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Reforming, Deforming, and Performing: Remixing Digital and Traditional

Approaches to José Agustín's *La tumba*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Hispanic Languages and Literature

by

Claire Elizabeth Ihlendorf Burke

Committee in charge:

Professor Ellen McCracken, Chair

Professor Sara Poot-Herrera

Professor Rita Raley

June 2014

The dissertation of Claire Elizabeth Ihlendorf Burke is approved.

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June 2014

Reforming, Deforming, and Performing: Remixing Digital and Traditional

Approaches to José Agustín's *La tumba*

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ABSTRACT

Reforming Deforming, and Performing: Remixing Digital and Traditional

Approaches to José Agustín's *La tumba*

by

Claire Elizabeth Ihlendorf Burke

This dissertation focuses on the novel *La tumba*, by Mexican author, José Agustín and explores this 1960s text through a digital lens. *La tumba*, written by Agustín when he was just seventeen, follows the life of a young, urban, upper-class protagonist who is disillusioned with his life and society in Mexico City in the beginning of the 1960s. What my re-reading of La tumba aspires to contribute to the existing critical landscape is summarized by three goals.

Firstly, my reading demonstrates a new degree of investigation, examining previously undiscovered perspectives of this classic text. I base my analysis of a re-mapping of the text by combining new and traditional hermeneutics. Where previous scholars have limited their scope purely on linguistic elements of this text, I offer new outlets for analysis that extend beyond the existing readings. Through this work I explore the relationships in the text, specifically those between the female characters and the protagonist.

Secondly, my work acts as a model for the study of other texts. Agustín has never been examined with a computer-assisted close reading and my dissertation acts as an example of what can be done for future study of other texts and further investigations of Agustín's work. I explore case studies in which

I used both deformances and performances of the text in a classroom setting to gauge the pedagogical implications of these methods. My research demonstrates the new perspectives and insights gained by using digital tools and visualizations, and while doing so, I demonstrate how these methodologies can be employed in the study of other texts.

Lastly, this dissertation connects the fields of Digital Humanities and Hispanic literature. Recent trends in literary criticism, which were previously labeled as "non-normative" methods of study, are now considered acceptable. These methods include different types of computer-assisted or machine readings as well as textual visualizations. However, there is a lack of representation of using these digital tools in the field of Hispanic literature; this dissertation responds directly to this void.

The framework for my textual experimentation comes from the concept of deformance by Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuels. For the purposes of my investigations, I extend this concept from poetry (as McGann and Samuels outline) to an entire novel. I combine my analysis of the deformances with traditional textual analysis/close reading scholarship. I also explore performances of the novel through social media platforms in order to consider the text in a modern-day format. This structure supports the secondary goal of my work, which is to propose new methodology that can be applicable in the study of other novels, regardless of language. The tools and methods I use can be adopted for literary analysis, but also have utility in a teaching capacity.

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Introduction

> . . .[Hay] cierta crisis de la novela misma. La narración novelística tradicional, bueno, se ha llevado a tales niveles de perfección que entonces ya mucha gente se resiste a tratar de narrar bajo los esquemas más o menos tradicionales, porque eso ya está muy hecho y está muy bien hecho además. Entonces, ya sabes, en Latinoamérica desde los sesentas se empezaron a fragmentar todas la estructuras, buscando cómo contar sin caer en los viejos esquemas[1]
>
> José Agustín, interview with Beth Miller, 1983

There exists a certain attraction to the "new": the desire not only to innovate, but to build on what has come before; to change. In the above quotation, José Agustín remarks on this phenomenon: in the face of crisis (in this case, literary), there is a need to break out of the standards of what has been done before. This dissertation is no exception.

The goal of this dissertation is two-fold: one, to re-examine the novel, *La tumba* (1964,1966) by Mexican author José Agustin with the aid of digital tools and two, to re-consider the traditional models of close reading with the aid of

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[1] ". . .[There is]a certain crisis of the novel itself. The traditional novelistic narration, well, it has reached such levels of perfection that already many people resist trying to narrate under these more or less traditional outlines, because this is already done and done very well.   So, as you know, in Latin America since the sixties, they began to break up the structure, looking for how to count without falling into the same old outlines."

computers and other digital tools. In Chapter One I contextualize José Agustín

and *La tumba* in the era and environment in which he writes. In Chapter Two I

consider *La tumba* through the theoretical framework of deformance[2], a concept

developed in the early 2000s by Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuels, in order to

analyze the text in a way that has never before been done. In Chapter Three, I

focus on performance, stemming from the concept of deformance; this

computational activity takes apart, reassembles, and performs a text, producing

a deeper understanding and a valuable method of textual analysis. Finally, in

Chapter Four, I examine the pedagogical implications of critical performatives

through a case study of student performances based on *La tumba.* While I utilize

Agustín's *La tumba* for my analysis, the secondary goal of my work is to show the

universality of the tools I employ. The versatility of the computer-assisted close

readings, deformances, and performances allows for this type of exploration and

careful examination to be done on other works. While not all computational

readings are the same, the creative aspect of both the process and the outcome

helps to construct these new methodologies and highlights the utility of the

varying readings and analyses that the computer-assisted readings produce.

Theory

The theoretical framework for this dissertation is based not only on the

"new" and digital models of the twenty-first century, nor the

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[2] For more recent commentary and scholarship on the concept of deformance in literary
analysis, see Sample and Ramsay.

deformance/performance dichotomy, but also on a re-interpretation (or re-appropriation) of a several early twentieth century foundational essays. Victor Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization in "Art as Technique" (1917) plays well with the later development of deformance, in which a remapping of a work creates a new vantage of analysis. Shklovsky places the value of art in its unfamiliarity:

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. (Shklovsky 12)

Thus, part of the creation and perception of an artistic object is found through creating this sense of unfamiliarity. Defamiliarization is indeed an important aspect to my framework, and also of the methodologies I adopt for textual analysis. However, the difference between my work and Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization is in the perception of the object. Instead of purely focusing on the result, I defamiliarize the text in order to examine both the process and the result of this defamiliarization and also how both of those relate back to the original object (or text).

Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay "Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction" analyzes the potential loss of "aura" in the new mechanical age. By "aura" he means a unique element that is only connected to the original object, not to a reproduction. While some present-day scholars contend that Benjamin's predictions have come to pass[3] a rereading of his concerns fosters valid points of discussion in today's artistic and literary environment.

Some fears of the era included the loss of the "artist" and the "aura". With the advent of the then new technology of photography and film, one argument was that anyone could be an artist (without the training or skill that was necessary of a painter). Some believed that with the democratization of art, we would lose originality. While seen as a negative effect of the new technology seventy-five years ago, the occurrence of this in the present era is more accepted due to the democratization of reading, writing, and criticism on many new platforms. While some critics may wish the academy remain open to only a few, the concept of open source writing, research, and publishing has gained popularity and support in many academic circles.

Additionally, the ability that film and photography had of close ups and comparisons which Benjamin acknowledges, parallels the present day ability that machines have in this digital era. Benjamin discusses the new vantage point that photography and film offer:

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[3] See Gumbrecht and Marrinan

By close ups of things around us, by focusing on hidden details of

familiar objects, by exploring common-place milieus under the

ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand,

extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives;

on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and

unexpected field of action…The enlargement of a snapshot does

not simply render more precise what in any case was visible,

though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the

subject…The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does

psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (223)

In the past, new machines were used to gain new perspectives, and this is true

today.   While some see the overlap or joining of powers (the digital and the

humanities) as negative, the positive combination of machine and human

reading has powerful results and offers new readings of previous works, new

vantage points, and new techniques of inspection.

Benjamin also considered public perception. Indeed, this is a changeable

and ever morphing facet of society. In his time Benjamin saw a change of

perception from ritual to political in terms of art, and ends his essay with

reference to the "absent-minded" public. While that change did not completely

take place as he predicted, perception has changed since then.   Today, the public

is ever more absent-minded and distracted, constantly stimulated by the bright

lights and shiny new objects that bombard the twenty-first century environment.

New technology, in whatever form, affects the attitudes and habits of the masses, which in turn alters perception. As such, the influx of digital natives and distracted readers influences not only the way we imbibe art and culture, but also the ways in which we process it.

In this work I do not claim that machine analysis can replace the traditional standards of close reading and textual analysis, but rather that it aids a reader's ability to work with and within a text, to further understand and analyze it. Furthermore, as computers become more and more ubiquitous with younger generations, they have become an important, stable, and permanent part of education and life in general. As such, incorporating these tools expands the analytical power of the human combined with that of the machine.

Text

La tumba is a special book, and as it turns fifty years old, it is just in time for a midlife crisis—a funny thing for a novel that exudes eternal youth. Fellow Mexican writer Rosa Beltrán comments, "Lo que se siente [Agustín] y lo que se vive es una juventud, en su caso, eterna; parece que hubiera hecho un pacto con el diablo" ("What he [Agustín] feels and what he lives is a youthfulness, in his case, eternal; it is as though he made a pact with the devil"; Personal Interview[4]). It is a book that readers and writers alike revere. It holds significance not only for being Agustín's first novel, but also for its place in history ushering in an era.

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[4] A full text of these interviews is available in the Appendix.

It was the precursor to a generation of change, sitting on the cusp of an important epoch in global history. For Mexico, it introduced a new type of language and style of writing. Renowned journalist and author, Elena Poniatowska notes, "José Agustín renovó todo…Renovó toda la literatura mexicana; es decir hizo estallar la literatura mexicana y la hizo normal con palabras normales, palabras que hablaban los jóvenes" ("José Agustín rekindled it all…He renewed all of Mexican literature; that is he exploded Mexican literature and did it with ordinary words, words that the young people spoke"; Personal Interview). Known for his use of slang and ludic language in *La tumba*, Agustín captures the essence of urban youth culture. At that moment in history, *La tumba* was anticipatory of the change in prominence of youth culture both in Mexico and globally.

First published in 1964, and a second edition in 1966, the novel was actually written in 1961 by a sixteen year-old Agustín. Fellow writer Juan José Arreola, who often ran writing workshops for young writers like Agustín, encouraged him to publish the novel.   Arreola was also the editor of a literary magazine, *Mester*, in which he published many young writers. Initially, *La tumba* was going to be part of this magazine, but Agustín preferred to see it in book form: "Preferí que [*La tumba*] apareciese como libro, aunque eso aparejara múltiples problemas de dinero. Mi papá me prestó dos mil pesos y se echó a andar la publicación." ("I preferred that it [*La tumba*] be a book, although this

caused many financial issues. My dad lent me two thousand pesos and the

publication came to be"; Agustín "Presentado por si mismo" 55).

Agustín initially found difficulty in publishing the novel. He was turned

away because of his young age, and once self-published, he had problems

distributing the novel. Very few copies of the 1964 edition remain in circulation,

and it is out of print. However, of those few copies, some were reviewed in

literary and cultural magazines at the time, with critic Humberto Batis declaring

that *La tumba* is a "híbrida de la Sagan y Nabokov" (a "hybrid of Sagan and

Nabokov[5]"; Batis XVI), comparing Agustín's debut novel with some of the highly

regarded writers of the era.

Despite difficulty publishing early on in his career, Agustín has gone on to

become a prolific writer. *La tumba*, as his first novel holds a special role in

Mexican literature, and it continues to captivate readers. In 2010, it was

included in a special series of "18 para los 18" ("18 for the 18") in which the

Secretaría de Educación Pública and the Fondo de Cultura Económica

("Secretary of Public Education and The Economic Culture Fund) released a

series of 18 novels still relevant for present-day youth.

Indeed, Agustín and *La tumba* remain key parts to the rich history of

twentieth century Mexico. Author Mónica Lavín notes that Agustín is

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[5] "Sagan" refers to the young French author, Françoise Sagan, who in 1954 at the age of 19 published her first novel, *Bonjour tristesse.* Nabokov is Vladimir Nabokov, Russian author, poet, and playwright who was active in the mid-twentieth century.

responsible for a shift in Mexican literature, offering a voice of the collective urban youth:

> Nos permitió escucharnos y vernos, y a mí, eso me parece fundamental porque va a tono con la época y le da a la literatura una inyección de juventud. Me parece que sin él, la literatura mexicana (o sin la literatura de la onda) no sería lo mismo, quién sabe cómo sería. [José Agustín] hizo mucho por popularizar la lectura también[6]. (Personal Interview)

With *La tumba*, Agustín succeeded in both echoing the voice of the youth in his era as well as maintaining that vigor for new generations of youth. His debut novel forever changed the plane of Mexican literature and is a novel that has influenced many subsequent Mexican writers.

Structure

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. In Chapter One, I contextualize Agustín both culturally and historically. I focus on his life, his writings and their confluence with Mexican history. The second half of the twentieth century in Mexico and around the world, was an important era in the development of youth culture, a theme important to the young writer and to his development socially, politically, and culturally. In order to have a complete

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[6] "He allowed us to see ourselves, and to me, this seems fundamental because it goes along with the tone of the era and it gives literature an injection of youth. It seems to me that without him, Mexican literature (or without the Onda literature), would not be the same, who knows how it would be. [José Agustín] did a lot to popularize reading as well."

perspective of *La tumba*, it is important to look at its context and place in Mexico's canon.

Chapter Two analyzes the novel through Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuels' concept of deformance. I extend the concept from their analysis of poetry to the entire novel, and I create and analyze several literary visualizations of the text. I argue that the combination of manual and computer close reading is an important factor for literary analysis today.

In Chapter Three, I develop a performance of the text, the other half of the deformance/performance pair. The first critical performative is that of a twitterization of the text, using the social platform of Twitter as a stage for a real time adaptation of the text. The importance of this performance is similar to that of the deformances, in that working within the text and remaking a literary object opens up new areas of study of the original novel. Of additional importance is the use of technology in these performances. In this chapter, I also consider a collective performance of the text for an English speaking audience.

The final chapter (Chapter Four) investigates the didactic implications of deformance and performance with a case study of student projects on Agustín and *La tumba*; they demonstrate the creative and analytical processes that the synthesis of computer and human machines foment. By examining this methodology in practice, this dissertation offers pragmatic information on how to utilize these tools in a classroom setting.

Chapter 1: José Agustín

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Mexican author José Agustín's place in the
historical and cultural context of Mexico in the second half of the twentieth
century. I will start with a wide approach, focusing global cultural movements of
the era and then focus on Mexico and ultimately the Onda[7] movement, which is
marked by Agustín's 1964 publication of *La tumba.*

Born in 1944, Agustín began writing at a young age in an era of intense
cultural and political change in Mexico. From a literary perspective, Agustín
stands apart from the other writers of his generation, often labeled as writers of
the Onda, for being the first and the most prolific. A classic text, it is rarely read
outside of its native country due to its colloquial and irreverent language and has
not yet been translated to English. However, its timeless themes and
international appeal cannot be ignored. Influenced by the global culture of the
time, *La tumba* is innovative linguistically and combines diverse cultural
elements.

This novel is also noteworthy because it presents a contrasting view to
the romanticized image of Mexico widespread in that time period. American
literary examples from this era such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) paint

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[7] In section 1.3.1 I will discuss how this is a disputed term, but continues to be used by most
academics and scholars to describe this moment in literary history. Other writers considered to
be a part of the Onda are Gustavo Saínz and Parménides García Saldaña.

Mexico as an exotic other—underdeveloped and indigenous. However, *La tumba* presents a modernized and cosmopolitan Mexico. The intertextual elements of this novel reference famous literary theorists, classical and jazz musicians, and foreign language texts. This novel deserves a wider audience, but is often limited by those who deem it too difficult to translate or too colloquial to understand.

1.2 The Big Picture: Youth Cultural Movements of the 1960s

> Counterculture blooms wherever and whenever a few members of a society choose lifestyles, artistic expressions, and ways of thinking and being that wholeheartedly embrace the ancient axiom that the only true constant is change itself.
> –Timothy Leary, Foreword,
> *Counterculture through the Ages:*
> *From Abraham to Acid House*

The dawning of a new decade brought with it an air of change. The vestiges of rock and roll and the Beat generation, introduced in the 1950s, had blossomed and adapted and were taken up by a new group of youths. The sixties were, as Ken Goffman states, a time where "Expanded liberties for individuals in thought, speech, and behavior rubbed against—and tried to merge with—a growing sense of collective responsibility to end war, poverty, and injustice" (247) and it was the young people of this generation who wielded a new and particular influence. It is not as though youth or youth culture did not exist previously; however, it had not been exhibited in the same manner. Instead, it began to stand out, and call attention to itself. Dick Hebdige points out:

> . . . youth is present only when its presence is a problem, or is
>
> regarded as a problem. More precisely, the category 'youth' gets

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mobilized in official documentary discourse, in concerned or

outraged editorials and features, or in the supposedly

disinterested tracts emanating from the social sciences at those

times when young people make their presence felt by going 'out of

bounds,' by resisting through rituals, dressing strangely, striking

bizarre attitudes, breaking rules, breaking bottles, windows,

heads, issuing rhetorical challenges to the law. (*Hiding* 17-8)

In Mexico in the 1960s, as well as globally during this time, youth culture began

to set itself apart from other generations. In general terms, the sixties were

known internationally as a decade in which counterculture and social

revolutions both emerged and flourished; and the young people (mainly

students) acted as the natural emissary of this new generation of oppositional

culture.

The sixties were ushered in with a spirit of revolt. On January 1, 1959,

the Cuban revolutionary fighters successfully overthrew dictator Fulgencio

Batista.   Many around the world were watching. José Agustín, in his book that

chronicles Mexican history, *Tragicomedia Mexicana 1: La vida en México de 1940

a 1970*, connects the Cuban revolution with the rise of protests in later years: "La

propensión popular a protestar públicamente recibió un impulso justo al

iniciarse el año de 1959, cuando, sorpresivamente, en Cuba huyó el dictador

Fulgencio Batista y las fuerzas del Movimiento 26 de Julio de Fidel Castro Ruz

dominaron toda la isla" ("The popular propensity towards public protest

received a boost at the beginning of 1959, when suddenly, in Cuba, dictator Fulgencio Batista fled and the forces of the July 26th Movement controlled all of the island";173). The same event, witnessed through television is shared by American writer, Todd Gitlin:

> As we celebrated the coming of 1959, around midnight, in a fragment of news squeezed into Guy Lombardo's orchestral schmaltz, we saw the black-and-white footage of bearded Cubans wearing fatigues, smoking big cigars, grinning big grins to the cheers of throngs deliriously happy at the news that Batista had fled; and we cheered too. The overthrow of a brutal dictator, yes. But more, on the faces of the striding, strutting *barbudos* surrounded by adoring crowds we read redemption—a revolt of young people, underdogs, who might just cleanse one scrap of earth of the bloodletting and misery we had heard about all our lives. (2)

Gitlin's memory of celebrating New Year's Eve at the age of sixteen recognizes that not only was a dictatorship overthrown, but a sense of hope surrounding this 'revolt of young people' was awakened. Gitlin, who shortly thereafter became the president of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1963, bears witness to the dawning of a new global age of revolution and protest.

This event inspired many youths worldwide; including sixteen year-old José Agustín, who traveled to Cuba in 1961 to work in Fidel Castro's "campaña

nacional de alfabetización" ("national literacy campaign"). This project, set forth

by Castro's young government was an attempt to expand literacy in Cuba,

specifically in the poorer rural areas. Agustín and other young people between

the ages of 10 and 19 lived with rural families while teaching them to read; they

were referred to as "Brigadas Conrado Benítez." Agustín writes of this

experience in his 1961 journal recently published in 2010 as *Diario de

brigadista: Cuba 1961*.

During the sixties and the early seventies, student and countercultural

movements worked for many different causes and had many different

representations: from rock and roll to civil rights to free speech to anti-war

protests. Both the plurality of activism and its ubiquitous nature made this

period a hotbed for political action and made it an important era in the social

and cultural history of the world.

In the twentieth century, cultural spaces became harder to define. The

invention and popularization of modern devices such as television also aided

this spread of culture. Specifically in the sixties, where there was international

social and political unrest, the global stage became more apparent and ever-

present.

1.2.1 México in the 1960s

Mexico, as well, during the mid to late 1960s, felt the generational gap

widen, and experienced a youth movement that was gaining momentum.

Cultural, social, and political change occurred hand-in-hand, each reinforcing the other's metamorphosis. A revolutionary fervor was ignited, affecting a range of standards: from styles of dress to political actions.

Change in Mexico in the 1960s did not occur overnight. The word "revolution" plays a significant role throughout Mexico's history and although at times problematic and over-used, it is evoked in many senses. Primarily, it is associated with one of the major socio-political revolutions of the twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). "Revolution" later became one of the founding tenets of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario or PNR (National Revolutionary Party) formed in 1926 emerging from the revolution; later it changed its name to the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana or PRM (Party of the Mexican Revolution) in 1938, and ultimately to the oxymoronic Partido Revolucionario Institucional or PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) in 1946. The PRI dominated the Mexican political arena for over seventy years, finally changing hands in the year 2000 with election of President Vicente Fox, a candidate from the Partido de Acción Nacional or PAN (National Action Party), and returning to power in 2012 with the election of Enrique Peña Nieto.

The PRI, in all its forms, has played an important role during the twentieth century in Mexico's history. As Mexico's primary ruling party, it utilized a discourse of revolutionary nationalism that attempted to capture and incorporate the revolutionary spirit from the early twentieth century. However,

forcing a national narrative eventually caused rebellion ultimately leading to much of the unrest seen in the 1960s and early 1970s.

During the relatively authoritarian leadership of the PRI, there were many incidents of discontent that were dealt with by the government. One of the biggest, which acts as a precursor to the later student movements, was a series of railroad strikes in 1958. The main issue was the government controlled unions that took advantage of workers and did not allow them proper avenues for improvement. During this time, many protests took place in public view. After years of mistreatment, Mexican society was beginning to react to the grievances people had experienced. This period would help set the foundation of the new "revolutionary" sentiments as seen in the later political, social and cultural movements. In addition to the changing attitudes in Mexico, the aforementioned Cuban revolution and its global recognition helped Mexicans see political change in a new, more tangible, perspective. The events in Cuba had particular resonance in Mexico because many felt a special connection to the "bearded revolutionaries."

After Fidel Castro's first failed attempt at revolution, the July 26, 1953 attacks at the Moncada barracks, an exiled Castro headed to Mexico to rally his troops and plan for another attempt. It was at this time that a young Fidel Castro met Ernesto "Che" Guevara in July of 1955 in Mexico City. While in Mexico, Castro was arrested by Batista-influenced Mexican police and upon his release made his Mexican training grounds secret; on November 25, 1956 he set out

from Mexico to Cuba with eighty-two men, including Guevara, to begin another attempt at revolution. After two years of guerrilla warfare, Castro and his revolution famously succeeded. Mexico was the birthplace and training grounds for Castro's successful attacks. This unique connection between Castro and Mexico is one element of the mythification of the Cuban revolution.

The idealistic perception of Cuba's revolution often conflicted with the Mexican government's discourse of nationalism specifically during the presidency of López Mateos (1958-1964). "Revolutionary" to the PRI government, harkened back to the Mexican Revolution, not the Cuban example that spoke directly to the youth generation. In *Tragicomedia Mexicana 1: La vida en México de 1940 a 1970*, Agustín comments on this specific period in Mexican history:

> Naturalmente el gobierno exprimió al máximo la "mexicanización" y la festinó ruidosamente en todos los medios y en grandes letreros luminosos en las avenidas de la Ciudad de México. López Mateos se esforzaba por dar una imagen "revolucionaria", hablando de reparticiones y nacionalizaciones, para contrarrestar los efectos casi numinosos, mitopoyésicos, de la Revolución Cubana entre la juventud y cierta clase media, y para diluir un poco los sumamente notorios presos políticos y la línea antiobrera. Pero ni disminuyó la mitificación de la revolución cubana, ni cesaron las campañas por la libertad de los presos políticos, ni

dejaron de aparecer distintas muestras culturales y

contraculturales que manifestaban un disgusto creciente por las

formas de vida de los gobiernos de la Revolución Mexicana. (187)[8]

While the growing sentiment in favor of the Cuban revolution continued among

the student and some of the middle class in Mexico, the PRI government

continued to push a nationalistic narrative to bolster support for its agenda. The

discord, felt between the people and the government, and the younger

generations and the older, was also supported through cultural outlets. While

the government pushed nationalism, many youths were enamored with

international popular culture as seen in music and dress, which further divided

the ideologies in Mexico at the time.

Critics such as Eric Zolov and even Agustín hail two American cultural

imports as some of the most influential cultural icons of the period: Elvis Presley

and the 1955 movie, *Rebel without a Cause.* Agustín views his country through

this film and the concept of "rebeldes" ("rebels") in his 1996 work, *La*

contracultura en México:

A estos chavos se les llamó "rebeldes sin causa", por la película,

naturalmente, pero también porque en verdad el mundo adulto

---

[8] "Naturally the government squeezed the most out of "Mexicanization" and loudly made light of it in all forms of media and in large neon signs in the avenues of Mexico City. López Mateos was trying hard to give a "revolutionary" image, speaking of distribution and nationalization, to counteract the almost divine and mythical effects of the Cuban Revolution among the young and a certain sector of the middle class, and to slightly dilute the especially notorious incarceration of political prisoners and the government's anti-worker line. But this neither decreased the mythification of the Cuban Revolution nor stopped the campaigns to free the political prisoners, nor did it cease the appearance of distinct cultural and countercultural demonstrations that manifested a growing distaste for the ways of life of the government of the Mexican Revolution."

mexicano se creía tan perfecto que no le entraba la idea de que los

jóvenes pudieran tener motivos para rebelarse. Además, no deja

de ser significativo que el término viniera de una traducción literal

del título de la película...en el que la causa no se refiere a un

"motivo", sino a una causa judicial, y por tanto más bien significa

"Un rebelde sin proceso", un rebelde que está en la línea divisoria

y no ha pasado a la delincuencia, un rebelde cultural. (36)[9]

The beginnings of these cultural rebellions blossomed into a full-fledged youth

movement, in which rock and roll and counterculture had major roles.

During this period a number of rock and roll bands gained popularity in

Mexico: Los Dug Dugs, Los Locos del Ritmo and los Teen Tops. These groups

flourished in part, because it was cheaper for record companies to hire local

groups to sing Spanish cover albums of the latest hits in English (Zolov 66).

Mexican youth wanted to be a part of the global rock and roll phenomenon, but

because of high tariffs, the music was difficult to find. Thus, bands began to

make their own versions and their popularity sky-rocketed. Zolov notes that in

addition to providing Mexican youth with their own (albeit copied) music, rock

and roll helped the young protest against the establishment: ". . . the mimicking

of foreign rock styles and intonations was not only an attempt to *belong* to a

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[9] "They called these guys 'rebels without a cause' from the movie, naturally, but also because the Mexican adult world truly believed itself so perfect that the idea that the young could have motives to rebel did not even occur to them. Furthermore, it is significant that the term came from a literal translation of the title of the movie...in which case the cause does not refer to a 'motive', but rather a court case, and therefore it is better understood as 'a rebel without trial' A rebel who is on the dividing line and has not passed on to delinquency, a cultural rebel"

global movement; it also became an act of defiance against a cultural and political structure that limited and denied access to rock as (world) popular culture" (95). Music is only one of the cultural changes that was taking place in Mexico at the time, forever changing its culture. Other unforgettable events of the period were darker in nature.

Probably the most remembered event from this era, and a major turning point for the Mexican student movements, is the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre where on October 2, 1968 military forces attacked a large group of student and civilian protestors and bystanders in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas killing hundreds of people. Tensions grew in the summer of 1968 heading into the fall with massive student demonstrations. The Olympics, for the first time, were being hosted in a Latin American country (October 12-27, 1968), and the government felt pressure to take action against the students before the rest of the world arrived. It is notorious not only because the protest was peaceful, but because of the brutal government-ordered killing of innocent civilians. This tragedy is also referred to as "La Noche de Tlatelolco" recounted in the 1971 *testimonio* by Elena Poniatowska of the same title. Poniatowska utilizes multiple voices throughout the book taken from testimonies of witnesses and other people involved, giving a disjointed, but more complete narrative of the events of that day.

However, Tlatelolco, experienced during a tumultuous era in Mexico's history, marks a moment in which a new cultural scene increased social

consciousness through the youth and student movements. As with all cultural

change, this one, years in the making, was composed of many different elements.

The first half of the twentieth century in Mexico was an epoch of change,

embodying "revolution" in its many forms. Literature was also a strong part of

these transitional decades. The youth literary voice, and perhaps a precursor of

the student movements, has come to be known as the Onda.

1.3 Defining La Onda

> For them [the literary establishment] the idea of letting authors speak of young people
> was a way of consecrating youth as something relevant, and how could you really consider
> something as serious when it was both funny and irreverent?
> -José Agustín, "Contemporary Mexican Fiction" 1978

"Onda" literally means "wave" and it was also used in 1960s Mexico as

slang referring to what was "hip" or "in." In this counterculture-and-rock-and-

roll infused decade, La Onda also referred to a new type of literature: a group of

young writers emerged, waging their own literary revolution. Their novels were

different than previous literary generations because they used popular slang and

wrote about taboo themes that provoked reactions from both the critics and the

public. Agustín's *La tumba* (1964 and 1966) and *De Perfil* (1966), and Gustavo

Sáinz's *Gazapo* (1965), were three such novels that prompted strong reactions

from fans and critics alike. Both authors wrote about the adolescent experience

from the larger voice of an adolescent author and most importantly, in the voice

of adolescents of the era. The linguistic code reflects the language of urban

youth, specifically in Mexico City. The narratives Agustín and Saínz created offer a new perspective on the society of that time.

From the emergence of these novels on the literary scene, critics have attempted to categorize them. Alba Lara de Alengrin notes that the terms *narrativa joven, juvenilismo, nuevo verismo,* and *iconoclastas* ("young narrative, juvenilism, new realism and iconoclasts") are attempts to classify this new set of novels (82-3). However, the classification that has endured to this day is *La Onda*, introduced by Margo Glantz in 1971. Patricia Cabrera López explains Glantz's categorization:

> . . .esta autora desarrolla teóricamente la tesis de su estudio: las propuestas de los nuevos escritores, o se inscriben en la onda (crítica social) o en la escritura (creación verbal). En tal tenor analiza los factores que influyen en cada una de las vertientes. La primera responde al contexto cultural de los años sesenta: el culto de la adolescencia o de la juventud, los *hippies*, las drogas, el *rock*, la oleada constataría de 1968 y la politización apartidista, y se expresa con el ritmo entrecortado y percutido de los aparatos electrónicos aunado a un registro lingüístico muy peculiar otrora reservado al teatro cómico. La segunda consiste en asumir como preocupación central en la literatura, el lenguaje y la estructura, en

23

la misma línea de la novelística contemporánea, inaugurada por el

nouveau roman. (177)[10]

By separating "onda" and "escritura," Glantz valorizes both categories.

"Escritura" is artistic and universal, while "Onda" is colloquial with juvenile

characters who relish sex, drugs and rock and roll. Glantz names Agustín, Sáinz

and Parménides García Saldaña who published *Pasto verde* (1968) and *El rey*

criollo (1970) as the major players of *los onderos.*

In the decades since Glantz's classification, many other critics have

reexamined this term in attempts to clearly define what constitutes a novel that

is part of the Onda. The most common trait, apart from the young age of its

authors, is the creative and playful use of language. Agustín, for example, uses

colloquial speech and neologisms throughout his works in order to poke fun,

create, and augment traditional speech. This rhetoric is most concentrated in his

novels from the 1960s, *La tumba* and *De perfil*. Agustín speaks of his new style

and the young generation of writers in a series of papers presented at the

University of Denver in 1978: "These young writers used to decline adjectives

and adverbs, nouns and verbs; they changed spellings to extract many more

complexities from each word, and these complexities not only possessed

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[10] ". . . [Glantz] develops the thesis of her study theoretically: the proposals of the new writers of the time in Mexico are either inscribed in the wave (social criticism) or in the writing (verbal creation). In this tenor she analyses the factors that influence each of the groups. The first responds to the cultural context of the sixties: the adolescent or youth power, the hippies, drugs, rock and roll, the contestatory movements of 1968, and the nonpartisan politicization; and it is expressed by the staccato rhythm and hammered electronic devices coupled to a peculiar linguistic register once reserved for comic theater. The second consists of assuming the central concerns in literature; language and structure, in line with the contemporary novel inaugurated by the *nouveau roman*."

phonetic and semantic values, but also involved a relationship with the people."

("Contemporary Mexican Fiction" 24). Not only did these authors (mainly

Agustín and Sáinz) use a different linguistic code than was traditionally used in

Mexican literature, they also created a new code.

    While most critics agree that the main trait of Onda Literature is its

inventive use of language, there are different interpretations of this linguistic

code. Jorge Ruffinelli, for example, recognizes its importance as a reflection of

the world view of these young authors and how Agustín uses dialogue in the

texts as opposed to other narrative techniques to propel the actions of the story.

In essence, Ruffinelli's view is that the utilized language directly correlates with

the youth societal perspective of the time, giving further insight to youth culture

during the era (59). Meanwhile, Margo Glantz, nuances her interpretation of the

literature of the Onda in her prologue to Xorge del Campo's 1971, *La narrativa*

joven de México. She remarks that the linguistic code includes more than just the

colloquial language and "albures" ("plays on words") that frequently appear

Onda works, but it also includes many extra-literary elements and creative

formatting such as the inclusion of rock lyrics and irregular typographical signs

(qtd by Del Campo 184) which offer material for further analysis.

    In addition to the different interpretations of the linguistic code, scholars

point to the creation of an oppositional view of society in the Onda texts. Inke

Gunia sees this perspective as countercultural, specifically in the works of

Agustín and Saínz. She demonstrates that the novels of the Onda help construct

and reflect the new awareness experienced by the youth in this era, acting as an antecedent to the student movements in the late sixties and early seventies (cited in Lara de Alengrin 85). While critics discuss the many traits of Onda literature, the most significant and most agreed upon are the special types of linguistic code and the reflection of a contestatory culture.

The Onda is frequently overshadowed historically by another Latin American literary movement from the era: the Boom. While the Onda was not widely read outside of Mexico, the Boom writers gained international fame. For the first time, many Latin American novels were published and translated in Europe and the United States. The four most noted authors from this movement were Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Julio Cortázar. These authors wrote experimentally, often with a political bent. While the Boom is frequently studied and taught, the Onda offers a chance for further investigation of an era that had many literary outlets.

1.3.1 José Agustín and the Onda

Despite the many discussions of what defines the Onda, an important matter of contention is that José Agustín, one of the famed *onderos,* has rejected this classification. Agustín has famously found these types of literary categorizations reductive. Of the appellation "Latin American Boom" he writes, "…and the term, like any other which is only a label, has turned out to be totally vague and inadequate" ("Contemporary Mexican Fiction" 6). His reaction to his

own literary classification, as one would suspect, is much stronger. Agustín

continues to argue strongly against the term, the woman who first officially

bestowed it (Glantz), and the labeling of a group of distinct writers as a whole.

In a 2004 essay "La Onda que nunca existió" he writes:

> Pero ella [Glantz] alucinó esa onda. Fue un juicio prematuro,
>
> basado en una apreciación personal que no se tomó la molestia de
>
> leer bien los libros y de estudiar seriamente un fenómeno
>
> importante…A los aludidos, esta visión nos pareció errónea,
>
> esquemática, reductivista, y, más grave aún, descalificadora, así es
>
> que casi todos protestamos. (12)
>
> But she [Glantz] hallucinated this 'onda.' It was a premature
>
> judgment, based on a personal assessment in which she did not
>
> even take the trouble to read the books well or seriously study this
>
> important phenomenon…To those of us she referred to, including
>
> me, this vision seems erroneous, schematic, reductive, and even
>
> worse, dismissive, so that almost all of us protest.

Even more recently, in an interview in 2013, Agustín continues to reject this

classification, but states that he and Glantz still get on well (Montoya n.p.).

However, in spite of Agustín's desires and opinions and regardless of the fact

that Glantz finally admitted her "error", the term Onda is still actively used to describe this set of writers from the sixties.[11]

Some critics even go further, describing Agustín as the sole member/creator of the Onda. Hernán Lara Zavala, a fellow writer and contemporary of Agustín, comments: "I would say he marks the end of a certain kind of writing in Mexico. And then, with him, there begins a new way of writing. He's the only one. He is *La onda*, there is no one else" (Personal Interview). While Agustín may reject this terminology and express concern that its limits and definition change from person to person, what remains certain is that a rupture in Mexican literature took place in 1964. In ¡*Ay vida, no me mereces!*, Elena Poniatowska notes this change, "...surge en cambio una literatura de la onda que la va rolando y por primera vez les da a los chavos un material de lectura muy accesible y muy inmediato y por lo tanto empieza a generarse un nuevo público lector. Esta onda la inicia en México un extraordinario narrador mexicano, José Agustín, al publicar su primer libro: *La tumba*" ("... instead, the literature of the Onda arises, and keeps going, and for the first time kids have reading material that is accessible and immediate and therefore a new readership is generated. The Onda was initiated in Mexico by an extraordinary narrator, José Agustín, upon publishing his first book, *La tumba*"; 176).

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[11] Agustín writes in a later section of the same article that Glantz publically admitted that the title was erroneous in 1993 in Brussels, however; she never published this admission.

With *La tumba* in 1964, and a second edition in 1966 along with *De Perfil*, José Agustín asserted himself as one of the leading young members of this new literary generation that would upset the status quo of the literary institutions of that time. Del Campo writes "De pronto, irrumpió violentamente un iracundo escritor destrozando mitos y tabúes, satirizando con un profundo análisis crítico a una sociedad cuya estructura reaccionaria, basada en el privilegio, anclada en la inercia de formas caducas, teme a lo nuevo y procura bloquear su insurgencia" ("Suddently, an irate writer violently interrupts, destroying myths and taboos, satirizing with a deep critical analysis of a society whose reactionary structure, based on privilege, rooted in the inertia of outdated forms, fear of the new, attempts to block their insurgency"; 181). As a group, these young writers stood out from other literary movements in that they had no common manifesto and they did not articulate or coordinate their actions. Essentially, they did not set out to become a "movement." And yet, they are still considered *los onderos*. As Agustín resolutely notes, "La 'literatura de la Onda' no murió porque nunca existió. Pero, para bien o para mal, lo que cada quien entiende por eso no se desvanece. Es un fantasma muy persistente" ("The literature of the Onda did not die because it never existed. But, for good or for bad, what each person understands by the term does not disappear. It is a very persistent ghost"; *La Onda que nunca* 17).

Jose Agustín is the most recognized and most prolific writers of the Onda. The novels that he has written and has continued to write secures his place in

Mexico's literary history. Although he does not believe in the sort of labels

bestowed upon him or his writing, critics continue to classify and define Agustín

within the Onda. Not only is he credited with being a part of the Onda, but also

starting it, with *La tumba*.

1.4 José Agustín

1.4.1 Short Biography

> Quién soy, dónde estoy, qué me dieron.
> -José Agustín, *El rock de la cárcel*

In April of 2011 Agustín was awarded the medal of merit in the arts from

the *Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal* (ALDF). This award marks the most

recent accolade for an author whose career has spanned decades. Since the first

publication of *La tumba* in 1964, Agustín's name has held an important place in

Mexican literature.[12] In addition to his many honors, he has published over

thirty works, in a diverse array of genres such as the novel, essay, theater,

screenplays and autobiography. He continues to be an important literary force

today, recently publishing in 2010, *Diario de brigadista Cuba, 1961.*

Born to Augusto Ramírez Altamirano and Hilda Gómez Maganda in 1944,

Agustín's city of origin is often cited differently depending on the publication.

His 1966 autobiography (Empresas Editoriales), for example, states that he was

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[12] His other awards and honors include: *el Premio Mazatlán de Literatura* (2005), *el Premio Nacional de Teatro Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (1974 and 1993, for literature), *el Premio Nacional de Novela Colima* (1983), Fulbright scholar (1978), Guggenheim Fellow (1977), and *Centro Mexicano de Escritores* Scholar (1967).

born in Guadalajara, while his first novel, *La tumba* (the 1966 edition by

Debolsillo) marks his birthplace as Acapulco. Other sources, such as John Kirk in

his 1986 essay on the author state his actual birth place as Huautla, Oaxaca (10).

Biographer Ana Luisa Calvillo refutes this in 1998, citing his birthplace and a

hospital (*el Hospital de la Beata Margarita*) in Guadalajara, but noting that his

family then registered him in Acapulco a month later (22).

Despite the confusion of his birthplace, recent publications state Acapulco

as his place of origin, most likely because the author perceives it as having had

the most effect on his development. Kirk writes,

> ...he [Agustín] claims that the bustling, rather sleazy atmosphere
>
> of Acapulco, where he spent most of his early life, deserves credit
>
> as his "official" birthplace...That city, with its decadent,
>
> international flavor, its beaches, and its eccentrics, is perhaps the
>
> city that has most influenced Agustín. (10)

Because the majority of Agustín's books purposely introduce his place of birth as

Acapulco, one's perception of Agustín is directly related to the image he

presents. This carefully constructed image links directly to the author's sense of

identity.

From his first publications onward, Agustín dropped his surname from

his works, setting himself apart from his uncle, also José Agustín Ramirez, who is

a famous composer[13]. Agustín strives to be unique and attempts to cut his familial ties so that they do not help no hinder his aspirational writing career.

Agustín's life has been well documented because of his fame as a writer at such a young age and also because he has written three autobiographies to date at key stages in his life.   In 1966 he was asked to participate in the series, *Nuevos escritores mexicanos del siglo XX presentados por sí mismos* (New Mexican Writers from the 20th Century Presented by Themselves). His next autobiography, *El rock de la cárcel* (1984) has three parts: the first is a reprint of his 1966 autobiography and the second and third parts discuss later events in his life, with the third part focusing on his time in the infamous prison, Lecumberri. His most recent published autobiographical work presents his diaries from his time in Cuba in 1961. While these texts not only shed light on the author, his life, and noteworthy situations, they also reveal his development throughout his career and traits in his works, such as his authorial voice and style.

1.4.1.1 José Agustín as Seen Through His Autobiographies

In 1961 a sixteen year-old José Agustín headed to Veracruz to board a boat for Cuba. While this in itself may have been a strange happening for a

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[13] He states: "Firmé como José Agustín, porque me molestaba muchísimo que en Guerrero me confundieran con mi tío homónimo, compositor conocidísimo, autor de *La sanmarqueña, Acapulqueña,* etcétera. Yo quería darme a conocer por mis propios medios, sin que me relacionaran con nadie. Jia, jia. ("I signed as José Agustín, because it bothered me a lot that in Guerrero they would confuse me with my uncle who has the same name, a well-known composer of music, author of *La sanmarqueña, Acapulqueña,* etcetera. I wanted to be known by my own merits, without being related to anyone. Ha ha" *Nuevos escritores* 48-9).

middle class teenager living in Mexico City in the 1960s, further circumstances make this situation atypical: he was married, and upon arriving in Cuba, he and his new wife worked for the "campaña nacional de alfabetización" ("national literacy campaign").

Agustín first publishes the story of this experience when he is twenty-two in his 1966 autobiography. In this work, written in the same colloquial and conversational style for which he became famous with *La tumba*, he writes about his decision to marry and go to Cuba with Margarita Dalton:

> El problema era que sus padres no le darían permiso para salir del país. Tenía dieciocho años, más para lograr sus planes necesitaba casarse. Qué tal si nos casamos y vamos a Cuba. Juega, dije al instante. Claro, yo deseaba ir a Cuba, pero nunca se me ocurrió que pudiera hacerlo tan pronto. Planeamos: matrimonio al vapor, visas rápidas, avión y qué preciosa es La Habana, ¿no? Todo era como un juego. Sin embargo, quedamos muy formales. (38)
>
> The problem was that her parents would not give her permission to leave the country. She was eighteen, but for her plan to succeed, she needed to get married. How about we get married and go to Cuba. I'm game, I said instantly. Of course, I had wanted to go to Cuba, but it never occurred to me to do it so quickly. We planned: shotgun wedding, quick visas, plane, and how beautiful Havana is,

don't you think? It was all like a game. However, we went through

the formalities.

As Agustín relates, the plan was quickly hatched, sounding like many a teenage

vision of escape. After a few metaphorical roadblocks, including angry parents, a

missed boat, and the loss of visas and money, the newlyweds arrived and were

quickly offered positions with the literacy campaign.

Agustín writes about his stay in Cuba and subsequent volunteer work in

only a small section of his 1966 autobiography. He recounts the annulment of

his marriage, the classes he taught, what he learned living in the countryside, his

experiences in Havana, and his continued productivity in writing, including short

stories, theater, and a diary. Of the diary he writes: "Durante ese tiempo llevé un

diario extensísimo, día tras día. Y también seguí el diario que inicié a principios

de año; en una agenda, todos los sucesos como flashes, perfectamente ilegibles

para quien no sea yo. Hasta la fecha sigo llevando ese diario" ("During that time

I wrote extensively in a diary, day after day. And I also continued with the diary

that I started at the beginning of the year; in a datebook, all of what happened in

flashes, perfectly illegible for anyone who wasn't me"; 42).

Unlike his 2010 chronicles, Agustín did not intend to publish the 1961

diary as he points out in an interview with Enrique Serna in May 2010: "Era

absolutamente personal, este diario no lo leía nadie, ni pensé publicarlo" ("It was

absolutely personal, no one read this diary, nor did I ever think to publish

it";162). Where on the one hand it appears a more "truthful" account as original

diary entries, on the other hand, his style so greatly mimics that of his fictional

works, the line between what is "real" and not is blurred. This diary, as Agustín

notes, is composed of "flashes": fragments of images that evoke both the

excitement of adventure that Agustín experienced as a teenager and the

hardships that were new to him as a middle class urbanite. Because Agustín first

references the existence of this diary in 1966 and then publishes it over forty

years later, readers assume that it is the "truest" version of his early life.

However, Agustín's early talent as a writer appears to have given him the ability

to carefully construct his image, making all that he wrote part of his literary self;

a self to which he remains faithful in all of his written work.

Having already written *La tumba*, Agustín employs the same

conversational and irreverent style in his diary. He flawlessly mixes neologisms,

puns, and borrowed words in a conversational style that reflects the slang of the

era and his own ludic language tendencies. By content and format *Diario de*

brigadista appears a typical diary of a teenager in extraordinary circumstances.

However, the hint of the intellectual and revolutionary nature of Agustín's

narrative is seen as he utilizes the French Republican calendar, instead of the

internationally accepted Gregorian calendar. The date of his first entry is not

August 14th, but "Termidor 27" (*Diario de una brigadista*, 13) revealing how the

young Agustín was influenced by revolutionary fervor sparked by the then

recent Cuban revolution. As a key event in the twentieth century like the French

Revolution in the eighteenth, the Cuban revolution affected society globally,

inspiring people to take action, as Agustín did when he moved to Cuba. In addition to his revolutionary spirit, sixteen-year-old Agustín was well-read, with authors he lists ranging from Bertolt Brecht to Lewis Carroll to Allen Ginsberg, in addition to a list of "lo que oía en esos días" ("What I listened to in those days"): music that included a mixture of classical, jazz, and rock and roll.

Agustín's stay in Cuba began as a spontaneous proposal of marriage, and by the time he had returned to Mexico (a mere seven months later), he had matured significantly. This period in his life demonstrates his rebellious, revolutionary, and adventurous spirit. Agustín witnessed the Cuban revolution first-hand. Living was difficult, but this experience helped the young writer mature and practice his narrative voice, which helps him later in his career when at twenty-two he was asked to write his autobiography for a new series highlighting Mexico's young writers.

He starts his 1966 autobiography in medias res relating a story about his "preprimaria" ("kindergarten"). He continues, sharing family anecdotes, his interest in art, writing, and acting. He tells of his schooling and relationships, moving and getting married in his twenty-two short years, and finally of publishing his first two books: *La tumba* and *De perfil*.

An author in a unique position, his talent was recognized at a young age, and very early on, barely past his teenage years, he writes his autobiography. He was encouraged through his membership in a writing circle, and by Juan José Arreola, whose writing workshops he attended. Because he was asked to write

his autobiography at such a young age, his first reflective comments come not from an older self, examining his early writing, but from his contemporary self. This type of introspection has continued throughout his career. In a 1986 interview he looks back at his writing and style: "From the beginning I tended to write in a relatively 'realistic' way, with an apparently simple and catchy language that, in large part, I could play with" (*Forty Archetypes* 25). It is this style that stands out and draws attention from fans and critics alike. It especially contrasts to the old guard literary institutions at the time that existed when he first started publishing.

While Agustín achieved literary success at a young age and had two books in the coveted first two spots in *Tiempo*'s best-seller list in 1966, *De perfil* and his autobiography (Kirk 16) [14]; initially, it was difficult for Agustín to be accepted as a writer when he first emerged in the scene earlier in the 1960s. This is in part because of his everlasting image of a young rebel, with his irreverent behavior and his ability to cause trouble within traditional literary institutions. Emmanuel Carballo captures this attitude in the first lines of the prologue to Agustín's 1966 autobiography. Carballo notes that Agustin's rebel style extends from his writing to his sense of dress:

> A primera vista, José Agustín parece el cantante de un conjunto
> musical a la moda. Pantalones ajustados, camisa esport y suéter (o
> saco que rompe bruscamente con la estética de las personas

---

[14] As recorded in the October 31st and November 7th, 1966 editions of *Tiempo* magazine

mayores). Su apariencia entre cautelosa y despreocupada impide,

en los primeros momentos que se vea en él a uno de los escritores

recién venidos que posee mayor talento y personalidad. (5)[15]

Agustín's entire style, through dress, writing, and attitude, is a break from the

standards of the traditional lettered elite of the time; and makes social

commentary on the changes of the era. Keeping with this image, in his 1966

autobiography, Agustín writes of his early life as a mischievous child and teen

who continued to push the limits.

His love of rock and roll music, along with slang and foreign words, is

interwoven into his autobiography as it is through many of his fictional works.

In one passage, Agustín, working as an English teacher, becomes nervous and

relies on popular music to aid his first year students. He writes, "Ah, bueno, yo

les enseñaré otra canción. Entonces escribí la letra de *Fuck On You*, digo, *Stuck*

On You, el hit en turno de Elvis. Los muchachos quedaron felices y en tres

minutos estábamos rocanroleando juntos" ("Ah, well, I will teach you another

song. So I wrote the lyrics of *Fuck On You*, I mean, *Stuck On You*, Elvis's hit at that

time. The kids were happy and in three minutes we were rock-and-rolling

together"; *José Agustín* 35). In this section, Agustín commits many taboos of the

era. First, his style is casual, almost conversing with the reader. Second, he plays

---

[15] "At first glance, Agustín seems like the lead singer of a popular band. Tight pants, sport shirt
and sweater (or jacket that sharply breaks with the aesthetics of an older generation). His
appearance between cautious and careless prevents one from seeing him as one of the new
authors of the age with the most talent and personality."

with the title of the song, an English curse word, and lastly, he uses rock and roll music in an academic setting.

In 1984, Agustín writes a third autobiography. Broken into three sections, the first is a reprint (with some small changes) of his 1966 autobiography, newly titled "Quién soy, dónde estoy, qué me dieron" ("Who I Am, Where I Am and What They Gave Me"). Combined with the second and third parts (named "Tienes que entrar para salir" 'You Need to Enter in Order to Leave' and "El rock de la cárcel" 'Jailhouse Rock'), this edition uses the title of the third section for the entire autobiography. The last part of this autobiography focuses solely on the year 1971.

This narrative tells of a different era in Agustín's life as he continues to express himself in a unique and laudable manner. Enrique Serna writes, "Casi nadie escribe sobre su propia vida y cuando alguien se atreve a hacerlo cubre su rostro con gruesas plastas de maquillaje. José Agustín rompió con ese tabú desde *El rock de la cárcel*" ("Almost no one writes about their own life and when someone dares to they do it covering their face with thick makeup. José Agustín broke this taboo in *Jailhouse Rock*"; Serna 139). Agustín writes of his own life without attempting to mask the gritty details and events; but instead, shares and remarks on them, welcoming the reader into his world. And yet,

He describes the intricate system of corruption, the balance of power in Lecumberri Prison, and the circles to which he belonged. His narrative, however, is not completely dire and dissolute. Instead, much of what he writes

is as though reported, told from a distance in a nonchalant manner such that it is

not overtly influenced by the horrors he must have experienced. Even so, when

Agustín does express the repulsive environment of the prison, he shows how the

experience affected him.

These lasting effects not only influenced Agustín as a person, but

extended into his writing. To escape from his present, Agustín utilized his stay

at Lecumberri to compose his novel, *Se está haciendo tarde.* He writes:

> Me pasaba tardes y noches enteras encerrado en mi celda pero a la
>
> vez bien instalado en los días brillantes de Acapulco. Me iba por
>
> completo. Me transfiguraba: mi percepción se afinaba a extremos
>
> agudísimos, me transportaba a un balcón de la eternidad, donde
>
> brisa y el sol siempre bañaban mi rostro con la felicidad serena de
>
> comprender la gravedad, el peso terrible y solemne de la vida… Me
>
> daba cuenta de que a través de la novela se canalizaba mucho de la
>
> atmósfera opresiva e infernal de la cárcel; se objetivaba la
>
> violencia, la sordidez y la virulencia de Lecumberri en el tono de
>
> mi novela, que definitivamente estaba resultando intensa. (172)[16]

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[16] "I spent entire afternoons and nights in my cell, but at the same time very much within the brilliant days of Acapulco. I was transfigured. It transformed me: my perception sharpened to extremes and transported me to a balcony of eternity, where the breeze and the sun always bathed my face with serene happiness of understanding the gravity, the terrible and solemn weight of life…I realized that the novel cannibalized the oppressive atmosphere, the tone of my novel objectified the violence, the sordidness and the virulence of Lecumberri, which was definitively very intense."

Although Agustín attempts to distract himself through creative outlets, he can never fully separate himself from the reality of his experience.

Agustín spent seven months in Lecumberri and was never sure of the exact date he would be released until the day it occurred. This anxiety of the unknown, along with the darkness of the experience, changed the author, as he notes about the day he leaves: "Ese día, sentado en la banquita bajo el sol, esperando una boleta de libertad que tardaba tanto en llegar, era conciente de que en mi vida se cerraba un ciclo y se iniciaba otro" ("That day, sitting on the bench under the sun, waiting for my ticket to freedom that was so delayed, I was conscious that one part of my life had ended and another was beginning "; *El rock de la cárcel* 181). This experience marks the end of an era for the author.

Throughout Agustín's career, his autobiographical works construct a self-referential perspective of the author that attempts to separate his identity from his fiction. However, both his fiction and non-fiction styles of writing overlap to create a world in which divisions between these two categories are unclear.

Some critics have claimed that his fictional work has as many parallels to his "real" life as do the autobiographies. These critics claim that the protagonists of Agustín's first two novels are representations of the author, as well as the protagonist of Agustín's later work, *Ciudades desiertas*—a man who follows his wife to Iowa, who is accepted at Iowa's International Writers' Workshop.

Indeed, there are many similarities between Agustín and his protagonists[17], but the resemblance is more of a reflection of real life situations and circumstances of the time, and not autobiographical.

Married at sixteen, divorced at seventeen, he published his first novel at eighteen. He married again shortly after, and by the time he was thirty, he had already spent time in prison. While to some, it may appear that he grew up quickly, he sees his own development differently. He writes, "Yo no sentía ninguna urgencia, me parecía lo más normal del mundo, de hecho me parecía que estaba medio lentón. Me gustaba hacer cosas, las intentaba, y cuando las podía hacer, nadie me detenía" ("I did not feel any urgency, it seemed to me the most normal thing in the world, in fact, I always felt like I was a bit behind. I liked doing things, I tried them, and when I could do them, no one stopped me.";"Interview with Enrique Serna" 143). Agustín remains committed and focused on his craft, and is a constant observer. The recurring theme in Agustín's life is his writing.   He has led a life filled with unique and interesting experiences. Some of these experiences lend themselves to the fictional circumstances of his novels, while others appear in his autobiographical texts.

1.4.2 Agustín's works

José Agustín's prolific oeuvre spans decades. While he is most known for his fiction, he has also written many works of theater, screenplays, essays and

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[17] Agustín was selected for Iowa's International Writing in 1977, while in *Ciudades desiertas*, it is the protagonist's wife who is selected.

non-fiction works.[18] The primary object of this study is Agustín's first novel, *La tumba*. I will examine this novel in more detail in later chapters of this dissertation but give a general introduction to the novel here.

1.4.2.1 La tumba

La tumba tells the story of seventeen-year-old protagonist Gabriel Guía from a first-person perspective. He comes from a privileged background—his father is a lawyer, and his mother does not need to work. He is surrounded by many luxuries including a big house and his own car (a birthday present from his parents). Guía is fluent in French, has a taste for classical music, rock and roll, and jazz. He is also an avid writer and member of a literary circle as he composes poetry, short stories and even a novel. Despite all these advantages. Guía is unhappy and (most likely) clinically depressed. Beneath the surface, he hides his fears and anxieties in frequent binges of alcohol, drugs, and women; each of which he partakes of with reckless abandon. Because of his discontent with both society and his personal life, the novel ends with the protagonist's apparent suicide, insinuated by a cryptic, onomotpeyatic series of "clics". (Agustín, *La tumba* 101). [19]

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[18] A selected list of his works is found in the appendix.

[19] In the last pages of the novel, Guía contemplates suicide with the intermittent 'clic' interjected between phrases: "No puedo negar que es cómodo. Clic, Sí, claro, en la sien es mejor. Clic, clic" ("I can't deny that it's comfortable. Clic. Yes, of course, in the temple is better. Clic, clic."; 101). These sounds invade his head in the final moments of the novel, he cannot escape it. He decides to commit suicide. And then, the last lines are a series of 'clics'. It appears that Guía has committed suicide, but it is never confirmed. Many interpretations of the "clic" sound have been suggested from the sound of a pistol, typewriter, or even a record player.

In this dissertation, I propose two modes of analysis of *La tumba* through the gaze of the current digital era. My choice of *La tumba* stems from its place in Mexican literature and its unique style and tone that represent a youth era that continues to be important. The publication of *La tumba* marks the beginning of a change in literature in Mexico during that period and it gives a narrative voice to the oppositional culture that was a significant part of the decade. Moreover, his work continues to be read today in spite of its colloquial language and "vulgar" themes. Agustín states:

> Mis libros han sobrevivido cuarenta años, siguen en plena
> circulación y cuando menos cinco de ellos se leen en las escuelas.
> El lenguaje que por local y temporal no se podría entender en
> otros países de habla hispana encontró muy buenos lectores en
> Latinoamérica y algunos en España. Los libros intraducibles
> merecieron magníficas traducciones, y críticos, investigadores y
> otros escritores los han visto como iniciación a la lectura,
> educación sentimental, iniciación a la vida social, o de plano como
> obras clave en la literatura mexicana[20]. (*La onda que nunca* 16)

La tumba has held and still holds a key space within Mexican literature and is a deserving object of study

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[20] "My books have survived forty years, they continue to be circulated, and at least five of them are read in schools. The language, even though local and temporal, that no one could understand in different Spanish speaking countries, has found many readers in Latin America and even some in Spain. The untranslatable books merited magnificent translations and critiques, researchers and other writers have seen them as initiation into reading a sentimental education, an initiation into social life, or broadly as key works in Mexican literature"

The most striking characteristic that separates *La tumba* from other novels of the time is its language. Agustín utilizes a mix of slang, neologisms, and foreign words (spelled both phonetically and correctly in French and English) to create an overall casual verbal ambiance in this short novel. Additionally, he employs dialogue and stream of consciousness to move the narrative naturally. An example is the following section of dialogue between Gabriel and his cousin, Laura; the two youths provoke a senator at a family party:

> —Muchas gracias por sus consejos, señor senador, los tomaremos muchísimo en cuenta; y gracias por narrarnos tan gongorinamente sus vicisitudes como senador. Acuérdese que ya quedó en ayudarme a ser senadora, senador.
>
> —Antes de irnos, ¿Por qué no baila con mi prima, senador? Ficha barato. Tostón la pieza.
>
> —No sea malito, senador, baile conmigo. Gratis por ser para usted. Un rock y ya. (56)
>
> —Thanks for the advice, Mr. Senator, we will keep it in mind; and thanks for telling us so *gongoresquely*[21] your vicissitudes as Senator. Remember that you agreed to help me be a Senator, Senator.

---

[21] English approximation of "gongorinamente" which relates to Luis de Góngora, a Spanish Baroque poet known for hyperbolic language. His name has come to represent exaggerations.

—Before leaving, why don't you dance with my cousin, Senator?

Cheap date. Fifty cents a song.

—Don't be a bad guy, Senator, dance with me. It'll be free, but just

because it's you. One rock and that's it.

In this short conversation (where the Senator remains silent, reinforcing the "invisibility" of the adults in this novel) Gabriel and Laura not only use slang, but speak in and adolescent register. They are using language to make the senator feel uncomfortable and angry. Commenting on youths and youth subculture, Dick Hebdige points out, "they are playing with the only power at their disposal: the power to discomfit. The power, that is, to pose—to pose a threat" (*Hiding* 18). In this way, Gabriel and Laura are indeed using language as their weapon; both to separate themselves and to threaten.

The use of colloquial street language by the protagonist and his friends, all of whom are upper class youths in Mexico City, separates them from the other social groups in the novel, mainly the adults.   The youth create their own world outside that of "normative" society; they have their own language and own code of conduct. It is through language Guía separates himself from the normal standards of society. Stella T. Clark remarks:

The early novels, particularly *La tumba* and *De perfil*, portray a

first-person narrator who is bright, young and of the upper class.

In both novels, this character is articulate and uses his verbal

abilities to isolate himself from a world in which he feels absurd.

With his unique language, which he draws from his peer group or

invents himself, he rejects communication from those who do not

belong. As a consequence, the outsider is excluded. (109)

In *La tumba* two levels of separation occur. The first is diegetic: Gabriel and his

friends exist in a world where they speak distinctly from the adults. In fact, the

adult voice in this narrative is infrequently invoked. The adolescents form their

own culture and lifestyle that has a specific speech and excessive way of living.

The second level of separation is between the reader and the language of the

book. This separation occurs on a different plane, between some readers and

the text. Agustín makes youth subcultural language (slang) the standard

linguistic code in the novel. His slang is both invented and realistic. He models

his created speech after slang used during that time period, as well as

incorporating authentic colloquial language from the era. Carter and Schmidt

remark:

In doing this [writing from within the referential group], *Onda*

writers obviously place the reader also within the referential

group, which, in its self-conscious alienation, has an outsider's

view of established society. One of the most important results of

this reader perspective is the new, critical light that it casts on the

values and the social forms of Mexico's bourgeoisie. (2)

Thus, when Agustín writes from the perspective of a teenager, using the invented slang that parallels the slang from the era, he automatically includes the readers in the "in" group because he does not explain his coded language. Whether or not a reader opposes the language and actions of the youth in the novel, he or she becomes a part of the subculture because of the author's automatic inclusion and assumption of the reader's understanding of his text.

Both language and subculture are integral to the concept of identity in the novel. Agustín presents and reinforces the identity of youth culture at the time—a culture that absorbs and appropriates global culture. Agustín incorporates French, English, German and Italian fluidly in this novel. In addition, the characters discuss Nietzsche and Kierkegaard with ease, intermixing philosophy and slang with no apparent awareness of the contrast. Agustín, who is also a noted music journalist, includes his love of music in the novel. Guía often takes solace in his music, which is a mix of rock and roll, jazz, and classical. Gabriel and his cousin argue over jazz greats (*La tumba* 51) and most notably, Guía plays Wagner's opera, *Lohengrin*, during his apparent suicide, noting, "Qué falto de originalidad soy. Debí haber discurrido algo ingenioso. Y el techo sigue azul, y *El Lohengrin* sigue sonando" ("How unoriginal I am. I should have thought of something more ingenious. And the ceiling is still blue, and the *Lohengrin* continues playing"; 101). In the case of the youth cultural identity presented in *La tumba*, borders are not built but broken; and a wide exchange of cultural transactions take place.

1.5 Conclusions

José Agustín began his writing career in an age filled with cultural, political, and social revolutions. He wrote at the forefront of the Onda movement and helped bring a literary voice to the youth generation. He has written many works in a diverse array of literary genres, but it is for his first book that he is most often remembered.

La tumba's colloquial youth language is dated making it difficult work for many scholars today who are not versed in this slang. In 1964, *La tumba* was the first book written for the youth generation in Mexico, in the language of that generation, and by a young author. Students today are digital natives. They are comfortable communicating through text messages and social media, and use varying levels of technology in the classroom. As such, it follows that today's students might find digital tools useful when approaching the novel, *La tumba* and using digital methodology with which they are familiar in order to understand it. In the subsequent chapters of this dissertation I will investigate two modes of reading shaped by the digital that aid the study of this classic novel. All of the existing scholarship on Agustín and this novel uses traditional modes of analysis. However, just as Agustín rejected Margo Glantz's term of *Onda* because it valorized the traditional-styled text over the new generation of writing. I feel confident that Agustín would embrace the non-traditional approach that this dissertation employs.

Chapter 2: Deformance

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 New Ways of Reading

> The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" He
> asked.
> "Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."
> *(Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Chapter 12)*

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, when the King answers the White

Rabbit's question by saying, "Begin at the beginning" he says it in a voice of

obvious astonishment. Clearly, that is what one should do: a highly logical

assessment of how to proceed. And yet, a child who comes upon this phrase,

might laugh at its absurdity; how does one know where exactly the end is?

Where does one start? What seems clear to the King in Alice's topsy-turvy world

is anything but clear to readers on the other side of the looking glass. Sometimes

we are like Alice, thrown into a world where our previous conception of "how

things should work" or "how things should be" is no longer valid.

The current age of literature is full of change. Because of today's

advances, systems and beliefs in place for roughly five-hundred years—or, since

the invention of the printing press—are not always applicable. Recent

advancements in technology have enabled many new directions in literature,

and some might argue that because of this progress, we have entered a sort of digital wonderland.

As a reaction to this new age of literature, an era in which many readers are "digital natives" (or at least "fluent" in this language), a new type of reading and textual analysis is merited. At a young age we are taught the lines that divide authors and readers; artists and critics. We valorize the novel as an object, and treat it as an unchangeable entity. However, in the present environment of digitized and technology-infused culture, the lines of distinction have faded. "Literature" can be written in blog form, and most importantly, it can be "published" by the click of a button.

Recent changes in how literature is written: from style, to medium, to the types of authors also mark a new age of writing. Because of this shift, it is necessary to alter modes of interpretation as well. Analyzing the Leslie Scalapino's book *Way* (1988), Lisa Samuels notes: "This binary [between creation and observation] is in constant operation in the classroom and in popular discourse, falsely separating artists and appreciators from critics and observers. The challenge in a book like *way* [sic] is to turn ourselves into different kinds of experiencers, so that we have more open notions of the natures of 'knowing' and 'meaning'" (186). Her reasoning applies to many other works as well. In today's era of the democratization of education and literature through the widespread effect of technology, there is less clear division between authors and their public.

Samuels argues for a dynamic reader, one who is able to take part in a work and not remain static. Language, after all, develops as does our understanding of a text the more it is read. It changes as we change, and as our perceptions change; as we learn more, study more, read, and reread. What Samuels refers to as "shaped reading" is akin to a concept that she and Jerome McGann have previously called deformance.

In this chapter, I will approach the 1966 edition of the novel, *La tumba,* by José Agustín, with a new mode of reading: deformance. This chapter has two objectives. Firstly, I will extend this concept of deformance, which McGann and Samuels outline for use in poetry, to an entire novel. Critical deformance lends itself to poetry for two reasons. First is the aesthetic nature of a poem: a poem is more than just the words that are written, it creates an artistic image, where the layout, stanzas and phrasings are important. Second is the brevity of a poem: each word is artfully crafted in order to carry the most meaning or fit within the rhyme structure or meter. However, while these attributes naturally support the deformance concept, they do not and should not exclude the application of this theory to other genres of artistic text.

Because of the technological advances facing today's readers and learners, new non-normative types of literary analysis should be investigated. Of specific interest are methods that utilize the available technology, such as deformance, which I will employ in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

The second main goal of this chapter is to offer a new reading and analysis of the *La tumba*. I will approach the novel using various deformances to gain new perspectives and expand current scholarship. I do not propose eschewing all traditional methodology, but rather using new tools to promote and enhance scholarship.

2.1.2 Deformance

McGann and Samuels outline the concept of deformance in the chapter, "Deformance and Interpretation," in McGann's 2001 book, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web*. McGann and Samuels first focus on performative and then proceed to deformative criticism. Critical performatives, according to McGann and Samuels, include editions, translations, and annotated works. In their words, "The edition performs its own meaning. Any other meaning it might have, or be given, could only enter the field as another performative act, another edition" (114). The process of editing a text and recreating it through translation or with footnotes, allows the editor or translator's own reading to shine through. There can be numerous performatives of any given work and often, these readings are the result of the political, cultural, or social environments of the time. While McGann and Samuels' presentation of performance precedes their discussion of deformance, I, alternatively, will focus on performative readings in Chapter Three of this dissertation and begin with my discussion of deformance in this chapter.

McGann and Samuels commence with the paradigm of "backward" reading as presented in marginalia by Emily Dickinson. Dickinson wrote: "Did you ever read one of her Poems backward, because the plunge from the front overturned you? I sometimes (often have, many times) have—a Something overtakes the Mind—" (qtd in McGann 106). McGann and Samuels utilize Dickinson's seemingly rhetorical question as the model of their critical theory. By approaching a text in a different manner—backward, for example—the structure and inner elements are seen anew. This process is not concerned with meaning, just as Dickinson's antithetical reading suggestion is not meaning-focused, but rather it gives readers the potential of an active role and reiterates the dynamic nature of words. Or, as McGann and Samuels comment, it is "...a project for reconstituting the work's aesthetic form, as if a disordering of one's senses of the work would make us dwellers in possibility" (108).

Conceptually, deformance appears to evoke the essence of the Russian Formalist idea of defamiliarization. It is to examine from a new and distinct perspective. However, when Viktor Shlovsky coined the term "defamiliarization" in his 1917 essay, "Art as Technique" it was to differentiate between poetic and prosaic texts; what is art and what is not art. While at first this concept appears similar to deformance, the focus is on the end product, the conclusion, and not the process. While other structuralist methods focus only on the breaking down, deformance focuses on making new. This becomes the defamiliarized object of study; also taking into consideration the path and

rationale of the process. Deformance considers both the deformed work and the method of critical deformance.

McGann and Samuels argue that the current accepted models of interpretation present the texts as static entities. Within these unchangeable objects lie basic forms of meaning that are then interpreted. In current more normative models of interpretation, elements such as word order or frequency are essentially ignored because they are accepted as established fact. McGann and Samuels note that while the study of linguistic structure of a text is often overlooked by those working in the field of literary interpretation, these elements are well studied by other scholars such as linguists and semioticians. These scholars, however, are not interested in the interpretive and aesthetic aspects of the texts. Deformance, then, or McGann and Samuels paradigm of "backward" reading, explores these previously ignored features with an interpretive lens. Critical deformance combines two perspectives of a work by creatively investigating analytic data.   In addition, it goes beyond conceptual interpretation and offers a useful remapping.

While McGann and Samuels briefly refer to pictorial deformation, they choose to focus on only poetic deformation and separate the possibilities into four different categories: *reordering*, *isolating*, *altering*, and *adding*. Their example of reordering is akin to their model of "backward" reading. *Reordering* also includes ordering the text in any manner different than the original. *Isolating* a text focuses on reading only one part of a text, all the nouns for

example, and *altering* a text changes the typography or punctuation. *Adding* is

the deformance that McGann and Samuels term as the most subjective; popular

examples of this kind of operation would be mash-ups or remixes of works that

exist in today's digital culture.

A more recent example of deformance is Matt Cohen's 2006 essay,

"Transgenic Deformation: Literary Translation and the Digital Archive." Cohen

sets out to deform the performed translation of one of Walt Whitman's poems to

discover if interpretation carries a tertiary role in the specific case of translated

poems. He bases his quest on McGann and Samuels' assertion that "Interpreting

a poem after it has been deformed clarifies the secondary status of the

interpretation" (McGann qtd by Cohen 1). Cohen works within the Whitman

archive and explores whether his critical deformances of Whitman's poetry

should be included in the archive. Especially interesting is his example of

Whitman's words translated into Spanish. Because Cohen is working with

Whitman's digital archive, his work is considered part of the field of the Digital

Humanities. Spanish language literature has been reluctant to adopt recent

trends in the field of Digital Humanities and the fact that some scholarship exists

is promising, even if the topic is still American literature in translation.

Cohen uses a deformance tool called TokenX which is available online

through the University of Nebraska. He spatially compares Whitman's original

work with the 1912 Spanish translation by Álvaro Armando Vasseur and he also

compares the use of key words by replacing them with icons. In this way, he

practices both *isolating* and *adding* deformations. While Cohen's work exhibits

another use of critical deformance, he, like McGann and Samuels, has stayed

within the confines of poetry. Poetry offers a great model for this type of

interpretation; however, McGann and Samuels' concept is not explicitly

restricted to poetic works.

2.1.3 Deformance Extended

I propose to extend this theory to longer works. Deformance of a longer

work can be a labor-intensive process. When McGann gives examples of

different types of deformance techniques, he shows reordering (reading

backward) and isolating (reading only verbs or nouns). These deformances are

performed without difficulty and reprinted with ease. McGann's example is a

sixteen line poem. Printed in reverse, it remains sixteen lines long and by

isolating only the nouns it becomes just twenty-seven words. A novel, however,

presents difficulty in both of these deformations because of its length. In spite of

this obstacle, with new technological developments, one can utilize many helpful

computer-based tools that aid the deformance of a text. What previously might

have been arduous work done by hand is now ready for interpretation at the

click of a mouse (or a few keystrokes of programming code). Using software or

computer programming to aid a textual analysis is not a new practice, as seen

with Cohen's 2006 example. In fact, although still relatively new, the field of

Digital Humanities was started before the age of digital natives.   Despite this

normalization, it is an area that still has yet to be adopted by the disciplines of

Spanish and Latin American literature, as previously noted. Addressing this

reluctance is another reason I chose José Agustín's novel, *La tumba* as my model

for this critical deformance.

2.1.4 *La tumba* as a Model

As an object of study, most critics have focused on the linguistic code

Agustín uses; most notably, his use of urban youth slang. Agustín comments on

his use of language in a 1978 interview: "the use of slang and colloquialisms was

not photographic; a lot of it was invented, or was an artistic re-elaboration of the

way in which young people spoke. Things now had new meanings, and so the

usual words became inadequate, and new terms had to be created. In this way

language came alive again as never before" (Agustín 24). In addition to ludic

language and the crafting of neologisms in Spanish, Agustín also includes words

and phrases written in German, French, Italian, and English.

The linguistic complexity of the novel makes it an optimal candidate for

computational analysis. Additionally, *La tumba* is an apt choice for deformance

because the novel's content aids the extension of this theory: within its pages,

there are intra-textual examples of poetry and prose which act as an ideal point

of departure as critical deformance. My analysis will begin with the poems

written within the text and then continue to other sections of the novel. Since *La*

tumba is the story of a young writer whose work appears in the novel, the poems

to be deformed are written by the protagonist, Gabriel Guía. I will first begin

with the two intra-textual poems. Then I will undertake a critical deformance on

specific sections and the entire work by using computer-assisted analysis. This

process, starting within the realm of McGann and Samuels' theory (poetry) and

then extending to the novel form, progresses organically because Agustín's novel

employs both genres.

2.1.5 Conclusions

Critical deformance additionally allows readers to work with

computational textual analysis tools that are readily available through the

Internet and other digital platforms. With more and more literature being

created for (and by) a digital audience, it is a natural progression for the

computer to play a larger role in our reading practices. Deformance, while not

initially created for computer-aided readings, is a prime fit for this type of

interpretive practice due to the breadth of tools available and the ease at which

they allow for deformative practices.

McGann and Samuels write that "deformance sends both reader and work

through the textual looking glass" (116). The normal system of rules is

(temporarily) turned upside down. Deformance breaks with convention, and

yet, causes us to reexamines the world of critical interpretation. The only option,

then, is to begin. Where? One might ask.   At the beginning, of course, it's really

quite simple.

2.2 Deformance in Practice: Beginning with Poetry

Poetic deformance releases critics from the typical constraints of studying a poem. Works are no longer regarded as static objects; they are dynamic and changeable. This new outlook allows readers the potential to see a poem from different perspectives. One main difference between Gabriel Guía's poems in *La tumba* and the works that McGann and Samuels examine is that Guía's are the work of a fictitious character within a novel. The benefit of this perspective is that information about the state of mind of the fictitious author (Guía) is known through the first person narration the novel. Even though a reading of this character is based on subjective knowledge—a result of interpretation—this type of information is often not available when studying the work of a living person. Deforming the poetry in this case not only analyzes its structure and meaning, but also how it pertains to the novel. For this exercise, I will consider and refer to Guía as the author, and not José Agustín, despite Agustín's authorship and ultimate responsibility for Guía's poetry in the novel.

I will begin by considering the poems in their original states and then follow the paths of deformance that arise organically, exploring the inner mapping of the poetic structure and the ideas that Guía presents in his work. I will present multiple deformances of the same work to show different possibilities of critical deformance.

The two poems I will examine here occur in critical parts of the narrative: when Guía's cousin dies in a car crash and when Guía decides to commit suicide, roughly the middle and the end of the text, respectively. The first work is without a title, but later referred to by its first line: "No soy nada y soy eterno" and the second work is the epitaph that Guía pens for himself before his suicide. He is an active member of a writing club, the "circuloliterariomodernistas" (modernistliterarycircle), and has a wide knowledge of authors and philosophers of the time. Although Guía often references his writings (usually short stories or novels) these two poems are the only examples of Guía's written work in the novel. As such, the lines in stanza visually stand out from the prose and dialogue.

2.2.1 "No soy nada…": Critical Deformances of Guía's first poem

The first of the poems (Figure 1) marks a resurgence of Guía's literary focus. Shortly after the death of his cousin Laura, Guía throws himself into his writing. His literary fervor begins immediately after he feels disgusted at the hypocrisy of his family at Laura's funeral. Guía creates the twenty-line poem during a manic writing session in which he attempts to continue working on his novel, invents verses in French and English and chain smokes. The poem acts as a literary focal point for his character. At long last, there is an opportunity to see a product of Guía's writing. Its placement is also of key importance as it is found directly after a turning point in the novel (Laura's death) where Guía's

depression and manic behavior begin to overtake his actions in the rest of the

novel.

No soy nada y soy eterno
eterna impotencia oscura.
Voz que se pierde en susurro
alma que almas enluta.
Ojos áridos sin luz,
ojos de obra inconclusa.
Sonrisa nunca advertida:
helada sombra de gruta.
Existencia sin razón,
vida sin olmos ni luna.
Lo hecho nada ha valido,
sólo temores y angustias.
El amor está deforme
en languidez de la bruma,
el canto ya es canto sordo,
sin matices y sin música.
¿Para qué vivir así
si mis cantos no se escuchan?
¿De qué me sirve llorar
si yo he tenido la culpa?

Figure 1: Original poem found in the text[22]

The poem also serves as a response to a seemingly rhetorical question

that Guía poses earlier. Thirty pages later, he recalls it after writing the poem

asking: "Si incline la cabeza, ¿qué pasa? Nada. Siempre me pregunté si en lugar

de masa encefálica no tendría algún líquido dentro de mi cerebro" ("If I tilt my

head, what happens? Nothing. I always wondered if instead of brain matter I

---

[22] "I am nothing and I am eternal/eternal dark impotence./ Voice that loses itself in whisper/ souls that mourns souls./ Arid eyes without light/ eyes of unfinished work./ A smile never warned:/ a frozen shadow of a cave./ Existence without reason,/ life without elms nor moon./ Of what's done, nothing has mattered,/ only fears and anguish./ Love is distorted/ in the listless mist,/ the song is already deaf,/ without nuances and music./ Why live like this/ if no one hears my songs?/ How can crying help/ if it is my fault?"

have some sort of liquid in my head"; 39). While mentions of this "masa encefálica" or "líquido" pepper the text, placed in ostensibly nonsensical dialogues or internal musings, Guía finally posits a concrete answer after writing the poem: "Y sirvió el retrofechado poemita: me hizo ver que mi cerebro estaba realmente lleno de algún líquido extraño" ("And that little back-dated poem served a purpose: it made me see that my brain is actually filled with some strange liquid"; 72). The self-questioning in the novel is a common leitmotif. Gabriel continually wonders if something is wrong with him, specifically with his head. The first poem ends with two introspective inquiries which are a concentrated version of this larger strategy in the novel.

Guía questions himself because he senses the futility of his life. His poem presents this meaninglessness with the apparent contradiction in the first lines: "No soy nada y soy eterno" ("I am nothing and I am eternal"). Throughout the poem, these contrasting pairs exist: voz/susurro, canto/canto sordo (voice/whisper, song/deaf song) for example. However, the contradiction is not as it seems and it is the enjambment in the verse that temporarily deceives. By following the author's punctuation, the full meaning of the first sentence takes form: "No soy nada y soy enterno/eterna impotencia oscura" ("I am nothing and I am eternal/ eternal dark impotence"). While the first line presents an existential dichotomy, the completion of the sentence exhibits the author's despair.

Additionally, the feelings of impotence and uselessness are in preparation for the final two questions that end the poem. The first, "¿Para qué vivir así/si mis cantos no se eschuchan?" ("Why live like this/ if no one hears my songs?") suggests thoughts of suicide, perhaps willing an answer that would offer him a reason to live. This query asks, "Why live if no one hears me?" or implicitly, "Why live if no one cares about me?" While everything that leads up to this question is despondent and sets the scene with hopeless imagery, the first question changes the rhythm and style of the poem because it engages readers.

The second question is more interesting because it is perhaps unexpected. Within the posed question, the author claims culpability. "It" is his fault. What exactly "it" is, is not clear. The depressing existence that the author describes can be directly attributed to something he did even if he has previously claimed that nothing has mattered, "Lo hecho nada ha valido" ("Of what's done, nothing has mattered").   Do the answers to these questions lie within the poem? Perhaps reading the poem backwards would offer guidance to see if the answers lie within what was just read.

It is at this point that a deformance (Figure 2) becomes useful because it allows the poem to be seen within a new context—a remapping—that allows the inner structure of the poem to be examined through a unfamiliar lens. The poem is deformed by reversing the lines:

¿Si yo he tenido la culpa
de qué me sirve llorar?
¿Si mis cantos no se escuchan
para qué vivir así?
Sin matices y sin música
El canto ya es canto sordo
En languidez de la bruma
El amor está deforme
Sólo temores y angustias
Lo hecho nada ha valido
Vida sin olmos ni luna
Existencia sin razón
Helada sombra de gruta
Sonrisa nunca advertida
Ojos de obra inconclusa
Ojos áridos sin luz
Alma que almas enluta
Voz que se pierde en susurro
Eterna impotencia oscura
No soy nada y soy eterno

Figure 2: Line reordering (*reversal*) deformance

In addition to writing the poem backward, line-by-line, I took out all the punctuation and replaced only the question marks. I also capitalized the first word of each line to maintain a consistent appearance. It should be noted that deformances, like any critic's reading of a text, are different and much is based on the person reading. He or she makes decisions of the type of deformance and the set of rules that the deformance will follow on his or her own path to understanding a text. This deformance, for example is born of the desire to find the answers to the questions that appear in the last verses of the poem. Could the answers lie within the poem? The resulting quest is to "retrace" one's steps—that is, examine the re-ordered deformance. The new poem more or less

retains the same sentiment of the previous, but its order affects reading and understanding.

By reversing the lines of the poem the small hope seen in the original disappears. It begins with the previously mentioned questions, allowing the author to attempt an answer within the subsequent verses. In contrast, the original version leaves the question as its final note, asking for a response. Comparing the original poem to the deformance reveals differences in the effects of the two versions. The placement of the questions highlights these differences. The original paints a bleak and grim picture. However, by ending with the two questions, there is a tiny bit of hope that someone will respond, telling the author that there are reasons to live. The reversal, however, is more resigned. The questions begin the poem, and the verses that follow only support the fact that the author lives a dark and empty life. The estrangement of the original poem helps a reader see the hope that was not apparent without the deformance.

Another nuance of the reversed version is that the first line declares the fault to be with the author. Beginning with this sentence sets the tone of the poem immediately. Just as in the standard version, the first and last lines of the poem remain integral to its interpretation.   In the reversal deformance, the line, "no soy nada y soy eterno" ("I am nothing and I am eternal") acts as a conclusion to an eternity that is bleak, such that "nada" and "eterno" are more synonymous than antonymic.

In McGann and Samuels' words, the goal of a reordering deformance is to show that "the poem's intelligibility is not a function of the interpretation, but that all interpretation is a function of the poem's systemic intelligibility" (120). Reversing the lines of Guía's poem achieves this goal. Since there are infinite ways to deform a poem, each deformance and its interpretation are unique.

An *isolation* deformance separates one aspect of the poem from the others. The poem is composed when Guía is upset at the hypocrisy of his family at Laura's funeral: before her death, they all complained about her wild life, but at the funeral, they lament the loss. As upset as he is, he feels impotent, unable to negotiate his feelings of being abandoned and his anger at his family. Because he is incapable of taking action, it follows, then, to explore the action of the poem by using an isolation deformance to show only the verbs.

Verbs express action, being, or a state of being. A verb is the one word needed to make a sentence and as such, in normal speech verb usage would be relatively consistent. However, a poem is not normal speech, but poetic speech, and as such it is affected speech. A poet can use an excess of verbs, or no verbs at all in the name of artful manipulation. Accordingly, in this deformance, I will base my judgment of verb density or sparseness on the image that the verbs create (Figure 3):

```
No soy         soy

         se pierde
                  enluta




                  ha valido,

         está

         es

         vivir
              No se escuchan?
         sirve llorar
    he tenido
```

Figure 3: Isolation deformance, verbs only

In this deformance, I left some punctuation and also kept the "no" if the

verb was negative in order to preserve meaning. Additionally, I reserved the

placement of the verbs visually, to add a new dimension to the deformance: an

image constructed in black and white; the presence and the absence of words.

The poetic skeleton reveals the inner structure of the poem. Based on a visual

perspective, it is clear that this poem is off-balance in terms of verbs. The white

empty space shows us the distribution: a few verbs widely-spaced in the

beginning, none in the middle, and a more concentrated cluster at the end. The

first two verbs in the poem are a verb of being, conjugated in the first person

singular. This poem is verb-sparse, and as such, shows that the active energy of

the poem does not occur consistently throughout, but rather in focused clusters.

It also reflects Guía's powerlessness in wake of a tragedy. Grammatically, it is

unbalanced when considering the types of verbs. Of eleven, four are verbs of

being: no soy, soy, está and es (I am not, I am, it is, and it is), while the rest are

action verbs[23]: se pierde, enluta, ha valido, vivir, no se escuchan, sirve llorar, he

tenido (lose oneself, mourn, has mattered, to live, [they] do not listen, worth

crying, I have had).

A balance is found, however, when considering the subject of the verb. In

Spanish, the subject is implied in the conjugation. There are only three verbs

conjugated in the first person singular, and they only occur in the first and final

lines. The rest of the verbs are conjugated in either the single or plural third

person. Beginning and ending with the implied "yo" ("I") directs focus back to

the author. It also gives a first person voice to the poem. Additionally, beginning

and ending through the "yo" demonstrates Guía's true focus in the wake of his

cousin's death: himself.

Despite the fact that the deformed poem appears relatively verb-sparse,

this visual lack leads one to question the absence of verbs. What fills the rest of

the space? It makes sense to depart from the elements that create the sense of

action and focus on the elements that fill the most space in the original: the

---

[23] Action verbs show either a *physical* or *mental* action, in contrast to the two other types: verbs of being and linking verbs
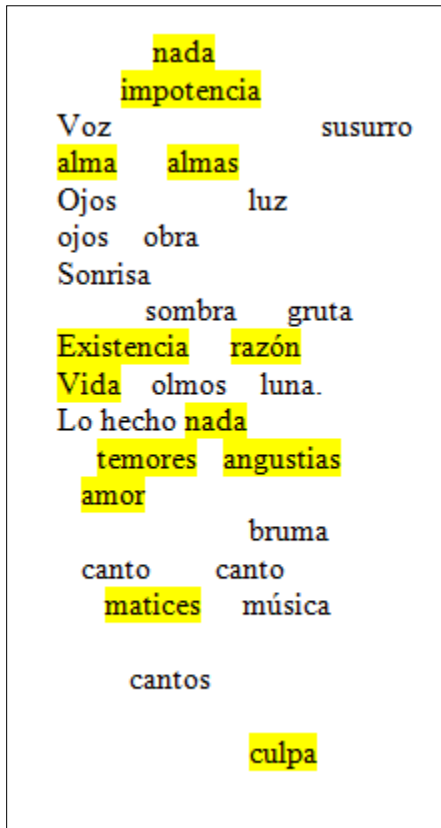
nouns. Isolating the nouns of the poem is another technique McGann employs in

order to gauge the types and frequency of the nouns in the poem. Figure 4

shows the noun isolation of Guía's poem:


```
        nada
     impotencia
Voz                    susurro
alma    almas
Ojos            luz
ojos   obra
Sonrisa
        sombra    gruta
Existencia   razón
Vida   olmos   luna.
Lo hecho nada
   temores   angustias
  amor
                bruma
  canto      canto
    matices    música

      cantos

                culpa
```

Figure 4: Isolation deformance, nouns only

This skeleton is visually fuller than the verb example in Figure 3. The noun

distribution is fairly consistent, with a slight concentration in the middle. One

noteworthy aspect of this deformance is the alliterative pairs: alma/almas,

ojos/obras, sonrisa/sombra, canto/canto, matices/música, and cantos/culpa

("soul/souls, eyes/work, smile/shadow, song/song, nuances/music,

songs/fault"). These pairs frame the noun-dense center section of the poem.

Abstract or concrete nouns also have significance; they assist in creating the imagery of the poem. Marking the abstract nouns creates a compound deformance (Figure 5). The abstract nouns are highlighted in yellow:

Figure 5: Double Deformance, abstract nouns highlighted

As shown in this deformance, the abstract and concrete nouns are almost evenly balanced. Abstract nouns are those referring to concepts or ideas while concrete nouns are those that can be experienced by one of the five senses. Certain nouns can be used in both ways, depending on context. Not including "lo hecho" (a nominalized verb) the nouns are divided thirteen abstract and sixteen

concrete in each category. Of the concrete nouns, a group of them deals

specifically with two of the five senses: hearing and sight. The nouns,

"voz","susurro", "canto", "canto", "música", and "cantos" are connected to

hearing; while "ojos", "luz", "ojos", "sombra" (and arguably "luna" and "bruma")

are associated with sight[24]. The concentration on nouns connected to hearing

and seeing reveals the isolation of these two senses also showing the absence of

the other three senses: touch, taste, and smell. These three that are missing, are

the more active of the senses, implying Guía's passive participation in his life.

Critical deformances of the first poem in *La tumba* dissect and examine

the poem from new angles. The deformances themselves offer a path to follow

or a quest for discovering the inner workings of Guía's work. In this case, the

meaning of the poem centers on the author's inability to act or take part in his

own life. He is just a passive observer who is not fully sensing and perceiving his

life. He does nothing to try and save himself. It is from these references of the

futility to continue living that we can cleanly transition to Guía's next

demonstration of writing; his own epitaph.

2.2.2 "Porque…": Critical Deformances of Guía's Self-Penned Epitaph

Guía's epitaph appears in the final scene of the novel. After picking up his

girlfriend of the moment, Elsa, and in his words, fornicating[25] in a cheap motel,

---

[24] "voice", "whisper", "song", "song", "music", and "songs". Then: "eyes", "light", "eyes", "shadow" (and arguably "moon" and "mist")

[25] The full quotation reads: "Fuimos a un hotelucho y ahí fornicamos rabiosamente. Luego la dejé en su casa para dedicarme a recorrer las calles, con el deseo de atropellar al primer imbécil que

Gabriel drops Elsa off and returns to his house. The "clics" that have been

invading his thoughts through the second half of the novel have increased in

frequency. The ostensibly random inclusion of this unexplained onomatopoeia

directly relates to Guía's descent into mania; the more frequent the "clics" the

more unbalanced he becomes. He is depressed, and begins to read the most

recent chapter that he wrote for his novel. Upon deciding that the chapter is

unacceptable, he decides to kill himself simply stating: "Mejor me mato. Clic, clic.

Otra vez. Clic" ("I better kill myself. Clic, clic. Again. Clic"; Agustín 126). The

"clics" continue and his plans to commit suicide persist.

> Acting as an introduction to his epitaph, he writes:

>> "Clic, clic, clic. El ansia suicida me hizo ver las maravillas de la
>>
>> muerte.
>>
>> Sí, me mato.
>>
>> Tomé una hoja de papel para escribir mi propio epitafio. Esto
>>
>> salió"
>>
>> ("Clic, clic, clic. The suicidal craving made me see the wonders of
>>
>> death.
>>
>> Yes, I'll kill myself.
>>
>> I took a sheet of paper to write my own epitaph. This is what came
>>
>> out"; 126)

---

se me atrevesara" ("We went to a fleabag hotel where we fornicated furiously. Later I dropped her off at her house so I could devote myself to roaming through the streets, with the desire to run over the first imbecil that crossed my path"; Agustín 125).

The work of spontaneous art, the epitaph, is not preconceived, but simply

what "salió" ("came out") in the short moments before he loads the revolver.

Comparing the circumstances surrounding this poetic work and the previous

poem show that while both are the product of the emotion of the moment, the

epitaph is written more hastily:

Porque mi cabeza es un lío
Porque no hago nada
Porque no voy a ningún lado
Porque odio la vida
Porque realmente la odio
Porque no la puedo soportar
Porque no tengo amor
Porque no quiero amor
Porque los ruidos están en mí
Porque soy un good ol' estúpido
Sepan pues que moriré
Adiós adiós a todos
Y sigan mi ejemplo.

Figure 6: Original Epitaph[26]

What is immediately apparent in the epitaph is the anaphora of "Porque"

("Because") in most of the lines. Guía lists the reasons for his suicide and

implements a rhythm to the poem before signing off, "Adiós adios a todos/Y

sigan mi ejemplo" ("Goodbye goodbye to all/ And follow my example"). In

addition to the overwhelming use of "porque," there is also repetition of the

---

[26] "Because my head is a mess/Because I don't do anything/Because I don't go
anywhere/Because I hate life/ Because I really hate it/ Because I can't stand it/ Because I don't
have love/ Because I don't want love/ Because the noises are in me/ Because I'm a good ol'stupid
guy/ Know that I will die/ Goodbye goodbye to all/ And follow my example"

word "no."   The repeated use of "no" gives the epitaph an overtly negative tone.

Where the first poem was passive in its impotence, this poetic work is actively

negative. The author's negation is almost constant; Guía is finally participating

in his life, but in a negative way. His final action is to negate the validity of his

own life.

Carpenter's analysis of the epitaph makes a connection between the

structure of this poem and poems of the Beat generation. In particular, the

poem, *Why is God Love, Jack?* (Ginsberg 1963), is similar to the epitaph by Guía

because of its form and repetition of the word "because." Carpenter also

compares the repetitive percussive sounds of the "Boom" of Gregory Corso's

1958 poem, *Bomb*, to Guía's persistent "Clics" (Carpenter 221). While Carpenter

is not the first to connect the Beat influence to *La tumba*,[27] she is the first to note

the parallels of Guía's work to these specific works by Beat authors.

Since anaphora is a key rhetorical device in the epitaph, a logical

progression is to take away the repetitive elements to examine the poem further

by creating an *isolation* deformance. I will first examine the poem looking only

at the verbs. Figure 7 shows this deformance:

---

[27] See Gunia, Inke, for example.

```
              Es
    No hago
    No voy
    Odio
              Odio
    No puedo soportar
    No tengo
    No quiero
              Están
Soy
Sepan          moriré

Sigan
```

Figure 7: Isolation deformance of Epitaph, Verbs only

The word mapping created by the verb distribution is relatively even.

The two verbs of being, "ser" and "estar" ("to be" and "to be")[28] form brackets

around the group of negative verbs in the top two-thirds of the space. In the last

third, the alliterative group of "soy" ("I am"), "sepan" ("know"), and "sigan"

("follow")[29] dramatically offsets "moriré" ("I will die"). In terms of subjects, the

verb mapping of the epitaph is practically an inverse of the previous poem:

verbs conjugated in the third person singular and plural bracket a group of verbs

conjugated in the first person singular, or "yo" form. In this case, the "yo" is

surrounded by other verb forms revealing the author's sense of others closing in

on him. The verb conjugations in this example also show that Guía only departs

---

[28] "Estar" is a temporal verb of being and location while "ser" is usually used in instances of permanence or definition.

[29] "Sepan" and "Sigan" are in the imperative mode; that is, they are conjugated in the command form.

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from the present tense in three cases: "Sepan", "moriré", and "Sigan". This

combination of imperative mode and future tense encourages others to share in

his final action. He commands others to know and to follow, noting that he *will*

die.[30]

The type of verbs, mostly action verbs, represents mental and emotional

action (as opposed to physical).   An analysis of the deformance shows what he

does not have, do, or want. He is only decisive with the last three verbs, where

the change in tense takes place: sepan, moriré, and sigan ("know", "I will die",

and "follow"). He is no longer passive and inactive but commanding and

confident in his next moves. The epitaph contrasts greatly to Guía's early poem.

The narrative voice in the epitaph orders others to act and sets out plans for

himself in contradiction with the verb-sparse example of Figure 3 which centers

on a lack of action and rhetorical questions. The *isolation* deformance helps a

reader focus on particular elements of a text and allows for easy comparison

between the two poems.

Figure 8 shows an *isolation* deformance of the nouns in the epitaph:

---

[30] The future tense emphasizes the "will." He does not say that he dies, or that he wants to die,
but rather he *will* die. According to grammarian John Butt, the use of the future tense is not as
common as the other constructions that imply the future (such as ir + a + inf. or the use of the
simple present). Its use then, in this poem is noteworthy.

```
Cabeza        lío
              Nada
              Lado
              Vida


              Amor
              Amor
    Ruidos
              Estúpido
              Todos
              Ejemplo
```
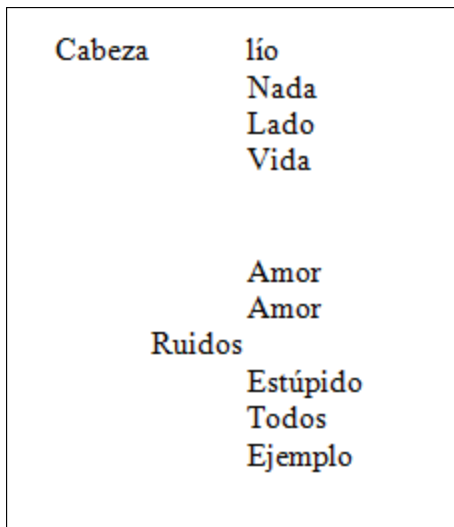
Figure 8: Isolation deformance of Epitaph, nouns only

The presentation of the isolated nouns shows a visually aesthetic image as did the mapping of the verbs alone. Two elements are immediately apparent in this deformance: the words "cabeza" ("head") and "ruidos" ("noises") are set apart from the other nouns spatially and the word "amor" ("love") is repeated. While the verbs may be necessary for the full understanding of this poem, the placement and repetition of only the nouns signal them as important themes. Firstly, the "clics," which have entered in and taken over his consciousness as his manic depressive state worsens, are the "ruidos"("sounds") in his "cabeza" ("head"). These words call attention to Guía's unhinged state. Secondly, the mention and repetition of love, "amor," calls attention to its role as a key term. Throughout the novel, Guía seeks love and acceptance. He attempts to fill the void with physical love with different women, including an incestuous experience with his aunt, but in the end he is left alone and without love. The

central place of this repetition represents its primary role in his thoughts directly before his suicide. Focusing on specific elements of the poem (in these examples the verbs or nouns) presents an uncluttered image of the poem.

McGann and Samuels' critical poetic deformance offers an important theoretical model. While the path of each deformance is based on a certain level of subjectivity, most hermeneutic theory relies on some amount of subjective interpretation. Each reader's experience is different which produces many unique readings and interpretations. Deformance can be used to help support these interpretations, by discovering answers to questions a reader poses and also to reveal new or unsuspected results, by seeing or allowing one to see the text anew. In a novel like *La tumba*, critical deformance helps to negotiate the intra-narrative works within the novel, such as Guía's poetry.

The main difference between the previous deformances and traditional skilled and careful readings is the image that is created with the layout of the words. Deformance offers a visual change to a text. In these cases, the deformances present new layouts of the poem. These visual representations often reveal new perspectives of a work. Using the deformance of the poems in this novel as a point of departure, the next step in the extension of McGann and Samuels' theory is to explore the deformations of sections of prose and the entire novel, extending McGann and Samuels' model.

2.3 Deformance of Sections and the Novel as a Whole

2.3.1 Indirect Character Portraits with Isolation Deformance

I will begin my critical deformance by studying the main female characters in order to investigate their roles in relation to the protagonist in the novel. While most criticism on *La tumba* (and Onda literature in general) focuses on the unique linguistic code of the work, another less-studied perspective is the relationships between the characters. Noteworthy relationships are those of Gabriel Guía and the five main female roles: Dora, Germaine, Berta, Laura and Elsa. Victoria Carpenter (2010) has adeptly studied the balance of power between the sexes, arguing that "after a sexual act the female characters successfully challenge and change an aspect of the protagonist's personality, thus blurring the boundaries of inter-gender power distribution and shifting the locus of text control away from an overtly dominant male protagonist" (679). Each encounter with one of the female characters leads Guía further into his own demise.

Carpenter's study examines three novels by three of the main Onda writers.[31] Her viewpoint is limited to the representation and transference of masculinity in these three texts. While her discussion is innovative and thorough, I will depart from her groundwork and focus on the relationships in the novel from a different perspective. I will show through deformance that

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[31] *La tumba* (1964) by José Agustín, *Obsesivos días circulares* (1969) by Gustavo Sainz, and "Goodbye Belinda" from the collection *El rey criollo* (1971) by Parménides García Saldaña

while the novel appears to center on Guía's first person narrative, in fact the female characters in the text drive the action and drama. I propose to magnify the indistinct image in order to see what is there. In this case, a deformance, aided by computer technology, performs this close-up perspective on the text.

La tumba is told in Guía's words, conversations, and thoughts and therefore one sees all interactions from his point of view. I term the lens that I use "incidental" because I will not base my observations on Guía's actions, but rather his use of words; specifically, his use of other characters' names. Because the novel is written from Guía's perspective, exploring his use of the female characters' names shows their connection to him. When and how he uses their names is personal and outlines their roles within the novel. Guía's use of the female characters names marks them as subjects. It is this interpellation that underlies the importance of name use. Althusser states, "the rituals of ideological recognition [. . .] guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (117). By making name use the point of a deformance series, the subsequent word trees I create present Guía's subjectification of the other characters in the text.

One restriction of this perspective is that gauging the characters based solely on the use of their names limits the results of my query. My results will not produce every instance that the character appears in the novel, but rather only the cases in which her name is uttered. While some might argue that this data is inaccurate, I argue the opposite. The data is accurate, as long as one

recognizes the limits of the data. Recognizing what the data does not include (all instances in which the character appears) is an important aspect of the deformance. I will isolate the uses of each of the five main female characters' names using the Many Eyes visualization tool which operates and allows analysis of user-submitted data[32]. Of particular interest here is the word tree. The word tree is a visual representation of a traditional concordance. As such, once the data is uploaded, any word or phrase can be selected to partially show its context within the text.

What is noteworthy of this approach is not the use of a machine that through a series of binary results spits out the answer, but what the human "machine" in turn does with the automated results. From this word tree deformance, the computer results act as a cross-section of the novel, allowing a human to make use of the data, keeping in mind the machine's limitations. The context that the word trees include is only the phrases that come after the name, omitting what precedes the word. In certain cases, the name ends the sentence, and so, the following phrase may not be directly related to the character, but contextually comments on her role and relation to Guía. Knowledge of the output is imperative in order to assign value to the branches on the word tree— an action that the computer is unable to perform. In this way, what the word tree presents is actually an indirect comment about each character.

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[32] Many Eyes was created in 2007 by the Visual Communication lab at IBM research. It is available free online at: http://www-958.ibm.com/software/data/cognos/manyeyes/. It is an open source tool which uses user submitted date to create visualizations.

In order to make sure that the information that the word trees reveal is valid, I will perform a deformance on the entire novel in section 2.3.3 that examines the relative space or presence each character takes up in the novel and compare those results to the word trees. The results of interest in this comparison are not only the instances in which the size of tree directly relates to the relative space in the novel, but those occasions where the opposite is true. As Matthew Kirschenbaum states in his description of the NORA project[33] which also utilizes computer assisted techniques in literary analysis, "we're interested in provocation, anomaly, and outlier results as much or more than in what we think the system actually gets right" (34). When the limitations of the first deformance are recognized, important information still surfaces and it is possible to proceed and interpret the results.

In addition to focusing on the usage of names in the novel, the word trees act as visual objects. Each tree is different and aesthetic in its own way. Some trees have many branches, while others stand out for their sparseness; and some are symmetrically balanced, while others are focused and weighted. Comparing the visual layouts of the word trees for the different characters gives further information. Each tree has a unique mapping that offers a new and different (visual) perspective of a text.

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[33] The NORA Project is now part of MONK is a digital space for those who work in the humanities. The tools available aid scholars in finding patterns and analyzing texts. For more information see monkproject.org

There are five main female characters in *La tumba.* Guía is an adolescent

male who seeks sexual relations with four of the women (all but Laura), but also

longs for love and acceptance, something he lacks from his emotionally absent

parents. Although the roots of his sexual encounters with the women vary from

revenge (Dora) to incest (Berta) to conquest (Germaine) to infatuation (Elsa),

each woman helps mark a chapter of Guía's life, and divides the narration of his

story.

The first word tree I examine is that of Guía himself (Figure 9), whose

name produces only 33 "hits" (or appearances in the novel). I choose to begin

with him, as he is the protagonist and I want to see how the various female

characters relate and compare to him in their own word maps.
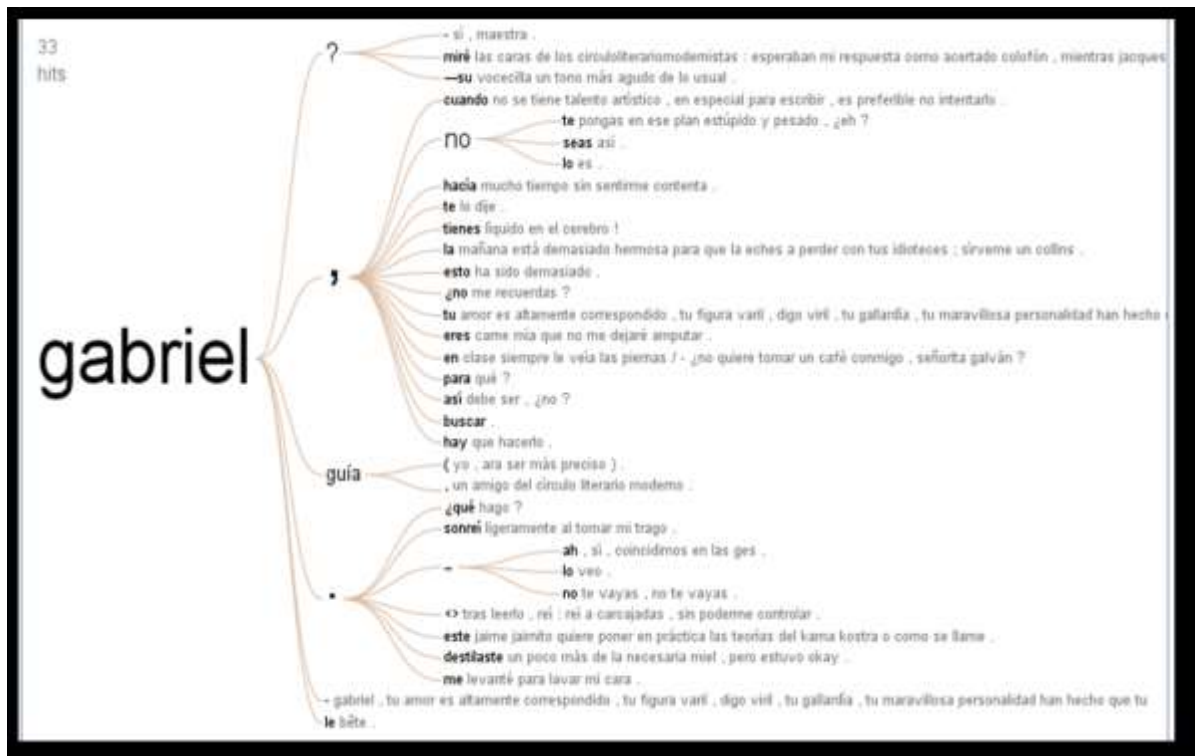
Figure 9: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Gabriel" from the novel *La tumba*

      The branches of Guía's tree are listed in order of occurrence. As such, this deformance is a snapshot of his character development; echoing the beginning, middle and end of Guía in the novel. Because the Many Eyes word trees take punctuation into consideration, it is another tool for interpretation. Additionally, paying special attention to the conjugation of subsequent verbs reveals part of the context in which the name is used.

      For example, in the many branches after the comma, most of the verbs are conjugated in the second person singular, or tú (you) form. This implies that the comments are directed to Guía. "Gabriel, tienes líquido en el cerebro" ("Gabriel, you have liquid in your brain") or "Gabriel, eres carne mía que no me dejaré amputar" ("Gabriel, you are my flesh that I will not let be amputated"); these phrases exemplify the use of dialogue in the novel and bring an active component to the word tree. The deformance does not show the identities of the speakers; but allows viewers see a significant pattern. This isolation shows that he is spoken to twenty-one times. Although from this context, we may not know *who* is speaking to Guía, we are able to focus only on *what* is being said. An *isolation* deformance may take away certain details to which we are accustomed to knowing, but it leaves concise elements that may have previously been overlooked. This fact highlights the importance of not eschewing traditional methods of textual analysis. As seen in Gabriel's word tree example it is the combination of methods that best suits this type of analysis.

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Overall, this isolation deformance is a reflection of Guía's path in the novel. It acts like a preview in which one flips through the pages of a novel before diving in, but is more controlled since every use of "Gabriel" is listed and ordered. It begins with a scene in the school (we assume contextually), "¿Gabriel? –Sí, maestra" ("Gabriel? – Yes, teacher") and continues leaving clues about Guía's character along the way. The tree reveals facts about Guía: he is a writer, he drinks, and his last name is Guía. The last branch on the tree is an important clue to his character: "Gabriel le bête" ("Gabriel the idiot").

At first glance, the use of French separates this branch from the others. The appearance of a non-Spanish language on this tree gives a glimpse of the novel's multi-lingualism. The phrase also previews his manic episodes throughout the novel that eventually lead to his suicide. The appearance of "le bête" in conjunction with Guía's name points to the inner demons that he possesses. This phrase occurs during the last scene in the novel when the unexplained "clics" increase in frequency and Guía contemplates, and then commits, suicide:

> Mas ahora es espantoso, martillea descarnizado. (Bête, Gabriel le Bête.) Traté de engañarme oyendo *El Lohengrin.* Me estoy haciendo el tonto, murmuré con indignación al ver el techo azul.

Clic, clic,clic. El ansia suicida me hizo ver las maravillas de la

muerte. Sí, me mato.[34] (126)

He is ruminating and refers to himself by name, for the last time in the novel.

Even a person who has not read the novel and examines only this deformance

will find this phrase remarkable due to the contrast it creates compared to the

other branches. The indirect portrait that this word tree creates concludes on an

ominous note, predicting his beastly act. Guía's profile is etched by this word

tree. It is a partial reflection of his character as a whole and the path that it

forges is a simple presentation of the novel.

Guía is a complex character, and his word tree does not fully represent

this fact. However, it makes sense that because he is the narrator, his name does

not often enter into the text. When it does, it is through its use by others. At

times he does refer to himself by name ("Gabriel, le bête" and "Gabriel, tienes

liquid en el cerebro" for example), but most of the results of the "Gabriel" word

tree are instances in which he is communicating with others. Dialogue is an

important part of the text—a fact which Guía and the women's word trees

reveal.

The word tree of Dora's name (Figure 10) is larger than that of Guía's and

is secondary only to Elsa's in terms of size. Chronologically, Dora is the first

female character that Guía interacts with in the novel. Although Dora's

---

[34] "But now it is horrible, hammering away my flesh. (Idiot, Gabriel the idiot) I tried to fool
myself by listening to *El Lohengrin*. I am becoming the stupid one, I murmured with indignation
when I looked at the blue ceiling. Clic, clic, clic. The suicidal urges were making me see the
wonders of death"

relationship with Guía is antagonistic at the start, she is perhaps Guía's only true friend. Guía seeks a sexual relationship with her, only to purposely leave her as retribution for a trick she plays on him. When Dora's father sends her to live in Vienna, Guía is pleased, but later realizes how much he misses her; and when she returns for a brief visit, he longs to resume their old habits. Dora, however, has matured and urges Guía to do the same.

55 hits

dora

se acercó con sus bromas estúpidas

y
- el maestro de literatura , escondidos bajo el escritorio , reían salvajemente al crear : - ahora es tu turn
- eso detuvo el vértigo .
- jacques subieron en mi coche y fuimos a cafetear a un lugarejo seudobeatnik llamado la náusea emb
- yo en el centro de todo , como un títere con los hilos rotos .
- miembro del círculo .

susurraba algo al maestro y que después me miraba .

había
- hecho cierto su chiste .
- estado bebiendo y cínicamente soltaba incongruencias y palabrotas .

abordado un confortable jet
- , vía nueva york , luego a parís , con conexió
- hacia mérida , luego a miami , a chicago , y s

,
- para ser más precisos .
- me la pagará .
- con deseos de despellejarla en vida .
- nadando con los amigos , aparentemente sin preocupaciones .
- qué encendía un cigarro
- sentía sus ojos clavados en mí , incomodándome .
- ¿no es así ?

dora ,
- dora , yo buscaré y voy a alcanzarte .
- yo buscaré y voy a alcanzarte

yo buscaré y voy a alcanzarte .

no obstante sus sonrisas dulces , repetía y repetía .

- ¿palabra ?

.
- risa cruel en boca fina .
- con la calefacción del auto y la música suave de la radio , casi llegué a sentirme a gusto .
- desde la última reunión del círculo literario moderno—dos semanas ya—no la había visto .
- solté la carcajada , pero cuando oí su voz , hasta la soñolencia se esfumó .
- fui a dejarla .

también lo hizo y nadamos el uno hacia el otro hasta encontrarnos en el centro de la alberca .

vino hacia mí , riendo .

cantó la marsellesa a tutti volumen .

me
- llamaba desde una esquina .
- llenaran , pero no fue así .

desmenuzándome .

fue mía .

tampoco había ido ese día a la escuela .

castillo
- , la muchacha con la que había hecho el amor un día antes , y para colmo , por primera vez en

)

bajó las escaleras a gran velocidad , para sentarse junto a mí , oprimiendo mi brazo .

intervino proclamando mis inquietudes , y fui aceptado .

en su casa , enfilamos hacia la de jacques .

?

para que estuvieran juntos todos los circuloliterariomodernistas que estudiaban en la secundaria 18 brumario , fra

llegó repartiendo besitos (incluyéndome , ¡oh , sorpresa !

acabaría en viena , pues como había dicho , no era profesional .

salió de la linterna , llorando .

ya no estaba .

uso encendedor }

acabé la carta cuando du und du terminaba también .

saldría , al día siguiente , a yucatán , luego a miami , a chicago ; y de ahí , a viena , todo por panam .

suspiró

prosiguió

decía : - no llores , ¿para qué ?

!

Figure 10: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Dora" from the novel *La tumba*

The initial hostility between Guía and Dora is evident at the start of her word tree deformance. Guía is the first person narrator: "Dora acercó con sus

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bromas estúpidas." ("Dora drew closer with her stupid jokes"). The phrase

reveals internal focalization and he is bothered by her and dislikes her. Through

a few key branches, their relationship changes and develops: "Dora, con deseos

de despellejarla en vida" ("Dora, with desires to skin her alive"), "Dora fue mia"

("Dora was mine), "Dora Castillo. La muchacha con la que había hecho el amor

un día antes" ("Dora Castillo. The girl with whom I had made love the day

before"), and "Dora ya no estaba" ("Dora was already gone"). From wanting to

skin her in one moment, to making love to her the in the next, this deformance

reflects the inconsistencies and roller-coaster nature of their relationship.

The words that stand out are the most striking aspect of Dora's word tree.

One of the qualifiers of the Many Eyes model is that words with more frequency

in the entire novel are presented larger and in bold. Because "Dora" occurs in so

many utterances, the listed examples are written smaller and those words with

more frequency, and hence larger and bolded words, stand out more. "Dora

habia..." ("Dora had...") is the most eye-catching branch sequence, and this

fragment is insightful. The use of the past-perfect tense demonstrates that Guía

reflects on their relationship as being in the past and over. This usage echoes all

that Dora "had" been, "had" done, and all that "had" happened in her relationship

with Guía. It also connects her to the past. Furthermore, following "había," the

clearest completion of the fragment is "abordado un confortable jet" ("boarded a

comfortable jet"). This phrase stands out, and hence, is repeated at least once.

The act of Dora deserting Guía leaves a lasting mark on him, and this word tree

reveals that scar. The last branch of Dora's tree is fittingly the exclamation: "¡Dora!" representing Guía's emotion at her desertion. She was able to escape and save her life, while Guía suffers in his own depressive state. "¡Dora!" is a presumed cry from Guía, lamenting his loss or calling out to her.

In contrast to the developed relationship that Guía has with Dora, his relationship with Germaine is brief and not meaningful. He meets her while they are both with their fathers at a club and they escape to spend time together in Guía's car. He invites Germaine to a party at his house after not seeing her for a few weeks, and then ignores her. Later, after Laura's tragic death, she calls on Guía at his house. Guía treats her previous refusal to sleep with him as a challenge and once he accomplishes his goal, she leaves, humiliated, never wanting to see him again.

Their relationship is casual and empty, just as is Germaine's word tree (Figure 11). The tree is without many clues about her character and role in comparison to the other visualizations. However, the absence of these characteristics is also significant. In *La tumba*, Guía's relationship with Germaine remains superficial. Germaine is unemotional and seems uninterested in Guía, except the scene where she and Guía sleep together and she leaves upset. At times she is flirtatious, as the tree shows: "Germaine, con esa sonrisa tan chistosa" ("Germaine, with such an amusing smile") and "Germaine, mirándome divertida" ("Germaine, looking at me entertained"); yet over all she remains a vague presence and is just one more conquest for Guía.

Germaine's tree is a deformance that does not produce expected results.

General facts about her are present on the tree, her last name (Giraudoux) for

example. Yet, nothing in particular stands out. There are no repeated words or

phrases that appear larger than the other phrases. However, a study of her tree

is worth investigating, even if the results seem inconsequential.
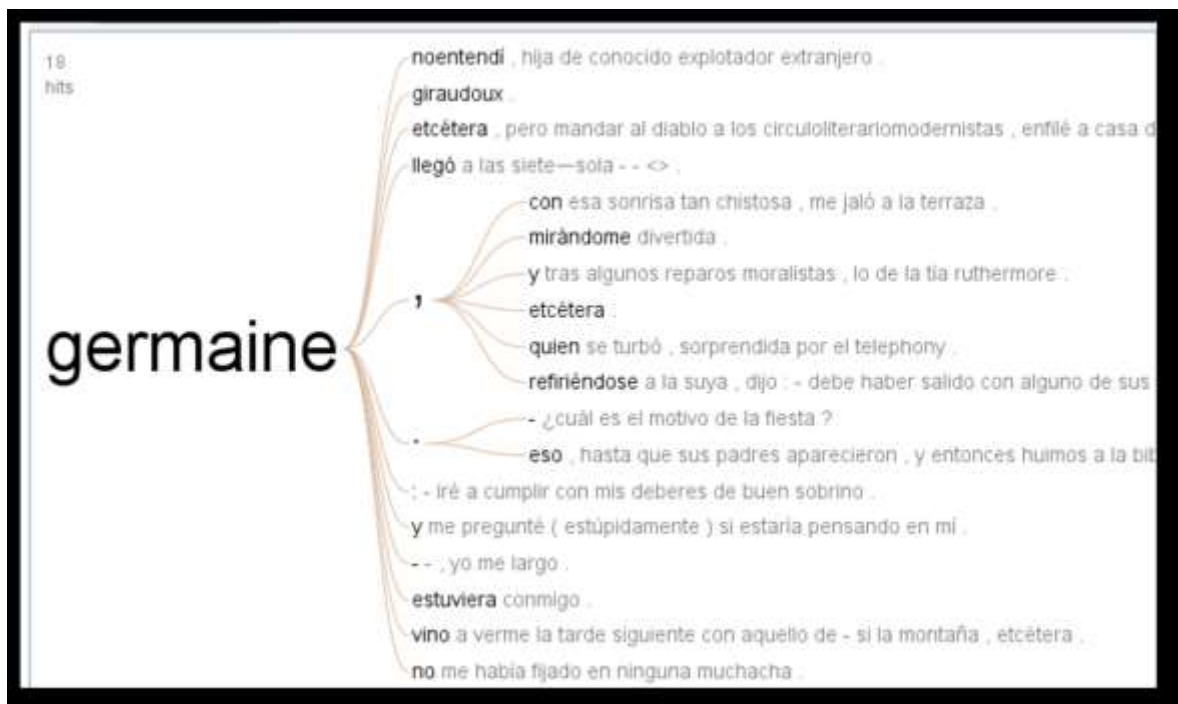
Figure 11: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Germaine" from the novel *La tumba*

Germaine's tree is fairly symmetric and plain, and after her name, none of

the other branches stands out. An inspection of the verbs shows that in the final

third of the tree, there is an emphasis in "yo" ("I") or "me" ("me"). The verbs are

either conjugated with "yo" as the subject pronoun, or alternatively, if they are

conjugated in the third person (with Germaine as the subject) there is always a

"me" as the object pronoun. The attention to Guía (the referent of "yo" and "me")

reflects the selfishness that characterizes his relationship with Germaine.

Despite her short appearance in the novel and consequently the limited uses of

her name, Germaine's word tree still gives insight into her character.

Like Germaine, Guía's aunt Berta has only a small presence in the novel.

She is his paternal aunt who flies in for a few days, and then leaves as quickly as

she arrived. Berta, however, leaves a lasting impression on Guía. Guía plays host

to Berta and realizes that his aunt from Chicago is smart and cosmopolitan and

he enjoys being in her presence. He decides to throw her a party before she

leaves and after this party, in a haze of drunkenness, Berta and Guía have sex.

Guía is left ashamed and sickened by his own actions, as well of those of his aunt.

Berta's character portrait is sparse; yet in the blank spaces there is much

to be interpreted. The smallness of the narrative shows us it is a "repressed"

narrative, representing the guilt he feels. Almost all of the branches of the tree

(Figure 12) state Berta's name or define her role in relation to Guía: "Berta

Ruthermore, hermana de mi padre, y por consiguiente, mi tía" ("Berta

Ruthermore, my father's sister, and thus, my aunt"). With every repetition of her

full title, Guía (and any viewer of the word tree) is continually reminded that she

is his aunt, a fact that weighs heavily when their sexual relation is considered.

Figure 12: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Berta" from the novel *La tumba*

Additionally, even though every use of her name except the final one

includes her full name (implying the formality of the relation), the fact that her

name is only mentioned six times highlights its lack of use. Using a name implies

a comfort level that is nonexistent in this relationship. The act of not referring to

her by name shows Guía's remorse for their actions, as even mentioning her

would bring back memories of her visit. The fact that the "Guía" portion of her

name is mentioned just once exemplifies further distancing. He represses the

memory of these actions. As Freud would argue, Guía's repression of this

incident does not keep it away, but reappears in neuroses after the fact (namely

his anxiety and depression) because Guía was unable to cope with his incestuous

relationship with his aunt.

Berta's word tree is most interesting because of its lack. It is this lack of

presence that represents Guía's repression of her name and hence, her character

as a whole. The contrast of her part in an unsettling, damaging relationship in the novel and the omission of references of her name (equating to a minimal number of branches on her word tree), shows a disconnect between what a reader potentially expects and Guía's actions. Juxtaposed with the other deformances, Berta's tree leaves the sense that there must be a reason for the dearth of mentions of her name; in this case it is that of the "unspeakable" act of incest. Guía is ashamed.

In the morning when Guía awakes from their tryst, he is disgusted and filled with self-hate. He escapes to a hotel and returns only when he knows that his aunt is gone. In the still messy room he finds a note addressed to him. His aunt writes, asking pardon for the drunkenness, and thanking him for the memory.[35] Berta's tree is almost bare; as such, after only viewing the tree, one could not hazard a guess about Guía and Berta's twisted relation. However, the tree's bareness speaks volumes in the absence of details and the repetition of her name on almost all of the branches. It is clear that Berta's tree is different than the other trees. The only branch that does not repeat her name in full is the last: "Berta es una pieza fuerte" ("Berta is a strong piece"). Just like her name is a definition of her, this branch offers an alternative definition. As the final phrase that describes her, it is a fitting understatement for a woman who leaves a note thanking her teenage nephew for their night of intercourse.

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[35] The note Berta leaves reads: "Forget that night of madness, excuse my heavy drinking and thanks for the memory" (*La tumba* 56)

Berta's relationship with her nephew is striking, and worth a closer

inspection. Further delving into psychoanalysis, Guía's incestuous relationship

mirrors that of the Oedipus complex where, in this instance, Berta takes the

place of the mother. This transference of role is perhaps because of the lack of

motherly attention from Guía's actual mother.   Berta's is Guía's paternal aunt,

and as such she holds a connection to his father. Freud asserts that boys have

the desire to sexually possess their mothers and kill their fathers out of jealous

competition for motherly love. While in this case, Guía does not appear to want

to kill his father, their relationship is indeed contemptuous. Guía's search for

love and approval is evident in the novel, specifically from his parents. Guía's

connection to Berta, an older female character, is representative of Guía's search

for motherly love and support. Guía's parents may be secondary characters, but

the few interactions between them is once source of conflict in the novel.

Guía and his father have verbal, loud, and aggressive arguments; while

the fighting between him and his mother is passive aggressive and his mother is

more often than not, absent. In one instance, Gabriel turns the stereo up and

then runs out of the house to annoy her.[36] Her interaction with her son is

minimal. Usually, it is Guía's father who speaks to him, scolds him, or sings him

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[36] "Tenía deseos de molestar. Tuve suerte: mi madre tomaba chocolate humeante en el jol, no lejos de la sala. Regresé pausadamente al aparato. El disco comenzaba con un sonido de bongós que crecía paulatinamente de volumen, hasta alcanzar un escándalo coronado con el aullido de mi madre" ("I felt like bothering someone. I was in luck: my mother was drinking a steaming cup of hot chocolate in the hall, not very far from the living room. I returned slowly to the stereo. The disc began with the sound of bongos that grew steadily in volume, until reaching scandalous heights crowned by the screams of my mother" 26).

the *Las mañanitas*[37] on his birthday. His mother is glaringly absent. The

relationship between Gabriel and his mother is of interest, especially when

juxtaposed with the Oedipal experience with his aunt. While Guía's mother is

not a main female character, her word tree is worth an investigation:
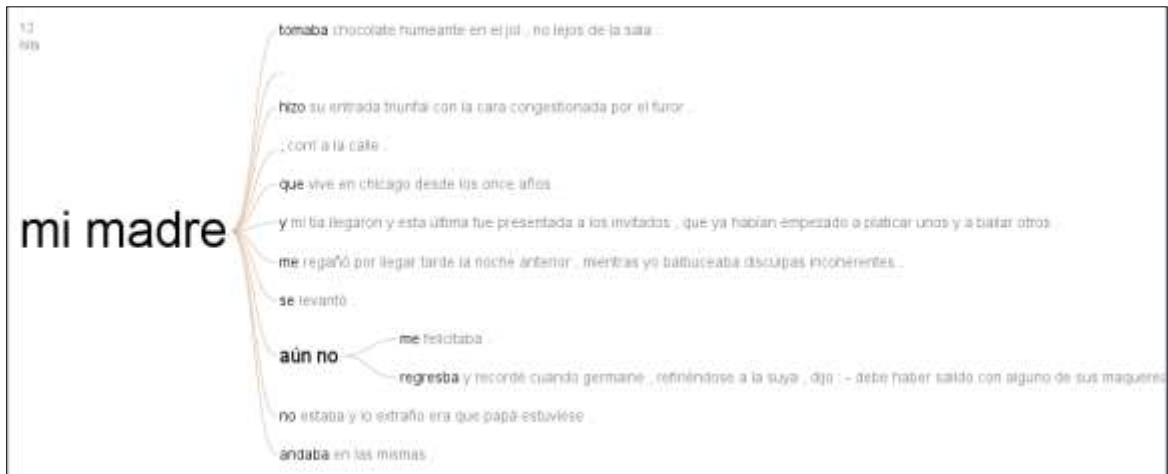
Figure 13: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "mi madre" from the novel *La tumba*

The striking branches of this tree are those that lead off from the "aún no"

("still had not"): "Mi madre aún no me felicitaba" ("My mother still had not

congratulated me") and "Mi madre aún no regresaba" ("my mother still had not

returned"). These phrases highlight Guía's mother's absence; she does not

participate in his life. The interactions between Guía and his mother are

minimal. Much of Guía's misdeeds could be categorized as acting out to get

attention and his continually inept approaches to relationships are explained by

the lack of motherly love and affection. Seen from this perspective, Guía's sexual

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[37] A song traditionally sung on birthdays in Mexico

relationship with his aunt is due in part to his mother's neglect. The

psychological repression of this incident then amplifies his depressive state.

The only person Guía tells about his night with Berta is his cousin, Laura.

She is also the only one of the five main female characters with whom he does

not have sexual relations. In her section with Guía, she appears as the female

equivalent of him, partying, entertaining a string of lovers, and with a conflict-

driven relationship with her parents. Laura's role, though brief because of her

death in a car crash, plays an important part of the novel.

The 1966 version of *La tumba* is the edition I have chosen to use for my

dissertation project, including the deformance and performance of the text.

However, it is important to note that of the few differences that exist between

the two editions (1964 and 1966) the development of Laura's character is one of

the main changes. Agustín deepened the bond between Guía and Laura by

extending their literary time together in the second edition.[38] What previously

was just a mention becomes a description of an entire afternoon of crazy

adventures and bonding that stop when Laura drunkenly wrecks her car and

dies. The further development of Laura's character and her increased role in the

narrative makes her death all the more sudden and tragic to Guía; especially

because she functions as his female counterpart and partner-in-crime.

Ultimately, Laura's death is what throws Guía back into his writing, producing

[38]For a more in-depth discussion of the changes between the 1964 and 1966 editions of *La tumba* see Gunia

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the first intra-textual poem. Laura's word tree (Figure 14) reveals this: "decidí

trabajar literariamente" ("I decided to work literarily").

Figure 14: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Laura" from the novel *La tumba*

The word tree isolation deformance begins with a question: "Laura?"

which then appears instantly answered by the next branch: "era todo un

carácter. Tenía mi edad y su fama de intrépida parrandera era bien conocida"

("She was a character. She was my age and her fame as an intrepid party-girl

was well known"). The quickly formed question and answer introduce the

character immediately in the same sudden manner as her initial appearance in

the novel. Both her introduction and her death occur abruptly, and both are

reflected in the word tree. Although not explicitly mentioned as it is in the novel,

her death (or at least injury) can be assumed by the following branch: "Laura

regresaba a su casa, el auto volcó" ("Laura was returning to her house, the car

flipped over"). With Laura gone, Guía is left alone.

Her death additionally drives him back into depression. Gunia comments on Guía's perception of Laura's departure: "Autocompasión y el reproche de haber sido abandonado por alguien que le había sacado de sus depresiones y ensimismamientos es lo único que puede sentir Gabriel frente a la muerte de su prima" ("Self-pity and reproach for having been abandoned by someone who had taken him out of his depression and self-absorption are the only things Gabriel feels when faced with the death of his cousin"; 85). Guía is devastated by his cousin's death, but does not feel for his cousin or her family, but rather for himself.

Visually, the most striking element of this tree is its spatial horizontal symmetry. The comma branch is offset from two groups of other branches. With this layout, the only flaw of its symmetry is that of the word, "dio" ("gave") which draws attention due to its size (and hence, it's frequency). "Laura dio…" ("Laura gave…") becomes the primary visual focus, causing a reader to ponder what it is that Laura gave, since those two words stand out in the word tree. In terms of her connection to Guía, she gave companionship and camaraderie. In the few scenes that she shared with Guía, he was happy. Ultimately, the last thing that Laura gives (or gives up) is her life.

After Laura's death, Guía eventually finds himself attracted to a new character: Elsa Galván. Chronologically, Elsa is the last female character whom Guía loves in the novel. His love, however, is not completely pure: he builds her up in the image of perfection and when he discovers what he considers tarnishes

in her character, he becomes disillusioned and wants retribution. He behaves recklessly and self-destructively and when Elsa becomes pregnant, a botched abortion makes her unable to bear children in the future. Upon hearing this news, Elsa and Guía celebrate. They live in an altered sense of reality, especially Guía, who appears more and more unhinged as the pages turn. Shortly after the abortion Guía decides to commit suicide.

The frequency of her name alone shows how important Elsa is to Guía (Figure 15) either as the recipient of Guía's love or hate. He invokes her name more than any other character in the novel. Comparing her tree to the others shows the obsessive nature of Guía's attraction to her. He is overcome with manic excitement and the magnitude of Elsa's word tree reflects this feeling. The portrait that the word tree creates introduces Elsa, and follows the various ups and downs of her relationship with Guía.
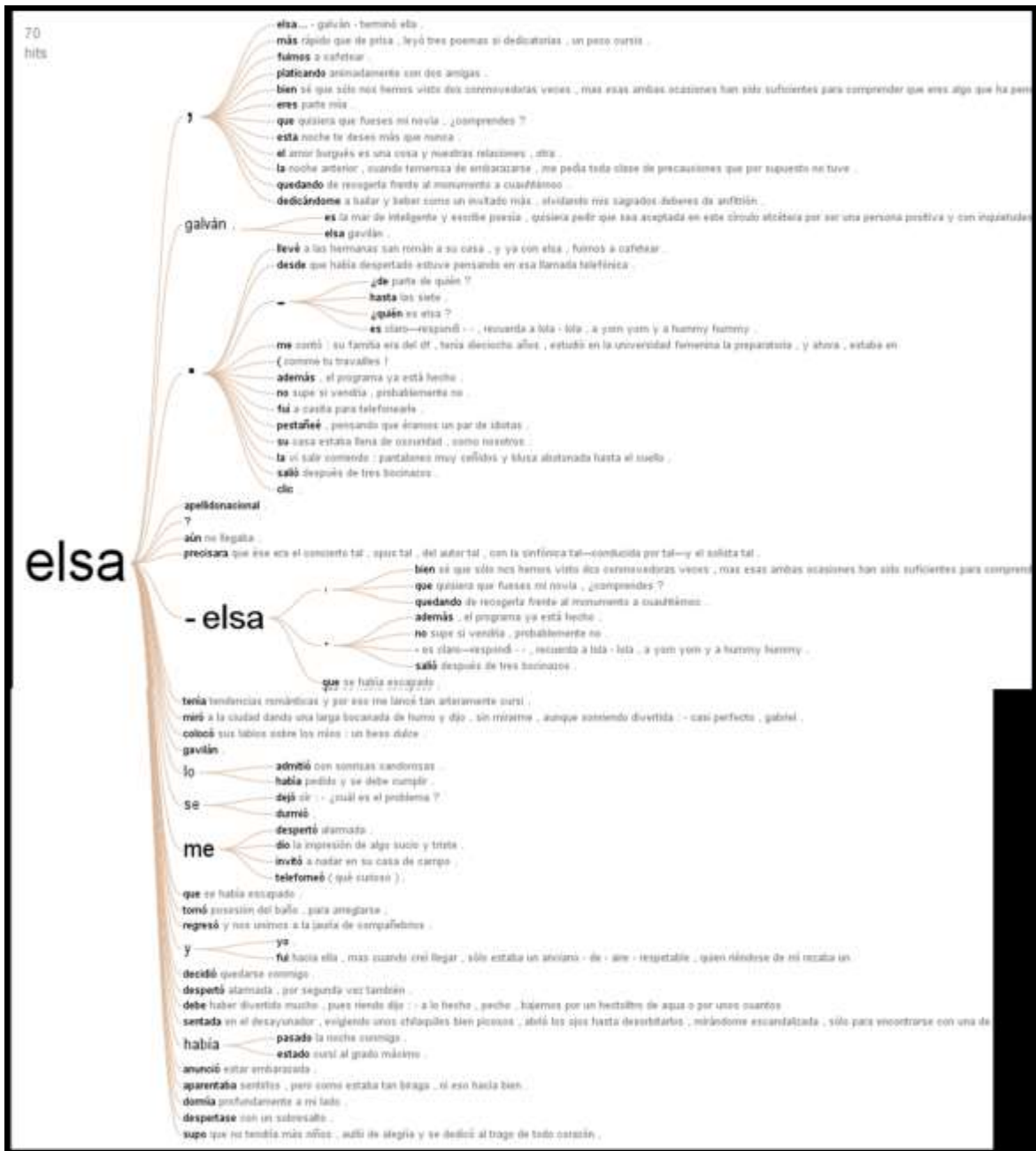
Figure 15: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Elsa" from the novel *La tumba*

Two sections of interest are the branches leading off from Elsa ("Elsa –

Elsa . . .") and Me ("Elsa me . . ."). Both of these branch groupings stand out as

they draw attention visually. The repetition of her name, "Elsa-Elsa" evokes the

longing that Guía feels towards Elsa and his perfected version of her. It is visually catching, echoing on the page.

The use of "me" as both the direct and indirect object pronouns present Guía as the recipient of Elsa's actions: "Me despertó alarmada" ("Woke me up alarmed"), "me dio la impression de algo sucio y triste" ("gave me the impression of something dirty and sad"),"me invitó a nadar en su casa de campo" ("invited me to swim at her country house") and "me telefoneó (que curioso)" ("telephoned me (how curious)"). These phrases connect the pair, as well as reflect their hyperbolic relationship. The tone of the first two lines is very somber compared to the second two, which represent relatively normal interactions of a couple. These seemingly disparate branches demonstrate the greater imbalance of their relation as a whole.

In the last few branches of the tree the culmination of their relationship takes place, when read between the lines. "Elsa anunció estar embarazada" ("Elsa announced she was pregnant") and "Elsa supo que no tendría más niños" ("Elsa found out she would not have any more children"): Somewhere between these lines, it is clear that something happened and caused lasting damage. In the case of the novel, Elsa had an abortion which was illegal in 1960s Mexico. This traumatic event, which Elsa and Guía celebrate with a heavy drinking session ("aulló de alegría y se dedicó al trago de todo corazón") ("she howled with happiness and dedicated herself to drink with all of her heart"), is the last reference to Elsa in the novel.

The consistent contradictions in the branches show the turmoil of Elsa and Guía's relationship, and more specifically Guía's apparent imbalance. One moment, the branch suggests a happy and functioning relationship, while the next it is filled with negative or violent imagery. While this type of back-and-forth is seen on other word trees, Dora's for example, the behavior is magnified with Elsa's tree suggesting that Guía has continued to spiral out of control.

2.3.2 Color Deformance of Entire Novel

One limitation I recognize of the Many Eyes word tree deformance is that it does not examine how often a character appears in the novel. Instead, it focuses on how often his or her name is used. There are many instances in which a name is uttered as a rhetorical tool: to introduce a new character or to add variety between the noun and pronoun usages. Just as frequently, a character's presence in the novel can exist almost exclusively by usage of pronouns; limiting the number of times the name is used. Thus, when analyzing this type of critical deformance, one must keep in mind its limitations in order to view the results with the proper perspective. I argue, however, that in spite of the restrictions of the word trees, they offer several valid insights into novel and in this case the characters' relations to the protagonist. In order to gauge if the word trees accurately reflect the content of the entire novel, I will use another deformance.

For this new deformance, I arbitrarily assign each primary female character a color and highlight their spatial representation in the text with this color. In any case where two female characters appear at the same time, I alternate the colors between each line. The female characters' "presence" in the novel becomes visually clear. I define "presence" as the time that Guía either spends with the character (physically), or the time he spends thinking or talking about the character (mentally). This deformance includes both the instances in which he refers to the characters by name and when he does not. This new deformance was done manually with the aid of a computer and paints a pictorial presentation of the female characters' presence of Guía's narrative space. Because *La tumba* is a short novel, this manual deformance, done with a digitized copy of the text, was not a taxing process. However, with a longer work, this type of deformance may not be ideal. A visual-based deformance is by no means a new concept. Matthew Cohen utilizes the substitution of pictures for words in selected poems from the Walt Whitman archive. In this instance, in order to extend the current notion of deformance from poetry to novel, I use colors instead of pictures, and character presence instead of single words. Both deformances in Cohen's words, "allow us to track how key terms migrate with the space of the page" (1) which, when transposed for the purpose of this deformance, shows how key characters exist in the space of the novel. By comparing the relative "presence" of each woman in the novel to the size of her

word tree, we can see how the representation relate to one another and if there are any correlations.

Figure 16: Whole novel color deformance, with female characters highlighted

This visualization shows that objectively, Guía spends a majority of his time either with the female characters or thinking about them. Their collective presence is a dominant part of the narrative. Another striking aspect is that there are not many cases in which the coexistence of characters occurs. Instances where the colors are alternating are rare, showing, at least in one sense, Guía's serial monogamy. This result is shocking, as Guía's presentation in the novel is that of a promiscuous, drunken, party boy with many sexual partners. However, this color deformation exhibits practically the opposite. He stays focused, or perhaps fixated, on each woman. The color deformance

visualizes this element and shows that previous readings of the text interpret Guía's character incorrectly. The short section in the middle, where the characters' presence overlaps—the panels that share Fuchsia, Yellow, and Turquoise lines—is where two climatic events of the novel occur: sex with his aunt and Laura's death. Both of these events are concurrent with the brief period with Germaine and reveal where these three women share the same space for a time.

The two most visually commanding sections (Green and Red) are those of Dora and Elsa. Their dominance corresponds to the size of their word trees. Similarly, Berta's color takes up the least amount of space, just as her tree is the most barren. What is surprising here is the amount of space that Germaine's Turquoise occupies in the deformance. Of the main female characters, Germaine's word tree is the second smallest. In this color deformance, her Turquoise is not as dominant as the Red or Green, and yet her presence in the color deformance is not as minimal as her word tree suggests. The majority of Germaine's Turquoise lines, however, are also shorter than the other characters' lines. The reason for this is that they are short single word dialogues. So, although Germaine's presence extends through the middle section of the novel, much of this presence is through short dialogues with Gabriel. She does not take up as much of his mental space as some of the other characters.

Another point of interest is Berta's representation in yellow. Whenever Berta's lines appear (Yellow), they are almost always sharing space with another

color. Berta's presence is shared with other main female characters in the majority of her scenes. When compared to Dora or Elsa, who dominate sections with pages entirely in Green or Red, Berta's segmented presence is noteworthy. In a way, the division of the Yellow lines is a visual representation of the Guía's repression. The other colors surround the Yellow sections. Yellow disappears for a few pages, and then reappears, sandwiched between the Fuchsia lines. This is the last appearance of Yellow, before the other colors succeed in taking over. Just as Berta's tree shows Guía's reluctance to confront and deal with the episode with his aunt, the color deformance vividly expresses the same sentiment.

By juxtaposing the word tree deformances and the color deformance, a corresponding relationship emerges. In spite of the fact that the word tree deformances only list instances in which the characters' name are used (and not a pronoun or nickname), in most cases the output of the tree deformances is proportional to the characters' total presence in the novel. The roles of Guía and the five main female characters (Dora, Germaine, Berta, Laura, and Elsa) are interwoven throughout the novel, *La tumba*. Each female character plays opposite Guía for a specific period of the narrative, and each relationship is distinctive. What a reader may intuitively sense about Guía's relationships and the female characters in the novel, is now made clearer through the word tree *isolation* deformances and the color deformance.

2.3.3 "Clic" : The Images a Word Creates

While the above deformances focus on character development and

relations between Guía and the main female characters in the novel, another

important use of the Many Eyes word tree is its aesthetic representation of

common words or themes. The word "clic" is significant and recurring. In fact,

with 101 hits (Figure 17), it is repeated far more than any name in the novel.

This term enters the text and Guía refers to it as a sound heard only in his head

that begins to drive him crazy. The frequency of the "clics" increases in the

second half of the novel and terminates only during the last scene: Guía's suicide.

The interpretations of the "clics" range widely from it being the sound of a gun to

the sound of the needle of a record player once the record has finished and

continues to spin. The "true" source is never revealed, just as Guía's suicide is

highly probable, but never fully confirmed.[39]

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[39] On the last pages of the novel, Gabriel actively prepares a gun, discusses his suicide and writes his own epitaph, all with intermittent "clics." The novel ends with a continual series of "clics", that cause Gabriel's suicide to be assumed; but not narrated.
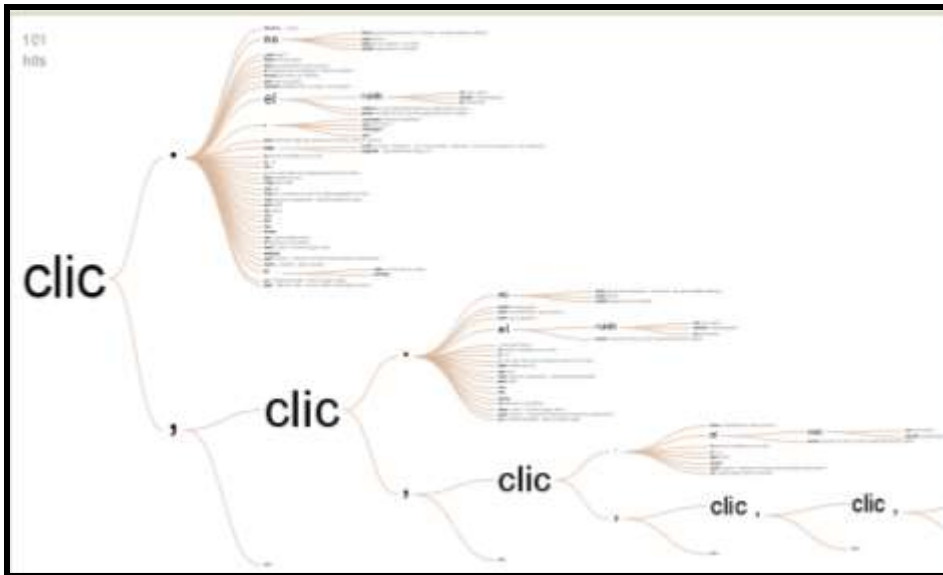
Figure 17: Many Eyes word tree deformance of "Clic" from the novel *La tumba*

Regardless of interpretation, however, as a rhetorical tool, the "clics"

invade the novel and consequently the space of this word tree. The words

appear, unexplained and potentially cause one to question their meaning, just as

Guía questions his sanity. The word "clic" is a repetitive and effective

psychological tool that Agustín employs. One way to visualize its power is to

utilize the Many Eyes word tree. When the word "clic" is mapped out, it

reverberates on the page just as it echoes in Guía's head. The "clics" that are

dispersed unexplained throughout the novel are represented in the upper,

cascading branches of the word tree, while the repeated murmurs resound along

the bottom of the page. The layout of this diagram can be explained by the use of

the words in the text. The "clics" appear singularly, in pairs, and also in small

groups in the text. The last line of the text is a series of the word. For that

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reason, when the Many Eyes tree diagrams this concordance, the "clics" seem to resonate along the bottom of the page.

Even if the viewer of the tree only reads the "clics" and not any text from the other branches, his or her experience mimics that of Guía. The "clics" slowly spiral out of control, continuing as a dulling echo. In this case, the word tree *isolation* deformance does not necessarily comment on the text but rather uses the words to physically paint a picture of Guía's emotional and psychological experience in the novel.

Visualization is an integral aspect of any type of deformance. Words not only portray the literary imagery, but also create meaning through their physical placement on a page. With various deformances, the underlying structures of these images are made clearer. In the current example using a word tree deformance on the word "clic", the viewer of this word tree can potentially experience similar emotions as the protagonist. Just as seeing a picture of an event can be more captivating than the words that describe it, deformance highlights the mental picture that already exists. These "clics" appear in the text, and a reader might note their repetition. However, this deformance causes the repetition to jump off the page, to echo, and to continue to sound. Deformance adds an important visual dimension to any text. While this is easily seen in poetic examples, where more attention is given to word placement, it is even more useful to deformances of novels, where imagery may be concealed by longer texts.

2.4 Possible Applications

Critical deformance allows for new vantages of works and is a creative application in which readers can exert some of control. Active readers are necessary for this type of interpretation and it aims not to replace more standard methods but to enhance further scholarship. One possible benefit of this practice, which I further detail in Chapter Four, is its use in the classroom setting. Through deformative practices, students learn more about a language or a text and how it functions. Identifying and working with only nouns or verbs in an isolation deformance, for example, aids the understanding of language for second language learners. Deformance also aids student comprehension of a text by sifting through pertinent vocabulary and even highlighting thematic patterns for imagery. Deformance in a classroom setting is also a creative approach to a text offering students many different directions to take. Thus, it is a prime exercise for a class with many types of students and many types of learners. Each deformance experience is unique to the person who creates it.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have assessed important character relations and examined key terms in the novel, through different deformances. In doing so, I have also extended McGann and Samuels' concept of critical deformance for use on a novel, opening up new opportunities with the deformance of works that are not classified as poetry. Because of the rapid way that the scholarship of reading

is changing, it is necessary to find new methodologies that foster the use of technology in literary analysis.

In addition to presenting quantitative information (i.e. a concordance through word trees), deformance reveals a visual mapping of the results of a specific query (first names, to continue the example). The spatial layout that deformances present varies, but it is the aspect of visualization that is important. This imagery offers a new vantage of a verbal art.

Examining *La tumba* through the mode of deformance sheds new light on the relationships between the main characters. In addition to offering a new lens with which to view the novel, deformance asserts aspects or feelings in the novel that a reader may only sense, but of which have no concrete vision.

Chapter 3: Performance

3.1 Introduction

Deformance, in the simplest terms, involves taking a text apart and putting it back together differently in order to gain new perspective on the original through studying the recreated object. Performance is a related concept in that one still considers the work anew but there is an additional focus on the relationship between the text and the creator of the performance. In this sense, a performance is not just evoked in the traditional manner (involving audiences

and actors), but rather an act in which one's reading of a text affects the newly created object.

As such, critical performatives can be translations or adaptations of a text. Although seemingly straight forward, the interpretive power of the translator makes his translation a performance. His reading of the original text affects how he translates the text, to such a degree that the new object performs its own meaning, different than that of the original; no translation is the same.

Performances include translations, adaptations, and even visual representations of a text. The use of digital tools is not necessary for a performance, but because of the array of computational methods available, they are a logical choice. Also, if the student performances of the text I consider in Chapter Four give any insight to the future, it is that the next generation of scholars will strongly wish to use technology in literary and cultural analyses.

In this chapter, I focus on the use of a social network (Twitter) for my performance of *La tumba* in Spanish and how a performance such as this aids the critical analysis of a text. I also investigate a case study of a collective performance of *La tumba* in English also using Twitter to examine how the use of performances affects awareness and attention to the novel by an English-speaking public.

3.2 Twitter Performance

The connection between Twitter and literature begins almost from the advent of Twitter as a microblogging platform in 2006. What began as a way send live updates and 140-character-limited messages has inspired users to adopt this social network for a variety of creative pursuits—one of which is literature.

Examples of Twitter's literary connections at the most general level include accounts for authors, present and past. These accounts are run by the writers themselves or are fan accounts created to represent the spirit and words of the author. Additionally, some utilize the platform to create micro-stories that are short enough to fit within one tweet. Along the lines of this genre are the tweets in which members summarize a famous work within the 140 character limit, for example, Shakespeare, with many invocations of his words appearing in a variety of formats[40]. Popular modernizations and adaptations of various literary works on Twitter show the ability of this platform to extend beyond its first content boundaries and cross into literary and pedagogic fields.

The use of a social media platform to produce, share, and adapt literature is important on many levels. It acts as a way to promote a text and to increase

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[40] See http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/apr/12/shakespeare-twitter-such-tweet-sorrow , http://mashable.com/2009/02/12/shakespeare-twitter/ , and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-helmes/to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet-_b_2302107.html

public awareness as well as re-examine it from a re-constructed angle. In addition, it can be a way that those who are already familiar with the text appreciate the story retold in a modern medium. As such, Twitter as a platform becomes a performance space for these (re)newed texts. From the perspective of a critical performative, there is value in the action of adapting a text for this digital space. The strict restrictions of character limit and nature of the platform allow for a focused form of textual analysis because the creator must write a new text that captures the essence of the original. In this chapter, I focus on the process of creating this performance as well as investigate of a case study of a collective performance of Agustín's, *La tumba.*

This performance, or "twitterization,"[41] is an adaptation of the text. It tells the story of *La tumba* through a different medium, but it is also more than the term adaptation suggests. It is an extension of the novel itself and a transposition into the field of new media. Besides the fact that this performance is a useful analytical tool for a creator, Augstín's first novel lends itself organically to the act of twitterization.

The format of this performance is a real-time interpretation of the text, using the platform of Twitter as the stage. As such, different characters have their own twitter accounts, including their own profile pages, and interact as

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[41] The term "twitterization" has been used in a variety of contexts but the general meaning is that of a text that utilizes the language of Twitter. This can be from the inclusions of "#" or "@" as well as shortened or coded speech. For the purposes of this dissertation, I utilized the term to mean a text adapted to the format of Twitter.

though they were living in today's society[42].   Figure 18 shows the main page and

banner photo for "Gabriel Guía":

Figure 18: Gabriel Guía's Twitter page and photo

The twitterization is broken into four parts, corresponding with the four basic

sections of the novel. Presently, the first section is active on twitter, while a

script of the entire twitterization performance is available in the Appendix. In

this chapter, quotations from the first section of the twitterizations of the novel

appear as they are on Twitter, and quotations from subsequent sections appear

as they do in the script located in the appendix.

The goal of this performance is not solely to create a present-day version

of the text. In fact, though the original text dates from the early 1960s, *La tumba*

has a sense of timelessness in its representation of youth culture, rebellion, and

dissatisfaction with society that still resonates today. The act of "updating" the

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[42] A full script of the planned tweets of this performance is available in the appendix.

text is almost unnecessary, save for the fact that the performance takes place on a platform of present day construction (Twitter), and certain slang terms lend themselves to the performance space. Instead, one main goal of this performance is to amplify and re-work the text for those who have already read the novel. While not a requirement for all twitterizations, Agustín's novel lends itself to a social media adaptation for a variety of reasons.

Gabriel Guía is the type of protagonist who would tweet were he living in the early 21st century. He is self-indulgent and self-important and looks for ways to express his disgust with the hypocrisies of society. He is also a writer, and one who would find it both entertaining and challenging to compose within the strict one-hundred-and-forty character limit that Twitter requires. However, elements more concrete than these character traits link *La tumba* to its modern-day, twitterized version. Agustín's literary style supports this transposition; the careful grammatical structures mirror the reportage of many tweets which I examine in the subsequent section. Additionally, the content of the novel reflects subjects and themes that people commonly share through social media.

The twitterization of *La tumba* I perform is born in part from the popularity of social media and the use of such platforms to communicate. The other part stems from the organic connection and timelessness of Agustín's brooding, discursive, teenage protagonist, Gabriel Guía and the manner in which he shares his life. More than themes and methods of communication, Agustín's

choice of grammar is an additional factor which supports a translation into the

modern format of Twitter.

3.2.1 Implications of Grammar

The novel uses primarily past tense and specifically the preterite more

than the imperfect tense. Grammatically, the preterite expresses completed

actions or events in comparison to the on-going past actions in the imperfect.

This tendency gives way to a sense of reportage in which the narrative focuses

on a single list of completed actions. The first sentences from the opening of the

novel exemplify this proclivity: "*Miré* hacia el techo: un color liso, azul claro…*Me*

levanté para entrar en la regadera…Al ver el reloj, *advertí* lo tarde que era" ("I

looked towards the ceiling: a smooth color, light blue…I *got up* in order to get in

the shower…Upon looking at the clock, I *noticed* how late I was"; 9, my

emphasis). From the start of the novel, Agustín initiates this style which

reinforces the reportage of the text. It allows a reader to gauge the day-to-day

experiences of his teenage protagonist.

La tumba, stylistically, is a complex narrative. While Agustín uses much

dialogue in the text, the non-dialogue sections relate to speech as well. Agustín's

style reflects that of oral communication. This is similar stylistically to the

feigned orality seen in informal methods of written communication such as

email, text messages or tweets.[43] Despite the written nature of these methods, the text is often filled with hallmarks of oral communication, such as the inclusion of disfluencies ("um") and lexical changes ("prolly" instead of "probably"), for example. Inke Gunia discusses this feigned orality in a study that predates the creation and subsequent ubiquity of social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Yet, her commentary highlights a style of communication that is now popular and frequently seen in connection with such social networks.

Gunia compares the narrativity of *La tumba* to oral communication based on several observations: first, the many references to an addressee or instances in the text where Guía seems to ask a question or invoke a response from an anonymous listener/reader (Gunia 34). Here, Guía reflects on recently discovering that Elsa previously had another lover: "Cometí la estupidez de enamorarme de ella, y al saber que había tenido un amante, profesor de filosofía, el dolor fue más grande. Chistoso, ¿no?" ("I committed the stupidity of falling in love with her, and upon finding that she had had a lover, a professor of Philosophy, the pain was much worse. Funny, right?"; 92). Gunia points out that Agustín's inclusion of "¿no?" demonstrates Guía's search for validation or a response. He interacts with an audience that, because it is not specifically defined or directed, remains anonymous and therefore inclusive of the readers.

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[43] These written forms can be either formal or informal, but for the purposes of this comparison, I am examining only the informal methods of written communication. Examples of stylistically formal messages would be those that are composed using correct grammar/spelling and do not include elements such as an informal tone, disfluencies, and lexical alterations.

By using this technique, Agustín draws the reader into a confidence with the protagonist, Guía. A reader feels as though Guía is directly communicating with him or her, and as Gunia notes, takes on an important role:

> Sin embargo, ya que este destinatario en todo el texto permanece anónimo y no enuncia ninguna palabra, cumple más bien la función de un oyente mudo. Son estas características del narratario que también hacen que el lector (enfocado) adopte el papel del oyente, del confidente, de Gabriel-narrador. (Gunia 34)[44]

Guía's audience experiences a perceived inclusion within Guía's intimate circle. By incorporating these moments in the text where Guía "communicates" with his audience, Agustín's stylistic orality makes it appear as though Guía is "talking" to the readers.

Twitter shares a similar quality of orality. Often, when tweeting, members will pose both rhetorical and direct questions; some like Guía's queries are in search for validation or a response. And like the novel's public space, despite one's "followers" or "friends", the readership is, in practice, anonymous. Questions are posed whether they merit a response or not and even readers freely choose to respond or not.   As such, a reader of a tweet experiences a similar inclusion—as though the author is addressing him or her directly.

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[44] "However, since this addressee remains anonymous throughout the text and does not say a single word, it best performs the job of a mute listener. It is these characteristics of the narrative that also make the (focused) reader adopt the role of listener, of a confidant, of Gabriel-the-narrator."

Gunia also argues that Augstín's graphical choices reflect orality. Seen

mostly in parenthetical references, italics, capitalization, and onomatopoeia, the

textual graphics echo informal oral communication as seen in the following four

examples:

"Salí al corredor (aunque estaba más que prohibido)" ("I went out to

the hall (even though it was more than prohibited)"; Agustín 10),

"Pero, como era natural, el maestro no quiso dar su brazo a torcer y

afirmó que debía haberlo plagiado (ahora sí, *plagiado*)de otro escritor"

("But, as was natural, the teacher didn't want to throw in the towel and

affirmed that I had plagiarized (now, yes, *plagiarized*) another author";

13; Agustín's emphasis)

"Pero se negó, arguyendo que quería estar en *mi* casa" ("But she

refused, arguing that she wanted to be in *my* house"; 73; Agustín's

emphasis)

"¡Zas!, una muchacha entró" ("Bang! A girl came in"; 41)

The use of parenthetical asides, italics, and onomatopoeia are indications of text

attempting to imitate speech. In a way, these graphical techniques give the

written words sound and as such, feigned orality.

Twitter, like all forms of written communication influenced by speech,

shares these characteristics. With Twitter (and other forms of informal text-

based communication), it is generally accepted that by writing in all capital

letters, one is "yelling" even though the reader is not literally hearing the writer.

Similarly, parenthetical references, onomatopoeia, and alternative spellings help one's tweets better mimic speech. Twitter encourages this type of ludic language in part because of the limited space. While Agustín did not face the same limitations, his topographical code reflects speech, even in the non-dialogue portions of his text.

3.2.2 Implications of Content and Themes

Also like Twitter, the text acts as a channel for Guía-narrator to map the daily occurrences in his life, and his thoughts and feelings around these occurrences. Throughout the novel, the protagonist does as his name suggests and "guides" the reader through the daily events of his life[45]. The novel, it seems, is in part a journal; it acts as an outlet for the young writer to chronicle what happens to him. Some of these details are mundane, such as his choice of food for breakfast: "Apresuradamente me vestí para bajar al desayuno. Mordiscos a un pan, sorbos a la leche." ("Hurriedly, I got dressed and went down for breakfast. Bites of bread, sips of milk"; 9). While other entries are more significant, and share Guía's strong emotional reactions: "Odié a Dora, con deseos de despellejarla en vida" ("I hated Dora, wanting to skin her alive"; 14). Though some sentiments are strong and therefore stand out, the quotidian elements that surround them compose the bulk of this novel.

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[45] "Guía" translates as "guide"

The manner in which Agustín presents Guía's narrative evokes Facebook or Twitter to a modern reader through content, the reportorial nature of the novel, and its feigned orality. Many users of these social media platforms share daily life events, from those as banal as breakfast food (like Guía) to more serious emotional or political feelings. Additionally, many teens use these spaces as a means to communicate solely with their peers in the form of their friends or followers, despite the fact that these are public spaces. It is a space where the topics and type of language they use are their own. Similarly, in *La tumba* Agustín's characters exist in a world where the adults have minimal visibility. Guía and his friends communicate with colloquial and sometimes invented language and create their own physical social network which is represented in the present-day by a digital social network.

Not only does the reportorial nature of the narrative mirror the incessant posting on today's social media platforms, but the use of dialogue in the text parallels the use of social media as a form of communication. The only sections of the novel that do not exclusively recount the events of Guía's day-to-day life are those told in dialogue, an essential device in the novel. The conversations are generally short, back-and-forth exchanges between two people, often Guía and a girlfriend. These short and concise conversations could easily be a series of text messages. Further, the conversations are at times direct and vulgar, much like the fearlessness people today exhibit when hiding behind a cell phone or a computer. For example, consider this exchange between Guía and Germaine:

-¿Sabes qué necesito?

-¿Qué?

-Acostarme contigo

-¿Para qué?

-Sais pas.

-Tú bien sabes que no soy una vagina andante, lárgate a un

burdel.

-Tú no quieres eso.

-Pues tampoco estoy dispuesta a entregarme así como así.

(73)[46]

Guía's blunt manner is a style that modern-day readers would associate more with text-based communication. The prevalence of new media and digital forms of communication is so omnipresent that many of the dialogues from the novel would seem more natural in today's perspective of communication through cell phones, computers, and/or social networking sites.

In addition to communicating with others, Agustín includes quotations from other novels and song lyrics. These intertextual references help the reader gauge Guía's mood and temperament and set the tone of the narrative. It is similar to a person tweeting his or her favorite lyric or inspirational quotation.

---

[46] "Do you know what I need?/What?/To sleep with you./What for?/Sais pas [I don't know]./You know very well that I'm not a walking vagina, so get yourself to a brothel./You wouldn't want that./ Well, I'm also not ready to give myself to you like that"

These elements help create a profile of Guía, his likes and dislikes, from his musical tastes to the philosophy he reads, as occurs on Twitter today.

Further literary clues that help construct Guía's characterization are the instances in the novel where he talks to himself or writes poetry. His auto-commentary shows his intentions and emotions much like writing in a diary. Theses musings distinguish themselves from normal dialogue in the text as they lack the introductory dash ("—"). Guía's self-questioning, complaints, and commentary give him the opportunity to share about himself much like the way present-day youth present themselves on social media platforms.

As *La tumba's* grammar, style, and content suggest, Twitter is an ideal platform for a performance adaptation of this text. The language of the novel also accommodates this digital adaptation naturally because of the youth-centered elements of the original texts. Twitter allows for a real-time performance of the novel and is host to a platform full of creative literary potential. However, it is not without its limits and it is important to examine the challenges related to creating a twitterization of a text.

3.2.3 Inclusions and Exclusions

One key concern is what part of the text to twitterize. Condensing the text is an important aspect of this transposition. As McGann and Samuels point out, in a performance it is nearly impossible to separate the reading the performer does from the object: "the edition performs its own meaning"

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(*Deformance and Interpretation* 114). Just as the imprint of the translator's

interpretive reading of the original occurs in a translation, so does that of the

adaptor on the adaptation. Similarly, the twitterizer's reading of the novel is

evident in the themes, characters, and plot elements included in the new text. An

integral feature of the performance is its creation—the distinct practice of the

creator—in addition to the resulting product.

  Scholars who have used Twitter as a literary performance space comment

on the key issues of compressing a text and choosing only the most essential

elements. In January of 2014, for example, Elaine Treharne tweeted the story of

Beowulf in one hundred tweets in preparation for her class. Both the university

course and her twitterization explore the question of "what is (the) Text?" "What

constitutes Beowulf?" For Treharne, the performance of the novel in one

hundred tweets re-examines the essence of this epic poem; a useful practice in

determining the answers to her own questions concerning what constitutes a

text. She writes in a blog post describing this process:

> For me, it was a worthwhile exercise, forcing me back to the Old
>
> English to try and capture, in the shortest possible length, what I
>
> thought were the essential components of the poem… I
>
> compressed speeches, but always tried to represent the direct
>
> speech as such; it's a major component. I only tangentially referred
>
> to the most complex of the digressions; they were too difficult to
>
> telescope. (Treharne)

Treharne's commentary highlights one of the main difficulties in this type of performance: the decision of what to include and exclude. As such, creating a performance becomes a practice in deciphering the key elements of a text.

In *La tumba*, repetition is significant. Certain phrases and concepts echo throughout the text, highlighting specific themes. One example is Guía's mention of circles, dizziness, and spinning: "Temblaban, temblaban. Todo se volvió círculos: mi mano, el cerillo, los dedos, su mirada; todo" ("[My fingers] trembled and trembled. Everything became circles: my hand, the match, my fingers, her look; everything"; 21). There are ten separate mentions of "círculos" in this context throughout the narrative and more examples when considering other similar terms, such as "vueltas" ("spins") and "vértigo" ("vertigo"). These repetitions show Guía's feelings of loss of control, and usually come after he experiences extreme emotion combined with alcohol, such as the scene in which Guía and his aunt have sexual intercourse: "Ya están aquí: vueltas, vueltas, vueltas. El vértigo. Círculos. Mi tía me besa. Ondas, giros, órbitas. Besándome. ¡El vértigo! Las vueltas vueltas, círculos…" ("Already they are here: spins, spins, spins. Vertigo. Circles. My aunt kisses me. Waves, turns, orbits. She is kissing me. Vertigo! The spins, spins, circles…"; 55). Because these specific words and phrases occur frequently and represent Guía's sense of powerlessness in his world, the element of circularity must not be lost in the twitterization. It is fundamental to maintain this connection between the protagonist's mention of "circles" and his feelings of losing control over his life.

The following tweets from the twitterization, represent the two previously cited situations from the original text. The first already exists on Twitter, and appears in its tweeted form and the second is from the planned section of the twitterization:

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69:

Mareado. Vueltas, vueltas, vueltas. El vértigo. Círculos. Ondas Giros, órbitas. ¡El vértigo! Las vueltas vueltas, círculos.[47]

Both of these tweets borrow text from the original, which brings into question the concept of plagiarism in conjunction with this twitterized performance. Because this type of performance is not attempting to rewrite the original text, but rather recreate the text in a new medium, the adoption of certain words or phrases from the original is justified. Whereas some phrases require alteration to make sense in the new format, other elements still function in their original state.

As Chapter One notes, another salient term in the text is "clic". The entrance of this word into the text is unexplained, and seems out of place. The

---

[47] "Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69: Circles,: my hand, the match, fingers, her look…" "Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69: Dizzy. Spins, spins, spins. Vertigo. Circles, Waves, turns, orbits. Vertigo! The spins, spins, circles."

contrast of this apparently random onomatopoeia and the rest of the text adds a

psychological element to the novel. As Guía becomes more unhinged and

depressed, the "clics" increase, until the end of the novel where ostensibly they

represent the sound of the gun as he commits suicide. In the twitterized text,

these tweets of the word "clic" appear as they do in the novel, apparently

randomly. The objective of these tweets is to cause distress or confusion to

Twitter followers of the tweets as for readers of the text. By the time a reader

understands the word's meaning, it is too late, just as in the novel.

Both of these examples require the twitterizer to valorize the importance

of elements from the original text in order to decide how best to transpose the

work to a different medium. While I consider the aforementioned examples of

the "circles" and the "clics" as essential components of the text, and as such

elements that must remain in the twitterized version, other elements must be

excluded due to space constrictions.   Space is of particular importance because

of the chosen medium; Twitter limits each tweet to one hundred and forty

characters. Thus, the act of condensing is a valuable aspect of this performance

as is the ability to capture the same essence, message, and meaning of the novel,

without including every detail. One section of the novel that I do not to include

in its entirety involves Guía purposefully causing a car wreck, and being pleased

with the results. The original text reads:

> La gran recta de la carretera se perdía al dibujarse una curva a
>
> lo lejos, en una colina. Un coche esport me retaba a correr. Hundí

el acelerador y el esport también lo hizo, pasándome. Sentí una

furia repentina al ver la mancha roja del auto frente a mí. El chofer

traía una gorrita a cuadros. Está sonriendo el maldito. Furioso,

proseguí la carrera con ardor. Había pasado la casa de Martín,

pero insistí en alcanzar al esport.

Llegamos a la curva. El rival se mantenía adelante al dar la

vuelta. Yo, temiendo darla tan rápido, disminuí la velocidad. El

esport no lo hizo y la dio a todo vapor.

Un estruendo resonó en mis oídos, mientras la llamarada surgía

como oración maléfica. Frené al momento para ir, a pie, hasta la

curva. El esport se había estrellado con un camión que transitaba

en sentido contrario. Una ligera sonrisa se dibujó en mi cara al

pensar: Eso mereces. (15)[48]

This is a crucial section because it reveals Guía's devious behavior and his

devaluation of human life. It also shows the outbursts of rage and violence that

he occasionally experiences throughout the narrative. This scene, while

important, is too lengthy and detailed to be included in the twitterized version of

---

[48] The wide, straight road was lost upon drawing up to the curve on a hill in the distance. A sports car challenged me to a race. I floored it, and so did the driver of the sports car as he passed me. I felt a sudden fury at seeing the red stain of the car dash before my eyes. The driver wore a plaid driving cap. The bastard is smiling. Furious, I stayed on the highway with ardor. I had passed Martin's house, but I insisted on overtaking the sports car./We arrived at the curve. My rival kept his speed as he started the turn. Afraid to take it too fast, I slowed down. The sports car didn't slow, and went on, full speed ahead. / A roar sounded in my ears, while a flare emerged like an evil prayer. I braked for a moment, to go, walking, up to the bend. The sports car had crashed into a truck that was traveling in the opposite direction. A slight smile crossed my face as I thought: you deserved that.

the novel. However, the same feelings can be expressed, with a shorter, less

explicit version. The twitterization becomes:

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
#tumbatuit eso mereces! pic.twitter.com/FmS5PsoiSl

Expand   Reply   Retweet   Favorite   More

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
#tumbatuit : Me retas, en tu coche esport y gorrita a cuadros? Q furia! }:-o
Expand   Reply   Retweet   Favorite   More

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It is important to note that the tweets are listed with the most recent at the top.

As such, narratively, this section should be read from the bottom up. In addition

to tweeting text, Twitter has the ability to host multimedia messages. Pictures,

then, can take the place of words in order to condense the text. The tweet is

considerably shorter, but expresses the same sentiment as the longer, original

version. The use of an "angry" emoticon, and a picture linked of the crash image

supplement what is left out verbally. Another possible interpretation of this

scene would be a series of tweets giving a blow-by-blow description of the race,

---

[49] "Gabriel Guía @GabGuia: Do you challenge me in your sports car and driving cap? How
enfuriating! }:-o" "Gabriel Guía @GabGuia: You deserve this!"

also, possibly, with pictures. The advantage of this interpretation is that the act of texting/tweeting while driving underlines the reckless nature of the scene.

Choosing what is included and excluded from the twitterization is a process of revision that ultimately sorts through the text to see what is important and what can be said in a different manner. Twitter, as a platform, has many tools that aid condensation. By using linked photographs or links to websites, much can be expressed within the character limit.

Additionally, the hashtag or "#" symbol allows for categorization, which groups posts together that have the same words following the hashtag. The hashtag also invites outside participation, as any user can utilize the tag to add his or her comments or opinions on the topic. The use of these tools depends on the reading and interpretation of the twitterizer and is an integral part of the performed text. The performance then becomes dialogic. It is possible for more than one person to interact and take part in it.   However, it is also possible for anyone to interrupt or hijack the performance because it takes place in a public forum or for the hashtag to be used in a different capacity. For example, a simple search of #tumbatuit (the official hashtag of this performance) results in this tweet (Figure 19), which is unrelated to the performance:

Figure 19: This tweet shows an example of a hashtag (#tumbatuit) that is used in a different capacity than the originally intended performance.

Since the twitterization performance exists in a public sphere, it runs the risk of unintended outside interaction. Examining these interactions brings forth the question of who is the intended audience for this performance in order to see if the performance reaches this group and what effects it may have.

3.2.4 The Audience

There are different levels of audience for this type of performance. Because it exists in a public space, theoretically anyone can access the twitterization and participate in a variety of manners. However, the intended audience of this performance (and the most likely audience) is those who are already familiar with the text and seek out this performance. For this performance, the ideal audience is Spanish speakers (either native or second-language) who are familiar with *La tumba*.

Like other adaptations on social media, such as of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*,[50] the audience finds more meaning in the performance when he or she already knows the work. In this sense, it allows the audience to examine the way they perceive and analyze a text when seen anew in the twitterization by comparing it to their existing knowledge and perception of the text. The performance asks the audience to question their interpretation and their own relationship with the original.

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[50] See http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/apr/12/shakespeare-twitter-such-tweet-sorrow

Additionally, it looks at how one communicates, through twitter, through novels and the like, examining language and varying methods and how they have changed or remained the same over the years. For *La tumba*, a novel whose themes are timeless, changing the methods of communication does not alter the result of the text or the turmoil Gabriel experiences.

The twitterization however, does change how the audience "consumes" the text allowing for true interactivity. While a reader can technically chose how he or she reads a novel—in what order, over what period of time and with whichever pages[51]—a novel is normally read in linear narrative form, from beginning to end. However, using Twitter as a stage for this performance allows different options of how to experience the adaptation, as well as a variety of layouts depending on which device is used—be it a computer or cellular phone. If one follows the characters, the tweets will be posted on that person's home page screen where the most recent tweets from those who he or she follows appear. If one uses a computer to search, "#tumbatuit" on Twitter, the tweets will be posted with the most recent response listed first. Audience members can interact with the performance by responding to tweets, or passing them along, as well as investigating a character's profile. Figure 20 shows the first few results for all of the tweets realated to "#tumbatuit":

---

[51] A common example where a text is read in a "non-normative" order is that of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*

Results for **tumbatuit**   Save

Top / All

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
Pienso escribir una novela. #legane #venganzaesdulce **#tumbatuit**
Expand   ↩ Reply ♺ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
NYC -> Paris -> Viena….adiós mundo cruel…**#tumbatuit**
Expand   ↩ Reply 🗑 Delete ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
@GabGuia69 :"(**#tumbatuit**
💬 View conversation   ↩ Reply 🗑 Delete ★ Favorite ••• More

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
@doralaprincesa Austria es sehr schon q me mandes un postal, y suerte con el vals! **#tumbatuit**
💬 View conversation   ↩ Reply ♺ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
Si repruebo, a Austria me voy. @GabGuia69 pq no te importo más? **#tumbatuit**
Expand   ↩ Reply 🗑 Delete ★ Favorite ••• More

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Figure 20: The top 5 results for the search query "tumbatuit" in Twitter, choosing to view "all" tweets. These tweets are the most recent with the tag #tumbatuit representing the first section of the *La tumba* twitterization performance.

By experiencing the performance in this manner, one accesses the entire

twitterization. The tweets are posted chronologically with the most recent

tweet, corresponding with the end of the first section of the Twitterization, at the

top of the results page. As such, reading down the page is comparable to starting

---

52 "**GabGuía69**: I think I'll write a novel #IWon #vengeanceissweet **Doralaprincesa**: NYC-> Paris -> Vienna…goodbye cruel world… Doralaprincesa: :"(**GabGuía69**: @doralaprincesa Austria is sehr schon send me a post card and good luck with the waltz! **Doralaprincesa**: If I fail, I'm going to Austria. @GabGuía69 y do I not matter to your more?"

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at the end of the novel. However, one can also choose to scroll to the bottom of

the page, if using a computer to access this performance, and experience the

twitterization from the beginning of the narrative. Because the narrative is no

longer linear and requires more interactivity, it is therefore helpful if one is

already familiar with the original text.

Accessing the twitterization through a cellular device, instead of a

computer also results in different levels of interactivity. For example, on a

cellular phone, a search for "#tumbatuit" only results in the "top" tweets, or most

popular, and does not give the option to explore "all" the tweets of the

categorized tag. Figure 21 shows the results of "top" tweets when searching for

"tumbatuit":

Results for tumbatuit

Top / All

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
NYC -> Paris -> Viena....adiós mundo cruel...#tumbatuit
Expand   ↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
Si repruebo, a Austria me voy. @GabGuia69 pq no te importo más?
#tumbatuit
Expand   ↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
#tumbatuit Papá y sr. Obesodioso hablan de política...q aburrido. El
Lohengrin y las vueltas serán mi salvación!
Expand   ↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
mañana todos sabrán la verdad cuando traigo las obras cmpltas de Chéjov a
clase #tumbatuit
Expand   ↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Kingslayer @HectorColorado · 3 May 2013
¿Cuando empieza la Feria de #Macuspana? #Twittab #TumbaTuit Jajaja
Expand   ↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

53

Figure 21: The first five "Top Tweets" search result for "tumbatuit."

The resulting tweets were listed as the "Top" results for "tumbatuit" on May 14,

2014. These results are updated regularly, and change based on an algorithm

that rates tweets that have caught the attention of others; meaning that they

have been retweeted, read multiple times, or have many responses. The tweets

---

[53] "**Doralaprincesa**: NYC-> Paris -> Vienna...goodbye cruel world... **Doralaprincesa**: If I fail, I'm going to Austria. @GabGuía69 y do I not matter to your more? **GabGuía69**: Dad and Mr. Fatgod talk about politics..how boring. The Lohengrin and the spins will be my salvation! **GabGuía69**: tomorrow all will know the truth when I bring Chekhov's cmplt works to class **Kingslayer**: When does the #Mascuspana Festival start?"

that are part of the performance come from different parts of the narrative, and the tweet from user "Kingslayer" is not related to the twitterization. Thus, experiencing the performance in this manner requires exploratory initiative and audience participation.

Another option is to access the narrative through each of the characters Twitter pages, exploring the text through different perspectives. Figure 22 shows GabGuia69's first tweets in this performance, beginning with "me levanto con el techo azul, como 100pre[54]":

---

[54] "I get up with the blue ceiling like always"

Figure 22: Gabriel Guía's first six tweets of the performance.

Experiencing the performance through the characters' Twitter pages isolates the

character's participation, which allows for a focused analysis of his or her part in

the whole of the twitterization. In certain tweets, the "@" symbol shows that

messages are directed to Dora (in this case), but her part of the conversation is

not visible from this page. An isolation of Dora's first tweets (Figure 23) shows

a different perspective of the beginning of the text:

---

[55] "**GabGuía69**: that damn woman. After class I'm going to the country to calm myself
GabGuía69: when @doralaprincesa threatens you, be careful. I'm not Chekhov, the words are
mine **GabGuía69**:@doralaprincesa I'm not in the mood for your stupid jokes
GabGuía69:@doralaprincesa I don't give a shit **GabGuía69**: Bread, milk, car (thanks dad) let's go
to class **GabGuía69**:I get up with the blue ceiling, like always"

Figure 23: Dora's first five tweets in the twitterizations performance.

Dora's tweets are all directed at Guía, and similarly, in the novel, she initiates all

of their conversations.

In addition to isolating the characters, specific conversations and

interactions can be isolated as well:

---

56 "**Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69 y not? **Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69Hiiiiii Chekhov! Come
swim :) <3 **Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69 haha **Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69: let's see if you
say that when the prof "discovers" that your paper is plagiarized **Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69:
I have a secret…"

Figure 24: Dora and Gabriel's first interaction in this twitterization performance.

Having the ability to further isolate specific conversations and characters is a

unique attribute to this performance resulting in a level of interactivity that

depends on the desires of the audience. The variability in the manners of access

and consumption of this performance allows the audience to create deformances

of the performance. Twitter, as a platform, makes the creation of each of the

different types of deformances (*reordering*, *isolating*, *altering*, and *adding*) easy.

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[57] "**Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69 I have a secret **GabGuía69**: @doralaprincesa I don't give a shit **Doralaprincesa**: @GabGuía69 Let's see if you say that when the prof "discovers" that your paper is plagiarized. **GabGuía69**: @doralaprincesa I'm not in the mood for your stupid jokes"

While this performance re-examines the novel, *La tumba*, and is an important analytical practice for its creator, it is equally as important for the part of the audience, and the different ways in which they experience the renewed text. For a knowing audience—one that is familiar with the original text—this twitterization causes them to reexamine their previous perceptions of the novel. Additionally, it acts as a uniting force, creating a group of insiders (those that understand the references and recognize the novel in tweet-form) in the context of a larger sphere of social networking. As such, in order to have a successful performance, it is integral to represent the core elements of the text so that it is recognizable to the audience.

3.2.5 Capturing the Essence of the Original

In addition to the performance condensing and re-presenting the text, it also decreases the number of active characters. Told in first person, the narrative centers on Guía; although other characters, at times, initiate conversation and drive the narrative. Figure 25 shows a dialogue network of the original novel. The arrows represent the directionality of the conversations, that is, who initiates the conversation.
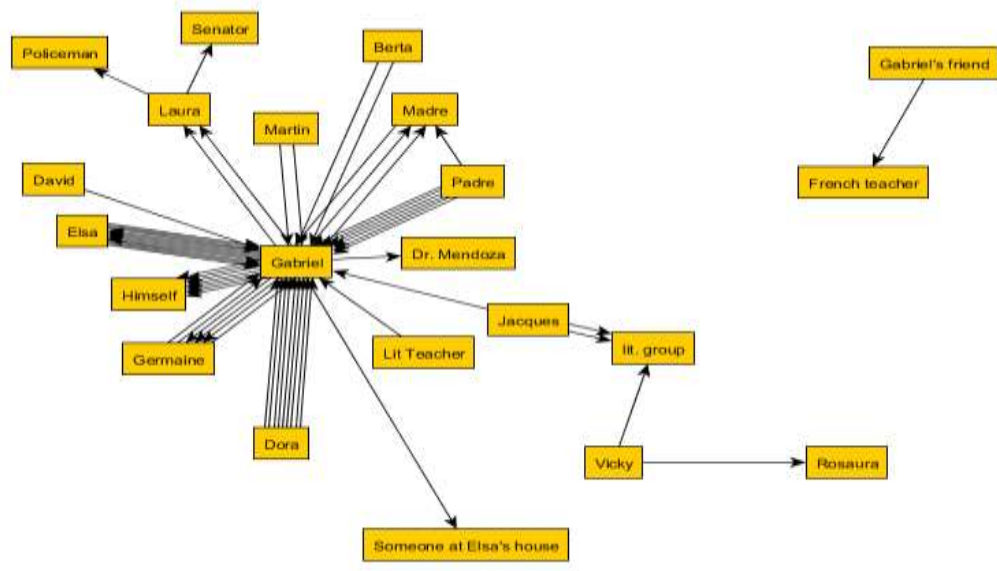
Figure 25: A dialogue network diagram based on the entire novel. This diagram was created with the program yEd and shows Gabriel as the center of the dialogue in the text.

Gabriel is the center of the network diagram. As such, it is important that in the

twitterization, Gabriel is still the center of the performance. For simplification,

in the twitterization, I omit characters from the social media platform, such as

Gabriel's parents and his Aunt. I reference these characters, but exclude them

from their teenage children's social network, as occurs in social media today.

This exclusion centralizes the performance on the characters whose actions and

interactions are essential to the plot.

The characters who do have active roles in this twitterization are Gabriel,

his girlfriends, Dora, Elsa, and Germaine, as well as his cousin, Laura. The

secondary characters Martin and Jacques also participate but their roles in the

twitterization mirror those of the original text, in that they offer situational

commentary in order to set up interaction between Guía and one of the main

female characters.

As seen in the following tweets, Martin hosts a pool party at which Guía

has a chance to confront Dora the first time after she accuses him of plagiarizing

Checkov:

58

In this instance, Martín's tweet sets up the scene for Dora and Guía's encounter

at the pool party where they continue goading each other before agreeing on

friendship and eventually ending the night with a sexual encounter.

In the original text, this interaction takes place on a public stage: at

Martín's house, amidst a pool party, where all of their peers witness their

interactions. Agustín writes, "Saludé a todos, incluyéndola [Dora], y sin más me

tiré al agua. Dora también lo hizo y nadamos el uno hacia el otro hasta

encontrarnos en el centro de la alberca. *Éramos la expectación general.* Todos

---

58 "**Martin:** what day is it? Thirsty Thursday? Come to my house for the partay! Drinks, pool, and you (whoever you may be)
Gabguía: Well, if you are going to confuse me with the great writer, Checkov...that's not so bad @Martymart on my way to your house, man"

habían dejado de hablar y nos miraban"[59] (16-7; my emphasis). Just as Dora and

Guía become the spectacle for their peer group in the original text, the

twitterization and subsequent tweets of this encounter are enacted on the digital

stage, to highlight the public aspect of their interactions in their relationship. In

the novel, Dora and Guía's interaction at the pool party takes place in a series of

three pages (16-19), yet twitter allows for a more condensed version of their

interaction:

---

[59] "I greeted everyone, including her [Dora]. Without much ado, I jumped into the water. Dora too, and we swam towards each other, meeting in the center of the pool. *We were the main attraction*. Everyone had stopped talking and looked at us."

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
el match duró poco ;) **#tumbatuit**
Expand   ↩ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
@GabGuia69 **#tumbatuit** celebramos nuestra amistad. Tú, yo y un hectólitro de whisky, al jardín! <3<3<3
💬 View conversation   ↩ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
#tumbatuit guardo mi venganza por otro día
Expand   ↩ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
@GabGuia69 pq no? **#tumbatuit**
Expand   ↩ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Gabriel Guía @GabGuia69 · May 10
@doralaprincesa y q? ahora somos amigos? **#tumbatuit**
💬 View conversation   ↩ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

Dora Castillo @doralaprincesa · May 10
@GabGuia69 Hooooola Chéjov! Vente a nadar! ;) <3 **#tumbatuit**
Expand   ↩ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

60

What remains is the public and spectacle nature of their interactions in this scene. In the novel, their friends act as witnesses, while on Twitter, it is the public and social space.

In this performance, as exemplified in the above exchange, I leave much to the imagination and the powers of inference of an audience familiar with the text. In certain exchanges, it is the information that is left out that is important; creating a narrative behind the tweets. This method draws an audience into the

---

[60] "**Dora**:@Gabguía Hiiiiiii Checkov! Come swim! ;) <3 **GabGuía**: and wha? Now we r friends? **Dora**:@Gabguía y not? **Dora**: @gabguía let's celebrate our new friendship, you, me, and an 1/8th of whiskey, to the garden! <3<3<3 **Gabguía:** the match was short ;)."

text by adding an air of mystery or asking them to question what is really going on.   By focusing on only capturing the essence of the novel, the performance avoids a mere summary of the text and instead creates a space where the audience must have an active role in piecing together the story.

Another example where omission plays a key role in the performance is Guía's sexual encounter with his aunt.[61] None of the actions between these characters is explicitly recounted, and the allusions and omissions allow for a reader to question what actually occurred:

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

la tia pide un baile…american style

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

swing down sweet chariot…#Elvis

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

no sdstoy segurs q sesa buenssa idesa X)

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

Mareado. Vueltas, vueltas, vueltas. El vértigo. Círculos. Ondas. Giros, órbitas. ¡El vértigo! Las vueltas vueltas, círculos.

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

Creo que I'm gonna be sick.

---

[61] This interchange occurs in a later section of the novel and is not yet part of the twitterization currently posted on Twitter. As such, it is presented in script form.

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

se fue. Tan rápido cómo llegó.[62]

The succession of tweets suggests a series of events. First, Tía Berta asks for a

dance, Guía tweets lyrics of the song, he drunkenly tweets that he is not sure it is

a good idea—including an inebriated emoticon and a mess of letters and

misspelled words exhibit his high level of inebriation—and the spins and turns

that are associated with his feelings of loss of control return.   Afterwards, he is

repulsed and sick, and then he comments on his aunt's quick exit. These tweets

give no strong evidence of what occurs, yet they create the question that perhaps

some inappropriate behavior took place. It is not until later in the performance,

after an exchange of tweets between Guía and his cousin, that a reader might

connect the full scope of the interaction between Guía and his aunt:

> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
> ahora mi prima sabe todos mis secretos
> **Laura** @Lalaura
> jaja, mi primo, anda incestuosón…quién habría sabido…jaja
>
> @gabguía me voy antesdeq tengas ideas..[63]

Laura makes light of Guía's situation, yet by labeling Guía as "incestuosón", she

connects the previous tweets regarding Guía and Tía Berta. The use of omission

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[62] "**Gabguía**: The aunt asks for a dance…american style **Gabguía**: swing down sweet chariot… **Gabguía**: I'm nost sures thiiso is a gddood ideas.. X) **Gabguía**: Dizzy, spins, spins, spins. Vertigo. Circles. Waves, turns, orbits. Vertigo! Spins, spins, circles. **Gabguía**: I think I'm gonna be sick. **Gabguía**: She left. As fast as she came."

[63] "**Gabguía**: now my cousin knows all of my secrets **LaLaura:** haha, my cousin, the incestuous one!. . .who would have known…haha..@gabguía I'm out b4 you get any ideas . . ."

in this case highlights Guía's repression of the situation between him and his aunt, as well as creating a space where a reader might question what is actually occurring in the text. In this way, through the use of different tweet a reader has an active role in piecing together the narrative.

Cousin Laura's role in the performance contrasts with the roles of the other characters that tweet. Dora, Germaine, and Elsa all tweet as a response to Guía's tweets. While they have their own profiles, their tweets are in the form of conversation with the protagonist. Laura, however, tweets on her Twitter account outside of conversations with Guía. The rationale for this in terms of the twitterization is that for Laura's short existence in the original text, from when she first appears to her death soon after, she complements Guía. In the original text, she is the only female character that Guía treats as an equal. It follows, then, that in the performance of the text, her role exists outside of her familial relationship with Guía. The following series of tweets show Laura's short existence in the novel.

> **Laura** @Lalaura
> @gabguíá buenooooss diaaasss primito mío :)
> **Laura** @Lalaura
> Rock > Duke (ellington)
> **Laura** @Lalaura
> a ver…cuánto recibiremos por eso

Laura @Lalaura

jajaja...otra vez evité una multa #exito #ventajadesersexy

Laura @Lalaura

¡Patinemos! #arenamexico

Laura @Lalaura

ahora: desmadre en la bonita casa del senador Robatealgo[64]

Laura @Lalaura

...

Laura @Lalaura

---

[64] "**LaLaura**: @gabguía goooood mooorning dear cousin! **Lalaura**: Rock > Duke (ellington) **LaLaura**: Let's see...how much can I get for this [photo of brooch] **LaLaura:** hahah....once again I get out of a ticket #success #advantageofbeingsexy **LaLaura:** Let's skate! #arenamexico **LaLaura**: making a mess in the beautiful house of Senator Robyougood **LaLaura**: [photo of speedometer]."

Only one of Laura's tweets is directed at Guía, and for a time, she takes control of the narrative of the twitterization sending tweets and posting pictures of her day. Her last tweet, a picture of the speedometer at a fast speed, implies the reason for her death—a car crash—and in the twitterized version it suggests unsafe driving both at high speeds, and for using social media while driving.

Laura's death, in both the original text, and in the twitterized performance marks a change in Guía as he laments the loss of the one person he believes understands him, and continues to feel dissatisfied, depressed, and out of control in his life. This change in the performance is marked by the increased frequency of his tweets and the disconnection of his tweets and his reality. A benefit of the performance is that it takes place in real time, as such, a quick succession of tweets represents Guía's frantic nature. The following excerpt from the performance would be tweeted in rapid succession, showing Guía's desperation with his life and his first toying with the concept of his suicide:

> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
> gané, pero no me siento mejor…me voy, no sé dónde.

> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
> ¿tengo deseos de volver?

> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
> ¿Me esfumo para siempre del círculo o sigo, sigo hasta que explote?

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

Gabriel Guía @ GabGuia69

rumbo a mi casa[65]

In this scene, Guía is upset despite having just "won" by sleeping with Germaine.

He realizes that this empty conquest does not improve his disposition. He begins

to doubt the existence that he leads, but ends up deciding to return home, and

continue this downward cycle. The quick succession of the tweets highlights

Guía's self-questioning and doubt. Instead of tweeting about day-to-day

happenings, or in conversation, his commentary becomes existential in nature,

changing the tone of his character.

In addition to the quick paced and more serious comments, Guía's tweets

shift to become more cryptic. This change further reflects his unstable mental

state. The "clics" that enter Guía's head in the original text, find their way into

the twitterization. In the same way that their appearance is unexplained in the

original, they appear without comment in the performance, mirroring the affect

that they have on the reader:

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[65] " **Gabguía**: I won, but I don't feel better…I'm out, I don't know where. **Gabguía**: Do I even want to return? **Gabguía**: Do I vanish forever from this circle or do I continue, continue until I explode? **Gabguía**: [photo of alley way] **Gabguía**: on my way home"

> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
>
> Clic, clic.
>
> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
>
> me duele la cabeza. Medicina? No. El Lohengrin otra vez.
>
> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
>
> suciedad, sociedad, suciedad.
>
> **Gabriel Guía** @ GabGuia69
>
> Clic, clic, clic.[66]

The "clics" remain open to interpretation and add to Guía's further mental destabilization. Because the twitterization takes place in real time, both the pace and content of the tweets add dimension to this critical performative.

In attempting to capture the essence of the text, the twitterization reflects many of the same experiences a reader might have when reading the original. At the same time, it is a text condensed and altered in order to fit within the restrictions of the platform. One of the goals of the performance is to remain as true to the original text while transposing it to a different medium in a different time period. As such, one might question how to gauge if the adaptation captures the essence of the original. A comparison that offers some clues to this the word concordances from each of the texts. While this is not a sure-fire method of deciphering a text's "essence" it allows the examination of the text at the smallest comprehensible unit while creating a visualization of the text at the same time.

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[66] " **Gabguía**: Clic, clic. **Gabguía**: my head hurts. Medicine? No. *El Lohengrin* again. **Gabguía**: Putrid, public, putrid **Gabguía**: Clic, clic, clic."

To compare the word concordances I used IBM's Many Eyes program to

create word clouds.[67] In these clouds, the larger a word, the more occurrences it

has in the text. One benefit for Spanish language texts is that with the Many Eyes

word tree tool, there is a Spanish language word-stop option. This takes away

some of the more common words. While this Spanish-language-friendly function

is available on this specific Many Eyes tool, other tools within the program prove

to be more difficult when exploring Spanish-language texts. Figure 26 shows a

world cloud visualization of the original novel.

Figure 26: Word cloud of José Agustín's *La tumba*

What immediately stand out are a few words: Elsa, Dora, Casa, Clic. The result

makes sense in terms of the text: "Dora" and "Elsa" are the two female characters

with which Gabriel has the most intense relationships, "Casa" is the scene of

much of the narrative's action (both Gabriel's "casa" and the "casas" of his

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[67] The word cloud tool differs from the other Many Eyes concordance tool because it offers a
variety of layout options, creating a more visually pleasing design.

friends), and "Clic" is the onomatopoeic word that enters his psyche and which ends the novel in repetition. As such, there is a correlation between most repeated words, and important themes/characters, a result that is perhaps obvious. Yet the goal of this visualization is not to analyze the text itself, but rather to see how it relates to its adaptation. As such, I created a world cloud based on a transcript of the twitterized version as shown in Figure 27

Figure 27: Word cloud of transcript of a twitterized *La tumba*

The resulting word cloud in Figure 27 is not completely accurate. However, I have included it to demonstrate the importance of understanding one's data before creating a visualization, and the potential for creating misleading visualizations. The word cloud was created using a transcript of the tweets, as such, each tweet was preceded by the username that tweeted it. "Gabguía" tweeted frequently, and consequently, his name dwarves the other words; despite the fact that "Dora" and "Elsa" are still barely visible. Changing the way

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the data is input into the program produces a more accurate result as seen in

Figure 28.

Figure 28: Word cloud of the twitterization of *La tumba* with the transcript identifiers taken out

In the revised example, "@gabguía" still has a major presence, because it

is utilized frequently as the others send tweets to Gabriel. There are many

similarities in terms of word use between this word cloud and the visualization

created for the original text. Mainly, the names of "Elsa" and "Dora" are

prominent as well as the other female characters "Lalaura" and "GermaineG".

The terms "Casa" and "Clic" are also pronounced, as they were in the original.

While this process does not guarantee that the twitterization completely

captures the essence of the original work, it is a useful tool for a base for visual

evaluation. Comparing the performance to the original is a worthwhile practice,

in order to analyze the connection between the adaptation and the original. With this type of transposition, it is also important to note what is lost from the original and what potential gains this performance offers.

3.2.6 Losses/Gains

Despite the twitterization becoming a creative and ludic outlet for this text, there are some aspects that are lost from the original. One possible complaint of this type of critical performative is the loss of "literariness" of the new text. Indeed, creating a twitterized version of the text moves away from the standard novel structure and supports the practice of what some might call the poor grammar usage of this this generation's digital natives. Across media and numerous disciplines, many lament the loss of basic spelling and grammar skills. The youth of today's generation has never had to write without spell check. Between emails, texting, and online social media, society is more textually based than previous generations. One might expect then, that writing skills would improve, however, with rapid forms of communication, many capitalization, spelling, and format rules are not invoked, and instead, knowledge of proper formatting and content deteriorates.

However, language is dynamic and continues to change with the creation of new devices and new methods of communication. The twitterization performance of *La tumba* may not be a traditional mode, but it does not aim to devaluate the original work of literature, rather to let it be reborn into the

current age of digitalization. To a certain extent, this movement parallels Agustín's use of slang and creative invention in terms of the language he uses in the novel. Agustín writes the novel in the voice of a certain generation and for that generation. Similarly, by utilizing the digital language of the youth, the performance better reaches his intended audience. Although a good deal of certain elements from the original text is in the twitterization, it has various advantages. Both the readers and the creator benefit from the performance.

Using a social media platform mimics the realistic quality of the text and brings it to life. The twitterization becomes a digital, textual, social, and theatrical interpretation of the novel and Twitter acts as the stage for this performance. The performance goes beyond giving readers an adapted text to read; it creates a visualized space in which the novel and its characters exist.

This performance is not only beneficial for those who might read the tweets, but for the creator of the twitterization as well. The methodology requires a close reading of the text and helps foster interpretive skills. While *La tumba's* plot, language, and teen protagonist lend themselves to this transposition, this type of performance is not limited to a specific kind of text. It has implications for use as a didactic exercise on any text in a literature course. The decisions of what to include or exclude in a text or how to translate certain passages are considerations that aid and promote close reading practices. I examine the pedagogic use of critical performatives further in Chapter Four.

3.2.7 The Value of the Performance

The performance has multiple levels of significance. First, in terms of creation, the twitterization is a practice in close and slow reading. The act of creating the performance highlights the subconscious observances of the text because one is trying to capture the essential elements and create a focal point of the most important events of the text. The performance is based on each "performer's" reading of the text, and as such, each interpretation or highlight can be different.

Because the act of creating a performance holds an analytic value in relation to the text, the formation of critical performatives can be an excellent pedagogical tool in both literature and language classrooms. It aids the reading and interpretation of a text. As previously discussed, in order to re-create a text, one must carefully study the original. By creating and comparing their different performances, students note their own distinct readings of a text.

For language students, a twitterization slows them down and lets them work directly with the language. It teaches new vocabulary, slang, and recreates an authentic use of language through a popular social network. In Chapter Four, I examine a case study of the use of performances in a classroom, and the benefits of the different performances that groups of students created as a final project in a survey literature course.

While the previous discussion of the relevance of the performances focuses on the benefits of the practice for the creator, be it in or out of the

classroom, there are also positive results on the part of the audience or readers

of a performance. In the case of the twitterization, the text becomes interactive.

A reader can choose how to consume the text: to read it in its narrative form,

organized by the common hashtag, or to examine the text sorted by character or

conversation. Because it is a real time performance, as well as the fact that the

tweets remain posted, the audience can observe the performance along with

each published tweet, as well as view them after the fact. The many

combinations of ways to read the twitterization demonstrate audience control

over different perspectives of the text.

Additionally, because the stage is a public platform, the audience is

composed of those both familiar and unfamiliar with *La tumba*. While the

intended audience for this performance is those who are already familiar with

the text, it is publically available for all to see and may pique the interest of

others who are on Twitter. As of May 2014, Twitter has two-hundred-and-fifty-

five million monthly active registered users[68]. While clearly not all of these

users will investigate the #tumbatuit performance, the stage is large. The

twitterization has the ability to reach to many corners of the world.

The critical performative of the twitterization of *La tumba* is an organic

extension of the novel in a present-day format. The diary-like reporting

language of the narrative and themes driven by teenage angst support the

transition of the original novel to the twitterized text. While there are many

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[68]https://about.twitter.com/company

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challenges due to the process of condensing this text, they are counterbalanced by the benefits that the twitterization offers.

The twitterization has value both in terms of those who create it, and those who consume it. The creating and the reading of the performance encourage closeness to the text from both directions. It also holds the potential to increase public awareness of the text and promote a return to the original text.   This section focuses on the intended audience, Spanish speakers already familiar with the original, and a single-author-adapted text. In the subsequent section, I explore a collective performance with the help of an audience unfamiliar with the text, in attempts to better investigate the connection between taking part in a performance for the purpose of promoting interest in a text.

3.3 Case Study on Collective Performance

In March 2013, I presented the concept of a collective performance of *La tumba* at a conference in the English Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. This time I tried to crowd source the content of the Twitter performance and in English to better reach the present audience.

The format was straight forward: each participant watched an introduction presentation of the novel and the concept of twitterization, and then was sent to a page with a random situation generator. With the press of a button, situations, quotations, or commands would pop up on the screen. With

access to the twitter accounts of both "Gabriel Guía" and "Dora Castillo", the

participants sent tweets or started following other members/groups based on

the introductory information they had learned about the text, and the random

situation generated at the end of the presentation.

The audience was mainly English speakers who were unfamiliar with José

Agustín and *La tumba*, although there were a few participants who spoke

Spanish and had read the novel. The ultimate goal of this performance was to

increase the novel's exposure to an English speaking crowd and to make each

participant a co-creator of the performance of the novel.

3.3.1 Introductory Presentation

In order for each participant to learn more about the novel, they watched

an introductory presentation about both the novel and the concept of this

performance. In the introduction, on the screen the participants read about

some benefits of this performance (Figure 29) and also were briefly introduced

to the characters who would be tweeting, Gabriel (Figure 30) and Dora (Figure

31).

Figure 29: This screenshot from the twitterization performance introduces the participant to some advantages of the performed text.

Figure 30: This screenshot introduces the character of Gabriel. Although only a brief description, it offers a snapshot of the protagonist and his life, much like a profile on different social networks.

Figure 31: Similar to Gabriel's bio, Dora is introduced briefly, highlighting her social position in the novel in relation to Gabriel, as well as her likes and dislikes at this point in the novel.

The set up for this performance is purposely limited by character and scene. That is, the participants are only introduced to two characters and the given information references only the opening section of the novel. I did this because many of the participants know nothing about the novel. To go into too much detail or to introduce more characters would be overwhelming. As such, by limiting the interactions, the participants direct their attention to two of the characters, learn about them, and take on their "roles" in Twitter. I also included some important questions to consider during the twitterization (Figure 32). This helped prepare the participants for making their contributions.

Figure 32: This screenshot from the introductory presentation shows the participants several questions they should consider before adding to the twitterized performance.

The goal of the introductory presentation was to give the same background to all of the collective performance participants. Since the personal backgrounds and relationships to the text and author varied, this introduction allowed for basic information to be addressed before active participation.

3.3.2 Collective Performance

Participants were then given an action, or the opportunity to choose their own action through the random situation generator. This step was to keep the tweets in line with the original text and to help guide them if they were unsure of

what action to take. Additionally, the generator creates a game-like atmosphere

to keep the participants interested and encourage involvement on different

levels. Figure 33 shows an example of four different situations generated from

the Random situation generator.

Figure 33: Examples of different random situations that a participant could see in this collective performance.

While some of the situations relate directly to the text, such as "Dora

invites Gabriel to join her literary circle" others, such as "Pick a band for Gabriel

to follow on Twitter" encourage an action outside of the textual plane. The latter

situation focuses more on the characterization of Gabriel within the collective

performance. A participant must consider his or her knowledge of the

character—based either on the introduction or previous knowledge—then

synthesize this information and make a decision on behalf of the character.

The random situation of "Clic" offers another level of interaction with the

text in this collective performance. As this term appears unexplained in the

novel at ostensibly random locations, a reader may be unsure of its meaning and

interpretation. Similarly, the use of the "clic" as a random situation recreates the

atmosphere that the reader experiences in the scope of the collective

performance.

Participants were asked to complete a minimum of one action for the

collective performance—from responding to a random situation to choosing a

group or fellow user to follow on Twitter. While the participants had varying

levels of familiarity with Twitter, often, after composing one tweet, a participant

would want to continue in order to flesh out their version of the character either

by adding more tweets or following different organizations or people.

Because this is a collective performance, the resulting construction of

Gabriel Guia's twitter profile and character stems from the additions of the

different co-creators. Thus, the tweets present differences in tones and content.

Figure 34 shows a sample of Guía's tweets from the collective performance.

Figure 34: Tweets from Gabriel Guía's account during the collective performance. The tweets are from different co-creators of the performance based on their knowledge of the text and information gained from the performance's introduction.

While some of the tweets remark on Gabriel's activities, others converse

with Dora (@Doralaprincesa). Additionally, co-creators made decisions based

on their perception of Gabriel Guía as a character. For example, when tweeting

Dora, one co-creator writes: "Keats and Yeats on your side or mine?"

incorporating a cultural reference from a song by the band The Smiths. This co-

creator believed that Guía would be a fan of the Smiths and included this

reference in his portion of the twitterization.

Similarly, other co-creators include alternative spellings such as the

words "dued", "2nite", "any1" and "cr8zy". These additions reflect the

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typography often seen on social media platforms, such as Twitter, or in text messaging, and also echo Agustín's use of ludic use of language in the text.

3.3.3 Results

This performance succeeded in creating interest in *La tumba* within the group of conference participants. Whereas the goals of previous performances were to explore the defamiliarization of the text, in this performance, it was the audience that was unfamiliar with the novel. As such, the co-creators offered a fresh perspective based on the controlled amount of information they received about the text.

The collective performance twitterization varies greatly from the #tumbatuit performance, in that the performance was not based on passages from the novel, but rather situations from the text. However, the main focus of the collective twitterization is the participation from a variety of co-creators and to increase the awareness of *La tumba* to an audience of those not necessarily familiar with the text. It is the interactivity that supports ludic interaction with *La tumba* and generates a new group of scholars interested in *La tumba*.

3.4 Conclusions

Both of the #tumbatuit and the collective twitterization of *La tumba* recreate the original text in a new space. Both also depend greatly on the creator's (or co-creators') perspectives of the text and their connections to it, be

it long studied or newly forged. This connection between creator and text aids

the process of interpretation and analysis.

The examples of critical performatives in this chapter focus on the use of

Twitter as a platform for performances. There are many elements in the text

that support this organic extension of the novel to a present-day format. The

diary-like reporting language of the narrative and themes driven by teenage

angst support the transition of the original novel to the twitterized text. While

there are many challenges due to the process of creating the adaptation and

translation of this text, they are counterbalanced by the benefits that the

twitterization offers. However, Twitter is only one of the limitless options of

performance spaces. In the next chapter, I examine a case study of student-

created performances of *La tumba* and the use of performances as a pedagogical

tool.

Chapter 4: Teaching Implications of Critical Performatives

4.1 Introduction

In the summer of 2013, I taught a Survey of Hispanic Literature course.

Teaching this course allowed me to organize the curriculum to include both the

methodologies relating to my own research and the text, *La tumba* as one of the

selections representing twentieth century Mexico. The class had thirteen

students and was held from 8:00am-9:05 am four days a week for six weeks. As

a six-week course, it is considered an intensive course, where we covered a great

amount of material attempting to include as many literary eras and genres from

a diverse selection of Spanish speaking nations.

   I introduced the concept of critical performatives early on, as my plan

was for the students to create their own performances of a text in groups as the

final project and presentation for the course. I aimed to encourage the students'

creative expression and instill the tools for traditional methods of textual

analysis to help prepare them future literature courses.

4.2 Logistics

   At the beginning of the course, I told the students that part of their final

grade would be a group performance relating to one or multiple texts read

throughout the summer session. These performances, I explained were not

solely a theatrical presentation of a text (although, that would be allowed) but an

expression of the text based on their reading and analysis. The guidelines for the

project were purposefully unstructured, allowing for student-oriented design of

these performances that would reflect a creative interpretation and analysis of a

text or texts. I encouraged the use of digital tools, but did not limit them to using

any specific type of technology or none at all. My role would be to guide them,

but not explicitly direct them. My approach to this final project was new to the

students, and at first they were unused to this type of freedom in an academic

setting. In order to increase their comfort in expressing their own ideas and

analyses, I created another course requirement to prepare them for this unstructured project.

I required the students to create blogs, and to write approximately five-hundred word post twice a week. The posts were open. They needed not answer specific questions, but comment on the readings in some way, even if it was to say why they did not like a particular reading. This was initially met with confusion, one particular student asked, "Isn't there a list of questions I have to answer?" I replied that if he felt more comfortable, he could look up questions about the text and base his blog entry on those questions. There were no rules, only the need to respond, in some way, to the assigned text. The content was up to each student, and I assured them that they could write on any theme or connection to the text that they wanted. They soon embraced the idea and the results were positive. The majority of the entries discussed salient questions/themes/points of analysis of the texts. Additionally, because of the freedoms, many entries exceeded my expectations in terms of creativity and additional materials. The students included links to pictures, videos and other resources about the texts; they became active readers. They were also required to comment on other students' blogs, and this fomented discussion outside of the classroom. Using blogs for reading responses is not a new idea, but in this case it supplied the necessary foundation to promote the student-driven final project focus.

The projects became an over-arching theme of the course—something that the students had on their minds starting from the first few weeks of readings. I encouraged them to write up project ideas in their blogs and to read about what interested the other students so that they could form groups based on these interests.

In order to form the groups, we had a casual "speed dating" type discussion session during class where students took a minute or two to talk to another student about their initial thoughts about the projects: which text they wanted to use, how they visualized the creative expression of this project, which tools they planned to utilize to achieve these goals. I chose this process of group formation over teacher-assigned groups because I wanted the groups to be formed organically. This "speed-dating" project session allowed the students to get a chance to talk with each of their classmates about their own thoughts about the project. The number of students per group was not limited, and at the end of that particular class, three distinct groups emerged: two four person groups, and one five person group.

While most of the work was done outside of the classroom, the students were responsible for turning in a project proposal, and various other small deadlines that let me know that how they were progressing. We also had a few in-class work days where the groups would meet and work, and I was available for any questions. While I had not assigned the project a specific text, and encouraged them to choose whatever text(s) they desired, each group chose to

work with Agustín's *La tumba* in some manner. I attribute this decision to the students' ability to relate to the text (all of the students in this course were between the ages of 18-22) which allowed them to see connections to their lives, and hence, create performances of the text in a natural manner.

The students presented the critical performatives at the end of the course and they were required to evaluate their own work and the work of the other groups after each presentation and offer commentary on each performance. It is important to note that while the class was an ideal size (small), that is not the only key to its success.   I recognize that a small class cannot always be the case in literature courses, and suggest that adaptations be made to suit each class. I have used elements of critical performatives while teaching in larger classes for my own presentations and have had students create similar textual performances, so while I enjoyed teaching the course with thirteen students, it is possible to engage in similar activities with classes of different sizes.

4.3 Group One: The Social Network "La tumba moderna"

4.3.1 Introduction to Group One's Performance
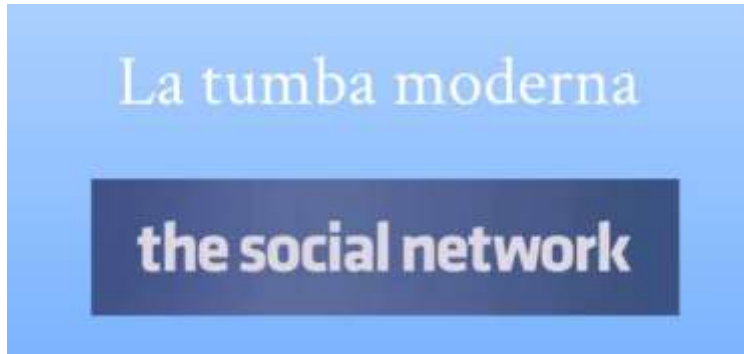
Figure 35: Graphic from Group One's presentation

This group was composed of four students who chose to make a modern version of *La tumba* using the social network, Facebook. Each student took on the role of one of the main characters: Gabriel, Dora, Germaine, and Elsa and created these accounts on Facebook. The students interacted through Facebook, posting photos, writing poetry, and using the chat function. The performance presented Gabriel and three of his relationships with the different women of the text, examining the interactions between the characters—not only the relationship between Gabriel and each woman, but also the relationships between the women as well.

For the in-class presentation, each student exhibited their page on Facebook and then the group presented using the cloud-based software, Prezi; Figure 35 shows the title slide. This presentation highlighted specific interactions between the characters and each student discussed pertinent

aspects of their analysis of the characterization of Gabriel, Dora, Germaine, and Elsa which assisted them in taking on these roles.

As part of the project grade, students were asked to grade themselves and their group mates and give commentary regarding the project. This commentary gives insight to the students' motivation and what they learned from the creative process of the project. One Group One student remarked: "Aprendí que aunque esta novel [sic] fue escrita hace mucho tiempo, todavía podemos interpretarla en un contexto moderno" ("I learned that although this novel was written a long time ago, we can still interpret it in a modern context"). Their modern adaption supports the thematic timelessness of the novel. The characters' adolescent angst and melodrama is something that is present (and easily visible) on Facebook.

Another student comments that her relationship to the novel changed through their Facebook performance: "Al principio no me gustó mucho la obra pero ahora siento que conozco los personajes de *La tumba*" ("At first I did not like the novel much, but now I feel like I know the characters of *La tumba*"). By having to take on the roles of different characters, the students acquainted themselves with the social network of the novel; experiencing how the characters interacted on a more intimate level than in their first readings of the text. Additionally, by using Facebook—a tool that present day students are comfortable with—the student became more connected to the text. He was able

to better connect with the text using a method of communication and language with which he was more familiar.

4.3.2 Character Profiles

By "becoming" a character, each student created a unique Facebook profile page that he or she believed represented the likes/dislikes of the characters. Additionally, each student chose profile pictures and a background design that they believed best represented the character—as though they were casting a movie of the text. Two students picked pictures of well-known celebrities to represent their characters, while the other two picked pictures of people they knew, shown in Figure 36, Figure 37, Figure 38, and Figure 39 below:

Figure 36: Actor Gael García Bernal as Gabriel Guía. This student highlighted Gabriel's love of whiskey and cigarettes in the photos he chose.

Figure 37: Singer Ariana Grande as Dora. This student focused on Dora's move to Austria with this Austrian postcard; a reference of the postcard she sends to Guía.

Figure 38: This student's interpretation of Germaine was that of an artistic, alternative (slightly) older woman.

Figure 39: In this photo, Elsa is seen smoking, similar to Gabriel, and her background picture represents her philosophy studies.

Through creating a profile for each character, each student created a life for the character outside of the text, based on their own perception of the character and modernization of the novel. While they modernized the text in certain ways, they still included allusions to Agustín's era. This is in part because of the cyclical nature of style and popularity—what was popular in the early 1960s is seeing a reemergence of popularity in today's youth culture. For example, a sampling of Dora and Germaine's "Likes[69]" do this in Figure 40 and Figure 41:

Figure 40: Dora's Facebook "Likes".

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[69] The "Like" function on Facebook allows users to exhibit their interests in music, literature, and film among other hobbies.

Figure 41: Germaine's "Likes"

The modern Dora, according to this student, appreciates more contemporary musicians and writers such as Mexican popular music star Gloria Trevi and Jonathan Safran Foer's novel, *Everything is Illuminated*, as well as authors that Agustín's Dora might have enjoyed: Sylvia Plath and Allen Ginsberg. Similarly, the modern Germaine is a fan of both Jazz great Thelonious Monk, and present-day musician, Feist.

The synthesis of the different eras was important to the students of this group. They wanted to transpose the emphasis of music and letters that they perceived as an important element in the original text. Agustín's Gabriel, Dora, Germaine, and Elsa, all had interests in philosophy, jazz, Russian and French literature, and rock and roll. They appreciated a mix of highbrow culture and

alternative youth expression. This juxtaposition of cultural elements the

students believed was important to bring to their performance. As such, they

chose a mix of artists and writers that represent this range: canonical texts, as

well as popular but still considered "high(er)" cultured or alternative authors,

and classic and alternative musicians instead of Top Forty musical artist.

The goal of these profiles is to fill out the characters—to give them more

depth. This was done in part by creating an online identity and presence

through their interests. Another aspect of their Facebook characterization is

their interactions with others in their comments and posts.

4.3.3 Content of the Facebook Social Network

During Group One's presentation, the students commented that one of the

reasons why they chose Facebook for their performance was that it acted like a

diary, albeit public, where one could use the different functions to express their

feelings as well as map their locations and share pictures. They believed this

connected to the original work, which reads like Gabriel Guía's diary due to its

first person narrative voice, and the quotidian and emotional content offered

throughout the text.

While using the platform of Facebook still maintains a sense of textuality

to the performance through the written comments and updates, it also offers

more dimension to the characters of Dora, Germaine, and Elsa in addition to that

of Gabriel. This performance gives the female characters a stronger voice than

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they have in the novel. Where the novel is told from the perspective of Gabriel, and the female characters enter and exit based on his accounts of their behaviors and personalities, this modern Facebook performance of the text empowers the female characters and gives them certain volition.   They also communicate with each other and comment on each other's walls, as seen in Figure 42:

Figure 42: Elsa updates her relationship status with Gabriel, Germaine and Dora comment.

In the space of this performance, the female characters become more fully formed and visible. While the narrative of this performance is still driven by their relationships with Gabriel, they each have a place to express their own feelings and emotions, for example, Elsa's feelings about her decision to have an abortion (Figure 43). Additionally, because of their more active roles, they are able to express elements of the plot that Gabriel shares in the novel, such as Dora's plans for her travels abroad (Figure 44).

Figure 43: Elsa posts a Pro-choice image on her profile wall

Figure 44: Dora shares her flight plan heading back to Vienna. In the novel, it is Gabriel who remarks on her travels: "Dora había abordado un confortable jet hacia Mérida, luego a Miami, a Chicago, y sin conexión, a Viena" (110)[70]

Additionally, this performance does not appear out of place on the chosen

platform, but rather it fits into the social framework of Facebook interactions.

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[70] "Dora had boarded a comfortable jet to Mérida, then to Miami, to Chicago, and non-stop to Vienna"

As such, one who is familiar with the text would appreciate the interpretation of these characters and this narrative, and if one were unfamiliar with the text, the post would seem like those of a normal teenage interaction.

This performance utilizes a combination of direct dialogue and quotations from the text and also the students' interpretation and synthesis of those elements. In the example in Figure 45 , Gabriel and Elsa begin their relationship with over-the-top statements expressing their love:
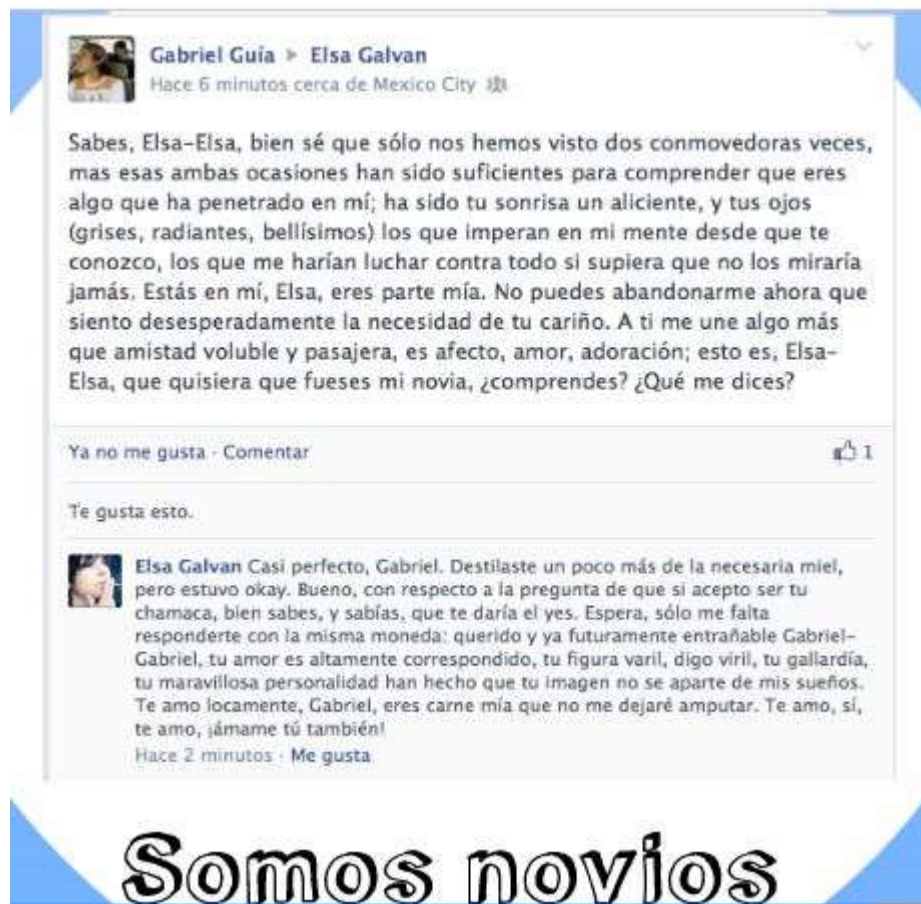
Figure 45: Screenshot from the Prezi presentation showing the Facebook messages that mark the beginning of Elsa and Gabriel's relationship, a conversation expressing their love.[71]

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[71] Excerpted text from pages 90-1 in *La tumba*

In this instance, Elsa and Gabriel's comments are direct citations from the novel. The students wanted to include a mix of Agustín's words in some posts and their words in others because they found value in Agustín's original text and believed that even set in a present-day performance using a social network platform, Agustín's language still resonates with current youth generations.

Perhaps because of their language abilities, Group One was inclined to keep longer soliloquies in Agustín's words and decided to alter shorter conversations to represent larger themes or plot points in the novel. For example, when Dora returns to Mexico after living in Europe with her aunt, she has changed; she no longer parties and has become politically active. When she meets with Gabriel, she is disappointed to find that he, however, has not changed. This exchange is an important point in the novel, because it represents a moment where Gabriel could choose to follow Dora and alter his ways. Logistically, it would be difficult to post the entire meeting and conversation between Dora and Gabriel. However, Group One decided that by having Dora post updates of the night and end by publically shaming Gabriel for his behavior (Figure 46), it would reflect the same about of humiliation that Gabriel experiences in the novel when Dora returns mature, and questions Gabriel for not changing for the better.

Figure 46: A few of Dora's comments during her reunion with Gabriel.[72]

Group One also created posts meant to be understood by only those familiar with the text, and yet still not alienate those who have not read *La tumba*. The students explained that while their desired audience of this performance would be others who have read the text, they recognized that by creating the performance in a public space, it would be open to all. One example is Gabriel's reference to a note that his aunt Berta leaves him after that have a drunken affair one night (Figure 47). In the novel, Gabriel is confused and ashamed of the situation and does not understand her actions.

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[72] "3 months without drinking any alcohol" ,"Perhaps before this was my life, perhaps it was normal, but now it's so different", "Ugh! Imbecile, stupid, mega-idiot! You haven't changed…"

Figure 47: Gabriel referencing the note his aunt leaves him after their incestuous affair.

This simple post that references the event will be meaningful to those who have read the text. The lack of further discussion of the event in the performance reflects Gabriel's repression of the incident in the novel. Group One believed that including phrases or elements from the text that allude to certain situations better connects those who have read the text to the performance.

The varied content of the pages of the Facebook performance helps bring the text alive. It presents parts of the novel in a modernized format using a modernized platform. By highlighting key elements of the text and utilizing a combination of direct citations and new written text, the students both stay true to Agustín's style and become co-creators of the work.

4.3.4 "Clic" as *Social* Suicide

One noteworthy aspect of this performance is their transposition of the mysterious "clic" that enters the last section of the book and suggests Guía's suicide. Since Group One's performance lives in the platform of Facebook, their interpretation of this portent is to take Guía's suicide from the "real" world into

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the world of Facebook by the deactivation of his account. A screenshot, shown in

Figure 48, shows their interpretation of the final "clic".

Figure 48: Screenshot of the Facebook deactivation screen from the students' Prezi. The reason for deactivation: "No me importa, ni facebook, ni la vida" ("Neither Facebook, nor life matter to me")

Their rationale for this action is that by leaving this social network, he is

committing social suicide. Anyone who has ever deactivated a Facebook account

or tried to do so knows it is a difficult process where one is faced with images of

their Facebook friends and the quasi-hyperbolic statement of "if you deactivate

your account, [Friend's name] will no longer be able to keep in contact with you".

The Gabriel of this performance faces the idea of leaving all of his friends and family behind in the virtual world.

Group One interpreted the "clic" as the action of the final "click" on the deactivation button. By cutting virtual ties with his friends and the drama surrounding their relationships, Facebook Gabriel is "virtually" (and socially) dead. Additionally, he, in essence, destroys his work or anything posted on his wall because deactivation deletes his profile, mentions, and tags of him on other peoples' walls. Just as Agustín's Gabriel reads and destroys his novel for the last time, Facebook Gabriel wishes to leave no trace of any work he may have posted online. While social suicide is not as severe or permanent as suicide, the students argued that since Gabriel's death is never confirmed, and only implied, the ambiguity allows for their interpretation.

4.4 Group Two: "Diario de Chéjov" Blog

4.4.1 Introduction to Group Two's Performance

Figure 49: Screenshot of the top of the Group Two created blog, *El diario de Chéjov*

Group Two was composed of five students who decided to adopt a present-day medium to present their performance: a blog, seen here in Figure 49. They picked out key elements of the novel, and each member penned a post or two in the voice of Gabriel Guía. While presented in a modern format, their performance does not include any markers of a specific time period, such that it could be from Agustín's day to the present (or even the future). The students chose to rid their text of these indications in order to echo the timelessness of the themes within the text.

As a part of the in-class presentation, the students presented their blog and read sections of their respective texts discussing the rationale for choosing each particular section and the meaning of the images they included within the posts. The blog represents the novel in six posts: "Una relación de amor y odio", "Líquido dentro", "Qué vergüenza", "Cigarros", "¿Una tumba?", "Adiós adiós a todos" ("'A love-hate relationship', 'Liquid inside', 'What shame!', 'cigarettes', 'A tomb?', 'Goodbye, goodbye all'"). The project was presented and compiled as a group, but each post is that of one author, and the group shared their posts among the other members before posting them in order to maintain a sense of connection throughout the blog.

By utilizing a blog, Group Two maintains many parallels to the original text. Primarily, it is told in a first person narrative voice, like the novel, and as such the sole perspective is that of Gabriel Guía. A difference is that the posts are

written in diary form and signed, which again, picks up on the daily confessional tone of Agustín's text.

The group members chose to focus on the feelings and emotions of Gabriel as they interpreted through a close-reading of the text. One student remarked: "Si lees los detalles de los sentimientos de una personaje se puede poner tu propio [sic] mentalidad dentro de la trama y entender las acciones del protagonist [sic] mejor" ("If you read the details of the feelings of a character, you can put your own mentality inside the storyline and better understand the protagonist's actions"). Group Two focused their readings on Guía's emotional state so that their performances of sections of the text would capture and present those same feelings and emotions of the original text.

Another student remarked that this process of emotional perception affects his outlook on the text: "Después de haber escrito un blog como Gabriel, siento que siento lo que él siente cuando me pongo a pensar sobre lo que pasa en el cuento" ("After having written a blog as Gabriel, I feel that I feel what he feels when I think about what happens in the story"). This performance required each student to take on the role of Gabriel, which in turn, allowed for a closer analysis of the protagonist's characterization. The result is that not only do the students feel closer to the character, but it affects their future thoughts, re-readings, and interpretations of the text.

4.4.2 "Chéjov"

The students chose to title the blog "Chéjov" and also signed each entry with the same name, instead of "Gabriel."   I noted that there are no markers of a specific era in this performance (at least in the text of the blog), the only modern element is that it is written in blog format, ostensibly by using some sort of computer. Through their interpretation of Gabriel, Group Two believed that the protagonist would have welcomed the anonymity that a pseudonym provides and titled their/"his" blog to reflect this.

They expressed that while he desires to be a writer, and perhaps also yearns for his name to be known, the blog provides a space for him to write about his life, express his feelings and his (at times) despair. At the same time, the blog exists in the public sphere. Using a pseudonym allows this performance's Gabriel to feel safe, and also comforts him knowing that his words will be read.

As for the name Chéjov, in both the novel and the blog, it stems from Dora's accusations of Guía's plagiarizing Anton Chekhov. The blog explains the situation in a few lines:

> La primera vez que hablé con Dora, me acusó del plagio. Aunque
> traje las obras completas de Chéjov al profesor para probar que no
> plagié las obras del escritor y dramaturgo más talentoso en la

historia del mundo, negó a creerme. ¿Sabes qué? Lo tomaré como

un cumplido. (*El diario de Chéjov*)[73]

While Guía in the blog is bothered by Dora's behavior, he decides to embrace her

joke and with a sense of irony signs "his" blog entries with "Chéjov".

Group Two's choice of a pseudonym demonstrates a key element in the

original text. While Guía's desire for revenge on Dora begins with her accusing

him of plagiarizing Chekhov, it comes to light that he actually enjoys the

comparison to such a great author. In Agustín's text, after ruminating with anger

over Dora's actions, he decides: "Sonreí al pensar otra vez: ¡No está mal si mis

cuentos son confundidos con los de Chéjov" ("I gave it a second thought and

smiled: it's not so bad if my stories are confused with Chekhov's!"; *La tumba* 15).

In the novel, this brief scene is situated between Guía's angry thoughts towards

Dora and a violent car crash (which Guía helps cause). The contrasting

sentiments demonstrate Guía's unstable mental state, which Group Two

represents through the content of their blog posts.

4.4.3 Blog Content

Based on the format of the blog, this performance does not have content

as diverse as the other two performances. Yet, the posts demonstrate a

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[73] "The first time that I talked with Dora, she accused me of plagiarism. Even though I brought Chekhov's complete works to the teacher to prove that I did not plagiarize any of the works of the most talented writer and dramatist in the history of the world, he did not believe me. You know what? I'll take it as a compliment" (*Checkov's Diary*).

profound understanding of the protagonist. Thus, while there are fewer outside

interactions, there is a tighter focus on Gabriel and his emotions.

The students incorporated phrases and elements from the original in

their reworking of the text to maintain cohesion between the original and the

performance. Group Two argued that it was integral that these concepts, such as

the "techo azul" that Guía frequently references in Agustín's text, appear in the

performance. The performance also mimics Agustín's style and use of playful

language. An example of this is the "Qué verguenza" post where the student as

"Chéjov" refers to the character Jacques as "nosabenada" ("a know-nothing").

While this exact portmanteau was not utilized by Agustín it mirrors the many

created names that Agustín uses in the novel such as "señor

Noimportasunombre" (*La tumba* 39) and "Elsa Apellidonacional" (85).

Because each post covered a major plot element or event, the six blog

entries needed to economize their space in order to cover the entire novel. Just

as each word is more significant or carefully chosen in a short story than a novel,

Group Two worked hard to concisely express Gabriel's feelings. They also

utilized pictures in each post to help tell his story. In one case, when Dora comes

to visit after being in Europe, Gabriel becomes ashamed of his behavior and

more depressed. As previously mentioned in section 4.3.3, this is a major plot

point. Figure 50 shows "Chéjov" writing about the incident. It is after this event,

that he decides to destroy his novel, and he shows the evidence in the included

picture.

El otro día recibí una llamada. Al escuchar que era de Dora, me emocione muchísimo que tenía tanto tiempo que no la había visto. Pero al verla y hablar con ella, sabía que ya no iba a ser igual entre nosotros. Y yo, como idiota, intenté besarla. Nunca jamás me había echo alguien pensar y reflexionar así como lo había echo Dora. Me hizo dar cuenta de lo triste que era mi vida. Estaba viviendo una vida sin sentido. Acostándome con chica tras chica y hundido en el alcoholismo. Sentía que ya no tenía remedio. Ya ni mi novela quise acabar de escribir.

La vida me está frustrando y en lo único que puedo pensar es una tumba... ¿Una tumba?
Mejor me voy a dormir ya.
- Chéjov

Figure 50: "Chéjov" posting about Dora and his sense of frustration.

Group Two wanted this performance to be a concentrated version of *La tumba*—focusing on the characterization of Gabriel and the major elements of the text. They attempted to mimic Agustín's writing style and included pictures to aid the narrative process and help keep their writing concise. In terms of multi-media format, this performance is the most like the original text, but executed using a modern method and in a public digital space.

4.4.4 "Clic, clic, clic"

The repetitive "clic" sound that begins to appear in the last section of the novel is an important interpretive element for each reader and each reading with different meanings. In this performance, the group chose the persistent "clics" as the subheading to their blog shown below in Figure 51, which is the only place where this element appears.
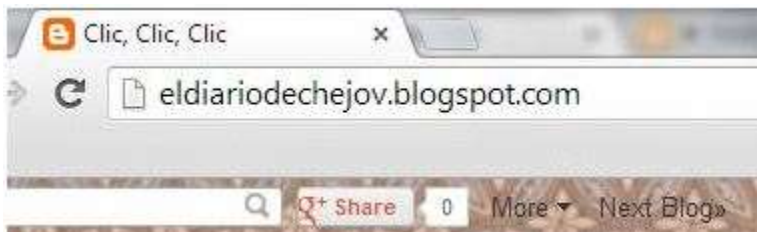
Figure 51: A close-up of the "clic" labeled tab.

It is not included in the text of the posts—a departure from the novel. However, the "clics" still remain an enigma, as no explanation for them is given within the blog post, similar to Agustín's tactic.

The students of this group offered their translation of the onomatopoeia for their performance during their presentation in class. They explained that in their reading of *La tumba*, they believed the "clics" to be the sound of a typewriter. As such, in their performance, they transposed it to represent the sound of a typing while using a computer. This rationale is one part of why they believed a blog to be a befitting medium for their performance of the text.

4.5 Group Three: "La tumba ausente"

4.5.1 Introduction to Group Three's Performance

Figure 52: The title frame from Group Three's performance, *La tumba ausente*.

Group Three was composed of four students and their performance

differs from those of the other groups, and as such requires more discussion of

the theoretical framework to represent their performance. Instead of working

solely with *La tumba*, they combined two works in order to change the endings

of both of the texts and create a new object of study. The result of their

performance exists within the realm of fan fiction or a remix of the two works.

According to cultural critic Lawrence Lessig, today's culture has changed

from that of a Read-Only cuture to a Read/Write culture where producer and

consumer have a relationship that is no longer unidirectional. This cultural

mindset, combined with the omnipresence of digital tools allows for the appropriation, combination, and re-creation of works, commonly known as "remixes" in music—a term that has extended to cover this process in other forms of art in the present day (Lessig 28-31).

Similarly, in fan fiction, fans appropriate the characters or basis of a narrative (literature, film, etc.) and create a new work using elements from the original. Fan fiction assumes that its readers and viewers are already familiar with the characters or background that is being used. While the new work can be experienced by those who are not familiar with the original, it is better appreciated and understood by other "fans" that are already knowledgeable about the specific narrative world. Group Three, then, by combining two works and creating a shared new ending, borrows both the remix and fan fiction culture and traditons, and the resulting performance and presentation was to a group that was familiar with the narrative worlds from the two works.

Group Three chose to combine *La tumba* with a short story the class read, "Ausencia" ("Absence") by Spanish author Cristina Fernández Cubas. "Ausencia" was published in 1994 as part of a collection of Fernández Cubas' short stories, *Con Agatha en Estambul,* "Ausencia" tells of a woman, Elena, who suddenly finds herself in a café with no memory. She is even unsure if she speaks the same language as those around her. As the day progresses, she slowly pieces together clues about her life and makes various assumptions: she lives in a nice apartment, has a great job, and according to her datebook, has to pick up

someone called Jorge at the airport the next day. She grows excited at this

prospect, curious about Jorge and her work life the coming morning. Overnight,

however, her attitude begins to change, and although she does not fully recover

her memory, she experiences flashes of emotions of negativity and annoyance

towards her work and the disruption of having to pick up Jorge. There is no

resolution to the story, Elena becomes consumed with her negative feelings and

the reader is left with a sense that Elena experiences these bouts of amnesia to

combat a life in which she is not content.

The students in Group Three stated that they enjoyed both *La tumba* and

"Ausencia" but collectively decided that they were unhappy with how

ambiguously both of the works end. Guía's suicide is implied, but never

confirmed, and Elena's story ends with her realization that she is unhappy, and

always has been unhappy with her life. The students decided to use this

ambiguity to their advantage and give Guía and Elena a new (narrative) life.

They wrote a script that combined the two works and gave them new

endings. Each student played a different role and instead of making a video, they

recorded a narration set to a series of staged photographs, the title page of which

is seen in Figure 52. They shared the resulting remix performance of both texts

for their presentation, as well as explained their rationale for why they believed

that these works fit together well and deserved new endings.

4.5.2 Summary of *La tumba ausente*[74]

In their performance, Gabriel Guía fakes his suicide and moves to Europe to escape his parents and his previous life (Figure 53 and Figure 54). He arrives at the airport, and is confronted by a woman (Elena) who asks him if he is Jorge. Feeling compelled to say yes and filled with the desire for a new life, Gabriel tells the woman that he is indeed Jorge (Figure 55). Elena and "Jorge" take a taxi to a café because Elena wants to introduce him to someone.

Figure 53: Gabriel writes his suicide note

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[74] The full script of *La tumba ausente* is found in the Appendix

Figure 54: A gun shot is heard, and the screen is black.

At the coffee shop, a woman is waiting (Figure 56). This woman is Elena's

niece named Dora (the same Dora from *La tumba* who is sent to Europe to live

with her aunt). Upon seeing Gabriel/"Jorge" Dora faints. "Jorge" and Elena take

Dora to her apartment, and while Elena leaves to buy medicine, Gabriel revives

Dora and she explains that she received a letter saying he was dead. He explains

that he finally took her words to heart, and decided to do something with his life,

but needed to escape first to make it possible.

Figure 55: Gabriel meets Elena at the airport and says he is Jorge

Figure 56: Dora and "Jorge" meet at the coffee shop

Dora encourages Gabriel to tell Elena that he is not Jorge, so that he can start his new life with a clean slate (Figure 57). Elena returns from the store with medicine for Dora, and Gabriel asks to speak with Elena. He tells her why he lied, and that he wants to start a new life. She is in shock at first, but decides

to forgive him as she also would like to start a new life. The remix ends

positively, with Gabriel and Elena beginning new lives together (Figure 58).

Figure 57: Dora encouraging Gabriel to tell the truth to Elena

Figure 58: Elena and Gabriel happy and excited to start their new life together.

4.5.3 Choice of Title

The title that Group Three chose for their performance is a combination

of the two original works' titles: *La tumba* and "Ausencia". Both of these words,

"tomb" and "absence", evoke negative or sad feelings—relating to death (tomb)

or deficiency or lack (absence). However, the combination in their

performance's title, *La tumba ausente* (*The absent tomb*), induces feelings of hope or even mystery.

When considered with reference to *La tumba*, the tomb is what Guía desires and gets when he presumably commits suicide: "Es imposible, ya estoy muerto, morido, fallecido; necesito una tumba, con pastito y lápida limpia, qué mierda soy/" (Agustín 110; "It's imposible, I'm already dead, departed, deceased; I need a tomb, with grass and a clean gravestone, I am such a shit/"). With the words, "La tumba ausente" ("The absent tomb"), the concept of an empty or absent tomb, supports Group Three's new thesis that Gabriel fakes his suicide— his tomb is empty or even that it does not exist.

The title of the performance also changes the perception of "ausente" or "ausencia" ("absent" or "absence"). When standing alone, as in the one word title of Fernández Cubas' short story, it promotes the sense of a void. When combined with another word, giving the term something to modify, it shows that in this case, being "absent" does not have to have a negative outcome.

4.5.4 Group's Methodology

In order to successfully combine these works, the group decided to follow its own rules and methodology so that their performance would make the most sense. One group member commented: "Para poder cambiar los finales de las obras tuvimos que pensar bien en nuestros motivos para hacerlo. Al mismo tiempo, tuvimos que encontrar un final que tuviera coherencia con las obras

originales y que nos satifaciera"[75] . Through careful and multiple readings of the

texts, the students looked for textual elements that were the same in each of the

works; they wanted to find both concrete elements and common themes.

One of main tonal elements connecting the two works is that both

protagonists experience a sense of despair. In *La tumba* Dora attempts to inspire

Gabriel to change, but he does not and even exclaims before his apparent suicide,

"¡Bah, todo es vulgar, no tuve valor ni de seguir a Dora! (*La tumba* 128; "Bah,

everything is a waste, I didn't even have the courage to follow Dora!"). Although

there is no implied suicide in "Ausencia", the short story ends on similar

defeated terms:

> Estás de malhumor. Pero nadie en la redacción parece darse
>
> cuenta. Ni siquiera tú misma. Tal vez sea siempre así. Tal vez tú,
>
> Elena Vila Gastón, seas siempre así. Constantemente disgustada.
>
> Deseando ser otra en otro lugar. Sin apreciar lo que tienes por lo
>
> que ensueñas. Ausente…es que tu vida ha sido siempre gris,
>
> marrón, violácea, y que el día que ahora empieza no es sino otro
>
> día más. Un día como tantos. Un día exactamente igual que otros
>
> tantos. (Fernández Cubas 170)[76]

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59 "In order to change the endings of the works, we had to think hard about our motives for doing it. At the same time, we had to find an ending that would be coherent and satisfied us."

76 "You are in a bad mood. But no one in the editorial office seems to notice. Not even yourself. Maybe it's always like this. Perhaps you, Elena Vila Gastón, is always like this. Constantly upset. Wishing to be another, in another place. Without appreciating what you have because of your

Elena, the protagonist, realizes that she is not enjoying her life because she is

unhappy and focuses on the desire to be someone else, without actively seeking

out change.

Another commonality is that both Agustín and Fernández Cubas utilize

literary techniques that draw the reader in—making her feel a close connection

to the characters. Agustín is known for his casual style and use of colloquial

language. His use of language and the confessional tone of the novel make a

reader feel as though he is part of Guía's intimate circle. Fernández Cubas writes

in the infrequently used second person narrative voice, literally including the

reader in the text.

Group Three argued that this bond, combined with aforementioned sense

of despair in both texts, creates a special situation between reader and

protagonist where a reader becomes so involved in the narrative that he or she

would like to help. This performance, then, is their response to the call for help

that they experienced while reading the texts. It is not because of a selfish desire

for a "happy ending" or a belief that the authors did not do a good job and they

needed to "fix" it, but rather they felt so intertwined with the text that they were

compelled to become a part of it in some way. In order to achieve this, the

students became co-creators of the text(s).

---

day dreams. Absent . . . it's that your life has always been gray, brown, purple, and today is just
another day. A day like many. A day exactly like so many others."

In addition to the shared themes and tones, the students looked for mutual concrete elements to use as the origin of their performance. These are points of intersection in the texts that act as a starting point or highlight an element to be included in their performance. The group utilized three shared components of each work: the airport, a café, and Europe.

In *La tumba*, Gabriel and his family go to the airport to pick up his aunt Berta and he also references Dora's various flights leaving Mexico. For Elena, in "Ausencia," the airport is an underlined date in her agenda—marking that she needs to pick up Jorge. Since she has lost her memory, in the student's performance when Elena goes to the airport to pick up Jorge, it makes sense that she confuses Gabriel for Jorge.

Both originals also use a café as a setting. Gabriel frequents cafés with his friends and love interests and Elena finds herself, without any memory, in a café at the beginning of the short story. As such, a café became a logical location for Elena to take Gabriel/"Jorge" to meet Dora.

 In *La tumba*, Dora is shipped off to Austria to live with her aunt. At first this seems like the worst kind of punishment, but Dora soon discovers that her (unnamed) aunt is sympathetic to her, and they travel throughout Europe. This experience causes Dora to change and mature. Elena lives in Spain, and in their performance the students make a plausible connection that Elena is Dora's aunt, binding the two stories as one.

While becoming co-creators of the texts does not itself come with any

rules or specifications, the students felt the need to operate under their own

methodology for creating their new narrative. Finding the points of intersection

of the texts strengthened their performance and helped them demonstrate their

logic during their presentation.

4.5.5 The "Clics" Remixed

In this performance, the "clics" are heard as knocks right before Gabriel

writes his suicide note. After that point they cease to exist in the new narrative

because he has become happy in his new life. In *La tumba,* this sound correlates

to Gabriel's mental state, as such, it makes sense that when he is content, it is not

necessary to include them in the performance in the same way.

However, based on the medium of the performance, the "clics" serve an

additional, extra-diegetic role: the sound of the camera. *La tumba ausente* is

composed of a series of photographs, and these pictures tell the tale of Gabriel,

Elena, and Dora. While one experiencing the performance does not explicitly

hear this sound, the style of the pictures suggests it. In this case, the "clics" cease

being solely an element in Gabriel's head and enter the consciousness of the

audience. It becomes a universal, and normalized, element of the performance—

bridging one work to the other.

While this may not have been a recognized goal of Group Three, the

correlation of the "clics" to the clicking sound of a camera when it takes a picture

is evident. The "clics" have metamorphosed to an element that is no longer

within the narrative, but part of its external framework.

4.6 Conclusion

Each of the student performances of the *La tumba* is unique, and the

groups chose to focus on and elaborate different elements of the text. Arguably

more important than the resulting texts, in this case, is a by-product of the

performances: what the students learned and how they connected to the texts in

the process of creating the performance. In terms of the performances in a

classroom setting, the students worked together discussing their interpretations

and readings of *La tumba* in order to find an agreement of what they believed to

be the essential elements of *La tumba*, or the aspects that they wanted to

develop or change. In comparison to traditional readings of the text in a

classroom, the students in this course appropriated the text in order to recreate

it in a space with which they were comfortable—in these cases, digital spaces.

This process allowed the students to connect on a deeper level with the novel.

While I consider this assignment a success, there are still parts that could

be improved. Obviously, in practice, one is confronted by issues that challenge

many teachers with group projects: students contributing equally or entire

groups putting forth more effort than other groups. I tried to encourage

accountability within and between the groups by having part of the final grade

composed of each student's assessment of their own group work and that of the other groups, which worked to a certain extent.

While the difference of student effort is most evident in the final product, a surprising result was that even the group with a perceived lower effort still gained an immense amount of knowledge and familiarity with the text, even if it was not presented as clearly in their performance. The action of creating a performance helped foment traditional literary analysis techniques such as close reading, which is an essential goal for many literature courses.

Of the three projects, there are a few elements that I found worthy of discussion. In this case, I found that the lack of rigid regulations and stipulations for the projects allowed the students to surpass my expectations with their resulting performances. I saw this in their use of visual elements and choice of platform as well as the different invocations of the ambiguous "clic" that each group included in their performances.

4.6.1 Visual Representation and Performance Medium

One element of note in each of the performances is the visual aspect that each group included. From using photographs, to creating a new virtual stage for the text, each performance incorporated visual elements that gave depth to their literary interpretations. Furthermore, their visual expressions of the text used in environments within which the students are already comfortable.

Each performance was made using media or a platform with which the students were accustomed to using in their daily lives. Today's students—from grade school to University—spend more time in front of their computers, smart phones, or tablets. While contemporary students continue to read and write as students have traditionally done, much of the writing and reading is done through text messages, blogs, or social media. As such, for them to use these platforms for an academic purpose or to have their performances in a setting in which they are already comfortable, is advantageous. It is a way for them to see the text anew; to revive it in their own eyes. They reclaim and redefine both the text and the platform in their own terms.

4.6.2 The Many "Clics"

Each group chose to interpret the "clics" in the text differently. This is noteworthy because it is an integral element of the text. It is ambiguous in the original, and acts as an interpretive point shaping one's reading of the *La tumba*. There are many ways to argue one's opinion of what the "clics" mean and represent, and many students related to me that upon reading the text again for their performances, they changed their opinions about what the "clic" could be.

Each group's different transposition of the "clics" served as a major influence in how they created their critical performative. The "clics" became, in a way, a characterizing element of the text—something that could not be left out of their performances. In one sense, although the "clics" introduce the end of

Agustín's text, for the performances, they represent the beginning of the students' interpretation. Having the "clics" be the sound of clicking the Facebook deactivation button, typing, or the sound of taking photographs, influences the platform the students used for their performances.

After performing a close reading of the text, there are many elements to interpret, but I believe that the students began with the "clics" because they are the most glaring and obvious example, and they allow for many different interpretations of their origin and the actual ending of the novel. While a definitive answer still does not—and will never—exist to what the "clics" are or represent, or if Gabriel truly commits suicide or if there's some other explanation, it is the ambiguous ending that the students felt gave them the authority or the creative energy to interpret or in some cases change.

4.6.3 Gains

There are two questions to pose when considering the gains of these performances: 1) How do the performances help the students and their understanding of the text? and 2) What do the performances add to the existing scholarship of *La tumba*?

For the students, these projects created a kinship with the text. They gained a depth of knowledge and a sense of ownership because they were co-creators. They did not just work with the text, but rather worked within the text to create it anew and in their terms. They practiced a combination of traditional

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literary analysis methodologies while working with today's digital platforms.

The students learned to become active readers and the resulting objects

depended on their interpretations and analyses thereby cultivating their reading

and analytical skills for future literature courses.

For *La tumba*, these performances, create awareness of the text outside of

Mexico and encourage interest in Agustín and his writing. They also offer

present day perspectives on this novel which turns fifty years old in 2014. *La*

tumba is read by many students in Mexican high schools and universities but

very infrequently included in reading list outside of Mexico. These performances

create a consciousness of this classic text and promote its further study.

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Appendix

Selected list of Agustín works

<u>Novels</u>
La tumba (1964 and 1966)
De perfil (1966)
Se está haciendo tarde (final en la laguna) (1973)
Ciudades desiertas (1982)
Furor matutino (1985)
Cerca del fuego (1986)
Luz interna (1989)
Luz externa (1990)
La miel derramada (1992)
La panza del Tepozteco (1992)
No pases esta puerta (1992)
Dos horas del sol (1994)
Vida con mi viuda (2004)
Arma blanca (2006)
La casa del sol naciente (2006)
Vuelo sobre las profundidades (2008)

<u>Essay/Chronicle/History</u>
La nueva música clásica (1969)
Ahí viene la plaga (1985)
Tragicomedia mexicana I, La vida en México de 1940-1970 (1990)
Contra la corriente (1991)
Tragicomedia mexicana II, La vida en México de 1970-1982 (1992)
Tragicomedia mexicana III, La vida en México de 1982-1994 (1998)
La Contracultura en México (2007)

<u>Short Story Collections/ "relatos"</u>
Inventando que sueño (1968)
El rey se acerca a su templo (1977)
No hay censura (1988)
Cuentos completos (2001)

<u>Theater</u>
Abolición de la propiedad (1969)

Los atardeceres privilegiados de la Prepa 6 (1970)
Círculo vicioso (1974)

<u>Autobiography</u>
José Agustín: Nuevos *escritores mexicanos del siglo XX presentados por sí mismos* (1966)
El Rock de la cárcel (1984)
Diario de brigadista. Cuba, 1961 (2010)

<u>Scripts/Screenplay</u>
Cinco de chocolate y uno de fresa (1967)
Alguien nos quiere matar (1969)
Ya sé quién eres/Te he estado observando (1970)

Full Twitterization of La tumba

The following text is a script of the different tweets that will be posted in real time of the twitterization of La tumba. *Part 1 is already live on Twitter. Each tweet will have the tag: #tumbatuit in order to categorize it and have it be searchable and accessible. Additionally, the commentary between brackets [ ] describes the picture or digital media*

PART I

#tumbatuit

Gabguía: me levanto con el techo azul, como 100pre

Gabguía: Pan, leche, coche (gracias papi) vámonos a clase…

Dora: @GabGuia69 tengo un secreto….

Gabguía: @dora me vale madres

Dora: @gabguía a ver si dices eso cuando el profe "descubre" que tu paper es plagiado

GabGuia69: @dora no estoy de humor para tus bromas estúpidas

Gabguía: cuando @dora te amenaza, ten cuidado. No soy Chéjov, las palabras son mías.

Gabguía: esa pinche mujer. Asdc voy al campo para calmarme

Gabguía: mañana todos sabrán la verdad cuando traigo las obras cmpltas de Chéjov a clase

Gabguía: no lo creo, we. El prof tdva piensa q he plagiado. Esa mujer pagará.

Gabguía: Comme un fou il se croit Dieu, nous nous croyons mortels.DELALANDE

Gabguía: Papá y sr. Obesodioso hablan de política...q aburrido. El Lohengrin y las vueltas serán mi salvación!

Martymart: Qué día es? Juebebes? Vengan a mi casa pa' la fiesta! Bebidas, alberca, y tú (seas quien seas)

Gabguía: Bueno, si me confunden con el gran maestro Chéjov...menos mal. @Martymart en camino a tu casa we

Gabguía: Me retas, en tu coche esport y gorrita a cuadros? Q furia!

Gabguía: eso mereces [Foto of car crash]

Dora: @gabguía Hoooola Chéjov! Vente a nadar! ;) <3

Gabguía:@dora y q? ahora somos amigos?

Dora:@gabguía pq no?

Gabguía: guardo mi venganza por otro día

Dora: @gabguía celebramos nuestra amistad. Tú, yo y un hectólitro de whisky, al jardín! <3<3<3

Gabguía: el match duró poco ;)

Gabguía: el techo sigue azul. No tengo ganas de levantarme...

Gabguía: pienso no entrar a clase hoy. Sí, no entro.

Dora: @gabguía no seas flojín mi chejovito!

Gabguía: @dora y tú, dónde estás?

Dora: @gabguía pos…tampoco entro a clases. Voy contigo,

¿adónde me   llevas?

Gabguía: @dora al diablo

Dora: @GabGuia69 hmmm…mejor el drive-in

Gabguía: círculos: mi mano, el cerillo, los dedos, su mirada…

Dora: pasando el rato con un escritor en potencia, que chingón. ¿nuevo

miembro del CLM? Quizá

Gabguía: ¿Círculo Literario Moderno? órale pues.

Gabguía: ¡Qué día espléndido! @Dora después de tanto ron…ahora eres

mía

Dora: @Gabguía okeys ;) pero no voy a decir la verdad al prof.

Sorrys!

Gabguía: [pic of broken mirror] ay.

Gabguía: stoy arto del techo azoool

Gabguía: Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang/der bleibt ein Narr sein

lebelang

Gabguía: ¿quimica? No. Mejor saber dónde estaba ella hoy….y con quién

Gabguía: [video mongosantamaría] para ti, mamá, volume up!

Gabguía: @Dora en camino a tu casa

Dora: @gabguía cuando llegues, prepárate una bebida, ahorita estaré lista

Gabguía: Fui aceptado al CLM. Ni modo.

Gaguía: café con Jaques y Dora, bar pseudobeat, There's a tavern in the town, & there my true love sits down & drinks her wine as happy as can be &never never thinks on me

Jacques: Básicamente, soy casi anarquista….y un cochino cobarde

Jacques: "You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist" #citasdenietzsche

Gabguía: Vueltas, círculos, vueltas. El techo azul me está regañando…esd ificsl estsr dw piwe

Gabguía: q fácil el examen! Pa todos: me voy a La Linterna después, nos vemos ahí

Dora: Si repruebo, a Austria me voy. @gabguía pq no te importo más?

> Gabguía: @dora Austria es sehr schon q me mandes un postal, y suerte con el vals!

> Dora: @gabguía :"(

Dora: NYC -⬜Paris-⬜Viena…adiós mundo cruel…

Gabguía: Pienso escribir una novela. #legane #venganzaesdulce

PART II

Gabguía: Si inclino la cabeza, ¿q pasa?

Gabguía: nada.

Gabguía: Mi padre, sr. Noimportasunombre y sr. Acalorado hablando el blah blah blah

Gabguía: Jac me dijo "Si el aburrimiento matase, en el mundo sólo habrá tumbas" jeje, tiene toda la puta razón.

Gabguía: Zas! Qué guapa! Ahora tengo algo …o sea…alguien para entretenerme…

Gabguía: 20 añitos, estudia filosofía y bebe un high, como yo.

GermaineG: @gabguía mucho gusto conocerte ;)

 Gabguía: @germainG el placer fue mío ;)

GermaineG: @gabguía …y gracias por el ride. Me gusta tu coche

Gabguía: @germainG tus kisses son raros, pero me gustan

GermaineG: @gabguía es mi estilo ;)

Gabguía: Run Samson run/Delilah's on her way/Run Samson run/I ain't got time to stay

Gabguía: [pic of D.F. airport] dónde estoy?

Gabguía: [selfie of Laura and Gab with drinks in bar] los padres piensan q estamos en el café…jeje

Lalaura: @gabguía salud!

Gabguía: @ Lalaura eres un carácter, cuz.

Gabguía: bienvenida a México, tía Berta

Gabguía: Día con la tía. Lo pasamos bien!

Gabguía: [series of fotos at restaurantes and museums…]

Gabguía: Fiesta esta noche para la tía q vengan tdos!

Gabguía: @germaineG quieres venir a mi casa esta noche para una fiesta?

germaineG: @gabguía gracias. Llegaré temprano para ayudar. ¡Nos vemos!

Gabguía: [¡Fiesta!]

GermaineG: @gabguía au revoir, mis padres me llaman

Gabguía: la tia pide un baile…american style

Gabguía: swing down sweet chariot…

Gabguía: no sdstoy segurs q sesa buenssa idesa X)

Gabguía: Mareado. Vueltas, vueltas, vueltas. El vértigo. Círculos. Ondas. Giros, órbitas. ¡El vértigo! Las vueltas vueltas, círculos.

Gabguía: Creo que I'm gonna be sick.

Gabguía: se fue. Tan rápido cómo llegó.

Gabguía: It was a terrific sound/Giggle or noise/Perhaps was spellbound/Perhaps a voice.

Jacques: mi nuevo ensayo: Tentativa de un studio acerca de la intelectualidad contemporánea o la siquis de don Juan Tenorio a los dieciocho años #CLM [*stated in 2 tweets]

Gabguía: q tonterías de ese Jacs #CLM

Jacques: q mediocre burgués ese Gab #CLM

Gabguía: @germaineG estoy out and about, ¿Paso por tu casa?

    GermaineG: @gabguía cómo quieras.

    Gabguía: @germaineG ¿estás sola?

    GermaineG: q vengas para ver ;)

Gabguía: Un(os) Whisky(s) con un miembro en potentcia de #CLM.

Gabguía: ay….got shot down 'cause i'm over zealous

Gabguía: Sí. Hay líquido en el cerebro.

Gabguía: me odio… la casa y yo estamos tristes. A lo mejor me pego un

tiro.

Gabguía: eh..no vale la pena.

Lalaura: @gabguíá buenooooss diaaasss primito mío :)

Lalaura: Rock > Duke (ellington)

Lalaura: a ver…cuánto recibiremos por eso [foto of emerald brooch]

Lalaura: jajaja…otra vez evité una multa #exito #ventajadesersexy

Lalaura: ¡Patinemos! #arenamexico

Lalaura: ahora: desmadre en la bonita casa del senador Robatealgo

Lalaura: [fotos of mess they make]

Gabguía: ahora mi prima sabe todos mis secretos

Lalaura: jaja, mi primo, anda incestuosón…quién habría sabido…jaja

@gabguía me voy antesdeq tengas ideas..

Lalaura: [pic of speedometer = fast…to imply accident was from tweeting

while driving, or at least bad driving]

Gabguía: DEP laura. mi prima, la única persona autentica de mi familia,

me abandonó.

Gabguía: Tengo q hacer algo. Me dedico a escribir. [foto of poem]

GermaineG: @gabguía Hace mucho q no nos vemos….¿q onda?

Gabguía: @germaineG tienes razón…debemos arreglarlo, tu casa?

GermaineG: @gabguía: no, la tuya. Nos vemos en 5

Gabguía: no lo sabe, pero será mía…

GermaineG: (-_-;)   nunca más…

Gabguía: gané, pero no me siento mejor…me voy, no sé dónde.

Gabguía: ¿tengo deseos de volver?

Gabguía: ¿Me esfumo para siempre del círculo o sigo, sigo hasta que

explote?

Gabguía: [pic of sun rising in alley from car]

Gabguía: rumbo a mi casa

PART III

Gabguía: No soy nada y soy eterna…ha sido 4 semanitas?

Gabguía: 17 en una semana!

Gabguía: #CLM quién es la nueva?

Gabguía: #CLM la conoceré pronto, aceptada por unanimidad

Gabguía: wow,esta tarde, la pasé bien…hace mucho que eso me ha

pasado. Q bien ⬜

Gabguía: Otra sorpresa: [pic of card from Vienna]

Gabguía: q buena onda recibir saludos de una amiga del pasado ⬜

Gabguía: ¿llamar o no llamar?, esa es la cuestión (llamar!)

Gabguía: Hasta las 7 con srta. Apellidonacional.

Gabguía: otra vez, los padres no se comportan bien.

Gabguía: pops acabo d preguntarme de mi novela : O….eso nunca pasa.

Gabguía: Con Elsa-elsa, la de los ojos brillantes. @elsa Estás en mí, eres mía, no me puedes abandonar, ¿q me dices?

Elsa: @gabguía si acepto ser tu chamaca, te doy el yes. Querido Gabriel-gabriel, eres carne mía q   no me dejaré amputar!

Gabguía: poesía en rojo vivo.

Gabguía: Wild things leave skins behind them….T. Williams

Gabguía: Cometí la estupidez de enamorarme de ella…

Gabguía: no dejo de imaginar ellos juntos…mil pesadillos invaden mi mente.

Gabguía: no caeré en el mismo error

Gabguía: @elsa te espero en el Viena a las seis, no quiero que faltes.

> Elsa: @gabguía cuál es el problema?

> Gabguía: @elsa, ¿cuál problema? Vamos al cine. Un feature doble.

> Gabguía: @elsa primero me divierto con la película y después contigo ;)

> Elsa: @gabguía estás loco?pq mandas un tuit asi?

Gabguía: la vista desde el hotel está buena ;)

Gabguía: un mar sucio, oscuro, con furia…Yo voy en este mar.

Elsa: Oh noes! Q regañas me esperan?

Gabguía: recuerdo mi mano sobre su cuello cuando dormía…

Gabguía: en casa. Escándalo con el estéreo

Gabguía: llego temprano para el meeting #CLM

Gabguía: dudo que ella venga…me pregunto por qué? Jaja

Gabguía: sí, mis trabajos van bien, pero siempre se tiene que pulir los textículos ;)

Gabguía: a mis amigos de #CLM y a los otros amigoidiotas míos, fiesta (de cumpleaños) mi casa, q vengan todos!

Gabguíá: y tú @elsa, vienes a mi fiesticita?

Elsa: @gabguía, pues…estoy súper castigada, pero contra viento y marea, me presentaré

Gabguía: @germaineG es mi cumpleaños y querría saber si te gustaría asistir a la fiesta

GermaineG: @gabguía….Me hablas en serio? No, gab, gracias x la invite, pero desafortunadamente tengo q negar.

Gabguía: las mañanias a las seis sans mamá…que comienzo desfavorable.

Gabguía: ¿un cheque? Hubiera preferido cualquier cosa…menos dinero.

Gabguía: Azul techo triste = desolación (y mi madre aún no me ha felicitado)

Gabguía: bueno….pos, tengo este cheque, debo aprovecharme de la situación sea lo que sea.

Gabguía: ropa fina, unos largopléis nuevos, libros…

Gabguía: @elsa rendezvous frente a Cuauhtémoc?

Elsa: @gabguía claro!

Gabguía: Fiesta con los compañebrios!Feliz cumple a mí

Gabguía: [pic of party]

Gabguía: lo indispensable: ganado hembruno, música y licor.

Gabguía: mis padres brillan por su ausencia ;)

Gabguía: mi cabeza = un caos, y me duele muchiiiisssimoooo

Gabguía: vértigo, círculos, vueltas…

Elsa: ¡ups! Otra regañada…

Gabguía: nadar en la casa de campo? Natürlich

Elsa: @gabguía de nada, gab, de nada

Gabguía: ahora yo soy lo de las regañas…q hipocrasia

Gabguía: sociedad, ¿suciedad? No, sociedad.

Gabguía: un telephone con @Dora q ilusión ⬚

Dora: @gabguía voy pa' ti a tu Haus

　　　Gabguía:@dora yippeee!

Gabguía: back to good ol' ways in the good ol'days ⬚

Dora: @gabguía he cambiado Gabriel, y tú lo debes hacer tmb.

Dora: @gabguía tienes q superarte, encontrar otro mundo, lucha!

Dora: @gabguía abandona la vida que llevas….hay q buscar!

　　　Gabguía: @dora sí dora…si.

Gabguía: es imposible, ya stoy muerto,morido, fallecido….necesito una

tumba…

Gabguía: una tumba…a dormir.

Gabguía: Pienso destruir mi novela.

PART IV

Gabguía: Techo azul me matas…y sigue el Lohengrin

Gabguía: Nada. Nadie. Luz eléctrica brillando. Frio, soledad, tristeza, oscuridad y tú.

Gabguía: la boca seca, otra vez. Regadera y más whisky

Elsa: @gabguía Vicky se fue de casa y ahora vive con David!

    Gabguía: @elsa q chisme. Vamos al cine?

Gabguía: reventémonos con todo el CLM; el otro, Heidgegger, el humanismo, y Die Lohengrin!

Gabguía: Personne. Je sonne. Repersonne. (Nabokov)

Gabguía: Clic, clic.

Gabguía: me duele la cabeza. Medicina? No. El Lohengrin otra vez.

Gabguía: suciedad, sociedad, suciedad.

Gabguía: Clic, clic, clic.

Gabguía: Unos versos [pic of Run run run…poem 116]

Elsa: @gabguía tenemos q hablar

    Gabguía: @elsa okeys. habla

Gabguía: hilarante. Jaja.

Elsa: @gabguía ¿Te das cuento? ¡Un niño!

Gabguía: @Elsa pues…según Vick, podemos arreglarlo por 700.

Elsa: @gabguía estamos. todo ha resuelto.

Gabguía: clic.

Elsa: @gabguía me gustas

Gabguía: @elsa eh? Cuánto? Cómo lo mides?

Elsa: @gabguía Kilos. Me gustas cien. Y 2?

Gabguía: @elsa menos. ¿cincuenta?

Elsa: @gabguía no está mal. Mis padres están en Veracruz ;);) <3

Gabguía: órale….clic

Gabguía: ¿De dónde sale este ruido? De mi cabeza, es mío.

Gabguía: Dieu, le grand Dieu doit savoir: Dieu grandieux!

Gabguía: No puedo dormir….NO PUEDO DORMIRRRR!

Gabguía: jaja, clic, jaja, CLIC, JAJA CLIC!

Gabguía: no me cae bien el Doc y peor aún, le caigo fatal.

Gabguía: regaños paternales…qué ironía…

Gabguía: ¿Divorcio? Así sospechaba.

Gabguía: @elsa te quiero AHORA

Elsa: @gabgu ia pa' que?

Gabguía: @elsa tú ya sabes…vamos

Gabguía: Casa, ruido, yo, clic.

Gabguía: Todo falso, mi furia se presente, y crece…

Gabguía: Mejor me mato. Clic.

Gabguía: Bête, Gabriel le Bête (y otra vez Mi Lohengrin y el pinche techo

azul)

Gabguía: ya salió mi epitafio: [pic of written epitaph]

Gabguía: clic. ¿No tengo otra solución?

Gabguía: @dora ni tenía el valor de seguirte

Gabguía: Es cómodo, después de todo….cómodo.

Gabguía: clic, clic, clic, clic…[repeated to 140 characters]

Consulted Tables and Visualizations

The following two visualizations aided the overall research for this dissertation, but were not related to one specific project. However, the knowledge they helped foment during the research process cannot be denied. I include them in this appendix with a brief explanation of their origins and the tools involved to exhibit the scope of this project.

List of all Non-Spanish Words in Text

While many studies focus on Agustín's use of language, there is no one collection of the non-Spanish phrases and words he utilizes. This list compiles the words and phrases that he uses in the 1966 edition of La tumba marking the language and the page number of the word or phrase.

Word/Phrase	Language/Type	Page(s)
Afrojazz	English	31
al teach	English	45
american way of dance	English	107
Beatniks	English	196
Bloodymaries	English	246
Cocacolas	English	53
Cross your heart?	English	271
daddy & kiddo	English	170
del jet	English	85
don't say	English	249
drive-in	English	20, 264
et all	English	73
Europe	English	261

Forget that night of madness, excuse my heavy drinking, and thanks for the memory	English	111
Gee	English	204
good ol' estúpido	English	306
Guests	English	92
hello	English	91
It was a terrific sound Giggle or noise Perhaps was spellbound Perhaps a voice. It was a terrific sound Giggle or noise Perhaps was spellbound Perhaps a voice.	English	112
kissin'way	English	83
Ku-Klux-Klan	English	2
la high	English	98, 99
levis	English	148
los facts of life	English	207
low-jazz	English	13
mexican currency	English	224
Nop	English	220
Okay	English	23
Okeyísimo	English	188
old parr	English	151
Partner	English	138
rock(s)	English	129, 154
Run run run run Because I cannot walk Sun you need fun Because I cannot talk	English	281

Run Samson run Delilah's on her way Run Samson run I ain't got time to stay SEDAKA & GREENFIELD	English	84
Scotch	English	265
seudobeatnik	English	42
sexy	English	108
Show	English	120,198
Sorry	English	192
speakers	English	166
speech	English	300
Supermán	English	48
Swing down sweet chariot	English	109
Telephony	English	223
There is a tavern in the town & there my true love sits down & drinks her wine as happy as can be & never never thinks on me.	English	43
un Collins	English	127
Un high	English	71
Warden threw a party in the county jail	English	252
Wear a safe	English	218
Wild things leave skins behind them… T. WILLIAMS	English	205
Yep	English	9, 79
Yes	English	202
l'école	French	185
Allons, enfants de la mairie	French	121
Alors	French	19

Assez	French	307
Attends	French	258
Bête, Gabriel le Bête	French	305
Bien fou	French	280
Chérie	French	117
chez elle!	French	283
Comme tu travailles!	French	193
Comme un fou il se croit Dieu, nous nous croyons mortels.	French	25
Connoisseur	French	201
Dieu, le grand Dieu doit savoir: Dieu grandieux!	French	288
Éclat de rire	French	296
enfant terrible	French	21
faire l'amour	French	124
Je dois être fou	French	279
je suis un menteur	French	74

L'étoile est verte
  Mais elle n'a rien
  L'âme est ouverte
  Et je ne sais quand
	French	282

l'oméga, rayon violet de ses yeux!	French	104
la chose	French	57
Mais non	French	116, 189
Mais oui.	French	115, 161
Maquereaux	French	251
Mon pauvre ami	French	225
Parfait	French	162
Pensez, idiot, c'est ton heure	French	212
Personne. Je sonne. Repersonne.	French	276
qu'est-ce qu'a	French	259
Que je suis un menteur, comme ses yeux!)	French	269
qui te va croire, petit	French	208
Regardez l'enfant, quelle moquerie!	French	1
Rien, c'est la chose qui vient.	French	17
Sais pas	French	159

Sceptique	French	75
Voyelles	French	103
Deutsch	german	59
deutsche-grammophon	german	168
Du und Du	german	187
Erze	german	182
Herr	german	35
Kaiser	german	180
Kirsche, Kinder, Küche. Auf wiedersehen	german	66
Kleine	german	199
mein gelibte,	german	64
Osterreich	german	174
Schönbrunn	german	178
sehr schön	german	65, 263
Vater	german	176
Wein, Weib und Gesang	german	171
Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang der bleibt ein Narr sein lebelang	german	29
Wien	german	260
Grazie	italian	143
tutti	italian	15
Sic	Latin	295
esport	mix	8
barcuate	neologism	243
Barhombre	neologism	227
burguesita--¿hamburgeusita	neologism	184
Circuloliterariomodernistas	neologism	38, 54
Cochemóvil	neologism	122
compañebrio(s)	neologism	30, 239
don Yonoloinvité,	neologism	105
Donjuanescas	neologism	160
Elsa Apellidonacional	neologism	190
Embiernesanto	neologism	284
Germaine Etcétera	neologism	97
Germaine Noentendí	neologism	70
Grisóxford	neologism	194

Hembruno	neologism	241
ingenebrio	neologism	191
Laura Algomás	neologism	126
Noimportasunombre	neologism	68
Nosedónde	neologism	219
Nosequién	neologism	89
Obesodioso	neologism	4
Obesomartirizante	neologism	5
poemucho(s)	neologism	102, 222
Profedistoria	neologism	217
senador Robatealgo	neologism	147
señor Ascohumano	neologism	213
Seudocategoría	neologism	93
Seudodiversión	neologism	242
Textículos	neologism	221
versolines	neologism	292
Yasabesquién	neologism	248
Yosisé	neologism	90
Adderly	Proper Noun	231
Anjou	Proper Noun	145
Barbusse	Proper Noun	158
Beckett	Proper Noun	236
chateaubriand	Proper Noun	144
Chéjov.	Proper Noun	3
Cortina d'Ampezzo	Proper Noun	146
Debussy	Proper Noun	232
DELALANDE	Proper Noun	26
Ellington	Proper Noun	130
Eróstrato	Proper Noun	47
Focolare (restaurant)	Proper Noun	94
Franz Josef	Proper Noun	179
Gide	Proper Noun	270
Grieg	Proper Noun	233
Hegel	Proper Noun	197
Heidegger	Proper Noun	76
Heidegger	Proper Noun	275

Juavaninno	Proper Noun	28
Kafka	Proper Noun	36
Kant	Proper Noun	210
Kierkegaard	Proper Noun	69
La marsellesa	Proper Noun	27
Lagerkvist	Proper Noun	237
Lohengrin	Proper Noun	7, 167, 278
Mongo Santamaría	Proper Noun	32
Nabokov	Proper Noun	277
Nietzsche	Proper Noun	78
Paco Kafka	Proper Noun	37
Perse	Proper Noun	234
Peter Appleyard	Proper Noun	110
Pound	Proper Noun	165
Ravel	Proper Noun	290
Remington	Proper Noun	132
Rimbaud, Une saison en efer	Proper Noun	101
Ritter Nerestan.	Proper Noun	56
Sandburg	Proper Noun	164
Satchmo	Proper Noun	230
Sissi de Wittelsbach-Schneider,	Proper Noun	181
Solitude de Duke Ellington	Proper Noun	128
Strauss	Proper Noun	169
Strindberg	Proper Noun	95
Verlaine	Proper Noun	235
Wagner	Proper Noun	289
Washington	Proper Noun	131
ZARATUSTRA	Proper Noun	51
A propos	slang	238
Aprobadísima	slang	72
Canallísimo	slang	172
chejoviano	slang	62
Chejovín	slang	11
Chejovito	slang	14
doc	slang	287
Doruca	slang	255

estupidísima	slang	266, 294
flojín	slang	18
Gabrielito	slang	209
Gabrielo	slang	61
Gabrielongo	slang	155
Gabrielucho	slang	173
hotelucho	slang	302
incestuosón	slang	156
Jaimazo	slang	140
Jaimín	slang	137
los Méxicos	slang	58
Luropa	slang	257
mensita	slang	268
oirope	slang	262
papis	slang	286
poemín	slang	285
primacho	slang	150
Quetín	slang	256
Reg'lar	slang	100
respetabilísmo	slang	299
ruidines	slang	291
Sipi	slang	22
traguín	slang	34
ultraidiota	slang	266
whiskín	slang	253

Place Map

This map visualization (Figure 59), made with the yEd diagramming program and shows the different spaces of the text. The inspiration of this visualization comes from the cyclic nature of the locations in the text: the novel begins and ends (with Gabriel's apparent suicide) in his bedroom, and the time he spends in his room is marked by his feelings of violence or depression. In addition the use of his room as an indicator of his manic disposition, Gabriel is often on the move throughout the city.   While some nodes are non-specific (Bar, Café, Gabriel's house), others are detailed, giving a realistic sense to Gabriel's movements in this era (Monumento de Cuauhtemoc, Arena México). Agustín and the other Onda writers were the first to document the upper-class, urban-youth perspective of Mexico City, and the street names and specific museums and monuments mentioned lend themselves naturally to the formation of a map.
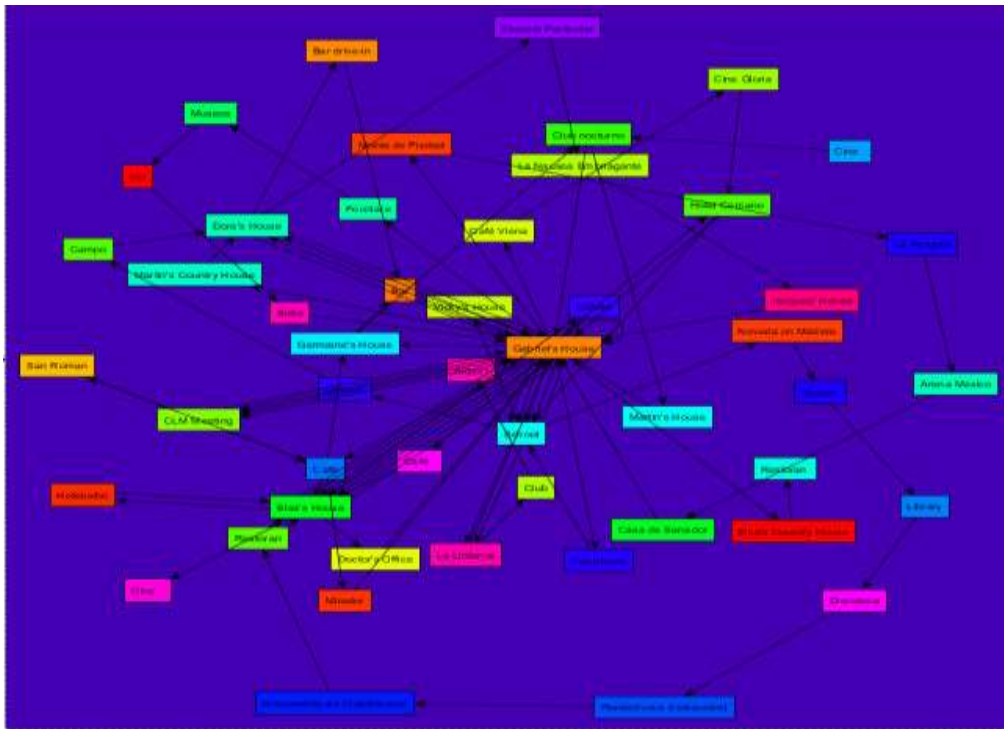
Figure 59: yEd diagram of the different settings/places in the novel

Group Three's Performance Script

<u>Escena 1: El cuarto de Gabriel</u>

Narración: *Clic clic clic clic. . .*Gabriel ya no aguanta la vida que está viviendo. Va a buscar un rifle para acabar con su sufrimiento. Pero antes que nada se sienta para escribirles una carta corta y amarga a sus padres.

Gabriel: Ya no puedo seguir así. . .*Clic clic clic clic clic clic clic...*es mejor para todos.

Narración: Gabriel pone la carta en la mesa y se toma otro trago de whisky. Le empiezan a temblar y a sudar las manos. Le dispara primero al piso. Rápidamente para que no tengan tiempo de entrar sus padres y cerrando los ojos, se pone la pistola en el templo de su cabeza...

(Fake gun noise and blackout)

<u>Escena 2: El intro de Elena</u>

Narración: Elena ha ido a buscar a Jorge al aeropuerto después de su tiempo en el café. Cuando llega al aeropuerto, está buscándolo desesperadamente. Se siente confundida y desorientada y no sabe a dónde dirigirse. Está parada en la entrada del aeropuerto y trata de mover sus pies para entrar por las puertas pero no puede. Algo le dice que no está preparada para enfrentarse a Jorge.

<u>Escena 3: Elena y Gabriel se conocen</u>

Narración: Mientras Elena mira hacia el cielo esperando ver al avión que carga a Jorge, un hombre adentro del aeropuerto la mira atentamente. Él la mira

248

con algo que no ha sentido antes. Nota que se mira confundida y hasta

desesperada. Tiene una sensación irresistible de querer ayudarla. Elena por fin

decide entrar al aeropuerto y, cuando voltea, sus ojos hacen contacto con los

del hombre. Él se dirige hacia ella. Se abren las puertas y están más cerca.

Gabriel está parado enfrente de ella. Elena trata de recordar.

     Elena: ¡¿Jorge?! ¿Eres tú?

     Narración: Confundido pero emocionado; sabe que esta es su

oportunidad a una nueva vida

     Gabriel: Si, soy yo. Qué gusto volverte a ver. ¿Cómo has estado?

     Elena: ¡ay Jorge! Gracias a Dios por fin has llegado

     Narración: Lo abraza por unos segundos oliendo su perfume y sintiendo

sus hombros como si fueran de un mundo extraño, pero Elena no cuestiona esta

diferente sensación. Por fin lo suelta y salen juntos del aeropuerto.

     <u>Escena 4: En el taxi</u>

     Narración: Elena y Gabriel buscan un taxi que los pueda llevar de regreso

al café. Gabriel le abre la puerta a Elena y mete sus maletas a la cajuela. Elena no

puede dejar de mirar a su Jorge. Se suben al taxi y le piden al taxista que los

lleven a Starbucks. En camino, no dejan de mirarse uno al otro.

     Elena: Oye Jorge te tengo que presentar a alguien.

     Gabriel: ¿A quién quieres que conozca?

     Elena: A alguien muy especial para mí. Ahora verás.

     Gabriel: Bueno, está bien.

Narración: Gabriel se siente un poco decepcionado porque quería tiempo a solas con Elena para conocerla más. No sentía ningún interés en conocer a la invitada de Elena. Siguen callados hasta llegar al café.

Escena 5: El café

Narración: Han llegado al café y se bajan del taxi. Mientras Gabriel baja sus maletas del taxi, Elena busca a su invitada. Mira a alguien sentada en la mesa y sabe que ella es su sobrina. Elena y Gabriel caminan juntos hacia la misteriosa mujer.

Elena: Dora, mi amor, te quiero presentar a alguien.

Dora: Hola tía. Haber dígame quien es.

Elena: (a Gabriel) Mira Jorge, esta es Dora, mi sobrina.

Narración: En ese instante Dora se voltea y mira a Gabriel. Sólo da un pequeño suspiro y se desmaya. Elena rápidamente la abraza y Gabriel no puede creer que la mujer quien acaba de conocer sea la tía de Dora. Elena le pide ayuda a Gabriel a subir a Dora a un taxi. Gabriel quiere manejar y se dirigen rumbo a la casa de Elena.

Escena 6: Adentro de la casa

Narración: Elena entra rápidamente a su casa mientras Gabriel carga a la inconsciente Dora a su cama. Elena agarra una botella de alcohol y se lo da a Gabriel. Dora reacciona. Elena va a la tienda a comprar medicina.

Dora: Gabriel. ¿No puede ser que estés vivo? Y aquí en Europa. Mi papá

me mandó una carta diciéndome que uno de mis amigos había fallecido y cuando

me enteré que eras tú casi me muero.

Gabriel: Tome tus consejos Dora de tener que salirme de México. Quiero

una oportunidad a una nueva vida. Quiero poder disfrutar de lo que tiene que

ofrecerme la vida. Me escapé de mi casa pero les hice creer a mis padres que me

había suicidado. Ya no tenia de otra salida

Narración: Dora abraza a Gabriel. Gabriel le dice a Dora que aunque

apenas la conoció, quiere empezar una vida nueva con Elena. Dora lo apoya pero

le dice que su tía merece la verdad. Gabriel decide ser honesto.

<u>Escena 7: Continuación de adentro de la casa</u>

Narración: Elena vuelve con un vaso de agua para su sobrina y se sienta

en frente de Dora y Gabriel para que le den una explicación de lo que pasó.

Elena: ¿Qué pasó en el café? Se conocen desde tiempo.

Gabriel: Mira Elena, la verdad es que yo me llamo Gabriel. Yo y Dora nos

conocemos porque los dos fuimos a la misma escuela en México. Me vine para

Europa porque quería una nueva oportunidad para tener la vida que yo quiero.

Cuando te vi en el aeropuerto algo me dijo que me tenía que ir contigo y por eso

te dije que era Jorge.

Narración: Elena está en shock pero acepta que ella lo puede ayudar y que

él también la puede ayudar a ella.

Elena: Gracias Gabriel por decirme la verdad. Empezaremos nuestras

nuevas vidas juntas.

Narración: Elena y Gabriel se abrazan. Se quedan afuera a platicar de todo

lo que les ha pasado. Por fin todos están en un lugar feliz donde no hay

preocupaciones.

Interviews

Introduction

The following interviews took place over two days, March 9th and 10th, 2012, in Mérida, México at the Féria Internacional de la Lectura Yucatán (FILEY). I had the opportunity to speak with Hernán Lara Zavala at the Amaro Restaurant in Downtown Mérida and to interview Elena Poniatowska, Rosa Beltrán, Mónica Lavín, and Cristina Rivera Garza at the Siglo XXI conference center.

The purpose of these interviews was to ask contemporary authors their thoughts on José Agustín and *La onda*. In some cases, the interviews strayed off topic to include digital literature and other aspects of interest of the 1960s.

Overall, I hope that these brief interviews help to highlight the important place that Agustín has in Mexican literature and show that his work resonates in the work and minds of some of today's popular Mexican authors.

Interview with Hernán Lara Zavala

Figure 60: Claire Ihlendorf Burke and Hernán Lara Zavala at Amaro Restaurant in Mérida, México

Claire Ihlendorf: I'd like to have a conversation about *la onda*

Hernán Lara Zavala: You just ask a question, and I will try to answer it.

C: What was it like in the writing environment during that era? Or to grow up in that time period?

HLZ: First of all, allow me to tell you that there was no such thing as the *onda*. Do you remember the phrase by Flaubert, when he says, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi" or "I am madam Bovary"? Well, the *onda* is José Agustín.

The rest of them were imitators; second class, second rate. Writers who were intending to write like José, because he was the real thing, the real thing. Why? I'll tell you why. He became a writer very young. He had a very keen ear, but he does not reproduce the language of the people, and he has a great deal of creativity. A good example would be Salinger with *Catcher in the Rye*, but Holden Caufield was using the normal language of adolescence; being disrespectful of society. Whereas Agustín was more than disrespectful, he was trying to go against the system, in fact he was different from Rulfo, Fuentes, and all the rest; he was the beginning.

As you were saying, it's not so much that he was hip, which he was, but why? Because he grew up as a listener of American music, a reader of American literature: the Beatniks, Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, that sort of thing. In a sense he was very spontaneous. He didn't believe in terms of cannon literature; he was just having fun. He was trying to have fun with a good sense of humor, and a very keen ear. An interesting fact is that his uncle, the composer José Agustín, was a great composer, so in a sense he [José Agustín] inherits the musicality. He was sort of a natural.

When he grew older he had good novels, very good novels. His first one, *La tumba*, was published by Juan José Arreola. Arreola was a great Mexican writer who taught almost all of the writers, including me, to write. He was a great creative writing "workshopper." He had a mind so good for listening that he could help Fuentes, Gustavo Saínz, and he got the idea that Agustin had a different voice.

Now let me just make a little stop here and and talk about the influence of José Agustín, He was with all the writers, inimitable, but he opened up what we would call vernacular language so that vernacular language could become part of the cannon. Rulfo wrote part of the story of the peasants with great imagination

and a great sense of ear, or musicality, lyrical in the sense. He was a lyrical writer; he knew the poetry of the peasant writer and he gave it the poetic insight. Agustín did the same with the language of the young people and making fun of older people and what he also opened up was the language of the lower world; of the underground world, of the jail world, the border or on the fringe. It's what we would call in Spanish "jerga", the hidden languages; it's also called "germinía." These hidden languages are the languages that people use in certain situations like the beatniks or like the dealers.

Another interesting point is that Agustín is a big fan of rock and roll from Elvis and previous to Elvis to let's say Dylan, Beatles, the Rolling Stones. He was the first music critic dealing with rock and roll which was very unusual. That's one reason why I say it's very difficult to imitate him. He had a good sense of humor he was very fresh he never sounded pompous; whereas his imitators were either too raw or too simple. He had the perfect balance.

C: what was the first of his books that you read? *La tumba*?

HLZ: I read *La tumba*, I loved it, and then I read *De perfil* and *Inventando que sueño* and I also read his autobiography, it was very funny

C What do you think of that phenomenon, he was so young, what 22? 23? and writing his own story?

HLZ: In his writing, he's so easy going, making fun of everybody, believing (as is most of the generation) in favor of Cuba, and just a little bit cynical. His father was an airplane pilot so he had the opportunity to get records from the states in a time when it wasn't easy, Elvis Presley, at this point, was banned in Mexico. As well, he also could read Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, it was very natural for him. He had a certain sense of inheritance of his good ear, just like his uncle. The only thing he could never do was write a good rock and roll song, why? Because that's a different matter. With the exception of Leonard Cohen, you can be a good poet or a good song writer. John Lennon was a good song writer and a terrible poet.

C: do you know if he tried to write rock music?

HLZ: Yes, and it wasn't very good. Another example: Allen Ginsberg when he tried to compose a song it was awful, awful! He tried to make an interpretation of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, by William Blake. He tried to put music to it, and it was just something awful. And José was also not good at that.

I would say he marks the stop of a certain kind of writing in Mexico. And then, with him, there begins a new way of writing. He's the only one. He is *La onda* there is no one else. Silvia Molina when she wrote *La mañana debe seguir gris*, writes in a way that is a little bit derivative from Agustín's. Up to a certain point she has the youth rebelliousness, she has the race. Also, Orlando Ortiz, García-Saldaña…Gustavo Sainz is the only one who's first novel is, in a sense, similar.

José's work only goes up to so much. I believe his last great novel is the one which happens in the states, *Ciudades desiertas*. It's a great novel. I also went to the International writing program and all of our friends, particularly the Latin American friends, read that and they were just laughing. He describes so well. He also changes things in terms of imagination, because in fact he was the writer, so he just switches it around and says his wife was the person going to the international writing program. He [the protagonist, Eligio] feels jealous and goes to Iowa and sneaks out and sees his wife making love to another man.

Agustín is a very important writer in the second part of the twentieth century, after Fuentes. Although there are others, like Juan Garcia Ponce, in all the imaginational works nobody can ignore José Agustín, you don't have to imitate him. Let's say, Enrique Serna, Cristina Rivera Garza, all of them these days are contaminated by what we learn from him.

If you ask me which is his best novel, I would say he has very good stories, in *Inventando que sueño*, he has one of the stories that is called, "¿Cuál es la onda?". Another work, inspired by a point in his life when he is stopped by the police after buying marijuana, *Rock de la carcel*, is very good. And there is another one, the *El Rey se acerca a su templo;* all of them are good.

He's not a writer of one novel, or one good story. He's a writer of *La tumba, De Perfil, Inventando que sueño, El Rey se acerca a su temple, el Rock de la carcel*. There is also one that is just a bit mysitical, that is not so good, but it's ambitious. By then he had started becoming more mystical. There are other short novels, and he also did films, but I don't think he was good doing films. He did one play that is good, from when he was in jail, *Círculo vicioso.*

He was also influenced by José Revueltas but in a certain way (and this is funny), he influenced Jose Revueltas. When Revueltas writes *El apando* in a sense, as I told you, Revueltas learns that the hard language jail could be also literary, like Jean Genet in French, and this very bawdy, obscene, vile, impertinent, and very strong language, which goes beyond the language of common people, is used. This is the language of jail which Cervantes uses quite often in *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and the *Quixote*, particularly in the scene of *los galeotes,* and it speaks

in terms of hidden languages; the hidden languages of the outcasts. In a way it is coded.

Agustín was very funny, and some of the characters are very well very depicted from the *La tumba* onwards. "Esteban" from *De perfil* is one example. His characters were funny and graceful; they were humorous and iconoclastic.

 I am surprised and happy to see that young people like you are interested in his novels. *La tumba* hasn't been translated into English, but I would have thought that it would have by now. Sounds like a good project that you should investigate.

Figure 61: Claire Ihlendorf Burke with Elena Poniatowska in Mérida, México

Interview with Elena Poniatowska

Claire Ihlendorf: Me gustaría saber sobre José Agustín y *la onda*, sobre todo ¿cómo era la época en que escribieron estos escritores y cómo fue el ambiente de escribir aquel entonces?

Elena Poniatowska: Surgieron casi simultáneamente José Agustín y Gustavo Saínz. Eran íntimos amigos, a todas partes iban juntos, eran dos escritores nuevos, dos escritores muy jóvenes, muy atrevidos, que tenían una vida que podía aparecer muy atrevida porque salían mucho, José Agustín fue un hombre

de cine, tuvo un inmediato éxito con su libro que se llamó *La tumba* y Gustavo Saínz tuvo enorme éxito también con *Gazapo*.

José Agustín enamoró e hizo una película con una actriz de cine, que era en ese momento la diosa de todo los jóvenes que se llamaba Angélica María, y se enamoró de ella, pero finalmente con quien se casó fue con una mujer admirable que ha sido su esposa con quien tiene tres hijos que se llama Margarita, y que han hecho una pareja notable. José Agustín renovó todo y también en cierta manera Gustavo Saínz con *Gazapo*, pero sobre todo José Agustín porque el siguió escribiendo y estudiando. Renovó toda la literatura mexicana; es decir hizo estallar la literatura mexicana y la hizo normal con palabras normales, palabras que hablaban los jóvenes.

Él estuvo en la escuela Simón Bolívar que era la misma escuela donde estuvo mi hermano Jan. Tuvo el mismo maestro, el maestro Cupich, y yo siento por José Agustín un enorme cariño y admiración desde hace años. Y además ha sido víctima él mismo de su celebridad. Porque él, en Puebla, fue a dar una conferencia en un teatro, entonces él ha ido, él fue a dar una conferencia en un teatro de Puebla y todo el público se subió, él era muy popular, sus conferencias se llenaban de pura gente que se quedaba de pie y él se fue para atrás en un anfiteatro y el cayó en la fosa, donde tocaba la orquesta, y cayó 20 metros y estuvo 15 días en terapia intensiva, y esto lo ha hecho sufrir muchísimo, y en cierta manera lo ha hecho también sufrir a toda su familia.

Ahora, él es también está volviendo a escribir y de veras yo creo que es uno de los puntales de los postes en las columnas de la literatura mexicana ahora porque a partir de José Agustín, se empezó escribir de otro modo, antes se escribía en cierta forma y ahora ya no se escribe así, gracias a ellos.

CI: Gracias, y ¿puede decir algo en inglés? do you think the youth of today is interested in his work?

EP: I think his work has a lot to do with Catcher in the Rye, he has said it many times. I think that his book has a lot to do with youth and young people and I think it opened the doors to a new type of literature in Mexico which is very important and which is linked with young people and also with old people because it's very good literature. I think he's the most wonderful story teller you can imagine. He's a very extraordinary story teller and also novelist. I think that *Se está haciendo tarde final en laguna* que es una novela sobre las drogas, sobre la desesperación, sobre el alcohol, es quizá una de las grandes y las mejores novelas en la literatura mexicana.

Interview with Rosa Beltrán

Claire Ihlendorf: Como una escritora mexicana, ¿qué piensas de la literatura de *la onda*?

Rosa Beltrán: Bueno, yo conocí la literatura de *la onda* cuando era estudiante universitaria de la licenciatura en la UNAM. Llevaron a un encuentro que se organizó allí que se llamaba *Literatura de la onda*, el nombre lo puso Margo Glantz. Ella misma es quien organizó este ciclo con autores que empiezan hablarnos en un lenguaje que se parece más al lenguaje que nosotros estábamos usando en ese momento y las experiencias que tenemos, aunque yo soy menor que muchos de los autores como Juan Villoro o Enrique Serna, que se vieron tocados antes que yo por esa literatura que hablaba del rock, de las experiencias de la juventud, y hablaba de la cotidianidad.

En el momento en que yo leo *De perfil* por primera vez, me doy cuenta de que se parece mas a lo que están haciendo muchos de los autores norteamericanos. Kerouac, muchos de los que Ginsberg, todos de estos autores que yo ya había leído; pero escucharlos en nuestro idioma, con nuestras costumbres, en esa mezcla que tenía que ver con, por un lado, la adopción de la modernidad que era voltear hacia los Estados Unidos, la música del rock versus la música vernácula como nuestras propias costumbres, pero mirando también hacia allá, no había ocurrido eso en literatura, y no había ocurrido con ese desparpajo.

Yo me di cuenta que se podía escribir con la mano izquierda, es decir que una tradición literaria tan solemne como la nuestra salvo el caso de Jorge Ibargüengoitia estaba abriendo una

Figure 62: : Rosa Beltrán and Claire Ihlendorf Burke in Mérida, México

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fisura por primera vez una fractura y que eso también era literatura, que eso también era escribible.

Ciudades desiertas es una novela que a mi me gustó muchísimo, me encantó. Cuando después yo me fui a ser un posgrado en los Estados Unidos, viví en esta circunstancia. Me di cuenta de que lo que hace Agustín siempre está relatando como si fuera en una bitácora o en un diario personal de manera encarnada. Lo que se siente y lo que se vive es una juventud, en su casa eterna; parece que hubiera hecho un pacto con el diablo.

C: Do you think his writing has caused a break, a change in what was written before and after? Do you think that the themes he writes about are still important today, universal, even though he uses a slang or jerga, de los sesenta? ¿Crees que los jóvenes de hoy todavía lo aprecian o disfrutan de leer sus obras?

RB: Pasó una cosa curiosa hace dos años. Hubo un homenaje a José Agustín en Chiapas donde se puso de nuevo la adaptación al cine de una de sus novelas y había muchos jóvenes, probablemente algunos lo habían leído y otros no. Y nos hacíamos esa misma pregunta: ¿qué tanto está localizado en una época lo que hizo Agustín? o ¿qué tanto es capaz de decirles a los jóvenes de ahora?

Y nos dimos cuenta que aunque muchas de las palabras y de los giros lingüísticos ya no se usen y les sueñen a lo mejor a esos jóvenes el lenguaje de sus papás, a los jipis que fueron sus papás, o a estos padres modernos que los metieron en escuelas activas que trataban de no ser autoritarios dentro de la familia buscaron un modelo distinto, al que después, los hijos se devoraron, a pesar de que eso ya hubiera cambiado la experiencia seguía diciéndoles mucho. Porque hay algo en la obra de Agustín que yo creo que es imperecedero y que captura este instante de juventud en el que tú crees que puedes cambiar el mundo antes de que el mundo te cambia a ti.

CI: Estoy completamente de acuerdo, sé que cuando leo *La tumba* por ejemplo, me lleva a otro momento de la vida, de la juventud. Recuerdo ser teenager. Hemos estado en esta feria de libros y he notado que hay muchos jóvenes y niños que siguen a Elena como si fuera un rock star y que el rol de la literatura aquí en México me parece más grande que en los Estados Unidos. ¿Piensas que con toda esta tecnología nueva, que este rol que la literatura tiene va a perder importancia? ¿Ahora que casi todo es digital?

RB: No, absolutamente no. Yo creo que son formas perfectamente compatibles el formato no es la obra, el formato no es la literatura. Algunos le llaman en soporte en papel a lo que otros aprendimos que se llama libro en el era Gutenberg que me sigue pareciendo un invento insuperable, maravilloso.

Pero, llevar un ipad, o llevar una computadora laptop donde puedes también acceder a la literatura de formas distintas simplemente ha abierto otras rutas. Si creo que se cambien los hábitos de lectura y de escritura si creo que esto también se vaya a ver reflejada en las estructuras mismas de la novela en el caso de lo que yo escribo o del cuento; el hecho de tener varias pantallas abiertas, el hecho de ir como si de tratar un virus mutante, transitar por capítulos distintos que no necesariamente están contando la misma historia, esto que ya se ve reflejado en algunas de nuestras obras creo que es el resultado de la digitalización pero de ninguna manera implica que la literatura corra ningún peligro.

Interview with Mónica Lavín

Figure 63: Mónica Lavín and Claire Ihlendorf Burke

Mónica Lavín: Creo que reconocemos y sabemos que fue fundamental lo que hizo la literatura de *la onda* para la literatura mexicana: que es darles voz a los

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jóvenes. Eran los sesenta y en el mundo los jóvenes se estaban volviendo los protagonistas; lo que hacen estas audacias y estas intuiciones literarias e inteligencias como la de José Agustín, es darle una voz a literatura la expresión y sentir de los jóvenes--casi como heredero de un Salinger, ¿no? (Salinger con *Catcher in the Rye*) Pero nunca nos habíamos oído a los mexicanos como él. Nos permitió escucharnos y vernos, y a mí, eso me parece fundamental porque va a tono con la época y le da a la literatura una inyección de juventud, de sobre todo de la cercanía de que la literatura no es algo que tenga que ver…tiene que ver con el lector urbano por ejemplo los chilangos--los del D.F.-- que se veía allí, que se miraba y que además usaba las expresiones que los años sesenta y setenta digamos. Fue un crecimiento del caló de las expresiones idiomáticas con las cuales nos sentíamos muy a gusto los jóvenes. Todo un código que nos representaba y que él extendía a su vez en los libros. Entonces, me parece que sin él, la literatura mexicana (o sin la literatura de la onda) no sería lo mismo, quién sabe cómo sería. [José Agustín] hizo mucho por popularizar la lectura también.

Claire Ihlendorf: ¿Recuerda la primera novela que leyó?

ML: Yo leí *De perfil*.

C: ¿Cuantos años tendría? ¿Es cuando era joven?

ML: Fíjate que no tan joven, no fue de las lecturas…Porque cuando se publicó yo era muy adolescente entonces yo no la leí hasta las veinte-algo.

C:¿Piensa que los jóvenes de hoy todavía pueden apreciar las novelas de José Agustín? ¿Que las pueden entender?

ML: Mira, a mí por ejemplo, la prueba que hice fue (yo soy también maestra de la universidad) di a leer *De perfil* y dije 'a ver qué les pasa a los jóvenes de ahora' y les gustó mucho. Lo único es que notaron que tenía un ritmo lento y les costó trabajo, A *La tumba* no le pasa eso. Es más briosa.

C: Y normalmente, ¿cuándo, en su carrera literaria, leen estas novelas los estudiantes?

ML: Aquí lo que es narrativa mexicana contemporánea digamos, cuando enseñas de los cincuenta en adelante, si es obligado.

C: Es interesante para mí, porque estas novelas no se leen mucho en los Estados Unidos, ni en las clases de literatura mexicana (de que yo sepa) y quiero saber ¿por qué?, si ¿hay una razón o no?

ML: Claro, y sabes que es muy interesante que él está influido por todo el movimiento beatnik. Él lee a los beats a Keruoac y es eso también lo que hace que tengan una voz

C: Si, con toda está conexión a los Estados Unidos me parece que debe ser más leído.

ML: ¿No será que también es muy difícil traducirlo al inglés?

C: Es posible, no hay una traducción todavía.

ML: Tiene equivalentes a lo mejor. Sabes que para mi fue muy interesante, hace poco la fototeca de la UNAM reprodujo varios videos que se hicieron en super 8 de la escuela del cine donde José Agustín era alumno. Entonces, uno de sus cuentos que se llama *Luz abierta* está hecho un mediometraje y este relato está narrado en voz off por Gabriel Retes. Es fascinante ver los setenta; no por las imágenes sino por esa voz, lo veo ahora y me fascina...digo como capto, como estaría el espíritu de esta época. Y a los jóvenes también se los paso a mis alumnos les fascina

C: No sé si es lo mismo aquí como en los Estados Unidos pero todo lo retro es muy popular ahora: la moda...

ML: el vocho, el volkswagon..

C: También había un sentido de rebeldía...

ML: Y tenía un lenguaje, propio. Había una manera de hablar, de nombrar, de decir aquí estamos, aquí somos, esto queremos, esto no nos gusta.

Interview with Cristina Rivera Garza

Claire Ihlendorf: Me gustaría saber tus opiniones sobre José Agustín y la onda, ¿has leído algunos de sus textos? Y ¿qué piensas?

Cristina Rivera Garza: Me acuerdo haber leído los escritores de la onda con mucha pasión y mucho gusto y con un gran sentido de curiosidad hace ya bastantes años y de ellos los que más me impresionó fueron los libros de José Agustín y de Parménides García-Saldaña que se convirtieron por de inmediato de libros de culto entre los lectores jóvenes de esa época. Creo que con el paso de los años lo que era tan fresco tan inédito esa incorporación del lenguaje popular, del lenguaje de los jóvenes a un medio que se había ido distinguiendo por ser pomposo, serio, solemne, et cetera creo que vinieron a imbuir una bocanada de aire fresco a la literatura, que de otra manera tiende con tanta facilidad a ser oficialista y solemne sobre todo.

Figure 64: Cristina Rivera Garza and Claire Ihlendorf Burke

CI: Y ¿empezaste de leer cuando eras joven?

CRG: Cuantos años tendría… estaba como en…creo que algunas cosas las empecé en la prepa y pero ya después fue como en los primeros años de la universidad

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sobre todo a García Saldaña , *Pasto verde*, *el Rey Criollo*, todo esto fue poquito después.

CI: Se dice que con *La tumba* y José Agustín empezaron un cambio en la literatura mexicana, y Agustín era muy joven cuando escribió *La tumba*, tenía 16 años

CRG: ¿Cuánto?, ¿16? ¿De verdad? No es cierto, no sabía

CI: Sí. La escribió en 1961 y la publicó en 1964, tenía 16 años en 61 (casi 17)

CRG: Oh my gosh. Es el año en que yo nací por cierto

CI: Entonces, imagínate, era muy joven. Pero bueno, ¿has leído *La tumba*, verdad? Entonces, ¿piensas que esta novela habla de temas universales? O ¿piensas que es "stuck in" su tiempo?

CRG: Especialmente lo que se refiere a *La tumba*, porque después creo que ya no les seguí la pista. Este de *La final de laguna*, ¿no? Son libros que reúnen lo mejor, que es poder, ser muy de su tiempo, ser muy enraizados, en su momento, pero a la vez que se preparan para crecer para envejecer muy bien. Te mentiría si te dijera que hace poco lo he releído, porque no es cierto. Lo leí entonces. Alguna vez lo recomendé en alguna de mis clases y volví a leerlo pero no lo tengo totalmente fresco en la cabeza, pero de esta lectura de verlo asignado en mis clases, lo que creo, es uno estos dos libros han envejecido muy bien.

CI: Como profesora, dijiste que los estudiantes la leyeron, ¿cuál fue su reacción?, ¿recuerdas algo de eso?

CRG: Si, creo que los jóvenes en cualquier generación les da mucho gusto y un especie de sorpresa de que el lenguaje que están utilizando que, para los jóvenes, es distinto pero es similar digamos al impulso de atrás, la utilización de ciertos términos de la construcción de una especie de slang, ¿no?, que está haciendo la generación etc. Etc. yo creo que había mucho de sorpresa, mucho de curiosidad, mucho de 'wow, no sabía que en nuestra literatura también se valía esto'.

CI: ¿Y eso es una clase en México o en los Estados Unidos?

CRG: Esto fue cuando daba clase en el Tec de Monterrey,

CI: Ah ok, porque estaba comentando antes de que en los Estados Unidos no vemos esta novela en las clases de la literatura.

CRG: ¿No? Ah es cierto

CI: Y yo quiero saber ¿por qué?, Propuse una clase para el año que viene sobre este tema. A mí me parece muy importante, y estos libros forman parte del canon, ¿no? Pero no se lee mucho en los Estados Unidos y no sé si es a causa del lenguaje, porque puede ser difícil, ¿no?

CRG: Es buena pregunta, no sé, no sé. A lo mejor se les etiquetó demasiado pronto como lectura para jóvenes. Y la consecuencia es que nada más se da en ciertos contextos en lugar de ser parte de lecturas más amplias. En este sentido la etiqueta de *la onda* tal vez no es la más afortunada que pudo haber pasado. Pero a la vez, les dio una identidad que les da también cierta coherencia dentro de sus mundos. Entonces, pues, uno nunca puede saber si fue bueno o malo, pero por lo menos esa experiencia que tengo yo los alumnos me la enseñaron bastante positivamente.