Collapse, Catastrophe and Rediscovery

Collapse, Catastrophe and Rediscovery: Spain's Cultural Panorama in the Twenty-First Century

Edited by

Jennifer Brady, Ibon Izurieta
and Ana-María Medina

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Collapse, Catastrophe and Rediscovery:
Spain's Cultural Panorama in the Twenty-First Century,
Edited by Jennifer Brady, Ibon Izurieta and Ana-María Medina

This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-5631-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5631-7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

III. HYBRIDITY, MARGINALIZATION AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE NATION IN FILM

PREFACE

ANA-MARÍA MEDINA

The anthology *Collapse, Catastrophe and Rediscovery: Spain's Cultural Panorama in the Twenty First Century* seeks to explore the various cultural phenomena that have shaped the national identity in contemporary Spain. The goal of the editors is to compile an eclectic body of manuscripts that elicit cultural responses to the changes in collective identity as a result of factors such as historical memory, gender representations, immigration and regional identities.

While the chapters in this collection cover various topics and propose diverse readings of artistic objects in both literature and film, they all seek to explore the repercussions of events that have defined Spain in its recent past. The aim of this preface is to guide the reader concisely through the evolution of cultural production in the last part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century while considering how catastrophe theory influences sociocultural production, as well as to provide an introduction of the division of chapters and an overview of each contribution.

In Spain, the events that have taken place in the last half-century have been catastrophic because they have led to pronounced changes, such as the collapse of established systems of knowledge. Through the disintegration of preconceived notions regarding gender ideology, communal memory and conceptualizations of immigration there has been an awakening or, in other terms, a rediscovery.

In mathematics there exists a theory of catastrophe developed by René Thom in 1660, made popular by Christopher Seeman in the 1970s, that aims to calculate a rapid deterioration in performance caused by the combination of increased levels of both cognitive and somatic anxiety. The theory attempts to predict human behaviour, thus many refer to it as a model of arousal. The model hypothesizes that when performance is affected by both physical and mental anxiety, two outcomes can occur. First, if either physical or mental anxiety is high, the other will become high functioning. However, if both are high, there is a deterioration which will lead to a continued worsening, or a resetting and regaining of control,

that will slowly and steadily increase performance. This model has been repeatedly applied to performances in sports, but not to the actions—or reactions—to the events shaping a populace.

It is no easy task to analyze the events that have shaped Spain within the last decade, specifically because the repercussions that have unfolded are still moulding the current ideologies that define the Spanish social system. However, it is clear there are two moments that have been the most catalytic events in Spain's recent past: (1) the Franco dictatorship, because it changed the course of the nation, and (2) the end of his regime.

I would like to relate the catastrophe model to these periods of Spanish history focusing on specific events—and their lasting effects—that took place in the Iberian Peninsula. As a starting point, during the thirty-six-year dictatorship the association between cognitive anxiety for those faced with remaining in inner exile, and somatic anxiety as a result of poverty, food rationing and poor living conditions, is an obvious marker for a change of behaviour. As a society, Spanish people suffered social deterioration in the initial stages of this period due to the implemented censorship and the fear that inundated the collective sphere.

The cultural deterioration or, in other words, the cultural catastrophe, gave way to a total reset and a regaining of control that allowed a recreation that gradually provided insight into what was to come after Franco's death. By this I mean that the artistic creation in Spain, beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 60s and 70s, that led to reactionary movements and experimentation in art, literature and film. It was through this gradual upward curve that artists, authors and filmmakers provided the steps necessary to bring the cultural production to the postmodern era. This was facilitated because of the second catastrophic event—the transition to democracy. It was through the events that preceded the Constitution of 1978 that the Spanish people again had to face a change, however this change would bring forth cognitive anxiety and not somatic anxiety. As a result, even though during the last third of the twentieth century Spain was abruptly positioned in a new political, social and cultural cartography, the country was able to enter postmodernity at a much quicker pace than other European nations that had been gradually introduced to globalization and its repercussions. In Spain there was a cultural boom and, consequently, models that had previously been imposed by the conservative regime were dislocated. Within two decades the neocolonial structures in the globalized world, cultural imperialism and the heteroneutral gender classifications that are reiterated within the patriarchal system had become commonplace; the sociocultural panorama had to—and continues to—reconstruct itself.

There have been numerous publications detailing the years after the death of Franco; books and articles have focused on interpreting and analyzing "*el destape*," "*la Movida*," "*la entrada a la democracia*," "*la transición*," among many other terms, which have been coined to explain the events that transpired in the last part of the twentieth century. A multitude of scholars have succeeded in outlining social and artistic theoretical perceptions of the entrance of Spain into the free market economy and the postmodern system where gender lines are blurred and reconceptualized. However, there seems to be more room to identify cultural shifts within contemporary works, thus the compilation of this anthology.

Mentioning the events that have taken place on a national scale in the last twelve years is simply impossible. Nonetheless, I seek to emphasize those that highlight some of the catalysts responsible for the transformations that have transcended the essence of Spanish identity. The events listed below have been "catastrophic" because they have triggered social anxiety; however, since they are high triggers of cognitive anxiety and low somatic unease, they have made the cultural production increase. Some of these changes are as simple as the introduction of the Euro in 2002, which marked the beginning of the extinction of expressions such as "*no valer un duro*," and qualitative denominators, such as "*pesetero*." Political struggles have stood out in the twenty first century as the Iberian nation was placed in the spotlight with the relationship between US President George W. Bush and Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar, as well as when the nation was brought to a critical point of sociopolitical questioning, heightened after the terrorist attacks in Madrid on March 11, 2004. These bombings killed hundreds and injured over 2,000 people, opening the door for large-scale protests on Spanish streets. Soon after, when presidential elections took place, the strong voter turnout resulted in the victory of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, over the Aznar's People's Party (PP). One of the promises Zapatero made during his candidacy, and kept once he was voted as Prime Minister, was to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq, attempting to separate Spain from the Bush war dogma. The socialist party, however, had a short-lived victory. The collapse of global markets that took place in 2008 led Spain into an economic downfall, which was followed by the stepping down of Zapatero in 2012 and the subsequent election of Mariano Rajoy's center-right Popular Party. The result of these events has led to internal political struggles for independence, heightened unemployment, fiscal cuts, innumerable protests, and an ever-growing sense of social discontent. At the end of Zapatero's time in office, in November 2012, the

Basque nationalist terrorist group ETA issued a tentative—and what now seems final—ceasefire. This took place after repetitive ceasefire agreements in the 1990s and what was thought at the time to be the final one in 2006. Catalonia has also stood out as a result in its leaning towards a pro-independence stance, with heightened self-determination. The movement is led by its president Arturo Mas who called for new parliamentary elections in late 2012, successfully willing the new group of representatives to give the people of Catalonia the decision to become independent in the four-year legislature.

As a result of the series of intellectual inquiries that started in the mid-1990s and culminated in 2007 with the populace demanding the unearthing of the so-called forgotten incidents that took place during the Spanish Civil War, the Law of Historical Memory was passed. Since the late twentieth century, testimonies of survivors were slowly repurposed by the independent investigation of authors, scholars and filmmakers, filling a historical void. The collective memory of these events had been, to a large extent, buried under what is today known as the *pacto del olvido*, and Spain needed to heal wounds that had been closed without being reconciled.

An underlying force in the condemnation of the atrocities was Baltasar Garzón Real. Garzón had been part of Spain's Audiencia Nacional and was the magistrate of the Juzgado Central de Instrucción No. 5, which is in charge of investigating terrorism, organized crime and money laundering. Amongst the cases for which he is renowned was his first, "Manos Limpias," which investigated crimes during Franco's regime and rendered him a hero in the Spanish spotlight. Although he was first suspended because of this trial, he was continuing that which Zapatero's government had highlighted as an important step towards healing the Spanish past through the Law of Historical Memory. The law, beyond condemning the Franco Regime, prohibited political events at the Valley of the Fallen, mandated the removal of Francoist symbols in public buildings and spaces and required state help in the exhumations and identification of victims of the regime. This provided validation for almost 500,000 descendants of exiled peoples, covering the time from the beginning of the Civil War until 1955, giving them the necessary means to gain Spanish citizenship and to have their paperwork processed from December 2008 to 2011. The relevant populations were largely Latin American, with half of them coming from Cuba and Argentina. This, however, has not been the height of immigration in Spain; since 1981, immigration has increased by almost ten percent. Estimates show that, in 2015, one out of three people who live in Spain will not have been born there. This influx has caused a tidal wave

of new cultures and a very globalized ethos with social discourses that have no precedent, creating a need for new narratives that allow the readers and viewers to better understand their surroundings by not having the position as an outsider.

The reality is that Spain's shifts go hand-in-hand with globalization and with the movements it has inspired: the availability of the internet, the European debt crisis, the increase in immigration, the revision of gender roles, and the presence of Spanish youth at the centre of social media movements. The films and narratives that are presented and analyzed in this collection seek to be responses to changes in the social, political, and historical spheres within Spain. The chapters in the collection focus on contemporary narratives in literature, film and the praxis of the translation of one artistic form to another. They serve as a starting point to understanding the cultural phenomena that have been reiterated through the public and artistic spheres. The editors' aim is to bring to the forefront new inquiries in the current studies of Spanish culture, literature and film and to incite further discussion.

The anthology has been divided into three parts. In the first, "Collapse and Revision of Hegemonic Ideologies of Gender in Literature," Jennifer Brady and Ibon Izurieta identify rediscoveries of gender definitions. They analyze how requalifications of gender relations and the abrupt changes have affected women and men who did not necessarily live during the feminist movement. Women and men entered territories where they were previously under or not represented, and these events have shifted the political and social landscapes of Spain. In "Mapping Masculinity in Twenty-First Century Spain via Multiplications in *Laura y Julio* by Juan José Millás," Brady explores how Millás employs the process of multiple creations of objects, bodies and written and spoken texts as a way to reconceptualize Spanish masculinities. She takes an optimistic approach, positing that the rediscovery of what it means to be a man in Spain in the twenty first century underlies the construction of multiplications in the novel.

On a similar topic, Ibon Izurieta's article "The Catastrophe of the Collapse of Traditional Gender Roles: Towards a Reappropriation of Gender-Based Identity in Basque Narrative and Film" analyzes gender performances in a handful of Post-Franco Basque films and narratives. Izurieta investigates how the language of ideological policing and the desire to renormalize hegemony take center stage, rather than the catastrophe itself, and analyzes how the collapse of the system of normalized gender and Basque essentialist identities augurs a future with fewer impending calamities since, in the absence of categories, the system

requires less repetitive buttressing of inflexible and artificial norms. Thus, the chapter provides a viewpoint of a new reality without incessant impending doomsday scenarios that would end the tyranny of the discourse of catastrophe and collapse.

The three chapters in the second section, "Literary and Filmic Recoveries of 'The Catastrophic' in Spain's Past and Present," seek to explore textual and filmic reconstructions of memories of the Spanish Civil War in *Soldados de Salamina* by Javier Cercas and *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón. Studying the rearticulation of the past in "Reconstructing the Catastrophe of *los vencidos*: Transcription in *La voz dormida*," Meredith Jeffers lucidly articulates the process of transcription in the creation of fiction and provides a critical reflection of the novel *La voz dormida* through engaging the works of Paul Ricour and Dominick LaCapra, which analyze memory and the use of transcription to meditate on the present. The second chapter, "Politics of Memory and Politics of Forgetting: Hermeneutics of Intermediality in *Soldados de Salamina*," by Adriana Minardi and Alejandra Sanementerio, explores the reconceptualization of memory through the juxtaposition of the real and the fictional. Through the exploration of the frames of memory and the remembrance of history versus its filmic elaboration, the authors aim to identify how the development of characters represents the essence of the textual discourse.

In the final section of this anthology, "Hybridity, Marginalization and the Collapse of the Nation in Film," Ana Corbalán, Henri-Simon Blanc-Hoàng and Susana Domingo Amestoy delve into pressing topics represented in contemporary Spanish cinema. In "Questioning Cultural Hybridity in Spain: Perceptions of Latin American Immigration in Contemporary Spanish Cinema," Corbalán explores the sociocultural dialogue represented in contemporary Spanish Film in which Latin American characters have a principal role. The author aims to negotiate a national imaginary that goes beyond perceived multiculturalism toward the reality of a power hierarchy in which intercultural conflicts are acknowledged as part of Spanish eurocentrism.

In "The Marginalized Male in Twenty-First Century Spanish Cinema," Blanc-Hoàng identifies the filmic translation of the death and the reconceptualization of masculinity as a result of the neoliberal state through Icíar Bollaín's *Te doy mis ojos*, Fernando León de Aranoa's *Princesas*, and Daniel Sánchez Arévalo's *Azuloscurocasinegro*. All three films, produced in the last ten years, present characters who fail to fulfil stereotypically masculine roles, resulting in the shifting of responsibilities and the rediscovery of hegemonic gender relations.

In the final chapter in this collection, "Postmodern Realisms: Memory, Family, and the Collapse of the Nation in Fernando León de Aranoa's Films," Susana Domingo Amestoy identifies the utopic ideal of Spain versus the reality that Spain fosters within the European and global landscape. This ideal is one that negates a reality of an economic, ecological downfall and a collapse of the nation-self. Employing Jean Baudrillard's theoretical perceptions to understand the end of the paradigm of Spain's representation as a social utopia, Amestoy analyzes *Familia*, *Barrio*, *Princesas*, and *Los lunes al sol* as representations of the impossibility of collective memory and nation.

Collapse, Catastrophe, and Rediscovery: Spain's Cultural Panorama in the Twenty First Century provides a broad perspective on cultural representations of contemporary realities of Spain. However, because this work is rooted in the idea of actuality, it is understood that this is just a first step in a continually developing process; Spain in a historical continuum. It is the editors' hope that, for scholars and students, this collection will initiate conversation and elicit new visions on the topics presented and those left to unearth. Its development would not have been possible without its contributors, and for their hard work we are immensely grateful.

I.

COLLAPSE AND REVISIONS OF HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGIES OF GENDER IN LITERATURE

CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING MASCULINITY IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SPAIN VIA MULTIPLICATIONS IN *LAURA Y JULIO* BY JUAN JOSÉ MILLÁS

JENNIFER BRADY
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH, USA

Abstract: In this chapter, I analyze the process of multiple creations in Juan José Millás's 2006 novel *Laura y Julio* as a possible interpretation of how conceptualizations of subjectivity, and specifically masculinity, are being (re)discovered in twenty-first century Spain. The protagonist of the novel, Julio, constructs multiples in his job in the fabrication of movie sets and in his personal life where he folds himself into the life of his wife's dying lover and composes multiple spoken and written texts. The repeated process of constructing mirrored creations and texts opens up alternate realities for the protagonist. As I suggest, the process of multiplication is what permits him to (re)establish his subjectivity not according to outdated societal norms, but rather according to the private framework that he manufactures for his self.

Keywords: bodies, Juan José Millás, *Laura y Julio*, masculinity, multiples, replicas

Distortions of scale and size and the creation and destruction of replicas are recurrent tendencies in the fictional worlds of Juan José Millás. Scale, which may be defined as a graduated range of values to measure or compare, and size, which might range from tiny to huge, are tools with which Millás manipulates the physical bodies of his characters and multiplies creations and texts. In many of his works, characters are housed in small places, children are juxtaposed with adults, shadows are contorted in relation to physical bodies, and, frequently, objects and characters are duplicated and/or made miniature. In this current study, I examine multiple constructions, texts and manipulations of scale and size

in Millás's recent novel *Laura y Julio* (2006). I suggest that the process of multiplications of scale and size could be read as a representation of the collapse—and, more importantly, the (re)discovery—of masculinity in twenty-first century Spain.[1]

In his impressive study, *True Lies: Narrative Self-consciousness in the Contemporary Spanish Novel*, Samuel Amago describes how characters in contemporary Spanish literature chart their subjectivities through acts of writing. Amago contends: "For the narrators and protagonists [in] Millás's world, writing is the map that leads to an understanding not only of the trappings of artistic representation, but also of themselves and their relation to the world" (2006, 29). His assumption is correct—Millasian characters often write as a way to search for points of reference to better understand themselves and the world that surrounds them. Moreover, Amago's statement that "writing is the map" is intriguing on several levels: first, writing is a continuous process that is based on language, our most stable and our most slippery ontological system; and, secondly, Amago relates the process of recording experiences in language—or writing—to a map, a product that offers a miniature, drawn-to-scale copy of a concrete place. In this chapter I expand on Amago's idea of charting to include writing in metaphoric senses, such as writing the physical body or modifications by multiplication.

No matter the ways in which the self is modified, subjectivities are inherently subjugated by societal, hegemonic pressures. The prevailing ideology of Spain during Francisco Franco's regime (1939–75), guided by national Catholicism and geared towards those in the middle and high economic and social classes, relied on hegemonic stabilizers. Men were to work and women to care for their families and their homes, as dictated by the Sección Femenina (or Women's Section), a branch of the Falange that sought to universalize the role of Spanish woman through domestication in the twentieth century. These privileged positions, which made up the notion of the traditional Spanish family, represent an inherently distorted and incomplete backdrop on which notions of twenty-first century masculinity are based.

Hegemonic ideals of masculinity—which rely on contrasts to "the other"—or women are not sustainable, and nor should they be. Traditional conceptualizations of Spanish masculinity in the twentieth century balance tenebrously on collapsing pillars. Franco's authoritarian ideology, the Sección Femenina, an unlevelled and eschewed hierarchical class system, along with other problematic social constructions, make for unstable scaffolding. It becomes clear that the foundation of being a man in contemporary Spain is an artificial construction built on empty referents.

As Isabel Ballesteros contends: "[M]asculinity is traditionally conceived of as a leveller, as a bar to be jumped, as a universal measure" (6), but what happens to representations of hegemonic Spanish masculinity when we understand the universal measure to be an falsified construct? How can we conceive of what it means to be a Spanish man in the twenty first century if the original model is inherently flawed and predicated on misleading premises, or in other words if the standard is an imaginary conceptualization?

Tension from Spain's precarious past coupled with present-day anxieties make for a society where, as Guy Garcia has posited about the United States: "it seems like the world that men built is falling apart or turning against them" (xiv). Reports from January 2013 state that the overall unemployment rate in Spain is 26.2% (News Release Euro Indicators 2013) and the rate of unemployment for Spanish youths under the age of 25 is 55.5% (Unemployment Rate by Gender and Age: 2006–2011). With woes regarding the current tenebrous economic situation, exacerbated by the lingering effects of the years of dictatorship in the twentieth century, it does not seem like an exaggeration to contend that some Spaniards—and, significantly, Spanish men as the so-called "universal measure" or traditional standard—are stuck in a bad situation. Seeking to make sense of the habituation of flawed ideological projections enables us to better understand the urgency for (re)definitions of what is means to be a man in twenty-first century Spain. The protagonist of *Laura y Julio* offers a fictional portrayal of the process of redefinition of the problematic notions of Spanish masculinity, specifically in how he interacts with distortions and multiplications of size and scale in the models and written texts that he constructs throughout the novel.

Laura y Julio tells the story of the triangular relationship between Laura, her husband Julio, and Manuel, their next door neighbor and Laura's clandestine lover. After a motorcycle accident leaves Manuel in a coma, Laura kicks Julio out of their apartment. With little option of where to go, Julio finds refuge in Manuel's identical and contiguous apartment, and there ritualistically begins to transform his physical body in the new space by eating his neighbour's food, dressing in his clothing, and wearing his cologne. Unable to leave Manuel's apartment without bumping into his wife in the hallway and unable to make noise fearing that his wife may hear, Julio lays in his neighbour's bed and undergoes a collapse of his individual identity.

Julio's career of constructing movie and television sets follows a similar path to that of his personal transformation in the sense that in both he seeks to find authenticity by constructing copies. Julio's obsession with

replicating reality of true scale in a fictionalized, hermetic space encourages us to rethink the relationship between the original and the replica, and between distinct scales and sizes. No longer does it serve us to envision the real and the representation and constructions of different scales and sizes as functioning on a hierarchy.

In *Laura y Julio*, Julio seeks to locate alternate realities in the models that he constructs at work. Describing Julio, the narrator tells us:

> *Si él tuviera una vida regalada, se dedicaría a construir maquetas por el propio placer de construirlas. Quizá fundara un museo de maquetas lo suficientemente grandes como para que los visitantes pudieran penetrar en ellas y jugar a ser los muñecos de un decorado gigantesco en el que habría consultas de ginecólogos y supermercados y viviendas de ancianas que vivían y morían solas, con el televisor encendido, y casas de matrimonios y de solteros y conventos de curas y de monjas … [A] lo que aspiraba en realidad era reproducir la vida a la misma escala que la vida, de ahí, pensó, la necesidad del hijo.*
>
> (2006, 54)

Julio is concerned with the duplication of spaces and of self. Alter-egos and self-duplication, which have their roots in Greek and Roman mythology and the German tradition of the doppelgänger, have traditionally divided the self into two binary opposites, such as good and evil, mischievous and gentle, and so forth. In the frequently cited example, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the 1886 novella by Robert Louis Stevenson, two polar opposite personalities inhabit the same physical body. As is the case for Jekyll and Hyde, division fragments subjectivity, taking away from more complex notions of self by separating characteristics of subjectivity into strict binary categories. On the other hand, the multiplication of self and spaces, as is the case of Julio, adds to the existing concept of subjectivity by duplication, creating layer upon layer of ways of measuring self and, simultaneously, constructing alternate realities from which Julio is able to write—or "map"—his self throughout the novel via the creation of multiples.

Both Julio and his father are architects in their own rights—his father designs houses and Julio designs movie sets, or houses "*de mentira*" as he reminds his father at one point (2006, 63). For Julio, however, they are not fake constructions; they are as real, if not more real, than his other reality where his marriage is crumbling. Julio's current project at work, in which he is designing a cardboard model of a set for a movie about the relationship between a young supermarket cashier and an elderly woman who shops there, reflects the alternate reality that Julio enters when he begins living in

Manuel's apartment. Both Julio living as Manuel and the cardboard model he is constructing correspond, in a visceral way, with what is true for him—the cardboard models from his job and the repeated texts in his life are as real as the so-called originals. The model-sized replicas that Julio constructs in his job embody real life and highlight absence. They are scaled-down replicas and fictional creations made especially for the service of the real and, at the same time, are their own reality.

Jean Baudrillard contends in *Simulacra and Simulation* that the reality of replicas is embodied in their own existence: "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes" (1981, 2). How Baudrillard understands multiplications emphasizes what postmodernity has been revealing all along—the symbolic order of things, or, in other terms, the outdated hierarchical order of subject and object, is a perilous ontological system at best.

One way in which Julio questions the idea of representation as its own reality is by attempting to write. His cardboard models evolve from miniscule scales to life-sized realities and the stories he tells also transform in a similar way. Millás interweaves stories in the novel in the form of several short narrations that Julio tells Julia, his stepsister's young daughter. In Julio's first story to Julia, the two characters with similar names share storytelling duties. The young Julia forces Julio to tell her a bedtime story, stating, "*Si quieres que me duerma, me tendrás que contar un cuento*" (2006, 71). She tells him, "*Tú di érase una vez y verás cómo sale*," after which a game of co-authoring ensues:

> *—Érase una vez –dijo Julio y se calló.*
> *—Érase una vez un país –añadió la niña.*
> …
> *—Érase una vez que un país –repitió Julio— en el que había menos sombras que personas.*
> *—¿Por qué?*
> *—Porque la mitad de la gente nacía sin sombra.*
> *—¿Y cómo era la gente sin sombra?*
> *—Atolondrada.*
> …
> *—¿Sabían leer?*
> *—Mal.*
> *—¿Y qué pasó?*
>
> (2006, 71)

This exchange of co-authorship—with Julia continuously prompting Julio to continue fabricating the story about the shadows without people—goes on until the young girl falls asleep. The repetition of the familiar beginning of a story, "*érase una vez*," adds dimension to the back-and-forth between the two characters, highlighting the difficulty of starting a story from scratch and focusing on the repetitious enunciation of the phrase. The technique of anaphora not only creates a poetic effect that is aesthetically pleasing due to its symmetry, but it also connects the two characters, the two "Julios" who, despite their differences in age and gender, occupy a similar position as that of the storytellers of this first work of intercalated fiction in the novel. Julio's position as the man, according to flawed hegemonic norms, is threatened by the young girl's storytelling prowess. She challenges him for authorship. By confronting his ability to create a story (another creation, for example a cardboard model, could easily substitute the story here), she arouses suspicion about his ability to conform to hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

As Julia drifts off to sleep, Julio takes control of the story, telling her that since only half of the population has shadows, the government mandates that each person give half of his or her shadow to those without one. This creates a search *en masse* for the other halves of their shadows: "*El afán de las sombras por encontrar la otra parte de sí mismas*," Julio tells Julia, "*era tal que mandaban más que las personas*." And, he continues: "*Las sombras dominaban los movimientos de todo el mundo. Y cuando dos medias sombras, que originalmente habían sido una, volvían a encontrarse, sus propietarios no tenían más remedio que irse a vivir juntos: tal era el poder de las sombras*" (2006, 74). The game of mirrors and reproduction that Millás creates with the two side-by-side apartments and the transformation of Julio into Manuel continue in this story. The first double is obvious—the names of the co-authors, Julio and Julia, closely mirror one another, yet each maintains their gender-inflected ending. Secondly, the content of the story—the half shadows that re-establish themselves as whole shadows—may not only represent Julio's transformation into Manuel, it may also foreshadow the ending of the novel when Julio and Laura reinstate their marriage.

Shadows and bodies share an essentialistic relationship. Baudrillard tells us that "nothing in the symbolic order permits betting on the primacy of one or the other" (148). In this and subsequent stories that Julio tells Julia, only half of the population is born with a shadow, which opens up a game of absence and presence and exposes the inherent division—and symbiotic relationship—of the physical body and its shadow. Conceived of both as one of many portrayals of the human body and as their own

realities, shadows are distorted in size and scale by light and disappear in darkness. Furthermore, the shadows in this story, occupying positions of power, are themselves divided in two, but once they find their matching half they are (re)established as a whole. In this sense, shadows are their own reality, and they simultaneously and inherently embody the process of multiplication. Baudrillard observes: "There is no more reality: it is the shadow that has carried all reality away with it" (1994, 148). In the stories that Julio tells Julia, shadows are not human-made models like the ones that Julio makes at work, but rather offer a unique perspective as a way for the concept of self to escape the constraints of the physical body, opening up room for what Drew Leder describes as the lived body.

In *The Absent Body* (1990), Leder examines corporeal absences in everyday negotiations. Even though we are always in our bodies, he theorizes that we often ignore the body's role in how we perceive the world around us. To exemplify this paradox, Leder reminds us that in the German language there are two words for body: *korper*, the physical body, and *leib*, the lived body.[2] He argues that we often get caught up with the sensations of the physical body and ignore the lived body, which he describes as:

> an ecstatic/recessive being, engaged both in a leaping out and a falling back. Through its sensorimotor surface it projects outward to the world. At the same time it recedes from its own apprehension into anonymous visceral depths. The body is never a simple presence, but that which is away from itself, a being of difference and absence.
>
> (1990, 103)

In this passage, Leder implies that we are complex beings who often overlook the roles of our bodies in our exchanges with each other and objects in the world. According to him, when we interact in the world, we do so with our bodies whether or not we are aware of its role in such negotiations. Leder's idea of the lived body incorporates the paradox of presence and absence. Physical bodies are always present, yet rarely are we fully aware of their presence in human perception. The concept of the lived body, which subverts the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and body, is especially relevant to my current study because it includes the physicality of experience on and in the body as well as the intangible essence of individual perception. We are our physical bodies, yet it is a difficult task to pinpoint what that truly means, as Millás tells us in a 2004 interview in which he contends that: "*el cuerpo es una medida de todo*" (Beilin 2004, 68). His comment emphasizes the perceptive nature of our physical bodies, which is inherently subjective and vulnerable in a similar

way to our system of language. Even though our physical bodies and language are continuously incomplete and, at the same time, the most complete they can ever be at a given moment, they are some of our most reliable modes of the construction of meaning. Millás's characters often seek to truly know their lived bodies, but the physicality of their bodies repeatedly curtails this project. When physicality is modified in scale and size, modes of perception are also eschewed, offering another layer with which to interpret the self in the world.

The next story that Julio tells the little girl also requires a bit of prompting from her. She requests that Julio tell her a story from the same country of shadows to which he replies that he does not know what else happens (114). They cultivate a dialogue similar to the previous example. The little girl asks him: "*¿No sabes si las muñecas nacían con sombra o sin sombra?*" (2006, 114). The question provokes the second story that the two create together. Julio begins:

> *—Una vez salió de la fábrica una muñeca sin sombra.*
> *—¿Por qué?*
> *—Por un error en el proceso de producción.*
> *—¿Qué es el proceso de producción?*
> *—El conjunto de fases por el que pasa la construcción de una muñeca.*
> *—Bueno, sigue.*
>
> (2006, 114)

Together, Julio and Julia repeat the story about the shadows they constructed in their first exchange and add to it. Once again, the focus of the story is not on people. Here, in the second story, the shadows of inanimate objects, the dolls, force the human body from the centre. The materiality of the physical body is put into question when its shadow, and even the shadow of the human body's miniature representation of a doll, become the most important characters in the story. In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart reminds us that: "There are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product" (1993, 55). The miniature replica, a scaled-down version of the human body, may also embody desire like Frances Armstrong suggests when she writes: "One might go further and see the miniature as appearing to offer an alternative to the endless deferral of the satisfaction on desire: it is always possible to envision smaller and smaller versions of the object of desire that preserve its essential qualities and that may be small enough to be possessed completely" (1990, 405). Julio's exploration of physical bodies, represented in miniature scale with the doll in the story, emphasizes that his search for subjectivity is based on the

process of duplication. Furthermore, the doll's lack of shadow may be understood as a metaphor for the complicated conceptualization of self that Julio and the young girl explore in these stories together. Julio's interpretation of his subjectivity relies on replication and mirrored images; the rediscovery of his self is not a return to the imaginary construct of the original, but rather he continuously and repeatedly rediscovers his self in versions, and all versions of his self are valid and real for him. Much like Julio's usurpation of his neighbour's identity, and like his inkling to create model worlds, the fantastical space that he constructs with the small girl is not just a bedtime story—it, too, is an alternate reality.

Coupled with the stories that Julio and Julia compose together, we also find the written texts that Julio constructs as Manuel. The transformation to being able to write as Manuel is steady. Julio first begins by simply logging onto Manuel's email account so that he is able to clandestinely read his neighbour's emails, but soon he actually writes an email posing as Manuel. When Julio opens Manuel's email box for the first time a hoard of new messages downloads. In one that he reads by chance, which, of course, is from Laura, he learns that his wife is carrying Manuel's unborn child (2006, 120).[3] Writing to her comatose lover she confesses that "*hay algo providencial en el hecho de que el niño haya aparecido en el instante que te he perdido a ti*" (2006, 120–21). Following Millás's tendency to create doubles, Laura's growing fetus, in a sense, replaces her dying lover, and she understands it to be a tiny replica of Manuel. In a message to Manuel, Laura says, "*Criaría a este niño como si te criara a ti, lo amasaría como si te amasara a ti, le daría forma como si te diera forma a ti*" (2006, 133), distorting the traditional hierarchy of progenitor and descendant.

The narrator tells us that the story has already—and has always—been written, and that Julio has always known that Laura would be pregnant, even when he had yet to meet her. He states that Julio

> *llegó a la conclusión de que lo sabía desde siempre. Lo asombroso es que 'desde siempre' quería decir desde toda la vida. Lo sabía en el colegio; en el instituto; en la academia de decoración. . . . Lo sabía desde que antes de conocer a Laura, desde antes de conocer a Manuel, desde antes de casarse, como si tratara de una profecía que le hubieran anunciado en un tiempo remoto y la hubiera olvidado. . . . Julio sintió que también él era el producto de una Biblia en la que estaba escrito lo que ahora acaba de averiguar.*
>
> (2006, 123–24)

If the story has always been written, the implications are many. Not only may providence be divine, but it also points towards the fact that no matter how much Julio attempts to transform—no matter how much he writes, (re)presents, or even (re)writes the story—the future is already written in the infinite copies that inherently exist in the original.

Laura also seeks to (re)define herself through her physical relationship with Manuel in a similar way to Julio's attempt to (re)discover his self by dressing in Manuel's clothes and living in his house. Maybe what really happens, however, is that the married couple actually (re)define themselves *vis-à-vis* multiple creations and replicas.

Biblical references highlight the creation of the human body when Laura writes the following lines to Manuel:

> *Era. . .como si después de que yo te hubiera creado con mis manos, tú te incorporaras y aún recién hecho, todavía caliente, como Adán después de que Dios soplara sobre él, te dispusieras a devolverme el favor creando un cuerpo verdadero para mí, porque yo carecía, amor, de un cuerpo propiamente dicho hasta que tú le diste forma. Disponía, sí, de la material prima, de la masa, pero era una masa informe, insensible, sin articulaciones, sin circuitos. Mi cuerpo era una casa vacía, oscura, húmeda, hasta que tú entraste en él y empezaste a prender las velas, a encender la chimenea, a habitarlo.*
>
> (2006, 127)

Just like the story of Genesis, the physical body occupies centre stage in the (re)creation of life for both Laura and Julio. In Laura's case, the tables are turned, for it is she, and not Adam or Julio, who creates her lover. Millás flips the roles in the story of Genesis here by alternating the traditional gender roles of the characters. Such a statement against hegemonic gender and erotic norms is reinforced in the relationship between the dying Manuel and Julio. In his preface to *Cuentos de adúlteros desorientados* (2001), Millás suggests that many extramarital affairs actually take place not because the male lover is attracted to the married women, but rather because he is attracted to the husband. Engaging in the affair allows him to get closer to the husband, which, in turn, fulfils his homoerotic desires and his ego's desire to continuously (re)discover his subjectivity.

Reading these messages between lovers brings Julio corporeal pleasure: "*Leyendo aquellos mensajes, por lo general breves, pero intensos, sentía un ardor sexual que tampoco había conocido en sí mismo, como si fuera otro—¿quizá Manuel?—el que se excitara a través de su cuerpo*" (2006, 127–28). Julio only permits himself to feel pleasure by

imagining Manuel's body as his body; it is real for him, just as real as his so-called original reality. Julio's physical body becomes the receptacle for sensory experiences once he has begun to pay more attention to it by trying to (re)define his self via Manuel's body. It seems, then, that Millás suggests through his characters' physical bodies the subversion of the human body as the site of inscriptions of societal standards of gender performance and sexual behavior, yet the privacy of the body prevails here.

Julio is indifferent and apathetic until he begins to write his own story; until he takes control of his physical body *vis-à-vis* the identity of his dying wife's lover he is unable to experience life through corporeal sensations. In attempting to transform his body into that of his dying neighbour's, Julio (re)discovers the different facets of himself, namely as a writer of his own experience and as a successful husband to Laura. Wolfgang Iser explains it well when he states that "human beings are at best differential, traveling between their various roles that supplant and modify one another. Roles are not disguises with which to fulfill pragmatic ends; they are means of enabling the self to be other than each individual role. Being oneself therefore means being able to double oneself" (1993, 80–81). By the end of the novel, the process of multiplication and (re)discovery leads Julio to understand his self not according to antiquated societal norms, but rather according to the framework of duplications that he has built for himself.

Laura continues writing to Manuel even when he is in a coma in the hospital and Julio, acting as Manuel, writes Laura an email that will bring the two back together. The tone of his letter—his ultimate creation—is authoritative and concrete. He tells his wife that "*hay una energía independiente del cuerpo*" and informs her that he (as Manuel) has come to visit her in his phantasmal form to say his final goodbyes. "*Lo cierto*," he writes, "*es que acabo de morir, querida Laura, querida mía. Me he convertido, como tú suponías que ocurre con los muertos, en una fuerza invisible, pero real*" (2006, 184). In the message, Julio (as Manuel) tells Laura that Julio should be the father of the child, he also writes: "*Julio y yo, pese a las apariencias, estábamos misteriosamente unidos por un vínculo de complementariedad*" (2006, 184–85). The narrator even ventures to tell us, "*El hijo era de él y de Manuel, que Laura no era más que un instrumento necesario para que ellos dos—la unión de lo abstracto y lo concreto—pudieran procrear*" (2006, 185–86). Ultimately, Laura and Julio will raise little Manuel together. Multiple creations of different scales and sizes lead them back together and the layers of constructions seem to permit Julio to (re)discover himself as a man, husband and father. In the

end, Manuel still controls their marriage from the grave, and what is even more significant is that his image has been duplicated in the physical form of the young child, Manuel. Gail Weiss comments:

> Paradoxically, just as the spider's web secures its victims in order to "undo" them, the text also secures writer and reader, allowing them to come into existence not as substantive subjects, but as those who give meaning and purpose to the web's existence by being woven within it and who are necessarily destroyed in the process. Desire plays a key role in this entrapment.
>
> (2008, 52)

The written text of emails, not to mention the actual process of writing the text, seems to manifest what Weiss so thoughtfully explains: written discourse is the web spun from the desire that ultimately seduces the two characters—the writer (Julio posing as Manuel) and the reader (Laura)—to become entangled in the network of written discourse. They are prisoners of the metaphorical spider which, in this case, just may be Manuel in all of his manifestations.

Near the last lines of the novel, Julio remembers that Manuel once told him: "*Desengáñate, la vida de los seres humanos, tanto en su dimensión colectiva como individual, está montada siempre sobre un mito, sobre una leyenda, sobre una mentira, en fin*" (2006, 186). This statement not only validates the process of repeatedly and continuously creating replicas and (re)creations that Julio takes on, but also emphasizes that ways of knowing and systems of knowledge are collective and individual assumptions that, when challenged, may reveal an imaginary foundation. Evoking the image of a map, Baudrillard writes: "[T]oday abstraction is no longer that of a map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreality" (1994, 1). The layers of replicas that Julio constructs in the novel may offer him a different way of conceiving of his self, perhaps in terms of what Baudrillard refers to as hyperreality, where desire and fantasy intermingle and where originals and replicas are one and the same.

In *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, Catherine Belsey describes desire as:

> [a]t once shared with a whole culture, but intimate and personal, hopelessly banal and yet unique: if these are not exactly paradoxes of desire, they are perhaps undecidabilities, instances of the difficulty of fixing, delimiting, delineating a state of mind which is also a state of body, or which perhaps deconstructs the opposition between the two, throwing into relief in the

> process the inadequacy of a Western tradition that divides human beings along an axis crossed daily by this most familiar of emotions.
>
> (1994, 3)

Desire constantly and continuously escapes definition. Desire in itself highlights absence and presence; the constant yearning to have something or someone is perpetually present and the object of desire is never attainable. In *Laura y Julio*, desire manifests itself in the process of constructing multiples in models and in written and oral narrations. Desire, then, is elusive, yet constant; and it is absent, yet always present.

In *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Peter Brooks writes that "the body maintains an unstable position between such extremes, at once the subject and object of pleasure, the uncontrollable agent of pain and the revolt against reason—and the vehicle of mortality. As such, it is always the subject of curiosity, of an ever-renewed project of knowing" (1993, 1). I would like to suggest that virtually the same statement could be made about the written and oral texts and the models that Julio constructs in the novel—they are both objects and the subjects of seduction, and the processes of multiplication constantly point towards the elusiveness of knowledge. The transitive nature of the human body and the open-ended process of creating multiples represent the intrinsic paradox of the human condition; we are always searching, but we never truly know. This is our postmodern situation, and as Amago has noted: "From the beginning, Millás's fiction has always linked writing and living" (2006, 69). More significant, however, is how Millás carries out such a task by employing repetition as a technique that attempts to capture the innate paradoxes of writing and the construction of the human body's experience in the world.

Writing, or constructing stories and models based on already false premises, permits Julio alternate spaces from which he examines his self. But does repeatedly duplicating his self, his projects at work, and what he writes move him any closer to better understanding his subjectivity? If Julio's multiplications, which distort size and scale, are as real as the so-called original, does he really (re)discover anything at all? His notion of self undergoes several modifications and multiplications, and ultimately, by the end of the novel, it seems like his subjectivity is (re)established according to the redefinition of traditional norms of what it means to be a man and a father in Spain. One may contend that he escapes the potential catastrophe of the crumbling pillars that support hegemonic pressures for the twenty-first century Spanish man by constructing his own, private platform in the stories that he tells and writes and in the replicas that he constructs. By establishing multiple constructions and exploring alternate

realities, Julio maps a path for (re)discovery of his self; in this sense, he is the author of his own story and his self, which permits him to be a father and a husband according to his personal framework.

Notes

[1] I choose to use terms like "(re)discovery" and "(re)construction" in this study to highlight the slippery relationship between what has traditionally been defined as the original and the copy. By employing terms in this way, I seek to emphasize that it is unclear with which referent the act of multiplication (that is to say, the "re-") is engaging.

[2] The concept of "lived body" in Philosophy can be credited to Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the 1940s he and Jean-Paul Sartre helped define what we now know as modern-day Phenomenology. For Merleau-Ponty, the "lived body" encapsulates corporeal perception and ontological consciousness, in keeping the German term *Leib*. For additional information on Merleau-Ponty's ideas see his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945).

[3] Although at first it may seem unlikely that Julio is able to access Manuel's email without having to enter a user name and password, especially given the several weeks during which Manuel's account had not been active, it is probable that Manuel had saved his login information on his computer, making it easy for anyone to access his emails.

Works Cited

Amago, Samuel. *True Lies: Narrative Self-consciousness in the Contemporary Spanish Novel*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2006. Print.

Armstrong, Frances. "Gender and Miniaturization: Games of Littleness in Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *English Studies in Canada* 16(4) (1990): 403–16. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1994. Print.

Beilin, Katarzyna Olga. "Juan José Millás: Vivir de la huida." Interview. *Conversaciones literarias con novelistas contemporáneos*. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004. 63–77. Print.

Belsey, Catherine. *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. Print.

Brooks, Peter. *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Garcia, Guy. *The Decline Men: How the American Male is Turning out, Giving up, and Flipping off.* New York: Harper Collings. 2008.

Glover, David & Cora Kaplan. *Genders*. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.