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Simulacrum and Post-Dictatorship Representation of Violence in Argentina: Translation and Critical Reading of Eduardo Pavlovsky's Paso de Dos

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Simulacrum and Post-Dictatorship Representation of Violence in Argentina: Translation and
Critical Reading of Eduardo Pavlovsky's *Paso de Dos*

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literatures
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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To Julian

It may seem as if you were the only one who's been growing for the past three years; yet I was growing alongside you, thanks to you. Thank you for the joy of being your mother!

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I owe much of this accomplishment to my fantastic, loving family: my son Julian, my always supportive husband Andy, the best *mama* ever, the greatest *babushka*, my-second-Daddy Tolik, my ever-polemic *papa* and all of the Riggs, Brandts and Gross. You are always on my team, even when I play against me.

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INTRODUCTION

Los amigos del barrio pueden desaparecer
 Los cantores de radio pueden desaparecer
 Los que están en los diarios pueden desaparecer
 La persona que amas puede desaparecer
 Los que están en el aire pueden desaparecer en el aire
 Los que están en la calle pueden desaparecer en la calle
 Los amigos del barrio pueden desaparecer
 Pero los dinosaurios van a desaparecer

Your friends around the corner can disappear
A radio singer can disappear
Those in newspapers can disappear
The person you love can disappear
Those in the air can disappear in the air
Those walking the street can disappear in the street
Your friends around the corner might disappear
But the dinosaurs are going to disappear¹
C. García, “Los dinosaurios” (Clics Modernos, 1983)

Thus commences the Argentine song “Los dinosaurios” (The dinosaurs) written and performed by Charly García. This particular composition has always greatly inspired me, even before I knew the reason why. The quoted excerpt features a somewhat simplistic repetition of the same words with different actors attached to them; yet this repetition does, in fact, deliver quite a powerful message: all the normal things that surround us in our daily life, our seemingly safe environment, might all of a sudden disappear.

To those who never had to experience the atrocities of violent military regimes, it might not seem like much--after all, people disappear from our lives all the time. Yet for Argentine citizens of the late 1970s and early 1980s the word *desaparecido* (disappeared) received an entirely new meaning. In the words of Thomas C. Wright, “the Argentine military regime made the term ‘disappear’ a sinister transitive verb” (108). He later continues, citing the

¹ All translations from Spanish are mine, unless otherwise noted

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, by saying that the disappearances were “a true form of torture for the victim’s family and friends, because of the uncertainty they experience as to the fate of the victim and because they feel powerless to provide legal, moral and material assistance.” Thus, we are to understand that the word that keeps repeating itself was not chosen at random and refers to the harrowing reality of the 1976-1983 military regime in Argentina with its disappearances and multiple human rights violations.

In a certain way, Charly Garcia’s song embodies this terrifying sense of ambiguity and uncertainty when expressing the possibility of disappearance: *pueden desaparecer* (might disappear). Yet the true extent of this uncertainty does not reveal itself until the last line: “Pero los dinosaurios van a desaparecer” (*But the dinosaurs are going to disappear*), in which the uncertainty of *pueden* (might) all of a sudden shifts to certainty (*van a/going to*). Another interesting element is the dinosaurs themselves and how the mention of these extinct animals plays into the dynamics of the disappearances in Argentina. On one hand, it may be concluded that the disappearance of an animal that is nearly mythical at this point, is a thing much more certain than the disappearance of “a person [one] love[s]. On the other hand, it is also possible that by proclaiming disappearance of the “dinosaurs,” Garcia is trying to allocate all the things associated with an archaic animal -- the regime itself or maybe its self-destructive, corrupt mentality? -- to the realm of past, from where it cannot escape and seep into the present and the future.

While I recognize that any text opens itself to a myriad of possible, and coexisting, interpretations, this one, fraught with ambiguity, has largely shaped my own conception of the entire project. If in the beginning I was hopeful that I would get clear answers, I am much more

prepared to accept something less conclusive. After all, it may be the only way to embark on the project that deals with such harsh realities of life.

This project, as the title suggests, is dedicated to the translation and interpretation of the play *Paso de dos* (1990) by an Argentine playwright Eduardo Pavlovsky, as well as to the exploration of various topics associated with the context of the violent military regime of 1976-1983, to which the play is directly referring to. In the next sections, I will discuss my initial interest in the play, as well as provide some of the essential information on the politics of naming, and ethical issues associated with the figure of the author.

Why translate Paso de dos?

I first found a mention of *Paso de dos* in the work of Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*. I was particularly interested in this work when researching the peculiar interrelation between language and subjectivity, for subjectivity is oftentimes better understood in situations when it is compromised, such as it was under state terrorism in Argentina. Speaking in her introduction about the period of the early 1990s in Argentina, when mass amnesties for the military regime's perpetrators were issued, Feitlowitz writes, "At the same time, the cultural world of Buenos Aires is torn apart by a play called *Paso de dos*, described by its prominent author as a 'love story' between a torturer and his victim, whose complicity takes the form of extreme, though involuntary, sexual pleasure" (3). I was intrigued not only by the provocative description of the play, but also by the diverse reverberations it had produced in the society. Feitlowitz herself points out that despite the efforts of its creators to make a play "feminist" and "a homage to the *desaparecidos*," "the work [drew] protest—and a boycott—from the Madres de

Plaza de Mayo" (3). This reaction suggests that the play has touched on the sensitive issues in the post-dictatorship Argentine society of early 1990s, something that was still painful and very real. With these considerations in mind, I was curious to read the play hoping to understand why the reaction to it was so drastically polarized.

I was not able to answer this question with any degree of certainty upon reading the play for the first time. Having an idea of how the play was staged, I expected the dramatic text to be provocative, yet the language Pavlovsky utilized was rather elusive and highly philosophical instead. All of the short play is a dialogue between HE and SHE (Él and Ella), by means of which the two characters try to demarcate their personal boundaries, form their identities and ultimately resolve the power conflict that was inevitable once the torturer became romantically and sexually involved with his victim. His language is more direct, while hers is elusive. The ending of the play in its written form affirms the victory of SHE: her refusal to "name" her torturer is what deprives him of his identity.

Upon reading the play, another concern, this time purely practical, has emerged—I was pondering what was the point of undertaking a translation project for this particular play. As far as its stage version is concerned, I was doubtful if it would have quite the same effect upon English-speaking audience as it did in the countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay). In its written form, too, it has little to do with the North American reality, unaffected by state terrorism in Latin America. However, upon reading Diana Taylor's *Disappearing Acts*, I realized that a North American reader and audience is an essential part in this complicated equation. In the preface to her book, Taylor sets up terminology for the rest of her work concerned with the theatrical nature of oppression in Argentina. In particular, she talks about the

"spectacle" that the military regime was, and how the introduction of this concept at once splits people involved into actors and spectators: "The performance model also helps spectators define their position vis-a-vis spectacles of violence. Are we complicit? Can we work to end violence, or will we go on 'just looking?'...My goal is to examine the politics of looking, 'just looking,' dangerous seeing, and percepticide in order to make active spectators, or witnesses, of us all" (Taylor xi). Thus, Taylor presents an interesting concept of "looking," which aligns itself with the kind of looking that takes places in a theater. If the stage action is imitating the state terrorism violence, does it mean that the spectators are being forced to be bystanders, or worse yet, complices? Viewed from this perspective, the translation of the play that has such an effect on its audience is fully justified. One might even say that if this play were ever to be staged in the U.S.², it would serve as a facilitator of historical justice: in a time of rampant violence in a number of countries in Latin America, North Americans were the bystanders without realizing or wanting it.

Translating the text of *Paso de dos* has more pragmatic advantages as well. An English translation will introduce the play into a new critical realm, and might result in a series of new stage interpretations. I view *Paso de dos* as an open text, which gives a lot of freedom to a reader/spectator and a theatrical crew alike. Thus, by inviting a different audience to evaluate engage with this play, the original text will continue amassing new meanings, this time from a very different audience. In other words, my point is that the play has the life of its own, and this life gets a new spin whenever the text is translated and made available to a new group of people.

² To my knowledge, the play has not yet been staged in English. Likewise, I was unable to establish with any degree of certainty whether or not the play was ever staged in the U.S. However, in her article "The Dance of Death," Marguerite Feitlowitz announces the possibility of the U.S. tour for the play: "As of this writing the production is scheduled for the Cadiz Festival and a U.S. tour" (60). Her publication is dated summer 1991.

Proceso, military regime or Dirty War?

As we are touching upon the ethical part of representing violence, it is imperative that I make a comment about the terminology I will be using throughout this project. When one first enters the academy, one is rarely aware of the dark side of some seemingly innocent words and names. What harm could there be from calling the period of military dictatorship in Argentina a “Dirty War” without quotation marks? After all, it is a very recognizable term in English. For the longest time, this was my preferred method to talk about the military regime of the late seventies and early eighties in Argentina. In Spanish, however, the equivalent of the “Dirty War”--*la Guerra Sucia*--is not at all frequent. While there is a page on Wikipedia about “Dirty War,” the article on “Guerra Sucia” does not exist, and instead, the page provides confusing links to other events, including Guerra Sucia in Mexico. Thus, even on this rather superficial investigative level, it can be concluded that the use of “Guerra Sucia,” even though linguistically it is a full equivalent of its English name, is not as straightforward, and the name in Spanish does not refer solely to the “offensive conducted by a regime against dissidents, marked by the use of torture and forced disappearance of civilians” (“Guerra Sucia”).

This reluctance of the Hispanic scholars to embrace the term that is so common among their English-speaking counterparts may not be coincidental. After all, what do we imply when we say “Dirty War”? Not only the presence of the military conflict, but also that this conflict is not unilateral. But was it, in fact, a bilateral conflict? The commonly used pretext of purging a stagnant country of guerilla warfare does not appear to be credible when one learns about the numerous victims of the regime, including older people, adolescents, women and children. It is true that the government, indeed, wanted to cover up its excesses presenting state terrorism as a

legitimate warfare. Aside from the fact that this vision is historically incorrect, it has additional negative implications. That is to say that whenever we mention “Dirty War,” we play into that government-rigged imagery of the kidnappings and torture as a justified way to “fix” the country. Moreover, the violence, from this standpoint, is justified. Nancy Gates-Madsen, the author of an article “Tortured Silence and Silenced Torture in Mario Benedetti’s *Pedro y el capitán*, Ariel Dorfman’s *La muerte y la doncella* and Eduardo Pavlovsky’s *Paso de dos*” starts her analysis precisely with addressing this sad scenario: “‘Por algo será.’ Those who believe that the military violence in the Southern Cone during the 1970s and 80s was a necessary response to leftist militancy use this phrase to escape from the bitter truth that in its search for ‘subversives’ the military far exceeded democratic and human bounds, and so doing devastated the lives of many people” (5). To reiterate, if “Dirty War” is used without quotation marks, it automatically turns into “por algo será” refrain of the post-oppression Argentine society, which is trying to justify thousands of innocent lives lost, while in reality we deal with the mass-scale abuse of authority.

This being said, throughout my investigation, apart from “Dirty War” in quotation marks³, I will be also using “military regime” and *proceso* to refer to the devastating events in Argentina in the 1970s and 80s. The term “proceso” comes from an actual official title that was given to the government project of purging the country of the “subversives.” Thomas Wright, the author of *State Terrorism in Latin America*, mentions this title in his historical overview of the event: “...the new junta, comprising the army, navy, and air force commanders, proclaimed an ambitious program, El Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (The Process of National

³ Quotation marks serve as a marker of my awareness of the ideological charge associated with the term, should it have been used without them.

Reorganization)” (100). Another scholar, Daniel Altamiranda, also mentions the origin of *el proceso*:

En 1976, frente a la crisis político-económica del gobierno de María Estela [Isabel] Martínez de Perón, la general sensación de disolución social y con el aval de vastos sectores de la población, los militares vuelven a intervenir, instalando lo que ha llegado a ser *el más vergonzoso período de autoritarismo y represión de la historia argentina*: el llamado Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (23, emphasis added).

I particularly like Altamiranda’s definition, as it offers a brief historical context of how the junta’s repressive rule came about, as well as a personal valuation of the regime-- “the most disgraceful period of authoritarianism and repression in the history of Argentina.” Likewise, I am invariably amazed at the impenetrable ambiguity of the term, *proceso*, itself: it seems to have been designed precisely to not give out any extra information, but to be capable of eventually encompassing all the meanings the ruling regime would need it to express.

So what does it mean to use the term “proceso” then? Wouldn’t the effect be similar to that of using “Dirty War” without quotation marks, in a sense of reiterating the official vision of the event? While these are fair concerns, I am convinced that using *proceso* is strategically sound. First, I would like to emphasize the distance it creates on purely linguistic level: when *proceso*, a Spanish word, is used in English to refer to the event that took place in a foreign country that speaks a different language, it may be viewed as almost a declaration of author’s awareness of the existing chasm between the two. Secondly, *proceso*, thanks to the original ambiguity of the term, has a capacity to refer to multiple things, depending on the speaker’s

intention, and now, as Altamiranta's definition shows, the whole idea of "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional" has come to be associated with the junta's violent regime. Thus, by deciding on *proceso* as a valid term for my investigation, I call the thing by its name, and, most importantly, try to influence the naming politics, by bringing yet a new meaning into this foreign term.

The Author and His Context

Despite the "the death of the Author"⁴ in the postmodern era, it turns out that this enigmatic, God-like figure can still serve as a great source of information. As a matter of fact, a number of my own revelations came from analyzing "Pavlovsky-author"⁵, reading his interviews and, overall, attempting to assess his involvement with his play, as well as his political stance, as far as representation of torture is concerned. In this section, I will provide brief biographical information, along with some of the key ideas that can be associated with Pavlovsky (dramatic multiplication, collective trauma, healing and exile)

Eduardo "Tato" Pavlovsky was born in 1933 in Buenos Aires, and died in 2015. A psychotherapist originally, he became quite a prolific playwright and an actor in both theater and cinema. Pavlovsky himself actually preferred acting to playwriting, so he acted in many of his own plays. When it was first staged in Buenos Aires in 1990, Pavlovsky played HE in *Paso de dos*, while his wife, Susy Evans, was SHE. In the late 1970s Pavlovsky fled Argentina for Spain to avoid being kidnapped; he came back in the 1980s once democracy was established. Even though the violence of the military regime had not touched him directly, it is quite evident how

⁴ R. Barthes, "The Death of the Author." In this essay, Barthes argues the necessity of removing the figure of the Author-God from interpretation of a literary work, as this may be the only way to "free" the writing and the language.

⁵ "Pavlovsky-author" as opposed to "Pavlovsky-actor." I borrow this terminology from Marguerite Feitlowitz's "The Dance of Death..."

his immediate environment was so politicized that it could not but affect his work in significant ways. In an interview he says:

I know my plays are basically political. Because it is in my irremediably political background: my grandfather, exiled from Russia, my father, exiled in Perón's time, myself being threatened and ultimately choosing exile during the dictatorship. I'm already affected by exile, and I'm particularly interested in where the words may lead us. The things that affect me in real life are the same things I try to rebuild later in my theatre work. ("Theatre icon Eduardo Pavlovsky dies at 81")

Apart from yielding some interesting details of Pavlovsky's biography, this excerpt is also valuable, as it shows the connection between the author's life events and his work, as seen by the author himself. While he did not have a physical knowledge of a torture chamber, he seems to be carrying some peculiar gene of "exile." Viewed more broadly, it can also be said that everyone appears to be involved one way or the other. As Taylor's analysis suggests, even those separated geographically from the tragedy need to be considered as participants.

Pavlovsky is known as "a pioneer of psychodrama in Latin America" ("Theatre icon"). Psychodrama is defined as a new approach to theater, which merges several disciplines together: psychotherapy, acting and dramaturgy. Some dictionaries define "psychodrama" as a form of psychotherapy in which patients act out their past experiences. This definition resonates with another term—*multiplicación dramática*--which I have stumbled upon in the article, "A Dance of Death: Eduardo Pavlovsky's 'Paso de dos'" by Marguerite Feitlowitz. *Multiplicación dramática*, or "dramatic multiplication," is a type of therapy developed by Pavlovsky and his colleagues.

Feitlowitz defines it the following way: “‘Dramatic multiplication’ is a group technique in which one member of the group describes a personal conflict. This description becomes the ‘written text.’ Each member of the group then improvises a scene, taking off from the original ‘text.’ The resulting production called the ‘dramatic text,’ is the work of various ‘authors.’ Therapeutically, the conflict in the ‘written text’ gets ‘taken away,’ is ‘absorbed’ in the final group drama” (64). This definition sheds light on Pavlovsky's contribution to Argentine theater, as far as the genre of psychodrama is concerned. This therapeutic method receives the advantage of all the elements of theatre, such as playwright, script, stage, actors and audience. Thus, it comes as no surprise that a “dramatic multiplication” could and, as a matter of fact, did move from psychotherapy onto the stage.

Yet this shift poses a number of issues, especially when it comes down to representing a type of collective trauma as experienced by Argentinians during the years of the "Dirty War." Does Pavlovsky suggest that his play is to perform a healing function? Is healing even a valid goal? In her analysis of the play, Marguerite Feitlowitz shares a similar concern:

In *Paso de dos* “dramatic multiplication” is particularly problematic, owing to the invasive violence and graphic sex in the acting. I had the discomforting sense that Pavlovsky’s relation to the audience is akin to that of HE to SHE--fraught with hostile love, a ravaging need to captivate, seduce and conquer so as to be “cured.” This is particularly disturbing since many, at least in an Argentine audience, likely have had their lives eviscerated by the “Dirty War,” and some may well have been tortured, for real. (“The Dance of Death” 64)

The comment Feitlowitz makes is fair: the violence on stage may, indeed, re-traumatize those who experienced it directly. In a certain way, looking at the issue from this point, almost renders my entire project invalid, or at the very least makes one question whether translating this kind of play into a new language and introducing it to a new audience would actually do any good. After all, according to Feitlowitz herself, watching this play was a “punishing experience.” The polarized social response to the play’s premiere equally suggests that not everyone in the still hurting society was ready or ever willing to confront such graphic violence on stage. Yet the bigger picture is that the mere presence of a play like Pavlovsky’s points to the issues that are still relevant and thus, should not be forgotten. Besides, controversial as it is, the play invites various critics to continue the conversation. In her essay dedicated to the analysis of artistic representation of the torture, Nancy Gates-Madsen quotes another critic, Estela Patricia Scipioni, who delivers a profound message: “Paso de dos, haya o no tratado el tema [de las relaciones ‘amorosas’ entre víctimas y victimarios] con el conveniente miramiento, tiene *el mérito de habernos obligado a meditar y discutir sobre el tema*” (8, emphasis added). To continue her thought, the act of *still* meditating on the aftermath and implications of such events as “Dirty War” in Argentina, does not let it be forgotten and, most importantly, keeps us, the actors, bystanders and spectators, alert, serving as a reminder of the dangers of authority abuse. After all, the state terrorism and human rights violations associated with it are not phenomena limited to Argentina of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Our world, up to this day, continues being shaken by instances of state-orchestrated violence that threaten the limits of our humanity and subjectivity. Although it would be too simplistic and unrealistic to suppose that critical thought is

capable of *preventing* the atrocities, in the time of social, political and economic turmoil, it is a good idea to keep the critical conversation open.

CRITICAL READING OF *PASO DE DOS*

Every translation is an interpretation; each one begins with a critical reading, then expands and ultimately embodies that reading.

“Evaluating Translations as Scholarship: Guidelines for Peer Review,” MLA

It may not always be self-evident, but the truth is that a translator is never an objective, impartial mediator between the author and the reading audience in a target language. Thus, it was inevitable that I would develop my own reading of the text, which was influenced by my own specific interests in the field of languages and literature, such as language, trauma and subjectivity, to mention a few. However, it is equally important to point out another seemingly self-evident truth. Over the course of the year that I have been working with the text, as well as with the secondary sources, I have come to embrace some of those points as well.

Overall, *Paso de dos* appears to be a fairly small-scale work, which has not yet received much critical attention, so my review of critical literature will be limited to four most influential sources. First and foremost, my understanding of the play has been greatly influenced and facilitated by Diana Taylor and her *Disappearing Acts*. As it was mentioned in the Introduction, Taylor applies a performative model to address social and political issues in post-dictatorship Argentina. By becoming familiar with her analysis, I was able to realize a greater involvement of the spectator: if the entire society with its movements is to be considered a stage, we automatically become viewers, bystanders, and ultimately, actors. Secondly, I have learnt a lot about the play from Marguerite Feitlowitz’s article “The Dance of Death,” wherein she asks questions about the play’s premiere to Pavlovsky himself and to the director Lausa Yusem. While I will not be repeating her feminist criticism of *Paso de dos*, her interpretation, presented in opposition to the interpretation of the play’s creators, helped me enter in the unstable

analytical space. My third source of literary criticism comes from Nancy Gates-Madsen of Luther College, who in her article “Tortured Silence and Silenced Torture...” discusses the peculiarities of the representation of a torture victim as silent in three post-dictatorship plays by Mario Benedetti, Ariel Dorfman and Eduardo Pavlovsky. Once again, my own analytical approach does not align itself perfectly with that of Gates-Madsen. However, her article broadened my own understanding of “silences” in the play and beyond. Lastly, I would like to mention the author himself, Eduardo Pavlovsky, and the premiere’s director Laura Yusem, whose opinions became available to me through the interview conducted by Feitlowitz in 1991, as well as through the author’s note titled “Paso de dos: Aventura de una puesta,” included with the 1990 Ediciones Ayllu edition of *Paso de dos* (31-39). Their vision of the play, quite contradictory to that of Taylor and Feitlowitz, was immensely important, as far as taking in different sides of the argument is concerned.

My own interpretation of *Paso de dos* rests on several concepts of postmodern theory, including “simulacrum” and “postdramatic theater.” Both of these terms question the boundaries between reality and fiction, and as such, problematize the supposed “fictionality” of the play. *Paso de dos* features so-called meta-narrative, when it introduces the idea of “simulacrum.” In one of the first scenes, as SHE inquires of him after his “convictions,” the protagonists start discussing their shared past experience (supposedly that of a torture chamber):

EL: No podía dejar ningún detalle de la ceremonia, ningún detalle del ritual.

ELLA: ¿Ninguna otra cosa era importante excepto la intensidad? ¿Cada una de las acciones de cada pregunta buscaban entonces silenciar o pretendían respuestas equivocadas? Cuesta creerlo y sin embargo... todo para justificar la intensidad. ¿Cada

instante, entonces, de la ceremonia era además un *simulacro*? ¿para justificar los encuentros, cada encuentro un *simulacro*?

EL: Después de un tiempo cada uno de nuestros encuentros fue un *simulacro*.

(Pavlovsky 12, emphasis added)

Even before looking up the word, it is possible to deduce its meaning: “simulacrum” must refer to an event that pretends to be something, without being it. In fact, this definition makes sense: what was supposed to be an interrogation was just a pretext to “justify the encounters.” The idea of “simulacrum” has been around since Plato, yet it takes on greater importance in postmodern era through Jean Baudrillard's rendering of it: “For Baudrillard, the simulacrum is essentially the copy of a copy, that is to say, the copy of something that is not itself an original, and is hence an utterly degraded form. At its limit, ... the simulacrum is used to deny the possibility of anything being the singular source or origin of either an idea or a thing” (“Simulacrum” 434). Quoting Baudrillard himself, another source corroborates this definition: “It masks the absence of a basic reality” (qtd in Smith 368). Out of these two definition, it can be ruled that the mere existence of “simulacrum” serves to put the reality into question. The idea is that there might not be anything that is “original.” On the other hand, a theatrical performance is a “simulacrum” in itself, as it only *represents* the reality, only refers to it without being it. In the context of the quoted excerpt, this definition takes on a rather sinister meaning, as the boundaries of what is real become increasingly more blurred. HE admits that every encounter was a simulacrum. Thus, we have two ideas: one of the torture session SHE is most likely referring to, being akin to a theatrical performance, staged, rehearsed and intended for the viewers, and another of this simulacrum

mimicking the "reality" so much it is practically indistinguishable. Hence, a viewer is presented with a simulation of a simulation of the torture scene.

The decomposition of the conventional construction of the theatrical play is complete, once we receive a commentary about what is taking place on the scene from one of the protagonists *within* the spectacle. In her quest for justice and remembrance of the past perpetrations SHE says,

ELLA: ...Tenemos que intentar recordar cada detalle de los acontecimientos con la misma intensidad original, ¿estás de acuerdo?

Primero transformamos experiencias compartidas en conceptos y con los conceptos nos alejamos de las intensidades

El problema de los conceptos es el olvido de las intensidades el olvido de la experiencia de la vida, ¿estás de acuerdo?

Hablamos de cosas, de palabras que aluden a otras palabras tenemos que volver a las intensidades

volver a recordar todo segundo a segundo con nuestros cuerpos

(Pavlovsky 18)

It appears as if SHE were aware of the "degraded" nature of the "concepts." SHE does not accept any imitation, any second-hand rendering of the original "intensities," including verbalization of the lived experiences, as valid. The experience must be re-lived with one's body, because the words only serve to further separate us from "reality." It may, of course, be argued that her comment should not be viewed outside of the context of the play, or, as another option, should be applied directly to the interpretation of the political situation in Argentina -- namely, to the

democratic regime trying to distance itself from the wound of the *proceso*, both on linguistic and legislative level. Yet I maintain that, along with this fair political commentary, another vision must also be accounted for. If we are to delve into the “meta” level of the text in earnest, we realize that it is not only the protagonists’ past experiences that are simulated -- our own experience, as viewers, readers or maybe even as human beings, is a simulated one.

As we are discussing the boundaries of the real and fictional, and how the postmodern era affected the apparent stability of these boundaries, we must be at a good place to define “postmodern theater.” As it is clear from the definition, postmodern theater attempts to oppose itself to modern drama. The shift is defined as follows: “The trajectory is pictured as a movement from a textually based art concerned with the crises of subjectivity and representation (Modern Drama) to a performance based art concerned with the random play of signifiers, the politics of authority, and the deconstruction of the process of theater production itself (Postmodern Theater)” (“Theater arts” 395). In other words, the newer art aims to be less orchestrated, so as not to be limited as much by the power of a “written word.”

How does the context of postdramatic theater influence the interpretability of *Paso de dos*? The differences between the staged version and its written counterpart create an almost unbridgeable divide between the two. For instance, the play ends with the declaration of SHE: "I won't name you," thus indicating that SHE has the last word in the situation and that she wins over in this power struggle. Moreover, incorporating another prominent theme of the play, that of silence as resistance, into the analysis of the play's ending, it is possible to say that she subverts the oppressive system itself by violating one of its precepts: speech as an act of self-defense and redemption (false, in case of the *indultados*). She chooses to be silent instead. However, Diana

Taylor in her *Disappearing Acts* gives a different interpretation of the ending she witnessed on stage in Buenos Aires. She writes,

The conquest is complete and empowers him beyond the actual rape. He has truly penetrated her deepest being: She now has no desire that is not merely the extension of his desire. The play depicts the fatal linkage between male identity, male violence, and male pleasure ... At the end of the production her body is almost indistinguishable from the endlessly malleable mud of the pit. (5)

What Taylor presents is a visual representation of the play's finale, and, upon interpreting its symbolism, it does not look as optimistic as the written text would suggest. The voice of the female character may still sound, but the actual body betrays her and positions her as a loser in the power struggle, while the man is standing "erect." The questions we must ask ourselves at this point are the following: in the context of a theatrical performance, what speaks louder—the words or the image? The mere concept of the postdramatic theater, dedicated to counterpoise the hegemonic power of the written word, would suggest that the image has the ultimate power.

Yet, in defense of the written version of the play, it can also be said that the postdramatic kind of text, as it avoids defining every aspect of the stage version, opens itself up not only to one particular representation, but rather to an infinite number of different versions. As a part of my investigation, I researched the existing stage version of *Paso de dos* in an attempt to get a three-dimensional idea of the text I was translating. On *YouTube* I have encountered a few different stage versions of the play, which confirm the most important feature of postdramatic theatre: its openness to stage manipulations. In fact, the stage directors have chosen their own way to visually interpret the text. In one of the versions, both actors are fully clothed, and the

actress performing SHE pronounces her part, unlike in the original version, where Stella Gallazi, the second actress, is responsible for the consciousness of SHE.⁶ In another version, similar to Laura Yusem's, two different actresses are responsible respectively for the body and the voice of SHE, but both of them are on stage. In yet another version, the problem of duality is resolved through projecting shadows of actors behind their backs. Thus, by juxtaposing visuality in these versions, something important can be established, something that did not manifest itself in the text, but was probably implied, to only be seen on stage, and it has to do with "doubling," with mind and body split. Most importantly, however, we can see how the dramatic text allows for greater flexibility as far as stage interpretation is concerned.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to draw attention to the wide interpretability of the play in question. As I have mentioned in the beginning, I have particularly appreciated the fact that my secondary sources contradicted each other: Feitlowitz, Taylor, and Gates-Madsen versus Pavlovsky and Yusem. The most unsettling part for me was that I could partially agree with each side of the argument. On one hand, as the critics point out, the protagonism of the torturer is extremely problematic. Feitlowitz and Taylor both indicate the gender bias in how the violence is represented: in the end, she is almost literally "disappeared," as HE wraps up her naked, dead body, while the male protagonist actually gets to "walk free." This exchange between Feitlowitz and Pavlovsky is particularly interesting in this regard:

⁶ If we are to consider the spectator's inevitable involvement, we may even conclude that the actress Stella Galazzi represents some sort of a collective voice that wishes to denounce the pardoned atrocities. A similar idea can be found in Feitlowitz's article, particularly in her interview with Laura Yusem:

FEITLOWITZ: I supposed that locating Stella in the audience is a way of saying that her resistance is collective

YUSEM: Of course, that it comes from all of us.

PAVLOVSKY: ... The violence on stage can come to signify other violences that are not so evident--people dying of starvation, the drastic shortage of medicines...

FEITLOWITZ: But you're using a *woman's body, the image of a woman's tortured body*, to stand for all that. ("The Dance of Death" 69)

Along with the valid concern that a female body is once again used as a medium, as a body for proclaiming certain "truths," it is equally problematic that SHE is a victim, while HE is a torturer. Their power is not even from the beginning, and the play appears to further emphasize this.

Speaking of male protagonism, Gates-Madsen's commentary sounds very astute. In particular, she is troubled by the disparity in the representation of victims and torturers in post-dictatorship plays by Pavlovsky, Dorfman, and Benedetti. While the plays portray "the torturers as human being rather than inhuman monsters," the victims are denied this three-dimensional humanity, and instead, are represented as a "one-dimensional symbol of resistance" (10, 17). Thus, it is fair to suggest that, represented in such manner, (male) torturers appear much more compelling characters than (female) victims, who, in turn, are viewed as creatures endowed with superhuman ability to maintain silence (and loyalty) in face of intense physical pain. While this disproportionate male/violent protagonism is justified by the creators with good intentions (Gates-Madsen recognizes those as well)--namely, to make a spectator question his/her own capacity for evil--in order to carry out these good intentions, the play recreates the gender and power inequity on stage.

On the other hand, “Aventura de una puesta,” a brief article written by Pavlovsky himself about the specifics of the original stage version, is a fascinating read that features numerous compelling ideas. Pavlovsky appears to be fascinated with the body (*la corporalidad*). To him, much drama on stage comes from the free interaction between the bodies, which partially explains the crew’s decision to have two separate actresses perform different parts of SHE⁷: as the actress on stage is too overcome with the corporal intensity, another actress needed to pronounce the lines. The most fascinating commentary, however, comes from Stella Gallazi, the voice of SHE and the embodiment of “conciencia crítica” (critical consciousness):

Existe un cambio en el tiempo dramático, porque la obra habla sobre un tiempo pasado, transcurre en un tiempo presente (los cuerpos en la pileta) y para mí existe un tiempo futuro que es el lugar desde donde yo hablo en la tribuna, como espectadora de ese pasado. Yo revivo mi pasado a través de la visión del cuerpo de los protagonistas. (“Aventura” 37)

Thus, the separation of body and soul is not dictated entirely by the dramatic text. Rather, it has a strong independent message underlying it: by choosing to represent it in such a way, the crew challenges the conventional boundaries not only between actors and audience, but also between past, present and future time. If we were to try to read this shift politically, we could say that “fictional” time and space, as they are represented by Pavlovsky and Yusem, grow out of their conventional boundaries to implicate everyone in the spectacle of violence, as well as to prove

⁷ Of course, the idea of separating different aspects of a woman, of dissecting her integrity, albeit metaphorically, is problematic in itself. However, the idea behind the original stage version suggests that the woman is either dead or close to death (*moribunda*), so in this sense, the separation of body and soul makes sense.

that time is circular, so the past tends to repeat itself in the present, and in so doing, threatens the future.

JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION

“Translation is much more a commentary on the original than a substitute for it”

D.S. Carne-Ross, “Translation and Transposition”

“While a poet’s words endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to be absorbed by its renewal”

W. Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”

One of the greatest advantages, and even pleasures, of writing a translation is a chance one gets to form a very intimate relationship with the text. One of its disadvantages is, surprisingly, quite the same. When I first started working with *Paso de Dos* I became aware right away of the depths I wish I had not touch. Moreover, I feel like I have become privy to the “intensity” which seems to form the core concept of the entire play.

As many translation theorists fairly point out, it is truly impossible to match original verbal expression to the translated one. In his “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin expresses this challenge quite eloquently: “The relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation. While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds” (76). To reiterate Benjamin’s thought, the challenge of the translation consists in not having the only one right word, but rather having to choose between several options, while being aware that not a single one of them would really “fit” as well as the original word did.

For instance, I have encountered on several occasions words or phrases that seem to combine both possible English meanings in one single word in Spanish. The introductory part of the play consists in a lengthy and quite bizarre monologue of HE. Several elements keep

repeating themselves throughout, which most likely serves primarily as a cohesive element. One of such elements is a phrase “How much is missing still?” (*¿Cuánto falta?*). The phrase is rather versatile in Spanish, and can be rendered in English in two possible ways: the one I chose, “How much is missing?”, and “How much longer?”, the latter being a more commonly used option. The peculiarity of this phrase lies in its ability to denote absence in terms of both time and space: “how much is missing” and “how much longer.” This is the pleasure of reading the play in the original--the author truly does not have to choose, and it is up to the reader to decode the meaning, if we were to assume that such a thing as the Ultimate Meaning even existed.

As a translator, I had to make a choice based on my reading experience of the entire play. The monologue itself is associated with very basic actions such as scratching one’s nose, or polishing one’s shoes. While carrying out these actions, the actor is expected to also announce them out loud, thus pushing the language into its “performative” function: the words uttered seem to have an actual power to physically transform one’s surroundings.⁸ As a result, the entire scene can be interpreted as a protagonist’s struggle to fill the space around him with something, whether it be words or actions, or, like in this case, a peculiar fusion of both.

On the other hand, as if to prove my own reasoning obsolete, at the very end of the play, I came across a similarly ambiguous time/space expression that, unlike the example cited above, lends itself more easily to translation. In the final altercation between the protagonists, SHE

⁸ By saying “performative,” I refer to the Roland Barthes’s rendering of the term in his essay “The Death of the Author”: “The fact ... is that writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, ‘depiction’ (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a *performative*, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered -- something like the ‘I declare’ of kings or the ‘I sing’ of very ancient poets” (145-46).

pronounces: “*There* in our intensities, with pillars of light distorting our faces, a bed frame in an unbelievable position, electricity and its leading role, dry blows, cotton and the smell of coagulated blood, pushing the limits of today just a bit more, music that seemed to originate from our own bodies” (emphasis added)⁹. In original Spanish this phrase reads, “*Allá* en nuestras intensidades, focos de luz deformando nuestros rostros, la camilla en posición inverosímil, la electricidad y su protagonismo, los golpes secos, algodones y el olor a la sangre coagulada, desafío a los límites del hoy un poco más, la música que parecía nacer de nuestros propios cuerpos” (Pavlovsky 27, emphasis added). Based both on the context and on the semantic import of the word “there” (*allá*) it is fair to imagine precisely this fusion of distant time and space, which the original text conjures up in both cases. In this case, the receiving language has a linguistic capacity to preserve this syncretism implicit in the original language and its temporal/spatial expressions.

Another interesting example that reflects my working process, coincidentally, also has to do with the first scene of the play. In this part Pavlovsky’s language is an embodiment of ambiguity, and I was struggling to decode the meaning in the original Spanish, let alone to transfer it to English. The problem was that I had to choose between several options that seemed equally possible. However, upon revising, I was able to actually form an image of what was going on in the scene, and this image was what dictated my final word choices. In the text, this image does not show itself until the very end of the male character’s monologue: “La vida nos arroja al vacío y nosotros decimos en el aire ‘voy por este camino, elijo este otro, me bamboleo

⁹ As a general practice, I attempt to always quote from the original text by Pavlovsky. However, in cases, such as this, when my rendering into English becomes essential to the argument, I quote from my own translation.

por aquí o por allí’.” (Pavlovsky 10). This sentence allows for a number of interpretations; yet all of them can be unified by the same visual representation of a Man being thrown around by Life, while s/he may be positive that his or her actions are of their own making. This idea touches on the existentialist insecurities as far as “authenticity” is concerned. However, in the context of the post-dictatorship and *indultados*, this lack of human agency takes on yet another meaning: by concluding his soliloquy with this phrase, HE--along with the pardoned torturers he represents--is trying to brush off all the responsibility for his actions, as he suggests there was another greater force at play.

However we choose to interpret the play as a whole, based on this particular observation, I felt like it was my duty to preserve this imagery with the connotations it produces. Using this image as a guide, I was able to plow through some of the complicated and ambiguous elements of the scene. For example, I struggled a lot with a phrase “se me gastó el pensar de sostén...” (10). First of all, the grammatical discrepancies between the languages complicate the issue on the most general level. To translate any impersonal phrase like *se me gastó* into English (I ran out of/I am out of...), one must inevitably sacrifice the meaning implicit in the grammar--that of an action happening to someone, seemingly without their own volition. In English, grammar suggests quite the opposite--a subject’s full involvement in the process of exhausting some resource. Clearly, the phrase suggests that thinking, as a process, is providing some sort of support to the male protagonist. My very first option was “I am out of thoughts,” the second--“Thinking no longer holds me.” Of the two the latter seems to resolve the grammatical issues I have indicated. Yet, in my final revision, I have made a decision to change “holds me” to “grounds me,” to mimic the repetition that takes place in the original. Namely, in the very

beginning, HE pronounces, “Me satisfice mirar un punto fijo. Me sostiene” (Pavlovsky 9). The verb *sostener* (to support) is used twice in the contexts that have a great deal in common: in the beginning, the act of staring at one spot is what supports the character, and by the end it is the thinking process that carries out a similar function. Even though “to ground” is not a direct equivalent of *sostener*, the use of this verb in both cases works to reinforce the image of falling, while trying to hold on to something, which, to me, was crucial to the interpretation of this particular episode.

The idea of having a certain image in mind made me ponder some of the well-established translation theories. For instance, Benjamin talks about the “intention” that the translator has to recreate: “The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [Intention] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it an echo of the original” (77). In this very frequently quoted passage, despite its evident usefulness, I am mostly stricken with the general ambiguity of its terms. Speaking about translation in this manner implies the existence of some impulse that gave life to the original work, and that must be decoded by a translator. Can that image I perceived in the first scene be conceptualized as Benjamin’s “intention”? It would be a very comforting thought, yet I believe that my visual reference point is a product of my own reading of the text. Benjamin’s definition seems to refer to some platonic ideal--an Absolute Text, but can we ever hope, even as the most attentive readers, to ever access the author’s mental state, in which he wrote his work? Rather coincidentally, I found a confirmation of my concern in the article by a renowned translator Gregory Rabassa, “No Two Snowflakes Are Alike: “The translator can never be sure of himself, he must never be ... He can never enter into the author’s being and even if he could the

difference in languages would preclude any exact reproduction” (12). Thus, whenever we think we perceive “intention,” or impulse, of the original text, it is unlikely to be the Absolute: that one unique thought that the author meant to put into words. Applying this conclusion to my own interpretation of the opening scene of *Paso de dos* can be, however, a troublesome experience. By admitting that the vision of a Man falling down some metaphysical “void,” at the will of Life/Fate, comes from my own reading of the text, and not from Pavlovsky, I therefore expose the vulnerability that is characteristic to the entire field of translation. Contrary to the common misconception, the translator does not have an access to the Ultimate Knowledge about the text, a message that would be inaccessible to any other reader.

Having mentioned my unorthodox word choice in the opening scene, I am probably at a good place to discuss other translator’s “transgressions.” While it may not always be apparent, translators, from time to time, have to push the limits of the receiving language. In a rather concise form, this idea is expressed in the “Guidelines for Reviewers” of translations, adopted by the Executive Council of Modern Language Association in February 2011: “A translation must occasionally violate the norms of Standard English in order to convey the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the source text.” Of course, one must also be aware of the excesses of such violations: how far can one go pushing these limits until the language no longer sounds as a creative transposition, but rather a stiff “translatese”¹⁰? In the process of refining my translation, I attempted to keep both sides of this argument in mind, whenever I had to stray from the rules of Standard English.

¹⁰ Awkwardness or ungrammaticality of translation, for example due to overly literal translation of idioms or syntax (“Translationese”)

For example, the original punctuation in *Paso de dos* appears to be as much of an expressive means as are metaphors and other purely linguistic resources. Until a certain moment, punctuation follows the general rules: the sentences begin with capital letters, and as far as organization on the page is concerned, each discourse pronounced by the characters is bound to just the space allotted to that character:

ELLA: ¿ Cada uno de los gestos de todo el ritual ceremonial, del ritmo general, todo el aparato montado, la importancia asignada a cada una de las preguntas? ¿Fue simulación para todos? ¿Siempre?

EL: Solo para mí era un simulacro. Llegó un momento que deseaba que fallara algo...para justificar otros encuentros. Amaba tu fortaleza, era lo único que aseguraba la continuidad. (Pavlovsky 12)

While both HE and SHE pronounce more than one sentence, each of these sentences starts with a capital letter to indicate its beginning, and sentences follow one another in a predictable fashion. Then, all of a sudden, HE breaks into a passionate discourse about his first memory of her, one that curiously precedes their first encounter:

EL: Recuerdo el día, hoy te puedo decir que siempre me impresionabas, tengo la imagen de una discusión o de algo parecido a una discusión... como un malentendido o algo así.

Son retazos, es verdad que antes de conocernos...

había recreado una imagen tuya...

quiero decir que me eras familiar... cuando alguien hablaba de

vos...

me sentía misteriosamente atraído por lo que se hablaba de vos...

me encontraba a mi pesar, a veces escuchando...

a veces entendiendo a medias...

a veces intentando seguir alguna secuencia para entender mejor....

(Pavlovsky 13)

Apart from his rather peculiar soliloquy in the first scene, these lines are the first ones to violate the regularity of textual representation. Except for the first sentence, not a single line constitutes a full sentence. Moreover, each line starts with a lowercase letter. This shift makes sense, as at this point the character steps into a “memory zone,” which is traditionally fraught with uncertainty and infinite fragmentation. If I were not to translate it, I might have noticed the ellipses and incompleteness of the sentences as the markers of this memory fuzziness. Yet, in the process of translation, the lowercase letters stood out for me, particularly because I had to make a rule-bending decision to transfer it “faithfully” into English. In the final draft, this episode is translated the following way:

HE: I remember the day, today I can tell you that you always impressed me, I
 have an image of an argument or something similar to an argument... some
 misunderstanding or something like that.

There were bits and pieces, it is true that before we met...

i had reconstructed your image...

i mean you were familiar to me...whenever someone spoke about
 you...

i felt mysteriously attracted by what was being said about you...

i found myself, against my own will, sometimes listening...
 sometimes half understanding...
 sometimes trying to follow a certain string of conversation to
 understand better...

While I recognize that in this episode it might have not been necessary to switch a correct “I” into its lowercase, “incorrect” version, my decision is not unjustified. As I have mentioned before, in the absence of stage directions and many other typically theatrical expressive means, the “expressiveness” of graphic representation of the text on the page becomes especially significant and salient. This episode is not the only one where the printed text clearly performs a function. Another remarkable example is a male character’s monologue wherein he recounts a story from his childhood. Each line in that monologue, with a rare exception, starts with a lowercase letter, including those that start with “I” (*yo*). I kept the original format, because in that episode the format of *his* written speech mimics *hers*, in an episode directly preceding his story:

ELLA: Somos fuimos vos y yo nuestras historias nuestras certidumbres.
 nuestra manera de sentir las cosas de eso no podemos arrepentirnos
 allá vos allá yo
 es la distancia que nos hace reconocernos
 qué misterio se cruza entre los dos
 haciéndonos olvidar tanto pasado quién sabe si somos tan diferentes
 qué creció tanto entre los dos?

algo que no entiendo algo más allá me hace sentir ambigua y me
 produce terror
 haber sentido piedad en algún momento
 cómo surgió a pesar mío esto de la piedad entre los dos
 como piedad convertirme en piadosa yo que nunca lo fui. (Pavlovsky
 15)

Something visually striking about this passage is the neat format that dictates that every line starts from the same point and begins with a lowercase letter: the entire fragment appears to be very much “lined-up.” This speech and the story of HE that follows are the only two fragments in the entire play that are organized in this manner. It is a particularly curious circumstance that HE appears to be following in the footsteps of SHE. However we choose to interpret this irregularity, it does not appear to be a coincidence, and therefore, must be preserved in the translation.

What is more, the irregularity of *Yo* and *yo* usage at the beginning of lines and sentences persists throughout the play. To reiterate, as the expressive resources are limited in this play, as a translator, I felt it necessary to imitate original punctuation, as well as graphic arrangement of the text. For instance, the final lines of SHE are translated as follows:

i don't know you you're unrecognizable one of THEM

...

I won't speak up

I will never make you a HERO

you'll keep on waiting imprisoned by my silence

I won't name you...

In translation, we see the irregularity I noted previously. Not only it is visually salient, but it also violates the rules of Standard English. However, this violation is nonexistent in Spanish: if *yo* (I) is not the first word in a sentence, it does not need to be capitalized. That is to say that this irregular capitalization of the first element in each sentence/line could be overlooked and not considered in literary analysis. In fact, it may be the right thing to do: after all, we have no way of knowing if Pavlovsky had any hidden agenda when he decided to only capitalize some of his *yo*'s and not the others. Yet, by consistently mimicking this irregularity, and making it especially apparent, as it violates the rules of the receiving language, I suggest that there might be a reason behind it, without necessarily offering one. Moreover, my decision to replace “I” with “i” in an attempt to imitate the printing style of the original, generates a web of spelling irregularities that function as some sort of a code, as a language of symbols, which may give a reader and a stage director alike a clue as to how to interpret the work as a whole.

One of the most joyous moments of translating *Paso de Dos* was, without a doubt, a “dance scene”:

EL: Quién

ELLA: Ella

EL: Quién ella

ELLA: Ella quien

EL: Quién ella quién

ELLA: Ella quien quien

EL: Hablo en serio

ELLA: Quien quien ella (22)

This scene truly lends itself to numerous and equally possible interpretations. As far as translation is concerned, the most remarkable feature of it is the rhythm. The frequent back-and-forth, along with sonic quality, make this episode resemble the dance that the name alludes to and the theatrical production actually reproduces¹¹. The episode lended itself to translation fairly easily. The only linguistic obstacle I have noticed had to do with the specifics of graphic distinction that Spanish language has for interrogatives (*quién*) and relative pronouns (*quien*), which cannot be recreated in English. Nonetheless, the rhythm that is so central to this episode's construction, was preserved more or less "faithfully."

Moreover, upon revising the translation, I have noticed that translation of this episode is that happy, albeit rare, case when the translation does not only manage not to "rob" the original of some of its essential characteristics, but also generates a different, more nuanced sounding. In particular, upon having translated Spanish *quien-quien*'s into English "who-who's," I ended up having similarly meaningless dialogue, which sounds like bursts of laughter:

HE: Who

SHE: She

HE: Who is she

SHE: She who

HE: Who is she who

SHE: She who who

¹¹ "A mournful, beautiful tango comes out of nowhere" (Taylor 1)

"There is an intermittent music track, most of which is tango--sensual, romantic, nostalgic, a hint of menace" ("A Dance of Death" 64).

HE: I'm serious

SHE: Who who she

This effect could not be foreseen in the original, and only manifested itself in translation. Most importantly, this new dimension of the scene works to further the scene's underlying message. My reading of the text is concerned with the language and its agency, so the idea behind this scene, as I interpret it, is to demonstrate the arbitrary nature of the words that are routinely utilized by the violent regimes and in a violent space such as a torture chamber. As lines are likened to dance steps, the text becomes imbued with a peculiar regularity: the quoted episode repeats itself throughout, forming some sort of refrain; likewise, the arrangement of lines within this "refrain" is predictable. Overall, the repetition within and beyond the quoted excerpt alludes to some sort of a ritual in place: the words seem to be devoid of their true reference point, but rather are pronounced as a sheer formality.

This interpretation is corroborated by the play itself, as well as by some of the critical texts. For instance, when the idea of a "simulacrum" is first introduced, SHE pronounces:

ELLA: ¿ Cada uno de los gestos de todo el ritual ceremonial, del ritmo general, todo el aparato montado, *la importancia asignada a cada una de las preguntas?* ¿Fue simulación para todos? ¿Siempre? (Pavlovsky 12, emphasis added)

Here she mentions "ceremonial ritual" that the torture was, and particularly draws attention to the peculiar manner in which the questioned were asked. However, later on, in yet another comment, SHE gives us a better idea of what kind of questioning must have taken place: "... me di cuenta que no te interesaban mis respuestas sino el tono en que formulabas tus preguntas"

(13). In other words, the questions in this scenario are rendered futile: they are being asked just to ask, and not to get an answer. This conclusion does not seem unreasonable if we go back to the “dance/torture” scene and look at the answers SHE provides throughout. While between the “refrains” her responses appear more lucid, and even form a somewhat coherent narrative, with Peter, Juan, and Ocampo as protagonists, it is hardly a coincidence that the words, names, and addresses SHE utters do not affect the overall development of the play, and do not reappear after being mentioned once. This is precisely where the arbitrariness lies: instead of these names, any other could have been used, and the scene’s meaning would not have suffered.

When reading Nancy Gates-Madsen’s analysis of victims’ “silence” in the post-dictatorship plays, I stumbled upon very similar definition of a confession given under torture. Quoting another author, Ñacuñán Sáez, she recounts a testimony of a “victim, who, as a direct result of false information given by a woman under torture, was kidnapped, tortured and interrogated about his participation in the ‘cope de rim,’ an event about which he had no knowledge.” The similarity is quite evident: Sáez’s victim must have found himself in an absurd situation, wherein he is forced to respond to questions with no meaning. Moreover, the absurd appears contagious -- this victim was forced into absurdity as a result of yet another absurdity: false answers given by another tortured victim, who, in turn, might not have had any knowledge about the subject of the interrogation. Thus, we can witness a formation of the “vicious circle” of meaningless questions and false answers, which seems to be the moving force behind the entire practice of torture. The most interesting yet, is the confession itself, as described by Sáez: “Pain forced her to give concrete (but false) names, exact (but random) addresses, precise (but distorted) information” (qtd. in Gates-Madsen 21). This description is truly remarkable, for it

perfectly summarizes the mock torture scene in *Paso de dos*: under pressure SHE gives her interrogator very precise names and addresses, which, nonetheless, seem to be quite random and arbitrary.¹²

Still, this perceived “emptiness” of the uttered words can not only serve as a generator of a compelling, yet rather sinister interpretation, but has also affected the process of translation. Namely, the loss of meaning behind the mere “shells” of the words, made it easier to translate them into English: all I had to do is just to replicate the words and arrange them in a slightly modified way. Along with inadvertent “comical” sound of the “refrain,” the translation, same as the original, works to emphasize the absurd and arbitrary nature of the official discourse.

After having mentioned the most satisfying part of translation of *Paso de dos*, it is fair to talk about inevitable frustrations associated with the process. Namely, I would like to address some small, delicate details that were inseparable from the original language, and had to be sacrificed for the sake of integrity of the translated text. For instance, in the “dance” scene I have analyzed before, when SHE starts giving him “invented” names, the original text features an interesting homonym, *Lea*, which can be read both as a third-person verb in the subjunctive mood (he/she reads) and as a female name:

ELLA: Se conocieron en un asado de una joven de apellido Ocampo

EL: ¿Quién cómo?

ELLA: Buena persona un tanto tímida que se formó en el Colegio Northlands de Olivos de donde surgió Lea Fate jugadora de Hockey del Sury

EL: ¿Lea qué? (Pavlovsky 22)

¹² The pressure here is also of a purely physical, sonic quality--the victim, as well as the viewer is bombarded with monosyllables.

Clearly, there should be no ambiguity when one reads the text, as the word is spelled with the capital letter, and thus clearly indicates a female name. However, we must keep in mind that the spectator has only one way to access this word, and it is by hearing it. Phonetically, both forms sound the same, which allows for the moment's confusion. As English does not allow for the proper expression of this nuance, I had to translate it just as "Lea" and leave out the possible second meaning. While this original effect is not essential to the play as a whole, I would like to point out the loss of meaning in this case. The torturer's question obviously serves to clarify the unknown last name; yet if we read *Lea* as a verb, the question can be interpreted as "reads what?" There is a clear irony in making this particular verb a female name: such seemingly innocent act as reading could come under the scrutiny of the violent regime during the time of the *proceso*. Moreover, the duality implicit in the language points to its wider *interpretability*. Once again, we are confronted with a concept of the "oppressive" language: there is the "void" inside the language itself, and it can be filled with any meaning.

Another translational sacrifice has to do with meaningful repetitions in Spanish. In general, I have noticed that Spanish and English deal differently with the repetition of exact same information within one line: if in Spanish it appears justified, and in fact, makes a reader ponder about the change in meaning that clearly occurs when the phrase is being repeated, in English this repetition just plods -- it sounds odd, and, more often than not, fails to recreate that meaningful "change."¹³ However, one of the repetitions stood out for me in particular, as I had

¹³ Here I refer to the two lines pronounced by HE: one line in the beginning "Ahora el tiempo lo modifica todo, creo que el tiempo lo modifica todo" (11), and another one soon after "Me producías una gran curiosidad... siempre me producías curiosidad" (13). While the phrases in both cases are not identical, I had to modify them even more in English, in an attempt to recreate the emphasis on the second element that I perceive in Spanish

to make a significant sacrifice in translating it. Telling a story from his childhood, HE recreates the following, clearly painful exchange with his father:

¿Seguro que *no te animás*? Recuerdo sus ojos. Su expresión denodada, su frustración infinita. Su hijo era un cobarde.

No lo podía creer, *no me animo* es más grande que yo le dije...

no no es más grande, *vos no te animás* no te engañés a vos mismo (17, emphasis added).

It is curious how HE and his father pass the same phrase back and forth, until in the last line, we can perceive the drastic change in meaning: if before *animarse* connotes uncertainty, in the last line it receives a decisively resigned undertone. Simply put, this is the moment when his father actually realizes that his son is a coward and feels disappointed. It can be argued that the repetition in this episode serves to intensify the protagonist's agony. By not expressing his disappointment outright and resorting to the use of seemingly "neutral" expression, his father lets him guess what is the real meaning behind the words. It serves both as a barrier that the father puts up between the two, and as a symbol of frightening ambiguity and uncertainty. By pronouncing the words, his father condemns him to suffer at the power of the unknown: "... Ese día permaneció oculto entre nosotros / vergonzosamente silenciado y cómplice" [That day remained a secret between us / shamefully silenced and clandestine] (17). Curiously, the word choice here points to the larger context, wherein Father stands for the oppressive state that uses words as a way to humiliate his people, represented by the figure of Child. In fact, much of what was happening in the country was *clandestine*, including the official discourse that used certain words and meant something completely different ("subversives", for example). Thus, once again,

this small detail allows a reader and a viewer to get an idea of the frightening power of language when it serves the oppressive regime.

What happens in translation when a translator is forced to *explain* the meaning of the last element? In the first two cases, I have translated *animarse* as “to feel like doing something,” but I could not use the same expression for the most meaningful repetition. Certain emotion associated with this element in Spanish, the one that drives the aforementioned interpretation, simply could not be transferred into English in exactly the same way. As a result, my translation reads, “...you’re just not up to it, don’t lie to yourself.” While the general idea of childhood trauma is preserved that way, the deeper meaning behind the repetition is lost. However, this loss was inevitable: in order to maintain the text’s overall integrity, I had to deprive the reader in English of the “original” experience.

In conclusion, I would like to unite the two overarching ideas of my investigation: of *Paso de dos* as a simulacrum, and of my translation as a reflection of my own reading and understanding of the text. More specifically, I suggest that *the translation itself is a simulacrum*: it only repeats the original, tries to liken itself to the original, mimics the original “intention.” However, Baudrillard’s conception of a simulacrum rests on the idea that even the “original” is not real -- what we tend to think of as reality might as well end up being just another illusion. Quite interestingly, some of the translation critics share this concern with “originality” or the original text. In his essay “Translation: Literature and Letters,” Octavio Paz points out, “No text can be completely original *because language itself*, in its very essence, *is already a translation*--first, from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a

translation of another sign, another phrase” (154, emphasis added). Paz’s broader conception of a translation is very compelling, as he questions such processes as writing an original text and even speaking (from nonverbal to verbal). Thus, it is only fair to envision this entire investigation as yet another “reflection,” another layer, another simulacrum.

PAS DE DEUX. English Translation

Characters: HE and SHE

HE: *(while talking he has to carry out all the movements suggested in the text)*. Looking straight ahead. Or maybe to the side. Now I look at my hand. I turn the head to the right, now to the left—I can glance once more straight ahead. Pause. No. I have to do something, I tap my left knee with a knuckle. I get up. I sit down. I scratch my nose. I try for every gesture to have meaning, I mean, so that every gesture would take on some spontaneity. I don't want holes. I look ahead, and sharply look back. I am satisfied with staring at one point. It grounds me. A shoe shine stain on my pants. I need more acts. A good neck massage, turning of the head. Everything is as if it was normal. Time stood still. A yawn, another yawn, one tiny smile, one small stroke of the comb through hair, a finger scratch on the forehead, a slight knock of the heel on the floor. A whistle. A puff. Going to the bathroom—no desire. I come back. I feel good. One has to learn how to feel good. I look at the roof. Dear God, how much is missing still! I polish my right shoe again. I make it look like I'm thinking of something specific that concerns me. I make a gesture of having discovered something. I put on the face of a scoundrel. I pretend to remember some love affair. I imagine places. I get a bit distracted. I return to the void. No! How much is missing? I think about my mother. I try to grasp the image of the face of my mother. I remember. My nose itches. My nose itches. I let it itch...to kill some time when I scratch it. I scratch a little. I rub it. A pause after such an effort. My god, what to do! A little bit of hope. Doesn't last long. Now despair. I pretend that I forget one thing and now I remember it. I open my mouth. I close it. I cough. Cough two times, three times. Now I pretend to

suffocate. I pretend to have recuperated. How do I continue? How much is missing still? I move a chair to a different spot. I move it again. Time does not move forward. I sit down on the ground. It is good sitting on the ground, very good. I walk. I stop. I walk. I move my hips. I'm a man. I'm a woman. I'm a child. I'm an animal.

How pretentious! A little bit of performance, a little bit of humor, of good humor, fine humor, English humor.

Pause. Pause. Pause. Let's start it all over. What is going to happen if I let myself be. The images stop. Faces like images without dimensions. All is flat. Perhaps a small speech or, better yet, a method, some procedure that could distract me... pause. For God's sake, how much is missing. It becomes long...everything is very long...I cannot think...Thinking no longer grounds me... I need acts, actions...

Life throws us into the void and we say while falling "I go along this path, I choose another one, I dangle around here and there."

I would like to explain the facts, the circumstances that caused them, explain the causes. To say: I can explain this act this way. I can only say that I am absolutely, one hundred percent responsible for everything, and I regret absolutely nothing, because my acts are the only thing in which I can find any sense, any line to follow/ to hold on to... I am responsible for every one of my intensities... this is certain...absolutely certain. This is my certainty.

HE: What was the problem? Now time alters everything, I believe time alters everything.

SHE: Do you know why?

HE: Why?

SHE: I'm asking you if you ever had any type of conviction, at least in the beginning when we first met each other?

HE: Convictions, convictions...

SHE: Ideas, just ideas.

HE: Those were our encounters that changed everything... It was hard for me to notice. Because you have become my NEED. The need of our bodies...together. The need to have you close, to talk to you in proximity, always next to me. Touching you always...

SHE: You must have had some type of conviction at some point. To separate at least right from wrong.

HE: Right from wrong?

SHE: Knowing if what you were doing made any sense, for instance.

HE: I always thought that things happen because they were meant to happen.

SHE: For no reason other than this? Absolutely no other reason?

HE: Why are you asking so many questions?

SHE: Because I am full of questions.

HE: About me.

SHE: About both of us.

HE: Whenever I was facing you, I discovered the intensity. To stop being with you was like facing the void. It was a terror knowing that the intensity could be over in an instant... that

it only depended on you. I was scared that you would yield and everything would suddenly just end.

SHE: All of a sudden?

HE: I couldn't leave out any detail of the ceremony, any detail of the ritual.

SHE: No other thing was important except the intensity? Does it mean then that every action of every question was meant to silence or to get the wrong answer? Hard to believe it, and yet... everything to justify the intensity. Then every moment of the ceremony was also a simulacrum? To justify the encounters, every encounter was a simulacrum?

HE: After a while every single encounter was a simulacrum.

SHE: Every single gesture of all the ceremonial ritual, of the typical rhythm, of all the set-up apparatus, the importance assigned to every single question? It was all simulation for everyone? Always?

HE: It was a simulacrum only for me. A moment came when I wanted something to fail... to justify other encounters. I loved your strength—it was the only thing that could guarantee continuity.

SHE: And if I all of a sudden yielded...

HE: Then there would be a fall into the immense void of the present time, too much consciousness... I lived waiting for our next encounter.

SHE: I knew this from the first day.

HE: What do you mean, from the first day?

SHE: Because I noticed that you were not interested in my responses—it was just the tone in which you formulated your questions.

HE: I remember the day, today I can tell you that you always impressed me, I have an image of an argument or something similar to an argument... some misunderstanding or something like that.

There were bits and pieces, it is true that before we met...

i had reconstructed your image...

i mean you were familiar to me...whenever someone spoke about you...

i felt mysteriously attracted by what was being said about you...

i found myself, against my own will, sometimes listening...

sometimes half understanding...

sometimes trying to follow a certain string of conversation to understand better...

You triggered a lot of curiosity in me...you've always triggered curiosity in me...

(She tries to leave)

HE: Where are you going?

SHE: *(stops.)* The tone of certain words always refers back to images...

HE: I was always asking you where you were going... absolutely always in our times... those times...

SHE: Those times...

HE: I was possessive. I recognize it. Before I knew you, it seemed that you belonged to me. Your name belonged to me...

Anyway I was pretending that you belonged to me... Even when I didn't know you, even when you were only a name... i was obsessed with an idea of possessing you... making

me your owner like a trophy, I was always thinking of your body...Taking control all of a sudden... out of the blue... like when an animal catches its prey...

invading you like this... like this...

SHE: Why so many truths... TODAY?

Is it just another game of intensities?

Pause

HE: We knew how to take advantage of our time...

I had been asking to see you as soon as I knew...

Well, that we were going to know each other...

I remember that day, our first encounter, those eyes of yours, so incredibly inquisitive and always so beautiful...

Your name, I asked, you told me something like Charlemagne, I started to laugh, you laughed, both of us laughed for a long time, we hadn't talked, and yet our mutual laughter was the first seal of the encounter.

You stopped laughing and looked at me, I think you said, it isn't necessary, I asked you, not necessary? You said it is not, I told you not necessary what? You said it is not, I asked you to speak clearly, said that you were starting to drive me crazy, you said that it wasn't your fault that I didn't understand, that you spoke little, that you were going to speak even less and that you didn't feel responsible for what I was not capable of understanding, that I don't understand what, I told you, nothing, answer yourself, unbelievable, I said, you are unbelievable.

and I burst out laughing
 you hurt my pride
 you hurt my pride
 i didn't know if we were playing our first game,
 i didn't know if both of us were playing the same game,
 knowing you were intelligent, I suspected that you were playing the game on your own,
 and I was playing the role of an idiot laughing on my own.

I think you told me that I was nervous or something like that, there was a precision in
 your words, I mean what you were saying was very exact.

There was a word about your responses, about your fast lucid answers...

I must confess I was warned, I had been told that in order to establish some sort of
 conversation the most important thing was not to look you in the eye, I had been told to talk
 to you without looking at you.

because if I did I was going to fall into your web

you understand me?

Your scarce words, the need of not having to explain anything

your silences in the most difficult moments, which could allude to so many things...

your strange departures that deepened even more the mystery

of our existence

SHE: We are...we were, you and I, our stories our certainties.

our way of feeling things, this we can't regret

you there me there

it is the distance that makes us recognize each other
what a mystery passes between the two of us
making us forget so much past who knows if we are that different
what grew so much between the two of us?
something I don't understand something way out there makes me feel ambiguous
and makes me terrified
to have felt pity at a certain moment
how it emerged against my will, this pity thing between the two of us
how pity turned me into a pious one, me who never was like this

HE: One Sunday afternoon I went to visit you and brought you a ricotta cake

which you liked, as you told me one day

you asked me who my father was

my father? I told you, you heard me, you said, I don't know who my father was, I said, I

knew it, you said and later, after trying the cake, and your mother? my mother, yes, I knew

her well

i thought so, you said

how odd, I only have one memory of my father, a memory that always comes back to me...

as if my entire relationship with my father were revealed through this memory

i was about nine or ten years old

i came home crying because some boys in the street had beaten me up

my father asked me how old they were

i told him they were older than me, around 12 or 13 years old.

he told me he wanted to see them, he promised he wouldn't mess with them, he just wanted to see them

we walked together to the place where the gang normally gathered. They were there. They didn't see us. Dad asked me which one had beaten me up.

i pointed to one of them who seemed the biggest to me and who had a moustache
my father told me, and that jerk hit you?

go and fight him right this moment

I won't let any other boy in go tell him you came to fight him one-on-one

i looked at the boy with the moustache, he seemed to me bigger than ever

i had a physical sensation of great weakness, I felt that I was fainting and I was trembling with fear...

You have to fight, go fight him, the kid was playing *balero*¹⁴

dad was getting tired of my cowardice, go on don't be a crybaby

go fight him

the more Dad insisted, the more petrified I became

Now is the time, go and tell him you want to fight him

just him, without his friends, that you want to fight him one-on-one

you'll see he is going to wimp out, I'm sure he will

I couldn't shake off the fear, he seemed so much bigger and stronger than me, but Dad insisted

To me that scene was so very long, never-ending

¹⁴ Cup-and-ball game ("Balero")

it had probably lasted just a minute or two

i know that at a certain moment I told my father

i want to go back home, I don't feel like fighting

Are you sure you don't? I remember his eyes. His hard expression, his infinite disappointment. His son was a coward.

He could not believe it, I don't feel like it he's bigger than me I said

no he's not bigger, you're just not up to it don't lie to yourself let's get home... and we walked back together in silence

Even years later I always had a feeling that Dad never forgave me my wimpiness...

that it marked our relationship forever. That day remained a secret between us shamefully silenced and clandestine

It was a mark where our story passed

SHE: Do you want a glass of water? Are you thirsty?

should we stop or go on?

You're tired

Should we start over or stop here?

Maybe this job is too intense, you should keep in mind physical fatigue sometimes

Another drink of water? When did you last eat?

(Pause).

Maybe we should start over, but keeping in mind the work that was already done

let's not throw it all out the window

it seems so easy sometimes to forget every detail every intensity, that's why I think that every moment we repeat turns into a true discovery

We have to try to remember each detail of every event with the same original intensity, agreed?

First we transform shared experience into concepts and these concepts separate us from the intensities

The problem of the concepts lies in forgetting the intensities forgetting the experience of life, agreed?

We speak of things, of words that refer to other words

we have to go back to the intensities

go back and remember everything second by second with our bodies

so that nothing is forgotten

not a single thing

HE: I need air

SHE: How much?

HE: How much of what?

SHE: How much do you need, a litre, two litres, you've always been precise why not be so now?

We have to recreate every detail every second

if not everything will be forgotten

it's so easy to forget

HE: Stop I can't breathe, I could hit you

I need air

SHE: Now is the moment

Maybe we could reconstruct

words help us forget, many times we've tried to talk to forget

Do you remember those long conversations when we talked to forget what was happening?

Every phrase we said buried an event

We were trying to forget what had been growing between us

this is what it's about

about recreating everything

the mystery of each event in detail

Is it even possible to talk about all of this?

it is possible to talk about death, about pain without invoking them onto our bodies, or we simply evoke them to forget the fear, to convert the fear in the words that don't mean anything anymore

Am I choking you? making you feel bad? do you have enough air?

does your trachea still endure?

how many were drowned?

Now yes, we are together. How many with their heads in the mud?

unable to breathe

naked, mutilated bodies, now yes, we are together

now we are, now we are

We can remember together, do you agree?

(All of a sudden she starts to whistle a song)

A long period of silence settles in while the song is being whistled)

HE: It has no reason to exist, makes no sense

every time you were whistling it

It seemed to me that it could be a beginning of something between you and me

like a warning that would hint at the possibility of the next encounter

i thought that the whistling was triggered by some stimulus and that maybe you, sick of yourself, of your silence, would start whistling as a primitive way to talk

i remember my hopes, my promises, my expectations.

You kept on whistling, always looking me in the eye

you never stopped looking at me

you would start doing it with greater force, with more rhythm until you made a long pause.

Trembling, I asked you if you wanted to say something and you didn't respond, I offered you a cigarette that was lit, I believe, I was waiting for some gesture of recognition, something that would let me sense your possible interest, something like a truce

my hand with the cigarette in it was left hanging in the air

you didn't answer, neither did you accept the cigarette and continued whistling

while your eyes kept watching me, I put out the cigarette and thought that maybe the opportunity of our encounter just had not come yet.

Pause

HE: Who

SHE: She

HE: Who is she

SHE: She who

HE: Who is she who

SHE: She who who

HE: I'm serious

SHE: Who who she

HE: Who

SHE: He

HE: Who is he?

SHE: He who

HE: Who is he who

SHE: He who who

HE: I'm serious

SHE: Who who he

HE: When

SHE: At no-time

HE: Where

SHE: Juan Arrivenos 341

HE: Who are they

SHE: Having lunch with him who smiles on the right

HE: On the right of who

SHE: Further behind Peter

HE: How?

SHE: A blond with some gray hair, it's hard to figure out gray hair on blonds

HE: Who

SHE: Peter and Juan

HE: Where?

SHE: They met each other at the barbecue of a young lady called Ocampo

HE: Who is like?

SHE: A good person a bit shy who got educated at the Northlands School of Olivos, it's where

Lea Fate, the hockey player of Hockey del Sury, came from

HE: Lea what?

SHE: Her brother Paul Fate played rugby in Quilmes. The relationship between Ocampo Peter

and Juan continues being a mystery

HE: There are no mysteries here

SHE: Ocampo had a relationship with Peter and Juan. Juan had relationship with Ocampo. Peter

only had relationship with Juan. That's why Ocampo had an advantage of knowing the bodies

of both Peter and Juan. Juan knew Ocampo's

HE: Slow down

SHE: Peter knew Juan's and Ocampo's. Juan fell in love with Peter, and Peter with Ocampo.

Later the three of them separated because they suffered a lot

HE: I don't believe you. Who?

SHE: She

HE: Who is she

SHE: She who who

HE: I'm serious

SHE: Who who she

HE: Who

SHE: Who is he?

HE: He who

SHE: Who is he who

HE: Who who

I'm serious

SHE: (*yelling*) Who who he

HE: What was his background?

SHE: Who

HE: Peter

SHE: Northern Ireland

HE: I don't believe you

Let's start again

HE: Many times I asked myself what would be the best way to get to know you or to make

myself known, what was the way that would least confuse you or simply

not cause you trouble, what the hell, sometimes we do get complicated

it's not easy for me to speak now, I mean, to remember it all over again now

when I tell you that you were my only obsession before I knew you you've got to believe

me, when I tell you that today you're still my obsession you've got to believe me

it would be ridiculous for me to have tried to ask you today something that's well beyond
what you can respond to

and I avoided asking you things that could bother you before

well beyond what was necessary...

but today it's about a bond, a story, a human experience shared with all the intensity

we can't regret that

if anything can define our story

it would be the intensity of what we shared

It is true that I was sometimes brutally possessive

wanting to know your most intimate thoughts

unable to bear the idea that there would be anything that I didn't know

maybe the intensity was within those moments when I was thinking there was something
yours that existed beyond us

this part of your intimacy that I could never reach was driving me crazy

perhaps I could never tell this to you, but in my defense I can declare that I didn't know it, I
mean there are many things in our relationship that I just now come to understand

The beginning was dominated completely by the obsession of getting to know you

to get control of all that's yours

of each and every one of your nooks and crannies

because possessing you was not just the matter of physiology

as you know it

but rather possessing you whole, your intimacy, the most unsayable

that is my absolute truth of today

You can imagine that environment blocked all sort of common sense for me

the years, perhaps some more maturity, time that cures it all

they allowed me to place myself in a different position towards our thing

but what's curious is that even if I've become wiser and more understanding, the area of
mystery that I still can't overcome even today, seems to me more tormenting now than before

It's because before all about us seemed to be a part of the mystery

Now that I can understand something it's getting more incomprehensible

what I still can't decipher

SHE: The need to tell you things words that grow when we're together in spite of you and me

in spite of our story always so different so horribly different

they just grow

not because of you and me

the words always sprout where they should only have existed the great silence of

screaming

the memory grows despite the both of us

what a strange space we will have created

that sometimes I can't but talk to you however unwillingly...

HE: Everything shatters

Despair is not a sad dialogue but rather an explosion of deafening silence

That thing that I feel for you today

bits and pieces of our faces... of our bodies

Your body here, what you were, what you are
here today, what to tell you for God's sake, what can I tell you
am I to apologize for everything?
no, I can't apologize, you wouldn't permit it
you're still the stronger one!
but why?
what does your body have that enables you to still be the same!
with the same strength as yesterday
and me trembling before you
always trembling
This that I touch is you and isn't you
bodies were first
how far did they go
the holes... without spaces
now the calmness of the intensities
it's the void that I can't tolerate...

"the terror of knowing that the intensity could come to an end in an instant," remember?

that...

This, without any other name but THIS so specific
where I start, where I end
where you start, where you end

SHE: You thought you knew me. That was your big mistake. You thought that you got to know me and now you suffer because you don't know who you were with all that time, so many hours and this is where your tiny torment tells you so many mistaken hours

so much work that was poorly done something that wasn't foreseen

you thought that the intensity would uncover everything all the way to the most intimate but it's the opposite, the most intimate preserves itself most of all amidst the intensity, something's always sheltered

the unsayable at the moment of screaming and that intimacy only grows bigger from that point on because the most intimate part becomes the last bastion to be protected

SURVIVAL is at stake there

HE: Why the evasions always winning in your silence

i wish you could scream out all the truths

that you'd look at me more in your silence...

If only you could insult me break the calmness, lose control for a while, barely...

if only you were to talk about our story about all of our story...

about the truth of our shared story.

You didn't speak up before and don't want to name me now

who am I then?

you look into my eyes like you did before when I asked you the question you would never answer

I got to the point of begging you that you'd make up names that I only needed a fake name just so that you'd tell me something to have a name between you and me something

that would belong to us that would be your surrender any lie would be acceptable the most important was that you were to pretend to give in, I didn't even ask you to give in for real... just to pretend...

just a lie a game between the two of us I got tired of asking you for truths

but you didn't surrender not even in a "game" your ethics didn't allow it I don't ask for much... just for you to name me as a part of your story because it was important, wasn't it?

our thing was...?

Why don't you tell on me you bitch

confess it sweetheart scream it out real loud so everyone hears who I am, tell them what I did to you

you're the same piece of shit now as before

i ask you to tell the truth

that you say what I did to you

i need it for me

it is my triumph

SHE: There in our intensities, with pillars of light distorting our faces, a bed frame in an unbelievable position, electricity and its leading role, dry blows, cotton and the smell of coagulated blood, pushing the limits of today just a bit more, music that seemed to originate from our own bodies. Agonies, cold sweats, death on approach, all of this reunited between us, objects with their own force, movements of different rhythms and back there our bodies, forming a part of all this. We were wrong thinking that it was we who generated the passions and the energy, because when the whole device disappears we find ourselves in

our nudity, you and I, and realize with dread that the passions which seemed to be so much a part of us, only formed a part of the setting for the event. Only for this reason you and I are facing the void of the lost meaning and it's unbearable. I only keep a memory of the movements from all that.

HE: possessing your body your holes your smells

every area of your body that I would hit

i knew the color of each and every one of your bruises

before it made any sense I was told that I wouldn't ever get any name out of you...

now I don't understand you you can scream out my name and once again you prefer to be silent and not talk

confess it, you whore, yell out who I am who I was scream out what's ours don't you turn away from me anymore

because I existed. Because I was

Why? Why? Why don't you name me?

SHE: I won't name you. You'd prefer that I denounce you that I tell everything

I know you'd feel better that way, proud of the fact that everyone knows you touched me

you want to be a hero like all the rest who are proud once again of what they did

proud to walk free ever so defiant...

heroes once again...

you're too twisted I won't name you you're going to keep on waiting...always waiting...

that's going to be your tiny torment I know you well

that's the only way to be imprisoned I won't talk

i don't know you you're unrecognizable one of THEM

you want to be a hero and you feel anonymous...

I will keep silent. My silence is your prison. My silence are the cries in your head my
silence are the fears in your head no one can release you from there

you know it's true

you'll stay there waiting forever

a prisoner of cries a prisoner of fears

perhaps one day who knows or perhaps never

because the time is mine now

I won't speak up

I will never make you a HERO

you'll keep on waiting imprisoned by my silence

I won't name you...

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