Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos

The Ethos of Care in Manuel Puig's El beso de la mujer araña

Ashley Brock

Volume 45, Number 2, Winter 2021

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1100802ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18192/rceh.v45i2.6685

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Asociación Canadiense de Hispanistas

ISSN

0384-8167 (print)
2564-1662 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Brock, A. (2021). The Ethos of Care in Manuel Puig's El beso de la mujer araña. *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, *45*(2), 283–306. https://doi.org/10.18192/rceh.v45i2.6685

Article abstract

This article focuses on corporeal experience and the material and affective practice of care in Manuel Puig's El beso de la mujer araña. It contends that at the heart of the novel's political project lies an ethos of care that is situated rather than transcendent, contaminated rather than pure, embodied rather than abstract, and transactional rather than disinterested. In spite of all of the ways such an ethos might seem compromised or insufficient, it succeeds in suspending social mechanisms of exclusion and models for the reader a mode of ethical engagement with the world narrated.

ASHLEY BROCK

The Ethos of Care in Manuel Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña*

Este artículo se enfoca en la experiencia corporal y en la práctica, tanto material como afectiva, del cuidado en El beso de la mujer araña *de Manuel Puig. Sostiene que en el centro del proyecto político de la novela se encuentra un* ethos *situado en vez de transcendente, contaminado en vez de puro, corporal en vez de abstracto y transaccional en vez de desinteresado. A pesar de que tal* ethos *se podría percibir como debilitado o insuficiente, lo que logra es suspender los mecanismos sociales de exclusión y ofrecer al lector un modelo de compromiso ético.*

Palabras clave: *Manuel Puig, cuidado, cuerpo, ética, biopolítica*

This article focuses on corporeal experience and the material and affective practice of care in Manuel Puig's El beso de la mujer araña*. It contends that at the heart of the novel's political project lies an ethos of care that is situated rather than transcendent, contaminated rather than pure, embodied rather than abstract, and transactional rather than disinterested. In spite of all of the ways such an ethos might seem compromised or insufficient, it succeeds in suspending social mechanisms of exclusion and models for the reader a mode of ethical engagement with the world narrated.*

Keywords: *Manuel Puig, care, body, ethics, biopolitics*

The action of Manuel Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976) revolves around bodies that are never directly depicted. This now-classic novel, set in a military prison in Argentina in 1975,[1] is composed primarily of dialogue. There is no third-person narrator to describe the physical appearance, activities, and interactions of the two incarcerated protagonists: Molina, a gay window dresser, and his cellmate Valentín, a Marxist revolutionary. This absence is all the more conspicuous in light of the baroquely detailed descriptions Molina furnishes of the Hollywood films he narrates to pass the time. Whereas Molina recreates visually rich scenes replete with set pieces and the costumes, hairstyles, and gestures of the actors, the material trappings of the cell and the bodies of its inhabitants are never directly described.

When we read between the utterances and silences of the characters, however, we see that much of the plot is driven by corporeal suffering and pleasure: the two protagonists writhe in pain and experience diarrhea, exhaustion, and chills after having their food poisoned by the prison director; Molina bathes and feeds Valentín when he is sick; they relish eating together; they touch each other with tenderness and make love; ultimately, Valentín is tortured and Molina is fatally shot at the hands of the military police. In short, the major forces at play in the novel – the dehumanizing violence of the state and the reparative potential of person-to-person care – are registered on the level of the body.

The unmediated nature of the dialogue that makes up most of the novel has often led Puig's characters to be understood first and foremost as voices. César Aira, for example, speaks of Puig's "puesta en escena de voces desnudas" (3). Importantly, however, a voice is not a disembodied phenomenon.[2] In thinking of and responding to Puig's characters as voices, we are called upon to listen not only for the semiotic meaning of what they say, but also for the accent, cadence, timbre, and affect with which they say it, all of which might be understood as the traces of an embodied, situated, and relational existence.

In testifying to the presence of the body in the act of enunciation, the voice also testifies to the presence of the animal body within the political sphere. As Mladen Dolar reminds us, for Giorgio Agamben, the voice inhabits language as *zoe* (animal life) inhabits the polis; it is the alterity that resides at the core of *bios* (political life) (Dolar 106). This point becomes particularly relevant under the pronouncedly biopolitical regime of the military prison, where Molina and Valentín are denied the rights and protections of citizens and relegated to what Agamben calls "the zone of indistinction," suspended between *bios* and *zoe* (*Homo* 90). What is left to them is bare life, natural life, that has been politicized precisely by its abandonment and its vulnerability to violence.

Gabriel Giorgi writes that the presence of indeterminate (queer, animal, hybrid) bodies in texts like *El beso* opens up "una exploración biopolítica sobre la materialidad de los cuerpos y sobre sus saberes" (245). I write in response to Puig's (and Giorgi's) invitation to such an exploration. The questions this article probes include: Can this zone of indistinction be reclaimed?[3] Can the vulnerability of the body that is stripped of its political personhood and left to die by the state that produces it as criminal and deviant be read not only as the most sinister manifestation of modern biopolitics but also as an opening towards ethical engagement? What does it mean, in material, affective, and political terms, to care for an abandoned body, to insist on its personhood? How might we understand this as the

ethical work with which the reader of *El beso* is tasked? Can listening to the voice of the other, sharing time and space with the other – what Daniel Link, following Roland Barthes, calls *living with*[4] – amount to caring for the other? In offering a (qualified) affirmative answer to this last question, I contend that the undecidability of corporeal existence (both human and animal, *bios* and *zoe*) does indeed lie at the heart of Puig's political project in *El beso,* but not merely for the reasons Giorgi cites. Beyond suggesting a posthumanist, queer ethics that does not depend on marking the limits between species and identities, as Giorgi argues, the centrality of the body points to the practice of care as the core ethos at play in *El beso*.

I define care, following María Puig de la Bellacasa in *Matters of Care* (2017), as a necessarily embodied and situated practice that spans, somewhat uneasily, the material, affective, and ethical realms. Drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, Puig de la Bellacasa argues that what makes care a useful framework "for thinking and living in more than human worlds" is the entanglement of care as affect, care as material practice of maintenance, and care as an ethos of "staying with the unsolved tensions and relations" between these terms (1, 5). Thus, care can never be a purely theoretical engagement any more than it can be a wholly pleasant feeling. It always remits back to hands-on work, often to physical touch, which, as Merleau-Ponty reminds us, is reversible but not reciprocal: he who touches is also touched but not necessarily in the same way (254-55). For these reasons, care confronts us with our interconnectedness, our interdependency, and our mutual vulnerability (Puig de la Bellacasa 17), as well as with economies of exchange that defy the abstract, rational logic of the commodity.

Moreover, unlike with other articulations of morality, ethics, and political commitment, it is hard to argue that care is proper only to human subjects. Certain manifestations of care – protecting, nourishing, soothing – appear to be base instincts shared by animals, often but not exclusively associated with the raising of young. As such, care is not necessarily altruistic nor political (capacities that a long, though now-contested history of philosophy has reserved for humans alone), but it may be both. At the same time, care may be used to control, manipulate, and even oppress. Puig de la Bellacasa reminds us that, for all of its positive valences as an affective and ethical practice (affection, love, stewardship, etc.), care can be a paternalistic and dehumanizing practice (as in colonialism, slavery, and incarceration) as well as an unevenly distributed social burden (traditionally women's work) (2, 9). Owing to the plasticity of the concept, the material manifestations of care can belie a diverse and conflicting range

of motivations that may prove difficult for the caregiver, let alone for the recipient of care or an outside observer, to disentangle.

In what follows, I read *El beso* as an exploration of the ambivalent enmeshment of the multiple senses of care, from caring for the body of another to caring about the values, story, and fate of another. Ultimately, I argue, the novel challenges the reader to take on the messy work of *caring for* the world narrated, as distinct from simply being entertained by it or assuming an ideological stance towards it. Though he stops short of suggesting that care is enough to disarm the dehumanizing violence of the military state, Puig presents the feminine-coded ethical work of caring as every bit as urgent as masculine-coded militarism. As Link has argued, at stake in this novel is the ethical question of how to live together: "cómo vivir juntos en un universo que postula toda separación como necesaria y toda comunidad como insostenible." I would contend that Puig's answer to this question of how to cohabitate ethically with the other in conditions designed to isolate and alienate is not to try to understand the other but, rather, to care for him, which encompasses attending to his body and responding to his suffering as well as listening to his voice and letting it, along with his concerns, values, and hopes, resonate within us.

READING AS CARING

Though Molina and Valentín are different from one another in many respects (politics, sexual orientation, aesthetic tastes), the fundamental tension between them at the beginning of the novel stems from the fact that they care about different things. To borrow Bruno Latour's terminology, there is almost no overlap between what constitute "matters of concern" for Molina and what constitute "matters of concern" for Valentín (Latour 231). Valentín finds it inexcusable that Molina appears not to care about politics. Molina, in turn, is insulted that Valentín sees his investment in popular culture and the aesthetic as trivial. This tension comes to a head during Molina's narration of a Leni Riefenstahl film, which Valentín immediately identifies as Nazi propaganda and consequently dismisses. Molina's hurt response reveals that he is not as politically naïve as Valentín takes him to be:

> Me ofendés porque te... te crées que no... no me doy cuenta que es de propaganda na... nazi, pero si a mí me gusta es porque está bien hecha, aparte de eso es una obra de arte, vos no sabés po... porque no la viste. (Puig 63)

Molina is not ignorant of the film's ideology, but it is beside the point to him; he admires the film as an aesthetic object and finds it compelling as a love

story. For him, Valentín's cursory dismissal is not a sign of moral resolution but of intolerance.

In this exchange, Puig distills the difference between the modes of reading and modes of caring modeled by each character. These represent two seemingly conflicting approaches between which the reader, too, will have to decide, or at least shuttle back and forth.[5] One can read symptomatically, as Valentín does, holding the text at an intellectual distance and hermeneutically processing every detail through a Marxist and/or psychoanalytic lens, or one can read for (aesthetic and/or affective) pleasure, as Molina does, cherishing its beauty and identifying with the characters. Valentín, along with the author of the footnotes that run throughout the text, upholds the former as a more serious mode of engagement.[6] Nevertheless, Puig's earnest treatment of Molina's devotion to his campy B-movies and sentimental *boleros* challenges the reader to take them seriously too.[7] As numerous readers have pointed out, the mode in which Puig approaches popular culture is not that of parody, but instead that of affective approximation.[8] *El beso* thus anticipates the so-called Post-Critical turn, wherein serious, critical reading is reconceived, in Latour's words, as seeking to "protect and care" rather than "debunk" (Latour 232). I will return to the reader's role in negotiating these different models of reading and caring at the end of the article, but in the meantime, I wish to dwell on the evolution of the characters as critical readers of as well as creators of narrative.

Over the course of the novel, the gap between Molina and Valentín and their respective modes of reading and spheres of concern begins to close. We learn Valentín is not devoid of aesthetic sensibilities nor immune to sentimental attachment. To Molina's surprise, he reveals that he was trained as an architect and knows a great deal about landscaping styles (Puig 82-83). Moreover, he admits to being sad when the first film comes to an end and sheepishly confesses that it is because he had grown attached to the characters: "Que me da lástima porque me encariñé con los personajes. Y ahora se terminó, y es como si estuvieran muertos" (47). Molina replies, "Al final, Valentín, vos también tenés tu corazoncito" (47). By the time he begins to share the details of his own love life, Valentín renounces his right to laugh at Molina's *boleros* and grants that his own story "suena a bolero," to which Molina replies, "Pero tonto, es que los boleros dicen montones de verdades, es por eso que a mí me gustan tanto" (143). It is no coincidence that overcoming his snobbism towards pop culture and sentimental, putatively feminine genres coincides with Valentín's emergence as a narrator. Once he starts to tell his own story (which blurs into Molina's Marxist-race-car-driver-turned-*guerrillero* film in Valentín's semi-conscious fever dreams in

Chapters Six and Seven), Valentín finds it harder to maintain his distance from narrative conventions he once saw as *cursi*. It should be noted that Valentín's softening in his critical stance is also linked to his physical suffering; he is gravely ill in these chapters.

As Valentín gradually comes to see the wisdom of Molina's embracing popular culture, Molina becomes more favorably disposed towards Valentín's political commitment. Whereas he initially quipped, "Política... Así va el mundo, con los políticos" (Puig 85), in Chapter Six, he selects a film with a Marxist protagonist in hopes that it will please Valentín, and by the end of the novel, his expression of care for Valentín's most cherished matters of concern (leftist politics) jumps from the level of words to the level of action: he agrees to deliver a message to Valentín's comrades on the outside and sacrifices his life in the attempt. As with Valentín's increasing openness towards popular culture and the feminine, it is hard to verify whether this change in attitude reflects a profound shift in worldview. As Valentín reflects in the final chapter, it remains impossible to know whether Molina's motives were genuinely political or merely sentimental: "si estaba triste o estaba contento de morirse así, sacrificándose por una causa buena, eso solamente lo habrá sabido él, y ojalá" (284-85). The imagined voice of Valentín's girlfriend Marta responds, "¿por una causa buena? Uhmm... yo creo que se dejó matar porque así se moría como la heroína de una película, y nada de eso es de una causa buena" (285). I am interested in the possibility that the true extent of Molina's political awakening not only remains opaque to Valentín and to the reader but is also beside the point.

If instead of trying to understand Molina's "true" self and motivations (as traditional discussions of individual morality do), we focus instead on the relationality between the two characters (as Levinasian ethics ask us to), the impossibility of knowing the extent of Molina's ideological conversion should not impair our ability to take his expressions of care at face value. In fact, the idea of an authentic self is one of the principles Puig throws most radically into question by creating characters who exist almost exclusively as voices in dialogue. As Lucille Kerr has argued, the identity of the characters is generated relationally through this dialogue (187). Neither subjectivity exists in a stable form outside of this dialogue; rather, the two continually shape one another. Herein lies Puig's ethical project according to Link: two seemingly incompatible communities ("la militancia" and "la homosexualidad") coexist (intimately and ethically) through acts of dialogue and seduction. If we move from the ethical plane to the political plane, we might still conclude, as Hala Amin does, that the forging of a friendship that teaches tolerance, respect, and loyalty to someone who remains fundamentally different from oneself is politically significant (193).

This friendship, which thrives in spite of the state's efforts to turn the two cellmates against each other, is one of the most subversive elements of the novel (Amin 195). This relationship of mutual care and respect causes each man to expand his notion of what constitute matters of concern: which kinds of subjects, relationships, and discourses merit serious attention and dutiful care. In this regard, it serves as an ethical model for the reader. As I go on to show, however, this transformation in the characters is brought about only partially through what is said and largely through the interaction between bodies, begging the question of how a literary text can mediate and engender embodied acts of care.

BETWEEN CAGED BODIES: CARE AND BIOPOLITICS

As Michel Foucault emphasizes, biopower – in which political subjectivity is produced through the control and discipline of the body – is nowhere more blatantly on display than in the modern prison (303-05). Though disciplinary power is generally effective owing to the invisible ways it acts on society (Foucault 187), the regulation of the body – when and how it can rest, exercise, eat, and receive medical care and punishment – is laid bare in the prison. The accentuated vulnerability of the incarcerated body to manipulation is underscored in Molina's version of the film *Cat People,* which foregrounds the figures of caged animals, inviting analogies with the prisoners' situation. For example, Molina paints a portrait of the content, well-cared-for birds in the pet store: "hay pájaros de todo tipo, volando alegres de un trapecio a otro, o hamacándose, o picoteando hojitas de lechuga, o alpiste, o tomando a sorbos el agüita fresca, recién cambiada" (Puig 14). The mention of the freshly changed water draws Valentín out of Molina's narration and reminds him of their own need for fresh water:

–Perdoná... ¿hay agua en la garrafa?
–Sí, la llené yo cuando me abrieron para ir al baño.
–Ah, está bien entonces.
–¿Querés un poco?, está linda, fresquita.
–No, así mañana no hay problema con el mate. Seguí. (14)

While Molina cheerfully plays the role of the provider, eager to anticipate and fulfill the needs of his cellmate, Valentín's sober pragmatism serves as a reminder that the two prisoners live in conditions in which their access to basic necessities like clean water is controlled by the state. Molina will go to great lengths to make this situation tolerable by distracting Valentín with his film narrations and caring for Valentín's bodily needs, providing him

with food when he is hungry and blankets when he is cold, and helping him bathe when he is sick.

The fact that Molina occupies both the roles of prisoner and caretaker – caged body and its keeper – becomes significant when we learn, halfway through the novel, that he has made a deal with the state: he has agreed to extract information from Valentín in exchange for the promise of an early release. Molina does not keep his word to the prison director and, in fact, repeatedly urges Valentín not to tell him anything about his comrades, insisting that he, too, could be tortured. Nevertheless, he plays the role of double-agent until his death, on the one hand, manipulating the prison director in order to extract ever greater promises and privileges and, on the other hand, piggy-backing off of the state's bodily and psychological manipulations of Valentín (they poison his food and threaten to move him to a new cell), in order to gain increasingly intimate access to the taciturn and guarded man he has come to love. Molina's manipulative tactics to win Valentín's trust may begin as a way of securing his own early release from prison, but they quickly become indistinguishable from those of courtship. As Francine Masiello has noted, it becomes difficult to differentiate between technologies of pleasure (means of seduction) and technologies of surveillance (means of extracting information) ("Fuera" 576). Bodily care is central to both.

Molina reveals his understanding of how the caged body can be plied and pacified in the very first scene of the novel, when he describes the panther at the zoo in *Cat People*. When Valentín, always concerned with verisimilitude, suggests that the panther would be able to smell Irena before he sees her, Molina explains the panther's inability to smell the outside world by claiming that the zookeeper places the meat next to the bars of the cage specifically for this purpose: "No, porque en la jaula tiene un enorme pedazo de carne, es lo único que se puede oler. El guardián le pone la carne cerca a las rejas y no puede entrar ningún olor de afuera, a propósito para que la pantera no se alborote" (Puig 9). This mechanism of control does not appear in the film and thus represents one of Molina's original contributions to the story. Molina's ease in coming up with this explanation belies how profoundly he understands the power of food as a means of coercion and control. We should remember he is complicit in the prison director's plan to poison Valentín's food in an effort to make him talk in his weakened state. Molina is also well aware of the seductive power of food: he receives care packages of anything he wants in exchange for his cooperation with the state, and he, in turn, shares this food with Valentín as a means of winning his trust and affection.

Though it is tempting to claim that Molina co-opts the state's mechanisms of biopolitical control in order to transcend them and establish a humane relationship with Valentín, his imbrication in and complicity with the state's coercive practices necessarily contaminates his and Valentín's relationship. It is for this reason that I find the ambivalence of care provides the most useful model for understanding the humanity of their relationship. Beyond being an ethos and an affect, care can also be transaction, a service rendered. It is thus hard to fully separate from the economic forces (namely the coercive power of debt) at play in the novel, even as it exceeds and disrupts their logic. Masiello has traced the way that identity is implicated in commerce throughout Puig's work and argues that in *El beso*, non-normative identities and the multiplication and fluidity of identity more broadly challenge the logic of the market and the state ("Fuera" 575). Giorgi's celebration of deterritorialized corporality in the novel leads to similarly hopeful conclusions.[9] In both readings, the subversion of normative economies and identities succeeds in creating a space outside of or beyond oppression.

Direct support for such readings can be found in a much-cited speech in which Valentín argues that, ironic as it might seem, the prison cell offers its inhabitants a space to forge an ethos free from injustice, abuse, and prejudice because of the very state of exception it represents:

> No sé si me entendés... pero aquí estamos los dos solos, y nuestra relación, ¿cómo podría decirte?, la podemos moldear como queremos, nuestra relación no está presionada por nadie... Es como si estuviéramos en una isla desierta. Una isla en la que tal vez estemos solos años. Porque, sí, fuera de la celda están nuestros opresores, pero adentro no. Aquí nadie oprime a nadie. (Puig 206)

Without discounting the emotional force of this moment, the radical promise it holds out, or the power of resistance many readers have attributed to Molina and Valentín's relationship, I contend in what follows that we need to contextualize Valentín's words rather than taking them as a direct expression of the novel's worldview. As numerous critics have pointed out, the multiple layers of discourse present in the novel – dialogue between the characters, academic footnotes, film plots, police reports and transcripts, etc. – serve as a constant and sometimes unwelcome reminder not to lose ourselves in any one of them. Most importantly for our reading of Valentín's speech, we must bear in mind that he gives it while being coerced by food poisoning, and that Molina is at least partially complicit in this indirect and slow-acting mechanism of torture. Once we remember how this chapter (11) began – with Molina sitting in the prison director's office

discussing how to make Valentín talk – it is apparent that, far from being a desert island like the one Valentín dreams in the last chapter, the space the two men inhabit is still very much governed by the state's technologies of biopower.

I want to be clear that I am not advocating a paranoid reading wherein the reader's ability to see through the ruses that blind the characters make it impossible to take anything they say at face value. On the contrary, I believe we need to take the sentiments expressed by Valentín seriously. We need to treat the radical vision he holds forth with care – both in the sense of emotional investment and commitment to protect and nurture – even as we question the possibility of transcending or escaping the logic of the state and the market. Rather than carving out a utopian space *outside of* relations of power, oppression, and economic exchange, I argue *El beso* introduces an ethos of care that is situated rather than transcendent, contaminated rather than pure, embodied rather than abstract, and transactional rather than disinterested. In spite of all of the ways such an ethos might seem compromised, it succeeds in suspending social mechanisms of exclusion and othering. Otherwise put, in the economy of care that prevails in Puig's novel, Valentín's epiphany, in which he realizes his relationship with Molina need not be dictated by the machismo and homophobia of the outside world, is no less sincere for being coerced.

In broad terms, the much-celebrated transformation in Molina and Valentín's relationship is catalyzed by each man's sense of owing the other. Molina's kindness towards Valentín can be at least partially explained as a way of making up for his dishonesty and betrayal, and Valentín's kindness towards Molina can be at least partially explained as a way of making up for his initial callousness towards and homophobically-tinged ridicule of a man who goes on to treat him better than he feels he deserves. I want to propose, though, that reading the development of this relationship as a series of repayments does not undermine its ethical nature. In the economy of care established in the prison cell, each man fulfills the needs and desires of the other. Molina nurses Valentín through his illness, feeds him, and entertains him, and Valentín offers Molina the emotional and physical intimacy of which the latter had been starved long before his incarceration. In the end, whether out of guilt, indebtedness, or unadulterated affection, both men seem intent on outdoing one another's generosity. Valentín freely gives the kiss that Molina asks for, and Molina voluntarily agrees to deliver the message to Valentín's comrades. Though the fundamentally economic nature of this exchange and its overlap with the state's biopolitical mechanisms of control complicate our ability to read this relationship as simply an expression of altruism, compassion, and love, neither these

factors nor the unknowable "true" motivations of each man undercut the value of the care bestowed.

In fact, I want to suggest that the most triumphantly humane moments in Valentín and Molina's relationship come about not in spite of but as a result of embracing this mutual obligation and vulnerability. For example, Valentín's much-cited musings on the utopian nature of the space the two men have created within the prison cell both emerge from and give way to a conversation about indebtedness. When he reluctantly accepts the food Molina offers to share with him, he explains he has realized that to refuse to be indebted is its own form of parsimony: "El que no sabe recibir... es un mezquino. Es porque tampoco le gusta dar nada" (Puig 205). Molina, who likely has his own unprofessed motivations for being generous with Valentín (guilt and/or the desire to further ingratiate himself), responds simply, "¿Te parece?". Valentín continues, "Sí, lo estuve pensando, y es eso. Si me ponía nervioso que vos fueras... generoso, conmigo... es porque no me quería ver obligado a ser igual yo con vos" (205). It is this conversation that leads, only a few lines later, to Valentín's metaphor of the desert island, suggesting that accepting the compromised position of being indebted to Molina is integral to Valentín's ethical awakening in this scene. In further support of this reading, the novel ends with Valentín's morphine-induced dream of being marooned on an island where he encounters an avatar of Molina in the form of the Spider Woman. This fantastic figure is at once predatory (she traps him in her web), seductive (she caresses him), and nurturing (she feeds him all of the delicacies Molina used to share with him). In embracing this relationship in his fantasy, Valentín recapitulates the earlier moment when he willingly, graciously submitted to the economy of indebtedness that leaves him vulnerable to Molina's manipulation.

The question remains, though, as to what degree the utopian tenor many readers identify in the novel remains compromised by Molina's never disclosed (to Valentín) relationship with the state.[10] Immediately after his pronouncement that "Aquí nadie oprime a nadie," Valentín returns to the troubling question of emotional indebtedness: "Lo único que hay, de perturbador, para mi mente... cansada, o condicionada o deformada... es que alguien me quiere tratar bien, sin pedir nada a cambio" (Puig 206). Molina responds, "Bueno eso no sé," but when pressed to explain himself, he stops short of a full confession and admits only that he has the ulterior motive of trying to win Valentín's friendship and "cariño" (206). Although Molina isn't telling the full truth, he isn't lying either. While his words may equivocate, his actions encourage us to take his expression of care – in this case affection – at face value.

ACTIONS SPEAK TRUER THAN WORDS

Before we impugn Molina for treachery based on the information he withholds from Valentín, we would do well to remember that under the biopolitical regime Puig depicts, where the prisoners are not sovereign political subjects and where contracts are meaningless because nobody's word is any good, speaking the truth loses its value as a measure of moral righteousness. In fact, the equation of truthful speech with moral fiber and human worth only serves the state. When trying to convince Molina to inform on Valentín, the prison director has to coax Molina to respond to questioning with anything more than the word "nada" by reminding him that, unlike his cellmate, he (Molina) is human (Puig 247). The implication, of course, is that being talkative, honest, and forthcoming is what people worthy of political citizenship and humane treatment do. Molina craftily appropriates this logic while continuing to withhold the secrets Valentín has confided in him. He insists on the latter's reticence and mistrust even after they have become intimate: "De veras, Arregui es como una tumba. Es un tipo cerrado, y con una desconfianza total, qué sé yo, es imposible, es... no es humano" (251).

The assumption that it is always more human (and by extension more political, more ethical) to speak than to remain silent does not hold up in the cases of coercion and torture, when silence is an act of defiance and often of self-sacrifice. As Julia Cuervo Hewitt has argued, in Latin American literature of the post-Boom (dictatorship) era, silence often represents "[r]esistencia, rebelión contra la prisión de un lenguaje gastado, violado y violador" (65). Puig seems to suggest that when language has been weaponized by the state, when state surveillance of written and verbal exchanges is a given (Valentín reminds Molina that all of his letters pass through state hands and appears to warn him that his phone line will be tapped when he is released), the value of words no longer lies in their factual truthfulness. On the contrary, it is their affective capacity – to bestow affection and care, to distract, delight, and entertain – that is most prized in the novel.

Though Molina's film narrations and Valentín's pronouncements about the cell as zone free from oppression both play important roles in drawing the prisoners together into a relationship of mutual care, I would argue that the ethical crux of this relationship lies at least as much in interactions between bodies as in verbal exchanges. The most intimate moments between Molina and Valentín, such as when they kiss or make love, are marked only by ellipses or inarticulate sounds in the dialogue.

The first moment of intimate physical contact between them occurs in Chapter Six (Puig 123-24) and is marked as much by pseudo-maternal care

as by sexuality. This moment of tender bodily care has gone relatively unremarked,[11] but in it I believe we can locate the foundation of the ethos that will come to govern the relationship between Molina and Valentín. Importantly, this pivotal moment in which the prisoners first touch each other and in which Valentín first lets down his guard comes as a direct result of the state's biopolitical methods of coercion. It is when Valentín is suffering the effects of food poisoning that the prisoners first experience the tenderness and vulnerability that will come to characterize their transformed relationship. In this exchange, which I quote at length, Valentín speaks first:

–Ay... ay... perdoname... ay... qué he hecho ...
–No, con la sábana no te limpies, esperá...
–No, dejá, tu camisa no...
–Sí, tomá, limpiate, que la sábana la necesitás para que no te enfríes.
–Pero es tu muda, te quedás sin camisa para cambiarte...
–Dale, esperá, levantate, así no pasa, así, con cuidado, esperá, que no pase a la sábana.
–¿No pasó a la sábana?
–No, lo sujetó el calzoncillo. Dale, vamos, sacátelo.
–Qué vergüenza me da...
–Ahí está, despacito, con cuidado... perfecto Ahora lo más grueso, limpiate con la camisa.
–Qué vergüenza.
–No decías vos que hay que ser hombre... ¿qué es eso de tener vergüenza?
–Envolvé bien... el calzoncillo, para que no eche olor.
–No te preocupes, que yo sé hacer las cosas. Ves, así, bien envuelto todo en la camisa, que es más fácil de lavar que la sábana. Tomá más papel.
–No, del tuyo no, no te va a quedar para vos.
–El tuyo se terminó, vamos, no hinches...
–Gracias... (123-24)

A cynical reader might see Molina's dedication as a caregiver as a means of ingratiating himself with Valentín in order to extract information from him and/or seduce him. Yet such cold calculation is hard to square with the way Puig repeatedly grounds the scene in the material realm, namely in the challenge of cleaning and containing excrement with the limited resources at the two men's disposal in their prison cell.

The combination of selflessness, pragmatism, and tenderness with which Molina responds evokes maternal care. This connection becomes even more pronounced in the following chapter when Molina bathes Valentín with a damp corner of the sheet, an experience that recalls for

Valentín the time he washed the infant son of one of his comrades (Puig 146). As María Moreno suggests, Molina's willingness to overcome his disgust may also be an expression of anal eroticism. But again, as with any expression of care, deep motivations can be hard to isolate and do not ultimately change the value of the care bestowed. Whether motivated by the urge to protect and nurture Valentín or by desire, Molina's care, in the sense of material and affective practice, is irrefutable in this scene, as is Valentín's vulnerability.

It is for this reason that this moment, as much as or more so than any other in the novel, epitomizes the ethical in the Levinasian sense of the compulsion to respond to the need and the vulnerability of the other. Levinas describes this vulnerability as nudity, "a stripping with no cultural ornament," and the ethical as the ability to respond to the other in this state of absolute and abject alterity (*Humanism* 32). The scene discussed above, much like the later love-making scene, achieves its sense of intimacy by showing the characters divested of their socially constructed identities. Valentín's nudity is both literal and figurative, as he reluctantly strips himself of his clothes and his pride. In his response, Molina, too, undergoes a form of denuding that anticipates his later sense of being freed from his own identity when the two men make love.[12] He becomes first and foremost a capable and uninhibited caretaker. Here, in sum, we are not faced with a revolutionary and a fairy, but, rather, with one body in need of care and another willing and able to provide it. Rather than degrading or dehumanizing the prisoners (reducing them to bare life), this laying bare forges a bond of mutual care that is both ethical and extremely intimate.

READING SILENT ACTS OF TOUCH

It is because the ethical substance of this relationship is rooted as much in touch as in speech that it remains elusive to the state's mechanisms of surveillance and, to a certain extent, to the reader's hermeneutical practices. The silent encounter between bodies is precisely what is not captured by the dialogue, which has been described as resembling the transcription of a surveillance tape (Cabrera 132). The ellipses and blank lines that punctuate this dialogue are simultaneously extremely evocative for the reader immersed in the interpersonal drama between Molina and Valentín and fundamentally indeterminate. This indeterminacy reflects what Puig de la Bellacasa describes as the intrinsic ambivalence shared by care and touch: neither one is immanently harmless (107). There is a disconcerting proximity between healing and wounding, between pleasure and pain, between sensuality and vulnerability. This is not to say that there is no difference between the amorous touch of a lover, the healing touch of a

nurse, and the violent touch of a torturer, but what these heterogeneous haptic experiences have in common is that they all defy or exceed linguistic capture and may even suspend signification.

Given the historical context of the novel and its many allusions to violence and torture, the specter of language-obliterating pain is easily conjured by moments of wordless touch. As Elaine Scarry has argued, not only is pain hard to describe in words, but its immediacy also actively destroys signifying practices (19-20). Pain and torture do rob language of its ability to produce meaning in *El beso*, as in the scenes where Valentín is delirious with pain and becomes incoherent. Nevertheless, the hiatus of signification remains indeterminate. Pleasure and intimacy also flee from language and seek out silence. Because signifying practices are continuous with coercion, othering, and surveillance in this world, silent corporality is not simply a state to which the prisoners are reduced; it is also a respite from oppression and a harbor for feelings of peace and fulfillment.

Puig plays with the indeterminacy of silence as both a symptom of bare life and a sanctuary from it, an expression of victimhood and of resistance, an opening towards the erotic as well as the political. For example, the way Valentín expresses his preference for silence during lovemaking evokes the deliberate silence of someone resisting torture. When Molina asks him how he feels making love to a man, Valentín responds, "No sé... no me preguntes... porque no sé nada" (Puig 221). There is a similar slippage between protective silence and erotic silence in Valentín's final dream, in which an imagined conversation with his ex-girlfriend Marta gives way to the fantasy of encountering the Spider Woman on a desert island. Valentín is initially afraid to speak, for fear their conversation is being monitored: "¿no nos oye nadie?... ¿y no habrá alguien escuchando, alguien esperando que delate a mis compañeros?" (282). This fearful silence transforms into the silence of intimacy once Valentín encounters "la isleña" who saves him from drowning: "se lleva un dedo a los labios en señal de que no le hable" (283). Their erotic encounter takes place entirely through touch, and during it Valentín repeats words he spoke to Molina the first time they made love: "callada es mejor" (284).

The heterogeneous kinds of silences that blur together in Puig's world share a protective function. Unlike reticence under torture, erotic silence does not aim to protect information but instead peace, intimacy, and alterity. It is Valentín, the more taciturn of the two, who teaches Molina to appreciate the silence of fulfillment, urging him, "No hables... ni pienses... Si te sentís bien, no pienses en nada, Molina. Cualquier cosa que pienses te va a aguar la fiesta" (Puig 224). In the following scene, Molina suggests a day of silence:

Que no hablemos... de nada, que no discutamos nada, hoy. Es por hoy solo que te lo pido... Porque me siento... que estoy... bien, estoy... muy... bien, y no quiero que nada me quite esa sensación. (224)

The silence of lack and privation that was once an unbearable symptom of bare life which Molina felt the need to fill with constant speech, has metamorphosized into a pregnant and fulfilling silence that must be protected.

This contented silence evokes Walter Benjamin's notion of "the saved night," which Agamben cites as a counterpoint to the silence of privation in bare life (Agamben, *The Open* 81-82; Benjamin 389). Benjamin locates in sexual fulfillment a form of discovery that defies language and a knowledge that preserves unfathomability: "to be sure, in their fulfillment the lovers learn something of each other that they should not have known – they have lost their mystery – and yet have not become any less impenetrable" (Agamben, *The Open* 87). In the context of Puig's novel, silence and touch succeed in protecting feelings of intimacy and contentment because they elude linguistic decoding and visual unveiling. In the face of the epistemological violence that readers like Giorgi see *El beso* as defying, silent touch offers an alternative form of knowledge that does not depend upon disclosure, classification, or domination. As Puig de la Bellacasa argues, touch confronts us with the presence as well as the unknowability of the other: touch combines "the attraction of closeness" with the "awareness of alterity" (115). Touch is, in sum, a way of knowing whose medium does not separate subject from object but instead troubles this very possibility and whose message does not lend itself to capture by explanation and surveillance. In *El beso*, the silences in the dialogue and the haptic communication they contain is what is missing from the chapters written as police reports and what the analytical footnotes cannot grab hold of. If these silent acts of touch remain legible to the reader, it is because she has been drawn into the relationship between the characters. In other words, it is affective proximity rather than critical distance that allows us to read the consummation of a love story or a tearful goodbye into the ellipses on the page.

THE ETHICS OF READING WITH CARE

As I have already suggested, it is next to impossible to know with certainty what motivates Molina's outward expressions of care towards Valentín. Most readers, myself included, are disinclined to question the authenticity of Molina's affection for and goodwill towards his cellmate for the simple

reason that the tale Puig weaves – of mutual compassion and tenderness emerging from the bowels (all too literally) of the state's mechanisms of oppression – is so compelling. In other words, it is extremely tempting to read *El beso* the way Molina "reads" his beloved Hollywood movies, which is to say reparatively rather than suspiciously, from a position of intimate proximity and affective investment rather than from a critical distance. My aim is decidedly not to debunk such readings as naïve, although I do believe they entail a willful act of blindness, or at least a shift in perspective. Just as Molina is not naïve when he overlooks the politics of his film heroines (he does so out of choice rather than ignorance) and as Valentín is not naïve when he submits to being indebted to Molina (he does so knowing and accepting that it will make him vulnerable), the reader who suspends hermeneutical practices and accepts acts of care at face value is not being naïve.[13] In allowing herself to be seduced in this way, she adopts an ethical stance: that caring for this world is more important than stripping it of its illusions. These are, of course, lessons that the reader has learned from the characters, who have suspended the need to analyze their relationship, embraced silence and unknowability, and accepted and reciprocated acts of care.

If we accept that humane behavior in the biopolitical era is determined within a necessarily transactional yet unevenly reciprocal economy of care, one that is mediated as much by touch as by language, then we must question our ability to judge Puig's characters by liberal humanist notions of morality and political commitment. We are also called to reflect critically on what it means for us, as readers drawn in by the story but unable to provide bodily care or share in bodily vulnerability, to be ensnared in this web of care. It would seem obvious that the way we care about these characters and their world is fundamentally different from how they care for one another. We can empathize with them, and in our reading we can embrace the ethos of staying with discomfort and undecidability, but we are barred from participation in the material practice of care that draws them together and from the intimacy of the bodily encounters we can only imagine in Puig's silences.

Yet, the important condition we share with Molina and Valentín is being called to listen and respond to the voice of the other. As Kerr points out, we, too, are cast in a dialogue of sorts: "The talk between the two prisoners is not unlike the 'talk' between author and reader, that is, the textual dialogue that runs throughout the novel's body as well as under it, at its feet" (186). In fact, Kerr draws our attention to the final chapter, after Molina's death, when Valentín's speech takes the form of an interior monologue that nevertheless incorporates elements of dialogue, as if imitating the earlier

conversations between the two men (Kerr 212). As Valentín, brutally tortured and under the effects of morphine, nears his own death, he imagines a series of interlocutors: Marta (his girlfriend), *la isleña*, and the Spider Woman, all caring women directly or indirectly evocative of Molina. The structural shift from dialogue to interior monologue (which has occurred in a few earlier moments, too) interpellates the reader as Valentín's interlocutor. We may not be able to provide Valentín with bodily care, the way Molina has and the way la *isleña* does, but the structural similarity between the reader and these other caregivers suggests that we may nevertheless be tasked with providing an intimate and tender act of care at the end of Valentín's life: that of staying with him, hearing his voice, and attending to its rhythms and silences. This, too, one might claim, is a form of embodied ethical engagement.

Masiello argues in *El cuerpo de la voz* that literature becomes "un acto físico" (38) when we consider that the reading experience corporally impacts us owing not to the message conveyed by the words but rather to their sound (37). According to Masiello, poetry in particular addresses itself to the reader through its rhythm, tempo, and voice, which resonate in the reader's body. It is the silences, caesuras, and friction between words, rather than their semiotic content, that allow us to feel the materiality of the poem with our bodies. Masiello thus reads poetry as a form of intersubjective engagement that is by nature ethical: "Aquí, la voz poética nos enseña a escuchar; se convierte en un recurso ético para asistirnos en la tarea de pensar nuestra relación con un tiempo y un lugar ... Nos mantiene en la posición ética que es capaz de registrar los sonidos de los otros" (*Cuerpo* 15). The ability for literary voices to involve the body in this way is not limited to poetry. On the contrary, as Marília Librandi contends in *Writing by Ear*, we might consider both the authors and the readers of what she calls "aural novels" listeners who use their own voices and bodies to register the voice of another.[14] There is an inherent ethical dimension to this act of listening, as the "listening body" serves as a "resonant chamber" in which the voices of marginalized subjects echo and are amplified (Librandi 14). Listening, as Jean- Luc Nancy reminds us, is always a matter of actively attending to the back-and-and-forth transitivity between the self and the other (3-5). It is in this sense, too, that Dolar sees the voice as a potential "exposure to the Other," for the voice is always addressed to the other and is always received as a reverberation of the other (80).

A number of readers have located the ethics of Puig's novels in the act of listening. Aira, for instance, claims that Puig's reader is tasked not with deciphering a story but, rather, with heeding a language, a style, a voice (1). Similarly, Alberto Giordano speaks of "una escucha literaria," which he

describes as an ethical gesture: listening with intimacy and fascination to a voice that, rather than speaking *about* alterity and marginality, speaks *from* alterity and marginality (105). This alterity is registered in large part in the voice itself, whose rhythms, cadence, and parlance always exceed its message. Such readings bring us back to Nancy's claim that it is the timbre of the voice, that which exceeds signification and is felt in the body, that allows experiences often dubbed incommunicable to be shared (41).

If Levinas's critique of Western metaphysics is that it demands that alterity be reduced to the same, attending to voice (rather than its message) may open the possibility of communing with the other while allowing his fundamental alterity to remain intact. For Levinas, the shift from content to expression corresponds to a shift from representing the other to co-presencing with the other.[15] I am interested in the possibility that the characters in *El beso* model for the reader how the act of listening might engender such a co-presencing. Alan Pauls has suggested that a large part of the intimacy between Molina and Valentín has to do with sharing time and duration, weaving together "una copresencia" that is almost "rítmica, musical" (14). In the act of listening, the reader, too, shares in this rhythm, space, and time (think, for example, of the synchronicity with the characters achieved by reading/"listening to" the unabridged film narrations for pages on end). This effect resembles the co-presence that Librandi argues writer and reader achieve through the act of listening, which implies being in the same place at the same time in order to hear the voice that reverberates in the textual object (60). As Link suggests, such an act of listening may be the closest the reader can come to sharing the cell with Molina and Valentín and expressing solidarity in the form of living with. Might it also be her point of entry into the embodied practice of care fundamental to the ethics elaborated in *El beso*?

Yet, even if one accepts that listening to, empathizing with, and sharing temporal duration and matters of concern with another constitute care and ethical engagement, one could still argue that none of this is enough. The tragic ending of the novel makes clear that care alone will not save anyone. When I teach this novel, my students report feeling a combination of confusion, dissatisfaction, and devastation upon reaching the end. This has to do in part with the way the deaths of the characters are narrated (or, rather, how they are *not* narrated). Molina's death is mediated by the cold, clinical tone of the police report: "De los heridos Molina expiró antes de que la patrulla pudiera aplicarle primeros auxilios" (Puig 279). As Jonathan A. Allan has argued, the way that this death is unceremoniously inserted in the report, which immediately moves on, does not allow the reader time to grieve (82). Valentín's death is never directly narrated and only implied by

the falling silent of his interior monologue. Although this arguably places us in the supremely intimate position of attending his death, the ambiguity deprives us of closure. Once again, there is not time and space to mourn the death of protagonists whom we have been following intimately. Neither our care for Molina and Valentín and their worldviews nor their care for one another has been enough to protect them, or even to grant them proper deaths.

This sense of insufficiency is important to the political stance of the novel. Though the affective and ethical turns in literary studies are often accused of substituting private concerns for political concerns, lingering on the ethos of care in *El beso* emphatically does not permit the reader to celebrate her own affective reading practice as a triumphant form of political engagement. On the contrary, the ending of the novel in particular underscores the painful insufficiency of this mode of care. Neither the ethos of care practiced by the reader nor the embodied practices and vulnerable exchanges of the characters prove capable of averting the tragic ending that lies in store for those who defy the totalitarian state.

At the same time, following the logic of Giorgi's argument – that the politics of the novel lie in making the private (sexuality) political – I find that one of Puig's greatest interventions in *El beso* is making care political. As we have seen, care cannot be divorced from material work, but it also encompasses the affective attachment that the protagonists have for each other, that Molina has for his film characters, and that we as readers develop for Molina and Valentín. It extends to listening for the alterity of the voice of the other and practicing an ethos of staying with, valuing, and protecting the ambiguity and undecidability of ways of knowing and ways of relating that defy linguistic capture and moral categories. These forms of care are political because they expand our spheres of concern and ethical responsibility. Care is what allows us to insist on the personhood of others who have been denied political citizenship or who find themselves in dehumanizing conditions. To give up these material, affective, and ethical practices would mean capitulating to the logic of the state. Puig thus plants the ethos of care as an insufficient yet still indispensable response to the biopolitical age.

University of Pennsylvania

NOTES

1 Puig originally intended to set the novel in 1971 and 1972, during the dictatorship of General Alejandro Lanusse, but in 1975, late in the production of the novel, he changed the dates so that the action would take place during presidency of Isabel Martínez de Perón (Goldchluk 71-72). In Graciela Goldchluk's analysis, the decision to change the historical setting combined with the grim ending of the novel underscores the direness of the political situation in Argentina from Puig's perspective. Whereas the author had originally modeled Valentín on Peronist resistance fighters imprisoned during Perón's exile, who might hope to be liberated upon the latter's return, there is no such hope in the final version of the novel, where Peronist *guerrilleros* continue to be persecuted by the government put in place by Perón (Goldchluk 72).

2 Jean-Luc Nancy distinguishes voice from language, describing voice as: "sounds from a human throat without being language, which emerges from an animal gullet or from any kind of instrument, even from the wind in the branches: the rustling toward which we strain or lend an ear" (22). He also emphasizes that in order to be heard, the voice must resonate in the body of the listener.

3 Giorgi answers this question in the affirmative, arguing that the breakdown of Cartesian divides such as animal/human and nature/culture erodes the basis of exclusions and encourages us to think of an unstable border or a zone of becoming between such binary terms (13).

4 Link sees Puig's novels as tackling the ethical work of imagining and analyzing "formas de vivir juntos," which is the subject matter of Barthes' *How to Live Together*, a reflection on how different modes of sharing time and space might create community while still preserving distance, autonomy, and alterity.

5 Juan Poblete makes a similar argument and links these two modes of reading, which he calls "critical" and "pleasure-driven," with elite and popular culture, with the masculine and the feminine respectively (72).

6 For an in-depth analysis of the role of the footnotes in the text, see Balderston.

7 As Manuel Betancourt argues, Puig's engagement with campy aesthetics is not purely ironic; it is also earnest and thus prompts us to engage critically with sentimentality without distancing ourselves from it entirely (80).

8 Link sees this rejection of parody and making fun (*la burla*) of the characters as a radical ethical decision to "compartir con ellos el universo que ellos habitan." Alan Pauls has described *El beso* as characterized by "[una] política de la cercanía absoluta," a mode of intimacy rather than irony (13). Alberto Giordano argues that Puig's ideal reader approaches the "bad taste" of his characters with "[una] íntima extrañeza," an intimate approximation that does

not amount to full identification but, rather, is the equivalent of a wink and a complicit smile (96).

9 It should be noted that Giorgi also acknowledges the ambivalence of corporality in Puig: the formlessness of the body can be liberating and subversive, but it can also be the result of abuse and torture, as is the case with Valentín's disfigured body at the end of the novel (253).

10 The utopia towards which the novel gestures is often understood as freedom from binary thinking, rigid subject positions, and the othering discourses these entail. In addition to the readings of Masiello and Giorgi already cited, see Elías Miguel Muñoz's reading of the novel as gesturing towards an ideal world of polymorphous sexuality (18) and Kimberly Chabot Davis's reading of it as "invested in the utopian possibilities of coalition politics" by challenging essentialist notions of identity (4).

11 One notable exception is María Moreno's reading of this moment, rather than the final kiss, as "el verdadero acto de amor."

12 See Masiello ("Fuera") and Cabrera for readings of the intimacy produced through silences in this later scene.

13 Alan Pauls, in contrast, does read Molina as naïve, but posits naïveté as a radical political and ethical position, a myopic commitment to the present and to "la cercanía absoluta" that is a precondition for intimacy (13).

14 Librandi focuses on the novels of Clarice Lispector and, more broadly, on literature's capacity to capture the voices of non-literate subjects, but the ample scholarship on voice, orality, and the use of the tape-recorder in Puig's work (See Giordano, Pauls, McEnaney) makes a compelling case for considering his novels aural as well. For example, Tom McEnaney writes that Puig's characters are themselves listeners whose voices imitate other voices, primarily those that circulate in pop culture, over the airwaves of radio: tango and bolero singers, radionovela characters, etc. (177). In *El beso*, the primary engagement is with film, but we might say that Molina, too, is a skillful listener to and imitator of the voices of his characters. This sense of the characters' and writer's voice as constituted by that which it aurally receives is very much in keeping with Librandi's conception of the aural novel.

15 Levinas writes that it is owing to the "expressive function of language" that, rather than suppressing the other and turning him into an object of representation, "language institutes a relation irreducible to the subject-object relation: the *revelation* of the other" (*Totality* 73). This is in part because "[l]anguage presupposes interlocutors, a plurality" who enter into a fundamentally ethical exchange (73). For Levinas, spoken language is thus never solipsistic, for it is uttered in order to forge relationship.

WORKS CITED

AGAMBEN, GIORGIO. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.

—. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004.

AIRA, CESAR. "El sultán." *Revista Paradoxa* 6 (1991): 27-29. Web.

ALLAN, JONATHAN A. "Femininity and Effeminophobia in Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*." *Mosaic* 47.3 (2007): 71-87. Web.

AMIN, HALA. "The Politics of Friendship in Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*." *Alif* 36 (2016): 177-200. Web.

BALDERSTON, DANIEL. "Sexualidad y revolución: en torno a las notas de *El beso de la mujer araña*." *El beso de la mujer araña*. Ed. José Amícola and Jorge Panesi. Paris: Colección Archivos, 2002. 564-73.

BARTHES, ROLAND. *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces.* Trans. Kate Briggs. New York: Columbia UP, 2002.

BENJAMIN, WALTER. "Letter to Florens Christian Rang", December 9, 1923. Trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings,* vol. I, 1913-1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard U P, Belknap Press, 1996. 387-390.

BETANCOURT, MANUEL. "The Hollywood Affair: Manuel Puig and the Queer Movie Fan." *Genre* 49.1 (2016): 79-94. Web.

CABRERA, DELFINA. "La intimidad del registro: Política, voces y escucha en *El beso de la mujer araña*." *Chasqui* 45.1 (2016): 130-46. Web.

CUERVO HEWITT, JULIA. "El texto ausente: Silencios y reticencias de una época en *El beso de la mujer araña* de Manuel Puig." *Discurso: Revista de Estudios Iberoamericanos* 10.2 (1993): 63-72. Web.

DAVIS, KIMBERLY CHABOT. *Postmodern Texts and Emotional Audiences.* West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1997.

DOLAR, MLADEN. *A Voice and Nothing More.* Cambridge: MIT P, 2006.

FOUCAULT, MICHEL. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1977.

GIORDANO, ALBERTO. *Manuel Puig: La conversación infinita*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2001.

GIORGI, GABRIEL. *Formas comunes: Animalidad, cultura, biopolítica. Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia, 2014.*

GOLDCHLUK, GRACIELA. *Intertextualidad y génesis en los textos mexicanos de Manuel Puig: Novelas, guiones, comedias musicales [1974-1978].* Diss. U Nacional de la Plata, 2003. Web.

KERR, LUCILLE. *Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1987.

LATOUR, BRUNO. "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2004): 225-48. Web.

LEVINAS, EMANUEL. *Humanism of the Other*. Trans. Nidra Poller. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2006.

—. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority.* Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duchesne UP, 1969.

LIBRANDI, MARÍLIA. *Writing by Ear: Clarice Lispector and the Aural Novel*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2018.

LINK, DANIEL. "Vivir juntos." *Página 12* 29 May 2009. N. pag. Web.

MASIELLO, FRANCINE. *El cuerpo de la voz (poesía, ética y cultura).* Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2013.

—. "Fuera de lugar: silencios y desidentidades en *El beso de la mujer araña*." *El beso de la mujer araña*. By Manuel Puig. Eds. José Amícola and Jorge Panesi. Paris: Colección Archivos, 2002. 574-88.

MCENANEY, TOM. *Acoustic Properties: Radio, Narrative, and the New Neighborhood of the Americas.* Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2017.

MERLEAU-PONTY, MAURICE. *The Invisible and the Visible*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1968.

MORENO, MARÍA. "Resonancias de allá abajo." *Página 12* 27 December 2013. N. pag. Web.

MUÑOZ, ELÍAS MIGUEL. "El discurso utópico de la sexualidad en *El beso de la mujer araña* de Manuel Puig." *Revista Iberoamericana* 52.135-36 (1986): 361-378. Web.

NANCY, JEAN-LUC. *Listening.* Trans. Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham UP, 2007.

PAULS, ALAN. *Manuel Puig: La traición de Rita Hayworth*. Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1986.

POBLETE, JUAN. "The High Stakes Adventure of Reading (in) *Kiss of the Spider Woman*." *Approaches to Teaching Puig's* Kiss of the Spider Woman. Eds. Daniel Balderston and Francine Masiello. New York: MLA, 2009. 65-76.

PUIG, DE LA BELLACASA, MARÍA. *Matters of Care*. Anne Arbor: U of Minnesota P, 2017.

PUIG, MANUEL. *El beso de la mujer araña.* Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2006.

SCARRY, ELAINE. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985.