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## Going Home: Tununa Mercado's *En estado de memoria*

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Frederick Jameson defines globalization "as an untotalizable totality that intensifies binary relations between its parts—mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which, however, continue to articulate themselves on the model of 'national identities.'"<sup>1</sup> He further clarifies that "globalization is a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings."<sup>2</sup> This somewhat neutral definition, as Jameson succinctly notes, elides very deep ambiguities and even contradictions in the use of the term, which is given very different emphases and valorations depending on how and by whom it is deployed. Theorists of globalization frequently fall into mutually exclusive positions, making the concept subject to what Jameson calls both "baleful" and "joyous" interpretations. Thus, for example, among some thinkers, the much-discussed phenomenon of globalization has been demonized as the latest metamorphosis of a corrupt capitalist system, and for others, it has been celebrated as marking the freedom of both the marketplace and the local actors in the political and economic realms.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond such ideologically charged positions of a phenomenon largely defined with relation to the international economy, Jameson also notes the reinscription of globalization as a philosophical and cultural concept. Interestingly enough, in the more typical analyses of globalization in recent years, the baleful readings tend to attach themselves—if ambiguously and complexly—to questions of the economic realm and the globalized capitalist market, whereas the joyous readings are most typically associated with the elaboration of opportunities for cultural exchange involving both mass and high culture, as well as for opening up new directions in philosophical discourse. Thus, for example, Martín

Hopenhayn asks us to think about the possibilities of a globalization that "could mobilize liberating energies. I am referring to transcultural enrichment, the encounter with the radically-other. . . . More than multicultural respect, transcultural recreation: To come back to us after having passed by the good savage, to put ourselves experientially in perspective, to have our bodies pass through the body of the South, the North, the East."<sup>4</sup> Hopenhayn is in this respect a utopistic visionary, drawing us with him into the seductive, provocative celebration of cultural multiplicity as a new kind of freedom, achieved through international travel and through the near simultaneous exchanges at the speed of electrons in the contemporary communication net.

From where I stand here in the First World, both economic and cultural globalization seem a self-evident fact, with implications ranging from shopping mall construction to university curriculum development. Nevertheless, even if we accept the theory that globalization has inescapably and universally impressed itself upon turn-of-the-century modernity, numerous questions remain. What are the blind spots in globalization theory? How is globalization differently understood in the U.S.-European (or Eurocentric), and Third World(ist) theoretical locations? In a recent paper, Santiago Castro-Gómez comments, for example, that the normative understanding of modernity in Latin America is necessarily different in kind from the Euro-American and that this temporal belatedness reflects a qualitative distinction in theoretical structures of thought about modernity: "By contrast to what happened in Europe, the consolidation of cultural modernity in Latin America does not precede the cinema, radio, and television, but it arose precisely because of them. . . . Modernity in Latin America challenges, then, the theoretical framework generated by 'the project of modernity.'" It is precisely this antinormativist perspective that Castro-Gómez analyzes in his recent work delving into the still relatively unexplored territory of modern Latin America's philosophical difference from, and potential contributions to, the metropolis.<sup>5</sup> There is in this argument a strong claim for a supplementary reading of this Euro-identified theory, one that comes from the South, from the peripheries of modernity. Even further: this southern take on this theory, suggests Castro-Gómez, not only will serve as a supplement to the metropolis but can provide the foundation for a countertheoretical stance that will challenge some of modernity's most basic and assumed premises.

Reading both Castro-Gómez and Hopenhayn together reminds us, too, that the "nosotros" [the "we"] and the "otros" [the "others"] in the latter's commentary are more ambiguous than they might look at first glance. From one point of view, the "us" is the international body of scholars who read and enjoy thinking about questions such as those raised in these fairly abstract, relatively dense, academic articles and books. Both Hopenhayn and Castro-Gómez, in this brief capsule, serve as exemplars of representative projects for Latin American engagement and dialogue with the challenges of thinking globally from outside the Euro-American axis. They are the "others" within the purview of the globalized

theoretical network, the oppositional thinkers who frequently serve to remind metropolitan totalizing thinkers of the local particularities and regional realities that serve as an offset as they undergird theoretical analyses. The questions they pose are essential ones; furthermore, the nuanced engagement with thinkers such as these men reminds us of a crucial blind spot in much First World theorizing and provides a resource for deeper and more powerful thinking.

From another perspective, people like Hopenhayn and Castro-Gómez—along with other scholars such as Ernesto Laclau, Enrique Dussel, Gayatri Spivak, or Homi Bhabha, to name just a few—represent courtesy members of the First World “us,” always marked by (and often celebrated for) a putative or real aura of otherness, that in turn and paradoxically makes them “other” to the intellectual institutions of their home countries as well as, obviously, “other” to the subalternized citizens inhabiting those local realities. Still further, in this playing off the global “us” versus the local “other,” there are many, many others who inexplicably remain on (or even imperceptibly off) the margins of theory, who perhaps cannot globalize, even if they want to, because their experience does not fit conventions that allow for the first opening into a dialogue. Tendentiously, I would say that, by and large, this is women’s case.

If, following Jameson, we agree that at the heart of discussions about globalization is the theorization of a totality, even if an untotizable one, then a serious gap arises with respect to at least 50 percent of the human race who remain almost entirely absent except for passing references in the vast body of theoretical work associated with thinking through the implications of globalization in contemporary society. This is what Kaplan and Grewal, following Vivek Dhareshwar, call the predominant “male agon” in the international cultural debate, a largely unexamined ethos that, they theorize, may derive at least partially from the Marxist heritage of many prominent thinkers and from the well-known limitations of Marxism with respect to gender-conscious analysis.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the obligatory feminist article in any anthology on the topic, the extensive mainstream bibliography on globalization rarely engages rigorously with gender-conscious research and tends instead to vaguely acknowledge the importance of international feminism without doing close readings of, or entering into dialogue with, these works. Raquel Olea says it well:

Women have been the subjects neither of the project of modernity nor of the crisis of this project; historically absent from the pacts of discursive, social, and political power, our recent incursion into the public sphere still situates us on the margin, outside of the spaces valorized by dominant culture. . . . Feminism comes from “no-where” into spaces where its discursivity does not yet have a history, where it does not yet have the capacity even to negotiate or enter into alliances.<sup>7</sup>

Feminism and, indeed, women in general represent real problems for these theoretical exchanges, and as a result, they tend to be all but ignored as a

complicating variable that somehow seems to be uncomfortably and, indeed, almost self-consciously displaced outside the boundaries of ongoing discussions. As Olea intimates, feminism seems to come from nowhere, and while its location in the public space has by now become technically unavoidable, the possibilities of engaged dialogue remain severely limited. Jean Franco would agree. She writes that “the class privilege of the intelligentsia has always posed a problem for Latin Americans, but in women’s writing it becomes particularly acute since women writers are privileged and marginalized at one and the same time.”<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Amie Parry’s trenchant response to the presentations in the 1994 Duke University Globalization conference is apposite: “One of the ongoing concerns of the conference was the question of feminism and its role in resisting the effects of globalization, a concern that was brought up in various contexts but was rarely itself the subject of prolonged discussion.”<sup>9</sup> Parry articulates a frustration that many academics have felt when participating in conferences and other intellectual exchanges; our colleagues openly and frankly acknowledge the importance of international feminist contributions to their projects, but they rarely go beyond the one-sentence reference to the essential importance of the advances in this theory by transnational feminists (a list of names typically accompanies this reference to feminists). The ubiquity of this throwaway acknowledgement in the glaring absence of any real engagement with feminist theories or women’s texts seems to appear as a way to avoid an intractable problem without pretending that it does not exist.

This problem is, of course, too large to address in a single chapter, and the dearth of reciprocity in theoretical discussions can only be alluded to here. I propose to contribute obliquely to a potential dialogue through a discussion of Argentine’s Tununa Mercado, paying particular attention to her remarkable 1992 text, *En estado de memoria (In a State of Memory)*.<sup>10</sup> Without ever using the word globalization, Mercado addresses a kind of globalized, cosmopolitan experience akin and analogous to that theorized in recent work like that of Jameson, Hopenhayn, and others, and links it to a particularized consciousness and to a style redolent of old-fashioned storytelling. The author describes this book in a 1992 interview as a “conquest of the body of the text—the only thing that could stanch the flow of personal loss, of nation, people, memory.”<sup>11</sup> In this book, ineluctably, the memory of an Argentina that has fueled personal identity during the long years of exile comes into conflict with the lived Argentina of a postexile returning home. This is a book that in some sense rigorously addresses the question asked a few years ago by Néstor García Canclini: “What does it mean to belong, to have an identity, in this end of the century?”<sup>12</sup>

In his perceptive study of this work, Idelber Avelar classes it among a body of “untimely” texts, works that take up the political and personal task of writing in a postdictatorial climate, confronting both “the imperative to mourn” and “the epochal crisis of storytelling and the decline in the transmissibility of

experience."<sup>13</sup> For Avelar, the impossible condition potentiating this work derives from the author's personal need and her intellectual commitment to come to terms with Argentina's recent past, in the recognition that the official strategy for redemocratization on the national level involved "the erasure and forgetting of the experience of the victims" of the Dirty War.<sup>14</sup> How, Avelar asks, do committed writers go about the task of mourning—an active forgetting—and a necessary personal and ideological task, in the face of a national process defined by passive forgetting?<sup>15</sup> At the same time, this work of mourning and remembrance is encumbered by the fact of the author's own absence from Argentina during those critical and terrible years, a period during which an imagined Argentina, constructed piecemeal in a foreign country, served her as the touchstone to ground identity. Globalized despite herself, because of her profession as a committed Argentine intellectual and a writer living in exile, Mercado, thus, returns "home" after long years in France and in Mexico, to a deeply loved and lovingly remembered Argentina that no longer feels comfortable and that is no longer entirely home.

Critics have differed considerably as to the genre of this work, and the slight variations in genre ascription seem to me to be telling in terms of the uses to which this text can/has been put. Jean Franco calls it simply a novel; Avelar refers to it as "highly fragmented and reflexive memoirs,"<sup>16</sup> and as a testimonial novel;<sup>17</sup> Patrick O'Connell talks about it as a novel,<sup>18</sup> as an autobiography in an episodic style, autobiographical fiction,<sup>19</sup> and "personal testimony."<sup>20</sup> In any event, readings of this text, and Mercado's own comments on it, generally reflect an awareness of the close parallels between the first-person narrator of the series of interconnected stories and the events in the author's life. This fundamental slippage among fiction, autobiography, and meditative essay offers readers the first and perhaps most radical message about this text, one we begin to absorb before even beginning to explore the book. In contrast to the comfortable norms and expectations associated with academic writing in general, this text's *sui generis* combination of fictional self-writing, on the one hand, and meditative essay, on the other, keeps us off balance and hints at the contradictions associated with a double-edged process when "others" deploy their knowledge in and against the structures associated with "us."

Strategically, while retaining its fundamental, irrecoverable strangeness, the text also suggests a modality by which a traditionally excluded subject can attempt to represent herself in a way that meets the demands of metropolitan knowledge construction—if only as a kind of inversion of norms associated with European-identified genres: travel writing (here Latin American woman explores the world), autobiography, trauma narrative, and personal essay. I have already noted the tendency in theoretical texts to use the abstract third-person discourse, as well as the fascination with, and almost obligatory allusion to, some ill-defined and underanalyzed other outside the bounds of theoretical discourse. At the same time, an essentialized concept of women and a vague gesture toward

feminism abound in globalization theory, subject to the displacements that are structural to the genre of the theoretical essay. Against this dominant tendency, Olea references a basic untranslatability of the woman's experience in the public space, the relative opacity of an embodied subject that seems to come out of nowhere and does not readily dissolve into existing discursive needs. In Mercado's text, we have the concrete working out of one response to this intermingling of expectations and exclusions with her simulation of witnessing in place of the re-creation of an imagined authentic other's voice. *En estado de memoria* fits neatly into the growing, and now better-recognized, subgenre of the "criolla gender essay" that Mary Louise Pratt succinctly defines with reference to Victoria Ocampo. The preferred form of the male essay, says Ocampo, is the monologue; conversely, Pratt suggests, the criolla gender essay structures itself implicitly or explicitly as a dialogue or conversation with its readers.<sup>21</sup> The Argentine writer, thus, implicitly takes issue with the traditional self-image of analytic thought as single, neutral, and objective, reminding us that the (returning) exile's consciousness is shaped inexorably by dialogue with other people and other cultures, by the class privilege that has allowed the narrator the option to choose exile, and by the overtly feminine voice that recalls the gender privilege attached to specific kinds of discourses.

Jean Franco has dedicated much of her recent work to exploring the expanding cultural repertoires that come with an increasingly intense and frequent juxtaposition, exchange, and displacement of peoples and cultures in a series of studies that have ranged from commentaries on mass culture comic books to analyses of Tununa Mercado's highly complex essays and fictions. She focuses on the profound transformations taking place at all levels of society and argues that in the Latin American context "this process can be described as 'deterritorialization,' although . . . in a sense rather different from that used by Deleuze and Guattari," one that not only takes into account the configurations of advanced capitalism but also recognizes the seductive power of the family and of the home as a "space of refuge and shelter."<sup>22</sup> The premise underlying *En estado de memoria* intersects directly with these concerns, in its unmistakable delineation of a peculiarly Argentine, specifically feminine, working through of the implications of a deterritorialized consciousness with respect to a problematic that is intensely personal, as well as both local and broadly universal, both rooted in a particular national history, and deracinated from the nation.

The problem Mercado sets for herself in this book is deeply hermeneutical, involving talking through a layering of culture on culture and text on text, learning how to think from the perspective of a Latin American woman displaced from her homeland into an alien cultural space (France, and later, Mexico), and then returning home in the aftermath of unthinkable traumatic violence. As Martín-Barbero says in another context, equally applicable to Mercado's problem: "A national memory built on a hereditary vindication explodes, divides, multiplies. It is the other face of the crisis of the national, a complement of the

new lattice that the *global* constitutes: Each region, each locality, each group demands the right to its memory."<sup>23</sup> And yet, this fiercely defended right to memory encodes its own irrevocable refusals. Mercado's work, says Jean Franco, "confronts one of the major issues of our time—the issue of a pluralism that permits and even encourages difference. The narrator's obsession with a tramp . . . may, in fact, reflect a certain nostalgia for marginality that has, however, no social significance. For the marginal is merely an individual rebellion while, on the other hand, the social text has become unreadable except individually." In Franco's reading, one of the accomplishments of Mercado's text is to bravely confront such teasing or baffling intellectual and institutional uncertainties. In the last story in the volume, the narrator writes on a cracked gray wall and is, finally, absorbed into the text of her own self-inscription, which dissolves under her writing hand. Referring to this metaphor, Franco continues: "When the wall of gender difference comes down, it is not simply the center that is destroyed but also marginal positions, including that of 'woman' and 'woman writing as a woman.' . . . The woman intellectual must witness not only the destruction of the wall, but that of her own anonymous inscription on that very wall."<sup>24</sup> It is a difficult and arduous path that leads Mercado from dream text to this seemingly nihilistic dissolution.

The longest text in *En estado de memoria* is a thirty-page meditation entitled "Exposure" [*Intemperie*], staging the encounter between a woman who has come home from exile and her obsession with a homeless man. This man offers an intractable mystery; as Franco says, he is marginal and (cruelly) insignificant, yet the narrator's nostalgia and her yearning for meaning ends up constructing an encounter and elaborating a discourse between the two of them in the pages of this text. In this effort, Mercado reminds us of parallel efforts of the fellow southern cone activist, Chilean-born Diamela Eltit. Eltit has spoken forcefully about the importance of working at the level of discourse in order to effect social change and has been particularly committed to mobilizing and giving nuance to that which has been most marginalized within culture. She is the author of a series of technically dazzling novels beginning with *Lumpérica*, a novel she notoriously read in a brothel after staging readings in Santiago in which she cut and burned her own flesh, and including controversial works like *Por la patria*, *Cuarto mundo*, *Vaca sagrada*, and especially her *El padre mío*—a famously "unreadable" text consisting of a recompilation and edition of a homeless man's disconnected, severely traumatized, schizophrenic monologue. Eltit specifically associates a rigorous and politically committed recuperation of marginal voices with a rearticulation of the feminine, since, as she notes, that which in society has been most repressed and negated tends to be relegated to the feminine space.<sup>25</sup> The feminine, then, is not just the space of women; for Eltit, it is whatever has been muted and privatized at the margins of official culture. Then too, as both Eltit and Mercado know, the indi-

viduals and groups who occupy the interstices of the system also reveal its limits when official discourse is put under pressure.

In Mercado's text, the style is less scourgingly transgressive, but the commitment to a writing that combines intellectual rigor and aesthetic value is the same as the overlap between the space of the feminine and the politics of marginalization. Her narrator is a writer, trying to use her craft to write her way back into this place that is both familiar and strange, in an awareness of the accrued effects of all the other places she has resided in the interim. The homeless man seemingly has no fixed place to be, since he lives and sleeps in a plaza; yet he rarely moves more than a few meters from a single spot, whereas the writer comes and goes throughout her newly reannexed space, drifting from room to room in her house, going out to walk her dog, and getting into taxis and buses to move through the city. As the narrator struggles to write through her estrangement from her homeland, every morning she watches the homeless man writing in a notebook, and her distraction from her work provides an absolute contrast to his total absorption in his.<sup>26</sup> In this manner, her writing and his become inextricably bound together and linked to her return to Buenos Aires, a reincorporation into her homeland interrupted in the course of this work by a two-month return trip to Mexico. The act of writing itself is one of the dominant metaphors of the text, and the homeless man, who she later learns is named Andrés, occupies the cusp of this meditation. Thinking of her own interrupted writing and watching Andrés' concentration on writing in his notebook, she comments: "Doing things is a way of life; this may seem obvious, but it is not so obvious to people who fold and unfold their existence as if it were made of paper and then go on folding it smaller and smaller until there remains a thin scrap left to stand on. . . . But if there are no chores, if the folding and unfolding is performed on the basis of pure being and the absence of doing, contact with the universe will necessarily be stark and withering."<sup>27</sup> It is in the reciprocal fluctuation of these observations of, and later conversations with, Andrés that the narrator moves to a radical uncertainty about her own work, a hyperconsciousness about the tasks she assigns herself perhaps because the encounter with self in a stripped and pitiless universe would be too impossibly difficult. Says the narrator: "My interest in the man of the plaza would put me, whether I wanted it or not, in an exceptional state, if not in a state of urgency . . . of the kind that one feels when one comes across a forceful revelation in a text concerning the question of being."<sup>28</sup> Thus, Mercado insists on the contrast between working day life, lived minute by minute in a consciousness of the passage of time, and *vivir a la intemperie* ["the life of exposure"]. She explains: "In that state of exposure there are no concrete or practical chores, no small closures that block off periods of time. . . . It would be endless to enumerate all the things that have no end, all that does not have to be done and that has no place in the place of exposure."<sup>29</sup> More important, this concept of *intemperie* [exposure]—living it, the state of it, the place of it—connects to her imagination

of the time and space of exile, which also has "pequeños cierres" [small closures], the imagined/constructed temporal and spatial parenthesis of a nowhere that marks time between the home before and the longed-for home after:

Time spent in exile has a trajectory like a great sweeping brushstroke . . . but it is brushed aside, one prefers not to perceive it because one assumes that the banishment will end, that it has all been some kind of parenthesis unrelated to the future.

Time is provisional, passing week by week.<sup>30</sup>

Exile, in this analogy, is like homelessness, like living under the elements, provisionally; it is like being folded tight into a scrap of paper, like occupying a parenthesis. The continuity of the homeless man's day-to-day existence comes to represent for her the experience of the discontinuities and disruptions of an exile's life.

It is no wonder that the narrator finds herself becoming confused: "I did not know what my own situation of exposure was, and I could not know, what his was either."<sup>31</sup> The narrator in this manner includes herself in the loose society of people living a *la intemperie*—but only in a metaphorical sense. Mercado, however, is pitiless with her narrator, who enjoys unreflectively the middle-class comforts that allow for a privileged abstraction without real commitment. There is still a further, necessary step in Mercado's account; the abstract becomes concrete when the narrator goes beyond speculation about the homeless man, when she learns about his past, gives him a name, and speaks to him. In the course of these conversations, it begins to rain, reminding both the narrator and her reader that the *intemperie* [exposure] that had become a metaphor in the text, anchoring abstract thinking about the situatedness of the gendered self, has its basis in a climatological phenomenon and is not merely the grounding for an existential speculation. Here, under the rain, her meditation breaks down—precisely when she tries to imagine bringing Andrés home, conversing with him in her house: "[I]f I was able to speak to him there, outdoors [*en la intemperie*], then there was no apparent reason why I could not do the same in the living room of my own home."<sup>32</sup>

The most persistent association for Mercado of the image of *intemperie* [exposure] with the situation of her narrator is that having to do with her severe disassociation from what we might call the normative rituals of arrival. The narrator's immediate response to her homeland on her return to Argentina is to look for anchoring memories, to ritually seek out context in place; instead, she feels unmoored and adrift. She recognizes herself as a survivor of a nexus involving a fragmentation of identity that reaches into all aspects of her life, making her physically ill: "I was in a shipwreck" [*Estaba en un naufragio*], says Mercado in an interview when asked about the genesis of this book, and *En estado de memoria* became her way of writing herself back home and to health.<sup>33</sup> Mercado is extremely eloquent in her descriptions of the disequilibrium and fragmentation fig-

ured through minute shifts in language and in semantics that totally change meaning. Her name provides one excellent example:

I told him my name in turn, which, over the course of several weeks, he systematically distorted, changing the first *n* of my name to a *t*, and I never corrected the error. . . . A *t* in place of the *n*, an *i* substituted for a *u*, an *o* in place of the first *u*, etc., these things do not upset me as they used to; I now know that this is my name, there are no more doubts as to the identity that the name confers upon me, but this was not always so. . . . With Andrés, it did not seem appropriate to clarify that the second *u* in my name did not precede a *t*; I preferred to put my trust in the possibility that some illumination in another context would dissipate this particular flaw in our relations.<sup>34</sup>

While the narrator explains that Andrés' errors are not atypical of similar misunderstandings in the past, they nevertheless play an important role in the reconstruction of a state of memory that finds itself located a *la intemperie*, echoing the unsettling of identity and home in exile space.

The narrator is able to act upon her fascination with Andrés because he poses no threat, remaining docilely in his place, allowing her to come and go around him, and occupy unproblematically the safe ground of her home. His life is rapidly subordinated to her needs, just as his text becomes part of hers, and his challenges to her identity are discounted too quickly. Over and over again, he is described as "harmless" [*inofensivo*]. This from a woman who knows his background and who further informs her interlocutor that he was once a brilliant student who "had ended up that way due to a trauma."<sup>35</sup> This confidence, in turn, makes the narrator wonder about other traumas, about whether the gossipy woman sees her as also traumatized (the narrator knows that she has confused the woman by saying that she's from here, but not from here, that she's also from Mexico) and asking herself, "perhaps she thought that I was totally harmless" as well.<sup>36</sup> Those marked as "harmless"—the freak who points at the narrator while she's standing in line for the bus, Andrés the homeless man, the exiled writer—the flotsam and jetsam thrown up by the various traumas of the time and surviving "on the banks of the world"<sup>37</sup>—pose no threat, but equally have no input. Andrés especially does not compete with the narrator as a writer: "what he was willing to give did not constitute what could be called a narrative body."<sup>38</sup>

The gossipy woman on the bus seems to bear out Robbins' elucidation of an "assumption that to pass outside the borders of one's nation . . . is to wallow in a privileged and irresponsible detachment" (e.g., in this case, ignorance marginalizes the narrator who knows nothing about the area's harmless freaks and homeless people and who is totally uninformed about a human interest story saturating the Argentine media at that moment). Consequently, Robbins continues, the "cosmopolitan is held to be incapable of participating in the making of history, doomed to the mere aesthetic spectatorship that he or she is also secretly held to

prefer."<sup>39</sup> The narrator's ignorance about Olmedo's suicide connects her once again with Andrés, who "preferred not to know what was going on in the world,"<sup>40</sup> and who consciously avoided news, rejected newspapers, and refused to speak to the narrator of current events.<sup>41</sup> Succinctly, such shifting alliances between, for example, the exile and the homeless man, the narrator and the gossipy woman, the exile and the reader, point to the uncertain ground creating and aligning "us" and "the others."

This assigned and necessary inoffensiveness of the outsider/marginalized person—the traumatized man who never left Argentina, the writer who is struggling to return—creates an absolute contrast with the general condition of the exile, who is, nevertheless and curiously, equally inoffensive while at the same time displaying utmost obnoxiousness. If the returned person seems out of touch with Argentine reality, the reality of the narrator and her companions in exile is constructed out of an obsessive reference to and reiteration of whatever scraps of Argentineness accompanied them to their host country of Mexico to an exclusion of interest in Mexican news, Mexican current events, and Mexican reality. As the narrator notes in an earlier text in the book, during the time of exile the monotypic of Argentina as the touchstone for conversation and contemplation created another kind of marginalization, one occurring within or at the borders of Mexican society. Argentine exiles remained blissfully ignorant of their host country, preferring instead to obsessively seek out any hint of a reference to their lost homeland: "Argentina, that wretched [*poca madre*] country that had expelled us and of whose situation we never stopped talking . . . filling the cracks and hollows of our reality, so to speak, with Argentine substance."<sup>42</sup> The exile community, in this manner, turned inward. To use a metaphor evoked earlier, the exiles folded back in upon themselves, becoming smaller and smaller like a repeatedly folded scrap of paper, and in this small and almost entirely irrelevant space, they created and projected a utopic image that bypassed the memories of an ungrateful home country in favor of localized memories evoking a lost paradise:

Our bond to the country we were forced to leave conditioned our lives; there were even some who were never able to bear the sum of their losses, who passed their days remembering their old neighborhoods and idealizing customs that, one might wonder why, were considered paradigmatic of a lost paradise; that substance of Argentina that they missed seemed to be embedded in mythologies of little interest . . . with neither intellectual nor imaginary value.<sup>43</sup>

The question here is not just one of belonging or of refusal to adapt into a predetermined foreign cultural context. More important, Mercado asks us to consider how we define what is one's own, what is foreign, how the choices one makes around such questions shape identity and reshape social reality. For Avelar, *En estado de memoria* "narrates the epochal crisis of the proper" and

the "dissolution of dwelling" that in this work come to encompass the question of exile.<sup>44</sup> I would add that the intersection of "lo propio" (in the sense not only of what is proper, but what is one's own) and the exilic consciousness come to operate as a modality to explore the meaning of weighted terms such as *madre patria* [motherland] itself. Recall the felt inappropriateness of certain disjunctures grinding against each other: for example, the obsessive mythological construction of a mini-Argentina in Mexico while filling their Mexican dwellings with local indigenous artifacts of indifferent value. Or, on the other hand, the strange appropriateness of certain borrowings that destabilize ways of thinking connected to specific social structures: as in the subtle use of the Mexican-flavored insult "poca madre"<sup>45</sup> that overrides the more neutral Argentine phrase and intensifies the sense of cultural loss.

These grammatical and evaluative twists and turns of language and property accompany the trunks of memorabilia with the exiles' return to their homeland. On the one hand, Mercado dwells at length on the decoration of exile homes, both in Mexico and after the return to Argentina, noting the identical interior decorating schemes based on Mexican handicrafts that distinguish Argentine exile dwellings—furniture from Taxco, rugs from Chiapas, tablecloths from Michoacán—and on the other, the curious way that the obsession with Argentina during the exile years translates into a nostalgia for Mexico on their return: the endless "Argemex" conversations in Argentina about chile, chipotle, and tomatillos and where to find cilantro. Avelar writes:

The text unveils the fundamental fallacy of all identitarian rhetoric by relating the predicament of a number of Argentine exiles who mystified an Argentine being and clung to national icons while away from home, only to complain after the return that those wonderful Mexican tortillas and chili [*sic*] could not be found in Buenos Aires. The most ideological facets of exile coalesced in these fetishes of an identity by definition alienated. These little objects, meaningless in themselves, appeared as substitutive, compensatory fictions for a political practice no longer available.<sup>46</sup>

I agree with Avelar that the fetish comes to occupy the place of lo propio when it has shifted its identitarian moorings, but would add the nuance that the concrete fetish objects are not the only things the Argemex brings home; she also carries with her an unacknowledged body of constitutive metaphors, images that reshape thinking.

One of the ways that the narrator explores such issues is through reminders of cultural borrowings, both of objects and turns of thought; another is through a humorous exploration of the many misunderstandings that arise when native speakers of the same language discover a lack of cultural fit. For the newly arrived Argentine exiles in Mexico, one of these errors concerns microdifferences in courtesy formulas that shift their meaning and generate incomprehension. Argentine exiles



had to learn to express hospitality with the courtesy form that consisted of saying: *We'll be expecting you in your house*, which Mexicans used when inviting to their home an Argentine, who at first believed that the Mexicans were announcing a visit to the Argentines' home; the misunderstanding could go on for quite some time, repeating the phrase *your house*, or with the attempted clarification, *your own house* ["su casa de usted"], with which phrase the Mexican wished to reaffirm the generous offer of his home to the foreigner; this generosity was never quite understood by the Argentine, whose interpretation was that the Mexican was assuming ownership of the Argentines' home, and the phrase *here you have your home* was never quite recognized, nor responded to with corresponding courtesy, which left the Argentine in poor standing and confirmed his inability to listen to others unlike himself.<sup>47</sup>

The lesson Mercado's narrator brings home with her to Argentina has to do with this seemingly minor, and apparently merely formulaic, difference. The question of one's own home, imprinted with the individual personality of the home dweller, blurs in the equivocal "su casa de usted."<sup>48</sup> Ironically, of course, what looks like a polite superficiality rings all too true. The Argenmex homes described by the narrator are nearly interchangeable, so that one's own home and the home of the other are distinguished only by the names of their inhabitants. And, of course, it is precisely the equivocal metaphor of home and homelessness that most insistently underlies the narrator's appeal to some ordering principle, if only that of a fetish.

The narrator sees her hapless fellow returnees with irony, but at same time, in her case, with her admitted dependency on the homeless man as a substitute (local) object of obsession, she half-acknowledges her concern that in stripping herself of the other, easily exoticized Mexican fetish objects she risks falling into an analogous trap:

I did not want the man . . . to become a theme, a topic, or, much worse, an object. . . .

I do not know whether these exercises of control, of my writing over that man's writing and his exposed condition, were demands of purity, but I needed to know, through a selective chemistry.<sup>49</sup>

She begins by clearing away all the traditional motives and structures of the narrative, establishing the grounds defining what she emphatically calls her own/proper writing in counterdistinction to what she describes as his own writing (the writing appropriate to him), and by specifying the relationship of her writing over/about his. Then, almost imperceptibly, the demands of intellectual purity erode and she slips into the delirious urge to tell a story that blurs the distinction she has taken such pains to establish in an almost identical move to that which she earlier associated with her humorous account of the rhetorical blurring of distinctions between one's own house and another's. The homeless man becomes in fact what he always was for her, despite her denials, her "key to the theme," although the narrator has struggled to retain his individuality and her ambiguous complexity in her response to him:

after my first meetings with Andrés, I entered a kind of conversational delirium. I would tell the whole world how I had met him, I wanted at all costs to transfer the problem to others, and, grossly, I have to admit, I tried to exorcise him through the mere act of describing his circumstances.<sup>50</sup>

In this position, there is an echo of Elena Poniatowska's elaboration of her long and, from some perspectives, vexed relationship with Josefina Bórquez, the woman whose testimonial she fictionalized as that of Jesusa Palancares in her testimonial novel *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*. Poniatowska has stated many times that her reconstruction/reinvention of the Mexico City woman's life was both an homage to the strength of the Mexican woman and a very personal quest to understand and come to terms with her own Mexicanness, after having spent most of her youth outside her mother's home country (see, for example, the articles on Jesusa in *Luz y luna, las lunetas*). In a similar vein, in the Argentine text, the marginal city dweller, the homeless former student, Andrés, comes to cipher for Mercado the longing for a situatedness with respect to the before and after of her own Argentine identity: "I take advantage of my circumstances," he tells the narrator in their first conversation, "to make progress toward the solution of certain theoretical problems."<sup>51</sup> Unsurprisingly, the figure that captures her attention is not only a displaced person, who has seemingly been caught in a set of transitory circumstances not dissimilar to that of exile, but also a writer: more, he is a theoretician. Here too, as is the case with Poniatowska, by virtue of the process of reinscription, a certifiably authentic local other is brought into alignment with an apparent opposite who comes from a position of great privilege. Andrés, like Jesusa, all too easily falls back into the role of generalization and representation that their respective authors initially rejected. Jesusa Palancares overrides and overwrites a protesting Josefina Bórquez, and Andrés, of course, despite or because of Mercado's efforts to puzzle out his significance to her, ends up precisely as an iconic image, or a fetish object, and a markedly Argenmex one at that. Her and our last image of him is of watching him sleep, "wrapped up like a tamale in his blankets, resting his head on Tomás Eloy Martínez's novel of Perón,"<sup>52</sup> combining one of the Mexican-derived food metaphors that she so elaborately deconstructs in the superficial chitchat of her fellow returned exiles, with the evocation of Tomás Eloy Martínez's journalistic novel about the crucial figure in mid-twentieth century Argentine history. Mercado, thus, at one and the same time enacts a recuperation of the sleeping past, a recognition of a traumatic present, a salute to the power of fictional narrative to shape historical memory, and a teasing evocation of an alien reality—the tamal—that serves as its indigestible wrapper. Avelar would call this reference untimely; it is also, in Homi Bhabha's sense, unhomey, marking yet another shift in signification between *lo propio* and *su casa*, with all the culturally specific and equivocal meanings Tununa Mercado has been so careful to trace out for us in the course of this text.

In an article focusing mostly on readings of Toni Morrison and Nadine Gordimer, Homi Bhabha rethinks Freud's classic study of the "Unheimlich" (usually translated as the "uncanny") through a postcolonial critical position that allows him to rethink Freud's key concept in terms of the unhomely. For while the uncanny carries with it some element of the supernatural, of something hidden and mysterious that is ambiguously brought home, in Bhabha's account, the postcolonial critic/writer's experience of the unhomely follows from "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place," and he describes it as a common feature in border culture, in exile literature, and in Third World literature in general. Bhabha continues:

In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible. It has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations. The home does not remain the domain of domestic life, nor does the world simply become its social or historical counterpart. The unhomely is the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world.<sup>53</sup>

Mercado's final image of the homeless man, *a la intemperie* [exposed], wrapped like a tamal, head propped on book, is a complex one. It is, first of all, a cipher of the narrator's own admitted cowardice, for after having struck up an acquaintanceship of sorts with Andrés, she reaches a point where she no longer knows what to say to him. For this reason, she avoids discussion by going to the plaza early and watching him sleep instead. Here the social exchange, or social accommodation, breaks down as the committed writer who identifies with the marginalized other reveals herself to herself as the self-indulgent consumer of iconic images, not at all different in kind from the other exiles whose purchases and obsessions she mildly satirizes in earlier chapters of the book. In this manner, Mercado suggests that the shock of recognition between conditions associated with a recovered home and with homelessness does not hold up to sustained analysis. Here, rather than committing herself to the difficult work that would follow her initial meditation, the narrator leaves us with the ethically ambiguous conjunctions among the marginalized street people, the narrator's appropriation of their lives and works, and the reader's delight in the gorgeous (fetish) object that results.

Tellingly, at the point in which she backs away from further knowledge, the narrator replaces the historical subject with an aestheticized fictional character. Her gesture reminds me strongly of Rachel Bowlby's observation that was made in reference to Nabokov's *Lolita* but, I think, equally applicable to the consumer/lover ethics intimated here. Bowlby writes: "The poetic speed of consumption also mutates into its opposite, a state of tranquil suspension, underwater slow motion . . . , a silently timeless still life." Also, in "Exposure," the vivid memories of travel and purchase and production of written texts slow down on the written page into the

timeless still life of the sleeping man. The returned exile, a reluctant consumer, reinvents herself as a lyrical ethnographer. The final chapter of this book, "El muro" ["The Wall"] concerns the not insignificant task of confronting this textual dilemma and, as already noted, breaking down the seductive metaphors, worrying at the edges of institutional and personal certainties, and finally, deconstructing even "woman writing as a woman."<sup>54</sup>

The deliberate aestheticization of Andrés as a silent object opens onto one set of issues that drives to the heart of the common perception of intellectual labor as a distanced, "pure" product. The metaphor of the tamal evokes a second set of references peculiar to the exile condition and the unhomely contaminations that creep in to disrupt attempts at reaccommodation. The book under Andrés' head suggests still a third line of questioning. It is commonplace in critical circles to bemoan the fact that in these globalized, postmodern days, the literary marketplace is flourishing, but for popular rather than elitist art. Franco notes, for instance, that "everywhere in contemporary Latin America, there is a sense of the literary intelligentsia's diminishing importance and displacement from public discourse."<sup>55</sup> Crassly speaking, all books put ideas up for sale, but they also create a dilemma with respect to the position of a presumed reader—does the author intentionally limit her work to an informed elite body of readers, or does she attempt to reach a wider audience? What are the implications of these choices in style and subject matter? Avelar poses the dilemma forcefully, in an explicit linking of globalization, the writing subject, and national cultural formations: "The literature produced in the aftermath of the recent Latin American dictatorships . . . confronts not only the need to come to terms with the past but also to define its position in the new present ushered in by the military regimes: a global market in which every corner of social life has been commodified."<sup>56</sup> Mercado refers obliquely to this problem with her discussion of Andrés's two books. One is an unnamed novel by the early twentieth-century Spanish writer and self-identified "Jacobin" politician Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (his 1905 *El intruso* would be the obvious candidate, as his most well-known work) chosen from among a pile of books, mostly cookbooks, in a garbage can. Nothing much is said of this book, except to mark the unusual conditions of its retrieval, and its primary function in Mercado's text seems to be that of serving as a foil to the other more important book.

The second book is a condensed version of Tomás Eloy Martínez's bestselling *La novela de Perón*, which Andrés tells his interlocutor that he has received as a gift. The narrator informs us that Andrés knows this text almost by heart, and it is the book that not only serves as his primary reading material (the narrator makes sure her readers know that he pointedly refuses to look at the easily available newspapers around him) but also doubles as a pillow. In a cultural tradition (ours) in which the perusal of the protagonist's library is a literary commonplace for revealing important facets of an individual's character, Andrés's random library of exactly two books has an overdetermined quality, both too much and too



little information at the same time. The already overdetermined quality of this exchange is reinforced even further when the narrator of this novel? autobiography? asks her interlocutor about the status of her own representation in Martínez's novel. In a scene that evokes the early chapters of the second part of the *Quijote*, the narrator asks whether her cameo appearance has been retained in the condensed version of the novel: "When I asked him if his edition contained a scene in which, by a pure coincidence of fiction, my husband, my son, and I appear on a balcony . . . he said no."<sup>57</sup> This curious exchange signals the beginning of the narrator's definitive withdrawal from further conversations with the individual in favor of an interaction with texts; it suggests as well a re-configuration of literary social relations in terms of a more equivocal exchange between a fictionalized narrator and a fictionalized interlocutor about the former's wholly spurious appearance in a fictionalized account of the life of Perón. To answer the question posed at the outset of this study by García Canclini—"What does it mean to belong, to have an identity at the end of the [twentieth] century?"—Mercado suggests that, like official history, personal identity is tied up with a merely written reality, a fictional text that must be radically put into question and ultimately exploded.

The place of memory, its "*estado*" ("state," in both senses) stages a personal encounter with official history that also counterposes itself to, and signals the end of, the nation-building novel, broadly understood as the novel at the service of the state—while deeply mourning its necessary disappearance. The right to memory, the obligatory quality of remembrance in this country of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, comes into conflict again and again with the struggle for the construction of a new state that wants only to turn its back on the past. In this book, Mercado takes up the untimely task (to use Avelar's term) of writing her way back home, writing herself back into a partially erased national history that has traditionally been based on what she now knows are fictions of stable territory, stable identity, known destiny, and fictions that she fundamentally rejects as dangerous illusions—and yet, she is paralyzed by their loss. There is, as Robbins says in an essay on cosmopolitanism, "no alternative to belonging. But the exercise becomes more complicated as soon as we ask what it *means* to belong, or how many different ways of belonging there may be."<sup>58</sup> Mercado's text makes an unflinching and clear-eyed examination of this vexed issue.

Martín Hopenhayn would concur, although on very different grounds. He says:

Modernization-in-globalization tends towards loss of identity [*des-identidad*], homelessness [*des-habitación*], and the desingularizing [*des-singularizar*] of its inhabitants. . . . The globalized city seems to be associated with an expressive explosion, but after a short while all expression seems to be born from the same combinatory mechanics.<sup>59</sup>

The hope that Mercado offers at the end of her book, with the absorption of the writerly text into the widening cracks in the wall, is that the constraints of dis-

course can be transcended through acts of imagination as an agent for ethico-political transformation. Theoretically, then, Mercado's *En estado de memoria* offers a useful test case for exploring new articulations in culture analysis that allow for the linkage of a Latin American feminine consciousness to the concerns of globalized national identity constructions. It is also a deeply personal book about the cost of going home, when both the going, and the encounter with, home encode deeply painful processes of loss and recovery.

## NOTES

1. Frederick Jameson, "Preface," in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. Frederick Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), xii.
2. Jameson, "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," in *The Cultures of Globalization*, 55.
3. Jameson, "Preface," xiii, xv.
4. Martín Hopenhayn, "Tribu y metrópoli en la postmodernidad latinoamericana," in *Enfoques sobre la posmodernidad en América Latina*, ed. Roberto Follari and Rigoberto Lanz (Caracas: Editorial Sentido, 1998), 32–33.
5. Santiago Castro-Gómez, "La filosofía latinoamericana como ontología crítica del presente: Temas y motivos para una 'Crítica de la razón latinoamericana'" (unpublished ms, 2000), 3–4.
6. Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, "Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies: Beyond the Marxism/Poststructuralism/Feminism Divides," in *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, ed. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Minoq Maoallem (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 354.
7. Raquel Olea, "Feminism: Modern or Postmodern?" in *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, ed. John Beverley, José Oviedo, and Michael Aronna (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 197.
8. Jean Franco, *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, ed. and intro. Mary Louise Pratt and Kathleen Newman (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 52.
9. Amy Parry, "In Place of a Conclusion," 376.
10. Tununa Mercado, *En estado de memoria* (Buenos Aires: Ada Korn Editora, 1990). In *A State of Memory*, English trans. Peter Kahn (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).
11. Gabriela Mora, "Tununa Mercado" (Interview), *Hispanérica* 21, no. 62 (1992): 77–81, 78.
12. Néstor García Canclini, "Comunidades de consumidores: Nuevos escenarios de lo público y la ciudadanía," in *Cultura y tercer mundo 2: Nuevas identidades y ciudadanías*, ed. Beatriz González Stephan (Caracas: Nueva Sociedad, 1996), 10.
13. Idelber Avelar, *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 20.
14. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 211.
15. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 2–3.
16. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 9.
17. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 211.

18. Patrick O'Connell, "Individual and Collective Identity through Memory in Three Novels of Argentina's 'El Proceso,'" *Hispania*, 81 (1998): 31, 31-41.
19. O'Connell, "Individual and Collective Identity through Memory," 35.
20. O'Connell, "Individual and Collective Identity through Memory," 37.
21. Mary Louise Pratt, "'Don't Interrupt Me': The Gender Essay as Conversation and CounterCanon," in *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Doris Meyer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 13, 17.
22. Franco, *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, 10-11.
23. Jesús Martín-Barbero, "Hegemonía comunicacional y des-centramiento cultural," in *Enfoques sobre la posmodernidad en América Latina*, ed. Roberto Follari and Rigoberto Lanz (Caracas: Editorial Sentido, 1998), 50.
24. Franco, *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, 60-61.
25. Diamela Eltit, "Cultura, poder y frontera," *La época* 3, no. 113 (10 June 1990): 1-2.
26. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 117; *En estado de memoria*, 148-49.
27. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 121-22; *En estado de memoria*, 155: "Hacer cosas es una manera de vivir; esto puede parecer obvio pero no lo es tanto para gente que pliega y despliega la existencia como si fuera de papel, y va plegando cada vez más chiquito, hasta no dejar más que un listón delgado donde pararse. . . Si no hay labores, si los plegamentos se hacen sobre el puro ser y el ausente hacer, el contacto con el universo ha de ser descarnado y quemante."
28. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 126; *En estado de memoria*, 160: "El interés por el hombre de la plaza me ponía, sin yo quererlo, en un estado de excepción o, por lo menos, de emergencia . . . la que se siente cuando en un texto uno se tropieza con una revelación contundente acerca del ser."
29. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 121; *En estado de memoria*, 154: "En ese estado de intemperie no hay los pequeños cierres que clausuran, en tareas concretas o prácticas, períodos de tiempo . . . y sería infinito enumerar lo que no se acaba, no se cumple, ni tiene lugar en el lugar de la intemperie." An alternative to Kahn's translation of the first sentence could be: "In that state of exposure, there are no small closures that close off, in concrete or practical tasks, periods of time [Ed.]."
30. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 19; *En estado de memoria*, 29: "El tiempo del exilio tiene el trayecto de un gran trazo . . . pero se lo aparta, no se lo quiere percibir porque se supone que el destierro va a terminar, que se trata de un paréntesis que no cuenta en ningún devenir. Provisorio, el tiempo va de semana en semana."
31. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 126; *En estado de memoria*, 161: "No sabía cuál era mi intemperie y no podía saber por lo tanto cuál era la suya."
32. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 130; *En estado de memoria*, 165: "Si podía hablar con él en la intemperie no se veía muy bien que no pudiera hacerlo en la sala de mi casa."
33. Mora, "Tununa Mercado," 78.
34. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 134-35; *En estado de memoria*, 170-71: "Le dije también mi nombre que de manera sistemática él tergiversó a lo largo de las semanas, cambiando la primera *ene* de mi nombre por una *te*, sin que yo corrigiera el error. . . La *te* por la *ene*, una *i* sustituyendo a una *u*, una *o* en lugar de la primera *u*, etcétera, no me hacen mella como antes; ahora sé que ése es mi nombre, no hay dudas sobre la identidad que me confiere, pero no siempre fue así. . . A Andrés no me pareció conveniente aclararle que a la segunda *u* de mi nombre no le antecede una *te* y preferí confiar en que alguna iluminación fuera de contexto habría de disipar el equívoco sobre ese aspecto de nuestras relaciones."

35. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 132; *En estado de memoria*, 168: "Que se había quedado así como consecuencia de una trauma."
36. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 133; *En estado de memoria*, 169: "Quizás pensaba que yo era totalmente inofensiva."
37. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 134; *En estado de memoria*, 169: "A las orillas del mundo."
38. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 136; *En estado de memoria*, 172: "Lo que él suelta no constituye lo que podría llamarse cuerpo narrativo."
39. Bruce Robbins, "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 4.
40. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 140; *En estado de memoria*, 178: "Prefería no saber los que pasaba en el mundo."
41. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 140; *En estado de memoria*, 178.
42. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 20; *En estado de memoria*, 30: "La Argentina, ese país poca madre que nos había expulsado y sobre cuya situación se hablaba sin parar . . . llenando por así decir con la materia argentina todo hueco de la realidad."
43. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 22; *En estado de memoria*, 33: "El apego al país que habíamos dejado condicionó la vida de todos nosotros; hubo incluso gente que no pudo sobrellevar la suma de pérdidas; que se pasaba el día pensando en su barrio, idealizando prácticas que no se veía muy bien por qué habrían de ser consideradas paradigmáticas de un paraíso perdido; la sustancia argentina que se extrañaba aparecía encarnada en mitologías de escaso interés . . . sin valor intelectual o imaginario."
44. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 221-22.
45. Literally "not much of a mother." Peter Kahn has translated *poca madre* as "wretched" in Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 20 [Ed.].
46. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 216.
47. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 23-24; *En estado de memoria*, 35: "Tuvieron que aprender a ofrecer hospitalidad usando la norma de cortesía local que consiste en decir 'Lo esperamos en *su casa*,' para invitar al interlocutor argentino, quien creía que el mexicano se refería a *su casa*, anunciándole una visita; el equívoco solía perdurar largo rato, reiterándose el '*su casa*' con un refuerzo aclaratorio: '*su casa de usted*,' frase con la cual el mexicano afirmaba la donación generosa de su casa, la de él, al extranjero; este desprendimiento nunca era entendido y los argentinos interpretaban que el mexicano se adueñaba de sus casas, y el 'ahí tiene usted su casa de usted' no era captado ni correspondido con análoga cortesía, quedando el argentino mal parado y demostrando su incapacidad para oír a sus diferentes."
48. The reflexive pronoun "su" may mean the second or the third person singular [Ed.].
49. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 127; *En estado de memoria*, 162: "No quería . . . dejar que el hombre fuera tema, o tópico, y menos objeto. . . No sé si estos ejercicios de control de mi propia escritura sobre la escritura propia del hombre y su condición de intemperie eran exigencias de pureza, pero yo necesitaba de una química selectiva."
50. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 138; *En estado de memoria*, 175: "Después de mis primeros encuentros con Andrés, entré en una especie de delirio de contar. Le decía a todo el mundo cómo lo había conocido, quería a toda costa pasarle el problema a otros, decomidamente, lo confieso con pena, trataba de conjurarlo por el solo hecho de relatar su circunstancia."

51. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 129; *En estado de memoria*, 164: "Aprovecho mi circunstancia . . . para avanzar en la solución de ciertos problemas teóricos."
52. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 141; *En estado de memoria*, 179: "Envuelto como un tamal en sus cobijas, apoyada la cabeza en la novela de Perón."
53. Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," *Social Text* 10 (1992): 141, 141-53.
54. Franco, *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, 62.
55. Franco, *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, 197.
56. Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, 1.
57. Mercado, *In a State of Memory*, 139; *En estado de memoria*, 176: "Cuando le pregunté si en esa edición figuraba una escena en la que por pura obra de ficción estamos mi marido, mi hijo y yo en un balcón . . . me dijo que no."
58. Robbins, "Comparative Cosmopolitanisms," in *Cosmopolitics*, 249-50.
59. Hopenhayn, "Tribu y metrópoli en la postmodernidad latinoamericana," 27.

## Globalization, Philosophy, and Latin America

Jorge J. E. Gracia

The part of the world known as Latin America, that motley of countries located south of the Río Grande, has been, since 1492, regarded as a backwater place, subordinated to the interests of other places on the globe. During the more than three hundred years of Spanish and Portuguese domination, it was a colony, and like all colonies, subservient to the whims and needs of colonial powers. Political independence in the nineteenth century did not essentially change the situation, although new economic masters took the place of colonial ones. The United States, England, and France, in particular, displaced Spain and Portugal as centers of hegemony for the region.

The subordination of Latin America has permeated every aspect and dimension of the lives of Latin Americans. Economically, it has meant unchecked exploitation; politically, it has resulted in manipulation and interference; and ethnically, it has been the source of cultural imperialism. Economic exploitation has taken many forms, including the unchecked exportation of natural resources. Political manipulation and interference have ranged from the imposition of political structures alien to the region, and even the creation of countries for the benefit of foreign powers, to the repeated invasion of sovereign territories. Cultural imperialism has involved the imposition of foreign values, products, and ideas and the suppression of local ones.

The subordination of Latin America in philosophy, in particular, is as evident as in those other dimensions mentioned and has been repeatedly noted by Latin Americans themselves.<sup>1</sup> During the colonial period, Spain and Portugal often set the agenda of what was to be discussed and how. Because of the pervasive influence of scholasticism in the Iberian Peninsula, the language of philosophy in