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## 62: CORTAZAR'S NOVELA PASTORIL

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The involved entanglement between a series of lovers, the tendency to see love as a form of enslavement, the *otium* which allows the characters to wander about in groups pursuing their love interests, cultivating their art and playing games, the shared nostalgia for the Golden Age: all these factors suggest that Cortázar's *62: Modelo para armar* is a kind of latterday *novela pastoril* that takes place, not in Arcadia, but in the modern metropolis. Here nature is reduced to a pet snail, a London Park, a group outing to the suburbs of Paris; the *locus amoenus* becomes a garret infused with sunlight, a field beside a railroad track. Repeated allusions recall a green world which remains inaccessible, except, I believe, to Austin and Celia. In this paper, I shall explore the relation between Cortázar's novel and the pastoral tradition, particularly focussing on the Spanish pastoral novel. Despite very obvious differences between *62* and the earlier works, the parallels between them are sufficiently marked that such a study should illuminate this rather difficult twentieth-century novel.

The oppressive air of melancholy that hangs over *62* is due in large part to the frustration of a series of lovers whose passion is not reciprocated. Marrast and Calac love Nicole, who loves Juan, who loves Hélène, who — after her fashion — loves Celia, who loves Austin. The chain ends with

Austin, who returns Celia's love; however, prior to meeting Celia, he has a brief encounter with Nicole that opens the scarifying possibility of a perfect circle of misery. In addition, Juan tries unsuccessfully to take his mind off Hélène with Tell, who laments the death of Leroy, a previous lover. Finally, two minor characters, Lila and Boniface Perteuil's daughter, have crushes on Calac and Polanco.

This is just the sort of amorous confusion essential to the *novela pastoril*, which depends on a series of tales told by shepherds and shepherdesses who suffer because their love is unrequited, or because they have been abandoned or because the object of their affections is absent. A scene in *La Diana* prefigures the constellation of erotic impulses in 62. Here Salvagia, betrayed by Alanio, recounts her tribulations:

Ved qué extraño embuste de amor: si por ventura Ismenla iba al campo, Alanio tras ella; si Montavo ¡va al ganado, Ismenia tras él; si yo andava en el monte con mis ovejas, Montano tras mí; si yo sabía que Alanio estava en un bosque donde solía repastar, allá me iba tras él...<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the Spanish pastoral novel, to love means to suffer. For Montemayor, who carries over much of the *cancionero* tradition, love is a "peligrosa prisión,"<sup>2</sup> the lover a prisoner, his will subject to someone else's. *Los que bien aman se vienen a desamar a sí mismos.*<sup>3</sup> The lovers in *La Diana* are helpless victims of fate, and although they insist that suffering and even jealousy ennobles, they readily accept the intervention of Felisa, who brings their trials to a happy conclusion with the help of magic potions. Although in *La Diana enamorada* and *La Galatea*, Gil Polo and Cervantes condemn jealousy and give their characters somewhat more active roles, they still see love as an inexorable fate. Cervantes calls it *oh rigoroso hado!*, *infelice hado*, *inexorable estrella*, *fuerza injusta*, *fatal estrella*, *implacables hados.*<sup>4</sup> Finally, in *La Arcadia*, Lope denies dignity to this form of love. He sees it as a form of madness to be avoided or overcome by creative effort.

In 62, Cortázar's most deterministic novel, the characters are predestined to perpetuate patterns of unsatisfied desire. For them, as for the suffering shepherds, love is a prisonhouse. Marrast identifies Nicole with La Malcontenta, the Foscarini woman who was imprisoned by her husband in a villa on the Canal de Brenta, an area connected with the Petrarchan tradition of unrequited love, as penance for the faults of a too free life.<sup>5</sup> Marrast and Nicole are locked in an affair that is meaningless because she is in love with Juan. She is a prisoner, she implies, not of Marrast, but of her passion for Juan. Marrast, too, feels imprisoned in the claustrophobic circle of this unhappy relationship, but he is unable to break away. His is one of those cases of love at first sight so typical of the pastoral; once his eyes met Nicole's, he forgot everything but her:

"...mujeres y estatuas y poemas se inmovilizaron para siempre en el pasado la tarde en que mis ojos habían encontrado los de Nicole en una calle de Passy..."<sup>6</sup>

In the pastoral novel, the human being is examined primarily in his function as a lover; he is undistracted by mundane obligations. The absence of routine is one of the most notable resemblances between *62* and the pastoral dispensation, for in *62* the characters enjoy what Renato Poggioli calls *an economic idyll*.<sup>7</sup> Marrast is a sculptor, Nicole an illustrator, Calac a writer, Austin a musician (unemployed). Polanco briefly holds a position in a vivarium but spends most of his time napping between the hedgerows. Tell, Celia and Feuille Morte do not work at all. Only Juan and Héléne have professions that impose serious restrictions on their movements — Juan is an interpreter, Héléne an anesthetist — yet these occupations are so closely related to Juan's and Héléne's preoccupations that they seem to spring from psychic rather than financial need. The jobs are projections of an inner state, not a set of external circumstances to be grappled with. None of the characters shows any real interest in cash flow.

As foreign as *negotium* to the eclogue tradition are questions of domestic responsibility. Even in the Spanish pastoral novel, which insists on marriage, the weddings are postponed until the last book. Similarly *62* is a world of single folk. Not one character in the novel is married; no one is even divorced. Celia and Austin are rumored to have parents, but these remain offstage. Freed then of economic and family obligations, the little band enjoys the *otium* that allows them to devote their energy to love, art and games.

Art, specifically the shepherd's song, occupies an important place in the Green World. Paul Alpers writes that, *The great pastoral poets are directly concerned with the extent to which song that gives present pleasures can confront and, if not transform and celebrate, then accept and reconcile man to the stresses and realities of his situation?* Marrast's upsidetown statue, a mocking self-portrait, and Juan's prose poem on *the city* both communicate a sense of pain and confusion. Not surprisingly, these expressions bring consolation neither to the individual nor to the group. Instead of coming to terms with their situation, Marrast and Juan try to reject the terrible revelations thrust upon them about the nature of their beloveds and hence about themselves, *esa verdad*, Marrast says, *que nos negamos con ios ojos abiertos* (73). The fifty-nine gnomes that Nicole paints doggedly and in solitude are worth a laugh, but they also embody her thwarted passion, repeated obsessively, the loss of perspective that will eventually lead to her suicide. Perhaps Calac's book, written *como antídoto de malos recuerdos* (221), will provide a deeper understanding of their communal dilemma — a book to be called possibly *Modelo para armar* — but this is simply conjecture. Unlike Morelli, Calac does not leave scraps of paper about.

The group puts its greatest imaginative energy into game-playing, an activity that links it to the bucolic tradition and to childhood, another version of the pastoral.<sup>9</sup> For Marrast, games are comforting because they suggest the possibility of change. The complicated joke he sets up at the Courtauld —

Un juego del tedio y la tristeza habla alterado un orden, un capricho habia incidido en las cadenas causales para provocar un brusco viraje, dos líneas enviadas por correo podían entonces conmover el mundo, aunque fuera solamente un mundo de bolsillo (156) —

leads him to hope for a moment that Nicole too can change, but that brief glimmer is almost immediately quashed, and the scene ends with this comment: *No creo que nada te cambie, mi querida* (157). Actually, the game will have repercussions that Marrast can hardly desire, but, for the moment he is playing, he experiences a sense of freedom that has become foreign to him. Games offer a temporary escape from the sadness of grown-up life. For this reason, whenever the atmosphere at the Cluny becomes too charged, Feuille Morte shows them *la salida al recreo y a los juegos* (63), initiating one of the infamous *sesiones de infantilismo* (63) in which they try to recapture what Oliveira called *hs palabras perdidas de la infancia*<sup>10</sup> The repeated references to nostalgia in the novel imply a longing for childhood, pervasive in Cortázar's writing. Feuille Morte, who never enters *the city*, never says anything but *bis-bis*, is, I would guess, a retarded adult rather than a child — after all, she is *morte*.<sup>11</sup> She suggests that innocence can be retained only at excessive cost, but the characters continue to look back with yearning. *Entre nosotros hay algunos que se hacen los locos por pura nostalgia* (141), Hélène comments when she hears about the antics at the Courtauld.

Oddly enough, the pastoral novel, which takes place in Arcadia, is also saturated with nostalgia. *La Diana*, for example, opens with Sireno's lament for an earlier time when he knew nothing of love and instead was free and easy:

...considerava aquel dichoso tiempo que por aquellos prados y hermosa ribera apascentava su ganado, poniendo los ojos en solo el interesse que de traelle bien apascentado se la seguía... No se metía el pastor en la consideración de los malos o buenos sucesos de la fortuna ni en la mudança y variación de los tiempos... no salían del campo sus pensamientos, hasta que el crudo amor tomó possession de su libertad...<sup>11</sup>

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\*Feuille Morte is the opposite number of Frau Marta, that incarnation of knowledges and will, who corrupts the innocent for her peculiarly selfish ends.

Like the other love-torn shepherds, he lives now in a world where innocence has been lost. The immediate cause of the loss is puberty; the underlying cause, according to the Neoplatonic belief so important to Renaissance pastoral, lies in birth itself when the soul loses its state of purity to become flesh. There is a parallel between the relative innocence of the child and the absolute innocence of the unborn soul. Rachel Bromberg points out that always in the pastoral novel, *perfection is in the past, when the individual and, implicitly, the world, were young.*<sup>12</sup> For all its beauty, the Green World is not the seat of happiness. The serenity of nature only reminds the swain of his discontent.

Since the corporeal world is only an imperfect reflection of the World of Ideas, it can be deceptive. The words *engañar*, *desengañar*,  *fingir* and *disimular* recur with surprising frequency in these novels. Rachel Bromberg points out that the tricks of Fortune, which suddenly sends lovers away, or makes them inconstant or kills them, are echoed by the tricks that characters play on each other. In *La Diana*, a jealous magician makes Belisa believe that Arsenio and his son Arsilio, both in love with her, have killed each other. Sexual identity is deceptive here. Celia commits suicide because Felismena, whom she believes to be the page Valerio, does not return her love. Salvagia falls in love with Ismenia, who apparently returns her affection, later claims to be a man dressed as a woman and finally reveals that she really is a woman and that she is in love with someone else. Details of this sort, present in all the major novels, have led Bárbara Mujica to conclude that the Spanish pastoral novels are Utopian ,in their lack of routine, but not in regard to human relations: *Rather, they depict a world saturated with violence, moroseness, morbidity, and perversion. The peacefulness and harmony usually attributed to the pastoral novels are never really achieved in any of them...*<sup>13</sup> The confusion which besets the pastoral swains is evident in 62 as well. Here identity is equally problematic. Countess Báthory, Frau Marta and Hélène, who seem to be different people, are actually one. Nicole is also La Malcontenta, and both she and Hélène overlap suspiciously. Love, too, is subject to strange permutations. Always an obsessive passion, it may take the form of incest, homosexuality or violence. Calac and Marrast, who is like a son to him, both love Nicole. Hélène wins Celia's trust by treating her like a daughter and then follows up by raping her. Despite its ambience of jolly camaraderie, this world is as deceptive as the Renaissance Arcadia.

Perhaps the most marked difference between 62 and the pastoral novel is that 62 takes place in an almost entirely urban environment: Paris, London, Vienna. In addition, the characters share a collective nightmare they call *the city*. The *hermosa ribera*, where Sireno voices his lament in song, has become the filthy Canal de Saint Martin, where Juan has his frightening revelation on Christmas morning — *mientras tan cerca los pastores y el pesebre y un cordero que lavaba los pecados del mundo* (18) — and it is also the stagnant

canal of *the city*, filled with boats that never take off. Yet *the city* is as exemplary in its way as the stylized world of the pastoral; it is an inverted Arcadia (and also, of course, the City of Dis, inversion of Augustine's ideal; here election is a curse, not a sign of grace — neither Celia nor Austin, the truly elect, ever enter *the city*). The pastoral, as we know, was the invention of a city-dweller. It is impossible to think about the country without being aware of the city, and vice-versa.

In any event, 62 is shot through with oblique references to the natural world. Marrast, *que odiaba el campo y las abejas* (47), suddenly finds himself in a London Park, *rodeado de verde y palomitos...debajo de un castaño que era como un estúpido país de pájaros* (193). On its peregrinations, the little band is accompanied by a snail who travels wrapped up in a lettuce leaf. Marrast and Nicole hold mock arguments over *animalitos* that invade each other's imaginary gardens. The controversy over the portrait of Dr. Lysons centers on a stem of *hermodactylus tuberosis* he is holding. Polanco, Calac and *mi paredro* are shipwrecked on a minute island in the vivarium pond (shipwreck is a favorite topos of the adventure stories intercalated in the pastoral novels). Finally, 62 ends with a day trek to the suburb of Arcueil.

With the return of the group from London, the allusions to the world of nature and the Golden Age become more insistent, and they are increasingly associated with Austin and Celia. Like the idealized shepherd of pastoral tradition, Austin is a musician. His name brings to mind St. Augustine of Hippo, who — in addition to his theological concerns — wrote a book on modal rhythm. Augustine believed that the numbers and proportions found in music are the symbols which make up the universe, and he justified the study of music because it leads to contemplation of the divine.<sup>14</sup> This notion of cosmic harmony is reinforced by the type of music Austin plays: villanelles by Purcell and suites by William Byrd, i.e. music that incorporates dance rhythms and thus involves movement as well as sound (the music of the spheres). The villanelle, incidentally, is composed of *stanzaic verses in a pastoral vein*.<sup>15</sup>

Austin is also associated with Wagner's Parsifal. Tell calls him *der Reine, der Tor* (89), that is, the Pure Fool, the one who, through his innocence, will destroy the enchanter Klingsor and release the knights and their ruler from the spell they have fallen under. When the spell is broken, Kundry, who serves the Grail and yet seduces the knights on behalf of Klingsor, falls dead, attaining the rest she longed for. Although Tell concludes rightly *maldito si me parezco a Kundry, eso es seguro* (89), this enigmatic figure who lies under a curse, expiating sins from a former life through her suffering,<sup>16</sup> connects with Hélène and Nicole, negative figures who hold "knights" in thrall, both to be metaphorically slain by Austin.

Hélène calls Austin a *pequeño San Jorge tonto y virgen que destripa...basiliscos* (261). The stabbing takes place only on the level of *the*

city. It seems to be a projection of Hélène's self-loathing, but it has a real counterpart in Nicole's suicide. This suicide has been subtly prepared for throughout the novel, but it is Nicole's sexual encounter with Austin and the subsequent break with Marrast that precipitates the inward plunge that ends in the Canal de Saint Martin (prefigured by the Canal de Brenta, which ran beside La Malcontenta's prison). On the return trip from Arcueil, Austin and Celia, *tomados de la mano y mirando el paisaje suburbano como si fuera una especie de Arcadia* (241), suddenly decide to abandon the train in order to take a closer look at a cow and calf. Nicole gets off at the next stop, prompting Calac to remark that *de golpe todos se estaban poniendo románticos y se largaban a mirar vacas o a juntar trébol* (252). True for Celia and Austin, the comment is harshly ironic in relation to Nicole, who sees only the faraway glimmer of the canal that promises oblivion.

Marrast's game does change things because it brings Austin into the circle. If the advent of Austin leads indirectly to Nicole's death, it also makes possible his meeting with Celia in all its life-giving potential. The only two characters in the novel to enjoy a reciprocal love, Celia and Austin suggest the possibility of circumventing the rigorous determinism of the *figura* and living their own lives. Each has had an ugly sexual initiation, but this experience serves as an *exemplum vitandí*. Unlike the passive English girl who is spellbound by Frau Marta (and, indeed, all the other spellbound lovers in the novel), Celia breaks away from Hélène, crushing the doll that represents that entanglement. She refuses to allow herself to feel victimized and later confesses to Austin, unburdening herself of any guilt. The idyllic scene of their sexual awakening to each other takes place in a room that is flooded by sunlight, a favorite image in the pastoral for the understanding that love can bring when it is not confused with obsession. In the novel, eyes are instruments of possession or evasion, but Austin and Celia really look at each other in a mutual act of discovery. *Me hace bien que me mires*, says Austin. *Mírame, aquí estoy* (230). In an interview given shortly after the publication of *62*, Cortázar commented, *...it is obvious that the physical must also seem to me metaphysical, whenever between seeing and the thing seen, or between subject and object, there exists a privileged means of access...*<sup>11</sup> It is this privileged access that converts a garret in Paris into a *locus amoenus*, a *miserable escenario de fábricas y cables de alta tensión* (255) into *una especie de Arcadia*.

Juan's rebellion against the *figura* — what he has discovered about Hélène — is futile because he continues to define himself in terms of his role in the *figura*. No matter what happens to Hélène and Nicole (who seems to be subsumed into a blood-thirsty continuum of the undead in the scene with Frau Marta), it is doubtful that Juan and Marrast will ever gain freedom because they cherish their servitude. Perhaps the only real rebellion against the destructive force of the *figura* is creation. The romance



between Celia and Austin is a clear example of the *metaphysical of the physical*, in its celebration of love that is both sexual and innocent, earthly and transcendent. The Renaissance pastoral looks beyond the world of the senses to the World of Ideas; following Neoplatonism, it believes that proper love can lead the lover to the contemplation of absolute Beauty. But Cortázar insists that the *goal is here, not in the world of Platonic ideas or in any of the various beautiful paradises of the churches*,<sup>18</sup> In the room Celia and Austin share in Paris, the spirit of Arcadia, of the Golden Age, is incarnate here and now.

## NOTAS

- 1 Jorge de Montemayor, *Los siete libros de la Diana*, ed. Enrique Moreno Báez (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1976), pp. 50-51.
- 2 Montemayor, p. 223.
- 3 Montemayor, p. 196.
- 4 Cited in Bárbara Mujica, "Antiutopian Elements in the Spanish Pastoral Novel," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, Vol. 26 (1979), p. 277.
- 5 Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venezia e il suo estuario* (Trieste: L. I. N. T., 1963), p. 853.
- 6 Julio Cortázar, *62: Modelo para armar* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1973), p. 62. Future references will be given in the text itself.
- 7 Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 6.
- 8 Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," *College English*, Vol. 78 (1973), p. 353.
- 9 William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1974), pp. 253-294.
- 10 Julio Cortázar, *Rayuelo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1965), p. 523.
- 11 Montemayor, pp. 11-12.
- 12 Rachel Bromberg, *Three Pastoral Novels* (Brooklyn: Postar Press, 1970), p. 46.
- 13 Mujica, p. 263.
- 14 Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Washington, D.C.: McMillan, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 696.
- 15 Sadie, Vol. 3, p. 511.
- 16 Ernest Newman, *Stories of the Great Operas* (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1928), pp. 124-157.

17 Cited in Rita Guibert, *Seven Voices*, trans. Frances Partridge (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 291.

18 Cited in Guibert, p. 291.