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Storytelling and Narrative Legacy: Violence and the Moral Decline of Jaime Deza in Javier Marías's *Tu rostro mañana*

Javier Marías combined historiography and fiction to examine the consequences of violence in Tu rostro mañana*, published in three volumes:* Fiebre y lanza *(2002),* Baile y sueño *(2004), and* Veneno y sombra y adiós *(2007). This interpretation examines the moral decline of Jaime Deza, the narrator-protagonist, in what he sees and the stories he hears to contextualize how Marías combined history with fiction to present nuanced representations of violence. Marías envisioned violence through Deza, who searches for a usable past to navigate the dilemmas he faces in the present.*

Keywords: *Javier Marías,* Tu rostro mañana*, violence, ethics, narrative legacy*

Javier Marías combina historiografía y ficción para examinar las consecuencias de la violencia en Tu rostro mañana*, publicada en tres volúmenes:* Fiebre y lanza *(2002),* Baile y sueño *(2004), y* Veneno y sombra y adiós *(2007). Esta interpretación examina el declive moral de Jaime Deza, el narrador-protagonista, en lo que ve y las historias que escucha para contextualizar cómo Marías combina la historia con la ficción para presentar los matices de representaciones de violencia. Marías concibió la violencia a través de Deza, quien busca un pasado útil para navegar los dilemas que afronta en el presente.*

Palabras clave: *Javier Marías,* Tu rostro mañana*, violencia, ética, legado narrativo*

As an accomplished storyteller, Javier Marías relied on his perspective as an author, columnist, and translator to make sense of the past and provide an interpretation of what it means today. His spy novel, *Tu rostro mañana* (published in three volumes in 2002, 2004, and 2007), attempts to answer the question: what will happen because of, or in the absence of, what we do? Jaime Deza, the narrator-protagonist of *Todas las almas* (1989), returns as

an older, middle-aged man who, like Marías, feels burdened by the impact of violence on historical memory. Deza's morals gradually erode as he witnesses and later perpetrates violence, succumbing to the *veneno*, or poison, that his father, a survivor of the Spanish Civil War, had long warned him to avoid. *Tu rostro mañana* contemplates violence more than it criticizes it. Marías combined historiography and fiction, formed through Spain and the author's familial memory, to reflect on violence. The characters surrounding Deza present him with a troubling dichotomy as his father, Juan Deza, and his mentor, Sir Peter Wheeler, tell stories that illustrate the consequences of violence for victims, perpetrators, and witnesses. At the same time, Bertram Tupra, his supervisor with an unnamed group of British Intelligence, attempts to instill a pragmatic view of utilitarian violence. Deza is an ambiguous narrator-protagonist whose seemingly good intentions are corrupted by his exposure to violent acts, thus suggesting the inevitability of violence, even for those who, in theory, reject it.

While the novel is ambivalent about how to rectify the past, Marías's writing suggests a burden not to let the injustices of the past stand. *Rostro* revisits collective memory through historiography as it brings history (including real-life individuals, events, books, posters, and other artifacts) in line with Marías's understanding of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship, which primarily came from his father, Julián. Sara Brenneis analyzed nearly two hundred of Marías's weekly columns in *El País* from 2001 to 2005 (during which he wrote *Rostro*) and found that, despite his attention to Spain's position in national and world affairs, "[he] does not stray far from a relevant issue that has preoccupied him for decades, inside and outside of his novels: his father's treatment during and after the Spanish Civil War" (179). However, Marías did not limit his storytelling to rectifying his father's betrayal but instead uses it to supplement the reader's conceptualization of violence through the intersection of historiography and fiction. The novel's historical and fictional characters encounter instances in which they hear of, witness, or even participate in violent acts. Thus, *Rostro* requires active and profound reflection, as Gonzalo Navajas argues: "[es] una narración conceptualmente ambiciosa ya que se plantea cuestiones que le dan dimensiones extraliterarias y se adentran en el campo del conocimiento y la filosofía" (151). The broad scope of Marías's storytelling makes *Rostro* a demanding work of literary thought, as Navajas suggests, in which the narrator-protagonist (Deza) contemplates the (in)conspicuous effects of violence, suggesting that we, like Deza, cannot expect answers to the moral dilemmas we face without turning to the past.

The theme of violence grows stronger with each of *Rostro's* three installments. Deza questions violence in *Fiebre y lanza* (which I cite as *FL*),

witnesses it in *Baile y sueño* (*BS*), and becomes a perpetrator of violence in *Veneno y sombra y adiós* (*VSA*). Marías dedicated this last installment to the individuals who influence the novel's moral lessons: his father, Julián Marías (1914-2005), a Spanish philosopher, and Sir Peter Russell (1913-2006), a British Hispanist and professor at Oxford University. There is consensus among scholars and readers of Marías's work that Julián Marías was the inspiration for the biography and experiences of Juan Deza, the melancholic father of Jaime Deza, who was betrayed to Franco's authorities (Brenneis 189; Miles 587). Similar comparisons have been made between Peter Russell and Marías's fictionalized version of him (Peter Wheeler) in several of his novels. Specifically, as Brenneis explains, "as the trilogy progresses, Wheeler's and Russell's life stories continue to run parallel to each other, though it is impossible for the reader to discern to what extent the conversations between Deza and Wheeler are invented or real" (188-89). In *Rostro*, Marías folds elements and experiences from Russell's life into Wheeler's, crafting a character who gives credence to Jaime Deza as he works in espionage. (Russell himself served in the British Intelligence Corps during the Spanish Civil War and World War II before working at Oxford.) Together, Julián Marías and Russell present what Brenneis calls "pseudo-fictional characters," strengthening the novel's fusion of historiography and fiction while suggesting readers "come to their own conclusions about where fact leaves off and fiction begins" (188). Sebastiaan Faber suggests that Julián Marías and Sir Peter Russell's fictional counterparts (Juan Deza and Peter Wheeler, respectively) "serve as ethical models" for Jaime Deza (186). Their stories instill in Deza a moral code for navigating the increasing dangers of violence while working for Tupra and British Intelligence. Their stories, which include experiences from the Spanish Civil War (involving Juan Deza and Wheeler) and subsequent dictatorship and World War II (experienced by Juan Deza and Wheeler, respectively), instill in Deza a moral code for navigating the increasing dangers of violence while working as an analyst of human subjects, specifically offering predictions of their behavior, while under the enigmatic Tupra.

Rostro inextricably connects violence to storytelling by forming a connection between the past and the fictional violence Deza experiences. Readers cannot grasp the depth of *Rostro* without some understanding of Spain's recent history, as "the country is still publicly grappling with its memories of the Spanish Civil War and postwar dictatorship some seventy years later" (Brenneis 10). The impression of history on the present and future influenced Marías, who was a frequent commentator on Spanish society and current events. As Spain continues to come to terms with its violent past through cultural production, specifically literature in the case of this analysis, "what remains clear is that narratives of the Civil War and

Franco's dictatorship positioned on either side of the political divide have recently renewed historical interest in Spain while fanning the flames of contention about what constitutes the country's 'true' past" (Brenneis 13). Storytelling is crucial for re-examining the past, as writers in Marías's generation (including Javier Cercas, Dulce Chacón, and Almudena Grandes) have written stories of moral responsibility in which "the narrative quality of the historical retelling challenges the reader to question concepts of 'truth'" (Everly 3).

History and fiction intersect throughout *Rostro* to accentuate the novel's violence through storytelling. Understood from this perspective, Carmen Moreno-Nuño explains that *Rostro* "actúa como moraleja, creando una distancia reflexiva crítica que invita a repensar la representación cultural de la Guerra Civil" (17-18). Marías conceptualized violence through the histories Deza reads and the stories he is told, the crimes he witnesses, and, finally, when he must choose between killing his estranged wife's abuser, Custardoy, or letting him live. Deza's hesitancy to kill is not a concern for the Other but rather his fear of how he will be remembered if he kills Custardoy. Deza's decline comes into perspective as he retrogresses from his opposition to violence as he works for Tupra's clandestine group. His exposure to violence and later violent actions allowed Marías to use historiography and fiction to reassess the past with a specific focus on familial and national histories. While Marías did not take a side between good and evil in *Rostro*, as he rarely did, his writing takes a nuanced approach to violence. History and fiction intertwine throughout the novel as Deza contemplates violence, learning from contrasting examples; some instill in him a moral code (his father, Juan Deza), a reflective melancholy (his mentor, Wheeler), or a pragmatic understanding of the usefulness of violence. Their stories intersect with history, creating a more ambiguous understanding of violence as Deza's propensity for violence grows from what he sees to what he does.

Telling and not telling stories was one of Marías's main novelistic concerns in fiction. While Marías's writing provides fictional versions of his father and Sir Peter Russell that tell Deza stories, it simultaneously warns against the dangers of storytelling. The first sentence of *Rostro* begins: "No debería uno contar nunca nada" (*FL* 13). Brenneis points out that, through his excerpt, "Jaime Deza opens volume one of *Tu rostro mañana* by sounding an alarm to the dangers of storytelling" (185). Veronica Esposito suggests, "[Deza] then defies the injunction for more than 1,100 pages." J. Seána Ryan similarly insists the admonition is perplexing: "Many of the characters of the novel, including the narrator, depend upon their ability to recount events for their livelihood. Yet, wrapped up in the many layers of stories which make up this work, is a fundamental fear of the consequences of telling too

much" (249). Marías himself spoke on the importance of the novel's warning, "en este comienzo están ya contenidos los temas del libro. Este tema de contar o no contar nos afecta a cualquiera, no solo a los escritores: todos contamos" (Marías, "Los rostros y el tiempo" 74). The narrative creates a paradox: Deza's need for stories, specifically for the answers they might provide to the intensifying moral dilemmas he faces while working for Tupra, is weighed against the warning that storytelling releases the possibility of innumerable anticipated and unanticipated consequences.

In *Rostro,* Marías demonstrates a curiosity for a useful past through his approach to storytelling. By merging historiography with fiction, David Herzberger suggests, "Marías proposes how narrative might be used to envision (and configure) human actions in the future – how stories might foretell, as the title puts it, 'tu rostro mañana'" ("Javier Marías's *Tu Rostro Mañana*" 207). As Herzberger observes, the combination of history and fiction conveys the consequences of violence, proving in *Rostro* that all stories have a time and place to be told. Brenneis adds that Marías's writing relies heavily on history to give *Rostro* a "fictional framework to produce a historical retelling" (191). Through this process, Marías projected his fascination with storytelling, including the real-life implications in addition to fictional, on Deza, whose curiosity for learning from the past is first on display in volume one (*Fiebre y lanza*) when he browses Wheeler's library to learn more about his host's involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Brenneis insists the library's collection (including books, novels, posters, artwork, and propaganda—some historical, some entirely Marías's creations) serves to "ground the novels in a historical reality indistinguishable from the fictional story Marías has composed…They definitively connect the novels to reality, though without citations to aid the reader in making those connections" (191). Historiography thus afforded Marías considerable latitude to establish a plausible narrative that combines real-life persons and stories with his fictional creations.

The appearance of each real-life individual connects *Rostro* to the past. One name Deza repeatedly encounters among Wheeler's collection is Andreu Nin Pérez (also known as Andrés Nin), a communist leader who helped form POUM, the Workers Party of Marxist Unification, in 1935. Through Deza, the novel retraces the events that brought about Nin's demise: The Communist Party of Spain (PCE) declared POUM illegal after the discovery of a falsified letter allegedly sent by Nin to Francisco Franco; Nin was arrested, sent to a Republican prison camp at Alcalá de Henares, interrogated, tortured, and executed in 1937. According to *Rostro*, Nin's accusers denounced POUM as a traitorous organization that cooperated with Franco and sympathized with Spain's nationalist movement (*FL* 152). Marías used Nin's story, as he does with other historical figures, to show

how language, such as slander, leads to physical violence, thus raising the stakes by which Deza reflects on his actions later in the novel.

Marías was not the only writer troubled by Nin's experience. Nin's persecution appears in *Rostro* through the process of intertextuality. Rather than Deza describing what he might already know about Nin, he narrates the latter's story while reading from Wheeler's copy of *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), George Orwell's account of his time in Spain during the Civil War, which describes how the communist-controlled secret police arrested individuals suspected to have connections to the organization, "including wounded men, hospital nurses, wives of members and in some cases, even children" (173). Deza struggles to comprehend the disloyalty that preceded Nin's demise, and questions why his captors tortured him: "él no habló, no contestó, no dio nombres ni dijo nada. Nin, mientras lo torturaban," adding "le costó la vida, aunque seguramente habrían acabado quitándosela de todas formas" (*FL* 458). Marías interwove historical accounts, such as Nin's well-known story (for which he uses Orwell's *Homage* to give context), with the fictional stories that others tell Deza. Isabel Cuñado explains that historical figures – including Nin, Orwell, and countless others – allow Deza to express his intrigue with violence: "Las primeras especulaciones sobre la experiencia de la violencia y la posibilidad de su narración se elaboran a partir de los fantasmas de la Guerra Civil" (237). Ryan suggests that by invoking the past, "the worlds of reality and fiction are never far apart … it is impossible to know where one world begins and the other ends" (262). Intertextuality offers Deza a broader understanding of the past, in this case, Nin's demise, while simultaneously providing a framework for readers to interpret past events in *Rostro*, whether they be fact or fiction.

Wheeler's library, symbolic as a place of inquiry and reason, is where reality and fiction begin to intertwine in *Rostro*. As Deza browses historical and fictional works, he finds multiple references to his father, including critical works and papers written by him. The fictional Juan Deza, who served in the Civil War as a Republican correspondent and was later betrayed by a friend and imprisoned, is based on Marías's father, Julián. When Julián Marías was a doctoral candidate in philosophy, he was denounced by professors and friends for his criticism of Franco, briefly imprisoned, and banned from teaching. Brenneis explains how Marías's father, Julián influenced his writing, specifically in *Rostro* and his columns: "Marías unabashedly admits that his father's postwar ordeal as a prominent scholar and philosopher in Spain who was marked as an enemy of the Franco state, falsely accused, and imprisoned, had a profound effect on his own writing" (34). Faber identifies similarities between Julián Marías and Juan Deza, explaining that the later "is largely based on Marías's father," adding that Marías once wrote a column in defense of his father and

"revealed the friends' betrayal and its consequences for his father's career" (187). However, Marías attempted to dispel notions that his father directly influenced Juan Deza, possibly to maintain a level of novelistic ambiguity:

> Incluso las conversaciones que hay entre Jacobo y Juan Deza, su padre, no tienen una base real. Son conversaciones que yo habría podido tener con mi padre, y digamos que la tonalidad del padre de Deza es la de mi padre, pero no necesitaba renovarla estando con él. Ni tampoco iba a hablar con él con el propósito de nutrir la novela. No me gusta hacer eso. ("Los rostros y el tiempo" 73)

However, readers familiar with Julián Marías are likely to observe the similarities between his story and Juan Deza, who is also "a scholar who's been betrayed by a slanderous friend" (Blitzer). While we must take Marías's words into account, there is a correlation between Julián Marías's experience with Francoism and Juan Deza, who tells his son, Jaime, stories from the Civil War and dictatorship years, instilling him with a moral code as he warns him not to (re)tell stories that bring back the horrific images of the past (Brenneis 193). Through these real and fictional father figures, Marías explores the perpetual pain of violence by interweaving personal history with fiction.

The influence of the past on *Rostro* extends beyond books, documents, and historical figures. Marías's writing uses artifacts that evoke imagery of the archaic violence associated with historic weaponry to strengthen the connection between past and present. Deza encounters violence when he accompanies Tupra, Manoia (one of the unit's assets), and Manoia's wife, Flavia, to a nightclub. Tupra becomes enraged when he discovers Flavia on the dance floor with Rafita De la Garza (a Spanish diplomat and Deza's former colleague) and instructs Deza, his new protégé, to take De la Garza to the accessible bathroom and wait. After Tupra escorts Manoia and Flavia back to their table, he enters the bathroom, sprinkles a line of cocaine on the toilet seat, and offers it to the detained De la Garza, a known drug user. Deza compares the scene – De la Garza exposing his neck to snort the drugs – to executions by ax and guillotine, which becomes more absurd when Tupra silently removes a Katzbalger (a short renaissance arming sword, approximately two to two and a half feet in length) from his trench coat and repeatedly makes down cuts toward De la Garza that imitate decapitation. While Tupra does not land any of the violent strokes, as he stops mere inches from his victim's neck, his actions cause Deza to suffer a panic attack. The unexpected scene escalates quickly, likely leaving readers unprepared and questioning what they are to make of Tupra torturing De la Garza. Although Deza decries the attack, implied through his shock, he does nothing. Instead, he becomes an accomplice to Tupra's violence. The archaic

violence of the bathroom torture scene, implied in the symbolism of the Katzbalger sword, continues Marías's delineation of moral questions that Deza tries to answer throughout *Rostro*.

Marías relied on history to contextualize the attack on De la Garza through a series of lengthy digressions of over nearly one hundred pages. When Tupra finishes beating De la Garza, the scene lasts a mere ten minutes in real-time. These deviations interrupt what happens to Deza in the present, particularly the action that readers of *Rostro* have long awaited and provide past instances of violence that necessitate contemplation. The digressions in *Rostro* connect the novel to other works by Marías that utilize similar breaks from the narrative, including *Corazón tan blanco* (1992) and *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* (1994), as each reflection builds upon another. While digressions are a part of Marías's style, they are used more in *Rostro* than in his other novels up to that point (Marías, "Los rostros y el tiempo" 70). Marías adopted his style of progression through digression from Laurence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, his favorite novel, which he also translated into Spanish. Since *Rostro's* publication, Marías has explained the purpose of its drawn-out digressions from the plot, explicitly highlighting the bathroom scene where Deza watches Tupra viciously beat De la Garza and threaten him with the sword: "la acción vuelve atrás y se acuerdan una serie de conversaciones entre el narrador y su padre. ("Los rostros y el tiempo" 70) Digressions elevate the bathroom torture scene from action to a profound reflection on trauma. The digressions in *Rostro* are a part of Marías's style of literary thought: "a pesar de la incertidumbre y el desconocimiento inherentes a su método, se afana en buscar – y finalmente encuentra – cierta orientación en lo real, cierto *saber a qué atenerse* frente a la realidad humana" (Bertrán 222-23). The novel progresses as it digresses, as Deza, in his role as narrator, looks to the past to comprehend what he experiences in the present.

The deviations from the narrative, which may prove frustrating for readers unfamiliar with Marías's style, convey Deza's trauma as a spectator of violence. In his review of the novel, William Deresiewicz suggests: "Deza's retreat into reflection here is comprehensible. He's terrified by what his boss appears to do, and his mind spins in upon itself to spare himself the sight of it" ("No Name or Too Many?"). Contrary to Deresiewicz's explanation, Deza does not avoid what he sees because he cannot; he is unable to comprehend the attack without relating it to the past. Anne Walsh suggests the digressions heighten the novel's intensity: "It would be wrong to say that such a narrative dilutes the violence of the scene described. Rather, by prolonging the tension, it teases the reader in a Hitchcockian manner, creating a masterly sense of dramatic suspense" (67). Walsh's observation is confirmed as Deza recalls the pain with which his father

remembered wartime violence, "por fortuna, y ojalá os dure eso siempre, no habéis estado en situaciones en las que no había más remedio que contar con ella" (*BS* 296). The deviations are, in fact, stories that Deza uses to cope with the violence he watches unfold, which effectively connect the fictional narrative in the present to Spain's history.

Despite Deza's gift for predicting behavior or "one's face tomorrow," his response to violence is heavily influenced by the stories his father tells him. As he watches Tupra beat De la Garza, he remembers two stories that his father struggles to tell from the war. The first story he overheard from a woman on a streetcar:

> Mira, ahí vivían unos ricos que nos llevamos a todos y les dimos el paseo. Y a un crío pequeño que tenían, lo saqué de la cuna, lo agarré por los pies, di unas cuantas vueltas y lo estampé allí mismo contra la pared. Ni uno dejamos, a la mierda la familia entera. (*BS* 300).

Although Juan Deza could not verify the story, Jaime remembers that it weighed heavily on him each time he rode past the house. The second was a man who bragged about killing Emilio Marés, an old friend, at the onset of the war in 1936. When the alleged killer and others forced Marés to dig his grave before being executed, he refused: "A mí me podréis matar y me vais a matar. Pero a mí no me toreáis," and his killers took his words as a challenge:

> Allí mismo lo banderilleamos, lo picamos un poquito desde el techo de la camioneta haciéndole pasadas lentas, y luego fue su paisano el que se encargó del estoque. Un tipo atravesado, muy cabrón, y se vio que tenía algo de práctica, le entró muy bien a matar, la primera hasta el fondo, cruzada en el corazón. Yo le puse sólo un par de banderillas cortas, en lo alto de la espalda. (*BS* 318-19)

This inclusion of Spanish culture, the controversial *corrida de toros* or bullfight, vividly portrays Marés's execution as more than a politically motivated murder but a dehumanizing act carried out as a sport. This brief and fictional memory is one of the novel's most explicit instances of violence. Despite Juan Deza's struggle to reconcile with the past, what to tell and how to tell it, "el relato de la muerte de Marés pasa del padre al hijo, como una herencia verbal que amplía la memoria," (Cuñado 239). The two stories are difficult for Juan Deza to share, but despite his reluctance to retell the past, he must share them to instill a moral code in his son: "quien ha vivido la violencia a diario durante una época de su vida no jugará nunca con ella, ni se la tomará a la ligera" (*BS* 333). Juan Deza's stories, juxtaposed with his son's need to know the consequences of his actions, make *Rostro* an

introspective novel concerned with raises philosophical questions. The novel draws on Marías's family history, implicit in Juan Deza's stories inspired by Julián Marías, and Spain's national history, including references to Spain's bullfighting culture, combining both to create opportunities for his narrator-protagonist to reflect on violence critically.

A strong and undeniable connection exists between the symbolic violence of language and the physical violence we see. Jean-Jacques Lecercle has written extensively on the subject, arguing that victims must feel and fear that "the violence of insinuation and threat, as the opponents try to gain the most favourable position, always threatens to give way to physical violence" (254). In *Rostro*, Tupra warns De la Garza after beating him, with Deza acting as his interpreter, that the attack could have been far worse: "otro día, cualquiera de estos, sabemos dónde encontrarlo. Que no olvide eso, dile que la espada siempre estará ahí siempre" (*BS* 347). When Deza later questions Tupra why he used the sword, his mentor replies:

> Si yo le saco a un individuo una pistola o una navaja, es seguro que se asustará, pero será un susto convencional, o trillado, como te he dicho, quizá esa es la palabra. Porque eso es lo habitual hoy en día y desde hace ya un par de siglos, de hecho va para antiguo. (*BS* 394)

Deza's understanding of violence transforms as Tupra's threat assures that he will return to finish the act if necessary, thus shattering his nonviolence ideals as he enters the world of espionage and witnesses his boss brazenly wield the Katzbalger sword.

Representations of violence affect how audiences react to what they read, hear, and see. Writers entrust readers with the facts and circumstances of their stories to contemplate the violence inflicted on or by their characters. Other contemporary writers who use violence to reinterpret the past include Javier Cercas and Dulce Chacón, whose novels, *Soldados de Salamina* (2001) and *La voz dormida* (published in 2002, the same year as *Fiebre y lanza*), similarly blend historiography and fiction as Marías did in *Rostro*. Kathryn Everly suggests *Soldados de Salamina* and *La voz dormida* shifted how Spain views its past and present, specifically its recuperation of historical memory, through "texts that reinterpret history at the same time as they reinterpret the novel" (26). Just as Cercas and Chacón revisited the consequences of the Civil War and Francoism, Marías similarly reflected on violence in *Rostro* through the stories others tell Deza, history books, and other artifacts.

While the first two parts of *Rostro* (*Fiebre y lanza* and *Baile y sueño*) focus on collective history, Deza's changes in the third part (*Veneno y sombra y adiós*). Juan Deza's influence on Jaime wanes as Tupra makes him

privy to the malicious realities of their work, including blackmail, manipulation, and violence. The volume begins as Deza and Tupra debate cowardice, heroism, and "narrative horror," or fear that a single act will determine one's legacy. Tupra criticizes Deza's position that violence is never justified and presents narrative legacy (also referred to as narrative horror, *vergüenza torera*, or "a bullfighter's sense of shame") as an effective tool for analyzing subjects and predicting their propensity for cowardice, heroism, or even violence (*VSA* 26). Tupra describes narrative horror, which he also refers to as the K-M Complex (the "K," standing for President John F. Kennedy and the "M," for Jayne Mansfield), as one's fear of being unfavorably remembered in the future, particularly if their actions are judged from outside the context and time in which they occurred. Marías utilized the former president of the United States and Hollywood starlet because their lives are remembered by a specific moment, Kennedy's assassination and Mansfield's fatal car accident, "[que] las definen o las configuran y casi anulan cuánto hicieron antes" (*VSA* 37). Narrative legacy, in all its iterations (narrative horror, *vergüenza torera*, K-M Complex), is a recurring leitmotif, particularly at the beginning of *Veneno y sombra y adiós*, that juxtaposes what characters do with their concern for personal memory. Narrative legacy gives Deza not only a framework to evaluate others but also to reflect on his actions and their consequences.

While the novel explores violence through storytelling, it is not until *Veneno y sombra y adiós* that Deza experiences its poison-like consequences. Although Deza is adept at reading people and predicting their behavior, his once firmly held principles diminish as he works for Tupra. When Deza disapproves of Tupra's clandestine and violent methods, swearing that he is incapable of such behavior, the latter asks a question that is essential to comprehend Marías's approach to violence in *Rostro*: "¿Por qué no se puede ir por ahí pegando, matando?" (*BS* 408). Deza is caught off guard and responds: "¿Cómo que por qué? ¿Qué quiere decir, *por qué*?" (*BS* 408). Faber suggests that while Deza appears confused, he comes to understand that "Tupra is looking for a genuine answer, a personal reflection or a reasoned argument" (180). By posing these questions at the conclusion of *Baile y sueño*, the story leaves Deza (and the reader) to contemplate a response. The first section of *Veneno y sombra y adiós*, aptly titled *Veneno*, centers on the desensitizing effect of violence on those who witness it, thus reducing their capacity to make value judgments while alluding to Deza's increasing susceptibility to violent behavior. This is best illustrated in Tupra's disregard for Deza's objections as he pressures his subordinate to watch a collection of top-secret videos: "Son filmaciones que guardamos por si un día hacen falta…No va a gustarte su contenido, pero no los desprecies ni los condenes. Ten presente lo que valen y para lo que valen. Y el servicio que

rinden, el bien que hacen al país a veces" (*VSA* 162-63). The content includes beatings, illicit sex, illegal drug use, bribery, scams, conspiracies, violence, cruelty, sadism, torture, improvised homicides, and premeditated murders committed by mafiosos and the sociopolitical elite, wealthy businessmen, socialites, and politicians. Deza recognizes the danger that the surreptitious videos pose for his ability to accurately predict human behavior: "a medida que miraba y entreveía y veía, un veneno me fue entrando, y si utilizo esta palabra, veneno, no es del todo a la ligera ni sólo metafóricamente, sino porque se introdujo en mi conocimiento algo que nunca había estado allí antes" (*VSA* 165). Despite Deza's complaints, Tupra responds: "Eres decepcionante a veces. A nosotros nos conviene eso siempre, con cualquiera que tenga importancia, peso, capacidad de decisión, nombre, influencia. Mejor para nosotros, cuantas más manchas y más altas" (*VSA* 170). Tupra relies on his authority and impunity, coupled with his indifference to moral justifications, to surveil suspected offenders of social norms and coerce them as needed. Notwithstanding the success of the recordings to blackmail at the behest of the State, Deza is deeply disturbed by the content. However, despite his protests, Tupra's recordings imprint on Deza's mind the possibility of violence, "al final acaba contaminándose, se le acaba inoculando un cierto veneno y empieza a comprender y a aceptar que ciertas actitudes son como mínimo útiles: infundir miedo, por ejemplo" (Marías, "Los rostros y el tiempo" 71).

Marías continues to draw attention to the consequences of violence through the projection of the past on *Rostro*. Historiography and fiction converge again with Tupra's collection of top-secret videos, as they did when Deza browsed Wheeler's library. Deza, still coming to terms with having witnessed Tupra torture De la Garza, struggles to see the benefit of the recordings, as Felix de Azúa explains: "en esas cintas se esconde un poder terrorífico que es simultáneamente grotesco: palizas, torturas, asesinatos, actos sexuales ridículos, la vil simpleza que exhibe constantemente la televisión en sus programas. Y sin embargo, es real para aquellas personas que la sufren" (52). Deza associates a particular recording of an execution on an Italian beach, which Tupra downplays as criminals settling a score, with Spanish history, recalling Antonio Gisbert Pérez's painting, *Fusilamiento de Torrijos y sus compañeros en las playas de Málaga*, to contextualize what he sees. Gisbert's masterpiece, considered one of Spain's greatest nineteenth-century historical paintings, depicts the execution of José María de Torrijos y Uriarte, a liberal Spanish soldier who fought during the Peninsular War (1807-1814) and returned seventeen years later from living in exile to lead a rebellion against the absolutist government of Ferdinand VII. The connection between the Tupra's video and Spanish history is further reinforced as Deza quotes a ballad from

Mariana Pineda (a 1927 play written by Federico García Lorca): "Muy de noche lo mataron con toda su compañía" (qtd. in *VSA* 182). The brief inclusion of Lorca is intriguing, but certainly not incidental; the poet and playwright's tragic murder at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War adds historic authenticity to the story. Similar to how Gisbert and Lorca conceptualized historical violence in *Fusilamiento de Torrijos* and *Mariana Pineda*, the incorporation of these works in *Rostro* was Marías's interpretation of violence at the start of the twenty-first century. Cuñado suggests the inclusion of culturally significant works make compelling layers within the narrative: "La historia llega mediatizada por la pintura de Gisbert, que el lector puede ver y que también es descrita por el narrador a la luz de los versos del *Mariano Pineda* de Lorca" (238). *Rostro's* intertextuality is effective, as Cuñado suggests, enabling Marías to make connections between history and fiction as he examines the impact of violence over generations.

Deza's morals, informed by his father's stories and experiences, dwindle as Tupra exposes him to violence. Even as an indirect participant, his role as spectator is emotionally and mentally taxing: "a medida que se sucedían las escenas me sentía más encogido, disminuido, anquilosado … Esa es la facultad del veneno, se infiltra y lo contamina todo" (*VSA* 206). Deza's experience watching Tupra beat De la Garza and the video recordings, lead him to question his conceptualization of violence (when, how, and to whom it occurs) and cause him to "doubt human morality or the possibility of a non-ethical life" (Faber 182). However, Deza's distaste for the videos is short-lived, as their "*veneno*," or "poison," distorts his moral perception. For Deza, choosing to follow his father or Tupra cannot be reduced to a simple decision between good and evil. Instead, he struggles to negotiate the circumstances in which he finds himself and makes decisions without violating the influences of the past (which come from a combination of historical memory and Juan Deza's stories) and the present (Tupra's businesslike rationalization of violence). Through Deza, Marías created a less rigid dichotomy between right and wrong, presenting readers with a more nuanced approach to violence, specifically toward its representation and use, leaving it to them to contemplate Deza's response to Tupra's question: "Why can't one kill?".

The recordings change Deza, who subconsciously begins to tolerate violence as a justifiable means to an end as he watches at his superior's behest. Through Tupra, Walsh suggests, "violence has been shown to be the solution, and it lies with us all. To get what we want, all we need to do is to instill fear" (66). Deza separates violence from the history he knows and the stories his father has told him as he absorbs his new mentor's teachings. Faber expounds on Deza's drastic change in behavior and attitude:

> What shakes him most is his own participation in acts of blackmail, violence, and betrayal. These occur throughout his assignment in London but later bleed into his personal life. And, as his confidence in the possibility of an ethical life loses force, so does his belief in the possibility of moral judgment. If life and history are drenched in the most basic selfishness, marked by ruthless struggle, instinctive violence, and gratuitous cruelty; if immorality is the rule and not the exception, then what use is it to prohibit or even condemn it? (182)

Deza's morals gradually decline as the plot moves toward the climax of *Veneno y sombra y adiós* when he confronts his greatest dilemma, and his principles crumble. Deza is conflicted between the reality of historical memory, which instilled in him a belief that violence is never acceptable, and his fear that violence may be necessary, even for him, specifically when others pose or are perceived as posing a threat. He no longer observes violence at a distance as he becomes indirectly and directly embroiled in violent acts. Marías reintroduced Custardoy (who first appeared in *Corazón tan blanco* in 1992), an art forger and womanizer, to test Deza's resolve and show the effects of Tupra's "poison" (recordings of violent acts). The altercation between Deza and Custardoy is the first and only instance in which the narrator-protagonist directly perpetrates violence; shadowing, plotting, and finally confronting the abusive new boyfriend with the pretext of protecting his estranged wife, Luisa. The violent incident stems from what Deza has learned from Tupra, as Carolina Sanabria suggests:

> El personaje se nutre de la información básica que confía en que le permitirá proceder a la expulsión del intruso, desde un *modus operandi* comparable con el de Tupra, como uso estratégico para contrarrestar la amenaza que el extraño representa. Su ejercicio resulta del adiestramiento en la observación durante sus meses de trabajo en un edificio sin nombre. (146)

In contrast to Deza's vindictive violence, the memory of Peter Wheeler's deceased wife, Valerie, returns *Rostro* to a more reflective text with her tragic yet introspective story. *Rostro* uses Valerie, whose unintentional actions during World War II brought about the persecution of loved ones, to reinsert repercussions in the discussion of violence that Tupra had worked to remove. These experiences influence and shape who Deza becomes at the end of *Rostro* as he accepts violence as a (possible) solution while recognizing that it is not without consequence.

Narrative legacy proves a troubling concept for Deza in *Veneno y sombra y adiós* when he discovers that his ex-wife, Luisa, has been physically abused by Custardoy. Hannah Arendt theorized that such instincts arise in

situations when "[the] very swiftness of a violent act may be the only appropriate remedy … under certain circumstances violence – acting without argument or speech and without counting the consequences – is the only way to set the scales of justice right again" (63-64). However, Deza struggles to know how to respond to Luisa's abuser, leading him to call Tupra, who advises: "si quieres quitar el problema de en medio, quítalo," adding in English, "*just make sure he's out of the picture*" (*VSA* 435-36). While Deza hopes for a non-violent solution, he reasons that he would have understood Tupra's advice to mean he should kill Custardoy had he heard similar words in *The Godfather* or an episode of *The Sopranos*. When he questions how to remove Custardoy, Tupra responds "yo creo que sí sabes cómo. Lo sabemos todos siempre, aunque no estemos acostumbrados. Otra cosa es que no nos veamos en ello. Es cuestión de verse" (*VSA* 438). Deza's concern for history and its implications on the present have dissipated as he works in espionage; Luisa's abuse is the catalyst that tests Deza as the violent operative that Tupra has trained him to become. Just as Deza was an accomplice to violence in the first two parts of *Rostro* (*Fiebre y lanza* and *Baile y sueño*), readers now become accessories to his violent deeds as *Veneno y sombra y adiós* concludes the three-part novel.

Despite Deza's previous concerns about using violence, Tupra's advice unsurprisingly emboldens him. Walsh explains that Deza ceases to be an "aimless, disenchanted, powerless postmodern man … [he] plots and plans and sees his ambitions realized" (*66*). Deza's plans are an imitation of the violence he has seen (when Tupra terrorized De la Garza) and heard (the execution of Emilio Marés) as he asks a friend, and retired bullfighter, Miguel "Miquelín" Yanes Troyano, to borrow his sword but is offered a gun instead. These weapons are artifacts that are emblematic of violence in twentieth-century Spain; the sword symbolizes the controversial bullfight, and the Civil War-era pistol subtly evokes the atrocities committed during the three-year conflict. Deza no longer resembles his father, Juan Deza, as his once unwavering principles continue to falter until he can answer Tupra's question ("Why can't one kill?"): "soy además el que puede matar a ese segundo marido ahora mismo, con mis guantes puestos y en mi humor airado. Llevo una pistola en la mano y está cargada, sólo tendría que montarla y apretar el gatillo" (*VSA* 467). Although Deza is determined to avenge Luisa's abuse, he fears that if he pulls the trigger, his *rostro* and face will resemble those who betrayed his father, tortured Nin, executed Torrijos, and murdered Emilio Marés. *Rostro* makes readers acutely aware of the irreparability of violence, particularly murder, through Deza's angst: "no, no quiero que desaparezca nadie…ni siquiera que este hombre falte de aquí. No me atrevo, *I do not dare*" (*VSA* 492-93).

The gravity of the situation is conveyed to readers as Deza teeters between a constant sense of foreboding and rage. *Rostro* explores situations that do not conform to Deza's stringent morals, evident in the change in his disposition as he comes to see violent action as his only option: "Ahora veía muy claro que yo no quería tener la suerte ni la desgracia de que Luisa muriera o de que la mataran (suerte en el imaginario y en la realidad desgracia), que no podía permitírmelo porque lo de la realidad no tiene vuelta y jamás puede ser deshecho" (*VSA* 452-53). Ilse Logie suggests Deza's trepidation is caused out of fear for what happens if he shoots: "la consecuencia de la violencia es que paraliza a quienes la sufren, pero también a quienes la ejercen," later adding, "se ha apartado del camino de rectitud señalado por su padre, al que tanto admira" (175). The narrator-protagonist's internal monologue confirms Logie's analysis and offers readers another glimpse into Deza's conflicted conscience. Despite the fear that constrains him from committing murder, his work with Tupra has inhibited his ability to reason and he convinces himself that Custardoy cannot go unpunished – he grabs a fire poker and strikes. Walsh argues the sudden violence has profound effects on how readers view Deza:

> As Custardoy's hand is crushed, so are our beliefs in consistency. As we hear, or read of, bones breaking, we reach a crucial point in the novel, a point where, along with bone, expectations are shattered. It is unexpected and shocking. Nothing has prepared us for a violent Jaime Deza, for his unwillingness to use words to persuade, or for his belief that words are not enough. (73)

Contrary to Walsh's assessment, there is much evidence in *Veneno y sombra y adiós* indicating the inevitable violent outburst. Deza mimics Tupra brandishing the Katzbalger sword by wielding the fire poker and threatening Custardoy: "Piensa siempre que podía haber sido peor, y que siempre estaremos a tiempo de darle a la otra, o de cortártela con una espada, tengo un amigo muy ducho al que le encanta la espada, allí en Londres" (*VSA* 504). Walsh explains that Deza has transformed: "He has now crossed an important line from being witness to criminal. His identity has changed, and his notion of self has suffered as a consequence" (65). While Deza's previous experience with violence was limited to history and stories, he takes the fire poker and releases his rage by breaking Custardoy's hand. Deza is left to question what he has done, what he is capable of, and whom he has become: "He realizes now that ethics are not a theoretical luxury separated from the domain of human action but instead are relevant in our everyday lives as we write and rewrite ourselves into history" (O'Donoghue 166). Faber similarly identifies this altercation as the culmination of the narrator/protagonist's transformation: "to his discomfort, Deza finds

himself enjoying the fact that he has turned into someone as fear-inducing as Tupra" (180). Readers are left to retrace Deza's downward spiral – witnessing Tupra torture De la Garza and watching the videotapes, plotting to kill Custardoy, and, finally, the assault with a deadly weapon – from which *Rostro* infers a conclusion similar to Arendt's theory: "Violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world" (80).

Rostro exposes readers to stories that become increasingly tragic with each of its three volumes. While Deza has suspected Wheeler's participation in British espionage, as evidenced by his interest in Wheeler's involvement in the Spanish Civil War and World War II, it is the death of his mentor's wife, Valerie, that affects him the most. Wheeler explains to Deza that his wife spent her youth living with another family in Austria, where she learned through the youngest daughter, María, that the family's son-in-law, whom they knew to be a quarter Jewish, was a member of the Nazi party, a secret she would divulge years later while serving with British Intelligence during World War II. After Valerie inadvertently shared the information, she became indirectly involved in creating falsified birth certificates and passports of an officer with Jewish blood infiltrating the German military. The propaganda was effective for the British, and the Germans responded swiftly: some family members were forced to flee the country, while the daughter and son-in-law's family were arrested, sent to prison camps, and killed. When Valerie discovered the cause of their demise she questioned how she could do such a thing to her childhood friend: "la traicioné sin pensármelo, cómo pude hacer eso, cómo no caí en la cuenta. Y esas niñas muertas por mi culpa en un campo, no entenderían nada, y su madre que se montó con ellas, qué otra cosa iba a hacer la pobre, santo cielo" (*VSA* 661). Valerie did not realize and could not understand the extent to which the secret would jeopardize the family's safety, as Herzberger explains: "Her text is viewed in different contexts and from different angles and utilized for purposes suffused with a harshness that she had not originally intended," adding that the propaganda caused "the death and exile of family members and ultimately led her to take her own life" ("Knowledge and Transcendence" 216). Valerie's desire to aid in the war effort disoriented her ability to discern between right and wrong, causing her to participate secondhand in violence against loved ones. Wheeler tells her story to caution Deza of the irreparable harm violence inflicts on victims, witnesses, and direct and even indirect perpetrators. While Valerie's fictional anecdote may seem out of place, Marías used it, along with countless others, as a cautionary tale of how language, represented in *Rostro* as the circulation of storytelling within society, can inconspicuously lead to violence.

Valerie's story is traumatic yet significant to understand the implications of Deza's actions in the narrative. Nevertheless, why choose Valerie's story to bring his spy novel to a close? Herzberger suggests that Marías "has persistently embraced the idea that the world depends on its stories, or perhaps more concretely that human beings depend on stories to understand the world in which they live" ("Knowledge and Transcendence" 203). For Marías, meaningful stories bring readers a deeper conscience to navigate the world they live in. Ryan adds that "stories must be told, if memories are to be kept alive. Without a past, we cannot be prepared to face the future" (264). Deza needs to hear Valerie's story at this specific time to know the implications of the violence he has witnessed and inflicted on others. Samuel O'Donoghue proposes that there is much to be learned from the narrator-protagonist's trajectory: "[his] firsthand experience with violence, and with the ethical complexities it entails, teaches him to not sit in moral judgment of the past" (167). Now that Deza knows the pain Valerie inadvertently caused for the Austrian family, herself, and Wheeler by sharing the secret, he realizes that violence cannot continue to be a part of his life, and he resigns from working for Tupra. For Marías, stories from the Spanish Civil War and World War II are useful to examine violence and give meaning to its consequences. While *Rostro* does not offer solutions to violence, its stories bring history and fiction together, allowing us to re-examine the past, as Deza does, as we seek to define our future (Herzberger, "Javier Marías's *Tu rostro mañana*" 218).

Marías's writing relies on historiography and fiction, especially in his use of digressions, to offer readers a nuanced approach to violence. In *Rostro*, his most ambitious work, he weaves history and fiction together, forming a single lens through which to examine violence in the past and present. While it is clear that revisiting historical violence reopens the wounds of the past, Marías was intimately aware of the consequences of impunity when violence is unchecked and rationalized. Because of this awareness, his characters question violence, dispute its need, and ponder its possible repercussions. Deza, as both narrator and protagonist, devotes himself and much of the narrative to contemplating violence and its meaning, specifically the acts he witnesses and later instigates, through extensive internal dialogues and discussions with others. Through the "narrative legacy" debate between Deza and Tupra, which explains the fear one has for how future generations will remember them, Marías insisted we look to the past to comprehend the present. While Deza is praised for his prowess in reading people, knowing their intentions, and predicting their behavior ("what their face will be tomorrow"), he ironically cannot foresee his capability for resorting to violence. Through Deza's moral decline, *Rostro* incorporates Spain and Marías's family histories into a narrative that

mindfully considers how violence, both directly and indirectly, affects us, leading us to question the violent acts it depicts and reflect on our participation in reading them. To do so, *Rostro* offers a narrative framework that combines historiography and fiction to navigate a moral position through the stories, discussions, and artifacts that layer each of its three installments. Each story and anecdote Deza reads and hears, told to him by others, contradicts the novel's opening statement that we cannot tell stories, thus creating a paradox that demands his, and our, introspection as we (re)conceptualize violence.

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