

THE POETICS OF TIME IN THE POETRY OF
IDA VITALE, HILDA HILST, AND JUANA BIGNOZZI

by

LAURA CESARCO EGLIN

B.A., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002

M.A., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007

M.F.A., University of Texas at El Paso, 2010

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Spanish and Portuguese
2016

This dissertation entitled:
The Poetics of Time in the Poetry of Ida Vitale, Hilda Hilst, and Juana Bignozzi
written by Laura Cesarco Eglin
has been approved for the Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Dr. Tania Martuscelli

Dr. Juan Pablo Dabove

Dr. Leila Gómez

Dr. Javier Krauel

Dr. Marguerite Harrison

Date _____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above-mentioned discipline.

Cesarco Eglín, Laura. (Ph.D. Spanish Literature, Department of Spanish and Portuguese)

The Poetics of Time in the Poetry of Ida Vitale, Hilda Hilst, and Juana Bignozzi

Dissertation Director: Assistant Professor Tania Martuscelli

Abstract

My dissertation steps away from traditional definitions of “women subjects” or “women writing” and explores the issue of time, which is generally attributed to a male universe. This investigation is a transnational project that spans two languages and three nations. My study focuses on the work of three poets born between 1923 and 1937, who have never been put into dialog before: the Argentinean Juana Bignozzi, the Brazilian Hilda Hilst, and the Uruguayan Ida Vitale. My contention is that in these poets’ works time is not merely a recurrent theme. Rather, they carve a poetics of time, whereby they resist accepted and internalized conceptions of time.

My dissertation examines how the role of poetry is crucial in our reorganization of the ways we inhabit the world. The authors investigated are bold in their construction of new paradigms of time. I propose that inherent in Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s work is an understanding of the power dynamics that govern socio-cultural structures. These three poets resist and undermine official narrative and look at their own beliefs and rhythms in order to articulate narratives regarding time.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all of my committee for their guidance: I especially thank Tania Martuscelli for her insights, dedication, commitment, and generosity; Juan Pablo Dabove for helping me think against the grain; Leila Gómez for encouraging me to articulate my voice; Javier Krauel for his kindness, support, and observations; and Marguerite Harrison for her encouragement and feedback. I am very grateful to John Slater for his mentoring throughout my five years at CU Boulder. Thank you to Nina Molinaro for making sure I was on track when Tania was away. I am grateful and indebted to Sara Williams Fall, who worked with me, supported me, and helped me. Thank you. I feel grateful and fortunate for the love, support, and encouragement from Silvia Arroyo, Raúl Pérez Cobo, and Laura Lesta García. Special thanks to Mary Long and Anne Becher for their wisdom. I want to thank Doreen Williams for her help. Thank you to my friends and colleagues: Harrison Meadows, Meredith Jeffers, Mark Pleiss, Marina López Solà, Beatriz Builes, Carlos van der Linde, and Sabela Pena García.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
 Chapter #1 Theoretical Framework	 31
 Chapter #2 The Poetics of Fracture in Ida Vitale's Poetry	 85
 Chapter #3 <i>Da morte. Odes mínimas</i> : Time and Death in Hilda Hilst's Poetry	 143
 Chapter #4 The Past in the Present; the Past in the Self: Juana Bignozzi's Poetry	 190
 Conclusions	 261
 Work Cited	 271

INTRODUCTION

The Poetics of Time in the Poetry of Ida Vitale, Hilda Hilst, and Juana Bignozzi

Time is a common subject of obsession, worry, conversation, and wonder, and it is present in everyday life. In the Western world, it is commonly taken for granted and regarded as something that “happens” or passes. Despite this acceptance of the existence of time, it is considered as that which has to be contended with and even conquered. Time, then, is conceptualized as a problem, one that has to be fought against. Implied in this view is the premise that time is external to a person. In fact, it is the inescapable other, even the abject other, which has to be dominated, for otherwise, it will dominate us. Time is, therefore, the enemy. An example of an attempt at this domination of time is the beauty products, and the marketing around them, intended to disguise the passing of time, especially in women. The passing of time is therefore relegated to the arena of the taboo, and marks of experience and life on the body are frowned upon since they are viewed as evidence of an impending need of marginalizing the person who shows signs of time being the victor. Another telling example is the popular use of the adjective *productive* to denote time spent working, producing, especially when referring to leisure time. In this case, language is responding to and helping to perpetuate a capitalist structure of thought. Linked to this last example, is the veneration of being busy. In short, time must be conquered by being fast, keeping busy, producing quantifiable proof that time has been taken advantage of, and even fooled, and definitely defeated.

We can trace this deep involvement with time in poetry back to Horace, with a famous line from one of his odes (1.11) that reads “*carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero,*” which

has commonly been translated as “pluck the day, putting as little trust as possible in tomorrow¹.” This concern regarding time’s relentless passing and our inability to stop it later became emblematic of the concerns of neoclassical poetry. Time has been dealt with and thought of in different ways by different poets and contexts. The Spanish poet of the turn of the twentieth century, Antonio Machado, a reader of Bergson and Heidegger, was also deeply concerned with the passing of time. He viewed it, much like I described contemporary Western culture’s perspective, as something with which one had to struggle. In his work the conflict is staged as two opponents, time and the soul, each with its tools to fight: “La muerte y el olvido son las armas del tiempo; las del alma, el recuerdo y el sueño” (Predmore 711). Nevertheless, despite this struggle, Machado views poetry as being intrinsically connected to time. In the voice of his character/alter ego Juan Mairena this connection is portrayed: “Sin el tiempo, esa invención del Satanás, sin ese que llamó mi maestro ‘engendro de Luzbel en su caída,’ el mundo perdería la angustia de la espera y el consuelo de la esperanza. Y el Diablo ya no tendría nada que hacer. Y los poetas tampoco” (Mairena in Predmore 703). The anguish of the passing of time is rendered as a requisite in order to write poetry. In fact, Machado believed that poetry without an awareness of temporality was not good poetry. This is why he found a liking to Juan Ramón Jiménez’s poetry, for his poetry “is eminently temporal, expressing as it does, with striking profundity of intuition, the perpetual mutability and elusiveness of all beloved objects” (Olson 170).

In *Time and the Poet* David Daiches proposes that one of the ways poets have dealt with the disquiet caused by the passing of time is by contrasting art and its permanence to life and its

¹ Merriam Webster Online Dictionary

vulnerability to time. For instance, Horace's idea that "Art can conquer *tempus edax rerum*², for it is long while life is short" (Daiches 5) is echoed in Shakespeare:

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme
(Sonnet 55)

Other ways that poets deal with mortality are, for instance, the thought of children, or turning to nature and observing its ongoing cycles, and seeing how nature depends on time and is bound to time. Nevertheless, time for nature runs differently than it does for people. The circularity of time in nature, the seasons and their predictability or stability is something that can be depended on, while, for people, it is ultimately death that can be depended on. Nature marks a cycle of renewals; human life has no renewals or reversals, in the sense that it is formed of a perpetual creation of new moments, always heading toward death and ending there. Nevertheless, poets remind us that art is a way that humans have of renewing by creating, or re-creating, life in general and time in particular (Daiches 16). Poets then, feel that through their art, they are able to live longer and even to outlive themselves.

Through the reading of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Daiches points to an important difference between nature and art, that is, that "art is an arresting of process," which is thus opposed to nature, for the latter is the epitome of that which is continuous. The characters in the urn are portrayed as always doing the same something and always being the same: the "bride of quietness" is always "still unravish'd"; the wedding night never happens. There is no biological process, there is no change, no decay, no getting closer to death. This marks a big difference between art's characters and real people, because, to continue with the example of the bride depicted on the urn, "For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair."

² Time that devours all things (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary)

It is in this way that Daiches marks a dichotomy between art and life with regards to time. On the one hand art permits immortality; on the other hand, art does not allow for there to be process, including decay, change, and death. From this one can deduce that art is diametrically opposed to life, and therefore, more similar to an idea of death. Art is less transient than life, but it is not a substitute for or synonym of life. Art therefore, cannot provide a solution to the concern of time, change, and impermanence in life. The poet is not able to live forever through his/her work. However, it is precisely the poem that becomes the site of life, in the sense that it is where the poet thinks of and works through different concerns. Whatever the conclusions the poets have reached and reach, it is through their poems that they conceive of different approaches to and comprehension of reality or realities. Poetry then, is crucial in the understanding of reality as we know it, a site for exploration of issues of concern, as well as in its co-creation.

My dissertation looks into three different perspectives by three poets on how it is best to experience time. These views differ from the commonly accepted view on time described above. They do not try to resolve the issue of mortality or negate the passing of time. I contend that what Ida Vitale, Hilda Hilst, and Juana Bignozzi do is conceive of three different approaches to the experience of time. I argue that they reappropriate time from socio-culturally prevalent ideas, and bring it back to the self. Theirs is a more organic view of time. Through my reading of the work of these three poets, I will demonstrate the ways in which each poet creates a poetics of time that is in accordance to their beliefs and circumstances. Poetry, then, is not only a starting point for perceiving realities, nor is it only an aesthetic experience, where certain subjects are used in order to create this experience. Rather, poetry is also the medium through which commonly accepted worldviews are contested and other realities are created. Poetry is crucial in

shaping reality as we know it. I propose that the authors studied are bold in their construction of new paradigms of time. They enrich both our perception and understanding by dialoguing with and also providing a counterpart to philosophy and socio-cultural structures, and consequently to reality.

In their pushing away from other ways of seeing time and proposing their own, Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi are breaking with the monolithic at various levels. Firstly, they are reading this monolithic critically, thus questioning the capitalist conception of time. Secondly, their work evidences poetry's importance as a proponent of a strong discourse that opens up possibilities of thinking and re-thinking socio-cultural conceptions. Thirdly, these three women's poetics of time marks a return of the agency and responsibility of the construction of the ideas, structures, and narratives that our society is built on, to each of us. By voicing their dissent and helping to rebuild these narratives, Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi show their readers that they too have a voice.

The Poets in Context

IDA VITALE

Ida Vitale is part of what is known as the "Generación del '45³," which according to the Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, who also belongs to this group of intellectuals, "comienza a manifestarse [...] alrededor de 1940"⁴ (Antuñez 374). Emir Rodríguez Monegal, yet another critic of the Generación, highlights that the year 1945 was important because of the historical context: "Ese año marca el final de la segunda Guerra mundial, el comienzo de la Guerra fría y la

³ The Uruguayan critic, Emir Rodríguez Monegal claims that he coined the name: "En uno de los primeros estudios que hice la bauticé Generación del 45 y el nombre ha sido repetido" (34).

⁴ "La época cultural que se cierra hoy se inició aproximadamente en 1940, fecha que registra una inflexión renovada en la vida cultural de todo el Río de la Plata" (Rama 18).

entrada [...] del hombre en la era atómica” (34). He also mentions that nearer to Uruguay, in 1945 Perón is in power in Argentina and starts an “antiyanqui” political campaign, and at the same time, that year marks the beginning of an economic rivalry between the “viejo imperialismo británico y el más reciente norteamericano” (35).

I will not attempt to write an exhaustive list of the literary critics, essayists, journalists, writers, and poets who made up this generation, for I would undoubtedly run the risk of leaving many important people out, in the same way that in many of the lists of the “Generación del ‘45” Vitale is left out. However, I will mention a few of those who were part of the group. I am certain that these few “brushstrokes” will yield a picture of what this impressive group was like: Juan Carlos Onetti, Carlos Real de Azúa, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Ángel Rama, Armonía Somers, Mario Benedetti, Amanda Berenguer, José Pedro Díaz, Idea Vilariño, Carlos Maggi, Humberto Megget, Ida Vitale. Onetti was regarded as a guiding light of his group⁵, and the publishing of his novel *El pozo*, together with the inauguration of *Marcha*, a weekly magazine that was “la tribuna más importante de la Generación,” in 1939 mark the beginning of this Generación (Antúñez 374). Rodríguez Monegal also mentions Líber Falco and Juan Cunha as the poetry referents of the Generación. He places them as part of this generation, while others place Falco and Cunha in the previous generation, the “Generación del Centenario.” Whatever generation⁶ they belong to, and as Rama and Rodríguez Monegal state, the limits fluctuate between generations, they are very influential.

⁵ “Juan Carlos Onetti, el indiscutido mentor de esta generación” (Paganini 529).

⁶ Rama, for example, divides the generation in two, while others see there having been “tres promociones u oleadas de intelectuales que participaron de las sucesivas décadas del extenso periodo acaecido entre los años 1933 y 1974” (Berisso and Bernardo 207). This means that, for instance, the writer Cristina Peri Rossi is considered by Rama and Rodríguez Monegal as belonging to the generation after the Generación—the “Generación del 60”; while Lía Berisso and Horacio Bernardo place Peri Rossi in the last of the “tres promociones” of the Generación.

There are certain dates that are pivotal to understand this Generación. The first dates are 1903-1907 and 1911-1915, which is when José Batlle y Ordóñez was president. Under his leadership Uruguay “se reconfortaba en una democracia política y social [...]”. Entre otros avances: la defensa del derecho a huelga, el impulso a la jornada laboral de 8 horas, la extensión de la educación, la creación de un sistema de jubilaciones y pensiones, la ley de divorcio y la abolición de la pena capital” (Espeche). For these reasons, the myth of Uruguay as the “Suiza de América” was created. Even after Batlle y Ordóñez’s death in 1929 the ideals of the batllismo lived on—that, and the illusion that this could last forever: “El batllismo no sólo tuvo una serie de ‘conquistas reales’: se formula como un ‘imaginario’ o un ‘estilo nacional’” (Henry Finch quoted in Espeche). Carlos Maggi explains that they were all ballistas, “[n]o políticamente pero mentalmente” (di Candia).

Another date that is important to mention is March 31, 1933, the day of Gabriel Terra’s coup d’état. Despite this dictatorship, the illusion of the batllismo continued. Maggi gives an insight as to why:

el viejo Batlle nos legó una manera de ser tan seductora que todos los uruguayos se fueron asimilando a ella. Y a medida que esa forma de ser y de vivir se iba perdiendo, más nos enamorábamos de ella y sentíamos más la nostalgia y la necesidad de quedarnos en ese encuadre. Nosotros tenemos una formación nostálgica. Descendemos de inmigrantes que fueron hombres que dejaron su corazón en otro lado, que perdieron todo menos la vida y nosotros tenemos un arrastre de esa nostalgia. Por eso esa cosa llorona de recordar lo perdido que tenemos [...] El batllismo nos gusta dos veces: porque fue hecho a nuestra medida y porque además se ha perdido. (di Candia)

In spite of this nostalgic streak, which according to Maggi is part of all Uruguayan’s DNA because of the immigration, and despite the yearning for the batllismo days, the “Generación del ‘45” is aware of the economic crisis that ensued the coup and Terra’s dictatorship:

La crisis económica hace que los escritores perciban la nueva situación del país, que se ha visto conducido a la bancarrota, iniciada tras el golpe de estado de Terra. De ahí que el inconformismo, la protesta y la negativa a todo tipo de apoyo oficial sea la característica del grupo. Lógicamente, la generación pondrá un especial cuidado en el relato y la crítica literaria rigurosa, al tiempo que frente al evasiónismo pretende una vuelta a la realidad. Todo ello implicará la presencia de una generación que trata de romper con el aislacionismo y el sentido individualista de la anterior. (Oviedo 240)

Because Rama wanted to highlight the “signo dominante de la cultura de la época,” he preferred to call this group “Generación crítica” (Rama 19). According to this critic, “las designaciones numéricas poco dicen sobre los procesos socio-culturales, mucho menos cuando, como en este caso –generación del 45– no aluden a ninguno de esos cruciales sucesos históricos. (Rama19).

He further portrays what the Generación’s consciousness is like:

Tal conciencia corresponde a una óptica para ver la realidad, pero no tiene ninguna vinculación forzosa con estilos literarios (realismo) ni con filosofías (marxismo), pudiéndose en cambio comprobar que abraza muy dispares orientaciones. [...] [P]arece más bien nacer de una desilusión –donde puede estar implícita la quiebra de un ideal– lo que confiere especial relevancia a la experiencia existencial, a la lección histórica del hoy. (Rama 33)

It is a literature that is conscious that despite the return of democracy in 1938 “observan que las estructuras anteriores a esta conmoción han permanecido intactas,” and it is this, and not the 1933 coup that, according to Rama, makes this a “Generación crítica” (Antúnez 377). Rama even quotes Carlos Quijano, the founder of *Marcha*, to emphasize that this break is due to how the return to democracy was carried out as if nothing had happened during those five years of dictatorship or as if the circumstances and systems in place that came before the dictatorship did not have to be revalued:

El 31 de marzo es un recodo de nuestra historia; pero no lo es menos y acaso lo sea más, el año 1938. En este último, [...] la historia del país se bifurcó. El 31 de marzo fue la reacción encabezada por las clases dominantes y más capaces. 1938, mostró que la

resistencia al golpe de Estado había equivocado el camino. Para vencer a la reacción no se podía transitar por los mismos caminos de ella, buscar el apoyo de las mismas fuerzas que habían reclamado el golpe o lo habían tolerado. El tiempo, bien corto por cierto, no tardó en demostrarlo. Cuando los núcleos políticos desalojados el 31 de marzo, volvieron al gobierno, dejaron en pie no sólo las estructuras que habían posibilitado el golpe, sino también las propias construcciones de la dictadura. [...] Todo siguió como antes y la lucha que contra la reacción se inició el 31 de marzo, en vez de abrir nuevas alternativas al país, se diluyó en una oscura confusión. (Quijano quoted in Rama 27)

The Generación is critical of the attitude that the government takes⁷, as is possible to understand from Quijano's words in the article he published in *Marcha* in 1965. Rama highlights how this Uruguayan crisis becomes two-fold because of the defeat of the Spanish Republic, the rise of fascism and right-winged governments across Europe (28). Moreover, Mario Benedetti expresses in his essay "La literatura cambia de voz" that the Generación is a group that is committed to being aware of the times they live in. He thus speaks of the "tres breves palabritas: *aquí y ahora*" to describe "tanto los intelectuales con inquietudes políticas, como los políticos con inquietudes intelectuales" (31). He further expands on this description:

El signo *aquí y ahora* [...] sintetizó de modo cabal una actitud que, desde hacía un tiempo, se venía formalizando en una promoción de escritores (narradores, ensayistas, dramaturges, y hasta algunos poetas) [...]. [...] *Aquí y ahora* significaba volver a seres de carne y de hueso, enraizados en un sitio y en un tiempo, y no flotando en una especie de limbo, desprovistos de compromiso y de lectores. (31)

The *aquí y ahora*, then, describes the "Generación crítica," which, unlike the previous generation with their "conformismo experimentalista," was fully grounded and ready to see things as they really were (Oviedo 241): "Sobre ese modelo de la Suiza de América, trabajaría el 45, negándolo y denunciándolo" (Blanco). Nonetheless, it is important to understand that the literature of the "Generación del '45" was in no way simply just an excuse to denounce the social, political, and

⁷ Rama calls this process that occurs after 1938 "falsa recuperación democrática" (28).

economic issues in Uruguay at the time. This group does not confuse “literatura con periodismo; novela con reportaje,” and they understand that even though they go against “una literatura de ojos vendados,” “[n]o alcanza con el realismo o la fantasía, con la militancia o el costumbrismo, con el arraigo o con la evasión, para asegurar la calidad literaria, el nivel artístico de una obra” (Benedetti 32).

1955 is yet another important date for it marks the beginning of an economic crisis in Uruguay, following the prosperous years during the Second World War, when Uruguayan products were in high demand⁸. Another “desengaño” that the Generación face. This one is economical in character, while the previously mentioned one of Terra’s dictatorship was socio-political and cultural in character. This economic crisis was due to the fact that “[e]l país adolecía de problemas estructurales, basados en una economía dependiente de los contextos internacionales” (Berisso and Bernardo 208). In 1955, the slogan “Como el Uruguay no hay”—prevalent in the middle classes, until that year, “como símbolo del imaginario social que sostenía, a partir de la nueva bonanza económica (aunque no inestable)” —failed to resonate anymore (Berisso and Bernardo 208).

1959, or rather, the Cuban Revolution, is another date which is paramount in that it had repercussions in Uruguay in general, and in the Generación in particular. “1959 abrirá el ángulo de toma incentivando aquellas otras perspectivas que habían insistido en Uruguay y su vinculación estrecha con América Latina” (Espeche). This, together with the crisis that started in 1955 will turn Uruguay to Latin America, from whom it felt a disconnect, while it felt more connected to France and Spain.

⁸ “La guerra y la inmediata postguerra fueron períodos de auge económico para el Uruguay, beneficiado por la creciente demanda de sus saldos exportables” (Paganini 529).

This group responds to the situation that Uruguay was going through by writing in *Marcha* and other journals, a proliferation of which appeared in the 40s and 50s in Uruguay. Some of these are *Escritura*, *Entregas de la Licorne*, *Apex*, *Número*, *Asir*, *Clinamen*, among others. Moreover, several publishing houses were established during that time as well, including Banda Oriental, Editorial Alfa, and Arca. This apparition of publishing houses and journals responds to the efforts that the Generación made in order to “restaurar el vínculo natural del escritor con el público que había sido sustituido por la relación perversa entre el creador y el estado”⁹ (Rodríguez Monegal 81).

The novelist Alberto Paganini stated that partly due to the circumstances in Uruguay of not having publishing houses the main genre of the Generación was the short story: “no existían editoriales, y esta ausencia llevó a los narradores al cultivo preferente del cuento.” (529). In order to emphasize this same point Fernando Aínsa mentioned that “Amorim¹⁰ y Onetti editaban sus novelas en Buenos Aires” (513). Rodríguez Monegal agrees with Paganini’s appreciation: “Fue el propio Emir Rodríguez Monegal, portavoz crítico del 45, quien señaló en 1956 que la tradición literaria del Uruguay seguía siendo la del cuento” (Aínsa 513). Paganini mentions Jorge Luis Borges and the Uruguayan Paco Espínola, who belonged to the “Generación del centenario,” as the mentors of the “cuentistas” (530).

⁹ Rodríguez Monegal elucidates what this renovation they sought entailed: “Había que devolver a la circulación literaria unos principios olvidados pero imprescindibles: (a) la utilización del mismo patrón crítico para las letras nacionales y las extranjeras, aboliendo toda complicidad nacionalista; (b) el examen de la tradición nacional, rioplatense y americana, desde sus orígenes hasta el momento actual, realizado con perspectiva histórica y rigor crítico; (c) la incorporación activa de algunas zonas muy creadoras del mundo actual, como letras anglosajonas, o las ideologías marxistas, o la cultura cinematográfica y teatral, que anteriores generaciones habían ignorado por completo, o recibido únicamente a través de parciales digestos parisinos o madrileños; (d) el restablecimiento de la relación natural entre el escritor y el lector; (e) la reacción militante y hasta agresiva contra el oficialismo; (f) la defensa de la autonomía de la creación literaria aunque se aceptase el compromiso del escritor con su medio y con su tiempo.” (83)

¹⁰ Rodríguez Monegal situates Enrique Amorim in the previous generation, that of the Centenario (50).

Aside from their awareness and their being critical, other characteristics that the writers of the Generación had in common were “[e]l coloquialismo [que] se convierte en un elemento singular y cotidiano, frente al predominio de la experimentación, la búsqueda y la belleza formal que caracterizaron a la generación pretérita, donde lo popular se confunde con lo folklórico” (Oviedo 241). One of the points of tension that exists with this generation is that of city vs. countryside: “ciudad-campo –es una dicotomía pacíficamente admitida” (Paganini 533). Paganini even shows both extremes of the cuentistas in the ciudad-campo range: “Si [Mario] Arregui es el más campero (o campal) de los narradores del 45, Mario Benedetti (1920) es el más ciudadano”—although that “ciudadano” title could be disputed by Onetti (536).

Rodríguez Monegal describes this group as a “comunidad intelectual,” which come from immigrant middle class families. According to him, most of them have in common “el viaje a Europa que para casi todos quiere decir París” (74). About this trip he comments on the tension—if not contradiction—between “muchas declaraciones de volver la mirada a América [...] y la menos publicitada práctica del viajecito a Europa” (74). Politically, Rodríguez Monegal, places “casi todos los integrantes de la generación” in a “izquierda” (80). Although, as Rama and others have pointed out as well, regardless of their political beliefs, “la experiencia que unifica a todos por encima de la variedad de las soluciones es una toma de conciencia temprana y radical de la realidad del país”¹¹ (80). This critic also underlines the following characteristics that the “members” of the Generación share: “un respeto por la obra crítica

¹¹ “Esa toma de conciencia no es exclusivamente literaria o artística y tiene su fundamento en la prédica de *Marcha* desde 1939. Esta es la primera generación uruguaya que se propone negar masivamente el sistema de delicados espejismos que constituyen las estructuras democráticas del estado uruguayos, ese supuesto Estado del Bienestar [...]. En el terreno literario, ese análisis de la realidad lleva a la generación a oponerse al oficialismo y sus magras prebendas, a restaurar los valores por medio de una crítica implacable, a desmitificar ciertos temas que se habían convertido en estériles (sobre todo la literatura gauchesca o campesina), a rescatar el pasado útil, a vincular la literatura uruguaya a la de América sin perder contacto con Europa o el resto del mundo, a poner al día los valores literarios, facilitando el acceso de Uruguay a las corrientes más fecundas de la vanguardia mundial” (Rodríguez Monegal 80-81).

objetiva, una desconfianza de los presupuestos emocionales de la creación, una reserve frente a las palabras y los sentimientos mayúsculos, una reticencia a creerse escritores” (38). Another particularity pertaining to this group that Rodríguez Monegal indicates is that, unlike previous generations, including Quijano, they were under “la influencia cada día creciente de las letras anglosajonas” (41)¹². This could be related to yet another shared trait of this group: “la generación del 45 buscó nuevos causes. Su actualización presupone sobre todo una renovación del lenguaje y de los estilos poéticos. Supone principalmente una renovación de la prosa” (Rodríguez Monegal 81). As far as influences are concerned, Rodríguez Monegal names Borges as “el maestro indiscutido” of the prose production, and Neruda, Vallejo, and Huidobro as influences of poetry (81). He also admits to the fact that this was not a homogeneous group, in the sense that “hay grandes diferencias de estilo vital, y notorias diferencias de intereses y hasta especializaciones” (38).

Aínsa also draws up characteristics pertaining to the novelists of the Generación:

1) La visión de la novelística del 45 es intelectualizada [...] 2) La dominante de la novelística del 45 es el realismo [...] 3) El estilo [...] es desencarnado, conflictivo y sus protagonistas poco inclinados al lirismo. [...] 4) Las respuestas que los novelistas dan en sus obras son netamente individualistas y subjetivas. [...] 5) prosa formalmente cuidada, racionalismo analítico [...] la mayoría de las novelas del 45 [son] obras complejas, emocional y estilísticamente, y nada convencionales [...] 6) El tema amoroso aparece en general en su faz de descomposición [...] 7) El género novelesco deja de ser privativo de los hombres [...] 8) Las memorias noveladas abundan y traen testimonios intelectuales complejos a una tradición literaria hecha de personajes simples. (Aínsa 514-518)

I agree with Judy Berry-Bravo when she says that “[m]any of the foregoing general tendencies could also be applied to the lyrical work of the ‘Generación del 45.’” (22). She further describes the poets of the Generación as feeling a “need to separate themselves from the surrealism of the

¹² Rodríguez Monegal discusses the influence of literature from the US and Britain. See pages 53- 64.

day as practiced by Enrique Molina and Octavio Paz” and that they did not want to walk along Pablo Neruda’s past and be overshadowed by his work (22). “Therefore, along with the Ultraístas, they abandoned traditional metric and harmony systems as well as the idea of the metaphor as the center of poetry” (Berry-Bravo paraphrasing Rama 22).

Rama characterizes the poets of this generation as follows: “adoptan el tono elegíaco o se entregan a la experimentación” (Rama quoted in Fierro 497). However, my views resonate more with Fierro, who believes that that only portrays the beginning of the poets of the Generación, for later on they went on to continue onto different paths: “Porque este grupo de poetas lleva bastante más que veinte años escribiendo y las trayectorias individuales nos lo transforman cuando menos lo esperamos” (497).

HILDA HILST

The Brazilian poet, playwright, and fiction writer Hilda Hilst was born in 1930 and died in 2004. She is the author of 40 books. Literary critics consider her to be one of the most important and controversial writers of the twentieth century in the Portuguese language. She has been awarded many literary prizes, such as the 1962 Prêmio Pen Club de São Paulo for her book *Sete cantos do poeta para o anjo*, and the Jabuti prize from the Câmara Brasileira do Livro for her book *Cantares de perda e predileção*.

Hilst studied Law but never practiced, always knowing that she wanted to dedicate her life to writing. In her thirties she decided to leave the city of São Paulo in order to keep away from social life and concentrate on literature. A catalyst for this decision was her reading of Nikos Kazantzákis’ book *Carta a El Greco*, after which Hilst realized that “o que ele tem a dizer é tão importante que eu preferi, então, sair de lá para começar a aprender outra vez as coisas, e

resolvi vir morar aqui [Casa do Sol]” (Hilst 1981, 78). She went to live in Casa do Sol, about 11 kilometers from Campinas, until her death.

Because of her strong personality, beauty, intelligence, and her eccentricities, and because Hilst consistently questioned and went against norms and traditions, the myth surrounding her image has often overshadowed the importance of her work and the critical analysis of it. Cristiano Diniz, in the prolog to *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*, claims that her interviews contributed to the creating of this image of Hilst:

Esse *boom* de entrevistas é um dos momentos-chave que possibilitam enxergar a maestria de Hilda no gênero, pois foi a ocasião em que ela, em grande medida, ajudou na criação e na divulgação de uma imagem que deixou marcas, que ainda ecoam quando seu nome é lembrado. Em outras palavras, uma corrente de afirmações sobre suas ‘excentricidades’ se cristalizou de tal forma que o que vemos se destacar hoje são os mesmos aspectos construídos nos anos 1990: dona de uma inteligência incomum, sem papas na língua, ousada, desconcertante, provocativa e... ‘louca’. (5)

Throughout her life Hilst constantly complained about the lack of readership and attention from most critics. Nevertheless, from the publication of her first book she actually did receive attention from various critics and a few loyal readers: “[O]bteve críticas de alguns dos principais analistas da época (Cecília Meireles, Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda, Alfredo Bossi, Lygia Fagundes Telles, Sérgio Milliet e Jorge de Sena)” (Britto 83).

She was often categorized by critics and readers alike as “escritora hermética, de difícil compreensão” (Hilst 1989a, 103). Her answer to these labels was to clarify that it was not her work that was difficult, but that humanity itself is complex. She also elucidates as to her writing process:

As pessoas me perguntam: por que você é tão complexa? Mas não sou complexa, o ser humano é complexo e não posso fazer uma linguagem fácil num contexto difícil. Eu pego uma situação interior do homem e persigo aquele caminho, fragmentando-o também, porque não há na vida de alguém toda uma coerência. Então eu pego um *flash*, um clarão

inicial e procuro cercá-lo de ordem dentro da desordem daquele percurso, porque isso é que é importante: conhecer o roteiro inexplicável do homem. (Hilst 1989a, 105)

Hilst never compromised either her commitment to literature or her path of constant learning because of her lack of readership. Nevertheless, in order to call attention to her work, in the 90s, she decided to stop writing “serious” literature and wrote her “erotic tetralogy,” as critics have referred to the four works. Three of them are fiction and one is a collection of poetry: *O Caderno Rosa de Lori Lamby* (1990), *Contos de escárnio: Textos grotescos* (1992), *Cartas de um sedutor* (1991), and the satirical poems *Bufólicas* (1992). Diniz states that, together with the interviews as well as her personality and intelligence, it was also the publication of her *tetralogia* that called attention to either her biography, Hilst as a character almost, and to the criticism toward these four books. Although the publication of the *tetralogia* meant more sales, the hilstean scholar Critiane Grando asserts that it did not resolve her being more read, and, I add, understood: “Com a publicação da Literatura Obscena, Hilda passou a ser mais lida, mas não atingiu o público leitor da forma como ela desejava. Só mais tarde, com a reedição da obra de Hilda pela Editora Globo, a escritora sente-se satisfeita com a quantidade de leitores de seus livros” (Grando quoted in Pimenta de Moura 3). The *tetralogia*, conversely, took over the criticism on Hilst’s work: “Apesar dessa fase erótica totalizar menos de dez por cento da sua bibliografia, uma crítica equivocada e escandalizada dá à escritora o cunho de escritora essencialmente pornográfica” (Pimenta de Moura 4). Her *tetralogia* further pigeonholed Hilst into a scandalous and eccentric character.

Another factor that might have contributed to Hilst’s lack of readers before her work was re-published by Editora Globo in the early 2000s is that all of Hilst’s books, except *Balada do Festival* (1955) and *Roteiro do silêncio*, which were published in Rio de Janeiro, were published in São Paulo. The same happened with the interviews and articles about her, the majority of

which were published in São Paulo, as well as the chronicles that she published from 1992 to 1995 for the *Correio Popular*, a newspaper in the city of Campinas.

Yet, another element to take into account when trying to comprehend her lack of readership is that Hilst refused to talk about her work, in the sense that she did not want to give explanations or analyses. She claimed that she was not a literary critic and that she had already said everything she had to say in the text itself: “Acho desagradável ter que falar sobre minha obra [...]. Não sou crítica [...], expliquei nos livros. Não entenderam. Então não adianta falar mais” (Hilst in Diniz 9). In fact, it is not that Hilst felt she had exhausted what she had to say in her work, but instead, she believed that the best work of a writer was in the work itself, and not in the interviews explaining that work:

no caso específico de um escritor, a entrevista se complica porque tudo o que um escritor tem a dizer, tudo o que ele imagina verbalizar, o seu mais fundo, a sua mais intensa verticalidade, está dito no seu trabalho, e já da melhor forma que ele acredita ser possível traduzir. Não acredito que escritor algum consiga verbalizar com mais verdade que no seu próprio trabalho. (Hilst in Diniz 11)

Hilst had a great commitment to literature, which is not only obvious in the fact that she decided to move to Casa do Sol, her prolific production, and her opinions on expressing herself in her literature as opposed to in an interview. In an interview with the critic Leo Gilson Ribeiro in 1980 she coined the expression *conduta literária* in order to refer to the commitment that the poet had with language. In that interview she also referred to this *conduta* as “entranhadamente ética” (Hilst in Diniz 10). Even as early as the 1950s, Hilst already affirmed that “é preciso que o poeta tenha o que dizer. A palavra é um elemento de comunicação e me parece estranho que seja usada sem compromissos...” (Hilst in Diniz 10). She further expounds in an interview that her poems “[n]ascem do inconformismo. Do desejo de ultrapassar o Nada” (Hilst 1952, 21). Again it is possible to perceive this fierce commitment to thinking of and communicating the great

problems and cruxes that a person faces. Hers, is an endeavor, not an act of spontaneity: “Porque não existe dizer ‘não, escrever tem que ser espontâneo’. Qualquer cretino pode ser espontâneo. Então eu acho que a literatura vem desse conflito entre a ordem que você quer e a desordem que você tem” (Hilst 1987, 96). As far as Hilst is concerned, part of this commitment is also related to her idea that poets and writers are different from others, in that they are “mais atentos, e captam coisas e estados emocionais que os outros não veem ou não sentem. Porque sabem que em tudo há sacralidade. Há um conhecimento da matriz das coisas, como que uma pressão obscura que se exerce nele para que surja o momento da revelação” (Hilst 1957, 30). This social commitment is also expressed by Bignozzi, as will be discussed below. Like Bignozzi, although very different, Hilst was also in tune with the circumstances that her country was going through, namely, the dictatorship. Hilst’s hiatus of poetry for 7 years, from 1967 to 1974, is due to this awareness and her social commitment towards the circumstances. Despite her feeling more herself with poetry and fiction, starting 1967 she wrote eight plays, which stemmed from the urge to communicate during the Brazilian dictatorship:

O teatro surgiu numa hora de muita emergência, em 67, quando havia a repressão. Eu tinha muita vontade de me comunicar com o outro imediatamente. Como não podia haver comunicação cara a cara, então fiz algumas peças, todas simbólicas, porque eu não tinha vontade nenhuma de ser presa, nem torturada, nem de que me arrancassem as unhas...Então, fiz, por analogia, várias peças em que qualquer pessoa entenderia o que se pretendia dizer numa denúncia. (Hilst 1989b, 130)

Hilst attributed her lack of readership to both her commitment to literature and to her work demanding a similar commitment from her readers. As she makes clear in an interview by Juvenal Neto, “em tudo o que você conseguir colocar para o seu próprio trabalho, para a sua vida, para o seu conhecimento, você precisa antes de tudo disso: intensidade, embriaguez, paixão” (Hilst 1981, 74). However, she is well aware that not everyone is willing to put that

much work into reading, and therefore concludes that “talvez por isso é que as pessoas não gostem desse tipo de literatura” (Hilst 1981, 74). Nonetheless, she is adamant in her view: “Eu não escrevo para me distrair, eu não escrevo nem leio o outro para me distrair. Eu faço o possível para ganhar tempo e, mesmo assim, eu sei que eu não conheço nada” (Hilst 1981, 74).

It is not easy or desirable even, to place Hilst in a specific generation. In an interview with Alcântara Silveira, the interviewer expressed how Hilst had always been apart from those writing in her same generation: “A poetisa, [...], conseguiu se manter immune à literatura do largo de São Francisco, não se deixando atingir, por outro lado, pelo cerebralismo que envolve a poesia dos vates de sua geração” (Hilst 1952, 21). She was often compared to the greatness of Clarice Lispector, Guimarães Rosa, and João Cabral de Melo Neto. In fact, the literary critics “Léo Gilson Ribeiro e Anatol Rosenfeld, [...] a colocaram ao lado de místicos—como San Juan de la Cruz—e de experimentalistas —como Guimarães Rosa” (Hilst 1993, 147). Hilst herself traced her influences to Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Jorge de Lima (Hilst 1999, 192). She is also placed in the same generation of other poets such as Lupe Cotrim Garaude and Renata Pallottini, whose work she liked (Hilst 2003, 233). All in all, Hilst highlights how she is not part of a generation. For instance, when Hilst started publishing in the 1950s it was the recognition of the *concretismo* with a visual cut, and in the 1960s the *poesia práxis* appeared. However, Hilst was never part of either movement: “Fui colega de faculdade de Haroldo de Campos, mas o grupo dele nunca me procurou. Já Mário Chamie parece que gostava do meu trabalho” (Hilst 1999, 193). Sérgio Milliet recognizes Hilst’s being part and apart of her time: “Hilst sempre foi muito pessoal em sua poesia. Não se preocupou jamais com ser moderna, porque naturalmente, sem esforço, falou a língua de sua época. Não há por isso artificios no seu verso, como não há nenhum vestígio de outras gerações” (Grando 7).

The impossibility of pinpointing where exactly Hilst's work fits as concerns categories and generations is common among critics. Alcir Pécora articulates this view and explains why this is so:

Segundo o pesquisador, a literatura de Hilst é de legibilidade difícil no âmbito das vertentes predominantes da produção e da crítica pós-45: 'não tem filiação construtivista, nem concretista; não tem enredo realista, não tem temas nacionalistas, nem uma militância política convencional, embora as obras sejam altamente políticas e intervencionistas. São obras de intensidade incômoda.' (Britto 85)

Nelly Novaes Coelho also describes Hilst's work along the lines of "intensidade incômoda":

Uma das coisas que me chamou atenção na sua literatura é que ela não é nada eufórica, de jeito nenhum. É dura, espessa, não tem leveza nenhuma de esperança festiva de que tudo acabe bem. Entretanto, passa-nos a sensação de que tudo vai ser descoberto. A sua palavra está empapada de um humus, de uma lama inaugural. Eu a sinto assim. E, não a lama de destruição, mas de fermentação. (Hilst 1989b, 116)

It is interesting to notice the difference between the labels commonly attributed to Hilst, especially readers and some critics, and Coelho's appraisal. Coelho does not blame Hilst for the type of work that she writes. Rather, she captures its value, and how, in order to be in tune with Hilst's work, the reader has to be open to that kind of journey, in which s/he must yield time to become acquainted with this fermentation, this wisdom, to be able to walk through it and arrive at the other side having reflected and learned something. Inês Mafra holds a similar view when she attributes Hilst with the creation of "outra língua portuguesa, mais densa e metafísica que a praticada cotidianamente" (Hilst 1993, 147). She continues by stating that "[a]o fácil prazer do texto ela sempre preferiu a assepsia, o desafio, os contrastes entre a miséria humana e não dito" (Hilst 1993, 147), and even admits that not all critics can appreciate her work: "Poucos críticos se extasiaram com os segredos da palavra de HH" (Hilst 1993, 147). Hilst's viewpoint regarding what she wrote was that her texts were philosophical texts: "Eu escrevo filosofia em todos os

meus livros. Como fundo narrativo ou não, é filosofia pura” (Hilst 1998a, 180). This assertion portrays her understanding her writing as a search for knowledge, for understanding herself and humankind better, and her seeking connection with the Universe and herself.

In fact, one of these critics, Gilson Ribeiro, characterized Hilst’s work as follows: “submerge o leitor num mundo intrépido de terror e tremor, de beleza indescritível e de uma fascinante prospecção filosófica sobre o Tempo, a Morte, o Amor, o Horror, a Busca” (Hilst 1993, 147). Both Ribeiro and Coelho point to Hilst’s complexity and profoundness. Hilst herself, trying to make sense of her writing commented that she is terrified of “situações-limite,” and adds that: “Acho que eu escrevo sobre elas para me exorcizar. A paixão, a morte, o perguntar-se. Tenho muito medo de mim também, por isso escrevo. Escrever é ir em direção a muitas vidas e muitas mortes” (Hilst 1993, 151). In contrast, José Castello observes how society deals with these “últimas fronteiras da modernidade: a paixão e a morte” (Hilst 1994, 162). Unlike Hilst, who, insists on facing these difficult subjects and writing them from “extremos lingínguos,” Castello claims that “[a] modernidade [...] as remete à margem. A paixão, então, é psicologizada; a morte, medicalizada. Procedimentos de contenção com que se tenta refrear o pavor diante dos dois polos radicais do humano” (Hilst 1994, 163, 162). Hilst, contrarily, goes in a different direction so as to “se entregar, moldura rompida, norma estraçalhada para levar a arte a pulsar, e não a macear”:

HH se lança na mesma direção inconveniente, pois seu descompromisso com o literário—aqui entendido como a norma que diz o que é e o que não é literatura, e que afere os patamares de competência e de incompetência da escrita—engrandece o ato de escrever e lhe outorga o poder letal. A literatura que se faz paixão tanto pode salvar como pode matar. (Hilst 1994, 163)

Regarding the themes in Hilst’s work, all critics agree that she has dealt with a recurrent number of themes, which correspond to, as Livia Carolina Alves da Silva expresses, the fact that

Hilst “procura em sua poética responder aos enigmas da vida e da existência humana e seus poemas vão radicalizando o interrogar no ‘eu’.” (89). Hilst viewed these themes as being related to the sacred: “A minha literatura fala basicamente desse inefável, o tempo todo. Mesmo na pornografia, eu insisto nisso” (Hilst 1999, 197). Hilst’s aspirations to approach the sacred and understand divinity reminds me of Borges’s understanding of human time versus eternity. He comments on eternity as the time that humans are not privy to because it would be impossible to apprehend (Borges 2008, 88). Hilst does not seek to be eternal, what she does seek through her work is a connection with God that stems from a thorough investigation of humanity. Hilst wanted to understand the self.

I argue that Hilst’s poetry creates a spiral figure in which there is a constant return to the same themes although neither is the return to the exact same places nor to a final destination. On the contrary, the proliferation in this recurrence raises questions and increases the depth of Hilst’s observations and understanding of these subjects instead of fixing them to a specific answer. In regards to the insistence of themes, Edson Sousa Costa Duarte clarifies that in Hilst’s poetry “paira a dúvida [...] paira o impasse, o aberto, o escorregadio de uma linguagem que acumula significados ao mesmo tempo em que os desmonta” (188). In other words, Hilst’s poetry forces us to dwell on the same themes and thus, leads us to more doubts and questioning. Hilst’s recurrent themes are the absent loved one, the relationship between the self and other, death, the importance of poetry, the sacred. Coelho, in her apprehension of Hilst’s recurrent themes, especially after the poetry hiatus in which she only wrote fiction and drama, and which ended in 1974, also notes a movement. As far as she is concerned, Hilst “aprofunda sua sondagem do *eu* situado no mundo, em face do *outro* e do *mistério* cósmico/divino que o limita. Agora essa busca do autoconhecimento cava mais fundo. Rompe violentamente as exterioridades

da vida cotidiana, para investigar o fundo do poço: o *eu-desconhecido*, que há em cada um de nós, à espera (ou com medo) de ser descoberto” (Coelho 73). Coelho then, describes a vertical movement, by which going over the same themes means going deeper into them. Gilson Ribeiro’s opinion of Hilst’s poetry coincides with Coelho’s in that for him, as well, it is after her 1967-1974 poetry hiatus, that “a grande poesia hilstiana [...] alça vôo” (Ribeiro in Duarte 13).

JUANA BIGNOZZI

Juana Bignozzi was born in Argentina in 1937 to working class parents: “Mi madre fue obrera textil y luego hacía trabajos de costura en casa. Mi padre fue un obrero panadero que militó en el anarquismo y luego, con la llegada de Perón, al crearse el sindicato único que pare él fue un golpe brutal¹³, pasó al comunismo; pero nunca dejó de pensar como un anarquista” (Saavedra 2). Her father’s ideology and the meetings held in their house helped her raise a social conscience: “él tenía un grupo de amigos, con los que había empezado a trabajar a los dieciséis o diecisiete años, que venían mucho a casa y mantenían esa cosa gremial, profesional, un tipo de conciencia social que a mí me ha quedado” (Saavedra 2). In an interview with Jorge Fonderbrider, Bignozzi also mentions the meetings and the underlying ideology behind all the gatherings that took place at her home: “la otra [aside from reading] actividad anarquista por excelencia es la discusión y mi casa funcionaba como comité clandestino del Partido Comunista de Saavedra.” Furthermore, Bignozzi clarifies that they were poor but that reading and culture were always paramount in her household: “En esa casa se leía el diario y, por la noche, leíamos

¹³ In her interview with Jorge Fonderbrider Bignozzi clarifies this further: “Mi padre, que era de una rectitud absoluta y espartana, detestaba el peronismo. Después de que Perón y su CGT [Confederación General del Trabajo] de 1945 se quedaron con el crédito de haber conseguido transformar en ley todos los proyectos del socialismo, el anarquismo fue apenas un sueño: se perdieron muchas de sus consignas y todos los delegados. No quedaba nada, salvo las bibliotecas obreras. Entonces, si bien nunca se afilió, mi padre que no toleraba el oportunismo, se acercó más a los comunistas.”

juntos libros como *El crimen de la guerra*. En su día franco, mi padre me llevaba al Colón, al circo, a ver títeres” (Saavedra 2).

Towards the end of the 1950s decade she becomes a member of the group “El Pan Duro.” Other members of this group were Héctor Negro, José Luis Mangieri, who will publish her work, Julio César Silvain, Samuel Nemirovsky (Juan Hierba), Alberto Wainer, Hugo Ditaranto, Juan Gelman, and others. In an interview for *Evaristo cultural* Bignozzi describes her experiences in El Pan Duro as follows: “Yo fui la única [mujer] de ‘El pan duro.’ Eran experiencias más militantes, más políticas. Nosotros luchábamos por una difusión de la poesía. Nuestras estéticas – si se podía llamar así a lo que escribíamos– no tenían nada que ver entre sí, eso lo probó después la historia” (Bignozzi 2013b). In his book about El Pan Duro Héctor Negro includes a testimony by Alberto Wainer from 1961 talking about the group: “consideramos que el poeta, como creador es un hombre que marcha con la multitud, en medio de la multitud, que se nutre de ella, teniendo la obligación ineludible de devolverle, en obra de arte, la misma voz que le ha entregado el pueblo...” (14-15). Negro’s words about why the members decided to start meeting also add to the portrayal of El Pan Duro:

antes que nada para publicar¹⁴. Nos sentíamos mutilados por la imposibilidad de publicar nuestros poemas. Poetas de generaciones anteriores lo habían hecho con menos edad que algunos de nosotros y queríamos supercar esa impotencia. Pero de ese firme propósito surgió el interrogante de ¿para quién?. La gente común no buscaba la poesía, no llegaba hasta ella. ¿Cuántos eran los que entraban a una librería a comprar un libro de poesía? ¿Quiénes, fuera de las ‘capillas’ literarias, leían los suplementos de ‘La Prensa’ y ‘La Nación’, que publicaban (salvo excepciones) una poesía elitista y aburrida que espantaba a los lectores no especializados? Entonces nos convencimos de algo que era extremadamente necesario. Si la gente no iba hacia la poesía, la poesía debería ir hacia la gente. (22-23)

¹⁴ The first book El Pan Duro published was Juan Gelman’s *Violín y otras cuestiones*.

From Negro's comment we learn El Pan Duro's position regarding their aim of publishing and circulating their poetry, and also, it reveals the difficulty of getting published in Argentina at the time, and the readership there was. Negro clarifies that with his statement he is not ignoring the fact that the poets from the "Generación del '50" and previous generations also held readings. However, the difference between El Pan Duro's readings and these other readings was that the "Generación del '50" and other previous generations "realizaban lecturas de poemas, pero siempre en lugares 'cerrados', para públicos de 'iniciados' que tenían que ver con el mundo cultural de entonces, exclusivamente" (23).

The group decides to hold their first reading in 1954 in the independent theater Teatro de la máscara. They were advised to use pseudonyms in the posters advertising their presentation, "ya que anunciarnos con nuestros nombres verdaderos resultaba políticamente peligroso o nos sumaría a alguna lista de réprobos, pues toda actividad cultural no oficial era vista con recelo por las autoridades de entonces. Más aun con el riesgo que entrañaba el contenido social y libertario de muchos de nuestros poemas¹⁵" (Negro 23-24). This statement attests to the turbulent and violent times in Argentina.

The end of Juan Domingo Perón¹⁶'s second period in the government was toward the end of 1954. 1955 would bring the coup d'état that would lead Perón to exile until his return in the

¹⁵ "la preocupación principal que movía el contenido de quienes leímos esa noche, eran los problemas de la gente común, lo cotidiano, el paisaje que transitábamos (la ciudad, el barrio) y sin habernos puesto de acuerdo o impuesto una temática determinada, teníamos en común todo eso, como una suerte de contenido social que cada uno expresaba a su manera y con su propia voz poética" (Negro 27).

¹⁶ Because of her leftist political inclinations, Fondebrider asks Bignozzi in his interview if she had been happy with what the first Peronism had achieved regarding the laws that improved the socio-economic life of the workers. Her response is very telling of her upbringing and her ideology of "nunca fui de transar": "Si me hubiese puesto contenta, mi padre se habría disgustado enormemente. Él me inculcó una visión jerárquica del obrero, que yo todavía mantengo. Sigo creyendo en un obrero con conciencia de clase, que no aspira a ser pequeño burgués, como en el caso de los obreros peronistas, cuyos sueños –que me disculpen– al lado de los de mi padre son pequeños."

70s. There was an economic crisis, and it was also a time of great unrest and political violence in Argentina, including attacks on the part of some conservative and military sections, such as that which took place in 1953 in the Plaza de Mayo and the 1951 coup d'état. There was great tension between Perón with his politics which favored the working class, and the economically dominant classes and the conservative sections of political parties, the Church, and militaries. At the same time, it is noted that some of Perón's measures, such as the persecution of opposers, repression, and torture, would fall under the category of dictatorship and human rights violations rather than democracy.

Toward 1959 Gelman was detaching himself from El Pan Duro, although he still supported them and met with them, albeit infrequently. During this time, Bignozzi joined the group: "un día llegó una muchacha que escribía poesías, que traía el respaldo de Juan Gelman¹⁷ (quien solía seguir viniendo a Callao 11 en distintos horarios y encuentros)" (Negro 59). According to Negro, she only stayed until 1960. Nevertheless, she did participate in the 1963 anthology of El Pan Duro. Her short stay could be due to her writing about different themes from those of the group, despite them sharing ideologies. Bignozzi expresses it as follows:

La personalidad de mi verso, si existe, se debe a que no tengo culpa en relación con mi origen. Nunca me sentí en la necesidad de rescatar esencias barriales, tal vez porque yo sí era de barrio, a diferencia de muchos escritores de mi generación. Por el contrario, he tenido siempre una especie de tilinguería por la cultura. Me fascina un mundo más amplio que el de la cultura popular, lo que llamo los mitos: lecturas, música, pintura. Y algunos poetas me marcaron sentimentalmente pero casi no aparecen en mi obra. Tuñón¹⁸, por ejemplo, es importantísimo en mi vida, como persona y como maestro, pero he seguido pocos de sus caminos poéticos. (Saavedra 2)

¹⁷ Bignozzi met Gelman, as well as Juan Carlos Portantiero, in the Partido Comunista.

¹⁸ Raúl González Tuñón was regarded as a kind of mentor by El Pan Duro.

Bignozzi sees many of the “escritores de su generación,” and specifically those of El Pan Duro as having written “poesía populista, que se podría asimilar a las letras de los malos tangos” (Bignozzi 2012). She mentions two exceptions: “Juan Gelman nunca estuvo allí. Héctor Negro, que se ha dedicado al tango, creo que tampoco, y eso lo ha salvado. Ellos, a diferencia de varios de mis compañeros del grupo El Pan Duro, nunca escribieron poemas oficinescos en los que se quejaban del jefe” (Bignozzi 2012).

El Pan Duro is described as a group that was “estrechamente ligado al Partido Comunista y practicante de una poesía social muy comprometida” (Lafforgue 5). Fondebrider identified the writing of this group in the 60s as a “poesía más combativa que aludía a la realidad inmediata y no dudaba en mezclarse con la política.” Nevertheless, Bignozzi insists that poetry is not simply writing about the dictatorship or social injustice—this would be what she calls “esa mala poesía política del tipo ‘yanquis hijos de puta, no pasarán,’” and it is the type of poetry that she claimed that many of the group wrote (Bignozzi in interview with Fondebrider). This opinion certainly does not imply that Bignozzi is not political in her writing. She herself admits to coming from a family that was very involved in the Argentine politics, in the neighborhood, and so on. She marks a distinction between the “mala poesía política” and poetry that has social consciousness, like hers:

Los críticos que me apoyan, que son buenos conmigo, nunca señalan mi poesía como política, sí la señalan como cívica, o como Helder [acerca del libro *Interior con poeta*] ponderan el uso que hago de determinadas palabras como ‘patria’ y ‘victoria final’. Pero no es una poesía política a lo Gelman, a lo Neruda; yo no tengo esa voz, y nunca la quise tener; si hubiera querido tener otra voz sería la de Verlaine, no la de Neruda, por supuesto. Pero yo creo que es una poesía de preocupación social, que ése es el tema central o dominante. (Bignozzi 1995, 65)

As Fondebrider clarifies “[p]oesía política [...] no es lo mismo que la poesía cargada de ideología” (Bignozzi 2012).

Three Women

The corpus being comprised of the work of three female poets is a conscious choice. I chose to study female poets for two main reasons. Firstly, it is an enactment of my feminist beliefs. It is too often that writing by women is not focused on and their work is overshadowed by literary criticism on literature written by men. My intention is to correct this imbalance. Secondly, I chose to focus on women poets following the intuition and hypothesis that if I was searching for an interesting and different perspective on time, I would most likely find it in the margins. I therefore decided to explore what one minority (women) was articulating regarding being and time. To put it differently, I sought to tap into women’s ability to experience reality differently, and their need to deal with power dynamics when voicing conceptions, especially those which question socio-cultural structures that are usually taken for granted, and which are not usually honored because of their gender.

Looking at Julia Kristeva’s examination of “women’s time” helps us understand that time involves much more than simply the passing of what we measure with various units of time such as minutes, hours, days, and years. As far as Kristeva is concerned, “female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations” (16). The translator clarifies that “[s]ubjectivity’ here refers to the state of being a “thinking, speaking, acting, doing or writing agent’ and never, e.g., as opposed to ‘objectivity’” (16). Kristeva is referring to modes of time that are more in tune with a female mode of being, and which invariably get

overridden with temporal constructions that generally obliterates the presence of female connection with their modes of time. “Women’s time” is therefore, considered as a threat: “female subjectivity as it gives itself up to intuition becomes a problem with respect to a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival—in other words, the time of history” (Kristeva 17).

What Kristeva asserts about feminists in the seventies, which is that they “seek to give language” to their subjective experiences “left mute by culture,” is precisely how I would describe Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi (19). Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s are dissident voices that tell us something new and unexpected about time. Their work not only have time as a shared theme, but also, and more importantly, it renders powerful poetics on how to inhabit time. These poetics expose narratives imposed on every member of Western society as a “natural” social contract. Their poetry, however, presents alternative modes of relating to the passing of time to the prevailing ones in Western culture. They do not seek to dominate time, but rather, they work with time. These poets seem to posit engaging with the passing of time in ways that are more organic to their beliefs—so instead of listening to normatized narratives of what the relationship with time should look like, they are engaging with time in their own terms. For each poet in this dissertation I study what it means to reappropriate time and the form this reappropriation takes. Also, through their poetry they insist in participating in the direction that discourses regarding time are taking.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework that provides the context for my reading of Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s work.

In Chapter 2 I analyze Vitale's poetry and how it counteracts the time that does not stop and leads to the grave, as is illustrated in her poem "Días de Sísifo": "*Del siempre amanecer por las mañanas*¹⁹ / para ir anocheciendo todo el día." (Vitale 1988, 55). Through my reading of Vitale, I reveal how the Vitalean speaker reappropriates time by being committed to inhabiting reality with a rhythm that is slower-paced than that of the continuous passing of time.

In Chapter 3 I explore Hilst's way of dealing with the preoccupation with the passing of time and its fleetingness. In her work, the way that reappropriation of time is captured is in the Hilstean speaker creating a present, which is a moment in time, part of a cut-up time, which is actually more than just a moment. The Hilstean present has a duration, and what is important for her speaker is to be mindful in that present.

In Chapter 4 I investigate Bignozzi's way of reappropriating time. Her work presents one option to living the present fully, and that is by incorporating the past into the present. By giving a space to the silenced voices of the past, the speaker in Bignozzi's work resists the official history.

¹⁹ Quote from Fernando Villalón within Vitale's poem.

Chapter 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Problematizing Language: To Have Faith in Language or Not?

tan saturado y animado de tiempo está nuestro lenguaje
J.L. Borges (“La refutación del tiempo”)

The literary critic Alfredo Bosi shows faith in language and how through it, specifically writing, it is possible to have a say in the way that the structures that govern our life work: “Pre (dic) ar é admitir a existência de relações: atribuir o ser às coisas; dizer de suas qualidades reais ou fictícias; de seus movimentos; de seus liames com as outras coisas; referir o curso da experiência. Predicar é exercer a possibilidade de ter um ponto de vista” (24-25). Writing poetry, for Bosi, is being an agent, “significa colher e escolher perfis da experiência, recortá-los, transpô-los, e arrumá-los em uma seqüência fono-semântica” (24). The poet then, through his/her process before writing is already shaping reality, by editing experience. From this I conclude that writing poetry necessarily involves reading reality with a critical mind, that is, not accepting it as is without filtering it. Bosi expresses it in the following way: “Quem pre(dic)a algo de alguém exerce sobre a imagem-nome o controle da perspectiva, o poder de afirmar, perguntar, duvidar ou negar. Quem predica é capaz de julgar” (121). This is, the person that uses language, that writes, has the power to add his/her input into the construction of meanings, s/he can also challenge meanings and name his/her own. The writer then, is not subordinated to the structures in society, and does not take them for granted.

Bosi is inadvertently separating language in literature from language outside literature. Carlos Bousoño does this as well. He coincides with Saussure in that for both, language is “el sistema de los signos y de las relaciones entre los signos en *cuanto que todos los hablantes les atribuyen unos mismos valores*” (97). Within language Bousoño discriminates between “lengua”

and “poesía,” while Saussure distinguishes between “lengua” and “habla” (Bousoño 98)²⁰.

Bousoño insists that these categorizations are completely different, in that in his distinctions, intonation and gesticulation are not relevant. Bousoño’s “*lengua*,” which he equates to “norma,” is “todo lo que en el lenguaje significa insistencia en lo recibido, herencia sin transformar, caudal sin merma ni aumento: patrimonio común de un grupo humano. Es el acopio de la tradición repetido por la boca de un hombre” (98). “*Lengua*,” then, is the given, the received structures, a cultural heritage that is not changed. As far as Bousoño is concerned, it is poetry’s job to change “*lengua*” and bring it away from the norm, for “el poeta ha de transtornar la significación de los signos o las relaciones entre los signos de la ‘*lengua*’ o ‘norma’ porque esa modificación es condición necesaria de la poesía” (98-99). A poet is always working against language, against what is generic and collective, against what is received. As a consequence, I venture to state that for both Bosi and Bousoño poets are a perfect fit for conjecturing ideas and conceptions that shape experiences for they not only look at the experience and ideas, but also, they are used to working against the grain, against the current, which means working against the very tool used in order to formulate the ideas and articulate the experiences. They portray poets as critical users of language. On this note their views are similar to Bigozzi’s for whom poetry is where language is conjugated with thought, and thus, de “búsqueda de lucidez”:

desde ese lugar, de mirar, no de sentir. Un poema, como decía Mallarmé, se escribe con palabras, nada más que con palabras. Entonces, lo que una hace es elegir las palabras, y las palabras se eligen con el cerebro, no con el corazón. Quien escribe poesía es un ser pensante, no es sólo un ser sensible, es un ser capaz de transformar su sensibilidad en una meditación, porque de otro modo no existiría la poesía, sino la confidencia o la carta. (Bigozzi 1995, 65)

²⁰ “Saussure, como es sabido, distingue estos dos aspectos en el lenguaje: ‘lengua’ y ‘habla’. Es para él ‘lengua’ el depósito de los signos; y es ‘habla’ para él el conjunto de los signos en cuanto movilizados por el hablando (Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique générale*, Paris 1916)” (Bousoño 98).

This means that according to Bignozzi poetry is the space to think, to observe, to choose the language, and to create. It is a very powerful space. Such is the space that Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi inhabit and work in.

Bousoño further develops his choice for poetry. He asserts that “‘poesía’ y ‘lengua’, hacen lo mismo pero de formas diferentes,” and he clearly favors poetry as a way to communicate for two reasons. The first one is that poetry does not use the collective language, but, on the contrary, it uses an individualized language producing “un contenido, no individual, pero sí *único*.” (116). Consequently, the readers, feel that the poetic subject is talking to them as individuals. The second reason why he favors poetry is that “el lenguaje ‘de uno solo’, propio de las sustituciones poéticas, al sorprendernos y romper con la rutina representada por la ‘lengua’, nos obliga a ‘fijarnos’ en el objeto al que se alude”, and thus, forces us out of the “percepción desatenta” (117). Bousoño suggests poetry to be the ideal way to entail a dialog about ideas since because of its relationship to language it is more effective in making the reader consider ideas and concepts. What Bousoño is pointing to then is the two-fold import of poetry: on the one hand it is significant because it allows the poet to think critically and change language with his/her aesthetic production, and, on the other hand, it is a significant way of communicating the poet’s ideas to others, thus ensuing a chain of thought and consequently, a greater impact in ideas.

Nevertheless, writing poetry and working with language is not simple or easy. Literature, and poetry included, is made of and with language, and therefore, the problematics that are part of it are also part of literature. Bosi presents the complexity of language and the treasures and difficulties of working with it:

A disposição dos sintagmas, sobre que assenta todo discurso, diz o quanto a linguagem humana é, ao mesmo tempo, seqüência e estrutura, movimento e forma, curso e recorrência. A sua estratégia de ir e vir é, por força, mais lenta e mais sinuosa do que a armada pela percepção visual ou pelo devaneio.

Nessa complexidade está a força e está a fraqueza do discurso. Ele é forte, é capaz de perseguir, surpreender e abraçar relações inerentes ao objeto e ao acontecimento que, de outro modo, ficariam ocultas à percepção. Ele é capaz de modalizar, de pôr em crise, e até mesmo *negar* a visão inicial do objeto (25)

It is clear that according to Bosi language is not perfect. It is a slower process to read than it is to take in an image, and it is tied to sequence and structure. However, language's strength, for Bosi, is in its incessant making of connections and in its questioning reality. This tension is inherent in language: the coexistence of setbacks in communication with what language can achieve. Bosi even quotes Octavio Paz expressing his view on this tension in poetry: "La expresión poética es irreductible a la palabra y no obstante sólo la palabra la expresa" (Bosi 29). Paz regards poetry as going beyond language, for it is not enough to express it. Yet, it is only through language that poetry can be expressed.

The problematics of language pertain to time as well. It is possible to claim that due to language's linear disposition on a page, meaning, one word after another, and that we read one word after another, it must follow that language itself invariably links time to linearity, to a succession, to moving only forward. However, Benedito Nunes elaborates on Cesare Segre's ideas in his book *As estruturas e o tempo* and explains the mechanics of how reading does not necessarily derive in the reader's abiding to linear and constant time that is one-directional:

Seria errôneo entender a leitura, o ato de ler, como uma travesia puramente linear do texto. O percurso nas palavras, de linha a linha, não se limita a reproduzir, aditivamente, o enunciado das frases, dispostas em seqüência. De frase a frase se opera uma *síntese memorial*, que retém os significados anteriores, e que, com base neles, propende aos seguintes. Uma reserva de "experiência conteudística e estilística" vai se acumulando à medida que se exerce, em cada nova frase, o mecanismo da experiência lingüística (75).

When read, language does not reproduce a sequence, it creates a three dimensional world. Nunes breaks the premise that, because of the linearity, when written or when spoken, language necessarily represents and creates a linear time. Nunes explains that the experience of language

is more complex and allows for other possibilities because of the mechanism that he expands on above. He therefore, does not see language as a limitation, and instead, focuses on our process of reading and thinking that leads to overcoming the language as succession problem.

In contrast to Nunes' faith in reading as an activity that renders reality three-dimensional, and thus time as represented by language as more than linear, Henri Bergson believes that time is made sequential and "normalized" through language. Granted, Bergson is not dividing language into "lengua" and "poesía" like Bousoño does, nor into everyday language and literature like Nunes does. Nonetheless, Bergson does acknowledge that while nature expresses, art suggests, and that is why it is more compelling. Specifically about poetry he says that its charm comes from the poet's developing feelings into images and these translate into word "while obeying the laws of rhythm" (16,15). From this it is possible to conclude that Bergson admits to the power of art, albeit over nature. Nevertheless, when it comes to time, internal states, feelings, and sensations, Bergson is definitely adamant about how the articulation through language of our experience of time regulates it and flattens it. He describes the self as having states and changes which "permeate one another" (125). They are personal, "confused, ever changing, and inexpressible" because "in the human soul there are only *processes*" (Bergson 129, 131). Conversely, words are stable, unchanging, and impersonal, and when articulating ourselves through language, words impose their stability on the self's processes (Bergson 132): "We instinctively tend to solidify our impressions in order to express them in language. Hence we confuse the feeling itself, which is in a perpetual state of becoming, with its permanent external object, and especially with the word which expresses this object" (Bergson 130). Language is described as imposing its order, structure, and fixedness onto what it articulates. It thus obliterates the inner conscious states of a person as well as their experience of time.

What Bergson describes is an inescapable cycle, for, since we are social beings we seek to communicate through language, and by doing so, we only speak in “shadows,” which is Bergson’s word to describe what the novelists provide:

Our tendency to form a clear picture of this externality of things and the homogeneity of their medium is the same as the impulse which leads us to live in common and to speak. But, in proportion as the conditions of social life are more completely realized, the current which carries our conscious states from within outwards is strengthened; little by little these states are made into objects or things; they break off not only from one another, but from ourselves. Henceforth we no longer perceive them except in the homogeneous medium in which we have set their image, and through the word which lends them its commonplace colour. Thus a second self is formed which obscures the first, a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separated from one another, and easily expressed in words. (138)

The split self is a consequence of breaking the flow of our internal processes of states of consciousness in duration, i.e. real time. What is separated into words, and thus fixed, is parallel to the separation of states and events in time into “distinct moments.” Words replace our reality and force another reality upon it, and this yields a loss of self: “As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken to pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self” (Bergson 128). In other words, although it is a need that we communicate and therefore separate the flows of time and internal processes, the translation of ourselves into words leaves us living in the shadows. As far as Bergson is concerned, using language always implies a loss. However, for him, if we are to use language, it is better to communicate through literature.

Bergson warns of the same fragmentation that happens to our conscious states happening with regards to time. Pure duration for him is “a continuous or qualitative multiplicity with no resemblance to number” (103):

We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which

represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space. (Bergson 101)

Bergson explains that duration cannot be measured for time cannot be separated into chunks, and, finding an order in a succession is actually a “representation of space, and cannot be used to define it” (102). The conception of time that is free from the idea of space is what Bergson calls pure duration: “Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states” (100). Again, Bergson points to the impossibility of language to faithfully communicate and represent internal experiences, be it of conscious states, time, or feelings. Whenever language intervenes in the articulations of these, it fails to actually capture our realities. For him, the ideas we express on time are always only a vestige of what we actually experience, or even worse, they are a misrepresentation of experience. We could say that his views on language would fall on the “no faith” side of the question of whether to have faith in language or not. He does distinguish literature, so it would be the best option of the worst scenario. I actually see this gap between the time that we experience and time represented in language as positive, for I believe that it is there that the possibility to re-think any kind of imposed or normatized and homogeneized idea exists. If what the poet feels is not identical with the constructions of time in society, then, a space for reflection and reformulation is created.

Bergson’s opinions appear to follow Immanuel Kant’s, who believed that “Time is nothing other than the form of inner sense, i.e., of the intuition of our self and our inner state” (163). In other words, it is “the form of all that we sense, whether inner or outer” (Guyer and Woods 41). This claim “does not mean that time is not also ‘objective and real’” (Guyer and Woods 42). Nevertheless, what was important about time for Kant is that it is “a subjective

condition of our (human) intuition [...], and itself, outside the subject, is nothing. Further, Kant had a stance on how this inner state is impossible to translate into language:

just because this inner intuition yields no shape we also attempt to remedy this lack through analogies, and represent the temporal sequence through a line progressing to infinity, in which the manifold constitutes a series that is of only one dimension, and infer from the properties of this line to all the properties of time, with the sole difference that the parts of the former are simultaneous but those of the latter exist successively. (163)

Notwithstanding, since Kant believed that our intuitions are real, in that time “has subjective reality in regard to inner experience,” “[i]t is therefore to be regarded really not as object but as the way of representing myself as object (165). From his claim I deduce that if the self is representing itself as an object according to its inner experience, then, by doing so, it is manifesting a certain type of ideology. Language is key in the articulation of such inner experience, and thus, in how the self carries itself in the world. Therefore, even if language, or any form of articulation of the experience invariably changes it in the process of encoding it, I contend that, depending on how language is owned and used, the way that the self actually performs itself. This means that although no two inner experiences can be the exact same, it is only in our manipulation of language that they become different when represented, and it is precisely in that encoding that a change can be carried out: the paramount process occurs then, from the encoding to observing the encoding and rewiring.

Borges agrees with Bergson and Kant in language itself being insufficient to express ourselves and our experiences. He describes grammar as the “*arte ilusoria que no es sino la autorizada costumbre*” (Borges 2005a, 46). Furthermore, because of the nature of language, Borges is of the idea that it is not appropriate to express all instances of time: “*Todo lenguaje es de índole sucesiva; no es hábil para razonar lo eterno, lo intemporal*” (Borges 1999, 271). Nevertheless, the Argentine writer, unlike Bergson, has faith in writers’ ability to transform

language, and in fact, it is even their responsibility to give it more dimension: “Lo que persigo es despertar a cada escritor la conciencia de que el idioma apenas si está bosquejado y de que es gloria y deber suyo (nuestro y de todos) el multiplicarlo y variarlo” (Borges 2005a, 49). Yet another difference Borges has with Bergson is that while the latter regards language as insufficient and as impoverishing our experience, the former regards language as positive: “El lenguaje es un ordenamiento eficaz de esa enigmática abundancia del mundo” (Borges 2005b, 52). However, Borges believes that not only does language structure the world, but it also adds to it: “Insisto sobre el carácter inventivo que hay en cualquier lenguaje [...] La lengua es edificadora de realidades” (Borges 2005b, 53).

It is precisely because of Borges’s belief in language and literature that he is attracted to the Kabbalah, which “le ha asignado al lenguaje la tarea suprema de reflejar –de ser– una manifestación directa de la Divinidad” (Sosnowski 25). This does not attest to Borges’s belief in Jewish mysticism, but rather, his adoption of certain premises of the Kabbalah is evidence to his faith in the written text. For example, how the written text encourages questions and investigation, how the text challenges the reader, and the power of the word to create realities. Concomitantly, Borges is also constantly problematizing language by highlighting its inability to fully express our experience. For Borges, then, although language is problematic and definitely has shortcomings, literature can still contribute to the creation of the realities we live in.

What he does not take as an enriching language is poetry, which he views as being “limosnera del idioma de todos” and as not actually actively participating in the construction of realities, save for a few exceptions and the “esperanza²¹” he has in the creations made with language (Borges 2005b, 54, 55). However, I venture to add that Hilst, Vitale, and Bignozzi’s

²¹ Bosi also finds that hope is part of language: “O discurso pede a quem o profere, e a quem o escuta, alguma paciência e a virtude da esperança” (25). Everyone that deals with language has to be patient and “practice” hope.

poetry does not “entrega un par de vanidades” nor does it use “soniditos” that are not poetic and deliver a mere “do en vez de donde,” which is how Borges describes poetry that does not provide an actual contribution to language or reality (Borges 2005b, 54). Contrarily, I am convinced that these women’s poetry is part of Borges’s “esperanza” of stretching and manipulating language in inventive ways in order to not only understand the world around us but to be creators in this world (Borges 2005b, 55). It is in this way that they are able to create modes of inhabiting time that undermine and modify those commonly expressed through language.

Both Bergson and Borges are of the opinion that part of the power that language does have is that in literature, language is more enticing for it suggests rather than simply expresses. This is what Borges calls “el procedimiento de insinuar las cosas” instead of clarifying them (in interview with María Esther Vázquez quoted in Aizenberg 84). For Borges, suggesting is crucial because it involves the reader in thinking and being critical: “Los símbolos, con su poder de sugestión, incorporan al lector al proceso artístico (ya que tiene que descifrarlos y alcanzar conclusiones sobre su significado), y así le proporcionan una experiencia estética más activa y más enriquecedora” (Aizenberg 84). This ties into what Bousoño presents regarding poetry, which is that in the aesthetic process of appreciation and involvement with language, the reader is immersed in the content of the poetry as well, and in fact, even more so than when reading a text that is not poetry. Both Borges and Bergson favor a kind of writing that will involve the reader and that will entice him/her to get involved with language and with the concepts presented. For these reasons I propose that poetry is an ideal space to discuss time precisely because it engages with language, its beauty and its limitations. What is more, because poetry requires the reader to imagine, think, and do so critically, it invites the reader to raise questions of the socio-cultural givens.

In all these authors it is possible to appreciate a tension between the power of language and being aware of its limitations. Language, which is what poets work with and the means they have to think and articulate their inner world as well as their perceptions of the outer world, both of which are intimately connected to time, always involves a struggle. Ultimately, language, which is used to communicate, is also used to try to find order in the world. Finding this order means risking normalizing, making homogeneous, taking for granted other's articulations of time, and living in the shadows. I argue that Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi succeed in living beyond the shadows.

Language and Time

The sociologist Norbert Elias and the philosopher and literary critic Nunes intersect in their view of time as a socio-cultural construct. I further study Elias' views in the chapter on Vitale. Both Elias and Nunes concur that because time is a socio-cultural construct it is created differently in different cultures. In addition, this means that there are multiple ways of perceiving and conceiving of time. Nunes articulates it as follows: “Embora a palavra ‘tempo’ tenha pendor para significar uma única realidade singular, não é menos um termo polissêmico com que se harmoniza a conceituação de um tempo plural, como conjunto de relações variáveis entre acontecimentos, como apoio na experiência interna ou externa, na cultura ou na vida social e histórica” (74). With this in mind, one can think of one word that corresponds to different realities; one word whose denotation can change for even one person; and one word that, as such, can be reformulated by writers.

Bosi also views time as being social since it is intersubjective and “habitado pelas múltiplas relações entre pessoa e pessoa, pessoa e coisa. E social, em um plano histórico maior, isto é, determinado, de cada vez, por valores de família de classe, de *status*, de partido, de

educação, sobretudo de educação literária, de gosto” (121). As far as Bosi is concerned, time is not something outside people or foreign of their agency. Conversely, he views time as being constructed by people’s viewpoints, which are derived from socio-cultural and economic factors, as well as people’s interactions with others. Time therefore, is regarded as plural.

Agustín García Calvo in *Contra el tiempo* gives much importance to language and the way it shapes our perceptions: “Pues es el establecimiento en el vocabulario semántico, que no es otra cosa que la Realidad o ‘visión del mundo’, lo que corona y convalida la existencia de la cosa que se ha venido fraguando en la sintaxis y en los tratos.” (16). García Calvo then argues that it is the words we use to talk about reality that actually shape reality. In the same way, he believes that the way we talk about time determines what time is for us, and vice-versa since time is a social construct. For this reason, concepts of time change from language to language, from culture to culture, and in time:

No ha dejado de ser trabajosos para el Tiempo ese establecimiento en el Vocabulario o Realidad: a cada paso lingüistas de campo (o antropólogos o etnólogos o sociólogos: tantos hemos llegado a ser en este mundo) nos dan cuenta, con más o menos asombro y fidelidad, de que en las otras lenguas, las dominadas o marginadas, no se encuentra algo que corresponda a la idea de ‘tiempo’ de las nuestras, por más que en algunas de ellas hayan llegado a ser las instituciones y cómputos del Tiempo, cartas astrales o calendarios, tan imperiosas y tremendas como entre los aztecas, egipcios o babilonios; y por tanto, en las gentes y mundos correspondientes no había tal cosa como nuestro Tiempo. (García Calvo 16)

This coincides with what Elias states. Different cultures struggle to talk about and explain time, and they do so in different ways. Not only that, but García Calvo notes how not all cultures give time the same place in their realities.

Furthermore, García Calvo asserts that there are two aspects of time deriving from the etymology of the words used to refer to time, which also serves to show according to him, how in antiquity the construction of time was still, like today, not steadfast:

notaremos [...] una duplicidad, representada por gr. *aión*, lat. *aeuon*, *aetās* (la raíz de gr. *aiei* ‘siempre’) por un lado, y gr. *chrónos*, lat. *tempus* (la raíz de **tem-* ‘cortar’) por el otro lado: es decir, aproximadamente, ‘tiempo’ tomado como abarcando en una palabra una extensión de tiempo, un tramo de duración ‘visto de una vez’, como el de una vida, una época, una era, o hasta el del Tiempo-todo o Eternidad, y por el otro lado, con *chrónos* y su frecuente Plural *chrónoi* (*aión* tan sólo por especulación tardía llegó a tener un Plural, y ya que para entonces la fusión de los dos vocablos estaba bien avanzada) y con *tempus*, algo como ‘situaciones en el Tiempo’, momentos, hitos de un ritmo o de otros cómputos. (16)

The duplicity in time that García Calvo alludes to, derived from the two words and roots in Latin that denote both a continuum and cutting up of time into more apprehensible chunks, is very relevant to understanding what Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi do in their poetry. With this I mean that the construct of time that is formed in their poems clearly embodies the tensions of these two elements of time.

Viewing time as a socio-cultural construction breaks the idea of accepting a given as if it were natural or the only way to view and experience time. If the conception of time is tied to social, historic, economic, and cultural factors, then it is safe to say that different conceptions simultaneously exist in each society. Concomitantly, this view of time as a socio-cultural construct also yields agency to each person participating in a society. It acknowledges that although we all have a common idea of what time is when we use the word *time*, we also all have different realities, and therefore, the possibility of creating our own conception of time. Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s work, are examples of agency in the creation of a meaning of time and a way to live it.

Borges also allots plurality to an understanding of time. Perhaps the most interesting idea that Borges puts forth in the essay “El tiempo” is the possibility of there being no singular time. He starts by introducing Newton’s idea of a unity of time, according to which “un solo tiempo que fluye a través de todo el universo” (Borges 2008, 94). Borges then presents Bradley’s idea, which is a possibility that counterbalances Newton’s unity of time: “Podemos suponer que hubiera diversas series de tiempo, decía, no relacionadas entre sí” (Borges 2008, 95). This is an invitation to focus on there being different series of times, regardless of whether or not the members of the series are contemporaneous. Having different series means that each person experiences a series of events, which can be parallel, or not, to other series (Borges 2008, 95). Borges regards this idea not only as possible, but also, as advantageous, in the sense that “nos daría un mundo más vasto, un mundo más extraño que el actual. La idea de que no hay un tiempo” (Borges 2008, 95). Borges therefore, presents time being experienced differently by different people, and that admitting to the notion of a plurality of views on time is more accurate than one that is singular.

Following the linguist and semiotician Émile Benveniste in his book *A linguagem e a experiência humana*, Nunes distinguishes between different kinds of time. He speaks of “*tempo físico*,” “[*tempo*] *psíquico*” and introduces “o [*tempo*] *cronológico* (*temps chronique*),” which he defines as “o tempo dos acontecimentos, englobando a nossa própria vida” (20). Nunes links chronological time with “[t]empo socializado ou tempo ‘público’,” in that it is related to the activities we carry out as well as to the objects in our lives. Nonetheless, according to Nunes, every kind of time is subordinated to physical time, and it is this physical time that controls our everyday life. He describes physical time as forming a “seqüência sem lacuna, contínua e infinita, percorrida tanto para a frente, na direção do futuro, quanto para trás, na direção do

passado, a sua armação fixa e permanente abriga expressões temporais específicas e autônomas da cultura” (20). Unlike Elias, then, who does not make the separations that Nunes does, the latter separates time as a cultural construct from a physical time. For him, chronological time is connected to social events and experiences, psychological qualities, and it includes liturgical time, political time, and historical time. Physical time, on the other hand, which coexists with socio-cultural time and is intercepted by its events, works separately from it. Physical time is relentless, in that it passes constantly and uninterruptedly in an identical manner, and is eternal in the sense that it is related to the past and future. Moreover, while physical time has one direction, forward, which corresponds in Nunes’s view to a Christian conception of time; historical time, which “representa a duração das formas históricas de vida,” can be divided into intervals of different length and does not always necessarily have the same directionality: “[a]s direções desse mesmo tempo variam de acordo com diferentes padrões culturais, que exprimem atitudes valorativas em relação à realidade temporal” (21). In other words, while people have no control over physical time; they certainly do over time that is constructed socially and culturally. This time, for Nunes, is susceptible to change, to be shaped according to interpretation, to the emphasis that is desired for what is told, experienced, and perceived.

Yet another time that is part of the constructed chronological time that Nunes mentions is the linguistic time. It possesses a “teor cultural” and it depends on the person making use of language, for it is the “tempo do discurso” (Nunes 23, 22). Nunes emphasizes that linguistic time “que não se reduz às divisões do *tempo cronológico*, revela a condição intersubjetiva da comunicação lingüística” (22). Time as expressed in our discourse opens a door to communicating a subjective viewpoint to others. This is connected to Bousoño’s idea that aside from the senses, language “es otro modo de captación de la realidad” (110). Nunes then divides

time in that which is objective and that which is subjective, to use Bergsonian terms. Although there is no way to influence physical time, which constitutes what happens and flows regardless of the self, it is possible to act upon what he denotes as chronological time, which is how we construct the narrative of time, how we experience it. Thinking of and communicating ideas on and time itself through language, which is another social construct, is in itself a way to read the world. For this reason, I anticipate that people that work with language and make literature are susceptible to thinking of time differently, and they will communicate it differently.

Specifically on time but following a similar line of thought as that of Bousoño, Nunes states that literature allows for different ways of conceiving time, in that, for example, “o tempo da ficção liga entre si momentos que o tempo real separa” (25). This is to say that literature, and I am certainly including poetry here, is more flexible in its construction of time. Nunes quotes Anatol Rosenfeld and his *Estrutura e problemas da obra literária* when he says that “essas fases não dependem, como na realidade, do fato de se definirem em relação ao autêntico *actu in esse* do presente. Devido a isso, o presente não goza, na ficção, do carácter preferencial que lhe cabe na realidade” (25). This leads me to affirm that from literature it is possible to contest reality by questioning it, creating new paradigms, and changing the existing structures. Even by creating a new reality. After all, “no plano do mundo imaginário qualquer modalidade temporal existe em função da sua apresentação na linguagem” (Nunes 25). I believe that this is so due to literature not being expected to conform to socio-cultural givens and because it is freer to question these structures (like that of time) and ideas than an individual that is doing so but not through literature. Literature can re-write time: I assert that the way that literature deals with time and portrays it, is not a mere representation of time or an invention of time. Conversely, literature’s

conceptions of time have a direct impact on reality, on how we conceive of time and experience it.

Bosi even states that poetry has a time of its own, an undulating time. According to him, poetry's process is best represented by the “figura do *ciclo* e a figura da *onda*” (117). Bosi elaborates on why the cycle and wave are a good representation for time in poetry:

Será que a forma poética responde, inconscientemente, a algum princípio vital, à energia que se move perpetuamente em ondas, à Natureza que recomeça perpetuamente o dia depois da noite, a primavera depois do inverno, a lua nova depois do minguante, a semente depois do fruto? O “tempo” da forma verbal reproduzirá em si o *eterno retorno do mesmo* que o pensamento e a História partem e crêem superar? Assim pensava Giacomo Leopardi na sua luta contra o progressismo fácil de certos intelectuais liberal-burgueses que faziam ruído no seu tempo: “Tudo se aperfeiçoou de Homero em diante, mas não a poesia.” (117)

In other words, Bosi holds that a non-linear and undulating time of return is organic to poetry. For this reason he quotes Leopardi and thus supports the belief that poetry has not “advanced.” Poetry for Bosi is not only undulating, but also, plural, for “são várias as temporalidades em que vive a consciência do poeta e que, por certo, atuam eficazmente na rede de conotações do seu discurso” (121). Bosi allows for the historical time to enter within the present of the poet. The poet, according to Bosi is capable of coexisting in different times, conceiving thus of different possibilities of existence and reality.

Writing Poetry in a Socio-Historical Context

The Brazilian sociologist Laymer Garcia dos Santos posits that any resolutions and conclusions reached are influenced by socio-cultural factors, indicating that contemporaries share some elements in the way they perceive reality—time, being part of this reality. More

specifically, Santos comments in “Modernidade, Pós-Modernidade e Metamorfose da Percepção” that the ways art, the self, as well as life and time are perceived, are influenced by the historical context of the perceiver. He looks into Walter Benjamin, whom he names “o primeiro [...] a falar de metamorfose da percepção em viturde do impacto da tecnologia moderna,” in order to show how different art forms changed man’s perception of reality (71)²². Art, then, as is poetry, is the key to being able to conceive of different approaches to and understandings of reality, and consequently, art is crucial in dimensioning reality as we know it. At the same time, in our day and age it is also relevant to observe how technology, related or not to art, heavily influences the way we conceive of time. An example to look at could be instant messaging, in whatever form that takes, being chat, snapchat, whatsapp: we become used to the instant, the now, what is fast. The present becomes quickly irrelevant. The rhythm we live in is fast-paced.

Octavio Paz, in his decisive study *Los hijos del limo* (1974), affirms, in accordance with Daiches and Benjamin, that each civilization has a different relationship with time. He notes two main types of societies: the primitive ones and the modern ones. Paz explains that for “las sociedades primitivas el arquetipo temporal, el modelo del presente y del futuro, es el pasado. No el pasado reciente, sino un pasado inmemorial que está más allá de todos los pasados, en el origen del origen” (25). This past continuously feeds and flows into the present, so much so that it merges with it. Social life in these societies is ritualistic and “no está hecha de cambios sucesivos, sino que consiste en la repetición rítmica del pasado intemporal” (25). Paz is referring

²² Santos is referring to Benjamin’s “A Short History of Photography” and “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” where he shows that with the advent of photography and cinematography and the changes in the practice of perception, the experience of time has changed.

to a past that is an archetype and that is constantly present in the form of rituals, festivities, a model to be imitated: “no es lo que pasó una vez, sino lo que está pasando siempre: es un presente” (26). It fuses the differences between the past and the present, highlighting thus, regularity. The past, he concludes, “defiende a la sociedad del cambio,” since the passing of time and change invariably translates into decay and a fall (26). Paz alludes to this double character of the archetypal past: it is both time and the negation of time. This past “está más allá del tiempo”, for it is the “principio original” (1974, 26). It is a past that is fully involved in the present, shaping it in the exact same manner that the “original” past was shaped in. There is an element of recurrence, which means that this past begins anew each time, and through it, the past constitutes itself as a “remedio contra el cambio y la extinción” (Paz 1974, 27). Therefore, even though the archetypal past is “atemporal,” it still participates in history, the passing of time, which these primitive societies see as “una degradación del tiempo original, un lento pero inexorable proceso de decadencia que culmina en la muerte” (Paz 1974, 26, 27). Nevertheless, the past’s participation entails being part of the present so as to ensure its repetition. Paz describes the future as double, in the sense that “es el final de los tiempos y es su recomienzo, es la degradación del pasado arquetípico y su resurrección” (27). The past is then, part of the present and the future too.

The author goes on to compare primitive societies, with their emphasis on an archetypal past that insists on becoming and being a present, with modern societies. Unlike for primitive societies, where time inhibits change, for modern societies, “el tiempo es el portador del cambio” (1974, 26). Each moment is different from the rest; it is unique. Paz notes that the “manifestación más pura e inmediata del cambio” is the present, “el ahora” (1974, 20). In fact, Paz observes this “curiosa concepción del tiempo” of modern societies, which is that the present moment denies

the past and seeks to be different from it. Time is no longer felt as a recurrence of moments, a repetition as it is for primitive societies. On the contrary, time for modern societies is a “proceso en el que las variaciones y las excepciones son realmente variaciones y excepciones a la regla” (Paz 1974, 20). Another aspect that Paz notes as particular to modern societies is the fast pace with which time passes. As a consequence of this celerity, “las distinciones entre los diversos tiempos—pasado, presente, futuro—se borran o, al menos, se vuelven instantáneas, imperceptibles e insignificantes” (1974, 20-21). Paz expounds that it is not only that the distinctions between what happened and what is happening are blurred, but also, “las diferencias entre la vejez y la juventud” (1974, 21). On the one hand, due to the emphasis made on the present, youth and its values are exalted. On the other hand, the fleetingness of time’s pace leads to a prompt aging. The double characteristic of modern societies does not stop there. What also transpires is that, because of this “aceleración del tiempo histórico,” the immediate past instantly becomes the distant past, and, at the same time “la antigüedad milenaria está infinitamente cerca” (Paz 1974, 21). Paz marks an increase in the speed with which time passes, as well as an increase in the amount of events that take place in a day. These events do not happen successively, but, rather, simultaneously; there is a fusion, in that, “todos los tiempos y todos los espacios conluyen en un aquí y ahora” (Paz 1974, 21). This intensity regarding the passing of time, as well as in its perception and awareness is idiosyncratic of modern societies. Paz believes that these characteristics of modernity regarding time are summarized in the expression “*la tradición moderna*,” which he explains as an “expresión de nuestra conciencia histórica. Por una parte, es una crítica al pasado, una crítica de la tradición; por la otra, es una negativa, repetida una y otra vez a lo largo de los dos últimos siglos, por fundar una tradición en el único principio inmune de la crítica, ya que se confunde con ella misma: el cambio, la historia” (1974, 25).

Modernity—“ese período que se inicia en el siglo XVIII y que quizá llega ahora [mid seventies] a su ocaso”—emphasizes both novelty, which is related to change, and also, heterogeneity: “Tradición heterogénea o de lo heterogéneo, la modernidad está condenada a la pluralidad: la antigua tradición era siempre la misma, la moderna es siempre distinta” (Paz 1974, 34, 16). Paz comments that modern societies highlight the difference between the past and the present, and also, assert that the past is plural. He expounds that this double emphasis on change and heterogeneity leads modernity to oppose Christianity’s view of time as lineal and irreversible, as well as any concept that is cyclical. Furthermore, this exaltation in “[d]iferencia, separación, heterogeneidad, pluralidad, novedad, evolución, desarrollo, revolución, historia [...] se condensan en un [nombre]: futuro” (Paz 1974, 34). That is, “[n]o el pasado ni la eternidad, no el tiempo que es, sino el tiempo que todavía no es y que siempre está a punto de ser” (Paz 1974, 34-35). The future is what Paz says that modern societies think of as perfection, after all, according to him, modern societies conceive “al tiempo como un continuo transcurrir, un perpetuo ir hacia el futuro; si el futuro se cierra, el tiempo se detiene,” which he describes as an intolerable and odious idea. Because the present is, “por definición, lo instantáneo y lo instantáneo es la forma más pura, intensa e inmediata del tiempo,” if the future does not follow it, then it becomes a nightmarish experience, for a fixed present “nos encierra en un estado que, si no es la muerte, tampoco es la vida” (Paz 1974, 43).

Although Paz described modern society in the seventies, I believe that we can still say that society nowadays follows the same characteristics that he allots to modern society. Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi live in this world that Paz describes where due to the fast pace of life, novelty and change are exalted, and the future is venerated in detriment of a past that is left behind. The present is, then, the manifestation of a fleeting instant that is never recuperated.

Instead of taking this for granted and their poetry reflecting the hectic and excessively fast way of life or revering the future, these three poets' work propose alternative ways of inhabiting the passing of time, whereby the focus is on the present, and where the neurotic view of the present as an instant is replaced by a present that runs deep and is worth investing in, stopping, and anchoring themselves in it.

Barbara Malinowska, also states how specifically contemporary poets do not write "independent of the outside influences" (1). These influences that Malinowska refers to are socio-cultural contexts, literary contexts, and the history of ideas, similarly to the studies referenced above by Bosi and Nunes. Paz would also agree with these critics on the significance of socio-cultural contexts in literature, especially when he explains that "[c]ada época se identifica con una visión del tiempo" (1972, 34). Paz goes on to show how literature is invariably part of the tissue of reality (and time related to socio-cultural phenomena). He traces the changes in literature that accompany the changes in the world since Romanticism to the late twentieth century, and concludes that although art and literature represent reality, they also change it: "El arte y la literatura son formas de representación de la realidad. Representaciones que son [...] también invenciones" (1990, 40). These changes start with language itself because, as stated by Paz, while "las palabras del poeta son también las de la comunidad," and thus "[e]l universo verbal del poema no está hecho de los vocablos del diccionario," "[e]l poeta transforma, recrea y purifica el idioma; y después lo comparte" (1990, 45, 46). Like Benjamin with art, Paz places weight in the import and impact that poetry has on society. Poets write within a context and are influenced by it, but, in turn, they influence society as well.

Another author who traces a lineage of poetry and time is Hugo Friedrich in his vastly studied *The Structure of Modern Poetry* (1956). He does not see the beginning of a change in the

way we think of time in Seneca, Augustine, Locke, or Sterne, who are often regarded as references. Rather, it is in Rousseau's last work, *Les Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*, that he finds a change. Nevertheless, according to Friedrich, Rousseau's "lyrical commitment" to internal time, "and the idea of inner time as belonging particularly to an antisocial psyche, helped pave the way for later poetry" (10). Friedrich explains that with Rousseau a new possibility became available regarding time: "Mechanical time, the clock, became the hated symbol of technological civilization (for Baudelaire and many later poets, such as Antonio Machado); internal time became the refuge of a poetry fleeing the confines of reality" (10-11). Another of Rousseau's contributions, according to Friedrich, is his envisioning a space for reality created by the self, which for him was more important than existing reality.

Bergson's exposition on time's double nature is pertinent to look into at this point. This two-fold time means that, on the one hand, there is an objective and external time that can be measured, and, on the other hand, a subjective time, which is the personal and individual experience of time. Nunes explains Bergson's idea as follows:

A experiência da sucessão dos nossos estados internos leva-nos ao conceito de *tempo psicológico* ou de *tempo vivido*, também chamado de *duração interior*. O primeiro traço do tempo psicológico é a sua permanente descoincidência com as medidas temporais objetivas. Uma hora pode parecer-nos tão curta quanto um minuto se a vivemos intensamente; um minuto pode parecer-nos tão longo quanto uma hora se nos entediamos. Variável de indivíduo para indivíduo, o *tempo psicológico*, subjetivo e qualitativo, por oposição ao *tempo físico* da Natureza, e no qual a percepção do presente se faz ora em função do passado ora em função de projetos futuros, é a mais imediata e mais óbvia expressão temporal humana. (18-19)

The psychological or subjective time that Bergson and Nunes point out opens possibilities for different experiences of one same objective time. This means that while a minute is still sixty seconds, it can be experienced differently according to each person's psychological makeup, circumstances, and so on.

I maintain that the poetry of Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi does not present a vision of the speaker fleeing reality, like Rousseau sought to do and therefore divided time between external and internal time. Their work seems to be more aligned with Bergson's understanding of an objective and personal time. In the work of these three poets there is a clear attempt at being as grounded as possible to reality. They are fierce in that they face the passing of time and propose to dialog with widely spread socio-cultural notions, as the ones seen above, and voice, thus, their vision (and practice) of how to experience the physical passing of time in such a way that it is not alienating. They do not heed givens and escape into an aesthetic world; they heed their circumstances and beliefs and construct a paradigm with that basis. Their resistance and reappropriation of time appears to follow the idea of Novalis by which "[p]oetry is a singing opposition to a world of habits, a world in which poetic men cannot live, for they are 'visionary, magic men'" (Friedrich 13).

Heritage

Friedrich's observations show how, despite the importance of the socio-cultural context the poets are writing in, the tradition to which poets belong also weighs on their writing. An example of this is the impact that certain movements and changes in poetry have on later poetry. This is the case of simultaneism. Paz characterizes poetry and time in the second decade of the twentieth century as follows: "en la segunda década del siglo XX apareció en la pintura, la poesía y la novela un arte hecho de conjunciones temporales y espaciales que tiende a disolver y a yuxtaponer las divisiones del antes y el después, lo anterior y lo posterior, lo interno y lo externo", that is "simultaneísmo" (1990, 44). Simultaneísmo points to a dynamic understanding of temporality, where moments that were once fixed in lineal time acquire movement, which is not to say that linear time is static, but that the events in a linear timeline have a specific moment

that comes before an event and after another one. Paz is referring to an endeavor in visual art, drama, and literature in the early 20th century whereby they strove to express multiple events and voices happening at the same time or within an extended period of time. As an example of simultaneísmo, Paz comments on the film theorist and pioneer in the theory and practice of montage, Sergei Eisenstein, and says that Eisenstein “señala en uno de sus escritos que la ausencia de reglas de sintaxis y de signos de puntuación en el cine le habían revelado, por omisión, la verdadera naturaleza de este arte: la yuxtaposición y la simultaneidad. O sea: ruptura del carácter lineal del relato” (1990, 45). Paz also mentions Apollinaire’s poem “Zone” as a rendition of this experience of simultaneity that characterizes Modernity. In this case, the kinetic aspect of the poem, in which the speaker walks the city, reminiscent of Baudelaire’s *flâneur*, is a way of bringing different experiences for the speaker, and different occurrences in various parts of the world together.

“Zone” paints a picture of simultaneity, where time is linked to space, to an unfolding of the lyric “I,” and to a reliving of past moments. Some of the ways it carries this out is with its peripatetic subject, who also “travels” metaphorically speaking by changing the references to himself as “I” and “you,” and the poem’s movement from past to present and back, as well as the different places it names and co-inhabits. These are all movements that appear in simultaneism for the first time and which are developed by postmodernity, making simultaneism a tradition.

Another poem of Apollinaire’s, which Paz does not mention, but which also illustrates simultaneism is “Windows.” The speaker in this poem experiences different sensations at once, and all that is taken in from the speaker’s windows is done so at the same time. The simultaneity of the poetic voice’s experience is reproduced in the fast pace of the poem, in the fragmentation, the alternation between past, present and future.

Apollinaire was writing at the beginning of the 20th century, and he belonged to the avant-garde. According to Paz, “la poesía nueva exaltó al instante, al presente: lo que ven los ojos y tocan las manos” (1990, 41). He contrasts “la poesía nueva”, the vanguards of the beginning of the twentieth century, with French symbolism, which he describes as having focused on “nostalgias de un más allá, a veces situado en un imposible pasado u, otras, en un no menos imposible *nowhere*” (1990, 41).

Similar to simultaneism, and contemporary to it, is Fernando Pessoa and Mário Sá-Carneiro’s *interseccionismo*. Intersectionism, as another avant-garde technique developed by these two Portuguese poets, has points in common with simultaneism. Both opened poetry up to the possibility of simultaneous happenings, musings, investigations, and metaphors, etc. That is, simultaneism and intersectionism opened time beyond linearity. *Interseccionismo* takes from Italian futurist painting the aspiration to “dar uma *sensação dinâmica*, nas palavras de Gino Severini, no seu *Manifesto* de 1913, a qual seria conseguida pela passagem de uma *analogia real* a uma *analogia aparente*” (Martins 363). Severini explains this in terms of the visual arts, but Fernando Cabral Martins shows how it applies to literature as well, as in the example of Pessoa’s *interseccionista* poem “Chuva Oblíqua”: “a obra (plástica) deveria partir de uma situação/metáfora inicial (real) para depois dela se afastar, intensificando a sensibilidade plástica (quer do pintor quer do público que olha) para evocar uma outra cadeia de comparações – analogias (aparentes)— que já não seriam da ordem do visível e do concreto, mas da ordem da abstração e da sensibilidade de cada um de nós” (Martins 363). Martins details the way in which the metaphor in literature is liberated, opened and expanded due to *interseccionismo*. Consequently, the “poeta, muito em particular, trabalha a aparente velocidade com que as imagens se sucedem aos nossos olhos/consciência e, num perfeito prisma de intersecções,

apresenta-las já fundidas, por vezes, de um modo aparentemente não-lógico, motivando e provocando quem as lê a encontrar lugares de sentido diversificados” (Martins 363-364).

Interseccionismo in poetry is not just evident in the multiple angles of the metaphors and analogies used. In Sá-Carneiro’s case, for example, his *interseccionismo* had more to do with a “fragmentação do eu, em permanente intersecção com o outro” than with an experimental technique or style (Martins 365). Martins indicates that Sá-Carneiro’s poem 7 is the quintessential example of this particular vein of *interseccionismo*, and he cites the following lines from the poem as an example:

Eu não sou eu nem o outro,
Sou qualquer coisa de intermédio:
Pilar da ponte de tédio
Que vai de mim para o outro

Martins does not see a trend in this poem, but rather, an expression of *interseccionismo* as a “modo de ser e de sentir,” and as such, it speaks of Sá-Carneiro’s ontological concerns (Martins 365). Martins describes these concerns as “o drama nunca resolvido de um eu que se sente absolutamente interseccionado por um outro, ao qual estará para sempre, e irremediavelmente, ligado por essa *ponte de tédio*, por essa incapacidade de libertação quer do eu-passado quer do salto (mortal?) para um eu que se deseja mais belo e mais perfeito” (365).

Martins defines *interseccionismo* as the “sucessivas intersecções de planos do objeto com a nossa sensação, do físico com o psíquico, do espaço com o tempo e a ideia” and as “tentativas de interdisciplinaridade” (365). I would like to add that *interseccionismo*, together with simultaneismo, and other movements related to the avant-garde are very significant when studying Hilst, Vitale, and Bignozzi’s work, for they were ground-breaking in opening up possibilities of understanding the self and reality’s structures, such as time, as complex bodies of

intersections and changes. Although, the three poets I will focus on are post-vanguard poets, tracing the literary tradition which they inherited and how different poets and movements conceive of time in poetry sheds light on the poets' starting point, and on how their work can be inserted in this line of poetry on time.

It is worth mentioning other Latin American avant-garde poets who were influential because of their treatment of time in their poetry. An example of such a poet is the Peruvian César Vallejo. In *Trilce*, published in 1922, the speaker constantly returns to a certain past or situation in the present. He is trapped in a present that carries the weight of the presence of a past as well as its absence. That is, there is an experience of a cyclical time that repeats itself: a present that is always there, that does not move onto a future. *Trilce* constitutes a subjective and personal experience of time, a time that is both dynamic and static. Vallejo portrays this dual character of subjective time by way of the repetition of words, neologisms, changes in verb tenses, and the recurrent appearance of numbers throughout the poetry collection. In this book, a particular time of day is always the same and not, which speaks of a broken time, which, concomitantly, places the speaker in a rut. Nevertheless, *Trilce* also breaks with the duality objective-subjective time, subverts the linearity of time and goes beyond a cycle. The reader of *Trilce* is witness to an emptiness that persists in the present due to the absence of his mother and other people in his life, and the speaker's consequent attempts to recuperate a time that was not empty. The language in the book is at times fragmented, and it enacts and embodies time's experience for the speaker.

Another avant-garde poet who is salient is the Chilean Vicente Huidobro. His *creacionismo* manifests how poetry is not a representation of reality but the creation itself of reality. Thus he asserts poetry's prominent place and input in the creation of reality's tissues.

This is tied to the belief presented in Huidobro's *Altazor* (1931) that due to every person being different they need different language to express themselves and what they perceive. Language therefore, is particular to each person, and also, to each moment. That is, "cada tiempo tiene insinuación distinta" (Huidobro 112). This awareness that language necessarily changes with time and each individual, is echoed in the above ideas presented by Paz, Friedrich, Benjamin, and Daiches. *Altazor*, precisely, through the metaphor of the journey, enacts the search for new forms of expression.

Because these three poets are writing after the 1950s, they can be situated in Postmodernity. According to Gianni Vattimo in *La Società Transparente* of 1989, Postmodernity comes to be when "não é mais possível falar de história como de um fenômeno unitário, em virtude, principalmente da multiplicidade de culturas e de povos que adentram a cena mundial com a descolonização e o fim do imperialismo (?!) , e da multiplicidade de visões de mundo suscitada pela explosão fenomenal da comunicação" (Santos 75). Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi, then are precisely writing in an era that demands a questioning of reality and the possibility of raising new and diverse perspectives on the structures that govern it—time being one of its main structures. Postmodernity, this "mundo múltiplo," as Vattimo describes it, allows for a certain liberty in voicing one's poetics even if this means going against the tide (Santos 76).

In the same way that Benjamin's view of art in Modernity is that which shocks the spectator out of anchored ideas regarding reality and the world, Vattimo dialogues with Heidegger's concept of shock (*Stoss*). Moreover, Vattimo explains the difference between Benjamin's and Heidegger's shock, but finds something in common too: the insistence in defamiliarization:

Tanto num caso quanto no outro [...] a experiência estética aparece como uma experiência de estranhamento que exige um trabalho de recomposição e de readaptação.

Mas tal trabalho não visa atingir uma recomposição total; ao contrário, a experiência estética *é dirigida para manter vivo o deslocamento* [...] Tanto para Heidegger quanto para Benjamin, o estado de deslocamento é constitutivo e não provisório. Esse é o elemento mais radicalmente novo de tais posições estéticas, no confronto com as reflexões tradicionais sobre o belo, e até com a sobrevivência dessa tradição nas teorias estéticas deste século. (Vattimo quoted in Santos)

For both Heidegger and Benjamin the aesthetic experience is a crucial component in keeping the spectator and reader questioning reality and in destabilizing a sense of permanence and unity both in reality and in one's self. I would like to extend this observation to poetry as well. This instability and constant readjusting implies that the poem can no longer be regarded as that which has more permanence than life, or as that which lends its being long-lasting characteristic to the poet. On the contrary, the poem becomes the very element that destabilizes reality and the self. In Santos' words: "a arte seria a arte da oscilação entre o pertencimento ao mundo e a sua perda, entre o sentido e a ausência de sentido" (77). I agree with Santos's idea of art, and see the same process occurring in poetry. The poem then, embodies the only permanence possible in the poet's life, that is, that of a permanent re-balancing in the way life is regarded and inhabited. It is as if the very fact of poetry as a mode of expression implied resisting, questioning, and constant re-evaluation.

According to Santos, we are no longer in a time where the shock produced by art will lead to a change of perception, but rather, art in postmodernity leads people to "a liberdade de oscilar continuamente entre o pertencimento e o deslocamento" (78). We can say that, in this way, Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi build structures of oscillation. Nevertheless, their poetry does not bring about a loss of a sense of reality due to the multiplicity of views, like Vattimo affirms, but rather, it creates constellations of meanings that break with a standardized view of reality and allow for a multiple understanding of reality, and more specifically, of time. They propose different resolutions to the concerns of life's transience, art's eternal present, grasping time and

articulating it, change and decay, how perception plays out with the passing of time. In fact, although considerations of time are present in poetry in general, what characterizes these three poets' work, as part of a post-vanguard generation and the advent of postmodernity, is its active construction of temporalities.

Returning Time to Being

In my dissertation I concentrate on “all complexities of mire or blood” in Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi's poetry (Yeats, “Byzantium”). To do so it is crucial to consider different sources of our understanding of time. Aside from personal experience, other factors that influence our conception of time are culture and, more specifically, different ideas concerning time articulated by philosophers, which permeate diverse levels of our human experience. For this reason, it is paramount to examine the way philosophy looks at time. These ideas are present in Hilst, Vitale, and Bignozzi's poetry, and they help illuminate their poems. At the same time, because these three poets' work sheds light on metaphysical concerns regarding time, philosophical perspectives on time are useful in the study of their work.

AUGUSTINE

One of the most prominent studies that link time and the human being is in Augustine's Book XI of *Confessions*. According to Herman Hausheer, for Augustine, “the mystery of time [...] is essentially bound up with the mystery of created being” (503). It is not just important to point out that he explained time as consisting of three moments (past, present, future), but also, it is crucial to understand what this meant with regards to the Being. The fact that we measure time is one of the ways that Augustine tackles the mystery of time. At the center of measuring time is the present, an instant, always subject to passing, and, simultaneously, with a perceptible

duration. The tension between being and not being is captured in this conception of the present. Nevertheless, the distinctions between being and not being are not so clear-cut, for in Augustine's view "the past survives in memory and the future preexists in some way in the form of an anticipation" (Hausheer 504). The past and the future exist then in the present, which is also fleeting.

What is evident in the relationship between past, future, and present is that there are points of contact between the three dimensions of time, and that absence and presence, being and not being, coexist. Concurrently, Augustine also believed that the measuring of time is actually a measurement of absence, in that we actually measure when the present is gone. This absence still has presence in a particular space where everything seems to be saved, namely, the mind: the presence of the past and the future, and, more specifically, their existence, takes place in the mind. From this it is deduced that instead of there being three moments, there are three different presents: "a present of things present, a present of things past, and a present of things future" (Hauseer 506). Putting the mind at the center where it organizes, measures, and directs time, and therefore, reality, is yet another aspect of the connection between time-being. Moreover, it allows for the coexistence of past, present, and future, because they share the space of time. But the mind still perceives these three moments as successions. James Wetzel points out that this change in the way of referring to the three moments—from past, present, future; to three presents—implies a change in the way the mind thinks. In other words, "[p]ast, present and future are present to us as memory, sensation and expectation" (346). However, Wetzel does not believe that this means that Augustine conceives of time only as that which has existence exclusively in the mind.

Wetzel is very emphatic when he states that it is a common mistake on the part of critics and philosophers, of which he mentions Bertrand Russell, “to think of Augustinian inwardness as a retreat to subjectivity”, and clarifies that “[i]f time is in the mind, as Augustine seems to conclude, it does not follow that time must be an item in a mental inventory, or an artifact of immaterial creativity” (341). Wetzel elucidates that Wittgenstein understands Augustine’s concentration on the mind when dwelling on the subject of time very differently from Russell: “The answer he supposes Augustine to suggest to the philosophical question of time is not a piece of speculation, a subjective theory of time, but a life returned to time, secured from its original estrangement” (Wetzel 343). Wetzel agrees with Wittgenstein when he explains that the question of time is precisely in Augustine’s *Confessions*, where he “spoke of time in order to express and deepen the sense of alienation he was feeling from his habitual truck with things temporal” (Wetzel 345). Wetzel thus highlights on the one hand the significance of time in a person’s life, and, on the other hand, a desire on the part of Augustine to have more insight regarding the connection between himself and time, as well as his connection to himself.

Paul Ricoeur, like Wetzel, stresses the importance of Augustine’s movement of bringing time to the mind, because by doing so Augustine links time and the self: “I begin to wonder whether it [time] is an extension of the mind itself” (Augustine quoted by Ricoeur 15). This quote of Augustine again shows the deep and intimate relationship between the self and time, so much so, that there is a hint of co-creation. Ricoeur clarifies that “the extension of time is a distention of the soul,” and that while Plotinus had made this connection before, he was referring to the soul of the world and not to the human soul, which is Augustine’s contribution to the discussion of time (16).

Another aspect to the association between the mind and time in Augustine, as Wetzel notes, is that the mind is both what allows Augustine to understand and measure time, as well as what undermines this understanding because “[h]is mind’s disorder never ceases to interfere with his efforts at understanding” (348). We can consequently argue that the mind is the enabler to comprehending time and to bringing it closer to the self, while it is, additionally, what disrupts any direct understanding or order that is graspable. This conveys various ways of attaining understanding and knowledge, as well as a mechanics inherent in the mind whereby what is understood is always questioned and seen in a new light.

Augustine revises Aristotle and Plato, for whom time was measured according to the movements of celestial bodies. Augustine maintains the comparison in measuring but shifts the point of reference from the celestial body to another point of time. The mind itself can work as “the fixed element that allows us to compare long periods of time with short periods of time” (Ricoeur 18). The mind, therefore, plays an essential role not only in the measuring of time, but also, and more importantly, in the apprehension of time. Moreover, a long or a short period of time is, in reality, the impression that certain events have on the soul “only inasmuch as the mind *acts*, that is, expects, attends, and remembers” (Ricoeur 19). The fact that the mind plays an active part in the construction of different conceptions of time is constantly being emphasized in Augustine. The mind’s engagement in the world and the self is thus undeniable for Augustine.

BEING - *DASEIN*

Another philosopher who develops thoughts on time, the self, and the mind is Martin Heidegger. His theories on Being and time are interesting to study together with Augustine because Augustine is one of Heidegger’s main interlocutors. It is crucial to clarify, however, that for Heidegger, Being (with a capital B) is not a synonym for *self*. Not only human beings are

Beings. Nevertheless, *Dasein*, which is what Heidegger calls “the *entity* that human beings as such are,” is a being who reflects on the fact that it is a being (Wheeler). This means that *Dasein* has the ability of unfolding, and therefore, it can live in the world, and, at the same time, observe itself.

In Hilst, Vitale, and Bignozzi’s poems, this unfolding is evident. Their poetry is the embodiment of the speakers’ inhabiting it, and the reader is privy to the *Daseins*’s observations and dwelling, which is the word that Heidegger sometimes uses to explain its relationship with the world²³. According to Heidegger, the world is not just a setting, for the *Dasein* is a “Being-in-the-world”; it has a special way of relating to it, to being open to it: “the term being-in [does not] designate a spatial ‘in one another’ of two things objectively present, any more than the word ‘in’ primordially means a spatial relation of this kind. ‘In’ stems from *innan-*, to live, *habitare*, to dwell” (Heidegger 2010, 53, 54). Heidegger refers to an active participation and relationship between Being and the world.

For Heidegger, unlike for Augustine, the three presents (“now,” “no-longer-now,” and “not-yet-now”) are related to lack, in the sense that the moment is either already disappearing, has already disappeared, or has not yet appeared. Despite this lack, Heidegger clarifies that all the moments in time are still present in the Being. If Being means presencing, then within one same Being, the three moments of time coexist, given that *Dasein* unfolds and can therefore experience simultaneous thoughts at the same time. As a consequence, *Dasein* is already equipped to inhabit and perceive time in more than one way.

²³ Heidegger’s idea developed through the analysis of Hölderlin’s lines “...poetically, man / Dwells on this earth,” whereby he proposes that poetry is not “merely an ornament and bonus added to dwelling,” but on the contrary, it is a kind of “dwelling”, and further, he adds that “poetry is what causes dwelling to be dwelling” (Heidegger 1971, 213).

It is not only Being that experiences disappearance with relation to time; according to Heidegger time itself also undergoes absence. He clarifies that Being is neither a thing nor is it in time, although it is “determined as presence by time, by what is temporal” (Heidegger 2002, 3). Concomitantly, time is determined by Being, in the sense that since time and temporality mean what passes away, time “pass[es] away constantly,” and consequently, “time remains as time” (Heidegger 2002, 3). Because to remain means to presence, “[t]ime is determined by a kind of Being” (Heidegger 2002, 3). The difference is that time is not temporal because it is always presencing in its constant disappearing. In both cases, disappearing is still a kind of presence.

On the issue of presence and absence, it is interesting to bring Emmanuel Levinas into the discussion as a parenthesis. He focuses on presence and absence in writing. Levinas explains that the absence of reality is emphasized through the use of language, for language, at the same time that it transmits content, also points to this non-reality, its arbitrariness, and mainly, to an absence. The absence is not only given by the fact that the words actually represent something that is not there, but also, by the fact that a text attests to the writer him/herself being absent. According to Levinas, “[t]he creator is he or she whose name is obliterated and whose memory has faded away. ‘The creator is without power over his work.’ To write is to break the bond uniting the word [*parole*] to myself” (132). In other words, the writer, by writing the text, erases himself and severs the link between the text and the author. This line of thought actually goes against that which asserts that by writing, the authors ensure their immortality.

Levinas does note that the writer “is not named,” and this indicates an absence. What is more, he marks the activity of writing as an intertwining of the writer with the words: the words that are evidence of absence of the thing itself “coincides” with the writer, who by definition is absent. Nevertheless, writing is also asserting presence, since as far as Levinas is concerned,

“[t]o write is to return to essential language, which consists in moving things aside in words, and echoing being. The being of things is not named in the work of art, but says itself there, coinciding with the absence of things that words are. To be is to speak” (131). From this, it is possible to conclude that writing is a way of making presence more present than absence; a way for the writer to return him/herself to language, to the world. Levinas’ assertions appear to be different from the trope of a text as immortal or a writer’s gain of immortality through their work. The disparity lies in that, while the case of a writer reaching immortality through writing presents itself as a finished and set situation; Levinas presents the writer and his/her writing, and the writing itself, to be an arena of constant struggle. The tension between absence and presence never disappears. The process of negotiation, of inner conflicts and of coexisting contradicting possibilities are always happening within the writing and the writer themselves. Furthermore, Levinas draws a parallel and a particular relationship between the writer and his/her writing and the dynamics of language. The world appears to be in continuously escaping language, just as the writer’s being appears to be continuously escaping the text. But, even so, in this escape, both absence and presence actively coexist.

MERLEAU-PONTY

Merleau-Ponty argues that in order to understand the subject we have to “seek it at the intersection of its dimensions” (477). He emphasizes that it is necessary to “consider time itself, and it is by following through its internal dialectic that we shall be led to revise our idea of the subject” (477). Time for him is, therefore, a primary building block in the understanding of the being. Another reason why Merleau-Ponty thinks studying time is paramount when studying the subject is that they are intertwined, in that “[t]ime presupposes a view of time” (477). To say it differently, time presumes a subject. Simultaneously, a subject presupposes time, because it is “a

dimension of our being” (Merleau-Ponty 483). Time and being cannot be separated when trying to study one or the other. Intrinsic to being is understanding and making meaning of things, for which temporality, in Merleau-Ponty’s view, is essential. “We mark out the phases or stages of our life: for example, we consider everything that bears a significant relationship to our concerns at the moment as part of our present, thus recognizing implicitly that time and significance are but one thing” (Merleau-Ponty 495).

According to these philosophers, time and Being are intimately connected. What the person enacts with regards to time always stems from deep observation, questioning and thought. Time means being connected to what Being is experiencing and thinking. How time is articulated, in language or in action, is evidence of Being tapping into itself and the world. Time is linked to identity, as well as to responding to one’s beliefs. From these views, it is neither surprising that the speakers in the work by Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi are poets, nor that in proposing a poetics of time, they outline a Being.

The Importance of Being

Another way of achieving knowledge is presented by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. According to him, phenomenology is paramount when studying the conceptions of time constructed in the works of different poets. As defined by Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*, it is “the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example” (vii). To put it another way, to study the essence of something it is imperative to go back to what is being studied and to “concentrate upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world,” or as Edmund Husserl puts it, “to return to the ‘things themselves’” (Merleau-Ponty vii, ix). At the

heart of the creation of conceptions is what it means to perceive, which Merleau-Ponty defines as different from “a science of the world,” and from “a deliberate taking up of a position” (xi).

Rather, perception is “the background from which all acts stand out, and it is presupposed by them” (Merleau-Ponty, xi). He blurs the boundaries between the world and the self, inasmuch as for him, the world is not an object and man is simply the observer. On the contrary, the world “is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and my explicit perceptions” (xii). “[M]an is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself” (xii). It is by fully inhabiting the world, being present in it, that the self becomes present to itself.

Merleau-Ponty blurs yet another boundary, this time, between the self and the other. Consciousness is construed as “active meaning-giving operation,” turning the world to be, in reality “world-as-meaning”—a meaning which is constructed in a shared way, forming a unity in which individual consciousnesses are not distinguished (xii). The world is, after all, “the system in which all truths cohere” (Merleau-Ponty xiii). If having a consciousness is all it takes to be part of the meaning-making, and by doing so be part of a unity, does this mean that simply by being present the self achieves unity and eternity? Also, what are the underlying assumptions regarding the construction of the self and of the other? Is the self not the only one responsible for its formation? Merleau-Ponty addresses some of these questions by saying that

[a]nalytical reflection knows nothing of the problem of other minds, or of that of the world, because it insists that with the first glimmer of consciousness there appears in me theoretically the power of reaching some universal truth, and that the other person, being equally without thisness, location or body, the Alter and the Ego are one and the same in the true world which is the unifier of minds. (xiii)

Following this logic Merleau-Ponty adds that the self and the other are not “part of the woven stuff of phenomena; they have validity rather than existence” (xiii). In other words, they have no

depth, for they are “merely a little shadow which owes its very existence to the light” (Merleau-Ponty xiii). This approach to the self contradicts the approaches presented previously, because the self in this case is depicted as having very little agency. All it has to do is to have consciousness to start weaving “the stuff of phenomena,” but without actually being it—a type of being and nonbeing at the same time.

Merleau-Ponty mentions that Husserl does not agree with this viewpoint on the self. Individuality is more pronounced in Husserl’s perspective. He introduces various layers: first there is the self and how it sees itself. Another layer is what the self presents to others (what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the “outer appearance”), which should be the same as the self itself because otherwise it is not the I that the other sees: “I must be the exterior that I present to others, and the body of the other must be the other himself” (Merleau-Ponty xiii). This is a paradox: the self and what it reflects: are they the same? And there is another question that remains: is “the I [...] accessible only to itself, since it defined *me* as the thought which I have of myself, and which clearly I am alone in having”? (Merleau-Ponty xiv).

Merleau-Ponty comments on the importance of the self for Husserl in reading reality, for he believes that the self’s “involvement in the world is precisely what has to be understood and made amenable to conceptualization, for it is what polarizes all our conceptual particularizations” (xvi). Therefore, in order to understand any conceptualization about the world, it is key to study the self and its involvement in the world, and with what it is that it conceptualizes. Husserl highlights the significance of language in the self’s understanding of concepts: it is through the experience of the self “that language comes to have any meaning at all” (Merleau-Ponty xvii). He takes the relationship of language and self still one step further, since, for him, language only appears to separate essences. It is actually through language that

essences live in consciousness. Moreover, silence is also crucial to comprehension, language and consciousness: “In the silence of primary consciousness can be seen appearing not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core of primary meaning round which the acts of naming and expression take shape” (Merleau-Ponty xvii). Silence is construed as an essential part of forming conceptions, as well as the other side of the coin of language. And forming conceptions is about connections—connections to essences, and within those, standing paramount is the connection to the self: “Seeking the essence of consciousness will therefore not consist in developing the *Wortbedeutung* of consciousness and escaping from existence into the universe of things; it will consist in rediscovering my actual presence to myself, the fact of my consciousness which is in the last resort what the word and the concept of consciousness mean” (Merleau-Ponty xvii). Basic building blocks become clear in order to start discovering how to go about reading conceptions of time in poetry.

The Present

Ricoeur also points to the multiplicity that becomes apparent when analyzing Augustine. When speaking of Augustine’s mention of placing time in the mind, it is a question of space, for Augustine asks himself where the past and the future are. His response to this question is that they are in the mind, and more specifically, “it is only by being present that they *are*” (Augustine 18:23, quoted in Ricoeur). Ricoeur notes that the present is then, a different present, it “is one that has also become a plural adjective (*praesentia*), in line with *praeterita* and *future*, and one capable of admitting an internal multiplicity” (10). Ricoeur is pointing to two distinct meanings of *present*, which coexist and are interconnected. The first *present* is the fleeting moment in which we exist and it is the space where we connect to what has happened and what has not yet happened. The second *present* refers to mindfulness, and this is why I believe that the “internal

multiplicity” of the present that Ricoeur describes has many facets and levels: three different presents, two meanings of one word, the self who can be present and absent at the same time, or present in both mind and body.

Heidegger is of the same mind as Augustine with regards to the present. The German philosopher elucidates that “[f]rom the dawn of Western-European thinking until today, Being means the same as presencing. Presencing, or presence speaks of the present. According to current representations, the present, together with past and future, forms the character of time. Being is determined as presence of time” (Heidegger 2002, 2). He notes that a characteristic of Being is precisely time: “the It which gives Being, which determines Being as presencing and allowing-to-presence, might be found in what is called ‘time’ in the title *Time and Being*” (Heidegger 2002, 10). Heidegger follows Augustine when he talks of presencing, since also for him *to be present* has two meanings. When Heidegger refers to “presencing” and the present, he is not merely alluding to the moment *now*; he is also referring to being present as opposed to being absent. He explains how these two meanings of *present* relate to one another:

if we are to characterize time in terms of present, we understand the present as the now as distinct from the no-longer-now of the past and the not-yet-now of the future. But the present speaks at the same time of presence. However, we are not accustomed to defining the peculiar character of time with regard to the present in the sense of presence. Rather, we represent time—the unity of present, past and future—in terms of the now. Even Aristotle says that of time which *is*, that is, presences, is the actual now. Past and future are a *me on ti*: something which is not, though not an absolute nullity, but rather, something present which lacks something. This lack is named with the ‘no longer now’ and the ‘not yet now.’ Viewed in this way, time appears as a succession of nows, each of which, barely named, already disappears into the ‘ago’ and is already being pursued by the ‘soon’. (Heidegger 2002, 11)

Heidegger emphasizes the present in two ways: firstly, by stating that the present is the only time that actually exists, for the past and the future are part of the present or are in themselves different kinds of presents. In this he follows Augustine, for whom there are three presents. The

second way he highlights the present is by showing how it is firmly associated with mindfulness, being present.

Borges intersects with Augustine and Heidegger in some aspects of his thoughts on time. He points out that we do not have the same relationship or understanding when talking of the present, in that the present is “una entidad abstracta. El presente no es un dato inmediato de nuestra conciencia,” which is why of the three moments of time, it is the most difficult to grasp, and perhaps even, the one moment that is most difficult to find a consensus on (Borges 2008, 97). What is certain is that, like Augustine before him, Borges sees the present as fleeting, in the sense that “[e]l presente no se detiene” (Borges 2008, 98). Borges describes the present as being “un poco el pasado y un poco el porvenir” (Borges 2008, 97). Here we can recall Bergson’s notions of time as not liable to being separated into moments.

Almost twenty years before writing “El tiempo,” Borges wrote “Una refutación del tiempo” where he states that “[c]ada instante es autónomo,” and that the past cannot be modified by the present (267, 268). In this essay he denies the coexistence of different moments, and even succession of moments. He also denies history, the narrative of the past, because “cada momento que vivimos existe, no su imaginario conjunto” (268). By saying this he seems to be only admitting the existence and importance of the fleeting present, measured in seconds. The rationale behind his statements is that “si el tiempo es un proceso mental, ¿cómo pueden compartirlo millares de hombres, o aun dos hombres distintos” (Borges 1999, 268). Time then, according to Borges, is within each person, and is a personal experience that is ineffable because of this and because what is only taken into account is the present moment (“Tampoco existiría el tiempo fuera de cada instante presente” (Borges 1999, 280)). In this early essay he reaches the

conclusion that time is irrefutable because it is part of us, it is us: “El tiempo es la sustancia de que estoy hecho” (286). We are made of time, yet, our experience of time cannot be shared.

Bosi brings an interesting point of view on the present in poetry. He also dialogs with Augustine: “Na poesia cumpre-se o *presente* sem margens do tempo, tal como o sentia Santo Agostinho: presente do passado, presente do futuro e presente do presente. A poesia dá voz à existência simultânea, aos tempos do Tempo, que ela invoca, evoca, provoca” (121). The picture painted in this quote is that the present is what prevails in poetry, for it is a time that actually surpasses just the present moment and includes all moments. Poetry then, is where time can actually be itself, in the sense that it can be expressed optimally, without divisions and fragmentation. This could be seen as an answer to Bergson’s regarding language as a filter that heavily changes our experience of time and is thus unable to communicate it. In fact, contrary to Bergson’s beliefs, Bosi asserts the power of language in poetry, in that for him, “[o] poeta é o doador de sentido” (141). For Bosi, what debilitates the power of language and of poets is not language, but rather, the dominant ideologies: “[é] a ideologia dominante que dá, hoje, nome e sentido às coisas” (142). It is poetry that Bosi finds “uma forma de resistência simbólica aos discursos dominantes” (144).

The present is what Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi focus on, exactly because it is in the present that they can be active agents in the developing of their ideologies and enacting of their beliefs. The present as being now and being mindful helps us to comprehend what the active present that the three poets concentrate on entails. They inscribe themselves and their conceptions in the present of the poem.

The Past: Memory

Bosi in *O ser e o tempo da poesia* explains that part of bringing the past into the present involves a construction of an image: “o imaginado é, a um só tempo, dado e construído. Dado, enquanto matéria. Mas construído, enquanto forma; para o sujeito. Dado: não depende da nossa vontade de receber as sensações de luz e cor que o mundo provoca. Mas construído: a imagem resulta um complicado processo de organização perceptiva que se desenvolve desde a primeira infância” (15). From the present we construct, or rather, reconstruct the past.

Borges is of the opinion that identity is very much related to memory, for “[n]osotros estamos hechos, en buena parte, de nuestra memoria” (Borges 2008, 86). Nevertheless, for the Argentinean writer, forgetting is a part of memory: “Esa memoria está hecha, en buena parte, de olvido” (Borges 2008,86). In other words, when in the present we remember and forget, we are actually creating the narrative that will sustain and recreate our identity. Borges emphasizes language as the key element in the creation of one’s own identity. Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi seem to be following Borges’s standpoint, in that they are intent on writing as a way to write their beliefs, their world, and themselves.

In spite of the fact that Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi were all writing during the dictatorships in their countries, and despite both Vitale and Bignozzi being in exile, it is when reading Bignozzi’s work that it is most relevant to take into account literature of exile and how this relates to memory²⁴.

²⁴ Note that not all the books by Bignozzi studied in this work pertain to her time in Barcelona.

Julio Cortázar, who only felt exiled from 1974 onward and not since 1951, which is when he left Argentina²⁵, regards exile as a “[t]ema universal, desde las lamentaciones de un Ovidio o de un Dante Alighieri” (8). His definition of an exiled writer is particularly illuminating when reading Bignozzi:

Un escritor exiliado es en primer término una *mujer* o un *hombre* exiliado, es alguien que se sabe despojado de todo lo suyo, muchas veces de una familia y en el mayor de los casos de una manera y un ritmo de vivir, un perfume del aire y un color del cielo, una costumbre de casas y de calles y de bibliotecas y de perros y de cafés con amigos y de periódicos y de música y de caminatas por la ciudad. El exilio es la cesación del contacto de un follaje y de una raigambre con el aire y la tierra connaturales; es como el brusco final de un amor, es como una muerte inconcebiblemente horrible porque es una muerte que se sigue viviendo conscientemente [...]. (9)

Cortázar’s definition reproduces the everyday vividly, the familiarity of a whole world that is left behind when in exile. In Bignozzi’s work we see streets, characters of a particular neighborhood, specific friends, parents, as well as habits and customs of Buenos Aires. Bignozzi’s circumstances of exile are, like Cortázar’s, particular: “Yo nunca me sentí exiliada, fui una desterrada. Yo viví siempre aquí [Buenos Aires], nunca me di cuenta de que vivía afuera, no lo registraba. [...] Lo que sí, estuve muy triste siempre allá [Barcelona],irme fue una liberación. Pero bueno, me tocó vivir eso. Acá no se podía volver. Primero por cuestiones ideológicas²⁶ y

²⁵ “cuando me fui de la Argentina en 1951, lo hice por mi propia voluntad y sin razones políticas o ideológicas apremiantes. Por eso, durante más de veinte años pude viajar con frecuencia a mi país, y sólo a partir de 1974 me vi obligado a considerarme como un exiliado” (Cortázar 8).

²⁶ When asked by Fondebrider “¿Qué pensó cuando empezó la lucha armada?” Bignozzi answers: “Estaba a favor, pero hay que matizar. Apoyé desde afuera. No podía ser ni montonera ni del ERP [Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, military arm of the (PRT) Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores]. Por un tiempo, estuve con las FAR [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias], pero después me aparté porque no soporté el nacionalismo con olor a sacristía de los montoneros. Mi padre siempre decía que todo nacionalismo es de derecha. Sumemos la parte cristiana y qué tenemos: oscurantismo. Así que, ante la perspectiva de un país montoner, mi marido y yo nos fuimos a España.”

después por un problema exclusivamente económico²⁷” (Bignozzi 2013). Despite her not having gone through a violently forced exile, Bignozzi’s work, especially that which relates to Argentine’s dictatorship and her focus on Argentina rather than Barcelona, has traces of many of the characteristics of authors writing in exile during the Argentine dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, or those writing post-dictatorship. Her living outside Argentina allows her to be able to denounce the human rights violations during the dictatorship as well as the military’s blatantly manipulative attitude toward and stand on what happened between 1976 and 1983. In fact, Ben Bollig illuminates this point in his book *Modern Argentine Poetry: Displacement, Exile, Migration*:

in her study of ‘transitional’ art in Latin America, particularly Argentina and Chile, Francine Masiello highlights the importance of exile in the work of writers such as Juan Gelman, María Negroni and others. Masiello credits poetry with great importance in the dictatorship and post-dictatorship eras, given its ability to speak ‘from places unauthorised by the state and [...] in defiance of massification’ and its rebellion against the usefulness of language. (7)

Bollig marks both the fact of living outside the country of origin undergoing or which has undergone an oppressive government, as well as the genre of poetry as key factors in being able to write critically about the situation. Bignozzi also credits being a woman with the ability to be critical of any structures of power: “El hombre siempre mantiene una zona de poder o, lo que es igualmente importante, una zona de ilusión de poder. En cambio, la mujer siempre parte del no poder, de la necesidad de conquistarlo; mientras el hombre naturalmente cree que le es inherente. El enfrentamiento de esta situación no es la sensibilidad, sino el cuestionamiento al poder” (Bignozzi 1995, 62). Bignozzi articulates her position as woman, and how, not being part of the

²⁷ “Cuando murió Perón yo estaba convencida de que iban a gobernar los montoneros, nos fuimos por dos años, dejamos la casa embalada y todo, pensando que en dos años la cosa cambiaba. Enseguida vino el Rodrigazo, después en el ’76 la Revolución, y ahí nos quedamos varados totalmente.” (Bignozzi 2013).

hegemony, she has a different relation to power and to official narratives. I argue that her stance and beginning point of questioning power is also common to Vitale and Hilst.

The theme of memory in Bignozzi, which goes beyond what pertains to the dictatorship, is very much related to power struggles. Carina Perelli, professor of sociology and political science in the Universidad de la República in Montevideo, Uruguay, describes memory as one of the infrastructures of reality since it is “a la vez marco y clave, encuadre y contenido, fondo y forma [...] La memoria es silencio, y son también sus versiones [...] conflictivas” (320, 321). It is clear from Perelli’s description that memory is not univocal, and precisely because of the conflicting versions of the past and its power over how reality is constructed and interpreted, that many try to dominate history, identity, collective memory, by imposing one version of memory. Memory therefore, is not only related to the preservation and the continuation of identity; it is because of that and beyond that, a political arena and a weapon of domination and sovereignty: “dar una versión de un hecho histórico determinado, imponerla como verdadera, y fundirla, naturalizarla, ha sido desde siempre una de las tareas que más han ocupado a la comunidad política en su pugna por imponer un buen orden” (Perelli 319-320). Memory is powerful because “‘significa’ el pasado y el presente, –el presente a la luz del pasado, el pasado a la luz del presente, en constant interacción– también la posición del sujeto –tanto individual como colectivo– frente a pasado y presente, frente a sí mismo y a los demás, frente al espacio y al tiempo.” (Perelli 321-322). Since memory is what shapes reality, the reading of it, and identity (both collective and individual), “[q]uien maneja la memoria, maneja el poder” (Perelli 323).

The tensions created by the disputes over the articulation and domination of memory is a large part of Bignozzi’s work. Memory is not necessarily a yearning of the past. In her article “La década del 70 en el Cono Sur” María Rosa Olivera-Williams speaks of Svetlana Boym’s

definition of reflexive nostalgia, which widens the notion of the generally accepted nostalgia as relating to the past with longing: “‘la nostalgia reflexiva’ no intenta restaurar un tiempo pasado, sino que vuelve al mismo desde una perspectiva crítica y con la conciencia de que ese pasado es irrevocable” (50). This definition is more in tune with Bignozzi’s poetry, for it shows a speaker trying to reappropriate the present by contesting the official memory. Doing this through poetry also sheds light on how memory works. Perelli links language and memory through Lacan:

Utilizando una distinción ya clásica, puede decirse que la memoria abarca los tres ámbitos que componen el mundo en el que vivimos y tal cual lo conocemos: lo real, lo simbólico y lo imaginario. La memoria se construye sobre experiencias realmente vividas. Pero, también, memoria son los ecos de esas experiencias, las distorsiones, la coloratura emocional que las rodea, los fantasmas, las culpas, las proyecciones, los desplazamientos en torno a tales fenómenos. Es, por tanto, real e imaginario a la vez. Es, asimismo, lo simbólico, en el sentido de que: ‘el nacimiento del lenguaje, la utilización del símbolo, operan una disyunción entre lo vivido y el signo que lo reemplaza’²⁸. El hecho real que se convierte en memoria, el imaginario real o imaginado que se convierte en memoria, lo hace a través de sus trasmutaciones de símbolos. El símbolo, huella y condensación de lo vivido, se transforma así en eje de memoria, vehículo de sentido. (322)

Memory is a complex and dynamic organism. It is not simply a fragment of the past brought unobtrusively and objectively into the present. Quite on the contrary, memory involves complex processes whereby the present, which is shaped by it, filters the past. Language is yet another factor that plays an important role in memory. How the past is articulated also contributes to shape the present, and at the same time, the language used in the present will determine the reading of the past and the construction of meaning²⁹: “los juegos de lenguaje nunca son **simples** juegos de lenguaje, en un contexto de este género la intrínseca cualidad de simulación que conllevan su potencia, elevándolos a la virtualidad de juegos de poder” (Perelli 330). All poets

²⁸ Anika Riffled Lemaire: *Lacan*, Barcelona, Edhasa. 1971.

²⁹ See Perelli 327.

are aware of this, and it is evident in Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi, in the weight they give writing and the poem in their work.

Memories of the same event in the past can yield various narratives in the present or vice-versa. These multiplicities respond to diverse understandings of realities, multiple ways of perceiving reality, and the creation of complex realities. From the above perspectives on memory, it can be apprehended that what is important is to know that one has a narrative, which should not be subservient to others' narratives.

Poetry and Philosophy

María Zambrano compares philosophy and poetry. In her view, the philosophical perspectives on time and the self do not constitute just a different approach as compared to poetry's *modus operandi*. They are complementary approximations of the same course of action-seeking. Zambrano regards the relationship between philosophy and poetry not as one informing and influencing the other, but as two complementary halves of a person, that is, to be poet and philosopher. Zambrano elucidates what is found in each half and explains their methodologies: "En la poesía encontramos directamente al hombre concreto, individual. En la filosofía al hombre en su historia universal, en su querer ser. La poesía es encuentro, don, hallazgo por su gracia. La filosofía busca, requerimiento guiado por un método" (13). It is precisely because philosophy and poetry are so different, albeit complementary, that their relationship involves conflict, for their approach to reality leads them to want different things and to attain them in different ways. Zambrano describes the philosopher's approach as that which is born from admiration for the things in the world, but which is quickly dominated by violence. She shows how violence as the source of philosophy is already present in Plato's *The Republic*. Therefore,

for her, although admiration is at the basis of the path of inquiry for a philosopher, it is violence that takes over and leads him/her to relentlessly search for and pursue that which “no se nos da, que no regala su presencia” (Zambrano 16). Zambrano describes this process as follows: “aquí empieza ya el afanoso camino, el esfuerzo metódico por esta captura de algo que no tenemos, y necesitamos tener, con tanto rigor, que nos hace arrancarnos de aquello que tenemos ya sin haberlo perseguido” (16). It is, therefore, this first resignation that takes the philosopher on a pursuit of the “ulterior posesión total” of reality, the world, and the way to attain this is “implacable; casi cruel” for it implies that “[l]a vida, las cosas, [sean] exprimidas” and that there will be “persistente interrogación; la inquisición del intelecto” that will inevitably cause the “martirio” of the interrogation itself “y también de la vida” (Zambrano 17).

Zambrano expounds how philosophy, unlike poetry, does not mix things and its “camino es el más claro, el más seguro” and seeks to conquer something “firme, [...], verdadero, compacto” so that it be “absoluto” (18). In contrast, Zambrano characterizes the “camino [...] del poeta” as one of possession, in that the poet has that which surrounds him/her as well as that inside of him/her, i.e., dreams and fantasies. In the case of the poets, what is outside and inside, including “fantasmas interiores mezclados [...] con los otros, con los que vagaban fuera,” is mixed and borders are altered and erased (Zambrano 18). She portrays poetry as being messier than philosophy, but as having the power of revealing mysteries while not resolving them. Poetry is thus prone to and encourages “la multiplicidad desdeñada, la menospreciada heterogeneidad” (Zambrano 19). Zambrano comments that unlike philosophers who concentrate on one question and discard others as well as what they already possess, poets do not renounce anything. Their path of pursuit and exploration, I venture, is of the rhizome type, as described by Gilles Deleuze

and Félix Guattari. In spite of this “messiness”, Zambrano insists that it is not that poets disdain that which philosophers highly respect and seek—unity. On the contrary:

Asombrado y disperso es el corazón del poeta —“mi corazón latía, atónito y disperso” —³⁰. No cabe duda que este primer momento de asombro, se prolonga mucho en el poeta, pero no nos engañemos creyendo que es su estado permanente del que no puede salir. No, la poesía tiene también su vuelo; tiene también su unidad, su trasmundo.

De no tener vuelo el poeta, no habría poesía, no habría palabra. Toda palabra requiere un alejamiento de la realidad a la que se refiere; toda palabra es también, una liberación de quien la dice. Quien habla aunque sea de las apariencias, no es del todo esclavo; quien habla, aunque sea de la más abigarrada multiplicidad, ya ha alcanzado alguna suerte de unidad, pues que embebido en el puro pasmo, prendido a lo que cambia y fluye, no acertaría a decir nada, aunque este decir sea un cantar. (Zambrano 21)

From this, we understand that both philosophy and poetry start with “asombro” and end in or pursue “la unidad.” The difference between philosophy and poetry lies in the path taken and what is believed to be the outcome and “la unidad.” According to Zambrano, for the philosopher, unity is that of the being, whereas for the poet, unity is found through words in a poem, and this poem, this unity, will never be an absolute unity. Zambrano notes that the poet is aware that the unity s/he achieves is incomplete. Concomitantly, it is an incompleteness that includes “cada una de las cosas sin restricción, sin abstracción ni renuncia alguna” (Zambrano 22). After all, as she comments, “[l]a cosa del poeta no es jamás la cosa conceptual del pensamiento sino la cosa complejísima y real, la cosa fantasmagórica y soñada, la inventada, la que hubo y la que no habrá jamás” (22). The complexity in poetry, as far as Zambrano is concerned, derives from the fact that reality for the poet is composed of what is and what is not, that which has come to be and that which will never be.

Taking Zambrano’s observations further, a poem can be viewed as a site of exploration. As such the work of a poet can be regarded as the sites where debate on various subjects and

³⁰ Antonio Machado

issues are carried out. It is done in a rhizome manner and not linearly nor necessarily in an orderly manner. In the work of a poet the narrative on a certain issue will necessarily involve silences and a horizontal exploration with blatantly unresolved tensions, workings and reworkings of the issue under observation.

Poetry also has the power to move its readers in different ways and directions to language used in philosophy. Bergson sheds light on this when he says that, like music, which suggests feelings instead of expressing them like nature does, and thus affects us more, poetry also has a similar kind of “charm” (15):

The poet is he with whom feelings develop into images, and the images themselves into words which translate them while obeying the laws of rhythm. In seeing these images pass before our eyes we in our turn experience the feeling which was, so to speak, their emotional equivalent: but we should never realize these images so strongly without the regular movements of the rhythm by which our soul is lulled into self-forgetfulness, and, as in a dream, thinks and sees with the poet. (15)

Poetry, according to Bergson, gives its readers access to different worlds, experiences, and realities. I would like to add that by doing so, it allows the readers to think of new realities and ideas presented in poetry, and even more than that, poetry is an opportunity for the readers to inhabit these realities. For this reason I believe that the constructions of time of Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi are powerful. The readers can experience the importance of duration, of being present, of memory, of introspection, of waiting. This means that the impact of the ideas presented by these poets is significant; they shape the way readers perceive time, live it, and encourage them to explore other options different from those commonly absorbed in society.

Poetry then, can present ideas, like philosophy, but the readers of poetry experience these ideas instead of just reading about them. Moreover, they can entertain multiple conceptions of time simultaneously, for, like Zambrano points out, poetry is comfortable with the plural, the

multiple, the ambiguous. Yet another positive aspect of reading various thoughts on and inhabiting time through poetry is what Bousoño expresses as the aesthetic pleasure that poetry affords. With poetry, there is communication as well as this delight:

el papel que en la comunicación poética representa lo que comúnmente se ha llamado *placer estético*. Y es que la expresión adecuada que para esa comunicación se requiere se acompaña, *secundariamente*, de un desprendimiento de placer, en el que coinciden autor y oyente o lector. Este desprendimiento placentero es propio de toda expresión idónea de un conocimiento: hasta del puramente conceptual, no poético. Nos produce placer, pongo por caso, la expresión clara, exacta y económica de un pensamiento matemático o, en general, científico. El placer estético, o como lo denomina, acaso más certeramente, Sartre, la “alegría estética”, quizá proceda, a mi juicio, de la sensación de plenitud vital que experimentamos al perfeccionarnos conociendo. (19)

Because of its aesthetic aspect, Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s poetics of time allow for a connection with the reader, a connection that demands from the reader his/her intellectual, aesthetic, and intuitive understanding. The reader becomes as engaged with their poetry and poetics as the speakers in their poetry are with the shaping of reality.

Chapter 2: THE POETICS OF FRACTURE IN IDA VITALE'S POETRY

Introduction

“Campo de la fractura,” a phrase taken from poem “IV” in the 1988 book, *Sueños de la constancia*, by the Uruguayan poet Ida Vitale’s poem refers to language and its imperfections and complexities. I assert that this phrase can be used to describe Vitale’s poetics of time. In this chapter I look at how Vitale applies her poetics of fracture to aspects that are essential to the understanding of reality, namely, the self, writing, and time. In this way, Vitale dismantles contemporary ideas of what is positive, such as not stopping, and trying to be as fast as possible in order to achieve more in less time. She shows an alternative way to inhabit reality—a way that responds to her beliefs of what it means to be, and more specifically, what it means to be a poet.

According to Vitale, “[e]l mundo es caótico y, por fortuna, difícilmente clasificable, pero el caos, materia susceptible de convertirse en maravilla, ofrece, como cualquier teogonía demuestra, la tentación del orden” (2012, 11). The poet sees “maravilla” in the chaotic world, and believes that it is a human tendency to try to organize it in order to understand it. This intersects with the sociologist Norbert Elias’ ideas, when he disserts about the need to have a sociological perspective when looking into how people experience time. According to Elias: “La cuestión acerca de la manera en que los hombres aprenden a orientarse en su mundo cada vez con más tino, a lo largo de los siglos, es sin duda de gran importancia para que el hombre se entienda a sí mismo” (28-29). Vitale speaks of an understanding of the world itself; Elias of an understanding of one’s self. As we will see later in the chapter, understanding the world for Vitale, implies understanding the self. What they both share is the knowledge that people construct systems so as to organize and grasp the world in which they live and life itself. The fact

that these systems are constructions implies that different people might subscribe to different systems, and that these systems are subject to change, be it within time or geographical and cultural context. After all, as Elias explains, “[u]na ojeada a la historia de la determinación del tiempo y sus instrumentos muestra que la hegemonía de los físicos y de la representación naturalista del tiempo son recientes,” for before, until Modernity, “[e]l tiempo era ante todo un medio para orientarse en el mundo social y para regular la convivencia humana.” (29). Elias exposes the manufactured character of time as a system through which we try to make sense of the world.

Language is paramount in the construction of the world for Elias as well, since it can transform how we articulate and perceive the latter. According to him, language enhances the illusion of time being anything but a construct, “pues [el lenguaje] parece insinuar que el tiempo es lo numinoso, cuya medida determinan los relojes, instrumentos de fractura humana” (29). By exposing this illusion, Elias underlines the power of language to shape our reality. To be more precise, he indicates the power of those who use language to determine how we view the world.

It is not surprising then, that Vitale chooses to work with language despite its lack of perfection. Despite her knowing that language is not irrefutable, she chooses this system. She describes that its “vastedad puede parecerse al caos que busca sustituir” (2012, 11). Her choice for words as the system through which to try to understand the world is very telling of the reality she chooses to inhabit. Vitale confirms the importance of language for her when in an interview with Magdalena García Pinto she explains that regardless of the country that literature is from, “there’s a common, inescapable element, which is language” (235).

The Uruguayan poet Mariella Nigro expresses how Vitale’s poetry embodies an appropriation of different aspects of reality through language:

La poesía de Ida Vitale [...] exhibe el proceso de su gozosa apropiación a través del lenguaje, la elaboración delicada del significante que dignifica su existencia, el desenvolvimiento del ser escritural, el amor a la letra: “*Asistir a esas frases que se disparan (...) Y quedan en la franja / de los acertijos a resolver*”. Y cuando las “*palabras de mar profundo / a cada instante suben a morir*”, la poeta “*las ama y acoge*”.

Nigro also points out how Vitale develops a Being through language, and more specifically, the “writer Being.” This could be the reason why the Vitalean poetic subject is generally a poet, who through language, seeks to resolve or come to terms with existence, for a poet is a person who chooses to work with language, and believes that through poetry they can have an impact on the world, come to terms with reality, subvert it, and understand the other and the self.

The system that the Uruguayan poet constructs is intimately tied to considerations of time and how it is experienced. For Vitale, writing opens new possibilities of inhabiting time. She thus subscribes to a poetics that is based on poetry as the “[c]ampo de la fractura,” meaning that the poem is the arena where rules can be broken and structures of time can be questioned, defied and other structures can be created (Vitale, “IV”, 1988, 16). In fact, it is precisely in this break from the continuous that poetry and the self thrive. This fracture in time and language appears in Vitale’s poetry in various guises, such as doubt and a pause. Whatever the guise, however, “fracture” is in Vitale’s poetics because for her it is paramount to writing, to knowing oneself, and to how to inhabit the world.

Vitale’s choice of language as the prism through which to apprehend reality appears to agree with what Merleau-Ponty explains of Husserl, who believed that language is paramount in a person’s understanding of reality, and, at the same time, who perceived language as being infused with meaning by its user.

Literary Review

Not many have written about Ida Vitale's work. In fact, as mentioned in the introduction, she is often left out of the list of the intellectuals and writers of the Generación del 45. What is most readily found are essays or book reviews that revolve around a particular book. Following, I will note the main ideas expressed regarding this poet's work.

According to Alberto Villanueva, Ida Vitale is one of the few Latin American poets writing in Spanish in the twentieth century that writes according to the "prácticas textuales descubiertas y establecidas por Mallarmé en el poema-constelación de signos e ideas *Un coup de dés*" (2006a:148). Villanueva summarizes these practices as follows:

(I) el reconocimiento de dos realidades, la llamada realidad real y la realidad del poema [...]; (II) un énfasis en la escritura, y una lectura silenciosa que significa en principio una aceptación significativa de la emergencia de los silencios que rodean a las palabras de los blancos de la página; (III) la activación de un metalenguaje, y, por lo tanto, un cuestionamiento sostenido de toda instrumentalización del lenguaje. (2006a,148, and 2006b,175-176)

Villanueva further clarifies that what it means to write according to these practices is basically writing in the aftermath of Mallarmé, who changed poetry, in that from him, "el poema se alejaría de la realidad referencial: se trata ahora de una realidad simbólica autosuficiente y, al mismo tiempo, muy material, concreta; uno está frente a un objeto simbólico y existente, interior—"lírico"—y físicamente sólido, intertextual y elusivo" (2006a, 148). I certainly agree that Vitale writes in the aftermath of these changes brought about by this French poet, and that Vitale's poems are a reality in and of themselves. However, in this statement, as when Villanueva claims that "la persistente verdad de Ida Vitale" is that her poems are the "morada simbólica" that has "[v]alor de residencia únicamente en el texto," he is actually limiting Vitale's poetry to the poem, and thus keeping it separate from the reality outside it (2009, 24). In my work, however, I

assert that Vitale's poetry—as well as Hilst's and Bignozzi's—goes beyond a physical construct that exists apart from reality. I propose that the reality in their poetry has a relationship with the reality outside it. This “intertextuality” is so strong that one impacts the other to the point of shaping it. This is not to say that poetry immitates reality, but rather, that it interacts with and counteracts reality. The poem creates a reality that becomes part of the reality outside the poem. Víctor Sosa phrases Vitale's relationship between reality and language as follows: “para Vitale, el mundo sigue siendo de vital importancia, y si el mundo importa, importa la palabra que lo dice” (52). According to the Uruguayan poet Eduardo Milán, what Vitale does is “una exploración del mundo, una manera de hablar con ciertas palabras es otra cosa que una elección, que una particularización: es la puesta en escena del matiz” (1994, 48). Vitale's way of exploring and actively participating in the world is through language.

Sosa maintains that “jugar con fuego” is the perfect expression to define Vitale's poetry (51). Fire, then, in Vitale, is “herida, es ardor, es conciencia –desgarrada conciencia moderna,” and he explains that this consciousness is an awareness of “*la esición* entre Naturaleza y hombre” (51). Furthermore, this same fire is also related to “un sentimiento mítico del mundo,” where the self connects to this fire (51). The “jugar” part of the expression that Sosa believes summarizes Vitale's work is derived from her poetry, which is “rica en paranomasias y aliteraciones –mas deliberadamente pobre en construcciones metafóricas– es heredera de esa actitud experimental frente al lenguaje que asumieron los padres fundadores (Huidobro y Vallejo sobre todo)” (51-52). Milán also draws a lineage between Vitale and Huidobro. He names Neruda as well (1994, 48). This lineage is linked to the precision in their use of language.

Michèle Ramond is in agreement with Sosa's statement that Vitale's poetry is not rich in metaphors. Ramond claims that her poetry is not characterized by the creation of images and the

use of metaphors (143). Ramond draws a parallel between images and light: “La imagen tal cual la practicamos y la teorizamos implica que haya luz y una superficie reflejante” (143). In turn, he believes that “[e]l culto a la imagen, que en cierta medida tiene algo de idolatría, es también un culto del punto de vista, de nuestro punto de vista sin duda, de nuestra actividad focalizadora” (143). Due to this, he states that Vitale’s is “el país sin luz,” for in her poetry “no se celebra ninguna apoteosis subjetiva ni ninguna gloriosa captura de imágenes” (144). Ramond further expounds that “[p]ara Ida Vitale la poesía no es una máquina de volar hacia el sol, ese fuego exterior del que se alimenta el verbo metafórico, iluminado, fértil, profético. No. La poesía es una máquina ciega (“La máquina ciega”, 1980) que no obedece a la fascinación del sol de fuego sino más bien a la gravedad que ejerce el centro de la tierra” (145).

I do not feel that Ramond’s extended metaphor to describe Vitale’s poetry, although it yielded the beautiful title for his article (“La noche alquímica de Ida Vitale”), portrays Vitale’s poetry in all fairness. Her poetry most certainly does not focus on the elegy of imagery, but that does not mean that it lacks imagery, or that it is more grounded to the earth than related to the sun. His imagery is not working for me. Vitale’s poetry is strong and certainly illuminating; it engages the reader in a variety of ways (aesthetically, intellectually, etc.). I believe that it neither obeys the sun nor the earth, as Ramond claims. Vitale’s poetry is in allegiance with language, which it observes, explores and subverts. The Uruguayan poet’s relationship with language is a very special, as will be discussed below. She insists on negotiating with it, returning to it, engaging with it, learning from it, and contributing to it. Her poetry witnesses that.

With regards to metaphors and Vitale’s poetry, Ester Grimbernatz González might hold the key to that which does not allow Ramond to become intimate with the Uruguayan poet’s imagery: “Constante de Vitale es ese desapego de la otra orilla en el armarse de la metáfora, que

se interroga, pero no se resuelve en sus poemas” (9). The reason for this is that, as Julio Ortega words it, Vitale’s poetry “es una expansión de inciertos” (42). This responds to Vitale’s poetics of doubt, which she is aware that exists from the very basic—language. It is logical, then, that Grimbernath point to a “persistente [...] intensa actividad interrogativa” in Vitale’s poetry, as a result of which “las palabras se conviertan en la huella de lo posible pero también de lo incumplido, constante transición irresoluta” (11). That is the nature of language itself, and despite and because of this, Vitale chooses to work with and from language. According to Grimbernath, Vitale’s speaker is a “voz poética reticente que no está dispuesta a otorgar la palabra crucial, la palabra en su sentido exacto” (12). Doubt and reticence are part of Vitale’s poetics of fracture, as I will explore below. Nonetheless, it is not that the speaker does not give the exact word, but rather, that she responds to Vitale’s poetics and belief that our reality, like language, is not exact. After all, “el espacio de la escritura [es] el lugar de la interrogación” (Ortega 42). As Ortega expresses: what Vitale does is “poner en tension el lenguaje con el acertijo y la agudeza del poema, es también hablar en ese espacio de disyunciones desde donde Ida Vitale nos convoca” (42).

Returning to Ramond, I also find his choice of “una máquina de volar” to describe Vitale’s poetry, unfortunate, given the recurrent motif of birds as poetry or the poet throughout her work. Lastly, I also disagree with his appropriation of the title of one of her poems (“La máquina ciega”³¹) in the service of his argument that for Vitale, poetry is a blind machine. In my

³¹ “Te estás acercando al lugar / donde / mejor se muere; / allí / un sol negro alumbra / el frío.
// Manos sin prisa / ceden / a la otra gravedad / donde caer definitiva / a solo. / Juntas todas las
lágrimas / llevan a donde / estalla / noche catedralicia.” (“La máquina ciega,” in *Jardín de sílice* (1980), *Sueños de la constancia*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988. Print: 87-88.)

opinion, “[l]a máquina ciega” in the poem does not refer to poetry, but either to the human body and life as related to time and death, or to the process of poetry. Despite the latter reading being similar to Ramond’s, I do not concur with his vision of Vitale’s negative view of poetry, whereby poetry leads to the fire at the center of the earth and burns “la materia poética llevada al negro melancólico y reducida a la ceniza del verso.” (146). Furthermore, Ramond believes that

El sol negro que coce la materia poética [...] la lava de su escoria y de sus impurezas y a medida que esa trituración y esa quema tienen lugar [...] son evacuados del discurso poético los mensajes vaticinados, las excrecencias verbales, los trofeos que atestiguan, bajo su forma decorativa, la victoria y el triunfo del poeta metaforizador. Para Ida Vitale hacer poesía es renunciar a esos esplendores criticables de una poesía solar. (146)

In my opinion, Vitale’s poetics are not a sombre and negative approach to reading or inhabiting the world. On the contrary, her poetry shows how words and poetry are marvellous and mysterious. Language has a life of its own with which the poet has to negotiate. Writing poetry, according to Vitale’s many metapoetic poems, is a process of learning, of intimately relating to language, of being acquainted with its wonders. It is definitely not an easy process, and there is burning involved, because writing poetry for Vitale is getting to know the self. I will examine these aspects of Vitale’s poetics below. For now, I think that the following words by Vitale herself, when the Universidad de la República in Uruguay gave her the Doctorado Honoris Causa in July 2010, help to elucidate what poetry means to her: “la poesía, tal cual yo la entiendo, esa parcela que para muchos es algo impreciso, homogéneo y vagamente desdeñable por su clara inutilidad o una precipitación de ingeniosidades morales y que para mí es precisa, distinta en todas sus partes y básica para el espíritu, como la música” (Fressia 2011, 8).

Villanueva’s following statement encompasses Vitale’s words and my own:

[E]n un mundo cada vez más indiferente a los trabajos poéticos y artísticos, y, en particular, cuando éstos representan para el lector empírico alguna *dificultad* adicional,

trabaja la poesía de Ida Vitale. Aclaro que es una dificultad ínsita al género literario más antiguo, que implica una *memoria* crítica activa en el poema y un cuestionamiento sin pausa tanto de lo que se está haciendo como de lo hecho y remite a un saber enciclopédico. (2006b, 178)

Ramond insists that poetry stops at the stage of suffering: “La escritura no deja de enfrentarse al fracaso de la magia, no sale del territorio triste del fuego paradójico, el fuego negro de combustión y de putrefacción, negro y frío, que produce escalofríos [...] [y] se declara importante para salvar de la maldición de Adán y Caín” (148). I insist on the opposite: Vitale’s poetry speaks of a difficult process because writing poetry is a relationship with language and the self. However, writing poetry is singing like a bird, it is flying and discovering, it is proposing changes and implementing them.

Later on in his article, when he is connecting Vitale’s poetry with the “alquímica” part of his title, I feel that Ramond captures Vitale’s poetics perfectly:

La poesía alquímica de Ida Vitale se alza contra la poesía metafórica porque se rehúsa a que el trabajo poético no sea *al mismo tiempo* un trabajo sobre el mundo. Es bastante evidente [...] que para Ida Vitale lo poético no tiene el derecho de sustituir lo real. Lo poético es un melancólico trabajo de transmutación de la materia, de toda la materia, no solo de la lengua. (150)

Writing poetry involves working with language, and consequently, working with the world. Poetry is more than verses, it is reorganizing reality. The Uruguayan poet and critic, Alfredo Fressia, sheds light on this matter when he depicts Vitale’s work as “un discurso poético configurado sobre la misma poesía, el “canto”, con todos los atributos que éste alcanza en la voz de Vitale, incluido el juego arriesgado y brillante de cierta dialéctica de construcción y deconstrucción del lenguaje” (1999). He points to Vitale’s insistence with language when it comes to her “canto,” her own particular voice. This particular voice, given by “un idioma que se niega al registro unívoco, que salta de la expresión popular a la subversión de la fórmula

burocrática o al perfecto refinamiento de lenguaje,” always “desafía el balbuce colectivo”

(Fressia 2006, 10). Fressia links her insistence with language, and poetry in particular, with this going against the collective voice:

[T]oda real poesía es periférica [...] Si la poesía surge de una mirada única, deslindada del mirar general, colectivo y aceptable, si su vocación es entregarse a una brújula rebelde a todo Norte hegemónico, entonces la “centralidad” reside en la antípoda de cierto idioma neutralizado, enyesado en el propio afán de reconocimiento y general aceptación. (2003)

This “centralidad” is what Fressia believes characterizes Vitale’s work—her “autonomía acentuada,” which in turn led her to “un proceso de deslinde respecto al grupo generacional” (2003).

Fressia coincides with Ramond by saying that Vitale follows a “línea mallarmeana” (2003). He also distinguishes the following features in her poetry: “Lucidez crítica, precisión, ‘esencialidad’, deliberada ocultación de elementos biográficos, metáfora iluminadora” (Fressia 2003). When speaking of *Procura de lo imposible*, which compiles eight series or chapters, Fressia, he marks her style as rare both with the “Generación del 45” and in Uruguayan poetry in general. The reason for this is the balance between “la emoción y la inteligencia vigilante” and “ese doble juego, poco frecuente en las letras uruguayas, entre la experimentación del lenguaje y el uso de formas clásicas” (Fressia 1999). Regarding recurrent themes in Vitale’s poetry, Fressia lists the following: “el tema de la memoria, [...] temas ecológicos [...], el tema ético” (2006, 10). He has also stated that other motifs of her poetry are “la muerte, la magia, el riesgo, la escritura” (Fressia, 1999).

To add to the description of Vitale’s poetry:

la [insistencia] de las aliteraciones más alguna paranomasia, contradicciones y antítesis, típicas figuras retóricas suyas, tiene la finalidad de mantener una línea reflexiva dentro del poema: hay una insistencia en las relaciones de contigüidad de la cadena sintáctica,

[...] revela una nueva, *naciente*, realidad ontológica con afán de permanencia en este mundo, completa en sí misma. (Villanueva 2006b, 180)

Villanueva's appreciation of Vitale's here seems to contradict what I quoted above from a previous article. Here, however, the emphasis is on an insistence in staying in the text because from it a "realidad ontológica" is created and is part of the world.

Vitale's "línea reflexiva" and this insistence on the text as the home of a reality is what I will examine in this chapter. In particular, I will focus on the reflection on time prevalent in her poetry. Despite it being mentioned or glossed over by some critics, there is no in-depth study of Vitale's poetics of time. Milán mentions it in his book review of *Sueños de la constancia*, where he affirms that one of the subjects that are "sobresaliente" in this compilation is "el tiempo, el tiempo y todas sus connotaciones devastadoras (la destrucción, la vejez, el fin del amor, en síntesis: la pérdida)" (1989, 48). He even says that this is a "tema obsesivo" in Vitale's poetry (1989, 48). Milán makes it clear that despite these "connotaciones devastadoras," Vitale's is not a "poética del desencanto. Mucho menos se trata aquí de la producción de una estrategia del lamento" (1989, 48). For him, "más que una maldición sobre la fugacidad del tiempo, se trata de su asimilación. El tiempo que mata fuera del poema es el que le da vida adentro" (1989, 48). He believes that by accepting the way time works Vitale can play with language (1989, 48). Consequently, her poetry is "riquísima en aliteraciones, antítesis, paranomasias y toda la danza poética" (Milan, 1989, 48).

Furthermore, Milán believes that Vitale's awareness of time derives in the choice to position herself "dentro de la cadena temporal" (1989, 48). In other words, "Vitale ocupa entonces, frente al tiempo, el lugar de *testigo interno*, de alguien que está internalizado e interiorizado de lo que está ocurriendo no sólo alrededor sino en el movimiento mismo" (1989, 48). It is Vitale's insights on time from her poetry that I focus on in this chapter. Reading

Vitale's work I found that it is not that she has a few scattered poems on time, specifically on the past and memory, as would be expected from someone in exile; rather, there is an insistence, a cosmogony of Vitale's views on time. Her awareness of the passing of time is evident, and, like Milán states, instead of concentrating on lamentations, Vitale comes forth with insights regarding how she chooses to deal with and live the passing of time.

On Poetry

In her book *Léxico de afinidades*, Vitale defines that a poem is the result of a clear connection between poetry and words. Her definition of poetry in this book has two entries: "(I) Las palabras son nómadas; la mala poesía las vuelve sedentarias. (II) Es imperdonable reducir la poesía a su máxima expresión. 'Menos es más', sabía Mies van der Rohe." (169). Both entries champion for a structure that allows movement and flexibility through the use of terms such as "nómadas", and underlining how bad poetry turns this characteristic into its opposite, namely, "sedentarias." Another set of opposites appears in the second entry: "reducir" and "máxima". For Vitale, poetry must not be reduced in any way, even if it is to their "máxima expresión." In the second entry, with its reference to the architect Ludwig Mies van der Roche, who advocated for "Less is more" in his buildings and for a structure that had open spaces, Vitale draws an analogy. Poetry should give words, which are nomads and therefore need movement, this space, to change and be flexible. Based on Vitale's viewpoint, words without movement would be dead words. Poetry for Vitale is precisely the place, or structure, where words can continue to beat, to explore. She defends that poetry should not fix words. This is the reason why in her poetics words "anidan, / cuando las dejas libres en el aire" ("La palabra infinito", *Tropelía*³² 48). That is,

³² This book is published within *Procura de lo imposible*.

in their nomadism words are most fruitful, for the life of words is a continuous, where signifieds are continuously explored. From Vitale's work, we can deduce that words have a dynamic life that involves pluriformity and change.

The fundamental character of poetry, as that which shapes language and life and makes them better, is present throughout Vitale's work. The poem "La palabra infinito" illustrates this point.

LA PALABRA INFINITO

La palabra infinito es infinita,
la palabra misterio es misteriosa.
Ambas son infinitas, misteriosas.
Sílabas a sílabas intenta convocarlas
sin que una luz anuncie su dominio
una sombra señale a qué distancia de ellas
está la opacidad en que te mueves.
Van a algún punto del resplandor y anidan,
cuando las dejas libres en el aire,
esperando que un ala inexplicable
te lleve hasta su vuelo.
¿Es más que su sabor el gusto de la vida?

(Vitale 1998, 48)

The title already indicates the metapoetic character of this poem: what is stressed is not the concept of *infinito* but the signifier that denotes it. In this poem the speaker talks to and teaches an interlocutor about the nature of words and the process of writing literature. In fact, the poetic subject even gives instructions as to how to relate to language. There is a parallel between the structure of the poem and what the speaker illustrates regarding the destruction of certainties in the creative process. While the first two lines are assertive sentences with a rigid grammatical structure, the poem's syntax becomes looser as the poem progresses, until it reaches the last line with the hyperbaton that is part of a question—that portrays instability. This liberation of syntax

and the uncertainties are directly related to the semantic field of movement found in the poem:

“distancia”, “vuelo”, “ala”, “mueves”, “dejar libre”, “llevar.”

Already from the beginning of the poem the poetic subject describes language: the words *infinito* and *misteriosa* “[...] son infinitas, misteriosas”. With the use of the plural, the speaker, a poet, notes the multiplicity of these words. Furthermore, the adjectives used reference, on the one hand, the possibilities of a signified, which cannot be fixed or anchored but that on the contrary, is “infinito”; and on the other hand, the “misterioso” aspect of language, which points to its ethereal character, as well as how language and its rules must be understood in order to convert it into poetry, which is where language can come into its innumerable possibilities. The first step that the poetic subject advises the interlocutor to take is to establish a relationship with words, to become familiar with language: “Sílabas a sílabas intenta convocarlas.” This calling of the syllables is not easy for it must be done in the dark, that is to say, without knowing exactly where the words are and how far away one is from them: “sin que una luz anuncie su dominio / una sombra señale a qué distancia de ellas / está la opacidad en que te mueves.” There is a marked antithesis between the “luz,” associated with poetry, and the “opacidad” in which the interlocutor moves. It is precisely in the “resplandor,” which is a kind of light, where words “anidan” in order to become poetry. The speaker explains this to the interlocutor so that they move out of darkness and into the light. The way the poet allows the words to nest is to “deja[r] libre en el aire” so that the words go to the “resplandor,” for after all, poetry does not dominate language: “sin que una luz anuncie su dominio.” The poetic subject insists in giving language the time and space it needs in order for the words to reach their highest potential. The premise behind this is that work with language in poetry requires time and space. This wait that the interlocutor, or any poet, must endure, is a necessary part of the process if they want to be taken “hasta su vuelo.” There is an

element of mystery, just like words have, that is part of the process of writing according to the Vitalean speaker: “[u]n ala inexplicable” will lead the interlocutor to understand the mystery of the words, or not, in the sense that this writing process that the poetic subject suggests only guarantees the possibility of the interlocutor being taken near the words’ “flight”.

The subjunctive mode in the verb *llevar* highlights this uncertainty: “esperando que un ala inexplicable / te lleve hasta su vuelo.” The last line of “La palabra infinito” is a question, and as such, it also marks uncertainty. The certainty of the assertions of the first two lines of the poems has been gradually unravelling toward uncertainty, which is parallel to the doubts and not knowing-state that the speaker portrays as a necessary part of the writing process. The question can be read as rhetorical, in which case it takes the reader back to the beginning of the poem, to the words, since the line notes the importance of language over life. To put it differently, what is heralded is the idea that language is better than life itself, and further, it is hinted that life is no more than the taste of words. This is to say that the question in the last line refers to language, and how through it life is more intense and beautiful, turning it into more “gustosa”.

Vitale does not expect time to stop. Conversely, she holds that the poet has to stop and step out of the flow of time, in an effort to let language incubate and to connect with the self. The Vitalean speaker is not preoccupied with the passing of time, but with the creation of a space, the poem, that demands allowing for elements that are beyond her control and power. This speaker is aware that the poet is only one part of the equation of poetry writing, and that another big part is language and how it conjugates in the poem. For this to happen, time has to be afforded to the poet and language, to that interaction, and to the relationship built between them. The aim is not for the poet to master or conquer language or to stop time entirely. Contrarily, the poet works by giving agency to language, by getting to know it. She does this by pausing, waiting, by fracturing

the passing of time. Having a relationship with language, writing poetry, means perceiving reality as mysterious³³, as a place of doubt and complexity, and, being able to inhabit the field of fracture, as Vitale puts it. The Vitalean speaker finds her own way of coming to terms with language and its implied doubt: by working both on the structure of language and in that of time, and fracturing the latter.

Despite the choice of the Vitalean speaker to engage with language and poetry, writing is in no way depicted as an easy process that involves freeing words and then putting them to paper. Poetry, in Vitale's work, is illustrated as very powerful, and yet, it is understood that writing involves a difficult process: "El fuego quemó sinuoso el campo. / Hoy su cicatriz es la lengua más verde." (Vitale 1998, "Soltar el mirlo," 16). According to Vitale, writing poetry burns, for, as I will show later in further readings of her poems, writing implies self-discovery. Despite the pain that is part of the writing process and the subsequent looking into the self, it becomes clear from Vitale's poetry that fire and burning are necessary in order for the tongue to be fertile. The scar of the writing process will always be a part of the tongue.

In Vitale's work, what is evident is that the way she chooses to read, question, and thus organize reality, is through the creative act. She extrapolates from *poiesis* in order to form a poetics on the best way to inhabit the world. Bosi's faith in language, discussed in the Theoretical Framework, can help to understand Vitale's own. For the literary critic, through writing, it is possible to have a say in the way that the structures that govern our life work (24-25). Writing poetry, for Bosi, is being an agent (24). For both Bosi and Vitale, the writer has the power to add his/her input into the construction of meanings, s/he can also challenge meanings

³³ Bignozzi also believes that poets see mysteries in reality that are not readily available to others. The poets should expose these mysteries so as to help others be aware of them.

and name his/her own. The writer then, is not subordinated to the structures in society, and does not take them for granted.

Time Through Poetry

It is revealing that the first poem of the book *Sueños de la constancia* starts with the word *palabras*. Throughout the first five poems of this book the speaker construes a theory of words and the writing of poetry as related to time. In poem “I” not only are words defined, but the process of their coming into poetry is also depicted.

I

PALABRAS:

palacios vacíos,
ciudad adormilada.
¿Antes de qué cuchillo
llegará el trueno
—la inundación después—
que las despierte?

(Vitale 1988, 15).

The poem’s first two lines seem to be structured like a dictionary entry of the word *palabras*. By themselves, they are “palacios vacíos, / ciudad adormilada.” However, when they are “woken up”, everything happens.

The poetic subject does not ask whether the words will awaken, or if the thunder that will awaken them will come. That is taken for granted. The second verse of the question, “llegará el trueno,” which is an affirmative phrase, underlines the certainty that the thunder will come and consequently, the words will awaken. The question is focused on when the thunder will come, since nothing happens, and everything is empty until the words are awake. The “ciudad adormilada” depends on them as well as on the speaker.

The poetic subject looks into the timeline of the awakening of the words, and in it, time is expressed as linear. There is a necessary order that has to happen for words to awaken and thus for the speaker to be able to write. The words *antes* and *después* mark the guidelines for this timeline: first “llegará el trueno,” “[a]ntes de” some “cuchillo,” “la inundación después,” and then the words will awaken. It seems as if the speaker already knows what will happen, as if this process has already occurred before, or, as if the speaker in the present knew what the future would bring because she knows how words work in poetry. The hinted repetition alludes to a certain cycle, implying the notion that, although there is an order of events, and consequently, a linearity, time also follows a more circular motion. The certainty of knowing how the process of writing transpires, contrasts with the uncertainty of the time when it transpires. Yet another tension in the poem is between the violence of the awakening of the words, with the presence of the knife, the noise of the thunder, and the flood, and the time when the poetic subject waits for the words to awaken, which is when the city is dormant, “ciudad adormilada.”

Like in “La palabra infinito,” in poem “I” too there is a waiting that is an intrinsic part of creation. This waiting constitutes a break from inertia and activity. It is a stop, a fracture. Moreover, the poem is set in the temporal plane of suspense, and although a clear timeline is apparent, the poem’s present is one of duration, one that is not just a fleeting moment in the timeline. On the contrary, the poem’s present has weight in this timeline. It is an intrinsic part of the process described in the poem.

Poem II of *Sueños de la constancia* also speaks of a linearity, although in this case, the order of events that occur in temporality are not separated into clear-cut times.

II

Vocablos,
vocaciones errantes,

perceiver's point of view, and standing point, whether s/he will see a certain event or moment as past, present, or future. Vitale's choice of drawing a parallel between words and stars appears to be speaking to this conception of time presented by Merleau-Ponty. Although there is a linearity, Vitale gives it dimension, making it more complex. She does so by using stars, for, as science has taught us, the stars we see shining in the sky are the past, they are already dead. In this way, the reality created in this poem, where traces of moments and the moments themselves coexist, comes alive in the plane of science through and in poetry. It is an unfolding of time, whereby time passes and is at the same time observed.

In Vitale's second poem of *Sueños de la constancia*, through the extended metaphor of words as stars, there is an implication that the future and past are both held in the present too; the three instances of time have a relationship, where they act upon the others and are influenced by the others. Time in this poem is an organic notion, where the present is always present. The stars, like words, are always present and have always been present, either as themselves or traces of themselves, or themselves in other moments: "Flota su polvo eterno." (Vitale 1988, "II," 15). The adjective *eterno*, which qualifies the stardust, stresses the idea that the stars-words are always present. They pre-exist the speaker, exist during her life, and will exist after her life. The stardust is like Merleau-Ponty's view of Heraclitus' metaphor of time as a river, in that as far as he is concerned, everything is in existence. The difference with Vitale's poem is that in it only the words are eternal.

At this point, it might be of interest to think of Borges' conceptions of eternity. He coincides with Merleau-Ponty when saying that it is the way that people's consciousness works that determines how time is understood. Nevertheless, for him as well, time is not a succession. Borges claims that people cannot handle the idea or the experience of eternity, and therefore,

time as succession comes into play³⁵. For both Borges and Merleau-Ponty, time as succession is a construct that allows people to comprehend and live in their reality. In poem “II”, despite the speaker not being eternal, she can understand eternity in the plane of language. That is to say that she seems to be aware of words’ eternal character.

The last few lines of poem “II” of *Sueños de la constancia*, pose a question: “¿Cómo ser su agua madre, / todavía una llaga / en que se detuviera, / pasar de yermo / a escalio / con su abono celeste?” (15). In this question the eternal character of the stars-words is contrasted with the changes undergone by the speaker, who goes from being barren to being productive thanks to the stars-words’ “abono celeste.” In these lines, the speaker is the river, or aspires to be the river, “su madre agua,” which leads the readers again to the Heraclitus’ river. Nevertheless, it also seems to echo Borges’ idea that the river is not outside the person, but, on the contrary, the person is the river, in that s/he is time³⁶. Being the river, therefore, means flowing, movement, and thus, producing change. In poem “II” specifically being the river means writing. The stars-words are what allow for this movement; they are what keep the river from being a “llaga,” and what keep the river flowing. Being the river then, is being time, and that implies eternity, in the sense that being time, means being part of all time, of the flowing. This flowing, eternity, transcends the time that each person has. It seems that Vitale agrees with

³⁵ Borges also speaks of time in terms of how people perceive it. In this way, he explains that the way our conscience works influences how time is experienced: “Nuestra conciencia está continuamente pasando de un estado a otro, y ése es el tiempo: la sucesión” (84). For Borges, our perceiving time as a succession is inseparable from the concept of eternity. He describes eternity as everyone’s past and everyone’s future and everyone’s present all together. He follows Plato when saying that we experience time as a succession because we cannot take in an “everything” all at once, all together: “Todo eso nos es dado sucesivamente porque no podemos aguantar esa intolerable carga, esa intolerable descarga de todo el ser del universo. El tiempo vendría a ser un don de la eternidad” (Borges 2008, 88).

³⁶ Borges takes Heraclitus’s metaphor further and makes people the river because “nosotros también somos fluctuantes” (Borges 2008, 85). That is, we are time and time is us—there is no separating being and time.

Borges and Merleau-Ponty in that eternity, a time that is not divided into moments, is time before people fragment it. From Vitale's poem we understand that it is language that can bring us back to the experience of eternity that we lost in order to be able to apprehend reality. Through language, the writer can inhabit a different time from the one cut up into pieces or separated from the self. Language allows for experiencing eternity. It is important to clarify the difference between infinite, that which has no end, and eternity, as discussed above. Eternity in Vitale's poetics is associated with the coexistence of moments, which is linked to constant present, in that all moments are relevant in the now—this is a now which, like in Hilst and Bignozzi, is not just one instant, but a profound and enduring time.

It is clear that the speaker seeks a relationship with words and writing because of their importance when perceiving the world and herself, and due to what they add to reality. Nevertheless, dealing with words, owning them, and being able to use them in her writing to create poetry is definitely neither an easy nor a simple task. As seen in the previous poems presented here, there are specific ways to deal with words and there are specific circumstances that have to be taken into account in order to write poetry. Poem IV of *Sueños de la constancia* illustrates even further the complexity of language and the speaker's relationship with it.

IV

Campo de la fractura,
halo sin centro:
 palabras,
promesas, porción, premio.

Disuelto el pasado,
sin apoyo el presente,
desmenuzado
el futuro inconcebible.

(Vitale 1988, 16).

The field of words is portrayed as the “[c]ampo de la fractura,” meaning that it is not an orderly world, in which the writing process is smooth. On the contrary, “la fractura” is in language and in poetry itself. The poem as a whole with the absence of verbs embodies this fractured field or arena. Another example of the fracture are the last two lines of the first stanza: “palabras, / promesas, porción, premio.” The alliteration of the /p/ groups a series of signifiers and signifieds, which help to define what words are. These meanings are grouped not only by contiguity, but also by sound, consequently causing the definitions to pour into one another. These two lines define what words are, and also, they enact the first two lines of the poem: “Campo de la fractura, / halo sin centro”. Despite the “[c]ampo de la fractura” not having a center, the fact that the word “palabras” is the only one of the group that is by itself, and that it is above the rest, shows that it is privileged. In this way, this word defies the very field that it inhabits, subverting it, and therefore, becoming its center and the center of the poem. Because the words in the following line all start with P, we can assume that they compose the field of fracture as well.

In the second stanza the focus is on time. In it, the panorama is even more discouraging, in that in this fracture of time, the past is no longer part of the present, the present crumbles, and the future becomes unimaginable. This second stanza is not presenting a different problematic. Rather, it is extending what has been formulated in the first stanza regarding the broken character of language. The second stanza extends the fracture to time. When connecting this stanza with the first one, and with Vitale’s poetics, this stanza then, refers to both time in general and to the time of the words. This is to say that if the words’ pasts, which are traces of meanings and uses, are dissolved—if the words are flattened—then the words’ present is unstable, and their future therefore, seems to be inexistent. In this poem, the present cannot exist without the past and the future embedded in it. In this way, linear time is fractured, just like the previous imagery of the

por alto premio?

(Vitale 1988, 18)

“Dudas, siempre” states that whatever the path followed, whatever the choice made regarding the two questions posed in the poem, what is certain and constant is doubt. Two options are presented on how to go about regarding time, doubt, and language. One option is to accept the directionality of time from past to future, and the second option is to go against this directionality and go from the present to the past. In both cases, time is presented as linear; the only change in the two scenarios is the directionality. The poem consists of two stanzas, each of which is a question that is left unanswered. These questions are proposals to leave the state of doubt. Nonetheless, the questions themselves represent and perform the doubt, in that they are asking what to do, and not affirming a possible path. Furthermore, within each question there is also a seed of doubt, which undermines any possibility of leaving the state of doubt. In the first stanza for example, the “solares astucias” of the god contrasts with the position of the speaker, or of the god, which is in the shadows. And the doubt stems from the fact that “todo signo se interrumpe,” denying thus, any certainty of communication. In order to “perseguir un recuerdo” the speaker has to go “contra el famélico tiempo” towards that “engañoso paraje” that the past constitutes when visited from the present. This counter-movement in the flow of time, is a fracture in itself. The movement towards the past is portrayed as a difficult journey, both because it means traveling against the current and because the past is disintegrating, and thus hard to reconstruct. It all depends on the word, for its strength will build the past. However, even if the poetic subject were to reach her destination, “un recuerdo,” the maximum she can aspire to is a few words. Again, in this stanza, the difficulty of expression is enhanced. In fact, the instability of it all is partly related to the fact that “todo signo se interrumpe,” and the only “alto premio” is a mere

few words. Since they come so scarcely, they are no more than a “*limosna verbal*,” leaving the speaker to be suspended in a “*siempre*” of doubts, a time that never ends. Both proposals depend on the word, and as a consequence, both are difficult endeavors, for they involve working with language, which is the field of fracture, and because of the difficulty of acquiring the words to articulate and write. “*Dudas, siempre*” makes it clear that the base of everything is a sign that, although it is the material that the world is constructed from, is not steadfast.

This aspect of the difficulty of engaging with language and working with it can be put in dialog with Paul de Man. He explains in “*Semiotics and Rhetoric*” that language is something that we cannot control “and that holds the discouraging prospect of an infinity of similar future confusions” (1371). The sign is not the thing itself, but a representation of it, which already alerts to a first break or interruption. In the same way, Vitale’s “*Dudas, siempre*” echoes the “infinity of [...] future confusions” in the very title of the poem. In his essay de Man looks into the contradictions in language itself, particularly in language used in literature (and this includes poetry), that is, rhetoric and figures of speech. Language therefore, prevents a determinate meaning to be found when reading a text. He speaks of the “*rhetorization of grammar*,” which is his phrase for the undecidability of interpretation when reading a poem because of the language used in poetry (de Man 2010, 1376). A reading of a text consequently points to the problematic nature of language, and how texts, ultimately, deconstruct themselves from within. Although Vitale uses different terms, namely, “*campo de la fractura*”, “*duda*”, we can argue that she is referring to the same problematic in language and poetry that de Man writes about in his essay. As mentioned by Ortega, Fressia, Grimbernat, and other critics, Vitale’s is a practice of doubting, questioning, raising questions. She does not set about to resolve mysteries, but instead, to sow them. After all, as Milán comments, “*Ida Vitale da por sentado el sentido arbitrario de*

todo principio pero deja constancia, como Cyrano, que siempre falta muy poco para que lo que finalmente sucede pueda no suceder” (1994, 48). Fractures are present in language, and therefore, Vitale must work with and against language.

Yet another parallel that can be drawn between de Man’s “infinity” and Vitale’s “siempre” is that both allude to a constant with regards to language: there is a break, confusion, doubt, conflict, movement, when it comes to working with and using language. Vitale even notes in “Dudas, siempre” that this constant in time with respect to language is the only time that one can depend on, since when trying to articulate the past, the present, or the future, doubt is all there is—a doubt that rises from the interaction with language. In a way, this constant creates a suspension of the passing of time, a writer—the person that works with language—is constantly and permanently in this “siempre”. There are no answers, only questions remain. The only certainty in this poem is that there will always be doubts, there will always be fractures. The suspension in a space of questions and waiting suggests that the speaker lingers in the present, which is constituted as the place to raise questions, to think, and to grapple with language.

The suspension of the passing of time is parallel to the one that the speaker of the poem advocates for when teaching the interlocutor how to write in “La palabra infinito” discussed above. There is the presence of the infinite, like the *always* in this case, and at the same time, the importance of waiting is essential for writing. Waiting, like being in doubt and therefore asking oneself questions, or being in the space between contradictions and conflicts, necessarily involves a suspension of a flow. Conversely, it is possible to read this as the speaker expanding time, in the sense that she is slowing the pace of how to go about writing, both because there is doubt in language, and also because working with words implies having to wait for them to come and soar. Working with language requires a slow pace. So as to provide this space for language

to be, the poet has to change the way time is inhabited. It is not that time stops for Vitale. Nevertheless, the poet has to stop and step out of the flow of time, in an effort to let language incubate. At the same time, the Vitalean speaker champions for a fracture in the flow of time (as will be seen below) in order to have a better present.

Time as Fracture

The following poem, “Mar de duda,” from *Trema* helps to add more layers to Vitale’s poetics of fracture and doubt:

MAR DE DUDA

Mirar la fruta, el mar con ojos de desierto,
la sinrazón con ojos de sordera,
el pasado como al volcán sus estrías de lava
y del futuro su suspensión de infancia,

cuando una sabiduría asombrada
adelantaba penas
y la única indiscutida certeza de la vida
sería osar la luz:

que alguna vez habría
paz en la red,
no un mar de duda.

(Vitale 2005, 21)

The title of the poem establishes from where the poetic subject writes. Through contradictions, the first stanza illuminates what this space is like. What seems to be most important is the first word of the stanza, “Mirar,” for it marks a point of view. It is the only verb in this first stanza, making it even more conspicuous. The poetic subject is then in a sea of doubt in a space of tensions: “[...] mar con ojos de desierto, / la sinrazón con ojos de sordera.” At the same time, she seems to be at the crossroads between the past and future: from where she is standing, the

speaker can look at “el pasado como al volcán sus estrías de lava / y del futuro su suspensión de infancia.” What remains of what was (the eruption of the volcano) are the grooves left by the lava; and what there is of the future is that childhood is no longer. The stanza does not portray the speaker as walking towards either past or future, rather, it stands her at the crux of time, the present. She is standing still and observing. Here again, it is possible to appreciate a stop, a waiting, a suspension of the flow of time, and the speaker in the present. The interruption is equivalent to the fracture in language and the waiting when writing. The emphasis resides on allowing for an internal process when writing and thinking, instead of on taking action. This is the time that the speaker, a poet, inhabits, that is, a time of allowing for certain processes to take place, a time of suspension, a time of evaluation, a time where the present time becomes more elastic.

In the second stanza, the setting is, again, the sea of doubt, even if it is not mentioned explicitly. Nevertheless, what does appear is the possibility of the only certainty in life: “y la única indiscutida certeza de la vida.” By contrast, the reader can assume that this certainty lies in the sea of doubt. The piece of information that there is only one certainty in life, which is “osar la luz,” is described as the product of a “sabiduría asombrada.” The adjective *asombrada* holds within itself the meaning of surprised, but also, of shadow and fear. These connotations contribute to qualifying the wisdom of knowing that the only certainty in life would be to defy and dare the light as something rare, just like the moments of certainty are rare and have a mysterious component to them, as seen in the poem “La palabra infinito.” The shadow aspect of “asombrada” contrasts with “la luz” that must be dared, signaling that not even this piece of wisdom is part of certainty, only the light is. Furthermore, the shadow and shade component of the word “asombrada” implies the personal colorings and hues of the poet, which is what

wisdom is portrayed as. To say it differently, light is her own particular light—a light that is fractured (it has *sombra*).

In this case as well, the poem “La palabra infinito” can help to illuminate “Mar de duda,” for in the former, the light is associated with writing poetry. Daring to go into the light can therefore be read as writing poetry, or, more specifically, having written a poem and reading it, which takes us back to the first part of the first line of “Mar de duda”: “Mirar la fruta.” The poet’s being with the poem, the fruit, reading it, can be described as holding a space for this activity in time. In other words, holding that space of poetry, is also interrupting the flow of time, in that it implies a return to what was done (the writing of the poem), and, most importantly, it implies stopping in time while pondering the poem. This is how “paz en la red” is achieved.

Concomitantly, “osar la luz” could also be read as going into the light associated with the semantic field of death. In this reading, peace is only reached when one dies, since living means constantly being in “un mar de duda.” Death too, like holding the space for reading her own poetry, constitutes a stop in time in Vitale’s viewpoint. The fracture in time, language, and in thoughts is a given as far as Vitale is concerned. In her own words, when she received the Octavio Paz award in 2010: “Nuevas experiencias, un paisaje diverso nutren vida y poesía. Siempre he pensado en las posibles variaciones del destino y de la escritura a partir de una discontinuidad en la línea que se creía inalterable. Una fractura imprevista y surge la deriva en el rumbo que parecía prefijado.” (Fressia 2011). Although a fracture is unpredictable, in that it is not always possible to know when it will take place, it is a fact, for there is always a discontinuity. The fracture in language and writing is directly related to Vitale’s belief that when writing, one must let words be free. This freedom, words’ nomadic character, and the writer’s letting go of full control, in the sense of not imposing on language, allows for words to reach

their highest potential, while it provides for an unpredictability of how or when the fracture will appear. At the same time, the speaker in Vitale's poems actively seeks this fracture in the way of interruption when writing, and in the way of stepping outside the flow of time to pause. As a consequence, the present is more fully appreciated and the self's imprint in the world is made. This pause means that time is not just a flow that one has no control over and is simply in it. The poetic subjects' pauses in order to revise, to slow down, to rethink, to write, are a way for her to mark her pace of time. For Vitale's speaker, time's rhythm is slower than what appears to be the pace in the plane of reality. It seems however, that she not only subscribes to a slower pace when writing, she also defends a slower pace in life in general. Her poem "Historia" criticizes being in a hurry in life.

HISTORIA

Subíamos corriendo la larga escalera.
 Apenas si mirábamos posibles
 detalles laterales,
 sorpresas de una ventana
 abierta al mundo tras los vidrios,
 reflejos, sedimentos
 del que subiera antes.
 Velozmente cruzamos
 la inútil pausa del rellano,
 abandonadas rosas menos que naturales,
 los ramalazos del siempre
 ciego cielo
 a su modo indeleble.
 Subíamos, subíamos
 por lo idéntico
 sólo que hacia cada vez menos luz,
 hacia pozo más hondo.

(Vitale 1988, 44-45)

The poem is structured in a gradual building up of reasons why going through life fast is futile. In “Historia” the staircase is a metaphor for life, and the poetic subject describes how “we” go about climbing those stairs, namely, as if it were a race to get to the top: “Subíamos corriendo la larga escalera.” By going fast, “we” do not pay attention either to what is around us or to the details: “Apenas si mirábamos posibles / detalles laterales.” Moreover, “we” are not aware of surprises, windows, views, or the world in general: “sorpresas de una ventana / abierta al mundo tras los vidrios.” On the contrary, it is implied that unlike the window that is open to the world, “we” are closed to it, and to everything that surrounds us. In fact, “we” are even closed to the experiences of others who are climbing before “us”: *reflejos, sedimentos / del que subiera antes.*”

Everything that is mentioned in the poem, namely, details, surprises, open windows, views, learning from others, is taken away even before it is mentioned. The “Apenas,” which is the first word of the second line, and which heads the near list-like presentation of a picture that is painted but is not really “ours,” serves the purpose of barely (*apenas*) giving the reader, who is part of the “we,” a taste of what they are missing. The reason for missing this is established in the first line, and again reinforced after the image of what “we” are missing is created—and taken away—that is, the speed at which “we” race up the staircase, to the point of even skipping the physical pauses provided by the landings: “Velozmente cruzamos / la inútil pausa del rellano.” The adjective *inútil*, which qualifies stopping on the landing of the staircase, reflects the opinion of this pause on the part of the “we,” the people that rush upstairs. At the end of the poem, with the twist of the last two lines, another task is added to *inútil*, which then appears to also qualify the actual race to the top of the stairs. It is then that the reader confirms the distance

between the “we,” which also includes the speaker at one point in this race, and the voice of the poem now.

It is important to mark that the verbs in the poem are in the past: the two main verbs of the poem “subíamos,” which appears in the first line and is repeated in line fourteen, and “mirábamos,” which appears in the second line, are in the pretérito imperfecto tense; “cruzamos,” in line eight is in the simple past, and “subiera” in line seven is in the past subjunctive. The verb tenses mark a distance that is both temporal and metaphorical. The distance is temporal in that the speaker of the poem is standing at a different point in time to the speaker that is part of the “we” who is racing to the top. This distance and difference from the people still rushing up the stairs happens after having gained understanding, maybe even after having climbed quite a bit of the staircase. The distance is metaphorical precisely because of that insight gained by the speaker in the present of the poem. There is a break of sorts in perspective, and between what *was* and what *is*.

Because of “our” stubbornness “we” continue going up the staircase without pausing, “[s]ubíamos, subíamos,” despite the landings, which are like abandoned roses, and at the same time, these abandoned roses, are like the reminders of the sky that come in the form of “los ramalazos del siempre.” The line-break between this line and the next, “ciego cielo,” helps to create two meanings: firstly, when reading the two lines separately, respecting the line-break, the “siempre” is read as a noun. This “siempre” is a constant, an entity that is abandoned, like the roses, in “our” eagerness to go on climbing fast. The second meaning, which comes from reading these two lines together respecting the enjambment, takes “siempre” as an adjective that qualifies the “ciego cielo.” The sky is blind to the abandoned roses, to the landings, to the pauses. If “cielo” is understood as heaven, then it is blind to the pauses because it always receives the

people rushing up the stairs. That is its “modo indeleble.” Both readings emphasize the constant, the *always* regarding the passing of time, whereby, pause or not, involves an end to a person’s life.

The last two lines are the culmination of the momentum, and the end to the race up the stairs. The culmination ends at the pit instead of at the top: “Subíamos, subíamos / por lo idéntico / sólo que hacia cada vez menos luz, / hacia pozo más hondo.” This reversal that plays on the contrast between climbing the staircase to get to the top only to really be climbing in order to be buried in a deep hole, gives an ironic twist to the poem and to the race. It is this twist that renders rushing to the top without pausing to enjoy life “inútil.” Without explicitly saying it, the preferred choice of climbing the stairs that can be deduced from “Historia” is exactly the opposite of the behavior “we” have. The alternative portrayed in the poem is one that is slow and that includes pauses to appreciate what is around “us”. In other words, it means not imitating the pace of the “siempre,” the constant passing of time, but rather, the choice to pause implies creating one’s own pace, parallel to that of time. The person still reaches the top—or the bottom—of the stairs, but the journey there is different. How we inhabit time has an impact in the reality we create for ourselves.

As was established in the Theoretical Framework, the self is invariably and intimately connected to time. Vitale’s speaker insists on creating a particular pace, that is, she insists on determining time by interacting with it as suits her best. This, for Vitale is fracture. In “Alacena del tizne,” for example, the fracture is a pause that is enacted in the line-break and the indented line: “Vivir es / [...]” (Vitale 1988, 43). Living is pausing. “Oscuro” (from *Sueños de la constancia*) and “Tarea,” (from *Trema*) are also proponents of the act of writing as being inextricably linked to the act of looking into the self. In “Paréntesis, casa frágil” the speaker also

recommends a pause, this time, in the form of a parenthesis. The pause is not to appreciate what is outside, but, conversely, to examine what is inside the self. In Villanueva's words, this is a "paréntesis autorreflexivo" (2006a, 150; and 2006b, 181).

PARÉNTESIS, CASA FRÁGIL

Cuando la cerrazón arrecie
 abre paréntesis, signo tibio,
 casa frágil
 que no tiene más techo
 que el cielo imaginado
 (aunque sea adusto, ácido, aciago,
 si es otro quien lo abre),

piensa dos manos
 que protejan tu rostro,
 de veras miren dentro de ti,
 agrupen sol contra el invierno,
 sol y solvencia humana.

Aunque debas cruzar
 bosques de tiempo,
 pisar tantas hojas secas
 en el suelo de la memoria,
 cuidar no ser tragado
 por zanjas de sorpresiva erosión,
 búscate en el paréntesis,
 como en palabras para siempre calladas.

(Vitale, 2002, 21-22)

Whereas up to now I have pointed out how the Vitalean speaker seeks a suspension of time particularly regarding writing and to take advantage of the present, in "Paréntesis, casa frágil" the poetic subject recommends that the interlocutor create a delay for him/herself. The speaker uses the signs of parenthesis, another graphic representation of space in Vitale's poetry, in order to transmit the idea of the break created in time. She suggests that the interlocutor him/herself

open the parenthesis “[c]uando la cerrazón arrecie.” In this play of contrasts between reality closing in on the interlocutor, and the parenthesis, which opens a space, the wonders of the parenthesis are presented: while it has walls, it has no roof, and is therefore not a claustrophobic closed space like the “cerrazón.” The parenthesis is a “casa frágil / que no tiene más techo / que el cielo imaginado”; they are “dos manos / que protejen tu rostro,” and also, two hands that look after and at the interlocutor.

Despite the parenthesis creating a physical space, a house, I argue that it also creates a temporal space, for, as seen before when the Vitalean speaker recommends a suspension of time when writing, the parenthesis is a type of stepping out of the flow of reality and outside time so as to look into the self. What is paramount is for the interlocutor to look for him/herself in the parenthesis: “búscate en el paréntesis”. Concomitantly, I consider that the parenthesis is also a temporal one in that the interlocutor will most likely have to go back in time, and search in all moments for themselves: “Aunque debas cruzar / bosques de tiempo, / pisar tantas hojas secas / en el suelo de la memoria, / cuidar no ser tragado / por zanjas de sorpresiva erosión, / búscate en el parenthesis.” The poem suggests that the interlocutor has gotten lost in time, and within the “cerrazón,” which seems to be the consequence of having lost the self. The parenthesis allows the interlocutor to look inwardly, and this includes looking at the process of him/herself in different points of time. The poem suggests that going back in time can be dangerous; the reader can even be swallowed by the erosion that attacks memory lane. Nevertheless, it is necessary, in order to recuperate him/herself.

The last line opens two possibilities. On the one hand, it can be read as the speaker comparing the parenthesis to “palabras siempre calladas,” and, on the other hand, she could be enticing the interlocutor to look for him/herself both in the parenthesis as well as in the silenced

words. The implication behind both readings is that dealing with silenced words means investigating, just like the poetic subjects wants the interlocutor to do him/herself, and it means looking and listening very hard to selves that are not overtly apparent and easily found anymore. “[A]br[ir] paréntesis” is therefore, dedicating time to regaining lost voices, be it of the interlocutor or of words, or both.

Taking into account Borges’s and Merleau-Ponty’s considerations on the coexistence of the different moments of time and in each moment influencing the other, to read “Oscuro” and “Paréntesis, casa frágil,” I could say that the journey into the self is actually a journey into the different layers of time, which means, the different layers of the self. Borges sees these layers as the unresolved tension between the core part of the self that does not change and the part of the self that does³⁷. Ricoeur speaks of this same outlook on identity in terms of *mesmidade* and *ipseidade*³⁸. That is to say that the tensions between the concept of the self as permanent, and the instability in identity, which requires the ability to recognize one’s self in the other and vice-versa.

³⁷ Borges suggests that while time passes, “no pasa enteramente” (Borges 2008, 85). In order to illustrate his idea he says that “[p]odemos decir que somos otros ya, que nos han pasado muchas cosas a todos nosotros en el curso de la semana. Sin embargo, somos los mismos” (Borges 2008, 85). Time therefore, passes—but not quite. Also, there are remnants that do not pass and that are always part of the present. The counterpart to a certain core not changing and passing is what Borges calls “el problema de la identidad cambiante,” which is the tension between what is remembered—“que en buena parte está hecha del ruido pero es esencial”—and the need to “sentir que no soy el que fui [...], que soy otro” (Borges 2008, 98). For Borges, this is an unresolvable tension.

³⁸ Ricoeur engaged with the tension between what remains and what changes in our identity when he spoke of two concepts that are related to identity: “a *mesmidade* e a *ipseidade*. A primeira revela permanência e imutabilidade, onde o conceito que o sujeito tem de si mesmo e de ser sempre igual a si é fundamental. Já a segunda está ligada à instabilidade, à capacidade do sujeito reconhecer-se através da alteridade. É a capacidade de interpretar o outro e ser interpretado por ele” (Quilian de Vargas and Umbach 70). Time is at the core of our understanding of identity, our own identity and that of others. Moreover, time is one of the hinges that determines how the relationship between the self and the other works.

The Perils of Rushing; the Power of Poetry

The Vitalean speaker does not only defend a way of inhabiting life and time, and of writing that is about taking time, pausing, and treading slowly. She also shows what happens when this slower-paced path is not taken. In “Historia” the futility of rushing is evidenced and Poem “V” of *Sueños de la constancia* shows the negative effects of not respecting a slower pace when writing.

V

Prosa de prisa
para
servir, como de broza,
prosa sin brasa,
de bruces sobre
la página,
ya no viento,
brisa apenas.
Temer su turbulencia
como el bote arriesgado
quien no nada.

(Vitale 1988, 16-17)

This poem shows a type of fracture that derives from words that are not given their proper weight and thought when writing. Vitale expresses it as: it is the “[p]rosa de prisa,” which creates a “prosa sin brasa,” and which is only good for creating what is discarded: “Prosa de prisa / para / servir, como de broza.” Words written in haste, that is, words that are not given enough time, are only able to create “brisa apenas” and “servir como de broza.” At the beginning of the poem the alliteration of the plosive /p/ sound reigns: “Prosa de prisa / para.” This explosion produced by the /p/ is soon replaced by the /b/, which in Spanish does not have as much explosion as the /b/ sound has in English. There is a loss of strength in the sound. The

alliteration of the /b/ sound emphasizes the loss derived from the “[p]rosa de prisa”: the loss of “brasa,” the loss of intention and thought as the words fall “de bruces sobre / la página,” the lack of wind and only being able to achieve a “brisa”; the words’ impossibility to be nature in all its glory, since they are only “broza.” Poem “V” defends allowing time to do what it has to do, and it also advocates for giving the words the time they are entitled to, as if there were a specific rhythm for words, and therefore, they cannot be rushed. This poem confirms Vitale’s ars poetica, that is her positioning in relation to time and poetry writing. Writing is not an activity which can be rushed. It demands a fracture in time.

In poem “V,” words, given the right time, are powerful and thus can create a “turbulencia.” It is rushing that leads to the disempowering of words. In a similar way, in poem “Diezmo” it is one instant that can lead words to death.

DIEZMO

A la hora de la ráfaga impía,
 flecha el perfil,
 cuchillo el breve destello,
 el minuterero, lanza.
 La palabra que primero se distrajo
 centellea bajo el rayo
 y se deja quebrar, ávido vidrio.
 Todo acecha.
 ¿No está cansada la memoria
 de jurar la no reincidencia?

(Vitale 2005, 16)

In “Diezmo” words’ fragility is made evident: the word is glass, and as such, it is brittle, and it only takes one instant, one distraction for it to break: “La palabra que primero se distrajo / centellea bajo el rayo / y se deja quebrar, ávido vidrio.” Words are under constant danger because “[t]odo acecha,” and it takes any “ráfaga impía” for the minute to be fatal to words. This

happens at a certain hour, a certain time. It is a time when the minute hand becomes a knife, and in an instant, “el breve destello,” the first word that is distracted breaks. This is a recurrent scene, as the reader is alerted to by the “reincidencia.” It is the “diezmo,” that words have to pay—a sort of sacrifice inherent in language.

The common denominator between “Diezmo,” where any instant can prove dangerous for words, and “V” from *Sueños de la constancia* is that when the time considered is an instant it is not positive for words. The reason for this is that an instant is all it takes to break words, and if writing takes place in an instant, what is broken is the text’s passion and light, becoming thus a text without “brasa” (Vitale 1988, “V,” 16-17). In Vitale, the present, of the poem, of the writing of poetry, is a present that lasts, that has duration.

According to Vitale, however, the words in poetry through the poet are not entirely at the mercy of time. They have the power to change time. The poem “Hacer azul” illustrates this.

HACER AZUL

Azul verdoso era el color
que gustaba al poeta.
Aun la miseria triste,
el inocente abrigo de maderas,
si así pintado,
era fiesta
en una esquina del tiempo.
Azul verde del mar,
glauco azul frío
donde cuaja la roca,
aire de la esperanza
y opuesto pensamiento de la vida
fugaz, en suspenso
por un minuto eterno
en que giran alevines minúsculos,
cangrejos pequeñitos
junto a un guijarro
que allá abajo

es ágata.
 Entre un azul y otro
 la vida entera pasa.
 Entre un azul y otro
 ráfagas encontradas,
 destinos no tangentes,
 arde lo momentáneo.

(Vitale, 1988, 25-26)

“Hacer azul” opens with the premise that greenish blue was the poet’s favorite color, “Azul verdoso era el color / que gustaba al poeta.” From this premise, the influence that this color has on reality is deduced: “Aun la miseria triste, / [...] / si así pintado, /era fiesta / en una esquina del tiempo.” Even misery can become festive if painted with the poet’s color, even if this only lasts a certain amount of time, or even if the festive character only belongs to a fraction of the time. Nevertheless, what is paramount is that this private corner pertains to the realm of influence that the poet has. Anything that the poet tinges with her creation, with her blue, is transformed, or comes to life. In fact, the title of the poem itself is already speaking of having the agency to make things—in this case, to make blue. For example, the sea comes to life in the poem through the image thanks to the descriptions of the type of blue that it has when it is quiet, how its tone of blue becomes lighter, which leads to a change in temperature when the sea crashes against a rock, and how those blues constitute the air of hope “Azul verde del mar, / glauco azul frío / donde cuaja la roca / aire de la esperanza.”

Nonetheless, the poem goes further, and the reader understands that creating blue is more than just creating different instances of the sea. With the right shade of blue, the poet can create an “aire de la esperanza.” Moreover, “[h]acer azul” means being able to turn the “fugaz” into a “minuto eterno” in “suspense.” What the poet creates is contrary to the “pensamiento de la vida,” which is “fugaz”: the poet creates a suspension of time, “por un minuto eterno.” The line “fugaz,

en suspenso” is already creating that break in time with the caesura, which forces the reading of “fugaz” to stop, and converts it into suspense. This time created by the poet, which is a break in what is fleeting and brief, makes a minute be eternal. In the poem, the oxymoron of “minuto eterno” actually becomes something plausible.

The change in perspective generated by the Vitalean speaker in this eternal minute is emphasized by the image of the pebble becoming an agate in the sea created by the speaker: “junto a un guijarro / que allá abajo / es ágata.” The way reality is experienced depends on the kind of blue that is made. Furthermore, the power of the blues produced by the poetic subject, a poet, is so strong that it holds a whole life and, also, the poet can spend her whole life creating blues: “Entre un azul y otro / la vida entera pasa.” Each poet has the power to endow blue with certain breaths, and according to that, what it will do to time: “Entre un azul y otro / ráfagas encontradas, / destinos no tangentes.” The creations of the poet are certainly not minor activities, on the contrary, she creates destinies, lives. Just like in her other poems both language and the poet herself burn (as seen above), “Hacer azul” shows how the creation of blues makes what is momentary “arde[r].” The poet is able to change perceptions of time and how time is experienced through her creations, for “[h]acer azul” is to create a certain pace in time that did not exist before.

Another aspect of reality that is constructed in this poem, aside from a particular pace, is a certain space. Through the use of colors and hues, as well as the use of the verb *pintar*, “si así pintado,” the speaker of the poem brings the pictorial into being. The speaker-poet, therefore, while writing, changes reality and makes a painting. This visual work of art is not a representation of reality, but rather, constitutes a reality in which the speaker is an active agent.

In these last two sections I have examined the different fractures Vitale presents in her poetry. It is as if Vitale were taking her cure from language, “el campo de la fractura.” Everything that is whole and continuous is undermined by this fracture. By pausing, observing the path traveled on, or the pause when writing, slowing the pace of our lives, raising questions, having doubts, Vitale punctures monoliths—be it of thought, or of the relentless and continuous passing of time. The self is paramount in the creation of these fractures, and it is thus, with its voice and agency, that change in the monolith is produced.

Memory as Returning, Recognizing oneself, and Re-evaluating

Vitale’s choice of a slow pace is tied to a revisiting and revising of what has occurred. From this it can be deduced that together with the slow pace, memory, and the relationship established with the past, is an important part of inhabiting the world. For this reason, in order to grasp a fuller and clearer picture of how Vitale constructs time, it is paramount to examine what her poetry yields with regards to memory.

The connection between memory and writing has been discussed by Clara Clairborne Park. She describes it as a bidirectional relationship, whereby writing brings the writer deeper into life, and writing would be impossible without memory. Clairborne Park tells a Homer story where a poet tries to compete in singing with the Muses. They decide to punish him for his hubris. They do not kill him or cut his inspiration. Notwithstanding, they do take his memory from him: “All they had to do was to take away that which made him a poet, his memory. He couldn’t sing any more after that; he had neither the means nor the materials” (179). The underlying reason for their choice of punishment is that just as the present cannot exist in a vacuum, poetry cannot either. Memory, the past, is crucial for this. It is no coincidence that it is the muses and not other gods that participate in Homer’s story. Like Clairborne Park explains,

“The Muses, for Hesiod, inspire all those arts of communication that inform, delight, civilize, and link us with the past and with our fellows. *And the Muses are the daughters of Mnemosyne, Memory*” (175). Without memory there is no poetry; and without poetry, memory and its treasures do not open as much.

Vitale has a similar vision regarding memory. For her, it is indispensable both in life and in writing. The Uruguayan poet has an entry for *memory* in *Léxico de afinidades* where it is rendered as a womb, as the source of energy to go on with life, as a type of fragile organ in a person, and as an exercise in ekphrasis:

Tabilla de cera, de seguro turbia y pequeña y no de la consistencia debida, según Platón. Según Plinio, lo más frágil del hombre. Pero lo cierto es que, cuando alguien está dispuesto a sumirse en la agonía menor del desánimo, ella ofrece la trasmisión de remotos fuegos que entibien el lugar donde pueda nacerle un ala. Y cuando se hace necesario invernar unos momentos, buscar una cueva materna donde acogerse a reparo, ella ofrece un *ekphrasis*, un fragmento brillante desgajable, una madeja de epifanías sucesivas, liquidámbaros a cuyo pie, retrotraído, recuperar fuerzas. Puede ser, pues, indulgente, amena, lenificante. También, a veces por su culpa, se enrosca el árbol el más astuto de los animales del campo y sugiere que ella puede ser empleada en un repaso rapaz de poderes. Después vendrá el suplicio, la felonía que te ofrece puntual, al cabo del doble, la nada. (117-118)

This definition of memory is complex, and it is evident that for Vitale memory is neither uniform nor easy. After all, she paraphrases Plato’s description of memory as turbid and unclear. By using Plinius’s conception of memory, Vitale places memory within a person. Moreover, it is alive, like an organ—a fragile one: “Según Plinio, lo más frágil del hombre.” Vitale thus acknowledges that revisiting the past is a necessary part of living. Furthermore, she explains that when life gets difficult, calling the past into the present makes reality more livable: “Y cuando se hace necesario invernar unos momentos, buscar una cueva materna donde acogerse a reparo.” Memory then becomes a space to go into, similar to a womb or maternal embrace. Going back in

cóndilo en que aún no queriéndolo, encajamos.

Lo opuesto

a lo que no veremos:

 planetas que se tejen
en torno a Fomalhaut,

 distante estrella.

(Vitale 1998, 63)

In “Memoria,” memory is heavily related to stories, legends, weaving, a bird singing in the sky.

Memory, in other words, is about writing. This part of writing has to do with death, which is a connection I visit when studying Hilst through Blanchot and Levinas. The connection writing-

death in this poem is of a slightly different order, for in this case, what completes the equations writing-death is not the writer, but memory. That is, the element of time is involved here. For

Vitale, as for Bignozzi, the present is not complete without the past, and writing is impossible without revisiting that past. Memory, therefore, is an essential part of living and writing.

Memory is what sings dying beauty; it is the remnants of what is dying: be it the ebbing sea or a dissolving bird: “De los días de gloria / la memoria es espuma / a orillas de una playa donde

canta / la belleza que muere, que renace / pájaro, que se disuelve en el cielo.” Memory is

portrayed as a supporting actor in the “días de gloria”: it is the foam of the sea, the song of

beauty, the bird in the sky. A supporting role does not mean that it is not important or even not

essential for life and writing. Memory, with its silent ways, performs the job of an ecumenical

sweep, “Ecumene barrida,” and it gives us eternity. Granted, it is an eternity that is fragile, but it

has the power to reorganize time, to disrupt what is perceived as the passing of time that never

stops, or the fragments of time: “Gentil, la eternidad parece frágil, / nos cede eternidad.”

The “voice” of memory is interwoven with the legend of the mermaids, giving the idea that both songs, that of memory and of the mermaids can lead the listener through difficult—if

not fatal—paths. However, because in Vitale’s poetics memory is part of, and not the only element, in the equation for living and writing, the listener does not drown in the sea of memory. Rather, the siren dies: “ Ecumene barrida / por la cola de escamas de la sirena sola, / al cabo silenciosa.” The legend is explained again, in a different context in this poem: “ Así, la leyenda.” The poem suggests that the past is necessary, but, if the focus is on it, then there is death, instead of poetry.

The second stanza of “Memoria” picks up on the legend, and in it, memory is the legend, and as such, “historia.” The use of “historia,” which in Spanish is both a story and history alludes to two aspects of memory, namely, how memory is in fact a retelling of a past, a construction, and, it is history, the past, and invariably part of each person. The “historia” promises to be a hard journey, where monsters and destruction have to be dealt with: “sequía, quimera monstruo, / derrumbe de cielo bajo.” Nevertheless, despite these difficulties and daemons, memory is a part of us: “cóndilo en que aún no queriéndolo, encajamos,” which purports that, whether we like it or not, we fit into memory and the past. Even if we do not see it due to the hardships of the journey, memory is the brightest star around which life and writing weave (and the verb choice points to writing) themselves—this distant star that is in the past, but illuminates the present: “

planetas que se teje / en torno a Fomalhaut, / distante estrella.” Memory is likened to a star—Fomalhaut, the brightest one—that guides us.

“Viaje de vuelta,” aside from also showing that returning to the past is indispensable, it also examines what this journey looks like.

VIAJE DE VUELTA

Regresar es
volver a ocuparse
de devolver a la tierra

el polvo de los últimos meses;
 recibir del mundo
 el correo dormido;
 intentar saber
 cuánto dura
 una memoria de paloma.

También,
 reconocerse
 como una abeja más
 que es para la colmena, apenas,
 una unidad que zumba.
 Eso, sólo una abeja más,
 muy prescindible.

(Vitale 2005, 48)

The poem has two stanzas. The first one deals with memory and how it works in general; the second one examines memory at a more personal level. The title already defines memory and how it works as a journey back. The first line underlines a revisiting of the past with the use of the verb *return*, and it already starts on that journey by examining it and what it means and entails: “Regresar es.” The verb *to be* asserts that this returning is in existence, i.e. that it happens. The enjambment between this first line and the second quickly submerges the readers into the journey itself. This speed, which prompts the reader to go to the second line to find out what returning is, is counteracted by a pause, marking the distance traveled in this journey into the past and into the meaning of memory: “Regresar es / volver a ocuparse.” It is also a pause, much like remembering is a pause in the passing of time. The second line ends with the reflexive verb “ocuparse,” which suggests another journey, one inwards. This second journey, which, as I have previously observed about Vitale’s view on the present and past, is one into the self, and is intimately connected to living in the present and to writing. Vitale’s poetry shows that both the

present and writing cannot be separated from the past, and neither of these times and the process of writing can be separated from the self's search, from the gaze inwards.

The enjambment between the second and third line, “de devolver a la tierra,” yields another meaning, which becomes clearer after the fourth line, “el polvo de los últimos meses.” To go back, “[r]egresar,” is, first and foremost, to remove the dust that has accumulated in the last months. It is to give that dust back to the earth. These lines seem to be a take on Genesis 3:19: “for you are dust and to dust you shall return.” In the poem, nevertheless, it is not the speaker that is returning to the earth, to die, but, it is the same dust, that represents death in terms of forgetting what the “últimos meses” has brought. The idea is that the dust belongs to the earth, and remembering, “ocuparse,” belongs to the speaker. Concomitantly, it is possible to find the following parallel in this first stanza: dust is analogous to memory; whereas earth is to the speaker, the person remembering. In order to remember, to return, and “ocuparse,” the dust has to be returned to the earth, which is to say that memory and memories have to return to the speaker, for the speaker has to remember to tend to memory. By tending to memory, the poetic subject tends to earth, and vice-verse. There is not one without the other.

Going back is also being open to the world and what it gives, trying to know more, getting involved with time, and others' memory: “recibir del mundo / el correo dormido; / intentar saber / cuánto dura / una memoria de paloma.” Because of the disposition of these elements of “[r]egresar” into five lines, what can initially be read as two aspects of returning, which are separated by the semi-colon, proliferate into more textures of the journey into the past. With the line breaks, the quest for knowing and raising questions about time, appear as part of the journey into the past. Moreover, the last two lines hold a comment on memory, its capacity, and how memories of different beings are connected.

Due to its starting with the adverb “También,” the reader understands that the second stanza adds information about memory and going back into the past provided in the first stanza. The second line, “reconocerse,” also a reflexive verb, like the one found in the second line of the first stanza, directly addresses the person making the journey to the past. They have to recognize themselves, which implies observing and acknowledging themselves. This is an echo of what I discussed earlier about knowing one’s self for Vitale: it is necessary for writing and it always implies a fracture, a reflection of the past in this case. Furthermore, as the stanza continues, we comprehend that what also has to be recognized is that the person returning is part of a community. They are one more in a beehive of countless bees: “reconocerse, / como una abeja más / que es para la colmena, apenas, / una unidad que zumba. / Eso, sólo una abeja más, / muy prescindible.” Being just one more in a world of a myriad of others is a humbling counterbalance to the idea conveyed in the first stanza with the active attitude required in order to “[r]egresar.” While the first stanza names the activities necessary to return (give back dust to the earth, receive messages from the world, investigate), the second stanza demands a different kind of action from the person embarking on a journey. These actions have to do with introspection, observation, and acceptance of the place of one’s journey within others’ journeys. To return then, is also to learn the place where we stand, to learn about perspective.

In Vitale's poetry, in order to create fractures in time, in order to write, in order to know the self, what is crucial is the presence of an active voice that asserts the self. The theme of who is the voice that tells the story and where this voice is in time is also present in "Casa."

CASA

Canta esta casa.
¿Baila en la noche a solas?
Casi escondida dice
una historia todavía humana

This narration is a construction that is alive, for it changes and it is in the present, although it has traces of the past, as well as a continuity into the future: “Su gracia es de este mundo / y nos salva de esas flores / sin estaciones / nacidas bajo el árbol del Mal. / Su resplandor avanza / —una imagen que vuela a nuestro paso— / hacia otro tiempo.” The narration is compared to that of the flowers. The narration, a composite of the kite, the house, and the wind is depicted in positive strokes precisely because it changes and it is in the present. Conversely, “those” flowers are portrayed in a negative light, since they do not have seasons and do not change, and they are something of the past, in that they were born “bajo el árbol del Mal,” which references Eden and the beginning of human kind according to the Bible. It is not that the poem is discarding the past altogether. Rather, the idea given is that change is positive. In fact, it is an intrinsic part of the post-Edenic reality, where the passing of time is translated into growing old, seasons, death, and so on.

In “casa” the change is not only part of the story that the house tells and that involves the kite and the wind. There is also change in the gaze of the singer: “que duele al alma mudada que la mira.” While the story can change a gaze; a changed gaze implies a changed understanding of the story. The past is not represented as static precisely because of the passing of time and the change in the gaze. This “alma mudada” feels pain in the presence of the passing of time, pointing to the difficulties in the negotiations between the past, or remnants of it, and the present. The changes do not come lightly: the readings and the stories told change with each moment.

It is paramount for the house to keep on singing, to tell stories, which it does from a knowledge and experience that is particular to it and to whom those in the present are not privy: “Desde su secreto canta.” It is these secrets, the singing of the present moments without forgetting the past that keep it alive. Nevertheless, there is a marked difference between carrying

traces of the past in the song and wanting to remain in the past while refusing to embrace the present. This is the case of Lot's wife in the Bible, who is heedless to God's command of not turning back and looking at Sodom while they were leaving, and therefore turns into a statue of salt. This story from Genesis is alluded to in the poem: "cantaba aun delante / de una estatua de sal desmoronada." The reference serves as a point of comparison between two perspectives on how to relate to the past. The house's take, whereby she sings despite of, or because of, the passing of time is favored in the poem. While the statue of salt collapses, the house "[s]e recompone ya distinta, / para otros ojos que la miren, / luego, / diversa en su misterio." There is an insistence on the universal and constant change in these lines, which note a double change: that of the house's constant reconstruction, which makes her different every time, as well as the "otros ojos que la mir[a]n," for whom the house is different. Change is depicted in a positive light, for it is what makes the house and her song complex and mysterious. It is useful to remember at this point that for Vitale, as seen above, mystery is an element of language in poetry. In "Casa," mystery is also associated with the house's journey in time, and the relationship that the entity who tells the story has with his/her past. "Casa" appears to advocate for singing from the present and of the present, but carrying traces of the past. The image of the house functions as a bridge that connects past and present (and future).

In "Miramientos," there is a fear of losing the past, and a search for a way to domesticate the passing of time.

MIRAMIENTOS

Aquel pasado venerable
ajeno o casi en nada mío,
en una caja se guardó,
por años. ¿Dónde ahora?

Las lentas instantáneas

ya buscaban detener el minuto
 que el viento bate o el reloj disciplina;
 contra el mar, sobre piedras
 como lomos de ballenas dormidas,
 manos salvan grandes sombreros
 de volar a la espuma,
 refuerzan los prudentes plomos
 de largas faldas.

Aún reina el miramiento
 secular de una pose:
 cabeza que descansa en una mano,
 codo sobre columna sin sentido,
 a la vista el prestigio de un libro
 y un telón que fabula.

Y hay sonrisas, sin duda,
 entre palabras de amistosa escansión
 y unos niños anónimos que crecen
 en los trajes de tan breves domingos
 y a alguien irán sus cárceles de tela.

Ese pasado aún precipita sangre,
 rumor acuminado
 para el que no hay oídos celebrantes.
 Sobre olvidos de tumba
 y desamores que algunos dispusieron,
 un perfume mecido.
 Cómo evitar que sea polvo sin más
 en mi memoria pronto inútil.

(Vitale 2005, 41-42)

The title of the poem is reminiscent of what I discussed above regarding Vitale's championing for a time and space dedicated to the present, to writing, to words, and to observing the self. "Miramientos," which denotes the attention and consideration given to an event, situation, or person, encompasses Vitale's beliefs. In this poem, the attention is given to the

passing of time, to the passing of the past, in the form of forgetting, and to the passing of a person, in the sense that s/he grows old and dies.

From the first line of the poem we understand that the past is looked on with reverence: “Aquel pasado venerable.” Nonetheless, there is a conspicuous distance between the past, which is a particular past (“[a]quel”), and the speaker, in that she describes it as “ajeno o casi en nada mío.” The distance appears to be temporal and spatial because the past was put away in a box for years: “en una caja se guardó, / por años.” This is a distance, however, that the poetic subject through the question “¿Dónde ahora?” shows signs of wanting to bridge.

In the second stanza the poetic subject speaks of an other’s—in a personification of photographs—efforts to regain a past that slips away. It becomes clear, by comparison and contiguity, that the photographs and the speaker have this mission in common, namely, to carry the past with them, to hold on to it: “Las lentas instantáneas / ya buscaban detener el minuto / que el viento bate o el reloj disciplina.” The passing away of time is portrayed as an indomitable force that the clock tries to “discipline,” the wind tries to beat into shape, and the photographs try to stop. The photographs work by capturing the present, which becomes the past, and saving it for the future. The last six lines of the second stanza make an image. It works as an imitation of a photograph. In a way then, the poem becomes a holder of the past, like the photograph.

The following stanza also depicts a scene, and the reader understands from its first line that they are looking at another picture, precisely because “[a]ún reina el miramiento.” That is, we are still contemplating and considering the past and the passing of time. The line at the end of the stanza, “y un telón que fabula,” brings in two elements that radically change the scene depicted in the third stanza. Due to the introduction of the “telón,” a theater curtain, the scene, until now considered static for it is one of the “lentas instantáneas,” acquires movement, in that it

becomes a scene in a theater. The photographs were put away in a box and now, the present of the poem, are being looked for and at, at least mentally, by the poetic subject. They are fragments of the past and bring the past to the present in an almost faithful manner, without changing it. The theatrical representation of the past however, adds movement at various levels: firstly, it means that each time the scene can be represented differently. Secondly, the people in the scene are characters, which stresses that the experience of watching this scene implies the speaker's detaching herself from certain involvement and thus, her ability to observe the scene as a spectator who interprets the past, therefore changing it. Thirdly, the "telón" is both the opening of the scene, when the curtain is opened, and, when it is closed, the closing of the scene. In other words, the curtain works as a reminder of the ephemeral nature of memory and the past. At any moment it can disappear behind the curtain; at any time it can be forgotten. The curtain is portrayed as active, after all, "fabula," which is, it writes a story. As the writer of a story, it can definitely alter it. The past is, therefore, not safe from change.

The story-telling continues in the fourth stanza. This time, however, it is in the form of poetry: "Y hay sonrisas, sin duda, / entre palabras de amistosa escansión." The story captures the passing of time by showing how the children grow and outgrow their Sunday best: "y unos niños anónimos que crecen / en los trajes de tan breves domingos / y a alguien irán sus cárceles de tela." Although time passes, and the past is in the past, it still has an impact on the present, as the first line of the fifth stanza shows: "Ese pasado aún precipita sangre." We can think of Roland Barthes and his ideas on photography in *Camera Lucida*, for this poem is looking at photographs and through them at the past. It is the photographs that "precipita sangre." In a similar vein, Barthes wrote the following: "a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it. So that is how I must name the attraction which makes it exist: an animation. The photograph

itself is in no way animated [...], but it animates me: this is what creates every adventure” (20). This conception intersects with what was studied above regarding the importance for Vitale of the past in the present. Photographs in Vitale’s poems work as a way to connect the past and the present. With the past in the present, a person is alive. The photograph brings the past to the present and allows for the spectator, to use Barthes’s terminology, to be alive; it animates him/her. At the same time, Barthes gives agency to the spectator by stating: “I animate this photograph and that it animates me” (59). In Vitale’s poems this concept is captured in her advocating for both a connection to the past, and also, a connection to the self, the writing self, who produces the present, and thus, recreates the past.

To return to “Miramientos,” we see that despite its importance and its influence on the present, the past is in danger of being forgotten, which is yet another effect of the passing of time. The story, in the last stanza, becomes no more than a tapering rumor, which describes the loss of impact of the past, and the loss of strength in its voice. The past is a “rumor acuminado / para el que no hay oídos celebrantes.” The third line of the last stanza specifies how it is that the past’s narrations become a rumor: those who do not listen to and celebrate the past lose it. Death ensues this forgetting, as well as the assimilation of the past’s distinct aroma: “Sobre olvidos de tumba / y desamores que algunos dispusieron, un perfume mecido.” This is also the conclusion reached when reading Bignozzi.

The last two lines of the poem incorporate a twist: it is not only those who do not celebrate the past for whom the past becomes nothing more than forgotten graves of buried events and people. The passing of time, which brings an involuntary unraveling of a person’s memory, can also cause the past to become dust, or, in other words, to die: “Cómo evitar que sea polvo sin más / en mi memoria pronto inútil.” No answer is provided to this question, pointing to

a constant battle that the speaker has against forgetting, against the passing of time and its effects.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show that the Vitalean speaker believes that in order to create poetry and one's own reality (actual living) it is necessary to have a different pace than that of the ongoing passing of time. The fractures in the form of pauses, waiting, a slow pace, lingering, as well as the returning to other moments in time, allow a person to look inside, to find mysteries in writing, and in themselves. Furthermore, they are ways of defying the passing of time by precisely stepping out of the flow of time. All these fractures in Vitale are not about staying still and avoiding or denying the passing of time. Rather, the fractures are about stopping and going back, in order to make sure to be in touch with the self in any journey—be it life, writing, growing old. The fractures, even that of returning to the past, serve to underscore the present as the moment in time that Vitale's poetry favors, in that it is the time where the self is present and able to make choices.

The speaker's agency in the construction of her own experience, of her own way of living, is asserted in her choice of language, and specifically in poetry, as the means and space of this construction. Introducing fractures in the flow of time implies resisting inertia and the outside flow and choosing the speaker's own flow instead. The insistence on writing and expressing one's voice in Vitale highlights the importance for her poetry of having a particular imprint. This is connected to Vitale's emphasis on the present, for it is the moment in time where the one's voice can help to change the self, one's approach, and the world in which one lives.

Chapter 3: *DA MORTE. ODES MÍNIMAS*: TIME AND DEATH IN HILDA HILST'S POETRY

Introduction

Hilst's poetic work is extensive and varied. Yet, if we were to trace the movement of time in her poetry, it would be possible to say that time is not experienced as a fast-paced motion forward with a resolution at the end. Quite the contrary, although the passing of time is certainly acknowledged and faced, the Hilstean speaker chooses a different way to apprehend time to fighting against it or falling into despair. The Hilstean speaker's way of dealing with the passing of time is by emphasizing and focusing on the present. Even the spiral-like movement traced by the recurrence of her themes leads the reader to feel that s/he is constantly in the present. In fact, the speaker's focus on the writing of poetry itself serves as empowerment as well as to maintain her in the present.

This concentration on the present and its duration works as a resistance to the consensus of how time should be experienced, and it follows what Friedrich believed to be the great change in poetry concerning time, as seen in the Theoretica Framework chapter (10). This change, paved by Rousseau, and taken up by Bergson, was to do away with the "outside" clock, and to concentrate on internal time. Internal time creates a reality that can compete, if not overpower, existing reality. Hilst's choice to inhabit the present emphatically, and for that to be the *modus vivendi* transmitted by her poetic work goes against the inevitable passing of time that worries the Hilstean speaker so much.

In *Time and Narrative* Ricoeur explains that according to Augustine, agreeing with the skeptics, if the present is more than an instant and would remain instead of becoming the past, then we would be talking about eternity. Augustine then, who was worried about the

measurement of time, opposes present to always. What Ricoeur also stresses in this book is the importance of the way we talk about time and the language we use. He elucidates that Augustine concludes that the past and the future must exist if we can put them into language, for “to recount is to ‘discern [cernere] by the mind’” (Ricoeur 10). Language then, works as “testimony” for time, and I would add, to how we perceive time (Ricoeur 10). Hilst’s poetry articulates a perception of time particular to Hilst. The Hilstean poetic subject does not seek to be eternal or immortal, nor does she deny that she will die. For her, lingering in the present is not about not facing the future or death; rather, I defend that it is about learning how to live differently.

As discussed in the Theoretical Framework, Ricoeur notes that Augustine is referring to a different present, namely, one that opens up of the meaning of *present* to allow for two coexisting possibilities of *present*: the first one is almost equivalent to *now*, whereas the second *present* refers to being present and mindfulness (10). It is pertinent to recall that Heidegger agrees with Augustine’s double *present* when in *Time and Being* he explains that present has to do with time as well as with presence, which could be defined as how we inhabit that now. Both Augustine and Heidegger are linking the present time with being present, and although Heidegger claims that people are generally not aware of this second meaning of *present*, in Hilst’s poetry it is possible to see how both aspects of *present* are invariably connected, as if the present time would not exist without mindfulness. As above-mentioned, with the insistence on the recurrent themes, Hilst’s poetry demands that the readers reflect on them, and demands that they not be absent from their own lives, despite pain, doubt, and concerns (regarding aging, death, loss, to name but a few). Her recurrent themes are a call for presence. I defend that Hilstean poetry embodies both presents, and thus, a commitment to life.

It is important to note that the way that the present time happens in Hilst's work is a different path from the present of either the primitive or modern societies as described by Paz (Paz 1974, 25-27). Paz's organization of how two different types of societies view the present has served to explain different worldviews for a long time. However, this paradigm seems to fall short when trying to understand Hilst's present. In *Los hijos del limo*, Paz defines the present of primitive societies as a present that remits to an archetypal past, for as far as these societies are concerned the passing of time inhibits changes. At the same time, Paz describes the present of modern societies as the utmost manifestation of changes. Typically, for these societies, time is what enables change. Paz presents two diametrically different ways of conceiving and experiencing the present. Nevertheless, the Hilstean present does not fall under either of these societies' world visions. The present in her work is a quase repetition of similar but not identical situations, but also, without a return to an archetypal past. It is also not a present that is instantaneous and therefore unique, like that of Paz's modern societies, as I will point out in the analysis of her poetry. Hilst's present opens a different type of possibility, namely, a present that is related to the self and to a way of being. Her present does not represent contemporary societies' present. Through her poetry, Hilst is forging a different way of conceiving time. By articulating this conception, which corresponds to subjective ideas and experiences, she is carving out its existence in reality. Poetry's impact on reality takes us back to Ricoeur's idea that "we owe a large part of the enlarging of our horizons of existence to poetic works" (80). He sees literary works as the enablers of different understandings, and thus, as enablers of diverse ways of inhabiting the world: "Far from producing only weakened images of reality—shadows, as in the Platonic treatment of the *eikōn* in painting or writing (*Phaedrus* 274e—77e)—literary works depict reality by *augmenting* it with [...] meanings" (80).

From Hilst's poetry and her interviews it becomes clear that her choice of concentrating on the present and being present in it stems from her belief that what is paramount about the present and being present is engaging with the difficult struggles of the now instead of avoiding them. This involvement takes the form of the relentless raising of questions, observing, pondering, and articulating ideas about the difficult subjects. Death is the ultimate uncomfortable subject because it forces you to face the fact that Being is within time and involves mortality. Hilst does not shy away from difficulty. On the contrary, she insists in actively participating in her present.

Singing Death

Death is one of the main themes that runs through all of Hilst's work. She was aware of this and even called "a problemática da morte," "o tema mais constant, o que aparece mais em minha obra" (Hilst 1975, 32). Hilst believes that the reason for death being present in her texts and characters is because "eu [Hilst] não estou comformada com esse conceito da maioria das pessoas de que a morte é definitiva, é um acabar completo e portanto é um tema, uma preocupação que sei que irá perdurar em minha obra future, e que vou repetir até a exaustão esse tema" (Hilst 1975, 32). For this reason, Hilst began carrying out experiments in the 1970s, whereby she would try to record the voices of the dead. She was following the experiments done in the late 1950s by the Swedish Friedrich Jürgenson, who was then joined by other physics from across Europe, such as "Friedbert Karger, do Insituto Max Planck, de Munique; Hans Bender da Universidade de Friburgo; Peter Hale, físico e engenheiro electrônico; Brendan Macgann, director do Instituto de Psicologia de Dublin" (Hilst 1975, 32). She believed that these practices and experiences could "mudar o conceito que têm da morte" (Hilst 1975, 33). She criticized

those scientists who did not take her seriously with these experiments: “Em todos esses assuntos em que não me imiscuo por um racionalismo entranhado, só me resta dizer como Jung, que longo tempo se dedicou a estudos sobre parapsicologia e espiritualismo: ‘Recuso-me a cometer a estupidez tão comum de considerar como fraude tudo aquilo que é inexplicável.’” (Hilst 1975, 33).

In Hilst’s poetry it is precisely through the speaker’s involvement with death that she finds her way to construe and construct time. Maria Luísa Carneiro Fumaneri in her article “Vencer a morte: uma leitura crítica de *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, de Hilda Hilst” states how the countless connotations regarding death in literary tradition has lead to the conclusion that it is only in life, and further, in their poetry itself that the poets, mortal beings, come to know death. Fumaneri expounds that it is in their texts that poets deal with the ambivalent view of humanity, as expressed by Erwin Panofsky, where on the one hand human consciousness is valued in contrast with animals, and, on the other hand, there is the knowledge that humans are fragile and transitory:

Erwin Panofsky, ao investigar as raízes do sentido de *humanitas* para o pensamento renascentista, defende que, já no chamado Antropocentrismo, *humanitas* guardava uma dupla condição: a de um valor – ser humano em oposição ao animal, ao bárbaro ou ao vulgar – e uma limitação – ser humano em oposição à divindade, portanto frágil e transitório. Segundo o autor, o humanismo nasceria da ambivalência da condição humana. (Fumaneri 503)

It is because of this ambivalence inherent in humans, that Fumaneri believes that when dealing with what is inherently human, we face both sides of the above-mentioned duality, namely, valorization and limitation.

Hilst’s poetry collection *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, about which Duarte states that “há a preocupação com o redimensionamento da vida por meio da reflexão sobre a morte, o impossível

instante do encontro como o desconhecido,” constitutes an excellent window into how this author dealt with the passing of time and death. Published by Massao Ohno/Roswitha Kempf Editores in 1980, it is Hilst’s third book after the poetry hiatus (Duarte 17). This book is divided into four parts: 1) “Aquarelas,” where each of the six poems is accompanied by a watercolor made by the Hilst herself; 2) “Da morte. Odes mínimas,” with 40 poems; 3) “Tempo-Morte,” with 5 poems; and 4) “À tua frente. Em vaidade,” with 5 poems. The title of the book indicates that the poems are odes, which immediately tell us that Hilst will be praising death in this book, because odes are a kind of lyrical poem that generally celebrate a person, thing, place, or idea. According to Alcir Pécora, the Hilstean odes are similar to Horace’s “private odes” (Pécora 2003, 8). Nonetheless, Pécora marks clear differences between these odes: “ela não se dirige a amigos ou parentes para tecer as suas considerações de ordem reflexiva ou moral. O seu principal interlocutor, senão único, é justamente a morte. Não a morte em geral, ou a morte como alegoria filosófica, mas aquela própria, pessoal” (Pécora 2003, 8). Another point of departure from Horatian odes, and odes in general, is that while odes usually sing to someone or something that is generally not present, Hilst’s odes call death into presence.

Hilst’s odes call death into the present. Death is commonly regarded as the last event in someone’s life. That is, we are born, we grow up, we die. Underlying this conception is the view that time is linear and that it can be measured in a succession of events, which are experienced in the present and quickly become the past. Death, from this standpoint, appears at the end of this line of events and is inevitable. The implication is that time is linear and that there is an end, namely, mortality. Fumaneri brings in Ricoeur and Bakhtin in order to clarify why this is so. For both Ricoeur and Bakhtin the basis of this perception of time is our language: “Para Bakhtin, a mortalidade fundamenta mesmo os aspectos de nossa linguagem: ‘If man were not mortal, then

the emotional-volitional tone of this progression of life—of this ‘earlier’, ‘later’, ‘as yet’, ‘when’, ‘never’, and the tone of the formal moments of rhythm, would be quite different” (Bakhtin in Fumaneri, 504). The author goes on to summarize Ricoeur’s idea about language and death as follows: “Ricoeur lembra que mesmo a linguagem humana dispõe o tempo em passado, presente e futuro, através dos advérbios de tempo e tempos verbais” (Ricoeur in Fumaneri, 504). I maintain that *Da morte. Odes mínimas* mines the neat line and brings death to be part of all the line and not just an end point. Hilst manages to destabilize language’s structure by personifying death and insisting on having a dialog with it in order to get to know it—and herself—more.

One of the most conspicuous changes in perspective in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* is that death is not perceived as a singular event. Rather, the idea of death as a consequence of linear time and as a point in the future is undermined. Death takes on an existence with duration. The way this happens is through the dialog the speaker of these poems chooses to have with her own death. Pécora states that the odes “descrevem a morte como ocorrência de certa duração e demora no cerne de uma existência particular, afetiva e mortal” (Pécora 2003, 8-9). Death in this book is understood as being part of the speaker’s life, as Pécora highlights. It is therefore not an event, but an ongoing company. Through the conversations, the speaker brings death into her everyday existence, and thus, it becomes a participant in all the moments of her life.

In his dissertation “Hilda Hilst: economias estéticas” Costa Duarte, views dialogs, together with thematic recurrence, in Hilst’s work as part of the trademark in her poetry after 1974: “Elencamos dois recursos estilísticos que são recorrentes na poesia hilstiana escrita entre os anos de 1974 a 1995: a encenação dramática do poema e a concentração temática dos livros.” (15). These dialogs, according to Duarte, respond to a pursuit of communication and confrontation with her object of reflection. “O recurso mais insistentemente utilizado por Hilst

será uma intensa dialogação com um interlocutor que às vezes é humano, mas na maioria dos casos é uma espécie de duplo da própria consciência da poeta” (Duarte15). Alves da Silva perceives this dialog as an unfolding of the self in an attempt to discover and get to know the real self. She thus continues to affirm that

A poesia nasce, então, da perda da unidade do sujeito que se estilhaça. Assim, o sujeito ao incorporar a alteridade radical e desejar o Outro está se destruindo (fragmentando-se) para preservar a unidade do ser. Por isso, há uma impossibilidade de conhecimento total do ser, a poesia se alimenta de lacunas e de indeterminacies, sob um sujeito que é instável e por isso móvel. (91-92)

Alves da Silva concludes that this fluid character of Hilst’s speaker is of a “sujeito que se constrói, reconstrói ao longo dos poemas” (92). The insistence in her recurrent themes is also a way in which Hilst investigates the self. This self is one that, like time, is in flux.

With respect to this intimate relationship between the speaker and death in Hilst, Humberto Guido, in his article “Pessimismo metafísico e sensibilidade poética: algumas aproximações entre a filosofia e a poesia de Hilda Hilst,” makes two claims: firstly, that Hilst’s dialog shows that “a poeta não teme a morte e dialoga com a vida, porque ela deseja viver, o que está morto lhe angustia, mas ela não teme o que virá: a morte” (201). His second claim is that the poetic subject’s engagement with death reflects Seneca’s pessimistic concept that learning how to live is an ongoing process, and that this process is concomitantly a process in learning how to die (Guido 201). I agree with Guido’s statement that the Hilstean speaker is in dialog with life, for despite her interlocutor in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* being death, it is because she wants to deepen her understanding of and her experience of life that she pursues death. Notwithstanding, I disagree with Guido’s claim that Hilst and/or her speaker are not afraid of death. I will later show how throughout *Da morte. Odes mínimas* the speaker exposes her fear of death and the passing of time through hesitations in approaching death. Moreover, in an interview with *Cadernos da*

literatura brasileira Hilst admits to her dreading death: “Eu tenho um pânico enorme da morte. Tenho medo de encontrar o desconhecido” (38). Concerning Guido’s claim, whereby in association with Seneca’s ideas on life and death, Hilstean poetry is painted as pessimistic, I argue that although Hilst invariably relates life and death, hers is definitely not a pessimistic view. Conversely, it is her investment in life that leads her to dwell on death. Death’s participation in all moments of the speaker’s life points to a speaker intent on understanding Being.

The choice to have death close appears to be a *modus vivendi*, in that it is making intimate that which is feared, the passing of time and being no longer. Death is the embodiment of the passing of time, whose connection is explicitly confirmed in the title of the third part of *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, “Tempo-Morte.” Pécora comments on Hilst’s choice to focus on establishing a dialog with death: “Construir a interlocução da morte significa, para Hilda, permanecer atento ao seu trote de cascos enfaixados, que trabalham em silêncio pela aniquilação. Importa sobretudo a observação minuciosa de seu lento consumir da vida, à maneira da ferrugem, que não dorme nunca.” (Pécora 2003, 9). Being aware and even more so, to concentrate on death and its work, is to understand that death is inescapable, relentless, and that it has a duration. Nevertheless, *Da morte. Odes mínimas* is not a pessimistic outlook on life simply obsessing over the passing of time. This book is a celebration of life, for becoming conscious of death’s duration and its work is what leads the speaker to “descobrir uma singular rotina para viver,” and, in this way, to appropriate life and live it to the fullest (Pécora 2003, 9). The speaker, a poet, understands that in order to answer the fundamental questions of why she is a poet and the ultimate meaning in and of life, she has to talk about and to death. This book by Hilst is an incredible journey of search for the coordinates of life. It is in dialoguing with death

that life becomes more visible. Hilst is relentless in her involvement and belief in human kind and the world.

Communication: Reaching the Present through Questions

In order to understand death and the passing of time, the speaker dialogs with death instead of running away from it and making it into a taboo, as it is commonly perceived in our society. Throughout the book it is possible to perceive a complex relationship between the poetic subject and her death; it oscillates between her fear and fascination of death. The speaker's intentions and words, however, neither guarantee a complete understanding of death nor do they guarantee reaching a clear answer regarding it. This desire to know death completely, and thus possess it and dominate it, is constantly frustrated in the book.

Poem IX of the second part of *Da morte. Odes mínimas* shows how death constantly escapes the full apprehension of it that the speaker desires:

IX

Os cascos enfaixados
 Para que eu não ouça
 Teu duro trote.
 É assim, cavalinha,
 Que me virás buscar?
 Ou porque te pensei
 Severa e silenciosa
 Virás criança
 Num estilhaço de louças?
 Amante
 Porque te desprezei?
 Ou como ares de rei
 Porque te fiz rainha?

(Hilst 2003, 37)

The speaker's attempts to define and categorize death are always undermined by it. Death, for example, will have bandaged hoofs so the poetic subject will not hear it trotting when it comes looking for her. However, if the speaker were to think of death as "silenciosa," then death will appear as a noisy child. Death is portrayed as being impossible to dominate. As Fumaneri concludes of this poem: "o poema tenta preencher suas arestas para que uma visualização seja possível. No entanto, a única visualização que o poema dá é a ausência de possibilidade de visualização. Conhecer demais é vedado ao humano" (511). This impossibility of knowing death is portrayed in the unanswered questions, which simultaneously, denote the speaker's being aware of death's evasiveness

Bringing Zambrano's discussion of the difference and similarities between philosophy and poetry into dialogue here is particularly revealing. Both philosophy and poetry seek to know, to gain more knowledge and both often take the path of inquiry, especially philosophy. However, philosophy does not stop until full knowledge and apprehension of that which it aims to own, despite the losses on the way to reach this goal. Poetry, on the other hand, is more comfortable with disclosing the mysteries of existence without fully resolving them. Taking Zambrano into account, I wish to follow on Fumaneri's opinion that the Hilsteian's speaker's impossibility of fully gaining knowledge of death is due to the fact that she is human, and as part of the human condition, she cannot and will never completely apprehend or dominate death. I contend that the Hilsteian poetic subject is a philosopher in her own relentlessness to pursue death and the significance of time, and at the same time, and more powerfully, she is a poet, for she raises questions, ponders on her existence, and allows for a multiplicity of coexisting aspects to be considered. As a poet the Hilsteian speaker is thus able to reorganize certain borders and redefine as well as reread the world and herself.

Regarding questions and death, the speaker in poem XIV of the second part claims that death “é feita de pergunta,” in the sense that queries are its essence (Hilst 2003, XIV, 42). In this poem, like in poem XII the speaker’s depiction of death includes ambivalence:

XIV

Porque é feita de pergunta
De poeira

Articulada, coesa
Persigo tua cara e carne
Imatéria.

Porque é disjunta
Rompida
Geometral se faz dupla
Persigo tua cara e carne
Resoluta.

Porque finge que franqueia
Vestíbulo, espaço e casa
Se sobrepondo de cascas
Gaiolas, grades

Máscara tripla
Persigo tua cara e carne.

Comigo serrote e faca.

(Hilst 2003, 42)

On the one hand, death is made of questions and dust, which point to something that is difficult to grasp and to the evasive character of death. After all, it is “[i]matéria.” Dust is also reminiscent of the Bible’s words, “For you are dust, And to dust you shall return,” emphasizing how, in spite of the speaker’s quest for comprehending death and negotiating the passing of time with it, she is extremely conscious of what death is and what it means for her. This certainty is

aligned with the speaker's perceiving death as "[a]rticulada, coesa," and later on in the poem as "[r]esoluta," in the sense that these are the sides of death that the speaker knows and understands: there is something clear about death's actions, and its resolve is unwavering. Nevertheless, these are just pieces that comprise death, but there are other pieces that are beyond the speaker's grasp. Death's evasiveness leads her to pursue death: "Persigo tua cara e carne," a line that is repeated three times in the poem, evidencing the speaker's perseverance—similar to death's relentlessness—which culminates in the last stanza of the poem, with the line "Comigo serrote e faca," which can be read as a war cry or a resolution on the part of the speaker to find death, whatever it takes. Furthermore, the particular choice of the tools or weapons suggest that the "war" the poetic speaker is waging, or, the quest she is in, involves determination: the speaker will do whatever it takes and use whatever tool she has to in order to attain her goal, that is, get death. She is persistent in the face of adversity—the impossibility of death's apprehension—and the difficulty in dominating or coming to terms with death. One of the reasons why the speaker's quest in apprehending death is not an easy one and why it is hard to have a relationship with death is because it is not just one face that she is pursuing and engaging with, but many. The speaker identifies that death "se faz dupla," and even has a "[m]áscara múltipla." These masks are parallel to death's making believe: "finge que franqueia / Vestíbulo, espaço e casa". Death is versatile and evasive: it makes believe, it wears masks, it approaches the speaker and pulls away, and it also seems to have contradictory behavior. Nonetheless, come what may, the speaker has a "serrote e faca" to defend herself from and to hunt death down so as to take death apart and consequently get to know all its sides intimately.

Aside from death's complexity, the ambivalent feelings that the speaker feels towards it, and its silence, we can focus on the existing tensions pertaining to the speaker and death's

relationship. Part of these tensions are illustrated in poem XIV, in the language used to talk about death (“pergunta” and “articulada”; “poeira” and “coesa”; “cara e carne” and “imatéria”), which attests to its complexity, and which might lead us to believe that these contradictions are a product of the colossal dimensions of death, which are hinted at in poem XII when the speaker contrasts “Pequenina” to “Morte,” and which point to death being inscrutable (Hilst 2003, XII, 40). Another kind of tension that partakes of the poetic subject and death’s relationship is a sensual and sexual one. In poem XIV this is noticeable, as aforementioned, in the repeated line “Persigo tua cara e carne.” Regardless of whether death is “pergunta” or “articulada”; “disjunta” or “[r]esoluta,” the speaker states that she chases after death’s “cara e carne.” There is an attraction that death exerts over her, that makes her want to go after it, and with “serrote e faca,” free herself from death and concomitantly, apprehend it. Apprehension can take the form of eating. “[C]arne” is both flesh and meat, and the knife is a tool of defense and attack, but also a utensil used for eating. The semantic field of meat, knife, and eating is a double entendre. These could be taken literally, as a cannibalism of sorts, in which we appreciate a reversal of roles: in this case it is the speaker who is doing the hunting down and is the potential killer, while death is being hunted down and at risk of getting killed. Simultaneously, the sexual innuendos are also there in the above-mentioned semantic field of eating, flesh/meat, and chasing after death.

Time, Death, And Poetry

The speaker in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* insists in a dialog with death precisely because it is through this dialog that she is working the comprehension and apprehension of time. Through the speaker’s insistence in the dialog the reader is privy to the thought process and emotional map of the speaker as she deals with understanding death and the relentlessness of the passing of

time. The speaker's questions are not answered, causing her to continue asking questions in search for answers and comprehension. The questions, then, demonstrate the impossibility of attaining clear answers on the passing of time and/or death and from it. However, the questions and insistence in dialoguing with death indicate yet something else, namely, that the speaker is reflecting, and as long as she is doing so, she is alive. I defend that forgetting about death or suppressing thoughts on it, according to the Hilstean speaker, does not entail a longer or better life. Contrarily, in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* we are told that it is by facing death and confronting the passing of time that one can go deeper into life. The speaker's questions are therefore intrinsic to life, in the sense that to face death and to question it is to think and to be present, as is illustrated in poem XXX of the second section of the book:

XXX

Juntas. Tu e eu.
 Duas adagas
 Cortando o mesmo céu.
 Dois cascos
 Sofrendo as águas.

E as mesmas perguntas.

Juntas. Duas naves
 Números
 Dois rumos
 À procura de um deus.

E as mesmas perguntas
 No sempre
 No pasmoso instante.

Ah, duas gargantas
 Dois gritos
 O mesmo urro

De vida, morte.

Dois cortes.

Duas façanhas.

E uma só pessoa.

(Hilst 2003, 58)

It is exactly the questions that lead to a “sempre” and to a “pasmoso instante,” which are two expressions that underline the way the passing of time is dealt within Hilstean poetry. That is, this “sempre” is the eternal “instante,” the present. Staying in the present and being present is the way of life portrayed in Hilst’s poetry; they are the key to staying alive, and “continuar buscando” allows you to do that (Hilst 2003, XXVII, 55).

In poem XXX of the second part of the book death is one with the speaker: “Juntas. Tu e eu.” They are “uma só pessoa.” Despite their having “duas gargantas / Dois gritos” they have “O mesmo urro / De vida, morte.” The speaker then, has life and death within her. This, however, does not mean that the questions, the quest, is irrelevant, or that it has come to an end; both life and death have “as mesmas perguntas.” They are “[d]ois rumos / À procura de um deus.” Asking about time, death, life, is necessarily linked to questions regarding the sacred in Hilst’s poetry. Coelho marks how Hilst’s poetry engages in “algumas das interrogações mais radicais do pensamento contemporâneo,” and within these pursuits, we find those of “natureza metafísica (filosófico-religiosa), centrada no além-aparências, ou melhor, no espaço-limiar entre o profano e o sagrado, tenta redescobrir o ser humano, as forças terrestres e a própria Morte, como elementos indissociáveis e integrantes do grande mistério da vida cósmica (Deus, o Absoluto, o Princípio primeiro...)” (67). Hilst’s work, prose, poetry, drama, raise questions regarding what the essential fibers of life are, and these include time, death, love, and the sacred. Coelho sees *Da morte. Odes mínimas* as bringing the reader closer to the understanding that we are closer to recuperating a

sense of sacredness. Poem XXX of the second part of the book intuitively that gaining understanding of our being, which includes life, death and time, will bring us closer to the sacred. Raising questions, and being in perpetual pursuit is the way to achieve this, and what it means to be alive.

In poem XXVII of *Da morte. Odes mínimas* another factor in staying alive is brought up:

XXVII

Me cobrirão de estopa
Junco, palha,
Farão de minhas canções
Um oco, anônima mortalha
E eu continuarei buscando
O frêmito da palavra

E continuarei
Ainda que os teus passos
De cobalto
Estrôncio
Patas hirtas
Devam me preceder.

Em alguma parte
Monte, serrado, vastidão
E Nada,
Eu estarei ali
Como a minha canção de sal.

(Hilst 2003, 55)

The first stanza displays the speaker's tenacity; this time, directed at the search for the "frêmito da palavra." This whole poem is in the future tense, alluding to what the speaker will be doing at another point in time, not the present, which is what she does now, namely, to be a poet. It is implied that the poetic subject looks for the word's tremor and thrill in the present, and that this is the activity that she will continue: "E eu continuarei buscando / O frêmito da palavra."; "E continuarei"; "Eu estarei ali / Como a minha canção de sal." There is a certainty about what will be in the future, and this future can be in life or in non-life. Death is clearly denoted in the

speaker's being covered ("Me cobrirão de estopa") and her songs being converted into a "mortalha." The speaker is fully aware of her mortality, and, at the same time, even in her death she has the certitude that she will continue to be a poet. Poetry, like the speaker's relationship with death, is a constant, in the sense that the poetic subject commits to a continuous pursuit of the "frêmito da palavra." It is not just a commitment to language, but to the word's "frêmito," a vibration, a life. Her pursuits, her persistent engagement with death as with her own song, where the singer vibrates the words and not simply says them, are what life is about for the poetic subject in *Da morte. Odes mínimas*. In fact, they are what she herself is made of.

Fumaneri posits that poem XXVII of the second section is stating that the poetic subject will survive death through her words. This argument can be related to Daiches' discussion of the different ways that poets have dealt with the passing of time in their poetry, and specifically, to the particular mode of dealing with the relentlessness of time by contrasting human mortality with the permanence of art (Daiches 15-25). I would like to give a twist to Fumaneri's claim that Hilst's poem XXVII in the second part of *Da morte. Odes mínimas* depicts the poetic subject winning over death with the permanence of her song. Her argument connotes a division between the poet and her song. Yet, in Hilst's poem, there is no such separation. Contrarily, it is the speaker/poet that will go on singing and looking for the vibration of the word. I therefore, propose that the speaker's victory does not lie in her poetry beating death, while she disappears, but instead, that her victory lies in her continuing to be a poet regardless of her being in this life or beyond, and regardless of time. If time is taken as a succession, then it is possible to state that the Hilstean speaker was a poet in the past (as seen in poem VII of the second section), she is a poet in the present, and she will be a poet in the future. If time is perceived as the coexistence of these three moments, then, we could read the poetic subject's continuous singing as the

consistency and duration of time. More importantly, this poem is affirming the indivisibility between being and poetry, and thus, between being, poetry, and time.

It is death and the passing of time that motivate the speaker's choice for poetry:

XXXII

Por que me fiz poeta?
 Porque tu, morte, minha irmã,
 No instante, no centro
 de tudo o que vejo.

No mais que perfeito
 No veio, no gozo
 Colada entre mim e o outro.
 No fosso
 No nó de um íntimo laço
 No hausto
 No fogo, na minha hora fria.

Me fiz poeta
 Porque à minha volta
 Na humana idéia de um deus que não conheço
 A ti, morte, minha irmã,
 Te vejo.

(Hilst 2003, 60)

Death permeates every “instante” of the poetic subject's time, or more accurately, death is the core of what it means to be “[n]o instante,” and, in this way, death is the prism through which the speaker perceives the world: “no centro / de tudo o que vejo.” The second stanza of this poem works like a list that enumerates the range of spaces where death is. It is in the veins and in pleasure; in fire and it is there when her body turns cold; and death is even in the very spaces between the self and other. Again, as is common to find in Hilst's poetry, and as seen in the first stanza of this poem when the speaker answers the question of why she became a poet, there are no verbs in this stanza, and this lack of verbs in the poem, highlights the constancy of death, its

ever conspicuous presence that is felt when being present. Her presence is not in the past, future, or present, it is all the time, for time is in everything and at all hours. Death is not only the core of everything, including the middle of this poem, that the speaker sees and in her relationships (“Colada entre mim e o outro”; “No nó de um ínfimo laço”), it is also in the speaker’s very marrow, “no mais profundo do osso”—meaning, like the poetic subject tells death: “Em tudo és e estás” (Hilst 2003, XXXII, 60; XIII, 41). What is more, just like we had seen in the first poem of the third section of *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, and in poem XXX of the second one, where water³⁹ is either equivalent to time or the very medium where the speaker and death inhabit, in poem XXXII, there are many images from the realm of the liquid: “veio”; “fosso”; “hausto.” Water, time, death are in the threads of water in a person or object, and it is also what is drunk, which is to say that it is what the speaker is made of as well as what she takes in from outside. Death is inside and outside: in the poet and in everything.

Due to this “centro,” death, the poetic subject chooses to live life as a poet. The passing of time and mortality are only possible to contend with through certain constants. In this case, the constants are death’s company and poetry’s pulsation. Death is eternal in that it accompanies the poetic subject throughout her life, and she chooses yet another constancy in time, the writing of poetry. Poetry and death allow the poetic subject to be present and to live the present. They are the speaker’s “sempres,” and as such, they are indispensable to her life, for they are what keeps her alive. In *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, she celebrates her life by celebrating them. These constant elements contrast with the poetic subject’s not knowing either God or death, and this lack of

³⁹ We are reminded here of Heraclitus’ ideas that everything flows, much like the passing of time does, and his famous pith of it not being possible to step into the same river twice. Another popular saying in Portuguese that this brings to mind is “Água mole, pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura.”

knowledge also propels her to write poetry: “Me fiz poeta / Porque à minha volta / Na humana idéia de um deus que não conheço / A ti, morte, minha irmã, / Te vejo.”

Regarding writing, the present and death, Maurice Blanchot in “Literature and the Right to Death” affirms that “[w]hen we speak, we gain control over things with satisfying ease” and states that a writer’s language is especially powerful because the writer causes something or a person to be present (322). For this reason, the Hilstean speaker’s insistence in talking to death, naming it, asking it questions, constitutes a way of creating present; a way of controlling death, be it the idea of an end, or the passing of time.

Blanchot, like Hilst, believes that writing and death are intertwined, making this act of creation and of bringing into the present a complex one. He explains it as follows:

Hölderlin, Mallarmé, and all poets whose theme is the essence of poetry have felt that the act of naming is disquieting and marvelous. A word may give me its meaning, but first it suppresses it. For me to be able to say, “This woman,” I must somehow take her flesh-and-blood reality away from her, cause her to be absent, annihilate her. The word gives me the being, but it gives it to me deprived of being. The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost being—the very fact that it does not exist. (Blanchot 322)

It is clear that a relationship between a poet and her own death implies a prior relationship with life and death in general. This consideration touches directly on the speaker as a poet, for it impacts her identity and what she is capable of doing with poetry. In addition, it seems that being a poet places her in a position of power, in that she has the ability to give and take life. In other words, the poet can make something or someone present or absent. By no means does this mean that the poetic subject in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* can do away with death, and thus, become immortal. Nevertheless, poetry allows the speaker to rethink the terms in which she experiences death and allows her to give (new) essence to the word *death* by creating her own meaning.

Like Blanchot, Hilst's speaker understands the complexities involved in being a poet. The following fragment of poem XI from the second section illustrates this: "E minha voz e cantiga? / Meu verso, meu dom / De poesia, sortilégio, vida?" (39). The speaker's "dom" is made of three elements: "poesia, sortilégio, vida," which is a combination that involves language, song, magic, creation, and being present. Poetry creates others' lives, and it also creates the life of she who writes. Through poetry the poetic subject constructs her vision of the world, the way she lives time and death. One of the choices that the Hilstean speaker makes is being aware that death is not the last point in her life's timeline, but that it is, through the passing of time, constantly present in her life.

Death is not only present in the poet-speaker's consciousness. It is there in her language, and it facilitates the poet-speaker's comprehension of the equation life and non-life. The relationship between language and death according to Blanchot sheds light on the Hilstean speaker's experience:

[I]t is accurate to say that when I speak, death speaks in me. My speech is warning that at this very moment death is loose in the world, that it has suddenly appeared between me, as I speak, and the being I address: it is there between us as the distance that separates us, but this distance is also what prevents us from being separated, because it contains the condition for all understanding. Death alone allows me to grasp what I want to attain; it exists in words as the only way they can have meaning. Without death, everything would sink into absurdity and nothingness. (323-324)

This quote reveals some of the points of tension in *Da morte. Odes mínimas*. In this book, the set life-non-life ceases to be a simple dichotomy in which the poetic subject must choose between one or the other part, and it becomes a complex life path. As clarified by Blanchot, death is an integral part of language, and even more so of a writer's language. Yet, the Hilstean poet-speaker writes "[p]alavras vivas, fogo, fonte," which is to say that poetry is also life's source (Hilst 2003, XIX, 47). Nevertheless, Hilst's poetry confirms that there is no life without death, so the poetic

subject cannot forget or discard death when choosing life. This is confirmed in the Hilstean speaker's being fully aware that by bringing death and poetry into her life, she can experience life more intensely, and she can be more grounded in the present. By doing this, the poetic subject places herself in a present, which although within temporality, it goes beyond the passing of time that upsets her.

Sexual and Sensual Intimacy with Death

The sexual and sensual tension described above between death and the hilstean speaker is also clear in other poems, like in ode XVI of the second part, where death is a “[c]avalo, búfala, cavalinha” and the speaker is riding it (Hilst 2003, XVI, 44).

XVI

Cavalo, búfala, cavalinha
 Te amo, amiga, morte minha,
 Si te aproximas, salto
 Como quem quer e não quer
 Ver a colina, o prado, o outeiro
 Do outro lado, como quem quer
 E não ousa
 Tocar teu pêlo, o ouro

O coruscante vermelho do teu couro
 Como quem não quer.

(Hilst 2003, 44)

The element of domination is present through the taming of the animal and riding it. Related to this sexual tension between death and the speaker are the similarities between them, and how, through the speaker's thoughts the readers see a change in their relationship. Poem XVI shows just how similar death and the speaker are. It is a similarity that although not explicitly

acknowledged by the poetic subject, the parallel between her and death is clearly drawn. They both share and take turns with the roles they perform. In the case of the speaker, she pursues death while concomitantly trying to not be summoned by it. Death, from the speaker's viewpoint, pursues her and wants to take her with it. Chasing after one another resembles a courting ritual, where the participants come close and pull away. Death and the speaker seem to be responding to alternate feelings of attraction and reverence, which involves respect, admiration and fear. The speaker herself admits to her wavering feelings in poem XVI that are expressed in the line "Se te aproximas, salto," which is reminiscent of poem XII of the second part, where the poetic voice asks death to forget her and simultaneously does not comprehend why death closes up when she looks for her. In the line "Se te aproximas, salto" the contrast between death's approach towards the poetic voice and her starting is established. Both movements are in the same line, but separated by a caesura. The pause is equivalent to the hesitance the speaker expresses throughout the poem, and entire book, regarding death. It is as if she wanted to stay and actually become acquainted and even intimate with death, but, this scares her. The affection of the first two lines of poem XVI, where the poetic subject gives death the name of animals ("[c]avalo, búfala, cavalinha"), and also calls her "amiga" and "morte minha," is quickly interrupted with the third line, "Se te aproximas, salto," which attests to the speaker's unwillingness to die. These movements towards and away from death are also part of the game of seduction with death in which the speaker is immersed. These movements that describe a duality, where on the one hand death moves toward the speaker, and, on the other hand, there is the speaker's "salto" away from the death, are not just physical. They are also emotional movements, and are echoed in the following line in the poem: "Como quem quer e não quer". The speaker wants to have a relationship with death, an intimate one, and she declares it when

she addresses death as a loved one: “Te amo, amiga, morte minha.” Nevertheless, she is also scared of death approaching her, as she is of its daily and implacable appearance in the form of the passing of time. Concomitantly, to continue the lover’s seduction rituals, the wild side of death as an animal contrasts with the poetic subject touching death’s animal hair (“Tocar teu pêlo”). Death is portrayed as an animal, and this wild element corresponds to what the speaker does not know about it, how it works, how to tame it, how to control it. This is also related to the seduction game, for, in order to be lovers, the poetic subject has to let go of this control, and learn to live with death and what it entails, namely, the unrelenting passing of time, the inevitability of life’s end, and not fully apprehending and controlling death.

The animal names the speaker uses in the first line (“Cavalo, búfala, cavalinha”), as well as relating to death as an animal throughout poem XVI, takes us back to the watercolor paintings by Hilst herself in “Aquarelas.” The first watercolor for example is that of a person riding an animal, and the accompanying poem reveals the speaker trying to get the animal, a rhinoceros elephant, to go to her desert:

RINOCERONTE ELEFANTE

Vivi nos altos de um monte
Tentando trazer teu gesto
Teu Horizonte
Para o meu deserto

(Hilst 2003, 12)

The animal, like death in poem XIV, which “se faz dupla,” is a double animal (Hilst 2003, 42). This duality attest to death’s complexity and its incomprehensibility. Another duality in this pair of *aquarela* and poem is found in the union between the person (the speaker) riding and the animal (death). Fumaneri links this duality to Georges Bataille’s ideas of continuity and discontinuity he expounds in *Erotism*. According to Bataille, a human being is a discontinuous

being, in that he is mortal. A fusion is a way to deal with mortality, for by fusing with another the discontinuity is disrupted and a fusion is created, and thus, as Fumaneri phrases it, “a suspensão do ser descontínuo” takes place (505). As far as Bataille is concerned, it is erotisim, that is the epitome of this fusion, considering that “[t]oda realização erótica tem por princípio uma destruição da estrutura do ser fechado que, no estado normal, é um parceiro do jogo” (Bataille 29 quoted in Fumaneri, 505). The continuity created in fusions is a way of escaping discontinuity, albeit for a finite amount of time. Fusing with an other, and more specifically, her own death, the poetic subject is resisting her nature as an isolated and mortal being, and also approaching the possibility of an inkling of the beyond. I contend that this fusion is also a way to reorganize time, for if through it the speaker is able to experience death and still remain alive, then the concept of death as the end of life is undermined. Instead, being with death, which as established before, the Hilstean speaker has turned into duration instead of instant, enables her to dwell in duration. The gerund in the verb *tentar*, “Tentando,” further underlines how it has been the speaker’s quest to bring death to her desert, that is, to be one with death (Hilst 2003, 12). The gerund marks the prolongation of this action, and thus a prolongation of the quest itself, which as has been mentioned before, allows the poetic subject to remain alive.

The first poem from “Aquarelas” is set in the past, since in the first line the verb *viver* is in the preterit. Nevertheless, because the main verb in the second line is in the gerund and this line can be read independently, the idea that the speaker is still in the present “[t]entando trazer [seu] gesto” exists side by side with the idea that this attempt no longer takes place (Hilst 2003, 12). The particular conjugation of the verbs *viver* and *tentar* suggests that duration, that is, living, actually happens in trying, in the pursuit. This means that as long as there is a pursuit, the poetic subject is dwelling in the present, and lasts.

Fumaneri points out that the emphasis given to the word *horizonte* with the capital H “é um desejo: trazer o horizonte para o deserto do *eu*” (508-509). She reminds us that the horizon, “só existe diante do ponto de vista humano. Ele não é físico, mas uma demarcação de até onde a vista alcança, e move-se à medida que tentamos—em vão—alcançá-lo.” (509). Fumaneri believes that the speaker’s wish to find the limit and bring it “para o deserto metafórico que é a condição do *eu*” is an impossible search, in that this limit only exists within the speaker’s point of view. In order to support this claim, Fumaneri posits that the fact that the verb *viver* is in the preterit indicates a finished action, or, in her words, “o ato frustrado de tentar trazer o inalcançável” (509). From this she concludes that “[a] morte, afinal, é conhecida em vida, porém seu desvelamento absoluto, quando vem ao poeta, rouba-lhe a possibilidade de cantá-la” (509). Although I agree that in this book, or in any of Hilst’s poetry collections, the poetic subject does not fully apprehend death, and that her relationship with it does not enable her to become immortal, I believe that this should not be regarded as a failure on the part of the speaker. I maintain that her quest is fruitful, in the sense that she finds out more about her relationship with death, as well as generates a viewpoint that she manages to start living by, which is that death is part of life—part of its mysteries, and by admitting this she faces mortality. Moreover, the very fact that the quest is not over is what leads her to continue her quest, and therefore, to continue living, to continue being present.

Throughout *Da morte. Odes mínimas* the speaker never ceases to pursue a relationship with death—one that has erotic elements, and one that will involve fusion. Returning to poem XVI, to achieve this fusion, the speaker knows that it means going to death’s terrain, to look for it, to be with it, to apprehend it all. This is why the poetic subject wants (and not) to “[v]er a colina, o prado, o outeiro / Do outro lado” (Hilst 2003, XVI, 44). This other side, which by

extension connotes the other side of life, that is, the unknown and what is not life, requires a certain courage on the part of the speaker for her to go there. In spite of this fear, there is desire, in the wide sense of the word, and the tension between the attraction and drawing back is captured in the following two lines broken and joined by the enjambment: “Do outro lado, como quem quer / e não ousa” (Hilst 2003, XVI, 44). The enjambment simulates how the poetic subject is torn between her desire (“como quem quer”) and her not daring to go forward with this impulse, and also, how both feelings coexist in her. Her desire is also portrayed in the following line of poem XVI, “Tocar teu pêlo, o ouro,” in which death’s hair is touched by gold, the sun, and consequently making it something that shines and attracts. Furthermore, “o ouro” is a metaphor for death’s hair: gold as that which tempts the speaker. Touching this animal’s hair is like touching and finding gold. This incandescence is picked up by “[o] coruscante vermelho do teu couro,” where the brilliance of the previous image deepens into “coruscante,” and from gold-colored (shining) hair, the new image focuses on red animal skin. The intensification of the color responds to how death (the animal) attracts the speaker and reflects her feelings for death. This couplet attests to the growing fascination the speaker feels towards death (in the form of its shining red skin), and at the same time, the intensification of the color into red, makes death more scary and threatening, yet more mysterious, exotic, and attractive. These same colors, gold and red, also appear in the last poem of “Aquarelas”:

Sonhei que te cavalgava, leão-rei.
Em ouro e escarlate
Te conduzia pela eternidade
À minha casa.

(Hilst 2003, 22).

In this poem the speaker is again a rider on an animal. This time it is not a double animal, although the phrase used to describe the animal is composed of two words, lion and king. The difference between this poem and poem XVI from “*Da morte. Odes mínimas*” is that whereas the colors pertain to death, the animal, in the latter poem; in the former, it is the rider that is in those colors: “Em ouro e escarlata / Te conduzia.” This sharing of the colors enhances connection between the rider and the animal, which, together, become one. The association death-speaker goes beyond a physical togetherness, be it in a sexual relationship or as rider and animal. In the book there is an erasing of the boundaries between death and the poetic subject, to the point where in some poems, they are one. I will discuss this in detail further ahead. Regarding the colors and the watercolors in themselves, Pécora comments that they “têm todas cores quentes, vivas, e não apresentam nenhuma forma imediatamente reconhecível como fúnebre, temível, ou macabra. As cenas são ensolaradas e apresentam cálidos passeios de seres que se metamorfoseiam em mistos e duplos” (Pécora 2003, 8). Through the watercolors and the way death is perceived and depicted by the speaker in the poems, Hilst is rewiring accepted conceptions of death. Death in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* is alive; it is life.

The wavering between wanting and not wanting to get closer to death, and ultimately go to the other side and actually join death, comes to an end with the last line of the last couplet of poem XVI. In this line, the poetic subject reaches a decision regarding the “to be or not to be?”-like question, which in this case is “to want or not to want?” posed in “[c]omo quem quer e não quer.” The final decision is “Como quem não quer.” It appears that the intensification of the shining of death’s body in the form of an animal, together with the time the speaker takes to think about this difficult decision, which is represented by the space between the first stanza and the couplet, are the factors that lead to the poetic subject’s decision. This hesitation is similar to

the caesura that I previously highlighted in the third line of the poem, “Se te aproximas, salto.” Furthermore, because the seventh line of the first stanza, “E não ousa,” is visibly shorter than the other lines in the poem, the reader sees blank space following this line. This space can be said to constitute hesitation on the part of the speaker. Despite this pause, the enjambment linking this line with the following one, “Tocar teu pêlo, o ouro,” again portrays the poetic subject’s vacillation: she is tempted but has still not decided. These spaces of hesitation and silence throughout poem XVI are not empty; they appear to embody the tensions within the poem. These are the spaces in which the speaker is dealing with these tensions in silence, and they usually come before a reaction on her part. In the first case it is a start and jump, and in the second case it is the decision to not want.

It is not only that the speaker seeks to become more acquainted and intimate with death, and thus approaches death, but also, she wants death to get to know her too.

II

Demora-te sobre minha hora.
 Antes de me tomar, demora.
 Que tu me percorras cuidadosa, etérea
 Que eu te conheça lícita, terrena

Duas fortes mulheres
 Na sua dura hora.

Que me tomes sem pena
 Mas voluptuosa, eterna
 Como as fêmeas da Terra.

E a ti, te conhecendo
 Que eu me faça carne
 E posse
 Como fazem os homens.

(Hilst 2003, 30)

When speaking to death the poetic subject says she wants: “Que tu me percorras cuidadosa, etérea / Que eu te conheça lícita, terrena.” These two lines clearly mark the difference between the speaker and the interlocutor, for even though as far as the speaker is concerned both have to be active in the process of knowing the other, the way to go about this process is different for each of them. Death will follow an “etérea” process, whereas the speaker’s way is being “lícita, terrena.” Implied in the poetic subject’s words is the existence of a gap that must be contended with so as to fully comprehend and apprehend the other, and, at the same time, it is suggested that both parties have to participate in the process of acquaintance. This gap that is made evident through the poem, is also bridged in the poem. Nevertheless, the above-quoted lines from poem II are ambiguous enough so as to allow the tensions of the terms of the process of getting to know each other coexist. The ambiguity is partly given due to both death and the speaker being female, which means that the adjectives “cuidadosa, etérea” and “lícita, terrena” can apply to both or either one. Both of them are part of these lines that point to a marking of a kind of contract that the speaker is setting. This game of adjectives allows for the interchangeability between the speaker and death, and it points in the direction of a unity.

This technique of setting the rules of the game in which death and the speaker are participants is a way that the poetic subject has of gaining control over death, that is, of making death, and by association the passing of time, graspable. In poem II, like in poem XVI discussed above, sexual elements are very much a part of the process of acquaintance that the speaker claims. Poem II equates death taking the poetic subject’s life to a sexual act. The verb *tomar*, which already appears in the second line, “Antes de me tomar, demora,” and then again in the first line of the third stanza, “Que me tomes sem pena,” is key in the construction of the sensuality of the act of death. *Tomar* refers both to death taking the speaker to the other side, that

is, killing her, as well as to taking her as in the sexual act. Other key words that pertain to the universe of the sexual act and also to that of dying are the verb *percorrer* (“Que tu me percorras cuidadosa, etérea,” the adjective “voluptuosa” (“Que me tomes sem pena / Mas voluptuosa, eterna”), which highlights the idea of the sensuality of the body and which is related to “carne,” and “posse” (“Que eu me faça carne / E posse”), which recalls the verb *to possess* when speaking of sexual intercourse. Even *death* itself pertains to both universes of meaning, for aside from no longer living, *death*, also denotes an orgasm, as in the expression *le petit mort*.

Personifying death is essential in order for the sexual nuances of this poem to exist. In it the speaker refers to death as a woman, and also, she places death and herself in the same level by referring to both of them as “[d]uas fortes mulheres.” By doing so she brings death to her terrain. The speaker also engages in the arena in which death dominates, that is, time and determining the end. She specifically asks death to linger and to take her time before taking her: “Demora-te sobre minha hora. / Antes de me tomar, demora.” In these sensual lines lies the speaker’s longing to spend more time with death. The consonance of the /m/ sound is reminiscent of moaning when experiencing pleasure. The poetic subject’s demands of a lingering foreplay evidence her desire (and I am using this word intentionally here) to enjoy the relations with death.

Implicit in this request is destabilization of time, in the sense that there is a wish or an expectation for certain moments to have more duration than others. Hilst’s poetry is therefore doing what Heidegger and Benjamin believe art and literature to do, as seen in the Theoretical Framework: it is questioning reality, for by defamiliarizing established notions of time, she undermines them and goes against commonly accepted ideas. I would like to stress that Hilst’s poetry does not simply detonate established paradigms; it constructs new ones. I suggest that her

poetry proposes experiencing time in a Heideggerean way: these lines, where she implores death to take her time and linger before her final hour, are an example of one of the proposals regarding time in Hilstean poetics, which advocate for duration, and thus, concentrating on the present as a time to dwell in and not as an instant that is always passing by. In *Da morte. Odes mínimas* death is not what divides being alive from being dead. Rather, death in this book is the speaker's interlocutor, who accompanies her throughout her life. The poetic subject lives death the same way she lives life. Favoring duration is directly connected to Hilst's view of the present, which is not a fleeting instance that is constantly renewing itself, but is a matter of intensity of time. By this I mean that the Hilstean present has to do with lingering on experience, going deep into, and being constantly mindful of the moments lived.

Nonetheless, the speaker in poem II is looking for more than duration. She goes one step further with wanting and demanding time from and with her interlocutor. The poem shows that the familiarization between the lovers is intertwined with a strong identification on the part of the speaker with death itself. The speaker groups both of them together in one same word and phrase, "Duas fortes mulheres" (Hilst 2003, II, 30). This line embodies death and the speaker's relationship, and, together with the following line, "Na sua dura hora," the closeness between the poetic subject and her interlocutor is emphasized. According to this couplet both "women," and not only the poetic subject, undergo a hard experience at a certain time, the time when life ends. Because the word *hora* is in the singular form, it is understood that although the two "mulheres" stand on different sides of the experience, both share that hour and the feeling that it is a difficult event. They become one at the "dura hora," which, as said above, can mean the moment of the speaker dying or the moment of the *petit mort*. In both readings, it is their hour when these two women are joined. The idea behind this is that if there is a duration and both get to know each

other, then, when the time comes, death can take her “sem pena / Mas voluptuosa, eterna” (Hilst 2003, II, 30). The speaker wishes to move dying from a sad part of life and transform it into a sexual act, through which eternity is reached. This takes us back to Bataille’s concept of how through the sexual union with an other it is possible to experience the destabilization of the self as a discontinuous being. Furthermore, eternity, which is a constant and never-ending duration, holds the promise of a sequel in life, that is, of life not being over when one dies. This desire for eternity echoes what Borges’ belief that people were a part from eternity and tend towards it. It also reminds us of Augustine’s explanation of how time as a succession is a result of our analysis of the world around us, while eternity is time as we experience it through our intuition⁴⁰.

Furthermore, as seen in the Theoretical Framework, according to Merleau-Ponty eternity is felt in certain events such as when we dream⁴¹, it is possible to conclude then that through the sexual act and the union with death, the poetic subject is striving to achieve eternity. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty specifically refers to the blurring of the boundaries between the self and the other when he clarifies that the meaning we give the world around us is a construction that is built in community. In this way, all of us are part of a unity, one that constructs meanings. With this in mind I can assert that by choosing to form a community of construction of meaning with death, the Hilstein speaker builds particular structures that move away from those that regarded death

⁴⁰ Augustine explains that there are two means of knowing, namely, by analysis and by intuition: “In analysis time is succession. In intuition time is no more. It is eternity” (Hausheer 509). Different approaches to knowing impact the kind of knowledge we acquire, and this applies to the kind of understanding we reach of time. Time as moments and a series of successions is the way that Augustine describes human time. Divine time, on the other hand, is constant and simultaneous. Augustine observes that while time “reduces itself to the impermanent, being made of a succession of indivisible instants,” the time related to God is eternity (Hausheer 504). However, there is one way in which people can approach eternity and move away from time as succession, namely, by intuition.

⁴¹ As far as he is concerned, “eternity feeds on time” (492). He does not relate eternity to either God or something that the human strives for but is incapable of grasping. He associates eternity with dreaming: “Eternity is the time that belongs to dreaming, and the dream refers back to waking life, from which it borrows all its structures” (492). Eternity then, is presented as how a person perceives time under certain circumstances—circumstances that nonetheless, are rooted in the waking life

as an outsider of the community. The poetic voice refutes this community and its constructions by associating and becoming a unit with others and creating her own meanings.

This erasing of the boundaries between death and the poetic subject is reinforced by the interchangeability of the adjectives in the first stanza of poem II as mentioned before of the following lines: “Que tu me percorras cuidadosa, etérea / Que eu te conheça lícita, terrena” (Hilst 2003, II, 30). This game with the adjectives can be regarded as an imitation of the entanglement of the bodies of the two women during lovemaking. Moreover, because when the poetic subject talks about one of them, she could also be talking about the other one, death becomes the speaker and the latter becomes the former. If death is the speaker herself, or within the speaker, then time is no longer something foreign and separate from her, but, on the contrary, time is within the speaker, and therefore has to be dealt with differently than if set outside the self.

Domesticating Death through Naming

Throughout *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, the speaker tries to approach death in spite of her fears. Death’s personification helps the poetic subject to make death familiar and to domesticate it, like the taming of a horse or bison, or by calling her “minha amiga.” Another way of domesticating death that appears in this book is by re-baptizing it. The first poem of the second section of the book starts with this proposal:

I

Te batizar de novo.
 Te nomear num trançado de teias
 E ao invés de Morte
 Te chamar Insana
 Fulva
 Feixe de flautas
 Calha

Candeia
 Palma, por que não?
 Te recriar nuns arco-íris
 Da alma, nuns possíveis
 Construir teu nome
 E cantar teus nomes pereçois:
 Palha
 Corça
 Nula
 Praia
 Por que não?

(Hilst 2003, 29).

This first poem of the second part of *Da morte. Odes mínimas* is the poetic subject's tentative to talk to and about death in her own terms. She proposes a list of names for death. The choice of names is very important because they are not names usually attributed to death. Rather, they are a personal choice on the part of the speaker, who is trying to "[c]onstruir" death's name. By calling death these names (insane, tawny, bundle of flutes, gutter, lamp, palm leaf, straw, doe, void, beach) the poetic subject is, in part, calling it her own. Moreover, naming is an act of empowerment, for s/he who names, creates. This seems to be the speaker's plan, to "[t]e recriar nuns arco-íris / Da alma, nuns possíveis / Construir teu nome." This redefinition of death, and thus appropriation of what it means and what it is about, forwards a shift; that is, from death as an event apart from the poetic subject's life to death as part of her life. The poetic voice consciously sees death and recreates her in a "trançado de teias" and "nuns arco-íris," ratifying that death is found everywhere, and also, that death is complex. Most importantly, the poetic subject finds no reason not to name her according to her understanding of what death is ("Por que não?").

It can be concluded that the speaker makes death a part of everything: death is in her life's tissue. Within that everything is her language and her life. In this way, death is no longer

the final event in a linear time; death participates in duration and in the speaker's present, in that it occupies other moments, or rather, all moments in a linear timeline. Life and death cannot be separated. The construction of the names and recreation of death denotes an elaboration on the part of the poetic subject of the meaning of death, and consequently, of the passing of time. Ultimately, the speaker of these poems appears to seek to gain control over the irrevocable and merciless passing of time, be it by renaming and resignifying death to a certain extent, or by trying to establish particular relationships with it where death and the poetic self are placed at the same level. The poetic subject does this by constantly characterizing both her and death as “[d]uas fortes mulheres,” or “consortes do tempo,” or by calling death her “amada,” (Hilst 2003, II, III, IV 30, 31, 32).

Death Is All the Time

In poem VII of “Da morte. Odes mínimas” the speaker also goes against the concept of death as an instant and as the borderline between life and a lack of life, as it is possible to appreciate particularly in the first two stanzas of the poem:

VII

Perderás de mim
Todas as horas

Porque só me tomarás
A uma determinada hora.

E talvez venhas
Num instante de vazio
E insipidez.
Imagina-te o que perderás
Eu que vivi no vermelho
Porque poeta, e caminhei

A chama dos caminhos

Atravessei o sol
Toquei o muro de dentro
Dos amigos

A boca nos sentimentos

E fui tomada, ferida
De malassombros, de gozo

Morte, imagina-te

(Hilst 2003, 35)

According to the speaker death is the one that will experience loss, not her, if it were to take her in one instant. After all, the speaker is made of many hours, and if only “uma determinada hora” is focused on, then death will not really know her. The poetic subject is again negotiating in poem VII for death to have a relationship with her. She looks for one that lasts, that has duration so death can partake of the poetic voice’s experiences. According to the speaker, it is impossible to get to know someone in only one moment; people are constituted by their past as well. We had seen this idea in Augustine since for him, the past, and the future, are part of the present. The difference being that for Augustine the present is fleeting and therefore when measuring time we actually measure the present as it goes or when it has gone, that is, its absence. Augustine believed that the present, as it becomes past, remains in the mind in the form of memory, and that is how it becomes present for the person. In this poem, however, it is not enough for the fleeting present to exist as memory, nor is the Hilsteian poetic subject content with a present that is actually a second away from absence. On the contrary, she advocates for a present with duration, for the “demora[s],” for a present where the focus is the present and being. Augustine’s present seems so fickle that it is only in the measurement of its absence that it can be perceived. The present for the Hilsteian poetic voice lasts, and it is even possible to come back to it so as to

experience it again. What these two presents have in common though is their inextricable relationship between time and being.

In poem VII the poetic voice firmly defends a larger span of time than that of “*uma determinada hora*.” She clearly prefers “[*t*]odas as horas,” since in her view, one moment, in the present, can be an “*instante de vazio / E insipidez*.” To know a person, it is essential to look at their whole, which includes moments in the person’s past. Although this idea may seem similar to Augustine’s, the Hilstean poetic subject does not emphasize memory but the reliving of an event. There is no verb in this poem that pertains to memory or remembering. Rather, the speaker retells crucial moments in her past. By doing this she brings these moments to the present, and makes them a part of her for death to see. These past events, and pasts in the speaker, therefore, coexist with her in the present. She makes these pasts available and concrete for death. What has transpired does not vanish, but is part of the present, and is just as responsible in the shaping of a person’s present as what a person is doing in the “now” and who they are being. Moreover, what is most innovative of the underlying concepts that emerge from this poem is that the past is more than just the cause, antecedent, or predecessor of a certain present. The past in this poem is a kind of present, in the sense that it is still alive in the *now*. The speaker’s insistence on death staying with her for longer than just an instant, as well as her bringing her past moments into the present, respond to Heidegger’s conception of Being and time, as seen in the Theoretical Framework. The German philosopher states that time is indissoluble from Being, since the former is one of the latter’s components. Being then, is an entity in which time is present. In the same way, Being, *Dasein*, is also Heidegger’s term for an entity which relates to the world around him and who contemplates on his presence. Thinking along Heideggerean terms, I venture to say that the Hilstean speaker in this poem, as in all of *Da*

morte. Odes mínimas, is asserting her Being by reflecting on the way she inhabits the world. In other words, she is presencing, because she is not just accepting the structures and paradigms of the surrounding world, but is dwelling in them, to use a Heideggerean term. This means that while the speaker in Hilst's book is interacting with the commonly accepted perceptions of time as succession, she is changing these perceptions and modifying the world. Consequently, by actively participating in the world (dwelling) and through her poetry enacting the changes she proposes, the poetic subject sustains that she is a Being, that she is present. Her being present translates through her poetry to the construction of her own Being, under her own terms: the component of time in and for this Being puts more weight on the present.

The Hilstean present necessarily includes the past. A person is a whole, and the speaker in poem VII describes that whole as a sum and group of hours. In other words, she understands that people are made of time. Time, like people, is a whole, it is a set, and although it is possible to separate time in hours, if only a part of this whole is taken into account, a loss is inevitable. The poetic subject repeatedly asks death to imagine that scenario: "Imagina-te o que perderás"; "Morte, imagina-te." In her effort to help death imagine and visualize what it would miss were she to come for one certain hour of the speaker's life instead of spending time with her, she offers very visual glimpses of her life until now. These glimpses work as pictures that the poetic subject conjures up, thus calling her past to stand along her present—to be part of her present. Because the speaker is showing death her past, the majority of the verbs in the poem are in the preterit: *vivi*, *caminhei*, *atravessei*, *toquei*. These verbs refer to journeys, and those have extension and involve more time than just a unit. Therefore, they embody precisely what the poetic subject is requesting: she wants her life to be taken as a whole, as a trajectory, she does not think that a specific moment can actually describe a whole person, since one hour is not

necessarily the equivalent of time. She is her present and her past: she is what she was as well as what she is. Better yet, what she was and is, *is*. She is duration.

The poetic subject paints a portrait of herself with traces of reds, “eu vivi no vermelho,” flames, “e caminhei / A chama dos caminhos,” the sun, “Atravessei o sol,” and she sets her experiences inside the mouth and others’ walls, “Toquei o muro de dentro / Dos amigos // A boca nos sentimentos.” These images depict the intensity of her life, and help her to have her reader and interlocutor imagine her way of inhabiting the world, her way of going about things—that is, through poetry. The poetic subject in these odes is a poet, and it is precisely because she is a poet that she has lived “no vermelho” and walked “[a] chama dos caminhos,” and was able to reach places and have her “boca nos sentimentos,” be arrested by pleasure and also fear. It is possible to also argue that living in the red also alludes to her living a life without money precisely because she is a poet, which was part of Hilst’s experience as well.

In this poem it is clear that poetry is not just what the speaker does, but rather, it is what she is. This is underlined by the lack of verb in line 10 between “Porque” and “poeta”: “Eu que vivi no vermelho / Porque poeta, e caminhei.” Being a poet is intrinsic to the poetic subject; it is therefore impossible to separate the two. What is more, the lack of verb and tense states that in the poem, the past and present are not determined, they all inhabit in and conform her. Also, it is not that she is a poet and/or was a poet, but that she is always a poet. As such, the speaker lives intensely, creates images and paradigms. It is this “package” of being a poet and therefore having a particular journey that the speaker wishes death to apprehend. She understands that in order for death to comprehend this poet, it needs to see her journey, which means, death has to see all her hours, all the time the poet is made of. Implied is the idea that the present does not exist fully without the past, since death cannot really appreciate the speaker’s presence and present without

taking into account the past in her. By being alive the past coinhabits with the present in the poet. Further, this poem, as does the whole book, advocates for duration as opposed to an instant. The present, and how it is regarded, is thus, redefined: in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* the present is not synonymous to *now*, but to *during*. At the same time, the poetic subject rejects the idea that death is a moment, as in a rite of passage, and transposes the border between life and no-life. Death and life are a continuous.

In order for a process to happen, I argue that the speaker insists on conversing with death, and negotiating the terms of the equation life-death. Regardless of the different relationships that the poetic subject tries to establish with death, regardless of her trying to dominate and lure death (“Te cavalgo. Tento”), regardless of the amount of time she has known death (“Há milênios te sei”), and regardless of the fact that “[a] qualquer tempo [a] reconhe[ça],” the speaker never actually fully gets to know death (Hilst 2003, III, 31; VIII, 36;): “Há milênios te sei / E nunca te conheço” (Hilst 2003, III, 31).

There is also a sense of cultural imaginary in the first line of poem III, in that death and the passing of time is something that the speaker also knows through her culture. The poetic subject was born into a culture with certain conceptions of death and of what time is. These notions have been in existence before the speaker starts getting to know death, and before she articulates it. This means that she has known death even before starting the dialog with it. It is illuminating to read Jean-François Lyotard’s formulation on the subject of what I have described as cultural imaginary. He expresses that when we are born “we are already the object of a lot of meanings, and we have to conquer these meanings afterward and probably we try all our lives to understand what was expected of us” (135). For this reason, he says that “we are born too late” and that “[a]ny communication strives to resolve this paradoxical situation with regards to time

(135). This means that any kind of articulation of meanings, be it thinking or writing, presupposes we face and contend with pre-established socio-cultural structures and conceptions, starting with language. “We also have to deconstruct, to dismember, to criticize the defenses that are already built into our psyche, impeding us from hearing original fundamental questions” (Lyotard 136). In *Da morte. Odes mínimas* Hilst is articulating death in a new way from the commonly accepted one. Additionally, she is destabilizing the inherited conception of time as succession, as well as the modern understanding of the present as fleeting as described by Paz. The death the Hilstean speaker wants to know is her own, not the one that she has known for “milênios.” Hilst definitely has to dismember what she has learned and acquired in order for her voice to be heard, and thus live in her own terms.

So as to be able to fully comprehend this new notion of the passing of time and of death the Hilstean speaker decides to approach death—death as she has understood it, that is, the embodiment of the passing of time, her lifelong companion—to learn more about it. Nevertheless, the poetic subject never ceases to ask questions, to negotiate, because she never gets closer to death. She never comes to the answer to a question that seems to be the most important one, and which repeats itself throughout *Da morte. Odes mínimas*: “Quando é que vem?” (Hilst 2003, XXIII, 51). This question reveals that ultimately, it is death that controls time, and that this is a way of controlling life. At the same time, “Quando é que vem?” leads to two considerations. Firstly, the question suggests that the new vision of death as duration is still not fully ingrained and adopted by the speaker. She seems to be transitioning to this new way of seeing death. The second consideration suggested by this question is that there are two different perceptions of death that coexist: the first one is death as a lifelong companion, and the second one is death as the threshold between life and non-life, which can be translated into a moment.

Consequently, these considerations corroborate the difficulty of the issue of death for the speaker, as well as reveal the complexities of her coming to terms with the passing of time. Yet another consideration suggested by the myriad questions in *Da morte. Odes mínimas* is that while the speaker keeps asking them she remains in the present; she remains alive.

I consider that part of the insistence of the speaker to talk to death is because she understands how death, and therefore time, is at the center of everything. The first poem of the third part of the book, “Tempo-Morte,” attests this:

I

Corroendo
As grandes escadas
Da minha alma.
Água. Como te chamas?
Tempo.

Vívida antes
Revestida de laca
Minha alma tosca
Se desfazendo.
Como te chamas?
Tempo.

Águas corroendo
Caras, coração
Todas as cordas do sentimento.
Como te chamas?
Tempo.

Irreconhecível
Me procuro lenta
Nos teus escuros.
Como te chamas, breu?
Tempo.

(Hilst 2003, I, 71)

In this poem, time is everything: water, the speaker's soul, faces, hearts, darkness, or as Fumaneri expresses it: "Esse tempo, que é morte e é vida, é matéria que alimenta a chama para depois se consumir, extinguindo o fogo" (516). Time for the speaker is at the core of everything, including herself, and consequently, it is in time's darkness that she looks for herself: "Me procuro lenta / Nos teus escuros." Time in this poem is also depicted as relentlessly corroding the poetic subject. It is therefore not only time, but actually the passing of time and how it shows itself through the negative changes visible in the speaker: her soul is being corroded by time, it is becoming undone or being destroyed, covered in lacquer, her heart, faces, and her feeling are also being corroded. The negative effects of the passing of time in the poetic subject is what leads her to call it "breu." It is metaphorically dark. Nonetheless, "Tempo" is also dark because the speaker does not comprehend it clearly. What is important to take into account in this poem is that the speaker does not look for time, but rather, she looks for herself ("Me procuro"). The underlying implication here seems to be that so as to find herself the poetic subject must apprehend herself. It is through the recurrent question, "Como te chamas?" that she seeks to understand time. Once again, it is through the articulation of time, through its name, that the speaker endeavors to comprehend time, and thus, herself. This way of approaching death/time is opposite to what we have previously seen, where the speaker names death. In this poem, where she asks for a name instead of inventing names for death/time, time is almost one with her. In poem I of the second part of *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, death is an other.

Fumaneri calls attention to the gerunds in this poem, which, being the "forma linguística de passagem, uma espécie de presente em continuidade, dá a impressão de ato ainda não encerrado" (517). I agree with Fumaneri, and I add that the gerunds, present in each of the first three stanzas in the poem, "[c]orroendo," "[s]e desfazendo," "corroendo," mark the constancy,

perseverance, and certainty of time and how it acts upon the speaker. Notwithstanding, at the same time that they emphasize time's ceaseless actions, it counteracts the passing of time. The way the use of the gerunds does that is precisely by keeping time, the speaker, and the reader grounded in the present. Yet another way in which the speaker counteracts the negative effects of the passing of time in this poem is by her acting slowly: "Me procuro lenta." By looking for herself slowly, the poetic subject is behaving contrary to "Tempo" who passes quickly. This slowness is associated with the speaker's emphasizing and advocating duration as opposed to an ephemeral instant.

Conclusion

As I mentioned before, throughout *Da morte. Odes mínimas* death's voice is not heard. It does not answer the speaker, nor does it give her any signs of participating in the dialog to which the speaker so insistently invites it. In spite of death's silence, the mere fact of the speaker talking to death and demanding a relationship with it is already a step towards removing death as a taboo occurrence, subject, and as something distant in the far future. By speaking to and of death, and thus engaging with it, the speaker reformulates what death entails, what is prohibited and what is allowed, and, in this way, redefines the border between what is present and what is hidden. Further, the concept of death as a specific event in the future of a life is contested. By the mere insistence of engaging with death, the speaker forces as a reality that the future is to be contended with every moment of the present. Since the speaker understands that death "sempre [se] assemelha / A tudo que desliza, tempo / Correnteza," death ceases to be fixed to a specific point in the future, and becomes a part of a continuum (Hilst 2003, XV, 43). Again, as was stated by Augustine, the future, like the past, live in the present. Time is then, a "tudo." According to

Augustine, the past, present and future coexist in the mind, which is particularly significant in Hilstean poetry, where death and the passing of time are internalized. This follows the link that Augustine, and later Heidegger, among others, made between being and time. Moreover, Hilst seems to follow Augustine's conclusion that since time is within, it is the mind that helps us understand and grasp time. In *Da morte. Odes mínimas* death is part of the poetic subject, and therefore, time is inside, which enables her to construct a theory of time. A time whose most important moment is the present that has duration, for it is there that the speaker/poet can ask questions, investigate all aspects of her being. Being active and a militant participant in her present, in her life, is what it means for Hilst's poetic subject to be alive.

Chapter 4: THE PAST IN THE PRESENT; THE PAST IN THE SELF: JUANA BIGNOZZI'S POETRY

Introduction

As shown in the introduction, Bignozzi believes that writing poetry means relating to language in a different way than simply expressing feelings or ideas, and, furthermore, it means revealing mysteries not accessible to others. As María Eugenia Straccali puts it: “La poesía para Bignozzi, entonces, tendría un poder de elucidación, facultad similar a la que Walter Benjamin atribuye al ojo mecánico: mostrar o hacer visible al conocimiento lo no percibido o lo imperceptible, o aquello que siendo percibido no es hecho consciente” (Straccali 2014, 106). One of such possibilities and mysteries that Bignozzi reveals in the compilation *La ley tu ley* is how the past is not a moment in time that is gone, as Paz describes with regards to modern societies. Rather, the past is elemental in the construction of the present, and ultimately of the self. Listening to the voices of the past also constitutes a political stance that destabilizes power. It is no surprise then that throughout Bignozzi's poetry, memory is a recurring theme.

It appears in all five books that comprise the 2000 Adriana Hídalgo's compilation, *La ley tu ley*. These five books will be the focus of this chapter. The books are: *Mujer de cierto orden* (1967), *Regreso a la patria* (1990), *Interior con poeta* (1993), *Partida de las grandes líneas* (1997), and *La ley tu ley* (2000). With the exception of the last book, which was published for the first time in the homonymous compilation, the first four were first published by José Luis Mangieri.

In *La ley tu ley* the poetic subject does not linger and dwell in the past, nor is she obsessed with maintaining it just as it was. What is crucial to her is to listen to the voices from the past, because by doing so, she learns to listen to herself. Listening to the past is also a form of

resistance, in that she revisits history, Argentina's dictatorship in particular, as it was written by the official voice, and chooses to listen to those who were silenced. In the poems it is the speaker's duty, as well as that of all of those in the present, to question the official narrative and rewrite it by allowing those from the past, who were not able to do so then, to tell the past in the present. Nevertheless, it is not only with regards to the dictatorship that Bignozzi's speaker expresses that it is paramount to revisit the past. She also traces a lineage with others from the past, and, thus, by incorporating them into her history, story, and identity, she is able to better connect to the present, and thus permits it and herself to blossom.

Perelli's views on memory as discussed in the Theoretical Framework to this study, helps to illuminate why memory and communication are crucial for Bignozzi: in order to be an agent in the construction of collective and individual memory it is paramount to be socially involved, to maintain that lineage and identity, and to have a voice instead of being submerged in silence, and thus, being erased from history and from your own story. The importance of being an agent in the construction of memory is brought forward when Bignozzi expresses her being astounded by the lack of political involvement of people after the 1976-1983 dictatorship:

Eso también me asombra, es como si todas las muchachas de esa edad que hubieran sobrevivido vinieran de casas apolíticas, ni peronistas, ni comunistas, vinieran de la desmemoria. Yo me pregunto dónde estaba la memoria de los padres. Ahí está la clave del tema, qué pasó con la transmisión familiar. Hubo un silencio de la sociedad argentina, donde la transmisión natural, oral, se rompió, y que se va a pagar durante décadas.
(Bignozzi 1995, 63)

Bignozzi's work demonstrates her position regarding participating in the construction of the social tissue and of one's own identity. Consequently, the importance for her of having a position and of communicating it. Being "apolítica" means having no participation in the narrative about the society you live in, and ultimate your own narrative.

Another aspect of looking at the past is related to the passing of time. The last two books of the compilation have a speaker who is conscious of growing old and of being closer to death. In one of the poems in the second section, whose first line is “el viento el día destemplado en que me voy de buenos aires,” she describes this time in her life as being in “la clave de mi vida” (*La ley tu ley*, 262). Bignozzi speaks of the different viewpoint one acquires when growing old and feeling closer to death in an interview with Marcela Castro and Silvia Jurovietzky for *Feminaria literaria*:

Yo tengo una edad en la que se empieza a pensar un poco en esto; y no es que mire la vida desde la edad, porque he tenido una vida muy atípica, no he tenido hijos, estoy casada desde hace casi 30 años con un hombre muy joven (tiene 48 años), mis amigos son jóvenes. El otro día le decía a mi marido: “yo creo que vos todavía mirás para el lado de la vida y yo miro para el lado de la muerte”. [...] es verdad que se empieza a mirar para otro lado, se hacen más balances. Esto no tiene nada que ver con la derrota ni la resignación, sino con pensar cómo se quiere vivir, cómo se va a terminar la vida. (68-69)

Bignozzi’s tone in the interview, as well as in *Partida de las grandes líneas* and *La ley tu ley* is not one of concern, but rather, a manner-of-fact tone. There is evident self knowledge on the part of the poet in the interview and the speaker in the poems. These women know exactly where they stand, what their expectations are, the journey they have been through. The poetic subject in *La ley tu ley* is a “viajera que empieza a despedirse” (“Homenaje a Caprioni,” *La ley tu ley* in *La ley tu ley*, 251), and who tries to find comfort in poetry as the place of permanence: “[...] alguien tiene que decir hay un consuelo en los poemas / no todo termina” ([“por qué o puede decirse en los poemas lo que se dice en las”], *La ley tu ley*, 263).

It is crucial to point out, however, that the importance of memory in these two books is not relegated to a nostalgic looking back at the past because of being near the end of one’s life. Memory in Bignozzi’s work goes beyond this. Looking back in Bignozzi is always linked to a firm stance in the present, voicing the self. Bignozzi understands writing and listening to the past

as asserting one's own power instead of taking for granted those who are in a position of power and want to have everyone believe that the story they write is the truth. The importance of the past in Bignozzi actually responds to a world view of how to live a better present. What follows is a literary review that addresses how Bignozzi's work has been read.

Literary Review

I agree with Zulema Moret's illustration of Bignozzi's work: "Más que el intento de un manifiesto político, lo que está en juego en su obra es una toma de posición frente a la Historia, de allí la preocupación por la construcción de una voz, el asumir una postura, un personaje" (3). Her position is to resist the imposition of silence and to resist the forgetting of the past and its separation from the present. Poetry is necessary for her to be able to articulate her voice and self. After all, Lafforgue argues that Bignozzi's poems "postulan una mujer en permanente búsqueda de sí misma, una mujer que se debate en el fuego del desorden, que hace o intenta hacer de su ley la ley" (9). With the use of the possessive determinant "su," when changing the title of the compilation from "*La ley tu ley*" (emphasis mine), to "*su ley la ley*," Lafforgue traces a trajectory that is marked in these books, that is a constant agency on the part of the speaker and poet to be governed by her own law, her own beliefs. Her own voice is what she wants to hear above the official voice.

I find D.G. Helder's claims in the prologue to *La ley tu ley* problematic precisely because he treats her work as apolitical and personal. In the Introduction of the dissertation I examine Bignozzi's take on being political and personal in her poetry, which is that her poetry is socially conscious and that she does not write autobiography despite their being a first person speaker and even her name occasionally appearing in a few poems. As one of the lines from "Sprit o

sentido del humor, como gusten” states: “como siempre hablo de los demás pero digo yo” (*Mujer de cierto orden*, 25). Bignozzi explains in an interview with Roxana Artal that poetry speaks of the “I”: “vos hablás de los demás, hablás del mundo, pero hablás de vos, no te ponés nunca en la piel de otro” (Bignozzi 2010). At the same time, Bignozzi elucidates that “[e]sto no quiere decir poesía intimista, ni confidencial ni autobiográfica, yo escapo de todo eso, lo que digo es que uno da siempre su versión del mundo, y ese es el yo” (Bignozzi 2010). She also clarifies: “yo no estoy confesándome, estoy diciendo en primera persona una poesía” (Bignozzi 1995, 65). It is interesting to compare Hilst’s take on this issue: “É bem verdade que o escritor está sempre falando de si mesmo, porque é somente através de nós mesmos que podemos nos aproximar dos outros” (34). Although it appears that Hilst is saying that all writers and poets basically write autobiographies or autobiographical pieces of themselves into their texts, what Hilst is actually alluding to is the starting point of writing, that is, the self. From that place, the writer seeks to communicate with the other, and s/he expresses concerns that are pertinent to him/her. In other words, Hilst and Bignozzi agree: poetry is not a confessional arena nor is it the representation of the poet’s life. The self is the starting point to initiate a dialog with the other; the poem, even if written in first person, is expressing ideas, it is creating language, and thus, it is transforming the world.

Helder claims that Bignozzi’s relationship with the past, as well as her refusal to forget those from the past, has as a consequence, an emotional appeal to none other than time: “El *pathos* de Juana Bignozzi deriva de su resistencia a sepultar lo que amó –sujetos, espacios, ideas. Su discurso se dirige al enemigo al mismo tiempo que se vuelve hacia el objeto perdido o postergado de su pasión” (12). Helder argues, then, that what Bignozzi is resisting is both to let go of the people and ideas that populated the past and the passing of time. Although I concede

Helder's view that Bignozzi's work portrays resistance, I insist that her resistance is not synonymous with her clinging to the past nor that it is nostalgic. She is resisting the erasure of the past and history, which makes her poetry political. I concur with Beatriz Sarlo on this point when she says that "la nostalgia de la poesía de Bignozzi no es blanda ni autocomplaciente. Se trata de un sentimiento activo, incluso desafiante" (1).

I contend that Bignozzi does not set about either to try to stop the passing of time or reject living in the present because of this resistance. On the contrary, like Hilst and Vitale, Bignozzi stresses the present, which is a point of connection between the three poets. As seen in the Introduction, time is a common theme in poetry, however, I see that there is a poetics of time in the work of these three poets. These poetics, although different from each other, share the fact that they all speak to how to experience the present best. That is to say that, Bignozzi's relationship with the past in no way hinders her experiencing the present or even being conscious of it. Rather, she revisits the past and the past visits her precisely in order to enhance the present. What she resists is the silencing of the past or of certain voices from the past. She endorses the incorporation of the past and its voices in the present. In Bignozzi's poetry nothing is either lost or left behind; the speaker carries with everything, and what she carries becomes a part of her tissue. Moreover, even when the speaker is not looking to remember the past, her "vidas muertas insisten en volver" ("Sprit o sentido del humor, como gusten", *Mujer de cierto orden* in *La ley tu ley*⁴², 25). With the past as part of her present, her voice becomes more grounded and her present fuller.

⁴² All the books from Bignozzi that I will be discussing and quoting from belong to Adriana Hidalgo's 2000 compilation named *La ley tu ley*, which is homonymous to the last book of the collection. The page numbers correspond to this compilation.

Helder's assertion of Bignozzi's poetry being charged with pathos again denies the Argentine poet's complexities. In fact, his can be qualified as a gendered argument, in that it reduces women writing to the category of lyrical, emotional, personal. Helder assumes that Bignozzi's poetry is charged with pathos, expressly because of her not wanting to bury those and that which she loved from the past. Moreover, he states that her pathos is directed toward her interlocutor, time. I would rather use the word *pathos* gingerly with regards to Bignozzi's work for it might be misleading. Her poetry is written in straightforward language, and we find no overflow of emotions. Helder himself describes her language as: "entonación conversacional y moderada, economía de imágenes, vocabulario justo --ni vago ni muy preciso--, sintaxis simplificada a tal punto que desaparecen los signos de puntuación, etc" (14). I assert that her ideas, because they are written in poems make the readers experience and not just read about them. This means that an aesthetic element is crucial in the poet's ability to convey her beliefs and insights. Like in all poetry and literature, imagination, which is a part of pathos, comes into play both at the time of writing the work and at the time of reading it. Nonetheless, Bignozzi's discourse is powerful because it moves the readers in various levels, not only the emotional one. Her vision of the past's participation in the present is also understood at an intellectual level. Bignozzi's readers are certainly moved by her poetry, they are lead to think and to imagine. The subtlety of her discourse is what prevents me from thinking that the word *pathos*, or *logos* for that matter, describe this Argentinean poet's work. There is no overt or marked appeal or intent of persuasion. I see it more as a will to articulate her standing as to how to inhabit the present and to deal with the passing of time. This in itself is a way of resisting the norm and hegemonic socio-cultural ideas about time, whereby time is the enemy, as Helder words it, and therefore, time has to be fought against, tricked, or persuaded. Bignozzi is not fighting against time; she is

having her voice heard, she is conveying through poetry how it is that she relates to time. This is what her resistance is about: resisting hegemony, the norm, and being engulfed in an inertia of thought.

Sarlo's comment on *Mujer de cierto orden* highlights this destabilization of one official voice even from the title of the books:

Mujer de orden, contrapuesta a hombre de orden, con sus obvias connotaciones ideológicas; y mujer de un orden que no es único sino que está disminuido por el adjetivo "cierto", que lo vuelve inestable, opinable, irónico. En aquel libro importante en la poesía argentina de los sesenta, Bignozzi presentaba contrapuesta al orden porque su orden era sólo "cierto" orden, secundario, conflictivo. Además, se presentaba como mujer, en 1967, cuando no se hablaba como hoy de la literatura de mujeres. (1)

This statement shows that through her poetry Bignozzi proposes to interpellate givens.

Everything is questioned because there is always another side, another voice to tell the same story from a different perspective. She does so by stating clearly that the speaker is a woman, and by questioning this "universal order," which includes the stories we hold as true, how we relate to the past and the present. Another way that we perceive resistance in Bignozzi's poetry is in her scarce or lack of punctuation, as well as her apparent simple language. This disestablishes the rhetorical rules and gives the idea that the poems are straightforward when they are not, which in turn, portrays another way of communicating, of remembering, of being. Bignozzi's poems provoke reflection and the coexistence of perspectives. The readers are drawn to return to the poems, to re-read in order to gain insight into the present, which is the poem. In the same way, the poems encourage the readers to go back into the past in order to be able to read and write the present better.

Memory is not something static in Bignozzi; it involves travels. According to Moret, travels are a thread common to all of Bignozzi's work. Her article, "El exilio interior: la poética

de Juana Bignozzi,” explains how the motif of the trip is recurrent and constantly appears in many of Bignozzi’s books:

Viaje que despliega su hacer no solo en los lugares del recuerdo, desde la Juana declarada interlocutora de sí misma, [...] hasta los otros que circula, erran por los textos como fantasmas del pasado, viajeros de recorridos comunes. [...] Desde los que viajan por lugares de la memoria en *Mujer de cierto orden*, hasta los viajeros en que el viaje es recorrido geográfico en *Retorno a la patria* [...] o el desplazamiento en lugares imprecisos como en *Interior con poeta*. (4)

When exploring the poems in *Mujer de cierto orden* it became conspicuous how the speaker moves from present to past and back, how she travels between the different answers to the different questionings she presents, how the poetic voice is involved in a constant reconstruction of her identity as someone that is continuously negotiating a present that includes the past. To use the “viaje” theme that Moret brings forward in Bignozzi’s poetry, it is possible to say that the speaker in *Mujer de cierto orden* is constantly travelling between a world outside the poem and one inside the poem, a world inside herself and one outside herself, a world of the past and one of the present that cannot see the past.

Moret marks a connection between the various travels in the different books that compose *La ley tu ley*, and clarifies that they are all part of an exile “desde la soledad de la infancia hasta la soledad en otra ciudad, desde la soledad del amor hacia la soledad de la vejez, se superpone, duplica otro lugar creado, nombrado, recorrido, visitado y es a través de este otro lugar que el viaje se transforma en búsqueda poética” (4). I would like to add that this traveling, this search, is what makes Bignozzi’s speaker have a particular standpoint, distinct from that of friends and family that appear in the poems. The traveling is a continuous raising of questions, a continuous attempt at bridging the distances between a past and a present, which, according to the speaker, are intertwined.

This “traveling,” or negotiations between different times, different standpoints, etc. are never resolved in any of the books in *La ley tu ley*. The feeling experienced when reading Bignozzi is of a struggle—be it between the different parts of the negotiation, or between what is serious and what is ironic, or between what is literal and metaphorical—that is the path that the speaker has chosen to live in. These struggles, this traveling, these negotiations are what makes the speaker who she is. A neat resolution is never reached. Like in Vitale and Hilst’s poetry, there is always something elusive, evasive in Bignozzi’s poetry. The reason for this may be that Bignozzi is not attempting at overpowering others’ voices, but on the contrary, she is conveying her voice, which responds to her beliefs regarding time and reality.

Lafforgue adds another element to this traveling, and it is the ambiguity in the poems. He explains it as follows:

Frente a lo manifiesto y lo escondido, el lector infiere que la autora ha elegido un sufrido purgatorio antes que el voraz infierno; tampoco el cielo de quien “quiere morir en paz consigo mismo”, pues para ella “la paz conmigo misma sería una guerra sin fin, / dos o tres asesinatos inevitables y alguna entrega desmedida / que no entra en mis planes”. Por eso, tal vez, para no comprometerse en una guerra santa, se intentará “ser armonioso sin conciliar unir sin renunciar”, según postula el intertexto de un poema esencial de *Regreso a la patria*. (8)

Lafforgue suggests that through her speaker Bignozzi chooses not to break all ties with what she is against, for this would imply something violent, a drastic severance. Instead, Bignozzi’s speaker “ha decidido luchar,” as the first poem in *Mujer de cierto orden* declares, but, like Lafforgue indicates, she never says what she is fighting for. That is precisely the place from where Bignozzi’s poetic voice enunciates the struggle.

I would like to add that in the case of time, it is impossible for this poetic voice to be adamant about staying in only one time, as in the future, the present, or the past. She stresses, again and again, how the past and the future cannot be disassociated. On the contrary, part of her

identity and the way she chooses to live is to incorporate the past into the present. That is, to bring this past into her present, into her own life, and even her identity. There is no present, no speaker, no her, without those from the past.

Straccali has written two wonderful essays on two of the last books that Bigozzi published, *Quién hubiera sido pintada* (2011) and *Las poetas visitan a Andrea del Sarto* (2014), both of which deal with the relationship between writing and visual arts. She studies social artistic memory in these essays, and looks into “la existencia de una temporalidad imaginaria y pictórica” (Straccali 2013, 94). Nonetheless, what these two books have in common with the five books that comprise my corpus is that Bigozzi “[a] través de una mirada poética, presenta un orden propio de lo real y en esta perspectiva [...] están implícitas sus visiones personales del mundo, su biografía, su ideología y la historia” (Straccali 2013, 94).

What pertains to the focus of my study, I am in complete agreement with Straccali in her very clear affirmation that “no hay en la poesía de Bigozzi una voluntad conmemorativa ni fetichista de preservar los recuerdos y conservarlos como documentos del pasado; por el contrario, puede decirse, retomando a Derrida, que allí el archivo es a la vez un topos –un lugar– y un nomos –la ley que los organiza–” (Straccali 2014, 100-101). Furthermore, Straccali places the responsibility of reviving the past as seen in images (as we will see in the photographs, memories, images, and in poems in the compilation *La ley tu ley*): “Las imágenes pasadas perduran espectralmente en el sujeto histórico que debe resucitarlas, desvelarlas, quitarles su antiguo adormecimiento” (Straccali 2014, 102). In fact, as far as she is concerned, the poet in particular, through her poetry, has the power to raise questions of the official normative narratives: “La historicidad poética es entonces crítica respecto de las historiografías dominantes, trabaja con los interrogantes, los vacíos y lo que en cierto momento se volvió prescindible en el

relato. El poeta descubre rastros que esperan ser rescatados para recuperar el impulso vital que les dio origen en un orden imprevisible y constelado” (Straccali 2014, 103). Straccali places Bignozzi and Gelman as heirs of Raúl González Tuñón, who she defines as the poet who begins the “poesía social y política” in Argentina, whereby “[l]a poesía puede salvar a los muertos a través de las imágenes que asaltan la mirada fugazmente, y en este gesto se restaura una justicia en el presente” (Straccali 2014, 103). Bignozzi and Gelman “traen lo reprimido, provocan un cambio en perceptiva y disponen nuevos sentidos históricos” (Straccali 2014, 103). Straccali compares González Tuñón and Bignozzi in the following manner:

González Tuñón es el poeta que, en su deambular por los suburbios, hace retratos poéticos de los sujetos que habitan las márgenes. En *El otro lado de la estrella* (1934) escribe retratos de personajes salidos de una noche surrealista. Bignozzi, como Tuñón, propone un sujeto lírico que cede su yo, su realidad, a los que ya no tienen voz o nunca la tuvieron, y su poesía hace hablar a subjetividades olvidadas. Tuñón escribe estampas poéticas; Bignozzi, glosas; ambos dan habla a las imágenes o hacen retornar, a través de la voz, la imagen de los muertos. (Straccali 2013, 96).

Memory in Bignozzi

The memory practiced and described in Bignozzi’s poetry is dynamic and empowering. A similar take on memory is appreciated in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* by Edmund Husserl:

Recollection is not expectation; its horizon, which is a posited one, is, however, oriented on the future, that is, the future of the recollected. As the recollective process advances, this horizon is continually opened up anew and becomes richer and more vivid. In view of this, the horizon is filled with recollected events that are always new. Events that formerly were only foreshadowed are now quasi-present, seemingly in the mode of the embodied present. (78)

Richard Jackson explains this quote by saying that “[t]he moment [...] always redefines itself, always transforms itself in an ever expanding movement” (28). Remembering, then, as far as

Husserl is concerned, is ensued by a constant transformation of a future by way of bringing the past to act in and interact with the present, its events and thoughts. Bignozzi's poetry is in constant movement to bring the past into the present, and to make them part of each other, for, it is understood that the present and the people in it are not real or whole without taking into account the voices of the past. This brings into play what reality is. According to Bignozzi, reality appears to be a collaborative tissue to which she contributes through poetry, where she reveals that time is not separated into different moments that do not relate to each other. Conversely, she changes the given whereby what is in the past stays there and does not participate in the present, and adds new possibilities of existence. Bignozzi's viewpoint coincides with Heidegger, who believes that to participate in the real, to be real, implies believing in truth, and also, going beyond it.

Truth, as Heidegger explains in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, is based upon *physis* and involves the self's 'placing-itself-in-the-limit' to achieve a sense of ever-emergence which alone authenticates it (*IM* 60, 109). The truth of the moment, then, resides in its dynamic process of appearing, emerging, expanding its horizons. This transformation of the moment as such, then, is also a transformation of, emergence of, the self. It is consciousness, the self, then, that not only creates but also *is* Time. (Jackson 28)

Allowing the past to be part of the present is not a mere act of remembering. From Heidegger's viewpoint it becomes an act of self-assertion that entails this "manipulation" of time, in that, since the self is time, transforming the present is actually being an agent in the self's existence and identity. This is pertinent when reading Bignozzi because her speaker, by insisting in revitalizing the past and making it part of the present and of herself, is co-creating both what time is and how it is experienced, as well as constructing herself. The construction of identity entails resisting normative ideas regarding worldviews, reality, and the self. Bignozzi's poetic subject affirms her position as agent in the construction of the self and of the world around her.

Michel Foucault's discussion of power dynamics and who gets to make the truth is a valuable lens through which to understand the insistence of agency in Bignozzi's poetry. Firstly, Foucault links power with the "manifestation of truth," which is inscribing one's ideology into the world and making it the system by which it is governed. He also speaks of hegemony in Greek, which he clarifies is not what we understand as hegemony today, but "the exercise of power": "hegemony is just the fact of being in the position of leading others, of conducting them, and of conducting, as it were, their conduct" (7). He admits that hegemony is not possible without "manifestation of truth" or "alethurgy." He elucidates then that exercising power necessarily entails "the production of truth in the consciousness of individuals" (7). This means that *a* truth is created whenever there is power exercised over others, and that this truth is imposed in a usually subtle way as what everyone subjects to and under that power thinks and accepts themselves. Foucault questions this monolithic truth and power, and affirms that the person who is "involuntarily subject" to this system of knowledge (the truth) can raise questions about the "contractual bond with the truth" (77). He goes on to clarify that these questions are not whether this knowledge is "truth or error, truth or falsity, ideology or science, rationality or irrationality that should serve as indicator for defining the legitimacy or denouncing the illegitimacy of power" (77). The focus should be on "freeing oneself from power" (77). This is not a "standpoint," as far as Foucault is concerned, but an attitude: "It is an attitude that consists, first, in thinking that no power goes without saying, that no power, of whatever kind, is obvious or inevitable, and that consequently no power warrants being taken for granted" (77).

In wrestling with these notions of power, Bignozzi resists the state's notions of truth and presents herself as her own individual entity of truth. It is safe to affirm that Bignozzi, as well as Hilst and Vitale, have this attitude of not taking for granted a system of knowledge in which they

have no say. Their poetry does not merely aim to destabilize and negate power relations, but, like Foucault asserts: “It is rather a matter of putting non-power or the non-acceptability of power, not at the end of the enterprise, but rather at the beginning of the work” (78).

A country’s collective memory is an arena of power struggles. Whoever writes history is the one who determines what the past has been and how it impacts the present. In Bignozzi’s poems memory appears to be alive and does not succumb to an official version of truth. Memory is an independent entity that has a mind of its own. The following poem from *Regreso a la patria* is an example of how memory has its own agency and way of operating in Bignozzi’s poems.

Nunca tuvo los trajes o las ceremonias
que crean la ilusión del poder
para mi desprecio o deslumbramiento
sólo hubo realidad e historia
alabada lucidez nunca adomrecida
no estoy hablando de tristeza
sino de que mi memoria emperrada
que sólo puede llamarse memoria
sigue mirando una tierra de justicia

(*Regreso a la patria*, 121)

The speaker talks about memory from the very beginning of the poem although she does not explicitly mention it until the seventh and eighth line of this 9-line poem. Memory is described as being authentic and direct. It is neither dressed in costumes nor does it work through ceremonies. Furthermore, it does not participate in hierarchies of power: “Nunca tuvo los trajes o las ceremonias / que crean la ilusión de poder.” The speaker’s memory was actually only about reality and history: “sólo hubo realidad e historia.” In fact, it was a very sharp and constantly active entity: “alabada lucidez nunca adomrecida,” which the speaker obviously appreciated and that is why she called her memory “alabada.”

After reading the whole poem it becomes clear that the third person singular of the conjugation of the verb *tener*, “tuvo,” refers to is the speaker’s memory. The fact that the first five lines of the poem refer to the poetic subject’s memory in the simple past tense seems to hint at a memory that either no longer exists or that has changed and is, therefore, no longer the way that it is described in the first five lines. Nevertheless, after the speaker clarifies that “no est[á] hablando de tristeza / sino de [...] [su] memoria emperrada,” and affirms that there is no other name for it (“que sólo puede llamarse memoria”), the speaker personifies her memory and declares that it continues to be active. The last line, “sigue mirando una tierra de justicia,” shows that memory continues to act in the same way as described in the beginning of the poem. This last line confirms the stubbornness previously attributed to the speaker’s memory (“memoria emperrada”), in that the word “sigue” and the continuous tense of “mirando” affirm that memory still repeats the same action, which it used to carry out in the past, in the present. This memory’s gaze is set on another land, one where there is justice, “una tierra de justicia.” From the context of the collection, *Regreso a la patria*, we assume that memory’s attitudes are not the only ones that repeat themselves. It is implied that even [de] “[r]egreso a la patria,” it is possible to see the same, or similar, injustices like those that took place during the dictatorship. The speaker’s memory does not forget what happened, and is still hopeful, as it was in the past, that there is a place that is just.

Memory in this poem is that which is crucial in order to know what position to take in the present. Taking into account the past, for Bignozzi’s poetic subject, allows for a more informed present, and therefore, allows her to be in a more real present. Memory can hurt, for it reminds her of sad events, and makes the emptiness left by those who are no longer in the present more conspicuous. However, despite the difficulty of remembering, Bignozzi’s speaker clings to

having a memory and the insights that it brings, in the same way that she clings to what the people from the past tell her. Only thus will she know what the past and present really look like. Memory is essential and this speaker guards it; for her, it is a right, privilege, tool, and part of her core that cannot be taken away from her: “pueden borrarse las huellas / matar la mano que escribió aquellos poemas / caer en la cátedra y la impostación / pero yo que tengo memoria de piedra y corazón de trapo / sé dónde cuándo y de quién me despedí” ([“Rodeada de universos en tragedia ineluctable,”] *Regreso a la patria*, 124). Memory makes her powerful, and poetry provides her with the space to articulate what she learns from memory. It is unthinkable for Bignozzi’s speaker to be herself without having her memory, without thus having the past in the present: “Qué haría yo si no tuviera / la certidumbre de tu memoria” ([“H.M.”], *Regreso a la patria*, 125).

Memory for Bignozzi’s speaker is paramount because of its powers. It can write the past. In fact, a lack of memory can even erase someone. One’s own memory is the only antidote as is shown in the following poem:

Agradezco a los que me han olvidado
 agradezco ese tiempo en blanco
 en realidad mi corazón se alimenta de su propio recuerdo

(*Regreso a la patria*, 134).

The speaker is not only not afraid of being forgotten by others, but on the contrary, she is grateful for this opportunity. So much so that the verb *agradecer*, conjugated in the present simple for the first person singular, “agradezco,” is repeated twice. It works as an anaphora in the first two lines. Oblivion results in the past being unwritten, and in time becoming a blank slate. The speaker is able to thank this lacuna, for she understands that it does not constitute her

obliteration, but rather, it provides the opportunity for her to write on this blank slate, “ese tiempo en blanco.”

The last line breaks with the repetition of “agradezco,” and starts with the phrase “en realidad,” alerting us to a change in what the speaker will say. She will no longer be thanking others for their forgetting and for the blank time. The last line reinforces the idea presented earlier in *Regreso a la patria*, when the speaker expresses that her memory is one of the elements that makes her strong: “mi memoria y mi soledad” is what make up her “frente interno,” a sort of core that she has and that allows her to go on despite the challenges presented by others, by the way that culture has been shaped, and so on ([“Acechada por cultos pensadores que han confundido”], *Regreso a la patria*, 130). In the untitled poem on page 134 of *Regreso a la patria*, the last line, “en realidad mi corazón se alimenta de su propio recuerdo,” is an assertion of the self. That is to say that with it, the speaker places the center of her existence in her own memory and not on that of others. In other words, she is written by her own words, regardless of being forgotten by others and regardless of “ese tiempo en blanco” resulting from the oblivion. The last line contradicts the existence of the blank time, for it implies that the speaker is the only one that writes herself. Memory, the memory of who she was, “su propio recuerdo,” is the source of her heart, her core.

In *Regreso a la patria*, as well as in all of Bignozzi’s poetry, memory is shown as an elemental building block of the speaker. Her memory is what allows her to be connected to others in the past, to have insights of the present and therefore understand it better, to keep the part of the speaker that lived in other places (Buenos Aires) other than the one where she is in the present of the poems (Barcelona), as well as the experiences in those places, namely, the dictatorship in Argentina, her childhood, her time with friends and family, her life. In fact, as far

as Bignozzi is concerned, memory is not only a fundamental component of the self, but also, it is one of the components of poetry, as she defines it, when in an interview she was asked “¿qué es la poesía?”: “Es memoria, es resistencia, es todos los aspectos de los que hemos estado hablando. Resistencia y persistencia. Es sobre todo voz de la memoria, que lo que existió no muera. La poesía logra que lo que existió no muera, de eso estoy convencida” (Bignozzi 2010). Poetry and the self seem to be made of the same elements: language and memory. Furthermore, they both have to resist a certain hegemony, be it a norm and expectations or history as written by someone else. Memory is what allows the past to be part of the present in the same plane as the people and events in the present. Also, memory is what keeps poetry and the speaker alive.

Memory and Poetry as the Creators of the In-Between Space

In Bignozzi’s work the present is constructed not only *from* the past, but also, *with* the past as well. Memory plays a crucial role in this construction, which clearly includes a construction of the self, which in Bignozzi’s poetics, is never complete or actually a self in all of its potential without memory revitalizing the past. Memory then, is a hinge between the different times, allowing thus the present to be inhabited as an in-between space that is an idiosyncratic space, one populated by the speaker’s past, the ghosts, events from the past, as well as the present. It is the reconstruction of the self, one who chooses how to create her own reality. The past also allows the speaker to unfold and observe herself more fully: by incorporating the past and those from the past, the speaker adds complexity to the self. Moret speaks of this deepening of the self in spacial terms when she reads this space that the speaker creates and inhabits as in-between spaces in which the speaker looks at herself “[d]esde otro lugar, esta distancia, este mirarse a sí misma en otro espacio de representación, re-conocer-se (en) la ventana desde donde

se mira y en la conciencia de un lenguaje que –a su vez– en juegos de espejos, denuncia en otro lugar, otro espacio” (10). She quotes fragments of the poem “Interior con poeta III” from the section “Interior con poeta” of the homonymous book. I will transcribe the whole poem so as to go further into it.

INTERIOR CON POETA III

desde mi ventana
 silencio de verano silencio de invierno
 veo servir la comida
 encenderse las luces
 lámparas del atardecer mesas del mediodía
 ¿acogerían ellos a una sin patria?
 ¿no estaría mi corazón para siempre en otra tierra?
 soy ajena a las ceremonias de la costumbre
 que suelen acogerme para señalarme extranjera
 vidas de espaldas al mar que es el camino de la vida

(Interior con poeta, 167)

The past of Bignozzi’s speaker is one that took place in a different country, a different continent, Buenos Aires, Argentina, from the one that she is in in the present, Barcelona, Spain. In this way, the geographical distance is linked to a time separation as well. Nevertheless, bringing Buenos Aires into her life in Spain through memory and in her poetry, is the enactment of the speaker’s beliefs, discussed before, and which permeate the whole of Bignozzi’s poetry, of the past being an integral part of the present, and not being relegated to that which is no longer alive or relevant. Time and space are joined in the poems. Nevertheless, the distance which both time and space afford to the speaker is what permits the unfolding of the self, and consequently, an ability to go deeper into who she is, how she acts, what she believes in. This is evident already in *Mujer de cierto orden*, in which the speaker is hyper aware that she is different from others precisely because she interacts with ghosts.

In “Interior de poeta III” the different seasons that occur at the same time in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres conflate in the speaker: “desde mi ventana / silencio de verano silencio de invierno.” The second line, without a verb or separation between the silences in each season emphasizes how they both coexist in the present, within the speaker, “desde [su] ventana,” that is, from her viewpoint, the self from which she reads the world. This is a dual world that the speaker lives in, for she is living in Buenos Aires and Barcelona at the same time. This means taking into account different seasons, and also, different times: “veo servir la comida / encenderse las luces / lámparas del atardecer mesas del mediodía.” The reality the speaker sees, from *her* window is a complex one, in the sense that it is simultaneously evening and noon, and different activities happen according to these different times of day in the different places. In her world, these two places, times, and seasons conflate. In her world, “mayo avanza por dos caminos / y me permite otro año de vida” ([“mayo que acorta y prolonga los días”], *Interior con poeta*, 171). Having both hemispheres be part of her life is what allows her to go on. This is the space that the poetic subject creates and lives in—an in-between, neither here nor there, and, at the same time, trying to be “acog[ida]” in both places, trying to ground her “corazón” in both “tierra[s],” knowing that she is a “sin patria” and will always be an “extranjera,” painfully aware that although she lives “vidas de espaldas al mar,” that that “es el camino de la vida.” To say it differently, involving her back and what is behind it is essential in her path. Her reality is writing about it and merging it into what is in front of her. For this reason, she sees both summer and winter, noon and evening through her window.

Additionally, I would like to point out that the complexity in her worldview is also captured by the use of the plural in the word “vidas” in the last line of the poem: “vidas de espaldas al mar que es el camino de la vida.” There are many lives that populate her own: those

that point to her as an “extranjera,” those that live in Buenos Aires, herself and the multiplicity involved in one self. She lives in more than one place, she hears more than herself in the present, she takes into account other lives from her past. This is what makes Bignozzi’s speaker unique, being conscious of the inclusion of different times, and places, in this space that she has created—the in-between. To put it differently, this poetic subject can be defined by what defines women in the border that have a multicultural background: “Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan simultáneamente” (from the poem “Una lucha de fronteras/ A Struggle of Borders,” Anzaldúa 99). More specifically, Anzaldúa uses the Nahuatl term *nepantla* to describe the in-betweens, those that live in a border and that are in the middle, as well as the space that these “split in half” inhabit. The state of nepantlism propels the in-betweens to be active in the construction of their own identity, or as Anzaldúa puts it: to “carve and chisel [their] own face[s]” (44). Bignozzi’s speaker lives in a unique space, comparable to that of the border as described by Anzaldúa, or the *orilla* described by Borges. This poetic subject views the Atlantic Ocean as a border, a wide one. However, she bridges it by having both sides of this border, both past and present, her past, and the people in the past, populate her present and creates, thus, the unique space she inhabits—a border that is not a boundary, but rather, the possibility of a world vision and lives that are more complex. She contributes to the creation of this space and her self, actively determining what they are like.

Homi Bhabha’s perspective on physical borders illuminates this in-between space that Bignozzi creates, even if in the case of the Argentinean poet, it is not just physical borders that are being discussed but also those pertaining to time, and ultimately, to the borders of what is normative. Even so, Bhabha’s discussions on physical borders helps to illuminate how borders are precisely, spaces that are prone to being subverted. In *The Location of Culture*, he widens

what borders are about and defines them as spaces where there is life, which is different from that in one or the other side of the border. The same happens in the in-between space that Bignozzi's speaker lives in. He explains his argument with an epigraph by Heidegger: "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing*" (1). Life blooms from this space, it becomes a source of presencing, a place where self can be constructed, defined. Bignozzi's speaker does not live by the norms in either side of the border. The poems show her as being different, complex in different ways. The in-between space leads to this independence, to these new constructions for, as Bhabha argues, "'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (1-2). The in-between spaces, physical or not, are, therefore, favorable to and give rise to the undermining of what is consolidated as a norm, what is widespread and hegemonic. Indeed, Bignozzi's speaker's presencing entails a subversion of time, in that she blurs the boundary between past and present. She creates a present where the past experiences—her past selves and others' lives in the past—are as much a part of it and of her self as what transpires and begins in the present. Bignozzi's speaker constantly makes choices as to how the self is created. Every space, the in-between, the poem, the "interior" are all the perfect venue, for she makes it so, for the speaker to choose, resist, explore, and create reality and paths to live in it.

Writing Is Participating

Writing is the way that Bignozzi's poetic subject participates with her voice. This is common to Hilst and Vitale's speakers. Through writing Bignozzi's speaker is able to inhabit

time in a way that suits her, be it by remembering the past, giving voice to others through poetry, or simply by creating a parallel world.

The poem “Y cada vez hay menos tiempo” captures the speaker’s concerns of time and the answer to those concerns being the creation of poetry.

Y CADA VEZ HAY MENOS TIEMPO

Yo me voy contestando a mí misma
poemas que contestan a otros poemas,
versos que les ganan a otros
y juana, fascinada, casi impresionada por ese juego,
ella que es inhábil para sus manos,
mira como una criatura
los triunfos, las derrotas de ese ir y venir de palabras,
su vida en realidad.

(Mujer de cierto, 39)

The title sets the problem: time passes and does not stop, and life’s end comes closer and closer. The response to this fact and problem stated in the title is given in the body of the poem, where the speaker “[se] [va] contestando a [sí] misma.” The surprise comes starting from the second line, “poemas que contestan otros poemas,” when the speaker declares that her answers to the concerns of “cada vez hay menos tiempo” come from her poetry, or more specifically, from the dialog she holds between her poems. The answer is not in someone other than herself nor is it anywhere other than in her poems. She creates the answers, meaning that she creates the way to handle the fact that “cada vez hay menos tiempo.” The answer to the passing of time is to connect with the self as poet, which is what Bignozzi says in her poem “Preferencias” in *Mujer de cierto orden*: “mis palabras para conocerme mejor” (50). After all, she is a “mujer de cierto

orden con ideas precisas con ninguna idea / que nos sirven para vivir” (“Conversable y moderado,” *Mujer de cierto orden*, 51).

Because in “Y cada vez hay menos tiempo” there is more than one poem that the speaker writes, and because one poem answers another poem, the reader is lead to understand that there is not just one answer and that the answers vary, depending on the “versos que les ganan a otros.” The winning “verso” is the one that prevails, until another one wins the debate. The poetic subject is portraying a plurality and not a monolithic notion of truth. This back and forth between her poems describes a dynamic that is different from that of the passing of time. Time, according to the title of this poem, is constantly heading toward an instance when there is no more time, which is to say, death. Therefore, time passes and advances in the direction of an end. Conversely, the movement of the conversation between the speaker’s poems does not have one direction nor is it depicted as having a constant pace. In this poem too we see the resistance that marks Bignozzi’s work. In this case, the speaker is resisting the passing of time and its dynamics through her poetry as well as through the dynamic that thoughts expressed in writing have. The speaker is consequently, presenting a structure that contests the structure of the unstoppable passing of time. It is structure that includes her voice.

The fact that the answer to the passing of time is in her own poetry, empowers the speaker, a poet, by stating that how to inhabit time depends on her and her writing. That is to say that the speaker is choosing how to experience and live the passing of time in her own terms. “Cada vez hay menos tiempo” blurs the boundaries between the outside world, “reality” so to speak, and the world created by the poetic subject, namely, the poem. It is no longer the case of what happens in the outside dictates what happens in the inside, but rather, the poem attests to the speaker’s assuming ownership of her time and her approach. The poems become reality, “su

vida en realidad.” This blurring of the boundaries between realities is further explored in the following lines, when the character “juana” appears. Juana could be the speaker herself or someone else. At the same time, it is the name of the poet, Juana Bignozzi, which adds another level to the difference of realities, that is, reality outside the poem, the reality of the poem, “objective” reality that happens regardless of the speaker. There is, thus, another “juego” aside from the one between the dialog between the different poems, which is what fascinates “juana.” This other “juego” involves the different layers of “juana” present in the poem that comes with the change from first person to third person speaker: Juana the poet, juana the speaker, or juana another character. The “juego” also speaks to a relationship with one’s self. Moreover, since “juana” “mira como una criatura / los triunfos, las derrotas de ese ir y venir de palabras,” there is a separation between the writing of the poems and “juana.” It is as if the poems have a life of their own and wrote themselves. Whatever the case, the last line of this poem asserts that “juana”’s reality is her life, and her life has been laid out as poetry, that which she reads, or that which she creates. It is from this reality that “juana” and the speaker have the tools to inhabit the reality of the passing of time.

Writing is a way that the Bignozzian speaker has of connecting to others, as in the poem “Función social de la poesía.” Nonetheless, as in the previous poem, the past is complex, in that it is not only a source of wisdom and community, but it can also weigh a person down, or haunt them.

FUNCIÓN SOCIAL DE LA POESÍA

Si toda vida es referencia a nuestra vida
 espero dejar una palabra
 que ampare a alguien
 en estas tardes inhóspitas de recuerdos

(Regreso a la patria 113)

As discussed above, Bignozzi's poetry describes a way of living that is based on connections: connections between times, between people in different generations, between people in different states (that is, ghosts and people alive), between people in different countries. Most of these connections, if not all of them, link the different times. In other words, the past, present and future are never separate moments, but rather, they are integral parts of each other. The connection between people echoes and also helps to enhance the fluidity, as well as the interconnectedness of the different moments in time.

In this poem, it is language, and poetry specifically, that serves as a link between people from the present and those from the future. The premise that is considered in "Función social de la poesía" is, as appears in countless other Bignozzi poems, that one person's life is never an island or a journey by oneself. Conversely, every life is always telling us something about our own life: "Si toda vida es referencia a nuestra vida." If that premise holds true, and we know it does for the Bignozzi speaker, then she has a hope, and that is to contribute to the link between people, to be part of a community (of ghosts, her mother, other women of her generation, people who experienced the dictatorship, among others). Her way of contributing and linking her life in the present with those from the present and future is through language: "espero dejar una palabra." Bignozzi's poetic subject asserts in other poems that she has gained wisdom because she listens to and observes and learns from the ghosts' experiences. In this poem her hopes lie in being able to help others through her words: "espero dejar una palabra / que ampare a alguien." That is the "función de la poesía," to protect others. Poetry is portrayed an essential part of life, for it offers protection, by being the carrier of wisdom. The last line offers an insight into what

makes it necessary to have protection in life, it is memories, or, to say it differently, the past that haunts the present: “en estas tardes inhóspitas de recuerdos.”

The relationship with the past goes beyond what is remembered and what is forgotten; it also includes responsibility. Due to the power of language and writing, they are a way to carry out this responsibility. The poem “El país mitológico” shows the responsibility of those on this side with regards to those on the other side, for these depend on the formers’ words in order not to be forgotten or relegated to oblivion.

EL PAÍS MITOLÓGICO

Desde sus cuatro clavos las fotos de la pared me dicen
del otro lado del mar nuestros huesos se deshacen,
del otro lado del mar hay flores rojas sobre ciertas tumbas
y silencio, rabioso silencio sobre otras
de este lado del mar,
en este hermoso mitológico país y casi nuestro
los rebeldes oficiales contemplan
sus balazos en la espalda,
sus fotos autorizadas;
las mejores vidas que me rodean pierden la forma,
a los rebeldes oficiales no les gustan ni las rabias ni las tristezas,
los muertos que no olvidamos los irritan en particular,
pero qué se le va a hacer,
dando pruebas de falta de respeto
nuestros huesos se mueven amparados por su furia,
suelen decirse no estamos muertos.

(Mujer de cierto orden, 32)

Already from the title of the poem, “País mitológico,” Bignozzi remits the readers to a world based on the creation of stories, where the word is obviously paramount. The poem itself is an embodiment of this belief in the importance of the word in resisting people’s forgotten death in the hands of the military or the official voice, the official memory. As seen in the Theoretical

Framework, it is a struggle over power; it is about the politics of memory and forgetting. In poet Patricia Hampl's words, it is "the habit of nations and those in power [...] to deny the truth of memory in order to disarm moral and ethical power" (209). This is so because "[w]hat is remembered is what *becomes* reality" (Hampl 209). The word *mitológico* in Bignozzi's poem aids in opening up a parallel reality, thereby yielding two different presents: in the present without the word, the people in the photographs remain in the past, a past that is forgotten; while in the present "mitológico," the people in the photographs partake of the present through the speaker's words.

The poetic subject not only gives the people in the pictures a present through the poem, but also, she gives them a voice within her voice. A mise en abyme of voices, which serves to make the voices from the past heard loud and clear, as well as to make these voices not only those of the people in the pictures of the speaker's wall, but the voices of all those gone that are in pictures on all walls. Bignozzi is constantly reminding the reader of this delicate balance between silence and voice, past and present, and how the speaker is pivotal in bringing the forgotten to memory, the silenced to be heard, the past to the present, as well as the dead to life. It is a responsibility to engage with the ghosts so as to avoid a somber future, in which the ghosts "quedarán en silencio" and in "mudez," which she describes as "ésta es la condena" (["Quién es este desconocido caminando,"] *Regreso a la patria*, 108). Those in the present must "desat[ar] la historia," as well as their stories so as to write a new history, which is what the poetic subject does in these poems (["Quién es este desconocido caminando,"] *Regreso a la patria*, 108).

The first image in the poem, "Desde sus cuatro clavos las fotos de la pared me dicen," is of the photographs in the wall saying something to the speaker. There is special attention drawn to the message that the people in the photographs convey. Their language, their talking,

counteracts silence. What further counteracts this silence is their photographs themselves, for, as Barthes asserts: “in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past” (76). The photographs hanging on the poetic subject’s walls subvert this silence that obliterates the people in the photos. These photos declare that these people are real, that they existed. Consequently, the photographs work as a way of returning them into history.

In “El país mitológico” it is not until line seven that it is understood that those who speak “[d]esde sus cuatro clavos las fotos de la pared” are “los muertos que no olvidamos.” The enjambment of the first two lines, “Desde sus cuatro clavos las fotos de la pared me dicen / del otro lado del mar nuestros huesos se deshacen,” contributes to the merging of the voices of the speaker and of those in the pictures: they speak through her. The phrase “del otro lado del mar” appears to be shared by both the speaker and them. Although in the third line, with the repetition of “del otro lado del mar,” it becomes clear that this phrase is part of what the people in the pictures say, the enjambment of the first two lines has already created the idea that we hear the people through the poetic subject, and thus, it is impossible to separate them, just like it is impossible to separate the present from the past according to her.

The people in the pictures speak of those “del otro lado del mar” as well as of those “de este lado del mar” because there are dead people everywhere, in every country, who have something to say from their “tumbas.” The voices alert of the “silencio, rabioso silencio sobre” some of the “tumbas,” which points to the silencing of their voices and their stories. This is equivalent to their “huesos se deshacen,” for they disappear in this silence that seems to be imposed from the outside. It is those alive, who by not putting “flores rojas” on their graves are maintaining the status quo. In fact, the past and present conflate because in the past, these people

were silenced by being killed with “balazos en la espalda,” and in the present they are silenced by not having been written into history and by oblivion. In this way, the present and the past are, in actuality, the same. Time appears not to flow and to be stuck, because of the repetition of this silencing, these deaths. For this reason, the dead continue to talk through memory, and only come alive in the memory of the speaker, and those like her who listens to them.

The words in the poem and the words of the dead are trying to make the “hermoso mitológico país” their own. That is, populating the present with voices from the past, breaks the silence, and contributes to making the country “nuestro” and not just “casi nuestro.” By bringing these voices to the present, the poem makes the past to be revisited and read differently. Not forgetting means unsettling these “rebeldes oficiales” and their official story: “los muertos que no olvidamos los irritan en particular” because they contest the widespread version of the past with voices from the past very much alive in the present. Not forgetting means unsettling time and allowing it to flow, allowing different events take place. The voices as well as the bones of the dead and the speaker’s, and others who like her remember the dead, are joined: “nuestros huesos se mueven amparados por su furia.” In this symbiosis by which the dead’s “huesos” become “nuestros huesos,” the bones acquire the ability to speak, to say themselves: “suelen decirse no estamos muertos,” to actively become part of the present, and thus, rearticulate the past. Those in the present are made from those from the past. Consequently, their words come from the past and from the present, and thus have more strength and power to change themselves and how time is experienced, as well as what their narrative is.

Like “El país mitológico,” “Mitología familia” also highlights that the present is constructed by those from the past within the speaker. She is complemented by them.

MITOLOGÍA FAMILIAR

Muy tarde ya en su casa
 una mujer toca la vida que duerme
 sólo ellos saben todo y sólo ellos me miran como extranjera
 mujer de otra lengua.
 Mueven la cabeza ante mis huesos
 limpios ya de tanta tierra
 nos hemos mordido dulcemente años y años
 ahora amparan la muerte que han creado
 el error de todo esto haber sido tan pocos
 era demasiado amor para tan poca gente
 gracias que estemos vivos todavía.

(Mujer de cierto orden, 44)

Here too, the title of the poem contains the word *mitología*, which remits to a story. Moreover, mythology was a way to explain the world and how it works, and which was substituted by science after the Age of Enlightenment. It is interesting to note that the poet chooses to align with mythology and not science. She is choosing this “cierto orden” that holds a particular viewpoint, that of the speaker, which contests “objective” reality. The appropriation of reality on her part by way of positing her story, her truths, makes the “mitología” reality, or at least a part of it. In fact, from the “mitología” in the poem, reality is expressed and experienced.

The poetic subject’s identity is formed by the incorporation of the narratives from those in the past. The poem reveals the process through which these become part of the speaker. The “mujer” in the poem is simultaneously a woman, who is part of the “ellos [that] saben todo” and that view the speaker “como extranjera,” and the speaker. Both are a “mujer de otra lengua,” both “toca[n] la vida que duerme.” Towards the end of the poem there is a distinction between a *them* and an *us*, as if the “extranjera” is no longer by herself as opposed to “ellos” but belongs to a community, which is included in the speaker’s tongue—the poem—that is no longer an “otra

lengua” by the end of the poem. After all, the dead and the poetic subject have bitten each other sweetly for years: “nos hemos mordido dulcemente años y años.” Associating with these people does not lead to the speaker’s death, or to her being trapped in the past, but on the contrary, it leads her to be protected by death: “ahora amparan la muerte que han creado.” In this poem then, the “mujer [that] toca la vida que duerme” awakens it so that living means that those from the past, forgotten in oblivion, as well as those in dreams, can be alive. It is through her poetry that the speaker incorporates into her present, lives from the past, and consequently, makes her self richer.

I would like to add another layer to these two poems by looking into what it means to remember. Remembering through poetry is not that simple according to Kierkegaard: “The more poetically one remembers, the more easily one forgets: for remembering poetically is really only another expression for forgetting. In poetic memory the experience has undergone a transformation, by which it has lost all its painful aspects” (289). If, from Kierkegaard’s viewpoint, remembering through writing means undergoing a process of filtering memories through the aesthetic experience, and thus a changing of the past, thereby mellowing the pain and/or other feelings that were attached to the past events and experiences, then Bignozzi’s poems could be said to depict a double route in how the speaker relates to the past. On the one hand, she insists on having the past participate in the present, by drawing a genealogy with those from the past and by providing them with a voice. On the other hand, in this same movement of stirring up the past and reviving it, the speaker is actually changing it, if not subduing it. This evokes another discussion on the double facet of writing, as stated by Levinas in *Proper Names* and Blanchot in “Literature and the Right to Death,” and according to whom both creating and killing coexist in the very same act of writing. For Kierkegaard, Levinas, and Blanchot, the past

is killed when one writes it and very little of it, if any, is immortalized. If the process of the poetry writing filters many strands from the past and transforms it by the mere fact of translating it into an aesthetic experience, then it is possible to say that what the Bignozzi speaker is actually recuperating from the past is what she remembers, and, more specifically, what she chooses to write about. However, in Bignozzi's poetry the emphasis is not on the past, but rather, on the poetic subject and how she relates to the past in order to create a certain present. It is crucial to consider that by writing the poems, the poet, Bignozzi's poetic subject, is constructing the self. She does so by embracing the "queridas voces" of the "fantasmas" ([*"Por ustedes queridas voces"*], *Regreso a la patria*, 89) into her identity and her way of inhabiting the present. Although it is true that she filters and thus changes the past and its voices through remembering and through the aesthetic construction, she also engages with it and weaves it into the tissue of the present. Consequently, despite there being some "killing" of the past involved, what is actually being killed in Bignozzi's work, is the monolithic—in this case, the past and present with only one voice, with one accepted way of experiencing them. As mentioned above, Bignozzi's work does not seek to replace this monolithic, but conversely, to undermine it with a *certain* voice, her own. Therefore, through the construction of the poetic subject's self, the past as experienced by or understood by her survives, and her present gives voice to a part of the past, and certainly not to all of it intact. Her present is the ever evolving self who goes into the past in order to be.

At this point it is relevant to study Bosi's take on memory and the formation of images. In "El país mitológico" there are the "fotos en la pared" (*Mujer de cierto orden*, 32), which means that the first images are not mental ones but photographs. In the case of the "Mitología familiar" these images are in the speaker's reality, in her daily life and make-up. In both poems,

nonetheless, the image, be it a real one, one that the speaker conjures up in her mind, or the image formed in the poem, is paramount for the speaker to connect to the past and those in it. Bosi states that “[a] imagem é um modo de presença que tende a suprir o contato direto e a manter, juntas, a realidade do objeto em si e a sua existência em nós. O ato de ver apanha não só a aparência da coisa, mas alguma relação entre nós e essa aparência: primeiro e fatal intervalo” (13). Bosi stresses the relationship between the “nós,” that is, the person seeing or thinking of the image, and the image itself. This constitutes a shift of focus from the image to the person, and in the case of the poems, from the past and its memory to the speaker. What is learnt from reading the speaker’s images and seeing the past through her eyes is more about her and how she relates to the past than about the actual past itself. The image appears to depend on the viewer in order to gain presence. Again, in Bosi, there is the tension between presence and non-presence, life and death, one that is further explored when he looks into the verbs *aparecer* and *parecer* and their double relationship in images, both mental and written: “O objeto dá-se, aparece, abre-se (lat: *apparet*) à visão, entrega-se a nós enquanto *aparência*: esta é a imago primordial que temos dele. Em seguida, com a reprodução da aparência, esta se *parece* com o que nos apareceu. Da aparência à parecença: momentos contíguos que a linguagem mantém próximos” (14). Bosi argues a translation of sorts, which is carried out when bringing to mind or to the poem an element of the past. It is a double translation, in the sense that first, it is a translation from the past (an event or person) to the present, and secondly, from the image in the mind to its appearance, that is, the manifestation of that image. Language then, helps to blur the borders of this process, even to the point of making it appear as if there is no process at all between making something appear and its similarity with the “original”—a case of simulacra. The similarity, and differences, between the past in the past and the past in the present are ignored, and the past in

the present is taken as the real thing. What is real is what is filtered, what is in language. This is similar to Perelli's explanation of language and memory through Lacan.

The shift of attention to the processes within the person looking at an image and at the past described in Bosi is related to Hampl's views on memory: "memory itself is not a warehouse of finished stories, not a static gallery of framed pictures" (205). Conversely, she admits to there being invention involved in the process of writing about what is remembered. This is why for her, like what was discussed on Bosi, is that her focus is on the construction of the person doing the remembering. Her emphasis is on the process of learning and the narratives that create the self. Memory then is alive, and as such, memories change from person to person and with time. This connects to Daiches' discussion on John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," where he contrasts immortality in or through art, which remains unchanged, to life, which implies change, even decay and death. Concomitantly, by revisiting the past or by bringing it into the present, one invariably changes it. The difference is that the change in this case comes from "outside" the past, for it is not that the past changes itself or from within, but that an agent in the present reads the past differently, or relates it to the present in a different way and thus transforms the past. In infusing the past with life, Bignozzi's poetic subject in the present, invariably brings the past to her, and consequently changes it, and by doing so, guarantees its life. Moreover, while Bignozzi's poetic subject is in the present infusing the past with life by revisiting it—although fixing it to an unchanging state in her poem—she insists that the past is actually helping to infuse *her* with life, to make her more insightful, and thus to deepen the connections with herself and the world around her. This also remits to Perelli's assertion about the bidirectionality in the relationship between the past and the present.

This bidirectionality of influence and change, include the ability to change the past. The way to do this is through one's voice and writing. The following poem helps to illustrate this point.

ARISTOCRACIA OBRERA

Las casas que vimos contruir tienen años
 las amplias labias son sólo discursos de mitómanos
 charlas de magisters
 cátedra de confusión
 no hay olvido ni paz sólo alguna entrevista pendiente
 una carta por escribir
 la distancia siempre llegó demasiado temprano a mis fiestas
 mucho de lo que amé ha caído en el vértigo de lo ridículo
 la poesía es una señorita esquizofrénica que delira al après-midi
 los que ostentaban la escoba de la historia
 cuidan la limpieza de sus legajos
 yo sonrío aunque no haya laúdes con qué
 acompaño a la gente hasta el ascensor
 abandonada, perro de umbral en las tardes,
 viejo pecador converso jamás en silencio
 a ver
 líneas de las manos
 de venus destrozada de apolo inmejorable
 alegrías que no le quitan profundidad a mi pensamiento
 per sí lo aligeran
 recuerdo algún cementerio sentimental
 cierta felicidad de un viaje nocturno
 enloquezco con estilo
 mientras los dueños de esta luz de domingo a la mañana
 con un sentido de la realidad muy argentino
 jugados a la precariedad y a la historia
 sobreviven en tensa vigilancia
 ignoran la tranquilidad de las siglas
 no se tranquilizan con ajenos marchitos
 ahora que todo empieza para terminar
 confiemos en la diferencia de nuestras muertes
 nada las cambiará
 menos estas alianzas pasajeras

las maravillosas delicadezas y sus culitos pateados
 cada vez que muevo esta mano cambio de lugar un objeto
 aparto algún rostro como en un triunfo de mis peleas de mis muertes
 o una felicidad de mi final
 sé que mis hermanos desconocidos no me olvidarán

(Regreso a la patria, 65-66)

This poem starts by exploring how discourse, texts of any kind, including houses, are not straightforward and necessarily change constantly: “no hay olvido ni paz sólo alguna entrevista pendiente / una carta por escribir.” Like the houses, everything is under constant construction. Everyone and everything has something to say, and “las amplias labias,” those that lecture too much, too long, are suspect of being “mitómanos” and “cátedra de confusión.” Nevertheless, because “no hay olvido ni paz sólo” there is always something more to say, like “alguna entrevista pendiente / una carta por escribir.” These first lines could also be referring to how narratives are constructed, how truths are created, especially about the past, about history: there is always something more to say or write about it, and each version has its own excess: “discursos de mitómanos”; “cátedra de confusión”; “la poesía es una señorita esquizofrénica que delira al après-midi.” There is never silence, not even when the speaker is alone, and compares herself to an abandoned dog, “abandonada, perro de humbra en las tardes, / viejo pecador converso jamás en silencio.” Furthermore, there is special care given to history, and stories, in that they are cleaned: “los que ostentaban la escoba de la historia / cuidan la limpieza de sus legajos.”

Even the mere observation of the hands yields a story, which sometimes comes in the form of journeys, be it to the future, such as the “líneas de las manos” provide, or to the present with her “pensamiento,” or to the past, through memories, when she “recuerd[a] algún cementerio sentimental / cierta felicidad de un viaje nocturno.” Moreover, Argentinean history,

does not have peace, and does not rest, not even on a “domingo en la mañana”: “no se tranquilizan con ajenos marchitos / ahora que todo empieza para terminar.” Something that does not change, in fact, is “nuestras muertes”: “confiemos en la diferencia de nuestras muertes / nada las cambiará.” This unmoveable and unchangeable fact in history contrasts with the ongoing discourse seen above. Those dead also contrast with the “alianzas pasajeras,” which have no depth, as well as will how “todo empieza para terminar.” There might be a new beginning, probably out of the dictatorship and into democracy, if the date of publication of *Regreso a la patria* is taken into account as well as the “sentido de la realidad muy argentino,” and everyone has a narrative to tell and change, and thus “la precariedad y la historia.” Nonetheless, what does not change is that we have our dead: “[...] nuestras muertes / nada las cambiará,” not even these “alianzas pasajeras” can change these deaths. Nonetheless, the speaker is aware that her hand, with the lines, have the power to make changes, for “cada vez que muevo esta mano cambio de lugar un objeto” and, thus, fights for her dead, and ultimately, the memory of herself when she dies: “aparto algún rostro como en un triunfo de mis peleas de mis muertes / o una felicidad de mi final / sé que mis hermanos desconocidos no me olvidarán.” This poem shows the precariousness of the past, for it can be changed with different narratives, and consequently, the lines in the hand change as well. The constant, and what cannot be transformed is the fact of people’s deaths. However, the narratives held in the present are so strong that they can change the past—everything except people having died.

The relationship between remembering and writing is not always straightforward and simple. In *Partida de las grandes líneas* memory and what is repeated through writing or reading are in tension. Poem XXIII of this book explores this tension.

XXIII

me he cansado de repetir
 qué distinto es este mar
 aunque los colores del que rescato ya se me han borrado
 y de tanto describirlo
 sólo conozco sus olores su calma su avance silencioso
 la negación del mar
 retrocedo cada vez más en la terraza
 y cada tanto pregunto dónde están los que bajaron a la playa
 (*Partida de las grandes líneas*, 206)

In the first line of the poem the speaker introduces the concept of repetition, “me he cansado de repetir.” This repetition, referred to in the first two lines, alludes to her having to repeat to others how different “este mar” is from the other one: “me he cansado de repetir / qué distinto es este mar”—the one that the speaker has not seen in a long time. The sea that she sees is probably the Mediterranean, while the one far away is the Atlantic Ocean or even the Río de la Plata. Despite this assertion that “este mar” is different, the poetic subject admits in the third line that the sharpness of the memory of the other sea has faded: “aunque los colores del que rescato ya se me han borrado.” It is as if she did not have evidence to prove her claim, for she has forgotten what the other sea is really like. However, this forgetting, or fading of memory, is not due to the poetic subject’s not conjuring up the other sea. Quite the contrary, she explains that she describes it so often she only knows certain aspects of this sea, namely, those that she describes, that is, those she writes about: “y de tanto describirlo / sólo conozco sus olores su calma su avance silencioso.” The writing on the sea seems to have replaced the actual memory of the sea. It is relevant to think of Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy,” where he discusses Plato’s *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue, “Socrates compares the written texts Phaedrus has brought along to a drug

(*pharmakon*). This *pharmakon*, this “medicine,” this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence” (70). The idea of the ambivalence of writing, especially with regards to memory is further explored in the exchange that Socrates tells between Theuth and the King: “when it came to writing, Theuth, said, ‘This discipline (*to mathema*), my King, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories [...]: my invention is a recipe (*pharmakon*) for both memory and wisdom.’” The king rejects writing categorizing it as useless but also a threat. Derrida emphasizes Plato’s use of the word *pharmakon* to refer to writing as what indicates the complexity of what might have otherwise been a binary concept that can be categorized as good or bad. The word *pharmakon*, argues Derrida, inevitably declares that “[t]here is no such thing as a harmless remedy. The *pharmakon* can never be simply beneficial. [...] [T]he beneficial essence or virtue of a *pharmakon* does not prevent it from hurting” (99). This is to say that even from the word used by Plato to speak of writing, it is branded as something that can aid memory and also harm it. Writing then, is characterized as an intense power that has an enormous impact on memory. Kierkegaard insists that writing filters memory; Derrida admits to their being higher stakes, in that writing can altogether kill memory. Derrida elucidates this danger and the connection between writing and its potential to harm memory: he reminds us that Plato believes

in the natural life and normal development, so to speak, of disease. [...] In disturbing the normal and natural progress of the illness, the *pharmakon* is thus the enemy of the living in general, whether healthy or sick. One must bear this in mind, and Plato invites us to do so, when writing is proposed as a *pharmakon*. Contrary to life, writing—or, if you will, the *pharmakon*—can only *displace* or even *aggravate* the ill. Such will be, in its logical outlines, the objection the king raises to writing: under pretext of supplementing memory, writing makes one even more forgetful; far from increasing knowledge, it diminishes it. Writing does not answer the needs of memory. (100)

In Bignozzi's poem XXIII of *Partida de las grandes líneas* this idea is expressed. While the speaker has written about the other sea, the one she remembers, and is trying to capture in her writing; she still admits to having forgotten it and to only remembering what she wrote about it. The sea no longer returns to her through experience, through her memory, that is, from within, but instead, the sea returns from outside, from the rereading of what she has written. There is a conspicuous loss in this change. Nevertheless, I believe that this is where poetry comes into play, in the sense that good poetry will be conducive to the recreation of an image, and even more, to the engament of all the senses in order to lead the readers to have an experience of their own. Although the speaker in the poem qualifies what she knows of the sea with the word "sólo," marking that she does not know very much about that sea far away, what follows the adverb *only* suggests the contrary, that the poetic subject actually knows quite a bit about the sea: "sólo conozco sus olores su calma su avance silencioso." She knows this precisely from reading her poetry about the sea. Therefore, the poem enacts the *pharmakon* complexity, in that the poetic subject encounters "la negación del mar," while recreating it. I venture to say that while the sea is "negated" and maybe even partially forgotten, what is regained is the sea as it was experienced by the speaker at the time of writing it, and then by the speaker at the time of reading her poems. She then internalizes this sea, and makes it hers again. There is a return of the sea within the speaker, as well as interactions of the self with former selves and with the past as it is read from the present. The power of what poetry has over memory and the past is endorsed by Bachelard: "through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away. Because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and a dynamism of its own; it is referable to a direct *ontology*" (xvi). Reading poetry, as Bachelard observes, is allowing the past to flow within oneself, it is

allowing it to interact with the present, it is recognizing that the way we read the past is alive and changes. Most importantly, for Bachelard, reading poetry means exploring beings, and that includes the self.

Plato's take on writing in relation to memory is not as trusting in poetry as my reading of Bignozzi's poem XXIII. Derrida interestingly points out that Theuth is known in Egyptian mythology as the demi-god Thoth, who defines himself as the son of the sun-god Ra. Derrida comments how in this mythology Thoth was called by Ra and told that he would be the replacement of Ra: "'You are in my place, my replacement, and you will be called thus: Thoth, he who replaces Ra'" (Derrida 89). Thoth's being a replacement is very telling, for it places writing heirarchically beneath speaking, as writing is defined as its mere representation or imitation. Moreover, because writing is a replacement it is even associated with death:

For it goes without saying that the god of writing must also be the god of death. We should not forget that, in the *Phaedrus*, another thing held against the invention of the *pharmakon* is that it substitutes the breathless sign for the living voice, claims to do without the father (who is both living and life-giving) of *logos*, and can no more answer for itself than a sculpture or inanimate painting, etc (Derrida 91-92)

Writing, according to Egyptian mythology is only a substitute, and a bad one at that, for it does not even replace life, it just emphasizes the lack of life. Although I am in no way equating poetry with the experience of life, I argue that in Bignozzi, as well as in Hilst and Vitale, the importance of poetry is prominent. Poetry is what allows them to express their poetics regarding what time is, how it should be experienced. Furthermore, for them, poetry is not how they represent the world; it is the way that they choose to live life, express it, and, most importantly, voice themselves, give themselves existence. For this reason, whereas Plato can place writing and memory on opposing ends of a spectrum, it is possible to observe that Bignozzi's poetic subject at no point regrets having written or sees writing as what blocks her from accessing the past,

which, as discussed above, is crucial in being in the present more fully. Writing can never substitute the past, and it still proves problematic. However, as stated above, the remembered past as written in the poem constitutes the building blocks of the poetic speaker's identity.

The ending of poem XXIII actually shows that the speaker does not emphasize lingering in nostalgia by staring at "este mar" so that it reminds her of the other one, and by the end of the poem there is a shift from concentrating on convincing others of the differences between this sea and the other one, to her retreating into her terrace: "retrocedo cada vez más en la terraza." The terrace is a symbolic place that is part of the house and, at the same time, it is outside. This is an in-between space, which like I commented above, is the space in which the speaker (and Bignozzi herself) lives in. From the in-between space, the speaker is empowered, for while she is part of the world around her, she has the necessary freedom and flexibility to create and transform this world. We could then say that she retreats within her terrace not out of failure at remembering, but as a way of settling in to this space of creation where she connects with herself, and only asks about others every now and then: "y cada tanto pregunto dónde están los que bajaron a la playa."

In poem XXIII, as well as in others, memory appears as accessing the past in pieces. The past is recuperated in the present in fragments. Poem XXIII portrays the fragmentation as necessary because otherwise, the present would be overshadowed by the past and there would be no space for the self to continue creating itself and its present. Nevertheless, these fragments from the past, as shown before are crucial in this construction.

Memory in Photographs

A recurrent motif in *La ley tu ley*, which had also appeared in the previous books in this compilation, is photographs. Photos as equivalent to names encarved on a tombstone or as a

representation of those dead (“porque hay un rumor que cruza y vuelve unos nombres fotos”⁴³), photos as a memento or souvenir (“fotos de familia artesanías de algún viaje y juguetes de”⁴⁴), photos so as to keep the memory of someone alive, sometimes even in a particular way (“y mi amigo tomando un eterno clarito en su foto de viaje”⁴⁵; “pero yo los he dejado sonrientes / sentados eternamente ante esa mesa”⁴⁶).

I would like to focus on the following poem as it illustrates the complexities in photographs. In the untitled poem whose first line is “descolgar las fotografías” the relationship of the poetic subject to photographs sheds light on the role photographs play in letting go, memory, and death.

descolgar las fotografías
ponerlas boca abajo
usar los marcos para fotos del Zaire

descolgar las fotografías
sigue siendo la mejor manera de decir adiós

(*La ley tu ley*, 252)

In previous poems in Bignozzi’s work, the photographs that appear are of family members or deceased friends. The photographs serve as reminders of those people, for, as Barthes claims, “[t]he photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially” (4).

Photographs, then, allow the spectator, as Barthes calls the observer of the photograph, to be

⁴³ “La poesía necesita silencio literario,” *La ley tu ley*, 241-242.

⁴⁴ [“si sabré que ha muerto la expresión directa”], *La ley tu ley*, 245.

⁴⁵ “Liguria con un tema de Ornella Vanoni,” *La ley tu ley*, 269.

⁴⁶ “Foto de cumpleaños,” *La ley tu ley*, 268. Here, we enter into considerations of what is eternal as opposed to what is alive, as discussed in “Ode to a Grecian Urn.” Furthermore, if taking Barthes into account, then we understand that photography per se is not the ideal medium to use if seeking eternity: “Not only does it [the Photograph] commonly have the fate of paper (perishable), but even if it is attached to more lasting supports, it is still mortal [...] Attacked by light, by humidity, it fades, weakens, vanishes; there is nothing left to do but throw it away. [...] [T]he Photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony” (93).

with the person photographed, because, “[a] specific photograph is never distinguished from its referent [...]: It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent within itself” (5). Barthes explains that, for this reason, when looking at a photograph we do not really see the photograph but the referent. In fact, just as he calls the photographer operator and the observer the spectator, he names the referent or target spectrum precisely because of this: “I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the Photograph, because this word retains, through its root, a relation to ‘spectacle’ and adds to it that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead” (Barthes 9). Looking at a photograph is not just remembering the dead, it is having them there together with the spectator.

In [“descolgar las fotografías”], the poetic subject is speaking of taking down the photographs from the wall. Moreover, she also wants to put them face down: “ponerlas boca abajo.” This is a gesture that indicates that the speaker no longer wants to see these photos, she no longer wants to be reminded of the people in the photos. This appears to contradict what Barthes explained about the spectrum of the photograph being brought back by the photograph. Nevertheless, although this is true, the photograph also makes death more apparent. This is similar to the case of how writing, as discussed by Levinas and Blanchot, concomitantly involves making something or someone present and their death more blatant. Barthes observes the following about how photographs can remind us of death: “however ‘lifelike’ we strive to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be or mythic denial of an apprehension of death), Photography is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead” (31-32). A photograph is of something/someone that “has been.” These two elements of life and death are in tension in a

photograph: on the one hand, a photograph makes death more visible, while, on the other hand, it also highlights the presence of the spectrum⁴⁷.

Despite the death involved in the pictures, what is undeniable, as per Barthes, is that photographs link those in the picture to reality, and also, to a specific moment in time, namely, the past. This connection between what is real and the past, emphasizes the tension between presence and absence in photography.

For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past ("this-has-been"), the photograph suggests that it is already dead. (Barthes 79)

The photograph proclaims and attests to the reality of the people in it, while it also places them in a past, which reminds the spectator that they are no longer. What is difficult about the observation of photographs of deceased people is this complexity that the photographs involve. The people photographed are real, they belong to the past, and yet, the spectator is not reminded only of their death, but also, feels them present, for, as Barthes puts it, "[t]he photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here" (80). This means that being a spectator is not simply

⁴⁷ Yet another tension between life and death in photography comes up in the untitled poem, whose first line is "tal vez las fotos sacan el alma" in the last section of *La ley tu ley* (271). In this case, although the speaker starts out by saying that "tal vez las fotos sacan el alma / como los hijos la belleza o miseria de los padres," she acknowledges that what takes the soul away from the spectator is not the photo itself but the photographers who are overpowering: "mientras dirigiés la toma / tanto que en estas últimas fotos /entre los que miran y yo / está tu mano inhóspita protectora / ya ineludible." The poetic subject denounces the photographer's overwhelming intervention in the photographs—so much so that she ceases to recognize herself in the picture, "y yo debo ser esa mujer sonriente junto a vos." When the speaker looks at these photos she does not see either the photo or the spectrum, she sees the photographer. This implies death, or rather, an obliteration of the spectrum on the part of the operator (Barthes's term).

looking at a memento, but, on the contrary, it is feeling “reality in a past state: at once the past and the real” (Barthes 82). According to Barthes’ thoughts, by looking at the photographs, Bignozzi’s speaker feels the presence of the people in them and is conscious that they are dead. It is a painful and complex experience, in the sense that although she feels their presence and the photographs affirm these people’s existence in the past, they are not restored to life, to use Barthes’ expression (82). The speaker feels the past and the absence as real.

Barthes coincides with Plato’s ideas of memory and writing relayed in Derrida. For the Egyptian King in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, writing does not aid memory, but contrarily, it serves to deteriorate it. For Barthes, photographs do not help the spectator to remember; they stop the spectator from remembering: “Not only is the Photograph never, in essence, a memory (whose grammatical expression would be the perfect tense, whereas the tense of the Photograph is the aorist), but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory” (91). Barthes describes why this is so by defining photography as violent: “not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion *it fills the sight by force*, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed” (91). Barthes calls attention to the fact that the photograph does not allow the spectator to exercise their memory and to revisit the past and therefore, change it. There is an element of something static and unchanging in the photograph. It imposes a particular way of viewing the past. Due to this stasis, photography does not allow the spectator to relate to the past individually, idiosyncratically, freely.

By taking the photographs down, Bignozzi’s speaker ceases to be a spectator, and in this way, she stops feeling the presence of those in the past, stops being reminded that the people in the photographs belong to a past and therefore, she might stop being reminded of their absence.

Ultimately, by taking down the photographs, the speaker ceases to be reminded of their death and her own⁴⁸.

In the place of these photos of the loved ones, the speaker proposes to use the frames for photos of Zaire: “usar los marcos para fotos del Zaire.” Unlike other geographical places that appear frequently throughout Bigozzi’s work, such as Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and other European cities, this is the first time that Zaire appears. Interestingly, Bigozzi chose to use Zaire, the name used for the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1971 to 1997. The name Zaire refers to the past, a name that is no longer used, in the same way that the photos have people from the past. Nevertheless, the difference between the photographs that the speaker in the poem would like to take down and pictures of Zaire is that the former are charged with emotion for the poetic subject, while the latter are not. The photos of Zaire then, are a safe replacement for the photographs of the people from the past because these revive a wound and loss.

In the couplet closing the poem, the poetic subject actually reveals why she is taking the photos down. She does so in order to say goodbye to the people in the photographs: “descolgar las fotografías / sigue siendo la mejor manera de decir adiós.” Is she saying goodbye to them? Is she acknowledging her own impending death? Is she saying goodbye to the past or just to a static past? The poem works as a farewell on two levels: firstly, because the speaker is intent on “decir adiós,” and secondly, because it is the last poem of the first section in this last poetry collection of the compilation. In spite of this double goodbye, the fact that the title of the following section of *La ley tu ley* is not only a question, but one that asks “¿Siguen allí...?”, the idea that

⁴⁸ “By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. [...] Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe. This *punctum*, more or less blurred beneath the abundance and the disparity of contemporary photographs, is vividly legible in historical photographs: there is always a defeat of Time in them: *that* is dead and *that* is going to die” (Barthes 96).

something is left open is prevalent. It is as if the speaker is not entirely sure and wants to confirm that taking down the photos is actually the ending. At the same time, this question also indicates a desire on the part of the poetic subject to not have the farewell be final.

The Rising of the Dead Provides Insights

The compilation *La ley tu ley* states the importance of one's voice in the construction of the present. The past is crucial, as far as Bignozzi's speaker is concerned, in making the present better. To remember the past is a way of using one's voice, and asserting it against official and imposed narratives. Writing the past into the present is to add plurality to the prevalent monolith. However, revitalizing the past for Bignozzi certainly does not mean catering to and maintaining it exactly as it was. On the contrary, despite the weight given to the past, the book does not advocate lingering and dwelling in it. Bignozzi's poetry speaks of the belief in each person participating actively in the construction of the self and the world around them. For the Argentinean poet a crucial building block to make a more rounded self and reality is looking at and listening to the past, embracing those voices in order to create a deeper and better present. The past is in the present because the self integrates it into his/her life. The self sings the past because it knows the importance of incorporating her voice (and the voices from the past) in history. Bignozzi shows what the alternatives to including the past in the present look like: she depicts how we can fix time in a vicious cycle of repetition without access to wisdom and, as a consequence, without the possibility to change and flow. Only by listening to the voices from the past can knowledge be reached in the present. It is clear from the poems that visiting the past implies a painful journey, for the dead have been abused, forgotten, killed and repressed. Visiting the past therefore, means reopening wounds, and letting those wounds speak.

Bignozzi is not worried that her poetry will kill the past or change it to the point of being unrecognizable. There is also no worry regarding either the death of the author or her overpowering presence. Rather, this book strikes a balance: the poet is important because it is through language that the new piece of reality and the self are created. It is through poetry that the poetic subject contributes to what the present looks like. It is poetry that allows for the present and reality to be plural.

In the second poem of *Regreso a la patria*, Bignozzi again conveys how the dead, those that were alive in the past, are still part of the present. This is part of Bignozzi's view on time: the past is inseparable from the present; they both coexist. Moreover, the people from the past necessarily are part of the speaker's identity, as well as of her everyday. She listens to them in order to experience a wiser life.

De las viejas agendas los fantasmas salen vuelven saludan
 han aprendido a callar aquellos nombres
 dejan brillar mi defensa palabrera
 sus códigos son confusos pero siempre entendibles y ajenos
 miran con ansiedad la puerta por donde desfilan los amigos
 nos ven cuidarnos
 niños lejanos y con frío a veces preguntan dónde está el asesino espléndido
 también él llegará cuando ya nada duela
 cuando mis amigas y yo
 creamos en serio en la seriedad
 y sigamos hablando como si la vida aún existiera entre nosotras

(*Regreso a la patria*, 64)

The poem opens with the presence of very active ghosts. It is possible to understand ghosts metaphorically, as in what haunts us, and, at the same time, and especially taking into account Bignozzi's recurrent motif of the past being an active agent in the present, ghosts can be

understood as people that were once alive. The presence of these “fantasmas,” and them being so active, “salen vuelven saludan,” makes them, in a way, alive in the present as well.

The silencing of certain names on the part of the “fantasmas,” nevertheless, contrasts with their activity: “han aprendido a callar aquellos nombres.” While the speaker is calling them into the present by recalling them and listening to what they have to say; the ghosts are avoiding others’ by not naming them. These avoided names are of those that have been taken by the “asesino,” who the speaker mentions later on in the poem. They are obliterated from the present by the “fantasmas,” who still have the power to make an impact because the speaker believes in and listens to them.

Although they are an integral part of the speaker’s life, these “fantasmas” appear to speak in a different language, “sus códigos son confusos pero siempre entendibles y ajenos.” The adjective “ajenos” highlights a difference between the language of those alive in the present and those in the past. Nonetheless, the speaker has the ability to understand this foreign code. It is not only her who makes an effort to understand them, they also listen to her, for they “dejan brillar [su] defensa palabrera.” Communication between them takes place. Even more so, the “fantasmas” watch over the speaker and her friends, as they “miran con ansiedad la puerta por donde desfilan los amigos.” This forms a chain of care, in that they watch over the speaker and see how her friends and her take care of each other: “nos ven cuidarnos.” Consequently, the distance that could have been established given that the ghosts belong to the past and the speaker to the present, and also given that the codes they handle are different, is bridged because of this shared love in the form of care. The speaker even refers to these “fantasmas” affectionately by calling them “niños lejanos,” pointing thus to their vulnerability on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to their belonging to a different time than her.

The care of the “fantasmas” is tinged with fear, they “miran con ansiedad,” and they feel “frío.” This fear has roots in their “viejas agendas,” and in their having known the “asesino espléndido.” Because *Regreso a la patria* was published in 1989, after the dictatorship ended in Argentina, it is safe to assume that these fears are associated to the events that transpired during this dictatorship. The ghosts are themselves haunted by this past. They are haunted by their own murderers from that time. It is unavoidable that this “asesino espléndido / también él llegará.” He will also be dead. This “asesino” can also be referring to death; what makes those living in the present part of the past. This “murderer” will also come for the speaker and her friends: “él llegará cuando ya nada duela,” when enough life has flowed through the speaker and her friends. Death will come when they “crea[n] en serio en la seriedad / y siga[n] hablando como si la vida aún existiera entre [ellos].” Death will not bring them to silence, nor will it bring the speaker and her friends to the end of existence. On the contrary, the idea portrayed in this poem is that death comes with a change of language, but it still holds conversation. Furthermore, death brings on a change in existence, as the speaker shows regarding the “fantasmas,” but with a presence none the same.

The “fantasmas,” those people from the past who are present in her life, are an intrinsic part of the speaker. They are part of her definition as the first line of the following untitled poem expresses: “Soy una mujer trabajada por fantasmas.”

Soy una mujer trabajada por fantasmas
 clavada a cuatro clavos por detentar valores cuestionados
 marcada por haber intentado pensar claro
 sola y algo errante en esta reencarnación
 sin un manto bálsamo otro alguien
 por haber comprendido a largo plazo

los amigos están lejos los espejos cerca

he perdido un código dolorosamente conseguido
 y ahora entender sólo significa
 iluminar una vía real de piedra
 sin pasos que huyan o se acerquen
 sin paso ninguno

(*Regreso a la patria*, 94)

The first line of this poem not only marks a lineage between the poetic subject and the ghosts, but also, and mainly, it portrays the latter as active agents in the construction of the former. The “fantasmas” are the ones that “trabaja[n]” the speaker. The use of the verb *trabajar* suggests that the ghosts carve and create this woman; the past is responsible for the present. The speaker defines herself as the woman that is created and carved by these ghosts. The beginning of the first line with the verb *to be* conjugated for the first person indicates that the speaker declares her identity, the two most important components of which, and of the line, are the nouns “mujer” and “fantasmas.” These two nouns are who she is; they are the pillars of her identity. The rest of the stanza depicts this woman carved and made by ghosts as different from the norm, and as such, she is punished, banished by other people, and alone. The poetic subject “detent[a] valores cuestionados,” pointing to her believing and acting in accordance with her values which are held as illegal and are questioned by others who simply think and live different from her. For this she is “clavada a cuatro clavos,” which, again, references a crucifixion, like in her poem “El país mitológico”: she is sacrificed for being different. She is “marcada por haber intentado pensar claro / sola y algo errante en esta reencarnación.” The speaker describes her way of thinking as clear, and by deduction, the way of thinking of the others, the majority, as therefore, not clear. Furthermore, if the word “sola” is taken as an adjective that means “by herself,” as in independently, then, it can be defining the verb “pensar” as well. In this way, the poetic subject is also marked as different, and even dangerous, because she thinks by herself. Another way to

read the adjective “sola” is by it having the meaning of being alone. The speaker is alone because of the way she thinks, which could be summarized by her choice of words “esta reencarnación,” which seems to allude to her life being part of a heritage of lives from the past—lives that live within her. Despite her condition of being or feeling alone in this journey (“algo errante”) regarding her choice of beliefs and life, an aloneness which is further enhanced by it being a difficult one (“sin un manto bálsamo otro alguien”), she has nevertheless understood something “a largo plazo.”

The second stanza underlines what is expressed in the first stanza, that is, the speaker’s loneliness and aloneness due to the choices made about how to gain understanding in life, how to go about living it, which is strictly related to her way of relating to the past. There is a lot of introspection that accompanies this kind of life: “los amigos están lejos los espejos cerca.” The first line of the second stanza leads to a comprehension that maybe because the speaker is in exile, in both the physical sense, as stated in other poems, and in the metaphorical sense of being different and therefore ostracized for her ideas, she spends more time with herself. This time is used to actually look into herself, and thus the mirror. This search within is crucial in Bignozzi’s poetry, for it seems to point to the importance of the life and lives within. In another untitled poem from *Regreso a la patria*, whose first line is “Digo tantas veces lo que no pienso,” the Bignozzi speaker goes into herself as well, this time, not through a mirror but through the word: “que no me interesan los sonidos que lanzo de manera constante / únicamente me apasiono por lo que hablo a solas / y así he descubierto minuto a minuto / el paso de mi futuro hacia el pasado” (*Regreso a la patria*, 102). The words to herself, speaking and hearing her voice—in the wide sense of the word—leads to her discovering gradually how her future pans out, and how time flows for her. There is always a return to the past. It is not only then that the present is charged

with the past and the many lives that inhabit it and which the poetic subject brings to the present, but also, the future has no existence if there is no return to that past. Her way of paving her way to that future is undoubtedly through and with the past.

Returning to the poem whose first line is “Soy una mujer trabajada por fantasmas,” it is clear that this investigation into the self, which necessarily includes an investigation into the selves and the lives within, including those from the past, is not just a matter of looking into the mirror or believing in reincarnation (*Regreso a la patria*, 94). On the contrary, there is a loss that happens between lives: “he perdido un código dolorosamente conseguido.” It is a double loss, for while there is a loss of her friends, the connection between those past lives and her present one appears to include a decoding that is evasive and elusive. As a consequence, gaining understanding is being alone, “sin paso ninguno.” Gaining insight involves an illumination of her path: “y ahora entender sólo significa / iluminar una vía real de piedra,” although this gain is counterbalanced with the loss: “sin pasos que huyan o se acerquen / sin paso ninguno.”

This poem portrays the loneliness when a person has beliefs that are outside of the norm. It is a lonely path. At the same time, this path chosen by the Bignozzi speaker is a journey of search for self, or, more precisely, for the selves from the past that are in her and a part of her. It is thanks to them that she is privy to insights that others who are not connected to the past and the people in it do not have access to.

Bignozzi’s poetry reiterates the importance of the connection with the past and those in it. It is thanks to those in the past that she knows more, as she expresses in these lines: “Por ustedes queridas voces / a través de los años / fantasmas de los que ninguna ciudad está libre” ([“Por ustedes queridas voces”], *Regreso a la patria*, 89). As far as the speaker in Bignozzi’s poems is concerned, she can experience a deeper, richer, and wiser present because of her intimate

connection with the past and the lives in the past, which she incorporates into her own story. This constitutes a disruption in time, for, according to these poems, there is no clear separation between the past and the present. They are indispensable to one another. The speaker's present, and the perspectives that she consequently has, is different from those of other contemporaries, precisely because she is in tune with the past and those from it. The physical distance between people and her, be it because they are in Argentina, or dead, or her ancestors, underlines an existential loneliness, a disconnection that contrasts with her being in another country, outside her own, away from friends and family, her city and neighborhood, her childhood, and so on. After all, she is the "mano única sobre el abismo guardiana de domesticidades / memoria de las mujeres de mi familia" ("El curso peregrino de la historia," *Regreso a la patria*, 101). The speaker is not dead or weighed down by history and histories, rather, these histories and her country's history, these people and names, are her heritage and what makes her a "bigger" person: "nunca seré mínima, clara y temblorosa" ("El curso peregrino de la historia," *Regreso a la patria*, 101). Bignozzi's speaker is never actually alone, despite the nostalgia and exile, since she has this past with her, these "fantasmas de abismos," her "ángeles musicantes / siempre / cruzaré con ellos / sus pórticos de gloria" ("El curso peregrino de la historia," *Regreso a la patria* 101). She is always protected, "envuelta" by them ("El curso peregrino de la historia," *Regreso a la patria*, 101).

It is evident that the speaker in Bignozzi's poems holds a very special relationship with the past, and especially with the people from this past, which, as seen above, she carries with her and makes full participants in her identity and her present. Her conviction of relating to the past, and being open to the voices from the past, leads her to lead a different life to others. The following poem distinguishes the speaker from other people precisely because of that

understanding she has of the past and the part the people from the past play in her present. They are part of her history, but also, they are what lead her to insights that she would otherwise not attain.

Yo que tal vez no supe elegir
 estoy con ellos lejanos perdidos jugados
 tal vez a mí me toque esto tan duro triste
 fácil de juzgar por los bienpensantes
 ser alguien que recuerda
 recoge los cadáveres
 anota las fechas
 alguien donde duermen como ya ni recuerdan
 donde vuelcan resumen nostalgian
 el pueblo los amigos el verano
 vieja irónica superficial vedette en reuniones de poetisas iniciadas
 brillante ingeniosa sonriente siempre
 pena no decir cuánto he perdido estas ganas
 soberbia no decir todo lo que entiendo
 para mi irremediable muerte para nuestra irremediable
 para la continuación sin fin de ciertas vidas
 algunos del alma tan poquitos
 sonriente savoir faire fuera de tiempo
 perfecciono de la superficialidad
 recojo los cadáveres anoto las fechas
 soy alguna de las memorias
 nunca nadie sabrá de mi entendimiento ni de mi tristeza
 quién los notaría entre tanta sonrisa desparramada para sobrevivir
 (*Regreso a la patria*, 74)

The poem starts with a speaker being doubtful of the path she has chosen, one that involves being with those far away: “estoy con ellos lejanos perdidos jugados,” which, as she points out, is “tan duro triste.” In this poem, once again, the speaker describes herself as “ser alguien que recuerda / recoge los cadáveres / anota las fechas.” She not only remembers the dead, but is also involved with their dates, and gathers them, to hold them. In other words, “Juana se reconstruye

en el trabajo de la memoria”: the poetic subject’s comes to life by bringing to life others from the past (Moret 9). The speaker even merges with them, becomes inseparable from the dead, by becoming some of their memories: “soy alguna de las memorias.” Concurrently, the dead want to be with the speaker, and, in a way, find a nest in her: she is “alguien donde duermen como ya ni recuerdan / donde vuelcan resumen nostalgian / el pueblo los amigos el verano.” The speaker is the conduit for them to be able to go on living, and even for them to think of the past. A chain is created, or rather, a moebious strip, in which the speaker in the present explains that she harbors the dead and their past as part of her tissue, and thus brings them to the present as active elements of her life. She goes back to their experiences as building blocks of her own wisdom. The dead, through the speaker in the present, are able to return to a past, although it is a return that carries nostalgia because they return being fully anchored in the present. They feed into each other, and their existence becomes inseparable.

There is the social part of the speaker that is the “vieja irónica superficial vedette en reuniones de poetisas iniciadas / brillante ingeniosa sonriente siempre”; it is what others see of her. Conversely, there is the speaker who is dwelling on everything she understands, thanks to her relationship with the dead, and it is a part of her that she does not let on in these “reuniones,”: “soberbia no decir todo lo que entiendo / para mi irremediable muerte para nuestra irremediable / para la continuación sin fin de ciertas vidas.” Like in the beginning of the poem, here too there is a wavering between her feeling that she should be sharing this knowledge, her understanding of life and death that she is privy to but that others, who are not in contact with the past the way she is, are not. These lines quoted above yield that the speaker’s comprehension of death, its inevitability and its continuum with life, is different from those who are not connected to the dead, and who therefore, do not perceive the past and the present as being interlinked and

inseparable. This knowledge that the speaker holds contrasts with the “sonriente savoir faire fuera de tiempo / perfecciono de la superficialidad.” The latter is superficial, and also, it is not connected to time; it is a matter of knowing social rules. Her knowledge, conversely, runs deep, and it is the contrary of superficial, for it is about connecting with others authentically, deeply. This knowledge is also within time, as opposed to “fuera de tiempo” both because of the way that she joins the past and the present, and because what is inevitable when reaching this wisdom is her being anchored in time.

The poem ends enhancing the distance and separation between the speaker with her “entendimiento” and those who do not possess it. She feels alone, in the sense that, “nunca nadie sabrá de mi entendimiento ni de mi tristeza / quién los notaría entre tanta sonrisa desparramada para sobrevivir.” In order to survive the poetic subject must have “savoir faire” and spread “sonrisa[s],” which is ironic for “para la continuación sin fin de ciertas vidas” the opposite is called for, namely, the connection with others, including those from the past, and the connection between past and present. This relationship with others blatantly emphasizes the difference between a life of disconnection and one of connection, which includes death, others, the past, and the present.

With the passing of time, aging, and gaining of experience, there comes a slight shift in the speaker’s attitude with regards to resisting the systematic forgetting and erasing of certain people from history. In the poem X “Los grandes nombres del exilio” the poetic subject is no longer trying to convince others to listen to the silenced voices of the past. Moreover, the attitude in this poem is not one of trying to put those left out of History by the official story back on the map. There is no more desperation and not as much pain. In poem X the poetic subject enjoys a certain peace that comes from a certainty and belief in the power of her pen and word.

X

LOS GRANDES NOMBRES DEL EXILIO

Cuando descenden a visitar su metrópoli
 en una ceremonia esclarecedora
 viejos compañeros convertidos en gloria
 aceptan benevolentes libros destinados al olvido
 grandes maestros de la confusión
 nunca caen en ella
 duros maestros de la ironía
 dejan el papel de ogro para las más ingenuas
 saben, que la historia la desatará la mano
 de la que siempre habla

(*Partida de las grandes líneas*, 192)

What is common to this poem and the previous ones, especially “El país mitológico” from *Mujer de cierto orden*, is that these people from the past come back to the present. They haunt the present, for they co-exist with the speaker and her contemporaries. Nevertheless, what is distinct about these “viejos compañeros convertidos en gloria” is that they are very articulate and they know exactly how the world works. When they appear, “Cuando descenden a visitar su metrópoli,” they clarify events, history, the past: “en una ceremonia esclarecedora.” Like in the poems discussed above, here too, the present is clarified and understood better by listening to those from the past.

The tone in “X: Los grandes nombres del exilio” differs from the one in the poems where the speaker’s dead “compañeros” appear in *Mujer de cierto orden* and *Regreso a la patria*. In the first two books of Adriana Hídalgo’s compilation the poetic subject is anxious, trying to get others to not forget and listen to the dead, and argues that it is the living’s responsibility to maintain their memory, to revisit history for them. In “X: Los grandes nombres del exilio,” however, the tone is calmer. Even those from the past are accepting of the fact that those that

wrote history are the ones that tried to shape it. Concomittantly, they are neither fooled nor confused by that: “grandes maestros de la confusión / nunca caen en ella.” These “duros maestros de la ironía / [...] / saben, que la historia la desatará la mano / de la que siempre habla.” They have faith in the speaker, and more specifically, they have faith in her poetry. They know that, ultimately, her poetry will be what pervades. There is a calmness about this certainty, in that it is part of the wisdom that those from the past hold. It appears that in this poem, due to the tone, the poetic subject has breathed in this calmness as well. This wisdom empowers poetry and the poet. Nevertheless, the speaker is aware that no matter how much she listens to the people from the past and how much wisdom she acquires, she still cannot stop time: she and everyone, tread forward “hacia un precipicio” (“XI / Billiken,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 193). The idea that can be deduced from Bignozzi’s work is that despite the fact that listening to the past and involving it in the present enrich the present and make it more profound, it still does not stop the passing of time and the inevitability of death.

In the same way that Bignozzi’s poetic subject realizes the importance of the past in the present and the inevitability of death, she also comprehends that although the past is part of the present, they are not the same. This is to say that although the events and people from the past participate in the speaker’s present, they do not do so in the same way as the events and people from the present do. The poetic subject is in no way confused between the two moments in time, nor is her incorporation of the past into her present a total denial of the passing of time, or even of the separation between times, or of a certain linearity. Bignozzi’s speaker advocates for a full participation of the past in the present, for listening to those from the past, for paying attention to them as well as to the places from the past as they appear in dreams.

Being Closer to Death Does Not Mean Being Nostalgic

In the last two books of the collection, *Partida de las grandes líneas* and *La ley tu ley*, the poetic voice is aware that time has passed, and that the “partida” also applies to her. In poem XLII, of *Partida de las grandes líneas*, for example, the speaker draws an analogy between herself at the point in life where she stands and monuments that have decayed with age and are being restored: “Todos los monumentos que amé / están en restauro pero no destruidos.” (*Partida de las grandes líneas*, 225). She is not yet destroyed, although by comparing herself to these monuments, the speaker is admitting that for her, like for the old monuments, time has transpired: “ya tuve duros golpes la cappella brancacci / a la que nunca volveré yo la vi como nuestro corazón la concía” (“XLII,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 225). The speaker does not want the kind of restoration that cleans the work of art and leaves it immaculate, for these marks of the passing of time in the monument are a part of it: “es más andrea el que vio elizabeth browning y yo o el que / algún día limpien y muestren / [...] / es mejor cubrir la miseria o decir que los colores se oscurecieron” (“XLII,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 225). Despite the lack of question marks, these are rhetorical questions, whose answer according to the speaker is that it is best to let the monuments, and thus people, carry the marks of the passing of time and its effects on them.

Memory, like tourists who venture behind the covered monuments for restoration, memory gives the person remembering access to the monuments or to the self in a previous time: “el turismo y la memoria son fatigosos / encuentran andamios reproducciones en cartón de lo que / está detrás telas que cubren los mitos” (“XLII,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 225). The speaker understands that what memory shows her of her former self is only accessible through memory and she will never return in time, she will never be that person she was in the past: “está

en restauro mi vida y yo sí que / no terminaré de ver su recuperación / [...] / y está in restauro una parte de mí / que no volveré a ver como la recordaba” (“XLII,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 225). Her memory allows her to see what her eyes cannot. In the poem, the speaker is not nostalgic about her younger self. On the contrary, as shown above, she advocates for the visibility of the traces that the passing of time leaves on a monument and a person. The speaker is stating the inevitability of change and death as a consequence of the passing of time. This again takes us back to Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” and the idea portrayed there that life is inseparable from change and death, which are consequences of the passing of time. The element that appears in Bignozzi’s poem XLII that is missing from Keats’ poem is memory. Time passes, changes happen, death is nearer each time, but in Bignozzi, there is still the possibility of looking back at what was. This does not stop the flow of time or revert the person to the one who she was in the past, but, as Bignozzi’s poetics highlight, the past and being in touch with it is an integral part of the present. There is no flow forward, no present, without these trips to the past, and Bignozzi’s speaker does not want to hide the traces from the past. Contrarily, she prefers these traces to show, they are part of the monument, person, etc..

Poem I from *Partida de las grandes líneas* also attests to the change in perspective on the part of the speaker that the passing of time affords. The poetic subject in this poem stands at a particular point in her life.

I

ahora desde el barranco ya no se ve la casa
han cecido los árboles llevándose el miedo
la edad camina hacia el mito

(*Partida de las grandes líneas*, 183)

The speaker positions herself in the ravine. It is from “el barranco” that she is looking at the world. The “barranco” can refer to a physical place, and also, it can be taken metaphorically to express the point in life where the poetic subject is: she sees the precipice, the end. She is at a point where time has gone by, which can be measured in the fact that “han crecido los árboles.” This passing of time has cleared her of “el miedo,” for she is now in “la edad.” This is an age in which she “camina hacia el mito.” Again here the myth appears, just like it did in poems in *Mujer de cierto orden*. As stated above, this myth is related to the narratives created in order to explain the way the world works, and this is linked to a focus on the subjectivity, and agency, of the speaker. She no longer sees the house, which is symbolic for the place where she grew up, or even the place where she lives as an adult. Our house, according to Bachelard, “is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the world” (4). At this age, she cannot even see the house, and walks toward something less concrete, less safe, less closed. Age, and I assume that the poetic subject with her age, walks away from a “space [that] bears the essence of the notion of home” towards something that is not enclosed, that is not home, which poetic subject is creating in the present, as she writes and lives (Bachelard 5). As Bachelard reminds us, and the poem testifies, the speaker does not leave everything behind in the house, in her journey toward myth. Contrarily, she takes everything with her: “An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying: ‘We bring our *lares* with us’ has many variations” (Bachelard 5). If Bignozzi’s poem is read taking Bachelard and her other poems into account, then it is understood that the speaker takes the past with her because it is part of who she is, and it is one of the building blocks for her present. Consequently, the myth will incorporate the past, in the same way that it will become past itself eventually.

What is undeniable is that with age, the passing of time, a change in perspective has occurred. *Partida de las grandes líneas* focuses on this change in perspective that has come about with the passing of time as well as the accumulation of age. “[Y]a tengo edad para mirarlas” claims the poetic subject in poem II referring to the faces that are hidden from her by the “vacío” but that at her age she is ready to look at (“II,” *Partidas de las grandes líneas*, 184). These faces are those of the past, and in the poem, the speaker is ready not only to hear the voices from the past, as she does in earlier poetry collections, but also look at them, face them. Even the relationship with the past changes with the passing of time.

The Past Comes in Dreams

Like observed previously, the people from the past communicate with the Bignozzi speaker because she is open to listening to them. However, in *Partida de las grandes líneas* her attitude has changed, for she seems actively looking to engage with them. She seems to have honed her skills of communicating with those from the past, and they appear to her in the present more clearly: “pero esta noche tu voz / [...] vino a consolidar y concluir aquel gozo / de nuestra amistad / con una cita imprecisa” (“VIII: S.B. mi corazón joven,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 190). Moreover, the poetic subject talks with more assertiveness about these people from the past, because it is clear that for her “los que hablan no están muertos / son jóvenes, pobres y de barrio” and even more important, “[...] ahora [la] ven y [le] hablan / [le] devuelven un escenario de tías abuelas la calle dorrego” (“III,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 185). The poetic subject insists that these scenes that appear in her “patio nocturno,” her dreams, are not like other dreams, in that “no hay símbolo.” (“III,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 185). These people from the past are real, they are part of her life. She does not refer to them as ghosts as she did in the

previous poetry collections. The speaker names them, sees them, hears them. The people from the past are in the same plane as she is—all of them participating in the present. She clarifies that these people appear and exist even before she writes the poem, even before language intervenes in an aesthetic process: “aún no diezmado por mi lengua y mis batallas” (“III,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 185).

Dreams are an important venue in many of Bignozzi’s poems for it is there that oftentimes people from the past appear. Such is the case in poem XXXVII:

XXXVII

los hombres que vuelven en el sueño
 son los que se fueron en la vida
 vuelven con la cara de hoy
 y aunque no la conozco debo aceptarla
 vuelven a alabar mi eficacia
 a confiarme su currículum
 y esperan de mis nuevos y viejos amigos
 de mis atenciones a los que amo
 de algún desinterés que disimulo por el recuerdo
 que yo gestione su permanencia
 en un mapa muerto en el setenta

a través de consignas de estación
 correos de confidentes encuentros fortuitos en ciudades
 erupoeas esquelas funerarias que nos devuelven a escenas
 olvidables y cambian el oprobio en ternura
 buscan el tesoro
 de la cronología de unos años que volverían a unir
 algunas ideas con algunas vidas

(*Partida de las grandes líneas*, 220)

The men that return in dreams are those from the past: “los hombres que vuelven en el sueño / son los que se fueron en vida.” They do not come exactly as they were before, they come with other faces, “vuelven con la cara de hoy,” which is a typical mechanism of dreams. The speaker

understands this: “y aunque no la conozco debo aceptarla.” What is important is that these men return, and this is highlighted by the repetition of the verb *volver*. “[V]uelven” appears in line one, three, and five. This insistence in the return of the men from the past alerts the reader that their appearing in her dreams is not an event that happened once or that is sporadic. Another aspect of the repetition of “vuelven” is that it strikes a certain incantatory note that transports the readers into a realm similiary to that of the dream in which these men appear. The poem is reproducing the event of the dream and apparition of the men for the readers; the poem conjures up these men from the past.

These men from the past return for a specific purpose: “vuelven a alabar mi eficacia / a confiarme su currículum.” Again, the idea that the poetic subject has a responsibility of keeping the memory of those from the past alive is present in this poem. What is different in this poem from those in the previous books is that this responsibility is accompanied by demands from the dead for her to carry them out: “y esperan de mis nuevos y viejos amigos / de mis atenciones a los que amo / de algún desinterés que disimulo por el recuerdo / que yo gestione su permanencia / en un mapa muerto en el setenta.” The men from the past that appear in her dreams expect her to arrange a present for them, to arrange for them a way to remain with the living, and a way to be part of a “mapa” that ceased in the 70s—when the dictatorship started in Argentina.

This poem, more blatantly than other Bignozzi poems, exposes a speaker who establishes a different relationship to the past and memory. She expresses that she is not very interested in remembering: “de algún desinterés que disimulo por el recuerdo.” Nevertheless, this line contextualized in the poem, also shows how this deceptive disintrest is actually an understanding of how memory works according to the speaker, and how she perceives her relation to the past. This poem, as other Bignozzi poems, mantains that the past is a moment in time that is

constantly changed through memory. It is not static. The present experiences lead to the remembering of the past: “a través de consignas de estación / correos de confidentes encuentros fortuitos en ciudades / erupoeas esquelas funerarias que nos devuelven a escenas.” From the present the poetic subject is lead to the past, although with a different reading of it, and consequently and necessarily, the memory of the past is changed: “nos devuelven a escenas / olvidables y cambian el oprobio en ternura.” The “escenas” of the past are deemed by the poetic subject as “olvidables,” which connotes both their being scenes that are not of events of historical import, but maybe from daily life, as well as their being scenes that are, like all scenes, prone to be forgotten, and changed. The feelings attached to a particular moment in the past suffers a transformation: “cambian el oprobio en ternura.” The scenes are therefore experienced differently in the present to how they were experienced in the original scene in the past, or in a more recent past as a memory. The past is held in tenderness. The memory of the past is a treasure that brings together ideas held in the past and people from the past. “buscan el tesoro / de la cronología de unos años que volverían a unir / algunas ideas con algunas vidas.” Memory allows for the return of the past into the present. This is not a trauma that is relived as if the situation were happening in the present. These memories transport the speaker to the past, although always holding the view of herself in the present. For this reason, she can observe the past in a different light than when she actually lived those scenes for the first time. This view of the change in the reading of the past is conveyed overtly in the following lines of poem “XLIX Port Gibson”: “todo está indicado para que el camino del pasado / no sufra alteración de estilo y ellos / ingenuos / piensan que tampoco la lectura” (“XLIX: Port Gibson,” *Partida de las grandes líneas*, 233). The vision that one has of the past invariably is altered with time and experiences

no matter the efforts made to keep the past exactly as it was. The past is read differently as time passes by.

Poem XXXVII demonstrates that the fragility of the past in the present is not due to memory or writing, but instead, to a change in the perspective of the person interacting with the past. What is clear, however, is that just like the speaker feels the past to be important in the present and feels a strong connection to it, the people from the past are also invested in maintaining this link. The urgency of their voices stems from the circumstance of dictatorship, when their voices were silenced. Dreams allow for these reminders for the poetic subject to go back to read the past.

Conclusion

Throughout the compilation *La ley tu ley* one can trace the journey of a person, from being a young woman to an older woman, regaining her present, constructing it, understanding the passing of time. These five books all carry the same underlying poetics regarding time and the self: it is imperative to take the past into account, to read it again, in order to be able to inhabit the present more fully, and that means, in order to have a voice in the ongoing creation of the self. Memory in Bignozzi is not synonymous with lingering in the past due to nostalgia or trauma. In her work, memory is crucial because the speaker weaves her present with strands from her own past and from that of others. Her tapestry is richer because of this.

At the same time, memory and the poetic voice's relationship with the past and those in it is crucial and even a responsibility, since the poetic subject is painfully aware of the power dynamics pertaining to the writing of history and thus the shaping of the present. Paying attention to those from the past and articulating them into her poetry constitutes a destabilization of the official narrative, which obviously does not include either those from the past or the

speaker's voice. Writing poetry, incorporating the past in it, is an active use of memory, and thus, recuperating the agency and "north" that the official voices try so hard to take away. It is an act of resistance and of self-assertion.

Memory and integrating the past into the present is not an act of preserving the past exactly as it was. The aim is not to avoid change. Listening to those in the past and remembering necessarily entails the self as filter. This distortion of sorts in the translation of the relationship with the past into her poetry does not worry the Bignozzi speaker. What is paramount is to form the self, to participate by articulating the self, to enable other voices to be heard, to counterbalance the prevailing voice, to be political.

CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I have set out to put poetry into dialog with other major forms of discourse on the subject of time. The premise behind this is the idea that thought articulated in poetic form is just as valid as that which is articulated in non-fiction prose, such as philosophy and sociology. Following Zambrano's discussion of the differences in approach to knowledge exhibited by philosophy and poetry, which are, yet, complementary, I contend that poetry's words regarding time have to be taken into account alongside philosophy and sociology, in order for us to be able to apprehend a clearer picture of the socio-cultural tissue that shapes our realities. In this work I present three different poetics of time, all of which question the monolithic of the experience of time in the Western world. The prevalent ideas that structure this monolithic is that time is the enemy of productivity. Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi are dissident voices, which is no surprise as "o poeta desafia, também, a linguagem: sua atividade de busca cumpre-se no ato da escritura" (Bella 9). Like Bosi who believes that poetry has the power to resist the dominant discourse, these poets enact their practices with regards to time in their poetry.

My exploration of the reappropriation of time that happens in these poets' work contributes to our thinking of the impact poetry has on the way we relate to inherited and internalized ideas underlying the way the world runs. Thinking of time goes beyond what moment in time we want to emphasize, or how we decide to experience time. It means reviewing our understanding of poetry, power relations, and the narratives that we too readily accept without participating in their writing.

Studying Benedito Nunes and Norbert Elias' view of time as a socio-cultural construct is useful in order to understand that the view of time widespread in the Western culture is only one way of apprehending and making reality—a view that seems to be superimposed upon other approaches—is, as a construct, subject to be dismantled. The poetics of the three Latin American poets interpolate what Lyotard defines as cultural imaginary and propose other ways to look at and inhabit reality. They thus expose time's constructions as malleable substances. I assert that by reappropriating time from a normative and prevalent discourse, Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi are destabilizing the power dynamics at various levels: they are questioning it, pointing thus to the prevalent narrative as vulnerable and not natural, but rather, as one among other possibilities of understanding. By voicing different narratives to those governed by capitalism, these poets are also evidencing the plurality of structures that actually make up society. They are owning language, in the sense that through their poetry they challenge fixed uses of language and present discourses with other possibilities of thought.

Their poetics incorporate some of the major questions and issues raised by philosophers and sociologists, and my analysis is informed by these ideas regarding time. Already in the fourth century, Augustine marks a return of time to the self. According to Merleau-Ponty time is part of what makes a person. Bergson speaks of a subjective time as opposed to an external time. Heidegger's *Dasein* points to a Being that is able to observe and think about life. Furthermore, Heidegger indicates the power that *Dasein* has to intervene in the world, when he explains that because he holds all moments in time present in himself, he is therefore able to dwell in and perceive time in diverse ways, and thus, is able to move away from time as linear, which only allows for experiencing one moment at a time. According to Heidegger then, the agency of the *Dasein* in the construction of time, is crucial. This return of time to Being, discussed by these

philosophers, as well as the notion of time as a construction, helps to understand Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi, whose work, like that of the above mentioned philosophers, does the constant exercise of bringing time from an external object of observation or from a structure devised by others to the self, the body, to Being. Time is a part of them, time is a part of their poetry. The poets in their work do not negate the passing of time; they are certainly active in their setting of the guidelines, parameters, and perspectives according to which they think is the best way to experience time.

I observed that the three poets explore the present. This does not make them into a unified school, but it does, however, bring them together in their poetics of time. I assert that, in a way, each of them subscribes to Augustine and Heidegger's thoughts regarding the present as the now and as being present. For these poets it is not enough to be alive and to be in time. I have tried to show that they emphasize the present because it is the moment in time in which the individual can participate in the world most actively. The present is where they can embody in their poetry a critical position.

Each poet proposes what constitutes her viewpoint on the best way to face and live in this present. Taking her cue from her observations of language, Vitale advocates for fractures. These take the form of lingering, doubting, waiting, reviewing, and pausing. She insists on keeping connected with the self, which is portrayed as the entity to be heeded. Hilst's work shows how for her, to be present means to be a thinking person and persistently engaging with difficult questions and issues, such as mortality and the passing of time. Bignozzi is a proponent of incorporating the voices from the past in order to live a fuller present. Paramount to her is also resisting the silencing of other narratives by official history. These poets' concept of a present, where the individual is an agent in the creation of their narrative by which s/he lives, is

empowering. Theirs are narratives that contrast with and challenge the prevailing narrative, simply by conveying and articulating competing and conflicting modes of existence.

Furthermore, by making a present that has duration, they do not coincide with Augustine's and Borges's view of the present as fleeting. In their poetry, by focusing on the present and working on it, the present gains duration. The present of the poem is the place of articulation; the present is when their voices can have an impact.

Despite their focus on the present, the past is paramount, especially in the poetics of Bignozzi and Vitale. As claimed by Borges, we are made in part by memory (Borges 2008, 86). Like for Borges, for Vitale and Bignozzi memory and forgetting is intrinsic to the creation of the self's identity. The past and the memory of what transpires is crucial in Vitale, since it is in this kind of *fractura* that the present can be more whole. Memory for the Uruguayan poet is instrumental in reviewing the past, evaluating one's steps, and thus being able to acquire that wisdom in order to continue in a more wholesome present. To study Bignozzi it was particularly illuminating to read Bolling and Perelli on writing during the dictatorship and post-dictatorship, and the role that poetry had in order to dismantle the state's version of the 1976-1983 dictatorship in Argentina. In Bignozzi's case, memory is connected to a common past shared by her fellow Argentines. It is instrumental in being able to counteract a certain story that particular interests endeavor to make it the only story. By listening to silenced voices and voices from the past, Bignozzi takes a critical stance with regards to the official narrative. The Argentinean poet writes another past, one that includes these other voices, and it is this past that informs her present.

The dissertation puts forward their stories, articulating the readings of these poets on the conceptions of time as poetics and not as merely a recurrent theme. This approach does not mean

that their ideas are not written in the poetic form or that this form is not important. Quite the contrary, it is because their conceptions and practices of time are written in poetry and from poetry that I argue that they are so compelling, for they are able to move the reader at intellectual and aesthetic levels. The shift in approach to the work of these poets can be useful as an analytical framework, whose underlying vision is of poetry as a particular socio-cultural discourse—one that needs to be brought to sit at the table with “the adults,” for it contributes tremendously to the conversation of thinking and rethinking of the structures on which our society is built on. Understanding the value of poetry in the shaping of our thoughts is easy when observing the amount of lines, or fragments of lines, from poems permeate our everyday language and thought. Examples are countless: Shakespeare’s “a rose / by any other name would smell as sweet,” Sir Walter Scott’s “Oh! what a tangled web we weave,” Elizabeth Bishop’s “The art of losing isn’t hard to master,” Yeats’ “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold,” Frost’s “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— / I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference,” Calderón’s “los sueños, sueños son,” Emily Dickinson’s “Hope is the thing with feathers,” Martí’s “cultivo una rosa blanca / en julio como en enero,” Camões’ “amor é fogo que arde sem se ver,” Pessoa’s “Tudo vale a pena / Se a alma não é pequena” and “navegar é preciso, viver não é preciso,” Pizarnik’s “una mirada desde la alcantarilla / puede ser una visión del mundo,” among myriad others.

With this study I contend that articulating their poetics of time in their poetry places Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi as destabilizers of power dynamics. Therefore, by being agents and by writing their poetry, they cease to regard the hegemonic capitalist ideas, which relegate them, as women and as poets, to the margins. From this margin and minority, they refuse to look at the center and strive to belong to it, fit in, or take it into account as a parameter. Rather, they work

on their poetry, they write their own way of inhabiting this world. The center is poetry; theirs. These three poets, therefore, undermine the “contractual bond with the truth” of the center (Foucault 77). Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s power does not display an overt conflict or intention to set out to de-center those cultural structures that they live in. Conversely, it is in this very lack of blatant addressing and even naming the prevalent ideology linked to time and ensuing practices, that these poets point to the illegitimacy of this self-appointed “king.” They thus denounce these socio-cultural structures of time as constructs that can and should be questioned. Their poetry removes them from the position of subjects of the monarchy, to follow the monarchy metaphor, and reinstates them as subjects of their own narratives—that is, subjects in the language sense of active agents.

While Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi have been studied before, and even extensively in Hilst’s case, my dissertation maps out, for the first time, their poetics of time and frames them as powerful discourses that question socio-cultural structures and are proponents of alternative ways of thinking an issue that is so ingrained in us and our lives that we too often take for granted and accept. My intention was to go beyond looking at recurrent themes and motifs in each poet’s work, and to discuss their work not only in terms of their style or what characterizes their work as theirs. I look at these poets’ works in order to study their body of thought and articulate it as such.

This is the first time that Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi have been put into dialog. What they share, aside from the fact that they are Latin American female poets, who were writing during their countries’ dictatorships, is the insistence in their involvement with time, such a difficult and “impossible” issue. Although it is certainly useful to trace the literary and historical contexts in which they were writing, I found that these three poets resisted, in a way, the labeling of their

work in the tidy category of a particular generation. This dissertation underscores a strong connection between Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi despite their having been born in different countries and belonging to different literary generations. The articulation of their ideas of time in their poetry does not simply respond to a mimetic move so as to portray the speakers' state of mind or experiences. Conversely, their poetry carves out treatises. That is the paramount common denominator between their works, as far as I am concerned.

Further directions that would complement this dissertation would be delving deeper into these treatises by analyzing yet other aspects of each poetics. For instance, Hilst's perspectives on desire and time, which appear in the compilation *Do desejo*, reveals how there is a return to the self, which implies a connection with the speaker's desires, passions, and poetry, and thus a shift to the presence and present of the self instead of the object of desire that is missing or in a hoped for future. In Bignozzi's case, it would be important to further the studies on memory and temporality in painting as seen through poetry, which María Eugenia Straccali has started on the Argentinean poet's *Quién hubiera sido pintada* and *Las poetas visitan a Andrea del Sarto*. For Vitale, given her prolific and long career, it would be useful to note any changes in perspectives and conceptions of time from her earlier works to her later ones and, conversely, any elements which have been stable throughout.

The conspicuous fact of the corpus of my dissertation being comprised of exclusively female poets was a conscious choice, which stemmed from my conviction that in order to have an interesting dialog with the prevalent ideas and beliefs on which we base our decisions, routines, and choices with regards to ways of inhabiting time, I would have to find dissident voices. I therefore decided to involve myself with the margins: women, as a minority, and poetry as a genre that is nowadays not majorly heeded other than for purely aesthetical reasons. I was

not mistaken. In reading these poets' work I found three particular poetics of time that do not represent the hegemonic practices in Western society. I draw on Kristeva's assertions on the particularity of women's time, who break from the universality of time and chip at one of the dimensions of time, which she calls "monumental time," using Nietzsche's term (14). This "time of another history" is already an interpretation of the conception of time, or, to put it differently, it is literally *his story* disseminated as natural, and therefore, disassociating this time from a constructed conception (Kristeva 14). My study succeeds in unpacking *her story*, or rather, their stories, and in underlining both theirs and *his story* as narratives that are subject to change. Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi's poetics of time can be viewed from a Derridian perspective, as the thread within the weave of *history* that is part of it and, concomitantly, unravels it.

Thinking of Kristeva's contention that women's time is a thing in itself and should be observed and analyzed as different, another kind of time would be an excellent exploration in order to expand the current project. An investigation of queer poets' poetics of time would enrich the depth of this work. For this study it would be fundamental to delineate what queer temporality is and think of the possibilities of relating "queer time" to both queer poets and non-queer poets. Judith Halberstam claims that "there is such a thing as 'queer time,'" which she characterizes as developing "at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (1). It is interesting to note that what Halberstam sees as a threat is not the sexual practices and identity of queer people but that queer is a threat as a way of being, a way of inhabiting the world, for it has "the potential to open up a new life narrative and alternative relations to time and space" (2). Again we see that within the socio-cultural tissue lies the very own kernel that can dismantle one simple narrative, evidencing and bringing to light the complexity of society's multi-narrative tissue. "Queer time" comes into being thanks to the fact

that “[q]ueer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, death” (2). Halberstam marks normativity regarding time to be based on particular landmarks in a linear time. If thought in those terms, Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi are women who, despite having married, never had children, meaning that one of these posts was not followed, would we be able to apply “queer time” as that which can describe their poetics as well? Can this framework also allow us to think of any poet or writer who opposes socially accepted views and practices of time? “Queer time” raises awareness of the fact that conceptions of time and the ensuing ways of inhabiting time that stray from the norm are not only deemed sub-par and not welcomed, but also, they are delegitimized: “in Western cultures, we chart the emergence of adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation; and we create longevity as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of long life (under any circumstances), and pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity” (Halberstam 2).

In *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* Elizabeth Freeman connects “close reading of the past for the odd detail, the unintelligible or resistant moment” (with queer practices (xvi). I believe that in part, this is similar to Vitale’s poetics of time, which involve lingering, looking back in order to re-read what has transpired, and pausing. At the same time, as a reader of the corpus of my dissertation, I have definitely been a close reader, not of the past, but of Vitale, Hilst, and Bignozzi’s texts. Freeman clarifies that “[t]o close read is to linger, to dally, to take pleasure in tarrying, and to hold out that these activities can allow us to look both hard and askance at the norm” (xvi-xvii). Reading texts, be it literature or socio-cultural phenomena as texts, is strongly associated with subverting. Close reading, then, implies a pace

that is slower than the one at which we are expected to function. It is, in itself, an act of resistance. The study of literature, in its returns to the text (reading and rereading), ponderings on the ideas raised in the texts, and the willingness to hear and consider other voices, actually constitutes a practice that is potentially subversive.

This same practice of close reading, in this case, society's conceptions of time and other norms, is what Vitale, Hilst, Bignozzi had to have done in order to be able to tear the structures, albeit without announcing that they were doing so. Close reading allows them to be critical and, in turn, to create alternatives. They seek to name the terms of their existence.

WORK CITED

- Aizenberg, Edna. *Borges, el tejedor del aleph y otros ensayos: del hebraísmo al poscolonialismo*. Frankfurt am Maim: Vervuert, 1997. Print.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007. Print.
- Alves da Silva, Livia Carolina. "Concepções do sujeito-lírico em Hilda Hilst." Orientadora: Prof. Dr. Elaine Cristina Cintra. 89-97. Web.
- Araújo, Ricardo and Sonia Silva. "Poesia e Pós-modernidade." *O Pós-Modernismo*. Eds. Guinsburg, J, and Ana Mae Barbosa. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2005. Print.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982. Print.
- Bella, Jozef. "Hilda Hilst—o poeta, a palavra e a morte." *MG Suplemento Literário*. 793.XIV. (12 December 1981): 9. Print.
- Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Trans. Frank L. Pogson New York: Dover, 2001. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Bignozzi, Juana. "Entrevista a Juana Bignozzi: 'Las palabras se eligen con el cerebro'." Interview by Marcela Castro and Silvia Jurovietzky. *Feminaria literaria*. VIII, No. 14 (1995): 62 -71. Print.
- , *La ley tu ley*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2000. Print.

- , "Juana Bignozzi: La luz de la edad." Interview by Roxana Artal. *Evaristo cultural*. No. 12. (December 2010). Web. 3 July 2013.
- , "Juana Bignozzi: Creo en el oficio de poeta." Interview by Pablo Montanaro and Luis Raúl Calvo. *Revista Generación Abierta*. Web. 3 July 2013.
- , "Juana Bignozzi: 'La ideología es una forma de eternidad'". Interview by Jorge Fonderbrider. *Ñ:Revista de cultura*. (15 August 2012). Web. 3 July 2013.
- Blanchot, Maurice. "Literature and the Right to Death." *The Work of Fire*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell and Lydia Davis. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995: 300-434. Print.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "La refutación del tiempo." *Otras inquisiciones*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1999: 257-287. Print.
- , "El idioma infinito." *El tamaño de mi esperanza*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005: 44-49. Print.
- , "Palabrería para versos." *El tamaño de mi esperanza*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005: 50-55. Print.
- , "El tiempo." *Borges oral*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2008: 82-99. Print.
- Bollig, Ben. *Modern Argentine Poetry: Displacement, Exile, Migration*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011.
- Bosi, Alfredo. *O ser e o tempo da poesia*. São Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1977. Print.
- Bousoño, Carlos. *Teoría de la expresión poética*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1985. Print.
- Britto, Clóvis Carvalho. "Hilda Hilst: O Corpo e o *Corpus* na Terceira Margem." In "Dossiê Expressões Artísticas e Mulheres," *Arquivos do CMD*, 2.2. (Jul/Dec 2014): 78-95. Print.

- Clairborne Park, Clara. "The Mother of the Muses: In Praise of Memory." *The Anatomy of Memory: An Anthology*. Ed. James McConkey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- Coelho, Nelly Novaes. "Da poesia." In: *Cadernos de literatura brasileira*, Instituto Moreira Salles: São Paulo, n. 08, outubro de 1999: 66-79. Print.
- Cortázar, Julio. "América Latina: exilio y literatura." *Cuadernos americanos*. 43.257 (1984): 7-14. Print.
- Daiches, David. *Time and the Poet*. Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1965. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy." *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010: 63 - 171. Print.
- García Calvo, Agustín. *Contra el tiempo*. Zamora: Lucina, 1993. Print.
- Garcia dos Santos, Laymert. "Modernidade, Pós-modernidade e Metamorfose da Percepção." *O Pós-Modernismo*. Eds. Guinsburg, J, and Ana Mae Barbosa. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2005. Print.
- de Man, Paul. "The Rhetoric of Temporality." *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. London: Routledge, 2005: 186-228. Print.
- , "Semiology and Rhetoric." *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 2nd Edition. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2010: 1365-1377. Print.
- de Saussure, Ferdinand. "From *Course in General Linguistics*." *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 2nd Edition. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2010: 850-866. Print.
- Duarte, Edson Costa. "Hilda Hilst: Economias estéticas." PhD dissertation. Adviser: Prof. Dr. Alckmar Luiz dos Santos. Florianópolis, Santa Catarina: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. 2006. Print.

Elias, Norbert. *Sobre el tiempo*. Trans. Guillermo Hirata. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010. Print.

Foucault, Michel. "The Discourse of Language." *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986: 148-162. Print.

-----, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1979-1980*. Trans. Graham Burchell. Eds. Michel Senellart, François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.

Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.

Fressia, Alfredo. "El encuentro del canto." Review of *Procura de lo imposible* by Ida Vitale. *El País Cultural*. No. 490. Montevideo. *El País*, March 26, 1999. Web.

-----, "La ética de un canto." Review of *Reducción del infinito* by Ida Vitale. *El País Cultural*. No. 709. Montevideo. *El País*, May 9, 2003. Web.

-----, "La poesía señalada." Review of *Trema* by Ida Vitale. *El País Cultural*. No. 852. Montevideo: *El País*, March 3, 2006: 10. Print.

-----, "Luna llena, tierra vacía." Review of *Mella y criba* by Ida Vitale. *El País Cultural*. No. 1107. Montevideo: *El País*, February 18, 2011: 8. Print.

Friedrich, Hugo. *The Structure of Modern Poetry: from the Mid-Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974. Print.

Fumaneri, Maria Luísa Carneiro. "Vencer a morte: uma leitura crítica de *Da morte. Odes mínimas*, de Hilda Hilst." In: *Travessias*. Vol. 5, No. 1. 2011. Web. Oct. 4, 2014.

García Calvo, Agustín. *Contra el tiempo*. Zamora: Lucina, 1993. Print.

García Pinto, Magdalena. *Women Writers of Latin America: Intimate Histories*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Print.

Gimbernat González, Ester. “la distancia de lo real: de exilios y ciudades en poemas de Vitale y Futoransky.” *Revista destiempos.com* Año 4. Número 20: 2-13. Web.

Grando, Cristiane. “Pela estrada das *Odes Mínimas*, de Hilda Hilst.” In *Antares: Letras e Humanidades* 6.11. Jan-Jun 2014: 4-15. Print.

Guido, Humberto. “Pessimismo metafísico e sensibilidade poética: algumas aproximações entre a filosofia e a poesia de Hilda Hilst.” In: *Roteiro Poético De Hilda Hilst*. Eds. Cintra, Elaine C, and Enivalda Nunes Freitas e Souza. Uberlândia, Minas Gerais: Editora da Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (EDUFU), 2009. Print.

Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Print.

Hampl, Patricia. “Memory and Imagination.” *The Anatomy of Memory: An Anthology*. Ed. James McConkey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Hausheer, Herman. “St. Augustine’s Conception of Time.” *The Philosophical Review*. 46.5 (1937): 503-512. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. Print.

-----, *On Time and Being*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. Print.

-----, *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany, N.Y: Excelsior, 2010. Print.

Helder, D.G. “Prólogo” in *La ley tu ley*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2000: 11-17. Print.

- Hilst, Hilda. "Palestra com Hilda Hilst." Interview by Alcântara Silveira. *Jornal de Letras*, Rio de Janeiro. Feb. 1952. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 21-23. Print.
- . "O sofrido camino da criação artística, segundo Hilda Hilst." Interview by Delmiro Gonçalves. *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo. Aug. 3, 1957. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 29-35. Print.
- . "Um diálogo com Hilda Hilst." Interview by Nelly Novaes Coelho. In: Coelho, N. N. et al. *Femenino singular: a participação da mulher na literatura brasileira contemporânea*, São Paulo: GRD; Rio Claro, SP: Arquivo Municipal, 1989b. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 111-137. Print.
- . "Hilda Hilst: um coração em segredo." Interview by Inês Mafra. *Nicolau* 51.VII, Curitiba, Nov.- Dec., 1993. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 147-155. Print.
- . "Potlatch, a maldição de Hilda Hilst." Interview by José Castello. *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, Oct. 30, 1994. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 157-163. Print.
- . "Hilda Hilst." Interview by Bruno Zeni. *Cult* 12, São Paulo, July 1998: 6-13. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 175-181. Print.
- . "Das sombras – entrevista." Interview by various authors. *Cadernos de literatura brasileira* 8. Instituto Moreira Salles, São Paulo, October 1999. In *Fico besta quando me entendem:*

- entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 189-215. Print.
- , "Entrevista – Hilda Hilst." Interview by Leila Gouvea. *D.O. Leitura* 5.21. May 2003. In *Fico besta quando me entendem: entrevistas com Hilda Hilst*. Cristiano Diniz, ed. São Paulo: Biblioteca Azul, 2013: 231-237. Print.
- , "Das sombras." Interview by *Cadernos de literatura brasileira*. *Cadernos de literatura brasileira*, Instituto Moreira Salles: São Paulo, n. 08, outubro de 1999. pp. 25-41.
- , *Júbilo, memória, noviciado da paixão*. São Paulo: Globo Editora, 2001. Print.
- , *Da morte: Odes mínimas*. São Paulo: Editora Globo, 2003. Print.
- Huidobro, Vicente. *Altazor, Or, a Voyage in a Parachute: Poem in VII Cantos (1919)*. Bilingual Edition. Trans. Eliot Weinberger. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2003. Print.
- Husserl, Edmund, and James S. Churchill. *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964. Print.
- Jackson, Richard. *The Dismantling of Time in Contemporary Poetry*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Women's Time." Trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake. *Chicago Journals: Signs* 7.1 (Autumn, 1981): 13-35. Print
- Lafforgue, Jorge. "Notas sobre Juana Bignozzi" in *La ley tu ley*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2000: 3-10. Print.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Proper Names*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Lyotard, Jean-François. "Ecology as Discourse of the Secluded." In: *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Ed. Laurence Coupe. London: Routledge, 2000.

Print.

Malinowska, Barbara. *Dynamics of Being, Space, and Time in the Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz and John Ashbery*. New York: P. Lang, 2000. Print.

Martins, Fernando Cabral. *Dicionário de Fernando Pessoa e do Modernismo Português*. Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 2008. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Milán, Eduardo. "Sueños de la constancia de Ida Vitale." *Vuelta* 13.146 (1989): 47-49. Print.

-----, "Léxico de afinidades de Ida Vitale." *Vuelta*. 18.217 (1994): 48. Print.

Moret, Zulema. "El exilio interior: la poética de Juana Bignozzi." *Confluencia*. 13.1 (1997): 3-13. Print.

Motanaro, Pablo and Luis Raúl Calvo. "Juana Bignozzi: Creo en el oficio del poeta." *Revista generación abierta*. Web.

Nigro, Mariella. "Una lectura de *Trema*, de Ida Vitale." *H enciclopedia*. Web. 21 Jan 2015.

Nunes, Benedito. *O Tempo na narrativa*. Sao Paulo: Atica, 1995. Print.

Olivera-Williams, Maria R. "La Década Del 70 En El Cono Sur: Discursos Nostálgicos Que Recuerdan La Revolución Y Escriben La Historia." *Romance Quarterly*. 57.1 (2010): 43-62. Print.

Olson, Paul R. "Time and Essence in a Symbol of Juan Ramón Jiménez." *MLN* 73.2 (1963): 169-193. Print.

Ortega, Julio. "Jardín de sílice de Ida Vitale." *Vuelta* 4.48 (1980): 42-43. Print.

Paz, Octavio. *El arco y la lira: El poema. La revelación poética. Poesía e historia*. México:

Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972. Print.

-----. *Los hijos del limo: Del romanticismo a la vanguardia*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974. Print.

-----. *La otra voz: poesía y fin de siglo*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1990. Print.

Pécora, Alcir. Introduction. *Da morte. Odes mínimas*. By Hilda Hilst. São Paulo: Editora Globo,

2003. 7-10. Print.

Perelli, Carina. "El poder de la memoria, la memoria del poder." *Represión, exilio y democracia:*

La cultura uruguaya. Ed. Saúl Sosnowski. Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1987: 319-333. Print.

Predmore, Richard L. "El tiempo en la poesía de Antonio Machado." *PMLA* 63.2 (1948): 696-

711. Print.

Proust, Marcel. "From Remembering of Things Past (Time Regained)." *The Anatomy of*

Memory: An Anthology. Ed. James McConkey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Quilian de Vargas, Andrea e Rosani Umbach. "A identidade em questão em *Budapeste*, de Chico

Buarque". *Estação Literária*, Londrina, Vagão-volume 8 parte B (2011): 66-74. Web.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Volume 1.

Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1984. Print.

Rodrigues, Joelma. "Hilda Hilst e a espiral: metáfora para uma poética latino-americana".

Revista de Letras. 45.2. São Paulo, 2005: 135-148. Print.

Sarlo, Beatriz. "Corazón en la tierra." *La Nación: Suplemento Cultural*. *lanacion.com*, Aug 30,

2000. Section 6. Web. 23 April 2015.

Sosa, Víctor. "Obra poética I de Ida Vitale." *Vuelta*. 17.201 (1993): 51-52. Print.

Sosnowski, Saúl. *Borges y la cabala: la búsqueda del verbo*. Buenos Aires: Pades Ediciones, 1986. Print.

Straccali, María Eugenia. "Imágenes poéticas, imágenes pintadas: sobre *Quién hubiera sido pintada* y glosas de Juana Bignozzi." *Literatura: teoría, historia, crítica*. 15.1 enero – junio (2013): 91-111. Print.

-----, "Las poetisas visitan a Andrea del Sarto. El Atlas Mnemosyne de Juana Bignozzi." in *Escrituras compuestas: letras / ciencia / artes*. Ed. Miriam Chiani. Buenos Aires: Katatay Ediciones, 2014: 93-128. Print.

Timm de Souza, Ricardo. "A Filosofia e o Pós-Moderno: Algumas Questões e Sentidos Fundamentais." ." *O Pós-Modernismo*. Eds. Guinsburg, J, and Ana Mae Barbosa. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2005. Print.

Vattimo, Gianni. *Introducción a Heidegger*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 1986. Print.

Villanueva, Alberto. "'Soltar el mirlo': Noticia de lo imposible alcanzado por Ida Vitale." *Hispanamérica*. 31.91 (2002): 111-118. Print.

-----, "Notas sobre *Reducción del infinito* de Ida Vitale." *Hipertexto*. 4 (2006): 148-154. Print.

-----, "La brasa en el centro del sueño: Anotaciones sobre la poesía última de Ida Vitale." *Cuadernos Americanos* (México). 20.117 (2006): 175-190. Print.

-----, "*En idiomas cantan diferentes*": *Notas sobre poesía contemporánea*. Montevideo, Uruguay: Vintén Editor, 2009. Print.

Vitale, Ida. *Sueños de la constancia*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988. Print.

-----, *Procura de lo imposible*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998. Print.

- , "Ida Vitale y Enrique Fierro: Léxico de afinidades mexicanas." Interview with Daniel González Dueñas and Alejandro Toledo. *Versoconverso: Poetas entrevistan poetas*. Ed. José Ángel Leyva. México: Ediciones Alforja, 2001. Print.
- , *Reducción del infinito*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2002. Print.
- , *Trema*. Valencia: Editorial Pre-Textos, 2005. Print.
- , *Léxico de afinidades*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2012. Print.
- Wetzel, James. "Time After Augustine." *Religious Studies*. 31.3 (1995): 341-357. Print.
- Wheeler, Michael. "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition). Ed. Edward N. Zalta.
- Zambrano, María. *Filosofía y poesía*. [1939] México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996. Print.