The New New Man: (Re)Articulations of Masculinity in Post-Revolutionary Cuba

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THE NEW NEW MAN: (RE)ARTICULATIONS OF MASCULINITY IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

By

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THE NEW NEW MAN: (RE)ARTICULATIONS OF MASCULINITY IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

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This dissertation explores the way masculinity was constructed and rearticulated during Revolutionary and Post-revolutionary Cuba. I analyze how the New Man was constructed discursively and visually through official documents such as speeches, magazines, comics, etc. produced by the government. Through the analysis of Reinaldo Arenas’s *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, Senel Paz’s *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, and Abel González Melo’s *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)* I demonstrate how these texts engage with official discourse in order to create new expressions/possibilities of masculinity. Highlighting key elements of the three narratives, including productivity, specters of the countryside, silence, quiet and invisibility, I trace a literary and critical history of the Revolution through gender and sexuality.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project focuses on three Cuban texts, *Arturo la Estrella más brillante*, *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, and *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)* from the 1980’s, 1990’s, and 2000’s respectively, and examines the ways these texts interpret and rearticulate the discursively and visually constructed notion of the New Man which was held as the standard for citizens of the Revolution. I argue that since this model propagated in the 1960’s as the future, the ideal citizen of the Revolution never came to fruition. These texts are able to articulate a different way of being a New Man that is often critical of the previous ideal. 1980 marked twenty-one years since the triumph of the Revolution; therefore, it would have been expected that the generation of New Men, born with the Revolution, would have materialized. The fact that they did not and that the efforts put into constructing the New Man were, for all intents and purposes, ineffective, allow these authors to point this out by envisioning a New New Man, creating a narrative of what the New Man ought to have been, or of what the New Man actually was. By incorporating different gender expressions as well as non-hegemonic sexualities, the hegemonic imagery of the New Man, which was defined by a very limited and narrow mode of acceptable gender expression, is turned on its head. The idea of the New Man is central to this analysis because in the early years of the Revolution a relentless campaign prescribed coercive performances of “regulated cultural
fictions,” (522) as Judith Butler calls them, to ensure adherence to the gender roles that the concept of the New Man blatantly depict.¹

Reinaldo Arenas’s, Arturo, la estrella más brillante, published in 1984, is a one-sentence novella that recounts the life of Arturo, the protagonist, in non-sequential order. This narrative is interspersed with Arturo’s own artistic production – a fictional space he is creating for himself and his imagined lover to retire. Much of Arturo’s story takes place in an Unidad Militar de Ayuda a la Producción, commonly referred to as UMAP, a detention center where he has been taken.² He is forced to perform hard labor in the sugarcane harvest because of what the government deems to be a questionable appearance.³ There, the cruelty of his surroundings is evident. Arturo’s response to these atrocities comes in the way of his literary creations; in his writings, he finds a temporary and sometimes ephemeral escape from the world that surrounds him. Arturo’s life story unfolds through flashbacks, through which the narrator explains Arturo’s origins in the countryside, his mother’s death, his siblings’ rejection of him, his homosexuality, his migration to the city, and his eventual arrest. Arturo has never fit into the environment that surrounds him, and once in the UMAP, he understands that in order to have a space for himself, for producing/creating his text, he must perform the role he is expected to

² The UMAPs were centers of “rehabilitation” and “reeducation” where people deemed “counterrevolutionary” owing to their sexual orientation, political or religious ideology, or other aspects deemed inconsistent with the Revolution, were taken. A detailed description of the day-to-day life at the UMAPs can be read in UMAP las gulags castristas, Una muerte a Plazo, and Conducta impropia. For an official rendition of the purposes of these detention centers, see Granma April 14, 1966.
³ Arturo and his acquaintances are arrested after a cultural event, a piano recital, by a Soviet pianist. The narrator explains that this is common for Arturo’s circle, as men that did not adhere to regulated notions of masculinity were assumed to be homosexuals and arrested for indecency.
embody. This novella challenges the society and the men that the Revolution is creating, and posits Arturo as the only one that has produced something of value.

Senel Paz’s well known novella *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* published in 1990 after receiving the Juan Rulfo prize, tells the story of David, a son of peasants who because of the Revolution has been given the opportunity to have an education and is pursuing his education at the University of Havana. David feels indebted to the Revolution, to the Party, and is by all accounts a model citizen. The novella begins with David remembering the way he meets Diego, who is at odds with the Revolution because of his homosexuality and the Revolution’s exclusionary practices. Diego is an educated, cultured man who seeks to tutor David into what he defines as the true New Man; one that is inclusive, able to dialogue, not entrenched in blind ideology, and who is rooted in Cuban history and culture. Diego and David are diametrical opposites, and yet, become great friends. Through his friendship with Diego, David begins to question many of the assumptions he and the Revolution hold.

Abel González Melo’s *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)*, published in 2005, is a play that recounts the life of Kárel Darín, who migrates to Havana from the countryside and is forced to earn a living any way he can, sometimes resorting to prostitution and gambling. The play begins on Christmas Eve when Kárel challenges Alejandro Depás to a chess match. Upon Kárel’s triumph, Alejandro informs Kárel that he has no money. In a rage, and a bit of bad luck, Kárel stabs Alejandro, fatally injuring him. The investigation into Alejandro’s death and its consequences unfolds while the play explores the different relationships that exist between Kárel and his uncle, Kárel and Alejandro’s family, and Kárel and the law. This journey through the city reveals an array
of characters who have lost faith in the Revolution, characters who, like Kárel, are doing what they can to survive.

I have chosen these texts because of the way these three text, in a span of three generations, articulate the relation between non-hegemonic masculinities and the hegemonic discourse of the New Man. These three texts in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000’s highlight ongoing relation to the New Man as a gender discourse. Furthermore, the performativity of the language used in each text to highlight the performative gender of the different characters serves as a link between the three generations. Within the greater context of Cuban literature and literary canon, Waldo Pérez Cino argues in his book *El tiempo contraído: canon, discurso y circunstancia de la narrativa cubana (1959-2000)* that there exists two tendencies. On the one hand, the literature an authors that are viewed as central to the cultural climate of the Revolution and who participate within the cultural institutions created by the institutions and therefore who are given a place within Cuban critical tradition, such as Carpentier, and those that do not, such as Arenas and Sarduy. Pérez Cino argues,

Indeed, Arenas and Sarduy’s work has been left outside the oficial tradition for some time. Arenas critique of the government, especially in this novella where he depicts the UMAP, is central to his exclusion. Cino characterizes the years of 1970’s to the late
1980’s as a configuration “tiempo disfuncional y <<doble>> del canon literario Cubano” (171). Cino argues that in the late 1980’s the double discourse of the literary tradition began to change, and so began “una participación sin precedents del ámbito artístico en la discusión pública del proyecto social cubano, y en en una suerte de vuelta a las polémica de los sesenta, del papel del intellectual en la Revolución” (171). Cino points out that this new dialogue will end with a return to “discurso oficial ortodoxo, que se reciclaría pronto en un discurso nacionalista fuerte” (171-172). It is in this climate that Senel Paz’s novella is received. Furthermore, this historical period opens up space for a literature of memory, as Pérez Cino calls it, including titles such as La mala memoria (1989) by Heberto Padilla, Mea Culpa (1992) by Cabrera Infante, and Antes que anochezca (1993) by Reinaldo Arenas. All of which were written in exile. In this sense, Paz’s text can be seen as David’s memoire. By late 1990’s and the first half of the 2000, Pérez Cino describes the turn towards a literature that is “anclada en lo referencial… unas y otras consiguen articular, poner en escena una historia que se sostiene, con hipnótica eficacia, sobre las relaciones entre el cuerpo y la escritura, y que se revieret en el peso que cabe a una consideración sobre los límites del lenguaje y el deseo” (212-213). Much like Antonio José Ponte’s Las comindas profundas, which as Pérez Cino writes, “es una trabada síntesis de géneros...la escritura se deja llevar por las comedas ausentes, va hacia afuera siguiendo su rastro, acude: a otro tiempo, a otro relato; se dispera, siempre centrífuga, en lo otro, y trae de vuelta un nuevo peso a lo trivial o al vacío” (213), Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar) focuses on the lack and emptyness left in the decades following the fall of the Soviet Union.
The starting point for the present study is Ana Serra’s book *The “New Man” in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution*, in which she discerns the ties between political ideology and literary production in the early years of the Revolution. Serra looks at the way literature reflects the goals of the Cuban government, specifically the creation of the New Man. Serra underscores the way literature reflects the discourse of the New Man and helps to propagate said image as the ideal citizen of the Revolution. My analysis departs from where Serra concludes. I am interested in understanding the way in which the discourse of the New Man is appropriated and rearticulated in the decades that follow the Revolution. My interest is not in how the discourse of the New Man was reinforced by cultural and literary production, but rather, how it is interpreted as the Revolution ages. Furthermore, I approach not only the discourse of the New Man but how this discourse creates and makes certain masculinities compulsory.

Lillian Guerra’s book *Vision’s of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistence 1959-1971* details the ways in which the Revolution established itself through the support of mass-media, campaigns, and rallies. By establishing itself, the Revolution promoted the New Man as the citizen of the Revolution and marginalized those that did not fit into the Revolution’s description of its citizens, and those who were critical of said model. Guerra’s excellent analysis and thorough investigation on the first decade of the Cuban Revolution is essential for understanding the role that vigilance of citizens played in order to maintain the discourse of the Revolution. The New Man, according to Guerra, was the result of campaign aimed to quell dissent, and create youth that would ultimately serve the state.
According to Sonia Behar, in *La caída del hombre nuevo*, the fall of the New Man begs the question, “What replaces the model of the New Man?” She suggests that the New Man is replaced by the absured hero, introduced by Albert Camus in *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, the postrevolutionary man, “es un hombre que ha sabido reconocer el carácter absurdo de su tiempo y espacio, pero que de vez en cuando se atreve a lanzar la mirada hacia el futuro aunque se tropiece con la desesperanza” (149). I would argue that this is not always the case. In fact, the three texts that I examine suggest that death or exile is the only means available to these protagonists. There is no possibility of a future in the social space that they inhabit. Therefore, their way of “opting out,” their way of decentralizing the discourse is through the body, its effective erasure via death or exile. The body itself becomes a space to write on, a space inscribed with meaning, a space that is insistently disassociated from the discourse used to mark it, which wants to determine its meaning.

Masculinity is a fairly recent analytic term. The conceptual shift from “manhood/manliness” (hombre) to masculinity (masculinidad) is a product of the scholarship on gender generated by feminism. This change in terminology is significant in so far as it highlights issues of gender as socio-culturally and historically constructed. In other words, men came to be regarded as gendered. Raewyn Connell’s book *Masculinities*, outlines ways in which masculinities are related to one another, the way different masculinities inteact and are contested among each other. This critical and theoretical approach to gender is starkly different from earlier discourses concerned with the “essence” of the male. Within the critical framework of feminist and gender studies, in conjunction with poststructuralist theory, this earlier ontology has been replaced by a critical understanding of gender as a seemingly stable and complex repetition of signs. I
would argue that masculinities are still relevant in the hegemonic spaces of Cuba, where citizenship is defined by inclusion within political institutions, which in turn, for men, is based upon institutionally legitimized form of hegemonic masculinity.⁴

The purpose of my dissertation is to identify and analyze representations of masculinities in a series of late twentieth century and early twenty-first century Cuban literary texts. My interest in masculinities as portrayed in Cuban literary texts, specifically, stems from the unique social conditions of the Revolution that engendered and upheld *el hombre nuevo* as the sole model of hegemonic masculinity by which men were judged, and therefore, the literary responses that this created. More concretely, I would like to focus my research on the relationship between the hegemonic discourse of masculinity and actual manifestations of masculinities, concentrating on the disjunction that exists between the two. Each of the texts I have chosen approaches masculinities differently, and in this analysis, I hope to show multiple Cuban masculinities, the coherence and incoherence of these multiple incarnations, and ultimately why it is still relevant to analyze and study masculinities within the Cuban context. I have chosen to work with texts produced after the Cuban Revolution because they depart from the seemingly cohesive model of hegemonic masculinity advocated by the leaders of the Revolution, which has served to include/exclude participation in the state. In other words, I am interested in the ideal male revolutionary as configured by a series of laws and regulations within Cuba, and more particularly, expressions of masculinities that deviate from this ideal model, the “counter revolutionary” ones, variously labeled “anti-social” or “sick” or anyone whose apperare or cultural interests “deviated” by those legitimized by

⁴ It has been well documented in the documentary *Conducta Impropia* that men who strayed or were perceived to stray from officially sanctioned masculine behavior were often purged from the Communist party, thus denying them access to the fundamental structures of Cuban civil society.
the state. Indeed, the slippage between gender and sexuality deemed non-hegemonic masculinities as necessarily equivalent to homosexuality. In his book, *Del otro lado del espejo: la sexualidad en la construcción de la nación cubana*, Abel Sierra Madero highlights how gender, sexuality, and nation building go hand in hand. Thus, homosexuality is constructed as the adversary of the new nation, and the New Man that was to be its citizen.

In the same ways that Gayle Rubin questions “essential” or “natural” sexuality in her 1984 article “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Theory of Sexuality,” Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* challenges the “inextricable” connection between sex, gender, sexuality, and desire. Butler posits that these are not fixed attributes, “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender… identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (25). By deconstructing the “essential nature” of gender identity, Butler exposes the fabrication and naturalization of sex and gender. The problematic between gender and sexuality that Butler addresses, is evident in the discursive and visual imagining of the New Man of the Cuban Revolution. This homophobic perspective of the Revolution is common place when articulating the characteristics that the New Man harbors.

In order to study masculinities, it is fruitful to think about them as constantly created and maintained through discourse. Ideologies have discursive strategies that help solidify them. Hegemonic masculinity is one type of discourse of power, of a will to

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5 This includes resolutions taken by the Congress on Education and Culture in 1971, Article 73 of the Penal Code, Article 359 of the Penal Code, Articles 23, 24, and 26 of the Youth Code. The latter refer to “social conduct” which are subject to interpretation/personal discretion (Lumsden, p. 60).
power, as well as a way of negating power.\textsuperscript{6} I find it fruitful, when speaking of masculinities, to think of power as defined by Foucault precisely because of manifestations of masculinities, like manifestations of power, according to Foucault, are not unidirectional. It is important to note that in Foucault’s definition, resistance is contained within power, “Where there is power, there is resistance and yet this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power… These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (95). Therefore, when thinking of hegemonic masculinity as a discourse of power, it is necessary to remember that it contains discourses of resistance. Indeed, it is this discourse of resistance in the texts that will be analyzed in this dissertation.

Within the larger theoretical discourse of power, the concept of invisibility proposed by Denilson Lopes in the introduction to Luiz Ruffatos book \textit{Entre Nós}, will be central to my analysis of masculinities. In an age marked by identity politics, which generally focuses on features that render identity visible, Lopes calls for a shift to the invisible. Lopes does not study the phenomenon of invisibility, rather his is a political call. He urges that “a invisibilidade é uma possibilidade de resistência, mais discreta e sutil diante da proliferação das imagens midiáticas em que as ideologias transgressoras são rapidamente transformadas em esteratégias de marketing” (18). Although a discourse of silence can be perceived as a contradiction, it quickly becomes evident in the texts that I am analyzing that silences are marked either by ellipses, spaces separating dialogue, or reactions to the silences of one character by another, and elicit significance within the text. In the introduction to Luiz Ruffato’s book \textit{Entre Nós}, Denilson Lopes urges us: “não ter medo do nada/e do vazio.” Lopes suggests that this creates a politics of

\textsuperscript{6} Others include colonialism, eurocentrism, etc.
ambiguity where silence renders one invisible in a world marked by a constant assault on our senses. Silence and nothingness become a powerful tool that according to Lopes “tem menos que ver com o fascínio romântico pelos marginais do que com a formação de uma subjetividade, uma outra forma de pertencimento” (18-19). I find this concept to be of particular importance in the texts I analyze because of their frequent and marked silences (ellipses, incomplete sentences, and moments of silence from the characters). Lopes posits silences as a political standpoint. These silences are signifiers that contain as much meaning as the words that are being written, therefore, I find it necessary to analyze moments of silence in the construction of masculinities, especially because invisibility becomes desirable when “visibility” becomes an inefficient means of acquiring power; when there has been a saturation of “visibility.” It would seem, then, that Lopes advocates not a discourse that eschews power, but rather one that helps acquire power through different means. That is, acquiring power by positioning oneself outside perceivable discourse. In the case of the texts I analyze, the moments of silence opt for this position by countering the proliferation of images and discourse that endorse the sanctioned model of hegemonic masculinity. How, then, do the silences of the texts function as a tool for eschewing power? What does this suggest about new representations of masculinities that employ silence/invisibility as a strategy of resistance vis-à-vis traditional discourses of hegemonic masculinity, i.e. power?

I have chosen to look at the practice of invisibility because it helps to counterbalance the visibility that arises from ideology, which can be thought of as being constituted through the repetition of a privileged discourse.\(^7\) When thinking of hegemonic

\(^7\) A privileged discourse is one that has institutional and/or social backing. That is, discourses that are promoted as being desirable to a given society.
masculinity as an ideology, the spaces of silence as well as the discursive cues that point to incoherence in models of hegemonic masculinity are paramount in understanding how the illusion of stability can be unraveled. Apparent stability is formed through repetition of signs, practices, or myths that are also crucial elements in understanding the way masculinities perform. This type of study becomes difficult because of the numerous possible combinations at any given time that can construct plausible masculinities. As Todd W. Reeser suggests, “There is no single model that everyone turns to in order to define masculinity and to imitate it when they want to be or to act masculine. There are only innumerable copies of masculinities floating around in culture, copies that can never be brought back to an originary masculinity that invented them” (25). Nevertheless, in a society such as post-revolutionary Cuba there is an obvious privileging of a revolutionary-branded hegemonic masculinity, officially sanctioned and institutionalized. In this case, compliance with this model of hegemonic masculinity defines participation within the state, thus excluding other possible models from “true” definition of hegemonic masculinity. As has been noted by Reeser, ideal models of hegemonic masculinity intend to eliminate ideological contradictions. That is, other models of hegemonic masculinity proposed by different institutions, be they the educational system, the church, sports, etc., are erased or co-opted by the dominant ideal model (28). Furthermore, there are also alternative models and practices in non-traditional public spaces.⁸ In the ideal model of hegemonic masculinity championed in Cuba, hegemonic masculinity was equated with the “el revolucionario” and created its antagonist in forms

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of masculinities that had been discursively separated from this warrior type. This could explain the emphasis on “real men” forming part of the military, performing agricultural work and sports, and equating those that did not participate in these circles as having less masculinity, not measuring up as men of the Revolution.

The relationship between tactics of visibility and invisibility is paramount in this study because of the ubiquitous presence of the visual image of *el hombre nuevo* as it is incarnated by the leaders of the revolution. That is, the iconic images of Ernesto “Che” Guevara plastered throughout the country, who because of his untimely death, will always be represented as a young man, as well as the reels of the emblematic entrance into Havana by bearded men (Che, Fidel Castro, Camilo Cienfuegos) wearing military fatigues, and the continuous imagery of these *revolucionarios* that has become inscribed in the historical consciousness.

Although hegemonic masculinity is relational to “others” (femininity, homosexuality, for example) in order to define itself, for the purposes of this study I find it more fruitful to consider masculinities following Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism as suggested by Todd W. Reeser, and thus to consider it, “not as pure opposition but rather a series of responses with a series of others. Not of a single definition of the other as not me, but a continual process of not me’s, a series of oppositions that never end and that are each slightly different from each other” (41-42). Masculinities are constantly being codified and designed, affected by interactions with others, with notions of ideal masculinity, as well as with self-questioning. These dialogues, be they internal for the characters or externalized by them, inform the construction of masculinities and its

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9 This *revolucionario*, according to Che Guevara’s book *El hombre nuevo*, is “motor ideológico de la revolución dentro de su partido, se consume en esa actividad ininterrumpida que no tiene más fin que la muerte.”
performance within the texts. Furthermore, this approach allows for the possibility of masculinities that change throughout the texts. In doing so, there is a privileging of perceptions and positions, as Reeser point out, “Masculinity has no meaning in itself, but only in the way it is put in dialogue with another and in the way in which it is perceived by someone else (42). Perception is an integral part of all three texts because the protagonists’ performance of gender is constantly being evaluated by others. This palpable "surveillance" over the characters allows them to be characterized as self-aware, and in turn results in the reflection or evaluation of the self vis-à-vis others. These ideological dialogues often result in the performance of masculinities that allows the characters to be perceived as having a degree of agency (i.e. challenging perceptions and postulating the possibility of further dialogue, which could lead to a transformation of initial perceptions).

Thinking in terms of dialogic masculinities helps us to understand how masculinities are perceived and how they are constructed. This is the first issue that must be addressed in order to understand the context of certain masculinities. Furthermore, it helps in understanding the constant changing character of masculinities. The next step in this analysis would be to identify how this change occurs, and if there is a possibility that this constant change leads to new models, new forms, new ways to relate to masculinities. Following Reeser’s focus on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theoretical work, “masculinity would be defined as a series of possibilities, a series of becomings, the potential for new productive movement” (47). Therefore, the movement granted by understanding masculinities as dialogic also permits one to think of masculinities as "a series of becomings, with no progress or linearity” (48). This does not
mean that the process is infinite, since concrete identities are not constantly in the process of becoming. Rather, it concedes enough freedom to think of masculinities as manifestations that have the possibility of creating new meaning and change, disrupting gender stability. However, is this disruption feasible in the texts and contexts that I will be examining, or is the apparent stability of gender too rooted in manifestations of masculinities to allow for such a disruption?

The theoretical breakthroughs achieved by feminism, which focused on the constructed nature of gender, gave rise to two distinct reactions that are known as the Men’s Movement and Masculinity Studies. The first was a backlash against feminism, focusing on the “universal essence” of men, and arguing for the recuperation of this lost “essence.” This way of understanding masculinity has very little resonance in academic discussions of masculinity/ies. Masculinities Studies, on the other hand, adopted the theoretical work of feminist scholars in order to understand the constructed nature of masculinity, and its implications within the discussion of gender. Within Masculinities Studies, as explained by Rebecca Biron, “studies tend to divide the topic into two general theoretical approaches. Some attend more to the individual life experiences and the explanations of their effects on gender offered by object-relations theory; others rely more on the analysis of gender as an effect of language and social representation” (11). This dissertation will be focused on the latter.

Masculinity research in Latin America began in the 1980s by describing men as having and producing gender (27). Most of the work done on men and masculinities in Latin America has been mainly anthropological, sociological, and psychological,
focusing on individual life experience. More recently, studies of masculinities in Latin America focusing on the literary text have begun to surface. The literary text offers a space where a multiplicity of discourses is brought into play. If literature is considered a field, in Bourdieu’s sense, where struggles for legitimacy take place, then the characters and discourses present can be thought of as agents in terms of Bourdieu’s explanation, “a field is a field of force within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they take with respect to the field, these position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field” (39). In terms of masculinities, the texts under consideration, which use different aesthetics, narrative strategies, and ideologies, attempt to redefine the system of identity and they propose to (1) invalidate traditional discourses of hegemonic masculinity (2) broaden the scope of “acceptable masculinities” (3) create subjects that are characterized by their ability to act with agency through performative acts of gender in movement and change. These propositions are in direct dialogue with deeply rooted popular/traditional Cuban masculinities, stereotypes such as “el macho guajiro,” “bravero”, “guapo”, “pingú”, “caballo”, “yegua”, “toro”, “pájaro”, “chulo”, which have been popularly defined by the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. I will analyze how these taxonomies are hybridized; I will deconstruct these stereotypes and propose a review of this terminology.

Notions of masculinities are further complicated by the contrast that Latin American literature since modernism has created between hegemonic, popular, and “artistic” models of masculinity. That is, the artist during modernism became a separate

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10 Viveros Vigoya, 27.
11 See Álvarez, Mavis.
model for representing masculinity, often taking on qualities that were rejected by popular discourses of hegemonic masculinity. This split is especially important when dealing with *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* because of the clear difference that exists in the way the protagonist/writer/artist defines his own masculinity versus that of those who surround him, who are excluded from his vision because of their inability to be thought of as anything that could resemble an artist. In the other texts, the figure of the “artist” or the “cultural elite,” is part of the dialogue surrounding masculinities; however, its configuration is unique to each text. In *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, he is embodied by Diego, who recovers “lost” Cuban artists that help illustrate his vision of patriotic, productive, and yet alternative non-macho masculinity. It is no coincidence that the rise of this alternative model of the artist takes place during the turn of the nineteenth century when master narratives were being called into question.

The apparent stability of dominant hegemonic masculinity can be constantly called into question at an individual level, having no repercussions on the stability of the hegemonic discourse. However, as Biron has pointed out, “masculinity becomes fragile and strained when the relationship between being male and having masculinity is strained, and individuals must struggle to identify with the master signifier of masculine” (13). I argue that the texts I have chosen reveal this fragile and strained relationship. Furthermore, I will analyze the subtle ways in which masculinities are constructed dialogically by analyzing the way the characters grapple with this incompatibility with the master signifier through their interactions with, and responses to others. Moreover,

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12 See Molloy, Sylvia.
this strained relationship allows for gender agency through constantly changing individual performances of gender that evoke continual movement.\textsuperscript{13}

The texts with which I have chosen to work, \textit{Arturo, la estrella más brillante} by Reinaldo Arenas, \textit{El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo} by Senel Paz, and \textit{Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)} by Abel González Melo, were published in 1984, 1990, and 2005, respectively. These dates are critical to the study of the texts precisely because of the ways privileged hegemonic masculinity is conceived and articulated during the course of these decades. By 1971, an institutionalized discourse equating the revolutionary with hegemonic masculinity was well on its way. The revolutionary was defined in opposition to the “counter-revolutionary” who was demasculinized, through the traditional opposition of masculinity/homosexuality. This discourse piggybacked on the historical constructions of hegemonic masculinity associated with the military soldier, which took root during the Cuban wars of independence in the nineteenth century when hegemonic masculinity was defined in opposition to effeminacy. This is evident in Manuel Cruz’s \textit{Cromitos cubanos}, as well as in José Martí’s \textit{Nuestra América}.\textsuperscript{14} As Emilio Bejel notes in \textit{Gay Cuban Nation}, “At the

\textsuperscript{13} By agency, I am referring to the possibility of stepping out of hegemonic models without being persecuted. Thus agency refers to the ability to live one’s life as one wishes, and in doing so contesting how others see one and/or the world. This agency inevitably points to an opening in “tolerated” masculinities. In other words, masculinities that are not necessarily criminalized but not promoted as ideal models either.

\textsuperscript{14} In “Nuestra América,” Martí accuses effeminate men whom he associates with Eurocentrism, in contrast to the vigorous masculinity of those who fought for independence: “A los siememesinos sólo les faltará el valor. Los que no tienen fe en su tierra son hombres de siete meses. Porque les falta el valor a ellos, se lo niegan a los demás. No les alcanza al árbol difícil el brazo canijo, el brazo de uñas pintadas y pulsera, el brazo de Madrid o de París, y dicen que no se puede alcanzar el árbol. Hay que cargar los barcos de esos insectos dañinos, que le roen el hueso a la patria que los nutre. Si son parisienses o madrileños, vayan al Prado, de faroles, o vayan a Tortoni, de sorbetes. ¡Estos hijos de carpinteros, que se avergüenzan de que su padre sea carpintero! ¡Estos nacidos en América, que se avergüenzan, porque llevan delantal indio, de la madre que los crió, y reniegan, ¡brbones!, de la madre enferma, y la dejan sola en el lecho de las enfermedades! Pues, ¿quién es el hombre? ¿el que se queda con la madre, a curarle la enfermedad, o el que la pone a trabajar donde no la vean, y vive de su sustento en las tierras podridas, con el gusano de corbata, maldiciendo del seno que lo cargó, paseando el letrero de traidor en la espalda de la casaca de papel? ¡Estos
end of the nineteenth century, the image of the military hero, far from having been displaced by that of the productive, home-dwelling citizen, was still at its peak during the wars of independence against Spain that started in 1868 and did not reach their conclusion until 1898” (3-4). The privileged model of hegemonic masculinity that is predicated on war and politics, necessary in order to sustain institutions such as the military, is revitalized at the outset of the Cuban Revolution. Models such as the ones articulated by Manuel Cruz at the turn of the nineteenth century are echoed in the late 1960’s when male homosexuality was connected to pre-Revolutionary excess and bourgeois culture. In 1965 Samuel Feijóo remarked, “No homosexual [can represent] the revolution, which is a matter for men, of fists and not feathers, of courage and not trembling,” and Fidel Castro claimed that the leaders of the Revolution “would never come to believe that a homosexual could embody the conditions and requirements of conduct that would enable us to consider him a true Revolutionary, a true Communist militant. According to Lockwood, Castro said “a deviation of that nature clashes with the concept we have of what a militant Communist must be” (124). These are part of the official discourse that defined the Revolution, the men of the revolution in opposition to

hijos de nuestra América, que ha de salvarse con sus indios, y va de menos a más; estos desertores que piden fusil en los ejércitos de la América del Norte, que ahoga en sangre a sus indios, y va de más a menos! ¡Estos delicados, que son hombres y no quieren hacer el trabajo de hombres! Pues el Washington que les hizo esta tierra ¿se fue a vivir con los ingleses, a vivir con los ingleses en los años en que los veía venir contra su tierra propia? ¡Estos “increíbles” del honor, que lo arrastran por el suelo extranjero, como los increíbles de la Revolución francesa, danzando y relamiéndose, arrastraban las erres!”

Cruz uses Julián del Casal to exemplify what he calls “the unmanly man,” “who does not devote his life to action nor his pen to seducing women”. Cruz pathologizes Casal’s character because he is too home oriented, not a proper space for the “viril man”: war and politics. According to Ian Lumsden in *Machos, Maricones, and Gays. Cuba and Homosexuality*, p.65; the notion of homosexuality being a bourgeois phenomenon was inherited from Stalinist ideology and “found fertile ground in Cuba, given its own traditional prejudices and the universal belief of Cuban doctors, psychiatrists, and lawyers that homosexuality entailed crime and social delinquency. “

Female homosexuality is all but ignored, and does not seem to pose a threat to the ideals of the Revolution in the same ways that male homosexuality does.

homosexual men which compounded with institutionalized purges of homosexuals following “Resolución Número 3 of the consejo de Cultura, the edict used to fire homosexual artists from their jobs and force them to do manual labor;” in 1965 the Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP) were instituted to “rehabilitate individuals whose attitudes and behaviors were perceived as being nonconformist, self-indulgent, and unproductive.” 17 By the time *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* was written, the male homosexual had been discursively constructed as outcast, and in many instances factually expelled from the revolution’s institutions.18

By the 1980’s this state sanctioned construct of masculinity was the most legitimate model of masculinity. However, contradictions in relation to male homosexuality abounded; in 1979, homosexuality was decriminalized as a private act while the prohibition of public homosexuality continued.19 But, what sets the last two decades of the century apart is the looming and eventual fall of the Soviet Union, and the economic, political, and cultural implications this had on Cuba. Kaja Silverman, reflecting on Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, states that, “historical trauma represents an attempt to conceptualize how history sometimes manages to interrupt or even deconstruct what a society assumes to be its master narrative” (55). For Cuba, the

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Productivity, as understood within socialism, as a marker of masculinity is part of the discourse of the Revolution that harks back to Guevara’s conceptualization of the new man, where he points out “la fuerza viril de nuestros trabajadores [cubanos] cortando caña con amor” (10).
18 “Homosexuality was to become a major concern at the first National Congress on Education and Culture, which took place in 1971. After it had examined the “antisocial” character of homosexuality and had recognized its “sociopathological” nature, the Congress resolved “that all manifestation of homosexual deviation” were to be firmly rejected and prevented from spreading. Specifically, the Congress resolved that “notorious homosexuals” Should be denied employment in any institution that had an influence upon youth. It further resolved that homosexuals should not be allowed to represent Cuba in cultural activities abroad. Finally, it was agreed that severe penalties should be applied to those responsible for corrupting the morals of minors, to “irremediable antisocial elements” Ministerio de Educación, *Memorias*, p.203 (cited in Lumsden, 73). This reaction stems from the idea that, “En nuestra sociedad, juega un gran papel la juventud, por ser la arcilla maleable con que se puede construir al hombre nuevo” (Guevara 33).
19 Lumsden, 82.
fall of the Soviet Union can be understood as a “historical trauma” from which new discourses arose.\textsuperscript{20} It is in this climate that Senel Paz’s *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* is written, questioning and reconfiguring the master signifier of hegemonic masculinity through its fragmentation into masculinities based on a variety of performances. Furthermore, the generation to which Paz belongs was born and educated under the revolution, whose outlook had been defined by the narrative of the revolution as it was imparted through schools, universities, and civic institutions. Therefore, it was perhaps this generation that was most affected by this historic trauma and the implications of the relative collapse of its master narrative.

The fall of the Soviet Union for Cuba led to a decade denominated “special period during times of peace” which dealt with the devastating economic consequences ravaging the country. Government institutions focused on the hardship of daily life and finding ways to alleviate the situation. This does not mean that the definition of hegemonic masculinity, as it had been continuously articulated against a “others,” changed, but it did mean that the attention toward this discourse was perhaps less on the forefront, institutionally speaking. The vigor with which this brand of hegemonic masculinity had been “defended” began to decrease, perhaps because of the economic situation of the country; or perhaps as a result of thirty years of accumulated discourse and practice defining masculinity had secured the apparent stability of the master signifier; or a combination of both.\textsuperscript{21} This was coupled with the creation of El Centro Nacional de

\textsuperscript{20} A new master narrative needed to be created that would explain a world where the Soviet Union no longer existed, the Cold War was no longer a reality, and Cuba’s role within this new world. This conceptual shift will affect approximations to understanding, which includes masculinities.

\textsuperscript{21} Although the health of the economy had been discursively coupled with the productivity in the fields, which has been tied to a productive Cuban masculinity, it is clear that the economic support by the Soviet
Educación Sexual (CENESEX) in 1989, and its increased role in the decades that followed.22 By the time *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)* was published, the narrative sustaining the revolutionary model of hegemonic masculinity had begun to deteriorate because of an increase in the possibility of other possible masculinities. This, I argue, is due to the fact that the imagery of *el hombre nuevo* is no longer visually sustainable. That is, the leaders of the revolution who are the visual cues for this discourse are aging. The visual signs of aging, which traditionally connote weakness, disintegration, and decreased virility necessarily affect the hegemonic model of masculinity. This is especially true for those who grew up in the later stages of the revolution because their contemporary vision of the Revolution’s leaders was always that of aging men. Thus, the twenty-first century brings about new concerns, problematizations, and conceptualizations of masculinities which I will deal with in my analysis.

The rest of the chapters will highlight the discursive construction of masculinity within the Revolution and examin how all three texts dialogue with this discourse, as follows:

*Chapter 2: (Re)creating the New Man: Construcing Gender in Revolutionary Cuba*

This chapter outlines the visual and discursive construction of the New Man in Cuba. Examining speeches, books, and images in magazines, of the first years of the Cuban Revolution, the chapter details the gendered aspect of the New Man. Through an

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22 According to the director of CENESEX, Mariela Castro, part of the role of this Center is to “CENESEX’s mission is to contribute to “the development of a culture of sexuality that is full, pleasurable and responsible, as well as to promote the full exercise of sexual rights.”
examination of archives of the period, the chapter traces the ways the New Man was initially represented discursively and how the gaps in discourse were filled with cartoons and images that completed the conceptualization of the New Man and placed him as the hegemonic masculinity to which citizens were to aspire.

Chapter 3: Work, Productivity, and Performance

This chapter focuses on the pillars that characterize the New Man, specifically on his role as part of the economy of the country. It examines these pillars and the way they are reimagined in the three texts, *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* (1984), *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* (1990), and *Chamaco: diez capítulos (para representar)*. Each text redefines the notions of work, productivity, and performance as they pertain to its protagonists. In doing so, they reveal inconsistencies in the discourse of the Revolution, propose non-hegemonic ways to engage said discourse, but also fall into the pitfalls of reproducing a hegemonic discourse.

Chapter 4: Specter of the Countryside

This chapter focuses on the duality that exists between the countryside and the city in Cuba, and the double-discourse describing the countryside as both a place that is “authentically” Cuban and also “barbaric” and in need of modernization. All three texts are examined in this chapter, as the protagonists of all of them make the move from countryside to city. The study of private and public spaces, as well as space and place as outlined by Michele De Certeau, related to performance of gender. The chapter highlights how masculinity is created and performed within each place/space and the changes it undergoes in order to navigate the city and the countryside.

Chapter 5: Quiet, Silence, and Invisitiblity
This chapter examines agency and the lack of agency. Drawing on Kevin Quashie’s book *Sovereignty of Quiet*, I consider how gender and agency are intertwined with notions of quiet, silence, and invisibility. This chapter examines all three texts, highlighting spaces of quiet, silence, and invisibility, that both the characters and the texts inhabit, and how they help shape a discourse of non-hegemonic masculinities. Issues of invisibility hark back to Chapter 2, where the visual archive of magazines is explored. Indeed, Chapter 5’s focus on invisibility serves as a sharp contrast to the barrage of images representing the ideal New Man of the Revolution, that permeates the pages of magazines intended for men and women, children and adults.
Chapter 2
(Re)creating the New Man: Constructing Gender in Revolutionary Cuba

1959 marked a shift in the political landscape of Latin America. With the Cuban Revolution, there emerged a discourse that proposed new political, social and cultural identities. The Cuban Revolution fashioned itself and its society, with its leaders taking upon themselves the redefinition of how people should fit into this new society. The past, associated with the rule of Batista, was discarded as decadent, and the revolution went about distancing itself from this recent history. In defining the revolution, the leaders also came to define the revolutionary, the men and women that were the standard bearers of the new society. Thus, new gender models had to be created, models that opposed those of the recent past. The Cuban revolution presents a clear moment in history where gender construction is rendered visible through official newspapers and magazines, as well as speeches by Fidel Castro and books such as Che Guevara’s *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba*. My purpose here is to trace how the concept of the New Man in Cuba comes about and is manifested through visual imagery, so that I may then analyze the gender models that were produced. This dissertation aims to explore the lasting effects of the construction of masculinity as it was imagined through the discourse of the New Man. The analysis of the three texts, Arenas’ *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, Paz’s *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, and Gónzalez Melo’s *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)*, serves to highlight how rooted the discourse of the New Man was, as it reverberated through these three generations of literature, and how by engaging with notions of gender these texts are able to rearticulate the concept of the New Man in order to present alternative expressions of masculinity.
Although Che Guevara’s conceptualization of the New Man was formulated specifically for the socio-historical process he was addressing in Cuba, the term itself was surely not coined by him. According to Jean Claire, “The notion of the creation or recreation of a New Man was expressed in Christian faith, through the Gospel of John and Paul: the unique sacrifice of Christ that permitted [spiritual] regeneration of the human species” (19). Therefore, this idea of renovation, of creating a New Man that leaves behind a degenerate past, is an ever-present idea in western Judeo-Christian society. During periods of revolution, which by definition seek to break away from the past, there emerges the need for a different future, which the New Man is charged with bringing into being. Claire notes that unlike the spiritual revolution and renovation attributed to the Christian New Man, the trauma of the first World War beckons a renewal in Europe which, coupled with scientific notions of the times, would give rise to the idea of a New Man based in physicality. This was the case “in Nazism – and Fascism to a lesser degree – and socialism, [marked by] the sacrifice of men declared ‘inferior,’ ‘degenerate,’ or ‘irrecoverable,’ ‘under-men’ or class enemies, who would die by the millions in the Nazi and Soviet camps, or simply of hunger or deprivation” (Claire, 19).

The 1930s saw a resurgence in the narrative of the New Man as the savior of the nation; the ideal citizen which a society striving to renovate itself should aim to produce. This model was employed in moments of historical change, when the need to renovate and regenerate society, leaving behind the “old degenerate world” seemed necessary. As Laura Bossi argues in Clair’s *The making of the New Man*, “The making of a New Man

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23 Ana Serra mistakenly attributes the coinage of the expression “the New Man” to Che Guevara (p.1)
24 Although this idea might be present in other traditions, I am focusing on Western Judeo-Christian society because of the significance of this tradition for the leader of the Cuban Revolution.
was a recurring theme in the thirties. None of these attempts were successful; they all led to immense tragedies. The ideal of the New Man engendered deportation, the Gulag, concentration camps, forced sterilization of the mentally ill, “euthanasia” for the sick and the weak, and the extermination of Jews and Gypsies” (36). The body coupled with a fixed sense of a masculinity that was the “natural” expression of said body, became the locus for the narrative of the New Man. Thus, gender was burdened with the task of reflecting the corporal characteristics congruent with politics (i.e. youthful, virile, militaristic, strong, etc.). This narrative prescribed a type of body that conformed to and mirrored the political discourse of the time, and thus, espoused the elimination of individual traits that did not correspond to the envisioned image.

The propagation of the rhetoric of the New Man in Cuba closely emulates these predecessors and like them it casts an ideal image of the revolutionary that the citizenry had to emulate. Che’s conceptualization of the New Man in Cuba, consciously or unconsciously, takes elements from historical predecessors (Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Franco’s Spain). Although fundamentally different in the way that it is theorized, there is the same trust in technology and science as a tool for modernization in Cuban society as there is in the construction of the New Man in the 1930s. That is to say, the rhetoric of modernization that believes in the technification of society for its advancement, put into operation in the 1930, is still latent in the political discourse of Revolutionary Cuba. Furthermore, there are clear similarities between the ways the New Man is theorized in both historical periods. In the futurist manifesto, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti called for “il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei liberatori, le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna.” As the leader of
the futurists he spoke for the group saying “noi canteremo le grandi folle agitate dal lavoro, dal piacere o dalla sommossa.” The cult of virility, aggressiveness, and violence is echoed in Che’s attitudes regarding the inherent and necessary violence of revolution and the need to have militarized men ready to defend the homeland. The implementation of a new ideological system in Cuba follows the same path described by Claire for the totalitarian regimes of Europe,

A series of mechanisms was quickly established...: the framing of the individual within the mass; the divination of the leader; the perfect model of the New Man as a figure to be worshiped; the creation of an original pedagogy; the enrollment from childhood in paramilitary organizations; propaganda and indoctrination; remodeling of physical and moral qualities; exaltation of hero figures, athletes, and warriors; enhancement of the body through athleticism, and so forth. (189)

The creation of an original pedagogy is posited by Guevara as he states the clear need to reeducate the next generation in ways the leadership sees fit. In Socialismo y el hombre en Cuba Guevara writes, “Para construir el comunismo, simultáneamente con la base material, hay que hacer al hombre nuevo.” It is notable that according to the author, the new man has to be “made” “hay que hacer el hombre nuevo”. The qualities of the New Man are not inherent to him, rather they must be learned and it is the task of the revolutionary leaders, “la vanguardia” as Che refers to them, to create this new man. In El socialismo y el hombre nuevo, Guevara outlines the qualities of the New Man of the revolution. He emphasizes youthfulness, “La juventud es la arcilla maleable con que se puede construir al hombre nuevo. Su educación es cada vez más completa y no olvidemos su integración al trabajo desde los primeros instantes” (26). His focus on youth and able bodies that carry out physical work is later coupled with the symbols that

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represent them, “el estudio, el trabajo y el fusil” (Guevara, 108). These three elements constitute the remodeling of physical and moral qualities that will give rise to the New Man. Guevara highlights this when speaking at the anniversary of the youth organization in 1962, “La Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas tiene que definirse por una sola palabra: ‘vanguardia’. Ustedes, compañeros, deben ser la vanguardia de todos los movimientos, los primeros en estar dispuestos en los sacrificios que la revolución demande, cualquiera que sea la índole de estos sacrificios; los primeros en el trabajo, los primeros en el estudio, los primeros en la defensa del país” (109). These sacrifices will lead to the change in society and give rise to a society of New Men. Guevara draws a clear distinction between the leaders of the revolution and the masses (for whom the revolution is intended). He sees the leaders as the educators of the people. This is a top down system, where the top (few) know, or believe they know, what is best for the bottom, and “educates” them in revolution/ideology. According to Ana Serra, “Given that the Cuban state invested a great deal of its power on defining discursive limits and providing models of identity, one can consider the revolutionary leaders and policymakers as leading emissaries of the discourse on the New Man, while the often invoked ‘masses’ were its recipients” (3). The New Man is created, educated, and formed; he does not come to revolutionary consciousness on his own. This reeducation is visible throughout the country, through literacy programs, and the building of boarding schools that incorporated technical education, ideological education, athletic education, and

agricultural work in the fields.\textsuperscript{27} The literacy campaign in 1961 successfully reduced illiteracy in Cuba. Its lessons were, as documented in \textit{Conducta Impropia} by Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez-Leal, highly ideological, correlating letters to figures, aspects of the Revolution (i.e. “c” for Castro, “m” for Marx, “s” for Socialism). The initiation or incorporation into literacy was marked by a clear ideology. \textit{La Juventud} narrates the logical transition that occurred from this campaign towards the boarding school system,

El Che, como Martí y como Marx quería que no fuéramos solamente productores de artículos y materias primas, sino que fuéramos a la vez productores de hombres. Para esto era necesario vincular el estudio y el trabajo en un solo amor, en un solo esfuerzo creador. Y se logra por primera vez en 1960, cuando los alfabetizadores comparten durante el día las faenas de los que luego, por la noche, enseñarían a leer y escribir. Dos años después, estos mismos alfabetizadores, ya convertidos en becados, ponen a prueba de nuevo su entusiasmo y marchan a la recogida de café. … Y como culminación, en 1966, alrededor de 20 000 estudiantes de Camagüey, trabajan durante 35 días en las Granjas del Pueblo de su provincia. De esta exitosa experiencia surgió la Escuela al Campo, que elija a los estudiantes de la enseñanza media al trabajo agrícola…La Escuela en el Campo que además de un alto rendimiento docente, permite a los jóvenes, como quería el Che, como quería Marx, como quería Martí: crecer y hacer crecer “con el trabajo que sale de sus manos.”\textsuperscript{28}

Schools were described as “el taller donde surge el hombre nuevo,” because they were, in fact, where the new generation was being molded to fit the image of the New Man. After Che’s death, his image is transformed into the ideal. Unlike Fidel, in death Che remains eternally youthful. This becomes a powerful tool for the imagery of the Revolution which plasters representations of Guevara throughout the country.\textsuperscript{29} This focus is signaled by

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28} It is notable that there is a reiteration of the historic line drawn between Martí, Marx, and Guevara. The Revolution created a historical tradition that links these figures, and grounds itself as the process which inherits this historical progression.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Most notable is Guevara’s silhouette on the façade of the Ministry of the Interior building at la Plaza de la Revolución.
\end{itemize}
Fidel Castro’s speech after Guevara’s death and emulated by the slogan pronounced by children all around Cuba, “seremos como el Che”.

The New Man of Cuba was to serve society above self-interest. Above all, he would be productive. Productivity becomes the pillar that upholds this gendered model. This productive work is often defined by manual labor, such as working the fields, which leads to the development of “volunteer work,” where the population is required to work the land (cane cutting, sowing the land, harvesting coffee and other foodstuffs). This has two purposes: on the one hand, it helps to cultivate the land and to develop the internal economy and on the other hand, it “educates” the citizens of the revolution, molding them into the citizens for whom the government calls. Being productive implied working for the progress of the Revolution. The implications for the intellectual and the artist become clear in Fidel Castro’s 1961 speech “Palabras a los intelectuales,” where he lays out the need to have politically engaged intellectuals that promote the Revolution. According to Castro, the job of the intellectual was to help educate the people. Artistic production and, consequently, the worth of the artist within the Revolution, were measured using this definition.

This recycled version of the New Man, defined by some of the same criteria as the New Man of the 1930s, is coupled with a clear imagery of the revolutionary fighters of the Sierra Maestra which is reiterated visually and discursively. The imagery of these men with their beards and fatigues that marked their time in the struggle and its constant and continuous reiteration become a hallmark of the Revolution. The men of the Revolution, the New Man that was to come about from this Revolution, had to have a distinctive look. There is an anchoring of these images in their “Cubanness,” and their
struggle against Batista is constantly defined in relation to the historical struggle for Cuban independence. And those who brought about the 1959 Revolution were associated with José Martí and his political thought.

Che’s definition of the New Man is at times vague. In *Socialismo y el hombre nuevo*, he emphasizes the role of the youth but also the role of the leaders of the Revolution. He highlights the role of youth as the “arcilla maleable con que se puede construir el hombre nuevo” and the role of the men of the party as “los hombres del partido deben tomar esa tarea entre las manos y buscar el logro del objetivo principal: educar al pueblo” (23). At the same time he states that, “Los revolucionarios carecemos de los conocimientos y la audacia intelectual necesarios para encarar la tarea del desarrollo de un hombre nuevo por métodos distintos a los convencionales y los métodos convencionales sufren de la influencia de la sociedad que los creó” (22-23). Therefore there is a gap between the need to create the New Man and how to go about doing so. Perhaps the clearest attribute of the New Man, according to Che Guevara, is that “su imagen no está todavía acabada” (13). Therefore, the concept of the New Man is being outlined and there are still attributes to be defined. This impreciseness opens the doors to magazines such as *Palante, Mujeres, and Zunzún* to create visual representations of the New Man as they interpreted it. Often times these were done through slogans, cartoons, and images. *Palante* served as the humor supplement of the government’s newspaper *Granma*. In its pages abound cartoons of both images of what the New Man should look like and how he should behave, as well as images of those that did not measure up. It not only served as a humoristic magazine, but also served to expose official discourse. *Mujeres*, published its first issue on November 15, 1961, became the only magazine
geared towards women after the Revolution. It included an array of material ranging from fashion, to child-rearing, to cartoon/humor, to public policy. Zunzún, was a children’s magazine that was didactical and humorous. It included things such as cartoon histories of meso-america, as well as cartoons regarding good manners and hygiene, and cartoons that characterized good citizens. These three magazines are important because of their scoop, in terms of ages and population. Indeed, the cartoons in these magazines, especially those regarding the New Man, served as visual clarifications/representations of what the citizen of the Revolution should look and act like. Indeed, after the Revolution, magazines and newspapers served an important role of disseminating information, and creating images that served to sketch out the characteristic of the New Man and disseminate it. These images are important in understanding the development of the New Man as a visual and discursive cultural phenomenon.

Initially, the image of the New Man is equated with Che himself. The following cartoon shows the physical change that occurred simultaneously to the change in social consciousness. It appears that the social awareness acquired by reading Che’s book manifested itself in the physical appearance of the reader. The New Man was created through “estudio,” studying and by becoming aware of his place within society. This was evidenced by the way the New Man became more Che-like. Indeed, it is no coincidence that in a society that was creating the New Man, children were taught the motto “Seremos como el Che”. The following image is a manifestation of that transformation. As the character reads Che's book, he is transformed into the New Man which looks just like Che, beard, long hair, barret, and cigar included.
During the initial years after the Revolution, the emphasis was on “trabajo, fusil,” as is evident in cartoons that show the virtues of work and defense. For instance, the following illustration depicts the progress from primate to man through work.
There are also many examples from Cuban magazines such as *Zigzag* and *Palante* that define the New Man (the Revolutionary) by what he is not. There is a series of cartoons in *Palante* that depict characters such as Subdesarrollo Pérez (from the late 60s) that serve as a counter-model for the New Man.

![Fig. 3 Aristide. “Subdesarrollado Pérez.” Comic. *Palante* 12 June 1969: 8. Print Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida](image)

This cartoon character is ridiculed for not being a true revolutionary, for being two-faced, for acting like a true revolutionary in public but being an opportunist in his core. Visually he is ostentatious, exhibiting his gold chain and medallion on his chest which is visible through his unbuttoned shirt. His shiny black hair, slicked back by hair products, his small size, and his nonchalant walk are often contrasted with the characters around him. The characters that surround Subdesarrollo Pérez do not function as a positive contrast to Pérez, rather they are all similar and highlight how out of place Pérez and his cohorts are in the society that surrounds them. This negative imagery is starkly opposed to the
constant barrage of ideal images of macheteros voluntarios, and of course, the leaders of the Revolution. The portrayal of these men emphasizes their heroic/superhero qualities. In the Palante cover of April 4, 1968, for example, the cartoon of a volunteer cane cutter is stylized in the form of traditional U.S. superhero comics. The positioning of the body on the cover to the ever present “pow” that is replaced in this cover by “cuarto millón,” indicating the amount of sugar to be harvested, is reminiscent of Captain America and his shield.

Fig. 4 Machado, Ricardo (Director). Cartoon. Palante 24 April 1968: cover. Print. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida
The December 1968 cover represents the volunteer worker as a knight, and his machete his sword, headed to the “campo del honor” or the fields of honor. The fields referred to here are not the battle field but the sugarcane fields. Therefore, the vocabulary of war is superimposed on that of the harvest.\(^{30}\) The fight of the New Man, then, is not only in the battle fields but also in the agricultural fields. The themes of producer and warrior converge.

There are other cartoons that highlight the counterrevolutionary men who are defined as outsiders to the revolutionary process and should have no place in the new society that is being created. These include homosexuals, hippies, and absentees (those who skipped out on their work obligations). There is a clear juxtaposition of behaviors that are accepted and rejected. An example of this comes from Palante’s 52 issue cover of 1966 that has side by side depictions of a young revolutionary and a non-revolutionary.

\(^{30}\) This type of bellicose language is not exclusive to Cuban programs, as is evident in government programs in other countries, such as “The War on Drugs” in the United States. However, it is important to highlight how this type of language reinforces a discourse that conceives citizens as engaged in a social war.
Fig. 5 Blanco, Francisco. Cartoon. *Palante* 20 October 1966: cover. Print
*Courtesy* of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

The revolutionary figure on the left side of the cover wears work boots and green fatigues, carries a Cuban *yarey* hat and backpack, and has a medal commemorating the 6th anniversary of the UJC (Unión de jóvenes comunistas). He is physically fit, his muscles are obvious through his clothing, and he has a crew cut, pronounced jaw and serious face. Above this image are the words, “Este tiene el sello,” meaning he has the stamp of approval (he is part of the UJC). The figure on the right is decidedly different. He is dressed in tight pants, a red motorcycle jacket, and a pair of sunglasses, and smokes a skinny cigarette. His body is very thin, and appears even more so when contrasted with the figure to his left. He carries a record called “Rock in the Rampa,” and has a haircut
similar to that of the Beatles. There is an “x” superimposed on his body, and above the image reads, “y este está sellado,” meaning his appearance, which clearly reveals his ideological leanings, does not fit within the national imaginary. As Lillian Guerra has noted, “state-directed forms of gender policing and ideological scrutiny of intellectual thought and artistic expression were integral aspects of Cuban officials’ plans to re-craft the national economy on the basis of an obedient, volunteer labour force and legitimate politically authoritarian ideals among emerging generations of citizens raised under the Revolution” (269). The body was policed for both its compliance with gender norms, as well as evidence of “productivity,” participation in the new economy.

The importance of outward appearance is that it correlates to ideology. For example, a symbol such as a “beard” can come to represent different masculinities depending on the context in which it is employed. Therefore, representations of the leaders of the revolutionary “barbudos” (bearded ones) are positive and serve as a model for the New Man. Their beards coupled with army fatigues and a cigar completes this image. However, men with beards and long hair who are not wearing green fatigues are characterized as hippies or homosexuals (i.e. antisocial/counterrevolutionary). The term homosexuality was used to brand someone that did not fit into the gender parameters established by the revolution. Therefore, there is often a confluence between hippie and homosexual, whereby a non-conforming apperarence is branded as both.31 Homosexuality, particularly, was seen as a threat to the ideal of the New Man and the education of the youth into this model. There are various cartoons in Palante that focus on homosexuals as fickle in character, unable to be trusted with matters of the state,

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31 Lillian Guerra analysis this tendency in her article, “Gender policing, homosexuality and the new patriarchy of the Cuban Revolution, 1965–70.”
which in the Revolution included everything. The visual, outward appearance was classified in terms of the proper/improper and any type of improper manifestations was severely oppressed. As part of this crackdown on appearances, there is a process of education depicting “proper” gender roles for men and women. Although there is a push in the later part of the 60’s to challenge traditional gender roles by promoting the role of men within the home and as partners in child rearing, and women as equal partners and contributors outside the home, there is also a strict policing of traditional markers of gender, as we see in an article that appears in Mujeres in November 1962 that addresses the distinction in the way men and women conduct themselves; how each should look at their nails, take off their shirts, put on their gloves, etc.

Figure 6: Gómez, Hortensia Gomez (Director). “Ella y él.” Mujeres 1 November 1962: 17. Print.
These random everyday behaviors become invested with gender significance. In other words, the way one looked at his/her nails became a sign of one’s masculinity/femininity. If the physical markers that one was expected to have were not present or were incongruent with expectations, this was a “symptom” of a “larger problem”. Thus, appearances became, as it has often been, an important aspect to determine conformity with gender norms because it can be “easily” and arbitrarily policed.

This type of gendered education can also be seen in magazines for youth and children. Youth were the target audience because they would grow up to become the New Men and Women if educated properly. In these magazines, there are a series of parables, cartoons, and sayings that serve to teach children how to behave. Still in the last decades of the twentieth century, Zunzún, for example, a magazine dedicated to teaching children about things as diverse as Mayan architecture and the history of the bicycle, included brief sayings at the bottom of the page which emphasized the elements of the New Man, including things like “No hay alegría mayor que el trabajo productor,” “Es bueno ser estudioso y es malo ser vanidoso,” “Lleva la niña aseada ropa limpia y bien cuidada,” and “De los pies a la cabeza lo primero, la belleza” next to a drawing of a little girl in pigtails.32

Notably, this particular magazine contains hygiene and behavior guides similar to those of pre-revolutionary publications. This focus on hygiene is tied to the 19th-century discourse of modernization that is present in the rhetoric of the Revolution. It is true that

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32 Zunzún p. 144, 205, 221, 238.
during the early years of the Revolution, the leaders combatted long-standing sanitary problems that often led to the spread of disease. In order to address this, there were concentrated efforts focused on the use of clean water, personal hygiene, etc. However, the images of hygiene in *Zunzún*, for example, were focused on girls. In various cartoons that aimed to teach children about cleanliness, the embodiment of this was a little girl. In “Contra el churre, agua y jabón,” the epitome of cleanliness is a little girl, dolled up in a dress with perfectly combed hair that is tied back with a large bow; she has long lashes, and pucker lips, and is standing straight as she is being looked at by two little boys.

The boys are facing the girl, their backs towards the readers. Therefore, the gaze of the reader goes straight to the little girl, who serves as a showpiece to be admired for her cleanliness. Under this drawing appears the following, “La higiene evita enfermedades y proporciona un aspecto agradable. Por algo las personas limpias son admiradas y respetadas por todos”.33

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33 Zunzún N 14 p 22 Contra el Churre Agua y jabón.
The focus on hygiene in relation to women is carried from childhood to adulthood, as seen in a cartoon in the May 1967 issue of *Palante*, which portrays different scenes of a mother’s day emphasizing her duty to maintain cleanliness, which was presented as a song (una décima) in order for it to be easily remembered. The song said, “A las mamás: La casa debes limpiar y bien limpios los pañales. Ojo con los animales… todo limpio al cocinar, el agua hervida ha de estar. Y todo muy tapado para tu niño amado. Debes estar vigilante con un apego constante, a la higiene y al cuidado.”

This gendered education is also correlated to Cuban thinkers like Martí. For example, in an article in *Zunzún* titled “Cuando Ernesto era Ernestito,” which told the life of Che as a boy, a picture of his childhood where he is holding his younger sister’s hand appears with the following caption “Pero nunca es un niño más bello – dijo Martí – que […] cuando lleva del brazo a su hermana, para que nadie se la ofenda.”

The idea that boys protect their sisters so that they won’t be offended, and in turn the family will not be offended, is promoted from the formative ages of childhood. The implication is not only that girls are not capable of protecting themselves, but also that women have a subjugated role within the familial structure. The focus on children is central to the development of the New Man.

The New Man is always, by necessity, a man of the future, because The New Man will be an outcome of the revolution. That is, the Revolution educates the new generation and by doing so instills all the necessary sociopolitical ideology necessary to have a fully revolutionary, communist society. This emphasis on the future is evident in the attention...
that is given to the formation of Cuban youth and Cuban children. Magazines such as \textit{Zunzún} and the “páginas infantiles” in the magazine \textit{Mujeres} are clearly ideological and help to promote the ideal of the New Man. All the hopes of the Revolution are invested in the proper development of young people. Because productivity is central to the creation of the New Man, there are various depictions of work as a rite of passage, or of initiation. Boys become men through productive work. Therefore, it is the work in the fields, the blisters on their hands, the machete in their hand, the sweat on their brow that render them men. The following cartoon depicts a young boy going off to do his voluntary hours, and coming back a larger than life man, as is evidence by his size.

![Fig. 8 Guerrero. Cartoon. Palante 11 April 1968: 4. Print. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida](image)

This is not the case for women, however, as is evident by the mother who stays at home. Although women are also recruited to do volunteer work and contribute to the sowing and harvest of sugarcane, coffee, etc., this work does not transform them from girls to women. When there are images of men in the country, it is indicative of their relationship to working the land, making the land productive. Women, however, are often compared to the land itself, examples of the beauty of the Cuban land, and Cuban woman
abound in *Palante*, comparing the female form to different flora or fauna.\(^{35}\) This equation of the female with the land, and the male as the reaper of the land, harks back to the nineteenth century discourse of nation building, as discussed in Doris Sommer’s book *Foundational Fictions*, where she posits that foundational novels in Latin American literature depict the romance between a “barbaric” woman which represents the land, and a “civilized” man who represents civilization. Through the relationship the man, modernization is able to tame the land in order to create a productive future, or is unable to tame it and the relationship and the nation is condemned to be barren.

\(^{35}\) One of these cartoons sketches the different types of palm trees that exist and how they are a reflection of the different shapes of female bodies that can be found on the island. “*Mujeres y Palmas*” September 1966, p.7
The focus on children evinces an obsession with youth that is present in this period of the Revolution. The Revolution, as proclaimed by Raúl Castro at the 60\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Moncada on July 23, 2013, “continues to be a Revolution of/for young people.” The culture of youthfulness is present in a series of “ads” advertising “male hormones”. The fact that these types of ads are present in pre-revolutionary Cuba (\textit{Manual de elegancia masculina} pamphlet magazine) as well as revolutionary Cuba,
highlights on the one hand, the widespread “problem/obsession” with a certain type of masculinity and the inability of measuring up to it, thus needing replacement hormones in order to achieve this ideal, as well as the continuation of traditional models of masculinity from the pre-revolutionary period. Hence, the Revolution does little to reimagine masculinity, and traditional hegemonic masculinity is simply given a “change of clothes”. The emphasis on youth is also evident in advertisements for hair dye to eliminate gray hair and to wash away the first appearances of the aging process, as well as the phrase “el gusto joven” which is initially used as a slogan to sell a particular kind of cigarette, and later is appropriated to promote the efforts of harvesting. The May 1968 cover of Palante has a drawing of a container with the name Camagüey written on it and the phrase “¿Tiene usted el gusto joven?” the youthful taste of revolution, of working the fields, of reaping the rewards of both.

Despite Cuba’s departure from consumerist capitalism, the promotion of youthfulness in both systems is similar. Not only is there a promotion of youthfulness, but the youth become the symbol of the Revolution because of their potential to be educated within the terms of the Revolution. Although youth is marked by the present, the theoretical concept of the New Man is always one of futurity, which constantly displaces his materialization. Hence, the models constructed never fully embody the concept. There is the idealization of this New Man (young) versus the realities of an aging model (leaders of the revolution) that necessarily diverge. In other words the actualization of the New Man, which is always categorized as youthful, is always displaced to the future while the future for the leaders which serves as a model is inevitably old age. This paradox between model and reality creates a problem for the
imaginary of the New Man. This is why the imagery of Che is so useful to the Revolution because it is permanently fixed in time and never ages. Che is perpetually the New Man because, unlike Fidel, he never grows old.\textsuperscript{36} At the same time, the regime’s obsession with linking the revolution to the historical past, and fashioning itself as an extension of the fight for independence and the political thought of José Martí creates an opposition of time, whereby the present is either an extension of the past or a precedent of the future. \textsuperscript{37}

Up to this point the discussion has been centered on the New Man as strictly male, because the concept is gendered. In his book outlining the New Man in Cuba, Guevara only mentions the word women to note that “Los dirigentes de la revolución tienen mujeres que deben ser parte del sacrificio general para llevar la revolución al destino”(69). In essence, then, women are viewed as wives of revolutionaries. This premise will be altered to some extent, as evidenced in Palante, which initially characterized women as wives and mothers, and later also as militants and volunteer workers. Therefore, instead of being freed from their traditional roles, their roles multiply. The word “man” in New Man is said to be a “universal,” however, there are very pointed differences in the way the New Man of the Revolution and the New Woman of the Revolution are conceptualized. Although there is an emphasis on productivity (productive, technical work/volunteer work), and armed fighting, the gender models of femininity are deeply embedded in the past and based on desirability. Women that abide

\textsuperscript{36} There is a distancing of Fidel and the New Man precisely because the New Man cannot be an Old Man.

\textsuperscript{37} It is worth noting that in her book Donatello among the Blakshirts, Claudia Lazzaro argues that Mussolini looked to “mobilize the national past and its rich repository of visual imagery”( 137). In much the same way, Revolutionary Cuba looks to its past to rescue imagery in order to create a masculinity based on national past. There is an appropriation of the images of the mambises, José Martí, during the Cuban Revolution in order to draw comparisons between the Revolution and the Wars of Independence. Thus, anchoring the Revolution with historical weight, and championing it as the completion of the past.
by the revolutionary standards become more desirable, to the extent that they are hypersexualized. Although the Revolution produces the militarization of women, their depiction in mass media, paradoxically, becomes curvier, more sexual. Cartoons of women dressed in militia or voluntary work clothing have large breasts, tiny waists, large buttocks, and thick thighs. Their uniforms are always shown as tightly fitting their shapely bodies.38

The same juxtaposition between revolutionary and non-revolutionary men is manifested between women that supported the Revolution and those that opposed it. There is a stark difference in traditional femininity, represented by the body, (bodies as

38 Examples of this can be found in Las criollitas de Wilson in Palante.
they are represented in the cartoons) between the women who abide by the ideals of the Revolution and those who do not. As previously stated, the revolutionary women are curvy, attractive, young, and often pictured with children or babies. Non-revolutionary women are either drawn as worms or large amorphous, older women, or very skinny women, contrasting sharply with the voluptuousness of the women of the revolution.39

Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

There are various articles in Mujeres that depict the way women should behave, particularly referring to the upkeep of feminine demeanor. For example, there is an article dedicated to the proper way of sitting while wearing a skirt. The focus of the article and

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39 The term gusan@ (worm) is used in Cuba as a derogatory term to denominate people that leave the island and seek political asylum in the United States or other countries. The term is significant because it dehumanizes these people, and this animalization is evident in cartoons in the second issue of Mujeres.
accompanying pictures is on the legs of the women. The body is fragmented in the pictures, the head of the woman cropped, and the pictures are voyeuristic. At the same time, there is a message that promotes the shedding of traditional gender roles in the articles presented, such as assuming militia roles, non-traditional production roles, volunteer work in cane sugar and other agrarian production that had previously excluded women. There is, of course, an issue of class in the depictions. Rural women of the lower class were active in agrarian life. Thus, it is evident that leaders of the Revolution assume that they were addressing the urban, whiter, middle-class. Yet, the presence of women in the workforce is also ridiculed.

Fig. 12 Roseñada, José (Director). Comic. *Zig-zag* 29 August 1959: 13. Print. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

Therefore, there are contradicting messages that maintain and promote traditional female roles and others that uphold a revolutionary role for women.
These competing perspectives result in a double discourse that goes unresolved. Las Criollitas de Wilson, a cartoon strip whose protagonists are “Criollas” (or the idealization of what the Cuban woman is and should be), are a staple in *Mujeres* and later in *Palante*. The Criollitas play an interesting role because they define the type of man that is desired by them, and teach women what kind of men should be desired. The first issues of the magazine present cartoons of men asking women to marry them. The women emphatically answer “Todo está bien, pero si no eres miliciano y has caminado los 62km. no puedo quererte,” and “Antes de casarnos…¿estás alfabetizado o no?” Both of these cartoons show the type of man that the Cuban woman should desire is a revolutionary militant who has participated in the policies of the Revolution.

![Fig.13 Wilson. Cartoon. “Las Criollitas.” Mujeres 1 January 1962: 96. Print. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida](image)

It is necessary to examine images such as the one above, which come from the early periods of the magazine. Indeed, the female character, although urging her man to be literate, and therefore desiring a man within the standards of the Revolution, is
herself depicted as a vidual extension of the burgouise model. Indeed, this image which is regarded as the visual manifestation of what should be desired in the New Man. However, the female character is still drawn based on pre-revolutionary ideals. This imagery will gradually begin to change as can be appreciated in the color-images in the chapter, which are from the later part of the 60’s.

The Criollita also serves to illustrate the kind of man that would be rejected by a revolutionary woman. On the Palante cover of August 1965, a Criollita is shown wearing a bikini at the beach listening to Mozambique music. She is clearly rejecting the advances of a skinny man who is wearing stripped pants and shirt, a long necklace with a flower on it, Beatles-styled hair, John Lennon-style sunglasses and holding a record called “Twist.”

![Palante cover of August 1965](image)

Fig. 14 Wilson. Palanate 12 August 1965: cover. Print. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida
The rejection of this Americanized male by the Criollita sends a clear message. On the one hand, there is the reproach of foreign, especially American, sensibilities. On the other hand, there is the latent imagery that identifies the female body with the national land. This cartoon not only teaches male/female desire, it also serves to showcase the antagonism between Cuba and the United States, where Cuba is represented as stronger and more authentic.

This pedagogy of desire is recurrent throughout these cartoons, and quickly replaces the desire for men with a desire for country. A Criollita’s devotion to the Revolution is demonstrated when she chats with her friend, “Chica, se me declara Pedro y se me declara Arturo, pero me gusta más la declaración de Santiago.” The declaration of Santiago was a document put out by the Cuban government condemning U.S. intervention in the island, and the rights of the Cuban people to defend themselves from any such invasion. It is clear, then, that while a few men have declared their love, the declaration that is most significant to a revolutionary woman is the political declaration. As Monica Krause-Fuchs points out, *Mujeres* was for a long time the sole magazine for women in Cuba (1986). This has clear implications, as the magazine was the only source of representation, and the type of women represented was closely tied to the ideals of the revolution.

Perhaps the most interesting depiction of gender is a cartoon in *Palante* that depicts signs for a bathroom. The space of the bathroom has been notorious for marking gender, and much has been said about bathroom signs.40

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40 See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*. 
What is worth noting here is the idea of a third gender based on sociopolitical ideology. In other words, the third gender is defined as revolutionary, and is clearly based on a masculine conception. The “caballero” sign on the bathroom is also coded in political discourse. The silhouette of the man clearly belongs to a different era, an historical period of top hats, which, like that specific representation of masculinity, has been replaced. However, the sign indicating the women’s bathroom is not explicitly political. The silhouette is indicative of a more modern woman, compared to the caballero, as she is sporting a 1960s hairstyle. The message here reinforces the idea that true revolutionaries are neither “caballeros” of the Batista past, nor women in general.

It is through a series of reiterations that the New Man is re-created in Cuba. There is a deliberate process that defines acceptable types of masculinity and femininity in the Cuban Revolution. The visual cues projected by the leadership were themselves seized upon to mark masculine appearance. There is a well-crafted performance of the
leadership that is constantly and continuously repeated.\textsuperscript{41} The emphasis on clothing and appearance signals not only the true revolutionary who fought to overthrow the previous government, but it is also emblematic of the goal for which citizens should strive. Those who did not adhere to these visual gender norms (i.e. those who donned flashy clothing, long hair, foreign brands, etc.) were punished according to the law and sentenced to jail time or labor camps, as documented in Almendro’s \textit{Conducta Impropia} and Ros’s \textit{La UMAP el gulag castrista}. Similarly there was an emphasis on defining femininity by the revolution, which fell back on patriarchal notions of femininity that emphasized the body.\textsuperscript{42} The New Man’s body was on display, it was molded through physical work. Thus, the body became a marker for what the New Man should look like. Everything from the muscles in their bodies to the callusus on their hands should be indicative of their physical participation in the Revolution. In fact, there are various magazine articles that outline not only the importance of working the fields as part of the economic effort needed to build a new communist country, but they also highlight the importance of returning home from the fields with the marks of hard work. Thus, there are images of shirtless young men with strong backs working in the cane fields, as well as cartoons depicting the results of hard work on the body. Young men were valued for their potential

\textsuperscript{41} See Judith Butler, \textit{Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive limits of “sex” and Gender Trouble} for a detailed study of the performativity of gender. Performativity of gender, as theorized by Butler comes from the performative aspects of certain speech acts, whereby enunciating the words that are sanctioned by laws, you are in fact performing the act. Butler takes this notion of speech acts to theorize gender. Butler argues that one is continually performing gender. In other words, gender is constantly being enacted and repeated so that it is created with the constant repetition of socially sanctioned performances.

\textsuperscript{42} Although I have focused my study on gender, it is necessary to note the racial component of the New Man. The conceptualization of the revolutionary is marked by whiteness. This is extremely problematic, and excludes a large part of the Cuban population from the imaged nation. As I noted before, \textit{Mujeres} was the premiere publication geared toward the Cuban woman. The fact that most, if not all of the representations of the women in the magazine were white reflects an ideology based on exclusion. Furthermore, the only cover that portrays a black woman is clearly meant to represent Africa. That is, blackness as outsider.
as workers in the economy and their value was evidenced to their counterparts by the “scars” they bared from the fields. As work and productivity become inseperable from the concept of masculinity, these hands bare witness to the adherence to the discourse of the New Man. The citizen of the Revolution is defined by his body as it is molded by the work he does within the national economy, and the fruit of said labor.

Fig. 16 Nuñez. *Palante* 13 March 1969: 10. Print.
Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida
Chapter 3
Work, Productivity, and Performance

On January 1, 1959 the revolutionary army marched through the streets of Havana proclaiming victory over the government of Fulgencio Batista. This moment marked the beginning of a process of nation-rebuilding. One of the fundamentals for creating a new society was the renewal of Cuban citizens. The re-education of the population was one of the primary concerns during the revolutionary process. The model for the new citizen was quickly codified into what would be known as The New Man. The New Man was a combination of the visual imagery incarnated by the revolutionary leaders, and the ideology that would develop regarding the definition of “true” revolutionaries, which was based on work, productivity, national loyalty, and militancy. The campaign to create this new citizen is evident in the institutional policies decreed by the government, as well as the visual campaign that created these models. In other words, there was a systematic use of the imagery of the New Man in magazines and newspapers like Granma, Mujeres, and Palante, to name a few, that was coupled with policies that emphasized the creation of the new model citizen, and excluded from the national imaginary those expressions of masculinity and femininity that did not adhere to those exemplified by said model. These values for the new Cuban citizen were based on traditional notions of masculinity, and therefore aligned themselves with a misogynist patriarchal discourse that emphasized traditional gender roles. Thus, there is a codification of masculinity through the image of the New Man, which specifically emphasizes physical work and productivity as the central pillars of the new citizen. Arturo la estrella más brillante, El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, and Chamaco: diez capítulos (para representar), engage this discourse,
effectively challenging and reassessing the meaning of “work” and “productivity,” and thus reimagining masculinity.

The model for the New Man arose from the images of the guerrilla fighters that toppled Batista. The young men and women, although mainly men, wearing military fatigues, with the visible marks of their time in the countryside, such as long beards, became ubiquitous in the years following the overthrow of the government. They became the symbol for a movement and eventually for the future generations. However, the mythification of these men did not occur by accident. In fact, the first photographs of the revolutionaries taken in the Sierra Maestra reveal an awareness of the power of the image. They serve to lay the groundwork for what was to become the enduring vision of the revolutionaries and eventually, the model for the The New Man. Apart from the olive green uniforms, the Cuban cigar, and the rifle in hand, a unifying characteristic of the revolutionaries was their age. The depictions of the revolutionaries seem to be a display of youth. The idea of the Revolution being a product of young people becomes a constant that is renewed with every generation.

In other words, the Revolution, or the completion of the ideals of the Revolution, is permanently displaced into the future. The New Man will necessarily come to fruition as a result of the education received from the Revolution. Therefore, in the 1960’s the ideal of the New Man was going to be embodied by the generation that was born under the Revolution. Consequently, there was an obsession with the way in which the children of this generation were going to be educated, raised, protected, etc., and the government saw itself as the teacher that would mold this generation into this ideal. “Che” Guevara
outlines in *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* the inability to reform the present because of the legacy of the past:

La culpabilidad de muchos de nuestros intelectuales y artistas reside en su pecado original; no son auténticamente revolucionarios. Podemos intentar injertar el olmo para que dé peras, pero simultáneamente hay que sembrar perales. Las nuevas generaciones vendrán libres del pecado original. Nuestra tarea consiste en impedir que la generación actual, dislocada por sus conflictos, se pervierta y pervierta a las nuevas. (66-67)

There is a concern with protecting the potential New Man from the perversions of the past. Particularly, Guevara points to intellectuals as a source of perversion of the ideological goals of the Revolution. This fear of perverting the youth with devious ideology, practices, and behaviors was also blamed on homosexuals. In the name of protecting the youth who were to become the New Man, various laws were enacted that codified long-held prejudices against homosexuality. Therefore, the new nation, as it was imagined, excluded the participation of homosexuals. Indeed, there is a valorization of youth not for what they are in the present but for what they could become in the future. Guevara argues that “En nuestra sociedad, juegan un gran papel la juventud y el partido. Particularmente importante es la primera, por ser la arcilla maleable con que se puede construir al hombre nuevo sin ninguna de las taras anteriores” (*El socialismo* 67), and “La arcilla fundamental de nuestra obra es la juventud: en ella depositamos nuestra esperanza y la preparamos para tomar de nuestras manos la bandera”(*El socialismo* 71).

If the Revolution sees itself as being possible only in the future, in the New Man, (that is, the new generation raised with the values of the Revolution), then homosexuality necessarily threatens that futurity. Lee Edelman in *No Future, Queer Theory and the Death Drive* explores the lack of futurity that some homosexuality represents. Since futurity is at the core of the Revolution - accomplishing a truly Marxist state (in the
future), homosexuality would be perceived as threatening. This relationship between Revolution and youth begins to wear down, and by the 1980’s, when the generation of the New Man should have come of age, is never concretized and loses its discursive power. Furthermore, the fact that the youthful leaders inevitably age and become old men creates an inconsistency between the model and the image. Nevertheless, the visual campaign waged during the early years of the Revolution weighs heavy on the collective consciousness as it is everywhere from magazine images and cartoon depictions to murals and statues throughout the country.

The legacy of the revolutionaries that fought in the Sierra Maestra served as the model for the New Man, and when outlining the qualities of this New Man, Guevara emphasizes the role of the guerrilla as the “motor impulsor de la movilización, generador de conciencia revolucionaria y de entusiasmo combativo” (El socialismo?54). The revolutionary consciousness was both a political approach that would be taught to the masses, through schooling, and an understanding of the nature and value of physical labor that would be fulfilled through service hours in the countryside. Furthermore, the love for country and what country meant would become an important element of the education of the New Man. Thus, education, physical labor, and patriotism became the focus of policies that were meant to catalyze the formation of this new vision of the Cuban citizen. The discourse that arose around this model was decidedly masculine. That is, the more correlated one was to the ideals of the New Man, the more traditionally masculine one would be. The physicality of the New Man was in direct correlation with the implementation of the ideological program of the Revolution. In other words, the education that would be given to this generation would guarantee a generation that would
reject foreign/imperial culture (represented by taste in clothing, music, personal style, etc.) in favor of the local culture. Furthermore, the policy of physical labor in the countryside carried out by citizens would ensure a muscular body type that has traditionally been associated with masculinity. Finally, the New Man would reject the bourgeois consumerism that characterized the urban generation that preceded the Revolution.

Recalling the cover of October 20, 1966 issue of Pa’lante that depicts two men side by side marking one as having the Revolutions seal of approval while the other represented the complete opposite, exemplifies the use of oppositions when promoting the model of the New Man was done by contrasting him with the negative characteristics he did not possess. Therefore, the New Man is in contrast to the “weak,” foreign-cladded (unpatriotic), and physically unfit man. The New Man was to embody the moral character of the Cuban society that was being built after the Revolution. Therefore, certain underlying assumptions excluded certain groups from participation in the discourse of the New Man. The image above depicts by contrast an example of the segment of the population that was excluded because they were regarded as undesirable. Another series of images that highlights the initial position of the leadership is depicted in the following image:
The cartoon is one in a series displaying the “innate” qualities of homosexuals, in the opinion of the government, and therefore, their “natural” exclusion from the revolutionary process. Here, the person in charge in the work place is signaled as a homosexual, not because of any declared sexual preference but by his way of dressing, the long-stemmed boutonnière he uses, his demeanor, the way his hands are folded, and what he says. These three elements are in stark contrast to the men on the right. This depiction serves to justify, and perhaps defend, the position taken by the government regarding the exclusion of homosexuals from participating in political life. The image defines homosexuals as fickle, and therefore as people who cannot be trusted with something as “serious” as the Revolution. It is clear from the image that to the men who are standing this fickleness is not acceptable. The model of the New Man was created not only with specific characteristics, but it was also envisioned as a negation of what it was in opposition to, whether that be homosexuals, “gusanos,” the bourgeois, or any number of incarnations of the “enemy” that would materialize throughout the decades.
The coupling of gender as expressed through visual cues, the way one dresses, walks, talks, carries oneself, and sexuality, is not unique to the Cuban Revolution; however, this coupling created a situation where the policing of gender was used to control sexuality. In other words, gender and sexuality were assumed to be one and the same; therefore, deviation of accepted norms of masculinity could be flagged as anti-revolutionary. The model of masculinity advocated by the Revolution was done through newspapers, magazines, speeches, and also, as Ana Serra has documented in her book, *The New Man in Cuba*, through state-sponsored narrative. The texts she analyzes are examples of how literature may help solidify the model of the New Man by reinforcing the characteristics attributed to this model of masculinity. Although the initial year of the Revolution was one of openness and experimentation within cultural production, this was quickly replaced with a hostile climate in which much of the literature that could be interpreted as anti-revolutionary was censored. It is evident in Fidel Castro’s speech “Palabras a los intelectuales” on June 30, 1961 in which he urged the intellectuals of the island to use their talents to further the cause of the Revolution rather than question it. Likewise, Che Guevara’s vision of artists and intellectuals, excludes them from his model of the men that would incarnate the Revolution, arguing that they could not be authentic revolutionaries. Thus, artists and intellectuals would never “fit” the model of the New Man because they were, in fact, the Old Man that carried the original sin existing in the pre-revolutionary society, and according to Guevara should not pervert the potential of the future generations of becoming the ideal men of the Revolution that he had imagined. The focus, initially, is on developing the New Man by implementing a series of policies that will prevent this so-called “perversion.” These include the education of the citizen,
which is imparted both through schooling and what will be called “productive work” that serves the purpose of the national economy, both rural and urban development. Productivity becomes a national obsession, the duty of all citizens depending on their ability. The focus on this type of work is evidenced in the various campaigns promoting the sugarcane harvest. This characteristic is, perhaps, one of the most highlighted when describing the New Man, perhaps because of its measurability. In fact, in magazines like *Palante*, there were sections devoted to different events throughout the island commemorating the most productive workers of each battalion. These ceremonies and recognitions were ways of validating and exalting this characteristic.

The focus on productivity, as a characteristic of the New Man and as a characteristic of the Revolutionary State, is so profound that when productivity levels are not met, as was the case in the Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest in 1970, it affects the cohesive discourse of the Revolution. The impact of this failure, both psychologically and morally, was evident, yet the rhetoric of productivity continued to be central to the Revolution. In the same way that the model of the New Man was built through discourse and imagery, so was the idea of productivity. It came to be through discourse, and therefore, the theoretical apparatus was such that even as the state gradually became less and less “productive” until it eventually became a service economy, the performativity of productivity was intact. The “reality” of performativity and masculinity did not, in fact, matter; rather the way these two models became dominant within the Revolution proves the success of the Revolution in creating and propagating these ideological commodities. The disparity between the imagining of the Revolution and the concretization of this discourse creates both a space of resistance and oppression. As Judith Butler has argued
in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” there is the possibility to subvert the repetitive acts that arbitrarily define gender precisely because gender is not a seamless identity, yet, “gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control” (528). The creation of the New Man, the model of masculinity, during the Cuban Revolution is a clear example of the way in which gender is constituted by performative acts that are either sanctioned or punished for resisting coercion.

The fashioning of the New Man according to arbitrary attributes is a topic of contestation in Arturo la estrella más brillante, El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, and Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos, whereby the characters are aware, to some extent, of the malleability of gender, specifically the model of the New Man. The protagonists of these texts recognize their ability to destabilize gender norms, and through this play, which often has dire consequences, they redefine the attributes of the New Man, or disavow the model completely. Each character has a different relationship to the model of masculinity and to notions of gender. Interestingly, although the characters often struggle to redefine masculinity from their own perspective, the traces of traditional notions of femininity abound in their discourse, stabilizing traditional misogynistic discourse.

(Re)Defining Masculinity

If the Revolution defined the New Man through characteristics such as productivity, patriotism, adherence to a certain political ideology, and corporal attributes such as youth and physical strength (corporal muscularity resulting from physical work),
then Arturo, the protagonist of Reinaldo Arena’s novel, *Arturo la estrella más brillante*, is presented as a different type of new man. During his time in the UMAP, he comes to embody the physical attributes that would identify him as the model, yet he is constantly challenging said characteristics, or in fact, the author shows through this character the inconsistency of this model, and the societal structures that said model is founded upon, become obvious.

The physical body is central to the understanding of gender and the place that Arturo occupies within society because it is his body what is looked at, codified, and regarded as not belonging. In other words, bodies are created by the work that they do, or the work they do not do, and it is the laboring body, shaped by the work done in the fields that defines whether an individual is part of the sanctioned section of society. Arturo is aware of this, and the narrator recounts how the protagonist recognizes himself as an outsider by comparing his body to those of other men in a concert hall as he is listening to a piano recital,

> Arturo vio las espaldas de los jóvenes, firmes y amplias, seguras e instaladas, distintas a las de los que lo acompañaban a él, a la suya misma, espaldas, cuerpos, manos que se ubicaban simples y firmemente, el amparo de una seguridad, de una tradición, de una ley, que a él, a ellos, los excluía. (23)

Thus, the bodies of these men are formed in relation to the law and tradition that includes them. Their relationship to the law renders their bodies visible. These erect bodies are upheld by tradition and by law. Therefore, the self-assuredness that comes from this invisible privilege (invisible to those that have it), and the body that is formed from it, is denied to Arturo. He is already excluded from the privilege of masculinity because he is excluded from the sanctioning that comes from tradition and law. Therefore, his body is always seen as a marker of “deviance.”
His body is his tool in the UMAP, as he is able to secure time for himself to write, his most prized activity, by transforming his body into what was expected of him as a homosexual within the UMAP. He performed the role that he is given,

Arturo successfully manipulates his body, conforming to the role he has been assigned. This conformity allows him to skirt the abuses that he endures when he does not abide by the gender norms of the camp. It is clear by the gender expectations of the camp that homosexuality and traditional notions of femininity are collapsed here, and thus, it is compulsory within the UMAP for homosexuals to adhere to the conceptualization that the soldiers and other detainees have of femininity.

This corporal transformation is not the only one that Arturo undergoes while at the UMAP. After several months, Arturo begins to discern a change in himself,

Physically, Arturo is transformed by the work he is doing in the cane fields; he has become the ideal of the man that works the land, yet, this is never recognized by anyone but Arturo. It angers him that those around him do not recognize this change, “¿cómo era posible que no se dieran cuenta?, ¿cómo era posible que no quedasen maravillados, sorprendidos, ante tal transformación?” (42-43). The soldiers do not recognize this change in Arturo precisely because, as he realizes in the concert hall, he is invisible in the
eyes of tradition and in the eyes of the law. This means that although his body has conformed to become the type of body that is sanctioned by the hegemonic discourse, this discourse excludes him because he has been codified as homosexual. It is not precisely his sexual desire that the soldiers reject, but rather, the way Arturo’s sexuality is codified by this discourse to position it outside the desired masculinity, or in opposition to it.

The emphasis on physical attributes that characterize the New Man not only focuses on the physicality of the body but more precisely on youthful bodies. Youth, then, refers to an abstract notion that is less about actual age, and more about the possibility that lies for the future. Consistent with Lee Edelman’s argument in *No Future*, the Revolution seeks to enact laws that will “protect” a hypothetical child who is to become the New Man from the possibility of homosexuality that offers, as the title of Edelman’s book suggests, no future for the nation. The image of the child is within the imaginary of the nation, and the image of the child as it is constructed within the discourse of the nation becomes part of the subjectivity of the nation. The youthful body within the symbolic order of the nation represents the future, and because the homosexual does not form part of that discourse proposed by the Revolution he is excluded from said symbolic order. The final embodiment of the Revolution in the New Man is always displaced to the future when the youth/child becomes the New Man and concretizes a truly revolutionary society. In fact, the youth of every generation since the Revolution are looked upon for this potential. The institutionalization of this futurity is evident in the following official declaration from the Congress of Education and Culture in 1971 that stated: “It is not permissible that, by means of ‘artistic quality’ recognized homosexuals
win influence and have an effect on the education of our youth” (Montaner qtd. in Epps, 256). This declaration makes evident the official attitude toward homosexuality as a deviation from revolutionary goals. Thus, it is considered incompatible and, indeed, a “threat” to the future of the Revolution. Youth are seen as the seeds that will grow into the New Men that will see the Revolution flourish, and homosexuality as a negation of that future. The focus on youth is still evident fifty years after the fall of Batista when the leadership of the Revolution still periodically claims that “La revolución es de los jóvenes.” Clearly, these are not the same jóvenes of the 1960’s, and yet, they are the same because of the abstract notion that is invoked when speaking of youth as a general concept, rather than as individuals.

Arturo too recognizes his age as an important element of his identity, and it occurs as he becomes aware of the transformation of his physicality. In other words, when he recognizes his corporal change, he is reminded of his age precisely because of the fleetingness of his youth and beauty contained in his youthful body. Contrary to the official discourse regarding youth, Arturo sees his own youth and its transitoriness. Instead of fixing himself in time, Arturo becomes aware of the passing of time and the effects it will have on his body: “Cada día que pasaba era un día que lo empujaba, que lo acercaba a su destrucción, cada hora, cada segundo: un empujón, un empellón, una patada, lanzándolo al inútil y monstruosos fin, envejecer, Dios mío, envejecer” (44). The reality of aging is made evident to Arturo as he realizes that each passing day leads him closer to death, to the end. If the Revolution projects onto youth the future of the New Man, Arturo sees his future as “todo condenado a la pudrición, a la infatigable voracidad del gusano y nada más” (44). Unlike the Revolution that looks at the future as a time of
hope, where society will reach its true potential, Arturo’s vision of the future is one of decrepitude, where everything is condemned to rot. Arturo’s vision is one of defiance of the New Man and the discourse that propels it because in his vision there is no future. If death and putrefaction is the natural end of the cycle of life, then this is also the future of the Revolution. Everything around him, the UMAP, the soldiers, the prisoners, and himself are headed toward the same destination. Indeed, the future of the youth that do not succeed in becoming the New Man, and of those that might, is death. The idea of youth is so appealing to the Revolution precisely because the constant renovation of generations means that death is evaded.

The focus that is given to the future by the Revolution, even to those in the UMAP who will be “re-educated” through hard labor and thus transformed into productive citizens, is contrasted by Arturo’s abrupt end. Arturo’s death snatches away any possibility of a future, and he becomes that eternal youth, the youth that never becomes old, but also the youth that does not become the New Man because the possibility is taken away. In fact, it is Arturo who designs his death:

allí estaban, allí estaban ya los integrantes del escuadrón, venían hacia él empapados de sudor, agitados y rabiosos, habían corrido por más de cuatro horas buscando a aquel maricón desertor, pero ahí estaba al fin, y he aquí que el muy cretino venía corriendo hacia ellos, ahora, pensaba el subteniente, ahogado por la furia y el calor, ahora que te ves acorralado (perdido) en medio de estas sabanas vienes hacia nosotros, hijo de la gran puta, y levantaba el arma apuntando hacia Arturo, lamentándose de no verlo correr en dirección opuesta para, justificadamente, poder disparar, y, sin lograr domarse, gritó: ¡maricón, deja que te coja que te voy a poner el culo como pomarrosa, aquí te haces hombre o te jodes! (78-79)

The confrontation between the subteniente and Arturo reveals the paradox that exists in the Revolution’s attitude toward masculinity and homosexuality. Here, the sub-lieutenant laments what would be perceived as Arturo’s bravery (which would be configured as
masculinity). The fact that Arturo is running toward the squadron rather than running away from it in fear is contradictory to the sub-lieutenant’s understanding of gender and sexuality because he assumes that Arturo’s sexuality necessarily makes him cowardly. In fact, the sub-lieutenant is taken aback by Arturo’s reaction precisely because it disarms him. He is unable to shoot an unarmed man justifiably if he is not running away. Furthermore, it is the sub-lieutenant who, in his frustration and to assert his power and masculinity over Arturo (as Arturo is bravely walking towards his death), defaults to his own sexuality. That is, he will make Arturo a man by raping him, and turning his buttocks into a Malay apple, red and swollen from what can only be interpreted as the sub-lieutenant’s penetration. In order to establish his dominance over Arturo, the sub-lieutenant makes recourse to the imagery of forced anal penetration, to show his masculinity vis-à-vis Arturo. Either Arturo becomes a man or he will be fucked into submission. This permissible violence is prevalent throughout the discourse of sexuality, and it is used in order to show strength. Thus, sexual violence becomes a weapon of assertion that homosexuals and women suffer in order to reinforce frameworks of traditional masculinity. It seems, then, that instead of reeducation in the Revolution, Arturo is being subdued into compliance, and yet, this compliance is never fulfilled because Arturo is killed before either threat can materialize. For Arturo, death is the only way to escape the impossibility of reintegrating into society.

Indeed, the paradox of Arturo’s reeducation is the weight that is placed on productivity. The ability to produce for society and the Revolution are pillars in the conceptualization of the New Man. However, it is evident that the definition of productivity is completely arbitrary, since predetermined groups of people, specifically
homosexuals are viewed by the Revolution as incapable of being productive. Therefore, regardless of Arturo’s results in the fields, he will never be regarded as a productive member of society, precisely because his sexuality codifies others’ perception of productivity. Most of Arturo’s time in the UMAP is dedicated to clearing sugarcane fields, and in fact by any standard, he is described as being quite a remarkable worker:

This description of Arturo’s tireless efforts in the cane-field are similar to those in official magazines describing the accomplishments of the most noted volunteer citizens of the Revolution. It would seem that his ability to surpass all set standards of productivity whilst enduring physical hardship without complaint would guarantee his characterization as masculine. If it were any other place, under any other circumstances, Arturo’s work in the fields would shine, and his courage to surpass obstacles in the name of productivity would be commended. However, the fact that he is a prisoner of the UMAP disqualifies him from any participation in the type of discourse that would include him as part of the nation. His sexuality and perceived gender deviance mark him as an outsider to whom the “rules” do not apply. Therefore, regardless of his efforts, his compliance with every regulation set out for him, and having in fact reached the goals set forth that would mark him as being “reeducated” into the system, he will never be regarded as such because of his sexuality. If Arturo is productive, and is nonetheless denied a place within the Revolution, then it becomes apparent that the discourse is a created and modified in order to exclude. It is an ever-changing, arbitrary set of
requirements that can never be satisfied. In other words, regardless of Arturo’s behavior, he is always regarded as other, and he underlines the arbitrary nature of this exclusion when he, in fact, becomes the model of productivity that the Revolution encourages.

This affront to the parameters that define masculinity allows Arturo to redefine masculinity in his own terms without straying too far from what has already been codified. Arturo effectively equates masculinity and productivity, however, instead of relying on the physical labor highlighted by the official discourse. Arturo’s physical productivity is irrelevant (to himself and to his superiors as has been explained in the preceding description), and instead he focuses on his creativity, his intellectual productivity. Unlike any other person in the UMAP, prisoners and guards, Arturo sets himself apart through his writing. He is very clear to draw a distinction between himself and others at the prison: “había establecido tres categorías: ellos, los otros y los demás” (11). This distinction is based on his perception of different groups he encounters, prisoners, guards, and the guards’ superiors. It is clear that he regards himself as different from all three groups, and this distinction is mainly based on Arutro’s ability to create rather than destroy:

ellos, los otros, los demás, todos, se lanzaban contra su memoria o su ilusión, siempre para joder, queriéndole estropear su obra, queriendo interrumpirlo, queriendo confundirlo y perderlo, reducirlo, enmarcarlo a sus estúpidos razonamientos, a sus mezquinas concepciones, al mundo, a su mundo (el mundo de ellos), a la vida, a sus asquerosas vidas. (8)

From Arturo’s perspective, it is writing that distinguishes him from everyone else at the UMAP, and makes his life less miserable than theirs.43 His creativity and ability to create

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43 This dichotomy that Arturo creates between himself and the other detainees at the UMAP is indeed civilizationist. There is no way to know if Arturo is better off in the UMAP than the other prisoners. Therefore, Arturo recreates the discourse of the New Man in his own terms, placing himself as the ideal – justifying this repositioning through art/writing. Thus, when rearticulating the discourse of the New Man,
for himself new worlds sets him apart and allows him, in a sense, to flourish in the prison, despite the abuses he endures. Writing becomes an obsession because it is, to Arturo, what distinguishes him. His writing has the power to resignify the definition of productivity in Arturo’s terms. According to Mauricio Arenas Oyarce, Arturo’s writing is the only way to escape his present reality because a different reality does not suffice. Therefore, Arturo must create an allegorical city that protects him from his surroundings.

Given his creative output, Arturo becomes the most productive individual in the UMAP, and thus, he overtakes the linguistic territory of the official discourse. He is able to penetrate the inner writings of the superiors, the acts of war, and transforms them with his own language

The original message becomes indecipherable as it is saturated by Arturo’s writing in the same way that the political message of the New Man is transformed by Arturo’s relentless productivity. If Arturo, as a homosexual, and the gender assumptions made because of his sexuality, at some level come to personify the New Man, he does so with a
clear difference. His homosexuality, of course, necessarily changes the relation to the official discourse, but he also projects his own vision of the New Man, the new man which he represents, as an artist, as a creator. Arturo is able to manipulate, disfigure, and render illegible the official language of political booklets, slogans and acts of war, and by replacing this type of language with a neo-barroque, obscure language that baffles the guards in charge of the UMAP, Arturo recreates the meaning of the Revolution within his own framework. He positions the ideal of the artist as the best possibility for creating a viable future that is not clearly defined by Marxist-Leninist manuals, political slogans, and acts of war, but instead one that allows for obscurity. The type of masculinity Arturo posits and indeed exemplifies is in direct opposition to the Revolution’s clearly defined gender configuration, and as his language suggests, promotes a murkier stance on masculinity. Arturo’s writing is seen as a threat because it is transformative; not only does it disfigure the official discourse; it also allows Arturo a certain amount of freedom to question said paradigms on his own terms. At the same time, as Brad Epps argues in his article “Grotesque Identities: Writing, Death, and the Space of the Subject (Between Michel de Montaigne and Reinaldo Arenas),” Arturo’s writings stand “against that grotesque, centered and straight in its authority, this other grotesque, marginal, deviant and devious, spirals across the pages, across the bindings, with its own secret, special authority” (47).

Unlike Arturo’s understanding of the malleability of gender, David and Diego, the protagonists of Senel Paz’s El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, have a much more traditional interpretation. According to James Buckwalter-Arias, the New Man needs to be reinterpreted during this time, after the fall of the Soviet Union, in order to not become
an anachronic caricature (701). Thus, the New Man presented by Paz is an update of the traditional discourse in order to survive the crisis that the fall of the Soviet Union has on the left and reiterates the discourse of the New Man as it was conceptualized by Guevarra. Buckwalter-Arias argues that Paz’s New Man has, “pronunciadas resonancias socio-simbólicas” throughout the novella (702).

The structure of the novella is set up to contrast Diego’s and David’s lives. The dynamics of their friendship is based on the conflicting worldviews that they come from, Diego as part of the cultural elite of Havana and a homosexual man that is marginalized by the Revolution, and David, a peasant from the countryside who has been embraced by the Revolution and educated within its parameters. David’s notions of masculinity are evidenced in his first encounter with Diego, where he conflates gender and sexuality, and indeed the arbitrary nature that designates completely random characteristics as either masculine or non-masculine, “Le eché una ojeada: no había que ser muy sagaz para ver de qué pata cojeaba; y habiendo chocolate, había pedido fresa […] Esta gente es así. En los pueblos pequeños los afeminados no tienen defensa…pero en La Habana, había oído decir, son otra cosa, tienen sus trucos” (10-11). David equates Diego’s effeminate mannerism with his sexuality, underscoring that his sexuality was obvious not only because of his mannerisms but because of his choice of ice cream flavor. The absurdity of the statement draws attention to the absurdity of the way gender paradigms are established and perpetuated, and at the same time highlight how entrenched they are in the social psyche. Once David determines for himself that Diego is outside the established norms of masculinity, he begins to characterize him as such through a diminutive language, “Me miró con otra sonrisa y se dedicó a recoger con la puntica de la
cuchara una puntica de helado que se llevó a la puntica de la lengua […] Pegó un gritito: había encontrado una fresa casi intacta en el helado” (13). The use of the diminutive underscores the initial relation between David and Diego from David’s perspective. It is used not only to belittle Diego, as one would use with a when speaking to a small child, but also it is employed contemptuously, to highlight the position of power that David holds vis-à-vis Diego. It serves to create an oppositional relation defined by David.

David’s conception of masculinity is further delineated when he recounts his experience in high school when he is asked to be part of a school play, “[Yo] tenía un concepto demasiado alto de la hombría para meterme actor, y no tanto yo como mis compañeros” (15). There are two important ideas about masculinity here: first, the fact that masculinity and the arts are mutually exclusive. In other words, masculinity is in opposition to artistic professions because of the implications on sexuality that this professional realm entails. Secondly, David points out that masculinity is a social construction that relies on the consent of the group. Therefore, it is not only his ideas of masculinity that dissuade him from acting but his classmates and their opinions. His classmates’ opinions have such a high bearing on his own, and thus influence him to such a degree that he initially claims that their opinion is his own.

David’s ideas are to be expected. However, as part of David’s education, Diego will challenge his pupil’s framework, and indeed he does delineate the categories of gender to David as he understands them. Nevertheless, he does so in order to explain himself and the way he fits into the project of the Revolution. Therefore, Diego reinforces some heteronormative notions of gender. His explanation categorizes different types of
homosexuals, as he sees them, a view that is very closely tied to the discourse of productivity:

Los homosexuales propiamente dichos – se repite el término porque esta palabra conserva, aún en las peores circunstancias, cierto grado de recato –; los maricones – ay, también se repite –, y las locas, de las cuales la expresión más baja son las denominadas locas de carroza. Esta escala la determina la disposición del sujeto hacia el deber social o la mariconería. Cuando la balanza se inclina al deber social, estás en presencia de un homosexual. Somos aquellos – en esta categoría me incluyo–, para quienes el sexo ocupa un lugar en la vida pero no el lugar de la vida. Como los héroes o los activistas políticos, anteponemos el Deber al Sexo. Los maricones no merecen explicación aparte, como todo lo que queda a medio camino entre una y otra cosa: los comprenderás cuando te defina a las locas, que son muy fácil de conceptualizar. Tienen todo el tiempo el falo incrustado en el cerebro y sólo actúan por y para él. La perdadera de tiempo es su característica fundamental. Si el tiempo que invierten en flirtear en parques y baños públicos lo dedicaran al trabajo socialmente útil, ya estaríamos llegando a eso que ustedes llaman el comunismo y nosotros paraíso. Las más vagas de todas son las llamadas de carroza. A éstas las odio por fatuas y vacías, y porque por su falta de discreción y tacto, han convertido en desafíos sociales actos tan simples y necesarios como pintarse las uñas de los pies. Provocan y hieren la sensibilidad popular, no tanto por sus amaneramientos como por su zoncera, por ese estarse riendo sin causa y hablando de cosas que no saben. El rechazo es mayor aun cuando la loca es de raza negra, pues entre nosotros el negro es símbolo de virilidad. (33 - 36)

Diego prioritizes productivity as a central part of gender. He distinguishes between people who are unable to be productive members of society because they are so consumed with satisfying their sexual urges, and those who are not easily distracted by their sexual desires. However, this initial proposal morphs into categorizing people according to their “assault” on traditional norms. In other words, Diego finds that black “locas” are the most rejected by society because black masculinity is necessarily identified with virility, and according to Diego, these two terms, “loca” and virility, are diametrically opposed to each other. Diego’s reasoning then reverts to issues of productivity and pleasure, outlining how the typology he has laid out is also applicable to heterosexuals whereby
el eslabón más bajo…está signado por la perdedera de tiempo y el ansia de fornicación perpetua, lo ocupan los *picha-dulce*, quienes pueden ir a echar una carta al correo y en el trayecto meterle mano hasta a una de nosotras, sin menoscabo de su virilidad, sólo porque no pueden contenerse. Entre las mujeres la escala termina naturalmente en las putas… aquellas que se entregan por el único placer, como acertadamente dice el vulgo, de ver la leche correr. (36-37)

Therefore, Diego’s typology is based on the same discursive structure as the revolution when he explains different types of hetero and homosexuals. He draws a clear hierarchy where he favors those that fall into his categorization of “productive,” whereby someone that seeks out sexual encounters constantly, by (his) definition, is excluded. It is notable that there is a marked difference between the way in which Diego characterizes heterosexual males and females. On the one hand, a heterosexual man who is constantly having sex is described as someone that cannot control himself. In other words, his sexual impulses are beyond his control and he will “relieve” himself with anyone without putting into question his virility. Women, on the other hand, who enjoy sex, that is, who seek it out because it is pleasurable, are categorized as whores, and according to Diego are worse than prostitutes who do it out of necessity, because these do it out of pleasure.

In order to defend his position as a homosexual who can be part of the revolutionary process, Diego reproduces official discourse and classifies people by their perceived usefulness as it is defined through their sexuality in relation to productivity. Furthermore, Diego’s position as a cultural elite places him in a slightly privileged vantage point vis-à-vis David, where he is able to determine artistic and intellectual value. Thus, his statement regarding “locas de carroza” and their “zoncera” serves to distance himself from the archetype of a “trivial and flamboyant” homosexual whom Diego believes are an affront to social norms. The complicity with established norms of gender allows Diego to include himself within an imagined realm of social norms that
excludes those that deviate from it. This perpetuation of the status quo reveals the misogynist discourse that underlines the gender divide, whereby men who are attracted to and sleep with other men do not complicate social norms; rather it is the men who are an affront to the traditional paradigms of masculinity, which display qualities traditionally used negatively to define women. There is a clear rejection of characteristics traditionally associated with femininity, and because of this there is, to some degree, an acceptance of male homosexuality that adheres to characteristics that are traditionally defined as masculine. This conceptualization both reestablishes certain notions of the New Man as the epitome of traditional masculinity, while at the same time opening a space from within said discourse where male homosexuality can be compatible with it, effectively changing the discourse. Indeed, it challenges the ideas put forth by Castro and Guevara that male homosexuality is necessarily an affront both to the ideals of the New Man as well as its futurity. At the same time, it devalues the performative qualities of *locas*, thus accommodating some of the Revolution’s values.

Diego reformulates the idea of the New Man from within the discourse. In a sense, he accepts said discourse for what it is and comes to formulate his own theory on gender within the traditional heteronormative delineation. At the same time, he highlights the overlooked elements within said discourse. Diego is portrayed as being rooted in Cuban tradition, even though he is overlooked and erased within the national discourse. His life work, too, is focused on the study of Cuban culture, the historical elements that have also been displaced from the national imaginary, but nevertheless form an integral part of the cultural heritage.

En mi caso, el sacerdocio es la Cultura nacional, a la que dedico lo mejor de mi intelecto y mi tiempo. Sin autosuficiencias, mi estudio de la poesía feminista
cubana del siglo XIX, mi censo de rejas y guardavecinos de las calles Oficios, Compostela, Sol y Muralla, o mi exhaustiva colección de mapas de la Isla desde la llegada de Colón, son indispensables para el estudio de este país. Algún día te mostraré mi inventario de edificios de los siglos XVIII y XIX, cada uno acompañado con un dibujo a plumilla del exterior y partes principales del interior, algo realmente importante para cualquier trabajo futuro de restauración. Todo esto, así como mi papelería, entre la cual lo más preciado son siete textos inéditos de Lezama, es fruto de muchos desvelos, querido, como también es mi estudio de la jerga de los bugarrones del Puerto y el Parque Central. (34)

This description of Diego’s interests spans the history and culture of Cuba from the earliest navigators to the island to the current slang terms used by bugarrones, and they present concepts that have been rejected by the Revolution. Diego’s interests not only reveal his commitment to Cuba, but also the importance he gives to the knowledge, study, and preservation of the island. Diego focuses on David as his project because, like the Revolution, Diego sees David as the possibility of a different future. If the Revolution has sponsored David’s education throughout his life it is in order to see the results of this education, a productive male citizen that is not only indebted to the Revolution, but complicit with it. In the same way, Diego tries to mold David into his version of the New Man. As David remembers,

Realmente le sorprendía y le dolía equivocarse conmigo. Yo era su última carta, el último que le quedaba por probar antes de decidir que todo era una mierda y que Dios se había equivocado y Carlos Marx mucho más, que eso del hombre nuevo, en quien él depositaba tantas esperanzas, no era más que poesía, una burla, propaganda socialista, porque si había algún hombre nuevo en La Habana no podía ser uno de esos forzudos y bellísimos de los Comandos Especiales, sino alguien como yo, capaz de hacer el ridículo. (26-27)

Diego has pegged David as a project, the possibility of a future that will lead to a truly inclusive Revolution. David’s youth is essential because he is susceptible to new ideas and, although he initially acts closed minded, his artistic sensibilities and curiosity for a cultural world that is unfamiliar to him allow him to open up to new possibilities and discourses concerning the aims of the Revolution. Diego sees David as his cultural heir, a
way to maintain the cultural elements of Cuba that are being erased. Indeed, when Diego sees himself forced to leave the island, he leaves his most prized cultural and historical documents to David to forward to certain cultural institutions or keep for himself. It is notable that although the novella suggests that Diego has cultural connections and friendships throughout Havana, he chooses to leave these things to David, with whom he has only spent a short period of time. This act of giving, of turning over his most prized intellectual projects to David, is of great importance since it effectively means he is picking his successor. Like the Revolution, Diego sees David’s youth as a key to guaranteeing the prolongation of his ideas into the future. However, in order for David to be Diego’s successor, it necessarily means that Diego will die, or in the case of the novella go into exile, which could be seen as effectively the same thing. In fact, the weeks leading up to Diego’s exile are described in similar ways as the winding down of a long sickness that will lead to an inevitable death, even David recognizes this:

A medida que se fue aproximando la fecha de la partida, fue languideciendo. Dormía mal y adelgazó. Yo lo acompañaba el mayor tiempo posible, pero me hablaba poco, creo que a veces ni me veía. Acurucado en la butaca de John Donne, con un libro de poemas y un crucifijo en las manos, pues su religiosidad se había exacerbado, parecía haber perdido el color y vida. (54)

It is unclear, however, if it is the long battle with the disease (the Revolution) or imminent death (exile) which have caused Diego to deteriorate. Perhaps it is the fact that his exile not only erases him, but also because he will leave as a presumed traitor, “Me voy, en el tono que lo había dicho Diego, tiene entre nosotros una connotación terrible. Quiere decir que abandonas el país para siempre, que te borras de su memoria y lo borras de la tuya, y que, lo quiera o no, asumes la condición de traidor” (48-49). Unlike death, exile eliminates one completely from the memory of the city because one is assumed to be a traitor. There are no memorials or tributes paid to traitors. Diego’s relationship with
David, in a sense, secures that he will not be erased, that David knows him not to be a traitor, to be entrenched in his love for Cuba but to have no option but exile. Furthermore, it allows Diego to live on within David, and this sensibility and knowledge is the manifestation of the New Man that Diego had strived to create in David.

Despite Diego’s adherence, to some extent, to the traditional characterization of gender, his mannerisms, questions, and conversation are enough to send David into an auto-critical monologue whereby he questions his identity, who he is, and what he stands for. Diego, although conservative in some respects, nevertheless serves as a source of auto-critique for David, and by extension the Revolution,

por qué, si era hombre, había ido a casa de un homosexual; si era revolucionario, había ido a casa de un contrarrevolucionario; y si era ateo, había ido a casa de un creyente. […] ¿Por qué delante de mí se podría ironizar con la Revolución (tu Revolución, David), y ensalzar el morbo y la pobredumbre sin que yo saliera al paso? ¿No sentí el carnet en el bolsillo, o es que solamente lo llevaba en el bolsillo? ¿Quién eres realmente, tú, muchachito? (29)

Diego’s first encounter with David leads him to question his loyalty and belief in the Revolution, and perhaps most tellingly, makes him refer to himself in the diminutive “muchachito” which he had reserved for contemptuously mocking Diego’s effeminate mannerisms. David uses the diminutive here with contempt for himself, for indulging his curiosity over his adherence to revolutionary ideals. The last two questions he asks himself, whether he only felt his i.d. in his pocket rather than his heart and mind, and who he really was, open the possibility of being in a way that was different than that which had been prescribed for him by his education. These two questions will be addressed throughout the novella, as David tries to come to terms with his education and his friendship with Diego, and reconcile them.
If the government has conceived the New Man based on elements such as productivity, education, love of country, and militant preparation, the conception that Diego has of the New Man, of his version of the New Man, also addresses these concerns. Diego’s commitment to productivity and his disdain for idleness have been established. His focus on education and love of country are just as fervent as the government’s. The crux of Diego’s and David’s relationship is based on Diego’s (re)education of David, but unlike the socio-economic structure that has shaped David’s formal education, Diego’s approach comes from a cultural perspective. His relationship with David is not his first attempt to establish this type of tutelage, as David points out, “John Donne era un poeta inglés totalmente desconocido entre nosotros, y que él, el único que poseía una traducción de su obra, no se cansaba de circularla entre la juventud” (22). Diego positions himself as a wielder of cultural power and he chooses who will have the good fortune to receive this knowledge. The education of David takes place because of his creative aspirations. Once Diego reads some of David’s writing it becomes clear to him that David’s literary education has vast gaps that need to be filled. He takes it upon himself to fill those gaps, to give Diego the cultural education that he lacks, and in so doing to expose him to the possibilities that exist, and help him to achieve not only a literary sensibility for his creative endeavors, but also an awareness that will inevitably make him less designed by the system that has hurt Diego so much. It is telling that David’s (re)education has as a starting point: his use of the word mujic in his writings. It is precisely this kind of Soviet influence that Diego rejects, opting for the Cuban, guajiro. Although Diego is seen as foreign influenced, he criticizes David’s education for the exact same thing,
¿Qué es eso de escribir mujic en lugar de guajiro? Denota lecturas excesivas de las editoriales Mir y Progreso. Hay que comenzar por el principio, porque talento tienes.” Y tomó en sus manos las riendas de mi educación. Léete, me decía entregándome el libro Azúcar y población en las Antillas, y yo me lo leía. Léete contrapunto cubano del tabaco y el azúcar, y yo me lo leía. Léete Americanismos y cubanismos literarios, y yo me lo leía. (38)

Clearly the education that Diego is providing is entrenched in his loyalty to “cubanía,” as he calls it. From the very beginning he makes it clear to David that above all things he is a patriot, and when he introduces himself he highlights: “soy, antes que todo, patriota y lezamiano, y de aquí no me voy ni aunque me peguen candela por el culo” (19). He further underscores his devotion to Cuba when he puts his country above his desires, “Somos tan patriotas y firmes como cualquiera. Entre una picha y la cubanía, la cubanía” (35). Diego’s educational program is rooted deep in his concept of Cuba and what he believes is the cultural cornerstone of the island, which has been denied to David’s generation. It mirrors the revolutionary projects with the great exception of including the Cuban literary tradition that has been excluded by said agenda. Perhaps the greatest paradox that Diego, who is so committed to disseminating Cuban culture, sees in the Revolution is that David, who has been educated by the Revolution which champions Cuba, would choose the Russian word for peasant instead of the Cuban word.  

David has been molded by the Revolution, and therefore the use of this word reflects his education. The definition of Cubanidad is in question here. Diego defines it with the literary works mentioned above, and others like Orígenes and most especially with the works of Lezama Lima. By placing Lezama Lima at the pinnacle of Cuban culture, Diego is also stating his position regarding homosexuality and its place within Cuba.

44 This can also be seen as a tactic to pander to nationalism, as it became easier to criticize Soviet influence once it had declined.
The image of the New Man, which Diego is promoting through the education he is giving to David, mirrors the revolutionary project, but maintains clear differences. On the one hand, Diego upholds ideas of productivity, youth, love of country. On the other hand, his definition of the cultural tradition that represents Cuban culture is very different from that professed by the Revolution. Furthermore, Diego believes in the flexibility of ideology, the openness to auto-critique, which his first conversation with David produces. It is this type of New Man that he imagines David becoming,

Yo sé que la Revolución tiene cosas buenas, pero a mí me han pasado otras muy malas, y además, sobre algunas tengo ideas propias. Quizás esté equivocado, fíjate. Me gustaría discutirlo, que me oyeran, que me explicasen. Estoy dispuesto a razonar, a cambiar de opinión. Pero nunca he podido conversar con un revolucionario. Ustedes sólo hablan con ustedes. Les importa bien poco lo que los demás pensamos. (28)

David’s reeducation begins with the Cuban tradition that he has not been exposed to, which means the ability to open himself up to different discourses. Using the schema of the Revolution, Diego repositions the pinnacle of Cubanness, replacing the men of the Revolution with the artist, Lezama Lima. It is significant that the model for David’s new education is José Lezama Lima, because of his rumored homosexuality and because of what he represents as an intellectual within the cultural landscape of Cuba. He is exactly the opposite in terms of artistic sensibility from what the Revolution expects of its intellectuals, and although he served in cultural positons during the initial stages of the Revolution, he is later marginalized and finds himself clashing with the political class. Lezama Lima’s verse and prose are characterized by their imagery and symbolism, their language, and what has been referred to as the Cuban neo-baroque. His style is obscure and open to interpretation, something that the Revolution would find threatening. Indeed, by acclaiming the artist, and this artist in particular, as the model for the future, Diego is
trying to reverse a fear that has been justifiably rooted in David, “Por favor, no le tengamos más miedo a las palabras” (55). Diego seeks to preclude the fear that anything you say can be misconstrued and used against you; the use of auto-censorship of one’s speech to avoid political and social consequences.

Although Diego uses the same parameters to describe the New Man as does the Revolution, by placing Lezama Lima as the model for his New Man, he completely overturns the Revolution’s discourse. If the reference for the New Man becomes Lezama Lima, then the image of masculinity expounded and the relationship to the Revolution is significantly altered. Physically, Lezama represents the complete opposite of the youthful, muscular man ready for any task in the fields of Cuba. His robust corporeality is itself an affront to the revolutionary ideal of masculine body, and it is associated with the excess that the Revolution is determined to eradicate. Furthermore, Lezama’s position vis-à-vis the government in various moments of contention, including that of the Padilla affair, make him stand out as a political outsider and counterrevolutionary in the government’s assessment. This position is underlined by Diego’s own actions when he is preparing to leave the island and assures David, “Son los inéditos de Lezama. No me mires así. Te juro que jamás haré mal uso de ellos. Nunca negociaré con ellos ni los entregaré a nadie que los pueda manipular políticamente” (54). Diego models his own moral code on Lezama’s legacy. Indeed, Diego challenges the discourse of the government by centralizing an author that had been marginalized and displaced by it.

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45 Heberto Padilla was encarcerated for what the government considered his counterrevolutionary text El justo tiempo humano (1969) where he critiques the regime’s stance vis-à-vis intellectual and artistic expressions that were critical of the Revolution. Although he is awarded the UNEAC prize, he is detained by the government and repents in court for his “mistakes.” Padilla’s detention prompted Latinamerican and European intellectuals such as Cortázar, Paz, Vargas Llosa, Sartre, and de Beauvoir to come to his defense, and begin with the break of their support for the Revolution.
Thus, within the conservative perspective that Diego has, there is also a deeply radicalized vision of what the New Man should be.

Diego sets clear expectations as to how the New Man should act, taking the categories established by the government and reworking them to model the future of Cuba on the maestro, the true artist, José Lezama Lima. Diego explicitly invokes the image of the New Man, reeducating David in order to create a semblance of what he has envisioned for Cuba’s future. Abel González Melo’s play *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)* never mentions the term New Man, and this omission speaks volumes. Kárel, the protagonist of the play, is part of the generation that would come of age after David’s generation, perhaps those *pioneros* that David sees in the closing lines of *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*. It is his generation that was supposed to see the fruits of the Revolution, and yet, it is clear in the play that the reality that Kárel lives is quite different than what was envisioned for him. The title itself suggests that the myth or the dream that once existed has vanished; there is no longer a mention of possibility, there is simply *Chamaco/Boy at the vanishing point* as the title has been translated. There is no gesture of grandeur here; the word *chamaco* is a basic term that refers to a kid. By using *chamaco* to refer to this 19-year old, and his generation, instead of referring to them as New Men, there is a clear difference of expectations and perception. The play effectively accounts for the realities that Kárel faces in Havana, which are starkly different from David’s world where possibilities still existed.

The emphasis on the individual as part of the fabric that will lead to a triumphant and long-lived Revolution clearly seen in *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* is non-existent in *Chamaco*. It becomes clear in this play that, at least in Kárel’s case, he is left
to his own devises. What once was a clear and systematic investment on the
government’s part to build the New Man through work, education, militarization, and
love for country has dissipated. While once focused on work and productivity, as was
demonstrated in programs such as voluntary labor hours and sugarcane harvest, the
country has spiraled into a service economy. Similarly, Kárel’s life is not defined by
quotas, work hours, or productivity; rather, he makes a living by playing chess for money
and prostituting himself. There is a complete disillusion with both the rhetoric of the
Revolution and its institutions. More than a representation of what the New Man should
be, as was presented by Diego, Kárel is what came to be, the antithesis of the rhetoric
espoused by the Revolution. *Chamaco* turns the discourse of the New Man on its head.
This ideal is only relevant in so far as it is not relevant at all to the realities the characters
are facing. If the New Man used to be an ideal of a possible reality, in *Chamaco* it is a
vague memory that is contrasted by the poignant scarcity and distrust in the institutions of
the Revolution (the police, the justice system, and public gathering spaces). The young
men in the play have very little resemblance to the New Man, and their aspirations are
contrary to the established goals of the discourse. Unlike the earlier generations that
worked the fields and did volunteer work to further the productive and social goals of the
Revolution, these young men live in a period where the economy has shifted from
production to service. Therefore, their aspirations are consistent with the society in which
they live. The discourse of production no longer weighs heavily on them. Miguel Depás
indicates his aspirations, and lack thereof, to Silvia:

> Estudio por el día y trabajo el turno que me toque en el bar. No, no me va mal en
> la escuela ¿Eso no es lo que importa? Pensé dejarla, concentrarme en alguna
> pincha que me guste y no sea sólo la cantina. ¿Pero en qué? Si no tienes título te
He is not very invested in his education and has no real aspirations. He contemplates working at a hotel, but is discouraged by his lack of English. Miguel wants to aspire to something but has no true possibilities. “¿Pero en qué?” indicates that he is unable to come up with any real desire for the future. The aspirations of the Revolution no longer correspond to the realities that Miguel is living, and perhaps his only real aspiration is to live on his own, away from the control that his father wields within the family household. The only possibility that would allow him this type of independence is the service industry, working in a hotel. However, this is unrealistic because Miguel does not possess the required language or bribe money to assure this position. Notably, there is no mention of any job possibility outside of the service industry. This shift from production to service not only affects the realities of the characters, but also the discourse that the country has about itself. If the discourse of productivity used to be a performance, overly theatrical at times as was the case with the production of the 10-million-ton sugarcane harvest of 1970, in *Chamaco* even the possibility of a performance of achievement is gone. In other words, there has been such a shift that production and productivity seem no longer to be relevant to the characters. As Alejandro Depás puts it referring to his own line of work, “¿Qué más da?” (19). Really there is no difference between one thing and the other; the reality doesn’t distinguish between them. These characters are no longer accosted by the pageantry of the New Man. Indeed, they have created a man that is new, unlike the projection that was proposed. This twenty-first century man does what he can to get by, to survive. The “rules” are no longer relevant to the younger generation, although there are still vestiges of them in the discourse of the older generation, Alejandro, Saúl, and
Felipe. There is no ideal masculinity; indeed, there are no ideals. Rather there are ways of surviving the scarcity that surrounds them, defining and redefining themselves.

The model of masculinity projected by the Revolution stands as the goal that male citizens should aspire to and embody. Likewise, the projects proposed in *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* and *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, although contrary to those that the government sponsors, are also models, projections of future possibilities, whether the model of Lezama Lima proposed by Diego or Arturo’s model. Indeed, although both are contrary to the official discourse on masculinity, they inevitably share some aspects with the revolutionary conception of masculinity, whether physical or character traits. *Chamaco* is different in that no model is proposed. There is an array of characters, each defining themselves within their own parameters, aware of the constraints that exist, and often taking advantage of them, but there is no ideal to be attained. This is notable for two reasons. Firstly, there is a type of freedom of expression for the characters that is not present in the other texts. Secondly, the absence of an “ideal” is indicative of the lack of futurity that exists in this text. In other words, this text focuses on the present without succumbing to the pressures of future realization. The absence of the model reflects a keen awareness that the intentions bestowed on the future will constantly be displaced and therefore never come to pass. Refusing to create a model of masculinity, and instead observing the different ways masculinity is embodied and preformed, can be read as a comment on the distortion of time and youth, which is always relegated into the unknown future. Thus, by eliminating a model that defines a specific masculinity to which aspire, the text is able to eliminate the evasiveness of an always-
future future. Consequently, the importance of youth as the beacon of hope for the future is dissipated and the “sanctity” of a possible future is eliminated.

The government focused a great deal of its efforts on fomenting the Revolution amongst the youth because it was they who would grow into the New Man. Youth always has within it the idea of possibility, where any type of ideal future can be prescribed to them. As Edelman points out, laws are enacted in the name of the “child,” a child that does not exist, that is, it is all children, but no particular child, and the futurity which they represent (4). Indeed, it is not specific child, but rather the symbol of the child. Chamaco greatly departs from this vision of youth, in great part because it focuses on specific youngsters and lets their voice be heard. It is they who speak and are constantly repeating the struggles they face, which are tied to the scarcity and lack of money. Indeed, their lives are limited because of the shortages they face. The lives and fates of the two young men, Miguel and Kárel, completely contrast the notion of futurity. Their lives are truncated, as there is no future for this generation. Both die violent deaths: Miguel is murdered by Kárel, and Kárel commits suicide with the same knife that he used to kill Miguel. Death takes the place of possibility, thus eliminating the narrative thruster on a series of generations of young men. The contrast between the men is highlighted from the onset of the book, and yet, the two are also very similar. Therefore, the untimely death of both men speaks to the inaccessibility of any notion of a future for either. Both men are also trapped in what Lillian Manzor as pointed out in her article, “Chamacos en el sur global”, in “códigos éticos conflictivos, productos de la crisis de valores y la doble moral en que viven” (59).
Kárel’s background is revealed throughout the play, through the dialogue between the different characters, but also in the narrative that is present before and after sections of dialogues. Kárel arrives in Havana from the country and, unlike David, the information on Kárel’s education is limited, “Kárel juega ajedrez desde los quince años y ahora tiene veintinuno y once meses. Aprendió dos semanas después de llegar a la ciudad. Miguel sabe ajedrez de toda la vida, su padre le enseñó desde la escuela primaria” (13). The only information given on his education is the way he educated himself to play chess as soon as he arrived in Havana. The absence of any mention of education, demonstrates that education is not central to Kárel’s life, and the fact that he taught himself to play, which is contrasted by Miguel’s experience learning chess from his father when he was in grade school, serves to highlight the lack of mentors in his life. Kárel has acquired this skill in order to survive, to gamble, and earn some money as soon as he arrives in Havana. Furthermore, the juxtaposition between Miguel’s clear educational formation (he is attending the university), contrasts with Kárel’s lack of education and employment which leads him to roam the streets of Havana looking for a way to subsist. Kárel has to resort to gambling and selling himself in order to acquire the money necessary to pay for his living expenses in Havana. Money, and the lack thereof, becomes the central motivator for the characters in the play, a new preoccupation when compared to *Arturo la estrella más brillante* and *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*. There is, however, a generational difference in the relationship with scarcity. On the one hand, the older characters do have some sort of means or income that they can depend on: Alejandro Depás is a lawyer, Saúl is a police officer, and Felipe has a house and rents a room to Kárel. Although Miguel works at a bar after he attends university, it is hardly enough, and Kárel earns money
betting on chess and having liaisons with people like Alejandro Depás. Scarcity becomes the defining factor of the youth in this play.

Although Kárel is the protagonist of the play, unlike in the other texts, there is an array of characters in Chamaco that are “dysfunctional/undesirable” (according to the government’s definitions) in their own way. Ironically, the Revolution has produced a society of characters that would not pass the litmus test of revolutionary masculinity; indeed, no gender model is ever attained, only performed/recreated. However, it is precisely for this reason that Chamaco presents no model. In fact, what is shown is the result of years of propaganda and campaigns that define and establish masculinity. In contrast to the other texts, which present an alternative model to the one exposed by the government, this work by González Melo offers no model. That void is clearly palpable. However, within this lack of model or multiplicity of manifestations, the consequences of the propaganda promoting hegemonic masculinity are evident. All the male characters manipulate their situation relying on the power that this discourse bestows on them at certain points of the plot. For instance, although none of the characters could be considered heteronormative, they often use a homophobic discourse to distance themselves from any implication that they are not masculine. For example, Saúl, the póllice officer who is in a relationship with La Paco, says to Kárel, “no te hagas de machito ahora” (29) implying that Kárel is not “macho” because he has sexual encounters with both men and women. In another instance, Felipe tells Saúl, “yo no soy ningún viejo maricón” (24), when Saúl implies that Felipe uses the peep hole in Kárel’s room to spy on him. In both instances, Saúl uses this discourse of masculinity coupled with sexuality and with power in order to create a clear distinction between himself and the other men.
These characters are all very conscious of the power that traditional masculinity confers, and they use it in order to distance themselves from “the other,” whether that is defined in terms of sexuality or gender (which tend to be conflated). Therefore, although there is no one model of masculinity represented in this text, as it is in the earlier ones, there are evidently real consequences to understanding the ways in which sanctioned masculinity legitimizes certain behaviors and grants power to individuals that adhere to it.

While the text does away with archetypes of masculinity, it is evident that the traditional discourses regarding masculinity are still present in social interactions. Most of the characters presented in *Chamaco* are men, but these men, like all men, do not embody masculinity as it is prescribed. This text is able to describe the ways Felipe, Alejandro, Kárel, Saúl, and Miguel live their masculinity, while at the same time understanding their place within the power structure that also grants them, to some extent, the ability to configure their masculinity in their everyday life very differently from each other. In other words, no two masculinities are performed in the same way; however, each character is aware of the overarching implications of what had at some point been established as legitimate. For example, Felipe is perhaps the antithesis of masculinity as presented by the government. He survives on the money he extorts from his nephew and he has no clearly-marked ideological position. However, when it comes time to leverage his position and to defend himself against insinuations made by Saúl, he exclaims “no soy ningún Viejo maricón.” Felipe’s sexual preference does not matter; what does matter is the way he presents himself to Saúl. His outrage at the implication is enough to evade any further imbalance of power between the two men. In much the same way, Saúl uses this tactic when pressuring Kárel to find out information regarding
Alejandro. In order to separate himself from Kárel, and highlight his position over Kárel, Saúl says, “no te hagas el machito conmigo.” This evokes Saúl’s power over Kárel in that he knows information regarding Kárel’s sexual activities, and how he wields this knowledge can have consequences for Kárel. Telling Kárel not to pretend to be macho, not only gives Saúl the power to decide what is and is not regarded as macho, but also to use the knowledge he has about Kárel to sanction him. Therefore, Saúl can categorize himself as masculine vis-à-vis Kárel, regardless of Saúl’s own intimate relationship with La Paco. In this sense, although masculinity in the text is rather fragmented, the traditional link that ties it to power/violence/money, creates a hierarchy wherein certain characters are able to evoke notions of masculinity, to which they do not adhere, in order to establish a system of dominion. For example, Alejandro’s relationship with his son, Miguel, is structured around Miguel’s inability to live on his own because of his lack of funds, and Alejandro’s desire to control his son and have him be the type of man that Alejandro wishes. The dynamics of money and control that balance the relationship are challenged when Miguel confronts his father, his masculinity, and his position in the household. Alejandro quickly retaliates with violence, hitting his son across the face in order to restore the “order” of the house. Despite Alejandro’s lived masculinity, any insinuation that throws off the balance that he perceives as necessary to maintain control in his home is met by violence. This not only illustrates the stronghold of structures of power, but also the real consequences of the dynamics of masculinity. The idea of masculinity, how one should act like a man, is traditional, yet the lived masculinities are all very different, and often defiant of this tradition. There is no clear definition: the
traditional point of view is used to wield power over others, yet there is an array of ways to practice masculinity.

The categories that served as the yardstick that measured masculinity, or the proximity of one’s performance of masculinity to the one upheld, are invalidated in this play. Indeed, certain values are often ignored, or presented ironically. In so doing, the play fragments the idea of a single model of masculinity, and exposes the multiplicity of masculinities present, as well as the violence that the model presented has wielded over the characters, and by extension the society that they create. There is a clear affront to the idea of productivity, and patria. Indeed, none of the men in the play are productive. Job titles are simply a formality, for those fortunate enough to be employed, and Alejandro mentions the fact that the police itself will not investigate because they are not productive in their own jobs. If the police are a representation of the government, as an institutional force that is representative of the rule of law, then this comment is indicative of the incongruence between the prescriptive masculinity and the lived reality. Even Alejandro Depás’s work in the courts is really of no consequence. The idea of productivity is as antiquated as the sense of patria. If at some point it served to conjure up a series of motivations, patriotism is described much more Ironically. If it had been the great motivator for people to rise up and unite as a nation, now it was a distant concept only conjured up in text books. Chamaco illustrates that the old discourse of the revolution are no longer relevant in the society that these characters inhabit. Nevertheless, there are small vestiges of this discourse that remain imprinted in the minds of those who were socialized within it. For example, the idea of the nation, sacrificing for the nation, and becoming heroes that protect the nation is not easily erased, and even as Saúl, a
policeman, beats Kárel, Kárel’s thoughts recall those omnipresent exhalations of the revolution, “Kárel levanta las manos. Va a hablar. Va a decir algo. Uno piensa que el héroe al final siempre tiene que decir algo. Para que no se apague su llama. <<Para emanciparme>>, piensa Kárel recordando los libros de Historia de la Patria. Pero calla” (29). By taking on this discourse, the text plays with the idea of hero and patria at the same time. By suggesting that Kárel, the boy who has murdered another for a few dollars, is the hero, and having him recall these words, the text reframes the notion of hero vis-à-vis the revolutionary definition. Furthermore, Kárel only thinks this and is unable to say it aloud, or chooses not to say it aloud.

The characters of Chamaco are able to escape certain vigilance over their masculinity, but at the same time are aware or are made aware of a structure of expectations. Whenever it is insinuated that someone diverges from these expectations, it is done as a show of power. In other words, by pointing out “deviance” the characters show that they are have the power to do so, and the support of a mechanism of repression that dictates (or dictated) behavior. This affront is either met by submission or by violence. In both cases, the dissident masculinity is eliminated through power, and the other prevails and restores the preestablished order. This, rather than creating new spaces and possibilities of expression of masculinities, confirms Butler’s theorization concerning prescriptive gender roles. Although there are always, consistently, failures to perform the ideal version of gender, and although there are constant nodes of resistance because of these failures, there exists a social pressure/violence that quells these types of resistance. In fact the act itself carries with it an awareness of the performative aspect of gender. In other words, the accusation is “I accuse you of not enacting masculinity as it should be
portrayed because of what I see or don’t see.” Saúl and Felipe are both aware of the performance he is giving Saúl when the policeman suggests that he is looking through a peephole at Kárel, and Felipe shrugs him off. Felipe says what he is supposed to say, with the intonation it is supposed to be said. Indeed, the performative aspect of gender is at the forefront in all three texts. Hence, David’s detailed description of Diego’s flamboyant behavior when they first met in Coppellia and when they had lunch together at a restaurant before Diego’s exile. In both cases, Diego exaggerates his behavior, molding it into what he knows is expected of him, but also in order to shock the sensibility of those that chose to ignore him. Diego makes himself seen through his behavior. Finally, during Arturo’s time in the UMAP he is keenly aware of what is expected of him, and uses his performance, literal and figurative, as a mode of survival, to escape vigilance.

It is notable that the texts themselves, the use of language and the way each is written, reproduce the type of masculinity that the texts propose. In other words, the text themselves are performative. Much like Gloria Anzaldua’s “Borderlands” textually/linguistically portray the author’s subject matter, the styles of writing used by Reinaldo Arenas, Senel Paz, and Abel González Melo, mirror types of masculinities they propose. Indeed, there is an emphasis on performance in the three texts that is evident in the style each is written.

Reinaldo Arenas is known for his use of language. Arturo, la estrella más brillante illustrates how important language is to Arturo. This novella contains within it another novella, Arturo’s writing. Both texts demonstrate the artist’s mastery of the language. It is no accident that Arturo, la estrella más brillante is eighty pages long, and just one sentence. The mastery of the artist to create a whole world and encapsulate it
within one sentence is evident. The language used is torrential, as Rocía Gordon argues, in that it does not allow the reader to catch his breath. Gordon describes the language as “un torrente desbordante de language” (203). Not only is the novella a reproduction of the space of the UMAP, where there is no space to breath, to rest, or to stop, it also is a blatant demonstration of the capacity to establish one’s own rules and parameters. The text that Arturo writes is equally skillful. His ability to produce and create sets him apart from those around him; and his mastery of language allows him to differentiate himself from the other prisoners and guards in the detention camp. Indeed, it is language that both distinguishes him and makes him worthy of the love of his own creation. Arturo is conscious of this, and it is this awareness of himself as an artist that allows him to escape, mentally, form his surroundings, in order to create a different reality. At the same time, this is what makes him so productive within his creative space, so much so that he appropriates every inch of blank space and substitutes it with his writing, a type of writing that baffles everyone else because they are unable to decipher it. If the New Man envisioned in this text is not a military man but rather an artist, the text itself illustrates the mastery of such an artist. The language used, the way the novella is composed, the fact that it is a single sentence, points to the importance of the style. In the same way that Arturo is able to confuse the men accusing him, unable to comprehend him, he also shows them that by using their parameters of masculinity and productivity, he surpasses their definition. If Arturo, a prisoner in the UMAP, is able to embody part of the masculinity they profess, then where does that leave them? In much the same way, Arenas is able to create a novella that sets him apart as an artist and a master of language. Through his own writing, Arturo is able to create images that are so disjointed from his
own reality that they displace it in favor of an alternate space. Arturo is constantly trying
to reproduce this place of freedom that is fruit of his dominion over the language and
discourse, which has codified him as unfit for his own country. Furthermore, his use of
language serves to control, guide, and create a show, a spectacle that is impenetrable
because of its confusion. In the same way that Arturo performs in the drag show,
controlling, contorting, creating a persona, he also creates an alternate reality in which the
artist is at the heart. The artist, specifically the wordsmith, is such a powerful image
within these texts because he is able to dismantle the rhetoric that denies his personhood,
and with the same tools used to displace him, recreate. The work of Arturo is not only to
create an alternative reality for himself, but to show that all realities are created and
mediated through language. Therefore, Arturo’s writing makes as much sense as the
official acts of war written on the paper that his writing appropriates. Neither is more
intelligible than the other, but one is privileged over the other. In much the same way,
Arturo’s masculinity is not validated within the space he inhabits, and therefore, he is
categorized as being the opposite of that masculinity, no matter the reality. Arturo’s use
of language mirrors the way he performs his own masculinity. The neo-baroque style of
Arturo’s writing is significant in so far as it creates a proliferation of images that are
constantly changing. Indeed, the idea of the baroque that all spaces must be filled is
evident in both the way Arturo writes and the way his writings take over every inch of the
UMAP. Arturo is able to eliminate all unused space and claim it as his own by overtaking
it with his own imaginary. In so doing, he is able to displace what is not of his own
creation, and surround himself with his words. In the same way, Arturo manages his own
gender expression. He performs certain discourses with his body in order to avoid that
particular space where his actions are prescribed by others. In other words, Arturo constantly makes himself seen by performing the gender role others ascribe to him. In so doing, he is able to evade surveillance. Arturo is able to control both his body and his language. By doing so he simultaneously performs physical masculinity, which is expected of him, and a masculinity rooted in his artistic ability and productivity which dismantles prescriptive gender roles.

Language is a central theme in *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, which employs language to characterize the protagonist. At the beginning of the novel, David is very conscious of the linguist differences that exist between Diego and himself. What David sees as Diego’s outlandish ways during their first encounter, are translated into David’s description of Diego using diminutive markers to establish a distance between them. David describes their first interaction. The repetitive use of the diminutive to describe Diego is David’s way of marking Diego’s masculinity vis-à-vis his own. David is discursively creating Diego’s masculinity as diminutive. Instead of creating a sense of endearment, as when the diminutive is used with a child, David employs it to distance himself from Diego. Initially, linguistic markers serve to diametrically oppose the protagonists. David uses the diminutive in order to mark Diego as different, lesser than. Furthermore, the ironic use of the diminutive turns David’s comments into a reproach of Diego.

The initial differentiation marked by linguistic difference begins to disintegrate as the relationship between the two characters grows more intimate. In order to highlight the masculinities in the text, the style of the narrative begins to take on a different shape. If initially the linguistic markers distinguished the two characters, as the text progresses, the
voices of the two characters begin to melt into each other, often rendering them indistinguishable from one another. Paz’s text is full of dialectical exchanges between the protagonists, where Diego imparts lessons of his notions of gender roles, sexuality, and equality within the Revolution. Often times, the dialogue between Diego and David become muddled, and the characters’ voices are lost within each other. In other words, as David narrates his story, Diego’s words literally come out of him. David is retelling what Diego has told him, and in so doing, he reiterates Diego’s ideas. As David recounts the story of his relationship with Diego, the narrative voice moves from first person to third person; this unfolding of the narrative voice results in the confusion of voices. This is first evident when David, retelling the story of how he first met Diego, remembers within this initial memory how he reacted to the request of his drama teacher to form part of the cast of the school play. David recalls the situation, and Diego interrupts the narration with his own comments, and finally, David finishes, “Sí” dijo el hijo de los campesinos paupérrimos, con una voz ronca que yo apenas reconocí” (20). David recalls himself saying this, but he does so as a narrator watching himself as a character within his own memory. This unfolding of the character into both voices will give way to a continuous dialogue between David and Diego that ultimately ends in David’s acceptance of Diego’s point of view. The narrative is structured around the dialogues that the characters have with each other, and in turn how these dialogues affect the dialogues that David has with himself. According to Diego, “conversar es importante, dialogar mucho más” (27). The difference between conversing and dialoguing is at the heart of Diego’s views on the Revolution. Instead of simply speaking, Diego proposes the importance of dialogue, which assumes the interchange of ideas that leads to some conclusion. In other words, the
relationship that Diego establishes with David is an attempt to create a dialogue, and indeed what it becomes is a dialogue that is so intertwined that the ideas held by one character becomes the ideas of the other. Not only does David become sensitized to the exclusionary practices of the Revolution but Diego comes to understand much of David’s point of view within the Revolution.

Most of the text is the dialogue that occurs between David and Diego, and David’s reflections over this relationship. The friendship that blooms between the two is a result of their continual discussions. There is a mentor/mentee relationship between the men that profits from a direct language that avoids obscurity but abounds in questions. Despite the clarity of the language used, there is a complex play with temporality where David is able to move seamlessly from the present to the past perfect to the past, and back again. David’s flashbacks are for his own benefit, in order for him to understand his own reaction to Diego. This occurs when Diego first mentions David’s performance in a high school play, and in his narration from the present state, he must go back to that moment in order to explain why Diego’s comment has affected him so much. These explanations serve to understand David’s reaction to Diego, both his curiosity and indignation with himself. Therefore, the interactions between David and Diego lead to an internal dialogue for David, where he begins to explain and question himself and his belief system. The intertwining of David’s and Diego’s voices with persistent dialogue highlights the way they perform their masculinities. By the end of the text, while waiting in line at a restaurant, David mirrors Diego’s performance

Gritó mi nombre con los dos apellidos desde la acera opuesta, agitando el brazo, que se había llenado de pulseras. Cuando estuvo junto a mí me besó en la mejilla y se puso a describirme un vestido precioso que acababa de ver en una vidriera y
David’s reaction underscores Diego’s performance. They are both consciously disrupting social expectations by publically breaking gender conventions. This scene foreshadows David’s response to Diego’s last confession,

¿Recuerdas cuando nos conocimos en Coppelia? Ese día me porté mal contigo. Nada fue casual. Yo andaba con Germán cuando te vimos, apostamos a que te traería a la guarida y te metería a la cama…Tu camisa junto al mantón de Manila, tendidos en el balcón, eran la señal de triunfo. Germán, naturalmente, lo ha regado por ahí, y más ahora que me odia…¡Me perdonas?’ Yo guardé silencio, de lo que él interpretó que sí, que lo perdonaba…Y cuando estuve en la calle, una fila de pioneros me cortó el paso…y me quedé mirando a uno, que al darse cuenta me sacó la lengua; y entonces le dije (le dije, no le prometí), que al próximo Diego que se atraviesara en mi camino defendería a capa y espada. (58-29)

The David that first met Diego would have been enraged by this confession. However, David’s reaction is silence. Furthermore, once he realizes that he himself has also done something similar by contacting Ismael regarding Diego’s inappropriate contacts with foreign consulates, he reacts by forecasting an optimistic future.

One of Diego’s last recommendations to David before his exile is literary, “Y pasando a mi formación literaria, agregó otros títulos a la lista de mis lecturas pendientes” (56). Upon Diego’s departure from Cuba, David is left with a series of literary titles that Diego has chosen. Therefore, Diego will continue to influence David regardless of his absence, and part of this work is to keep his literary model, Lezama Lima, from falling into obscurity.

Diego’s understanding of gender is informed by his own lived experience and the social structure to which he belongs. Although he is critical of the Revolution, he also agrees with certain elements. The emphasis he places on productivity and patria are evidence of this. It is, therefore, not surprising that the text should end on an optimistic
Although he is exiled, Diego continues to believe in the Revolution. Before leaving he advises David,

No dejes de ser revolucionario…La Revolución necesita de gente como tú, porque los yanquis no, pero la gastronomía, la burocracia, el tipo de propaganda que ustedes hacen y la soberbia, pueden acabar con esto, y sólo la gente como tú puede contribuir a evitarlo. (57)

Clearly, Diego believes in the Revolution as a social project, and he sees David as the type of New Man that can save it from itself.

Chamaco, informe en diez capítulos (para representar) does away with the notion of the New Man. As Sonia Behar points out in her book La caída del hombre nuevo, the prolongation of the Revolution and the loss of an ideal reveal el “carácter absurdo de sus vidas” (146). This is evident in Chamaco, more than in any of the texts analyzed here. Not only has the model of the New Man crumbled but there is nothing to replace it. The emptiness so feared by the baroque is made evident in this play. The veil is lifted on the discourse that tried to regulate gender identity, and there is nothing. The language used in Chamaco stands in contrast to the other texts. Although Chamaco, like El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, is written mostly in dialogue between characters because it is after all a play, the language in Chamaco is sparser. There is less communication, and much of it is interrupted by silence. The language used is direct and the genre of the text does not allow for the confusion between the voices in the dialogues that are taking place. There is no place for ornate flights of fancy within Chamaco; instead, there is a scarcity of language, as though the economic downturn that has affected the character’s life, has also taken hold of communication. Conservation and survival become part of the linguistic environment. Therefore, rather than producing language, often times, as is the case when Saúl is threatening Kárel, or when Miguel Depás is arguing with his father, speech is
repressed. This truncated communication, the inability or unwillingness to produce speech, is akin to the unproductivity of the characters in the text, which is in direct opposition to the ideals that characterize the New Man of the Revolution.

Different expressions of masculinity abound in Chamaco, and because there is no set model of masculinity, silence becomes a resource within the styling of the text that allows for a multiplicity of expressions. In other words, the highly performed and stylized discourse of the Revolution is starkly contrasted by the lack of discourse prescribing compulsory masculinity presented in the text. Thus, the void that is left by the absence of the revolutionary discourse around masculinity is obvious, and it translates into an opening, if slight, that allows for each character to perform their masculinity in different ways, at different points, with different people. The language of the text undoes traditional archetypes and presents various possibilities and complexities in gender performances. This does not mean that there is an overturn of gender norms and expectations; rather there is an exhaustion of the imagery produced by the Revolution, and in fact a complete disbelief in the fruits bared by the Revolution, which leads to the ability of rearticulating expressions of masculinity.

As I have argued in this chapter, Arturo, la estrella más brillante, El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, and Chamaco, informe en diez capítulos (para representar) are in dialogue with the discourse of masculinity of the New Man. Each text delineates different forms of masculinity by emphasizing certain aspects, such as productivity, and rearticulating masculinity through these concepts. Productivity, or the lack thereof, becomes central to the understanding of masculinity in all three texts. In each one, there is a performance of masculinity that is mirrored in the text’s writing style. This emphasis
on performativity is done to evade scrutiny or to play deliberately with social expectations.

Productivity and performance go hand in hand in all three texts, as well as in the official discourse of the Revolution. Productivity, especially as it relates to youth and their work in the countryside is paramount for the development of the New Man. The countryside, as an imagined space, is essential for the narrative of the Revolution, as it is imagined as both the space of productivity and national “authenticity.” The countryside functions as multiple symbols within the discourse of the New Man and the nation. It is interesting to note that the protagonists of all three texts are from the countryside and make their way to Havana. The following chapter will focus on the dichotomy that exists between countryside and city in the imagination of the nation and in each text.
Chapter 4
Specters of the Countryside

The Countryside

One of the main goals of the Cuban Revolution was to alleviate the problems affecting disenfranchised urban and rural populations. The policies of the newly-formed government were focused on eradicating illiteracy, implementing land reform, restructuring the education system, and, on a larger scale, reorganizing the political and economic structure of the country. The literacy campaign in 1961 was meant to (re)educate the population. Students from Havana would move into villages in the countryside to teach peasants and their families to read. This cohabitation was meant to show the urban literacy brigades the plight of the peasant farmer and as a consequence these youths would naturally come to value the people that worked the land. During the day, the literacy brigades would work the land with the peasants and at the end of the day, they would teach the peasants how to read and write. This reciprocal relationship was meant to create a stronger society whereby the traditionally marginalized population of the countryside and the urban city-dwellers would create bridges of understanding and cooperation. Ana Serra has outlined in her book, The New Man in Cuba, how the literacy program effectively imagined the Cuban countryside versus the Cuban urban space. She describes the literacy campaign as one that not only brought literacy to the masses but one that reinforced the discourse of modernization, bringing hygiene to the masses that needed to be brought into the twentieth century. According to Ana Serra, the discourse of the Cuban Revolution created a pedagogical/hierarchical system, where the leaders of the revolution were responsible for educating the masses. Serra argues, “Given that the Cuban state invested a great deal of its power on defining discursive limits and providing
models of identity, one can consider revolutionary leaders and policymakers as leading emissaries of the discourse of the New Man, while the often invoked “masses” were the recipients” (3). Therefore, the leaders effectively embodied the New Man and were responsible for the “education” of the population. This type of pedantic attitude is reminiscent of the “salvation” discourse predicated by colonial and neo-colonial powers. Contrary to Antonio Gramsci’s ideas of organic intellectuals, it is clear that the leadership saw itself as wielding the correct ideology to recreate the Cuban society and therefore they had the duty to bestow it upon on the population that previously did not have access to it. It is not surprising, then, that the literacy campaign was not merely a way of bringing literacy to the masses, but also of bringing the message to the Revolution. According to Serra, “It is clear in Guevara’s pedagogical model that the leaders are the ones responsible for constituting and teaching this new identity, and that every possible means of expression needs to serve this purpose” (11). Therefore, the materials used in the literacy campaign exemplify the ideal revolutionary, the New Man, and that artistic expressions should serve this purpose, as Fidel Castro declares in his 1961 speech, “Palabras a los intelectuales.” The process of educating the people was not only a literacy process: “The initial idea that the literacy workers were going to rescue a form of ‘natural man’ was combined with a desire to *civilize* that man and turn him into someone resembling a citizen of an ideal modern revolutionary city. According to the testimonial of Orquidea Canel Pendas, the first teacher brigades sent to the Sierra included medical workers as well as barbers and hairdressers, and their curriculum comprised cultural and recreational activities as well as courses on hygiene” (Serra, 33). These elements of the Revolution shed light on the clear division that existed between the Cuban urban and
rural spaces. The “negative representations of the peasants and the silencing of their voices in the earliest years of the Revolution caused Cuban culture after 1959 to be distinctively urban based, with only idealistic or mythical representations of the Sierra as the site of historical Cuban rebelliousness” (Serra, 52). This valorization is central to understanding the role that the countryside plays in the self-imagining of the protagonists of *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* and *Chamaco* since protagonists in all three migrate to Havana from rural provinces.

This division of spaces is evidenced in Fidel Castro’s own words: the literacy brigades were as Guillermina Ares describes, “missionaries of culture, like torches lit to bring light” (53). Thus, the literacy campaign served as a beacon of light that was bringing the Cuban peasant into the modern world. Rather than unite these two disparate spaces, the dichotomy verbalized by the leadership of the Cuban Revolution during its early years created a chiasm between the urban and rural spaces. “El campo” continued to signify not only the countryside but also a backwardness that needed to be irradiicated in order for the Revolution to truly succeed. This is not to say that the literacy campaign did not have its upside, but the discourse that codified “el campo” was one reminiscent of nineteenth-century positivism. This narrative that counterpoints the modern urban space of Cuba with the underdeveloped countryside is a constant within the Cuban imaginary. It is, perhaps, for this reason that the main characters in the three texts are haunted by their rural roots. “El campo” for them is an element of the past that has been left behind, but nevertheless is constantly reappearing in their daily lives. These protagonists emigrate from the rural provinces of Cuba to Havana; in some cases, this is a direct result of mandates carried out by the Revolution, as is the case of David in *El lobo, el bosque y el*
hombre nuevo, who is in Havana studying in the university as a result of the educational investment that the Revolution has made in him. In the cases of Kárel of Chamaco and Arturo of Arturo, la estrella más brillante, their emigration to the capital is a result of life circumstances. Nevertheless, their life in the urban space is marked by their rural past.

The relationship that these characters have to their pasts varies, but the nature of this relationship is similar. All three are haunted by their pasts, in as much as it has an invisible presence in their lives. The dual nature of the past as both present and absent, and therefore as a specter, is discussed in Jacques Derrida’s Specter’s of Marx, where he argues that “the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes rather, some ‘thing’ that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other…There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reapparition of the departed” (6). This conceptualization of the specter allows us to consider the reapparition of place/space of the countryside as it helps shape questions of visibility, gender, and belonging of the characters. The rural space is significant within the Revolution because there is a continuation and reformulation of the “noble savage,” whereby the campesino has not been corrupted by the decadence of the pre-revolutionary era. It is he who should teach the new society the value of hard work, the value of the land. At the same time, he is seen as backward, needing to be modernized. This double discourse of fascination and rejection of the countryside is central to its conceptualization within the imaginary of the Revolution.

Invisibility is central to understanding the relationship of the rural space in Havana because, although it is a central identity marker for these characters, it is never
present. Once in the urban scape, the characters’ rural identity is rendered invisible because it is not immediately perceivable. Nevertheless, it is integral to their understanding of themselves, their surroundings, and their interactions with others. In the introduction to Luiz Ruffato’s book Entre Nós, Denilson Lopes argues, that subjectivity can be formed through invisibility. It is precisely this formation of subjectivity, this other way of belonging within the city, that characterizes the protagonists of Arturo, la estrella más brillante, El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, and Chamaco. The “otherness” of these characters in relation to their surroundings and peers is constantly underlined in the texts. The presence of the specter necessarily marks their difference in the urban social space. Belonging, thus, becomes difficult, as they never quite fit in the urban space. All three are products of the revolutionary discourse that marks the countryside as a sight of both backwardness and redemption.

The leadership of the Revolution contributes to the rhetorical division that exists between these spaces, and also imagines the revolutionary struggle differently in both spaces. There is an awareness of the difference that these spaces represent within the attempt to implement a new society. A female lieutenant in the Revolutionary Army, is asked in an interview done by a Canadian reporter in 1964 about her time in the Sierra, conditions for women, and armed fighting. Guevara Pérez explains the physical hardships the guerilla endured during this period in the countryside, including battle wounds, hunger, and cold. The interviewer goes on to ask her to compare the armed struggle in the Sierra to defeat Batista, and the efforts currently underway in the urban spaces. “The fight for autonomy, against the tyrant was easier,” she says. The lieutenant explains that the urban struggle is much harder because of what is being created. The struggle now is
mental, that is, for the minds of the people. She adds, almost as an afterthought, that the latter is harder because it is a fight against imperialism. This dialogue reveals the perceived division between the countryside and the city. There is an implication that the struggle for the countryside is one of force, of strength. That is, it was hardship for the body that was conquerable. The city, however, represents the mind, the building of a new society. Therefore, there is a Cartesian dualism projected on the country, where the countryside is the body and the city is the mind. This division harks back to the nineteenth century, when national movements in Latin America were guided by the idea that the urban space had to “conquer” and “civilize” the rural land and its people. 46

The countryside is the sight of victory, of triumph, where the struggle for the “autonomy” of the country was accomplished, and the city is a sight that must still be conquered. Therefore, the specter of the “victory” in the countryside is always present in the city. That is, the question of how the success of the armed struggle in the countryside can be translated to the city permeates urban life. All three texts address this in different ways. It seems as though the “unsuccessfulness” of the characters (can one argue that any of them is successful in the way the revolutionary movement would measure/define success?) within the city mirrors the Revolution’s own struggle. None of these characters live up to the established models of the revolutionary. So, not only does the ghost of the countryside haunt them in terms of where they come from, but the ghost of the Revolution’s countryside (i.e. victory) haunts them as well, and ultimately is never embodied by them. Therefore, a victory based on the Revolution’s conceptualization remains disembodied in the city. However, this does not mean that the characters are not victorious; they are in so far as they define victory on their own terms.

46 See Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, i.e. civilization/barbarie.
In the conceptualization of a revolutionary that will produce and contribute to the state, the countryside is seen as a site, a location where work is promoted; the physical, the body must produce, and like the revolutionary army that produced the Revolution in the Sierra Maestra, the new citizen must produce for the country in the countryside.

At the same time that these currents of positivism continue within the political discourse, there is an inherent value, according to the leaders of the Revolution, of working the land; thus, the imposition of “volunteer” work in agriculture. One could argue that the value of working the land to tame it plays into the notion that the urban must “civilize” the rural. Noticeably, there is a valuing of the physical work that is achieved in the rural areas. Thus, the division that equates the urban with the brain and the rural with the body is maintained. What does this mean for the conceptualization of the revolutionary? It is interesting to note that the requirement to work the rural areas was not only imposed on men but also women. Hence, there is an expectation that women will participate in the revolutionary process, and the work that it demands of its citizens. However, as Ana Serra has documented, women of the Revolution faced the task of abiding by these requirements of the Revolution whilst still being expected to maintain a traditional role of mother and caretaker within the home, while men were not expected to take on the responsibilities of the home.
**Familial Specters**

The Cuban countryside, the periphery of the periphery, has been characterized as backward, as well as having been touted as the space of “the people,” and the geographical place where revolutionaries are made (i.e. La Sierra Maestra).\(^{47}\) The multiple meanings given to the countryside have created contrasting myths about it within the national discourse. The protagonists of each text, *Arturo, la estrella más brillante, El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo,* and *Chamaco,* are products of the countryside, born and raised in different provinces, who eventually find their way to the city. The countryside is not directly present in the texts, since the characters have migrated to the city, and yet, it is constantly present. These characters are haunted by this geographical ghost that does not make an appearance in the texts except in retellings of the past.\(^{48}\) Arturo, David, and Kárel are constantly reminded of their inadequacies (be they cultural, economic, politicial, etc.) that stem from their peasant origins and social position as migrants from the countryside. Therefore, the countryside can be understood as a specter, “a reapparence of the departed,” or in these cases, of that which is left behind. Although the language of the Revolution used to describe the countryside posits it as a positive space, there are aspects of the countryside that are rejected by the urban dwellers. Therefore, there is also an element of “reapparition” surrounding the “meaning” of this space. That is, although the geographical space of the countryside has been

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\(^{47}\) These revolutionaries, the Castro brothers, Ernesto Guevara, Cienfuegos, etc., were generally urban men who were perceived as becoming one with the people, true revolutionaries, through the struggle that was fought in the countryside. See Guevara, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War.*

\(^{48}\) In *Arturo, la estrella más brillante,* the countryside is present in so far as he is forced to work in the UMAP camps and therefore his physical space during that time is the countryside. However, when he chooses to inhabit his writings, he is, in fact, more present in his fiction than the countryside’s “unreal reality.” Furthermore, the countryside of the UMAP becomes an incarnation of his dreaded past life before he moved to the city. Therefore, it becomes the manifestation of the specter, making him relive the past without reproducing it.
recodified as the space where true revolutionaries are formed, the nineteenth-century discourse that depicted the space as backward, savage, etc., also persists.49

The otherness of this specter is intrinsic to the protagonists and their (de)construction of masculinities. There is a clear split in the lives of the protagonists: before (represented by the countryside) and after (represented by the city). Yet the “before” phase never completely concludes because, although they inhabit the urban space, they are always haunted by the countryside. The break between city/countryside not only occurs within the protagonists, but is representative of the protagonists vis-à-vis the other characters they encounter. This split point of view establishes different dialogues, antagonistic at times, regarding the definition, or a possible definition, of masculinities. The ghost of the countryside is thus present in the self-construction of the protagonist as well as in the way in which the protagonists are constructed by the other characters, and narrators.

The specter of the countryside also contributes to the protagonists’ ghostlike presence in the city. None of the protagonists have male peers that are empathetic to new forms of masculinities. In fact, there are no male peers with which to negotiate, share, discuss ideas. The distancing from the past and all that goes along with it, such as male friends of the same age group, results in an absence of the “male pack.” This absence and the relentless pursuit to eliminate difference are perhaps the reason these protagonists are able to open themselves up to new possibilities of masculinities.

49 The countryside was filled with positive imagery and upheld as a space of/for revolutionary work. This discourse was cemented through the Literacy Campaign of 1961, and Volunteer Work, and the Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest of 1970. It was also used as a way to justify the use of the UMAP camps to “reeducate” counterrevolutionaries through work in the countryside.
The countryside (re)appears in different forms and has specific meanings for each protagonist. In *Arturo la estrella más brillante*, the place of elocution is the countryside, where Arturo is being held at a UMAP work camp. Much of Arturo’s time is spent in the countryside cutting sugarcane. Although this part of the plot takes up some of the narrative, the novella mainly contains Arturo’s own fictional writing and memories of the past. Furthermore, it is not the countryside of the present that haunts Arturo but the countryside of his youth. This time and space are exemplified by his mother, La Vieja Rosa, who has died. She constantly reappears throughout Arturo’s fictional narrative, interrupting his creation, and throughout the narrator’s retelling of Arturo’s life. The ghost of his mother is constantly breaking through his desire to be invisible, to garner a space for himself away from the gaze of others, and points him out, signals to him. Even in her death, hers is a gaze he can never escape,

Arturo’s mother, the authoritarian figure that tried to kill her son when she found him in the arms of another boy, lives on, judging and mocking every queer desire or gesture that Arturo has. This castrating figure serves as a constant reminder of Arturo’s “lack of masculinity” or his noncompliance with established models outlining “correct”
masculinity. Therefore, even in the space of the city, during the musical recital, where Arturo is perhaps the freest he has ever been, her presence floods his thoughts, stripping him of this possibility of escaping the gaze of others. Within the performance hall, when everyone in the theater is looking at the pianist, Arturo is still the object of his mother’s gaze, or at least that is how he imagines it. He can never escape the gaze of her specter because by definition her specter is always present. Whenever the countryside is invoked in Arturo’s memory, the memory of his mother, la Vieja Rosa, is superimposed on it. Therefore, the traditional linkage between woman, body, land, is replicated in this novella. However, this woman cannot be “tamed,” certainly not by Arturo, rather, she is representative of the traditional patriarchal authority/law. Thus, she is land and law. La Vieja Rosa takes the place of the state as gender police, enacting their homophobic laws, while paradoxically being opposed to the Revolution. Indeed, the patriarchal system is extended from pre-Revolutionary Cuba to Revolutionary Cuba, and Arturo’s mother paradoxically is *le nom du père* that becomes the Law of the Father/Mother. Perhaps this is why she seems to encompass every space from which Arturo eternally can not escape. It is not merely the ghost of the countryside that haunts Arturo; rather, it is his mother and the law that she represents (from which he is excluded) which constantly beset him. Lillian Bertot argues that Arenas’s work consistently creates a “tensión simbólica libertad/opresión. El hijo busca su auténtica y legítima realización como ser, y la madre se lo impide, lo coarta, lo condena al fracaso y a la destrucción” (3). Bertot argues that throughout Arenas’s work the mother becomes the mother-state which serves as the extention of the state by upholding its laws.

50 In Lacanian theories *le nom du père* is the figure that represents the law and prohibits, whilst situating the subject within the symbolic order.
Arturo is forced to leave the countryside after his mother’s death. He is put up in a “family pension” by his brother in a provincial town until he manages to make his way to the city. The city is a hiatus between Arturo’s time in the countryside of his youth and the countryside of his detention. This urban space offers him the possibility to create ties with people who were not related to him, although these possibilities never materialize into anything meaningful. In fact, Arturo does not seek out these types of relationships, and initially rejects a group of gay men that tries to engage him. The city also offers him an anonymity that is unavailable to him in his town where he knew everyone and everyone knew him; where he was obliged to acknowledge those who would not acknowledge him. The compulsory nature of his interactions is highlighted by his double use of “obligation,” “había conocido el desprecio (la indiferencia) de sus hermanos, el desprecio y la indiferencia de todos los que obligatoriamente se veía obligado a saludar” (24). The other constants of Arturo’s life before leaving his familial home, as illustrated in this quotation, are disdain and indifference.

Perhaps the most important element of the city for Arturo, is the possibility of escapism, exposing him to art forms that were inaccessible to him in the countryside. Libraries become central to Arturo’s existence in the city, finding refuge within their walls. However, even within this initial space of refuge, Arturo is unable to escape his past. The only book that calls his attention, regarding stars and planets, immediately conjures up the memory of his mother, the conversations regarding his name, and the star that shares it. The city also gives him the possibility to attend a piano concert. It is his experience in the music hall that first allows him to escape into his own fictional reality, “la música tomó a Arturo suavemente, lo sacó de la silla y apaciblemente, descorriendo
los cortinajes, lo depositó junto a una torre, en un cantero, en una tarde, junto a la mata de pensamiento chino y la zarzarrosa florecida del jardín junto al corredor” (24). This experience is essential for Arturo because, throughout his time in the UMAP camp, he is trying to recreate, through his creative process, the sensations and imagery that this music provokes in him. Perhaps it is not only the music, but the fact that the concert marks Arturo’s last moments in the city, the last moments before he is taken to be “reeducated” through forced labor and imprisonment, before he is taken by police during “una de las acostumbradas <<recogidas>> de jóvenes amparadas en el pretexto insólito de un pelo demasiado largo, de una forma de vestir determinada, y, sobre todo, de ciertos rasgos, de ciertas <<maneras>>” (29). It is notable that Arturo’s experience in the theater, the moment of pure joy that he will constantly invoke to escape the harshness of his realities, is starkly contrasted to the cynicism of the narrator towards the wielders of power. The contrast between the freedom in the theater, where the performance is recognized as such, and the oppression of the forced gender performance epitomized by the gender model of the New Man that the detainees are evading with their long hair, way of dressing, and mannerisms is paramount.

Arturo’s friendship with the men that attend the musical recital is barely commented on. There is a certain reproach toward them, and the attention they pay to their own presence in the theater. Arturo walks among them because he is rejected by others, but not because he shares a deep affinity for them. This is the only social circle that engages him, that includes him, that is not disdainful or indifferent. However, Arturo is not one to seek friendships, and keeps to himself. The only presence that is constant during his time in the city is the ghost of La Vieja Rosa, who constantly passes judgment
on his actions, the way he sits, the way he looks at others, the way he carries himself, etc. Her presence intensifies during Arturo’s imprisonment in the UMAP, as do his attempts to elude her through his writing. Because she represents the law, as do the police who detain him, it is clear that his writing is a way to escape compulsory gender roles.

During his time at the UMAP, again, Arturo finds himself marginalized. Amongst the “locas” and “más locas” Arturo is a stranger, his difference, not adhering to what the other characters expect from a homosexual, is seen as a threat. This variance needs to be eliminated, and Arturo is accosted by the guards and the other prisoners who see his behavior as trying to be something he is not (decent). Thus, there exists a chain of signifiers that equates indecency with homosexuality and homosexuality with non-masculinity. This equation of homosexuality with not being masculine is casted as an expectation of the femininity of homosexuals. Therefore, within the UMAP, and in the society at large, male homosexuality is expected to be performed as femininity. There is a slippage between gender and sexuality that leads to social rejection, which is based on the implicit “superiority” of the masculine. This isolation is part of Arturo’s retreat into his creative process, and the identity he most cherishes, the artist, is cultivated in this isolation. When Arturo realizes that he will need to fit in with the rest of the prisoners in order to survive, and to have the peace he needs to write, he becomes “la loca más loca” and is named the queen of the carnival within the camp. This performance allows him to become invisible. That is, by erasing his difference, he is no longer persecuted and is able to slip into periods of complete silence, and isolation to develop his work. Arturo becomes invisible and can retire into his writing, where he is able to create a new reality. This invisibility, as Denilson Lopes posits, vests him with the ability of being subversive,
outside of the stereotypical behaviors that are expected of him and the other prisoners. The writing itself, the proliferations of images, also render him invisible and opens up a space where his own image is not coopted. The ties he creates with other prisoners are effective in that they allow him to isolate himself from them. There is never any dialogue between Arturo and any other man. The lack of communication between Arturo and the others marks a clear incomprehensibility between him and others, and further highlights the protagonist’s isolation from the collective. The only verbal interaction occurs when the superiors (military men/guards) at the camp address the prisoners, or address Arturo directly in the last moments when the web of writing is destroyed, and Arturo is once again pulled into the visual. Before they shoot him, the superiors yell “maricón, ahora sí que no te vas a escapar...maricón!... Tres veces te hemos dado el alto, párate ahora mismo o hacemos fuego!” (80). Although Arturo is hailed by the soldiers, he refuses to be questioned by them. He does not recognize himself in their exclamation, and although they are screaming and threatening him, he refuses to look back at them, and instead runs the other way, as if the screaming were directed towards someone else. Althusser argues in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, that one is transformed into a subject in as much as one responds to the “hey you” enunciated by a policeman on the street (163). However, Arturo does not recognize himself in the words of the soldiers. He resists their intent of rendering him a subject determined by their ideology.

Arturo’s identity/awareness/construction of himself as artist has no validation amongst his peers. The silence and solitude that this identity requires marginalizes Arturo from the margins. That is, he is rejected from the space of the other prisoners who themselves have been marginalized from society. In fact, he resides at the margins of the
UMAP. Arturo’s difference in behavior does not abide by the rules of behavior imposed on homosexuals. Hence, Arturo is unable to negotiate his identity: there is no space for this difference, unless it is veiled. Once this farce is disclosed, his difference cannot be sustained, and it is inevitably eliminated. While Arturo’s assassination serves to erase this difference, the evidence he leaves behind, his work, is plastered throughout the camp, as he manages to write on every inch of paper—scraps, political banners, papers detailing acts of war—that he was able to get his hands on. In this sense he completely invades and inscribes himself within the letter of the law that excluded him.

Arturo’s time in the UMAP camp is characterized by the tough labor of sugarcane harvest. This hard physical labor and the ability to participate within the sugarcane production was a way to remasculinize these men who, because of their sexualities, were deemed less/not masculine. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, masculinity was defined partly by the ability to carry out this type of work and the ability to contribute to producing the revolution, and yet, the work that these men carry out is never recognized precisely because they are always already defined as less masculine. Therefore, the remasculization of these men through agricultural labor is ultimately a myth because their masculinity is in fact not dependent on their “ability” to be active producers for the Revolution. Furthermore, it could be argued that Arturo is the greatest producer of all, since he produces both physical and mental (his fiction) products. Yet, the second type of production is not valued by the leaders of the camp, and, in fact, casts him as an anti-revolutionary. Upon discovering Arturo’s creative work plastered throughout his barrack, one of the guards emphasizes his already consolidated image of Arturo, “qué

51 Part of producing the Revolution means taking part in the economic effort, i.e. agricultural efforts set forth by the government. The charaters in the novella are actively contributing to the development of the country’s economy.
mariconerías son estas.” Writing itself, as it is connected with a prisoner at the UMAP, is not only equated with sexuality, but it is done so using a derogatory slur. Therefore, Arturo’s creative production becomes an affront to the officers that represent the laws and punishment of the Revolution. “Writing” is equated with “faggotry” and it is this equation that makes Arturo’s use of language on political banners and acts of war so powerful. By appropriating such official documents through his writing, he is re-signifying them within his epistemology, while being aware that the military officers will read them as such. In other words, Arturo is queering these products of the Revolution. Arturo turns to writing as a means of escaping his reality, but also as a way of creating, generating himself as an artist, within a space that denied this category, and as a result is able to manipulate the power to create meaning that the Revolution wields. By making the political banners and acts of war incomprehensible when he writes over them, Arturo is effectively defacing the “original” message and molding it into an incomprehensible chaos of signifiers that are unintelligible to the military personnel who are searching his possessions:

papeles, papeles, cartones, pancartas, afiches, actas de consejos de Guerra, y todo escrito hasta los mismos bordes; las actas que se habían perdido, dice el teniente, qué haría el verraco con ellas, y toma una y, con trabajo, lee, al instante, asqueado, mira al cabo y le entrega uno de los documentos garabateados, qué te dije, dice, con esta gente hay que tener mucho cuidado, éste no sólo no se conforma con desmoralizarse a sí mismo, sino que también nos desmoraliza a nosotros, al país, a la patria, mira lo que escribe, contrarrevolución, contrarrevolución descarada; y el cabo lee, trabajosamente, algunas palabras que no entiende: jacintos, turquesas, ónix, ópalos, calcedonias, jades...un aterido lo-fo-ro-ro, ¿lofororro?. ¡qué coño es esto! Qué cantidad de sandeces y boberías, que verborrea. (67)

Arturo occupies the political language with his own which is not only difficult for the corporal to read but also to comprehend. Arturo’s language renders the political writings
useless because the abundance of his writings makes the “original” text illegible; additionally, the imagery that Arturo creates with language is superimposed on the political messages rendering them invisible. In fact, the corporal no longer sees the political messages in the papers he is given; instead, what he is drawn to are the words written by Arturo, precisely because these words seem so unusual to him, so out of place within the UMAP.

Arturo is able to finally create his masterpiece in a niche he has created for himself, “hoy, había sabido elegir el lugar, había sabido escaparse, correr sin ser visto, había sabido burlar la guarida, ABANDONAR EL CAMPO y situarse, instalarse, no como antes: cerca y por poco tiempo, sino lejos y solo, independiente, solo hasta que él, el exquisito, llegara, solo solamente hasta que terminase la gran construcción para que él, el exquisito, se quedara finalmente; había sabido elegir el sitio, huir” (13). Thus, the countryside is a constant, and he must find ways to abandon it, to rid himself of its stifling influence. This “huída” from the countryside is not always futile. The fleeing is the result of a creative reconstruction where he assembles a world so distinct that it is unrecognizable to those that inhabit the same physical space as he. Yet, this is always momentary because it is constantly being interrupted, and destroyed by the ghost of his mother.

The countryside of Arturo’s youth haunts him. Even as he is forcibly cutting sugarcane as part of his “rehabilitation” into the Revolution, this ghost is present:

al remover la tierra para remover una caña doblada, Arturo sentía el olor de la mata de cerezas, allá, en primavera, subiéndole hasta el rostro; la humedad, el brillo de las hojas, a veces un pequeño, diminuto, casi invisible insecto de coraza púrpura, de insólitas antenas violetas, lo transportaba y depositaba en el sitio donde confluían y partían todas las memorias, todos los olores y sonidos y cuerpos disfrutados, todo lo que antes, al ser, no había sido más que un
acontecimiento cotidiano, un acto natural inconscientemente ejecutado a veces casi con hastío que se cubría ahora de un esplendor, de una gracia, de una belleza, de un don, que la distancia se encargaba de amparar, agravando ...y por las mañanas, al despertar, siempre confundía por unos instantes la jeringuiza de los cocineros del barracón con la voz insustituible de la madre. (15-16)

Arturo’s relationship to the specter of the countryside is complex. It is both menacing and cherished. The vigilance and exclusion of social and familial structures he experiences during his youth in haunt his every move. The gaze of his mother, long dead, continues to follow him, judging and disapproving of him. And at the same time, the countryside as a physical place of his youth fascinates him. It is the land of the past, as the quotation indicates, that serves as a source of inspiration for his creative work. It is notable that the same “brillo, púpura, violeta, olores, sonidos” of his past is exactly what he is trying to recreate in his writings, and can never fully concretize. It is constantly eluding him because it is no longer present. The reality and harshness of the land, of the barracks, have replaced the connotation of the countryside. As I discussed in the previous chapter, it is not only the countryside that haunts, but rather, the mother, the essence of the countryside, the woman that pointed the gun at him when she found him with his “friend” in the field and accidently shot herself. At certain moments, she too is resignified, and acquires an almost nostalgic presence, which is quickly dismissed by the realities that surround him.

The last place Arturo visits in the city, before being detained in a “rodada,” was the only place where Arturo momentarily finds solace, the theater, listening to a concert by a Soviet pianist. It is the music that allows him to wander, his mind to be at peace even knowing the atrocities he has faced, even being aware that “si el mundo en general era terrible, para él era una prisión estricta y asfixiante que se reducía cada día,” the
music transported him and he was able to see his artistic creation “roldanas, andurriales, papagayos, techumbres artesonadas, y, ante un mar estático un hombre que se desangra en la nieve y él salva… porque también hizo la nieve… la música, la música transportándolo a parajes distantes” (26). However, even within this space, the mother, his mother, the countryside, that which he has left behind comes back to haunt him, a permanent ghost in his most sacred of spaces, “allí estaba la madre ahora, junto al gran corredor, entre los canteros y los itamorreales, aguardándolo… Arturo oía a su madre hablando, hablando con él, con nadie, con las estrellas, o sobre las estrellas” (26).

Perhaps instead of his mother interrupting the concert, it is the concert that interrupts, for a moment, the omnipresence of La Vieja Rosa’s ghost and Arturo’s memories of her which are constantly hounding him:

La Vieja Rosa, como siempre ordenó: vamos para la casa, y espoleó el caballo; el hijo detrás la seguía, LA MUSICA, y ella, la alta figura, señalando, LA MUSICA, y ella, la protectora figura… diciendo mira… nada iba a cambiar, nada iba a resolver, ninguna paz, ninguna felicidad o reposo iba a encontrar, allí también surgía la impotente figura LA MADRE. (27)

Arturo has no space to call his own. Even his own fictional creations are encroached upon by his past, by the ghost of his mother that insists that he adjust to the heteronormative world that rejected him, and that he rejected. This specter’s gaze is capable of reducing him, of squashing his creative impulse, leaving him unable to escape the realities of the world he inhabits. Therefore, Arturo is unable to imagine himself as he pleases, part of his self-awareness is inevitably tied to the mother’s gaze, which is symbolic of the countryside’s gaze. That is to say, the mother serves as the embodiment of “la ley” (i.e. legitimate) from which he is excluded. The mother is characterized as the authoritarian extension of the state. La Vieja Rosa, however, is not representative of the
Revolution. She defends her lands from being appropriated by the Revolution. The same patriarchal and heteronormative values that she represents, as a proponent of the previous political powers, are continued in her oldest son, Arturo’s brother, who is an ardent Revolutionary. Therefore, although La Vieja Rosa does not serve as an extension of the Revolution and its values, the values she symbolizes do carry on into the Revolution, and are legitimized, as is evident in Arturo’s interment in the UMAP camp.

The mother, representative of the countryside of his youth, haunts Arturo to the point of creative paralysis. She embodies the rule of law. The mother, the only constant female character throughout the novella, cuts his ability to create, and possesses him in a way that he cannot escape,

y luego la madre, alta y fría, en el mismo centro del barracón, dominando con su mirada fija y recriminatoria... observando a Arturo como se observa a un objeto que se aprecia, pero sobre el cual tenemos la certeza de que no lo perderemos nunca; esa mirada – violenta y avergonzada – lo reducía, lo dejaba impotente, prisionero, otra vez prisionero de la realidad inmediata, las insufribles literas, el trabajo, el hambre, la opresión y aún más: prisionero de la fastidiosa memoria y de la muerte. (53)

She is able to imprison him through memory (yet this is an invisible prison, of his memory/mind). The memory of his mother forces him back to the reality he is so desperately trying to escape. Thus, memory here works to counter creativity and imagination. The more Arturo focuses on his creative masterpiece, the stronger the memory of his mother pulls him away from any possible space of belonging “intentó entonces conformarse con un murmullo de hojas cayendo en otro sitio, en cualquier sitio, pero la madre estaba allí chisporroteando entre las sombras, ordenando que se acercase a su pecho chamuscado, ordenándole que aceptase exclusivamente aquella realidad, la que siempre lo rechazaría y él rechazaba” (53). The memory of his mother continues to wield
power over Arturo, destroying his ability to create and forcing him to acknowledge that any type of relief from reality is simply a way of accenting the pains of reality itself, through the contrast that the break provides. This ghost is able to destroy, not only Arturo’s creation but his ability to create.

The novella ends with the specter of Arturos’s mother chasing after him, screaming at him, and calling for his death. The powers of the state and his mother converge. Hence, her presence: the ghost of the dead mother lives on in those that persecute Arturo. The specter of the past (the mother) materializes in the countryside of the present:

cuando [Arturo] miró atentamente a la comitiva armada descubrió con irrebatible claridad que quien la encabezaba no era uno de los tantos tenientes o subtenientes del campamento, iguales todos - sumisos con los jefes y arrogantes con los presos-, sino su madre, La Vieja Rosa, enfurecida y vestida de militar, quien, escopeta en mano, le gritaba maricón, ahora sí que no te me vas a escapar. (79)

This is a clear critique of el hombre nuevo discourse, where the citizenship is masculinized into the guntotting revolutionary. His mother has become one more of these men… or the men have become his mother, “otra vez divisó a La Vieja Rosa, arma en mano y vestida de hombre” (80), and although they represent two opposing sides of the political spectrum, both embody the heteronormative law that eliminates difference, that eliminates Arturo. The specter becomes corporeal, the leader of the guards becomes Arturo’s mother, or Arturo’s mother becomes the leader of the guards. This can be seen as both the feminization of the army and the masculinization of his mother. This convergence is the ultimate gaze that encompasses all the elements that suffocate Arturo, until finally he sees that the only possibility to escape this is death. Arturo is constantly read, deciphered, and policed by others. His difference is marked by the people who
surround him. In the countryside, where his family and the people of the town have a relationship of obligation, Arturo is recognized but disregarded. However, in the city he is alone, until he is approached by other gay men who are able to read him. To read him, as Carlos Decena has proposed, means to recognize him as homosexual; to recognize that which does not need to be made explicit because it presents itself as tacit within the cultural space. Arturo is constantly trying to escape being read. In the end, he realizes that this is not found in the momentary “invisibility” garnered in the UMAP but rather in death. Only in his death, a death he seeks, is he rendered unreadable. The moment in which Arturo seems to be running towards his death, “Arturo se vio corriendo hacia una tropa de soldados que, arma al pecho avanzaba también hacia él” (79), confuses the soldiers because on the one hand he is acting in a way that could be read as “masculine” according to traditional ideals, whereby he is courageously facing his death, thus challenging the soldiers’ notions of sexuality/gender. On the other hand, Arturo’s actions seem counterintuitive, instead of running from the soldiers who are going to kill him, he is walking towards them. At this moment, the soldiers are unable to read Arturo. Their epistemological arsenal is not equipped to deal with this moment of defiance that results in the inability to be deciphered.

Cultural/Educational Specters

Unlike Arturo, David, the protagonist/narrator of Senel Paz’s El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, is not a victim of the Revolution, at least not an obvious victim. Rather, David is a product of the Revolution: he was born with the Revolution and his position in Havana is shaped by it. David seems to be the incarnation of the Revolution’s New Man. However, it is clear that David has a tumultuous relationship with the Revolution, which I

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52 See Decena’s work on the Tacit Subject as the ability to be read.
argue is the result of the education he receives and his origins in the countryside. This relationship is further complicated as he becomes friends with Diego.

Also, unlike Arturo, David’s family does not appear in the short story. There is no familial presence, something that is both rare and expected. On the one hand, it is rare because of the emphasis traditionally given to the family structure. On the other hand, it is expected because David inhabits a non-familial space, Havana. Also, this education and life experience has taught him that the Revolution has taken the role of provider. It is because of the Revolution that David is in Havana, studying at the university with a scholarship, that he received from the state. It is the Revolution that has educated him, and provided him with the material needs that his family could not. Therefore, in a sense, his family has been partially substituted by the institution. This institution, however, cannot provide him with that which he craves the most, human connection and knowledge. The novel begins with David’s solitude: he yearns for human contact. As he and Ismael part ways he doesn’t know what to do with himself, where to go, or who to call; all he knows is that, “me quedé con aquella necesidad de conversar, de no estar solo” (1). Being alone marks David, and it is perhaps this loneliness, this need to connect with someone, that is the foundation for the friendship that will arise between Diego and himself. As part of the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, a communist youth organization, David is integrated within the workings of Cuban society in Havana, and is aware of his fragile position within that structure. When Diego first sits at David’s table at Coppelia, he thinks to himself, “en cualquier momento podía vernos algunos de mis compañeros” (Paz 10). This moment is telling because it reveals David’s awareness of his position within the structure of the Revolution, and the fragility of that position, whereby being
seen with someone that could be perceived as being gay because of his gender non-conformity, and therefore anti-revolutionary, is unsettling to him because of the implications and consequences that it would have. Also, the choice of the word “comrade,” and not “friend,” reveals the types of relationships David has with his peers. As the beginning of the novella reveals, David has a great need to converse, to exchange ideas, to feel that he is not alone after Diego has left Cuba, yet, the linear time of the novella also suggests this void. During the development of the novella, David is able to establish a friendship with Diego, the first true friendship he is able to forge within Havana, which serves to highlight his lack of real relationships in the city.

In David’s first encounter with Diego, Diego brings up David’s humble origins and apparent loneliness “Yo a ti te conozco. Te he visto muchísimas veces paseando por ahí, con un periodiquito bajo el brazo. Chico, como te gusta Galiano. Silencio de mi parte. Un amigo mío al que no se le nota nada y que también te conoce, te vio en un encuentro provincial de no me acuerdo qué y me dijo que eras de Las Villas, como Carlos Loveira….Se habla de los orientales y los habaneros, pero a ustedes, los de Las Villas, les encanta ser de Las Villas” (13). David is immediately vulnerable because he is already known, deciphered, read, not only by Diego but also by an acquaintance of Diego. Therefore, David seems to be exposed, even to those he does not know. Unable to hide from or contradict what Diego is saying, he chooses to remain silent. Diego not only knows his past, a past of which David is somewhat ashamed, but he has also noticed David’s loneliness in the city, where he strolls around aimlessly with a newspaper to keep him company. The ghost of his past echoes in his own silence, and yet, it is brought to light by Diego, reminding David of his time in Las Villas. The comparison with Carlos
Loveira is significant because of Loveira’s political affiliations and his professional and personal life. As a writer of humble beginnings during the first republic, Loveira mirrors David’s own past, as well as his aspirations.

The fact that inhabitants of the city, whom David has never met, know of him and know his story, without him saying a single word, is quite startling to him, and it is in direct opposition to his own lack of relationships to and knowledge of others in Havana. David’s encounter with Diego finds him unable to navigate the situation. He is clearly uneasy having Diego approach him and speak to him, yet he is aware that his behavior has to be modified from what he has been taught in his rural upbringing, and yet he is unable to adapt to his new surroundings and sits in silence. David’s ideas of sexuality and gender behavior are delineated by his experiences outside Havana. He is very aware of the division that exists between countryside and city and must walk the tightrope of expectations, which does not come easily to him. As Diego is speaking to him, David thinks, “En los pueblos pequeños los afeminados no tienen defensa, son el hazmerreír de todos y evitan exhibirse en público; pero en La Habana, había oído decir, son otra cosa, tienen sus trucos. Si cuando me volviera a mirar le soltaba un sopapo que lo tirar al suelo vomitando fresa, desde allí mismo gritaría, bien alto para que todo el mundo lo oyera: Ay, papi, ¿por qué? Te juro que no miré a nadie, mi cielo” (11). This awareness on David’s part of two separate spaces (urban and rural), and the different conducts employed in them, reveals an awareness of his own expectations based on his upbringing. Therefore, he carries the ghost of the countryside, the “education” he receives in the countryside, with him into the city. It is precisely this inability to act, unable to understand what is required of him in this situation, which allows him to forge an initial
connection with Diego. David is aware of the different social parameters that are present in the city, but he is unable to engage with them. David assumes that Diego has certain “trucos,” certain tactics that allow him to navigate the city, and its inhabitants. Of course, these are all conjured up in David’s head, he can only imagine what effeminate men in the city would do, but he is well aware of his own reaction, what he would do if he were not in Havana. Therefore, the fact that he is an outsider leaves him unable to navigate certain situations. The city itself changes the way he relates to others, specifically effeminate men, and he is unable to read the dynamics that play out in the urban space.

This initial interaction is a way to lure David back to Diego’s apartment in order for Diego to win a bet. Instead of using the tactics that David supposes Diego will use, Diego resorts to David’s interest in books. It is their relationship to books, and Diego’s ability to acquire books that have been censored, that attracts David’s attention. After mentioning that a friend of his knows David from a play in which he performed, Diego invites him to see Mario Vargas Llosa’s book in his apartment, “Yo, si vas conmigo a casa y me dejas abrirte la portañuela botón a botón, te la presto, *Torvaldo*” (14). David is outraged by this comment not because of the sexually suggestive nature “I’ll show you my mine if you show me yours,” but rather, for bringing up one of the key moments of his life, shrouded in embarrassment. As David remembers his experience in the *pre-universitario* when he is asked to perform in a theater piece which he would rather not, he focuses on the argument of the school’s director which leaves a lasting impression and convinces him that he must abide, “[el director] me planteó el asunto como una tarea, una tarea, Álvarez David, que le sitúa la Revolución, gracias a la cual usted, hijo de campesinos paupérrimos, ha podido estudiar; el escenario principal de la lucha contra el
imperialismo no está en estos momentos en una obra de teatro, déjeme decirle; está en esos países de la América Latina donde los jóvenes de su edad enfrentan a diario la represión, mientras que a usted lo que le estamos pidiendo es algo tan sencillo como interpretar un personaje de Ibsén” (15-16). David’s position as a poverty-striken peseant is constantly being invoked. There is no way that David can escape this past, and it haunts him from the moment he leaves his family home. The director of the school uses this knowledge to convince David, and this marks him. He knows that he cannot reject the principal’s request, because if it were not for the Revolution, he would not be in the position to accept or deny the role, as he would have not been granted the opportunity to be enrolled in a pre-universitario. Much like Leonardo Padura comments in “La generación saltada,” the generation that came of age with the Revolution is reminded that they must, “seguir trabajando duro, demostrar lo aprendido y confiar en la Revolución y en sus dirigentes, porque nosotros no desembarcamos en el Granma ni estuvimos en La Sierra” (Padura). In other words, David is in no position to question what is asked of him; instead he must comply and be thankful for the opportunities granted to him.

The countryside serves as a marker. Diego not only equates David with the interior, but also has expectations based on this. However, to some degree David breaks away from the identity constructed by Diego. Once in Diego’s apartment he asked David what kind of music he prefers to listen to. When David replies that he is unfamiliar with the music that Diego suggests, “Celina González, no sé quien es, dije con toda sinceridad” (22), Diego is taken aback and replies, “La gente de la Habana cree que porque uno es del interior se pasa la vida en guateques campesinos” (22). This moment is
notable for two reasons; on the one hand, González’s music represents to the Havana-dwelling Diego what it means to be a guajiro. On the other hand, she has no resonance to an actual guajiro, who has no idea who she is. Thus, her music, to some extent, marks the difference between the imagined vision of the peasant of the countryside, and the lived experiences of a peasant. Furthermore, David, as will be evident in conversations with Diego throughout the novella, is unaware of many Cuban cultural figures. As a student who has grown up in the Revolution, David is more aware of politically-sanctioned knowledge because the cultural capital that Diego wields has, until this point, been inaccessible to him. Thus, the ghost of the countryside, more than linking him to cultural traditions, serves to highlight David’s lack of resources, both cultural and economic. It is the legacy that his past leaves him that marks him as he makes his way through the urban space.

David’s past cripples his perception of himself. This underscores the difference that exists between the revolutionary discourse that touts the peasant as the owner of the Revolution, as the people who will teach the urban dwellers the “true” meaning of Cubanness, and the realities and discourses that David has internalized. After David’s first visit to Diego’s apartment, he experiences an unfolding where his conscience and his spirit take different positions regarding his time there. On the one hand his spirit complements his actions of rushing out of the apartment without engaging with Diego’s attempts to connect through books. On the other hand, his conscience badgers him, his motives, his fraternizing with the “enemy”. And it is precisely his conscience, while asking him for explanations which accuses him, “ya se te va a olvidar que no eres más

53 Celina González was a Cuban singer-songwriter who was considered an icon of “la música campesina,” that is, music from the countryside.
que un guajirito de mierda que la Revolución sacó del fango y trajo a estudiar a La Habana?” (29). David has internalized the discourse of reproach towards the countryside to such an extent that his own conscience reminds him that he is a “guajirito de mierda” who owes everything to the Revolution. It is this sense of indebtedness that prompts this internal battle between David’s conscience and his curiosity. He must overcome his identification as a “guajiro de mierda” indebted to the state in order to deviate from the party and forge a friendship with Diego. Perhaps what he overcomes is the adjective “de mierda,” but the noun “guajiro,” or at least the ghost of that noun, stays with him. And it is Diego who helps him overcome the adjective and pay homage to the noun. As Laura Redruello has noted, Diego scolds David for using Russian words such as “mujic” which are disconnected from the Cuban reality, preferring instead the Cuban “guajiro” (125). By endorsing the use of “guajiro” within David’s writings, Diego is privileging David’s identity. This is significant because it allows David to relate to his past in a way that allows him to participate in the cultural patrimony that Diego has to offer without the shame that eats at him at the beginning of the text. Diego’s ability to value David’s past for what it is, and not for what it is expected to be, or rather, how the Revolution has codified it, frees Diego from these expectations, and allows him to begin to develop himself outside the predetermined parameters of the Revolution. David’s awareness of his past is summed up by the expression that resounds in him, “guajiro de mierda.” It is precisely this conception of his past that seems to define his contradictory relationship with the Revolution. If the Revolution, and much of its efforts, emphasized the importance of the peasant, his way of life, his attachment to the land, his hard work, his strong morals, there was a clear contradiction between this view and David’s view of
himself. There is a significant difference between what the Revolution promoted and David’s self-assessment as a “guajiro de mierda.” Instead of relishing his roots, David is aware that his place in society is a result of his past. Unlike Diego, he has been raised and educated within the Revolution. He has been granted access to an education but only a certain type of education. It is his past that defines him. In other words, the fact that he was a peasant meant that he was only granted access to the education sanctioned by the Revolution. It is Diego that shows him that there are other forms of knowledge that he has been denied.

Furthermore, for the first time during his stay in Havana, David begins to develop a friendship. Soon after meeting Diego, he characterizes their relationship “con este y otros temas, fuimos haciéndonos amigos, habituándonos a pasar las tardes juntos, bebiendo té y convertimos en algo sagrado los almuerzos de los domingos, para los que reservábamos los asuntos más interesantes” (37). Discussion and exchange of ideas fuels their friendship. This is something that David lacks in the city, and is desperately seeking, as he admits in the beginning of the narration. There is a level of intimacy that develops between Diego and David, “Yo andaba descalzo por la guarida, me quitaba la camisa y abría el refrigerador a mi antojo, acto este que en los provincianos y los tímidos expresa, mejor que ningún otro, que se ha llegado a un grado absoluto de confianza y relajamiento” (37). This relationship, and the cultural education that David receives from Diego, gives him the possibility to maneuver within the city. It allows him to form connections and friendships that were previously inaccessible to him. Thus, Diego not only becomes David’s cultural guide, but also teaches him how to relate to others. As David describes after his first encounter with Ismael, “Éste es Ismael. Llegaremos a ser
amigos, a querernos como hermanos, y un día le ofreceré un almuerzo lezamiano porque también en su vida hubo una profesora de literatura” (32). It is apparent, then, that Diego’s influence permeates David’s future relationships. Eloy Merino has highlighted that Diego’s relationship with David is a homosocial if not homosexual relationship by which David is initiated through the “almuerzo lezamiano” that Diego serves him (pagina).54 This initiation allows David to establish relationships and to recognize the bond he can create with homosexual men. As a matter of fact, the “mirada penetrante” which Diego has, and which David recognizes in Isamel, signals the possibility of fostering a relationship with Ismael. Thus, David’s relationship with Diego can be seen as a preparation for the relationship he will strike up with Ismael, to whom he eventually serves an “almuerzo lezamiano.”

It is precisely the “almuerzo lezamiano” that solidifies David’s reeducation within Diego’s cultural epistemology. In other words, this elaborate lunch represents the ceremony that crystalizes David’s position as the future conceived by Diego, a future that includes him precisely because of David’s sensibility and the tutelage imparted to him by Diego. The lunch serves as a culmination of the time they have shared, and of the new man that David has become thanks to Diego. This transformation is evident at the end of the lunch when Diego states that the lunch should end properly by smoking cigars, however he tells David: “pasaremos por alto los habanos, que a ninguno de los dos interesan” (44). The habano can be seen as a symbol of the leadership of the Revolution. In fact, the image of the leadership wielding a cigar is recurring, because the cigar, as a local product, represents the nation. Therefore, the fact that Diego says that neither he nor

54 The term homosocial is theorized by Sedgwick in Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, where she highlights the same-sex bonds that exists between males, characterizing the continuum that exists between homosocial and homosexual relationships.
David is interested in these cigars is also a sign that they are not interested in the men of the Revolution. Furthermore, their rejection of the cigar is also a rejection of the phallic symbolism with which the figures of the Revolution identified. That is, it is not the phallus that is rejected, but rather the phallus associated with the patriarchy of the Revolution. Therefore, David’s tutelage ends when he is no longer interested in the *habano*, and by extension, in the Revolution as represented by its leaders.

At the beginning of the novella, David is the embodiment of the New Man as defined by the Revolution, but through his relationship with Diego and his desire for Diego’s knowledge, he is reeducated into a gay epistemology, into “la ciudad loca,” as described by Esther Gabara. As a pillar of the Revolution, education serves to create the men of the future that will carry out the revolutionary process. David has been educated within the parameters of this education and therefore, although he is deeply attracted to the “illicit” knowledge that illudes him and which Diego processes, he is unable to escape the specter of his education, which continually harasses him, and his relationship to Diego. To an extent, the lessons of the Revolution hold David prisoner, and he is unable to let down his guard and is always vigilant of Diego, his coming and goings and relationships with foreigners. As much as he trusts Diego, David is also deeply distrustful because of the education he has received. Even once the relationship between the two men is consolidated, his education, and the social reverberation of this discourse do not allow him to think outside their perimeters, “Bruno llevaba razón, Ismael se equivocaba cuando decía que a esta gente había que analizarla caso por caso. No. Siempre hay que estar alertas: estos maricones son traidores por naturaleza, por pecado original” (46).
David’s family is notably absent from his life in the city. In fact, through David’s relationship with Diego, it is apparent that David is almost orphan-like within the city, and Diego takes him in from the streets. *La guarida*, Diego’s apartment, serves as a refuge, where David is able to communicate in ways that are not allowed in the city, outside those four walls. Diego’s home becomes a second school for David: he is not only received in the home but educated there. It seems as though, for the first time in Havana, David is part of a home, a structure that is not based on political links but on links of affection. Diego soon becomes a confidante, a tutor, and a guide. Unlike Arturo, David’s past is not entangled with the memory of his family. The countryside signifies David’s impoverished roots, but his family does not have a prominent role, if any, within his memories. In fact, he never names his parents directly, and his mother only appears as a figure in the narrative tied to Diego, that is, when Diego suggests that David share one of his recipes with his mother: “la crema helada también lezamiana, de la que me ofreció la receta para que yo a mi vez la trasladara a mi madre” (44). And she appears again when Diego is sorting his things in order to decide what he will leave behind when he goes into exile: “llévate la máquina de escribir, la cocinilla eléctrica y este abridor de latas. Le será muy útil a tu mamá” (51), and “¿Quieres el paraguas para tu mamá, o la capa?” (53). David’s mother is the recipient of both the unattainable “crema lezamiana” and the discards that Diego leaves behind, which nevertheless could be quite useful. On the one hand, the idea that David would share the decadent recipe with his mother seems out of place, highlighting the cultural and economic divides that separate Diego and David. It is clear from the information in the text that Diego’s mother is in no position to prepare such a concoction that could only be acquired through connections with foreign
entities. Although Diego offers the recipe to David, it seems as though he never actually passes it on to his mother, for it is an absurdity that she would have the political or cultural ties to be able to acquire the ingredients needed to reproduce it. To some extent, this offering is a courtesy, a way of leaving David with something to remember their time together. Thus, David’s mother serves as an intermediary between the two men that connects them. It seems strange that Diego would offer this recipe and the other objects mentioned to David’s mother for no other reason than David himself never mentions his mother. The reader has no awareness of her until Diego offers David these things for her. Diego’s offers were met by resigned silence. David accepted everything in silence, aware of the inevitability of Diego’s exile.

Economic Specters

Like Arturo and David, Kárel, the anti(hero) of Chamaco, comes to Havana from the countryside. However, he is not in Havana as a result of persecution or educational projects of the Revolution. Unlike the other protagonists, Kárel’s migration to the city is not explained; he is just another boy from the country migrating to the city. His time in the city is marked by this past in the countryside. The plot of the play is a result of Karél’s position in the city. Unlike David and Diego, the world that Karél and Alejandro Depás inhabit is not one that is hopeful of the future; it is the antithesis of that: a city where everyone is trying to survive as best they can, doing what is necessary in order to not be trampled. It is the Havana of the twentyfirst century where cynicism seems to be the natural state.

Kárel has lived in Havana for six years, and has had to survive in the city, resorting to anything that could help him. At the beginning of the play, the narrator
describes him initially as a function of his ability to play chess. Unlike David, Kárel is not indebted to the Revolution; it was not the Revolution that brought him to the city to study. Rather, after arriving in Havana, Kárel has to learn a “trade” in order to survive in the city. It so happens that the profession he learns in the city is chess. That is, playing chess for money, perhaps the only thing the Revolution has given him. It is precisely this skill, acquired in his early days in Havana, however, that will eventually lead to his death. It is curious that Kárel moves to the city when he is fifteen; at a time when students would be entering the EAC (Escuela al Campo), Kárel was entering the city, as if in a contrary trajectory. His survival in the city is dependent upon his ability to play chess and sell his body. It is through connections with other men and women with money that Kárel is able to survive.

The six years spent in Havana have been spent in the home of Felipe (his uncle), who tries to extort him whenever he has any contact with Kárel. It is soon revealed that Felipe rents out a room in his house to Kárel, and is quick to remind him that if it were not for him, Kárel would have appeared to be nothing more than a beggar in the city: “Cuando llegaste a esta casa tenías las uñas negras y yo te las corté para que no parecieras un pordiosero” (18). This intervention by Felipe is significant because Felipe voices the modernization project of the nineteenth century that is carried on into the Revolution, where there is a dichotomy between the modern/hygienic city and the underdeveloped/unsanitary conditions of the countryside, focusing on the dirt between Kárel’s long nails that, from Felipe’s point of view, identifies him as a beggar. Paradoxically, the dirt from the land, which at the beginning of the Revolution would have been a sign of someone engaged in the volunteer work promoted by the Party, is no
longer a symbol of the communist struggle. Rather, it signals an underclass, according to Kárel’s uncle. This statement also hits at Kárel’position vis-à-vis his uncle, as understood by Felipe. On the one hand, he is indebted to Felipe for “rescuing” him from his past, and for giving him the ability to integrate into Havana. However, the “help” that Kárel receives comes at a price, as he is constantly tormented by his uncle, his sexual advances, and his threats to leave him on the streets. Felipe’s sexual advances are followed by an invocation of the countryside as central to Kárel’s life: “Nunca vas a saber lo que te quiero. Acepté que vinieras a esta casa, que durmieras en este cuarto, esperando que pudieras olvidarte para siempre de ese campo de basura en que vivías, donde se te llegaban las manos con la guataca y la tierra” (18). Here, as in El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, the countryside is referred to in derogatory terms, although here it is not the peasant that expresses reproach. In Felipe’s view, the countryside is denigrating. It not only is garbage, but it’s also the source of affliction. What once had been considered as the epitome of productivity, the hoe and land, are seen as sores in Kárel’s past. In other words, what was to produce the New Man, working the fields, has become that which afflicts Kárel’s generation. Felipe’s point of view, however, cannot be fully trusted; after all, he is reminding his nephew that he is indebted to him.

The fact that Kárel is from the countryside marks him as an outsider, and although he has spent considerable time in Havana, his “otherness” is evident to those around him. When Felipe calls the police, and the questioning into Felipe and Kárel’s relationship begins, the investigator, within a series of questions declares, “Y Kárel Darín es del campo,” to which Felipe responds: “Nació en el campo pero ya está instalado en la ciudad” (23). This declaration stands out because of the nature of the interrogation, where
a series of questions are being asked and answered. Saúl does not pose this as a question; he is sure of his assertion. Felipe needs only to corroborate the investigator’s intuition. Why is it that his origins in the countryside are pertinent to the investigation? Whatever the reason, it is clear that Saúl finds it obvious that Kárel is from the countryside. The fact that Kárel is identified as an outsider by institutional forces, the police, is telling because it immediately positions him in opposition to the legitimate city-dwellers. Does Kárel’s living arrangements with Felipe make it evident to the police that Kárel is not from the city? The fact that he is forced to rent a small room in Felipe’s home immediately marginalizes him. His economic situation is dire, and compared to the other characters in the play, he seems to suffer the consequences to a greater degree. Kárel experiences hunger and cold, like the other characters, but unlike the others, he does not have ties in the city that would ameliorate the situation. His lack of relationships with people in the city obliges him to seek alternatives; alternatives like Alejandro Depás who has the means to help Kárel and the desire to possess him.

**Marginalization**

If the Revolution is characterized by community, that is belonging to some sort of organization, whether it be the Pioneros, or the Young Communist League, or the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, or the Communist Party itself, then these protagonists are evidently not conforming to this requirement. Neither Arturo or Kárel belong to any group, and although David forms part of the Young Communist League, it is obvious from the text that he does not feel part of the organization as an integrated member. That is, he is never quite sure of his place within the city. Although all three men differ in their lives in Havana and their modes of survival take on diverse forms,
their commonality is their sense of alienation in the city directly related to their emigration to the city, which each does alone. Their presence in the city is ghostlike in that they are barely perceivable, their surroundings swallow them up, and they are lost within the city, unnoticeable by passersbys.

The specter of the countryside also contributes to the protagonists’ ghostlike presence in the city. All three, Arturo, David, and Kárel, have left behind family and friends, and are left to their own devices in the city. That is, none of the protagonists has male peers with whom they share relationships. In the social space that they enter, where social interaction is structured through belonging to groups, both Arturo and Kárel find themselves unattached, solitary, alienated form the societal structures put in place by the communist government. Although David is part of the Young Communist League, it is evident from his interactions that before knowing Diego he has no type of relationship that would be categorized as friendship, in spite of the fact that he associates with other students. It is thorough Diego that David learns how to connect with others, and it is because of Diego that he is later able to connect with Ismael, precisely through the Lezamian lunch through which Diego consolidates their friendship.

Arturo, on the other hand, is forced to form relationships within the UMAP. Yet, it is apparent that these relationships are based on his performance, the compliance of an expectation created by the structure of the labor camp. However, even within this highly performative relationship, where Arturo fashions himself into what is expected of him, “Arturo manipuló aquella jerigonza afectada y delirante, comenzó a lanzar la típica carcajada de la loca histérica, cantar, modelar, pintarse los ojos y el pelo y los labios … todo lo hizo él hasta dominar y adueñarse de todas las jergas y ademanes típicos del
maricón prisinero” (34-35), he does not do so in order to become part of a larger collective within the camp. Instead, Arturo takes on the garb of the collective in order to become unperceivable within the larger structure of the camp,

sin dejar de participar, desde luego, en todos los desfiles de modas, orgías, asaltos a campamentos de reclutas, festivales, insólitos carnavales y coronaciones, sin dejar de mover las nalgas o de acompañar al soldado al cañaveral cuando éste le hacía la señal convenida, sin dejar de cantar todas las noches, o casi todas, con aquella voz de puta enmohecida, sus más escandalosas creaciones…chillar, chillar, mover las nalgas y danzar, sólo así podría pasar inadvertida su verdadera labor. (39)

Only when he fulfills the expectations of “femininity” ascribed to homosexuality within the camp, is he able to isolate himself. Therefore, gender coercion is embedded in the perception of sexual preference, and because Arturo does not initially fit into this paradigm of gender/sexuality, he is viewed as a threat by the structures of power, the soldiers that patrol and keep watch over the camp, and other prisoners within the camp. When Arturo decides to perform the gender model that is expected of him, he becomes part of the collective, with which he does not identify, but to which he needs to belong in order to evade violence. The reiteration of this performance soon becomes his norm, and when his sister comes to visit him in the camp, “Arturo debió controlarse con mucho esfuerzo para no multiplicar gestos equivocos y para converser con el timbre normal de su voz” (35). Arturo, therefore, embodies the gender that he performs, and is conscious of the necessary performance for varying audiences. Judith Butler asserts in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” “gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (519). The illusion is visible in
Arturo’s embodiment of compulsory and changing gender norms, which are regulated by the environment surrounding him. Therefore, in his quest to become part of the collective, Arturo is hyperconscious of the role he is performing because of the physical implications they will have on his safety. Notably, although his siblings are aware of Arturo’s homosexuality, and treat him with contempt because of it, “todo esto sin mirarlo de frente, con un aire de superioridad, de indiferencia, de desprecio o de asco; Rosa lo había abrazado, varias veces, pero no era a él a quien había abrazado, no era que lo abrazase por ser él, sino por ser el único que en esos momentos estaba disponible” (19), he still feels that the gender performance he enacts within the UMAP should be separate from the gender performance he enacts with his family. In the spaces that Arturo inhabits, within the structure of the family, the city and the UMAP, he is effectively isolated from the collective, even though his gender performance is tailored to each space/audience/receptor in order to meet expectations, and in so doing, avoid reprisal.

Ultimately, Arturo sees his isolation, his ability to distance himself from others, as a necessary tool for creativity. In other words, his aloneness is the only space that allows for uninterrupted production, and it is this ability to create which in his assessment will save him. Indeed, Arturo seeks out moments of isolation. He positions himself against “ellos,” “los otros,” and “los demás,” three categories that he identifies to describe the men that surround him, none of whom he identifies with. It is their presence that most disrupts Arturo and prevents him from creating. Therefore, he seeks to be free of these three groups that stifle him with their version of what he ought to be. For Arturo, being alone is synonymous with being independent, having the ability to choose, to not be bothered, to not be part of anything other than himself. Escaping from these collectives...
allows his mind to wander, to “crear su fabulosa creación” (13). This sentiment is an echo of his memories of his hometown, where there still existed a refuge, where escape was possible, “habitaba el infierno, y no había otra cosa; pero aún entonces, pero aún entonces, quedaban los árboles, algún refugio, los demás, y luego, estar solo, disfrutar de la soledad, aunque ya supiera, aunque ya supiera…” (18). Arturo does not seek to be alone because of the situation in the UMAP, indeed, it is the only mode of survival even in his earliest memories. Throughout the novella, Arturo’s desire to escape those that surround him motivates his actions. He is constantly seeking ways to escape vigilance, and even companionship, in favor of his thoughts, his creation. The city, then, becomes just another reality from which to escape, “poco a poco descubrió que es fácil integrarse a cualquier realidad siempre que no se tome en serio, siempre que secretamente se desprecie, y que en cualquier sitio hay oportunidad para perderse…” (20). And yet, although Arutro is constantly seeking places in which to lose himself, his circumstances always force him back.

Kárel is perhaps the least attached to a collective of all three protagonists. His personal attachments, which seem to be the only relations he sustains, leave much to be desired. Kárel’s aloneness is highlighted when he first meets Alejandro Depás at 2 a.m., Christmas Day, and they share a slice of pizza:

Alejandro: Frío ¿no?
Kárel: Un poco (Bosteza. Se estira.)
Alejandro: ¿Hambre o sueño?
Kárel: El sueño se me quitó ya.
Alejandro: (Saca unas monedas del bolsillo y se las da.) Cómprate una pizza en La Revoltosa
Alejandro: (Le pone el dinero en la mano.) Cruza al Louvre, son mejores. Y tráeme una.
Kárel: ¿Alcanza?
Alejandro: Sí no alcanza me dices, chamaco.

Kárel: Está rica. Caliente, por lo menos. No comía desde el mediodía.

Alejandro: ¿Y tu Nochebuena?

Kárel: Bien, gracias

Alejandro: ¿Y tu gente?

Kárel: (Mastica y habla). Me encanta el queso. (Se aparta. Mira hacia el parque. Regresa junto a Alejandro.) Tú comiste en tu casa.

Alejandro niega con la cabeza.

Kárel: Entonces esta es tu Nochebuena.

Alejandro: La compartimos, ya ves.

Kárel: (Se ríe.) No jodas. Es 25 hace rato.

This interaction is telling; Kárel has no attachments or social obligations that would require him to be at a certain place during this traditionally familial occasion. In the end, Kárel is spending his “Nochebuena” with a complete stranger, and would have spent it alone if it had not been for his necessity to walk up to Alejandro. Upon Alejandro’s query regarding Kárel’s “people”, family, loved ones, Kárel’s immediate reaction is to remark on the fact that he loves the cheese on the pizza he is eating. This highlights two realities that structure the youth’s life, his pervasive hunger and his lack of “gente,” in other words, his familial and social exclusion. Kárel does not have “gente,” and that does not preoccupy him. Instead, his focus is on the fact that after a day without food, he is finally having something to eat at two in the morning because of the generosity of a stranger. This highlights Kárel’s economic position vis-à-vis Alejandro. There is an immediate distinction between Kárel who hasn’t eaten since noon and Alejandro who has the means to provide for both. The brief time that Kárel and Alejandro spend together is a prelude to their encounter the following day. However, Kárel’s situation is only momentarily relieved, as Alejandro has to return home despite Kárel’s instance that they spend the night together. Perhaps Kárel’s only attachment is with Silvia, whom he wishes to marry; however, when she misses their date, he quickly dismisses the relationship, “Una
muchacha. Pensé que podía ser bonito, nada más. No comimos en Nochebuena porque iba a estar con su familia, con el padre, el hermano, y quedamos para hoy. Me dejó plantado. Ilusiones estúpidas que uno se hace con las mujeres” (26). His ability to create relations quickly, as with Alejandro, and put another aside just as fast, as with Silvia, allows Kárel a certain amount of fluidity because there is no structure, familial or otherwise, that requires some sort of participation. That is to say, Kárel has the freedom to move from relationship to relationship, he is not part of a larger social structure that obliges him to act in any certain way. In this sense, Kárel’s aloneness affords him a type of freedom from certain social obligations. The complete lack of peers is obvious. Kárel has no friends, and other than Silvia and the brief moments before killing Miguel, he does not interact with any other youth.

The disconnection that exists between the protagonists and their peers has a two-fold effect. On the one hand the protagonists are alienated from the social structure and are left vulnerable to the repressive vigilance of the collective. On the other hand, precisely because they are not integrated within a collective, their sense of individuality surpasses their loyalty to the group. This individuality allows them some room to question and negotiate their own identity outside the collective. In other words, the fact that Arturo, David, and Kárel do not have strong bonds with their male counterparts results in an absence of the “male pack” and, ironically within the Cuban Revolution, an emphasis on the individual. Perhaps it is precisely because they fall outside the reach of the collective that these characters are able to open themselves to new possibilities of gender expression. In effect, the protagonists make their gender in reaction or compliance to social expectations. The awareness of gender performance comes from their place
outside of the collective. It is also this position that allows the three protagonists to engage with a particular non-structure that allows them to wander, both physically and mentally, through discourses of gender and gender expression. In other words, because the protagonists are in one way or another not part of a collective of peers, they are able to explore forms of masculinities that are not part of the official discourse of gender models.

Wandering

Michel De Certeau argues that from the panoptical vantage point above the city, the urban life of the pedestrian cannot be seen. Therefore, there exists ever-changing texts traced and retraced by pedestrians that, in fact, give meaning to the city. It is through the tactics of these pedestrians that the city acquires its meaning. However, these texts are constantly being displaced. There is a constant renovation of ways to “walk,” “understand,” “interpret,” the city that give it meaning. Therefore, there is a confrontation between the imposed order of the city and the tactics employed by pedestrians to navigate the city, “Things extra and other (details and excesses coming from elsewhere) insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order. The surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order” (107). Therefore, it is the pedestrian that adds the extra and the other to the structure. There is a parallel, then, between the tactics used when navigating the city, and those used when navigating gender. Both are discourses of power that structure behavior and impose a certain order. Yet, the mass of pedestrians, through their interpretations or uses of these structures, which themselves are meshed, that brings meaning to the discourse through breaks and drifts form said orders. It is not surprising, then, that the
city, and more importantly the movement through the city, is part of all three protagonists’ experience. Their wandering through the city not only creates new meaning within the urbanscape, but also produces alternative discourses of masculinity by deemphasizing certain places of the city and instead emphasizing spaces.55

Although the protagonists arrive to Havana during different times in their lives and under different circumstances, their relationship to the city is quite similar. They have no sense of belonging. Not only do they lack close social relationships but, because of their relocation to the city, the protagonists have nowhere to call their own; each lives in a location that they do not consider theirs, a pension, a dormitory, or a rented room. Again, the ghost of the countryside is a presence that marks their daily lives, including the “private” spaces they inhabit. In reality, they have no private space, even Kárel, who does not share his room with anyone, is constantly being spied on by his uncle through a peep-hole that his uncle has created for precisely that purpose. This lack of privacy forces him to wander the streets. Ironically, the streets, filled with people, offer Kárel more privacy than his rented room. At the same time, this drifting through the streets serves as moments where the mind can wander. That is, the streets of Havana become the young man’s refuge and, as Michel De Certeau points out, “To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper” (103). Kárel roams the streets to escape the vigilance of his uncle. His room, his potential “proper” space, is always under vigilance; therefore, the streets, the constant movement that inevitably disappears, is in fact a way of disassociating from that home. It is this perpetual

55 Here I am marking the difference between place and space as defined by De Certeau, “A space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporitalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities…In short, space is a practiced place” (117).
movement that allows him to encounter other passersby, Miguel, Alejandro, and Silvia. However, Silvia is not a perpetual roamer; unlike Kárel, she does have a space proper and Kárel reminds her of this difference between the two when she asks him to stay:

Silvia: Es tarde.
Kárel: Luego te acompaño.
Silvia: ¿Y te vas a quedar dando vueltas por ahí?
Kárel: Tú me conociste dando vueltas por ahí.
Silvia: Pero la calle es una furia, Kárel.
Kárel: Yo no le tengo miedo al lobo. (La abraza.) (24)

This exchange demonstrates not only that Kárel creates his life in the streets, but that he does so “dando vueltas por ahí,” that is, wandering, roaming Havana. In so doing, Kárel is mapping his own geographical space, and his movement through the city, in fact, alters the city, rearranges it, by elucidating the dark corners, alleys, park benches where Kárel spends his time and obfuscates the traditionally more visible, open spaces and monuments erected by the Revolution. Havana, then, becomes in Chamaco a series of spaces through which Kárel navigates. Instead of an all-encompassing panoramic view of the city, or a specific focus on an iconic building or monument, it is restructured into a series of planes that overlap. I would argue that his constant movement, the roaming, wandering through the spaces of Havana, not only “make some parts of the city disappear and exaggerate others, distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it from its immobile order” (De Certeau, 102), but it does the same to the protagonist himself. That is, his movements render possible a divergence from the discursive order of masculinity inherent in the imagery of the New Man. Furthermore, the spaces through which he moves point to his undefined place within the city. “Por ahí” cannot be pinpointed or defined; there is no way to imagine the city or the space through which Kárel moves with
this description. In the same way, Kárel himself cannot be defined; he is in fact a
personification of that “por ahí.”

David, too, in his need to find a place, his place, resorts to wandering the city. His
story comes full circle in so far as he begins his journey walking through the city and it
ends with him, much in the same way, wandering without a clear path or destination. The
story begins as David wanders the streets of Havana, not knowing what to do or in which
direction to turn, questionings his every move: “iba a meterme en el cine cuando me
arrepentí, casi llegando a la taquilla, y me pareció mejor llamar a Vivian, pero me
arrepenti, casi llegando al teléfono, y me dije: mira, David, lo mejor es que te vayas a
esperar la guagua a Coppelia, la Catedral del Helado” (9). This inability to complete any
action has him crossing the city in search of something, of someone, and he finds the
memory of Diego at Coppelia. This initial wandering is reminiscent of his first encounter
with Diego, “un día de esos en que uno no sabe si cuando termine la merienda va a
perderse calle arriba o calle abajo” (9). It seems, then, that nothing has changed since
Diego’s departure from Cuba; David still wanders aimlessly trying to not feel alone. The
difference now is that Coppelia is not only an ice cream shop, but rather the place that
harbors Diego’s memory. David’s interaction with Diego has inscribed the city with
memories, making it more recognizable to David, thus making the city more his own.

David’s constant wandering is highlighted in his first encounter with Diego, when
Diego lets him know that before meeting, he already was aware of David, “yo a ti te
conozco. Te he visto muchísimas veces paseando por ahí, con un periodiquito bajo el
brazo” (13). Again, this “por ahí” is significant because it does not outrightly identify a
space that David occupies; rather it is the movement that is emphasized. “Por ahí”
indicates no specificity, and if it were not for David’s description of his wandering through the avenue, between the cinema, and Coppelia, and the university, there are no distinct markings of Havana, at least of Revolutionary Havana. In this novella, “la guarida,” Diego’s apartment, becomes the geographical focal point. It is described with great detail, and it is this place that allows for free conversation between the two men. If the streets are David’s space for his thoughts, then “la guarida” becomes the place where these thoughts are materialized. Notably, there is no description of the monuments of Havana or public spaces that commemorate the Revolution. Instead, “la guarida” in its smallness replaces the grandeur of the spaces where thousands gather, becoming the heart of the city for David. Is is the place where he goes to hear great speeches about Cuban culture, literature, how Diego “became” gay, and listen to history of the Revolution from Diego’s perspective, instead of orations about the Revolution as it was conceived and carried out by the government. Havana is redesigned by Diego and David; the landmarks of the city are reimagined in order to create a city more suitable for them. For example, Diego traces the important landmarks of his Havana, the city which he wants to show to David, “puedo ayudarte muchísimo, prestarte libros, conseguirte entradas para el ballet, soy amiguísimo de Alicia Alonso y me encantaría presentarte un día en casa de la Loynaz” (27). Diego traces a trajectory that outlines the city he has created for himself, and which he wishes to share. This is a city that is built on books, books that are difficult to come by and that have been censored by the government, like La Guerra del fin del mundo, which marks their first encounter, and the trajectory then opens up to sites of cultural importance and resistance to normative discourse. By replacing traditional landmarks that identify Havana with these “secondary” sites, there is a clear silencing of
the hegemonic discourse that draws the city. Diego redraws the plans of the city to include places that have been ignored but that represent important elements to him. The fact that David is from the countryside facilitates this rewriting because the city, its monuments, symbols, and representations of power, are not part of David’s memories. Therefore, Diego is offering a new city to David, a new way of residing within the peripheral spaces of the city, making them central places in his life.

Arturo’s trajectory through the city begins in the library, a place where, for an instance, he finds the isolation that he craves, “su primer refugio fueron las bilbiotecas, por eso, seguramente, su primer consuelo, su primera estratagema, fueron las palabras; extasiado se paseaba por las galerías repletas de estantes repletos” (20). The wandering that Arturo experiences through the library serves as a transition between the countryside and the city. This space, within the city, becomes his introduction to the city. The same way he strolls through the aisles of the library, choosing his own paths and movements, is in direct contrast to his time in the countryside, a space dominated by vigilance. The library allows Arturo to wander physically, loosing himself in “lo repleto.” It is this excess of words, this wandering through words, that will become concrete when he is taken to the UMAP. If the library is a physical space of solace, then it is this excess of words and images that allows him to wander through his own mind and recreate the library within the detention camp. That is, he takes hold of every imaginable blank space and fills it with words, with the smallest of handwriting that allows his imagery to conquer and overtake those written on official banners and strategic documents throughout the UMAP. Areas Oyarce argues that Arturo, “reconstruye una ciudad en donde abundan los objetos y las murrallas, las puertas, los recovecos, las cavernas; una
ciudad refugio que lo protegerá de aquella que en realidad lo excluye” (55). Therefore, when Arturo no longer has a place where he feels protected, he must create his own.

Contradictorily, his wandering through the library leads him to the acquaintance with a group of young gay men who introduce him to the streets of the city, and although the time he spends with these men is limited, they convey a concrete idea of loss, of a disappearing city. De Certeau argues that “it is the very definition of a place, in fact, that it is composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers” (108). In other words, displacements, and the ability to recognize and have memories of these displacements, help anchor the visible through the invisible that is no longer present. It is by walking with this group of gay men through the city that Arturo is faced with and able to grasp the continual displacement of the city, and inevitably of himself from the city. Although Arturo initially has a limited connection to the city, it is by walking the streets and listening to other pedestrians that he begins to gather a sense of space and memory which anchor the city for him.

Arturo notaba que casi todos hablaban en pasado y quizás lo que más sorprendía (y hasta le fascinaba) dentro de aquel torbellino de aventuras inconclusas, era el ver la rapidez con que todo, hasta las mismas calles, hasta los mismos rostros, hasta el tiempo, se iba deteriorando, cuarteando, rompiendo, erosionando. día tras día y cada vez más, una semana era un cine cerrado, otra, otro producto racionado, otra, un establecimiento clausurado, en un mismo día todos los árboles de la calle talados sin explicaciones, sin contar con nadie, y la claridad que descendía a la vez que faltaba el agua, y la claridad que también se iba haciendo cada día más claridad. (20-21)

The continual deterioration of the city allows Arturo to perceive the fleeting of the past, and therefore helps him become part of the city. It is his limited interaction with others—notice that Arturo only hears what his companions are saying but does not participate in
the exchange because his memory of the city is limited—that gives him a sense of place, of what the city used to encompass. Therefore, Arturo is a witness to memory. The ability that this group has to walk through the city, mostly unseen by others, through “las largas madrugadas por los lugares más insólitos de una ciudad” (21) is cut short by the clarity that invades everything. It is this light, the relentless spotlight that pursues Arturo, that makes him seen, which destroys the “entrada de una esclaera, peligrosos zaguanes, el baño de un solar al parecer deshabitado” (22) where he had had clandestine encounters that were disappearing. The light invaded everything and with it displaced the places that Arturo had inhabited. This aggression, as it is interpreted by Arturo, in part erases those places, precisely because it sheds light on them. By exposing these places, they can no longer be inhabited, used by Arturo, and therefore, they become deserted.

The fact that all three protagonists are from the countryside and migrate to the city resonates in their descriptions of Havana. There is an obvious omission of traditional landmarks associated with the Revolution, and these are replaced with places that are important to the characters and places through which they wander. Even in Chamaco, where there is a clear mention of el Paseo del Prado, the focus is not so much on the avenue but on the dark corners that abound in the area. Furthermore, when describing the scene, Kárel mentions la estatua de la india, but there is no mention of the capitolio, thus wishing to focus on a statue instead of on one of the most prominent symbols of the capital. The characters’ position as outsiders allows them to imagine the city in ways that eschew the hegemonic conglomeration of the city.

None of the protagonists have a “memory” of the city because as migrants from the countryside, their memories are those of the land. Thus, the countryside serves as the
backdrop against which these characters view the city. The historical importance of spaces, monument, and streets in the city does not permeate their vision of Havana. Therefore, they are able to create their own monuments, their own places void of the ghost of the city. It is because of this “blank slate” that the ice cream shop, Coppelia, is able to become “a cathedral” for David. It is in this “cathedral of ice cream” where he met Diego, and this experience, more than any other he has had in Havana, marks him to the extent that it becomes a symbol of his friendship and of his trajectory in the city. By highlighting Coppelia and “la guarida,” David is creating his own city, one that reflects his experiences and the places that are important to him, rather than those that are important to the history of the Revolution. Diego provides David this memory.

For these protagonists, the city is built around their understanding of it at the present, and its spaces lack meaning until the characters bestow it on them. The tactics that characters employ not only serve to evade the organizing structures of the city and create a labyrinth of their own, but they also allow them to circumvent the images of hegemonic masculinity of the New Man, statues, posters, murals, etc., that populate Havana. In other words, the city is identified through its structures, yet never are places of revolutionary glory or images of revolutionaries introduced in the texts. Clearly, those images have been displaced in favor of other more peripheral ones. The ghost of the countryside, then, not only affects the way these characters perceive themselves and the way others perceive them, but also the way they perceive and construct the city for themselves. The fact that spaces in the city do not hold their memories means that these characters are creating memories, and therefore places in the city as they move through it. The act of wandering, then, becomes an act of constructing memories, of establishing
places within the city, and thus reconfiguring the city to their specificity. It is notable that all three texts describe the city while restricting the spaces explicitly associated with the Revolution. By so doing, the texts render traditionally invisible spaces visible.
Chapter 5
Quiet, Silence, Invisibility

Language and discourse are intrinsically related to power. In order to create a vision of the new revolutionary state and the citizens who would constitute it, certain recurring images were used by the state. The power wielded by the government and the discursive machinery it employed solidified certain recurring discourses regarding gender, sexuality, and citizenship. This is evident in publications used to educate the public, speeches by government officials, and laws enacted to ensure the creation of a state free of the excesses that prevailed under previous governments. The proliferation of revolutionary imagery during the first decades is seen not only in official publications and radio broadcasts but as part of the landscape of the country, statues, murals, etc., that become part of the scenery. This soundtrack of the Revolution is constantly fed by the continual repetition and helps sustain itself and the power which it itself sustains. It is this mutual relationship between power and discourse that makes totalitarian ideological governments fear opposition voices and their potential disruptive force. The cohesiveness of a single unitary discourse carries power because it is unquestioned; it is accepted or at least packaged as truth. When these types of discourses are debated, critiqued, analyzed, etc., they become less cohesive and therefore less powerful. Silencing opposition, and eliminating any potential for fracture serve as a tactic to ensure one discursive power.

Nonetheless, silence can also have a disruptive function. In a space of cacophony, silence serves as an interlude, marked precisely because of its surroundings. In his book *Una poética de la despreocupación: modernidad e identidad en cuatro poetas latinoamericanos*, Rafael Hernández Rodríguez, studies the relationship of four Latin
American writers vis-à-vis Europe. Hernández Rodríguez argues that these poets who inhabit the margins because of their geographical location do not engage in the discussion of center vs. margin. Rather, their silence, their inward look towards their poetry, “no se trata, pues de oponerse a la cultura dominante en una lucha de poder, ni de aceptar pasivamente el ser ‘incluido’, sino más radicalmente de negar la dicotomía” (15). Negating the dichotomy by not engaging in a struggle for power with what was viewed as the dominant culture of Europe, would have placed the poets in opposition to the center and therefore, automatically at the margins. Their “despreocupación” does not position them in a relationship with the center; rather, it opens a space for them whereby the dichotomy that exists between center and margin perishes.

Within a certain context, silence can have the same function. That is, it does not engage with a certain discourse, rather it highlights the gaps within it. There are two aspects to silence. On the one hand, there are those things that are not said, that are excluded from the discourse of power, thus effectively rendering them invisible. In terms of gender norms, this silence is a complicit silence that begets certain models to exist, persist, and coerce. This is the tacit agreement that accepts certain expressions of gender that fall within established parameters. On the other hand, there is self-aware silence, which renders itself obvious because of its presence, much like a musical piece, it is an integral part of the structure, rendered obvious on account of its presence. Nodes of silence that are markedly different from the rest, they are disruptions to the musical piece, and are woven into it. In The History of Sexuality Vol. 1., Michel Foucault describes a silence which “is less a limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a
strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in reaction to them” (27).

If discourse entails power, it would seem contradictory to say that silence does too. However, as Douglas Lanier points out in his article “Masculine Silence: Epicoene and Jonsonian Stylistics,” Jonson relates silence to masculinity in as much as it represents power over the self. Lanier explains,

As Jonson formulates it, masculinity entails the maintenance of a rigorous self-identity and autonomy. Strategic silence is a central component of that ideal <associations of speech with frivolity, sin and regret, and political vulnerability; and of silence with gravity, virtue, self-control, rationality and learnedness, rest, and most important manliness> sentiment appears in some of the first lines a Renaissance boy might learn, Cato’s Disticha de Moribus 1.3. (3-4)

It is important to highlight Lanier’s identification of strategic silence as being connected to manliness because it is this subtle difference that is tied to power and control. Clearly, within the structure of the Revolution, wherein the main model during the initial years included Fidel Castro, silence was not necessarily related to manliness. Rather, it is strategic silence, the ability to have control of one’s own language, and others’ language. I would argue that manliness is not only constituted by strategic silence but also by strategic speech, which as Foucault has observed are not exclusive of each other. Indeed, what is really being highlighted is the way speech and silence function vis-à-vis power, and how that is coupled with gender. The context of the Cuban Revolution distinguishes speech as Jonson sees it from oration, which it ties to manliness. The arbitrariness of gender is obvious; manliness is both silence and discourse depending how, when, and to whom they correspond.

In his book, Sovereignty of Quiet, Kevin Quashie looks at the concept of quiet as it relates to Black culture. According to Quashie, his project is “a shift in how we
commonly understand blackness which is often described as expressive, dramatic, or loud” (4). I would argue that from the patriarchal standpoint of hegemonic gender discourse, queerness, especially Cuban queerness, is perceived as loud, as dramatic, as expressive. This interpretation of what it means to be normative and what is perceived as not normative outlines the notions of expressive, dramatic, or loud. The same hierarchy that values silence as a masculine virtue, rejects being expressive, dramatic, or loud as feminine characteristics. Thus, these terms are collapsed into the same non-desirable box.

Quashie uses the term “quiet” as something different from silence. This distinction is important because it highlights the main theoretical differences between the two terms. According to Quashie,

quiet is often used interchangeably with silence or stillness, but the notion of quiet is neither motionless nor without sound. Quiet, instead is a metaphor for the full range of one’s inner life, one’s desires, ambitions, hungers, vulnerabilities, fears. The inner life is not apolitical or without social value, but neither is it determined entirely by publicness. In fact the interior—dynamic and ravishing—is a stay against the dominance of the social world; it has its own sovereignty. It is hard to see, even harder to describe, but no less potent in its ineffability. (6)

Quiet is different than silence in so much as silence describes the public space, where as quiet is a notion that encompasses interiority. The moments of quiet, of interior dialogue, that are made clear to the reader through the insight of a narrator, are perceived by other characters that do not have access to the interior life of other characters, as silence within the public exchange of ideas of the text. Therefore, some silence, as perceived by others, can indicate quiet. When defining masculinity, overwhelmingly silence is equated to quiet, as defined above. Nevertheless, power lies with the model of masculinity that is being championed because it is able to define. This power allows certain silences to be defined as quiet, i.e. rich in interior thought, and others as simply silences that lack the
thoughtfulness that quiet suggests. By positioning itself in a space that wields power, not only does he define others by the way their silence is perceived, but it also silences the other, leaving no place to speak or to be quiet. However, I will not focus on the inability to speak, which this analysis will focus on, but on the quiet spaces that these moments of silence suggest and on the repercussion they have on manifestations of masculinity. Quashie’s focus on quiet is important in that it privileges on the inner space of the individual, and the ability to formulate identity from this space. At the same time, I suggest that silence, as a space that surrounds the individual, is also paramount. As I will demonstrate, the characters of *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, *El lobo el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, and *Chamaco: informe en diez capítulos (para representar)* are often surrounded by silence. If quiet relates to the inner thoughts of a person, as Quashie argues, and does not indicate stillness, but rather an active inner life, then silence is the exterior that can serve to oppress or free these characters.

Within the larger theoretical discourse of power, the concept of invisibility proposed by Denilson Lopes is central to an analysis of masculinity. In an age marked by identity politics, which generally focus on features that render identity visible, Lopes calls for a shift to the invisible. Lopes does not study the phenomenon of invisibility, rather his is a political call. He urges that “a invisibilidade é uma posibilidade de resistência, mais discreta e sutil diante da proliferação das imagens midiáticas em que as ideologias transgressoras são rapidamente transformadas em esteratégias de marketing” (18). Indeed, *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, *El lobo el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, and *Chamaco, informe en diez capítulos (para representar)* are marked by a discourse of silence indicated in the texts either by ellipses, spaces separating dialogue, or reactions to
the silences of one character by another, which elicit significance within the text. In the introduction to Luiz Ruffato’s book *Entre Nós*, Lopes urges us to “não ter medo do nada/e do vazio” (42). Lopes suggests that this creates a politics of ambiguity where silence renders one invisible in a world marked by a constant assault on our senses. Silence and nothingness become a powerful tool that according to Lopes is not based on marginalization but a different subjectivity. Indeed, each character forms his own subjectivity, and proposes his own manifestation of masculinity that both coincides and negates aspects of the model of the New Man.

The protagonist in *Arturo la estrella más brillante* is considered by those around him as the complete opposite of the model of masculinity endorsed by the government. However, as has been demonstrated in Chapter three, Arturo bears many elements in common with the New Man. Nevertheless, the fact that he is in the UMAP disqualifies his masculinity, and his embodiment of a “loca” within that space further distances him from the revolutionary model of masculinity, in the eyes of the characters that surround him. Yet, Arturo adapts to his environment and performs the role he is expected to perform in order to retreat into his own quiet space. It is this space, impenetrable by the other characters, that contains the richness of Arturo’s thought. Indeed, Arturo, hardly speaks in the novella. Rather, his thoughts and writings are mediated by the narrator, who is able to penetrate Arturo’s interior thoughts. Arturo’s tactic of creating an illusion of what he should be, according to those around him, allows him to retreat into the space which he hopes to occupy and inhabit, his own thoughts and creations.

It is no coincidence that Arturo’s preferred style of writing is what can be described as neo-barroque. Rich in symbolism, it relishes the artifice, and creates spaces
that highlight the absurdity of the UMAP. Indeed, Arturo’s obsession with overtaking every imaginable writing surface with his own words reveals not only the proliferation of his work within the UMAP itself, but also the proliferation of imagery that is characteristic of the neo-barroque style. The obsession with filling space, both literally and metaphorically, is evident in Arturo’s writing and performance. However, it is precisely in this explosion of imagery that there are many spaces of silence and quiet.

Arturo’s performance is meant to create a sense of ubiquity. Thus, once the other prisoners and the guards have created their own version of Arturo as a participant in the drag shows that are put on in the internment camp, once he disappears from sight, he leaves the idea of his presence. In other words, the proliferation of his image is engrained in the social networks of the camp to such an extent, that when he is no longer present, because he has retreated in order to create, the idea of him continues to be present. He becomes superfluous in the space because the persona he has created lives in the minds of those that surround him. Therefore, even when he is not there, he is nonetheless present.

Thus, physically, Arturo carves his own spaces of silence, where he can retreat, and find solace, “pero aún entonces, quedaban los árboles, algún refugio, los demás, y luego, estar solo, disfrutar de la soledad, aunque ya supiera, aunque ya supiera…” (17-18). Solitude becomes a means of escape, where Arturo does not need to feel watched. He is able to retreat into this space to create. At the same time, although Arturo is the creator of all that he writes, he can never create or materialize his lover. This elusive character leaves blank spaces throughout Arturo’s creative process. Arturo has a one-sided conversation which is only met by the silence of his lover. This lack of reciprocity between Arturo and his lover parallels the lack of reciprocity between Arturo and the state. Neither is able to
engage with Arturo, but the ideal lover disappears while the state becomes more apparent and dominant in Arturo’s life, surrounding him up to the point of near-complete surveillance.

Arena’s text is riddled with ellipsis. On the one hand, they serve as transitions between arguments and space within the narrative; given that it is a one-sentence novella, the ellipsis serves as a method to create separation between themes in order to avoid using the period and thus allowing the grammatical structure to continue. On the other hand, these ellipses are central to the understanding of Arturo, la estrella más brillante because they highlight the omissions/absences that are peppered throughout the text. When read in this manner, what is left unsaid in the text accounts for a substantial part of the narrative. In other words, the absences are made central to the narration; Arena’s insistence on ellipsis allows him to privilege in a clear way that which remains unsaid which becomes more important than the visible text. Certain moments are substituted by the ellipses because they are obvious, and therefore need not be mentioned. These moments refer to Arturo’s sexuality. As Carlos Decena points out, the tacit subject need not be mentioned. Here too, it is unnecessary for Arturo to articulate the details of his sexuality. He simply allows the ellipses to speak for themselves: because his sexuality is already understood, there is no need for explanation. This is also the case when referring to the conflated notions of gender and sexuality held by the state, “se trataba de una de las acostumbradas <<recogidas>> de jóvenes amparadas en el pretexto insólito de un pelo demasiado largo, de una forma de vestir determinada y, sobre todo, de ciertos rasgos, de ciertas <<maneras>>…” (33). Here the ellipsis serves to underscore the fact that there is no need to explain what the “rasgos” or “maneras” are because it is already understood.
Furthermore, if in other places the ellipsis serves to highlight silences, here it is used to discredit these “recogidas.” Thus, there is a constant fluctuation where the ellipses serve various purposes within the text. Although silence is part of discourse, the text brings attention to that silence, allowing the reader to create meaning by textually allowing visual spaces, marked by the ellipsis, for silence and interpretation. Therefore, the physicality of the ellipsis forces the reader to pause, to allow silence when they are reading the text. This forced pause allows for the assimilation or interpretation of the discourse. It serves as a technique that accentuates what is not said.

This multiplicity of meaning that can be given to the text by the reader is echoed in Arturo’s writing. Arturo’s text is unreadable, undecipherable, and untranslatable by others. When his text is found by the soldiers, the corporal laboriously reads the text, unable to find meaning, one word displacing the other, creating a counter cacophony for the discourse which the soldiers represent. The corporal’s difficulty reading Arturo’s text has the same effect as the incompatibility between the different discourses of masculinity which the soldiers and Arturo represent: violence. The violence is two-way. On the one hand, the inability to understand what Arturo has written results in an outburst of rejection. On the other hand, the words themselves are a violent affront, if not corporal at least linguistic, to the orderly language of “pancartas, afiches, [y] actas de consejos de guerra” (66) on which they are superimposed. Thus, Arturo meets the violence of the state on his physicality (i.e. he is deprived of freedom because of his perceived undesirability), with the violence of words, deforming the very language used to indict him. Furthermore, the incomprehensibility of Arturo’s text forces the corporal to read in syllables, breaking up the words into digestible phonemes of language. However, more
than helping him understand what Arturo has written it further decontextualizes the language that Arturo is using. By choosing which words he reads aloud, the corporal is reimagining Arturo’s text. The text becomes a string of incomprehensible words that displace the meaning of the other. Furthermore, the corporal’s pronunciation of “lofororo” marks the pauses between syllables, emphasizing the pauses/silence within the word itself, highlighting the inherence of silence within discourse. Indeed, Arturo capitalizes on the spaces of silence left in the “pancartas, afiches [y] actos de guerra” by mutilating said relics with his own affront, the only tool that he possesses and which is so critical to the construction of the New Man: language.

In *Arturo la estrella más brillante*, the silence that surrounds the discourse of the New Man is inevitably present. On the one hand, the idea of the New Man is found throughout the text; it is the belief in the New Man and the exclusion of those who are not deemed to possess the qualities that exemplify this model that has led to Arturo’s detention in the UMAP. Therefore, although the policies that establish the New Man as the model of masculinity are not explicitly mentioned in the text, they encompass the life of Arturo, the other detainees, the soldiers, etc. On the other hand, this text highlights the opposition that exists between the official discourse and policy and the embodiment of these policies. Thus, the body becomes central to the understanding of masculinity. Bodies are watched and policed constantly, and yet there are various spaces where they escape this vigilance. The power to police masculinity is both widespread and concentrated. For example, it is in the hands of everyone, including the detainees in the UMAP, who initially harass Arturo for not fitting in with the stereotypes that define the detainees. Therefore, once in the UMAP the detainees police each other, marginalizing
those who do not perform their role of “effeminate homosexual.” At the same time, the policing power is in the hands of the guards within the UMAP. Indeed, their profession is to police, and that power is sanctioned. Therefore, when guards at the UMAP solicit Arturo for sexual favors, they are able to set themselves apart from their relationships with the prisoners, and continue to project or perform the role sanctioned by the state,

el mismo soldado que lo vigilaba en el corte le otorgaba el mismo gesto, y los dos se adentraban en el cañaveral; Arturo se dedicaba minuciosamente a provocarle el placer, y sin embargo, aún cuando sentía la violencia y el goce de aquel cuerpo desahogándose en su cuerpo, en su memoria no alcanzaba a nublarse la enredadera del corredor ni las reverberaciones y hasta el perfume de sus millones de flores…el soldado, como siempre culminó con un resoplido, y como siempre retirando el cuerpo le dijo espera, no salgas hasta que yo no haya entrado en el campamento… (16-18)

The interaction between the soldier and Arturo is based on a series of signs that are not enunciated. There is no need for spoken language because everything is transmitted through gestures and glances. The soldier controls this interaction, in the sense that he decides when it will take place, yet it is Arturo who controls the soldier’s pleasure. The silence that surrounds the interaction is only broken by the soldier’s puffing, and then by his insistence that Arturo wait in the cane fields until the soldier has reached the camp. Arturo is quiet through this entire interaction and continues to be so when he remains in the cane field. However, this does not indicate Arturo’s inability to access language, this affords him the space to create worlds that have an excess of words, of symbolism, so packed together that there is little room to breath,

…parques, tenía que haber parques, parques inmensos y sombreados replegándose hasta el horizonte, parques donde por las tardes el sol proyectase las esbeltas siluetas de las palmas fragmentándose en las Fuentes cuyas líquidas exhalaciones formarían siempre incesantes contornos, de modo que quien las viera de lejos podrá descubrir en ellas cualquier figura anhelada, parques rodeados de canteros, montículos olorosos, senderos que bien podrian no conducir a sitio
Thus, although, Arturo is surrounded by silence in the fields, his mind and creativity never quiet down. The space of the cane fields is both a threat, of sexual and physical violence, and of silence. Indeed, much of the violence suffered by Arturo is never denounced aloud because it would be met by more violence. Instead, Arturo’s denunciation toward his surroundings is inward, and is transformed into the need to create an alternate space where the reality that surrounds him vanishes under the weight of his own creation.

The sexual encounters between Arturo and the soldier at the UMAP necessarily occur through gestures and glances. Silence is paramount to keeping the façade in discourse that condemns Arturo to be a prisoner of the UMAP and sustains the soldier as a guard at the camp eventhough they have sexual encounters with each other. These encounters are able to exist because they are silent; that is, they exist in the blank spaces of the discourse of masculinity. Indeed, they are central to the discourse and yet are never articulated. A pact of silence must exist in order to have models of masculinity be perceived as such. There has to be a tacit agreement whereby certain actions and behaviors that do not adhere to a certain model are accepted in order for the model to prevail, because, as Judith Butler has argued, it is impossible to perform any model of gender successfully one hundred percent of the time. Therefore, within the dominant model of masculinity, there exist endless amounts of nods that differ from said model. However, it is this tacit agreement of silence, of not recognizing these variants, that allows a model to have meaning. If every single point of discrepancy were highlighted, it
would be impossible to maintain a coherent model. Thus, the silence between Arturo and
the guard is representative of the silence that is necessary for this structure to exist.
Indeed, masculinity itself relies on a series of silences and silencing in order for it to be
credible. Thus, the silences in the text not only serve to acknowledge that which is
marginalized, but also the tacit agreements that need to occur in order for certain notions
of masculinity to prevail as models over others. Indeed, the very notion of gender is
based on a series of silences. By marking these spaces of silence visually, through the
ellipsis, the text is focusing the readers' attention on them. Although the ellipsis itself
does not “say” anything, its mere presence, draws attention to that space, to that silence,
to the fact that something is both present and missing within the narrative.

The textual privileging of the invisible resonates throughout the text. Indeed,
within Cuban revolutionary society, Arturo himself is invisible. That is, he is
marginalized at various levels: within his family both his sister and brother reject him; at
a social level he is marginalized to the dark corners of the city, and to the library that
serves as his refuge; furthermore, the Revolution literally marginalizes him into the
UMAP, and once in the UMAP he is marginalized by the soldiers and other detainees.
Arturo personifies invisibility. Indeed, he embraces it when he realizes within the UMAP
that it is this invisibility that will allow him a space for quiet, for inner thought, and most
importantly for his writing. It is away from the cacophony of discourse that surrounds
him that he is able to retreat and create. By privileging the margins, Arenas highlights the
possibilities that lie there. At a certain point in the text, Arturo ceases the potential that
these spaces of quiet offer him, and there is a clear “despreocupación,” as defined by
Hernández Rodríguez, that takes place. Arturo no longer wishes to engage with the
dominant discourses; in fact, they are irrelevant to him and to his artistic production. He throws himself into his writing in order to create a world that is apt for him and his lover without any interest in if or how it will be perceived by others. Furthermore, Arturo’s prolific writing takes hold of the blank spaces on pages scattered throughout the UMAP. He overtakes the margins of the war writings and populates them. His writing, then, becomes the central focus of the war papers, as the original message can no longer be comprehended because it has been taken over by Arturo’s writing. He is able to transform them so that they are no longer recognizable, and no longer offend his sensibilities, “paredes que se desmoronaban por el reventar de una cañería podrida o bajo el peso de las pancartas que sus ojos siempre habían rechazado y siempre habían estado condenados a mirar, ahora eran gruesas, sólidas, monumentales elevaciones, torres que se alzaban hasta perderse en las nubes” (68).

The rearticulation of reality through language and in spite of language allows Arturo to reimagine his surroundings. Within the cacophony of the UMAP, Arturo carves out a place for himself that allows him to retreat and create. This space of quiet is juxtaposed to the daily routine and bombardment of orders to follow. It is here that Arturo can retreat into himself and explore his thoughts. The other detainees at the camp, according to Arturo’s perspective, do not enjoy this possibility. It is this silence that allows Arturo not only to reimagine his reality, but effectively to create an alternate space for himself, where he is central to its existence. It is precisely because of the silence that he is able to procure that he starts writing; before that point in the text, Arturo is not presented as a writer. Hence, Arturo’s own notions of what the New Man is, and how he sees himself vis-à-vis the other men that are in the UMAP (both detainees and soldiers) is
a result of quiet. Indeed, no one else is afforded the possibility of introspective thought because they are constantly professing either the official discourse or the assumed discourse of masculinity. The inability to retreat from said discourse into a space of quiet, does not allow anyone but Arturo, who does find this, to become aware of its constant presence. It is silence, and the possibility to quiet what surrounds him, that allows Arturo to reimagine the discourse of the “pancartas” and “actas de guerra.” Furthermore, the actual blank spaces where the official discourse is recorded, affords Arturo the necessary space to alter it with his own language.

The language Arturo uses is no coincidence. Not only is it elaborate and symbolic, which demonstrate the labor and artistry of the artist to create, there is also a self-awareness that consciously observes moments of silence within the text. In other words, Arturo’s text is populated by spaces where the reader must pause; quiet is intrinsic to Arturo’s text. This awareness, represented by the ellipses that abound, shows the importance that silence holds within discourse. Visually, it is impressive to see blank spaces so prominent within the text because it serves to neutralize the power of discourse, by having silence occupy nearly as much physical space as discourse. Arturo is quite aware of the silence that surrounds him, not only the silence that he has created for himself but the silence that challenges his notions of self. Thus, silence serves as a tool for Arturo to create, but it also goes hand in hand with discourse to marginalize Arturo. When Arturo recognizes that his body is becoming that which is expected of masculine men who work in the fields to contribute to the country’s production, this change goes unrecognized by everyone else. As Arturo slowly becomes the physical embodiment of the New Man, as expounded by the model of masculinity, he becomes invisible. The
silence of those that surround him is a clear affront to Arturo’s sensibility. In fact, as Arturo begins to resemble the type of man that the UMAP is trying to create, the more invisible he becomes. Thus, there is no possibility of recreating himself within the paradigms of the established discourse because he has already been disavowed by it.

In *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, silence and quiet both function within and outside of the discourse of masculinity. They serve as both a tool to question and consolidate models of masculinity, rejecting and marginalizing others while at the same time allowing for introspective thought and creativity, which has the capability to question structures and paradigms. This text draws attention to spaces of quiet and silence by placing them at the heart of the narrative. In so doing, it allows for a discourse of silence to emerge. This discourse of silence is prominent enough to be evident within the physical space of the novel, through ellipses. This obvious textuality of silence highlights the silent pacts, which often render the complicit nature of gender norms invisible.

Invisibility is key to understanding masculinity because the norms of masculinity and the acceptance of those models are successful in that they are accepted as natural. When the seams of models of masculinity become invisible, then there is an acceptance of these models as “natural.” However, in *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* the continual focus on that which is not seen or said, on the invisible, through the use of ellipses, compels the reader to focus on the “invisibility” of gender, which is constantly rendered. Indeed, it is the need to maintain that line of invisibility, whereby the model of masculinity that is promoted by the government is the only one that is seen, the only one that is present in the community, that results in Arturo’s incarceration in the UMAP. All those who did not fit the particular model were subject to detention. Masculinities that did not conform to
the model were detained, displaced, and to those that remained, rendered invisible. Therefore, the successful implementation of this mandatory model of gender needs other non-conforming forms of masculinity to become invisible, in order for it to acquire the sense of “naturality.” One of the merits of this text is that it highlights the relationship that needs to exist between masculinity and invisibility, while at the same time delineating the potential that exists within parameters of silence, quiet, and invisibility, to undermine this type of coerciveness.

Senel Paz’s novella also approaches the subject of silence, quiet, and invisibility as it relates to masculinity. However, it does so differently than *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*. The juxtaposition that exists between Diego and David serves as a platform to examine the relationship between the two characters and the relationship between the characters and the Revolution, its policies, and the consequences of their implementations. Furthermore, the relationship between the two characters lays out the differences between the two: David – raised in the Revolution and taught to believe in it, and Diego – an outsider of the Revolution who is trying to consolidate what is considered to be a “counterrevolutionary” lifestyle with his love for his country. As prototypes of divergent masculinities, Diego and David’s relationship highlights how gender is perceived, and how it is tied to power that is often displayed by way of silence. Silence is central to understanding the relationship between Diego and David because it permeates the text from beginning to end.

The arbitrariness of characteristics designated as gendered is evident because they are often interchangeable depending on the situation. If silence, as Dougals Lanier explains, is linked to manliness in certain cultures at certain points in history, in others, it
is viewed as suspicious. For example, when David first meets Diego, he is worried what his comrades will think when they see him with Diego. David fears that they will start questioning his sexuality, and in turn his manliness, and he begins to imagine the reasoning behind the students’ possible assumptions, “la broma pasaría a sospecha, y si a eso se agrega que David es un poco misterioso y David cuida mucho su lengauje… y David no tiene novia desde que Viviana lo dejó, ¿lo dejó ella?, ¿y por qué lo dejó?” (10-11). David is aware that his use of language and the way he speaks or does not speak can be a contributing factor to his comrades’ assessment of his masculinity. Therefore, his quietness and the lack of vulgarity of his speech could be a potential liability amongst his comrades, who are all assumed to abide by a certain code of conduct that places them within the sanctioned expression of masculinity. However, David’s initial encounter with Diego is marked by David’s silence. He is unwilling to engage with Diego. He is taciturn in order to highlight his position vis-à-vis Diego. It is no coincidence that while Diego is speaking to him, David switches his communist youth identification card from one pocket to another so that it is clearly visible to Diego. David is employing strategic silence in order to make his own intentions known without having to directly engage with Diego. This initial interaction between the two men is marked by Diego’s incessant talking and David’s silence. There is a clear dichotomy between words and actions, where each man is associated with the other. After each of Diego’s attempt to engage David into conversation, either by speaking of the ice cream they are eating or banned books that he is able to obtain, David has no reply: “Silencio de mi parte” (13). After each of Diego’s attempts, David repeats this to the reader. In the first ten pages of the novella that describes this first encounter, David only chimes in at the end, “¡NO!, dije
poniéndome de pie y tomando una decision tajante” (19). Although David only says this one word to Diego during their whole interaction, he is narrating to the reader every thought he has had during the conversation. Therefore, what appears to be silence from David’s part is not that, rather quietness. In fact, the whole novella is David recounting Diego’s words and his own thoughts. Rarely does David, as a narrator, mention that he actually said something to the other characters. The person he has the greatest outward interaction with is Ismael, when David is informing him of Diego’s illegal behavior.

If David is characterized by his quietness, it is further highlighted when contrasted to Diego’s constant talking. Diego is characterized by David, at the beginning of the novella, as frivolous because of his constant speaking. Indeed, Diego himself admits to David, “Quizás te he parecido superfluo. Como todo el que habla mucho, hablo boberías” (27), however he comments, “Es porque soy nervioso, pero me he sentido distinto conversando contigo. Conversar es importante, dialogar mucho más” (27). Therefore, because Diego is a gay character, it is easy for David to characterize him as talkative and frivolous, and even though David never articulates this, Diego is aware of the tendency to characterize him in such a way and rejects this description. Indeed, what is at play between Diego and David is more than just an exchange between two stereotypically constructed characters. Throughout the first half of the text the relationship between the two is not an exchange but a one-sided conversation. David describes their initial encounter, “<<Te he visto muchísimas veces paseando por ahí, con un periodiquito bajo el brazo. Chico, como te gusta Galiano.>> Silencio de mi parte. <<Hoy es mi día de suerte, me encuentro maravillas.>> Silencio de mi parte” (13, my emphasis). This interaction is representative of the men’s relationship for the first part of
the text. Not only is David staking out his ground by not replying, but his silence also disenfranchises Diego. By speaking to David, Diego recognizes David and therefore, within the social space David exists as someone who is being addressed. By denying reciprocity to Diego, David is effectively signaling that Diego does not exist within the social space of the dialogue. Through his silence, David renders Diego invisible. When Diego’s monologue finally becomes a dialogue, it is with David’s “¡No!” (21). Silence and negation characterizes the initial interaction between the two, as marked by David.

David’s silence towards Diego is contradicted by the turbulence in his interior. While he is trying to stake out his claim to masculinity vis-à-vis the threat and attraction that Diego inspires, he is steeped in a reimagining and questioning of himself. The interior battle that he experiences is described as one between his spirit and his conscience. This struggle leads him to question not only his approach towards Diego but also his understanding of himself. This results in a series of questioning that David had never considered, yet David never externalizes or verbalizes these feelings. As Quashie points out, quiet serves as a space to which to retreat and deal with contradiction and identity. David internalizes and manages the struggle between his spirit and his consciousness, and it is only through writing that he can manage to express himself. However, even when recounting the story of his relationship with Diego, David is unable to externalize certain aspects.

The complexity of David’s internal struggle and the change in perspective that he undergoes as a result of his relationship with Diego are the main thread of the text. David grapples with the lessons of the Revolution and his friendship with Diego, leading him to question certain aspects of the Revolution and concluding with the validity of Diego’s
contribution to Cuban society. Because the text is written from David’s point of view, Diego’s thoughts on his relationship with David do not receive the same attention. Indeed, there is no mention of any interiority when referring to Diego; his characterization is relegated to his external performance that David sees. This erasure of Diego’s interior life is concurrent with the way he is displaced from the story. Despite or because of Diego’s flamboyant performance, according to David when the two first meet, “se instaló en la silla de enfrente con sus bolsas, carteras, paraguas, rollos de papel y la copa de helado. Le eché una ojeada: no había que ser muy sagaz para ver de qué pata cojeaba” (10). Within Cuban society Diego is completely marginalized: his performance attracts attention; however, this attention is marked by rejection and silence, as David exhibits upon his first encounters with him. Diego’s position within the cultural elite of Havana society is not enough to save him from the gradual displacement and eventual forced exile that completely erases him from Cuban society.

Diego’s invisibility is in juxtaposition with his performance. Yet, the policies that he cites work in order to displace him from what Benedict Anderson called the imagined community of the nation. When Diego first meets David he highlights certain aspects about himself that are crucial, “Yo, uno: soy maricón. Dos: soy religioso. Tres: he tenido problemas con el sistema […] Cuatro: estuve preso cuando lo de la UMAP. Y cinco: los vecinos me vigilan, se fijan en todo el que me visita” (19-20). This revelation makes it clear that Diego is not only ideologically marginalized from the Revolution, but has also been physically marginalized through the UMAP. Displacement from Havana to the detention centers of the UMAP in the countryside serves as a type of method to render people invisible. By extracting them from the imagined community, these citizens are no
longer visible, they no longer walk the streets, or inhabit the shared spaces of the city. By placing Diego in the UMAP he becomes invisible to the rest of the city dwellers. However, once he is released, and reenters society, a clear contradiction arises: he becomes hyper-visible, in the sense that neighbors are constantly watching him. However, because he is being watched, he is marginalized from the community. The constant vigilance serves to exclude him from those who are sanctioned by the society to “watch,” and “enforce” the norms that must be followed. It is this marginalization that eventually leads to a complete erasure within society. Diego’s defense of Germán’s artistic work, which is religious in character, is enough to have his record tarnished. “Es una simple amonestación laboral, ¿pero quién me va a contratar con esta ficha, quién va a arriesgarse por mí?...Aquí no me quieren, para qué darle más vueltas a la noria?” (50-51). This warning on Diego’s record is enough to force him into exile. Thus, the vigilance placed on Diego by those around him because of his time in the UMAP eventually leads to his exile from the community, and thus his full erasure. David clearly states that Diego will never become invisible because David will remember him, but Diego’s exile comes from a process of continual displacement, until he is physically displaced completely from the nation. In fact, Diego’s exile occurs before he leaves Cuba. In the text, Diego’s exile is all but certain, however, it is not for part of the narrative. Therefore, as soon as David leaves Diego’s apartment, Diego’s exile has taken effect. Therefore, the friendship between the men is divided between the place they share, Diego’s apartment and la calle, a space that only belongs to David. Once he has crossed the border between the two, Diego’s exile, at least from David’s life, is certain.
The final days before Diego’s departure have an effect on both men, and for a moment it is as though they change roles. If Diego is initially chatty, verging on superficiality, as his eminent exile looms nearer he becomes taciturn, but because the reader only has access to Diego through David’s perspective, Diego’s silence remains inaccessible. David remembers the last days he spent with Diego, “Yo lo acompañaba el mayor tiempo posible, pero me hablaba poco, creo que a veces ni me veía” (54). For a moment, the men’s roles change drastically from the time they meet to the days leading to Diego’s departure. Diego’s constant speech quells into silence, and David, who initially was unwilling to communicate, acquires a desperation that is noticeable in his incessant speech, “Diego, ¿y si le escribimos a alguien? Piensa en quién podría ser. O yo voy y le pido una entrevista a algún funcionario, tú me esperas afuera...¿No conoces a algún abogado, uno de esos medio gusanos que quedan por ahí? ¿O a alguien que ocupe un puesto importante y sea maricón tapado? Le has hecho favores a muchísima gente. Yo me gradúo en julio, en octubre ya estoy trabajando, te puedo dar cincuenta pesos al mes” (53). This is perhaps the most David says to Diego during the entirety of the text. However, David is never able to articulate exactly what the relationship between them has meant to him. In the end it is Diego who sums it up, and David is left with a disconnection between his thoughts and what he is able to express to his friend, which he confides to the reader, “Era también lo que yo había querido decir, pero tengo esa dificultad” (55). In order to make it clear to Diego that their friendship was indeed significant to David, David lets the reader know that to show his appreciation he invites Diego to a restaurant to have lunch together. In this manner he will show his gratitude to Diego, and let everyone around him know that he is not ashamed to be seen with his
friend. However, the inability to tell Diego how much he cares for him is accentuated by this invitation. That silence is never resolved between the two men. However, the fact that David extends an invitation to Diego to a restaurant in the middle of Havana does say something about what he is willing to do for his friend. Up until that point in the text, the entirety of their relationship, with the exception of the day that they met, has developed within the walls of Diego’s apartment, “la guarida.” The name that Diego has given his apartment is indicative of both the constant vigilance that his apartment is under by neighbors, and the fact that it is the only place that serves to protect those within it. The reclusiveness of the relationship within Diego’s apartment reflects the marginalization of Diego, but also the fact that David is unwilling to be seen with Diego. The fear of being associated with Diego is stronger than David’s relationship with him. Therefore, the invitation to be seen in public together, as well as David’s behavior once at the restaurant with Diego, serves to communicate what he is unable to verbalize.

Moments like these, where things are left unsaid but somehow are understood, are scattered throughout the text. From their initial meeting, Diego mentions David’s role of Torvald in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. The mention of this play within the text and the connotations that arise from this play situate David as the patriarchal figure, not only of the play, but also within the larger social context. David not only adheres to the norms of masculinity set forth and ratified by social norms, he seems to be the embodiment of these norms. However, David’s performance in the play, like all performances of gender, is a failure, and he must improvise his role within the structure of the play. When his classmate forgets her lines David knew that the play must continue, and the long silence that occurs between both characters allows him the opportunity to recreate the play. He
recalls, “la obra tuvo que continuar convertida en un monólogo autocrítico de Torvaldo” (17). It is precisely the silence that is produced between the characters, the lack of pre-established dialogue, which allows this self-critique of the character to occur. The play not only acquires a new meaning, but through David’s improvised performance it also allows for a new creation/interpretation of the piece. Likewise, when David meets Diego and establishes a friendship with him, he is forced to question the norms by which he is used to abiding and he must improvise his sense of self. This is why David struggles with the friendship, not knowing whether he should be vigilant of Diego. The sharp contrast between the play and what was performed leads to a disjunction between the audience’s expectations of David’s role and what they witness. Diego, part of the audience, describes this disjunction, “la mitad del público rezaba por ti y alguien habló de provocar un cortocircuito…Nos conmovió tanto tu sangre fría, la inocencia con que hacías el ridículo. Por eso fuimos tan pródigos en los aplausos” (18). David’s performance leaves the audience speechless, not because of the greatness of what he has done, but because of the inability to consolidate what they are seeing with what they expected to see. Furthermore, David’s insistence on finishing, regardless of how the play was being perceived and without any awareness of the consequences, leaves the audience not knowing how to react, and the only way to do so is by clapping. It is this performance, the ability to deviate from expectation, that motivates Diego’s friendship with David. David reveals what Diego has told him, “si había algún hombre nuevo en La Habana no podía ser uno de esos forzudos y bellísimos Comandos Especiales, sino alguien como yo, capaz de hacer el ridículo, y él se lo tenía que topar un día y llevarlo a la guarida, brindarle un té y
conversar” (27). David’s embarrassment and his ability to act like a fool in front of an audience, makes him stand out among the other men of his generation.

In her book *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick studies the effects of shame and humiliation in the works of Henry James. Her analysis is based on Silvan Thomkins’s study, *Shame*, which explains the relation between shame and identity, and how it is not the result of a negation or prohibition, but rather it is a reaction to a lack of communication. “The shame-humiliation response, when it appears, represents the failure or absence of the smile of contact; a reaction to the loss of feedback from others, indicating social isolation and signaling the need for relief from that condition” (Sedgwick, 36). In other words, Tomkins observes that shame and humiliation is the result of an inability to identify with the community that one belongs to. This rejection results in a sense of isolation that is fundamental in the process of identity construction/creation. From this point, Sedgwick studies manifestations of humiliation in the editing process that Henry James does of his early works, and the relationship that exists between the present and past narrators, and how this affects the subjectivity of the text (44). Sedgwick suggests that shame-humiliation does not necessarily constitute a point of rejection, rather that shame, as an integral part of the creation of the self, can give way to creativity and thus can, in some cases, be construed as positive. The lack of communication between David and the audience, the disjunction between David’s performance and the response from the audience, is clear in David’s mind, “Y eso fue lo peor, la lástima con que me aplaudieron. Mientras los escuchaba, iluminado por los reflectores, rogaba con toda mi alma que se produjera un efecto de amnesia total sobre todos” (18). The applause from the audience is not warranted: it is covered in pity, and
therefore, there is a lack of sincere communication between the audience and David. It is this that produces the shame that David feels, as he is standing knowing he has made a fool of himself, and nonetheless having the audience applaud his performance.

The amnesia that Diego had hoped for did not set in: Diego is well aware of his performance, and it is exactly this memory that Diego brings up during their first encounter in Coppellia that pushes David to go to *la guarida* and initiate a relationship with Diego. It is this experience of lack of communication, a sort of silence between David and the community he belongs to, which deeply marks him. It is this instance that allows him to act outside the norms of his community, because he already understands himself as having been outside of the community, if only for an instance. Thus, when he establishes a friendship with Diego, it is natural that his sense of self begins to shift. He no longer sees himself only as a card-bearing member of the Young Communist League; he begins to imagine himself differently. There are new possibilities that arise in his own subjectivity, to the point that one of the last moments he sees Diego, David understands that it is his friendship and his ability to step outside the established norms that have made him, “era más el yo que siempre había querido ser” (55). The rupture that occurs between the community and David is marked by shame, which is rekindled when Diego first mentions that he had seen him as Torvald. It is from this position/experience of shame-humiliation that David can imagine himself outside the boundaries of the community. And although during their initial encounter David insists on showing Diego through his actions that, “mis intereses de lector no creaban ninguna intimidad entre nosotros” (12-13), it becomes clear that the reading interests does create a complicity between them, and it is precisely this interest in literature that Diego is able to cultivate
and direct. The friendship that arises between Diego and David does so from the relationship of teacher/student that initially takes hold, whereby Diego introduces David to a literary world that had been closed off. In fact, it is this understanding between the two in relation to literature that leads David to reveal himself as a writer. The relationship that these men form through their mutual appreciation of literature is left out of the critical tration. Literature and a joy for the written word not only sparks David’s interest in getting to know Diego, but also forms the foundation of their friendship and mutual respect for each other. David’s trust in Diego is evident when he reveals his writings because up to this point in his life he has not shown them to anyone.

At the beginning of the text, David’s identity rests on being a member of the group, “Me cambié el carnet rojo de militante de la Unión de Jóvenes Communistas de un bolsillo a otro” (12). This performance where he displays his membership within the young communist union, is not only for Diego to be aware of his political affiliations, but also to reassure himself of his ties to the community. If actions speak louder than words, then this was David’s warning to Diego. However, this credential, which Diego pays no attention to, is David’s way of corroborating his identity to himself in the face of Diego, who at this point in the texts seems “dangerous” because of his mannerisms, but most of all because he has in his possession a copy the banned book, La guerra del fin del mundo by Mario Vargas Llosa, a critic of the Revolution. Thus, this ID card serves as a sort of talisman at this point that would protect David if any doubt were to be cast on his allegiance to the Revolution because of his interest in the books that Diego has. However, after David starts spending time with Diego, there is a notable shift in the way he identifies himself. The first signs of this come from Diego, who describes David once
they are in *la guarida* for the first time, “mentiroso, villareño al fin. Te llamas David. Yo lo sé todo de todo el mundo. Bueno, de la gente interesante. Tú escribes” (23). Diego’s perspective of David as a writer begins to alter the way that David identifies himself. In fact, David’s communist ID does not make another appearance in the text, and apart from his struggle to understand why he is attracted to Diego and *la guarida*, David’s self-perception begins to change. If the beginning of the interaction between the two men was marked by a tense silence from David and a barrage of stories to fill the silence on Diego’s part, with time, their relationship evolves into a comfortable silence. The tension disappears, and David describes how he is at ease with Diego. The vigilance that David had during his first encounter with Diego has dissipated, and his absolute trust in Diego, expressed by opening the fridge door as he pleases, allows him to show Diego his true self. It is at this point that David has the courage to give David some of his texts for him to read and critique. By sharing his writings with someone else, David accepts himself as a writer and being identified as such. By doing so, David is unequivocally related to the other writer mentioned in the text, José Lezama Lima. Diego’s affinity to Lezama Lima’s work and life is prevalent throughout the text. Therefore, although never explicitly mentioned, Diego’s relationship to the work of Lezama Lima and Diego’s cultural and literary tutelage of David, create a literary lineage between Lezama Lima and David that is mediated by Diego. In fact, it is Diego who introduces David to the work of Lezama Lima, who he has previously never read and of whom he had not been aware.

Like most of Diego’s cultural and literary Cuban interests, Lezama Lima has been erased from the collective consciousness. The invisibility of Lezama Lima’s work and the value of his work suffer the same fate as Diego. It is precisely this invisibility that
captures David. The constant bombardment of Revolutionary imagery has left him deeply aware of these norms. However, it is Diego’s and Lezama’s work that capture him precisely because they are marginal. Within the repetition of revolutionary imagery that is used by his highschool teacher, for example, “diapositivos de trabajadoras y milicianas, citas del Primer Congreso de Educación y Cultura” (17), the imagery that Diego offers him a different way to belong, and a different community to which David can belong.

Like Reinaldo Arenas’s work, Arturo, la estrella más brillante, Senel Paz’s text is steeped in silence, quiet, and invisibility. Although Diego and David become close friends there are countless examples of the silence that exists between them. These silences are not only borne of things that need not be said because they are understood, but also from the inability to express certain emotions and realities. The fact that the text is narrated from David’s point of view gives an insight into David’s thoughts in those moments that he is unable or unwilling to say anything to Diego, because his thoughts are conveyed to the reader through the text. However, Diego, to an extent, remains a mystery to the reader because his interior is never represented, and his inner thoughts remain impenetrable. David’s taciturn attitude during the length of the text is in opposition to his interior thought process. He is in a constant struggle between what he is thinking and what he says, or more often what he does not say. On the other hand, Diego is constantly filling the silence that exists between David and himself, and yet, there is no way for the reader to know what Diego is thinking, or if what he is saying is or is not in opposition to what he thinks. At the same time, there is also a privileging of ideas that Diego professes; after all, he is David’s teacher in this process, and his positioning of Lezama Lima as a cultural and literary icon within David’s understanding of the world serves to undercut
the proliferation of traditional models of masculinity that David knows. Invisibility and silence serve as a tool for change, to observe, much like an invisible cloak which lets one see one’s surroundings without being seen. However, this is only true if silence and invisibility are chosen, in the way David chooses to inhabit the space of invisibility where Diego resides. In Diego’s case, invisibility is trusted upon him, he is invisible to the revolution, and therefore his voice is unheard. Diego is constantly speaking because he has been silent. He performs in order to be seen because he has been made invisible. His time at the UMAP and his imminent exile are physical manifestations of his invisibility within the Revolution. Diego’s invisibility coupled with his powerlessness to change his situation, and indeed to be the victim of a system that excludes him, are diametrically opposed to David’s silence and invisibility which stem from his own choice. David becomes “enlightened” while Diego is discarded. These two modes of experiencing invisibility are tied to the way each man’s masculinity is perceived and conforms to accepted models.

There is a mutual understanding between Diego and David, and a complicity regarding how much Diego can push David out of his comfort zone. This is established through stares, glances, and silences. David’s silence vis-à-vis Diego establishes the boundaries he is willing to cross. Although David is often silent when he is in Diego’s presence, when Diego is recalling his first sexual encounter, etc., this silence is indicative of a complicity that exists between them. It is indicative of the power David has over the situation; as long as he is quiet, Diego can continue speaking. However, any “no” on David’s part shuts down the conversation. However, the cultural and intellectual knowledge that Diego wields is evident, and David is unable to reject this information.
Diego’s discourse comes to the forefront and so does the knowledge that he possesses. This text becomes a tribute to silence, to the invisible, and displaces the images of the Revolution. Thus there is a tension in the text between the omnipresence of the Revolution in the background of the text, and the history and stories that Diego is rescuing from oblivion that dominate the dialogue between the characters. By placing Lezama Lima as the model to be followed, and displacing the figures of the Revolution, Diego allows David to inhabit his space. However, this is only true in the relationship between Diego and David.

In a broader sense, visibility and invisibility are intertwined to such a degree that one can be both visible and invisible. Diego is a primary example of this dual-characteristic. Although Diego is invisible within the social structure, that is, he has no voice or power and is slowly being pushed as far to the margin as permitted before he is forced to completely disappear (exile), he is under constant vigilance. He is constantly being watched. His presence is hyper-visible, in the sense that his neighbors, David, and the government are very much aware of his presence. Yet, in both senses he is powerless. The social structure that ensures this duality is itself both visible and invisible. The invisibility of the structure is like the forces in nature, gravity and magnetism for example, which are invisibl, yet their effects are apparent. The same is true of gender and the structures that sustain the normalization of certain gender norms. That which is visible is only the effect of certain forces, yet the structure itself is invisible because it is perceived as natural. The tacit consent that exists in order to maintain these structures is in part the fear of being rendered visible, in the same way as Diego is rendered visible.
Certain gender models are maintained through silence and invisibility and are expressed in the same terms.

González Melo’s play showcases a series of relationships that are fraught with silences, what cannot be said, what is left unsaid, or thoughts that are never quite finished. Silence permeates this work, and often works as one more character sharing a scene. Often times the characters in a scene are speaking to each other, but there is no dialogue between the characters. Each is only aware of their thoughts, and this lack of communication between them is highlighted by the silences that express the inability to communicate. As Michel De Certeau points out describing how the individual leaves traces of the self in the city, “The verbal relics of which the story is composed, being tied to lost stories and opaque acts, are juxtaposed in a collage where their relations are not thought, and for this reason they form a symbolic whole. They are articulated by lacunae” (107). According to Manzor, “central a todo lo no-dicho está la cuestión de la visibilidad y la invisibilidad del deseo homoerótico masculino y otras formas de sexualidades queer que se entrecruzan con las repercusiones sociales y económicas de una doble economía característica del socialismo tardío cubano” (62). The interaction that is seen between the characters of González Melo’s play create a collage, interacting with each other haphazardly as they meet in the city. The constant change in narrative time and space, even within the same scene, creates a collage of relationships that tie together all the characters in the play in one way or another that leads to crisscrossed stories that remain with large gaps of information between the characters but is apparent to the reader.

These silences characterize the relationships between the characters, most notably between Miguel Depás and his father Alejandro, the relationship between the Depás
family in relation to the figure of the mother, the relationship between Kárel and Felipe, and between Saúl and La Paco. Indeed, these characters inhabit marginal spaces in the city, and they all inhabit marginal time. This text continually approaches the silences that result from scarcity, from surviving, and from dying in the context that these characters do. This text approaches the ineffable, and it is this inability of expression that results in the continual silences between the characters. Furthermore, the setting is characterized by silence. The play takes place in the late hours of Christmas Eve and the early hours of Christmas day. The city is deserted and the only people seen or heard are the characters of the play. The stillness of the city highlights the silence that surrounds the characters. However, unlike Arturo, la estrella más brillante and El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, the silence that exists in this text does not lead explicitly to the type of quiet that Quashie explores because the text itself does not offer the possibility to read the characters’ self-reflection. However, this is not indicative of a lack of such reflection. Indeed, there are moments of silence within the text that highlight the self-awareness of the characters. Often, they are found outside of the dialogue between characters, and in the stage directions that serve as a narration of thoughts and possibilities, which are not afforded by the dialogues of the text.

The web of characters of Chamaco, informe en diez capítulos (para representar) are interconnected by various levels of relations that are all characterized by different degrees of silences. In fact, Kárel, “our hero,” is described by Alejandro Depás, “Escuchó las cosas que yo me había callado la mañana del día anterior y no replicó, ni me hizo preguntas. ¡Tantas palabras importantes y soltarlas así, delante de un extraño! Creo que en su silencio me pareció hermoso” (30). This description of Alejandro’s relationship
with Kárel could just as well be a description of Alejandro’s relationship with his son Miguel. Kárel mitigates the relationship between Alejandro and Miguel, by becoming the receptor of what Alejandro cannot or will not say to his son. Alejandro vents all his emotions and secrets that he never had a chance to express to his son, to Kárel. Alejandro finds beauty in Kárel’s silence because it is his silence that allows him to express himself. Indeed, he sees reflected in Kárel, not Miguel but himself, and the acceptance of what he needed to say. However, his beauty does not lay in silence itself, but what that silence represents to Alejandro.

The relationships that Kárel and Miguel have with the rest of the characters are characterized by silences but not by a lack of communication. There is no need to say what is already known, and much is understood by simple insinuation. Thus, ellipses become prevalent within the text: they mark the silence between two characters, letting the reader understand that thoughts are not completely finished, that there is always something left unsaid. This is also true of the way the characters’ masculinity is constructed and expressed. That is, there are gaps and spaces for interpretation, where the characters move in and out of expected discourses of masculinity, depending on the interaction with which they are faced.

Within the discourse of the New Man, the body is central to the expression of the ideal masculinity. As has been discussed in previous chapters, meaning is placed on the body, its aspect and the way it is presented. Thus, clothing, muscles, hair length, etc., are all indicators of certain kinds of masculinity, especially the notions of masculinity championed by the government. This is also true of González Melo’s play where physicality -- hunger, cold, sexual desire -- define these characters. When thinking about
Kárel and Miguel, their bodies are fundamental to the text. The text begins and ends with the bodies, the lifeless body of Miguel in the middle of the park, and Kárel’s body laid out on the bed that Alejandro and he have shared. It is ultimately their bodies that make them visible. In other words, Kárel and Miguel are both marginal, not to the text but to their surroundings, and it is only when they are killed, when their bodies have been harmed, that they become visible.

ROBERTA. Voy a tener pesadillas de tanto mirar a ese niño ahí tirado.
LA PACO. Por eso ya nunca bebo, para que no me encuentren tirada en medio de la calle. Será un borracho.
ROBERTA. Caminé un rato tratando de olvidarlo…Desde niña me da miedo la sangre.
LA PACO. ¿Tiene sangre?
LA PACO. Es un niño.
ROBERTA. Un niño.
LA PACO. Y está muerto.
ROBERTA. No, no.
La Paco vira completamente boca arriba el cuerpo. Husmea en el pantalón, sin resultado. Revisa el abrigo. De uno de los bolsillos saca un carné.
LA PACO. Miguel Depás. Qué nombre suave para morir así, lleno de sangre un 24 de diciembre. (10-11)

Miguel Depás is one more faceless, nameless young man in Havana, but it is his blood and dead body that call attention to him. He is named; he is called to being because he is dead. If it were not for his body lying in the park, he would have never been identified.
Kárel faces the same anonymity within Havana, and it is the fact that he cuts his throat that forces Alejandro Depás to make a declaration about him to the police. Both men become written into history, the history of the crime – the police report – through their bodies. It is the wounds inflicted on their bodies that lead to their visibility. It is only through death that these men become visible, and become a part of each other’s narrative
within the police report. This paradox, becoming visible through death, which is the erasure of the body, underscores the men’s position within their society.

Invisibility is perceived when it serves as a contrast, and it is this obvious absence that makes something which is not there visible. In *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* and *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo*, the presence and emphasis on models of masculinity is abundant. There is a dialogue between these texts and the idea of the New Man as it was articulated by the government, and diffused through propaganda and reiteration for decades. These texts present alternatives, or new articulations of the government’s proposal. *Chamaco* is starkly different, as it no longer engages in that dialogue. It is the absence of any clear model of masculinity that sets it apart, and makes the invisibility of a certain model so visible. *Chamaco*’s multifaceted characters stand in opposition to the idea of compulsory gender, and present an array of possibilities that are “despreocupados,” to use Rafael Hernández Rodríguez’s term, with the center.

*Arturo, la estrella más brillante* and *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* are in dialogue with the concept of the New Man as projected by the government for its citizens. Arturo, Diego, and David are characters that in one way or another rearticulate the idea of the New Man into what they imagine it to be; whether an artist, a writer, a man that is rooted in the historical and cultural aspects of Cuba, both texts take into account the notion of the New Man as a possibility for the future. The sense that the Cuban Revolution is at the forefront of these characters’ understanding of the world is apparent; Arturo and Diego are both obvious victims of the Revolution that excludes them from participation through their physical removal from the city, through the UMAP and forced exile. Symbols of the Revolution permeate both texts. *Chamaco* is drastically
different from these two texts in that the Revolution is invisible. That does not mean that
the repercussions of the Revolution are not felt. Indeed, the text is clear that the
characters in the text are struggling to survive, as a result of the socio-economic
conditions. However, the obvious dialogue with the Revolution seen in Arenas’s and
Paz’s texts is no longer present. There is no New Man in Chamaco. In order for a New
Man to be conceived, one must evoke the future; and in this text the future is erased. The
death of the two young men marks the inability to project a vision of the future where a
New Man is possible. The idea of the New Man has completely disappeared from the
text. The Revolution too has disappeared, but instead of becoming obsolete, as the model
of the New Man, it has become invisible because of its quotidian presence. The
consequences of the Revolution are seen on a daily basis; it is the staple of the characters’
life, and therefore, in its normalization, the Revolution itself has become invisible.
Chapter 6  
Conclusion

The visual and ideological campaign to create the New Man of the Revolution has had lasting effects on the conceptualization of masculinity in Cuba. This dissertation has traced how this discourse has permeated literary texts produced by three generations of Cuban writers. However, each text has come into dialogue with this discourse from their particular standpoint, and from it has rearticulated possible masculinities. It is no coincidence that productivity, specters of the countryside, the city, silence, quiet, visibility, etc. are present in these three distinct texts. Through them, we see how the Revolution carefully constructed a model of masculinity that speaks to these issues, how the three texts react to that construction, and the proliferation of non-hegemonic masculinities that arise from said discourse.

The visual nature of the construction of masculinity is imperative to understand the way the New Man permeated the social consciousness of Cuban society. As a model for the citizen of the nation, the discourse and imagery of the New Man became part of the social consciousness of the Cuban Revolution. The texts that I have examined demonstrate the oppressing nature of this discourse and the policing and vigilance that arise from it, as well as the ways in which the New Man was skirted or reelaborated in order to imagine new possibilities of being and not being.

The presence of the discourse New Man within the crafting of a new society generated a series of responses, yet there are important markers that are present in all three texts. The language of work and productivity is central to the idea of the New Man, and these texts approach it in various ways. Arenas reiterates this discourse, while at the
same time reimagining it from the standpoint of the artist. This turn of perspective flips it on its head, particularly when considering Fidel Castro’s sharp critique of artists’ role within the Revolution. By resemantisizing the state’s discourse, Arenas’s discourse inhabits it and changes it, as does Arturo’s text within the official text of the government within the UMAP.

Although Senel Paz’s novella has been criticized for conforming to the present discourse of the New Man and reinventing it for the post-soviet world, and suggestions that it is not subversive but rather a reiteration of official policy, Diego’s iconography and model of Lezama Lima as David’s literary father suggests the strong distance away from the image propagated by the state. Indeed, simply the physical appearance of Lezama Lima is antithetical to the state’s image of youth and physical fitness. Not only is Lezama Lima’s homosexuality and political posture central to the rejection of official stance but also his physical image. When so much has been invested to create an image of the New Man in magazines such as Palante, as was demonstrated in Chapter 2, it is obvious that the counter image of Lezama Lima becomes the model for David.

In Abel González Melo’s text, the double discourse lived by the characters and the space and time where the action takes place renders the invisible visible. Indeed, the shadows of the New Man, that which was left out of the official discourse, that to which the hegemonic discourse was continually and constantly in opposition, come to light. Although the New Man is no longer relevant to the lived reality, the homophobic/hegemonic masculinity upon which it was predicated continues to permeate the social consciousness when exercising power.
The concept of the New Man is appropriated differently in each text, however, in all of them death or exile are the fruits of the compulsory nature of this gendered discourse. The hegemonic masculinity is unsustainable and inevitably gives rise to a multiplicity of articulations that stray from said narrative. If Chamaco dealt with the breakdown of the myth of the New Man in 2005, and proposed a multiplicity of masculinities, then by 2016 articulations of masculinity should not be as intertwined with the model of the New Man presented in the 1960’s. Furthermore, one must take into account the political and economic changes that are presently taking place between Cuba and the United States. This new relationship is bound to have an impact on all levels of society. It would be necessary to see how models of masculinity are affected and, once again, are discursively and visually rearticulated.
Bibliography


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