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## The Self as an Act of Message and Reinaldo Arenas's *Antes que anochezca*

### Keywords / Palabras clave

Arenas, *Antes que anochezca*, Subjectivity, Self

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Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism

## *The Self as an Act of Message and Reinaldo Arenas' Antes que anochezca*

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Reinaldo Arenas's rhetorical homosexualization of the revolutionary macho as an entity subject to desire's vulnerability in Antes que anochezca denotes sexuality as the vengeful tonic of the autobiographical narrative. Nevertheless, beyond the denunciation of the Cuban Establishment's hypocrisies concerning the nuevo hombre [1] and his alleged masculinity, Arenas' self-articulation as an unleashed sexual force also suggests the precepts of the Revolution to be contradicting in terms of normative constructions of identity. [2] Thus, Arenas' "homosexualization" of the *macho* revolutionary throughout the pages of Antes consequentially writes otherness as normalcy, inscribing difference as sameness. In the proposition of authority as a potential homosexual, Arenas explores gender identity as a social construct while seeking to reveal the artist's existence as a struggle to overcome the engendered definitions of "being" dictated by tradition and the Cuban Revolution. [3]

Homosexual desire is amply diffused in Antes as shameless and natural, released from its customary patriarchal guilt. Early on in the autobiography, the reader encounters such an ideological tenet as the author reports on his sexual voracity as a *campesino* child. As Arenas states, the manifestation of sexuality in the countryside --whether zoophilic, heterosexual or homosexual-- does not fully conform to the same generic fixities employed by urban milieu in its bourgeois conduct: [4] “Siempre tuve una gran voracidad sexual. No solamente las yeguas, las puercas, las gallinas o las granjas, sino casi todos los animales fueron objetos de mi pasión sexual, incluyendo los perros” (39). From the beginning of his life account, Arenas suggests to the reader a definition of sexuality that justifies the transgressive act of homoerotic activity as an innocuous and primal occurrence. The author sees within the “primitivism” of the country the full manifestation of Self outside convention, and also the closest one could actually come to sexual plenitude: [5]

En los medios campesinos hay una fuerza erótica que, generalmente, supera todos los prejuicios... la fuerza de la naturaleza, se impone. Creo que en el campo son pocos los hombres que no han tenido relaciones con otros hombres; en ellos los deseos del cuerpo están por encima de todos los sentimientos machistas que nuestros padres se encargaron de inculcarnos. (40)

The natural domain of one's sexuality --namely the rural environment where the desires of the flesh are above patriarchal inculcations of maleness-- is not removed from its own context of violence. The instinctive manifestation of sexual desire occurs, as Arenas describes it, against a background of incessant brutality that mirrors the universe he later experiences under Castro's dictatorship.

El medio campesino en el cual pasé mi infancia no era solamente el mundo de las relaciones sexuales, era también un mundo conminado por una incesante violencia. Las ovejas se colgaban vivas por las patas y se degollaban; luego se les desangraba y, medio vivas todavía, se descuartizaban (41).

If on the one hand, in his earlier years as a *campesino* Arenas reports being relatively free to express his homoerotic feelings, and the violence he experiences is restricted to the background of nature, on the other hand, during Castro's regime, violence and desire meet as oppositional forces in the context of the city. Even though Arenas postulates in the pages of Antes the enjoyment of sex as a form of escape from authoritarianism, the author purports the libidinal manifestation of one's Self as corrupted by the physical and spiritual violence of Castro's regime. Violence is articulated in Arenas' autobiographical message as a mechanism of repression that, besides attempting to conceal homoerotic desire, is intended to operate in the redefinition of one's sexual identity. In this sense, the presence of accounts in Antes in which Arenas asserts his identity as an early revolutionary indicates the inclusive attitude towards validating his homosexual identity as a part of the first stages of the revolutionary movement. The author voices his discontent with many incidents that occur within the revolutionary milieu – such as the practice of unfair executions of alleged traitors – albeit he still takes pride in looking back and asserting himself as a rebel who believed in the promises of the Revolution: “Bajamos las lomas y nos recibieron como héroes; en mi barrio en Holguín, me dieron una bandera del 26 de julio y yo recorrí la cuadra con aquella enorme bandera en la mano” (68). In his recollections, Arenas does not obscure homoerotic desire as a part of the aura created around the Revolution, specifically in the depiction of its masculine agents. When reinforcing the sexual appeal that the image of the revolutionary exerted on the nation, the author reports:

Los rebeldes eran, por lo demás, guapos, jóvenes y viriles; al menos aparentemente. Toda la prensa mundial quedó fascinada con aquellos hermosos barbudos, muchos de los cuales, además, tenían una espléndida melena ... en general las mujeres y también muchos hombres de la ciudad se volvían locos por aquellos peludos; todos querían llevarse algún barbudo a su casa. (68)

Indeed, the diffused definition of the revolutionary as the prototypical nuevo hombre confined individuals, according to Arenas' narrative, to certain modes of behavior that were limiting not only in terms of political ideals but also in generic attributes. [6] As is often perceived in totalitarian regimes, the very sustainability of the Establishment requires the elimination of any type of representational ambiguity that deviates from uniform and hegemonic models of social order. The myth of the revolutionary, in particular, played an integral part in Castro's government, for it not only circulated an ideal image to be attained by all of those who subscribed to the propositions of the Revolution but also leveled differences within the regime at the cost of exclusion. [7] The paradox of the Revolution's attempted unification of difference occurred as the Cuban socialist regime, opposing the bourgeois patriarchal norm, founded a rhetoric of respectability similar to that of the socio-political and economic system that it vehemently contested.

If the bourgeois context of the nineteenth-century capitalism already deemed homosexuality a form of parasitism, the homosexual worker, in the perspective of the social Revolution, became stigmatized as anti-revolutionary for his confusing sexual conduct (Ellis 125). [8] The homosexual identity posed, therefore, an effective threat to the revolutionary Cuban

regime, for its very contradiction of the heterosexist order imposed by the State became an act of defiance.

Whether consciously or not, the institutionalization of machismo through the nuevo hombre identity became a synonym for opposing homosexual behavior viewed as a byproduct of the bourgeois mentality. As José B. Alvarez notes, the most obvious demonstrations of the behavioral institutionalization of machismo in the context of the Revolution can be observed in the hypermasculinization of the body. The very appearance of revolutionaries, whose Prussian style haircuts substituted the long-haired rebel image, placed in evidence a new typological construction of identity. Women, who begin to enlist in the armed forces, are dressed in the characteristic olive-green military uniform, which suggests that Cuban socialism rearranges itself by accommodating its new ideals to well-regimented patriarchal values (30). [9]

Arenas denounces Castro's patriarchal fundamentalism as an intentional project within the processes of forming the post-Revolution Cuban identity. As the author retells, the Revolution's ideology was fueled by inflammatory discourses in which its symbolic intelligentsia, Fidel Castro, dictated what was to be seen as revolutionary. [10] The author exposes the constructionist aspect of Castro's regime's "new man" by asserting its incoherence and aleatory articulation, for it condemns, among other things, the very haircut that rebels displayed during revolutionary conflicts. The Revolution's suppression of spontaneous behavior, which for Arenas corresponds to the limiting of one's ability to freely manifest desire, translates in the autobiographical space into an individual struggle to reject imposed and unnatural codes of conduct: "Recuerdo un discurso de Fidel Castro en el cual

se tomaba la potestad de informar cómo debían vestir los varones. De la misma forma criticaba a los jovencitos que tenían melena y que iban por las calles tocando la guitarra” (119).

The numerous and hyperbolically narrated sexual experiences in Antes can be, therefore, justified through the prism of a rebellion within a rebellion. The homoerotic sexual act becomes not only a form of escape from authoritarianism but also is converted into an act of message that expresses a direct confrontation against what the system stipulates as proper behavior: “Clandestinamente, seguíamos reuniéndonos en las playas o en las casas o, sencillamente, disfrutábamos de una noche de amor con algún recluta pasajero, con una becada o con algún adolescente desesperado que busca la forma de escapar la represión” (117).

Arenas’ rhetorical use of sexuality in Antes is without a question personal and political, since the very presentation of desire is framed within the subversive homosexual act of reclaiming the body as private property. The visibility of the homosexual body in the open space suggests the materiality of its presence amidst the context of its repression. The sexually charged episodes that populate Arenas’ autobiography claim not only desire and pleasure as synonyms of individual freedom but also symbolically come to represent the rejection of the State’s effective control over one’s body. [11] Nonetheless, while blatantly depicting his homosexuality, Arenas unavoidably represents a contradiction where visibility is concerned. As the author reports to have acted out his homosexual Self in the public space during his years in Cuba, he indicates that he also opened himself to persecution. Conversely, the narrative paradox created by Arenas’ choice of representing his Self as a visible loca in the



pages of his autobiography is resolved when the performance of his sexuality is rhetorically used against the victimizer, either to arouse in the persecutor desire for the homosexual or to deceive authority on the grounds of gender performance.

One example of how Arenas resolves this dichotomy can be observed in the episode in which the author narrates his departure from Cuba. Acting upon the government's encouragement of homosexuals to leave the country, Arenas goes to the police in order to request a permit that would allow him to leave the island. When the author arrives at the police station, he is asked to prove his homosexuality: "Me preguntaron si yo era homosexual y les dije que sí; me preguntaron entonces si era activo o pasivo, y tuve la precaución de decir que era pasivo" (301). As Arenas continues, the police requests that he walk around the room so that women psychologists could verify if he, in fact, was a legitimate loca. "Passing" the police identity test, Arenas is finally granted the permit on the condition that he remains underground until the time of his exit. [12]

This same stance on the contextual relativity of one's behavior as a defining characteristic of gender identity is also verifiable in one of Arenas' sexual accounts that is much underscored among critics of Antes, in which the author is forced into confessing to have performed the passive role even though in actuality he had not. While engaging in sex with a young man that the author reports to have picked up during a bus ride, Arenas is requested to assume the active position: "Al llegar a la casa me sorprendió porque en vez de él hacer el papel de hombre, me pidió a mí que lo hiciera. Yo en realidad también disfrutaba haciendo esos papeles" (128). After both Arenas and his partner reach orgasm, the young man asks that if the police arrive, which would be the one to confess to have performed the female role.

Arenas replies that he had been the male, for he was the one to penetrate the young man, which causes the adolescent to react violently:

Eso enfureció a aquel hombre, que también practicaba judo, y empezó a tirarme contra el techo; me tiraba y, por suerte, me recibía otra vez en sus brazos, pero me estaba dando unos golpes horribles ... Quién es el hombre?, me repetía. Y yo, que temía perder la vida en aquello, le respondí: “Tú, porque sabes judo. (129)

Arenas' ironic remark at the end of the episode (“tú porque sabes judo”) reinforces the arbitrariness of sexual identity inasmuch as the author indicates that, in the case of the young judo fighter, brute force established one's definition of a homosexual identity. [13] Because the young man knew judo, he was able to “force” upon the author an admission of submissiveness, suggested to be the passive feminine role. Arenas' construction of homosexuality can be viewed, in this sense, as guided by patriarchal principles, since the terms male/female still operate under the understanding of force as a defining factor of sexual attributes (male/strength, female/weakness). Collaborating this hypothesis, it could be argued that Arenas' frequent references to passive homosexuals (*locas*) in *Antes* by using the Spanish feminine personal pronoun *ella* still rely on heterosexual matrixes to understand the homosexual body. [14]

Indeed, the linguistic insufficiency to define the homosexual outside the male/female/strong/weak parameters forces Arenas to adopt signs that suggest the inescapability of the traditional patriarchal understanding of gender identities. However, it is precisely in the author's denunciation of the patriarchal incongruities found in male behavior

that the message of identity and gender as fluid constructs emerges. When reporting on married and masculine-acting individuals who seek pleasure in the company of other men, the author underscores the deficiency of language to characterize certain behavioral idiosyncrasies when stating: “No sé cómo llamar aquellos jóvenes cubanos de entonces ... Lo cierto es que tenían sus novias y sus mujeres, y cuando iban con nosotros gozaban extraordinariamente.” (132)

In the precept of identity as a performance, Arenas seizes the autobiographical genre as a space suitable for articulating the multiple aspects of his Self. Under the tenet of the autobiography as a strategic interpretation of selfhood, the identities Arenas chooses to represent in Antes ultimately function as combative statements against a repressive regime. Both affectively and effectively, the author’s enunciation of his identity as a homosexual exiled dissident, who close to his death reconstructs from afar the history of the homeland, creates a form of subjectivity that ultimately corresponds to an image of the nation both in its past and present stages.

Certainly, the psychological effects occasioned by the process of deterritorialization exerted a vital influence in Arenas’ writings, which are visibly erected as memorial projects that revise and propagate the concept of nation from the exile’s perspective. As Edward Said argues, the exiled author often reveals in his/her craft the constant need to reconstitute a broken life, for much of his/her existence is taken up with “compensating disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule” (Reflections on Exile, 177). Joseph Brodsky assumes a similar position by arguing that deterritorialization manifests itself aesthetically as a fight to conspire and restore the exiled individual’s significance, his/her leading role and authority in society

(26). This sense of Self and restoration is a line of argument also taken up by Domnica Radulesco, who claims that exiled writings tend to translate both a necessity of self-preservation and a need to “continually reintegrate and reposition the self within the world in ways that are not solely metaphoric but largely physical” (188).

Arenas’ literature observes such paradigms of self-preservation through the re-creation of the original space as a form of continued existence. [15] Yet, Arenas’ autobiographical message proposes the appreciation of exile as a human predicament not necessarily tied to geographical displacements. If anything, the pages of *Antes* express the exiled otherness as a condition emphasized by the stigma of socially unacceptable difference, whether this difference is marked by homosexuality, political dissidence, or even literary aesthetics. For Arenas, exile corresponds to a lasting form of pilgrimage in which the individual never encounters the object desired, for it resides exclusively in the imaginary:

Para un desterrado no hay ningún sitio donde se pueda vivir; que no existe sitio , porque aquél donde soñamos, donde descubrimos un paisaje, leímos el primer libro, tuvimos la primera aventura amorosa, sigue siendo el lugar soñado; en el exilio uno no es más que un fantasma, una sombra de alguien que nunca llega a alcanzar su completa realidad. (314)

Arenas’ exile experience, as reported in his autobiography, reveals the author as a homeless body who writes “from and within exile” (Avila 110). [16] The melancholy expressed for the homeland is exposed as an act of abjection. The national space and its history are configured both as an utopian project – the longing for a past that is unavoidably better than the actual original experience – and as a dystopic reality – the subject’s realization of the impossibility

of the full experience of return. Oscillating between memory and present, Arenas' autobiography discloses the Self under the perennial stigma of difference, a lasting form of otherness that is as metaphysical as the very act of evoking one's presence through writing.

If on the one hand difference marks Arenas' existence in the homeland, on the other hand, while in the United States, rejection, solitude and inconformity continue to testify to the author's permanent experience of otherness. This is certainly the case with Arenas' criticism of the Cuban community in Miami that, in his words, constituted an appalling caricature of the island. [17] The author observes the same oppressive codes stipulated by the patriarchal *machismo* that he experienced in Cuba to be widely diffused in the behavior of expatriates such as himself. When describing his arrival at an uncle's house in Miami, Arenas states that the first thing suggested to him is to assume a manly behavior and conform to the norms stipulated by traditional conventions of respectability: "Ahora te compras un saco, una corbata, te pelas bien corto y caminas de una manera correcta, derecha, firme; te haces además una tarjeta que diga tu nombre y que eres escritor" (313).

Thus, the abject tone with which the latter sections dedicated to Arenas' exile are narrated is justified not only by the premise of the author's realization of his eminent death due to AIDS but also by the recognition of the impossibility of escaping his own otherness. In exile, the rejection of all forms of hegemonic definition – which constitutes the struggle for artistic freedom and for the artist to exist as he is – comes to be realized as something unviable. Although Arenas emphasizes at the end of his life account his apolitical stance towards any form of imposed ideology, the author's suicide apparently contradicts the message of resistance he articulates throughout the pages of his autobiography. [18]

However, Arenas' suicide may also represent the confirmation of his apolitical position more than an act of despair. [19] The act of suicide vouches for the truth Arenas attempts to communicate in the text; it transcends the materiality of its action and becomes transported to a space of ideological expression. Arenas' final letter, submitted for publication jointly with his autobiography, supports the argumentative aspect of his death as a strident ideological statement: "Al pueblo cubano tanto en el exilio como en la Isla los exhorto a que sigan luchando por la libertad. Mi mensaje no es un mensaje de derrota, sino de lucha y esperanza. Cuba será libre. Yo ya lo soy" (343).

It is possible, therefore, to interpret Arenas' self-inflicted death as an act that reverses the roles of accuser/accused that marks the autobiographical space of Antes, specifically where the author emphasizes the responsible agent for his death, namely Fidel Castro and his regime. The last instances of Arenas' textual existence are spent reaffirming his own identity as a victimized subject and that of Castro as the representation of totalitarianism. In this process, the author subversively appropriates the very fragility of his emotional and physical condition and rhetorically uses it against he who once persecuted him:

Pongo fin a mi vida voluntariamente ... Ninguna de las personas que me rodean están comprometidas con esta decisión. Sólo hay un responsable: Fidel Castro. Los sufrimientos del exilio, las penas del destierro, la soledad y las enfermedades que haya podido contraer en el destierro seguramente no las hubiera sufrido de haber vivido libre en mi país. (343)

In the space of marginal exclusion – exile – the solitary and dejected last words pronounced by Arenas vouch for his ability to defy authority by reversing the gaze of the persecutor. In

this subversive rhetorical maneuver, the authorial Self poses his own suicide as a discursive deliverance, which can be easily aligned with any other type of organized system of beliefs that reclaims the being liberated from physical or spiritual oppression. Arenas strategically proclaims his personal life account and his Self as the reflection of a condition that is characteristic not only of the Cuban context but that is universal in its libertarian principles: “Yo digo mi verdad, lo mismo que un judío que haya sufrido el racismo o un ruso que haya estado en un gulag, o cualquier ser humano que haya tenido ojos para ver las cosas tal como son” (322). Hence, the author’s existence becomes a presence to the reader in the very resonance of the autobiography as a text in which its subject’s identity is capable of proclaiming the Self beyond its own mortality: “grito, luego existo” (322). Life and work are jointly manifested in the symbolic connotation of Arenas’ death, since the politically articulated act of suicide opens the autobiographical genre to the possibility of contemplating writing as life and the writer as the text. [20]

## Notes

[1] In his essay “El hombre nuevo,” Ernesto Guevara delineates an antithetical image for the bourgeois intellectual by purporting the individual’s sense of civic duty and responsibility as fundamental qualities of the “revolutionary man.” Additionally, Guevara projects the true revolutionary identity as being a characteristically masculine authority whose search for knowledge and intellect should be unmistakably altruistic.

[2] As Suzanne Kaebnick affirms, “Cuban nationalism celebrates male virility as the emblem of national strength, but, like many other modern ideologies of the nation, denigrates sexual

intercourse between men and constructs abject personalities supposedly pertaining to these bodies” (102).

[3] Arenas’ construction of maleness in Antes stands as an alternative to the pre-established patriarchal image of masculinity. Kaebnick notes that: “As an alternative to machismo, Arenas does not endorse a “gay” politics, not if that is understood to mean a politics of shared, identical gender roles as he interprets “gay.” Instead, [he] presents a more democratic gender politics in which erotic relations between “masculine” and “feminine” males are a cause for celebration” (102-3).

[4] George L. Mosse postulates that nationalism and sexuality are jointly defined by a bourgeois aesthetics. As Mosse argues, “just as modern nationalism emerged in the eighteenth century, so the ideal of respectability and its definition of sexuality fell into place at the same time” (1).

[5] According to Arenas, the country represents a locale where nature’s primitivism places the individual in contact to a raw and androgynous type of eroticism: “hay que tener en cuenta que, cuando se vive en el campo, se está en contacto directo con el mundo de la naturaleza y, por lo tanto, con el mundo erótico” (39).

[6] See Guevara, “El hombre nuevo.”

[7] As Richard Ellis affirms, “the gay male is integral to Cuban revolutionary discourse, since it is in opposition to him, as the designated incarnation of bourgeois degeneracy, that the



identity of the socialist “new man” is forged” (125). Although such a statement is rather restrictive of concurrent factors that have contributed to the exclusion of the practice of homosexuality as a permissive act within the patriarchal order, it is significant to note that Castro’s regime, indeed, utilized the bourgeois mythology of the homosexual as a social parasite to the benefit of the Revolution’s own representational uniformity.

[8] According to Mosse, “manliness was invoked to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, which threatened the clear distinction between what was considered normal and abnormality” (23).

[9] On the grounds of the homosexual exclusion in the process of the Revolution, José B. Alvarez affirms that: “La persecución del homosexual tiene que ver con la persecución del disidente; un homosexual es un disidente de la norma burguesa de vida conyugal, en pareja. Cuando los roles “Mujer-Hombre revolucionario/a,” los cuales has sido dictaminados autocráticamente, se transgreden [sic.], el poder, que la hegemonía heterosexual se autoatribuye, es violado; violación que lleva a que la hegemonía contrataque [sic.] con una fuerza reaccionaria que, además de contener, arremete violentamente al percibir que el orden sexual está siendo desafiado” (25).

[10] Castro often spoke of *machismo* as a historical tradition, dismissing its institutionalization as a conscious practice employed by his regime and, conversely, dismissing the persecution and imprisonment of those who deviated from the norms of conduct imposed by the regime. As he affirms in an interview to Ann Louise Badach in 1994, “el machismo es una tradición histórica y cultural ... Debo decirle que nunca he compartido de esos sentimientos ... Pienso que pudo haber habido una época en la que el machismo fue muy poderoso, pero

no fue un producto de la revolución, sino del medio social en que vivíamos ... nunca ha habido aquí una persecución de homosexuales” (50).

[11] The notion of communal sex as a subversive act that contests the socialist/communist principles of Castro’s regime as well as bourgeois parameters of behavior is taken up by Adolfo Cacheiro in his Marxist analysis of Antes (125-30).

[12] It could be argued that within the premises of patriarchal societies, homosexuality has come to be fundamentally associated with the “passive” role, the characteristic “feminine” stereotypification of one’s body (Kaebrick 104, Mosse 30-7). Nonetheless, there seems to be a limitation to this idea in terms of how one, in fact, is excused or stigmatized as a male who has had sex with a gay person. In support of this hypothesis, it would suffice to mention the accounts in Antes in which soldiers are emasculated and reportedly humiliated on the account of having sexual relations with the author.

[13] As Kaebrick notes, “because macho masculinity must be infallible, it is easy to throw into question. It does not matter how many times the tough guy has won fights, once he loses, he is liable to be seen as “weak” or “sissy.” Desire, affection, and especially the desire for erotic intimacy with other men may also put masculinity in question. (102)

[14] This can be noticed in Arenas’ typological assessment of *locas* in both Antes and his novel El color del verano. In the sections dedicated to “explain” the various homosexual constitutions, the author’s satirical tone in the feminized description of the homosexual being observes an inconsistency where the number of gay personalities is concerned (there

are four in the autobiography and more than twenty in El color). Thus, one observes that the utilization of pre-established gender matrixes to identify the homosexual individual in Arenas' writings is utilized as a textual artifice that ironically approaches homosexuality as an expected performance and not necessarily as an authorial attempt to seriously categorize homosexual behavior. For further reference, see Villaseca 146.

[15] Celestino antes del alba is Arenas' only novel to be published in Cuba. His following works were either clandestinely published abroad or written/rewritten in exile (Hasson 60-1, Soto 35).

[16] Julia Kristeva postulates the exilic Self as a form of identity that is independent from geographical constraints. As Kristeva observes: "The foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode ... By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamendable [sic.] to bonds and communities" (264).

[17] As Arenas states in Antes: "La típica tradición machista cubana en Miami ha logrado una especie de erupción verdaderamente alarmante. Yo no quise estar mucho tiempo en aquel lugar que era como estar en la caricatura de Cuba; lo peor de Cuba" (313).

[18] In reinstating his apolitical and marginal position in any form of organized political thought, Arenas states his autobiography: “Nunca me he considerado un ser ni de izquierda ni de derecha; ni quiero que se me catalogue bajo una etiqueta oportunista y política” (322).

[19] As Arenas relates in his autobiography, he attempts to commit suicide in at least three occasions prior to his departure from Cuba. It is well to note that suicide is also a common topos of his literature, appearing under various pretexts that express the ideology of inescapability from the repressive reality in which the author lived. See Bejar 249-56.

[20] This idea can be observed in Arenas’ own stipulation of his literature and his body as a single manifestation of being. Arenas refers in his autobiography to his persecutory existence as a parallel to that of his character Fray Servando in El mundo alucinante: “En El mundo alucinante yo hablaba de un fraile que había pasado por varias prisiones sórdidas ... Yo al entrar allí (El Morro), decidí que en lo adelante tendría más cuidado con lo que escribiera, porque parecía estar condenado a vivir en mi propio cuerpo lo que escribía” (222).

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