

The Nature of Love: Corporeality, Drama and the Musical Poetics of the Female Human Voice in Monica Maffía's 'La anémona y el jabalí'

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Abstract. In *La anémona y el jabalí* [The Anemone and the Boar] by Mónica Maffía, codes related to corporeality, musical poetics, semiotics, hermeneutics, poetry, gender, history, ideological positions and social significance are present at the core of this interdisciplinary play located in the precise time of specific dates before the Spanish Civil War breaks in 1936. In the play, female voices tell their stories in a demarcated spatial setting in which socio-ideological capital and 'cultural values resonate throughout the bodies that constitute them'¹. In this radical dramaturgical product, the dualism between mind and body is linked by the female voices of the female bodies on stage, whose expressive agency delivers meaning and action of socio-historical significance. Moving away from the rooted narratives of nostalgia associated with the Spanish Civil War's imaginary, *La anémona y el jabalí* presents instead a fluid socio-cultural product, in which the intertwining of the female voice and poetics crafts a dramaturgical work on the multifaceted nature of love in precise chronotope.

Keywords. Spanish Civil War, Shakespeare, García Lorca, Mónica Maffía, corporeality, female body, musical poetics, semiotics, female voice, *La Anémona y el jabalí*.

La naturaleza del amor: corporeidad, drama y poética musical de la voz humana femenina en 'La anémona y el jabalí' de Mónica Maffía

Resumen. En *La anémona y el jabalí* de Mónica Maffía, códigos relacionados con la corporeidad, poética musical, semiótica, hermenéutica, poesía, género, historia, posiciones ideológicas y significación social están presente en el núcleo de esta obra interdisciplinaria, situada en la temporalidad exacta de unas fechas específicas antes de que estalle la Guerra Civil Española en 1936. En la obra, las voces femeninas

¹ Cooper Albright, Ann. (1997). *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*. (p.94). Wesleyan University Press.



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cuentan sus historias en un entorno espacial demarcado en el que el capital socio-ideológico y los 'cultural values resonate throughout the bodies that constitute them'² [valores culturales resuenan en los cuerpos que los constituyen]. En este producto dramático radical, el dualismo entre mente y cuerpo está vinculado a través de las voces femeninas de los cuerpos femeninos en el escenario, cuya agencia expresiva ofrece significado y acción de importancia sociohistórica. Alejándose de las arraigadas narrativas de nostalgia asociadas con el imaginario de la Guerra Civil Española, *La anémona y el jabalí* presenta en contraste un producto sociocultural fluido, en el que el entrelazamiento de la voz femenina y la poética crea una obra dramática sobre la naturaleza multifacética del amor en cronotopo preciso.

Palabras clave. Guerra Civil Española, Shakespeare, García Lorca, Mónica Maffia, Corporeidad, Cuerpo femenino, Poética musical, Semiótica, Voz femenina, *La anémona y el jabalí*.

Completed in the early 1940s before fleeing to Spain³, in the essay "On the Concept of History", Walter Benjamin acknowledged the difficulty found in our attempts to revisit the past historically, arguing the differences and objective of accuracy found in historicism and in historical materialism within a primarily Marxist prism, as to him 'to articulate what is past does not mean to recognize "how it really was"'.⁴ Since Benjamin's conceptualization of history analysis, Marxist criticism has evolved –from Engels to Hegel, from Goldman to Althusser– and it is often conjoined to different branches of thought encompassing interdisciplinary areas that affect reception theory in a political context. This is significant when we are faced with cultural products that involve historical evidence, as questions of authenticity and textual transmission may incite scrutiny of sources and borrowing before their legitimation. The cause for this is complex as it is embedded in socio-ideological mental processes, as already Aristotle questioned in *On Memory and Reminiscence* the disparities found in the intricate structure of memories when stated that there are differences between memory (*mnēmē*), remembering (*mnēmoneuein*) and reminiscing (*anamimnēskesthai*). Our long tradition of attachment to the past is evident in politics of heritage that foster cultural practices that give significance to our perception, as meaning is produced on any occasion we express (du Gay, 1997) and it is found in the rituals which are part of daily acts that –ultimately– shape our identity.

In Spain, the historical event known as the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and its suppressive aftermath has for long generated a passionate offer of cultural products –from drama to film, from poetry to novel and art– because it etched into the collective sensorial imaginary a unique historical event in which the fight between Republicans and Nationalists embodied a distinctive socio-political and ideological encounter in precise chronotope; setting positions and dispositions in all areas of daily life affected

² *Ibid.*

³ Faced with the possibility of capture by the Nazis due to the politics of Francisco Franco's dictatorship, Walter Benjamin committed suicide in Spain on 26 September 1940.

⁴ Original source: http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/Theses_on_History.html; English text retrieved 15/03/2024 from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.

by the Civil War's consequential experiences of external exile, internal exile, censorship and repression affecting groups and groupings in precise time and space. Itself the main tool of interpretation, the Spanish Civil War plays in our collective memory, and it has defined group identities in the social and psychological arenas still in force in contemporary Spain. This occurs because Spanish historical memory cannot be separated from Spain's turbulent past, from its politics, its polarized ideologies, and from the structures of power whereon human agency is formed and functions. Hitherto, since the end of the dictatorship in 1975, different visions of the Spanish Civil War often appeared in the cultural arena of drama and theatre, in which the performance of a written text was frequently critically unquestioned by spectators and reviewers alike, as the playtexts were commonly considered a way of bringing to life the many formal and conceptual liberal ideas of the Second Republic (1931-1939) based on the mythical, utopian and allegorical sides and edges of the Spanish Civil War. This consolidating trend took stronghold during the last two decades of the twentieth century, in which literary products, performance art events and films generated a meaningful collective saturation of significance via plays like *iAy Carmela!* (1986) by José Sanchis Sinisterra -and the later film of the same title directed by Carlos Saura in 1990-, or *Las bicicletas son para el verano* [Bicycles are for the Summertime] (1977) by Fernando Fernán Gómez, also made into a film by Jaime Chávarri in 1984. From literary works like *La monja libertaria* [The Libertarian Nun] (1981) by Antonio Rabinad, to films like Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* (1997), this unceasing creative disposition shaped in turn a cultural market in which these cultural products became a 'constituted taste'⁵. Yet, at the beginning of the 2000s, this rooted approach began to be questioned by a new wave of academics like Marianela Muñoz, whose excellent "Nostalgia, Guerra Civil y Franquismo en la narrativa española de finales del siglo s. XX" [Nostalgia, Civil War and Francoism in the Spanish narrative of the late 20th century] looks back at this precise historical period of Spain, examining and evaluating how and why the factor of nostalgia contributed to the positioning of the Spanish Civil War in the cultural collective imaginary. As Muñoz acutely observes, there is 'a nostalgic attitude [in] the Spanish narrative of the 80's and 90's [that] returns to the past: the Spanish Civil War years and the Franco era. There is a place for memory in this literature where the valuation of the facts has a double meaning', arguing that -frequently- 'these texts dissolve the limits between personal and collective memory'⁶. In this neoteric arena of novel approaches to the analysis of the Spanish Civil War, landed in 2022 the exceptional interdisciplinary play *La anémona y el jabalí* [The Anemone and the Boar] by the playwright Mónica Maffía, creating a storm of deserved critical acclaim across borders that identified it as a dramaturgical work in which 'verbal discourse is a social phenomenon'⁷. The play is a highly complex cultural product, in which an accurate historical-political context and curated knowledge of coded disciplines creates a playtext that questions the boundaries of gender, civilization, accumulated capital, ideology and panoptic systems of ruling in precise chronotope; offering to the spectators a fluid ethnographic product

⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre. (2007). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (p.231). Routledge.

⁶ Muñoz, Marianela. (2007). "Nostalgia, Guerra Civil y Franquismo en la narrativa española de finales del siglo s.XX". Retrieved 06/02/2024 from <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/332/33267177003.pdf>

⁷ Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays: 1*. (p.259). University of Texas Press Slavic Series.

(Clifford & Marcus, 2010) wherein metaphor, figuration, semiotics, hermeneutics and social codes affect the way the dramaturgical process is registered and perceived by an audience. From its absorbing text and luminous use of kinesics to its devastating conclusion, Maffia's radical performative interdisciplinary writing and fluid corporeal artistic directing denote the enormous power prevailing behind a cultural product which can connect 'shared meaning or shared conceptual maps'⁸ across borders and identities, as the three heroines of the play telling their story during a few days in 1936 Spain, engage in action of socio-historical significance.

Since 2022, *La anémona y el jabalí* has premiered worldwide, either as a dramatized reading or as a staged performance, in Montevideo (Uruguay), Buenos Aires (Argentina), the Spanish cities of Madrid, León and at the XXIII Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro Contemporáneo [Festival of Iberian-American Contemporary Theatre] in Almagro (Spain). The play also opened the 40th theatre season at the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas (University of Buenos Aires) on Theatre World Day, closed the Out of the Wings Festival in London (UK) with an English version translated by Sophie Stevens, and was performed in April 2024 at the Instituto Cervantes of Chicago after receiving the prestigious award 'Women Creating'. In this interdisciplinary play where the female voices utter 'las mil cosas que no se dicen'⁹ [the thousand things that are not said], an ontological view on humanist aesthetics (Lukácsian, 1971) is present in Maffia's fluid corporeal approach to performance, in which the female voices of the three characters and their female bodies function either as part of an identifiable social group or in isolation. In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the limiting factor of nostalgia is resoundingly absent, as the play is not a period piece mythifying the Spanish Civil War in titivating utopian longing. Instead, the story we are told deconstructs the Cartesian legacy that claims ontological difference between mind and body, prioritizing the former. The resulting product zooms in on the dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) activity of the female voices and female bodies on stage as discourse possessing a significance due to being 'enmeshed with social forces and social relationships'¹⁰. This stance firmly positions the evidence that Maffia –as Mary Douglas did– values the body as 'a receptor of social meaning and a symbol of society'¹¹ holding the capacity to play a unique role in the sphere of social constructionism. Here, the semiotic activity ushered by the constitutive significance of what we see and hear happening on stage is performed by female voices and female bodies to whom 'life is not only biological, but also psychological and intellectual'¹².

⁸ Hall, S. (1999). "The Work of Representation". *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. (p.18). SAGE Publications.

⁹ Mónica Maffia in unpublished conversation with Olga Celda Real. University Women's Club. London, U.K. (24/10/2023).

¹⁰ Shilling, Chris. (2006). *The Body and Social Theory*. (p.82). Second edition. SAGE Publications.

¹¹ Shilling, Chris. (2006). *The Body and Social Theory*. (p.62). Second edition. SAGE Publications.

¹² Baker Miller, Jean. (1979). *Towards a New Psychology of Women*. (p.59). Pelican Books.



Encarnación (Carmen Gómez de la Bandera), Paquita (Marina Andina) and Carmen (Montserrat Madariaga) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

La anémona y el jabalí is structured in five sections headed by carefully chosen dates happening in the year 1936, each section forming one single radio programme called “Los Jueves de la República” [The Thursdays of the Republic], a programme broadcast live on air. During the programmes, a radiophonic serial based on the poem *Venus and Adonis* by Shakespeare -sponsored by the anise’s brand, ‘Anisette Breuvage divin’- becomes the dramaturgical cord linking musical poetics, playtext, corporeality and the female voice. The anise’s advert itself is performed in the programme by a recorded male voice, his absent presence (Shilling, 2006) reduced to a speech enthusiastically exulting the tantalising pleasures of this drink in ‘once aromas: anís verde, flores, semillas, plátano, limón, café, coco y elixir de especias. [...] perfuma el amor’ [eleven flavours: green anise, flowers, seeds, banana, lemon, coffee, coconut and spice elixir. [...] scents love]. The cast is made of three female characters: two ideologically polarized broadcasters, Encarnación (a Republican teacher of adults’ classes) and the Conservative Paquita, and the politically engaged Carmen (a *Foley* specialist who creates the sound effects for the programme, including live musical interludes playing harmonies with a Spanish guitar). The action happens in a radio station regulated by the state, at the ‘Estación radio-difusora EAJ-7 de emisiones ‘Unión Radio’ [Radio-broadcasting station EAJ-7 broadcast ‘Unión Radio’], in the Spanish capital of Madrid. Musical landscape is critical to historical context here, as Maffia’s meticulous use of historically contemporary radio adverts and curated chosen songs employed in the play creates instant sensorial referencing that allows the spectator to place the plot in time and space accurately. The use of Spanish, Latin American and North American songs, like “Fumando espero”, “Granada”, “El día que me quieras”, “Ojos negros”, “Morena Clara”, “Dale guindas al pavo” or “Cheek to Check”, and the inclusion of multinational singers such as Agustín Lara, Carlos Gardel, Imperio Argentina, Fred

Astaire, Carlos Cano or Miguel Molina; plus the addition in the playtext of names like Margarita Xirgu, Max Aub (and his revolutionary theatre initiative, *El Buho*), Alejandro Casona, García Lorca's *Yerma*, Carlos Arniches, Antonio Machado, Pedro Salinas or Luis Cernuda, creates an unequivocal volume of cultural capital in precise chronotope. This semiotic activity codes a hemispheric perspective wherein the illocution process infiltrating the lyrics fosters a process of metaxis in which the spectator is transformed into an active member of the action happening on stage. This growing state of belonging in the spectator as the plot advances crafts a complicity that crosses the boundary line between stage and stalls at different times during the play, like when the characters gather for the programme on 7 May and Paquita arrives late to the radio studio wearing a pair of black glasses to cover a black eye. Here, the evidence of a suspected act of domestic violence against a civilized body (Shilling, 2006) and the subsequent stigma (Goffman, 1990) -that crippling feeling impeding the full integration of oneself into the collective social because of shame and embarrassment- saturates the corporeal language of Paquita and denounces the discrepancy between her virtual and real social identity. Her predicament rouses a genuine response of solidary female kinship from her fellow workers, as Encarnación gestures to Carmen, silently asking her to put any record on to make time and allow a subdued Paquita to centre herself before the programme begins live on air. As the first chords of the song "Ojos negros" [Black Eyes] fill the auditorium, this song accidentally chosen in haste –but now charged with double meaning- creates a comic reaction in the characters and the spectators because of its painful irony. In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the musical landscape created by well-known iconic compositions and by esteemed artists holds rooted symbolic power across generations and is richly expressive of a precise age and sensibility. Yet, Maffia specifically allocates the role of the recorded songs employed in the play as purely didascallic to secure context, as the lyrics are performative to the actors, creating referents for movement and derivative meaning, but do not function as the centripetal cause to the semiotic activity happening on stage. The curated musical repertoire also affects the punctuation and tone of the female voices on stage, as harmonic and melodic are elements associated with oratory. This is evident in the sensorial connexions, emotional associations, and corporeal reactions of the characters to the songs' lyrics inserted in radio scripts written for female voices –and censored by a male censor who also happens to be Paquita's husband- for the radio programmes. At times, the 'difference' (Bakhtin, 1981) enacted in their private asides is physically expressed: Paquita and Encarnación covering the shared microphone with one hand, the physical act signalling the concealing of -potentially- prohibited information or exchanges to the listeners. This tactile image gives a particular texture to the utterances publicly silenced –though revealed to the audience-, as now the characters denote that meaning can only be constructed and sustained between different agents via semantic or corporeal expressive intention depending on the space where it occurs. Here, the 'diferencia entre la voz íntima y la pública'¹³ [difference between the intimate and the public voice] has a bearing in our understanding of hermeneutics because words and done actions do not have the same perlocutionary effect. Increasingly, as the plot advances, the activity of the characters on stage –either by themselves or as single agents- identifies

¹³ Mónica Maffia in unpublished conversation with Olga Celda Real. University Women's Club. London, U.K. (24/10/2023).

the space of this radio station as a place where the female bodies on stage can use their female voices to ‘express openly their sense of power, something they have certainly not been encouraged to do’¹⁴.



Carmen (Monserrat Madariaga) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

In the play, the female voices make variations of tone in sequences, performing raising and falling harmonic phrases punctuating singular speech, in turn delivering a code of female cultural competence (Brunsdon, 1982) in which social practice exists within a social context. This is intensely manifested in Paquita’s and Encarnación’s range of husky tones when reading the poetic lines, as the lines are embedded in the playtext and are themselves performative. Here, the intensifying eroticism permeating utterance in use by female voices in a play wherein cognitive praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991) functions in articulating a collective identity based on individual processes of identification, is per se a factor acutely evident as the subtext encoded in the poetic lines becomes increasingly metaphorical when the identity of the boar mentioned in the play’s title is revealed. The organic hybridity of disciplines (music, poetry, drama, corporeality) is fostered in *La anémona y el jabalí* via a multi-layered approach to social dynamics linked chronologically. The dates of the broadcasts (19 March, 16 April, 7 May, 4 June, and 16 July) are critical to understand the growing urgency permeating the action happening in front of our eyes, as the dates accurately chronicle the echoes of real events happening in those months of 1936 in Spain and beyond its frontiers. Maffia’s choice of dates is significant because it is disquietingly relevant in its precise role as historical-political context to the plot. This is evident from the first programme, dated 19 March, when the ‘Diario hablado’ [News Round]

¹⁴ Baker Miller, Jean. (1979). *Towards a New Psychology of Women*. (p.26). Pelican Books.

uttered by female voices, directly refers to the outlawing of the political party of the Falange [Spanish Phalanx] as 'ilegal y antidemocrática' [illegal and undemocratic] and to the arrest of its founder, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. The implicit subtext here confirming the historical fact that these decisions were made by the Republican government as consequences of the aborted attempts by the Falange party's members to assassinate the Socialist Luis Jiménez Asúa on 10 March and Francisco Largo Caballero, a Trade Union leader, on 14 March. Historical-political references are also present in the second programme, dated 16 April, in which a happy Encarnación, on arriving to the studio and after placing on the table a 'banderita tricolor' [little tricolour flag] -the Republican flag bearing the colours red, yellow and purple-, begins the programme reminding the listeners that on 'this week' Spain is celebrating the fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the Second Republic (14 April 1931). Political positions and frayed human relationships because of opposing ideologies are inferred here, as Paquita replies to Encarnación, saying to the listeners that she hopes 'all' had a happy Easter week, adding that during the Easter processions, the people attending 'despidieron las imágenes al clamor de "¡Por Dios, y por España!" [waved goodbyes to the [religious] images clamouring, 'For God and for Spain!']; an alarming report that forecast the future of this very same chant, later adopted by Franco's army during the Spanish Civil War and widely used as identifying currency during the dictatorship. Indeed, as the last programme of "Jueves de la República" happens on 16 July 1936 - and because of our historical knowledge of the past- we are aware that only two days after, on 18 July 1936, the military *Alzamiento* against the legal Republican government occurred in Mellilla, starting three years of civil war. As the plot advances, through their interactions, we realise that Maffia has given different nationalities to the characters, making Carmen Argentinian and Encarnación and Paquita Spanish. This decision effectively augments the potential scope of socio-cultural understanding and extent of verbal exchanges between the characters, as 'secondly factors'¹⁵ -like composition of total capital and volume of inherited cultural capital specifically- do gel these multicultural female voices who ultimately unify to challenge hegemony (Turner, 1994). It also confirms Maffia's position as a cognisant playwright whose playtext positions at the core of the plot the humanist view that 'the greatest good is in the communion with others'¹⁶. With its increasingly political standing and performative fluency, this luminous cultural product deconstructs the static and conventional approach to the existing narratives and aesthetic imaginary on the Spanish Civil War we are already familiar with in dramatic plots, offering instead a kaleidoscopic vision of womanhood in a socio-political and cultural context.

¹⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre. (2007). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (p.14). Routledge.

¹⁶ Durkheim, É. (1953). *Sociology and Philosophy*. (p.321). Cohen & West.



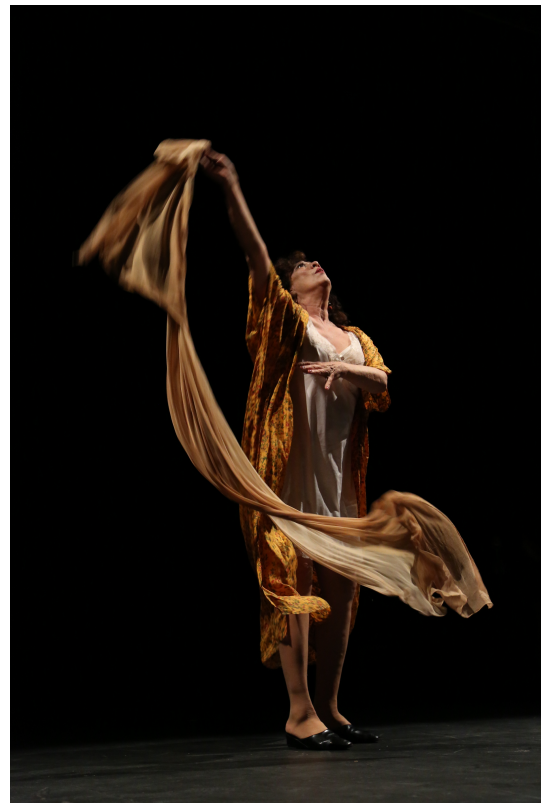
Encarnación (Carmen Gómez de la Bandera) and Paquita (Marina Andina)
in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

In *La anémona y el jabalí*, Maffía's performative praxis (Foucault, 1990) delivers with unnerving historical and ideological accuracy referents saturated with meaning. From the closed social space of a radio station's room, a vivid panoramic vision of a changing and increasingly volatile world filters through the different sections of the programme, encapsulating an extended metaphor of an already divided Spain unstoppably marching towards a fratricidal war. In *The Production of Space*, Henry Lefebvre explored Durkheim's theoretical on social space, itself a term coined by the latter in 1865¹⁷. Lefebvre rationalised space as a social product, a complex social construction liable to produce meaning affected by spatial perceptions and activity in which 'space is not the quality of property of human action in general, on the contrary, it is in itself the origin and source of the rationality of activity'¹⁸. Here, repeatedly, the semiotic activity permeating the stage and the performative use of the space itself under Maffía's artistic direction is shared with the audience and reaffirms our estimation of Durkheim's postulate on society as a collective unit encompassing social space, social groups and social life (Durkheim, 1953, 2014). In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the simplicity of the space designed for the play possesses an elastic performativity, as it mutates from being an identifiable shared social space wherein the broadcasting of the programmes (to an external world) happens and social encounters occurs, to an stunning intimate space either suffused by or encircled with single beams of light in

¹⁷ Buttimer, Anne. (1969). "Social Space in Interdisciplinary Perspective". (pp. 417-426). *The Geographical Review*. (LIX n.3).

¹⁸ Lefebvre, H. (2007). *The Production of Space*. (pp. 71 -72). Blackwell.

which the private monologues of single female voices experience different process of embodiment: from the crouching body of Carmen uttering urgent notices in *sotto voce* whilst covertly using the radio's facilities to transmit and exchange highly explosive political information using the cryptic codes Q; to the intimate performativity found in the mesmeric scene of a single reclining female body bathed in red light in Encarnación's home, as her staunch utopian belief in the endurance of the Republic splits open and she questions the possibility of her own exile away from Spain and of abandoning her socially committed teaching; to the riveting stunning scene in which in the private space of her sitting room, Paquita's floating long shawl becomes an extension of her physical body and an unequivocal corporeal sign of her defiant anger against her husband; whom she suspects of having an affair with a mistress, the singer Celia Gámez, because the censor-husband repeatedly includes in their radio scripts songs by this popular *cupletista* [singer of 'coplas']. The actual truth behind this suspicion is later disclosed during the last programme, scheduled on 16 July, when Encarnación reveals to Paquita that the reason she has been forced by her husband to go to the theatre to watch performances by Celia Gámez and include her songs in the programme is not because the singer is his mistress, but because he receives 'órdenes de arriba' [orders from above] directly from the 'jabalí' (Franco). This revelation in turn creates a complicit understanding with the audience, as the politically aware spectators, from their privileged position of knowing the future, know that Celia Gámez was a personal favourite of Franco, to the point that she was publicly nicknamed 'La Protegida' [The Protected] during the dictatorship.



Paquita (Marina Andina) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

The plot of *La anémona y el jabalí* was initially inspired by Shakespeare's erotic poem *Venus and Adonis*, and in the play Maffía uses the myth as a political metaphor to denounce the damaging consequences of abuses of power. On approaching our analysis of the play, it is present the fact that our sensorial memory is populated by artistic plastic versions of the myth, from Veronese to Carracci, or from Rubens to Titian, especially in the case of the latter, whose masterly use of pigment created a vivid erotic picture of the Goddess of love and the God of beauty and desire. Originally inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare's version of *Venus and Adonis* is a mammoth of a poem divided into 199 stanzas (or 1194 lines). Written in 1593 and considered a minor epic, it is constructed as stanza¹⁹ and its vocabulary is markedly erotic and incisive. It is intensely corporeal. In his poem, Shakespeare transformed the original story, making of his Venus an agent capable of explicitly articulating her desire. In the play, Maffía carefully chooses lines from Shakespeare's poem, extracting from it sentences that are sensorially connected to and articulate meaning to the plot. Embedded in the story we are told by the female voices of the female bodies on stage, the poem increasingly becomes a signifying force signalling unexpressed sensuality but avoids restricting itself to a possible identifying dynamic applicable just to the characters in the play, as the connotation here is universal and to the chronotopic Spanish woman at large. Poignantly, Maffía also interweaves into the plot lines from Federico García Lorca's *Llanto por la muerte de Ignacio Sanchez Mejías* [Lament for the Death of Ignacio Sanchez Mejías], the poem written in 1935 by García Lorca for his torero friend, gored to death by a bull in 1934. In this 'elegía funeral' [funeral elegy], the topic of death itself and the repetitive reminiscence of the time of death becomes a metaphor of premonition for García Lorca's own death (Zuleta, 1971) and for the death of Spain during the Civil War. In this poem, the recurring line 'a las cinco de la tarde' [at five o'clock in the afternoon] is anaphoric, and the absence of a verb leaves the action suspended in potential rhetorical meaning. García Lorca's choice is highly symbolic, and the insertion in the playtext –repeatedly– of this specific line is given full plurisignificance towards the end, when both poems interlace themselves as one, woven into Maffía's own writing. Linking the facts that in the Shakespearian poem Adonis is killed by the tusk of a boar and Sanchez Mejías is killed by a bull's horn, Maffía brings to the text the shadow of death advancing towards Spain, embodied in the senseless violence of the brutal boar, 'el jabalí, el nombre cifrado de Franco'²⁰ [the boar, Franco's coded name], whose identity is unveiled towards the end of the play by Carmen. The braiding of both poems by Maffía into her own writing feels like the careful passing of a silk thread through a needle eye, as she understands –like Easthope (2010) did– that we are surrounded by poetry in our daily life. In the play, the poems' lines are utterances signifying meaning in context, and the communicative traffic created by language becomes 'a guide to [the] social reality'²¹ of the characters. Here, the distinct rhythm created by the poetic lines are emphasised by the individual female voices of the characters, whose own speech patterns perform social action and

¹⁹ A stanza is an iambic pentameter quatrain couplet with the rhyme scheme known in poetic metrics as 'ababcc'. Stanza is one the recognisable characteristics of Shakespeare's version of the mythological story.

²⁰ Mónica Maffía in unpublished conversation with Olga Celda Real. University Women's Club. London, U.K. (24/10/2023).

²¹ Sapir, Edward. (1966). *Culture, Language and Personality*. (p.68). University of California Press.

interaction via registers that encompass all elements found in human voice and tessitura, namely: tone, detail, imagery, punctuation, syntax and diction. In the play, the reference to the anemone of the title is also revealing, as though these flowers can come in different colours, it is the one in vivid red, with its deep colouring and its signifying presence in a real bunch of anemones brought into the radio studio by Paquita in the fourth programme (happening on 4 June), what signifies its meaning because 'la sangre es roja, la anémona es roja'²² [blood is red, the anemone is red]. In the same way that the red blood of Adonis and Sanchez Mejías denotes their violent deaths, the colour red as adjective and in its verbal variations (like 'sonrojado' [blushed]) is present throughout the play, furthering in our semiotic spectrum powerful metaphorical and distinctive associations linking eroticism, sensuality, death and sorrow, making the spectator to question the many sides and unpredictable nature of love. In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the tusk and the horns symbolise the unstoppable brutality of an impending fratricidal war approaching Spain, and it is through and by the poems that emotional restraint dissolves during the enunciation of the words by the characters, breaking the social boundaries of the civilized female bodies (Shilling, 2006) on stage that we had assumed at the beginning of the play to be 'characterized by self-discipline and restraint'²³. Embodiment occurs via utterance, as the emphatic single identity of each female voice's reading of the poems and the musical interludes, create a fluid organic process in which the inherent discourse becomes 'cohesive and determined simultaneously in three respects: materially, ideologically, subjectively'²⁴. Again and again, the dichotomy found in 'langue' and 'parole' (Saussure, in Easthope, 2010) is integrated into the codes of drama employed in the play, creating a specific linguistic texture that delivers a definitive language of drama (Herman, 1998). Undeniably, Mónica Maffia's delicate use of poetic text and referential imaginary in *La anémona y el jabalí* is a direct result of her own personal journey. Born in Argentina, this multifaceted and prolific playwright, opera librettist and artistic director is a Shakespearean doctorate²⁵ with an expertise on creative literary artistry who reads Shakespeare 'a través de una pátina de luminol'²⁶ [through a luminol patina]. As luminol is an organic compound that when oxidized emits light and exhibits chemiluminescence, Maffia's simile figure of speech to capture her relationship with the Bard's poetry is distinctively evident and connotative, as her capacity to create referential effects in the audience springs from her chosen sense of cohesive identity found in the Shakespearean poetic discourse pulsing at the core of the play. In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the organic verbal plasticity found in the speech in use of the female characters is a growing process of self-awareness developed in

²² Mónica Maffia in unpublished conversation with Olga Celda Real. University Women's Club. London, U.K. (24/10/2023).

²³ Howson, A. (2007). *The Body in Society. An Introduction*. (pp.68-69). Polity Press, Blackwell.

²⁴ Easthope, Anthony. (2010). *Poetry as Discourse*. (p.47). Routledge.

²⁵ 'Próspero: antifausto o deuterofausto?' Doctoral Thesis by Mónica Maffia. Universidad del Salvador, (Argentina).

²⁶ Mónica Maffia in unpublished conversation with Olga Celda Real. University Women's Club. London, U.K. (24/10/2023).

precise time and space that confirms Paglia's theory that, for women, 'identity is power'²⁷. Here,—as Foucault argued- identity truly is a 'productive power'²⁸.



Encarnación (Carmen Gómez de la Bandera), Paquita (Marina Andina) and Carmen (Montserrat Madariaga) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

In *La anémona y el jabalí*, Mónica Maffía's expertise on the type and range of vocabulary used by Shakespeare exhibits her awareness of the role intonation, inflections, potential iconocity and harmonic perception of music -and its potential acoustic spectrum- are recognised and recognizable across borders and sensitivities. In the play, the phonetic features of human speech performed by three female voices are performative of the rituals encoded in their actions, private and public; and it is the resulting motivic and rhythmic categories what creates meaning in chronotope. Here, musical poetics (Burmeister, 1993), one of the categories explored in music theory that analyses the connexions between rhetoric and music -and the resulting rhetorical figures- is central to the semiotic traffic happening on stage. Burmeister's interpretation differs from Euclid's *melopoia*, the latter widely use to define how we assemble a musical piece by means of coalescing melodic lines into a comprehensible harmony. Indeed, it is the connexions made by Burmeister between speech and composition what is pertinent to the analysis of *La anémona y el jabalí* as a significant interdisciplinary play. In Maffía's writing, Burmeister's premise on the formation of rhetorical figures is present, as the careful stitching of poetry and music in the tapestry forming the playtext becomes a highly organic process generating human voices recognised as part of a collective identity. As the plot advances, the audience gradually

²⁷ Paglia, Camille. (1995). "Sex and violence or nature and art". *Sexual Personae*. (p.3). Copyright Yale University. Penguin Books.

²⁸ Howson, A. (2007). *The Body in Society. An Introduction*. (p.127). Polity Press, Blackwell.

identifies songs and poetic lines from the two poems as creating a hermeneutic pattern (Caputo, 2018). Concomitant to it, there is the ever-present fact of the precise chronotope cohabited by the characters on stage and of the gradual disintegration of the universal principle of hope (Bloch, 1986, 2000), as the (utopian) future verbally articulated in Encarnación's praise of Republican principles dissolves into the fragments of a dystopian future civil war. To Carmen, Paquita and Encarnación, hope is threaded into their human praxis and it is loaded with a lyricism that encapsulates their 'expression of desire for a better way of living'²⁹. Here, the hybridity of disciplines found in the playtext allows for a multidimensional performative praxis according to each of the female characters' individual discursive and performative functions.



Encarnación (Carmen Gómez de la Bandera) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

The presentation, representation and understanding of the social self are at the core of sociological studies, linking inter-crossing disciplines such as cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis, social psychology, gender theory, semiotics and philosophy of language, all of them referred to when analysing the human body in society. This approach has positioned the body as essential for engaging in social interaction (Howson, 2007). In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the relationship between the physical female bodies we see on stage and the social and moral worlds is representative of the civilization progress's theory postulated by Norbet Elias, who contemplated the human body as the bearer of values in societies (Elias in Shilling, 2006). In the play, Maffia's use of musical poetics and textual poetry is intimately intertwined into her corporeal perception of female representation, as her artistic conceptualization denotes here that 'the 'revelatory power of true literary language as poetry is indeed

²⁹ Levitas, Ruth. (2007). "The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society". *Utopia Method Vision. The Use Value of Social Dreaming*. (p.53). Peter Lang.

the access to free speech'³⁰. In the play, each female voice, in their role as narrators, brings to the written playtext the Aristotelian's canons of drama, namely: plot, character, thought, diction, melody and spectacle; but it is in their female bodies how the characters are constructed and absolute. The corporeality permeating the actions of the female bodies on stage possesses critical significance in assessing our perception of the plot, as it gradually builds a recognisable shared vocabulary on body idiom (Goffman, 1990 and Howson, 2007). Here, we realise that the three female characters expand their identifiable meaning beyond the restrictions imposed on their gender happening in the play's time and space of 1936 Spain, as Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen are increasingly aware that the first step to deconstruct patterns is to create a principle that critiques the hierarchies shaping identity (Derrida, 1978). This is particularly evident in the use by Maffía of the three female bodies on stage as agents functioning in the symbolic field, as within the female sphere, the absence of formal conventions and male gaze produces stunning images bridging embodiment and subject matter. In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the bodies of Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen experience each a personal journey towards a communal end due to external forces, crafted by the interactive communication process they experiment when sharing the social space of the radio station and the deconstruction of accepted social rules of decorum and restrain each character experiments when challenging them whilst alone on stage. Maffía's approach to directing is captivating in the arena of the corporeal imaginary, and her vision of the female body contests the values we associate to the importance of keeping the 'social front' dictated by social rules that shape the behaviour of these women in 'setting the appearance and manner'³¹ of female identities in the precise chronotope of 1936 Spain. Here again, the three female characters emitting signs to an audience contest structure of power, as their social interactions transmits the importance of dialectic across borders and identities, especially when facing panoptic forces. The changing body language of Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen when alone is absorbing in its unveiling of female private spheres, as the boundaries shaping their civilized bodies (Goffman, 1990) break down the panoptic imposition of male hierarchy in the play (the absent male censor) and reject their positioning as docile bodies (Howson, 2007); developing instead recognizable identities in female bodies whose female voices confront dominant discourses affecting their social, intellectual, ideological and sensorial worlds. Mónica Maffía's perception of embodiment shares with Merleau-Ponty's theory (2012) his belief that the body and mind are not just interconnected and undividable, but also that the human body develops through experiences with other bodies. The physical connexions between the characters are manifest throughout the play, as the characters often touch each other, gesture to, or point at each other to reaffirm meaning, as to Maffía, the female body is part of the human self and connects mind and action. Here, the gestural components of body language are encapsulated in the playtext itself. In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the carefully curated use of musical cues and musical poetics builds the growing empathic parallelism (Beckerman in Shepherd, 2006) in which 'the shifts of tension either between the characters or between stage and audience'³² become increasingly kinaesthetic, creating a sensorial landscape that vibrates with energy.

³⁰ Derrida, Jacques. (1978). *Writing and Difference*. (p.13). Routledge.

³¹ Goffman, Erving. (1990). *The Representation of Self in Everyday Life*. (p.39). Penguin Books.

³² Shepherd, Simon. (2006). *Theatre, Body and Pleasure*. (pp. 8-9). Routledge.

This dramaturgical positioning creates a defined socio-semiotic space charged with meaning in which positions and dispositions are firmly demarcated. Approaching the end of the play, the three characters meet for the last radio programme, dated 16 July. As Carmen confirms the feared information that 'Todo se precipita. Mañana se firma un bando de guerra en Mellila' [Everything is happening now. Tomorrow a war declaration is issued in Mellilla], the three characters are aware of time running out as the 'jabalí' (Franco) is gathering the military rebels to initiate a revolt against the legal Republic government. It is at this point in the playtext, that the poems of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and García Lorca's *Llanto por la muerte de Ignacio Sanchez Mejías* interweave their stories into Maffia's own writing, the words becoming a metaphor on the relationship between love and death. As Encarnación and Paquita read the last poetic lines and the -now- emotionally disjointed advert of 'Anisette Breuvage divin' fades, Paquita announces the closing of the programme with the song "La taverna d'en Mallol" [Mallol's Tavern]. As the lyrics of Emili Vendrell fill the auditorium, Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen collect their belongings, Encarnación promising to them -to us-: 'El jueves que viene aquí. Como sea.' [Next Thursday here. One way or another]. At this moment in time, the three characters form a stunning image of female kinship saturated with recognition, linking their arms in a circular shape charged with significance that brings to the stage and to the audience the principles at the core of Delsarte's structural system³³, as Maffia, with disarming versatility, makes us participants in a stunningly visual signifying corporeal practice that possess meaning beyond words across borders and cultures.



Encarnación (Carmen Gómez de la Bandera), Paquita (Marina Andina)
and Carmen (Montserrat Madariaga) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

³³ Marsella, Stacey., Carnicke, Sharon Marie., Gratch, Jonathan., Okhmatovskaia, Anna. And Rizzo, Albert. (2006). *An Exploration of Delsarte's Structural Acting System*. Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg. Retrieved 10/04/2024 from: [https://ict.usc.edu/pubs/An Exploration of Delsarte's Structural Acting System.pdf](https://ict.usc.edu/pubs/An%20Exploration%20of%20Delsarte's%20Structural%20Acting%20System.pdf)

As Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen leave the stage and Vendrell's song slowly fuses into sounds of war and destruction, a blackout signals the transition to the end of the play with the first chords of Celia Gámez's song "Ya hemos pasao" [We have already passed], the singer's derisive version that contested the Republican song based on the Communist leader *La Pasionaria's* cry '¡No pasaran!' [They Shall Not Pass!], first issued in July 1936 at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Here, Maffia's choice of Gámez's taunting lines creates an immediate association in the audience because -with the distance of time- the spectator knows it signifies the future defeat of the Spanish Republic. Against the background of this *chotis* playing as background sound, Maffia delivers one last coup de théâtre, as the last scene of the play sees the return of Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen to the darkened stage, seemingly searching for something amid the chaos. The three characters fetch each one long soft shawl: Paquita in yellow, Encarnación in red and Carmen in purple, initiating a process of embodiment that sees their female bodies corporeally shaping the Republican flag. As the sound made by the burst of machine-gun fills the auditorium, the three female bodies fall on the floor, their death now forever interlocked with the fate of the Spanish Republic. At this moment in the play, the dramaturgical link between the theatrical element in the song's lyrics and the deconstructive sense found in the scene's performativity signals absorption (Parker & Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1996), as the human body is an intrinsic component of human agency (Shilling, 2006) and 'theatre is a practice in which society negotiates around what the body means'³⁴. The impact created by this exact image of falling female bodies is also saturated with iconographic connotative value, their soft flowing shawls and corporeal energy generating instant visual, sensorial and spatial connexions with the dance choreographies of Humphrey, Duncan and St Denis. The impact of this last scene catapults the spectator into the pool of images encapsulating the rich imaginary of the Spanish Civil War -such as the vivid photograph of "The Falling Soldier" by Robert Capa- but also into the violence of the war itself and of its harrowing consequences. The darkened stage here multiplies its potential meaning, as it signifies not just death as the physical act per se, but it also carries with it into the collective imaginary the dark tunnel of the dictatorship approaching Spain.

³⁴ Shepherd, Simon. (2006). *Theatre, Body and Pleasure*. (pp. 1-3). Routledge.



Encarnación (Carmen Gómez de la Bandera), Paquita (Marina Andina)
and Carmen (Montserrat Madariaga) in *La anémona y el jabalí*
Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

In *La anémona y el jabalí*, the spectator does not find the familiar image of a single woman dressed in white robes, wearing a Phrygian hat, her hand triumphantly carrying the Republican flag, neither finds the rousing cries of long live to the Republic in the playtext. Instead, Maffia, offers to the stunned spectator a devastating hyperreal last image that harrowingly summarizes the brutality of the Spanish Civil War and its futile senseless violence. Here, the deconstruction of these female bodies, their female voices forever silenced, is intensely and intently corporeal, as the bodies of the falling heroines are saturated with symbolic power in the semiotic spectrum. The scene purports its significance as an expressive universal episteme functioning in an imaginary that contests prescriptive set of meanings. Indeed, it is now, standing at the threshold of the dark tunnel of the dictatorship, when the spectator recognises that there may be mercy in the killing of Encarnación, Paquita and Carmen at the end of the play; as Maffia –like the audience- is aware of Spain's historical past and knows that women like our heroines would vanish, be punished or be re-educated to comply –mentally, physically and spiritually- with the new female imaginary of a socially constructed female identity accepted by the Francoist regime. In precise time and space, as the basic goodness that binds people together (Orwell) disappeared in a fratricidal war, the Republican utopia was substituted by a dystopian structure of power in which the doxastic norms of repression and atonement were institutionally enforced by practice. As 'La Victoria' [The Victory] arrived on 1 April 1939, the Spanish

woman emerging after the Spanish Civil War ended became a silenced identity whom –like Shakespeare wrote on his last line of *Venus and Adonis*– was forced ‘to immure herself and not be seen’.



La anémona y el jabalí

Image by José Manuel Gómez de la Bandera

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