

THE FICTIONS OF ALFREDO BRYCE ECHENIQUE

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Texts and Contexts: Bryce and Peru, France, Spain...

Alfredo Bryce Echenique (Lima, 1939) has emerged over the course of the last three decades to rival Mario Vargas Llosa for consideration as Peru's greatest living novelist and short story writer, as well as one of the country's outstanding authors of the twentieth century. This is especially true within Peru itself, where Vargas Llosa's public profile has declined sharply following his defeat in the 1990 presidential elections, while that of Bryce has grown markedly in the wake of increasingly frequent visits to the country and his definitive return to Lima in 1999.¹ At a continental level he is one of the most prominent members of the 'post-Boom', although he is older than many of those who have started to publish since 1970, and his work has received a growing critical awareness in western Europe and the US. Each of his novels has enjoyed editions with various publishing houses in Spain and Latin America (*Un mundo para Julius* and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* have both appeared in the last ten years in critical editions by Julio Ortega in the Cátedra *Letras hispánicas* collection) and most have been translated into several European languages. As far as literary prizes are concerned, Bryce has had successes in the prestigious Premio Casa de las Américas (for *Huerto cerrado*), and won Peru's 1972 Premio Nacional de Literatura for *Un mundo para Julius*, with the same novel a strong contender in the 1970 Seix Barral prize for the best Latin-American novel (the prize was never awarded because of the split between the two publishers).² More recently Bryce was admitted to the French *Ordre des Lettres et des Arts* (1995), was awarded the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* by Lima's Universidad Nacional Mayor San Marcos (1999), and was made a member of Spain's *Orden de Alfonso X El Sabio* (2000). He also received Spain's 1998 Premio Nacional de Narrativa for *Reo de nocturnidad*. Despite Bryce's international success with publishers and reading public alike, and the

¹ A survey published in 1995 by the journal *Debate* revealed *Un mundo para Julius* to be the most popular novel among the Peruvian reading public by some margin. See *Debate*, LXXXI (March-April 1981), 28-43, at p. 29.

appearance of hundreds of reviews and brief critical items in newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, his work has received relatively little attention in terms of substantial scholarly studies. The relative lack of critical consideration of his otherwise well-received works may be attributed to several factors: firstly, as an author in self-imposed exile in Europe from 1964 to 1999, his work was largely passed over – at least during the 1970s and 1980s – by Peruvian academics. The situation was aggravated by the coincidence of the appearance of Bryce's first (and subsequently acclaimed) novel, *Un mundo para Julius*, with Velasco Alvarado's left-wing military government of 1968-1975. When Bryce refused to attribute a revolutionary intent to the novel, which depicts an oligarchy in decline, the highly politicised Peruvian academics, who might have been expected to devote more attention than any other group to Bryce, labelled him as a reactionary author maintaining his links with the oligarchy into which he was born, and virtually blacklisted him. Moreover, most critics and academics kept their critical focus on the first wave of the Latin-American literary boom, with significant attention turning only fairly recently to those authors who have started to appear in print since 1970.

The condition of Bryce as a somewhat marginal figure can be seen to be relevant not only to his reception via international literary criticism, although this is less the case since the early 1990s. Bryce's literary vocation created tensions with his father, who insisted that Alfredo study a degree in Law at the Universidad Nacional Mayor San Marcos with a view to following in the family banking tradition, at the expense of a place at Cambridge that he had gained. The Law degree was completed co-terminously with another in *letras* in 1963, a dissertation on the function of dialogue in the work of Hemingway offering an insight into the seriousness of the young Alfredo to maintain his literary aspirations. The following year he took up a scholarship for a postgraduate degree at the Sorbonne, where he hoped finally to

² *Huerto cerrado* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1968); *Un mundo para Julius* (Barcelona: Barral Editores,

be able to study and write literature. Between 1964 and 1999 Bryce lived and worked in France (Paris and subsequently Montpellier), Italy (Perugia) and Spain (Barcelona and then Madrid), with spells too as a visiting lecturer at several universities in the USA.³ Bryce has repeatedly spoken of ‘la marginalidad en que he vivido siempre en Europa’,⁴ and this sense of marginalisation finds expression as a constant theme throughout his narrative production. Alienation from the family and social milieu as a result of literary vocation, and resulting geographical isolation in Europe, in addition to tardy critical recognition, mirrors the experience of Julio Ramón Ribeyro, who may be seen in this sense as Bryce’s precursor, and the similarities no doubt played their part in the formation of a close friendship between the two in Paris. Bryce’s literary antecedents in Peru are more difficult to trace: like Ribeyro, Bryce is faithful to the literary style developed and perfected over the course of his career, and although his work fits with the growing internationalisation of Peruvian literature (in terms of awareness of foreign trends and of access to publishing outlets) and the increasing presence of the urban world - especially Lima - in narrative fiction, his treatment of the world of the oligarchy and of the world frequented by them stands out as a case apart. On the publication of *Un mundo para Julius* in 1970 comparisons were made with José Diez Canseco’s novel *Duque*, which opens with references to Oxford, golf, cocktails and the use of English to convey the world of the elite.⁵ The similarities – unlikely as it may seem – are coincidental, for *Duque* was published in Chile in 1934, and only re-published (in PEISA’s *Biblioteca peruana*) in 1973 as part of a project by the *Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas* to raise the profile of national literature. Bryce’s sense of marginalisation,

1970).

³ For further biographical details see the *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature* edited by Verity Smith (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997); José Luis de la Fuente, *Cómo leer a Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Madrid: Ediciones Júcar, 1994); or Bryce’s *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), pp. 9-17.

⁴ Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla, la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1994), p. 62.

⁵ José Diez Canseco, *Duque* (Santiago de Chile: Ercilla, 1934).

and his repeated treatment of it as a central theme, may well then be seen as justified on a number of counts.

Bryce's literary 'coming in from the cold' has taken place largely from the mid 1990s, with the publication of several critical texts on the author's work. Of the fourteen studies published to date, only two predate 1990: Wolfgang Luchting's *Alfredo Bryce / humores y malhumores* is the first detailed study of Bryce's work, and gives thorough consideration to the structure of *Un mundo para Julius*, as well as to its themes and, to a lesser degree, the main characteristics of the narrative and the narrator;⁶ while a special edition of *Co-textes* devoted to Bryce consists of a collection of essays by various academics in French universities.⁷ While containing some valuable information in the shape of articles and especially interviews, the tendency in this collection is towards largely personal accounts of encounters with Bryce and his early works. Of the works to appear since 1990, three are limited to the brief consideration of a single text, two derive from theses and include much background material, and a further two are compilations of essays: the bulk of those which make up Ferreira and Márquez's useful *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (textos críticos)* had appeared previously in journals and other printed media, but those to be found in another special number of *Co-textes* are all original contributions, the product of a conference held in Montpellier in 1996 in honour of Bryce's work.⁸ Bryce was also the subject of a *semana de autor* in Madrid in November 1987, and the volume which arises from this gathering provides transcriptions of the various sessions on key themes in Bryce's literature.⁹ It also contains a useful interview of Bryce by Rodríguez Lafuente and an excellent

⁶ (Lima: Milla Batres, 1975).

⁷ *Co-textes 9: Alfredo Bryce Echenique* edited by Jean-Marie Saint-Lu and Jacques Soubeyrou (Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1985).

⁸ César Ferreira and Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (textos críticos)* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1994); Jean Franco and Christiane Tarroux (eds), *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1997).

bibliography compiled by César Ferreira, who has established himself as one of the leading experts on Bryce, and has contributed much to a greater appreciation of his work.¹⁰ The other two academics to have published extensively on Bryce are Julio Ortega and José Luis de la Fuente, whose works represent the only broad surveys of Bryce's literary production.¹¹ Ortega's study deals with works published before 1990, and those of de la Fuente concentrate on *Un mundo para Julius* and the short stories respectively. What this study sets out to achieve in terms of its chronological scope is a critical survey of the author's literary production to the 1995 publication of *No me esperen en abril*, which, it will be argued, marks the end of an era with regard to Bryce's output.

Scholarly texts on Bryce's literature tend to focus either on its thematic content, its narrative style, or both of these, and can usefully be synthesised here. The publication of *Huerto cerrado* passed virtually unnoticed, despite its success in Havana in 1968, and what little appeared by way of critical comment was limited to providing an exposition of some of the stories, together with minimal comment regarding dominant themes, which were identified as the problems of human relationships between individuals and different levels of society. They also brought to the reader's attention the use of irony, which avoids ever reaching the level of virulent social denunciation, and the colloquial style of the narrative. Despite their having been written by three of Lima's foremost critics, these articles apparently failed to spark any interest in this first collection of short stories, and since their publication few other articles have given any substantial consideration to this work: Gabriela

⁹ Fernando Rodríguez Lafuente (ed), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: semana de autor* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1991).

¹⁰ In addition to the items already mentioned, see his PhD thesis 'Autobiografía y exilio en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', The University of Texas at Austin, 1991, as well as articles in the bibliography.

¹¹ Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla, la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1994); Ortega has also produced editions of *Un mundo para Julius* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1993) and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000). José Luis de la Fuente, *Cómo leer a Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Madrid: Júcar, 1994); *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1998).

Mora's study stresses the continuities of the stories, seeing them as a holistic community against which Manolo's alienation can be charted, and Valerie Hegstrom Oakey develops this idea, relating the narrator of the stories to the loss of innocence at the level of plot while also placing the collection in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*.¹² The two other important contributions to an understanding of this work are made by Ferreira and de la Fuente, who coincide in seeing the stories of *Huerto cerrado* as prefiguring major subsequent developments in Bryce's narrative production.¹³

Un mundo para Julius, as mentioned above, awoke significant interest in Spain as one of two final contenders (the other being José Donoso's *El obscuro pájaro de la noche*) for the aborted Seix Barral prize, and in Peru as a contribution towards the revolutionary process that was taking place at the time. The main thrust of the crop of articles (primarily journalistic) that appeared in the wake of the novel's publication was to interpret the work as the swan-song of an oligarchy whose pointless existence was being exposed from within, while comments on narrative style universally concentrated on its orality. The publication of articles on this, Bryce's first novel, has continued at a slow but steady pace to the present day, and all have considered the dominant themes of social decay, the breakdown of human relationships and the resulting solitude, as well as recognizing the innovative use of language and the important role this plays in the development of the narrative. Of particular interest is J. Ann Duncan's article, in which language use is recognized as being of prime importance in the narrative process, and is elevated to the status of a protagonist.¹⁴ She sees the series of anecdotes which constitute the plot as unimportant, with the real interest lying in the way in

¹² Gabriela Mora, 'Huerto cerrado de Alfredo Bryce Echenique, colección integrada, cíclica y secuencial de cuentos', *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos*, XVI (1992), 319-28; Valerie Hegstrom Oakey, 'The Bildung of Manolo and his narrator in Alfredo Bryce Echenique's *Huerto cerrado*', in Ferreira and Márquez, *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 97-116.

¹³ César Ferreira, 'Los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (textos críticos)*, pp. 85-96; de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad* (see note 6).

¹⁴ J. Ann Duncan, 'Language as Protagonist: Tradition and Innovation in *Un mundo para Julius*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, XVI (1980), 120-35.

which these events are presented to the reader: from various perspectives, each denoted by a shift in vocabulary or syntax, and with an extensive use of the anglicisms, diminutives and clichés which typify the language use of the various *limeño* classes portrayed. Despite the traditional structure of the novel, with a central group of easily identifiable characters and the following of a linear chronology, she sees the novel as essentially experimental in terms of language use. Of the many theses written on *Un mundo para Julius* that by Merino Silicani is one of the most interesting: in it she identifies both the dominant themes and the importance of the way in which language is used in the narrative.¹⁵ She goes on, however, to suggest a relationship between the various uses of style and the distance between narrator, characters and reader, and is virtually alone in giving consideration to what will be seen here as one of the fundamental qualities of *Un mundo para Julius*.

The success of *Un mundo para Julius* has tended to overshadow Bryce's subsequent publications, especially those which appeared shortly afterwards. Such is the case of *La felicidad, ja ja*, Bryce's second collection of short stories (although de la Fuente's study is an important step towards correcting this state of affairs), and *Tantas veces Pedro*, his second novel, about which a handful of articles have been published, most of which are brief expositions of the respective plots.¹⁶ The more serious articles on *La felicidad, ja ja* share the interpretation of the dominant theme as the difficulty to achieve happiness in a milieu where the decay of society and human relationships is prevalent, while the notion of the active involvement of the reader in the genesis and interpretation of the text is examined by Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat.¹⁷

In addition to a handful of single-page reviews and notices on the publication of *Tantas veces Pedro*, and various references to the work in articles looking primarily at other novels

¹⁵ Rosanna María Merino Silicani, 'El acortamiento de la distancia en *Un mundo para Julius*' (unpublished *tesis de bachiller*, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1984).

¹⁶ *La felicidad, ja ja* (Barcelona: Barral Editores, 1974); *Tantas veces Pedro* (Lima: Libre-1, 1977).

by Bryce, there are only some three academic articles which devote themselves entirely to this novel in particular. Antonio Cornejo Polar's extended review sees it as a portrayal of the international aristocracy in decline at the same time as being an exploration of the nature of creativity and the importance of imagination in fulfilling desires.¹⁸ Beyond the self-referentiality of the text he praises the narrative style and its role in the narration of events. Luis Eyzaguirre also identifies the self-referential aspect of the work and sees the relation between fiction and reality as being of central importance to the protagonist's attempts to escape the disillusionment he is suffering, while László Scholz's helpful explication of the text sees it as a fusion of the traditional and the experimental with regard to narrative and structure.¹⁹

Along with *Un mundo para Julius*, Bryce's third novel, *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (the first volume of the *Cuadernos de navegación en un sillón Voltaire*), has attracted the lion's share of critical attention, and, as was true in the case of *Un mundo para Julius*, the majority of the criticism consists of fairly brief articles that concentrate on what their authors see as the autobiographical nature of the work and the importance of the act of writing, or at least storytelling, as a means of coming to terms with reality.²⁰ The articles which go beyond such journalistic examinations of the work concentrate on what is commonly referred to as the oral style of the narrative, through which the theme of marginalisation is once again portrayed as dominant. Another commonly treated theme is the relationship between life and fiction, and the process of literary creation as a cathartic process. Probably the most detailed exposition of the above points is to be found in Phyllis

¹⁷ Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat, 'Lector y narratorio en dos relatos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Inti*, 24-25 (Fall-Spring 1986-1987), 107-26.

¹⁸ Antonio Cornejo Polar, '*Tantas veces Pedro*', *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, 7-8 (1978), 226-28.

¹⁹ Luis Eyzaguirre, 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique o la reconquista del tiempo', *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, 21-22 (1985), 215-21; László Scholz, 'Realidad e irrealidad en *Tantas veces Pedro* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 155-156 (1991), 533-42, also published in Ferreira and Márquez, *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 165-77.

Rodríguez Peralta's article, in which she examines the effectiveness of the narrative perspective and the variegated technique and style which Bryce inserts into a traditional first-person narrative.²¹ She emphasises the relationship which is built up between narrator and reader, encouraging the reader to share in the experiences which are related and the emotions they occasion. She also touches on the way in which the words of other characters filter into Martín's narrative, and sees this as one of the main features to enhance the immediacy of the experience for the reader, as well as contributing to the orality of the tone. She concludes that the overcoming of the limitations of the first-person narrative and its tendency to portray a one-dimensional reality is an achievement in itself.

After such renewed interest in Bryce's work it is perhaps surprising that *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*, the second volume of the *Cuadernos*, and very much a continuation of Martín's story, should have been the subject of only a dozen one-page reviews and notices, not one of which could be considered a detailed study.²² The themes of humour and love, the orality of the style and the relationship between life and fiction are all briefly discussed in most of these articles. Subsequent studies of a more academic nature have given further consideration to these themes, as well as those of identity and the role of music, but have done so exclusively within the context of the two works of the diptych together.

Magdalena peruana, Bryce's next publication, suffered a similar fate in terms of serious critical study, despite the maintained efforts of *Oiga*, the news magazine run by Francisco Igartua, Bryce's brother-in-law, where a steady stream of articles by and on Bryce had appeared since the first in 1968, and continued to do so until the magazine's closure in

²⁰ *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (Barcelona: Argos Vergara, 1981).

²¹ Phyllis Rodríguez Peralta, 'The Subjective Narration of Alfredo Bryce Echenique's *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*', *Hispanic Journal*, X (1989), 139-51.

²² *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1985).

1994.²³ Until the appearance of de la Fuente's study of Bryce's short stories, *Oiga* saw the publication of the bulk of what little was written about this collection, with the character types, atmosphere and narrative tone of earlier works again identified, together with a dose of ironic humour.²⁴ A development is the introduction of some element of the unknown which plays a determining role in the plot and creates a consistent dramatic tension that is not always resolved. The stories are largely seen as social portraits with psychological depth drawing on a broad field of references, and demonstrating a clear structuring of the narrative, as opposed to the more spontaneous, digressional style of the preceding novels.

La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo has attracted a similar paucity of critical attention.²⁵ What little has been written highlights the development (and new-found concision) of Bryce's personalized style, typified by its orality, humour, references to popular music and ability to gain the reader's complicity. Margarita Krakusin's study undertakes an analysis of the importance of popular music in this novel in particular, and describes its growing importance in Bryce's narrative as part of a process of incorporation of popular perspectives.²⁶ For his part Luis Eyzaguirre considers *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* as a continuation of the process of presenting an '*universo totalizador*' begun in *Huerto cerrado*.²⁷ He divides Bryce's narrative into two sections: the first consists of the first three works in which the reader is presented with protagonists bearing the burden of experiences in which they can find no order, experiences which are ordered in the narrative no differently from the way in which reality delivers them; the second section presents protagonists whose imagination starts to impose its own order on the remembered reality of events, thereby creating a reality in line with the character's desires. He sees *La última mudanza de Felipe*

²³ *Magdalena peruana* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1986).

²⁴ Ana María Gazzolo, 'Nuevos cuentos de Bryce', *Oiga*, 9 December 1986, 68-71; Elsa Arana Freire, 'Bryce y sus amigos', *Oiga*, 24 November 1986, 62-63.

²⁵ *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1988).

²⁶ Margarita Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique la narrativa sentimental* (Madrid: Pliegos, 1995).

Carrillo as the culmination of the narrative cycle started with *Tantas veces Pedro*, given that at the end of this last work the protagonist (who he considers to be an extension of Pedro Balbuena and Martín Romaña) seems to have escaped from his memories and the trap of nostalgia to accept an unaltered form of reality.

Dos señoras conversan is a collection of three novellas that seems to bear out Eyzaguirre's view of *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* as the end of a cycle, returning as they do to a narrative of observation with events set in Peru.²⁸ Criticism of this work is extremely limited. The most detailed review was written by the Peruvian poet and sociologist Abelardo Sánchez León and emphasizes the juxtaposition of Lima's oligarchic past with the harsh realities of the present, with the theme of decay proving all-pervasive.²⁹ He praises the use of humour and the emotional engagement Bryce demonstrates for his characters, who are all given the opportunity to express themselves, in marked contrast to the lone voice of the protagonist which dominated the previous works narrated in the first person.

Bryce's most recent publications have on the whole not yet generated any significant criticism, partly no doubt a function of the lack of temporal distance. The exception is *No me esperen en abril*:³⁰ this substantial novel received enthusiastic treatment from a number of the speakers at the 1996 conference in Montpellier devoted to Bryce, and is the subject of three chapters of the critical volume that arose from it, as well as figuring prominently in several others.³¹ It also enjoys frequent mention as a point of reference in de la Fuente's study of the short stories. The reception of this text stems from the fact that it represents not only Bryce's first major novel in a decade, but also a continuation in many ways of *Un mundo para Julius*,

²⁷ Luis Eyzaguirre, 'La última mudanza de Bryce Echenique', *Hispanérica*, XVIII (1989), 195-202.

²⁸ *Dos señoras conversan* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1990).

²⁹ Abelardo Sánchez León, 'Bryce conversa', *Caretas*, 28 January 1991, 66-67.

³⁰ *No me esperen en abril* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1995);

³¹ Edmond Cros, 'Le fonctionnement du chronotope dans *No me esperen en abril* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', pp. 195-203; François Delprat, 'Partir, revenir, hantises dans *No me esperen en abril* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', pp. 205-17; Annie Figarède, '«Pour en finir avec Julius» ou la vision d'un monde dégradé', pp. 219-26.

still his most popular work with readers and critics alike. All of these critical contributions look at the position of *No me esperen en abril* in relation to Bryce's previous literary production, giving attention to the dual aspects of thematic constants (nostalgia, friendship, love, the incorporation of popular culture) and recurrent features of narrative style (orality, heteroglossia, humour). Luis Eyzaguirre in particular identifies the sense of closure marked by the novel when he states that 'El largo peregrinaje de los personajes de Bryce encuentra su fin con la muerte de Manongo'.³²

These main trends in the criticism of Bryce's literature will form the background to this study, in which the issues of style and theme will be addressed and developed. However, they will not be studied as two separate aspects of his work, as has been the case with criticism on Bryce to date; but rather an exploration of the complementary nature of the relationship between these two fields, recognized universally as the two outstanding features of Bryce's narrative, will be undertaken. At the same time a global view of Bryce's narrative and its development will be offered for the first time, to 1995 at least.

The approach to the analysis of Bryce's narrative style will make eclectic borrowings from the field of stylistics, in which the attempt to bring together linguistics and literary criticism may be seen as particularly relevant to this study. Free indirect discourse, described in the context of *Un mundo para Julius* by Luchting, Duncan and Merino Silicani is an important feature not only of that work but across Bryce's literature, and plays a key role in the shifting narrative perspective and orality of the text repeatedly identified by critics.³³ It is worth highlighting at this stage not only Bryce's study of the function of dialogue in Hemingway, in which he reveals a keen awareness of its potential to manipulate distances between character and reader, but also his work as a lecturer on Latin-American literature, through which he

³² Luis Eyzaguirre, 'De Julius a Manongo Sterne: la saga del protagonista en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, edited by Jean Franco and Christiane Tarrow (Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1997), pp. 49-62, at p. 61.

³³ See notes 6, 14 and 15 respectively.

sees himself as ‘un lector atento de la nueva crítica literaria y, en particular, de aquélla que se refiere a nuestra novelística.’³⁴ Despite this, Bryce has always stressed the spontaneous nature of his literary creation; however, a study that combines consideration of narrative style with that of narrative theme suggests itself as an approach that reflects the preoccupations of the author himself, and a means of gaining access to his *universo totalizador*.

³⁴ Rubén Bareiro Saguier, ‘Entrevista: Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, *Hispanamérica*, VI (1974), 77-81, at p. 79.

Huerto cerrado: El camino fue así.

Huerto cerrado is a collection of short stories, each one of which narrates a significant episode in the development of Manolo, the protagonist throughout. The stories were initially written in Perugia, Italy, but rewritten in Paris after the manuscript was stolen from a car.³⁵ The writing of the stories in an unfamiliar environment may go some way to explaining the predominant sense of alienation which emerges from a reading of them, while the writing of them gives rise to a profound change in Bryce's perception of himself as an author, 'autónomo, independiente: comencé a ser Alfredo Bryce'.³⁶ With the exception of the first story of the collection, 'Dos indios', which serves as a framework and a constant point of reference for Manolo's childhood, the reader follows Manolo from the age of thirteen to twenty-two, with each episode chronologically following on from the last. Besides sharing the protagonist, the stories also have a common setting (middle-class Lima) and a common theme (Manolo's increasing alienation from society and his ideals in general and those to whom he feels emotionally attached in particular), all of which serves to give the work as a whole the feel of a novel, with each story a new chapter. Although some critics have failed to notice these continuities, Gabriela Mora's study of the collection classifies it as a short story cycle, with each story dependent on the others for its impact.³⁷ The integrative structure of the collection and its sense of community on the one hand highlight the mental breakdown and social alienation experienced by the protagonist on the other.

Bryce's undergraduate dissertation on the role of dialogue in Hemingway's short stories reveals a keen awareness of considerations relating to narrative style, and is a vital formative

³⁵ For a fuller account of the writing and publication of the stories see Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'El camino es así' in *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), pp. 330-335, and José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, Universidad de Valladolid, 1998), pp. 32-36.

³⁶ Unpublished interview with the author, Lima, January 2000.

influence behind the writing of the stories of *Huerto cerrado* only a couple of years later.³⁸ Of the creative process of this first collection, Bryce has described how ‘Cuando escribí *Huerto cerrado* andaba con terror ante los maestros del cuento y entonces sí que enfrenté muchos problemas técnicos para los cuales apenas tenía soluciones.’³⁹ The connection between master and apprentice is made explicit in an early interview: ‘En él [*Huerto cerrado*] yo sólo trataba de presentar la evolución de un adolescente a través de una serie de situaciones traumatizantes, siguiendo un poco el modelo de los primeros libros de Hemingway, aquellos cuyo personaje central se llama siempre Nick Adams.’⁴⁰ The formative influence of Hemingway with regard to theme and the undergraduate dissertation with regard to style may then be seen to underlie Bryce’s first work, in which the novice author searches for his own voice.

As mentioned above, the first story of *Huerto cerrado*, ‘Dos indios’, does not coincide with those that follow in terms of setting and chronological sequence. The same is also true of the narrator, who narrates in the first person, but is an external observer (a reflection of his status as a tourist) who does not share the proximity to Manolo which typifies the narrative voice of the other stories of the collection. The unnamed narrator of ‘Dos indios’ presents the reader with Manolo at the age of twenty-two as a character who finds himself isolated – physically and emotionally – in Peru and Europe alike. This narrator presents events from a dual temporal perspective, with remembered words or thoughts contemporary with the events narrated embedded in the adult perspective by means of speech marks, as in the following example, in which Manolo tries desperately to recall a crucial event from his early childhood. ‘Volteó para mirarme y noté que tenía los ojos llenos de lágrimas. «Le está dando la llorona.

³⁷ For example, de la Fuente (*Cómo leer a Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 27) says of the stories ‘Sus protagonistas son adolescentes o jóvenes [...] El muchacho protagonista suele llamarse Manolo’.

³⁸ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, ‘Función del diálogo en la narrativa de Ernest Hemingway’ (unpublished *tesis de bachiller*, Universidad Nacional Mayor San Marcos, Lima, 1963).

³⁹ Wolfgang Luchting, *Alfredo Bryce / humores y malhumores* (Lima: Milla Batres, 1975), p. 104.

Me fregué.»' (p. 15).⁴¹ A pattern becomes established whereby remembered thoughts thus embedded (corresponding to an adolescent narrator) come to express the *criollismo* typical of the male section of Lima's middle-class population, typified by its avoidance of emotional expression and treatment of women as sexual objects. That they are presented in the narrative in such a way as to stand out suggests that they are not in keeping with the general narrative perspective, and the technique serves to create a distance between the attitudes which dominate Lima's society and the narrator and protagonist.

When Manolo does finally gain access to his memories and the world of childhood, while at the same time overcoming his customary problems of communication (all achieved only with the help of copious amounts of wine), speech marks are used to a similar purpose in the reporting of Manolo's remembrances:

Pero ¿los dos indios?...No, no eran albañiles...Recuerdo hasta los nombres de los albañiles...Sí: el Peta; Guardacaballo; Blanquillo, que era hinchado de la «U»; el maestro Honores, era buena gente, pero con él no se podía bromear...Los dos indios...¡Ya me acuerdo! Pasaban el día encerrados, y cuando salían, era para que los albañiles los batieran: «chutos», «serruchos», les decían. Pobres indios... (p. 20)

In this passage Manolo's identification with the abused Indians signals a tendency to identify with the downtrodden and marginalised which remains a constant throughout the collection (and indeed throughout Bryce's oeuvre). This identification with the Indians is accompanied by a simultaneous distancing from the attitudes of the 'albañiles', communicated stylistically by the placing of the two terms of insult in speech marks, thereby isolating them from the rest of the passage and from Manolo's perspective. However, the fact that theirs are the views which predominate in Lima's society means that in the final analysis Manolo comes to experience a condition as marginalised and alienated as that of the Indians. It is significant that Manolo's memories are related in the breathless, short phrases of childhood, when he was able to communicate freely without the constraints of social convention. This section of

⁴⁰ Rubén Bareiro Saguier, 'Entrevista: Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Hispanamérica*, VI (1974), 77-81, at p. 78.

text then marks a return to a childhood in which expression could take place, while the story acts as a framework through which the world of childhood and adolescence will be revisited as a process of *Bildung* against the background of social forces such as *criollismo* and *machismo*.

‘Con Jimmy, en Paracas’ is the first of the body of stories which follow in chronological order, but was written some time after the rest of the stories and inserted at the expense of two others. It holds a position of special significance as it was Bryce’s first publication and also the first story in which the author broke free from the influence of the masters mentioned above to find his own narrative voice.⁴² It is entirely consistent that work not only for ‘Antes de la cita de los Linares’ (published in *La felicidad, ja ja*) but also ‘Las inquietudes de Julius’, the story that was to become *Un mundo para Julius*, should have started within days of the writing of ‘Con Jimmy, en Paracas’, for it is widely held that it is in his first novel that Bryce discovers his narrative voice, but certain features of it may be found here.⁴³ In the short story we are presented with a thirteen-year-old Manolo, who accompanies his father on a weekend sales visit to the luxury resort of Paracas, where they encounter Jimmy, one of Manolo’s classmates and the son of the employer of Manolo’s father. This story also sees a change in the narrative voice which, while remaining in the first person, is not that of ‘Dos indios’: instead the reader is immediately introduced to a constant switching between the perspectives of an adult Manolo remembering the events of years gone by and the Manolo of thirteen who is the protagonist of the story. The temporal shifts are made evident through vocabulary and syntax, with the childhood perspective typified by its use of present tenses and nouns which focus on the physical and external, as well as hyperbole through augmentatives and diminutives, while the adult perspective characteristically uses more

⁴¹ All page numbers refer to the 1990 Plaza & Janés edition.

⁴² ‘Con Jimmy, en Paracas’ first appeared in *Amaru*, IV (1967), 46-50; for the decisive influence of Cortázar in Bryce’s acquisition of an autonomous narrative voice see ‘El camino es así’ in *Permiso para vivir*, pp. 330-335, at p. 331.

complex verb tenses and describes notions that are both abstract and internal. These differences serve as shorthand to convey the priorities of the two narrators: Manolo the teenager is preoccupied with external appearances and the manifestations of wealth which mark class divisions (Jimmy belongs to the elite while Manolo's father can only aspire to the same condition for his children, as signalled by his exclusion from this world through his failure to comprehend the English 'bungalow'), but Manolo the adult has come to realize the superficial nature of the external and values instead the internal world of emotions with which he is to struggle in many of the stories. The difference between Manolo's attitudes as child and adult is made explicit when Manolo fears that Jimmy will laugh at his father's old car: 'Jimmy no me preguntó cuál era mi carro. No tuve por qué decirle que el Pontiac ese negro, el único que había ahí, era el carro de mi padre. Ahora sí se lo diría y luego, cuando se riera sarcásticamente le escupiría en la cara' (pp. 34-35).

The inclusion of more than one perspective in the narrative is recognized by critics of Bryce as one of the characteristics of his narrative and by Bryce the critic as one of the features of Hemingway, whose work he sees as typified by 'ingenuidad en el lenguaje, que a menudo pasa al coloquialismo del personaje del cual se está tratatndo.'⁴⁴ What is being described in both cases is free indirect discourse, used extensively by Bryce in *Un mundo para Julius* and subsequent publications, but used rather more sparingly here. What its removal of narratorial filtering achieves is the reduction of distances between the narrator and characters whose words (or thoughts) are presented in this form. The same can also true with regard to the reader, as will be seen in the consideration of subsequent stories. Bryce's use of the technique in this story is only occasional and apparently inconsistent with the manner in which characters are portrayed at a thematic level. For example, a desire to reduce the distance between the narrator and the corrupt and reprehensible Jimmy, into whose face he

⁴³ Unpublished interview with the author, Lima, January 2000.

would now spit, would seem unlikely, yet that is the potential effect when his words are briefly incorporated into the narrative: ‘Jimmy me mostró el lugar en que había estrellado su carro, carro de mierda ese, dijo, no servía para nada’ (p. 35). It would seem that while Bryce is aware of the potential of the techniques he is using, he is unsure exactly how they can be employed, which fits very much with the author’s assessment of the work as ‘un libro de transición’.⁴⁵

‘El camino es así (Con las piernas, pero también con la imaginación)’ was to have given the collection its title, until Bryce was persuaded otherwise by Julio Ramón Ribeyro and Mario Vargas Llosa. The story relates a school excursion to Chaclacayo by bicycle, which Manolo struggles to complete, and in it we find the narrative voice which is to dominate throughout the rest of the collection with its combination of third-person narrative, with remembered thoughts placed in speech marks (as in ‘Dos indios’), and the dual temporal perspectives of Manolo as a teenager and as an adult (as in ‘Con Jimmy, en Paracas’), with limited use of free indirect discourse. The adult narrator is never explicitly identified as Manolo, but his presence as first-person narrator of the preceding story and the overwhelming portrayal of events from the protagonist’s perspective suggest that such a conclusion is valid. These main features of the narrative are present from the outset, as may be appreciated from the following extract from the opening paragraphs:

Miércoles. «Mañana se cierran las inscripciones.» El amigo con permiso empieza a inquietarse por el amigo sin permiso. Era uno de esos momentos en que se escapan los pequeños secretos: «mi madre dice que ella va a hablar con mi papá, pero ella también le tiene miedo. Si mi papá está de buen humor... Todo depende del humor de mi papá». (Es preciso ampliar, e imaginarse toda una educación que dependa «del humor de papá».) El enemigo con permiso empieza a mirar burlescamente al enemigo sin permiso: «Yo iré. Él no.» (p. 40)

In addition to marking the difference in perspectives of person and time, the use of speech marks heightens the immediacy with which the reader experiences the excitement of the

⁴⁴ Bryce Echenique, ‘Función del diálogo’, p. 2.

schoolchildren, and combines with the use of exaggeration (as in 'Con Jimmy, en Paracas') to offer a more convincing portrayal of the world of adolescence. Also of interest in the above passage is the parenthetical aside of the narrator, which has the effect of establishing the beginnings of a bond between the narrator and the reader, although the infrequent use of the device, both in this story and throughout the course of the collection, means that the potential of the technique is never fully realized, and the relationship between narrator and reader remains a tenuous one compared to subsequent works, in which such devices are used with far greater regularity.

Once the excursion is under way, Manolo is soon symbolically left behind by the rest of the class, and in the course of the arduous completion of the journey alone he suffers several falls. Through the dual temporal perspectives it is left to the adult Manolo to elaborate on the experience and inform the reader of the significance of the episode: 'Lloraba detrás del muro, frente a los campos de algodón. No había nadie. Absolutamente nadie. Estaba allí solo, con su rabia, con su tristeza y con su verdad recién aprendida' (pp. 51-52). Although this is presented from the adult perspective, the presence of the young Manolo's thoughts can be detected through the words 'No había nadie. Absolutamente nadie.' According to the conventions of free indirect discourse, this assumption of a character's perspective by the narrator would signal a reduction in the distance between the two and would encourage the reader to feel sympathetic towards the young Manolo in his despair. Such an attitude would be in keeping with the notion of an adult narrator who is looking back on the travails of his younger self, and represents a more consistent and successful use of free indirect discourse in forming the reader's attitudes towards a given character. Narrative presentation also mirrors thematic content when the words of Brother Tomás, who is described positively, enter the narrative, albeit filtered through Manolo's remembrances:

⁴⁵ Unpublished interview with the author, Lima, January 2000.

El hermano Tomás, ayudado por un alumno de quinto de media, tendrá a su cargo la excursión. «¡Rah!» El hermano Tomás es buena gente. Instrucciones: un buen desayuno, al levantarse. Reunión en el colegio a las ocho de la mañana. Llevar el menor peso posible. Llevar una cantimplora con jugo de frutas para el camino. Llegaremos a Chaclacayo a la hora del almuerzo. «¡Rah!» (pp. 41-42)

Although the full implications of the journey are realized only by the adult narrator, the young Manolo is aware on his eventual arrival at Chaclacayo that ‘«no soy el mismo que hace unas horas»’ (p. 53), and once he had become aware of his state of alienation (as with the title, the physical is matched by the spiritual) and apparently accepted it, the journey is much easier to complete, presumably again ‘con las piernas, pero también con la imaginación’. The excursion then marks an important first step in Manolo’s awareness of his difference, of his condition as a marginal figure, and it is the increasing sense of this alienation, together with his inner conflict vis-a-vis rejecting or accepting it, that is explored in the remainder of the stories.

‘Su mejor negocio’ recounts the sale (to Miguel, a local gardener and childhood friend) of the bicycle that caused such suffering, in order to buy a brown corduroy jacket very like that worn by Brother Tomás in the previous story. Manolo is still motivated to some degree by ideals, as is clear from his desire to imitate Brother Tomás, but the coveting of the jacket signifies a change in priorities in which appearances and social relationships become of ever greater importance. A childhood perspective (Manolo remembers his thoughts from the age of ten) presents Miguel as «Un artista» and «Maestro», reflecting the status he acquires via his work, but when he arrives at the house the fourteen-year-old protagonist compares him to an ‘actor de cine mejicano’, influenced by his visits to the cinema with schoolfriends, an early example of the use of non-literary cultural expressions as a point of reference. The comparison serves to distance Manolo from Miguel, as well as to convey the notion of class difference of which he has only recently become aware. The differences in treatment with the passing of time are not, however, limited to Manolo: when they first knew each other

Miguel called Manolo by his name, but as Manolo leaves childhood and enters adolescence he also begins to take his place in the rigidly divided social classes of contemporary Lima, and the gardener locates him somewhere between ‘niño’ and ‘usted’ (p. 59). The move out of innocence is accompanied by an inability to achieve communication in a world governed by convention, and although this theme enjoys fuller development in subsequent stories it is raised here towards the end of the story as ‘Manolo buscaba alguna fórmula para liquidar el asunto’ (p. 61).

Although the whole story is narrated from an adult perspective, it is not until the closing paragraphs of the story that this adult narrator, who may be seen to be an adult Manolo throughout the collection, gives the reader any clues as to how the views and behaviour of his younger self should be seen.

Sábado en el espejo de su dormitorio. Sábado en su mente, y sábado en su programa para esa tarde. El espejo le mostraba qué bien le quedaba su saco de corduroy marrón, su pantalón de franela gris, su camisa color verde oscuro, y su pañuelo guinda al cuello (él creía que era de seda). Alguien diría que era demasiado para sus catorce años, pero no era suficiente para su felicidad. (p. 62)

The adult narrator’s comment in brackets is another example of the tentative relationship with the reader and undermines the description of Manolo’s appearance which goes before. A re-reading of the passage in the light of this comment highlights the garish colour combinations and the neckerchief which, like the society he aspires to join, is not made of the fine cloth he believes it to be. The adult narrator has clearly come to realize this and, from the complicity of the parenthetical comment, he assumes that so too has the reader.

The development of this relationship between narrator and reader is continued in ‘Las notas que duermen en las cuerdas’ via the repeated use of complicitous parenthetical asides in the opening paragraphs of the story, and as in the example taken from ‘El camino es así’ these tend to open up consideration of wider societal concerns. Another narrative device used to

reduce still further the distance between narrator and reader is the introduction of a second-person-singular narrative in the second paragraph.

Por las calles, las limeñas lucen unos brazos de gimnasio. Parece que fueran ellas las que cargaran las andas en las procesiones, y que lo hicieran diariamente. Te dan la mano, y piensas en el tejido adiposo. No sabes bien lo que es, pero te suena a piel, a brazo, al brazo que tienes delante tuyo, y a ese hombro moreno que te decide a invitarla al cine. (p. 63)

Although this use of the second person could of course correspond to the 'one' of general discourse, the ambiguity in the context of a narrator who is manipulating distances with the reader is resolved in favour of an impression of direct address. As a result of the use of these techniques in the story's opening paragraphs, the reader is drawn towards a position alongside the narrator, and when the adult narrator withdraws from the narrative, allowing the young Manolo's thoughts and words to enter it without narratorial intervention, through free indirect discourse, the reader is more likely than otherwise might have been the case to share the narrator's sympathy for the protagonist, as in the following example: 'Acababan de darles el rol de exámenes y la cosa no era para reírse. Cada dos días, un examen. Matemáticas y Química seguidos. ¿Qué es lo que pretenden? ¿Jalarse a todo el mundo?' (p. 65). As well as establishing a relationship between narrator and reader, these techniques also require the reader to engage with the text, and this participation in the process of narrative creation is a constant feature of Bryce's literature, the development of which will be considered more fully in the context of subsequent works.

The speech marks and free indirect discourse discussed in the context of the stories already considered are used consistently throughout the remainder of this story, with similar results. The strengths (and weaknesses) of the two devices can be appreciated particularly well in certain passages of this story. In the following quotation the use of speech marks serves to layer the perspectives of Manolo at different ages: their presence in the first instance serves to distance Manolo (as both an adolescent and an adult) from the attitudes commonly held by

his classmates, while in the second instance they distance the adult Manolo from the views he held as a teenager (as an adult he feels capable of going against the dominant values, as has been seen).

Detestaba esos grupos de muchachos que hablaban de las mujeres como de un producto alimenticio: «Es muy rica. Es un lomo.» Creía ver algo distinta en esas colegialas con los dedos manchados de tinta, y sus uniformes de virtud. Había visto cómo uno de sus amigos se había trompeado por una chica que le gustaba, y luego, cuando le dejó de gustar, hablaba de ella como si fuera una puta. «Son terribles cuando están en grupo, pensaba, y yo no soy un héroe para dedicarme a darles la contra.» (p. 69)

In both cases Manolo's alienation from his own class and the dominant views and values of Lima's society is evident, despite his attempts in 'Su mejor negocio' to conform to the norm. Another theme that comes to the fore in this story, and which remains there for the remainder of the collection, is that of the difficulty of achieving communication, especially of emotion, within a society governed by a strong sense of *machismo*. In the closing lines Manolo feels that 'tenía algo que decir. Algo que decirle a alguna persona que no conocía; a muchas personas que no conocía' (p. 76), and the tensions which arise from the conflict of individual desires with societal conventions starts to build towards their final resolution at the close of the collection.

The solution to Manolo's problems of communication and of emotional communion seems to be at hand when in 'Una mano en las cuerdas (Páginas de un diario)' he finally establishes contact with one of the beautiful girls he sees wherever he goes. The extracts from the diary inform the reader of Manolo's feelings for Cecilia, who soon becomes his girlfriend, in a highly emotional and idealised fashion. The diary entries are interrupted on four occasions by a third-person narrator whose voice again may be seen to correspond to that of an adult Manolo, because of his non-omniscience, his focalisation of events through Manolo, the presentation of the different narrative voices on the page as continuous, and the incorporation

of words and thoughts from the narrative in the first person into that in the third.⁴⁶ In the light of these interventions and the dual perspective they again introduce, the reader is forced to question the authenticity of the emotions expressed by Manolo in the diary entries, as well as his motivation for establishing a relationship with Cecilia.

In the course of the story it becomes apparent that Manolo does not manage to share his feelings with Cecilia, that his attempts at communication become formulaic and that the pressures of social convention gain the upper hand as he conforms to the behaviour of his friends in his relationship with her. Cecilia in turn is characterised as being different (the fact that her parents are Austrian means that to some degree she is not bound by Lima's conventions), while her palour and her 'nariz respingada' are features which are to be found repeatedly in Bryce's female characters, notably Teresa of *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* and Tere of *No me esperen en abril*. The idealised nature of her description reflects the unattainable nature of the relationship uncontaminated by social convention that Manolo seeks, and the adult narrator excuses Manolo's naivety on grounds of his age, and at the same time makes it clear that with hindsight the conventions within which Manolo struggles to locate himself are the rules of a game which does not have to be played.

The following two stories, 'Un amigo de cuarenta y cuatro años' and 'Yo soy el rey' provide little new in terms of the narrative, the communication of the major themes, or the relationship between the two. Both, however, revolve around episodes which contribute to the sense of community of Bryce's work: the first is set in an English-style boarding school near Lima, and is very much the first literary manifestation of the elite schools of *Un mundo para Julius* and, more specifically, El Colegio San Pablo of *No me esperen en abril*; the second relates Manolo's first visit to a brothel, another setting which is used repeatedly in the depiction of the teenage world of Lima's middle and upper classes. Of note also is that 'Yo

⁴⁶ See, for example, pp. 80-81 of the edition cited for an illustration of all of these points.

soy el rey' sees a return to the use of dialogue, employed extensively in 'Dos indios' but only sparingly subsequently, and the effect for the reader is to create a sense of distance from Manolo and the events portrayed, which is entirely consistent with his somewhat repulsed perception of the visit, during which he repeatedly thinks of Cecilia, still his girlfriend.

'El descubrimiento de América' is, at close to thirty pages, by far the longest of the stories of *Huerto cerrado*, and its scope allows for the features of the narrative discussed in the context of the other stories to be significantly developed.⁴⁷ In addition, several elements are found in the narrative for the first time, and the result is a narrative style that approaches what might be considered that of *Un mundo para Julius*, and the first manifestation of what several critics have referred to as Bryce's *tonito*. From the opening lines the use of a blend of the perspectives of the adult Manolo and his younger self, through free indirect discourse, enlivens the narrative and consolidates the relationship between protagonist and narrator, and between both of these and the reader. The voluptuous América is also included in this loose community by means of direct address of her by the narrator: '¡América! ¡América! Si no hubieras estado en colegio de monjas, tus profesores te hubieran comprendido. Pero ¿para qué?, ¿para quién?, esas piernas tan hermosas debajo de la carpeta' (p. 124). The same device is to be found in the opening paragraphs of 'Las notas que duermen en las cuerdas', although in that instance its use seems far more gratuitous as it relates only to an incidental character, thereby obviating the possibility of it affecting the reader's perceptions to any significant degree.

The suspicion that the reader is being encouraged to understand América and her consequent behaviour is strengthened by the discovery of free indirect discourse in association with her in the opening paragraphs; moreover, the narrative subsequently assumes

⁴⁷ The length of this story is the first indication of Bryce's liminal position with regard to narrative classification: his work spans short stories, journalistic articles, chronicles, essays, novellas and novels, often taking advantage of the spaces between the different forms.

her perspective in the form of stream of consciousness over the course of an entire page (pp. 144-45). These are the only occasions in the collection on which a female perspective is presented, and what is conveyed by this representation of América, which suggests that the narrator is pushing the reader towards a reasonably sympathetic impression of her, is a criticism of the roles to which young women are restricted by *machista* society and confirmation that they are bound as much as Manolo by conventions beyond their control.

Stream of consciousness is also used in association with Manolo, both in the opening and closing pages of the story. As well as demanding the engagement of a *lector cómplice*, it fulfils the function of again reducing the gap between narrator, character and reader through the reduction of the difference of perspectives. In addition, it prefigures the extensive use of it in the final story, in which the conflict between Manolo's ideals and social conventions lead to mental breakdown. This conflict is most patently apparent here in his preference of América (external appearances and the socially desirable) over Marta (internalised values and the possibility of communication), and having crossed the line in favour of conforming to convention at the start of this story, by its close he has come to realize the superficiality of these values and has returned to favour personal ideals.

'La madre, el hijo y el pintor' sees Manolo back with what remains of his family, the separation of his mother and father symbolic of the portrayal of the broader difficulties of relationships, and the sister of whom he was once so fond apparently no longer at home. Manolo's problems of communication are also mirrored in the adult world as he arrives with his mother at the home of her new partner to find a table for two, the result of a message which was not received. The sense of community created by means of the features of the narrative style described in 'El descubrimiento de América' contrast here with a far more extensive use of dialogue, which marks the breakdown of the 'community' (in this case Manolo's family) and highlights ironically the ineffectiveness of attempts at communication.

The predominance of direct speech is even more marked in ‘El hombre, el cinema y el tranvía’, in which a metanarrator presents a tale in which the relationship between art and life, cultural creation and lived actuality – a central theme of later works – is explored for the first time. Here the creation of distances implicit in the predominant use of dialogue reflects Manolo’s continuing alienation from all around him, but it also highlights the formulaic nature of the expression of those who witness the death of a man who is dismembered by a tram under which he falls:

—No pude hacer nada por evitarlo —dijo el conductor, de pie frente al descuartizado.
—¡Dios mío! —exclamó una vieja gorda, que llevaba una bolsa llena de verduras—.
En los años que llevo viajando en esta línea...
—Hay que llamar a un policía —interrumpió alguien.
La gente continuaba aglomerándose frente al descuartizado, igual a la gente que se aglomera frente a un muerto o un herido.
—Circulen. Circulen —ordenó un policía que llegaba en ese momento.
—No pude hacer nada por evitarlo, jefe.
—¡Circulen! Que alguien traiga un periódico para cubrirlo.
—Hay que llamar a una ambulancia. (p. 163)

Such formulaic expression becomes devoid of meaning and is anathema to the communication and expression of emotion Manolo hopes to achieve. His alienation from such people and their perception of events is made explicit when he goes with his friend to a bar after the accident, and while everyone else drinks their daily beer, unaffected by the horrors of life, Manolo orders a straight pisco.

The final story is ‘Extraña diversión’, which provides an open ending to the collection, as it is unclear whether the action takes place before Manolo leaves for Europe or whether it takes place after his optimistic return to Peru at the close of ‘Dos indios’ (the customary references to Manolo’s age are missing). If the latter interpretation is accepted then it would seem that such optimism was misplaced. The third-person narrator presents the reader with Manolo wandering the streets of Lima in a state of clear mental imbalance, and after the setting of the scene a first-person stream of consciousness interrupts, providing an explanation for Manolo’s behaviour via a string of infinitives which summarise his behaviour in his

relationships with Cecilia and América, and which plot the course of his alienation from the possibility of communication and emotional integrity. The abrupt shift from third-person narrative to stream of consciousness denotes a dramatic reduction of the distance between the character and the narrator. Given the relationship that has been created between the narrator and reader by means of the narrative strategies described above, the reader is likely to share the narrator's apparent sympathy for Manolo, with the dramatic charge of the narrative significantly heightened as a result. The effect is sustained as the narrative assumes the form of Manolo's unmediated thoughts for the remainder of the story as he regresses to a childlike condition in an attempt to recover the values he once held. The sympathy that has been established for Manolo throughout the collection, by stylistic and thematic means, comes to a climax when he finally encounters a group of people who similarly refuse to conform to the norms of Lima's society and who have returned to a state in which the recuperation of childhood behaviour and its accompanying innocence is possible. As Manolo sits on the wall of the lunatic asylum with his new-found friends, he at last seems to have found the opportunity for communication and happiness he has sought, albeit it at the cost of profound alienation.

Free indirect discourse and stream of consciousness provide Bryce with the ideal tools for a survey of the psychological development of Manolo, whose sentimental education between the ages of thirteen and twenty-two is traced, and it is this emotional journey that is of real interest to the reader and adult narrator alike in this collection of short stories. Manolo's increasing alienation from the ideals of the paradise lost of childhood is highlighted by the sense of community of the stories with their common protagonist, setting and themes, as well as the reappearance across stories of items such as the brown corduroy jacket and figures such as Miguel. Moreover, the stories of the collection which come first chronologically, and in which Manolo is relatively integrated with his family and peers, see a more extensive use

of third-person narrative with dual temporal perspectives and occasional free indirect discourse, reflecting the greater sense of community experienced at this age, while the stories that chart his growing alienation feature dialogue to a far greater degree, marking distances and ironically underscoring the protagonist's inability to achieve communication. The consistent use of diverse narrative strategies to establish relationships between the adolescent and adult Manolo, the reader and the narrator, and the reader and the protagonist makes the communication of the themes of marginalisation and alienation all the more effective. While Bryce is clearly aware of the potential of such techniques as instruments for reducing or creating narrative distance, as his dissertation on Hemingway confirms, his use of them is at times uncertain, as befits a first work.

In an interview with Leonardo Padura Fuentes, Bryce acknowledged that *Huerto cerrado* is the first work of an author striving to find his own voice, seeing 'Con Jimmy, en Paracas' as the only story of any literary value.⁴⁸ As has been seen, this story was written some time after the others and predates by a matter of days the genesis of *Un mundo para Julius*. It is here, in Bryce's first novel, that the narrative strategies present only in nascent form in *Huerto cerrado* are employed with mastery and to great effect, clearly having benefited from the learning process undergone in the creation of *Huerto cerrado*.

⁴⁸ Leonardo Padura Fuentes, 'Retrato y voz de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Plural*, CCXXIV (May 1990), 35-40, at p. 38.

Marginalisation via theme and narrative in *Un mundo para Julius*.

The alienation of the individual from society has revealed itself as a key theme in *Huerto cerrado*, and is as apparent in Manolo's lonely teenage angst in Lima as it is in Martín Romaña's nervous breakdown in Paris and Spain in *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, to be discussed subsequently. In his acclaimed first novel, *Un mundo para Julius*, Bryce Echenique charts the development of the eponymous protagonist between the ages of four and eleven as he grows up in a family of the old oligarchy that is adapting through a second marriage to the US-oriented capitalism which has typified Peru's development since the second half of the twentieth century. During the course of these childhood years the sensitive Julius gradually moves away from the sphere of influence of the servants (characterised by their emotional sincerity) who have been entrusted with his care, until by the end of the novel he enters adolescence and it appears that the world of his brothers and stepfather (characterised by a concern for the external and the material) is that for which he is destined. The theme of marginalisation can be seen to be in play for most of the work's many characters as they strive to define or redefine their place in *limeño* society in relation to each other, but attention here will be focused primarily on the manner in which the core of a dozen or so protagonists, particularly Julius, his immediate family, and their servants, experience or impose a marginalised condition, and on the resulting effects of this process. Given Julius's family background it is perhaps to be expected that some of the marginalisation to be considered will be social in its character, but it is also experienced at a number of other levels: with regard to the servants alone, Jacques Soubeyroux identifies spatial and ideological, as well as social marginalisation;⁴⁹ in the case of Julius's family, the same factors are of course at work in reverse, as they seek to impose a condition of *marginado* on others.

⁴⁹ 'Rapport sociaux et niveaux de discours dans *Un mundo para Julius*', in *Co-textes 9: Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1985), pp. 83-99, at p. 87.

Cultural models and influences are also of great importance in this process, as are issues relating to language use, while narrative strategy and narrative structure in turn play a significant role.

From 1968 to 1978 Peru was governed by the left-wing *Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas*, which undertook an extensive Agrarian Reform programme and in many ways provided the nail in the coffin for an *hacienda*-based oligarchy already in decline. Against this background Washington Delgado hailed the novel on its publication as constituting ‘un servicio a la revolución’;⁵⁰ this reading which has held much currency, despite being at odds with that of the author, and can perhaps best be seen in this particular historical context and coincidence, for while the oligarchy’s existence is depicted in all its injustice, stagnation and futility, mentions of social movements are limited to fleeting references to strikes and workers’ rights, and there is certainly no proposal for a revolution of the kind that was actually taking place. Without entering here into further discussion of the novel as a socio-historical document, attention instead is drawn to the treatment of the demise of the oligarchy in articles by George McMurray and James Higgins.⁵¹

Taking as a starting point the structure of the novel itself, there are already here features that contribute to the sense of exclusivity which prevails with regard to Julius’s family, whose existence is devoted to maintaining the status quo. As J. Ann Duncan points out, the abolition of a structural hierarchy which typifies certain other innovative Latin American novels (such as *Pedro Páramo* or *Rayuela*) is not a feature of *Un mundo para Julius*. Instead there is a conventional framework and a chronological progression in the sequence of events. As Duncan also notes, however, ‘neither the events nor their sequence is really significant;

⁵⁰ Washington Delgado, ‘*Un mundo para Julius* de Alfredo Bryce’, *Creación y crítica*, VII (1971), 13-14, at p. 13.

⁵¹ George McMurray, ‘Un canto del cisne peruano’, *Nueva narrativa hispanoamericana*, IV (1974), 363-366, and James Higgins, ‘*Un mundo para Julius*: the swan-song of the Peruvian oligarchy’, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, IV (1998), 35-45. The latter draws heavily on my PhD thesis for its consideration of narrative strategies.

they could all be replaced by others, or could occur in a different order.⁵² What is implicit in this observation is the arbitrariness of the order described, and by extension the same may be seen to be true of the social order with which the reader is presented, one of many criticisms levelled against it during the course of the novel. The text itself has five sections which bear an overwhelming sense of circularity, highlighted by the title ('Retornos') of the final section and reinforced by the fact that the first section in turn has five chapters, with the last dealing with the return of the family to the home in which the novel opened. Indeed, even before undertaking a reading of the text, the reader is confronted with an indication of the importance of this theme in the two epigraphs to the work: «Lo que Juanito no aprende, no lo sabrá nunca Juan.» (Refrán alemán); and «Raza de Abel, raza de los justos, raza de los ricos, qué tranquilamente habláis. Es agradable, ¿no es cierto?, tener para sí el cielo y también al gendarme. Qué agradable es pensar un día como su padre y el padre de su padre...» (Jean Anouilh, *Médée, Nouvelles Pièces Noires*). The backdrop for the five sections is similarly circular, moving from home to school to Country Club to school and back to the home, while at the same time there is a series of events which are repeated in the course of the novel, particularly between the first and last sections. Such events include the attempted rape of maids by Santiago and subsequently Bobby, the deaths and burials of Bertha and Arminda, the arrival in Lima of Lester Lang III in the opening section and of his son Lester Lang IV in the final one, Rafaelito's birthday party and Bobby's *fiesta de promoción*, and the 'reappearance' of Cinthia after her early death. Although the events are not exact repetitions, there are significant similarities between them which enable the reader to make comparisons and decide the extent to which progress has been made. The indications are that the differences in comparable events confirm what is implied by the opening epigraphs, and that Santiago and Bobby are to follow in the footsteps of Juan Lucas. Julius too is repeatedly seen

⁵² J. Ann Duncan, 'Language as Protagonist: Tradition and Innovation in Bryce Echenique's *Un mundo para*

to be taking the path traced by his older brothers as he is groomed to take over the family business interests, and as he does so the symbols of his marginalisation from his stepfather become less pronounced, as his mother unwittingly notes: ‘cómo ha crecido Julius y cómo ya no es tan orejón’ (p. 486).⁵³ The de-emphasising of his ears may also be seen to symbolise the decreasing attention he pays to the voices and language of the servants who dominated his early childhood. Julius’s condition as a child and his prominent ears exclude him from the world of adult pleasures and physical perfection inhabited by his stepfather and mother, and these outstanding features are given even greater prominence in alternative openings to the novel, included in the appendix to Ortega’s edition. In these, and in the actual opening, Julius is repeatedly described as ‘de espaldas’, which makes his ears all the more noticeable, but is only in the alternative versions that the reason for this is made explicit: ‘porque él vivió de espaldas a su mundo, como si no quisiera saber de él’ (p. 605). This marginalisation as an innocent child from the world of the elite is gradually eroded until at the close of the novel it would seem, most poignantly, that it is the world of his stepfather, characterised by physical perfection and the primacy of the external and material, for which Julius is destined.

As well as the *grandes momentos* described above, the daily routine of Juan Lucas and Susan, revolving around the golf club, is portrayed as futile, superficial and hedonistic, and is summarised by José Luis de la Fuente in the following terms:

La vida de esos ricos de la oligarquía se configura como una continuada sucesión de repetidos momentos de reunión y ocio que solapan los que pudieran existir de obligaciones profesionales y de producción, lo que imprime una sensación de grupo social nada dinámico, cuyos movimientos suponen una constante circunvalación sin progreso en torno a sí mismos.⁵⁴

Such a negative appraisal may seem to be at odds with that of Jacques Soubeyroux in his aforementioned piece, when he states that

Julius, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, XVI (1980), 120-135, at p. 131.

⁵³ All page references are to Julio Ortega’s edition, Colección Letras Hispánicas 369 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1993).

⁵⁴ De la Fuente, *Cómo leer a Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 48.

Un mundo para Julius presenta una visión dinámica de Lima, que transcribe los profundos cambios sociológicos de la capital peruana durante los años 1945-70: un proceso de renovación de la oligarquía tradicional de terratenientes por la integración de elementos ligados al capitalismo internacional; desplazamiento de barrios residenciales hacia las afueras de la ciudad; migración masiva y crecimiento de barriadas periféricas; proletarización creciente de las clases bajas.⁵⁵

The importance difference lies in Soubeyroux's consideration of others than Julius's immediate family: while Susan and Juan Lucas undeniably move to their purpose-built *palacio nuevo* in the recently-developed Monterrico, their condition remains unchanged; the same is manifestly not true of the other dozens of characters who populate the novel, whose condition undergoes fundamental change, be it for the better (Imelda, who graduates in *corte y confección*, Daniel and Celso who gain a foothold on Lima's social ladder with the construction of their houses, or Juan Lastarria, who becomes increasingly accepted into Juan Lucas's company) or for the worse (Vilma, the nanny sacked after Santiago's attempted rape, who ends up as the prostitute visited by Bobby, or Nilda, the cook whose baby dies after she too is sacked). By comparison with the changing condition of these many characters, Juan Lucas and Susan are interested only in being at the top rather than getting to the top of the socio-economic hierarchy, or even simply in being further from the bottom, and are seen to be leading an existence which is not only fruitless (it is symbolic that no children are born of Susan's marriage to Juan Lucas), but which is marginal to the dynamic portrayal of Lima as described by Soubeyroux.

Another feature of the novel that plays a significant part in the marginalisation of Julius's family, and especially of Juan Lucas, Santiago and Bobby, from the society in which they live is the narrative style. References to the orality of the narrative of *Un mundo para Julius* are ubiquitous in analyses of the novel, and through the recurrent use of colloquialisms and a conversational tone the effect of this orality is to place the narrator at a level which approximates far more closely to that of the reader than to the privileged world of Juan Lucas

and Susan, from which reader and narrator alike are excluded by linguistic and other means. From the opening pages of the novel the narrator sets about establishing a relationship between himself and the reader which draws the latter towards a complicity with the former's perspective. As early as the second page of the novel narrative strategies are employed to this effect, with the inclusion of the reader in the perspective of the narrator ('ya lo hemos dicho') and the use of parenthetical asides, similar to those discussed in the context of *Huerto cerrado*, aimed at ushering the reader towards the construction of a negative vision of the world of the oligarchy:

cuando se acabaron las visitas que entraban calladitas y pasaban de frente al salón más oscuro del palacio (hasta en eso había pensado el arquitecto), cuando los sirvientes recobraron su mediano tono de voz al hablar [...], papá murió. (p. 78)

These strategies are employed repeatedly throughout the work, and are complemented subsequently by more direct address of the reader, who is clearly assumed to share much common ground with the narrator: 'la casa ésa de vidrio que hay sobre un cerro en Monterrico, ¿cómo?, ¿no la has visto todavía?, ¡pero si ha salido fotografiada en todas las revistas!' (p. 330). Indeed, the narrator explicitly attempts to distance himself from a position of detached omniscience, locating himself instead on a par with the imagined reader, as when the family return from their journey to Europe, which will be widely reported in the local media: 'Hablarían de su viaje sin que ellos lo quisieran... (Ya por ahí no me meto: eso es algo que pertenece al yo profundo de los limeños; nunca se sabrá; eso de querer salir, o no, en «sociales», juran que no...)' (p. 155). Once this relationship has been established the mutual exclusion of reader and narrator from Juan Lucas and Susan's circles is made abundantly clear, and through inclusion in the narrative process the reader is made to share the marginalisation suffered by the other characters ('En otro baño, uno que tú nunca tendrás', p. 174; 'se conocían en restaurants en que la cuenta podía ser tu sueldo', p. 294).

⁵⁵ Soubeyroux, 'Rapports sociaux', p. 84.

A similar, but far more complex, set of relationships is created between the narrator and the main characters as the novel progresses. Direct address is again one of the strategies employed, on some dozen occasions, and on all but one of these it is Julius that is addressed; the upshot is that he becomes the only character to enjoy a similar degree of intimacy with the narrator to that experienced by the reader. The tone used in these instances (some of which extend over several pages) is as informal and amicable as it is when the narrator addresses the reader, thereby creating a bond not only between narrator and reader, and between narrator and Julius, but also – as a result of the common treatment both receive at the hands of the pivotal narrator – between reader and protagonist. The use of this technique here can be seen to be more accomplished than was the case in *Huerto cerrado*, in terms both of its frequency and, especially, of its effectiveness as a means of complementing the thematic content of the narrative.

A far more pervasive narrative strategy in the creation of bonds between the narrator and the characters is the adoption of a character's pattern of speech or of thought by the narrator in the presentation of an event or episode. This leads to the work's constantly shifting narrative perspective, which allows for a good deal of subjective interpretation and places the novel above the conventional social novel of dogmatic denunciation. Here again the position of Julius is particularly prominent, and the narrator slips into free indirect discourse so routinely that it becomes the norm, as can be appreciated from the following passage, again taken from the opening pages, highlighting the manner in which the reader is immediately drawn into the complex web of relations which reflects the reality of the society in which the action takes place.

Sólo Julius comía en el comedorcito o comedor de los niños, llamado ahora comedor de Julius. Aquí lo que había era una especie de Disneylandia: las paredes eran puro Pato Donald, Caperucita Roja, Mickey Mouse, Tarzán, Chita, Jane bien vestidita, Superman sacándole la mugre probablemente a Drácula, Popeye y Olivia muy muy flaca; en fin, todo esto pintado en las cuatro paredes. Los espaldares de las sillas eran zanahorias y la mesa

en que comía Julius la cargaban cuatro indiecitos que nada tenían que ver con los indiecitos

que la chola hermosa de Puquio le contaba mientras lo bañaba en Beverly Hills. ¡Ah!, además había un columpio, con su silletita colgante para lo de toma tu sopita Julito (a veces, hasta Juliuscito), una cucharadita por tu mamá, otra por Cintita, otra por tu hermano Bobicito y así sucesivamente, pero nunca una por tu papito porque papito había muerto de cáncer. A veces, su madre pasaba por ahí, mientras lo columpiaban atragantándolo de sopa, y escuchaba los horrendos diminutivos con que la servidumbre arruinaba los nombres

de sus hijos. «Realmente no sé para qué les hemos puesto esos nombres tan lindos, decía. Si los oyeras decir Cintita en vez de Cinthia, Julito en vez de Julius, ¡qué horror!» Se lo decía a alguien por teléfono, pero Julius casi no lograba escucharla porque, entre la sopa que se acababa, y el columpio que lo mecía abrazándolo como la planta del sueño, poco a poco se iba adormeciendo, hasta quedar listo para que la chola hermosa lo recogiera y se lo

llevara a su dormitorio. (p. 81)

As is apparent here, the narrative perspective shifts continuously and very rapidly to allow the words and thoughts of characters who enjoy the narrator's sympathy to enter the narrative, representing a narratorial endorsement. The narrator may also add further weight to the perspective of a particular character (again, it is typically found in association with Julius) by adopting their form of expression himself through speech allusion, as when he describes how Julius 'abría grandazos los ojos' (p. 83) or repeatedly refers to Susan as 'linda'. When such approval, despite occasional ironic use (as in 'papito había muerto de cáncer' above), is granted to a character, then the reader, through his complicity with the narrator, is encouraged to share the perspective of this character and to view them in a similarly favourable light. The above section of text is representative not only in its style, but in that the character, other than Julius, whose perspective we share is one of the servants (in this case Vilma), as the narrator's treatment of this group is uniformly sympathetic, as indeed it is with most characters who are in some way vulnerable or excluded from the hegemonic group. In this context it is interesting to note that Susan's words in the above passage are not given narratorial endorsement through free indirect discourse, but are separated from the flow of the narrative as direct speech, and are thereby hers and hers alone, reflecting the fact that she does not form part of the complex relationships of Lima's society to which the narrator

and assumed reader belong. Julius and Cinthia are named after two of Susan's friends from her time in a convent school in London and each name contains a sound which is notoriously difficult for Spanish speakers to pronounce. As a result anyone without an excellent command of English would be unable to pronounce their names correctly. The fact that Susan rarely frequents circles where people have no knowledge of English is something that the reader must consider. However, given that the servants are monolingual Spanish speakers, they make *criollo* approximations to the pronunciation of their names, changing the difficult sounds and adding the ubiquitous Peruvian diminutive. It is Susan's reaction to this that we find in direct speech, and the change in style creates a distance between the narrator and Susan's words, thereby dissociating both himself and the reader from her. Speech marks were used to similar effect in *Huerto cerrado*, and just such a narrative distance is also maintained in the case of Juan Lucas, a character for whom the narrator has little sympathy as a result of his ruthlessness with the vulnerable and his exclusion of almost all others from his world. Santiago and Bobby, particularly in the later stages of the novel, when they are well down the path to becoming younger versions of their stepfather, are also kept at arm's length via the reporting of their words in direct speech and by the use of irony to which free indirect discourse lends itself. By the closing pages constant reinforcement of the narrative strategies which serve to create the complex relations between narrator, reader and characters create a situation whereby Julius's immediate family finds itself isolated from the community of characters from the lower and middle classes (servants, Juan Lastarria, various vulnerable classmates from Julius's school, notably Cano) which has been built up throughout the course of the novel. Rather than portraying a society inferior to and excluded by the oligarchy, the narrative strategy inverts the accepted view and instead serves to suggest that Juan Lucas and those like him are marginal to Peruvian society.

In addition to a narrative style that seeks to engage the reader as part of its community, another feature that contributes to the sustained enjoyment of reading the novel is the use of humour. However, the pervasive use of humour does more than add to the informality and orality of the text, thereby strengthening further the bond between narrator and reader: it complements the creation of a community of characters via the narrative strategies described and plays a significant role in calling into question the position of those at the top of the social hierarchy. Bryce is fully aware of this potential and of the importance of humour, which he described as ‘un personaje en la novela’.⁵⁶ This has been attested in interviews:

Lo que realmente busco con el humor es, utilizándolo como herramienta, penetrar en la realidad de una manera más profunda y sutil. [...] Lo que el humor pide es que se le crea, y por eso precisamente genera una complicidad con el lector.⁵⁷

This process of drawing the reader into the narrative reflects what is achieved by the consistent and repeated use of various narrative techniques, and the characters alongside whom the reader is aligned through the use of humour similarly correspond to those who receive a sympathetic portrayal as a result, for example, of their words and thoughts being incorporated into free indirect discourse.

Many of the humorous episodes rely on the creation an incongruous situation, the tension of which is resolved through laughter. One such example is the ‘loss’ of Julius during his stay in Chosica with the servants: as Vilma and Nilda imagine progressively more catastrophic outcomes of their charge’s disappearance, the reader has already been made aware that he is quite safe with Peter the painter. That this episode should revolve around the servants is entirely representative, as the humour created in association with them corresponds exactly to the sympathy generated for them at the levels of theme and narrative style. The other character whose narrative presentation encourages our sympathy is of course Julius, and he is

⁵⁶ César Hildebrandt, ‘El regreso de Julius’, *Caretas*, 24 July 1972, 36-39.

⁵⁷ Fernando Rodríguez Lafuente (ed), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: semana de autor* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1991), p. 46.

at the centre of numerous amusing incidents, many of which depend on the gap between adult and childhood perspectives exploited for other purposes in *Huerto cerrado*.

Habían colocado una banca y ellos se acercaban uno por uno, se arrodillaban y el padre Brown les daba su cachetadita y les hacía una seña para que se marcharan y viniera el próximo. Luego volvían y el padre les tocaba la boca, así iba a ser cuando les diera la hostia. Pero más serio, más grave, porque ese día iban a recibir a Dios en la hostia consagrada. Varias veces practicaron, ellos encantados porque perdían clases con la Zanahoria. Además, terminado el día escolar, al salir al patio jugaban a lo de la confirmación y se daban tremendas cachetadas. (p. 212)

The humour arises from the juxtaposition of the seriousness with which Father Brown treats the rehearsals with the playful recreation of the event by the schoolchildren, who are unaware of the sacrilege they are committing in the eyes of the religious school's authorities. Here then is an example of humour being used not only to generate a bond between the reader and certain characters, but also to undermine a figure of authority, in this case Father Brown, whose position in the school run by US nuns acts as one of many structures which serve to perpetuate the social order headed by Juan Lucas. There are resonances here of José María Arguedas's *Los ríos profundos*; Bryce has also acknowledged similarities with Arguedas in the context of the problems in reproducing a particular (and unorthodox) language code, and the same author comes to mind again with regard to the affirmation of non-hegemonic values, to be discussed below.⁵⁸

Another type of humorous episode draws upon notions of superiority, and lends itself particularly to the erosion of hierarchies such as those called into question in the course of this novel. The effect of humour that depends on superiority is greatly enhanced if the reader's identification class (in this case Julius and the servants) is esteemed and a non-identification class (Juan Lucas and those like him) is the butt of the humour. This theory can be seen to be at work to some degree in the text quoted above, in which the schoolchildren enjoy the reader's confidence while Father Brown's position within the structures of authority

ensures that he does not. Over the course of the novel it is noticeable that those in positions of social pre-eminence are consistently undermined through the use of humour, and are thereby brought down from their lofty heights to a level far closer to that of the other characters. This can be seen to be true for the *Madre Superiora* of Julius's school (whose imitation of the language of childhood reduces her to the level of the children, as well as being incongruous), for Fernando Ranchal, the only Peruvian to be treated by Juan Lucas as an equal, but who is cut down to size by Julius's story 'El señor de negro'. It is no surprise that Juan Lucas himself should find himself on the receiving end of such treatment, as when he admires the view from the new mansion through a crystal glass full of whisky: 'Juan Lucas se encontró un poco ridiculón, tan sensitivo ahí, combinando colores, inventando caleidoscopios y decidiendo de esa forma el color de unas telas que pensaba encargar a Londres' (p. 478). This deflation of Juan Lucas through humour at his expense is also made explicit as the narrator undermines his position and ridicules his obsession with external perfection, thus questioning the value system that this underpins: 'En efecto, ahí estaba Juan Lucas, vestido para la ocasión (probablemente el día en que haya terremoto aparecerá Juan Lucas gritando ¡socorro! ¡mis palos de golf!, y perfectamente vestido para la ocasión)' (p. 154). The conspiratorial tone of the parenthetical aside, directed to the reader, highlights the close and complementary relationship between humour and narrative strategies, which combine to increase the engagement of the reader with the text at the same time as creating a community of characters alongside whom the narrator and reader align themselves. Just as significantly, they combine to create a small core of other characters from whom the same community are kept apart.

The language used by the characters is as important as that used by the narrator with regard to marginalisation, acting as it does as an important factor of exclusion. Already discussed

⁵⁸ Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla, la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Universidad

above are the English names of Susan's youngest children, and the more general use of English (and to a lesser degree French) by members of the social elite creates a barrier which monolingual Spanish-speakers cannot cross. Perhaps more than anyone else it is Juan Lastarria, whose English is limited to 'My duchess' (to address Susan), who experiences the impenetrability of this barrier, as he repeatedly finds himself excluded on linguistic grounds alone from the circle to which he aspires. Moreover, the correct use of English (and French) as a means of exclusion is not unconscious or innocent, and Susan considers her knowledge of these languages an important marker of her status, as is revealed among other occasions by the Nicaraguan ambassador's imperfect use of French (p. 236), or during a school prizegiving ceremony: 'Cosas así pensaba y sentía Susan, linda y mejor que todas porque hablaba en inglés' (p. 286). Her children all learn English from an early age, and soon become aware of its potential for exclusion: Santiago is out of his teens when he returns to the *palacio nuevo* to explain the ugliness of the servants to Lester Lang IV in English, then to turn to chat with them quite cordially in Spanish, but Bobby and Julius register the difference in more subtle ways and at a younger age. On several occasions Bobby is thrown out of the class in his English-speaking school 'por mandar al diablo al profesor *de castellano*' (p. 508, my italics), while in Julius's school, run by US nuns, it is again the Spanish language teacher who receives negative treatment, constantly described as *huachafa*. In addition to this detail, Julius's learning of English provides another angle on the gradual process of his distancing from the servants. During his early childhood, when Vilma was to all intents and purposes a substitute mother, Julius enjoyed a very close relationship with the servants, virtually living with them and sharing their lives, but by the close of the novel he rejects the visiting Nilda as 'horrible' and learns that Vilma is a prostitute. While this distancing was very much desired by Juan Lucas, he alone cannot claim credit for it, and the role of Julius's knowledge of

English in the process is not to be underestimated. Having received the bulk of his informal education from the servants, largely through the oral tradition, the subsequent acceptance of the – very different – written version of these events from schoolbooks in English provokes a change in his relations with his former close friends, now excluded from his experience:

Algo caducaba, también, porque no todo en los textos escolares era como Nilda o Vilma o los mayordomos le habían contado. [...] Y para remate, una buena parte de esos textos estaba en inglés y, cuando él leía en voz alta, para traducirles enseguida, ellos lo miraban con desconfianza, entre asustados y avergonzados. (p. 207)

The filter of English, used to recreate Peruvian reality, creates a definitive distance between that reality as lived by the servants and as experienced by Julius through his schoolbooks. He is of course also party to the various conversations in English which take place between his mother, stepfather, and associates, and thereby gains access not only to another linguistic code, but also to another set of values. By the final chapter of the novel Julius corrects the servants' approximations to English names (p. 533) in the same way that Susan did in the opening chapter, and the use of language comes to symbolise the protagonist's passing from one world to another, never more conspicuously than through his learning of the double meaning of 'tirar', which removes him from a condition of childhood innocence and allows him to gain an insight into the world of deceit and moral decay inhabited by Bobby.

Although language is used as a powerful tool for exclusion and marginalisation by Julius's family and other members of the elite, the narrator, by a variety of linguistic means, undermines their position of supposed pre-eminence. In her aforementioned article, J. Ann Duncan discusses the narrator's use of adjectival markers (Susan – 'linda', Susana – 'horrible', Juan Lucas – 'vestido para la ocasión') and compares them to stage masks, thus drawing attention to the importance of the external and material, as opposed to the internal and emotional, to the elite. The image of the stage mask also conveys the superficiality of the characters thus portrayed, and when it is realized that such characters belong to the oligarchy another level of criticism is added to those which are apparent as a result of their actions and

words. Another means employed by the narrator to undermine the importance attached to language is by suggesting its arbitrary nature. This is achieved by the use of minimal linguistic difference in connection with maximum semantic divergence: Susan is uniformly and universally perceived as 'linda' while her cousin Susana is 'fea' and 'horrible'; Juan Lucas is the model of elegance and good taste while Juan Lastarria is quite the opposite. Such considerations are compounded when we learn that Susan used to be known as Susana by her Spanish-speaking mother, and that the English version took precedence only during her teenage years in London. By pointing up the lack of an inherent relationship between the characters' names and their adjectival marker, or mask, the reader is invited to question the relationship between word used and object described, and the conclusions may be applied equally well to the use of English over Spanish and the apparent superiority of those who use the former. This whole topic is greatly enriched by the characters of Cano and Carlos, both of whom attempt to reorganise reality on their own terms through their use of language: Carlos subverts conventional language through the use of Lima slang, which reduces social differences through burlesque, while Cano systematically renames objects to fit his subjective – and marginalised – vision of the world.

Alongside the use of foreign languages as a means of exclusion is the use of foreign objects, places and points of reference as the norm among the elite, and especially among Julius's family. Susan is of English and Spanish colonial stock, and the prestige of the former in particular is recognised by all levels of society, from Juan Lastarria, who sees Susan's grandfather as 'tan británico en todo, tan señor, como ya no los hay y con ese nombre tan sugestivo, Patrick, estudió en Oxford, ¿no?, ¡cuánta tradición!' (p. 110), to Gumersindo Quiñones, the driver of Julius's school bus, who replies 'Ah, eso ya es distinto' (p. 205) when Julius reminds him that his mother was educated not in Lima's exclusive Villa María, but in London. She continues to make a life based around points of reference which are either

physically removed from the present Peruvian reality (she has Dutch butter and English marmalade for breakfast, drives a Mercedes, drinks Coca-Cola, and flicks through European magazines) or temporally distant from it (her paintings of the *Cuzqueña* school, the *carroza* of her grandfather-president in which Julius plays, her colonial antiques). Juan Lucas looks more to the United States, especially as far as business interests are concerned, but he too uses objects imported from Europe in his recreation of a European physical and cultural space (golf, cars, clothes, toiletries, drinks, meals) which makes his life in Lima what it is. This is perhaps made most explicit during the *feria de octubre* (Lima's bullfighting season), when Juan Lucas imports a range of Spanish items, from sherry and red wine to cigars and music, 'los elementos que lo harían sentirse en Madrid, esta feria de octubre' (p. 250). Despite the thoroughness with which this world is materially recreated, the narrator deflates it by pointing up its fleeting artificiality: '[Susan] les [los toreros] presenta a niñas rubias que tienen toros de lidia en sus haciendas y que son como Ava Gardners jovencitas desde mediados de octubre hasta fines de noviembre, solamente' (p. 251).

The *vida feliz* of Juan Lucas and Susan depends not only on the recreation of a foreign cultural space in Lima, but also on visits to these spaces themselves: their holidays are spent in Europe (significantly, a solitary trip to Quito ends in frustration), and Europe and the United States offer the solution to moments of crisis. When Cinthia's illness becomes acute, she is flown to a hospital in Boston, and when she dies the family, minus Julius, goes to Europe; when Santiago fails the year at University, he is sent to the US to continue his studies there, and a similar course of action is suggested for Bobby when he is struggling at school. However, Europe and the United States do not provide the solutions in the expected manner: Cinthia dies in Boston; Susan returns from Europe married to the unpleasant Juan Lucas; and Santiago returns from the United States with 'la mirada vacía', leading a completely narcissistic existence. Foreign solutions would appear to be shown as incompatible with

Peruvian reality (another reason for the ‘revolutionary’ reading of the text), never more clearly so than during Bobby’s jilted rage: ‘Alguien, seguro que en los Estados Unidos, creyó que había terminado con el problema de los ruidos en las casas, pero para qué, como se dice en Lima [...]’ (p. 479).

The aim for the oligarchs is to recreate a world from which other Peruvians are excluded, be it linguistically, culturally, socially, or materially, and sharing the marginalisation of the Peruvian readership are the narrator and reader, whose exclusion from the world of foreign points of reference (here it is the golf course) is again not left implicit.

Hablaban en inglés o en castellano, pero sea cual fuere el idioma que escogían, inferían en él con deliciosas palabras extranjeras. También, a veces, hablaban en francés, por lo de la embajadora, pero ahí ya sí que muchas de las nacionales se pasaban la tarde sin decir esta boca es mía. [...] Si, por ejemplo, en ese momento, te hubieras asomado por el cerco que encerraba todo lo que cuento, habrías quedado convencido de que la vida no puede ser más

feliz y más hermosa; además, habrías visto muy buenos jugadores de golf, hombres sin edad, de brazos fuertes y ágiles, y mujeres chambonas en lo de darle a la pelotita pero lindas. Quedándote asomado un ratito más, y con un poco de perspicacia, habrías podido también reconocer a Juan Lastarria y al profesional argentino, bien canchero este último, caminando los dos tras la pelotita y todo lo que ella representaba. (p. 199)

The ubiquitous references to European and North American linguistic usage, physical objects and points of comparison make it clear that it is not just a series of incidents, but a whole way of life that depends on these crutches, without which Susan and Juan Lucas would be condemned to the life of the ordinary Peruvians from whom they strive so hard to distinguish and separate themselves. Early in the novel’s first section, by which time the reader has already encountered scores of foreign points of reference in Julius’s bedroom and dining room, described as ‘una especie de Disneylandia’ (p. 81), the narrator, typically by use of a parenthetical aside, draws attention to this crucial aspect of the novel. Explaining the presence of Julius and Cinthia at Rafael Lastarria’s birthday party, the narrator tells us: ‘Y, un poco por lo que en geografía suele llamarse determinismo geográfico (antideterminismo lo hace el hombre), Julius y Cinthia continuaban metidos en todo eso’ (p. 102). When,

subsequently, the reader becomes fully aware of the family's constant attempts to transcend Peruvian reality by the means described above, the implications of this statement can be appreciated, and what the narrator is implying in no uncertain terms is that Susan, Juan Lucas and other oligarchs are engaged in 'antideterminismo geográfico', and the manner of narrative presentation of this term indicates that it is a practice of which the narrator is critical. Given the bond created between reader and narrator, discussed above, the reader is invited to share the narrator's dim view of this superficial and transplanted way of life.

Those who conform to 'determinismo geográfico', by contrast, are those for whom the reader is encouraged to feel sympathy through the narrative strategies, another reason why the novel was read as part of the Revolutionary process under way in the Peru of the early 1970s, as Quechua was granted co-official status and efforts were made to integrate traditionally subjugated sectors of society into the political process via national mobilisation networks. The servants, who act as the family's Other, represent a cross-section of Peru's non-white society: Vilma is a *mestiza* from Puquio in the Andean foothills; Nilda is a *selvática* from Madre de Dios; Carlos is a negro from Lima; and Celso is from Huaracundo, Cuzco. They live out their lives firmly within Peruvian reality, with points of reference taken almost exclusively from inside Peru (the few which are not tend to come from Mexico, whose *mestizo* experience – and its official recognition via that country's own revolutionary process – make it a highly appropriate point of comparison). Any one of Juan Lucas and Susan's many journeys to the golf club in the Mercedes or Jaguar, thinking of a Coca-Cola and their next or last foreign trip can be usefully contrasted with the journey made by Arminda from her shanty town (ironically named 'La Florida') to the Country Club on the tram. For the duration of the journey (over 6 pages) the foreign points of reference are conspicuous by their absence, replaced instead by a harsh Peruvian reality which Arminda literally struggles to survive. The return journey is less physically arduous, as Carlos takes her in the Mercedes,

but it is just as revealing with regard to the difference between the worlds of the elite and the rest of the population. As they enter the shanty town the road becomes a '*caminito que el tiempo ha borrado*', and as they finally reach the shack where Arminda is staying 'el Mercedes avanza perdido para que Julius vea más de esa extraña hondura, lejana como la luna del Country Club' (p. 327). The physical and temporal distance described between the world inhabited by Arminda and that of Susan and her family is precisely what the latter consciously or subconsciously creates by her collection of Colonial antiques and foreign travel. The only travel undertaken by characters in the novel not belonging to the elite is, by contrast, within Peru: Vilma returns to Puquio and Nilda to Tambopata, while there is also an allusion to the process of massive internal migration which has been under way since the 1950s: 'En la cocina, veintitrés amas llegadas a Lima de todas las regiones del Perú' (p. 98). Even those from the middle and upper classes, such as the Lastarria family and Julius's classmates, go to Ancón or some other Peruvian resort. What emerges again is a picture of the protagonist's family as a case apart, alien to the reality of life around them.

These considerations go of course to the heart of the debate about western and Andean/non-western traditions that has run since the late nineteenth century at least, and despite the lack of obvious predecessors for Bryce with regard to the world recreated in this novel, the themes that it raises can readily be inserted into an established tradition that incorporates such influential literary figures as José Carlos Mariátegui, Manuel González Prada (whose Romantic poem 'Determinismo' may find an echo in the 'determinismo geográfico' mentioned above), Arguedas and Mario Vargas Llosa. Literature in Peru has long been a forum for the exploration – and denunciation – of social and political issues, as well as a questioning of the hegemonic vision: Antonio Cornejo Polar describes this as 'una tenaz obsesión de la narrativa peruana desde, por lo menos, el siglo pasado [diecinueve]', while Julio Ortega traces the trend back to the immediate aftermath of the Conquest and to Inca

Garcilaso de la Vega and Guamán Poma de Ayala.⁵⁹ However, *indianismo* and *indigenismo* were not confined to the literary sphere; indeed their development in works of fiction was matched by their growing influence in the world of politics, the culmination of this arguably coming with the military government of Velasco Alvarado. The convergence of these various factors serves to place *Un mundo para Julius* within a tradition upon which Bryce can draw with some confidence – and to which he contributes to good effect – while at the same time it makes more understandable the initial interpretation of the work as part of the revolutionary process under way at the time of the novel’s publication.

In addition to the obvious differences between the elite and the rest of the Peruvian population, and the many measures taken by the former to recreate a world from which the latter are marginalised, it is apparent on a number of occasions that Juan Lucas in particular makes a conscious effort to exclude himself from the reality of life in Lima. From the journey in the funeral cortège it is clear that Lima is alien to Susan, and her new husband is determined that the strictly demarcated social – and physical – boundaries should be maintained. His keen awareness of these demarcations is illustrated when he is obliged to make the collection in church. His path takes him to the back of the building, where the poor are gathered, ‘sector que atravesó lo más rápido posible para dirigirse nuevamente a aguas territoriales’ (p. 256), and when Susan attempts to talk to him about the plight of those she sees during her flirt with social work he cuts her short, and soon manages to persuade her to put an end to her charitable activities. Not only, then, is life in Lima alien to the family, but Juan Lucas in particular does his utmost to ensure that this remains the case.

The fence of the golf club, the metal railings of the *palacio viejo* and the doormen at the Country Club are not the only means used by Juan Lucas and Susan to create a distance

⁵⁹ Antonio Cornejo Polar, ‘Profecía y experiencia del caos: la narrativa peruana de las últimas décadas’, in *Literatura peruana hoy. Crisis y creación*, edited by Karl Kohut, José Morales Saravia and Sonia V. Rose (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1998), pp. 23-34, at p. 27; Julio Ortega, *La cultura peruana. Experiencia y conciencia* (Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1978), p. 11.

between themselves and other Peruvians, and the few Peruvian points of reference which do appear in the novel are looked on with disdain. For example, the ‘horrible’ Susana Lastarria commits the unpardonable *faux pas* of providing the local (Andean) refreshment *chicha morada* as well as Coca-Cola and whisky at Rafael’s birthday party. Worthy of mention here is the one character in the novel who merits explicit mention of marginalisation, Gargajo López del Perú. He makes his appearance at a party during the *feria de octubre*, and in a world dominated by a preoccupation with the material, the external, and with physical beauty, his ugliness is tolerated by those he knows only because of his renowned anecdotes, humour again revealing its effectiveness in breaking down barriers. Susan is fascinated by his presence among them, and he himself is well aware of the reaction his appearance, symbolically linked to his surname, will provoke: ‘le iba dando la espalda a tanta mujer que no conocía y buscaba la integración entre sus conocidos, antes de que una mirada de asco lo marginara para siempre’ (p. 262). This sense of disgust and marginalisation epitomises the rejection of *lo peruano* by the oligarchs, whose interest is sparked only when the Peruvian can offer a moment of humour, as when Juan Lucas calls for Universo to be brought before him, to see how such a name can coexist with a *cholo* gardener. However, the fleeting and superficial nature of this engagement with national reality becomes clear when Juan Lucas cannot imagine what a gardener is doing before him when Universo makes him appearance as requested.

By end of the novel, then, the reader, as a result of the narrative strategy, has become part of a loose community of characters from Peru’s lower and middle classes, who have manifest differences, but who have in common their exclusion from the world inhabited by the elite. This strong sense of exclusion is reinforced by linguistic usage, as the members of the elite use English (and French) to marginalise monolingual Spanish speakers, while the novel’s narrative structure marks out a circular path for the members of the elite, whose stagnation is

all the more marked when contrasted with the fundamental changes that most of the other main characters experience in their condition. In addition to social and linguistic marginalisation, the lower and middle classes suffer cultural marginalisation through the physical and mental reconstruction by the elite of a foreign, predominantly European, cultural landscape. However, the resulting products of this world marked by its apparent symbols of superiority are not admirable: Susan is *linda* but little more; Juan Lucas is ruthless and cold; Santiago returns from the US hollow and heartless; Ernesto Pedro de Altamira is sickly and weak.

The marginalised condition that the members of the oligarchy impose on others through linguistic, material, social, and cultural factors is one that is imposed by a tiny minority upon the vast majority. By means of the narrator's subtle undermining and constant questioning of the grounds on which the elite marginalises others, doubts are raised as to the validity of their order of priorities and, ultimately, of the very order they suppose to head. In the society recreated by the novel, which would appear to be the world for Julius, the narrator, the reader and the overwhelming majority of the characters are excluded from the world of the elite. However, through a combination of narrative strategies, narrative structure, humour, linguistic use, and cultural points of reference the marginalised condition becomes inverted, and as a result it is the oligarchs who come to be seen as marginal: marginal to the language, to the culture and to the society that surround them and from which they constantly endeavour to exclude themselves. The lack of a family name for the main characters, and the almost complete absence of temporal markers in relation to the society depicted, afford the novel a strong sense of universality; whether or not a temporally reductive reading of the novel can allow it to be considered to constitute a 'servicio a la Revolución', there is no doubt that Susan, Juan Lucas, and their kind are shown to be profoundly out of place in Peru.

Continuation and development: *La felicidad, ja ja*.

La felicidad, ja ja shares many of the features of *Huerto cerrado*, in terms both of setting and themes. There are also, however, significant differences, as might be expected in view of the gap of some five or six years between the writing of the two collections, and possibly more importantly the intervening publication of the substantial novel *Un mundo para Julius*, which drew on many of the techniques used in *Huerto cerrado*. These differences manifest themselves in terms of a far more heterogeneous use of style, themes and characters. Bryce is aware of these developments, as attested in an interview with Rubén Bareiro Saguier, in which he commented briefly on how this collection differs from *Huerto cerrado*.

Con excepción de un par de cuentos en que retomo, de manera distinta, la temática de *Un mundo para Julius*, mi nuevo libro se abre hacia una gama de nuevas preocupaciones, por no decir de nuevas angustias. Me parece que *La felicidad, ja ja* es un libro más profundo que *Un mundo para Julius*.⁶⁰

Despite this sense of progression from Bryce's earlier works one of the stories of this collection, 'Antes de la cita con los Linares', was written in 1967 and was published together with 'Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid' prior to the appearance of the collection in full.⁶¹ In some ways these two texts can be seen to represent a summary of the salient features of Bryce's preceding production ('Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid') and that which was to follow ('Antes de la cita con los Linares'), with the remaining seven stories, written in 1971 (two) and 1972 (five) constituting a bridge between them.

The way in which *La felicidad, ja ja* differs most obviously from *Huerto cerrado* is that each of the nine stories has as its protagonist a different character, although distinct commonalities with regard to theme can again be seen. The content of the stories may be seen to continue largely to explore the isolation experienced by Manolo in *Huerto cerrado*, against a more forcefully depicted background of the decay and downfall of both individuals and social groups. This overwhelmingly negative atmosphere is the result of a profound crisis suffered by Bryce following the publication of *Un mundo para Julius*, and his close identification with F. Scott Fitzgerald's extremely downbeat epigraph has led him to refer to

⁶⁰ Rubén Bareiro Saguier, 'Entrevista: Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Hispanamérica*, VI (1974), 77-81, at p. 81.

⁶¹ *Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid. Antes de la cita con los Linares* (Lima: Mosca Azul, 1972).

this collection as ‘el libro más duro que escribí’.⁶² In order to counter their alienation a number of the characters, unable to transform themselves in a manner which will bring about the elusive happiness of the collection’s title and epigraphs, alter reality (or their relationship with it) instead. This (re)creation of a fictional world becomes a persistent tendency of Bryce’s characters in what Eyzaguirre identifies as the second and third stages of his oeuvre, and clearly opens the way to an exploration of the process of literary creation and the metafictional dimension of the author’s narrative production.⁶³

As well as homogeneity of theme and protagonist, the unity of setting of the stories of *Huerto cerrado* is also lost, since the stories here are divided roughly equally between Lima and Europe (Paris and Spain) in terms of setting. However, all the stories (except ‘Antes de la cita con los Linares’) set in Europe rely heavily on memories, usually of childhood, as a point of reference from which events in the narrated present take their meaning, and it is through them that memory enters Bryce’s literature as a recurrent focus.⁶⁴

The first story of the collection, ‘Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin’, opens with a first-person narrator addressing a friend (‘gordo’), marking a continuation of the search for the communication that proved elusive for both Manolo and Julius. The presence of an implied interlocutor (and at times an explicit audience) underlies much of Bryce’s narrative, and makes a major contribution towards the orality of his work, although here the ideological implications of such a voice do not appear to be assimilated as they are in subsequent works. The alienation of the privileged protagonist in this opening story and the accompanying depiction of social decay come about as the result of his sensitivity, which lead him to seek happiness in marriage to a shop assistant whose social aspirations he had mocked with the friend to whom he now addresses himself. The assumed dialogue becomes a monologue as the implied interlocutor significantly fails to respond, but only on the last page of the story

⁶² For a personal account of this depression see ‘Hay que pagar siempre’ in Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), pp. 336-41; Efraín Kristal, ‘Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, *Imprévue*, I-II (1979), 221-39, at p. 229.

⁶³ Luis Eyzaguirre, ‘De Julius a Manongo Sterne: la saga del protagonista en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, edited by Jean Franco and Christiane Tarroux (Montpellier: Centre d’Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1997), pp. 49-62, at p. 51.

⁶⁴ The undertones of Proust are made explicit in Bryce’s short story ‘Magdalena peruana’ in *Magdalena peruana* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1986).

when a barman interrupts does it become apparent that the monologue is interior, and no communication has taken place. The object of the second-person address is seldom referred to specifically and the effect of this sustained unspecified use is to create an illusion of communication with the reader, who is thus again engaged with the narrative process and invited to reflect on their position with regard to the social conventions and structure that have combined to alienate the narrator.

By marrying the socially inferior Carmen the narrator had hoped to escape from the hypocrisy of those like the friend to whom he addresses himself and their dominant values, characterised again by the material and the external, into a world where love and emotional expression have a place. Unfortunately Carmen is as aware of social barriers as 'gordo', and subscribes to the same set of values, marrying the narrator in the hope of climbing the social ladder and securing material wealth. This situation recalls the relationship between Manolo and América in 'El descubrimiento de América' and may be seen to provide us with a likely outcome to their liaison, were it to have continued. More interestingly it offers an example of common situations and character types to be found across Bryce's literature, another of which is the character of Felipe Anderson, who reappears in *No me esperen en abril*.

The use of second-person address by an intimate first person may be seen as particularly appropriate in highlighting problems of communication, while the introspective ramblings of a drunken narrator allow a medium for reflections on the subject to be communicated, and at the same time offer a convincing depiction of social and individual alienation. Another device used to reflect the thematic in the stylistic is the discordant presentation of proper nouns, as in the following example: 'Pero claro, ahora lo comprendo todo, ahora sé que reaccionaste en nombre de la justicia, de la sociedad, de todas esas palabras con iniciales mayúsculas que tú defiendes y encarnas' (p. 149).⁶⁵ The capital letters are missing, however, and the distance between the narrator's vision and that of his friend and society in general, made explicit on several instances, is thus reflected also at the level of narrative style.

⁶⁵ All page numbers refer to *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: Cuentos completos 1964-1974* (Madrid: Alianza, 1981).

Another trait that characterises the stories of this collection, humour, is here conspicuous by its absence, despite the comic paradigm of skinny and fatty being made explicit, and in fact defining the relationship between the narrator and his overweight friend: ‘Fuimos don Quijote y Sancho, Laurel y Hardy, Abbot y Costello, fuimos el gordo y su amigo el flaco, fuimos cojonudos juntos [...]’ (p. 9). If humour assumed, as Bryce has stated, the dimensions of a character in *Un mundo para Julius*, then its role in this collection is hardly less important.⁶⁶ In an interview subsequent to the publication of *La felicidad, ja ja*, Bryce made the following comments on the importance of humour in his work.

La ironía es algo fundamental en lo que he escrito hasta ahora. Me interesa mucho este tipo de humor que no produce carcajadas encegueadoras sino más bien una sonrisa lúcida. El humor, en este sentido, se convierte en un recurso de penetración sutil y de conocimiento ya que permite a la vez acercarse al tema y tomar distancia frente a él.⁶⁷

In ‘Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin’ not even the humour that has formed the basis of their friendship is able to withstand the tide of reality or enable the narrator to confront his problems. However, in other stories, as we shall see, humour serves to alleviate the suffering of the characters when faced with a disagreeable reality, if not for the character himself then at least for the reader.

The use of an informal first-person narrative is continued in the second story of the collection, ‘Florence y *Nós Três* (todo parece indicar que no soportará este invierno)’, and the presence of an audience is again implicit throughout. The implied audience here is identified explicitly to a continental level as the narrator mentions ‘nuestra América Latina’ (p. 154), the plural verb form also serving to reinforce the bond between reader and narrator created by the confessional tone of the first-person narrator. The narrator is habitually mistaken for the *clochards* with whom he identifies, but it was not always thus, as is spelt out when he remembers that in Lima he had been ‘un joven elegante, ágil, optimista’ (p. 156).

Marginalisation and social decay are again readily recognisable themes, and in the face of them a retreat to adolescence in the company of Florence, a student at the school in which the

⁶⁶ Hildebrandt, César, ‘El regreso de Julius’, *Caretas*, 24 July 1972, 36-39, at p. 37.

⁶⁷ Bareiro Saguier, ‘Entrevista: Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, pp. 79-80.

narrator works, serves not to offer a happy route of escape but rather heightens the realisation that the innocence of that age is now unattainable.

The use of a first-person narrator in both of the first two stories of this collection largely deprives Bryce of the opportunity to introduce shifts in narrative perspective, central to the success of *Un mundo para Julius*, but it does provide him with the ideal means of exploring the mind of one character, and in particular the role played by memory in his (the protagonists are all male) emotional development. One way in which this story is particularly significant is that the realm of the emotions finds a correspondence in music, as Bryce's subsequent novels draw heavily on various forms of popular culture, but especially music, as points of reference with which the protagonists finally prove able to convey their inner world to an external audience. That the title of a record given to the protagonist by his first girlfriend features in the title of the story is an indication of this importance, but as with the orality of the narrative, what might be seen as the ideological implications of the appropriation of popular music as an element of the narrative creation are only fully explored in later works.

'Pepi Monkey y la educación de su hermana' tells the story of a brother and sister from a privileged background who never leave the one room which is all that remains of the family's glorious past. They are brought up by their grandmother and a private tutor who collaborate to give them a view of life that corresponds to the fantasies of the grandmother rather than to the reality of Lima. This whole world comes crashing down around them on the fateful night on which the reality of the outside world finally overwhelms the grandmother's antiquated vision of the world. Events are narrated once again in the first person, in this instance by the brother, who continues to cling to an idealized childhood state via a retreat into an asylum. The implied audience of the previous two stories is here made explicit as the text assumes the dimensions of a metanarrative, very much a feature of the novels of the 1970s and 1980s: 'Déjenme contarles ahora que no está ella para rogarme que piense en otra cosa' (p. 168). Other notable features of this story include the use of a dramatic present tense characterised by its syntactic simplicity to recount events (a development of its use in 'Con Jimmy, en Paracas'), and the creation of dramatic tension by means of the presentation of a number of

situations which are left unexplained. All of these combine to create a narrative that reflects the narrator's retreat into the world of childhood against the unpalatable realities of adult life. It furthermore engages the reader's interest and sympathy in another instance of an attempt to establish a relationship with the world beyond the text, all of which is of course precisely what the narrator-protagonist is in turn seeking to achieve.

The narrator's sister, by contrast, has broken out of the world of an idealised childhood, and has entered the real world through marriage to an average man of average aspirations, rather than the prince their grandmother had promised her. While the narrator's return to the world of childhood leads to madness and complete social marginalisation, as it did for Manolo in 'Extraña diversión', there is a strong sense that the sister's forced exit from the world of an elite past into a routine existence in the present does not bring about happiness either. The decline of the oligarchy, explored in *Un mundo para Julius* and central again to *No me esperen en abril*, is depicted here with some force, as is the artificial nature of their continued existence.

In the following story of the collection, 'Dijo que se cagaba en la mar serena', the themes of alienation and decay are replaced by that which appeared at a secondary level in 'Pepi Monkey y la educación de su hermana': the restructuring of reality in order to make it more acceptable. The first-person narrative of the preceding stories is maintained, as is the intimate tone and the discursive nature of the narrative. Humour makes its most significant entry into the collection thus far, and is as much linguistic as situational which, combined with the main theme, marks a departure from the world of *Huerto cerrado* and *Un mundo para Julius* and a move towards that of *Tantas veces Pedro*.

The informality characteristic of the other stories considered is recreated from the outset and it soon becomes apparent that a self-aware narrator is telling a story to an explicit audience ('Por eso lo cuento', p. 178). The relationship between narrator and reader is developed in large part through the extensive sharing of humorous episodes, many of which arise from the Peruvian narrator's surprise at the free and enthusiastic use of a wide range of expletives on the part of Antonio, the Spaniard he meets in a bar in Zaragoza. This centrality

of language appears to be at odds with the expression of emotion, thus picking up on a theme at the heart of some of the stories of *Huerto cerrado*, such as ‘Las notas que duermen en las cuerdas’; and the juxtaposition of expressions such as that which gives the story its title with the feelings of Antonio on meeting the double of his dead brother is what creates the incongruity necessary to the creation of amusement. Another source of humour are the farcical situations that arise from the narrator’s willingness to go along with the fantasies of others, despite his awareness of the gap between the fantasy and reality. For example, when the two characters stagger back to Antonio’s flat in the early hours of the morning, the narrator’s collusion in pretending that the tawdry sitting room is in fact Africa is the cue for pure farce.

Lo miré y continuaba rugiendo. ¡Africa!, grité yo. ¡Africa!, me contestó, y se sirvió más licor rugiendo y derramando sobre la alfombra que era la piel de un tigre, con su cabeza y todo. Metió el pie entre el hocico del tigre y me miró. Inmediatamente me puse a contar, llegué hasta veintinueve sin que el tigre le hubiera arrancado la pierna. Más allá había una cabeza de bisonte y Antonio volvió a rugir mientras se trababa en mortal lucha con unos cuernos enormes. Mientras tanto yo conté hasta quince con la pata metida en el hocico del tigre pero no me atreví a más. (p. 186)

The drunkenness of the characters enhances the confusion of Antonio as he sees his dead brother’s double, renders credible the narrator’s indulgence in the bizarre exploits recounted, and finally assists in the mechanics of the story as the reader’s interest is maintained through both of the above.

The shifting narrative perspective of *Un mundo para Julius* and *Huerto cerrado* is used with far greater frequency here than in previous stories from this collection, due in part to the fact that this narrative does not take the form of an interior monologue, as was the case in two of the three stories considered thus far. The words of Antonio enter the narrative unmediated by the narrator, endorsing them and creating sympathy for him. In addition to the adoption of another character’s perspective, the fluidity of the narrative is enhanced by the use of different temporal perspectives in a manner reminiscent of ‘El camino es así’ or ‘Con Jimmy,

en Paracas'. What emerges from this is that the narrator, looking back on events, is no longer so sure that encouraging an escape from reality (which is what he consciously does with Antonio) is wise, for the happiness that this strategy is able to bring about provides a happiness that is as ephemeral as that offered by a retreat into the world of childhood ('Pepi Monkey y la educación de su hermana') or by engagement with reality as it is found ('Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin').

The theme of the reorganisation of reality to conform with desires is further developed as we follow the life of Taquito Carrillo from the early years of secondary school to the beginning of his career as a Peruvian diplomat in 'Baby Schiaffino'. A third-person narrator whose informality and orality are strongly reminiscent of *Un mundo para Julius* narrates events, and another similarity is the manner in which the reader is immediately plunged into a narrative full of free indirect discourse, although the effect here is even more striking:

Bueno, claro, eso...Pero la vida también, hombre, y para qué negarlo, la vida le andaba dando toda clase de satisfacciones últimamente, para qué negarlo, su primer puesto en el extranjero, toda clase de satisfacciones, el comienzo de una brillante carrera diplomática. Y en Buenos Aires nada menos, pudo haber sido cualquier otra ciudad inferiorísima a Lima, pero no: nada menos que Buenos Aires y mira la suerte que hemos tenido de encontrar este departamento, ¿precioso no? (p. 188)

The key difference between the use of the device in the above passage and in *Un mundo para Julius* is that here it is being used to ironic effect to undermine the protagonist's interpretation of reality and, especially, of himself. This narrative strategy is repeatedly employed throughout the story, often to facilitate the presentation of the contrast between a character's external and internal worlds.

The repeated incorporation of Taquito's words and thoughts into the narrative might be expected to create a sympathetic portrayal of him, and this indeed would be the case were it not for the manner in which the narrator persistently undermines the protagonist's representation of events. The asides and interrogatives which lead the reader to disbelieve Taquito's version also serve to establish a relationship between narrator and reader which

makes the latter all the more ready to accept a negative portrayal of the protagonist. The first such undermining occurs in the opening paragraph, and takes the form of a question aimed at the reader as Taquito reflects on how his colleagues refer to him and his wife as newly-weds, despite their having been married for almost seven months: ‘Bueno, todo es relativo... ¿relativos también entonces su bienestar, su alegría actual?’ (p. 189). The question, aimed at the reader, is the first step in the creation of the narrator-reader relationship referred to above, and the reader’s doubts as to the authenticity of Taquito’s happiness grow as his version of events continues to be questioned in the second and third paragraphs.

Y ahora precisamente estaba sirviéndose de [sus virtudes] con profunda conciencia de su utilización, tal vez era de eso de lo que consistía su ‘gran capacidad’. O era tal vez de otra cosa, de algo que le volvió a fallar aquella mañana en medio de su alegre ajetreo profesional. (p. 190)

The use of inverted commas to separate ‘gran capacidad’ from the body of the narrative essentially corresponds to the use of speech marks in the stories of *Huerto cerrado*, and the effect is also the same, namely to create a distance between the protagonist and the narrator. Here what is called into question is the nature of Taquito’s ‘gran capacidad’: if it does not consist of a conscientious use of his virtues, of what does it consist? In the light of Borges’s epigraph to the story (‘Yo, que tantos hombres he sido, no he sido nunca / Aquel en cuyo abrazo desfallecía Matilde Urbach’) and the constant discrepancy between events as portrayed by the narrator and by Taquito, it seems that the only thing for which Taquito has a great capacity is self-deception. This is confirmed when the origins of the phrase are explained much later in the story, as the protagonist’s philosophy on life is revealed:

‘Gran capacidad de asimilación’, había señalado un cronista deportivo, refiriéndose a la resistencia a los golpes que poseía Archie Town, un boxeador norteamericano que andaba por entonces en Lima. Y Taquito había sentido que eso se le parecía aunque en su caso era también algo más, era contar una mentira alegre y sentir la alegría de la verdad, y era sobre todo sonreír cuando las cosas le salían mal como si en alguna región ignorada del alma le estuvieran saliendo bien, sonreír, sonreír, sonreírle siempre a la vida porque la vida no está a la altura de lo que uno espera, la vida es en el fondo triste pero existía felizmente la vida con la gente, mentira y sonrisas, sonrisa y mentiras. (pp. 199-200)

The importance to Bryce of this notion of altering reality, and of exploring the gap between objective and subjective interpretations of it, central of course to the act of literary creation itself, becomes abundantly clear when Archie Town and his ‘gran capacidad de asimilación’ reappear in *No me esperen en abril*. Also apparent from the passages quoted above is Bryce’s mastery in *Un mundo para Julius* of the narrative strategies employed tentatively in *Huerto cerrado*: while the various forms of free indirect discourse create a narrative in which Taquito is initially viewed sympathetically, the use of techniques with which the reader of Bryce has become familiar in previous works, are subverted by the narrator’s comments to the reader, which undermine our faith in Taquito and significantly reduce the sympathy felt for him.

Another narrative technique adapted in this story is the address of the protagonist by the narrator: this has been already discussed in the context of both *Huerto cerrado* and *Un mundo para Julius*, where it was as one of several strategies to strengthen the bond between narrator, character and reader. Here, however, the obviously critical nature of the narrator’s comments again serves to distance the protagonist both from him and the reader, testimony again of Bryce’s increasing confidence in the use of the narrative strategies at his disposal. The central position enjoyed by language is highlighted by the use of narrative foreshadowing: dramatic tension is removed as the reader is informed from the outset that the relationship with Baby will not last, and soon learns that it is indeed a fabrication. The effect is to divert the focus of the narrative away from the plot and the dénouement, and to place it instead on the process of narrative creation, which corresponds to the creation of an alternative reality on the part of the protagonist.

Humour in ‘Baby Schiaffino’ regains the status of a character attributed to it by Bryce in connection with *Un mundo para Julius*. As well as the irony created through the undermining of Taquito’s perception of events, many farcical situations are created as a result of the protagonist’s wish to amend reality, translated as a desire to be who he is not. Several examples of this arise when the diminutive Taquito attempts to imitate Frank Sinatra, to whom Baby is attracted, in order to impress her.

Entró, pues, a la fiesta tal como lo había planeado, hasta lanzó el sombrero al aire y embocó en una percha, igualito que en el cine, lo único malo es que de repente no supo en qué película estaba y como que se le mezclaron todas. Mejor aún, ése era el verdadero Sinatra, el de todas sus películas, así era el personaje. A Baby la saludó desde lejos haciéndole adiós con la corbata y cuando llegó donde ella le golpeó afectuosamente la mejilla y se echó un poquito para atrás, ni más ni menos que el cantante entonando *Cheek to cheek*. Baby lo miraba entre asombrada y sonriente y sobre la marcha se dio cuenta de que había bebido algo más de la cuenta. Pero él dale con que dónde está el bar, whisky *on the rocks* quería, y tú, *beautiful one*, me vas a acompañar a buscarlo porque no te voy a dejar en este barrio mal poblado. (p. 214)

Rather than having the desired effect, Baby's reaction is one of bemusement, and it is no surprise when the episode ends in disaster with Taquito falling off the back of his chair and the garden balcony in a drunken stupor. In the humorous episodes too then, the bond between reader and narrator is of great importance, vital as it is to the reader's appreciation of the irony which functions at Taquito's expense and to an ability to perceive the multi-faceted reality (that of the narrator, that of Taquito and that of Baby) upon which the incongruity of situations depends. Taquito is another character for whom flight from reality fails to provide happiness, but the importance of the themes explored here reveal themselves to be of particular importance to Bryce, and many of the features of this story reappear in *No me esperen en abril*. In addition to details such as the reappearance of Chany, Danny and Vito from las Gaviotas 'con sus truzas chiquititas' (p. 203), the boarding school with its photos of naked girls (pp. 194-96), or the schoolmate who writes a letter of friendship from his *hacienda* (p. 193), 'Baby Schiaffino' opens the door to one of the most salient characteristics of Bryce's later fiction: an exploration of the relationship between references taken from the world of mass cultural production (in particular cinema and music) and reality as experienced by the individual. Here Taquito's imitation of Sinatra brings ridicule instead of admiration, but it is only in subsequent works that a more profound consideration of the influence of cultural representations on life (and of life on cultural representations) is undertaken.

'¡Al agua patos!' returns to the world of the loss of childhood innocence and the decay of the upper classes, following the development of the protagonist from the age of five through to approximately thirty. The death of his sister in Boston (the similarities with Cinthia in *Un mundo para Julius* are striking) provokes the downfall of the wealthy family into which he was born: the father turns to drink and economic ruin swiftly follows. The story revolves

around the protagonist's efforts to regain access to his childhood and recall an event whose importance remains a mystery for the reader until the closing paragraphs. Comparisons with 'Dos indios' are immediately apparent, and the outcome is similar, although here at least the protagonist seems to have come to terms with his mediocre existence. The importance of language, and in particular of the spoken word, also comes to the fore once more: 'Dos indios' was the title of a Peruvian film watched by the narrator of that story, but it was through its enunciation to Manolo that it acquired significance. Here again the spoken word (as in 'Dijo que se cagaba en la mar serena') provides the title of the story and also underlies much of the thematic content, as the protagonist is unable to communicate his childhood trauma to his wife.

The narrative voice of the story shifts between first and third person, with second person also used, and there is again a return to the language of childhood in the first person, as in 'Pepi Monkey y la educación de su hermana'. Here too its function is to present more convincingly a deeply traumatic episode in the early life of the protagonist, the lack of grammatical structure being a direct reflection of the mental anguish caused by the memory of the event. This lack of structure, both of grammar and of mental processes, is highlighted by the repetition of the story's opening sentence ('Cuántas cosas para que el niño se entretenga había en la casa', p. 223) to start subsections of it on a further two occasions, also emphasising the protagonist's inability to break free from the grip of the events of childhood that mark his adult life. Such repetitions are a more prominent feature of the *Cuadernos* and *No me esperen en abril* and will receive further consideration in the context of these later works. What Bryce chooses to emphasise here is the notion that memory does not lead to happiness nor relief, but rather to the grim realization that the exit from childhood leads inexorably to the angst of adulthood in societies as impersonal and marginalising as those depicted here, in *Huerto cerrado*, and in *Un mundo para Julius*. These ideas bear comparison with Vallejo's *Los heraldos negros*, and his substantial influence on Bryce's narrative will be considered more fully in the context of the *Cuadernos*.

The shift in narrative voice between third, first and second person hints at the experimental feel to the story, especially prevalent when the protagonist's mother explains the decline of

the family through dialogue, which alternates with the narrator's memories of the period in the first person. The influence of Cortázar may again be felt here, as the presentation is not dissimilar to that encountered in chapter thirty-four of *Rayuela*, in which the protagonist's thoughts alternate line by line with the Galdós novel he is reading. The narrator has completely withdrawn from the scene, and the direct contact with the words and memories they evoke makes them more immediate and more direct for the reader, who consequently experiences all the more acutely the protagonist's alienation from those with whom he mixed as a wealthy schoolchild.

From a thematic point of view then, '¡Al agua patos!' represents a continuation of the exploration of the problems experienced by Manolo in *Huerto cerrado*, but as far as style is concerned, the innovations and experimentation of this later text are clear to see. While Bryce's desire to treat memory as a central theme is evident, it would appear that events in this story are developed in order to fit the stylistic experiment and that theme is subordinated to style throughout. The mother's appearance seems little more than a means of facilitating the juxtaposition of first-person narrator and dialogue, and further exploration of the theme of memory is ideally suited to the use of a first-person narrator who reverts to the language of childhood.

'Antes de la cita con los Linares', written in 1967, predates the other stories of *La felicidad, ja ja* by four or five years. It is a clear departure from the worlds of Manolo and Julius and can be seen very much as a precursor of *Tantas veces Pedro* and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, dealing as it does with several exaggerated episodes in the life of Sebastián. Another similarity with these two works is the introduction (at the end) of the question of literary creation, as Sebastián tells his friends that the story that has just been read was written as he waited for them in a café. Because of this shift in the focus of the story, which does not concern itself with the manipulation of distances between narrator, reader and characters, the narrative style does not relate as closely to the themes of the text as has been the case in the previous stories of both this collection and *Huerto cerrado*. This does not mean to say, however, that techniques used elsewhere are not found here, and in this instance there are again marked similarities with the narrative voice of Hemingway. The story has an

ex abrupto opening with an extensive passage of dialogue in which there are no contextual markers, all of which is strongly reminiscent of the later stories of Hemingway studied by Bryce in his undergraduate thesis. Indeed, in his dissertation, Bryce comments on precisely this technique in the context of a consideration of ‘The Killers’.

El autor ha desaparecido prácticamente de la escena. Sus personajes están solos, frente a frente, y la sensación que el lector experimenta es la de estar escuchando una verdadera conversación. Muy de vez en cuando se nos señala algún rasgo físico de los caracteres, o se les sitúa en un lugar determinado.⁶⁸

Although this narrative may then be seen to belong to Bryce’s earliest formative period with regard to style (the use of sections of unmediated dialogue interspersed with third-person narrative creates different perspectives in much the same way as in ‘Una mano en las cuerdas’), its central concern looks forward to a theme that finds its full expression only some ten years after the writing of this story with the publication of *Tantas veces Pedro* and subsequent novels. Here the twisting of reality to bring it into line with the protagonist’s desires ends unhappily, as Sebastián discusses his dreams with a psychiatrist, believing that ‘tal vez no él sino la realidad tenía la culpa’ (p. 243). This realization does nothing to help, however, and flight from reality continues to the very last line in which the doubly fictional nature of the whole story is revealed, and the reader is jolted into the realisation that the relationship between reality and the literary creation that has been completed is as problematic as it is for Sebastián. The choice of yet another *desadaptado* as protagonist assists in the comic dimension of the story, while the manner of narrative presentation (as well as the differences in perspective afforded by the dialogue, the third-person narrative is interspersed with various forms of free indirect discourse in association with the protagonist) allows optimum exploitation of the gap between reality as perceived by the narrator – and reader – and by Sebastián.

⁶⁸ Bryce, ‘Función del diálogo’, p. 50.

‘Un poco a la limeña’ is perhaps the least noteworthy of the stories of this collection, in terms of both theme and style. The narrator’s nights spent chatting in bars with his best friend offer a counterpoint to the narrator of ‘Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin’, and what is communicated is the inability of those who cling to the superficial and deceitful world of Lima’s elite to achieve any more happiness than those who have fallen from this society.

The final story of the collection, ‘Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid’, marks a return to the successful narrative style of *Un mundo para Julius* and various of the stories discussed above, as well as a combination of the two themes which have dominated *La felicidad, ja ja*. The length of this story (at forty-two pages by far the longest of the collection) allows the plot to be developed in some detail and facilitates the use of the stylistic devices typical of his work to their greatest advantage.

Sevilla is very much in the mould of Manolo in terms of his alienation from the dominant conventions of Lima’s society, although he descends more directly perhaps from Julius’s friend Cano of *Un mundo para Julius*. Educated at one of Lima’s best schools as a result of financial sacrifices on the part of the aged aunts who look after him, his unattractive physical appearance, coupled with his humble background, led to victimisation by his classmates, among whom he forged no friendships. His only experience of solidarity came on a school trip to Huancayo when a much older boy who was accompanying the teacher as a monitor briefly befriended him. It is the memory of this that enables Sevilla to suffer the trials of unhappy schooldays and a dull existence in an office in the *Municipalidad de Lima*. His routine is broken when he wins a luxury trip to Spain to mark the opening of a new airline company and the disruption of his ordered existence leads him to throw himself from the window of his hotel room to join the childhood friend he imagines to be awaiting him outside.

From the opening paragraph the relationship between narrator and reader which has been a feature of many of the stories, and which was even more noticeable in *Un mundo para Julius*, is established via a typically informal tone and the use of the second person. The bond created is used once more to increase or reduce distances between the reader and characters, as in the depiction of Sevilla's aunts: 'La tía más vieja se murió cuando el pobre [Sevilla] entraba al último año de secundaria, y la pensión de la otra viejita con las justas si dio para que Sevilla terminara el colegio' (p. 262). The use of 'el pobre' to refer to Sevilla and the diminutive of 'viejita' are clear indications of the sympathy felt by the narrator for these characters, and given the relationship which has been established with the reader it is likely that this view of them will be shared. This technique is used on many other occasions, but only in connection with Sevilla and his aunt is a favourable impression created, enhanced by the occasional use of plural first-person verb forms. In contrast, the public relations officer who informed Sevilla of his success in the prize draw receives quite different treatment: 'El imbécil de Cucho Santisteban insistía en hablar y ella le hizo las últimas señas' (p. 280). The 'imbécil' can only be attributed to the narrator, and the negative appraisal is explained by the fact that Cucho Santistebán was one of those who made Sevilla's schooldays such a misery, and in keeping with the minimal distance created with regard to the protagonist, a maximum distance from such a character is only to be expected.

Another, more subtle, means of forming our impressions of certain of the characters is the now familiar use of the various forms of free indirect discourse, used repeatedly in association with Sevilla and his aunts to convey the narrator's implicit approval of their perspective. The same end is also achieved by the use of a device seen in 'Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin', although it is employed differently here, as la tía Angélica reflects on the meaning of life: 'En la vida no había más que un Viaje Verdadero, un Ultimo Viaje que para ella ya estaba cercano y para el cual desde que murieron sus padres había estado preparando a

Sevilla' (pp. 266-67). Unlike in the opening story of the collection, here the use of capital letters reflects the narrator's willingness to endorse the perspective with which the reader is presented, once more manipulating the position of the character concerned vis-à-vis the reader. As was the case with Juan Lucas in *Un mundo para Julius*, distances from the Conde de la Avenida and Mr. Alford are maintained as these strategies tend not to be found in association with them. This coincidence, at least in the case of the count, becomes all the more apparent when we learn that he is part of Juan Lucas and Susan's social circle, in the only explicit inter-textual reference in the collection.

The differences in perspective also allow for the creation of the many humorous episodes in the story, almost all of which revolve around the protagonist's timidity and his consequent inability to express the urgent physical needs provoked by a severe stomach upset. The humour arises from the gap created between the other characters' perceptions of Sevilla, their interpretation of his actions and facial expressions, and the reality of the situation for him. Bryce's accomplished use of the narrative strategies considered above obviates the potential clumsiness of the portrayal of the different viewpoints by presenting Sevilla's thoughts and feelings through one of the forms of free indirect discourse, while the thoughts of other characters are presented in a more conventional third-person narrative or in an externalised, objective account by the narrator himself.

Two final devices found in 'Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid' merit comment: one – narrative foreshadowing – has already been discussed in the context of 'Baby Schiaffino', and serves again to place the emphasis firmly on the process of narrative creation, granting language the status of protagonist identified by Duncan;⁶⁹ the other is the appearance of Bryce himself as a character in the narrative, a feature of most of the novels published since this collection. The use of the device here is not gratuitous: in addition to adding depth to questions of the

⁶⁹ See note 52.

relationship between fiction and reality, it also adds to the reader's understanding of the dénouement as Bryce remarks to his wife that the view from the hotel room from which Sevilla launched himself is reminiscent of Huancayo, the site of the protagonist's one moment of happiness. Although it may seem that this story definitively explodes the notion that a quasi-mythical childhood constitutes a paradise lost to which one can happily return, the collection has an open ending as Sevilla's 'breve vuelo [...] se convirtió en el instante más feliz de su vida' (p. 303). Reality proves testing, even unbearable for the protagonists of *La felicidad, ja ja*, but the route to happiness does not lie in an idealised past, and the search for a resolution to this dilemma provides the basis of subsequent novels, especially *No me esperen en abril*.

In conclusion the stories of *La felicidad, ja ja* represent the consolidation of themes and narrative strategies that contributed to the success of *Un mundo para Julius*, as well as the exploration of new themes and narrative devices. Faced with a world in which happiness proves elusive, if not unattainable, humour reveals itself to be the only weapon with which the horrors of daily life can be overcome. As for the narrative style, techniques such as the use of free indirect discourse to establish bonds between narrator, character and reader, and the direct address of characters and reader by the narrator were already established features. Others, such as the narrative foreshadowing, the constant switching of the narrative between the first, second and third person and the consistent use of a first-person narrative are found for the first time in this collection. The questions raised as to the relationship between reality and fantasy, fact and fiction in 'Antes de la cita con los Linares' find expression for the first time here, as does the related issue of adapting objective reality to conform to its subjective counterpart, although both of these are developed considerably in Bryce's subsequent novels. Despite his continued use of certain tried and trusted narrative strategies, Bryce continues to search for a voice that can express his preoccupations, and the themes and narrative strategies

explored for the first time here, although not used with the same assuredness as those which first appeared in *Huerto cerrado*, provide the springboard for the achievements of subsequent works.

Tantas veces Pedro: at the crossroads.

Thus far in Bryce's narrative development, a pattern of the publication of a collection of short stories followed by a novel that develops many of its principal features can be seen to emerge. *Un mundo para Julius* develops the themes and narrative techniques first used in *Huerto cerrado*, presenting the reader with a more profound psychological study of a sensitive and impressionable young boy growing up in the privileged social classes of Lima, and the conflicts which arise from this situation. From the point of view of the narrative techniques employed, *Un mundo para Julius* sees the refinement of such techniques as a shifting narrative perspective, the incorporation of various forms of free indirect discourse into a third-person narrative, and the use of direct address of both characters and reader, all of which were used sparingly and with a certain degree of uncertainty in Bryce's first work.

In the same way that *Un mundo para Julius* provides Bryce with the opportunity to consolidate his use of the narrative strategies and thematic concerns first used in *Huerto cerrado*, *Tantas veces Pedro* fulfils the same role with regard to *La felicidad, ja ja*, whose publication preceded that of the novel in question by three years. While *La felicidad, ja ja* continued the exploration of certain themes and techniques found in Bryce's previous work, such as the marginalisation of the individual, the use of humour, and the use of a third-person narrative that reflects the thoughts and words of the characters, it also represents a heightened concern for the individual's pursuit of (unattainable) happiness, a consideration of memory via the influence of the past over the present, the use of European cities as settings, and a readiness to experiment with temporal and spatial dislocations. Two of the most fundamental changes, however, are the exploration of the relationship between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy, and the increased use of the first-person narrative, both of which come to constitute the primary features of the novel in question in terms of theme and technique, and which are further developed in the novels which follow *Tantas veces Pedro* through the 1980s. In this

respect, *Tantas veces Pedro* can be seen to represent a work in which Bryce continues to break away from narrative conventions in an attempt to find his own narrative voice.

Tantas veces Pedro also marks something of a change in direction with regard to the relationship between the author, the text and the reader, for while there may still be what might be termed a functional purpose to the work in its consideration of the psychological problems of the isolated individual, there is also ample evidence of the notion of *le plaisir du texte*. The novel holds a high position in the Bryce's affections, and he has gone as far as referring to it as 'la más maravillosa de las que he escrito'.⁷⁰ Its writing is described as 'unas verdaderas palizas de placer literario', and this enjoyment derives in large part from a sense that it is here for the first time that he writes unconditionally for the joy of writing itself.⁷¹

Bryce's confidence to start to write for his own – and the reader's – enjoyment did not, however, meet with universal acclaim. With the Peruvian (and, to a lesser extent, European) reading public and critics expecting a second volume of *Un mundo para Julius*, a novel set in Europe and the United States suffered a lukewarm reception. Although the reading public has to some extent gone back to *Tantas veces Pedro* after the publication of more widely acclaimed novels (it has gone through several editions with Plaza & Janés), the fact that to date only two articles have dealt in any detail with this novel, shows that the academic readership does not on the whole share Bryce's enthusiasm for this novel.

A first reading of *Tantas veces Pedro* can indeed prove a frustrating experience: in contrast to the linear plot, the all-pervading humour and the relatively conventional narrative techniques employed in *Un mundo para Julius*, the reader here must invest considerable effort to disentangle the details of the plot from the fictions of the frustrated author Pedro Balbuena, who is the protagonist and occasional narrator of this novel. These problems are

⁷⁰ Unpublished interview with the author (May 1993).

⁷¹ 'De escritor profesional al más extraño cliente', *Oiga*, 1 February 1988, 76-78; also included in Bryce's *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), 122-127, at p. 123.

compounded by temporal and spatial dislocations, which are often unmarked, and by the fact that Pedro is a drunkard who tends to drift off into a world of fantasy.

From the outset, as in *Un mundo para Julius*, the reader is introduced to what are by now familiar narrative strategies, as the words and thoughts of the protagonist filter into the third-person narrative. The effect is again to reduce the distance between narrator and protagonist, and between protagonist and reader, and thus Pedro starts to be drawn into the reader's affections. The ongoing nature of this process encourages the reader to identify more closely with the perspective of Pedro and thereby engage more closely with the problems and experiences that confront him during the course of the novel. This use is consistent with that already seen in association with Manolo, Julius, and Sevilla in preceding chapters, and it might be more interesting to consider the use of these techniques in association with the novel's secondary characters.

The four women (Virginia, Claudine, Beatrice and Sophie) whose relationships with Pedro provide the material for the storyline of the novel are presented differently to the reader, largely through the narrative strategies employed in association with them. That female characters are once more found in secondary roles (albeit defining ones for the protagonist) may be seen as a reflection of the traditional *limeño* background of Pedro Balbuena and Bryce alike, but will be considered more fully in the context of later works, in which female characters are represented in rather more depth. Virginia, who shares the opening scene and chapter with Pedro, is presented initially solely through direct speech. Only after three pages of dialogue between Pedro and Virginia, in which we find Pedro's words and thoughts embedded in the narrative, but only direct speech in association with Virginia, is a single utterance of hers presented in indirect speech. The upshot of this is that the distance between Virginia and the reader is at no point reduced during our introduction to her, and is indeed kept to a maximum, and as a result when conflicts arise between the two, the reader is

inclined automatically to sympathise with Pedro. Although Virginia's words and thoughts are subsequently encountered in brief sections of free indirect discourse, the dominance of the perspective of Pedro, the apparent narrator of the text, coincides with events at the level of plot as Virginia refuses to associate with Pedro, and ultimately abandons him when he joins her in Mexico. Theme is thus reinforced through narrative style.

Claudine, Pedro's partner in the second chapter, receives somewhat different treatment at the level of narrative presentation. She also is introduced to the reader through a dialogue with Pedro in which both are presented through direct speech, but on her reappearance the reader quickly encounters her words and thoughts entering the narrative without mediation on the part of the narrator: 'Claudine salió corriendo porque ya era hora de ir a comprar, contigo, Pedro' (p. 98).⁷² This far more egalitarian treatment of the characters in terms of their narrative presentation (extensive sections of the various forms of free indirect discourse continue to be found in association with Pedro) suggests that the narrator wishes Claudine to attain a position in the reader's sympathies approaching that enjoyed by Pedro. Confirmation of the desired effect of the narrative strategies employed comes from Bryce himself when he refers to the 'mil rasgos de la bondad, ternura, y torpe generosidad de esa noble mujer de papel que fue Claudine en *Tantas veces Pedro*'.⁷³

If the manner in which Claudine is presented to the reader means that she is perceived more favourably than Virginia, then Beatrice, who appears in the third chapter, receives even more privileged treatment. From almost the minute Pedro meets her she is presented to the reader via a narrative heavily infused with her thoughts, in sharp contrast to the sections of dialogue which established a distance (maintained in the case of Virginia, gradually reduced in that of Claudine) between the reader and the secondary character in the preceding chapters. Indeed, events are narrated so consistently from Beatrice's perspective that on occasion she becomes

⁷² All page numbers refer to the 1987 Plaza & Janés edition.

the protagonist rather than Pedro, and when she takes her final revenge on Pedro for his treatment of her ten years earlier, the reader finds it hard to condemn her, due primarily to the manner in which her narrative presentation has drawn her solidly into the reader's sympathies.

By far the most problematical of the women whose relationships with Pedro the reader follows is Sophie, the subject of the final chapter, as well as of numerous fictions written and spoken by Pedro throughout the course of the novel. At the level of plot, Pedro receives far worse treatment at her hands than from the other leading ladies, as she deceives, betrays and uses him, in the final scene even apparently killing him. All of this might lead the reader to consider her in the most negative of lights, given the manner in which the relationship between Pedro and the reader has constantly been reinforced through the repeated use of the narrative strategies referred to above. In the event, however, she is not perceived nearly so negatively as might be expected. The proliferation of sections of narrative impregnated with her thoughts results in the reader being drawn as close to her as to any of the other characters, despite her actions. This apparent anomaly can be explained in similar terms to the portrayal of Beatrice: Sophie has been the one true love of Pedro's life and, however cruelly she may treat him, he will continue to be blind to her imperfections. The implications of this as far as Pedro the narrator is concerned are that he will portray her in as positive a light as possible, thereby encouraging the reader to share his view of her as a woman to be loved unconditionally. An idealised love, drawing on questions as to the nature of the relationship between reality and fantasy, fact and fiction, finds expression here for the first time in Bryce's work, and will continue to do so in later works (especially in connection with Octavia and Tere), revealing the central importance of friendship and love to the author, in life as in fiction.

⁷³ 'De escritor profesional al más extraño cliente', *Permiso para vivir*, at p. 125.

Another narrative strategy, also used in *Un mundo para Julius*, which contributes to the establishment of certain relationships between reader and character is the second-person direct address of the reader by the narrator (it also occurs in Pedro's monologues with the memory of Sophie or with Malatesta/Alter Ego/Alter Mierda, the bronze statue of a boxer allegedly given to him by Sophie as a parting gift), or more subtly the inclusion of parenthetical information which facilitates the reader's understanding of the complex details of the plot. Although this device is not used as extensively as was the case in Bryce's first novel, nor indeed as in 'Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid', it is used frequently enough to have an impact on the reader. As was true in the context of the texts already discussed, the effect of this technique is to create an atmosphere of complicity between reader and narrator. If this is achieved, then the narrator's willingness to allow the words and thoughts of certain characters to enter the narrative in an unmediated or minimally mediated form is all the more effective, for a *lector cómplice* is all the more likely to follow the narrator's lead in endorsing the views of certain characters. The reader's perception of the various characters is thus subject to a two-pronged attack.

The other possible narrative voice, the first person, is also found on various occasions in the novel, and its use in the context of a narrator who is both an aspiring author and the protagonist of the novel contributes to the self-referentiality of the text to be discussed below, and perhaps more importantly fulfils a vital role in Bryce's development as an author. As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, various of the stories included in *La felicidad, ja ja* feature a first-person narrator, and the three novels written in the 1980s are written in the first person throughout. In this respect it is perfectly valid to view this novel in the manner alluded to in the title of this chapter: a novelistic half-way house between *Un mundo para Julius*, dominated by a third-person narrator, and the later novels in which the first-person narrator is the preferred narrative voice.

It is in this variety of narrative presentation that *Tantas veces Pedro* most obviously provides continuities and developments of certain features of *La felicidad, ja ja*: for example, one of the features of ‘¡Al agua patos!’ is the alternate use of sections of direct speech and memories triggered by the words spoken, and a similar technique is to be found in the final chapter of this novel when Sophie remembers a lengthy conversation with Pedro in which he confronts her with their brief relationship in the past.

—De acuerdo. Pero tú mismo acabas de recordar que sólo fueron tres meses y pico.
—Dieron para toda la vida, sin embargo.
... le había dicho Pedro, me hacías mucha gracia con tu francés de recién llegado y sin embargo logrando siempre soltar alguna ocurrencia oportuna y divertida; le había dicho Pedro, eras la mejor compañía que podía tener en ese momento, eras diferente a la gente que frecuentaba, me aburría; le había dicho Pedro, recuerda que siempre te advertí que tenía un novio...
—Un novio que te aburría, lo acabas de reconocer. En cambio yo te ofrecía una Italia de risas y travesuras, un eterno viaje a Venecia... Yo podía salvarte, Sophie.
—¿Con qué dinero, Pedro?
—En esa época no hablabas así, Sophie.
—Pero pensaba igual. Lo que pasa es que era más discreta.
... le había dicho Pedro, yo jamás hubiera podido vivir contigo, menos aún con un escritor, y tú querías serlo, sólo con alguien tan rico como yo, Pedro. (p. 216)

Also common to ‘¡Al agua patos!’ is the repeated use of structures and phrases to offer a superficial cohesion that is in fact lacking at the level of the character’s mental processes. Narrative foreshadowing, used in ‘Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid’ is another narrative device refined here: the reader is made aware of the probability of an unhappy outcome of the second chapter as soon as it is under way, and Sophie’s final killing of Pedro comes as no surprise, given the way in which it constitutes the opening scene of the final chapter (p. 185), and the blow on the back of the head Pedro receives in one of his stories about Sophie (p. 182). In an interview with Efraín Kristal, Bryce reveals a keen awareness of the implications of the use of narrative foreshadowing: ‘Sí, sí, claro, ése es el mismo procedimiento de “Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid”, o sea anunciar el desenlace. Jugar a crear intriga, tensión y

todo, cuando la gente ya sabe cómo acaba.’⁷⁴ What it also does, of course, is to displace the focus of the narrative away from the plot and onto the use of language and the process of narrative creation itself.

One of the technical innovations of the *nueva novela* in Latin America was the use of temporal and spatial disjunctions, such as those characteristic of *Pedro Páramo* (whose author is referred to in the final chapter) and many of Cortázar’s stories. Bryce first used this technique in *Un mundo para Julius* in Susan’s remembrance of her years as a student in London in an unmarked six-page stream of consciousness, but here he uses it with far greater frequency (on occasion, it could be argued, with too great a frequency), as befits a novel in which the author explores the use of a wide range of narrative devices. These disjunctions can be divided into those which are somehow marked (by an introductory verb or a break in the text) and those which occur unannounced. The former can perhaps be described as flashbacks, and constitute a tried and trusted device in literature and film over the last century, while the latter is the more innovative feature in the context of Bryce’s work. Cortázar used it as a means of challenging the reader’s preconceived notions of literature, according to which the narrator led the reader along a story line that was typically linear, unambiguous and chronological. He sought to develop a *lector cómplice*, a reader whose active involvement in the narrative process, and participation in the genesis of the tale would mirror notions prevalent among left-wing intellectuals of engagement with society through action rather than passive reception. For Cortázar this often involved the reader in piecing together events narrated out of chronological or sequential order and thus in a re-creation of the text.

The whole question of the re-creation of episodes is also highly pertinent to the theme of self-referentiality that is of such importance in an analysis of this text. The most striking use

⁷⁴ Efraín Kristal, ‘Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, *Imprévue*, I-II (1979), 221-39, at p. 223.

of these disjunctions is found in the final chapter of the novel in an argument as to whose stomach has rumbled.

- Te ha sonado el estómago, Pedro.
—No Sophie. Te ha sonado a ti.
—A mí no. A mí nunca me suena tan raro. Te ha sonado como en el cine, cuando se anuncia en los dramas una tormenta cruel. Igualito. ¿No te da miedo?
—Pero si no he sido yo...
—Tienes que haber sido tú porque a mí nunca me suena el estómago.
—Sí, he sido yo, Pedro —dijo Claudine—. Debe ser el hambre. Primero te dije que no había sido yo porque me ha sonado muy feo... Me ha parecido como en el teatro, como en el cine cuando va a pasar algo malo en las películas de miedo.
—Ha sido lo que se llama un efecto sonoro.
—¿Por qué te vas, Pedro? Quédate un tiempo con nosotros... Hasta que lo hayas pensado mejor.
—Bésame rápido, Claudine, que se acerca un mozo.
—Ya sé quien ha sido, Sophie.
—¿Quién si no tú?
—Mi ángel de la guarda.
—Tonto. (p. 196)

This passage draws on two episodes taken from pages 189 (when Pedro dines with Claudine before leaving Paris for Italy) and 237-38 (when Pedro and Sophie go for a drive in the Italian countryside) respectively, and the blending of two similar episodes and the confusion of the two women, as Pedro's interlocutor switches from Sophie to Claudine and back again, is easily overlooked. The subtlety of its use, and the reworking of the format of presentation of the two original episodes to achieve their convergence in the one quoted above, suggest that Bryce has created and included this effect more for its intrinsic value as an item of entertainment – for himself as much as the reader – than as a narrative strategy with a broader function.

Another feature *Tantas veces Pedro* shares with Bryce's earlier works is the humour that pervades the novel, although here it is somewhat more bitter than elsewhere. Episodes deriving from what might be termed linguistic humour and situational humour were encountered frequently in *Un mundo para Julius*. The linguistic humour especially is yet another demonstration of Bryce's desire to revel in the enjoyment of the manipulation of

language for its own sake and is consistent with the primacy of language in his work. Examples of this range from word plays to a subversion of figures of authority through an incongruous use of language, in much the same manner as that used in association with the Madre Superiora in *Un mundo para Julius*. The two are combined in the final chapter during Pedro's conversation with the priest in the monastery.

—¡Umbría! —exclamó Pedro.
—¡Umbría! —exclamaron en coro.
—Coliiiiiiiiinas y coliiiiiiiiinas —señaló el padre—. Coliiiiiiiiinas y coliiiiinas. Viñedos, tantos viñedos, viñas por todas partes, y siempre, siempre, coliiiiiiinas y más coliiiiiiiiinas.
¡Umbría! Y allá al fondo, ¡Asís!
—Se ve asís de chiquito —dijo Pedro, haciéndole con los dedos *asís* de chiquitito.
(p. 200)

Besides the erosion of the priest's assumed solemnity, as the mimicry of his utterances urges the reader to imagine him throwing his arms wide to embrace the landscape, this episode provides us with another example of one of the typical puns in which Pedro and Bryce alike take delight. The innovative feature of *Tantas veces Pedro* in relation to the humour of the narrative, which becomes the cornerstone of *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* and *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*, is the often humorous digressions, or 'episodios exagerados', and although the frequency and extent of these digressions is limited in this novel, their use in the *Cuadernos* has been criticised as excessive, a criticism the author explicitly contests in *No me esperen en abril*. In keeping with his concept of the act of literary creation (in both its writing and reading) as a pleasurable activity, Bryce sees these *digresiones* as an integral part of his literary creation. In an article on literary matters, he expanded upon the importance of the *Quijote*, and of the work of Sterne and Rabelais:

Para mí, son los fundadores de la novela y de la novela como territorio de la libertad, como cajón de sastre literario, y como la mayor aportación que Occidente haya hecho a la cultura universal. Y en su feroz creatividad, en su inspiración libre y única, en el maravilloso desorden vital de su vocabulario palpitante siempre y de sus digresiones siempre pertinentes, he encontrado la mayor fuente de entusiasmo para seguir adelante con mi propio trabajo. [...] Y me encanta pensar que de esas relecturas vienen no sólo el entusiasmo y la espontaneidad con que escribí esos textos [*Un mundo para Julius*, *Tantas veces Pedro* and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*],

sino también ese desorden formal que tantas veces se me ha achacado y que yo considero más bien la más placentera forma de escribir desabrochada y libremente.⁷⁵

The influence of the *Quijote* will be discussed in the course of the following chapter, but it would seem clear that the influence of Sterne (to whom homage is paid through Don Lorenzo Sterne, the father of the protagonist in *No me esperen en abril*), and especially *Tristram Shandy*, can be seen in *Tantas veces Pedro* not only in the digressions, but also in the interest in the representation of the workings of the mind (evident in Sterne in the form of stream of consciousness and here through the use of free indirect discourse), and the balancing of an often piquant brand of humour with an obvious affection for his characters.

While the features discussed above represent significant developments of techniques previously used, and on occasion innovations, the area in which *Tantas veces Pedro* is most noteworthy is that of self-referentiality. Bryce's only previous exploration of this theme was a summary treatment of it in 'Antes de la cita con los Linares' (*La felicidad, ja ja*), discussed in the previous chapter. Here a further resonance is the coincidence of biographical detail between the protagonist and Bryce, something that is repeatedly mentioned in criticism of Bryce's work, although it seldom adds to its analysis. The autobiography issue is addressed in 'Las campanadas de Santa Clotilde', one of the stories Pedro sits down to write in the course of the novel: as he writes he reminds himself that he must change the names of the characters 'para que nadie sepa que se trata de mi esposa y para que luego la gente no me venga con la vaina esa de que si es autobiográfico' (p. 169). This may be taken as a direct response to those critics whose interpretations of *Un mundo para Julius* depended heavily on a parallel reading of Bryce's family background. Another such contestation is encountered in the epilogue, entitled 'Un cuento de Pedro Balbuena', in which the reader is shaken out of a reading of the story by the interruption of its author's thoughts: 'No está mal dejarlo así, piensa Pedro Balbuena. Suena a purita autobiografía pero, en fin, es el primer cuento que he

escrito en mi vida y me alegro de no haberlo roto' (pp. 251-52). The reader's sense of certainty as to their relationship with the text is further challenged when it becomes obvious that almost all of Pedro's biographical details coincide closely with those of Bryce himself, all of which compounds the self-referential dimension of the work in itself. The key to the resolution of these different levels of uncertainty is to be found in the closing line of the novel, in which the reader learns that it was written in Port Fornells, Menorca, and a dizzying paragraph in the final chapter in which Pedro Balbuena is addressed in the second person, 'aquí en Fornells [...] donde algún día vendría yo a contar tu historia, Pedro Balbuena' (p. 195). Despite Pedro's avowed intention to write a story with the same title as the third chapter of this novel (which the reader has just completed), he himself is revealed to be no more than the protagonist of a story being related by Bryce, who thus claims authorship of the text and a close involvement with it, at the same time participating explicitly in its self-referentiality. This does not, however, prevent the literary input of Pedro Balbuena, who continues to act as the first-person narrator, from constituting the principal source of self-referential elements in this novel about the nature of fiction and literary creation.

Before reaching the opening page of the novel the reader is already being asked to question the relationship between different levels of fiction and literary creation via the epigraphs: alongside quotations taken from Saint-John Perse, Ramón del Valle Inclán and Pentadius, there is also the following: '...que nunca volví a quererte como te quise, en nadie. (PEDRO BALBUENA)'. An attentive reading of the text reveals that these words are taken from page 173, and the words provide the closing line of Pedro's story 'Las Campanadas de Santa Clotilde', in which he creates an alternative, happy ending to his relationship with Beatrice. In this interlude, Pedro and Beatrice travel to Peru with their daughter Beatriz, and it is from his hotel room in Cuzco that Pedro writes these words on a postcard he intends to send to

⁷⁵ 'Historia personal del *Quijote*', *Caretas*, 17 February 1992, p. 84.

Sophie, who may well be a fiction herself. The reader here is on at least a second layer of literary creation, as Pedro has re-created himself in a fiction within a fiction. Other devices that add to this effect are Pedro's writing of six stories in the course of the novel (that four of them are about Sophie strengthen suspicions that she is a creation) and comparisons of Pedro's actions with literary points of reference, such as 'La escena había sido digna de una novela' (p. 58), or 'lograba parecerse en algo a Pedro Balbuena, o en todo caso al drama de Pedro Balbuena' (p. 59). Another significant contribution to the self-referentiality of the novel, and the area which could be considered to be the most significant innovation therein, is what might be termed its intratextuality. This internal cross-referencing of the text also develops the notion of the *lector cómplice*, whose involvement is crucial to an engagement with the themes under consideration. All of these techniques are used repeatedly throughout the text, drawing the reader's attention to the relationship between fiction and reality and heightening consideration of the process of literary creation as an act capable of reordering, subverting and controlling reality.

Pedro's difficulty in distinguishing between fact and fiction becomes ever greater until in the last of the stories he writes there is no differentiation whatsoever. The story is set apart from the narrative by the use of a title, as was the case with 'Las campanadas de Santa Clotilde', but the narrative continues completely uninterrupted. Is the reader to deduce that Pedro is no longer able to distinguish between his fictions and his reality? If so, both Bryce and the reader, through their close engagement and participation in the text are forced to examine their own position with relation to art, life, and connections between the two. Moreover, the protagonist's apparent death comes to require close examination: an interpretation of the final chapter as a fantasy in which Pedro finally frees himself from the memory of Sophie is rendered more credible by phrases which suggest that Pedro is indeed living a life based on the fantasy of the final chapter of his novel: 'por qué no me mataste

también ese día, Sophie' (p. 140). On a simply practical level, had Pedro been killed at the end of the narrative, then he would of course be unable to narrate events in hindsight, as he does.

Another dimension to the issue is introduced by Bryce's appearance in the narrative, seen already in 'Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid', and to be seen again in the context of his subsequent novels. In an essay in honour of Borges, Bryce comments on the Argentine's appearances in his own fictions: 'Tal vez así se fue formando el Borges de Borges, su máxima creación.'⁷⁶ Another echo of Borges' preoccupation with the nature of reality and creation, and more specifically his story 'El sur', one of the stories of *Ficciones*, may offer an explanation to the outcome of this novel. In this story Dahlmann, the protagonist, suffers a blow to the head which becomes infected and which leads to a spell in hospital. One reading of the story is that at several points the protagonist either falls asleep, drifts into unconsciousness, or even dies, and that all that follows after these points is either a dream or a creation which corresponds to what Dahlmann would have preferred as an outcome to the story of his life. A similar interpretation of the final chapter of *Tantas veces Pedro* is possible given the consistent doubts as to the existence or reality of Sophie, and Pedro's delirious condition at the end of the third chapter as a result of his abandonment by Beatrice. The validity of such a reading is confirmed by the closing lines of the third chapter, as a doctor prepares to sedate him:

y usted doctor oscurézcame todo esto con un poco de olvido, cuénteme de los poderes de su inyección, quiero irme de aquí, despertarme en otro país, qué le parece Italia, doctor, una cura geográfica, doctor, un arreglo de cuentas con siete caballos salvajes, doctor [...] años de encierro y de viajes no fueron la solución, Virginia, Claudine, Beatrice tampoco fueron la solución después, doctor, vecinos, policías y doctores del mundo uníos para escuchar la verdadera historia de la que fue Sophie... (p. 184)

⁷⁶ 'Nuestro Homero', *Oiga*, 30 June 1986, 65-66, at p. 66. Also included in *Crónicas personales* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1988), pp. 85-87.

Having stated his desires, he proceeds to dispose of ‘caballos salvajes’ in a final chapter set in Italy, but whether this is Pedro’s reality or a drugged fantasy is unclear. The significance lies not in the resolution of the ambiguities that characterise the closure of this and other of Bryce’s works, but in their very existence, which oblige the reader to enter further into a consideration of the very nature of fiction, reality and the question of literary creation, all of which lie at the core of this novel. This whole area very much foreshadows the ending of *No me esperen en abril*, which is perhaps not surprising given that ‘la novela sobre el colegio “San Pablo” se convirtió en *Tantas veces Pedro*’, although there are important differences between the two (un)happy endings, to be discussed in the concluding chapter.⁷⁷

A final, and less problematic, feature of *Tantas veces Pedro* is the manner in which Bryce introduces a number of literary, musical and artistic allusions as another way of probing into the relationship between fact and fiction, life and artistic creation. Various other Latin-American authors have also employed this technique (notably Cortázar, whose importance has already been noted), although its use in a work such as *Tantas veces Pedro* affords it a position of greater import. These allusions can conveniently be divided into the categories of cinematic/artistic, musical and literary, in ascending order of importance. The cinematic and artistic allusions total only some half-a-dozen and as such fail to carry sufficient weight to constitute a vehicle for the communication of any particular notion: rather they serve to reinforce the general haziness with regard to the distinction between life and fiction through comparisons of events and characters within the novel to Botticelli, Diego Rivero, Humphrey Bogart, James Bond and Dracula, as well as to more general cinematic conventions. The inclusion of the words of various songs as points of reference for the events of the plot performs a similar function, although it is noticeable that there is a greater incidence here of

⁷⁷ Bryce in Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla, la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1994), p. 114.

Latin-American referents, with Carlos Gardel, *rancheras* and *guarachas* all important features.

The full importance of the use of Latin-American cultural references becomes apparent only in the context of the literary allusions which, being the most numerous (there are some twenty in all), have the force to carry an independent theme. While a number of these allusions serve a valuable purpose in the consolidation of the novel's self-referentiality, with references to Quevedo, *La vida es sueño*, and the notion of the world being a stage, the allusions to Latin-American works perform a different function. The majority of these allusions occur in the latter stages of the novel and can be seen as representative of Pedro's desire to establish for himself an identity as a Peruvian and a Latin American in Europe, a theme that enjoys a more profound treatment in the *Cuadernos* that follow *Tantas veces Pedro*. The question of identity is implicit in relation to the character of Sophie, and also of Malatesta/Alter Ego/Alter Mierda, and a similar concern can also be seen in the case of Pedro, who re-creates himself as Petrus, Petrus Primero and the Ladilla Oficial del Reino. The repeated use of allusions to Latin-American culture serve as an affirmation of his continued faith in his origins in the face of a Europe which is increasingly hostile to him. It is also possible to see here a demythification of Paris as *la ciudad luz*, centre of culture and creativity, with alternative Latin-American and popular cultural references posited as sources of creative impetus. Both ideas are made explicit within the text, and are again given a more thorough consideration in subsequent novels.

It is no coincidence that Pedro's heaviest reliance on Latin-American literature as an affirmation of his identity is found in the final chapter as he endeavours to break away from Sophie and start a new life free from the fate his dependence on her myth has created. During the course of a lengthy dialogue in which there is a profusion of allusions to Vallejo, Juan Rulfo and the literary boom, as well as to Calderón de la Barca (who becomes the author

of Rulfo's works), Sophie's frustration at her inability to follow Pedro's words leads her to threaten to hang up if he doesn't tell her what the boom, which has become the central theme, all means. It is in Pedro's reply that the reader can appreciate the significance of the boom in particular, and Latin-American cultural production in general, for an isolated, frustrated author: '—Es una manera de ser latinoamericana' (p. 234). The proliferation of allusions to Latin-American literature, and to a lesser extent music, in the latter sections of the novel suggest the extent to which these elements come to be representative of Pedro's increasing alienation and marginalisation in Europe and his consequent search for an alternative set of values through which he can validate his existence, as well as establish his position within that reality via cultural creation. Having introduced this dimension to his narrative in *Tantas veces Pedro*, it is significantly developed in the novels that follow it.

An overview of the novel does then indeed show it to be a work of transition in a number of respects. While it undeniably shares certain features with Bryce's previous works, especially with regard to the use of humour, narrative strategies and free indirect discourse as a means of influencing the reader's perception of the characters, there are other areas in which this novel marks a definite break from the past. At the level of themes, there is a new preoccupation with self-referentiality and the act of literary production, while there are at the same time important technical innovations in the shape of internal acts of literary creation, spatial and temporal dislocations and a constant flow between first-, second- and third-person narrative. All of these features are used in conjunction during the course of the novel to contribute to a multi-faceted consideration of the relationship between fact and fiction and with the whole question of cultural (re)creation, which lies at the centre of this work. The result of the combination of these innovations and their working through in the context of the parallel development of features already present in previous works will become apparent in a study of the *Cuadernos*.

Cuadernos de navegación en un sillón Voltaire: love in the I of the beholder

The two novels that constitute the diptych *Cuadernos*, *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* and *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*, while having much in common, have suffered different fortunes in terms of public and critical reception. *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* has, together with *Un mundo para Julius*, attracted the lion's share of the critical attention devoted to Bryce's work, with well over thirty articles having been written on it over the last twelve years. Although many of these articles are little more than journalistic reviews, a number of more lengthy academic studies have appeared (see the introductory chapter); *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*, by contrast, has been the subject of a number of brief reviews, but has attracted critical attention only as a junior partner in the context of the diptych. This privileging of the first volume of the *Cuadernos* is reflected in the recent appearance of a new critical edition with Cátedra.⁷⁸

In many respects the *Cuadernos* can be seen to represent a continuation of the exploration of themes and the development of techniques used by Bryce in the works considered in preceding chapters. At the level of the plot, as was the case in *Tantas veces Pedro* and to a lesser extent in many of the earlier short stories, friendship and love (and its trials) provide the impulse for the action for the protagonist. They also represent the *fuera motriz* on a second level, with the notion of emotional attachment inextricably linked to the act of literary creation for the author, as is attested by the dedications and epigraphs of both works: for example, 'A Sylvie Lafaye de Micheaux, porque es cierto que uno escribe para que lo quieran más' (*La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*). Other features of earlier works which are also represented in the *Cuadernos* are the questions of identity (both individual and cultural),

⁷⁸ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, edited by Julio Ortega and María Fernanda Lander (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000).

various aspects of metafiction, and the problem of the relationship between fiction and reality, literature and life.

One of the constant features of Bryce's narrative, from the earliest stories of *Huerto cerrado*, has been an acute awareness of language and of its potential to involve the reader in the narrative process. As has been shown in the context of *Un mundo para Julius*, Bryce had mastered the creation and reduction of distances between the reader and his characters a decade before the publication of the first of the *Cuadernos*, and in the intervening years similar strategies were employed in both *La felicidad, ja ja* and *Tantas veces Pedro*. Although the *Cuadernos* bear witness to the resolution of the conflict between a first- and third-person narrator, which proved to be a feature of the narrative of *Tantas veces Pedro*, in favour of the first person, this does not mean that Bryce abandons the use of free indirect discourse, associated thus far in his narrative production with the use of a third-person narrator. The use of a first-person narrator does present some problems in the context of free indirect discourse insofar as a first-person narrator cannot be privy to the mental processes of the characters he describes, and this deprives the narrative of devices which were used with particular effectiveness in *Un mundo para Julius* and *Tantas veces Pedro*, as the thoughts of certain characters filtered into the narrative. The representation of stream of consciousness of any character other than the narrator himself also becomes impossible. The possibility of reporting the words of others remains, however, unaffected by the shift in narrative voice, and Martín, as the narrator of the text, appropriates the words of others in much the same way as has been seen in the other works studied. Indeed, in her study of the novel, Phyllis Rodríguez-Peralta highlights the polyphony of the first-person narrative as one of its creator's most notable achievements.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Phyllis Rodríguez-Peralta, 'The Subjective Narration of Alfredo Bryce Echenique's *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*', *Hispanic Journal*, X (1989), 139-51.

Although the narrative voice of the *Cuadernos* is that of the first person, there are shifts in the narrative voice in both novels: the first instance in *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* takes the form of a chapter, ‘Martín Romaña creía firmemente’, in which an omniscient third-person narrator contests Martín’s reasons for travelling to Europe, and for remaining there. The implied objectivity of the third person creates a tension with the version described by Martín in the first person, the upshot being that the protagonist is portrayed as a naive romantic. This technique was used in several stories of *Huerto cerrado* as an adult narrator called into question the sincerity of the teenage Manolo’s emotions, as for example in ‘Una mano en las cuerdas’. There is, however, a significant difference here in that while in the earlier text the first person was seen as a subjective and largely unreliable voice, interrupted by a more credible third-person, here the balance has shifted to a position where the subjectivity of the first person has come to be the norm. This reflects the lack of certainty on the part of both the author and the protagonist as to their position in the world they describe, a concern that finds ample expression at the level of theme. The other section encountered in *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* takes the form of a seven-page chapter, entitled ‘Bizquerita de Inés y locura de Martín en Cádiz’, narrated again in the third person, and the apparent anomaly can be explained by the fact that this chapter is a short story written by Martín and inserted into the narrative in much the same way as Pedro Balbuena’s literary creations were incorporated into *Tantas veces Pedro*.

The intervention of a third-person narrator in *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* lasts only two lines and is far more subtly incorporated into the body of the narrative, which moves from first- to third-person to relate Martín and Octavia’s first night together, and coincides with Martín climbing into bed to join Octavia:

...Bueno, y ahora a la cama [...] de una noche de lectura al pie de la chica más linda del mundo envenenada para *mi* mayor solaz y esparcimiento.

Santa, santa, *declamó* Martín Romaña al salir en punta de pies del bañito azul. Del dicho al

lecho hay solo un trecho, *se dijo*, por fin, en punta de pies, y *se odió*. (p. 114, my italics)⁸⁰

When in the third section of the novel the narrator confesses a rather prudish attitude towards erotic episodes in literature, ‘porque siempre me han producido una vergüenza horrible cuando los leo en otras novelas’ (p. 236), the distance created between the events and their narration by means of this shift may be understood. Also in the third section of the work is the final shift in narrative voice, through which a narrative in the first person plural discusses the process of literary creation over the course of two pages, listing the various sources consulted in the reconstruction of a dialogue between Martín and Octavia and raising the question of the different possible perceptions of reality. The fact that ‘el escritor Bryce Echenique’ (p. 202) is one of the sources consulted in this reconstruction and that it should be he who challenges the accepted version of events (which he himself has ultimately created) again brings into question the conflict between objective and subjective realities, as well as foregrounding the metafictional character of the work.

As mentioned above, the use of free indirect discourse is again a feature of the narrative, although the use of a first-person narrator, and the consequent loss of narratorial omniscience, mean that the credible representation of other characters’ thoughts is no longer possible. The thoughts of Inés (Martín’s wife in *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*) and Octavia (his idealised love in *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*) are occasionally embedded in the narrative, but such instances correspond to Martín imagining what the two women might be thinking about him, or even what he would like them to be thinking about him, and as such are in perfect keeping with the function of free indirect discourse, allowing control of the narrative perspective to be gained by a character who enjoys the sympathy of the narrator. Examples of the narrative being filtered through the words of other characters abound in the *Cuadernos* and are consistent with examples studied in the context of earlier works, serving

⁸⁰ Page numbers for both texts refer to the Oveja Negra editions, published in Bogotá in 1985.

primarily to manipulate distances between narrator, characters and reader. In some respects the use of a first-person narrator makes more explicit the connection between the use of free indirect discourse in association with certain characters and Martín's favourable impression of them, for Martín is able simultaneously to convey his opinion of them as reinforcement of the presentation via narrative strategy in a manner that is not possible for a third-person narrator.

Alongside the features of the narrative that have come to constitute Bryce's style is a variety of devices new to Bryce's work, whose appearance is fully in keeping with the metafictional nature of these texts. The most recurrent of these is the use of footnotes, which contribute to the multi-directional dialogues that take place between narrator, reader and text. The primary function of a minority of these footnotes is the conventional one of furnishing the reader with supplementary information, but most of them are highly self-aware, reflecting on the nature of literary creation and even on the use of footnotes. Other devices that contribute to giving the narrative a decidedly post-modern feel and to the overall metafictional quality of the texts include the following: the presentation of conversations in terms of a tennis match (*Octavia*, p. 182); the use of a highly self-aware point by point format to represent the narrator's thoughts (*Martín Romana*, pp. 313-14); the use of formulaic constructions to convey thoughts or words (as seen in '¡Al agua patos! and *Tantas veces Pedro*), again drawing the reader's attention to the process of narration; the variation of chapter length in order to slow down or speed up the action of the narrative. Each of these devices is used only occasionally, but when considered en bloc their influence is greater than the sum of the individual elements, constituting an important feature in the narrative's concern with the conditions of its own creation.

As can be appreciated, issues of language continue to be of fundamental importance to the text, in terms both of *lenguaje* and *lengua*: if language as a system for (re)creating reality is

explored at a macro level, linguistic production as a means of individual expression is also explored through the protagonist's use of Spanish. Bryce's ability to capture a social class via linguistic usage has been noted in the context of *Un mundo para Julius*, and here this awareness is heightened still further through the repeated and frequent use of Peruvian (and Latin-American) forms of expression, wordplays and linguistic humour. As well as providing entertainment for the reader, who is faced with a narrator who again revels in the manipulation of language, the wordplays and Peruvianisms serve to provide an important element in the affirmation of Martín's identity as a Peruvian and Latin American in the face of a Europe which fails to meet his preconceptions and which is consistently unreceptive to him and his cultural values. It is interesting that the bulk of the Peruvianisms occur in the second half of *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* when Martín undergoes an identity crisis. Besides such phrases as 'resultó que su casa quedaba donde el diablo perdió su poncho' (p. 220) or 'dejándome turulato' (p. 209), there are a number of occasions on which the Latin American or specifically Peruvian nature of a locution is made explicit. In the first volume of the diptych there is just one such instance, while in the second there are several, all in the third section of the work. It is no coincidence that there should be a proliferation of these expressions of Latin Americanness in this section of the text, for it is precisely here that Martín's loss of Octavia leads to the collapse of his world and an acute crisis of identity, voiced by the protagonist himself: 'Una vez más, ¿quién soy?' (p. 221).

A function of language already studied in the context of Bryce's earlier works is that of a source of humour, and here again puns and examples of the humorous manipulation of language abound. Many of these episodes are again highly self-aware, in keeping with the general tone of the work, and the use of humour goes further than being a means to 'genera[r] complicidad con el lector';⁸¹ its use here acquires an additional dimension, described in one

⁸¹ See note 57.

of the epigraphs to *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*: ‘Entonces, ¿en qué creía? En el humor. En reírme de los sistemas, de la gente, de uno mismo [...] (Erica Jong, *Miedo a volar*)’ (p. 14). Humour, deriving largely from the manipulation of language (the work’s many *digresiones* can be seen to fulfil a similar function), serves not only to involve the reader in the process of narration, but also as a tool of resistance with which the narrator-protagonist can subvert and deflate the hegemonic structures of the society in which he finds himself. The Madre superiora and Fernando Ranchal suffered the same fate in *Un mundo para Julius*, but here humour and linguistic usage combine to provide the protagonist with a powerful means of assertion of his identity over forms that would seek to deny him his existence as Other.

Metafiction was seen to be a significant feature of *Tantas veces Pedro*, but its contribution to the *Cuadernos* is greater again. While Pedro is a frustrated author whose creations are worked into the body of the narrative in the form of digressions or sub-sections of the chapters, and whose only credited story constitutes the epilogue to the work, Martín is not only the highly self-aware author of the *Cuadernos*, but also the author of a lengthy *novela por encargo* about Peruvian fishing unions and of a number of travel guides. Given all of this, it is perhaps not surprising that Martín assumes a position as metanarrator, as aware of his position as scribe as of the existence of his readership, consistently addressed in the plural. This assumed dialogue between narrator and reader has been present throughout Bryce’s narrative, from the parenthetical asides of the stories of *Huerto cerrado* to the direct address of *Un mundo para Julius* and *Tantas veces Pedro*. Here, however, it is developed to an extent not previously witnessed, due in part to the move to a first-person narrator whose intimacy is conducive to the establishment of such a relationship. It may also be explained in terms of the narrator seeking the sympathy – and empathy – of the reader in the cathartic process that is the literary creation. The result is that the narrator is in a position to guide the

reader through the narrative, prompting or eliciting reaction and seeking a more active and conscious involvement in the process of narrative creation. Not only is this strategy developed with regard to previous works: it also becomes far more prevalent as *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* progresses, and is employed from the outset in *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*.

The narrator's involvement of the reader in the process of the literary creation is implicit in cases such as those described, but on occasion it is made explicit, as the reader is asked to recall details from earlier episodes in order to make sense of the text. Moreover, the narrator expects the reader to demand consistency and coherence of him (he calls attention to the discrepancy between his professed fear of heights and his ability to clean up after his landlady's dog on a ninth-floor balcony), and to maintain a level of engagement with the text that equates to his own: 'Recuerde el lector dormido, avive el seso y despierte, que por ahí se descolgó ya Inés con algo de eso' (*Martín Romaña*, p. 427).

The metafictional nature of the *Cuadernos*, another aspect of their pervasive (post)modernity, is made apparent from the outset of the first volume, since the untitled opening chapter is the 'Punto de partida del cuaderno de navegación en un sillón Voltaire', while the novel's opening lines announce the second volume of the diptych just being commenced:

Mi nombre es Martín Romaña y esta es la historia de mi crisis positiva. Y la historia también de mi cuaderno azul. Y la historia además de cómo un día necesité de un cuaderno rojo para continuar la historia del cuaderno azul. Todo, en un sillón Voltaire. (p. 13)

The profuse metafictional references fall under two broad categories: those which allude to the concrete, physical conditions of the literary creation (the *Cuadernos* themselves), and those of a more reflexive, abstract nature. Having referred to his notebooks in the introductory chapter, they are mentioned on numerous occasions towards the end of the first volume ('he tenido que salir en busca de hojas para agregarle a mi cuaderno azul. No puedo

ocultarles más que hace tiempo que se me acabó’, p. 455) and into the second, whose opening chapter is entitled ‘Abriendo el cuaderno rojo’. The use of metafictional devices here serves a dual function: on the one hand references to the physical conditions of literary creation constitute another component of the general desire on the part of the narrator to include the reader as fully as possible in the creative process, while on the other they express the *joie d’écrire* witnessed in *Tantas veces Pedro*, and also to the fore here. They also, of course, contribute in no small part to the exploration of the relationship between art and life, to be discussed more fully below.

When the use of metafictional devices is considered in the light of the work’s dedication, quoted above, then it would appear that for Martín and Bryce alike literary creation has an undoubtedly emotional function, serving to evoke and even recuperate (or at least reorder) the past in an act of catharsis. On other occasions the emotional bond created between reader and narrator by means of the narrative strategies discussed above appears very much to be a two-way phenomenon: in the closing pages of *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, when Martín is finally to relate Inés’s departure from Paris, marking their definitive separation, he confesses that ‘Uno se encariña con el lector, y termina queriendo ahorrarle aeropuertos tan tristes’ (p. 457). The emotional attachment Martín feels for the characters of his narrative extends to his reader as well, once more blurring the boundary between reality and artistic creation.

The metafictional and metanarrative qualities of the work combine to give a feature of Bryce’s narrative already discussed in the context of *Tantas veces Pedro*, namely its intratextuality, which here takes the form of the closing words of a chapter or section giving the title for the next, which may then pick up on the same words in a dialogue between the narrator and his text. This engagement on the part of the narrator with his own narrative is another dimension of his search for reconstructive and cathartic dialogue, referred to above,

and also reflects the participation of the reader, who again is drawn into a position approximating to that of the narrator with regard to literary creation. Such instances raise the question of why there should be a new chapter at all when unity of action, space and time are maintained. The significance of chapter length as a means of manipulating the pace of the narrative and the reader's interest has already been mentioned, and in the light of this the intratextuality of the chapter titles functions not only as another metafictional device, but also as a convenient means of interrupting the apparently interminable stream of Martín's narration for the benefit of the reader. The divisions of the otherwise uninterrupted narrative are also a reminder that despite the pervasive (post)modernity of the text, there are constraints on literary production, which has to some degree to conform to convention. However, Martín's challenges to convention at the level of the plot (he refuses, for example, to accept that he cannot marry Octavia because of their different social backgrounds) find expression in the construction of the narrative via means such as these.

The role of a more familiar narrative device, narrative foreshadowing, has already been given consideration in the context of both *La felicidad, ja ja* and *Tantas veces Pedro* as a means of deflating dramatic tension and consequently foregrounding the narrative itself. In what are essentially love stories, the conventional source of the principal dramatic interest – whether the relationship will flourish or wither – is dispelled well before the denouement is in sight. Indeed, in *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* the reader is made aware as early as the second page that this love story will not have a happy ending, as Octavia's marriage to another is announced. Narrative foreshadowing is often combined with the self-aware titles of chapters to challenge further the conventions against which Martín struggles; while it would be abnormal for a title to bear no relation to the information that follows, some of the titles in the *Cuadernos* go beyond what might be expected or accepted:

DE CÓMO Y POR QUÉ A MARTÍN ROMAÑA, MÁRTIR DE UNA LITERATURA QUE AÚN NO HA ESCRITO, LE BLOQUEAN UN DEDO QUE LE SERÁ INDISPENSABLE PARA ESCRIBIR, SI ALGÚN DÍA

ESCRIBE. Y DE CÓMO Y POR QUÉ OCTAVIA DE CÁDIZ SE APROVECHA DE LA OPORTUNIDAD PARA APROPIARSE HASTA DEL TENDÓN DE CATALINA L'ENORME. TODO, BAJO LOS EFECTOS DE LA ANESTESIA. (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 268)

When the length of this title is combined with the brevity of the chapter that follows (just over four pages), the details at the level of plot are amply summarised, with typically metafictional overtones, and what is foregrounded is the language through which the events are described, with its humour, its free indirect discourse and its metanarrative qualities, all of which is entirely consistent with the primacy of language throughout Bryce's work. In the context of this repeated deflation of dramatic tension, instances of a more conventional usage of devices which serve to create suspense come to be all the more noticeable and arguably more effective through the inversion of standard and non-standard usage. On the few occasions when dramatic tension is created, the suspense is consequently heightened, only for it to be frustrated as the mystery is often left unresolved, again subverting narrative conventions and manipulating the reader.

A final component of the metafictional quality of the *Cuadernos*, and one which could be seen as an extension of the intratextuality discussed above, is the reproduction of scenes and character types from Bryce's previous works, and even explicit references to them. These range from passing references which could easily be overlooked by the reader, such as the French girl called Beatrice and the girl from Berkeley 'con régimen macrobiótico' (*Martín Romana*, pp. 50 and 53; cf. Beatrice and Virginia in *Tantas veces Pedro*), the 'gimnasio de los hermanos Rodríguez, cuya publicidad era SALUD Y FIGURA EN TRES MESES' (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 260; cf. *Un mundo para Julius* and 'Baby Schiaffino'), or the anecdote of the uncle killed by a tram (*Martín Romana*, p.77; cf. 'El hombre, el cinema y la tranvía' in *Huerto cerrado*), to direct references which cannot be overlooked. In a fashion typical of this work, Martín uses Bryce's work as a point of reference for his own life: 'yo [me había convertido] en el hijo más travieso y delicioso del mundo, un niño con algo del Julius de la novela que

tiempo después escribiría Alfredo Bryce Echenique' (*Martín Romaña*, p. 134), as well as claiming that *Tantas veces Pedro* was inspired by an incident from Martín's childhood of which Bryce learned. The appearance of Bryce in the narrative has already been seen elsewhere, but the confusion of timescales, with the *Cuadernos* predating both of Bryce's earlier novels, deserves comment, illustrating once more the capacity of literary creation for reordering reality and the requirement that the reader undertake a critical and active engagement with the text.

The literary creations of Martín (and Bryce) are validated to some degree by the use of one of the great works of Hispanic literature as a form of proto-text. The diptych with a protagonist who suffers from an inability to distinguish clearly between fiction and reality and a stubborn adherence to an idealised love has strong resonances of the *Quijote*. Moreover, the first volume of each work contains the same number of chapters (52), and both second volumes are self-aware continuations of the first. That the similarities are not coincidental appears to be confirmed by Bryce's recognition of the influence of Cervantes's seminal novel on his literature.⁸² A similar conclusion can be drawn from the manner in which the reader is encouraged to notice them via numerous allusions, such as 'hasta trabajó en un lugar de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme' (*Martín Romaña*, p. 74) or explicit comparisons such as 'pensé que, como don Quijote, estaba listo para una nueva salida' (*Martín Romaña*, p. 249). The narrators of both works exploit the reader's assumed awareness of literature and literary convention, and manipulate the position of the reader in relation to both the central characters and the narrator himself. Needless to say, by engaging with the *Quijote* the narrator (and author) add to the literariness of the *Cuadernos*, and at the same time provide further depth to the intertextual dimension of the work.

⁸² See note 75.

Already discussed briefly in the context of *Tantas veces Pedro*, and requiring a more thorough consideration here, is the question of cultural identity and, to a lesser degree, identity in general. Martín becomes rapidly disillusioned with the view of Paris as a spiritual and cultural capital, in much the same way as Pedro did, and the reader is witness to a repeated demythification of Paris, which is initiated in the opening chapters of *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* and is continued throughout the *Cuadernos*. As Martín comes to reject the Parisian cultural model, through phrases such as ‘Nôtre-Dame estaba exacta que en Lima, aunque tal vez allá en Lima sí irradiaba un poquito más’ (*Martín Romaña*, p. 26) and ‘De Gaulle en Lima, y yo en París, desde luego no sé cuál de los dos andaba dándose peores tropezones con la realidad’ (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 159), he constructs a Latin-American cultural system which comes to replace the Parisian (European) model and to acquire the dimensions of an affirmation of his values and very identity. While the demythification of Paris is begun in the opening chapters of the first volume of the *Cuadernos*, it is only towards the end of it that a Latin-American model starts to be developed to replace it, and this is continued through the second volume, constituting a clear example of *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* serving as an arena for the development of a process begun in *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*. Among the wealth of allusions and explicit references to songs, poems and works of fiction by Latin Americans which, through cumulative reinforcement, serve to reaffirm Martín’s cultural values in much the same way as the self-consciously Latin-American expressions discussed above, references and allusions to the work of César Vallejo stand out in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz*, Vallejo’s vision of Paris comes to supplant that of Hemingway, with which Martín left Peru:

empezaba a pensar que era una revisión, para uso de latinoamericanos, de *París era una fiesta* de Hemingway [...] a cada rato me descubría con el índice pegado en un nuevo verso del poema sobre los golpes: Golpes como del odio de Dios...
Comprendí entonces hasta qué punto Vallejo tenía razón [...] (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 215)

Indeed, it could be argued that the Vallejian perspective assumes the proportions of a credo that helps Martín to cope with a European reality that seeks to deny him his existence as *limeño*, Peruvian and Latin American, especially when taken in conjunction with the numerous other cultural allusions. This relationship in the *Cuadernos* between life and literature and fact and fiction is a complex one, and will be afforded a fuller consideration in the closing stages of this chapter, as well as in the analysis of *No me esperen en abril*.

Fundamental to Martín's need to reassess his cultural values are his growing doubts as to his own identity. The early manifestations of this crisis of identity are to be found in the second half of *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* and take the form of a realisation of the ignorance of Europeans and North Americans alike as to the nature of Latin America. Even in the company of Sandra, who is staunchly anti-imperialist and who expresses considerable interest in developing nations, Martín feels that 'tendré que contarle [...] casi lo que es América Latina' (p. 278) in order for her to understand him and his actions. In the opening chapters of *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* it is made clear that Europeans are no more aware of Latin America and its essence than Sandra, as is illustrated by the comment of a Belgian duke upon being introduced to Julio Ramón Ribeyro: 'ah, peruano, ¿no? Pues yo una vez al año voy a España para cazar jabalíes con El Caudillo' (p. 120). The gradual narrowing of the focus from continental to national identity is taken a step further as Martín questions his identity as an individual. A crucial event in his realisation that perceptions of him are not uniform is his detention by the French police as a result of his continuing relationship with Octavia, which is very much against the wishes of her influential family. At the end of a lengthy interview with the police, Martín concludes that the power of love is overwhelming and expresses himself, typically, through the words of a Latin-American artist, in this case Juan Rulfo: 'no se puede contra lo que no se puede', which is misinterpreted by the police as a resigned acceptance of their power. When Martín is called before the

Peruvian ambassador to be similarly warned, the same words are understood in the sense in which they were spoken, and the ambassador bids him farewell with ‘palmadas de afecto en la espalda: cuídese, Martín’ (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 212). It is in the pages immediately following this episode and the realisation it brings that Martín questions for the first time his personal identity. The reader has by now been made aware of the fact that both Martín and Octavia are to a greater or lesser extent the creation of the other and while Octavia Marie Amélie ‘del apellido difícil de retener’ becomes Octavia de Cádiz and occasionally Zalacaín la aventurera (Martín’s vision of a girl on a beach in Cádiz had been surrounded by the works of Hemingway and Baroja), Martín is known as Richard Cantwell, el colonnello, Maximus, Maximusky and even ‘el colonnello Maximus Richard Martín Cantwell Romanaña’. It would seem that these names are all adopted to create a present free from the influence of the past and the love Martín Romanaña felt for Inés, and when he comes to realize that this love, which in some ways represents another meeting of two worlds, will also be frustrated he is left without his identity either as Martín Romanaña or any of the personas created by Octavia. His growing awareness that he will not be accepted by Europe, as represented by Octavia’s family, leads him to suggest that they elope, knowing that ‘si me deja, será porque hay gente que me acusa de ser exactamente lo contrario de lo que decidieron Inés y un grupo de gente [un burgués podrido]’ and to ask himself ‘¿Cuál de los dos soy?’ (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 213). By the end of the following chapter, which significantly contains several allusions to Latin-American culture (Cortázar, Borges, popular sayings) and the discussion of the merits of Vallejo’s poetry reproduced above, Martín is actually asking himself ‘Una vez más, ¿quién soy?’ (p. 221).⁸³

⁸³ For a more considered treatment of this issue see my article ‘Identity and Cultural Identity in Alfredo Bryce Echenique’s *Cuadernos de navegación en un sillón Voltaire*’, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (Liverpool), LXXVI (1999), 519-532.

The remainder of the work represents, to some extent, his attempts to remain faithful to the identity created for him by Octavia, and subsequently to break away from it once she is married, but this central question is not resolved until the work's closing paragraph, in which Martín is living in Lima and working as the author of a series of travel guides, having finally managed to escape from his previous identities and their hold on him. He is now known as Maximus P. Camacho, writing under the pseudonym Maximus Solre, and it would appear that the names' combination of past and present, real and fictitious signify an ability to incorporate his experiences with Inés and Octavia into his new identity, all of which will allow him to respond positively to the future, and thus come to terms with an existence unencumbered by the past. Martín/Maximus has then been able to do what Pedro Balbuena and the protagonists of the stories *La felicidad, ja ja* could not: the past has been subjected to examination, evaluation and reinterpretation, all through the cathartic process of literary creation. However, the price for acquiring this independent identity has been high, involving a failed marriage, social and cultural marginalisation and a nervous breakdown. This ambiguity with regard to the positive nature of the closure is maintained into the epilogue, in which Martín dies and waits in heaven for his loved one, who will finally become Octavia de Cádiz, free from the constraints of earthly reality. The open ending is typical of Bryce's preceding works, and typical also of the involvement of the reader in the narrative, for its resolution becomes a matter of interpretation, dependent on the response of the individual reader to Martín's story in a manner consistent with the desire of narrator and author to engage the reader in the process of literary creation.

The themes of identity and creation converge in the protagonist's loves, who are central to the *Cuadernos* in several ways: if Martín's relationship with Inés is relatively straightforward (at least in terms of its reality), then his relationship with Octavia is clearly not and is heavily Quixotic. When Martín first encounters Octavia in one of his classes he sees in her the

realisation of an ideal he has long been seeking: ‘Había algo que sólo puedo calificar de doble, sí, algo doble había en el parecido de la muchacha que acababa de entrar con la muchacha que yo había visto una vez en la playa, en Cádiz’ (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 58). The attentive reader will remember that Octavia’s appearance on the beach in Cádiz, upon which Martín has based his model of beauty and comprehension, was itself a fiction, apparently written for the benefit of the real Octavia as a fiction within a fiction. The creation of Octavia de Cádiz by Martín is reminiscent of that of Dulcinea del Toboso by don Quijote, and both serve as a character to whom the protagonist can devote his efforts and whose name he can evoke in times of difficulty, as Martín frequently does. The *Quijote* again brings further depth of meaning to the *Cuadernos*, and in a work of this kind such superimposed layers of meaning – and of fiction – are all-important. These layers come together as the *Cuadernos* reach their conclusion and Martín realizes that ‘Octavia de Cádiz no era real, era un ideal, fue una quimera’ (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 370), the stimulus coming typically from literature (François George’s *Historia personal de Francia*). The reader has suspected this for some time, and the real surprise comes when Martín visits Octavia in Italy, having been granted patronage by her husband. In their library Martín finds a copy of the same work and tells the reader:

encontré la página que casi me había matado en Lima, [...] pero Octavia intervino arrancándome violentamente la página subrayada de las manos. *Troppo tardi*. Porque lo entendí toditito, desde el primer día, desde el primer instante: también yo era el quimero de Octavia. (*Octavia de Cádiz*, p. 376)

The effect of this is to add significantly to both the questions of identity and reality, as it becomes apparent that Martín is not alone in struggling to position himself with regard to reality and its recreation through literature. The implication would appear to be that while Martín may well have finally come to terms with what he sees as his own identity (and reality), Martín and Octavia are both dependent to a large degree on the perceptions of others in order to acquire an identity, and that both identity and reality are necessarily subjective,

even artificial. As these considerations open out at the close of the novel to include Octavia, the other figure with whom the narrator has constructed a relationship – the reader – is also drawn into the frame, and is invited to address these issues beyond the confines of the text that is being completed.

As well as the relationship between the *Quijote* and the *Cuadernos*, there is also the broader question of how Martín's existence relates to fiction and the literary models in which he has become so involved through the writing of his story. As *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* progresses, the division between fiction and fantasy, life and literature becomes increasingly blurred, largely through the repeated use of the cultural allusions discussed above as points of comparison for life and Martín's acute awareness of his position as protagonist in a literary construct of his own making. A notable contribution in this respect is made by the references to works of Bryce, presumably familiar to the reader as publications, and the frequent appearances of Bryce himself within the novel. As in *Tantas veces Pedro*, Bryce is described as a Peruvian author of some repute, and a close friend of Julio Ramón Ribeyro, but on a personal level he is consistently antagonistic towards Martín, mocking his relationship with Octavia and even punching him unconscious at one point. One of the most interesting features of Bryce's appearances, however, is the manner in which he is consistently referred to as 'el pérfido Bryce' because of his habit of propagating alternative versions of events which are damaging to Martín. This use of Bryce as a conveyor of an alternative reality to the one he is positing through Martín adds yet another dimension to the considerations of reality, identity and metafiction as the author grapples with his own demons (autobiography, literary creation and love/friendship) in a manner that parallels the efforts of his protagonist-narrator.

While in the first volume of the diptych Martín tended to see literature and artistic creations in general as reflections of life, as in the case of his social realist *novela por encargo*, whose

characters were based upon his neighbours in his first apartment, throughout *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* he repeatedly does the reverse, reflecting on life in terms of the literature he reads, the films he sees and the music he listens to. The function of this frequently used device would seem to be to detach himself from a Parisian reality and a marriage which do not correspond to his expectations, both of which are based in turn on the European literary and cultural models he now rejects in favour of Latin-American ones.

To compare the two novels of the *Cuadernos* with the preceding novel, from which the majority of the main features of this narrative arise, it would seem reasonable to conclude that whereas *Tantas veces Pedro* was characterised by a fragmentation of the narrative into chapters into which short stories and letters were inserted in the form of *digresiones*, then the *Cuadernos* consist primarily of such digressions hung loosely around a plot that is of secondary interest. On numerous occasions each chapter of the two volumes of the diptych is a self-contained episode or digression similar to a short story, and the backgrounding of the events of the narrative allows the language through which events are expressed – and above all the literary constructs within which they are couched – to become the features on which the reader's attention is focused. Although both volumes of the *Cuadernos* share a number of characteristics with the works discussed in the previous chapters, especially in terms of the use of free indirect discourse, the direct address of the reader by the narrator and the creation of a humour based on linguistic considerations, there are also a number of significant developments, both with regard to this manipulation of language and the reader and to devices and themes which first came to prominence in *Tantas veces Pedro*. In the context of the relationship created between narrator and reader through a careful manipulation of language and the exploitation of the narrator's privileged position vis-à-vis the characters and events he portrays, the resolution of the alternating use of first- and third-person narrator witnessed in *Tantas veces Pedro* in favour of a first-person narrator-protagonist in the

Cuadernos means that the reader is drawn even further into the confidence of the narrator, and through him into a greater involvement with the narrative itself and the process of literary creation. A natural extension of this, which makes a significant contribution to the exploration of the nature of fiction and metafiction, is the awareness on the part of the narrator as to his position as the creator of the work, and the consequent possibility of guiding the reader through the narrative and the process of its construction. Other narrative devices discussed in the context of Bryce's earlier works and developed here to make a contribution to the self-referentiality of the *Cuadernos* are the appearance of Bryce as a character, allusions or references to his works, and intratextuality. As well as this internal cross-referencing of the work, the intertextual references that appeared towards the end of *Tantas veces Pedro* play a far more prominent role here in the context of a more profound questioning of identity, both at the level of a Latin American in Europe and of the individual, and herein lies one of the work's two main themes. The other, a broad exploration of the nature of reality, benefits hugely from the metafictional qualities of the *Cuadernos* and the manner in which the question of identity is considered. Martín is defined largely in terms of his cultural identity, and the collapse of his vision of love and life as seen through European cultural expression leads to a crisis of identity which is resolved through an affirmation of Latin-American values, primarily through cultural, and especially literary, media. In addition to these numerous individual references which build up over the course of the work, there is also the overarching influence of the *Quijote* which contributes in no small measure to the considerations of both identity and reality, as well as serving as a model for the work's intertextuality.

As far as the narrative style is concerned, there is a continued use of strategies already established as part of Bryce's narrative voice, but there are still signs of growth and development, such as the use of footnotes and other forms of narrative presentation that are

used here for the first time to give the narrative a feeling of innovation. Having moved from a third-person narrative in his earlier works to a first-person narrative here, this voice undergoes refinement in Bryce's following novel, *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*.

La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo: ‘Volver, volver, volveer...’

Luis Eyzaguirre describes *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* as a ‘verificación de la autonomía conquistada por la escritura de Bryce’, and the novel can indeed be seen to synthesise many of the characteristics of preceding works: the narrator-protagonist tells his story in a highly self-aware manner to an audience whose assumed presence is made explicit.⁸⁴ With the resolution of the narrative voice in favour of the first person in the *Cuadernos*, its use here is far more assured and controlled, as is appreciated most readily by the novel’s relative brevity (150 pages compared to 471 and 383 for the two volumes of the diptych respectively). The structure of the novel, superficially at least, is also less challenging: with the exception of the opening and closing chapters, they are given numbers rather than titles, and there is a far greater degree of uniformity in their length. These differences between novels are again mediated by a collection of short stories: *Magdalena peruana*, published in 1986, not only demonstrates a clearer structuring of the text and far less spontaneity and digression in the narrative of the stories, but also sees a return to Lima as setting, for half of the stories at least. At the level of theme, there are more marked continuities, with ‘Una carta a Martín Romaña’ and ‘El breve retorno de Florence, este otoño’ entering into a dialogue with Bryce’s previous literary creations.

In 1974 Bryce stated ‘Me interesa la escritura antes que la estructura. Simplemente poner mi historia oral en papel’, and while this can be seen to hold true for *Un mundo para Julius* (although the significance of the novel’s structure has been discussed above), *Tantas veces Pedro* and, to a degree, the two volumes of the *Cuadernos*, the structure of the text becomes increasingly less gratuitous. The numbering of the chapters in *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* corresponds to the protagonist’s desire to impose order on the events he narrates, but

⁸⁴ Luis Eyzaguirre, ‘La última mudanza de Bryce Echenique’, *Hispanérica*, LIII/LIV (1989), 195-202, at p. 201.

the first and last chapters escape that order: the last sees Felipe Carrillo in Paris, having emerged from the events of the narrated past, and coming to terms with them in the narrative present, while the first (entitled ‘Música de fondo’) introduces the reader to the story announced in the closing pages in a manner reminiscent of both *Tantas veces Pedro* and ‘Antes de la cita con los Linares’. This arrangement of the physical construct that is the text is not casual, as is made abundantly clear from the opening lines to the second chapter:

La verdad, acabo de decidir que no habrá capítulo primero en este libro. ¿Para qué? Basta con esa música de fondo que llevamos ya un buen rato escuchando y que nos acompañará muy a menudo, como agazapada detrás de este relato. Y no, no es que pretenda introducir una sola gota de novela experimental en esta historia. (p. 19)⁸⁵

The narrator’s denial of experimental structure of course draws attention precisely to this very feature, and if the numbering of the chapters mirrors the narrator’s efforts to (re)order events, they also highlight the metafictional qualities that again form a significant element of this narrative.

The use of a first-person narrator aware both of his position as narrator and of the presence of an audience, to whom he again frequently addresses himself via ‘ustedes’, is clearly another continuation from the *Cuadernos*, although the intimacy created is perhaps even greater here, since the narrative is more tightly focused and the reader’s attention more closely concentrated on a story line that is considerably more condensed. The use of only four main characters and a fairly linear development of the plot also contribute to a less diluted role for the reader, who becomes to a greater degree an audience for the conventional telling of a story. That two of the main characters (Felipe’s lover, Genoveva, and her son Sebastián) come to be explicitly described in highly negative terms means that the reader’s relationship with the text and its personages becomes narrowed further, heightening the sense of intimacy between the narrator and his audience. Further manipulation of distances

⁸⁵ All page numbers refer to the Oveja Negra edition (Bogotá, 1988).

between reader, narrator and characters again takes place through the use of free indirect discourse and the use of direct speech as means of reporting speech. Context is once more of great significance to the effect achieved by the use of these devices, for although the words of Sebastián may be incorporated into the narrative in unmediated form, Felipe's stated loathing of him infuses the words with an ironic charge, or lends them a mocking mimetic function. A similar distance is created by the presentation of the words of Genoveva and her son via direct speech, and it is noticeable that this narrative form comes to the fore when the relationship is at a low ebb. Comparisons here with the treatment of characters such as Juan Lucas from *Un mundo para Julius* become inevitable, and are reinforced when Genoveva is similarly described as 'vestida para la ocasión' (p. 131) after her relationship with Felipe is definitively over. By contrast, the narrator's adoption of the words of Eusebia, the *mulata* maid with whom Felipe elopes from the holiday refuge in Colán, serves to validate not only her utterances, but also the perspective that underlies them, as well as to convey Felipe's emotional attachment to her. This dialogue between narrator and reader extends to require the latter to assume the character of a *lector cómplice*, who again has to participate in the (re)creation of the narrative in order to make full sense of it, while narrative devices such as the use of self-referential footnotes indicate further continuities with the *Cuadernos*.

The metanarrator of *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* creates another metafictional work, as can be expected from one of the novel's epigraphs: '«There is only one thing you can do with a woman – said Clea once –. You can love her, suffer for her, or turn her into literature.» Lawrence Durrell, *Justine*.' In the course of the pages that follow there are numerous references to the act of literary creation that is taking place, drawing attention to the creative process and drawing the reader towards participation in it. Another way in which this is achieved is by a clear demarcation between the events of the story, narrated in the past, and the narrator's reflections on them, narrated in the present. Such a strategy was first seen

in ‘Con Jimmy, en Paracas’, but its use here relates far more closely to the question of the conscious recreation and reordering of events that were simply accepted in the early story. Chapter II, for example, is interrupted by a ‘PAUSA’ that appears across the page, after which a paragraph in the present tense reflects on what has just been written before the chapter is completed under another intrusive heading, ‘Capítulo II (CONTINUACIÓN Y FIN)’ (p. 34). The involvement of a *lector cómplice* is not left implicit as the narrator writes how ‘A la piscina, el lugar elegido por mí para que Genoveva y yo lo conversáramos todo de Nuevo con Sonsoles y Claudio, llegamos casi tan cansados como ustedes al fin de esta frase, seguro. Hay que ver lo mal que escribe uno algunas tardes’ (p. 66). There is also a wake-up call similar to that encountered in the *Cuadernos* when the reader’s supposed engagement is deliberately manipulated to frustrate expectations as a phrase that has been used repeatedly is suddenly withdrawn: ‘retomemos el hilo de esta historia de... Pues ahí sí que los agarré: creían ustedes que iba a decir, ya sé, esta historia de amor como no hay otro igual... Pero no’ (p. 101). For Felipe, the act of literary creation serves to assert order and control over his memories and thus come to terms with his past, via his own personal means of expression. All of this converges with considerations of metafiction and a strong sense of closure (which at the same time returns the reader to the opening of the novel) when in the closing paragraphs Felipe echoes the words of the epigraph quoted above: ‘Te amé, te sufrí, y ahora te escribo, Eusebia’ (p. 148). The act of literary creation serves again as catharsis and a powerful tool against a marginalizing and chaotic reality, as well as functioning as a means of dialogue with the past and a means of breaking free from the potentially destructive power of memory.

La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo enters into a dialogue not only with the past and with itself as literary artefact, but also with other works by Bryce – and others – in much the same way as has been seen in previous chapters. Echoes of ‘Con Jimmy, en Paracas’ and of *Un*

mundo para Julius have already been mentioned, while resonances of ‘Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin’ in a relationship that crosses social divides marked by language use will receive further attention below. In keeping with this work’s greater compactness, the profusion of references to Bryce’s earlier works is much reduced here, although there are some marked continuities with the *Cuadernos* in the reproduction of key phrases such as ‘así de medio la’o, tomándose un hela’o’ (p. 16), or Sebastián’s diaries taking the form of ‘dos cuadernos de elegante encuadernación’ (p. 68). On the whole, however, the central preoccupation of this novel lies not in literary creation, but in cultural (re)creation more widely, and this shift of emphasis means that intertextual references of the kind that formed a central feature of previous works are significantly downplayed here. A notable exception to the reduction of literary input to this novel is the reproduction of a three-page article on Felipe’s architectural style, supposedly published in the *Revue Psychanalytique* (publication details are given in a footnote on p. 49). In it Felipe’s origins and his position in Europe are examined, all of which contributes to the consideration of issues of identity, while the format of presentation and blurring of the boundaries between literature and reality pay homage to Borges, whose influence has already been discussed in the context of *Tantas veces Pedro*.

While there are then similarities with preceding works, there are also important differences, one of the most obvious being a return to Peru as setting, at least for chapters X-XII. The narrative is constructed in Paris, but the events that took place in Colán (a beach resort in the northern province of Piura) very much represent the impulse that underlies it, and it is their legacy that Felipe endeavours to deal with in the present of narrative creation. The socio-historical location of the Peruvian action is as precise as it was vague in *Un mundo para Julius* and the early short stories set in Lima: chapter X opens with ‘Colán, año 1983 d.C.’, and in this and the following two chapters there are repeated specific and accurate references to Peru’s socio-economic situation at the time. Felipe mentions the Agrarian Reform

programme implemented by the government of General Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975), the poor quality of Peruvian newsprint, and the two terms of President Belaúnde, all of which relates the action at the level of the protagonist's two love affairs to a concrete reality, the importance of which will become apparent. The post-Velasco backdrop significantly updates the world of *Un mundo para Julius* and prefigures that in which Manongo Sterne finds himself in the latter sections of the 1995 novel *No me esperen en abril*, providing another *vaso comunicante* across Bryce's works.

Language not only serves as a means of communication for the characters, and of literary creation, but performs two other fundamental functions in this novel: the first of these relates directly to the location of the action in a concrete Peruvian context, which allows for an exploration of the permeability or otherwise of the social (and cultural) barriers that exist between Felipe, Genoveva-Sebastián, and Eusebia. As Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat notes, Eusebia is a 'personaje que nunca se describe en términos románticos o utópicos sino precisamente ubicado en el interior de un orden socioeconómico específico.'⁸⁶ As well as the barriers of race and culture, which it seems can be overcome, Eusebia is separated from Felipe by the use of language. The difference is made explicit through their discussion over the use of *roncar/soñar*, *ronquidos/soñidos*, but the full social implications emerge only through the intervention of a figure outside the love affair. Felipe gradually reconciles these linguistic differences, and the worlds they express, through an understanding that 'Roncar era, por consiguiente, soñar con los pies en el suelo y pateando latas por la vida' (p. 121), but others from the Peruvian elite cannot do the same. When Jeanine, the wife of a close schoolfriend, refuses to accept 'las palabrotas de Eusebia, que también ella conocía y hasta usaba, si le daba la real gana' (p. 32) Felipe realizes that his love for Eusebia will never be accepted in the Peru that he knows, while Eusebia will never accept the francophone world in

which he lives. It is interesting to note here that the perception of Peru as barbarous, indicated by the *Fenómeno del Niño* that destroys Colán, as well as by hegemonic reactions to Eusebia, is subverted as Eusebia rescues Pedro from the emotional turmoil he experiences as a result of the incestuous relationship between Genoveva and her son.

If language functions as a marker of social boundaries in a manner that first appeared in ‘Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tin’, and that will be further explored below in the context of cultural references, then it also serves to establish differences and commonalities in the creation of identity, which again emerges as a significant theme. Felipe is as acutely aware of his own alienation in Europe as was Martín Romaña: his failure to comprehend fully Madrid’s society comes about because ‘Claro, uno es extranjero y no está preparado para semejantes sutilezas’ (p. 84), while in France he is ‘un arquitecto peruano en París, o de París, como quieran, porque la verdad es que ni yo mismo lo sabía muy bien’ (p. 144). When in the novel’s closing pages he asks his new-found soulmate Catherine to call him ‘*Felipe Carrillo*, primero, después *Felipe Sin*, después *Felipe Con y Sin*, después *Felipe a secas*’ (p. 146), he is seeking to recapture his identity in his relationship with the Peruvian Eusebia in which he found refuge from the torment produced by Genoveva and Europe. The purging of the relationship with Genoveva is expressed in the final paragraph of the story in the narrated past in which ‘Felipe Carrillo se agotó de pronto’ (p. 137), the use of the third person emphasising the distance adopted in relation to the manner in which Genoveva addressed him. The use of names as an obvious means of entering the realm of identity (Sebastián becomes Bastianito and Miplatanito, according to his behaviour) is taken further by the use of a specific type of language as a basis for expression. The use of self-consciously Peruvian and Latin-American phrases as an affirmation of identity was noted in the context of the *Cuadernos*, and here Felipe’s awareness of his own lack of identity in Europe is reflected in

⁸⁶ Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat, ‘Travesía y regresos de Alfredo Bryce: *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*’,

his use of several very Spanish locutions, such as ‘Qué va’ (p. 73), ‘pero venga ya’ (p. 91), or the use of the Spanish second-person plural form ‘os’ (p. 90). These are more than countered, however, by the use of a raft of sayings, significantly taken from the world of Peruvian/Latin-American popular expression, which afford Felipe a means of communication entirely complementary to the message that is being conveyed. It is significant that a number of these are spoken by Eusebia, some being subsequently incorporated into the discourse of Felipe, providing further validation of her (popular and Peruvian) perspective in favour of the (elitist and hegemonic) version held by Genoveva and Felipe’s childhood friends.

Central to the novel, and to Felipe’s identity as a Peruvian and Latin American, are the cultural references considered in the previous chapter, although here popular music assumes a more dominant role than was previously the case, thus replacing literature to some extent at the core of the protagonist’s existence. In 1985 Bryce described in his work ‘la última búsqueda que he emprendido, la de buscar la quintaesencia de lo peruano a través de los enfrentamientos culturales.’⁸⁷ While this search in *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* takes in a number of the works and authors that appeared in the *Cuadernos* (Juan Rulfo and Julio Cortázar at a continental level, Ricardo Palma, *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* and *Los ríos profundos* as specifically Peruvian, with Vallejo again representing an important nexus between the worlds of Paris and Peru), forms of expression from the world of popular culture here assume greater importance. The organic development in terms of cultural fields of reference other than the predominantly literary finds explanation in Felipe Carrillo’s recognition of the semantic value of other cultural forms when he states that ‘sus lecturas [de Eusebia] se limitan a la radio y la televisión’ (p. 125). The growing significance of music as a point of cultural reference in the search for ‘lo peruano’ is not surprising given Bryce’s

Hispanamérica, LXIII (1992), 73-79, at p. 77.

⁸⁷ ‘Confesiones sobre el arte de vivir y escribir novelas’, *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos*, CCCCXVII (1985), 65-76, at p. 71.

view that ‘la canción popular latinoamericano forma parte de nuestra literatura oral’.⁸⁸ The use of forms of cultural expression taken from a range of registers represents what Krakusin describes as ‘un interclasismo psicológico’ in the author’s exploration of the Peruvian (and Latin-American) cultural space.⁸⁹

Music permeates the novel even at a structural level, with the opening chapter entitled ‘Música de fondo’, and the opening lines drawing attention to the presence of music as a point of reference for the narrator: ‘(yo siempre pensando así, como musical, letras de canciones de ayer y de siempre, música de fondo, verán ustedes)’ (p. 11). The opening lines of the chapter II reiterate the underlying and underpinning importance of music, ‘agazapada detrás de este relato’ (p. 19), with the ‘música de fondo’ conveying the sense not only of background music, but also of music as fundamental or profound within the construction of the text, an interpretation that is entirely consistent with its functions in the novel. In chapter II, the first chapter of the story proper, Felipe reviews his record collection and thinks that what awaits him in it are ‘los caminos andados, mis nostalgias e ironías, mi reírme de esas palabras de tangos, rancheras, valsecitos, boleros, que sólo a nosotros los latinoamericanos nos pueden decir tantas cosas’ (p. 33). The sense of evocation of the past through music confirms the importance of memory as a leitmotif, adding at the same time another dimension to the relationship between narrator and reader, and to the generation of a *lector cómplice* who joins the narrator in the reconstruction of the words and melody of the music of which there is mention or allusion. As Margarita Krakusin notes, there is another dimension to this act of recreation, given that ‘En la música [...], más importante que el sonido o los símbolos lingüísticos, vacíos en sí de sentido, es la creación de un significado a partir de ellos.’⁹⁰ As with the work’s metafictional aspect, the reader here parallels the narrator in the (re)creative

⁸⁸ César Ferreira, ‘Cuando “uno escribe para que lo quieran más”’: entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, *Dactylus*, VIII (1987), 8-12, at p. 11.

⁸⁹ Margarita Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la narrativa sentimental* (Madrid: Pliegos, 1996), p. 142.

act, and will continue to do so beyond the confines of the text, offering another link between the reader's engagement with the fictional world of Felipe Carrillo and with that experienced in daily reality. During the remainder of the novel there are repeated references to the forms of Latin American popular music mentioned in the text quoted above, and as in the *Cuadernos* their contents are shown to correspond closely to the protagonist's reality. Felipe's conflicting desires to return to Peru (to live with Eusebia) and his realisation that he must return to Paris (to live with reality) are conveyed, typically, via musical expression and his 'tocabiscos de los pro y de los contra': while the former tells him that 'el mundo fue y será una porquería en el año 506 y en el año 2000, según afirma *Cambalache*, un tango casi inmortal cuando siento el cambalache que llevo adentro desde que regresé del Perú' (p. 99), the latter tends to play 'volver, volver, volver', which he knows he cannot do. Felipe is the first of Bryce's protagonists to accept the impossibility of his dreams and to acknowledge that he must live in the real world, and that this should be communicated via music underlines its importance as a cultural form. By the close of the novel, Felipe has made explicit the intimate relationship between music and life, as 'la letra de una canción cualquiera logró convertirse en materia bruta' (p. 136), and the ironic distance adopted at the outset (see p. 33 quoted above) has been eroded: 'me harté de mí mismo y sin la ironía con que había escuchado toda esa música, hasta que la viví contigo, los pros y los contras eran ya *mis* pros y *mis* contras' (p. 147).

Felipe's acceptance of the appropriateness of Latin-American popular music as an expression of reality is accompanied at an ideological level by his acceptance of Eusebia's racial, social and cultural differences through love, which of course is at the heart of many of the forms of musical expression to which he listens. The exploration and valediction of the popular is one of the most significant features of Bryce's latter narrative production,

⁹⁰ Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 139.

representing a fundamental aspect of his search for ‘la quintaesencia de lo peruano a través de los enfrentamientos culturales’.⁹¹ In this novel its manifestation through music may be seen, for example, by Felipe’s escape from the incestuous relationship between Genoveva and Sebastián in ‘la cocina donde Eusebia siempre estaba escuchando la radio’ (p. 106), but other forms of popular culture are also used as points of reference: Eusebia (and subsequently Felipe) draw on soap opera as a means of explaining their daily experience, and a sporting discourse is also self-consciously adopted when Felipe describes his first embrace with Eusebia: ‘todo esto formaba parte de un primer tiempo de mi consuelo, por decirlo en términos deportivos’ (p. 107). During the course of the novel, Felipe, the Paris-based architect, attempts to inculcate Eusebia with an understanding of ‘high’ culture, but fails to do so as she refuses to accept the validity of his ‘correct’ linguistic usage and cannot understand his allusions to Quevedo’s notion that ‘la vida es sueño desde que amanece’ (p. 121). These two ideas come together of course in her obstinate desire to ‘roncar’ instead of ‘soñar’, already discussed above, and by the final chapter, in which Felipe has returned to Paris, it is he who has instead been educated, in the worth of precisely the popular forms of expression that serve to mark social differences in the Peru he has left behind. That he goes back to Paris and knows that he cannot return to Peru indicates the rejection – by both protagonist and author – of these divisions, and the exploration of different means of cultural expression suggests that the various forms of popular culture, especially music, can serve not to create social divisions but instead to dissolve them.

Underlying many of the above reflections on the function of music is the notion of it as a form of communication, which is made explicit, paradoxically, when Felipe recalls ‘una frase de algún libro («la música fue inventada para confirmar nuestra soledad»)’ (p. 129). That the words should come from a work of literature calls into question their validity, in the light of

⁹¹ See note 87.

what has been discussed above, and music's challenge to the established order is strengthened by Krakusin's observation that for Bryce 'la función retórica de la música es la de deconstruir la idea del machismo, mostrando el verdadero interior del hombre'.⁹² She sees music as a coded form of expression, able to circumvent the conventional taboo on the communication of male emotions, and while she perhaps takes this reading a little too far in a desire to give primacy to gender issues over cultural ones there is undoubtedly a sound basis to her interpretation of the role of music in the text.

La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo continues to incorporate and assimilate features from Bryce's previous works, especially from the *Cuadernos* that immediately precede it. These include the primacy of language, the use of a first-person narrator-protagonist, the metafictional nature of the text and references to literary and non-literary cultural production as a tool in the construction of identity. Alongside these continuities there are also, however, differences, such as the more assured (and concise) use of the first-person narrative voice, the return to Peru as setting, at least in part, and the entry into the narrative of a female voice that is given credence. Related to this is the key development in the exploration of Peru and its cultural production with the balance of power shifting from the literary to the non-literary and the popular. Through this privileging of musical expression, and the narrator's recognition of the value of popular linguistic expression through the incorporation into his discourse of *refranes* and *letras musicales*, there is a strong sense of valediction of the popular as a valid mode of expression. While it would perhaps be going too far to see popular expression as the only valid mode of expression, there is no doubt that a vision of Peru that fails to recognise that the popular has a place alongside elite forms of cultural expression, such as literature, is portrayed as unrepresentative, partial and divisive.

⁹² Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 41.

No me esperen en abril: punto final pero no aparte.

No me esperen en abril is very much a novel for Bryce readers, and for Bryce himself, with an exploration of the themes of love and friendship, and of the nature of the relationship between fiction and reality again at the centre of the literary creation. Throughout its 611 pages there is also a wealth of references and allusions to Bryce's previous works, and to other literary and non-literary cultural production, all of which interweave to produce an extremely rich text. That the novel should incorporate so many features found from across the author's literary output is not surprising given the length of time its creation spans: in 1981 Bryce described how 'la novela sobre el colegio "San Pablo" se convirtió en *Tantas veces Pedro*';⁹³ and as far back as 1974 he declared that 'tengo empezada una novela cuyo título provisional es *No me esperen en abril*, pero que creo que a menudo tendré que abandonar porque nuevos cuentos me acechan.'⁹⁴ The sense of unfinished business is made explicit in the novel itself in the acknowledgment that follows the dedications: 'Mi mayor gratitud a don Luis Alberto Sánchez, que lamentablemente ya no leerá este libro, y a Abelardo Sánchez León, el poeta hermano, porque se pasaron veinte años empujándome a escribir este adiós a toda una época y una edad de la vida' (p. 8). Although there are temporal grounds then for considering the novel to be the long-awaited *Julius II*, as well as the fact that the action of both novels takes place against the backdrop of the world of the Peruvian oligarchy, the protagonist Manongo has more in common with Manolo of *Huerto cerrado* (who meets and dislikes Julius in the eponymous novel). These similarities go well beyond their names, which as Luis Eyzaguirre points out, are variants of the same, with Manongo a nickname for Manolo:⁹⁵ both are highly sensitive adolescents who question

⁹³ Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla, la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1994), p. 114.

⁹⁴ Rubén Bareiro Saguier, 'Entrevista: Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Hispanamérica*, VI (1974), 77-81, at p. 81.

⁹⁵ Luis Eyzaguirre, 'De Julius a Manongo Sterne: la saga del protagonista en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, edited by Jean Franco and Christiane Tarrow (Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1997), pp. 49-62, at p. 58.

convention as they struggle to find their place in the society into which they have been born, a society whose values are examined through the settings of the home, the exclusive school (Santa María and San Pablo) and the friendships of the barrio Marconi played out beside the swimming pool in San Isidro. While ‘Una mano en las cuerdas’ and ‘Un amigo de 44 años’ provide the obvious points of commonality in *Huerto cerrado* with regard to summer holidays spent by the pool in the grounds of the Country Club and the English-style boarding school respectively, it is in ‘El hombre, el cinema y el tranvía’ from the same collection that Bryce first broaches the subject of the relationship between art and life. This is taken much further in ‘Antes de la cita con los Linares’, first published in 1972 and included in *La felicidad, ja ja* but written in 1967 – the same time as the stories of *Huerto cerrado* –, and from *Tantas veces Pedro* onwards the question of literary creation becomes another key concern. The examination of the relationship between literary (and non-literary) culture and life, so much a feature of the *Cuadernos* and *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*, enjoys full consideration in *No me esperen en abril*, and its climax in the novel’s closing pages helps to offer resolution to a number of the ambiguities in the open endings of Bryce’s previous works.

As has been seen in chapter three, one of the privileged interpretations of *Un mundo para Julius* has been of the novel as a critical portrait of the decline of the Peruvian oligarchy.⁹⁶ Another marked difference between this novel and *No me esperen en abril* is that in the latter there is little room for interpretation with regard to the Peruvian oligarchy, who are depicted as obviously anachronistic and out of place from the outset. As early as the second line of the novel, Don Álvaro de Aliaga y Harriman, the anglophile founder of San Pablo, later referred to as ‘el colegio más exclusivo y anacrónico del Perú, y el más alejado de la realidad

⁹⁶ See for example George McMurray, ‘Un canto del cisne peruano’, *Nueva narrativa hispanoamericana*, IV (1974), 363-366, or James Higgins, ‘*Un mundo para Julius*: the swan-song of the Peruvian oligarchy’, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, IV (1998), 35-45.

nacional, además de todo' (p. 188), is described as an 'obsoleto señorón y ministro' (p. 8). Before the first page has been completed, Don Álvaro's wife asks him '¿Pero qué tiene que ver el Perú con nuestros hijos y conmigo?' to which he replies 'Ahora que lo pienso, no mucho'. That the school and those who study there are as out of place in the Peru of the 1950s as its founders is made explicit through numerous episodes such as Pepín Necochea's war cry of '¡Viva la oligarquía vasca!' (p. 200), or a *zambo* in the centre of Lima taking the boys in their English-style school uniforms for 'una orquesta brasileña' (p. 161). In turn, their failure to adapt to the country's changing reality is symbolised in one of the public works projects which typified the Odría government (1948-56); 'el modernísimo puente que acertó camino entre Chaclacayo y Chosica dejó al San Pablo aún más aislado de la realidad nacional' (pp. 291-92). The fact that the school is in an area known as Los Angeles is an irony that will not be lost on the reader, and similar ironies are found in the names of the Phoenix Club, where the ageing oligarchs meet, and the Club Nacional, a bastion of an exclusive elite that looked outside Peru for its points of reference.

The economic and relative social decline of the oligarchy is repeatedly mentioned over the course of the period 1953-1995 spanned by the action of the novel, and the suicide of the protagonist in the final chapter has been preceded by the deaths of many other members of his class: Don Álvaro and Manongo's father Don Lorenzo Sterne both die acutely aware that the Peru they struggled to maintain is fast disappearing;⁹⁷ the enlightened teacher and formative influence Teddy Boy has died after marrying a maid from Tingo María in a symbolic union of the old and new societies; and several of Manongo's schoolmates have met a variety of unnatural ends. This catalogue of deaths is reminiscent of that in the opening section of *Un mundo para Julius*, and serves similarly to represent the decay of the world of

⁹⁷ Bryce has repeatedly expressed his admiration for Sterne, and discussed the significance of his literary style in relation to his own. For an assessment of this influence see Margarita Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la narrativa sentimental* (Madrid: Pliegos, 1996), pp. 43-66.

the oligarchs, who find life increasingly difficult in Peru, especially following the coming to power of the military government of Velasco Alvarado (1968-75), which implemented a major agrarian reform programme.

The events of the novel are repeatedly grounded in a social and political history of Peru that is as precisely detailed and accurate as that in *Un mundo para Julius* is vague and generalised. Following the mention of historical facts in *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*, there are here scores of references to successive Peruvian presidents over five decades, although the first of the novel's five sections, of almost 150 pages, is almost completely free of them. Indeed, it is only in the final two sections of the novel that their use becomes frequent, with one entire chapter (pp. 429-55) serving as a synopsis of Peruvian political history in the second half of the twentieth century. One function of these references is, as François Delprat has noted, to create an illusion of reality within which the plot can move rapidly forward (the first three sections of the novel, at over 400 pages, cover the years 1953-56, while the final two, at under 200 pages, cover the period 1956-95). He also notes that the historical facts are largely incidental to the narrative, which has at its heart private and emotional rather than public and political matters.⁹⁸ Another related function is to mark the passage of time against which the reader can compare and contrast the changes in Manongo's friends with his own constancy to an adolescent ideal of his love for Tere. While it may be true to affirm that the political developments described are incidental to the narrative, they are not irrelevant: through them there is a consistently critical appraisal of Peruvian democratic governments (along with the military and the Church, in particular Opus Dei). It is curious that the only president of whom the reader forms a positive impression, via the protagonist's imagined conversations and drinks with him, is General Velasco Alvarado,

⁹⁸ François Delprat, 'Partir, revenir, hantises dans *No me esperen en abril* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in *Cotextes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, edited by Jean Franco and Christiane Tarroux (Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Sociocritiques, 1997), pp. 205-217, at p. 215.

for it is precisely his government that brought in the Agrarian Reform programme that marked the end of the oligarchic state. Despite many of Manongo's friends leaving the country during this period, with those who remain struggling to adapt, Manongo imagines a cordial meeting with the military ruler and seems to understand – even justify – his actions. This is curious because it runs contrary to Bryce's refusal to ascribe a socio-political reading to *Un mundo para Julius* when it was published in the early years of Velasco's regime. The apparent contradiction may be accounted for by Bryce's personal sympathy for the military ruler;⁹⁹ by the narrator's depiction of the oligarchy as abusive and anachronistic; and by the protagonist's friendships with people from different sectors of society: before he meets the boys from the barrio Marconi, his closest friend from the *barrio* is Adán Quispe, a recent migrant from the Andes, and when he visits the *hacienda* of one of his schoolfriends in Piura he befriends Eliseo, one of the *peones*, who is 'exacto a Adán Quispe, sólo que campesino' (p. 346). Manongo's social relations are then far more diverse than those of his peers, whose racial and sexual abuses are only too apparent in the novel's second section, while the hostility of 'los de arriba' towards 'los de abajo' is forcefully represented through the death of Adán Quispe and Montoyita (a San Pablo student of highland origins) in Vietnam, killed by a stray bomb dropped by one of Manongo's elite schoolmates at the close of the third section of the novel. The protagonist's differentness may be explained in part by his sensitivity, in part by his awareness of the changes in Peruvian society (he is repeatedly described as understanding better than his schoolmates what is happening to the country), and also by his creation of a world of cultural references that borrows heavily from the realm of the popular, to be discussed in more detail later. The upshot of all this is that 'no podía cacharse al pueblo peruano' (p. 237), which refers specifically to his visit to a brothel, but which can be seen to have a far wider significance, drawing on Felipe Carrillo's

⁹⁹ 'Hay que pagar siempre', *Permiso para vivir*, pp. 336-341, at p. 341.

determination that ‘al pueblo no se le explota ni en un libro’ (*La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*, p. 125).

The use of political events to create an illusion of reality is enhanced by the mention of publications such as *Caretas* and *La Prensa*, and the appearance in the novel of figures such as the painters Camino Brent and Fernando Szyszlo, Bryce’s close friend the poet Abelardo Sánchez León (whose encouragement in the novel’s creation is acknowledged on its opening pages), and Bryce himself, as well as *Un mundo para Julius*. The appearance of Bryce in his own literature has been discussed in the context of earlier works and will be discussed further in that of literary creation below, while the appearance of Sánchez León might be seen as another example of this author (as others) writing primarily for his friends. This interpretation of the novel is lent weight by one of its two dedications, which quotes Joseph Conrad to state that ‘A medida que transcurren los años y el número de palabras escritas crece a buen ritmo, también crece en intensidad la convicción de que solamente es posible escribir para los amigos’ (p. 7). Two of the seven friends to whom the dedication is addressed are identified by Bryce in an interview with none other than Abelardo Sánchez León as childhood friends with whom he shared experiences such as the first cigarette in the Country Club of the barrio Marconi and the solitude of the rupture with his first girlfriend, key moments in the novel.¹⁰⁰ One clearly provides the inspiration for Jorge Valdeavellano, alias Tyrone, while the other’s origins in Nazca provide that for Manongo’s *compadre* José Antonio Cajahuaringa Billinghamurst.

Although a reading of Bryce’s work as autobiography can be readily undertaken, far more interesting – and relevant to his literary production – is the question of the boundary between reality and fiction explored in varying degrees since *Huerto cerrado*. On completing the novel, the reader becomes aware that this topic is flagged in the other of the work’s

dedications, which is ‘a Tere, en la ensoñación y en La Violeta, con estas palabras de Antonio Muñoz Molina: «No te he inventado como inventé a otras mujeres incluso después de haberlas conocido.»’ (p. 7). The boundary between this Tere and the Tere of the novel is an elusive one, especially when one bears in mind that Martín Romaña’s first love is called Teresa;¹⁰¹ and, if ‘Después del amor primero’ from *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* can be read as autobiography rather than literary creation, then so was Bryce’s.¹⁰² The blurred demarcation of historical episodes and literary creation serves another, metaliterary function: the reader who latches onto the security of political events and living individuals amid the creative flux of the narrative is mirroring the struggle of Manongo to differentiate between reality as experienced by those around him and the world of cultural (re)creation into which he retreats.

Julio Ortega describes Bryce as ‘de los narradores que mejor han transformado a la historia de la vida en una *mise-en-intrigue*. Tanto que esta potencialidad inclusiva de la fábula termina incluyendo al lector, pero no necesariamente como personaje sino como interlocutor, como parte de la comunidad de la fábula.’¹⁰³ This sense of community, identified already with regard to *Un mundo para Julius*, is sought from the work’s opening line: ‘¡Púchica diegos, cómo sería aquello!’, and even from its title, both of which are typified by their orality (which links again to the popular) and their search for an interlocutor. The title in particular may be considered to epitomise Ortega’s ‘comunidad de la fábula’: not only are the words spoken by Manongo to his friends on learning that Tere is to marry another (hence their association with the shattering of the ideal at the centre of Manongo’s existence and

¹⁰⁰ Abelardo Sánchez León and Augusto Ortiz de Zevallos, ‘Entrevista a Alfredo Bryce’, *Debate*, XXVIII (1984), 8-23, at pp. 11 and 14.

¹⁰¹ *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1985), p. 18.

¹⁰² Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), pp. 204-210. The similarities in physical descriptions and the ending of the relationship between the first loves of Bryce and Manongo are also striking.

¹⁰³ Julio Ortega, ‘Bryce y la narrativa latinoamericana’, in *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 33-47, at p. 39.

their appropriateness as a title for the work), but they also serve to establish immediately the relationship between narrator and reader at the heart of much of Bryce's production.

Moreover, they create a dramatic intrigue which is not fully resolved until the final page of the novel's penultimate section.

The narrative voice of *No me esperen en abril* is that of the third person, although it is heavily impregnated with free indirect discourse, thereby again bringing to mind *Un mundo para Julius*. This of course is a marked contrast to the three novels written in the 1980s, all of which employed a first-person narrator, whose expression became more controlled and certainly more succinct as the decade progressed. The crossover is again mediated by a collection of shorter fiction, this time the three novellas of *Dos señoras conversan*, which bridge not only the gap between first- and third-person narrative but also that between Europe and Peru as setting.¹⁰⁴ All three deal with the themes of friendship and of the influence of the past on the present, of great importance in *No me esperen en abril*, and 'Dos señoras conversan' and 'Los grandes hombres son así. Y también así.' in particular ground the narrative in a socio-political reality that is explicitly depicted with some accuracy.¹⁰⁵ 'Un sapo en el desierto', unlike the other two novellas, uses a first-person narrative, except in its first chapter, which is narrated in the third person, a shift reminiscent of the opening of 'Dos indios', the first story of *Huerto cerrado*. The protagonist is called Mañuco (another variant of Manolo-Manongo), and was educated in the same Santa María from which Manongo was expelled, offering another example of commonalities between Bryce's short fiction and his subsequent novels.

The opening few lines apart, the first chapter is narrated in a fairly conventional third person with a considerable amount of dialogue, which serves well to introduce the reader to

¹⁰⁴ *Dos señoras conversan* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1990).

¹⁰⁵ The presence of Abelardo Sánchez León may assume another dimension in 'Dos señoras conversan', whose elderly female protagonists and their concerns echo Sánchez León's poems 'Las señoritas Godoy' and '¿Hasta acá llegará, hasta San Isidro?'

the characters involved and fill the initial information gap, thereby affording a context. This establishment of a framework again brings to mind 'Dos indios', the opening story of *Huerto cerrado*, for once the opening chapter is finished Don Álvaro does not appear for well over 100 pages, during which attention turns far more to introducing the reader to the central characters of Manongo and Tere, and the relationship between them that is to form the point of reference for the remainder of the novel. Before proceeding to an analysis of the third-person narrative infused with the words and thoughts of various characters, which is the predominant form of narrative presentation, it is useful to consider the use and function of dialogue as the other means through which the characters' words can be presented to the reader. It should be remembered that Bryce wrote his undergraduate dissertation on precisely this topic, and so approaches the subject with a privileged understanding, of which he avails himself to good effect. As already mentioned above in relation to the novel's opening chapter, dialogue can be used to good effect to communicate to the reader information which is ostensibly communicated from one character to another, in other words it can serve an informative function. Another good example of this is the penultimate chapter of the work, significantly entitled 'La versión de Tyrone Power', in which Manongo's closest friend from the era of the Country Club and Tere responds to his wife's questions about the couple, thereby providing the reader with another perspective on events, as well as important new pieces of information. A related function is the expression of a difference not of knowledge but of opinion, and on several occasions a disagreement is expressed through dialogue, such as Manongo and Tere's fight before he departs for Piura (pp. 343-44), or the discussion between Manongo's friends as to his reasons for getting into a dispute with the national football team (pp. 581-82).

This discrepancy implicit in much of the use of dialogue, be it of knowledge or opinion, is precisely the gap necessary for the creation of humour, and it is perhaps not surprising that

dialogue is often introduced to humorous effect. Nowhere is this seen better than in the ‘fight’ between el Cholo Facciolo and Jaime Landázuri, in which the escalating action is imagined and spoken only, with Facciolo eventually begging for mercy having been spun around in an imaginary ‘avión’:

—Entonces hace rato que te tumbé y ahora estás volando. Te he agarrado de las dos piernas y te he aplicado el avión y te tengo vuelta y más vuelta en el aire.

—Estoy mareado compadre, y no logro escaparme.

—¿Te rindes? Di que te rindes.

—Yo creo que mejor sí. (p. 272)

The generation of humour is also often situational, in which the gap between adolescent (characters) and adult (narrator and reader) perspectives are exploited, or linguistic, as in the chiasmus describing the disintegration of the Peruvian left in the late 1970s into ‘mil partidos partiditos en mil’ (p. 453). The use of humour is not gratuitous: one of the characteristics of Bryce’s work is the failure of the protagonist to achieve an often illusory ideal, which is in marked contrast to the lightness of an entertaining narrative. As has been seen, Bryce is well aware of the importance of humour to his narrative, suggesting that ‘Lo que el humor pide es que se le crea, y por eso precisamente genera una complicidad con el lector.’¹⁰⁶ The humour then paradoxically contributes to the heightening of the text’s pathos through its role in involving the reader with the developing plot.

Before moving on to an analysis of the manner in which the narrator involves the reader in the process of narrative creation, two final functions of dialogue must be mentioned: the first is as a means of varying the narrative, which at 611 pages could be seen to need diversity in order to maintain the engagement of the reader. For example, towards the end of the fourth chapter Manongo’s conversation with his parents is reported through direct speech after over twenty pages of narrative in the third person into which the words and thoughts of the protagonist and his friends are inserted through free indirect discourse. Although it could be

¹⁰⁶ See note 57.

argued that here the narrative presentation is in keeping with the fact that Manongo's parents are not included in the community of characters mediated by free indirect discourse (the world of adolescence), it also serves to break up a narrative that may be in danger of becoming monolithic. More incontrovertible examples of dialogue as narrative variation are to be found in association with Tere, who shares the world of the protagonist for the opening two sections of the novel. For example, in the final chapter of the first section the third-person narrative has become typically infused with the words of Manongo, but the pattern is rapidly broken by the intrusive appearance of Tere's reply in direct speech. The narrative then drifts back to the incorporation of Manongo's words, only to be disrupted on the following page by the use of direct speech again, this time to convey the protagonist's words, which continue from the preceding paragraph, in which they had been unmarked as speech. A brief quotation may help to illustrate the point.

Sí, él había matado a su hermano. [...] Porque su hermano iba a cercar más e iba a ser más fuerte que él y él no iba a poder cuidarlo, protegerlo, tener la misma fuerza que de pronto había empezado a tener su hermano menor.

—Entonces lo maté, Tere. Y todos en mi casa lo saben y saben que es el drama más terrible del mundo. (p. 145)

A sense emerges that the narrator is toying with the issue of narrative presentation, as well as the consequent narrative distances between characters, narrator and reader, and this is the final function of dialogue. As has already been mentioned, the novel's opening chapter is dominated by dialogue, which serves to communicate information to characters and reader alike. However, the use of dialogue also maintains a distance between the narrator and those characters whose words are thus presented, as has been seen in the context of *Un mundo para Julius*. On one of Don Álvaro's returns to the narrative, this time with his friends in the elite Club Nacional, it is no coincidence that their discussions are all reported in direct speech, for the world that they aspire to perpetuate is described by the narrator as anachronistic and out

of place. As a result, a distance is maintained between both them and the narrator and them and the reader: thematic content is complemented by narrative presentation.

To return to Ortega's notion of 'la comunidad de la fábula', from which the ageing oligarchs are excluded, it is noticeable that as soon as Manongo enters the narrative in the second chapter then so too do his thoughts, and the reader is soon faced with a text explicitly narrated from the perspective of the protagonist ('¿Por qué nadie habla nunca de la paloma cuculí? ¿Es que nadie la oye, *como yo*, desde la madrugada?'), whose voice and thoughts dominate for much of the novel.¹⁰⁷ As has been discussed in chapter three, such a shift in narrative presentation confers a position of privilege to the character whose words or thoughts are allowed to enter the text unmediated by the narrator, who effectively endorses the words or thoughts so presented, especially when a given character is repeatedly granted this privilege. Manongo's status as protagonist and anti-hero mean that it is perhaps to be expected that he should enjoy a position of privilege, but he is by no means the only character whose words and thoughts become embedded into the narrative: in a work which has at its core an exploration of the nature of friendship and love, it is entirely fitting that those closest to Manongo (his mother, his schoolfriends, Adán Quispe and, especially, Tere) should feature heavily in the story and in this form of narrative presentation. As a result the reader comes to share the protagonist's favourable perception of those dearest to him, especially when this perception is repeatedly reinforced over the course of such a lengthy work.

More than any other character it is of course Tere whose words and thoughts are thus presented, and her perspective comes to constitute an important point of comparison with that of Manongo. Their relationship as teenagers bears very great similarity to that of Manolo and Cecilia in several of the stories of *Huerto cerrado*, in particular 'Una mano en las cuerdas', but while in Bryce's first work the perspective was almost exclusively that of the male

¹⁰⁷ pp. 29-30, my italics.

protagonist, in *No me esperen en abril* it is far more equitable in terms of representing the experience of both partners in the relationship. The importance of Manongo's mother at several points, especially towards the end of the novel, and her incorporation into the community of the novel through the appearance of her words in the narrative, means that it is here that the female voice finds expression for almost the first time in Bryce's narrative. Without wishing to enter here into feminist theory, it is worth noting that the female voice is characterised as secondary in various ways: it appears less frequently than that of the male protagonist; it is mediated by a male narrator; and typically it acts in response to a situation initiated by a male character. Equality of narrative voice and narrative perspective has not then been reached, but it should be remembered that the society in which the action takes place is that of a patriarchal oligarchy, albeit one whose values are being profoundly questioned, and in which the role of women is clearly changing.¹⁰⁸ One of the ways in which Tere's perception of events is most clearly marked for the reader is the inclusion of some of her letters to Manongo in the chapter 'Algunas cartas de Tere a Manongo, por aquellos años'. In these letters, several events which the reader has already experienced from Manongo's perspective are described from Tere's, allowing the reader to gain an appreciation of the differences (often only slight) between the versions. It is interesting that the letter should be chosen here as a feminine form of writing (the one letter written by a male character in *No me esperen en abril* gives rise to 'El Cholo seguro que nunca había escrito carta a nadie porque eso era cosa de señoritas', p. 350), for it also used by Susan and Cinthia in *Un mundo para Julius*, and constitutes the backbone of Bryce's latest novel *La amigdalitis de Tarzán*, in which Juan Manuel's first-person narration is frequently interspersed with letters from his

¹⁰⁸ The dissatisfaction of women with traditional roles and their increasing access to higher education is made apparent on p. 525 for example.

great love Fernanda María.¹⁰⁹ The epigraphs to that work reveal a keen awareness of and interest in the question of women as literary creators.

The sense of community between narrator and characters is then developed to a large degree by the closeness of their perspective, as evidenced by the narrator's willingness for the words and thoughts of the main characters to enter the narrative without mediation. The relationship between narrator and protagonist in particular is strengthened by means of direct address, as was also the case in *Un mundo para Julius*, to similar effect. Here the technique is not used as frequently, but its two uses do much to underline the point made: on the first occasion the address lasts over three pages (pp. 63-66), in which Manongo's inability to feign ambivalence or conform to convention are expressed. The lengthy second-person address is swiftly followed by another, that of his friends, whose words filter into the narrative:

‘Literalmente, Tere le está bloqueando la salida a Manongo, se está burlando de él y los chicos del barrio Marconi, te jodiste, Manongo, se pasó de viva la Tere, desahuévate hermano y no vayas a echarte atrás’ (p. 67). The similarity in narrative format, together with the same rather mocking tone used in both instances, places the narrator and the protagonist's friends on the same level, leading the reader to group them together. The other instance of address of the protagonist by the narrator lasts only one page, but the shift out of it and into the second-person (imagined) address by Manongo first of Adán Quispe and then of Tere which lasts over five pages is extremely subtle:

Y digamos que tú entonces inventas siete millones de peleas de catchascan, haciendo por olvidarla como en aquella canción que oíste de paso, tan de fondo, tan de la superficie del dial de un radio [...].

Y estás en plena forma en eso de andar haciendo por olvidarla. Serás mi ídolo Adán. Al menos tú ganarás y tú campeonarás en lo tuyo: el karate. (p. 476)

The shift comes after the second ‘haciendo por olvidarla’, and the ease with which it is passed over (and the conscious effort to cause a confusion) does much to conflate the

¹⁰⁹ *La amigdalitis de tarzán* (Lima: Alfaguara / Peisa, 1998).

perspective of the narrator with that of his protagonist. The idea that the narrator belongs to the socio-economically privileged world of the protagonist and his friends is furthered on odd occasions when he apparently assumes the racist and elitist discourse of some of the boys at San Pablo as their thoughts enter the narrative, and is confirmed when a first person narrates without there being anyone to whom the words could be attributed other than the narrator himself. For example, in response to the Caballero de la Orden de Malta's thoughts on selling titles of nobility there is the following: 'Se expresaba como lo bruto que era el luxemburgués de Malta y de mierda y a mí me tiene hasta la coronilla con las cornamentas esas de floridos venados conque se le aparece a uno en la oficina' (p. 152); and when Harry Jacobson enters the school there is no presence of a schoolboy in the narrative to whom the following first person can be attributed: 'creemos que le habría gustado saber que un nazi fue el que nos convenció a todos para que lo dejáramos entrar al colegio con las manos alzadas a cien por cien' (p. 289). The narrator then identifies closely with the protagonist and his friends, who are central to the development of the plot, with friendship a major theme in itself.

It is not only the characters who enter the community described by Ortega, but as he rightly identifies the reader is also included therein. The second-person address found in *Un mundo para Julius* is not used here, although a first-person plural, aimed at an imagined Peruvian audience, sometimes is, as when the narrator relates the own goal 'en el partido que perdimos ante Bolivia' (p. 258). The sense of an assumed interlocutor, already mentioned as implicit in the novel's dedication, title and opening lines, and furthered by the predominantly oral tone of the narrative, is encountered in the novel at a number of points when the narrator asks a question of the reader, as in the following example, which stands out because of the temporal marker which is some forty years out of keeping with the events being narrated: 'Y qué pasó, nadie lo sabrá nunca, pero lo cierto es que, hace 1990, La Herradura era ya una playa de

piedra. ¿Fue algún nostálgico del San Pablo el que, oculta y solitariamente, continuó con aquella absurda empresa en las décadas siguientes? Nadie lo sabrá nunca' (p. 211). A conspiratorial narrator also offers several parenthetical asides to the reader in much the same way as in *Un mundo para Julius*, offering information which is not essential to the development of the plot, but which is essential to the creation and reinforcement of a sense of community between narrator and reader. Given the proximity of the narrator and characters described above, the reader is also drawn closer to them via his approximation to the narrator, thereby giving us the 'comunidad de la fábula'.

The various narrative strategies employed here depend of course on a reader who is prepared to be engaged by the narrator – a *lector cómplice* – and the engagement is not only used to further the emotional impact of the work, but also to involve the reader in the process of narrative creation. Literary creation has of course been central to novels such as *Tantas veces Pedro* and the *Cuadernos*, but in *No me esperen en abril* the reader is even more actively involved in the process of the creation of the narrative than has previously been the case. A significant feature of this is the meta-narrator, whose repeated comments to the reader draw us into the creative act, as in the following examples: 'Veamos, pues, esta segunda historia en su totalidad, que bien vale la pena, por la pena que da' (p. 249), or the closing lines of the novel's second section, 'Pero dejémoslo en Manongo y Tere Mancini o, mejor aún, en Tere y Manongo. Sí. Dejémoslo ahí. Para que no suene a predestinación o algo así...' (p. 303). Another important contribution to this area is made through the chapter titles, many of which link to each other (such as the final four chapters of the first section, all of which relate to the imminent arrival of April, and which become progressively shorter as the period of time they cover reduces, thus increasing the pace of the action) or to key words from the previous pages (for example 'Con su inmensa fortuna' which opens the final section of the work and which refers back to the key line of the song *Cielito lindo*, whose full

significance will be discussed in due course). On two occasions a chapter title or subtitle makes explicit the meta-literary issue, one being through ‘Cuentos infantiles’, which relates the breakdown of Manongo and Tere’s adolescent relationship and closes with the same words, the other being rather more complex, as the subtitles do not appear in the index as such. On page 458, in the course of a chapter that is particularly self-aware in its narration, the narrative is abruptly broken off with ‘...(continuará)...’, after which there is a heading of ‘PARÉNTESIS ÚNICO Y REAL’, which reflects on the preceding lines by means of a critique of the magical realism bandwagon, a lengthy parenthesis, and the relation of an encounter of Bryce Echenique with the Ecuadorean poet Jorge Enrique Adoum. Having fulfilled its stated aims of being a parenthesis, of dealing with material that is real, and of being ‘único’ (it is the only example of the self-conscious ‘divagaciones’ that fill the pages of the *Cuadernos*, whose criticism Bryce is clearly addressing) the narrative resumes with another heading, picking up from where it left off with ‘«...(CONTINUARÁ)...»’. Examples such as these, along with the unfeasibly long chapter titles at the close of the work’s second section that prefigure the events of the narrative to such a degree as to place the focus on the act of narration rather than its content, convey a very strong sense of revelling again in the enjoyment of literary creation, and of encouraging the reader to share in the pleasure of the creative act.

Another way in which the reader is required to participate in the (re)creation of the narrative process is through the abundance of intra-textual references that greatly enrich the text and which are often vital to a satisfactory reading of the work. Although a few of these correspond to episodes from the first section of the novel which are picked up on in the final section (in a manner reminiscent of the ‘Retornos’ of *Un mundo para Julius*), the majority of them are to be found in the novel’s fourth and fifth sections and involve key episodes or details. An obvious example is the final enunciation of the protagonist’s ‘No me esperen en abril’ of the novel’s title, which is alluded to at other points in the closing chapters, as well as

in the title of several chapters in the opening section. Its full weight is only realized retrospectively, spoken as it is in the wake of learning that Tere is to marry another, and the reader is forced to some degree to re-evaluate and recreate what has gone before in the light of this new information. Two other key components of the novel's denouement are the repeated references to the suspension marks of 'Villa puntos suspensivos' and the aforementioned references to 'su inmensa fortuna', both of which will only be understood by a *lector bien cómplice*. The first relates to Jorge Negrete's 'Ella', which closes with 'Perdiera su amor...' (p. 457), while the second refers to 'Cielito lindo':

De cien dificultades / cielito lindo / que el amor tiene / yo tengo ya vencidas / cielito lindo /
noventa y nueve.
Ay ay ay ay / me falta una / y ésa pienso vencerla / cielito lindo / con la fortuna...
Con su inmensa fortuna lograría recomponer íntegro el mundo de todos y cada uno de sus seres más queridos. (p. 498)

The importance of each clearly revolves around its expression of recuperation of love lost, which becomes Manongo's obsession; that both should be taken from popular song is no coincidence, and will be discussed below.

A final point to make in the context of intra-textual references is the connection between the epigraph to section three of the novel, taken from Balzac, and Manongo's capture of a sense of optimism when reading *Una mujer de treinta años*, which leads him to return to Lima, where he enjoys a happy reunion with Tere: 'Manongo retomó la novela de Balzac, [...] hizo un gran esfuerzo de concentración, y el asunto se le aclaró, por fin, cuarenta páginas más adelante. *No, créame usted, un primer amor no puede ser substituido*, lo iluminó Honoré de Balzac' (pp. 564-5). Rather more than forty pages (257 to be exact) have passed between the reader encountering the epigraph – which is exactly the phrase reproduced – and the text quoted, and Manongo's powers of concentration will have to be matched by those of the reader to make the connection. As well as serving further to blur the boundary between the reader's world and that of the protagonist, and to draw the former into the latter, the

episode brings to mind ‘Continuidad de los parques’, the short story by Cortázar which closes as the character crosses the boundary of fiction/reality and enters the world of the reader to strangle him. The connection may not be gratuitous, for the influence of Cortázar on Bryce’s literary development has been recognized by the author himself and identified by several critics.¹¹⁰

The many intra-textual references that demand an active engagement from the reader are complemented by a series of inter-textual references and allusions that will be picked up by readers of Bryce’s literature from across the decades. Given the geographical location of much of the work in San Isidro and the Country Club, and the exploration of the world of the enamoured adolescent undertaken in that context, it is no surprise that *Huerto cerrado*, and in particular the story ‘Una mano en las cuerdas’ are often evoked. Continuities between Manolo-Monongo have already been mentioned, but those between Cecilia and Tere have not: the physical descriptions of both are strikingly similar, focusing on their whiteness, their freckles and their ‘nariz respingada’, and both have similar origins (Cecilia’s parents are from Austria, Tere’s from Switzerland). The environment of the English boarding school recalls that of ‘Un amigo de 44 años’, although its accentuated elitism is more reminiscent of the world of *Un mundo para Julius*, whose main characters (Julius, Susan, Juan Lucas and Vilma) all reappear in *No me esperen en abril*. From *La felicidad, ja ja* there are several points of comparison, notably from the story ‘Baby Schiaffino’, from which Chany, Danny y Vito ‘matadores de la sección Las Gaviotas de la Herradura’, the stoic resistance of the boxer Archie Town, and the imitation of Frank Sinatra as a model for life are revived.¹¹¹ The genesis of the novel in the 1970s, discussed above, renders such apparently anachronic

¹¹⁰ See Bryce, ‘Mirando al Cortázar premiado’ in *Crónicas personales* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1988), pp. 79-84; Fernando Rodríguez Lafuente, ‘Entrevista a Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, *Ínsula*, DXVII (January 1990), 26-28; or Ortega, *El hilo del habla*, p. 136, although the whole work self-consciously mirrors the structure of *Rayuela* with its three sections ‘Del lado del tú’, ‘Del lado del yo’, and ‘De otras personas’.

¹¹¹ See pp. 54, 464, and 285 of *No me esperen en abril* and pp. 203, 200 and 213-15 of the Alianza edition of *Cuentos completos* respectively.

continuities more understandable, but the two decades of gestation are also reflected in allusions to Bryce's output from the late 1970s and 1980s: Malatesta in *Tantas veces Pedro* and *Goig*, Bryce's excursion into children's literature, provide Manongo's boxer dog (p. 375);¹¹² from *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* comes the use of Nat King Cole, who 'en inglés y en castellano acompañó día tras día la ansiedad con que viví mi primer amor, Teresa';¹¹³ and *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* provides the notion of 'música de fondo', the setting of Piura, the character of el Muelón León, and the novel's opening words.¹¹⁴ This is far from being an exhaustive list of the dozens of allusions made to Bryce's previous works, but does give an idea of the extent to which specific environments and themes find an echo in the novel under consideration.¹¹⁵

No me esperen en abril may, then, be seen as a synthesis of Bryce's oeuvre to the 1990s, and although it invites comparison with – and continuation of – earlier works by means of the examples given above, as well as by introducing the reader to Manongo through exactly the same words as those that close *Un mundo para Julius*, it also offers contestation, as is made abundantly clear when the narrator challenges the physical portrayal of Vilma: 'en *Un mundo para Julius*, la novela del sentimentaloides Bryce Echenique, como eran unas tetas de mujer pobre, le metió ternura a su descripción caritativa. Dejémonos de cojudeces, hombre' (p. 255). The effects of the inter-textual references (which extend to include novels such as Miguel Gutiérrez's *País de Jauja* and Jorge Icaza's *Huasipungo*, as well as works by García Márquez, Ciro Alegría and others) are several: firstly, there is the sense of continuation and comparison with Bryce's earlier works, and the possible resolution herein of ambiguities such as the endings of *Huerto cerrado* and *Un mundo para Julius*; secondly, the notion of a *lector*

¹¹² Another metafictional reference: *Malatesta* is a play by Henry de Montherlant, the subject of Bryce's doctoral thesis.

¹¹³ p. 58 of *No me esperen en abril* and p.18 of *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (Oveja Negra).

¹¹⁴ See pp. 475, 337 and 13 of *No me esperen en abril* and pp. 11, 95 and 137 of *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* (Oveja Negra) respectively.

cómplice discussed above in the context of the intra-textual references is not only enhanced, but is closely related to Bryce's literary production; and thirdly, the community of the novel in the third person described in the consideration of narrative style is extended to include a range of characters from Bryce's literary world (it is striking that the intra- and inter-textual references start to be created only when Manongo and his friends enter the narrative). That the reader is involved in the creation of this cross-referenced and autonomous reality, and is included in it, serves to erode the boundaries that separate the reader and their lived experience from the characters and their fictional world. The blurring of this boundary takes place not only for the reader, but for Bryce too: already mentioned above are those to whom the work is dedicated, and their slippery relationship with the real and fictional worlds, as well as the appearance of Bryce himself and his first major work in the novel. The sense of the merging of fact and fiction, life and literature is significantly enhanced in the work's closing pages, in which Manongo commits suicide in Formentor during the climactic *ensoñación*, or recreation of his idealised past with Tere. On finishing the episode and the novel the reader discovers that its writing has culminated in Formentor, and gains the impression that Bryce may be similarly purging reality through cultural creation. It is this relationship between the two to which attention must now turn as a final area of consideration.

Music, cinema and sport are to be found throughout Bryce's works, although their use changes from being simply another of the leisure activities enjoyed by Manolo in *Huerto cerrado* to allowing the creation of a cultural identity for the protagonist in the *Cuadernos*, to forming the sub-text of *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*. In *No me esperen en abril* these three areas of popular culture are drawn upon by the main characters, but especially and extensively so in the case of Manongo, as points of comparison, reference and inspiration for

¹¹⁵ For other allusions and explicit references from the short story collections see de la Fuente, *Más allá de la*

their daily experience.¹¹⁶ Bryce is by no means alone among the writers of the so-called post-Boom in exploiting popular culture, a practice which Margarita Krakusin explains through the words of Umberto Eco as reflecting ‘un momento histórico en que las masas entran como protagonistas de la vida social y participan en las cuestiones públicas. Estas masas han impuesto a menudo su propio ethos, han hecho valer [...] exigencias particulares, han puesto en circulación un lenguaje propio, han elaborado pues proposiciones que emergen de abajo.’¹¹⁷ Although valid as an explanation of this phenomenon at a general level, the application of such a theory to a work set amid the world of the elite is rather problematic. Krakusin offers a route out of this apparent cul de sac when she describes the use of popular music in the novel as demonstrating ‘un interclasismo psicológico’, for this is perfectly consistent with the friendships created by Manongo with members of social classes other than his own.¹¹⁸ Indeed, in the chapter ‘El ex brigadier distraído empieza de cero’ the narrative twice assumes the perspective and expression of a migrant to Lima’s shanty towns, and in both instances popular religion, popular music and television are an intrinsic part of the world represented. The use of sport in the psychological crossing of class boundaries is exemplified in football, which serves a dual function in the narrative: firstly, it is shown to contribute to a national psyche characterised by defeat in the War of the Pacific and by defeat via an own goal against Bolivia in the 1956 *Copa América*; secondly, the use of what might be termed the discourse of football to describe the daily life of the protagonist places the popular on a par with literature, which is employed in a similar fashion. Furthermore, both of these functions serve to validate the popular perspective and experience alongside literary expressions of the nation by figures such as Ricardo Palma and Sebastián Salazar Bondy, whose literary creations and creativity are mentioned in the novel.

modernidad, pp. 31-32.

¹¹⁶ For examples of non-literary culture in Bryce see de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad*, pp. 203-36.

¹¹⁷ Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 36.

Music and cinema are a little different from football in that they are cultural products as well as cultural creations, and the sense of a message communicated by both is also important to their function in *No me esperen en abril*. Films and songs both provide Manongo with models for the romantic love personified by Tere, particularly in the case of *Historia de tres amores* and *Pretend or Ella*. Krakusin suggests that music adds another dimension to the creation of a *lector cómplice* who mentally recreates the songs mentioned and alluded to, and who thereby ‘participa activamente en la experiencia estética y emocional de la novela.’¹¹⁹ She also convincingly makes the case for music acting as a shorthand through which the male characters can circumvent the codes of machismo and thus experience or express emotion.¹²⁰ Although Krakusin’s work predates the appearance of *No me esperen en abril*, in its writing if not in its publication, this final observation can be applied repeatedly to the novel, as is made explicit when José Antonio writes a letter to Manongo in Piura, with a post script consisting of ‘La escribiré con sangre / con tinta sangre / del corazón...’, taken from a song by the Ecuadorean Julio Jaramillo: ‘¿No parecía cosa de maricones declararle tanto afecto a un amigo aunque sólo le hubiera hablado de camionetas y carros y caballos y zorros? [...] Ese *post scriptum* que decía sin decirlo nunca por supuesto, «Soy muy macho, pero te quiero, compadre»’ (p. 351). Bryce, then, is questioning traditional hierarchies, in this case masculine/feminine forms of expression, and elsewhere in the novel the validity of popular/literary culture, the significance of Lima/the provinces (Lima is consistently seen to be a corrosive influence), and the oligarchy/other sectors of Peruvian society (the legacy of the oligarchy is repeatedly described as a ‘luminoso porvenir’, which appears to lay the nation’s recent socio-political turmoil at the door of the oligarchic state).

¹¹⁸ Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 142.

¹¹⁹ Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 137.

¹²⁰ Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 141.

Mentioned above in the context of the work's intra-textual references, *Cielito lindo* assumes a particular importance to Manongo, who interprets the lyrics to fit his circumstances, and who 'las convirtió en la razón de su vida y en la forma de poner esa razón en práctica' (p. 498). José Antonio disputes his friend's interpretation of the lyric, and in the closing pages the protagonist is forced to concede that he was right: 'le produjo la repentina revelación y el atroz y definitivo convencimiento de que su compadre José Antonio había tenido toda la razón del mundo: la hija de la gran puta de *Cielito lindo* no hablaba de una inmensa fortuna sino de la suerte' (p. 585). This recognition symbolises the crumbling of the world of cultural references in which Manongo has kept alive his teenage ideal, and the realisation that reality cannot be held at bay forever. When Tere does finally join him briefly in Villa Puntos Suspensivos in Formentor it becomes clear that she does not share his dreams (she is content to be a doting grandmother), that she will not join him despite his wealth, and that she wishes Manongo to love her in the present for who she is instead of as who she was over forty years ago. On her departure, Manongo asks to be left alone, without the ever-present music which recreates the paradise lost, and is visited by Tere aged twenty-three, in other words before her marriage, and in the perfect fusion of imagined past with present Manongo takes his own life. The sense of closure produced is extremely powerful and multifaceted: for the reader of Bryce, the coming together of characters and settings in the novel and in Manongo brings about the resolution of the open endings of *Huerto cerrado*, *Un mundo para Julius*, *Tantas veces Pedro* and the *Cuadernos*, all in favour of a pessimistic reading: the struggle to preserve individuality and idealism in the face of pressure to conform seems doomed to failure and the search for a love which is returned in kind seems impossible. However, *No me esperen en abril* offers its own ambiguity as the protagonist's suicide can be seen as a moment of supreme pathos or as one of ecstatic release. Whichever reading is accepted, the power of the denouement is accentuated by the closing of the circle by Manongo and Bryce

together, with both ending their respective cultural creation in Formentor. For Bryce, the novel marks an important coming to terms with the Lima he left in the mid 1960s, and prepares the ground for the return to the reality of Peru which he was already preparing at the time of writing. However, Bryce and Manongo are not alone in using cultural references to recreate reality in the work: the narrator does the same, and so does his readers, who through this novel are called upon to question their relationship with their cultural milieu, their loved ones, and themselves.

Closures and openings

From *Huerto cerrado* to *No me esperen en abril* what emerges from a study of Bryce's narrative is a pattern of organic development, in terms of both style and theme. The marginal condition of Manolo in the earliest stories reveals itself to be a constant preoccupation for protagonists across a literary production that spans four decades, serving as a gateway to the subsequent exploration of cultural identity in the *Cuadernos* and of the value of popular cultural forms in *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* and *No me esperen en abril*. Literary and non-literary cultural forms figure as points of reference for daily existence from their inclusion in some of the stories of *Huerto cerrado* (for example, cinema in 'Su mejor negocio', popular music in 'Yo soy el rey', and Chekhov in 'Una mano en las cuerdas'), but it is only in the novels of the 1980s that their significance comes to be addressed as a central issue. It is perhaps only once Bryce has secured for himself a position within the sphere of literature that he is able to move into an exploration of other cultural manifestations within his works. With the greater maturity and self-assuredness that comes with experience (literary and personal) Bryce examines the ideological implications of the incorporation of non-literary cultural forms and weighs them alongside their literary counterparts to produce a world of cultural references that draws upon a wide range of influences, validating them all as vital components in the creation of a representative Peruvian cultural space.

The construction of a Peruvian (and Latin American) identity runs parallel to a greater ability on the part of the protagonists (who also mature from the children of early narratives to adults of later ones) to comprehend their reality and come to terms with it. In general terms Bryce's protagonists pass from struggling unsuccessfully to make sense of their world (*Huerto cerrado*, *Un mundo para Julius*) to using the past to try to understand the present (*La felicidad, ja ja*) to re-ordering the past through literary creation (*Tantas veces Pedro* onwards). It is significant that Felipe Carrillo should be the first of these protagonists to

accept reality as it is, albeit as a result of his having grappled with the past via literary creation, for his narrative coincides with a return to Peru after the alienating European experience of Pedro Balbuena and Martín Romaña: the suggestion would appear to be that for Peruvians (or at least for the Peruvian in question) the solution to their problems, especially those of a cultural nature, must be sought inside the country itself. Felipe, and subsequently Manongo, finally manage to achieve the profound emotional communication that Manolo was unable to express, and the resolution of their position within the diverse cultural landscape of their native Peru would again seem to be a key factor in this communicative ability. In some ways *No me esperen en abril* marks a retrograde step with regard to *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*, for Manongo is unable to accept present reality in the manner that Felipe does, dependent instead on the past as a governing force over the present. In many other ways, of course, the latter novel is far more accomplished and offers a multifaceted richness that is not to be found in the earlier work, and the move back towards a position more in keeping with the novels of the 1970s and 1980s may be explained by the fact that *No me esperen en abril* has its origins in and across that period. What this novel does that makes it worthy of consideration as the culmination of Bryce's previous narrative production is to combine the issues around literary creation that were at the heart of the *Cuadernos* with the examination of the role of non-literary cultural expression central to *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* to offer a more comprehensive vision of the Peruvian cultural space and the way in which Peruvians fit into it.

What the incorporation of music and other popular cultural forms into *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* and *No me esperen en abril* also achieves is to challenge the traditional cultural hierarchy that places literature at its head, and at the same time challenge other conventions, such as the *machismo* within and against which Manolo endeavoured to locate himself in *Huerto cerrado*. Part of this challenge is the growing presence of the female voice

in Bryce's narrative, reflecting the rise of women poets and narrators in Peru since 1980, and contesting the male-dominated environment of the author's early narratives. While it has been seen that the female voice gains a place in the last two novels considered here in particular, it is not until *La amigdalitis de Tarzán* that this reaches a position of parity with the male voice.

The process of literary creation is always necessarily fundamental to any work of literature, but the manner in which this process is foregrounded in Bryce's narrative marks it as one of special importance for the author. If the relationship between art and life is first brought into focus in 'El hombre, el cinema y el tranvía', then it is in another of the earliest stories, 'Antes de la cita con los Linares' that the exploration of the process of literary creation can be seen to begin. The progressive sense of protagonists assuming control of their own lives through the rewriting of them via literature reaches its climax in the *Cuadernos*, in which Martín reorganizes his experiences to provide himself with an ending that meets his desires, and then again in *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*, with the protagonist coming to terms with a disagreeable past through the present of literary creation. The autobiography question is mentioned in the discussion of the *Cuadernos*, and the coincidences between Bryce's protagonists and the author himself, together with the primacy of the creative act, make it possible to see the power of literature in and over life as decisive for narrators and author alike.

As well as developing distinctive fields of examination Bryce also gains a narrative voice with which to give them expression. The orality of this voice is a constant feature, and feeds into considerations of the validity of the popular as a means of expression: from the epigraph of *Un mundo para Julius* popular sayings enter the narrative, and the spoken word gives the title of two of the stories of *La felicidad, ja ja*. Another narrative strategy that features strongly in the incorporation into the narrative of speech patterns of diverse social classes is

the use of free indirect discourse, a feature since the stories of *Huerto cerrado*, but employed most effectively from *Un mundo para Julius*. The move towards a first-person narrative has an impact on the use that can be made of this form of narrative presentation, but the words of others continue to enter the text across Bryce's production. Something that emerges when considering the move between narrative voices and continents is the coincidence of the two, with the first person employed almost constantly in narratives set in Europe (or in the case of 'Un sapo en el desierto' the United States), whereas Bryce avails himself of the third person when the action takes place in Peru. It is difficult to apply the observation rigorously to the author's short stories (although it still holds largely true), but it does seem to obtain consistently to the novels. One explanation for this is that the first person conveys more effectively the social, cultural and emotional isolation suffered by the protagonists from Pedro Balbuena of *Tantas veces Pedro* to the eponymous anti-hero of *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* (who travels to Peru in the course of the novel, but who writes from his home in Paris). On the other hand, a third-person narrative, and especially one into which the words and thoughts of the characters are embedded, and which consciously seeks to include the reader in its creation, corresponds to the sense of community evoked when dealing with Lima and Peru, felt both by the characters and by Bryce himself.

Another feature of Bryce's narratives is the dialogue with his readership as well as with his characters. This dialogue is found in a very tentative form in *Huerto cerrado* in the narrator's awareness of his position as story-teller in the opening paragraph of 'El hombre, el cinema y el tranvía', but the metanarrator finds its apogee in the *Cuadernos*, in which its use by a narrator-protagonist who is himself an author serves greatly to enrich the consideration of the subject to hand. Throughout Bryce's work the assumed reader is Latin American or specifically Peruvian, as is made explicit on repeated occasions across the novels and short stories, and this ties in with the exploration of a Peruvian (or Latin-American) cultural space

and identity undertaken in the later works, as well as with the notion of writing as an intimate act for the benefit of personal friends, raised in the context of *No me esperen en abril* in particular.

In the introduction to his doctoral thesis César Ferreira suggests that a mature novelist should

construir un mundo verbal esférico, autosuficiente, no solo formalmente – como lo es toda ficción lograda –, sino temáticamente, un mundo en el que cada nueva ficción viene a incorporarse, o, mejor, disolverse, como miembro de una unidad, en la que todas las partes se implican y modifican en un mundo que se va configurando mediante ampliaciones y revelaciones no sólo prospectivas sino también retrospectivas.¹²¹

Although these words predate by some years the publication of *No me esperen en abril*, they provide a prophetic summary of Bryce's narrative production to the publication of the novel, which can be seen as marking the end of a grand narrative cycle that began with *Huerto cerrado*, and which indeed mirrors the integrative nature of that collection. The various levels of continuity have been noted in the course of the studies undertaken in this work, and the holistic unity of Bryce's narrative production is significantly heightened in *No me esperen en abril* by the numerous references and allusions to previous works. This dialogue enriches not only this novel, but all of the texts with which there is communication here through explicit reference or implicit allusion. This is especially true in the case of *Huerto cerrado* and *Un mundo para Julius*, whose closing ambiguities are finally resolved in Manongo's suicide in Mallorca. That a collection of short stories once again finds mention alongside a novel is entirely fitting, as the two narrative forms (in addition to novellas and shorter pieces) complement each other in the development of Bryce's narrative world: the short stories (and the novellas of *Dos señoras conversan*) function as a literary space through which moments of transition between narrative voices, locations and thematic concerns can be explored prior to a more profound (and assured) treatment in subsequent longer fiction. In this sense then,

while Bryce's novels have overshadowed his work in shorter narrative forms, a situation addressed by de la Fuente in his study of the author's short stories, the value and implications of each can only be fully appreciated in function of the other, as has also been seen to be true for literary and non-literary cultural forms and for the treatment of the protagonists in Europe and Latin America.

Despite the apparently pessimistic closure of the narrative cycle with the suicide of the protagonist, and the privileging of a negative interpretation of the open endings of earlier works, *No me esperen en abril* also serves as a point of forward-looking *apertura*: for Bryce the texts serve to resolve profound internal conflicts and facilitate a final return to Peru, as well as provide an opening to the exploration of new literary forms and concerns in *La amigdalitis de Tarzán*. Through the narrator's constant search for an audience the reader of these texts, and especially the reader of Bryce's work across the decades, is drawn into the creation of the narrative as a *lector cómplice*, and is also involved in the resolution of the issues that arise not only at the level of the text, but beyond it too.

¹²¹ César Ferreira, 'Autobiografía y exilio en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique' (unpublished doctoral

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