DECAPITATION, CASTRATION AND CREATIVITY IN ELENA GARRO’S ANDAMOS HUYENDO LOLA [WE ARE FLEEING LOLA]

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In Andamos huyendo Lola [We Are Fleeing Lola], the Mexican writer Elena Garro examines the process of writing and the consequences of authorship for the female writer. By creating a discourse of silence, characterized by omission, marginal perspectives, ambiguity, displacement and troping, Garro narratively represents the silence to which her writer-protagonist is condemned. Through this “silent,” hidden discourse, her authorial persona, Lelinca, challenges the hegemony of the ubiquitous, unidentified male persecutors/censors who appear as “heads,” “invisible bodies,” or government representatives. Just as Garro displaces her authorial persona onto her writer-protagonist, Lelinca displaces her own authorial voice onto a cat, Lola, a frog, and male narrators in order to tell her story while appearing to submit to injunctions to silence. As she does so, she reappropriates silence and passivity, the model of femininity in Mexican thought, to develop a femino-centric text in which the creative “I” is both silent and expressive.

In Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism, Debra A. Castillo distinguishes between silencing, a condition imposed from outside, and silence freely chosen.¹ She further suggests the latter can take two forms: using silence as a weapon or breaking silence with hypocrisy (Castillo, 38–39). The interplay between silencing and silence, as explained by Castillo, characterize Elena Garro’s life and work. After being imprisoned for her activism on behalf of the Indian peasants in Chihuahua and Morelos, taunted by the press, rejected by the left for allegedly betraying the leaders of a planned 1968 coup, and barred from publishing houses that were controlled by her powerful ex-husband Octavio Paz, Garro left Mexico for the United States in 1971. She

¹ Debra Castillo, Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 37. All subsequent references to this source will be given in the text with the author’s last name and the page number of the reference.
moved on to Spain, where her Mexican passport was confiscated, and finally settled in France.  

These events had a profound affect on Garro’s literary career, her attitude toward authorship, and the creation of the writer/artist protagonists of the works published after a thirteen year hiatus. Garro initially, however, remained silent in response to personal and political persecution, to misrepresentations of her words and actions, to the limitations of her broken health and to the demands of single parenting. Castillo admonishes,

As a political strategy, however, to embrace silence is clearly of limited value. Silence alone cannot provide an adequate basis for either a theory of literature or concrete political action. Eventually, the woman must break silence and write, negotiating the tricky domains of the said and the unsaid, the words written down, as Lispector would have it, smudging the page, and the words left, for whatever reason, between the lines (42).

Following a similar imperative, Garro again wrote and published; she wrote of loneliness, loss, fear and persecution while denouncing the silencing of the female authorial voice and the sado-masochistic underpinnings of male–female relationships. Garro’s protagonists, as the author herself, suffer the negative consequences of female authorship and other creative activity. In these novels, Garro implicitly denounces the hypocrisy of the Latin American leftist intellectual who takes upon himself the social, political and economic privileges of the previous aristocratic elite and who represses the female narrative voice even as he claims to express alternate (more real) realities than those of official discourse. While Garro’s protagonists decry male control of authorship, and their own forced silence, they reclaim their own right to author-ity as they create a different reality, a magical reality of their own making or a new meaning for the reality created by male writers.  

To address the problems confronting the female author/creative artist, Garro creates an alternate discourse characterized by omission, marginal perspectives, ambiguity, displacement and troping. Through this discourse, Garro and her protagonists appropriate silence as they appear to submit to injunctions to silence, with respect to their narrative voice, while at the same time telling the

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