

**Coming of Age in Maite Agirre's *BILBAO:*  
*Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* and Teresa Calo's  
*El día en que inventé tu nombre***

**Barbara Foley Buedel**  
*Lycoming College*

The term "coming of age" has been used to identify that time when a young person moves from childhood to adulthood and for many the term is synonymous with adolescence (Millard 4). In some cultures, the young person's transition to adulthood is associated with early adolescence and sexual maturity, and in others there are ceremonies that serve as rites of passage.<sup>1</sup> In anthropological studies such as Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), the expression designates that time when the juvenile acquires social standing within the community. Similarly, coming of age functions as a legal convention to stipulate points in adolescence or early adulthood (usually ages 16 to 21) when the young person is no longer considered a "minor" (McDonough 174-75). As a topic of literature, scholars frequently associate coming of age with the *bildungsroman*,<sup>2</sup> although as Marjorie Garber demonstrates in her study on Shakespeare, coming of age is neither limited to the novel nor to a particular century (26).

In this study, I will consider how two contemporary Basque playwrights, Maite Agirre<sup>3</sup> and Teresa Calo,<sup>4</sup> use the coming-of-age story in their respective plays: *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* (2002, 2008) and *El día en que inventé tu nombre* (2007, 2009).<sup>5</sup> In particular, I will focus on the dramatization of innocence and its loss by addressing several questions: how is innocence represented and configured, what forms of social experience does it encounter, what kind of maturity, if any, is achieved by the young characters, and finally, how do the coming-of-age experiences of the young character(s) impact the adult figure in each work?

*BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* is a postmodern drama that portrays the past and the present of its troubled protagonist, Mertxe

Adulta, through her journey of memory (Buedel 113-14).<sup>6</sup> The play opens and closes in present-day Bilbao in an abandoned bar located on the ground floor of a building that is about to be torn down. Before the building that housed her family's bar is demolished, an event that takes place at the end of the play, the protagonist—Mertxe Adulta—returns to say farewell to the physical space in which so many of her memories occurred. It is especially fitting that her memories are recreated in the abandoned bar since, as Jeanette Malkin reminds us, "sight and site remain the central elements found in postmodern dramatizations of memory" (5).

Except for the opening and closing scenes, the play's loose structure is composed of unnumbered scenes of the past interrupted by comments from the adult protagonist that disrupt the narrative unity. Temporally disjointed in the sense that an unspecified time elapses between each one, the staged memories are selective and incomplete like the process of memory itself. Nevertheless, they record a tragic love story that took place in Bilbao during the Spanish Civil War from the autumn of 1936 to June 1937 when Franco's rebel forces overcame Republican resistance and entered the city. Also witnessing the past is Leire Adulta, who is summoned by Mertxe, introduced as an "esfinge," and later revealed to be the ghost of Mertxe's dead sister. Although Leire Adulta never speaks, her presence on the stage is a constant reminder of the link between past and present. As Candyce Leonard writes in her introduction to the play, "La coincidencia de la acción de los dos tiempos, y la coexistencia de Leire y Mertxe ratifican el vínculo entre los ciclos históricos, . . . y además la imposibilidad de poder borrar jamás el impacto del pasado en la vida de un país, de una sociedad, o de un individuo" (71).

The characters who appear in Mertxe's staged memories are the younger versions of herself and her sister—Mertxe Joven and Leire Joven—as well as their best friends Ángel and Luis. Unmarried, ranging in age from 18 to 19 years old, and each living at home, the four companions recognize they are on the cusp of transitioning into adulthood. For example, Mertxe Joven enthusiastically anticipates her part-time work at the hospital, saying to her sister, "No es gran cosa pero es el comienzo de mi independencia" (80). For her part, Leire Joven speaks enviously of the approaching independence of her friend Miren, who will soon marry and thereby leave her parental home.

A common definition of innocence is chastity which, in western culture, is frequently used interchangeably with sexual abstinence, especially before marriage. In this regard, the attitudes and behavior of the young characters clearly reflect experience rather than innocence. Toward the beginning of the play, Luis summarizes their attitudes toward sex with his exuberant and somewhat naïve "¡Viva el amor libre!" (80). In a similar exchange, Ángel, Leire and Mertxe playfully cite lines from Lorca's *Doña Rosita la Soltera*, all of which create a light-hearted flirtatious scene that portrays Leire Joven and Ángel as young lovers. The mood becomes more somber when Leire Joven tells her sister that she is two months pregnant, protesting the inherent gender inequality that makes an unplanned pregnancy more difficult for women: "qué fácil es todo para ellos, qué fácil (*Vuelve a llorar.*), pero para una mujer es bien distinto, porque ella se queda con las consecuencias" (89). Mertxe Joven tries to bolster her sister's morale by remarking that at least social expectations are changing: "Hoy en día las mujeres no tenemos que meternos a monjas porque nos han dejado plantadas" (89), reminding her sister that "[v]as a ser madre y ya está, . . . eso es normal si se hace el amor con un hombre" (90). In spite of her sister's progressive attitudes, Leire Joven worries about how she will share the news with their parents: "no sé qué voy a decir en casa" (89). She is even more concerned about how she will inform Ángel, who recently suggested they cool their relationship because of the impending war. When he subsequently reacts to her pregnancy by declaring that he intends to leave for the battlefield, thus placing public duty above personal circumstance, Leire recognizes that "el amor libre" comes with a price.

Ignorance or a lack of knowledge is another definition of innocence.<sup>7</sup> In general, the young characters do not seem innocent in this regard either, especially in terms of politics. Of the four friends, Ángel, Mertxe and Luis are portrayed as staunch supporters of the Republic, and Luis proudly refers twice to the Constitution of 1931. More than once, Ángel and Mertxe censure the "fachas" (facistas) who have rebelled against the Republic, and Ángel celebrates the statue of autonomy granted to the Basque Country in October 1936.<sup>8</sup> Both Luis and Leire, however, seek innocence by feigning ignorance. When Ángel forecasts that the winter (1936-1937) will be marked by the rebel assault, Luis opts to blind himself to the approaching Francoist troops:

“Pero hasta que no se te metan en el cuarto aquí todo va de perlas. ¡No pasa nada!” (84). Finally admitting that he also loves Leire, Luis refuses to follow Ángel to the Front and promises to stay with and care for Leire. Nevertheless, his devotion cannot forestall the harsh realities of war that disrupt and separate the lives of many, and he implores Leire to seek help from her parents, who think she is safe with Miren, or from his mother who would accept her pregnancy. Leire, with almost childlike naiveté, refuses to acknowledge their precarious reality and insists that she and Luis remain hidden in her family’s closed bar. Although Luis knows that women and children are being evacuated from Bilbao, he acquiesces to her wishes, later telling Ángel that he and Leire hoped the world would forget about them:

Como decía Leire, vivíamos sin pasado y sin futuro, aislados del mundo. Yo salía de tanto en tanto a buscar alimentos y cosas y me sentía como un sonámbulo que soñaba moverse, caminar y andar en medio del desastre y cuando regresaba a nuestro refugio con ella era como si despertase y viviera de verdad, viviera la vida real. (116)

Leire’s and Luis’s self-imposed blindness is a strategy to cope with the horrors of the war, but it does not save Leire. When it is time for her baby’s birth, she and Luis leave the bar to seek medical help but to no avail. Luis later tells Ángel: “Murió como un montón de mujeres más al dar a luz en malas condiciones. Ella y el niño” (117). In this context, Leire’s innocence and that of her child stem not from her self-imposed ignorance. Instead their innocence transcends the individual and is configured by the collective reality of all those who died as blameless victims of war.

Mertxe Adulta is both a physical survivor and a psychological casualty of the war. Her staged memories focus on both the personal (Leire’s tragic love affair and death) and the public (the devastation brought to the Basque Country by the Civil War) because the two are forever linked in Mertxe’s traumatized memory. As a survivor, Mertxe Adulta has a privileged perspective from which she comments on the past, and sometimes her words portray her with the discernment that comes from maturity. For example, at the beginning of the play when Luis exuberantly celebrates free love (“¡Viva el amor libre!”), Mertxe Adulta tempers his youthful optimism as she reminds the audience (and herself) of the ominous historical doom that would soon end their

carefree adolescence: “Libre. Libre y caprichoso. Y ante ese amor libre y caprichoso nosotros éramos cualquier cosa, pero no libres” (80).

As a victim, Mertxe is psychically rooted in the past because the past events caused the trauma from which she suffers. A repeated image that haunts her is one of the tide that washed away the sandcastles she and Leire built as children. Representing a happier time prior to war, the daily repetition of constructing sandcastles, watching the tide carry them away, and knowing that she and Leire would build them again, formed a cycle that was comforting because of its predictability. The war and the “marea negra” of the advancing Francoist troops changed everything: “Allí estábamos refugiadas en nuestro barco de arena. . . Bilbao era un gran barco de arena mientras una marea negra iba destruyendo su protección” (109). Longing to return to a distant past prior to Leire’s death and the invasion of her homeland, Mertxe Adulta is not unlike Leire Joven and Luis who seek to escape from the brutality and personal loss brought on by war. Thus, as a “postmodern agent” (Berteens and Fokkema 12), Mertxe displays an identity that is multiple and in flux. Her intense though futile desire to recover the lost paradise of her youth portrays her as a “traumatized individual” who “becomes detached from the self and from reality” (Gabriele 68).

The second play, *El día en que inventé tu nombre*, takes place in the present day in an unnamed small town in the southern province of Almería. It opens and closes on the same day with a brief initial monologue and a final one, both of which are introspective journeys as Esperanza (Espe) addresses her absent daughter Begoña (Bego). Most of the play is a flashback that records the dialogue between them on the afternoon and evening of Bego’s arrival at her mother’s house. During this exchange, we learn that Bego, age seventeen, has lived with her father since her parents divorced when she was three. Until she was seven years old, she spent one month each summer with her mother, but no visits have occurred in the last ten years. Esperanza’s task is to convince her daughter to leave the *kale-borroka*, literally “street fighting,” comprised of urban guerrilla actions inspired by ETA. Bego first claims she agreed to live with her mother so that her father would not send her to reform school; she later admits her compliance stems from wanting to understand why her mother disappeared from her life. During their afternoon and evening of conversation, both characters

attempt to explain the reasons for their choices in a dialogue that includes personal details and socio-political issues. Although there are moments in which the two manage to form a bond via soul-wrenching questions and confessions, their reestablished relationship does not last.

Bego's precipitous arrival at her mother's house occurs because her father mistakenly believes she has participated in the burning of a public bus in which a young man lost his hand. Given Bego's typical demeanor and uniform ("*cabeza casi rapada, mallas, botas de monte, camiseta deslavada y cazadora de pana*" 156) and the paraphernalia her father found in her room ("*carteles, esprais, cosas*" 206), her father's flawed conclusion was not ill-founded, as she herself admits. She also insists that it was mere chance and her fear of fire that prevented her from being one of the perpetrators:

BEGO.—Sí. Bueno...yo...yo hago lo que me manden, pero...

ESPE.—¿Pero qué?

BEGO.—Le tengo fobia al fuego, pierdo los nervios, no me puedo controlar. (207)

Extraordinarily relieved that her daughter is still innocent of violent crime, Espe hugs her, declaring: "Por primera vez en toda mi existencia siento que la vida me da otra oportunidad" (207).

The decoration of Esperanza's humble abode as well as her attire—"un vaquero, una blusa floja y sandalias"—denote a middle-aged woman who still self-identifies with "*el estilo hippy*" (155). In her youth, Esperanza was a political activist in Francoist Spain (she met Bego's father at a rally protesting the death penalty) and in the present, she admits feeling at times deceived by injustices perpetuated by Spain's democratic governments. Therefore, she never endeavors to deter Bego's commitment to Basque nationalism; it is the violent methods toward that end that Esperanza wants her to question. She believes Bego may change her mind about the *kale-borroka* because Bego's contrived statements lack personal conviction: "Euskadi es un país ocupado . . . hay una lucha por la independencia (171) . . . Nos defendemos de la invasión. En el momento en que se vayan acabará la violencia, ya está" (174). Bego's commitment to the nationalist cause via street-gang warfare might be understood as "foreclosure" or the second status in the "identity status interview" developed by James E. Marcia (cited in Del Mastro 44). In this stage, the young person

embraces commitments but fails to explore choices, often due to rigidity or the strong influence of parents or guardians (Del Mastro 45). In Bego's case, due to her family history, the strong influence comes not from parents but from peers. Throughout the exchanges with her mother, Bego demonstrates a degree of naiveté that prevents her from exploring political options. In other words, when it comes to history and politics, she is immature and not sufficiently educated to enter into a logical debate with her mother:

ESPE.—¿Contra quién vais?

BEGO.—Contra el sistema.

ESPE.—¿Qué sistema? ¿El de transporte? ¿Cuál es el objetivo? ¿Qué quiten los autobuses y os pongan tranvías? (183)

Espe did not choose the name Begoña (Bego) for her daughter; that name was selected by Bego's paternal grandmother. Espe explains that she wanted to name her "Beitu" which in Basque means "Mira", 'contempla', 'observa'" (196). This revelation is consistent with Espe's insistence that Bego think for herself—"Quiero que me hables de tus ideas propias" (171). When Bego says, "El pueblo vasco lleva años votando nacionalismo", her mother adds, "El pueblo vota paz" (192). Espe urges Bego to seek a more informed understanding of the complexities of Basque independence and to consider that the violence of the *kale-borroka* is "cruel, injusta y estéril" (182). As Tracie Amend observes, "Esperanza not only represents an older generation, but also the more mainstream position of the Basque people—that is, that while the Basque Country may have been occupied unjustly, the road forward is one of consolidation" (192).

The role of the family is often recognized as an important aspect in coming-of-age stories. Mary Frosch, for example, uses the family as one of six organizing categories for the selections she includes in *Coming of Age in America* and in the anthology she co-edits with Faith Adiele, *Coming of Age around the World*. Stephanie Lovelady holds that there is "a persistent tendency to look backwards" (30) in coming-of-age stories, in part due to the adolescent's desire to understand his or her origins. In *Coming of Age in Contemporary American Fiction*, Kenneth Millard maintains that an important issue is "the way in which finding a place in society is coterminous with finding a satisfactory relationship with the father" (15), the parent usually absent as a

consequence of divorce. In *El día en que inventé tu nombre*, divorce also disrupts the family unit, but it is Esperanza's "unconventional motherhood" (Amend 180) that leads Bego to search for answers. Candyce Leonard maintains that this work displays "la inseguridad de una hija que quiere encontrar su sitio dentro del mundo afectivo de su madre" (146). Although her mother has not been a consistent part of Bego's life, Esperanza remains Bego's center, "su punto de origen y, por ello, algo integral a la formación de su ser" (Leonard 146).

For these reasons, Bego interrogates her mother relentlessly and Esperanza answers, even admitting that she wanted to end her accidental pregnancy but eventually consented to marry Bego's father and have their child (Bego). Suffering from depression and wanting to divorce her husband, Espe believed that only he could give Bego a financially secure life. When he complained that the summer visits shared by mother and daughter were detrimental to Bego because she returned rebellious, undisciplined, and hostile towards her stepmother, Esperanza finally agreed to suspend them provided that every month he send her a videotape that would allow her to have a sense of watching Bego grow up.

As previously mentioned, there are moments when through humor, affection, and honesty it appears that Bego is gaining a more mature understanding and acceptance of her mother. Several times her behavior and concern portray her as somehow stronger than Espe, as if their roles were reversed. For example, when Bego decides not to smoke so as not to worry her mother, Espe laughingly acknowledges that Bego's father would be horrified to see his ex wife's lack of disciplinary skills: "Te ha mandado aquí para que yo te ayude, o te encamine, o no sé. Y yo no valgo ni para ponerte unas normas mínimas. Renuncias a fumar para no agobiarme" (181). Bego also recognizes her mother's fragility: "Yo no debo parecerme mucho a ti. A pesar de lo que diga el aita, somos muy distintas. Yo no soy tan frágil como tú" (197). She even voices concern that her presence may cause her mother harm: "A mí sí me da miedo el [daño] que te estoy haciendo a ti" (194). "Enferma" becomes the code word for "depressed" and Bego declares, "No quiero que vuelvas a ponerte enferma" (194).

The play ends by coming full circle. It is an hour later on the same day in which Espe pronounces her first monologue to the absent Bego. In this second monologue, we learn that after living with her mother for two months, Bego ran away to rejoin her comrades when one of them

was arrested. Since her departure, Esperanza has waited for months to hear news of her daughter's whereabouts. In the same newspaper she brought home in the opening scene, Esperanza learns that a young woman named Beitu has been arrested for killing a police escort: "Estás muy rara en ese retrato robot... Beitu. Dios mío. Beitu. El día en que inventé tu nombre jamás pensé que se convertiría en un alias de guerra" (211). The maturity which Bego displays on a personal level when dealing compassionately with her mother eludes her when dealing with her peers. Her final actions stem from blind loyalty and compliance—"yo hago lo que me manden" (207)—rather than from personal conviction based on informed choices.

Doubts remain both to Esperanza and the spectator if a more traditional, present mother would have influenced Bego's choice of friends. What is patently clear to Espe, however, is that her daughter's violent crime has forever changed Bego's life because in killing the police escort, Bego eradicates the innocence she once had: "Veo la foto de esta madre llorando desconsolada por la pérdida de su hijo y siento ganas de correr hacia ella y abrazarla, y llorar juntas porque a la mía la ha matado la misma bala" (211).

Although the focus of this study has been to examine the portrayal of the coming-of-age story and to understand how the experiences of the young characters impact the adult figure of each work, it is helpful to recall the ways in which these two memory plays reflect the literary and historical contexts in which they were written. *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* belongs to a time of prolific literary and cinematographic responses (Hurcombe 28-29; Labanyi, "Memory" 95; Ryan 126-27) aimed at recovering memories of the Spanish Civil War repressed by the "pacto de olvido" of the transition period, which facilitated the return to democracy through a collective agreement to consign past wounds to oblivion" (Labanyi, "Teaching History" 438). Agirre's work exposes the brutality of the war and its devastation on both the individual (Mertxe, Leire, and their friends) and the collective Republican identity (specifically, the Basque Country). *El día en que inventé tu nombre* was also written during the first decade of the twenty-first century, a decade that began with the creation in 2000 of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (Labanyi, "Memory" 95-96) and witnessed the declaration of 2006 as the year of memory (Ryan 129). Although Calo's drama does not address the Civil War per se, it recalls

the war's aftermath—the dictatorship—and examines freedom as a theme/issue within the family (Espe's painful choice to be the absent mother and Bego's rebellion) and within society (Espe's and Bego's respective political activism). In addition, the complicated relationship between Bego and Espe can be understood as a metaphor for the complex relationship between Basque national identity and the broader Spanish identity.

In form, the plays are significantly different and yet strikingly similar. *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* is a postmodern work characterized by narrative disunity and collective images: the past and present of its traumatized protagonist are equally fragmentary, blurred, and in flux. *El día en que inventé tu nombre* is a neo-realist play, or what Jeannette Malkin calls a modernist play, a drama that narrates the past through the linear structure of flashback and through the memory of a psychologically endowed character—Espe—who “can act as the locus of recall” (7). In spite of this significant difference in the performance of memory as a narrative device, both works open and close with monologues by the respective protagonists while their staged memories comprise the extensive core of each play.

Thematically, these dramas portray the loss of innocence and its impact on the adult figure who is profoundly affected by the coming-of-age experiences of the young characters. In *BILBAO*, innocence is lost through rites of passage: sexual experience and the horrors of war. However, unlike the protagonist of the typical *bildungsroman*, Mertxe is not re-formed; she physically survives the war but remains psychologically fractured. Ultimately, there is little separation between the young characters (especially Leire and Luis) and the adult Mertxe, all of whom attempt to return to a state of innocence through self-imposed ignorance and a willful retreat into fantasy, in short, to a time prior to war. In *El día en que inventé tu nombre*, innocence is lost when the adolescent Bego rejects her mother's endeavors to deter her from a path of violence. Although the play presents Bego as a young person at times capable of mature empathy toward her mother, she ultimately chooses peers over family, and in following her friends, Bego chooses the violence of the *kale-borroka*. Esperanza's anguish is wondering whether or not she could have changed the course of Bego's life had she made more traditional choices in the past. Finally, unlike the typical novel of youth development in which the protagonist is a young person transitioning to adulthood, *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* and *El día*

*en que inventé tu nombre* feature the coming-of-age experiences of the young characters in order to portray the profoundly troubled present of the adult figure, the true protagonist of each play.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, first menstruation is viewed as the sign of sexual maturity in numerous cultures such as Cree (1:81), Tamil (3:278) and Karaite Jewish (9:155). The Jewish Bar and Bat Mitzvah (6:36) and the Hispanic *quinceañera* (8:80-81) are examples of rites of passage, and in Kota culture, both boys and girls have their heads shaved as a coming-of-age initiation (3:137).

<sup>2</sup> While the term *bildungsroman* was coined in Germany in 1819, today it is generally understood as any novel of youth development. See Millard 2, Adiele and Frosch xiv, Oster 90, and Klein 22.

<sup>3</sup> Maite Agirre (b. Zarautz, Gipuzkoa, 1955) has received awards in all three areas of her theatrical career (acting, writing, and directing). She is committed to fostering the growth of Basque theatre: when her plays are presented in the Basque Country, she insists on staging a version in Basque and a version in Castilian on alternate nights. Some of her best-known works are dramatic adaptations of classic texts and characters—Joyce's *Molly Bloom*, Rojas's *La Celestina* and Cervantes's *Don Quijote*—as well as adaptations of works by Basque authors such as Xavier María de Munibe e Idiáquez, Conde de Peñaflores, Jon Mirande and Bernardo Atxaga. Agirre has collaborated closely with Basque artists of other mediums, such as the sculptors Jorge Oteiza and Koldobika Jauregi, the painter Vicente Amestoy, and the musician Joseba Tapi; and not surprisingly, her productions tend to be multidisciplinary, combining music, dance, visual imagery and drama. Her theatrical company, Agerre Teatro, devotes significant time holding workshops and staging adaptations of classical works both in Spain and abroad: Argentina, Mozambique, Peru, Mexico, Chile and Colombia. Agirre's recent awards include a prize in 2004 for her direction of Alfonso Armada's *Los niños no pueden hacer nada por los muertos* as well as the 2007, 2008, and 2010 Premio Max, a theatre prize comparable to the Tonys. Agirre received these awards as best author in Basque for her respective works, *Chicas bonitas, alegres maizales* (*Neska politak, artasoro alaiak*), *Cabaret infantil* (*Haur kabareta*) and *Secando charcos* (*Putzuak lehortzen*).

<sup>4</sup> Teresa Calo Fontán (b. Donostia, Gipuzkoa, 1955) has enjoyed a productive career as actor, dramatist, director, scriptwriter, and teacher of theatre. Her long acting career on stage and in film and television includes prizes for best actress in the play *Nasdrovia Chéjov* (Festival Garnacha de Haro) and in the Goya-nominated short film *Cita con Alberto* (international festivals in Alfas del Pi and Elche). As a playwright, she writes and publishes in Castilian although her play about anorexia has been translated and published in Galician, *Marta ante o espello* (2011), and Basque, *Marta ispiluaren aurrean* (2012). Calo considers herself primarily an author of comedies, many of which have been published and either staged (*Un millón de mujeres*, *Ex Symbols*, *¡Ay, Manolo!*, and *Mentiras*) or presented as dramatized readings (*El hombre que sobrevivió una mudanza* and *Entre líneas*). Recent awards include the Serantes Prize (2003) for *¡Ay, Manolo!* and the 2009 award Luis Barahona de Soto de Teatro Breve for *Mujeres en crisis: marketing*. Her single drama, *El día en que inventé tu nombre*, received the Ciudad de San Sebastián Prize in 2005.

<sup>5</sup> *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* was first published in 2002 in Elorrio (Spain) by Arzteblai. *El día en que inventé tu nombre* was published in 2007 in Madrid by Primer Acto and the Asociación de Autores de Teatro. Throughout this study, all citations correspond to the second editions which were published, respectively, in 2008 and 2009 by Editorial Teatro.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to analyzing *BILBAO* as a postmodern representation of traumatized memory, this article studies the key role of intertextuality in creating images of the Spanish Civil War, two of which are formed by the iconic poets, Lauaxeta and Lorca, both Republican victims of the military uprising.

<sup>7</sup> Dianne Klein studies the protagonist's move "from initial innocence to knowledge" (22) in the coming-of-age novels, *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *The House on Mango Street*.

<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of the war, the Partido Nacional Vasco (PNV) split; the provinces of Álava and Navarra supported the military uprising while Vizcaya and Gipuzkoa opposed it (Cazorla-Sánchez 69). Agirre's work portrays Bilbao not only as the political capital of Vizcaya but also as the spiritual capital of Basque nationalism.

## WORKS CITED

- Adiele, Faith and Mary Frosch, eds. *Coming of Age around the World: A Multicultural Anthology*. New York: New Press, 2007. Print.
- Agirre, Maite. *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos. Teatro español del siglo XXI: actos de memoria*. Ed. Candyce Leonard and John P. Gabriele. Rev. ed. Winston-Salem: Editorial Teatro, 2008. 75-119. Print.
- Amend, Tracie. "Basque Identity on Stage: History, Family Constructs, and the Troubled Mother in Maite Agirre's *Bilbao: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos* and Teresa Calo Fontán's *El día en que inventé tu nombre*." *The Changing Spanish Family: Essays on New Views in Literature, Cinema and Theater*. Ed. Tiffany Trotman. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011. 180-97. Print.
- Bertens, Hans, and Douwe Fokkema, eds. *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997. Print.
- Buedel, Barbara Foley. "Images of the Spanish Civil War through Intertextuality and Memory: Maite Agirre's *BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos*." *Estreno* 38.2 (2012): 101-17. Print.
- Calo Fontán, Teresa. *El día en que inventé tu nombre. Teatro español del siglo XXI: actos de identidad*. Ed. Candyce Leonard and John P. Gabriele. Rev. ed. Winston-Salem: Editorial Teatro, 2009. 153-211. Print.
- Cazorla-Sánchez, Antonio. "At Peace with the Past: Explaining the Spanish Civil War in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia." *Representations of the Spanish Civil War*. Ed. Noël Valis. New York: MLA, 2007. 63-72. Print.
- Del Maestro, Mark P. "Identity Achievement and Lost Innocence in Carmen Laforet's *La insolación*." *Ojáncano: Revista de Literatura Española* 25 (2004): 43-60. Print.
- Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. Ed. David Levinson. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1991. Print.
- Frosch, Mary. *Coming of Age in America: A Multicultural Anthology*. New York: New Press, 2007. Print.
- Gabriele, John P. "Memory as Postmodern Discourse in Buero Vallejo's *Las trampas del azar*." *Ojáncano: Revista de Literatura Española* 34 (2008): 63-84. Print.
- Garber, Marjorie. *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*. London: Methuen, 1981. Print.
- Hurcombe, Martin. "Mi guerra, tu guerra: Claiming the Spanish Civil War in literature and film." *Journal of War and Cultural Studies*. 1.1 (2008): 25-30. Print.

- Klein, Dianne. "Coming of Age in Novels by Rudolfo Anaya and Sandra Cisneros." *The English Journal* 81.5 (Sep. 1992): 21-26. Print.
- Labanyi, Jo. "Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War." *Poetics Today* 28:1 (2007): 89-116. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Teaching History through Memory Work: Issues of Memorialization in Representations of the Spanish Civil War." *Teaching Representations of the Spanish Civil War*. Ed. Noël Valis. New York: MLA, 2007. 436-47. Print.
- Leonard, Candyce. "BILBAO: Lauaxeta, tiros y besos: fantasmas del pasado." Introduction. *Teatro español del siglo XXI: actos de memoria*. Ed. Candyce Leonard and John P. Gabriele. Winston-Salem: Editorial Teatro, 2008. 69-72. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Construyéndose la identidad en *El día en que inventé tu nombre*." Introduction. *Teatro español del siglo XXI: actos de identidad*. Ed. Candyce Leonard and John P. Gabriele. Winston-Salem: Editorial Teatro, 2009. 145-50. Print.
- Lovelady, Stephanie. "Walking Backwards: Chronology, Immigration, and Coming of Age in *My Antonia* and *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Modern Language Studies* 35.1 (2005): 28-37. Print.
- Malkin, Jeanette R. *Memory-Theater and Postmodern Drama*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1999. Print.
- McDonough, Gary. "Coming of Age." *Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Culture*. Ed. Gary W. McDonough, Robert Gregg, and Cindy H. Wong. London: Routledge, 2001. 174-75. Print.
- Mead, Margaret. *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*. Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1961. Print.
- Millard, Kenneth. *Coming of Age in Contemporary American Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007. Print.
- Oster, Sharon. "The 'Erotics of Auschwitz': Coming of Age in *The Painted Bird* and *Sophie's Choice*." *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*. Ed. Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2003. 90-124. Print.
- Ryan, Lorraine. "For Whom the Dominant Memory Tolls: The Suppression and Re-Emergence of Republican Memory and Identity in Spain." *The Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Cultures*. Ed. Laura Rorato and Anna Saunders. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2009. 119-34. Print.

## Picking Up the Tracks: The Impact of Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* on Postboom Perceptions of US Culture

**Alex C. Holland**  
*Auburn University*

Alejo Carpentier, born 1904, is undoubtedly one of the more universally recognizable names in Latin American letters. The Cuban narrativist, along with the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges is usually credited with the literary paternity of the marquee movement of modern Latin American fiction, the Boom. The Boom put Latin America on the literary world stage in a big way, most famously due to an effort to incorporate more universal themes and a tendency toward technical experimentation. The central figures of Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa and Julio Cortázar; as well as writers such as José Donoso, Jorge Edwards and Ernesto Sábato carved out a new literary space of honor for Latin American letters in the decade of the sixties and the early part of the 1970s.

Although critics and the writers of the Boom universally cite Carpentier as a pivotal figure, part of the proto-boom as Donoso puts it, much less is discussed of his influence on the Postboom. To provide a striking example, Donald L. Shaw, who has written both the Twayne World Author Series volume *Alejo Carpentier* as well as the well-known study, *The Postboom in Spanish American Fiction*, does not connect the dots between the Cuban intellectual's breakthrough novel, *Los pasos perdidos*, and the later literary tendency.<sup>1</sup> Shaw includes Carpentier in the discussion, but limits it only to his later fiction and essays. While this would seem to provide an authoritative dismissal of significant influence, this study will show to the contrary that there are quite concrete reasons to reevaluate the impact of *Los pasos perdidos* on the writers of the Postboom. More specifically, I argue here that Carpentier's 1953 novel is an important precursor of how United States culture would be portrayed by Latin American writers in the Postboom.