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Silence and the Unsayable in Lorca's *Doña Rosita la soltera*

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In plays of inaction, when nonprogression in language [...], combined with confined settings, underscores the sensation of entrapment, silent response and muteness reinforce the portrait of man as not merely estranged from his world, but entrapped in the hell of the self. As a metaphor of solitary confinement, silence confirms man's inability or unwillingness to relate to others and his concomitant torture by exclusion.

Leslie Kane, *The Language of Silence: On the Spoken and the Unsayable in Modern Drama* (24)

Perhaps due to postmodernism's broad sense of skepticism regarding the power of language and the growing loss of confidence with respect to that medium of communication (Steiner 12-35), the last twenty years have seen an exponential growth in interest within precisely that area that many consider to be the lack of language: silence. Not surprisingly, literary critics have been quick to begin their explorations of manifestations of silence within a wide range of genres. Leslie Kane's pioneering study *The Language of Silence: On the Spoken and the Unsayable in Modern Drama* is one of the best examples of this kind of investigation. In her analysis of the dramatic production of various twentieth-century playwrights, Kane utilizes a wide-ranging definition of silence as she shows how "[t]he fluidity of silence allows the artist to journey to the depths of the psyche, to exteriorize, dramatize, and emphasize what the Symbolists termed *l'état d'âme*" (14). Because she categorically refuses to confine silence to its limiting meaning of an "absence of language" (15), Kane gives herself enough wiggle-room to explore explicit

manifestations of silence both in the dramatic text and on the theatrical stage as well as to delve into more metaphorical “articulations” of silence.

While it may seem obvious that silence plays an important role in an existentialist work such as Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1952), a play in which incessant, awkward onstage silences bombard the audience into a very quiet, yet very tense, state of neurosis, much more subtle is the use of silence by earlier twentieth-century dramatists. One such case is that of the dramatic work of Spanish writer Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), a poet and playwright who skillfully positioned a wide assortment of silences in his plays, thereby creating, according to Dru Dougherty, a “retórica de reticencias y asaltos verbales que daba la medida de una inquietud a la vez íntima del dramaturgo y propia de su época” (107).¹ Although Lorca’s judicious yet continuous employment of a dramatic rhetoric of silence may seem slightly out of character for the creator of the surrealist somersaults of *Poeta en Nueva York* (1929-1930, published in 1940), silence is, nonetheless, a constant in his poetry, almost always tragically linked to physical or spiritual death. In his collection *Poema del Cante Jondo* (1921, published in 1931), the poem “¡Ay!” within the “Poema de la soleá” contains one of the most profound expressions of silence encountered in Lorca’s work:

El grito deja en el viento
una sombra de ciprés.

(Dejadme en este campo
llorando.)

Todo se ha roto en el mundo.
No queda más que el silencio. (1-6)

Within this movement of the *solear*, a *cante* considered to be “la madre de todos los cantes” (Mederos 54), silence is awarded a pre-eminent position: that which remains after everything is broken and while the very image of death (“una sombra de ciprés”) hangs in the air. Silence operates in a very similar way in Lorca’s play *Doña Rosita la soltera o El lenguaje de las flores* (1935), the last of Lorca’s plays that he saw premiered during his lifetime, described in the playwright’s own words as “la vida mansa por fuera y requemada

por dentro de una doncella granadina, que poco a poco se va convirtiendo en esa cosa grotesca y conmovedora que es una solterona en España” (*Obras completas* 741).

Refusing to move on after her cousin’s promise to wed her fails to yield results, Doña Rosita retreats inward, enveloping herself within the confines of her family’s *carmen*, wrapping herself within a world of silence and inaction as she grows old. This active turn to passivity is dramatically represented through a variety of silences that serves as a structuring element of the work, showing both audience and reader the true state of Rosita’s soul after “todo se ha roto en el mundo.” By analyzing the silence that exists between acts, “silencings” and moments where characters choose to be silent, silenced meaning (through the utilization of “empty words” of all form and no content), and explicit instances where characters reflect upon the insufficiency of language to convey significance, we will attempt to at least scratch the surface of what critics Ban Kah Choon and Robbie B. H. Goh have termed the “effectively inexhaustible list of essential areas of study” generated by a text’s silences (xviii). In this way, we will see how repeated multifaceted manifestations of silence reveal how the only adequate language left to Rosita is the sad but beautiful silence of the metaphorical “lenguaje de las flores.”

The most obvious use of silence in *Doña Rosita* is that of the onstage silence witnessed by both the audience of the theatrical work and the reader of the dramatic text. Forming a central part of these onstage silences is the numerous—almost excessive—use of ellipses that signify suppressed words. However, a more important structural silence is the silence that occurs between each of the three acts of the play. Within these silences, time passes, only noticed once the characters return to the stage. In this quiet yet inexorable way, we go from 1885 in the first act, to 1900 in the second, to 1910 in the third, with Rosita having matured from an innocent twenty-five year old in the beginning of the work to a woman close to fifty by its end (Greenfield 435). Because she never marries, the protagonist remains “Rosita” throughout the work, unable to shed the distinctive diminutive of her name. In spite of both the Aunt’s and Rosita’s attempts to “silence” time’s passage so as not to call attention to Rosita’s situation, the pauses between acts in fact serve to amplify the strong sense of temporality that pervades the work.² Furthermore, the pauses invite—indeed force—the audience / reader

to fill in the blanks. In the words of Dru Dougherty, “Las pausas, los rodeos, las frases truncadas, las acciones mudas—todas sirven para que los espectadores entren en el hecho teatral. En definitiva, señalar un mensaje implícito mediante reticencias escénicas es invitar al público a aportar, con la propia imaginación, el texto suprimido” (103).

This “suppressed text” of time’s passing is best read through careful analysis of the words and actions that bookend the dramatic silence. In the case of the transition between acts one and two, the pause in action is immediately preceded by Rosita’s recitation of a poem the Uncle had found in his prized book of botany that describes the “rosa mutabile,” a name that, according to the Uncle, “quiere decir mudable, que cambia...[...] Es roja por la mañana, a la tarde se pone blanca y se deshoja por la noche (75-76). This special rose becomes a metonym for Rosita, adopted by the protagonist herself when she repeats the final words of the poem at the close of act one after saying goodbye to the Nephew—her cousin and betrothed: “mientras los aires se van, / en la raya de lo oscuro / se comienza a deshojar” (99). A rapid close of the curtain leaves the word “deshojar” hanging in the air to be pondered during a silence between acts that is only broken when the enigmatic Señor X appears onstage in act two as a representative of the recently inaugurated twentieth century while he waxes poetic about recent technological advances. His description of the novelties of the new century contrasts strongly with the plight of Rosita, a woman whose life changes little as time passes.

A similar structure that serves to focus our attention on the temporal also marks the transition between acts two and three. Here we become even more aware of Daniel Devoto’s observation that the drama of Doña Rosita is precisely that “no le pasa nada. En los actos finales de la obra—entre los actos finales de la obra—sólo pasan los años” (409). The close of act two finds Rosita pondering the Nephew’s promise to marry her “por poderes” (148), a promise that of course never comes to fruition. At the same time, the Uncle mistakenly cuts his last “rosa mutabile” in its most beautiful phase when “todavía estaba roja” (148). As the third act begins, one of the longest examples of didascalia in the work eloquently sets the scene:

Sala baja de ventanas con persianas verdes que dan al jardín del carmen. Hay un silencio en la escena. Un reloj da las seis de la tarde. Cruza la escena el AMA con un cajón y una maleta. Han pasado diez años. Aparece la TÍA y se sienta en una silla baja, en el centro de la escena. Silencio. El reloj vuelve a dar las seis. Pausa. (151)

The insistence in temporal elements in this stage direction (“Un reloj da las seis de la tarde”; “Han pasado diez años”; and “El reloj vuelve a dar las seis”) combined with the silence that envelops the scene forces the audience / reader to reflect upon the arrival of the twilight of Rosita’s life. The Housekeeper’s first words of the act (“La repetición de las seis” [151]) show how the passage of time has become the dominant element of Rosita’s drama, a drama largely silenced and kept under wraps throughout the first two acts of the play.

Perhaps the most common articulation of silence within *Doña Rosita* is also its most violent and demonstrates what Catherine Nickel has called the “overwhelming inclination to suppress meaningful communication” within the claustrophobic space of Rosita’s family home (528).³ Violent verbal silencings (manifested in multiple variants of the verb *callar* [Nickel 528]) and self-imposed silences are at the heart of Rosita’s plight, a plight shared by countless Spanish women throughout history. For Robert Lima, the life of the *solterona* is the “quiet tragedy of many Spanish women who are defeated, not so much by a frustrated love, as by a society which makes such rejection a symbol of shame” (245, my emphasis). Although the entire family—and perhaps all those who travel within the family’s social circles—is aware of Doña Rosita’s situation, both the Aunt and Rosita herself go to great lengths to avoid any explicit verbal mention of the protagonist’s sentimental tragedy. When the Housekeeper tries to break through this wall of silence so that Rosita will rebound from her (self-)imposed alienation, her efforts are thwarted again and again by other members of the household as well as a social structure based at least in part upon the silence and passivity and/or complicity of its female participants.

The Aunt’s attempt to control discourse begins early in the first act when she chastises the Housekeeper in what becomes a pattern of silencing that remains relatively stable until the final act when the Aunt finally realizes the harm that her silencing—and that silence in

general—has caused in the lives of those she loves. The Aunt's second intervention in the first act is as brief as it is powerful when she strongly tries to keep the Housekeeper quiet: "Calla. No repliques" (70). In spite of the shock that this produces in both the theatrical audience as well as the readers of the dramatic text, such an intervention is hardly unusual within Lorca's work. Indeed, as Dru Dougherty has noted, the entrance of a character whose first dramatic act is, in effect, a silencing, could be seen as a structure particular to Lorca's theater (104). The imposition of silence at such an early moment in the work establishes a culture of silence that eventually will pervade the space of the family home and permeate the lives of its occupants.⁴

Although the Housekeeper continually tries to speak up in direct contradiction to the Aunt's wishes, she nonetheless recognizes the force of the code of silence that is in place. Her discourse is bursting with ellipses that are never completed, thoughts that are never finished, concerns that are never voiced. Even before the first act has ended, the Housekeeper explicitly comments on at least three occasions that it is impossible to do anything but keep silent within the household: "Está visto que en esta casa no la dejan hablar a una" (75), "Aquí no la dejan a una ni abrir los labios" (80), and "como soy criada no puedo hacer más que callarme, que es lo que hago, y no puedo replicar y decir..." (81). Her frustration becomes evident as she obliquely alludes to Rosita's sentimental situation by expressing her belief that long-distance love will always be weaker than the love between people who live near each other: "Más se quiere a un primo segundo que ve todos los días, que a un hermano que está lejos. Por qué, vamos a ver" (80). By referring to the Nephew's (Rosita's beloved's) departure even before he leaves, the Housekeeper displays an uncannily insightful concern for Rosita's well-being in a relationship doomed to failure, a concern that the Aunt feels the need to silence even though she too is aware of the Nephew's plans to go to Tucumán (83). The Aunt's quieting of the Housekeeper ("Mujer, sigue limpiando" [80]), returns her to a subservient, passive role that will not threaten the order of the house. By refusing to let the Housekeeper state the obvious—the eventual failure of Rosita's amorous relationship with her cousin—the Aunt is able to keep the illusion of a happy future for Rosita alive, all the while knowing full well that she is living a lie.

The Aunt's attempts to silence others are not limited to her control of female members of the household. In fact, in the second act, fifteen years after the Nephew's departure, it becomes quite clear that the Uncle also lives squarely within the code of silence imposed by his wife, attempting to compensate for the inability to communicate in his own small way through his participation in household chores. This pattern of behavior is revealed in a brief exchange between the Uncle and the Aunt as they debate the role of the Housekeeper in family affairs, finally agreeing to disagree:

TÍO. (*Con dulzura.*) Basta, basta, no quiero llevarte la contraria.

TÍA. Pero ¿Es que conmigo no se puede hablar?

TÍO. Se puede, pero yo prefiero callarme.

TÍA. Aunque te quedes con tus palabras de reproche.

TÍO. ¿Para qué voy a decir nada a estas alturas? Por no discutir soy capaz de hacerme la cama, de limpiar mis trajes con jabón de palo y cambiar las alfombras de mi habitación. (115-16)

In this passage, the traditionally associated role of the male as shaper of discourse is subverted as the Uncle tacitly accepts a role usually linked to the female members of a family. His desire to clean instead of trying to break the code of silence in his own home reflects his withdrawal from family affairs. His explicit reference to the futility of saying anything "a estas alturas" echoes the utter despair of Rosita's situation and shows that not even the Uncle is willing to actively address the problem. The Aunt's supplanting of the patriarchal role and her use of that role to silence others reinforce a culture of appearances. By patently refusing to address Rosita's plight "a estas alturas," the Uncle, through his silence, and the Aunt, through her suppression of discourse, convert Rosita's *solterona* status into a taboo instead of something that can be talked about and worked through. While Rosita's situation is actively and conspicuously *not* talked about it is highlighted even more as the play's silences become increasingly awkward.

Rosita herself internalizes this silence and actively participates in it as she too tries to erase any mention of the failure of her romantic life and the inexorable passing of time—a passing that draws ever more attention to her spinsterhood. When Las Ayola pay a visit to Rosita and the Aunt, their ebullient youthfulness, striking beauty,

and incessant talk of marriage prove to be too much to bear. As Las Ayola's frivolity becomes even more pronounced, Rosita becomes even more reserved:

(Pausa. Las AYOLA inician una risa incontinente que se comunica a ROSITA, que hace esfuerzos por contenerlas. Las CURSILONAS y su MADRE están serias. Pausa.)

TÍA. ¡Qué criaturas!

MADRE. ¡La juventud!

TÍA. Es la edad dichosa.

ROSITA. (Andando por la escena como arreglando cosas.) Por favor, callarse. (Se callan.) (130)

Rosita's command effectively silences any temporal reference within the conversation; it is a silencing that is essential to Rosita's self-preservation. In a very visceral way for the audience, the multiple pauses in the dialogue reinforce the tension generated by any mention of youthful promise. For the same reason that Rosita avoids conversation about time's passing, she also encloses herself within the confines of the family home: "Pero es que en la calle noto cómo pasa el tiempo y no quiero perder las ilusiones. Ya han hecho otra casa nueva en la placeta. No quiero enterarme de cómo pasa el tiempo" (120). Her self-imposed exile from everyday life and her inability to give voice to her emotions—both kinds of self-silencing—are signs of an extreme estrangement and self-destructive passivity that radically differentiates Rosita from Lorca's other dramatic protagonists. According to Frances Colecchia, Lorca's other heroines "no se quedan calladas frente a [su] disatisfacción. [...] En cambio, doña Rosita no hace nada. Ni se queja de la ausencia prolongada de su prometido, ni protesta el irrevocable pasar del tiempo que le roba los días de su juventud, convirtiéndolos en hojas secas lanzadas sin rumbo a la eternidad" (38-39).

Rosita's passivity is deafening in its silence and frustrates even the Aunt in the third act. As the play closes, the Aunt undergoes a transformation; indeed, instead of continuing to keep talk of Rosita's plight to a minimum, she realizes that silence—as the most obvious manifestation of female passivity—has been the problem all along. When selling the family home after the death of the Uncle, the Aunt tells Rosita that the furniture will be hers the day of her wedding.

Rosita responds by not responding, but the Aunt refuses to accept the *solterona's* silence as a final answer:

ROSITA. No me haga usted hablar.

TÍA. Ese es el defecto de las mujeres decentes de estas tierras.

¡No hablar! No hablamos y tenemos que hablar. (A voces.)

¡Ama! ¿Ha llegado el correo?

ROSITA. ¿Qué se propone usted?

TÍA. Que me veas vivir, para que aprendas.

ROSITA. (Abrazándola.) Calle.

TÍA. Alguna vez tengo que hablar alto. Sal de tus cuatro paredes, hija mía. No te hagas a la desgracia. (172-73)

In this exchange, *hablar* acquires the meaning of *actuar*. The Aunt implores Rosita to act, to live, to break her silence and give voice to her feelings. Because the audience / reader is accustomed to Rosita's characteristic silence, one cannot be prepared for the avalanche of words that then comes from Rosita's mouth; her entire discourse questions the power of language as a means to express those thoughts and feelings that are the closest to her heart: "Y yo [...] oigo [los comentarios de 'solterona'] y no puedo gritar, sino vamos adelante, con la boca llena de veneno y con unas ganas enormes de huir, de quitarme los zapatos, de descansar y no moverme más, nunca, de mi rincón" (174). Rosita cannot shout and realizes that even if she could, words would not be able to adequately express her pain.

This strong statement about language is at the center of Lorca's play, a text in which an excess—or a lack—of words can produce multiple varieties of silence. Because Rosita's voice remains so quiet throughout the play, the words of others shape the body of the dramatic text. In this way, Sumner Greenfield asserts the following: "Siendo Rosita una presencia con voz limitada, el diálogo consiste en gran parte de conversaciones entre las otras personas que viven en su casa, y los que entran en ella de visita" (315). Yet, while these conversations are certainly numerous, the words of those who enter into Rosita's house are largely devoid of meaning. To a large degree, despite the constant hum of conversation echoing throughout the *carmen*, real communication oftentimes does not take place. In Catherine Nickel's astute and humorous analysis of this type of language in *Doña Rosita*, she points out that "[t]he dialogue is filled with popular sayings, polite formulae and trite observations, with

what Virginia Higginbotham identified as the ‘vapid ritual of politeness’ ” (527). One of the best examples of this “vapid language” is found in the fundamentally empty discourse of the Manolas that serves more to annoy than to communicate any type of real meaning. While the Manolas’ conversation does introduce an important element of local color into the play,⁵ their dialogue can be best understood as a joyful counterpoint that forcefully contrasts with Rosita’s withdrawn character.⁶

Much more important in the development of the dramatic action is another series of words that are ultimately proven to be without meaning: the empty promise of the Nephew to eventually return from Tucumán in order to marry Rosita. As he responds to the Aunt’s doubts regarding his sentimental motives, the Nephew promises to return at the same time that he questions the value of language, ostensibly questioning the Aunt’s threats to prohibit a wedding: “Todo es hablar. Demasiado sé que no puedo. Pero yo quiero que Rosita me espere. Porque volveré pronto” (84). The presence of the strong declarative (“Todo es hablar.”) creates a kind of instant self-contradiction that nullifies the Nephew’s promise even as it is being articulated. For Luis Fernández Cifuentes, this “promise” is the root of Lorca’s play: “El drama no tiene otro origen que una *promesa*, el *acto del habla* más acusadamente performativo” (332). Unfortunately for Rosita the performance is enacted in bad faith and its emptiness is the cause of her suffering.

As we have seen, in the third act the Housekeeper and the Aunt finally break their silence regarding Rosita’s situation. At one point they fiercely discuss what they would do to the Nephew were he to return, twenty-five years after his departure; nonetheless, their threats are as empty as the Nephew’s initial promise. They know they will never see them again:

TÍA. (*Enardecida.*) Cuando pienso en la mala acción que le han hecho y en el terrible engaño mantenido y en la falsedad del corazón de ese hombre, que no es de mi familia ni merece ser de mi familia, quisiera tener veinte años para tomar un vapor y llegar a Tucumán y coger un látigo...

AMA. (*Interrumpiéndola.*) ...y coger una espada y cortarle la cabeza y machacársela con dos piedras y cortarle la mano del falso juramento y las mentirosas escrituras de cariño.

TÍA. Sí, sí; que pagara con sangre lo que sangre ha costado, aunque sea sangre mía, y después...

AMA. ...aventar las cenizas sobre el mar. (154)

The desire for revenge reaches a fevered pitch in this conversation, with both Aunt and Housekeeper constructing a edifice of verbal vengeance that they both know will never be realized. Their words reverberate within the silence of their once splendid home, sold and steadily unfurnished after the death of the Uncle. The strict economy of the Old Testament-style eye-for-an-eye vengeance proposed by the two (“que pagara con sangre lo que sangre ha costado”) has its analogue in that fact that the Nephew’s empty promise is now being repaid through a similarly empty act of verbal revenge.

The multiple manifestations of silence—both real and metaphorical that we have seen throughout the course of this study have ranged from the silence between acts and the numerous instances of “silencings” to the silencing or emptying of meaning, even as Lorca’s characters are constantly speaking. The sum total of these manifestations of silence is a play that perfectly expresses the emotional pain of Doña Rosita in spite of the fact that the protagonist herself never expresses that pain until the third act. Her silence—and the silences—that dominate the work demonstrate that some types of pain are so intense that they resist expression. Rosita’s pain is so great that she must remain in a constant silence that she passionately describes to the Aunt and the Housekeeper in the final moments of the play:

¿Y qué os voy a decir? Hay cosas que no se pueden decir porque no hay palabras para decirlas; y si las hubiera, nadie entendería su significado. Me entendéis si pido pan y agua y hasta un beso, pero nunca me podríais entender ni quitar esta mano oscura que no sé si me hiela o me abrasa el corazón cada vez que me quedo sola. (176)

This eloquent description of the makeup of the “unsayable” perfectly expresses the depth of Rosita’s pain and echoes the famous final sentence of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1929): “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (87). The only escape to the numerous silences that reign in *Doña Rosita la soltera o El lenguaje de las*

flores is not found within the character of Doña Rosita but rather in “el lenguaje de las flores.” When “todo se ha roto en el mundo,” and prosaic language has lost its meaning in the middle of a silent world, only poetry remains in the form of the poem of the “rosa mutabile.” As Rosita collapses at the end of the final scene, the language she employs is the language of flowers: “Y cuando llega la noche / se comienza a deshojar” (186). In this way, the rose’s death represents the final silence of the play and thus serves as the perfect conclusion to Lorca’s meditation on both the quiet drama of the spinster and the limitations of language.

NOTES

¹ For an extensive analysis of silence within the whole range of Lorca’s dramatic production, please refer to Dru Dougherty’s intelligent essay “El lenguaje del silencio en el teatro de García Lorca.”

² Throughout this study, we will use English translations of generic character names (Tía → Aunt, *etc.*) so that the analysis reads more easily.

³ For an exhaustive cataloguing of this particular kind of “silencing” present in *Doña Rosita*, please see Catherine Nickel’s intelligent article “The Function of Language in García Lorca’s *Doña Rosita la soltera*.” Although some examples of silence are common to both Nickel’s paper and the present analysis, Nickel’s study focuses upon how “the play’s principal themes, e.g. the struggle between fertility and sterility, are advanced not only by the plot and imagery, but also by the everyday common language” (Nickel 522).

⁴ To see a very similar instance of silencing during the first appearance of a character who will come to dominate discursive patterns throughout the rest of the dramatic action, one need only recall the first act of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936). There, right in the middle of the Maid’s eloquent reminiscences of Antonio María Benavides, the late husband of Bernarda, Bernarda suddenly appears, screaming “¡Silencio!” (123). Bernarda’s cry is repeated at the end of the third act (199), thereby completing an imposed circle of silence as Bernarda futilely attempts to restore order in a world that has become irrevocably chaotic.

⁵ According to Luis Martínez Cuitiño, the Manolas have their origin in a “copla popular”:

Granada, calle de Elvira,
Donde viven las manolas,
Las que se van a la Alhambra
Las tres y las cuatro solas. (49)

⁶ The exuberance—and vapidness—of this type of communication can be well appreciated in the following passage:

MANOLA 1ª. La noche nos gusta.
ROSITA. Pero...
MANOLA 2ª. Por calles en sombra.
MANOLA 1ª. Nos subimos a la Alambra
Las tres y las cuatro solas.
MANOLA 3ª. ¡Ay!
MANOLA 2ª. Calla.
MANOLA 3ª. ¿Por qué?
MANOLA 2ª. ¡Ay!
MANOLA 1ª. ¡Ay, sin que nadie lo oiga! (92)

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La ambivalente expresión de lo urbano en la vanguardia española

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Head and hands want to join together,
but they don't have the heart to do it...
Oh mediator, show them the way to each other...
The mediator between head and hands must be the heart!
Fritz Lang, *Metropolis*

El rasgo más destacado de la modernidad es la atracción hacia todo lo nuevo como una forma de rechazo al pasado y a la tradición. De ahí que la burguesía y el capitalismo hagan del espacio urbano su emblemático y se valore el momento presente por su riqueza de connotaciones. La ciudad representa además el dominio de lo público frente a lo privado al perderse la noción de individualidad.¹ Sede de la tecnología, la velocidad, el cine y la moda, la urbe aparece representada en los textos de los vanguardistas como un espacio animado lleno de ruido, dinamismo y bullicio. Los autores intentan ofrecer una visión distinta de la realidad urbana del mimetismo realista y utilizan el escenario urbano como marco de sus visiones fragmentadas. El artista sale a la calle en busca de vivencias que luego le sirvan para la creación de la obra de arte y para poner énfasis en las posibilidades de experimentación que ofrece la ciudad como espacio del ocio, la sexualidad o la aventura. Esta actitud optimista hacia lo urbano la encontramos en Pedro Salinas, Ernesto Giménez Caballero y Benjamín Jarnés. Pero frente a esta valoración positiva existe otra visión de desencanto. La otra cara de la ciudad es captada por autores como Federico García Lorca en *Poeta en Nueva York* y Francisco Ayala en "Erika ante el invierno". De igual modo, el cine expresa la perspectiva desesperanzadora de una ciudad donde los individuos sufren la opresión del sistema capitalista. Este ensayo analiza este sentido ambivalente del motivo urbano bien como centro de