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The Mexican Woman in Conflict, as Characterized by the Female Protagonists in the Theater of Elena Garro

Mary Ann Kolosi
Our Lady of the Elms High School

The Mexican writer Elena Garro reveals and protests, through her female protagonists, the struggle for existence inherent to the Mexican woman, traditionally limited and defined by patriarchal norms. The conflict these women experience demands a recognition of the female identity, space and even language. These protagonists are spokeswomen for generations of women who have separately and collectively shared a destiny of abuse, isolation and domination in their male-controlled society.

This paper will analyze the women protagonists in the plays "Los perros," "Andarse por las ramas" and "La señora en su balcón."[1] The female's speech or lack of speech will be examined as a means of understanding the inner frustrations of these women. The messages and images imparted by these characters will further serve to illuminate their conflicts, individually and collectively. Each play highlights the common plight inherent to the female. The plays distinguish themselves, however, by each female character's reaction to her specific environment.

In the play "Los perros," the setting is that of a rural village, where a primitive lifestyle of superstition, fear and macho behavior is depicted. The women protagonists Manuela and Úrsula, mother and daughter respectively, both suffer physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Both were victims of rape, unable to defend themselves, verbally or physically, against their macho abusers. The parallels in these women's tragic experiences strongly suggest that this abuse is cyclical, passing from generation to generation.

Once sexually and physically abused, they will now bear the signifiers "la desgraciada" [the disgraced one] (134) and "la mujer apartada, la que avergüenza al hombre, la que carga las piedras y recibe los golpes, la que apaga la lumbre en la cocina con sus lágrimas..."[2] (135).

Concurrent with the cycle of abuse is the cycle of fear. In their speech and lack of speech, Manuela and daughter Úrsula both reflect fear and superstition. The cycle of fear began a generation back with Manuela's

mother, Albina, who warned Manuela not to even talk about misfortune, in order to prevent it. Manuela, in turn, passes down the same superstition to Úrsula in her time of distress. All three women inherited suffering, however, by remaining voiceless. These, and other generations of women were afraid, instead of free, to speak. They were silenced in their suffering, just as the dogs were silenced.

The ritual of the rapist, and his gang, was to first kill the dogs guarding the house. Thus, with no dogs barking, there was no voice or force to alert the community to the violations. The victims of the violators were so gripped by fear as well as cruel, brute force that they lost their power to act. Manuela, at the end of the play, hypnotically stammers that the dogs are so silent. She knows that another cycle of abuse has just begun.

It is significant that in the play Manuela does not face the audience. She is "arrodillada, con su espalda al público"[3] (125), to emphasize her lack of identity and submission to fate. Úrsula, shortly before her abduction and rape, assumes this posture as well, fulfilling another cycle of faceless anonymity.

Ursula earlier had the possibility of developing a new self image by wearing her new pink suit. This shiny suit could have served as a "mirror" for Úrsula, offering her a new view and identity for herself and her future. Ursula even states "Todos dirán: ahí va Úrsula Rosales como un espejo"[4] (127). In Lacanian terms of the "mirror stage" in child development, Úrsula could have seen herself distinct from her mother and her own past self image, as well as being distanced from her familiar knowns. Sara Sefchovich in her book, *Mujeres en espejo*, refers to the mirror as an instrument empowering woman to see herself as persona. Although Úrsula is beginning to envision this new image, she will not have the privilege to fulfill her new identity. The fresh pink suit, which she had wanted for years, will never replace the faded purple of her old clothes. Úrsula will not experience a satisfying metamorphosis into womanhood, but will instead be forced to bear the indictment of "la chingada" [the violated one] (139). The purple of Úrsula's playclothes is symbolic of her physical suffering and abuse to come. In essence, Úrsula will reflect the Macho male with all his callous force and extreme dominance, as *macho*, in classical Náhuatl, means "image" or "reflection of myself." Thus, the female's lack of self—self-identity, self-respect and self-expression—is perpetuated from generation to generation.

In another play "Andarse por las ramas," the woman protagonist Titina has a different existential crisis, in which she too must fight against the deterministic forces of patriarchy and tradition, though on a different level. Titina utilizes her power of speech to develop her own identity and to finally escape from male domination. This ultimately leads her to the realm

of marginalization and isolation. The drama is a farce criticizing the male-dominated world of don Fernando—a world of order, logic and precision.

> Don Fernando—Las siete y siete y apenas han servido la sopa de poros.
> Sopa de poros: lunes. Lunes y mis mancuernillas checoslovacas no aparecen.[5] (83)

In this male-controlled household, female behavior must be subordinate to that of the male, complimenting, compromising, and never contradicting. Titina, in her speech, rebels against such confinement and creates a new space where her female identity and uniqueness can exist. Titina superficially puns with the words of her husband, but essentially deconstructs not only his words, but more importantly his values and beliefs.

> Titina. —Sí, hay alguien que hace aparecer y desaparecer las cosas. ¿Verdad, Polito?[6] (83)

The traditionally-accepted concepts of order and logic are made to look like nonsense. The theories of time, truth and tradition are twisted and turned in text and context to allow for a fresh and novel re-interpretation. Titina rebels, not only for her own survival, but also for their son Polito. This serves to further frustrate and threaten don Fernando, as Polito's future was also under tight scrutiny and control.

> Don Fernando. —¡Justina! Van a reprobar a este niño en la escuela ...
> —Hay que poner un hasta aquí ...
> —...Un punto que ponga fin al desorden o Polito no será nunca ingeniero agrónomo.
> Polito. —Yo no quiero ser ingeniero agrónomo.[7] (87-88)

More effective than any word power, Titina will confront her husband's rigidity with her escapist tactic of disappearing into her chalk-drawings. Titina, in order to survive, needed to create this new reality, literally surrealistic, in order to avoid being molded into the static, patriarchal patterns of thought.

> Titina se levanta en silencio. Se dirige a los telones del fondo, saca de su pecho un gis rojo y sobre el muro dibuja una casita con su chimenea y su humito. Luego dibuja la puerta, la abre y desaparece. Encima del muro surgen las ramas de un árbol y Titina, sentada en una de ellas.[8] (85-86)

Elena Garro's radical, Brechtian-type strategy here "breaks the fourth wall," breaks away from the stereotypical reality into a new dimension for Titina, which her husband will later typify as "lunar" or mad.

> La locura presidiendo en mi casa. La fantasía a la cabecera de mi mesa. . . .
> Las mujeres viven en otra dimensión. La dimensión lunar. ¿Me oíste? ¡Luuunaar![9] (86)

This fantastic escape of Titina serves a double significance. For the woman protagonist, it definitely reveals the conflict of the woman in point, as well as her determination not to be victim. The text also shows a "break through" on the part of the female writer, as she creatively constructs and/or deconstructs textual meaning into new perspectives (Shinn 10). Annis Pratt posits in her study *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, that fantastic literature by women writers is the butterfly releasing the beauty and power only dreamed of in the caterpillar. . . trapped in the cocoon of patriarchal expressions and limitations (Shinn 10). Magdalena García Pinto reaffirms this, recognizing that Latin America's women writers are using fiction as a space to develop the feminine (García Pinto 6).

Don Fernando refuses to acknowledge Titina's behavior and persona, speaking to her empty chair instead of recognizing Titina in her drawings. He characterizes her as being mad, since her thoughts and speech are other than his. This otherness of women has been considered to be madness by traditional, patriarchal societal norms. Shoshana Felman offers much support for women's capability and right to be "other" in her article "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy": "Theoretically subordinated to the concept of masculinity, the woman is viewed by the man as *his* (sic) opposite, that is to say, as *his* (sic) other, the negative of the positive, and not, in her own right, different, other, Otherness itself" (3). Belgian psychoanalyst and feminist Luce Irigaray contends that women have historically been "excluded from the production of speech, since the woman, and the Other as such, are philosophically subjugated to the principle of identity," that identity being the male "self-presence and consciousness-to-itself" (Felman 3). Felman cites the influence on Western thought of Plato and of Sigmund Freud, both being forces discouraging freedom for a female identity and expression. Plato's works projected symmetry, repetition of sameness and dichotomous opposition, establishing woman again as an opposite, and not other, of the male.

Freud's philosophy of woman frames her as a deficiency, as she who lacks the masculine. His theory that "anatomy is destiny" is parallel to the

Macho attitude that oppresses Manuela and Úrsula in "Los perros," Titina in "Andarse por las ramas," and Clara, in the last play under analysis, "La señora en su balcón."

Clara is a woman who has been discouraged and disappointed by men in critical stages of her life, from childhood through adulthood. Clara had initially embraced life with excitement and imagination, ready to receive all the beauty and wonder around her. But her enthusiasm and divergency are consistently ridiculed and rejected by male figures in her life. Therefore, Clara suffers with an existential dilemma all through her life, searching to find a space for herself and her ideas.

Symbolically, circles were abhorrent to Clara, since they represented the confinement and imprisonment she had experienced in life, under the male constraints in her environment.

Professor García, in his lectures to Clara on the civilization of the world, presented the world as it had been conceived in ancient history, where much was unknown, including whether the Earth had been round or flat. The professor, annoyed with the many, excited questions of his young, eight-year-old student regarding the past, continually admonished Clara that the mysteries had already been discovered and that the ancient cities, in all their former splendor, no longer exist. Clara thus associated the roundness of the world with a lack of adventure, where all has been charted out, and where there is nowhere for her to be free. Nineveh, one of the ancient cities of her lessons, became her battle cry, symbolizing a place of escape for her spirit, upsetting first the professor and later other men in her life. Clara, in remembering her past, laments:

> Quieren que vivamos en el mundo redondo que nos aprisiona. Pero hay el otro, el mundo tendido, hermoso como una lengua de fuego que nos devora.[10] (63)

This concept of confinement was repeated with Andrés' marriage proposal to Clara, where parental approval and tradition defined their parameters. The wedding ring thus again symbolized this circle of confinement. In her marriage later to Julio, Clara was abandoned, because of his disillusionment with the repetition, or circles, of routine in their life. The woman is left alone with her struggle for existence.

Escaping all these circles of confinement led Clara to yet another circle imposed by patriarchal society, the circle of isolation and marginalization. Men, in this play, did not understand Clara in any stage of her life, despite her constant and defiant verbalizations. Her self-definition and desires were labeled as "tonterías" [nonsense] and "locuras" [insanities] (68). Her

imagination, fresh and unfettered, was called "una enfermedad de los débiles" [an illness of the weak] (63).

Clara's conflict in life is so great that she finally chose suicide as a means of finding Nineveh, where freedom from the prison of patriarchal definition and control seemed possible.

The suffering and conflicts of these female protagonists, Manuela, Úrsula, Titina and Clara, were not in vain. Their roles and reactions, traditional (Manuela, Úrsula) and atraditional (Titina, Clara) make a critical statement to society. Each character carries a distinct message and image to the reader/spectator. The sexual, physical abuse of Manuela and Úrsula is as clear as the emotional, mental abuse of Titina and Clara. All faced an existential crisis, accompanied by loneliness and misunderstanding. These afflictions, however, serve to sensitize and enlighten the reader/public as to the needs of modern Mexican women, specifically, and of all women, in general. Change is made possible then, so that women may aspire to have a voice and to discover a new self image. Perhaps men can perceive women in a different way, allowing women the freedom of thought and expression that is so vital.

As Luis Leal attests in his article, "Female Archetypes in Mexican Literature," a "new Mexican woman" is finally being discovered, "breaking away from the stereotyped characterization based on traditional archetypes" (Miller 242). This confirms, through the representation in literature, that Mexican women are breaking the boundaries of traditional, patriarchal norms. Women are finally emerging from captivity and are developing into their own, unique beings. There is hope that woman will be recognized and affirmed in her proper and special space. As Ranier Maria Rilke writes:

> Someday there will be girls and women whose name will no longer mean the mere opposite of male, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement and limit, but only of life and reality: the female human being (Downing 18).

•NOTES

1. All references and citations made to the individual plays of Elena Garro refer respectively to the following works: "Los perros", *Un hogar sólido* (Xalapa, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 1983) 123-142; "Andarse por las ramas," *Un hogar sólido* (Xalapa, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 1958) 79-96; and "La señora en su balcón," *Tercera antología de obras en un acto* (Mexico: Colección Teatro Mejicano, 1960) 57-71. All the following translations are from the author of this article.

2. "the woman withdrawn, she who shames man, she who carries the stones and receives the beatings, she who puts out the flame in the kitchen with her tears..."

3. "kneeling, with her back to the public"

4. "All will say: There goes Úrsula Rosales like a mirror"

5. Don Fernando. —7:07, and they have barely served the lentil soup. Lentil soup. Lentil soup: Monday. Monday and my Czechoslovakan pastries have not appeared.

6. Titina. —Yes, there is someone who makes things appear and disappear. Right, Polito?

7. Don Fernando. —Justina! They are going to reprimand this child in school!...
—It is necessary to put a stop here!...
—A point that would put an end to the disorder or Polito never will become an agricultural engineer.
Polito. —I don't want to be an agricultural engineer.

8. Titina gets up in silence. She goes toward the back curtain, takes out from her bosom a red chalk and on the wall draws a little house with its chimney and smoke. Next, she draws the door, she opens it and disappears. Over the walls spring forth the branches of a tree and Titina, seated on one of them.

9. Insanity governing my house. Fantasy at the head of my table. ... Women live in another dimension. The lunar dimension. Did you hear me? Luuunaar!

10. They want us to live in the round world which imprisons us. But there is the other, the world laid flat, beautiful as a tongue of flame which devours us.

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castillejo, logarejo, portalejo); -uelo was used after radicals ending in vowel or *-ç, -z, -ch -ñ, -j, -y, -ll* (e. g. *erbezuela, braçuelo. cabezuela, conchuela, pequeñuelo, fijuelo, sayuelo*); while *-i(e)llo* was used everywhere else (González Ollé 193-97). The diminutives were not restricted to the denotation of physical smallness but already showed a variety of expressive nuances, especially affection, compassion, and, occasionally, pejoration. Towards the end of the Medieval period the phonotactic constraints on diminutives loosened, and they eventually came to be utilized interchangeably (ibid. 243-45).

The analysis of Argentinian Spanish texts of the 16th and 17th centuries by Fontanella de Weinberg (40-1) shows *-illo* to be the most common diminutive, followed by *-uelo*, with a single instance of *-ito*, a situation which closely parallels that of Medieval Spanish. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, the diminutive suffixes primarily denote small size and have very little expressive value. By the 19th century, *-ito* is firmly established as the most frequent diminutive, and *-uelo, -illo*, and *-ico* occur only sporadically (ibid. 74-8, 110). Assuming the relative uniformity of early American Spanish, we can presume that, during the period studied by Fontanella de Weinberg, the situation in other Latin American countries regarding the diminutives was quite similar to that in Argentinian Spanish.

Nowadays the diminutive is definitely one of the most vital elements of Modern Spanish: it is widely used, especially in popular and familiar contexts. For example, Julio Ricci finds it to be a generalized trait in the Spanish of Rio de la Plata and claims that there is "un aumento muy acusado en el empleo de dicho sufijo entre los miembros de todas las clases sociales (incluso entre el elemento varonil)" (257-8).

There is almost no restriction regarding which word category it can apply to, although the diminutive in demonstratives and pronouns is very rare, and in conjunctions, prepositions, and verbs (except for gerunds and past participles) does not occur at all. *-Ito* and *-ico* are the most widely used diminutives, *-ito* much more so than *-ico*. In certain areas of the Spanish speaking world (Central America, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, and certain regions of Spain), -ico is preferred over *-ito*.

2. Diminutives and Word Formation

An important function of Spanish diminutives has been to create derived lexical items, although some of the suffixes are no longer very productive. Historically, *-illo* has been extremely productive as a derivative, perhaps due to its wider usage in the earlier periods of the language. Com-

mon lexicalized derivations involving *-illo* nowadays include:[3] *barbilla* 'chin' < *barba* 'beard'; *bocadillo* 'snack' < *bocado* 'bite'; *bolsillo* 'pocket' < *bolso* 'bag, *handbag*'; *bombilla* 'bulb' < *bomba* 'pump, bomb'; *mantequilla* 'butter' < *manteca* 'lard'; *pasillo* 'passage, corridor'< *paso* 'step'; *sombrilla* 'sun-shade' < *sombra* 'shade'. This suffix is also involved in some common adverbial phrases: *en cuclillas* 'squatting'; *a hurtadillas* 'furtively, stealthily'; *de puntillas* 'on tip-toe'.

Though less productive, the suffix *-ino* has been responsible for a number of lexicalizations. Its feminine form, *-ina*, often has the value of a substitute or an imitation of the original, sometimes implying inferior quality with respect to it: *clavellina* 'pink carnation' < *clavel* 'carnation'; *madrina* 'godmother, sponsor' < *madre* 'mother'; *neblina* 'mist' < *niebla* 'fog'; *tesina* 'short thesis' < *tesis* 'thesis'; *tetina* 'teat for baby's bottle' < *teta* 'teat, breast'.

-Ejo presents very few instances of lexicalization, most likely due to its strong pejorative implications: *calleja* 'little or narrow street' < *calle* 'street'; *candileja* 'foot light' < *candil* 'oil lamp'; *marmolejo* '(small) marble column' *mármol* 'marble'; *moraleja* 'moral (of a story, etc.)' < *moral* 'morals, morality'.

Examples with other diminutive suffixes are: *arete* 'earring' < *aro* 'ring'; *boquete* 'narrow opening, hole' < *boca* 'mouth'; *camioneta 'van'* < *camión 'truck'; careta 'mask'* < *cara 'face'; libreta* 'notebook' < *libro* 'book'; *hoyuelo* 'dimple' < hoyo 'hole'; *pañuelo* 'handkerchief, scarf' < *paño* 'cloth'; *portezuela* 'door (of a vehicle)' < *puerta* 'door'.

-Ito, the most productive suffix as a diminutive proper, is not very productive in the formation of new lexical items, possibly because its still strong diminutive implications do not allow interpretations other than the usual diminution of the primitive. In Mexico, there is the recent colloquial lexicalization of *mamacita* < *mamá* 'mom, mother' as 'beautiful, attractive woman' and *papacito* < *papá* 'dad, father' as 'handsome, attractive man'. Amado Alonso reports the case of *agüita* < *agua* 'water', curiously lexicalized as 'hot water' in Chile, and that of *ahorita* 'a while ago, soon' < *ahora* 'now' in the Dominican Republic (216). Also, in Puerto Rico, *ahorita* has the meaning 'in a little bit, in a little while'.

3. The Diminutive as an Intensifier

Besides its adjectival diminishing role, as when it is used with nouns to convey a mere diminution of size, mass or extension, the diminutive functions as an intensifier, expressing an emphatic interpretation of characteristics or qualities. Such is especially the case when the diminutive is used

with words already denoting smallness or scarcity, like *poquito* 'very little' < *poco* 'little', *chiquito* 'very small, very little' < *chico* 'small, little', and *nadita* 'nothing at all' < *nada* 'nothing'. Such suffixal derivation indicates a greater degree, dimension, or intensity of a derivative adjective or adverb with respect to the corresponding simple form.[4]

In general then, if it is not tinged with affective connotations, and sometimes even if it is, the diminutive carries an intensifying force: *solito* 'all alone' < *solo* 'alone'; *dormidito* 'fast asleep' < *dormido* 'asleep'; *limpiecito* 'completely clean' < limpio 'clean'; *blanquito* 'intensely white' < blanco 'white'; *fresquito* 'very cold' < *fresco* 'cool'; *tempranito* 'very early' < *temprano* 'early'; *rapidito* 'very quickly/ very fast' < *rápido* 'quickly/fast'.[5] We can also observe some kind of superlativization in phrases like: *Yo soy la primerita que se va* 'I'm the very first one to leave'; *tenemos lo mejorcito* 'we've got the best of the best'; and *es lo mismito que te he dicho* 'it's the very same thing I've told you'.

In earlier periods of the language, this intensification of meaning probably began with words already incorporating the notion of scarcity, smallness, and the like, such as *pequeño* 'little, small', *chico* 'little, small', *poco* 'a little', *pedazo* 'piece', and *parte* 'part'.[6] In fact, these constitute some of the most frequently diminutivized forms in Medieval Spanish. González Ollé (231) reports that in Medieval Spanish *poquillo* occurs more frequently than *poco*, and that there was also a high frequency of *poquito*, *chiquito*, and *chiqui(e)llo*.

But the addition of a suffix that supposes diminution to a lexical item which already carries that notion implies an intensification of its diminutive sense. Starting from its original application to such words, it is not difficult to imagine how this intensifying sense was generalized to cover other adjectives and adverbs that did not imply any kind of diminution at all. Thus, in Modern Spanish, the diminutive as an intensifier is not limited to a specific semantic field but has a wider domain of application, a generalization typical of grammaticalization processes.

4. The Diminutive as an Attenuative

Still another case of semantic modification of the base by the diminutive is one that affects the adjective or adverb representing the term taken as basic[7] in a pair of opposites—for example, *lejos* in the pair *cerca/lejos* 'near/far', *caro* in *barato/caro* 'cheap/expensive', and *rápido* in *lento/rápido* 'slow/fast'. The opposites typically denote, but are not restricted to, degrees of some variable property such as length, speed, weight. The diminutive acts as an intensifier or emphatic suffix on the "non-basic" member

of the opposition (*barato*, *lento*, etc.), the meaning of the combination translating as 'very + primitive': *cerquita* 'very/pretty near', *baratito* 'very/pretty cheap', and so on.

However, when the diminutive suffix is added to the basic term, the resulting combination expresses a mitigation or diminution of the meaning of the adjective or adverb, so here the diminutive actually acts as an attenuative.[8] The speaker wants to make use of the adjective or adverb but feels that its characteristics are "too strong" for his intentions, and he wants to somehow qualify its sense. The diminutive suffix that functions as an attenuative is *-illo* since, for most speakers, *-ito* carries different (intensifying) connotations.[9]

For example, to the question: *¿Dónde está la universidad?* 'Where is the university?', a speaker who answers *está cerquita* (< *cerca* 'near') 'it is very/really near' modifies *cerca* to stress the sense that the adverb conveys. He can even say *está bien/muy cerquita* 'it is very, very near', emphasizing it even more. On the contrary, a speaker who answers está *lejecillos* (< *lejos* 'far') is not modifying the sense of *lejos* in order to intensify its basic characteristics. He is not saying 'it is very/really far', but rather 'it is a bit far or not very far'. Here *muy* or *bien*, as intensive adverbs, cannot be used, which is understandable since, rather than stressing or highlighting, the speaker intends to attenuate what is regarded as a "too strong" sense. The idea of the university being actually located at a very great distance would have to be conveyed by the adjective preceded by *muy* 'very' or by an augmentative suffix such as *-ote*: *está lejotes/muy lejos*.[10] Similarly, when a speaker says *está carillo* (< *caro* 'expensive') this does not mean 'it is extremely expensive' but 'it is not very/too expensive'.

This kind of synthetic semantic modification of the primitive effected by the diminutive is not what one would expect from a so-called affective suffix, and it is one that it is barely recorded in Medieval Spanish and other earlier varieties of Spanish, which suggests that this is quite a recent use of the diminutive. We should now think about possible paths of development regarding this attenuative function.

The notion of smallness in its fundamental sense is a physical one, anchored in our experience of the real world, and refers to that which we can sensorially perceive and/or measure. From this concrete basis, it gets generalized to apply not only to nouns referring to concrete objects but also to more abstract cases involving qualities and attributes.[11] This latter development possibly started with adjectives used to describe people.

The tendency to use the diminutive out of politeness or deference to others is a well-attested one in the history of the language. We can imagine how this polite intention behind the use of the diminutives, when applied to cases involving adjectives with negative implications used in the

description of human beings, served the purpose of euphemistically mitigating their meaning so as not to appear too harsh or impolite—as when one says *era feílla* 'she was a bit ugly' instead of the unmodified *era fea* 'she was ugly'.[12] These attenuative features of the diminutive were not difficult to acquire since, by its basic nature, the diminutive implied some sort of diminution. From here, the attenuative diminutive extended its domain of application to adjectives other than those possessing or presupposing negative characteristics and even to adverbs. Thus, the concept of physical smallness, when applied to adjectives and adverbs, came to signify an attenuation of their meaning, as having "less" of the relevant quality. This process of increased abstraction, again, allows the diminutive to apply to more contexts, performing new functions.

5. Pejorative Diminutives

All of the Spanish diminutives can be used with pejorative connotations; in fact, most of them, except for their occurrence in a few isolated contexts, have lost their original diminutive force almost completely. *-Ejo* is the one that has moved farthest away from its original denotation of diminutiveness to the extent that it may now be more properly classed with the pejorative suffixes such as *-ucho* and *astro*:[13] *tipejo* 'wretched individual' < *tipo* 'individual, person'.

-Uelo, *-ete*, and *-illo*, more often than not, also tend to be used in a pejorative sense: *autorzuelo* 'third-rate author' < *autor* 'author'; *estudiantillo* 'mediocre student' < *estudiante* 'student'; *vejete* 'wretched old man' < *viejo* 'old man'. The variant *-ín* is to a lesser extent used for this purpose too: *borrachín* 'miserable or petty drunk' < *borracho* 'drunkard'. Finally, *-ito*, mainly hypocoristic, can also have pejorative implications. Context and intonation here are very important in deciding which meaning is intended. One can say: *Ya me está fastidiando esta gentecita* (< *gente* 'people') 'I'm getting tired of these foolish people' without making any reference to their size whatsoever.[14]

The expansion of the diminutive to express pejoration can be explained as a development that most probably originates in the association in speakers' minds of the notion of smallness in physical size with that of pettiness, insignificance or inferiority. This then translates into a derogatory attitude of contempt and superiority on their part towards what they see as inferior, unworthy, of little value and, therefore, despicable.

6. Hypocoristic Diminutives

The diminutive lends itself fairly easily to hypocoristic usage. In fact, this is, if not the most common, one of its most common uses. In this sense, diminutives are a way in which speakers express affection, intimacy, appreciation, and familiarity to others. They also can serve to show sympathy and compassion, as when one asks a sick person: *¿Estás enfermito?* 'Are you sick?' Here it does not mean that the speaker thinks that the addressee is not really sick or that he is just a little bit sick, rather the speaker wants to show sympathy and concern.

Diminutives are also very frequently used in the expression of politeness. In stores and other public places one can hear expressions like *espere un momentito/minutito. por favor* 'just a minute, please' or *¿alguna otra cosita?* 'anything else for you?', in which the diminutive is a polite form, not a sign of affection or closeness. Similarly to the *tú/usted* distinction in second person singular pronouns, the diminutive represents a more or less grammaticalized manner of expressing politeness. Its use has little to do with the physical, propositional domain of measurements and sizes; rather it brings forward considerations of social relations and social interaction where the speaker's intentions and attitudes are the most important meaning that gets across.

Related to this is the diminutive of persuasion with which one seeks to favorably predispose one's interlocutor, to gain his or her good will. It is a way of accommodating people to one's intentions. One does not ask someone *hazme un favor* but *hazme un favorcito* 'do me a favor', which is not to say that it will be a small one; indeed, one might be asking quite a bit. Or one can say *quisiera hablarle de un asuntillo* 'I would like to talk to you about something' so as not to appear too imposing. The beggar on the street would ask for a *limosnita*, not for a *limosna* 'alms'.

The association of hypocoristic implications with diminutive forms appears very early in the history of the language (*niñuelo, pobreçiello, fijuelo, pastorçiello*). González Ollé finds this hypocoristic function to be a most important characteristic of diminutives in the Medieval period, often overriding their diminutivizing function (17-20, 45-47). The connection between these two functions is perhaps the easiest to account for, as we very frequently tend to consider small objects cute, nice, and lovable, but, again, this has to start with a physically anchored notion that then translates to more removed, abstract contexts.

7. Diminutives Proper

All of the original Spanish diminutives can in principle be used with diminutive force. However, most of them have acquired pejorative connotations so strong that they are avoided when one wants to express actual diminution. In contemporary Spanish, *-ino*, though not clearly pejorative, is rarely used as a diminutive, except in the Asturias-Leon region in Spain. As in the case of *-ino, -uelo* is most frequently used diminutively on adjectives already denoting smallness, and thus it serves more as an intensifier than a diminutive. Since *-illo*, when applied to nouns, also has strong negative connotations, it is almost never used diminutively, except when acting as an attenuative with adjectives and adverbs; we are then left with *-ito* and *-ico*, and marginally *-illo* and *-ino*, as the only diminutives proper.

The fact that out of all the original diminutives only two are, in the majority of cases, unambiguously so means that there has been a reduction of the derivational resources available in the language to express the notion of diminutiveness. We will see below how the language compensates for this loss.

8. New Ways to Express Diminutive Force

One way in which the language compensates for this suffixal impoverishment is reduplication. Examples of this are *cositita* < *cosa* 'thing', *toditito* < *todo* 'all, everything', *chiquitico* < *chico* 'little, small', and *poquitín* < *poco* 'little'. I have even heard *toditininito*, where the suffixes *-ito* and *-in* are repeated twice each.[15] Although reduplication is still a limited phenomenon, the fact that speakers feel the need to reinforce the notion of diminutive suggests that it has weakened considerably. For most Mexican Spanish speakers *ahorita* is just another way of saying *ahora* 'now': for them, it means exactly the same thing.

Another way of reinforcing the notion of diminution is the addition of the prefix *re-*, meaning repetition, to the derivative diminutive form. Thus: *reflaquito* 'very skinny' < *flaco* 'skinny', *rechiquito* 'really small' < *chico* 'small'. This reinforcement is confined to rural areas and the speech of uneducated people, and it can be considered an even more limited phenomenon than reduplication. González Ollé (207) does not report a single instance of reinforcement of the diminutive by means of prefixes in Medieval Spanish, which suggests that this is a relatively recent development.

9. Conclusion

The preceding analysis of the diminutive in Spanish suggests that its original domain of application has extended and diversified to encompass more contexts and a variety of meanings it did not have before. Concomitantly, its primary meaning has weakened, requiring new ways to express diminution. We also see the move, typical of grammaticalization, from instances of meanings directly grounded in sensorial experience to their generalization to more abstract contexts. Even though the role of the diminutive in its purely diminishing role seems to have weakened as a result of its association with and application to other semantic domains, this notion remains important enough for speakers to keep trying to find ways of reinforcing it. However, it could also happen that the synthetic diminutive erodes so much that periphrastic means will replace it altogether.

•NOTES

1. Many thanks to Milton M. Azevedo and Jerry R. Craddock, who read and made comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2. Grammaticalization involves the evolution of a grammatical category or a lexical item, such as a verb, as it gradually loses part, or all, of its semantic content and extends its range of application to contexts that did not allow it before (see Lehmann (1985) and Traugott and Heine (1991)).

3. For more examples of this and other Spanish diminutive suffixes in derivation, see Gooch (1967).

4. In Portuguese, the diminutive is used in a similar manner to intensify meanings: *agorinha* 'right away, right now' < *agora* 'now', *branquinho* 'extremely white' < *branco* 'white', *limpinho* 'very clean' < *limpio* 'clean', *pertinho* 'pretty near' < *perto* 'near', *pouquinho* 'very little' < *pouco* 'little'. See Vazquez Cuesta and Mendes da Luz (1961) 423-25.

5. The Spanish augmentative suffix *-ote* also functions in this manner: *lejotes* 'very far' < *lejos* 'far'; *gordote* 'extremely fat' < *gordo* 'fat'.

6. Regarding Medieval Spanish, González Ollé (11) notes: "Con adjetivos y adverbios de `pequeñez' y 'escasez', *-illo* tiene un valor elativo, perfectamente claro en algunos casos en que se les hace equivalentes al positivo con muy."

7. The one expressing a greater degree of the relevant property or characteristic. I chose the term "basic" only for exposition purposes.

8. This must be a relatively recent development since it is not discussed in any of the works on the Spanish diminutive I consulted, perhaps because, as far as I know, this is a phenomenon which does not apply across all dialects. Even though

the attenuative occurs in dialects such as that of the Dominican Republic (Jurafsky 430), this section mostly refers to Mexican Spanish.

9. Note that although *-ito* functions as an intensifier for the majority of speakers, for some it also acts as an attenuative.

10. The augmentative which yields a comparable result is *-ón*: *tristón* 'a bit sad/somewhat sad' < *triste* 'sad'; *delgadón* 'a bit thin/not very thin' < *delgado* 'thin'.

11. For more on the experiential basis of grammatical categories, see Lakoff (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

12. Here *-ito* can sometimes be used without implying any intensification of meaning: *era tontito* 'he was a bit stupid'; *era feíta'* she was a bit ugly'.

13. Ex. *medicucho* 'mediocre doctor' < *médico* 'doctor', *politicastro* 'third-rate politician' < político 'politician'.

14. In Portuguese, the diminutive can also express pejorative force in certain contexts: *comidinha barata* 'wretched meal/food' < *comida* 'meal, food'; *um doutorzinho de meia tigela* 'a mediocre/bad doctor' < *doutor* 'doctor'.

15. According to Vazquez Cuesta and Mendes da Luz (91), this also takes place in Brazilian Portuguese: *pequeninozinho* < *pequeno* 'little', *bocadinhozinho* < *bocado* 'bite, piece'.

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