

Macheted: Trauma, Affections, and Nostalgia in Roberto Lovato's *Unforgetting*

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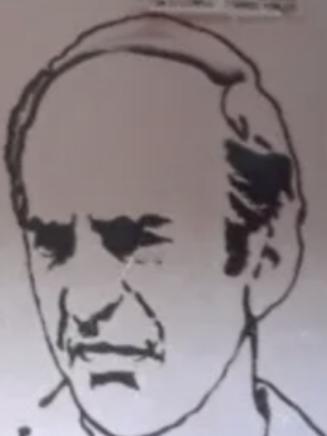
03/15/23



LA NEGOCIACIÓN ES
UNA VICTORIA CONQUISTA
DO POR EL PUEBLO.
EMILIO



IGNACIO



ELACURIA

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- ▶ We're all dismembered from above by that ultimate machete of memory: borders

Writing a -collective- memoir in a contradicted world

- ▶ Salvadoran limbo a source of trauma: “to speak of the darkness is impossible, but to not speak of the darkness is also impossible” (xxi)
- ▶ Machete as a soft or swift double edged sword
 - ▶ Key image of Salvadoran violence and identity
 - ▶ **A means to break and dig into a traumatic past (clavarte el machete)**
 - ▶ Literally, the case of tattoos as a shared experience
- ▶ “Divided by the border between memory and forgetting (xxii), [...] my best effort at reconstituting the layered and discontinuous fragments of my forgotten, macheted self” (xxvi)
- ▶ A collective, (trans)national experience: “Where others see mine as a Central American story, I see it as a story of the United States” (xxiv)

The narrative structure of trauma

- ▶ The linear representation of events is replaced by the fragmented cadence of a traumatic memory that transcends generations and [geographic] borders
- ▶ Personal experience ends up tied up -and honoring- a collective memory
- ▶ Cyclical by nature: sins are perpetually repeated in a “time-space continuum”
 - ▶ Ramon: “*My father is one hundred percent hijueputa*” (66)
 - ▶ Roberto: “*Motherfucker. Callin’ me the son of sixty thousand whores [...]*” (91)
- ▶ Speaks for itself, despite a culture of *silencio*

[A monster is born-e]

Confinement: Ver, Oir y Callar (16)



[Other Elements of Trauma]

Pain and Anger: Affections as a Means to Reinforce/Overcome Trauma

- ▶ Rage as a vocation
 - ▶ Between Mr. Peabody (34, 63) and Tito and Los Originales (96), always macheted by anger (30) → emotionally truthful
- ▶ Awareness of the body: the gut wrench, the jaw clench (xvii, 2, 89, 90)
- ▶ *Encachimbado*: Anger as a collective experience to recover dignity
 - ▶ *Valeverguismo*, or the “crazy, Jedi resistance spirit that has driven Salvadorans [...] to take on impossible odds for centuries (50)
- ▶ Laura Quintana: rage (*rabia*) as an immune and complex affection
 - ▶ Either sealed in the past: resentment, wound projection
 - ▶ Or as a means for the collective transformation of a shared injustice (*digna rabia*).
 - ▶ Beyond the subjective being, it machetes multiple bodies and develops a collective sensitivity

Nostalgia For The Light or un-burying the past [Trailer]



The women who search for their dead

Purposeful Nostalgia to Break the Limbo

- ▶ We are invested in getting to know our distant past but do little to shed light on our close history, it could be *accusatory*
- ▶ Lovato re-machetes himself to break the cycle of trauma as an act of self-love
 - ▶ From a childhood lost innocence (65) to an adult compassion for folks' life choices (156, 298)
- ▶ Slice his way into the underworld, piece it together to wage a war against oblivion
 - ▶ Recognize that “our half-dead condition as Salvadorans [...] comes because of our open wounds, wounds that keep us in luto prolongado” (178) → Bones
 - ▶ “Stir the memory and imagination of that part of themselves that’s still resilient and powerful, something we will all need to survive and move forward in this fragmented world of perpetual crisis.” (xxvi)

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Sociedad E.P.
para el fúnebre
residencial D. S.

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DES ANISA
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ERMINIA
MURILLO SANCHEZ
18-4-2012

MANUEL
DURRN
5-JUN-15

N-N.
NO BORRAR
NI PINTAR
-03-11

CRISTOBAL
ANTONIO
BARRIENTOS
05-09-11

FABIO DE J.
ISAZA
CHATRAN

L-BBR-16
VIERNES

MIGUEL
ARCHANGEL
CEBALLOS
CARVAJAL

16-ABR-13

GRACIAS
POR SIEMPRE
L.E.

ESTAN
CORTINAS
DUEY-16
18-10
1-10-10

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NC-07-52
08-07-07
SLOGINO
EVML

CATOLICOS

Glorias

J. A. M.
ZIOT

RAFAEL
ANGEL
GONZALES
TOMAS
1935

Thanks!

A monster is Born-e [Return]



[Dimensions of violence]

Dimensions of Violence [Return]

- ▶ Exotic violence
 - ▶ Kid's machetes in LA
 - ▶ Urban safari and war analogies (3)
- ▶ Re-victimizing violence
 - ▶ Salvadoran pity
 - ▶ "Yes. I know it as abuse. Without realizing it, our own families help create these monsters, putting them in our bodies (...) The state helps create this monster in our families and then calls on it when it needs us to destroy ourselves."
- ▶ Silent violence
 - ▶ US citizenship
 - ▶ Texas detention centers, cages for forgotten non-citizens (14)
- ▶ No-border violence
 - ▶ Salvadoran violence is, in no small part, an expression of forgotten American violence

Elements of Trauma [Return]

- ▶ Dismemberment: Neglected, distorted, and mythical -if not chopped- family truth
 - ▶ Fathers: Nunca, never! (30)
 - ▶ Mothers: Ravaged indigenous females' life (39)
- ▶ Confusion: insecurity, uprooting, ingenuity
 - ▶ *Ni chichi* (sic) *ni limonada* (144), Robert-o (31), Niño Yanqui (58)
- ▶ Humour?
 - ▶ Hands up, it's La Migra! (6)
- ▶ **Confinement: silence**
 - ▶ Ver, Oir y Callar (16)