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Nota sobre el (con)texto:

Empecé a trabajar en este borrador hace un mes y medio, basándome en notas y un esqueleto previo y con la idea de convertirlo en una sección (una suerte de *bottle episode*) de mi capítulo sobre prácticas de escritura improductiva y teorías de la escritura en *Ifigenia* (1924) de Teresa de la Parra. El capítulo sobre de la Parra es el cuarto y último de la monografía también en proceso, tentativamente titulada *Against Productivity: Unproductive Writing in Early Latin American Fiction*. En el curso de las últimas semanas, la "sección" creció como una protuberancia que no sé si va a ser parte del libro o si podría ser un artículo comparatista en el futuro…

El texto que comparto es el primer borrador en el que estoy trabajando ahora mismo, adaptado como ensayo autocontenido para el workshop. Algunas notas al pie son reflexiones que de momento no caben en el cuerpo principal pero no logro dejar ir. La aclaración más importante es que, a los fines de hacer el curso de mi argumentación más inteligible en el marco de nuestro evento, uso el término "non-instrumental writing" para referirme a las prácticas descriptas en mis dos fuentes primarias, sin distinguir, como sí haría en el libro, entre 'non-instrumental' y 'unproductive'. Para enmarcar el texto precirculado de la manera más precisa posible, incluyo una descripción sucinta de mi proyecto y una distinción conceptual entre 'non-instrumental' y 'unproductive' en las próximas páginas.

"¿Qué hacer con toda esta excrecencia?" es mi pregunta fundamental.

Gracias por la generosidad, la paciencia y la misericordia,
Romi.

A brief introduction to Against Productivity: Unproductive Writing in Early Latin American Fiction

Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Latin America—a period marked by the consolidation of independent nation-states, the region's integration into a world market economy, the establishment of formal education systems, the ascendency of the printing press, and the development of the novel as a genre—has often been characterized as an era of (re)production: of national economies, national cultures, national languages, and national literatures. A dominant strand of scholarship assigns an influential role to the written word and particularly to novels of the time: by featuring heterosexual romances between individuals of different ethno-racial and social backgrounds, the prevailing discourse goes, these fictions taught readers how to *literally and symbolically (re)produce socioeconomically productive* citizens of new Latin American nation-state*s*. I argue that in this period of nation-building, the same novels that were supposed to engender socioeconomically "productive" Latin American citizens through the instructional power of the written letter depicted the very act of writing as an "unproductive" activity: that is, as an act realized against the socioeconomic interests of slavocrat and emerging capitalist societies.

My book, *Against Productivity: Unproductive Writing in Early Latin American Fiction*, examines Latin American novels from the 1840s through the 1920s in which characters use writing as a means to refuse productivity. These characters write in lieu of work (sometimes, to explicitly avoid working) and in defiance of social mandates that discourage them to pen on the basis of their race, ethnicity, class, and/or gender. Nuancing grand narratives that identified "writing" as a mere colonial imposition (Mignolo), a tool for political domination (Rama), and a vehicle for social indoctrination (Sommer), I show that early canonical Latin American novels—including Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (Cuba, 1841), José de Alencar's *The Guarani* (Brazil, 1857), Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis's *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (Brazil, 1881), and Teresa de la Parra's *Iphigenia* (Venezuela, 1924)—depicted disenfranchised subjects (clerks, homemakers, enslaved peoples, former Indigenous leaders) writing in minor genres (notes, letters, scribbles, diaries) to take a stance against racism, ethnocentrism, paternalism, and misogyny, as well as to escape the oppressive experiences of domestic, pauperized, and forced labor.

By examining how these canonical novels depicted the act of writing, I contest the assumption that these books are valuable to the extent that they allegorized nation-state ideals. As I demonstrate by painstakingly analyzing novelistic depictions of penning processes, early authors described innovative textual practices and developed sophisticated theories of what 'writing' is. In particular, they conceived of penning as an embodied, convoluted, and effortful activity; against the so-called Romantic myth of the author as a "spontaneously inspired genius," Latin American novelists portrayed writing as an arduous process deeply affected by the environment, bodily sensations, and the materiality of writerly technologies. The complexity with which acts of penning are rendered in early novels ultimately demonstrates the latter's theoretical and literary worth: not only do these texts provide theories of 'writing' that remain relevant at present, but they also dismantle the idea that "high" Latin American literature begins with the mid-twentieth-century Boom that put Nobel prize winner Gabriel García Márquez, as well as prestige authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, in the international spotlight.

My book's arc thus follows chronological, critical, and conceptual criteria. The arc is chronological, in that it begins with pre-independence and pre-slavery-abolition processes in the nineteenth century (*Sab*, 1841; *The Guarani*, 1857; *The Posthumous Memoirs*, 1881) and culminates in the emerging capitalist nation-states of the early twentieth century (*Iphigenia*, 1924). It also serves as a critical

history of the economically productive regimes or activities that each novel opposes through unproductive writing (enslavement, vassalism, state bureaucracy, domestic labor) and of the social scripts that these regimes impose on the protagonists (racism, ethnophobia, paternalism, misogyny). Finally, the book's arc is conceptual insofar as it builds an increasingly expansive definition of 'writing' upon each novel's characterization of the penning process (as anthropodecentric, collaborative, multimodal, and performative).

Useful distinction apropos the pre-circulated text: 'non-instrumental' vis-à-vis 'unproductive'. As I elicit in my essay, 'non-instrumental' writing encompasses acts of penning realized against the four tenets associated with modern industrial capitalism (instrumental rationality proper, the calculating principle, bureaucratic domination, and the disenchantment of the world). Examples of 'non-instrumental' writing include poetic practices that ostensibly denounce these modern tenets and the artistic, scientific, and social institutions that support them, as well as acts of penning realized in lieu of work or to explicitly avoid working (in my case study, we see a young woman refusing to engage in domestic labor by writing a personal diary and an extravagant letter never to be sent). The difference between the first and the second case of 'non-instrumental' writing is that the former partakes in the institution of literature—however marginally—and thus fuels the literary marketplace it criticizes, while the latter is socially and economically inconsequential; by remaining out of circulation, it does not only take a stance against the productive system in place, but it effectively does *not* (re)produce cultural or economic capital. Therefore, we can say that practices socioeconomically recognized and circulated as poetry count as 'non-instrumental productive writing', whereas extravagant texts written in lieu of work and out of circulation stand as 'non-instrumental unproductive writing'. By establishing this conceptual distinction, I do not imply that one practice and its results are necessarily superior or preferrable than the other: while my book underscores the potential of unproductive writing (the possibility to do *anything* without reproducing capital is almost inconceivable yet vital today), I also acknowledge that it is only by producing (publishing, publicizing, circulating) writing that an act of penning can become political. The flip side of radical unproductivity is political inconsequentiality.

Beyond Imagination's Bounds: A Venezuelan Feminist Expansion of English Romantic Conceptions of 'Writing' and 'the Writer'

> The Wordsworth of much Romantic criticism. The Wordsworth who kind of stands in as this sort of maybe negative or naïve face of Romanticism. The Wordsworth who thinks he's talking about nature but he's always just talking about himself [...] I think there's something very different happening.
>
> —Greg Ellermann

> But those who have disparaged *Ifigenia* for its "immorality" or its lack of "verisimilitude," as well as those who have lamented Parra's somewhat ambiguous feminist stance, have perhaps missed the point.
>
> —Kristine Byron

> The question of fantasy, of women's desire.
>
> —Susan Kirkpatrick

> With this, verisimilitude had been rescued.
>
> —César Aira

This essay compares theories of 'writing' and 'the writer' featured in three "Prefaces" by English Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and in the romance *Iphigenia* by Venezuelan novelist Teresa de la Parra (1889-1936).[1] I show that Wordsworth and de la Parra's works articulate Late-Renaissance faculty psychologies—specifically the faculties of Reason and Imagination—not only to ground writing theories, but also to defend non-instrumental writing

[1] Unless specified otherwise, I cite the following editions: William Wordsworth, Stephen Gill, ed., *William Wordsworth* (Oxford University Press, 2010), Teresa de la Parra, Bertie Acker, transl. *Iphigenia. The Diary of a Young Lady Who Wrote Because She Was Bored* (University of Texas Press, 1994), Teresa de la Parra, Velia Bosch, ed., *Obra. Narrativa – Ensayos – Cartas* (Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1982). From here on, I use the terms "writing" and "penning" interchangeably. Names of literary movements and mental faculties, as well as certain terms such as "Nature" and "God," are capitalized to indicate that common-use words (such as "imagination" or "romantic") are employed here in a technical sense. I subscribe to Doris Sommer's characterization of 'romance' as "a cross between our contemporary use of the word as a love story"—or, more precisely, as a narrative shot through with "the rhetoric of love"—and its "nineteenth-century use" which designates a genre fiction novel often oriented towards women readers. Although I agree with Sommer's assertion that this "rhetoric of love" cuts across "the standard taxonomies that like to distinguish foundational novels as either 'historical' or 'indigenist,' 'romantic' or 'realist'," and I sustain that *Iphigenia* is a hybrid novel borrowing centrally from the seventeenth-to-eighteenth-century metaliterary irony of *Don Quixote* and *Tristram Shandy*, nineteenth-century French Realist and Naturalist novels, and nineteenth-century English Romantic poetry, I also concur with Kristine Byron that de la Parra's novel is particularly invested in scrutinizing the literary scripts of Romanticism/s. To Byron's observation, I add that the heightened vitalism and sentimentalist exuberance characteristic of the protagonist's diction—particularly of her discourses on love—stands as an ironic (yet dexterous) rearticulation of Romantic traditions from French narrative to English lyric poetry. Thus, my comparison with Wordsworth is not a mere parallelism but an account of how de la Parra's work reworks Romantic legacies. See Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* (University of California Press, 1991), 6-13, and Kristine Byron, "'Books and Bad Company': Reading the Female Plot in Teresa de la Parra's *Ifigenia*." *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly 64.3* (2003): 349-76.

practices in increasingly utilitarian societies after the Industrial Revolution. My key argument is that de la Parra's theorization of writing in *Iphigenia* may be read as a feminist expansion of Wordsworth's, as it broadens his mental faculty schema to consider women as potential literary authors and dignify their penning practices outside literature. My supplementary thesis is that both mental faculty scaffoldings have practical rather than conceptual *raisons d'être*. I suggest that their articulations of faculty psychology arise less from intellectual conviction than from a pragmatic need to validate non-instrumental writing praxes amid the growing mercantilism of early-nineteenth-century England and early-twentieth-century Venezuela.

The first three sections reconstruct the faculty-centered depictions of the human mind found in the "Prefaces" and *Iphigenia*, alongside their corresponding theories of writing and the writer. I begin by showing how Wordsworth's characterization of the penning process as an Imagination-driven, ecologically-situated, and patiently nurtured habit points beyond its trivializing reduction to the so-called Romantic myth of the author as a spontaneously inspired genius and toward its contemporary theoretical purchase.[2] I then argue that *Iphigenia*, published in the aftermath of Romanticism's greatest influence on the Latin American novelistic tradition, echoes Wordsworth's notion of penning yet broadens its scope by rejecting the circumscription of the writer to a divinely-endowed, natural-born man. Critical of the gender biases and the "ideology of giftedness" still present across inherited notions of authorship, de la Parra's novel presents an earthy conception of what 'writing' entails and a feminist expansion of who 'the writer' is.[3] To arrive at this welcoming definition, it introduces Fantasy as an exorbitant faculty capable of transgressing what Wordsworth calls Imagination's "proper bounds."[4]

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[2] For examinations of the myth of the author in English Romantic poetry, and particularly in Wordsworth, see William C. Edinger, *"Genial" Perception: Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Myth of Genius in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Liverpool University Press, 2022), 19-45; 77-135. See also Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford University Press, 1973), 9-38, M.H Abrams, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," M.H Abrams, ed., *English Romantic Poets* (Oxford University Press, 1975), 37-53, M. H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 95-114, and Geoffrey Hartman's *Wordsworth's Poetry. 1787-1814* (Yale University Press, 1964), 34-89.

[3] To assess the pervasiveness of the "ideology of giftedness" at present, see, for instance, Brent Royster, "Inspiration, Creativity, and Crisis: The Romantic Myth of the Writer Meets the Contemporary Classroom," *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom*, Anna Leahy, ed. (Multilingual Matters, 2005), 26-38. See also Gillian Parekh, Robert S. Brown, and Karen Robson, "The Social Construction of Giftedness," *Journal of Disability Studies* 7.2 (2018): 1-32, and Abraham J. Tannenbaum, "A History of Giftedness in School and Society," *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent 2* (2000): 23-53. To frame this phenomenon within a specifically contemporary (perceived) gap between "mere" writers and authors, see Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008) and Marcelo Topuzián's *Muerte y resurrección del autor* (Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 2015).

[4] As I elaborate below, Wordsworth adduces that the often-overwhelming excitement triggered by Imagination—what Geoffrey Hartman dubbed this faculty's "apocalyptic pitch" (*Wordsworth's Poetry* 17)—should not be "carried beyond

Next, I test the claim that the mental faculty schemas featured in Wordsworth and de la Parra's works are pragmatically instead of conceptually motivated. While both posit their scaffoldngs of the human mind as foundational for theories of writing and the writer, and thereby as the psycho-physiological basis for the latter, I contend these scaffoldings were pieced together hastily, if not retroactively, to legitimize non-instrumental writing practices in instrumentalist societies. Published amid post-Revolutionary disillusionment and rampant anxiety concerning a growingly mercantilist England, the overall role (or absence) of poetry in this emergent social order—and, within the latter, the specific place (or lack thereof) of his own "anti-poetic" lyric—Wordsworth's descriptions of the structure of the mind in the "Prefaces" (1800-1815) should be read as strategies to validate his poetical program and arrangement of his work for publication, rather than as revelations of a unified "developing vision" of human anatomy.[5] Penned during Latin America's integration into the global market economy—when Venezuela boasted the fastest-growing GDP in the region, fostered industrialist policies under a despotic leadership cadre allied with a new commercial-financial sector, and promoted a Victorian ideology that confined women to reproductive roles—de la Parra's characterization of the human mind in *Iphigenia* (1924), especially the inclusion of Fantasy as a faculty that renders the irrational conceivable, serves to verisimilize a woman's "unreasonable" desire to write for writing's sake.[6]

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its proper bounds" (387). To avoid letting "himself slip into an entire delusion" (377) throughout the writing process, the poet must domesticate the so-called Highest Faculty through habits of meditation, thoughtfulness, and remembrance. As Greg Ellerman helpfully puts it citing Wordsworth himself: "The 'glory' of imagination is also its 'strength / Of usurpation' (599–600); when we are fully in its grasp, 'the light of sense / Goes out' (600–601)" (16). Thus, the poet must keep Imagination at bay if it is to fruitfully leverage its powers during the process of composition. For a detailed analysis of Imagination's scope of action and boundaries in Wordsworth, see Helen Regueiro, *The Limits of Imagination: Wordsworth, Yeats, and Stevens* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 43-94.

[5] The notion of a unitary "developing vision" features in Stephen Gill's introduction to *The Salisbury Plain Poems of William Wordsworth* (Cornell University Press, 1975), xv, and reappears in Ortwin de Graef's "Encrypted Sympathy. Wordsworth's Infant Ideology," *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading*, Helen Regueiro Elam and Frances Ferguson, eds. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 45-71. For a detailed characterization of Romanticism as a critical reaction to large-scale capitalist industrialism and as "the fruit of disappointment at the unkept promises of the bourgeois revolution of 1789" (16), see Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity* (Duke University Press, 2002), 1-54. For an analysis of the perceived "anti-poetical" quality of Wordsworth's poetry in his time, see Patrick Campbell, "Lyrical Ballads: The Current of Opinion," *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Lyrical Ballads* (Palgrave, 1991), 1-14. As I elicit below and Wordsworth expresses in his "Prefaces" (1800; 1802; 1815), the public's perception of his poetry as non-poetical or anti-poetical largely stemmed from his (in)distinction between poetry and prose and his advocacy for a lyric about seemingly "trivial" topics written "in the language of men." Although this was unforeseeable to most of his contemporaries, Wordsworth's hitherto unorthodox poetic project would ultimately totemize him as "*the* poet who turns the commonplace into the remarkable" (Regueiro and Ferguson, *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment*, 11; emphasis added).

[6] Over the course of my analysis, and based on how these expressions are used in the primary sources, I use terms such as "reasonable" and "rational" as synonymous (as all pertaining to Reason's domain). For an in-depth analysis of the accelerated industrialist turn and its ensuing political and class implications in Venezuela from independence

I conclude with the theoretical and cultural limitations of the two mental faculty schemas, interrogating whether the notions of 'writing' and the 'writer' presumed to rest on them are salvageable. My closing statement is that, precisely because these schemas are afterthoughts rather than foundational principles, the writing theories attached to them hold a degree of conceptual autonomy. To the extent that their autonomy exists, these theories remain insightful for contemporary research at the intersection of literary studies, media theory, rhetoric and composition studies, and cognitive psychology. Against a dominant focus on "efficient" techniques for producing "successful" texts, Wordsworth and de la Parra foreground dimensions of the penning process—its ecological situatedness, temporal protractedness, gendered embodiment, susceptibility to being nourished by habit, fruitfulness beyond efficiency, and reliance on memory—that insist on alternative research agendas and underexplored writing practices.

Before delving into my analysis, one more word on insistence. In this essay, I join a recent tendency in Latin American and English studies to return to the long nineteenth century not only for unorthodox outlooks on totemized traditions, but also for the resonance of these traditions at present.[7] The fact that this tendency has shown an overinvestment in Romantic literature and its

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through the 1920s, see Francisco Rodríguez and Adam J. Gomolin. "Anarchy, State, and Dystopia: Venezuelan Economic Institutions before the Advent of Oil," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 28.1 (2009): 102-121 alongside Rosemary Thorp, *From Windfall to Curse? Oil and Industrialization in Venezuela, from 1920 to the Present* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009). It is noteworthy that *Iphigenia*, first published in 1924, falls squarely within a period of transition between the advent of industrialization and its establishment. For a regional framing of this transitional period at the intersection of economics, politics, and literature, see Javier Uriarte and Fernando Degiovanni's "Introduction" to *Latin American Literature in Transition 1870–1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1-12.

[7] In a critical Latin Americanist expansion of Eric Hobsbawm's use the term, I extend "long nineteenth century" to encompass not only the period from the irruption of the Industrial and French Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the First World War in 1914, but also the 1920s. This expanded understanding of the term allows us to see as part of the same historical epoch the coerced integration of Latin American states into the politico-economic world order ushered in by the Industrial Revolution and marked by large-scale industrial capitalism. I take the notion of totemized traditions from Ronald Mendoza de Jesús's *Catastrophic Historicism* (Fordham University Press, 2024), where "monumental-totemic reception" names the endpoint of a long process of "sedimentation or traditionalization" of an oeuvre such that it becomes "increasingly illegible other than in the symbolic terms [already] sanctioned" (19-20; 61). Against the backdrop of Julia de Burgos's totemized legacy, Mendoza de Jesús's aims "to reconstruct the field of legibility in which her fame is inscribed. This will require a careful examination of what has been read in this image and how this reading has sedimented into a tradition" (54). In a similar effort to restitute the full "field of legibility" of the English Romantics and rescue their legacy from its fossilization in canonical twentieth-century Romanticist scholarship—of which M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Geoffrey Hartman's two major books on Wordsworth (1954; 1987), and Northop Frye's *A Study of English Romanticism (*1968) are paradigmatic examples—contemporary scholars have overwhelmingly (re)turned to Romanticism in a post-anthropocentric and ecocritical key. See most notably Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Routledge, 2013), Greg Ellermann, *Thought's Wilderness: Romanticism and the Apprehension of Nature* (Stanford University Press, 2022), Lenora Hanson, *The Romantic Rhetoric of Accumulation* (Stanford University Press, 2022), Joseph Albernaz, *Common Measures: Romanticism and the Groundlessness of Community* (Stanford University Press, 2024), and Kate Rigby, *Reclaiming Romanticism Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization* (Bloomsbury, 2022). Note

heretic transculturated heirs(ses) doubtless raises the question of "what's Romanticism got to do with it?": that is, whether there is anything specific about it that explains its contemporariness. In this regard, I agree with Latin American and English studies scholars for whom the "newly modern world" ushered in by the Industrial Revolution and against which Romanticism launched its aesthetics of exuberance is, if hypotrophied, "still our world."[8] If the present is indeed hyper rather

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that all these monographs include Wordsworth as one of their featured case studies. For a more comprehensive survey of the state of the field, see Anahid Nersessian, "Romantic Ecocriticism Lately," *Literature Compass* 15.1 (2018): 1-16. In the case of Latin American studies, scholars have returned to the long nineteenth century to either read the canon of so-called "foundational fictions" otherwise or, much more frequently, to rescue alternative corpora that illuminate the independence and post-independence period from the perspectives of the sidelined or the oppressed. For the first case, see *Gabriela Nouzeilles, Ficciones somáticas. Naturalismo, nacionalismo y políticas médicas del cuerpo* (Argentina 1880-1910) (2000) and Elisabeth L. Austin, *Exemplary Ambivalence in Late Nineteenth-century Spanish America: Narrating Creole Subjectivity* (Lexington Books, 2012). Illustrative of the second trend are Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle, ed., *Ficciones y silencios fundacionales: literaturas y culturas poscoloniales en América Latina, siglo XIX* (2003), Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds., *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), Juan Carlos González Espitia, *On the Dark Side of the Archive: Nation and Literature in Spanish America at the Turn of the Century* (Bucknell University Press, 2009), Nathalie Bouzaglo, *Ficción adulterada: Pasiones ilícitas del entresiglo venezolano* (Editora Beatriz Viterbo, 2016), Isabela Fraga, *Subjected to Feeling: Slavery and Personhood in Nineteenth-Century Brazil and Cuba* (University of Chicago [dissertation], 2022), Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, *Identidades imaginadas: Biografía y nacionalidad en el horizonte de la guerra (Cuba 1860-1898)* (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1999), Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal (eds.), *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), and Sônia Roncador, *Domestic Servants in Literature and Testimony in Brazil, 1889-1999* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Representative of this renewed interest in the long nineteenth century are also the recent volumes Ana Peluffo and Ronalds Briggs, eds., *Latin American Literature in Transition 1800–1870* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and the aforementioned Fernando Degiovanni and Javier Uriarte, eds., *Latin American Literature in Transition 1870–1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2022). In this context, it is noteworthy that none of the monographs or volumes mentioned above revisits Teresa de la Parra's *Iphigenia* (1924)—the only English translation of the novel remains Bertie Acker's edition from 1994 and the last Anglophone monograph about Teresa de la Parra's work and life is RoseAnna Mueller's little-known *Teresa de La Parra: A Literary Life* (Cambridge Scholars, 2012). This gap in scholarship is all the more flagrant given the recent 100th anniversary of the novel's publication and a renewed scholarly investment in Latin American reworkings of Greek mythology. As evinced by Moira Fradinger's *Antígonas. Writing from Latin America* (Oxford University Press, 2023), there is a specific tradition of rewriting Greek myth from women's and strictly feminist perspectives, yet scarce attention has been paid to feminist rewritings of *Iphigenia*.

[8] Citations are from Joseph Albernaz's *Common Measures* (2024), where we find the assertion that the Romantics' "newly modern world is still our world" (143). This hypothesis partakes in both Albornoz's and Uriarte and Degiovanni's characterization of this world order as based on "colonialist primitive accumulation" (*Common Measures* 142) and structured by "technologies for enclosure" (*Common Measures* 142), "processes of privatization and privation" (*Common Measures* 142), the attempt at "reducing of all things to [money as] a common measure" (*Common Measures* 5), "a complex transformation of pastoral and rural societies into modernized and market-oriented states" (*Latin American Literature in Transition* 1), neocolonialist "transnational economic and cultural networks" (*Latin American Literature in Transition* 2), "emerging global capitalism" (*Common Measures* 152), "new forms of individualism" (*Common Measures* 152) and "the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures" (*Common Measures* 152, paraphrasing Foucault). A similar reading of the long nineteenth century along Latin Americanist and Foucauldian lines can be found in Beatriz González-Stephan's "Cuerpos de la nación: cartografías disciplinarias," *Anales Nueva Época*. 2.1 (1999): 71-106. The "aesthetics of exuberance" (193) or rhetorical "excess" (142) that Albernaz ascribes to English Romanticism has also been identified as a trait of its Latin American iterations and critical expansions. See Cole R. Heinowitz, *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777-1826: Rewriting Conquest* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), Emilio Carilla, *El romanticismo en la América*

than postmodern, and the past two centuries "continue to speak to us because the crisis of civilization connected with the birth and the development of the industrial capitalist system is far from being resolved,"[9] Romantic gestures against the tide of modernity speak to us too, perhaps more than ever now that it is *much* easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.[10] In this context, my personal overenthusiasm is for Romanticism's defense of—indeed, its insistence on—everyday practices that oppose instrumental rationality, an expression by which I metonymically gather all four principles sociologist Max Weber famously ascribed to the "capitalist spirit": namely, instrumental reason proper, bureaucratic domination, the calculating principle, and the disenchantment of the world.[11] Be it by opposing an "anti-poetic" poetry to past literary traditions and pervasive mercantilist tenets, or by validating acts of penning that neither are nor aspire to become literature in the first place, Wordsworth and de la Parra's works deem unsanctioned writing practices as ways out of instrumentalist cloisters. At yet another historical turning point when the reduction of all actions and of all things to their utilitarian value seems inescapable, I take these Romantic defenses of non-instrumental writing as remainders and reminders of hope.

Wordsworth's Theory of (the Writer's) Mind: Nature and/or Nurture?

> As one expects of a lyric poet.
> We look at the world once, in childhood.
> The rest is memory.

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hispánica (Gredos, 1975), and, most recently, Christian Paúl Naranjo Navas and Alegría Cumandá Navas Labanda, *Romanticismo y revolución en Latinoamérica* (Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, 2020).

[9] Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, 17, paraphrasing Max Milner, *Le Romantisme (1820–1843)* (Arthaud, 1973), 242.

[10] The notion that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (2) has been popularized by Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (John Hunt Publishing, 2009). According to Fisher, the phrase was first attributed to Slavoj Žižek and Fredric Jameson. To my knowledge, the phrase first appeared in print in Jameson's *The Seeds of Time* (1994). The "Introduction" reads: "It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism" (xii). For a more detailed consideration of this phrase as it relates to the concept of 'world' and the state of Latin American literary studies, see Romina Wainberg, "Writing about Writing Amidst the End of Worlds: An Invitation," Gesine Müller and Benjamin Loy, eds., *Post-global Aesthetics*. 21st *Century Latin American Literatures and Cultures* (De Gruyter, 2022), 61-73.

[11] See Löwy and Sayre's repurposing of Max Weber's terminology in *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, 18-55; for reference, see also Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic or the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). Along similar lines but rearticulating Frankfurt School thought (particularly Theodor Adorno's), Greg Ellerman writes in *Thought's Wilderness* (2022): "Whether described in terms of instrumental rationality or the calculating principle, such a turn […] defined capitalism since the start" (26) and was opposed by "romantic efforts to think past capitalist instrumentality and its devastation of the world" (2); within this framework, Ellerman specifically associates Wordsworth with the critical "interrogation of instrumentality" (100).

— Louise Glück

> Yet this myth about the Romantic view of poetry is like most myths: it veils an important truth.
>
> —James Scoggins

Wordsworth's clearest layout of the human mind features in his "Preface" to *Poems* (1815), where it serves to justify the arrangement of his texts for publication according to the faculty most preponderantly employed in their composition. Glimpses of the poet's interest in the mind's "inherent" and "indestructible" faculties, as well the latter's connection with the heart, soul, and nature, also emerge in the two "Prefaces" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800; 1802), epistolary exchanges with poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), and his literary oeuvre, including all three versions of the famously unfinished *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem* (1799; 1805; 1850). Unlike Coleridge's, however, and despite his occasional consideration as a "philosophic poet,"[12] Wordsworth's theoretical insights are less systematic, more strategically than conceptually deployed, and at times contradictory with one another.[13] That said, I contend with Romanticist James Scogging that a generous reading of Wordsworth's "Prefaces" along with his poetic oeuvre affords the (re)composition of a fairly coherent schema of the mind.[14]

Following Late-Renaissance terminology and its pervasiveness throughout the Enlightenment, Wordsworth's schema comprises the faculties of Reason, Understanding, Fancy, and Imagination. In his Romantic version of this framework, the faculties that previous traditions understood "statically" in terms of their a priori "transcendental structures" are dynamized through an organicist view of the mind according to which the latter grows from childhood to adulthood.[15]

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[12] See Stephen Gill, "The Philosophic Poet," Stephen Gill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 142-60. James Scoggins also calls Wordsworth "a philosophical poet in a wid[e] sense" (14, n.2) and Geoffrey Hartman attributes a "quasi-philosophical dignity for his view of nature" (193). See James Scoggins, *Imagination and Fancy: Complementary Modes in the Poetry of Wordsworth* (University of Nebraska Press, 1966) and Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (Yale University Press, 1964).

[13] Here we should recall, with Alan Richardson, that positing "a cognitive Wordsworth still depends on making tentative links among a number of detached passages scattered throughout his poetry and prose" (90). Further, the poet's thought is "anything but systematic" and "changes in emphasis," as much as in broader theoretical assertions, are indissociable from "changes in immediate purpose" (90). See Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66-92.

[14] Such is the conviction behind James Scoggins's *Imagination and Fancy*. In *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, Richardson also supports the thesis that "there is more continuity than contradiction between the 'Advertisement' of 1798, the 'Preface' of 1800, and the additions and 'Appendix' of 1802" (90).

[15] Considering the full gamut of theories developed from the Late Renaissance through the Enlightenment alongside their different degrees of (un)systematicity, Richardson argues that in the least systematic cases we should speak not of "transcendental structures" but of "transcendental mind-stuff." See Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, 13.

As part of this dynamization, Wordsworth endows each faculty with a passive and an active mode, depending on whether "external things impinge upon [it]" or it acts upon the external world.[16] Despite this alternation being always available, the passive modality prevails in infancy (when the purest and most powerful emotions are said to be experienced) whereas the active is leveraged in maturity (when complex skills are developed). Given his appraisal of infancy—and, by extension, from the perspective of adulthood, of long-term memory—the poet hierarchizes each faculty according to how far back into the past its capacity for recollection can stretch. Thus established, this hierarchy is reinforced by giving the faculty capable of stretching furthest back into the past the ability to produce new materials out of old-stored apprehensions.[17] Ultimately, the productive capacities ascribed to the so-called Highest Faculty—without further ado, Imagination—roots the human in the divine by securing an analogy between the anthropomorphic mind that "creates a second nature" and "God who creates the first nature and produces the archetype which will serve as example and rule."[18]

We need not delve into the characterization of all four faculties. For our purposes, it suffices to say that Reason often stands for the values of instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and the calculating principle (*Rechnenhaftigkeit*) associated with mercantilist political economy, both of which are backed by science as a modern institution geared towards "counting" and "classifying" Nature.[19] In Wordsworth's purview, Reason poses a threat whenever it wields economic instrumentality as a principle and, most fundamentally, whenever it presents itself as the root of all truth or the means to reach it—by self-appointing as the ultimate purveyor of veracity,

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[16] Citations from Greg Ellerman, *Thought's Wilderness*, 9.

[17] See James Scoggins, *Imagination and Fancy*, 3-8, and Geoffrey Hartman, "Reading: the Wordsworthian Enlightenment," *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment*, 29-44.

[18] I borrow this helpful phrasing from Jacques Derrida, Richard Klein, transl., "Economimesis," *Diacritics* 11.2 (1981), 13. As James Scoggins puts it apropos of Wordsworth: "The acknowledgment of the divine source […] is not a rhetorical flourish, but a basic tenet of Wordsworth's faith in imagination" as the only faculty able to "glance from earth to heaven" (*Fancy and Imagination* 118; 74). In the poet's own words: "The Imagination also shapes and *creates*; and how? By innumerable processes; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number—alterations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own *mighty* and *almost* divine powers" ("Preface" (1815), 611; first emphasis in the original, subsequent emphases added).

[19] In this view, Reason multiplies distinctions according to the calculating tenets of modern political economy, the paradigmatic institution of which is science. As Raymond Dexter Havens puts it in his commentary to *The Prelude*, citing Wordsworth: "the analytical reason is spoken of as 'the false secondary power / By means of which we multiply distinctions [and ignore] … / The unity of all" (348). See Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Mind of a Poet* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020). Along the same lines, Wordsworth presents Reason as seeking to analyze the human mind and its conditions of possibility by ranking the faculties "[i]n scale and order, class[ing] the cabinet / Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase / Run through the history and birth of each / As of a single independent thing" (*The Prelude* 556).

the poet argues, the "words of reason deeply weight'd" occlude their genesis in God.[20] Referred to as either Reason's mere synonym or as a lesser power relative to it, Understanding plays similar dissecting and/or distortive roles.[21] Despite these unfavorable characterizations, both of which cast Wordsworth as "the first forthright spokesman for a new kind of poetry that challenged science for the right to discover and to proclaim truth,"[22] it is worth noting that in his mental faculty scaffolding Reason and Understanding still have a place: not only do their discerning powers gesture towards an alternative, humbler scientific project compatible with the "new kind of poetry" posited above,[23] but these faculties' most basic operations ("thought," "meditation," "reflection," and "intellect") are considered necessary for most human endeavors—including, as we will see, lyrical composition.[24]

Fancy and Imagination both qualify as "the poetic faculties" *sensu stricto*, that is, as "the powers requisite for the production of poetry" (431). In the 1815 edition, Wordsworth classifies texts as "Poems of the Fancy" or "Poems of the Imagination" depending on which of these powers

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[20] Reason is in this sense ill-suited to inquire about the depths of the soul and the deepest roots of truth: "Hard task to analyse a soul, in which, / Not only general habits and desires, / But each most obvious and particular thought, / Not in a mystical and idle sense, / But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd, / Hath no beginning" (*The Prelude* 557).

[21] For a detailed study of the distinctions between Reason and Understanding, see James Scoggins, *Fancy and Imagination*, 32-47. As it will become clear below, Understanding's lesser status is inextricable from the fact that it is an "exclusively adult faculty" (32).

[22] James Scoggins, *Fancy and Imagination*, 9. This characterization of Wordsworth as a lonely pioneer in the rejection of modern science and advancement of a new kind of poetry is, if somewhat exaggerated, insightful, as it suggests why his unique poetical program and aesthetics would need such a complex theoretical apparatus to justify their existence, worthwhileness, and relevance.

[23] The possibility of a kind of science attuned to a new kind of poetry already features in the "Preface" (1802) to *Lyrical Ballads*, where we find the rather surprising assertion that "if the labours of the Men of Science should ever create any material revolution," the poet "will be ready to follow the steps of [such] Man of Science" (57), alongside a possible division of labor whereby "The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion" (58). Scholars have associated the last-minute addition of this reflection to the "Preface" with Wordsworth's nuanced understanding of the "culture of science" and most notably with his friendship with the prolific chemist-cum-poet Humphry Davy. See, for instance, Fred Wilson, "Wordsworth and the Culture of Science," *The Centennial Review* 33.4 (1989): 322-92, James H. Averill, "Wordsworth and 'Natural Science': The Poetry of 1798," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (1978) 77.2: 232-46, Gregory Tate, "Wordsworth, Humphry Davy, and the Forms of Nature," *Nineteenth-Century Poetry and the Physical Sciences: Poetical Matter* (2020): 23-63, and, most notably, Maurice Hindle, "Humphry Davy and William Wordsworth: A Mutual Influence," *Romanticism 18.1* (2012): 16-29. If, as James H. Averill poses, "nowhere in his later work does Wordsworth attempt to embrace the contemporary revolution in science and technology" (246), we should attribute this split not to the inconceivability of a reconciliation between science and poetry but to the facticity of science's persistent alignment with instrumental reason.

[24] As I explain below, "habits of meditation," thinking "long and deeply," and "reflecting" are identified as constitutive of the writing process. Citations from the "Preface" (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*, 59-60.

was putatively most operative in said texts' composition.[25] Considering the frequent confusion of the two, we should delimit their respective ambits. Fancy is most often debased as "the willful and capricious faculty" depicted in Book VIII of *The Prelude*:"[26] still, in his prefatory remarks to the 1815 edition, perhaps to justify the mere inclusion of "Poems of Fancy" in his collected volume, Wordsworth provides a more charitable acceptation of the term as a less-than-imaginative power which is nonetheless, "under her own laws and in her own spirit, a creative faculty."[27] This power stands out for its capacity to detect affinities between mental images available at a present moment and explore the ways in which they may be linked together. Having only recourse to these ephemeral "images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects," Fancy combines them such that "the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic."[28] The latter power differs from Imagination in its weaker links to memory and divinity. Imagination is defined as the privileged "soil" where since childhood Nature "plant[s], for immortality, images of sound and sight," and it can tap into said images even when childhood is long gone.[29] This faculty can also modify long-stored memories, conferring additional properties to or subtracting attributes from them so as to produce new expressions.[30] In Wordsworthian diction, "throwing a certain colouring of the Imagination" over (mental images of) things allows for ordinary life to appear in new ways bound neither to common sense perception nor to the

[25] The relationship between the incidence of these faculties in the writing process and the way that their operation is represented in the poems is not uniform or straightforward. In the specific cases of the Imagination, Wordsworth writes: "in the series of poems placed under the head of Imagination, I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature in the development of this faculty. Guided by my own primary consciousness, I have presented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents, to plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination […] The Poems next in succession exhibit the faculty exerting itself upon various objects of the external universe; then follow others, when it is employed upon feelings, characters and actions; and the Class is concluded with imaginative pictures of moral, political, and religious sentiments" (430).

[26] Citations from James Scoggins, *Fancy and Imagination*, 199. As the scholar notes, Fancy's "special importance for Wordsworth has never been sufficiently emphasized, perhaps because the formidable example of Coleridge has prepared later readers of Wordsworth to apologize for or to ignore the poems of fancy" (201).

[27] As Scoggins explains: "Thus matured, fancy and imagination were for Wordsworth not antagonistic but complementary powers, each providing an appropriate response to Nature, which itself manifests two complementary moods, in awful mountains and in daffodils, in tempests and in rainbow […] the beautiful is somehow closely involved with serenity, peace, the understanding, and fancy; and the sublime, with fear, awe, excitation, reason, and the imagination The progress of the fancy in Wordsworth […] As it matured, it became a worthy partner of imagination, serving the beautiful and pathetic as the higher faculty served the sublime. Its special importance for Wordsworth has never been sufficiently emphasized, perhaps because the formidable example of Coleridge has prepared later readers of Wordsworth to apologize for or to ignore the poems of fancy" (201).

[28] Citations from the "Preface" (1815) to *Poems*, 610-11.

[29] Quotes from the "Preface" (1815) to *Poems*, 612.

[30] Citations from the "Preface" (1815) to *Poems*, 610.

prefixed outlines of "form and feature" to which all the other faculties are subjected.[31] As anticipated before, the fact that Imagination is *the* creative faculty properly speaking—the only one capable of engendering new expressions out of preexistent images—connects human psycho-physiognomy with its posited divine source, thus offering a "glance from earth to heaven."[32]

The theory of the mental faculties just laid out supports, if not undergirds, Wordsworth's conceptions of 'the writer' and 'writing,' in whose framework Understanding's meditative affordances, Fancy's combinatorial abilities and, above all, Imagination's articulation of divinity and memory, play a key role. The poet's oft-quoted description of the writing process in the "Preface" (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads* is most eloquent in this regard:

> I believe that my habits of meditation have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a purpose. If in this opinion I am mistaken, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings […] I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on [...] If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. (60)

This passage compresses everything we need to know hereafter about Wordsworth's theory of mind as it ties into his conceptualization of 'writing' and 'the writer.' The first observation we should make is that the most successful composition originates from "past feelings." How far back into the past those feelings go depends on which poetic faculty is preponderantly involved in the composing process. Per our descriptions of mental powers and their differential relation to memory, it follows that "most poems of fancy are written in the present tense [and] present

[31] Quotes from the "Preface" (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*, 57.
[32] Citation from the "Preface" (1815) to *Poems*, 609.

reflections and experiences occurring more or less at the time of compositions. Most poems of Imagination are quite obviously autobiographical, recalling mainly memories from [c]hildhood."[33]

The correspondence between the timeframe of the feelings that ground the poem and the preponderance of the poetic faculty employed in its writing process is consistent with Wordsworth's above-mentioned appraisal of childhood as the life phase in which the purest emotions are experienced and significant events are recorded in Imagination's "soil." These events, also referred to as "accidental revelations," "visionary experiences" and writing's "primary materials,"[34] demand that Imagination initially adopt its passive mode, for the depth of their inscription in the mind depends on the latter's receptivity to the "gifts of Nature" or, in secularized parlance, to the "world of nonhuman things imping[ing] upon [it]."[35] Noteworthy here is that "accidental revelations" are, for all their mighty quality, repeatable.[36] To access Nature's gifts, the child need only return to the settings where revelation has already occurred and remain predisposed to be "surprised into perception." From the vantage point of childhood, these accidents inscribed in the so-called Highest Faculty are intense yet fleeing, amounting "almost to nothing."[37]

The term "almost" is key. For, even if revelations seem inconsequential to the child, they will grow in and alongside his mind to become the very materials upon which mature Imagination acts.[38] While the child's habit of accidental revelation inscribes images in the mind's Highest

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[33] Scoggins, *Imagination and Fancy*, 226.

[34] For a painstaking examination of these phenomena, see Greg Ellermann, "Accidental Revelation in Wordsworth," *Thought's Wilderness: Romanticism and the Apprehension of Nature* (Stanford University Press, 2022), 86-100. Scoggins summarizes these "visionary" experiences as follows: "the imaginative vision comes upon one unawares, and though it lives and operates in memory, it is itself a fleeting experience […] Object, perception, and imagination are three of the constituents of Wordsworth's visionary experiences. The fourth is the set of conditions under which the other three come together most fruitfully" (*Imagination and Fancy* 77; 146).

[35] Citation from Ellerman, *Thought's Wilderness*.

[36] Even critics as innatist and auratizing as Harold Bloom have recognized that Wordsworth "saw repetition or second chance as essential for development" (9). See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 1973).

[37] Quotes from Ellerman, *Thought's Wilderness*, 92; 97. As the scholar elaborates, "his sentence's labored grammar [in the last "Preface"] insists, surprisingly, on the passivity of the imagination, described earlier in the essay as an inherently active power […] while 'the Poems next in succession [in the volume] exhibit the faculty exerting itself upon various objects of the external universe," this poem depicts a boy who is 'surprised into a perception.' Nature appears to the Winander boy when he gives upon "exerting [him]self upon" it" (92-3).

[38] It is worth noting that the distinction between immature and mature Imagination is indexed within the internal arrangement of the "Poems of Imagination" themselves, the progression of which follows the growth of the poet's mind. As Wordsworth expresses in the "Preface" (1815) to *Poems*: "in the series of poems placed under the head of Imagination, I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature in the development of this faculty. Guided by my own primary consciousness, I have presented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents, to plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination […] The Poems next in succession exhibit the faculty exerting itself upon various objects of the external universe; then

Faculty, the adult's habit of meditation allows for the tranquil contemplation of said images and the bygone emotions associated with them. Through this act of contemplation, "the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind" (607). Intent on penning, the mature Imagination asymptotically reproduces the materials planted in its ground during childhood and the past feelings that correspond to them; in turn, the asymptotic replicas of these past feelings catalyze the writing process *proprement dit* and sustain its cadence as it unfolds. Now, contrary to the common-sense use of the equation "poetry = spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and the corresponding vulgar myth of the Romantic author as an ineffably inspired man, the poet asserts that the conditions of possibility for expressing overflowing emotions are both having experienced them and having thought "long and deeply." He could not be clearer in this respect: throughout poetic composition, feelings are laboriously elaborated on by meditative reflections and imaginative modifications.

Having recomposed Wordsworth's theory of the penning process, it is now time to assess what the poet suggests about 'the writer' figure. In the past decades, left-leaning Romanticists have overplayed the "egalitarian" valences of the following proclamation, found in the "Preface" (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*: "What is a Poet? He is a man speaking to men" (59). Although the implications of this idea are contained in the above-quoted excerpt, it once again helps to cite the poet's dictum within his broader argument:

> What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them […] The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men […] There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce

follow others, when it is employed upon feelings, characters and actions; and the Class is concluded with imaginative pictures of moral, political, and religious sentiments" (612).

> it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men […] Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. (59)

Just as the (in)famous phrase "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of power feelings," the motto "a poet is a man speaking to men" suggests two radically different views depending on whether it is considered in or out of context. In isolation, the first phrase construes the caricaturesque, naïve but still influential view of the writer as a spontaneously inspired genius. Placed within Wordsworth's theory of the penning process, it means almost the opposite—the overflow of powerful feelings takes place in a past that the poet must learn to re-enact through his nurtured exercise of meditative habits. A similar logic obtains from putting the second sentence into perspective, with a switch from positive to negative sign. This sentence that, in its more charitable interpretation, upholds the ecumenical position that anyone can be a poet and a reader of poetry, has quite a different meaning within Wordsworth's lengthier utterance; indeed, a poet writes about ordinary subjects in a language proximate to the parlance of men, but it does so in virtue of his "more lively sensibility" and "greater knowledge of human nature," to name a mere few qualities listed above. Now, a Romantic(ist) could argue that the poet stands out only insofar as he has developed a meditative habit that, *in potentia*, could be adopted by anyone. Therefore, the argument would follow, Wordsworth implies that a writer is neither essentially nor qualitatively different from a putative layperson. The issue with this line of thought is that it occludes two significant details present in the above-quoted excerpts: the fact that the poet is *endowed with* a heightened sensibility and the fact that said sensibility is *organic*. These emphasized features clarify Wordsworth's definition of 'the writer', all the while completing his theory of mind. In short, they confirm that a person's capacity to become an author depends on the divine endowment of an innate sensibility. Mindful of feasible objections to this statement, Wordsworth specifies that the writer's peculiarity "implies nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree" (70). However, this degree is unachievable by "other men" because the poet's capabilities inhere in "the structure of his mind" (61).

Before pivoting to the theory of the mind featured in *Iphigenia* (1924) and its comparison with Wordsworth's, I want to note two scholarly implications of the latter. On the one side, it is plausible that the poet's first-hand knowledge, meta-awareness, and nourished habit of composition yielded his characterization of 'writing' as ecologically embedded, embodied, and effortful labor. It is also arguable that, by endowing the poet's mind with productive abilities,

selective access to long-term memory, and the capacity to articulate creation, combination, and reflection, he cast 'the writer' as an active decision-maker in the penning process. To the extent that this twofold argument holds, Wordsworth's definitions of 'writing' and 'the writer' are far removed from the Romantic myth of the author as a spontaneously inspired genius, and in fact approximate contemporary findings in writing research.[39] On the flip side, my reconstruction of the author's faculty schema should alert literary scholars who, speaking of the English Romantics, often employ "the poetic mind," "the mind," and "our mind" interchangeably.[40] No matter how generous our reading of Wordsworth, he indisputably endorses the idea that the poet's mind is, in all probability, *not* ours. Here, it matters that the author insisted on an interpretation of his most notable work as "quite obviously autobiographical," for that boy who envisions the "accidental revelations" that enable mature poetry cannot be any child.[41] If the poems of childhood are consistent with the theory that serves as their preface, the boy must always already be a poet to come. Put in terms of the author's third renowned dictum, borrowed from "My heart leaps up when I behold" (1807): there is a special way in which this boy is the "Father of Man" (264). Seen in this light, the putatively egalitarian features of Wordsworth's theory—the fact that the accidental revelations on which the writing process depends are repeatable (seemingly accessible to all under

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[39] As I explain below, contemporary writing research—chiefly developed within the fields of rhetoric and composition studies, creative writing, and cognitive psychology—has just recently begun to underscore the historically overlooked yet key role of embodiment, processuality, and ecological embeddedness in the writing process, alongside the need to conceptualize writing beyond its strictly anthropological features. See, for instance, Isabel Jaén and Julien Jacques Simon, eds., *Cognitive Literary Studies: Current Themes and New Directions* (University of Texas Press, 2012), Aaron V. Cicourel, "A Personal, Retrospective View of Ecological Validity," *Text & Talk* 27.5-6 (2007): 735-52, Sylvia Pantaleo, "An Ecological Perspective on the Socially Embedded Nature of Reading and Writing," *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy 9.1* (2009): 75-99, Jon Smidt, "Developing Discourse Roles and Positionings: an Ecological Theory of Writing Development," Roger Beard, Debra Myhill, Jeni Riley, and Martin Nystrand, eds*., The SAGE Handbook of Writing Development* (SAGE Publications, 2009), 117-125, and, most notably and recently, Linden J. Ball and Frédéric Vallée-Tourangeau, eds., *The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Cognition* (Routledge, 2024). In the *Handbook*, the limitations of laboratory experiments to achieve "ecological validity" compared to writing processes that are "allowed to occur in naturalistic environments" are recurrently brought up as an unresolved theoretico-practical problem. Last citation taken from Nathaniel Barr, Lucas Klein, Michael J. McNamara and Kelly Peters, "Creative Cognition: From Ideation to Innovation," *Handbook of Creative Cognition*, 113. It is telling that the editors chose to close the *Handbook* with the following reflection: "Finally, the notion of ecological validity is particularly salient in creativity neuroscience […] Given the constraints of the MRI environment and the spontaneous nature of creativity in the real world, creativity researchers should continue to balance ecological validity (designing experiments that resemble real-life creativity) and experimental control (designing tasks that can reliably link creative behavior to brain activity/connectivity) […] to build theories of creativity across domains. We also encourage researchers to use innovative methods to reliably study the neuroscience of creativity in everyday life" (446). Below, I elaborate on the paradox constitutive of creative cognition as a field that claims to study "creativity in everyday life" yet deems only certain acts (chiefly, artistic practices) as properly "creative."

[40] We find this deceiving exchangeability in both the canonical Romanticist scholarship and the recent ecocritical monographs mentioned above (see note 7).

[41] Citation from James Scoggins, *Fancy and Imagination*, 226.

certain iterable conditions) and the idea that a writer's ability to pen hinges on a nourished habit—prove accessible to few. Without the right innate structure, nurturing habits are fruitless. From a Wordsworthian perspective, a poet must be made *and* born.

Alonso's Theory of Mind/Writing: The Exigence of Exorbitance

If Wordsworth's theories of the 'mind', 'writing', and 'the writer' stretch across his life-long body of work and remain—partially for that cause—scattered, the theories that de la Parra puts in the mouth of *Iphigenia*'s protagonist María Eugenia Alonso are distilled into a mere few excerpts that show remarkable consistency.[42] In what follows, I claim that Alonso's mental faculty schema overlaps with Wordsworth's conceptualization of Reason and, to a degree, Imagination. However, to make the habit of non-instrumental writing and the figure of the 'woman writer' conceivable, the protagonist of de la Parra's novel must also institute Fantasy as an exorbitant faculty operating beyond Imagination's "proper bounds."[43]

As Latin Americanists will recall, *Iphigenia* employs the "found manuscript" device to showcase the private writings of a young woman living with her aunt and grandmother in early-twentieth-century Caracas. Extolled to learn homemaker skills and marry a *nouveau riche* businessman after her land-owning family has lost most of their property (and precisely to evade or postpone this manifest destiny), María Eugenia Alonso indulges in writing: first, a profuse letter to a friend that barely elicits response; then, a diary, a love letter, and a sonnet, none of which circulate before the fictional *editora* "comes across" the protagonist's papers. It is in the diary that

[42] At the risk of stating the obvious: this essay hinges on the conviction that it is pertinent to compare not only English Romanticism and Venezuelan romance, but also a literary author and a character. In this vein, I follow David Lewis's (in)famous assertion in "Truth in Fiction" (1978) that under certain circumstances "it is certainly appropriate to compare" a "fictional character" and "a real-life person of flesh and blood" (37). The main reason why it is vital that I speak of Alonso and not de la Parra is that the character's socioeconomic position differs from the novelist's in such a significant way that it shapes the former's theory of writing and pushes her to painstakingly justify her recurrent engagement with non-instrumental writing practices. In the last analysis, it is Alonso's interwovenness of her gendered *and* class disenfranchisement that allows for a radical expansion of Wordsworth's theoretico-practical purview. That said, my "Coda" interrogates de la Parra's ethical responsibility when it comes to racial, religious, and ethnic biases embedded in the novel, arguing that certain prejudices that inform the character's position feasibly echo the author's beliefs at the time. Supplementarily, the comparison between author and character is pertinent insofar as, pace Brazilian novelist José de Alencar's idea that "truth dispenses with verisimilitude" (*a verdade dispensa a verossimilhança*), I claim that both Wordsworth and Alonso employ "verisimilizing" strategies to justify their non-instrumental writing practices. See David Lewis, "Truth in fiction," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15.1 (1978): 37-46, and José de Alencar, *A viuvinha* (L&PM Editores, 1997 [1857]), 28.

[43] See note 4.

we learn about a trip to San Nicolás' riverbank where, in the company of her cousin Perucho, Alonso drafts a love letter formally addressed to the professional-class suitor Gabriel yet penned "never to be sent."[44] Described as *cosa de romance*, this letter explicitly borrows from Romanticism not only in the sentimentalist and exuberant aesthetics of its content,[45] but also in the vitalist, ecologically-grounded, and heightened depiction of its writing process: "On the rock in the river," Alonso writes, "I used the book as a writing case and my knees as a desk, from time to time sharpening the point of my pencil on a nearby stone […] And I feverishly wrote this letter, which has the mad sincerity of all ardent and silent love letters that are never sent […] with the pure immodesty with which water reflects our image, and with the fresh nakedness of the rocks bathed by the eternal, murmuring river" (173). In the same diary we read that, at the family dinner following their return, Perucho relays María Eugenia's scene of writing by the river to Aunt Clara and Grandmother, who reprimand her for having penned in an "improper" and "dangerous" place.[46] "My dear, what foolishness!", exclaim the older women, "Don't you know that the river is swarming with dangerous mosquitoes? You might come down with a fever! Don't do that anymore! When you want to write, write here, at home."[47] After this injunction, Reason and Imagination make their first significant appearance:

> As soon as dinner was over, I said goodnight to everyone and retired to my room. Once there, I took the three sheets scribbled in pencil and I opened them in the intimate and familiar circle of light that the table lamp traces every night. I saw the words of my letter looked indecisive and twisted, because they were heaped with absurdities and, considered *like this*, *in the cold, hard light of reason*, they seemed a thousand times more *ridiculous* than they had before, at dinner, seen and judged in *the uncertain light of my imagination*. With the crumpled papers lying open under my eyes, which no longer were looking at them, I sat reflecting for quite a

[44] Teresa de la Parra, Bertie Acker, transl. *Iphigenia,* 152.
[45] Teresa de la Parra, Bertie Acker, transl. *Iphigenia,* 173-6.
[46] It is noteworthy here that what Aunt Clara and Grandmother censure—and thus, what appears ridiculous to the reasonable mind—is not only the act of writing "inappropriate" texts but also its realization in putatively "improper" spaces, which here amount to anywhere beyond the confines of the bedroom. Curiously, the protagonist's resistance to this confinement works as an *avant la lettre* critique of Virginia Woolf's dictum: "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." Beyond matters of literature and ownership—a priori beyond María Eugenia's reach—what the latter foregrounds is that the demand for *una habitación propia* is a double-edged sword, even for those to whom this luxury is granted. On the one hand, a bedroom allows for a tad of privacy and autonomy; on the other hand, the claim on just said room circumscribes it as the only designated space for a woman to write. The physical circumscription latent in Woolf's statement thus echoes, in María Eugenia's case, voices of socially sanctioned reasonability rather than liberation.
[47] The original reads: "¡Pero, María Eugenia, mi hija, qué extravagancia!," exclaims her grandmother, "¿Por qué has de ir a la toma a escribir cartas? "¿Tú no sabes que el río está lleno de mosquitos malignos? ¡Puedes coger una fiebre! ¡No vuelvas a hacerlo más! Cuando quieras escribir, escribe aquí, en la casa" (150).

> while. What could I have been thinking to write such a letter! […] An hour later, in bed, with my light out and my eyes closed, I could still hear those telling words, full of positivism, that in such a timely way had awakened me to wholesome reality [*a la sana verdad*]. "What need is there to go write letters at the pool?" "You'll help me put up a new fence around the chicken yard." "The river is swarming with dangerous mosquitoes." "When you want to write, write here, as we all do" […] *my imagination was busy reproducing that sensible and prudent advice*. (178; emphases added)[48]

The nature of the two faculties and their mutual relationship are here condensed in the kinds of light ascribed to them. Reason's "cold, hard light" indexes its fourfold affiliation with modern science, Enlightenment philosophy, medical discourse, and Victorian social mores. The expression first works as a double reference to the programmatic style of Enlightenment philosophy and to early-twentieth-century optical microscopes. A few lines below, the casting of "positivism" as an antidote to hush the voices in the protagonist's head and "awaken" her to "healthy truth" entwines scientific and philosophical discourses and articulates them with mental health institutions, which, as Latin Americanists have noted along Foucauldian lines, spread in post-independence urban enclaves as centralized political power gained control over populations.[49] This spread of medical institutionalization throughout the long nineteenth century then reinforced, as the novel's protagonist knows, the pathologization of women, ranging from hysteria diagnoses to the stigmatization of "the female reader" as unable to "know the difference between fiction and reality."[50] The complicity between patriarchy and Reason is ultimately expanded through the

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[48] In the original: "No bien terminó la comida, di a todos las buenas noches y me retiré a mi cuarto. Una vez en tomé de mi seno los tres pliegos [de la carta ya escrita] borroneados con lápiz, y los abrí dentro del círculo íntimo y familiar, que todas las noches me dibuja la lámpara en la mesa. Vi que las palabras de mi carta se alineaban indecisas y mal escritas sobre las rayas derechas del papel, me pareció que estaban torcidas, porque iban agobiadas de extravagancia, y consideradas así, en la claridad de la luz física, me resultaron mil veces más ridículas de lo que me habían parecido antes, en la comida, vistas y juzgadas *bajo la luz incierta de la imaginación*… Con los pliegos arrugados, tendidos bajo mis ojos que ya no los miraban, me quedé reflexionando mucho rato… ¡Qué idea había tenido de escribir semejante carta! […] Y fue que una hora después, ya en mi cama, apagada la luz y cerrados los ojos, me parecía sentir aún en los oídos aquellas acertadas palabras llenas de positivismo, que tan a tiempo me habían despertado a la sana verdad: '¿Qué necesidad hay de ir a escribir cartas a la toma?' 'Vas a ayudarme a poner un alambrado nuevo en el corral de las gallinas'… 'El río está lleno de mosquitos malignos, cuando quieras escribir, escribe aquí, en la casa, como hacemos todos' […] mi imaginación *se ocupaba en reproducir* tan sensatas y prudentes expresiones" (147; emphasis added).

[49] See Beatriz González-Stephan, "Cuerpos de la nación: cartografías disciplinarias," 71-106 and *Fundaciones: canon, historia y cultura nacional. La historiografía literaria del liberalismo hispanoamericano del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2002). See, along similarly Foucauldian lines, Julio Ramos, "Cuerpo, lengua, subjetividad," *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana* 19.38 (1993): 225-37.

[50] Kristine Byron, "'Books and Bad Company'": Reading the Female Plot in Teresa de la Parra's Ifigenia*," MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 64.3 (2003), 351. In responses to her critics and late conferences, Teresa de la Parra explicitly addresses accusations of the "Voltarian" influence that many feared *Iphigenia* would have on "young ladies,"

latter's association with "prudence," a term saturated with the Victorian ideology that so obstinately pushed for women's physical confinement to the household and socioeconomic reduction to domestic labor, prudish comportment, marriage, and child rearing.[51]

Three inferences ensue from this characterization of Reason. First, through its fourfold (scientific, philosophical, medical, and ideological) lens, non-instrumental actions appear preposterous to the mind. Put concretely, seen under this "cold, hard light," Alonso's written words of love—and, by extension, the act of non-instrumental penning from which they arise—seem pointless. This means that Reason holds an immense dissuasive power, that is, the ability to prospectively or retroactively cast non-instrumental acts as ridiculous and thus reroute the mind (at last, the body) from "improper" to more "prudent" behaviors. Secondly, Reason's attempts at rerouting comportment are more present or pressingly felt in women's minds, not because any quality inheres in them that makes this faculty appear in high degree, but because more behaviors are deemed contrary to Reason (therefore, in need of dissuasion) if conceived by women. In other terms, the idea to perform the same action—say, writing a letter never to be sent by the riverbank—will or will not demand the dissuasive power of reasonability depending on whether the one who holds the thought is a (wo)man. Thus, we find here an innate-cum-historical conceptualization of Reason whereby it inheres in all minds equally but is only phenomenologically experienced as a constant dissuasive force by those whose range of reasonable behaviors has been contingently—

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elusively retorting that to her mind the book was not revolutionary propaganda but "la exposición de un caso típico de nuestra enfermedad contemporánea, la del bovarismo hispanoamericano" (349) [the exposition of a typical case of our contemporary disease, that of Spanish American bovarism]. See Teresa de la Parra, *Tres conferencias* in *Obra,* 473. In an upcoming article, Graciela Montaldo offers a critical analysis of de la Parra's concept of "Hispanic American bovarism" beyond the frequent (yet inaccurate) identification of María Eugenia Alonso with Emma Bovary. See Graciela Montaldo, "Bovarismo: el mal de América, el mal de *Ifigenia*," Héctor Hoyos, Romina Wainberg, eds., *Nuevo Texto Crítico, Special Issue: Centenario de* Ifigenia, forthcoming 2025.

[51] For analyses of the incidence of this Victorian ideology in Teresa de la Parra's work and Latin American women writers more broadly, see Carmen Mayela Évora Rivero, "Imagen y territorialidad de lo femenino en *Ifigenia* de Teresa de la Parra," *Lengua y Habla* 9.1 (2005): 27-43, Lucía Guerra, "Cuerpo de mujer y rituales del adorno en *Ifigenia* de Teresa de la Parra," *Letras Femeninas* 30.1 (2004): 129-40, Dolores Alcaide Ramírez, "Una lectura perversa de *Ifigenia* de Teresa de la Parra: el placer del espejo," *Letras Femeninas* 37.2 (2011): 25-39. Rosa Di Domenico, "Aproximación a la concepción de imagen femenina presente en textos de Teresa de la Parra y de José Rafael Pocaterra," *Revista Venezolana de Estudios de la Mujer* 20.45 (2015): 201-18, María Teresa Medeiros-Lichem, *La voz femenina en la narrativa latinoamericana: una relectura crítica: Teresa de la Parra, María Luisa Bombal, Marta Lynch, Clarice Lispector, Rosario Castellanos, Mercedes Valdivieso, Ángeles Mastretta, Elena Poniatowska, Luisa Valenzuela* (Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2006), and Celia Zapata, "One Hundred Years of Women Writers in Latin America," *Latin American Literary Review* 3.6 (1975): 7-16. In his prefatory remarks to Teresa de la Parra's second novel, *Las memorias de mama blanca* (1929), Juan Liscano refers to (celebrates!) the spirit and aesthetics of early-twentieth-century Caracas as an "estilo victoriano y solemne" (xv). See Juan Liscano, "Liminar," Teresa de la Parra, Velia Bosch, ed., *Las memorias de mamá Blanca* (Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1996), xv-xxii.

that is, sociohistorically—curtailed. Third, alongside the recognition of Reason's power comes the acknowledgement of its contingency. Alonso's phrasing (*las palabras de mi carta* […] *me resultaron ridículas* […] *bajo la claridad de la luz física*) is telling in this regard, for the letter and the act of writing that undergirds it are not considered ridiculous in essence but only seem so to the mind for as long as they are seen through Reason's light. This leaves room for the same course of action to appear otherwise under the light of a different faculty.

Considering Imagination's reputation in the Romantic tradition from which Alonso borrows, one would expect it to play Reason's antagonist. Yet the protagonist suggests this conjecture only to betray it. To wit, the purported Highest Faculty appears promising at first: seen under its "uncertain light," non-instrumental writing passes from looking altogether preposterous to appearing "less ridiculous." On first reading, it seems that *la luz incierta*—the uncertainty inherent in or introduced by this light—casts doubt upon *la luz física*, thereby calling its omnipotence as well as its omnipresence into question. However, a closer look at the excerpt proves Imagination not only feeble but, arguably, an undercover agent of Reason.[52] Evidence of feebleness is the faculty's incapacity to present non-instrumental writing as anything more enticing than "less ridiculous." Indeed, presenting an action as not-altogether-preposterous makes it relatively more inviting than positing it as preposterous altogether, but neither one nor the other option casts this action as desirable. Per the above-quoted excerpt, it remains unclear how Imagination could shift Alonso's mindset from the consideration of non-instrumental writing as ridiculous under Reason's cold light, to the assessment of the same action as less absurd under an imaginative lens, to an obstinate determination to reengage with it. Further, the use of the comparative in *less* ridiculous implies that Imagination's light diverges from Reason's not in kind, but only in angle or intensity. If this is so, then the former faculty approximates rather than antagonizes the latter. This approximation turns into fusion when, by the end, Imagination limits itself to reproducing Reason's "sensible and prudent advice" (178).

The fact that Imagination ends up reduced to the reproduction of Reason indicates that, within the purview of these two faculties, the mentally conceivable ends up coinciding with the

[52] In *Aesthetic Ideology* (1984), Paul de Man associates Imagination operating as "an agent of reason" (90) with Enlightenment thought, notably with Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790). In this vein, we might suggest that Alonso's concept of Imagination draws from (or critiques) Enlightenment conceptions of this faculty rather than Romantic ones. However, as will become clear in the next section, Alonso's definition of Imagination indeed overlaps and is intended to show the limits of a specifically Romantic understanding of the mental faculties. See Paul de Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," *Aesthetic Ideology* (The University of Minnesota Press, 1996 [1984]), 70-90.

reasonably producible. In early-twentieth-century Caracas, reproducing the reasonable means, as we know, confining the scope of women's behaviors, if not their entire mental itineraries, to sociobiologically reproductive ones. This is why a faculty operating beyond Reason's (and, by extension, Imagination's) jurisdiction becomes indispensable. Enter Fantasy. Introduced throughout the novel as an "aberrant," "extravagant" or exorbitant faculty—a power acting outside Reason's orbit—Fantasy institutes the conceivability of the irrational, the unsanctioned, and all other flavors of the non-instrumental.[53] It does this axiomatically: the existence of Fantasy is decreed and so is its endowment with the ability to conceive actions beyond reasonableness. Without hermeneutical violence, we may assert that Fantasy enters the mind's stage to provincialize Reason. To grasp how exactly the mind's eccentric faculty operates, it helps to examine its depiction in Francis de Miomandre's "Prologue" to the 1928 edition. In her prefatory remarks, Miomandre rightly identifies the mental power of *fantasía* at work in the novel whenever (*cada vez que*) María Eugenia Alonso "se deja llevar por los caprichos o por las conclusiones lógicas de sus libres convicciones" (2). In short, this power features on the occassions when Alonso's mind lets itself go, opening up to unpredictable trajectories and improper courses of action. Key to note here is that Fantasy does not merely act as the power that fuels the desire for the non-instrumental but is also the latter's condition of possibility. Without Fantasy—that is, left to Reason and Imagination's devices—non-instrumental actions would be inconceivable to the mind. Yet these actions must be made conceivable (and practicable) if Alonso is to desire and

[53] Alonso's engagements with non-instrumental writing practices are explicitly said to be catalyzed and/or sustained by *fantasía* or its byproducts (referred to by the noun *la fantasía*). Reflecting back on the act of writing the letter that occupies the first eighty pages of the novel, Alonso writes: "hay que decir en honor de la verdad, que esta larga historia de la carta con su final de desilusión, fue toda ella de principio a fin obra única y purísima de mi fantasía" (142); later on, she associates a Romantic "humor sentimental" with "un rato de fantasía" (241) and justifies the act of writing her extravagant love letter never to be sent as follows: "Como si hubiese tenido la influencia de esas drogas, alucinantes y embriagadoras, el diálogo cortísimo, sostenido con Perucho, despertó en mí el recuerdo de Gabriel tan vivo y tan violento, que lo sentí moverse en el río, en los árboles, en los pájaros, en Perucho, y en todo aquello que se movía y que me rodeaba; lo sentí después dentro de mí, y lo sentí tan hondamente, que tuve la fantasía de escribirle allí mismo" (153). It is significant that Bertie Acker translates "tuve la fantasía" as "I had the urge to write" (172)—an expression that betrays the original and bolsters the rather mythical assumption that writers write not because they decide to do so, but because they cannot help it. As I show over the course of this analysis, the latter assumption goes against Alonso's socioeconomic and gendered understanding of who is endowed with the freedom to write, as well as with the freedom to chose what, when, and where to do so. As will also become clear below, it is relevant that Uncle Pancho (a proto-anagram of "Sancho") says about María Eugenia's scope of thinkability and agency: "Tu libertad es un mito; sí; es una de las muchas fantasías o aberraciones, que se agitan en tu cabeza" (97). For his part, Gabriel defines "fantasía" in opposition to "la conciencia real de las cosas" (280) and to Alonso's own understanding of the same faculty as precisely "plena claridad" (287) and "plena iluminación" (20). For their part, Aunt Clara and Abuelita repeatedly label Fantasy-infused actions as "extravagancias" (106; 136; 157; 216).

decide, as she does time and time again throughout the novel, to indulge in non-instrumental writing. Given this theoretico-narrative exigence, there must exist Fantasy's exorbitance.[54]

Faced with this explanation, a reader may retort that the institution of Fantasy as an in-built exorbitant faculty is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to turn non-instrumental writing into a praxis, much less a habit. Moreover, the fact that Fantasy is at work whenever María Eugenia lets herself go risks implying a circular argument: in order for the protagonist to give in to non-instrumental trajectories, Fantasy must be active; however, in order for Fantasy to become active, the protagonist must let her mind go. Although this reading may arise from Miomandre's ambiguous use of *cada vez que* in the "Prologue," the novel makes sure that there is a method to Fantasy's madness. If we follow a generous yet plausible interpretation according to which this power is at work every time María Eugenia *se deja llevar*, meaning that it sustains and allows for her gesture of letting herself go, the only question remaining is what awakens Fantasy in the first place. Note that, with the information the novel offers, we cannot presuppose that Alonso has always already been predisposed to Fantasy's awakening (nowhere does her theory of mind imply that she possesses a faculty in extraordinary degree), nor can we assume that this faculty affords a passive mode that allows it to wake to and co-operate with "external accidents."

In lieu of all explications in stock, Alonso deploys one that completes and strengthens her theory of mind's robustness. This explication appears as a rejoinder to Aunt Clara and Abuelita's condemnation of her act of letter writing at the riverbank. As we saw, the passage featuring the injunction ends with Imagination's reproduction of the women's "sensible" advice, under whose aegis the act of having written non-instrumentally in an "improper" place, alongside the text resulting from this process, appear ridiculous. This is a moment of seemingly irreversible entrapment, as one cannot picture how Alonso might extirpate herself from the tenets of

[54] It is curious that Latin Americanist scholarship has not historically differentiated between Imagination and Fantasy in Teresa de la Parra's novel, or between non-instrumental writing more broadly and poetic writing in particular, thus using these terms interchangeably. As a consequence, we find reflections such as: "la imaginación poética […] le permite [a María Eugenia Alonso] sobreponerse a estas exigencias. La centralidad de la imaginación en [esta] novela de iniciación explica por qué los problemas estéticos y la ficcionalidad son aspectos esenciales" (2). See Edna Aizenberg, "El Bildungsroman fracasado en Latinoamérica: el caso de *Ifigenia,* de Teresa de la Parra," *Revista Iberoamericana* 51.132-133 (1985): 539-46. In an upcoming article, I claim that *Iphigenia* is not a failed but an unorthodoxly successful Bildungsroman that leverages Romantic vitalist and sentimentalist aesthetics to portray the protagonist's growth from self-centeredness to class consciousness and community-building amongst women. Romina Wainberg, "Casarse o escribirse: escritura improductiva versus reproducción socioeconómica en *Ifigenia* de Teresa de la Parra," Héctor Hoyos, Romina Wainberg, eds., *Nuevo Texto Crítico, Special Issue: Centenario de* Ifigenia, forthcoming 2025.

reasonability that the Imagination, as an undercover agent of Reason, keeps replaying. The only event capable of moving the action forward is Fantasy's intervention but, as our hypothetical reader has retorted, it is not clear how this exorbitant power can be awakened from within the domain of reasonability. Let us then examine how the protagonist ejects her mind from Reason's radius through an explication of Fantasy's awakening. After the older women's scolding, we read:

> I didn't answer a single word […] everything I'd written now seemed completely ridiculous to me. Under the spell of the words pronounced by María Antonia, Aunt Clara, and Grandmother, the spirit of Don Quixote had fled from me, leaving only Sancho, sitting in a far corner of my soul, rightly mocking such a nonsensical letter […] But not in vain has it been said that the adventurous spirit of Don Quixote is immortal, and that it is as tenacious as the eternal rebirth of life […] while my imagination was busy reproducing that sensible and prudent advice, in the upper regions of my soul, somewhat whipped and battered but still courageous, the enterprising spirit of Don Quixote again appeared […] the adventuresome spirit we all have within our souls arose temptingly and whispered in my ear […] "Maybe the river is right! Remember madness is the mother of the sublime!" (177-9)[55]

To my knowledge, the theoretico-narrative significance of this passage has been overlooked. Granted, scholars have noticed the relevance of Cervantes's hero in the novel by foregrounding that "María Eugenia Alonso" references "Alonso Quijano" (Don Quixote's given name), while her accomplices (the aforementioned "Perucho" and her uncle "Pancho") are proto-anagrams of "Sancho."[56] María Eugenia's penchant for interlacing Fantasy and reality with almost unbeatable obstinacy, against societal pressure and sanctioned behavior, also hints at a so-called Quixotic

[55] In the original: "Yo no contesté ni una palabra […] cuanto había escrito en la tarde, me pareció ahora completamente ridículo. Al conjuro de las palabras de María Antonia, tía Clara y Abuelita, había huido de mí el espíritu de Don Quijote, y por lo visto, ya no tenía sino a Sancho, sentado en un extremo de mi alma, burlándose con razón de tan disparatada carta […] Pero no en balde se ha dicho que el espíritu aventurero de Don Quijote es inmortal, y es tenaz el eterno renacer de la vida […] mientras mi imaginación se ocupaba en reproducir [s]ensatas y prudentes expresiones, en lo más elevado de mi alma, algo apaleado y maltrecho, pero siempre animoso, apareció de nuevo el espíritu emprendedor de Don Quijote […] este espíritu andante que llevamos todos dentro del alma, se erguía tentador y me decía al oído [:] «Tal vez sea el río quien tenga razón: ¡mira que es la locura madre de lo sublime!». Hasta que por fin […] logré sacar en claro que el mal de las cosas no está en su fondo, sino en su forma [y r]esolví, pues, cambiar las apariencias de mi proyecto que resultaba «impropio» y ridículo en su traje de carta, y determiné encerrarlo en un traje de versos" (158-9). The term "sublime," so dear to Romantic aesthetics, appears in the novel seventeen times.

[56] See Rafael Climent-Espino, "Novela autobiográfica y metaliteratura: usos y maneras de la escritura en Teresa de la Parra," *Revista Iberoamericana* 17.64 (2017), 175-94, Luz Marina Rivas, "De Ana Teresa a Ana Teresa: Teresa de la Parra, paradigma de un siglo," *Revista Venezolana de Estudios de la Mujer* 15.34 (2010): 201-16, Juan Cristóbal Castro, "El virus literario: peligros de la ficción desbordada en la literature mdoerna venezolana," *Universum* 39.1 (2024): 195-212, Froilán Ramos Rodríguez, "Teresa de la Parra e *Ifigenia* (1924): Mujer y escritura," *Folios 43* (2016): 3-15, and Ana María Caula, "Género y nación en la narrativa de Teresa de la Parra," Beatriz Domínguez García and Auxiliadora Pérez Vides, eds., *Género ciudadanía y globalización* (Ediciones Alfar, 2011), 151-64. See also RoseAnna Mueller, *Teresa de la Parra: A Literary Life*, 61-79.

temperament. Hints notwithstanding, the first time Cervantes's protagonist appears in *Iphigenia* is in the above-quoted excerpt, which embeds his spirit in human physiognomy while illustrating its function as an enabler of non-instrumental actions. At the end of the above-quoted paragraph, María Eugenia has somehow let herself veer off Reason's beaten track and, in consonance with her understanding of Fantasy-at-work, has arrived at the unreasonable conclusion that she should reengage in writing. This means that the eccentric faculty became operative at some point between Imagination's replay of sensible advice and María Eugenia's insensible resolution. But how? Through the eternal return of Don Quixote's spirit! It is this spirit that, from the depths of the soul and through its characteristic stubbornness, recurrently enlivens the mind's unreasonable region, namely Fantasy. Once the latter has awakened, the (il)logic that follows—say, the casting of non-instrumental writing as desirable—makes perfect (non)sense.

As exciting as it sounds, this discovery suggests that there may be a conservative side to the protagonist's theory. If the mental power of Fantasy, which is the condition of conceivability of all unreasonable actions, depends for its awakening on Don Quixote's spirit, but the latter shows up at the writer's soul *ad libitum*, then Alonso's concept of "the spirit of Don Quixote" could prove an iteration of the myth of Muses' spontaneous visit, therefore reinvigorating the figure of the Writer as s/he who receives from the Muses the inspirational impetus needed to pen. I argue this is not the case, but to make this argument we must examine the second and third mentions of Don Quixote's spirit included in the above-cited excerpt. There we find that, just when María Eugenia is about to capitulate to Grandmother and Aunt Clara's indictments—according to which non-instrumental writing is a ridiculous endeavor—the spirit of Don Quixote returns to her. "Not in vain," the protagonist tells us, "it been said that the adventurous spirit of Don Quixote is immortal, and that it is as tenacious as the eternal rebirth of life." Even as she continues to struggle with the tension between the constriction of the older women's tenets and the effluence of Don Quixote's presence, María Eugenia identifies the latter as "the adventuresome spirit we all have within our souls, arising temptingly and whispering in [her] ear."

The reason why these claims entail everything but a divinization—in fact, they imply a secularization and trivialization—of the writer figure involves an apparent paradox. On the one hand, the idea that the appearance of Quixote's spirit is capricious, and thus stands beyond the will of the writer, holds. On the other hand, the appearance of this spirit is said to be part and parcel of the "eternal rebirth of life"—a description that, whilst maintaining the mysteriousness of the

spirit's reason for appearing, renders this causal logic insignificant. In other words, even if it is true that a writer cannot voluntarily invoke the source of Fantasy's awakening and, with it, the conceivability of acts of non-instrumental penning, the ability to summon the spirit is negligible because its return is not rare. Insofar as it continues to partake in the universal rebirth of life, the arrival of the spirit of Don Quixote is a widespread and quotidian reoccurrence. Furthermore, the spirit's arrival is neither granted nor guaranteed just in María Eugenia's case, but it is an impetus that "*we all* have within our souls" (179, emphasis added). Just as Fantasy constitutes a faculty embedded in the human mind, the spirit is an innate feature of the soul that admits neither exceptions nor degrees, even if some follow and others deflate—or channel otherwise—its words of unreason. If non-instrumental writing's condition of possibility is therefore granted to all and quotidian, then not only is María Eugenia's theory miles apart from the aforementioned myths of the Writer, but it contests these myths by characterizing non-instrumental penning as an embodied, ordinary, and universally-accessible activity.

To nuance this inclusive definition, the protagonist underscores the feasible distance between the capacity to write (which is universal) and the realization of acts of non-instrumental writing (which hinge on the result of a struggle between a person's socioeconomic conditions and their opportunities, confidence, and perseverance). This struggle, dramatized as a tension between the older women's mandates to behave "properly" and Alonso's penchant for "improper" comportment, indexes an acute understanding of the relationship between writing, gender, and class, as well as a critique of the historical confusion of innate inability and practical impossibility when it comes to writing. Insofar as, at this stage in the narrative, the protagonist embodies a subject position with material access to writerly tools, leisure time, and societal permission to pen under certain circumstances, the tension she faces lies between the prohibition to pen "improper" texts in "improper" places—an injunction that qualifies her writings as ridiculous—and the stubborn determination to pen as fueled by the quotidian reappearance of Don Quixote's spirit and the active leveraging of Fantasy as a faculty. As this is, on María Eugenia's terms, a struggle between two weighty poles, the determination to write improperly is the result of effortful persistence, of a carving out of propaedeutic moments only dedicated to weighting arguments against one pole or its opposite. By not only noting but also devoting pages to her intervals of hesitation, Alonso strengthens her conceptualization of writing as an innate capacity, all the while illuminating the unequal effort required from a woman to realize each act of non-instrumental

penning. In doing so, she offers an expanded, strictly feminist critique of the myths of the Writer mentioned above, including their residual presence in Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's Vis-à-Vis María Eugenia's Theory: Modeling the Writer after the Human?

With the aftertaste of the last paragraph, some readers may deem this joint analysis superfluous. Other readers, more willing to go through the motions, will find puzzling the framing of this exercise as a comparison instead of a contrast—why, if the divergence between frameworks is at this point self-evident, should we put "vis-à-vis" in place of "versus"? In what follows, I substantiate my assertion that Wordsworth's and Alonso's theories of mind are closer than it seems. So much so that the absence rather than the institution of a comparison will appear, by the end of this section, odd.

Let us begin with the most obvious confluence, namely their association of Reason with instrumentality. We cannot ignore that in virtue of their geopolitical, socioeconomic, and gendered differences, principles of "societal reasonability" add to María Eugenia's experience on top of the strictures of "scientific reasoning" that both character and poet oppose. Still, a similar impetus animates not just their common opposition to instrumental rationale but their adhesion to non-instrumental actions. Amongst these, they exhibit an obstinate penchant for, defense of, and return to writing. Furthermore, Wordsworth as much as Alonso define penning as a recurrent practice susceptible to nourishment. For the poet, this means nurturing a "habit of meditation" on which the intentional moment of recollection and the succeeding act of composition depend. In a similar fashion, *Iphigenia*'s protagonist engages in a habit of contemplative reflection (of *dejarse llevar por sus tendencias contemplativas*) that need not but can also entail remembrance. Consider, for instance, Alonso's account of her own drafting process for the letter to a childhood friend:

> I'm writing in my room whose double doors I've locked […] Since I have placed my head reclining against the back of the chair, or leaning my elbows on the white surface of the desk, I am always looking at my patio with the orange trees. And I have thought so much, gazing up, that I now know even the tiniest detail of the green filigree against the blue sky. Now, before starting my story, without looking at the orange trees, or sky, or anything, I've closed my eyes for an instant, I have locked my hands over them, and very clearly, for a few seconds, I've seen you

> again, just as you were when you faded in the distance there, on the station platform in Biarritz. (11)[57]

As it happens for Wordsworth, the act of remembrance does not manifest as a lapse of Proustian involuntary memory, but as a result of the habitual self-positioning in a familiar setting, which facilitates the mental recomposition of a past event deemed necessary for an act of writing to begin.[58]

Undergirding this commonality between Alonso and Wordsworth is the first fundamental difference between their theories of mind and writing. We saw above that for the poet, the act of penning is the endpoint of a process that starts with Nature's "plant[ing] images of light and sound" in the soil of a chosen child's Imagination. Because said child has been endowed since birth with a higher degree of the mind's "poetic faculties," his Imagination in passive mode is innately predisposed to both envision and record Nature's "accidental revelations." In maturity, when the mind grows along with the poet's body, he nurtures the habit of meditation in whose framework Imagination operates in its twofold active mode: first, it endeavors to recollect bygone events with as much faithfulness as possible; then, it exerts its baggage upon reality, allowing the poet to asymptotically express past "powerful feelings" in poetry. The contrast between Wordsworth's and Alonso's account of the mental faculties that intervene in the writing process is ostensible—in the character's assessment, Imagination hints for a brief moment to an "outside of Reason" only to prove the latter's ally, folded back into or always already operating within its jurisdiction. It is therefore the faculty of Fantasy that, operating beyond Imagination and Reason's orbit, allows the mind to veer off Reason's radius and thus to conceive of non-instrumental penning as a feasible

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[57] In the original: "Te escribo en mi cuarto cuyas dos puertas he cerrado con llave. Mi cuarto es grande, claro, empapelado de azul celeste, y tiene una ventana con reja que da sobre el segundo patio de la casa. Del lado afuera de la ventana, muy pegadito a la reja, hay un naranjo, y más allá, en cada una de las otras esquinas, hay otros naranjos. Como yo he colocado mi escritorio y mi sillón muy cerca de mi ventana, mientras pienso echada atrás la cabeza contra el respaldo del sillón, o apoyada de codos sobre la blanca tabla del escritorio, estoy siempre mirando mi patio de los naranjos... Y es tanto lo que tengo pensado mirando hacia arriba, que ya conozco hasta el más mínimo detalle de la verde filigrana sobre el azul del cielo. Ahora, antes de comenzar mi relato, sin mirar naranjos, ni cielo, ni nada, he cerrado un instante los ojos, me he puesto sobre ellos las dos manos entrelazadas y muy claramente, durante unos segundos te he visto de nuevo, tal como dejé de verte allá en el andén de la estación de Biarritz" (20).

[58] In my close examination of *Iphigenia*'s depictions and theorizations of 'writing,' I unpack this thesis according to which, throughout Alonso's life, penning is a habit characterized by the disruption of other habits. In other words, I argue that acts of writing stand throughout the novel as habitual disruptions of even more habitual psychophysical states. See Romina Wainberg, "*Iphigenia* (1924): Unproductive Writing as Resistance to 'Proper' Womanhood," *Against Productivity: Unproductive Writing as Resistance in Early Latin American Fiction* (Stanford University [dissertation], 2023), 180-245.

course of action. Here, Fantasy's recurrent awakening—sparked by the ordinary reappearance of Don Quixote's spirit—enables not only Alonso's acts of writing, but also their repetition and eventual congealment into a habit.

Confronted with these two renderings of the Imagination, we may settle for a sensible conclusion: despite Wordsworth and Alonso's terminological overlap, the concepts underpinning their use of the same term differ. Without altogether dismissing this proposition, I venture that the shift from Wordsworth's to María Eugenia's theories ensues not necessarily from a fundamental difference in their understanding of the faculty in question, but from the character's need to supplement its powers to make her acts of writing possible. It may be that, for Wordsworth, the innate ability to be impinged upon Imagination and the mature habit of exerting its colors upon reality suffices to reengage in penning, to convince himself that non-instrumental writing is worth pursuing. "The obstacles that stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and the Historian," claims the author, "are incalculably greater[.] The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being" (67).[59] Unlike the poet's, the character's restrictions are more numerous, and her obstacles harder to surmount. Not only is she persistently encouraged to abandon "improper" writing practices in favor of "prudent" activities such as sowing and weaving but, on the exceptional occasions in which penning is permitted, it must take place in preestablished spaces, genres, and manner(ism)s geared to the reproduction of the reasonable (saliently, she is allowed to pen letters in her room that procure socially convenient friendships or economically affluent suitors).

In this adverse context, and as suggested before, the appearance of non-instrumental writing as a conceivable practice and the decision to exercise it requires greater deliberation than what imaginative operations afford. Recall once again that, in Wordsworth's theory, the condition of possibility of writing stretches back to the fleeting instants of "accidental revelation" that plant the seeds of writerly exploitable "images" in "the celestial soil of the Imagination" (607). Note also that this seminal moment finds a correlate in María Eugenia's theory, as there is indeed a brief interval in which the Imagination allows for an alternative to reasonability. In Wordsworth's case,

[59] We should remain healthily skeptical about how free from obstacles or "easy" it was for the poet to reengage in his heterodox literary program and intended mission against the grain of both his increasingly utilitarian milieu and the weight of the English lyrical tradition. As Walter Jackson Bate puts it, "even Wordsworth had more difficulties in getting started or renewing his efforts than he cared to advertise" (109). See Walter Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Harvard University Press, 1970).

the brevity of the instant in which this alternative makes itself available presents no problem, for the poet-child is always already susceptible to receiving and elaborating on Imagination's influx. The same cannot be said of María Eugenia, who must work through a host of societal obstacles before even conceiving a logic other than Reason's. In her mind, the window of opportunity that Imagination gifts—that instant before reasonability folds all things thinkable back into its radius—is briefer than required: the circle simply closes too fast. From this socially-imposed need for supplementary time to access an outside of Reason's orbit, follows the institution of a faculty whose exorbitant domain is more readily and protractedly available.

The temporal *modus operandi* of Imagination and Fantasy is not the only difference between Wordsworth and Alonso's theoretical frameworks. If the faculties' temporal divergence results from the poet and the character's societal positionalities (from nurture or, in a loose appropriation of Marxist diction, the superstructure), the possibility of this divergence hinges on a structural construal of said faculties' nature. To see this, we must only foreground that, if Wordsworth's Imagination is always already predisposed and therefore quick to access the gifts of "external accidents," it is because his theory of mental faculties admits innate differences in measure. To be clearer, the brevity that suffices for the "images of sound and sight" to be planted within the "celestial soil" of the child-poet's Imagination, therefore preparing the ground for his mature leverage of this faculty, stems first and foremost from faculties' ability to accept degrees, and from the secondary attribution of higher degrees to "the structure of the poet's mind." Neither the adscription of a peculiarity to the writer nor the faculties' ability to differ in degree belong in María Eugenia's theory. The latter assertion is made evident in this theory's disavowal of innate disparities internal to Fantasy (that is, in the presumption that its powers remain equal from mind to mind), and in its more fundamental endowment of all human souls with "the spirit of Don Quixote" (which, as we know, drives Fantasy's recurrent awakening).

A fundamental hypothesis thus obtains from this comparison between Wordsworth's and Alonso's stances: namely, that their theories imply not only different acceptations of 'writing' and 'the W/writer', but conflicting definitions of 'the human'. Proofs of this are the contingent and structural conditions that in each case make writing possible. In Wordsworth's account, penning stems from an engagement with accidental revelations (premised on the passive mode of the Imagination mode during childhood) and a habit of meditation (developed in adulthood through the active leverage of the so-called Highest Faculty and against the grain of his instrumentalist

milieu). Key to these two instances is that they premise writing on a power inherent in the human mind's structure and on the intentional repetition of certain practices. To be concrete: just as the access to "accidental revelations" depends on a willful replication of "the set of conditions under which come together most fruitfully,"[60] the act of penning and the recollection from which it stems hinge on repeated exercises in meditation. Once again, and contrary to caricaturesque renderings of the Romantic myth of the Author, Wordsworth's theory of the mind upholds a conceptualization of 'writing' as an effortful, ecological, often-exercised, and embodied praxis whose conditions of possibility are structural rather than uniquely individual and whose conditions of replicability are not ineffable but enumerable and repeatable. On the flip side, his conviction that some "boys" are always-already writers (i.e. fathers of men born to be poets) must correlate to a theory of the mind wherein chosen individuals are divinely endowed with a higher degree of universally shared faculties. Here, it is worth adding that this premise applies not only to writers, gifted with a greater measure of Imagination, but also to child prodigies who, equipped with an enhanced faculty of Reason (fathers of men born to be scientists) "can read / the inside of the earth" through the use of "telescopes, and crucibles, and maps" (605). This adds consistency to Wordsworth's theory, as any faculty admits lower or greater degrees, even if some of them are said to rank higher than others (Imagination > Fancy > [instrumental] Reason).

The selective embeddedness of faculties' degrees within the structure of human minds is (if I may) a shame, for it partially if not altogether undoes the most egalitarian aspects of Wordsworth's theory: the universality of the mental conditions of possibility for non-instrumental writing, along with its dependence on recognizable and repeatable praxes. Whereas the latter are necessary conditions, they ultimately prove insufficient, as a higher degree of so-called "poetic faculties" is also required for penning to ensue. No matter how generous our reading of Wordsworth, and how much can be rescued from his theory, we cannot bypass that within its purview acts of non-instrumental writing—poetry being their pinnacle—are accessible only to those whose mental structure has been endowed with special qualities by God.[61] Alonso's theory

[60] James Scoggins, *Fancy and Imagination*, 146.

[61] However trite, this is important to underscore in a context where the most exciting readings of the English Romantics focus on their potentialities for horizontal left-leaning thought. Even Greg Ellermann's groundbreaking recent monograph, centered on the repeatability of accidental revelations and non-instrumental relations of mind to nature, leaves untouched the problem of *for whom* these events are repeatable as well as experientable. An example will suffice to bring this problem to relief and show the perils of its omission in the reconstruction of Romantic tenets. In his book, Ellermann cites as proof of accidental revelation's replicability an excerpt from Thomas De Quincey where he states that, following Wordsworth's depiction of the conditions under which revelations occur, he found himself

of the mind, the reader will have noticed, distributes universality and accessibility differently. On a fundamental level, the fact that faculties admit no differences in degree implies no variation in structure across individual minds—the human mind is one and for all. Also for all is the ability to conceive and potentially practice non-instrumental actions, including (albeit not limited to) writing. Insofar as Fantasy's embeddedness in the mind allows for "letting oneself go," and the latter opens mental itineraries beyond Reason's and Imagination's perimeter, it paves the way for thinkability beyond instrumentality. Noteworthy here is that, unlike the instant that Imagination affords to think otherwise and its insufficiency for those who—in virtue of their positionality and corresponding socio-economic restrictions—require additional time to convince themselves of pursuing "improper" actions, Fantasy's exorbitant domain is, as it were, open 24/7. Fantasy's availability guarantees that all individuals are not just structurally able to conceive reality beyond reasonability (this is granted by the Imagination) but that this conceivability is temporally realizable. In a twofold sense, time is of the essence—inherent in mind's physiology and key to afford everyone's lingering on non-instrumental thought. Given that the latter and—*in potentia*—the actions that spring from it, are supplied in equal measure by the structure of the human mind, the conceivability of said actions is universally accessible. On an even deeper level, the universal reachability of non-instrumental (un)reason is secured by "the spirit of Don Quixote that we all carry within us" (172); as explained before, it is the ordinary reappearance of this spirit that sets Fantasy in motion, thus permitting the actual (as opposed to the merely structurally possible) trajectories to which this faculty's activity leads.

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witnessing "the same impressive transfiguration; so that it is not evanescent, but depends upon fixed and recoverable combinations of time and weather." According to Ellerman, "De Quincey's note evokes, more than any particular event, a mode of quality of experience that might be cold "Wordsworthian" (89). As we have seen, however, this "Wordsworthian" experience, the name of which indexes its structural repeatability, is accessible not to just anyone but at most to those natural-born poets who, like Wordsworth, have been endowed with a high degree of Imagination. Thus, if we were to look at the situation from a faithfully Wordsworthian perspective, we would have to doubt De Quincey's assertion that he has experienced an accidental revelation himself. Neither a poet nor an indisputable source of evidence, his self-report cannot be used as proof that revelations are open to all, being that they are dependent on the replication of a set of conditions. If more must be added to support De Quincey's unreliability, we should recall that, in supposedly "relaying" Wordsworth's own depiction of revelatory events, he smuggles the syntagma "capacity of apprehension," the Kantian resonance of which seems unlikely to be used by someone who prided himself in having "never read a word of German metaphysics" (106; 87; 89). This argumentative itinerary brings us back and further bolsters our hypothesis: according to Wordsworth, non-instrumental writing is indeed an embodied, effortful, ecological, and exercised practice dependent on passive and active operations of a faculty universally embedded in the structure of the human mind, alongside the repeatable sets of conditions that put said faculty at work. Nonetheless, this writerly practice, the degree of the mental power that allows for it, and the environmental-perceptual-mental coordinates from which said power blossoms, are only accessible to natural-born poets.

The last affirmations invite an underexplored point of comparison: Alonso's seemingly secular vis-à-vis Wordsworth's at bottom religious theorization of the mind's powers. Not only do these theorizations mark a disagreement about the primary source of mental faculties but, through the selection of one or another source, they warrant conflicting theses on said faculties' distribution. Wordsworth explains variations in "structures of the mind" by way of varying divine endowments, thus justifying the poet's extraordinary status amongst men. For her part, Alonso roots penning in an ordinary, earthy, and universal spirit-cum-faculty, therefore implying that 'the writer' is no one special, biologically or otherwise. Whereas Wordsworth's theory of the mind endorses uneven access to penning and an exceptionalist, divinely gifted notion of the writer figure, Alonso's posits universal accessibility to writing and a conception of the writer seemingly freed from biological exceptionality, social respectability, or literary prestige.

Wordsworth's Vis-à-Vis María Eugenia's Theory II: Modeling the Writer after Specific Human Needs?

From the previous characterization, it would seem that Wordsworth's theory of writing and the mental faculty schema that upholds it are ethically spurious, whereas Alonso's conceptual framework is the byproduct of selflessness and kind-heartedness. Despite appearances, I claim that the ethics inferred by "reverse engineering" purposes from results conflict with the actual (respectively historical or narrative) motivations of Wordsworth and Alonso. Following my introduction's supplementary thesis, I argue that the two theories are pragmatically instead of conceptually motivated. Although their scaffoldings of the human mind are framed as the psycho-physiological underpinnings for conceptions of 'writing' and 'the writer', I contend these scaffoldings were put together hastily, if not *ex post facto*, to validate non-instrumental writing in milieux that hindered its unconceivability.

I suggest probing this unorthodox statement through Argentine author César Aira's equally unorthodox concept of 'dynamic verisimilization' (*verosimilización dinámica*). Aira has one of his narrator's friends introduce this expression in *Conversations* (2014 [2007]), a novella centered around a dispute about whether a seemingly odd detail in an artwork should be considered a decision or an error (in mineralogical if not computational terms: is a given detail a flaw or a

feature?).[62] Faced with the image of a herdsman wearing a Rolex in a blockbuster film, the two interlocutors discuss how said image should be judged. In this context, the narrator's friend advances the following proposal worth quoting at length:

> I had spoken of verisimilitude, right? In fact, I had based my argument on it. That it was not verisimilar for a humble mountain herdsman to be wearing a fancy Rolex. So, if ours had one, this would create a rupture in verisimilitude, and there my syllogism ended […] Hence, he continued, my error consisted of me having limited myself to a *static concept of verisimilitude. He proposed a different, more dynamic one*. According to this concept, and seen within the movement of creation, verisimilitude could be, and was, a generator of stories. That attribute was a byproduct of its very *raison d'être*, which was to rectify an error […] Stories that are told or written or filmed, whether they belong to the realm of reality or fiction, have to have qualities that make them worthwhile, because *they are neither facts nor natural occurrences*. A rock along the side of the road, or a cloud, or a planet does not need to *justify itself with its beauty or interest or novelty*, but a story does. Because stories are *gratuitous and have no specific function* [*no servir para nada*], other than whiling away the time, they rely on their *quality*. Inventiveness has to be maximized in each instance: each time, a new rabbit has to be pulled out of the hat. One recourse they use is verisimilitude. But not a *static and narrow verisimilitude, which reality itself provides, but rather "emergency" verisimilitude, the one that arrives at the last minute*, like firefighters with their sirens blaring, coming to the rescue in a dangerous situation.[63]

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[62] I quote from the following editions: César Aira*, Las conversaciones* (Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2007) and César Aira, Katherine Silver, transl., *Conversations* (New Directions Publishing, 2014).

[63] César Aira, Katherine Silver, transl., *Conversations*, 19-20 (emphasis added). For the purposes of further research, I suggest that César Aira's notion of 'dynamic verisimilization' could be read as a hyperbolic case of philosopher of language H.P. Grice's concept of 'the cooperative principle' in conversational communication, according to which when we speak to one another there is an "assumption of cooperativeness" that undergirds our sustained efforts to make (and keep) a conversation "meaningful" (in the twofold sense of keeping it interesting and guaranteeing that it makes sense). See H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," *Syntax and Semantics* 3.1 (1975): 41-58 and Atefeh Hadi, "A Critical Appraisal of Grice's Cooperative Principle," *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 3.1 (2013): 69-72. Aira's original is worth citing at length: "Yo había hablado del verosímil, ¿no? De hecho, había basado mi argumentación en él. Que un humilde pastor en la montaña tuviera un faustoso Rolex era inverosímil. Luego, si el nuestro lo tenía, se producía una ruptura del verosímil, y ahí se acababa mi silogismo […] Pues bien, dijo, mi error consistía en limitarme a una concepción estática del verosímil. Él me proponía otra, dinámica. Según ésta, tomado en el movimiento de la creación, el verosímil podía ser, y era, un generador de historias. Esa cualidad salía de su misma razón de ser, que era la de enmendar un error. Un error real, o virtual, porque no importaba que no se hubiera cometido ni se le hubiera cruzado ni a mil leguas de la cabeza del autor cometerlo: bastaba con la posibilidad del error o el anacronismo o el disparate, y los autores de historias, aunque no lo supieran, cultivaban esta posibilidad, la protegían, la atesoraban, como su bien más preciado […] Las historias que se contaban o escribían o filmaban, ya pertenecieran al reino de lo real o al de la ficción, debían tener cualidades que las hicieran valer la pena, porque no eran hechos o cosas naturales. Una piedra a la vera del camino, o una nube, o un planeta, no necesitaba justificarse por su belleza o su interés o su novedad, pero una historia sí. Al ser gratuitas y no servir para nada específico, como no fuera para pasar el tiempo, las historias dependían de su calidad. Había que extremar la invención cada vez, cada vez había que sacar un nuevo conejo de la galera. Un recuerdo a propósito era el verosímil. Pero no el verosímil chato y estático, el que venía dado por la realidad misma, sino el 'de emergencia', el que venía a último momento, como los bomberos haciendo sonar la sirena, a salvar una situación comprometida" (48-9).

The exciting implications of this passage for literary theory and analysis fall beyond the scope of this study. What is vital for our purposes is the assertion that an uncalled-for action or narrative may need to justify its worthiness—its beauty, its novelty, its quality, and/or its interest—through last-minute tactics, the most salient of which is emergency verisimilitude. This impromptu act of verisimilization rectifies an error or explains how what may appear as an inconsistency, is in fact there by design. Brought into our argument, 'dynamic verisimilization' allows us to hypothesize that Wordsworth's and Alonso's mental faculty schemas, presented as the conditions of possibility of their writing theories and praxes, are in fact retroactive or last-minute gestures aimed at justifying said praxes' worthwhileness in increasingly adverse societal contexts. I claim that there is historical evidence of this in Wordsworth's case and narrative evidence in Alonso's.

Wordsworth's most systematic elaboration of his theory of mind, coterminous with the justification of his poems' classification, appears as we know in the "Preface" (1815). However, there are already signs of the retroactive quality of his theoretical scaffoldings in the "Preface" (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*. This Preface begins with the disclaimer that, after the initial publication of the book in 1798, he was advised

> to prefix a systematic defence [sic] of the theory upon which the poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, because I knew that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of reasoning him into an approbation of these particular Poems […] and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display my opinions, and fully to enforce my arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to the nature of a preface […] I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible, that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those, upon which general approbation is at present bestowed. (605)

The author's convoluted excuses for his refusal and subsequent agreement to provide a systematic defense of the theory upon which the poems are written, and the very postponement of this theory's explanation, suggest that its systematic version preexists neither the poems nor their classificatory principles. In a gesture of *verosimilización de emergencia*, pressured to justify his contested status as a poet in tandem with his "anti-poetic" aesthetic choices (notably, the combination between "the everyday language of men" and metric conventions), Wordsworth offers the theory of poetry he

deems sufficient to convince the public. In this context, the affirmation that he was hitherto unwilling to undertake this endeavor because he "might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of reasoning [the reader] into an approbation of these particular Poems," works not against my argument but as further proof of dynamic verisimilization at work. Anticipating the reader's assumption that his theory is an afterthought made to retroactively defend his standing and style, Wordsworth addresses this (correct!) suspicion up front, thus making it seem that he had not only considered it before, but it was precisely for this reason that he had refused to "reveal" his theoretical apparatus. Yet there was no apparatus to reveal before 1800! The same can be said of the "Preface" to *Poems* (1815): Wordsworth put together the theory of the mental faculties that introduces the volume *after* having categorized his texts as "Poems of Fancy" and "Poems of Imagination." Rather than preceding the arrangement of his texts, his mental faculty schema was deployed as a retroactive "theoretical" justification for this idiosyncratic arrangement.[64]

Whereas Wordsworth consolidates his theoretical apparatus *ex post facto*—as a strategy to make his standing as a poet indisputable, the existence of new poetry indispensable, and his "anti-poetic" aesthetics respectable—Alonso devises a theory of mind through a similar gesture of dynamic verisimilization. This speculation is harder to back up, as there is no way of proving if the character "came up" with a theoretical view of the mind's structure before or after her engagement with non-instrumental penning. Difficulties notwithstanding, I contend that there are grounds to assert that her theorization is less a conviction than a self-enabling justification for her eagerness to write and succeeding penning practices. This argument already features in our explanation of Fantasy's indispensability vis-à-vis Reason and Imagination. Per this explanation, the protagonist must substantiate her desire to engage in non-instrumental writing and convince herself—time and time again and contra societal injunctions—that her yearning is worthy and worth pursuing. To do so, she must devise a theory of the mind from which the unfeasible

[64] Wordsworth's theoretical justification and correlative arrangement of his poems have remained contentious (if not outright unconvincing) to such an extent that, beginning in the nineteenth-century, editors started to replace the poet's own proposed arrangement with one they deemed more suitable. In fact, the editor of the first major complete edition of Wordsworth's poetry, William Knight, chose to substitute the author's ordering of his poems for a chronological arrangement (by date of composition). In his "Preface" to *Poems of Wordsworth*, renowned critic Matthew Arnold called the poet's "scheme of mental physiology" and the categories upon which poems are supposedly distributed (i.e., "Poems of Imagination" and "Poems of Fancy") "ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory" (xii). See Matthew Arnold, "Preface," *Poems of Wordsworth* (Macmillan and Co., 1879) and William Knight, "Preface," *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (William Paterson, 1886).

conceivability and the less probable pursuit of this yearning always obtains. In want of this auto-enabling system, acts of non-instrumental writing are, if not inconceivable, impracticable. The institution of Fantasy as an exorbitant faculty, alongside the earthly Quixotic spirit that catalyzes its recurrent awakening, are therefore gestures of *verosimilización de emergencia* that warrant non-instrumental behaviors and excuse her stubborn reengagement with them even when societal restrictions seem, as in her conversation with older women, inescapable. As a curiosity, we may add that this introduction of Fantasy as a last-minute gesture to "rescue verisimilitude" fulfills an intra- as well as a meta-narrative function: given that readers of *Iphigenia* would have likely held similar if not more conservative belief systems than the novel's protagonist, the efficacy of the latter's self-enabling gesture of *verosimilización* makes non-instrumental writing appear feasible not only to her mind but also, meta-narratively, to the reader's.

In the last analysis, seeing Alonso's theory of the human mind as an enabler of self-indulgence should shift our judgment of this theory's (meta-)narrative functions as well as of its "egalitarian" traits, namely its universal accessibility and consequential rendering of writing as a practice available to all. If this egalitarianism is a gesture of verisimilization geared toward specifically allowing a middle-class woman in decadence to pen, then the intention behind her universalizing version of the mind, her expansion of 'the writer' figure, and the casting of non-instrumental penning as a desirable praxis, is a necessary byproduct of her selfishness rather than a theoretical conviction. Truth be told, the latter is consonant with María Eugenia's narcissistic temperament across the bulk of the novel.

Wordsworth's and Alonso's self-centered motives ultimately force us to confront the question of whether their mental faculty schemas and, more important for our purposes, the writing theories and practices that said schemas aim to enable, merit serious attention today. In Wordsworth's case, the sum of his personal motivations plus the characterization of writers as naturally-born, divinely-gifted men render his theoretical stance especially unpalatable to current standards. Yet, I maintain that each case study gives us distinct reasons not to throw the baby out with the bath water. These reasons will become clear once we consider the research foci of the three disciplines principally tasked with studying and thus shaping the theoretical concept of 'writing' since the turn of the twenty first century:[65] rhetoric and composition studies, creative

[65] We may at least partially explain the displacement of literary studies as a privileged site for theoretically negotiating the concept of 'writing' through two simultaneous phenomena: on one side, the turn of the century has witnessed a

writing, and cognitive psychology. Whether rhetoric and composition programs conceive of writing practices in narrow terms (within literature, composition, and language courses) or more broadly (across the curriculum), they approach it from the perspective of either its contributions to learning or its assistance in students' absorption into professional marketplaces.[66] From these viewpoints, the writing process is figured—therefore, conceptualized and taught—as a means to an end subject to failure/success benchmarks. This perception is not remote from how penning is viewed in the field of creative writing. Through the "systematization of creativity" and orientation to engender "texts that work" (in the most cynical versions, "products that sell"), these programs also regard the writing process in utilitarian terms. Furthermore, the programs' very name supports the assumption, looming in our comparative analysis, that only certain acts of penning—say, whatever counts as "poetic" composition at a geohistorical conjuncture—are creative and therefore deserving of a peculiar status.[67] For its part, the field of cognitive research centers on three main pillars: writing for cognitive development, the relationship between writing processes and their corresponding textual outcomes, and effective teaching approaches to composition. In keeping with these axes, experiments put forward in this field to monitor, elucidate, and theorize writing often entail an individual performing a writerly task whose success (or lack thereof) is correlated to the cognitive operations at work from the beginning of said task to its culmination.[68] Once again, a utilitarian notion of the penning process is at the heart of these experiments' designs.

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proliferation of writerly technologies and textual practices, alongside the development of technologies capable of measuring with increasing efficacy the psycho-physical operations at work throughout the writing process. This socio-technological phenomena have encouraged research at the intersection of fields such as cognitive psychology, media theory, and rhetoric and composition studies. On the other hand, the so-called "decline" of theory (*el declive de la teoría*) in literary departments has shifted scholarly attention from questions concerning the nature of language, writing, text, and literariness (much debated from early-twentieth-century formalisms through deconstruction) to a cultural studies-centered paradigm. See Marcelo Topuzián, *Muerte y resurrección del autor*, 5-30.

[66] Besides references cited above, see Roselmina Indrisano and James R. Squire, eds., *Perspectives on Writing: Research, Theory, and Practice* (International Reading Association, 2000), Charles A. MacArthur, Steve Graham, and Jill Fitzgerald, eds., *Handbook of Writing Research* (The Guilford Press, 2008), Lee Nickoson and Mary P Sheridan, eds., *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), Ken Hyland, *Teaching and Researching Writing: Applied Linguistics in Action* (Routledge, 2016), and Xiaoye You, ed., *Transnational Writing Education: Theory, History, and Practice* (Routledge, 2018).

[67] See Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Harvard University Press, 2011), x-xi; 71-4; 399-410.

[68] In addition to the references provided in note 39, see Michael Burke, *Literary Reading, Cognition, and Emotion* (Routledge, 2011), Terrence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 2016), Kathy Conklin, Ana Pellicer-Sánchez, and Gareth Carrol, eds., *Eye-Tracking: A Guide for Applied Linguistics Research* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), and Elena L. Grigorenko, Elisa Mambrino, and David D. Preiss, eds., *Writing: A Mosaic of New Perspectives* (Psychology Press, 2012), and Paul B. Armstrong, *Stories and the Brain: The Neuroscience of Narrative* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

The instrumental frameworks characteristic of rhetoric and composition studies, creative writing, and cognitive psychology are not in principle objectionable—they respond to needs internal to each discipline and have many times yielded groundbreaking discoveries. However, these disciplines' oligopoly over contemporary writing theory (if not practice) risks modeling both the penning process and its concept after utilitarian affordances. In this context, Wordsworth's compelling emphasis on the process rather than on product-centered dimensions of writing—its ecological situatedness, temporal protractedness, susceptibility to being nourished by habit, playful ties to memory, and enjoyment beyond efficiency—reminds us that alternative research avenues are still possible and worthy of pursuit. Besides iterating this emphasis on process, Alonso's earthly and feminist expansion of Wordsworth's Romantic construal of 'the writer' foregrounds that penning is not only a situated and embodied activity but, precisely to that extent, a classed and gendered one. By tracing a distinction between in-built penning abilities and sociohistorical (im)possibilities, she illuminates the contingent inequalities that may make writing impracticable to some even if it is structurally accessible to all. On the whole, Alonso's attempt at universalizing penning abilities and her dignification of writing outside institutional validation challenges the masculinist biases, ideology of giftedness, reification of literature, and auratization of the authorial figure still present in the English Romantics, constitutive of the literary marketplace (if not of literary studies) since its inception, and less conspicuously found in interdisciplinary scholars' prioritization of so-called "creative" and "successful" acts of penning over those insusceptible to criteria of failure and success, efficiency and inefficiency, accuracy and error. As the research foci summarized before imply, certain writerly activities—whichever count as "creative" or "successful"—and whoever performs them "accurately" remain endowed with disproportionate scholarly attention and resources. By contrast, Alonso joins Wordsworth in encouraging acts of penning whose literary orientation or social recognition has yet to gain acceptance, while also and more radically defending those acts that do not aim to partake in the institution of literature. At last, Wordsworth's and Alonso's shared willingness to go as far as to put together entire mental faculty schemas to justify non-instrumental penning habits resonates with the current urgency, as well as the worthwhileness, of making writing conceivable—therefore, practicable—beyond its instrumental functions.

Coda. The Limits of the Human: Race, Ethnicity, Religion[69]

I would be remiss If I remained silent about the mostly implicit yet arguable exclusions inherent in Wordsworth's and Alonso's theoretical scaffoldings. These exclusions involve not just the deprivation of racial, ethnic, and/or religious groups of certain qualities of the human mind but, in some cases, the denial of these groups' humanity.

Race is the most ostensible bias behind the two theories.[70] I cannot here do justice to the subtlety, eloquence, and erudition of the scholars who have argued for racial biases in Wordsworth's and Alonso's (feasibly, Teresa de la Parra's) stances. Thus, I limit myself to rehashing some of their central claims for a preliminary grasp of this controversy. Drawing from the poet's letters, statements, prefaces, and poems, Mary Kelly Persyn writes about Wordsworth's "inability to speak about [a woman of color] as a whole person," eventually referring to Blackness as an "afflicted race."[71] In consonance with Persyn's general thesis yet nuancing her assertion that "Wordsworth finds both slavery and the Black race illegible," James A. W. Heffernan contends that to the poet the "racial Other here is plainly visible," for it is precisely as exotic "sights" that "black women and other racial groups appear."[72] Heffernan states that, in writing about London's indoor spectacles, Wordsworth "associates alien [sic] races with animals […] undercut[ting] his universalizing claim that London reveals the essential unity of humankind."[73] The scholar's contention that there is at least a tension and most probably a contradiction between Wordsworth's

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[69] I borrow this expression from Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). It is auspicious that Nussbaum's analysis on the limits of the concept of the 'human' along racial, gendered, and ethnic lines culminates in the 1780s, when Wordsworth's work and thus this analysis begin. Given the current paucity of bibliography devoted to the subject, I refrain from making assertions about the feasible ableism inherent in both Wordsworth's and Alonso's schemas.

[70] Of course, as this essay has made explicit and Romanticist scholars have also argued in detail, gender and class biases are at the heart of Wordsworth's construal of 'the poet' and, less conspicuously, 'the human'. See, for instance, Judith W. Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women* (University of California Press, 1994), Lawrence Kramer, "Gender and Sexuality in The Prelude: The Question of Book Seven," *ELH* 54.3 (1987): 619-37, and Marlon B. Ross, "Naturalizing Gender: Woman's Place in Wordsworth's Ideological Landscape," *ELH* 53.2 (1986): 391-410. For a more controversial take developed at the intersection of literary criticism and gender and sexuality studies, see Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (Columbia University Press, 1999). It is noteworthy that, despite their efforts to acknowledge the gendered biases and structural inequalities that shape Wordsworth's view of writing—and, more specifically, poetic practice—contemporary Romanticists such as Joseph Albernaz and Greg Ellermann still sideline these inequalities in their monographs.

[71] See Mary Kelly Persyn, "The Sublime Turn Away from Empire: Wordsworth's Encounter with Colonial Slavery, 1802," *Romanticism on the Net* 26.1 (2002): 21.

[72] Citation from James A. W. Heffernan, "Wordsworth's London: The Imperial Monster," *Studies in Romanticism* 37.3 (1998): 436.

[73] Citation from James A. W. Heffernan, "Wordsworth's London: The Imperial Monster," 421-43.

proclamation of "the essential unity of humankind" and his ethno-racial prejudices is persuasive. From this follows that, at its most inclusive, Wordsworth's theory endows Persons of Color with the humanity necessary to be equipped with a mind; yet this mind, if it is assumed at all, is structurally impermeable to the high degree of powers that the poet ascribes to great men.[74] In short, it is far from a given that his notion of 'the human' includes Black and Brown peoples, much less their innate ability to write poetry.[75] Therefore, our working critique of Wordsworth's exclusivist theory of mind must be supplemented with a skepticism about not only who he qualifies as a writer but who counts as a human in the first place.

Alonso's view of race features most prominently in her description of Gregoria, the household's Black laundress. Apropos of this, Ileana Rodríguez observes that Venezuelan society as depicted in *Iphigenia* comprises three distinct racial groups: "The white, oligarchic *Mantuana* nation is always the focus of discussion. The mulatta nation is [seen as] an absurdity, a nightmare, the grotesque. The black nation, a 'sympathetic' illiteracy'."[76] Building upon Rodríguez's stance, Elizabeth Russ argues that, faced with the prospect of marrying a mixed-race *nouveau riche*, María Eugenia takes comfort in the "sight" (in Russ's parlance, "the 'pure' black visage") of the laundress:[77] "With few exceptions, any mention of Gregoria is accompanied by almost fetishistic reference to her blackness: her black skin, her black handkerchief blending with her black hair, and, above all, her black hands. In a passage dedicated to the 'whitest poem of the tub,' María Eugenia admiringly describes how these hands contrast with the white suds of the laundry tub: 'How her black hands shine on the immaculate whiteness!'."[78] In a gesture seemingly contradictory with this fetishistic othering, Alonso describes Gregoria as

> my friend, my confident, and my mentor, because even if she doesn't know how to read or write I consider her indisputably one of the most intelligent and wisest

[74] As Heffernan himself notes, this is most evident in Wordsworth's elusive sonnet "To Toussaint Louverture" (1802), published in "homage" to Louverture's role in the 1791 Haitian Revolution and months before his death in a French prison.
[75] This bias is not peculiar to Wordsworth but arguably inherited from the long tradition of Enlightenment primitivist theories of language and the mind. Although scholars such as Alan Richardson posit that "viewing Wordsworth as an Enlightenment primitivist" underestimates the intricacy of his theoretical schema, "primitivist impulses" still "in fact persist throughout the Romantic era—but on the basis of a new, embodied conception of human nature" (*British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, 74; 178).
[76] Quote from Ileana Rodriguez*, House/Garden/Nation: Space, Gender, and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Latin American Literatures by Women* (Duke University Press, 1994), 80.
[77] Citations from Elizabeth Russ, "Intersections of Race and Romance in the Americas: Teresa de la Parra's' *Ifigenia* and Ellen Glasgow's *The Sheltered Life*," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 58.4 (2005): 737-59.
[78] Citation from Elizabeth Russ, "Intersections of Race and Romance in the Americas," 744.

> people in my life. She was mother's nurse and she has stayed since then in this house where she has the double role of laundress and historian, given her admirable memory and her exquisite artistry in ironing lace and bleaching tablecloths. When I was very little and I would come to spend the day here at Grandmother's house, it was Gregoria who would always feed me, who would tell me stories, and who, when no one was looking, would let me go barefoot or play in the water, in this way taking care of my physical and spiritual well-being. Because her poetic soul, which scorns human prejudices with the elegant harshness of a cynical philosopher, has for all creatures the brotherly charity of Saint Francis of Assisi. This free partnership has made her soul generous, indulgent, and immoral. Her disdain for conventions always preserved her from any science not taught by nature itself. For this reason, besides not knowing how to read and write, Gregoria doesn't know her age. (40)[79]

This still-understudied passage is worth quoting at length because it merits consideration for further studies and, within this research, because it indexes Alonso's inner tension between her purportedly all-encompassing vision of 'the human' and her underlying racial biases. The justification for her "friendship" with Gregoria on account of the latter's skills as an oral storyteller and a soul that has grown "generous, indulgent, and immoral" (all of which are seen under a positive light from the protagonist's advocacy for unreason), is as much a praise as it is a prejudice. In Russ's synthetic diction, María Eugenia "repeatedly associates the laundress's blackness with romantic notions of nature, oral tradition, and a harmonious balance between 'pure' black(s) and white(s)." The term "romantic" is here used laxly, but it is not altogether erroneous—similarly to Wordsworth, and in conflict with her explicit defense of a racially inclusive definition of 'humankind', Alonso exoticizes Gregoria's "more natural" language and "closeness to nature," thus carrying over Venezuelan elite's ingrained "label[ing of] non-whites as inherently inferior."[80]

The religious inclinations of Wordsworth's theory of mind are conspicuous enough. Suffice it to briefly elaborate on my agreement with Alan Richardson's depiction of said theory as

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[79] The original reads: "mi amiga, mi confidente y mi mentor, pues aun cuando no sepa leer ni escribir la considero sin disputa ninguna una de las personas más inteligentes y más sabias que he conocido en mi vida. Nodriza de mamá, se ha quedado desde entonces en la casa donde desempeña el doble papel de lavandera y cronista, dada su admirable memoria y su arte exquisito para planchar encajes y blanquear manteles. Cuando yo era chiquita y me venía a pasar el día aquí en la casa de Abuelita, era Gregoria quien me daba siempre de comer, quien me contaba cuentos y quien a escondidas de todos me dejaba andar descalza o jugar con agua, atendiendo de este modo al bienestar de mi cuerpo y de mi espíritu. Y es que su alma de poeta que desdeña los prejuicios humanos con la elegante displicencia de los Filósofos Cínicos, tiene para todas las criaturas la dulce piedad fraternal de San Francisco de Asís. Este libre consorcio le ha hecho el alma generosa, indulgente, e inmoral. Su desdén por las convenciones la preservó siempre de toda ciencia que no enseñara la misma naturaleza. Por esta razón, además de no saber leer ni escribir, Gregoria tampoco sabe su edad, que es un enigma para mí, para ella y para todo el que la ve" (36).

[80] All citations from Elizabeth Russ, "Intersections of Race and Romance in the Americas," 744.

"more than materialist," implying not just that the poet's spiritual-cum-embodied understanding of mental operations is couched in Christological discourse, but also that his materialist, Christian, and vitalist (sometimes referred to as "second-hand Spinozist") bents could mostly cohere in

> a naturalistic, physiological, ecological approach to psychology and anthropology [that at the time] was fully compatible with the belief in a "motion and a spirit" coursing through the body (and its mind) and, it might be, through every other particle of the universe as well. Whether that indwelling power was itself material (perhaps a superfine "fluid" related to electricity and magnetism) or altogether unworldly was a question that could be left open.[81]

Relative compatibility notwithstanding, our affirmation that Wordsworth's discourse on the human mind is at bottom sourced in a Christological concept of God seems to hold. Perhaps Richardson is right to question whether this foundationalism corresponds to the author's actual beliefs or to the fact that although the nature of the mind's "indwelling" power "was a question that could be left open," the "lack of a firm spiritualist commitment made writers […] notoriously vulnerable to orthodox attack. '*God and the brain! nothing but God and the brain*' Gall would desperately proclaim, after repeated charges of atheistic materialism […] It did not keep him from being excommunicated, or his books from being placed on the Papal *Index.*"[82] Richardson's speculation, along with our suspicion that Wordsworth's mental faculty schema stands as a pragmatic strategy rather than a theoretical conviction, are warranted. That said, his poetry as much as his prose sustains a commitment that is not just (more than) "spiritualist" but largely Christian.

To nuance the implications of these commitments for Wordsworth's conceptualization of 'humankind', scholars have zeroed in on his aforementioned ethno-racial biases as well as on his contentious relation to Jewishness. Nabil I. Matar has argued provocatively that

> against th[e] background of public antipathy to the homeless Jews, Wordsworth composed his "Song for the Wandering Jew" (1800). His poem was not about a London Jew but about a revolutionary Englishman, disillusioned after the Reign of Terror in France. Without the title, the poem would have no association with Jews, for although Wordsworth portrayed a heroic and suffering man, he only succeeded in presenting an ambiguous being, less of a person and more of a state of mind […] In turning the Jew into a symbol, Wordsworth demonstrated his total lack of interest in the Jews as a real community in England. For him the Jew was a literary means to a poetic end.[83]

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[81] Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, 68.
[82] Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, 69 (emphasis in the original).
[83] Citation from Nabil I. Matar, "The English Romantic Poets and the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 50.3/4 (1988), 225.

Considering "A Jewish Family," Judith W. Page claims in a similar vein that the poet "does not see them as Jews in Germany in 1828. He views them from a distance as a Christian who has sympathy for their suffering, but cannot accept them for themselves and their own aspirations." This becomes patent for her in Wordsworth's poetic exoticization of the Jewish sisters as "two Oriental beauties," as much as in his overall adoption of a nineteenth-century philo-Semitism of conversion that "locates the Jews in an ancient Biblical past: they are ancient Hebrews, anachronisms bound to the glory of a fallen Jerusalem, not living people."[84] If we accept Page and Matar's readings, then Wordsworth's exoticizing othering and its exclusion of the other(ed) from 'the human' *proprement dit* reaches not only Black and Brown but also Jewish populations.

Alonso's religious views have been grossly understudied, at least as they manifest beyond the secularizing bent of her Paris-infused "prestigious, Enlightened"[85] liberalism and the religious implications of her racial prejudices (which, at most, see Persons of Color as "primitive" or "potential" Christians, no matter how lax her adoption of Christianity).[86] Seldom have scholars mentioned that, in *Iphigenia*'s first edition from 1924, the protagonist employs the term "Jew" (*judío*) twice, both times as an insult to the villainized Uncle Eduardo: first, she uses the word as a stereotypically derogative synonym of "avaricious"; then, she characterizes the supposed ugliness of her uncle's countenance as "Jewface" (*cara de judío*). Elizabeth Garrels's recent preface to the *Ifigenia*'s 1928 edition reflects on this usage and its ultimate deletion from the novel:

> Esta edición está basada en la segunda edición de *Ifigenia*, revisada y publicada por la autora, en 1928 y en París, en la editorial de I.H. Bendelac. Esta segunda edición contiene trozos suprimidos y otros agregados respecto a la primera […] Los trozos suprimidos y añadidos nunca van mucho más allá de un solo párrafo, y el mayor número de los cambios tiene que ver con palabras eliminadas o sustituidas por otras. Al revisar su novela para la reedición, Teresa de la Parra *no cambió nada fundamental* […] En 1928, después de cinco años de residencia en Europa, Teresa de la Parra decide eliminar todas las instancias en que algún personaje en la primera edición usa el nombre "judío" como un insulto antisemita. Es curiosa esta decisión porque todo el resto del viejo discurso valorativo sobre las razas sigue en pie.[87]

[84] Citations from Judith W. Page, "'Nor yet redeemed from scorn': Wordsworth and the Jews," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99.4 (2000), 541-2.
[85] Citation from Kristine Byron, "Books and Bad Company," 362.
[86] See Ileana Rodríguez, *House/Garden/Nation*, 59-86.
[87] Teresa de la Parra, Elizabeth Garrels, ed., *Ifigenia* (Stockcero, 2008), ix-x (emphasis added).

This excerpt, rarely cited in Teresa de la Parra's scholarship, contains key details about *Iphigenia*'s reception and publication history. For a start, it elicits that de la Parra's contact with European milieux did not fundamentally modify the racial biases that—by necessity, verisimilitude, contingency, or design—Alonso echoes. The passage also underscores the change of fate undergone by the Jewish people, whose absence in the last edition of the novel is, we could argue, the result of their ultimate inclusion in Alonso's (potentially, de la Parra's) definition of 'humanity' as such. Finally, Garrels's assessment that this shift in the treatment of Jewishness amounted to "nothing fundamental" (*no cambió nada fundamental*) hints at the little relevance that scholars have attributed to this issue, if they have been aware of it at all.

Yet we are now aware of it. Given the evidence just presented, the allegedly ecumenical aspects of Wordsworth's and Alonso's conceptions of 'writing' and 'the writer' prove not only based on personal motives, but consociated with xenophobic biases. These biases risk positing certain racial, ethnic, and religious groups as lacking the mental structure necessary to write (or to do so with a high degree of sophistication)—an assertion that is at least compatible and at worst solidary with the idea that these groups are less or other than human. Faced with the ineludible presence of these exclusions, the question once again arises as to whether Wordsworth's and Alonso's insights merit theoretical attention. Even if we abide by the imperative to "always historicize," the "it was a different time" excuse will not—and should not—suffice.[88] Considering, then, the problems (i.e. the ethno-racial bigotry inherent in the two mental faculty schemas) and the potentialities (i.e. Wordsworth's process-centered, ecologically situated, and embodied conceptualization of penning, Alonso's feminist expansion of it through a broader definition of the writer figure, and their shared commitment to pen against instrumentality), should we insist on rescuing them to theorize 'writing' at present?

My final answer depends on what we are willing to sacrifice in the rescue. It is yes, if by the latter term we mean discerning the potentialities underscored above, all of which can be leveraged against their original intent, used to expand our theoretico-practical paradigms, and repurposed in contemporary research and classrooms.[89] While our students could use a break from

[88] The injunction to "always historicize" features most (in)famously in Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Methuen & Co, 1981), ix.

[89] To this endeavor, the fact that Wordsworth's and Alonso's mental faculty schemas are *appendages to* rather than *constitutive of* their conceptions of penning is relevant, for had the second been built systematically upon the first, 'writing' and 'the writer' would have been defined in more consistent continuity with narrow conceptions of the human.

pass/fail approaches to writing and a more textured approximation to its experience with a non-instrumental, ecologically mindful, and process-oriented predisposition, we could benefit from a similar engagement with a task whose centrality to our job—thus, whose ties into "producing" for the "marketplace of ideas"—easily makes us forget that it can *also* be enthralling, unpredictable, playful, and enjoyable. To procure that, in our case as in the case of our students, acts of writing happen outside utilitarian frameworks is, as it was in Wordsworth and Alonso's times, urgent—their willingness to go great lengths so as to verisimilize non-instrumental writing into existence is a lesson on the historical power of obstinacy. My answer is no, however, if by 'rescuing' we imply bracketing the ethico-politically objectionable facets of Wordsworth and Alonso's schemas so as to revamp them with a "clean" conscience. At a historical turning point that aims to subsume every action and every single thing to the spirit of capitalism, the spirit of Romanticism-cum-Quixotism speaks to us more compellingly than ever. Yet the current overenthusiasm with the long nineteenth century has been and cannot keep sidestepping its ethico-politically inconvenient truths.[90] Just as instrumental Reason threatens to fold Romantic legacies into its jurisdiction, so too do these legacies risk confining our theories of 'writing' and 'the writer' within an exclusionary domain. We can afford neither to ignore the anti-instrumentalist impetus that Wordsworth and Alonso have bequeathed us nor to downplay the exclusions it has left in its wake.

[90] Two phenomena make this sidelining ostensible: first, as previously stated, it is in the interest of recent monographs that aim to revamp Romanticism through an ecocritical lens to minimize its more problematic ethico-political aspects; secondly, scholarship that outright criticizes Romantic authors is still scarce, especially in comparison to the overwhelming profusion of their laudatory receptions. The latter is true not only of English Romanticism more broadly and Wordsworth in particular, but even more flagrantly of de la Parra's romance.