

Adapting old cuentos que todos conocen: *Don Juan Tenorio* in the borderland

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ABSTRACT

It is increasingly obvious that a large number of canonical European texts of different genres is being used by Latinos¹ as the basis to develop their own dramatic writings. According to Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez and Nancy Saporta (82) “[Estela] Portillo Trembley relied on a European canon as part of her formation”, noticing “the parallel between *The Day of the Swallows* (1972) and Lorca’s *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*”. This same play stimulated Migdalia Cruz to envision *Another Part of the House* (1995). Luis Valdez, for his part, found the title for his play *Dark Root of a Scream* (1971) in García Lorca’s tragedy *Bodas de sangre*. Since José Zorrilla’s *Don Juan Tenorio* has been the basis for Octavio Solís *Man of the Flesh* (1998) and Carlos Morton’s *Johnny Tenorio* (2003), this paper proposes an analysis of the transatlantic connections of the Spanish myth of Don Juan and how its interpretation by both Mechicano² playwrights ultimately deconstructs the Romantic characteristics which José Zorrilla introduced into the original legend in the first half of the 19th century. As it is commonly accepted, interpretive deconstruction of canonical texts is a characteristic of postmodernism as well as of postcolonial writing.

Key words: Chicanos, theatre, postcolonialism, deconstruction, adaptation, Carlos Morton, Octavio Solís, Don Juan Tenorio, myth.

Adaptaciones de “old cuentos que todos conocen”: *Don Juan Tenorio* en la frontera

RESUMEN

Es evidente que un considerable número de textos canónicos europeos esta siendo utilizado por escritores y escritoras Latinos como unto de partida para crear sus propios textos dramáticos. Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez y Nancy Saporta advierten la influencia de *La casa de Bernarda Alba* de Lorca en la obra de Estela Portillo Trembley *The Day of the Swallows* (1972). Esta obra de Lorca también influye en *Another Part of the House* (1995) de Migdalia Cruz, mientras que Luis Valdez toma el título para *Dark Root of a Scream* de *Bodas de sangre*. Puesto que *Don Juan Tenorio* de José Zorrilla ha sido la base para *Man of the Flesh* de Octavio Solís y para *Johnny Tenorio* de Carlos Morton, la finalidad de este artículo es analizar las conexiones transatlánticas de la versión española del mito de Don Juan y

¹ I am using “Latino” here following Elizabeth Ramírez’s claim that “‘Hispanic’ does serve to represent the more conservative, traditional segment of the Spanish-speaking population of the early decades of this century [while] ‘Latino’ remains the most widely used term to designate the large population of women and men in the United States descended from Spanish-speaking groups (Ramírez xiii)

² According to Huerta, Mechicano is “a conflation of Chicano/a and Mexican, when conditions pertain to both groups equally.”

cómo es interpretado por estos dos dramaturgos mechicanos, quienes, como resultado, deconstruyen los elementos románticos introducidos por Zorrilla en la leyenda original durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX. Por otra parte, es sabido que la interpretación desde un punto de vista deconstructivo de los textos canónicos es una característica del postmodernismo y de la escritura postcolonial.

Palabras clave: Chicanos, teatro, poscolonialismo, deconstrucción, adaptación, Carlos Morton, Octavio Solís, Don Juan Tenorio, mito.

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction, 2. Don Juan Tenorio and Myth, 3. Don Juan Tenorio and Transculturation, 4. Deconstructing Don Juan, 5. Conclusions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migdalia Cruz not only adapted Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*: the traditional tales of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Cinderella* was the inspiration for *Lucy Loves Me* (1991) and *Fur* (1995) respectively. One would have hardly suspected that the character of Anna in the title of Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer award winning play *Anna in the Tropics* (2003) was Leo Tolstoy's tragic heroine, nor that, for that matter, Luis Alfaro's *Electricidad* (2003) was related to Euripides's *Electra*. However, it is as evident that Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman, A Mexican Medea* (1994) comes from an instantly recognizable Greek source as it is obvious that Carlos Morton's *The Miser of México* has Molière's comedy as its predecessor. Due to this considerable number of references to European canonical works in the Latino literature of the last few decades, I intend to analyze two Chicano adaptations of *Don Juan Tenorio* by approaching their mestizo culture with non-colonizing eyes, "by working critically through one's beliefs, prejudices and assumptions and understanding how they arose and became naturalized" (Nelson 1988:271). Most of these texts are embodied in Spanish culture as what cultural critics have identified as "timeless cognitive models" (Hutcheon 2006:176) that may travel to other places across time and become "indigenized" by means of revision and consequent adaptation. The adapter usually looks at the original text, be it legend, novel or play, with a certain degree of ambiguity where admiration, interest or disapproval are intertwined. In any case, any adaptation to be considered as such must be appreciated as a version of its source by the audience.

2. DON JUAN TENORIO AND MYTH

Since the staging on the eve of All Saints Day of *Don Juan Tenorio*, the legendary play by José Zorrilla, became a tradition for many theatre companies all over Spain for nearly two centuries, the reputation of its central hero is paramount. But tradition does have a dramatic side. As well as attending the theatrical production, during the first two days of November Spaniards usually take flowers to cemeteries, where they are laid on the tombs of deceased family members. Visitors also say their prayers with the aim of easing the passage of their relations and friends to heaven. It is not surprising that an equivalent tradition was introduced in

Mexico after the Spanish occupation, nor that the Day of the Dead is also celebrated across the Rio Grande in the areas of Mexican American influence. The original celebration can be traced back to the Aztec festivities held at the beginning of summer, ritually presided over by the goddess Mictecacihuatl ("Lady of the Dead"), and devoted to children and the departed. During the postconquest era Spanish priests reassigned the time for this commemoration so that it would coincide with the Christian holiday of All Hallows Eve, the Catholic "Día de Todos los Santos", in a vain effort to change it from a "profane" celebration into a Christian one. The result is that Mexicans now celebrate the Day of the Dead during the first two days of November, the modern festivity being characterized by a Mexican blend of traditional ancient Indian, Aztec and others, features together with those introduced by the Christians. In general, the day's activities consist of families visiting the graves of their close kin. According to Ricardo Salvador (2003: 75-76), relatives engage in cleaning up the gravesites, decorating them with flowers, laying out and enjoying a picnic, and interacting socially with other community members who gather at the cemetery. Families remember their departed by telling stories about them. Gravesites or family altars are profusely decorated with bright flowers such as yellow marigolds and chrysanthemums, and adorned with religious talismans and with offerings of food, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. This festive interaction between the living and the dead constitutes an important social ritual and a way of recognizing the cycle of life and death of human existence. Therefore it is also coherent with the postconquest religious adjustment and with an equivalent cultural transfer including a secular myth. In any case, there may be different reasons behind adjustment but seldom faithfulness to the original culture takes place. In the case of the cultural transfer under analysis here, one must realize that the Christian tradition in Zorrilla's play have been obliterated by prevailing native myths, since, "postcolonial adaptations are, by definition, wilful reinterpretations for a different context" (Hutcheon 2006:153) which, in turn implies a certain degree of accommodation to the indigenous culture.

The reasons why *Don Juan Tenorio* is staged on the night of the first day of November can be found in the play's close relationship to death and the ensuing resurrection of the flesh. The play also shows God's mercy since, as will be explained below, He allows Don Juan to repent for his sinful and despicable past. The storyline of the original Spanish play by José Zorrilla is well known: the young nobleman Don Juan Tenorio returns to Seville to take up a wager he had previously made with Don Luis Mejía by which they are to determine who has had better fortune while acting more despicably. In view of the fact that Don Juan wins the initial bet they agree to make a new one by which Don Juan vows to seduce two virgins: a novice and a virgin who is none other than Doña Ana, Luis's bride. The loser will pay with his own life. Then, thanks to the ministrations of a servant, Brígida, Don Juan manages to enter the convent where Inés is a novice and to persuade her to elope with him. But when they are in his chamber Don Juan unexpectedly falls desperately in love with her. Don Gonzalo (Inés's father) and Don Luis go in search of him to avenge the young women's lost honor but Don Juan kills both noblemen and then runs away. Five years later he returns to Seville to find out that Inés is dead. Don Gonzalo's ghost invites

Don Juan to dinner and he accepts. Finally, Doña Inés returns from the dead to ask Don Juan to repent. When he sees his own funeral procession marching towards his tomb, he repents. Then Inés realizes that God has forgiven him and stops the mournful ceremony³:

Cesad, cantos funerales;
 callad, mortuorias campanas;
 Ocupad, sombras livianas
 Vuestras urnas sepulcrales:
 volved a los pedestales,
 animadas esculturas;
 y las celestes venturas
 en que los justos están
 empiecen para don Juan
 en las mismas sepulturas.

(Las flores se abren y dan paso a varios angelitos que rodean a doña Inés y a don Juan derramando sobre ellos flores y perfumes, y al son de una música dulce y lejana se ilumina el teatro con luz de aurora. Doña Inés cae sobre un lecho de flores, en lugar de su tumba, que desaparece.)

The play thus ends in death, but unlike in tragedy, it is the happy death of the saved that will allow the two lovers to be united forever. We are in a Christian environment where the afterlife offers unlimited happiness to virtuous souls. As Joaquín Casaldueiro has written, “la necesidad romántica de presentar el ‘yo’ y de expresarlo, unida a la necesidad sentimental de dar al dolor romántico una solución, que se encuentra gracias a una fe candorosa en la bondad humana, producen *Don Juan Tenorio*” (10). As we have seen, it is clear that with the images suggested by the director’s notes mentioned above, Zorrilla does not intend to frighten the audience with the terror of death. On the contrary, “busca representar la misericordia de Dios y la apoteosis del amor” (Morales, 53)

The modern legend of Don Juan originated with Tirso de Molina’s *El burlador de Sevilla*, first performed in 1630, for which it seems there was no written source

³ INÉS. Cease, you funeral sounds:
 Be still, death's bells on high:
 fickle shadows, occupy
 your sepulchral mounds.
 On your pedestals, be found,
 you living sculptures, soon:
 let heavenly fortune
 in which the just delight
 begin for Don Juan, in sight
 of his very tomb.

(The flowers open and reveal various little angels that surround Inés and Don Juan, sprinkling on them flowers and perfumes, and at the sound of the sweet far off music, the stage lights up with light of dawn. Doña Inés falls on a bed of flowers that remain in view, instead of her tomb, which disappears.)

but simply legends based on tradition and myth. According to Ruiz Ramón, Tirso de Molina, “aprovechando una materia legendaria, crea su obra fundiendo dos elementos de la leyenda: el del joven libertino burlador de mujeres y el de la cena macabra” (1965, 271). After Tirso, Molière wrote *Dom Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre* (1665) on which Mozart based his famous opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) with libretto by Lorenzo DaPonte. Back in Spain, Antonio Zamora’s drama *No hay plazo que no se cumpla ni deuda que no se pague* (1714) advances the topic of a pending pledge, and, in Italy, Carlo Goldoni wrote another *Don Giovanni* with libretto by Lorenzo DaPonte. Then came the Romantics: Lord Byron’s *Don Juan* (1819-1824), and the historical romance by Alexandre Dumas, *Don Juan de Marana ou la chute d’un ange* (1836). And even later the versions by Alexander Pushkin, *El convidado de piedra*, and by George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*. Like many other writers before him, such as Corneille, Rostand, and Baudelaire among others. Tennessee Williams used the Don Juan figure in *Camino Real* and, just a few years ago, the American theatre director Peter Sellars staged a version of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* placing the action in a Harlem brownstone with the protagonist and his servant Leporello dining in the front steps on MacDonald’s hamburgers. Consequently, as many critics have asserted, the figure of Don Juan, has come to share a similar place in western literature like that occupied by the mythical figures of Don Quixote, Hamlet and Faust.

3. DON JUAN AND TRANSCULTURATION

All the above references are illustrations of the popularity and perpetuation of the legend prior to the writing of two recent Chicano Don Juans: a play by Carlos Morton, *Johnny Tenorio* (1982, 1992), and a second work, *Man of the Flesh* (1988) by Octavio Solís. Neither play is based on Tirso’s forerunner but rather on its Romantic offspring, *Don Juan Tenorio*, which José de Zorrilla wrote in 1844. Zorrilla’s drama became such a popular play in Spain because it is informed by the mixture of magic and Romantic drama that was so recognizable during the first half of the 19th century. Zorrilla intended it to be a religious fantasy drama creating “una combinación no desarrollada antes en el teatro español, enlazando las dos tendencias más populares de su época en lo que podría llamarse un híbrido teatral: la comedia de magia romántica” (Gies, 29-30). We should also add that the simple versification and the rhythm of the stanzas would make it easier for audiences to remember long excerpts particularly if the play were staged every year. To help popularize his drama, Zorrilla turned his romantic hero into a bourgeois gentleman by causing Don Juan give in to Ines’s love and then to repent his past sinful actions when he pronounce his famous final lines “es el Dios de la clemencia el Dios de don Juan Tenorio”. Zorrilla’s hero is not just an erotic hurricane, as Américo Castro believed (Ruiz Ramón, 1978:73). In fact, he incorporates the attractiveness of a vehement Romantic hero together with the repose of a prospective middle class husband. The Romantic aspect is emphasized by the use of a number of gothic metaphors that arose during the post revolutionary period in Europe, particularly those regarding fire. Through these

Zorrilla expresses both incendiary love and passion but he also alludes to the punishment that is awaiting Don Juan in Hell, as becomes clear in the following lines when Don Juan is trying to seduce Inés⁴:

No es esa chispa fugaz
Que cualquier ráfaga apaga;
es incendio que se traga
Cuanto ve, inmenso, voraz. (2272-2275)

And later on when Don Gonzalo, Ines's father, warns him that his future is one made up of fire, ashes and flames⁵:

DON JUAN. ¿Y qué es lo que ahí me das?
ESTATUA. Aquí fuego, allí ceniza
DON JUAN. El cabello se me eriza.
ESTATUA. Te doy lo que tú serás.
DON JUAN. ¡Fuego y ceniza he de ser! (3672-3676)

Because Zorrilla's Don Juan is an enthusiastic seducer. Most of the exploits he relates when he arrives at Butarelli's inn to meet his rival Don Luis when the play begins concern the seduction of women: he had seduced seventy-two in just one year and boasts that he needs only two days to inspire a woman with love and desire⁶:

Uno para enamorarlas,
otro para conseguir las,
otro para abandonarlas,
dos para sustituirlas
y un hora para olvidarlas (686-690)

When in the course of the action he kills both the Comendador of Calatrava and Don Luis, his own father also dies: Don Juan's misbehavior causes him too much grief and shame. Although this makes the audience wonder what drives Don Juan to break social rules to such an outrageous extent, Gordon Banks suggests that Don Juan is the kind of individual "who has no sense of right and wrong, no feelings of guilt or shame for wrongdoing, and has a marked propensity to lie, cheat, and engage in other activities which normal society considers reprehensible" (Banks, 2). Banks goes on to describe Don Juan as an egocentric, promiscuous and manipulative psychopath who is unable to form meaningful relationships with others, has no fear of death and lacks any sense of responsibility. This more aptly

⁴ *it is not a fleeting spark of need / that a breath of wind defeats; / it is a roaring fire that eats / all it sees in its vast greed.*

⁵ *And what is it you have for me there? / Here ashes, and there the fire. / My hair stands on end, a pyre! / I show you what you shall be. / I'm to be ashes and flame!.*

⁶ *One day to seduce them, / another to reduce them, / another one to leave them, / two days to replace them, / and a single hour to forget them.*

describes Molière's hero than Zorrilla's since in the latter's play Don Juan falls in love with Inés while trying to persuade her to elope with him. She is, in a manner of speaking, the first woman to stir in him emotions he had never felt before. According to Casaldueiro (146)

El Don Juan romántico-sentimental no es el mal, la materia en radical oposición al Espíritu y a lo Eterno; Don Juan Tenorio es el hombre anegado en el pecado y el dolor, ser impuro y temporal que ansía lo puro y el infinito. Don Juan a través de crímenes y pecados va hacia Doña Inés. La mujer ideal es su norte y su guía, y la pureza de la mujer se siente vehemente atraída por el pecador, ansiando redimirle y salvarle con su propio sacrificio, ofreciéndose como víctima propiciatoria.

In this way, Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*, far from being a baroque examination of the good and evil of human nature in its relation to God as in Molière's drama, becomes a Romantic tragicomedy in which the redemptive power of love saves the hero from the eternal damnation he rightly receives in the French tragedy because he dares to defy God's power.

It is not surprising that Don Juan's popularity spread to Latin America. In California, as Nicolás Kanellos asserts (21), by the 1860s the company of the famous Mexican actor Gerardo López del Castillo was producing, among other plays, Spanish melodramas by Zorrilla. *Don Juan Tenorio* had been staged in Mexico as early as 1844, the same year it had its Madrid premiere. Just as the customary staging of the play on All Saints Day by the Spaniards found a corresponding convention in the celebration of the Día de los Muertos by the Mexicans, both traditions fuse in Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio*. Linda Hutcheon, in her exhaustive work *A Theory of Adaptation*, asserts that "stories also evolve by adaptation and are not immutable over time. Sometimes, like biological adaptation, cultural adaptation involves migration to favorable conditions: stories travel to different cultures and different media. In short, stories adapt just as they are adapted" (2006:31). Therefore, Don Juan on leaving his native land to cross the Atlantic, also leaves behind the dark romantic overtones with which both Tirso de Molina and Zorrilla illustrated his controversial relationship with Catholicism and fate.

4. DECONSTRUCTING DON JUAN

Morton's deconstruction of the original *Don Juan Tenorio* begins with the replacement of Buttarelli's tavern in Seville with a bar in contemporary San Antonio, Texas. The nineteen characters of the Spanish play are reduced to five: Berta, Johnny, Louie, Ana and Don Juan; and each of them code switches between English and Spanish, recklessly translating interspersed lines from Zorrilla's play. But Morton's *Tenorio* is a very different Don Juan. He is a contemporary Chicano, the offspring of a dysfunctional family, who, as far as responsibility is concerned behaves like an absolute maniac. At the beginning of the play, objective time dissolves into dramatic time as on the evening of the Day

of the Dead, Big Berta summons Johnny's ghost through the incantation of Don Juan Charrasqueado, a popular Mexican *corrido* that also echoes the Don Juan myth. The overall effect is that of a Chicano tableau, adorned with "large, bright flowers such as marigolds and chrysanthemums" and provided with food –atole and tamales-- for the ghosts of the dead to enjoy. The music we initially hear is the *corrido* that Berta sings and which later on will come from a jukebox. In addition, Morton moves the time of the year of the action of the original drama - Carnival- to the Day of the Dead, while the final banquet in Don Juan's chamber takes place in Big Berta's Bar where Mexican food is served. Berta's behavior toward Johnny fluctuates between outright admiration and sorrowful shame. As an example of the former, she knowingly exaggerates Johnny's accomplishments with women over one year:

In Texas, six hundred and forty.
 Arizona, two hundred and thirty.
 California, one hundred, and look,
 New York, already one thousand! (29)

However, to illustrate the ambivalent feelings Mexican American women have for their men's patriarchal values concerning sex, just before the final curtain falls, she expresses regret for Johnny's past behavior:

BERTA: Here is Johnny Tenorio, el Don Juan, a thorn in the soul of la Raza since time immemorial. Ha traicionado a mujeres, asesinado a hombres y causado gran dolor. Por eso decimos... que muera! (51)

On the other hand, Louie's feats are not as large as Johnny's for he only scores "a grand total of fifty-six" successful sexual encounters whereas his rival actually seduces seventy-two women, which echoes the number seduced by his forerunner in Zorrilla's play. Unlike in the original *Don Juan Tenorio* though, there is no virginal Inés to save Johnny's soul from eternal damnation. Another striking difference is that although Johnny does stab his friend Louie to death during a fight, the reason is not that he has deceived his fiancée Doña Ana. In Morton's play, Ana is Louie's sister, who is pregnant by Johnny. He in turn will get "shot by a gringo", the husband of a blonde he had seduced, while Don Juan dies at the hands of a law officer in Seville. Although the decentering of these facts apparently seems to undermine the overall moral purpose of Zorrilla's play, Morton, on the contrary, goes a step further to underscore Johnny's amorality. He also emphasizes the lack of communication between father and son by having Johnny's father, Don Juan, speak the original 19th century Spanish lines from *Don Juan Tenorio* while Johnny answers back in disrespectful dialectal English:

DON JUAN: No puedo escucharte, vil Johnny, porque recelo que hay algún rayo en el cielo preparado a aniquilarte...

JOHNNY: What's that you say, viejo?

- DON JUAN: Ah! No pudiendo creer lo que de ti me decían, confiando en que mentían, vine esta noche a verte. Sigue pues, con ciego afán en tu torpe frenesí; más nunca vuelvas a mí. No te conozco, Johnny.
- JOHNNY: What the hell do I care what you think.
- DON JUAN: Adiós, pues. Mas, no te olvides de que hay un Dios justiciero.
- JOHNNY: Just a Goddam minute.
- DON JUAN: ¿Qué quieres?
- JOHNNY: Who are you? Take off that mask.
- DON JUAN: No, en vano me lo pides.
- JOHNNY: Show me your face!
- DON JUAN: ¡Villano!
- JOHNNY: ¡Papá! (43)

And when Johnny's speech quotes directly from the original play, he speaks in flat ordinary English: "One hour to fall in love with them. Another to make it with them. A third to abandon them and sixty seconds to forget them" (35) as opposed to the richness of the original quatrain stanza:

Uno para enamorarlas,
 otro para conseguir las,
 otro para abandonarlas,
 dos para sustituirlas
 y un hora para olvidarlas (686-690)

This linguistic resource also discloses two different attitudes towards assimilation on the part of Mexican Americans and its relation to successive generations. While Don Juan *père*, who hardly knows any English, speaks refined faultless Spanish, Johnny's speech is far from correct and he shows a tendency to speak Spanglish. Neither his English nor his Spanish are lexically free from linguistic loans:

- JOHNNY: Hey man, you know I would never deny mi Raza. Anyway, we used to make menudo sometimes and invite the gringos over for breakfast. Of course, we knew they wouldn't eat it if we told them it was pancita de res. So we served it as "American Indian Stew!" they scarfed it up!
 (34)

Don Juan's conventional rhymed Castilian Spanish arises from the speech of the text as part of a postmodern dialogical convention and also emphasizes Morton's postcolonial viewpoint. Johnny displays both a cynical contempt for his

father's moral standards as well as a definite scorn for his own Mexican background. The first emerges from Johnny's knowledge of his father's prior adulterous behavior to his wife who died when Johnny was a small boy. She knew that her husband had been not only unfaithful to her but also had another wife, who, while passing as his niece, lived in their home. On the other hand, Johnny's Mexican childhood is associated with the humiliation inflicted by his racist American schoolmates:

JOHNNY: Can I play with you?

GREGY: No, you can't even speak English, beaner.

JOHNNY: Don't you call me dat!

GREGY: What are you going to do about it, beaner! Brown like a bean! Chili dipper! (43)

His need to retaliate against both his father on the one hand and American culture on the other has turned Johnny into a reckless and sexually promiscuous young man, who, according to Otto Rank, "re-enacts over and over the oedipal struggle of the little boy who hopes to best his father and take on his possessions. The wish to best the father is usually extended into the wish to discredit and destroy him" (Banks 2006: 11). Not only does Johnny attempt to outdo his father, he also tries to overcome his being demeaned by American men by seducing their women:

JOHNNY: Pinches gringos. Hey, but the white girls –¡mamasotas! They had never laid –and I do mean LAID—eyes on such a handsome Chicano like me. I ate them up. Anglos, Jews, Czechs, Irish, Italians, Swedes... it was like the United Nations. I took them away from their fathers, boyfriends, husbands. (34)

If Morton reduces the number of characters in the original play by Zorrilla to five, Solís's play has a cast of nine. Morton sets his play in contemporary Texas, and most of the main characters are of Mexican descent, reducing Anglos to secondary figures of the action. There is no class conflict in *Johnny Tenorio* but rather a father-son antagonism originating in Johnny's father's own history as if he were naturalistically doomed to repeat his forebears' misdeeds⁷. For his part, Solís has created a different leading character. His Juan is such an attractive young man that women cannot help being seduced by him nor can he restrain himself from being tempted by them. The question here is sex since, after all, he is a "man of the flesh" (164) and so we know he seduces Romelia, Lorena, Martina, Dora and Heather but

⁷ In a private conversation, Morton explained that he was interested in showing that the patriarchal standards Mexicans inherited from both the Spanish and Aztec traditions are still operative within the Chicano culture and passed from fathers to their sons.

he, in turn, is almost raped by Flor. In certain aspects, Juan's behavior may remind the audience of Molière's protagonist, particularly when he is confronted by the three women he has seduced, a passage that is reminiscent of the scene of Dom Juan with the two peasant girls in the French play:

ROMELIA: (*Grabbing him*) He's mine, I called it!

LORENA: (*Grabbing his other arm*) ¡Te casas conmigo, chiquito! That money's for my ring!

MARTINA: (*Shoving the other away and taking him for herself*) Get your claws off him! He's moving in with me! (121)

However, the underlying conflict in *Man of the Flesh* arises from class. It is clearly noticeable that postmodernity affects Mexican immigrants just like Jorge Huerta (57) claims when quoting W.B. Worthen,

"If the 'cultural logic' of the postmodern... is the logic of Euro-American hegemony, Chicano/a representation necessarily employs the rhetoric of "postmodern" expression with a *difference*... 'the ideologically flattening, decentering effects of the postmodern' that Jameson takes as representative have been for some time (since the 1960s) the everyday living condition of working-class Mexican Americans, a *Mexicano* working-class postmodernity"

Subsequently, Juan, a working-class Chicano, falls madly in love with Anne, the youngest daughter of the Anglo landowner for whom he works as a gardener. Even though her sister warns him that she is "off-limits" (141), Juan is reckless enough to jump the class line in such a class-conscious and racist society; he is bound to pay for his audacity with his own life. And he dies on the night of Halloween when the Downey mansion is full of guests and revellers who, as a materialization of what Bakhtin sees as carnivalesque, fraternize with actual ghosts since it also is the Mexican Day of the Dead. In a way, Solís takes us back to the merriment of the Spanish Carnival of 16th century Seville.

While Morton's Ana is just a middle class Chicana who gladly agrees to sleep with Johnny, the innocent Anne in *Man of the Flesh* is comparable to the virginal Inés of the Zorrilla play. In both Mechicano plays the young women cause the death of the protagonists although neither originates redemption. Contemporary Doña Ineses and Don Juans are less inclined to romantic meditations on religion and fate than their predecessors and, in the cases we have been looking at, they are totally imbued with pagan Mexican traditions. Both Johnny and Juan die before Mexican symbols –be it skeletons, bright marigolds or the altar of the Virgen de Guadalupe– and are carried away by the ghosts of their dead. Johnny is taken away by Luis, and Juan by his own mother who "engages him to dance with her a dance of death" (164). As Jorge Huerta claims "Solís has made important changes to the original text that reveal his deeper, more political purpose...[H]e also incorporates indigenous Mexican beliefs, enhancing his story and reminding the audience of their autochthonous past" (2000:93).

4. CONCLUSION

Even though *Johnny Tenorio* and *Man of the Flesh* share with Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* what Iris Zavala has defined as characteristics of the Romantic drama, "efectismo formal y exageración: escenas sepulcrales, cadalsos, horrores, tormentos, amores apasionados" (185), they move away from the monologic discourse of the original play. Both Mechicano plays are "a response to philosophical Eurocentrism as well as to realism in the theatre" (Huerta, 35). They also move a step forward from Luis Valdez's *mitos* and *actos* in that these two plays are neither as didactically oriented as the earlier Chicano drama nor realistically structured. On the contrary, they turn the original tragedy into comedies which do not only aim at illustrating or instructing the audience in their ethnic origins and cultural roots. Both Solís and Morton make use of a dialogical discourse in which Spanish, Mexican and non-Christian mythologies mix with not only the aim of enlightening the audience. As Hutcheon asserts, "postcolonial dramatists use adaptations to articulate their political positions", and both Morton and Solís have worked to decenter and therefore dehistoricize a Spanish myth by decoding its ample potential of meaning.

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