

The Beginnings, Means, and Ends of Interpretation in *Yo también hablo de la rosa*

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Any essay on Emilio Carballido's play *Yo también hablo de la rosa* would necessarily have to be a dialogue not just with the work itself, but also with the many different interpretations that have been posited over the years by various literary critics. This situation, far from being in any way an imposition, is actually quite apropos in the context of the play itself and in light of the multiple interpretations that have been generated since its debut. The central theme of this work, as has been repeated time and again and which it is not my intention to refute here, at least not in its entirety, is the way in which any action can be framed by multiple interpretative discourses that seek to claim or uncover its ontologically inherent "truth." Even the most cursory analysis of this play could discover the failings of any claim to a so-called objective revealing of the ardently sought truth or reason behind the derailment caused by Polo and Toña. My intention, then, is not to enter into this non-debate about why they placed a tub of concrete on the train tracks. To clarify, the term non-debate characterizes this aspect of the play not because no serious concerns are at issue here, but because of the work's central preoccupation with the impossibility of imposing any one master narrative, as Jacqueline Bixler points out in her book on Carballido, and thus the impossibility of definitively answering the question of why the children committed this deed. Rather than speculate further about why this tragic action was performed by these two children, this essay explores the ways in which the dramatic structure of the play, as assembled by the dramatist himself and opposed to the often identified Medium-as-narrator character, constitutes a fusion of the acts of creation and interpretation, one which underscores the work as a whole and has important repercussions for our understanding of the interpretative acts that are so salient in the analysis of this play. We shall

see how the perception generated by and within this play is directly tied to its narrative modality as a dramatic work of art and the questions of representation that consequently arise from this confluence of genres.

Beginning as Locus of Interpretation

Although it is true that the events are minimal and in fact it could even be affirmed that there is only one action that occurs in this play (i.e. the derailment of the train), it is suggestive that the train wreck occupies a space of non-interpretation. There is no exhaustive reflection, either by the play's characters or its critics, on the consequences of this action in and of itself, which is to say that it is generally accepted to be simply a trigger for an interpretative act that looks for reasons and causes, not outcomes. In other words, it is an artistic mechanism that unleashes the representation of a series of narrative nodes that chronologically precede it and which, although they endow it with meaning, are themselves taken to be more meaningful. Rather than being seen as an event worthy of analysis, its worth resides in its ability to conjure up the events that lead up to it, specifically as represented in the four different versions of Polo and Toña's morning. The train wreck, which is represented five times in the play, is loaded with force not because of what it means, but because of what the events that precipitate it mean. As Bert States describes, therein lies the allure of theater:

In short, the deep appeal of drama, as the art of catastrophe, is that behind anything you *do* or *are* at a particular moment stands the causal pyramid of your life—all its choices, givens, accidents, mistakes—and, it turns out, the causal pyramids of everyone with whom you have crossed paths. Your *now* is the product of a unique lifetime of *thens* and *others*. (63-64)

So, if behind every great catastrophe on stage there is a chain of factors both causal and accidental leading to it, the critical interest in the four versions of Polo and Toña's story in *Yo también hablo de la rosa* can certainly be explained as the need to define and analyze this pyramid described by States and whose broad base offers a much larger field of play than its narrow top.

In many ways, then, this play is a reflection on beginnings. The questions of beginnings and ends and how to get from one to the other, and in what direction and with what consequences, permeate the entire work. As we shall see, many more beginnings are implied than just those represented in the four versions of the derailment's antecedents. For example, if we were to search for the first of the many types of beginnings present here, we

would logically have to begin with the title, which is the formal beginning of any text, and which, in this case, is directly followed by the playwright's classification of his play as a *loa*. The title evokes a verbal act, which could be one of narration or interpretation and is clearly a response to some other speech act that precedes it. The ambiguity of this title (Who is this "I"? What does he or she say about the rose? Who else has spoken about the rose "too"?) speaks volumes to us about the play that follows. It posits from the beginning of *Rosa* as written text or staged representation the importance, and the inherent difficulty, of fixing a beginning, which, as Edward Said states, "is by no means a simple proposition, since in choosing a beginning [an author] confers upon it a certain status based on its ability to intend the whole of what follows from it" (50). In this case, the title, as the threshold or entrance to the play, stands in stark contrast to its immediately subsequent classification as a *loa*, which was a Golden Age prologue, usually in the form of praise in verse and preceding a comedy. So, from the title, which is the formal beginning of any work, and in this case is some sort of reference to dueling, oblique, and sequential narrations or interpretations whose specific content is neither here nor there and whose referentiality, furthermore, points to a moment *in media res* (which, as Said points out, is a beginning with the burden of the pretense that it is not one), we pass to the definition of the play as a whole as a prologue, a beginning before the true beginning of the real show. This formal aperture of the play places in the foreground the problematical nature of beginnings, middles, and ends and clearly merits a deeper analysis.

This preoccupation with beginnings goes on to manifest itself in the formal structuring of the play. As has been previously stated, the train wreck is represented five times in the play, once after the Medium's introductory monologue and then in each of the four versions of Polo and Toña's actions. Strikingly, the first representation of the derailment breaks with a strictly chronological presentation of events by preceding its own causes and antecedents. By structuring his play so, Carballido deprives the derailment of the privileged status to which it could lay claim as the climax (or in Aristotelian terms, the peripety or sudden reversal of fortune) in a more linear presentation. In breaking with a more explicitly realist style of chronological unfolding of events, the dramatist exposes the presence of formal manipulation in the creation of his drama, in this case emphasizing the importance of beginnings in any tale even though, and in this example specifically because, they are not presented chronologically.

Before examining more fully the consequences of the playwright's conscious decision to put the would-be climax first, a further analysis of exactly what a beginning is and why and how it is important is in order. In his book on this subject, titled *Beginnings*, Edward Said studies this concept from many different perspectives, be it an author's intention as that which precedes the actual act of writing, or in the work of art itself as that which commences, opens, or serves as the point of departure. Regardless of whether we are speaking about textual or pre- or extra-textual beginnings, the designation of a beginning as such can only be made retrospectively and is made to specifically "designate, clarify or define a *later* time, place or action" (5). That being said, the force of a beginning radiates from its two defining attributes: it is powerful because it comes first and because something important happens at a later junction of time or space that makes it relevant now. Moreover, it is endowed with force precisely by these pressing conditions of the present, as Said states:

For one rarely searches for beginnings unless the present matters a great deal; this is as true of comedy as of tragedy. It is my present urgency, the here and now, that will enable me to establish the sequence of beginning-middle-end and to transform it from a distant object—located 'there'—into the subject of my reasoning. So conceived and fashioned, time and space yield a sequence authorized by a wish for either immanent or surface significance. (42)

This act of naming as such a beginning, which is notably located in the past, from the distant or even not-so-distant present is temporally framed by a representational process; any notion of beginning is a fictional construct. In this regard, Said identifies it as "the first step in the intentional production of meaning" (5). That is to say, it is an interpretative action that by definition projects itself in such a way that it necessarily implies a hierarchization or valorization of an action, whether tragic or comedic, and its antecedents. In *Yo también hablo de la rosa*, then, its narrative structure is a hermeneutic gesture; it is in no way casual that Carballido presents the end before the beginning. So, even though Margaret Sayers Peden states that "the play is not about the train wreck" (50), maybe, in a way, it is. On the one hand, placing it first is part of a narrative strategy whose nonconsecutive organization will condition our interest in Polo and Toña's story and will predispose us to underscore those elements that will explain the outcome that we have already witnessed. On the other hand, the fact that we will approach everything that follows (or, viewed chronologically, precedes) with the full knowledge that

it will be important predisposes us to look for meaning where we would have perhaps only done so retrospectively. Although the author has inverted the order of events, the beginning, as Said states, will continue to be the most fertile raw material for the discovery of the densest nodes of meaning and, consequently, of interpretation.

But let's take this idea one step further: in Carballido's play, the top of States' pyramid of concatenation of events (the derailment) is the narrative beginning of the drama, the place from which every interpretative gesture and all search for cause and meaning is derived. Hence, here the narrative beginning of the play, and not the causal origins of the derailment, becomes important as the first act of interpretation. The former is, in reality, the beginning of all hermeneutic causality, not only of the interpretations generated in the play by its myriad of characters, who like the spectator look for cause after becoming aware of the derailment, but also of those elaborated by the play's critics. In other words, by being presented first, the end is made the beginning; what Said claims we cannot select or discard, this urgency of the present, has been claimed as a beginning by the author. This was a choice that was made for, not by, us; it is the one element that throughout the play neither changes nor is reinterpreted. This fictional construction of the end-as-beginning, this creative act of the playwright as artist, makes another statement about beginnings that in a certain way coincides with the criticism that this play has generally generated: discourse can be willfully manipulated to produce a desired effect, in this case to spark the multiple hypotheses made about this action.

Between Narration and Dramatization

As Jacqueline Bixler astutely points out, *Yo también hablo de la rosa* is a play that defies generic categorization; nevertheless, approaching it as a tragedy in the Aristotelian sense can be helpful to see how its dramatic structure is intimately tied to my claim here that interpretation is cardinally generated in the formal structure laid down by its author. Bert States, in *The Pleasure of the Play*, a contemporary re-reading of tragedy, starts with the premise that mimesis in tragedy is the imitation of an action, which he defines as "any sequence of events which is complete and whole (with a beginning, a middle, and an end) and possesses a certain magnitude" (59). For our purposes here, the question that arises is that of what, then, would be the action imitated by this play. I hold that it cannot be the train wreck per se, because if we accept that Aristotle's "main point about [an action] is that it should

represent a single change to good or bad fortune” (58), the effects of the derailment are far too ambiguous, and indeed largely too ignored, to be what this play is “about.” It is too unclear what, if any, punishment is meted out to the children as a result of their action. But, as I hinted at above, in a way the play *is* about the train wreck, albeit in a roundabout one. The rearranging of the beginning, middle, and end, together with the infusion of certain narrative qualities (i.e. flash-forward or flashback; temporal and spatial jumps that today we would refer to as cinematic) in the dramatic structure of the play, point us in another direction than the one indicated by the surface plot of this drama.

The tragic plot, with its peripety and subsequent recognition, traditionally moves in such a way that the action is dictated by complication and then its denouement, all the while defined by its likelihood, as States calls it, which is to say its probability within the range of all possible human actions. According to States, the recognition, or unconcealment as he labels it, is the central component of action: “Unconcealment is a continuous process in the play, for even when things seem to be more in doubt, more questionable, the play is moving, however obliquely, toward its master unconcealment, and this unconcealment is what gives force and depth to all dramatic speech” (66-67). With the reordering of these two key components in *Rosa* and its presentation of the denouement before its complication, the telling of events, and not the events themselves, becomes the central object of dramatic action. By breaking the conventional rhythm of plot, the play comes to be about not the story of the derailment, but rather how that story is told. As we have seen, it is about how the telling of a story can have an embedded interpretation.

By placing the spectator in a position where the outcome is known from the outset, Carballido situates us somewhere between mimesis and diegesis, between drama and narrative. On this matter, John Kronik writes:

In brief, dramatic representation ostensibly involves no description, no commentary, no point of view, no frame, no inside and outside, no shifts of perspective. Stated another way, the difference between drama and narration is the difference between experience and the reflection on experience, between present event and past time, between immediacy and mediation, between a tale that tells itself and a story that has a storyteller. (26)

Being placed somewhere in between these genres is somewhat uncomfortable for the spectator, as the direct and unmediated world created by classical drama offered a stable representation of an action that is notably absent here. In his article, Kronik analyzes this “mixing of modes” in several Latin American

plays, concluding that a heightened narrative component in a drama creates a metatheatrical dimension that destabilizes the position of the spectator. Laid bare the craft behind the onstage representation, the mimetic illusion breaks down and forces the spectator to recognize the artifice that produces it. The spectator is no longer watching “something,” but rather something “about” something.

These preliminary observations on the play between mimetic and narrative representation can lead us to approach *Rosa* in the light of what States posits as “the question of how it is that mimesis can be an end in itself and adapt itself to other ends as well” (16). To do so, we shall now turn to the four versions of the derailment’s antecedents.

Truth According to Version

The repetition of the initial scene in which Polo and Toña appear—the beginnings of the derailment as it were—as employed has a distinct discursive quality that allows us to reflect on the ways in which a story can be told and what that telling means. These four versions have been examined by almost every critic of the play, but generally taking into account their function as discourses of interpretation, separated from the narrative or representational questions that they put in tension and which will be the subject of our interest here. While it is true that the competition between the versions is nothing less than a battle in which each tries to impose its view as superior to the others, nevertheless, they all share a common characteristic: they are positioned somewhere between drama and narration, between action and reflection as proffered by Kronik, with consequences that we will now examine.

Any analysis of the four versions should naturally begin with the first one. It is generally granted ontological supremacy over the other versions, probably because it comes first in the play and it wears a mask of authenticity. The natural, we could even say realist, language that the children use here contrasts sharply with the obvious manipulation and codification of their language in the subsequent versions and makes it figure as the “real” story, the one against which all other versions must be judged. Moreover, the absence of an obvious, internal narrator framing the onstage action markedly bolsters the idea that this first version is the original enactment of how events played out on that fateful morning. This lack of narrative framing combined with the manifest absence of the veneers of interpretation that characterize the three reenactments is a dramatic sleight of hand meant to coerce spectators into believing that they are one step closer to the action. Frank Dauster goes so far

as to claim that we witness this first version of events exactly how it happened (*Ensayos* 176), while Priscilla Meléndez grants it primacy by referring to the “triple recreation” that it spawns and which consists of re-reading incidents that we have already witnessed (313). Diana Taylor, likewise, gives the first version a free pass; that is to say, she also exempts it from critical scrutiny: “In terms of time and staging devices, however, three perspectives claim preeminence. They are juxtaposed as three perceptual hypotheses during the Emcee’s game show, and they correspond to the epistemic positions of the Freudian, the Marxist, and the Medium respectively” (165).

But, if we agree with Said’s claim that the designation of a beginning is by definition a heuristic act of election (of selecting and discarding), we must accept that this first version has also gone through a process of interpretation, even though it tries to hide the machinery that has been employed in its creation. We could say that its perspective, in part, corresponds to the epistemic position of the artist. We do not view the morning in its entirety, in real time; after a blackout Polo and Toña reappear onstage, at the dump that is the site of the accident. The implication is that the dramatist as storyteller must have left out details, because he judged them to be either unimportant or cumbersome. Either way, this cannot be a neutral or transparent version of Polo and Toña’s actions, however much it may seem so when we compare it to the versions proffered by the Professors and the Medium. Indeed, this is the trap that it sets. It is not present to serve entirely or exclusively as an objective contrast to the other three versions, although it does, in part, fulfill that function, but with a few important caveats.

To begin, the spectator’s appreciation of this version is conditioned by the playwright’s authorial gesture of putting the derailment before the events that lead up to it, establishing a field of play that has been consciously and conspicuously manipulated. We can assume that when the peripheral characters (i.e. the newsboy, the teacher, the university students, the parents, etc.) speak of the accident and speculate about its causes, they do so knowing that it has happened (in the past) and thus do so retrospectively. In order to put spectators in the characters’ position, which is to say, in a position from which we too can retroactively find meaning in the derailment, Carballido gives us the accident first, so we approach it just like all of the characters who read about it in the paper or hear about it secondhand. We, and they, know the event through its outcome first. For this reason, the first representation cannot be neutral. We know where it is going to finish, so we ask ourselves what the importance of each action is as we watch. We are no less guilty of

seeing causality in these beginnings than the Professors or the Medium, and, arguably, no less right or wrong.

Moreover, this first version is deceptive precisely because it appears to be purely mimetic. Its naturalness and, more importantly, its likelihood within the range of possible human actions stabilize its representation for the spectator. We can enjoy it because it lulls us into believing that what we see is what we get. As Priscilla Meléndez states, we get a representation that does not appear to be tinged by ulterior motives; it is primarily descriptive (313). The other three versions, which are striking because they are reenactments and as such challenge what we may have naively seen and accepted as truth, put the narrative dimension of the drama in the foreground by employing other characters as onstage narrators. These scenes are startling because we have made assumptions or interpretations based on the first version that we saw; we don't expect the children to act like this, and they are obviously acting. Gone is the natural air of the first version; Polo and Toña are obviously taking direction and reading from a script as characters, not just as actors.

Here Carballido achieves the destabilization of spectatorship alluded to by Kronik and brought about by the surfacing of a metatheatrical dimension to his play. The ironic use of Freudian or Marxist discourse in the Professors' versions and the cryptic, mystic discourse in the Medium's version draw our attention to the fact that we are no longer watching "something"; we are watching something "about" something. The spectator cannot watch passively; we must make an attempt to get to the bottom of why these scenes are being re-represented and why they have changed.

Ultimately, the only way to reconcile these four disparate versions of the derailment's beginnings is to link them to the greater concerns of artistic creation and interpretation that are central to the work at large. Tellingly, the Professors and the Medium frame the original version not through an analytical discourse per se but through a restaging of the initial story, returning us to our initial observations here about text reception as interpretation versus the interpretation implied and embedded in artistic creation. In all three reenactments, the onstage representation breaks down; the foregrounding of the narrative retelling of the initial scene, with an onstage director/narrator no less, produces an estrangement with the realization that the characters are acting. The central theme put forth is that the telling of any story can be manipulated as a means to an end, whether we are aware of it or not. Let us consider as an example this dialogue in the first version between Polo and Toña, after he has given all of their money to the Scavenger:

TOÑA. ¿Le diste todo?

POLO. Pues sí.

TOÑA. ¡Te pidió un quintito! Ay, qué tarugo.

POLO. ¡Pues, tú dijiste que le diera!

TOÑA. Pero no todo. Te pidió un quintito.

POLO. Loca y además coda. (Carballido, *Yo también* 139)

In the restaging directed by the Marxist Professor, there is no mention whatsoever of this exchange. The Freudian Professor prefaces his scene by stating that certain antecedent factors will allow him to present his explanation, the implication being that he will select what is most suitable and will discard that which is not convenient. We can assume that this preamble applies also to the Marxist, whose scene follows the Freudian Professor, and that he leaves out this dialogue purposefully, as it undermines the whole idea of class solidarity that is the basis of his rationalization of the derailment. This omnipresent suggestion, that underlying any act of creation or enunciation can be found a process of selection and exclusion, finds other, less subtle, manifestations in the play, such as when the Teacher reads to Polo's classmates:

(*Lee.*) Los delincuentes juveniles quedaron inmóviles junto a la vía, viendo su obra. Fueron capturados fácilmente. (*Asiente, busca otro trozo ejemplar.*) Debe culparse también al abandono de los padres (*Asiente.*) que dejan a sus hijos entregados a la vagancia, y al descuido de los maes... (*Calla. Dobla el periódico.*) Pues ya lo saben, eso pasó. (146)

She only partially replicates her source material, manipulating its content as need be. Her reading of the newspaper for her class is metonymical of the play as a whole, of the ways in which knowledge is generated and received, extracted and manipulated to all kinds of ends. And as with the three reenactments, here the gaze of the spectator is drawn to the storyteller and not the story. By being made completely visible, the interpretative filter of narration as reflection makes us take pause by distancing us from the show on stage and requiring us to decide which, if any, of these dueling versions of the same event can speak some truth to us.

How to End

Since we started with beginnings, it is only fitting that we should end with endings. As Edward Said states, the beginning implies the end, so any analysis of beginnings and their means must include their ends. In our effort here to see intention in method, we have seen several instances of ends

defined as objectives or aims. The end of the multiple reenactments, as we have just seen, is to reveal how the interplay of representation and narration can destabilize the play's mimetic illusion through their rivalry, thus making a statement about truth and deception in art. Another example of ends would be Carballido's putting the ending first to foist upon us the recognition that everything that followed would therefore be important.

However, I do not mean to end with this type of end. Rather, we shall examine the end as conclusion, as that which closes, for as much as *Yo también hablo de la rosa* is about beginnings, it is also about endings. The circular structure of the play leaves us without the classical tying up of all of the loose ends. The Medium, whose reenactment brings the play to a close but does not necessarily close the story of Polo and Toña, teases the spectator with the end that she knows we want, but she does not give it to us: "(*A gritos.*) ¿Saben cómo muy pronto sucedió un cambio sorprendente? ¿Y saben cómo Polo llegó a instalar un taller? ¿Y cómo fue el matrimonio de Toña? [...] Ésa... ya es otra historia" (174-75). These words resonate because we have heard them before, at the end of the Medium's third monologue, which is the story of the two brothers who had the same dream: "(*Empieza a retirarse. Casi al salir se vuelve.*) ¿Y saben lo que pasó con el terreno que los dos hombres desmontaron y limpiaron para bailar? (*Calla. Ve a todos. Semisonríe con malicia.*) Ésa ya es otra historia. (*Sale rápidamente.*)" (152-53). In both of these cases, our desire for a neat ending to the story is frustrated by the Medium, whose malicious smile in the first instance and dramatic pause in the second show just how consciously she is toying with us. The story of the brothers seems strange to us, like an odd puzzle whose presence in the play is disconcerting. Interestingly, both Roy Kerr and Priscilla Meléndez, in their respective articles on this play, point out the need to "decipher" the puzzle of the Medium's third monologue, the former noting that neither the brothers nor the spectators can manage to find a logical answer and the latter going so far as to affirm that "[l]a inserción de esta narración tiene como base el acto de descifrarla, es decir, de interpretarla tanto en términos de los propios soñadores como de su pertinencia —si hay alguna— en el drama" (311).

Let us take up this common thread sustained by both critics—that this story demands an interpretation—and furthermore, the idea that its inclusion in the play must also be accounted for somehow, although Meléndez herself seems skeptical of this proposition. In light of all of our reflection here on the question of interpretation's beginnings, means, and ends, obviously it is not much of a stretch to say that the story's insertion in this drama is just

one more part of the puzzle that is constructed by the manipulation of form in the telling of a tale. These demands that the story and its presence in the drama be explained are intimately tied to one explicit, troublesome fact: this story (and, ultimately, the play itself) has no ending. The Medium recognizes the power she holds as a storyteller by waiting until she is almost offstage to address our eagerness to know what happens to the brothers. If their tale is mind-boggling to the spectator, it is precisely because she does not tell us how it ends. Without the end, without States' master unconcealment of the plot, we do not know what importance to grant to the details that have been narrated by the Medium and pantomimed by the dancers. We are left with nothing but questions. Is it important that the brothers could have been twins or maybe not even brothers at all, just two friends? What importance does the fact that it is physically impossible for the two brothers to be present at the same time in each other's house have? Is the solution that they have found adequate? If not, what are its consequences?

Without Aristotle's peripety and recognition, we can make neither head nor tail of this story, and maybe that is just its point. If we are angry with the Medium for teasing us by dangling resolution before us, it is because what she is withholding is not another story, but rather the end of this one. Without a conclusion, without Said's pressing urgency of the now that authorizes the beginning, the tale of the two brothers is bereft of all meaning. Inasmuch as a beginning only has meaning endowed by the end that it precipitates, any attempt to interpret the significance of the brothers' actions is doomed to failure because we cannot know what they mean if we do not know where they lead. The same also holds true for the Medium's bestiary. Why does she describe a seemingly random list of animals and their characteristics? Are the specific animals that she has chosen somehow relevant to Polo and Toña's situation? Does the order in which they are presented matter? How is this bestiary in any way relevant to the play? Clearly Carballido is trying to push us into explaining what cannot be explained. The bestiary seems to point to a hyperactive search for meaning that can be juxtaposed neatly against the story of the brothers and the ways in which it prods us to uncover its hidden meaning. Ultimately, the Medium's allusions to the various versions that exist of the brothers' story come to nothing, because with no conclusion it is impossible to ascertain the value of their possible discrepancies. Consequently, here we have the opposite of Carballido's putting the end first at the play's opening; just as the author can rearrange his drama's plot to impose interpretation on and by us as we have seen, so too can he impede

it through willful manipulation. Then, as much as the brothers' tale is about what Meléndez calls the inconclusive and the absence of answers (312), it is also about the inseparability of beginnings and endings.

The Curtain Falls

In the end, there is no real denouement in *Yo también hablo de la rosa*, no master unconcealment, no untying of the knots tied by the plot. Indeed, if it were not for the progressively ordered choreography of the dance and the ever brightening lights that accompany it, the end would be wholly anti-climactic. In spite of the fact that the Medium tempts us with hints sprinkled here and there and although the curtain does ultimately fall, the play does not really have an end. It goes back to the beginning and ends with yet another version of the beginning, the Medium's reenactment. We do at least get to the end that she hinted at in her first monologue: "si todos los corazones sonaran en voz alta... Pero de eso no hay que hablar todavía" (129). At the curtain, the growing light, like pulsating heartbeats, returns us to the beginning and leaves the mystery of life, whose end cannot be known, unsolved.

This enigmatic state of affairs at the close can be reconciled with our experience as spectators by taking into account the position sustained here that this play is not really about Polo and Toña's story in and of itself. *Yo también hablo de la rosa* is, as countless critics have pointed out, about interpretation and how it can be willfully manipulative and must necessarily be partial. I am certainly as guilty as everyone else for selecting what I wanted to discuss and leaving out the rest. But as we have seen, interpretation is not just a function of reception; it can likewise be embedded in the gestation and transmission of art. For this very reason, any apparent transparency that a story may purport or be purported to have is a sham, as fictional as the story is as the imitation of an action. There is always manipulation of the raw material from which any story is constructed. Consequently, truth becomes a function of representation, be it dramatic or narrative. It is a fictional construct, which is to say that actions cannot reveal truths; only through their telling can a claim of truth be offered or postulated.

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