

DANIEL BALDERSTON

Sexuality and Revolution:

On the Footnotes to

El beso de la mujer araña

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

One of the most important reflections on Latin American masculinity, *El beso de la mujer araña* (The kiss of the spider woman), authored by Manuel Puig (1930–90), was published in Spain in 1976, the very year a brutal military dictatorship took over Puig's native Argentina. The novel, banned in Argentina until after the end of the military regime in 1983, consists of a series of conversations in a prison cell between an urban guerrilla, Valentín Arregui Paz, and a gay window dresser, Luis Alberto Molina. Much of the novel consists of a series of film narratives that Molina retells to Arregui; cinematic fantasy and identifications mediate the distance between the two men, who eventually make love (shortly before Molina's release). The following essay is based on a close study of a portion of the manuscripts to the novel and is limited specifically to eight footnotes, Puig's most extended reflection on theories of sexuality and on the relation between sexual liberation and political liberation movements. The larger issues at stake in the novel are, then, clearly reflected in the footnotes.

One of the most controversial aspects of Puig's novel is the series of didactic footnotes, eight in all, on theories of sexuality, especially on the

origin and nature of homosexuality, and on the possibilities opened by sexual liberation movements. These notes establish a strange dialogue from below with the dialogue above, that of Luis Alberto Molina and Valentín Arregui, a dialogue that turns on the plural nature of masculinity.¹ Many readers, and most critics, have questioned the need for the series of footnotes (which some U.S. and European readers, in particular, have believed to be largely common knowledge), and there have been somewhat fruitless attempts to relate the precise matter of the notes to the events taking place on the upper parts of the same pages.² This essay, based on research into the sources of the footnotes and a careful examination of the manuscript versions of the material that became the notes, will take a somewhat different tack: to look at the series of notes as a brief treatise on the theory of sexuality and on the relationship between sexual liberation and broader social change. Given that Puig was famous for having eliminated the narrator from his fiction, the footnotes provide a unique point of access into his point of view.

The following essay is based in part on manuscript material that is being prepared for a critical edition in Colección Archivos in Paris by a team at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata consisting of José Amícola, Graciela Goldchluk, Roxana Páez, and Julia Romero.³ The original manuscripts are in the possession of the Puig family in Buenos Aires; Goldchluk and Romero have tea and watch a movie every Wednesday evening with Puig's mother, choosing from the videotheque left by Puig, which consists of some thirty-five hundred films. This contemporary version of "Tea and Sympathy" has yielded access to a fascinating body of manuscript material, perhaps the most interesting such material to emerge in the field of Latin American literature since Ana María Barrenechea worked on the *Guaderno de Bitácora* to Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963; Barrenechea edition of manuscript material 1983).

Because I will be dealing in some detail with the sources and versions of the eight footnotes, it would no doubt be helpful first to review their order and content. (I will not be dealing here with a ninth footnote, the one that completes the story of the supposed Nazi film, because it has little to do with the project of the notes on homosexuality and establishes a very different relation with the "text above," as Lucille Kerr calls it.) The first note (pages 66–68 of the first edition) appears in the middle of the third

chapter, during the first half of Molina's retelling of the Nazi film involving Leni the chanteuse; it summarizes three theories of the physical origin of homosexuality (hormonal imbalance, intersexuality, hereditary factors) and the refutations of these theories by the British psychologist D. J. West. The second note (pages 102-3, near the beginning of chapter five, before Molina's interior monologue on the story of *The Enchanted Cottage*) is concerned with three "lay" theories of the psychic origin of homosexuality (theories of seduction, segregation, and perversion) and ends with an introduction to Freud's theories of its origin in infancy. The third (pages 133-35, in chapter six, the one in which Valentín tells the story of the film involving a race-car driver) continues the discussion of the theories of Freud and his orthodox followers (including his daughter Anna) on child psychology, the infantile libido, original bisexuality and the function of repression. The fourth (pages 141-43, in chapter seven, which opens with Molina's singing a bit of the bolero "La carta" and continues with Valentín's deciphering of a coding letter about "uncle Pedro") focuses on the orthodox Freudian theory that male homosexuality arises from an excessive identification of the child with his mother. The fifth (pages 154-55, in chapter eight, which opens with the prison records for Molina and Arregui and then continues with the dialogue between Molina and the warden) focuses on the function of patriarchal dominance in the workings of repression, mentioning for the first time the so-called Freudian left or heterodoxy—Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown—and the Australian political scientist and ideologist of gay liberation Dennis Altman. The sixth (pages 168-71, in chapter nine, the first chapter of the second part of the novel, in which Molina tells the first half of the Jacques Tourneur film *I Walked with a Zombie*) discusses the fortunes of the Freudian concept of sublimation in the work of these heterodox Freudians and opens the discussion of a new topic: the possible function of sexual liberation in broader social change. The seventh (pages 199-200, at the end of chapter ten, in which Molina continues the retelling of *I Walked with a Zombie*) begins with the assertion that the stigma against homosexuals is stronger than that on alcoholics, compulsive gamblers, ex-cons, and former mental patients (derived from J. L. Simmons's work on deviance) and continues with Freud's disapproval of this stigma (in his well-known "Letter to an American Mother"), and proposes that if the original "poly-

morphous perverse" were released, that strong changes in society, sexual roles, and human liberation in general would follow. The eighth and final note (pages 209-11, in chapter eleven, which begins with another interview between Molina and the warden, continues with the conclusion of *I Walked with a Zombie*, and finishes with the first time that Molina and Arregui have sex) argues once more for the liberation of the "polymorphous perverse" (again mentioning Marcuse's and Brown's interpretations of Freud), recalls Fenichel's idea that the only gender roles that are available are those that are based on imitations of our mothers and fathers, and ends with an extensive discussion of the ideas of the Danish woman doctor Anneli Taube on the link between sexual liberation and revolution.

The eight notes, then, provide a fairly broad survey of twentieth-century ideas on the dialectics of sexual oppression and liberation; Pamela Bacarisse calls them "a homogeneous collection, orientated towards the theories proposed by the politico-sexual liberation movements of the sixties, and at least some of the sexual idealists of that epoch" (Bacarisse 1988, 114). A total of twenty-six authorities are quoted or paraphrased (from Freud and Lenin to Dr. Taube), from a total of thirty-one texts (five Freud texts are cited, as well as two of Marcuse's). This extensive treatise on sexual repression and liberation is noteworthy for the seeming diversity of its sources and for its strong final thesis: that sexual liberation in general and gay liberation in particular are essential parts of the widely desired social change (we are in the seventies, after all) and that there are strong links—Lenin, Marcuse, Taube—between ideas of sexual liberation and the Marxist tradition.⁴

Such an abundance of authorities, quotations, summaries, and paraphrases suggests considerable research. However, a careful examination of the quotations and paraphrases from the twenty-six authors reveals that with only three exceptions all of them are cited in the two sources that Puig relied on the most: *Homosexuality* (1967), by the British psychologist D. J. West, and *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* (1971), by the Australian political scientist and activist Dennis Altman. The first exception is a passing reference to C. S. Lewis's memoir *Surprised by Joy*, which includes a discussion of homosexual practices among boys in British boarding schools (a situation parallel to that of the prisoners in the novel, and one often studied in relation to other segregated male situations such as mili-

tary bases and prisons in the literature on the subject). The second is a passing reference to Freud's authorship of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a work not cited directly by West or Altman (although the ideas of Freud's that are discussed here do appear in West, but with notes referring to others of Freud's works). The final exception is the discussion of the ideas of Dr. Taube, for reasons revealed years ago by Lucille Kerr in her book on Puig, *Suspended Fictions*: that said Danish doctor is our author in drag.

In general terms notes 1 to 4 are based on Puig's readings of West and notes 5 to 8 on Altman, although there are some exceptions to this pattern. In any case the summaries of the sociological and psychological studies of homosexuality, particularly the empirical ones, derive from West, whereas the discussions of the work of the heterodox Freudians (Reich, Marcuse, Brown), of ideas on sexual revolution and counterculture (Millett, Roszak), and even the reference to Lenin's ideas on sexual liberation, derive from Altman. The odd thing about the almost total reliance on this particular pair of sources is that West's book is sharply criticized by Altman for its reliance on the normative language of 1960s social science: West uses descriptive terms that imply a strong moral sanction, such as *normal*, *perverse*, and *deviant*, without apparent irony. Altman comments: "however able a psychologist West may be, he is a poor logician, and a man too apt to confuse social prejudice with natural laws" (Altman 1971, 48), and later "his use of words like 'natural,' 'perversion,' etc. powerfully reinforce conventional morality. . . . Like too many psychologists, West is strongly conformist, even where his own expert knowledge tells him that social norms are not necessarily sensible" (Altman 1971, 49).

By using West almost exclusively in the first half of the notes (concerned mostly with theories of the origin of homosexuality), leaving Altman as the main source for the second half of his treatise, Puig privileges the latter's ideas on gay liberation and its ties to social transformation over West's more conventional or conformist ideas on the origin and nature of homosexuality (as an exotic Other). What interests Puig in the last instance is not what the homosexual is but what he or she could become. As Altman writes:

It seems to me that the connection between sexual liberation and total liberation should be made somewhat differently. Liberation is a process

that individuals strive toward, and part of this striving involves a recognition of the way in which oppression is implanted in the very structures of our society. To overcome the stigma society places on homosexuality, for example, does mean radical alterations in the way in which we order the socialization process. More than this, as individuals come to a greater acceptance of their erotic/sexual being, they tend spontaneously to reject the "performance principle" that underlies the dominant ethos of property, competition, and aggression. Thus, between individual and social liberation there is a dialectic relationship, and as Marcuse puts it in his *Essay on Liberation*, "radical change in consciousness is the beginning, the first step in changing social existence: emergence of the new Subject." (Altman 1971, 92).

There is a startling unevenness in the importance of the authors cited in the notes (or rather, quoted from prior quotations, since these almost always derive from West and Altman). One feels a bit embarrassed to encounter the quotation from Theodore Roszak on the woman who is hidden within every man waiting to be liberated; his book *The Making of the Counter-Culture*, published in 1969, is very much of its time and barely intelligible today. So it is a bit comforting to think that Puig did not necessarily read Roszak (but encountered Roszak in Altman), although it is in fact very likely that he did read him, because it was impossible to live in the United States and to follow the pseudointellectual discussions of the time without reading Roszak or, even worse, Charles Reich's embarrassing *The Greening of America*, which was excerpted in *The New Yorker* in the early seventies and widely commented on as if there were ideas to be found in it. Altman's book is very informed by discussions of the period—about the relations between gay liberationist ideas and those of the women's movement, the New Left, or the Black Panthers—but for the most part Puig avoided quoting from the most lightweight material that found its way into Altman's early book (his more recent work is quite different in tenor, I should clarify); instead, Altman is mostly used for his useful digest of the ideas of Reich, Marcuse, and Brown and Altman's provocative use of the heterodox Freudian tradition for discussing gay liberation.

In numerous instances, when comparing the quotations or summaries in Puig's footnotes with the texts cited in West and Altman, I have found

small but significant changes of title, confusing of opinions, even the conflation of two or more authorities into one. For instance, the first note claims to summarize the ideas of Dr. Foss, from his article "La influencia de andrógenos urinarios en la sexualidad de la mujer," in the following words:

las grandes cantidades de hormonas masculinas administradas a mujeres producen sí un notable cambio en dirección a la masculinidad, pero sólo en lo que concierne el aspecto físico: voz más profunda, barba, disminución de senos, crecimiento del clitoris, etc. En cuanto al apetito sexual, aumenta, pero continúa siendo normalmente femenino, es decir que el objeto de su deseo sigue siendo el hombre, claro está si no se trata de una mujer ya con costumbres lesbianas. (Puig 1976, 66)

This is a fairly full translation of the following passage in West:

The effect of large doses of androgens on women is well known as a result of naturally occurring adrenal tumours, which secrete excessive amounts of androgens, and because big doses of androgens have been given as treatment for certain cancers. The woman's appearance undergoes a striking change in the direction of masculinity. The voice deepens, a beard grows, breasts regress, clitoris enlarges, features coarsen, and feminine fat disappears. Sexual desire usually increases, but remains normal feminine desire, unless of course lesbian inclinations were already present. (West 1967, 158)

Apart from the slight condensing of the original material in Puig's translation (and of the addition of the idea that "normal" feminine desire is directed toward men, not in West), what is most interesting in this passage is that West's notes refer not only to G. L. Foss's article "The Influence of Androgens on Sexuality in Women" but also to two other sources: R. B. Greenblatt's "Hormonal Factors in Libido" and W. H. Masters and D. M. Magallon's "Androgen Administration in the Post-Menopausal Woman." Puig, that is, simplifies the critical apparatus, referring to only one of the three articles. In the same note, when he refers to a Dr. Swyer, author of "Homosexualidad, los aspectos endocrinológicos," he paraphrases material from page 159 of West, which is based on the work of C. A. Wright

author of "Endocrine Aspects of Homosexuality." I will not try your patience with an excessive number of examples of this sort of error or simplification, but they confirm the hypothesis that the bibliographical research on the topic was minimal, apart from the two books mentioned.

The case of Dr. Taube is interesting in part because the author disguises himself as a woman (as he is said to do in the letters that are preserved in the Princeton library), but the Danish doctor is also a sort of double of Dennis Altman. Like him, she sees the gay liberation movement as parallel to, and in solidarity with, movements of women's liberation and Black power, and part of a broader united front. Both use the language of the New Left of the sixties and seventies. The author himself calls attention on page 210 to the great similarities between the ideas of Taube and Altman. Dr. Taube says that the homosexual child is a future revolutionary: "el rechazo que un niño muy sensible puede experimentar con respecto a un padre opresor—símbolo de la actitud masculina autoritaria y violenta—, es de naturaleza consciente" [the rejection that a very sensitive child can feel with regard to an oppressive father—the symbol of an authoritarian and violent masculine attitude—is of a conscious nature] (Puig 1976, 209). It is worth noting that *taube* in German means "dove" or "pigeon" ("pichón" in Argentine Spanish), a possible reference to the Argentine psychiatrist Enrique Pichon Rivière but also to the use of *pichón* as a term of endearment; the German form of the surname is reminiscent of "taboo," thus recalling Freud's *Totem und Tabu*. The doctor is Danish, I suppose, because of the celebrated early sex change operation performed on Christine Jorgensen, recalled at the moment that our author changes sex. (José Amicola mentions that when the novel was translated into Danish, Puig attempted—but too late to affect the published form of the translation—to change the doctor's name and nationality, so as not to give away the game [Amicola 1992, 238 n. 8].)

The ideas of Taube/Altman on sexual revolution and the polymorphous perverse make possible the entanglement of Molina and Arregui and their change of roles in the course of the novel: the reading of the "bottom" of the page alters the "top." In this game of "top" and "bottom" there is an interesting inversion of roles: if the active figure (male, top, "lector cómplice") normally subjects the passive one (female, bottom, "lec-

tor hembra”), then Puig uses the footnotes, and invents the authority of Dr. Taube, to destabilize this schema.⁵

Another example of the use of the sources, now with respect to the topic of sexual revolution, is when Puig writes, “Marcuse señala que la función social del homosexual es análoga a la del filósofo crítico, ya que su sola presencia resulta un señalador constante de la parte reprimida de la sociedad” [Marcuse signals that the social function of the homosexual is analogous to that of the critical philosopher, since his or her very presence is a constant indicator of the repressed part of society] (Puig 1976, 199). This is derived from Altman, who in turn is summarizing the arguments of Paul A. Robinson, author of *The Freudian Left*, on Reich, Roheim, and Marcuse: “Robinson interprets some of [Marcuse’s] writings as suggesting that ‘in a certain sense, then, the social function of the homosexual was analogous to that of the critical philosopher’” (Altman 1971, 65, quoted in Robinson 208). Here there can be no doubt that Marcuse is thinking of the famous phrase of Karl Marx: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real task is to change it.” In the diverse intonations of the same idea there is continuity but also rupture: it is obvious that Marx would not have affirmed that the homosexual is the “critical philosopher,” the conscious rebel, the hero of history.

That is perhaps why there is one series of notes and not two (one on sexuality, the other on Marxist theory and urban guerrilla practice). The critical philosopher in the cell turns out not to be Valentín Arregui but the seemingly frivolous Luis Alberto Molina. He needs the voice of the other, and his ears (and other appendages), to make himself heard. The voice from below, the voice of the reader or spectator who chooses the subaltern or “bottom” role—a space occupied here by Taube, Marcuse, Freud, even Lenin, and certainly Puig—is closer to the vital center of this story, in which the private is public and the personal is political. A careful look at the manuscript material reveals that the earliest document is probably a list of quotations from Freud, Fenichel, Marcuse, and numerous others culled from Puig’s readings of West, Altman, and others. These were typed, and later numbered, in Puig’s handwriting with a series of letter codes: a, b, c, and so forth through the entire alphabet, then starting again with a’, b’, c’, etc. (That these quotations were collected prior to their being organized into the present notes is proven by the fact that they are assem-

bled in the notes in orders very different from their ordering in the collection of quotations: note 5, for instance [in chapter 8] contains quotations in the following order: k - i - b - e - j - d - h - ñ - o - t - u.) There is then a series of handwritten pages where Puig struggles with the ordering of the material and with determining what chapters it should be paired with. A crucial document is a schematic outline of the first eleven chapters, a scrap of paper on the other side of which Puig noted some page numbers from Altman and jotted down that his “next novel” would be called—or about—*Man and Beauty*. The outline reads:

1.	Pantera A	
2.	Pantera B (y Jane)	
3.	Leni A (y mozo)	Homo I (teorías 3 que termina con consenso de causas psic.
4.	Leni B, dolores SHE	Vulgo y start psic.
5.	Seef (?) Cottage	
6.	50’s guerrilla, dolores HE	Edipo
	Madre She, He’s film	Narcisismo ¿Anal?
7.	“Mi carta”—Dolores HE, He’s film	Represión I
8.	Director	
<hr/>		
9.	Comida, Mejoría, Zombies A,	Rep. II
	carta dictada, lava	
10.	Salud HE, Zombies B	Rep. III
	Desplante He por mimos	
11.	Director—Vuelve She triste	Corolario
		ME alone!!!
		+ Nombre INVENTADO
	 PARA DEDUCCIÓN
		... Rechazo Imagen Represor

This outline is substantially that of the novel that was later published, although only of the first eleven of the sixteen chapters. The HE and SHE are Arregui and Molina, and the films that are narrated are indicated in shorthand. The importance of the outline resides in the crucial structural role played from early in the project by the footnotes, summarized in the right column after the arrows. The summary of the content of the notes is



Black and white. HIV/AIDS prevention postcard used in interventions in gay commercial venues. Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA).

perhaps clearer than the summary of the main action: "Director-Vuelve SHE triste" is a somewhat inadequate summary of a chapter that includes the first time that Molina and Arregui make love. It is also of particular interest that the last five chapters, which include preparations for Molina's release, the Mexican cabaretera film, Molina's release and death, and Arregui's spider woman fantasy after being tortured, are absent: what interested Puig at the moment he scrawled this outline was the pairing of the footnotes to the main action, and the footnotes end in chapter II. The note on the eighth footnote is particularly revealing, as he calls it a "Corollary" to the three notes on repression, and adds: "ME alone!!!" The reader of the novel is left to deduce that Dr. Taube is Puig (Nombre INVENTADO PARA DEDUCCION, with DEDUCCION heavily underscored).⁶

Altman's title *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* is echoed in Taube's *Sexuality and Revolution* and in the general structure of the last four notes, which move through three versions of Repression (Rep. I, II, and III, in the manuscript) to the final note on Liberation (although this theme is present earlier in the quotations and paraphrases from Marcuse, Brown, Roszak, Millett, and Altman).

The presumed next step in the process of composition is the typescript of the first seven notes, some with heavy handwritten corrections, including arrows to rearrange the paragraphs. The eighth note, the one about Dr. Taube's theories of the relations between sexual liberation and revolution, is, tellingly, handwritten rather than typed, as Puig was not working directly from his typed collection of numbered quotations but from ideas of his own. The handwritten manuscript is extraordinarily rough compared to the relatively neat typescripts of the rest of the notes, showing intense rewriting of this section. Roberto Echavarren, in a perceptive article on *El libro* published in 1978, just two years after the publication of the novel, asks near the end, in the title of the final section (which is concerned with the footnotes), whether the novel could be considered didactic. He explains:

Tal vez [las notas] irriten a ciertos lectores, tal vez resulten en parte superfluas a otros. El propósito fundamental de las notas es enriquecer la visión de la homosexualidad abriendo un campo de posibilidades que rebasa las características concretas del personaje Molina. (Echavarren 1978, 74)

[Perhaps the notes will irritate certain readers, perhaps they will seem superfluous to others. The notes' fundamental purpose is to enrich the vision of homosexuality opening up a field of possibilities that surpasses the concrete characteristics of Molina the character.]

And he later adds: "Quizá la mayor ventaja de las notas es la distancia que establecen entre una homosexualidad 'posible' y el 'modelo reducido' de la homosexualidad de Molina" [Perhaps the greatest strength of the notes is the distance they establish between a "possible" homosexuality and the "reductive model" of Molina's homosexuality] (Echavarren 1978, 75). José Amícola argues in similar terms that "las notas tienen la cualidad

de establecer una connivencia con el lector mediante un efecto de ruptura de la ilusión que, a la manera brechtiana, permite considerar el problema desde la perspectiva de una equidistante lectura racional" [the notes establish a sort of complicity with the reader through an effect of the breaking of the illusion, which, in the Brechtian manner, allows the reader to consider the problem from the perspective of an objective and distanced rational reading] (Amícola 1992, 95), whereas Elías Miguel Muñoz calls the notes a "texto científico" [a scientific text] (Muñoz 1987, 71). Juan Pablo Dabove has written in his book on *El beso, La forma del Destino*:

los personajes viven un conflicto de naturaleza afectiva, política, sexual. Por lo mismo, desconocen las variables fundamentales que en él se articulan, las repeticiones, las comunidades históricas. El saber eminentemente libresco que las notas exhiben cumpliría la función de distanciar al lector de la trama, de mostrar a la luz de las diversas disciplinas constituidas aquello que los protagonistas no ven, ampliar y relativizar los términos del debate o el amor que entre ellos se suscita (Dabove 1994, 14 n)

[the characters embody a conflict of an affective, political, and sexual nature. For that very reason they do not know the fundamental variables that are articulated in that conflict, the repetitions, the historic communities. The supremely bookish knowledge that the notes exhibit would thus fulfill the function of distancing the reader from the plot of showing through the discourses of the various disciplines that are invoked that which the characters cannot see, to expand and relativize the terms of the debate or the love that grows between them.]

The problem with these readings, three of which make use of the Brechtian notion of distancing, is that the perspective from below that is opened up by the notes, and that supplements the discourse of Molina, can only be described as "objective" or "rational" if one reads these notes as if they were notes to an article or critical book. Roxana Páez allows for a richer reading of the notes when she says that they

reintroducen fantasmáticamente lo que Puig reprime, el narrador que deviene Puig mismo con una postura que no deja resquicios librados al lector. Enriquecen la narración/relación, porque la apostrofan o la con-

tradicen. Y por momentos, de tan brechtianas, las interrupciones se vuelven cómicas. (Páez 1995, 77)

[reintroduce in a phantasmatic way what Puig represses, the narrator, who becomes Puig himself in a posture that leaves no opening for interpretation by the reader. They enrich the narration/telling, but they apostrophize or contradict it. And at times, due to the Brechtian character, the interruptions become comic.]

Julia Romero's comments on the destabilization effects of Dr. Taube's ideas of the polymorphous perverse are also pertinent:

La nota de Anneli Taube, incluida en el mismo capítulo donde los personajes llegan a la consumación sexual, deja ver la ironía: el perverso polimorfo no es Molina, sino el viril Valentín. Recordemos que Molina discrimina (se siente "una mujer," y es por eso que quiere a un "hombre de verdad," no a los homosexuales amigos suyos) y el sujeto de la enunciación lo critica. (Romero 1996, 455 n. 12)

[The note by Anneli Taube, included in the same chapter in which the characters achieve sexual union, leaves room for irony: the polymorphous perverse is not Molina but the virile Valentín. Let's remember that Molina discriminates (he feels himself a "wo-man," and for that reason seeks a "real man," not his homosexual friends) and the subject of the enunciation criticizes him.]

She then quotes in extenso from Dr. Taube on the bourgeois models that afflict both heterosexuality and homosexuality, that is, above all, the models of "hombre fuerte" and "mujer débil," thus suggesting the same subversion of the upper text by the lower that I suggested earlier.

Notes in a fictional text, as Shari Benstock has observed in a fine article in *Arizona* in 1983, have a somewhat different, and often more subversive, dimension:

Footnotes in fictional texts do not necessarily follow the rules that govern annotation in critical texts: they may or may not provide citation, explication, elaboration, or definition for an aspect of the text; they may or may not follow "standard form"; they may or may not be subordinate to the text to which they are appended. Most significant, they belong to a

fictional universe, stem from a creative act rather than a critical one, and direct themselves toward the fiction and never toward an external construct, even when they cite "real" works in the world outside the particular fiction. The referential and marginal features of these notes serve a specifically hermeneutic function; to the extent that notations in fictional texts negotiate the distance between writer and reader, they do so in terms that differ radically from those of scholarly discourse. (Benstock 1983, 204-5)

Although Benstock focuses her attention on notes in Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, and Vladimir Nabokov, and never refers to Puig (or to Jorge Luis Borges), her ideas are a useful corrective to Echavarrén, Amícola, and Dabove, all of whom assume a scientific stance in these footnotes, some of which refer to empirical scientific research or to the pseudoscience of psychoanalysis yet do not speak from a scientific viewpoint. The treatise on sexuality and revolution that is Puig's footnotes to *El beso* is closer to the mock-philosophical tradition that we know from Jonathan Swift, Sterne, and Borges than to the "equidistante lectura racional" invoked by Amícola, and the clincher is Puig's disappearing act at the end into the female body and voice of Anneli Taube. As Benstock writes at the end of her article:

Because footnotes in fiction cannot serve the ends they serve in the scholarly tradition, they parody the notational convention and draw attention to the faulted authority present in all such structures, most especially those employed by scholars. Language always embodies both authority and the threat to authority; it is always a dialogue between self and other; it is always turned back on itself. The very fact of writing both extends and undercuts the claims of language. Thus footnotes in any text, whether scholarly or fictional, illustrate the rhetorical double bind that keeps all language at the margin of discourse. (220)

The sex change that Manuel Puig performs on himself at the end of the treatise on sexuality, whether we choose to read the treatise as a whole as mock-philosophical or not, is at least a signal to the fact that authority can be put into question or "turned back on itself" in the "bottom" text, as well as in the "top" one.

Notes

1. The focus of this essay is deliberately narrow, on the footnotes to the novel and the theories of homosexuality that inform them; it may seem at times that the multiple "masculinities" with which other essays in this volume are concerned are referred to only obliquely. I would argue, however, that Puig's 1976 novel is an early and decisive intervention in debates about masculinity in Latin America, certainly one of the most widely read texts to be concerned with these questions. In addition, Molina and Arregui's debates in the novel are centrally concerned with what it is to be a man, and it is certainly not the case that Arregui's performance of masculinity is the only one available here.

2. See, e.g., Bacarisse: "The reader should not ignore the footnotes, for if he does, a major key to at least some kind of understanding of the novel will have been passed over" (1988, 113).

3. A Spanish version of this essay appeared in Daniel Balderston, *El deseo, enorme claridad luminosa* (Caracas: Ediciones eXcultura, 1999).

4. "Their quasi-scientific nature gives them an impersonal, even objective air, but they are not, of course, either impersonal or objective. Like the sixties movements, they constitute an explicit plea for freedom from repression, a repression that was seen then as the pervasion of society by a ruthless masculinity" (Bacarisse 1988, 114).

5. In a 1984 talk (published in part in the British journal *Index on Censorship* in 1985), "The Loss of a Readership," and in a subsequent 1990 talk "El error gay," Puig develops his ideas about sexual liberation, polymorphous perversity, and the fluidity of sexual categories. See Romero 1999, 305-15, which includes a transcription from the manuscripts of these important texts, showing Puig's careful revision of his expression of these ideas.

6. Juan José Sebreli, in a long 1997 essay on the secret history of homosexuality in Buenos Aires, argues that Puig based *El beso* on the outcry by the ERP (one of the urban guerrilla groups in the early 1970s in Argentina), which "denunció con horror que sus militantes eran recluidos en las mismas celdas que los homosexuales" [denounced with horror that their militants were imprisoned in the same cells as homosexuals] (Sebreli 1997, 337). Sebreli also mentions that Puig took part in the first meetings in 1971 of the Frente de Liberación Homosexual in Buenos Aires, although he claims that Puig "advirtió que no participaría en el movimiento a causa de su carrera literaria" [announced that he would not participate in the movement because of his literary career] (Sebreli 1997, 332).

References

- Alman, Dennis. 1971. *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*. New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey.

- Amícola, José. 1992. *Manuel Puig y la tela que atrapa al lector: Estudio sobre El beso de la mujer araña en su relación con los procesos receptivos y con una continuidad literaria contestaria*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano.
- Bacarisse, Pamela. *The Necessary Dream: A Study of the Novels of Manuel Puig*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988.
- Balderston, Daniel. *El deseo, enorme cicatriz luminosa*. Caracas: Ediciones eXcultura, 1999.
- Benstock, Shari. 1983. "At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text." *PMLA* 98, no. 2:204-25.
- Dabove, Juan Pablo. 1994. *La forma del destino: Sobre "El beso de la mujer araña" de Manuel Puig*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora.
- Echavarren, Roberto. 1978. "El beso de la mujer araña y las metáforas del sujeto." *Revista Iberoamericana* 102-3:65-75.
- Kerr, Lucille. 1987. *Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Muñoz, Elías Miguel. 1987. *El discurso utópico de la sexualidad en Manuel Puig*. Madrid: Editorial Pliegos.
- Páez, Roxana. 1995. *Manuel Puig: Del pop a la extrañeza*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Almagesto.
- Puig, Manuel. *El beso de la mujer araña*. 1st ed. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1976.
- Romero, Julia. 1996. "De monólogo al estallido de la voz." In *Materiales iniciales para la traición de Rita Hayworth*, ed. José Amícola, 451-67. La Plata: Centro de Estudios de Teoría y Crítica Literaria.
- . 1999. "Manuel Puig: Del delito de la escritura al error gay." *Revista Iberoamericana* 65, no. 187:305-25.
- Sebreli, Juan José. 1997. "Historia secreta de los homosexuales en Buenos Aires." *Escritos sobre escritos, ciudades bajo ciudades*, 275-370. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana.
- West, D[onald]. J. 1967. *Homosexuality*. Chicago: Aldine.