

Strategic Rebellions: Reinaldo Arenas Has the Last Word

Translation by Stacey Van Dahm

When we think today about Cuban literature in the United States, especially that originally written in Spanish, Reinaldo Arenas emerges as its most successful representative. The objective of this essay is to study the origin and the consequences of Arenas' success and especially to analyze the limitations of the interpretation of his work resulting from that success. The most visible consequence of this interpretation has been to privilege his autobiography, *Antes que anochezca* (*Before Night Falls*),* and to emphasize in it the author's victimhood and, thus, to establish an image of the author and his work that has affinity with the multicultural discourses that prevail in the North American academy when one aims to study the so-called subaltern cultures. I propose to emphasize in Arenas' own autobiography and in *El color del verano* (*The Color of Summer*)—a novel that functions as a parallel text to the former—the elements that demonstrate a clear resistance to the victimhood that is attributed to Arenas for the sake of adapting him to predetermined agendas. There are two elements I mark as the most subversive in the face of this interpretation: his ferocious satire against almost everything and his no less aggressive representation of his sexuality. Next, I explain why satire and sexuality in these texts simultaneously contradict the predominant reading of Arenas in the North American academy and are keys for confronting another much more complex and fruitful reading of his work, a reading I will attempt to quickly sketch. Finally, I describe how Arenas, in writing these final texts, was complicit in the ambiguity found in certain readings of his work. This complicity—according to my suspicions—responds to Arenas' need to assure the posthumous success of his work in the context of the academy and the liberal North American culture. To conclude, I endeavor to briefly summarize the dilemmas that the North American reception of Arenas' posthumous work represents for Cuban literature that is produced in the United States.

* Translator's note: I have added the English title of translations of Arenas' and other major works. Quoted passages from Arenas' novels have been taken from the English translations done by Dolores M. Koch or Andrew Hurley. After first mention, all titles appear in English only. I have translated quotations from secondary critical sources myself unless a readily available English translation exists. This article by Enrique del Risco is published with the permission of Editorial Aduana Vieja, which owns the world rights for *Guayaba Sweet: Literatura Cubana en Estados Unidos*.

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AFTER NIGHT FELL

The paths that lead to literary fame often surprise those who still believe that such notoriety stems directly from the literature itself. This is the case with Reinaldo Arenas, author of a handful of the most disconcerting, amusing, and pivotal novels of Cuban literature, who, nevertheless, reached literary celebrity with *Before Night Falls*, an autobiography that demonstrated his darkest sides. During a long decade of editorial marginalization that coincided with his exile, Arenas published some of his most brilliant works with small and limited-distribution publishers. The autobiography, preceded by the author's suicide when he was sick from AIDS, achieved immediate and extensive circulation and with time won two of the weightiest forms of endorsement that one could hope for in North American culture: academic and cinematographic.

Before Night Falls has become required reading in many North American literature courses, and the film, also titled *Before Night*

Falls, directed by the renown painter Julian Schnabel, debuted a couple years ago with plenty of fanfare. I propose to utilize precisely the cinematographic version in order to reconstruct the reading of the book from the North American cultural perspective, a reading that the film summarizes and facilitates. In the film, Arenas' literary world is barely alluded to in some passages and his obstinate pursuit of writing is almost ignored. On the other hand, the film insists on the theme that auspiciously offers the most attraction for the North American public: homosexuality as martyrology. In that reading, which is the same that arises in many universities, Arenas is important less for his position as a writer than as a victim.

The actual notoriety of Reinaldo Arenas is, as occurs frequently, a misunderstanding. According to this popular reading, the principal value of the autobiography is that it is signed (permit me the poor metaphor) with Arenas' own blood. All the editions of the book include the author's suicide letter in which he blames Fidel Castro for his death. The disease that destroyed Arenas and the

disturbing final photographs that accompany the book dramatize his text in a way almost impossible by other means. The morbid compassion towards the doomed author, once he was dead, would do the rest. Now deceased, his image permanently fixed in the final photograph, Arenas would never be able to alter the representation that would introduce and canonize him as a writer-martyr-homosexual.

We may agree nevertheless that even though these circumstances would be enough to explain the public attention given to Arenas' posthumous book, it would be insufficient to explain the enthusiasm of the North American academy. We will try to imagine the academy less sensitive to the *mise en scene* arranged by a moribund author than a housewife is in front of her daily soap opera.² We will concede the benefit of imagining the academy more analytical and less suggestionable. If not the blood, what distinguishes Arenas' autobiography from his earlier texts? In my search for an answer, I have found two possibilities: genre and tone. The combination of a somber and at times pathetic tone with the choice of the autobiographical genre is the key. We may venture that due to this combination Arenas has risen to the academic altar with an advantageous martyr's halo.

EULOGY OF THE VICTIM

Some years ago, the appearance of a book questioning the claims made by Rigoberta Menchú in her biography, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (I, Rigoberta Menchú)*, caused a capital commotion. The biography reads like an article of faith in North American universities and the Nobel Peace Prize has validated it (perhaps more than its defense of the indigenous people of Guatemala). Pressed to deny or confirm the accusations of the book, Menchú spoke for the cameras with enlightening frankness: "No one is going to take away my victimhood!"

In order to fully understand this sentence it is necessary to understand the political value of victimhood, its recuperative capacity and the special space that it occupies within North American multicultural discourse. If I must choose a way of saying it, though brief and undoubtedly clumsy, I would affirm that within the predominant multicultural framework of North American universities, minorities take their place, preeminently, as victims (or, perhaps, as equivalents to what in his time represented Rousseau's noble savage: an example in nature of social harmony prior to the emergence of private property). The calculation that equates minority with victim and reserves for him a space for his voice to be heard does not manage to conceal the character of subordination that is conferred to the minority-victim from the centers of what we will call, to abbreviate, the "good conscience of the West". The dynamic of the victim is, as Nietzsche would say about what he calls "slave-morality," a dynamic condemned to action as reaction, without possibilities of action based on one's own initiative. Perhaps representations of these minorities, as in Menchú herself, do not ignore this condition,

but at the same time they prefer securing their victimization to losing the position gained.

As a victim, Reinaldo Arenas finally acceded to a position from which he had been banished since his exit from Cuba in 1980. Arenas' exclusion from the editorial and Western academic world had, according to him, political and ideological roots,³ but these would not be enough to explain the posthumous re-entry of the writer into those same circuits. It is certain that Arenas was marginalized as an anti-Castroist writer (after having been considered—by pure geographical conventionalism—a representative writer of the Cuban Revolutionary novel)⁴ and has returned as gay author, as victim.

The most evident sample of a "victimized" reading of Arenas is precisely the cinematographic version of *Before Night Falls*. *Before Night Falls* is striking for its filmic realization of the pathetic tone of the work that inspires it, that is, up to the point at which it adulterates the original plot. The most notorious is the passage presenting Arenas' first imprisonment. While in the book Arenas acknowledges explicitly that he had had sexual relations with some adolescents, this detail was passed over in the film. It was obvious how counterproductive it would be to the success of the presentation of martyr-Arenas, someone who, being condemned in his country for the 'crime' of being homosexual and "hostile to the revolution," had committed an act typified in North American legislation as the "corruption of minors" (curiously, Arenas was not convicted for this offense thanks to the fact that the age of consent in Cuba is only 16). Equally unfaithful to Arenas' work is the film's exclusion of that aggressive and impudent laughter that runs through almost all of his texts even, at times, his autobiography. To deny him that laughter, like denying him the imaginary ferocity of his "hallucinatory world," commits the double sin of refusing to offer the complete and rich nature of the biography and its context and not taking advantage of its powerful creative world.

Curiously, the Cuban exile community remained fairly content with the film. As aware as Rigoberta Menchú of the symbolic profitability of victimization, the exile community, even the most conservative sector, who had never sympathized with the scandalous and unpliant homosexual that Arenas was, was grateful that the author had been restored to them as a simple martyr. Arenas and his posthumous fame had sensitized North American public opinion more than decades of repeated denunciations had.

Thus a pact was made between the political convenience of the exile community and the political correctness of the North American academy and culture. Both had accommodated the director of *Before Night Falls*. Nevertheless, though faithful enough to Arenas' autobiography, Schnabel was consciously unfaithful to the work and the life of his subject. Dedicated to presenting Arenas as the most credible version of a martyr that his biography permitted, the director adorned it with all the attributes of the victim, when in reality the great victim of this version of his life was Reinaldo Arenas' humor.

LIFE IN LAUGHTER

When death was a remote possibility for him, Reinaldo Arenas stated in an interview: "I would want to be remembered not as a writer in the conventional sense of the word, but more as a kind of mischievous goblin—a type of spirit trickster" (Valero 337). In the farewell letter that accompanied the text of *Before Night Falls* Arenas said: "You are the heirs of all my terrors, but also of my hope that Cuba will soon be free. I am satisfied to have contributed, though in a very small way, to the triumph of this freedom" (Arenas 1993, 317). The man who for 10 years desired to be remembered as a goblin, now at death's door, takes leave as a patriotic fighter for his country's liberty. Furthermore, he wanted to give his death political utility by making Fidel Castro responsible for it. For Reinaldo Arenas, editorial and cinematographic deification has been a basic political fact. The author is displayed like a corpse to be used for two agendas that, in the absence of Reinaldo Arenas, struggled to coincide.

This is less about respecting the author's intention than it is addressing the literature's intention, an intention that is, at the same time, quite slippery. Gay and exile academic readings of Arenas have a certain logic that excludes all possible laughter because his laughter dangerously undermines his condition as victim. A victim that tirelessly mocks everything and everyone is, precisely because of this, less moving. A victim who laughs is suspected of not being one. Laughter raises suspicions about the veracity of the pain, even when dealing with a cruel and bitter laughter like Arenas'. And there is reason for the suspicion. Beyond the intentions of the author himself, the laughter that recurs in his texts, including the autobiography, prevails on us to take delight too much of the time in the terrible, especially when the one affected is the author himself. This laughter takes the focus away from the tension about a story that, because of its content, would gravitate fatally into the tragic.

Arenas was aware of laughter's literary and political power. He tells us that *The Color of Summer* is "a grotesque and satirical (and therefore realistic) portrait of an aging tyranny and of the tyrant himself" (Arenas 2000, 228). Arenas holds the conviction, shared by many, that the grotesque and the satirical presuppose a distortion in which there is more literary reality. Commenting on the clandestine success of his satirical tongue twisters in 1970s Havana, he tells us:

One of the most nefarious characteristics of tyrannies is that they take everything too seriously and destroy all sense of humor. Historically, Cubans have found escape from reality through satire and mockery, but with the coming of Fidel Castro the sense of humor gradually disappeared until it became illegal. With it the Cuban people lost one of their few means of survival; by taking away their laughter, the Revolution took away from them their deepest sense of the nature of things. Yes, dictatorships are prudish, pompous, and utterly dreary (Arenas 1993, 239).

Persecution of laughter by a political sovereignty is for Arenas an infallible indicator of its power. Following Arenas' reasoning, laughter helps us to survive. But what survival is referred to here? Apparently the text deals with a life beyond the one imposed by political and economic exigencies, an alternative to the closed game of the discourse of power. The symbolic capacity to extricate oneself from political power resides in laughter. It calls attention, on the other hand, to the fact that the most hilarious moments of a novel like *The Color of Summer* may be exactly those in which power is manifested with most crudity. I think for example of the chapters titled, "A Tour of Inspection" and "The Death of Virgilio Piñera". In the first, Fifo, the tyrant that governs the island, kills almost all of his advisors and escorts at the smallest sign of contradiction while touring the island by helicopter. In the chapter about the death of Piñera, a group of agents intent on killing the writer by any means possible finally succeed by forcing him to view a painting of a giant vagina. In spite of hyperbole, there is something terribly real in those bloody caprices that, nevertheless, continues to make us laugh: an attempt to surpass through laughter that thing that overwhelms us, that exceeds our capacity for confrontation and indignation, our rationality.

Those dictatorships, "prudish, pompous, and utterly dreary," of which Arenas speaks need gravity and asceticism to better instill the group of fixed ideas in which their power is based, so that the dictatorship can maintain the image that it has of itself and establish its meaning. "...Ascetic procedures and lifestyles are a method of freeing those ideas from competition with all other ideas, of making them 'unforgettable'" (Nietzsche 38). In his work, Arenas makes abundant use of the elements that historically have demonstrated magnificent capacity to erode fixed ideas: laughter and sex.

"By taking away their laughter, the Revolution took away from the people their deepest sense of the nature of things," says Arenas. What is this deep sense that disappears with laughter? What profound knowledge, according to Arenas, elicits laughter? If one notes the anguish that underlies or haunts Arenas' work, his profound nihilism and his childish confidence in the idea that only literature gives meaning to his life, we can see in Arenas' laughter the certainty that life does not have any meaning other than the one we attribute to it. Arenas himself said that "with humor you evoke reality in a more disrespectful manner and therefore can come closer to it without the distancing effect of that is typical of all seriousness. All rhetoric implies certain useless formalities that humor interrupts and challenges as it gives us a more human reality" (Soto 152).^{*} Note that, contrary to the traditional conception of humor as distancing, Arenas formulates it as closeness, a closeness that at the same time that it offers us the object in detail, it also hinders the balanced and distanced view that necessarily ignores detail. "The price of objectivity is the loss of closeness," Solterdijk reminds us from the other side of the problem (1987, 140).

One of the darkest scenes in the autobiography as well as the film adaptation, Arenas' imprisonment at *el Morro*, had already been covered by the author in an important chronology told years earlier:

He returns, then, to the "drafty" *el Morro* prison and spends a year locked up in one of its caves. There he comes to the conclusion that he is condemned to write all he has lived (*Cantando en el pozo* [*Singing from the Well*] y *Otra vez el mar* [*Farewell to the Sea*]), or to live that which he has written: *El mundo alucinante* [*Hallucinations*]. By the cruelty of chance, in 1966 Arenas [in good part of this chronology Arenas refers to himself in third person] had written the imaginary and real biography of a Mexican friar who, persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition, is conducted to Havana's *el Morro* prison. After having been fugitive from the law for a long time Arenas, now captured, sits in *el Morro* in the same cells where 150 years before Fray Servando Teresa de Mier y Guerra had been (Valero 16).

On describing the persecution that not only he but also his manuscripts suffered (remember that on two occasions he suffered the loss of successive manuscripts of the novel *Farewell to the Sea*), he speaks of the "police officials' eagerness to read his words, works that apparently they found extremely affable but which were never returned" (Ibid. 15). In these fragments, recycled as much in *The Color of Summer* as in *Before Night Falls*, the use of irony subverts that which would make him a victim. He transforms his persecutors into admirers of his writing and his imprisonment into a work of literature rather than political power. Thus, in the story he constructs for himself a freedom that he had not been able to enjoy in his life. He deflates the suffering that his persecutors inflicted upon him, transferring the power to his literature.

This is not the end of Arenas' devictimization strategies, his attempts to recover his motivation in the face of reality. (In Arenas, autonomy not only means constructing a different reality, an escape, it also means responding to and undermining the supposed coherency and weight of the transformative discursive power that the world imposes upon him.) Nothing escapes his savage and spiteful mockery: those who represent Cuban political power or his own friends, confused at times in Arenas' writing and paranoia with the figure of the informer. In Arenas' obsessive world nobody is exempt from being a real or potential traitor. In a collection of phrases that he offers in his novel he tells us that "friends are more dangerous than enemies because they can get closer to you" (Arenas 2000, 167), an idea that he repeats in a poem even more forcefully: "the best informer is always there, your best friend" (Arenas 2001, 205)⁶. In the world of *The Color of Summer* the presumption of innocence has disappeared. The conclusion seems to be that in hell, everyone is already guilty. Just as the conventional separation between victim and executioner is dissolved, so is the distinction between good and evil. In few Cuban literary works is that basic moral distinction as blurred as it is in Arenas.⁷ But this dissolution of the ethical boundaries liberates both the victims and the executioners. Each of whom is only responsible for himself, not having any other limits than those he assumes for himself.

ARENAS, A GAY WRITER?

In spite of the protagonism of homosexuality, above all in his last works, Arenas never intended to idealize his sexual preferences. There is no trace of gay consciousness, gay solidarity, nor gay pride; quite the opposite. Homosexuality appears in his work like a type of fall, a curse redeemed by the beauty and enjoyment that transforms Arenas and his friends into martyrs of pleasure. His vision of homosexuality, developed in a machista atmosphere like Cuba's, is uncomfortable for actual queer theory as it is practiced in the North American academy. Francisco Soto, a diligent Arenas scholar warns: "Arenas' representation of homosexuality cannot be considered 'positive' in the way that much of contemporary Anglo-American gay literature strives to celebrate homosexual identity and represent ideal gay relationships based on mutual respect and equality" (Soto 2003, 35). In fact, Arenas not only does not share this ideal of gay relations based on respect and equality, but he openly criticizes an atmosphere that makes him feel like the (un) noble savage. "Homosexual militancy has gained considerable rights for free-world gays. But what has been lost is the wonderful feeling of meeting heterosexual or bisexual men who would get pleasure from possessing another man and who would not, in turn, have to be possessed" (Arenas 1993, 108). Can anyone, who like Arenas has been despised for his whole life by his own family, his society, and his state, avoid self-loathing? Nevertheless, Arenas manages to avoid the position of inferiority that they want to impose on him with his theory that all men are effectively or potentially homosexuals. The traditional popular Cuban division between active homosexuals (*maricones*) and passive ones (*bugarrones*)⁸ is deactivated by Arenas in the chapter of *The Color of Summer* titled, appropriately, "HM, top, seeking same...":

In all his long erotic wanderings through the world, he, the supermacho top, had always thought he was screwing another top. But imagine his surprise to realize that all those supposed tops were really just a bunch of pansy faggots, because they would allow their butts to be stuffed by other tops—tops, in turn, who weren't really tops because they would allow their butts to be stuffed by other tops, and so on, *ad infinitum*. In fact, *ad nauseam*. Because to his horror, the old bull macho had finally realized that the world had contained no *men* at all—there was nothing but pansy faggots (Arenas 2000, 57-58).

Whatever the designation, in Arenas' work, sex carries out a liberatory function equal to laughter, a function onto which Arenas imposes a political character as can be appreciated in this passage:

In spite of everything, youth in the sixties managed to conspire, not against the regime but in favor of life. We still had clandestine meetings at the beaches, at some-

body's house, or we simply enjoyed a night of love with a passing recruit, a female scholarship student, or some desperate young man looking for a way to escape the repression (Arenas 1993, 91).***

Reinaldo Arenas seems to understand that to reduce homosexuals to simple victims, however brutal the repression they suffered, would be just that, a reduction. Sex acts as a liberator in many senses with its capacity to put the oppressors and the oppressed in intimate contact. Homosexual sex in Arenas' texts displaces and softens the ideological, social, political, cultural, and sexual limits. The oppressors are in reality repressed homosexuals. There are many scenes in which the most ferocious authority figures appear as sexually attractive beings before whom the homosexual characters can scarcely contain themselves.¹⁰

More than exalting the homosexual condition, Arenas celebrates its liberatory function. His homosexuality is valuable to him insofar as he has dared to follow his instincts in spite of social hostility. According to a delirious lecture given by one of his characters from *The Color of Summer*, at some point:

We have lost all meaning in life because we have lost paradise, and we have lost paradise because pleasure has been condemned. But pleasure—persecuted, execrated, condemned, exploited to exhaustion, and almost vanished from the world—still had its armies: clandestine, silent armies, always in imminent danger of defeat but utterly unwilling to renounce life. Which is defined by giving pleasure to others. "These armies," boomed the voice of the queen of Holland . . . "are made up of queers, faggots, fairies, and other species of homosexuals all over the world. These are the greatest heroes of all time, those who truly have the dream of paradise and hold to it unflinchingly, those who at all costs attempt to recover their—and our—paradises lost" (355-6).

Narrating his experiences in prison, Arenas recounts the history of Cara de Buey, who was killed by another prisoner who caught de Buey masturbating while watching him (Arenas 1993, 194). This makes Arenas say: "...sexual pleasure often exacts a high price; sooner or later we pay with years of sorrow for every moment of pleasure. It is not God's vengeance but that of the Devil, the enemy of everything beautiful. Beauty has always been dangerous. Martí said that everyone who is the bearer of light remains alone; I would say that anyone who takes part in certain acts of beauty is eventually destroyed" (Arenas 1993, 194). By identifying himself—a writer persecuted in his own country, terminally ill with AIDS in exile—with the masturbator who has paid for his pleasure with his life, Arenas is touching on one of the bases of his critical and literary impulse. Whether he intends it or not, Arenas has evolved into a writer who is truly cursed and not just for the most narrowly defined Cuban can-

ons. He does not deal with the "polite" homosexual who requests the normalization of his sexual condition in society, but with someone who shows us the narrowness of our moral conventions as an impediment to the search for pleasure and beauty. Sloterdijk has said in his book, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, that "aesthetic amorality is only a prelude to life demanding its sensual rights practically" (Sloterdijk 1987, 108). We come to understand then the meaning of Arenas' corrosive laughter and of his voracious sexuality as they appear in his literature: a battle to the end to force the ethical limits in the search for beauty and pleasure.

THE NECESSITY OF LIBERTY

The intensive use of laughter and sex serves Arenas as a means of liberation. It is helpful to ask, liberation from what and for what? What is this "deepest sense" that Arenas attempts to reveal with his literature? What is his secret personal utopia? Among the reasons that Arenas gives for writing, some are as conventional as describing a world that otherwise would be lost, "fragmented and dispersed as it is in the memories of those who knew it" (Arenas 2000, 228) or as "a way of being with my friends when I was no longer among them" (Arenas 1993, 173). Nevertheless, when describing the noise in prison he tells us in *Before Night Falls*: "Ever since my childhood, noise has always been inflicted upon me; all my writing has been done against the background of other people's noise" (Ibid. 178). We can translate this "noise" as the common place of vulgarity, insult, violence, repression, stupidity or the simple lack of imagination which Arenas tried to confront with his own voice, a literary voice that could transport him from those common places to the most intimate of his paradises.

Perhaps the best description that Reinaldo Arenas gives of the flight and the liberty that writing represented for him is when talking of another exiled writer, José Martí.

Therefore, being here, outside of the place both loved and hated, outside of prison, from which we had to flee just to continue feeling human, feeling free, we are not completely free, because in exile our souls and imaginations are still there. But there, one can only be free as a deserter, that is, as a fugitive—always on the verge of being captured—a rebel inhabitant of the landscape of our childhood, of that enchanted forest which, being magic and unique (our very own), calls us, and also (by magic) betrays us (Arenas 2001, 63).

The treason of that enchanted forest, of the landscape of his youth, suddenly a paradisiacal space of impossible return, lies precisely in the fact that he cannot inhabit it again. In the face of the vanishing landscape of his childhood Arenas has erected his literary oeuvre to include that landscape and magnify it. In *Before Night Falls* he recasts the lost paradise in which he was free—even to search for the

meaning of life: "I think the splendor of my childhood was unique because it was absolute poverty but also absolute freedom; out in the open, surrounded by trees, animals, apparitions, and people who were indifferent toward me. My existence was not even justified, nobody cared" (Arenas 1993, 5). This calls attention to the radical contrast between the childhood paradise described by Arenas and his literary simulation of it: while in the first he is satisfied with his social invisibility, in the literature, once innocence is lost, he seeks a way to make himself visible at all costs. As a result, Arenas' personal paradise is in a way very similar to its biblical model: a place where sex does not make him feel guilty.

There is no truth to the theory, held by some, about the sexual innocence of peasants. In the country, sexual energy generally overcomes all prejudice, repression, and punishment. That force, the force of nature, dominates. In the country, I think, it is a rare man who has not had sexual relations with another man. Physical desire overpowers whatever feelings of machismo our fathers take upon themselves to instill in us (Ibid. 19).

When Arenas said that he had to write *The Color of Summer* in order to restore meaning to his life, it was something more than the plaintiveness of someone facing terminal illness. That novel was the missing piece from a pentagon that he had been working on for two decades. With it he could bring to a close the most ambitious literary plan conceived by a Cuban novelist. And the plan consisted of recounting different moments of his life in Cuba including an imaginary future (*El asalto / The Assault*). His paradises and personal utopias are not definitive in any case. The successive biographical passages that his literature invents and exalts—his wild sexual excursions of the 60s, Lenin park, the 'window' into Santa Clara, etc.—are a response to his most intimate demands. Since it was no longer possible to recover his childhood landscapes, he would transform his fundamental experience into a type of inverted epic, heartbreaking and mocking at the same time. Heartbreaking because of the anguish of the work and the uncertainty about the result. Mocking because of the profound certainty of how futile it is to try to find a meaning for his existence. Either he does not find meaning or that meaning is usually devastating. Moreover, the enchanted forest can only exist as a memory, as consciousness of his loss. The transaction in laughter is produced upon noticing the ridiculousness of any search for meaning, similar to the frustration of the supermacho top who "had always thought he was screwing another top" only to discover in the end that in the world there are "nothing but pansy faggots."

At the end of his prologue to *Before Night Falls* Arenas recounts how, fearing that he may not live long enough to finish his plan, he made this supplication to a photograph of Virgilio Piñera in his house: "Listen to what I have to tell you: I need three more years of life to finish my work, which is my vengeance against most of

the human race" (Ibid. xvii). And he managed to fulfill his ominous petition. Except for a couple of friends, his lover, and his literary mentors Lezama and Virgilio Piñera, almost no one escapes from the most destructive machine of insult that Cuban literature has known. Thus we can understand better Arenas' savage and bitter laughter. Laughter of one who recognizes that he is the owner of a destiny that will come to an end. Laughter of one who, attacking all of humanity, believes himself freed from sadness and passive victimhood: a laughter that shows more sovereignty than hatred.

HE WHO CAME TO SCREAM

Richard Rorty has written that "to fail as a poet—and thus, for Nietzsche, to fail as a human being—is to accept somebody else's description of oneself" (Rorty 28). Arenas not only did not accept the descriptions or labels with which state security agents and cultural functionaries branded him: a poor, queer writer and counterrevolutionary. [One civil servant/critic calls him a "forsaken little peasant" in order later to say that "the tragedy of Arenas' life resided in the fact that he most certainly did not choose his own path and that his path was drawn up against the grain of history" (Ubieta 5)]. Arenas also anticipated the ways the Cuban exile community and the North American academy and film industry would describe him (gay writer, "martyred victim of Fidel Castro's revolution") (Hillson 1).

The refusal of these labels would seem to contradict the somber tone and certain passages of *Before Night Falls* (and especially the farewell letter) that cry out for the reader's compassion. Those who see in that tone Arenas' crucial perspective or his state of mind as he approaches death ought to take into account this detail—Arenas himself says in the prologue: "I finished my autobiography after leaving the hospital . . . and continued working on *The Color of Summer* (Arenas 1993, xiii). Or it may be that the rabidly playful novel was written at the same time as the autobiography and was completed afterward. The decision to work with such different tones in texts written almost in unison is not consistent with the tone of the autobiography being due to a special state of mind, but rather to a conscious and premeditated decision.

On the eve of his death Reinaldo Arenas had a devastating vista before him. Even abstracting the nearness of his death (something already abstracted enough) he must have seen how his literary world, created against all types of obstacles, remained at the margin of public attention. The curse lobbed by Ángel Rama seemed fulfilled. ("Reinaldo Arenas al ostracismo" was the title of Ángel Rama's article that greeted the author upon his arrival in exile to the United States). Arenas declared that he had come to scream. But being able to scream did not ensure that he would be heard. He probably said to himself then that if he had not garnered attention with his literature then he would do it with his life and with his death. The autobiography and the letter would be part of that plan and political persecution and sex the central motifs of his memoirs.¹¹

Jorge Brioso notes that after having lived his whole life in a phantasmagorical relation to his texts, Arenas wanted with the autobiography to assure himself that his work would once again find a place to belong. Hence, says Brioso, he insists various times that the manuscripts of all his work can be consulted in Princeton's Firestone library ("along with *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the writings of Blanco White and . . . the account settlements for Bette Davis's work") (Valero 21). For Arenas, the archive that keeps Arenas' manuscripts at Princeton would come to be the triumphant reversal of another archive also evoked in his texts: the one holding his manuscripts confiscated by the Cuban state security, an archive that the writer trusted was still preserving his texts. The choice of tone in the autobiography seeks to dramatize his literary farewell and to make himself credible as the author of his work and the protagonist of his biography. This journey through the same scenes already housed in the novels that comprise the pentagon is apparently an attempt to distinguish the biographical origins of his work from its fictional result. But it is certain that he achieves exactly the opposite: on discovering the biographical charge of the pentagon without renouncing the imaginative excess, *Before Night Falls* manages to confound, perhaps forever, the borders between the life and work of Reinaldo Arenas. But the tone, I insist, is what is decisive. The tone seeks (and manages) to transmit a gravity to his work which, he suspects, never will be taken seriously. In this manner Arenas aims to convert *Before Night Falls* into the prologue of all his work, during his most efficient publicity campaign. And to top it off, in order to increase the mystery, at his own request the manuscript of the autobiography cannot be consulted until 2010.

The condition of Arenas as a victim of Castrismo or of homophobia and moral, aesthetic and political conservatism, as much in Cuba as in exile, is not enough to explain his literature. Nonetheless his literature could be explained, though only in part, as rebellion against the values that attempt to spurn him as a person and writer. This explains in part his decision to emphasize all those motifs and themes in place of those which have been diminished. The most categorical definition of all Arenas' work appears in a passage of *The Color of Summer*: "...my books constitute a single enormous whole in which the characters die, are reborn, appear, disappear, travel through time—always mocking, always suffering as we ourselves have mocked and suffered. All of my characters form a single mocking, despairing spirit, the spirit of my work, which is also, perhaps the spirit of our country" (Arenas 2000, 315). And so that no doubts would remain about the mocking nature of his spirit he finishes the paragraph like this: "As for my play *Abdala*, [in reality Martí's text], don't publish it, for heaven's sake—I really don't like it; it's a sin of my youth" (Arenas 2000, 315).

Some years ago, Carlos Victoria, one of the most important contemporary Cuban writers (and one of the least recognized) published a piece on the discouraging condition (I was going to write "situation" but I stopped myself—the temporality that this word suggests could be deceptive) of Cuban writers in exile in North

America. Victoria, a companion in exile and of the same generation as Arenas and the founder of the *Mariel* journal, chronicled the repetition of the same editorial neglect faced by the successive waves of exiled writers, as if there were an inimitable curse. With time even the few signs that might suggest a change (editorials, journals and contests) would fade away as if they had never existed. Victoria confesses with bitterness:

Something else that occurs with us . . . is that the eagerness of being part of something has never materialized. In exile in the United States we have been "outsiders," to use the English term. Our dissatisfaction has not allowed us to join any political movement, despite the fact that almost all of us hate the regime in Cuba. And this same dissatisfaction, woven into our texts and making evident the faults, not only of Cuba, but also of the United States, has made us suspicious in the eyes of the people that should most take us into account: our own compatriots in a country that never will be ours, despite the fact that many of us carry passports bearing the deceptive stamp of North American citizens (Victoria 72).

Arenas, as we have seen, managed to get himself the biggest possible piece of this "political and geographical curse," at least posthumously. He has integrated himself into the liberal North American culture and the political pantheon of Cuban exile at the cost of being read very partially and, no less formidable, of not being able to take advantage of or refuse that fame due to the insurmountable circumstance of being dead. His example, the most successful up to this point, is like a dead-end road. Something has blocked Cuban exile literature from being integrated into the current of "Latino culture" that exists within the United States. The political and cultural singularity of the "Cuban case" has made it extremely difficult for the best Cuban exile writers to enter into the niches that multicultural discourse offers them.

Richard Rorty in his book, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* tells us that "only the poets can truly appreciate contingency," understanding poets as the true creators, beyond the genre that they cultivate (Rorty 28). Arenas' contingency included his North American experience, and both *The Color of Summer* and *Before Night Falls* should be understood as reaction and resistance to the discourse in which his work would be assimilated and encased. Arenas knew that the future of his work depended upon its passage through the North American academy, the same one ordered to preserve his manuscripts. The autobiography represents his acceptance of this ultimate contingency, working in a system that, even though it accepts and exalts Arenas' homosexual condition, does not seem to understand the necessity of liberty (to use an expression agreeable to the writer) that motivated his life and his work. Multicultural discourse, imposed with the intention of resisting the "universalist" vision as an instrument of the West's hegemonic culture, has repro-

duced the hegemonic vices of that universalism. It has been supplanted by innumerable categories and subcategories of subaltern discourses that keep responding, even though now with more discretion, to a hegemonic vision in which each category has been assigned beforehand to a group of functions with very little variation. In their most well-equipped versions this conception becomes incapable of appreciating the contingency of a body of work like Arenas' and frequently ends up simplifying and reducing it to a simple representation of its own discourse.

Nevertheless, with his autobiography Arenas has managed to break with the indifference facing a writer so unclassifiable as himself. Though at the risk of over simplification, it is certain that his

autobiography has tested and will continue testing the limits of this discourse. For Arenas, to accept his own contingency would end up being much more than proclaiming himself a gay, anti-Castro, exile, Latino, victimized writer. As *Before Night Falls* expressly announces, Arenas had in mind the exigencies of that recently consolidated discourse, just to rebel against it as he had done before with the official discourse of Castrismo or exile. His recent acclaim has as much merit as danger. The Cuban writers in the United States have in Reinaldo Arenas new temptations to overcome: that of accepting the misunderstanding that this victimist reading mollifies, or the temptation of taking advantage of Arenas' canonization in order to similarly fall back on this position.

NOTES

¹The real Arenas did not maintain too many illusions in respect to the academy. In one of his incessant diatribes against North American intellectuals he says that "it's impossible to tell whether they are progressives or reactionaries—they're quite simply fools, and therefore tools of the most sinister forces" (Arenas 2000, 226).

²"When I left Cuba my novels were being used as assigned texts at New York University, and when I adopted a radical position against the Castro dictatorship, Haydée Vitale [Rivera], professor of literature, started to drop my books from the curriculum until not one of them remained. She did the same with all the other Cuban writers in exile (...). This has happened to me at many universities in the United States and in other parts of the world. Ironically, while I was in jail and could not leave Cuba, my chances of being published were better because I was not allowed to speak out, and foreign publishing companies with leftist leanings would support a writer living in Havana (Arenas 1992, 322).

³Even so one cannot say that Arenas despises in an absolute sense the possibilities of being victim. "Hell is other people," Sartre's famous statement, is openly contradicted by Arenas, who says that "hell is not other people (as a resentful toad once said); it is ourselves" (Arenas 2000, 169). A variant of this statement could be one of the slogans of his autobiography: "the others are the victims". The compassion that he does not wish for himself he solicits for many of the tragic characters that appear in the pages that he dedicates, for example, to his captivity in *el Morro*. But for Arenas the value of victimhood is not just in stimulating the reader's compassion. At some point he refers to victimization as a path to a higher power, made possible, he says, by totalitarian experience. "The hope of humanity lies precisely in those who have suffered the most. Thus, the hope of the next century obviously lies in the victims of Communism; thanks to the apprenticeship of suffering that they have served, those victims will (or should) be those in charge of constructing a world that it is possible to live in" (Arenas 2000, 226).

⁴In the chapter, "The Garden of Computers," Arenas recounts: "Among those turning in reports were Clara Mortera, tossing in a report on Teodoro, and Teodoro, with his report on Clara. A group of sailors were lodging charges against a group of bull macho tops, and a priest was bringing a complaint against a beggar—a whole *book* of charges, and written in just a week. Accusations were brought against a bridge and an almond tree. Hundreds of poets turned in manuscripts of self-denunciatory verses.

Housewives accused themselves of wasting imported butter. Teenagers, hiding their long hair under enormous caps, denounced longhairs. Officially licensed whores brought complaints against freelancers." [Later Arenas' alter ego, la Tétrica Mofeta, will discover that his own mother informed on him] (Arenas 2000, 369).

⁵This unsettling of the limits comes with Arenas' verification of the ubiquity of evil. For Arenas there is no absolutely reliable decree that distributes and separates good from evil. To be a victim does not guarantee goodness. To the contrary, "suffering degrades us; pleasure corrupts us" (Arenas 2000, 167), he says in one of his maxims in *The Color of Summer*, and the treasonous behavior of some of his closest homosexual friends seems to confirm it. Nevertheless, the final distinction between victim and executioner serves to practice his idea of goodness: not to denounce. Interrogated about his counterrevolutionary accomplices, Arenas gives the names of State Security agents but remains silent about those close to him who have betrayed him. "Of course, I could have added the names of Pepe Malas, Hiram Prado, and of my aunt, but I did not do so; after all, one had to recognize that they were also victims of the system" (Arenas 1993, 213).

⁶The high point of these scenes, in which the homosexuals seduce the policemen and soldiers, occurs when, in the middle of the erotic moment, the very idea of authority is suspended, or as in some cases, the roles are reversed (as when Arenas discovers with surprise that his virile lover prefers to take the passive role in the love act). In the chapter, "Buses or Turtles?" at the end of the sexual encounter between the Tétrica Mofeta and a policeman, the policeman, after ejaculating twelve times, manages to "recover his revolutionary morality—and his pistol" and tries to imprison the Tétrica (Arenas 2000, 89).

⁷Without doubt Arenas tries to graft a political meaning onto his life, a meaning from which his own text frequently takes leave. Arenas attempts to demonstrate his political discord with the 'revolutionary' regime practically from the start. Everything seems to indicate that before he became aware of the unsalvageable breach that opened between him and the Cuban regime, it, along with the official cultural sector, had already detected his aesthetic and sexual dissonance and interpreted it as a threat. A process similar to that described by Milan Kundera in *The Joke*: marginalizing and neutralizing your future critics when they are not even past the phase of ridicule. Every totalitarian system knows that the most corrosive criticism that can be made of it starts with not taking the system seriously. The wis-

dom of totalitarian power is based on the ability to detect a threat before the real carriers of the threat recognize it themselves. And on its vulgarity, because totalitarian power is incapable of distinguishing an unruly poet from a professional terrorist: both fall within the category of threat.

Translator's notes

*Del Risco mis-cited this as from a different Soto publication. I have corrected this in the Works Cited. In this case, Soto handled translation of Arenas' responses during an interview.

**Del Risco's use of "active" and "passive" merit clarification here. Conventionally, maricón designates one who is receptive or takes the pas-

sive role in homosexual sex. Bugarrón designates the one who penetrates or takes the macho or active role. Here, Del Risco indicates the way these two are often understood socially: the maricón is actively seen as a homosexual, a queer, where the bugarrón may not be; he may be seen as a macho who passively engages in homosexual sex. See Tomás Almaguer, "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior." *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Eds. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin. Routledge, 1993. 255-73.

*** This was cited in the original as "Arenas 1999, 117," referring to *El color del verano*. In fact, the original passage is found in *Antes que anochezca* 1992, 116-7. Here the translation is taken from *Before Night Falls* 1993, 91.

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Strategic Rebellions: Reinaldo Arenas Has the Last Word

Translator's Afterword

Reinaldo Arenas has become one of the most well-known Cuban authors in the world. His novels seduce readers with a surprising blend of sensuality, satire, and hyperbole, and they will continue to signal to readers the redemptive power of beauty well beyond the ebb and flow of academic arguments about the author's importance to various literary canons. But his work is also compelling because as a Cuban exile in the U.S. during the Cold War period, Arenas landed within the sticky web of nationalist (Cuban and U.S.) discourses of the day. I was drawn to Arenas for both his literary valor and the possibility his perspective offered for critiquing U.S. nationalism. Like Kate Mehuron and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler and others,¹ I found promise in Arenas' transnational positionality as he mobilized and negotiated Cuban and U.S. discourses around gender, sexuality, and belonging. It is in this context of looking not just at Arenas' writing, but also at the social and national discourses with which he had to contend in the 1980s, that Enrique Del Risco's 2003 essay,² here translated as, "Strategic Rebellions: Reinaldo Arenas Has the Last Word," conspicuously addresses the academic discourses and pressures that also impinged on Arenas. Del Risco argues that the multicultural discourses prevalent in the academy of the period appropriated Arenas as a victim, allotting him recognition at the expense of his true voice and a full appreciation of his literature. Thus, even today, Del Risco's perspective demands that scholars become self-critical in how they read and represent Arenas and other authors, and he cautions other Latin American writers to write from the heart, not for the academy.

Born in 1943, in the Oriente Province of Cuba, Reinaldo Arenas has become well known, in part because of the highly autobiographical nature of his novels, especially his *Pentagon*:³ *Singing from the Well* (1987), *The Palace of the White Skunks* (1990), *The Color of Summer* (2000), *Farewell to the Sea* (1986), and *The Assault* (1994). The author grew up in his maternal grandfather's house, a life bounded by poverty and the rules of a machista society, but tempered by freedom to roam the rural countryside and experiment with his imagined worlds. The revolution was a particularly formative moment for Arenas because it drew him away from rural life to the city of Holguín and eventually Havana. He left his family to join the rebels only to find that the liberation won by Castro was not for him, a writer and an intellectual bent on pursuing beauty through literature and homoeroticism. After the revolution Arenas experienced early successes as a writer but also ever increasing persecution as he spent time with ostracized Cuban writers like Virgilio Piñera and Lezama Lima, gay intellectuals persecuted for their criticism of the regime and their disregard for the dictates of the "New Man" of the revolution. Eventually, Arenas' writing, some of which had been smuggled out of the country for publication, drew censorship, and he was imprisoned in El Morro from 1974 to 1976. Once re-

leased, Arenas spent the next four years unable to publish and tirelessly evading surveillance to finally escape Cuba in the 1980 Mariel boat exodus. Arenas' life in the United States, celebratory at times, was also filled with anger and sorrow, particularly as portrayed in his autobiography, *Before Night Falls* (trans. Dolores Koch 1993). His writing was no longer as well received as it had been in the prior decade. At the same time, he kept his 'stateless' status and lived always on the margins—not a citizen, not the kind of Cuban intellectual some U.S. scholars desired, not the kind of exile a conservative Cuban-American community would accept, at times impoverished, and forever longing for a return to a Cuba that no longer existed. His letters to life-long friends, Jorge and Margarita Camacho (*Cartas...* 2010), demonstrate the tragedy of his fractured belonging and exilic loss. He continually wished to move to Europe to join them, to find a more reliable connection and home, but his political position—self-chosen but also assigned—and his desire to complete his oeuvre before being overcome by AIDS, kept him in the U.S. until his death in 1990.

This brief biography, containing so many of the key elements of the author's life we find in other publications, now feels like déjà vu for many Arenas scholars and readers. And this familiarity gestures to the very point Del Risco makes when he argues that our knowledge of Arenas has been filtered through a particular set of lenses established by "the North American academy" and the popular biopic, *Before Night Falls* (2000), by Julian Schnabel. The film, del Risco suggests, reinforces the North American academy's framing of Arenas as a victim to be recuperated as the "subaltern" of multiculturalism and given life by that academy. Invoking the Rigoberta Menchú controversy, Del Risco argues that "within the predominant multicultural framework of North American universities minorities take their place, preeminently, as victims" (??). He suggests that this guarantees for them a certain position within this space of cultural power, a position purchased through acceptance of subordination "conferred to the minority-victim from the centers" (??). Where this perspective will certainly meet resistance, it offers us a view into academic and intellectual thought of the 90s, a discursive space that merits consideration.

I find, similarly, that the film perpetuates a martyr-like image of the author through artistic and commercial representations that contributed to a contradictory U.S. anti-communist discourses. The film's success depends upon framing Arenas such that the persecution he faced in Cuba for his homosexuality becomes more central to his exile than the censorship that plagued him. This takes the film on a course that garners mainstream acceptance of homosexuality, defined in strictly U.S. cultural terms, at the cost of embedding the terms of this freedom in the binary discourses of the Cold War period that conflate the concepts of democracy and anti-communism.

In so doing, the film underscores the ways that nationalist discourse shapes subjectivity. The film embraces Arenas while overlooking U.S. homophobia, with its history of persecution of homosexuals under “democracy,” and it limits homosexual desire to the national and cultural confines of U.S. identity politics, defying, if inadvertently, Arenas’ artistic endeavor to articulate desires and artistic beauty that thrive outside of nationalist discourses and may serve to undermine them.⁴ Regardless of which discursive forces drive this framing, a key point is that the aesthetic value of Arenas’ writing gets lost in readers’ obsessive sympathizing.

Beyond this appropriation and victimization that Del Risco links to multiculturalism and I link to anti-communism, Del Risco’s most provocative point is that Arenas might have strategically placed emphasis in his autobiography on his sexual and political persecution, also choosing to bookend his memoir with a letter to the press defaming Fidel Castro, *in order to gain this tenuous position in an academy that seemed determined to shut him out*. Del Risco challenges us to consider this framing as part of Arenas’ own rebelliousness. Whatever the case, these political and narrative maneuvers belie the actual nuance and complexity of Arenas’ final texts, and their laughter, Del Risco suggests, and they repel the kind of reading these works deserve. The victimization framing Arenas the literary figure and the author risks missing that Arenas’ biting and dark humor was central to his literary vision. Del Risco offers as one example the chapter of *The Color of Summer*, “A Tour of Inspection,” in which Fifo, the dictator, simply kills off his escorts and aids, one-by-one, whenever they might contradict him in the slightest. The tragic side of this humor—Arenas mocks the death of innocents forced to pander to the leader’s ego for their survival—marries unbearable feelings of anger and injustice to produce, of all things, laughter. Laughter arises all the more poignantly for its unlikely but inevitable appearance in this moment. And, as Del Risco points out, this is in keeping with Arenas’ belief that humor is a form of survival and a force that undermines oppressive power systems.

Laughter is important to Del Risco, too. Also an immigrant and writer from Cuba, Del Risco shares with Arenas a penchant for satire and humor. While Del Risco is situated in New York University’s Department of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures, his intellectual and artistic presence far exceeds the academy. Called a writer and historian, Del Risco says that he writes so that his voice and perspective cannot be (mis)represented by another (“La obligación de ver...”). He writes with a sense of humor, irony, sensitivity, and authenticity. Del Risco enjoys the salon-style engagement of intellectuals and artists discussing political and intellectual concerns, reading literary excerpts, and enjoying the community of like-minded individuals as seen in videos, interviews, and recordings, especially on his blog, *Enrisco*, which focuses largely on Latin American and Cuban issues. Since 2015, Del Risco has been a member of the

Academia de la Historia de Cuba en el Exilio (the Academy of Cuban History in Exile) recently taking charge of the group’s digital publications as the Secretary of Publications and Social Networks. One recent publication,⁵ *Enrisco para president* (Sudaquia editores 2014), is a provocative compilation of writings demonstrating the author’s sardonic humor and wit. For example, he opens the text with a section titled, “Cuba AD (Antes del Divertículo),” referring to the period before the significant change in Cuban leadership when Fidel Castro had to, at long last, step down from his position as leader because he was ill with diverticulitis.

My translation of “Strategic Rebellions” is intended for English-speaking and reading scholars and students who recognize the importance of Arenian scholarship in Spanish, of which there is an ever-increasing amount. My aim is to bring this piece of literary criticism to that audience, while recognizing that translation always only approaches its original. I bring to my own work a level of familiarity with Cuban cultural frameworks, with Arenas and Arenian scholarship, and with academic discourse that serves as a basis for this task of writing-translating. With all of this in mind, I have used the published English translations of Arenas’ works for titles and quotes included here where possible. For example, Del Risco’s first footnote cites *El color del verano* (1999). I took the corresponding passage from *The Color of Summer* (trans. Andrew Hurley, 2000). I draw on these official translations both because these works are readily available to English-speaking audiences, and to honor that translation work so assiduously completed by Andrew Hurley and Dolores Koch. For other quotations from secondary critical sources translated to English here, I selected existing English texts or translations where available, and translated to English myself when unavailable. These sources are updated in the Works Cited list to correspond with these choices. Finally, I have added footnotes, indicated with asterisks to distinguish them from the author’s own notes, to contextualize cultural terms and clarify sources.

In sum, in “Strategic Rebellions...” Del Risco offers a reading of Arenas’ final works that goes against the grain of the criticism that abounded in 1990s. For audiences new to Arenas or less familiar with the post/Cold War era, this work serves as a view into discourses of the day. Where the highly politicized nature of that period continues to evolve, it is worth noting that Arenas’ request to keep the materials for his autobiography sealed in Princeton’s Firestone library archives until 2010 have not been honored. Or, it may be better to say, they have been exceedingly honored. Arenas, concerned about the implications of his writing for friends in Cuba, wanted the manuscripts protected until the death of Fidel Castro. For both the manuscript and the Cuban leader, the date has been postponed until further notice. We can look forward to how those manuscripts might bring yet another perspective to the splendid irony of Arenas’ literary vision.

NOTES

¹ See Kate Meheron, "Queer Territories in the Americas: Reinaldo Arenas' Prose," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 17.1 (1994), Robert Richmond Ellis, "The Gay Lifewriting of Reinaldo Arenas: Antes que anochezca," *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies* 10.1 (1995), Brad Epps, "Proper Conduct: Reinaldo Arenas, Fidel Castro, and the Politics of Homosexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6.2 (1995), Stephen Clark, "Antes que anochezca: Las paradojas de la autorrepresentación," *Revista del ateneo puertorriqueño* 5.13-15 (1995), Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, "The Displacement of Cuban Homosexuality in the Fiction and Autobiography of Reinaldo Arenas," *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*, eds. Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), Ricardo L. Ortiz, "Pleasure's Exile: Reinaldo Arenas's Last Writing," *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*, eds. Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton (Stanford UP, xiv, 1998), Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, "Reinaldo Arenas, Re-Writer Revenant, and the Re-Patriation of Cuban Homoerotic Desire," *Queer Diasporas*, eds. Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), Emilio Bejel, "The (Auto)Biography of

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² "Reinaldo Arenas: víctima imposible, literatura posible," *Guayaba Sweet: Literatura Cubana en Estados Unidos*, Eds. Fabio Murrrieta y Laura Alonso, Aduana Vieja: Valencia, 2003.

³ Here, given by the titles of the English translations by Andrew Hurley.

⁴ See Stacey Van Dahm, "Desire, Arenas, and Cold War Discourse: Reinaldo Arenas as Protagonist in Julian Schnabel's *Before Night Falls*," *Latin American Studies: Critiques of Contemporary Cinema, Literatures, Politics and Revolution*. Editor, David Gallagher. Academica Press. 15-31.

⁵ For a more complete list of Del Risco's publications, see "Enrique Del Risco" *Sudaquia editors*, 2016, http://sudaquia.net/index.php?route=product/author/info&author_id=25. Accessed 1 November 2016.

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