

Ryan Prout

Fear and Gendering

Pedophobia, Effeminophobia,
and Hypermasculine Desire
in the Work of Juan Goytisolo



PETER LANG

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 PREFACE

Not just in commerce but in the world of ideas too our age is putting on a veritable clearance sale.¹

—Johannes *de silentio*

The process by which the manuscript which forms this volume took shape as a book was one that turned out to be more protracted than I could ever have imagined. Consequently, for those readers who are very well acquainted with the critical bibliography on Juan Goytisolo, references to the very latest in criticism on the author's extensive and constantly expanding oeuvre may seem elusive in the notes and bibliography. In the course of preparing the manuscript for publication, there have not only been important additions to the literature on Goytisolo, but the author himself has also been busy writing new works of fiction, notably *Carajicomedia* and *Las semanas del jardín*, as well as further harrowing testimony from some of the most troubled places in the world, such as Chechnya and Algeria.² There has also been an important supplement to the biographical studies of Juan Goytisolo in Miguel Dalmau's family history, *Los Goytisolo*.³ Instead of trying to conceal these bibliographical lacunæ by means of a purely cosmetic exercise of adjusting references here and there I decided to try and resolve the issue more frankly by referring to it now and by adding a postscript to the text. In these additions some effort is made to take stock of developments in studies centred on Juan Goytisolo's oeuvre as well as of the significance which his own new writings have for the argument developed in the main chapters.

As each of the chapters in the text which follows was conceived as a component which could stand alone, the lapse between the time of writing and publication should not suppose too many problems, even for the most demanding critic. Whilst there is intended to be a progressive current in the book, one which develops the enquiry into Goytisolo's management of age and gender based phobias, each chapter also deals in its own right with a separate issue: disclaimed youth in the first chapter; dread disease in the second; eugenics and reproduction in

the third; eschatology in the fourth chapter; and, finally, New World Order ethics in the fifth chapter.

Since the final chapter addresses the integration and reappraisal of themes central to Goytisolo's critical persona during his period of residence during the siege of Sarajevo, it is here that the need for revision appears to be most obvious. However, in the space of only a few years, circumstances which inform the themes central to the other main chapters have also changed at a remarkable pace. The concerns which can be extrapolated from *Makbara* over eugenicist reproductive technology seem more pertinent with each month that passes, such is the lightning pace at which the uncoding of genetic material advances.⁴ The conditions which can, potentially, be screened out of new human lives at an embryonic stage seem to increase in number so quickly that it would challenge a specialist to keep pace with the story, let alone a slightly wayward Hispanist. One does not need to be a specialist, however, to understand that in the industrialised nations would-be parents face the prospect of becoming entangled in a designer baby scenario that makes the fiction of Aldous Huxley's dystopian baby factory in *Brave New World* seem tame by comparison with the realities of the twenty-first century.⁵ The sensationalist response to the ethical questions raised by the increasing ability to play God with unborn children underscores the fact that the moral apparatus needed to make sense of this changing technology has not kept pace with scientific developments. In some sense, *Makbara* can be read as a prescient re-working for the twenty-first century of the Frankenstein myth. Goytisolo's prescience is in realising that perfection rather than deformity is the monster which might come to threaten the developed world. With the passage of time, the association made in the novel between an increasingly circumscribed freedom to choose non-conformity and the imperfection of the developed world's neglected ugly sister in the back yard of underdevelopment seems to become more engaging and relevant, rather than less so. Whilst there are technical details which should be up-dated in the light of recent scientific advance, then, I think the argument which I intended to extrapolate from *Makbara* continues to be pertinent. Sometimes it appears that if scientists could have their way, every single aspect of human conduct would be ascribed to genetics. Genes for homosexuality and anti-social inclinations have already been mooted. Shop-lifting genes and an acid test for bad taste cannot be far off.⁶ Perhaps the geneticists will eventually isolate the gene for becoming a genius geneticist and will thenceforth be able to replicate themselves and their project faster than they had ever imagined even in their wildest dreams. One risks little in prophesying that *Makbara's* sceptical enquiry into the shrinkage of society into biology is set to remain interesting for the foreseeable future.

Medical and scientific advances which in their embryonic application are challenging notions about when individuality begins to inhere to a human life have also begun to promise the prolongation of life, rather than its premature arrest, for

some people living with HIV and AIDS. When I began to write the section of text which makes up the second chapter of the book, AIDS remained a dread disease that was no respecter of boundaries, status, or wealth. During the time which it has taken that chapter to find its way into this volume, there have been radical advances in AIDS therapies. In many of the forums (such as the gay press) which once devoted space to ways of coming to terms with mortality, attention is now focussed equally on the challenges faced by people who thought their time was up and instead find that they have been given a new lease of life by complex combinations of medication.⁷ These pharmaceutical advances coincided with what AIDS specialists described as the transition from a mood of urgency to one of neglect in people's attitude towards the disease and its impact.⁸ At the same time, there are those whose concern it is to remind us that new therapies are not a cure and that AIDS remains a serious and fatal complex of diseases. Nevertheless, the subject has become sufficiently non-threatening to feature, for example, in film melodramas aimed at the mass market like Pedro Almodóvar's *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999). This development suggests a need for some re-appraisal of the way that I set out to read Goytisolo's most celebrated novel, *Reivindicación del Conde don Julián*. My focus in the chapter dealing with that novel is on the question of the function dread disease plays in society's creation of its all important them and us categories. At the time of writing the chapter it seemed perfectly reasonable to make an equation between the role Goytisolo affords rabies in the novel and the social meanings which AIDS had at that time, and which it continues to have depending on where in the world one is. Arguably, the extrapolation from the novel of the social meanings of disease remains valid as the basic function of the chapter in question. A shocking report published in June 2000 by the United Nations indicated that:

The ongoing spread of HIV in the world's hardest-hit regions is reversing years of declining death rates, causing drastic rises in mortality among young adults and dramatically altering population structures in the most affected regions [...] In the worst affected countries, all of which are in sub-Saharan Africa [...] fallout from the AIDS crisis is changing population structures in ways that will rip the social and economic fabric. So far, a total of 13.2 million children have lost their mother or both parents to the disease since the epidemic began. Whole generations of teachers have been devastated by AIDS, which is straining public health systems to their limits, in part because health care workers themselves are dying of the disease.⁹

Whilst the dreadfulness attributed to AIDS for much of the 1980s and 1990s in the West, then, has been moderated by new treatment regimes, for the greater part of the world's population the disease remains a dreadful prospect with