

The Child Victim, the Hole Trope and the Politics of Space in Ray Loriga's Early Works

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The year 1992, the 500th anniversary of its encounter with the New World, afforded Spain an opportunity to return to the global stage and to identify itself as a new European power. Three cultural events, the Olympics in Barcelona, the Expo in Seville, and Madrid's designation as Cultural Capital of Europe, showcased Spain's transformation into a modern, democratic, consumer-driven society. For Spaniards of the 1990s, modernity was equated with being part of a progressive Europe whose ideologically sanctioned center was, as it still is, the accumulation of capital, as Graham and Sánchez observe (410-11). The implication of such a positioning is that a society based on capital accumulation is an enlightened, civilized one. However, as Raymond Williams demonstrates, quoting from Coleridge to illustrate, a "civilized" society does not always or necessarily denote a compassionate, altruistic or humane one:

But civilization is itself but a mixed good, if not far more a corrupting influence, the hectic of disease, not the bloom of health, and a nation so distinguished more fitly to be called a varnished than a polished people, where this civilization is not grounded in cultivation, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity. (59)

Likewise, the urban as site where, as David Harvey defines it, capital dominates "through superior command over space and time" (*The Condition of Postmodernity* 238), is also, and even more so, a "mixed good." The possibility of economic gain can blind people to possible negative consequences. This theme is implicit in Ray Loriga's first four texts, *Lo peor de todo* (1992), *Héroes* (1993), *Días extraños* (1994), and *Caídos del cielo* (1995), in each of which the figure of the maladjusted, marginal, abused, self-destructive adolescent with an innocent and wounded psyche recurs. It is my contention that this child victim functions as a metaphor for space penetrated and dominated, and hence abused by what Harvey terms the urbanization of capital, the constant interplay between, on the one hand, the accumulation of capital in certain cities, such as through the selling of place, with, on the other hand, the devaluation of capital in others (*The Urban Experience* 55).

The obsession to "sell" Spain, so to speak, to the rest of the world in the early 1990s and to convert Barcelona, Madrid and Seville into global cities resulted in an increase in city planning, urban design and cartography (Capel 15; López 217). In Barcelona, the Olympics were used as an excuse to convert industrial spaces into consumer venues, benefiting real estate agencies, banks, and multinational corporations more than the working-class citizen. For example, in order to build the Olympic Village, the government of Barcelona razed industrial factories in Poblenou, a proletariat neighborhood in the northeastern part of the city that runs parallel with the sea. After the Games, the Village was converted into luxury apartments, raising the price of housing in the area and forcing many of the original inhabitants to abandon the

neighborhood (Delgado 109-10). Housing was converted from public good to a money-making endeavor. A similar transformation occurred in Madrid. However, the conversion was much less in response to a specific cultural event (in this case, Madrid as Cultural Capital of Europe) than to a general shift in economic policy. In order to fuel economic growth, the city of Madrid began to subsidize real estate demand in the late 80s and early 90s. According to López:

En Madrid y en España, la revalorización de la vivienda ha sustituido al empleo como motor del crecimiento de la demanda de bienes de consumo, así como de las propias viviendas. Tanto las operaciones de compraventa como el uso de la vivienda como colateral a otros préstamos al consumo o a segundas hipotecas han mantenido la demanda de bienes de consumo. (219)

The lure of real estate speculation likewise began to take hold of Seville. Renewed interest in transforming the decrepit space of the historical center into a consumer/tourist space was accompanied by real estate “mobbing” in which occupants were pressured to leave their old buildings:

El deterioro de las casas se utiliza para declararlas ‘ruina técnica’ o ‘económica’, esto es que costaría más dinero arreglar la casa que derribarla y hacer otra. La declaración de ruina supone el desalojo de los vecinos de la vivienda, el único obstáculo para el propietario para venderla y sacar tajada, o para que la compañía que la ha comprado previamente pueda derribarla y hacer nuevas viviendas de clase media de las que obtendrá un enorme beneficio económico, por lo elevado del valor del suelo. (“La especulación...”)

What is significant about the increase in gentrification demonstrated in these examples is that such consumption-based strategies of urban growth and design were endowed with truth-bearing power. That is, the Spanish municipal government privileged and fomented the belief that urban design, now “predicated...on urban boosterism and selling place,” was key to Spain’s well being (Compitello 405). The urban design plan and the city map came to hold greater significance, authority even, creating a hierarchy of place over space. Roberto González Echevarría argues in *Myth and Archive* that the novel is an imitation of any document that society bestows with authority and that this imitation reveals the hidden aspects of said document. “The novel, therefore, is part of the discursive totality of a given epoch, occupying a place opposite its ideologically authoritative core” (8). Using this theoretical framework, I argue that Ray Loriga’s first four texts, *Lo peor de todo* (1992), *Héroes* (1993), *Días extraños* (1994), and *Caídos del Cielo* (1995), occupy a place opposite the city map providing a cartography of a different kind, one which emphasizes not the physicality and quantifiable order of *place*, but rather the way in which *space* is perceived psychologically by children who have suffered physical and emotional trauma. In these novels, Loriga performs a mapping of subjective activity which was referred to by the Situationist International of the 1950s as psycho-geography. The perception of the politics of space as a map of holes, whether the holes be “black holes” in *Lo peor de todo*, anuses or vaginas in *Héroes*, ghettos in *Días extraños*, or bullet holes in *Caídos del cielo*, is the common psycho-geography shared by each of Loriga’s child victims. His novels function as counter-city maps in which the invisible, in this case the politics of space, is given materiality. The shared cartographic imaginary, the fixation on holes, stems from principally, but

not exclusively, childhood trauma related to the forced manipulation of orifices, be it through sexual abuse or medical intervention. Loriga's child victims learn at a young age that holes are vulnerable sites of contested space.

The majority of this paper is devoted to exploring these different kinds of holes as well as the symbolic and ideological meanings of the child victim trope. In the second and briefer section, I examine the child victims' narration and movement through their maps of holes.

Space as a Map of Holes – The Psychological Perception of Space or the Counter-city Map

“Supongo que son agujeros que no están marcados en los mapas” –Loriga *Héroes* 150

The ideological meaning of the child victim trope, the space penetrated and dominated by the urbanization of capital, is that any contest over power is a contest over space. The main character of *Héroes* describes the dynamic in the following way: “Siempre quieren que estés en otro sitio, no importa dónde estés, tienen verdadera obsesión por sacar y meter a la gente constantemente de sitios de los que no quieren salir y en sitios en los que no quieren entrar respectivamente” (127-128). Elder Bastidas, the protagonist of *Lo peor de todo*, gives examples:

La gente ve un niño esperando su turno en la compra y va y se lo salta, y luego empuja en las puertas y adelanta cuando no hay sitio suficiente y tienes que frenar para no matarte y se ofende por cualquier cosa y pone vidrios rotos en las vallas y pone el culo para que le den por el culo y escupe en el suelo y a mí todo eso no me gusta nada. (121)

The powerful take advantage of the weak, such as children, bending the rules, marking as well as pushing the boundaries, identifying appropriate behavior and peoples, and relegating inappropriate ones to the peripheries. In an urban context, those with money control space, and have the power to determine who is allowed in and who is not, such as by putting broken glass on top of fences.

This space of power has traditionally imitated the masculine form and has been occupied according to the logic of masculine values. The association of power with the male member finds expression in the city, as Lefebvre observes, through “the use and overuse of straight lines, right angles, and strict (rectilinear) perspective” (410). Not only is the space of power phallic in terms of form but also in terms of practice. According to Elizabeth Grosz, men occupy space “as territorialized, as mappable or explorable,” conceive space in terms “according to the logic of penetration, colonization and domination,” and do not “respect spaces and places which are not theirs” (57). Phallogocentric thought as performed in space is violent and destructive. The penis, as representative of power, is weapon and wrecking ball. If capital reproduces itself by conquering space, as both Lefebvre and Harvey assert, the selling of place and the subsequent gentrification of neighborhoods are “screwing” the weak. Loriga performs the politics of space through the abuse of child victims in order to emphasize the exploitation of the weaker parts of the city.

In response to the violent spatial practice found in cities, Loriga's child victims dream of a utopia that is beyond space, beyond power relationships, beyond the dialectic of placement/displacement. The main character of *Héroes* explains: “No se trata de dónde me gustaría estar. En realidad no quiero estar en ningún sitio. No quiero pensar en ningún tipo de

desplazamiento” (my emphasis, 84). The older brother of *Caídos del cielo* likewise wants to be outside of the urban and beyond morality. The younger brother clarifies: “...lo único que quería era que le dejaran tranquilo. Quedarse fuera de todos los retos y de todas las obligaciones, de todo lo bueno y de todo lo malo” (104). However, this desire is at odds with reality, for one can never really be beyond space. As a result, the child victims reject any identification with the social order and create difference by separating themselves from the social space that surrounds them. The separation takes three forms: 1) The creation of a hidden, feminine, vacant space like a vagina in which to be idle and passive, a space free of analytical/masculine thought (as in *Héroes* and to a lesser extent, in *Días extraños*); 2) the turning of masculine/phallic/destructive logic against itself in the form of bullets and bullet holes in order to destroy the “Other,” that part of oneself that one abhors (as in *Caídos del cielo*), and in so doing, creating a space in which to perform violent criticisms; and 3) the reinforcing of “Otherness” -instead of its rejection – not through the creation of a uterine space but through the maintenance of an abject space that is eventually absorbed into “sameness” (as in *Lo peor de todo*).

The child victims’ perception of the politics of space as a map of holes stems from the perversion of a fundamental binary opposition according to which the physical world functions: the opposition between holes and objects with mass and extension. In order for an object to occupy space, there needs to be a hole into which the object can fit. Children are introduced to this elementary notion through the game in which they have to fit certain shapes such as a star, a cross and a half moon, etc., into their corresponding holes. Instead of attaching a positive connotation to this dynamic, the main narrator of *Héroes* laments that this game is the beginning of the end (“Todo está mal desde el principio” [referring to the game, 129]):

Después es todo lo mismo; cosas que tienen que encajar en unos agujeros y cosas que tienen que entrar en otros y *sobre todo cosas que por nada del mundo deben pensar en agujeros que no les corresponden*. Todo esto nos lleva a un amigo mío al que le gustaba mucho que le dieran por el culo. (my emphasis, 129).

The issues of anal sex, forced entry, the power relationship between occupier and occupied, and the connection between taboo holes and the anus all surface here. The negative connotation stems from the possible abuse that the spatial relationship between the open and vulnerable (a child) and the closed and dominating (an adult) facilitates. The game is perverted, corrupted (no longer innocent) when associated with sex. Holes such as the anus and the vagina are contested spaces, and, like social space, they are sites where certain people are allowed in and others are not. Sometimes there are forced entries (as in rape), other times there are patriarchal figures who determine entry (as when marriages are arranged), and other times there is mutual consent (as in consensual sex and doctor’s visits). But always there is negotiation.

Although the nameless narrator/protagonist of *Héroes* does not specifically discuss or mention molestation, the author hints that he may have been abused as a child because he admits to having a strange childhood (“Lo siento sinceramente, he tenido una infancia extraña” [102]) and laments the fact that children want to be loved but oftentimes find a depraved version of love. “Todos los niños buscan amor y acaban encontrando algo que no sé muy bien qué coño puede ser, *algo que duele y ensucia* y acaban pagando demasiado por ello” (my emphasis, 93). As an adult, he compares his penis to a Geiger-Müller tube that detects, not radiation, but the

presence of anuses (120). His lack of control over abusive impulses leads to a time in his life when his penis determines his actions (23). He admits to having had a penis with a vengeful mission:

Dile a las niñas que se mantengan alejadas de los hombres porque sus pollas ridículas cortan por los dos lados. Son pollas de venganza. Lo sé porque la mía también lo fue antes de que empezase a correr hacia atrás. (92)

A third-person narrator, possibly the main character's brother, reveals that one of the protagonist's prior indiscretions (*desgracias*) includes trying to find a "hole" in which to put "himself:"

Te apedrearán cuando digas que *sólo tratabas de encontrar un agujero donde meterte*. Nadie aceptará tus excusas, dirán: Puede que hayas pasado los días tropezando con la tristeza, pero hemos seguido tus huellas y no nos gusta el sitio al que nos han llevado. Tú dirás: Sólo quería conocer a un niño que no confundiese a sus padres con un martillo. (101)

Given the main character's obsession with holes and his use of the word to refer to anuses (126, 129, 147) and to vaginas (96, 147), and given his admission to having a vengeful penis, it would not be inconsistent to read the above mentioned "agujero" as anus, thus converting the revelation into a recognition of abuse.

Once realizing his lack of self-control, the narrator locks himself in his room not so much to protect himself from abuse (although there is that element), but to prevent himself from abusing others. "Supongo que no se pueden cerrar las puertas con llave y que en realidad se trataba desde el principio de tapiar las salidas más que bloquear las entradas. De vigilar más los desagües que los grifos" (167). He creates a "hole" to live in – "an ugly, squalid, or depressing dwelling" – and "holes" himself up (*The American Heritage Dictionary*). He believes that a person may become hidden from society if he or she is damaged. "Estar mal [...] es estar tranquilo, tan tranquilo como una fortaleza quemada en mitad de una guerra" (135). The protagonist of *Héroes* plays with the notion of architecture as body and creates an undesirable body/building/space that he likens to a burned fortress in the middle of war, in the middle of phallic, territorialized, mappable, dominating space. He essentially ghettoizes himself in order to become completely undesirable by those in power. His "hole" is hidden, much like the vagina. According to Lefebvre, "the Phallus is seen. The female genital organ, representing the world, remains hidden" (262). Lefebvre uses the term "world" in the Roman sense of *mundus*, that portion of nature that included holes and abysses as opposed to "Cosmos," mounds, shining hills, straight lines. Roman thought filtered and understood the dualities of nature through the dualities of the human body. Lefebvre explains:

This able manoeuvre...made it possible, beginning in the city of the ancient world, simultaneously to incorporate femaleness and to demote it, to establish dominion over it by assigning it a limited portion of space, and to reduce it to a 'femininity' subordinated to the principle of maleness, of masculinity or manliness.' (377)

Like the Roman *mundus*, *Héroes*'s protagonist's *mundus* is at once an accursed and sacred place. It is both pit and dump as well as safe haven. His body/building/space has been feminized and, hence, devalued. If capital reproduces itself by conquering and penetrating space, the protagonist of *Héroes* purposefully divests his body/building/space of "capital." He allows his penis to fall, the erect lines of the fortress become broken and consumed by fire.

Space divested of capital may be just as abusive as space penetrated and dominated by capital. The flip-side of gentrification is the under-development of communities and the subsequent creation of ghettos. Unlike the protagonist of *Héroes* who purposefully ghettoizes himself, minorities such as African Americans have oftentimes been economically forced to live in ghettos. These ghettos mark physical boundaries between whites and other racial, ethnic, or religious subgroups, causing them to be invisible to affluent Caucasians. Loriga in *Días extraños* comments on this situation and illustrates his point with another hole image, the toilet:

Un día los negros quemaron Los Ángeles y a todos los listos les pareció que ése no era el camino. *Es como asomarse al retrete y esperar ver a Esther Williams rodeada de nenúfares*. Te pueden dar por el culo mil años, pero no te pueden dar por el culo mil años y un día, y esto, no sé por qué, no se oye mucho en la ópera. (my emphasis, 55)

The politicians who judge the minorities negatively for the use of any sort of violence as protest are criticized by Loriga. He argues that one should not be surprised to find "shit" in a "shit hole." In order to quell social dissatisfaction, politicians have sometimes engaged African Americans in dialogue, but always, according to Loriga, "desde los bordes del *agujero*" (my emphasis, 55). Unlike the space of a self-imposed ghettoization, the "neighborhood as hole" is not a safe haven. It is an accursed place without the characteristics of a sacred place. In other words, the "neighborhood as hole" is not a feminized space, but rather a battle zone of gang violence. It is phallic, territorialized and mappable, for space is marked by graffiti and gang colors.

The older brother of *Caídos del cielo* also creates holes, but instead of holes divested of capital, either self-imposed (place of repose, absent of analytical thought) or forced (place of abjection), they are bullet holes produced by the turning of masculine/phallic/destructive logic against itself in order to destroy his "Other," those parts of himself that he abhors. Instead of controlling his "polla de venganza," he unleashes it. Before entering a convenience store in Madrid, the older brother discovers a pistol with three bullets in a garbage can, decides to keep it, and hides it under his belt in his pants. His newly acquired "erection" is a loaded gun waiting to be discharged, thus, converting him into potential dominator and penetrator.

There are ready-made holes vulnerable to domination such as the anus and the vagina, but there are also forced holes such as the ghetto or the wound caused by a bullet. The body continues to be the space for the negotiation of power in *Caídos del cielo*. However, the bullet hole becomes the site of penetration and domination by the pistol/penis. The power the older brother wields with his fire arm is linked with the virility of an erect, vengeful penis, the firing of his gun with an act of masculine, phallic, destructive domination and the resulting bullet hole as site of penetration.

Seemingly anticipating the criticism he would receive for the violence in *Caídos del cielo*, Loriga argues in *Días extraños* that the violent murders depicted in novels and film are not examples of gratuitous violence but a healthy way for the public to release built up frustrations. “Cuando uno de esos tíos de las películas sacaba una gran pistola y le volaba los sesos a alguien, siempre había por allí uno de los listos hablando de violencia gratuita” (53). However, Loriga emphasizes that the movie-goers “sólo querían ver el fogonazo y el impacto, el gran agujero chorreando sangre. Simple y puro desahogo” (53). The word *desahogo* may refer to relief but also to the creation of space in order to feel more comfortable (*Larousse*). In this case, the imagined bullet holes of literature and film are spaces of collective, metaphorical blood-letting and release, spaces in which to perform a violent criticism and self-criticism. “Todos tenemos caras, culos y barrigas donde poner el agujero...Agujeros de bala para jefes, mujeres, maridos, madres, padres, curas, Papas, salvadores de la patria, banqueros, vecinos y críticos literarios. Luego vienen los listos con lo de la violencia gratuita y eso lo hace aún más rentable” (*Días extraños* 53). The older brother of *Caídos del cielo* adds to the above-mentioned list and puts a bullet hole in a security guard of a chain of one-stop shopping stores in Madrid, and in a misogynistic gas station attendant. Commenting on the relationship between violence and the availability of hand guns, Loriga explains to Elena Pita of the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*:

La pistola en mi película [Loriga converts his novel to the big screen] es un pretexto, de hecho no me interesa el asunto de las pistolas, me interesa la violencia como punta armada de una ira adolescente. El chico en realidad mata una cierta maldad que hay escondida detrás de mucha gente, él mata a *quien no quiere ser*, al concepto machista, la falta de respeto que hay en cierta manera de mirar a las mujeres. (my emphasis, “Ray Loriga Entrevista”)

When the older brother murders, first, a security guard and, second, a gas station attendant, he figuratively kills himself, or at least those parts of himself of which he is most critical, namely, his identification with consumerism and the selling of place, and the objectification of women.

The older brother is critical of a morality that condones the excesses of consumerism and the selling of place, particularly the selling of Spanish beaches to tourists. His hatred for the beach stems from the explosion of tourism to Spain in the late 1980s that converted Spain’s tourist revenues to the highest in the world. Fifty and a half million tourists, attracted primarily by the beaches and the sun, visited Spain in 1987 generating US\$14.7 billion (“Tourism”). Manuel Fraga, in order to promote tourism in the 1960s, coined the slogan “Spain is different.” However, the slogan is just a mask. Spain is just like any other coastal area that sells sun, sea, beach, festival, etc. Spain’s “difference” operates according to the same logic acceptable to all money-making, productive tourist sites that are, according to Lefebvre, “centralized, organized, hierarchized, symbolized and programmed to the *n*th degree” and that serve “the interests of the tour-operators, bankers and entrepreneurs of places such as London and Hamburg” (59).

He is also critical of the abuse of women. After murdering the security guard, he flees the store, hijacks a BMW from a random family, and speeds off with a beautiful teenage girl in the back seat. During a sexual encounter with the beautiful girl, she orders him to hit her. Scared, he tries to evade her plea by physically separating himself from her. However, she grabs his

penis and does not let go. “La sacó y trató de apartarse, pero ella se la agarró con fuerza. Apretó la polla con las dos manos como si quisiera exprimirla” (131). By taking his penis without his consent, the sexual encounter becomes a sexual assault. In this decisive scene, he is, at the same time, abused and asked to abuse. Unable to physically distance himself from the beautiful girl, he seems to psychologically distance himself: “Miraba la polla entre sus manos como si fuera la polla de otro, o una polla de nadie. Una polla atrapada” (131). This reaction, known as dissociation, is common to rape victims and sexually abused children. Valente explains that dissociation allows victims to “‘tune out’ and create psychic numbing to repulse pain, humiliation, and violence” (13). The older brother’s greatest fear that he will continue a cycle of violence is realized as he raises his hand to beat her. In order to destroy the lack of respect associated with the objectifying male gaze that he sees in others and in himself, he shoots the gas station attendant in the face. The motive for the second murder, as for the first, is to kill the person he does not want to be. The raising of his hand is equated to the gas station attendant’s objectification of the beautiful girl.

In *Lo peor de todo* “Otherness” is reinforced instead of rejected. Elder, the main protagonist, equates the worst aspects of his life with a particular type of hole, the black hole. “M [his brother] me dijo que todo lo peor, lo que menos te gusta en el mundo, está dentro de *un agujero negro* y que puedes no verlo, pero si te asomas un poco ya estás dentro” (my emphasis, 107). The powerful gravitational pull of a black hole in space is compared to the strong lure of dark desires. You may try to stop those tendencies, but at the same time you are seduced by them. You cannot escape the pull or lure. The use of the phrase *agujero negro* or black hole, when considering Elder’s childhood, brings to mind the “black hole” that is the anus. As a child, Elder suffered a heart murmur and had to undergo various medical interventions. His mother, in an attempt to cure her son of arrhythmia, not only heeded the advice of modern medicine, but also that of traditional medicine. Following the popular belief that toxic substances could be forcibly expelled from the body, she gave six-year-old Elder strong laxatives. As a result, during the first grade, he experienced many embarrassing moments in which he would uncontrollably defecate in his pants, making him an easy target for ridicule. Referring to the embarrassment that he suffered, Elder explains: “Las cosas en general van siendo peores según creces, por eso resulta especialmente cruel que te amarguen la vida de pequeño, cuando aún tienes posibilidades” (10). The physical trauma of his illness coupled with the emotional trauma of ridicule led to psychological and behavioral problems. For example, he has difficulty identifying with his peers and makes himself “Other”:

A mí me gustaba sentarme al lado de Paquito de Ribera con toda su mierda pegada al banco y todos los libros atascados en la cajonera, me hacía sentir como un subversivo. Paquito y yo éramos terroristas y teníamos mucha mierda amontonada para que nadie se nos acercase a sonreír o a ser buen amigo o a pedirnos de nuestra merienda. (83)

His proximity to excrement makes him feel like a subversive and a terrorist, and he revels in his “Otherness.” Elder is the excrement expelled by the educational body, the school, as well as by the body politic, society. He becomes the abject, “that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered ‘Other’” (Butler 169). It is not surprising, then, that Elder would equate the worst aspects of his life with the anus or the “black hole.” The use of

laxatives to forcefully expel toxic substances from Elder's six-year-old body parallels the forceful eviction of undesirable neighbors by real estate agencies and municipal governments from rundown buildings, or what might colloquially be referred to as "shit holes," in order to rebuild the neighborhoods for middle to upper-class citizens.

For all his effort to maintain "Otherness," Elder is eventually absorbed into "sameness." He plans to stab to death the employee of the month of the fast food restaurant where he works, but is beaten to it by a fellow employee. Despite an initial reaction of anger, the unexpected turn of events actually benefits Elder because he has a good chance of becoming the next employee of the month. As a result, he starts to take pride in his work and makes an effort to cook the French fries and the onions rings to the best of his ability. In other words, Elder becomes a productive member of society.

The quote that introduced this section ("Supongo que son agujeros que no están marcados en los mapas" [*Héroes* 150]) summarizes the core issue of this paper. Purely geographical coordinates are deemed more important than the psychological perception of space. Cartesian maps, the privileged narration of the designed city, do not provide space for the subjective experience of the city. Hence, alternate maps, those that make visible the "holes" that are absent in the spaces of power, are necessary in order to reflect how the space of the city is practiced by the weak.

Narration and Movement Through the Map of Holes

"Estamos centrifugando la nada" – Loriga *Días extraños* 45

The child-victims' narration and movement through their reinvented locality, their map of holes, is a circular, rhythmic, repetitive, mechanical, self-consuming, excessively speedy movement that has no direction. Circular movement is usually offered as a positive alternative to Hegel's historical idealism and linear, progressive dialectics, but here it is problematic. The main character of *Héroes* describes himself as a hamster in a cage running on a plastic wheel going nowhere (107), a motorboat whose motor is out of the water with the propeller pointlessly spinning (38), and a type of refillable cartridge (84). Loriga in *Días extraños* compares his situation to an empty, spinning washing machine (45) or to any "aparato para andar sin moverse del sitio" (48). Movement on the road in *Caídos del cielo* equals circular movement because it does not really advance the main character's position. He steals a car and begins to drive, but his roads lead him nowhere. His movement has no direction, has no end, no goal, no purpose. Likewise, Elder Bastidas in *Lo peor de todo* feels that he is just spinning his wheels in a world of idiotic jobs that do not require much effort.

The protagonists of Loriga's early works walk through or narrate through their counter-city maps by using a discourse that is anti-Hegelian, anti-progress, anti-Cartesian, anti-positivist, and anti-modern. Instead of considering space as a set of geographical coordinates that can be identified, measured, and divided, there is an emphasis on the subject's experience of both space and time as an occupation of space that cannot be quantifiably measured. Invisible things are "put on the map," recognized, given a place. The narrating or, in this case, mapping of subjective activity takes the form of a first-person cartographer and a non-linear progression of time. There is no pretense of an accurate presentation of reality. Elder Bastidas of *Lo peor de todo* confides that he takes a global approach to narration. "De alguna manera todo lo que pueda contar va a

sonar extraño, porque la verdad es que odio los detalles, me aburren” (13). He also admits that fiction is the only vehicle through which subjective reality may be faithfully expressed. “De todas formas, creo que lo que uno se inventa es más real que lo que a uno le pasa” (38). The first-person narrator of *Héroes* purposely writes a chaotic account. “...quería explicarlo todo de una manera confusa, aparentemente superficial, pero sincera...” (17). One may doubt the sincerity of the first-person narrator of *Caídos del cielo*, however, because he is the younger brother whose explicit objective is to defend his older brother’s character and to offer an alternate version of the events presented by the media, for the media has vilified the narrator’s older brother and has sensationalized the two homicides by dubbing him “the angel of death.” In order to correct the image of his brother as a monster, created by the media, the younger brother portrays him as essentially a good person who commits two violent crimes. Unlike the narration given by Elder Bastidas and the main character of *Héroes*, the younger brother’s invention is offered as truthful and accurate and reveals much more about his subjective reality than that of his older brother. *Días extraños* blurs the border between reality and invention because it is unclear whether we are reading Loriga’s personal confessions or those of a fictionalized character.

Carmen de Urioste has already observed that Loriga’s texts are fragmented narrations reflecting the subjective perception of time. She explains: “[...] *Lo peor de todo*... cuenta las experiencias del narrador-protagonista en un estilo desordenado donde la necesidad de contar una vida de manera lineal-referencial ha desaparecido” (466) and “[...] *Caídos del cielo*... aparece dividida en 51 capítulos de diferente longitud – desde un párrafo hasta varias páginas – agrupados en cuatro secciones, los cuales poseen características de viñetas temáticas...” (466). *Héroes* follows the same model as *Lo peor de todo*, and *Días extraños* is a series of short observations and reflections resembling journal entries.

The cyclical, non-linear nature of the child victims’ movement is, at times, related to drug abuse and the need to forget a past trauma. Milan Kundera observes in his novel *Slowness* that “a person who wants to forget a disagreeable incident he has just lived through starts unconsciously to speed up his pace, as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing still too close to him in time” (39). Loriga in *Días extraños* takes amphetamine which speeds up his thinking to such an extent that it puts his mind on auto-pilot, as it were. “El cerebro no es capaz de pensar tan deprisa, así que funciona de manera mecánica y absurda, como una lavadora, como una lavadora vacía” (45). The main character of *Héroes* values being drunk because “estar absolutamente borracho es estar absolutamente incapacitado para la acción (“action” understood in terms of phallic penetration) y por lo tanto tan alejado como se puede estar de la responsabilidad o lo que es casi lo mismo, de la culpa” (135). In each case, both Loriga and the child-victim of *Héroes* are trying to create a space free of analytical/masculine thought. That is, a passive, feminine, vacant, idle space like a vagina, a place of madness or nature’s space not unlike Lefebvre’s heterotopical place (264) instead of a phallic-visual-geometric space or second nature (Lefebvre 289).

As illustrated by all of the above-mentioned absurd images, even though there is a great deal of movement, the child victims seem to be going nowhere. A neo-liberal market agenda is creating a negative utopia in Spain, a negative no-where, a “nada” that is the constant, pointless circular movement of life as emptying and refilling. The fact that the market is driven by money and not affect creates inequalities and reinforces the master/slave, abuser/abused dynamic. Economic externalities will almost always trump social considerations, making it difficult to

determine whether the benefits of technology, modernity and globalization of a neo-liberal agenda outweigh the economic, social and cultural apartheid that it imposes, for in such a climate, anything or anyone may be bought or sold, even children. This preoccupation for the objectification of children and the loss of respect for life is shared by the main character in *Héroes*. Speaking directly to the reader, the protagonist advises: “Confía en los caballos y confía en las quinielas pero no confíes en un país que desayuna niños como tú y ten siempre en cuenta que todos los países, grandes o pequeños, desayunan niños como tú” (109). Horses and lotteries are better bets than are countries because countries are self-interested entities that will defend their own political and economic space at the expense of the weak such as children.

Even though the negative utopia is oftentimes referred to in Loriga’s texts as “la nada”, one of Loriga’s child victims, the older brother in *Caídos del cielo*, appropriates “la nada” and converts it into a space for hope. Many critics have read his actions as motivated by nihilism. To support this view, they often quote the passage in which the beautiful girl of the back seat asks him what he would do if he could only do one more thing in life. His response is that he would do nothing, “Nada de nada de nada” (104). Critics such as Carmen de Urioste, Jason E. Klodt, and Toni Dorca read this affirmation as pejorative. Carmen de Urioste argues that the older brother’s response illuminates “la filosofía nihilista que esta nueva sociedad de jóvenes profesa” (463) and Klodt equates the “nada” to “identity destruction” (50). I agree that Loriga’s character may be described as nihilistic in the sense that he rejects the preferred prevailing values associated with the flexible accumulation of capital. It seems to me, however, that the “nada” for which he searches is related more to nirvana than to nihilism. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* defines nirvana as “a positive state of perpetual peace” in which one lives “without craving” (my emphasis, 623). Loriga’s character, at this point of the novel, is drained and tired for two reasons: 1) he is physically tired of running from the law; and 2) he is emotionally tired of continually fighting the desires created by capitalism and wants a vacation from these “manufactured” cravings. His sought-after nirvana is the opposite of a beach full of consumer products such as radios, walkmans, fake breasts, etc. He wants to lie on an *empty* beach, a beach empty of all cravings, a beach beyond the control of consumerism and do nothing.

It is fitting that the older brother dies on the beach, for the beach is the space most representative of the conversion of the qualitative (sun, sea, beach) and the unproductive (not of profit and not for a company) into the quantitative and productive (organized vacations by tour-operators, consumption of the beach mediated by marketed products, etc.). As he walks across the beach to the sea, he laments what he sees: “La playa estaba llena... Llena de sombrillas y de radios y de walkmans y discmans y toda clase de inventos sumergibles, llena de todo” (147). The police and the media surround him on the beach and hover over him in the air in a helicopter. He shoots his gun into the air, which incites the policemen to open fire on him. Like the beach as space dominated and penetrated by flexible capital, his body is finally penetrated and dominated by the police.

Conclusion

Loriga’s early works fit within the larger context of the innovative mapping practices with which social movements, not only in Spain but in the world, are currently experimenting. Publicly editable maps known as geo-wikis create a platform with which social movements are

able to give materiality to the experience of the city. Map as static, geographical identifier created by urban designers gives way to map as constantly evolving story-teller. Users are able to freely add to and change the map-story, providing an alternate narration of the designed city. Yves Degoyon, founder of one such platform, Mapomatix, describes it as “a subjective positioning system” made up of “mental maps or imaginary maps” that locate “the subjective nature of flows of human activity and the processes involved” (“PGS versus GPS...”). Unlike Loriga, who locates individual practices, Degoyon is interested in “collaborative imagination, a map that draws a tissue of human practices, an active map in this sense, since it empowers the activity of collectives” (“PGS versus GPS...”). Nonetheless, both Degoyon and Loriga create counter-city maps that highlight the politics of space.

The conception of city, not as an adult, masculine body, but as a child’s body, and the politics of space as abusive and dominating emphasize the exploitation of weaker parts of the city. As opposed to the mapping of consumption-based strategies of urban growth during the 1990s in Spain, Loriga, in his first four texts, *Lo peor de todo* (1992), *Héroes* (1993), *Días extraños* (1994), and *Caídos del Cielo* (1995), maps the subjective activity of various child victims and discovers that they all share a similar cartographic imaginary, one in which the politics of space are perceived as a map of holes. The holes are “black holes” in *Lo peor de todo*, anuses or vaginas in *Héroes*, ghettos in *Días extraños*, and bullet holes in *Caídos del cielo*. Each of these holes is a contested space vulnerable to penetration by the penis and/or by the urbanization of capital. Loriga puts the child victims’ subjective experience of these holes on the counter-city maps that are his novels and gives them a place.

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