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**TITLE:** From 'Guardia' to 'Guardia' and 'Insilio' to 'Exilio': A Close (Re-)Reading of Senel Paz's "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo"

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**ABSTRACT:** This close (re-)reading of Senel Paz's "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo" (1990) examines how the Cuban author purposefully yet subtly contrasts the words "guardia" and "guardia" at numerous points in his story. In the external space and public sphere of communist Cuba, the former term—"guardia"—dominates; in the inner island and private space of Diego's apartment, the latter term—"guardia"—prevails. The narrative juxtaposes being guarded and on guard, hiding out and being on look out. Ultimately, Diego's "insilio" in the "guardia" gives way to his "exilio" at the end of the story, as he decides that he must leave Cuba if he wishes to attain true freedom in the public sphere. Upon first establishing the tension in the story between "guardia" and "guardia," this article goes on to examine the implications of the transition from inner to outer exile, from a willing retreat into a self-created insular hideaway to the decision to leave the island nation altogether.

**KEYWORDS:** Senel Paz, Cuba, Castroism, "The Wolf, the Forest and the New Man," Strawberry and Chocolate, homosexuality, inner exile, outer exile, public sphere, private sphere

**RESUMEN:** Este análisis de "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo" (1990) de Senel Paz examina cómo el autor cubano contrasta las palabras "guardia" y "guardia" en numerosos momentos de su historia para juxtaponer los actos de exhibir(se) y esconder(se), de guardar(se) y de estar de guardia. En el espacio externo y público de Cuba, el término "guardia" domina; en el espacio interior y privado del departamento de Diego, el término "guardia" prevalece. Después de establecer esta tensión entre "guardia" y "guardia", examinaremos las implicaciones de la transición de Diego desde su "insilio" en la "guardia" a su "exilio" fuera del país.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Senel Paz, Cuba, castrismo, "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo," fresa y chocolate, homosexualidad, guardia, guardia, insilio, exilio, el espacio público, el espacio privado

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## From ‘Guardia’ to ‘Guarida’ and ‘Insilio’ to ‘Exilio’: A Close (Re-)Reading of Senel Paz’s “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo”

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Since the 1990 publication of Senel Paz’s narrative “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo” and the 1993 release of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío’s filmic version *Fresa y chocolate*, which was based on Senel Paz’s script, a lot has changed in Cuba, particularly with regard to the treatment and acceptance of homosexuals. Paz sets his story in late 1970s Havana and narrates the unlikely friendship between David, a heterosexual university student and member of the Communist Youth League, and Diego, a thirty-year-old homosexual and cultured intellectual who has had “problemas con el Sistema” (255). The two protagonists share a growing bond based on tolerance and acceptance, despite the differences in their sexual and religious orientations as well as their age and class backgrounds (255). Two decades after the initial publication of Paz’s narrative and four decades following the period in which the tale is set, Fidel Castro drastically changed his ideas regarding homosexuals, stating in a 2010 interview that the persecution of homosexuals during the previous decades in Cuba had been “una gran injusticia” and admitting that “si alguien es responsable, soy yo” (Saade). In stark contrast to these more recent statements, Castro had notoriously declared in a 1965 interview with an American journalist: “We would never come to believe that a homosexual could embody the conditions and requirements that would enable us to consider him a true Revolutionary, a true

Communist militant. A deviation of that nature clashes with the concept we have of what a militant Communist should be” (qtd. in Farber). Many factors come into play to explain Castro’s 2010 revision of his 1965 ideas regarding homosexuals and Communism. I wish to return to Paz’s narrative to examine its poignant message and its potential impact in anticipating such changes.

In this close (re-)reading of Paz’s narrative, I aim to examine how the Cuban author purposefully yet subtly contrasts the words “guardia” and “guarida” at numerous points in this story in order to highlight the extremes of oppression and freedom in his native Cuba.<sup>1</sup> In the external space and public sphere of communist Cuba, the former term—“guardia”—dominates; in the inner island and private space of Diego’s apartment, the latter term—“guarida”—prevails. David and Diego meet frequently and privately in “la guarida,” the name Diego gives to his Havana apartment, to taste forbidden liquors, read banned books, listen to censored music, and discuss sexuality, religion, politics, the revolution, and the future of communism in Cuba. The term “guarida” translates into English in a number of different ways: as a hideout, haunt, or refuge or as an animal’s lair or den (255). I should also note that critics have suggested that the same term, “guarida,” was used to refer to the underground gay scene in Havana, although it is uncertain whether or not Senel Paz was aware of this fact.<sup>2</sup> It is in “la guarida” that Diego is free

to act “como es, como piensa” and to express “una libertad interior” (269). It is also the place where David is able, ultimately, to escape his societally-prescribed role as “un agente [. . .] con la guardia en alto” (260, 261). Diego does not have to be “guarded” in his “*guarida*,” yet David is “on guard” in many of their interactions there. Ultimately, however, Diego’s “*insilio*” in the “*guarida*” gives way to his “*exilio*” at the end of the story, as he leaves the island home that he loves so much, deciding that he must leave Cuba if he wishes to attain true freedom in the public sphere, as indeed nothing remains private or protected. Upon first establishing the tension in the story between “*guardia*” and “*guarida*,” I will go on to examine the implications of the transition from inner to outer exile, from a willing retreat into a self-created insular hideaway to the decision to leave the island nation altogether.

The opening scene in “*Coppelia*, la Catedral de Helado” establishes the importance of seeing and being seen (250). David is sitting alone at the busy Havana ice cream shop, when Diego approaches his table, murmurs “con permiso,” and sits down directly in front of him (250). David recalls his first impression of Diego: “le eché una *ojeada*: no había que ser muy sagaz para ver de qué pata cojeaba, y habiendo chocolate, había pedido fresa” (250-51, emphasis added). Based solely on visual clues, David identifies Diego as homosexual and immediately becomes anxious and overly self-conscious in his presence. He worries that some acquaintance will see him sitting next to Diego. “Estábamos en una de las áreas más céntricas de la heladería, tan cercana a su vez a la universidad,” he reflects, “por lo que en cualquier momento podía vernos alguno de mis compañeros” (251, emphasis added). He also feels and fears Diego’s “*mirada libidinosa*” (251, emphasis added). Not wanting to be “seen” publicly with a homosexual, David ponders the differences between being gay in Havana and in the countryside: “[e]n los pueblos pequeños los afeminados no tienen defensa, son el hazmerreír de todos y evitan *exhibirse* en público; pero en La Habana,

había oído decir, son otra cosa, tienen sus trucos” (251, emphasis added). In the capital city, then, homosexuals do not have to hide or “guard” their identity with such intensity, although tricks (“*trucos*”) are required in order to exhibit or flaunt their sexual orientation publicly. The italicized words in these passages underscore the repetitive emphasis on the visual, as Paz repeatedly employs verbs such as “to see” and “to exhibit” and nouns such as “glance” and “look” in this first encounter.

As this initial scene continues, Senel Paz goes on to juxtapose the visible and the hidden, the exhibited and the concealed. Diego purposefully removes several books from his bag, which catches David’s eye. “*Sólo miré de reojo y vi que eran libros, ediciones extranjeras*,” explains David:

y el de arriba-arriba, por eso mismo, por ser el de arriba, quedó al alcance de mi vista: Seix Barral, *Biblioteca Breve*, Mario Vargas Llosa, *La guerra del fin del mundo*. ¡Madre mía, ese libro, nada menos! Vargas Llosa era un reaccionario, hablaba mierdas de Cuba y el socialismo dondequiera que se paraba, pero yo estaba loco por leer su última novela y *mírala allí*: los maricones todo lo consiguen primero. (251, emphasis added)

Soon thereafter, Diego remarks, “[c]on tu permiso, voy a *guardar*’ [. . .] e hizo *desaparecer* los libros” (251, emphasis added). Diego explains further: “Es un material demasiado explosivo para *exhibirlo* en público. Nuestros policías son cultos. Pero si te interesan, te los *muestro*... en otro lugar” (252, emphasis added). These banned books must be hidden (“*guardados*”), but Diego’s apartment—“*la guarida*”—is the “other place” where one can “see” and “show” what is “too explosive to exhibit in public.” This is the second time Paz uses the phrase “*exhibir*... en público”—once with regard to homosexuals (“*exhibirse*”) and once with regard to banned books (“*exhibirlo*”), since neither are approved nor sanctioned by the current regime.

The next scene further underscores the thematic significance of seeing and being seen or of not seeing and not being seen. It takes place in Diego's apartment, which he has baptized "*la guarida*." Upon entering Diego's hideaway, David makes it clear that he does not want Diego to close the door to the apartment. Nonetheless, Diego explains that "así le facilitamos la labor a los vecinos," implying that an open door allows the neighbors to watch and monitor them with greater ease (256). David is uneasy in Diego's presence and in the enclosed space of "*la guarida*." He notes: "Era obvio que [Diego] conocía a la perfección la técnica de despertar el interés de reclutas y estudiantes, y también la de relajar a los tensos [. . .] Consistía esta última en *hacernos oír o ver lo que no queríamos oír ni ver*" (258, emphasis added). Diego's interest in making others hear and see what they did not want to hear or see parallels Senel Paz's intent with this tale, and David parallels the implied reader who is brought on a journey of increased awareness, growing acceptance, enlarged vision, and broadened perspective. Nonetheless, in this early moment in his retrospective, first-person narrative, David, "en el centro de la guarida, [. . . está] convencido de haber[se] equivocado de lugar" (256). He staunchly declares: "Me voy," rejects the gift of the Vargas Llosa book with a resounding "No," yelled two times, and slams the door as he leaves (259). If, as I will argue, "*la guarida*" represents an idealized alternative to the nation proper and to the public sphere in Castro's Cuba, it is clear that the David we encounter at the outset of the story is neither ready nor willing to be included as a member of this redefined insular space.

Whereas the previous scene established the concept of "*la guarida*," the next one points to the opposite notion of "*la guardia*." Upon leaving Diego's hideout or lair, David heads to the university in search of a fellow student, Bruno, whom he plans to ask "qué se hace, a quién se le informa cuando uno conoce a alguien que recibe libros

extranjeros, habla mal de la Revolución y es religioso" (260). Before he meets with Bruno, however, David engages in an inner dialogue with the three parts of his fragmented self—his "Espíritu," "Conciencia," and "Contraconciencia" (261). He interrogates himself in the third person: "David Álvarez, por qué, si era hombre, había ido a casa de un homosexual; si era revolucionario, había ido a casa de un contrarrevolucionario; y si era ateo, había ido a casa de un creyente" (260). He asks further: "¿Por qué delante de mí se podía ironizar con la Revolución (tu Revolución, David), y ensalzar el morbo y la podredumbre sin que yo saliera al paso? ¿No sentí el carnet en el bolsillo, o es que solamente lo llevaba en el bolsillo?" (260). David attempts to give an explanation or self-justification when he explains to Bruno that "los revolucionarios siempre teníamos *que estar alertas, con la guardia en alto*; y que por eso, *por estar alerta y con la guardia en alto*, había conocido a Diego, lo había acompañado a su casa y sabía de él lo que ahora sabía" (260, emphasis added). Bruno and another student named Ismael assign David a new role or task—to be on guard. Ismael outlines his new responsibilities: "Averigua con qué embajada tiene contactos, anota lo que pregunte sobre movimientos militares y ubicación de dirigentes, y nos volveremos a ver. Ahora tienes esa tarea, ahora eres un agente" (261, emphasis added). Although David as narrator already mentioned his embarrassment in acting as "Torvaldo" in his high school's theatrical production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* four years earlier and promised himself then that he would "pensarlo dos veces cuando volvieran a asignar[le] una tarea," he once again treats "el asunto como una tarea" and uses his "talento histriónico" in his newly assigned role as secret agent (254, 253). In these moments in the public sphere in general and the university setting in particular, David strongly contrasts with what "*la guarida*" represents, while he clearly symbolizes the threats that force Diego to hideout in private and to live an inner exile or "insilio."<sup>3</sup>

It is in this private space of “la guarida” that Diego tries to escape from the injustices that he suffers on account of his sexual and religious orientations, that is, of being, in his own words: “UNO maricón [. . .] DOS religioso [. . .] TRES [con] problemas con el sistema [. . .], CUATRO preso cuando lo de la UMAP y CINCO [con] vecinos [que le] vigilan” (255). I would like to outline the harsh treatment of homosexuals from the period immediately following the revolution through to the story’s setting in the late 1970s, so as to better understand Diego’s personal struggles, at least those related to numbers one, three, and four in the citation above.<sup>4</sup> After the revolution, homophobia increased in Cuba as many communists considered homosexuals to be a threat to military order and a “deviation” incompatible with revolutionary ideas. Given the ways in which post-revolutionary Cuba celebrated “machismo” and promoted Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s concept of the virile and militant “hombre nuevo,”<sup>5</sup> homosexuals were marginalized for not conforming to such masculine ideals, and many, especially those deemed effeminate, were detained and imprisoned without charge or trial. Between 1965 and 1968, many homosexuals were sent to government-run labor camps known as UMAPs or “Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción” (Military Units to Aid Production), which is exactly what Diego mentions in the fourth term on his list. The UMAPs were an alternative to military service that aimed to “rehabilitate” and “re-educate” those deemed “marginal” or “counterrevolutionary,” namely homosexuals, religious individuals, and anyone who disagreed with the ideals of the revolution. Anitra Nelson insists that the “notorious UMAPs” were “designed to resocialize gays by ridding them of their supposedly deviant homosexual behaviour” (105). In the 1970s, discriminatory measures toward gays increased and many homosexuals were thrown out of the Community Party. Tania Cepero López offers an excellent summary of the “fierce persecutions of homosexuals” in Cuba and the ways in which

homosexuals were seen as “the antithesis of the New Man, the man of the Revolution” (180). She notes that the First Congress of Revolution and Culture in 1971 “defined ‘homosexual deviations’ as a ‘social pathology’ that must be ‘rejected’ as a matter of ‘militant principle’” (180). She also cites legislation passed in 1979 that “authorized the arrest of people who had not done anything wrong, but exhibited ‘an eccentric appearance’ or ‘showed symptoms of being dangerous.’ These ‘precautionary laws’ were supposedly therapeutic and rehabilitative in nature, and allowed for the internment in ‘special labor facilities’ or ‘mental institutions’ for at least 1 and up to 4 years” (Cepero López 180). In spite of the socialist promise of an egalitarian society, there was neither sexual liberty nor social justice for gays and lesbians during the first two decades of Cuban socialism. In 1975, however, the Supreme Court overturned the laws that excluded homosexuals from jobs in educational and cultural sectors. In 1979, the year in which Senel Paz’s story is set, same-sex relationships were decriminalized. Nonetheless, during the well-known Mariel boatlift in 1980, many homosexuals were expelled from Cuba or given the ultimatum to leave the country or face incarceration as a way of “purifying” the socialist Cuban society.

“La guarida” is thus the space where Diego can be himself and escape the persecution or “la guardia” that is omnipresent in the public sphere. Although I have yet to encounter any literary studies that examine the particular tension between “guardia” and “guarida” in Paz’s “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo,” many critics have noted the importance of Diego’s apartment and the various ways in which “la guarida” functions as an alternative to the oppressive space of the Cuban nation proper. Francine A’ness insists that “la guarida” is “a symbolic space” and “a utopian space of synthesis” (89, 93); she terms “la guarida” “Diego’s alternative ‘nation’” and his “little, personalized Cuba” that “has been designed to be a place more accepting than the ‘hegemonic or Official Cuba’” (A’ness 90).

A'ness explains further that "la guarida" is "both home and the space of exile. Excluded, marginalized and misrepresented in his own country, Diego has constructed his own space within the nation proper" (90). Diony Durán (Rostock) asserts that as an interior space "la guarida" is "[una] zona privada," "una zona de resistencia periférica," "una zona construida como protección del 'exterior' agresivo, tal y como es concebida la ciudad/sociedad, pero a la vez es una copia o representación de parte de ella" (74). Laura Redruello deems "la guarida" the "espacio 'interior' de Diego" and "un microcosmos abierto culturalmente al resto del mundo" insofar as "[l]a guarida se convierte en una zona de resistencia cultural protegida del 'exterior' agresivo y represor" (125-26). Tania Cepero López calls "la guarida" "Diego's nation within the Cuban nation" (187). I agree completely with these interpretations of "la guarida" as an alternative national space of refuge and protection against an aggressive and oppressive public sphere.

"La guarida" is also the place where Diego hopes to gain an ally and a friend, even if his initial plans of finding a sexual partner in David fail.<sup>6</sup> Literary critics have also rightly noted that it is in "la guarida" that Diego and David share ideas and learn from one another. Laura Redruello sees "la guarida" as the place that functions as the "nueva escuela para David" (125). Diony Durán (Rostock) notes how "la guarida" serves as "una zona de debate" and "el escenario en el cual se confrontarán Diego y David" (74). Once again, I agree with such interpretations and aim to demonstrate that Diego's teachings and David's lessons in "la guarida" help redefine positively—albeit only temporarily—this interior space, so that the negative aspects of Diego's "insilio" are undermined or undone through his growing friendship with the symbolic other—David.

To establish this argument, it is helpful to outline some previous definitions of "insilio" as this will help determine Senel Paz's particular portrayal of Diego's inner exile. According to Paul Ilie, "[e]l exilio es un estado de ánimo cuyas emociones y valores responden

a la separación y ruptura como condiciones en sí mismas. Vivir aparte es adherirse a unos valores que están separados de los valores predominantes, aquél que percibe esta diferencia moral y que responde a ella emocionalmente vive en exilio" (8). The term "insilio," Ilie argues, carries almost the same definition, but involves an "exilio interior," that is, the act of "vivir aparte dentro del propio país" (8). Ilie's definition of "insilio" invites us to consider the ways in which Diego lives "apart" within Cuba as well as the ways in which he tries to be "a part" of the national space and project. Francine A'ness notes this interplay between the concepts of being "apart" or "a part" in her analysis of the filmic version of Paz's story, *Fresa y chocolate*: "Diego argues that the nation is incomplete without his participation. It must be understood that the underlying structure of the film operates around the ambiguity of the notion of being 'a part' of something (as in belonging), as opposed to being 'apart' (as in being separated or removed from). Diego wants to be 'a part' of the Revolution but the Revolution has kept him 'apart,' and removed him from this process" (92). Begoña Alberdi Ozollo asserts that "[u]n exilio puede ser político, religioso, territorial: interno o externo, temporal o definitivo, económico, cultural o como demos en adjetivarlo en cada circunstancia, pero primero y ante todo, es un estado de conciencia del que lo padece" (377-78). Borrowing Alberdi Ozollo's terms, then, we must examine Diego's "state of consciousness" and how the act of being "un insiliado en su propio país" affects his thoughts and his actions (378). María Rosa Olivera-Williams characterizes inner exile as "una realidad de miedo, de silencio, de inseguridad y censura" (80). Narratives of "insilio" are often replete with what Naín Nómez terms "el sentido de pérdida, de angustia ante lo impredecible, de atmósferas irrespirables [. . .] de vivir en una ciudad y un país cercados" (109, 116). Corinne Pubill explains that "[e]l insiliado se siente aislado de la sociedad y convive a diario con este sentimiento de miedo, sin poder luchar de manera activa ni tampoco poder dar voz

a lo que siente” (148). She also mentions “la falta de libertad” of the “insiliado,” who “está condenad[o] a vivir en estado de ostracismo, incomunicad[o] con el mundo exterior” and adds that “[e]l dolor emocional y su estado psíquico es difícil de medir puesto que no lo puede compartir. Está solo frente a su dolor y convive con su soledad. El silencio y la invisibilidad se convierten en sus únicas armas de sobrevivencia” (Pubill 148). In this regard, we must determine whether Diego is silenced, isolated, and ostracized as is generally the case with inner exile. I would argue that Diego is undoubtedly “insiliado en su propio país” as he hides out in “la guarida,” but he is also free to be himself and to express himself within the private space that he has constructed. If the conditions of “insilio” generally include censorship and self-censorship, silence and repression, insecurity and fear, isolation and separation, Diego’s form of inner exile changes with the addition of David. As an interpersonal space that the two frequently share, “la guarida” has the potential to function, at least temporarily, as a utopia or even as a “paradiso,” to reference Diego’s many allusions to José Lezama Lima’s novel, a space that defies the censorship and oppression that exist outside the apartment’s closed door.

With the pretext of his assigned duty, then, David returns frequently to Diego’s apartment, and the visits actually allow their friendship to grow. David admits: “fuimos haciéndonos amigos, habituándonos a pasar las tardes juntos,” while Diego tells David: “somos como hermanos” (264, 265). As David becomes more comfortable in Diego’s hideaway, he reflects: “Yo andaba descalzo por la guarida, me quitaba la camisa y abría el refrigerador a mi antojo, acto éste que en los provincianos y los tímidos expresa, mejor que ningún otro, que se ha llegado a un grado absoluto de confianza y relajamiento” (264). David also mentions “la intimidad del apartamento, cerrado a cal y canto” (265). The two are free to be themselves and to learn from one another in “la guarida,” and in this sense, their friendship turns Diego’s “insilio”

into a tolerable or even desirable situation. Nonetheless, they are unable or unwilling to be seen together in public, to exhibit themselves before others. Rather than showing David the architectural sights of Havana himself, Diego creates an itinerary using old maps and sends David alone to view the aesthetics of the city, only to discuss his impressions in private at a later time. Instead of enjoying the ballet together, they go separately and avoid any encounters. David explains: “En el teatro no nos saludábamos aunque coincidiéramos a la entrada o la salida,  *fingíamos no vernos*, y nunca su puesto quedaba cerca del mío. Para evitar encuentros, yo permanecía en la sala durante los entreactos, contando las vocales en los textos de los programas” (265, emphasis added). In the private and protected space of “la guarida,” they can be friends, even brothers, but outside in the public sphere they are forced to hide their friendship and to pretend that they do not see or know one another. A homosocial bond between the two men—one homosexual, the other heterosexual—is not something tolerated by Castro’s regime in the late 1970s, and David and Diego fear reprisal were they to exhibit their friendship in public.

This hiding out and keeping out of sight in the protection of their “hide out” nevertheless has to do in part with the fact that, despite the growing friendship between them, David had not fully given up his task of spying on Diego. During the famous “almuerzo lezamiano” that Diego prepares for his friend, David begins to feel guilty. “De repente empecé a sentirme mal,” he admits to himself:

porque mientras disfrutaba del almuerzo no pude evitar que algunas de mis neuronas permanecieran ajenas al convite, sin probar bocado y *con la guardia en alto*, razonando que las langostas, camarones, espárragos de Lubek y uvas, sólo las podía haber obtenido en las tiendas especiales para diplomáticos y por tanto constituían pruebas de sus relaciones con extranjeros, lo que *yo debía informar al compañero [ . . . ] en mi calidad de agente*. (267-68, emphasis added)

In a similar instance in which David sees Diego “subir a un carro diplomático,” he likewise reflects: “Dios mío, todo era cierto. Bruno llevaba razón, Ismael se equivocaba cuando decía que a esta gente había que analizarla caso por caso. No. *Siempre hay que estar alertas: los maricones son traidores por naturaleza, por pecado original*” (268, emphasis added). When David finally confronts Diego about his actions, he tells himself that he would even be willing to go directly to the police. David’s discriminatory thoughts about homosexuals mimic Castro’s own views on the incompatibility between communism and homosexuality. One possible way to understand these problematic moments in the story is to consider what David William Foster says about the film adaptation: “*Fresa y chocolate* implícitamente se burla de las actitudes de David y la retórica del lenguaje del filme trata de convencer a la audiencia de lo ridículo de su comportamiento” (988). Foster argues further that the film’s rhetorical strategies “cuestionan la supuesta heteronormatividad” and that Gutiérrez Alea “quiere encaminar a su audiencia hacia un espíritu público en el cual ser homosexual es naturalizado” (989, 988). I agree with Foster on all accounts—first the audience must be shocked and bothered by David’s discriminatory views on homosexuality and then David himself must change those views within the story so as to naturalize and accept homosexuality. In the above cited moments in the narrative, however, David still oscillates between being a loyal friend to Diego and a devoted guard or watchman for Bruno and the Communist Youth League. He is, on the one hand, captivated and changed by the open exchanges and eye-opening dialogues that occur in “la guarida,” but also, on the other hand, firmly committed to his societally-prescribed role as agent and to his personal sense of duty and indebtedness to the regime for taking “[un] hijo de campesinos paupérrimos” and “un guajirito de mierda” out of “[el] fango” so he could “estudiar” en “La Habana” (253, 260).

Ultimately, however, David rejects the role of agent and chooses friendship over duty, acceptance over watchfulness, and tolerance over vigilance. In his second encounter with Ismael, David explains: “Me confundí [. . .] ese muchacho [Diego] es buena persona, un pobre diablo, y no vale la pena seguir vigilándolo” (269). Even more significant is what he would have liked to have said to Ismael. “[N]o tenía aún confianza con Ismael como para agregar lo que me hubiera gustado,” David narrates: “Actúa como es, como piensa. Se mueve con una libertad interior que ya quisiera para mí, que soy militante” (269). It is in this moment that David gives up his role as guardsman and begins also to form a friendship with Ismael; he explains: “entendí que [Ismael] me liberaba de mi compromiso de agente y que comenzaba nuestra amistad” (269). I would argue that the exact moment when David chooses to stop being on guard occurs when he learns of Diego’s impending exile. David’s initial reaction is marked by shock and sadness: “*Me voy*, en el tono en que lo había dicho Diego, tiene entre nosotros una connotación terrible. Quiere decir que abandonas el país para siempre, que te borras de su memoria y lo borras de la tuya, y que, lo quieras o no, asumes la condición de traidor” (269). It is indeed significant that when Diego utters the phrase “*Me voy*” in this scene, it echoes back to the earlier scene in which David used the same two words to signal his leaving. Departing not the island nation, but the inner island that Diego’s apartment—“la guarida”—represents, David is initially unable to accept or understand this space of difference, this space filled with religious artifacts, foreign books, and homosexual innuendo. Nonetheless, the narrative goes on to establish a mutual coexistence and a budding and legitimate friendship in “la guarida,” which demonstrates that this imagined alternative space is not “insular” in the sense of being narrow-minded or culturally isolated, although it does resemble an island insofar as it is detached and separate. Thus



when Paz consciously reemploys the phrase “Me voy” to announce Diego’s impending exile, it calls into question the ability of “la guarida” to substitute for the nation proper. Communist Cuba can neither accept nor understand Diego even if David has proven himself to be capable of accepting and understanding his new friend. Their mutual tolerance had been closed off and “closeted,” hidden and kept secret in the private sphere. In this regard, I agree with Esther Gabara, who argues that although “Diego’s exile actually begins within the city” with his “exclusion from active and open participation in social, artistic, and economic public spaces of Cuba,” he is later forced into “an internal exile, a closeting in the *guarida*” (127). She argues further that both “David and Diego are closeted, not permitted the casual public encounter” (128). I disagree, however, with Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé’s contention that “con el personaje de Diego, el homosexual emerge de la ‘guarida’, se hace visible, es reintegrado a la nación” (59). Paz’s short story makes Diego visible only inasmuch as it “closets” him in “la guarida” and then forces him into exile, allowing him to speak through David’s narrative and memory and preventing his reintegration into the nation proper. The tolerance their friendship represents is unable to influence the public space of the nation, a nation that Diego—despite the love he has for it—must abandon if he wants to be true to himself and be free to be himself. “Te juré [. . .] que nunca me iría y me voy,” Diego further confesses to David (272). He breaks his earlier promise—“ellos piensan que no hay lugar para mí en este país, pero de eso, nada, yo nací aquí; soy, antes que todo, patriota y lezamiano, y de aquí no me voy ni aunque me peguen candelita por el culo”—precisely because of his inability to find a place, a “lugar,” in the public sphere, outside the walls and closed door of “la guarida” (255). Diego had hoped to prove that “[e]s totalmente errónea y ofensiva la creencia de que somos [los homosexuales] sobornables y traidores por naturaleza. No,

señor, somos tan patriotas y firmes como cualquiera. Entre una picha y la cubanía, la cubanía” (262-63). He had planned to fight “hasta que reconozcan nuestro lugar y nos acepten como aliados,” but he eventually deems such a battle futile and seeks “a place” and “allies” outside his native land (263). David understands Diego’s situation and knows that his friend’s “relación con la Revolución no ha sido como la nuestra. Es difícil estar con quien te pide que dejes de ser como eres para aceptarte” (269). Still, David questions his friend’s decision to leave the island, asking: “¿Qué ibas a hacer tú lejos de La Habana...? ¿Qué podías hacer en otra ciudad, Diego querido...?” (269-70). Diego’s reply is both accurate and telling: “Quiero hacer cosas, vivir, tener planes [. . .]. ¿No tengo derecho? [. . .] ¿Tú me comprendes? Aquí no me quieren, para qué darle más vueltas a la noria, y a mí me gusta ser como soy” (270-71). As a result of his staunch defense of his friend Germán’s art exhibit, Diego now has “[una] nota en el expediente,” which means he will not be able to find work except “en la agricultura o la construcción” (270). Unable to give up his love of the arts, his dedication to “la Cultura nacional” which he likens to a “sacerdocio,” and unwilling to stop being who and how he is, Diego decides that he must leave Cuba in spite of his love for his homeland (262). Outer exile is necessary to attain true freedom in the public sphere; inner exile in the “guarida” is simply not enough, even with David’s frequent visits.

I would like to pause here to underscore the fact that David and Diego do not necessarily experience the “guarida” in analogous ways.<sup>7</sup> While David experiences the space as both ideologically and psychically liberating, Diego cannot help but notice its confining and punitive dimensions. The “guarida” opens up new and significant intellectual, social, and interpersonal freedoms for David—the straight man who is enlightened and potentialized by the gay man; yet for Diego, “la guarida,” emblematic of the persecution he

faces, serves more as a prison than a refuge. The oppressed Diego becomes the narrative mechanism for David's personal growth and ideological liberation, but David's positive experience of "la guarida" occurs at the expense of Diego's negative experience of it as both confining and censoring.

It is noteworthy that as soon as David gives up his role as "guardsman," he wishes to extend their friendship beyond the confines of the hideout, beyond the symbolic walls and closed door of "la guarida." Wanting to break down not just the physical limitations, but so too the mental ones, David invites Diego to have lunch at "el Conejito" and admits: "Y si lo que yo quería, o necesitaba, era exhibirme con él, si eso me servía para ponerme en paz conmigo o algo, bueno, concedido" (273). Perhaps because David knows that he will soon be unable to see Diego anywhere, he is willing for others to see him with Diego somewhere, although he is also motivated by a guilty conscience on account of his "doblez," that is, for having been secretly "on guard" for so long (268).<sup>8</sup> If we recount the initial conversation between the two, in which Diego shows his "libros [y] ediciones extranjeras" to David, and then explains "voy a guardar[los . . . ya que] es un material demasiado explosivo para exhibirlo en público [. . .] Pero si te interesan, te los muestro . . . en otro lugar," we uncover a significant development in the story (251, 252). The pair does finally appear in public in their last reunion and no longer hide out in their "hideout." For a brief moment, the protagonists succeed in showing their friendship and mutual acceptance in the public sphere—breaking out of the spatial limitations of the "guarida" and psychological confines of "insilio." This is underscored even further in *Fresa y chocolate*, the cinematographic version of the story, in which, "[a]fter the disclosure of Diego's future exile condition, almost every scene takes place outside of *la guarida*. The friends move from private to public places" (Tania Cepero López 189). Nevertheless, while "la guarida" functioned temporarily as an alternative

island space that the two men shared, as a place where "[c]onversar es importante, dialogar mucho más," and as a location where Diego and David could come to understand one another, despite their differences, the end of the tale calls into question the possibility of such a utopia or paradise (259). As the outside world was coming in, they would soon "hacer el inventario" and register the contents of Diego's apartment, searching his home for proof that he was a traitor to Cuba (271).<sup>9</sup> Even if Diego's intuition with regard to David was right—"Creo que nos vamos a entender, aunque seamos diferentes"—the nation proper is not ready to understand or accept Diego's differences (259).

While Paz chooses to exile Diego and remove him from the national space, he also decides to give David a voice. David opens his narrative with the confession that he feels "aquella necesidad de conversar, de no estar solo" (250). Contrary to his first interaction with Diego, which involved repeated "[s]ilencio de [su] parte," David desperately misses his dear friend, whom he refers to "con afecto" as "un maricón amigo [. . . suyo], porque a él [a Diego] no le gustaría que lo dijera de otra manera" (250). Just as Diego "est[aba] dispuesto a razonar, a cambiar de opinión," so too does David change his views and open his mind as a result of his relationship with Diego, which we see throughout his first-person retrospective narration (259). David explains: "en alguna medida, yo era otro, había cambiado en el curso de nuestra amistad, era más el yo que siempre había querido ser" (273). The most significant change in David is that which is suggested by Diego in one of their last face-to-face conversations: "Debes ser más decidido. No te corresponde el papel de espectador, sino el de actor. Te aseguro que esta vez te desempeñarás mejor que en *Casa de muñecas*" (273). No longer a spectator or a passive observer of his fragmented self, David will act rather than watch. Moreover, instead of using his histrionic talents as an "actor por encargo" in the role of "Torvaldo" or as a secret agent acting according to Bruno's script,

David will “act” by taking action (254).<sup>10</sup> David initially had “un concepto demasiado alto de la hombría como para meter[se] a actor,” but he ends up changing his understanding of both “manhood” and “acting,” when he makes the following promise: “que al próximo Diego que se atravesara en mi camino lo defendería a capa y espada, aunque nadie me comprendiera, y que no iba a sentir más lejos de mi Espíritu y de mi Conciencia por eso, sino al contrario, porque si entendía bien las cosas, eso era luchar por un mundo mejor” (253, 274-75). Now eager to fight for a better world, David aims to construct “una nueva nación, tolerante, capaz de incluir a todos los cubanos, incluso si éstos ‘pecan’ por ser intelectuales lezámianos y homosexuales” (Casamayor-Cisneros 130).

In this moment, David comes closest to “el hombre nuevo” that Diego, and perhaps also Senel Paz, desire, although it is certainly not the one envisioned by Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara or Castro’s regime. Diego had hoped that David would embody an alternative version of the “new man.” David as narrator explains in an earlier moment that:

[r]ealmente le sorprendía [a Diego] y le dolía equivocarse conmigo. Yo era su última carta, el último que le quedaba por probar antes de decidir que todo era una mierda y que Dios se había equivocado y Carlos Marx mucho más, que *eso del hombre nuevo*, en quien él depositaba tantas esperanzas, no era más que poesía, una burla, propaganda socialista, porque si había algún *hombre nuevo* en La Habana no podía ser uno de esos forzudos y bellísimos de los Comandos Especiales, sino alguien como yo, capaz de hacer el ridículo, y él se lo tenía que topar un día y llevarlo a la guarida, brindarle té y conversar. (258-59, emphasis added)

David is indisputably a “new man” on account of his personal changes, which is what Diego tells his friend in the days before his own exile: “No dejes de ser

revolucionario. [. . .] La Revolución necesita de gente como tú, porque los yanquis no, pero la gastronomía, la burocracia, el tipo de propaganda que ustedes hacen y la soberbia, pueden acabar con esto, y sólo la gente como tú puede contribuir a evitarlo” (273-74). Ultimately, Diego’s influence on David, followed by David’s friendship with Ismael, allow David to become more active than passive and to be an instrument for positive change and growing tolerance in Cuba. By writing this “cuento” or “capítulo” about Diego, which is how David refers to his narrative, he becomes more like Ismael, someone who “[no] se limitaba a señalarte las cosas, [sino . . .] te exigía que, si no te gustaban, comenzaras a actuar allí mismo, para cambiarlas” (269, 275, 269). The symbolic gesture which closes David’s “story” or “chapter” on Diego is a significant one. David narrates: “Y quise cerrar el capítulo agradeciendo a Diego, de algún modo, todo lo que había hecho por mí, y lo hice viniendo [a] Coppelia y pidiendo un helado como éste. Porque había chocolate, pero pedí fresa” (275). He is able to change his perspective and adopt a different point of view. Diego has had to leave Cuba to be himself, but Senel Paz keeps David in Havana, where he might become an “agent” and “actor” for social change, which is markedly different than his earlier “tarea” as “agente” or informant.

In many ways, Senel Paz’s story suggests a subtle response to Fidel Castro’s well-known 1961 comments:

dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada. Contra la Revolución nada, porque la Revolución tiene también sus derechos; y el primer derecho de la Revolución es el derecho a existir. Y frente al derecho de la Revolución de ser y de existir, nadie— por cuanto la Revolución comprende los intereses del pueblo, por cuanto la Revolución significa los intereses de la nación entera— nadie puede alegar con razón un derecho contra ella. Creo que esto es bien claro.

¿Cuáles son los derechos de los escritores y de los artistas, revolucionarios o no revolucionarios? Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, ningún derecho.

Senel Paz offers a critique from the inside, a critique that is stronger and more poignant in light of Diego's necessary departure to the outside. Paz thus juxtaposes not only the concepts of "guardia" and "guarida" and of "insilio" and "exilio," but so too the notions of "dentro" and "fuera." In contrast to Castro's concern with the right of the Revolution to be and to exist, Paz demonstrates a concern with the right of Diego—as homosexual, religious believer, artist, intellectual, etc.—to be and to exist, which proves impossible "inside" the national space that is depicted and thus leads Paz to suggest a reformulation of Castro's arguments along the lines of: *dentro de Cuba, todo; contra los cubanos, nada. Contra los cubanos nada, porque los cubanos tienen sus derechos; y el primer derecho es el derecho a existir. Y frente al derecho de los cubanos de ser y de existir, nadie puede alegar con razón un derecho contra ellos.* Indeed, when Diego tells David—"Yo sé que la Revolución tiene cosas buenas, pero a mí me han pasado otras muy malas, y además, sobre algunas tengo ideas propias"—Paz tells his readers the importance of tolerating "ideas propias" within Cuba and within the Revolution (259). This would be the key to allowing Diego and others like him to remain in Cuba, to be and to exist as themselves, to be neither "guarded" nor "on guard," and to face neither inner nor outer exile.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>I would like to note from the outset that my focus in this article is almost solely on Paz's short story, rather than the more popular film adaptation *Fresa y chocolate*, for the following reasons: (1) the lexical word play between "guardia" and "guarida" is not as explicit in the film; (2) many of the short story's harshest political critiques were weakened or eliminated in the filmic version; (3)

the narratological point of view shifts entirely from the autodiegetic and retrospective narration of David in Paz's tale to a heterodiegetic and nearly omniscient narration in the cinematographic adaptation. For more on these narratological differences in particular, see Aleksandra Jablonska's "Las perspectivas de los narradores en 'El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo' de Senel Paz y su adaptación filmica." Jablonska rightly argues that "el cambio de la identidad y perspectiva del narrador en la adaptación filmica del cuento 'El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo' de Senel Paz (1991) produce un cambio importante en el discurso sobre la otredad y el compromiso con la revolución cubana, temas centrales en ambos textos" (123). In the film, Jablonska explains further, "[n]o queda nada de la autocrítica, de las dudas, del conflicto de valores del David del cuento de Senel Paz. Lo que allá se planteaba con tremenda ironía, aquí se pronuncia con total seriedad" (128).

<sup>2</sup>According to Emilio Bejel, "[a]lthough neither the scriptwriter nor the directors of *Strawberry and Chocolate* may have known it, *guarida*, the word meaning "den" or "hideout" that Diego uses to refer to his apartment, has an interesting rhetorical connection to Havana's homosexual subculture of the late nineteenth century. In 1888, Dr. Benjamin Céspedes published in Cuba a work entitled *La prostitución en La Habana*, a chapter of which concerned what he called 'masculine prostitution.' According to Dr. Céspedes, "guarida" was then already used by homosexuals to denote a place where they lived or gathered" (77).

<sup>3</sup>It is interesting to note Laura Redruello's argument that "[l]a universidad se contrapone a La Guarida" insofar as "la universidad aparece atrapada en ciertos referentes oficialistas y dogmáticos" (125). Francine A'Ness makes a similar point when she suggests that "the space that David occupies, the university, metonymically evokes the official space and is meant to be read as Cuba's post-revolutionary nation-state" (89).

<sup>4</sup>On a side note, as regards number two in Diego's list—"soy religioso"—it is interesting that he initially describes himself this way, before confessing a lack of faith in the end:

"[s]i fuera buen católico y creyera en otra vida no me importaba, pero el materialismo de ustedes se contagia, son demasiados años. La vida es ésta, no hay otra." (255, 270)

Still, Paz's decision even to mention Diego as religious invites his readers to consider Cuba's history of religious persecution. After the revolution, Cuba declared itself atheist and put in place various restrictions on religious freedoms such as the nationalization of private schools that had previously been run by the Catholic church, the suspension of all religious programming on TV and radio, the prohibition of religious processions or public demonstrations of faith. As a result, there was a voluntary exodus of many religious leaders from the island, while those who stayed were often imprisoned or sent to the UMAPs if they did not hide their faith. Being religious was enough to prevent someone from being a member of the Communist Party, from attending the best schools or studying certain disciplines in college. It was not until 1976 that the Constitution established a separation of Church and State and designated the nation as secular. In 1991, the Communist Party began admitting religious individuals into its ranks, and in 1992, it amended the Constitution to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs.

<sup>5</sup> In his 1965 essay "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba," Ernesto "Che" Guevara first introduces the concept of the New Man. "Para construir el comunismo," Guevara contends, "simultáneamente con la base material hay que hacer al hombre nuevo." This "hombre nuevo" must gain "cada día más conciencia de la necesidad de su incorporación a la sociedad;" he must embody "la auténtica voz del pueblo" and "tomar esa tarea entre las manos y buscar el logro del objetivo principal: educar al pueblo." The New Man is "el que debemos crear" as "[e]l hombre del siglo XXI." Guevara also insists that "la juventud" is "la arcilla maleable con que se puede construir al hombre nuevo."

<sup>6</sup> In an interview with Senel Paz about the film *Fresa y chocolate*, Emilio Bejel asks about the decision not to sexualize the relationship between David and Diego. According to Bejel, Paz suggested that:

"if David had been a closeted homosexual (i.e., if Diego had managed to draw David out of a repressed homosexuality), the film would have been weakened because the intention was to portray a heterosexual character who had the capacity to understand a homosexual and his situation in Cuban society." (70)

Bejel adds that:

"another consideration was how far a film produced and released in Cuba could go at that time, that is, without meeting rejection not only from officialdom (as I interpret what Senel said on the matter) but from the Cuban public in general." (70)

<sup>7</sup> I wish to thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this essay for pointing out this "further layer of complexity" in the term "guarida," which has "different valences" for the two main characters. This paragraph is the direct result of this reviewer's suggestions for revision.

<sup>8</sup> I find it troublesome that David remains silent about his own "doblez" and never confesses to Diego anything about his role as agent and informant (268). Diego tells David about his bet with Germán and the lies that he allowed to spread among his friends. "Nada fue casual," he admits, "[y]o andaba con Germán, y cuando te vimos, apostamos a que te traería a la guarida y te metería en la cama" (274). Diego goes on to say: "¿Ya ves?, no soy tan bueno como crees. ¿Hubieras sido tú capaz de una cosa así, a mis espaldas?" (274). Surprisingly, David does not confess what he has done behind Diego's back. When Diego states, "No sé si un día me podrás perdonar, David," David admits: "Lo mismo pensaba yo" (267). Similarly, when Diego asks "¿Me perdonas?," David reacts as follows: "Yo guardé silencio" (274). Nonetheless, David does tell Diego: "Nuestra amistad ha sido correcta, sí, y yo te aprecio," as indeed the friendship between them is significant and symbolic (272-73).

<sup>9</sup> This intrusion of outside forces into the inner sphere is more poignant in the film *Fresa y chocolate*, given that the character Miguel, whose role is similar to that of Bruno's in the narrative, literally and physically invades Diego's apartment and all that "la guarida" represented until that moment. Francine A'ness rightly notes how Miguel:

"invades Diego's space. The outside world comes rushing in and destroys the dreams Diego and David had created. Diego has to finally admit he is leaving the country, forced into absolute exile by the rigidity of the system. Disappointed, David takes back his flag and the images of Che and Fidel which had formed such an integral

part of the utopian vision within the guarida. The collage is dismantled, the walls are left bare, and Diego's belongings are packed up or given away." (94)

<sup>10</sup>Laura Redruello correctly notes that:

"[e]s a David, el revolucionario heterosexual, a quien se le otorgan las cualidades necesarias para llevar a cabo la transformación; el único con posibilidad de actuar como agente de cambio. David, se convierte de nuevo en 'actor', que ha dejado el escenario de 'Casa de muñecas' para asumir un reto mucho más serio, el de integrarse al escenario de la Revolución." (127)

Redruello points out further that:

"Senel otorga sólo la posibilidad de actuación al sujeto heterosexual, fiel a la 'norma' y capaz de proponer los cambios por los caminos 'adecuados.'" (127)

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