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Jesús Eguía Armenteros  
*Marbella International University Center*

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## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CHARACTER IN THE THEATRE OF ANGÉLICA LIDDELL: THE NUBILA WAHLHEIM PARADIGM

Jesús Eguía Armenteros

Marbella International University Center

### Abstract:

In this article I will analyze the *negation* of the fictional character for the *Artistic Poetics* of *Theatre inside Theatre* in Angélica Liddell's work *Monólogo necesario para la extinción de Nubila Wahlheim y Extinción* in order to explain her artistic strategy.

**Key Words:** Metatheatre. Sublimation. Dithyramb.

### 1. THE TDT OF THE CREATOR'S POETICS IN LIDDELL

Two years after writing *Monólogo necesario para la extinción de Nubila Wahlheim y Extinción* (2003a) (henceforth *MNPLEDNWYE*), the work which brought the playwright her first critical acclaim and recognition, Angélica Liddell indicated Samuel Beckett's influence on her work. In the article *Un minuto dura tres campos de exterminio: la desaparición del espacio y del tiempo* (2005a), Liddell explains how Beckett informed her position on the *negation* of the fictional character. Even if Liddell is referring to

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*Waiting for Godot* (1952), it is *The Unnamable* (1953) in which Beckett most clearly exposes what would become a new literary *paradigm*: the elimination of the character in order to explore the limits of the *individual ego's* consciousness. As Salman Rushdie maintains,

To remember not only what happened, the long confused emotion, but also what has not happened, the thing of which no human being has a living memory, because the think itself is memory's end is to assert life's primacy over death, for memory is the tool by which the living know and forget and understand and misunderstand themselves, so what tool could be better to wield, like a weapon, against death, knowing it will be inadequate, knowing the inexorability, knowing and not giving in, or not yet, no quite yet, not before a few more words have been spoken, not until memory has spoken, as the artist, Beckett as much as Nabokov, requires and commands. (Rushdie en Beckett, 2006: xii)

Beckett introduces this break with the fictional character metaliterarily:

All these Murphys, Molloyes and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing, speak of them when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and of me alone. (Beckett, 2006: V. II, 297)

Liddell adopts this expression for the first time in *MNPLEDNWYE*, thus rendering this break with the *fictional character* the piece's *motive*:

A partir de ahora ausencia total de personajes, lo asquerosamente confesional, solamente. (Liddell, 2003a: 94)  
*LA PASIÓN ANOTADA DE NUBILA WAHLHEIM* no permite el desarrollo psicológico de los personajes. Su expresividad es plana y directa, sin ambigüedad (*Ibid.* 57).

Similarly, in the playwright's talk, *Llaga de nueve agujeros* (2002a), she explains her *ars poetica*:

The servitude of being human that we speak of with regard to other men. A few poor humiliated beings that speak of other poor humiliated beings. Essentially we are talking about a single humiliation—that feeling of a wad of spit, a sad redundancy, like a relapse, an insurmountable mistake, a chronic complaint that originates in the word. A man who repeats in other humiliated men. I went up a current of shit to the temples. But I continue to write; I continue to talk about men, humiliated. I support, I support the afflictions of the word. (*Ibid.* 133).

Although she refers to the *transindividuality* of the *individual* in this paragraph, later she suppresses the *character* as a symbol of the public in order to have it complement her *artistic strategy* of abolishing the private.

And is it the case that contemporary tragedy consists of revealing the author's own intimacy, narrated by the author himself? I don't know. According to Conrad the essence of literature is the fall toward one's self. I don't know. Perhaps in contemporary tragedy one has to move from the character's decency to the indecency of intimacy. Characters are always sociable, the imagination is always sociable. And, increasingly, I want to appear as an example of human misery; I want my

project to be my own living catastrophe. I want the descent toward ones self to be absolutely explicit. Perhaps we don't present works but rather residue of ourselves. Everything is debris. Of course, all the while supporting the affliction of words. (Liddell, 2002a: 135)

This suggests the inheritance of the inter-war period's *strategies of the elite* that Arendt analyzed:

Since the bourgeoisie claimed to be the guardian of Western traditions and confounded all moral issues by parading publicly virtues which it not only did not possess in private and business life, but actually held in contempt, it seemed revolutionary to admit cruelty, disregard of human values, and general amorality, because this at least destroyed the duplicity upon which the existing society seemed to rest. What a temptation to flaunt extreme attitudes in the hypocritical twilight of double moral standards, to wear publicly the mask of cruelty if everybody was patently inconsiderate and pretended to be gentle, to parade wickedness in a world, not of wickedness, but of meanness! The intellectual elite of the twenties who knew little of the earlier connections between mob and bourgeoisie was certain that the old game of *épater le bourgeois* could be played to perfection if one started to shock society with an ironically exaggerated picture of its own behavior. (Arendt, 1958: 334)

Two years later, Liddell defined her position as «una reafirmación feroz del individuo, que desembocará en la desaparición del personaje a favor de la voz del propio autor» (2005a: 69). As Arendt indicates, this *negation* occurs in the history of theater under two tendencies with very distinct conceptions of the *ideological*:

Since Balzac revealed the private lives of the public figures of French society and since Ibsen's dramatization of the "Pillars of Society" had conquered the Continental theater, the issue of double morality was one of the main topics for tragedies, comedies, and novels. Double morality as practiced by the bourgeoisie became the outstanding sign of that *esprit de sérieux*, which is always pompous and never sincere. This division between private and public or social life had nothing to do with the justified separation between the personal and public spheres, but was rather the psychological reflection of the nineteenth-century struggle between bourgeois and citizen, between the man who judged and used all public institutions by the yardstick of his private interests and the responsible citizen who was concerned with public affairs as the affairs of all. (Arendt, 1958: 336)

In analyzing Liddell's work, the pertinent question is: from which trend does she create her work. Does she function from within the *moral* debate of the *responsibility* of the *citizen*? Or does she work within the *historical avant-garde's* break with the private sphere? In her own words, and similar to the *avant-garde*, the playwright invites the recipient to take on a perspective of devastation in order to *persuade* him to move to apocalyptic solutions:

Para defenderse de tales masacres la obra tiende a concentrarse en el individuo, se vuelve ferozmente individualista para vislumbrar alguna verdad sobre el hombre, entonces el autor se quita la máscara del tiempo y el espacio ficticios y se presenta desabrigado ante una audiencia que demanda a su vez una confesión única, un punto de vista singular, una vivencia. La sociedad ha perdido la confianza en la ficción para hacernos comprender el mundo y sus dos grandes

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diferencias, la diferencia entre el bien y el mal, y la diferencia entre lo útil y lo inútil. (Liddell, 2005a: 69).

By concentrating exclusively on the creator's *individual ego*, this apocalyptic vision justifies the violent *misology* that explicitly defines *MNPLEDNWYE*:

La experiencia individual de los personajes no se relaciona con la evolución del mundo, no, *LA PASIÓN ANOTADA DE NUBILA WAHLHEIM* queda enclaustrada, enquistada, aniquilada por un mundo personal y paroxístico, *LA PASIÓN ANOTADA DE NUBILA WAHLHEIM* se ahoga en sí misma, se acaba con ella, se destruye. (Liddell, 2003a: 23).

*MNPLEDNWYE* was the first work in which Liddell used what Gray has called the *TDT of the poetics of the creator* and since then, this has defined Liddell's *artistic strategy paradigm*:

El TDT DE LA POÉTICA DEL CREADOR que normalmente se refiere a los principios o reglas explícitas o no del teatro, es una forma que se desarrolla debido al desdoblamiento estructural generado por el desarrollo de la autoconsciencia o autorreflexibilidad del creador (términos que pueden utilizarse como similares dado que se contienen el uno al otro) a través de estrategias tales como compartir desvelos y sufrimientos del proceso de su creación, o bien por medio de la participación indirecta de éste en el drama, en boca del personaje, que sustituye el rol del creador, que suele utilizar su alegato para convencer a críticos, autores, seguidores y artistas.

[...] Es decir, la forma del TDT que se produce con el TDT DE LA POÉTICA DEL CREADOR, se convierte en un espacio y tiempo en el que el creador (Dramaturgo, Director, Actor, etc.), muestra un alto nivel de consciencia de su propia teatralidad y de sus propios recursos como resultado de su interés por el teatro como objeto de sí mismo, en el que nos muestra los hilos y los resortes del cerebro creador, en el que éste se complace en mostrar las costuras de su propio traje.

Así como ya hemos visto el TDT a diferencia del Metateatro necesita la materialización, la representación de este (des) doblamiento estructural en el que el TDT consiste. (Gray, 2011: 60-1)

## 2. THE ANGÉLICA CHARACTER

If her goal with *MNPLEDNWYE* was to isolate herself in her personal world, the interviews with Liddell (Eguía, 2008a y b) conducted between 2001 and 2002 (the years that the work was created) indicate otherwise. Liddell never appeared to have manifested a psychological disorder so serious that she had to detach herself from her social life. Even if it is possible that she concealed such a disorder, and in spite of her explicit and clearly affirmed intentions, one cannot help but interpret the work as a *deformity* of the *individual ego*:

Estos dos monólogos [refiriéndose a éste y a *Lesiones incompatibles con la vida*] tratan de la biología y la biografía de la Mujer Angélica, no del Personaje Angélica, por mucho que la palabra, tal como le inquietaba a Maeterlink y a Musil sea incapaz de expresar la verdad. Si hiciéramos

caso, la Mujer Angélica de los monólogos sería una ficción, no se sabe si por incompleta o por deforme. (Liddell, 2005a: 74).

The First part of piece (pp. 19-101) lacks any stage directions indicating the characters' names. Although this is understood to be Liddell's explication/justification of all that is beyond her alter ego's, (i.e. ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO) diary:

Me he propuesto muchas veces como ejercicio trabajar sin personaje, a no ser que haya desplazado toda la fuerza inicial hacia el yo. Eso ha pasado en otras obras, como en *Nubila Wahlheim*, en la que el yo se convierte en el monstruo, *Angélica Monstruo*. (Cornago, 2005: 320).

Conversely, in the Second Part of the piece (pp. 103-22), as a poeticized mask is placed over the "Angélica Woman", Nubila becomes more prominent. She calls herself ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO, thus taking up another type of *TDT* (the *simultaneity of opposites*) already used by Liddell in her series *Haemorroísa* (Liddell, 2001b), and described by Gray as:

un proceso estético que implica dos efectos contrarios y simultáneos:

–El doblamiento estructural.

–El desdoblamiento estructural.

[...] con el fin de generar efectos de (des)figuración, que en la misma medida que esconden/revelan, impactan/emocionan, transforman/estructuran, hasta el despejo total de cada una de las máscaras [...] Esa doblez crea un diálogo interdependiente entre el objeto que ocultaba, y lo que se oculta (sujeto), que interactúa entre la realidad y la ficción produciendo efectos de tensión entre fuerzas contrarias propias del TDT de la SIMULTANEIDAD DE LOS CONTRARIOS, que a la vez que (des)personalizan, (des)enmascaran, (des)estructuran y (des)doblan. (Gray, 2011: 59).

In the First Part, ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO submits herself to an act of martyrdom in a closed space for five hours. This creates a *ceremony* (Berenguer, 1977: 327-28) in which she exposes her intimacy before the public/reader, presented a priori as an *aggressor*: the persecutor of the sacrificial lamb. This has a corrosive function as much for ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO as for the recipient. Furthermore, the outdated medications only serve to augment the imminent dramatic tension. According to the "Epilogue of the Medication" (p. 17), given the apocalyptic diagnosis of both the *society* and the *human being* present throughout the piece, these medications inundate the stage and create suicidal tendencies. During this tour, the *environment* is drawn «como si la única verdad que une a todos los seres fuera el sufrimiento de la condición humana» (Garnier, 2012: 218) with «a strict, unvarying regularity which either, in fact, holds in nature» and «It does not describe a fact, but lays down directions for our behavior» (Popper, 2013: 56) and what Popper identifies as *naive naturalism*, which assumes a Natural Law: «whether natural or

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conventional, [they] are felt to be beyond the possibility of any alteration whatsoever» (*Ibid.* 58). Or as Angélica herself would define it:

no existe orden social que solucione aquellas cosas que pertenecen estrictamente a la naturaleza humana, la envidia, la mezquindad, la corrupción moral, la mediocridad. Ante la inmundicia de los deseos humanos se tambalea cualquier tipo de orden social. (Liddell, 2007: 231).

From this *perspective* of devastation, which has been called an *apocalyptic axiom* (Eguia, 2013), ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO confronts the *environment* as a *radical antagonist* of her *ego* and of «lo bueno, lo bello, lo importante y lo eterno» (Liddell, 2003a: 82), equating it dialectically to the *ideal* since both are presented as *ideas* in opposition to the *environment* organized by a «roña». It is precisely this *idealism* that leads her expound an *ideology* which encompasses the totality of the human being, from the artistic to the metaphysic (without ignoring the socio-political), and which aspires to attain the status of the *platonic doctor* (Plato, *Statesman*, 293a). As a result, her works are the «solución para el dolor de toda esa gente», the solution for everyone's pain, artistic works with which human beings «no tuvieran más cosas que pedir, más deseos que realizar». This should be understood without losing sight of the fact that Liddell's theater is created and functions while continuing to completely identify with the playwright's *individual ego*, and therefore suggests the *success of the ego as ego*. Thus she affirms «Sueño que fabrico un hombre con palabras» with the ability to annihilate the *environment*, making it «gritar de dolor y gemir y hundirse las uñas en el pecho» and basically leave it «sin capacidad para reflexionar». That is, with all of its *rational* criticism neutralized, «esta fábrica de hombres [...] que desata los terrores, que paraliza la reflexión» (Liddell, 2003a: 89). The *irrationalism* is presented as a “solution” for the problematic sociopolitics and psychology of the human being.

However, in spite of her “messianic” aspirations (Liddell, 2003a: 73), Liddell attacks herself and her own work, (re)presenting herself as the *absolute antithesis* of the beautiful, of so-called *medicine*. In reality, this conflict works dialectically in order to equalize the opposing forces, thus creating a *strategy* of (self)*sublimation*. The fierce self-criticism actually intensifies the importance of her martyrdom and drives her to *heroism*, in opposition to the rest of the *environment* in which «ningún hombre es lo suficientemente honesto para avergonzarse de sí mismo» (*Ibid.* 56). The *Sage* appears in

opposition to it, suffering, as she affirms in her next work, because, «Estoy consumida por la verdad» (Liddell, 2003b: 9). Finally, as Popper argues about Plato, «Even his self-deprecating remarks are not based upon awareness of his limitations, but are rather an ironical way of asserting his superiority» (Popper, 2013: 124). Therefore, her *ego* remains *idealized* like a martyr *hero* or leader of Truth confronted with «la roña que es incapaz de reconocer lo bueno, lo bello, lo importante y lo eterno» (Liddell, 2003a: 63). This is the argument that *persuades* the *recipient* to accept the *apocalyptic axiom* that justifies Liddell's vital proposal. When she affirms, "I hate society", she does it from human being's negative *consciousness* that is exposed (and imposed) like a Natural Law, that is to say, it is *deterministic*. The repetition of the proclamations such as «ES LAMENTABLE PARA LOS CERDOS PARECERSE TANTO A LOS HOMBRES», strengthens the ideological *idealism* and renders the resulting praise into a sort of prescribed *elite*.

She stands with the *hero* who is ashamed for having not yet achieved "the pigs'" absolute isolation: «Me avergüenzo cuando pienso que todavía no he roto el contacto» (Liddell, 2003a: 56). If, as Popper suggests, her self-criticism becomes extreme with the suicidal repetitions, the exaltation of suicide still remains completely consistent with the platonic maxim that if the *Canvas* (the *environment*) is an aberration that should be completely erased (Plato, *Republic*: 500d-501a): «the Wise themselves, as much as they are incapable of separating themselves from the *Canvas*, would have to destroy themselves» (Popper, 2013: 1156). However, as Liddell already explained in *Lesiones incompatibles con la vida*, this serves to create the perfect strategic flaw in the *hero's* suicide:

Alguien debe quedar en mitad de los hombres haciéndose preguntas, alguien debe quedar en mitad de la esperanza haciéndose preguntas. Alguien debe quedar como un idiota. Alguien debe quedar como excremento, alguien debe fracasar definitivamente» (Liddell, 2003b: 5).

This is confirmed in interviews the playwright gave about her own person: «Poca gente se percata de la injusticia. Alguien tendrá que estar con el dedo señalándola» (Fernández, *M2, El Mundo*, 23/04/2004). If we pay attention to her *mediations*, this *suicide* is both foreseeable and consistent with the Kierkegaard's *idealist* influence present in all of Liddell's work. As the Dane proclaims:



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Only I do not deny that he who is educated by possibility is exposed—not to the danger of bad company and dissoluteness of various sorts, as are those who are educated by the finite, but—to one danger of downfall, and that is self-slaughter. If at the beginning of his education he misunderstands the anguish of dread, so that it does not lead him to faith but away from faith, then he is lost. (Kierkegaard, 1957: 142)

This *dialectic* self-criticism is fundamental to Liddell's *sublimation strategy*: the character is *negated* in the interest of the *ego*, thus enabling her, like a public martyr, to consent to her own *negation* so as to mythify her *individual ego*.

This mythification is supported by the *gnosis* of Truth that contains both the *hero* and what the piece identifies as 'nothing' (*Ibid.* 81), taken from Liddell's other *idealist mediations*: the philosophy of Heidegger. This philosophy views *total negation* as a vehicle for reaching the *absolute*, and from there it requires *Hegelian dialectic*: «The nothing itself does not attract; it is essentially repelling. But this repulsion is itself as such a parting gesture toward beings that are submerging as a whole.» (Heidegger, 1998: 90).

Liddell used the same methods in her antithetical proposals, whether by means of «la contradicción entre su elevada misión y su incapacidad para llevarla a cabo» (Liddell, 2003a: 38), her criminal tendencies and her rigid defense of the “poor” (*Ibid.* 8), or her creative desires and «ansia de mudez» (Liddell, 2002a: 137), a total isolation (Liddell, 2003a: 66). According to Cornago, in this final collision of opposing forces,

reside su fuerza teatral, en su capacidad de dar verdad a ese acto paradójico, «inverosímil o absurdo», en su capacidad de afirmarse sobre la negación de lo aparente. Desde esa imposibilidad, desde ese deseo alimentado por una voluntad de muerte, de no querer ser, se presenta esta escritura, escritura dramática por el mismo hecho de tener que ser escritura, escritura para los otros.» (Cornago in Liddell, 2011a: 140)

However, although the Heideggerian *Nothing* is a *metaphysics*, it also entails a sociopolitical *ideology*. Attaining a *total negation* demands that one directly confront the *environment*: «Unyielding antagonism and stinging rebuke have a more abysmal source than the measured negation of thought. Galling failure and merciless prohibition require some deeper answer. Bitter privation is more burdensome.» (Heidegger, 1998: 92). That is, it demands that one lean toward death, a «daring breath» that contradicts the «jittery» (*Ibid.* 93) *people* who are, once again in history, faulted for being incapable of understanding the good and the beautiful and for degenerating into «the comfortable enjoyment of tranquilized bustle» (*Ibid.*) which modern democracy's *welfare state* offers:

But this implies that the original anxiety in existence is usually repressed. Anxiety is there. It is only sleeping. Its breath quivers perpetually through Dasein, only slightly in those who are jittery, imperceptibly in the "Oh, yes" and the "Oh, no" of men of affairs; but most readily in the reserved, and most assuredly in those who are basically daring. But those daring ones are sustained by that on which they expend themselves - in order thus to preserve a final greatness in existence. (*Ibid.*)

Liddell unifies Plato and Heidegger in the defense that «all great things are risky» (Plato, *Republic*, 497d), and in Heidegger's translation of Plato, characteristic of Nazi Germany, «Alles Grosse steht in Sturm»: "All of the Great stands in the storm" (Heidegger, 2009: 19). This defense of the daring is what Popper called the *gangster philosophy* (Popper, 2006: 294). Liddell herself reexamined this tendency in one of her theoretical expositions:

En tiempos de «paz bélica», así lo denomina Heidegger (porque según Heidegger la guerra surge para garantizar la paz), donde la muerte es una cifra, un amasijo de miembros amputados, hacemos resistencia con el YO, con lo único, con nuestro deseo totalmente individual de matar aquello que más amamos, nuestro hijo único, Isaac, nuestro cuerpo, nuestro pensamiento, es decir, hacemos resistencia con el arte, con lo INCOMPREENSIBLE, somos el Abraham particular que transgrede las leyes generales de los hombres. (Liddell, 2008: 25)

Arendt describes this attitude as *negative solidarity*, which he takes from the era that the present resembles more and more each day: the *historical avant-garde* of the 20s:

The fall of protecting class walls transformed the slumbering majorities behind all parties into one great unorganized, structureless mass of furious individuals who had nothing in common except their vague apprehension that the hopes of party members were doomed, that, consequently, the most respected, articulate and representative members of the community were fools and that all the powers that be were not so much evil as they were equally stupid and fraudulent. It was of no great consequence for the birth of this new terrifying negative solidarity that the unemployed worker hated the status quo and the powers that be in the form of the Social Democratic Party, the expropriated small property owner in the form of a centrist or rightist party, and former members of the middle and upper classes in the form of the traditional extreme right. The number of this mass of generally dissatisfied and desperate men increased rapidly in Germany and Austria after the first World War, when inflation and unemployment added to the disrupting consequences of military defeat; they existed in great proportion in all the succession states, and they have supported the extreme movements in France and Italy since the second World War. (Arendt, 1958: 315)

All of these *mediations* drive ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO to claim «Quiero morirme sola, sin dejar nada atrás. Es mi manera de unirme a los que fueron exterminados, a los que sufrieron sin límite» (Liddell, 2003a: 69). As Heidegger proposes, «The anxiety of those who are daring cannot be opposed to joy or even to the comfortable enjoyment of tranquilized bustle. It stands outside all such opposition - in secret alliance with the cheerfulness and gentleness of creative longing» (Heidegger, 1998: 93). Liddell tries to remove the citizen from this "jittery" situation and move him toward anguish

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(*anfagtaelse*), which, for Heidegger, can only come about from a *radically daring* human (dis)organization (*Ibid.* 93). In the playwright's words, «Tenemos que recuperar la capacidad inmoral del mito como beligerancia contra el brutal adocenamiento de esta sociedad» (Javier Montero, 2008: 68) or «Con mi creación quiero prender fuego al mundo con una astilla» (Agencia Europa Press. 06/11/2007). These are some of the gems of wisdom that confirm the creator's intentions. As Liddell recalls, for this *anfagtaelse* it is necessary to «dejar la ética en suspenso» (Javier Montero, 2008: 68):

Now the story of Abraham contains such a teleological suspension of the ethical. There have not been lacking clever pates and profound investigators who have found analogies to it. Their wisdom is derived from the pretty proposition that at bottom everything is the same. If one will look a little more closely, I have not much doubt that in the whole world one will not find a single analogy (except a later instance which proves nothing), if it stands fast that Abraham is the representative of faith, and that faith is normally expressed in him whose life is not merely the most paradoxical that can be thought but so paradoxical that it cannot be thought at all. He acts by virtue of the absurd, for it is precisely absurd that he as the particular is higher than the universal. This paradox cannot be mediated; for as soon as he begins to do this he has to admit that he was in temptation (*Anfechtung*), and if such was the case, he never gets to the point of sacrificing Isaac, or, if he has sacrificed Isaac, he must turn back repentantly to the universal. By virtue of the absurd he gets Isaac again. Abraham is therefore at no instant a tragic hero but something quite different, either a murderer or a believer. The middle term which saves the tragic hero, Abraham has not. Hence it is that I can understand the tragic hero but cannot understand Abraham, though in a certain crazy sense I admire him more than all other men. (Kierkegaard, 2005: 41)

Even Kierkegaard already considered the implications of a *knight of faith* from a *rationalist* perspective and by actively applying 'the ethical': an assassin, a believer/prophet or both, such as Abraham. According to Liddell in *MNPLEDNWYE* and the rest of her work, Kierkegaard's *mediation* clarifies the significance of the assassins and madmen: *Knights of faith*.

The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is clearly evident. The tragic hero still remains within the ethical. He lets one expression of the ethical find its *telos* in a higher expression of the ethical; the ethical relation between father and son, or daughter and father, he reduces to a sentiment that which has its dialectic in its relation to the idea of morality. Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical itself.

With Abraham the situation was different. By his act he overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher *telos* outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former. (*Ibid.* 43)

However, if Kierkegaard's *leap of faith* from the *ethical state* to the *spiritual state* requires "the suspension of the ethical" (understood to be a discipline that requires its relation with the general), such an action has implications:

Kierkegaardian violence begins when existence is forced to abandon the ethical stage in order to embark on the religious stage, the domain of belief. But belief no longer sought external

justification. Even internally, it combined communication and isolation, and hence violence and passion. That is the origin of the relegation of ethical phenomena to secondary status and the contempt of the ethical foundation of being which has led, through Nietzsche, to the amorality of recent philosophies. (Levinas, 1998: 31)

In his analysis of the *gangster philosophy* Popper's definition of the *tribal conception of the Heroic Man* is comparable to the Liddellian *leader* (madmen-prophet-assassin):

The tribal ideal of the Heroic Man, especially in its fascist form [...] It is a direct attack upon those things which make heroism admirable to most of us—such things as the furthering of civilization. For it is an attack on the idea of civil life itself; this is denounced as shallow and materialistic, because of the idea of security that it cherishes. *Live dangerously!* is its imperative; the cause for which you undertake to follow this imperative is of secondary importance; (Popper, 2013: 284).

Popper's synthesis of Heidegger can also be compared to the tendencies of Liddell's earlier fictional characters, characters who ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO adopts and then later casts into Liddell's future theatre:

Fear; the fear of nothingness; the anguish of death; these are the basic categories of Heidegger's Philosophy of Existence; of a life whose true meaning it is 'to be cast down into existence, directed towards death'. Human existence is to be interpreted as a 'Thunderstorm of Steel'; the 'determined existence' of a man is 'to be a self, passionately free to die... in full self-consciousness and anguish' (*Ibid.* 286)

Without intending to provide a prophetic analysis, it is still necessary to emphasize the link between this type of philosophy and the advent of 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianisms. Perhaps one could conclude of Liddell that which Adorno concluded of Kierkegaard: «He never would have dreamed that he would contribute to providing the totalitarian era's considerable darkness and deception with good intellectual consciousness. His thought was suggested like a thought that virtually faulted thought.» (Adorno, 2006: 221).

ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO attains her *anagnórisis* by submitting herself to a complete defeat during the four and a half hours running time, even if the *misology* proclaimed throughout the piece might indicate the opposite. As she recognizes her verbosity about the search for the *ineffable*, «Lo increíble acaba siendo una burda combinación de palabras» (Liddell, 2003a: 101), she admits that her objective was not the search for Truth, but rather «satisfacer los deseos de toda esa gente» in order to achieve the *success of her ego insofar as the ego*. The premise of living in isolation, to thereby reach the

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*ideal*, is speculative. It is a *strategy* of *negation* that seeks to reach the previous goal of self-sublimation.

ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO's *agnorisis*—and therefore the recipient's—becomes circular because she must repeat former arguments to maintain the *sublimation* of Liddell's *ego*. Thus she claims, «LA PASIÓN NO DESCANSA» (*Ibid.* 101). In reality, the *arc* is a circumference and her intention to commit suicide, or to be destroyed by the environment, so as to reach an imaginary *gnosis* is fruitless. In spite of this she does not modify her objectives. Following the *gangster philosophy*, for the Angélica Character and her *strategy* of self-sublimation, the *martyr* is a cause in and of itself.

### 3. THE NEGATION OF TIME AND SPACE

In addition to eliminating the fictional character through the *TDT of the creator's poetics*, *imaginary and hypothetical space/time* are eliminated for the sake of the *real*, where Liddell's confession evolves. In her evolution, this jump entails the final and definitive move toward her *paradigm*. If there is a primary structure in *theater within theatre* which «constituida por el primer nivel al que denominaremos ficción o circuito externo [...] La segunda estructura estará constituida por el segundo nivel de metaficción o circuito interno» (Gray, 2011: 53). In Liddell's dramatic works subsequent to *MNPLEDNWY*, the *internal circuit* works within the *metafictional* relationship between the creator's *ego* and the public. This moves the *external circuit* to Nubila's plotline, the character (alter-ego) assassinated in the Second Part.

Two years after writing *MNPLEDNWYE*, Liddell theorized literary *space/time*. For her, «Si partimos de la segunda mitad del s. XX, hay que partir indudablemente de la destrucción, de la aniquilación masiva» (Liddell, 2005a: 67) through which the «La definición del sufrimiento ocupa la definición del espacio y el tiempo [...] dando lugar a fórmulas aberrantes y nihilistas». Consequently, it is there that we find the end of *fiction* and the acceptance of *misology* and *amorality* as a diagnostic of existence:

La destrucción provoca que busquemos la máxima identidad como hombres únicos y no como un cuerpo más entre todos los cuerpos. [...] La sociedad ha perdido la confianza en la ficción, ha dejado de creer en la capacidad de la ficción para hacernos comprender el mundo y sus dos

grandes diferencias, la diferencia entre el bien y el mal, la diferencia entre lo útil y lo inútil. El tiempo y el espacio pertenecen a esa ficción que nos conduce a la incredulidad. (*Ibid.* 69). [...] Nada sucede fuera de uno mismo ni tiene duración, es un sentimiento largo, sin exterior y sin posible medición [...] La desaparición de los conceptos dramáticos tradicionales constituye por tanto la herencia de las masacres y el síntoma de un mundo apoyado en la apariencia y la mentira. (*Ibid.* 74)

In summary, «Ya no es preciso el espacio y el tiempo para que las obras nos sigan inspirando, tal y como canonizaba Aristóteles, temor y compasión.» (*Ibid.* 68). In Liddell, this is substituted by «el dolor íntimo del hombre» (Liddell, 2002b,) to the extent that it identifies with the author's own pain. That is, *solidarity* functions to the extent that the Other sublimates his own *individual ego*, in accordance with *TDT* which offers «una base formal para la expresión de la autoconsciencia del YO creador» (Gray, 2011: 51).

In terms of the work's intertextuality, Liddell explicitly indicates Beckett's influence (Liddell 2005a: 70-74). Samuel Becket reflected on the romantic experience in his first narrative work in French (dated to 1945), and through his omniscient narrator, confirmed that:

I didn't understand women at that period. I still don't for that matter. Nor men either. Nor animals either. What I understand best, which is not saying much, are my pains. [...] But even them, my pains, I understand ill. That must come from my not being all pain and nothing else. (Beckett 2006: V. IV, 235)

Even though Becket is able to eliminate all *mediation* of the *environment* in *The Unnamable*, *real space-time* in Liddell continues to adhere its particular *private* and *social environment*.

Lorenzo Zamorano connects Liddell's break with fiction with the "patriarchal bias" (Lorenzo Zamorano, 2005: 461). That is, the woman vindicates herself in order develop her *individual ego*:

Esta dramaturga propone y practica la disolución de la propia categoría espacio-temporal, la cual no es sino símbolo del poder –entiéndase patriarcal–. Este radical planteamiento lo percibimos positivamente de cara a la realización identitaria. (Lorenzo Zamorano, 2005: 461)

This vindication has been explained as the *Frankenstein syndrome* (Eguía, 2013): the ego's (in this case the Liddell's) obsession with the creator/mother-father as a vindication tool that originates in the early mother-child interaction and whose *genesis* is found in an *early trauma*. Goldberg also indicates that this is one of the possible causes of *executive*

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*dysfunction*, which causes one to apply the *apolalyptic axiom* following an anecdotal experience. Moreover it brings about the *pseudo-psychopathic* behavior (Goldberg, 2008: 192) that Liddell's protagonists lack. As ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO confirms: «Mi comportamiento es similar al del monstruo. Si no me aman haré todo lo posible para que sientan miedo. Soy la hija del doctor Frankenstein.» (2003b: 90). Therefore, this break with the “patriarchic bias” sums up the goal of Liddell's artistic work: that *the success of her ego* agree with the *TDT of the artistic creator's poetics*.

With regard to the *formal structure* of the piece, one can see that the *dramatic movement* also operates in the same direction. In the First Part this is manifest in the accumulation of aggressive materials against the recipient so as to overwhelm his sensibilities. Given that the work lacks a plotline, this occurs without operating as an *effect* of the *dramatic cause*. Therefore, there is no *dramatic progression* since the *formal and argumental structure* is repetitive and circular. In fact, this intensifies the receiver's *aggression*. The *climax* is reached with the *agnorisis* of the success/failure (p. 101), however, not on account of *dramatic progression*, but rather through the exhausting textual accumulation and the excessive use of *real time/space*.

In the Second Part the *dramatic movement* is based on both the progressive interpretations of the newspaper and HOMBRE 1 y 2's process of *affiliation* with the *ideological* supremacy of NUBILA/ANGÉLICA's marginal project. The *dramatic progression* is organized within this process of *affiliation* until the *climactic* suicide and *heideggerian nothingness* are attained.

In conclusion, this piece formalizes the *space-time paradigm* that Liddell has followed since the end of the nineties: the exclusive use of *real space-time* wherein its saturation is rendered a wound of *aggression*. It awards the public (the representation of the *environment*) the role of the *antagonist* and places the *internal circuit* of the theatrical incident within the *metafiction*.

#### 4. THE CONTEMPORARY DITHYRAMB

In her effort to strip theater of traditional elements such as characters, Liddell undertakes a process opposite to the «evolutions that both perfected the dramatic forms that occurred on the Attic grounds and created the prerequisites for European drama» (Lesky, 1969: 250). At the end of *Un minuto dura tres campos de exterminio...* Liddell reveal her method:

Dos de mis últimos textos pertenecen a la fauna cadavérica que se desprende de este discurso y de las obras de Beckett y Müller. Se trata de dos monólogos, *Monólogo para la extinción de Nubila Wahlheim* y *Extinción* (2002) y *Lesiones incompatibles con la vida* (2003). Más próximos a una era pre-dramática, pre-Aristotélica, es decir, equiparados con el poema épico, son textos en los cuales la palabra es entendida como acción pura, como único soporte expresivo, sin dependencia alguna de tiempo o lugar. (2005a: 74)

With that she indicates how to approach a study of these pieces, representative of her *paradigm*: «a pre-dramatic, pre-aristolian era» prior to the inclusion of dialogue that was, a reflection of Sophocles and Pericles' Athenian democracy.

On the other hand, even if she categorizes her new theater as “epic” in the aforementioned article, given her intention to expand her *individual ego* to global dimensions (which would be the *motive* for all of her following works), they are actually characteristically *lyrical*. Her words express «the author's sentiments and set out to provoke feelings in the listener or the reader» (RAE) that are similar to her own *individual ego*. Therefore, in *MNPLEDNWYE* «la supresión de las dimensiones espacio temporales tiene que ver con una vocación realista cuya cúspide es el acto confesional» (Liddell, 2005a: 74). Thus we have the total emphasis of the *individual ego*.

For this, (and in spite of the work's apparent “innovative” quality) *MNPLEDNWYE* becomes analogous to the Pre-aristotelian Dithyramb in both its *argumental* and *explicative structures*.

and now I think I can make plain to you what I was unable to before, that there is one kind of poetry and tale-telling which works wholly through imitation, as you remarked, tragedy and comedy; and another which employs the recital of the poet himself, best exemplified, I presume, in the dithyramb. (Plato, *Republic*: 394b-c)

While *tragedy* and *comedy* are “imitative” and thus play on fiction, in rejecting an imitative stance, Liddell creates a dramatic approach that tends toward autobiography—specifically the *irrationality* of autobiography. The *dithyramb* is a ritual song that honors



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Dionysus, and is marked by violent, sexual and scatological Dionysian themes. In the Second Part, Liddell introduces the *agon* (also dithyrambic) on the stage itself:

One could also translate the Greek word as “harmonizers” if one understands them to be, in relation to the singers who start the song, who introduce it and who confront the chorus who then responds. In this role, we have to imagine Arquiloco, who brags about knowing how to harmonize with Dionysus’ beautiful song when the wine oversomes his senses. (Lesky, 1969: 251).

When ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO takes on the role of the Harmonizer, the HOMBRE 1 and 2 do the same when they assume the role of the chorus’s harmonizer (the chorus to which the protagonist responds). This dramatizes «the confrontation of those who harmonize and the chorus» (Lesky, 1969: 250). In ancient Greece this signified a fundamental step toward *tragedy* (Lesky, 1969:216). However, in Liddell the opposite occurs and there is a relapse that looks back to the state prior to *tragedy*. It is this that defines *El Matrimonio Palavrakis* (Liddell, 2004). Like the lyric genre, the *dithyramb* discusses the praise of the *hero* and its link to the *poet*:

En primer lugar, hay un eje fundamental que condiciona la selección de motivos del poema: que une al *vencedor* y al propio *poeta*. Es obvio que una tarea primaria del último es alabar al vencedor. Por ello, con mayor o menor relieve, encontraremos el elogio de la victoria, a veces con una descripción de cómo se produjo la misma (no olvidemos que se está dando a conocer el acontecimiento a los ciudadanos); el elogio de la persona del triunfador, en el que se pone de relieve la actualización en tal hazaña de las cualidades innatas del mismo. (Suárez de la Torre, 1988: 221).

As it has already been noted, the self-criticism that *MNPLEDNWYE*’s *argumental structure* develops actually employs the exaltation of the *protagonist* (the author) as a vehicle for *sublimation*. This makes her *heroic* biography known “to the citizens” through the *dialectic* of «her own destruction to secure her continuity» (García Montero, 1987: 72). On the other hand, the *winner-poet* duality is unified through ANGÉLICA MONSTRUO and NUBILA/ANGÉLICA’S (*hero* and *author*) confessional game. The «praise of the triumphant person» and the relief of its own «innate qualities» (*genetic*) become the *author-heroine*’s *praise of the ego as ego*. Angélica Liddell places herself on the *winner*’s level. In this *dithyramb* (with the gods of *lumpen* instead of Olympus), *hero* and *author* remain connected, thus turning her *individual ego* into a “guide”:

Otro elemento a considerar es la *sentencia*. El poeta como «maestro de verdad» y depositario de la sabiduría de la comunidad, que sabe transmitir de modo persuasivo y convincente, se erige en su guía. La poesía sapiencial no falta en numerosas culturas. Es frecuente que con, o sin nombre propio, diversos *corpora* poéticos recojan y transmitan normas de conducta para un conjunto social.

En el caso de Grecia su manifestación es muy diversa, pero sin duda ha arraigado como elemento constitutivo de las tradiciones poéticas. (Suárez de la Torre, 1988: 222)

In line with the *dithyramb*'s function, LIDDELL/NUBILA proclaims herself as a "master of Truth" or the kierkegaardian *witness of Truth* who hopes to turn into the «repository of the community's wisdom». In conclusion, her *artistic strategy* becomes a way to «peruasively and convincingly transmit» a point of view of reality, which in this case is synthesized in the *apocolyptic axiom* and a Natural Law that defines man as an irremediable criminal, so that they are accepted as «True» for the social group. Therefore, as Suárez de la Torre indicates, Liddell's need to *sublimate* herself makes her a *myth* nonexempt from functionality:

El mito no es una digresión con finalidad simplemente estética. Su valor *funcional* es evidente (lo que no se opone a una consideración estética paralela). El mito configura estructuras de comunicación básicas en la sociedad griega. Acumula valores culturales, configura (y es configurado por) la mentalidad de esa comunidad; y, sobre todo, hace tangibles modelos (personales, de conducta, etc.) de esa sociedad. (Suárez de la Torre, 1988: 221)

In the quest for creating an *artistic strategy* that would provide her with the *success as I*, reducing the staging elements as far as a *dithyramb* is consistent. Far from delineating an invalidated personal experience, by electing (or unconsciously recreating) this *genre* she responds to *motives* that are common to the *dithyramb* in predemocratic Greece: the direct confrontation with the Attic dramatic forms, the increased number of characters as in Sophocles and Euripides, the expansion of the *open society* (Popper, 2006). Its difference is the same as that which mediated Sparta's *closed society* and Pericles' democratic project. In Liddell, the *dithyramb* renders her *mythic*, thereby reproducing the tribal rites of the *closed society* that reduce the Stage Arts to the *sublimation* of a *hero* who structures the community's mentality around his selfish *ideology*. The *drama* disappears because there is no internal *agon*. Hence, theater becomes a discourse, propaganda.

In the wake of the *dithyramb* as an *irrationalist* (and therefore Dionysian) genre, as Prieto Cané asserts, one can find a link between Helade and Liddell and Nietzsche's *Dionysian Dithyrambs*,

la exaltación refluye a veces en actitudes soñadoras, y el tema del fracaso (Prieto Cané, 1994: 4) [...] comprendiendo un pensamiento inquisitivo, angustiado, absorbido por las polaridades del ideal y la realidad, el dolor y la felicidad, aspirando a una felicidad ideal de la que depende poder

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penetrar con su entendimiento la razón de ser de la existencia, su misterio que describe como pavoroso, y la muerte.

[...] Su pensamiento, acuciado por un ideal de visión perfecta de la verdad oculta avanza en su expresión a saltos, con bruscas sacudidas, convulsiones, desmayos y arrobamientos: pensamiento fraccionado, disuelto por la pasión de pensar en rugidos, en carcajadas sarcásticas, en violentas imprecaciones, en un lirismo rumoroso, en los que palpita la visión de una dicha ansiada. (6) [...] identificando al instinto de muerte con la ciencia y la identidad individual. (pp. 5-6)

In Nietzsche's final lines, one can observe a summary of the *motives* and *strategies* of *MNPLEDNWYE*. Here there is a similitude that can be considered plagiarism, but if it is simple evidence that the *idealist* currents always fall in the same topics in the defense of the *close society*:

You would like to give, give away your superabundance,  
But you yourself are the superfluous one!  
Be clever, you rich one!  
*First give away yourself*, oh Zarathustra!

For ten years now —  
And no drop has reached you?  
No humid wind? no dew of love?  
But who *ought* to love thee as well,  
You over-rich-one?  
Your happiness creates nothing but aridity,  
Makes a dearth of love —  
A *rainless* land ...

But you thank everyone  
Who takes from you:  
Hence,  
Over-rich-one,  
I see you as the *poorest* of all the rich ones!

You sacrifice yourself, your wealth *torments* you,  
You give away yourself,  
You don't take care of yourself, you don't love yourself;  
Great agony always compels you,  
The agony of an *overflowing* barn, an *overabundant* heart;  
But no one thanks you any longer ...

You must become *poorer*,  
Unwise wise one!  
If you wish to be loved.  
One loves only the suffering man,  
One gives love only to the hungry man:  
*First give away yourself*, oh Zarathustra!

—I am your truth ... (Nietzsche, 2010: 313-315)

The *dithyramb* is open to all of this: *Excess* and individual dedication as ways of attaining *gnosis*, the *negation* of the *environment* and the *idealism* of the *absolute* concentrated on the success of the *ego* as *ego* (which would become the *ubermenche* for Nietzsche).

In conclusion, the use of this genre and the rest of the *idealist* mechanisms formalized in *MNPLEDNWYE*, which operate as Angelica Liddell's *artistic paradigm*, are not due to intentions to create an archeology of theater or to improve society through an *exemplification of the negative*. Rather an *ideological* necessity drives Liddell to develop an *artistic strategy* that might bring her success as an artist within an *environment* that continues to change (*open society*) and to which she is unable to respond adequately. In this way she works to acquire a *vital perspective*, except through the complete reduction of her own *ego* to the *transindividuality* of her specific problematic so as to vindicate her life and artistic work.

(Translated by: Emily Warden).

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