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*Karen Peña Benavente*

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## **Art Echo: María Zambrano and the *Kouroi* Relief**

Karen Peña Benavente

### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of early Greek thought in the work of María Zambrano, a Spanish critic and philosopher who lived most of her life in exile (1939-1984). Zambrano incorporates Greek concepts into her writing as a means to question conventional Philosophy, not as an aim or *télos*, but as an uncomfortable dwelling that paradoxically leads into suspension and doubt. Key concepts and artistic figures emerge in her seemingly illogical reasoning (*razón poética*) such as those arising from her work on the Greek *Kouroi*. Zambrano refuses fixity in Philosophy, where logic and method can be rigorously apprehended. She gracefully takes another turn: by elucidating ancient wisdom through allusive metaphors and ancient ruins, she resists direct pathways into History and Truth. Her style takes after her thinking and can often meander into the realms of enigma, mysticism, and other unconventional forms of thought such as intuition and dreams.

In 1948, the then relatively unknown Spanish philosopher María Zambrano (1904-1991) posed a bold, but important question: “Ha existido en verdad Filosofía en España?” (“El problema” 3).<sup>1</sup> Directed primarily at the prominent investigations of Menéndez y Pelayo and Ortega y Gasset, who had both given detailed answers in their published work, the question paradoxically neither seeks to affirm nor negate a response: “Y tal pregunta produce una perplejidad de la que no podemos salir por una simple negación apresurada, ni tampoco vencer por una afirmación inspirada por el entusiasmo.” Zambrano’s query, like most of her philosophical thinking, does not demand a clear answer. Her *razón poética* refuses to elicit one.<sup>2</sup> Instead, she dwells in the perplexity of abstract yet familiar concepts such as ‘Love,’ ‘Light,’ ‘Smile,’ and ‘Heart’ originating in archaic Greek thought.<sup>3</sup> From the shadows of

these concepts (such as Love) there is an affective recognition or perception of understanding (what she later calls ‘a [visual] clearing’), a gleam into the cornerstone of Philosophy: “Si acudimos a los orígenes de la Filosofía en Grecia bien pronto encontramos que es el amor, lo que reside en su fondo primero y en su meta última” (“El problema” 3). Zambrano embraces an intuitive interpretation of *aletheia*, a long remembered truth, in a move against the systematic philosophy of *logos*.<sup>4</sup> If Spanish philosophy exists, it can only be found amidst the mysteries of pre-Socratic wisdom, where sacred secrets of ancient reasoning lie.

Archaic secrets, which cannot surface easily, resist direct philosophical logic. Instead, María Zambrano turns to early Greek thought as a means to displace [*desviar*] prescriptive knowledge with another pathway, that is, with a radical interpretation of *sophrosyne*, arcanelly defined as ‘supreme temperance’ or ‘ultimate self-knowledge.’<sup>5</sup> “Quién soy yo?Cuál es mi realidad verdadera de persona viviente? La Filosofía comenzó en Grecia cuando frente a la aceptación de la realidad de las cosas surgió la pregunta sobre el ser verdadero escondido en ellas” (“La liberación” 109). To explain Zambrano is to move toward a particularised metaphorical language of oneiric ‘dark matter’ [*logos oscuro*] of lost Greek gods and occult knowledge that ultimately cannot be firmly grasped at [*drassomai*] but deeply and intuitively felt. Zambrano chooses an abstract and poetic language to grant her mobility to point to (but never define) that no-place, as she so describes the unknown within, the recess of her soul [*ínferos*]; metaphors in flux guide us to what remains of an (dis)embodied aesthetics of existence in the mysteries of art, beauty, drama, and poetry.<sup>6</sup> In attempting to sidestep the question of (Spanish) philosophy, Zambrano turns to an archaic interpretation of *sophrosyne*, the one feared precisely by Plato for its ambiguous relation to the errors and illusions of *mania*: “es una meditación figurada, dramática, en la que el error, las ilusiones de nuestra mente y los engaños del mundo se van descubriendo como en un teatro, el ‘gran teatro del mundo,’ con gran sencillez” (*Obras* 304).<sup>7</sup> When the Oracle of Delphi greets those who enter her temple with aporiatic injunctions, ‘Know thyself!’ and ‘Everything in moderation!’, she riddles the meaning of self-knowledge with bafflement and doubt. For how can we know our world and ourselves without giving in to all forms of knowledge, not just reason and restraint but passion, anguish, affectivity, and perplexity?

Zambrano interprets archaic wisdom as a form of radical concealment [*ocultación radical*]<sup>8</sup>—or what she alludes to as ‘Enigma’ or ‘Smile’—that tenuously reveals as it also suspends the location of incipient (sacred) knowledge once tragically sacrificed but lying in wait amongst discarded ruins and humble art forms (*El hombre* 31, 32).<sup>8</sup> Unlike philosophy, these semi-hidden places of knowledge (of painting, of poetry, of sculpture) persist without a *télos* or clear beginning. They comprise an aesthetic tradition independent from historical interruption or rationalist thought. For María Zambrano, the very lack of a cohesive system opens up a realm of possibility for discovering ‘Intellect’ or ‘Nous.’ One needs to accept other entryways of knowledge, not usually associated with philosophy, such as intuition, admiration, bewilderment, inner resistance, or ‘epiphany’ (Johnson, “Literary” 185-87).<sup>9</sup> Zambrano shifts the solid ground of methodical reasoning towards a precarious mystical or pagan territory. Truth (or the Light) is not what matters most, but dwelling in and garnering feelings for the shadows behind objects. To discover the correct route to *sophrosyne* is to be guided by the contemplative act of projective transcendence.<sup>10</sup> By meditating on ‘ambiguities’ [*ambigüedades*] or by allowing feelings of ‘perplexity’ [*perplejidad*] to arise, we can learn to perceive and react to an ancient poetics forcibly denied to us and gifted only to the gods.<sup>11</sup>

To recall some thoughts from one of her mentors, Xavier Zubiri, the locus of knowledge may lie in ‘Enigma,’ an act not easily named or found, but always pointing to a form of reality: “Enigma es ante todo un modo de significar lo real, pero no declarando lo que es sino tan sólo indicándolo significativamente, como lo hace un oráculo. Así dice Heráclito que el oráculo de Delfos ni dice ni oculta nada, sino que solamente lo significa. Este modo de manifestar la realidad es lo que se llama *ainigma*, enigma” (97). Zambrano actively searches for the Enigma of knowledge, whether it be in a poem by Dulce María Loynaz or in the music of Andrés Segovia, by contemplating ancient Greek sources to help guide her through this cryptic knowledge. She engages with Plato, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Seneca and Sophocles, among many others.<sup>12</sup> She reaches even farther back when she metaphorically seems to dig through the rubble, as an anthropologist-philosopher, gathering cultural wisdom from old Greek ruins, and—particularly important to this study—from those sculptures or parts of masks, ancient corporal artefacts

serving as divine precursors for understanding later art and (Spanish) poetic forms. Zambrano notes in her mature work that it is particularly the Greek *Kouroi*, the adolescent ancient statues, with their intriguing smile that serve as mediums [*mediadores*] between ancient secrets and modern ones. They can be thought of as material representations of Enigma. How not to avoid their performative slight grin, pointing intrinsically (and affectively) to ambiguities of secrets not yet divulged?<sup>13</sup> The smile is repeated, as in a mirror, to recall Horace—we smile back—and yet we still do not know when gazing at the spectacle or statue what precisely is being withheld:

La escultura que encontró su momento de equilibrio en el arte arcaico griego, en la sonrisa—de los *Kouroi* de la aurora de Grecia—sonrisa que no es solar, que, por el contrario, es como todas las sonrisas señaladas, del reino de la aurora. Así la misma sonrisa, que llaman ambigua, de la Gioconda, y, sobre todo, la de los ángeles románicos de ciertas catedrales, tal la de aquel ángel de Reims o del que, en Chartres, ofrece el tan matemático cuadrante solar, como una gracia, como ofrenda, no como imposición, mas sí como un conocimiento. (“Del reino” 111)

The smile may hint at other things beyond what remains in art and old relics. La Gioconda smiles but we do not know why. She lures us into a myriad of speculations. She may be smiling in response to our own fear of death or that simply she is Da Vinci’s lover. We can only guess at her mysterious gift [*ofrenda*] of auroral knowledge. Zambrano depicts her as a direct descendant of the *Kouroi* or cherubim, whose graceful image and mystery repeats within her, as they equally resound within literature, painting, sculpture. We need only to recall Beatrice’s last smile in the *La divina commedia* or the shopkeeper who ends Fernando Pessoa’s most famous poem, “Tabacaria,” with a smile.<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, a philosopher deeply admired by Zambrano, equally disrupts meaning in his *Beyond Good and Evil* when the Dionysian god replies to Zarathustra’s inquiry into moral reasoning with a “Halcyon smile” (295).<sup>15</sup>

Smiles resist us—with their closed alluring line—and in so doing, they wilfully deny access to the knowledge withheld. This act serves as peaceful revenge. María Zambrano complicates the smile by alluding to it as a silent trap; the moment we are captivated (she has an enchanting smile), she shuts us out.<sup>16</sup> Her vengeance, similar to that of the dormant god lying in wait amidst the shadows since Parmenides, is not to let meaning—in this case words—easily escape. Only in active contemplation [*contemplación activa*] <sup>17</sup> of *sophrosyne*, without solid reasoning or

logical ground, does the sacred dust stir, “donde nace la sonrisa. Y hay el encanto, y hasta el sentir halagada una zona de nuestro ser que apenas vive y hay la sonrisa de *vendetta* lograda. Hay siempre venganza en la sonrisa, una venganza sutil. Y cuando es una multitud la que sonríe, será, debe de ser, porque se siente vengada en forma pacífica, armoniosa, de algo que soporta, que ha de soportar difícilmente” (*Islas* 170, 171).

Zambrano’s observations on the defiant gesture of the smile remind us of lyrics written much earlier by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado on the events leading to the capture of Madrid in 1936. Machado, who was a poet close to Zambrano’s heart,<sup>18</sup> emblemises the stoic gesture of the Spanish people with their ‘Madrid Smile,’ when the city and its citizens fall tragically to flames [“tú sonríes con plomo en las entrañas”].<sup>19</sup> In his verses and in his essays, Machado pays homage to Spanish poets and artists (in the poem, Federico García Lorca and Emiliano Barral) who, in refusing to yield, ironically enact their bequeathed tragedy:

Madrid tenía ya—quién puede dudarlo?—una breve y gloriosa tradición salpicada de sangre y de heroísmo, su breve historia trágica, que Don Francisco de Goya anotó para siempre. Pero el pueblo madrileño, que no lo ignoraba, nunca se jactó de ella... Pero la sonrisa madrileña, levemente cínica, marcadamente irónica, es ya una sonrisa *a pesar de todo*, porque en Madrid es la vida más dura que en el resto de España. (*Antología* 287, 288)

The Spaniards’ implicit suffering forges more than a common bond with the dramatic impulses of the ‘blood and ‘heroism’ of their past; it drives a passive resistance in the form of an internal strong humour that cannot be defeated by ideological confrontation. Machado does not dismiss the ferocity of the conflict but proposes a firm stance in believing that history will, in time, bring some form of justice. The *madrileños* resist by smiling slightly, implicitly imparting a silent revenge.

The smile serves as precursor to the laugh. It is a momentous pause before action is taken. The smile enshrouds mystery and veils a truth we cannot know directly, at least not yet. Christ responds with a smile to Pontius Pilate’s question, ‘What is Truth?’, and Zambrano takes note of this, just as she recognizes that the smile comes from a silent inner resistance, since Enigma cannot be told directly, can only be guessed at intimately:

pues la sonrisa es lo más delicado de la expresión humana, que florece de preferencia en la intimidad, y aun a solas; comentario silencioso de los discretos, arma de los tímidos y expresión de las verdades que, por tan hondas o entrañables, no pueden decirse. Cuando Cristo se oyó interrogar de Pilatos en aquel *proceso* paradigmático: *¿Qué es la verdad?*, calló y...sonrió. Calló y sonrió como prólogo a la lapidaria contestación en el episodio de la mujer adúltera. Y cuántos procesados humanos no tienen sino callar y sonreír en el punto de la verdad, de la verdad, sin más, que habría de confundir al que procesa. (*Islas* 170)<sup>20</sup>

Zambrano offers her own delicate answers to knowledge with conceptual intrigue. Impossibly, we feel her smiling back. When she ponders such abstractions such as 'Love,' 'Tragedy,' or 'Heart,' we as critical readers who seek clarity or truth, cannot but keep insisting, as does she: 'has Philosophy existed in Spain?' We keep reading, seeking, demanding (not unlike Love), all leading us back to the place where we unwittingly lose our footing, to the slippery slope of intangible perceptions and affects that allude to uplifting promises of variances, word play, and aesthetic uncertainty. (Who or what do we love? How do we know we love? What does loving mean in art and reality?) If the point of Philosophy is to ask a question, within the spaces of poetry (or poetics) lies the answer (*El hombre* 66).<sup>21</sup>

Her quizzical tone, her lilt, her metaphorical suggestions, all perform a *saltimbanque poesis*.<sup>22</sup> She reminds us that within Spanish folklore—from the Quixote to the 'pueblo' [*Agora*—the clown retains old archaic wisdom in his ability to cross over from ancient to modern (in the terms of Zambrano's poetics, from an Auroral ponderance to an imperative of the Sun), from life to death, from theatre to spectacle. In the performance of the smile there is a deep understanding that the clown hides only to slightly reveal. He does nothing but keeps his audience guessing.<sup>23</sup> Like the *Kouros*, an inner disobedient child of Zeus and the physical incorporation of Dionysius, the clown embodies the archaic wisdom of *sophrosyne*; he mimes knowledge through silent reporting [*testimonia*] long before the Philosopher speaks and condemns. The clown does not ask, but mimetically points:

Y yo diría que uno de los trucos del payaso que nunca falla es una escena en que no sabríamos decir qué es lo que hace. Pues en realidad, no hace nada. Todos los payasos lo repiten; es infalible y deben de saberlo; ante cualquier público, aunque sea de intelectuales. Y es...cómo describirlo con palabras? Es ese ir y venir vacilante y cambiando de dirección, es ese ir hacia algo y quedarse detenido a la mitad del camino; ese gesto fallido de querer apresar algo, de evitar que se escurra de entre las manos, como si fuera una mariposa, un objeto pesado y a veces grande; el violinista al que se le escapa el violín. Es el...eterno Aquiles que no puede alcanzar a la tortuga. El Aquiles que no puede alcanzar a la tortuga, ¿quién es? ¿No es, acaso, el intelectual, el filósofo; es decir, el que piensa? (*Islas* 171)

When the clown smiles, he ‘dons’ the mask of the *Kouroi*; in so doing he dramatically summons their hermetic divine nature. From around 500 BC, the Greek youths cryptically reveal inner harmony by alluding to an inner understanding of the natural phenomena around them. They are—to use María Zambrano’s terminology—portals of an inner passion of ‘delirium.’ Apollonian in form, they replicate the perfect youthful body in their corporal statuesque representation; their tense emphatic posture—arms straight, hands clenched—demands a response from those who approach them. In principle, they should represent inner Reason, that which shines light on Truth, specifically when *logos* answers to specific questions. Except the Dioscuri do not quite obey their strong father Zeus. They serve as messengers of an-Other world, those of the shadows and of passionate divine rituals. Their smile hints at something they have partaken in or gained, or, according to Parmenides’s fragmented hexameter poem, some discursive secrets received from the goddess of nature in the course of their journey: “it is right that [he] learns all things [from her]” (B1.28-29; trans in Curd 113).

But if Parmenides encourages his *Kouros* to recognize Reason through the One or Unity [“whole of a single kind”], Zambrano does not allow her youth(s) to follow such a straightforward path to Philosophy. Instead, she encourages the sensations of the body, the “aimless eye and resounding ear and tongue” to predominate (B7.4-5; trans. in Curd 61). Her *Kouroi* attend to a poetics of sense perceptions ruled by nature—music, ritual, dance, delirium, and resistance—to receive sacred knowledge not directly from the goddess but indirectly as in a dream. Zambrano interprets Parmenides’s contradictions through the logic of slumber: there is and is not movement; there is and is not being; there is and is not unity; knowledge dwells in aporias, just as it does with Zeno’s paradoxes.<sup>24</sup>

Whether briefly referred to as *Kouroi* or adolescent youths, young men keep re-emerging in Zambrano’s writing.<sup>25</sup> They harbour an inner sanctum of knowledge that has not completely disappeared or been transformed into other modes of logic. Poets such as Virgilio Piñera, Federico García Lorca, Jaime Gil de Biedma, and Emilio Prados <sup>26</sup> or artists such as Picasso, Ramón Gaya and Luis Fernández are *Kouroi*-turned-flesh, true poetry: “la poesía es vivir en la carne, adentrándose en



ella, sabiendo de su angustia y su muerte” (*Filosofía* 57). Existing in liminality or in crisis, their avatars on page or canvas courageously negotiate the dangers between two worlds, including immortality and death (*Artículos* 91-92).<sup>27</sup> ‘Adolescence,’ according to Zambrano is: “entrada en la madurez, y para los que creen en la inmortalidad, la muerte, vale decir; esos momentos peligrosos en que un ser tiene que transformarse” (59). Like the statues, these poets and artists point to precarious unknown origins [“al oscuro, indeterminado *apeiron*”; *Filosofía* 29], hinting at a mimetic realism denied by Plato.<sup>28</sup> Theirs is a world of iconoclastic images, of beautiful lost forms. Defying and crossing the line between history and nature, they must keep copying to remember the inner wisdom that dwells in the irrational: “lo irracional que porta y soporta el ser humano, todo aquello que alberga como ajeno, oscuro y remoto, aquello que le obliga a padecer su propia historia” (Maillard 25). They are gods condemned (or banished) for not facing the light. Ultimately their revenge comes: at some future moment in time (Zambrano always hints at an expectant future) their art unleashes vengeful secrets of divine revelation [*revelación divino*] that craves *orexis*, an appetite for being [“anhelo de ser”; *Claros* 29].

We must make note, too, that although Zambrano recognizes and accepts Plato early on in her *razón poética* (as far back as the 1930s)—that the banishment of poets from the Republic was a false but necessary task for survival—she metaphorically reads Plato at a crossroads, as a poet-philosopher who cannot leave his adolescent poetics too far behind (*Filosofía* 70, 71).<sup>29</sup> If Plato unfairly seems to condemn the uncertainty of knowledge, the ideal forms always point to the darkside of poetics. For Zambrano, Plato is a fallen angel, the castigated poet who came first to Socrates in a dream:

Muchas gentes no saben de Platón, sino una leyenda que las hojas del Almanaque reproducen alguna vez: Platón se anunció a su maestro Sócrates, antes de su encuentro con él, en un sueño; en un sueño, bajo la forma de blanco cisne. Reprimamos la sonrisa incrédula de los que han leído mucho y se han ensoberbecido por ello. Porque un cisne es un ángel castigado; un ángel inmovilizado que no ha perdido su pureza, ni sus alas. (71)

Divine knowledge pivots against fixity or unity; as Zambrano often remarks, supreme wisdom moves both within the shadows of poetry (art) and without, in the light of reason. Double-*Kouros* or Janus-faced, what lies here and there resists and

vacillates.<sup>30</sup> Plato only follows one direction. He understands the dangers in divine revelation; philosophical questioning must triumph over poetics to allow the *polis* a clear vision of truth, cohesion, and order, even if these concepts originally derive from poetry (*Filosofía* 32). He denies his prisoners access to the unstable space of 'intuition' and forces them to 'turn towards the light'; by doing so, he distracts them from listening to the 'clamour' [*grito, llanto*] of *apeiron* (the sacred) among the flickering shadows. The gift of interpretation assigned originally to the poets can now only be regulated by philosophers with their new Law. For Plato, the limitless unknown, the space of emptiness before the naming of 'presence,' must lie buried beneath the rubble. Sacred spaces, the presence of gods or what Fernando Ortega Muñoz calls an 'intuitive auroral reasoning' all anticipate (Spanish) philosophy through glimmers of inspiration and visions of its own *poieio*; an-Other language and art emerge once sacred knowledge is no longer persecuted but allowed to emerge from the inquisitorial shadows, to (lovingly) re-locate itself as an omnipotent rekindling of meaning (*Breve antología* 4).

How then to rekindle grace from the insistent question ('Has Philosophy existed in Spain?'), which Zambrano locates along the liminality of the hidden divine? We find Zambrano responding through artists, philosophers, and mythic figures, who embody Enigma and radical concealment and who turn away from Plato's proposal, only to be banished by their own marginality. In addition to the poets recently mentioned, other figures that repeatedly appear in Zambrano's work include the Cuban poet José Lezama Lima (1910-1976), the Greek mythic figures of Oedipus and Orpheus and the Spanish anti-philosopher Don Quixote, all of whose dark impulses find resonance within Spanish thought. Zambrano is constantly drawn to figures who 'dream while being awake.' They 'transcend' their circumstances by transforming their inner reality. By dreaming, they can liberate their poetic impulses and rescue their souls (and artistic meaning) from obscurity. They willingly accept the 'aporias of dreams' to actively complicate other modes of thought (*Dreams* 189-92). María Zambrano interprets dreams as a form of alternative knowledge. To dream is to challenge other modes of wisdom, whether by forging new subconscious pathways or by reconceiving lucid representations of utopia (Johnson, "Literary" 189, 194; Nimmo 901). The difficulty, as Zambrano points out, is accepting the incomprehension of the dream and forcefully resisting

the systematic reason of *logos*. That may mean resigning to an empty space, a supreme nothingness [*la nada*]. Creative freedom may never come (or at any time soon). For those who dream and hope there is always a waiting,<sup>31</sup> and with it must come an acceptance—a love even—of tragic knowledge that offers ruin or “anomalous suffering” (*Dreams* 191). True wisdom and freedom [*liberación*] are reached by appropriating the mysteries encountered through ‘obedient’ disenchantment.<sup>32</sup>

To cross the threshold from curiosity to knowledge, from delirious vision to corporal form proves an impossibility, at least for the Greek figures in Zambrano’s writing. From Oedipus to Antigone, from Orpheus to Medusa, these ancient protagonists cannot completely transcend their destiny and historical circumstances; when in crisis they fail to ‘overcome’ their inner essence of being. Something within them resists, and they either embrace their circumstances or suffer for them. Without a concrete body or secure knowledge to give material form to their deepest desires and without ground (home), they are banished to exist in “infratemporality” or Hell (192). Exiled, they are non-beings barred from a stable *locus*, time, history or identity. Somatic metaphors of Enigmatic meaning—they mirror the monstrous wisdom they fear—and inadvertently choose suffering rather than clarity, fragmentation and banishment, rather than unity and ground.

Certain allegorical representatives of adolescent (male) suffering such as Oedipus and Orpheus recur in Zambrano’s work and embody the tragedy of wisdom lost.<sup>33</sup> They are *Kouroi* among dark ruins, whose gift of ‘communication’ either through ‘dance,’ ‘music,’ or ‘lyrics’ cannot completely come to fruition or ‘see the light.’ Seeking divine continuity [*continuidad*] in an expectant anti-sacred, logical world, they recognize that there are things that cannot be revealed openly or directly but reverberate within the recesses of their being.<sup>34</sup> Both banished poets must live in exile, confined to a life of solitary existence and monologue. Zambrano interprets them as ‘born suffering’ [‘un nacer padeciendo’; *Claros* 43]. To allay their pain, Oedipus and Orpheus could return to the place of their origins, that is, to the recess of divine kinship belonging to their forefather, Dionysius [*diososcuro*]. Zambrano, instead, renders them to a waking-quietus. They unwittingly collaborate in their own demise. Oedipus and Orpheus are fallen angels who prefer to suffer than to realize that theirs is not a truth that can be represented in any unified way

(*El hombre* 130, 131). They are alienated performers of their own tragic spectacle. As fragmented beings, they are inferior to reason, always lying in error: “Creerse inferior es pues irse suicidando lentamente y condenar al ‘otro’ a que se sienta superior. La obligada inferioridad es una condena doble, pues que implica la forzada superioridad del otro” (*Artículos* 102, 103). By attempting to hide the knowledge held within, they cannot save themselves from being secondary to the strong preponderance (of the Sun) of Reason.

In Zambrano’s essays, Oedipus encapsulates the ‘problem of man,’ as the vision of his future self (to become king) overpowers him from recognizing his historical circumstances. Instead of going *to*, he must now step back *from* the very light and image he had hoped to become.<sup>35</sup> Oedipus’s monstrous outer reality sets him on the terrifying journey he does not want to take, that is, to the limitless consciousness within. He has no choice but to traverse the path to *poesis*. As Zambrano states, “Oedipus does not see that he must be born, above all, as a man and not as a king, nor as anything else” (*Dreams* 194). Zambrano reads him as a would-be philosopher and briefly grants him a second chance, to be a thinker who reaches *anagnorisis* and sees all things clearly (*Obras* 55). The light allows him a moment of self-discovery before the terrible truth condemns him to darkness. Precisely at the moment when he questions the Sphinx, he understands what he is. He then chooses to look away from his own reflection as Enigma. Oedipus remains in constant immobility, denying himself access to the knowledge that opens the passions of the Heart. Zambrano calls Oedipus’s waking-blind state an ‘inertia,’ “an inertia that diverts *eros* from its transcendent direction” (*Dreams* 193). Without Love, his reality turns into *epoché*, a suspension into no-where.<sup>36</sup>

If Zambrano defines ‘lack of Love’ as a ‘life in Nothingness’ (“*Dos fragmentos*” 1, 4), Oedipus is a figure refusing the path to *sophrosyne* or ultimate self-knowledge to opt instead for a perduring blindness that cannot bear Love or Freedom. His plight has no end but keeps resounding in history, literature, and cultural ruin. Zambrano quotes Dostoyevsky’s question: “Who has not wanted to kill his father?” to remind us that the suffering incurred from the “mask of a blinded power” keeps tragically repeating, at least when divine knowledge has been abruptly abandoned (*Dreams* 194).<sup>37</sup> For Oedipus to embrace his history, he must first define himself in the *aporia* of ‘empty-time.’ His refusal of self-deception or denial of Love as

Enigma is reflected in the plight of mankind: “la más aflictiva de la humana condición, es estar oculto a sí mismo, ser ignorante acerca de sí mismo y tropezar con sus pasiones como con los fenómenos naturales o con los inexplicable mandatos de los Dioses” (*Islas* 196). Oedipus exists as the pause before the ‘almost-what-if,’ but he cannot hear the almost-silent stop [*pausa imperceptible*] before the beating of the Heart or the breath that continues (*Claros* 65). As consequence, his legacy (history, art, reason) cannot evolve without appropriating what truly belongs to him, that is, tragedy or death [*nemesis*]. Zambrano finds that it is not until Oedipus arrives in Colonus with Antigone that he embraces his fate. Antigone is the embodiment of piercing insight and delirium; she demonstrates the Dionysian right to compassionate suffering, a gift Oedipus sees in his daughter but does not find in himself (*El hombre* 53).<sup>38</sup>

Oedipus’s failure to find inherent grace within himself emerges as a constant in Zambrano’s work. His suspended tragedy becomes a recurrent metaphor for an exile without transcendence, and it keeps repeating in almost imperceptible murmurs of sacrificial loss. During her mid-career residencies in Cuba and Puerto Rico (1939-1952),<sup>39</sup> Zambrano hears Oedipus but now resounding within the figure of Orpheus. Zambrano turns the Oedipal question of ‘who or what am I?’ into an Orphic mournful ‘where can I go?’ From a procurement of knowledge into a transformative place of action [*acción transformada*], *sophrosyne* can be attained by contemplating the places of radical concealment and being guided by the fluctuations of *alatheia* or the slight apertures of remembrance-truth. Zambrano advocates a willingness to descend into the darkside of knowledge, and like Orpheus, encourages mediation between the knowledge of what is found there and one’s art:

...el mediador con los inferos. Y eso sí que ha sido un gozoso y penoso descubrimiento mío: la mediación con los inferos. Yo no creo que se pueda ascender sin dejar algo abajo. Por eso he aceptado el escribir y el hablar, y el vivir la Historia. Y la oración.<sup>40</sup> La oración va más allá de todo. Puede atravesar las mismísimas esferas. (“Sobre la iniciación”)

In Zambrano’s Cuba, José Lezama Lima is the poet who ‘faithfully’ answers Orpheus to negotiate between Poetry and the divine secrets of the Heart. He successfully moves between Paradise and Hell, between primitive Love and a passionate Faith, between Greek thought and Catholic redemption. Zambrano’s

reading of Lezama envisions a carnal and spatial poetics, a physical manifestation within the Cuban nation but one that also occurs in the allegory of the ‘Authentic Man’ [*Hombre Verdadero*]. His is a territory and tale that resist being told directly: “paradigmático por enigmático quizás” (*Islas* 216). The Cuban ground and its tragic voice turn into her own ‘dream and a cipher’ (93), and Lezama’s lyrical ‘secret’ becomes hers as well. Lezama’s knowledge draws Zambrano back to a time before memory and suffering, to the transformative time [*Aurora*] of a poetic Spain before the philosophical interruption of being (‘what are you?’) Cuba and Lezama remain sacred ‘spaces’ of a ‘pre-nascent’ philosophy in Zambrano. They allow her to reformulate an *a priori* cultural ideology of the (all-knowing) *patria*.<sup>41</sup>

Lezama labours in the ‘avatar of Orpheus’ and crafts his poetry to hide from the light and hover below the shadows (*Islas* 222). He is the ‘poet-in-action’ [*poeta obrero*], who works towards deciphering the ‘dark caverns of sentiment’ [“oscuras cavernas del sentido”; *Algunos...de Poesía* 277].<sup>42</sup> Zambrano metaphorically represents Lezama as a fallen angel, constructing his dreams in the ‘joyous night.’<sup>43</sup> His poetry searches for knowledge behind the materiality of being [*fysis*] in obfuscated metaphors of sound not sight. Like Orpheus, he hears poetry by ‘palpitating’ [*palpitar*] or ‘beating’ [*latir*] in the dark. If Socrates tells us to ‘listen more carefully’ [“hay que escuchar más finamente”; *Claros* 42], Lezama listens, but he stoically refuses to indicate directly where knowledge lies. He harbours a double attraction [*apego*] for the resistant topography of the tropical shadows and what lies beneath. For Zambrano, his poetics of tropical umbrage barely delineates his smile; when above ground, the poet hides as a transformed divine Polyphemus: “Quizá un poco el terroso dulzor de la caña de azúcar extraída por una boca sin dibujo aún y la densa sombra de los árboles fundiéndose con la tierra, tierra ya antes de caer en ella” (*Algunos...de Poesía* 275). It is only below through the abyss, in the deterritorialisation of being, where one can defiantly gaze towards *sophrosyne*: “...clavarse por sí mismo en la picota de la ambigüedad, en lo alto entre dos abismos que celan muchos otros—el abismo prolifera—, deshacer con el mirar de la frente a la falacia, sonreír en el centro oscuro de la llama es la incesante actividad del hombre verdadero” (*Islas* 214).

For Zambrano, Lezama enacts the law of ancestral memory (*Algunos...de Poesía* 276). His lyrics allude to the origins of shadows just before they are named. He

brings Zambrano back to the necessary question of Philosophy, of whether it should be understood as a contested space for the forgotten ancestors who inhabit it. In *sophrosyne*'s 'who am I...?' Zambrano ponders, along with Lezama and his intellectual group of *Orígenes*, a broader horizon [*horizonte*] that includes a passionate fidelity to self and other, a faithfulness to 'pre-nascent' materials, divinities, and topographies. The query becomes a territorial game of remembrance: "Adónde te escondiste?" (*Claros* 17). The urgency to capture the inner apprehension of lost glimpses of wisdom in the steep ground and pathways of Truth becomes an imperative not for a *who* but for a *where*: "Ah, que tú escapes en el instante—en el que habías alcanzado tu definición mejor" (*Islas* 217). Lezama's verse could be the very same echo that describes Orpheus's search for Eurydice or Zambrano's craft of elusion [*arte de esquivar*] that pivots around the question that defines her work. She now rephrases it to wonder about the constant quivering [*tiembla*] of knowledge before its near captivity ('Where does Poetry escape to before Philosophy takes its place?').

Lezama's radical poetics of Cuba may point her back toward a deterritorialized Spain, but these are thoughts which Zambrano developed early in her work.<sup>44</sup> From the 1930s onwards, Zambrano sought to describe the place of knowledge as a topographical deviation. It is filled with traps and blunders (and surrounding defeats): "Para el pueblo español, filosofía es algo que tiene mucho que ver con los revieses y tropiezos de la vida" (*Obras* 302). In engaging in answers that appear to toddle or meander along [*desviando*], she challenges her readers with language games that shift from eliciting a clear binary answer to responses embracing the lack of certainty enacted by Enigma. Zambrano turns her question ('Has Philosophy existed in Spain?') into a strain, bringing up feelings of failure: "anhelar es no conseguir y no poder renunciarse" ("Vivir es anhelar" 6). Unbridled desires for attainment [*irrefrenable anhelo*] deliberately provoke feelings of confusion. To remain ungrounded, in the space of not knowing or more radically of 'nothingness' ["el punto nada"; *Claros* 122] is what Zambrano defiantly embraces, as these feelings of discomfort indicate radical insight into knowledge. To really know oneself, to dwell upon what *sophrosyne* means, is to face ambiguity inside and out and contemplate it but not necessarily resolve it: "mira a ver si...' lo que quiere

decir: detente y reflexiona, vuelve a mirar y mírate a la par, si es que es posible” (*Claros* 117).<sup>45</sup>

The shifting spaces of perplexity can reveal the horizons of deliberation within oneself. Ancient knowledge may be another name for discovering the spaces where old souls never rest. The Escorial and the Acropolis are examples of such relics and monuments cited in Zambrano’s work; she likens them to mysterious ghosts [*fantasmas*] surfacing in myths, legends, and even within humble sages of the Agora [*pueblo*]. Their spectral resonance is to be found in parts of speech, in sculpture (such as the *Kouroi*), in paintings, in music, and more importantly, for Zambrano and her mentors before her, in literary examples such as the novel or poetry. Literature may not be ‘real,’ but it mirrors the topography of local (Spanish) dreams. In all her work we find her describing literature as a secret landscape projected by the *daimon* of the gods.<sup>46</sup> Zambrano cites numerous literary characters that call upon their divine power to be released from the burdens of History, but it is particularly in the figure of Don Quixote where she finds her answer, as he encapsulates “estar fuera de sí, andar enajenado” (*El hombre* 223). He is a portal of divine wisdom, a mirrored reflection of the Spanish soul.

Zambrano defines Don Quixote’s madness [*locura*] as a possessed embodiment of Truth gifted to him by his forefather Dionysius. He cannot help but be faithful to what he is, the sacred embodiment of Enigma. Following unknown laws of tragedy, Don Quixote disregards Philosophy or systematic reasoning to follow the irrational pathways of an inner order: “hecho de razones secretas, sutiles, paradójicas; de razones del corazón que sólo el delirio da a conocer” (*El Hombre* 223). Zambrano understands Don Quixote as an impassioned embodiment of those ancient gods constantly in the process of transformation; they are “criaturas no de ser, sino de metamorfosis” (47). His vision, to liberate the essence of being and things from the dark, can never result in anything but failure. Zambrano (like her mentors Unamuno and Ortega before her) acknowledges that Don Quixote is an allegorical representation for the suffering people of Spain, since the only person he cannot save is himself. But unlike her predecessors, Zambrano does not seek to solve his ambiguity. She breaks the habit that keeps recurring in Spanish or Western thought: “Y toda ambigüedad requiere una liberación” [sic] (*La Liberación* 106). Whereupon the writings of Ortega and Unamuno attempt to *solve* Don Quixote’s



ambiguity in designated plans of action, Zambrano *abstains* from doing so in stoic irony. Don Quixote or his madness does not need to be decoded but left in radical suspension [*epoché*] and doubt.

Zambrano performatively hesitates to answer the question ('Has Philosophy existed in Spain?') in the same way Don Quixote waltzes away from reason. In Zambrano's essays, what matters most is Don Quixote's passions of the Heart. He ambiguously remains a prisoner to Love. His vision does not subscribe to a method or system, but instead seeks to play, dance, or listen to the dithyrambic cadences of those gods that came before him. With Sancho by his side, he functions as the Janus-faced *Kouroi*, both reflecting in contradictory directions, and even more radically, seeking to reflect both the listener and the composer, master and servant, reader and novelist, in a game of infinite mirrors. If the novel by Cervantes reflects Spanish thought, it does so by a "Juego de espejos y de imágenes dominadas por una mirada y una sonrisa" (*La Liberación* 106). Don Quixote lives in an endless but unresolvable projection of the Poetic soul of the 'pueblo' [*Agora*]. Citing Ortega, Zambrano declares Don Quixote an allegory of Poetry, "Porque toda revelación poética *es ambigua*" (*La Liberación* 108);<sup>47</sup> but for her, ambiguity cannot be liberated without taking into consideration its ancestral ties with Tragedy. Zambrano finds Tragedy unresolvable. Another name for *sophrosyne*, Tragedy defies rational thinking or systematic clarity by finding relief in sentiments that define Enigma, such as 'pity,' 'failure,' and 'fear' (Adrados 58). To find 'liberation' in the ambiguity of Don Quixote is to refrain from acting in (Philosophical) revenge and not turn the Smile into Laughter or restraint into victorious action. By reading Cervantes (and Quevedo, too) as a keeper of the sacred, Zambrano acknowledges the relief felt in the transcendence of the delectable irony of (a projected but never violent) *vendetta*:

Pues esta sonrisa piadosa e irónica, nacida de la mirada que ve el conjunto de los asuntos humanos, es el tesoro que portan los largamente vencidos en la historia. La mirada que descubre en la cumbre de la fortuna la desgracia; y en el abismo de la derrota, la victoria y el triunfo. Porque la vida pasa y el arte queda. "Reirá más quien ría el último," es el grito de amargura que anticipa la venganza casi siempre destructora, ya que la venganza verdadera es arte, sino es solamente prolongación de la impiedad del vencedor. Mientras que la sonrisa, piedad e ironía del que ve la historia total y no el episodio inmediato por mucho que nos duela, anticipa el porvenir; un porvenir diferente en que el presente quede superado. (*Islas* 167)

Cervantes allegorises freedom in the divine figure of Don Quixote and allows him to accomplish what Oedipus and Orpheus are unable to do. These two Greek figures repetitively dream of solving their ambiguity, but their banishment (or subsequent failure) prohibits them from doing so. They attempt to mediate between the dark side of poetic reason and the systemic rules of light, but as their Greek tragedy unfolds revealing them as unfaithful visionaries riddled with doubt, they can never be set ‘free’ [*liberados*]. Don Quixote, however, faithfully reflects both the inner desires of the Spanish people and the divine knowledge of the gods. His philosophy comes by metaphorically crossing many borders. He serves as a mediating entryway [*dintel*] between the human and the divine, dreams and reality, local knowledge and high art. Ancient knowledge does not stay still but moves to protect its incarnated dream of radical resistance in Don Quixote, just as it does in Dionysius, the clown, the *Kouroi*, and José Lezama Lima. How ironic, then, that for Zambrano resistance can be captured by reflecting that which does not change. In the constancy of the Smile [‘inmutable sonrisa’] hides ‘the [true] place of poetry’ (*Algunos...de Poesía* 49).

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<sup>1</sup> Zambrano’s article (1948) was published in *Las Españas* (1946-1956). The Republican journal was established in Mexico as a forum for Spanish exiles to criticise the Franco regime and to put forward a liberal agenda on nationality, politics, and identity. It also published seminal articles on Spanish art, literature, and philosophy by critics who collaborated in the same spirit as the founding *Revista Las Españas* by Ortega y Gasset and Guillermo de Torre (1926-1936). For an in-depth overview see Valender and Rojo Leyva. In her article, Zambrano directly addresses Ortega y Gasset (*Meditaciones del Quijote*; 1914) and Menéndez y Pelayo (*La ciencia española*; 1887) as examples of writers who prove that systematic reasoning (but not necessarily Philosophy) has always existed in Spain: “poseemos una gran riqueza de precursores, de hombres sin duda geniales, que se anticiparon y pensaron ‘casi’ algunas de las ideas más innovadoras y revolucionarias del pensamiento occidental, tal por ejemplo la que inaugura la Época Modernas de el Discurso del Método de Descartes” (“El problema” 4).

<sup>2</sup> Roberta Johnson and Janet Pérez both observe in separate studies the difficulty in defining *razón poética*. It is not in the strict philosophical sense a method of ‘reasoning’ but a sensory feeling, a ‘desire,’ an ‘intuition’ or a ‘passion.’ I have chosen not to avoid using it, but abstain from translating it directly (a Zambranoan move perhaps?) As Johnson notes, *razón poética* strongly borrows from Ortega’s *Razón Vital* (“Literary” 188). See Pérez, “*Circunstancia*” (153).

<sup>3</sup> I have chosen to capitalise Zambrano’s key concepts to emphasise their abstractness and importance in her philosophical thinking. Zambrano on occasion chose to capitalise these terms but was not methodical in her orthography. Curiously, the one term which she never capitalises (but Ortega occasionally does in his particular derivative) is *razón poética*.

<sup>4</sup> *Aletheia* is usually thought of as an undisclosed truth or open truth. María Zambrano returns to its archaic definition of ‘remembrance.’

<sup>5</sup> The philosophical discussion surrounding *sophrosyne* is a lengthy one, and it can be argued that all of Greek philosophy preoccupies itself with this term (certainly from Parmenides onwards). I have chosen to draw upon Helen North’s seminal studies on *sophrosyne* and Kristian Urstad’s work on temperance. They both argue that *sophrosyne* incorporates (by way of denial) secret knowledge of desires, feelings and pleasures. Our common understanding of the term comes from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards, through Socrates, who advocates for “being self-controlled and master of oneself, ruling the pleasures and appetites within oneself” (qtd. in Urstad 9). North and Urstad argue on the contrary that *sophrosyne* did not reject desire completely, as it would have interfered with enjoying a full life that seeks to incorporate all kinds of intelligence. See North, *Sophrosyne* and Urstad, “The question of Temperance.”

<sup>6</sup> Zambrano creates a spell for those who read her closely like myself. In attempting to write an explicative essay, I found myself incorporating and echoing her poetic language. Many readers of her work cannot refrain from using her linguistic turns of phrase or cryptic metaphors. Perhaps Zambrano’s writing functions as a mimetic trap to point to the paradoxes of *razón poética*?

<sup>7</sup> Mark Carr incorporates Helen North’s alternative definition of *sophrosyne* in his study on ‘advantageous passions’ and the ways in which they allow one to lead a moral life, including the conscious choice of accepting (for one’s own moral advantage) *mania*. See *Passionate Deliberation* (18). In separate scholarship, Michael Mahon and Paulus Van Tongeren equally observe the contradictory power of *sophrosyne* in Nietzsche’s thought. See Mahon, *Foucault’s Nietzschean Genealogy* and Van Tongeren, “Nietzsche’s revaluation.”

<sup>8</sup> Zambrano always returns to Enigma as a tentative way or uncertain departure where knowledge lies—we can only guess an answer to its location, even if further questions arise, as if in a game: “Pues enigma es una respuesta disfrazada de pregunta, de lo que en tantos juegos infantiles de preguntas y respuestas ha quedado el rastro. La respuesta está jugando al escondite dentro de la pregunta” (*Artículos* 90).

<sup>9</sup> See Bundgård.

<sup>10</sup> Zambrano defines transcendence as: *de(s)velación*, *revelación*, or when addressing the poetry of Antonio Machado, it is a ‘proyección sentimental’ (*Algunos...de Poesía* 142, 143). It is ‘projective’ in that it directs the intellect towards another place; it is never ‘here’ but always somewhere ‘over there’ or ‘back there.’ The puzzlement or surprise comes when we realize that we can never ‘reach’ it.

<sup>11</sup> In *Persona y Democracia* (originally from 1958), Zambrano observes: “Y qué hacer con mi propio ser, cuando me sale al encuentro?” To which she answers: “Algo tan inédito, mas necesario; algo nuevo, mas que se desprende de todo lo habido. Historia verdadera, que sólo desde la conciencia—mediante la perplejidad y la confusión—puede nacer” (22).

<sup>12</sup> Among other Greek writers include: Plotinus, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Aeschylus, and Euripides (and the list is not exhaustive).

<sup>13</sup> This study does not distinguish between the physical statues (with their divine/decorative function) and their metaphorical representation in literature or philosophical discourse.

<sup>14</sup> See Borges. Also see Zambrano’s commentary on Beatrice’s smiling taunt in *Claros* (12).

<sup>15</sup> See “María Zambrano y la filosofía de Nietzsche.”

<sup>16</sup> Etymologically, the term ‘sonrisa’ derives from the Latin ‘subrideo,’ literally meaning ‘below the laugh’ or ‘what is hidden behind the laugh.’ Zambrano often pairs the words ‘silence’ and ‘smile’ to connote secret meaning before words and laughter break out.

<sup>17</sup> See Zambrano, *Algunos lugares de la Pintura* (214).

<sup>18</sup> Zambrano’s father, Blas Zambrano García de Carabante, considered Antonio Machado a close friend. Their friendship began when they were both living in Segovia around 1919.

<sup>19</sup> See Machado, *Poeta en exilio* (24).

<sup>20</sup> Text originally published in the journal *Bohemia* from La Habana, Cuba (1953).

<sup>21</sup> See Maillard on the problem between Philosophy and Poetry (170).

<sup>22</sup> I am incorporating Stephen Summerhill’s observation in finding ‘arabesques and spirals’ in María Zambrano’s writing (as noted earlier by R. Johnson, 1996). Zambrano’s jump in logic gives her style a singular and repetitive effect. See Summerhill, “Toward the Postmodern Sublime.”

<sup>23</sup> Zambrano finds similarities between Socrates and the clown early in her work; she notes that Socrates ‘jokes’ against the grace of knowledge: “Y la idea del maestro callejero, su vocación de pensador trotacalles, vacila...abandona la filosofía al llegar a sus umbrales y pisándolos ya casi, hace poesía y burla” (*Filosofía* 19).

<sup>24</sup> See Zambrano, *El sueño creador*.

<sup>25</sup> As do *Korai* appear, among them include: Antigone, Medusa, the Moon, Aphrodite, Athena; and literary representations (in the possessive by male admirers): Dante’s Beatrice, Don Quixote’s Dulcinea, Galdos’s women, Calisto’s Melibea, and Abelard’s Eloise.

<sup>26</sup> Many (adolescent) women artists and writers emerge in Zambrano’s work such as: Reyna Rivas, Lydia Cabrera, and Maria Victoria Atencia.

<sup>27</sup> See Zambrano, “Cuál es la adolescencia?” in *Artículos*, 91, 92.

<sup>28</sup> Mary Stieber's illuminating study depicts how, through *agalmata* (decorations), the female Attic *Korai* sculptures allow the archaic viewer to derive pleasure from their attractiveness, and by transference, also to feel emotions for the goddesses who offer themselves to the worshipper (21, 22). Standard Greek studies do not make the same observation for the *Kouroi*, but that doesn't stop us from wondering how these male bodies were perceived.

<sup>29</sup> "Lo que hace Platón es poesía y mística" (*Filosofía* 57).

<sup>30</sup> Zambrano often describes divine knowledge as a 'nothing' always in movement. See "La nada" in *El hombre*, 174-88.

<sup>31</sup> In "El payaso y la filosofía" [1953] she calls this no-space: "un tiempo al margen, en blanco." See *Islas*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> See Revilla, "ley de la presencia."

<sup>33</sup> In archaic Greek philosophy Oedipus and Orpheus are never old (except when Oedipus returns to Colonus) but are seen as young, adolescent, or in the prime of youth. These young men are always on the brink of understanding their 'future' (but unresolved) selves. See Miller.

<sup>34</sup> María Zambrano differentiates between the 'sacred' and the 'divine.' Simply put, the 'sacred' is the 'origin' of things, from where all things derive their hidden form. We can never know what the 'sacred' is. It is always concealed and manifests itself in selective ways, one of them being in the 'divine.' The 'divine' or ancient godly knowledge reveals the sacred (in art, poetry, language) but only in the interstices; that is why we keep pursuing it. We seek the 'divine' (as this essay mostly does) to negotiate those sacred spaces of knowledge. Our tragedy is that our (human) avarice blinds us from getting to the unknown and unnamed 'there.'

<sup>35</sup> See Andrew Bush, who particularly notes Zambrano's paradoxical "step back into ignorance" (96).

<sup>36</sup> Zambrano often uses the term *epoché* or 'suspension in judgment' in her writing. See Rodríguez (106).

<sup>37</sup> Patricide is not a common theme in Spanish literature. We cannot help but think that when María Zambrano asks Dostoyevsky's question, she may have posed it in reference to her philosophical forefather, Ortega y Gasset. She may of course have also been alluding to works and characters such as A. Machado's *La tierra de Alvargonzález*, Don Juan / Don Gonzalo in *El burlador de Sevilla* (at least figuratively), and Melibea in *La Celestina*; they all touch upon patricide in their narratives.

<sup>38</sup> See Bush. See also Zambrano, *La tumba de Antígona*.

<sup>39</sup> María Zambrano leaves for Paris in 1946 to help her sister take care of their ill mother. Zambrano remains there until 1949 and then returns again in 1950-51 (residing briefly in Rome). With respect to Cuba, she visits the island a number of times before relocating to La Habana in 1951.

<sup>40</sup> In Spanish, the term 'oración' can be defined as 'prayer' and 'sentence' / 'phrase.' Zambrano plays with both terms.

<sup>41</sup> See Gentic's intertextual connections between Lezama and Zambrano.

<sup>42</sup> For Zambrano, there exists two poets; the one who 'acts' and the one who 'contemplates' (Lezama vs. Machado).

<sup>43</sup> Zambrano notes Lezama's Polyphemic angel in his prose poem, "Noche dichosa." See Lezama (87).

<sup>44</sup> See Zambrano, "Nostalgia de la tierra."

<sup>45</sup> There is no 'aim' to knowledge but an inward turning, vacillating, going around (in an almost radical interpretation of Aristotle's law of celestial motion): "Ya que la meta sin figura se confunde con el horizonte, y fluctúa, no es determinante. Es, sí, una orientación, y una llamada a ese girar en torno, signo de fidelidad, de aceptación del tiempo, de la relatividad que no renuncia al absoluto" (*Claros* 125, 126).

<sup>46</sup> We are reminded of the dancing rituals of the *Kouroi*. In one dance, they offer themselves to Cybele to ask for the protection of a new born male infant (such as Zeus or Dionysius). They sing the 'birthing song' or dithyramb in honour of the *daimon*, the 'greatest Kouros' of them all. See Fischer-Lichte 42, 43.

<sup>47</sup> See Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*.

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