Avisos
de Viena

1 Introduction

"Wir wissen es wohl" wrote the Romance philologist and literary scholar Ottmar Ette recently; "Unsere eigene Geburt und unser eigener Tod entziehen sich unserem reflektierten, gleichsam *selbst-bewussten* Erleben. Wir wollen den Augenblick erhaschen, der nicht mehr wiederkehrt: jenen Augenblick, der nicht mehr ist und doch nicht aufhören kann zu sein." (Ette, 2022, pp. 1–2). But one remedy remains: "human art, in *all* cultures of the world. […] Because art, and because literature is knowledge of life, knowledge of dying, death and childbirth" (2022, p. 2, my translation). In terms of literary history and art history, this is especially true for the literature of the baroque as an era in which birth and death seem to occupy a particularly prominent position in the collective imagination.

In baroque literatures, I have noticed that knowledge of life and knowledge of death are not only negotiated separately, but that there is a remarkable number of examples that place birth and death *in analogy* to one another. Thinking of birth and death as comparable processes and events enabled Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681), for example, to describe the uterus of Sigismund's mother as a "living grave" and the dying and the being born as being "similar" (Calderón de la Barca, 2008, vv. 665–667, my translation). It allowed Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, as well as physicians and other literary figures of her time, to reflect on the direction of *dying* (headfirst or feet first?) and to relate this question to the direction of being born. It also made authors like José Pellicer, Luis de Rebolledo, and Calderón ponder over the emotions of birth and death because they suspected that birth and death *felt* similar.

Each of them represents a sobering human incompetence and impossibility: "concebir el fin de la vida de otra manera que como un pretexto o un Motivo [sic!] poético. Los mitos de la muerte son conocidos gracias a la poesía y la muerte misma es concebible como metáfora" (Elizondo, 1975, n.p.). Because the insights gained by those who are about to be born and die cannot yet, or can no longer be processed in literature, it opens the space for poets, whereby any approach to death and birth necessarily takes the form of a metaphor, or – as in our special case – an analogy. Certainly, what Detweiler observes for death also applies to birth:

> Something of that "power of the instant" in its movement "between nullity and totality" is caught and discharged in the efforts of various literary artists to portray the moment of death in fiction or poetry. Such moments, usually brief descriptions that generate intense emotion, appear to us as particularly significant, as both containing and epitomizing a mystery of being and nonbeing at once more accessible and yet more elusive than our experience of that mystery in mundane time. (1972, p. 269)

This "mystery of being and nonbeing" was not only fascinating in the baroque. Latin American literature of the 20th century revisits, re-contextualizes, and reconceptualizes the analogy of birth and death. Questions about the emotions and celebrations, about the process and the surroundings of dying and being born arise again and are answered in a similar way or sometimes with remarkable differences: Rosario Castellanos, as baroque authors before her, also chooses "Bilder der Tiefe" (Müller, 2020, p. 2) as settings for both birth and death; in Isabel Allende's work, the fear of the unknown is still the unifying element in dying *and* being born, and birth and death still follow analogous paths in Octavio Paz's text with the difference that they become a little more spectacular: they take the form of a fall or a labyrinth.

L'homme devant la mort et la naissance

Although the different manifestations of the birth-death analogy are considered in this study from the conceptual perspective of the literary baroque and neo-baroque (see below), they do not, of course, happen in a historical vacuum. In *L'Homme devant la mort* (1977) Philippe Ariès[1] notes central upheavals in the way death was dealt with as early as the Christian (!) High Middle Ages. Individualism changed the concept of the afterlife, which led to the idea that only the body dies, but the soul is immortal (Ariès, 2015, p. 779). There were also changes in ritual terms. The death scene on the bed was supplemented by additional ceremonies (funeral escort and the church service in the presence of the corpse). Fear of death made people hide the face of the deceased (which had hitherto been unveiled to the gaze of mourners).

The following centuries (16th–18th), paradoxically a period of "growing rationality" (2015, p. 782, my translation) lost their familiarity with death, which was so far understood as an 'evil' inseparable from human beings. Here Ariès sees the first form of a "great" fear of death, whereby Ariès draws an astonishing parallel to the 20th century. For us, this means that both periods examined in this thesis felt a loathing of death (at least as far as the part of society influenced by Christianity is concerned). But the way death is dealt with in the 20th century is more than that. The partial disappearance of the expectation of hell and the idea of original sin lead to a social

[1] While in philosophy and history of mentality mortality and the death of a human being have always played a privileged role, Christina Schües rightly observes a "Missachtung und Vergessenheit des Geborenseins" (Schües, 2016, preface) and its philosophical significance. *In Philosophie des Geborenseins* (2008) she tries to reconstruct it from antiquity to her present.

powerlessness that is met in two ways: pretending that death does not exist or pretending to be able to talk about death like any other event (2015, p. 788).

If the 16th and 17th centuries saw some changes in the way death was dealt with, the same is true for sexuality, however, a history of *baroque* sexualities has yet to be written. Ferguson summarizes the main developments as follows:

> The period is marked by a movement toward more clear-cut definitions and fixity: the establishment of two dimorphic sexes, sustaining physiologically grounded sexual and gender roles, concomitant with, and sustained in part by, the definition and marginalization of the homosexual. An object of surveillance, sexual dissidence comes to be no longer regarded in terms of sin but of social disorder, before being considered a pathology. […] Marriage is subject to progressively tighter regulation by Church and state, becoming, in consequence, a more effective means of social control. Individuals are brought to turn inward to discover their true selves as subjects of desire. These developments are not swift or uniform, however, and so the Baroque is irreducibly a period marked by fluidity, multiplicity, and the coexistence of (apparent) contradictions. (Ferguson, 2019, p. 705)

Not only is the baroque a time in which apparent opposites coexist, but the baroque also manages to combine processes that are usually perceived as separate. The analogy between birth and death is an example of this.

State of the art

Thinking of birth and death as belonging together is not an entirely new phenomenon. However, the first impulses for this came less from literary studies than from anthropology, ethnology, and religious studies. As early as 1911, Ernst Samter observed parallels in the practice of laying "die Kreißende wie de[n] Sterbende[n]" (Samter, 1911, p. 19) on the earth and concluded: "Was aber dies zu bedeuten hat, kann, namentlich nach der Analogie des Sterbebrauchs, nicht zweifelhaft sein: unter die Erde geht im Tode die Seele, aus der Erde kommt sie bei der Geburt in das Kind" (1911, p. 6). More recent publications also focus on parallels in the rituals surrounding birth and death. Smith-Rosenberg, for example, speaks of "elaborate unisexed rituals" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975, p. 23) among 19th-century American women; Hennessey examines rites of passage (including birth and death) diachronically for their religious component (Hennessey, 2021); Kaufman & Morgan, in turn, divide those anthropological studies into thematic blocks that have dealt with the "beginnings" and "endings" up to this time (Kaufman & Morgan, 2005). Wojtkowiak & Crowther address spirituality in birth and death for the first time from an explicitly comparative perspective by recognizing that both birth and death are characterized by a particular spatiality and temporality ("both unfold with uncertainty and exactitude", Wojtkowiak & Crowther, 2018, p. 11). Both represent embodied and relational events. Finally, in their monograph *Birth and Death: Experience, Ethics, Politics* (2019), Woodward & Woodward refer to themselves as the first book to consider birth and death in relation

to each other (Woodward & Woodward, 2019, p. 122). They also advocate a relational approach, viewing birth and death as intergenerational and (knowledge) discourse-connecting (2019, p. 32). Looking at birth from the perspective of death and vice versa could serve as a "critical lens" to better understand both events – a thesis that we will see confirmed several times in the course of this study (2019, p. 2).

In a first for literary studies, and from a combined perspective, Ottmar Ette addresses the topic in *Geburt Leben Sterben Tod. Potsdamer Vorlesungen über das Lebenswissen in den romanischen Literaturen der Welt* (2022). He is guided by an observation that is also fundamental to this thesis: all the literatures of this world deal with basic existential questions, with "life questions". This gives literary *studies* the privilege (and duty), to also ask those "Lebensfragen" and to work out the "Lebenswissen" and "Erlebenswissen" that are preserved in those literatures (Ette, 2022, p. V, 11): "Die Literatur bietet uns die Chance, Zugriff auf Anfang und Ende eines Lebens zu erhalten, Geburt, Leben, Sterben und Tod zu repräsentieren, zu reflektieren und zu (re)inszenieren" (2022, p. 2).

I would like to take up Ette's reconsideration of the contribution of literary studies to the topic of birth and death and ask: what "knowledge of life" do literatures hold by placing birth and death in analogy with each other? Where do we find it? And what (research) questions can we ask as a result?

Methodology and research questions

In this thesis, I am going to start from the two main research questions: how is the analogy of birth and death[2] represented in Spanish baroque and 20th century, Latin American literature? And why do concrete, sensual, painful, female life experiences so strongly determine the representation and imagination of the great unknown death at certain times in certain forms of expression?

As we will see throughout this study, birth, and death are unifying events. They connect generations, subjects, and discourses (medical, religious, literary, etc.). In the sense of "transareal literary studies", we consider the literary texts analysed here to be "Mobile des Wissens, das uns den experimentellen Umgang mit kulturell wie sozial verschiedenartigsten Lebensformen und Lebensnormen erlaubt" (Ette & Asholt, 2010, p. 9). The methodological approach of this study must accommodate this relational peculiarity of birth and death and their representation in texts through a plurimethodological, comparative approach. In this thesis, two central types of text-immanent methods of comparison are therefore applied in parallel: content-based and historical comparison (Zelle, 2013, p. 131). On the one hand, the work-centered,

[2] I will not consider the following related topics in this study: The simultaneity of birth and death (when mother or child die in childbirth) or topics such as reincarnation (only the Christian idea of life after death is briefly touched upon). I am interested here in representations that equate aspects of death with aspects of birth and vice versa, not temporal coincidence.

content-based comparison and the method of close reading make the linguistic peculiarities, formal features and the spectrum of meaning or the ambiguity of individual expressions visible (Köppe et al., 2013, p. 290; A. Nünning, 2008, p. 98). This includes the (sometimes ambiguous) physical and sensual elements that the analogy between birth and death are drawn with; but these methods likewise identify the status (theme, motif, singular element etc.?) that is given to the analogy in the respective texts and allow the question of where a syncretism between Christian and indigenous culture can be observed.

By focusing on the theme of birth and filtering projections of culture onto nature and vice versa in the texts, this thesis also follows the tradition of feminist literary studies, one of whose aims is to make so-called 'female' themes visible in canonical texts (Köppe et al., 2013, p. 360).

On the other hand, through historical comparison we can pose questions about influence, epochs (and their boundaries), and other arts or sciences: which discourses are involved in the representation of the analogy, and (where) is the analogy a result of intertextualities?

In addition to comparison as a method, however, 'comparing' is also relevant on another level. It is part of that heuristic process that we have already repeatedly called *analogy* and which the authors carry out in their reflections on birth and death. The process and its purpose could be summarized as follows: by means of the analogy, one assumes "bestimmte Entsprechung von Verschiedenem […], um aus Bekanntem Unbekanntes zu erklären" (Fliethmann, 2008, p. 22). Essentially, it is about (not necessarily consciously) noticing similarities and "resemblance[s] between relationships" (De Libera, 2014, p. 31). Or, as Octavio Paz (1914–1998), one of the authors in our corpus, notes:

> La analogía es la ciencia de las correspondencias. Sólo que es una ciencia que no vive sino gracias a las diferencias: precisamente porque esto *no es* aquello, es posible tender un puente entre esto y aquello. El puente es la palabra *como* o la palabra *es*: esto es como aquello, esto es aquello. El puente no suprime la distancia: es una mediación, tampoco anula las diferencias: establece una relación entre términos distintos. La analogía es la metáfora en la que la alteridad se sueña unidad y la diferencia se proyecta ilusoriamente como identidad. (Paz, 2008, pp. 109–110)

Coming to terms with terms: baroque and neo-baroque

A comparative analysis between the literatures of the Siglo de Oro and 20th-century Latin American literatures invites us to look at parallels and possible influences under the frame of *baroque* and *neo-baroque*. Those terms, however, are by no means clearly defined in literary history. Questions surrounding the nature, definition, and difference between the baroque and the neo-baroque have produced a multitude of theoretical

writing over the last two hundred years – so many that the term *baroque* in the mid-20th century "risks losing all methodological and conceptual value" (Ibbett & More, 2019, pp. 540–541; Jaumann, 2010, p. 200).

In the history of the term *baroque*, Spanish literature and Hispanic studies have always had a special position. While in the literary historiography of other Romance languages, *baroque* as a period term is sometimes called into question, Spanish literature of the 17th century seems to represent *baroque literature* almost paradigmatically and thus to place the focus of literary studies less on the justification of the period category than on the definition of the concept (Küpper, 1991, pp. 919–920). Since the beginning of literary baroque studies, currents that understand *baroque* as a pure stylistic phenomenon have alternated with those that understand *baroque* as a historical category (1991, pp. 922–927). Attempts to define the style of the baroque remained too unspecific and criteria were sought with which the texts of this epoch could be understood as a unity (1991, p. 926). Historical epiphenomena like the Counter-Reformation, Absolutism, or the importance of the Jesuits, as well as idealized 'Spanish' traits, were used to collect authors as diverse as Góngora and Cervantes under the term *baroque* (Ibbett & More, 2019, p. 547; Küpper, 1991, p. 926). The question of whether the baroque offers its own model of interpretation and the confrontation with the cliché of the baroque as a stylistic epoch have characterized baroque research in literary studies ever since. Finally, there are (implicit or explicit) positions on the *historical* baroque by those theorists who postulate a baroque in the 20th century – a neo-baroque.

For clarification of the term *neo-baroque*, a particularly valuable contribution comes from Arabella Pauly in *Neobarroco: zur Wesensbestimmung Lateinamerikas und seiner Literatur* (1993), which, regrettably, is little known beyond the German-speaking world. She divides the theories[3] put forward on the subject into three currents: i) the so-called **"constant theory"** ("Konstantentheorie"), primarily represented by Alejo Carpentier; ii) the **telluric concept of the baroque**, which understands the baroque as an entity anchored in Latin American nature, history, and art; and iii) the **neo-baroque in the sense of Severo Sarduy**[4] (Pauly, 1993, pp. 10–11).

i) Let us begin with what Pauly calls the *constant theory*; the theory which understands the baroque as an eternally recurring constant of the spirit. Strictly speaking, this theory is based on a change of meaning that is closely linked to European cultural chauvinism (1993, p. 28). As a reaction, in a sense, to the European use of the baroque concept, Latin American representatives began to relativize the European influence by referring back to its pre-Columbian heritage and attempting to prove an influence that lasted into the colonial period (1993, p. 32). From there, the idea is not far-fetched that for Latin Americans, the baroque is a "genuine Ausdrucksform […], die sich nicht nur in der Kolonialzeit manifestiert ha[t], sondern jederzeit wieder aufleben könne" (1993, pp. 32–33). What began as an anti-imperial stance *against* Europe thereby paradoxically received a renewed hegemonic impetus by proclaiming a regional Latin American

[3] As far as I know, there is not a single woman among the neo-baroque theorists.
[4] All bold marks in this paper are my emphases.

essence, a notion that remains influential to the present day (Ibbett & More, 2019, p. 542).

ii) The telluric concept of the baroque can also be interpreted as a Latin American 'reappropriation'. In Alejo Carpentier's argument, neo-baroque artwork is equated here with American flora[5], however diverse it may be. It represents the relationship to nature that the European baroque has lost in its artificiality (Pauly, 1993, pp. 46–47). This theory, too, can be seen as an "Abkehr von rein literaturwissenschaftlichen Belangen zugunsten allgemeingehaltener und widersprüchlicher Reflexionen zum lateinamerikanischen oder europäischen Wesen" (1993, p. 112). On the one hand, it attempts to reconstruct some genuine American roots of the baroque (without the recourse of any scientific sources); on the other hand, the American baroque is said to be characterized precisely by heterogeneity and cultural receptivity[6] ("*mestizaje*" and "*contraconquista*" theory) (1993, pp. 84–85). What the representatives of this current have in common is the notorious avoidance of dealing with the *conquista* and the accompanying destruction of old American culture as well as idealizing colonial life, which in this conception is seen as being merely a brief interlude in American history (Ibbett & More, 2019, p. 550; Parkinson Zamora & Kaup, 2010, p. 3; Pauly, 1993, p. 108).

iii) Severo Sarduy's post-structuralist concept of the baroque ties in with the preceding ideas but brings a novelty to the discussion in that he assumes an "epistemological solidarity" between art and cosmology. This results in the following model: while the Classical period corresponds to the Galilean idea that the planets revolve around a fixed center, the baroque period corresponds to Kepler's realization that the planets run in elliptical orbits (Pauly, 1993, p. 117). The consequence is this:

> Kreist barockes Schaffen um ein zwar verdrängtes, unterschwellig jedoch vorhandenes, festes Zentrum (*significante oculto*), das dem Kunstwerk bei aller Komplexität und hermetischen Verschlüsselung Sinn und Einheit gibt, begreift sich "neobarocke" Literatur als ziellose Akkumulation von kulturellen Zeichen, die lediglich die vollständige Abwesenheit eines Sinnzusammenhangs und den Verlust von Logos als absoluter Größe (*centro vacío*) zu dokumentieren vermögen. (1993, p. 151)

Also, with Sarduy's concept of the baroque, it is necessary to point out the most central contradictions: Sarduy, for example, seems to assume (without concrete comparative analyses) a correspondence between baroque and neo-baroque works, which is reflected, among other things, in the same nomenclature (*barroco*). However, this contradicts the above-mentioned premise of "significante oculto" and "centro vacío" (1993, p. 189) and corresponds to the fundamental disagreement of all theories about whether a differentiation must be made between *baroque* and *neo-baroque* (although a tendency can be observed for Latin America to use the term *baroque* as a supra-

[5] This idea is also used inconsistently: Figuerora Sánchez sees the roots of the Spanish / European baroque in nature and the Latin American in "magic" and "myth" (Figueroa Sánchez, 1986, pp. 89–90).

[6] In Chiampi's words: "[...] el neobarroco apunta a una utopía de lo estético, en la cual la palabra privilegiada sea de las culturas construidas, no por la conjunción de las normas erigidas en los centros hegemónicos, sino por la heterogeneidad multitemporal con que se precipitaron a la historia" (Chiampi, 2020, p. 41).

temporal phenomenon and, taking Cuban essay writing as a starting point, *neo-baroque* in relation to current Latin American literature and 'reality', 1993, pp. 7–8, 34).

Pauly answers the question about whether the 'labels' *baroque* and *neo-baroque* have so far served as a meaningful explanation for the analogies and relationships in the negative. She considers the kind of 'catalogue of criteria' for what defines *baroque* and *neo-baroque* literature to be too abstract because of those other literatures that would then also have to be considered following those criteria (for example Boom and Post-Boom literature or magic realism) (Dhondt, 2015, p. 26; Pauly, 1993, pp. 8–9, 65, 74, 208–222). Furthermore, current debates on the neo-baroque ignore the controversies of European baroque discussions mentioned above, which provide an extremely inconsistent basis for any attempts at defining *neo-baroque* (Pauly, 1993, pp. 205, 207). The hypothesis that typical themes of *culteranismo* and *conceptismo*, such as death and dreams, are again receiving a great deal of attention in contemporary Latin American literature has not yet been empirically confirmed. All in all, it is more than questionable whether the diffuse use of terms actually constitutes "new heuristic territories" (Pauly, 1993, p. 4), or whether it is not currently much more a collective term for longwinded and ambivalent references that diverge even in relation to the time periods proposed for the baroque and the neo-baroque: while the time span for the baroque is firmly narrowed down to the time period from the last third of the 16th century to the first half of the 18th century, the statements for the neo-baroque differ much more fundamentally (Weisbacher, 2008, p. 152). Leaving aside those neo-baroque theories that understand the baroque as a "human constant, rather than as a particular historical period" (Moraña, 2005, p. 10), the neo-baroque is said to encompass roughly the period from the second half of the 20th century to the 1980s (Pauly, 1993, p. 4). But here, too, there are voices that suggest a broader time span. According to Guerrero, for example, neo-baroque persists into the 21st century (Guerrero, 2012, p. 19). Completely unanswered (these answers prevent the nationalistic claims of the baroque and neo-baroque concept) remains the question of which geographical regions the literary baroque and neo-baroque extend to.

This thesis does not aim to contribute to the characterization of the baroque and neo-baroque literary movements or the elaboration of any catalogue of criteria (and cannot do so within this framework). I, therefore, use the term *baroque* in the form outlined above: as an epoch term for the production of literature, art, and knowledge in the period from the last third of the 16th century to the end of the 17th century, but I'm conscious that despite its long tradition as a period term in literary studies *baroque* is not an analytical category. The look at 20th-century Latin American literature (and a little bit beyond) in turn is to see if *neo-baroque* can be used as an explanation for the resumption of the analogy. The positions of individual authors from the corpus on the baroque/neo-baroque debate will be mentioned in part. Especially in the last chapter on the eventfulness (chapter 5), in which the discussed text *El Naranjo* (1993) by Carlos Fuentes reveals a particularly interesting web of historical references, I will draw on Fuentes's own neo-baroque conception as a possible explanatory model.

Corpus and structure of this study

The lack of uniformity in the definitions of *baroque* and *neo-baroque* literature has the disadvantage that there is no predefined canon or corpus of (neo-)baroque texts to fall back on. In the course of my work as a research assistant in the FWF-funded project "Interpretation of Childbirth in Early Modern Spain" (University of Vienna), I collected text passages that equated aspects of birth with aspects of death. Accordingly, the corpus presented here has no claim to completeness, nor could it, since only a full-text database of all texts published in this period would make the compilation of the corpus more arguable.[7]

While collecting suitable passages, I noticed that they concentrated on four thematic axes. These will form the basic framework for the structure of this study and result in chapters that can be read independently of each other.

On the one hand, there are those texts (and a painting) that ask about the processual nature (chapter 2) of being born and dying: does dying happen in the same direction as being born? What is the nature of this path? Do you have to walk the path alone? The second group of texts (chapter 3) is characterized by the fact that it archetypically assigns birth and death to the same setting: the cave. In this chapter, the symbol of the cave or the metaphorical descriptions of its partial aspects with female body parts present themselves as places where birth and death, beginning and end, knowledge and ignorance become indistinguishable. Texts in the third group (chapter 4) make assumptions about the complex interplay of feelings and emotional reactions at birth and death. In this chapter we learn about philosophical or theological topoi surrounding the emotional evaluation of birth and death and their temporal changeability. If we cry at birth, do we also cry in death? Who is afraid of birth?

The texts of the last group (chapter 5) follow a somewhat different structure. In terms of content, they revolve around events: what rituals accompany birth and death and what do they celebrate? In this chapter, however, there is an increased focus on the question of intertextualities that this theme inevitably exposes if one wants to trace ideas back to their origins. Here is an overview of the chapters and the texts discussed in each:

02 The Processual

- Anonymous: "¿Quién es éste que pisa...?" (1654)
- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *El Príncipe Constante* (1640)
- El Greco: *El Entierro del Señor de Orgaz* (1586–1588)

[7] Interesting research can be expected here from Laura Hernandez Lorenzo (University of Seville) and Jörg Lehmann (University of Tübingen), who presented quantitative methods for the analysis of texts at the conference "Calderón, R and Python: New Methods and Digital Tools for Quantitative Analysis of Theatre, Verse Drama and Poetry" (2-3 June 2022, Vienna).

- y De los Ruyces de Fontecha, Juan Alonso: *Diez preuilegios para mugeres preñadas, compuestos por el Doctor Iuan Alonso, y de los Ruyzes de Fontecha. Con vn diccionario Medico.* por Luyz Martynez.
- Luther, Martin: *Ein Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519)
- Mercurio Scipione: *Comare o ricoglitrice* (1596)
- Núñez de Coria, Francisco: *Libro intitulado del parto humano* (1580)
- Paz, Octavio: *El laberinto de la soledad* (1993)
- Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: "Ofrecimiento para el Santo Rosario de Quince Ministerios que se ha de rezar el día de los Dolores de Nuestra Señora la Virgen María" (n.d.)
- Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: "San Pedro Apóstol" (1677) & (1690) (the authorship of the latter is not assured)

03 The Surrounding

- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *El Año Santo de Roma* (1650)
- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *El Pleito Matrimonial* (approx. 1650)
- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* (approx. 1653)
- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *La Vida es Sueño* (1636)
- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *No hay más Fortuna que Dios* (1653)
- Castellanos, Rosario: *Oficio de tinieblas* (2009)

04 The Emotional

- Allende, Isabel: *La casa de los espíritus* (1982)
- Calderón de la Barca, Pedro: *Lagrimas, que vierte un alma arrepentida a la hora de la muerte a los pies de Christo Crucificado* (1757)
- Casona, Alejandro: *La dama del alba* (1984)
- Galdós, Benito Pérez: *El terror de 1824* (1948)
- Godínez Manrique, Felipe: "Oración fúnebre [...] en la muerte del doctor Frey Lope Felix de Vega Carpio" (1779)
- Luther, Martin: *Ein Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519)
- Paz, Octavio: *El laberinto de la soledad* (1993)
- Pellicer de Ossau Salas y Tovar, José: *Oracion funebre en la muerte del serenissimo Señor Don Carlos de Austria, infante de las Españas, principe de la mar* (1632)
- Rebolledo, Luis de: *Cincuenta oraciones funerales en que se considera la vida y sus miserias, la muerte y sus provechos* (1608)

05 The Eventfulness

- Fuentes, Carlos: *El Naranjo* (1993)
- Paz, Octavio: *El laberinto de la soledad* (1993)

2 The Processual

> "Born, Nicolas, wie lange bist du schon tot! Es datiert sich so rasch von dir fort. Soeben spannte ich einen neuen Bogen in die Maschine: loswerden will ich sie, diese Kopfgeburten." (Grass & Neuhaus, 1997, p. 159)

> "Death is really the opposite process to the process ending in birth, yet these opposite processes can be reconciled." (Bataille, 1986, p. 55)

In *De Senectute* (44 BC), Cicero claimed that "life's racecourse is fixed; Nature has only a single path and that path is run but once, and to each stage of existence has been allotted its own appropriate quality"(Cicero & Falconer, 1923, p. 43). This is only one of countless passages, handed down since antiquity, that describe the *cursus aetatis* as a path, an arch, or a wheel (Burrow, 1986, p. 44,57, 116). Authors like Cicero thereby laid the foundation for a powerful image of conceptions of life that became a familiar body of thought for a Western-socialised readership.[8]

Idioms such as the "*path* of life" are still familiar to many readers today. However, other analogies and metaphors also stand the test of time. A resonance can be found, for example, in Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950). As we will see below, the structuring element in Paz's work is that of solitude. As one period of a human biography, solitude starts at birth and prepares one for death (Paz, 1993, p. 353). There is, however, another aspect to Paz's national psychological essay that relates birth to death, and death to birth which opens a new dimension (in the literal sense) to the examination of birth-death-analogy. We encounter this said dimension in the chapter "Apéndice: La dialéctica de la soledad"[9]. In it, the author claims that:

> oscuramente sabemos que **vida y muerte son sino dos movimientos**, **antagónicos, pero complementarios**, de una misma realidad. Creación y destrucción se funden en un acto amoroso; y durante una fracción de segundo el hombre entrevé un estado más perfecto (1993, p. 343).

While images such as the path of life, the arc of life, the life cycle, stages of life, etc. are omnipresent (and perhaps even an anthropological constant[10]), Paz adds the dimension of movement. Instead of the static concept of space, it is about the *change*

[8] Art historians and philologists like Elizabeth Sears (1986) or J.A. Burrow (1986) set milestones in reappraising and tracing the development of this imagery of the 'ages of man', which attempt to describe the ages of human beings with 'scientific' phenomena (humoral theory, astronomy etc.), from antiquity to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance respectively.

[9] The specification that this is an appendix only appears with the second edition (1959) of the text. In the third version (1970), the appendix is followed by another part entitled "Postdata" (Santí, 1993, p. 65).

[10] "Es ist offensichtlich, dass dieses Modell [Kindheit, Ausbildung, Erwerbszeit, Ruhe] zusehends erodiert. Erstaunlicherweise griff diese Erosion jedoch nicht in gleichem Maße auch die Vorstellung einer den Lebensweg strukturierenden Instanz an. Dass es etwas geben muss, das die Kontingenz der individuellen Lebensvollzüge, die unüberschaubare Fülle an einzelnen Erfahrungen, Erinnerungen und Handlungen steuert, gehört wenigstens zur mentalen Grundausstattung in den westlichen Gesellschaften, wenn nicht gar zu einer anthropologischen Grundausstattung" (Fetz, 2009, p. 18).

of place in time. This chapter is therefore concerned with the following questions: if Paz speaks of "movimientos antagónicos", what *kind* of movement is it? In which *direction* does it go? What is the nature of the path? How do place and time, which, according to Bakhtin have a reciprocal and inseparable connection in texts, shape birth and death? Roughly speaking: in which direction are you born, and in which direction do you die? What is the processual aspect of the analogy of birth and death? To date, these questions have rarely been asked.

One might think that the answers to this can be found in biographical research. It is true that in this field one observes such a fascination emanating from the biographical individual, that it is described with words of movement. It is said that we "rush" ("entgegenstürzen") towards it in a "narcissistic **movement** [...] again and again and seemingly independent of times and spaces" (Fetz, 2009, p. 39, my translation). Biographical research also speaks of a mental or social "grammar" created during the biographical process of experience through self-referential processing of external impulses (Alheit, 2020b, p. 161, 2020a, p. 91). Here, too, Alheit does not specify what kind of verbs (verbs of movement?) are used to form this "mental grammar". Other concepts such as the "life **cycle**" only function as milestones for stages of life and its transitions on a time continuum of ageing. However, it is little known how they actually take place, or how they obtain their relevance for the individual story of life (Schütze, 2016, p. 56). They remain simply as vivid metaphors for cognitive processes that are hardly ever questioned in research.

Linguistics gives us a little bit more guidance. Ana Seradilla Castaño, for example, investigated the meaning of verbs of movement for Spanish by looking at proverbs that include *abrir, cerrar, subir* and *bajar*. She confirms that "los verbos de movimiento son especialmente productivos para expresar tiempo, sentimientos, ideas, [y] emociones" (Serradilla Castaño, 2010, p. 91). Beyond that, those verbs seem to correspond to shared conceptual schemes that appear across different languages that are not necessarily closely related culturally and historically (2010, p. 91).[11] In total, however, linguistic theories and biographical research are only loosely applicable when answering the above-mentioned questions about the analogy of birth and death in the processual in literary texts.

Octavio Paz's meditations on birth and death are hesitant. In a sense, Paz also finds himself echoing the (post)modern skepticism in which knowledge about the elementary "Prozessstrukturen des Lebenslaufes" (Schütze, 2016, p. 55) gives way to a string of questions:

> Entre nacer y morir transcurre nuestra vida. Expulsados del claustro materno, iniciamos un angustioso salto de veras mortal, que no termina sino hasta que caemos en la muerte. ¿Morir será volver allá, a la vida de antes de la vida? ¿Será vivir de nuevo esa vida prenatal en que reposo y movimiento, día y noche, tiempo y eternidad, dejan de oponerse? ¿Morir será dejar de ser y, definitivamente, estar?

[11] Serradilla Castaño also refers to Foment with the observation that in proverbs these verbs occur particularly frequently in combination with body parts. As they are a fundamental reference point for our sense of direction, they lend themselves particularly well, says Foment, to metonymic or metaphorical use (Serradilla Castaño, 2010, p. 93).

> ¿Quizá la muerte sea la vida verdadera? **¿Quizá nacer sea morir y morir, nacer? Nada sabemos.** (Paz, 1993, p. 343)

We know nothing and yet Paz raises questions here that other literatures and other disciplines have already tried to answer. Which way did one die in the baroque, and which way was one born? In this chapter, we will start a conversation among male and female, discourse-shaping figures from different disciplines: medicine, religion, literature[12], and art. To illuminate this widely unresearched field, we will deal with more authors in this chapter than in any other chapter of this thesis.

Medical discourse: head-first out of the womb, feet first into the grave

If one follows Octavio Paz, man "falls" into life:

> Uno con el mundo que lo rodea, el feto es vida pura y en bruto, fluir ignorante de sí. **Al nacer**, rompemos los lazos que nos unen a la vida ciega que vivimos en el vientre materno, en donde no hay pausa entre deseo y satisfacción. Nuestra sensación de vivir se expresa como separación y ruptura, desampara, **caída** en un ámbito hostil; y extraño. (1993, p. 341)

The fall, as a kind of movement into death, is a recurring motif in Paz's œuvre. In his poem "La caída" (1937–1947), falling is already linked to this existential extreme of life: "Mana el tiempo su ejército impasible, / nada sostiene ya, ni **mi caída**, / transcurre solo, quieto, inextinguible" (Paz, 2004, p. 75). We will see it elsewhere in this chapter: the idea that death is not an isolated event in a human's life, but is immanent in him from birth, can be seen as part of Paz's reception of Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645) (Correa Rodríguez, 2005; Mutis, 2006, pp. 43–44). *Cotidie morimur*, you die from the moment you are born.[13] Dying is "to **fall** into [your]self unendingly", to experience "the horror of not being" (Paz, 2004, p. 76, my translation). To be born means to fall and to die means to fall, especially when dying already begins at birth. If we recall the first quotation of this chapter, however, life (or being born) and death are not only characterised as falling in Paz's work. He also writes about being born and dying as two "movimientos antagónicos, pero complementarios" (Paz, 1993, p. 343). But what is antithetical about the movement of falling? What are the opposing but

[12] The boundaries between essay and literature are, of course, fluid in *El laberinto de la soledad*. But because Paz received the Nobel Prize for Literature for it, I think it is justified, for the sake of simplification, to call it a literary text here.

[13] Quevedo's dealing with the *cotidie morimur*-topos is best reflected in his philosophical text *La cuna y la sepultura* (1634). In his words, the topos reads like this: "Son la Cuna y la Sepultura el principio de la vida y el fin della; y con ser al juicio del divertimento [descuido] las dos mayores distancia, la vista desengañada no solo las ve confines [próximas], sino juntas, con oficios recíprocos y convertidos en sí propios; siendo verdad que la cuna empieza a ser sepultura, y la sepultura cuna a la postrera vida. Empieza el hombre a nacer y a morir; por esto, cuando muere, acaba a un tiempo de vivir y de morir" (Quevedo, 1992, p. 316).
These thoughts were part of Quevedo's early reception of Seneca's Stoicism (Blüher et al., 1983, pp. 428–429). (A contrary idea is presented in the title of Pablo Neruda's book *Para nacer he nacido*, 1978)

complementary movements? This is a question that also preoccupied physicians of the 16th and 17th centuries.

At first glance, one direction was particularly relevant to early modern doctors: the orientation of the foetus' head at the time of birth. This was a decisive factor in determining the – happy, and sometimes unhappy – course of a birth. Just like nowadays, a "natural" birth was the one in which the child saw the light of day head-first. An insightful source on this topic is Juan Alonso y De los Ruyces de Fontecha (1560–1620), a Spanish physician, obstetrician, pharmacologist, and writer. In *Diez preuilegios*[14] *para mugeres preñadas, compuestos por el Doctor Iuan Alonso, y de los Ruyzes de Fontecha. Con vn diccionario Medico* (1606), he declares:

> Plinio en su lib. 7 en el cap. 8 acudió a la duda con otra congruencia y afirmó que por que está puesto en costumbre levar los muertos a los sepulcros, que es **cuando salen los hombres desta vida, los pies hacia adelante** y primero, cuando viene a ella, **porque la vida es contraria a la muerte**, **por eso viene la cabeza primero en el parto natural y bueno**, sea lo que fuere, poco nos importa eso. (y De los Ruyces de Fontecha, 1606, fol. 117v)

As a marginal note in the eighth chapter on the "Privilegio […], para elegir comadre", this passage nevertheless implies something significant and bears enormous ramifications: firstly, birth and death, in terms of their direction, are linked here. But also in this passage, two types of discourse are positioned in relation to each other: the practical ductus of an obstetrical treatise and a philosophical, abstract association about an everyday burial rite (feet first into the grave), which, the text suggests, was still common in Alcalá de Henares in the 16th century.

The reference to Pliny the Elder is correct[15]:

> **It is against nature to be born feet foremost**; this is the reason why the designation of 'Agrippa' has been applied to persons so born – meaning 'born with difficulty'; Marcus Agrippa is said to have been born in this manner, almost the solitary instance of a successful career among all those so born – although he too is deemed to have paid the penalty which is irregular birth foretold, by a youth made unhappy by lameness, a lifetime passed amidst warfare and ever exposed to the approach of death, by the misfortune caused to the world by his whole progeny but especially due to his two daughters who became the mothers of the emperors Gaius Caligula and Domitius Nero, the two firebrands of mankind […] Nero also, who was emperor shortly before and whose entire rule showed him the enemy of mankind, is stated in his mother Agrippina's memoirs

[14] The idea of certain "privileges" for women and pregnant women is already found in *Privilegios e perrogativas que o genero feminino tem po direito commum, e ordenaçoens do reino, mais que o genero masculine* (1539) by Rui Gonçalves and in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *De nobilitate & praecellentia foeminiei sexus, ejusdemque supra virile eminentia libellus* (1529) (Mendes, 2021, pp. 229–230).

[15] The Roman writer Aulus Gellius cites Marcus Terentius Varro as a source for Pliny. Varro's text is not conserved. The idea is based on the analogy between the foetus and a tree: "Aquellos que, al nacer, no sacan primero la cabeza, sino los pies – parto que es considerado como dificilísimo y dolorosísimo – han sido llamados *Agrippae*, con un vocablo formado a partir de *aegritudo* (dolor). Y de *pedes* (pies). Dice Varrón que en el útero los niños están apoyados con la cabeza hacia abajo, con los pies levantados hacia arriba, conforme a la naturaleza no del hombre, sino del árbol, pues llama pies y piernas de los árboles a las ramas, cabeza, a la raíz y el tronco."
"Quorum in nascendo non caput sed pedes primi exstiterant, qui partus difficillimus, *Agrippae* appelati vocabulo ab aegritudine et pedibus conficto. Esse autem pueros in utero Varro dicit capite infimo nixos, sursum pedibus elatis, non ut hominis natura est, sed ut arboris. Nam pedes cruraque arboris ramos appellat, caput stirpem atque caudicem" (Gellius, 2006, p. 206).

> to have been born feet first. **It is Nature's method for a human being to be born head first, and it is the custom for him to be carried to burial feet first.** (Pliny the Elder, 1938, pp. 536–537)[16]

This custom (namely to be buried feet first) is derived from nature dictating we are born head-first. Culture complements nature. Since an analogy is assumed between being born and dying, one aligns the undetermined variable (the direction of dying or being buried), it seems, with the determined variable (the direction of a natural birth). Moreover, with the custom of putting people into the grave feet first, Pliny the Elder once again validates, indeed substantiates, the fact that a natural birth happens head-first. The high mortality rate[17] in a breech birth strengthens Pliny's observation, if it did not even contribute to this 'congruence' between the natural direction of birth and the burial of a corpse in the first place: whether in a breech delivery or in a natural burial, on both occasions dying would occur feet first.

Fontecha is neither the first, nor the only one to refer to the medical knowledge of ancient authors and to derive the idea of being born feet first from the course of natural birth. Francisco Núñez de Coria (1535–1590) for example, reproduces in his *Libro intitulado del parto humano* (1580) almost word-for-word the passage in Pliny[18]:

> [Hippocrates] [c]oncluye […] Agrippae, aunque como truximos de Avicena[19], entre los partos no naturales el de menos peligro es el que sale por los pies, si sale estendidas las manos por los muslos, finalmente los que nacen de pies se dizen Aggrippe, tal dize Plinio aver nacido Aggrippe yerno de Augusto Cesar, y el cruel Neron, segun que escrivia del su madre Aggrippina. Empero en aquel capitulo de Plinio parece aver con tradicion, pues al principio del capitulo affirma, que nacer por los pies como nacio Marco Aggrippa es contra natura, empero a baxo dize. ***Ritu naturae capite gigni hominem mos est, pedibus efferi***, a donde claramente dize, que **por ley de naturaleza es costumbre que el hombre se engrendre por la cabeça y que salga por los pies, porque aunque es verdad como arriba lo truximos de Hippocrates, que el hombre se engendra cabeça arriba, empero al tiempo del parir se vuelve cabeça abaxo**: porende no se puede a esta autoridad de Plinio dar otra salida, sino que **el hombre se engendra de cabeça, y se lleva a enterrar los pies a delante: pues este verbo**

[16] The Latin original: "In pedes procidere nascentem contra naturam est, quo argumento eos appellavere Agrippas ut aegre partos; qualiter M. Agrippam ferunt genitum, unico prope felicitatis exemplo in omnibus ad hunc modum genitis—quamquam is quoque adversa pedum valitudine misera iuventa, exercito aevo inter arma mortisque adeo obnoxio accessu, infelici terris stirpe omni sed per utrasque Agrippinas maxime, quae Gaium, quae Domitium Neronem principes genuere totidem faces generis humani, praeterea brevitate aevi quinquagesimo uno raptus anno in tormentis adulteriorum coniugis socerique praegravi servitio, luisse augurium praeposteri natalis existimatur. Neronem quoque paulo ante principem et toto principatu suo hostem generis humani pedibus genitum scribit parens eius Agrippina. **ritus naturae capite hominem gigni, mos est pedibus efferri**" (Pliny the Elder, 1938, pp. 535–536).

[17] As far as I know, there are still no statistics on breech birth mortality from this period. As a general measure of mortality, McQuay suggests 1270 deaths per 100000 births between 1565 and 1665 in Shipton-under-Wichwood (McQuay, 1989, p. 55). It can be assumed that the risk of death was much higher with a breech birth. Even today, the risk is 3.1 times higher than for ordinary births (Morgan & Kane, 1964, p. 262).

[18] Carreras Panchón claims that Núñez's *Libro intitulado del parto humano* is an almost verbatim translation of the Latin version of Eucharius Rösslin's (1470–1526) *Der schwangeren Frauen und Hebammen Rosengarten* (1513) (Carreras Panchón, n.d.). At least for the quoted passage, this does not seem to be true. This passage is found neither in the German original, nor in the Latin translation *De partu hominis* (1532?).

[19] In the passage of the Latin translation where Avicenna speaks of the direction of a natural birth, the analogy with the direction of burial does not appear: "Figura naturalis partus est, ut egrediatur super caput suum, cum rectitudine oris matricis, absque inclinatione, manibus eius extensis super coxas: & quae est praeter illam est, non naturalis, sed quae propinquior est, est ut egrediatur super pedes suos: & egrediantur manus eius extense super coxas" (Avicenna, 1555, p. 389).

> **latino, *effero, effers*, significa llevar a enterrar, por manera que quiera dezir, costumbre es en ley de naturaleza, que el hombre se engendre por la cabeça y se lleve a enterrar por los pies**, porque de otra manera no se podria salva repugnancia, no solo contra si, mas contra todos los de mas que todos los partos que primero no proceden por la cabeça, de la manera que hemos dicho, no son naturales: porque como dize Hippocrates, el qual segun dize Galeno, es en medicina autor de todo bien. *Grave autem est etiam si in pedes processerit, nam saepe aut matres pereunt, aut pueri aut ambo.* (Núñez, 1580, fols 9r–10v)[20]

This quotation specifies what we have already observed in the quotation from Pliny. A cultural ritual (the burial) is derived from the law of nature (birth) and follows it. It becomes a "costumbre **en ley de** naturaleza" (1580, secs 9r–10v). What is also remarkable about this passage is the additional distinction between the moment of birth and that of conception. A human being is begotten head-first, turns shortly before birth in order to see the light of day with his / her head first, and is finally buried feet first. What is more: on closer examination, it is not the process of dying that is compared with birth, but the burial. That is telling. If one could argue with good reason that birth, just like burial, is culturally shaped, a dichotomy is created here between nature (birth) and culture (burial). Instead of comparing birth with dying, and thus two "natural" events with each other, birth is reduced to the purely natural aspect and death to the purely cultural one. The authors oscillate between different conceptual understandings of culture: one closer to the original Latin meaning of culture (the transformation of nature) and another closer to the postulated tension between nature and art or artificiality (Cassin et al., 2014, p. 199).

The idea of the processual and the direction of movement of birth on the one hand and burial on the other circulates across language, cultural, and national borders. Scipione Mercurio (1540–1615), an Italian religious and medical man, states, only fifteen years after Núñez, in *Comare o ricoglitrice* (1596):

> Ma Plinio nel 7. libro della sua naturale historia nel 8. Cap. porta questa ragione molto gratiosa, **che essendo la vita contraria alla morte, si come alla morte si va co piedi avanti, cosi alla vita si viene col capo.** Ultimamente come Filosofi possiamo dire, che ciò interviene: imperoche essendo la Natura molto sollecita in conservare i suoi suppositi s'ingenga di condurli al grado del migliore fine più presto che sia possibile; e perche doppo l'essere ricevuto nel ventre materno la rispiratione è il primo grado d'essere perfetto; per ciò vuole, che la testa sia la prima ad uscire come più nobile membro, & accioche tantosto goda la creatura il beneficio della respiratione, la quale non solo como tale è procurata dalla Natura: ma come quella, che apporta grandissima facilità al nutrimento. Impercioche essendo il parto una di quelle attioni, le quali ricervano forma non poca, mentre la creatura manda la testa suori prima che gli altri membri, acquista maggiore forza per la rispiratione, per la quale aiutandosi allegerisce assai le fatiche alla madre non solo più facile: ma anco più sicuro. (Mercurio, 1596, pp. 22–23)

Here, in turn, there is no talk of burial, which is done feet first to the corpse, but instead of death. So Mercurio seems to have interpreted death and burial as synonyms

[20] In all early modern quotations in this chapter, the abbreviations in use at the time are written out.

in Pliny, or he made a modification of the analogy. As death is the opposite of life, its course is also inverted.

Literary discourse: being born face up and dying face down

Not only is the direction of the child at birth and death of importance, but also the way it is received by the environment. From the medical discourse we have now arrived at the literary discourse. In Calderón's *El Príncipe Constante* (1640), something remarkable happens that, while it does not directly answer the question of the direction of birth, does place it in a context that is quite as revealing.

The play is about two rivaling kingdoms. Fernando, the Prince of Portugal, becomes the King of Fez' prisoner of war. As a steadfast, Christian prince, he does not bow to the opposing Muslim king, to whom he would have to give a Christian city in exchange for his release. The hunger he feels as a slave makes him suspect that he is approaching death:

> […] bien sé, al final, que soy mortal
> y que no hay hora segura,
> y por eso dio **una forma**
> **con una materia, en una**
> **semejanza, la razón**
> **el ataúd y a la cuna;**
> acción nuestra es natural,
> cuando recibir procura
> algún hombre, alzar las manos
> en esta materia juntas,
> mas cuando quiere arrojarlo,
> de aquella misma acción usa,
> pues las vuelve **boca abajo**
> porque así las desocupa:
> **el mundo, cuando nacimos,**
> **en señal de que nos busca**
> **en la cuna nos recibe**
> **y en ella nos asegura**
> **boca arriba**, pero cuando,
> o con desdén o con furia
> quiere arrojarnos de sí,
> vuelve las manos que junta
> y aquel instrumento mismo
> forma mi materia muda,
> **pues fue cuna boca arriba**
> **lo que boca abajo es tumba.**
> Tan cerca vivimos, pues,
> de nuestra Muerte; tan juntas
> tenemos cuando nacimos
> el lecho como la cuna […]. (Calderón de la Barca, 1640a, vv. 483–512)

In this play, cradle and grave, as sensually perceptible objects, correspond to the same Platonic idea (as Calderón seems to have interpreted it) (Graeser, 1975, p. 14,57). They are the 'image' (*eikon*) of one and the same 'model' (*parádeigma*) (Sheppard, 2014, p. 57). Since the cradle and the grave have the same origin in the world of ideas, to which we only have access through our mind, they also show similarities in the sensually perceptible world – they are made of the same matter. For this reason, we use the same gesture when we receive a person as when we want to detach ourselves from him / her. In contrast to the previous text passages, the analogy here is not based on the birth position of the child but on the orientation of that matter (the cradle, the world or, metaphorically, the midwife's hands[21]) that receives us in the world and ultimately sends us away from it again.

Religious discourse: shifted perspectives: Paz mimicking Sor Juana mimicking Petrus

Inverted perspectives, reversed directions and upside-down worlds remain interesting for us. Left remains right in this subchapter, up remains down, but we will now look at the direction of birth and death from a religious point of view. A particularly cruel, and, for the Christian cultural and iconographical[22] areas, familiar dying position is attributed to the apostle Peter, who, according to apocryphal writings, is said to have demanded death on the cross upside down. This is his story, as told in *Actus Vercellenses* (approx. 4th century), the most important part of the apocryphal records on the apostle Peter (Döhler, 2017, p. 1): after Paul leaves Rome for Spain, having just consolidated the Christian community there, Simon Magus invades Rome. He is considered the first heretic of the Christian church and managed in a short time to dissuade large parts of the Roman population from the faith through his magic arts. Peter now receives an order from God to leave Jerusalem and fight Simon Magus in Rome. After several duels and contests, including talking dogs and babies, raising the dead, and healing blind people, Peter is finally able to defeat Simon. However, Peter now earns the disfavour of the prefect. By convincing several women of chastity, the husband of one of these women incites the prefect to have Peter crucified. Peter escapes but meets Jesus at the city gate who tells him not to oppose the crucifixion. So, Peter returns to Rome and, in accordance with his wishes, is crucified upside down[23].

I have paraphrased Peter's story because, apart from its iconographic tradition, it is perpetuated in a genre we have not encountered before, yet its authorship is attributable[24] to a writer who will be at the centre of this subchapter: Sor Juana Inés de

[21] Cf. (Aichinger & Grohsebner, 2021) on this topic.

[22] An early, and particularly fine example on glass can be seen in the LWL Museum of Art and Culture in Münster (Germany): (*Apostel Petrus Als Märtyrer, Aus Arnstein/Lahn*, 1260). The painting also creates an impression due to its spatial proximity to the crucifixion of the Apostle Paul (in the usual direction of crucifixion).

[23] Historically, such a crossing method is rather unlikely (Wimmer et al., 2002, p. 656); Döhler, however, cites sources that refer to head-over-crossing in the course of the persecution under Diocletian (Döhler, 2017, p. 306).

[24] The attribution comes from Méndez Plancarte's complete edition of Sor Juana's work where he quotes it in the section "villancicos atribuibles" and justifies this as follows: "Y más por nuestra cuenta – ya también desde

la Cruz (1648–1695). In one "villancico" (a genre of songs that were sung in the matins of various liturgical feasts) of a series dedicated to "San Pedro Apóstol" (1690), the supposed Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz writes:

> En la Cabeza del Orbe,
> cuando muere Pedro, reina,
> fijando la suya donde
> será perpetua Cabeza.
> **Al suelo la frente abate,**
> **para que de esta manera,**
> **de aquella violada Corte**
> **se santifique la tierra.** […]
> También la humildad de Pedro
> sabe, porque es muy discreta,
> que aun en las afrentas mismas
> hay más y menos afrentas;
> **y muriendo en Cruz su Dios,**
> **y él en otra, es reverencia**
> **– cuando no puede excusarla –**
> **que sepa Pedro volverla.**
> Con eso, en el Vaticano
> y el Calvario hay diferencia:
> **en un Dios, que al hombre baja,**
> **y en un hombre, que a Dios vuela** […]. (Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 2018, p. 317, vv. 18–45)

When he dies, Peter reigns in Rome, where he, or metonymically, the Pope, will forever be its head. In the second stanza, the semantics are vaguer: by kissing the ground, or by being crucified upside down, he sanctifies humanity. And finally, if Peter cannot prevent his murder, at least he knows how to turn the cross around. In this way, Jesus was seen as a God who *descended* to the humans, and a human being who *ascended* to God, feet first.

Méndez Plancarte at this point refers to another "villancico" about apostle Peter, written in 1654 by an anonymous author (Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 2018, p. IX). The text comments on Peter's death as follows:

> ¿Este morir qué será? / Es un dichoso nacer: / **para el mundo de cabeza**, / y **para el Cielo de pies**… (Anonymous, 2018, p. XXXVII)

The aspect of dying feet first is emphasised even more in this "chanzoneta" and embraces the Christian idea that death is also the beginning (and thus the birth) of life after death.

entonces – osamos igualmente adivinar su límpida voz en algunos otros [villancicos]. […] Y esotros de san Pedro, en Puebla, 1690, que traducen graciosa y pulcramente, en estilizada jacarandina, la vida y glorias del apóstol, o plantean y resuelven la sutil duda escriturística sobre el "sagrado idioma" del "atar y desatar" con las Llaves…" (Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 2018, p. 60). Later treatments of this theme take over from Méndez Plancarte the division into "villancicos" and "villancicos atribuibles" (De Rivers, 1999, p. 79; Tello, 2022, p. 226; Tenorio, 1999, p. 58) or question their authorship in general, without clarifying the authorship of this specific cycle from 1690 (Alberto Pérez-Amador, 2008).

Three reasons can be named to historicise and contextualise the motif of the head-over-crucifixion:

i) In the aforementioned song[25] we find the idea that it is Peter's humility that leads him to go headlong into martyrdom; because he is not worthy to die like Jesus, he changes the orientation of the cross. This train of thought is taken up by Sor Juana in another villancico on Saint Peter from 1677 (in this case authorship is assured):

> **Poner Pedro la planta**
> **adonde Cristo la cabeza puso**,
> misterio es, que adelanta
> el respeto que el Cielo nos impuso:
> **pues de besar el pie Cristo se precia**
> **a Pedro, por Cabeza de la Iglesia.** (Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 2018, p. 45, vv. 23–28)

It is precisely through his modesty that Peter puts himself in a position where Jesus can kiss his feet and herald him as an icon to be imitated by the people. Paradoxically, by turning his feet to where Jesus had his head, Peter becomes the "head of the Church", a common attribute as he was the first bishop of Rome (remember the wording "Cabeza del Orbe" at the beginning of the first villancico attributed to Sor Juana).

ii) In the apocryphal Acts of Peter, Peter insists on crucifixion upside down, not only because of humility but also because he compares himself to a fallen man.

> Et conuersus ad eos, qui eum suspensuri errant, dixit ad eos: '**Capite deorsum me crucifigite**; et propter quam causam sic peto figi, audientibus dicam.' Ut autem suspenderunt eum, ut ipse petierat, coepit dicere: „Quibus est uoluntas audiendi, audite ⟨quae nunc⟩ maxime uobis adnuntio suspensus. **Intellegitis omnes mysterium principatus quod factum est. prior enim homo cuius ego effigiem sumpsi capite deorsum missus, et totum genus suum in terra proiciens, ipsam ergo effigiem suspensam tamquam et homo**, susum adtendens Christus partem, quem honorificauit et communicauit; dextram in sinistram demutans sic, ut ⟨bona⟩ tamquam mala uiderentur et mala tamquam bona. "Et dominus ipse dixit: '**Si non feceris dextram tamquam sinistram et sinistram tanquam dextram, et quae sunt (susum) tamquam deorsum et quae retro su(nt) tamquam ab ante, non intrabitis in regna caelorum**"'. [26] (Döhler, 2017, p. 136)

[25] See also Hieronymus in *De viris illustribis* (392–393 A.D.): "A quo et affixus cruci, martyrio coronatus est, capite ad terram verso, et in sublime pedibus elevatis: asserens se indignum qui sic crucifigeretur ut Dominus suus" (Huther, 1859, p. 6). In English translation: "At his hands he receives the crown of martyrdom being nailed to the cross with his head towards the ground and his feet raised on high, asserting that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord" (Cushing Richardson, n.s., p. 827).

[26] For lack of an English translation, here is the German one: "Und sich an die wendend, die ihn aufhängen würden, sprach er zu ihnen: ‚**Mit dem Kopf nach unten kreuzigt mich**; und aus welchem Grund ich wünsche, so aufgehängt zu werden, werde ich den Zuhörenden sagen.' Als sie ihn aber aufhängten, wie er selbst es gefordert hatte, begann er zu sprechen: ‚Ihr, deren Wille es ist zu hören, hört, was ich euch jetzt, da ich aufgehängt bin, vor allem verkündige. **Ihr kennt alle das Geheimnis des Anfangs, wie er geschehen ist. Der erste Mensch nämlich, dessen Ebenbild ich angenommen habe, wurde mit dem Kopf nach unten herabgeschickt, und er warf sein ganzes Geschlecht auf die Erde hinunter, dieses Ebenbild ist also aufgehängt wie auch der Mensch**; Christus richtet den Teil auf, den er in Ehren gehalten hat und mit dem er Umgang gepflegt hat; das Rechte verkehrt er in das Linke so, dass die Güter gleichsam als schlechte Dinge erschienen sind und die schlechten Dinge als Güter. Und der Herr selbst hat gesagt: ‚**Wenn ihr nicht das Rechte zum Linken machen werdet und das Linke zum Rechten, und das, was oben war, zum Unteren und das was hinten war zum**

But what does he mean by "making the right the left and the left the right, the above the below and the behind the front?" Does this also refer, as Wilhelm Michaelis suggests, to Adam's fall, when he saw everything upside down during his fall from heaven (Michaelis, 1956, p. 378)? In this sense, Peter takes the position of fallen men, but does not fulfil the call of God, which demands a reversal of these conditions. It thus remains unclear what Peter's renewed conversion would mean in this context (Döhler, 2017, p. 835).

iii) The third explanation that I want to present here also brings us back to the topic of birth. Döhler takes the Adam-Christ parallel one step further by understanding this to be an allusion to the head-first, downward birth resulting from Adam's fall (2017, pp. 307–308). As a source for this he cites the martyrdom of Peter as presented in Pseudo-Linus in the *Passio Sancti Pauli Apostoli* (14th century), where the fall of Adam is paralleled with the human birth:

> tu semper rectus, tu semper excelsus, tu semper altus. nos secundum carnem primi hominis filii sumus, qui principale suum demersit in terram. **cuius lapsus significatur specie generationis humanae: sic enim nascimur ut proni uideamur in terram effundi,** et quod ad dexteram est hoc ad sinistram sit, et quod ad sinistram hoc ad dexteram fiat, eo quod in auctoribus huius uitae mutata conditio est. (Eastman, 2015, p. 54,56)[27]

> So, Peter's head-over-cross death here does not just signify a birth into his afterlife; his upside down death is analogised with the head-first direction of birth. Adam's fall to earth (head-first), according to Genesis, is synonymous with a laborious and painful birth, which in most cases also happens head-first. The direction of the fall = the direction of the birth = the direction of Peter's death. Thus, an infant, just as the dying Peter, and all men (since they are burdened with original sin) takes on a twisted perspective in which left becomes right, up becomes down, front becomes back, etc. Perhaps this is also how Matthew 18.2–4 is to be understood when it says: "And having summoned a child, He stood him in the middle of them, and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are **turned-around and become like children**, you will never enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (Magill, 2011). By returning to the position of his birth when he dies, Peter achieves divine grace.

Recapitulation

At the beginning of this chapter, we formed two hypotheses from two quotations by Octavio Paz: on the one hand, that life and death are movements that run antagonistically, and that death is birth and birth is death, on the other. By adopting

Vorderen, werdet ihr nicht ins Himmelreich eingehen'. Dies aber aus der Vorsehung des Herrn habe ich euch zur Kenntnis gegeben" (Döhler, 2017, p. 137,139).

[27] "You are always upright, always exalted, always on high. We are according to the flesh children of the first man, who let go of his original purpose on the earth. **His fall is illustrated by the form of human birth, for we are born so that we appear to be inclined toward going down to the earth**. What is on the right is on the left, and what is on the left is on the right, because the condition that existed for the originators of this life has been distorted" (Eastman, 2015, p. 55,57).

the label of 'neo-baroque author' for Paz from the secondary literature[28], I have asked how baroque authors of different disciplines answer the question of the direction of dying and being born. Are they the key to understanding, to concretising what Paz means by "movimientos antagónicos"? What are (widespread or individual) opinions about which direction of movement is present? Does it matter at all? What would be the line of argument? Indeed, the question of direction seems to have a threefold ancestry: a medical, a literary, and a religious one. Although the discourses partly coincide (for example, the medical and the religious), the birth and death accounts are treated and negotiated differently in the textual testimonies: medical texts of different ages (beginning with Pliny up to his early modern reception by Núñez de Coria, Mercurio and Fontecha) derive from the definition of a head-first natural birth a death or burial rite that corresponds to the logic that life and death are opposed to each other. In Calderón's *El Príncipe Constante*, this idea is also echoed, but here it is not about the direction the foetus takes at birth, but about the orientation of that matter (the cradle, the world or, metaphorically, the midwife's hands), which either receives it palms up, or deny it continued life on earth, palms down. What is underlined as a "natural" process here is not birth head first and belly forward but the inviting gesture of receiving something with the palms up, or the rejection of something with the palms down. Moreover, the approaching death of the character reminds us of the ever-present danger of dying in childbirth as a mother or as a child.

The picture given to us by the texts discussed so far is by no means consistent or free of contradictions: sometimes the direction of dying is mentioned, sometimes the direction of being buried, and again another time the direction of crucifixion (whereby the latter could stand for the process of dying). These are, of course, essential differences that come to light in the process of close-reading and that must be accounted for. It has been shown, however, that on the one hand, by recourse to the same authors (Pliny), and by the position that these passages occupy in the complete works (a marginal one), dying, death, and martyrdom, respectively, were treated as synonyms. It is just argued differently: because life and death are *opposites*, according to one strand of argument, cultural practices (such as burial) are geared to ensure that the directions of leaving are also opposites. We find this argumentation in Pliny, Fontecha, Núñez, and Mercurio. Yet, the other side seems to argue: being born *is* dying, and dying *is* being born, they differ only in that one comes into the world head-first and leaves it feet first. We find this line of argument in the texts about the crucifixion of Apostle Peter. Both lines of evidence are contrary and yet conclude in the same way because the analogy between birth and death still remains. The directions remain the same in all discourses – from Latin to vernacular authors, from religious to profane writers. If the directions are reversed, i.e. if a child came into the world with its feet first, it resulted for many centuries in death; or, led into a paradox: if one dies with the head first, this means that one, provided that he is Jesus, is not mortal at all. In some cases, we have already touched on it, the discourses seem to merge quite seamlessly. Paz's linking of birth, death, and the movement of falling for example takes on a new

[28] Cf. for example (Song, 1998).

dimension of meaning when seen in relation to the falling and birth of the first man, Adam.[29]

Being born and dying – a labyrinthine, narrow enterprise

Paz's thinking in analogies and his reflections on the processualism of birth and death do not end here. To be able to follow him further, we must first go into more detail about those passages in *El laberinto de la soledad* in which Paz characterizes the female body. At one point he writes:

> En un mundo hecho a la imagen de los hombres, la mujer es sólo un reflejo de la voluntad y querer masculinos. Pasiva, se convierte en diosa, amada, ser que encarna los elementos estables y antiguos del universo: la tierra, la madre y virgen; activa, es siempre función, medio, **canal**. (Paz, 1993, p. 171)

And also in the further text the female gender is characterized as an "indifferent manifestation of life, as channel of cosmic appetite" (1993, p. 172, my translation). Does the woman as "channel" here merely indicate her function as "instrumento de transcendencia" (Panico, 1980, p. 558)? Or is it not rather the case that, using canal here it semantically resonates with vagina, including its function as a birthing canal? Puro Morales places Paz's (invariably male) view of the female body in a larger context:

> […] [N]o debemos olvidarque [sic!] 'la mujer es el anverso del ser' el no-ser. Ser y no-ser a un tiempo, **vida-muerte**, dualidad de contrarios que para Paz 'nos exalta, nos hace **salir** de nosotros y, simultáneamente, nos hace **volver**. **Caer**: volver a ser. Hambre de vida y hambre de muerte. Salto de la energía, disparo, expansión del ser: pereza, inercia cósmica, **caer** en el sin fin". (Puro Morales, 1982, p. 146)

Here we encounter again the familiar components characterising death or birth: the simultaneity of life and death, the conflicting directions of the movements ("salir" and "volver") and falling as the direction of movement in each case. We are dealing with a metonymic / metaphoric relation here: being born = dying = falling = woman = channel whereby the latter is to be understood also in the sexual sense, thus vagina[30].

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[29] Although we can attribute this only to coincidence, it is Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, of all people, who caused the crucifixion of Peter in the apocryphal Acts; that son of Nero, of whom Pliny the Elder claims to have been born feet first. Because of him persons born with difficulty were named *Agrippa*e.
The birth stories (that is, under what circumstances the birth took place) are passed down among the Romans in their middle names. Besides Agrippa, other examples are Optier (born after the death of the father), Lucius (born at sunrise), Caesar (cut from the womb of the dead mother), etc. (Obladen, 2021, p. 57). There is no mention of this designation in *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* by Covarrubias (1611) and the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726– 1738), which is why we may assume that there was no longer any equivalent for this custom in the early modern period.

[30] Cf. for example the poem "Cuerpo a la vista" where Paz describes the place between the legs of a woman as a "well". This is how the complete stanza of this poem goes: "**Entre tus piernas hay un pozo de agua dormida**, / bahía donde el mar de noche se aquieta, negro caballo de espuma, / cueva al pie de la montaña que esconde un tesoro, boca del horno donde se hacen las hostias, / sonrientes labios entreabiertos y atroces, / nupcias de la luz y de la sombra, de lo visible y lo invisible / (allí espera la carne su resurrección y el día de la vida perdurable" (Paz

Just as the first part of this chapter explored the nature of falling into death and birth and its direction, in the last part we shall examine what this "channel" looks like. What is the process of dying and being born like? Are there also Early Modern points of reference for this?

According to Paz, the way of being born and dying is also comparable to the path through a labyrinth, and all the hurdles and disorientation that prevail within[31]: "hemos sido expulsados del centro del mundo y **estamos condenados a buscarlo por selvas y desiertos por los vericuetos y subterráneos del Laberinto**" (Paz, 1993, p. 357). At the end of the "labyrinth of loneliness" awaits the "completeness, the reunion", the "unity with the world" (1993, p. 342, my translations) from which one is expelled at birth. Life, according to Paz, is therefore synonymous with a search for this motherly centre, and also with the search for the centre of the universe and the restoration of that completeness that was lost through the separation from the mother (1993, p. 356). Paz's argument, however, corresponds to the typical discourse that characterized early psychoanalytic discourse from a male perspective. The return to the female womb, toward which human life is nostalgically directed, is as enigmatic and ambivalently charged as the female sex itself. (Hu)man(s) can never be sure: "la mujer, ¿esconde la muerte o la vida?, ¿en qué piensa? ¿piensa acaso?, ¿siente de veras?" (1993, p. 203) It now only requires a small step to reach the assertion that the maternal and the feminine not only oscillate ambivalently between life and death, but are death *per se* (1993, p. 199). At the end of the labyrinth awaits both, "la matriz" *and* "la huesa", the womb *and* the tomb (1993, p. 198).

Baroque opinions about the nature of the path at birth and death are more simplistic than Paz's idea of the labyrinth. There is essentially only agreement that dying and being born are synonymous with overcoming a narrow passage. Sor Juana, for example, pleads in the sixth "Ofrecimiento para el Santo Rosario de Quince Ministerios que se ha de rezar el día de los Dolores de Nuestra Señora la Virgen María" (n.d.) about the death of Jesus:

> ¡Oh, María, mar de gracia y de virtudes y ahora mar inmenso de dolores, donde entraron como ríos caudalosos las penas y tormentos! Nosotros os ofrecemos estas diez avemarías y un padrenuestro, al indecible dolor y al atrocísimo [sic!] cuchillo que penetró vuestra angustiada alma […] cuando visteis ir inclinando la cabeza apartarse aquella alma sacratísima de vuestro Hijo de su atormentado cuerpo, entregándola a su Eterno Padre: […] Por el cual dolor, Señora y Madre nuestra, os suplicamos nos deis esfuerzo y valor para morir a las cosas del mundo y vivir sólo en el Señor, para que en llegando la precisa y temida hora de la muerte,

& Deltoro, 2009, p. 57). In the following chapter, we discuss the metaphors *cave, mouth, lips* for female sexual organs in more detail.

[31] Paz's labyrinth considerations are not an isolated case. According to Hennessy, the labyrinth as a symbol of birth has a long tradition in many cultures: : "Like Pachamama and the Woman of Willendorf, the labyrinth is an important part of material culture used in the rituals of birth. Unlike a maze, which has multiple sometimes dead-end paths, a labyrinth is unicursal with a single path leading towards a center. Labyrinths have been used for various reasons in numerous cultures over the course of history, identified in the cultural and religious contexts of the Native Americans, Ancient Greeks, Chinese, Scandinavians, South Asia, and Ancient Peru, among others. Yet they are also used in the contemporary context of childbirth. Pregnant women visualize the labyrinth as a sacred path of emergence for both mother and child. In this context, labyrinths represent a mother's emotional and physical passage towards her child and can be used ritualistically by the pregnant woman as she prepares to labor and birth her baby" (Hennessey, 2021, pp. 11–12).

> nos halle apercibidos, y confortados con vuestra intercesión, tengamos valor y conformidad para **pasar aquel estrecho paso**, que esperamos en la misericordia de vuestro Hijo y vuestra protección, sea para pasar a mejor vida, donde vivís y reináis para siempre, etc. (Juana Inés et al., 2001, p. 510, vv. 100–121)

With this view of the dying process as a narrow path, Sor Juana is no exception. Martin Luther (1483–1546) in his *Sermon zur Bereitung zum Sterben*[32] (1519) offers us the most explicit and detailed analogy between dying and being born:

> […] Zum Dritten / Wan so yderman urlaub auff erden gebe / Soll man sich dan alleyn zu gott richten / da der weg / des sterbens / sich auch hin keret / und uns furet. Und **hie hebt an / die enge pforte / der schmal steyg / zum leben** / des muß sich eyn yglicher [?]lich erwegen / dann er ist woll fast **enge** / er ist aber **nit langk** / und geht hie zu / gleych wie ein kind / auß der cleynen wonung seyner mutter leyb / mit gefar und engsten geboren wird / yn dießen weyten hymell und erden / das ist auff diße welt. **Alßo geht der mensch durch die enge pforte des todts** / auß diesem leben / und wie woll der hymell / und die welt / da wir itzt yn leben / groß und weyt angesehen wirt. […] Drumb muß man das glauben / unnd **an der leiplichen gepurt eyns kinds lernen** / als Christ sagt. **Eyn weyb / wan es gepirt so leydet es angst** / **wan sie aber geneßen ist / so gedenckt sie der angst nymmer** / die weyll ein mensch geporn ist von ihr / in die welt / alßo / **ym sterben so auch muß man sich der angst erwegen / und wissen / das darnach eyn großer raum und freud seyn wirt**. (Luther, 1983, p. 162)

Luther finds four elements that enable him to relate the process of birth and death: i) the narrowness and thinness of the path, in birth as in death; ii) its brevity; and iii) the anxiety felt both at birth as well as in the run-up to death, and which is iv) rewarded with great joy in birth as in death (we will deal with the emotional aspect in chapter 4). Death does therefore not appear as final, but rather as a birth into a new existence, the beginning of an eternal life (Mühlparzer, 2021).

The metaphor of a "narrow passage" can not only be found in texts, but also in pictures and their interpretations. A narrow path as the way of birth and the way of death is also part of recent interpretive approaches to El Greco's (1541–1614) *El Entierro del Señor de Orgaz* (1586–1588) (Toledo).

In the centre of the painting is a miracle, according to which at the funeral of the Count of Orgaz, St. Augustine and St. Stephen personally descended from heaven to attend his burial and to take the soul (depicted as an eidolon, a small foetus or newborn) with them into heaven. Gonzalo Ruiz de Toledo, the count of Orgaz (1256?–1323) distinguished himself as a particularly benevolent figure during his lifetime and enjoyed saint-like status even after his death. Numerous elements in the picture indicate a funeral: the processual cross, the presence of some clergymen, the six large candles

[32] The general basis for the comparison of life in this world with life in uterus is Seneca's Epistle 102, which states: "Quemadmodum decem mensibus tenet nos maternus uterus et praeparat non sibi, sed[10] illi loco, in quem videmur emitti iam idonei spiritum trahere et in aperto durare; sic per hoc spatium, quod ab infantia patet in senectutem, in alium maturescimus partum. Alia origo nos expectat"

"As the mother's womb holds us for ten months, making us ready, not for the womb itself, but for the existence into which we seem to be sent forth when at last we are fitted to draw breath and live in the open; just so, throughout the years extending between infancy and old age, we are making ourselves ready for another birth. A different beginning, a different condition, await us" (Seneca the Younger, 1917, pp. 180–181).

(Schroth, 1982, p. 1). Yet, on closer examination, there are also some details that recall a birth, as a brief overview of how the image was received will show. The first mention of a childbirth / a maternal vulva in the context of El Greco's work appears in the Spanish Wikipedia article in 2005, without indication of the source. Here, in the subchapter "Dimensión teológica del cuadro", we read:

> Entre el cielo y la tierra, el lazo de unión es el alma inmortal del señor de Orgaz, figurada **como un feto** que es llevado al cielo por manos de un ángel, a través de una especie de **bulba** [sic!] **materna que le dará a luz** a la vida eterna del cielo. **La muerte aparece así como un parto, como un alumbramiento a la luz eterna en la que viven los santos**. Trance doloroso, pero lleno de esperanza. (Wikipedia, 2005)

In 2009, this interpretation appears again in the blog of the Argentinean art history professor Alfredo Benavidez Bedoya. From Bedoya's point of view, this visual expression is not only manifested in the structure of the painting, but also allegorically. Here we find the expression "narrow passage" for the first time.

> El alma del difunto Conde es introducido en un **estrecho pasaje** que asemeja claramente al **espacio vaginal**, el alma es representada como un niño inocente siguiendo la tradición bizantina y es la Virgen la que, autorizada por Jesús y con su mano derecha, permite la llegada (o la vuelta en realidad) de la parte divina del Conde, la espiritual, mientras su cuerpo es depositado por San Agustín y San Esteban en la tierra para su corrupción. El alma volviendo como un niño indica que es un alma proba la del Señor Conde, como lo certifica la Iglesia que encarga la obra al Greco. **Es un parto a la inversa, un regreso al origen**, abandonando el cuerpo que sólo sirvió para transitar la vida. Las nubes sugieren **piernas**, rodillas, masas **que se abren para permitir el paso del niño**, el paso del alma; mientras que **dos grandes formas vaginales** se dibujan, una para el parto invertido y la otra para el depósito que los Santos hacen en la tierra del cuerpo del Señor Conde. (Benavidez Bedoya, 2009)

In addition, when the passage that connects the lower with the upper half of the image is described as "**conducto** simulando la vagina maternal" (Ortega Gutiérrez, 2022, sc. 6:01-6:31), we see analyses of this work designate the route of death and birth as "channel". The soul of the deceased, as a child carried by an angel, thus travels a path "a través de una vulva materna que le dará a luz" (Sanz & Thibout, 2014, sec. 17:10-17:21), "una vulva genitora" that opens "genitalmente" (García Álvarez, 2014, p. 99) and leads to the brightly lit upper part of the painting. "Trance **doloroso**, pero lleno de **esperanza**" (2014, sec. 17:10-17:21), writes Sanz and closes the circle to Luther by referring to the emotional aspect.

To associate the passage of death with the birth canal or the vagina is therefore by no means only a fantasy of baroque authors, artists, and theologians like Sor Juana, El Greco, or Luther. In contemporary literature and art criticism, it can be found both hidden (Paz), and made explicit (interpretations of El Greco's work). The outlined interpretations of El Greco's masterpiece become part of a discourse about the painting, as it is mainly conducted on the Internet and especially in non-academic circles. It seems that already in the baroque period, the nature of the passage of dying was a cultural 'enigma' that contemporary meditations about the topic – be it in

literature and art or in art criticism – are still trying to solve. Asking about this process retains its relevance as a question worth asking. The answers are as similar as they are different and undogmatic: dying is as much a labyrinthine endeavour (Paz) as it is a narrow (Sor Juana, El Greco, Luther), short (Luther), and painful (El Greco, Luther) one. As we have already seen with the medical texts in all these cases, a *natural* event (the passing through the birth canal at the time of birth) serves as the occasion to derive *cultural* imaginings (the death path). The conception of the passage of death in analogy with the birth canal, fills a blank of the human imagination and/or the empirical value. Because we lack the experiences and accounts of the one extreme of life (death) we approach them with images of the familiar (even if subconscious) experience of birth. The imagination of the process of death as a narrow channel, path, or "valley", as Pérez Borbujo calls it, is thereby quite causally related to the fear and the hope felt at birth, and before death. To experience fear of death means to perpetuate the borderline experience under maximum tension that a child feels at birth from the moment it passes the narrow cervix (Pérez Borbujo, 2022, pp. 102–103). Thus, the perception of death as a narrow channel is the inverted image of the intrauterine or vaginal environment.

Therefore the "constantes y paradójicas analogías entre morir y nacer" (2022, p. 111). To be expelled. "Ser arrojado". The fear and violence implied in it, as part of the birth experience, in turn, motivates the question about the direction and nature of the path one takes in dying.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have tackled texts and works of art from two different epochs with questions about the processualism of birth and death and let them enter into a fruitful dialogue with each other. If living and dying are, as Paz claims, two opposing movements, what *kind* of movement is it? In which *direction* does it go? What is the nature of the path? In which direction are you born and in which direction do you die? The sources discussed here provided a wide range of answers. Dying (or being buried) happens feet first. This idea derives from the birth position, be it through the birth positions in real life as depicted in the medical tracts, or as a reference to the biblical, religious canon of images, where then the focus is not on the individual birth but on collective images such as Adam's fall and the resulting painful births. Only Sor Juana's line of reasoning does not draw a parallel between the death position (of Peter) and the birth. She uses the contrast man-God as a reason why Jesus and Peter cannot die in the same way (i.e. in the same direction).

A special position, in the full sense of the word, is occupied by Calderón's *El Príncipe Constante*, which is more about the direction of the hands with which a man is received on earth and their metaphorical position in which he pushes him out of life again. And in El Greco's painting it becomes even more ambivalent: because dying is depicted here as birth, the child (the soul of the deceased count) wanders head-first into heaven

(will the mortal remains of the count seen in the lower half of the picture then be buried feet first)?

As a narrow path, steep gate, narrow channel, or labyrinth, the nature of the path of birth and death is more varied compared to its direction. The birth canal serves as a template for these metaphors. As we can see, both the position of the dying person and the type of route one takes are defined by circumstances of birth. Thus, when Nünning refers to birth and death as "cultural imperatives" (Nünning, 2013, p. 166, my translation), this does not apply to the processual aspect of these two extremes. It is not only culture which determines how to deal with birth and death. Above all, the *natural* conditions at birth (position of the fetus, the birth canal) cause people to draw *cultural* conclusions about death.

Here, after all, we can once again tie in with biographical theories. What Bernhard Fetz, following Dilthey, describes for the process of understanding with regard to (self-)biography, namely as "Wiederfinden vom Ich im Du" (Fetz, 2009, p. 9) could also be applied to this topic: understanding death and approaching it conceptually, means finding death in birth. The analogy between the process of dying and the process of being born is thus always accompanied by a process of making sense of life (von Felden, 2020, p. 26). And this sense making process always happens from a set "end point" (Braun & Stiegler, Bernd, 2012, p. 10) that necessarily lies *before* the death of that person who wants to understand 'death'. Death eludes one's perception. In this, biographies and other sources that want to study life in its entirety have something in common: despite the high extratextual referentiality of biographies and their claim to factuality (Hoffmann & Waburg, 2021, p. 12), biographies must resort to tools that make the subjective experience of death comprehensible.

Apart from the epochal division into baroque and neo-baroque, the texts presented in this chapter can be distinguished according to another criterion. Some of them belong to an epoch in which so-called "biography generators" were operating (Braun & Stiegler, Bernd, 2012, p. 13, my translation). The church, one powerful "biography generator", until late modern times, could offer schemes (e.g. the scheme of the four ages of life) that were then adopted as frameworks in autobiographical texts and intended to convey a moral message (Burrow, 1986, p. 3). Octavio Paz, on the other hand, found himself in an era in which the construction of the self as an entity was confronted with existential ruptures. Perhaps this explains the affinity to the concepts of birth and death of the baroque period. Its biography-generating institutions could perhaps fill this 'void' in modernity. However, while Paz's concepts of death have been analyzed mainly in the context of his Quevedo reception, the aspect of the analogy of birth and death has so far received little attention and seems to be better explained by Paz's Sor Juana reception[33] than that of Quevedo. Paz's meditations on birth and death go beyond the *cotidie morimur* topos and enrich the death and birth conceptions of the baroque by the analogy of birth and death.

[33] Paz's preoccupation with Sor Juana began in 1950 and is best illustrated in his book *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe* (1982). But the nun also appears in later works by Paz, for example in *El laberinto de la soledad* and *Las peras del olmo* (1957) (De Rivers, 1985, p. 417).

This is also the context in which Paz's 'mimicking' of Sor Juana and Sor Juana's 'mimicking' of Saint Peter (as we have indicated elsewhere in this chapter) must be understood. In no case, of course, is it possible to speak of an imitation as a direct line of reception. Rather, it emphasizes the universality and timelessness of the thinking in analogies regarding the process of birth and death as well as its directions. In the broadest sense, "mimicking" refers to the authors themselves, *their* being born, and their dying. As human beings, these writers experienced births and their own deaths, without knowing, whether their own experience of death resembles the reflections that they have made in their texts.

3 The Surrounding

> "Alles begann mit der Geburt, aber 'niemand kommt auf die welt / und weiß wie es geht'.
> Nur der Arzt sagt gleich, sie sei zu Großem imstande, und meint damit den Hunger.
> Und so ist ihr eigener Körper von Beginn an Krisen- und Kriegsgebiet. […]
> Ein Ort der Liebe und der Sehnsucht und der Heilung –
> der (Ur)Sehnsucht nach einer Mutter vielleicht, ‚neben der einen die ich habe.'"
> (Elspaß, 2022, covertext)

"¿Qué se hace a la hora de morir? […] ¿Qué es el rito de esta ceremonia? ¿Quién vela la agonía? ¿Quién estira la sábana? ¿Quién aparta el espejo sin empañar?" (Castellanos, 1998, p. 138) Rosario Castellanos (1925–1974) asks these questions in her poem "Amanecer" (1960). A justification is following: "Porque a esta hora ya no hay madre y deudos" (1998, p. 138).

Motherhood is a central topic in Castellanos's work and repeatedly touches on, as this poem indicates, the theme of death, death as birth, and birth as death. This chapter asks about the scenery, the setting of the analogy of birth and death: where does it occur? Where do we have to look for it? In what *surroundings* does it take place? Locating the analogy and asking about its baroque ancestors is the aim of this chapter.

Before we explore Castellanos's novel *Oficio de Tinieblas* (1962) and its baroque parallels in Calderón de la Barca's plays, Castellano's positioning towards the concept of the neo-baroque movement in Latin America could be of interest, given that it coincided with her artistic period as a writer. Castellanos's texts have been analysed, albeit rarely, in terms of 20th-century baroque[34]. The fact that the parallels between Castellanos's work and the baroque have not been better explored may be due to her own positioning towards the neo-baroque or the baroque of the 20th century. Contrary to writers like Fuentes or Carpentier, Castellanos positions herself critically towards the revival of 'baroque language' and the baroque, which in her view is primarily a stylistic term: a style characterised by its artificiality, its exclusivity, its elitism, and its contribution to erasing local existences. She reconstructs such local realities and lives in her novel *Oficio de Tinieblas*. *Oficio de Tinieblas*, set in Mexico, recounts the parallel lives of people of two neighbouring, but separate spheres. One sphere is city life in Ciudad Real where the privileged Ladino family of Leonardo Cifuentes lives. The other sphere is the rural village of San Juan Chamula, home to the indigenous Tzotzil people. Based on a historic event (the crucifixion of a child) but translated into the background of the land reform by Lázaro Cárdenas, the story recounts the great resistance against the dominant society that this land reform provoked. As the son of a Tzotzil woman

[34] Corinne Machoud Nivón, for example interpreted Castellanos's *Balún Canán* by adapting Sarduy's concept of "ciudad barroca" (Nivón, 1994, p. 306). Nivón sees the "ruptura sorpresiva" (Sarduy, 1999, p. 1227) , the "de-situating" of a "baroque city" in the protagonists of *Balún Canán*.

who was raped by landowner Leonardo Cifuentes, Domingo connects these spheres of racist society. The seer ("ilol") of the Tzotziles, Catalina Díaz Puiljá, whose own marriage remains childless and whose social standard suffers from her barrenness, adopts Domingo – "el que nació cuando el eclipse" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 67) – and becomes the prophet of her people, advocating for their salvation. Her prophecies, however, constantly intermingle with her role as a mother or the loss thereof. Taken as a whole, the novel describes a double process of 'othering', a double banishment into exile: on the one hand through the suppression of an indigenous people, on the other hand through othering the 'second', 'other', female sex (Guerra, 1995, p. 192).

These parallel and related oppressions that Castellanos explores are reflected in the topography of the novel which assigns closed spaces to women. Three of the main characters, Doña Isabel (Leonardo Cifuentes's wife), Julia (his lover), but above all Isabel's daughter Idolina, are bound in their existence to the manorial houses of their husbands or fathers (Finnegan, 2000, p. 70). In the almost hermetic enclosure of their four walls, they experience their silencing and isolation, which in turn is reflected in the "hermetismo de su lenguaje en su modalidad de monólogo interior" (Guerra, 1995, p. 192). In addition to almost 'hermetic' rooms and buildings in *Oficio de Tinieblas*, we also encounter closed-off 'body worlds' in the novel. Protagonist Catalina is infertile, which exposes her to a constant fear of being (morally rightful in their value system) abandoned by Pedro González Winiktón – her husband and Judge of their indigenous community. She is "una 'ilol' cuyo regazo es arcón de los conjuros. Temblaba aquel a quien veía con mal ceño; iba reconfortado aquel a quien sonreía. Pero el vientre de Catalina siguió cerrado. Cerrado como una nuez"[35] (Castellanos, 2009, p. 22).

The description of Pedro Winiktón's infertility or childlessness also contains the image of a hole, a cave: "Winiktón se consideró semejante al **tallo hueco**; al rastrojo que se quema después de la recolección. Era comparable también a la cizaña. Porque no tenía hijos" (2009, p. 21). Apart from body holes, however, the most important hole in the novel is the one Catalina discovers in Tzajal-hemel. In this cave she establishes a cult around Gods, or "saints", thereby causing a conflict between the representatives of the Christian faith and the indigenous followers of the 'pagan' cult.

Into the depths of death and maternal wombs

Castellanos based this kind of syncretism on historical events in Mexico where cave cults flourished until colonisation and Christianisation put an end to these practices (Rincón Mautner, 2005, p. 119). Reports from the Early Colonial Period testify to these cave rituals and portray them as mysterious practices of devil worship (2005, p. 119). Other sources, too, attest to cult pilgrimages to caves (as also portrayed with the cave

[35] This comparison appears again at the end of the novel: "Ah, cómo se conocía [el mal], cuánto tiempo se había soportado. Mujer sin hijos. **La nuez** que no se rompe para dar paso, crecimiento y plenitud a la semilla. La piedra, inmóvil, fea, con la que se tropa el caminante. El puño que aprisiona el pájaro y estrangula sus últimos estertores" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 407).

in Tzajal-hemel in the novel) and mention the veneration of stalagmites in the caves, which were honoured as saints (a phenomenon that we also find in Castellanos's text) (Heyden, 2005, p. 31; Moyes & Brady, 2012, p. 157).

In total, the cultural tradition of ritual cave use in the region of present-day Chiapas (Mexico), where *Oficio de Tinieblas* is set, is manifold and can be reconstructed to varying degrees from historical sources. Nevertheless, certain aspects seem to be common throughout Mesoamerica, a culture with one of the strongest cave traditions in the world (Moyes & Brady, 2012, p. 166). A common thread are Mesoamerican myths of the world's origins, as seen for example in the *Atlas of Duran* (second half of the 16th century), which locates the origin of humankind in a cave (depicted as the mouth of an earth monster or a jaguar) (Aguilar et al., 2005, p. 69; Moyes & Brady, 2012, p. 153). A further common perception was that rain and maize have their origin in caves, an idea that is particularly deeply rooted in places with seasonal rainfall (Moyes & Brady, 2012, p. 153; Rincón Mautner, 2005, p. 119). It is said that water, as well as other necessities of life, must come from the female-conceived Earth Goddess, who, according to the Tolteca-Chichimeca tradition, was brought into the world by the Gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipocal. In the form of serpents, they tore her body apart, formed the earth from her back, trees from her hair, caves from her eyes, and rivers, and caverns from her mouth (Moyes & Brady, 2012, p. 152; Rincón Mautner, 2005, p. 123). In addition, rock art throughout Mesoamerica represents the conceptual association of water with (genital) parts of the body: rain God imagery appears next to vulva motifs (as is the case for example in the caves Dzibichen or Pak Ch'en, Quintana Roo) (Rissolo, 2005, pp. 362–363).

Not only do water, maize, lightning, and thunder come from the openings of the Earth Goddess, other Gods and humans (or ethnic groups, respectively) were also created in caves. The God of fire, Xiuhtecuhtli, for example, is said to reside "in the middle of blue water, in the navel of the earth" (Fray Bernardino de Sahagún quoted in Heyden, 2005, p. 22) – places that ethnologists see as equivalent to a cave or a womb.

As a basis for the analysis of Castellanos's novel, however, the significance of the cave in the precolonial period must be taken even further: caves in pre-Hispanic indigenous tradition also functioned as ritual spaces for death. Moyes & Brady analyse the uses of caves for purposes related to death, noting that human remains appeared in the context of burials, sacrifices, and other deposits (Moyes & Brady, 2012, pp. 161–163). As indicated above, according to the beliefs of Guatemalan Tzotzil Maya, their clans are associated with particular caves whereby each cave represents the place where lineage emerges, as well as where they return after death (2012, p. 55). This corresponds to the Mayan cosmovision that also interprets caves as the entrance to the Underworld (or the lower region of the cosmos), which on the one hand is Tlalocan, the place of gifts and riches, and on the other Mictlan, the Land of the Dead (De la Garza Gálvez, 2017, pp. 186, 187–188; Heyden, 2005, p. 31). The predominant Gods in the Inferno Mictlan are Mictlantecuhtli y Mictecacíhuatl (otherwise called Tzontemoc) that

descend face down[36] to their dominion in order to be "devorado por la Tierra o por algún ser descarnado, o bien entrar en una Cueva; es decir, la muerte" (De la Garza Gálvez, 2017, p. 187). Tlalocan too seems to be located in a similar place: through the relationship of its deity Tláloc with water, mountains and the earth, De la Garza Gálvez proposes that Tláloc is the Earth itself, although in some aspects related to the waters and the mountains and with a generative and sustaining capacity (2017, p. 187).

We see, death and birth mutually referring to caves and caverns, or, in the words of Eva Hunt: "caves are imagined simultaneously as womb-vaginas and as mouths that swallow dead souls, entrances to the underworld from which man once emerged and to which he returns after a short journey on the earth's surface" (Hunt, 1977, p. 108).

Caves are therefore an ideal surrounding for the analogy of birth and death. But which conceptual framework allows us to confront the caves in Castellanos and, subsequently, in Calderón de la Barca? What connects the caves in their peculiarity of being an environment for both birth and death? How can we analyse caves further and give them context? In the following pages I will look at the theoretical framework of "depth" (as a constitutive characteristic of caves), conceptualized in the anthology *Tiefe. Kulturgeschichte ihrer Konzepte, Figuren und Praktiken* (edited by Dorothea Kimmich and Sabine Müller, 2020).

As one of the oldest and most important metaphors in cultural history (Müller, 2020, p. 1), *depth* covers a broad spectrum of semantic meanings:

> Bilder der Tiefe können zum einen der Bezeichnung einer unter der Oberfläche liegenden Größe oder Zone (Wesen, Ursprung, Grund, Unbewusstes, Tiefenstruktur usw.) dienen. Sie können zum anderen auf eine Bewegung verweisen, die durch ihre Ausrichtung auf ein Unten oder ein Innen gekennzeichnet ist. Dieser in die Tiefe gerichtete Gang kann als Prozess des Erkennens, Erfahrens oder Erinnerns, des Sich-Ausdrückens oder Sich-Einlassens einen Boden, einen Grund finden. Er kann aber auch – verstanden als Fall, Sturz oder endloser, labyrinthischer Abstieg – ins Bodenlose, in einen Abgrund führen. (2020, p. 2)

Cave stories best and most vividly depict the uncertainty of the depths in all their complexity (Kimmich, 2020a, p. 183): they project the darkness, irrational and threatening, and uncontrollable forces (Müller, 2020, p. 1). In a cultural topography that charges the spatial axes with valuation, "das Dunkle, Böse, Niedrige, Unedle, Wüste, Hässliche, Triebhafte und Angstmachende (aber auch die Schätze der edlen Metalle)" (Böhme, 2020, p. 47) are located below. The depths are therefore a place for the repressed, the forgotten and the taboo; as a place of protection and retreat, however, they are also an archetypal, 'maternal' figuration (Kimmich, 2020a, p. 186), the substitution of that place to which, according to Blumenberg, man, since his phylogenesis from the sea-dwelling reptile to the land-living upright Homo sapiens, has been longing to go. Instead of the return to the intrauterine / "intramarine[37]

[36] Numerous iconographic representations show how this descent of the head implies being devoured by the Earth, by some fleshless being, or entering a cave, i.e. death (Arellano, 2003b, p. 187).

[37] As a digression on intramarine depth, an excerpt from the latest novel awarded with the Deutscher Buchpreis (2022) by Kim de l'Horizon:

conditions of light and sheltered life in the homogeneous medium" (Blumenberg, 2016, p. 22, my translation) (wo)men seek, in a Freudian sense, for a return to the origin, the cave, "[in den] Schoß der *materia* als der wahren *mater* der Dinge des Lebens" (2016, p. 66).

When we speak of caves and depths, we speak of places whose spatial liminality and transitoriness are evident. As geological and archaeological sites, caves are symbols of spatial and temporal "depth" where one can have a look into humanities and the earth's past (Männlein-Robert, 2020, p. 20). When the 'above' represents "das Lichte, Gute, Hohe, Schöne, Wahre, Geistige, Erhabene (aber auch die furchterregende Leere des Weltraums)" (Böhme, 2020, p. 47) it is only the surface where knowledge gets structured, consequently implying, that there is always a tension between surface and depth (Kimmich, 2020b, p. V). However, the threshold between below and above, the entrance to the cave, is significant in a much more fundamental context: "Er ist genau der Bereich, wo sich die ambivalenten Besetzungen der Höhle am deutlichsten abbilden: Es ist die Schwelle zwischen hell und dunkel, feucht und trocken, oben und unten, Gefahr und Rettung, der Ort, wo sich Leben und Tod begegnen" (Kimmich, 2020a, p. 184). If we take this in the literal sense, it is not just the meeting point of death and birth or the place where they become equal. What we encounter through the symbol of the cave, is an indistinguishability, indecision, indivisibility between living and dead, beginning and end, knowledge and ignorance, death and salvation, freedom and captivity, nature and culture – the list could go on (2020a, pp. 183–184, 196).

"Returning to the origin": caves and depths in *Oficio de Tinieblas*

When we approach *Oficio de Tinieblas*, the ambivalent qualities of the cave are already present at the threshold. Like the above cited Böhme, Castellanos relates the depth of the body with the depths of the universe when she gives an account of Marcela's (an indigenous young woman's) emotional world after being raped by the "caxlán" Leonardo Cifuentes: "De su **cuerpo**[38], **como de un planeta distante**, le llegaba un rumor doloroso. Pero Marcela estaba lejos, flotando en una **atmósfera densa y tibia, maternal**" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 36). In this passage, the depth of the body is terrifying and painful and contrasts with an outside sphere of maternal security, this indeterminate, "dense" and "warm" place to which Marcela longs to return after the

"In der Sprache, die ich von dir geerbt habe, in meiner Muttersprache also, heißt ‚Mutter' MEER. Mensch sagt DIE MEER oder MEINE MEER […]. Für die ‚Grossmutter' GROSSMEER. Die Frauen meiner Kindheit sind ein Element, ein Ozean. […] Ich erinnere mich an ein Gefühl des Daheimseins und an ein Gefühl des Vollkommenumgebenseins. Die Liebe der Meeren war so gross, mensch entkam ihr nicht, entkommt ihr nicht, mensch schwimmt ein ganzes Leben lang, um aus den Meeren herauszukommen. […] Als Frau drohte einem [when growing up], ein Gegenstand zu bleiben oder ein Ozean zu werden. Das wollte ich nicht" (De l'Horizon, 2022, pp. 16–17).

[38] The German translation emphasises the aspect of depth even more: "Wie aus einem fernen Planeten erreichte sie aus der **Tiefe** ihres Leibes ein schmerzhaftes Rumoren" (Castellanos, 1993, p. 23).

trauma of her rape. This notion corresponds to another ambiguity of depth, which was established as early as Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*:[39] it is not always clear from which direction danger or protection is to be expected – inside or outside, above or below (Kimmich, 2020a, p. 184).

Nevertheless, temperature, as a distinguishing feature between the body cavity and the outside and in connection with sexuality and fertility, remains relevant in the further course of the narrative. After Catalina adopts Marcela following her rape, she misinterprets her husband Pedro's contradictory reaction to this decision. She relates his rejection to her (or Pedro's) infertility:

> ¿Acaso ella era culpable de no tener hijos? ¿A qué medio, por doloroso, por repugnante que fuera no había recurrido para curarse? Todos resultaron inútiles. **Tiene la matriz fría, diagnosticaban**, burlándose, las mujeres. Estaba señalada con una mala señal. Cualquiera podía despreciarla. (Castellanos, 2009, p. 45)[40]

Briefly, in anticipation of the second part of this chapter, it should be mentioned that the idea and association of a cold uterus, or an improperly tempered one, is also encountered in medical texts of the baroque period (in traditions from antiquity). Ambroise Paré (1694), in a treatise on surgery, dedicated a chapter to "The signs of a distempered womb" (Chap. XXXIX, Book 24). We read: "That woman hath too cold a womb whose flowers [her menstruation] are either stopped, or flow sparingly, and those pale and not well colored" (Parey, 1694, pp. 626–627). If the uterus is too cold, too hot, too moist, or dry, this can prevent conception. The womb, as a sensitive organ, can therefore be influenced by nutrition, also to prevent female sterility (Usunáriz, 2021, p. 677). The Spanish doctor Luis Lobera de Ávila gives the following dietary suggestions: "Ansí mesmo, las mujeres que desean haber hijos hanse de guardar de comer vinagre y cosas agrias, porque alende que **secan** la simiente y **la enfrían** […], son dañosas a la madre y ansí impiden la preñez" (Lobera de Ávila, 1551, fol. 36r).

The characteristics of dampness and coldness with which the uterus is generally associated according to Galen's doctrine of the humors, are again encountered in the further course of *Oficio de Tinieblas*. This time as a description of the cave of Tzajal-hemel. Domingo, Marcela's son, with whom Catalina had tried to compensate for her childlessness, becomes increasingly distant from her and leaves her unbearable lonely. He spends more time with Pedro, learns farming from him, and accompanies him to his meetings. This makes him privy to a male discourse excluding Catalina and driving her further into isolation.

> Cuando los pensamientos duelen, el olor se asoma a la cara. A todas partes: al pastoreo, al río, al jacal, a la iglesia, Catalina llevaba sobre sí el sello de

[39] In this first philosophical conception of the cave in the *Allegory of the Cave*, Plato "desacralizes" the cave. The revelation of the divine happens *outside* the cave. Leaving the cave holds a disillusionment, understanding, *desengaño* (Männlein-Robert, 2020, p. 27,30). In Plato, the cave is for the first time no longer a place of longing but a place where the return inevitably brings death.

[40] In Castellanos's *Balún-Canán* (1957) it is not the coldness of the uterus that inhibits pregnancy but its dryness: "Juana no tuvo hijos. Porque un brujo le había secado el vientre. Era un balde que macerara las hierbas que le aconsejaban las mujeres y que bebiera su infusion. En balde que fuera, ciertas noches del mes, a abrazarse a la ceiba de la majada. El oprobio había caído sobre ella" (Castellanos, 2004, p. 221).

> sufrimiento. […] El círculo de aislamiento que rodeaba a Catalina se cerró. Y ella quedó en delirio que le llenaba los ojos de imágenes absurdas, con aquella hambre que la hacía desenterrar recuerdos. […] ¡Si se pudiera **regresar hasta el principio**! (Castellanos, 2009, p. 248)

Returning to the origin in this case means returning to her infancy, returning to a cave, that is full of darkness and, above all, cold:

> Correr por los montes, trepar entre las peñas y de pronto el pasmo de aquel encuentro. La cueva oculta entre la maleza. Rodó Catalina lastimándose con los guijarros, con los espinos. Miró la breve abertura sin atreverse a entrar. Se retiró de allí asustada. Pero volvería. Volvía con Lorenzo. Un hombre es un amparo. Juntos, los dos hermanos apartaron las hierbas. Entró él adelante. Ella atisbaba en el borde, medrosa. Quería gritar, huir. Pero lo siguió. Su corazón palpitaba con tal ímpetu que la cueva entera resonó como esos tambores lúgubres del templo. Después ¡qué **oscuridad y qué frescura**! (2009, p. 249)

In this passage (exactly in the middle of the book) Catalina encounters the cave she discovered as a child with her brother Lorenzo. The experience inside the cave, the shadowy silhouettes of ferns and stones, leaves the brother forever dumb and mentally challenged. The rediscovery of the cave in *Oficio de Tinieblas* thus also corresponds in this aspect to the concept of depth (or the cave narrative) which associates entering a cave with looking into the past (geologically, archaeologically, anthropologically). In this case, with the return to Catalina's past. At her first encounter, the cave seems to be the source of disaster: "Se queda aquí, ante la boca de la caverna. Sabe, oscuramente, que **el día en que trasponga este umbral, morirá**" (2009, p. 249). This reflects her first trip to the cave as a child:

> Tengo que andar a tientas, como en el fondo de una cueva. ¡De una cueva! Resuena el eco en el hueco de la piedra. Caminan lagartijas, alimañas de humedad. Resbalan mis pies en la laja fría. Y me penetra hasta los huesos esta tiniebla mojada. **Es igual que si me hubiera yo muerto y me hubieran enterrado** envuelta en un petate viejo. Y no llevo conmigo al perro que ha de ayudarme a atravesar los ríos. El perro, el tigre de San Roque, protector de los brujos. Nadie, nadie. No se puede avanzar. Voy a **pudrirme** aquí, **en la tumba**, **en la cueva**. (2009, p. 247)

Soon, the cult enacted by Catalina in the cave of Tzajal-hemel replaces the initial wetness and darkness as well as the seemingly imminent danger with the scent of fresh flowers, candlelight, and warmth (2009, p. 270). People from far and wide bring offerings to the stone formation. The idol gives voice to these stone-shaped Gods to make their prophecies and promises audible in her enigmatic, pre-linguistic chant which she performs, "hierática como un cadaver" (2009, p. 328). However, the priest quickly puts an end to the cult. After a short arrest for worshipping the 'wrong' deity, Catalina falls into a deep loneliness. The loss of her emotional bond to Pedro and Domingo, in fact, the loss of the child she tried to compensate for with Domingo, catches up with her. She returns to the cave and finds herself once again in the timeless state so characteristic of caves and depths. Like the first time she was alone in the cave, "[…] las horas pasaban, noche y día, iguales adentro de la cueva"(2009, p. 252). In the

twilight she loses track of time and oscillates between sleep and being awake, between life and death.

> Catalina quedó sola. Como en sueños oyó los últimos pasos del último que la abandonaba. Habría querido gritar, asir, detener a ese desconocido que se llevaba, irrevocablemente, su aliento y su razón de vivir, pero sabía que era inútil. Permaneció quieta, en la misma postura en que estaba cuando derrumbaron los ídolos y los raptaron: con el rostro humillado contra el suelo, respirando un vaho impuro, una emanación malsana de juncia pisoteada y cera consumida. **Mucho tiempo estuvo allí y nunca supo si dormida o despierta, si difunta o viva**. (2009, p. 295)

Her condition resembles that of the Gods before she rediscovered the cave and they were resurrected: "Míralo [al Dios] allí, dormido, mudo. […] Dios, el dios que viniste a reverenciar, duerme. **Duerme como un recién nacido. O como un muerto**" (2009, p. 271). The narrator is not sure which simile to use to describe the circumstances and searches for words. In the Tzajal-hemel grotto, as in other places of depth, the dictum of indistinguishability holds sway.

After the first desecration of the cave Gods by the representatives of the Catholic Church, the Gods 'die', but soon Catalina forms, gives birth to, new idols in the crevices of her cave.

> […] [A]lgo estaba **gestándose**. No lo advirtió en su corazón ni en su cabeza. Fueron **sus manos, más ciegas**, más humildes, pero más obedientes, las que **empezaron a buscar a tientas una materia para palpar la forma que ya habían presentido**. ¿Cómo tener presente otra vez la imagen esfumada de los ídolos? Cada hora, cada día pasaban, cumpliendo su tarea de tachar un rasgo de aquellas facciones, de trastrocar una expresión, de confundir un atributo. Y Catalina, ansiando detener esa corriente, **hundió los manos en el barro**[41] y allí **la punta de sus dedos fue imprimiendo** lo que le dictaba una memoria imprecisa, contradictoria, infiel. […] La fiebre, la fiebre de los días de plenitud, volvió a poseerla. Pero ahora ya no la golpeaba como el viento encerrado sino que la erguía en el esfuerzo, la iluminaba en la **concepción**, la sostenía en la conformidad. Y no fue descanso lo que tuvo Catalina cuando, al fin, la obra de sus manos correspondió – aunque imperfectamente – a las exigencias de su memoria. **No fue descanso sino un frenesí, ese jadeo de la hembra que está a punto de dar a luz**. (2009, pp. 320–321)

Catalina becomes the mother and "comadre" (2009, p. 327) of her people. Once again she takes them by the hand "como a un niño, para conducirlo" (2009, p. 322). Like the Virgin Mary, after a long period of sterility, she is rewarded with the "God(s)" she gives birth to, "sucia de barro y no de sangre, como las otras hembras" (2009, p. 327; Davies, 2000, n.p.). Whilst Catalina looks into her own past by returning to the cave, the Gods also "miraban dentro de **las entrañas del tiempo**" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 328), exerting their power on humanity with the help of Catalina's voice. The parallel between Catalina's adopted motherhood with Domingo and the modelling / mothering of the idols becomes evident. The birth of the Gods is only a repetition of

[41] Compare Jehova in the texts of the First Testament: God creates Israel on the potter's wheel, but also gives birth to it (Staubli & Schroer, 2014, p. 58).

a sacrifice and a modelling process that she has already undertaken with Domingo: "[…] Esas manos que fueron **modelándolo** [a Domingo], día tras día, con más paciencia que a los ídolos […]" (2009, p. 413) In order to receive new divine messages, Catalina turns herself into a vacuum, a vessel (2009, pp. 320, 405).

Soon, however, the story renews the association of caves and depths with death. First, Father Miguel Mandujano meets his death in the cave. He has travelled to the cave again to punish the *ilol* and is violently killed by the rest of the mob on Catalina's command (2009, p. 340). At the Maundy Thursday ceremony in the community, the tension between the indigenous population and their oppressors culminates. Catalina decides to give her people their 'own' Jesus and nails her adopted son Domingo to the cross[42]:

> ¡Qué pequeño es el mundo si un niño puede convertirse en su centro! Es un niño cuyo nacimiento se acompaña de presagios: 'el que nació cuando el eclipse'. […] Pero hoy [su destino] se pone de manifiesto, ante la cara de la tribu. Porque **una ilol, una mujer que ha parido dioses**, lo alza en brazos y pronuncia las palabras que ungen a los elegidos. (2009, p. 411)

How interesting to observe, however, that Domingo is not hanging on the cross like Jesus, but upside down! If we refer to the previous chapter, his position is more comparable to that of the apostle Peter (perhaps the end of the novel is already anticipated in this scene, in that Domingo's crucifixion upside down, like Peter's, makes their humanity and fallibility visible).

Domingo's death in the church[43] corresponds to Catalina's inner death[44], the return to the cave and thus her infancy, her own decay:

> […] la losa sepulcral, que no alcanzó a cubrir el cadáver del niño, de su niño, la cubría a ella desde entonces. Bajo ella, inmóvil, yacía la ilol cuyos poderes se habían perdido. La que tuvo el maravilloso hallazgo en la cueva lo había olvidado; la que con sus propias manos dio figura a unos ídolos remotos, quizá ya inexistentes; la que en su aridez se alegró con la cercanía de su infancia. Y ésta era la parte de Catalina más muerta, más enterrada, y más podrida. (2009, p. 443)

After Domingo's sacrificial death, the Tzotziles begin their attack on the ladinos. They roam the estates murdering the defenceless inhabitants more out of fear than reason. However, the punishment of their rebellion on the part of the Caxlánes was crueller:

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[42] Compare the parallel to Castellanos's *Balún Canán* (1957): "Mi madre se dispone a limpiar las imágenes con una gamuza. Quita el paño que cubre a una de ellas y aparece un Cristo largamente martirizado. Pende de la cruz, con las coyunturas rotas. Los huesos casi atraviesan su piel amarillenta y la sangre fluye con abundancia de sus manos, de su costado abierto, de sus pies traspasados. La cabeza cae inerte sobre el pecho y la corona de espinas le abre, allí también, incontables manatiales de sangre. […] Es igual (digo señalando al crucifijo), es igual al indo que llevaron macheteado a nuestra casa" (Castellanos, 1957, pp. 42–43).
In contrast to *Oficio de Tinieblas*, this is an involuntary association made by the child protagonist between a slain indigenous man and the suffering Christ. This scene could reflect the experience that led Catalina to sacrifice her son.

[43] In a way, Domingo's death itself takes place in a cave. Fitzsimmons Steele, quoting Beals, pointed out that the Mixe people use the same word for the translation of *church* as they do for *cave shrines* (Fitzsimmons Steele, 1997, p. 1). Although the Mixe people's area only borders the territory (Chiapas) where *Oficio de Tinieblas* is set, it could establish a wider frame of reference.

[44] After the first destruction of her cult Catalina already "se sentía morir" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 320) when she entered the cave.

"El valle de Chamula – de niebla, de retaros – ahora es el valle de las humaredas. Humo es lo que antes fue paraje, sembradío, pueblo. Humo: tierra solmada, aire envilecido, arrasamiento y aniquilación" (2009, p. 467). Even at this stage of the indigenous population's retreat into the mountains and poverty, the cave remains a significant space in the plot:

> En esta eternidad se cumple el destino de la tribu. Porque es voluntad de los dioses que los tzotziles permanezcan**. En grutas** y al aire libre, de noche y a pleno sol. Hembras y varones se ayuntan para perpetuarse. **La mujer fecunda camina con lentitud y se esconde cerca de las corrientes de agua cuando llega el plazo de dar a luz. La búsqueda de la tiniebla los conduce a las cuevas**. […] Y allí se congregan, ciertas noches que el coyote aúlla desesperado y que la luna se alza lívida y sin sangre. **En el centro de la cueva, en el centro del círculo que forman los congregados, reposa el arca**. La han defendido de la codicia de los ladrones y más de uno sucumbió antes de permitir que se le arrebatara. La cubren de las intemperies como si fuese criatura desvalida, la protegen de la incuria, la rodean de solicitud y de reverencia. **Porque en el arca está depositada la palabra divina**. Allí se guarda el testamento de los que se fueron y la profecía de los que vendrán. Allí resplandece la promesa que conforta en los días de la incertidumbre y de la adversidad. Allí está la sustancia que come el alma para vivir. El pacto. (2009, pp. 468–469)

After the people of the Tzotziles have fallen into a state of timelessness without its own history, the cave still functions as a space for syncretism between the indigenous cave cult and the Christian belief system. In the centre of the cave, a new cavity opens up in which a book is worshipped ("Ordenanzas militares", 2009, p. 470). A book, which no one can read due to illiteracy so that the fact that it is written word alone bestows it with a sanctified status.

A characteristic of the concept of depth is that it meanders between being a process of knowing, remembering, and expressing oneself on the one hand, and falling, collapsing, or forgetting on the other (Innerhofer, 2020, pp. 296, 298). Instead of connecting themselves with their "palabra primera, la de la madre creadora" (Martínez Vázquez, 2016, p. 112) the uterus and tomblike cavity again becomes a place where "la palabra otra, ajena" (2016, p. 112) remains dominant.

While the cave, the *umbilicus mundi*, becomes a death trap for the priest Mandujano, it is thus only in a limited sense an instrument of power for Catalina (Finnegan, 2000, pp. 88–89). The muteness with which the "Ordenanzas militantes" in the chest speak to the descendants of the Tzotziles of Chamula corresponds to the silence that Catalina, inwardly a "cofre saqueado" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 408) herself, experienced shortly before the sacrifice of her son Domingo as well as to the remark that she had found Gods that had forgotten the language of their folk. In *Oficio de tinieblas* language therefore appears both as a means to uphold memory as well as for memoricide. At the end of the novel "nana" Teresa retells Catalina's story but releases it into the timeless space of fairy tales and myths. The silencing of the *ilol's* fate becomes part of the story's plot itself:

> El nombre de esa ilol, que todos pronunciaron alguna vez con reverencia y con esperanza, ha sido proscrito. Y el que se siente punzado por la tentación de

> pronunciarlo escupe y **la saliva ayuda a borrar su imagen, a borrar su memoria**. (2009, p. 475)

Silene, in *Oficio de Tinieblas*, is the "hungry mouth of the abyss" (2009, p. 408). This abyss, the narrated cave in *Oficio de Tinieblas,* signifies both protection (from the eyes of the ladinos) and danger (at the time of the removal by the priest and the sacristan). It stands between nature (the cave as a natural phenomenon) and culture (as a place of action for the *ilol*, birthplace of the Gods and the cult); and for the acting figures it means both freedom (alleged independence to rediscover their own indigenous culture) and captivity[45] (insofar as the emancipation of the indigenous must always take place within the hegemonic discourse of the ladinos). According to Dorothee Kimmich, it is this "ambivalent oscillation" (Müller, 2020, p. 10, my translation) between these opposing poles, between "trapped cognition" (2020, p. 10) and "threatening delusion" (2020, p. 10) that characterises caves and what makes them so suitable for representing the analogy, or indistinguishability, between birth and death.

"Being born and dying – two actions like one": baroque reflections

With *Oficio de Tinieblas* we are dealing with a 20th-century text in which caves and depths unfold a rich and complex symbolism. The precolonial treatment of caves in Mexico is only one anchor point in history from which a line of development can be observed. In the baroque, caves as literary symbols are again of particular importance[46], as we will see with the example of plays by Calderón.

The function of caves, caverns, and grottos has already been topologized in connection with Calderón's hagiographic plays, cloak-and-dagger dramas, and religious comedies; as well as in the analyses of their scenic realisation in the set; their relation to secrets; the dwelling of magicians; courtly festivities and with evil in baroque literature (Hernando Morata, 2017, n.p.). Of little interest to secondary literature to date, however, has been the isotopy of the female body and its interaction with caves, with which Calderón forms the analogy of birth and death[47]. Let us now begin the journey through the different genres of Calderonian plays to shed light on these topics.

Early modern spectators of Calderón's allegorical plays sometimes got to see a cave at the very beginning of the play: "Suena dentro la música y mientras se canta se abre en lo alto de un carro una gruta y sale de ella el HOMBRE, vestido de pieles, como

[45] For a short time, the cave frees Catalina from the socially negative connotations of sterility and abandonment by her adopted son Domingo. In the same instance, however, the cave symbolizes the social compulsion to motherhood, to procreation as a means to achieve social status. For Catalina, as well as for most of the other female protagonists, it means being trapped in a patriarchal social system (Cf. for example Silvina Persino, 2000, p. 10).

[46] For a brief analysis of the cave symbolism in Cervantes, see (Sabor de Cortazar, 1987, pp. 55–56). Here, too, the cave is a place for death and "el tercer nacimiento".

[47] One exception is Manfred Engelbert, who, as early as the 1970s, interpreted the "Hervorgehen aus der Höhle" in *El Pleito Matrimoni*al as a direct reference to the birth of man (Calderón de la Barca, 1969, p. 194).

escuchando de admiración" (Calderón de la Barca et al., 1995, introductory stage direction). That this is a birth becomes apparent as the play, *El Año Santo de Roma* (1650), progresses:

HOMBRE Rásguese las entrañas
el **centro** que en sus **bóvedas** me encierra,
primer prisión de la fortuna mía,
y entre las dos campañas
del cielo y de la tierra,
a la voz desta métrica armonía,
salga a gozar la breve edad del día,
símbolo de mi edad, pues **cuando nace**
de ansias el Hombre, y de miserias lleno[48],
bien como el día, de uno en otro **seno**,
tránsito es el que hace
con vida tan escasa
que **de un sepulcro a otro sepulcro** pasa[49]. (1995, vv. 9–21)

We encounter a similar scene (but at another position in the plot) in the allegorical play *El Pleito Matrimonial* (approx. 1650):

PECADO […]
Ábrese el peñasco y véase al HOMBRE vestido de pieles, como muerto.
Y para que veas si tengo
para esto ocasiones muchas,
los ojos vuelve a mirar **el corazón de esa gruta**,
cuya boca se espereza
para que su **centro escupa**
al Cuerpo, que en ella agora
como en el seno se oculta materno,
que poco o nada la significación muda
la explicación del concepto
porque sean peñas duras[50]
las entrañas que le aborten,
puesto que su **primer cuna**
el centro fue de la tierra,[51]
que ha de ser su sepultura,

[48] "Ansias" and "miserias" in the context of birth and death are encountered in detail in chapter 4 – the emotional.

[49] Calderón's equation of birth and death takes on a more positive, even joyful connotation in a text by Sor Juana. In "Ofrecimiento para el Santo Rosario de Quince Ministerios" (n.d.) she pleads (on Jesus' death): "!Oh, Madre, viva sola a los tormentos y muerta a todo consuelo! Nosotros os ofrecemos humildemente estas diez avemarías y un padrenuestro, al nuevo dolor que sentisteis viendo apartar de vuestros brazos aquel deshecho cadaver de vuestro amadísimo Hijo para ponerlo en el **sepulcro** […] Pedimos, Madre clementísima, por este dolor, limpiéis nuestros corazones de las inmundicias de nuestros pecados […] para que, **no como sepulcro duros helados sino como entrañas tiernas y puras, reciban a vuestro sacramentado Hijo**, que siéndonos aquí alimento de gracia, nos sea para la vida eterna de gloria perdurable, donde vivís y renáis para simpre, etc." (Juana Inés et al., 2001, p. 512, vv. 184-205).

[50] The same "peñas duras" and "entrañas deste monte" can be found in *La Sibila del Oriente* (1701–1750): "[…] En tu vientre / (ò peña dura!) / vivo à sepultarme voy, que es bien, pues cadáver soy, / que busque mi sepultura" (Calderón de la Barca, 1850, p. 205).

[51] Cf. the *memento mori* like features in the verses of a poem ("Muro de lamentaciones", 1950) by Castellanos: "[…] Porque los niños surgen de vientre como ataúdes / y en el pecho materno se nutren de venenos. / Porque la flor es breve y el tiempo interminable / y la tierra un cadaver transformándose / y el espanto la mascara perfecta de la nada" (Castellanos, 1998, p. 51).

> donde el nacer y el morir
> son dos acciones tan una
> que no son más de pasar
> **desde una tumba a otra tumba**. (Calderón de la Barca et al., 2011, vv. 167–186)

In this passage, the allegorical figure Death appears in his function as a midwife to pull out of the earth the "informe embrión / de un cadaver sin figura" (2011, vv. 115–116), but Death's own origin is also associated with a birth (Mühlparzer, 2022):

> Ya de aquel tronco que mi **cuna** fue,
> de quien **naciendo** rama soy raíz,
> **rasgué el seno**, y rasgándole dejé,
> yerta su pompa, mustio su matiz. (Calderón de la Barca, 2011, vv. 33–36)

One notable difference between *El Año Santo de Roma* and *El Pleito Matrimonial* is the state in which the person finally dies: while the allegorical figure of the Body in the latter returns naked to the cave from whence he came, the cave in the former has more negative connotations. Together with Amor, Honor, Desprecio, Culto Divino, Temor, Castidad, Obediencia, Verdad, Seguridad, Perdón and Albedrío, the protagonist (Hombre) of *El Año Santo de Roma* sets out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in order to ask for indulgence in the Jubilee Year of the Catholic Church. Along the way, he is seduced by Luzbel and Lascividad to step into a palace full of gold. He ignores the warning of his companion, the Decalogue, and approaches the palace but is blown away by the wind as soon as he wants to enter it. What remains is a cave, the cause for a dispute between Mundo and Hombre:

> MUNDO Sí hare [albergar al Hombre], entra a ese breve espacio,
> que yo al que ofrezco un palacio
> le doy una sepoltura.
>
> […]
>
> HOMBRE ¡Ay de mí!
> ¡Qué pavoroso, qué fuerte
> es el horror de la muerte!
> ¿Aquí he de hospedarme?
>
> *Sale* LUZBEL *de la gruta*. (Calderón de la Barca, 1995, vv. 1549–1554)

The cave, therefore, becomes not only the womb from which the body sees the light of day and the origin of the earth (as we learn in v. 1528), but it is also the place of the devil, the place of abiding after death for a sinner.[52] Temor fears the constantly looming danger of falling into an abyss of the earth and thus permanently walking over his own "sepultura" (1995, vv. 543–549). The pilgrimage, as the theme of the play thus not only

[52] Apart from the scenery, the cave also appears in this play as a humble contrast to the pomp of the promised palace and a place for repentance (Calderón de la Barca et al., 1995, vv. 1110-1116).

means the journey to Jerusalem on the special occasion of the Jubilee Year but also stands for the life of man in itself:

AMOR Oye atento.
Que es el hombre peregrino
en su patria, pues el **centro**
de la tierra, que le engendra
en sí le tiene violento
hasta que **vuelve** a **cobrarle**,
cuando, en cenizas resuelto,
entrañas que fueron cuna
le sirven de monumento […]. (1995, vv. 212–220)

In *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* (approx. 1653), the cave represents purgatory, but also a "prueba de valentía y fortaleza" (Hernando Morata, 2017, n.p.). Their descriptions are also built on the isotopy of the (female) body:

[Polonia] ¿No ves ese **peñasco** que parece
que se está sustentando con trabajo
y con el ansia misma que padece
ha tantos siglos que se viene abajo?
Pues mordaza es que sella y enmudece
el aliento a una **boca**, que debajo
abierta está, por donde con pereza
el monte melancólico bosteza.
Esta, pues, de cipreses rodeada,
entre los **labios** de una y otra peña
descubre la **cerviz** desaliñada,
suelto el cabello, a quien sirvió de greña
inútil yerba, aun no del sol tocada,
donde en sombras y lejos nos enseña
un espacio, un vacío, horror del día,
funesto albergue de la noche fría. (Calderón de la Barca, 1640, p. 68)

And further:

[Ludovico] […] la tierra en que estaba
abrió el centro en cuyo **vientre**
me pareció que caía
a un profundo, y que allí fuesen
mi **sepultura** las piedras
y tierra que tras mí vienen. (1640, p. 76)

Even in scenes in which the cave takes on the function as a symbol for the Christian path of knowledge, as in *Los Dos Amantes del Cielo* (1682), the isotopy of a woman's body is to be found (Hernando Morata, 2017, n.p.): "Válgame el cielo", exclaims the nymph Daria, "tropezando acaso / dejé de sepultarme, ¡estraño caso!, en una infausta, en una horrible **boca** / que está abierta en la **falda de esa roca**, / por donde con pereza / el monte melancólico bosteza" (Calderón de la Barca, 1682, p. 87).

The last play which is important to consider when analysing the analogy of birth and death and their surroundings, the cave, is *No hay más Fortuna que Dios* (1653). Demonio explains in a long introductory monologue his intention to invent a new deity (Fortuna)

to dissuade man from his belief in God and Justicia. He starts his evil work by making assumptions about the origin of mankind:

> […] supongo
> que de ese monte las duras
> entrañas son el nativo
> **seno** que en su centro oculta
> antes de ser al humano
> género; y no, no presumas
> que es arrastrado concepto,
> pues fue su primera **cuna**
> la tierra, de quien él mismo
> se labró su **sepoltura**;
> con que viene bien que sea,
> (fuera de lo que aseguran
> muchos sagrados lugares),
> **su cuna el monte, y su tumba**. (Calderón de la Barca, 2013, vv. 154–167)

The allegorical figures, who subsequently awake from sleep and receive their insignia (of power, poverty, beauty, etc.) from Justicia, now witness a battle between Bien and Mal. Only through Hermosura's fall into a "sima", a "lóbrego oscuro seno" (2013, vv. 1464, 1467), which made their transience visible, do they realise that God's plan is unfathomable and that in birth, as in death, all are equal.

As we could see through these numerous passages, caves, grottos, and above all crags are used by Calderón to shape the analogy of birth and death, as both hold mysteries of life and dying. In rare cases, however, this analogy is also found in scenes that are not set in a symbolic place of depth, for instance in *La Vida es Sueño* (1636): the King of Poland, who will later banish his son to a tower in the mountains, describes the circumstances of his son's birth: "En Clorilene, mi esposa,/ tuve un infelice hijo, / en cuyo parto los cielos/ se agotaron de prodigios, / antes que a la luz hermosa/ le diese el **sepulcro vivo**/ de un **vientre**, porque **el nacer/ y el morir son parecidos** [...]" (Calderón de la Barca, 2008, vv. 660–667).

As the close reading of the respective passages shows, terms associated with the appearance of a human body are frequent: "seno (materno)", "vientre", "entrañas", "labios", "boca", "falda", and "cerviz". While some of these are general parts of the human body, a look at the etymology of the terms reveals a spectrum of meaning that in some cases differs from today's semantics and establishes a closer relationship to the female body. This applies, for example, to *cerviz*. While *cerviz* means the lower part of the neck and has little to do with *cervix*, with which it forms a minimal pair, they nevertheless have the same etymological origin in lat. *cervix, -īcis* and gr. **αὐχήν** what means 'neck' and 'neck of the uterus' ('Cerviz', 1729). The context of the passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* – a play in which several body parts appear whose meaning etymologically includes that of female genitals – thus activates a broad and consciously ambivalent interpretation in the viewers or readers that supports the idea of the cave

as analogous to the female genitalia. Something similar applies to *labio,* which shares its roots with *labios vaginales* through lat. *labium*. Finally, let us remember that the Latin root of *vientre*, lat. *venter*, denoted both 'belly' and 'pregnancy'[53] ('Vientre', 1739).

The cave in Calderón takes on multiple functions. As studies show, the spectrum here ranges from the cave as a place for deepening faith (cf. *Los dos Amantes del Cielo*) and repentance (cf. ibid., *El José de las Mujeres*) to caves as places of the devil (cf. *Las Cadenas del Demonio*) or refuge from religious persecution (cf. *El José de las Mujeres*) (Arellano, 2003, pp. 49–53; Arellano, 2006, p. 79; Hernando Morata, 2017, n.p). Even at this stage, Calderón expands the values and functions usually ascribed to the cave as a literary symbol. As a symbol, caves often refer to mystery, threat, and lack of knowledge; but they also appear as symbols of protection, spiritual rapture, and (female) sexuality (Butzer & Jacob, 2021, pp. 279–280). Psychoanalysis in particular is dedicated to the symbols of female sexuality and interprets caves, grottos and other objects "die [die] Eigenschaft teilen, einen Hohlraum einzuschließen, der etwas in sich aufnehmen kann" (Freud, 1916, n.p.) as symbols of the female genitalia and the womb.[54] In Calderón, as in Castellanos, however, the meaning of the cave in the texts often goes beyond this. Calderón's work surprises with the detailed and above all repeated association of the cave with the analogy of birth and death. While the analogy occurs more as a simile in Castellanos, Calderón explicitly equates the process of being born and dying with that of becoming "dos acciones tan una" (Calderón de la Barca, 2011, v. 184). Calderón's depictions of the caves also characterise themselves as "Bilder der Tiefe" (Müller, 2020, p. 2) in a broader sense: as a search for depth, they symbolise processes of knowing or experiencing (but less so processes of remembering as in *Oficio de Tinieblas*). Elsewhere they represent bottomless pits descending into the depths, the demonic, and hell. The threshold to the caves also plays an important role in Calderón's depictions. It is fraught with similar fears as the cave in *Oficio de Tinieblas*. Similarly located in barren areas, both authors, Calderón, and Castellanos, describe the entrance as "**boca** occulta de la cueva" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 250). Another characteristic of all the caves discussed here is their darkness (in *Oficio de Tinieblas* only initially). This may also contribute to the fact that death and birth become indistinguishable in darkness (as in the case of Castellanos) or at least that humans are the same in birth and death, as symbolised by the surroundings (the cave).

The role of the cave by both authors is, as Frenzel points out, not fundamentally different, but "ein Unterschied der Funktion und des Stellenwertes" (Frenzel, 2008, p. IX). Entering and leaving the cave and the birth of the Gods[55] take on the role of a "Raummotiv" and "Situationsmotiv" in *Oficio de Tinieblas*. Both elements motivate the

[53] For an excellent study of the different levels of meaning of "estómago" as a metaphor for the body of the Catholic Church and Jesus wife, from Galen to Sor Juana's *Primero Sueño*, see (Saldarriaga, 2006, pp. 173–180).
Compare at this point also a cave birth in Sor Juana: "El monte arrojó de sí, / embrión de su pereza, / una fiera en forma de hombre, / un hombre en forma de fiera. […] con que, aborto de estos montes, / doy a estos montes la vuelta" (Quoted in Juana Inés de la Cruz & Glantz, 1994, p. XXXIII).

[54] According to Freud, fabrics are also symbols of women. At this point it should be added that Catalinas learned the profession of "tejedora". The memory of the many times she has found loose ends and woven difficult patterns that come together in the end to form a harmonious picture encourages her not to be afraid of the "misterioso" (Castellanos, 2009, pp. 23, 414; Freud, 1916).

[55] There are no births of Gods in Calderonian plays; caves only serve as dwelling places, for example in *La Fiera, el Rayo y la Piedra* (1664) for the Parcae.

plot and are related to other themes, symbols and motifs (for example childlessness). As motifs with a symbolic character, they combine birth and death that appear in Castellanos's novel as themes[56], as "abstract basic ideas" (Dahms, 2013, p. 126); only in combination or in analogy to each other do they become relevant to the problem of the plot. One could thus argue that the analogy itself functions as a secondary motif in the novel.

In all of the above mentioned Calderonian plays, the cave is found as a literary symbol, but only once as an element that essentially drives the plot (*El Purgatorio de San Patricio*). As a symbol, it also fulfils its unifying function: not only does it connect the contrasting themes of birth and death[57] and thus individual parts of the plot, but it also creates a connection between author and reader who share a common worldview (Frenzel, 1978, p. 37). While Calderón builds the symbol of the cave and the analogy of birth and death on an "escenografía tipificada" (Hernando Morata, 2017, n.p.) whose biblical symbolism could be easily deciphered by the audience, the reference space of Castellanos's cave in *Oficio de Tinieblas* is larger and also represents syncretism in the novel: particularly because the cave evokes similar associations with birth and death in allegorical Christian texts as it does in the precolonial culture of Mexico, it can be used to represent the syncretism of two cultures.

Conclusion

At the beginning of *Geburt Leben Sterben Tod*, Ottmar Ette reflects on the "untereinander Verwoben-Sein [der] unterschiedlichen Dimensionen menschlichen Lebens" (Ette, 2022, p. 1). We encountered a similar impossibility of drawing a clear line between life and death, being born and dying, in Castellanos's and Calderón's texts. Death and being born elude our consciousness, our conscious experience. Among other things, it is probably the commonality of these two moments evading us that have caused (and still does) various cultures (the Greek, Mesoamerican, and Christian, to name but a few), to locate death and birth in one place – the cave. This, in turn, enables a dynamic characterization based on resemblance, a continuum of shared traits between a cave, the origin of being and death. Literature(s), baroque as well as 20th-century literature, can give us access to these hidden spheres of experience; and act as modern myths that stage "knowledge" about these spheres in an archetypal way.

As we have seen, caves are particularly suitable for depicting the analogy of birth and death because they are "places of depth". And it is precisely their depth that allows associations with death in the more figurative sense of silencing, oblivion, and memoricide. This too, is highly ambivalent: while the Tzajal-hemel cave *in Ofico de*

[56] If we follow *Metzler Lexikon literarischer Symbole*, birth and death are themselves symbols. What is interesting here is that no cross-reference is made between the two symbols in the respective descriptions. Birth, as a symbol, is, according to this lexicon, not used (or too rarely to be mentioned) as a symbol for death and viceversa.

[57] Combined in the form of an allegory, they fulfil the function of an appeal to *memento mori* in *El Año Santo de Roma* and *No hay más Fortuna que Dios*.

Tinieblas, in the end, represents the pushing back of the indigenous people into a timeless, miserable state of existence, and in Calderón represents purgatory, the caves can also symbolize the gaining of knowledge, the preservation of faith and the "coming to writing". This discursive potential is indicated by the description of the entrance to the cave with metaphors of the mouth. These in turn are reminiscent of the pictorial representations of cave entrances as mouths in various Mesoamerican codices where the air flowing from a cave entrance, the mouth, is compared to earth's breath (Aguilar et al., 2005, p. 69; Moyes & Brady, 2012, p. 153; Rincón Mautner, 2005, p. 122).[58]

At the end of this chapter let's recall the questions Castellanos posed in her poem "Amanecer". She asked what one should do at the time of death and which rite one should follow. Who watches over the death throes, who spreads the shroud (Castellanos, 1998, p. 138)? What happens during death is not real anymore ("lo que sucede no es verdad", 1998, p. 138), it has already withdrawn from the conscious experience of the dying. At the time of one's own death, there are no longer any mothers who, the poem suggests, take on the social tasks like spreading the shroud. Contrary to this poem, however, *Oficio de Tinieblas* as well as Calderón in his plays admit that mothers play a crucial role in the act of dying, such a central role even that dying is thought of as a return to the cave, a return to the uterus: dying as a return to a mother's womb "[…] desfer-se, ser / xuclada endins / de l'úter viu, / matriu de déu / mare: desnéixer" (Marçal et al., 2000, p. 41).

[58] In chapter 4 we will talk about a text that also features a return to such cavernous places of history's foundation or, conversely, its destruction: in Allende's *Casa de los Espíritus*, a character – a miner – penetrates artificial caves of earth's body exploring the presence of the past in the present. Jean de Satigny, a minor character, in turn, robs mummies and other treasures from undiscovered tombs in Chile and sells them to European collectors (Allende, 2000, pp. 269–272). Interestingly, Blanca, a character who does pottery compares her figures with the ceramics Jean de Satigny excavated. She, too, describes her art of pottery as "Nacimientos" (Allende, 2000, p. 270).

4 The Emotional

> "La muerte azul, la muerte verde, la muerte roja, la muerte lila, en las visiones del nacimiento." (Pizarnik, 2005, p. 256)

> "Vielleicht hatte die Welt letzten Endes doch recht, dachte Paul, vielleicht gab es für sie keinen Platz in einer Realität, die sie nur mit ängstlichem Unverständnis durchschritten hatten. Aber sie hatten Glück gehabt, sehr viel Glück. Für die meisten Menschen war die Durchquerung vom Anfang bis zum Ende eine einsame Angelegenheit." (Houellebecq, 2022, covertext)

> "Geburt
> Sie ist / am Rande des Todes, / es ist am Rande des Lebens. / Mit ihren Schreien / in diesem engen Raum / teilen sie sich das Leben." (Ṭaiyib, 2019, p. 39)

Following Ecclesiastes 3:1–4 there is a time for everything: there is "a time to be born, and a time to die; […] a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (*Holy Bible: The King James Version*, 1987). In this chapter we will see that both being born and dying can be a time to cry, laugh, be afraid, or feel lonely. As we will see, apart from the surrounding and the processual that we analysed in the previous chapters, the emotional level also leads authors to create an analogy between birth and death. The following questions should guide us through the reading of Luis de Rebolledo (1549–1613), José Pellicer de Ossau Salas y Tovar (1602–1679), Felipe Godínez Manrique (1582–1659), Isabel Allende (*1942), Alejandro Casona (1903–1965), and Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920): which emotions and senses are associated with both birth and death? What *attitudes* towards birth and death are found in the selected literary texts? And, if one takes the approach that emotions are experiences and phenomena that emanate "von den Sachen selbst" (Husserl quoted in Landweer, 2019, p. 48): what is the *phenomenology*, what is the "*praxis*" (Scheer, 2019, pp. 356–357) of emotions associated with both birth and death?

The 20th-century authors I will present in this chapter have not yet been mentioned in the context of the neo-baroque concept. When considering senses and emotions, the analogy of birth and death is found first and foremost in texts that are traditionally assigned to other categories in terms of time, place, and style. Allende's *Casa de los espíritus* (1982) is classified as Chilean Post-Boom literature that incorporates aspects of magical realism; With *El terror de 1824* (1877), Pérez Galdós is considered a representative of Spanish realism, whilst Alejandro Casona, as a member of the Generación 27, oscillates between symbolism and avant-garde (whereby in the latter the connection to the baroque is most clearly marked by the veneration of the baroque authors Quevedo and Góngora). Therefore: what began for this chapter as a challenge to the corpus becomes, once again, the challenge of schematising the concept of the neo-baroque.

Hope, horror, fear, and anxiety: the narrowness of the world

One of the emotions most frequently associated with both birth and death[59] is fear: the fear of birth finds its counterpart in the "Urangst" of death, according to Epicurus, one of the four central fears of man (Bähr, 2019, p. 159; Humar, 2019, p. 10). Following Bataille's reading of Aristoteles, it is the conception of nature as something shameful and evil that conditions that "horror and shame were attached both to our birth and […] our death" (Bataille, 1986, p. 56). However, the reconstruction and interpretation of emotions of past centuries from a comparative perspective is by no means a mere search for terminological equivalents. The terms used to refer to emotions underwent a profound change from the baroque to the 20th century and also brought about conceptual changes: in the 17th century, for example, the terminology of "affect" developed into that of "feeling"[60]; and in modernity, concrete, object-related "fear" turned into a "diffuse, gegenstandslose Angst" (anxiety) (Bähr, 2019, p. 157; Dietz, 2019, p. 152; Renz, 2019, pp. 23–24). But while the "scientification of man" in modernity apparently brought light into the 'dark' inner life of people and transformed the fearful arbitrariness of birth and death into a plannable and predictable "script of life courses" (Böhme et al., 2013, p. 278, my translation), the feelings at birth and death are still characterized as "ambiguous" even in very recent scientific treatments of the subject (cf. Wojtkowiak & Mathijssen, 2022, p. 1). The ambivalence of fear or anxiety is a recurring feature. We will repeatedly find ourselves at crossroads where abstract *anxiety* changes into concrete *fear* of something that concerns birth or death and viceversa.

Before we turn to our primary texts, it is vital to specify within the context of emotions, whose fear is at stake when we talk about the analogy of death and birth on the level of emotion. *Who* feels the fear of childbirth? The child or the woman giving birth? And who feels the fear of dying? The relatives or the one who dies? In a different context, Otto Haendler coined the term "Gebärangst" and provides us with an initial starting point to examine who is affected by fear and why it is precisely the sensation of fear that favours an analogy between birth and death:

> Die aktivste Möglichkeit der Krisenangst ist die Gebärangst. Gemeint ist nicht das Geborenwerden [footnote: „Seit Sigmund Freud ist anzunehmen, daß auch mit dem Geborenwerden bereits eine völlig ‚vorbewusste' Welt- und Daseinsangst erlebt wird, die für die gesamte Angstdisposition des Menschen konstituierende Bedeutung hat.], sondern das Gebären. […] In der Krisenangst am stärksten ist die Angst vor dem Empfinden ihrer Fruchtbarkeit begleitet, und hier ist sie zugleich verbunden mit dem ehrfürchtigen Einblick in das geheimnisvolle und schaffende Walten höherer Mächte […] **Die Empfängnis ist sozusagen beengend durch ihre Weite.** Man erlebt die Angst des

[59] It would be obvious to use the term "existential" feelings for the emotions surrounding birth and death. In fact, this term is used in a different context in research: Mathew Ratcliffe defines existential feelings as "das, was auf wechselnde qualitative Weise die konkrete Verortung einer Person in der Welt ausmacht, so dass spezifische Bezugnahmen auf innerweltliche Begebenheiten dadurch affektiv vorgeprägt werden" (Slaby, 2019, p. 327). Existential feelings thus determine how one reacts emotionally to existential events such as birth and death, not the other way around.

[60] As will be shown in the following text analysis, *anxiety*, *fear*, and related terms are by no means used consistently. I, therefore, use *anxiety* and *fear* as synonyms unless I refer specifically to the semantics of these words and the contexts in which they are used.

> schöpferischen Tuns abschnittweise und wechselnd in der Zeit des Austragens. Kulminationspunkt der Angst ist jede Geburt […]. Hier ist in allen Stadien die Angst ebenfalls bestimmt durch das Spiel der helfenden und der angreifenden Mächte […] **Die Enge ist eine Enge des Weges, erwachsend aus der Not, daß man den gewiesenen, einzig fruchtbaren und doch nur intuitiv zu erfassenden Weg nicht verfehlen darf.** […] Gebärangst ist keine reine Angst. Vielmehr ist sie organisch verbunden mit Vertrauen, Zuversicht, Freudigkeit und ähnlichen Empfindungen. (Haendler, 1954, pp. 34–36)

Three aspects of this quote deserve special attention: i) On the one hand, Haendler builds his definition on the narrowness inherent in the emotion of anxiety, which is also reflected etymologically: for example, gr. *angschein* means 'to choke', 'throttle', 'squeeze'; lat. *angor* means 'choking', 'constriction', 'fear' (Bähr, 2019, p. 155; Böhme et al., 2013, p. 277).

ii) Beyond this though, through the image of birth and the narrow exit to the world that has to be pierced in order to enter a space that is no longer perceived as constricting, Haendler describes the close connection between angst and (female) corporeality (Körtner, 1988, pp. 184–185). This corresponds to the phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz, in whose theory of space the bodily sensation alternates between narrowness and expanse. Fear, shame, and pain, for example, are felt as constriction, while an enthusiastic feeling of happiness is associated with the bodily experience of widening (Landweer, 2019, p. 52).

iii) By Haendler turning the fear of childbirth into a metaphor for a fear of crisis, it also becomes clear which aspect of the fear of childbirth makes the analogy to the fear of death possible. In both cases (birth and death), it is a feeling of the narrowness of the current state and a fear of the vastness that comes after it: on the level of phenomenology, it is the narrowness of the birth canal combined with the unknown vastness of the new environment after birth. In the case of the fear of death and crises, it is the world that is perceived as "narrow", and vastness is sought in an afterlife of whatever kind.

Let us recall at this point the quotation from Luther's *Sermon zur Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519), which we referred to in the chapter on the processual, but which becomes more explicable in this context:

> […] Zum Dritten / Wan so yderman urlaub auff erden gebe / Soll man sich dan alleyn zu gott richten / da der weg / des sterbens / sich auch hin keret / und uns furet. Und hie hebt an / die **enge pforte / der schmal steyg / zum leben** / des muß sich eyn yglicher frdlich erwegen / dann er ist woll fast **enge** / er ist aber nit langt / und geht hie zu / gleych wie ein kind / **auß der cleynen wonung seyner mutter leyb / mit gefar und engsten geboren wird** / yn dießen **weyten hymell und erden / das ist auff diße welt**. Alßo geht der mensch durch die **enge pforte des todts** / auß diesem leben / und wie woll der hymell / und die welt / da wir itzt yn leben / groß und weyt angesehen wirt. […] Drumb muß man das glauben / unnd an der leiplichen gepurt eyns kinds lernen / als Christ sagt. **Eyn weyb / wan es gepirt so leydet es angst** / **wan sie aber geneßen ist / so gedenckt sie der angst nymmer** / die weyll ein mensch geporn ist von ihr / in die welt / alßo / **ym sterben so auch muß man sich**

> **der angst erwegen / und wissen / das darnach eyn großer raum und freud seyn wirt.** (Luther, 1983, p. 162)[61]

Here, too, the emotion of fear corresponds to the feeling of confinement, and the sensation of joy to a subsequent experience of vastness. The narrow path through the birth canal is analogous to the "enge pforte des todts". In both cases, the individual enters "eyn[en] große[n] Raum", "dießen weyten hymmel" and just as the narrowness of the first abode (a mother's womb or the earth) is associated with angst, in the wide space (the world or heaven) this anxiety is forgotten and, fear gives way to the feeling of joy.[62]

Worldly dealings with fear of birth

We have now dealt with the parallel between fear of childbirth and fear of death at the conceptual (and etymologically vouched-for) level. However, the proximity between fear of death and fear of or at childbirth could also be supposed on a statistical, demographic level. Is the fear of childbirth possibly analogous to the fear of death because an expectant mother was at a higher risk of dying in childbirth? At the time of José Pellicer, Calderón, and Felipe Godínez Manrique, did pregnant women feel more anxious about giving birth than they did three centuries later? *What* exactly might they have been afraid of and *how* was it possible to express their fears? Historians have tried to reconstruct the spectrum of emotions of women in childbirth in past centuries based on different ego documents. There are different points of view on the emotions of women in labour: while some historians believe that a higher birth mortality rate is associated with an increased sense of fear, others qualify this view by pointing to the equally higher likelihood of dying from something other than childbirth (Begiato, 2017, p. 212; Mander & Kay Marshall, 2016, n.p.). Furthermore, statistics on maternal mortality in childbirth vary. Researchers such as Schofield or McQuay, who studied mortality rates at birth in 16th and 17th century Britain, arrived at low figures, suggesting that concerns about dying in childbirth were correspondingly less justified (McQuay, 1989, p. 55; Schofield, 1986, p. 259). But, even with this conclusion, caution is advised.

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[61] Interestingly, we encounter a similar wording by the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, who, like Haendler, equates birth with a crisis. Here in German translation: "Der Tod ist, wie wir an anderer Stelle schon schrieben, wie die Geburt. Wenn das Kind geboren wird, verlässt es den bis dahin nährenden Mutterschoß, der es jetzt aber, am Ende der neun Monate, allmählich zu ersticken droht, weil die Möglichkeiten des intra-uterinen Lebens erschöpft sind. Das Kind gerät in eine gewaltige Krise, wird von allen Seiten gedrückt und gepresst und schließlich in die Welt geworfen. Freilich weiß es nicht, dass **eine Welt** es erwartet, **die weiter ist, als der Mutterschoß es war**, eine Welt mit ausgedehnten Horizonten und grenzenlosen Möglichkeiten der Kommunikation. Im Tod muss der Mensch durch eine ähnliche Krise. Er wird schwächer, das Atmen fällt ihm schwerer, der Todeskampf überkommt ihn, und schließlich wird er wie aus der Welt gerissen. Allerdings weiß er wenig davon, dass er in eine wesentlich weitere Welt hineinkommt, als die es war, die er gerade verlassen hat […]. Der Mutterleib des im Tod Neugeborenen ist nicht mehr der eng umgrenzte Körpermensch, sondern das Gesamt des Universums" (Boff, 2009, pp. 38–39).

[62] Luther and Haendler show that the terminological and conceptual distinction between concrete fear and non-object-related anxiety, although historically changeable, was by no means consistent in this differentiation. In early modern Europe, when an understanding of the world could not be conceived as a this-side without a complementary beyond, the boundaries between object-related and non-object-related fear become blurred (Bähr, 2019, p. 158).

Statistics are not synonymous with emotions. Demographics and statistics were not accessible to women in early modern Europe; rather, their risk assessment of childbirth was shaped by the fates of the women around them, which were not necessarily representative. It should be noted again that not infrequently the sensations of fear and anxiety were accompanied by other emotions. Birth as the "epitome of Creation itself" (Wilson, 2008, p. 1), could have also been an occasion for joy. It could be seen as a trial of overcoming fear, danger, and pain, as a necessary route to experience divine grace (Howard, 2003, p. 2). Also, the fear of death or of pain could lead women to hope that they are being delivered from these negative emotions (Maguire, 2021, p. 271).

In any case, it can be stated that the fear of childbirth and the realization of the risk of dying during childbirth were widespread (Maguire, 2021, p. 56; Mander & Kay Marshall, 2016, n.p.).

17th and 20th-century voices on the fear of birth and the fear of death: Pellicer, Paz, Allende and Casona

The first literary voice we will hear on the analogy between fear of birth and fear of death is José Pellicer de Ossau Salas y Tovar (1602–1679). As a poet, historian, philosopher, and chronicler Mayor de Castilla y Aragón, he published a text in 1632 that has hitherto received little attention from scholars. On the occasion of the death of the Infante Carlos de Austria, who died aged only twenty-four (1607–1632), he wrote an 80-page *oración fúnebre*, which, in the style of this type of text and the ecclesiastic rhetoric, was intended to mourn the death of the deceased and to highlight his strengths "in an excessive poetic manner" ("laudatio funebris") (Cerdan, 1985, p. 101).

What is remarkable about this panegyric is not the publication of such an *oración fúnebre* (the tradition of this literary text type can be traced back to antiquity and was particularly popular in the 17th century) (1985, p. 87). Rather, it is astonishing how many writers, even popular ones like Calderón, dealt in literature with the death of the otherwise rather forgotten Infante (Duchesne, 2021, p. 78). In these texts, the Infante Don Carlos (the fourth son of Felipe III and Margarita de Austria-Estiria y Baviera) appears as particularly calm and generous, as well as obedient to king Philip IV (2021, pp. 83–85, 88). Apart from the personal colouring of this text however, it represents the tradition of this genre[63], which sees itself as a combination of the evangelical sermon and the panegyrical oration (Cerdan, 1985, p. 101). Various concepts of death can be found in Pellicer's funeral eulogy.

> Qué importa que **Seneca** te llame [la muerte] **Puerto, donde surten los que navegan este Golfo de miserias que ay entre Nosotros, i el Cielo**? Yo te

[63] It is still being discussed whether the *oraciones fúnebres* should be considered a genre, see for example (Cerdan, 1985, p. 79).

> llamo tormenta precisa de la vida, despues que en ti soçobrò la de CARLOS. Que aprovecha que **Euripides** te nombre, **Medicina en que convalecen los Hombres de las dolencias de la vida**? Yo te nombro enfermedad inescusable de los Mortales, despues que adolecio de ti CARLOS. Que remedia que **Eschilo** te apellide, **Medico que sana los achaques mas incurables**? Yo te intitulo riesgo mayor de la Naturaleza, despues que fallescio a tus aforismos CARLOS. Que supple dezirte, **Salustio Descanso donde so sosiegan los trabajos de la mortalidad**? Yo te pronuncio fatiga penosa despues que padecio tus afanes CARLOS. Que acalla el aclamarte **Tulio**, **Quietud donde resposan las penalidades humanas**? Yo te digo suplicio inexorable, despues que sufrio tus socobras CARLOS. Que desquita que te llame **Estobeo**, **Senda facil que guia al reposo**? Yo te vozeo despeñadero infiel, que lleva al precipicio despues que diste en la sepultura con CARLOS. O Muerte! O Muerte! O Mortales: ya CARLOS fenecio. (Pellicer de Tovar, 1632, pp. 13r–13v)

With these parallelisms, Pellicer portrays the death of the Infante Don Carlos as such a drastic experience that no comfort can be expected from any of these conceptions of life and death. "Aisi vamos caminando desde un sepulcro a otro, desde la cuna al ataud […]"[64] (1632, p. 3v). One dies every moment of life, death is only the end of a long process of dying. According to Pellicer, the many indications and omens of death that human beings experience contrast with the unpredictability of birth, and are intended by God; it is the only way to prevent people from dying "con tanta pereça como nacen" (1632, p. 11v).

But it is not only here that Pellicer refers to ancient or early Christian authorities to come to terms with Carlos de Austria's death, he also refers to them when it comes to the *emotions* at birth and death:

> Iguales son allá para el Iuizio todos, desde el humilde Villano […] hasta el soberano Monarca […] Iguales son en la muerte tambien, feudo [?] comun de la mortalidad, que le pagan sin excepcion los Reyes como los Vassallos que, segun dezia **Salomon**, **siendo iguales las miserias del nacer, lo han de ser tambien los horrores del morir**[65]. **Ningun Rey nacio con distinta salida**, con diferente origen: **uno fue el principio en todos, uno será el fin**. **Y del modo mismo que ninguno tuvo compania para nacer, la tendra para acabar.** […] Aca muere acompañado de las Virtudes [?] solas que hviere exercitado en vida; ella le asisten solo al que feneca: sus Obras no mas le siguen, i le apadrinan; (1632, pp. 10v–11r)

Following the topos tradition of "aequat omnes cinis" – "ashes level all men!" (Seneca the Younger, 1917, pp. 442–443) – in the previous quote, Pellicer further refers to Ecclesiastes 4:1–3, where it says:

> And look! The tears of the oppressed, / But they have no comforter […] Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, more than the living who

[64] The idea of the cradle as a tomb is already found in the book of Job (10: 18–19): "Why then have you brought me out of the womb? / Oh, that I had perished and no eye had seen me! / I would have been as though I had not been. I would have been carried from the womb to the grave". The prophet Jeremiah (20: 14–18) too cursed the day he was born: "Cursed *be* the day in which I was born! […] Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow, / That my days should be consumed with shame?" (*Holy Bible: The King James Version*, 1987). Cf. also footnote 13 on Quevedo in the chapter on the processual.

[65] The phrase "horror of death" already occurs in Erasmus, in the Latin original as well as in the German translation (Erasmus, 1534, p. 9r; 'Preparing for Death / De Praeparatione Ad Mortem', 1998, p. 405,407).

> are still alive. Yet, **better than both *is he* who had never existed, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun**". (*Holy Bible: The King James Version*, 1987)[66]

While in Solomon, life as a whole appears as a misfortune from which one can only wish to escape as early as possible, Pellicer reinterprets the *miseria hominis* into a *miseria nasci* and a *miseria mori*. Pellicer's quote can thus be understood in two different ways: by assuming an analogy between birth and death as an affect ("horrors"), conclusions are drawn from the negative aspects of death to an equally negative reaction to birth. And because every birth is equally a misery, the horror of dying must also apply equally to every human being.[67]

On the other hand, Pellicer thus serves as a complement to the chapter on the processual. Because the two most existential events are alike in their peculiarity of causing horror, so are the ways through which they happen. Through the fact that even a member of the royal house, like Don Carlos, is born through a vulva ("ningún rey nació con distinta salida"), Pellicer concludes that death also affects all people equally, regardless of their social position. Their origin and destination might even be *identical*. And just as the nature of the path at birth and death are comparable, the path also determines the way it can be followed: in the case of Pellicer, one is born without company and dies without company. With this idea we can in turn build a bridge to three authors of the 20th century:

i) First, we remember Octavio Paz, who, in *El laberinto de la soledad* describes birth as "primera inmersión en la soledad" (Paz, 1993, p. 342) and both dying and being born as fundamentally solitary experiences. With the moment of falling into life also begins that loneliness that Paz assigns to (especially Mexican) people: "La soledad, fondo de donde brota la angustia, empezó el día en que nos desprendimos del ámbito materno y **caímos** en un mundo extraño y hostil" (1993, pp. 217–218). However, falling and loneliness characterise not only birth; they are also the elements that make Paz analogise birth and death: "Nacer y morir son experiencias de soledad. Nacemos solos. Nada tan grave como esa **primera inmersión en la soledad que es el nacer**, si no es esa **otra caída en lo desconocido que es el morir**" (1993, p. 342). But how can a birth be described as a lonely experience when at least two people – the mother and a child – are involved? Does the knowledge of whom the loneliness concerns eventually also provide us with information about whose horror of birth and death is referred to? In *Erotism. Death and Sensuality* (1986), Bataille addresses this question:

> Reproduction implies the existence of *discontinuous* beings. Beings which reproduce themselves are distinct from one another, and those reproduced are

[66] Solomon in "Ecclesiastes" and "The Book of Job" gave rise to Innocent's III *De miseria conditionis humane* (1195), which in turn was strongly received in the baroque period. This dictum of *miseria hominis* (the world holds so much calamity that the dead or unborn are to be envied because they do not have to experience the misery) is the Christian counterpart of the maxim *optimum non nasci* (it is better not to be born in the first place) of the non-Christian tradition, which goes back to Crantor (ca. 330–270 B.C.). For the history and fusion of these two motif traditions, see (José Vega, 2015).

[67] Paradoxically, Pellicer inverts the statements of the authorities he refers to intertextually. While Seneca's frequently quoted (and in Pellicer's quote also implied) passage in his *Epistles* states that "[w]e are *un*equal at birth, but […] equal in death" (Seneca the Younger, 1917, p. 443), Pellicer claims the opposite: because we (or our emotions) are equal at birth, we (or our emotions) are also equal at death.

> likewise distinct from each other just as they are distinct from their parents. **Each being is distinct from all others. His birth, his death, the event of his life may have an interest for others, but he alone is directly concerned in them**. **He is born alone. He dies alone**. Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity. […] If you die, it is not my death. You and I are *discontinuous* beings. But I cannot refer to this gulf which separates us without feeling that this is not the whole truth of the matter. It is a deep gulf, and I do not see how it can be done away with. None the less [sic!], we can experience its dizziness together. It can hypnotise us. This gulf is death in one sense, and death is vertiginous, death is hypnotizing. (Bataille, 1986, pp. 12–13)

Although we can share in the birth and death of others, there is always a gap between someone else's experience of dying and being born and our own. Loneliness is perhaps the result of this. And yet Pellicer puts himself in the emotional position of his eulogised deceased, when, instead of a general reflection on the horror of being born, very specific reference is made to Don Carlos' emotions about his impending death:

> O como CARLOS, entre estas vanidades vivio tan escrupuloso, que en ellas mismas hallava los desengaños, i era para su memoria cada noche una aldavada, a cuyo **temeroso golpe se dava por noticioso de la Muerte que tenia tan cerca**; pues no està desatento nunca **aquel impulso secreto de el coraçon**, quando conoce el estragon vecino; **y raras vezes dexa de ser complice** en los sucessos **el miedo** que los rezela, ya que no sabe ser remedio que los escuse! **Que mucho, haviendo cogido estos horrors, resplandeciesse en CARLOS la templança enmedio de los riesgos que se traia consigo una mocedad tan briosa, I una juventud tan sana**! (Pellicer de Tovar, 1632, p. 12r)

The infant is said to have met his death as a "fearful surprise" and a "secret impulse of the heart" (my translation) that is almost always accompanied by fear.[68]

ii) Through Isabel Allende, the second author to whom we can build a bridge from Pellicer into the 20th century, the observation that both birth and death are linked to fear and anxiety becomes integrated into the fabric of post-colonial Chilean culture. *La casa de los espíritus* follows the story of the 'Trueba women': grandmother Clara, who is endowed with clairvoyant abilities, daughter Blanca, and granddaughter Alba. Just as the matrilineal genealogy of these women is significant to the structure of the novel and a marker of time, so are their births and the theme of reproduction in general (Wentworth, 2022, p. 10). We have already learnt about her contraceptive method from great-grandmother Nívea ("lavados con vinagre y las esponjas con hiel", Allende, 2000, p. 13). The birth attendants are usually family members, nannies ("nanas"), or midwives. It is also their perspective not the mother's that is used as the first description of the newborns.[69]

[68] Contrary to expectations, however, those very horrors would once again bring out Carlos' positive trait of moderation. So apparently, the tradition of the *epitafios* to mention only the positive character traits of the deceased does not seem to contradict the reference to the sensation of fear in view of death.

[69] For example, the midwife describes Clara's older sister Rosa (whose fiancé Esteban Trueba Clara will marry after Rosa's death) as "criatura más hermosa que había nacido en la tierra desde los tiempos del pecado original" (Allende, 2000, p. 14). At the birth of Clara, Rosas's sister and protagonista of the novel, "la Nana la acunó, la lavó y desde ese instante amó desesperadamente a esa criatura frágil (2000, p. 18).

Some births in the Trueba family are truly spectacular. Clara carries her first child in her womb much longer than usual and gives birth by caesarean section, bringing Blanca into the world, "una niña más peluda y fea que lo usual" (2000, p. 113). The pregnancy that follows Blanca is doubly arduous, as Clara is pregnant with twins:

> Clara, que con […] las emociones de los últimos días [the death of her parents in an accident] y las pócimas del médico había adquirido la facilidad para dar a luz que no tuve con su primera hija, apretó sus dientes, se sujetó del palo de mesana y del trinquete del velero y se dio a la tarea de echar al mundo en el agua mansa de la seda azul, a Jaime y Nicolas […]. Férula la agarró por turnos del mechón del pelo húmedo que les coronaba la nuca y los ayudó a salir a tirones con la experiencia adquirida viendo nacer potrillos y terneros […]. [L]a madre descansaba tranquila y los niños, minúsculos como sietemesinos, pero con todas sus partes enteras y en buen estado, dormían en brazos de su extenuada tía. (2000, p. 135)

Clara's enormous belly during this pregnancy triggered "pena infinita" in her sister-in-law, but also her husband Esteban "muchas veces [s]e desvel[ó] pensando que se podía morir al dar a luz" (2000, p. 126).

The fear that Clara might die at the next birth did not materialise. Jaime, one of the twins, in turn, becomes an obstetrician at the birth of his niece, Alba. Blanca, who leaves her husband Jean de Satigny, returns to her parents' house just in time to give birth to Alba in her mother's bed:

> Alba nació con rapidez. Jaime le quitó el cordón del cuello, la sostuvo en el aire boca abajo y de dos sonoras bofetadas la **inició en el sufrimiento de la vida** y la mecánica de la respiración, pero Amanda, que había leído sobre las tribus africanas y predicaba la vuelta a la naturaleza, le arrebató la recién nacida de las manos y la colocó amorosamente sobre el vientre tibio de su madre, donde encontró algún consuelo a **la tristeza de nacer**. (2000, pp. 278–279)

For the first time, birth is described here as the beginning of a laborious and sorrowful life, thus recalling the topos of *miseria hominis* or, more concretely, the *miseria nasci* as we know it from Pellicer.

Unlike the birth of the twins, the focus of the narrative voice here is not on the emotion of the relatives' fear of possible death of the mother but shifts the perspective to the emotion of the one who is born ("sufrimiento" and "tristeza").

The *miseria nasci* topos, which comes to light in the description of Alba's birth, is already a first omen for Alba's further life, in which Chilean political events overturn and personal strokes of fate clear the way for the decadence of the house of Trueba[70]. Clara dies before the military coup. Of all the family members, Alba can best cope with the death of her grandmother "debido […] al hecho de que su abuela le había explicado a menudo **las circunstancias y los afanes**[71] **de la muerte**" (2000, p. 305). Said circumstances and fervours of death are above all the following – and here we come

[70] The condition of the house in *La casa de los Espiritus* and its cellar also have a symbolic character and have been likened several times in analogies to the female body (Frick, 2001, pp. 27–41; García-Johnson, 1994, p. 190).
[71] In the German version "ansias" is translated as "Angst" (Allende, 1995, p. 337).

to the actual analogy between birth and death: because "**[i]gual que en el momento de venir al mundo, al morir tenemos miedo de lo desconocido**. Pero el miedo es algo interior que no tiene nada que ver con la realidad. **Morir es como nacer:** solo un cambio […]" (2000, p. 305). In both events, birth, and death, we are afraid of the unknown and this fact serves as a comfort to Alba.

iii) The fear of the unknown[72] that links the two threshold experience of birth and death allows us to build a connection to yet another 20th-century text. In Alejandro Casona's play *La dama del Alba* (1944), death too becomes an occasion to reflect on the fear directed into the unknown. Set in a small village in Asturias, the Narcés family meets a pilgrim ("La Peregrina") whom they welcome into their home so that she can recover from her journey to Santiago. The woman looks familiar to the grandfather and after a while, he realizes that she is the personification of death. There was an earlier encounter between the two in a mine[73] when an accident killed all the children of the family's housekeeper and the grandfather barely survived. With Death a guest in the house, the grandfather worries about his family, as it is still mourning the death of their daughter Angélica, who allegedly drowned in a river and whose body has never been found. Meanwhile, Martin, the young husband of the deceased Angélica, brings Adela into the house, whom he has rescued from the nearby river. Later she will become part of the family. Peregrina moves on and promises to return after seven months announcing the death of a family member. All the grandfather's attempts to keep the female death away from his family fail:

> ABUELO.—No puedes negar tus instintos. Eres traidora y cruel.
> PEREGRINA.—Cuando los hombres me empujáis unos contra otros, sí. Pero cuando me dejáis llegar por mi propio paso… ¡cuánta ternura al desatar los nudos últimos! ¡Y qué sonrisas de paz en el filo de la madrugada!
> ABUELO.—¡Calla! Tienes dulce la voz, y es peligroso escucharte.
> PEREGRINA.—No os entiendo. Si os oigo quejaros siempre de la vida, **¿por qué os da tanto miedo dejarla?**
> ABUELO.— No es por lo que dejamos aquí. **Es porque no sabemos lo que hay al otro lado**.
> PEREGRINA.—**Lo mismo ocurre cuando el viaje es al revés. Por eso lloran los niños al nacer**. (Casona, 1984, pp. 87–88)

The grandfather's fear of death astonishes Peregrina: "tú perteneces a un pueblo que ha sabido siempre mirarme de frente. Vuestros poetas me cantaron como a una novia"(1984, p. 89). When the pilgrim returns to the family home after the promised time, she plans to take Adela with her, but things turn out differently. Angelica, who was thought to be dead, returns home and Peregrina realizes her mistake: it is not Adela who is destined for death, but the daughter Angélica, whom the family already deemed dead anyway. Angélica approaches death only fearfully:

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[72] The uncertainty that arrives at either a positive or negative decision also serves, for emotion researchers, as an explanation to the question of why both sad and joyful events (like death or childbirth) can trigger the reaction of crying (Mellmann, 2016, p. 163).

[73] Cf. the chapter on the surrounding. A mine, also a "place of depth" here once again becomes the scene of a death.

> PEREGRINA. —Yo te enseñaré el camino. […] (La toma de la mano). ¿Vamos?...
> ANGÉLICA.—Suelta... **Hay algo en ti que me da miedo**.
> PEREGRINA.—¿Todavía? Mírame bien. ¿Cómo me ves ahora?... (Queda inmóvil con las manos cruzadas).
> ANGÉLICA (La contempla fascinada).—Como un gran sueño sin párpados... Pero cada vez más hermosa...
> PEREGRINA.—¡Todo el secreto está ahí! Primero, vivir apasionadamente, y después morir con belleza. (Le pone la corona de rosas en los cabellos). Así..., como si fueras a una nueva boda. Ánimo, Angélica... Un momento de valor, y tu recuerdo quedará plantado en la aldea como un roble lleno de nidos. ¿Vamos? ANGÉLICA (Cierra los ojos).—Vamos. (Vacila al andar).
> PEREGRINA.—**¿Tienes miedo aún?**
> ANGÉLICA.—Ya no... Son las rodillas que se me doblan sin querer.
> PEREGRINA (Con una ternura infinita).—Apóyate en mi. Y prepara tu mejor sonrisa para el viaje. (La toma suavemente de la cintura). Yo pasaré tu barca a la otra orilla... (1984, pp. 147–148)

After a closer look at death, Angélica is able to overcome her fear "[de] no saber lo que hay al otro lado" and walk the path to death ("[e]l otro lado del miedo", 1984, p. 145). In contrast to Pellicer, however, the fear of death and of birth (ergo the fear of the unknown) is no longer exclusively due to the *miseria hominis*. Although Peregrina observes that people complain a lot about their lives, for the grandfather, "por dura que sea" (1984, p. 87), it is the best life he knows.

As in the previously mentioned texts by Pellicer, Paz, and Allende, the analogy of the fear of birth and death in *La dama del alba* also refers to the emotions of the one who dies and the one who is born. Fears of birth and death thus also occur in a more isolated way in Casona's play than, for example, in Allende's novel where the fears of the dying or of those giving birth are mentioned alongside the fears of the relatives; thus showing the broad, complex spectrum of possible emotions at birth and death as well as their (non-)simultaneity. In *La casa de los espíritus*, fear *and* relief can appear simultaneously, when, for example, mother and daughter, "descansando, desnudas y abrazadas" deal with the aftermath of childbirth and fail to notice that there is a child in the half-open closet that "observaba la escena **paralizado de miedo** (Allende, 2000, p. 279). The fears of relatives, who can also accompany birth and provide emotional sympathy, contrast with the discourse of loneliness at birth and death as we find it in Pellicer and Paz but correspond to Bataille's "discontinuity", which always makes us distanced observers of a death and a birth. Interestingly, the discourse of solitude at birth and death and the discourse of fear at birth and death appear united in the baroque text of Pellicer as well as in Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad*.

Pellicer refers to the fear of dying in analogy with the fear of birth in an ambivalent way. Fear is implied in the quote "horrores del morir", but apart from horror as a frightening experience, it simultaneously refers to everything bad that can be associated with death. The first explicit reference to the *fear* of death happens with a direct reference to Carlos' death. Here, fear appears as the natural companion of a person whose death is imminent. Even if the horror (of / at) birth in Pellicer is inseparable or

almost synonymous with the *miseria hominis* or *miseria nasci*, the question of what the "horrors" and fears are directed at in Pellicer remains imprecise. In contrast, Allende and Casona refer to a concrete fear: the fear of the unknown. The term "fear", which, as we have seen, tends to be used for concrete fears in many European languages, is thus applied in these two cases to something diffused like the fear of the unknown.

As far as the small corpus of this study is concerned, we can observe that the historical semantics do have changed, at least as far as the analogy of birth and death is concerned: from "horrors" in the baroque (Pellicer) to "miedo" in the 20th century; what remains the same is the term "angustia", which we encounter in both Luther and Paz. In *El laberinto de soledad,* "angustia" is the consequence of loneliness, which according to Paz begins at birth: "La soledad, fondo de donde brota **la angustia**, empezó el día en que nos desprendimos del ámbito materno y caímos en un mundo extraño y hostil" (Paz, 1993, pp. 217–218). The aspect of narrowness which the artists, as discussed in the chapter on the processual, used to describe the path out of the womb and into death is thereby confirmed in Paz on the etymological, emotional level: the etymology of anxiety (the feeling of the narrowness of the world, the uterus, etc.) corresponds to the narrowness of the process of birth and death.

In all the texts that I have mentioned so far, the analogy between the fear of birth and the fear of death appears in connection with the *miseria hominis*[74]. But while the *miseria hominis* idea remains present in the 20th century, this is not the case with the assertion that all men become equal through death. In Allende's text, this aspect is missing and would hardly correspond to the implicit social critique of the novel, which denounces the systematic inequality of people.

Crying when being born and crying when dying: emotion as a (cultural) practice in Rebolledo, Calderón, Godínez Manrique and Pérez Galdós

A modern approach to emotion research understands emotions as practice, as reaction, and action. Thus, mutually contradictory emotions can not only happen at the same time or close to each other in time (as we have seen in the text of Allende), but can also be understood as a practice, which in turn occurs in practice complexes: "Wahrnehmen, Denken, Fühlen, Körperteile bewegen oder stillhalten: das alles wird gleichzeitig vollzogen und ist miteinander verbunden" (Scheer, 2019, pp. 356–357). The fear of the unknown and the crying of a child in Casona can thus be considered as part of the same emotional practice complex which is why we will zoom in on the bodily practice of weeping in the remainder of this fourth chapter.

Just as the 'practices' of fear, anxiety, and horror are associated and analogized with both birth and death, so too is the response of weeping. Already in baroque texts,

[74] With one exception: authors of the 20th century do not refer to ancient authorities.

being born and dying *sound* similar. We find an early example in Luis de Rebolledo's *Cincuenta oraciones funerales […]* (1608), with a striking similarity to the Luther quote mentioned at the beginning:

> San Gregorio Niceno en una Oracion[75], que haze de la muerte, apura lo que vamos hablando con una maravillosa comparación de **el Niño, que quando nace, y sale de las entrañas de su madre, que es tan estrecho, y angosto aposento, sin duda sale de mala gana: pues llora porque lo hechan de su antigua posada, donde estava recogido a abrigado**: pero despues de nacido, visto el espacio del mundo, la verdura de los campos, la luz del Sol, la frescura del agua, la comunicacion de las gentes, echa de ver que estaba necio en llorar quando nacio: pues claramente se vee, quan mejor casa, es para el mundo, que no las entrañas de la madre. **Assi (dize este Santo Doctor) passa en el morir, que estamos tristes, porque no sabemos a donde vamos**. Y de la manera que el hombre despues de nacido por ningun interes bolveria al vientre de su madre: assi despues de muerto por ningun thesoro bolveria a **este mundo, que dexo, el qual es tan estrecho para el Alma en comparacion del otro, donde vamos, como es para el cuerpo el vientre de la madre, respecto deste mundo, a donde agora estamos. Demanera, que al morir (segun esta similitud que vamos siguiendo) se puede llamar nacer** […]. (De Rebolledo, 1608, pp. 362–363)

Just as a human being leaves his mother's womb with "mala gana" and mourns the fact that his familiar home in the womb is taken away from him, he also meets death with sadness because he does not know where he is going. In retrospect, however, the sadness is unfounded, for under no circumstances does a person want to exchange his larger "posada" (here, too, a remarkable proximity to Luther's "wonung") for the former, narrower one.

And although the womb and the world become too confining for the one who is born or dies (or for his soul), Rebolledo's text does not advocate the idea that it would be better not to have been born in the first place. The trigger for the tears is not the *miseria hominis*, but the regret of having to leave something familiar and protected – something that probably also gained a sense of security *through* that very confinement.

The Franciscan friar and writer Rebolledo thus once again provides a textual example in which the person who dies, or is born, is in the foreground. Likewise, Calderón, in his poem "Lagrimas, que vierte un alma arrepentida a la hora de la muerte a los pies de Christo Crucificado" (1757):

> **¡Oh cuanto el nacer!, ó quanto,**
> **al morir es parecido!**
> Pues **si nacemos llorando,**
> **También llorando morimos.**
> **Un gemido la primera**
> **Salva fue**, que al mundo hicimos;
> Y **el ultimo** vale, que
> Le hacemos, **es un gemido**. (Calderón de la Barca, 1757, pp. 2–3)

[75] I have not been able to verify to which sermon of Gregory of Nazianzus Rebolledo could be referring here.

The first two verses of this *romance* are recurring in Calderón's work.[76] It gets more interesting from the third verse on: if we are born crying, we will also die crying. We greet *and* say goodbye to the world with a whimper or a sigh. The moaning is the sign of life *per se*. At the time of birth, the ability to breathe without emitting a "gemido" ends (1757, pp. 7–8). This analogy between weeping at birth and weeping at death is also connected to the *miseria hominis* (or *miseria nasci*) and the *cotidie morimur* topos: "Y si al fin para morir no ha menester […] más critico accidente el hombre, que haver nacido" (1757, p. 4). Birth is followed by a life full of sins and thus also justifies the fear of the Last Judgement (surprisingly expressed here with the verb *temer*) of the person, who is about to die. Although not explicitly mentioned, this shows that in Calderón, as in Casona, the practice of the emotion fear and the practice of weeping can perhaps even be considered part of the same practice complex, which means that if fear of death makes us cry, perhaps fear is also the reason for the tears at birth. Or vice versa (and more in line with the conditional sentence in the poem): the fact of being born at all, which is perceived as misery, thereby necessarily leads to a life full of sin, which in turn is the cause that the fear of God's punishment, misery, and weeping (three practices of one practice complex) accompany both birth and death.[77]

For the Spanish dramatist and cleric Felipe Godínez Manrique (1582–1659), weeping at birth is not just an omen of all the evils to come. In his "Oración fúnebre [...] en la muerte del doctor Frey Lope Felix de Vega Carpio"[78] (1636), birth is wept over *as* death:

> También yo, dixo Salomon, soy hombre mortal, semejante a todos; tambien en mí, como en los demas, **mi primera voz fue mi llanto**. Si el hombre, a quien llama Tertuliano cuidado del divino ingenio, o la atención con que le sacó a luz Rey de todos los animales, pudiera infante formar dicciones, como sabe articular tan tempranas lagrimas, preguntárale melancolica Philosophia, **si se plañe muerto, porque ya nace, o si se llora nacido, porque ya muere. Mas no lo preguntará, que no lo duda: llorale la misma naturaleza, por que da al**

[76] In *La vida es sueño*: "En Clorilene, mi esposa,/ tuve un infelice hijo, / en cuyo parto los cielos/ se agotaron de prodigios, / antes que a la luz hermosa/ le diese el **sepulcro vivo**/ de un **vientre**, porque **el nacer/ y el morir son parecidos**. [...]" (Calderón de la Barca, 2008, vv. 660–667).
In *El Pleito Matrimonial*: "[…] su primer cuna / el centro fue de la tierra, / que ha de ser su sepultura, / donde **el nacer y el morir / son dos acciones tan una** […]" (Calderón de la Barca, 2011, vv. 180–184).
Also the motif of the indistinguishability between waking and dreaming, the leitmotif in *La vida es sueño*, is found in this poem and again allows us to link to the chapter on the processual: "**Vive el hombre, ò muere el hombre**?* / Pues que ninguno ha sabido / Si vive, ò muere, porque / **Todo se hace de un camino**!" (Calderón de la Barca, 1757, p. 3).
Even if we learn nothing about the nature of the path, we at least learn that the path is the *same* when we are born and when we die.

[77] We find a similar idea in Calderón's contemporary Baltasar Gracián y Morales in his thousand-page work *El Criticón* (1651–1657). *El Criticón*, considered one of the most important books of the *Siglo de Oro*, is structured around the human lifecycle and the seasons. If not in analogy to dying, the mother's screaming, and the child's crying at birth are already an omen of the impending misfortune called life: Bien supo la naturaleza lo que hizo y mal el hombre lo que aceptó. Quien no te conoce ¡oh vivir! te estime; pero un desengañado tomara antes haber sido trasladado de la cuna á la urna, del tálamo al túmulo. **Presagio común es de miserias el llorar al nacer**. Que, aunque el más dichoso cae de pies, triste posesión toma y **el clarín, con que este hombre rey entra en el mundo, no es otro que su llanto**: señal que su reinado todo ha de ser de penas. Pero ¿**cuál puede ser una vida, que comienza entre los gritos de la madre, que la da, y los lloros del hijo, que la recibe?** Por lo menos, ya que le faltó el conocimiento, no el presagio de sus males, si no los concibe, los adivina (Gracián y Morales, 1913, pp. 50–51).

[78] Another contributor to the original publication *Fama posthuma a la vida y muerte del doctor frey Lope Felix de Vega Carpio y elogios panegiricos a la inmortalidad de sv nombre* was Pellicer, actually an enemy of Lope de Vega (Arellano, 2019, p. 27; Trambaioli, 2016, p. 188).

> **tumulo el primer paso, y quando se empieza el entierro, quando ya camina el difunto, prorumpe en lastimeras voces natural sentimiento de quien le llora**[79]. ¡Hai de nosotros de veces sepultados, exclama el gran Nazianzeno, una antes de nacer, y otra poco después de haver nacido! Salí de las entrañas de mi madre, y voy a las entrañas de la tierra; de un sepulcro a otro sepulcro[80]. Naciste pues, o mortal, y también lloraste: pero si mueres desde que vives, o no es otra cosa la vida, que prolixidad de la muerte, o lo mismo es ir viviendo, que ir caminando a la sepultura. (Godínez Manrique, 1779, pp. 147–148)

Human nature cries at his birth because it is the first step towards the grave, and when the funeral begins and the deceased is already approaching it, nature breaks into compassionate voices, the natural feeling of those who mourn him. Three readings of the central statement of this paragraph are possible: firstly, as soon as the human can walk[81] (which is about the age at which a child also learns to speak), human nature can make known the lamentations about his fate *through* the voice of the child. (The emotional practice of crying and the articulated practice of speaking are thus part of the same emotional practice: the mourning around the brevity of human life). Secondly, human nature weeps for the child at birth as it would mourn a dying person with lamentations. Thirdly, human nature weeps for the human being at birth *and* when he approaches his second grave, his death.[82]

It is remarkable how the subjects who express displeasure at *the miseria hominis* by crying in this quotation become blurred. Through further reference to Solomon in Ecclesiastes, it is on the one hand a human being and *his* / *her* weeping, yet at the same time, weeping is the "first voice" of human nature as an abstract agent. The latter, in turn, embodies the mourning of the relatives; indeed, human nature appears *as* the relatives of man. This contrasts with Calderón, as he only depicts the cry of the one who is born and the one who dies.

Finally, let's look at the author on the threshold of the 20th century whose work echoes those same laments. The setting of Benito Pérez Galdós's historical novel *El Terror de 1824* (1877) is Spain at the time of the French invasion. After the Spanish War of Independence in 1810, a conflict arose between Ferdinand VII and revolutionary militias, which France was supposed to settle. The monarchy was enforced, and Ferdinand VII pursued severe reprisals against the revolutionaries for years. As deep as the divide between monarchists and revolutionaries was, it did not prevent the two protagonists of this novel from meeting: Patricio Sarmiento and Soledad Gil de la Cuadra. The senile old man Sarmiento, an opponent of absolutism and a father who lost his son in the war, vagabonds through Madrid and is taken in by the young woman Soledad, daughter of a monarchist. Their life together develops into a friendship that

[79] An anthology from 1802, which includes Godínez Manrique's text, adds commas and a few words to this difficult-to-understand sentence: "Llórale la misma naturaleza, porque da al túmulo el primer paso, y quando ya hácia él camina el hombre, prorumpe en lastímeras voces, natural sentimiento de quien le llora" (Josse, 1802, p. 395). My reading is influenced by this version of the text.

[80] Cf. Calderón in the chapter on the surrounding. In *El Año Santo de Roma* we read: "**el Hombre**, y de miserias lleno, / bien como el día, de uno en otro seno, / tránsito es el que hace / con vida tan escasa que **de un sepulcro a otro sepulcro pasa** (Calderón de la Barca, 1995, vv. 9–21).

[81] The oxymoron of the walking deceased recalls the chapter on the processual. The idea here really does seem closer to burial than to birth, in which, as we know, the head is closer to the ground than the feet.

[82] My thanks to Fernando Sanz-Lázaro, who helped me to decipher this passage.

continues even when both are taken to prison for alleged conspiracy against the monarchy. In preparation for the death penalty (which ultimately only affects Sarmiento), the priest visits the two in their cell and comforts them with the following words:

> Llore usted, llore. Dijo el padre Alelí a su penitente –, que así se calma la congoja. Yo también lloro, querida mía, también me lleno de agua la cara, a pesar de estar tan acostumbrado a ver lástimas y dolores**. ¿El mundo qué es? Barro amasado con lágrimas**, ni más ni menos. **Lloramos al nacer, lloramos también al morir que es el verdadero nacimiento**. (Galdós, 1948, p. 230)

In contrast to Godínez Manrique's baroque text, Galdós's narrator does not cry because birth is already the beginning of death, but vice versa (and more in line with Christian eschatology), death is the second birth into the life after death. This quotation opens a series of dialogues that negotiate emotional practices at birth and death. On the one hand, the text deals with the question we already know from Paz. Is it true that we are born lonely and die lonely? Before it is clear that only Patricio Sarmiento is sentenced to death, he comforts Soledad (!) in her loneliness: "Tu destino es mi destino. […] **Hay gemelos del morir como los hay del nacer**: tú y yo somos mellizos, y **juntos saldremos del vientre de este miserable mundo** a la **inmensa** vida del otro…" (1948, p. 186). The fact that only twins (or multiple births) do not go through the birth process *alone* is transferred to the process of dying, which in turn is characterised as a birth process: out of the narrow "womb of a miserable world" (my translation)[83] into the wide ("immense") life after death.

On the other hand, the aspect of fear that we are already familiar with also comes into play: "Verdad es que la Naturaleza [sic!] (cuyos Códigos [sic!] han dispuesto sabiamente los modos de morir) nos ha infundido instintivamente **cierto horror** a todas las muertes que no sean dictadas por ella, o hablando mejor, por Dios" (1948, p. 249). As with Godínez Manrique, (human) nature appears as an abstract agent that determines the emotional reaction to death. There is, however, a remarkable differentiation: only the unjustly killed are horrified by their death. Those sentenced to death, like Patricio Sarmiento, who believe they are dying like a martyr, face death with joy instead of tears. The analogy between birth and death based on weeping is in *El Terror de 1824* thus not affirmed by a dying person himself, but by the external person (the priest). Galdós corresponds to one of the three tendencies we have observed in this section on crying: i) *earthly life* is wept over in comparison to the heavenly life, but not birth or death itself because dying is just another birth (Galdós); ii) *death* is mourned, because death begins at birth (Calderón, Godínez Manrique); iii) weeping at death corresponds to weeping at birth because birth and death are one and the same (Godínez Manrique). It is not the practice of weeping that makes birth and death analogous here, but birth and death are congruent, and so their regrets are identical.

[83] The baroque *miseria hominis* is complemented by a *miseria mundi.*

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have dealt with three central emotional practices that characterize both birth and death: loneliness, fear, and crying. What function fear, loneliness, and weeping fulfil varies greatly in the different texts. Crying is either an accompaniment to being born or dying (Rebolledo, Galdós), or an omen ("presagio"). For Caldéron, weeping at birth and death is a greeting and a farewell to the world, for Godínez Manrique it is the first (and last?) voice. Something similar applies to fear: in Pellicer, fear is an accomplice of death; in Allende's text, the emotion of fear is "circunstancia" and "afán" of dying (and probably also of being born). Sometimes the sensations of fear and crying occur together or are part of the same emotional practice. The reaction of crying at birth and death in Pellicer, for example, goes hand in hand with loneliness. This emotion also plays a role in Galdós, without crying necessarily being a reaction of the same. Calderón and Casona, however, suggest exactly that: in their case, fear seems to be the trigger for crying at death, so it is also fear that causes the crying at birth.

Not only the functions of these emotions are different, but also their triggers: in Pellicer, Allende, Godínez Manrique, and Galdós, the emotions arise from the themes surrounding the *miseria hominis*: regretting the fact of having been born at all (Calderón), having to live and die (Pellicer). But also: being exposed to the blows of life (Allende) and its shortness (Godínez Manrique). Rebolledo, Casona and Allende add to this emotional motif the fear of the unknown. Fear can thus be determined, phenomenologically speaking, once again through a spatial constriction: not via knowledge, but rather ignorance of the fearful, which a priori prevents one from escaping (Bähr, 2019, p. 157). The aspect of confinement, which is etymologically linked to both birth and fear, appears in Rebolledo in connection with birth and sadness, but surprisingly not with fear. As in Galdós, where confinement is also associated with birth, but not with fear.

At the beginning of this chapter, I briefly outlined the state of research and different approaches to emotions around birth and death. What these approaches had in common was that they pointed out that birth and death were never only accompanied by negative emotions; that "life and death, pain and creation, fear and joy" were "inseparable and unpredictable partners" for 17th-century mothers (Howard, 2003, p. 17). This interplay of fear / weeping / joy / loneliness / relief, which we partly find in Luther, explicitly in Rebolledo, and somehow also in Allende, does not occur in the rest of the texts discussed here. However, the literary approach of this chapter has shown that fear and crying were accepted, universally valid, emotional approaches to birth, and are hardly ever doubted, especially from the male perspective on birth presented here.

Furthermore, the findings of this chapter speak against the postulated loss of the fear of the afterlife in modern societies (Knobloch, 2013, p. 352). After all, the analogy between the fear of birth and death can certainly be understood as a historical constant, that even overcomes confessional wars ideologically. With Luther as a Protestant and Rebolledo as a Christian monk who published in the period of the Counter-Reformation, two authors are represented in the corpus who, also in terms of

emotions, should not actually have much in common. With Luther, fear and anxiety underwent a radical change of meaning because in his view, the fear of God (first commandment) should no longer serve as a motor for faith but be reinterpreted as an attitude of reverence towards God (Dietz, 2019, p. 151). In Rebolledo's *Cincuenta oraciones funerals*, man mourns the departure from the world with crying but quite in the spirit of Luther, the attitude towards dying is not connected with a fear of God in the Last Judgement. Sadness, yes, but not fear.

The literary approach to the emotions at birth and death proposed here has also shown that the fear of birth is a rather unknown quantity in the cultural history of fear. While in Delumeau's standard work *Le peur en Occident* (1978) the fear of death certainly counts as "peur collective" or "peur du plus grand nombre", the fear of childbirth is not mentioned at all (Delumeau, 2008). Perhaps this is due to the lack of consideration of 'female' worlds in the Annales school, in which, despite the ground-breaking paradigm shift towards the history of everyday life, this topic nevertheless remains the blind spot of a male gaze. It is even more astonishing, however, that many of the authors discussed here try to put themselves in the emotional world of those who are born and those who die. The analogy between birth and death on the level of the emotional apparently motivates the authors to take on the perspective of a foetus or a dying person, which can certainly be considered extraordinary. Nevertheless, the thematization of emotions at birth and death in the literary texts discussed here in no way exhaust their "emotion potential" (Süselbeck, 2019, p. 287, my translation). For instead of using empathy, identification or sympathy to make the reader experience the fear or sadness, the texts discussed here stick to an undifferentiated description of those emotions, which rather than delving deeper into the emotional world of a character appear as a matter-of-fact, 'wise', marginal note. Thus, the question of the significance of the analogy for the overall context of the texts makes little sense because in some texts (e.g., the *oraciones fúnebres* or Paz's essay) one can hardly speak of a plot, involving their readers.

For various reasons, this chapter should be considered as a work in progress. On the one hand because researching emotions historically, let alone comparatively, requires the consideration of numerous premises that can hardly be met even with an interdisciplinary approach such as that represented in this study. On the other hand, while some of the authors presented here fit the neo-baroque in time and space, to call these texts *neo-baroque* because of the parallel we have found here, seems daring. Despite his active engagement with baroque authors, Casona was more devoted to fantastic than to neo-baroque literature. Galdós, with a novel published in the 19th century, transcends all categories and cannot even be defined by Severo Sarduy's very broad definition of neo-baroque, which describes *contemporary* literature written with baroque rhetoric (Moraña, 2005, p. 10). Can "literatura fantástica" (like Casona's) and texts that represent the "realismo mágico" (like that of Allende), also contain neo-baroque elements? Is the treatment of death in fantastic literature ("[que] pone en juego el miedo o el horror, en última instancia el temor a la muerte", Ubidia, 1997, p. 105) really so different from that of magical realism (that instead of dealing with death is considered a "canto a la vida y a la sensibilidad")? Where does the neo-baroque settle

here? Questions like these open a discussion of genre which we have already addressed in detail at the beginning of this study and which I will not be able to answer here. Therefore, Casona, Allende, and Galdós serve to complement the overall presentation more than to trace a straight line of development with them. The reasons and motives for this intertextual transfer remain to be explored.

In summary, we can state the following: fear and weeping as the motor for the analogy of birth and death are both an occasion (fear of death and of birth) and a coping mechanism (hope at birth is projected onto hope for death); they are both presentations (imagery, illustration of the path) and representations (fear of birth, fear of death and weeping as sensations of confinement); they are instrumentalization (consolation, a 'pointing the way') as well as interpretations (the unknown event death is met with the known event birth). And finally, as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) already observed: "Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other" (Bacon, 1909, n.p.). Weeping and fear in literary texts *represent* reality in the written medium, but they also shape collective emotions *through* their representation.

5 The Eventfulness

> "[…] joyous miracle of birth, dark miracle of death […]" (Bâ, 1989, p. 3)

> "[…] Last scene of all, / That ends this strange eventful history, / Is second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." (Shakespeare, n.d., p. 83)

> "Incluso le alquilamos la vida y la muerte: si usted quiere nacer, le alquilamos el hospital, el médico, los padres y los padrinos, los biberones y los fórceps. Si quiere usted morir, le alquilamos el ataúd, le alquilamos las flores, las esquelas, le alquilamos las plañideras, le alquilamos tres metros de tierra […]." (Del Paso, 2013, p. 229)

The last chapter of this thesis is an invitation: an invitation to an event of which it will only become clear to us in its execution what and how we are celebrating. For *what* do we celebrate in birth and death and *how* do we celebrate it? If we think of birth and death in analogy to one another, is it the *how*, or is it the *what* that creates the parallels? I am extending an invitation to an event that begins unexpectedly and ends unpredictably (even the venue is negotiable!). Above all, however, this last chapter is an invitation to question lines of development in literary history.

I will focus on a story from the volume *El Naranjo* (1993) by Carlos Fuentes (1928–2012), an author who himself made a significant contribution to the theorisation of the neo-baroque. The autodiegetic narrator of this historical fiction "Las dos orillas" is Jerónimo de Aguilar, a shipwrecked man who arrives in Mexico several years before Hernán Cortés, lives there in a kind of slave status among the indigenous people, and learns Maya. Later, together with Malinche, he will become Hernán Cortés' translator and will try in vain to influence the course of the Spanish conquest of Mexico in favour of the indigenous population. Before Hernán Cortés arrives at Yucatán, he makes the following important observation about the traditions of the Mexican natives:

> Cuidar tierra; era su misión fundamental; eran servidores de la tierra, para eso habían nacido. Sus cuentos mágicos, sus ceremonias, sus oraciones, no tenían, me di cuenta, más propósito que mantener viva y fecunda la tierra, honrar los antepasados que la habían, a su vez, mantenido y heredado, y pasarla en seguida, pródiga o dura, pero viva, a los descendientes. […] La muerte, para ellos, era el premio para la vida de sus descendientes. **Nacimiento y muerte eran por ello celebraciones parejas para estos naturales, hechos igualmente dignos de alegría y honor**. **Recordaré siempre la primera ceremonia fúnebre a la que asistimos, pues en ella distinguimos una celebración del principio y continuidad de todas las cosas, idéntico a lo que celebramos al nacer. La muerte, proclamaban los rostros, los gestos, los ritmos musicales, es el origen de la vida, la muerte es el primer nacimiento**. Venimos de la muerte. No nacemos si antes alguien no muere por nosotros, para nosotros. (Fuentes, 1993a, pp. 51–52)

Let us briefly summarise the main statements of this quotation to outline the, not entirely uncomplicated, starting point for this chapter: here, an analogy is made between birth and death on a ceremonial level. According to Aguilar, birth and death are two identical or very similar celebrations ("celebraciones parejas"); celebrations that, contrary to our observations from the last chapter on the emotional, are not characterised by fear and sadness, but by joy and honour. A 20th-century author and representative of neo-baroque refers with the analogy to the period of the 16th century, shortly before the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Do the concepts of the neo-baroque and the baroque offer an explanation for this kind of reference? Does an element of pre-Columbian culture become *baroque* because it appears in a neo-baroque text? Does Fuentes's text become *neo-baroque* because, according to the telluric concept of the baroque, the precolonial period is also encompassed? Or is there a completely different line of development, independent of the two reference points *baroque* and *neo-baroque*? What is Jerónimo de Aguilar referring to when he claims that birth and death are analogous to each other through the associated ceremonies? And finally (and already as a question of a rhetorical nature): is Fuentes really referring to the precolonial period or is this not possibly a much more modern intertext[84], born at a time and with the intention of establishing an autochthonous Latin American cultural concept of the baroque? As we can see, we are again faced with the difficulty of distinguishing between *neo-baroque* as a term (axiom) and as an analytical concept (theorem), only this time we have the advantage that the author himself provides us with a tool for analysing the text. Throughout his life, Fuentes expressed his views on the neo-baroque in numerous writings[85] and thus developed his own definition of the neo-baroque concept, which will guide us at the end of this chapter to contextualise "Las dos orillas" in the (neo-)baroque.

But before that, let's take a closer look at "Las dos orillas". Jerónimo de Aguilar, stranded in Mexico eight years before the arrival of Hernán Cortés, is an ambivalent figure who, contrary to his intention, intrigues the indigenous population with his translation deception at key points in the *conquista*. He reveals the Spaniards' weak points to Moctezuma, translates peace offers as threats (convinced he knows the conqueror's true motives), which then in turn and against all logic, become true and push the Mexica's defeat ever further: "mentía y sin embargo [...] decía la verdad" (1993a, p. 40). The act of translating, however, is only one way in which "el poder […] de las palabras" (1993a, p. 41) is negotiated in Fuentes's narrative: there is also the gender aspect, for Aguilar soon loses his monopoly on translating to a woman: Malinche. While she initially translates from Náhuatl into Maya, and Aguilar from Maya into Castilian, Malinche soon begins to learn Spanish herself and instead of interpreting

[84] In this chapter I will use the term "intertextuality" in the sense of Bakhtin and Kristeva (Aczel, 2008, pp. 330–332). This enables me to refer to the part of pre-Hispanic culture which has not been handed down in writing as a "text" and to grasp parallels between texts and cultures terminologically, where a consciously intended reference cannot always be proven.

[85] These include (Fuentes, 1965), (Fuentes, 1969), (Fuentes, 1993b), (Fuentes, 1998b), (Fuentes, 1998a), and (Fuentes, 2000). Among the writings that have already analysed Fuentes in terms of neo-baroque are: (Scarpetta, 1990), (Abeyta, 2002), (Ochoa, 2004), (Abeyta, 2006), (García Gutiérrez, 2012), (Gutiérrez Vélez, 2012), and (Dhondt, 2015).

Aguilar, she replaces him. Aguilar perceives this as a betrayal and even more so when Malinche rejects him sexually and becomes Cortés' mistress.

The creative power of the word as "poder gemelo que compartían los dioses y los hombres" (1993a, p. 54) is thus relativised to a certain extent: even if it is not yet clear at the beginning if Aguilar is falsifying the translation or Malinche is also exploring her agency as a translator, Malinche soon acquires the power to control or manipulate the messages at will. The word of the translating woman is more powerful than the word of the translating man, what could either be regarded as a reference by Fuentes to the female role in creation myths in Mexican culture (cf. the chapter on the surrounding), or just Aguilar's personal resentment and strategic disadvantage. What is certain is that language is presented as a significant factor in understanding the indigenous culture and its ruler as confronted by castaway Jerónimo de Aguilar after his arrival in Yucatán. Probably in reference to the creation myth of the Quiché Maya as told in the *Popol-Vuh*, the narrator says the following about the ceremonial and shared myths of the indigenous population (*POPOL VUH*, 2013, p. 4):

> **En sus ceremonias públicas**, pero **también en sus oraciones privadas**, repetían incesantemente el siguiente cuento: "El mundo fue creado por dos dioses, el uno llamado Corazón de los Cielos y el otro Corazón de la Tierra. Al encontrarse, entrambos **fertilizaron todas las cosas al nombrarlas**. **Nombraron a la tierra, y la tierra fue hecha**. **La creación, a medida que fue nombrada, se disolvió y multiplicó**, llamándose niebla, nube o remolino de polvo. Nombradas, las montañas se dispararon desde el fondo del mar, se formaron mágicos valles y en ellos crecieron pinares y cipreses. Los dioses se llenaron de alegría cuando dividieron las aguas y dieron nacimiento a los animales. **Pero nada de esto poseía lo mismo que lo había creado, esto es la palabra**. Bruma, ocelote, pino y agua, mudos. **Entonces los dioses decidieron crear los únicos seres capaces de hablar y de nombrar a todas las cosas creadas por la palabra de los dioses. Y así nacieron los hombres, con el propósito de mantener día con día la creación divina mediante lo mismo que dio origen a la tierra, el cielo y cuanto en ellos se halla: la palabra.** Al entender estas cosas, Guerrero y yo supimos que la verdadera grandeza de este pueblo no estaba ni en sus magníficos templos ni en sus hazañas guerreras, sino en la más humilde vocación de repetir, a cada minuto, en todas las actividades de la vida, lo más grande y heroico de todo, que era la creación misma del mundo por los dioses. (Fuentes, 1993a, pp. 53–54)

Fuentes thus interweaves an indigenous conception of life and death (and here one can even demonstrate the narrative has a certain ecocritical potential) that places the continuity of the earth above individual fates. Moctezuma's "obligación consistía en ser siempre, en nombre de todos, ese primer hombre que pregunta: '¿Volverá a amanecer? […] ¿Volvería a llover, a crecer maíz, a correr el río, a bramar la fiera?'" (1993a, p. 30).

Rituals around death and birth in pre-Hispanic Mexico

The idea that in Mexico in pre-Hispanic times every festival, whether for a birth or a death, celebrates the "principio y continuidad de todas las cosas" is thus to be understood in Fuentes's narrative in the larger context of mythology. Still, what did the ceremonies around death and birth look like in the time before the Spanish conquest of Mexico? And is there a historical equivalent for the analogy between birth and death as Fuentes establishes it in fiction?

Apart from archaeological finds, the most important source[86] for birth and death ceremonies in pre-Hispanic Mexico is Fray Bernadino de Sahagún's (1499?–1590) *Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva España* (1578–1580). According to Sahagún, the celebrations surrounding a birth begin during pregnancy, with thank-offerings, prayers to the gods, and baths to make the birth easier (De la Torre, 2003, p. 372). Depending on the stage and situation of the pregnancy (e.g. the cutting of the umbilical cord; bathing the child, the death of the woman giving birth, etc.), the respective events are accompanied by ritual sayings (Bueno, 2017, n.p.; De la Torre, 2003, p. 375). The information varies as to *where* the child is born in the end (mentioned are the bathroom and a room prepared for birth where the child is finally born on the floor, De la Torre, 2003, pp. 375–376; Rojas-Granados et al., 2014, p. 132). Soon after the birth, the first 'burial' takes place by burying the placenta[87] in the yard (in the case of a girl) or "en la parte y lugar donde peleaban" (in the case of a boy) (De Sahagún, 1829, p. 193). Depending on whether the day of birth has a positive or negative connotation in the Mexica's[88] calendar, the naming ceremony takes place either immediately after the birth or a few days later. The priests choose a name for the newborn that is closely linked to the fate attributed to the child based on the significance of its date of birth (Bueno, 2017, n.p.; De la Torre, 2003, p. 381). The names of the dishes eaten at the naming ceremony translate to "ombligo del niño" or "position or positioning of the child in the cradle" (De la Torre, 2003, p. 380). But even before that, there are gatherings to give thanks for the birth of a healthy child and to exchange ideas about raising children (Bueno, 2017, n.p.).

I have already referred to the 'geography' of the afterlife in Mexico's pre-Columbian culture in the second chapter on the surrounding. In the indigenous concept of death,

[86] Using indigenous written literature as a source for indigenous thoughts on death would partly be an option, but poses some methodological problems, such as the fact that the majority of orally transmitted indigenous literature mostly becomes accessible through the transcription by the colonial power (Gómez Sánchez, 2017, p. 44). The intervention of colonial writers makes a literary close reading of them difficult and at the same time points to the inadequacy of European-influenced literary concepts which rarely makes them the focus of literary studies (2017, p. 42). Gómez Sánchez therefore proposes to speak of a "literatura colonial indígena" or of "versions" of indigenous literature instead of pre-Columbian literature per se (2017, pp. 60, 61). The representatives of the baroque concept, which also ascribes baroque qualities to Latin American culture before colonisation (see introduction), could be accused of not having asked the very question of mediality. To which cultural artefacts does this concept of baroque refer? To which works, texts, myths, or traditions? In the following, however, I will make a short cross-reference to Náhuatl poetry.

[87] Ohaja & Anyim's analysis of similar rituals around the burial of the placenta in Africa was interpreted as follows: "[…] birth rites are not only expressions of collective joy for the newcomer but also a farewell for the mother. […] The birth of a child is welcomed by joy and is a goodbye for the mother, the end of a 9-month pregnancy during which the baby has been living and growing within one's body" (Wojtkowiak & Mathijssen, 2022, p. 4). Cf. also (Hennessey, 2021, pp. 4–5).

[88] I prefer the proper name *Mexica* to the name *Aztec* invented by Alexander von Humboldt.

there are several possible places where a deceased person could dwell after death. These afterlife concepts are not linked to the social hierarchy of this world but are determined by the way a person dies: Those who die by water are reserved for the Tlalocan; soldiers and women who die in childbirth go to the Tonatiuhichan[89]; deceased children go to the Chichihuacuauhco, the highest of all heaven. All the rest go to the Mictlan, after four years and after passing nine tests[90] (Valotta, 1985, pp. 59–61).

In total, there are three main death cults among the Náhuas: cremation and/or burial, as well as the already mentioned burial in caves or in "ollas de barro" (León Estrada, 2019, pp. 105–106).[91] Again referring to Sahagún, Mercedes de la Garza summarises the ceremonies around death as follows:

> se ponía al muerto en posición flexionada, se le introducía una piedra en la boca y se lo envolvía en mantas hasta formar un bulto fuertemente atado. Se le iban colocando papeles cortados y, al mismo tiempo, se le indicaban los sitios que recorrería en su camino; […] se le derramaba agua sobre la cabeza, dirigiéndole unas palabras sobre el simbolismo del líquido, y se depositaban junto a él comida, bebida y varios objetos útiles y simbólicos, así como el cuerpo de un perro sacrificado. […] La cremación se realizaba a los cuatro días del fallecimiento en una hoguera cuidada por los ancianos, mientras se oían los *miccacuicatl o [sic!] cantos* fúnebres. Se dice que en esos cuatro días los familiares y amigos podían conversar con el muerto, pues su espíritu todavía estaba en el cuerpo. Después de incinerado el cadáver, se recogía toda la ceniza y los huesos, así como la cuenta de jade que el difunto llevaba en la boca, y se derramaba agua encima para purificar los restos, los cuales se disponían en una urna más tarde enterrada. […] A los 80 días de la muerte se formaba un bulto mortuorio artificial y se le daba de nuevo comida, vestidos y objetos. Lo mismo se efectuaba una vez al año durante los cuatro siguientes. (De la Garza, 1997, para. 25)

Wherein, then, could Fuentes have seen the parallels between birth and death ceremonies that make him claim they are "celebraciones parejas", "hechos igualmente dignos de alegría y honor", events that celebrate "el principio y la continuidad de todas las cosas"? The sources provide scant information on *how* celebrations were held, but hardly any on *what* was celebrated with the festivities.

A first possible clue to the quote by Fuentes is provided by the analogy that Nahua culture makes between a human life and the annual agricultural cycle, and which is also already indicated in the narrative by the quotation we saw at the beginning of this chapter (López Austin, 1994, p. 209): "la muerte era la gran preparación de la vida de los futuros seres; […] La destrucción de los individuos no era sino la condición indispensable para la perpetuación de la especie" (López Austin, 1997, para. 5). With

[89] This is also where the warriors go and corresponds to the idea that birth is a battle against death, whose prisoner or trophy is the newborn (Vargas G. & Matos M., 2011, p. 303).

[90] Matos Moctezuma sees this as the equivalent of the nine menstrual periods that stop during pregnancy: "[L]os nueve pasos que recorre el individuo que fallece de muerte natural, es el retoro al vientre materno (la tierra) del cual surgió la vida. […] [E]l camino que da vida y detiene el sangrado por nueve ocasiones, será recorrido en sentido inverso para reintegrarse al gran vientre materno que es la tierra" (Matos Moctezuma, 1998, pp. 39–41).

[91] De la Garza adds for the Maya culture the exposure of the corpse in the open air (De la Garza, 1997, para. 8). Núñez mentions the exposure of the corpse as well as the severing of body parts also for the Náhuas (Núñez & Martínez González, 2010, p. 60).

the words "[v]enimos de la muerte [,] [n]o nacemos si antes alguien no muere por nosotros, para nosotros", Fuentes thus seems to refer to a historical fact, namely the mythology of the pre-Columbian period. A remark in Sahagún's chronicle supports the argument that there is a real-world equivalent for Fuentes's analogy between birth and death. In the description of the birth process, Sahagún claims that the moment of birth is called "hora de muerte" [of the mother]" (*imiquizpan*) among the Nahua (De Sahagún, 1829, p. 191). In addition to the real dangers to which a woman is exposed during childbirth, this metaphor refers to a ritual (although not ceremonial) aspect of birth, which symbolically links birth and death and can be explained by other passages of the text: the significance of the steam bath (*temazcal*) in the Mesoamerican region during pregnancy and birth establishes a symbolic connection to the goddess complex Yoaltícitl, who according to a myth was killed in the steam bath and through her death created the source of new life (Groark, 1997, pp. 17–21). By visiting the *temazcal*, a woman giving birth symbolically repeats the death of the original mother and creates the basis for new life (Mühlparzer, 2024). However, unlike Sahagún, who in that very chapter sees birth as the first death, Fuentes in "Las dos orillas" presents us with death as the first birth. This makes it unlikely that Fuentes draws his historical knowledge from Sahagún).[92]

Most certainly in the realm of fiction is the aspect of emotions that, according to Fuentes, accompany birth and death. No source that I know of presents a funeral as an "hecho digno de alegría"[93], rather, death is associated with the emotion of fear, as we have seen in the previous chapter on the emotional. Approximately 1566, Fray Diego de Landa (1525–1579), for example, describes the Mayan way of dealing with death on the Yucatán peninsula as extremely fearful: "ya que venían a morir, era cosa de ver lástimas y llantos que por sus difuntos hacían y la tristeza grande que les causaban. Llorábanlos de día en silencio y de noche a altos muy dolorosos gritos que era lástima oírlos. Andaban a maravilla tristes muchos días" (De Landa, 1966, pp. 59–60). This is also supported by the *icnocuíatl* genre of the Náhuatl literature, a genre that deals with existential questions about life, its uncertainties, as well as the fear of dying (Cruikshank, 2007, p. 109). In one poem of this genre for example, which the translator León-Portilla entitled "El Enigma de Vivir", the lyrical I regrets the fact of dying with the poignant words:

> ¿Quién de vosotros, amigos, no lo sabe?
> Mi corazón sufre, se llena de enojo:
> ¡No dos veces se nace, no dos veces es uno hombre:
> Sólo una vez pasamos por la tierra! (León-Portilla, 1986, p. 147)

[92] The opposite (and certainly familiar to Sahagún) phenomenon is the Catholic liturgical calendar, in which the anniversary of the death of saints is celebrated as a birthday. Fuentes refers to the adoration of the Catholic saints and the syncretism that arise from it, in the second half of the narrative: "No quedó en Cholula ídolo de pie ni altar incólume. Los 365 adoratorios indios fueron encalados para desterrar a los demonios y dedicados a 365 santos, vírgenes y mártires de nuestro santoral, pasando para siempre al servicio de Dios Nuestro Señor" (Fuentes, 1993a, p. 39). In fact, Fuentes's birth-death analogy would correspond more to this Catholic idea of celebrating the death as a birthday, than to the pre-Catholic one Sahagún portrays.

[93] Even more difficult to reconstruct from historical sources is the assessment of the "honourability" of the events of birth and death, as Fuentes postulates.

So, unlike birth, it is highly unlikely that a funeral was perceived as a joyful experience by members of the Nahua or Mayan culture.

An event much closer to Fuentes's description than an actual burial is the *Día de los Muertos*. As a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Site, the dead are commemorated on *Día de los Muertos* in early November, but unlike the European Christian festivals of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, *Día de los Muertos* is a joyous ceremony and can hardly be compared to the serious, mournful commemoration of the dead found in other traditions. For a long time, it was assumed that this festival represented Nahua or Mayan traditions or was a "gigantesco proceso de transculturación" (Báez-Jorge, 2012, n.p.) of the pre-Hispanic days dedicated to the dead and the colonial All Saints' Day/All Souls' Day. Various ideologues and intellectuals around Lázaro Cárdenas favoured this ahistorical explanatory model, which presents the *Día de los Difuntos* as an original Mexican tradition (Malvido, 2006, p. 42,43). However, researchers such as Elsa Malvido or the aforementioned (footnote 94) anthropologist Matos Moctezuma were able to prove that, except for a few elements that survived the period of colonisation (e.g. the use of aromas, Santos Pérez et al., 2022, p. 49), the Day of the Dead is to be considered a European phenomenon (Malvido, 2006, p. 48). The customs surrounding All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day originated as a fusion between the funeral rite and the Christian idea of resurrection, the veneration of the bones from the High Middle Ages, the 'invention' of purgatory in the early Middle Ages and the pagan belief in the return of the souls of the deceased on a certain day of the year (2006, p. 46). Even the supposedly typically Mexican elements of these holidays are of European origin – the custom of making sweets and buns comes from the region of León, Aragón, and Castile and was supposed to imitate the relics of saints (2006, p. 47). In Mexico, the pagan rite of providing food for the return of the dead and the Catholic All Saints' Day/All Souls' Day rite merged in the 18th century and became a custom with macabre dances, which was further transformed into a festival in Mexico City that lasted several days and took on the character of a fair, whereupon visiting the graves was theoretically forbidden, but remained part of the ceremony (2006, p. 50). For several reasons (e.g. the cholera epidemics) the Mexican government moved the cemeteries to areas far away from settlements. Visiting the burial sites now involved a long journey and procession, where the pilgrims arrived exhausted and hungry. The graves were decorated and afterwards, they celebrated and drank between the graves (2006, p. 52). The chronicler Diego Durán (1537–1588) already mentions a certain syncretism between the indigenous festivals Huey Miccailhuitl (or Xocotl Huetzi) and Miccailhuitontli (or Tlaxochimaco), which were traditionally celebrated in the ninth and tenth months of their calendar year and then moved to the date of the Catholic All Saints' Day. Still, the indigenous feasts of the dead were not necessarily interpreted in contemporary colonial sources as joyous ceremony, but much more as "ceremonias de mucha tristeza" that were celebrated „con grandes clamores y llantos" (Durán, 1588, p. 288; Graulich, 1989, p. 56; Torquemada, 1964, p. 426).

When Fuentes describes an indigenous tradition of dealing with death in which "los rostros, los gestos, los ritmos musicales" express "alegría y honor", he is probably not referring to a real funeral situation in pre-Columbian Mexico, as claimed in "Las dos

orillas", but to the *Día de los Muertos* as it developed in Mexico in the 18th and 19th centuries. The intertext that Fuentes creates in his narrative through the birth-death analogy, therefore, does not refer to a source from the pre-Hispanic period or the Mexican baroque (whenever one places this in time), but to an author we already know from another chapter: Octavio Paz. Through *El laberinto de la soledad*, he made a significant contribution to the dissemination and consolidation of the fiction of the indigenous Mexican origin of *Día de los Muertos* (Malvido, 2006, p. 42).[94] According to Paz's chapter on "Todos Santos, Día de los Muertos", Mexicans "adula[n]", "festeja[n]", "cultiva[n]" and "abraza[n]" (Paz, 1993, p. 195) death. Paz thereby creates an ahistorical dichotomy between how a Mexican and how a "habitante de Nueva York, París o Londres" (1993, p. 193) deal with death. Instead of silencing death, Paz says, "[e]l mexicano [...] la frecuenta, la burla, la acaricia, duerme con ella, la festeja, es uno de sus juguetes favoritos y su amor más permanente" (1993, p. 193). Although he does not deny their fear of death, he attributes to them a "contemplación del horror" of death and evaluates this as "uno de los rasgos más notables del carácter mexicano" (1993, p. 158). And further on in Paz's text we also find the idea that death nourishes life, which I have already quoted from Fuentes' narrative at the beginning of this chapter:

> [E]l hombre alimenta con su muerte la voracidad de la vida, siempre insatisfecha. El sacrificio poseía doble objeto: por una parte, el hombre accedía al proceso creador (pagando a los dioses, simultáneamente, la deuda contraída por la especia); por la otra, alimentaba la vida cósmica y la social que se nutría de la primera. (1993, p. 190)

Three elements become blurred in Paz and in Fuentes's intertext with Paz: i) The rite of human sacrifice, to which Paz alludes with the ceremony on *Día de los Muertos/Difuntos*. Human sacrifice seems to have been an integral part of the festivities for the dead in pre-Columbian times. However, whether and how this element was retained in the Catholic feasts of All Saints and All Souls is by no means clarified in Paz's text.

ii) Moreover, theology and emotion become blurred in both texts. As we have seen, there existed in the Nahua cosmovision (through its close connection with the agricultural cycles) the idea of death as the precondition for new life. Views like these, however, do not have to be directly reflected in the *emotional* valuation of existential events. A Christian funeral can still be perceived as sad, even if Christian theology promises the deceased an afterlife that is unsurpassed in beauty.

iii) Finally, another two elements that are confused in Fuentes are the cult around death as celebrated on *Día de los Muertos* or *Día de los Difuntos* and the funeral rite itself.

[94] Paz's national psychological essay continues to be used as a valid source for dealing with death in historical Mexico (Cruikshank, 2007). But even without mentioning Paz's idea by name, it found its way into numerous ethnological and anthropological writings: "Ambivalencia fecunda del mexicano que no teme a la muerte; que la hace un juguete gracioso o una azucarada golosina. ¿Cómo no asombrarse, allá por noviembre, de la persistencia de las costumbres mágicas indias que inducen a nuestros compatriotas a ofrecer a sus muertos, a sus huesos, el mismo alimento que ello toman?" (Carrión, 1971, p. 19).

The analogy between birth and death in "Las dos orillas", which Fuentes establishes due to a similar way they are celebrated, thus only has baroque roots to a limited extent. One could summarize it as follows: in terms of what is being celebrated, Fuentes is actually referring to pre-Hispanic times. Nahua mythology links the (sacrificial or symbolical) death of a human being with the regeneration and permanence of nature. The metaphor *imiquizipan* ('[her] hour of death') for the moment of birth cited in Sahagún is an expression of this and refers indirectly to the tribal mother Yoaltícitl, who laid the foundation for new life through her death. The awareness that we are not born "si alguien no muere por nosotros, para nosotros", which the narrator Jerónimo de Aguilar attributes to the indigenous population in Mexico, reflects this cosmovision in fiction. With regards to the question of how celebrations are held and what emotional value the festivities surrounding birth and death have received, Fuentes refers intertextually to Paz, who ascribes to 'the Mexicans' a joyful, grotesque approach to death and implicitly values this as a direct legacy of pre-Hispanic times.

The death of the narrator

Death and birth are mentioned in "Las dos orillas" not only in relation to the pre-Columbian period but also at the level of the structure of the narrative. The impossible narrative perspective already brings the themes of death and the afterlife to the fore: Jerónimo de Aguilar tells his story postmortem *after* he has died of the plague. He looks at the events "desde la perspectiva olímpica que [le] da la muerte" (Fuentes, 1993a, p. 12) and talks to us from his "tumba mexicana, […] desde [su] lecho en el fondo antiguo de Tenochtitlan" (1993a, p. 55), wrapped in an "intangible shroud" (1993, p. 28, my translation). In a sense, the narrative proceeds in "umgekehrter Vektorizität" (Ette, 2022, p. 163), as Ottmar Ette puts it in reference to Alejo Carpentier's short story *Viaje a la semilla* (1944), which follows a similar narrative structure. Fuentes begins with number 10 and the victory of the Spaniards over the Mexica and then gradually goes back to number 1, where Jerónimo de Aguilars recounts the time before the arrival of Hernán Cortés and how he tries to trace the decline of the Mayan culture. Section 0, one could interpret, represents in several ways the indigenous cultures' cyclical understanding of time and the idea of death as a necessity for new life. This subchapter begins with the same words as number 10 ("Yo vi todo esto") and imagines a *contraconquista* of the Mayan (!) people, who, to the complete surprise of the Europeans, respond to the conquest of Mexico:

> […] partiendo de diez para llegar a cero, a fin de indicar, en vez, **un perpetuo reinicio de historias perpetuamente inacabadas**, pero sólo a condición de que las presida, como en el cuento maya de los Dioses de los Cielos y de la Tierra, **la palabra**. Ésa es quizás **la verdadera estrella que cruza el mar y hermana a las dos orillas**. (Fuentes, 1993a, pp. 60–61)

This expands the semantic spectrum of the title of the story: "Las dos orillas" refers to the shores of two continents, Central America and Europe, but also to life and death

and thus, in a syncretic way, to the ancient river crossing metaphor for death. For Jerónimo de Aguilar not only presents the events of these two spheres from the perspective of his *grave*, but also whimsically surveys them as a *star* into which his soul transforms/which he rides after his death and which is closely linked to the meaning of language as it is attributed to it in the narrative (1993a, pp. 57, 59, 61). Elsewhere he speaks of the "estrella verbal" with which he travels from Mexico towards Seville and which is mistaken by onlookers for a "pájaro terrible", "suma de todas las aves de presa que vuelan en la oscuridad más profunda" (1993, p. 61). Through the association of stars and birds, Fuentes once again succeeds in building a bridge to the metaphors of birth, but above all death, of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, according to which the heroes who have died and whose destination is the Tlalocan, accompany the sun to its zenith, transforming themselves into multicolored birds in the afternoon and into stars at night (Graulich, 1989, p. 51).

However, stars and birds also appear in the symbolism of one of the two festivals that the Mexicans dedicated to the dead and which is called Xocotl Huetzi, "Fruit Falls": "the 'fruit' could be [represented by] a victim representing Otontecuhtli Xocotl [divinized heroic warrior], or a funerary bundle, or a many-colored bird, or a pile of arms or a star" (1989, p. 59).[95] At this festival, the warriors (represented by Otontecuhtli Xocotl, the "fallen fruit") were expected to return, transformed into a star or a bird (1989, p. 61).

If we understand Jerónimo de Aguilar as a warrior who returns in the form of a star and who can easily be confused with a bird for earthly observers, Aguilar's whereabouts in the tomb and in the sky do not contradict each other, but are to be understood as complementary and within the Mexica's annual cycle: the feast of the dead and the return of those dead warriors falls on the *tenth* month of the Mexican calendar – that number Fuentes also uses to structure his narrative. The first section 10 tells of the end of the indigenous rule over Mexico, the last section 0 of the *contraconquista,* and the "perpetuo reinicio de historias perpetuamente inacabadas". In "Las dos orillas" there are thus not only intradiegetic implicit references to the Festival of the Dead through the description of ceremonies for the dead as Aguilar experiences them before the arrival of Cortés and through his return as a star, but also on the extradiegetic, structural level: the ordinal number 10 refers numerically to the month of the Festival of the Dead and the section 0, in which European-Mayan history is rewritten, points again to the abstract necessity of dying (or decline) for new life to arise and ergo a cyclical understanding of time. Ottmar Ette's description of "inverted vectoricity" in Carpentier's *Viaje a la semilla* is thus also applicable in a modified form to "Las dos orillas" and allows similar questions to be asked[96]. In Carpentier's narrative, which tells the life of his protagonist Marcial backwards – but not as analepsis, but in reverse – life proceeds from death to birth where at the end of the text, Marcial

[95] A setting star, a fallen fruit, and the bones of the dead share the characteristic that they all return to Mother Earth and make her fertile (Graulich, 1989, p. 60).

[96] *Viaje a la semilla* is not structured around the number 10, but around the number 13, which is significant in literary history (Ette, 2022, p. 160).

(re)enters the womb[97]. Marcial "desmuere", "desenferma" and "desnace" (Márquez Rodríguez, 1983, pp. 358, 400). Both narratives provoke the question of whether the passing from life to death and viceversa (and how it is celebrated) is not synonymous with a celebration of life itself, which is no longer thought of individually (Ette, 2022, p. 170). As in *Viaje a la semilla*, "Las dos orillas" is about "schleifende Übergänge, bei denen die Grenzen zwischen Leben und Tod, zwischen Sterben und Gebären fließend sind und aus beiden ‚Richtungen' Sinn machen" (2022, p. 168).

Fuentes and the neo-baroque

So how can Fuentes's analogy between birth and death on the intradiegetic level of the ceremonial and the extradiegetic level of narrative structure, be framed in terms of literary history? How do they relate to the theory of the (neo-)baroque, to which Fuentes himself contributed to in several texts?

For the first time in his entirety, Reindert Dhondt looked at Fuentes's concept of baroque and how it has changed over time. He summarises how it is to be classified in terms of time and literary history:

> Su concepción del barroco no es ahistórica, sino **transhistórica**: a pesar de las rupturas históricas, **el barroco alberga la posibilidad de una continuidad cultural** […] ya que puede reaparecer en diversos momentos de la historia. Sin embargo, arguye que el barroco es en su origen una creación del siglo xvii, a diferencia de alguien como Carpentier que postula un barroco precolombino. (Dhondt, 2015, p. 39)

Instead of a mere return to 17th-century topoi, Fuentes understands the Latin American baroque as a provocative or ironic recourse to the past, as an "estilo del mestizaje" or as a cultural ideology particularly suited to integrating both indigenous Mexican and European values (i.e. for syncretism) (2015, pp. 29, 32, 45–46). For Fuentes, baroque is thus always something unfinished, "algo que está continuamente haciéndose" (2015, p. 31), something that always remains without ultimate answers (2015, p. 34). He regards the baroque as an instrument for the "contraconquista" or "contrautopía" (2015, p. 42), which makes the brutal reality of the conquest and the decline of Spain visible, and that is not entirely different from the "desengaño" in the 17th century:

[97] The text can thus also be read as a counter-narrative to the chapter on the processual, where passages were dealt with that interpreted death as a re-emergence *from* the womb. Here it is a re-entry *into* the womb.
The idea of re-entering the womb at the end of life is also found in Gabriel García Márquez's story "Tercera resignación" (1974). In it, the protagonist experiences death in the plural. Death, which he is diagnosed with as an illness as a child, makes him spend his life in a coffin into which he literally grows over the years. At the age of 25, the body stops growing and the narrative switches to the subjunctive: "Resignado oiría las últimas oraciones, los últimos latinajos mal respondidos por los acólitos. El frío lleno de polvo y de huesos del cementerio penetrará hasta sus huesos y tal vez disipe un poco ese "olor". Tal vez –¡quién sabe!— la inminencia del momento le haga salir de ese letargo. Cuando se sienta nadando en su propio sudor, **en una agua viscosa, espesa, como estuvo nadando antes de nacer en el útero de su madre**. Talvez entonces esté vivo" (García Márquez, 1981, p. 20). This narrative is also exceptional in that it imagines the "moment of death" (Detweiler, 1972) in particular detail.

> Cuando el barroco se universaliza, no contribuye a la uniformización de las culturas locales, sino que fomenta una hibridación generalizada y lleva a una diferenciación cada vez más acusada. América Latina no debe conformarse a Europa, porque ya refleja la tendencia futura de Europa, y por extensión, del mundo. (2015, p. 44)

"Las dos orillas" also corresponds to this idea, for through the fictional reconquest of Europe by the Maya, it makes it clear that cultural diversity in general (and the languages that represent it) are always superior to more monolithic, homogenous cultures:

> La lengua española, ya había aprendido antes, a hablar en fenicio, griego, latín, árabe y hebreo; estaba lista para recibir, ahora, los aportes mayas y aztecas, enriquecerse con ellos, enriquecerlos, darles flexibilidad, imaginación, comunicabilidad y escritura, convirtiéndolas a todas en lenguas vivas, no lenguas de los imperios, sino de los hombres y sus encuentros, contagios, sueños, y pesadillas también. (Fuentes, 1993a, p. 58)

Conclusion

The imagined reconquest of Europe by the Maya at the end of "Las dos orillas", one could argue, makes Europe a baroque continent and, together with the syncretic elements (e.g. the reference to the liturgical calendar) the narrative itself a (neo-)baroque event that, in the baroque sense, "wreaks havoc on a linear history imagined as homogenous time moving towards a particular end" (Ibbett & More, 2019, p. 553). The parallels between birth and death, which Fuentes sees in the eventfulness of "Las dos orillas", are in this narrative first and foremost a complex mesh of intertextualities, which, also in keeping with the character of the baroque, "inherently, create[] the possibility of critique of tradition, including periodization itself" (2019, pp. 542–543). The earliest period Fuentes refers to is the pre-Hispanic period, through those elements that I have already discussed in detail (the mythology, the meaning of the number 10 and the *Popol-Vuh*). In addition, however, there are also intertexts that refer to the 20th century (Paz and how the *Día de los Muertos* is pseudo-historicized in this period). Although not in the context of the events surrounding birth and death, Fuentes also refers to the baroque, quoting from the chronicle of Bernal Díaz de Castillo, whose work he elsewhere calls *baroque* (Dhondt, 2015, p. 43; Fuentes, 1993a, pp. 12–14).

What Luis de Rebolledo observes for death in the 16th century thus also applies to Fuentes's understanding of the baroque and how he puts it to practice in "Las dos orillas": both, the baroque and death "no tiene[n] hora segura" (De Rebolledo, 1608, p. 400).[98] For this reason, this last chapter of this thesis is to be understood as an invitation – an invitation to participate reflectively in the events of baroque and neo-

[98] The explanation of this is: "porque como la muger, entrando en el mes, no tiene hora segura, assi en nasciendo el hombre, luego entra el mes de la muerte" (De Rebolledo, 1608, p. 400).

baroque on the one hand, and in the – "necessarily embodied" (Wojtkowiak & Mathijssen, 2022, p. 5) – events of birth and death on the other, whose point in time of beginning and point in time of ending remain unspecified and whose venue remain debatable. An invitation to ceremonies that are similar partly in *how* and partly in *what* they celebrate. It is finally an invitation to consider literatures of this world and their history also as "ÜberLebensWissen" (Ette, 2022, p. 4).

6 Conclusion

When the Bible says that there is "a time to be born and a time to die; […] a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (*Holy Bible: The King James Version*, 1987) – so is it time to end this thesis with a conclusion. The question of how the analogy between birth and death is represented in baroque and 20th century, 'neo-baroque' texts can now be answered more thoroughly through the areas examined (referred to here as the processual, the surrounding, the emotional, and the eventfulness).

The subject of the direction in which one dies, or in which the world receives an individual, is primarily dealt with in religious, medical, and literary-artistic discourse. In different ways and with different forms of analogy, the direction of being born is used as an explanation for the postulated direction of dying: dying, being buried, or crucified (in Peter's case) happen by falling feet first, because either i) dying and being born are two opposing events; ii) because dying and being born are actually the same and only differ in the direction in which they occur; or iii) because they represent Adam's fall and all the characteristics of human birth that it caused. However, the directions of birth and death do not yet reveal much about the nature of this path. The discourses examined here show some variations (a narrow, steep, or labyrinthine path), with the female birth canal forming the template for these metaphorical attributions. Both the position of the dying person and the type of route one takes are defined by the circumstances of birth. In summary, this means the following: what *nature* presents as an *observable* condition of birth is reinterpreted in *cultural* practice as the *non-observable* phenomenon of dying. In other words: the complex of perception (visual, conceptual), possibly unconscious remembering and feeling (being born), as well as anticipating (dying) results in the cultural practice of a particular burial rite.

We also encountered the ambivalence between nature and culture in the chapter on the surrounding. As "Ort der Tiefe", the cave archetypically symbolizes certain characteristics that make it a suitable setting for many authors for the clash, merging or indistinguishability of opposites: remembering and forgetting, knowledge and not-knowing, surface and depth, birth, and death. The discursive potential attributed to caves (in the broadest sense) is revealed in etymological and metaphorical parallels and its derivatives such as *mouth*, *cervix* and *mouth* as a metaphor for the entrances to caves.

Spatial associations were also mentioned in the chapter on the emotional. The aspect of 'narrowness', which is etymologically related to the emotion of anxiety, would thus be a possible explanation as to why some authors equate the anxiety of birth with the anxiety of dying. As we have already seen with El Greco in the chapter on the processual, the path of dying and being born is commonly imagined as a *narrow* birth canal. But is a narrow birth canal also a frightening one? The constriction on the phenomenological level was ignorance: not knowing what awaits one after birth and after death, not knowing the object of one's fear.

The triggers and functions of the emotional practices analogous to birth and death – anxiety/fear, weeping, and loneliness – presented themselves very diversely:

sometimes they occur as causalities or in combinations, sometimes individually, sometimes as a reaction to the uncertainty of what lies ahead, sometimes as part of the *miseria hominis* issue (where the horrors of dying find their equivalent in the evil of being born). Either because by the mere fact of being born and dying, *humans* resemble each other, or because *birth and death* are thought of in analogy to each other, both events equally trigger fear, equally cause weeping, and must equally be performed in solitude.

An analogy between the emotions of birth and death is, in a sense, the condition for the analogy in the eventfulness to which we have devoted the last chapter of this thesis. Carlos Fuentes describes birth and death for the indigenous population of Mexico as "celebraciones parejas [...], igualmente dignos de alegría y honor". Without questioning the originality of this artwork, we have nevertheless attempted to contextualize this idea, and have been able to establish an intertextual frame of reference that stretches from the pre-Hispanic period to the 20th century.

Afterthoughts on the afterlife and birth

Why then do concrete, sensual, painful, female life experiences so strongly determine the representation and imagination of the great unknown death at certain times in certain forms of expression? Let us try to explain.

At the beginning of this thesis, we observed that both birth and death elude our conscious experience. In the words of Blumenberg:

> Kein Bewusstsein kann sich als anfangend erleben. Nicht einmal beim alltäglichen Erwachen aus dem Schlaf ist jemals ein Augenblick der erste; **erst recht sind Anfang des Lebens und Welteintritt der Geburt jeder Erlebbarkeit wesensmäßig entzogen**, was auch immer davon als Spur oder Trauma geblieben sein mag. **Gerade und nur weil das so ist, gibt es die unerfüllte Insistenz auf Annäherung an das Erlebbare, das rastlose Umkreisen der Natalität nicht anders als der Mortalität**, der Undenkbarkeiten von Anfang und Ende des Bewußtseins als der Indizien seiner Unzugehörigkeit zu den physischen Realitäten. […] Paradox ist: Wir *wissen*, daß wir sterben müssen, aber wir *glauben* es nicht, weil wir es nicht *denken* können. Nicht anders und nicht weniger paradox ist, daß wir *wissen* angefangen zu haben – weil angefangen worden zu sein – , ohne es glauben – weil nicht denken – zu können. **Dieses Dilemma ist von der Art, daß es nach Mitteln der Substitution für das Undenkbare, der Nachhilfen fürs Unglaubliche, der Surrogate für die blasse Äußerlichkeit des Wissens verlangt**. Es ist das Reich der absoluten Metaphorik im Zentrum, in der Kapitale, wo sich entscheidet, ob es überhaupt eine Chance für ein wenig mehr als das Wißbare gibt […]. (Blumenberg, 2016, p. 23)

Literature in general, and the texts discussed here in particular, presented themselves as such a "Mittel der Substitution für das Undenkbare". For this, Detweiler names three creative procedures used as a literary approach to the moment of death: *mimesis, aletheia,* and *ex nihilo*:

> The presentation of the moment [of death] is mimetic because the artist "imitates" what he knows of the concrete realities of dying. It is revelatory (based on aletheia) because the artist attempts to make the moment personally meaningful by depicting one's consciousness at the instant of dying. It is independent creation (based on nothing) because the artist is forced to metaphorize beyond the realm of what can be experienced – a situation in which the function of metaphor itself is strained to the limit, to the point where **the juxtaposition of known realities must create a new, unknown (and unknowable) one**. (Detweiler, 1972, p. 270)

Although not explicitly referring to the analogy between birth and death, with the "Gegenüberstellung von bekannten Realitäten mit dem Ziel, eine neue Unbekannte zu kreieren", Detweiler describes the procedure we encountered in the birth-death-analogy. Birth and death are juxtaposed, with the result that unknown aspects of them can be made tangible.[99] Let us try to rephrase it: if birth and death are equated, this is done through two kinds of heuristic practices, each of which also corresponds to an explanatory approach: a) Through the practice of similarity[100], common features between birth and death are noticed. The fact that birth and death are both experiences of a "great unknown" serves here as a perceptual category that makes birth and death similar in their partial aspects.

The second practice b) refers less to the actual commonalities, but rather attempts to heuristically productively shape what is already known and observable (aspects of birth) and to fill the voids of the other variable (death): in the aspect of the processual as well as the surrounding and emotional, something known (position, emotion, and body of the mother at birth) is inferred to something unknown (position, emotion and surrounding at death). Birth allows – according to the logic of analogy as we defined it in the introduction – conclusions to be drawn about death (Fliethmann, 2008, p. 22). This results in answers to questions that are in principle unanswerable and the "blank face of nothingness" (Detweiler, 1972, p. 294) gives way to a familiar script.

We see again: in the texts discussed in this thesis, literary "Lebenswissen" is generated through "Erlebenswissen". At the same time, however, this experimental knowledge is expanded through literature. By offering the possibilities for an experimental approach to life itself (think, for example, of the so-called "reverse vectoricity"), literature continuously creates further, new, spectacular knowledge of life, which in turn finds its way into lived realities.

Line(s) of tradition

Baroque and neo-baroque served as the historical framework for this thesis. I apprehensively chose these two terms because both were only conditionally suitable as analytical categories. We recall the inconsistencies in the debate about the historical

[99] If one wants to be very precise, however, it is not imagining *ex nihilo*, but *ex morte* or *ex natu*.
[100] On the cultural theory of similarity see (Bhatti & Kimmich, 2021).

baroque and the problems Arabella Pauly traces systematically in *Neobarroco. Zur Wesensbestimmung Lateinamerikas und seiner Literatur*: the lack of scientifically tenable arguments when trying to define neo-baroque Latin American literature, the conversely strongly emotional and patriotic use of the baroque concept (both on the part of Spain and subsequently on the part of Latin America), the lack of regional and temporal delimitation in each case, the lack of concretization of how baroque and neo-baroque differ. The list could go on.

And yet, this thesis should once again put this vague, but literarily historical powerful, theoretical foundation to the test, with a view to those Latin American literatures of the 20th century in which we could observe parallels in the analogy of birth and death. Let us now draw a conclusion: are the baroque and the neo-baroque suitable to explain the 'resumption' of the birth-death analogy? The answer is no.

Certain recurring elements could indeed be claimed as *(neo-)baroque* if *baroque* and *neo-baroque* are understood as stylistic terms. For example, in the course of this thesis we repeatedly encountered representations of syncretism between Christian and indigenous cultures, a topic that is frequently mentioned in research to characterize the *neo-baroque* (or 'new world' *baroque*): The neo-baroque is said to „engendra[r] una actitud de receptividad sincrética y busca suponer a sus viejas raíces, los mitos y tradiciones del Viejo Mundo para aproximarlos y utilizarlos en la creación de nuevas formas proyectadas a la expresión universal de nuestra cultura" (Figueroa Sánchez, 1986, p. 93). We further encountered representations of syncretism in Castellanos and Fuentes in the field of historical fiction, and in Paz in the form of cultural and customs analysis.

Last, but not least, in the chapter on the eventfulness, we found neo-baroque elements when we applied the neo-baroque concept of the author himself to his own texts. Specifically, this involved the idea of the baroque as an instrument of a *contraconquista*.

We came to a different conclusion in the chapter on the emotional: birth and death were equated here in texts that otherwise contained no (neo)baroque elements. Here, Pauly's observation confirmed that there is as yet no research that conclusively distinguishes the neo-baroque from other currents such as the (Post-)Boom. What is the difference between these currents and their contemporaries, who always differ to some extent in their worldview and their "epistemología que privilegia unos aspectos de la realidad y desdeña otros" (Ubidia, 1997, p. 101)?

However, the main argument against the neo-baroque-baroque relationship as an explanation for the re-emergence of the analogy in the 20th century is that it would ignore those lines of tradition that predate the baroque. Indeed, the parallels in individual facets of birth and death show how the ideas of antiquity (Pliny the Elder, Seneca, the Bible) or aspects of precolonial cultures flowed through the baroque and neo-baroque in many different channels. They thus have a much longer tradition – and sometimes even a certain claim to universality (?) – to which the baroque-neo-baroque explanatory pattern would do no justice.

The equation of birth and death: an existential side note

We have not yet conclusively answered one research question: that of the status of analogy in the texts. Is the analogy a theme, a motif, or a singular element? What meaning is assigned to it in the textual context? The answer is as simple as it is ambivalent: both, baroque and 'neo-baroque' artists, understood the analogy of birth and death to be an issue. And yet the topic was not a popular one. Other baroque topoi (*cotidie morimur, aequat omnes cinis, miseria hominis*), which we have touched upon, are much more widespread than "la ecuación morir-nacer" (Villarreal Acosta, 2012, p. 19). The analogy appears as an additional variant, or also as a variation of those other topoi, and not infrequently in close proximity to them: if people become equal *through* death and birth, are *death* and *birth* also the same? If death is not a singular event, but we die every day – is birth already death? Such was the reasoning we have encountered in the past pages.

Not in all the texts dealt with here has the analogy been given the status of a motif; only in Castellanos does it represent the smallest element that carries meaning. Sometimes the analogy is related to another theme (death), allegory (death as a woman in Casona), or other symbols (the cave, the labyrinth, the crucifixion head first), and sometimes – in the case of Fuentes – it is a rather secondary element when it comes to the level of content, but on the macro level it forms the structure of the narrative.

As a motif, as a symbol, as a subject (El Greco), or as an 'existential side note' – the perspective and the respective situation from which the analogy in the texts comes about are also different. Are the events of birth and death themselves analogous to each other, or is the analogy assumed to occur in ceremonies assigned to them (and therefore at somewhat staggered points in time)? Who is the subject of the analogy? The one for whom it represents the beginning and end of his consciousness or the one who participates (mother or mourner)? Here, too, the present study has shown surprising results. In *Höhlenausgänge* Blumenberg writes about the perspective from which birth is portrayed:

> *Das Licht der Welt erblicken*, als Umschreibung des Geburtsvorganges, klingt aus dem Mund derer, die sich schon im Licht der Welt stehen glauben, triumphierend: Dies ist der Zustand, den es zu erreichen galt, wenn man einmal auf dem Wege war. Für die andere Seite, das vorhergehende Dunkel, gibt es sprachliche Emphase nicht. Bei der Rede von der Geborgenheit *im* Mutterschoß ist kaum je an die intrauterine Pränatalität gedacht, fast immer an die Flucht des weinenden Kindes *auf* den Schoß der Mutter. Was den Schmerz der Geburt angeht, ist alle Aufmerksamkeit auf den der Gebärenden gerichtet gewesen, nicht darauf, daß es auch der des zu Gebärenden sein könnte. (Blumenberg, 2016, p. 20)

Blumenberg may have been right about that. And yet we now know: those perspectives of those being born exist, in different genres and discourses. A cave precisely allows that "linguistic emphasis" (my translation) on the state in the womb, because as a symbol it connotes ideas attributed to intrauterine life. It imitates the indeterminate, indistinguishable, liminal state of the unborn and the dead, who are no longer

concerned about it. The emotional practices at birth also speak against Blumenberg's assertion. In fact, the focus was more often on the *child's* fear and pain than on the emotional practices of the woman giving birth. What Bataille sees as an unbridgeable distance between observers and those who are born / give birth / die (and what he cites as a reason for their postulated solitariness) is overcome in many ways by many authors in our corpus. In this respect, the authors discussed here accomplished something extraordinary: they placed themselves in a consciousness that either has not yet begun (that of the one being born) or is in the process of being extinguished (that of the one dying), which in any case has no direct correlation in the narratable reality (Detweiler, 1972, pp. 270–271).

Critical gaze, male gaze: concluding remarks

Artists who permeate the experience of birth and reflect on that of death often dig deep into the subtexts of their cultures. With this study, I have attempted to explore these 'subtexts' from an interdisciplinary perspective. And yet I would like to briefly mention other disciplines with which one could also have approached the topic and whose historicity – I suspect – would provide promising explanatory approaches. There is, on the one hand, biographical theory, as we have dealt with them in the chapter on the processual. On the other hand, psychoanalytic literary studies could offer other explanations for the significance of the cave or the symbolism of 'depth' in different cultures. If the 'return' of the baroque is a "return of the repressed" (Moraña, 2005, p. 247), how would psychoanalysis explain such a thesis? In any case, it proved necessary not to explore the analogy of birth and death in a spatially isolated and uni-disciplinary way, but also to draw on aspects of theology, anthropology, psychology, and history. The literary approach of this thesis in turn complemented the knowledge of other disciplines, e.g. by showing that the fear of birth has been largely neglected in the cultural history of fear.

It is due to the historical literary field that texts and written testimonies from the baroque period were mainly produced by male authorship and that the corpus of this study, therefore, presented a tendentially male view of death and the tendentially female theme of birth. However, the aspect of analogy itself proved to be more of a blind spot, which I only became aware of through Alicia Salomone's article "Analogía, ironía y escritura femenina: Repensando a Octavio Paz desde la teoría crítica feminista" (2006), which took a critical look at Paz's understanding of the aesthetic category *analogy*: what if the creation of analogies is inevitably rooted in a symbolic order in which the feminine is subordinate? What if *analogy* for women writers means adoption of patriarchal structures (Salomone, 2006, pp. 92, 93)? Thinking in analogies, according to Salomone, would thus be an instrument that assigns women to the dual and ambivalent categories that have always been attributed to them within patriarchy: their postulated proximity to nature as opposed to culture, good mother vs. bad mother, but also life vs. death, etc. Making analogies with 'female' topics would thus in many

cases mean reducing femininity to the one-dimensional characteristics invented for them in patriarchy. The present study does not take sufficient account of this justified objection by Salomone.

Next chapter(s)

Of course, the analogy of birth and death is not limited to the aspects of the processual, the surrounding, the emotional, and the eventfulness mentioned here, but other aspects could round off the topic in the future. A similarity between dying and being born is, for example, also established on the level of the positional: a mummy appears in Allende's *La casa de los espíritus*, "como un hueso de un fruto extraño, **encogida en posición fetal**" (Allende, 2000, p. 271) and protagonist Alba "se encogió como un feto en el suelo" (2000, p. 428) when death is imminent during her torture. In *Oficio de Tinieblas*, the secondary character Límbano takes "**la postura fetal** de los cadáveres" (Castellanos, 2009, p. 170), "se ovilló en el regazo de la tumba" (2009, p. 170) as he kills himself with a bullet to the head, only sixteen years old and nostalgically looking back at the lost childhood and the tender darkness of the womb. In *Un millón de muertos* (1961) by José María Gironella, "muchos cuerpos, en su última sacudida, adoptaban la postura que cerraba el ciclo, **la postura fetal**" (Gironella, 1975, p. 430). And Sahagún also describes the "posición fetal" of those individuals who migrate to the Mictlan (Báez-Jorge, 2012, p. 226). A chapter on the positional promises to open up yet another dimension in the analogy of birth and death.

Also, these last three quotations clearly show: the artistic and literary approach to the indescribable, the production of "Lebenswissens", is based on the imagination and the talent of observation of its artists and authors. And yet, because of migrating ideas and/or the basic anthropological need to form ideas about birth and death, there are astonishing commonalities in the imagery of these texts and artworks. This is probably as true nowadays as it was yesteryear. Let's keep our eyes open for it.

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