Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica, **16**, 1 (2024) 184–197

DOI: 10.47745/ausp-2024-0012

Remediated Encounters in Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio* and *Pancho Diablo*

Edit-Mária DÁNÉL
University of Bucharest (Bucharest, Romania)
Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies
daneleditmaria@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7163-7944

Abstract. This paper aims to identify those protagonists who occupy the position of dramatic remediators in the process of mending broken relationships in Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio* (1983) and *Pancho Diablo* (1987). The research sets out from Jacques Derrida's essay *Plato's Pharmacy*, where the work of art is considered to be the fountain "perhaps with curative powers" (Derrida 1981, 70) in re-examining past relationships. On the level of the narrative, remediated encounters have the role of rebuilding interpersonal relationships with the help of designated arbitrating entities with an independent, self-contained existence. Considering their level of involvement in the outcome of the plot, Carlos Morton's subjective, semi-objective, as well as indirect empathic, partial, or detached remediators assume the position of non-judgemental, non-political, self-sufficient individuals who initiate the process of self-discovery in a subjective time frame designated for this purpose. According to Susana Monica Tapodi's study (2017), certain obsolete traumatized characters, such as hedonists, intellectuals, and medieval knights, assisted by their alter-egos, attempt to mend the resulting broken discourse occurring at borderline situations determining the individual's (post-)existence.

Keywords: hedonism, dramatic remediation, subjective-semi-objective mediators, identity.

I. Introduction

This paper focuses on identifying those independent, self-contained entities or protagonists who occupy the position of dramatic remediators in Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio* (1983) and *Pancho Diablo* (1987), based on Jacques Derrida's essay *Plato's Pharmacy*, where the work of art is considered to be the fountain "perhaps with curative powers" (Derrida 1981, 70) in re-examining past relationships. On the level of the narrative, remediated encounters have the role of rebuilding

interpersonal relationships with the help of designated arbitrating entities with an independent, self-contained existence.

Considering the level of involvement in the outcome of the plot, the paper relies on the hypothesis that Carlos Morton's subjective, semi-objective as well as indirect empathic, partial, or detached *re*-mediators assume the position of non-judgemental, non-political, self-sufficient individuals who symbolically administer the *pharmakón*, the medicine to the protagonists initiating the process of self-discovery in the *Teatro de Campesino* manner, where the individual is not judged or punished. However, his attitude and the consequences of his actions are reflected in a comedic way. Morton uses satire to reach a dramatic effect – "[w]hether he treats mythical, religious, and social themes and presents human beings in search of liberation there is always a sense of humor in the character, situation and language" (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 187).

Nicolás Kanellos (2024) traces the birth of *Teatro de Campesino* to the year 1965, when Luis Valdez, Dolores Huerta, and Cezar Chávez established a canon for Chicano literature. The ideology behind this endeavour was serving through language, mediating culture in a multilingual literary universe, and reconciling and softening past traumatic experiences. Teatro de Campesino was a political theatre, influenced by Berthold Brecht's philosophy of "epic drama" (Hecht 1961, 64), breaking the fourth wall between audience and characters, and introducing socio-political commentaries or symbols for the spectators to alienate themselves from the created world of the play.

Both Brecht's epic theatre and Teatro de Campesino share the urge to educate people, to present a new attitude towards life. The general attitude they create is that of constant respectful awareness: "If the distance is sufficient, then knowledge, perhaps as a terrifying self-knowledge will come" (Hecht 1961, 79).

The most frequent collective works published were the so-called *actos*, performed outdoors, containing elements of song and dance, using only certain props and masks of some prominent Mexican-American traditional figures such as *calaveras*, The Devil, and the *pellado*, or the naked one, always engaging with the audience. Some works, however, did not appear in written form; they were improvised *corridos* and loud songs, influenced by the Medieval Spanish and Mexican oral folk culture. Travelling performers followed the logical line of these improvised sketches, acting them out in different ways, under other circumstances so no show was completely identical. This form of theatre is similar to the work of a student-travelling group in Spain called *la baracca*, which translated into English means 'hut,' or 'cabin.' In 1932, *La Baracca Mobile Theatre*, a wandering theatre group, was formed, mostly centred around staging the 1619 play *Fuenteovejuna*, which dramatizes the revolt of peasants against their tyrannical lord. The theatre's ideology followed the value system of the seventeenth century, when religious and political ideas were not easy to pair up

with the Republic's sovereignty: "We believe we can do our part toward the great ideal of educating the people of our beloved Republic by means of restoring to them their own theatre" (Rodríguez Solás 2016, 202).

Postmodern Chicano playwright Carlos Morton's (1947–) career spans over four decades. As a second-generation Chicano, his dramatic work can be assigned under the key notion of *barrio* 'border.' The 1970s democratization of the American Academy opened the doors for Latino students to enter the higher education system. This is also the period when playwrights began to professionalize. Carlos Morton's name as an independent dramatist surfaces with volumes like *The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales and Other Plays* (1983) and *Johnny Tenorio and Other Plays* (1992), the latter in collaboration with Arte Público Press. His recent dramas include the political video play *Trumpus Caesar* (2021) and its sequel in progress *Trumpus Caesar Returns*, directed by Michael Mufson.

By using myths of the Mexican-American culture with a "sardonic view of humanity and a folkloric interpretation of classic patterns" (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 190), he constructs his plays following a tragic-comic pattern of rituals placed in a multi-cultural Chicano setting: "In this sense, Carlos Morton not only sees theatre as a ceremonial activity but a combination of ritual within a ritual, in order to present a new perspective" (Lomeli and Shirley 1992, 190).

II. Mediation and Remediation

Susana Tapodi connects the past nostalgia of once remarkable intellectuals, villains, lovers, and heroes with the Bergsonian conception of subjective time, according to which nostalgic protagonists, to preserve their glorious past, endeavour to annihilate the notion of time and temporality by assuming the position as their creator's "pessimist alter-ego" (Tapodi 2017, 161). Thus, subjective time is reversible through recreating the emotional itinerary of certain past events, which somehow triggers the absurd situation of emotional involvement to a certain extent, with the help of subjective fragmented memory. At the time of reconstructing past happenings, anchored to the time of speech, protagonists are unable to relive the unmodified physical and spiritual encounters with their former selves missing the necessary substantial and perfect quantum leap; as a conclusion, their narrative loses a significant amount of accountability.

Considered to be a process of self-discovery induced by certain empathic, philanthropic, or partially detached arbitrating entities, mediators negotiate between two parties. In a dramatic context, they are helpers, messengers contributing to the protagonist's self-awareness followed by the realization of the impossibility of a fundamental change in their past. Protagonists realize that acceptance of the unchangeable is a means to recovery.

Mediation and remediation are interconnected procedures in the sense that as soon as the problem has surfaced, possible solutions are being considered. Both concepts function as results of broken dramatic dialogue that determine the individual's (post-)existence in borderline situations induced by designated, self-efficient conflict-catalysing, negotiating entities, stimulation agents who, through subjective-semi-objective-indirect dramatic involvement, contribute to the individual's fundamental transformation, recovery, and reconnection.

Oxana Timofeeva (2016, 162) considers art in its various forms as "individual/social therapy" providing a cure for an imperfect world, using the ancient Greek term *pharmakón*, medicine with healing powers. Jacques Derrida in his essay *Plato's Pharmacy* (1981, 70) considers texts as written accounts, creations to be the fountain "perhaps with curative powers" for ameliorating conflictual situations. The notion of *pharmakón* bears a double meaning: it is considered to be both a poison and a remedy with the aim "to push or to attract" (Derrida 1981, 70). The medical benefits of *pharmakón* are described by Derrida as follows: "This medicine is beneficial, it repairs and produces, accumulates and remedies, increases knowledge and reduces forgetfulness" (1981, 97).

According to the latter definition of the term, the paper hypothesises and proves that Carlos Morton's subjective, semi-objective, as well as indirect empathic re-mediators symbolically administer the *pharmakón*, the medicine to the protagonists initiating the process of self-discovery with a non-judgemental, tolerant attitude, urging them to accept the consequences of their actions instead of ignoring them. Despite not preventing the painful effect of spiritual purification, re-mediators have a persuasive, convincing nature to "bewitch the soul" (Derrida 1981, 116).

Partial detachment from the remediator's connection to the protagonist includes ghostly apparitions or parallel reasoning, which exclude a constant presence in the individual's life but have an increased, lasting significance considering the outcome of events. For example, both paternal returns are rejected as a self-defence mechanism in the case of José Zorilla's play *Don Juan Tenorio* and Carlos Morton's sequel entitled *Johnny Tenorio*, because these occurrences were aiming towards a necessary change in the behaviour of the protagonist which ended with a warning: "Adios, pues. Mas no te olvides de que hay un Dios justiciero" [Well, farewell. But don't forget, there is a God of justice] (Morton 1992, 42), as Don Diego's last words to his son prove: "Farewell, but don't forget / that there is a God of Justice" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.).

In Carlos Morton's *Pancho Diablo* (1987), Jesús Domingo renders the historical subplot of the play becoming the symbol of Mexican immigrants crossing the American border. Disillusioned by the Great American Dream after 1960, and in hopes of surviving persecution, they decide to return to their home country. Jesús Domingo can be defined as being part of the working community "braceros"

(Sommers and Ybarra-Frausto 1979, 8), or immigrant Mexican factory workers during the Transition Period between 1848 and 1910.

The presence of detached remediators triggers a humorous element in Carlos Morton's *Pancho Diablo*. In a world of turmoil where Evil himself decides to convert into a good entity without any help from those superior forces everyone turns to, his disillusion turns independence when he finally proclaims: "Pancho, you're trying too hard. Forget about the world out there; it's a mystery no one can solve. Try to come to grips with yourself. Look for the little dios inside you" (Morton 1992, 180).

III. Indirect Dramatic Remediation and the Don Juan Myth

The popularity of the Don Juan myth, according to Tapodi (2017), can be attributed to the fact that his story reunites love, conquest, and death, some eternally interesting topics. The author discusses popular sources regarding a man who, among many negative features, disrespects the deceased, the institution of marriage and its obvious urge for commitment. Tapodi mentions a further occurrence of the Don Juan motif in Spanish Baroque dramatist Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* [*The Trickster of Seville and His Guest of Stone*], written in 1616 and published around 1630. This play also introduces the servant as a remediator, emphasizing Don Juan's shortcomings as a villain and a manipulator incapable of love but also rendering value to other characters as the common denominator. The wise servant Ripio's words addressed to Duke Octavio carry a lot of wisdom regarding cautious love as opposed to mad attraction:

> Why, what an idiot would I be / To lose my reason for the dame, / If I loved her and she loved me. / Now, did she not return your flame, / Then you might well keep such a coil / Adore and flatter her and spoil / And wait till she rewards your toil; / But when you mutually adore / And neither in your faith miscarry, / What difficulty is there more, / What is preventing that you marry? (De Molina 1959, 144)

Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio* describes the way the protagonist forms superficial and avoidant interpersonal connections, intimate relationships with the ladies: "One hour to fall in love with them. Another to make it with them. A third to abandon them and sixty seconds to forget them" (Morton 1992, 35). Morton was influenced by José Zorilla's 1844 drama *Don Juan Tenorio: Drama*

religioso-fantástico en dos partes [*Don Juan Tenorio: A Religious-Fantasy Drama in Two Parts*], where the main character and his alter-ego rival Don Luis Mejía provoke each other to have as many conquests as possible. The long-anticipated meeting between the two masked gentlemen takes place at the Inn of Cristófano Buttarelli. This geographic centre of events shelters their competitive nature and mutual reflection. Don Luis is confident regarding his abilities: "Because one day, it's true, / I said that in Spain, no one / could do, not another man, / what Luis Mejía could do" and receives an immediate reaction from Don Juan: "No one can come / near / what Tenorio will achieve" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). Considering the names Tenorio and Mejía, one can grasp the concept behind their denomination: Tenorio suggests the musical abilities of a non-trustworthy individual who only "sings," and talks without any significant factual result, or evidence. Taking adverse trajectories from their majestic namesakes, both Don Juan and Don Luis, in the given circumstances, become thieves and murderers. Don Louis counts a killing and fifty-six conquests, Don Juan fifty-six killings and seventy-two conquests.

The rivalry between the two men is depicted in Morton's play as well. Johnny Tenorio's enemy, Louie Mejía, is a twenty-year-old "would be lady-killer" (Morton 1992, 27), who is also the brother of Ana, the teenager whom Johnny Tenorio wants to marry. According to the account of Louie and Johnny's female conquests, the result is obvious: "Seventy-two. Six I married" (Morton 1992, 35). Louie proves to be a worthy adversary – "Chingao! No puedo compararme contigo" [Damn! I cannot compare myself to you]"[1] (Morton 1992, 35) – to a self-centred seductor: "Why try? There's only one Johnny Tenorio" (Morton 1992, 35).

Looking at the most recent representations of Don Juan, the absurd man, who considers the love of life a priority and is a convinced atheist, counts his conquests as defeating impermanence. By slowly removing and burying objects from Johnny's sanctuary, Berta purifies his past, frees him from his guilt and grants him forgiveness, claiming: "I cleansed you by listening and understanding. You see, I am the eater of sin, la que se traga los pecados" [the one they take their sins to] (Morton 1992, 50).

Albert Camus mentions "Don Juanism" as a psychological process where the archetypal lover exhibits the same degree of passionate affection towards all his conquests and needs to repeat the cycle ever so often (Camus 1955, 45). Thus, Don Juan cannot be seen as a melancholic individual because he knows his limitations and faces them with an oblivious attitude. Carlos Morton's Johnny Tenorio, despite his numerous superficial romantic affairs, needs Mother-Earth Berta to anchor him into reality. This charming, charismatic, self-confident man becomes an honest-hearted boy when his interaction with his best friend is concerned: "Sure, one of my best friends is Berta, the bartender at Big Berta's Bar

1 The English translations of the Spanish passages are my own throughout the article.

on Guadalupe Street […] She's someone I can tell my troubles to. She listens to me and makes the pain go away" (Morton 1992, 38).

Obliterating temporal and spatial obstacles permits the individual to reclaim people, emotions, and unsolved conflicts from his past. The curtain on memory lane is lifted as his parents access the stage, a fact which from a dramatic point of view triggers remediation by indirect means. Historically, Johnny's father was an immigrant, who considers his son a ray of hope and ambition for a better, more tolerant society, encompassing the dreams of a parent for their child. Don Juan, wearing a mask, supports his son's aspirations of wanting to become an astronaut. The interaction between the Spanish and the English language is a special characteristic of Carlos Morton's plays because words uttered in one's mother tongue have a more intimate and sincere effect: "Ya, ves, el primer astronauta chicano. Por eso tienes que ir a la escuela" [Would you look at that! The first Chicano astronaut. This is why you have to go to school for] (Morton 1992, 44).

Eugene Tartakovsky (2013, 231) discusses the idea of cultural identity as part of the individual's self-definition belonging to a certain cultural heritage, language or ethnicity, rooted in "shared values and beliefs". On a behavioural level, it means involvement with a certain community through "shared language, practicing certain traditions and rituals, supporting particular values and norms, participating in gatherings and organizations, and knowledge of one's ethnic or national history" (Tartakovsky 2013, 231). About the migrant's cultural identity, Tartakovsky (2013, 231) mentions Eisenstadt's "unidimensional bipolar model" according to which immigrants, as they arrive in a foreign country, have a single identity but with time passing, their self-awareness is somewhat modified and their ethnic provenience is placed aside in favour of that of the host country. This desocialization-resocialization has a value system contradictory to their homeland's customs, a fact which can lead to assimilation, more rights, better treatment, more job opportunities, and culturally mixed families, but also negative characteristics such as a gullible attitude towards the host country, discrimination, segregation, and exclusion from all cultural-political decisions. The "identity confusion" (Tartakovsky 2013, 232) occurs when immigrants try to assimilate both their ancestor's culture and the one provided to them by the new society.

Rodolfo Acuña in his 1972 book entitled *Occupied America* mentions the phenomenon of forced acculturation concerning Mexican-Americans after the Second World War. Post-war disappointment drew almost half a million of the Mexican male population who served in the armed forces to reconsider their move towards the older "barrios" (Acuña 1972, 290), which saw a sudden expansion regarding acculturation on a social and individual level.

According to Nicolás Kanellos (2024), second-generation Chicanos in the 1960s and 70s, although aware of their bitter-sweet historic past, were not keen on remembering the humiliation and the constant identity crisis. Johnny Tenorio

refuses to show any consideration for his ancestors. His more than disrespectful send-off to his father: – "Then … go to hell!" (Morton 1992, 44) – turns into indifference. His father's ghost is summoned on stage as a last warning before Johnny's decline: "Adios, pues. Mas no te olvides de que hay un Dios justiciero" [Well, farewell. But don't forget, there is a God of justice] (Morton 1992, 42). The final parting from his father's ghost leaves Johnny oblivious: "What the hell do I care what you think" (Morton 1992, 42).

When he is faced with his mother, Johnny is preparing to face the confrontation with laughter, a coping method that is, according to Camus, significant to the modern absurd individual to fight off annihilation. Laughter, for a non-believer, is a means of prayer for the forgiveness of his sins: "his laugh bursts forth and makes one forgive everything" (Camus 1955, 46). This positive emotional outburst in adults triggers spiritual purification. Similar to a child, the protagonist in question produces a spontaneous reaction of self-awareness absolving the individual from accountability. In plays, according to Camus, punishment is cancelled, redeemed, and eliminated since it is not considered a successful means to modify initial behavioural patterns.

Don Diego, the indirect remediator in José Zorilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*, to monitor his son's life progress, returns incognito: "I, wanting to catch a sight / of the sort of man you were/come past at evening light / and … I am ashamed to be here" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). When faced with resistance on his son's part, Don Diego leaves him with these words: "Farewell, but don't forget / that there is a God of Justice" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). The same rebellion as in Johnny Tenorio's reply is present in Don Juan's words addressed to his father: "I've never asked for a day / of pardon, in my place. / So don't worry about me / from this time on, since how / he's always lived till now's / how Don Juan will ever be" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.).

Despite adopting an atheist life philosophy, Don Juan knows that generally from conception and birth, man is headed towards death. The time spent during this period is a state of hedonism for this archetypal hero. He aims to turn the pain of passing into the enjoyment of living earthly life to the fullest and experiencing ultimate happiness while being aware of one's mortality. The ability to self-deprecation and ridicule makes the Don-Juan archetype unforgettable and morally indestructible.

IV. Remediated Encounters in Selected Plays by Jose Zorilla and Carlos Morton

José Zorilla's *Don Juan Tenorio: Drama religioso-fantástico en dos partes* [*Don Juan Tenorio: A Religious-Fantasy Drama in Two Parts*], published in 1844, has been

influenced, besides the obvious Don Juan myth, by Tirso De Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* [*The Trickster of Seville and the Guest of Stone*], as previously stated. After numerous superficial conquests, Don Juan makes a pact to seduce his fellow *caballero*'s, gentleman's fiancée, Doña Ana, and the novice Doña Ines in a period of six days and to kill more men than the other. Don Juan's achievements indeed overshadow that of Don Luis's, but the consequences of his deeds are haunting. The inn of subjective-involved-active (re)mediator Cristofano Butarelli is the centre of Don Juan's reflections. Loyal to his name, Cristofano of God-loving individual, Cristofano induces Don Juan's process of self-discovery, resulting in his redemption and reunion with his true love.

Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio* (1983) and *Pancho Diablo* (1987) are humorous, bicultural records of two controversial archetypes: the eternal scoundrel, Don Juan, and the personification of Evil, who as a comic, unexpected twist decides to embrace the opposite existential trajectory.

In Carlos Morton's play *Johnny Tenorio*, the protagonists all gravitate around Berta's Bar, the axis mundi of the play. Big Berta, as her name says, is a collected Earth Mother, while Johnny Tenorio, constantly changing, is considered to be an air-like character. She functions as the anchor, the provider of wholeness; all events and characters revolve around her. From a dramatic point of view, Berta is the subjective-involved-active (re)mediating entity, placing characters in a void of past events, constantly striving to help protagonists reach the centre again. In writing the play, the author was closely influenced by Zorilla's above-mentioned drama using characters, events, and almost identical lines adopting a more sarcastic, up-to-date modality of presentation.

Lee Daniel (1989, 80) considers Berta to be a "mother-figure, who, like a magician, creates various scenes on stage in the form of flashbacks to provide the viewer/spectator with information on Johnny." She is the "cosmic bartender and mother-confessor" (Daniel 1989, 80). She recreates the past to recompose vanished existences. Her role is to "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (Timofeeva 2016, 168). Just before the curtain falls, she reflects on Johnny's life, acknowledging both his negative and positive characteristics: "Here is Johnny Tenorio, el Don Juan, a thorn in the soul of La Raza since time immemorial. Ha tracionado a mujeres, assasinado a hombres y causado gran dolor. Por eso decimos … que muera! […]. [He has cheated on women, killed men and caused great distress. This is why we say … let him die!] He is our lover, father, and son. Por eso decimos – i que viva!" [This is why we say – let him live] (Morton 1992, 52).

The specific time of this reunion is the Day of the Death, and the place is Big Berta's Bar "on the West Side of San Antonio, Texas" (Morton 1992, 28). Big Berta is the angel who "would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (Timofeeva 2016, 168). The bar with the altar is the sacred place

where every year puppet-master Berta grants the memory-machine permission to return its most beloved guest Johnny Tenorio. There is a strong bond between Bertha and Johnny, who after each conquest tells his confession to his confidant. Berta represents stability in Johnny's volatile existence; she is his conscience, his spiritual double. At a certain point in the plot, Johnny proposes to Berta: "Hey, Berta, why don't you marry me, huh?" (Morton 1992, 31) or "Berta, you are my main squeeze. I'd die for you, you know that" (Morton 1992, 32). Besides the fact that she is a perfect listener, Berta is also a catalyser of events, having the power to reveal souls and manipulate nature. She is the only one who can unite past and present for one night. The interdependence between Johnny and Berta is described by the protagonist himself: "She's someone I can tell my troubles to. She listens to me and can make the pain go away" (Morton 1992, 38).

The humorous elements of the play are not missing either: Berta has an altar in Johnny's memory, where she places all the objects that once defined his life: we know he liked to drink and gamble and had a passion for women, hence obtaining "the centerfold of Playboy Magazine" as well as a list of his "conquistas" [conquests] (Morton 1992, 29): "In Texas, six hundred and forty. / Arizona, two hundred and thirty. / California, one hundred, and look, / New York, already one thousand!" (Morton 1992, 29).

Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio presents a subjective-involved-active (re)mediator in the person of Buttarelli, the owner of the Inn of Cristófano Buttarelli. He starts the memory machine by initiating the re-enactment of Don Juan's story. Buttarelli reopens the symbolic Pandora's box and summons all the protagonists to revolve around one major character. He is the messianic arbitrator who sacrifices his identity by paying homage to the greatest masked seducer in history. To demonstrate this process of active-participative remediation, Zorilla uses the ancient, most reliable technique of storytelling, balancing historical facts with satire. In the light of Don Juan's accounts concerning his romantic conquests, several places in the world are introduced with a playful, humorous undertone. Italy is called "the palace of pleasure" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.), whereas Rome is referred to as "Love's net" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.), and Naples is described as "a rich love garden / an empire of pleasure" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). Don Juan's infinite self-confidence takes abnormal measures: he urges that the gates of Rome should read, "Here's Don Juan Tenorio, / for whoever wants to have a go" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). He considers Roman women to be "capricious / their customs: licentious, / I: a gallant rake / who on earth could make / the count of my amorous / adventures?" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). Short after these encounters, Don Juan shares his second proclamation concerning his abilities in this surreal, absurd portfolio of his:

> Here's Don Juan Tenorio / who has no competition. / From princess / who will not bend / to a fishergirl in a lowly boat, / there's no female who does /

> not attend, / no enterprise he will not / float, / whether it smacks of gold or / valour. / Let the quarrelsome ones, / and the gamblers come: / whoever is proud, let him see / if he can take advantage of / me, / in gaming, in loving, or / fighting. (Zorilla 2001, n. p.).

Despite his symbolic name, Don Luis Mejía joined forces with the Devil by becoming a thief: "We did well by the devil, / and such road we went" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.). His spiritual decline is definite as he remorselessly accounts for robbing the Bishop's chambers on Easter Day, which happens to be the most significant Christian holiday: "I shiver with / joy, can't stop, / when I remember his / treasure" (Zorilla 2011, n. p.). Don Luis has a notorious behaviour, the results of which he proudly displays around France: "Here is Don Luis / who's worth at least two / of you. / He'll stay here a few months, / then, / and his only yen, / really his only game, is / to adore the French ladies, / and fight all the French men" (Zorilla 2001, n. p.).

The protagonist in Carlos Morton's 1987 play entitled *Pancho Diablo* pursues the concept of intentional redemption despite a millennial negative reputation. Thus, Pancho Diablo can be considered the modern, converted version of Don Luis Mejía.

The centre of this artistic universe is La Gran Cantina del Infierno, owned by Mr Pancho Diablo with the following characteristics: "has a tail, horns, hooved feet; fire and smoke comes out of his mouth and ears. In short, he is the very personification of the beast" (Morton 1992, 157). Pancho Diablo is a satyr-like character who recalls and regrets all his wrongdoings and has reached the point of radically changing his life by renouncing his millennial title of being the Devil. The semi-objective, less participative remediating entity Saint Peter is sarcastic and unholy. Pancho's major sins make it impossible for him to reach a solution, and the arbitrator does not intervene in his case, a fact which leads to Pancho Diablo's sceptic revolt: "What did I do? I am the wronged party. Who used me to achieve his goals? Who's the fall guy here? I ought to sue Him!" (Morton 1992, 159). Pancho's decision is somewhat a backwards-rebellion as he unscrews his horns and tail and throws them at Saint Peter, who remains collected, adding: "You can't quit. It's your destiny" (Morton 1992, 159). Pancho Diablo is not able to change his past to an ideal extent because of the constant battle with his conscience: "You see, you really haven't left, you just brought hell with you" (Morton 1992, 166).

His encounter with the enigmatic subjective-involved-participative remediator Jesús Domingo is significant in Pancho's change of perspective. Jesús, the archetype of the foreigner was shot by the Houston Police because of his provenience, skin colour, and language: "In Houston the cops shoot first and ask questions later – especially if you're Mexicano" (Morton 1992, 167). Pancho

Diablo, touched by his interlocutor's story, alludes to the local authorities El Cielito Lindo or the Beautiful Little Sky on Jesús's behalf, who decides to opt out of crossing the Rio Styx, which in Greek mythology is the River of Death carrying the souls to the Underworld. The sign on the ship – "Abandon All Esperanza of Entering Aquí" [Abandon All Hope of Entering Here] (Morton 1992, 167) – is directly referencing the Inferno scene in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Going through life-changing encounters and different experiences, and being radically "humanized" as a consequence, Pancho Diablo, the sanguine, boisterous demon understands that fairness on earth always "comes with a baggage" (Morton 1992, 187), which is the condition of existence, proven by the fact that he now wants to do good. His final disillusion consists of the absence of The Creator, who never has time for his creation: "Sorry, I really must go now. There are so many things to do, new planets to create, old worlds to check up on" (Morton 1992, 191). In a world where morals are turned upside down, Jesus is a Mexican man shot by the Police, and God can rarely be contacted; Pancho's only point of reference is his conscience, which returns whenever he faces an existential crisis: "Pancho, you're trying too hard. Forget about the world out there; it's a mystery no one can solve. Try to come to grips with yourself. Look for the little dios inside you" (Morton 1992, 180). After having cried out to heaven and being treated fiercely, Pancho Diablo is finally granted forgiveness, which he celebrates by dancing and singing, diminishing the borders between good and bad, renouncing the title of an illegal alien. This way, Pancho Diablo solves his predecessor's dilemma in the sense that despite not coming to terms with his past, he embraces the unchangeable, looking ahead towards the imperfect future: "Now just a minute / I may have been bad / but that had to stop / I am reformed / no longer deformed / So give me a chance / to try to reform" (Morton 1992, 190). The phrase "I am reformed" versus asking for an opportunity to "try to reform" (Morton 1992, 190) means that the possibility for change has been granted, but the outcome is doubtful.

V. Conclusions

Re-examining the past and rebuilding personal relationships is a deep process of self-discovery and self-acceptance which needs arbitration and guidance. Interpersonal relationships can be mended through certain designated remediating entities with an independent, self-contained entity who, according to their level of involvement, modify the outcome.

To present the transformation of these social rejects, outsiders, and individuals at the border of their existence, postmodern Chicano playwright Carlos Morton in his selected plays: *Johnny Tenorio* (1983) and *Pancho Diablo* (1987) deliberately

chooses empathic, tolerant, philanthropic remediating subjective, semi-objective as well as indirect remediating presences from Mexican-American folklore who as healers administer the *pharmakón* with "curative powers" (Derrida 1981) to the protagonists initiating the painful process of healing according to the fictitious, dramatically internalized subjective Bergsonian time frame designated for this purpose.

Acknowledgements

With special thanks and respect to Prof. Dr Susana Monica Tapodi for her invitation to her lecture entitled *A hódító férfi motívuma* [The Motif of the Seductor] held at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Faculty of Economics, Socio-Human Sciences and Engineering, Miercurea Ciuc, on 9 March 2022.

With special thanks and respect to Prof. Dr Nicolás Kanellos at the Arte Público Press, Houston, Texas, for graciously agreeing to an interview on 23 July 2024 and providing information regarding Mexican-American theatre and its cultural legacy.

Works Cited

Acuña, Rodolfo F. 1972. *Occupied America. A History of Chicanos.* Eighth Edition. New York, U. S. A.: Pearson.

Camus, Albert. 1955. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays.* Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Random House.

Daniel, Lee A. 1989. "Johnny Tenorio: Don Juan á la Chicana." *Confluentia* vol. 4, no. 2(Spring): 79–83.

De Molina, Tirso. 1959. "The Trickster of Seville." Trans. Roy Campbell. *The Classic Theatre. Vol III. Six Spanish Plays*, ed. Eric Bentley, 137–218. New York: Doubleday (Anchor Books).

Derrida, Jacques. 1981. "Plato's Pharmacy." *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, 61–117. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hecht, Werner. 1961. "The Development of Brecht's Theory of the Epic Theatre, 1918–1933." *The Tulane Drama Review*. Vol. 6, No. 1(September): 40–97.

Kanellos, Nicolás. 2024. Personal Interview with the Author at the Arte Público Press, Houston, Texas. Interview by Edit-Mária Dánél, 23 July.

Lomelí, Francisco and Carl R. Shirley. 1992. *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Volume 122. Chicano Writers*. Detroit: Gale Research.

Morton, Carlos. 1983. *The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales and Other Plays.* Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press.

1992. *Johnny Tenorio and Other Plays*. Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press.
2021. *Trumpus Caesar*. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmu3CM1EOVI* (Last accessed 20 June 2024).

Rodríquez Solás, David. 2016. "La Baracca, 1993: el giro lopiano de García Lorca" [La Baracca, 1993: Garcia Lorca's Lopian Turn]. *Anuario Lope de Vega. Texto, literatura, cultura* vol. 22: 200–216.

Sommers, Joseph and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, eds. 1979. *Modern Chicano Writers. A Collection of Critical Essays.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Tapodi, Susana Monica. 2017. "Decadență, nostalgia trecutului şi lirismul prozei în evocarea figurii lui Don Juan la Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Gyula Krúdy şi Mateiu Caragiale" [Decadence, Nostalgia of the Past, and Lyrical Prose in Presenting the Figure of Don Juan by Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Gyula Krúdy, and Mateiu Caragiale]. *Itinerare textuale. Studii şi eseuri de istoria culturii şi de literatură comparată* [Textual Itineraries. Studies and Essays on Cultural History and Comparative Literature], 161–187. Iaşi: Vasiliana '98.

Tartakovsky, Eugene. 2013. "Cultural Identities of Immigrants: Their Formation in the Pre-Migration Period and Their Transformation during Adjustment to the Host Country." In *Immigration: Policies, Challenges, and Impact*, 231–254. Hauppauge, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288451933_Cultural_identities_of_immigrants_Their_formation_in_the_premigration_period_and_their_transformation_during_adjustment_to_the_host_country (Last accessed 26 July 2024).

Timofeeva, Oxana. 2016. "Theatre for the Dead." *Stasis* vol. 4, no. 2: 162–174.

Zorilla, José. 2001. *Don Juan Tenorio*. Trans. N. K. Mayberry and A. S. Kline. *https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5201/5201-h/5201-h.htm* (Last accessed 26 July 2024).
2002. *Don Juan Tenorio: Drama religioso-fantástico en dos partes* [Don Juan Tenorio: A Religious-Fantasy Drama in Two Parts]. Madrid: Real Academia Española.