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Haunting the *Corpus Delicti*: Rafael Campo's *What the Body Told* and Wallace Stevens' (Modernist) Body

LÁZARO LIMA

WHAT THE BODY TOLD, a volume of poems by the Cuban-American poet Rafael Campo (b. 1964), addresses how formal poetry may give form to loss and memory in the age of AIDS by structuring an exchange between the literary institutions that privilege poetry as a representational medium and the inability of language adequately to account for and remember loss. Campo's *What the Body Told* haunts modernism's legacy by construing it as the *corpus delicti*, literally the body of the crime, where "crime" is conceived as the insufficiency of modernist aesthetic agencies to give evidence of the "truth" about the body.¹ Campo's ghostly demarcations of the *corpus delicti*, through a search for keener sounds, are established in his implicit dialogue with modernism in general and with Wallace Stevens in particular.

Stevens, who has been variously read as a reluctant modernist and modernist *extraordinaire*, embodies for Campo an aesthetic meditation on the representational crisis between ontology and epistemology: the crisis between *being* and *knowing* that Stevens' poetic language grapples with as a necessary but inadequate communicative medium. In his dialogue with Stevens, Campo attempts to confront the inadequacy of the modernist literary theory of aesthetic autonomy by establishing an intertextual dialogue with his interlocutor.² My reference to Stevens as Campo's "intertext" is intentional and signals Campo's own provocative deauthorization of the modernist notion of "genius" as a trope. Indeed, in this essay I will argue that rather than deconstructing the New Critical conceit of aesthetic autonomy—a hallmark of Latino protest poetry—Campo constructs an inter-American continuum of literary ties and dependencies that he posits as the necessary prerequisite for a poetics of intercultural engagement. As I will show, Campo suggests that intercultural engagement is the figuration of dependent continuities and not a necessary rupture between one aesthetic and another. The aesthetic continuities with Stevens that Campo establishes as an ethnically and culturally marked "Other" are significant because they signal a turn away from direct confrontation in the relation-

ship of self-identified ethnic writing with the master narratives of American cultural identity. That Stevens is Campo's interlocutor is also suggestive because it promotes a conversation among presumed equals; even if this conversation is with Stevens' specter, that is, with the malleable legacy of his words in their ability to perform on our cultural consciousness in general and on Latino cultural identity in particular. I argue that Stevens' "afterlife" is as much at stake in Campo's conversation with modernist aesthetic agencies as the weight accorded to this embodied modern called Stevens.

Andrew Lakritz has recently noted that Stevens, along with other masters of the "constellation of modernist American verse" like Eliot, Frost, Pound, Williams, and Crane, attempts to answer the quintessential modernist question, "[H]ow does one remake a poetry, and a culture, on the grounds of an exhausted tradition?" (1). For Stevens, this was a daunting question indeed, but one that he attempted to answer roughly within the constraints of New Criticism's emphasis on "aesthetic autonomy." The Anglo-American New Criticism's call for aesthetic autonomy registered an important metaphor in its desire for "a close reading," a practice that simultaneously created and reinforced the cult of genius, since it relied on the belief that the poet's intention was tantamount to his artistic truth. (I say *his* intentionally; Marianne Moore, who was loosely associated with the American modernists, was one of very few female poets to be canonized in American letters as a modernist, and this only several decades after the fact.) A close reading demanded above all else a hermeneutics of engagement within the text's formal boundaries, an analysis of and for meaning that considered the text to be an autonomous cultural artifact produced by a great mind. Crudely speaking, this posited the poet as the purveyor of "truth" and the critic as the purveyor of meaning.

For American New Criticism, this critic-centered monopoly on meaning, as Frank Lentricchia reminds us, had "the ideological effect in the United States of sustaining, under conditions of higher education, the romantic cult of genius by dispossessing middle-class readers of their active participation in the shaping of a culture and a society 'of and for the people.' The New Criticism strip[ped] those readers of their right to think of themselves as culturally central storytellers" (6). Lentricchia is too generous, of course, in his critique of modernist aesthetic agencies. His singular concern for the middle-class reader still leaves too many "culturally central storytellers" outside New Criticism's prison-house of meaning.

If Lentricchia is right about New Criticism's ideological hegemony on American culture, and the weight of his critical authority should indemnify me (an irony he might not appreciate given his avowedly anti-authoritarian materialist critique of modernism), then what is it precisely that interests Campo in this "modernist" Stevens? As a Cuban-American poet, should he not write of things Cuban, at least the experience of being a Latino? Curiously, Campo's fascination with Stevens has less to do with

disassociating himself from an ethnic identity than it does with associating Stevens with Cuban and Cuban-American literary history. Stevens' literal and metaphorical ties to Cuba and Cuba's premier organ of modernism, *Orígenes: Revista de arte y literatura*, provide a telling answer.

Wallace Stevens and José Rodríguez Feo, the Cuban founder and one of the editors of Cuba's influential *Orígenes*, carried on an epistolary dialogue that resulted in an enduring friendship as evidenced by the ninety-eight extant letters they shared between 1944 and Stevens' death in 1955.³ Though Rodríguez Feo was only twenty-four when he began his correspondence with Stevens, the two men had much in common. Both had graduated from Harvard and shared an interest in George Santayana as well as an appreciation of Cuban things (Coyle and Filreis 2). Stevens' own affinities with the younger Rodríguez Feo become clear when he tells the young man in a letter dated 20 June 1945 that "Even though there appears to be a vast difference between us in respect to our age, I am most interested in finding out how alike we are" (60).

Rodríguez Feo admired Stevens and was the first to translate Stevens' poetry into Spanish for *Orígenes*, allowing his Cuban readership to be the first Spanish-speaking audience to appreciate the American modernist (6). During the almost eleven-year course of their friendship Stevens had occasion to send Rodríguez Feo some " 'lovely ties' " (3) that the young man no doubt appreciated because they were a symbol of both the *literary ties* established between the two and of their collaboration. The literal and metaphorical ties with Cuba were evident in Stevens' own concern for the nature of "Cuban things" in *Orígenes*, which, as I will later suggest, found its complement in his own concern for things American. Stevens chides Rodríguez Feo for including too many "un-Cuban" things in *Orígenes*:

Assuming that you have a passion for Cuba, you cannot have, or at least you cannot indulge in, a passion for Brinnin and Levin. . . . [I]t is a question of expressing the genius of your country, disengaging it from the mere mass of things, and doing this by every poem, every essay, every short story which you publish—and every drawing by Mariano, or anyone else. . . . *Cuba should be full of Cuban things* and not essays on Chaucer.⁴ (57; my emphasis)

The advice to the young man manifested itself in a poem Stevens wrote for Rodríguez Feo, "A Word with José Rodríguez-Feo," which appeared in Stevens' collection *Transport to Summer*. Stevens' advice is summarized in the last lines from the poem's first stanza where the poetic persona asks, "Night is the nature of man's interior world? / Is lunar Habana the Cuba of the self?" (CP 333). Stevens' use of *Habana* and not Havana in his last rhetorical question is important in that Cuba's "self" is linguistically marked (*Habana*); implying that "night" (the unknown) is not the nature

of one's true self, his or her "interior world." The essence of things Cuban resides in language, performed in the poem by the signifier *Habana*; that is, identity inflected by the specificity of language, *Habana* as a Cuban thing.

Stevens' concern for things Cuban in a Cuban journal edited by Cubans reflected his own anxieties about things American, a concern that made him note, "Nothing could be more inappropriate to American literature than its English source since the Americans are not British in sensibility" (cited in Rehder 95). Robert Rehder has observed that for Stevens, "[b]eing an American poet . . . was the inevitable consequence of living in America" (97). In addition to location as the arbiter for defining what is American in Stevens, Rehder notes that Stevens "needed Europe in order to define America" and goes on to claim that Stevens' poem "Academic Discourse at Havana" was precisely about defining America in contradistinction to Europe (97).

It is curious that Stevens' fascination with Cuban things was such that conceptualizing America—that is, the United States—meant defamiliarizing America and recreating it in another place, Cuba. I cite the first two sections from Stevens' decidedly hermetic poem (reprinted in *Ideas of Order*):

I

Canaries in the morning, orchestras
In the afternoon, balloons at night. That is
A difference, at least, from nightingales,
Jehovah and the great sea-worm. The air
Is not so elemental nor the earth
So near.

But the sustenance of the wilderness
Does not sustain us in the metropolises.

II

Life is an old casino in a park.
The bills of the swans are flat upon the ground.
A most desolate wind has chilled Rouge-Fatima
And a grand decadence settles down like cold.

(CP 142)

The modernist question I cited earlier ("[H]ow does one remake a poetry, and a culture, on the grounds of an exhausted tradition?") finds a tentative resolution in this poem. Within the internal logic of the poem, the *locus amoenus* is America, broadly conceived. The topos of the *locus amoenus* is reconceptualized in the figuration of the "casino in a park," which also serves as a metaphor for life: "Life is an old casino in a park." That is, life is seen as a gamble (the casino) in a place (park/*locus amoenus*)

where “the sustenance of the wilderness / Does not sustain us in the metropolises.” This place of “wilderness” may be taken to refer to the new American *locus amoenus*. The medieval cultural topos of the *locus amoenus* is literally transported to another place away from the “metropolises.” Stevens’ poetic voice, the “us,” creates a subject of enunciation that identifies with the “old casino” (the old life/the old continent) brought to the “wilderness” (America)—Europe in America, if you like. Life in the “wilderness,” however, cannot sustain the needs of those who live in “the metropolises,” the “us” in the poem. Conversely, this new place requires a new language if it is to flourish. The distinction between competing forms of identity, Europe (the old) and America (the new), is further reinforced by the “grand decadence” that “settles down like cold.” This is meant to suggest the northern imposition of form, literally climatological in this instance, in a new place that cannot accommodate an old form, figuratively an old aesthetic. This “cold” from the north (Europe) settles on the park (America) and chills “Rouge-Fatima.” Even Rouge-Fatima (Fatima is the Portuguese name for [the Virgin] Mary), red-warm María, if you will, is cold, the red suggesting the warmth of the South subjected to the North’s cold imposition of form.

The significance of “swans” and “decadence” in the second stanza is perhaps most important in situating the thematic axis of the poem in relation to its form. It reinforces how the imposition of an old form in a new environment is culturally inappropriate. The swan is suggestive both of Latin American *Modernismo*’s “swan” *par excellence*, Ruben Darío (1867–1916), and of his modernist attempt to establish an aesthetic rupture with the old, with the heavy weight of Spain bearing on *América*, through a kind of “decadence” (itself understood as an attempt to supersede one aesthetic by another). Stevens conjures Darío’s modernist recourse to aesthetic *decadence* as a response to *América*’s cultural *dependence* on Europe: Darío’s attempt at revitalizing modernist aesthetic agencies under the aegis of something “new,” *Modernismo americano* proper, in another place, *América*. I would like to suggest that Stevens’ “Academic Discourse at Havana” attempts to define America by virtue of what (to him) it is not. He accomplishes this by defamiliarizing America and recreating it as *América*, à la Darío. Stevens thus removes himself twice from the American identity problem he attempts to work out in the poem by displacing it both geographically and culturally: a Cuban locale (the ostensible discourse at Havana) and a Latin-American aesthetic movement (*Modernismo*).

In deferring the problem of American cultural identity by way of the swan, the poetic voice can summarize the issues of cultural dependency that inform the poem’s thematic axis: “The world is not / The bauble of the sleepless nor a word / That should import a universal pith / To Cuba” (CP 144). That is, reality (and I would suggest, ideology) is neither a dream (“The bauble of the sleepless”) nor dependent on form for verification (the modernist last “word,” as it were); rather it is coterminous with lan-

guage ("the word") but not subservient to it. The poetic voice's "incantation" ends the poem by making the displacement of aesthetic agencies, from America to *América*, clear:

And the old casino likewise may define
An infinite incantation of our selves
In the grand decadence of the perished swans. (CP 145)

The "old casino" is conceived as a modernist conceit: the belief in language's ability to account for reality can "define" (impose a form upon reality) an identity ("incantation of our selves," where incantation, of course, suggests words that are to produce magical results) infinitely—in and through language—but this will not change the fact that swans perish. The symbolic death of the swan is also the death of language, crudely embodied in the figure of the genius, the poet as purveyor of meaning and truth. Stevens' body of evidence seems to suggest a tone of resignation before the "word," his lack of "rage against the dying of the light." His resignation is related to the recognition that an attempt to supersede one aesthetic by another merely reinstates one hegemony in place of another: replacing one aesthetic by another is another way of replacing one master by another. If Rehder is right in saying that "'Academic Discourse at Havana' shows Stevens' relation to British literature . . . in the warm South of the imagination" (97), and I believe he partly is,⁵ then the pith of America for this quintessential American modernist is up for grabs. As a privileged New Critical "voice of genius," Stevens speaks softly and goes quietly into the night. Responding to the question, "[H]ow does one remake a poetry, and a culture, on the grounds of an exhausted tradition?" Stevens seems to be saying that no poetic or cultural identity can be fully comprehended or adequately articulated by language; even the privileged practitioners of language, like the swan, ultimately perish. What remains is the utterance, the trace of the essence, but not "the" essence.

Campo takes Stevens' critical legacy to task, wishing, it would seem, to do what the Mexican poet Enrique González Martínez was purported to have attempted with Darío when he symbolically commanded, "Tuércele el cuello al cisne de engañoso plumaje" ("Wring the neck of the swan with suspect plumage"), in his aptly named sonnet, "Tuércele el cuello al cisne" (Anderson Imbert and Florit 139). The similarities with Stevens notwithstanding, Campo's perspective ultimately differs in important degrees from Stevens' with regard to their relationship with language. Where words are ultimately bound to their insufficiency in Stevens' universe of meaning, Campo offers the materiality of the body as evidence of another type of writing, another type of meaning: the body as a greater sort of writing, the body semanticized.

Rafael Campo, a practicing physician and AIDS treatment specialist at Harvard Medical School, is the author of two other poetry collections, *The*

Other Man Was Me: A Voyage to the New World and, more recently, *Diva*. Like Stevens and Rodríguez Feo, he attended Harvard, and he shares obvious ties with these cultural producers' interest in "things Cuban," ties that ethnically mark much of his poetry. *What the Body Told* extends the two main concerns evinced in his previous collection: identity and corporeality. Campo posits in this collection that words may be the most vital of the body's parts. The volume is divided into five sections: "Defining Us," "Canciones de la vida," "For You All Beauty," "Canciones de la muerte," and the titular section, "What the Body Told." My specific concern will be, as I noted earlier, with Campo's rewriting of Stevens' legacy as it pertains to "things Cuban" and his implicit critique of modernism. Aside from other broader similarities with Stevens—for example, the use of iambic pentameter and correlative verse—I will focus on one of Campo's most important intertextual rewrites: the thematic rewriting of Stevens' "The Cuban Doctor," a poem that was first published in *Poetry* (October 1921) and then included in *Harmonium*. I focus specifically on this poem because it is emblematic of Campo's engagement and dialogue with Stevens' version of modernist aesthetic agencies, especially as it pertains to my expressed concerns for figurations of the corporeal. I will demonstrate how Campo performs a reverse narrative of authority while rewriting Stevens' thematics (signifiers) by altering Stevens' connotative language (signifieds).

Campo's intervention in the field of Latino poetry is significant because it marks a discernible turn away from Latino poetry's emblematic emphasis on social protest toward a conception of poetry as an engagement with the cultural milieu from which it emerges and not an indictment of that cultural milieu.⁶ That is, sparing his audience responses to the imposition of form, language, and cultural identity, Campo reinvests the protocols of modernist aesthetic agencies with present meaning by superseding its referent, its cultural authority. In so doing, Campo attempts to shape "American" poetry by making his own contribution. This contribution takes the form of engagement: that is, a dialogue staged among equal cultural actors that questions authority in order to shape it, not overturn it. The modernist turn away from the commodification of language through a hermeneutic disassociation that made poetry hard to consume did not make this poetic tradition indigestible for Campo, a fact that he emphasizes through his parody of "mastery." Parody—in Campo's case the ostensible parody of New Criticism's cult of poetic genius—thus implies that the object of protest itself (modernism and its poetic conceits) has been mastered to the point where the performance of mastery supersedes its referent. Campo puts into question modernism's presumptuous cultural authority, its hegemony in the cultural sphere, by linking intercultural experiences: the decidedly American modernist Stevens' own consumption of Cubanalia (those things purported to be distinctly Cuban) that begs a logical question: Just who is using whom?

Campo's "The Good Doctor" is a revision of Stevens' underdiscussed "The Cuban Doctor." In Campo's version, *the good doctor* is literally a *Cuban doctor* insofar as the poetic persona draws a parallel between the doctor in the poem and the explicit poet who is also a doctor, Campo himself. Biography, a casualty of New Criticism's reification of meaning within the poem, thus combines with poesy as a valid aesthetic dimension to be factored in the construction of meaning.

A doctor lived in a city
Full of dying men and women.
He ministered to them
A medicine admittedly

Not curative, and only
Slightly toxic. The medicine
Was known as empathy. It worked
Until the doctor grew more lonely—

His patients only died less quickly—
And in a fit of rage
He burned its formula.
Word spread to the sickly

As the virus had: precise
And red, omitting nothing.
The doctor's reputation changed.
No longer was he viewed as wise;

Instead, when patients came
To him they brought suspicion;
They held their breath when he would try
To hear their songs. His names,

Once various and musical,
Were soon forgotten.
When he died of the disease,
They left him where he fell.

(*What the Body Told* 60)

The theme of the poem is, of course, death, literally and metaphorically conceived. The doctor's loss of faith in his words equals his literal death. "Once various and musical," the doctor's words, like the poet's truth and belief in language and the word, signal an ontological crisis in meaning. The literal crisis in meaning results in the doctor's inability to care for his patients' bodies with his usual dosage of "empathy," understood as his

words' ability to soothe, which had once allowed the patients to die "less quickly," even if this medicine was "admittedly / Not curative, and only / Slightly toxic." Figuratively, the "medicine" that fails is his own faith in both the discourse about medicine's ability to save the bodies he treats and, more important, the inability of language to comprehend that loss.

The figuration of the doctor must be understood, then, on two different connotative planes. On the literal plane, the poetic persona's limitations wrought by the unnamed disease—the specter of AIDS—are the cause of his literal death in that the disease leaves him incompetent to treat, to read, if you will, his patients' signs of illness appropriately and cure them. This crisis in meaning, understood as his inability to perform his role as a doctor adequately and competently, occasions another crisis in meaning, in this instance a metaphorical crisis. The metaphorical crisis in meaning is the result of his loss of faith in language, as the doctor is also a practitioner of language, a language that no longer serves meaning but becomes subservient to it in its inability to account for loss: "His patients only died less quickly" even when he had "ministered to them."

The powerful figuration of language as a virus is introduced in the fourth stanza when, after he burns his formula (his doses of empathetic words as a poultice, a deferral of death), "Word spread to the sickly / As the virus had: precise / And red, omitting nothing."⁷ "Word" here refers to language and associates language with "virus": "Word spread . . . As the virus had" spread. Once the doctor loses his literal faith (in his ability to perform his duties) and his metaphorical faith (in his ability to account for the "city / Full of dying men and women") his patients bring "suspicion." Suspicion is brought both literally, to the doctor's office, and metaphorically, to the poet's house of meaning. Yet this very suspicion is not for want, as it were. The doctor's own body becomes evidence of the epistemic inability to cure or provide solace, but all is not in vain. The doctor/poet's body *is* the cultural *corpus delicti*: the body of the viral crime for which the doctor/poet's body serves as evidence. Though "His names" (doctor/poet) "Were soon forgotten," the body remains as evidence "where he fell"; the doctor/poet's body here too is evidence of loss. The body left where it "fell" is devoid of language and identity; it cannot speak and its identity is stripped of its use value (the body "identified" as both a practitioner of language and of medicine). Then comes the body's haunting of language and the spaces of memory.

Avery F. Gordon, in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, conjures "haunting" in the following manner:

Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life. It is neither premodern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalizable social phenomenon of great import. To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it. This confrontation requires (or produces) a fundamental change in the

way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production. (7)

For Gordon, this entails a “thoroughgoing epistemological critique of modernity as what is contemporaneously ours with an insurgent sociological critique of its forms of domination” (10–11). Following Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s critique of modernity, Gordon engages their “On the Theory of Ghosts” (from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*) in order to designate a space of meaning that recognizes an “Other-knowledge,” the weight of memory, the contours of feeling, and the shapes of desire’s willingness and need to *know* a lost sense of *being* through the legacy of beings. The “dead” speak to the living through memory: hauntology.

It is in this sense that Campo’s *corpus delicti*, the poet/doctor’s body of the crime as it were, haunts and is haunted by Stevens’ fetishization of things Cuban by performing a reverse reading of modernism from the subject position of a Cuban doctor in Stevens’ America. Where Stevens’ teleology posits the end of the word as the end of meaning, Campo’s dialogue with the ghost of modernism is meant to suggest an aesthetic rage against the dying of the light, the body understood as meaning by virtue of what it “told” when it was alive, the incomplete but necessary memory of the body.⁸ In Stevens’ “The Cuban Doctor,” this is a variable impossibility, something that Stevens’ Cuban doctor cannot apprehend:

I went to Egypt to escape
The Indian, but the Indian struck
Out of his cloud and from his sky.

This was no worm bred in the moon,
Wriggling far down the phantom air,
And on a comfortable sofa dreamed.

The Indian struck and disappeared.
I knew my enemy was near—I,
Drowsing in summer’s sleepest horn. (CP 64–65)

The poem’s theme is again death and, like Campo’s rendition, it is about a literal and metaphorical death. In Stevens’ poem the Cuban doctor’s enemy is the Indian who brings death, like the virus that brought death (AIDS) in Campo’s poem. The poetic persona, the poem’s speaking subject, is a Cuban doctor who attempts to elude death by “escaping.” The Cuban doctor goes abroad (Egypt) in order to escape death, but death’s figuration, “the Indian,” strikes all the same. The Indian functions here like Campo’s “virus” in that both are the vectors of death that both doctors attempt to elude without success. In the second stanza, the Cuban doctor’s fear of death is clearly not unfounded. Death is no “worm bred in

the moon," that is, not something created in the imagination. This is further reinforced when the speaking subject affirms that death is not a ghost in the "phantom air" dreamt "on a comfortable sofa." The presence of death, the speaking voice contends, is the opposite: complete discomfort for the living doctor. Resignation before the dying of the light manifests itself here again in Stevens' poetry in the third stanza when the Cuban doctor receives death's final call: "The Indian struck and disappeared." This prompts the speaking subject to recognize that his "enemy was near." His enemy is at once the Indian's curse, death, and the inability of the poetic "I" to counter the finality of the Indian's visitation. As in Campo's version, the Cuban doctor dies, "Drowsing" suggesting permanent sleep as the poetic persona succumbs to death on summer's sleepest horn. The end of summer, "summer's sleepest horn," marks the literal Fall (the season) as well as the metaphorical fall, death.

As a Cuban doctor in Stevens' America, Campo in his dialogue with Stevens' Cuban doctor performs a haunting, a conversation with the specter of modernism and with the emblematic American modern whose fascination with things Cuban occasions his own query into that which is distinctly American. Campo's questioning of modernism's principal fiction, read by Campo as the absolution from an ethic of care of the self in the face of linguistic insufficiency—the lack of rage against the proverbial dying of the light—forces Campo to engage in the pursuit of a corporeally grounded recourse to meaning, a conceit of meaning, nonetheless, but one of ethical action. As when Odysseus visits Hades and realizes that he must listen to the dead before he can leave—since all dead souls crave an audience with the living—Campo's dialogue with modernism performs a haunting of "The Cuban Doctor" that offers the literal *corpus delicti*, the dead "Good Doctor," as evidence of the need to write as well as remember the body in theory and in deed. Neither in denial of death nor in terror of it, Campo effectively renders America's spaces of death livable through memory, the spaces of images and words.

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Notes

¹See Richard Poirier's illuminating discussion of the (ab)uses of modernism. He notes how "[m]odernism managed to implement, within the self-analytical mode of its texts, a form of cultural skepticism whose uniqueness was not supposed to be put into question by the fact that, sporadically, something similar is to be found earlier on. . . . Indeed, it is fair to say that these early evidences of modernism became fully appreciated, as did Melville's, only because later evidences, in Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, were made unavoidably visible" (112–13). It is this periodizing modernism, as noted by Poirier, that interests me here. My thanks to Bart Eeckhout for pointing this out as well as to the anonymous readers whose suggestions made this essay stronger than it would have otherwise been.

²See James Longenbach's *Wallace Stevens: The Plain Sense of Things and Modern Poetry After Modernism* for a discussion of Stevens' own critique of aesthetic autonomy. Alan Filreis' *Wallace Stevens and the Actual World and Modernism from Right to Left* offer a critique of Stevens' exceptionalism as a modern.

³In addition to Rodríguez Feo, the other principal members of the *Orígenes* Group (*Grupo Orígenes*) were Eliseo Diego, Cintio Vitier, José Lezama Lima, Ángel Gaztelu, Fina García Marruz, Lorenzo García Vega, and the painter Mariano Rodríguez. The extant correspondence between Stevens and Rodríguez Feo has been collected, with an introduction, by Beverly Coyle and Alan Filreis in *Secretaries of the Moon: The Letters of Wallace Stevens & José Rodríguez Feo*. My page number references refer to this compilation of the correspondence.

⁴Stevens is referring to an essay by María Rosa Lida who later became an authority on medieval Spanish literature as well as the editor of the works of the fourteenth-century Spanish poet Juan Ruiz.

⁵I would however argue that Rehder completely misses Stevens' allusions to *Modernismo* symbology. Not surprisingly, for him the identity issue is merely related to a problem of America (read: the United States) vs. England.

⁶Rafael Pérez-Torres' recent and influential *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins* continues to perpetuate the view that Latino poetry's "significance" resides in its protest against established conventions and as such its status "as a resistant 'minority' critical practice is undeniable" (1).

⁷The contextual association here is also meant to recall William Burroughs and Laurie Anderson's appropriation of Burroughs' notion of "language as virus" in a performance song entitled "Language Is a Virus" on her CD *Home of the Brave*.

⁸Jacques Derrida, in *Specters of Marx*, refers to "hauntology" as a condition of "being" in our technological age that is neither in the realm of the "living nor the dead, present nor absent," but rather, interstitially located in the realm of memory (51). Derrida's notion of hauntology is reminiscent of his previous deployment of "trace." He used the term "trace" to signify that there is no simple sense in which linguistic signs are either present or absent. For him, every word, every sign, contains a trace of another sign; one sign leads to another, and so on, in a system of interconnected meanings that is paradoxically both implicit (absent) and explicit (present) at once. Curiously, in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx* (proceedings from a symposium sponsored by the University of California at Riverside on the topic of "Whither Marxism") the editor, Michael Sprinker, does not mention the spectral associations of the volume's title with Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West," the poem that ends with language's auto-referential phrase, "In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds" (CP 130).

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