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Phantom Limbs: Affect, Haptics and 'Partes De Mucha Gente' in Mariana Enriquez's *Nuestra Parte De Noche*

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In Mariana Enriquez's *Nuestra parte de noche* (*Our Share of Night*), the insistence on narrating putrid wounds and hewn limbs seeks to reinvigorate stagnant tropes, to highlight the corporeal cruelty obfuscated by the ghostly. This article explores the association between textures and emotions, specifically questioning what it can lead to when remains and wounds are the main textural components presented to readers. Enriquez, I propose, cleaves together the material violence of jagged detritus and the ghostly undertones of disappearance, mobilising the horrifying possibilities of (re)presenting human remains to generate an affective response to ghosts that, years after dictatorship, are still straining to *touch* us.

Keywords: affect, haptics, horror, Mariana Enriquez, memory, phantom limbs.

> 'There is something almost tragical, something ghastly, in the notion of these thousands of spirit limbs … ' – S. Weir Mitchell

'Hay un montón de muerte, ¿y dónde está?' (*There is loads of death, but where is it?*) (Caja Negra, 2022, 00:07:40). With these words, Mariana Enriquez attempts to summarise the haunting experience of childhood during the Argentine Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. The author's concern reverberates through time from the dictatorial past in which it was originally burrowed to the unsettled present of the interview, in which the estimated 30,000 disappeared by the Argentine Military Junta still raise more uncertainties than any Commission, Government or Report has been able (or perhaps willing) to answer. Enriquez's unease – the disconcerting memory of a childhood surrounded by disappeared brutality – pulses through her fiction, in which bones and corpses, severed limbs and ghostly echoes obsessively trace over the question marks. Anchored in similar concerns to those of previous post-dictatorial authors (Diamela Eltit, Ricardo Piglia, Marta Traba) as well as in contemporary fears related to the Argentina created by dictatorship, Mariana Enriquez's fiction collects fears and rebuffs, pushing them together in a project that seeks to reinvigorate untimely affects. Moreover, pulling at the strings of horror and gore that emerge in Argentine literature as far back as Esteban Echeverría's 'El matadero' ('The Slaughter Yard') (1871) and bringing in the influence of Gothic writers in the Anglo-Saxon tradition (from Emily Dickinson to Stephen King), the author's work smears blood long spilled and scatters the splintered bones on which the present vertiginously stands.

Inés Ordiz (2018) describes Enriquez's fiction, particularly the short stories in the author's second collection *Las cosas que perdimos en el fuego (Things We Lost in the Fire)*, as reproducing 'a type of terror originating in the reality of social injustice, everyday sexism, and a silenced past that refuses to disappear'. This is undeniable; in fact, the past's refusal to disappear seems to be at the core of horror in Enriquez's fiction, which features inherited ghosts, fears and even memories. However, there is little focus in Ordiz's analysis on the gory mode of Enriquez's writing, little emphasis on the *form* in which

the past reappears. Despite rightfully pointing out that 'from a contemporary perspective, Enriquez seems to suggest that brutality has never stopped being a part of Argentinian reality', Ordiz does not deeply examine the corporeal viscosity of the author's language, does not engage with the bloodied residues of brutality that Enriquez so poignantly brings into her prose. It is these tarnished traces and remains that I believe truly highlight the horror of violent death within Enriquez's fiction, this insistence on narrating putrid wounds that characterises her search to reinvigorate stagnant tropes by honing in on the body. As Fernanda Bustamante Escalona (2019, original italics) indicates, 'los relatos de Mariana Enriquez apuntan a denunciar las violencias *de* los cuerpos y *sobre* los cuerpos' (*Mariana Enriquez's short stories aim to denounce violence wrought* by *bodies and* upon *bodies*), they mobilise human remains and bloody tissue to explore the depths of a violent past always lurking beneath the surface. Moreover, as Olivia Vázquez-Medina (2021) points out, 'in Enriquez the object of fear is often slippery, ambiguous, or manifold'. Gory remains are disruptive because they – like the 'nasty events' Vázquez-Medina underlines – 'are rarely singular or self-contained'. Unearthed babies, self-mutilation, anorexia, hewn limbs, shit and wounds litter Enriquez's prose, aggressively interrupting characters' lives and truncating the possibility of a future. It is these viscous remains and their unsettling role that I wish to bring to the forefront. Thus, this article explores what I perceive to be a distinct turn towards haptic prose and a viscerally embodied affective realm in Enriquez's fiction; most notably in *Nuestra parte de noche* (2019) (*Our Share of Night* ([2019] 2023)).

Broken up into six parts, *Nuestra parte de noche* haltingly narrates the story of the Order, an unnamed cult of Darkness that thrives in the jungles of northern Argentina throughout and beyond the years of the Proceso. Stubbornly – despite each chapter being anchored in this very particular moment of Argentine history as indicated by the years emphasised in each of their titles – the novel refuses to be *about* dictatorship. We follow, instead, Juan and Gaspar Bradford, a father and son cursed (or blessed) with the power of communicating with Darkness. Their story, however, is constantly interrupted. Diaries from Gaspar's late mother's point of view delve into the history of the cult of Darkness and compile folktales of magic and sorcery. A newspaper entry cuts through Gaspar's childhood and his relationship with his friends Adela, Vicky and Pablo. The exalted testimony of a sacrificial victim of Darkness halts the development of Juan's point of view entirely. Then, there are the bodies. Perhaps more jarring than all other forms of interruption in *Nuestra parte de noche* are torn-off body parts and cadavers that constantly reappear to haunt the novel and the lives of its characters. They disturb the narrative and, alongside the wounds constantly inflicted and emphasised by Enriquez's unflinching prose, punctuate every plotline. In this, the content of the novel weaves itself into its form: the edges of hewn limbs and violent gashes scattered within the novel are as jagged as the limits between each of the novel's parts.

As the novel advances relentlessly to its conclusion, it also constantly falters. Times, Enriquez asserts, are haunted and the scent of blood hangs thick in the stagnant air. Times, she also seems to indicate, are broken. Like abandoned limbs strewn randomly, the novel's long chapters are bizarrely organised: they are not in chronological order and there seems to be no discernible pattern that explains their arrangement. Over and over again we meet characters and time and again we are led away from them. Decidedly non-linear, the novel is presented to us as a collection of shards that must be gathered in the hope of obtaining a full picture, however cracked. And yet, the ending leaves us, along with Gaspar, abandoned in the place where the story started, staring blankly at a lonely abyss. The jagged presentation of time in *Nuestra parte de noche* echoes Jean Franco (2013) in indicating that 'a historical narrative is not a seamless curve toward the present but the broken remains that are buried and waiting for their resurrection'. Moreover, as the parts of the novel relentlessly interrupt each other, as broken remains are unearthed and resurrected to be woven into the story of the Order, the text becomes haunted by a horror at once fictional and disquietingly real.

Idelber Avelar (1999) emphasises that 'mourning is never simply completed' and that post-dictatorial fiction is, above all, a lingering reminder of a past catastrophe that has become the present's foundation. Twenty years passed between the publication of Avelar's *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* and that of *Nuestra parte de noche*; yet the task of mourning rings true throughout Enriquez's novel and is indeed made urgent by the underlying possibility of oblivion that lurks in that gap of time. Furthermore, as mourning that cannot be completed is interrupted by corporeal residues, it becomes clear that it is the very trace of the cruelty which

unleashed the present that will not allow the past to rest. This trace, importantly, is a material one. So, in a novel where both form and content are cleaved, what I argue could be called allegorical horror emerges: a collection of images and limbs – of ruins – scattered together. If, as Walter Benjamin ([1928] 2019) posits, 'in allegory there lies before the eyes of the observer the *facies hippocratica* of history' (original italics), Enriquez harnesses horror to underline its disconcerting presence. Unlike what Avelar (1999) argues when he states that 'there is […] no possible shock, no eruption of the unexpected or the magical in allegorical novels', Enriquez's torn novel seems to lean into shock and the supernatural to create allegory. Thus, in a broken, constantly interrupted story littered with the rancid ruins of violent death occurring at the fore of the plot and in the silenced background, Mariana Enriquez attempts to reinvigorate mourning, to regenerate allegory to affect a disaffected generation. Infusing the memory of the past with 'partes de mucha gente' (Enriquez, 2019: 341) ('*parts of a lot of people*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 362)), Enriquez proves that 'memory far exceeds any factual recounting' (Avelar, 1999) and, additionally, pushes readers into the corporeal horror disavowed by the practice of disappearing victims; victims still present that have perhaps been all too easily made ghostly.

It is worth noting, at this point, that one layer of the trauma associated with the memory of the Argentine Proceso is the brutality of torture that those detained by the Junta endured. The ruthless corporal pain that political prisoners in Argentina were subjected to, however, is partially obscured by an additional layer of what characterised death in dictatorship and complicates the process of memory around it in the first place: disappearance. In her seminal work on torture and language, *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry (1985) argues that 'the most crucial fact about pain is its presentness and the most crucial fact about torture is that *it is happening*' (my italics). This is complicated in the Argentine context where torture was hidden, denied and obfuscated throughout and – despite the work of movements like 'Nunca Más', which pushed discussion of the Junta's crimes into mainstream consciousness – after the *Proceso*. In fact, current Argentine President Javier Milei and his government's stance on dictatorship, which has focused largely on reanimating the discourse of a 'guerra sucia' (*dirty war*) fought between the state and subversive terrorists, continues to obscure the Junta's crimes under the guise of occasional excess. So, in Argentina, a country where bodies were hidden and found in pieces, the critical fact of material violence is displaced, or rather, disappeared. Yet, crucially, it happened. Hence, I believe, Enriquez's urgency to underline the remains.

But how does the echoing question of disappearance coexist with the material residues of the violent killing that it was meant to hide? In other words, if we cannot find our dead, how can we feel our ghosts? The answer depends, I think, on how you interpret the word *feel* as it stands in the middle of the question. Is it a matter of haptics? Is it a matter of affect? Is it possible that somehow, it is a matter of thinking about both? Rather, is it possible that in thinking of the former we might bring about – with a new edge, with strength long forgotten – the latter?

The impression that there is a relationship between the tactile and the emotional is by no means new, nor is it entirely original. In fact, in her introduction to *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) addresses the intuition that 'a particular intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions' and even stresses that this 'association between touch and affect may be too obvious'. This last fact, I would argue, is important to recognise but, as Kosofsky Sedgwick herself seems to conclude, should not push us away from examining the depths of where the association might take us. Importantly, Kosofsky Sedgwick also indicates that 'the same double meaning, tactile plus emotional, is already there in the single word "touching"; equally it's internal to the word "feeling"', pointing to the fact that this association is etched deeply into language. In what remains of this article, I will attempt to delve into this association between textures and emotions, specifically in regard to what it can lead to in an allegorical horror novel where human remains and wounds are the main textural components presented to us. In *Nuestra parte de noche*, I posit, Enriquez cleaves together the material violence of viscous residues and the ghostly undertones of disappearance through texture, mobilising the horrifying possibilities of (re)presenting human remains to generate affective responses to the ghosts that, so many years after dictatorship, are still straining to touch us.

Touching Ghosts: Haptic Images, Mimesis and Phantom Limbs

Whatever the answers to the questions posed above, there are further tensions at the core of the overarching concern of this article. On one hand, the fact that feeling (read: physically touching) and ghosts seem to lie on separate ontological spheres. The fact, that is, that the material and the phantasmagorical seem impossible to reconcile. And yet, as Jacques Derrida conjectures, 'it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition' even if these 'disappear right away in the apparition' ([Derrida, 1993] 2006: 5). This is to say that ghosts imply, always, a spectral materiality, a physical body that once was. On the other hand, the complication of the sign must be acknowledged. The possibility (and thereby the possible impossibility) of touching or sensuously approaching textures mediated by the written word underlies my understanding of Enriquez's work. It seems odd, I am aware, to talk about touching when referring to such a medium in which the sign is itself a thing torn from the materiality of objects. And yet, much like spectres – which emphasise a body that is, importantly, not there – the sign, if it is properly deployed, can bring to the fore textures otherwise circumvented. Thus, I posit that these tensions, rather than contradictory, are crucial to understanding and interpreting Enriquez's viscous fiction.

In *Nuestra parte de noche*, body horror takes over from the first pages as the story of Juan and Gaspar is presented as one unequivocally splattered with blood, one that treads on every page over quartered remains, over 'tantos huesos' (Enriquez, 2019: 68) ('*so many bones*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 64)). And yet, ghostly horrors are also pervasive in the narrative: echoes of the (not so) distant victims of dictatorship seep into the pages, 'los muertos inquietos se [mueven] con velocidad, [buscan] ser vistos' (Enriquez, 2019: 23) ('*the restless dead [move] quickly, they [want] to be seen*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 16)). By emphasising the restlessness of unseen victims the text registers from the beginning the challenges of its own textuality, the sensorial limits imposed by the mediation of the sign on the bodies that so desperately seek to be noticed, witnessed even as they are made textual. Simultaneously, by bringing together material gore and spectral overlay in the novel, Enriquez signals a desire to reconcile the two ontological planes in order to render sensorial the material cruelty implicit in the delayed presence of the ghost. So, the two horror-filled modes – gore and hauntings – come together, written into a single landscape. The ghostly world – 'ese mundo flotante' ('*that floating world*') – is simultaneously a sticky material biome – 'esos posos pegajosos' ('*those sticky wells*') – (Enriquez, 2019: 23) (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 15). We are dealing, then, with a dialectical style of writing, one intending to bring the bloody materiality of spectral remains to the forefront even as it recognises that these remains are also confined, in a way, in text.

Throughout the novel, characters (and by extension, readers) are consistently forced into the vicinity of fleshy remains and open wounds. In the first part, people are torn apart and swallowed by Darkness in the macabre Rite. Sacrifices to Darkness disappear 'dejando solamente un rastro de sangre, los chorros que la carótida había dejado sobre los devotos' (Enriquez, 2019: 134) ('*leaving only a trail of blood, the spatters that the carotid artery had sprayed over devotees*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 135)). Initiates to the Cult are dismembered, their 'manos y brazos perdidos en la Oscuridad' ('*hands and arms lost to the Darkness*') becoming 'extremidades nuevas, mordidas, arrancadas' (Enriquez, 2019: 135) ('*new extremities now, torn and bitten stumps*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 137)). Wounds are opened and quickly cauterised, but not before they are described as 'tajos tan profundos [que] habían dejado ver la columna y las costillas' (Enriquez, 2019: 135) ('*so deep they could see [the] spine and ribs*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 137)). For readers, the cruelty is mediated, always, by the sign, by the letters on the page that concurrently push us towards and keep us separate from gore. But, as if to diminish this separation, gashes and remains are described tangibly, Enriquez's prose urging us not merely to imagine the sight of torn flesh but its texture, its temperature, its putrid traces of life. In her book, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Laura U. Marks (2000) indicates that haptic perception is 'usually defined by psychologists as the combination of tactile, kinaesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies'. Building on this to analyse a certain type of perception encouraged by independent intercultural cinema, Marks establishes that haptic looking 'tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture'. Marks' theory of haptic visuality throws light on the textual images (re)presented in *Nuestra parte de*

noche, allows for an understanding of them as haptic images characterised by a sort of description that funnels us into haptic reading: interruptive images in which we can almost graze the textures of discarded body parts, feel the ridges in scarred tissue. Images, in short, that encourage us to reach out towards the wounds, to read as if we were brushing them with the very fingers we use to turn the pages.

In the third part of *Nuestra parte de noche*, Juan cuts Gaspar's arm so deeply that 'la piel y el músculo se desprendían como algo comestible, como la carne bajo la luz de la heladera de la carnicería' (Enriquez, 2019: 315) ('*the skin and muscle hung down like something edible, like the meat under the display-case light at the butcher's*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 334)). He also pushes Gaspar to insert his hand into a box full of something he cannot fully see, his fingers forced to examine the 'textura frágil' ('*fragile texture*') of those 'cientos de pequeñas cosas que habían estado vivas' ('*hundreds of small things that had once been alive*') before he, together with the reader, comes to the awful realisation that what he assumed to be bugs are in fact 'párpados secos con sus respectivas pestañas' (Enriquez, 2019: 228) ('*dried eyelids with their corresponding eyelashes*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 240)). In descriptions like these, Enriquez describes texture with intent, pushing us close to torn body parts and slowly trailing over them to generate a haptic experience. Amidst these palpable remains so vividly rendered – amidst their texture – readers are left with the urge to vomit, like Gaspar does, allowing the sick to splatter. We are tempted to scream along with him, to 'gritar y gritar' (*scream and scream*) and then to cry; to sob with Gaspar as he heaves until 'la cabeza le ardía por dentro, como si alguien hubiese escondido en su cerebro un cuchillo que le daba puñaladas' (Enriquez, 2019: 229) ('*he felt like his head was burning on the inside, as if someone had hidden a knife within his brain and it was stabbing him*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 241)).

Juan's actions, described through textural details of the decaying residues of disappeared bodies or his son's torn flesh, followed by Gaspar's grieved disgust are, in one word, shocking. And our body recoils instinctively. As such, Enriquez's dismembered corpses and oozing wounds are quickly established in the novel as the building blocks of horror, the elements that are deployed to horrify the reader. If, as Adriana Cavarero theorises in *Horrorism* (Cavarero, [2007] 2011), 'the body is revulsed above all by its own dismemberment, the violence that undoes and disfigures it', then these fleshy remains rendered verbal are relevant because they have a particular effect on the body. We sit, as we read – to use Rita Felski's (2008) words – before an 'assault equal parts intellectual and visceral'.

And yet, how does this work? How is it that Enriquez generates this effect of tactile reading, forces us to brush against the tissue of the text? Marks argues that tactile epistemology (that is: knowledge gained through physical interaction) 'involves a relationship to the world of mimesis, as compared to symbolic representation'. Further, she follows Auerbach and Bergson in noting that mimesis far beyond other forms of representation 'is mediated by the body'. Similarly, Felski (2008) posits that 'art that disturbs or appals' is an experience of the body, one in which 'we are rudely ripped from aesthetic reflection to the baseline workings of biology'. Mimetic representation is at play in Enriquez's textural descriptions – what I have previously called haptic images – of bodies ripped apart. Further, it is precisely these images' mimetic quality – their detail, their ridges, their viscously rendered contents – that makes them shocking to the reader. So it is by mimetically homing in on the particular textures of carnage that Enriquez's prose brings us ever closer to it, closing, even as we baulk at it, the distance between our bodies and those of the dead. Thus, we are caught in the materiality of horror.

Still, the ghostly echoes cannot be forgotten. The ghosts of victims of dictatorial terror scream, the air of Buenos Aires 'lleno de ruegos y rezos y risas y aullidos y sirenas y la vibración de electricidad y chapoteos' (Enriquez, 2019: 89) ('*full of pleading and prayers and peals of laughter and howls and sirens and vibrating electricity and splashing*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 87)). *Nuestra parte de noche* is full of reverberations of those victims that do not directly appear in its pages, of a 'matanza' (Enriquez, 2019: 23) ('*massacre*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 16)) perpetrated in the background. Along with these victims, there are other ghostly elements in the text creating a phantasmagorical world that is constantly on the verge of erupting into 'reality' as it is established in the novel. Dogs die and come back as phantoms, scratching on closed blinds to be let in (Enriquez, 2019: 204). Juan himself ensures that Gaspar knows he is living in a haunted world when he reminds him that '[l]os fantasmas son reales. Y no siempre vienen los que uno llama' (Enriquez, 2019: 206) ('*[g]hosts are real. And the ones who come aren't always the ones you've called*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 216)). Despite their insistent phantasmic form, these ghostly echoes overlap with the strikingly fleshy remains previously analysed. They

are established as phantoms, but their spectral materiality is repeatedly emphasised: they seek embodiment, scratching at the limits of the ghostly to be let in. In an early (and futile) attempt to appease his worries about Gaspar's future, Juan verifies that he can only *see* the ghosts – or echoes, as he refers to them – that surround him and states that 'siempre [es] mejor solamente ver' (Enriquez, 2019: 25) ('*it [is] always better to only see*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 18)). The real danger, it is implied, would be hearing or, what is more, touching, the dead. Yet, it seems like the haptic descriptions deployed by Enriquez push us precisely towards that risky possibility. Indeed, Enriquez's textural writing excludes readers from the safer possibility of 'solamente ver' (*only seeing*) and throws us into a direct confrontation with the materiality of the dead. In this vein, the image in which tensions between hauntings and gore are finally entangled emerges in the novel: the phantom limb.

'It has long been known to surgeons that when a limb has been cut off the sufferer does not lose the consciousness of its existence', states S. Weir Mitchell (qtd. in Simmel, 1962) – who coined the terms phantom limb, sensory ghost and ghost limb in 1871 – in his description of the phenomenon wherein non-existent (or, rather, disappeared) limbs continue to feel as if they were materially present to those who lost them. Even now, patients who have these symptoms are said to be 'suffering from phantoms' (Chatine and Ghassan, 2007). The strangeness of this phenomenon is pointed out in its contradictory name: phantom limb. In other words: ghostly flesh; the material and the immaterial in a single piece of shorn off tissue. It is, medically, the only phenomenon in which *what is no longer there* continues to be felt and, importantly, causes physical pain and discomfort. In their article 'Phantom Limb Syndrome: A Review', LamaChatine and Ghassan (2007) state that between 80 and 100 percent of amputees suffer from phantom limb syndrome while somewhere between 60 to 80 percent of patients suffer specifically from phantom limb pain. Meanwhile, in her earlier article 'The Reality of Phantom Limb Sensations', Marianne Simmel (1962) delves into the role of memory in phantom limb syndrome, emphasising that it is because the body remembers what was once there that visual evidence of the lost limb 'does not abolish the phantom'. Interestingly, Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012) takes the analysis of phantom limbs further in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, blending medical and philosophical discourse to imply that the complication established by phantom limbs goes beyond a problem of memory, settling, rather, on describing it as a problem with our 'being in the world'.

In Merleau-Ponty's words 'our "world" has a particular consistency, relatively independent of stimuli, that forbids treating "being in the world" as a sum of reflexes', but, simultaneously 'the pulsation of existence has a particular energy relatively independent of our spontaneous thoughts that precludes treating it as an act of consciousness' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 2012: 82). To wit, the world and our being in it are facts not as straightforward as we might believe them to be and, so, the phantom limb cannot be explained away as a physiological problem, nor can it be understood exclusively psychologically. It is compelling that Merleau-Ponty uses the feeling of missing another person to explain phantom limb sensation. 'We only understand the absence or the death of a friend in the moment in which we expect a response from them and feel that there will no longer be one' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 2012: 83), he writes, tying this delayed sensation to that of the phantom limb by indicating that the ghostly sensation may be attributed to the fact of the sufferer's world still allowing for a limb that is, crucially, no longer there. As such, 'the phantom arm is not a representation of the arm, but rather the ambivalent presence of an arm' (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012: 83). This, once again, remits us to the ghostly and its relation to materiality insofar as it recalls that a spectre is not a representation of a person that once was but rather their ambivalent, ongoing presence. In their lack of materiality, ghosts point to some material missing from the world, to flesh no longer there but still felt. Felt, what is more, precisely because it has been ripped off.

In *Nuestra parte de noche*, it is in the character of Adela – or, more specifically, in her phantom – that the previously unsettled entanglement of two ontological planes is cyphered. Despite the fact that the first part of the novel is rife with hewn limbs and blood as well as with references to the ghostly underpinnings of violent death; and despite the fact that these two opposed fields consistently collide throughout the text, it is Adela – who comes into the narrative on page 185 wearing 'un piloto amarillo enorme que parecía una carpa y que le tapaba por completo el muñón del brazo izquierdo' (Enriquez, 2019) ('*a giant yellow raincoat that looked like a tent and completely covered the stump of her left arm*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 193)) – who quite literally brings a phantom limb as well as a disappeared loved one into the book. From her first appearance it is made clear that 'Adela no tenía

papá y nadie sabía bien por qué, si se había muerto o se había ido' (*'Adela didn't have a father and no one really knew why, whether he had died or left'*) and that 'también era un misterio por qué le faltaba un brazo' (Enriquez, 2019: 186) (*'it was also a mystery why she was missing an arm*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 194)). However, these mysteries are not quite so unknowable for readers, who have been told in the first part of the novel that Adela's arm was ripped off by Darkness and will be told in the fourth part that her father was a left-wing militant killed in combat. Yet, reminding us that these two facts are mysteries to the characters – namely to Gaspar, whom we will follow for much of the remaining parts of the novel – Enriquez places Adela in the centre of both the political violence seeping in from the side-lines of the text and the cultish violence that the Order perpetrates within the narrative. Significantly, both violences result in empty spaces: a stump where Adela's arm should be and a deep silence where her father once was. So, Adela becomes an instance in the novel of 'regions of silence […] marked out in the totality of [the] body' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 2012: 84). Hers is a body laced with silence and deeply scarred by absence – a haunted and ghostly body where ambivalent and immaterial presences are cleaved to (and from) flesh.

The importance of these apparently empty spaces, their cyphering as phantoms that hurt, begins with a conversation between Gaspar and Adela in which she tries to express the discomfort her missing limb is causing her, insisting that 'me pica el brazo en la parte que no tengo' (*'[my arm] itches on the part I don't have*') and further explaining 'se llama miembro fantasma' (Enriquez, 2019: 196) (*'it's called a phantom limb'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 206)). Her explanation falls on skeptical ears, with Gaspar replying 'no te puede picar algo que no existe' (*'something that doesn't exist can't itch'*), causing Adela to double down furiously and yell 'me repica y vos no entendés nada' (Enriquez, 2019: 197) (*'it itches a lot and you just don't get it'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 206)) before running away. The argument pushes Gaspar to ask his father about phantom limb syndrome and leads him to the realisation, presented by Juan, that 'no sentimos con la piel hijo, sentimos con el cerebro. El dolor está en el cerebro' (Enriquez, 2019: 207) (*'we don't feel with our skin, son, we feel with our brains. Pain is in the head' (*Enriquez [2019] 2023: 217)). As such the very real possibility of feeling what is not there bursts explicitly into the novel 200 pages after we have already started to feel it crackling in the words. The landscapes made sticky by residual blood and the ripped-off limbs that have been accumulating previously become all the more important as, suddenly, what should have been apparent from the beginning becomes abundantly clear: ghosts, in all their bloody materiality, can be felt inasmuch as they have been ripped away. Apologetic, Gaspar builds a mirror box inspired by Vilayanur S. Ramachandran's mirror therapy drawings and presents the radical possibility of scratching her phantom arm to Adela as a birthday gift (Enriquez, 2019: 238). But the phantom is comforted only momentarily (not eradicated) by mirror therapy and thus it continues to be a crucial part of the narrative after this episode, with Adela's missing arm always emphasised in descriptions of her, even when it is her own disappearance that is being posited later in the novel: 'Una nena se pierde en una casa y no se la encuentra más. Una nena sin brazo' (Enriquez, 2019: 606) (*'A girl gets lost in a house and they never find her again. A girl who's missing an arm*' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 657)). In fact, Adela is rarely present in the narrative without some reference to her arm (the missing one or, alternatively, the remaining one, which relentlessly signals loss in its singularity).

So, notwithstanding her apparently minor role in the novel (she is only actively in the narrative for a few hundred pages), I would argue that Adela is the core character upon which the paradoxical encounter of the material and the ghostly comes to fruition and, therefore, the most important character in the book. She is, additionally, clearly an important – or at the very least intriguing – character to Enriquez as her story first notably appeared in 'La casa de Adela' (*'Adela's House*') (2016). Albeit with different supporting characters and general plot, that story also emphasises Adela's missing limb, becoming itself a phantom haunting *Nuestra parte de noche*. It is Adela, then, who brings us to the question that opened this article: how can we feel our ghosts?

Her eventual disappearance in the novel (and in the short story) turns Adela into a phantom herself. The memory of her loss extends itself through the entirety of *Nuestra parte de noche* and deeply hurts, scars and touches Gaspar, Pablo and Vicky's subsequent haunted lives. In fact, from the moment in which Adela disappears, the three children become branded by her absence much like she was branded by the absences that clung to her; they become 'los que habían entrado a la casa con Adela. Adela sin brazo' (Enriquez, 2019: 633) (*'the ones who'd gone into the house with Adela. Armless*

Adela' (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 686)). Gaspar's visions of Adela after her disappearance are grisly and horrifying. Trying to explain them to his uncle, Gaspar utters: 'Adela viene a la noche. Me saluda con la mano. Le comieron la cara' (Enriquez, 2019: 526) (*'Adela comes at night. She waves at me. They ate her face'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 569)). Once again, Adela's hand is emphasised, her previous mutilation underscored even as more physical damage is cast upon her image. For Vicky, who grows up to be a doctor, 'los sueños de Adela no eran terroríficos, en un sentido estricto' (*'dreams about Adela were not horrible, strictly speaking'*), but in them the missing limb is yet again key: 'Su amiga aparecía en la guardia, por ejemplo, quejándose de un dolor fantasma en el brazo' (Enriquez, 2019: 583) (*'Her friend would appear in the ER, for example, complaining of phantom pain in her arm'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 631)). The importance of the missing limb is, at this point, almost overstated, the novel tipping itself into repetition lest we forget its importance. In light of this, it is Pablo's haunting that becomes the most intriguing as the novel progresses given that it is his friend's missing arm, not her, which refuses to leave him alone. It is the limb, not the person, that does the haunting. 'A Pablo lo agarra una mano, *la siente*' (Enriquez, 2019: 605 my italics) (*'Pablo is grabbed by a hand, he feels it'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 656)) states Gaspar, underscoring the importance of touch in this particular haunting and bringing the material sensation of it to the forefront. This arm that lingers by Pablo becomes a vital part of the narrative, connecting him to his lost friend and bringing about the idea that ghosts, in their ambivalent presence, may be reaching for us; that fleshy residues and remains are straining to pass on via touch the knowledge of their violently material existence. It is in allowing the hand to grasp him that Pablo can eventually come to terms with the violence contained in its phantom fleshiness: 'Dejó que la mano lo tocara, sintió su apretón, su violencia contenida' (Enriquez, 2019: 589) (*'He let the hand touch him. He felt it squeeze him, felt its heat, its contained violence'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 639)). Therewithal, it is in coming to terms with the haunting presence of the limb that Pablo realises that:

> la mano también estaba perdida en la oscuridad, como el resto olvidado de un recuerdo incompleto que tenía como misión tocar, rodear con los dedos, apretar, empujar débilmente y luego ignoraba como seguir. Enriquez, 2019: 589
> *the hand was also lost in the darkness, like the forgotten remnant of an incomplete memory that was on a mission to touch, to surround with its fingers, to squeeze, to weakly push, and after that it didn't know what to do*. Enriquez [2019] 2023: 639

And so, bloody, ghostly remains in *Nuestra parte de noche* are branded forgotten residues of incomplete memories. Remnants of memory, further, that have a mission to touch, grasp and push us. The hand, once it manages to make contact with Pablo, flounders, 'como si no supiera qué hacer. La pobre' (Enriquez, 2019: 605) (*'as if it didn't know what to do. Poor thing'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 656)). So, Enriquez presents us with a novel in which hauntings are embodied by parts – our parts, as the title indicates – memories of violence, it would seem, that reach out to us, flounder, feel their way, graze us, grab us and fester, unsure what to do with us and raising the question: what do we do with them?

Touched by Ghosts: Affect, Encounters and the Grasp of Phantom Limbs

The answer to the question *how do we feel our ghosts?* is bound up, then, in the recognition of feeling as both haptics and affect. Or rather, the recognition of feeling as haptics and therefore affect. We feel our ghosts, *Nuestra parte de noche* posits, because they touch, grasp, grope and pull us. As Marks states, 'through mimesis we can not only understand our world, but create a transformed relationship to it – or restore a forgotten relationship'. Furthermore, in discussing memory and affect we can refer back to Merleau-Ponty, who states that 'memory, emotion, and the phantom limb are equivalent with regard to being in the world' ([1945] 2012: 88). This is to say that phantom limbs, like memory and like emotion, can only be truly understood by taking into account the complex entwined relationship between our body and the world. Enriquez's positing of phantom limbs as 'resto[s] olvidado[s] de un recuerdo incompleto' (Enriquez, 2019: 589) (*'forgotten remnant[s] of an incomplete memory'* (Enriquez, [2019] 2023: 639)) seems to echo Merleau-Ponty's statement that these limbs indicate 'a previous present that cannot commit to becoming past' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 2012: 88), but she adds an additional, tactile, layer. In her dialectics of ghostly flesh, Enriquez examines the possibility of a haptics of horror wherein

readers can be touched by the gruesome remains of a violent past, encouraged by the fleshy grazes to feel the hints of material remains hidden in the topography of memory. Where Merleau-Ponty points to the likeness between memory, emotion and phantom limbs in regards to our being-in-the-world, Enriquez pushes us into it, obliging us to let our bodies become actively invested in a past that is not and cannot be resolved. Enriquez, in short, tackles that entwined relationship between our body, our memory, our emotions and the world in literature; writes through it to remind us it is there.

As many have argued before me, there is no clear or single definition of affect. Nor is one possible. However, I align myself with Deleuze who – following Spinoza – is interested in affect insofar as in involves an immanent and ever-varying fluctuation taking place within us. I am interested in our constant oscillations; more specifically, in how novels like *Nuestra parte de noche* participate in this constant movement, how they engineer encounters that affect us. If, as Deleuze (1978) proposes, we can only come to know ourselves 'by way of the actions of other bodies on [us]', the hewn bodies we encounter throughout *Nuestra parte de noche* intend to act upon us; in her fleshy prose, Enriquez stages encounters with remains we have no other means of confronting. These remains thus come to play in our 'line of continuous variation' (Deleuze, 1978) that is affect; in representing them as material residues that touch us Enriquez allows them to shock us, move us, *affect* us. I am, of course, not trying to imply that Deleuze was using the word 'bodies' quite so literally, but do want to insist on the importance of the use of that word, on the affective potential of bodies (re)presented to the reader in torn up pieces.

Equally evocative here is Sara Ahmed's (2014) formulation of affect as something that can 'stick', a notion almost impossible to ignore when it comes to the tackiness of gore and the manner in which the horrifying clings to us. As Vázquez-Medina (2021) has already noted, following Ahmed, 'concepts and feelings are often sticky in Enriquez: they are not self-contained and create unpleasant clusters; they are hard to let go and seek to get under her reader's skin'. In stubbornly appearing even though the text recognises them to be absent, Enriquez's phantom remains reach out through horror in *Nuestra parte de noche* to get under our skin. Yet, it must be noted that what exactly we should feel remains unsettled. Felski (2008) states that 'shock' – the most immediate reaction elicited by Enriquez's graphic and spectral remains – 'tells us less about the specific content of an affective state than about the qualitative impact of a text or object on the psyche.' Our bodies, recoiling from the pages as spectral hands mimetically rendered grope and grasp in an attempt to reach us, denote shock: 'a sudden collision, an abrupt, even violent, encounter' (Felski, 2008). We are, without a doubt, moved, but what emotion exactly these encounters leave us with is hazy. Vázquez-Medina (2021) identifies, via Sianne Ngai, the presence of 'a constellation of "ugly feelings" that range from fear […] to distinctively non cathartic emotions such as uneasiness, shame and disgust' in Enriquez's short stories. Descriptions in *Nuestra parte de noche*, such as the ones discussed in the first section of this article, follow in this pattern, they appeal 'to a visceral, sensory, embodied engagement on the part of the reader' (Vázquez-Medina, 2021) but they do not allow us the stability of a single emotion. The affective encounters Enriquez engineers are potent precisely because they remain unsettling and unsettled. Moreover, 'rather than serving up suffering at a distance', Enriquez's novel – like other shocking works examined by Felski (2008) – compels us 'to witness it close up (…) in lurid and blood-spattered detail'. The descriptions of broken bodies and wounds through the entirety of the novel seem to cancel out the distance, physical as well as timely, between our bodies and those of the violently killed; to produce a sticky affective engagement with the past in a generation that lies temporally removed from it.

When it comes to phantom limbs, Chatine and Ghassan (2007) define telescoping as 'the phenomenon in which the phantom arm, which is initially felt as the entire limb, eventually, after years, is felt by the patient to be a phantom hand, ectopically originating at the stump'. Even though the body remembers, it remembers above all the missing part with the most sensory receptors, more quickly forgetting the tendons and bones that the brain was less consistently aware of, the bits of flesh that served mainly to connect the shoulder to the hand. Memory eventually feels (literally) incomplete. Enriquez's phantom remains, however, emphasise the connective tissue. They present themselves as fragments ('resto[s] olvidado[s] […] recuerdo[s] incompleto[s]' ('*forgotten remnant[s] […] incomplete [memories]*')) that push for the affective engagement with *desaparecidos* (*the disappeared*) and disappearance in general to be reignited by reminding readers of the material cruelty that lies behind the phenomenon, underscoring the violent materiality of tortured flesh that is inseparable from the

empty spaces left behind. Like the stump, whose physiological stimulations 'keep the amputated arm within the circuit of existence […], ensure it has not been annihilated […], maintain a void that the history of the subject will fill in' (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 2012: 88), *Nuestra parte de noche* endeavours to maintain the void of horror, keep the missing persons at the core of the word *desaparecido* (*disappeared*) within the circuit of existence, ensure that they have not been annihilated. As such, phantom limbs reopen time, disorganise it, their ambivalent presence in the world bringing the disappeared back into a relation of being-in-the-world along with us. We cannot, as we read, simply skip past the connective tissue. It disgusts us, stops us in our tracks, frightens us, touches us; whatever the emotion it elicits, it *sticks*.

Elyse Semerdjian (2022) has theorised that 'a body can archive an absence', pointing to the body's ability to remember what was materially once there: to feel a missing limb. Specifically, Semerdjian uses phantom limbs as a 'theoretical shorthand' in anthropological research to explore experiences that defy empiricism. Albeit developed in a different context, Semerdjian's interest in the image of a missing limb as 'an absence that simultaneously invokes a presence and calls into question our ability to know it' resonates with the appearance of phantoms and mangled remains in *Nuestra parte de noche*. In bringing together the ontological fields of hauntings and fleshy residues, Enriquez renders visible, and more importantly tangible, the absence at the core of phantom limb syndrome, pushing us to face it, to know it, instead of questioning our ability to do so. More clearly: fantastical and horror-filled descriptions of phantom limbs in the novel seek to eliminate the possibility of telescoping by forcing us to face and touch the complete image of the phantom in all its fleshy, putrid materiality. By manipulating into fiction an image that archives an absence, by focusing on the textural and yet ambivalent presence of that which is missing, Enriquez's novel becomes an ectopic archive of memory, an allegorical dumping ground for the hacked remains of a past not bygone.

As Marks (2000) clarifies following Auerbach, 'mimesis requires a lively and responsive relationship between listener/reader and story/text, such that each time a story is retold it is sensuously remade in the body of the listener'. So, *Nuestra parte de noche* remakes parts and pains that are no longer there in our body, sensuously brings forth ghosts that hurt like a mirror that reflects what is not there. Thus, the novel *becomes* Ramachandran's mirror, which is aptly described by Katja Guenther (2016) as 'a meeting point between the real and the virtual, the body and its phantom, the material and the immaterial'. It becomes a place where fleshy remains can reach forward through history to grasp the reader; an encounter (or a multitude of encounters) with bodies that affect us; fragments of remains which could 'dejar[nos] una marca' (Enriquez, 2019: 565) (*'leave a permanent mark'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 612)).

In 'Mourning Remains' Eng and Kazanjian (2003) argue that 'loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it'. In her dialectic of material and ghostly detritus, Enriquez turns our attention to those remains that cannot be known (those never found) and, in rendering them material through the mimetic mirror of fiction, gives them a space in which they can taint us. The work of the ectopic archive of memory that is *Nuestra parte de noche*, then, is to refute the disavowal of memory, to make our bodies painfully aware of the bones we are walking over. *Nuestra parte de noche* is, after all, as Gabriele Bizzarri (2020, original italics) ingeniously describes, 'una invitación a la inclusión de la cuota de oscuridad que *nos pertenece*, una aceptación creativa de nuestra exposición a la noche' (*an invitation to be included in the quota of darkness that* belongs to us, *a creative acceptance of our exposure to the night*). The novel is also a catalogue of pieces, an assemblage of parts – of bodies, of lives, of tortures, of violences – that haunt us and reach out from the past, desperate to be felt. So, *Nuestra parte de noche* seems to generate, or call for, an affective and haptic turn in memory narrative. The viscous, torn, placeless remains in Enriquez's fiction seem to yearn for a type of writing that will *affect us* and remind us constantly of what Gaspar comes to realise at the end of the novel: 'Era cuestión de recordar. En eso tenía que concentrarse. En recordar *incluso lo que no había presenciado*' (Enriquez, 2019: 653 my italics) (*'It was a matter of remembering. That's what he had to focus on. Remembering, even things he hadn't witnessed'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 709)). Just so, Enriquez forces us to haptically remember what we never could see, challenging at once the safe possibility of simply observing – 'solamente ver' (Enriquez, 2019: 25) (*'to only see'* (Enriquez [2019] 2023: 18)) – the wreckage of the past and that of emerging from remembrance unscathed. And it is for that purpose that *Nuestra parte de noche* mobilises a type

of physically horrifying fiction that engineers nothing more, and nothing less, than a continuous unearthing of the dead; a constant encountering of bodies.

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