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Abstract

In Roberto Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives* the young visceral realists emulating the poetic travail of Cesárea Tinajero embark on a journey to change and rescue Latin American poetry. They found visceral realism to wrest the regime of truth from “official” poets such as Octavio Paz and Pablo Neruda. Yet it's through their marginal conditions and nomadic existence that they resist such poets. The participants of visceral realism come from the marginalized section, move through marginal spaces in Latin American literature, remain marginalized from official literary historiography. Their marginalities are furthered as they also write poetry through their de/gendered bodies and their nomadic bohemian travails. Such moves do not represent hindrance but promise and possibilities. Marginality and gendered identities, thus, become a potential site of subversion as a challenge to repressive patriarchal and dictatorial designs of master narrative. This paper examines how Deleuzean notion of nomadism, becoming and displacement work towards resistance in Bolaño's said narrative.

Keywords: Roberto Bolaño, Visceral Realists, Deleuze, Nomadology, Latin American literature

For many of us, students of Latin American literature, *The Savage Detectives*, originally published as *Los detectives salvajes* in Spanish (1998) is what Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* or *Rayuela* (1963) was to our professors.¹ Critics, among them the Chilean Jorge Edwards and the Argentine Elvio Gandolfo, have compared both the novels and indicated similar traits in them mainly because of their open-ended structure. There is no doubt Bolaño admired Cortázar as he appreciated, worshiped Borges. He acknowledged, “To say that I'm permanently indebted to work of Borges and Cortázar is obvious” (*Between Parentheses* 353). His novel provides multiple ways of reading as does Cortázar's since it is an open narrative without a traditional beginning and end. However, pointing out only similarities fails to underscore other important elements present in the novel. Unlike Cortázar, the Boom writer, Bolaño does not insert a table of instructions to read his novel; he is also unique in including hieroglyphic images, circles, squares, lines, etc. in his narrative. He neither demands nor asks his readers to start from a particular segment. Further, about *The Savage Detectives* he says, “I believe there are many ways to read my novel as there are voices in it. It can be read as a deathbed lament. It can also be read as a game” (*Between Parentheses* 353).

This article looks at the ways the young visceral realist poets in *The Savage Detectives*

¹ The year between parentheses corresponds to the year of the publication of the novel in Spanish. *Hopscotch*, *The Savage Detectives* appeared in English in 1966 and 2007 respectively.

embark on a journey to change and rescue Latin American poetry from the regime of “official” poets such as Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz. It is through their nomadic existence, marginal conditions, bohemian travails they resist the establishment. The article argues that their marginalities and “becoming” identities do not represent a defeatist situation before the dominant, “masculinist” culture but promise and possibilities; on the contrary it is only through such a living they are enabled to rebel against the literary giants and remain outside the powerhouses of literature.

In *The Savage Detectives* poetics is expressed in the narrative form of fragments such as diary, interviews and monologues. It is not just poetics but poetics intertwined with politics. Another distinguishing feature as is common in Bolaño's narrative is that quite often both real writers and imaginary writers appear as characters.² Gracia Madero, the 17-year-old orphan who lives with his aunt and uncle, and later abandons home and law school for poetry narrates in the form of first person diary entries the first and third parts of the novel titled “Mexicans lost in Mexico” and “The Sonora Desert” respectively. The action of the first part takes place in Mexico City in 1975. García Madero's diary entry starts on November 2 and ends on December 31. The sequence in this and the last section moves forward in time in strict chronological order. It is fascinating to note why Bolaño chose this particular date. November 2 is celebrated as Día de Muertos or Day of the Dead in Mexico and other parts of Latin America.³ Thus on closer observation one can sense the ambiance of laments and loss of Latin America's poetic tradition, the loss of authentic poetry with the death of Cesárea Tinajero. But of that we come to know only in part three. The diary of García Madero is suddenly suspended on 1976 New Year's Eve.

The second part “The Savage Detectives” is chronicled by various voices in different parts of Latin America, Iberia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. It reaches as far as Kathmandu as well. All conflicting and multiple voices in this section refer to Belano and Lima, the godfathers of the visceral realism, and their adventures. The time period of this section moves gradually from 1976 to 1996 but it does so by erratically moving back and forth like the spaces experienced by the visceral realists. It consists of fifty three narrators and ninety six monologues. The montage of monologues can be read from the perspective of interviews, testimonies or fragments of their own autobiography or stories.

The third part as the title suggests takes place in the Sonora Desert. It's a continuation of García Madero's diary entries that flashback to 1976. It begins on January 1 and ends on February 15. The quest for Cesárea Tinajero, the uncompromising passionate poetess of the 1920s Mexico who leaves everything and vanishes in the desert of Sonora and in whom the visceral realists find inspiration and who they emulate connects the three parts. The novel derives

2 It is often difficult to draw a dividing line between these characters since most of the stories that Bolaño tell are also largely based on true events and persons. This is not just limited to *The Savage Detectives*. For instance, Alberto Ruiz-Tagle/Carlos Wieder in *Distant Star* is, in fact, an allusion to Chilean poet Rául Zurita; Bolaño does not characterize him favorably as a 'messianic' poet although he is seen by many as an 'institutional' figure of the Chilean left as Neruda once was. Similarly, in *By Night in Chile* María Canales and her husband are based on Mariana Callejas, writer and wife of DINA agent and torturer Michael Townley. Bolaño also frequently quotes title of the books, both factual and fictitious, in his narratives. See “The Violence of Writing: Literature and Discontent in Roberto Bolaño's 'Chilean' Novels” by Ignacio Lopez-Vicuña.

3 On this day family and friends reunite to remember, pray for and honor friends and family members who have died. For more information on this topic see *Skull to the Living, Bread to the Dead: The Day of the Dead in Mexico and Beyond* by Stanley Brandes. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006. Also see “The Day of the Dead” in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Octavio Paz. New York: Grove Press, 1991. pp. 47-64.

its force from the varied tones about visceral realism, visceral realists that dominate the three parts and keep the reader engaged as the numerous characters immerse in distinct varieties of speech in various circumstances.

Philip Derbyshire maintains, “The novel moves from a secure location in Mexico City outwards” (167). This article demonstrates that it does not just travel from a secure location outwards but also from the sedentary to nomadic existence where nostalgia, sense of belonging are replaced by purposeful homelessness, orphanhood, uprootedness, and non-belongingness whether one takes the case of Cesárea Tinajero who leads this move, the savage detectives Belano and Lima or other visceral realist poets who follow her footsteps.

The visceral realists celebrate Cesárea Tinajero's nomadism and resist submission to individualized subjects and refuse to belong. They reject becoming integral to the relationship of production, signification and power as they reject the use of the uncontrolled power exercised over people's bodies, their health, life and death. They shun law (steal books, peddle drug etc.), etiquette of sexuality (gender and position hierarchies), power (literary academia, competitions or any kind of patronage ...), stability (transient displacement), and any civilizational principles and ethics. Yet they are not like the nineteenth century rag pickers because they are not purposeless wanderers indulging in art for art's sake. On the contrary, they are the peekers into the other side of the darkness as mentioned by Bolaño himself, they choose these paths deliberately and it is in this choice of indulging in such activities that they found their poetic etiquette! Poetics is this choice and the very act of stealing, drug peddling, sexual acts, wandering and thieving and getting lost or disappearing which is the source of their poetry. They strive towards a situation of purposeful unbelonging. They don't seek success and instead opt to a continuous sitting on the edge; a continuous becoming! The visceral realists are also aware that they are no longer the uncanny and desirable intellectuals as the people know for themselves their truths and don't need the intellectual anymore.⁴

Cesárea Tinajero, the woman poet and intellectual ideal for the visceral realists, leaves everything and does the disappearing act in order to resist the gaze of the State. She retreats voluntarily from the literary scene of Mexico City, stops writing due to decay in the principles of Mexican Revolution. She departs from the capital for Sonora desert. In other words she moves from the “lettered city” to unfamiliar margin. In a dirt filled village called Villaviciosa she takes up different professions: she works as a school teacher, she sells medicinal herbs in the local markets; she engages with the people. Belano and Lima look for Cesárea Tinajero and her work in that they comprehend that her withdrawal from public poetry and refusal to publish poetry do not symbolize her submission, surrender but resistance and in certain way reverberate some of the fundamental issues of the intellectuals. They are inspired by her because despite power within her reach, she resists to be co-opted by the State, she refuses to be dominated by her male partners. Thus they emulate her and concurring with her that poetics must not be subservient to the rich and powerful, they too resist to be absorbed by the establishment. They come to an agreement that in order to resist if need arises the poet must be prepared to give up the privileges that he/she enjoys.

The visceral realists arm themselves with ambiguous conditions as regards their gender and sexuality. For them the word “poet” indicates both male and female poet; gender does not

4 For debate and understanding the role of the intellectuals and the intellectual as subject see “Intellectuals and Power: A conversation between Foucault and Gilles Deleuze” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* edited by Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980. pp. 205-217.

pose a problem. They don't differentiate between poets and poetesses as such, nor there is hierarchy among them. The following conversation suggests:

“Are there a lot of poetesses?”

“It's lame to call them poetesses,” said Pancho.

“You're supposed to call them poets,” said Barrios.

“But are there lots of them?”

“Like never before in the history of Mexico,” said Pancho. “Lift a stone and you'll find a girl writing about her little life.” (*The Savage Detectives* 20)

So women also partner the visceral realists in choosing to live nomadic lives. Like their male companions they too live trans-border, transnational lives and subvert all societal rules. Simone Darrioux does not just read Sade but translates his theory into practice. María Font's “eccentricity,” as she demands to be slapped at her bottoms until they are red when she sleeps with different boys, wonders her partner to remark, “She's the wildest girl in Mexico City” (61). Lupe joins the nomadic gang and head to the Sonora Desert to resist, to free herself from prostitution and clutch of her pimp Alberto.

García Madero, the orphan visceral realist, is the opposite of the Borgesian model or Borges the Argentine writer who had the privilege of owning a personal library at home. His uncle relates artistic life with perdition. As such he is constrained to choose law over literature at UNAM.⁵ He is compelled to look for poetic communion outside. Later he quits university, abandons home for poetry. He drifts “from place to place like a piece of flotsam” (79). But he has no qualms. It's in visceral realism, only after he has abandoned home and given up formal studies, he finds poetic camaraderie. Thus he writes in his diary entry, “Before, I didn't have time for anything, and now I have time for everything. I used to spend my life on the bus and subway, having to cross the city from north to south at least twice a day. Now I walk everywhere, read a lot, write a lot. Everyday I make love” (92). He lives a nomadic existence. As the nomad is always on the move, mobility thus becomes an essential characteristic of García Madero. Poetry and sexual pleasure, writing and sexing go hand in hand for him as he writes poems for lower class waitresses at bars and in return receives blowjob:

Without taking her eyes off me, Brígida kneeled down, unzipped my pants, and took my cock in her mouth. First the head, which she nibbled, the bites no less disturbing for being light, and then, showing no signs of choking, the whole penis. At the same time, she ran her right hand over my lower abdomen, stomach, and chest, slapping me hard at regular intervals and giving me bruises I still have. (15)

The discovery of poetry and sexuality occurs at the same time and they are, for him, part of the same process; he recites the poem “The Vampire” and does a marathon masturbation session imagining Rosario requesting him to write a poem and begging him to pound her on the bed with his throbbing cock (11). García Madero claims that this poem is written by Mexican poet and lawyer Efrén Rebolledo. However, from the acknowledgments of the novel we learn that it is actually written by Octavio Paz and very interestingly translated into English by Samuel Beckett. His “dull” life completely takes a new turn as he moves outside and enters into the world of the visceral realist poets in order to find Cesárea Tinajero and her work.

Much of what Bolaño writes about visceral realism in *The Savage Detectives* is indeed a

5 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/ National Autonomous University of Mexico, a prestigious public university, is the largest and the oldest in Latin America. It is also the alma mater of Nobel laureate Octavio Paz. The setting of the first part of the novel where the action initiates is thus significant.

reflection of the infrarealism movement which he created together with Mexican poet and his best friend Mario Santiago. Belano is the alter ego of Bolaño, the writer; while the model for Ulises Lima is Mario Santiago Papatzi.⁶ David Shook, the English translator of the infrarealist manifesto, maintains that Bolaño uses much of the infrarealists' early history to a great effect in the novel and the manifesto is playful in the tradition of the minor Latin American avant-gardes, incorporating Soviet science fiction, Mexican rock 'n' roll, and romantic notions of social revolution; the infrarealist motto was “to blow the brains out of official culture” (“Leave Everything, Again” 2). The infrarealists constantly denigrated men of letters, particularly Paz and Neruda. Like the Beat Generation of the 1950s they questioned conventional politics and proposed poetry that existed outside the mainstream culture. Carmen Boullosa, the Mexican novelist, while interviewing Bolaño in 2002 admitted that both he and Mario Santiago were “terrors of the literary world” in Mexico City who disrupted public reading of poetry, she was terrified to read her poems in public and feared that halfway through the reading the infrarealists would burst in, ridicule her and call her an “idiot” (*The Last Interview* 66-67). The following excerpts describe the ideology of the movement in a nutshell:

I repeat:

the poet as hero developer of heroes, as the fallen red tree
that announces the beginning of the fores.

-The attempts at a consistent ethic-aesthetic are paved in
betrayal or pathetic survivals.

-And the individual can journey a thousand kilometers but
in the long run the path will eat him.

-Our ethic is Revolution, our aesthetic is Life: one-sole-
thing. (“Leave Everything” 6)

It is this call the visceral realist poets follow and hit the road in the novel. Arturo Belano wanders through Europe and the jungles of Africa following nomadic Rimbaud's incredible Ethiopian journeys. Ulises Lima drifts around Europe, the Middle East and back in Latin America he disappears in Nicaragua. Rimbaud becomes for Belano and Lima, as well as for other visceral realists not just a model of desert but also a model for approaching sexuality without cultural conditioning related to man or woman. Rimbaud's poem “Le coeur supplicé” is quoted in full in French by Lima within the text. Rimbaud wrote this poem in a letter to his ex-professor George Izambard on the aftermath of 1870 French commune. The text is polysemic as the poet plays with words and its multiple connotations. The word “coeur” in the poem can mean heart and at the same time, the center of emotions and sentiments and sexual organ. Though literally it means that the poet is vomiting at the rear of the boat because of strong smell of tobacco that the soldiers on board are smoking. But at the same time, its implicit meaning can refer to the act of ejaculation. So it refers symbolically to physical nausea, sexual sodomy directed against the poet by a group of soldier on a ship and the moral degradation that the poet feels because of it. Some interpreters have also identified anguish and moral incapacity expressed by Rimbaud for not participating in the political upheaval in Paris led by the working class. All in all his poem is a satire and parody of traditional poetry where he uses the pathetic and turns it into something completely grotesque. Its a rejection of poetry as a genre per se.

6 Juan Esteban Harrington/Juan García Ponce is the possible prototype of Juan García Madero. Likewise, Mara Larrosa, Vera Larrosa that of the Font sisters; Carla Rippey, an American visual artists and friend of Bolaño, is fictionalized as Catalina O'Hara and so on.

Likewise, the visceral realists reject institutional definition of poetry. The poetics of “official” poets nauseate and suffocate them.

So the visceral realists attempt to wrest the regime of truth from the establishment, particularly Paz and Neruda through their useless (visceral) “activities.” García Madero informs, “Our situation (as far as I could understand) is unsustainable, trapped as we are between the reign of Octavio Paz and the reign of Pablo Neruda. In other words, between a rock and a hard place” (19). Following the path of Cesárea Tinajero's poetic travail, the visceral realists live by their words, drift in strange places from one menial day job to another and writing by night. They drop out of school to devote themselves to reading and writing poetry. They sabotage the reading of poets whom they hold in contempt, shout out their own poems in such renderings. They share a common ambition to dismantle official canon, the hierarchy of Mexican literary field and its dominant figures. They make plan to sequester Octavio Paz, the leading man of Mexican letters:

For a moment, I admit, the idea of a terrorist act passed through my mind. I saw the visceral realists getting ready to kidnap Octavio Paz, I saw them breaking into his house (poor Marie-José, all that broken china), I saw them emerging with Octavio Paz gagged and bound, carried shoulder-high or slung like a rug, I even saw them vanishing into the slums of Netzahualcóyotl in a dilapidated black Cadillac with Octavio Paz bouncing around in the trunk. (155)

They shun the panopticon by preferring non-belonging, orphanhood and through rejection of patronizing godfathers, awards lobbying or critical acclamation. They are wandering poets, the nomad intellectuals. They have no literary home nor father as they don't believe in that concept. Maples Arce informs the reader in his monologue, “All poets, even the most avant-garde, need a father. But these poets were meant to be orphans” (161). They traverse nomad spaces that are dehumanized cities, dictatorial regimes in Africa and Latin America and difficult terrain across the globe.

The visceral realist poets devalue the traditional notion of literature and strip it of its aura by naming it as heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual. “Novels, in general, were heterosexual, whereas poetry was completely homosexual; I guess short stories were bisexual” (72). Further, Paz and Neruda turn into queer for them; Borges, a philene who can be a faggot one minute and simply asexual the next. Rubén Darío is the “queen freak” within the vast ocean of Latin American poetry (72). The visceral realist poets laugh, cry at the misfortunes of themselves and others. If laugh-at-life facetiousness and satire dominate the tone in *The Savage Detectives*, it's dark witticism that maintains the narrative voice in Bolaño's other novels such as *By Night in Chile* and *Distant Star*. Culture, particularly literary culture occupies a savage dimension in these texts as during the dictatorship poets hold *tertulias*, social gatherings, party to discuss philosophy, politics, poetry, art while the military junta torture people in the basement of the same building; Wieder, the criminal poet, seeks to bring in change in the landscape of Chilean literature but through physical torture, murder, violence, photographic exhibitions of mutilated dead bodies. The stories told in these narratives put the literary institutions in crisis mode as the line between what is called literature and crime becomes thin and blurred.

Writing about Bolaño and his work Burgos maintains, “Nomadism and mobility are essential aspects of a great part of his characters, who move at will without great qualms” (306). Bolaño's poets are nomads because they are not concerned with their departure or arrival but the journey itself; the stops on the journey are subordinated to their path. Unlike the migrant who moves from one point to another in search of a work, a place to live, etc. even when the second

point is doubtful, unpredictable or inaccessible, the visceral realists move as a consequence and necessity. Their life is characterized by a trajectory that has two points. Yet it is the “in-between” or “between two” that acquires all the consistency, autonomy and direction in their life. He further asserts that Bolaño's characters are “poor devils,” they rail against icons and are deeply attracted to the avant-garde. But more than the avant-garde they are propelled by a desire that seeks to renounce the unchanging criteria of standard literary institution, to change art as an institution and the various places that work of art occupies within it. It is through this view Bolaño approaches the past in *The Savage Detectives* and revises the contemporary Latin American poetic tradition.

In Europe Belano and Lima venture into spaces that are dehumanized and deserted. But it's on the edges, margins or degraded spaces that they live their lives. At first Lima lives in the degraded Paris of the exiled Peruvians as poor and miserable as César Vallejo was when he lived there. Then he travels to Spain to meet Belano for the last time. While in Spain he stays in the cave nearby a sea and works as a seasonal worker for a fishing company. Thence he wanders the desert of Israel. For modern Nation-State which functions through disciplinary power the nomads or the vagabonds pose a threat since they remain outside the purview of the law due to their mobile status. So it is not surprising that the Jewish authorities imprison Lima in Beersheba when he wanders the Israeli desert. But prison which Foucault calls disciplinary institution and also heterotopia of deviation hardly bothers Lima. If the bars, cafés, streets, brothel, motel room, hospital, mad house, desert, and other dingy places of Mexico City serve as spaces of rejuvenation for García Madero and other visceral realists, the prison becomes the site of friendship for Lima. In the Israeli jail Heimito Kunst the giant Austrian psychopath befriends Lima. After they are released from the jail the two of them beg in front of the hotels, in the places where tourists frequent. They wander, sleep in the streets or in church doorways. They attack people and mug them randomly in order to subsist since they don't possess money. “When we got there I punched the taxi driver in the back of the neck and we walked away” (287). They don't target anybody in particular but whoever they come across to nor do they regret after attacking them. “We didn't have any money. We found an old man in Esterhazy Park. He was feeding the pigeons, but the pigeons were ignoring his crumbs. I came up behind him and punched him in the head. My good friend Ulises went through his pockets but he didn't find any money, only coins and bread crumbs and a wallet that we took” (290). Lima even stabs two friends of Heimito Kunst in a brawl. As a result he is arrested, later expelled. In the deportation order issued by the Austrian authorities he is instructed not to set foot in Austria before 1984. Ulises Lima is thus the nomad-savage who shows no concern for laws or *nomos*.

The protagonist Ulises Lima as has been mentioned above is based on Mario Santiago Papasquiaro. The real name of Mario Santiago was José Alfredo Zendejas Pineda. But he called himself Mario to distinguish his name from José Alfredo Jiménez, the great Mexican singer and added “Santiago Papasquiaro” to pay homage to the birthplace of the Mexican writer José Revueltas. A larger-than-life personality Mario Santiago was alcoholic from an early age, he lived the life of the *poète maudit* to the extreme and paid hugely for it with his life. He died in a tragic traffic accident in 1998. Bolaño recalls that when an ambulance came to pick up his friend Mario's dead body nobody knew that he was a poet and his dead body lay unclaimed in the morgue for several days (Zalewski, “Vagabonds”). It is only after the publication of *The Savage Detectives* because of the character Ulises Lima, Mario Santiago became popular and his poetry is starting to get published nowadays and interest in forms of academic studies and research on

his poetry started to pour. Mario Santiago used to write poems on the margins of books, on napkins and other pieces of scrap paper. According to Luis Fabre he composed more than two thousand poems on the margins of other people's books. He did not just read but intervened in the poetry of other poets by writing his own verses on the margins of their collections. Such poems which Mario Santiago wrote, if published separately, seem meaningless and trash. But one gets to know the crux when they are read in the context of the poetry collections on whose margin they were written. For example, lines written on the margins of a poem by Alfonso Reyes (Maristain 250). As regards Belano, his life shares a striking resemblance with the Chilean writer's own brief, nonetheless intense experiences. It is hardly surprising that part of Bolaño's literary genius lay in creating a legend of himself. While in Europe to make a living he performed an absurd variety of odd jobs such as grape harvester, dockworker, campground watchman, trinket-shop proprietor. He undertook various trips in France, Spain and North Africa before finally installing in the province of Catalonia in 1977. In the text Belano evades panopticon gaze of any political or social institutions, ideological brands of art houses or even a "safety" valve by denouncing power, status, family, respect.

The visceral realists' status as poets is not so much defined by what they produce as to how they live and view the world. Their poetry is thus more about action and performance than expression but such actions and performances which are "useless," unproductive and even wasteful from the social perspective. Their nomadic poetry thrive on the fringes of any affirmative energies and don't dwell on any sense of humanitarian redemption. The women partners of the visceral realists also lead such lives and cross their paths quite unusually. They earn reputations of terrorists in academic and intellectual domains by championing the cause of Cesárea Tinajero. Such actions of ill repute lead them to degenerated identities/ways of unbelonging. However, it is only through such a process that they are able to reveal, revel and ruffle the calm waters of heterotopic designs.

Their understanding of poetics is intrinsically linked to connivance between state terror, awards committee, corporate publishing houses and established academic institutions. Poetics, for them, is not just about writing, but also about culpability, compromise and "surrender" opposed to epic discourse of bravery, commitment. Their major discontent with the intellectuals or "official" poets is in terms of their moral and ethical role with respect to their creative faculties as potential weapon. It is for this reason Belano and Lima found visceral realism and the movement is joined by young participants. They therefore reject convention and impose their own law on themselves. They endure anything, and therefore face ruin, madness and even death at the end. Their iconoclastic attribute can be best described by what Bolaño writes in his short story "Enrique Martín":

A poet can endure anything. Which amounts to saying that a human being can endure anything. Except that it's not true: there are obviously limits to what a human being can endure. Really endure. A poet, on the other hand, *can* endure anything. We grew up with this conviction. The opening assertion is true, but that way lie ruin, madness, and death. (*Last Evenings on Earth* 32, italics in original)

Some visceral realists end up in mental asylum, hospitals; some die in accidents, extrajudicial killing; yet others simply disappear. Towards the end, Lima disappears from a literary meeting in Nicaragua, Belano from the conflict zone of Liberia. Nobody remembers García Madero, the narrator of the first and third part of the novel and through whom we come to know about the visceral realists. "Juan García Madero?, No, the name doesn't ring a bell. He never belonged to

the group” (520). Where the visceral realists go is beyond any possible mapping. Throughout the novel the term visceral realism remains undefined. Yet one can infer from the adventures of the visceral realist poets that for them poetry and life are inseparable.

A true poet, for the visceral realists, is one who abandons the coffeehouse and takes the part of 'the sharpshooters, the lonesome cowboys ... the spat-upon supermarket shoppers in their massive individual collective disjunctives' – the cunning, the lonely, the unnoticed and despised (Wimmer 579). They despise the poets who are on the pay roll of the state, those who exchange truth for status, wealth and power. They hate writers and thinkers who cozy up to power and make their peace with the system. While contemporary writers write for fame, prestige, respect, recognition, they believe that “rejecting a career in poetry was in fact a way of taking poetry as seriously as life itself – and vice versa” (Wimmer 583). They advocate active role of the poets and are critical of academia and therefore vehement in taking anti-academic stance because of the intellectuals' double standard.

The visceral realist's lifestyle, their way of living, the things they do also go against the Foucauldian notion of discipline and punish as they shoplift books, drop out of colleges, quit jobs, abandon home, sever relationships, assume new identities, read and compose poems about orgasm, about masturbation, about adolescence, about their loss of virginity and about the lost poets who are no longer remembered by their own country. They defy the State apparatus through their nomadic existence. Nomadism as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari says:

The nomad is radically is opposed to the civilian, the man/woman living within the state. The civilian is coded in three stages: first, man or woman is surrounded by all types of social apparatuses; then, living according to them, he/she becomes the subject of his/her statements (“I,” the civilian); finally he/she is empowered accordingly, functioning within all facets of the state as an active part of its machinery. (Dolphijn 507)

Contrary to the above stated principles, the visceral realists resist the encoding machineries of power. Their resistance is not a search for equality or demand for recognition since they don't want to be identified at par with the established poets. It is more about becoming different from the mainstream. Becoming, as Deleuze and Guattari define in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is “becoming different.” Thus, the visceral realists are “becoming” poets which means that they are marginalized according to the poetics of dominant “official” poets. Living on the margins and writing with their own bodies, marginalities, sexualities and donning their texts with them is then a nomadology since such acts take place outside the phallogocentric strategies; nomadology subverts normality and overcodes the marginal. The visceralist or visceral realist movement is a rejection of poetics of the “official” poets. The visceral realists questions the dominant masculine structures that are found everywhere. Thus, visceral realism invites “all minorities to write a politics of location, an ethnography of everyday life that uncovers all the dominant political structures that turn life into being” (Dolphijn 509).

The visceral realists are aware of their imperfection, limitation. Nevertheless they resist, they don't give up their fight. They speak the Chilean writer's own poetic conviction that writing has always been:

the ability to peer into the darkness, to leap into the void, to know that literature is basically a dangerous undertaking. The ability to sprint along the edge of the precipice: to one side the bottomless abyss and to the other the faces you love, the smiling faces you love, and books and friends and food. And the ability to accept

what you find, even though it may be heavier than the stones over the graves of all dead writers. (*Between Parentheses* 34)

Bolaño mentioned this in his extraordinary “Caracas Address,” the text that he read in Venezuela when *The Savage Detectives* won the eleventh Rómulo Gallegos Prize in 1999. He further declared that literature is “danger” like an Andalusian folk singer remarks it. “Literature has nothing to do with national prizes and everything to do with a strange rain of blood, sweat, semen, and tears” (*Between Parentheses* 113). The visceral realists embark on poetic journey at their own risk. It has been rightly argued that the novel reflects the universal conditions, fate of some young poets who bet on their creative faculties until the last consequence. As San Epifanio says, “Poetry is more than enough for me, although sooner or later I’m bound to commit the vulgarity of writing stories” (46). They know that they cannot carry out their project by inhabiting the same space where “official” poets who first criticize the State and yet live off it exist. So, they continuously seek outer space, alternative space, a new space or spaces, even the most prohibited ones, which are there but also not there at the same time to change and rescue Latin American poetry. Literature/poetry, like the erotic sexual adventures, is useless and need not necessarily be an act of “procreation.” Poetics is rendered boundaryless or without boundaries in terms of their own “lives as texts as lives” as they write with their own marginalities and their own bodies and don their texts with them. Their failures and their “useless” (visceral) activities are what constitute their poetics: a celebration of the uselessness and wastefulness, a vain eroticism!

The visceral realists move at will taking their few belongings with them. They group together as visceral realists not through any organization but individualized visceral actions. The purposeful or intentional wanderings of Belano and Lima as also of the unconventional marginalities of the women characters reflect the prolongation of the resistance to “official” poets and cultural institutions that the visceral realists project in the first part of the novel. After the accidental and tragic death of Cesárea Tinajero in the desert of Sonora both Belano and Lima leave for Europe. They don't cross the Atlantic because of the consequence of what happens in the Sonora desert. The plan for leaving Mexico City was always there with them: “What they're doing is getting the money together to go to Europe, said Requena. Getting it together how? Selling pot left and right, how else, said Requena” (103).

Belano and Lima defy, evade the gaze of the State through their purposeful wanderings and meaningful nomadism. As they don't stick to or remain in one place for long time, transience, not permanence describes their trait. They resist sedentary lifestyle and mindset by imposing their own law on themselves. They don't have sense of ties to any traditional settled community. As such nation and nationalism do not hold meaning for them. They are characterized by their uprootedness, ease of mobility, lack of connection or patriotism to any Nation-State. They exhibit a “tribal” sense, opposed to the civilian. Hence they are the savage detectives. They inhabit a smooth space of the Deleuzian type and completely evade sedentary lives in a space striated by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures. However, they also sever relationship, cut off ties with everyone they have known, quit jobs, abandon apartments, skip the return flight home, assume new identities, flee combustive love affairs or simply head off into the Sonora desert without notice or telling anyone (Zalewski, “Vagabonds”). They appear and disappear like a phantom. Nomadism, marginalities, bohemian travails becomes a way, for them, to escape the gaze and surveillance of the other, to rebel against a society oriented toward “useful” capitalistic production and consumption.

Burgos maintains that Bolaño's work does not question the value of the Boom writers. "But it does want to limit the field to a few names, styles, or particular representation of Latin America" (305). The Latin American literary phenomenon called the Boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as we know, eclipsed a number of Latin American writers in good measure and hijacked recognition due to them; it represents an imprecise notion since it depends on the fixed parameters one employs for inclusion and exclusion of writer. The visceral realists in the novel rail against icons to connect with the work of "underground" or "lost" poet who is a woman. The Bolañian textuality thus splurges itself with the problematic core of poetics by bringing to the fore the poetics of infrarealists/viscerealists that is politics which is of rejection of all linked with power or of anything which can be managed, controlled, deployed and maneuvered; it advocates, instead, for venturing into the most marginalized, the most hostile and the most inhospitable of life experiences.

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