

LITERARY ONOMASTICS TYPOLOGY OF RELEVANCE  
 TO ONTOLOGY IN  
THE MIRACLE OF AUNT BEATRIZ BY THE DOMINICAN  
 DRAMATIST MANUEL RUEDA

by

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The Dominican Republic, a Spanish-speaking island in the Caribbean, has a historicity that can be divided into four dictatorships (Santana, Báez, Liliés and Trujillo). In spite of its political oppression and the inclemencies of nature, for it has been devastated by hurricanes repeated times, its literature beginning in the Neoclassic period has now flourished into a Golden Age.

Through the symbol of a MIRACULOUS DEATH-BODY THAT DOES NOT DECAY literary onomastics plunges us into an Ontological typology of names in the one-act drama THE MIRACLE OF AUNT BEATRIZ by Manuel Rueda. Onomastic concepts cannot be disassociated from respective philosophies. Manuel Rueda's heritage reflects in this macabre tragedy an onomastic melting pot of the following cultures: Buddhism-Hinduism-Islamism; Greek-Arabic; Hebrew and Christian-Roman, showing the substrata of these civilizations that dominated the Iberian Peninsula.

The corpse is the center around which revolve all the actions and the destiny of the characters: two nephews (Amadeo, Crispín), the niece (Emilia), the priest, the servants, the governor, the community and the church. When the curtain rises the two servants (Francisca and Onelia) are

discussing their horrible plight of having to turn away all the visitors who have come to see the presupposed sick Aunt Beatriz. The fact is that she has been dead for three days and only the priest and her niece have been with her in observation and prayer. When Crispín arrives the situation is revealed.

Priest Bernardo: It's as if her death has not brought her the expected peace. . . Awaiting for an answer. . . What meaning has Aunt Beatriz wanted to give to her death? That is what torments and disorients me.

Amadeo:  
(practical man) Three days of infernal heat and the corpse remains the same, without the slightest decomposition. It's enough to drive one to insanity.

Emilia: Early this third day I dressed her up with one of her best dresses. I did not need any help. No rigidity! She gave into my demands as a willing child, almost trying to make my task easier. She smiled at me. Before her death she ordered that she was to be left intact and observed to see what God was granting her for which she had long prayed. God was guiding her so that her body would remain intact.

One of the servants, Onelia, alarmed and totally confused, exclaims:

An aunt of mine, skinny and drawn, had a terrible odor only two hours after her death and now this.

The nomen 'Beatriz,' from the Latin 'beator, beo,' denotes "to make happy, to fulfill all the desires, gratify, enrich," giving the characteristic of the corpse as "someone who makes all happy by gratifying all the desires and enriching people's lives," which is exactly what Aunt Beatriz accomplishes. Her sainthood is questioned by the priest who explains to Amadeo that canonizing a saint for the Santoral is not done arbitrarily and miracles are not used to create an aura of morals.

The priest Bernardo, who wishes to bury her immediately, has a name made up of two germanic words 'berin and hard' meaning "the daring strong bear (beast)." The Catholic Church is symbolized by a reddish or scarlet beast. Revelation 17:3-7

.. and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast.. having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour.. having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The seven heads represent the seven mountains associated with the origin of Rome. The union of Church (woman) and State (beast) represents a rich, proud, corrupt institution. The priest changes his mind about burying her when he is promised, in return for keeping their secret, a monumental contribution.

The will of the luminously rosy cheeked corpse, Aunt Beatriz, is read.

Emilia: First--- I, Beatriz.., single, 81 years old (Eduviges Sotomayor Taveras), in full possession of my faculties and by my free and spontaneous will, leave all my wealth, property and possessions to my nephews and niece; Amadeo, Crispín and Emilia.

Second-. The condition for this inheritance to be effective is the following: I will never be buried. God has given me the gift of incorruptibility and permits that my body continue among my loved ones just as if I were alive, until my plans are fulfilled. To which plans do I refer? It is a secret between God and this his servant.

Third-. If on the other hand it is unanimously decided that the presence of a corpse doesn't make up for a huge fortune then you are to use all my fortune in the creation of a hospital for children. In this manner you can give my body to the eternal peace of the earth. The matter is in the hands of my heirs.

The governor storms into the presence of Amadeo demanding that the community wishes a wake and a burial for Aunt Beatriz immediately. His name Pedro, from the Latin 'petra' meaning "rock, stone," is a symbol of stability and firmness. He was the only stumbling stone for them to become millionaires. The foundation and solidarity of the government crumbles when he accepts as a bribe the gift of the mansion he lives in, rented from Aunt Beatriz but now he has no money to continue paying rent. This is in exchange for declaring that the city will have a saint in their house and the home will be declared a historical site for visitors after they pay a fee. Unanimously deciding to become millionaires, they listen to the priest in his last sermon. He has in mind the large sums of money for the church.

Priest Bernardo: I don't know if she is a saint, but I now comprehend something: that body ... will remain there incorruptible, watching for that little bit of kindness none of you offered her in life. Her mission is to always be present while you agonize day after day as you corrupt yourselves in family fights caused by hate and money.

Emilia from the nomen 'Aemilius' meaning "swollen, inflated, puffed up, pompous" is very apropos for the niece who has been too proud to marry, no one is good enough for her.

Francisca from the nomen 'francesco' is a French patrial referring to the germanic tribe Franks, thus called for their principal arm of war, a sword. "Woman or man of the sword" is truly symbolic of this servant who so devotedly protects the family with her two-edged-sword tongue from intruders, visitors, and ruffians trying to penetrate into the house.

Crispín is a popular name for an unscrupulous person in Spanish literature. The Nobel Prize winner of literature in 1922, José Benavente,

used it in his famous play LOS INTERESES CREADOS, a psychological play of how one Crispín influences, exploits people and then destroys them. 'Crispinus-Crispus-Crespo' are Latin words that give the meaning to this character of "curly-haired." In addition it has a connotation in the Spanish world of Crispín, "obscure and bombastic." These are the very characteristics that the alcoholic Crispín portrays, for besides being ostentatious he experiments with all the popular whores in the village. His family had to wait three days for him because they could not extricate him from his obscure, mysterious whereabouts.

The Church and Government are the other two characters not personified.

Beatriz, the corpse, "the spiritual and secular panacea," is never seen. The audience knows of her actual existence because at one point they see the lace of her right hand cuff as she sits in her armchair. She's installed in the play to represent the personal and generic conscience of the family. There was nothing else to do but accept her. She was Life (good or tragic), Death and the Ideal that man grips on to regardless of time or space in order to bring redemption to man. The family comes to a surprising decision.

Amadeo:           What are you planning to do?

Emilia:           Bring her here every day. Sit her to preside over the debates and problems of the house, give her back her authority.

Crispín:           You are carrying things too far.

Emilia:           It is our duty. I will be eternally here to carry out her orders and remind you both. I'm late, she awaits me. For three days she has waited for me.

Amadeo:           Woman, what are you going to do?

Emilia: We will sit her in her favorite armchair and bring her to this parlor in her customary place where she sat every day at 10:00 A.M. when you Amadeo always kissed her.

Looking intently at the sitting corpse, which the audience doesn't see because the back of the armchair faces the public, Emilia speaks:

Yes, Aunt Beatriz, it is you, we are here just as you want it, to say hello and wish you a good day. We also thank you for what you have done for us and daily we will bring you here.

The spiritual aura of Aunt Beatriz is so overpowering that Amadeo gives in to kissing her as was his custom when she was alive. She becomes the hope of the world today. Aunt Beatriz makes God her accomplice, makes her family accept procedures scandalous to all except God and starts the trip of Death seated on top of GOLD. With a surprising SMILE on her face and a sword in her right hand she hopes for the moment of the miracle. Here come to mind the words said to Martha by Jesus in John II: 23 "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." After three days she comes to life just as Jesus, after his resurrection, came to life to complete his plan of salvation. The priest explains the miracle or secret of Aunt Beatriz.

Bernardo: Let me remind you that kindness never dies. They sleep in us, but one day they will awaken and we will understand that the sun shines, the flowers bloom with their perfume and rejoice in other numerous simple things. Science is not capable of explaining these things to us.

Through Literary Onomastics I envision the wheel of the Fruits of the Spirit; the nine spokes are the characters, each representing a fruit, and Aunt Beatriz the axle, the hope of the world. Man as the most responsible creature continues to dominate the earth by bringing about its destruction

and degradation but there does exist a solution: Aunt Beatriz. At the end of the play all the characters possess one of the fruits of the spirit.

- 1- Meekness: Reflected in Onelia's humble spirit of behaviour.
- 2- Long-suffering: Obvious in Emilia who will daily bring the corpse to the parlor.
- 3- Peace: Pedro, the governor who will maintain the peace needed to worship Beatriz.
- 4- Temperance: Crispín abandons his scandalous life.
- 5- Faith: Bernardo has understood miracles and preaches about them.
- 6- Joy: The community is joyful to have a saint in its own city.
- 7- Love: The local church understands love better because a soul of her congregation taught with an exemplary life the true love.
- 8- Gentleness: Francesca imitates the kindness of Aunt Beatriz with those who come to the door.
- 9- Goodness: Amadeo, the callous, insensitive modern man, learns kindness and contributes to helping those in need and being more understanding of the weaknesses of others.

The miracle is understood clearly with more lucidity through the typology of literary onomastic, relevant to Ontology. Here is a universal enigma.

I leave you with this question: Doesn't it terrorize you to think that Aunt Beatriz's holiness and hope are based on the most somber power on earth: MONEY?

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NOTE

All the excerpts from the play are my own translations. They are based on Manuel Rueda. Rueda Teatro (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe C. por A., el 5 de noviembre de 1968), pp. 121-184.