

## **María Zambrano's Caribbean Imaginings: Philosophy from Island to Continent and Back**

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## **María Zambrano's Caribbean Imaginings: Philosophy from Island to Continent and Back**

Maria Zambrano's (1904-1991) meditations from her exile in Puerto Rico and Cuba are fraught with the ambivalence experienced by those displaced and forced out of their homeland. As it has been widely demonstrated, all situations of exile and migration are inherently traumatic. In this paper, I will delve into what I call Zambrano's hybrid philosophical essays –“Isla de Puerto Rico” (1940) and “El Tiempo y la Verdad” (pub.1963) as well as in her book *The Agony of Europe* (1945)– a new modernist genre that the Spanish philosopher cultivated during her forty-five years of exile. In Zambrano's descriptions of her Puerto Rican idealised insular environment she moves from the solitude of the island, to the nostalgia of today, delves into *The Agony of Europe* (1945), and enquiries into the origins of the ‘America Hispana’ and the Pan-American proposals by contemporary intellectuals and politicians.

In an attempt to set her Caribbean philosophical essays in a productive dialogue with her major philosophical projects and her intellectual-emotional exilic condition, I revisit key Zambranian ideas such as solitude, loss, nostalgia, time, truth and poetic reason.

Keywords: María Zambrano, Puerto Rico, Philosophical hybrid essay, Caribbean, Islands, Exile

Through the word we make ourselves free, free from the moment, from the  
besieging and instantaneous circumstances.

María Zambrano, *Hacia un Saber sobre el Alma*, 35

## 1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on María Zambrano's (1904-1991) rich Caribbean work, especially on a selection of her texts written or published in Puerto Rico and Cuba, where she developed valuable philosophical and aesthetic ideas, in an inquiry into and an hybridization of several traditions. I will be tracing Zambrano's thinking in a series of texts from "Island of Puerto Rico" to *The Agony of Europe* and "Time and Truth" which have proved invaluable to gain a sense on her meditations upon the future of Europe from her exilic condition in the Caribbean. Moved from her experience on these islands, I argue that these writings, constitute crucial meditations on the prospect of a hopeful horizon for the old European continent and a utopian re-generation after the war. These meditations tinged with the melancholy of loss and the hope of recovery move from ideology (loss of a Europe of democratic values) to the personal domain, always from her position as an engaged Republican intellectual.

In part, the underlying idea of this chapter is to approach how Zambrano created across borders, working cross-culturally, or against the grain of the dominant culture or philosophical tradition, at times suffering the absence of Spanish as her mother tongue, even if her close intellectual and emotional milieu used mostly Spanish. I will explore, among other issues: the creation of singular philosophical and aesthetic responses to exile; the development of innovative and hybrid essayistic forms; and the role of the intellectual and her relation with community and truth. I intend to investigate the way in which crossing the Euro-American divide responds to a traumatic exilic experience, as

well as how writing across borders can be construed as a strategy to manage the anxiety and psychic instability that comes as trauma's aftermath.

In 1939, in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, María Zambrano (1904-1991) went into exile. Her forty-five years spent in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Italy, France and Switzerland, allowed her to produce her distinctive philosophical and creative work, as much as to develop an intense existential awareness on the "exilic condition." As part of a generation of Spanish Republican exiles who were fleeing the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the regime of the dictator Francisco Franco, Zambrano lived a nomadic existence, shared with her generational peers, in a variety of geopolitical locations.<sup>1</sup> Their work gave rise to the most impressive cultural production that Spain had to offer to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

For Spanish Republican exiles, relocating to America represented an "extremely selective emigration. Without ignoring the presence of working class emigrants, still the majority of Spanish who fled to Latin America belonged to the leader levels of society" (Vilar 360).<sup>3</sup> The exile in the American countries was then characterized by a large

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<sup>1</sup> A large number of Spaniards crossed the border to France during the tragic winter of 1939. In Latin America, Mexico, Chile and Dominican Republic, were the only three American countries willing to officially welcome the Spanish republicans.

<sup>2</sup> After the collapse of 1898, with the loss of Cuba and the Philippines, in the aftermath of this epochal disaster for the nation, a generation of writers and critics, known as Generation of 98, such as Unamuno (1864-1936), Ángel Ganivet (1865-1898), Pío Baroja (1872-1956), Antonio Machado (1875-1939), and Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968) made substantial progress in questioning the Spanish mindset. The Generation's mythical resurrection of a "tragic" way of life (Unamuno) only reconfirms the concepts of crisis, decay and loss related to Spain's essence.

<sup>3</sup> "emigración extremadamente selectiva. Aún sin ignorar la presencia de inmigrantes de clase obrera, la mayoría de los españoles que escaparon a Latinoamérica pertenecía a las capas dirigentes de la sociedad". Almost none of Zambrano's works have been translated into English and, unless indicated otherwise, all translation from Spanish are mine.

number of exiled people connected to a range of professions in the fields of politics and intellectual and liberal arts.

Throughout their intellectual journey, the group of Spanish Republican exiles produced a body of work crucial for any approach and attempt at understanding the cultural reality of Spain after the Civil War. Writers, politicians, historians such as, Antonio Machado (1875-1939), Manuel Azaña (1880-1940), María de Maeztu (1881-1948), Salvador de Madariaga (1886-1978), Claudio Sanchez Albornoz (1893-1984), Dolores Ibárruri (1895-1989), María Enciso (1908-1949), and Max Aub (1903-1972), among others, contributed immensely to the project of rereading and reconsidering Spain's endemic flaws and the country's sense of historical failure. Years later, from the poetic "Generation of 27" and its milieu, Luis Cernuda, Rafael Alberti, Pedro Salinas, Concha Méndez, Manuel Altolaguirre, Ernestina de Champourcin, Emilio Prados, María Teresa León, and Rosa Chacel, bearing the generational burden of having outlived their brutally repressed fellow nationals, and the aftermath of Federico Garcia Lorca's assassination at the hands of the Franco militia, took the legacy of their elder fellow emigrés and built upon the remnants of a country devastated by a fratricidal civil war. They had to negotiate their own survivors' traumas as well as their painful deracinated existence. In Zambrano's view, the country's historical debate over "What is Spain?" would continue to generate the battles between brothers and sisters so that "the Spaniard dies in order to live, in order to recuperate its history" (*Los Intelectuales* 142).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "El español muere para vivir, para recuperar su historia."

María Zambrano was also an important member of a unique generation of women thinkers and intellectuals who radically confronted rationalism and the continental philosophical tradition from within. With their unique contributions, Rosa Luxemburg (1871), Edith Stein (1891), Hannah Arendt (1906), Simone de Beauvoir (1908), Simone Weil (1909), and Zambrano herself, introduced women into philosophical, political, creative and academic circles and offered a solid body of work with far reaching insights into a crucial period of political turmoil in European history. A true diaspora of modernist women philosophers and artists decided, or saw themselves forced, to go beyond frontiers. Many of them remained permanently “in transit” across national and other sorts of boundaries, experiencing the trauma of exile.

## 2. Zambrano’s writings: from Island to Continent

Can we speak of a specific kind of hybrid essay, one in which the experiential, the epistemological, the documentary and the lyrical interact and fuse into a new form? I am arguing in support of the appraisal of the philosophical hybrid essay in Zambrano’s work. It goes beyond the strictures of genre taxonomy within philosophical writing and opens up to more flexible modernist literary elaborations, in an attempt to interrogate and to understand the human condition in moments of crises. In my attempt at crossing the “transcultural” frontier with the inspiration provided by Zambrano’s writings, I would like to posit the existence of a movement back and forth in several of her texts which is based on repetition, iteration, and the movement back and forth between the location of the philosopher in exile and the old Europe.

During her time in Cuba and Puerto Rico, Zambrano would carry her travel journal as an acute observer of the realities that surrounded her. In an attempt to recreate a portrait of the remote foreign land, so far unknown to an audience largely from Spain

and its politically repressed diaspora, she conveyed her sense of defamiliarization as much as her feelings of complicity and identification with the plight of the islanders. Far from mirroring other realities to legitimize the European ethos, Zambrano rather wove her own narrative in order to understand the place and the historical experience of the Other as well as the events of political history which crystallize on the Caribbean societies she visited and where she became a temporary resident.<sup>5</sup> Zambrano not only became a keen observer and analyst of the Caribbean societies she visited, she became integrated within intellectual groups such as the Origenes in Cuba or the group of professors and researchers from the University of Puerto Rico. Some scholars hold Zambrano was a participant in the “networks”<sup>6</sup> of intellectual exchange active within many Latin American institutions at this moment in time. From letters to pieces in

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<sup>5</sup> This sense of wonder and pure inquiry is a time ripe for philosophy in which she was refining her thinking about liberalism, current democracy, and the political situation in Europe. According to Mariátegui, in the Puerto Rican context, “the philosopher’s writings “...” affected the cultural and political landscape into which she was inserting herself” (*To Reach the Isle* 74). In his view, Zambrano’s “Isla de Puerto Rico” forms part of her quest to renovate the liberalism she examined in her first book, *Horizontes del liberalismo* (1930). In Avilés-Ortiz’s research, it remains clear that “The island [was] a hotbed of political passions” (“La isla [era] un hervidero de pasiones políticas,” “Una filósofa en la ‘red Benítez’” 120) and Zambrano was not exempt from watching developments taking place in Puerto Rican (and largely Caribbean) geo-politics. The philosopher was trying to make sense out of the intellectual life, university environment, and Puerto Rico’s position vis à vis neighboring countries, the US and the Spanish heritage.

<sup>6</sup> Iliaris A. Avilés-Ortiz has recently demonstrated that Zambrano, during her stay in Puerto Rico, 1940-45, was a ‘participant’ in Jaime Benítez’s intellectual “network”, the Chancellor of U. Puerto Rico. She draws from Eduardo Devés Valdés in his *Redes intelectuales en América Latina*. In Devés’ view, an intellectual network is “a group of people engaged in intellectual pursuits who contact each other, meet, exchange written pieces, write to each other, collaborate in joint projects, improve the extant channels of communication and above all, create ties of mutual trust” (“el conjunto de personas ocupadas en los quehaceres del intelecto que se contactan, se conocen, intercambian trabajos, se escriben, elaboran proyectos comunes, mejoran los canales de comunicación y, sobre todo, establecen lazos de confianza recíproca,” *Redes intelectuales* 18).

periodicals or fragments of memoirs, and as a complement to her published more canonical works, these pieces allow us to better understand all elements, influences, and crucial factors that had an impact on the trajectory of her work. These networks also allow the researcher to explore more in depth the connections operating among different scientific and academic communities, and their relations with ongoing political projects (Avilés-Ortiz, “Una filósofa” 101).

In this new hybrid genre, the aforementioned travel journal, Zambrano uses both narration and the essay form, and a range of other smaller genres that critically contribute to its expansion, as both a meditative and an imaginative outgrowth of the writer’s capacities to comprehend human reality. In the Zambranian writings in exile that appear as proper to an insular setting, one finds an impressive fusion of genres mostly from narrative and essayistic ventures, such as: public lecture, newspaper or journal article, academic paper, letter, short story, piece of (historical) research, petition, complain, and confession. These are all among the most frequently used, and crucial as far as the overall design of the essays is concerned.

There is also an abundance of marginal or lesser known genres such as the micronarrative, the anecdote, the maxim, the aphorism, the epigram, the proverb and the piece of popular wisdom that take us both to a Spanish and to a larger European context, and also to creating bonds with her new personal and intellectual horizons in exile. As it is amply known, during her exile in Cuba, the philosopher came to be associated to the

Origenes poetry group whose leader, José Lezama Lima (1910-1976), became a life-long friend and correspondent.<sup>7</sup>

In her insular essays, Zambrano manages to imagine the city (San Juan, Havana) as a point of destination and also to introduce the broad social and individual force field that both constrains and enables the writer to create under specific historical and contextual circumstances. Her real-life journey into exile is transformed into a meditative essay and finally, into a philosophical elaboration which takes place in the Caribbean (Cuba and Puerto Rico) and the Latin American mainland (Santiago de Chile, Mexico DF, Morelia – Mexico) including New York, with intermittent trips to Europe (south of France, Paris, Rome, Trélex-sur-Lyon –Switzerland–, La Pièce, Greece, Geneva), and back to Spain in 1984. In her rich philosophical pieces, Zambrano reflects upon the phenomenological, the historical, the political, the ethical, the spiritual, the anthropological, the rational and the poetic.

It is important to note that we should understand Zambrano’s exile in the Caribbean as a continuum, the majority of which she spent in Cuba (1940-1946) with short periods in Puerto Rico (1940, 1941, 1943, 1945) and sporadic and very occasional trips to other locations.<sup>8</sup> This was probably the most creatively fruitful and philosophically rich period in her life. Specifically, “Isla de Puerto Rico” (1940), is a central piece in Zambrano’s personal, philosophical and political exploration that occurs in transit. Dedicated to her friends, Luz Martínez and Jaime Benítez –the president of

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<sup>7</sup> The rich correspondence between Zambrano and Lezama has been beautifully edited by Javier Fornieles Ten (Lezama Lima and Zambrano, *Correspondencia*). It also includes the correspondence between the Spanish philosopher and María Luisa Bautista, Lezama’s wife, after Lezama’s decease in 1976.

<sup>8</sup> Zambrano left for good for Europe in 1953 after spending time in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Chile and Mexico (Ortega Muñoz, *María Zambrano* 20).

UPR—, this text was written upon Zambrano’s returning to Havana after a visit to San Juan. This “document” in which the philosopher, nurtured by the spirit of the island, inspires hope, and advocates for a better world, ends up including some sort of Pan-Americanist manifesto. “Isla de Puerto Rico” was first published in the Puerto Rican newspaper “El Mundo” in 1940, and later in the same year in Cuba in “La Verónica” publishing house as a book.<sup>9</sup> In Puerto Rico, the Spanish philosopher joined another group of intellectuals invited by Jaime Benitez. It is interesting to note that this small book was dedicated to her friend, José Lezama Lima, “whom also felt and thought about the islands” (“Isla de Puerto Rico”).<sup>10</sup>

Like other Caribbean and Latin American societies, after the Great Depression of the 1930s, Puerto Rico went through difficult times.<sup>11</sup> Only after World War II a period of economic reconstruction and political transformations would bring about significant changes. In the early 1940s Puerto Rico was economically dependent on the US, and the colonial state saw migration to the mainland as a leeway to ease off the unemployment situation of the island. All through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most Puerto Rican

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<sup>9</sup> “La Verónica” was founded by the Spanish poet, editor and critic Manuel Altolaguirre (1905-1959). As a young Republican intellectual, he was forced into exile in 1939. He lived in Cuba and Mexico. A member of the “Generation of 27,” he was also the editor of a collection devoted to Spanish poets in his publishing house.

<sup>10</sup> “quien también ha sentido y pensado sobre las islas”. Lezama dedicated to Zambrano his poem, “Noche insular, jardines invisibles.” As it is well-known, Lezama created his own “Poetic System of the World,” his idiosyncratic ideas on metaphor and the image support a sophisticated philosophical-poetic system based on an Orphic-Pythagorean basis. His whole cosmogony constitutes a solid attempt to substantiate his ideas and *Weltanschauung*.

<sup>11</sup> In the Caribbean region of the so called Lesser Antilles, Puerto Rico exhibits the particularity of its territorial status as a “non-incorporated territory” of the US. A good number of monographs by legal scholars have charted the history of non-incorporation under US law up until now (see Duffy Burnett and Marshall, *Foreign in a Domestic Sense*, and Rivera Ramos, *American Colonialism*).

writers and intellectuals have problematized the purported breach between major ‘opposed parties’ such as those of “islanders” and “mainlanders.”

Politically, the Partido Popular Democrático held legislative dominance between 1940 and 1968 and supported Puerto Rico’s status intact as “non-incorporated” territory to the US up until the beginning of the Cold War period.

Crucial to reaching a more accurate understanding of the Puerto Rico Zambrano appraised, and to assess the fundamental shifts in cultural, socioeconomic, and political terms the island underwent, are Antonio Pedreira’s ideas on *Insularismo* (1934). In Pedreira’s view, Puerto Rico’s future must privilege the university-educated youth who will end up taking a similar position to those supporters of *autonomismo* in the nineteenth century (in favour of home rule but without independence from Spain) in relation to the US. Puerto Rico’s underdeveloped potential should not expect to gain full autonomy until it achieves a certain level of cultural development. Pedreira’s rhetoric and ideas would pave the way for a renewed insularity, at the basis of the Partido Popular Democrático’s ideology, for the decades to come.

Zambrano’s –and later on Juan Ramón Jiménez’s– understanding of insularity will not take her far from the ideas entrenched in ‘institutional’ political circles in the decades of the 1940s and 1950s. The philosopher, as many of her acquaintances finally failed to see in what ways insularity would have been instrumental in developing alternatives to the political status quo, to for instance, foreground issues of class and race, and to integrate the island with its Caribbean neighbors and gradually separate it from the US and the Global North.

In “Isla de Puerto Rico,” Zambrano’s rhetoric, in her descriptions of her Puerto Rican idealised “homely” environment, in her affect-laden discourse, takes us with a

trope to a paradisa<sup>12</sup> scene of origins, an idyllic place where she could think and write and be free. Zambrano moves from the solitude of the island to the nostalgia of today, to the political conundrum of her ideas on person and democracy (*Person and Democracy*) and to the origins of the Pan-Americanist proposals by several contemporary intellectuals and politicians (Bolívar, Martí, Rodó, Mariátegui). Zambrano's encounter with "the island," with Cuba and Puerto Rico, was for her a long journey of arrivals and departures, an intellectual pilgrimage that connected her to people and places, that opened up new far away friendships and comradeships, that immersed her deep into her thinking and enriched her experience with the benefits of collaboration with poets and intellectuals, with artists and politicians. She was able to penetrate deep into the "island-world" reaching finally for a sensible rationale to her understanding of poetry and poetic reason.

### 3. Caribbean Localities

Zambrano's sojourn in Puerto Rico has recently been researched and approached from different angles. From a philosophical and biographical perspective (Moreno Sanz, "Insulas extrañas"), from our philosopher's ideas on Pan-Americanism (Cámara and Ortega, *Caribbean*), and from her teaching, lecturing and intellectual activities on the island (Avilés-Ortiz, "Zambrano in Puerto Rico"). We have been fortunate with what seems a recent scholarly interest on Zambrano's Caribbean work, with the publication of volumes by Arcos (Zambrano, *Islas*) and Cámara and Ortega (*Caribbean*) as well as

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<sup>12</sup> *Paradiso* (1966), Lezama's major and only completed and published novel during his life time, is considered to be one of the most accomplished texts in Cuba's history. The novel's structure inspired in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, can also be discussed as an allegory dealing with creativity, homosexuality, death and regeneration. *Paradiso* is certainly a product of Lezama's insular, pythagorean-gnostic imagination.

with recent papers on her Caribbean period (Sánchez-Gey, “Relaciones personales;” Sedeño, “Viaje iniciático;” and Burgos-Lafuente, “Ruinas, islas y escritura”).

During her stay in Cuba and Puerto Rico, Zambrano reflected upon alternative ways of philosophizing such as through poetry, music and painting rather than through the usual structures of logical and onto-epistemological thought. Checking the limits of impermanence, precariousness<sup>13</sup> and solitude, but also of bodily resilience and speech, Zambrano constructs her philosophical meditation. For Zambrano it is the notion of style that gives cohesion and binds together disparate elements. Nothing, not even an experiential sensuous item, when it responds to a style, to another way of life, remains loose, nor could it exist without deep connections to other elements.

The island acts in Zambrano as a mirror that gives us the nostalgic image of our solitude. In the case of Puerto Rico, the island inspires love and tenderness, she describes it as a “flake of land on water that miraculously floats, but so incredibly light for such beauty” (“Isla de Puerto Rico” 9).<sup>14</sup> The island, in which “every corner of its land is full of beauty”,<sup>15</sup> exhibits a “flourishing” (“floreciente”) solitude, and Zambrano associates it with femininity, perhaps by what she understands as “humble fecundity,

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<sup>13</sup> Even during their very intellectually fruitful exile in Cuba and Puerto Rico, Zambrano and her husband, the historian Alfonso Rodríguez Aldave, lived a very difficult life. They never had financial security, a university position or any stable source of income. Judith Butler first introduced the concept of precarity in *Prearious Life*, defined as a type of precariousness by which human life can be understood from a collective, communal and interdependently political point of view. Whereas all lives are born precarious—vulnerable and hence finite—precarity refers to a politically induced condition derived from (in)action on the part of social and economic systems, which fail to protect human lives from physical impairment and extreme situations of poverty or political violence.

<sup>14</sup> “copo de tierra sobre el agua en que milagrosamente flota, paso tan leve para tanta belleza”.

<sup>15</sup> “cada rincón de su tierra está cargado de belleza”.

overflowing with her presence, this perpetual overflow without tiredness or pride” (9).<sup>16</sup> Puerto Rico represents “The miracle of integrity, in equilibrium” (9).<sup>17</sup> Zambrano weaves her essay as a conversation, “with you, friends of Puerto Rico whose names will always be intertwined with this nostalgia and this hope of mine, in the present terrible hour” (10).<sup>18</sup> At present, in the terrible hour,<sup>19</sup> she writes “from the failure of our past as Spaniards and from the anguish of our present as Europeans” (10)<sup>20</sup> to revitalize hope, “The hope of a past better off if it turned into the future” (11).<sup>21</sup> Hope must arise from the present moment, and reunite past and present in order to get away from the slavery to which reason has subjected us. Reality - historical, social, political - is far from rational, and the events of the War are a clear demonstration of this.

A sense of continual itinerancy can be perceived from the opening lines of “Isla de Puerto Rico.” She addresses previous conversations she had entertained with colleagues and friends “in the best moments in long walks across the island watching the twilight” (3).<sup>22</sup> Her addressees are thus her friends, and she wants her writing to work as a “testimony of profound friendship, creative friendship that unites us, and of

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<sup>16</sup> “fecundidad humilde, de este desbordar de su presencia, de este rebasar siempre sin cansancio, ni soberbia”.

<sup>17</sup> “El milagro de la integridad, en equilibrio”.

<sup>18</sup> “con vosotros, amigos de Puerto Rico cuyos nombres irán siempre entrelazados con esta nostalgia y esta esperanza mía, en la terrible hora presente”.

<sup>19</sup> It is important to remember that it was precisely in Puerto Rico where Zambrano received the terrible news of the fall of Paris. The Nazi occupation of Paris was an imminent danger, and a great risk for her mother and sister who were, at the time, in exile in Paris (see Avilés-Ortiz, “Zambrano in Puerto Rico” 7).

<sup>20</sup> “desde el fracaso de nuestro pasado de españoles y desde la angustia de nuestro presente de europeos”.

<sup>21</sup> “La esperanza de un pasado mejor convertido en porvenir”.

<sup>22</sup> “en los mejores momentos en largos paseos por la Isla mientras mirábamos el atardecer”.

those joyful days of my stay on this gorgeous island” (3).<sup>23</sup> Her piece shows a dialogical nature and it is, thus, presented as a gift of friendship to her peers. This piece opens with Zambrano’s thoughts around islands: “For the imagination, an island holds always a promise (3).<sup>24</sup> From early on, the island is associated to daydreaming, whereas the continents and mainland are the land of work. The islands appear as the “expected compensation, true compensation beyond justice, where grace plays its part” (3).<sup>25</sup> The islands occupy a place between daydreaming and dream (3-5), “The islands are the gift made to the world on days of peace for their enjoyment” (3).<sup>26</sup>

The islands appear to our imagination as a gift, and in parallel, as a residue of something, the remains of a better world, a sense of lost innocence. Out of the island we always expect the prodigy of life in peace, of a life in harmony, of an age in which no word had been prostituted, when the work was joyful and there was no envy (4). Puerto Rico was to Zambrano, in maximum degree, “a place of evasion of this present dreadful world” (4).<sup>27</sup> In Puerto Rico, she lived outside the usual coordinates of space and time, in a pure space of wonder, and in a “time outside time” in which she remained in contact with something alive and pure (4).

Zambrano wonders about the role of islands in history, from the Greek islands of the Aegean to the islands of the Antilles. In her view, Spain has rather been an island

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<sup>23</sup> “testimonio de la honda amistad, amistad creadora, con que me siento unida a ellos, y del recuerdo de los días venturosos de mi estancia en esta Isla maravillosa”.

<sup>24</sup> “Una isla es para la imaginación de siempre una promesa”.

<sup>25</sup> “la compensación esperada , compensación verdadera más allá de la justicia, donde la gracias juega su papel”.

<sup>26</sup> “Las islas son el regalo hecho al mundo en días de paz para su gozo”.

<sup>27</sup> “lugar de evasión de este pavoroso mundo actual”.

more than the Iberian Peninsula (4-5). The island is the sign and prelude for a better world, a better life. This is an idea of a life enmeshed in pure nostalgia, for “Man is the creature that is defined by his nostalgia more than by his treasures, so he misses so much or more than by what he has” (5).<sup>28</sup> From Columbus’ times, the Antilles were islands containing the rare and exquisite, the highly-coveted species and, associated with them, all things related to the refinement of the senses. The islands had a landscape “of trees miraculously flowered, of heaven unalterable ...” (6).<sup>29</sup> The island always belonged to another realm, far from the madding crowd.<sup>30</sup> Many inland Europeans were nostalgic for the mere vision of freedom traditionally evoked by the islands. The emotion of nostalgia has no clearly defined object, but in Zambrano’s words “Whenever nostalgia is directed at something, it becomes hope” (6).<sup>31</sup> At present, nostalgia is a pervasive sentiment, the nostalgia of Europeans today is a nostalgia for what now seems a bygone way of life. Zambrano argues that Europeans have snatched a certain way of life, a “style” from us: “a system of attentions and disdain, a unity of reason and sensitivity, a conscious and flexible measure” (7).<sup>32</sup>

In Zambrano’s section devoted to “The failure of the Spanish Empire” the philosopher speaks about the “peculiar pain” (11) and bad conscience that a Spaniard feels upon arrival in America. All the “incapacities” and “terrible evils” (12) of the old

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<sup>28</sup> “El hombre es la criatura que se define por sus nostalgias más que por sus tesoros, por lo que echa de menos tanto o más que por lo que tiene”.

<sup>29</sup> “de los árboles milagrosamente florecidos, del cielo inalterable...”.

<sup>30</sup> I am certainly alluding to Thomas Gray’s 1751 “Elegy written in a Country Churchyard,” and to Thomas Hardy’s homonymous novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and their ironic pastoralism.

<sup>31</sup> “Toda nostalgia cuando se dirige a algo se transforma en esperanza”.

<sup>32</sup> “un sistema de atenciones y de desdenes, una unidad de razón y sensibilidad; una medida consciente y flexible”.

imperial Spain are patent when confronting the realities of America. The most serious evil of those endemic to the Spaniards is “their lack of communication with the past, their lack of self-knowledge, and their ignorance about origins” (12).<sup>33</sup> These important problems appear even more acutely in their offspring in the America Hispana. It is thus a question affecting all Spaniards and all Spanish-speaking peoples, those that the Northerners have called “Spanish” –“Spanish” is the national and place name that appears in Zambrano’s paper. Their unity is more profound than what it might seem, “The great unity of language, origins and culture, the hidden and poorly known unity ... of a whole way of life, of facing all the questions that decide upon life, even death itself” (12).<sup>34</sup>

At this very moment in time, Puerto Rico plays a distinctive role regarding culture and values (13), and “The destiny of the little island enters, we believe, a decisive phase in which man ... (this upright creature, the remnant of a better world) must muster all his treasure ... to arrive at the understanding of something more transcendent...” (13-14).<sup>35</sup> In Zambrano’s view, the destiny of the people of Puerto Rico will be to serve a mission universal in scope, showing the island’s Spanish tradition and its American present (15). This mission will be one of pacification and

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<sup>33</sup> “su incomunicación con el pasado, su aislamiento de la tradición, su tremenda ignorancia acerca de sí mismo, de sus orígenes”.

<sup>34</sup> “La gran unidad de idioma, de orígenes y de cultura, la unidad oculta y mal conocida ... de todo un estilo de vida, de un encararse con todas las cuestiones que deciden la vida, hasta la misma muerte”.

<sup>35</sup> “El destino de la islita nos parece que entra en una fase decisiva en que el hombre ... (Esa criatura íntegra, intacta, como residuo de un mundo mejor) se ve forzado a poner en juego todo su tesoro ... para llegar a la comprensión de algo más trascendente...”.

“reconciliation of the two Americas” (16). This is a crucial, critical moment, “It is the terrible time of danger, of anxiety, despair, and hope. It is the moment of truth” (16).<sup>36</sup>

For Zambrano, at the root of the failed Spanish imperial origin, lies the fortitude which must take over the noble heritage of Western culture, namely, human creation. This Western heritage, consisting essentially of objectivity of thought and love, makes possible the existence of a livable world. This livable world is made by free men and for the benefit of free men, by the human person and for the benefit of the human person. At present, “[The human person] is the victim, sentenced to death, enslaved and persecuted, marked for annihilation” (16).<sup>37</sup> This person opts always first for dignity and justice rather than for her own individual life, and believes in essential freedom. It is in line with the best Spanish tradition, the Stoic and the Christian. In her view, the Spanish-speaking American man should be able to go back to this Spanish-European root in order to face his “inalienable heritage” (17).<sup>38</sup>

North America has in its root something very noble inherited from old Europe, its tradition in the autonomy and freedom of the human being. North America is a colossus brimming with strength and “the wide space of history ahead” (18).<sup>39</sup> Finally, Zambrano points out that the greatest evil afflicting America is its present cult of success, what she calls “the religion of success” (18). America has come of age, and the cult of success, of results, and achievements must yield in favor of principles –ethical,

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<sup>36</sup> “Es la terrible hora del peligro, de angustia y desesperación y esperanza. Es la hora de la verdad”.

<sup>37</sup> “[La persona humana] es la víctima, la sentenciada a muerte, la esclavizada y perseguida, la que se pretende aniquilar”.

<sup>38</sup> “herencia inajenable”.

<sup>39</sup> “el ancho espacio de la historia por delante”.

democratic, principles of respect and peaceful coexistence. This new cult demands “much more effort and heroism than the previous one” (19).<sup>40</sup> Everything points to the fact that the small and graceful island of Puerto Rico might be the place where the encounter between the South and the North occurs, “Reconciliation between the powerful man of the North; the clear understanding of the work to be performed, awareness and enthusiasm for the acceptance of the difficult destiny” (19).<sup>41</sup>

Zambrano’s philosophical essay defies any taxonomical imperative, the systematicity of any philosophical or literary corpus. She proceeds in a palimpsestic mode, superimposing layers that get adhered to a fragile surface which remains scratched and encrypted as if written on a sand bank –from the failure of the Spanish Empire to Europe at war, from democracy imperiled to a present-day man, unaware of his past and unresponsive to the demands of these times of crisis. She insists upon the trope of origins, of the lost and irretrievable past that is nostalgically evoked, on the erosion of ethical and social principles, and on the decay of a way of life.

In my view, Zambrano generates an encounter between some of the ways in which islands have been imagined and used from without, primarily in the interest of the advancement of the West, and from within, as can be gathered from the experience of Cubans and Puerto Ricans. This perspective from within, an affirmative and creative counter-imagination on islands emerges from works by José Lezama Lima, Cintio Vitier, Fina García Marruz, and the poets from the Orígenes group, as much as from Zambrano’s reading of Juan Ramón Jiménez or Luis Cernuda –both of them in exile in

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<sup>40</sup> “mucho más esfuerzo y heroísmo que el anterior”.

<sup>41</sup> “La reconciliación entre el hombre poderoso del Norte; la comprensión clara de la obra a realizar, conciencia y entusiasmo para la aceptación del difícil destino”.

the US and spending time, Cernuda mostly in Cuba, and Jiménez in Puerto Rico. In her work on the islands, Zambrano reflected upon some key concepts associated with insularity –the light, the coast, and the ocean– and the ways in which they force a rearrangement of crucial philosophical concepts: respectively, vision and sense perception, time, space, and history. The epistemological problems posed by the islands open up several lines of enquiry for a different understanding of history and the imagination inspired by Caribbean texts, whose singularity precludes us from an easy classification that exhausts their differences.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. Hemispheric Connections

Certainly, the pressing situation in Europe with the advent of WWII did not have much to do with the specific situation in Puerto Rico and Cuba. Zambrano had come to a Puerto Rican scenario of modernity to lecture with a well-deserved aura of knowledge and prestige –at the university and at a series of institutions (the PR Athenaeum, the Professional School of Social Work) where she was welcomed as one of the disciples of Ortega who soon became well-known and gained respect and the admiration of intellectuals, professors and critics. In any event, Zambrano was addressing audiences, speaking of subjects as varied as Seneca and stoicism, Greek ethics, Ortega or Antonio Machado, but she was also living as an exile and had a reputation for being a “red.” This was certainly a big obstacle for her candidacy to be hired as a university professor of philosophy.

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<sup>42</sup> During her Caribbean exile, Zambrano was extremely prolific. She wrote many hybrid texts moving between philosophy, literature, painting and the other arts. For an exhaustive account of her Puerto Rican and Cuban intellectual activities, see Moreno Sanz, *La visión más transparente*, and Zambrano, *Islas*.

During the difficult times of continuous travel back and forth to San Juan, Zambrano maintained a fluid correspondence with Waldo Frank (1889-1967). Frank had become an important referent in the relations between the US and what he himself called the “America Hispana.”<sup>43</sup> They both benefitted from this friendly intellectual exchange and Frank tried to help Zambrano to gain a stable position with his contacts, but to no avail. Even though Frank’s ideas about the reconciliation of the two American hemispheres, were influential on Zambrano –and the most telling instance is precisely her elaboration in “Isla de Puerto Rico”–, the philosopher remained cautious in relation to the incipient Puerto Rican nationalism that arose in the 1940s as a counterpart to the American colonial regime.

Zambrano was clearly in a position of vulnerability, identified as a leftist political exile. She spoke of exile as an experience lived by those faithful to their ideals. Exiles went through a long and painful process of loss of the mother country, fellow nationals, and an immense solitude. Exiles also became refugees who, watching the future, hoped to recover as soon as possible their lost existence. Finally, the exiled became aware that what they longed for did not exist anymore, and, personally, they did not completely adapt to their new societies. Many of them ended up having two mother countries, the one of origin and the other of stay, a double identity and a form of identification.

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<sup>43</sup> Frank published a book entitled *America Hispana. A Portrait and a Prospect* (1930). Dedicated to Peruvian intellectual Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894-1930), this was one of the first volumes that presents us with a cultural history of North and South America.

Zambrano suffered from a double exile, a political and physical exile, a forced eviction from her home and homeland, and also a philosophical exile. As F.J. Martin has noted:

Hers was also a philosophical exile, in a double and complete sense. Her work grows independent and strong on the margins of schools and academies ... and above all she strengthens ties, through the vindication of poetic reason and her choice for the knowledge of the vanquished and humiliated by the weight of history, with all the tradition of thought in exile and with the exiles of the Great Philosophy.<sup>44</sup>

In “Island of Puerto Rico,” Zambrano’s prospect is to a great extent, her dream for America, both halves of the hemisphere integrated into one people, a new spiritual synthesis where the ethical ideas of person, community and democracy will regain momentum. With her views, the philosopher challenges a transimperial history of global power relations between English and Spanish (Mignolo) with an idiosyncratic philosophical-literary language that exceeds canonical traditions. She also brings to the fore a vein of avant-garde ideas of her Cuban milieu and the Spanish Republican diaspora. Zambrano meditates upon the literary as a locus of thought. She introduced

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<sup>44</sup> “Exilio filosófico también, el suyo, y en un doble y fuerte sentido, pues su obra se gesta y crece al margen de las escuelas y de las academias (téngase presente que fueron los poetas antes que los profesionales de la filosofía los que primero reconocieron el valor de su pensamiento), y, sobre todo, se hermana, a través de la reivindicación de la razón poética, de su abrazo integrador, de su opción por los saberes vencidos y humillados por el peso de la historia, con toda la tradición del pensamiento exiliado y de los exiliados de la Gran Filosofía” (Martín, “Presentación”).

poets who uniquely ventured into broadly comparative and international terrains, including Lezama, Cernuda, García Marruz, Cabrera, whose work straddles trans-American literary traditions, engaging Latin American history as well as a global poetics of dissent and non-complicity with the old Empires.

Finally, Zambrano elaborates on exile and cultural borders in ways that distance her from more established and “neutral” ways to think about displacement and deracination. Her philosophical, critical and creative work is a celebration of a hybrid Spanish of the Republican diaspora, a Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish in conjunction with the English spoken in Puerto Rico and N.Y. as well as the legacy of other native American languages that question cultural and literary traditions.

## 5. Back to Europe

At the aforementioned historical conjuncture, it is imperative to revisit Zambrano’s thought in the 1940’s. At that moment, as a Spanish Republican philosopher in exile in Cuba she engages in a sustained meditation on the future of a Europe besieged by war with an essay that will give title to her book, *The Agony of Europe*, published in Buenos Aires in 1945. In that book, a collection and reworking of articles rewritten between 1940 and 1944, Zambrano wrote:

Europe is not dead, Europe cannot entirely die; it agonizes. Because Europe is perhaps the only thing – in History – that cannot entirely die, the only thing that

can come back to life. This principle of resurrection will also be the principle of its life and of its transitory death. (*Agony* 42).<sup>45</sup>

Zambrano certified the disaster of Europe. She experienced that only through nostalgia do we encounter the unity of Europe – unity composed of all the diversities of its rich life; her experience was so strong that she surrendered to her suspicion that Europe was truly dead.” However, in her view, utopian obstinacy was stronger. Unable to believe in a definitive death for Europe, the profile of utopia was held within the very reality of Europe (82). Based on the assumption of the new man that takes shape in the Augustinian *Confession*, Zambrano outlined a paradigm for the European man and his way of living history:

... from his hope of resurrection here on earth, a revolutionary need sprang up for a world, for an ideal city always there on the horizon. It is man’s historical anxiety, that of wanting to substantiate his dreams, of somehow believing in them. For this reason, history is more history in Europe than elsewhere because of this definitive importance of the horizon, because of the belief in one’s dreams that corresponds with an aspiration to go beyond oneself. ... The European man’s effort has been his tireless straining to reach toward a world, a

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<sup>45</sup> “Europa no ha muerto, Europa no puede morir del todo; agoniza. Porque Europa es tal vez lo único –en la Historia– que no puede morir del todo; lo único que puede resucitar. Y este principio de su resurrección será el mismo que el de su vida y el de su transitoria muerte”.

city forever on the horizon, unreachable. The European landscape is pure horizon... (80-81)<sup>46</sup>

Europe exhibited a dual profile: an unreachable horizon, and the utopia of an impossible hope whose necessary failures give way to the real history, history itself as a failure. Thus, the Augustinian City of God is equivalent to a final paradigm for all European culture, even in its bloodiest nightmares:

In every European struggle, someone is pushed by this impossible hope, in defense of the invisible city, having made sure that the visible cities rise; at the entangled base of the nightmare and among the terrible tension between two worlds, a longing for the kingdom of God on earth still lives, and solely by the virtue of that image, Europe has inflamed itself with nostalgia and hope, in search of its permanent utopia, its final and definitive resurrection, its transfiguration. (84)<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> ... de su esperanza de resurrección aquí en la tierra, ha brotado la exigencia revolucionaria de un mundo, de una ciudad ideal siempre allá en el horizonte. Es su ansia histórica. El querer substantivar sus sueños, el creer en ellos de alguna manera. / Por eso la historia es más historia en Europa que en otra parte, por esta importancia definitiva del horizonte, por la creencia en los propios sueños que corresponde al afán de salir de sí. ... El esfuerzo del hombre europeo ha sido la infatigable tensión de tender a un mundo, a una ciudad siempre en el horizonte, inalcanzable. El paisaje europeo es puro horizonte..."

<sup>47</sup> Pero sí cabe decir que toda lucha europea hay alguien que ha ido a ella lanzado por esta imposible esperanza, en defensa de la ciudad invisible, y que ha hecho levantarse a las visibles. Que siempre en el fondo intrincado de la pesadilla y en la terrible tensión entre los dos mundos se encuentra vivo todavía el anhelo del reino de Dios en la tierra, por cuya sola imagen Europa se ha incendiado de nostalgia y de

The disaster, the sickness of Europe will thus be weariness that can no longer bear the tension between the two worlds, it will be the desire to shatter the horizon, to erase the line of the unreachable, to abolish the distance, nullify the yearning for utopia – “to destroy the horizon so that everything is nearby” (84);<sup>48</sup> “monist barbarity, false mysticism”<sup>49</sup> writes Zambrano, and “weariness of the lucidity and of love for the impossible” (85).<sup>50</sup> If we take the utopian tension out of what Europe is, the old continent belongs to the time of that which is not. And in the space of this paradox, nostalgia intertwines with utopian sentiment. Nothing living can reach unity if not through death (once again echoing Zambrano): this unity in which Europe shows up in our nostalgia, plunges us into the suspicion that it is truly dead. The condition of possibility, of our looking back in time to the turn of the nineteenth century and the consequences of the Great War is perhaps nostalgia for a lost Europe, a Europe that we have learned to perceive precisely in our suspicion of its death. We know however that the other side of suspicion is hope, the hope to return to utopia, the lucidity of the European man who learns to live history as a failure.<sup>51</sup>

Zambrano’s words in *The Agony of Europe*, when she herself walked across the Franco-Spanish border and into exile in January 1939 are a most telling testimony of the

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esperanza, en busca de su permanente utopía, de su resurrección última y definitiva, de su transfiguración.”

<sup>48</sup> “destruir el horizonte para que todo esté al alcance de la mano”.

<sup>49</sup> “barbarie monista, falsificada mística”.

<sup>50</sup> “cansancio de la lucidez y del amor a lo imposible”.

<sup>51</sup> In the aftermath of the ravages of the Spanish Civil war and the dispossession of exile, Zambrano remained determined to counter the “truth of necessity” (“verdad de la necesidad”) with the “truth of hope” (“verdad de la esperanza,” *Delirium and Destiny* 103).

trauma of exile, disenfranchisement and deracination.<sup>52</sup> The efforts that she made in supporting the Republican cause appear all through her life and work. Unfortunately, learning to live history as a failure was not a clear outcome of the somber times of WWII. The indelible mark of colonial history and its implications remained visible in Latin America and the Caribbean, and certainly became a shameful reminder of the past into the present and future.

#### 6. The Emergence of Truth in Time, or waking up to reality

Zambrano worked indefatigably on what was to be one of her major contributions to the history of thought, that of “poetic reason”. Her stay in Cuba and Puerto Rico constituted a true laboratory for the generation and articulation of this crucial concept. Far from giving rise to a similar quasi-utopian elaboration as in “Isla de Puerto Rico,” Zambrano resumes her indefatigable roaming around the Caribbean and ends up writing another central piece for the completion of her Puerto Rican sojourn, namely, “Time and Truth” (“El tiempo y la Verdad” publ.1963). At this point, her essay becomes a genuine heterotopia<sup>53</sup> where temporality and truth are at stake.

From the tendency in continental philosophy to the abstraction of temporal consciousness, Zambrano posits time as the substance of our existence, and it is a crucial element in any consideration of her ideas on “person” and “democracy”. In her

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<sup>52</sup> In *Las Palabras del Regreso*, she writes, “We had to cross the border of France one by one ... And the man who precede me was carrying a lamb on his back, a lamb whose breath reached me and for an instant, of those indelible ones, of those that are always worthy, for all of an eternity, looked at me. I looked at it ... then I saw that the lamb was I” (“Tuvimos que pasar la frontera de Francia uno a uno ... Y el hombre que me precedía llevaba a la espalda un cordero, un cordero del que me llegaba su aliento y que por un instante, de esos indelebles, de esos que valen para siempre, por toda una eternidad, me miró. Y yo le miré ... entonces vi que el cordero era yo,” 70-72).

<sup>53</sup> From the beginning of her career, in the late 20s and early 30s, Zambrano was already a student of temporality. She even planned to write a modernist novel tentatively called, *The Multiplicity of Temporalities* (see Rodríguez García, “Two Essays on Ruins” 99).

view, democracy is oriented toward building a community, and “democracy ... is the society in which to be a person is not only a requirement, but a must” (*Persona y democracia* 169).<sup>54</sup> In *Person and Democracy* (1958) Zambrano alludes constantly to the human condition, humankind, “must humanize its history, making it his, assuming it from the person” (100).<sup>55</sup> Almost simultaneously, in “Time and Truth,” we hear Zambrano’s lament for a bygone way of life, that of democracy in Europe.

In Zambrano, time occupies a double dimension, the historical and the transcendental. The first dimension addresses the time of a specific community, from the past and into the present. The transcendental dimension is one in which the “person” conceives of her relation to the community as a part of her own relationship to the future. It is important to note that not only time passes, we also pass with time, and time is certainly the medium of human existence, and, in Zambrano, time is even figured as the space where the person is born. Time, the word and the creative action are three essentials –“notas esenciales” (“Tiempo y verdad” 63)– of the human condition. In “Time and Truth,” Zambrano foregrounds the convergences between being in exile and being born, since “to live entails getting into a ‘situation’ ... that the exile, as soon as he is away, must procure for himself” (63).<sup>56</sup> Still there is a dramatic difference between exile and biological birth.

“Time and Truth,” opens with the trope of a birth scene, a scene of origins in which the human being, senses the unique feeling of “coming out of a dark place which

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<sup>54</sup> “la democracia ... es la sociedad en la cual no sólo es permitido, sino exigido, el ser persona”.

<sup>55</sup> “ha de humanizar su historia, hacerla suya, asumirla desde su persona”.

<sup>56</sup> “vivir implica asumir una ‘situación’ ... que el exiliado, tan pronto como se va, debe cuidar de sí mismo”.

contains us” (63).<sup>57</sup> Time is already there, assisting the human. In Zambrano’s mythical account, it is Cronos, the first agent and “efficient cause” of the liberation of human life. With recourse to mythical time, to Hesiod’s Theogony,<sup>58</sup> she ushers us into her account of time and truth. Zambrano poetically states that “The encounter with time will be the awakening of the dream” (67)<sup>59</sup> and argues that man only discovers himself over time. At this point, it is important to note that, in the philosopher’s view, our knowledge of time does not start with a question, “it was, no doubt, a poetic and experimental knowledge, a knowledge of suffering that corresponds to the first awakening of consciousness” (68).<sup>60</sup> She claims, “To wake up to reality is to wake up to time. But one does not wake up to reality without others having awakened to the truth” (69).<sup>61</sup>

Zambrano speaks from her position of exile, and speaks about “the truth of the vanquished” (72).<sup>62</sup> She also speaks of “passivity” and how passivity is also a major way of action which resides in suffering, suffering for the truth (72). In *La Confesión, género literario*, she goes on to argue that “[confession] deals with finding the point of contact between life and truth” (31-32).<sup>63</sup> And we should not forget that confession is a

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<sup>57</sup> “salir de un lugar oscuro que nos contiene”.

<sup>58</sup> As it is well known, Hesiod’s Theogony (8-7th cent. B.C) is a poem and the first Greek mythical cosmology in which an explanation is given of the origin of the Cosmos with the Greek gods, their deeds and offspring. It tells how Cronus overthrew Uranus, and how in turn Zeus overthrew Cronus and his fellow Titans, and how Zeus was eventually established as the final and permanent ruler of the cosmos.

<sup>59</sup> “El encuentro con el tiempo será el despertar del sueño”.

<sup>60</sup> “fue un saber poético y experimental sin duda, un saber de padecimiento que corresponde al primer despertar de la conciencia”.

<sup>61</sup> “Despertar a la realidad es despertar al tiempo. Mas no se despierta a la realidad sin otras haber despertado a la verdad”.

<sup>62</sup> “la verdad de los vencidos”.

<sup>63</sup> “[la confesión] trata de encontrar el punto de contacto entre la vida y la verdad”.

genre that, in her view, appears mostly in times of crisis. While we may feel entitled to question Zambrano's own self-representation, the philosophical essay she cultivates is an opaque and democratic form of self-writing. What literature does rhetorically and discursively, philosophy does inquisitively as a continuous quest –here, both gestures attempt to reveal the mystery of the writer's identity. Could this identification of writing and selfhood then make the confessional, as defined by Zambrano, into one of the crucial paradigms of her oeuvre?

For Zambrano, "Truth occurs firstly in speech" ("Tiempo y verdad" 71)<sup>64</sup> and if it were not for the word one would tend to think that time is all that exists. Throughout her work, Zambrano speaks frequently of the poet's role in connecting the people to the word –in her view this was best represented in Antonio Machado's poetry (see her crucial "La guerra de Antonio Machado") – and in his engagement with community and truth. She considers both poetry and philosophy as based on the love for knowledge and on the love and admiration for the world. Her notion of "Poetic reason," which announces as "This reason for reintegrating love of the rich substance of the world" (*Senderos* 69)<sup>65</sup> comes out of what she calls "the deep root of love" (*Senderos* 68).<sup>66</sup>

It seems to me there is an aporia in the midst of the philosophical essays examined in this chapter: the crisis in experience parallels the unsurmountable obstacles the individual faces in any attempt at reconstructing memory, community and homeland. In Zambrano, the writing of philosophy becomes a mediation between the historical demands of her intellectual project and those realities that were, in her view,

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<sup>64</sup> "La verdad se da primeramente en el decir".

<sup>65</sup> "esta razón de amor reintegradora de la rica substancia del mundo".

<sup>66</sup> "honda raíz de amor".

traditionally excluded by Western philosophy. In her Caribbean essays, as much as in her philosophical practice Zambrano works with all that exists beyond the limits of intelligibility as established by the dominant idea of Reason: affect, emotions, the immaterial, and the excluded (friendship, love, time, democracy, hope). Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to show how the recursive movement back and forth, from the insular space to the mainland, from the Caribbean to Europe, present at the level of the form and content of her work, functions not only internally as a trope for the nascent writing process but also externally as a mirror image of the issues strategically addressed.

In her hybrid philosophical essays, Zambrano's journey goes from the island to the continent and back to the island. Throughout her journey, she reveals new insular topographies, exploring with genuine interest the role of the other –interlocutor, friend, poet, artist–, in sustaining life and democratic ideals. Upon writing “Isla de Puerto Rico,” and “Time and Truth” (1948),<sup>67</sup> Zambrano touches upon a geographic imaginary and concurrently presents us with her major latent ideas on love, loss, temporality, history and truth. Her exile status gravitates around the conditions of the known world and the horizons of possible worlds (Daniels 183), and within her real-cum-imagined geographies, she piles up perceptions, reflections and analyses related to a largely unmappable world. It is through her emotional attachments and memorable experiences linked to specific places and times that past and present prove to be interconnected through her epistemologically rich involvement. For our thinker, Puerto Rico and Cuba,

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<sup>67</sup> “La Cuba Secreta” (1948) is a central text in which Zambrano speaks about her engagement with Cuba and with the Origenistas: Lezama, Cintio Vitier, Eliseo Diego, Fina García Marruz, Lidia Cabrera, among other writers and artists. They were the aesthetic and intellectual basis that nurtured Zambrano. Their gatherings, conversations, shared readings and life, were instrumental in the philosopher's work, as well as in the evolution of many of their oeuvres.

came to be promised and promising lands to engage in creative activities and do philosophy. Both islands came to be “clearings in the woods,”<sup>68</sup> where her own philosophical system, in touch with the new insular realities, was drawn to the intimate, solitary and meditative spaces of the islands.

Zambrano’s legacy of modernity, feminism and democratic ideals shows in “Isla de Puerto Rico” and “Time and Truth” as a response to the pressing concerns that assail the person, then and now, in times of crisis. From the heterotopia of her enchanted Caribbean islands to the heart of Europe, her words resonate with the rhythmic insistence of the abiding human.

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<sup>68</sup> Zambrano published *Clearings in the Woods* (1977) as a sustained philosophical-literary meditation on mysticism, poetry and the unveiling of the hidden and the occult that is in Nature

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