

STRATEGIES OF READING: SEXUAL POLITICS IN
AIDA RIVERA-FORD'S
"LOVE IN THE CORNHUSKS"

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Once upon a time--this phrase is less rhetorical than it seems--we were taught that art, great literature, is essentially a creation of genius, an expression of a divine spirit, an epiphany of a god. Artists are heroic souls or geniuses who agonize to produce a masterpiece; that is to say, the artist resembles an oyster suffering in pain when a grain of sand enters its bowels until later, after its gratuitous martyrdom, it throws up a pearl. This is called the oyster theory of art production.

If you are one of those delicate sensibilities offended by this metaphor of the oyster and consider it a desecration, you can replace it with any one of such familiar images like Edgar Allan Poe drinking his way to greatness. Or Byron, the aristocratic individualist riding his horse and declaiming rebellion against tyranny. You can recall any number of pictures of mad or crazed painters, musicians, sculptors, or mass media superstars. You will notice that in doing so, you have fallen into that time-warp I've signalled earlier-- "once upon a time," where you have just escaped reality into fantasy island, a realm of Ideas--to use the philosophical term--akin to that of Plato's or of religious and

mythical thought. This is a safe refuge which hides and shields us from the terrible menace of History.

For anyone who has studied this particular notion of the artist, perhaps a banal or trivial one that is still part of the collective "common sense," I would like to suggest that this notion has a specific origin: it sprang from the edge of romanticism in Europe, during the last half of the 18th century and after the French Revolution (1789). It was then a period of radical transition from a feudal or precapitalist system to a capitalist and industrial one. As a protest against the savage exploitation and ecological disaster produced by the birth of an order founded on cash, profit and the market, writers and artists began to assert the value of the authentic self. Think of William Blake, Shelley, Goethe, Lamartine, and later Emerson and Whitman. "Feeling," "nature," and the "imagination" became the slogans of the romantic artist's fight against the breakdown of the homogeneous organic society they still remember and the onset of an atomized, fragmented world which has reduced art into commodities. What the scholar M.H. Abrams calls the

"expressive" theory of art focusing on the artist, a theory which replaced the pragmatic conception centered on the audience and the more traditional mimetic theory centered on a knowledge of reality, should then be situated in the historical context of its origin. In doing so, we can then appreciate how this particular view of art has been universalized as an answer to a still felt need, especially in line with the cult of heroes, magicians, movie stars, etc. For those of us in the academy who would like to feel more informed and sophisticated than the crowd, there is another view of literature which in fact, I think, is still the dominant and orthodox mode of thinking in our universities. We who went to school in the fifties and sixties have been indoctrinated in what is called New Critical formalism--even if some of us didn't realize it then. Unlike the romantic or expressive orientation, this view excluded the artist and the audience from the field of study and concentrated on the form, the organic unity--of the text or verbal icon. I am sure most of you are familiar with close textual analysis of poems and stories, the explication of such properties in the work as ambiguities, ironies, symbolism, etc. Form thus became a fetish transcending time and place. Here is a recent testimony from a professor at De La Salle University:

The literature we write will be excellent only if it is capable of crossing barriers of time and class distinctions in our national structure. Excellent literature, then, is classless and timeless. Politics, by necessity, derives sustenance from temporal eventualities, but literature, by necessity, seeks to articulate and enhance timeless human values."

(Cirilo F. Bautista, "After the February Revolution, Where is Philippine Literature Going?" *Ani* Sept. 1987, 116-121.)

Conceiving the text as a "self-sufficient" entity, the formalists upheld what they called an "intrinsic" approach to grasp the essence of aesthetic object. This, to them, is the only correct or valid way of understanding any literary text.

Although this formalist standard looks very different from the romantic one, it shares a common tendency: both have the habit of looking for an essence behind appearances in time and space, an essence that would then provide the key for explaining phenomena. However, instead of explaining the concrete object, it substitutes a mystical invention--such as we've seen in the oyster throwing up the pearl.

Now this move to universalize a particular approach will remind you of the way the romantic consensus arose first as a particular opinion and then subsequently, for various reasons, became everyone's favorite theory. I should like to remind you what is now public knowledge about the New Criticism we imported from the United States. The major American critics like Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Tate, etc. who articulated the principles of New Critical formalism in the thirties and forties shared a conservative and even reactionary view of society. While they rejected capitalism, they endorsed the agrarian slaveholding South as a model society.

Reacting like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound against an alienative commercial civilization, the New Critics were also combatting a Marxist-oriented thinking popular in the thirties, during the militant union-organizing days of the depression and the united front of the western democracies against global fascism. Obviously, if one's attention is

concentrated on the verbal tensions of the poem, a tension which is left ideally suspended in the void, then you hardly have any time left to fight for better working conditions, against racist vigilantes and fascist violence in everyday life. In the fifties, the Cold War against global communism virtually granted a "Good Housekeeping" seal on New Critical formalism.

How then were we able (or at least some of us) to free ourselves from the stranglehold of formalism? It was, to tell the truth, not by lifting our bootstraps through a superhuman effort of will. Events overtook our minds, events that were also shaped by the critical reflections of participants and protagonists--millions of them.

When the abstractions of organic form and metaphysical conceits could no longer a satisfying explanation for what was happening in the real world in the fifties and sixties--one can cite the Korean and Vietnam war, the problems of sexism and racism, the profound alienation of youth and intellectuals, together with the upsurge of national liberation struggles in the Third World--two trends superseded New Criticism by incorporating some of its insights and giving it a semblance of scientific rigor and coherence. I am referring to archetypal or myth criticism systematized by Northrop Frye, and structuralism. Since I would assume that most of you are familiar with archetypal analysis--every other hero is a Christ or Hercules figure--I'll limit my remarks to the structuralist method.

The chief inspiration of European structuralism came from anthropology and linguistics. Like the formalists, structuralist critics concern themselves with the descriptive analysis of individual

forms with a view to constructing a grammar of taxonomy of plot structures. An element or unit acquires meaning only when placed within the totality of the structure. But beyond this preoccupation, structuralists (especially the French like Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes) were also interested in comparing the forms of discourse, the internal mechanisms or style of a text (not just linguistic but also rituals and practices with forms of consciousness obtaining in a given society. Unlike myth criticism, which deals with essences removed from any empirical context, structuralists engage in correlations between literary and extra-literary structures. For example, the anthropologist Levi-Strauss, after isolating and describing the structure of the Oedipus myth in all its existing variants, proceeds to investigate the function of such narratives in the life of the community. It turns out that myth is a form of unconscious thinking whereby a group attempts to reconcile lived oppositions, to solve in the imagination the concrete contradictions that plague the community. So here we arrive at a point where, by analyzing the formal specificities of a text, the critic comes to grips with the imaginative work as an act or event whose value is embedded in its social context or grounding. This is a discovery that the intrinsic structures of a text cannot be separated from the cultural and ideological functions that ultimately invest them with more than purely formal significance.

Events in the late sixties and seventies overtook the mind again before it could take second thought. With the cataclysmic upheavals of the anti-war rights, feminist and youth movements, a radical questioning of norms and values sparked a vigorous interest in the works

of the major thinkers Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. In this atmosphere, students of literature began to question the assumptions of structuralism--poststructuralism was born, even as the renaissance of Western Marxism attained its peak in the early seventies.

In general, one can sum up this change as a crisis of the autonomous, rational subject--a crisis of the myth of fiction of the self, to be precise. We can no longer assume the existence of a thinking, coherent ego (as Descartes once assumed) as the self-evident foundation of every truth we can formulate. In short, all such statements need to be questioned by placing them in situation. All texts or artworks are to be problematized by placing them in the historic conjuncture where manifold forces interact. There is no longer any innocent reader. Everything is overdetermined, or shaped by multiple factors one of which is the reader or viewer herself. Everything is problematized.

One of the decisive effects of this crisis of belief in the traditional notion of the subject (consciousness, self) is the recognition that the reader--the once passive consumer--is an active participant in the construction of meaning, and that meaning in fact is an effect of the transaction of interface between the reader's repertoire--her selection of beliefs, habits, practices and assumptions--from the ideology of the given society and the text's own repertoire (both literary conventions and moral values) which is also derived from the general ideology of the author's milieu. Thus both literary work and reader inhabit a specific sociocultural formation. Both are implicated in practices and institutions usually taken to

be normal, natural, or universal by everyone immersed in them. Given this complicity between text and reader, it is also necessary to be sensitive to the variety of cognitive styles--the ways by which you process and react to what you perceive, conditioned or determined by your gender, class, ethnic or racial affiliation, etc. One must be aware too of various reading strategies deployed to process a text and produce meaning.

Instead of further elaboration in theoretical terms of what is generally called a reader-centered approach, let me consider how we can explore the various ways of reading, interpreting and critiquing a particular text. For this purpose, I have chosen a story by Aida Rivera Ford's "Love in the Cornhusks." Let me summarize the story here (of course, there is no substitute to the experience of reading the whole text yourself. This is easy to do and gives a general orientation, but remember that this is not really "objective". It presumes a knowledge of the codes--the basic elements of narrative coding--which are mobilized to compose the text and the historical situation in which it was inscribed. In summarizing, the reader fills in the gaps, makes correlations and inferences--in short, actively recomposes the text. Here's my summary:

Tinang, a young mother with her baby goes to her former mistress' house to seek her favor as the child's godmother. While in the house she recalls her past as caretaker of the house; her nostalgia for the "essence of the comfortable world" is evoked by the Señora's "faint scent of *agua de colonia*." She confesses to her former employer that marital life is hard and wishes that she were back to her position as maid. But she realizes that she is now a visitor.

The Señora mentions Amado, an efficient driver of the plantation tractors, who suddenly left the house one day.

After consenting to be *madrina*, the Señora reminds Tinang to pick up a letter at the drugstore. "Desperate to read the letter," Tinang stops at the corner of a cornfield. The letter from Amado Galauran discloses their past liaison. Tinang discovers why he left and assures herself that her love "never meant to desert me." She cries, recalling the past and her seduction. While in this transport of remembering, she is jolted by the sight of a green snake near her baby. Panicked and stricken with guilt, she grabs her baby while the letter falls unnoticed among the cornhusks.

To be sure, this bare summary leaves many blanks, but the next stage of this pedagogical strategy is interpretation. Properly speaking, we interpret when we fail to read. What is the meaning of these incidents? What are the major thematic concerns?

From the image of that singular "intoxicating" letter whose fall (ignored by the receiver) we cannot evade noticing an image that seems to simultaneously confirm Tinang's estimate of herself as a loved object and induce overpowering guilt, we can at once suggest here the fatal division in Tinang's character. We confront a major theme: the split in the subject whose choice of the baby over the letter cannot hide. This fissure or cut in Tinang's psyche can scarcely be concealed by the artful closure of the narrative and the reader's identification with this suffering woman whose victimization makes her resemble Felicite, that memorable protagonist of Flaubert's story "A Simple Heart." I might interject her that Tinang's religiosity--"Ave Maria Santisima! Do not punish me," she prayed, searching the baby's skin for marks--betrays an impulse of narcissism that makes the narrative ambiguous in spite of its surface clarity. We shall watch Tinang examine her baby's skin for marks in order to distract

us from the baby itself as the telltale mark or inscription of her "I" forever postponed from revealing its plenitude by being caught up in language. The baby, the letter and "Constantina Tirol" will all be interred in the place of *jouissance*, in the lover's death (both literal and symbolic here), in the site of the dreamer who is forever refused by that Symbolic Order we call society, the law, family, phallic supremacy.

Before elaborating further on that theme, I might propose here an application of the structuralist strategy of reading. We can post it initially by binary opposition that gives a synchronic pattern of the elements of the text unfolding in time. The opposition involves the outside and the inside: the inside refers to the Señora's home associated with Christian charity, abundance, patriarchal order, social success and decorum. We cannot forget the dogs that greet Tinang, the hierarchical code that dictates the syntax of her request, and the lover's style of communication. The outside is the world of mud, cornhusks, the pagan space of the Bagobo tribe. Despite his ownership of two hectares of land, Tinang's husband--nameless, unaccepted except in stereotype and banter, remains on the margin of civilization. We see the mud that smears Tinang's baby, bundle, letter and shoes when she trudges home lost in thought over the unopened letter--bifurcated between the body that forges a path in the mud and the unconscious that removes her from present time and space. She is indeed lost even before the letter is opened, the agency of the letter or language functioning as that utopian ideal space where an enigmatic subject can be reconstituted. The narrative suggests that cornhusks, snake and mud all belong to

the fallen world of matter and sin which Tinang has failed to escape.

A crystallization of the polarity of inside/outside can be discerned in Tinang's sensibility, itself an epitome of the tensions dramatized in the story and a wish-fulfillment of its possible resolution. Embodying the conflict in herself--an outsider now wanting to be back as an insider, Tinang assumes the role of a mediator. She occupies the boundaryline of visitor and former resident, recipient of charity and petitioner for ritual inclusion into the family of the Señora. Note how she feels warmth for her former mistress and for Tito the boy:

Her eyes clouded. The sight of the Señora's flaccidly plump figure, swathed in a loose waistless housedress that came down to her ankles, and the faint scent of *agua de colonia* blended with kitchen spice, seemed to her the essence of the comfortable world, and she sighed thinking of the long walk home through the mud, the baby's legs straddled to her waist, and Inggo, her husband, waiting for her, his body stinking of tuba and sweat, squatting on the floor, clad only in his foul undergarments.

Our sympathy for Tinang is aroused here when the narrator discloses her attitude to her Bagobo husband. She confesses that "it is hard, Señora, very hard" to be married; subordination as maid or servant is preferable. The Señora, knowing her plight, reminds Tinang of her advice that she refused to heed: "Didn't I tell you what it would be like, huh?...that you would be a slave to your husband and that you would work with a baby eternally strapped to you." Tinang's motherhood and her second pregnancy seems to be less a blessing than a curse, a penalty for leaving the Señora's house in order to serve a Bagobo master. But the ending of the narrative seeks to reconcile us to Tinang's fate because the alternative is sin and the taboo on *jouissance*, the

forbidden site where the subject as desire of the Other is inscribed.

Underlying this antithesis we have sketched is perhaps a more all-encompassing but abstract opposition definable from an ethical and psychological perspective. It is the antithesis between the guilt of erotic pleasure, that bliss seized from transgressing a prohibition or violating a taboo, and the innocence of obedience to the rule of the Father, or the patriarchal code. One way of formulating this by borrowing the terminology of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan by posing the conflict here between that of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, between the mirror-stage of narcissistic identification with the pre-Oedipal mother called the Imaginary phase of the psyche, and the Symbolic order of culture and language, of Desire, marked by the castration complex (about which more later).

Now what the narrative unfolds in its diachronic sequence is the attempt to reconcile the opposition we have described by valorizing one part of it against the other so that one term becomes dominant implicitly or explicitly. When Tinang returns to her former employer to seek her favor as *madrina* in baptism, this wife-mother who now should submit to her husband, returns to the fold of Christian/civilized law in effect seeking to reinstate her identity as subaltern of the patriarchal household. Although the Señor is absent--a symbolic concealment, the Señora acts as an effective stand-in--a signifier that represents the subject (the father) to another signifier. The Señora affirms the law of class distinction and gender asymmetry. The Señora's house becomes the privileged place Tinang longs for--she seeks to recuperate the

aura of the past, looking for the flowers she watered with so much care only to see the new "girl who was now in possession of the kitchen work" barring her return. With the Señora as godmother to her child, Tinang will partly restore that original state of bliss and innocence--not completely because Amado's will and her disappearance has more permanently barred her return to that schizoid condition where the "I" can still elude the threat of castration. It is the letter, of course, that restores her to the past if only on the imaginary plane, but it is also this letter that uncovers a death-drive--the death of the lover/seducer--and a revolt against her fate as subordinate female servant. She gains the recognition of the Other, the desire of the Other being the locus of her emergence as subject which for a moment flickers in the gaps of the signifiers in Amado's letter. It is the letter and its peculiar language that positions Tinang in the endless chain of signifiers which Lacan calls the metonymy of Desire: it is that letter which exposes the negativity or abyss of *jouissance* forever undermining the supremacy of the male-rational order signified here by the efficient tractor driver, the bolts and tools surrounding him. The baby displaces the letter in the incessant sliding of signified over the signifiers--until, finally, the utterance of "Ave Maria Santisima," grasped as both address and apostrophe, seals Tinang's fate.

After establishing the structural oppositions in broad outline and sketching possibilities of deconstructing them, the question we should ask next is: What actual lived contradictions of the writer's society are being acted out and staged in this narrative? And what resolutions are being proposed to these

contradictions? In other words, in what way is the narrative an imaginary re-writing of performance of the real situation ascribable not just to one individual writer or character but to a whole community? It might be recalled here that the Oedipus myth and its multiple variants, according to Levi Strauss, represented on the imaginary level the attempt to resolve the urgent problems of Greek tribal society. Just like Freud's dream-work, the myth articulates a collective working through of a social crisis.

It should then be clear by now that the structural opposition is not really a neutral equation, a ratio of equal and complementary terms. Earlier I have pointed out that the opposition between outside and inside resolves itself with the inside (through ritual kinship, guilt as symptom of lack, assumption of gender subordination) eventually installed as the hegemonic standard of values of the whole society. Subordinated to the authority of the Señora, Tinang's future a prefiguration of the Virgin Mother invoked spontaneously to purge her sin, Tinang assumes her maternal position on the fact of the snake's presence--a castration threat to this substitute phallus, in the psychoanalytic terminology.

I should like to point out, at this juncture, that it is possible to qualify the seemingly unchallenged domination of the patriarchal order by stressing the pre-Oedipal mother's gesture of revolt when the Señora chides Tinang for being a slave to her husband. But with her announcement of the letter's presence at the drugstore/post office which dispenses not medicine but a chain of signifiers whose cultural idiosyncrasy catches "Constantina Tirol" in a trap laid by a mother's death, Tinang plunges into an

abyss which sacrifices "Tinay," "our lover," to the guilt-stricken object of sexist practice, the wife-mother Tinang.

I should like to formulate here my idea that the collective problem that the text grapples with has to do with how to re-impose discipline on the Constantina Tirols who presume themselves a cut above the laborers in the fields, who are drawn to such figures as Amado because they can shift from the role of filthy, dark workers to educated, finely dressed professionals, and therefore dare to cross boundaries. A moment of "great excitement" disrupts Tinang's unquestioning servitude: "The shadows moved fitfully in the bamboo groves as she passed and the cool November air edged into her nostril sharply...He embraced her roughly and awkwardly, and she trembled and gasped and clung to him." But order and hierarchy are reinstated when the snake, that mythical emblem of taboos and prohibitions, slithers into sight.

We can now conclude that "Love in the Cornhusks"--note that the field littered with cornhusks is the scene of reading the love letter, not that of physical union--given our interpretation so far, proves itself vulnerable to a feminist deconstructive reading, and to a critique by all those excluded from the Christian, patriarchal dispensation.

It is at this point that I would like to signal the transition to the third stage of the reading strategy I have been demonstrating here, and this stage is properly that of criticism. Criticism signifies here not a purely literary judgment about grammar, plot consistency, plausibility, etc., but a critique of the themes and especially the codes out of which the text has been constructed. Criticism happens when the

reader puts into play her human ethical and political reactions that she shares with others. Let me quote Robert Scholes' proposal from his instructive book *Textual Power* (1985):

The individual reader is in no position to take a critical view of a text. This is so because fiction deals with types, with representative characters, and can thus be criticized only from a position correspondingly broad. The most striking recent examples of this sort of critical work have come from feminists, but any group that has identified its interests as a class can mount a *critical attack* on a story's codes and themes from the position of its own system of values...A major function of the teacher of fiction should be to help students identify their own collectivities, their group or class interests, by means of the representation of typical figures and situations in fictional texts.

My point here is that criticism is always made on behalf of a group. Even "taste" is never a truly personal thing but a carefully inculcated norm, usually established by a powerful social class...The whole point of my argument is that we must open the way between the literary or verbal text and the social text in which we live. It is only by breaking the hermetic seal around the literary text--which is the heritage of modernism and New Critical exegesis--that we can find our proper function as teachers once again.

I should be clear now that criticism is a collective act that each of us is bound to perform if art and literature are ever going to be not just a privileged, luxury education but a liberating experience.

Our target for critical reflection is the ideology of the text which is mainly constructed on a skillful rendering of Tinang's character as schizoid sensibility. Tinang's thoughts and feelings, her view of the world, confirm the Señora's milieu and ethos as the source of her social identity, the space where the Other's question--"What do you want?"--is posed for her. In short, the Señora represents the Symbolic Order of culture, language, and the law of the phallus: the taboo on

incest. The letter is the rhetorical ruse of condensation which generates Tinang as the subject of the Symbolic Order. Tinang learns from Amado's letter that were it not for his mother's illness and subsequent death, he would not have "deserted" her. He left the Señora without visible excuse, but "deserted" Tinang. The highly stylized language of his letter conveys a protest against a legitimized social alienation where communication between persons is mediated by the official authority of the property-owning class. Juxtaposed with the official English of the text, the letter's idiosyncratic style releases the power of difference (gender, ethnic, class) suppressed by the linear authority of the plot. This love letter which at first evokes the thought of death (Tinang's sister's death) later serves as a metaphor for the lover's death administered or delivered through that very knowledge of reading she prides herself in possessing as a sign of her superiority over her co-subalterns. In decoding the script of the letter, Tinang unveils her body, as it were, to the clutches of an impersonal need coming from "the screen of trees beyond." We see here how the text sacrifices the woman to the model tractor driver who, in the letter, displaces the Bagobo husband halfway to her marital "prison." She is sacrificed to a past of infinite displacement which can never be fully grasped as plenitude and which can in fact only be interrupted by a trope from Christian mythology: that little green snake slithering out of the reader's conscience. This is of course not a question of author's intention but to the text's own motivation.

I should like to emphasize here that the power of this astutely crafted narrative depends to a large degree on the pathos of this honest, capable, suffering

young woman who seems all alone in the world, a solitary heroic figure struggling for status, survival, and an affirmation of integrity in a world characterized by gates and hogfences guarded by fierce hostile dogs; a world surrounded by mud and suspicious workers, by a husband "stinking of tuba and sweat." As a compensation, the text offers us that poignant cut in the narrative, Amado's letter—a husk to be discarded with other cornhusks, where the "I" of the speaking voice, the subject of the enunciation, is irrevocably separated from the "I" of the grammatical subject (subject of the enunciated) by the dying mother whose loss guarantees the rupture in Tinang's being and the preservation of the status quo:

My dearest Tinay,

....It is not easy to be far from our lover.

Tinay, do you still love me? I hope your kind and generous heart will never fade. Someday or somehow I'll be there again to fulfill our promise.

Many weeks and months have elapsed. Still I remember our bygone days. Especially when I was suffering with the heat of the tractor under the heat of the sun. I was always in despair until I imagine your personal appearance coming forward bearing the sweetest smile that enabled me to view the distant horizon.

....I hope you did not love anybody except myself.

Note the utopian impulse sublimated here: "Someday or somehow I'll be there again to fulfill our promise." Consider here the echo of repetition in the gap between Tinang's reading (her pursuit of the chain of signifiers) and her catching sight of that castrated member disappearing in the grass. Could this post-official voice claiming a monopoly of love act as a subversive force that can

explode the patriarchal regime? Or is it a pitiful cry of help from a child forever tied to the sacrifice of the mother, a voice that can liberate Tinang and her sisters if it is finally condemned to the cornhusks?

A plausible reading of the concluding paragraph would consider the two-year old baby as the love-child of Tinang and the "disappeared" lover who has in effect acquired the ambidextrous, dual-faced visage of Dionysian, trickster figure. His schizoid (dark/bright) image disrupts Tinang's servant identity. Her guilt springs from the split between obedience to the Christian prohibition against pre-marital sex and her desire. The coherence of the self appears threatened by its dissolution, the unitary psyche fragmented by antagonistic claims. To forestall this crisis, the text forces a closure: desire is suppressed, the fear of punishment supervenes. The Madonna image signals a restoration of order and the patriarchal norm.

But I submit this final thesis against other readings: While the child implies thus a dual significance--it (note the neuter position ascribed here to this love-child) proves Tinang's defiance of the subaltern code and at the same time her submission to it by her impulse of guilt--Tinang's choice of the child's body as the site of an as-yet-uninscribed future, the index of the power of female desire, over the hallucinatory promise and memory of the letter, may be taken as the triumph of a feminist politics-in-the-making. This particular reading unmasks the fissures, gaps, ruptures of patriarchal ideology. Despite Tinang's return to the fold of her Bagobo husband, we see in the end how the male impregnator's letter, symbol of male privilege and class domination, is finally consigned to the fate of the cornhusks and of texts that we discard after extracting the ears, the grains of meaning--seeds and progenitors of other texts, future readings, new rewriting.