

The Art of Being Forgettable: Ray Loriga's *Lo peor de todo*, the *Generación X*, and the New Cultural Field

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In the spring of 2000, Tele 5 introduced the reality program *Gran Hermano* with the line, “Diez personas, noventa días, un sólo ganador.” The idea was not original to Spain and since has come and gone in the United States. Its details need little elaboration. The program swept Spain, becoming the most watched show of all time and a national phenomenon. The finale of the *Gran Hermano* fiesta coincided with a spate of ETA terrorism as well as the 35th congress of the PSOE in which the man who would eventually become Spain’s next prime minister was named. Still, as Lluís Bassets wrote on the day following the show’s finale in *El País*, the run-off between Ismael, Ania and Iván of *Gran Hermano*—as well as elections for the Madrid and Barcelona football club presidencies—garnered equal if not greater media and public attention than the major political events (4). On this particular weekend, the traditional public sphere found its territory occupied by what Zygmunt Bauman has described as the contemporary phenomenon of the public airing of private issues, a key factor in the “liquification” of a once “solid” modernity (2-6). The public sphere, according to Bauman, presently finds itself overrun by the popular airing of the private lives of nondescript individuals (37). This new situation, in combination with the related phenomenon of the replacement of authority figures by temporary, substitutable experts increasingly allows common, undistinguished and indistinguishable citizens to offer, in the place of meaningful discussion, fallible and forgettable living case studies (Giddens 82-85; Bauman 71). Margarete Riviere, commenting on the success of *Gran Hermano*, notes such a situation in contemporary Spain:

Gran Hermano ha mostrado a la España de este momento. La que va bien. La España de Aznar: del espectáculo y de la moralina. Una España en la que todos somos buenos y no se habla de nada. (qtd. in "El triunfo" 14, my emphasis)

Ramón Colom, one of the forces behind the TV program, confessed that the show was ultimately about "personas que no tienen nada en su haber, nada que ofrecer" (qtd. in "El triunfo" 15). But Colom acknowledged as well, that despite such apparent indistinction, the otherwise anonymous "se convierten en mitos." *Gran Hermano* confirmed the triumph of a culture set not only on relaxation or spectacle, but also on mediocrity and anonymity. Within this cultural setting the ominous title, "Big Brother," quickly lost its bite. Rather than a constant presence guaranteed to inspire distrust and unhealthy competition, "Big Brother" came to describe an older sibling for a media-saturated Generation—"Big Brother" became as it were "Elder Brother," providing its audience with spectacles of the unimportant, the unremarkable, and the easily forgettable.

While the smashing success of *Gran Hermano* surprised everyone, the culture of the unremarkable from which it benefited did not arise overnight. Throughout the 1990s a variety of cultural, social, and economic factors worked to prepare a climate for this triumph. Rather than concentrate on *Gran Hermano*, in the following essay I would like to use this television event as a starting point from which to look back at one of the cultural forces that participated in and helped to produce this climate of anonymity: the group of young Spanish writers often referred to as the Generación X.¹ In the cultural work of the Generación X, we see the development of a literary and

cultural stance in harmony with the culture of anonymity that triumphed in *Gran Hermano*. Parting from Pierre Bourdieu's concept of literature and its agents inhabiting a field of cultural production, in the following essay I will show how the Generación X writers took advantage of a changing cultural field to establish themselves as major writers without having to show—and indeed in large measure because they were unwilling or even unable to show—traditional literary prowess. That is, I will argue that the success of the Generación X is not merely a marketing phenomenon. Rather, by understanding that the very position of the field of cultural production in Spain has changed with respect to the macro fields of economic and political power, it is possible to view the strategies of Generación X writers as cultural and not simply market strategies, indeed viewing their often unremarkable texts as part of larger narratives within which the very lack of literary value or the very potential anonymity of their literary output is key.

At the heart of this essay, I will examine Generación X author Ray Loriga's first novel, *Lo peor de todo*, to explore how a representative novel contributes to Generación X's success. My decision to employ a form of close reading in an article ostensibly concerned with market changes again speaks to my desire to understand the Generación X's success as not merely market phenomenon but as a cultural event in its own right. One of the key factors in the televisual triumph of *Gran Hermano*, according to experts, was its ability to move beyond television and effect almost total media saturation during its run. Likewise, the success of the Generación X, indeed, the very stories they tell, extend far beyond the actual narrative text displayed on the bookstore shelf. In this sense, Generación X authors are literary masters of a

post-literary age, an age that began taking shape in the 1990s.

A New Field for Forgetting

The field of cultural production in Spain during the 1990s offered some interesting contradictions. While the publishing industry flourished, producing ever greater quantities of books, surveys showed fewer readers than ever (Fernández Santos 3; R. Mora, “En 1997”; R. Mora, “100,000” 1; EFE 1). Editors, reviewing the numbers, called the state of book publishing in Spain “alentador” and celebrated what they saw as the “democratización de la lectura” in the new age of the book in the era of electronic reproduction as it were. Others spoke, at the same time, of “una auténtica crisis lectora” (M. Mora 2; R. Mora, “1997” 2).

The contradiction could be easily dismissed as simply a faulty comparison between two distinct phenomena, market forces on the one hand and cultural practices on the other. However, a closer look at the state of both factors during the 1990s indicates that, in fact, the two converged in unprecedented ways that would allow for claims of a democratization of reading despite plummeting numbers of actual readers. While literature has long been subject to commodification, in Spain in the 1990s the author and even the practice of reading itself became a kind of commodified product to be bought and sold in pursuit of cultural and social prestige. In the triumph of the mega-bookstore—first FNAC and later the El Corte Inglés super-bookstores—book buying, and more importantly, book reading found a setting for commodification. The appearance of the glossy, gossipy, oversized literary monthly *Qué Leer* in 1996—sold significantly in both kiosks

alongside popular *revistas del corazón* and traditional bookstores alongside such venerable high-culture publications as *Ínsula* and *Revista de Occidente*—worked explicitly to popularize the old-fashioned practice of reading by making it “pop,” its columns filled with juicy tidbits about the latest personal scandals, its photo montages aligning Spanish authors with international fashion models and Hollywood stars. The continued proliferation of literary prizes during these years (as many as ten major awards were offered in a period of two months in 1999, for example [“El Alfaguara” 1]) combined with these new institutions not merely to sell more books, or even turn authors into commodities, but to turn book buying, browsing, and reading itself into a product. As with *Gran Hermano*, where one could be a fan without necessarily watching the show, with these new industry agents, one could be a “reader” without necessarily poring over the latest Muñoz Molina.

While many have lamented the loss of traditional literacy, these changes could portend new forms of cultural competence, or literacy, in the making. In short, the commodification of reading on top of earlier commodifications of literature and the author points to an increasing co-optation of the field of cultural production itself by larger fields of power, from which in Bourdieu’s studies of the field, it always maintained a certain degree of autonomy.² While this may sound like bad news to many (no autonomy of field → no “reverse logic” of cultural capital → no capital available for non-commercial culture), this co-optation presented new power and new spaces in which the agents who inhabited the cultural field in the 1990s could maneuver. Here we return our attention to writers of the Generación X, now capacitated to

understand their “writing” in a larger “reading” project in which culture and capital are no longer so easily separable.

The writers of the Generación X enjoyed success in the 1990s, according to most explanations, because of an unhealthy decade-long obsession on the part of editors with young writers (Castilla 1). Rather than searching for quality, editors were merely looking to satisfy the market demand created by changing demographics and the enhanced financial status of Spain’s youth culture. Generación X writers told the stories of the nation’s youth, therefore they sold, and therefore they were published in greater numbers. Moreover, while there were other young authors who enjoyed publishing success in the 1990s, it was the Generación Xers with their sense of style, more familiar to rock stages and runways than to literary reviews, that carried the day. Lucía Etxebarria adorned in red evening gowns and sometimes less; Ray Loriga, with tattoos, bleached hair, and a pack of cigarettes; Pedro Maestre boasting of television and rock music as his literary inspirations at the Nadal presentation; and José Ángel Mañas selling film rights almost as fast as he writes text come readily to mind when we recall the phenomenon of young writers in the 1990s. What also comes to mind is the dismissal of these authors’ writing as lacking in literary quality, as frivolous and, finally, forgettable (Gullón 31; Mora, “Los nuevos” 1; Castilla 2; “Primera” 16-18).

Again, *Gran Hermano* offers a different though related take on their triumph. If *Gran Hermano* proved the triumph of a celebrity culture, the Generación X success manifests the emergence of this same culture. Daniel Boorstin has defined celebrity, rather wittily but also insightfully, as that which is known for being known (qtd. in Bauman 67). If, as Riviére said of *Gran*

Hermano, “la vida actual es espectáculo,” and the general public likes the idea of being famous, then novelties from commodified, previously unknown authors, who, like the inhabitants of *Gran Hermano* arise overnight to take their particular corner of the market by storm, and who then garner the wrath of the literary establishment—or better yet, the complete dismissal by the establishment as not worthy of attention—may hold particular appeal. Generación X authors, in short, do not just tell the stories of contemporary Spanish consumers but offer those consumers a story beyond the text that corresponds to broader cultural desires. And as I will show in the following reading of a Generación X novel, the story within the text is not a separate text from the story without. In a field where “reading” has expanded beyond the text, celebrity style—anonymous, forgettable—and literary style not only work together but also converge.

Forgettable Fiction

Ray Loriga’s *Lo peor de todo* (1992) is a key text in studying the Generación X phenomenon and its positioning in the changing cultural field for several reasons.³ First, it is the earliest of the extreme “rockero” novels of the new Generation (predating Mañas’s better known *Historias del Kronen* by two years). Second, an early cult favorite, most of its readers only discovered it after the major publishing house Plaza & Janés put Loriga’s later works in bookstore display windows, after which film producers put them in the theaters—both phenomena related to the increasing co-optation of the cultural field. Third, Loriga is perhaps the most radical character of his literary Generation—at least according to the image he projects. In interviews and through associations, Loriga

has clearly worked to position himself on the fringes of the traditional cultural field, often reading more as rock star than writer, an artist for whom traditional “literary” cultural capital holds little place.

Literary style and content, however, even when downplayed, prove important factors in providing Loriga an image beneficial to the new cultural field. From the beginning, *Lo peor de todo* makes a concerted effort to appear indifferent to traditional aesthetic standards. It offers, for example, little suspense with respect to its title, opening with a sentence that explains the title outright: “Lo peor de todo no son las horas perdidas, ni el tiempo por detrás y por delante, lo peor son esos espantosos crucifijos hechos con pinzas para la ropa” (7). It sets up this definition through implied opposition to any potential transcendent reading of humanist inspiration. In the traditional “literary” novel—the kind celebrated by the Generación Xers’ loudest detractors—“the worst of all” might involve the breakdown of human communication, the anxiety of time lost, or the angst of a spiritually exhausted character standing before an overwhelming future. In contrast, Loriga’s narrator is simply ticked off by kitschy crucifixes. Without pausing to elaborate, the narrator moves forward with his story, reminiscing about classroom pranks and then relating embarrassing childhood mishaps. The stories he relates are in bad taste and do little to endear the narrator to the reader. Most remarkable is the length of this opening; the three ideas do not fill a chapter or even several pages but simply the first half page of the novel. This pattern holds true for the rest of the narrative with the narrator providing little and often no elaboration on the events and data he recalls. For the 121 pages that comprise the brief novel, Loriga offers a fragmentary, distracted, and superficial prose peppered

by the repetition one might expect from an over-stimulated adolescent rambling on about the events of the day.

From this extreme skaz style the thinnest of plots emerges.⁴ Carmen de Urioste, who identifies minimal plots as one of seven hallmarks of the “Generación X” novelists, summarizes the argument of *Lo peor de todo* in a single sentence:

El lector entra en contacto con el mundo de un joven pícaro contemporáneo ‘nacido en el seno de una familia elegante’ (99), con una esmerada educación (90)—‘De niño estudié en los colegios más caros y mi casa tenía jardín y piscina particular’ (15)—que termina vendiendo hamburguesas en un restaurante de cadena. (459)⁵

Perhaps the only point left to add is that this contemporary *pícaro* decides towards the end of the novel to knock off the chain’s employee of the month. If he ultimately fails to do so it is only because another disgruntled french-frying co-worker beats him to it. In short, very little action transpires in the novel. Yet, this lack of action contains a wealth of meaning that a critic exploring the traditional field of cultural production might not note. Gullón writes: “Si digo que la novela de Loriga es interesante [...] que revela una ‘nueva sensibilidad,’ digo bastante, pero para quienes la belleza sea lo único aceptable, me quedo corto” (31).

The new sensibility that Gullón identifies might be found in the fifty-plus anecdotes dispersed throughout the novel’s 121 pages. Though many of these are hardly developed by more than two or three brief paragraphs, in relation to the sprinkling of events that constitutes the plot of the novel, these short, trivial narratives could be

considered subplots. Among these, readers may recall with a black-humored nostalgia tales of Paco Arce's "elefante de escayola," details of the book *Vietnam no era una fiesta*, the prodigies of both Real Madrid and the German Luftwaffe, or the rivalry between Actionman and Geiperman, all stories that come at the reader at an MTV video clip pace. In addition to the multiple subplots, the 121 pages introduce the reader to anywhere between fifty and one hundred characters, depending on how one wishes to count what qualifies as a character. The reader finds the list all the more overwhelming thanks to the narrator's penchant for giving full names to even the most minor of participants: Juan Carlos Peña Enano, the tattle-tale (7); Iván Bernaldo de Quirós Uget, the glue-eater (18); and Antonio Álvarez Cedrón Hernández, the kid with a sixth soccer sense (18) to name a few. Not only does the narrator give each character's full name but he tends to repeat it—instead of using a pronoun or nickname—every time he mentions the character. At the same time, the narrator identifies the most important characters by single initials: his ex-girlfriend T, his brother M, and T's family members R, J, and A. The memorable full names are lost in the narrative, while the brief, non-descriptive initials continually reappear. Finally, intermingled with names and subplots the reader confronts an avalanche of trivia based for the most part on childhood obsessions with World War I, gun-slinging cowboys, Real Madrid, and especially the Vietnam War. One example should suffice, a typical aside in the midst of an unrelated subplot:

Si sumamos todos los puntos ganados por todos los equipos en todas las ligas tenemos que el Madrid suma 2.355, mientras que el Barcelona, que sería el segundo equipo con

más puntos, se queda en 2.192. En cuanto a trofeos en propiedad, es decir, tres campeonatos consecutivos o cinco alternos, el Madrid vuelve a encabezar la lista: del 53 al 61, del 61 al 67, del 67 al 69, del 71 al 79 y del 85 al 88. (27)

What initially might read as important narrative clues end up as so much noise, pure trivia that challenges the reader's capacity to remember what really might matter. What must be remembered and what discarded in a world of too much information, of attention-grabbing stories about undistinguished, forgettable characters? Meanwhile, as the critic tries to keep track of what matters, Generación X readers find themselves skating down memory lane, nostalgic for their own trivia-littered pasts.

Even as this wealth of information produces unanticipated childhood nostalgia in channel surfing mode for the Generación X reader, for the high-culture critic it positions the novel and its author, the flesh-and-blood Ray Loriga as extremist and easily dismissible. Moreover, for these traditional power brokers of the cultural field working to make sense of the apparent disorder, Loriga's novel does not simply offer too much information with too little organization, but in fact, offers in this information a wealth of intentional misinformation that many readers may not necessarily catch in its entirety, but whose effects mark their experience. I will point to two examples here. On the first page of the narrative, the otherwise anonymous narrator reveals his assumed name within the novel, Elder. Urioste identifies this unusual name as a "nombre tomado de la plaquita de identificación de un mormón," that is, again, according to Urioste, a member of "la Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de los Últimos Días" (462,

467). Elder's brief union with Mormon missionaries reads as yet another sign of, one, his own impetuosity; two, his existential search for meaning; three, his status as a typical Loriga character self-destructively attracted to unusual religious communities, and four, his place in the new global society of world politics and hamburger stands that has inspired the need to recall in written form "lo peor de todo."⁶ But in fact, under closer scrutiny it becomes apparent that Loriga's protagonist never really joins the Salt Lake-based Mormon church. Rather Loriga joins alternately "la Iglesia de Jesús de los Santos de los Últimos Días" (56), "la Iglesia de los Santos de Jesús de los Últimos Días" (57), "la Iglesia de Cristo de los Últimos Santos" (90), and even "esos locos de los Últimos Días" (63). The reader can believe what he or she wants, and most likely, like Urioste, most readers assume Elder's temporary conversion to Mormonism and move on. To do otherwise may seem like splitting hairs. Nevertheless, the repetition of always incorrect versions of such a long title—without ever using the single correct form—underlines a significant play with reader expectations and narrative "realities." Either our narrator (or our author) is ignorant, forgetful, or indifferent, or there is meaning behind the repeated mistakes. That the misnaming of "La Iglesia de los Últimos Días" is not an isolated incident suggests the latter.

The same play with truth and error occurs with Elder's descriptions of Puerto Rico, the homeland of an absent character, Javier Baigorri, whom he remembers as his best friend. Puerto Rico, Elder fondly recalls, is the land of merengue, cyclones, Ruben Blades, Willie Colón, and Celia Cruz, where a shark could drop by at any odd moment and bite your leg off (18-19). Again, if this is Puerto Rico then Elder is

indeed a Mormon. In fact, merengue is the national dance of the Dominican Republic; hurricanes and not cyclones ravage the Caribbean from time to time; Ruben Blades is Panamanian and known for his South American and Cuban influences; Willie Colón was born and raised in the Bronx; and Celia Cruz is Cuban-born and New York-bred. Other than the exaggerated possibility of a shark attack, Elder does not offer a single accurate fact about Puerto Rico in his praise of the island. What then is the reader to make of so many other names and numbers provided in the course of the novel? How many goals were in fact scored by Real Madrid in the history of Spanish soccer, how many sheriffs really fell victim to Wild Bill's pistol, and what really happened between Sid and Nancy?

If Generación X novelists have been celebrated for their portrayal of the reality of today's Spanish youth, in the face of one of its landmark novels our glimpse into that reality seems suddenly foggy. With so much detail, the reader cannot help but find in Loriga's novel indubitable markers of the contemporary non-fictional world. While fiction is by definition "an imaginative creation," Loriga's recurrence to familiar information invites readers to suspend disbelief on the level of the plot but not on the level of setting ("Fiction" 500). If anything, the wealth of facts surrounding the plot unsuspends disbelief—it drags the story back into the messy world of the real Generación X, their readers, and their detractors. Indeed, Loriga's novel often seems like Loriga's story.⁷ Yet, the Real Madrid, Wild Bill, Sex Pistols, Puerto Rico, and Mormon Church of this world—those things supposedly most real—are ultimately not themselves. The reality that sustains the fiction—and not simply the "reality" sustained by the fiction—dissolves. To describe the effects

of this play between truth and lies, reality and fiction, we might borrow again from the words of a journalist referring to the effects of *Gran Hermano*: Loriga's novel "ha creado un territorio de arenas movedizas entre la realidad y la ficción" ("El triunfo" 14).

The effect of this play of information/misinformation, of truth/lies varies according to readership. For Loriga's young media-saturated, amnesiac readers, the misinformation—if it is ever discovered—merely confirms that Loriga, like them, either does not remember or does not care. So what if that which they took for reality turns out to be as fictional as that which was overtly fiction? Loriga is none the worse and perhaps much the better for it. For his young audience, fallen imperfect heroes whose respective downfalls include an inability to recall what they undoubtedly should have known, from Richard Nixon to Felipe González to Bill Clinton, have been the rule in their "truth-free" postmodern world.⁸ That the oft-celebrated realistic element of the novel is in fact its most insidious fiction becomes then either a non-issue or, ironically, that which most imbues its author with greater value, the potential of "celebrity." He is as careless as the rest, or he is as deceiving as the best.

For the older or at least more culturally savvy readers (the high culture establishment) Elder's constant lies work towards at least two other ends. First, they may convince the skeptic that this young writer not only cannot write well but scarcely understands his subject matter, in short, that he deserves to be forgotten. Of course, this is exactly what needs to be made public in order for him to be remembered in the culture of anonymous celebrity. Second, and more significant, because of its more transcendent effects on the immediate field

of cultural production, Loriga's misinformation may loosen up the very field of power from whose high ground the cultural brokers condemn. For the informed reader the misinformation mocks the concrete "realities" upon which the fields of economic and political power that now co-opt the cultural field are based. Still, while this reader may recognize that these "realities" are not quite correct, he/she—as Urioste's reading manifests—proceeds as if they were. Hence, the willingness to continue creates a dialogic process of reading in which one accepts as reality—and not as a fictional ontology reliant on a willing suspension of disbelief—that which one knows is not.⁹ The ontology that grounds the fictional, the area where disbelief sustains so as to allow for its suspension in other parts, is ultimately more imaginary than the fiction it contains. Here the reader enters into the shifting sands between truth and fiction that *Gran Hermano* later made popular. This dialogic play, in short, loosens up the firm structures of the extra-cultural fields—where "reality" supposedly maintains a certain Modernist solidity to the fields—helping to carve out a space for the Generación X culture even as it establishes them as celebrities and, hence, worthy of that space.

The Power of Anonymity

As the post-program cultural and economic success of many of the *Gran Hermano* house sitters showed, monetary rewards are not always to be found in an initial product but in its aftermath. Indeed, Loriga, like fellow Generación Xer, José Ángel Mañas, has seen his real fame and fortune come in the conversion of his novels into films that then become a key reference, if not the starting point, for further cultural discussion. Loriga,

in fact, has not only sold film rights to his novels, but has begun directing them. Lucía Etxebarría, on the other hand, has continued to play the image card, still more powerful in female than male hands, using magazine layouts that lead in turn to prominent face-time in book displays to shift her persona gradually from vixen to radical feminist to neo-bohemian poet over the last half-decade. In the aftermath of the earlier posturing, Etxebarría's most recent makeover, in spite of the rejection of market style that it denotes, cannot help being read as yet another confirmation that a pose of forgettable, anonymous celebrity continues to factor significantly into these writers' success.

Finally, style—the kind more associated with *Gran Hermano* than with Anagrama—seems indeed to be at the forefront of these writers' minds. Whether the books with which they garner initial fame endure in the traditional fashion of the cultural field Bourdieu described seems to matter little. In a multi-media age, there are alternative paths to success that undo the old reverse logic of the cultural field. To conclude, it is revealing to return to end-of-the-series comments on the impact of *Gran Hermano* on the current cultural field of Spain, with Loriga's novel and the cultural work of his fellow Generation Xers in mind. Writer and director Gonzalo Suárez writes of the TV show, "Con este programa se ha pretendido poner fin a la idea de la ficción. Aunque todo sea una trampa porque el resultado es otra ficción" (qtd. in "El triunfo" 14). The Generación X novelists, with their supposed indifference to quality fiction, may disappear. So too may some, if not all, of their early fictions. But on the other hand, the disappearance may be part of a larger game, or fiction. Just as *Gran Hermano* became the first TV show to move beyond TV, dominat-

ing television only because it dominated so much else, so too the Generación X authors continue "writing" stories that extend far beyond the pages of their novels. In this extra-textual project, short-lived fame and lasting anonymity, guaranteed by forgettable and even misleading style and content, are merely another pose in a trajectory that promises many more surprises for a Generation of writers with perhaps another half-century of literature, cinema, and cultural projects yet unimagined in their future.

Notes

¹ Numerous names have been proposed to designate this group (see Izquierdo; Urioste; Gullón; Castilla). I find the sticking power of "Generación X" particularly telling: it has been recognized as inaccurate; still it holds, indicative of the importance of style over substance (see the importance of stylish *inaccuracy* in my analysis of *Lo peor de todo* further in this essay).

² Literature has long been subject to commodification (see Williams, 45-54; Easthope, 3-21). I am proposing that commodification has recently extended to include cultural agents beyond the text, if not the notion of the supposed cultural field itself.

³ To date, Ray Loriga is the author of five novels, *Lo peor de todo* (1992), *Héroes* (1993), *Caidos del cielo* (later changed to *La pistola de mi hermano* to match the title of the movie it inspired) (1995), *Tokio ya no nos quiere* (1999), and *Trifero* (2000). He has also directed the film *La pistola de mi hermano* (1997) and worked on screenplays for several others.

⁴ David Lodge describes *skaz* narration as, "a type of first-person narration that has the characteristics of the spoken rather than the written word." In *skaz* writing a first-person narrator uses:

colloquial speech, and appears to be relating the story spontaneously rather than delivering a carefully constructed and polished written account. We don't so much read it as listen to it. (18)

He warns, "Needless to say, this is an illusion, the product of much calculated effort and painstaking rewriting by the 'real' author" (18).

⁵ Urioste defines the "Generación X" in terms of 1) "Amínima trama argumental," 2) "Prioridad de la primera persona narrativa," 3) "Retrato realista de la abyección," 4) "Primacia de la narración fragmentada," 5) "Temática del desencanto," 6) "Independencia de la tradición cultural española," 7) "Cosmopolitismo" (458-72).

⁶ In addition to the obsession with "Mormon" Elders in *Lo peor de todo*, one of the principal motifs of Loriga's fourth novel, *Tokio ya no nos quiere* (2000), is the overwhelming and imbecilic influence of Evangelical ministers, one-man cults, Holy Week processions, and Promise Keepers on contemporary western culture.

⁷ In an undergraduate literature class at Bowling Green State University, Fall 1999, students repeatedly referred to "Elder" as "Loriga," though they had seldom made the same mistake with other first-person narratives they had read. For this class at least, *Lo peor de todo* read closer to an autobiographical representation of the "real world" of 1990s Spain than other first-person narrations in the same course. The introduction to one Loriga interview refers to his first three novels as "obras autobiográficas" (Pita 1).

⁸ With postmodernity, "not only has knowledge become uncertain, but more importantly the question of how to legitimize certain forms of knowledge and certain contents of knowledge is firmly on the agenda: no single satisfactory mode of epistemological legitimization is available" (Docherty 4). The significance of fallen heroes to the Generación X is symbolically captured in the titles of two of Loriga's novels, *Caidos del cielo* and *Héroes*.

⁹ Ironically, critics to date have found the "Generación X's" realism its most notable quality. According to critics, what the Generation's authors lack in style, they compensate for through a hard-hitting depiction of life in the streets, bars, and clubs of Spain. Urioste writes, "la narrativa de esta 'primera Generación de la democracia' sí muestra de manera realista y

testimonial los temas conflictivos de la sociedad española actual" (463). Violeta Hernando, one of these authors who saw her first work published at age fourteen, explains,

Los escritores jóvenes tenemos la sensibilidad suficiente como para expresar una serie de sentimientos, ambientes, deseos y frustraciones cercanos a nosotros y que manifiesta unas determinadas formas de vivir [...]. Un furor por la vida expresado en nuestros escritos que los más mayores han perdido. *Ellos hacen más ficción y nosotros algo parecido a una crónica de cada día*. (qtd. in "Primera" 16, my emphasis).

Félix Romeo defends his Generation's prose by reference to the inevitability of reflecting reality: "Estamos comprometidos con la realidad, lo que escribimos se nutre de nuestro tiempo" (qtd. in "Los nuevos" 1).

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