

**THE ELDORADO EPISODES OF
VOLTAIRE'S *CANDIDE* AS AN INTERTEXT
OF AUGUSTO ROA BASTO'S *YO EL SUPREMO*:
A UTOPIA / DYSTOPIA RELATIONSHIP**

Resumen

*Yo el Supremo es un ejemplo de ficción histórica, pero se parece a la ficción distópica en un aspecto importante: revela la crueldad de la dictadura al mostrar la diferencia entre las expectativas optimistas y el desengaño profundo. La invención de distopías sugiere necesariamente la conceptualización complementaria de utopías. Una serie de alusiones evidentes a los capítulos sobre Eldorado en el *Candide* de Voltaire señala que este cuento filosófico es un intertexto. Hay que considerar esta relación en el contexto de la pretendida adherencia de Rodríguez de Francia a los ideales políticos del Siglo de las Luces. La relación intertextual tiene dos aspectos; por un lado, la dictadura paraguaya es lo contrario del sistema sociopolítico de Eldorado, lo cual sirve para mostrar lo que una buena sociedad no debe ser; por otro lado, y de manera desconcertante, la distopía se parece a la utopía voltairiana. Sin embargo, estas semejanzas tienen causas y efectos diferentes y expresan escalas de valores distintas, lo cual le permite a Roa Bastos mostrar que la perversión de ideales admirables puede producir consecuencias lamentables.*

Palabras clave: *Roa Bastos, la distopía, Voltaire, la utopía, la intertextualidad*

Abstract

*Yo el Supremo is an example of historical fiction, yet it resembles dystopian fiction in one important respect: it reveals the cruelty of dictatorship by commenting on the reversal between high utopian expectations and deep disillusionment. The invention of dystopias necessarily implies the complementary conceptualization of utopias. A purposeful pattern of references to the Eldorado chapters of Voltaire's *Candide* points to the latter as an intertext. This relationship must be seen in the context of Rodríguez de Francia's claimed adherence to Enlightenment political ideals. This intertextuality takes two forms. In many respects, the Paraguayan dictatorship is the opposite of Eldorado, which difference illustrates what a good society ought not be. In other ways, however, the dystopia strangely resembles its utopian counterpart, except that those similarities have different causes and effects and they embody different value systems. In this way, Roa Bastos shows how the perversion of admirable ideals can have disastrous consequences.*

Keywords: *Roa Bastos, dystopia, Voltaire, utopia, intertextuality*

Because of historical developments in Latin America and Africa -principally the concentration of power in the hands of *caudillos* and military *juntas* and the rise of one-party states in the wake of decolonization -the novel of dictatorship became, in the twentieth century, an important sub-genre, partly as an instrument of political protest but also as an effort to analyze the mechanisms of totalitarianism and the psychology of dictatorship.

Some of these works of prose fiction that depict frightening imaginary societies clearly fit Arthur O. Lewis, Jr.'s definition of the anti-utopian novel:

[A] Work depicting a society which is officially "perfect" but which is demonstrated to have flaws making it unacceptable to the author's -and presumably to the reader's- point of view. [...] Anti-utopian novels appear to fall into three major groups: anti-totalitarian, anti-technological, and satiric (or combinations of these three) (27).

I do not wish to argue that Augusto Roa Bastos's *Yo el Supremo* is an anti-utopian novel. It is more properly classified as historical fiction, evoking as it does a real rather than a fictitious society due to its solid grounding in the career of Paraguayan politician José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia's *dictadura perpetua* of 1814 to 1840.¹ Yet in one important way this work does bare a remarkable resemblance to dystopian fiction, one of Lewis's synonyms for the anti-utopian novel, as Erika Gottlieb defines the latter type:

¹ Considerable discussion has surrounded the issue of this text's relationship to the historical novel, as the following small sample of critical opinion will show. Because of the absence of a single, authoritative narrator and its Bakhtinian dialogic structure, Julia A. Kushigian is unwilling to categorize this work as a historical novel: "[N]o es una novela histórica sino una redefinición de figuras, etapas y culturas históricas que en su esencia irónica y posmodernista reconoce su complicidad con el poder y la dominación" ("Culturas híbridas y análisis de las razas en *Yo el Supremo* de Augusto Roa Bastos", *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*. LXXXIII 4 (2006): 542). Wladimir Krynski likewise situates *Yo el Supremo* outside the limits of the historical novel, identifying as one of its structures "[la] transformación de la novela histórica en novela metahistórica por medio de operadores y dispositivos espaciotemporales por una parte y, por otra, a través de la puesta en evidencia de los operadores discursivos y narrativos diferentes" ("*Yo el Supremo*: punto de fuga de la novela moderna". *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*. 493-494 (1991): 265). Amancio Sabugo Abril writes that this work fits into the more traditional classification, but he attenuates that assertion by acknowledging its generic ambiguity: "*Yo el Supremo* es una novela histórica y al mismo tiempo una historia novelada, una actualización de ayer en hoy, donde los tiempos establecen una oposición dialéctica, una unidad en la narración, tras el combate de la historia con la confabulación" ("Historia, biografía y ficción en *Yo el Supremo*". *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*. 493-494 (1991): 278).

In the realm of literature it has been a task worthy of the greatest of political satirists to comment on this reversal [between high utopian expectations and deep disillusionment] as having revealed the cruelty of dictatorship under the false Messiah's mask of hypocrisy, and to exhort the reader to see beyond the mask (7).

M. Keith Booker explains the close referential tie between literary dystopias and historical reality:

[F]irst and foremost, I wish to underscore the role of utopian fiction as social criticism. In particular, I emphasize [...] that the treatment of imaginary societies in the best dystopian fiction is always highly relevant [...] to specific "realworld" societies and issues. [...] [I]t is usually clear that the real referents of dystopian fictions are generally quite concrete (18-9).

I believe that Booker's observation of the correlation between dystopian fiction and historical reality, together with Gottlieb's characterization of dystopian fiction as concerned with the degeneration of "high utopian expectations" into "deep disillusionment," authorizes us to explore, in the case of *Yo el Supremo*, another crucial relationship that may prove to be instructive.

The invention of dystopias necessarily implies the complementary conceptualization of utopias, ideal societies that exist in the minds of certain political and social theorists, many of whom put their visions into literary form. Of the necessary connectedness of the two poles of this dichotomy Gottlieb writes:

[T]he dystopian novel itself demonstrates the push and pull between utopian and dystopian perspectives. To a significant extent, each of these novels makes us ponder how an originally utopian promise was abused, betrayed, or, ironically, fulfilled so as to create tragic consequences for humanity. [...] [I]t becomes obvious that each dystopian society contains within it seeds of a utopian dream (8).

Indeed, Silvia Pappé asserts that a utopian vision underlies Roa Bastos's protagonist's idea of his mission of preserving Paraguay's independence and establishing its nationhood:

El Supremo, toda su actitud lo comprueba, es quien obstruye [...] la total independencia a su pueblo -precisamente porque no sale del paternalismo, ni de la dictadura, ni reconoce voz fuera de la suya. Pero forja sueños, utopías y, sobre todo, la convicción de que estas utopías [...] pueden realizarse en *esta* vida. Forja el proyecto que no se romperá [...] [p]orque, recuerda el Supremo, “¿No sabían, señores, que sólo existe lo que aún no existe?” (195-6).

If we seek an ideal counterpart for this particular dystopia, we can observe in the novel a purposeful pattern of intermittent references to the chapters of Voltaire's *Candide* that evoke Eldorado, a South American utopia positioned somewhere between Paraguay and Surinam -a location that is in itself very suggestive- that Roa Bastos seems to be contrasting with Francia's state. In spite of the relative sketchiness of the *Candide* episodes -attributable to Voltaire's highly focused intent in injecting them midway in his *conte philosophique* as well as to the brevity of that genre itself- compared to the depth and breadth of Roa Bastos's novel, the French text is detailed enough to serve as a highly resonant intertext for the latter.

There is considerable disagreement among critics not only about the meaning of Voltaire's Eldorado chapters, including their function in the plot, but also about whether they evoke an ideal society or one that is itself fraught with problems. A representative sample of opinion will suffice to illustrate this point. William F. Bottiglia thinks that the author strategically places the Eldorado episode between the adventure among the cannibals and the sojourn in Surinam in order to affirm that the “the amorality of subcivilization” and “the immorality of civilization [...] are equal in their abysmal inferiority to the ideal.” He distinguishes between Eldorado as “a dream of perfection, a philosophical ideal for human aspiration” and Candide's garden as “the optimum present reality” (145-6). Centering his analysis on the resemblances between the utopia and the world known to Candide, Jean-Marie Goulemot calls Eldorado “le monde antérieur devenu raisonnable, la leçon tirée du déjà dit, le projet philosophique mis en oeuvre,” but he concludes that “la leçon d'Eldorado tourne court. Loin d'apparaître comme un modele plein, il est le lieu des espoirs fondés, des fuites illusoires et des mensonges” (435, 440). Jean Sareil proposes that in this episode Voltaire “ne cherche nullement à inventer un

monde idéal qui ignorerait tout de ses préoccupations de moraliste,” but that “cet épisode est une satire comme ceux qui le précèdent et ceux qui le suivent.” Voltaire’s basic idea, asserts Sareil, is that humans are incapable of living in the state of perfect happiness because of their imperfect nature (56-7). Mary L. Shanley and Peter G. Stillman conclude that “the Eldorado episode shows the shortcomings of natural ignorance”, that it “shows that the satisfaction of material desires does not produce full human satisfaction” and that “Eldorado contains an innocence that must be overcome,” citing as Voltaire’s ideal “[c]reative human activity that tries to overcome these problems [politics and war, natural scarcity and disaster, and human failing and evil] -the activity characteristic of Candide’s garden” (88). Haydn Mason maintains that Voltaire uses Eldorado “to point to certain values” -non-dogmatism, minimal government, the development of science, extreme civility, dignified work, sincerity, meaningful intellectual activity, equality, and commerce- “quite different from our corrupt way of life” (96). Manfred Kush maintains that “Voltaire rejects the model of the garden of Eden as a narrow-minded closure inhabited by intellectually blind people; the Celestial Paradise on earth, the utopian ‘entrance garden’, is nothing but a dream from which the hero has to rise or in which he must drown” (61-3). Donna Isaacs Dalnekoff regards Eldorado as a necessary stage in the protagonist’s moral development: “It is not in man’s imperfect nature to find happiness in such a perfect society. [...] [I]t is after Candide has passed through the utopia of Eldorado that he can at last reject the philosophy of optimism” (70-1). David Williams regards the episode’s “possible purpose as a symbol of human aspiration” that reminds Candide and Cacambo “that there is always a better world, that solutions to some problems can be found, and that the human struggle against evil is not entirely futile” and that ultimately enables them to act willfully without the “paralysis of Optimism” (60-1). Jacques van den Heuvel believes that “Il est incontestable que, dans cet épisode, Voltaire a introduit ce qui de son idéal lui tient le plus au coeur [...] cet idéal fondé sur les rapports harmonieux de l’homme, de la nature et de Dieu [...]” adding that “[l]’épisode d’Eldorado n’est ni une conclusion dérisoire, ni une révélation finale: c’est une étape dans la conquête de l’homme par lui-même” (267-8).

We thus see that some critics' objections to Eldorado's being considered a true utopia hinge on how Candide's experience there functions in his moral and intellectual development outside of that place and how that society falls short of Voltaire's Enlightenment ideals, not on the configuration of the imaginary South American state itself viewed in isolation from the overall plot of the *conte philosophique*. If we set aside these considerations, we can deem Eldorado to be a utopia on several grounds: the inhabitants are happy; their material, emotional, aesthetic, spiritual, and intellectual needs are met; they are safe from hostile outsiders; their leader is benign and enlightened; and society functions harmoniously because of its inhabitants' voluntary and conformist acceptance of customs and manners.

In the voluminous critical commentary that has been dedicated to *Yo el Supremo*, scant attention has been paid to that text's references to *Candide* and none of it proposes Eldorado as a counter example to Francia's failed Paraguayan state. Briefly citing three such allusions, Roa Bastos himself points to them simply as items present in an "interjuego [...] entre los elementos de la naturaleza, del medio paraguayo, y la cultura, particularmente de la cultura francesa" ("Algunos" 179-80). Juan Manuel Marcos cites the presence in Paraguay of Voltaire's characters Cándido and Cacambo as evidence of "la porosidad 'intertextual' de la novela" (71) without explaining how that intertextuality functions. Rafael Humberto Moreno Durán refers fleetingly to Candide's original naive Leibnitzian optimism, saying that Francia "creía vivir en el mejor de los mundos posibles y que [...] se dedicó a cultivar su jardín" (69), but he neglects to examine Candide's larger role in Roa Bastos's work. John Earl Joseph asserts that the dictator reads *Candide* with admiration but he does not explain the significance of that emotion in the characterization of the protagonist (19). Victorio Agüera cites *el Supremo*'s ability to bring life to a fictional character by placing Cacambo in his service, but he fails to point out why Francia sarcastically confers this nickname on an actual historical personage (94). Helene Carol Weldt-Basson cites two passages to show that a dialogue develops between Cándido and the dictator about their differing concepts of optimism and she even claims that *Candide* functions as an intertext of *Yo el Supremo*, but only to set up that particular dialogue and for no other purpose (205-6).

Roa Bastos invites comparison of Voltaire's Eldorado and his historical fictional Paraguay via a series of four direct references to *Candide*. In the first of these, the dictator compares John and Robert Robertson, British businessmen who arrive in Paraguay in 1809 and 1812, shortly after British invasions open Buenos Aires to free trade, to Voltaire's Candide and Cocambo,² who go to that same country in order to fight for the Jesuits. Francia's narrative dissolves the boundaries between fiction and reality, first by transporting Voltaire's characters into history by having his pet dogs remember them disdainfully, and secondly by incorporating into his own recollection of their arrival three nearly verbatim passages from *Candide* that stress the Jesuits' lavish lifestyle and their ill treatment of the Indian peasants.³ The dictator also makes fun of Candide's absurd adherence to Leibnitzian optimism: "Cándido, ¿qué es el optimismo? Gritó el mulato de Tucumán. [...] Por lo que sé, le respondió Cándido, sostener lo bien que está todo cuando manifestamente todo está muy mal." (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 152-3). Here, the dictator is drawing a distinction between the old Paraguay governed by the Jesuits, in which a rich oppressor class was served by a poor

² While Voltaire pairs the experienced and cynical *pícaro* Cacambo with the inexperienced and naïve optimist Candide partly in order to point up the latter's moral and intellectual development over time, Roa Bastos creates no such contrastive and complementary characterizations of John and Robert Robertson. Instead, as seen through the eyes of the dictator, the brothers are portrayed collectively either as silly, conniving, harmless, or dangerous at various times. After having at first, according to Francia, found that "El Paraguay es una Utopía real y Su Excelencia el Solón de los tiempos modernos" (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo*, 8th ed. México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1978. 326), the Robertsons eventually publish two books in England entitled *Letters on Paraguay and The Reign of Terror* that negatively portray the dictator's régime. Their evolution from enthusiastic and adventurous *ingénus* to aware social critics does generally parallel Candide's movement from blind optimism to common sense realism.

³ "Los padres son dueños de todo, y los pueblos no tienen nada. Es la obra maestra de la razón y la justicia" (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 152). ["Los Padres y ont tout, et les peuples rien; c'est le chef d'oeuvre de la raison et de la justice" (Voltaire, *Romans et contes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1954. 180)]. "Entre columnatas de mármol verde y color de oro, jaulas colmadas de papagayos, pájaros-moscas, cardenales, colibríes, toda la volatería del universo, Cándido y el padre provincial almorzaban plácidamente en vajilla de oro y plata" (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 152) ["Aussitôt on conduit Candide dans un cabinet de verdure orné d'une très jolie colonnade de marbre et or, et de treillages qui renfermaient des perroquets, des colibris, des oiseaux-mouches, des pintades, et tous les oiseaux les plus rares. Un excellent déjeuner était préparé dans des vases d'or" (Voltaire 181)]. "Cacambo, resignado, comía granos de maíz en escudilla de palo con los paraguayos bajo el sol rajante [...] entre las vacas y los lirios del campo" (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 152). ["Les Paraguins mangerent du maïs dans des écuelles de bois, en plain camps, à l'ardeur du soleil" (Voltaire 181)].

Indian majority, and his new Paraguay. Ironically, Francia himself is just as oppressive a ruler as were the Jesuits to whom he favorably compares himself. Moreover, he is just as blind to the horrible reality of his dictatorship as is Candide to the obvious evils that prevail in the world.

The second direct allusion is found in Francia's conversation with Argentinean general Belgrano, who is trying to subordinate Paraguay's sovereignty to his own nation by means of the diplomatic maneuver of an alliance against external threats from France and Britain. To illustrate the idea of Europeans' meddling in South American affairs, *el Supremo* tells a facetious story in which Voltaire and his fictional creations blend seamlessly into real Paraguayan history: in the mid-eighteenth century, having become a cynical and greedy ship owner obsessed with the myth of El Dorado, Voltaire sends Candide and his mulatto servant Cacambo to South America in a vessel hired by the Spanish government in order to wage war against the rebellious Jesuits in her Paraguayan colony. The dictator claims even to have hired Cacambo for a time, thus freeing him from the realm of literature, but that Cacambo betrayed him because mulattos are inherently treacherous.

Next, when the Paraguayan Echevarría explains to Belgrano that his country's isolationist policy is necessary to protect itself from Brazilian and Argentinean territorial predation, he makes a witty allusion to Leibnitzian optimism as expressed by Voltaire's philosophically stubborn but experientially blind Pangloss: "El Paraguay no se aisló por su propia voluntad. Tanto valdría que usted se avanzara a sostener que si lo tapiáramos en este cuarto de baño se encuentra su merced ahí por puro gusto en el mejor de los mundos" (224). Lastly, Francia describes his physician Amadeo Bonpland's naïveté in terms of Voltaire's hero when the doctor tries to reassure his patient even as his country is descending into anarchy during its war with Argentina: "Este viejo franchute, más cándido que Cándido, príncipe del optimismo universal, quiere consolarme, alentarme, reanimarme" (289-90).

In addition to these direct references, Roa Bastos makes three indirect allusions to Voltaire's work. First, in his summary of Paraguayan history in the colonial era, the dictator alludes to the search for the mythological land of gold by referring to some Spanish adventurers as "cuatrocientos sobrevivientes de los que habían venido en busca de El Dorado" (39). He then joins Voltaire in condemning the Jesuits' hypocritical establishment of

a repressive society, but rather than accusing them in this instance of gross economic inequality, he condemns their sexual exploitation of indigenous women. Next, Amadeo Bonpland, a naturalist as well as a doctor, describes Paraguay in utopian terms as “el Paraíso Perdido” and “el Primer Jardín” (279). Finally, Francia uses a utopian metaphor -writing the ideal place as a single word, as does Voltaire- when outlining to Belgrano his scientific means of perfecting animal and human nutrition: “En lugar de fabricar aparatos mecánicos y aerodinámicos, logré cultivar pastures térmicas. [...] Usinas de fuerzas naturales de incalculables posibilidades en el perfeccionamiento de los animales y el progreso de la genética humana. [...] He aquí Eldorado de nuestra pobre condición real” (231).

These several references to Voltaire's *Candide* must be seen in the context of Rodríguez de Francia's claiming to be an ardent student of French Enlightenment political and social thought and his assertion that his government is based on theoretical principles propounded by the *philosophes*. Ángel Rama situates Francia in the broader context of Latin American revolutionaries who were inspired by the same thinkers but who, like the Paraguayan, used their ideas selectively for their own political ends:

El Doctor Francia es un típico representante del pensamiento iluminista, como lo fueron en diverso grado la mayoría de los jefes de la revolución de la independencia, lectores de Rousseau y Montesquieu, lo que les permitió afirmar, frente al destronamiento del monarca español, que el poder había revertido al pueblo. [...] Las constituciones nacidas de la estructuración jurídica de los nuevos estados americanos no harían sino justificar [...] el mantenimiento del poder entre las manos de una minoría. [...] [L]a dictadura del doctor José Gaspar Francia [...] adapta las formas del gobierno a la realidad socio-económica del país, sirviendo al mismo tiempo al ideario iluminista que alimentó la revolución (34).

The dictator establishes that his intellectual and political *bona fides* dates from early in his life. In a flashback to his Catholic school days, Francia recalls the child José's having been admonished by a priest for secretly reading French Enlightenment authors and being warned that “El demonio, hijo mío, sopla las páginas de estos libros deicidas y regicidas.” The idealistic boy and his friends refuse to obey that order because “Nosotros [...] pensa-

mos construir *todo nuevo* mediante albañiles como Rousseau, Montesquieu, Diderot, Voltaire, y otros tan buenos como ellos” (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 161).

As an adult politician, he begins by differentiating himself from the reactionary Paraguayan oligarchy that constitutes his political opposition by his familiarity with progressive Enlightenment thinkers: “En cuanto a los oligarcones ninguno de ellos ha leído una sola línea de Solón, Rousseau, Raynal, Montesquieu, Rollin, Voltaire, Condorcet, Diderot” (45). He goes on to set forth his own distorted version of certain concepts and his cynical use of them to justify his political ends. Although he does correctly conceive of social revolution (“[Los oligarcas] se negaron a aceptar que toda verdadera Revolución es un cambio de bienes. De leyes. Cambio a fondo de toda sociedad.”), as head of state, in violation of the principle of the separation of powers, he unilaterally and arbitrarily assumes the legislative function and he confuses the inherent justice of laws with the equitableness of their application, (“Redacté leyes iguales para el pobre, el rico. [...] Para establecer leyes justas suspendí leyes injustas.”), he abolishes certain rights by subordinating them to some undefined idea of overall righteousness (“Para crear el Derecho suspendí los derechos”), he confiscates all private property -disregarding the French political thinkers’ affirmation of individuals’ right to hold it- and transfers its ownership to the state (“Liquidé la impropiedad de la propiedad individual tornándola en propiedad colectiva, que es lo propio.”), he loses sight of the citizenry as the fitting beneficiary of laws (“El beneficio de la ley es la ley misma.”), he uses Rousseau’s concepts of popular will and popular sovereignty to support absolutism (“Ésta no existe sino como voluntad soberana del pueblo, fuente del Poder Absoluto, del absolutamente poder.”), in order to paradoxically affirm the liberating power of his dictatorship, he exploits Rousseau’s idea that humankind in its natural state is free but that the development of human society corrupts it (“La naturaleza no da esclavos; el hombre corruptor de la naturaleza es quien los produce. El mojón de la Dictatura Perpetua libertó la tierra [...]), and with false modesty he depicts himself as the servant rather than the master of the state that he governs. (“Aquí el único esclavo sigue siendo el Supremo Dictador puesto al servicio de lo que domina”) (45-7).

As one measure of Francia's cynicism, Roa Bastos reveals to what extent he deliberately falsifies the ideas of Enlightenment figures. In a gross misreading of *De l'esprit des lois*, the future dictator interprets Montesquieu's insistence upon social order as a necessary precondition for liberty in order to justify his opposition to Paraguay's being ruled by a Junta instead of himself alone: "La libertad ni cosa alguna puede subsistir sin orden, sin reglas, sin una unidad, concertados en un núcleo del supremo interés del Estado [...] Pero lo sabroso es que, como también lo dice Montesquieu, se puede vivir libres con poner orden en nuestra República" (174, 177). In truth, Montesquieu, who proposes the separation of powers as the most effective guarantee of personal freedom, utterly rejects the concentration of state power in a single individual.

The intertextual relationship between the *conte philosophique* and the novel takes two distinct forms. In many respects, the Paraguayan dictatorship is the opposite of Eldorado, which difference illustrates how a society ought not be. In other ways, however, the dystopia strangely resembles its utopian counterpart, except that those similarities have different causes and effects and also reveal very different value systems. In this way, Roa Bastos shows how the perversion of admirable ideals can have especially disastrous consequences. Let us begin with the second category because in it there are fewer examples.

Both places are isolated, the utopia geographically and Paraguay politically, but while the Eldoradans' intent is to protect themselves from annihilation by outside peoples who would plunder the gold that is one of their natural resources, the dictator wishes primarily to preserve his absolute authority and the integrity of his national territory. An old sage explains to Candide, "nous avons toujours été jusqu'à présent à l'abri de la rapacité des nations de l'Europe, qui ont une fureur inconcevable pour les cailloux et pour la fange de notre terre, et qui, pour en avoir, nous tueraient tous [...]" (Voltaire 192). Francia uses every possible diplomatic and military stratagem to fend off Argentina and Brazil's repeated attempts to absorb all or part of Paraguay. Invasions are met with fierce resistance by Indian armies but at a terrible cost of lives.

Emigration is prohibited in both countries, but for entirely different motives. After the imperialistic Incans had left their land to subjugate other peoples and had been destroyed by the even more expansionist Spaniards, “Les princes de leur famille qui restèrent dans leur pays natal furent plus sages; ils ordonnèrent, du consentement de la nation, qu’aucun habitant ne sortirait jamais de notre petit royaume; et c’est ce qui a conservé notre innocence et notre félicité” (192). Thus, the Eldoradan leaders seek to keep their people happy by maintaining their ignorance, a compromise that Voltaire rejects elsewhere in his “Histoire d’un bon bramin” and that some commentators see as a basic criticism of his utopia by its creator himself. As conditions in Paraguay grow worse, the dictator prohibits outmigration because in his paranoia he views all emigrants as enemies of his person and the state, which in his view are coextensive: “Ya en apátridas deslenguados, calumnian, difaman, escriben novelerías contra su país. Confabulados con el enemigo se hacen espiones, banqueanos, furrieles, informantes” (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 318).

There are in each state schools for children. *Candide* furnishes no details of this institution, but the narrator implies that Eldorado enjoys a system of free, universal public instruction. The country’s commitment to higher education takes the form of “le palais des sciences, dans lequel [Candide] vit une galerie [...] toute pleine d’instruments de mathématique et de physique” (Voltaire 194). The success of scientific education is illustrated first by architectural achievements of great size and beauty (“les édifices publics élevés jusqu’aux nues, les marchés ornés de mille colonnes” (194)) and then by 3,000 engineers’ and physicists’ construction of a giant machine that propels the voyagers over the mountains and out of the country at the end of their sojourn. The *dictador perpetuo* promotes a sense of nationhood partly by nationalizing education -which one must assume to mean removing it from the control of the Church- not to prevent children’s being indoctrinated but, on the contrary, in order that it be used to inculcate political propaganda in young people. Education has its limits of usefulness for Francia, however, as his extreme mistrust of intellectuals leads him to exile or imprison them under the pretext that they are seditious and economically unproductive:

Aquí en Paraguay, estábamos llenos de escribientes, de doctores, de hombres cultos, no de cultivadores, agricultores, hombres trabajadores, como debiera ser y ahora lo es. Aquellos cultos idiotas querían fundar el Aerópago de las Letras, las Artes y las Ciencias. Les puse el pie encima. [...] ¿Qué pueden significar sus hazañas intelectuales? [...] Cuanto más cultos son, menos quieren ser paraguayos (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 40).

The arts, especially music, are encouraged in the two countries. In Eldorado, aestheticism seems to be part of national policy. Their chief informant, *le vieillard*, speaks to Candide and Cacambo of “les spectacles publics” and “les arts” (Voltaire 192). Even the carriages that serve as public transportation are beautifully manufactured, the simple and orderly interiors of houses are artistically decorated, and ambient music seems to be everywhere, in the first house that the travelers encounter, where “[u]ne musique très agréable se faisait entendre” (190), in the king’s living quarters that are graced by “deux files chacune de mille musiciens” (193) and during religious devotions where 5,000 or 6,000 musicians accompany hymns of thanksgiving. The Paraguayan dictator is a great patron of music, but his aim is not to develop an aesthetic sense in his citizenry in order to elevate the human condition. He decrees that thousands of musicians be trained, that 5,000 flutes be distributed to children and that music theory be taught in the schools so that bands might be formed there, and he establishes military bands throughout the country. He is proud of making Asunción the capital with the most bands in the world and he boasts of their uniformity of tone, rhythm, and tuning, for far from fostering creative musicianship, he uses that art to cultivate discipline and conformity.

The last shared characteristic is social peace and harmony, which is real in Eldorado and simply claimed -and perhaps, at times, even believed- to exist in his by the *dictador perpetuo*. Voltaire’s earthly paradise is devoid of social conflict, material want, disease, natural disasters, ugliness, oppressive customs and manners, and all the negative passions normally deemed to be part of human nature: “Quel est donc ce pays, [Candide et Cacambo] se disaient-ils l’un à l’autre, inconnu à tout le reste de la terre, et où toute la nature est d’une espèce si différente de la nôtre? C’est probablement le pays

où tout va bien” (191). While insisting elsewhere that it is not a utopia,⁴ in one of his public proclamations known as *circulares perpetuas, el Supremo* does describe his revolutionary state in terms that suggest a transformation into a perfect and just society as he cites the rise of the peasantry to its rightful place, the attainment of its collective freedom, its ownership of the land and the means of production, the remediation of all previous ills, the state as the sole employer, the government as the protector of the peasantry by its creation of just laws equally applied to all, and the principle that each individual receives benefits according to his needs.

A systematic analysis of the points of difference allow one to posit that Roa Bastos's dystopian Paraguay contrasts intentionally with Voltaire's utopian Eldorado. The narrator of the *conte philosophique* begins by presenting an overview of the place that exemplifies Horace's ideal of *mis-cuit utile dulci* with its notion that humans need equal amounts of sensory gratification and social security: “Le pays était cultivé pour le plaisir comme pour le besoin; partout l'utile était agréable” (189). Such a balance does not characterize the state created by Francia, who never expresses any public need either for natural or for artistic beauty. Even in the most likely area for beauty to be a concern, namely the arts, the dictator sponsors musical training strictly as a regimentation strategy and the only theatrical piece is a tasteless political allegory replete with symbolism borrowed from the French Revolution whose intent is to fortify the audience's loyalty to the state.

While in the streets of Eldorado men and women are “d'une beauté singulière” (189), a sure indicator of physical health, and everybody lives in a unified social setting, in Paraguay the dictator establishes Tevegó, a remote town that is a prison camp for criminals, thieves, prostitutes, migrants, and conspirators where everything, including the prisoners, is the color of ashes and stones; its inhabitants are depicted as the living dead, deprived of voices and normal physical movement such as the ability to

⁴ Francia disparages the utopian vision of certain optimists as illusory: “Por tiempos, los vaticinios de taimados farsantes aciertan más que las predicciones de visionarios que solo visionan elementos inverosímiles producidos por la ilusión crónica y la Utopía” (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 315). When, in a conversation in which he offers the British government's protection of Paraguayan maritime commerce on the Río de la Plata and the Atlantic Ocean in exchange for certain trade favors, John Robertson flatteringly refers to “Paraguay, al que todo el mundo llama ya con justicia el *Paraíso del Mundo*,” the dictator corrects him: “No se alucine usted con humo de pajas, que el Paraguay no es la Utopía que usted dice, sino una realidad muy real” (332).

stand; there is no sign of human comprehension, and any healthy living person who comes in contact with inhabitants of that place dies of contagion (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 21-7). Toward the end of Francia's reign, poor, famished, and deformed people start entering the capital begging for help and giving the lie to the myth of a healthy and happy population (426-9).

At a restaurant in the utopia, the patrons, "pour la plupart des marchands et des voituriers" (Voltaire 190) dine well, indicating the existence of a vibrant commercial class. In order to encourage trade, the state even subsidizes hotels for business people: "Toutes les hôtelleries établies pour la commodité du commerce sont payés par le gouvernement" (190-1). There is no such social class in Paraguay, since the economic system controlled by the dictator does not allow for the emergence of a bourgeoisie that might contest his monopoly on power. The ruler appropriates to the state all the nation's profitable flora and minerals, saying that he is making it the people's property: "Aquí he nacionalizado todo para todos. Árboles, plantas tintóreas, medicinales, maderas preciosas, minerales. Hasta los arbustos de yerbamate he nacionalizado" (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 316). In fact, in an era when South America's economy is expanding, Francia opposes economic growth. He advocates economic shrinkage, expressing his vision of his country's economic future in terms of the proportionality of the population to its material wealth:

El país entero está rebosando riquezas. La necesidad de multiplicar se ha vuelto ahora necesidad de desmultiplicar. Pues todo exceso de bienes degenera fatalmente en males, según lo acredita la experiencia. La prosperidad de un Estado no consiste tanto en la existencia de una población muy grande como en la perfecta relación del pueblo con sus medios"(315).

Eldorado's king says that Candide and Cacambo are free to leave his country whenever they like: "[J]e n'ai pas assurément le droit de retenir des étrangers; c'est une tyrannie qui n'est ni dans nos mœurs, ni dans nos lois: tous les hommes sont libres; partez quand vous voudrez" (Voltaire 195). In fact, the prohibition on the Eldoradans' leaving is an order that has the consent of the governed ("[I]ls ordonnèrent, du consentement de la nation, qu'aucun habitant ne sortirait jamais" (192)). The Paraguayan *dictador perpetuo* expels foreigners and even citizens whenever it suits him, such as his humiliating

expulsion of the previously favored Robertson brothers. His cruel penal code includes condemnation to perpetual internal exile whereby a convict is forced to live out his life in a canoe; no village may welcome or help him, so the condemned person must keep paddling and fend for himself for food, clothing, and shelter. His paranoia prompts him to imprison innocent foreigners as hostages in order to prevent imagined possible invasions, thus violating the right of voluntary egress that is respected by Eldorado's king. He argues that intentionally harming the few in order to ensure the greater good of the many is morally defensible: “[L]a cautividad que comparte con otros franceses, italianos, ingleses, alemanes y americanos [...]. Esos pocos particulares [...] lo están en calidad de rehenes de todo el pueblo” (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 285).

Voltaire uses his fictitious state to put forth his real ideas about religion: his deism, his anticlericalism, and his opposition to organized religion, which he feels is based on a collection of beliefs unworthy of a rational being. The elderly wise man sums up Eldoradan devotional practices succinctly since they are few, including thanksgiving (“Nous avons, je crois, la religion de tout le monde: nous adorons Dieu du soir jusqu’au matin” (192)), monotheism (“Apparemment [...] il n’y en a ni deux, ni trois, ni quatre” (192)), and the absence of clergy, whom the *philosophe* considers undesirable on several counts (“-Quoi, vous n’avez point de moines qui enseignent, qui disputent, qui gouvernent, qui cabalent, et qui font brûler les gens qui ne sont pas de leur avis? -Il faudrait que nous fussions fous, dit le vieillard [...]” (193)). In Paraguay, Catholicism is the state religion but the dictator co-opts the clergy, largely to teach, in place of the standard catechism, his new “Catecismo Patrio Reformado” in the hope that “la militancia ciudadana les extirparán a esos chicos cuando sean grandes el quiste catequístico” (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 12). As Francia integrates religion into a general policy of institutional subordination to the state, the patriotic catechism redefines God as inherent in the national territory and in the products of the work of the people:

Con su propio esfuerzo el Paraguay ha labrado su fundamento de Patria, de Nación, de República. La educación que reciben es nacional. La iglesia, la religion también lo son. Los ni-

ños aprenden en el Catecismo Patrio que si Dios es algo más que una palabra [...] está en la tierra que pisan, en el aire que respiran, en los bienes ganados en el trabajo colectivo (316).

Unlike the pious leaders of Eldorado, the *dictador perpetuo*, in an act of blasphemy, denies the need for the existence of God since he himself has usurped the deity's role. He does promote the free practice of religion, however, because he can channel the Church's ritualistic energy to aggrandize himself: "Pese a todo yo no prohibí ningún culto. [...] El Dictador de una Nación, si es Supremo, no necesita la ayuda de ningún Ser Supremo. Él mismo lo es. En este carácter lo que hice fue que el culto se sometiera a los intereses de la Nación" (365). Francia then catalogues a long history of clerical corruption and hypocrisy, claiming to protect the integrity of the institutional Church by bringing it under his secular control.

Besides there being neither a separate clergy ("Le bon vieillard sourit. 'Mes amis, dit-il, nous sommes tous prêtres'" (Voltaire 192)) nor prayer ("Nous ne le prions pas, dit le bon et respectable sage; nous n'avons rien à lui demander; il nous a donné tout ce qu'il nous faut; nous le remercions sans cesse" (192)), there is in the utopia, no theology. Most notably in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* and his *contes philosophiques*, Voltaire spent his life debunking beliefs and practices in all the world's religions and denouncing metaphysical speculation as having no practical benefit to humankind. Roa Bastos' protagonist speculates on the basic beliefs of the Guaraní Indians concerning the double nature of all animate and inanimate beings, the evolution of the human soul, the separation of body and soul, the presence of three souls in each person, the misappropriation of souls by evil spirits, and the limited curative powers of helpful spirits. Unlike Eldorado, there are in Paraguay two widely held competing religious systems emanating from the indigenous and European cultures, as well as beliefs about witchcraft and practices designed to neutralize its efficacy. Francia is a philosopher-ruler, reflecting on the ideas of Descartes and Pascal while formulating his theory of governing Paraguay, anchoring his nation in the uncertain territory located between the infinitely great and the infinitesimally small and assuming power in a world that God put in motion and then left to its own devices.

When greeting the king of Eldorado, people embrace him, kissing him on both cheeks. He is polite to the two foreign visitors and has no fear of his people, among whom he moves freely. On the contrary, *el dictador* is feared and hated by his people and he fears them in turn. In *decretos supremos*, he condemns to death by public hanging people whom he merely suspects of wanting to succeed him after his death. He suspects others of seeking to defame him and lie about the government, so he outlaws all written publications other than his own. He places a premium on absolute loyalty: “Los he preferido leales funcionarios, que no hombres cultos. Capaces de obrar lo que mando” (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 37). As revered and approachable as is the Eldoradan king, so is Francia feared and guarded. He is incapable both of true friendship (“Tengo pocos amigos. A decir verdad, nunca está abierto mi corazón al amigo presente sino al ausente” (275)) and of love (“Nunca he amado a nadie [...]” (299)). Ironically, toward the end of his life, this absolutist ruler is ruled absolutely by feelings of alienation from his people, of whom he is so mistrustful that he dares only venture out alone on foot at night in deserted parts of the capital: “Erré por los lugares desiertos [...]. Vagabundo. [...] Llevando a costas mi desierta persona. Solo sin familia, sin hogar, en país extraño. Solo” (423).

The last great difference lies in the area of government, which is absent from Eldorado on account of the pervasive influence of customs and manners and the plenty that satisfies all material needs, but which in Francia's state takes the form of oppressive institutions. “Candide demanda à voir la cour de justice, le parlement; on lui dit qu'il n'y en avait point, et qu'on ne plaidait jamais. Il s'informa s'il y avait des prisons, et on lui dit que non” (Voltaire 194). Since all Eldoradans' behavior conforms to social norms, there is no criminality, hence no judiciary and no penal system, and no laws, hence no legislature. The king himself seems to have no function other than to lead others in paeans of thanksgiving. In fact, the very concepts of the state, citizenship, law, policing, rights, and monarchy are non-existent.

The situation in Francia's Paraguay is quite the opposite. Its underground jails are crowded with political prisoners condemned in perpetuity; an isolated prison camp is filled with brutalized people whom the dictator considers social deviants; a court system is an instrument of the will of *el*

Supremo, who individually and capriciously legislates against writers because he deems them a danger to the state, prohibits foreign men from marrying white Paraguayan women, punishes both begging and the giving of alms, and terrorizes citizens by means of public executions by firing squad or burning at the stake. As one of his principal branches of government, Francia creates a military that is personally beholden to him and that functions as an instrument of internal control as well as a defender of the nation's borders: "Autonomía, soberanía absoluta de mis decisiones. Formación, bajo mi jefatura, de la fuerzas armadas para hacerles cumplir." (Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo* 179).

If Eldoradans are essentially self-governing, Paraguayans are instead subject to an increasingly controlling leader whose totalitarianism includes two opposite tendencies. On the one hand, Francia rules via a multi-layered hierarchy whom he cynically calls "mis fieles sátrapas" and who include "Delegados, Comandantes de Guarnación y de Urbanos, Jueces Comisionados, Administradores, Mayordomos, Receptores Fiscales, Alcabaleros y demás autoridades" (36). On the other hand, he often bypasses that hierarchy by concentrating in his person, through a process of depersonalization and abstraction, all legislative, judicial, and administrative powers: "[E]l poder absoluto está hecho de pequeños poderes. [...] El Supremo es aquel que lo es por su naturaleza. Nunca nos recuerda a otros salvo a la imagen del Estado de la Nación, del pueblo de la Patria" (69). The dictator micromanages every aspect of his government, from the construction of fortifications and naval vessels, to the functioning of a secret spy agency broad, to the choice and distribution of children's toys at Christmas, to the designs and color schemes of army uniforms, to punishments for individual crimes, to the disposition of individual petitions for legal and financial relief. This mania grows in inverse proportion to his trust in his appointed officials, for as time passes, he perceives more and more disloyalty, corruption, and inefficiency in his military and civilian administrations. The ultimate irony is that this student of Enlightenment political philosophy, by substituting the people for God as the basis of his derived authority, ends up by quoting Louis XIV, the greatest spokesman for the divine right of kings

and absolute monarchy: "Aquí la generalidad del pueblo se encarna en el Estado. Aquí puedo afirmar yo sí con entera razón: El Estado-soy-Yo, puesto que el pue-blo me ha hecho su potestario supremo" (73).

Several ideas encourage the reader of Augusto Roa Bastos' *Yo el Supremo* to seek a utopian world against which Rodríguez de Francia's dystopian Paraguay may be measured. These include Arthur C. Lewis' definition of dystopian fiction as portraying a theoretically perfect yet really flawed society, Erika Gottlieb's assertion that every dystopian society contains within it the impulse toward a utopian ideal, and Sylvia Papp's notion that -despite Francia's statements to the contrary- a utopian vision underlies this dictator's efforts to found a republic by and for the people. Because of the several direct and indirect references to it in the novel, we may conclude that both Roa Bastos and his protagonist know Voltaire's *Candide* well. By carefully uncovering a pattern of similarities -although with different intents and outcomes- and an even larger pattern of opposites between the dictatorship and the idealized country, I have attempted to demonstrate the existence of a carefully constructed intertextual relationship between these two prose works. By means of this juxtaposition of alternatives and opposites, Roa Bastos reveals not only Francia's perversion -at different times cynical or delusional- of eighteenth-century political and social ideals, but also the structural and psychological mechanisms that underlie the transformation of the ideal good into the real evil. This process contributes in great measure to making *Yo el Supremo* an original contribution to the subgenre of the novel of dictatorship.

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