

THE INSINUATION OF THE BODY: CAPABILITIES AND FREEDOM IN *THE COUNTRY OF WOMEN* BY GIOCONDA BELLI*

Oscar Ortega Arango

ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to focus on the proposal for the development of citizens presented in the novel *The Country of Women* (2010), by the Nicaraguan writer Gioconda Belli. Said proposal is in direct relation with the approaches of the Bengali economist Amartya Sen from the perspective of development as a result of the consolidation of civil liberties. The novel explores, in the fictional country of Faguas, the experience of a governing group of women that implements a series of political transformations, particularly associated with women, with the intention of generating the development of both individual and social capacities through the process of commitment.

Keywords: Belli, The country of women, Body, Amartya Sen, Capabilities, Liberty

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es enfocar la propuesta para el desarrollo de la ciudadanía presentada en la novela *El país de las mujeres* (2010), de la escritora nicaragüense Gioconda Belli. Dicha propuesta está relacionada directamente con los planteamientos del economista bengalí Amartya Sen desde la perspectiva del desarrollo como resultado de la consolidación de las libertades civiles. La novela explora, en el país ficticio de Faguas, la experiencia de un grupo gobernante de mujeres que implementa una serie de transformaciones políticas, particularmente

* An earlier version of this text was presented in Spanish in the Seminario Permanente “Estudios sobre el Caribe: perspectivas transdisciplinarias,” organized within the research project funded by CONACYT (México): “Representaciones literarias de insularidad en Yucatán, Belice y Guyana. Hacia un modelo para el Caribe continental” (CB257673, 2016-2021).

Translation to English: Jon Harrington, Susana Barradas, Margaret Shrimpton. All citations are by the translating team, and the original (Spanish) citations correspond to the Spanish editions referenced in the bibliography. The author acknowledges the detailed reading by the two anonymous reviewers, whose contributions have enriched this article.

asociadas a las mujeres, con la intención de generar el desarrollo de capacidades tanto individuales como sociales a través del proceso del compromiso.

Palabras clave: Belli, El país de las mujeres, cuerpo, Amartya Sen, capacidades, libertad

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cet article est de se concentrer sur la proposition de développement de la citoyenneté présentée dans le roman *El País de las Mujeres* (2010), de l'écrivain nicaraguayen Gioconda Belli. Cette proposition est directement liée aux propositions de l'économiste bengali Amartya Sen dans la perspective du développement à la suite de la consolidation des libertés civiles. Le roman explore, dans le pays fictif de Faguas, l'expérience d'un groupe de femmes au pouvoir qui met en œuvre une série de transformations politiques, particulièrement associées aux femmes, dans l'intention de générer le développement des capacités individuelles et sociales à travers le processus d'engagement.

Mots-clés : Belli, Le pays des femmes, le corps, Amartya Sen, les capacités, la liberté

Introduction

In 2010, the Hispano-American Novel Prize “La otra orilla,” organized by the publishing house Norma, was awarded to Gioconda Belli’s novel *El país de las mujeres* (*The Country of Women*). The award proceedings stated that: “In the landscape of the Latin-American political novel, dominated primarily by men, this novel (*The Country of Women*) is an entertaining and unexpected provocation.”¹ The three man jury—Santiago Roncagliolo, Mario Mendoza and Pere Sureda—asserted that the two most important features of Belli’s novel were the “unexpected” and “entertaining” aspects pertaining to a fictional text written by a woman. Thus, the construction of characters such as José de la Aritmética (Joseph of Arithmetic, instead of Arimathea) or the presence of an incredible volcanic eruption, that leads to a reduction in male testosterone in the fictional country of Fraguas, make this novel easily accessible.

¹ It should be mentioned that in the act conferring this award, the name of the author was registered with the pseudonym “Viviana Sansón” and the title of the novel as *Crónica de la izquierda erótica* (*Chronicle of the Erotic Left*). This was changed to *The Country of Women* when the novel was published in the collection *La otra orilla* (*The Other Side*), following the award. The available fragments from the proceedings can be seen on the website <www.giocondabelli.org/belli/>, dated 13 July 2010. Consulted on 30 August 2013.

Without denying the presence of these lighthearted elements (that serve as a catalyst for a wider reading of the novel by the general public), they also become an obstacle for specialized critics, uninterested in the political novel, who are discouraged from searching for the identifiers that would reveal a reading of a different magnitude. A further intervening fact is that the so-called Party of the Erotic Left (PIE, by its Spanish initials) has been relaunched, motivated by the publication of the novel (and going back to an earlier idea, that predates the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua).² This may have been taken by literary scholars as a reason to approach the novel with some caution. Nevertheless, this article argues that in *The Country of Women* by Gioconda Belli, the fictional discourse is constructed from the concept of capabilities and freedom, taken from the work of the Bengali economist Amartya Sen (1933), which in turn, derives from the experience and observance of the body. This work is therefore centered on the relation between the fictional discourse and the social discourse crucial to Sen's proposal. In Belli's novel, the behavior and attitudes of the female characters, and particularly in the case of Viviana Sansón, the protagonist, follow a route that directly correlates with Sen's concepts, leading to a transformation of sympathy into commitment. This in turn, is set up in the novel through the experience of the eroded female body, which is read as a map of social and historical inscription, generating a change of attitudes among women and their relation to the world.

Within this framework, the article examines the literary text as a site of national consciousness, as Jean Franco argues for the nineteenth century: "In the nineteenth century, literature was conceived not only as an instrument of social protest but also as a means for modelling a national conscience and creating a sense of tradition" (1971:17). Thus, Belli's novel attempts to evince, through a fictional text (oddly called "entertaining and unexpected" by jury members), an instrument for shaping female consciousness, based on Sen's approach. This is possible because, according to Sen's arguments, the transformation of economic systems occurs only to the extent that there is also an appropriation of the close and intimate universe. This proposal allows Belli to understand the

² In the acknowledgements page of *The Country of Women*, Belli mentions that "In the 80s in Nicaragua, during the Sandinista Revolution, there was an actual group of women, friends who constituted an organization called the Party of the Erotic Left. Each of us had some intermediate position of importance in governmental structures, political organizations or mass movements. We all agreed to discuss and put into practice strategies to promote the individual rights of women in our own spheres of influence" (2010:277). Subscriptions to PIE and their communications, can be consulted on the website <www.partidoizquierdaerotica.com>.

female body as a natural living space for perceiving and communicating new expressions. In order to move forward, it is important, first of all, to recognize the main parameters and guidelines of the work of the 1998 Nobel prize for economics.

Amartya Sen: Capabilities and Freedom

The nodal point from which Amartya Sen's proposals emanate is the concept of capabilities, defined as: "The different combinations of operations (being and doing) that a person can achieve, enabling the person the freedom to live one type of life or another [...] to choose a way of life" (1995:35). Thus, capabilities are those basic elements that each person must have in order to convert their rights into achievable positive freedoms. Positive freedom is referred to as the actual capacity of a person to be or to do something, instead of negative freedom, which is common in economics and focuses simply on non-interference. From this perspective, social and human development does not focus on the increase of national economic production (and its respective estimation by income levels) but, as Rafael Cejudo states: "[...] with the things that people can really do or be (the so-called *operations*), and thus also with the *capabilities* they have, understood as the opportunities individuals have to choose and live one kind of life or another" (2007:10). This approach does not eliminate the need for the possession/disposition of resources, but it locates them as an instrumental element for the development of capabilities.

In this way, Amartya Sen proposes "[...] a transformation of the neoclassical *homo oeconomicus* to a new moral person that navigates the different economic processes through sympathy, commitment and values" (Pedrajas 2006:105), thus recalling the ethical interpretation present in the work of Adam Smith (Pedrajas 2006:105), that attempts to focus on economic processes from a "horizon of ethical economy" (Conill 2004). Indeed, when addressing the study of the economic rationality of the *homo oeconomicus* (together with the idea of maximizing self-interest and obtaining profits), Sen states that this form of world-conception solely depends on one's own consumption, which impedes freedom because it determines the totality of our choices (1989:75-105). This arises from three fundamental aspects: welfare is based on oneself; a person's goals are based on their own well-being; and, the defining one, for Sen, choice is based on the objective where "each person's choice is directed immediately to the achievement of their own objective: welfare in the form of consumption" (Pedrajas 2006:108). It is because of this that "the purely economic man is almost mentally retarded, from the social point of view" (Pedrajas 2006:114).

Faced with such a scenario, Amartya Sen proposes that economic rationality must open itself to a new ethical economic theory based on an ethical rationality that supports a theory of social and economic justice and human developmental. For this to occur, it is necessary that freedom be understood as a capacity, insofar as it functions autonomously, derived from the diversity of life conceptions that are guaranteed thanks to the pre-existence of another series of basic capacities. For all these reasons, Cejudo concludes: “[...] the fact that freedom as a capability is power and not control, justifies the action of the State in favor of freedom by a different path from that of republicanism, emphasizing the importance of public policies of equality and development” (2007:21). Therefore, the capabilities do not serve exclusively for economic production, but for social development: “Development can be seen [...] as the process of expansion of the true freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen 2000:19), where development is the “[...] promotion and expansion of valuable capabilities” (2000:19). Therefore, as Francisco Álvarez mentions: “Amartya Sen proposes the understanding of development as the process of expansion of true liberties that people enjoy. These freedoms are both the aim and the means for development” (2001:383). Moreover, this includes moral codes as an integral part of the economic plan, and also as a part of the communities’ social assets. This is fundamental in the context of Belli’s novel, because the system of government set up in Fraguas is based precisely on these concepts.

The notion of capability, therefore, is set in motion by overcoming an egoistic, ethical rationale, and centering instead on two elements: sympathy and commitment, which arise from developing agency among individuals belonging to a community. This agency, Sen affirms, is incarnate in “[...] the person who acts and provokes change and whose success can be judged as a function of their own values and independent objectives, regardless of whether we evaluate them based on other external criteria” (2000:35). Now, the ethics of rationality (in accordance with the liberty exercised thanks to the development of one’s capabilities) can lead this agent to express sympathy or commitment, elements developed by Sen in his text “Los tontos racionales: una crítica de los fundamentos conductistas de la teoría económica” [Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory], in the following way: “If the knowledge that others are being tortured does not sicken us, this is then a case of sympathy. If it does not sicken us but we believe that it is something bad and we are prepared to do something to prevent it, then this is a case of commitment” (1986:187). This is of primary importance in Belli’s novel, as it is the discovery of a tortured and enslaved young woman that produces a lasting change in the novel’s protagonist, Viviana Sansón.

As noted above, one of the central elements indicated by Sen in order to succeed in development as freedom (and not merely as an indication of productivity) is that associated with a transformation of the role of women in the social sphere. He affirms that: “[...] perhaps the most immediate reason to center attention on the agency of women would be precisely the role that this agency can play in the eradication of the inequalities that reduce their well-being” (2000:235). In this way, one of the capabilities to explore in the case of women is the possibility that they might work outside the household and receive education, etc., which María Edo affirms “[...] can help to redistribute the goods and services within the family in a more equitable form” (2002:31). Assisted by education, this produces a reduction in the infant mortality rate, as well as a reduction of the birth rate, and allows Sen to assert that: “a change in the agency of women is one of the principle factors intervening in economic and social change, and it is both their determination and their consequences that are so closely linked to many of the fundamental aspects of the development process” (2000:249).

Implicit in all of the above, is the evidence of a definition of democracy (and of the democratic state) and also of the market and its borders. Regarding the first aspect, it is important to note that achievable rights in a democracy must be, above all, political rights, based on four fundamental aspects: 1) their direct importance to human life as an instrument for the development of one’s basic capabilities (to live, eat, express oneself, etc.); 2) their instrumental role to express and defend political demands that can be expressed as requirements for amending economic necessities; 3) their constructive role in the definition and expression of real necessities that arise from the development of educational capabilities; and, finally, 4) the role of protecting freedom for the development of one’s own capabilities and differences (Edo 2002).

Consistent with the above, and taking a stance in the face of the market economy (measured solely in rental increases), Sen positions himself as an anti-neoliberal, while recognizing the advantages of neoliberalism for the consolidation of individual and social liberties to exchange. In this sense, Sen’s principal argument against the market mechanism is not the mechanism itself but, as María Edo comments: “Sen considers that much of the criticism directed towards the market mechanism, concentrated on the poorest countries, is often due not to excessive intervention in the market, but due to the restrictions that exist in these same countries, that deny individuals economic opportunities and the favorable consequences that enable its efficient functioning” (2002:28). Now, Sen considers that this idea cannot be seen as a totalizing response (the market mechanism as totally open and as a global solution) but rather as a process in equilibrium with the role of the state.

As Sen affirms, it must be an “integrated and pluralistic focus, with the aim of moving forward simultaneously on different fronts, including the different institutions that are mutually reinforced” (2000:161).

Constructing, Step by Step

Summing up some of the previous elements, Amartya Sen’s proposal involves a series of transformations at diverse levels that, among others, can be enunciated in the following way: 1) a diverse idea of the democratic system based on the development of capabilities; 2) an idea of the exercise of power for freedom, with particular emphasis on women; 3) an idea of development for freedom and not for the market, as an ultimate goal; 4) the basis of the social system and its transformation must be held within a human relationship of sympathy and commitment.

As has been proposed above, the previous elements are correlative to the development of the novel, *The Country of Women*, which is organized in fifty-four sub-divisions and a final section with acknowledgements, at the end of the novel. The segments follow in sequence from two successive narrative events: the state of coma that the President of Fraguas, Viviana Sansón, falls into after an attempt on her life; and the process of formation, campaign, the rise to power, and governance of the Party of the Erotic Left (PIE). Even though elements pertaining to these four elements can be encountered in both of these narrative lines, it can be affirmed that the sequence that moves from the formation of the party to governance by the Party of the Erotic Left points directly to elements 1-3 indicated above (capabilities, liberation, development for freedom). The fourth element (sympathy and commitment) is specifically developed in the narrative sequence relating to the state of limbo in which Viviana Sansón remains, after the attempt on her life.

Regarding the first element (a democratic system based on the development of capabilities) it is important to mention that one of the proposals that stands out in the process of consolidating the exercise of democracy in this country of women, is the idea of the voter as a qualified agent. Thus, they propose the implementation of a lottery that would select 300,000 voters (150,000 men and 150,000 women) equivalent to 10% of the population of Fraguas:

These 300,000 would be called QUALIFIED VOTERS [...] Each one of them will know how to read and write at the moment of voting (if they do not already know they will be taught). The *qualified voters* will receive special courses on rights and duties of citizens and the function of the State, as well as two annual workshops concerning the principle problems of the country. The vote of the *qualified voters* will count for two votes in the presidential elections. (Belli 2010:47)

In other words, one of the proposals presented as necessary for the consolidation of a democracy is the development of the capabilities of the voters, who would enjoy a greater possibility of participation and comprehension in proportion to their access to better educational training. As can be observed, the role of education multiplies the capacity to assume a decisive and conscious participation in democracy: the development of individual capabilities, generated by state organization, augments the possibilities of resolving problems. In this same line of thought, the novel continues: “In the discussions and approval of type A laws (that directly affect the life of the population) in the National Assembly, the vote of the *qualified voters* will be collected in electronic form. The Assembly will take note of the results, but is not obliged to uphold them, in accordance with the majority decision” (Belli 2010:47). Even though the quality of the laws that “directly affect the lives of the population” is not clarified, it is important to observe that being well-informed concerning the decisions of the National Assembly is one of the capabilities that should be developed among the population, as well as their capacity to continue to intervene in the issues of the nation after the elections. The narrative aligns with Sen’s proposal regarding democratic rights—that they are produced from increasing individual and social capabilities—, and that these should become the center for development in nation states.

In relation to the second element, the exercise of power to foster positive freedom with particular emphasis on women, various examples can be encountered over the course of the novel. One of the most outstanding examples is the so-called proposal of “happiness and felicity”: “We define happiness as a state where the essential necessities are taken care of and where men and women, in complete liberty, can choose and have the opportunity to utilize to the maximum, their innate and acquired capabilities to benefit themselves and society” (Belli 2010:131). As can be observed, following the argument posited by Sen, this proposal is concerned with a state that creates freedoms that result from the exercise of individual capabilities. Now, these liberties bring with them, first of all, a series of transformations to everyday life that, as a result, transform economic life and not the contrary (as Sen argues). Among these arguments are:

- a. Reform the democratic system [...]
- b. Reform the workplace to end segregation of family-work [...]
- c. Reform the educational system [...]
- d. Establish a system of accountability that guarantees transparency in the handling of public funds and capital [...]
- e. Direct the country’s productivity towards achieving self-sufficiency in terms of food and energy, and to the production of two basic exports: flowers and oxygen [...]
- f. Reform the concept, and the system, of taxation so that it to

responds to the idea of the responsibility that each citizen has to their country and to their fellow citizens. (Belli 2010:132)

As can be observed, following the anti-neoliberal position of Sen, the problem is not to be found in the denial of the market but rather in development, understood as a liberty, based on the reach and execution of individual and social capabilities. Accordingly, the Ministry of Unrestricted Liberties is created in the country of women, which would be “[...] an institution dedicated to promoting laws, behaviors, educational programs and all that is necessary to inculcate respect for inviolable liberty for women and men within society” (Belli 2010:42). In the fictional text, then, the physical removal of men from public duties in order to have women assume their roles, is one of the most striking exercises introduced to bring about the transformation of social organization: “The removal of the men began around a month or two after installing the new government and it caught everyone by surprise. Although it only applied to State employees and each one received, in recognition of their service to the nation, a payment equivalent to six months work, the shock was tremendous” (Belli 2010:61). After the initial crisis, the women took charge of the administration and of the military and police forces, in the fictional nation of Fraguas.

This last element ties into Sen’s third proposal, regarding the idea of development for freedom as the ultimate goal, and not development for the market. This can be seen in its contribution to the development of agency for women beyond the so-called motherly labor (raising children, primary level education), so as to incorporate them in any and all spheres of social life. In addition, this leads to the transformation of the labor market with no established restrictions put in place by gender constructs. Nevertheless, the transformation of the market as the ultimate goal of development is in itself also transformed, when productive activity is orientated from the perspective of freedom: “It seems unbelievable that in the 21st century we are still discussing socialism or capitalism or economic crisis, without noticing that we still haven’t solved the problem of domination or abuse within our very own homes” (Belli 2010:228). Thus, the call for women to enter the workforce must show the development of their capabilities without the previous and external limitations to their potential. In this way, it is announced in the fictitious Fraguas:

WOMEN NEEDED WHO ARE PREPARED TO WORK, WITH OR WITHOUT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE, WITH OR WITHOUT “GOOD LOOKS”, WITH OR WITHOUT DAUGHTERS, MARRIED, SINGLE, HETEROSEXUAL OR GAY, PREGNANT OR NOT, WITH OR WITHOUT HIGHER EDUCATION, MINORS OR ADULTS, ALL ARE WELCOME. THERE ARE PLACES FOR EVERYONE. CHILD CARE PROVIDED DURING

WORK HOURS. (Belli 2010:181)³

In this way, the market is not presented as the ultimate goal, but instead acts as an enabler to escape the domination and abuse to which women have been subordinated. For this reason, although the novel appears to lack depth for not exploring the economic transformation in the form of the production of flowers and the commercialization of oxygen in Fraguas, it does show that it is necessary to constitute a society founded on actual positive liberty, wherein the capabilities of its members can develop fully.

Sympathy and Commitment: The Body as a Catalyst

These processes, following the ideas posited by Sen, cannot be presented in an appropriate form without commitment of an ethical kind among the different members of the community. In this sense, the configuration of Viviana Sansón as a transformed being within the novel is fundamental.⁴ Therefore, the segment “The Alarm Clock” signals a new beginning in the lived experience of the narrative’s central character. In this fragment, the presence of various penguins kept as pets in the house of a Supreme Court magistrate, is discovered in the hot country of Fraguas: they are found in a “room with ice and a big glass door” (Belli 2010:73). The discovery of them causes a transformation in Viviana, which can be understood as the quality of sympathy mentioned by Sen:

If until then, just like the vast majority of her fellow citizens, in her daily life Viviana ‘had been playing the ostrich’ or living like those monkeys that ‘see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil’, the story of the penguin radicalized her. At times she laughed, thinking that to write her biography, she would have to divide it into her life before and after the penguins. (Belli 2010:76)

However, the story does not end there. Some days later, when Viviana is given responsibility for a television program, a young woman appears in her office shivering with cold while reporting that she was a victim of a network of human trafficking associated with the magistrate, and that they brutally used the penguin’s icebox to cool down the young women slaves, because “They said that when were ice-cold we were tastier” (Belli 2010:93). Then, they were removed: “They took me out. They told me they were going to warm me up. One by one they passed

³ Uppercase letters as in the original version.

⁴ In Belli’s novels, the transformation of a female character is an identity trait that can also be appreciated in *El pergamino de la seducción* (*The Parchment of Seduction*) (2005) and *La mujer habitada* (*The Inhabited Woman*) (2006), amongst other texts.

me around. My God. And this has happened every Saturday and other days, too, I don't know how many, I lost count" (Belli 2010:9). The previous situation is noteworthy because it is the body (in this case female) that functions as a detonator for Viviana Sansón. In this way it can be understood that, as affirmed by Margarita Paz (based on the thoughts of B.S. Turner): "[...] the body is the central issue for social theory, and that a mistaken identification of the theme of the body with biology kept it absent from the former, which in his opinion should be changed" (1996:100-101).

In this line of reasoning, it is interesting to observe that contemporary philosophical thought in Latin America attempts to overcome outdated dualist concepts and to reevaluate the vision of the body. Such is the case of the philosopher Arturo Rico Bovio who in his book, *Las fronteras del cuerpo. Crítica de la corporalidad* (1998) (*The Borders of the Body: A Critique of Corporality*) develops an integrated concept of these binaries and their consequent reductionisms, by considering the body as a complex reality of "polyhedral" dimensions, with various levels of bodily organization (energetic, chemical, cellular, organic, social and personal). The social psychologist Enrique Pichón Riviére, in his *Teoría del vínculo* (*The Theory of the Link*), proposes a phenomenic point of view that distinguishes three ways of being: the mental, the corporal, and the behavioral, in relation to the exterior world. This interrelationship confirms, for Pichón Riviére, that "[...] that the inner world is also constructed by external experience, creating a particular world, a world that is not external but is as real for the individual as the external in which we work" (1980:50).

Pichón's work puts forward very similar ideas to those of Sen and allows us to affirm that the significance of the contemporary notion of the body is not the dual correlation between body and soul, but rather its capacity for experience and construction of its being-in-the world. So, Margarita Paz affirms that: "[...] a certain number of scholars have located as their objective of study, not the knowledge of the body, but rather the "experience of the body" (1996:36-37). Such "experience of the body," Paz continues, points to the living experiential dimension which, based on Merleau-Ponty's idea of "the living body," leads to a reconsideration of the idea of experience, starting from the development of: a) a differentiation of "I / not I;" b) the difference between perception and illusion; and c) the discrimination of perception between external and internal stimuli (1996). In other words, the experience of the body allows us, as affirmed by Françoise Dolto, to observe the structural footprint that the language of desire has left on the individual in relation to the other (Dolto 1990) for which, returning to Margarita Paz: "all the body is a field of forces where the strategies for social order are

staged; it is also, inevitably, a surface on which the codes of society are inscribed [...] These reflections lead us to recognize that the “nature” of the human body is also a result of cultural and historical activity” (1996:98-99).

The conclusions emanating from these arguments are that the body, if indeed it has a natural biological presence, is at the same time socially constructed and, as M. Bernard asserts, this construction differs in each society: “[...] for each society, the human body is a symbol of its own structures; to take control over the body by means of rituals (in some ways magical) is always a way to take control of society” (1994:184). In this way, as Isabel Jáidar and José Perrés state, this symbolic-cultural body is: “[...] constructed from the imaginary models of identification that come from religion, myths and, derived from these, tradition that is transmitted from generation to generation” (1999:16). The inscription of tradition upon the body makes it the ideal territory to carry out an archeology of our societies and how they conceive themselves. Margarita Paz (1999) explains it in this way:

The body must be conceived as history, like a field of forces where the traces of our pulsional and emotional life palpitate and where the codes of society are rooted: the most intimate and immediate, as well as the trans-individual, the social bond without which the body as history would not exist. And, if it is history, it means that the organism has been ripped from the natural world to become body. (26)

Given this historicism of the body, it will take on a series of systems that regulate its relation with itself, as well as the interchange with other such bodies. As Paz asserts:

[...] they remain, literally, incarnate: they are habits, gestures, management of space, ways of speech, movement, sexual codes, expressive modalities of the emotions, social rhythms, and other such forms of the experiential use of the body. All these codes conform to a special governance of the body with its ethics founded in the acceptable, the desirable, the prohibited, and public and private zones: moral acceptance in the bodies that functions as second nature. (1999:27)

Thus, to think of the body from a functional and historical perspective is to enter a universe of discourse. As Paz finally asserts: “[...] the body becomes language” (1996:100) and in doing so, it is made visible and is capable of interacting with the other. Therefore, the study of the ways in which these languages are presented within a narrative construction, evidences a rewriting of history that, more than addressing a mere problem of description, situates a trans-individual experience before the form of participation in that experience. In other words, to be in the world and also to participate in it.

This is what happens to Viviana, who as a result, undergoes a new transformation. In effect, she does not only consider this to be an unjust and reproachable situation, but it also carries with it the intention to transform her; that is, in the words of Sen, she decides to assume a commitment in the face of injustice:

She tossed and turned in bed because she could not sleep. She arose and sat down in front of the computer. She looked for information on the internet. Twenty-seven million people in the world, four-hundred times more than the total number of slaves forced to cross the Atlantic from Africa, were victims of human trafficking. Eighty percent of these are women. (Belli 2010:95)

In the novel, Viviana's commitment to confronting the enslaving of women is manifested through the development of her organizational capabilities in the Party of the Erotic Left; and with the constant call for freedom as the ultimate goal, arising from the experience and observation of the body.

In this way, Gioconda Belli's novel, *The Country of Women*, retakes an old road, brought into practice during the nineteenth century, that utilizes novelistic structures in order to present a philosophical idea in narrative form, that also attempts to shape a type of consciousness among the general readership. Separating oneself from proposing the transformation of economic models based on market economy as the founding principle for the construction of new countries, causes, in the critical reader, a distancing that is also questionable in Sen's proposals. Gioconda Belli is a renowned opponent of Anastasio Somoza Debayle's dictatorship, for which she was imprisoned and forced into exile; and she is also a member of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) from the time when it was a clandestine organization (for which she transported arms, was a courier and informed the world of the injustices of Somoza's government). That such a writer and activist should produce a fictional text showing that the principal policy for this new country is centered on the consolidation of freedom, makes it worthwhile that we at least listen to, visualize and talk about, these possible, alternate roads to development.

References

- Álvarez, J.F. 2001. "Capacidades, libertades y desarrollo: Amartya Kumar Sen," in R. Maiz, comp. *Teorías políticas contemporáneas*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 381-396.
- Belli, G. 2010. *El país de las mujeres*. Bogota: Norma.
- Bernard, M. 1994. *El cuerpo, un fenómeno ambivalente*. Barcelona: Paidós.

- Cejudo Córdoba, R. 2007. "Capacidades y libertad. Una aproximación a la teoría de Amartya Sen." *Revista Internacional de Sociología (RIS)* 47:9-22.
- Conill, J. 2004. *Horizontes de economía ética. Aristóteles, Adam Smith, Amartya Sen*. Madrid: Tecnos.
- Dolto, F. 1990. *La imagen inconsciente del cuerpo*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Edo, M. 2002. "Amartya Sen y el desarrollo como libertad." Undergraduate thesis. Buenos Aires: Universidad Torcuato di Tella.
- Franco, J. 1971. *La cultura moderna en América Latina*. Mexico: Joaquín Mortíz.
- Jáidar, I. and J. Perrés. 1999. "Mitología, sincretismo y cuerpo del dolor," in S. Carrizosa Hernández, comp. *Cuerpo: significaciones e imaginarios*. Mexico: UAM-Xochimilco, 11-24.
- Paz, M. 1996. *Metáforas del cuerpo. Un estudio sobre la mujer y la danza*. Mexico: UNAM-PUAG.
- . 1999. "El cuerpo en la encrucijada de una estética de la existencia," in S. Carrizosa Hernández, comp. *Cuerpo: significaciones e imaginarios*. Mexico: UAM-Xochimilco, 25-49.
- Pedrajas, M. 2006. "La transformación ética de la racionalidad económica en Amartya Sen. Una recuperación de Adam Smith." *Quaderns de filosofia i ciencia* 36:105-117.
- Pichón Rivière, E. 1980. *Teoría del vínculo*. Buenos Aires: Nueva visión.
- Rico Bovio, A. 1998. *Las fronteras del cuerpo. Crítica a la corporeidad*. Quito: Abya-Yala.
- Sen, A. 1986. "Los tontos racionales: una crítica de los fundamentos conductistas de la teoría económica," in F. Hahn and M. Hollis, comps. *Filosofía y teoría económica*. Mexico: FCE, 172-217.
- . 1989. *Sobre ética y economía*. Madrid: Alianza.
- . 1995. *La desigualdad reexaminada*. Madrid: Alianza.
- . 2000. *Desarrollo como libertad*. Madrid: Planeta.

Online references

<www.giocondabelli.org/bell/> Consulted on May 30, 2017.

<www.partidoizquierdaerotica.com> Consulted on May 19, 2017.