



English Studies in Latin America

Sex in Santiago

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Sex in Santiago

Tony Magistrale¹

It is the middle of the afternoon, searing
hot, as is often the case throughout autumn
in downtown Santiago. In the park,
the only slice of green inside a rumbling
ocean of gray concrete rising vertically
as it tumbles out horizontally, there are many
reclining couples seeking surcease from the sun,
entwined beneath the penumbras of trees,
their humped shadows on cool grass
like pooled silhouettes of black paint.

Although hot even in the shade, men and women
press themselves together, exploring the soft
interiors of each other's mouths, reminding me
what used to drive us in high school—at drive-ins

¹ Tony Magistrale is Professor of English at the University of Vermont who specializes in Anglo-American Gothicism. He has published more than twenty books on subjects ranging from Stephen King to Edgar Allan Poe. He is also an acclaimed poet: his book *What She Says About Love* won the 2007 Bordighera Poetry Prize, and his Poem "Dora Maar" received the 2011 Literary Laundry Award of Distinction.

Magistrale recently visited Chile to deliver a series of lectures and a mini-course on Poe at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano.

Tony Magistrale

and late nights on sofas in darkened basements
before everything about sex became so much more
complicated.

Technically, what they're doing
isn't really sex—as both parties remain
fully clothed—but for me,
jogging past each set of nimbly gyrating bodies
rolled up inside the single shadow they form,
it seems almost better than sex
or at least the best part of sex,
its relentless invisible magnetism
impervious to the impediment of clothes,
to the afternoon heat, to the public display
that gathers in curious scrutiny
the envy of every passerby.