

Letras Hispanas

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Presentación

Nos complace presentar la edición 8.2 de *Letras Hispanas*. Este otoño que termina ha sido un semestre productivo en el que hemos recibido un considerable número de artículos para que fueran considerados y evaluados para su publicación. Si bien este que acaba ha sido el primer año bajo nuestra gerencia, consideramos que los resultados han sido satisfactorios. En esta edición se han publicado lecturas analíticas sobre literatura española y latinoamericana, de autores clásicos y contemporáneos, al igual que análisis culturales y sobre cine hispano.

Entre los artículos que analizan textos literarios encontrarán “Saint John of the Cross’ *Spiritual Canticle: A Christian Perspective of a Jewish Love Affair*” de David Navarro, “Aunque no veas, algo ves: la culpa en *Ojos que no ven*, de J. Á. González Sainz” de Carlos Javier García, “La recepción de la novelística umbraliana: notas para una interpretación” de Noelia Domínguez-Ramos, “Towards a Poetics of the Automobile in Contemporary Central American Fiction” de Vinodh Venkatesh, “Like Mother, Like Daughter?: Generational Memory and Dialogue in Josefina Aldecoa’s Historical Memory Trilogy” de Sarah Thomas. Por otro lado, los artículos sobre cultura y estudios filmicos que se pueden encontrar son “Intercambio de miradas y la (re)articulación de la otredad en *Extranjeras* de Helena Taberna” de Sohyun Lee, “The Aesthetics of Violence in Colombian Film: *Rodrigo D: no futuro, Apocalipsur, and Satanás*” de Richard K. Curry, y “Men in Black: Fashioning Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain” de Collin Mckinney.

El artículo de David Navarro analiza la obra del San Juan de la Cruz como hipertexto cristiano que se origina en el libro bíblico *Cantar de los Cantares* para anotar las consecuencias religiosas surgidas de la Reforma y la Contrarreforma en la España del Siglo de Oro. En “Aunque no veas, algo ves: la culpa en *Ojos que no ven*, de J. Á. González Sainz” Carlos Javier García trata los temas de la emigración, el terrorismo y el retorno del viaje, retorno en el cual encuentra casa con un ambiente salpicado de terrorismo yuxtapuesto paradójicamente a un simbolismo portador de identidad y de un orden social ideal. Noelia Domínguez-Ramos comenta la obra de Francisco Umbral y los motivos por los que esta se ha visto trivialmente relegada del ambiente académico. La importancia del automóvil y la política neoliberal en los países centroamericanos y la manera que estos se ven representados en la novela negra centroamericana es analizada en el artículo de Vinodh Venkatesh “Towards a Poetics of the Automobile in Contemporary Central American Fiction.”

En cuanto al cine se refiere, este volumen contiene dos artículos. Uno, escrito por Sohyun Lee y titulado “Intercambio de miradas y la (re)articulación de la otredad en *Extranjeras* de Helena Taberna.” Lee propone una lectura de *Extranjeras* en la cual se exploren los procesos de (re)formulación de la otredad dentro de la dinámica de los fenómenos migratorios conduciendo así a una construcción alternativa y multidimensional del “otro” en relación a un “yo” inestable y fluctuante. En “The Aesthetics of Violence in Colombian Film: *Rodrigo D: no futuro, Apocalipsur, and Satanás*” Richard K. Curry resalta que la violencia es una característica central en la estética del cine colombiano, lo cual se observa claramente en las tres películas mencionadas en el título. De esta manera, el autor deja en evidencia que la retórica de la violencia y su triunfo sobre la vida crean una ética y estética que no ofrece falsas expectativas.

Sarah Thomas analiza la trilogía narrativa de Josefina Aldecoa en relación a los efectos causados por el franquismo en su artículo “Like Mother, Like Daughter?: Generational Memory and Dialogue in Josefina Aldecoa’s Historical Memory Trilogy.” Por último, en su ensayo “Men in Black: Fashioning Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain,” Collin Mckinney propone que en el siglo XIX la preocupación por la apariencia llegó a tener más importancia que en épocas anteriores gracias a los cambios sociales, la reformulación del género y la popularidad de la fisonomía.

Esta revolución, en la indumentaria masculina, tiene motivos contradictorios ya que el hombre que llevara un traje negro intentaba esconderse, evitando la mirada de los demás. Así, según Mckinney, la vestimenta se convierte en símbolo polisémico, convirtiendo al hombre del siglo XIX español tanto en el objeto como en el sujeto de la mirada.

Con esta colección de artículos, el equipo editorial de *Letras Hispanas* se congratula por haber completado su primer año en el Department of Modern Languages de Texas State University-San Marcos, entidad a la cual agradece todo el apoyo brindado. Igualmente los directores aprovechan para expresar su gratitud a todos los colaboradores y personal involucrado en la producción y edición de *Letras Hispanas*.

*Sergio M. Martínez y Agustín Cuadrado
diciembre de 2012*

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TITLE: Saint John of the Cross' *Spiritual Canticle*: A Christian Perspective of a Jewish Love Affair

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ABSTRACT: The religious consequences of the Reformation and Counter Reformation in Europe forged in Spain's Golden Age literature a new theological concept which sought to transform the ways and customs which, from that point, prevailed in the religious sphere. Individual identification with Christ became the engine that drove the believer in his approach to God, launching a new relationship between man and his Creator. This idea led to the production of several important mystical pieces, including *Spiritual Canticle* by Spanish Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591). The aim of this article is to analyze this work as a Christian hypertext of the biblical text of *Song of Songs*. In the Spanish version, Saint John borrows the story and rich imagery of the Biblical account and transforms it to create a similar mystical love affair with its own theological background. In this article, three aspects from both works will be explored and compared: characters, scenery, and the metaphors of the dove, the human eye and wine.

KEYWORDS: Hypotext, Hypertext, Jewish, Christian, Exegesis, Marriage

RESUMEN: Las consecuencias religiosas surgidas de la Reforma y Contrarreforma en Europa originaron dentro de la España del Siglo de Oro una nueva concepción teológica que perseguía transformar los modos y costumbres que hasta ese momento imperaban en el ámbito religioso. La identificación con Cristo se convirtió en el motor que impulsaba la conversión del individuo y su acercamiento a Dios, estableciéndose un nuevo modo de relación entre el hombre y su Creador. Esta idea derivó en la producción de un número considerable de piezas místicas como *Cántico espiritual* de San Juan de la Cruz (1542-1591). El objetivo de este artículo persigue analizar la obra del místico español como un hipertexto cristiano de la fuente original bíblica del *Cantar de los Cantares*. En la versión castellana, San Juan transforma y moldea el contenido del poema bíblico para crear una pieza similar de corte amoroso, pero dotada con su propio trasfondo teológico. Para ello, se discutirán y compararán tres aspectos empleados en ambos trabajos que proporcionan una perspectiva diferente en su significado alegórico: los personajes, el paisaje, y las figuras simbólicas de la paloma, el ojo humano y el vino.

PALABRAS CLAVE: hipotexto, hipertexto, judío, cristiano, exégesis, matrimonio

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Saint John of the Cross' *Spiritual Canticle*: A Christian Perspective of a Jewish Love Affair

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The new philosophical and literary concepts developed during the Renaissance marked a return to the divine and to the religious study of secular subjects, a feature that had already appeared in the Middle Ages (Wardropper 153). In the medieval period the literary world was dominated by the position of the Church, while in the Renaissance a return to themes of divine love became one of the most common benchmarks of religious orders and spiritual thought. They carried a profound emotional meaning, which did not exclude intimacy or affection, and the lyric became their channel of transmission (Asún xxi). Humanism encouraged the development of new narrative themes, such as the exaltation of nature as a source of life, harmony, passion, and love as opposed to physical and material union. The Platonic movement influenced a re-examination of the concepts of body and soul. Among the authors who projected this spiritual and loving message was the Spanish mystic, Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591), who did so in his sixteenth century piece *Spiritual Canticle*. The poem is made up of thirty-nine stanzas written at different periods of time. Based on the biblical text *Song of Songs* it describes the journey of the soul from when it begins to serve God until it reaches its final stage of perfection—the spiritual marriage with God.¹ The aim of this article is to analyze Saint John of the Cross' work as a Christian hypertext of the biblical source that itself borrowed the mystical Jewish framework and its characters' love affair. In this sense, the story is transformed to create a similar mystical meaning for a Christian audience

with its own theological and cultural background excluding any geo-political reference present in the biblical account.²

The anthropocentric ideas of the Renaissance that placed man as the centre of the universe reflected religious material in the form of *Christicism*: Christ became the origin of life and the pathway for the human soul to achieve its divine union with God. In the case of Saint John of the Cross, he conceived the notion that the only way to approach God was through Christ, and love for God and His Son became the driving force and central message of salvation. His Christian mysticism was founded on the oppositional conceptions of how to define the world and God's relationship with mankind: apophatic and cataphatic. The former referred to a negative conception of theology, describing what God was not, while the latter defined God by a positive and affirming perspective. Apophatic theology found its origin in Greek and Hebrew sources. In the pre-Socratic and Platonic thought, the idea of divinity was conceived of as "ultimately a transcendent being known internally through intuition" (Ellis 111). The concept of negative theology was developed by the Neo-Platonist movement and had a great influence on the Jewish, Islamic and Christian mystical traditions during the first centuries of the Common Era. The most important figure in this aspect was Plotinus (c. III), who in his work *The Enneads* outlined the idea of Being or God as an entity "absolutely transcendent, indescribably indivisible" (III, 17). Another influential character in apophatic theology was the Syrian monk Dionysius the Areopagite (c. VI). On the basis of Neo-Platonist

theories he held that God was above Being, and divine knowledge was accessed through absolute negation. In other words, Dionysius stated that the way to know and understand God is explaining not who or what He is but what He is not (Dionysius 203). On the other hand, cataphatic theology supported the ability to know God through reason and contact with reality. Creation, seen as the work of God, became the instrument through which man could discover the attributes of the Creator. Christian mysticism portrayed then not only the individual's personal experience and direct contact with God through ecstasy or deep meditation, but was also conceived of as a historical phenomenon (Scholem 1961: 19).

The exegetical interpretations of biblical texts played a very important role in the development of Jewish and Christian mysticism. Among the most influential works was *Song of Songs*, or *Canticum Canticorum* as known in the Vulgate version, one of the canonical books of the Old Testament.³ It is conceived as a series of love poems within a single dramatic unity that narrates the story of a young beautiful maiden known as Shulamite who is captured by King Solomon to become part of his harem of wives.⁴ Solomon, with the help of his concubines, tries to win the love of the girl who is already betrothed to a young shepherd of the region. After four failed attempts and, as homage to her loyalty and true love to her beloved, Solomon releases the girl who is allowed to return to her country home and lover. The text, read in a non-figurative form, represents a hymn of profane and erotic discourses that alternates with dialogues between the Shulamite and her male lover. The allegorical interpretation of the *Song* in Judaism first appeared in the *Talmud* (150-500 ACE) and more particularly in the *Targum*, a Hebrew commentary on the same text in the sixth century. It was interpreted as the love of Jehovah (Husband) towards His chosen people (Wife), referencing the Jewish exodus from Egypt, their journey through the desert, and their covenant at Sinai (Buttrick 32). Jewish exegesis also interpreted it as a

royal wedding between God and the People of Israel (Robinson 191). This allegorical heritage was passed on to Christian exegetes along with the canon of the Hebrew Bible. However, in Christian readings of the *Song of Songs*, especially as popularized by Origen of Alexandria, the interpretation of the poem read by Jews as the love between God and Israel found their "true" sense as the love between Christ and the human soul (Matter 51; Suarès 8). Saint John of the Cross composed his *Spiritual Canticle* with the same connotation; its protagonists are represented by a bride and her bridegroom, both symbolizing the spiritual marriage between the Christian soul (the wife) and Christ (the Husband) in a similar way as the love relationship between the young Shulamite and her shepherd from the biblical account. The poem avoids almost entirely the religious subject, making it a secular text following the same pattern as *Song of Songs* in content and theme. The structure of the *Canticle* is organized with three interventions of the chorus, and two dialogues between the lovers (Tavard 129):

Bride	stanza 1-4
Chorus (I)	stanza 5
Bride	stanzas 6-12
Bridegroom	stanzas 13
Bride	stanzas 14-27
Chorus (II)	stanza 28
Bridegroom	stanzas 29-31
Bride	stanzas 32-33
Bridegroom	stanzas 34-35
Bride	stanzas 36-39
Chorus (III)	stanza 40

The structure of *Song of Songs* is made of 8 stanzas with its characters and plot distributed as follows (Robinson 192-94; Segal 470-90):

Stanzas 1-2	Shulamite longs for her absent lover
	Chorus of the Daughters of Jerusalem
	Solomon's attempt to win Shulamite
Stanzas 2-3	Shulamite's dream of her shepherd lover

Stanzas 3-4	Solomon's proposal to Shulamite
Stanzas 4-5	Encounter between Shulamite and her beloved
Stanzas 5-6	Chorus of women
Stanzas 6-7	Solomon's third proposal to Shulamite
Stanzas 7-8	Solomon's final proposal to Shulamite Reunion between Shulamite and shepherd and return to Shulam

Saint John of the Cross maintains several aspects of the hypotext: the landscape and geographical setting, the flora and fauna, as well as the temporal space of the story. The biblical text places the story in an area that included part of the Persian Empire and the regions administered by the kingdom of Israel under King Solomon. This information is obtained through names of places, such as the vineyards of Ein Gedi, the mountains of Beth, or the forest of Lebanon.⁵ The Spanish poet employs a similar natural setting surrounded by trees, meadows, valleys, mountains, rocks and pillars, which bring to mind the Sierra Nevada in Granada, where the author wrote several of the stanzas. Furthermore, the texture and description of the landscape evokes the style of the Italian eclogue (Tavard 46)⁶ and lacks of a political overtone found in *Song of Songs*. The scenery description has an important role in both works, representing the idea of Paradise on earth and God as the Source and Creator of life. In contrast, Saint John makes use of this landscape to project Christ, represented by the Husband, as the Creator of this nature, providing his text with its own original and personal structure:

You forest, thicket, dene,
Which my beloved set in close array;
You meadow-land so green,
Spangled with blossoms gay,
Tell me, oh, tell me, has he pass'd your way?
(SC 4)

In this respect, Colin P. Thompson remarks that,

It is clear that San Juan took considerable liberties with the Biblical text in the creation of his poem. He used the *Song* not as a whole, but as a quarry from which he could draw his poetic material. He was not interested in preserving the sequence of images he found in the *Song*, but in the evocative quality of each, and where he thought it right he reshuffled them and altered them. (69)

Stanzas 14 and 15 are the most significant regarding the Bridegroom's [Christ] creative power, portraying him as the source of life through the bride's words [the human soul]. In his own commentary on *Spiritual Canticle*, Saint John explains that,

[in these two stanzas] the Bride says that her Beloved [Christ] is all these things, both in Himself and also for her. [...] It must be understood that each of these grandeurs which are spoken of is God, and they are all of them God; for, inasmuch as in this case the souls is united with God, it feels that all things are God in one simple being [...]. (76-77)

Saint John is expressing in his verses the doctrine that the presence and being of God may be read in the natural order. His creation and creatures testify to His existence. As Thompson adds,

Nature does not provide the colouring for human emotions, but seems rather to be a participant in the unfolding drama, a protagonist independent of the others. In this sense she is 'outside' the poem's action: not as a passive onlooker, but as a force to be reckoned with in the course of the search the poem is describing [...] Nature is endowed with the power of speech. Woods, thickets, and flowery meadows are questioned to see if the Beloved has passed through them [...]. (99)

A feature of the *Canticle* is the lack of logical order of the stanzas, due to the influence of Hebrew syntax used by Saint John who tries to imitate in his verses the Hebrew syntactical structure from the hypotext. In this attempt of “Hebraizing” his *Canticle*, Luce López Baralt suggests that,

The ‘Canticle’ literary doubles the nuptial mystery because we noticed that reading is the work of a single author [...] a Renaissance writes composing an Italian style poem which its content is more biblical and Semitic than European. (38)

Saint John’s version may have been based on earlier translated versions of *Song of Songs* from Hebrew into Latin and vernacular, or he might have also attended courses on Hebrew language at Salamanca University between 1565 and 1566 which allowed him to read the original version (Rodríguez-San Pedro Bezares 249). Thus, he retains the Hebrew syntactic scheme and applies it into Castilian directly, in a similar way that other contemporary authors had done with Latin (Ynduráin, “Mi amado” 171). This can be observed in the absence of the Spanish verb *ser* (to be) particularly in stanza 14 which consists exclusively of nominal phrases. This poetic construction is due to the arbitrariness of the Hebrew language pertaining to the use of the verb ‘to be’. Although “to be” exists as a form, the verb is usually omitted in written and verbal input. The Semitic syntactical structure Saint John employs provides textual parallels in both content and style with the source narrative:

My love [is] as the hills,
The lonely valleys clad with forest-trees,
The rushing, sounding hills,
Strange isles in distant seas,
 Lover-like whispering, murmurs of the breeze.

My love [is] hush-of-night,
[Is] dawn’s first breathings in the heav’n above,
Still music veil’d from sight,
Calm that can echo move,
The feast that brings new strength—the feast of love.
(SC 14-15)

This similar, yet different structure shared by both pieces in the geographical and temporal settings, is also reflected in the conception of the characters. The description of the protagonists and the allegorical meaning of several concepts—the dove, the human eye, and wine—in *Spiritual Canticle* represent two main features that distinguish both works, providing Saint John’s poem with a well defined Christian message. The main characters of the hypotext are King Solomon, the Shulamite and her beloved, as well as a choir formed by a group of maidens and the brothers of the beloved.⁷ Their physical descriptions are very abundant in details, especially concerning the young maiden. Saint John’s hypertext, however, disregards the physical descriptions of the protagonists. The *Canticle*’s bride does not receive the physical attention that the young Shulamite does. This detail, as noted by José C. Nieto, is there because “Jewish anthropology is not ascetic and not ashamed of the body, a creation of God” (106). The Spanish mystic only maintains one common feature between the bride and the Shulamite from *Song of Songs*—the bride’s dark skin. Moreover, the verse repeated is taken directly from the Vulgate Latin version used by Saint John for his *Canticle*. Additionally, the apology for the dark skin in stanza 33 is similar to popular ballads compiled in the Spanish *Romancero*. As stated by Dámaso Alonso, this feature did not appear in cult lyric that regarded blonde colour to beauty (107):⁸

Despise not my humble ways,
For if my colour is brown,
On me you may well gaze,
For your look is the crown,
Of every grace and beauty I have. (SC 33)

The geographical origin of Husband and wife from the hypertext are unknown; the latter does not form part of a harem of women as occurs in the hypotext and Saint John does not include the figure of the king. This absence of the character of Solomon allows

the poet to avoid the geo-political element of the biblical text from his poem, thus enhancing its Christian message. Finally, the chorus of the hypertext is formed by a group of shepherds and by nature, who the bride addresses directly:

Ye shepherds, soon to be
Among those sheepcotes on the hillside high,
If ye perchance should see
Him that I love pass by,
Say to him that I suffer, grieve and die. (SC 2)

Spiritual Canticle reflects several symbolic love images adopted from *Song of Songs*. The different symbols and figures used by Saint John stand for one or more abstract ideas, more or less popularly attributed to it. The idea conveyed by these symbols is in direct relation to the main theme of love, of union and of transformation. They are centred on the lovers either expressing their own personal characteristics, which contribute to their union, or indicating the actions and media necessary to attain this end. However, I will argue here that these are employed with a different allegorical meaning than portrayed in the biblical text. These images refer to the metaphor of the dove, the eye, and the wine. As it happened with the Christian meaning of nature provided by Saint John in which Christ is reflected as the Creator of life, he envelops these three love-related concepts with the same Christian message in the *Canticle*.

The symbol of the dove was used as an emblem of love in previous lyric traditions: it was the bird of Syrian goddesses Ishtar and Astarte, the Greek goddess Aphrodite, and the Roman Venus (Ferber 61). It represents affection as well as virtue, purity, innocence and happiness. The young Shulamite and her beloved are portrayed on several occasions as a dove in the hypotext. She is described as having “dove’s eyes”, and like a dove, she is high up on the mountain out of reach, but is nevertheless nearby.⁹ Both expressions suggested to Jewish exegesis that “just as clear eyes indicate physical health, so Israel has

religious leaders—the eyes of the community—who will lead them to spiritual health” (Kravitz and Olitzky 10). Similarly, her beloved appears personified as a dove descending from heaven in the Shulamite’s garden.¹⁰ The *Targum* interpreted this verse as the acceptance of the prayers of the prophets and the people by God. Like a person gathering lilies from the garden, God has gathered His people from Babylonia by bringing them out of exile through the actions of leaders such as Cyrus, Ezra, and the elders of Judah (Kravitz and Olitzky 72). In Christian exegesis, Origen of Alexandria was the first exegete to relate the dove with the Holy Spirit in his commentary on the *Song of Songs*: “[...] for the dove is the emblem of the Holy Spirit to understand the Law and the Prophets in a spiritual sense, therefore to have the eyes of a dove” (170). Furthermore, he emphasized the meaning of love and fidelity attributed to this creature:

They say it is the nature of the turtle-dove that the male bird never mates with any female but one, and the female similarly will not suffer more than a single mate; [...]. This bird spends its life in the more hidden and remote localities, away from crowds; it loves either mountain wastes, or the secret parts of the forests, is always found far from the multitude, and it is stranger to crowds. (146, 241)

Saint John employs the same image of the dove to conceive of it as a Christian symbol. In this case, to embody the bride through her bridegroom’s words like a dove flying over nature:

[Bride] Withdraw thy gaze apart,
For, lo! I soar aloft.
[Bridegroom] Return, my love!
See where the stricken hart
Looks from the hill above
What time he hears thy beating wings, my dove!
(SC 13)

The scene of the flight by the *Canticle*’s wife or human soul can be interpreted as the moment of ecstasy in her union with her Husband or

Christ. Through this mystical encounter the soul reaches the Divine. In this sense, the symbol of the dove is directly linked to the flight image; both symbolize the elevation of the soul, a constant of the Christian tradition, and in this particular stanza are employed together to enhance the meaning of purity. The flight, like the dove, becomes a pure element, while the ground or earth is stained and degrading, clouding the mind. As Duke Mancho adds, “in ascending air, the soul is released and purified, stripped of imperfections [...] and allows air to immerse itself in the solitude of the Godhead, deepened in the celestial spaces while transforming the spirit” (242, 246). Furthermore, this Christian message is also connected to several images from the New Testament such as Mary offering two doves after the birth of Christ, and the Holy Spirit descending on Christ at His baptism, enhancing its loving meaning in Christian terms (Stewart 138).¹¹ Like the young shepherd descending in the form of a dove in the Shulamite’s garden, the *Canticle’s* turtledove (human soul) returns to her Beloved (Christ) who is waiting in a green and flowery place that evokes the Garden of Eden:¹²

See, where the milk-white dove
Bears to the ark the pledge of flood-freed ground,
And the comrade of her love
The turtle-dove has found,
On verdant banks, with pastures all around.
(SC 34)

Along with the dove, the eye image is also borrowed in *Spiritual Canticle*. The eye is the part of the face that receives more descriptions in both poems, expressing feelings, physical sensation and perception (Ferber 71). However, Saint John portrays this image with a Christian message based on biblical exegesis by Spanish contemporary spiritual writers such as Fray Luis de León and Benito Arias Montano. To do so, he projects the Hebrew word for eye (*ayin*) in a physical sense: firstly, like a stream or source, and secondly with a deeper value, by adding the adjective

‘crystalline’.¹³ This is shown in stanza 12 where he employs a personification with the image of Christ as a *crystalline sparkling stream*:

O crystalline spring so fair,
Might now within thy silvery depths appear,
E’er as I linger there,
Those features ever dear
Which on my soul I carry graven clear!
(SC 12)

This stream or fountain is, on the one hand clear like crystal water, and on the other hand a symbol of purity and faith of Christ the Husband, as the mystic poet describes in his commentary on the *Canticle*:

She calls faith ‘crystalline’ because it is from Christ, her Husband, and it has the properties of crystal in being pure in its truths, and strong, and clear, free from errors and natural forms [...] from it there flow to the souls the waters of all spiritual blessings. (65)

The image of the fountain has its roots in a long tradition from the fountain of Narcissus, and the beach or river in which shepherds reflect themselves to the pastoral character of Albanio in Garcilaso de la Vega (Alonso 33). The reader therefore encounters the allegorical image of the bride’s soul who tries to enter into the crystal clear waters in the hope of encountering the face of God, “those features ever dear” (SC 12: 4; Ellis 64). As Helmut A. Hatzfeld says,

the only desire of the soul is that the fountain of faith, whose dark depths contain Christ and His mysteries, becomes transparent and shows the eyes that look at her, the eyes of Christ, that is, the rays of His divine essence. (56)

This image, which appears in previous works such as Plotinus’ *Enneads*, is adapted by Saint John to project water as a purifying element used by the bride [human soul] to wash herself in preparation for her sacred marriage with her Bridegroom [Christ].¹⁴ It also

represents the Holy Spirit entering in the believer who accepts Christ's message of salvation as it appears in the New Testament.¹⁵ In contrast, the image of the stream that bathes the Garden of Eden with fresh water in *Song of Songs* symbolizes the four major rivers of antiquity, the origin of life, and Israel.¹⁶ They also portray the physical cleansing of the female's body, an important part of woman's daily obligations in traditional Judaism.¹⁷

The last symbol to analyze is the metaphor of wine, also found in both poems. Wine has been represented in classical literature as Dionysus's blood offered to the gods, as well as being synonymous with love in classical works like Ovid's *Ars Amandi* (Ferber 237). In Genesis, it embodied one of God's gifts to humanity along with wheat. Jewish exegesis interpreted the image of wine as a perfect union between two lovers, established by the Old Covenant between God and Israel.¹⁸ The first image of wine in *Song of Songs* appears in the first verse with an erotic connotation: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth / for thy love is better than wine" (1: 2). The Shulamite's love is more intense and deeper than the well being sensation caused by this drink. Later on, the vineyards are used not only as a geographical setting of the poem, but also as a mechanism to describe the Shulamite's body by her beloved. In this case, it is represented in a more physical manner to evoke the covenant between Israel and the Lord:

[...] Thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy nose like apples;
And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved,
That goeth down sweetly,
Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.
(SS 7: 8-9)

The relationship between wine and the allegory of marriage amid God and Israel is observed on three terms that appear metaphorically intertwined in the biblical text. They derive from the same morphological root [*k-d-sh*]: *kiddush*, *kiddushin* and *kaddosh* (Pike 129). These three concepts do not

appear explicitly in the text, however, their combination through allegorical images projected on the young Shulamite, her lover and the wine emphasize the symbolic idea of this holy marriage between Jehovah and Israel. The *kiddush* ceremony, or *sanctification*, is the prayer recited during the blessing over the wine at the opening of the Sabbath. This celebration is central to Jewish life, and serves as a reminder of the world's creation and the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Hebrew literature and poetry sometimes refer to the Sabbath as a bride, which commemorates the covenant between Yahweh and Israel (Dosick 127). The next term is *kiddushin*, or *holiness*, which refers to the marriage ceremony. And lastly, *kaddosh*, or *sacred*, relates to the Holy Ark or Ark of the Covenant (*Aron HaKodesh*) that contained the Ten Commandments that sealed the sacred pact between God and the Israelites. These three concepts are reflected metaphorically in the following verse:

[Shulamite]: I would lead thee and bring thee
Into the house of my mother,
She who used to instruct me.
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,
The nectar of my pomegranate.
...
[...] I awakened you under the apple tree.
(SS 8: 2, 5)

The *Targum* interpreted this verse with the Messianic era. The people of Israel, personified in the young Shulamite, speak to the Messiah, and together they will bring him to the Temple where he will teach Israel to fear the Divine and walk in the way of God (Kravitz and Olinski 95). The allegorical figures employed in the stanza establish the use of these three symbolic terms with the ideas of marriage; the young Shulamite invites her beloved into "the house of my mother" (SS 8, 2: 2). This place represents the holy (*kaddosh*) setting in which the couple meets to consume their union. The image evokes the Holy Temple built in Jerusalem in which the

Ark of the Covenant was placed to remind the Israelites of their agreement with God. Then she offers her beloved “to drink of spiced wine, / the nectar of my pomegranate” (SS 8, 2: 4-5). The expression “spiced wine” comes from the Hebrew *yayin harekah*, and it is used to describe the traditional cup of wine mixed with perfume and aromatic liquors drunk by the bride and groom during the Jewish wedding ceremony. The young Shulamite is described throughout the poem as a bride (*kalah*) by her lover. This analogy intensifies her role as a spouse within this holy union with her shepherd. It also permits the couple to be perceived as husband and wife, reminding the reader of the *kiddushin* or marriage ceremony. Finally, the last image employed, the wine (*kiddush*), appears throughout the poem to highlight this sacred union consummated “under the apple tree” (SS 8: 5).

In *Spiritual Canticle*, Saint John uses the same sensual image of the wine related to marriage as appears in the hypotext. However, he portrays it by reflecting the Christian message of the union of the bride and bridegroom, personified in Christ and the human soul. Like the couple from *Song of Songs* they celebrate their spiritual union with “spiced wine”, and fulfilled “beneath the apple-flower”:

[Bride]: [...] To taste thy spiced wine,
To be anointed with thy balm divine.

Within his secret store,
Of my beloved drank I deep indeed.

...
[Bridegroom]: Beneath the apple-flower
To plight my troth to thee, my love, I came.

...
[Bride]: Mount we at last on high
Ev'n to the caverns of the rocky mine.
Enter we, thou and I,
Those secret haunts divine,
To drink of the pomegranate's ruddy wine.
(SC 17: 4-5; 18: 1-2; 29: 1-2; 37)

“The house of my mother” (8: 2) shown in *Song of Songs* that symbolizes the Holy Temple, is replaced by the Christian mystic with the expression “caverns of the rocky mine”

(36: 2). This rock represents Christ as exposed in the writings of Saint Paul.¹⁹ The deep caverns contain the mysteries of Christ. The bride does not enter alone in the cave but asks her bridegroom to come along with her. They both take part in this holy entrance (*kaddosh*), and ascending to the rock they prepare to celebrate their encounter like a married couple (*kiddushin*). By tasting together the wine of the pomegranates they illustrate the joy of their sacred mutual love (*kiddush*) embodied, in this case, in the Christian Eucharist. The term “new wine” (*adobado vino*) used by Saint John relates to the “spiced wine” from the biblical source.²⁰ The author projects a literal meaning of this expression in his commentary on the *Canticle*:

This spiced wine is another and far greater favour which God grants at times to souls that have made progress, inebriating them in the Holy Spirit with a wine of love that is sweet, delectable and strong, for the which cause she calls it spiced wine (324).

This Christian interpretation of the “new wine”, unlike the Old Covenant where it symbolizes the union between God and Israel and the world to come, in Saint John's poem it enhances the New Covenant from the New Testament under the figure of Christ, overshadowing the former (Monferrer Sala 363).²¹ The wine, like spiced perfume, consecrates the spiritual union between the couple through the sacrament of the Eucharist. Through this way, Saint John manages to illuminate to his Christian audience the significance of this sacred union. The human soul (wife) and Christ (Husband) reach their final destination, becoming a marriage, in a single holy bond and communion.

Final remarks

Spiritual Canticle is without a doubt one of the most symbolic and representative poems of the sixteenth century Spanish mysticism. Saint John of the Cross, as evidenced by *Song of Songs*, created a mystical poem

during a period of time where the emerging aesthetic and philosophical ideas of Platonism dominated, leading to an amalgam of secular and Christian elements. These secular and religious works shared the same rhythm, vocabulary and themes. As the rest of his contemporary mystics, Saint John's human soul's goal was its union with God. The way to pursue this was through Christ, and love became the driving force and central message of the poet's work. Thus, taking the two lovers from *Song of Songs* Saint John projected in his *Canticle* the symbol of the union of soul with its transcendent and crystalline source, combining the Neo-Platonist aesthetics with Christian mysticism. Through allegorical interpretation and using the translation of the biblical account, Saint John provided his hypertext with a Christ-centered view, where the figures of Jehovah and Israel from Hebrew exegesis are transformed into Christ and the human soul. The message of the Old Covenant between God and His people set out from the exodus from Egypt, is now transformed by the poet into a New Covenant between Christ and the human soul, remaining in line with Christian exegesis. Christ guarantees the gift of the Spirit and the Father's love, and He becomes the ultimate way to achieve union with God. Love becomes the instrument that enables this mystical union, and therefore, this use of love in the *Canticle* is the mechanism to bridge the gap between the human being (soul) and the Divine (Christ). Saint John's interpretation of some symbolic images is used to project the message of Christ's love and his marriage to the soul. The landscape and nature represent Christ as the creative source of life. The dove is the symbol of the couple's immaculate love, and the Holy Spirit. The crystal fountain and the eye symbolize the purity of the Husband, while the spiced wine seals the couple's sacred union. The arch-typical image of the beloved couple simplifies, in an effective manner, the mysterious and love relationship between God and the human soul in a similar approach to the more profane version of the hypotext. In this way, Saint

John captivates the attention of his audience in order to incite them to begin, with courage and resolution, the arduous ascetic path that prepares the human soul for its encounter with the Divine.

Notes

¹Saint John wrote the first 31 stanzas of the poem during his captivity in Toledo in 1578. After his release from prison he moved temporarily to Baeza, in the southern province of Jaén where he might have written stanzas 32 to 34 (Macdonald 167; Ynduráin 2002: xxxiv-xxxvi). In 1584, during his stay in Granada he added five more stanzas by request of a Carmelite nun from the convent, as well as a comprehensive review of his *Canticle*. Later on, Saint John reshaped and expanded the text altering the order of some stanzas and redirecting certain passages of the poem. The result was a second version of the poem made of 40 stanzas and known as *Canticle B* or *Codex of Jaén*, while the first version, containing 39 stanzas became known as *Canticle A* or *Codex of Sanlúcar de Barrameda* (Tavard 37). The first complete edition of his *Canticle* was published in 1630 (Ynduráin, "Introducción" xxiii). This article has used the version of *Canticle A* from the translated text *The Spiritual Canticle & Poems* by Allison Peers, following the order in which the stanzas were printed in the Sanlúcar codex, with Stanza XI added. The quotations from *Song of Songs* are extracted from the revised version of King James Bible edited by George Arthur Buttrick et al. The initials SS (*Song of Songs*) and SC (*Spiritual Canticle*) have been used to quote both works throughout the article.

²Gerard Genette defines *intertextuality* as "a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts [...] the actual presence of one text within another" (1). As part of this connection the author distinguishes the relationship uniting a text B, known as *hypertext*, to an earlier text A or *hypotext* (5). The *hypotext* represents the source narrative, while the *hypertext* is a new version based on the *hypotext*.

³Some sources have ascribed *Song of Songs* to King Solomon; however, considering the topic of the text, this theory has been rejected. Most scholars agree with the idea of several scribes as the authors of the text who might have belonged to a poetic school during Solomon's reign between 970 and 930 BCE (Segal 481-82; Suarès 8).

⁴The word *shulamite* comes from the village of Shulam or Shunam, the girl's country home in the Galilee region (see Joshua 19: 18). It has also been connected with the words *shalom* (peace) and *Shalem* (perfect) in reference to the harmonious union of the spouses (Pike 158). It may also refer to the feminine form of *Solomon* (Jasper and Prickett 187).

⁵"My beloved is my cluster of henna blooms from the vineyards of Ein Gedi [...] and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel. [...] King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon" (1:14; 2:17; 3:9).

⁶These types of physical images are found in the hypotext: *vineyards* (1: 14), *trees of the wood* (2: 3), *mountains and hills* (2: 8), or *clefts of the rock* (2: 14).

⁷O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. [...] Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? (SS 1: 5-7)

⁸The Vulgate text reads as follows: "nolite me considerare quod fusca sim quia decoloravit me sol filii matris meae pugnaverunt contra me posuerunt me custodem in vineis vineam meam non custodivi" (SS 1: 6). The King James Version also translates the text directly from its Latin source: "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept".

⁹Behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes [...] O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely [...] My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother [...]. (SS 1: 15; 2: 14; 6: 9)

¹⁰"My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (SS 6: 2).

¹¹Luke 2: 22-24:

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every

male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons'.

Matthew 3:16: "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him".

¹²Marcel Bataillon affirms that since Aristotle and Pliny the Elder the symbols of the dove represented marital fidelity, was represented by the dove, not the turtledove, which was later on adopted by Christian patristic (291-306).

¹³The eye is one of the four bodily "fountains", the other three being mouth, skin and urethra. In the case of the eye, cleansing through tears is produced in estates of grief or sorrow, leading to a more spiritual purification (Hoffman 220; Pike 102).

¹⁴In Book I of the *Enneads*, the same purifying message of the soul can be found:

[...] When therefore the soul is purified, she becomes form and reason, altogether incorporeal, intellectual, and wholly of the divine order whence is the fountain of beauty and all that is akin thereto. [...] Therefore, we must investigate the beautiful and good, and the ugly and evil, by the same process; and in the highest rank we must place the Beautiful Itself, which is also the Good Itself, of which Intellect is the immediate emanation and the first beautiful thing. (I, Tractate 6)

¹⁵See Ephesians 5: 25-27:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

See John 7: 38: "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

¹⁶These four main rivers are Arnon, Jabbok, Jordan, and Yarmuk (Kravitz and Olinski 52).

¹⁷The *Targum* associated the sealed fountain with the woman's chastity that is pure and preserved in her walled garden. This image of water

represents also a reference to one of women's *mitzvot* or commandments, the ritual immersion of Jewish women in the *mikvah* for their spiritual and physical cleansing (Kravitz and Olinski 54).

¹⁸Genesis 27: 28: "Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine".

¹⁹See 1 Corinthians 10: 4: "and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ."

²⁰In the original version: "[...] al adobado vino, / emisiones de bálsamo divino. / En la interior bodega / de mi Amado bebí [...]" (SC 17: 4-5; 18: 1-2).

²¹See Matthew 2:22: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles." The idea of wine as a couple's union in the New Testament takes all its essence at the scene of the *Wedding at Cana*. The miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding represents the new covenant and the sacrament of baptism as the new pact with God through Christ, replacing the old covenant at Mount Sinai (John 2: 7-10).

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TITLE: Aunque no veas, algo ves: la culpa en *Ojos que no ven*, de J. Á. González Sainz

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ABSTRACT: Emigration, terrorism, and return home come together in the story of a man that emigrates from the rural country to the industrial north where he discovers signs that his son might be part of a terrorist group. He appeals then to a strict symbolic code that signifies a unified sense of personal identity and social idealism. But that sense of unity cannot be complete.

The plot uncovers the illusion that the subject's internal moral code tensions can be sutured by the public discourse used to maintain it. By stressing the compulsive need of the character to stay within a unified symbolic order, *Ojos que no ven* exposes the tensions and paradoxes between the public discourse to maintain the appearance within the law, and the internal moral code that goes beyond what is demanded by the public decorum.

KEYWORDS: J. Á. González Sainz, *Ojos que no ven*, terrorism, Spain, symbolic order, ethics, fiction

RESUMEN: Emigración, terrorismo y retorno a casa confluyen en la historia de un hombre que emigra del campo a un lugar industrial del norte, donde descubrirá signos de que su hijo podría formar parte de un grupo terrorista. Apela entonces a un estricto código simbólico portador de identidad personal unida a un orden social ideal. Pero la unidad no puede ser completa.

La trama socava la ilusión de que un estricto discurso público puede suturar las tensiones del código moral. Al acentuarse la necesidad compulsiva de permanecer dentro de un orden simbólico unificado, *Ojos que no ven* muestra las tensiones y las paradojas existentes entre el discurso público, vinculado con las apariencias dentro de la ley, y el código moral interno, que trasciende lo que exige el decoro público.

PALABRAS CLAVE: J. Á. González Sainz, *Ojos que no ven*, terrorismo, España, orden simbólico, ética, ficción

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Aunque no veas, algo ves: la culpa en *Ojos que no ven*, de J. Á. González Sainz

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Pudiera sorprender la dureza de *Ojos que no ven*, tal vez excesiva, dirán algunos, en la medida en que la novela se centra en el sentimiento de culpa precisamente del personaje más abierto a los valores de la racionalidad ilustrada y poseedor de una conciencia reflexiva que se detiene en consideraciones éticas y en valores como el irrenunciable derecho a la vida. Una consecuencia de esta perspectiva es que se hace más visible la exigencia vigilante de mantener abiertos los ojos. Al poner en primer plano el pecado de omisión de un personaje que valora los hechos desde la integridad y cuyas omisiones e inhibiciones carecen de responsabilidad judicial, la novela señala tanto el rechazo de la violencia criminal como el discurso exculpatorio de quienes se agarran a ideas y excusas justificativas. A través de la confesión de las inhibiciones propias del personaje se señalan otras omisiones.

Lejos de limitarse la novela a “ratificar los decálogos éticos y políticos oficiales” y a buscar solamente la “adhesión a lo consabido” (Peinado),¹ en estas páginas me propongo mostrar, por un lado, que el acto confesional forma parte de un proceso narrativo en el que actúan las resistencias y recursos de quien, en última instancia, intenta desentenderse de cuanto suponga un impedimento para aliviar su pesadumbre; por otro lado, que el proceso narrativo a la vez puede ser revelador de los pliegues y trampas del lenguaje. Se busca así contribuir a la comprensión de los mecanismos narrativos del sentimiento de culpabilidad y su relación con el mundo simbólico y con la identidad moral del sujeto. Antes de pasar a examinar *Ojos que no ven*, y dado que lo confesional es un componente configurador de la novela, es preciso aludir brevemente al peso que el discurso confesional tiene en nuestra época.

Lo confesional

Como es sabido, las prácticas confesionales ocupan un lugar muy destacado en la cultura de nuestro tiempo. Si el simulacro, la imitación, la verdad fingida, el artificio, la ambivalencia epistémica entre ficción y verdad y, en general, el distanciamiento irónico, son para algunos pensadores marcas características que definen a menudo las narraciones de las décadas finales del siglo XX y los comienzos del siglo XXI, no es menos cierto que los relatos confesionales abundan en este período y que, como contrapunto, reclaman autenticidad y sinceridad. Frente a la perspectiva distanciada e irónica de otros relatos, en la confesión se busca borrar la distancia entre el sujeto que recapacita en el presente y el agente de la experiencia vivida.

Los relatos confesionales se manifiestan en situaciones comunicativas que pertenecen tanto al ámbito de la reflexión moral y religiosa como al judicial. Si la confesión religiosa acontece y permanece en el espacio privado del confesionario, y la ética en el de la reflexión, en cambio, la confesión judicial es de naturaleza pública y su contenido trasciende a comisarías, tribunales y salas de juzgado. Naturalmente, el tema admite variaciones y matices enriquecedores a lo largo del tiempo y en las diversas clases de relato en que se manifiesta. La propia literatura recoge muchas situaciones confesionales; más aun ante la reciente proliferación de multimedia y de todo lo relacionado con el universo informático y las nuevas tecnologías que se encuentran hoy en proceso de gestación y renovación acelerada.

El momento presente es marcadamente confesional. Señala Foucault que el sujeto occidental moderno se ha convertido en un animal confesante (*une bête d'aveu*) (80). La confesión

ofrece una vía de acceso a la mente del individuo, a sus creencias, aspiraciones y faltas, y al mismo tiempo refleja la presión religiosa, moral, ideológica o social que vigila y castiga las creencias y deseos del individuo. Por otro lado, se trata frecuentemente de una confesión terapéutica que busca facilitar la sutura de heridas y la reconciliación con otros.

De este contexto se deriva la estructura diferencial de *Ojos que no ven*. Si en nuestra época a veces se busca exhibir el sentimiento de culpa (hay casos extremos en determinados programas de televisión) y otras veces las instancias de poder y las presiones sociales imponen la exhibición pública de ese sentimiento (por ejemplo, a personas como proyección pública como los políticos), en esta novela se trata la conciencia de culpabilidad de alguien que se confiesa a solas, sin interlocutor, en un acto confesional cuyo proceso es revelador de los pliegues y trampas del lenguaje. Hay que preguntarse si la clave codificadora de la realidad representada en su confesión está dónde el personaje cree, o si, en cambio, la propia manera de percibir la realidad es también parte de la misma realidad y el personaje no se ha parado a pensar en ello. De ahí la importancia de desvelar el funcionamiento de los mecanismos mediante los que se construye la propia configuración de la realidad.

Signos de “especial importancia”

Ojos que no ven cuenta la historia de Felipe Díaz Carrión y su familia, integrada por su mujer Asun y su hijo de nueve años, que se ven forzados a emigrar desde un lugar rural a uno industrial del norte. Transcurrido un tiempo, en el norte nacerá otro hijo. La novela se centra en los años pasados allí y en los sucesos vividos a partir de la vuelta al pueblo veinte años después; también se reconstruyen algunos hechos previos, ocurridos en el pasado lejano de 1936.

Los hechos relatados se reconstruyen principalmente a través de la perspectiva del padre, sobre quien late el papel que a él le tocó en el hecho de que su hijo mayor se convirtiera

en un asesino. En este sentido, hay que considerar si el acontecer de los hechos en sí pondría de manifiesto las propias inhibiciones del padre. Es decir, si el acontecer textualizado pone de manifiesto sus inhibiciones ante verdades que el texto pone de manifiesto y frente a las que no actuó como hubiera correspondido a la imagen ideal de sí mismo. Cuando descubre que su hijo pudo haberle utilizado para obtener información facilitadora del secuestro y que él se la proporcionó involuntariamente, se limita a pensar que “a nada le había dado una especial importancia hasta la noticia del secuestro del empresario” (55). Pese a que se manifestó contra el secuestro en la plaza de la localidad, exponiéndose allí a los insultos de la gente, se inhibió y optó por mantener las sospechas en secreto, sin tomar medidas que pudieran haber ayudado a solucionar el secuestro del industrial.

Ahora bien, el hecho de que con la noticia del secuestro considerara la posible implicación de su hijo en el mismo, constituye un momento nodal, pues no se trata de una mera sospecha ante la que se mira para otro lado, sino que en ese momento interpretó los signos sospechosos y alcanzó un grado de certeza superior. Sin llegar a afirmarse que se trata de un conocimiento claro y seguro, la novela puntualiza de modo concreto que el personaje concede “especial importancia” (55) a los signos delatores que fundan la sospecha. Con todo, a pesar de ser un hecho bien establecido en su mente, sus acciones posteriores no se corresponden del todo con las pautas morales que defiende en sus reflexiones.

Durante un tiempo deja sin abordar de modo reflexivo la falta de acción directa que reclamaban los signos, visibles sobre todo una vez que reconociera la importancia de las sospechas que implicaban de algún modo a su hijo. A la hora de explicar la razón por la que se manifiesta en la plaza del lugar para exigir la libertad del secuestrado, se pregunta si lo hace “por esa *punta de sospecha que trataba de espantarse* o bien simplemente *por decencia, por pura decencia*” (55, cursivas mías). El que se constate que era un hecho

bien establecido en su mente, hace visible que sus acciones posteriores no se correspondan con los signos ni con la ejemplaridad que defiende en su reflexiones.

Las palabras del padre no llegan a ser lo suficientemente explícitas en este punto y sus omisiones producen incertidumbre en el lector. Ello no implica que el receptor juzgue en términos negativos el comportamiento del padre; tampoco que la sospecha, el recelo o la desconfianza necesariamente acompañen la recepción. Con todo, la lectura interrogativa se guiará por la discreción interpretativa, pues la falta de adecuación entre reconocer la “importancia” de algo y luego no explicitar suficientemente sus implicaciones, más que simplificar la novela, da pie a cierta inseguridad interpretativa. Al margen de que pueda o no haber una voluntad oculta y deliberada por parte del padre de omitir palabras o acciones, abordarlo llevaría por la espiral del psicologismo que considera al personaje un ente viviente sin atenerse al texto.² El hecho narrativo es que la omisión es un signo textual aportado por la novela. De ahí que, sin pretender por ello valorar la intención del padre, la recepción ha de prestar atención a la disposición de los signos textuales, para, a partir de ellos, desvelar los dispositivos de inteligibilidad que dan forma a su relato. Veamos con cierto detenimiento cómo prosigue el relato una vez que se establece la “especial importancia” de los signos sospechosos.

Palabras un poco grandes: lo quieras o no, algo ves

Una vez establecida la “especial importancia” de los signos, el personaje se lanza a una exaltada defensa del principio de la vida, que es también un descenso a los infiernos de las atrocidades del terror. La intensidad verbal confiere a estas páginas un valor literario y moral significativo. Su rectitud moral lo induce a manifestarse con valentía y a denunciar la inhumanidad del secuestro y del terror. Con todo, el no alzarse contra su hijo, lo cual hubiera sido consecuente con la importancia

que confiere a los signos, sumerge al padre en un mundo narrativo ambivalente, en el que las palabras enunciadas resultan un exceso afirmativo que reprime o oculta algo, al margen de que sea o no una ocultación deliberada. El momento en que el padre reconoce la especial importancia de los signos es un eslabón de una cadena compuesta de recurrencias, pero también de omisiones, de ecos expresivos que no se concretan y cuya ausencia forma parte de la cadena de potencialidades ideales. Dicho de otro modo, las palabras, enunciadas con convicción moral para frenar una injusticia humana, dejan fuera una continuidad potencial que la lógica narrativa reclama y que se echa en falta. Una vez que el padre ha detectado los signos delatores de la implicación de su hijo, guiado por su convicción moral, emprende una denuncia pública contra el secuestro, pero prefiere no indagar en la “especial importancia” de lo que si vio con claridad y, por lo tanto, en sus omisiones. Veamos el pasaje completo donde especula sobre su actitud:

Desde las primeras semanas tras el secuestro, sin embargo, no supo muy bien por qué—*ni falta que me hace saberlo, se decía*—, si por esa *punta de sospecha que trataba de espantarse* o bien simplemente *por decencia, por pura decencia*, que es lo que contestaba si alguien se lo preguntaba o más bien se lo reprochaba, empezó a acudir puntualmente, junto a otros compañeros, a la plaza mayor de la localidad para solicitar en silencio la libertad del economista. (55, cursivas mías)

El padre y los otros manifestantes tienen dudas sobre la eficacia práctica de su manifestación pública: “ni siquiera tenían mucha confianza en la operatividad de aquel gesto” (55). Con el paso del tiempo, los insultos e intimidaciones provocan el abandono de algunos. En las páginas siguientes, sin embargo, las dudas dan paso a una declaración rotunda de principios morales alejados de

toda inseguridad. Son páginas que constituyen un texto directriz sobre el que gravita la novela en su conjunto:

Pero él, sin proponérselo, sin pensarlo siquiera a decir verdad, sin ponderar ni contrapesar ni tener en cuenta nada que no fuera lo que él llamaba, *con palabras que a lo mejor le venían un poco grandes*, lo absolutamente irrenunciable y sin excusa alguna que valiera, perseveró allí como perseveran los árboles y las plantas y a veces, aunque sólo a veces, perseveran también algunas personas. (56, cursivas mías)

La distancia entre las palabras y lo que significan queda cifrada al señalarse en el texto que el personaje declara su posición tajante “con palabras que a lo mejor le venían un poco grandes” (56). En este pasaje, la voz narrativa se sirve del foco del padre y de sus palabras para enunciar la escala de valores configuradora de la novela:

[P]arecía permanecer allí de pie imperturbable para recordar ante quien quisiera hacerlo que unas cosas son *justas* y otras *injustas*; que unas son atinadas y otras un completo desatino se mirara por donde se mirara; que unas traen *el bien* incluso en general y otras nada más que *calamidades* y *atrocidades*; que unas son verdad, verdad de la buena y no meras instrumentalizaciones o utilizaciones ventajistas, y otras nada más que puras fantasmagorías o meras monsergas más o menos hueras o envenenadas, y unas son *lícitas* y otras claramente *ilícitas*, tolerables las unas y las otras de todo punto intolerables, como *atemorizar e intimidar* y ofender a la gente y por supuesto *matar, matar o secuestrar* a quien sea y por o que sea. Y que *si se renuncia a recordarlo y a tenerlo en cuenta en cada uno de nuestros actos, se renuncia a lo irrenunciable, a lo que hace dignos a los hombres* de ser hombres y convivir entre hombres y los hace capaces de cosas verdaderamente nobles y no de verdaderas y

colosales engañas, de cosas verdaderamente *libres* y no engreída y rastreramente *serviles* y, a la corta o a la larga, contraproducentes para todos. Y que si era verdad que la línea de demarcación entre unas y otras podría que fuera a veces, más que enrevesada y corredera, escondidiza, que unas ocasiones parecía estar en un sitio y otras en otro y muchas daba la impresión de no estar ni en uno ni en otro, también lo era que cada cosa tenía al cabo indefectiblemente sus lindes y para *cada cosa había un límite, y el límite de los límites, el límite que si se franquea ya no tiene en condiciones normales posibilidad de retorno, por mucho que se diga o se deje de decir, es el de la vida y la incolumidad del otro*. (56-7, cursivas mías)

Cita extensa pero necesaria para mostrar cómo el padre actúa movido por la decencia pero también por la entereza moral que, de modo rotundo, expresan sus palabras, apelando a valores esenciales más allá de las circunstancias del individuo. Si bien se alejó parcialmente de sus propias circunstancias, en la medida en que durante el largo período del secuestro evitó preguntarse por la implicación de su hijo y evitó enfrentarse a él, sin embargo, sus palabras contienen huellas de sus circunstancias personales, hasta el extremo de que éstas pudieran ser consideradas un impulso velado que mueve su expresión rotunda y le hace aguantar con entereza los insultos que recibe. El enunciante reflexivo toma claro partido por los principios de la justicia, la legalidad, la no violencia contra el otro y la vida, pero a la vez evita ahondar en sus propias circunstancias familiares. Rehúye el enfrentamiento familiar y, en cambio, desplaza su acción hacia la verbalización interior de principios. Tanto él como el “puñado escaso de personas que, casi sin proponérselo, habían decidido algo así como dejar oír su silencio frente al bullicio de los reñores y la algarabía de las retóricas” (58). Al silencio público se contraponen la vida interior del personaje, cuyas palabras rotundas, precisas y

terminantes evitan sin embargo una pregunta clave que aborde qué papel tiene su hijo en el secuestro.

De ahí que las circunstancias del enunciante no desaparezcan en esa parte de la novela, siendo ellas las que contribuyen a humanizar al personaje, situándolo en una esfera viva que no se confunde con una toma de partido abstracta y terminante. La imagen pública del padre se presenta en términos acordes con la imagen del activismo pacifista y humanitario, guiado por valores de convivencia y respeto. Dichos valores, que verbaliza en la intimidad, actúan como soporte de su conducta. Con todo, el texto incita a preguntarse si su actitud responde también a otra dimensión reprimida por el personaje, tal vez sin saberlo, y que explicaría el tono rotundo de sus palabras y los menos claros móviles de su actuación pública. Recordemos que él “no supo muy bien por qué” empezó a manifestarse en la plaza (55), ni supo por qué permaneció hasta el final “casi sin proponérselo” (58). Dada la falta de correspondencia entre la reflexión y los sucesos circunstanciados, cabe decir que el personaje vive hacia fuera, en función de los sucesos que le circunscriben, y hacia dentro, en su discurso reflexivo, donde las ideas cobran vida propia.

Para abordar si el sentido de la firmeza discursiva responde a una dimensión reprimida, hay que tener presente la dinámica textual, sin que ello suponga remitirse a un tipo psicológico fuera del texto. Al no poder contrastar con otras fuentes informativas lo pensado por el padre, el lector ha de limitarse al discurso narrativo, para, desde él, dar forma a los sucesos y valorar su consistencia. En efecto, la ausencia de referente extratextual no impide que el lector pueda examinar el texto para ver si existen posibles disyunciones entre la historia que el padre vive y su discurso. De nuevo surge la pregunta sobre la situación concreta en que se inserta el discurso del padre: ¿podrían los mecanismos productores de sentido imponerse hasta el punto de constituirse al margen de la historia?

Lógica interpretativa y acontecer: una hipótesis hermenéutica

Ante la ausencia de datos que corroboren la equivalencia entre el acontecer y el relato del padre, la atención del lector se desplaza hacia las operaciones textuales, basadas en la lógica del sentido interpretativo y confesional del padre. En consecuencia, es necesario examinar qué lógica interpretativa opera tanto cuando examina su papel en las manifestaciones de la plaza como ante el hecho de que evite enfrentarse a su hijo.

Veamos una hipótesis hermenéutica que permita dar consistencia a la realidad sin suplantarlo. De acuerdo con lo que Freud llama lógica sintomática, tal como aparece formulada en su estudio sobre el fetichismo, los excesos afirmativos se leen como síntoma de una carencia (“Fetichism”). Es decir, junto con la estructura coexiste el síntoma de lo reprimido. Por ejemplo, al afirmarse de modo recurrente e insistente la autoridad y la voluntad de dominio, dicha retórica escondería el temor del sujeto a que el otro imponga su voluntad. Y es que la afirmación insistente de la propia fuerza esconde el temor a su carencia (lógica afín a la del refrán, a menudo dicho con retintín, dime de qué presumes y te diré lo que te falta). En suma, la lógica sintomática se apoya en el supuesto de que al afirmarse o imponerse una estructura, algo se reprime o esconde.

Se trata ahora de ver si esta lógica queda fijada en la novela por la propia dinámica del discurso, sin que sea necesario apelar a un tipo psicológico posible, fuera del papel. Frente a otros momentos en que duda, el discurso del padre se distingue por su voluntad afirmativa y contundente cuando expresa (“con palabras que a lo mejor le venían un poco grandes”) los que considera principios irrenunciables. Como vimos en la extensa cita del apartado anterior, el empeño de manifestarse con seguridad se ve tanto en su reacción al calificar la conducta de los terroristas cuanto al definirse a sí mismo como agente que se manifiesta reaccionando con firmeza ante la acción deshumanizada y criminal de los secuestradores.

Al examinar la lógica sobre la que se asientan las reflexiones del padre, aparece un denominador común que, en principio, responde a lo que Freud llama lógica sintomática. De acuerdo con esta lógica, como vengo diciendo, los excesos afirmativos se leen como síntoma de una carencia. Y es que la afirmación insistente del propio rigor moral ocultaría el temor a su carencia o a la caída (al igual que, por ejemplo, el exceso repetido de puntualidad esconde y reprime el temor a llegar tarde). La clave es, entonces, la insistencia como exceso y la repetición como retórica.

Hay dos situaciones especialmente ilustrativas en las que la seguridad que el padre irradia cuando reflexiona se vuelve perplejidad cuando actúa, lo cual produce una disyunción textual cuya lógica es iluminadora. La primera de ellas tiene lugar después de concluir el secuestro y ocurre tras un duro enfrentamiento con Asunción, su mujer. Sobre él caen las acusaciones de reaccionario, vendido y facha, a las que responde con firmeza calificando a Asunción de rencorosa y deshumanizada (62-9).³ Tras la retórica violenta, y al darse cuenta de que la estaba mirando con una “vehemencia y una fijeza rabiosa” desconocida (69), se fue a caminar de noche cerrada por la cuneta que recorría habitualmente cuando iba a trabajar. Se detuvo un momento a la entrada de la fábrica y luego continuó caminando varios kilómetros, hasta el pueblo siguiente. Después de haber comido algo, ya de madrugada, volvió a caminar en sentido contrario hacia la fábrica. Este recorrido de vuelta se presenta alternando la focalización del padre con la perspectiva externa que le retrata desde fuera:

Pasaban los coches moviendo el aire a su lado y algunos le pitaban o le pasaban rasante, pero ni aun a los camiones, que parecía como si lo fueran a bambolear engulléndole en las bolsas de vacío que creaban a rebufa, daba la impresión de hacerles caso. Los faros de los vehículos que venían de frente le deslumbraban como con intermitencias y, aunque él solía meterse habitualmente

hacia adentro todo lo que podía en la cuneta [...], esa madrugada todo parecía indicar que había olvidado el sentido de las distancias y los márgenes. (70)

Los signos apuntan que, emocionalmente confuso y desesperado, se expone y arriesga su vida sin buscar protección. Al alcanzar la puerta de la fábrica, se quedó dormido junto a la puerta cerrada, hasta que le despertó el industrial secuestrado y recién liberado “que acababa de incorporarse justamente aquel día temprano al trabajo” (70). Hay que recordar que la escena ocurre precisamente cuando se acaba de producir la liberación del industrial. Las palabras que éste le dirige llaman la atención: “Qué *casualidad*, le dijo sorprendido al encontrarlo allí en aquel estado mientras le ayudaba a incorporarse” (70-1, cursivas mías). Lo que en el orden del acontecer pudiera ser considerado una casualidad, en el del sentido no puede por menos de sugerir al lector una combinación de circunstancias que producen unos efectos y activan el principio hermenéutico de la causalidad. El lector atiende tanto a la verdad representada en la historia como al artificio compositivo que implica la novela en su conjunto.

La hipótesis de que la firmeza discursiva interior y la manifestación silenciosa en público ocultarían una dimensión añadida de culpabilidad reprimida, pero que permanece latente, cobra peso significativo en esta situación. El exponerse al peligro mortal de la carretera no sería casual en términos textuales, como tampoco lo sería el que al encontrar al industrial éste apelara a la “casualidad”. Se trataría entonces de la acción de un subtexto silenciado y a la vez latente, el subtexto de la culpabilidad añadida por no haberse enfrentado a su hijo una vez que ha reconocido la “especial importancia” de los signos que le inculpaban. Recordemos que entonces optó por no indagar en los signos y su acción se desplazó a la manifestación pública, no sabía bien por qué “—ni falta que le [hacía] saberlo, se decía—, si por esa punta de sospecha que trataba de espantarse o bien simplemente por

decencia, por pura decencia” (55). El malestar que provoca su inhibición (“no [pudo] por menos de recelarse algún gato encerrado”) (55) y el haber evitado el enfrentamiento con su hijo presionan y producen el subtexto, lo cual hace que, a la hora de la lectura, se active el principio de causalidad. Este subtexto emerge de modo ambivalente: por un lado, señala que el padre se mueve con entereza moral en sus reflexiones; por otro, el texto deja entrever la “pura decencia” de quien actúa sin buscar indagar en la sospecha y en los signos. No es esta una valoración psicológica de acuerdo con un modelo posible, sino una valoración de los mecanismos de significación que configuran el texto.

De acuerdo con la lógica sintomática, el exceso afirmativo retórico del padre (a quien sus palabras “a lo mejor le vienen un poco grandes”) es de naturaleza expiatoria y, al mismo tiempo, señala que algo permanece oculto. Si la represión es una parte consustancial del exceso afirmativo, entonces cuando algo se afirma de modo rotundo y excesivo, algo se reprime. Al igual que al exceso de puntualidad es consustancial el miedo a llegar tarde, el cual se reprime y oculta con la puntualidad, de modo semejante cabe decir que la retórica rotunda del padre es consustancial al miedo que desencadena el secuestro, pues entonces los signos de sospecha cobran “especial importancia” y señalan a su hijo. Existe una culpabilidad que sí asume abiertamente indagando de modo recurrente sobre lo que vio y sospechó y no quiso enterarse, pero el texto sugiere que sobre los excesos parece gravitar asimismo lo omitido, el no alzarse contra su hijo precisamente en ese momento cuando acude a la plaza para exigir la libertad del empresario.

Otro momento decisivo que sugiere esta hipótesis interpretativa se produce pasadas cincuenta páginas de la escena recién comentada. Transcurrido el tiempo y de vuelta en el pueblo, el padre ve en las hojas de un periódico dos apellidos que coinciden con los de su hijo; ve los apellidos pero falta el nombre de pila, el cual se encuentra en otra página. Leyó las palabras de los apellidos repetidamente,

“otra vez y después otra y otra más”, con el “inconsciente deseo de desgastarlas” y ver si acababan “por no poner en aquella línea lo que ni su *incredulidad* ni su impotencia podían impedir que pusiera” (106, cursivas mías). El padre responde como un lector incrédulo, que presta atención a la mecánica de la representación y se resiste a dejarse llevar por lo representado. No sólo se resiste a creerlo, sino que quiere que su incredulidad y su percepción se impongan sobre los hechos mismos. Considera simultáneamente la verdad acontecida y el artificio de los signos que la representan.

Pero veremos que dicha simultaneidad no lleva a confundir la representación con lo representado. El desconcierto psíquico y moral que vive el padre en ese momento va unido a la lucidez reflexiva de su indagación, cuando valora la extrañeza de sentir “el hecho de que los ojos sirvieran para ver las cosas y no fueran ya las propias cosas” (106). Se da a entender así que el mundo no es una proyección del yo; no todo es cuestión de la perspectiva desde la que se observa. Hay hechos en sí que se imponen como tales, no importa la resistencia ni la incredulidad de quien los observa o valora. De este modo, la incredulidad refleja también distancia crítica en su reacción. Frente al entusiasmo cegador de quien confundiría los ojos que miran con las propias cosas, aquí actúa el distanciamiento crítico e incrédulo que discierne sin confundir. La incredulidad que experimenta el padre le mueve finalmente a comprobar

lo que no quería comprobar por más que supiera y sabiendo lo que no hubiera querido saber por más veces que hubiera podido intuirlo. Pero todavía podía ser un error, todavía podía ser una coincidencia, una pura *casualidad*, ¿eran al fin y al cabo dos apellidos tan comunes! (107, cursivas mías)

El padre lee absorto y la exaltación producida por los signos parece por momentos anular el razonamiento e imponerse. Tras cincuenta páginas, vuelve a repetirse la palabra “casualidad”, la pura coincidencia, alejándose así del

principio de causalidad que estaría por detrás de las palabras. Ahora bien, la repetición de la palabra casualidad no es una mera duplicación sino que recalca lo que calca y repite. El hecho de que se valore con la misma palabra el encuentro sintomático con el industrial liberado y la coincidencia de los apellidos, subraya su significación interpretativa y revela uno de los hilos de significación velada que la novela asigna a las omisiones. Pese a que no se trataría en este caso de una realidad psíquica, en la medida en que el enunciante en un caso es el industrial y en el otro el padre, la repetición constituye una realidad textual de la novela y su alcance es interpretativo.

El padre en su papel institucional y el peso de la culpa

Frente a la indagación elusiva de la primera parte de la novela, a partir de este momento mira de frente los posibles efectos de las omisiones y, cuando echa la vista atrás, el horror y la culpabilidad insoportable se apoderan del personaje y le paralizan. Los vacíos e interrogantes no resueltos se traducen en una tensión moral que resuena con fuerza en las últimas cincuenta páginas de la novela, hasta el extremo de arrastrar al personaje al abismo que roza la muerte. Si en el pasado fue la fuerza de la sangre la que, en un momento decisivo, determinó que priorizara el acercamiento de su hijo y dejara de lado los signos que le implicaban a éste, hasta el punto de sentirse “halagado” al verle rondando la fábrica (55) y eludir las sospechas, ahora la fuerza de la sangre queda momentáneamente en segundo plano y, apesadumbrado, se enfrenta desnudo al horror y a la muerte.

Con el fin de mostrar las relaciones con la historia, la tradición y la lengua, es preciso considerar los esquemas perceptivos del padre y los dispositivos mediante los que construye la realidad. Su perspectiva no se caracteriza por sus ideas históricas ni por su interés en las ideas políticas. Hay trasfondo político e ideológico, pero su visión lee el mundo mediante esquemas éticos, sin

proporcionar datos sobre pensamiento político.⁴ En otras palabras, aun si de la novela se desprenden consideraciones de carácter histórico y político, la ética y los valores se proponen como ámbito fundacional estructurador de las relaciones personales, familiares y sociales. Lejos de priorizar la doctrina ideológica y el mensaje político, se imponen las convicciones y la reflexión en torno a los valores esenciales que regulan la conducta personal y las relaciones humanas.

Con todo, vimos que el peso de la historia cultural se impone en la medida en que él, sobre todo al principio, desempeña el papel que le asigna la cultura, al margen de que él sea o no consciente de ello. Actúa como miembro de la institución familiar según los parámetros de conducta que le impone el papel de padre. El texto lo apunta al mostrar cómo la identidad institucional familiar es configuradora de unos esquemas perceptivos que le impiden abordar sus inhibiciones.

Existen varios momentos clave que muestran la perspectiva cambiante del padre. Uno de los más visibles ocurre en la escena ya comentada donde el texto afirma que el padre percibió la “especial importancia” de los signos inculpadores (55). Hay que volver sobre este momento narrativo. Si bien la presencia de su hijo en la fábrica constituye un signo que suscita sospechas, por otro lado, éstas quedan desplazadas a un segundo plano que oculta su “especial importancia”, quedando entonces privilegiado su papel de padre, quien, “aunque no pudiera por menos de recelarse algún gato encerrado, se había llegado a sentir hasta halagado *al ver* por allí, *fuera como fuera y con la mirada que fuera, a su hijo*” (55, cursivas mías). Cabe hablar, entonces, de enmascaramiento de los signos y de su responsabilidad, lo cual se produce a través de una serie de movimientos retóricos mediante los que el padre se ciega a la verdad del acontecer. Es esa ceguera la que dificulta que la evocación de los hechos sea también un acto confesional en el que la verdad afectiva y la autenticidad de las cosas, en su dimensión ética, coincidan y puedan verse reflejadas desde su perspectiva.

Se desprende de esta lectura que la evocación del padre se queda corta y ello es debido a que, en ese momento, el personaje se encuentra sometido a unos esquemas interpretativos y a unas ataduras discursivas.

Más adelante, el yo confesional, atormentado, busca palabras para cifrar su sentimiento de culpa. La dificultad de verbalizar ese sentimiento conforma un hilo narrativo cuya significación se subraya en el último tercio de la novela. Después de ver la fotografía y los titulares del periódico acusadores de su hijo mayor, la comunicación se dificulta y el propio lenguaje, sus usos y abusos, se sitúan en el primer plano del relato. Es entonces cuando el hijo menor le dice a su padre: “Tú no tienes culpa de nada” (111). A estas palabras exculpatorias, responde: “Alguna tendré que tener [...]. Algo habrá, Felipe, algo habrá. Esas cosas no pasan porque sí y yo soy su padre” (112). Veamos algunos detalles de la escena.

Cuando el padre reconstruye uno de los posibles asesinatos de su hijo mayor, selecciona, repite y retoca cuidadosamente las palabras con que dar forma verbal a lo acontecido, y examina lo que las palabras dicen de sí mismo. Atento y perplejo, el hijo menor escucha a su padre mientras éste lucha por verbalizar el acontecer y la culpa:

A veces era verdad que le parecía un oráculo a su hijo, y otras veces sólo un borracho, un hombre mortalmente ebrio de culpa y de dolor, obcecado no se sabe si en lo que ve como nadie o bien en dejar de ver lo demás justamente por haber visto aquello como nadie. Pero poco a poco, a fuerza de repetir y volver a repetir, la voz se le fue quebrando, adelgazando, volviendo indistinguible por momentos, inaudible, casi ya sólo un murmullo, o un temblor. (114)

Dominado por el sentimiento de culpabilidad, en ese momento las palabras no aciertan a su verbalización. Busca palabras “dignas de salir de la boca de un oráculo”, pero repite las palabras y la escena igual que quien repite

“una melopea” (114). Más adelante, la monotonía y la repetición se asocian con la letanía (115), aludiéndose así a la enumeración o retahíla larga e interminable.

Según el hijo menor, este uso del lenguaje contrasta con el que habitualmente usa su padre, hombre sereno, resulto y silencioso, alguien que se guía por la divisa de Calderón: “Cuando tan torpe la razón se halla [...], mejor habla, señor, quien mejor calla” (116). Desde la perspectiva del hijo, quien, en su papel de testigo, focaliza por momentos la narración, su padre necesita encontrarse de nuevo y “volver a ser quien era” (116-17). Frente a la idea de valores cambiantes y relativizados, se manifiesta aquí una defensa de valores esenciales portadores de identidad. Por eso considera que en su padre hay una fuerza que le empujará a encontrarse a sí mismo, a encontrar algo

inmutable en lo más hondo, o bien algo—algo que podía ser su mundo o Dios o sus propios adentros—que él pudiera escuchar o le hablase como a lo mejor hablan las cosas y no sólo nuestro deseo de que algo nos hable. (117)

Frente al relativismo circunstancializado, se expresa el deseo de encontrar algo hondo, permanente e idéntico a sí mismo.

Cuando visitó en la cárcel a su hijo mayor, vio la mirada de éste y

supo lo que a lo mejor nunca había dejado de saber por mucho que quisiera o hubiera creído hacerlo: que no habría remedio, que no habría escapatoria alguna ni posible marcha atrás por más que él nunca pudiese explicárselo o quizá admitirlo, y que por todo ello, y por lo que a él le iba en todo ello, estaba irremediablemente condenado. (128)

Ante la falta de explicaciones con las que profundizar en las sombras, en lo reprimido por el deseo paterno y por el miedo, se acaba imponiendo la razón moral. Pero aun si la razón moral le condena en términos rotundos, la

imprecisión verbal persiste, manifestándose de nuevo poco después en un diálogo imaginario con su hijo asesino: “¿Qué he hecho mal?, dime, ¿qué he tenido que hacer mal? ¿Cuál es mi culpa?” (130).

La dificultad de concretar el malestar aparece también cuando se encuentra a solas, desde una interioridad marcada por “el peso de lo que podía haber sido y no fue” (146). Caminando entre peñascos por la empinada pendiente, la voz narrativa heterodiegética le enmarca como un hombre “[i]mpedido, como abrumado por una carga muy superior a todo lo que hubiera podido acarrear antes en su vida, se diría que hasta imposibilitado o tullido” (143). Dentro de la confusión, el peso de las omisiones se hace patente:

a su debido tiempo, cuando pude empezar a barruntar por dónde iban los tiros, [...] es cuando tenía que haberle dicho yo cuatro cosas bien dichas; cuando pude hacerlo y no lo hice o no creí que tuviera que hacerlo y cuando pude verlo y ni lo vi ni quise tal vez verlo. (144)

Casi al final del sendero que le llevará arriba, se produce un momento reflexivo en el que se enfrenta con las palabras y busca separarlas de los hechos desnudos:

Claro que también podía haber llamado a la policía a las primeras de cambio, se decía; pero cómo va a acusar uno a su propio hijo y de qué al principio. Este crío es un imbécil, les hubiera podido decir a los guardias, este crío es un imbécil, pero es mejor que no pase de ahí y sea otra cosa. ¿Pero cómo va uno a denunciar a nadie por imbécil?, ¿cómo va uno a denunciar a su propio hijo por imbécil [...]? (146)

Por la voz del padre habla su identidad institucional y afectiva, creándose así un contexto narrativo que le permite explicar su percepción y comportamiento en el pasado. Pero

la voz narrativa aclara a continuación que la culpa no se diluye en ese contexto familiar:

Como quien da mil pasos más a cada *circunvolución de sus pensamientos y se va cargando del peso imposible de lo que podía haber sido y no fue*, Felipe Díez fue arrastrando poco a poco sus miembros entumecidos por una culpa que no atinaba a despejar. (146, cursivas mías)

El peso de las omisiones va emergiendo gradualmente de la sombra y su verbalización señala su falta de iniciativa en el pasado, la agencialidad que tuvo a su alcance y, sin embargo, inhibió al “no haber actuado y haber levantado la voz y peleado lo suficiente”; todo ello le hacía “tan culpable de alguna forma como a su hijo” (148).⁵ Si la institución familiar y el papel que ésta le asigna dominan en ciertos momentos y le permiten crear un contexto narrativo expiatorio que explique sus omisiones, en otros momentos vemos que las inhibiciones del pasado se verbalizan en primer plano y van dando forma a un sentimiento de culpa que le lleva a igualarse con el infractor. Todo ello le empujará poco después a seguir la tentación del suicidio.

La naturaleza sublime y la integridad desde la imperfección

La dinámica textual salva al atormentado personaje dotándole de un final conciliador consigo mismo. En las últimas páginas, la acción del pensamiento ético se entrelaza con la fuerza de la naturaleza y juntas producen un efecto vitalizador del contexto narrativo. El deslumbramiento de la naturaleza induce el paso de las tinieblas a la luminosidad sobrecogedora del paisaje y a la reconciliación del personaje con la vida y con las palabras, dejando atrás la fuerza tenebrosa de la conciencia desbordada por la culpabilidad.

Se trata de una experiencia de desbordamiento asociable con la experiencia estética de lo sublime, destacándose que la contemplación del entorno le sobrecoge el ánimo y se entremezcla con el peso abrumador de la re-

flexión moral. Esta doble dimensión contemplativa y reflexiva aparece así vinculada con la experiencia convulsiva de lo sublime. En un contexto diferente, Roger Scruton apunta:

Somehow, in the very awe that we experience before the power of the natural world, we sense our own ability as free beings to measure up to it, and to reaffirm our obedience to the moral law, which no natural force could ever vanquish or set aside. (73)

Remitiéndose a Platón y a Kant, Scruton asocia el deseo de perfección con la contemplación estética de la belleza:

the feeling for beauty is proximate to the religious frame of mind, arising from a humble sense of living with imperfections, while aspiring towards the highest unity with the transcendental. (175)

Atormentado por la culpa y desbordado por la fuerza de la naturaleza, el padre se desespera entre su imperfección y su código ético.

Es un cierre confesional ajeno al narcisismo. Es confesional, en la medida en que el personaje experimenta un proceso agónico que le lleva a confesarse a sí mismo su verdad en un ejercicio de sacrificio autoinfligido. Lejos del narcisismo, supone una renuncia que, lejos de justificar sus omisiones o escamotearlas, hace un examen de fondo en cuyo largo recorrido se enfrenta sin autocomplacencia al horror ante un paisaje vitalizador, pero no justificador. En el estadio contemplativo final se acorta la distancia con el entorno natural, hasta el punto de que las palabras casi le disuelven en él: sus “piernas entumecidas o casi se diría que petrificadas al igual que aquella mole de roca” (150). Ahí, casi petrificado,

nada más abarcar con la mirada toda la extensión que desde allí se dominaba, se sintió de pronto seguro, extrañamente seguro, como si descansase o se apoyase más en toda aquella inmensidad que en el escueto filo de tierra sobre el que se hallaba. (15)⁶

La novela presenta un universo cuyos códigos éticos y emocionales a veces desbordan al personaje, quien se ve superado por algo más poderoso que él. Abrumado por lo vivido, el personaje actúa impulsado por la voluntad de levantar la mirada por encima de su situación precaria. El aliento que le impulsa al final emerge a través del encuentro reflexivo con la naturaleza, cuya fuerza encamina su ensimismamiento y, al mismo tiempo, el pensamiento de valores que trascienden lo circunstancial. Si bien el lenguaje se interpone como una barrera entre el sentimiento de culpabilidad y su concreción transparente, por otro lado, el escenario natural permite al sujeto, subyugado al entorno, el encuentro con el fondo de su culpa y facilita la revitalización del personaje. Al poder finalmente asumir sus omisiones, el sentimiento de culpa inextinguible impone un castigo, lo cual, de modo paradójico, crea a la vez una vía de escape que le permite convivir con ese sentimiento punitivo. No se trata de un subterfugio psicológico calculado deliberadamente, pues, aquí, la conciencia de culpa solamente es aceptable para quien la reconoce y rechaza un contexto mitigador. Recordemos que, al final, sus omisiones e inhibiciones “lo hacían tan culpable de alguna forma como a su hijo” (148). Al igualarse con su hijo criminal añade entonces un exceso de culpa (pues en la realidad de los hechos acaecidos sus actos no coinciden con los de su hijo), infligiéndose así una castigo interior con el que afirmar la naturaleza indebida de sus omisiones.⁷

Ahora bien, incluso actuando o pensando de esta manera, la dinámica narrativa produce un contexto en el que confesión, culpa y castigo coexisten con cierta forma de liberación. Es decir, el castigo que se autoimpone (el sentimiento de culpa inexcusable) no puede dejar de ser, al mismo tiempo, consecuentemente, una forma de convivir con su culpabilidad. El sujeto es ciego a esa dinámica; en última instancia, no puede controlar este efecto que produce la confesión interior. De modo paradójico, el grado de conciencia de la culpa es también simultáneamente una

vía de convivencia con ella. Aun el sujeto que se confiese sinceramente culpable y considere imperdonable su falta, no puede ser consecuente, pues, incluso cuando no quiera justificarse, la confesión produce como efecto lo que para él es la mejor forma de convivencia con la culpa.⁸ Para él, la mejor forma de convivencia con el pasado es precisamente sentirse culpable. El asumir la culpa inexcusable e imperdonable abre una vía de convivencia con el pasado.

No por paradójica es menos poderosa esa dinámica narrativa en la que el sentimiento de culpa desasosegante que devalúa su pasado permite al personaje agarrarse a su castigo y así alcanzar una forma de reconciliación consigo mismo. Cuanto mayor culpa haya que confesar, más hay de qué arrepentirse y mayor es el sentimiento de culpabilidad y, consecuentemente, el castigo que ésta impone.

Observación final

Estas consideraciones enlazan el pensamiento ético y la acción narrativa propiamente dicha. Según la lectura que propongo en estas páginas, el recuento del padre y sus reflexiones buscan ahondar en el pasado y esclarecer el alcance de su responsabilidad en el curso de unos hechos criminales que involucran a su hijo. Pero en el recuento gravita la culpa y emerge un problema de conciencia que convierte la evocación en un acto confesional, cuyo proceso, involuntariamente, deja fuera ciertas omisiones, que a su vez producen silencios elocuentes.

La culpa, el proceso de la expiación y el efecto exculpatório resultante son componentes destacados que dan forma a la novela. Cabe plantear la lectura desde una perspectiva ética en virtud de la cual el planteamiento de la novela se sostiene en la premisa de que uno de estos tres componentes prevalece sobre los otros hasta llegar a anularlos. Pero asimismo hay que preguntarse si pueden coexistir los tres en un texto narrativo cuya inestabilidad no termina por resolverse. La lectura en la que

los tres, sin anularse, coexisten en tensión. Para ello ha sido preciso un análisis de los mecanismos productores de sentido, por esquivo que éste pueda ser, tanto para el propio personaje, que se afana en alcanzar un sentido satisfactorio a lo acontecido, como para el lector, cuya interpretación no tiene por qué coincidir con la del personaje, pues la novela en su conjunto le aporta elementos que, sobre todo en la primera parte, permanecen al margen de la evocación del padre. Lejos de la impunidad ética que produciría la razón permisiva, la novela presenta una reflexión sobre la vida emocional y su relación con los valores éticos. Y lejos de haber en sus palabras un descargo de conciencia que justificaría las omisiones y los silencios del pasado, la culpa aparece inextinguible a la vez que su examen abre un espacio que permite asumir y aceptar la realidad de la imperfección. Disconforme y tenaz con su manera de actuar, su recuento reflexivo y la textura narrativa en que se encuentra constituyen una reflexión integradora de las tachas de la existencia humana que, lejos de los fanatismos y la ignominia, acaso pudiera contribuir a mejorar el mundo desde el compromiso interpretativo. Lejos del relativismo permisivo, la visión de la novela, integradora de la imperfección, señala que las cosas ocurrieron de una determinada manera, pero sugiere que pudieron ocurrir de otra.

NOTAS

¹Junto con las afirmaciones recién señaladas, Juan Carlos Peinado reitera múltiples variantes apodícticas: “Y es que el tema de la novela no es otro que el terrorismo de ETA;” “El lenguaje, además, adolece de unos excesos retóricos;” “la novela está concebida como la ejecución de un programa, no como un intento de captar (de comprender) el mundo;” “La aspiración fundamental, por no decir exclusiva, es que esa reprobación vehemente del terror.” A juzgar por estos enunciados, pareciera que el crítico tiene bula para recurrir a la vehemencia que precisamente critica en *Ojos que no ven*. Llama la atención que Peinado descalifique la novela sin exigirse a sí mismo saber de dónde procede su propia autoridad, limitándose a afirmaciones apodícticas que dejan fuera el análisis de la propia dinámica de la novela. Todo es

incontrovertible en los enunciados de Peinado, pero no proporciona al lector ningún fundamento sobre el que apoyar su acuerdo o disensión.

Hay que apuntar también otras reseñas y notas que llaman la atención sobre el interés de *Ojos que no ven*: Jon Juaristi, José María Pozuelo Yvancos, Alejandro Gándara, Gonzalo Martín de Marcos, Ricardo Senabre, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Félix de Azúa y J. Á. Masoliver Ródenas.

A propósito de la trayectoria literaria del González Sainz, véase <http://elcastellano.elnortedecastilla.es/autores/gonzalez-sainz-jose-angel>

²El padre habla consigo mismo sin que sus palabras estén sujetas a la racionalidad ni a las limitaciones que impone el receptor ni la ley. Si bien cabe suponer que su expresión interior está libre de esas imposiciones, por otro lado, la novela muestra que estamos ante un cruce de registros discursivos, el que dirige el personaje y el que habla a través de él, sin que ninguno de ellos imponga su hegemonía a costa de borrar el otro.

³En una nota sobre el libro de Aurelio Arteta, *Mal consentido*, Fernando Savater alude a la complejidad del entorno en que se desarrolla el terrorismo de ETA y al fenómeno social de la “inhibición y adormecimiento moral”. En el lenguaje de Savater, bien afinado, el lector reconoce ecos del mundo e incluso el título de la novela que aquí nos ocupa: “Se han cerrado los ojos o se ha desviado la mirada, a veces con alambicadas coartadas ideológicas” (Savater, cursivas mías).

⁴Según Masoliver Ródenas, la Guerra Civil y el terrorismo de ETA son conflictos “nunca mencionados explícitamente porque, a diferencia de tantas novelas sobre el mismo tema, se evita la crónica en favor de conflictos que tienen una dimensión más universal” (N. pág.).

⁵El enunciado aparece en pleno proceso expiatorio, cuando se confiesa a sí mismo que “su no haber actuado y emprendido y llevado la iniciativa, su no haber hablado y haber levantado la voz y peleado lo suficiente, lo hacían tan culpable de alguna forma como a su hijo” (148). No se trata tanto de un subterfugio psicológico justificador cuanto de un dispositivo de inteligibilidad que mueve el recuento del padre y le proporciona una escapatoria retórica.

El enfrentamiento del personaje con su propia actuación no borra otros enfrentamientos que presenta la historia. Pero la novela profundiza en los que ocurren dentro del ámbito familiar, y especialmente en el del padre, tal vez porque, como señala Gándara: “las certezas del resentido y violento, venga de donde venga el sujeto [...],

son sordas, oscuras, ajenas al lenguaje. No son una cosa de decir, de poner a prueba, de contrastar” (n. pág.). Sobre esa barbarie, ver también la reseña de Pozuelo Yvancos.

⁶Lo que deviene abarcable y perceptible para el personaje tiene marcas emocionales y no se corresponde con la realidad física que le rodea. Su percepción desborda el entorno:

no sabía si toda aquella hermosura estaba en realidad ahí, en el espacio, o bien en aquel momento y por lo tanto en el tiempo; ni siquiera si estaba verdaderamente ahí fuera y no más bien en sus adentros. (151-52)

Atraído por la inmensidad y tentado por ella, se pregunta poco después ante el misterio que le rodea: “¿Quiere decir algo esto?, ¿nos dicen algo las cosas y no sólo nuestra necesidad de implorar que algo nos hable?” (152). La inmensidad del entorno intensifica el misterio y en él convergen el “vértigo de la desaparición”, el “aliento de lo eterno” y “una extraña piedad por cuanto permanecía impenetrable” (153). En vez de dejarse caer al abismo, ante la presencia enigmática de lo sagrado [purificador] el padre retrocede hacia la tierra firme del “extrañamente indomeñable alrededor” (153). Su deseo de perfeccionamiento moral, implícito a lo largo de la novela, se intensifica en esta parte final y muestra su coexistencia con las imperfecciones de la conducta.

⁷González Sainz dice en una entrevista que la novela relata también la expulsión de un mundo “de ignominia y abyección moral, de satisfacción con la propia vileza” (Noticias EFE). A la expulsión le sigue el intento de volver al lugar de origen del que tuviera que emigrar veinte años atrás. Sobre la dificultad de esa vuelta, se pregunta el escritor: “¿Se puede regresar de la ignominia cuando permea la sociedad y a tu familia? ¿Se puede regresar de eso?”. Azúa señala en una reseña de la novela: “su protagonista, una especie de Orfeo ético, nos permite visitar el infierno de la miseria moral y salir con vida”.

⁸Para la dimensión performativa del lenguaje, remito a la exposición de *Contrasentidos* (García 9-29). Está presente una lógica conceptual que remite al uso que hace Paul de Man de la dimensión performativa del lenguaje.

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TITLE: Intercambio de miradas y la (re)articulación de la otredad en *Extranjeras* de Helena Taberna

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ABSTRACT: *Extranjeras* (2003), by director Helena Taberna, provides a series of interviews of foreign women residing in Madrid metro, and may be categorized as an ethnographic documentary. In its treatment of the ethnically diverse profile of the population of Madrid, *Extranjeras* provides various ways of looking at the phenomenon by means of juggling alternative, interchangeable, and contradictory dimensions of the gaze. This article proposes a reading of the film *Extranjeras* that illustrates the strategic usage of traditional ethnographic documentary conventions, allowing the (re)articulation of otherness in processes of migration. The women in *Extranjeras* tell their personal stories from their subjective point of view, and all the interviews are held in Spanish soils. These two factors are crucial in the process of a ludic representation of alternating perspectives, thus creating an alternative and multidimensional construction of otherness, vis-à-vis an unstable and fluctuating self.

KEYWORDS: Spanish cinema, ethnographic documentary, otherness, migration, women

RESUMEN: Por tratarse de una exposición de mujeres inmigrantes que residen en Madrid y sus alrededores, la película *Extranjeras* (2003) de Helena Taberna puede ser considerada como un documental etnográfico. En la estructuración de su contenido, el documental de Taberna entreteje dimensiones alternativas, intercambiables y contradictorias de la mirada para exponer desde varios ángulos la progresiva diversificación étnica de la población de la capital española. La lectura de *Extranjeras* a partir de los usos y desusos estratégicos de las convenciones tradicionales del documental etnográfico permite explorar los procesos de (re)formulación de la otredad dentro de la dinámica de los fenómenos migratorios. Las historias que componen el documental surgen desde la perspectiva subjetiva de las mujeres entrevistadas, y dichas entrevistas tienen lugar dentro de las fronteras geográficas de España. Estos dos aspectos de *Extranjeras* son cruciales en la presentación de un juego dinámico y versátil de miradas, conduciendo a una construcción alternativa y multidimensional del “otro,” en relación a un “yo” inestable y fluctuante.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cine español, documental etnográfico, otredad, migración, mujeres

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Intercambio de miradas y la (re)articulación de la otredad en *Extranjeras* de Helena Taberna

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En los años recientes se ha visto un incremento de documentales dentro de la producción cinematográfica de España,¹ con experimentaciones y variaciones dentro del género, que reflejan una búsqueda de vías alternativas de representar la realidad. El fenómeno incluye un buen número de producciones que se relacionan a una temática de movilizaciones poblacionales² o diásporas³ protagonizadas, en varios casos, por mujeres.⁴ Los textos de esta naturaleza ofrecen un comentario sobre los usos del espacio geopolítico y sociocultural de España desde diferentes perspectivas, y pueden ser vistos como un espacio creativo que permite formas alternativas de articular las convenciones cinematográficas del documental, las construcciones del género sexual, y las políticas de representación de identidades nacionales. Además, la imagen de la mujer migrante ofrece un acercamiento visual a la movilización transnacional de cuerpos femeninos, en contraste a la idea tradicional de la migración, entendido como un proceso primordialmente masculino, conectado a la imagen del conquistador o pionero.⁵ El protagonismo de la mujer migrante como agente consciente de su movilización demuestra que “mobility not only as a physical dimension, but also containing an intellectual dimension by representing freedom of choice as far as conducting [women’s] lives is concerned” (Costa-Villaverde 90). Se reivindica así la presencia legítima de la mujer y la creciente importancia de su papel en la toma de decisiones en los procesos de migración. El documental *Extranjeras* (2003), de Helena Taberna, recopila numerosos casos de mujeres migrantes, poniéndolas en primer plano como dueñas de

su propio destino. Con esto, el texto expone diversos aspectos de adaptaciones transnacionales protagonizadas por estas mujeres. Aunque en apariencia *Extranjeras* hace uso de una formulación fílmica llana, una lectura cuidadosa del film permite entrever un juego en las convenciones del documental etnográfico, a caballo entre el cine y la antropología. El análisis de su arquitectura fílmica, a partir del intercambio de miradas entre la cámara observadora y las observadas, desarticula las fórmulas tradicionales del documental, contribuyendo a describir efectivamente el proceso de diversificación poblacional de los centros urbanos de España. Expone, además, perspectivas multidimensionales y multidireccionales al abordar fenómenos migratorios, transculturales y/o transnacionales que van de la mano en la compleja (re)articulación de la otredad. El presente artículo propone la lectura del documental *Extranjeras* como una etnografía bidireccional que alterna las miradas de sujeto observador y objeto de observación. Se sugiere que un estudio de la estructura del film, concentrado en el intercambio de miradas entre el ojo de la cámara y los ojos de las entrevistadas, ofrece una descripción más comprensiva de ambos lados de los procesos migratorios.

Extranjeras entrevista a mujeres que residen en Madrid y sus alrededores, pero que vienen de varias partes del mundo. Estas mujeres hablan de sus experiencias personales como extranjeras en España, explicando las razones por las que se encuentran en ese lugar. Las imágenes de estas mujeres tienen como trasfondo varios lugares de la capital española, como Lavapiés, que según Martínez-Carazo es el barrio madrileño que

“cuenta con el mayor porcentaje de población extranjera en términos absolutos y relativos” (269), donde el número de extranjeros censados en el año 2002 ha superado los 10.000, provenientes de noventa y siete nacionalidades. También ocupan porciones considerables las escenas del Retiro, que se representa como “punto de encuentro y desencuentro de inmigrantes, sobre todo latinoamericanos,” o Aluche, que los domingos “se transforma en espacio de intercambio para los inmigrantes polacos” (270). Pero de todos estos lugares, Lavapiés constituye un espacio crucial, puesto que este barrio está poblado por inmigrantes africanos y latinos, así como de tiendas chinas (Szumilak 170), y estas imágenes forman parte de *Extranjeras*.

Las secuencias del documental muestran que las vivencias de estas mujeres son necesariamente experiencias situadas en espacios concretos de España, pero que están, al mismo tiempo, arraigadas en otros espacios tan variados como el número de entrevistadas, según lo aclaran las mismas mujeres. En el amasamiento de su contenido, *Extranjeras* aprovecha al máximo la dualidad que proviene de exponer episodios situados dentro del contexto geopolítico de España, pero que deben tener en cuenta el previo posicionamiento de las subjetividades que los refieren en otros espacios lejanos. Se crea así una yuxtaposición sugestiva entre el espacio que ocupa el sujeto entrevistado en el momento de contar su experiencia (el rodaje del documental en España) y el espacio que había ocupado en algún momento del pasado (previas experiencias en su país de origen). Es importante notar que la experiencia previa, que no registra el documental, ha sido decisiva en el procesamiento cualitativo de las experiencias que se recuentan en la pantalla. Así se entretiene una estructura que opone el espacio que ocupan los cuerpos de estas mujeres en el momento de ser filmadas, contra el espacio nostálgico en que residen sus memorias.

Este andamiaje sugerente viene ya condicionado por el título del film: *Extranjeras*. Teniendo en cuenta que el título tiene la capacidad

de “crear un marco que incita al espectador a aceptar una determinada lectura de lo que está viendo” (Gómez López-Quiñones 98), el título *Extranjeras* contextualiza de entrada su contenido—y por ende un rasgo definitorio de las protagonistas de las mismas—a la vez que orienta la interpretación del texto. Las imágenes de las mujeres entrevistadas están supeditadas a su calidad de “extranjeras” dentro de España, y el título *Extranjeras* subraya la presencia física de estas mujeres en tierras españolas en contraposición a su procedencia foránea. Este contraste entre el espacio del presente y el espacio del pasado se logra mediante la técnica de *talking heads*, uno de los formatos más simples del documental en que se exponen en serie varios sujetos que hablan ante la cámara.

La entrevista a personajes relevantes ha sido un método ampliamente empleado en el documental ya que se suponía que establecía conexiones sin mediaciones entre el sujeto entrevistado y la audiencia. Esta fantasía de una comunicación directa se acentuaba más en aquellas entrevistas dirigidas al lente de la cámara, como las que presenta *Extranjeras*, a diferencia de las técnicas de entrevistas que siguen el llamado M.I.R. (Modo Institucional de Representación).⁶ Nichols afirma que los varios métodos de la entrevista constituyen una técnica predominante del documental porque crea la sensación de que los sujetos del film se dirigen directamente a la audiencia, con lo que se evitan problemas potenciales de la “voice-over narration,” como una omnisciencia autoritaria o un reduccionismo didáctico (“The Voice of Documentary,” 23-4). En el caso de los documentales etnográficos, Nichols indica que el “voice-over commentary”⁷ (*Blurred Boundaries*, 68) sirve, efectivamente, para secundar la perspectiva hacia la que se quiere orientar al espectador, y corroborar una supuesta objetividad de las representaciones dentro del texto. En su análisis de *Extranjeras*, Martínez-Carazo señala la eliminación de “la tradicional voz en *off* propia de los documentales” para afirmar que el documental de Taberna confiere “la responsabilidad actancial a estas mujeres plurales y

[les permite] monopolizar la palabra en la pantalla [con lo que] las desplaza de los márgenes al centro” (271). Por un lado, Martínez-Carazo reconoce la imposibilidad de armar las historias de las mujeres inmigrantes desde una perspectiva netamente interna, aceptando que *Extranjeras*

destaca la pervivencia de estructuras de poder heredadas del pasado colonial, concretamente la construcción de la imagen del inmigrante desde la perspectiva del sujeto dominante que ha condicionado la construcción del otro. (271)

Afirma así que

el punto de vista narrativo, a pesar de la intervención directa de las inmigrantes, pertenece a una observadora inscrita en una tradición ajena a la vivida por las protagonistas de este documento.

No obstante, ella insiste una vez más en que la eliminación de la voz en *off* “minimiza la presencia de la directora” y reduce “la fricción entre el discurso dominante y el del inmigrante” (272), otorgando autoridad a las *extranjeras* en el proceso de su representación. Una lectura como la que propone Martínez-Carazo busca una reconciliación forzada entre la voz autoritaria de la directora del texto y las múltiples voces de las entrevistadas, es decir, las “otras.” Esto surge de la problemática de ver los segmentos de estas entrevistas como un elemento espontáneo, olvidando todo el marco de construcción que impone la formulación del texto en sí. Una aproximación más exhaustiva del texto en su totalidad, y no de sus elementos por separado, contribuye también a evitar situaciones en que la “simple observación sea asumida como un acto redentor” (Gómez López-Quiñonez 101).

Por lo dicho, es necesario notar que la estructura de *Extranjeras* revela todo lo contrario, y que resulta ingenuo determinar que la mera ausencia de una voz en *off* signifique

gratuitamente “permitirles monopolizar la palabra en la pantalla” (272) a las mujeres entrevistadas, como afirma Martínez-Carazo. Aunque las entrevistas ayudan a disipar la autoridad entre los componentes del texto (Nichols, “The Voice” 24), esta técnica no descarta problemas de representación o de interpretación. Nichols señala que la lectura de textos filmicos que se basan en entrevistas debe cuidarse de ver que

in documentary, when the voice of the text disappears behind characters who speak to us, we confront a specific strategy of no less ideological importance than its equivalent in fiction films. (“The Voice” 25)

Vale decir que el significado de un texto se confiere no solamente por el contenido, sino también por el andamiaje en que se presenta dicho contenido. Es necesario, pues, diferenciar la concepción integral del texto de la concepción parcial de los elementos del texto. En el caso de *Extranjeras*, se debe recordar que las entrevistas son parte del texto—el “contenido”—pero no el texto en sí. Tomar una parte como la totalidad, o representativa de la totalidad, puede obstruir la lectura integral del texto, por lo que una interpretación que pretende ver las entrevistas de las mujeres en *Extranjeras* como elementos independientes del proceso de producción del film atenta contra una interpretación apropiada del film. Por otra parte, para el texto filmico, esto raya en la paradoja de negar su propia complicidad con una producción de información que se apoya en bases no menos firmes que su propio acto de producción (“The Voice” 21). Es decir, cada componente de un texto debe ser concebido con plena consciencia de la presencia y efecto de otros componentes que están sujetos a un proceso complejo y dinámico de su propia producción. En *Extranjeras*, las entrevistas deben ser vistas como ingredientes cuya mezcla y combinación producen un cuadro panorámico más grande, y no simplemente como una exposición directa de la voz de las mujeres entrevistadas.

Si bien el texto parece presentar una organización ordinaria en la secuencia de imágenes proyectadas en pantalla, esta fachada simple sugiere considerar todo un conglomerado informativo que se ha dejado en entredicho. Nótese que *Extranjeras* no solamente descarta la voz de un narrador que intenta guiar la lectura del espectador, sino que prescinde también de las preguntas hechas a las entrevistadas. La técnica de entrevistas de este texto es lo que Nichols denomina “masked interviews” (*Ideology and the Image*, 281), que a diferencia de una entrevista explícita en que se dan registros de la interacción entre un entrevistador y un entrevistado, se omite todo rastro de los procesos interrogatorios. Por un lado, esta técnica puede resultar favorable para la escenificación de un ambiente espontáneo, ya que “la desaparición de la pregunta le otorga a la entrevista un aura confesional”⁸ en que no se le impone al sujeto una serie de preguntas que apuntan a respuestas determinadas, ofreciendo en su lugar imágenes de “un personaje que decide exponerse ante la cámara para desarrollar un relato con una temática, un ritmo y un sentido aparentemente voluntarios” (Gómez López-Quiñonez 99), tal como se da con las historias referidas por las mujeres de *Extranjeras*. Pero, por otro lado, hay que considerar que las entrevistas, incluyendo las que utilizan la técnica de *masked interview*, pasan por un proceso de selección que orienta el argumento hacia una dirección en particular. Entonces, atribuir un tono confesional a las entrevistas presentadas en *Extranjeras* resulta ser una lectura simplista del texto, ya que es innegable que lo expuesto en la pantalla surge como respuesta a ciertas preguntas y que posteriormente se pasa por un proceso premeditado de selección. De hecho, en el documental de Taberna se pueden inferir las preguntas a las que están respondiéndolo las mujeres que hablan ante la cámara, burlándose así de un supuesto “diálogo directo,” que tradicionalmente se le atribuía a la entrevista. La información de las entrevistas hace suponer que las mujeres responden a una serie de preguntas que exigen

una explicación de su inmigración a España. El hecho de que los testimonios de estas mujeres no surjan por iniciativa propia, sino como respuestas para explicar su presencia en tierras españolas, posiciona la cámara en un punto de vista particular, que necesariamente afecta el punto de vista del espectador. Desde este ángulo se puede decir que la existencia del texto fílmico en sí es una muestra palpable de la inexistencia absoluta de una relación directa entre los sujetos/objetos del documental y los espectadores, como pretende sugerir Martínez-Carazo.

Además de problematizar el uso de la entrevista como una forma directa de representar a las extranjeras en España, la estructura simple de *Extranjeras* cumple la función de subrayar la complejidad de relaciones que constituyen el texto. Se ha dicho que las respuestas de las mujeres entrevistadas permiten inferir las preguntas, que según la información que transmiten entrevistadas, parecen ser las mismas para todas. Todas hablan de su trayectoria desde los países que consideran aún suyos hasta el territorio español, con detalles de sus experiencias como “extranjeras” en tierras españolas. La supuesta uniformidad de las preguntas a las que están respondiéndolo estas mujeres hace resaltar, paradójicamente, la diversidad de sus experiencias. De esta manera, se obtienen diferentes narrativas pese al empleo de preguntas semejantes para todas las mujeres, ya que la diversidad viene adherida a una selección previa de las entrevistadas. El film se constituye así en una contradicción fructífera mediante la yuxtaposición de un estímulo simple y la opulenta multiplicidad que genera el buen uso de dicho estímulo. El proceso de seleccionar un grupo variado en cuanto a origen, edad, profesión, modo de vida, entre otros criterios, de “extranjeras” ha sido suficiente para llenar decenas de minutos con historias diferentes que son significativas individualmente. Luego, los rasgos distintivos que diferencian a una mujer de las demás es, precisamente, el elemento que las une y las conecta bajo el catálogo común de “extranjeras” en España, y que otorga a su vez el título del mismo largometraje.

La construcción de este texto fílmico en una serie de experiencias personales de ciertas mujeres se fundamenta en la premisa de que las vivencias de dichas mujeres merecen la atención por ser diferentes de un grupo referente. La presentación de sus historias tiene validez, inevitablemente, en cuanto a su característica distinta de lo ordinario dentro del contexto español. En cuanto que se trata de la exposición o estudio de una cultura—la “extranjera”—para una audiencia—en supuesta contraposición a la “extranjera” y por lo tanto la “propia”—se puede decir que *Extranjeras* funciona como un texto etnográfico, ya que, en sus orígenes, la etnografía fue concebida como un estudio descriptivo de una comunidad o una cultura, convencionalmente fuera de la cultura occidental, con el fin de realizar análisis comparativos de dichas culturas (Hammersley y Atkinson 1). Es ilustrativo que la palabra etnografía venga literalmente de “ethnos, a people, and graphos, the describing or writing” (Tobing Rony 8), aludiendo a su objetivo primordial de (re)presentar a un grupo particular de gente. A este propósito, el cine, que se vale de imágenes audiovisuales, fue considerado como un medio propicio, ya que la relevancia de datos visuales viene dada por “the possibility of visual forms (especially film and video) becoming a recognized medium of anthropology—a means of exploring social phenomena and expressing anthropological knowledge” (MacDougall 63). Nichols alude a ello cuando afirma que “the realist image certifies the authenticity of what is seen and heard as lifelike” (*Blurred Boundaries*, 68). Es decir que la credibilidad de las imágenes de un film se da en función de la fidelidad que se le ha atribuido en el momento inicial del aparato cinematográfico a los registros visuales en su calidad de prueba evidente de algún fenómeno.

El film etnográfico tiene como tarea primaria la representación de una cultura para otra (*Blurred Boundaries*, 66), que en principio parte del objetivo antropológico⁹ de observar y estudiar otras culturas, algunas veces como un proceso de reafirmación de la

suya propia. De manera que el film etnográfico constituye un registro de contacto con una cultura diferente (McDougall 75). Además, el valor pragmático de una etnografía visual como índice fiable de su referente se decide en la medida en que retrata individuos de otras sociedades (McDougall 114), proceso que retoma la idea de (re)presentar a un “otro” para un “yo.”¹⁰ Se hace aquí una distinción entre un “nosotros” y un “ellos” que Nichols identifica como un rasgo inscrito en la formulación misma de los textos fílmicos de etnografía. Esto establece una estructura binaria en que “[t]hey occupy a time and space which “we” must recreate, stage, or represent” (*Blurred Boundaries*, 67), que bien se puede observar en film *Extranjeras*.

A la luz del planteamiento teórico de la etnografía visual, es factible considerar *Extranjeras* dentro de esta categoría, ya que se trata de una documentación de unas “otras”—o extranjeras—para un supuesto “nosotros”. Luego, la consideración de algunas convenciones de este sub-género—por así decirlo—en la formulación del documental de Taberna permite observar variaciones y alteraciones sugerentes. Teniendo en cuenta que la etnografía es la (re)presentación de otra cultura ante la propia, y que convencionalmente las culturas se dan territorialmente, Nichols identifica “the act of travel” (*Blurred Boundaries*, 67) como un elemento central en el proceso de su producción. Nichols indica que la visualización del viaje del observador hacia el lugar donde se sitúa el objeto de estudio apunta a consolidar la autoridad del film etnográfico y a establecer los cimientos de “veracidad” del texto, ya que esto sirve como garantía de “[w]hat you see is what there was (I know; I was there)” (*Blurred Boundaries*, 68). De ahí que los documentales de esta modalidad hayan establecido como norma comenzar su narrativa con la llamada “arrival scene” (*Representing Reality*, 222) para exponer visualmente el encuentro entre observadores y observados.

En contraste a esta convención, *Extranjeras* no presenta escenas de viajes, ni tomas

de llegadas, así como tampoco momentos de encuentro entre las varias “culturas” que son representadas en el film. Evidentemente, el preámbulo de la llegada del equipo cinematográfico al lugar del contacto intercultural resulta ser irrelevante, ya que el viaje es—o ha sido—realizado no por el observador, sino por los observados. Sin embargo, la apertura del documental se escenifica en el centro budista So Guang Shan, un contexto espacial no necesariamente “típico” de España. Esta escenificación de las primeras tomas crea la falsa sensación de que la cámara se encuentra en otro espacio geográfico, más aún porque el centro budista alberga practicantes étnicamente diversas. La escenografía del templo genera incertidumbre sobre el título “extranjeras”, que según estas imágenes pueden ser tanto chinas como españolas. Pero inmediatamente sigue la entrevista de Kin Lang Wu que explica en español la razón por la que ella se encuentra en España. Estas secuencias invitan a considerar el sentido bidireccional que puede tener el catálogo de “extranjeras”, así como las mecánicas de procesamiento de un espacio físico o cultural como un contexto familiar o ajeno. La contraposición de estas dos escenas expone la posibilidad de diversas dimensiones socioculturales, así como de los usos múltiples de un mismo espacio geográfico. Este rasgo dialoga con las convenciones tradicionales del film etnográfico en que, según Nichols, “our bodies there and representation of them here is governed by the standards and principles of fieldwork and location filming” (*Blurred Boundaries*, 67). Efectivamente, mientras la etnografía tradicional parte de la premisa de que la “otra” cultura existe en “otro” lugar, en *Extranjeras* se cuestiona esto mediante el registro de las otras culturas dentro de España, el territorio propio—del yo—del texto.

Por la manera en que se superponen varias dimensiones del espacio en cuanto a la localización del observador y el observado, se puede decir que *Extranjeras* es un registro que opera en doble sentido, a modo de etnografía bidireccional. Una primera mirada es la que

va dirigida a las mujeres que se exponen ante las cámaras para hablar de sus historias, pero simultáneamente se proyecta una segunda mirada y es la que va dirigida a la sociedad española desde la perspectiva de las mujeres que están siendo “observadas” por la cámara.

En una dimensión de perspectivas multidimensionales, las historias de las extranjeras pueden ser vistas como exposiciones etnográficas de sí mismas, en el sentido de que cada una de ellas se representa como el “otro” ante los ojos subjetivos del “yo” español. Las mujeres hablan de su movilización hacia España y sus experiencias de la cultura española, describiendo la vida que llevan dentro del territorio español. Esta dirección de la mirada implica la exposición de las “extranjeras” que deben ofrecer un trasfondo de las culturas de sus respectivos países para poder contextualizar el impacto que sufrieron al entrar en contacto con otra cultura, la española, que difiere de las suyas. Para ofrecer los testimonios de sus experiencias en España, las mujeres explican primero las prácticas habituales en sus respectivos países para poder establecer un contraste con las prácticas culturales de España, explicando las consecuentes diferencias cognitivas en su calidad de extranjeras. De esta manera, las mujeres hablan de sus respectivas culturas de donde arrastran sus subjetividades, al tiempo que sus cuerpos están ocupando el espacio de una cultura ajena. Por tanto, desde la perspectiva del lugar que alberga la cámara, la observación del “otro” ocurre dentro del espacio del “yo.” Además, este desplazamiento del “otro” hacia el “yo” no es un procedimiento abstracto o conceptual, sino que se da de manera real en cuanto que se trata de un movimiento de cuerpos físicos hacia espacios concretos. El juego de esta dualidad espacial, simbólica a la vez que somática, permite poner en cuestionamiento los usos convencionales de la mirada del film etnográfico en general, proponiendo también considerar la diversidad de perspectivas dentro y fuera del documental *Extranjeras*.

Desde este ángulo, el lente de la cámara observa a estas mujeres en su calidad de

“otras” que resaltan por ser diferentes del contexto “nuestro” de España, pero si se invierte la perspectiva, los testimonios de estas “otras” se basan en sus observaciones subjetivas—es decir desde una postura del “yo”—de las prácticas socioculturales de España. Se tiene así la mirada desde una dirección opuesta en que las historias personales, que aparentaban ser autoetnografías de las mujeres entrevistadas, resultan ser una observación de la sociedad española a través de los ojos de dichas mujeres. La observación, que realiza el texto desde una postura del “yo” (perspectiva del español) para estudiar a un “otro” (la extranjera) por medio de una cámara, se funda en los testimonios de este “otro” (la extranjera) que ha construido sus historias personales a partir de su observación del “yo” (la cultura española). En este juego de perspectivas, *Extranjeras* puede ser visto como una etnografía bidireccional en que se alternan los roles del “yo” y el “otro.” La cámara observa a las extranjeras y registra sus testimonios como datos etnográficos sobre estas “otras”, mientras que las extranjeras, a su vez, cuentan sus historias personales a partir de sus percepciones de las prácticas culturales y costumbres de España, ofreciendo lo que podrían verse como comentarios etnográficos sobre España, que desde este extremo funciona como el “otro.” Barajando estas perspectivas intercambiables, el documental que en principio aparentaba ser una observación de las extranjeras (las otras) se constituye como un documento de introspección sobre España. Lo que cuentan las mujeres “extranjeras” son sus experiencias personales, pero al mismo tiempo son innegablemente experiencias de España.

De hecho, muchos comentarios de las entrevistadas describen varios aspectos de la sociedad española. Según la experiencia de Lily Lin Chen, en su escuela “se ríen de ti porque eres china, y al final terminan diciendo, pero ella es china,” y Kamila afirma que fue golpeada muchas veces en la escuela simplemente por ser polaca y “por ninguna otra razón.” En contraste, una de las hijas de la familia Oyo-la habla de una experiencia positiva en que

“todo fue muy bonito,” aunque comenta también que le preguntaban si en Perú “todos van con faldas largas y de traje típico.” Muchas otras muestran preocupación por el racismo que han experimentado. Para ejemplificar unos cuantos casos del film, la dominicana Lala comenta que “hay racismo, bastante,” cuando cuenta entre risas el episodio en que Coral, la niña que ella cuida, le dijo que no le pusiera las manos porque la pondrán negra. Maryam, de Marruecos, asiente que “hay algunos españoles que nos tratan muy bien,” pero que hay otros que “son racistas, bien dicho, son racistas porque hasta hola no nos dicen.” Hayar Salih, de Siria, dice que “entras en la tienda y ya que dicen ésta es terrorista, porque llevas el pañuelo dicen ésta es terrorista. Los niños pequeños te llaman la hija de Bin Laden,” y Mary Hakki, de EEUU, cuenta que en sus viajes a Toledo con sus estudiantes de cultura árabe han sido insultados por ser “morros” (sic) y “los chicos pequeños les han tirado piedras.” La marroquí Ayar calcula que el incidente del 11 de septiembre “cambió algunas cosas, pero el racismo ya estaba.” Safia, de Argelia, asegura que ella no hubiera tenido tantas amigas españolas “si lleva velo o fuese más morena de piel” y Maguette, de Senegal, murmura con tristeza que “hay muchos blancos que no quieren ni ver negro.” Además del trato que han recibido, varias mujeres ofrecen también sus impresiones sobre la sociedad española, especialmente sobre los derechos de la mujer. Entre otras, la colombiana Ángela Botero observa que en España “muchas mujeres están convencidas de que ya tienen las cosas ganadas y se están quedando muy tranquilas, pero eso no es cierto.” Sainab, de Iraq, por su parte, subraya que “el islam directamente no te discrimina como mujer, tienes un montón de derechos, dime tú si hay igualdad de derechos entre el hombre y la mujer en España mismo,” dando a entender que el estatuto de la mujer depende mucho de la perspectiva de cada cultura.

Se debe reconocer aquí que, a pesar del intercambio de miradas entre observadores y observadas, no se puede negar una estructura

de poder asimétrica en este documental: un grupo de grabación español observa a unas extranjeras, que a su vez, observa a la comunidad a la que en cierto modo representa dicho grupo de rodaje. Es decir, aquí se puede poner en duda la existencia una simetría o una horizontalidad epistemológicas, y considerar este desdoblamiento de miradas como una forma de correspondencia dentro de una estructura asimétrica. Sin embargo, desde una tercera mirada, la del espectador, esta estructura asimétrica de poder no es estática sino que puede variar según los elementos que se observen. Es más, en este sentido, el peso que gana la mirada de las “extranjeras” puede ser visto como un acto de apropiación de la estructura o el sistema audiovisual que el equipo cinematográfico. Independientemente de estas consideraciones, esta serie de entrevistas dejan entrever aspectos de la sociedad y la cultura de España. Si bien se trata de las experiencias individuales de las entrevistadas, son también experiencias de España, protagonizadas tanto por ellas como por los españoles con quienes estas “extranjeras” han tenido interacción y además dentro del territorio español. Las mujeres entrevistadas exponen de esta manera varias facetas de España en el proceso de contar sus historias personales, puesto que ellas—y no la cámara—son las que conocen los dos lados por vivencia propia. Con esto, las entrevistadas hablan de lo que ha sido y es España, a través de sus ojos y desde un ángulo reverso. Desde la perspectiva de estas mujeres, el “otro” es España en el hecho de que para todas ellas la idea de “mi país” se reserva para su nación de origen que se encuentra en otro espacio geográfico, lejos de España. Esta concepción de sentimiento, memoria o nostalgia nacional se traduce en las prácticas diarias de estas mujeres: lo que cocinan, lo que comen, lo que visten, lo que leen, lo que ven en la televisión, las noticias que les interesan, la gente con quienes se relacionan, lo que estudian, lo que creen, lo que valoran y lo que sueñan. Estas mujeres mantienen varios encuentros casuales para cocinar, ver la televisión, y comer

juntas; también estudian y practican religiones en mutua compañía; o se lavan el pelo y se acicalan las unas a las otras. Estas escenas muestran que ellas residen emocionalmente en un espacio conceptual y compartido que brota de los recuerdos de un país que, a pesar de la distancia, siguen considerando suyo. En consecuencia, se establece una estructura binaria entre “yo” en oposición al “otro” que para ellas es España. Esta postura es consistente en todas las mujeres entrevistadas que siguen denominando “mi país” a su país de origen, independientemente de los años resididos en España.

En este espacio las extranjeras son conscientes de su otredad, pero al mismo tiempo, este mismo espacio gana cierto sentido de otredad desde la perspectiva subjetiva de estas mujeres. Allí, las extranjeras tratan de mantener un balance entre dos puntos que no parecen tener convergencia: por un lado, ellas desean incorporarse en la sociedad española como miembros funcionales, mientras que por el otro, ellas se esfuerzan por mantener los lazos que las unen a su cultura y costumbres de origen. La mayoría de las entrevistadas afirma que el deseo de pertenecer al sistema español se limita a cuestiones legales—los “papeles”—que aseguren ciertas actividades económicas. En contraste a ello, todas conciben el mantenimiento y la práctica de las costumbres de su cultura de origen como una tarea natural y digna. Muchas hablan de la importancia de mantener su lengua y su escritura, y varias de ellas tomando medidas necesarias para que sus valores culturales sean transmitidos a sus hijos. Como parte del mantenimiento de su cultura, estas extranjeras mantienen encuentros con sus “compatriotas” en lugares específicos de la capital española y sus alrededores. En estos encuentros ellas comparten informaciones y noticias, la nostalgia común hacia la tierra natal, se intercambian servicios de diversas clases, o cocinan juntas platos tradicionales de sus países. Las sesiones de convivencia constituyen una suerte de tregua del transcurrir cotidiano en un medio poco familiar para todas ellas.

Buen ejemplo son las secuencias de “cocina intercultural,” en que mujeres de diferentes nacionalidades ofrecen voluntariamente clases de cocina para dar a conocer la cultura culinaria típica de sus respectivos países. En su entrevista, la colombiana Ángela Botero asegura que las mujeres se benefician “del saber de otras mujeres” y afirma que “estar en la cocina nos junta, es que es un ritual. Donde más que llenarnos, es alimentarnos de los saberes y de la compañía de mujeres que vienen de otros países.” Para Botero y las numerosas mujeres que participan en estas reuniones, estas actividades en conjunto resultan ser una forma de conocerse y entablar relaciones solidarias. El apoyo moral que reciben las “extranjeras” en las reuniones basadas en sus afinidades culturales se hace más evidente en las entrevistas a las estudiantes del Centro Cultural Islámico ya que ellas se sienten unidas por convicciones religiosas que fundamentan sus existencias mismas.

Al contraponer el espacio físico de España con el espacio emotivo del país natal, las mujeres entrevistadas sugieren un conflicto interno en torno a los dos espacios. La disociación entre el espacio donde reside el cuerpo y el espacio que ocupan los afectos genera una situación de desafío diario en que estas mujeres deben negociar una conciliación de ambos. Este intento de conciliación se traduce en una relación volátil que las mujeres del texto mantienen con el espacio físico que ocupan, y donde la “integración”¹² a la sociedad española, según las entrevistas, se limita a una participación de índole económica que garantice una mínima subsistencia en el territorio español. Sin embargo, es irónico notar que para casi todas las mujeres entrevistadas, las actividades económicas que les permiten entrada a la sociedad española se basan, precisamente, en las prácticas socioculturales que provienen de sus países de origen. La ironía radica en que en la mayoría de los casos, la integración de estas mujeres se hace posible mediante la explotación de sus cualidades “exóticas” en el contexto español. Vale decir que los patrimonios culturales que las mujeres traen de sus países de origen tienen

valor de capital cultural para adentrarse en el ámbito económico de España y forjar sus bases financieras.¹³ Se observa este proceso en el restaurante “La Flor de la Canela” que opera la familia Oyola o el restaurante chino que tienen Hua y Shin Chi, así como la situación de Rasha, Paz y Mila que se dedican a la música africana. Igualmente, las relaciones sociales basadas en raíces nacionales, culturales o étnicas compartidas son aprovechadas al máximo para avanzar en sus profesiones u operar sus negocios, como el locutorio de la familia Falcón, la peluquería de Fanta, o la tienda de Fátima.

A partir de la inestabilidad en que habitan estas mujeres, tanto el andamiaje como el contenido del texto articulan un vaivén constante de diferentes perspectivas que juegan con las nociones fijas del “yo” y “el otro.” Esto cuestiona asimismo la inmediatez afectiva de las varias nociones del espacio físico y del espacio simbólico. Según los registros del documental, los espacios que habitan estas mujeres distan de la idea típica de lo “español,” y la mecánica que opera dentro de estos espacios poco tiene que ver con las costumbres y tradiciones de lo que se puede considerar tradicionalmente español. Todas conservan en sus memorias una imagen de “mi país” de donde arrastran un bagaje histórico y cultural que las sostiene en un medio que no consideran familiar. Algunas mujeres apelan al pasado colonial o islámico para reclamar sus derechos justificados de residir en España, cuestionando con la relación legítima de un grupo determinado con un territorio enmarcado como nación.

Como texto audiovisual, dicho cuestionamiento se expone de manera sensorial por medio de mujeres “exóticas” que no hablan o no han perfeccionado aún su español. Se trata, además, de un texto etnográfico con la añadida ironía de que los testimonios ofrecidos en otras lenguas o en castellanos de diferentes acentos, y desde una fisonomía no española, se articulan dentro del espacio geográfico de “España.” Se constituye así en un registro audiovisual a modo de contra-etnografía en que

se alternan los espacios físicos y emotivos, así como los roles del “otro” y el “yo.” Así, *Extranjeras* juega con la idea de que cualquier persona, o toda persona, es potencialmente un etnógrafo en el mundo multicultural de hoy (Johnson y Michaelsen 28). Otro factor importante de esta etnografía bidireccional es su concentración en la figura de la mujer, como sujeto observador a la que vez que objeto de observación. Las protagonistas de este documental ofrecen sus experiencias de “extranjeras,” mientras que comparten sus testimonios como conocedoras de “España,” acoplándose efectivamente a la arquitectura versátil del texto que alterna perspectivas opuestas y descarta así la división estricta ente observador y observado. El desdoblamiento de estas perspectivas, es, en cierto modo, inevitable y natural, ya que en un momento dado las “extranjeras” se reconocen como individuos insertados en el espacio, tanto territorial como sociocultural de España, cuando confiesan que el regresar a sus países de origen “ya no es lo mismo,” que quieren “pertener a los dos lados,” o que el lugar ideal es el “espacio del medio.” Van Hear identifica esta pertenencia imprecisa como una marca distintiva de las comunidades transnacionales, que en el caso de las mujeres del texto no es simplemente entre el país de origen y el país de residencia, sino que alcanza el grado de desarrollar “networks which materially substitute for territorial homes” (249), como se puede ver a lo largo de la película en los contactos, tanto organizados como espontáneos, que crean y mantienen estas extranjeras.

Además de ofrecer una cara de las múltiples facetas que tiene la realidad social de la España actual, una lectura versátil del film *Extranjeras* permite reconsiderar los usos de las convenciones tradicionales del documental etnográfico, así como de las políticas representativas de etnia y género en los procesos de formulación de identidades nacionales. Luego, si se adopta la postura que propone MacDougall de que un texto de esta índole “indeed, it may be conceived of as neither a message nor a representation, but as a record

of engagement with a different culture” (75), *Extranjeras* se establece como un intento de comunicación, no solamente con la audiencia en su calidad de texto, sino en dimensiones múltiples y complejas entre las mujeres dentro y más allá del texto. En el proceso de (re) presentar y (re)producir el mundo real, tal como son las convenciones del documental tradicional, *Extranjeras* expone el proceso de su propia (re)producción, y una lectura detenida de este proceso permite una (re)formulación lúdica de convenciones tradicionales sobre la direccionalidad de las miradas de observación, la agencialidad de dicha observación y los usos de la etnografía como instrumento de (re)presentación de la otredad. El intercambio de miradas en la película de Taberna puede verse como una manera de “test out new ideas and to imagine a different way of ordering things” (Duncombe 177), simplemente como un intento de abrir un espacio creativo para cuestionar y observar críticamente los procesos de representación de los fenómenos socioculturales.

Notas

¹Gómez López-Quiñonez resalta tanto el “estreno comercial como el relativo éxito recaudatorio” (95) de films no narrativos en España. Entrando en el año 2000, y sin contar las coproducciones dirigidas por directores no españoles, se pueden citar producciones como *El tren de la memoria* (2005), *Aguaviva* (2006), *Las estrellas de la línea* (2006), *La espalda del mundo* (2000), *Balseros* (2002), *Adiós con el corazón* (2006), *El cielo gira* (2005), *En construcción* (2001), *En el mundo a cada rato* (2004), *Galindez* (2002), *Hay motivo* (2004), *Invisibles* (2007), *Calle 54* (2000), *La mafia en la Habana* (2000), *La niebla en las palmeras* (2006), *La pelota vasca* (2003), *The Sugar Curtain* (2005), *Fados* (2007), *Invisibles* (2007). La importancia del documental en la industria del cine español está creciendo, y la revista *Academia* afirma que “una muestra de que cada vez se hacen más documentales en España son los más de 40 proyectos que se están rodando o empezarán a filmarse este año” (48).

²Ballesteros afirma que hacia finales del siglo XX, la cinematografía comienza a concentrarse en los fenómenos migratorios y el tema de la xenofobia, lo que en España permite hablar de todo un

género que ella llama “immigration film” (4). Sin embargo, nótese que sería preferible el nominativo de “cine de migración” en cuanto que descarta la localización de la perspectiva desde la que se observa a la población móvil.

³En este trabajo se observa la diáspora como una experiencia cotidiana de la frontera. Safran (1991) define la diáspora como

dispersal from an original centre to two or more peripheral regions; retention of collective memory of the homeland; partial alienation from the host society; aspiration to return to an ancestral homeland; commitment to the maintenance or restoration of that homeland; and derivation of collective consciousness and solidarity from a relationship within the homeland.

Es viable ver la diáspora como bloques poblacionales que se caracterizan por su capacidad de habitar varios espacios, pero sin pertenecer realmente a ninguno, en un espacio marginal que se encuentra entre un centro y otro.

⁴El papel protagónico de la mujer migrante en el cine de migración es un reflejo de los cambios en la composición de grupos migrantes. Para más información al respecto dentro de la industria cinematográfica de España, refiérase al artículo de Ballesteros.

⁵Sobre el protagonismo de la figura masculina en las movilizaciones migratorias tradicionales, véase el concepto de *homo migrans* que presenta Harzig en oposición a *femina migrans* en su artículo “Women Migrants as Global and Local Agents” (15), así como el ensayo “Female ‘Birds of Passage’ a Decade Later: Gender and Immigration in the European Union” (273) de Kofman.

⁶Término acuñado por Noël Burch y que Gómez López-Quifones explica que consiste en exigir que “el actor no dirija su mirada a la cámara, ni interpele verbalmente a los espectadores porque éstos (así lo quiere la ilusión fílmica) no están ahí” (99).

⁷Al respecto, Nichols añade comentarios sugestivos sobre los efectos de emplear una voz masculina anónima, a la que se atribuye una infundada autoridad sobre el tema que trata el texto fílmico. Asimismo, junto al anonimato de la voz en *off*, la ausencia física de una persona que está creando o armando el film que se proyecta contribuye a crear la falsa sensación de “self-effacement” que borra también sus propias limitaciones físicas para generar un aire de omnisciencia u omnipotencia (*Blurred Boundaries*, 68) en el proceso perceptivo de los espectadores.

⁸MacDougall habla de la efectividad del método de la entrevista—aunque no específicamente limitado al formato de “masked interview”—como el “ideal medium for confession and self-revelation,” aunque también lo condena como un instrumento de “misinformation” (117).

⁹El uso del film etnográfico dentro de la antropología ha sido general, pero esto no significa que el primero sea gratuitamente equivalente al segundo. El debate aquí es entre texto etnográfico y texto antropológico, que difiere, a su vez, de la problemática que expone MacDougall a partir de la pregunta que Jay Ruby había hecho en 1975: “is an ethnographic film a filmic ethnography?” (74) que apunta a cuestionar la relación entre film y etnografía. MacDougall define el film etnográfico como “a broader category than films made within, and for, the discipline of anthropology” (97-8), teniendo en cuenta que un texto fílmico no específico de la antropología pretende cubrir una audiencia más amplia, más allá de un campo académico. En el caso de Trinh T. Minh-ha se mofa del “sanctified terrain of anthropology” que supera al tosco film etnográfico “because they do not [...] just show activities being performed, but they also *explain* the anthropological significance of these activities,” calificando de “unreliable constructs” aquellas aserciones “that do not obey the rules of anthropological authority” (102-3). Lo que se puede deducir de lo dicho es que no es fácil llegar a conclusiones tajantes acerca de la relación o diferenciación entre un texto etnográfico y uno antropológico. Aquí es relevante señalar que la forma clásica de la etnografía pretende encapsular toda una cultura en un texto visual, de modo que “an ethnographic film becomes a metonym for an entire culture” (Tobing Rony 7). Esto refleja no solamente la interdependencia de los dos campos en cuestión, sino la dificultad de establecer con certeza los criterios de uno u otro género fílmico. Por otro lado, en lo concerniente a la categorización de textos visuales etnográficos dentro del género documental, es interesante la idea de que “ethnographic film, as a form of documentary, has often been regarded by *cinéastes* as obscure and by anthropologists, at least until recently, as lacking intellectual substance” (MacDougall 95). El documental etnográfico se sitúa así en una posición marginal en su relación con el campo antropológico, además de la posición ya liminar que ocupa el género del documental dentro del cuerpo cinematográfico.

¹⁰En relación de la dicotomía del “yo” y “el otro,” es sumamente interesante el argumento de

Tobing Rony que discute el planteamiento de un grupo de gente “historificable” en oposición a otro grupo “ethnographiable,” subrayando que tal estructura no resulta ser nada inocente (7-8). Refiérase también a los comentarios de María Pilar Rodríguez (44-48) sobre “la condición subalterna” de la población migrante femenina. Sin embargo, es importante aclarar aquí que la división binaria del “yo” y “el otro”—o sus equivalentes “nosotros” y “ellos”—no opera con grupos concretos o concretamente definidos. Se trata más bien de una dicotomía de imaginarios que están sujetos a constantes alteraciones y reformulaciones, es decir, grupos cuyo sentido de comunidad es fragmentado, polivalente, indefinido e inestable. Por extensión, y como bien lo ha apuntado ya Benedict Anderson en su libro *Imagined Communities* (1983), puede ser igualmente problemático manejar un concepto estático y concreto de “España,” ya que la idea de nación es un conglomerado complejo y fluctuante, propenso a alteraciones y fabricaciones, especialmente en el presente contexto de globalización. Sin embargo, es igualmente importante notar que, pese a la dificultad de fijar con certeza un “nosotros” en oposición a “los otros,” así como la inevitable falta de precisión de una noción de “la España,” dentro del documental *Extranjeras* se observa una estructura de enfrentamiento, que para las involucradas toma formas concretas y palpables.

¹¹Aunque María Pilar Rodríguez alude también a la ausencia de la escena de llegada en *Extranjeras* en su artículo (50), esta observación es en cierto modo irrelevante, ya que dicho “arrival scene” no es de ninguna manera un elemento indispensable del documental, sino un elemento convencional de la modalidad etnográfica del documental.

¹²Van Hear presenta el esquema clasificatorio de John Berry en el estudio del encuentro entre grupos minoritarios y un bloque social más grande. Según este esquema las relaciones entre estas dos partes se dan en cuatro categorías: “acculturation” en que el grupo minoritario establece relaciones con otros grupos a la vez que mantiene su identidad cultural; “assimilation” que consiste en su sumersión en el grupo dominante; “separation or segregation” en que conserva su identidad pero con una relación mínima con el grupo dominante; y “marginalization” que ocurre cuando la minoría pierde su propia identidad, sin poder pertenecer a la sociedad dominante. El término “integration” se reserva para aquel grupo que forma parte de la sociedad al tiempo que mantiene su propia identidad (55).

¹³Además del provecho económico de sus patrimonios culturales “exóticos,” muchas mujeres se dedican a labores domésticas, fenómeno que no necesariamente se relaciona a su calidad de extranjeras. Sin embargo, su inserción en el mercado laboral de España por su capacidad de ofrecer servicios domésticos coloca a estas extranjeras en la paradójica situación en que, por un lado, ellas dependen de los servicios domésticos de otras mujeres en sus tierras natales—aunque no necesariamente a cambio de dinero—para que, por otro lado, puedan ellas dedicarse a labores del hogar que les permitirán los medios para sustentarse ellas mismas y también mantener los servicios de los que dependen para seguir trabajando en España. Para más detalles sobre las dinámicas transnacionales del quehacer doméstico, referirse al capítulo “Contradictory Class Mobility: The Policies of Domestic Work in Globalization” del libro *Servants of Globalization* de Salazar Parreñas donde ella sugiere que el trabajo doméstico pagado conlleva unas relaciones interpersonales inherentemente opresivas y desiguales.

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Letras Hispanas

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TITLE: La recepción de la novelística umbraliana: notas para una interpretación

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ABSTRACT: Francisco Umbral (1932-2007) is by far one of the most prolific and controversial writers in Spanish contemporary literary history. A writer of a hundred books and winner of the most distinguished awards in peninsular culture, his work generates some distrust in the academic world, to the point that it goes unnoticed within the contemporary literary canon. The aim of this paper is to analyze the possible causes of the indifference that currently arises from his legacy, which have been divided into two factors, of a formal and extra-literary nature. Among the first ones, we find the difficulty to catalogue his fiction due to his continued use of generic heterodoxy. Similarly, his dedication to the prosaic and the compositional construction of newspaper columns has tended to overlap with the verbal beauty of his poetic prose and the originality created by the simultaneity of his creative literature in direct relation to the political and social events of a Spain in flux. Finally, the extra-literary factors are related to a public image of a controversial and surly writer, constantly in confrontation with the academic world and especially interested in the massive proliferation of his texts, which contributed inevitably to the trivialization of his literary legacy.

KEYWORDS: Reception, canon, novel, literary legacy, generic heterodoxy

RESUMEN: Francisco Umbral (1932-2007) ha sido con diferencia uno de los autores españoles más prolíficos y polémicos de la historia literaria contemporánea. Escritor de un centenar de libros y galardonado con los premios más distinguidos de la cultura peninsular, su obra genera en la actualidad cierto recelo entre el circuito académico hasta el punto de pasar desapercibida dentro del canon literario contemporáneo. El objetivo del presente artículo es examinar las posibles causas de la indiferencia que actualmente suscita su legado atendiendo a factores de índole formal y extraliteraria. Dentro de los primeros encontramos la dificultad en la catalogación de la novelística de Umbral por su continuo recurso a la heterodoxia genérica. De igual modo, su gusto por el prosaísmo y la construcción compositiva de la columna periodística ha tendido a oscurecer la belleza verbal de su prosa poética y la originalidad que comporta la simultaneidad de la creación literaria con respecto a los acontecimientos político-sociales de la España en cambio. Por último, los factores de orden extraliterario guardan relación con una imagen pública de escritor polémico constantemente confrontado a la academia y especialmente interesado en la proliferación de su escritura, lo cual contribuyó, inevitablemente, a la trivialización de su legado literario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Recepción, canon, novela, legado literario, heterodoxia genérica

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La recepción de la novelística umbraliana: notas para una interpretación

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Francisco Umbral (1932-2007) ha sido, con diferencia, uno de los autores contemporáneos más prolíficos y polémicos de la historia literaria peninsular. Escritor de un centenar de libros y galardonado con los premios más distinguidos de la cultura hispánica, su obra genera en la actualidad cierto recelo entre el circuito académico, hasta el punto de pasar desapercibida dentro del canon literario contemporáneo. El objetivo del presente artículo es abordar el tema de la recepción de la obra narrativa de Umbral y analizar las posibles causas de la indiferencia que actualmente suscita su legado. Para ello se hará un análisis del proyecto estético defendido por Umbral a lo largo de su trayectoria profesional, además de retratar la figura literaria del escritor dentro del contexto socio-cultural de la España postfranquista.

Para empezar hay que señalar que hablar de Francisco Umbral como escritor de ficción requiere ciertos matices puesto que su narrativa supone un ejercicio de hibridez conceptual entre dos realidades en principio antagónicas: el hecho histórico o autobiográfico tangible y la pura imaginación. Joaquín Marco define en estos términos la ecuación del texto umbraliano:

Francisco Umbral descubrió hace ya años una combinación que había de ofrecerle enormes beneficios literarios: rasgos autobiográficos, crónica política y social e imaginación. (sin pág.)

Su novela de título prusiano *A la sombra de las muchachas rojas* (1981) es un ejemplo claro de esta matemática literaria que propone Marco. Cualquier crítico conocedor de los entresijos del mercado editorial español de las últimas

décadas sabe que la simple combinación de estos tres elementos no te convierte en escritor ganador; entre otros muchos, del premio Nadal (1975), el Premio de la Crítica (1991), el Príncipe de Asturias de las Letras (1996), el Premio Nacional de la Letras Españolas (1997) o el Cervantes (2000) por citar sólo unos cuantos. Mariana Genoud de Fourcade considera que la carrera literaria de Umbral sufrió un punto de inflexión con la publicación, en 1995, de un especial sobre su obra en *Ínsula* recibiendo como consecuencia los tres últimos premios citados con anterioridad (113). Lo curioso del fenómeno umbraliano es que el reconocimiento oficial por parte de los críticos se hizo extensible a un amplio público que con los años se haría fiel al estilo de su prosa tan particular y sobre todo a su columna diaria. Las publicaciones de Umbral, inmersas en esa jerga cheli tan representativa de los años ochenta,¹ fueron leídas y consumidas con regularidad, a la par que se generaba en torno a su figura pública un aura extraña de escritor polémico e insolente.²

A pesar de lo dicho con anterioridad hay un aspecto que llama especialmente la atención de quienes se aproximan desde el escenario académico a la obra de Umbral y es la exclusión del canon literario contemporáneo de “uno de los grandes estilos del siglo.”³ Críticos de literatura española especialistas en el periodo como José María Pozuelo Yvancos se muestran sorprendidos ante este hecho:

No han dado estos un prosista que por vigor estético, genio para la imagen verbal, y capacidad lírica sea comparable al Umbral de *Travesía de Madrid*, *Mortal y rosa*, *El hijo de Greta Garbo* o esta excelente *Trilogía de Madrid*; pero lo cierto es que las Historias

de la Literatura apenas incluyen una mención de pasada a su labor de articulista, con pertinaz preterición de su obra publicada en libro, y los recientes panoramas de la narrativa española y las monografías críticas, que conceden páginas y estudios a autores de mucho menor calado siguen marginando una obra que es alabada por los críticos en privado como de excelente prosista, pero que raras veces se ve públicamente reconocida. (124)

Carlos X. Ardavín Trabanco señala el desconocimiento que se tiene de la obra del autor madrileño dentro del seno de la universidad estadounidense y advierte que la falta de interés responde no sólo a la “pereza intelectual,” sino también a “razones de carácter extraliterario” (15). ¿Cuáles serían entonces los factores que habrían llevado a separar la obra de Francisco Umbral del corpus literario español del pasado siglo XX? ¿Qué hace posible que, como sostiene el crítico Pozuelo Yvancos, su obra no sea públicamente reconocida y sí sea alabada por la crítica “en privado?”

Para empezar con la primera pregunta podrían señalarse factores de orden meramente literario. Se ha querido ver a Umbral ante todo como un escritor de periódico, y, de hecho, algunos de sus libros son recopilaciones de artículos de prensa publicados en *El País* o *El Mundo*, como *Diario de un español cansado* (1975), *Diario de un snob* (1973) y *Mis placeres y mis días* (1994). Su defensa acérrima del periodismo literario⁴ no siempre ha convencido a esa parte de la crítica ortodoxa que se resiste a hermanar la escritura en periódico con los géneros por excelencia de la literatura tradicional: poesía, narrativa, teatro y ensayo.⁵ La proliferación de su obra periódica ha favorecido, por un lado, la falta de interés por estudiar en profundidad el vasto legado umbraliano, y por otro, el juicio rápido, fruto de estudios fraccionados y sin visión de conjunto. Así hemos podido apreciar a lo largo de esta investigación que las alabanzas más sonadas hacia la obra de Umbral han girado, casi siempre, en torno a su labor como

escritor de periódico más que como novelista. Luis María Anson, gran admirador de Umbral, considera que

fue un novelista sólo discreto, un autor de teatro insignificante, un poeta casi inédito pero con más interés de lo que se dice. Como escritor de periódico, como articulista, fue el más importante de una generación a la que yo pertenezco. (sin pág.)

Eduardo Martínez Rico explica cuáles son, a su juicio, las características que han hecho del columnismo de Umbral un éxito:

Para ser columnista hay que tener, digamos, un pensamiento fácil, algunos dirían *light*, una forma fácil de expresarlo. Ideas ligeras o que lleguen de forma ligera, y redondas, capacidad de relación, don de lenguaje y, como digo, amenidad. (327)

El problema surge cuando estas características forman parte de sus novelas puesto que sirven como argumento para quienes consideran a Umbral como novelista menor. Por otro lado, la intromisión del articulismo en la narrativa del escritor madrileño no se limita a la amenidad, como señala Martínez Rico, sino que desde nuestro punto de vista se extiende a tres elementos significativos: primero, la brevedad compositiva de los capítulos a veces carentes de relación discursiva entre los mismos; segundo, un estilo en ocasiones poco elaborado, cercano a la lengua hablada y la jerga de la calle; y por último, la simultaneidad con la que Umbral escribe en relación a los hechos históricos que protagonizan sus novelas.⁶ Este último aspecto genera cierta problemática puesto que resta originalidad a la obra literaria. Así vemos que

la literatura es lo más opuesto a la actualidad: la buena literatura se ocupa de temas permanentes y lo hace con la voluntad de permanencia, permanencia que se la otorga su calidad literaria. (Martínez Rico 322)

Esta voluntad de permanencia, como sabemos, es mucho más improbable en la literatura en prensa por lo que, si la obra literaria se asemeja a la columna de periódico, la resistencia al paso del tiempo se desvanece.

Podemos con todo lo anterior concluir que la influencia del articulismo en la obra literaria de Umbral puede haber potenciado sus facultades novelísticas como sostiene Ardavín Trabanco (“A la sombra,” 139), pero ha actuado igualmente como arma de doble filo puesto que se ha entendido como una limitación de su capacidad creativa de Umbral a pesar de haber escrito obras de evidente calidad literaria como *Mortal y rosa* (1975) o *El hijo de Greta Garbo* (1980),⁷ que en realidad poco o nada tienen que ver con el articulismo: ni el estilo es el mismo, ni la factura compositiva, ni los temas a tratar, ni la belleza lírica en la que son concebidas. Llegar a la conclusión de que la ficción de Umbral es una continuación de su columna periodística no es, por tanto, más que una simplificación carente de rigor analítico de quienes pretenden definir la obra umbraliana atendiendo a una parte minúscula de la misma. Hay que acudir al estudio textual del conjunto de su obra para entender la calidad literaria de sus textos ficcionales y la magnitud real de su legado.

Un segundo factor de naturaleza también literaria se centra en el hecho de que la obra de Umbral carece de género definido siendo muchas de sus novelas un popurrí compositivo a medio camino entre la autobiografía, la ficción, la crónica política y/o la memoria colectiva. Aunque esta ambigüedad genérica haya podido entenderse como un obstáculo para catalogar su obra dentro del canon literario contemporáneo, la realidad es que esta característica ya se encuentra en la novelística de autores consagrados como Ramón Gómez de la Serna.⁸ El propio autor fue consciente del desconcierto que generó su novelística cuando afirma: “Para los críticos sigo siendo una singularidad, a veces interesante, a veces perfectamente marginable” (*Los cuadernos*, 112). Quienes se dedican a la docencia y la investigación dentro de las Humanidades son

conscientes de que, a diferencia de las ciencias empíricas sujetas a mecanismos objetivos de evaluación, hay en el campo de lo literario una necesidad inexorable por evaluar y catalogar las obras literarias con el único objetivo de evitar un maremágnum de opiniones, perspectivas y arbitrariedades individuales. Así se llega a consenso dentro de la comunidad cultural que permite diseñar el corpus literario y la consecución de la labor docente. Esto implica necesariamente que la indeterminación genérica evidente en la obra literaria de Umbral constituya un aliciente más para su exclusión de las antologías y las historias de la literatura. Genoud de Fourcade ha querido atajar la cuestión etiquetando la novelística umbraliana dentro de lo que se entiende por “literatura del yo,” debido a que el elemento autobiográfico reside en la gran mayoría de sus textos de ficción (122).

Esta condición autobiográfica que adquiere la novelística de Umbral se explica dentro del contexto de la estética literaria posmoderna que, de acuerdo al crítico Vance R. Holloway, se caracteriza por la hibridez de géneros, la autorreferencia, la intertextualidad y la síntesis de lo culto y popular (103). En la posmodernidad se dio la espalda a la construcción de los grandes relatos de la literatura moderna dando paso a una proliferación de la narrativa de lo personal y el relato intimista de las memorias y diarios, género especialmente fecundo en nuestro autor. Umbral se mostró contrario a muchos de los conceptos con los que trabajaba la crítica moderna; así manifestó su falta de creencia tanto en géneros como en generaciones literarias tan en boga en el pasado siglo XX (*Los cuadernos*, 112). Sin embargo, a pesar del atractivo que esta teoría supuso por lo que tuvo de lucha contra el “absolutismo ideológico y su proclamación de la apertura conceptual y ética” (Navajas 89), el posmodernismo empezó a perder *momentum* a la par que se reconocía la necesidad de la vuelta del canon por una circunstancia tecnológica muy determinada: la llegada de Internet y la era digital. La revolución acontecida en

los medios de comunicación gracias a la incorporación masiva del uso de Internet ha afectado profundamente al formato escrito debido a la publicación sistemática de textos en la propia red. El papel de la crítica y la academia como legitimadores culturales ha sufrido un considerable revés tras el acoso de otras entidades o sujetos asociados al mundo de la cultura esta vez cibernética. Esto ha generado, como advierte Gonzalo Navajas, un replanteamiento del concepto del canon y del ejercicio de los propios investigadores, que actúan como agentes diferenciadores de aquellos objetos culturales sujetos a órdenes comerciales bien alejados de los valores tradicionales asociados a una obra literaria canónica (94). Y por supuesto ha perjudicado en gran medida a la obra de muchos de los autores que, como Umbral, defendían con ahínco la estética literaria posmoderna.

Además de la necesidad pedagógica implícita en el canon occidental que dificulta la catalogación de la obra del escritor madrileño, existe, de acuerdo a Navajas, una connotación política asociada que ha venido a agudizarse en la era de la globalización que podría haber actuado igualmente en contra del reconocimiento de la obra literaria de Umbral. El canon, según el crítico,

[p]roporciona unos referentes de identidad cultural comunes en un momento en que el concepto de nación se devalúa, los fundamentos de la identidad nacional se resquebrajan y la hibridez y la indiferenciación reemplazan a la sólida homogeneidad de las entidades nacionales del pasado. Ésa es la razón primordial por la que los nacionalismos actuales necesitan iconos culturales obvios que contrarresten el impulso de devaluación nacional que la globalización conlleva. (88)

Debido a su naturaleza portadora de identidad cultural y política una de las características definitorias de este catálogo de obras maestras es su maleabilidad en el tiempo y el carácter cambiante de sus contenidos. Así

vemos cómo en la literatura española contemporánea las novelas que hoy se estudian en las universidades españolas distan considerablemente de aquellas que eran objeto de estudio con el franquismo temprano. A nivel académico, la obra de los escritores españoles en el exilio empezó a reconocerse y estudiarse entre la élite progresista años antes de la muerte del caudillo, y con el posterior nacimiento de la democracia el rescate de aquella “España peregrina” se daría incluso en detrimento de la obra literaria de quienes se quedaron en la península, como fue el caso de Umbral. La historia literaria española de los últimos treinta años del pasado siglo tuvo en parte como objetivo el rescate de la biografía y la obra de la izquierda española—sobre todo aquella en el exilio—lo cual comportó la reconstrucción cultural del país no sólo a nivel literario sino en el resto de las artes. Curiosamente dentro de la dialéctica habida en el seno de la izquierda española en esos años posteriores a la transición encontramos la opinión de escritores como Juan Goytisolo, quien acusa vehementemente a Francisco Umbral de haberse convertido en un escritor de derechas. Para ilustrar ese movimiento hacia la derecha, Goytisolo apunta el paso del periodista madrileño de *El País* a *El Mundo* además de publicar artículos de dudosa afiliación progresista (sin pág.). Pilar Rubio también refirió esta ambivalencia política de Umbral tras haber declarado en su día que las distancias entre la derecha y la izquierda no eran tan abismales (53). Umbral, consciente del interés que suscitaba su afiliación política, destaca con cierto asombro en su obra *Madrid tribu urbana* la opinión del filósofo y colaborador de *El Mundo* José Antonio Marina quien lo define como escritor de izquierdas y periodista de derechas (85). Teniendo en cuenta por tanto cierto rechazo de la izquierda española hacia la figura del escritor a partir de los años noventa.¹⁰ Sería interesante analizar detenidamente si esta supuesta indeterminación ideológica contribuyó a dificultar el reconocimiento de la obra de Umbral en un

periodo de la historia española en el cual se definió el futuro ideológico y cultural de la democracia.

Francisco Umbral, de la heterodoxia al exhibicionismo

Para responder a la segunda pregunta analizaremos una serie de factores de carácter humano que, a nuestro juicio, contribuyeron a enturbiar la relación de Umbral con cierto sector de la intelectualidad española de finales del pasado siglo. Somos conscientes de la naturaleza subjetiva del siguiente análisis pero sin duda complementará lo anteriormente explicado, y contribuirá a demostrar el hecho de que diversos factores de carácter extraliterario afectaron el reconocimiento de la novelística del escritor madrileño.

La imagen pública de Francisco Umbral ha estado asociada a la polémica durante gran parte de su trayectoria profesional. En una entrevista publicada en la revista *Fusión*, cuando se le pregunta por su tendencia al morbo y la provocación, Umbral responde:

Está en las leyes del periodismo que ante todo siempre hay que buscar un titular. Eso hace que en ocasiones se emplee una frase—incluso manipulándola—para darle más fuerza a una entrevista o una declaración. (“Francisco Umbral: un buen chico”)

Una de las características que mejor definen su personalidad creadora es su anarquía formal y estilística que antes se mencionaba. Umbral huye de las reglas formales establecidas por la Real Academia de la Lengua porque tienden a la “taxidermia del idioma” y porque todo lo que suene a juego e innovación lingüística o gramatical “les parece peligroso y subversivo” (7). Umbral legitima esta transgresión de la norma basándose en toda una supuesta tradición: “Todo el que ha hecho idioma en España, todo el que ha hecho estilo, castellano, creación, lirismo, prosa, ha escrito contra o a pesar de Nebrija, fornifollándose la gramática” (“El 92,” 7). Sin embargo, este

modus operandi tan reconocible en Umbral le garantizó su auténtico lugar en el mundo periodístico de la España de finales del franquismo. Cuando el director de *El País*, Juan Luis Cebrián, decide contar con Umbral, no espera de éste el ejercicio de un corresponsal de guerra. Quiere al personaje:

Ya ves, Umbral—cuenta el columnista que le dijo Cebrián en su despacho de director—, este periódico tan serio, tan grave, con tanta barba, tan objetivo, tan frío, tan imparcial, tan europeo, que estamos haciendo. Bueno, pues yo quiero que me hagas en él todo lo contrario, o sea que hables de ti, que seas tú, que cuentes lo que te pasa. (*Los ángeles custodios*, 67)

Lo cierto es que en estos primeros años trabajando para *El País*, Umbral siguió a pies juntillas la petición de su director, consolidando su persona pública dentro del periodismo y la sociedad española del postfranquismo.¹¹ Umbral será reconocido con los años como el mejor cronista de la transición para quienes le idolatran y por supuesto cronista de sí mismo para quienes se atragantan con sus insolencias: su excelencia como escritor,¹² sus comentarios escatológicos,¹³ su capacidad extraordinaria como seductor y presumida promiscuidad narrada una y otra vez en sus novelas.

La relación de Umbral con el mundo femenino dentro de la esfera pública no estuvo exenta de polémica tampoco. En numerosas ocasiones ha manifestado su entusiasmo por el sexo opuesto hasta llegar a afirmar que para él la literatura no era más que su segundo oficio siendo su verdadera profesión llegar a saberlo todo sobre las mujeres (Bravo 39). En la gran mayoría de los textos, sean periódicos o ficcionales, encontramos comentarios extremadamente ofensivos e indignantes hacia la mujer, lo cual provocó la repulsa por parte del colectivo feminista. El episodio más sonado se dio tras la concesión a Umbral del premio Cervantes en el año 2000, cuando un centenar de mujeres se manifestaron en

la sede de la Real Academia de las Lengua denunciando al escritor por considerarle un “incitador de la violencia contra la mujer.”¹⁴ Las antipatías hacia su persona y hacia su actividad como periodista fueron constantes durante décadas. El escritor y miembro de la RAE Arturo Pérez Revorte, uno de los críticos más “emocionales” de la persona y obra literaria de Umbral, señala que fue un “periodista que nunca dio una noticia.”¹⁵ El mismo Umbral ha relatado en varias ocasiones cuando la periodista Pilar Urbano le preguntó en su día: “¿Tú has dado alguna vez una noticia?” Y Umbral contestó “No, por Dios, qué horror. Pero en cambio he difundido muchos rumores, que me parece más eficaz” (“La difamación,” 7).

Para aquellos que han pretendido encasillar a Umbral dentro de lo que estrictamente se entiende por periodismo se entiende que el escritor no es un informador *per se*; es un columnista que opina sobre el personaje o la anécdota política y hace de su trabajo, de algún modo, espectáculo, entretenimiento. Su maestría, como buen retórico, reside en construir una serie de argumentos que en apariencia son impecables, pero que carecen en la gran mayoría de los casos de toda lógica. De acuerdo a Santamaría Suárez y Casals Carro, la fórmula empleada por Umbral se denomina en periodismo “petición de principio y argumento *ad hominem*.” Así definen el término:

[...] la petición de principio es aquel razonamiento en el que se introducen proposiciones no verificadas o inverificables como si fueran verdaderas para, desde esa posición, llegar a conclusiones aparentemente lógicas y razonadas y contando de antemano con su aceptación. (210)

La petición de principio es la forma argumental y *ad hominem* el contenido de dicho argumento, que en este caso es un argumento en contra de una persona. Las autoras consideran que Umbral es el maestro por antonomasia de la falacia retórica, siendo este su estilo

predominante como columnista. Su ejercicio como cronista político le generó enemistades no sólo en el ámbito de la política sino, sobre todo, en el campo de la producción cultural: “como crítico literario también ha abusado Umbral del juicio rápido y tantas veces injusto” señala Juan Bonilla (4). Así despotrica sobre la obra de los clásicos castellanos como Azorín, Galdós o Baroja y vapulea el trabajo de sus contemporáneos como Muñoz Molina o Javier Marías.¹⁶ Del propio Baroja, por ejemplo, señala lo siguiente:

Y la mala escritura de Baroja llega a ser intolerable. Una señorita elegante le dice a su corteador, en esta novela: ‘Saldrían ustedes ganando dejando dirigirse por vosotras.’ Esos dos gerundios seguidos y toda la estructura de la frase son como anteriores a la creación del castellano. (*La noche*, 210)

El sentimiento de rechazo se aprecia igualmente hacia quienes, por cuestiones políticas, tuvieron que abandonar la península tras la guerra civil. En *Las palabras de la tribu* (1994) hace una reflexión bastante desafortunada sobre el exilio español, al que atacó con frecuencia a lo largo de los años:

Los grandes: Juan Ramón, casi todo el 27, Alberti, Bergamín y poco más. Los Ayala, Sender, Onís, Andújar, Barea, Rajano, Domenchina, etc., disfrutaron la gloria y la ventaja de la guerra y el exilio. Le debían su grandeza a Franco. Una buena página de Cela vale por casi todo el exilio. Aparte de que uno valora más el exilio interior de Aleixandre, Celaya, Blas de Otero, José Hierro. Los otros tuvieron vida y dulzura. Y luego volvieron a una España liberada, que encima les daba asquito, a ganar el premio Cervantes y la Academia. (316)

Lo que es evidente para cualquier estudio de su obra es que su imagen pública no siguió estrictamente el perfil de intelectual ortodoxo,¹⁷ y sus intervenciones públicas y el

recurso en ocasiones a un lenguaje ordinario y soez rememora a otro grande de nuestras letras ciertamente menos maltratado: su aval literario Camilo José Cela.

Hay una faceta, sin embargo, más explotada en el personaje literario de Umbral que corresponde a la profusa proliferación de su obra—mucho superior en número a la del escritor gallego—lo que desafortunadamente provocó que en ocasiones se trivializara su escritura por parte de algunos compañeros de profesión. El crítico literario Andrés Amorós lo deja claro en el siguiente comentario:

Acaba de sacar Paco, a la vez, dos libros, que se unen a la larga lista de los anteriores, y eso irrita mucho al personal [...] A mucha gente le parece intolerable que le dé tiempo a sacar, juntos, dos libros más, además de la columna de *El País*, todas las otras colaboraciones y esa vida social sobre la que cada uno fantasea a su gusto. (citado en Amell, “El periodismo,” 14)

El propio Umbral reflexiona con ironía sobre este aspecto al cuestionarse si sus artículos salen de su cerebro o se los saca de la manga como parecen decir sus enemigos (*Suspiros*, 72). A favor de estas críticas diríamos que efectivamente hoy contamos con recopilaciones de artículos de prensa editados en libro que quizá no alcancen la talla de un premio Cervantes—puesto que fueron escritos y publicados en el mismo día—pero que conforman sin duda una minúscula parte del todo que fue su legado literario.

A esta última circunstancia habría que añadir la omnipresencia de su novelística dentro del mercado editorial español durante varias décadas (Vila-Sanjuán 193) y el reclamo de su firma en los periódicos más destacados del panorama informativo nacional, lo cual incide negativamente en esa idea comúnmente aceptada dentro de los círculos literarios de que autor reconocido y leído por el gran público es autor incómodo dentro de la élite intelectual que cuestiona la calidad de su obra. Amando de Miguel explica esta tendencia en la vida cultural española:

en la casta intelectual no se considera bien vista la conducta de los cofrades que escriben ‘demasiado’ o los que tienen más éxito editorial [...]. Escribir mucho es síntoma de ‘frivolidad’, más todavía si lo que se escribe es claro y no digamos si resulta que los libros se venden. (citado en Amell, “El periodismo,” 13)

Ejemplo de todo lo anterior lo encontramos en el artículo de Candau “Espectros de Baudelaire: Francisco Umbral y el mercado de las palabras.” El crítico hace referencia a la inclusión desafortunada por parte de Juan Goytisolo de Francisco Umbral dentro de ese grupo de periodistas profesionales del *best seller*, restando inevitablemente valor literario a su obra. Umbral manifestó en numerosas ocasiones que para él la escritura diaria era su modo de vida y en consecuencia participó activamente en la promoción editorial de casi todos sus libros por medio de entrevistas y apariciones en los medios de comunicación. Umbral escribía a diario y presumía, como señala su biógrafa Anna Caballé, que a su muerte nadie encontraría escritos inéditos porque todo le era publicado de inmediato (47). Existe además una actitud del propio escritor hacia el valor material que otorga a su creación, en este caso periodística, que lo aleja definitivamente de los escritores tradicionales. Sirva de ejemplo el siguiente comentario: “para puta yo, que me encargan un artículo sobre Gorbachov y lo primero pregunto: ¿Lo quiere usted a favor o en contra? Es el mismo precio” (“Subvenciones,” 7). Cabe añadir que el escritor interpreta el éxito de su escritura no sólo por la calidad de la misma, sino también por el valor material asociado a su trabajo. Umbral ha insistido ante las preguntas de los periodistas que su marcha del diario *El País* a *El Mundo* tuvo que ver con un aumento significativo de su salario.¹⁸ Es decir, Umbral no pertenecería, de acuerdo a Candau, a ese grupo de escritores, sobre todo poetas, que viven “en la pobreza y el anonimato” (303). Ni por pobre ni mucho menos por anónimo. Sirva como ejemplo la siguiente confesión

realizada a Sánchez Dragó, incluida en la biografía de Umbral *El frío de una vida*:

A veces por Arguelles, por Princesa, que había muchos quioscos, y los sigue habiendo, me paraba delante de un quiosco, y veía: “A ver en qué revista no escribo yo.” Y miraba alguna: “En esta no he escrito nunca y me interesa.” Y al día siguiente me presentaba al director con un trabajo que me parecía bueno y, zas, se lo colocaba. Tenía el ansia de estar en todo el quiosco, y yo creo que llegué a conseguirlo; me jodía que hubiera una revista donde no se publicara nada mío, me jodía muchísimo. Sobre todo en las revistas, porque en los periódicos había que estar fijo. (40)

A pesar de lo dicho con anterioridad, llegar a la conclusión de que Umbral no está hoy por hoy entre los mejores narradores del siglo XX por cuestiones ajenas a lo literario, como su afición materialista, su misoginia o su exposición en los medios, sería ciertamente simplista. Hay una arista de mayor calado dentro de su personalidad pública que definitivamente ha emponzoñado su obra literaria. Anna Caballé, nos habla de un hombre extremadamente obsesionado por el reconocimiento del gran público, por un lado, y el reconocimiento de su profesión como escritor por el otro. En nuestro proceso de investigación hemos encontrado numerosos comentarios del autor en relación a su necesidad de notoriedad y reconocimiento público. José Carlos Mainer y Santos Juliá comentan la personalidad literaria del escritor al señalar acertadamente que Umbral:

[n]ecesita saberse contemplado, querido y esperado, y de ahí que el exhibicionismo y la provocación sean sus armas, aunque no sean exclusivas de su estilo y proliferen en mayor o menor medida en otros escritores. (237)

En su obra *Suspiros de España*, cuya primera edición data de octubre de 1975,

encontramos un capítulo titulado “Miércoles literario,” dedicado por entero a su interés por conseguir un premio literario. Sus reflexiones sobre la importancia de hacerse con un galardón en el mundo de la creación literaria se intercalan con su descontento por no conseguir en el pasado un título universitario, lo cual tuvo como consecuencia directa, según Umbral, que su reconocimiento dentro de las universidades tanto europeas como americanas se viera mermado (129). El autodidactismo de Umbral parece pasarle factura con los años, y describe la carencia de formación académica como un verdadero trauma para él, de ahí que busque el reconocimiento oficial por medio de los premios literarios. En su más laureada obra, *Mortal y rosa*, publicada en 1975, el escritor, a modo de autoconfesión, parece lamentar su dedicación diaria a la producción de artículos. Se dice a sí mismo que la ejecución diaria de su columna supuso un éxito al poder abrirse un hueco dentro de las letras peninsulares, pero que con los años se convertiría en una especie de autodestrucción (217). Umbral se da cuenta con los años de que el artículo periodístico no tenía la resistencia ni la continuidad de la escritura creativa, por lo que entendía que la ejecución sistemática de artículos y el tiempo empleado en ello estaba autodestruyendo su futuro como escritor y mermando sus posibilidades como autor de ficción. La realidad es, sin embargo, que Umbral publicó novelas de una belleza lírica indiscutible que le hicieron ganar los premios más prestigiosos de la cultura española del momento, aunque, por razones ajenas permanezca excluido del canon literario español.

Notas

¹En 1983 Umbral publica *Diccionario cheli*, obra realizada tras el encargo del académico Fernando Lázaro Carreter en una reunión informal. Fue editado por Grijalbo (Vila-Sanjuán 195).

²La investigadora Pilar Bravo hace referencia a una encuesta llevada a cabo por la empresa Sigma 2 a petición de *El Mundo* en noviembre y diciembre

de 1991 de la que se desprende que un 48% de los lectores consideraba “muy buena” la columna “Los placeres y los días” de Umbral y un 19% la consideró “buena.” El propio periódico *El Mundo* comenta “que resulta inusual un grado tal de sintonía de una firma con los lectores, máxime teniendo en cuenta que Umbral no es precisamente del tipo de escritores temerosos de levantar ampollas” (55).

³Así lo define Miguel García-Posada en la “Introducción” que hace a la obra de Umbral *Mortal y rosa* (35).

⁴Umbral, quizá hastiado de la polémica algo academicista sobre lo que es y lo que no es literatura, legitimó esto del periodismo literario en estos términos en su discurso de aceptación del doctorado “Honoris Causa” en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid el 2 de diciembre de 1999:

Don Francisco de Quevedo rasga el papel con su pluma de buitres, en el sotabanco de los mesones, y llena su siglo XVII de obras jocosas y escritos satíricos, críticos, costumbristas, muy plásticos de escritura y vivos de traza, que son siempre folios cortos, de la dimensión de una columna de periódico actual, pues Quevedo estaba inventando el periodismo dos siglos antes. Era un periodismo de mano en mano, de copia y difusión verbal o manuscrita, que volaba por Madrid y se leía en las escalinatas de San Felipe. El periodismo, pues, nace como género literario—siempre lo ha sido—y mantiene a los ciudadanos avisados, a las putas advertidas y al Gobierno inquieto. (75)

⁵Eduardo Martínez Rico en su artículo “Literatura y periodismo: el tema-problema” defiende el hecho de que la literatura también está presente en la prensa escrita y considera que hay dos elementos que diferencian el trabajo de un escritor del de un simple periodista: “la ambición literaria y la calidad literaria.” Ambos conceptos están presentes, de acuerdo al crítico, en Francisco Umbral (321).

⁶Ejemplo de las características mencionadas lo encontramos en la ya citada *A la sombra de las muchachas rojas* (1981) y en *Y Tierno Galván ascendió a los cielos* (1990).

⁷Se insiste que es complicado hablar de ficción en Umbral. Las dos obras citadas son novelas en primera persona con datos fehacientes de la propia experiencia vital del autor: la muerte de su hijo como hilo conductor en *Mortal y Rosa*, y semblanzas de su madre y muerte final en *El hijo de Greta Garbo*.

⁸Carlos X. Ardevín Trabanco considera que la obra umbraliana “sigue los pasos de Ramón Gómez de la Serna, paradigma del escritor sin género cuyo refugio predilecto es la novela” (“A la sombra,” 142).

⁹En el primer número del diario *El País* editado en mayo de 1976 aparecen “unas cuartillas escritas por el poeta exiliado Rafael Alberti sobre León Felipe, también poeta, muerto en el exilio mexicano. Era un símbolo y mostraba el afán de recuperar a la España peregrina” (González Duro 75).

¹⁰En el artículo “¿Viajó a la derecha o viajaron los demás?” José María Pozuelo Yvancos señala el vacío evidente que el diario *El País* hizo a Umbral cuando no apareció una sola mención a su columna en el libro que celebraba los 25 años del diario en el año 2001 (Alemany).

¹¹Umbral colaboró en decenas de revistas y periódicos de tirada nacional desde *Hermano Lobo a Triunfo*, *Diario 16*, *El Mundo* y un largo etc. sin embargo no en todas ellas era admirado. En 1993 abandonó el periódico *ABC* tras una corta estancia debido a las quejas de los lectores, ciertamente más conservadores que los de *El País* (Bravo 47).

¹²“La naturaleza sigue imitando al arte, pero sobre todo a mi arte” (“El campo del moro”).

¹³yo he llegado a la madurez cronológica o mental de reconciliarme con mi caos, con mi nada y con mis defecaciones, pero el joven saca la cabeza muchas veces, el joven va por dentro y la verdad es que yo no me veo como un señor, sino como un gamberro que está dando el timo a la sociedad. Un gamberro que ahora, después de haber cagado en casa, como antaño en los solares, se subirá los pantalones y se irá por ahí a engañar a la gente. (*Diario de un escritor burgués*, 66)

¹⁴Información en *Mujeres en red. El periódico feminista*.

¹⁵Véase “El muelle flojo de Umbral” que el escritor y periodista subtítulo “Incultura camuflada bajo la brillante escaramuza del estilo. En realidad nunca tuvo nada que contar.”

¹⁶Consúltese el artículo “Haro Ibars.”

¹⁷Otra de sus provocaciones extremas, fruto de su naturaleza anárquica y rebelde, son sus confesiones a favor del plagio. Sirva como ejemplo: “El plagio es un género artístico tan respetable como cualquier otro” (“El triple héroe,” 4). En 1994 Julio Rodríguez Puértolas escribe una reseña titulada “Umbral y los fascistas” publicada en *El País* sobre la novela escrita por Umbral *Madrid*

1940. *Memorias de un joven fascista*. En esta reseña se acusa a Umbral de haber plagiado la novela escrita en los años cuarenta por Tomás Borrás titulada *Checas de Madrid*.

¹⁸Pilar Bravo apunta que la versión de *El País* es que Umbral fue cesado en 1989 porque estaban cansados de sus provocaciones (47).

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Letras Hispanas

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TITLE: Towards a Poetics of the Automobile in Contemporary Central American Fiction

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ABSTRACT: The study analyzes the impact of the automobile vis-à-vis the institution of neoliberal policies in the region. Taking into account Horacio Castellanos Moya's *Baile con serpientes* (1996) and Franz Galich's *Managua salsa city: ¡Devórame otra vez!* (2000), I examine how and to what effect the automobile is written into the urban fictions produced in the postwar period. Touching on other works and relevant novels by Rodrigo Rey Rosa, Rafael Menjívar Ochoa, and Maurice Echeverría I argue that the automobile is a fundamental component in the poetics of contemporary Central American fiction as writers use its history, makes, and models as important referents in the authorial critique of open-market systems. The car is both a tool in the characterization of the urban subjects, and a critical mode of how the reader receives and processes the urban space.

KEYWORDS: Automobile, Horacio Castellanos Moya, Franz Galich, Central American narrative, Noir novel

RESUMEN: El presente trabajo analiza la importancia del automóvil en relación a las políticas neoliberales en Centroamérica. El corpus de textos se centra en *Baile con serpientes* (1996) de Horacio Castellanos Moya y *Managua salsa city: ¡Devórame otra vez!* (2000) de Franz Galich, pero también recopila ejemplos de obras de escritores como Rodrigo Rey Rosa, Rafael Menjívar Ochoa y Maurice Echeverría. Propongo que el automóvil es un componente fundamental a la poética de la Centroamérica contemporánea y que los escritores de la región hacen uso de sus modelos y marcas para deslumbrar los vínculos entre la narrativa y la política. El ensayo plantea la idea de que el coche no sólo funciona como referente material en la caracterización de los personajes de estas obras policíacas sino que también afecta la recepción que el lector tiene de las zonas urbanas que componen el espacio narrado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: automóvil, Horacio Castellanos Moya, Franz Galich, narrativa centroamericana, novela negra

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Towards a Poetics of the Automobile in Contemporary Central American Fiction

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No narrative produced in Latin America in the past thirty years has been as reactive to its social milieu and maladies as that which begins to emerge from Central America in the 1990s. Though lacking a recent narrative genealogy excised from political movements or an aesthetic and poetic antecedent that rallies together a corpus of texts, contemporary Central American fiction is best known for its unabashed portrayal of a violent, degenerative, and infested society that remains in the aftermath of the civil and military strife of previous decades. In terms of genres, there is preponderance in this era of what Misha Kokotovic terms “neoliberal noir” (15), further studied by Dante Liano as “la novela neopoliciaca centroamericana actual” (6). Whether representative of Nicaragua, El Salvador, or Guatemala, these works share a

noir sensibility characterized by a pervasive sense of corruption, decay, and disillusionment, in which the social order itself, and particularly the state, is the ultimate source of criminality, rather than of justice. (Kokotovic 15)

These texts, importantly, reflect on the growing economic problems in the region and the products of US-bred neoliberalism in Central America, namely through the implementation of free market systems that leave unprotected the socially disadvantaged and engender a deeper divide between rich and poor.

The economic inequities portrayed in these fictions call to mind the importance of the market and fiscal policy in dictating the future of the region in the 21st century. The open market system allows for the free

movement of resources and products across national lines, best exemplified by the plethora of “made in Guatemala” or “fabriqué au Nicaragua” tags placed on clothing sold in North American and European clothing stores. The converse, however, is equally important in understanding the economics of the region, as the import of goods harkens back to the prominence of foreign influences in the age of neoliberalism. The existence of an imported product in the region’s contemporary fiction is most evident, I argue, in the shape of the automobile, as it empowers the often displaced urban subject to trace the devastated landscapes of Managua, San Salvador, Tegucigalpa and Guatemala City, following Matthew Paterson’s notion that “even for those who do not use a car, the conditions under which we move around are shaped fundamentally by car-led development strategies” (9). The role of the car, however, goes beyond a simple means to an end as these writers chronicle violence, drug-addiction, and poverty, but instead serves an important literary role in the writing of Central American noir. The car, I argue, is a fundamental character of neoliberal noir, as it is subjectified and mobilized very much like the criminals, detectives, and journalists that populate the genre. Taking into account Horacio Castellanos Moya’s *Baile con serpientes* (1996) and Franz Galich’s *Managua salsa city: ¡Devórame otra vez!* (2000), the following pages attempt a reading of the automobile in contemporary Central American noir that focuses on the origins of the vehicle and its ramifications within the depicted societies. My arguments, in essence, follow a line of thinking opened by Simon Maxwell when he posits that

meanings of car use are embedded in social and cultural relations, yet the intricate ways in which these meanings are created and maintained through interactions with others and negotiations with the self in everyday life are often neglected. (203)

The following pages, therefore, focus on the social, vis-à-vis textual, meanings of the automobile in an attempt to understand the poetics of the car in contemporary Central American fiction. I further discuss that while also a diegetic crutch to allow the textual exploration of neoliberal urban spaces, the genesis, nature, form, and physics of the automobile are intrinsic to the characterization and development of these noir narrative worlds and their subjects.

Mostly written by males and centered in urban centers, contemporary Central American fiction/noir lacks the idealism of wartime literature, and instead focuses on themes such as corruption, cynicism, and society-wide violence. Unlike other Latin American noir, Central American noir “generally expresses a deep disillusionment with the outcome of revolutionary struggles and marks its distance from the Left more categorically” (Kokotovic 16). These texts take on a strikingly apolitical tone, as they critique all sides of the political spectrum. Keeping with this notion, Werner Mackenbach argues that “la representación de la violencia en la novelística se distancia de [un] sentido político-ideológico,” suggesting that the cities written by Castellanos Moya, Galich, Maurice Echeverría, Rodrigo Rey Rosa, Rafael Menjívar Ochoa and others lack an ideological compass. These texts emblemize, in turn, what Ignacio Sánchez Prado affirms as

una tendencia en la cual los escritores centroamericanos reclaman para sí el derecho a la escritura literaria como una forma de superar tanto el imperativo revolucionario como el imperativo testimonial. (82)

I want to pause appropriately in setting the stage for the subsequent pages as the over-arching poetics of these texts cultivates a

diegesis that operates under a physics of violence and simple progressions of actions and murders that leave the reader at times lost, and at times gasping for breath. Unlike traditional detective fiction there are no determined good and bad guys here. The protagonist in Castellanos Moya’s *Baile con serpientes* oscillates between being a caring paterfamilias to his brood of snakes and a maniacal serial killer intent on causing havoc whilst smoking, drinking, and snorting a variety of drugs. Though lacking a poetic demarcation of role, the protagonist, however, does react to the Chevrolet he drives, as the make and model of the automobile suggests a reading of the text that necessitates a meshing of history, economics, and the socio-cultural matrix of Central America.

This matrix lies at the heart of Horacio Castellanos Moya’s fictive world, which begins with the collection of stories published as *¿Qué signo es usted, niña Berta?* (1981). Born in Honduras but then living in El Salvador, Canada, Spain, Germany, Mexico, and the United States, Castellanos Moya first finds success with a collection titled *Con la congoja de la pasada tormenta* (1995), and is labeled as an up-and-coming writer with *Baile con serpientes* (1996), *El asco: Thomas Bernhard en San Salvador* (1997), and *La diabla en el espejo* (2000). He gains must-read status in the field of Central American fiction with the publication of *Insensatez* (2004), which chronicles the mass assassinations of villagers and natives during the years of war in an unnamed Central American country that strongly alludes to Guatemala, but which is equally representative of any society in the aftermath of conflict. Focusing on issues of violence, authority, responsibility, and poverty, the author’s novels underline a broader concern with unearthing a Central America that is tenuous in its daily survival.

The status quo, we cannot ignore, is a product on the one hand of war and systematized aggression, and on the other, the legacy of neoliberal economic policy. For the purpose of this analysis I will focus on *Baile con serpientes* as representative of the

importance of the automobile vis-à-vis neoliberalism in Castellanos Moya's fiction, given the structural importance of the old yellow Chevrolet to the narrative. Before embarking on a chaotic journey through the streets of Macrópolis, the protagonist, Eduardo Sosa, is an unemployed sociologist who sleeps on his sister's couch while futilely looking for gainful employment. The city is a veiled allusion to San Salvador, following Gioconda Belli's lead of half-heartedly obscuring the name of the urban setting in *La mujer habitada* (1988); a tactic later utilized by Maurice Echeverría in *Diccionario Esotérico* (2006), where Guatemala City is jokingly referred to as "Playground." This detail is important in the development of a regional literature, as part of a broader trend that evidences writers from distinct countries choosing to write beyond their borders, thereby outlining a common regional corpus of texts. Following this notion, Belli's latest piece, *El país de las mujeres* (2010), *Insensatez*, and Galich's *Y te diré quién eres: (Mariposa traicionera)* (2006), all illustrate how local writers spread their wings to cover the geographic terrain of Central America, asserting an authorial vision and exercise over its volcanoes, jungles, and devastated urban spaces, unrestrained by arcane notions of the Nation and "national literature."

Returning to Castellanos Moya's novel, the narrative kicks into speed when Eduardo's neighborhood realizes that a homeless man is living amongst them in an old Chevrolet. The police are called to evict Jacinto Bustillo from the area but surprisingly allow him to stay, arguing that they have no legal reasons to force his move, symbolic of the genre's lack of faith in juridical and legislative bodies. Fueled by the boredom of being unemployed, as his "estudios de sociología (una carrera que a esa altura ya había sido borrada en varias universidades) no [le] servían para nada en lo relativo a la consecución de un empleo" (10), Eduardo befriends Jacinto momentarily, only to stab him to death at the first opportunity and steal the keys to the Chevy.

Though his actions may at first appear to be a random act of violence, one of many that Castellanos Moya plants along the trajectory of his narratives, it can be argued that Eduardo's commandeering of the American vessel has everything to do with the realities of neoliberal Central America, of being "desempleado, sin posibilidades reales de conseguir un trabajo decente en estos nuevos tiempos" (10). The importance of owning an automobile is first underlined in *El asco*, when the protagonist, Edgardo Vega, relates to a metaliterary Castellanos Moya his impressions of disgust upon returning to his native land. The novel is told through the perspective of a fictive Moya Castellanos, who claims to have softened Vega's original words, providing what can be interpreted as a testimony by proxy. After criticizing the local beer and lack of overall hygiene in the city, Vega comments that

la gente en esta ciudad se divide entre los que tienen carro y los que viajan en autobús, ésta es la división más tajante, más radical [...] no importa tanto tu nivel de ingresos o la zona donde vivís, lo que importa es si tenés carro o viajás en autobús. (49)

This important distinction between the haves and the have-nots provides the fulcrum for all other inclusions of the automobile as a textuality of composition in Castellanos Moya, as the car becomes more than an assemblage of metallic and plastic parts. The car and car ownership, Catherine Lutz and Anne Lutz Fernández argue, "is helping to make the poor poorer and the rich richer" (101), echoing the importance placed on the automobile as a narrative marker of neoliberalism in Central American noir.

This distinction is particularly poignant in a regional market that is characterized by the import of finished automobile goods and the export of cheap parts as North American manufacturers shift production to factories in Costa Rica and El Salvador where the average salary is a fraction of that paid to US workers.

The observation made by Vega is even more relevant when we consider the relative lack of efficient public transportation in the region and the shrinkage of the auto industry after the global financial crisis of 2008, leading to the entry of cheaper Chinese-made scooters—which importantly consume less gasoline as petroleum prices soared—into the market as an alternative to the one-time car owners who abstain from taking the bus (Reynolds n. pag.) This caveat provides a further piece to the puzzle of theorizing the role of the motor engine in post-war Central America: speed and dependability outweigh all other factors in traversing the urban landscape, as inhabitants and workers must routinely move from changing points and loci for their most immediate needs in an unplanned and chaotically sprawling city.

Returning to *Baile con serpientes*, then, the importance of owning a car and of belonging to the empowered group lies at the center of Eduardo's usurpation of Jacinto as the rightful owner of the Chevy. Jacinto, for his part, once exemplified the social class that Eduardo hopes to attain, as prior to becoming a homeless person and abandoning his worldly possessions, he was a respected accountant who lost his job after having an affair with the wife of a Special Forces officer. Echoing Edgardo Vega's impression of the neoliberal class in San Salvador, Jacinto affirms that his reason for leaving everything behind was "el asco" (18). His break from belonging to the neoliberal middle-class occurs when he buys the old American car,

ese cacharro que compró en el preciso momento en que decidía tirar todo por la borda y dedicarse a la mera subsistencia, con el auto como sola pertenencia, durmiendo por temporadas en distintas zonas de la ciudad, lejos de la mugre que los demás llamábamos familia, prestigio, trabajo. (18)

There is a distinct rejection of the neoliberal lifestyle and what it affords in *Baile*, akin to Vega's moment of panic upon realizing that

he was slowly acclimatizing himself to his brother's money-grubbing lifestyle.

By buying the old Chevrolet, Jacinto emancipates himself from the *asco* of the neoliberal class system that Edgardo Vega so strongly opposes. The automobile is again at the center of the social hierarchy, but this time the make and model play a role in the narrative process of characterization. Embodying all things that produce a sense of *asco*, Edgardo's brother poses as a product of what the neoliberal economy has come to achieve. As part of a culturally homogenous middle class that has no appreciation for history, art, literature, and education, he owns a Toyota Corolla "último modelo, que [...] cuida más que a sí mismo" (106). In the climax of the narrative Edgardo recounts how he spends a night out on the town with his brother and a friend, only to be left alone in the car when he refuses to go to a local whorehouse. All his criticisms and feelings of disgust reach a boiling point when seated in the Toyota as he waits to be taken home:

los cinco minutos en el interior del carro de mi hermano se me hicieron eternos [...] y esos últimos tres minutos en que el pánico hizo presa de mí fueron horriblos, una experiencia desgastante, algo que no le deseo a nadie, permanecer encerrado en un Toyota Corolla. (107)

This scene at the end of Castellanos Moya's earlier piece underlines the shift towards the focus on the branding of the automobile as a marker in the region's fiction, as the author goes beyond simply assigning importance to the motorized vehicle in the urban environment: it is now *what* you drive, and not so much *if* you drive, that defines the subject.

The feeling of being entrapped in the banal middle class leads Jacinto to instinctively react "como animal acorralado" (14) when the police ask him to first leave the neighborhood. Jacinto's refusal to belong to the world of the Toyota Corollas is parodied

when, with Eduardo, he visits a local hole-in-the-wall bar known as “La Prosperidad” (19) to refill his flask of rum. The locale is anything but prosperous as the pair leave with another toothless miscreant, Coco, who proceeds to fellate a drunken Jacinto. This esperpentic moment, reflective of the random violence of Central American noir that Kokotovic calls to attention, reaches an apex when Jacinto’s penis is viciously bitten, and he subsequently kills Coco with a broken bottle. A quiet Eduardo then claims to be fearful of his own life and unsheathes a blade, cutting Jacinto’s neck from ear to ear. His true intentions, however, are revealed when he immediately seizes the keys to the yellow American car and traverses the city “a toda prisa, ansioso por llegar al auto, por descubrir esa intimidad que don Jacinto guardaba con tanto recelo” (22), and to ultimately belong to “los que tienen carro” and not to “los que viajan en autobús” (*El asco*, 49).

Eduardo’s rush to “descubrir esa intimidad” (22) reaffirms the notion that the automobile is a prosthetic attachment to the literary character and that it is more than a mere possession in these Central American fictions. It is essential to identity and to the narrative function of each character, a point that I will explore in the pages that follow. The Chevrolet, as an example, is evocative of Jacinto’s rejection of neoliberal capitalism as its Spartan interior is “extraordinariamente ordenado, sin asientos, con solo un pequeño taburete” (23). Being inside the/a car is primordial to gaining subjectivity in *Baile con serpientes*, akin to Edgardo Vega’s breakdown upon sitting inside the Toyota Corolla in *El asco*, as Eduardo now feels “una alegría inédita, abrumadora, porque ese espacio ahora [le] pertenecía, era sólo [suyo], para siempre” (23). The need for ownership on the part of the protagonist, furthermore, stresses the mandate placed on individual and not communal property in the micro-politics of neoliberalism.

Once in the Chevrolet, Eduardo realizes that he is not alone as a group of four snakes slither out from the orifices of the automobile

to greet him. He names them Beti, Valentina, Loli, and Carmela and proceeds to have conversations with them as he drives the old car, “ganosos de llegar a otras zonas de la ciudad, donde iniciaría[n] la aventura de una nueva vida” (25). Their first stop is at a large shopping complex in the city, a commercial center representative of capitalist economies of centralized amassment and deployment. The shopping center, furthermore, represents an acute shift in the Latin American city towards nodal development, that is, it mimics the North American model of town centers and localized hubs of residential and commercial locales. The role of transportation, or owning a quick and efficient means of getting around the city, therefore becomes essential to the urban subject’s ability to reach these centers that are no longer pedestrian-friendly. When a pair of security guards chide Eduardo for coming to the complex, as “una mugre de esa calaña desentonaba con los reglamentos del centro comercial” (28), the narrative takes a turn towards the fantastic as the snakes viciously attack and leave the security guards lifeless in a matter of seconds. The subjectification of the snakes as accomplices is similar to the confluence between the monstrous-natural and the decaying-urban evidenced in Echeverría’s *Diccionario Esotérico*, where natural elements become grotesque characters within the tableau of post-war Central America. Mayhem ensues in *Baile con serpientes* as Eduardo and the snakes enter the shopping mall and leave a slew of bodies in their wake, a murder spree which shows no signs of dissipating, as they later visit Jacinto’s old house and kill his wife and maid.

Random violence, which is characteristic of much of the prose of Castellanos Moya, Menjívar Ochoa, Galich, and Echeverría, shifts the narrative into gear as Eduardo drives the old Chevrolet haphazardly through the city. Reactive to the chaos that is instigated by the snakes, Eduardo comments that “no era posible que lo que había sido el centro histórico de la ciudad estuviera sumido en semejante caos” (34). This break

with the colonial structure, that is, a model of development based on concentric circles that maintained an ordered sense of development, astounds the protagonist, as the new pattern of growth is jarring for an urban environment that lacked the earlier movements of sectorial and polarized growth that come as byproducts of rapid industrialization that characterized much of Latin America during the period of import substitution industrialization (ISI). The cities of Central America are unlike their mainland counterparts, however, and lack that historical urban vestige that comes with large tracts of industrialization in the direction of peripheral factories or a developed port system. The city described by the mobilized Eduardo, as a space that lacks the genealogical cues of socio-spatial morphology, cements the overall tone of discord and insanity that permeates *Baile con serpientes*:

Me acerqué al centro de la ciudad: los edificios derruidos por el terremoto, las aceras atestadas de vendedores ambulantes, en las esquinas pilas de ropa usada recién traída de Estados Unidos, centenares de grabadoras sonando al mismo tiempo, y la gente a borbotones caminando enloquecida por las calles. El Chevrolet amarillo avanzaba a vuelta de rueda entre aquella marea humana. (34)

The importance of the Chevy moving through the remnants of the city calls to mind North American involvement in the region during the better part of the twentieth century. Beginning with the US government's involvement in Panama's drive towards independence and aid against the communists in El Salvador in 1932, to the support of the Guatemalan coup d'état in 1921 and 1954, amongst a plethora of examples, the United States has held a geopolitical stronghold in the region. Discussion of US influence in Central America is not complete without an overview of military installations in Nicaragua, beginning with the occupation of Managua by Marines in 1910 and the establishment of a

training academy in 1929, an antecedent to the School of the Americas that opens in Panama as a transatlantic military academy in 1946 to protect American interests. More recent involvement during a heightening of the Cold War includes support of the Nicaraguan Contras and the right-wing in El Salvador in the 1980s that was responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians that a generation of writers in the 1990s chooses to focus on.

In terms of economic influence the Washington Consensus of the 1980s set forth an ideology of neoliberalism that opened trade barriers under the guises of NAFTA, CAFTA and ALCA, which only succeeded in polarizing domestic wealth distributions. Other tenets of neoliberalism such as the privatization of state enterprises, austerity measures, and deregulation of markets entry only added to the problem as foreign companies were given the green light to outsource production to places like Guatemala where minimum wages and their regulation were vastly below foreign levels. A further factor to consider is the economic blockade instituted by the US against the Sandinista government in the 1980s, forcing a complete realignment of import strategies, best illustrated in Galich's use of the Russian-made Lada in *Managua salsa city*. In fact, we do not have to limit ourselves to recent US forays in the region; the hulking, yellow Chevy incites the reader to remember the characteristic hue of the United Fruit Company that was so influential in domestic and transnational politics.

Returning to *Baile con serpientes*, we can see how the old Chevrolet functions as an ominous reminder of US involvement in Central America as the car makes its way through the metonymic streets of Macrópolis. The car, for its part, does not appear in official records when the police begin a search for the owner after the first reported murders, emblematic of the at-times phantom hand the United States had in domestic political and military affairs. Like so many of the coups, botched elections, and civil wars that were silently fueled by North American policies

of hemispheric control, the Chevrolet's presence reminds the reader that (undocumented) foreign factors are responsible for, and are very present in, contemporary Central American societies. Aside from being a metaphoric allusion to the politics of the region in the past decades, the Chevrolet also reminds the reader that the chaos that is set in motion in *Baile con serpientes*, and which makes an intertextual reappearance in *La diablo en el espejo*, springs forth from the character intimately associated with the American car, suggesting that the violence and anarchy that constitutes Castellanos Moya's diegesis is not as random as it may first seem.

The violence enacted by Eduardo and the serpents culminates in the attack on the family of Abraham Ferracuti, a well-connected political aspirant who lives in a gated compound in the outskirts of the city, as the Chevrolet attempts to flee from increased police supervision in the capital. Ferracuti for his part is representative of the other pole of neoliberalism, which is to say those who became richer with the opening of markets, and is identified with a late-model Mercedes Benz sedan. The imported, high-end German automobile, whether a Mercedes or a BMW, characterizes all those of the same social class as Ferracuti in Castellanos Moya's work and also appears as a textual identifier in Franz Galich's *Y te diré quién eres: (Mariposa traicionera)*, Ronald Flores's *Último silencio* (2004), and Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *El cojo bueno* (2001). Its purveyors manipulate the congested streets of post-war Central America through tinted windshields and (un)official police escorts, emphasizing the demographic divide between classes. Like Ferracuti, the owners of these German imports usually live in gated communities and villas in the outskirts of the decaying center, urging the reader to address how powerfully spatio-social relations of class have changed places such as Macrópolis and the Playground. To note is the fact that we, as readers, are never afforded the intimacy of the automobile shrouded in tinted glass, and are always caught on the outside as it bids its

own will through the urban landscape. Perhaps it is only within the Mercedes and the BMW that we can find answers to the quandaries posed by Kokotovic when he suggests that post-war Central America lacks discursive and civil logic.

Upon entering Ferracuti's compound and realizing the magnitude of his actions, Eduardo decides to go into hiding and parks the Chevrolet in "un cementerio de autos" (51) to wait out the police searches. At this juncture the novel splits into two subsequent chapters that chronicle the events created by the Chevrolet from the perspectives of the deputy commissioner of the police, Lito Handal, and that of a reporter for the newspaper *Ocho Columnas*, Rita Mena, both of whom appear in several of Castellanos Moya's novels as secondary characters. The break from Eduardo's narrative underlines the author's commitment to examine the veracity of history and the importance of point-of-view in writing and rewriting the past, which is a topic that is central to *Insensatez*.

The exercise of interpreting Eduardo's actions is left to Handal as he leads an investigation of the epidemic of murders in the city. With his assistants, Flores and Villalta, he goes from site to site to investigate the consequences of the snakebites. The process of piecing together the events is flawed from the outset as Handal relies on testimony and reports which are incomplete and incorrect, evocative of the author's critique of historical documentation in his latter works. The first report the deputy commissioner reads, for example, attests that "un hombre como de cincuenta años, con fachas de pordiosero, había llegado en un viejo auto destartado, tipo americano al centro comercial" (54). It comes as no surprise, then, that the authorities' efforts to catch the Chevrolet are futile as a series of bad leads and misinformed assumptions handicap the chase.

The chase itself is permitted by Handal's late-model Nissan, another Japanese import signaling his belonging to the neoliberal economies that permit a rising, "disgusting"

middle class. But unlike the Toyota Corolla that suffocated Edgardo Vega, the Nissan is a reminder of the chaotic consequences of the tentacles of economic imperialism. The deputy commissioner, as an example, does not eat pupusas, which are termed the national food in *El asco*, but instead devours “hamburguesa[s], papas fritas, y [...] coca cola” (57). Though not belonging to the urban oligarchy that is central to *La diablo en el espejo*, Handal enjoys the economic benefits of fast food, fast cars, and faster lines of credit that ensure his enslavement to an economic model that perpetuates consumerism in the face of increasing poverty. The Nissan, for its part, does not represent the American-controlled past, but a neoliberal present of free-trade as markets open for cheaper economic cars like the Japanese imports.

The author’s inclusion of the make of the car signals a concerted inquiry into the role of the automobile in defining contemporary Central American society, as the ineffective, overpaid and inefficient police force metonymizes the societal impact of late twentieth century economic policy. If the Toyota and Nissan are evocative of a decadent and decaying middle class, and the German import substitutes for those entities that profit greatest from the economic and political innuendos of the Washington Consensus, then where does the layperson stand?

The answer resides with the second class of person that is alluded to in *El asco*, which makes its appearance in *Baile con serpientes* in the form of Rita Mena, a curvaceous journalist of the proletariat who takes the reins of the narrative in the third chapter. Unlike Handal and Ferracuti, she takes the bus to work and first hears of the snake-killings “en el autobús, cuando interrumpieron la emisión musical para difundir un boletín de última hora” (98). By only hearing about the adventures of the yellow Chevrolet on the radio, we can see how her status as a user of public transportation occludes her from the principal channels of information regarding the investigation and the state of the city.

Though she doesn’t own a Nissan, Mercedes, or Chevrolet, she does partake in Castellanos Moya’s poetics of the automobile in *Baile con serpientes* through her job as a journalist investigating local crime. With a band of mismatched photographers and journalists, evocative of the urban and auto-mobilized band of reporters in Alberto Fuguet’s *Tinta roja* (1996), Rita embarks on a tracing of Macrópolis to follow the damage done by Eduardo and the band of snakes. Their journey is facilitated by a “cucarachita Volkswagen” (98), the iconic “auto für Jedermann” first developed by Ferdinand Porsche and the German motorcycle manufacturer Zündapp in 1931, which gains massive middle-class popularity throughout Latin America due to its cheap price and local production.

The development of the Beetle is antithetical to the capitalist production of the other automobiles in Castellanos Moya’s universe as it begins as a government project sponsored by Hitler in 1933 immediately following the collapse of the Weimar Republic. The German leader specifically commissioned a car to be named “Volkswagen,” representative of the populist aim of the party. The car would become a central component in the National Socialist’s restructuring of Germany in the inter-war years, allowing for common citizens to purchase the car through a federally sponsored lending program. The Beetle, however, never truly gained momentum until after the defeat of the Nazis, when in 1945 the British reanimated the factories to produce what would become the most popular and longest-running vehicle produced from a single design platform. Given its production history, the Beetle poses an opposing position within the geopolitics of the car in *Baile con serpientes*, as it negotiates an urban landscape that is occluded by the bright lights and flashy engines of the Toyotas and BMWs. The Beetle, whether due to its layman’s prestige or inefficient aerodynamics, forces us to slowdown and to take note of the lifestyle of Rita and many like her, and to document the increasing degradation of living standards

amongst the poor—a detail left on the dark side of the tracks by the newer, foreign imports. The Beetle does not speed from point A to B, but instead fulfills its journalistic role by carefully reconstituting the disjunctive elements that the Nissan and Toyota take for granted in their neoliberal *jouissance*.

The association made between Rita and the Beetle is cemented by the popularity of the car in Central and Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century, as even when global demand decreased, operations continued in Mexico and Brazil. The date of publication of *Baile con serpientes*, 1996, coincides with the final decline of the *cucarachita* as Volkswagen closed the Brazilian factory, only to end all production of the model in 2003. Though persisting till the 21st century, the decline of the Beetle truly begins in the 1960s, coinciding with the shift towards neoliberal policies as part of American affront to the purported spread of communism. Unable to compete with small, efficient Japanese models and well-marketed American products like the Ford Pinto, the Volkswagen Beetle declined in sales due to the pressures created by the free market.

It is not surprising, then, that the Beetle occupies a central role in the narrative of Rita's attempts to piece together the events occurring immediately after the murder of Jacinto Bustillos. Her position as a journalist asserts a societal necessity to be informed and to know the truth regarding the violence that plagues Macrópolis. For her part, Rita asserts that the crime spree "tiene que [tener] una lógica, una ligazón" (108). Her approach to the crimes underscores the futility of neoliberal noir in assigning culpability and consequence in the postwar era. Part of her detective work, in fact, leads to the involvement of the president in the mayhem. Keeping with the importance of the automobile in the narrative, it is no accident then that the Beetle plays a central role as the capital is thrown into greater chaos:

Y entonces, cuando el guardia ya ha abierto el portón de tela metálica, y

Victor hace avanzar despacio el Volkswagen, ella percibe por el rabillo del ojo un destello amarillo que llama su atención, y se vuelve para distinguir nítidamente un viejo auto tipo americano que en ese preciso instante pasa de largo frente al portón de Casa Presidencial. (110)

The car that Rita spies is ultimately not the famed Chevrolet but nevertheless alerts the city into a high state of alarm as the palace is locked-down. After the dust settles her boss asks her to write a first-person testimony of what she experienced during the emergency, but in a knowing wink to the critique of testimony and political narratives, Rita is unable to write a single paragraph chronicling her experiences, suggesting a societal inability to novelize the illogic of the postwar period in Central America.

Rita's section of *Baile con serpientes* terminates with Eduardo calling-in to the newspaper and taking responsibility for the mayhem, claiming that "no hay plan, no hay conspiración" (122), laying to rest her haphazard theories of the crimes yet at the same time exacerbating the city's worst fears. The conversation ends with Eduardo ominously warning Rita that "solo el azar y la lógica [...] [le] permite profundizar [su] mutación" (122), which is evocative of a myriad of Hollywood serial killers who delusionally promise to become a monstrous Other. Yet just as how *Baile con serpientes*, like other works by Menjívar Ochoa such as *Cualquier forma de morir* (2006) and *De vez en cuando la muerte* (2002), never fully becomes a detective novel or a thriller, Eduardo is unable to become more than an unemployed sociologist joyriding with a group of snakes, as the fourth chapter returns with him as the principal character.

The novel ends with a military assault on the automobile scrap yard where the yellow Chevrolet is parked, as Eduardo makes an escape to his sister's house, returning to his previous life of unemployment and nights on her couch as if nothing had changed. The armed forces, for their part, "estaban incendiando

todos los autos, indiscriminadamente” (157) in an attempt to destroy all vestiges of the series of murders. Their attempts to solve the crime and to arrest the true villain are left aside as the focus becomes on destroying the automobile, as by setting aflame its metallic body they manage to cleanse Macrópolis of the random, illogical terror that plagued its streets. More importantly, the massacre in the scrap yard epitomizes the poetics of the automobile that Castellanos Moya ferments in his narrative, as it is the car, as avatar of the character, that holds a sense of agency and subjectivity in the face of a neoliberal society left to decay.

The importance of the automobile vis-à-vis subjectivity in an increasingly disjunctive and alienating space can be further traced in Franz Galich's *Managua salsa city: ¡Devórame otra vez!*, a prequel to *Y te diré quién eres: (Mariposa traicionera)* where the themes of violence, chaos, and economic disparity are explored in a hellish Managua that is reeling from the aftermath of the Contra wars. Like Castellanos Moya, Galich does not perfectly fit into the mold of a national writer, as he moves from his native Guatemala to Nicaragua at a young age. He furthermore asserts that

de alguna forma ya me he integrado al proceso productivo nicaragüense pero prefiero hablar en términos generales de un proyecto centroamericano, es decir una literatura centroamericana. (Martínez Sánchez n. pag.)

Aside from placing himself within a regional literature vis-à-vis the process of cultural production, Galich affirms that his novels are located within “tiempos de la cólera neoliberal” (“Tandas,” n. pag.), as the economic effects of free markets and lessened entry restrictions create greater wealth gaps across the region. These changes are reflected in the author's novelistic production, which echoes Elizabeth Ugarte's observation that:

El consumismo es presentado como fenómeno devorador de la identidad

que se acrecienta en Nicaragua en la década de los noventa con el fracaso del proyecto socialista impulsado por la revolución de 1979. Y la violencia como la expresión simbólica de la alienación y marginación, producto de la desocupación y pobreza extrema, uno de los grandes problemas que enfrenta el espacio social urbano de Managua ante la falta de alternativas. (n. pag.)

The social conditions described by Ugarte can be reflective of any of the countries of the region, and serve as a pivot for Galich's novel, which recounts the meeting of a prostitute, La Guajira, and a lower-class, ex-military soldier Pancho Rana. The latter is evocative of any number of male characters who populate Central American fiction, characterized by idleness and insecurity with the end of armed conflict as they have only been trained and nurtured to fight. A prime example of this trope resides in Castellanos Moya's *El arma en el hombre* (2001), which chronicles the postwar life of Robocop, an ex-soldier who is left unemployed after a civil war. This trope is deeply enmeshed in the author's universe, reappearing in *La diabla en el espejo*, and sharing storylines with Handal and the murder of natives in *Insensatez*.

Returning to *Managua salsa city*, we see how a Robocop-like Rana now works as a chauffeur and houseboy for a rich couple that is spending some time abroad in Miami. They unsurprisingly drive a BMW, which is only revealed in *Y te diré quién eres*, when it is further divulged that they are involved in a transnational band of smugglers. Their expensive German import situates them within the spheres of power that are extraneous to the negative impacts of neoliberalism, akin to Abraham Ferracuti's posh mansion and lifestyle away from the detritus and decay of the urban centers of Macrópolis. The novel begins with Rana courting La Guajira in a local bar as they begin a game of seduction and wits with each wanting something different from the carnal adventure.

The importance of the automobile in this courtship is exemplified by Rana commenting on the allure of his car to the sinuous Guajira who is sure to fall trap to his charms upon seeing the car he drives: “Vamos a ver si la maje soca, si aguanta el ácido y no se gasea antes de tiempo porque en cuanto mire la nave que cargo no se va a aguantar las ganas” (3). Again, the distinction between the haves and the have-nots in relation to motorized transportation dictates the social hierarchies of the novel, following through with the protagonist’s assertion in *El asco*. The *asco* felt by Edgardo in Castellano Moya’s work is further evoked when Rana leaves the bar with La Guajira and they step into a Toyota Tercel, “color verde botella, el mismo que usaba la señora para hacer sus mandados” (8). Though belonging to a rich family that only drives a German import, the Toyota is Rana’s work car that is used to go from shop to shop as the lady of the house engages in local capitalism, permitted by the Japanese model that is metonymic of the mindlessly consumerist middle class that is vilified in *Baile con serpientes*.

The connection made between the Toyota and neoliberalism is further affirmed by Rana as he opens the passenger door for La Guajira when he comments: “¡Pase la reina de Estados Unidos!” (8). The automobile permits them to imagine an existence away from the chaos of the Nicaraguan capital as they make their way to another bar: “al llegar a la rotonda y ver que la fuente, como cosa rara, estaba encendida, no pudo evitar el ¡qué bonita que es! [...] pareciera que estamos en Estados Unidos” (9). Aside from providing a means of transportation through the city, the Toyota allows for a metaphorical move away from the nation following the influences of economic imperialism that has as its center the powerful North. The Toyota allows the characters to develop a true spatial imagination of not being in the global South, as its slick design and solid build evoke a belonging to the industrialized global North, which is not necessarily the United States but an amalgamation of the first world. Such an

imagination is in part permitted by neoliberal policies, which, as result, allows a Japanese model to represent modernity. Contradictorily, however, any possibility of social mobility is only imagined in another space, that is, within the celluloid streets of the United States, as the neoliberal market only exacerbates conditions of inequality.

The Toyota, furthermore, improves Rana’s standing in the eyes of La Guajira’s henchmen who lie in wait to rob the unsuspecting prey. They and La Guajira form a band of urban miscreants who blatantly seduce and then rob men in the underprivileged areas of Managua. Their actions go unperceived by the police, since they target the poor, thereby fomenting the cannibalistic impressions of the postwar Central American city that we see in other narratives. The head of the group, Perrarenca, drives an old taxi that doubles as their escape car. Unlike the Toyota, BMW, and Volkswagen that play representative roles in *Managua salsa city* and *Baile con serpientes*, the band traverses the spaces of urban decay in an old Russian Lada. The automobile is one of the few vestiges of the USSR in the region and gained popularity in the 1970s as the Soviet Union attempted to earn foreign currency through exports. The presence of the Lada suggests two important qualifiers to the term “neoliberal noir.” On the one hand, the Lada in *Managua salsa city* underlines the historicity of all politico-economic models, as the obsolete vestiges of the past share lanes with modern metonymies of neoliberalism. On the other hand, the Russian model emphasizes the controversial and convoluted pathways that lead to the status quo, as the Lada is evocative of the US blockade against the Sandinista government. The car, therefore, exists as a textual device that stresses the triangle between discourse, economics, and society around which neoliberal noir is erected.

The Lada’s history in Latin America dates to the first years of the company’s existence with exports to Costa Rica and Ecuador, which soon tapered off with the inability of the Soviets to keep production levels viable.

The usage of the brand in *Managua salsa city* is not fortuitous, as Galich reminds us of a political past that was created in part by the fear of Soviet influence in the Western hemisphere. The United States, as outlined earlier, embarked on a politics of intervention that supported right-wing governments, juntas, and guerrilla forces that were favorable to the spread of capitalism in the face of an impending communist revolution throughout Latin America. By situating La Guajira's band of criminals in the Lada, the narrative juxtaposes competing systems of production and economies of consumption that reenact a historic affront that concludes with the victory of neoliberal policies in Nicaragua, even with the political victories of the Sandinistas.

The Lada and Perrarenca's men are intimately connected in their characterization, as just as the car needs gasoline, they need more alcohol to keep them fueled in the chase of Rana's Tercel through the streets of the capital. During a break in the car chase through the city, they chastise La Guajira for not completing the plan and demand "gasolina, del carro y de [ellos]" (42). They are further linked by the name given to the Lada, Perromochó, as it becomes another member of the gang, but is unable to catch the Toyota as it "estaba bastante viejito, bien bacaneado" (21).

The Toyota and its occupants, for their part, continue on a high-speed joyride through the rotting streets that serve as background to poverty, drugs, and crime. Just as how the Lada becomes intrinsically connected to Perrarenca, the Tercel is organically intermixed with Rana's subjectivity within the text when he decides to execute a series of high-risk maneuvers that are choreographed to the increasing desire he feels for La Guajira, reflective of Sarah Redshaw's assertion that automobiles are

driven in ways that express the particularity of both the car and the driver. Car cultures intersect with driving cultures within car networks that includes how cars are embedded in socialization. (1)

Keeping this thesis in mind, we can hypothesize that the car holds an erotic value within socialization, which accentuates its phallic prowess in terms of speed and aesthetics, enabling the public assertion of an internal libidinal drive. The narrative goes into technical detail describing the maneuvers performed by Rana:

mediante un leve giro del timón hidráulico inicia la vuelta, las llantas rechinan, el motor bufa de la compresión [...] la máquina revoluciona rápido, compresiona al máximo, reduciendo la velocidad, la inercia lo lleva, las llantas chillan, el carro se la-dea e inmediatamente se desliza sobre el asfalto, amenazando con salirse de la cinta asfáltica, pero responde bien. Al iniciar el giro prácticamente en noventa grados y completar la vuelta, manipula rápidamente, mete el closh, toca levemente el pedal de la gasolina, lo suficiente para no deja que los pistones dejen de trabajar a causa de la compresión, vuelve a closhar, mete primera y acelera a fondo. (19-20)

The result is a frightened Guajira who falls into Rana's lap, "quien ni corto ni perezoso, después de efectuar los cambios con la sincronización de un experto, le metió la mano entre las piernas" (20). In a later moment of intimacy

él sintió el calorcito y la descarga eléctrica no se hizo esperar. Aceleró y enrumbó por el bulevard que conduce a la embajada de los Estados Unidos, pasó a toda velocidad, ciento veinte por hora. El carro respondía. (52)

Keeping these examples in mind, we can see how Galich critically intertwines Rana and the Toyota, postwar Robocop and neoliberal automobile, triangulating them with the source of neoliberalism from abroad, that is, the foreign embassy as a tangible spatial marker. Quite fittingly, then, Rana's dexterity with the automobile translates into

the impression that Rana is “un hombre que estaba acostumbrado a hacer lo que quería” (20), evocative on the other hand of the status the Toyota permits within an economy of capitalism.

With the Lada in pursuit, Rana and La Guajira make it to the mansion of his employers in the outskirts of the city, but pick up on the way another pair of street criminals who spy La Guajira and the potential bounties of her body. The two criminals are returnees from the United States and speak a mangled brand of Spanglish that mixes Nicaraguan slang with anglicized expressions picked up from the streets of Miami. They follow the Tercel on its way to the mansion, surprised at the speed of the Toyota but asserting that their nameless vehicle is just as fast. The omission of a make here signals a non-belonging of the pair to the social milieu of *Managua salsa city*, as expatriates who come to post-war Nicaragua as part of the free market to prey on whatever they can get their hands on, which in this case is La Guajira. They are not guided by the promises of wealth or the allure of a middle class car as they have already lived in the United States and have seen firsthand what capitalism is. Their car, therefore, is not indicative of a social class or economic system, but instead runs through the arteries of the city as an incarnation of a neoliberal identity in its unadulterated form.

With two groups of scoundrels behind them, Rana and La Guajira enter the affluent compound of the Towsand family and proceed inside to finish what they started in their earlier game of seduction. Their affair, however, is truncated by the two bands of intruders who engage in a free-for-all gunfight that strongly resembles the chaos of civil conflict in Nicaragua, albeit in an urbanized, domestic setting. With casualties amongst all groups, La Guajira is taken by one of the Miami “latin lover[s]” (61), Cara de Ratón, who wastes no time in leaving the scene of the crime with his prize in hand. His personal philosophy hints at the legacies lived by those men displaced by war in Central America: “hay que estar con el que

tiene el poder [...] y cuando no se sabe quién lo tiene, uno se espera para ver, pa mientras, hay que saber aprovechar toda las situaciones” (80), and his vehicle as he flees, “un carrito diesel, viejito, pero bueno” (91), is indicative of Galich’s lack of faith in a system directed by neoliberal physics, as the text gestures towards a different critique that is not tied down by notions of cultural and economic heterogeneity.

The deviance from the poetics of the automobile that characterizes *Baile con serpientes*, *Managua salsa city*, and other works by Rey Rosa and Echeverría is continued in the sequel, *Y te diré quién eres*, where a miraculously resuscitated Rana drives around a nameless “carro” (47) in search of his lost love. By moving away from a poetics of designation and characterization vis-à-vis the automobile, which by definition sheds light on the characters of the diegesis within an economy created and perpetuated by neoliberal policies, Galich changes the focus of his critique to a broader context of cultural imperialism, focusing on the ramifications of music as a means of entering foreign markets. The author does, however, continue a pattern followed by Castellanos Moya and Menjívar Ochoa of narrating within a self-populated universe in *Y te diré quién eres*, an exercise that is cut short as Galich dies shortly after the publication of the novel in 2007.

Returning, however, to *Managua salsa city*, it is telling that the usage of the car as a social marker and as a narrative aide in characterization follows a broader trend of fixating on the commercial as part of an examination of the role of neoliberalism in contemporary Central America. Whether as a strong social critique, as is the case of the Toyotas and Nissans that go from mall to mall in *Baile con serpientes* and Galich’s *Managua*, or the Mercedes and BMWs that escape the minutiae of capitalist everyday life, the automobile poses a central structure in creating a prose that provides a litmus to a society that has lost its bearings in the wake of military, economic, and political wars. The preponderance of a narrative focus on the car

accentuates the changing urban landscapes that Central American writers must contend with in detailing their noir sensibilities. The fast imports and German symbols of political and economic stature speed the reader through the metonymic streets of Castellanos Moya and Galich without necessarily stopping and pausing, thereby assimilating the morphosyntactic changes evidenced in the neoliberal age. It is only through the ramshackled Chevy and the once-ubiquitous Beetle can the narrative return to the pace of the *flâneur*, albeit in a modernized and more aerodynamic fashion, allowing the reader to examine how nodal economies of agglomeration have changed the socio-spatial structure of the city. The mechanics of speed, however, are reflective of the globalized pace of culture and civilization, as once disjointed spaces are now brought together in the spirit of open markets. The specific cars and their brands, on the other hand, address Maxwell's preoccupation with the symbolic capital of the automobile. Cars in these texts are not limited to a laundry list of brands that explicitly enumerate the influence of the North in Latin American societies, as seen in the opening sentences of José Emilio Pacheco's seminal *Las batallas en el desierto* (1981); the car in contemporary Central American narratives piques our curiosity as its aesthetics, history, marketing, and market-share all contribute to an epistemological skeleton of how writers such as Castellanos Moya, Galich, Rey Rosa and Echeverría, amongst others, address and dialogue with the sociocultural matrices of disenchantment that subsist in post-civil war societies.

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Letras Hispanas

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TITLE: Men in Black: Fashioning Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain

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ABSTRACT: Clothes offer us a commentary on the individual who wears them, and one of those comments deals with gender. Clothing is fundamental to gender, turning male and female bodies into men and women. In the nineteenth century the preoccupation with appearances was greater than in previous periods thanks to changes in the social system and a reformulation of gender roles, as well as the popularity of physiognomic theory. Given this increased sensitivity to the gaze, it is curious that men would uniformly adopt the black suit as their garment of choice. This revolution in male fashion was born from contradictory motives. On the one hand, the man in black attempted to avoid the gaze so as not to be anyone's object of desire. An exception to this rule was the elegante, for whom fashion was a way of life. The elegante became a frequent target of the satirical press, which questioned his masculinity. On the other hand, the black suit came to symbolize the power of the ascendant middle class because it recalled Spain's most important monarchs, such as Carlos V and Felipe II. The black suit thus became a polysemic signifier, and the man who wore it attempted, impossibly, to be both the subject and object of the gaze.

KEYWORDS: Fashion, men's fashion, masculinity, physiognomy, 19th century, psychology of fashion, social role of fashion

RESUMEN: Las prendas nos ofrecen un comentario sobre la persona que las viste, y uno de sus mensajes trata del género. La vestidura forma parte íntegra del género, convirtiendo cuerpos masculinos y femeninos en hombres y mujeres. En el siglo XIX la preocupación por la apariencia llegó a tener más importancia que en épocas anteriores gracias a los cambios sociales, la reformulación del género, y la popularidad de la fisonomía. En este ambiente hipervisual lo curioso es que los hombres adoptaron con uniformidad el traje negro. Esta revolución en la indumentaria masculina tiene motivos contradictorios. Por un lado, el hombre que llevaba un traje negro intentaba esconderse, evitando la mirada de los demás para no ser objeto del deseo. Una excepción era el elegante, que se dedicaba al arte de vestir. Éste llegó a ser objeto de burla en la prensa popular, que cuestionaba su masculinidad. Pero al mismo tiempo el traje negro simbolizaba el poder de la nueva clase media, porque recordaba a los monarcas más importantes del imperio español, Carlos V y Felipe II. El traje negro, entonces, se convierte en símbolo polisémico, y el hombre que se lo pone intenta, imposiblemente, ser tanto el objeto como el sujeto de la mirada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Moda, indumentaria masculina, masculinidad, fisonomía, siglo XIX, psicología de la moda, papel social de la moda

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Men in Black: Fashioning Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain

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¡Los trapos, ay! ¿Quién no ve en ellos una de las principales energías de la época presente, tal vez una causa generadora de movimiento y vida?
—Benito Pérez Galdós, *Fortunata y Jacinta*

The old adage that clothes make the man may be as true as it is trite. Beyond their basic function as protection from the elements, clothes operate as a social discourse, signs that make status claims and moral declarations, reveal aesthetic trends, and, of course, communicate gender identities.

The present study will address a lacuna in the scholarship on the intersecting subjects of gender and fashion.¹ As the study of dress and fashion has expanded during the previous half-century, so too has the variety of theoretical approaches. Roland Barthes, Susan Kaiser, and Fred Davis, for instance, have written about fashion from within the fields of semiotics, psychology, and sociology. Despite their diverse methodologies and discursive styles, each one insists on the role of clothing as nonverbal communication, what Barthes calls the “transformation of an object into language” (99).² Unsurprisingly, with the rise of post-structuralist philosophy and second-wave feminism, gender has become an increasingly central focus for fashion scholars as they explore the role of clothing in representing individual and collective identities (Crane; Hollander; Jones; Eicher). Although the study of fashion and dress has, over the years, concentrated mainly on women’s fashions, recent scholarship has addressed the relationship between sartorial practices and the representation of masculinity (Breward; Byrde 88-109; Edwards 99-115; Harvey, *Men in Black*; Kuchta; Nixon; Zakin).

This shift toward a more gender-centric study of fashion has resulted in fruitful avenues

of exploration in the field of nineteenth-century Hispanic studies, as seen in a number of publications that highlight the contribution of fashion discourse and sartorial habits to the construction of femininity, primarily in relation to literary representations of the feminine ideal known as the *ángel del hogar*.³ The role of fashion discourse in the production of Spanish masculinity, by contrast, has been virtually ignored.⁴ This is not to say that the evolution of men’s fashion has not been documented by historians. There has been some effort in tracking changing styles, yet these tend to be descriptive accounts rather than interpretive, and make little attempt to draw conclusions about how fashion trends contributed to or reflected ideals of masculinity.⁵ A notable exception to this critical oversight are the writings on the dandy figure in Spanish society.⁶ I would suggest that such studies, though valuable to the study of men’s fashion and masculinity, remain incomplete in that they attempt to view the dandy as an isolated subject. Because masculinity is layered and always relational, we must first document the hegemonic model, if only to move past it in our exploration of more subversive models of Spanish masculinity.

The following study will provide a clearer picture of why the black suit became the garment of choice for Spanish men during the second half of the nineteenth century by examining various examples from the discourse on fashion. Given the historical specificity of gender, I will outline how developments in the social environment of the day created a hypersensitivity to the gaze. On the

one hand, for an ascendant middle class, being seen in the latest, most elegant fashions provided a convenient way to achieve social distinction. On the other hand, the fashion discourse, influenced by a power dynamic in which the gazing subject occupies a (masculine) position of power while the object of the gaze is situated in an inferior (feminine) position, discouraged men from dressing conspicuously. This tension finds expression in the ubiquitous black suit, which became the visual symbol of hegemonic masculinity in the nineteenth century.

It is by now commonplace to refer to gender as a constructed identity rather than a coherent, monolithic, biological reality. Biology may create differences, but discursive fields give those differences meaning. Every culture has a unique way of conceptualizing the way the world should be, and presents that framework as truth. This holds true for conceptions of gender as well. Commenting on the historic variability of knowledge, Michel Foucault explains that, “there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth” (*Politics*, 51). These “régimes of truth,” as he calls them, are created through discourse. Foucault does not use the term discourse in its common sense as a speech or sermon but, rather, as a body of statements and practices that constitute the knowledge or “truths” of a period:

Each society has its régime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (*Power/Knowledge*, 131)

Discourses, and the identities that they create, rise to prominence and fall according to the specific context of a period. The evolution of discursive trends typically corresponds

to changes in the dominant ideology of a given society, and while one cannot reduce discourse to any one social or political agenda, it should be recognized that by functioning as a key site of power, discourse is never ideologically neutral. “[T]ruth isn’t outside power, or lacking in power” because, Foucault explains, “[t]ruth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power” (*Power/Knowledge*, 131). As this citation suggests, truth derives not from a single source but from “multiple forms of constraint,” that is, from the overlap, interplay, and loose unification of various discourses—a system of dispersion known as a discursive field.

Foucault’s theories have been appropriated to great effect by contemporary gender theorists, who argue that masculinity and femininity are socially constructed, culturally specific, and fluid identities rather than natural, universal, and fixed. As various discourses—medical, religious, and fashion, for instance—coalesce around issues of gender, they form a new discursive field, out of which culturally specific models of masculinity and femininity emerge. Individuals then set about, usually unwittingly, molding their appearance, behavior, and thoughts accordingly. “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body,” explains Butler, alluding to the physical manifestations of gender discourse (typically gestures, dress, and grooming) that make masculinity and femininity visible and give them the “appearance of substance” (33). Within the metaphorical gender wardrobe there are a limited number of costumes permitted by the established social order. Failure to wear the appropriate costume can potentially lead to marginalization.

Inasmuch as discourses intersect in varying configurations over time, gender identities are inevitably fractured and shifting. Connell and Kimmel, among others, have successfully argued that previous conceptions of manliness—which relied on the traditional view that men are one-dimensional and unemotional creatures who groan and

grunt through life—were inadequate because they failed to account for the variations created by culture. To speak of masculinity, even something as specific as Spanish masculinity, is to dangerously oversimplify the situation. The interplay between gender, race, and class means that we must acknowledge the plurality of masculine identity. Black as well as white, working-class as well as middle-class, heterosexual and homosexual, male and female.

How, then, do we organize so many models in a way that is relevant? In her pioneering book *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell suggests that the most effective way to understand the diversity of gender is a relational approach, one that highlights the “patterns of masculinity” within a given socio-cultural context (37). Although in any given context there may be a wide variety of potential models of masculinity, we can separate these into two basic categories—hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinity (76-81). Hegemonic masculinity is a culturally normative ideal of male behavior. It is not static and is not even the most common type of masculinity. Rather, it represents a particular configuration of masculinity that is culturally exalted. It is not a reality but a socially endorsed fantasy. It includes those characteristics and behaviors considered most desirable by a given society at a given moment. It is subject to challenges from subordinate or marginalized models of masculinity, and is reconstituted when new conditions arise. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that individuals position themselves in relation to others through discursive practices.

Dress is central to the construction of gender, transforming male and female bodies into men and women. Yet clothes say so much more than that. As one of the most visible markers of identity, clothing has the power to tell the world who we are (or at least who we would like to be). That people’s clothing carries meaning is hardly news, but in the nineteenth century this notion was especially

pronounced, a consequence of social developments and redefined gender roles. The popularly held belief, that clothing possesses the capacity to unveil a person’s true character by converting appearances into legible texts, is based on the principle of physiognomic reliability. First popularized by Aristotle in his “*Physiognomica*,” physiognomy is the art of discovering a person’s inner character by reading their outer appearance. Originally the study of physiognomy developed from human-animal comparisons. “The resemblance of forms supposes a resemblance of characters,” argued Giambattista della Porta in his 1586 treatise *De humana physiognomonia* (qtd. in Lavater 2:99). Thus a man with drooping jowls and an upturned nose, like that of a pig, would be judged slovenly and gluttonous. Similarly, a man with thick golden hair and a full beard might be compared to a lion, courageous and strong.

As the popularity of the theory waxed and waned over the centuries, the field of physiognomy evolved and broadened so that by the end of the eighteenth century, when Swiss theologian Johann Casper Lavater published his seminal *Physiognomische Fragmente*, every element of an individual’s appearance, from the angle of their nose to the shoes on their feet, was viewed as a virtual map of the soul:

I comprehend under the term Physiognomy all the external signs which, in man, directly force themselves on the observer; every feature, every outline, every modification, active or passive; every attitude and position of the human body; in short, every thing that immediately contributes to the knowledge of man, whether active or passive—every thing that shows him as he really appears. (Lavater 1: 11)

With the publication of *Physiognomische Fragmente* Lavater captured the attention of modern Europe. During the first half of the nineteenth century his name was regularly cited in scientific journals and popular

newspapers alike. According to historian John Graham, Lavater's work

was reprinted, abridged, summarized, pirated, parodied, imitated, and reviewed so often that it is difficult to imagine how a literate person of the time could have failed to have some general knowledge of the man and his theories. (62)

Physiognomy became a cultural phenomenon, and the belief that an individual's exterior accurately reflected their interior was accepted as fact.

This was certainly the case in Spain where the principles of physiognomy were disseminated by both scientific and popular publications. The August 1836 edition of *Semanario Pintoresco Español* ran a study of the face in which it cites Lavater to support the claim, "Tal nariz, tal frente, tal alma" ("Fisonomía," 163). In 1842 Antonio Rotondo published *La fisonomía, o sea El arte de conocer a sus semejantes por las formas exteriores; extractado de las mejores obras de Lavater*. In 1849 Mariano Cubí i Soler came out with a highly popular study of his own, *Elementos de frenología, fisonomía y magnetismo humano*. The marketability of such works showed little sign of diminishing in the second half of the century as publishers continued to print physiognomic studies. Mariano Aguirre de Venero's *Primer sistema del lenguaje universal, fisognomónico de los ojos: Nuevo arte de conocer a los hombres* was published in 1865, and in 1883 *Madrid Cómico* ran an article titled "En la cara," which asked readers: "¿Queréis conocer al hombre? Miradle la cara... no hay individuo que pueda sustraerse al influjo que las pasiones ejercen en nuestra fisonomía" (Matoses 3). Given the quantity and frequency of publications dealing with physiognomy, one can safely assume that most literate Spaniards were well versed in the practice of reading appearances.

As an extension of one's body, clothing, it was believed, provided an additional measure of a person's inner self. Honoré de

Balzac, who, in his *Traité de la vie élégante*, conflated fashion and physiognomy, what he dubbed "clothingonomy," argued that clothes make hieroglyphic men of us all (Balzac 67). Spanish writers agreed. "La vestidura," observes Benito Pérez Galdós in a speech to the Real Academia Española, "diseña los últimos trazos externos de la personalidad" (*Ensayos*, 176). María del Pilar Sinués de Marco, a prolific writer of conduct literature, echoes Galdós and Balzac in "El arte de vestir": "El traje, la elección de éste y de los accesorios que le completan, no es otra cosa que la profesión de fe de nuestros gustos, de nuestros sentimientos y de tendencias particulares" (qtd. in Díaz Marcos 168). Kasabal, another frequent contributor of fashion-themed articles, also notes that, "no es esto de la indumentaria cosa tan insignificante como a primera vista parece; pues el traje da idea de los gustos, de la cultura y de la educación del que lo lleva" ("El traje"). Similarly, in an 1891 article published in Madrid's *La Edad Dichosa*, the author describes the symbolic value of clothing: "[la vestidura] expresa al mismo tiempo el carácter y aficiones de su poseedor" (Pino 474).

It is no mere accident that this interest in clothing's communicative capacity and the persisting faith in physiognomic typing coincided with the rise of the middle class. As the financial and political power of the day gradually shifted from the nobility to the bourgeoisie, previously rigid class boundaries became permeable to those with means. Consequently, the perception that clothing had the capacity to construct identity intensified. "In the society of the spectacle the gaze of the Other is all-important," explains Stephanie Sieburth in her study of mass culture in modern Spain (37). "Since wealth now counts as much as title," she continues, "and since wealth is a recent phenomenon, even for many of the upper bourgeoisie, the sense of having no identity other than one's representation in public is acute" (37). This preoccupation with one's public persona only served to strengthen people's faith in the communicative role of clothes.

Authors were well aware that clothing possesses the dual capacity to both represent and misrepresent. On the one hand clothing promises the possibility of recognition, of distinguishing individuals in a sea of unfamiliar faces. On the other hand, clothing's ability to mislead appealed to those who, dissatisfied with their current social situation, would attempt to transgress social boundaries by appearing to be something that they are not. By purchasing and displaying the trappings of luxury, social aspirants tried laying claim to an elevated status through their appearance alone. It was a trend that did not go unnoticed by authors, who took aim at those attempting to hide their poverty behind fine fabrics. In *La desheredada*, Benito Pérez Galdós includes a description of social pretenders who parade down the Paseo de la Castellana and vie for each other's attention:

Como cada cual tiene ganas rabiosas de alcanzar una posición superior, principia por aparentarla. Las improvisaciones estimulan el apetito. Lo que no se tiene se pide, y no hay un solo número uno que no quiere elevarse a la categoría de dos. El dos se quiere hacer pasar por tres; el tres hace creer que es cuatro; el cuatro dice: "Si yo soy cinco," y así sucesivamente. (137)⁷

Sartorial expression was reduced to a game of copycat, and, as authors like Larra, Galdós, Mesonero Romanos, and Pardo Bazán lamented, distinguishing one class from another grew increasingly difficult (Bernís 457; Díaz Marcos 158-67).

These misgivings in no way lessened the emphasis placed on clothing as social signifier. This may be due to the fact that the role of dress in signaling social boundaries has a long, even systematized history in Spain (Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño; Sempere y Guarinos). Sumptuary laws were used to consolidate and reinforce the formalized hierarchy of class and status in medieval Spain by "producing an effect of order while coping with constant changes in fashion" (Martínez

Bermejo 97). By regulating consumption, social rank was made instantly recognizable—one only needed to glance at a person's attire to know his or her position. Strict rules on the types of threads, the location of stitches, the colors of fabrics, or the type of jewelry one wore all helped individuals "recognize," "identify," and "know" others who inhabited the crowded "world of strangers" that was the modern European city (Mather 71).

In Spain the sumptuary laws underwent a process of gradual relaxation after 1600, with the last recorded sumptuary legislation coming late in the eighteenth century (Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño 278; Hunt 33). Despite the fact that sumptuary laws were increasingly unenforceable as the urban environment became more crowded and social divisions more pervious, the principles behind sumptuary laws (that is, a desire for appearance-based categorization) prevailed well into the nineteenth century.

Between the conspicuous consumption of the newly formed bourgeoisie and the widespread fascination with physiognomy, the importance placed on appearances was greater than ever before. In this atmosphere of seeing and being seen we might expect that clothing would become more stylized, more ornate, and that trends would change more rapidly as individuals tried to outdo their fellow social climbers. Our assumption would be only half right. There did exist an undeniable obsession with fashion, but it was notably one-sided.

The fashion discourse of the nineteenth century reveals a clear division along gender lines. Fashion magazines and newspapers were plentiful, but all were for women.⁸ Occasionally some advice for men would appear in conduct manuals, although readers would have to look carefully as it was usually only a sentence or two tucked away within a more extensive section on women's sartorial etiquette. The prevailing sentiment was that fashion was a purely feminine interest. Where fine fabrics once separated aristocrats from commoners, they now divided women from men.

This was not necessarily the case in the previous century under Bourbon rule. During much of the eighteenth century women's and men's styles ran on parallel tracks, differing in degrees, perhaps, but not in essence. The justaucorps, a long, knee-length men's coat imported from France, was stylistically analogous to a woman's dress. Similarly, women's dresses and men's *casacas* were cut from the same colorful, silk fabrics. Only after the turn of the century do men's and women's fashions begin to diverge dramatically. The female form expands while the male form contracts. Women's dresses maintain or enhance their vibrancy while men's suits lose their color until they are mostly shades of gray and black. Whereas women's fashion becomes more prominent over time, fashion for men becomes invisible.

The portraiture of the period exemplifies the degree to which men's and women's styles had diverged over the span of a century.⁹ Jean Ranc's companion portraits of Felipe V (1723) and his wife, Isabel de Farnesio (1723) represent a pair with more in common than their rank. Felipe's blue justaucorps has a fitted bodice and flared skirt that is not so dissimilar to Isabel's red dress. His armor, a dark breastplate, is barely visible beneath a voluminous red sash around his waist and a second, blue sash across his chest. A similarly colored blue ribbon holds back her hair. Both garments are accented with gold embroidery and white lace. Their powdered wigs add to the similitude.

French styles continued to dominate Spanish society, particularly the aristocracy, up to the end of the century. Even as late as 1800, in Goya's paintings of the royal family, there remains a noticeable likeness in both the colors and materials used to craft men's and women's garments, although we begin to see a departure from previous styles as the three-piece suit, with its shorter frock coat, replaces the dress-like justaucorps.

Two portraits by Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta, of siblings Manuela and Ramón de Errazu (1875; 1879), show a very different

picture of gender-specific dress taking shape in the second half of the nineteenth century. Manuela de Errazu is shown in a full-bodied gown consisting of a silk navy-blue bodice, which extends over a large bustle, trimmed with white lace and a bold pink skirt. Several rows of ruffles and a voluminous train testify of the many, many yards of fabric that went into the construction of such a sumptuous garment. Her brother Ramón cuts a more modest figure. His ensemble lacks the volume and vivid colors worn by Manuela. A white shirt, vest, and tie are mostly covered by a black frock coat. Gray pants and black shoes complete his wardrobe. Whereas Manuela's luxurious look reveals an elevated social standing, the understated restraint of Ramón's clothing exposes nothing.

Even before the composition of the Errazu portraits Spanish men had abandoned the refined French styles of the of the previous century for more modest garb:

Al comenzar el siglo se había producido una verdadera revolución en el traje de hombre... A Inglaterra se le debe la idea del traje confortable y práctico, la sustitución de las bordadas casacas de seda y terciopelo por prendas de paño más austeras. (Bernis 458)

As men turned their eyes from Paris to London in search of sartorial inspiration, styles changed to reflect a more severe aesthetic. The first changes were in the cut and fabric. Gone were the powdered wigs, silk breeches, and stockings. In their place men adopted full-length, wool trousers and dark jackets, typically a *frac* or *levita*, which were worn over a dark vest and a white shirt. The *chistera* or *sombrero de copa* was the hat of choice for most men. As the decades passed only minor changes occurred. The silhouette relaxed as pants and jackets were worn more loosely. The *americana* was introduced and the *capa* gave way to the *gabán*. Yet the most notable change was as dramatic as it was universal: the variety of colors diminished until the male wardrobe took on the colors of the city: gray,

dark-brown, and black. In a satirical piece by Galdós, the author complains that, “[los hombres] hemos proscrito el color, adoptando el negro o los antipáticos tonos de cenizas y los grises y asfaltos más feos que es posible imaginar” (“El elegante” 233). Clearly not a fan of this achromatic style, Galdós notes that men seem too preoccupied with feigning “una seriedad estúpida,” leaving it up to women to utilize a youthful and vibrant palette in their dress (233).

Galdós’s disapproval is not the norm. Most social commentaries describe the dark suit as the most appropriate option for men. In Mariano de Rementería y Fica’s highly popular *Nuevo manual de urbanidad, cortesanía, decoro y etiqueta, o el hombre fino*, the author urges men to “escoger colores oscuros y seguir la moda de lejos... y no tener otro fin que el aseo y la comodidad” (31). Unlike his advice that men should dress for comfort, Rementería y Fica states that women’s clothing “está más destinado a adornar que a vestir” (27). His counsel is both uninspiring and familiar. In an article from the paper *Nuevo Mundo*, titled “La elegancia masculina,” the author Kasabal offers similar advice:

[E]s condición indispensable [de la indumentaria masculina] la sencillez, el alejamiento de todo lo que sea chillón y llamativo... La elegancia masculina se ha de distinguir siempre por un sello de severidad, por el predominio de aquello que parece de menos ostentación. (4)

The message conveyed by these experts of socially appropriate behavior could not be clearer. Women should be seen while men should remain unnoticed. Each of these texts reveals the same dismissive attitude toward the topic of men’s fashion, insisting that such concerns are fine for women but unbecoming of men.

Blanca Valmont, a popular fashion writer for *La Última Moda*, echoes the words of both Kasabal and Rementería y Fica when she states that a man’s wardrobe should be

distinguished by a “sobria sencillez,” and that, “Todo hombre serio debe huir de dar golpe, como vulgarmente se dice, por su manera de vestir” (2). She warns men not to imitate the “afeminado gomoso,” who, thanks to his slavish adherence to fashion trends, “es el hazme reir de los hombres y no hay mujer que le tome en serio” (2). Likely influenced by the concept of essential differences, which justified gender roles as being a product of biology, Valmont depicts as natural the contrasting place of *la moda* in the lives of men and women:

Con los incesantes cambios del traje femenino contrastan las lentas y poco importantes variaciones de la indumentaria del sexo fuerte. Pero no se entienda que esto significa una protesta contra nuestra inconstancia, o un ejemplo que pretenden darnos los caballeros. Significa en todo caso que los admiradores de las elegancias femeniles renuncian a competir con ellas y tratan como así debe ser de adquirir notoriedad por otras cualidades. (2)

Valmont highlights the reluctance of men to compete for the gaze, preferring instead to renounce fashion and define themselves in other ways. This concept will form the basis of the most influential explanation to date of the popularity of the black suit, Flügel’s theory of masculine renunciation, which is described below.

This apparent renunciation of fashion by men is unexpected if one considers the primacy of appearance in determining social status. Being readily available and easily interpreted, clothing was arguably the most common currency used to establish social distinction in the nineteenth century. With the considerable wealth of the middle class and the end of sumptuary laws in Spain, the sartorial possibilities for men were seemingly limitless, and yet when viewed from within the gender discourse of the period it becomes obvious that indulging in anything but a dark

suit would have been viewed as unmanly. How, then, should we interpret the fact that men were shunning fashion despite the important role played by clothing in establishing rank in a society where everyone was jostling for position?

One of the more persuasive explanations emerged from the field of psychoanalysis. In "The Great Masculine Renunciation and Its Causes," J. C. Flügel rejects the notion that the seemingly sudden transformation from the brilliant styles of the French court to the somber style of English bankers was strictly a political declaration—that is, a consequence of the social upheaval of the French Revolution—insisting that the democratization of men's fashion was psychosexual in nature. Men, he claims, do not want to be the object of anyone else's erotic look. By rejecting showy styles in favor of nondescript black, they can avoid being objects of desire. Instead, women are expected to bear this role with their fine gowns and accessories. Flügel's argument is not without its flaws. He relies on stereotypes and a number of misconceptions about the natures of men and women that typified the gender discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He suggests that men play a greater role in social life than women, and he takes for granted the validity of the public/private divide (106). He asserts that women are inherently more narcissistic than men (107), and he maintains that men have a "sterner and more rigid conscience" than women, whose sentimental character quickly gives rise to envy and spite when they encounter other women who are dressed more elegantly (105). Flügel clearly subscribed to the concept of essential differences that shaped the gender norms of the nineteenth century.¹⁰

While such bias cannot be overlooked, Flügel's basic thesis, that men attempt to deflect the gaze through inconspicuous styles, is worth considering. Such a view is in line with the position of many gender theorists who argue that the gaze and male privilege are interconnected. According to Luce Irigaray,

"investment in the look is not as privileged in women as it is in men" (50). This gendering of the gaze, she explains, is due to the intertwining of knowledge, power, and looking: "More than any other sense, the eye objectifies and it masters" (50). If the gazing subject occupies a (masculine) position of power while the object of the gaze is situated in an inferior (feminine) position, then for a man to be caught in the Other's gaze would be tantamount to emasculation. By donning a nondescript black suit men attempt to escape the gaze by saying, "Don't see me! I efface myself" (Harvey, *Men in Black*, 13).

Men could still achieve status through dress, but they had to do so vicariously, by buying beautiful gowns for their wives. Thorstein Veblen suggests that a woman's appearance came to symbolize the economic condition of the entire household (118-31). The reasoning is that the more extravagant and impractical the woman's dress, the further removed from the world of labor she is. In other words, as a family becomes more deeply imbedded in the leisure class, they (especially the women) have less use for functional clothing. A man's reputation was therefore tied to the clothing his wife wore, rather than his own. In *La de Bringas*, arguably Galdós's most fashion-conscious novel, Rosalía seems to be alluding to her role as symbol of the family's pecuniary standing, as well as the honor of her husband, Francisco, when she explains why she likes to dress well: "Si se tratara de mí sola, me importaría poco. Pero es por él, por él... para que no digan que me visto de tarasca" (173). Her explanation that Francisco's reputation depended on her appearance rather than his own is in keeping with the gendering of fashion that occurred in nineteenth-century Spanish society.

The positioning of hegemonic masculinity in relation to subordinate models, as described by Connell (37-38), is clearly visible in Spain's fashion discourse. The man who shunned fashion in order to avoid the gaze did indeed have a model against which to base his wardrobe and his behavior. In the

seventeenth century they were called *lindos*. In the eighteenth, *petimetres* or *currutacos*. In the nineteenth century, men who displayed an exaggerated interest in clothing were known as *gomosos* or *elegantes*.

The *elegante* paid little heed to the conduct manuals that called for renunciation of flashy styles and instead enjoyed attracting the gaze of others. Unlike the everyman in his nondescript attire, the *elegante* embraced color, form-fitting garments, and sartorial innovation. From the October 14, 1883 edition of *Madrid Cómico* we find the following description of the *elegante*:

Y más que vanagloria, hay quien convierte en carrera civil el arte de vestirse. Ustedes verán por esos teatros y por esos cafés sujetos planchados, almidonados, estirados, de quienes no se sabe otra virtud que la de llevar bien el traje.

—¿Qué es ése?

—Nada.

—¿Trabaja?

—No.

—¿Es artista, escritor, propietario?...

—Ni empleado siquiera.

—Pues ¿qué hace?

—Mire V.: por las mañanas se viste, por las noches se desnuda, y al día siguiente hace la misma operación. (Matoses, "Los elegantes," 3)

The *elegante's* refusal to conform to the hegemonic model of inconspicuous masculinity resulted in similar derision from *costumbrista* authors who questioned his manliness. In the immensely popular *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, Ramón de Navarrete paints a humorous picture of the *elegante*, showing him to be more vain than virile:

Yo tengo para mí que el Elegante desciende por línea recta, de aquel Narciso famoso que cuentan se pasaba las horas muertas contemplándose en la límpida corriente de los ríos... Lo primero que hace el *hombre de buen tono*, (que también por esta castiza metáfora se le conoce), en cuanto

amanece para él, que no ha de ser antes de las doce del día, es pedir un espejo. (398)

Like the previous citation by Matoses, Navarrete highlights some of the unflattering, indeed unmasculine, qualities of the *elegante*. That he sleeps until noon shows him to be an unproductive member of society, certainly not in keeping with middle-class ideals of ingenuity and work ethic. As for the *elegante's* self-absorption, we can contrast his narcissistic love of mirrors with a scene from Galdós's *Tormento*, in which Agustín Caballero alludes to the relationship between masculinity and grooming.¹¹ Caballero's introduction in the narrative occurs in the fifth chapter when, after finishing his morning ride on horseback, he visits the home of his cousins, Rosalía and Francisco Bringas. No sooner does he walk in the door than Rosalía attempts to straighten his tie: "¡Ay, qué desgarbado eres! Si te dejases gobernar, qué pronto serías otro" (39). Caballero, not a man to be "gobernado" by anyone, brushes aside her concern about his appearance, which he disparages as mere "melindres." He goes on to explain that he has gone fifteen years without bothering to look in a mirror (39). With candid approval, the narrator elaborates on Caballero's rejection of sartorial protocol as well as his disdain for social wannabes who are overly preoccupied with appearances:

Caballero, con muy buen sentido, había comprendido que era peor afectar lo que no tenía que presentarse tal cual era a las vulgares apreciaciones de la afeminada sociedad en que vivía. (40)

Implied in these statements, particularly in his use of the adjective "afeminada," is the belief that fashion (and by extension anyone unduly concerned with being seen) falls outside of the proper domain of men. Fashionable or image-conscious men arouse suspicion because they appear to transgress the limits of "appropriate" male behavior.

It is no wonder that the satirical press gravitated toward the *elegante* for comic fodder. Satire is designed to attack vice or folly with wit and ridicule. It seeks to persuade an audience that something or someone is reprehensible or ridiculous. Similar to the aforementioned vignette from *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, many of the cartoons by artist Francisco Ramón Cilla veiled anxiety beneath a veneer of humor. In one image a man and woman stare through a shop window. The word “MODA” is stenciled across the glass. The lady wears a full-length dress with a high neck and long sleeves. A hat with feathers completes the look. The man at her side wears a long, form-fitting coat (*levitón*) and top hat. The artist has composed the piece so that the silhouettes of the two figures mirror one another. The four verses at the bottom of the page explain this symmetry: “Entre los sexos contrarios / se dan ya aproximaciones: / se aproximan en derechos, / en gustos y hasta en faldones” (“Aproximaciones,” 122). The blurring of boundaries, in this case between male and female, is precisely what stimulated the physiognomic craze of the nineteenth century. Undecideability makes, to paraphrase Larra, every day of the year carnival with its topsy-turvy confusion of categories. In a society that preached the doctrine of essential differences, gender ambiguity was an affront to the established order.

Another cartoon by Cilla in *Madrid Cómico* contains a similar message about the dubious gender of the *elegante*, although it is left up to the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. At the top of the page is the title, “EL SEXO ¿FUERTE?” The title’s punctuation immediately casts doubt on the gender identity of the *elegante* depicted below. He stands at the window of a tailor shop, leaning forward to get a better view of the items on display. His thoughts, revealed below the image, help the viewer answer the question posed by the title: “¡Caramba! el caso es que necesito una docena de corbatas y no sé qué modelos elegir... ¡Ay, Jesús! nos mandan unas cosas de París este año...” (“El sexo ¿fuerte?,” 365). His excitement

over something as trivial as ties is meant to be laughable, and the viewer would have an easy time concluding that the *elegante* could not possibly belong to *el sexo fuerte*. In the nineteenth century fashion was synonymous with feminine, and the man who failed to realize this was not considered much of a man at all.

Even though a fear of gender ambiguity was a cultural reality during the period in question, wearing black was more than just a reaction to the feminization of fashion. The appeal of the black suit also had possible political underpinnings. The styles of the previous century were Paris imports, symbolic of the *afrancesamiento* ushered in by the Bourbon regime, and were often associated with effeminacy. The Paris correspondent for *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, Jacinto Octavio Picón, in his coverage of the Parisian art scene in 1880, condemned “la ignorancia del público francés, que toma por elegante lo afeminado y confunde lo bonito con lo bello” (389). Picón does not refer to fashion specifically but, rather, a general “mal gusto” of the French. Gabriel Araceli, the narrator and protagonist of Galdós’s popular *Episodios nacionales*, expresses a similar opinion about French taste. In *Trafalgar*, Araceli describes the effeminate appearance of the *afrancesados* as contrary to what normal Spaniards wear: “Como yo observaba todo, me fijé en la extraña figura de aquellos hombres, en sus afeminados gestos y sobre todo en sus trajes, que me parecieron extravagantísimos” (142). Here the gendering of fashion has the added nuance of a national bias. Araceli realizes that unlike most of his friends and acquaintances, individuals who “vestían a la española,” these *afrancesados*, whom he refers to as “afeminados,” draw on Paris for their sartorial inspiration (142). Could the privileging of London styles in nineteenth-century Spain be less about celebrating British culture and more about rejecting French culture? There is certainly a hint of anti-French sentiment, even subtle nationalism, in the adoption of the black suit.

Given the rise of liberalism that accompanied the establishment of the bourgeoisie in Spain, we could also interpret the

homogeneity of men's dress as a sociopolitical declaration of liberal ideals (Pena González, *El traje*, 30). However we should not be too quick to accept the declaration of universal equality made by the liberal segment of the newly empowered bourgeoisie. As historian Jesús Cruz has shown, the persistence of "old society" continued throughout the century via the monopolization of political, economic, and social power by a ruling elite who used kinship, friendship, and patronage to maintain its control (172). Publicly the ascendant middle class argued for reform, revolution, and equality, but privately the ideals of the old regime continued to hold sway (171-77). Like a new round of musical chairs, the rules of the game did not change, it was simply that a new player had ascended the throne.

This dynamic hints at an alternative interpretation of the bourgeois black. In Spain black clothing has always been the color of power, authority, and legitimacy, and for this reason the popularity of the black suit in Spain should be viewed through a different lens than in other nations. Unlike the United States or even England, Spain's tradition of black clothing is much longer and can be seen as fortifying divisions rather than breaking them down. In his study of black clothing, John Harvey observes that, "it was Spain, more than any other nation, which was to be responsible for the major propagation of solemn black both throughout Europe, and in the New World" (*Men in Black*, 72). When Carlos V became the first person to rule united Spain in his own right in 1516, he brought not only his titles from the houses of Hapsburg and Burgundy, but the black style worn in the court of Burgundy as well. Titian's iconic portrait (1548) depicts Carlos V resting in a chair and dressed head to toe in black, with the exception of a white collar and a gold pendent that hangs from his neck.¹²

As Holy Roman Emperor, Carlos V's influence cannot be exaggerated, although it was his son, Felipe II, who codified black clothing as the uniform of the Spanish monarchy. Felipe II ruled for more than 40 years,

and one would be hard-pressed to find a portrait of him wearing anything other than black. These rulers produced an empowerment of black:

En el ámbito de la Monarquía Hispánica, el negro pasó a convertirse en signo de autoridad y poder, no solo propio del rey, sino de toda la corte y en general de la administración de los territorios de la Corona. (Colomer)

When the ascendant middle class is looking to strengthen its foothold, to really legitimize itself as the dominant class, there is no better way to look the part. By donning the black of their most popular monarchs, Spain's new social elite symbolically laid claim to the crown.

The echos in Federico de Madrazo's stark portrait of politician Segismundo Moret (1855) are hard to ignore. Moret's appearance invokes Carlos V's wardrobe, but it is also typical of Spanish men during the period in question and embodies the hegemonic model of masculinity popularized by the middle class. He stands erect, turned ever so slightly, with his left arm on his hip. His trimmed brown hair is brushed back and his dense beard and mustache are also neatly groomed. As for his clothing, he is dressed entirely in black, the default uniform of the nineteenth-century gentleman. The blackness of his attire is so complete that the only hints of color are the gold chain of a pocket watch and the slightest bit of a white collar that peeks out above his coat and tie. Serene confidence marks his visage. He has the look of a man in control. Moret's appearance does not reject the attention of others but commands it. And unlike the depictions of the *elegante*, which produce scorn and laughter, Moret seems to demand respect. The black suit, as represented in Madrazo's portrait, is thus transformed from a hideaway cloak to a declaration of sovereignty.

In Spain, black's association with the Catholic Church enhanced its symbolic importance. After all, when we think of the Church we think of men in black. This may

be part of the very reason that Carlos V and Felipe II wore black. Men in black were the ultimate moral authority. In a strict Christian state, wearing black was good politics on the part of the king. Black's symbolic connection with the court is ostentatious, yet its connection with the priesthood almost makes a show of renouncing ostentation. Therein lies the brilliant paradox of black. It is polysemic, and you can be grand without offense—an attractive quality for a social group on the rise. In a deft maneuver the man in black ostensibly sidesteps the social staircase by taking his stand on a moral stair instead.

In summary, developments in the visual culture, especially the link between spectatorship and social mobility, resulted in gender identities that were increasingly dependent on matters of style, self-presentation, and consumption. Yet at the same time, the reformulation of gender roles based on essential differences contributed to a feminization of fashion. These multiple forms of constraint, to put it in Foucauldian terminology, meant that the respectable gentleman, upon throwing his closet doors wide each morning, had only one viable option. The black suit was the garment of choice for those who sought to emulate the hegemonic model. Wearing anything else might raise questions about one's masculinity. Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of the black suit, it was a complex signifier. It was conspicuous in its inconspicuousness. It manifested apprehension and ambition at the same time. On the one hand, the middle-class man in black seems to say, "Don't look at me. I don't want to be the object of your gaze." On the other hand he is saying, "Look at me, I'm calling the shots now."

Just as we find in most discursive fields, the discourse on fashion is characterized by contradiction. The feminine ideal known as the *ángel del hogar* relegated women to the private sphere, yet the discourse on fashion designated them as symbols of family status, thereby requiring their presence in public. Hegemonic masculinity also presented ideals that were seemingly incompatible. Marriage,

faith, and civility were celebrated on the one hand, yet many of the paragons of masculinity—the frontiersman, the *Don Juan*, the soldier—rejected the limits imposed by those value-systems. The question that the middle-class man is struggling with in nineteenth-century Spain is: how do you control the social order and yet remain untouched by it? It is a question that scholars have yet to explore.

Historian Keith Thomas once noted that, "those who study the past usually find themselves arriving at two contradictory conclusions. The first is that the past was very different from the present. The second is that it was very much the same" (10). This certainly seems to be true of the current state of men's dress in Spain. No longer does men's fashion carry many of the negative connotations that it once did. Advertising campaigns target men of all walks of life, and depict men dressing in a broad spectrum of colors and styles. More importantly, a desire to dress well does not produce the same degree of scorn that it would have just over a century ago. And yet for all the changes, much remains the same when it comes to sartorial protocol. A cursory glance at any red-carpet event, wedding, or executive board meeting will tell you that for important events the black suit is still the most popular option for men. Colorful shirts and trousers may be appropriate for the park or the bar, but only a dark suit has the necessary gravitas when all eyes are on you. It would seem that black is not back in style, it actually never left.

Notes

¹My use of the term *fashion* encompasses, but is not limited to, definitions found in previous studies of dress in which *fashion* refers to the collective acceptance by consumers of new styles (Kawamura; Reilly and Cosbey xv; Sproles), a style popular at a certain time (Horn and Gurel; Kefgen and Touchie-Specht), and a specific code of dress (Entwistle 47-49).

²For additional reading on the communicative role of fashion see Barnard; Damhorst; Díaz Marcos (47-50); Harvey (*Clothes*, chapter 3); Hollander (24-29); Lurie; Stone; Svendsen (especially chapter 4).

³Aldaraca; Anderson; Bacon (22-53); K. Davis; Díaz Marcos; Jagoe; Labanyi; Sinclair, "Luxurious Borders."

⁴In fact, Spanish masculinity in general has been largely overlooked until very recently, most likely because the masculine pole of the sex-gender system is assumed to be an unproblematic default position against which femininity is measured. The limitation with such a view is that it not only glosses over a potentially rich area of scholarship, but in doing so it does a disservice to social critics, religious leaders, doctors, and literary authors whose discussions and portrayals of masculinity are anything but unproblematic. Fortunately, the subject now seems to be gaining purchase, especially in the arena of literary studies, as evinced by a small but growing body of scholarship. See, for instance, recent scholarship by Copeland; Erwin; Harpring; Iarocci; McKinney (95-108, 136-57); and Tsuchiya (112-35).

⁵In his extensive overview of clothing trends in Romantic Spain, Pena González notes that, "Desde el Romanticismo la moda será cosa de mujeres" (*El traje* 28), an attitude that is reflected in the composition of his book. He dedicates approximately eighty pages to women's styles (two chapters), but only sixteen pages (one chapter) to men's. He briefly mentions the prominence of the black suit, however his commentary is limited to a summary of Flügel's thesis (29-31). Through no fault of his own, Pena González's study is also hampered by a lack of authentic source material. Nearly all of the fashion plates that appear in the section on men's fashion come from French publications. Although this is due to the fact that there are no journals published in Spain on the topic of men's fashion, it gives a false impression of male fashion trends, which by this time were imitating English styles more than French.

⁶Ortiz; Pena González "Dandismo"; Reyero 253-57.

⁷The type of social emulation described by Galdós finds a more extensive articulation in Thorstein Veblen's classic study of modern affluence, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899. In his analysis of "conspicuous consumption" Veblen observes how social pretenders emulate the behavior and fashion trends of the social tier directly above them:

In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the

norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal. (70)

Veblen's insistence on the primacy of appearance, as well as his frequent use of the adjective "conspicuous" to describe the pecuniary habits of members of the leisure class (and those hoping to join its ranks) highlights the visual dimension of social mobility and the role of clothing in initiating that process of ascendancy. See also Georg Simmel (chapter 5) and Herbert Spencer for a discussion of sartorial imitation and its social underpinnings.

⁸All journals about fashion listed in Alison Sinclair's computerized handbook of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Madrid periodicals (up to 1870) appear under the rubric of "Women's Papers" (*Madrid Newspapers*, 438-39).

⁹The few examples of conserved garments in the collection of the Museo del Traje in Madrid are similarly useful in observing the evolution of fashion between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It should be remembered, however, that in both instances these examples reflect the clothing of the upper classes. Given this study's focus on gender ideals created by the dominant classes, this is entirely appropriate.

¹⁰Flügel's comments recall the words of celebrated Spanish physician Pedro Felipe Monlau, who in 1853 famously described the anatomical and psychological differences between men and women: "La mujer está dotada de una sensibilidad mayor; sus sentidos son más delicados y finos. Predominan en la mujer las facultades afectivas, así como en el hombre las intelectuales" (112). This notion, that differences between men and women were the result of fixed, biological realities, was used to explain everything from the concept of separate spheres to the feminization of religion.

¹¹It should be noted that, of all the male characters in this novel or its sequel, *La de Bringas*, Caballero represents the most positive model of masculinity (McKinney 95-108).

¹²As an example of the influence wielded by the Spanish monarchy throughout Europe, Barzini, author of *The Europeans*, relates how a visit from Carlos V in 1530 ushered in a new phase of Italian fashion:

That year Charles V came to Bologna to be crowned both king of Italy and Roman emperor by the Pope and to pose for a portrait by Titian. He and his retinue paraded on horseback through the city streets. The gay Italians, dressed in silks of all colors, brocades, velvets, and damasks, cheered their guests and tossed flowers from balconies hung with multicolored cloths and tapestries. All the unsmiling Spanish dignitaries, as pale as El Greco saints, wore black with white ruffled collars. A few months later the Italians, most of them, wore black too, as if to show their sorrow for the end of the Renaissance and the loss of their liberties and joy of life. (36)

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TITLE: The Aesthetics of Violence in Colombian Film *Rodrigo D: no futuro*, *Apocalipsur*, and *Satanás*

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ABSTRACT: Violence has become a central characteristic of the aesthetics of film in Colombia.

This is apparent in three films of the last two decades: *Rodrigo D: no futuro* (1990), *Apocalipsur* (2007), and *Satanás* (2007). In the first two, violence is a part of different everyday realities, presented with aesthetic commonalities. In *Satanás*, violence produces a catharsis, understandable to Colombia's urbanites. In spite of the social differences among these films, there is a common discourse created from their different perspectives, and the result is the same: the triumph of violence over life, and the films' tragedy creates an ethical and aesthetic sense which does not adorn Colombian reality with false expectations. Do recent socio-political and filmic realities indicate new directions for Colombian film and society?

KEYWORDS: Colombian film, *Rodrigo D*, *Apocalipsur*, *Satanás*, film violence

RESUMEN: La violencia es una característica central de la estética del cine colombiano. Esto está claro en tres películas de las últimas dos décadas: *Rodrigo D: no futuro* (1990), *Apocalipsur* (2007) y *Satanás* (2007). En las dos primeras, la violencia es parte de diferentes realidades y es presentada con elementos estéticos en común. En *Satanás*, la violencia produce una catarsis, comprensible para la mayoría de los colombianos. A pesar de las diferencias entre las películas, hay un discurso común y el resultado es el mismo: el triunfo de la violencia sobre la vida y la tragedia crea una ética y estética que no pretende adornar la realidad colombiana de expectativas falsas. ¿Es posible que las recientes realidades socio-políticas y filmicas señalen nuevas direcciones para la sociedad y el cine colombianos?

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cine colombiano, *Rodrigo D*, *Apocalipsur*, *Satanás*, violencia en cine

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The Aesthetics of Violence in Colombian Film *Rodrigo D: no futuro, Apocalipsur, and Satanás*

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Entre los años de 1989 y 1992 fueron asesinados en Medellín más de 25 mil personas, la mayoría de ellos menores de edad. Algunos llamaron a estos años el Apocalipsur. Apocalipsur, Javier Mejía, 2007

For decades Colombia has been ravaged by violent conflict.¹ One of the results of continued violence is hundreds of thousands of people who have been displaced within their own country.² Estimates would suggest that Colombia has had one of the world's largest internally displaced populations (after the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Violence has been woven so deeply into the social fabric of Colombian society that no one knows who to trust, and anyone can unexpectedly turn into a perpetrator of violence. Many have had to live from day-to-day without any hope for the future and struggle for survival on a daily basis.

According to conventional wisdom, drug-related violence is the main threat to Colombian democracy, and annual data reveal a strong relationship between coca production and violence. But other studies show³ that the relationships among drugs, violence, and the economy are not as clear cut as conventional thinking would suggest. With time, undoubtedly, what many Colombians have come to believe is that ultimately drug trade and violence flourish because of government's inability to offer viable solutions.

For some, if not for most, violence in contemporary Colombia has reached at times the level of humanitarian crisis. So ingrained into the Colombian reality is violence that it has become the structuring principle, the central characteristic of the aesthetics for film. Particularly reflective of this phenomenon are three

of the best known Colombian films of the last two decades: *Rodrigo D: no futuro* (Víctor Gaviria, 1990), *Apocalipsur* (Javier Mejía, 2007), and *Satanás* (Andrés Baiz, 2007). Though these films are widely available, they may be more unfamiliar than other Latin American films; thus, a brief introductory summary of the films' narratives can be helpful.

The first film, *Rodrigo D: no futuro*, is a 1990 film from director Víctor Gaviria, and it is set in 1988 as it tells a fictional story based on the violent lives of young people in the drug- and crime-filled city of Medellín. The film focuses on Rodrigo, not yet 20 years old, and it opens with him in the last floor window of a downtown Medellín high rise building. He is about to jump into that city that invites, oppresses, and marginalizes him. He has no other options, he screams at the city. Time stops, and through flashbacks, some of his life and surroundings are narrated and described. Rodrigo is a frustrated artist, who wanders the film narrative listening to Sex Pistols tapes and trying to get a set of drums. The meandering plot really does not take the viewer anywhere, as its meanderings are meant more as a reflection of Rodrigo and his friends' aimlessness while they live their days making minor drug deals and stealing cars. Most serious violence happens off screen. The final violence and Rodrigo's despair are merely taken for granted.

Although *Rodrigo D: no futuro* is Gaviria's first feature-length film, it, along with

his subsequent feature productions *La vendedora de rosas* (1998) and *Sumas y restas* (2005) have confirmed him as a major figure in Latin American cinema. Further confirmation of his stature as a filmmaker is the now extensive bibliography of critical work dealing with Gaviria's filmic production. This critical bibliography has dealt with and made very clear the major elements of the director's filmic project, many of which are important to the focus of the present essay. Scholars have shown how Gaviria's films make the marginal central by bringing to the screen images and subjects which have been marginalized by processes of global or neocolonial discourses. With his "voluntad realista," (Gaviria's own words), his attempt is to move the consciousness of the viewing public toward solidarity by opening a space to the testimony of the subaltern. Though some have wanted to see Gaviria's neorealism as "pornomiseria," his filmic project implies an ethics of representation committed to bringing to the screen experiences which are sometimes incomprehensible (because of their violence or scorn for hegemonic values), creating a dramatic process of "doble devenir" in which margin becomes center and audience becomes margin.

Apocalipsisur is directed by Javier Mejía. Released commercially in 2007, it won the prize as Colombia's best picture at the Cartagena Film Festival. It tells the story of a group of young people who travel around early 1990's Medellín when the city was ravaged by drug-traffic mafias. El Flaco runs away to London from his home in Medellín because of threats against his mother. Before he leaves, his friends give him a wild farewell party with a punk rock band included. Eight months later, he comes back to Medellín and finds that the city is the same war zone he remembers. El Flaco's best friends pick him up at the airport in their Bola de Nieve, a VW van in which they have traveled so much together that it has become everyone's refuge. Again, flashbacks are used to narrate the characters' pasts, particularly how they have come to be friends as well as their shared experiences.

Satanás is the first feature film directed by Andrés Baiz, and it is also a 2007 release. It is based on a book by Mario Mendoza. The Mendoza book in turn was based on the real events which occurred at Bogotá's *Pozzetto* restaurant on December 5, 1986. On that day, Vietnam veteran Campo Elías Delgado, Eliseo in the film, massacred several people after having murdered his mother and others close to him.

The second of the films, Mejía's *Apocalipsisur*, reminds viewers in the first few seconds that "in Medellín between the years of 1989 and 1992 more than 25 thousand people were killed, the majority of them minors."⁴ For Colombian national cinema the question is: how to represent Colombia's violent ethic of the '80's and '90's in filmic form? For recent filmic production, the real world referent is too strong an element to be forgotten or to be ignored. The effort must be to find an aesthetic form where violence appears appropriately well-represented, and in order to do that, it is important to place the act of filming within a kind of similar reality. That is to say, to film from the inside, from the natural conditions of the very images which the film seeks to show, so that the rhythm of the real interactions becomes part of the rhythm of the filmmaking process.

It is possible to observe several formal steps in this process. On the one hand, film turns towards a documentary quality of reality with the use of non-actors. This is especially true in *Rodrigo D*, where the use of non-actors is an attempt to rescue from or draw out from the real man a series of behaviors which range from the linguistic to their way of walking and dressing. It is in this way that the object sets out to signify from itself, from its own reality. And, as Herrera points out, it is in this way that the effect is drama which these very non-actors collaborate in creating ("Ética, utopía e intoxicación en *Rodrigo D. no futuro y La vendedora de rosas*").

Another very interesting formal reference to violence in the first two films is the immediacy of image, that is, without lighting but

rather with ambient light and sound, noise. The clean aesthetic sense to which most mainstream films aspire, and which is very present in *Satanás*, though, is not present here. That kind of aesthetic polish places violence outside the frame, interpreting violence as a kind of collective condition, ciphered in a definitive aesthetic sign, without paying attention to the conditions of its specific context. In more mainstream, aesthetically polished films, violence has been taken out of its birthplace, manifesting a separation between the reality to which it attempts to refer and the very methods of filming it. In many films we are carried thematically close to the idea of violence, but we don't get to know it that way; instead, what we are exposed to is a rather decorated, dressed up violence, which is presented as excessively well-filmed, but as dictated by external narrative rhythms or through entertaining filmic takes and cuts.

Rodrigo D and *Apocalipsur*, films about the reality of poverty, are filmed from poverty, but the difference between them is in the protagonist social group. They all live within the same situation of violence, but for *Rodrigo* violence is part of an everyday reality. For El Flaco and his friends in *Apocalipsur*, it is an effect with which they are careful and reticent, and from which they will eventually free themselves or not; but, they are not the producers of that violence, rather they are its tangential consumers. This difference is very evident in the fact that the nature of the conversations in the two films is different: El Flaco allows himself poetic evaluations and philosophical abstractions about death, but death is a concrete reality in the world of *Rodrigo*.

For that reason, *Rodrigo D* is strongly documentary in its intention; the constant use of the *comuna* streets, houses, etc. is a source of that sense of violence. In *Apocalipsur* there is a separation of the group of youths from the reality of the streets; the individual leaves that reality and imposes his speaking self with a certain detachment. The characters in *Apocalipsur* do not live in the city, rather they flee

from it; they hide from it, in their houses on the outskirts, in their van; they live from party to party; and when they want, they can take off for Europe. Reality in *Rodrigo D* is much more abrasive.

By mainstream standards, both films, however, are cheap visual productions. *Apocalipsur* seems almost to have been filmed with a video camera. This quality should be understood from the importance of the urgency or the need to speak. To express that kind of urgency, one cannot begin with notions of a cinema of high-budget filmmaking, where the production system and reality are almost incompatible. That intention of poverty appears everywhere, not only in the themes but in the images as well. The city, the backdrop where everything takes place, insists on showing the viewer its sidewalks, its locks on the houses, its motorcycles, but not trying to create a symbolism from the point of view of the unaccustomed eye, nor to create some *aprioristic* exoticism for the unaccustomed viewer, but rather to view it and its poverty as something natural.

When we notice that in a film there is too conscious of an effort to show a theme or motif, things appear false in ways which make them seem too ubiquitous, too universal, and too symbolic. In *Rodrigo D* there is no dramatic emphasis on poverty and violence created by the use of formal emphatic techniques, rather there is a rhythm of natural continuity, without any sort of additional dramatic effects. When violence is real, it does not have to be shown too much because the atmosphere of violence is felt. What is being shown is already too dramatic to need exaggerated reinforcement. The film relies on the ethical portrayal of the dramatic which is what carries the story; it does not rely on aesthetics.

The music is basically punk rock, and the driving, savage rhythm and the lyrics are enough to summarize what there is no need to say in the dialogue, like the songs about God and the devil in the land of the sun. Images direct and carry the story, and the

songs are summaries of the state of the world in which the characters live. The aggressive music adds something common with the first film, with the very character of Rodrigo: it is not performed by necessarily good musicians nor sung by good voices, but the attempt is not to please the refined ear. The important thing about punk, which is extended to the very importance of both of these films, is the urgency of its ethical message. This is even more incarnate, even more visible in the figure of Rodrigo, who is not a good musician, but who possesses an urgency to speak through his music, which has power.

The film is formed from this power, from the impossibility of telling a story referent to Medellín's society with an inflated blockbuster budget. But therein lies its worth, in the ability to use poverty to make images stand out. All of this is incredibly suggestive through the very story of Rodrigo, through his inability to find drums to play. But, lacking drums, he plays by banging on walls, on pipes, on objects in the street. To this purpose, a powerful reminder is the knife-fight scene, where the "soundtrack" is composed of the noises produced by Rodrigo's drumsticks on the wall.

But those noises are of interest, and they create emotion because they are created from within, from very real conditions. The film itself searches for the city. So too, Rodrigo's drumsticks search for the city in order to make music on it, on its walls, on reality itself, until finally for a short while he can sing and play on a borrowed drum set. Not separating itself from the city is the key which returns this film to a city of violence, to a city of poverty. The filmic discourse does not look beyond or outside, with formal imitations of any aesthetic, but rather it adopts the practice of an ethical sense to confer its own aesthetic to the formal mechanisms. There is no facile projection of aesthetic forms which could ignore the forms that reality possesses to present itself.

Though clearly there is selection process, sets are not planned or constructed, but

rather they are real. The image is not beautiful, but rather important, urgent. Violent types in broken-down places are not adorned, they don't wear make-up; rather they are presented in their real form. The city seethes with destruction. There is immanent violence in everything: a city half-done, a city in the midst of being built, like the idea of society, of progress which never arrives, a provisional city.⁵ And there, alongside the broken city, is the mountainside reminiscent of a past which perhaps never should have been left behind. We see the mountainside over Rodrigo's shoulder as he contemplates his leap. The broken streets are a mixture of city and countryside, a project and a projection of the impossible city.

Violence forms part of all phases of being, like games, which become violent with knife play, verbal violence, street noise, barking dogs. In the filmic aesthetics, there is no thought of the antiseptic, of the pleasant. There is a violence of style because the filmic discourse moves naturally through it without affectation. The characters live in a continuous state of survival, because of which they must develop defense mechanisms, like constant verbal attacks and being on guard to any circumstance which might arise. There is no security, even within the circle of friends, which, more than friends, are actors in the same game of survival; they use each other in order to subsist. Violence at times appears almost without real motive, like a way of just being, like when a man appears with a swastika on his tee-shirt, or the poster of death to the blacks where there doesn't seem to be racial protest as much as an inarticulate motive to violence manifest against everything possible.

Violence in gestures and language is omnipresent. Language is punctuated by persistent racism, sexism and homophobia. Here, sexuality is an important theme, and verbal aggression is evident when the guys create insults by "feminizing" the other. The female is identified as a sex object, in deed as well as in the way in which these characters

express themselves. In an *argot* punctuated by sexual or de-sexualizing epithet and insult, the constant verbal aggression among the guys is a marker for how language is an important element in the aesthetics of violence in these films. Linguistically, the aesthetics of violence takes two directions: aggression with language, and violence to language. In the first case, aggression with language, the characters' verbal expression is populated with the continual use of swear words carried by a strident (hopped up?) delivery. If the enunciation is characterized by the stridency of its delivery, even more characteristic is its violence to language itself. The pronunciation/enunciation of the characters quite frequently violates all notions of conventional comprehensibility, and it creates either a sense of aggressive rejection of that convention or a vivid recognition of their own marginality or both. So relaxed is their pronunciation, so particular is their lexicon, that, at times, the viewer loses any literal or figurative understanding of what is being said. What is not lost, though, is the sense of aggression. In the second case, violence to language, the interesting dynamics of *Apocalipsur* offer an illustrative example. Typical of the aggressive, de-sexualizing verbal expression of the guys, is the epithet "maricón," whose presence in these characters' verbal expression comes as no surprise to the viewer. What is a surprise is the violence done to this word in order to refer to and mete out the same sort of aggression towards Malala, the female among the friends. Doing violence to language by violating logic (even biology), the epithet "maricona" is created and often used to maintain aggressive quality of the expression when insults are directed towards Malala.

Apocalipsur is the social antithesis of *Rodrigo D* with its group of middle-class youths, consumers of the cocaine that the lower-class characters sell. There is in them a kind of social irresponsibility; they are unemployed youth condemned to live in a kind of limbo. They are touched by violence, but only as the final effect of violence, on the edge

of dangerous situations but only tangentially. Their lives do not possess the urgency of danger since they are not directly involved in criminal situations.

It is important to see all this through the laughter, and the continuous parties, and through the space in which they live, shut up in their apartments like safe-houses.⁶ The characters of the film continuously joke, and their conversations generally possess the inconstancy of the carefree. Friendship appears to be the form that binds these characters. In *Rodrigo D* laughter is hardly ever heard. There is a tragic air throughout this film; it is a quiet air, an atmosphere that is full of tension. But there are no existential tensions in *Apocalipsur*. Discussions are philosophical questions about man in general, like the idea of death. In one such discussion, El Flaco comes to the ludicrous conclusion, which is delivered in deadpan style, that "Y el problema es que uno se muere para toda la vida" (*Apocalipsur*). Or discussions center on the tedium of life, but they are presented as abstract questions which are not necessarily directly conditioned by social context. When the characters talk of death, it is the death of every individual to which they refer.

The characters in *Apocalipsur* experience the problems of man born into an extended time, which allows them to be conscious of their own lives, like their jealousies and love. Nighttime in *Apocalipsur* is full of "attractions," full of fiction, like the transvestite himself as a social actor who introduces tones of entertainment and diversion among the characters. Joviality and jokes are signs or symptoms of a free spirit. They have a lizard as a pet, and this is symbolic of a social group whose problems are pretty much resolved. They have no great conflicts, they keep up with fashion and style, and their observations about reality are more ideological than a real part of their lives, as when El Flaco says that "el Apocalipsis sigue estando aquí" (*Apocalipsur*).

In *Rodrigo D* there is a velocity to life that pushes it forward, that demands actions, and for that reason, there are no conversations

which have a practical, direct import. Death in *Rodrigo D* is an everyday, physical, temporal, present thing. Theory does not exist, only reality. Interesting here is the scene in which, in class, the teacher proposes the theory of human personality being formed by seven years of age, with questions of the soul, religion and eternity. We see that the characters who participate here in this class are socially different; they are still pure individuals who have not yet seen too much violence. These far too abstract topics would be of little interest to others who first need to guarantee their survival.

The timeframes and the cities of these films are different, but not the historical time, not the historical place. They are set in the same historical framework, the same mental time and place. *Rodrigo D* gives power to the night as the time when everything happens because the very conditions of darkness and obscurity favor the criminal, which is the driving survival force in the characters. The night is ever present because it is time as urgent, a time that with it come violence and poverty. The characters can hardly keep up with night's pace, as it swallows up everything. In *Apocalipsur*, thanks to that extended time which the middle classes live without immediate worries about survival, there is room to return to the past, to memories. In fact, the filmic discourse is made up of memories, those moments in which El Flaco and his friends met each other. There is nostalgia, which is a quality of time directed towards the past. In *Rodrigo D*, there is no time for these kinds of emotions.

The attitude of being disposed to the omnipresence of drugs is different in the characters of these first two films, as different, too, are the drugs used. In *Apocalipsur*, smoking marijuana and snorting cocaine are ways to belong, ways to consume, and ways to have fun, to escape the boredom of having too much time on their hands. Like their other conversations, in which ideas are discussed, not as a function of their own immediate reality, but as ideas, drugs and drug use, though a constant in their lives, are thought of on a meta-level. In the opening scene of the film

with four of the characters high from smoking marijuana and reminiscing, Malala, for example, sets the tone as she announces that, "Los estados de conciencia alterados siempre son buenos, ¿no?" (*Apocalipsur*).

"Trabémonos, no hay más": in *Rodrigo D* there is a kind of conscious evasion or avoidance of the nervousness which is created by constantly being hunted and haunted, "tan sicoseado," by the continuous disappearances of people at the hands of death squads, the "escuadrones de limpieza" (*Rodrigo D*). The common deaths, the unknown bodies found in the weeds little by little end up being those of the main characters themselves. One can die at any moment, and death almost has a saving quality. We hear, for example,

-¿Tú no quieres llegar a viejo?
-Sabes que no quiero llegar a viejo,
no quiero la vida de esclavo de todos
aquí. (*Rodrigo D*)

To die young is the only way out. Joncito is a hero because he has died. And, those who survive him are "pobres huevones los que estamos aquí" (*Rodrigo D*).

The nearness of death teaches them of the naturalness of a short, dangerous life. But it is not the mythologized, romanticized idea where a young death comes almost as a choice. Rather in this case, it depends on external factors, from the death squads, from street attacks, from life itself which kills you. The presence of death is so strong that in *Rodrigo D* they speak of burials as a natural part of life. The characters plan and imagine their own burials. They are conscious of the nearness of their own end as something almost normal. They kill Ramón almost just to "sentir algo, para pasar un susto, hacer funcionar el arma," (*Rodrigo D*) just to feel something, to feel fright, to put the weapon to use. And this is exactly what Rodrigo does. He commits suicide; he kills himself in order to escape from an even more tragic end. For that reason we hear, "Mátate, mi amigo, mátate" (*Rodrigo D*).

Violence is everywhere in Medellín. It is present in the language, in the music, and even in gestures. In *Apocalipsisur*, two of the characters meet while they are in their time of captivity having been kidnapped, and both films end with the death of their main characters. This ending again unifies the separation of the social classes and creates a common discourse from the different perspectives, from the different intentions. In spite of the social differences of the characters in the films, the end is the same: the triumph of violence over life. Tragedy in the films creates a sincere ethical sense, which does not attempt to polish the very rough edges of Colombian reality or dress it up with false hope. Nor does violence need to be repeatedly shown for the viewer to know it, and to sense its presence.

The third film, *Satanás*, Colombian Andrés Baiz's film, is the story of Eliseo, the name of the psychotic killer in the film. His story is told along with two other stories. One is the story of Paola, a dye seller wanting to escape poverty, and the other is the story of Ernesto, a priest who can no longer continue to serve God without falling into mortal sin.

The figure of the rebellious hero, who carries people's darkest desires as he restores and reaffirms their values, has always been a part of storytelling. But Eliseo is no traditional hero who sends the viewer out of the theater feeling lighter, with head held high, his rights defended, the evildoers vanquished, and moral, ethical and religious codes restored. Eliseo is more like a new kind of filmic character, sort of postmodern hero seen in films of recent decades, who acts for all of us, and through whom we vicariously live.⁷ With traditional heroes, their "madness" can be quixotic, even virtuous. But, in the case of this English teacher, it is a question of a real mental illness. What remains the same is the marginality of the rebel, his non-conformism in the face of institutions. This seemingly timid subject living with his mother is far from the hero on a white horse and wearing a white hat. In action films we know who the good guys are, and who the bad guys are. In the case of

serial killers or of the mentally infirmed, it is not a question of good and evil. The figure of the psychotic killer responds to much darker human dreams.

Andrés Baiz's 2007 film *Satanás* responds to this type of disturbing impulse. It is unlike other popular Colombian films, full of drugs and poverty which repeatedly explain violence. It is different when the killer in *Satanás*, the agent of our most hidden desires, kills without allegiance or ideology, against life itself. What, then, justifies the crime? The only thing that remains is the satisfaction of seeing, on screen, the realization of those obscure tendencies, and the societal institutionalization of violence after decades of living with it. The weapons are not in hands of a hero responsible for the community, but rather in the hands of a common citizen, who acts according to his own interests and impulses. It is not a question of justice, nor of criminal motivation, but rather of visceral release, of giving free reign to psychosis, to the intolerant in the human animal, and everything else falls to the side. There is no institution that matters. The final acts of the psychotic English tutor in *Satanás* release the brutal nature of a marginalized individual, left to his fate and betrayed by all systems.

But this new rebel, defender of the rights of the monstrous human, resentful killer from modern urban society, is an ambiguous creature, difficult to define. In *Satanás*, the indignation with injustice is neutralized by the demented hatred of a damned soul which threatens to break the fragile balance, but without anyone daring to condemn it.

As for the other characters in *Satanás*, the viewer knows what to hold on to. The former dye vender, Paola, is an attractive young woman who works as bait to attract customers for a couple of guys who give them the royal treatment at the bars and discotheques, and then rob them. The priest, named Ernesto, is fed up with sinning for love, and he is tired of listening to the sins of others. In *Satanás*, the atmosphere in which actions develop is one in which a careful artistic direction creates an

aesthetic common to Bogotá's lower middle and middle classes, with some brief excursions into the upper class. Here, we understand the origin of the film's moral gaze as it sees this specific social sector as decadent and aloof to the pervasive injustice and violence.

There is no attempt at a New World, Spanish American, Latin American aesthetic. If, as spontaneous observers of our surroundings, we stop a second to contemplate the half-opened doors, the adobe shops, and the pretentious restaurants, we will notice that the same props and settings are repeated constantly in *Satanás*. There is nothing special in the sets; they reflect a customary urban style recognizable on the covers of magazines; and, even less special are the power outages and storm effects that accompany the climax of several scenes.

The film *Satanás* produces a kind of catharsis, understandable to the majority of today's urbanites, and understandable to Colombians who have lived decades of violence, and who do not have any confidence in the government or governing for finding any alternatives for improving their quality of life. But, Eliseo is not the only one there as the sum total of all evil. Also there is the priest, Ernesto, who maintains an amorous relationship with Irene, his maid, and who has lost all patience with God's poor souls.

In terms of the aesthetic of spontaneous violence, there is a memorable and impactful scene with Ernesto. This scene should make many viewers' blood boil, not so much from anger but from the pure delight of catharsis. It is the scene with the priest and the beggar. The priest is walking down the sidewalk, troubled by recent events. Suddenly, he is approached by an indigent who asks him for a handout in the most traditional and irritating way possible. Every city dweller or anyone who has visited a big city has been through this; certainly, every resident of Bogotá has been through it. But, different from what happens with the common citizen, fear does not overcome this servant of God, rather he turns into a beast, into a purger of streets

and flop houses. He pushes the beggar man, and he kicks him within an inch of his life. He rejoices in it; he looks around to be sure no one is coming. Then, he just goes away, while the beggar whimpers. After this action, and confronted with the weeping image of the victim, the viewer feels vile. The violent aesthetic allowing for his own hidden desire for vengeance to be realized, the viewer can but repent, looking around to see if anyone has noticed his momentary joy. Every day in Colombia there are killings and lynchings, and they are not perpetrated by death squads; they are carried out by regular common citizens who are tired of robbery and abuse. These are spontaneous acts; it is violence incarnate in the masses, and violence becomes incarnate in the aesthetic of film.

Another memorable moment, and perhaps the most polemical of the film, is that of Paola's vengeance. She comes across the location of her rapists, and she orders them to be killed. The scene shows the criminals, only a few days earlier exalted in their violent, despicable act, transformed into frightened sheep. This is a moving image which could move the viewer to mercy, but which provokes a disturbing euphoria instead. This is how Paola wanted to see them. The executioners point their weapons at their captives' heads; the captives (despicable rapists) whimper and beg for their lives. "Perdóneme, niña" (*Satanás*) whines the worst and grossest of the whimpering rapists. Paola grabs their faces; she looks into their eyes, up close. Then, she turns and walks away. Suddenly, two shots are heard. The shots are heard off camera over the next scene, which is that of Ernesto, the priest, in the church thinking about leaving his robes so that he can marry Irene.

Even the murder of Eliseo's student, the rich girl with the dumb, pretty face, turns out to be darkly gratifying for the many resentful, screwed-up guys who live in nervous fear of pretty girls. The majority of these guys would not harm a fly: that is what Eliseo is for; he is the upside-down rebel who incarnates the unspoken, even unconscious,

desires of a society ravaged by decades of violence. This violence, more than any other, corresponds to the judging gaze which condemns a decadent sector of society which seems to live above and ignore the violence present everywhere else.

The aesthetic of violence in *Satanás* vindicates, perhaps to its own chagrin, feelings of vengeance and relief/release that have become institutionalized after decades of violence, which disturb daily life in Bogotá, and which all urbanites nowadays suffer as a condition of life in large cities. Violence in the film produces a kind of catharsis, understandable to the majority of Colombia's urbanites, which is the space from which this view originates, as it soothes the frustration they have come to feel with successive governments' inability to find solutions for the country's intractable violence.

Socially, the characters in the films *Rodrigo D*, *Apocalipsis*, and *Satanás* are different. Different, too, is the violence, ranging from a natural, unquestioned part of reality in *Rodrigo D* to the apparently unexplainable and arbitrary in *Satanás*. In spite of the social differences and motivations, there is a common discourse created from their different perspectives, and the result is the same. It is the triumph of violence over life, and the tragedy of the films creates a sincere, ethical and aesthetic sense which does not try to adorn Colombian reality with false perceptions and expectations.

At a time in which some 2,500 books and articles have been written on the effects of TV and film violence on human behavior and society in the United States,⁸ it is clear that the cause and effect relationship between violence and media is other, as it relates to film in Colombia. Societal violence and despair in the face of it have caused violence to become institutionalized not only within Colombian society but as an aesthetic in Colombian film as well.

A summary review of recent film production in Colombia would seem to corroborate this assertion. In 2008, for example, of the

fourteen films produced nationally, five dealt heavily with violence, most notably among them, *Perro come perro*⁹ by Carlos Moreno. Of the eleven Colombian films produced in 2009, four feature violence prominently.¹⁰ And, from a total of thirteen, three of 2010's Colombian films center on violence,¹¹ while four of 2011's fifteen features owe their aesthetic to violence.¹² At the same time, however, it would seem there reason to speculate about a turn away from violence in Colombia, in film as well as in society.

In 2002, President Alvaro Uribe's government began a new strategy for Colombia ("Mano firme, corazón grande" was Uribe's campaign slogan) based on social investment in people's skills and aimed at demobilization of the paramilitary organizations. The strategy involves a reintegration process and since 2002, more than 52,000 Colombians have demobilized from illegal armed groups (the far-right Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia and the leftist FARC or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and joined the reintegration process. The results have been encouraging where most of the reintegrated work on new, peaceful lives. In recent years, indices of theft, murder, and kidnapping have decreased significantly. The challenge is to reach the causes of violence and achieve long-term peace and reconciliation.

For now, it seems that Colombian film is reflecting a less violent social setting in what Cuban director Humberto Solás ("[...] whenever you make a historical film [...] you are referring to the present" [Burton 1978]) observed decades ago and what historian Robert Rosenstone (*History*) echoes in affirming that films tell us as much about the time in which they are made as they do about the time they seek to portray. Though, as we have shown, violence continues to be an aesthetic which informs Colombian filmic production, since the relatively recent examples (2007 and 2008) of the institutionalization of violence as aesthetic in *Satanás* or *Perro come perro*, film in Colombia has relied less on violence. In the case of two 2011 productions (*El páramo* and *La sargento*

Matacho) it might be argued that, rather than violence structuring the aesthetic of the films, the aesthetic of the films is more appropriately explained as an attempt to come to terms with a traumatically violent past. And, in another 2011 film, *Todos tus muertos*, Carlos Moreno takes up violence again, but this time from a satirical, tragicomic point of view which also might signal a change of aesthetic direction. More importantly, perhaps, and more recently, Colombian national cinema has enjoyed critical success with films in which violence is not the structuring aesthetic. This is true in films like *Los viajes del viento* (Ciro Guerra, 2009), *Del amor y otros demonios* (Hilda Hidaglo, 2010), based on the novel of the same name by Gabriel García Márquez, *El vuelco del cangrejo* (Óscar Ruiz Navia, 2010), *Los colores de la montaña* (Carlos César Arbeláez, 2011), and *Porfirio* (Alejandro Landes, 2011). These films respond to other aesthetic imperatives, and as such they are reflective of a different present as they seem to eschew the aesthetics of violence and seek a new identity for Colombian national cinema.

Notes

¹See, for example, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime report *Violence, Crime, and Illegal Drug Trafficking in Colombia*. Bogotá, 2006; “Colombia’s Civil Conflict” at *BBC News*, (23 Dec. 2009). Web. 15 Feb. 2010.

²See, for example, Reuters “Killings, Violence Wrack Rural Colombia—Red Cross” (26 April 2010) at AlertNet. Web.

³See, for example, Jennifer S. Holmes, Sheila Amin, Gutierrez de Piñeres, and Kevin M. Curtin, “Drugs, Violence, and Development in Colombia: A Departmental Analysis.” American Political Science Association. Web. 15 Feb. 2010; World Bank, *Violence in Colombia: building sustainable peace and social capital*, World Bank Technical Paper no. 451, 2000; Charles W. Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda, Gonzalo Sánchez G., *Violence in Colombia, 1990-2000: waging war and negotiating peace* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2001).

⁴The film begins with the intertitle which reads, like the introductory quote to this essay: “Entre los años 1989 y 1992 fueron asesinados en Medellín más de 25 mil personas, la mayoría de

ellos menores de edad. Algunos llamaron a estos años el Apocalipsur” (*Apocalipsur*).

⁵A suggestive motif here is construction or the idea of being under construction. Buildings are made up of cinder blocks, the building blocks of construction which await, before finding definitive space in a wall, just like the characters await, carrying out multiple functions. A cinder block can be somewhere to hide things; it can be a weapon; a cinder block can be the cause of accidents, falling on someone’s head. This is interesting since the cinder block is the form of minimal expression of the city, but it is outside of it, it doesn’t belong, like the characters who are condemned to the margins of life.

⁶While it is true that both sets of characters, those of *Rodrigo D* and those of *Apocalipsur*, belong to the city’s peripheries, their space marks them differently as it relates to violence. The former come from the *comunas*, and they go to the city in search of survival, creating violence with their crimes. The latter live in residential areas, suburbs, and they belong to the “buena sociedad.” They go to the city as consumers for diversion, though they may become victims of the violence spawned by the city.

⁷Reference is made here to films like the 1993 Joel Schumacher work *Falling Down*. In this film, William Foster, played by Michael Douglas, is an unemployed defense worker who acts for all of us, and through whom we vicariously live, when he abandons his car in the middle of a rush hour traffic jam, when he goes into a McDonald’s restaurant, armed with a submachine gun and demands to be served an Egg McMuffin even though he has missed the time for breakfast by a few minutes, or when he shoots the golf cart of two pompous country clubbers. His is not the story of heroically stoic detective who strikes his shield against the halls of justice, but rather a simple office worker. He is not a romantic marked by the satanic sign, like Bruce Wayne, but rather a common citizen, with no virtues, who is not looking to disengage from the world he is trying to save. This seemingly timid subject wearing glasses, a tie and short sleeves is far from the traditional hero. It is not a question of good and evil. This new figure of the psychotic killer responds to a different set of dark human dreams.

⁸Since 1990, more than 2,500 studies of the effects of violence in television and film have been produced.

⁹Shown at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival and nominated for the Goya award as the best Spanish

Language Foreign Film, *Perro come perro* (Carlos Moreno) shows the low-life underworld of Cali. It features vengeance, torture, murder, and criminals incapable of respecting their own code of ethics.

¹⁰Reference is made here to: *El arriero* by Guillermo Calle, *El cielo* by Alessandro Basile, *La pasión de Gabriel* by Luis Alberto Restrepo, and Jorge Navas' *La sangre y la lluvia*.

¹¹Of the 13 feature films produced in 2012, here reference is made to: Dago García and Juan Carlos Vásquez' *La captura*, Carlos Gaviria's *Retratos en un mar de mentiras*, and Rubén Mendoza's *La sociedad del semáforo*.

¹²Reference is made here to: *El páramo* (Jaime Osorio Márquez), *La sargento Matacho* William González), *Saluda al diablo de mi parte* (Juan Felipe Orozco), and *Todos tus muertos* (Carlos Moreno). *El páramo* and *La sargento Matacho* are films which deal with causes and effects of commando violence in the mountain countryside.

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TITLE: Like Mother, Like Daughter?: Generational Memory and Dialogue in Josefina Aldecoa's Historical Memory Trilogy

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ABSTRACT: Josefina Aldecoa's trilogy of historical memory—*Historia de una maestra* (1990), *Mujeres de negro* (1994) and *La fuerza del destino* (1997)—traces the personal and political experiences of a mother and daughter during the most pivotal period in Spain's contemporary political history: the years spanning the Second Republic, Spanish Civil War, Franco dictatorship, and the nation's transition to democracy. Against the backdrop of these tumultuous political events, Aldecoa constructs a complex portrait of a mother and daughter, two women struggling not only to understand the events unfolding around them, but also to understand one another. This essay demonstrates how, in representing the women's generational differences and attempts to overcome them, Aldecoa creates an intergenerational dialogue, bridging the gaps not only in memory and its transmission, but also between generations.

KEYWORDS: Josefina Aldecoa, memory, postmemory, mothers and daughters, Francoism, generationality

RESUMEN: La trilogía de la memoria histórica de Josefina Aldecoa—*Historia de una maestra* (1990), *Mujeres de negro* (1994) y *La fuerza del destino* (1997)—sigue la experiencia personal y política de una madre e hija durante una época fundamental en la historia política contemporánea de España: los años que abarcan la Segunda República, la Guerra Civil, la dictadura franquista, y la transición a la democracia. Usando estos eventos tumultuosos como telón de fondo, Aldecoa construye un complejo retrato de una madre e hija, dos mujeres que intentan entender no sólo los eventos pasando alrededor suyo, sino también entenderse entre sí. El presente ensayo demuestra cómo, al representar las diferencias generacionales de las dos mujeres y sus esfuerzos para superarlas, Aldecoa crea un diálogo intergeneracional, zanjando las brechas no sólo de la memoria y su transmisión, sino también entre generaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Josefina Aldecoa, memoria, posmemoria, madres e hijas, Franquismo, generacionalidad

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Like Mother, Like Daughter?: Generational Memory and Dialogue in Josefina Aldecoa's Historical Memory Trilogy

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Marianne Hirsch has developed the concept of postmemory, a theory she applies in particular to the case of children of Holocaust survivors, who themselves did not live through the traumatic events their parents did, but are nonetheless indelibly marked by them.¹ For Hirsch,

postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor received. (Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 22)

These children find themselves deeply invested in the stories of their parents, the “narratives that preceded their birth,” despite having not directly lived or experienced them. Hirsch demonstrates the ways in which many such children, like Art Spiegelman in his creation *Maus*, explore their parents’ stories in their art, literature, or critical work. Susan Suleiman has used this theory as a point of departure for her own concept of the “1.5 generation,” that is, “child survivors of the Holocaust, too young to have had an adult understanding of what was happening to them, but old enough to have *been there* during the Nazi persecution of Jews” (277, emphasis added).² Josefina Aldecoa, author of the historical memory trilogy that serves as the basis of the present analysis, proposed a strikingly similar generational concept in her first foray into literature in post-Franco Spain in 1983. She deemed her own generation,

marked profoundly by their experience of the Spanish Civil War, “*los niños de la guerra*,” defining this group as those who were born between 1925 and 1928 and were therefore 8-11 when the war broke out. For Aldecoa, this is “*la edad de la infancia consciente*,” and despite geographical, class, or ideological differences, she comments, “*vivimos una misma experiencia que nunca hemos olvidado y que, de un modo u otro, nos ha influido a todos*” (*Los niños*, 9). Her so-called historical memory trilogy is without a doubt based concretely on this shared experience as it details a mother’s and daughter’s experience of the pre-war, wartime, dictatorship, and transition to democracy in Spain. It is interesting that the trilogy is now referred to this way, as in the 1990s when the books were written, the debates ongoing in Spain about historical memory had yet to achieve the potency they now hold (Aldecoa simply referred to it as the trilogy of memory). At the same time, the books are among the first to emerge in what would be a long line of novelized versions of Spain’s recent historical past. One of the novels’ strengths, in the context of this memory boom, is that they focus not only on historical events, but also, more profoundly, on the lives of those who experienced them. The trilogy’s focus on the relationship between mother and daughter is particularly of interest, and demonstrates the complex generational negotiations that play out in the context of civil conflict, repression, exile, and return—events that marked the lives of multiple generations of Spaniards.

The trilogy is chronological, and its fictional details correspond loosely to the events of Aldecoa’s life and her mother’s.

Its first installment, *Historia de una maestra* (1990), is dedicated to Aldecoa's mother and tells what is essentially a fictionalized version of her story—that of a rural schoolteacher who lives for the ideals of the leftist Second Republic in the years leading up to the war. The narration is in the first person, from the point of view of Gabriela (the mother) as she lives through early career difficulties, marriage to a leftist militant, pregnancy, childbirth, and the raising of her daughter, Juana. At the end of the novel, the reader learns that it has been a monologue directed to Juana, who is invited to take up the narration for the second installment, *Mujeres de negro* (1994).³ In the second novel we see through Juana's eyes as she experiences the wartime years as a young child, as well as her subsequent exile in Mexico, where she lives with her mother through adolescence before returning to Spain to attend university in Madrid. The third novel, *La fuerza del destino* (1997), takes up Gabriela's viewpoint once more for a novel-length interior monologue, as she returns to Spain in the wake of Franco's death and must cope with a changed nation, her challenging relationship to her daughter and to politics, as well as the aging process and her eventual descent into fragility, dementia, and death. This essay explores the dialogue Aldecoa creates in these three novels and its ability to transmit historical and individual memory. Can the daughter voice the mother's story, as well as her own? Can she speak *with* her mother, as opposed to *for* her mother? I hope to show that despite the problems inherent in a fictionalized voicing of the mother, Aldecoa succeeds in creating an intergenerational dialogue of memory. The trilogy attempts to bridge the gaps not only in memory and its transmission, but also between generations. In depicting Gabriela's and Juana's difficulties in relating to one another and differing approaches to political involvement, while nonetheless underscoring their deep care for one another, the trilogy stands as a document of women's experience over generations, against the backdrop of the most important political events of the last century in Spain.

Personal History as Mode of Transmission

A first question that arises is whether and why a personal—in this case family-based—structure for the transmission of memory is compelling or useful. How can a literary rendering of either postmemory (examination of parental experience) or 1.5 memory (exploration of one's own childhood experience) serve a larger goal of national, collective or universalized memorialization of the trauma of war and displacement? Can the personal serve the political? Aldecoa herself has commented that

Mi propia vida no interesa, pero sí la vida que me ha tocado vivir, en la medida en que mi vida está integrada en la vida de una generación cronológica y al mismo tiempo de una generación literaria. (*Los niños*, 10)

Speaking of the first two novels of Aldecoa's trilogy (prior to the publication of the third one), Sarah Leggott comments that the novels “reveal the interconnectedness of the public and private spheres, as personal familial issues are shown to be intertwined with public political ones” (“History,” 125). Aldecoa purposefully aligns many of the key personal or familial milestones in the two novels with larger historical events—Gabriela receives her teaching diploma on the day that Franco marries his wife; Juana is born on the eve of the election of the Republic; Gabriela's father dies days before the outbreak of the Civil War and her mother at its exact conclusion; Gabriela herself dies on the same day in 1982 that the socialists win the elections, on which Juana has tirelessly worked. This coordination of events serves as a means of foregrounding the personal but with strong reference to the political. Christina Dupláa comments of the trilogy that it is a “personal search [...] that legitimizes a whole lifetime and which is inseparable from Spanish historical and political events of the twentieth century” (72). The close parallelism between the life stories of

the trilogy's fictional characters and the lives of Aldecoa and her mother serves to personalize—and historicize—the material even further.

The trilogy's establishing of a close relationship between personal and political events suggests that the two are inextricably linked; although the trilogy is primarily a personal account, collective and public events take on great importance throughout, situating it in a broader context and tying it to themes beyond the lives of its characters which affect Spanish society as a whole. Writing in a different context, on the *escrache* protests staged by the children of the disappeared in Argentina, Diana Taylor has commented that “by emphasizing the public, rather than private, repercussions of traumatic violence and loss, social actors turn personal pain into the engine for cultural change” (168). In the trilogy, the opposite action serves the same effect; by telling the personalized, private stories of two generations of women from the same family and examining the differences in their viewpoints and experience, Aldecoa brings their unique voices to the fore and creates a sympathetic and moving private portrait within the context of the more public, societal suffering caused by the Civil War and Franco dictatorship—as well as the public debates about historical memory that continue to this day. In the trilogy, we see the difficulties of these two women and those close to them through their own eyes, personalizing the material for the reader rather than broadening it into a generalized or generic picture of wartime suffering. At the same time, Aldecoa's constant foregrounding of these personal experiences against a backdrop of recognizable political events forces the reader to see the personal as always in context of the political. Aldecoa's focus on the personal gives the reader a deeper understanding of the national traumatic past than a merely historical account could; as Sara Brenneis has commented:

History and fiction are intricately fused—not only in Aldecoa's trilogy,

but in so much of Spain's contemporary literature—because the process of reexamining facts and data in order to understand the country's past is still incomplete. (146)

Despite the personal focus of the trilogy, the public, historical, national story it follows is equally present, and enriched by the personal component.

The emphasis on personal—and in particular, women's—experience in the trilogy also seeks to recuperate the experience of those traditionally marginalized or excluded from hegemonic historical discourse. Paul Connerton addresses the significant work of life and oral histories in giving voice to subordinate groups, whose stories do not always figure into the official histories:

Or consider the case of life histories. After all, most people do not belong to ruling élites [...]. For some time now a generation of mostly socialist historians have seen in the practice of oral history the possibility of rescuing from silence the history and culture of subordinate groups. Oral histories seek to give voice to what would otherwise remain voiceless even if not traceless, by reconstituting the life histories of individuals. (18)

Many critics have also spoken of the work of oral or life histories to recuperate women's experience, and today there are countless oral history projects and testimony-based research seeking to recuperate and vindicate women's historical experience.⁴ The Spanish context is no exception, as women's stories remained largely silent as the dominant narratives were those of the men actively involved in politics and combat. It is important to note that the pre-war leftist Republic, the setting of the trilogy's first novel, accorded many more rights to women than were available during the war or dictatorship years—for example, divorce, which was legal only during the Republic and again in the 1980s after Franco's death—but still offered limited opportunities

at best for women's advancement (key among them being work as schoolteachers, such as the novels' elder protagonist). Aldecoa's novels give a voice to the everyday experience of women not engaged in the historical events of the day, but inevitably marked by them.

The trilogy does not, strictly speaking, function as an oral history; it may better fit the term "life-writing," but it nonetheless retains elements of oral history or testimonial writing, particularly in the case of *Historia de una maestra*, a first-person narrative spanning a lifetime and directed in the second person at its conclusion to the daughter-interlocutor. Writing on Aldecoa's works, Sarah Leggott has commented that, generally speaking:

for women, life-writing has provided a vehicle for the voicing and preservation of stories and memories that have long been excluded from hegemonic discourses of cultural and collective memories. ("Re-membering Self," 13)

At the close of the novel, after her first-person narration has ended, Gabriela speaks directly to a second person addressee seen only on the first page and never named (as if being interviewed by an oral historian and only acknowledging her presence at the beginning and end of the interview): "Contar mi vida... Estoy cansada, Juana. Aquí termino. Lo que sigue lo conoces tan bien como yo, lo recuerdas mejor que yo. Porque es tu propia vida" (*HM*, 232). Thus in the first novel, Gabriela aligns herself directly with the subject of a life history in summing up the novel as a life-telling ("contar mi vida"), and Juana takes on the outside-the-frame position of the interviewer or receptor of her mother's life history. In adopting the framework of an oral history, Aldecoa's characters work toward precisely what Connerton and others have suggested as the goal of oral history: giving voice to the stories that are marginalized or excluded from official—and predominantly male—historical discourse. The trilogy's second and third novels also give voice to

marginal experience: that of the exile, in the case of *Mujeres de negro*, and of old age, in *La fuerza del destino*. The interplay between the personal story and the official history cannot have escaped Aldecoa, who titles the first novel *Historia de una maestra*, playing with the Spanish resonance and ambiguity between "story" and "history." Thus the personal story of a rural *maestra's* experience of the Civil War, exile in Mexico, and eventual return to grow old in what she calls "un país que no se parece en nada al que dejé" (*FD*, 62) imbricates with and gives another perspective on more depersonalized historical narratives, serving as a dialogue on the experience of two generations during the most tumultuous years of the twentieth century in Spain.

Mother-Daughter Transmission: An Outsider Genealogy

Aldecoa's use of the personal within the historical, then, enriches the trilogy's historical content by imbuing it with personal and familial content, drawing the reader into one family's experience of the war, its aftermath, and the years-later transition to democracy. But what does the trilogy's particular mother-daughter focus achieve? The family in general serves as a rich model for generational transmission of memory, as we see in the example of postmemory, where children feel great investment in the memories of their parents, even though they did not live their experience. Marianne Hirsch has commented that while postmemory as a whole "defines the *familial* inheritance and transmission of cultural trauma;" this framework need not be restricted to the family, but can rather be more broadly applied or borrowed ("Marked by Memory," 77, emphasis added). The familial, then, can serve as a model of transmission for a broader context such as the national (in Spain's case), or even transnational. Here it should be noted that while much of Holocaust-based theory cannot necessarily be directly transposed to the Spanish context for obvious differences

in context and magnitude, certain elements thereof—particularly the idea of postmemorial “belatedness”—seem well-suited to adaptation to the Spanish context. This belatedness also occurs in Spain, where literature dealing with the Civil War and dictatorship could not and did not emerge until long after the conflict’s end, and was often necessarily written by a second generation because of the time that had elapsed. Jo Labanyi has rightfully pointed out, however, that in the Spanish case, such a gap does not necessarily have to do with traumatic blockage but more so with “habits of silence induced by decades of repression and a lack of willing interlocutors” (109). It is worth noting that Aldecoa’s trilogy, and especially the first installment, was one of the first great successes (critically and commercially) of Spain’s belated memory boom of the 1990’s; although Franco died and the dictatorship came to an end in 1975, literature and art did not begin directly dealing with the war and dictatorship for quite some time because of the emphasis on a smooth transition to democracy. So Aldecoa’s family-based framework is not necessarily intended merely to elicit sympathy for her own family’s particular experience of the war, but rather also to bring issues of memorialization of the war, dictatorship, and transition to the attention of the Spanish public at the time of publication.

However, there does seem to be a uniqueness to the mother-daughter bond in the novels’ representation of the generational transmission of memory, based in no small part on gender identity. Hirsch discusses the unique capabilities and risks of the mother-daughter relationship in the transmission of memory, asserting that

[...] the identification between mothers and daughters forms a clear example of how a shared intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, based in bodily connection, can be imagined. Because of a bodily closeness that is reinforced by cultural expectations, the case of mothers and

daughters might indeed acutely exemplify the danger of an over-identification. (“Marked by Memory,” 77)

Because of their common bodily experience, mothers and daughters can share a space of remembrance; at the same time, the dangers of one speaking for the other or eroding her memory are also greater based on the mother-daughter capability for intersubjectivity and identification. Both Gabriela and Juana are only children who have complex relationships with their mothers; however, upon reaching adulthood, these relationships draw from and are strengthened by common female bodily experience (pregnancy, childbirth, maternity) and expectations of gender roles (romantic or sexual relationships, marriage, motherhood, career)—which in Spanish society of the time were, to different degrees in the 1930s and 1970s, rigid and traditional. Gabriela, for example, grows up much closer to her father than her mother, but finds that this alliance shifts once she becomes a mother herself. After Juana’s birth, Gabriela, her mother, and her daughter come to form a female intergenerational triad set apart from their fathers and husbands, who are becoming increasingly enmeshed in the politics of the day. Late in *Historia de una maestra*, Gabriela nostalgically recalls one summer spent at her parents’ house with her young daughter:

Evoco aquel verano y veo el pequeño grupo que formábamos las tres, mi madre, mi hija y yo, unidas en una plácida armonía, voluntariamente aisladas de los insistentes presagios [de guerra] de nuestros hombres. (205)

Gabriela chooses to isolate herself from her largely absent husband and the country’s escalating political tensions to take solace in the female companionship of her own mother, who knows firsthand the bodily experiences Gabriela is living as a new mother. This isolation, although harmonious and voluntary, nonetheless foreshadows the mournful, solitary triad

we see in *Mujeres de negro*, where the three women live together in the capital after the deaths of their husbands/fathers and the outbreak of war, as well as Gabriela's more profound isolation in the final installment, *La fuerza del destino*, which finds her living alone in the suburbs of Madrid, where Juana is too busy with the politics of the day to visit her very often. Gabriela appears to derive most joy from the infrequent visits of Juana's son, her grandson Miguel.

Although in the third novel we have a mixed-gender triad, in the first two installments Aldecoa creates a female genealogy of daughter-mother-grandmother, demonstrating the workings of female familial lineage which she herself enacts and embodies in writing her trilogy. In tracing the experience of three female generations (albeit focusing primarily on two), Aldecoa emphasizes the familial and generational legacy of historical memory through the war, dictatorship, and into the present day. At the same time, a female-only triad focuses the narration particularly onto Spanish *women's* experience in this context; as Sarah Leggott has commented,

[*Mujeres de negro*] focuses even more than the first [installment] on relationships between women as [...] the three generations of women are forced to make a new life for themselves, as is the case for so many Spanish women of the period. ("History," 113, emphasis added)

By tracing a female familial genealogy, Aldecoa also succeeds in tracing the experience of a broader contingent of Spanish women as a whole—a contingent that had typically stood outside the discourse of history, especially at the time of the trilogy's publication. Joseph Roach has commented that "genealogies of performance" work to transmit cultural memory (24); Aldecoa's generational triad accomplishes a similar function in tracing both specific and generalized female experience of the war, showing the ways in which gender identity came into

play as women became increasingly isolated and excluded by the events of the conflict.

Mother-Daughter Challenges: The "Vexed" Relationship

But despite Aldecoa's construction of female outsider solidarity in her intergenerational construct, the mother-daughter relationship in her novels, as elsewhere, is not always an easy one. Emilie Bergmann, writing of the Spanish postwar context, has commented that:

The maternal role [...] is such a culturally contested space, a notoriously "vexed" category, that it is no surprise that relationships between mothers and daughters are fraught with vexation, guilt, self-loathing and the profoundest love of self and other. (108)

This could be said of mothers and daughters in almost any context, but, as Christine Arkininstall asserts, the dynamic was particularly exacerbated by the traditionalist mores of the Francoist context; it is unsurprising then, that "[u]ntil the late 1970s, representations of mother-daughter relationships in contemporary Spanish literature by women [were] fraught with difficulties" (47). Mothers and daughters, sharing an often problematic gender identity and cultural position, are a topic of much literary and cultural analysis, and many critics have demonstrated the difficulty in constructing the mother as a fully-developed subject rather than an objectified or essentialized stereotype, stumbling block, nag, or nonentity. In her earlier work in *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, Hirsch demonstrated the ways in which conventional literary representations of women have converted the mother into "either the object of idealization and nostalgia or that which has to be rejected or surpassed in favor of allegiance to a morally and intellectually superior male world" (14). Departing from Adrienne Rich's work in *Of Woman Born*, Hirsch also goes on to explain that even many writings aligned with

feminism demonstrate what Adrienne Rich has called “matrophobia,” wherein “mothers remain in the position of dreaded other, of objects to the daughter’s emerging subjectivity” (Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, 136). Narratives from the point of view of the daughter frequently cast the mother as an obstacle or symbolic of the repressive male order the daughter seeks to escape; narratives that deal with motherhood are rare or superficial, and often written from the daughter’s position. As Hirsch aptly writes:

Feminist writing and scholarship, continuing in a large part to adopt daughterly perspectives, can be said to collude with patriarchy in placing mothers into the position of object—thereby keeping mothering outside of representation and maternal discourse a theoretical impossibility. (163)

Maternal experience lacks representation, and the mother’s voice rarely surfaces in women’s writing, which generally—as in Aldecoa’s case—is constructed by the daughter. For the daughter to speak for the mother risks reifying or silencing her; it is “at once to give voice to her discourse *and* to silence and marginalize her” by speaking for rather than with her (16, emphasis added). How, then, can the mother’s experience be adequately represented?

For a number of critics of the Spanish literary tradition, such as Arkinstall or Emilie Bergmann, the same problems characterize the treatment of the mother figure there. However, although Bergmann acknowledges that representations of the mother have been traditionally “vexed” in Spanish literature, she also asserts these representations are changing (108). Arkinstall, too, comments that the early 1990s “witness a greater impetus to rewrite myths pertaining to mothers and daughters [...]. A more recent development has been a demythification of maternal stereotypes hitherto eschewed” (70). Bergmann attributes this trend to the changing political

climate of the nation: with the political enfranchisement of women in Spain after the demise of the dictatorship, women writers became

able to perceive their mothers in a larger context, beyond that of the family that reproduced a politically and sexually repressive society. This recognition prompted a search for the woman who existed before she became a wife and a mother, particularly when the mother had come of age during the period in the 1930s in which women had the rights of citizenship. (112)

The first installment of Aldecoa’s trilogy undertakes precisely this search, with the double burden of searching for the woman who existed not only before marriage and motherhood, but also before her life was forever changed by the events and losses of the Civil War.

Representing Maternity, Speaking with the Mother: Aldecoa’s Trilogy

In reconstructing her mother’s possible experience prior to the traumatic break of the war, Aldecoa undertakes a true postmemorial work, attempting to connect to her mother’s inaccessible past. In undertaking such a work by means of a fictionalized version of her mother, Aldecoa approaches this memory in the only way in which she can do it justice; as she does not have direct access to her mother’s memories, she thus approaches them through a creative construction. As Hirsch has stressed in her work on postmemory, this type of memory’s “connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (“The Generation,” 107). Aldecoa’s novelistic creation serves, then, as an imaginative projection of what her mother’s experience might have been. Much like *Mujeres de negro* (a recollection of childhood spoken from a posterior viewpoint), *Historia*

de una maestra is spoken after the events in question, and serves as a document of recollection. Gabriela comments throughout the trilogy on the challenges and difficulties of memory, commenting for example:

Cuando vivimos sin testigos que nos ayuden a recordar es difícil ser un buen notario. Levantamos actas confusas o contradictorias, según el poso que el tiempo haya dejado en los recuerdos de la memoria. (*HM*, 59)

Memory in the novels, especially the first and last—those told from the mother's perspective—often appears as confusing or contradictory, and the accounts are not always chronological, skipping back and forth to memories within memories. The fluidity of memory gives Aldecoa more room to maneuver when telling a story that is not always her own, as Sarah Leggott has commented: “the protagonists’ rejection of a linear account destabilizes generic norms to contest traditional notions of self and story;” the self, in these novels, can be mother or daughter, or both at once (“Re-membling Self,” 15). Throughout the novel the narrator questions her own memory, drawing the reader's attention to its failings and ambiguities, and to the fact that the novel itself is a fictionalized attempt to access an inaccessible memory—that of the author's mother. The novel's questioning of the very function of memory also serves to mark it as an imaginative or creative attempt at reconstruction, not a definitive account that claims to speak for the experience of another, in her place.

But *Historia de una maestra* not only serves as an imaginative postmemorial projection of maternal memory; it also gives voice to maternal experience, against the difficulties of such representation noted above. Through the use of both inscribing and incorporating representations, Aldecoa gives full weight to Gabriela's maternal experience, creating a maternal narrative of depth and complexity, not essentialization, silencing, or

mere nostalgia.⁵ Firstly, it is significant that the novel is spoken in Gabriela's voice—and that this narrative voice differs strongly from that used in the second novel, spoken from Juana's perspective. Secondly, it is essential that the novel valorizes Gabriela's experience as a mother by showing us her life previous to and within motherhood. Of particular importance in the novel is her pregnancy and initial maternal experience, during which she withdraws from the increasingly hostile political context surrounding her. This withdrawal on some level prefigures her distance from political life in the third novel, *La fuerza del destino*. Both are somewhat surprising given her passion for education and equality depicted at the beginning of *Historia de una maestra*, though at least in the concluding novel her apathy is linked to feelings of isolation or uselessness after returning from exile, to be discussed below.

In the first novel, Gabriela's withdrawal and isolation is cast in a very different, even positive light. She consistently describes pregnancy and motherhood as isolating, but positively or even joyfully so, as they provide her an escape from the political situation that threatens the country. Her pregnancy is an experience of pleasant solitude:

Había caído en una indiferencia placentera y serena. El embarazo me alejaba del mundo exterior. Me encontraba escuchándome por dentro, observando el más mínimo cambio dentro de mí. (*HM*, 99)

Her positive experience of isolation continues once the baby is born; early in her motherhood she writes similarly of a tranquil summer spent with her daughter:

Mi vida transcurría ajena de cualquier fenómeno que no fuera el de mi maternidad [...]. aquél fue sin duda el más hermoso y sereno de los veranos. Atrapada voluntariamente en mi papel de madre, prescindía de lo que me rodeaba. (112-113)

Aldecoa privileges Gabriela's bodily experience of maternity as well as her inscriptive experience thereof in writing the narrative to her daughter (to whom we discover it is addressed at its conclusion). Although this representation of bodily experience and plenitude reclaims and exalts female experience—maternity is the most positively described experience in the novel, and Gabriela relishes in the possibility of escape from the political battles closing in on her career and family—Gabriela's enjoyment of being “trapped,” even if such entrapment is soothing and voluntary, is somewhat troubling. While it is certainly true that Gabriela's narrative works toward displacing the primacy of the male political sphere and valorizing female experience, this focus is nonetheless problematic inasmuch as it removes her entirely from political action or discourse during the critical pre-war period. Even as the situation becomes increasingly grim, Gabriela does not take a stance, but rather repeats again and again her pacifist stance whenever political matters are mentioned: “no es posible la violencia. Nunca la violencia” (*HM*, 198).

However, this treatment of maternity, though certainly more profound and fully-realized than many, is nonetheless still a projection on the part of the author/daughter, who imbues the mother-daughter relationship previous to her own memory of it with a closeness the two do not share later in life, largely due to the traumatic events of the war. Gabriela's idealized “voluntary entrapment” could be seen as functioning within a sort of “feminist family romance,” as critiqued by Hirsch in *The Mother/Daughter Plot*. Hirsch describes this revision of Freud's family romance as one of a “retreat to the pre-oedipal” and “concentration on the mother-daughter bond” (133). Aldecoa projects a happy unity between mother and infant daughter where the two are isolated from the outside world and, in particular, the masculine order of politics and war (it is worth noting that Gabriela's husband, Ezequiel, becomes increasingly

radical and politically active in parallel to his wife's retreat into the domestic sphere and her maternal activities). At the same time, the idealized projection also takes place in a time previous to the traumas of war and the losses Gabriela suffers—both parents, her husband, friends, and career. In this sense, Aldecoa's idealized portrayal of pregnancy and maternity need not be construed as an attempt to romanticize the mother-daughter relationship but rather as a means of recuperating the mother figure as complete and fulfilled in ways she cannot be after the events of the war. Leggott comments that

as hope for a new and different Spain disintegrates in an environment of ever-increasing tension and violence, Gabriela's immersion in her daughter and in her role as mother increases, and in this way Aldecoa foregrounds motherhood and the unique mother-daughter relationship. (“History,” 112)

The experience of motherhood is thereby depicted as a valuable and positive experience against a background of violence and hatred. In exploring Gabriela's experience of maternity before the war imposes distance between her and her daughter, Aldecoa recuperates Gabriela's more complete experience and shows her as a fully realized subject, as yet untouched by the losses of the war years.

It is precisely this version of Gabriela that Juana never really gets to know, and she, like many Spaniards, to quote Bergmann again, is prompted to “search for the woman who existed *before*” (112, emphasis added). The installment of the trilogy that perhaps most overtly encapsulates this search is *Mujeres de negro*, the second novel, which operates as a document of 1.5 generation memory or memory of a *niña de la guerra*, whose life autobiographically mirrors that of Aldecoa's generation—though not as directly Aldecoa herself, who did not live in exile as Juana does. Throughout this installment, the reader sees through Juana's eyes, as she struggles through the difficulty of the war years and grapples

with her relationship to a single mother (widowed when her husband is shot on the first day of the war) who struggles to provide for Juana and her own mother after being barred from teaching. Juana's narrative, spoken from a posterior perspective by the adult Juana, reflects on her childhood perception of war-time trauma and the ways in which she did not understand as the adults around her did:

La infancia es un continuo atesorar sensaciones, sentimientos, ideas en estado puro [...]. Pero la infancia puede también ser dolorosa, porque si sobreviene la tragedia, el niño no tiene defensas racionales, no levanta, como los adultos, el escudo de las soluciones posibles. (MN, 26)

Juana senses the fear and concerns of her mother and grandmother, but doesn't have the resources to process them, nor is she treated or spoken to as an adult; as a result she develops a relation to her mother (particularly after the grandmother's death at the end of the war) based in close physical proximity but great emotional distance. Juana sees her mother as distant, withdrawn, marked by her losses during the war. The rupture between them certainly arises because of the trying experiences suffered by Gabriela during the wartime; this is a prime example of the "break in transmission resulting from traumatic historical events" described by Hirsch that "sever[s] the intergenerational memorial fabric" ("The Generation," 110). In this case, not only has a traumatic historical event (the war) caused a break in the transmission of memory—Gabriela never speaks to Juana of it—it also broadens the generational gap between the two women, isolating Gabriela and causing her to withdraw from her daughter.

In *Mujeres de negro*, where we see from the daughter's perspective at a young age, the mother-daughter relationship is often indeed strained. Juana speaks frequently of her mother's attitude as one that shifts generally from disapproval to apathy—confirming the elderly Gabriela's suppositions and

projections in *La fuerza del destino*, where she repeatedly reflects on how the adult Juana wrongfully thinks they are so different: "[Q]ué distintas somos, [Juana] me dice con frecuencia. No exactamente, Juana, le digo. Pero no acaba de creerlo. Me ha visto, desde que nació, bajo esa apariencia triste y sombría" (52). This sad and somber appearance takes center stage during Juana's formative years in *Mujeres*, where Gabriela lives in an interior world, enclosed in her mourning clothes and engrossed in her work as a teacher. In one characteristic scene, when a ten-year-old Juana asks permission to go to Mass with her friends, the irreligious Gabriela seems scarcely to process her daughter's question:

Ella me miró como si estuviera ausente o regresara de un lugar muy lejano. Tardó unos momentos en reaccionar y al fin contestó: 'Haz lo que quieras.' Pero no lo dijo enfadada ni como un reproche, sino como si de verdad no le importara. (MN, 16)

Juana's relationship with her mother in the novel is emotionally distant, as is Gabriela's relationship with Octavio, her second husband. The events of the war and the losses she has suffered have drawn Gabriela into herself. However, despite her mother's distraction and emotional unavailability, Juana depends on her greatly, and is shocked upon Gabriela's remarriage and their move to Mexico by the degree of her dependence:

Por primera vez me di cuenta del cambio que había sucedido en nuestras vidas. El matrimonio de mi madre no significaba sólo una nueva residencia, una forma de vida diferente y más grata, sino una forma nueva también en nuestra relación. Yo estaba acostumbrada a vivir pegada a mi madre, hasta el punto de no haberme separado de ella ni un sólo día en mis diez años. (69-70)

Thus Gabriela and Juana's relationship is above all one of physical proximity and comfort, if not emotional fulfillment. As Juana

grows up through adolescence and young adulthood, she places physical distance between herself and a mother she sees as too stern, old before her time, and inattentive. Juana chooses to study in Mexico City for secondary school (away from Octavio's rural hacienda) and in Spain (where Gabriela has vowed never to return while Franco remains alive) for university. Reflecting later on her move to Spain, Juana comments:

Una reflexión inevitable se interpuso en mis recuerdos: yo me había ido para separarme de mi madre, yo había necesitado dejar atrás la pesadumbre de mi madre, sus trajes negros enlutándola desde tan joven, yo me había ido para vivir sin remordimiento mi propia vida. No era un acto de rebeldía. (176)

Leaving for Spain allows Juana to live her own life on her own terms, in the homeland she left as a young child and barely remembers.

The return to Madrid not only allows Juana to reconnect with her roots after living in exile, but also brings her emotionally closer to her now even more physically distant mother. It is in her independent life in her home country that Juana becomes involved in clandestine political activism and takes up the ideals her mother espoused in her youth—liberty, the importance of education, women's intellectual and career possibilities. Juana ends up embracing the narratives that shaped her early life, even from before her memory of them:

Con paso seguro, me acercaba a los mitos que había alimentado desde mi nacimiento: la lucha por la libertad, la oportunidad perdida, la esperanza siempre mantenida de que un día empezáramos de nuevo. (141)

In her move to gain physical distance from her mother, Juana ends up coming closer to Gabriela's ideas, moving away from the girlish frivolities for which her ever-serious mother had

previously chastised her. In addition to becoming ideologically aligned, Gabriela and Juana also finally become peers and *confidantes* after Juana experiences a failed love affair. Juana fears confessing the experience to her mother, assuming that she will, as usual, consider her daughter frivolous; but Juana is surprised not only by her mother's response but also by the cathartic function she experiences in writing to her:

tomé una decisión importante: escribiría a mi madre para contarle toda la historia del principio al fin. Estaba segura de que esa carta ejercería una función de limpieza y equilibrio y me liberaría... La respuesta de mi madre no se hizo esperar. Era una carta rebotante de amor y comprensión. (199)

"Comprensión" is a word almost never used by Juana to describe her mother, until these the final pages of the novel, where her mother relates her own romantic experience to console her daughter, granting Juana insight previously unavailable into Gabriela's early life. Juana finally manages to connect with her mother despite the generation gap—further widened by Gabriela's difficult wartime experiences—that stands between them. By returning to Spain and coming into her own, Juana also connects with the woman her mother was before becoming her mother, before the war, before her marriage; she comes, on her own terms, to share her mother's ideological beliefs, and develops a written connection with her based in common female experience.

Undoubtedly, much of the success in this connection derives from the women attaining some level of peer status; Juana is now an adult, with a political consciousness and romantic failures to which her mother can relate. In the trilogy's third installment, however, we see the mother-daughter bond challenged anew as Gabriela must face a new phase of life her daughter cannot fully understand. *La fuerza del destino*, structured as

a long interior monologue that indirectly relates conversations in the present and memories of the past, shows how Gabriela returns to Spain following Franco's death to find herself isolated and adrift, in contrast to her daughter, who is boundlessly active in the new democratic process taking shape in post-Franco Spain. As critics such as Arkinstall have pointed out, the novel is a uniquely nuanced and moving depiction of old age, and the protagonist's descent into Alzheimers holds obvious symbolism in a trilogy of memory. Perhaps most of interest for the present analysis, however, are the ways in which Gabriela finds herself consistently out of place in or at odds with the present-day Spain in which she finds herself. This sensation primarily comes across as a sense of isolation or uselessness, no doubt arising from the circumstances of Gabriela's life; for the first time ever, she is not working or taking care of anyone. Her lack of fulfillment is clear throughout the novel; in contrast to her experience of pregnancy and maternity, the description of her corporeal reality is overwhelmingly negative and defeated:

No me arrepiento de haber vuelto, eso desde luego. Pero la vuelta me ha envejecido. Lo noto, lo siento en todo mi cuerpo. En pocos años he pasado a convertirme en una anciana [...]. He pasado a convertirme en un ser inútil. (FD, 21)

This sense of uselessness pervades Gabriela's experience for the bulk of the novel as she has neither a personal nor professional mission as in the past: "[h]ay un punto en el que la función paterna no es necesaria. ¿Soy yo necesaria a alguien?" (76).

Gabriela's sense of futility or isolation also translates into a double sense of disconnection from the two causes previously most dear to her: her daughter and politics. Her sense of distance from the political events of the day appears directly tied to her experience of old age, as she herself comments midway through the novel: "he vuelto demasiado tarde para incorporarme a la vida activa, para

compartir con los jóvenes la aventura de la libertad" (113). She feels weary and unmoored, asking as well where the nucleus of her life lies after thirty-eight years in Spain and thirty-three in Mexico. In contrast to Juana's energy and involvement—her husband Sergio is working on the new constitution and she is active in the burgeoning Socialist Party—her mother transmits a sense of exhaustion or despondency as concerns the political. Gabriela comments that when Franco died:

Yo no estaba alegre. Demasiado tarde. No me sentía con fuerzas para brindar por Ezequiel, mi marido fusilado el 18 de julio, por nuestros sueños rotos, por mi vida truncada. Era el 20 de noviembre y pocos días antes yo había cumplido setenta y un años. (11-12)

We observe the contrast between mother and daughter, now inverted in their commitments to activism, through Gabriela's perspective, underscoring their differences yet again. Juana appears somewhat naïve in her passion, as Gabriela is shown to have more consciousness of the past, for example in response to Franco's death, or the new efforts of Spanish leftists toward a government and constitution:

Mamá, estamos en el corazón del gran cambio histórico. Tenemos que colaborar. Es muy fácil criticar sin hacer nada. Hay que comprometerse. Yo asiento y trato de convencerme de que [Juana y el esposo] están en lo cierto. Retrocedo en el tiempo a aquellos años nuestros, a aquella España que viví cuando era joven, antes de que el exilio me convirtiera en un fantasma. (13)

A veces, cuando les oigo hablar les digo: Me doy cuenta de lo jóvenes que sois, históricamente quiero decir. Porque los que andáis en el juego político no habéis vivido lo anterior, no recordáis lo anterior [...]. La historia no va a saltos. Cada etapa es consecuente de la anterior [...]. Me miran un poco indiferentes. Como si no entendieran a qué vienen mis razonamientos. (62)

Gabriela's disenchantment with politics, then, not only has to do with her disorienting return from three decades of exile or old age, but also her greater awareness of the political past of the nation and precarious nature of any one political moment. The presence of the past—a theme throughout the novel as Gabriela ponders her childhood and youth, her marriages and husbands' infidelities, and her experience as a teacher—takes on a particularly poignant role late in the novel as the Alzheimer's-stricken Gabriela begins to conflate the Republic and Civil War years with the present day of the transition to democracy. Her insistence on this past, despite stemming from memory loss, also serves as a testament to the prior historical moment, and the legacy she bequeaths to Juana, whether her daughter accepts it or not.

The final novel also sees a more complex version of the mother-daughter bond than previously depicted, as Gabriela is able to take up an ambivalent position, rather than the plenitude of pregnancy and Juana's baby years in *Historia de una maestra* or her frustrations with the adolescent Juana in *Mujeres de negro*. Here, Juana remains the great love of Gabriela's life, despite the mother's frequent feelings of abandonment by a daughter caught up in the political excitement of the transition: "[Juana], lejana y ocupada como está, sigue siendo la principal razón de mi existencia" (*FD*, 114). At the end of her life, Gabriela becomes able to reflect on the imperfections of their relationship, from both ends; not only does Juana not have enough time for her, Gabriela has also been reticent to share the deepest parts of herself with her daughter. At one point she wistfully thinks about Émile, the Guinean she fell in love with as a young woman, and wonders if she ever told her daughter; in the end wistfully concludes she did not (25-26). Later, thinking back to the letter Juana wrote her at the end of *Mujeres de negro*, she ponders the non-mutual dynamic of their relationship:

Juana me ha preguntado muchas cosas, pero a los hijos se les cuentan las verdades parciales. Una madre es

capaz de recibir el peso de las confidencias de un hijo por dolorosas y brutales que sean. Pero no podemos cargar a un hijo con el peso de nuestros descalabros. (74-75)

Whether her failure to share these experiences with Juana comes truly from not wanting to burden her daughter, or perhaps from embarrassment, Gabriela's consideration of her relationship with Juana is at life's end more nuanced and complex than ever before. Aldecoa's decision for the third book to be written as an interior monologue exclusively from Gabriela's point of view thus makes a great deal of sense, as we can see—before Alzheimer's sets in—the ways in which she is able to reflect on the difficulties and ambiguities of the mother-daughter relationship; sadly, however, these thoughts are only voiced internally, before Gabriela's memory loss sets in.

Conclusions: Mother-Daughter Dialogue

In the trilogy, Aldecoa presents us with a maternal subject, whose experience is created through imaginative projection rather than actual memory or recall. At the first book's conclusion, Gabriela bequeaths the legacy of memory to her daughter, speaking in direct address for the first time to her interlocutor, Juana: "Contar mi vida... Estoy cansada, Juana. Aquí termino. Lo que sigue lo conoces tan bien como yo, lo recuerdas mejor que yo. Porque es tu propia vida" (*HM*, 232). In these lines, Aldecoa underscores the overall project of the three novels: a memorial dialogue between mother and daughter, where both can speak as equals and in true dialogue. Gabriela's admission that she is "tired" certainly can be read as a defeat of sorts, and in many ways it is, serving as the lead-in to the second novel, where she becomes withdrawn and is in a state of constant mourning. Nonetheless, she has told her story, shown herself to be more than just the permanently-mourning, prematurely-aged woman that her daughter

sees in the second book. In handing off the narration to her daughter, Gabriela gives her daughter's memory equal weight—perhaps stronger, as she “remembers better” than her mother does—and establishes them as equals or peers in their memorial project. Likewise, Aldecoa has constructed a parallel structure between a narrative invested with postmemorial interest and one invested with her own memorial capacity as a *niña de guerra*. The third novel, although it returns to a monologic rather than dialogic structure (it would have been interesting to see, perhaps, two parallel monologues of the same time period), nonetheless valorizes the mother's experience by painting an evocative and human portrait of the challenges of the end of life. Although Juana only speaks indirectly through her mother's relating of the novel's events, she is nonetheless present throughout, and the last words Gabriela expresses before dying—in her mind, as she has lost the power of speech—are “Juana, hija mía, Juana” (*FD*, 223). Although she does certainly on some level speak on behalf of her mother or mother's generation, the permissiveness of the genre allows Aldecoa's narrative to give her fictionalized mother a unique voice and a full subjecthood in a way that would be impossible in a strict historical or biographical text. Because the novels “imaginatively bridge the genres of history, memoir, and fiction” (Bergmann 112), Aldecoa's imaginative investment or projection does not silence her mother, but rather allows her to enter a dialogue with her daughter's own memory, passing the responsibility of testimony between one and the other. The novels, much like oral histories, put the daughter—and the reader—in the position of listener to the testimony, allowing the mother to speak for herself.

In writing the trilogy, however, Aldecoa does not merely undertake a dialogue between her own generational memory and that of her mother, or a dialogue between two fictional protagonists whose lives resemble their own. In giving voice to these two

women, Aldecoa gives voice to the history and stories of two generations of Spanish women. As Hirsch has noted, postmemorial work:

strives to *reactivate* and *reembody* more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression. Thus less-directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory which can thus persist even after all participants and even their familial descendants are gone. (“The Generation,” 111)

Thus Aldecoa's work makes use of her own personal and familial experience to tell a story that has affected generations of Spaniards, using the stories of her protagonists to tell the broader story of the devastating personal and political ramifications of the Civil War—and the country's eventual return to democracy. In so doing, she also undertakes what Conner-ton describes as “giv[ing] voice to what would otherwise remain voiceless even if not traceless, by reconstituting the life histories of individuals;” (18) that is, telling the story of the women who lived through the war, lost their family members, and were forced to start anew. At the same time, the novels show us how, despite the strength of the mother-daughter bond, there always remains the impossibility of either mother or daughter fully understanding the other's past or present experience. In this sense, the texts achieve a similar effect, despite their overwhelmingly realist structure, to what Jo Labanyi has written of non-realist texts dealing with the Civil War; rather than simplify or make the reader feel good about having understood the difficult past, they give us “a sense of the difficulty of what it was like to live that past, as well as making us reflect on how the past interpellates the present” (112). Perhaps the success of her novels, and their role in setting off the memory boom in Spain, can be accounted for

thus: the past, like our parents, may not be possible to understand fully, but both nonetheless shape us irrevocably.

Notes

¹For an excellent alternative reading of post-memory in the trilogy, published subsequently to the writing of the present article, see de Menezes, Alison Ribeiro: "Family Memories, Postmemory, and the Rupture of Tradition in Josefina Aldecoa's Civil War Trilogy" (*Hispanic Research Journal* 13:3 (June 2012): 250-263.

²Suleiman goes further to break down the 1.5 generation into different groups depending on their age, which determine their cognizance of the events around them and their level of responsibility for themselves and their family. The youngest is "too young to remember" (0-3), then "old enough to remember but too young to understand" (4-10) and then "old enough to understand but too young to be responsible" (11-14). Their memory and experience of, and formation by, the Holocaust, varies to some degree according to these groups.

³In titling the novel *Mujeres de negro*, Aldecoa may reference the international women's anti-war protest group Women in Black, begun in Israel in 1988 in the wake of the First Intifada, and subsequently expanding worldwide, including two Spanish chapters, one in Seville and another in Barcelona, founded in 1992. As the novels themselves are a kind of anti-war statement based on women's experience, the title is apt, not only to designate various characters' mourning dress but also to connect the Spanish context to broader world events.

⁴In the context of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, some works of note include: Shirley Mangini's *Memories of Resistance: Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), Tomasa Cuevas's *Cárcel de mujeres* (1939-1945) (Barcelona: Sirocco, 1985), Mary Nash's *Rojas: Las mujeres Republicanas en la guerra civil* (Madrid: Taurus, 1999) and *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), and Juana Salabert's *Hijas de la ira: vidas rotas por la Guerra Civil* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 2005), as well as novelistic reconstructions such as Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2002), whose testimonial sources are only revealed at the novel's conclusion.

⁵These terms are taken from Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember*. Connerton discusses two

categories of memorialization as *incorporating*—that is, transmitted through bodily activity—and *inscribing*—transmission through writing or other means that are recorded or stored and retrieved after the fact (72-3).

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