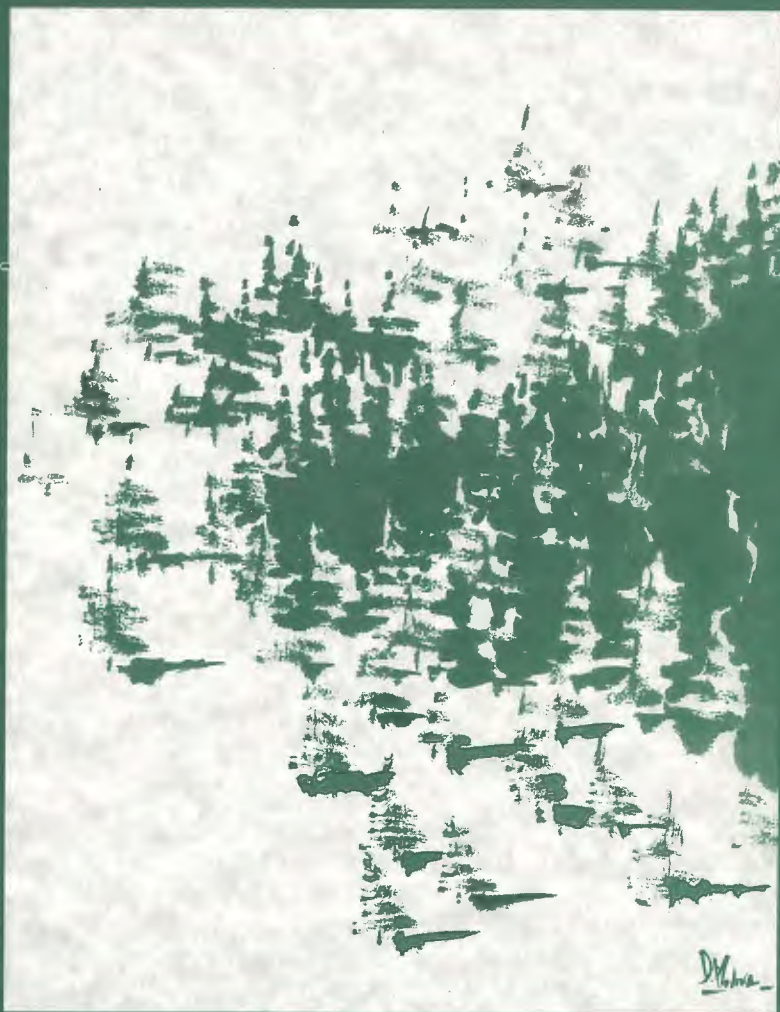


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EL RESURGIMIENTO DE LA IRONÍA ROMÁNTICA DURANTE EL MODERNISMO

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Universidad de La Rioja

Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to show the resurgence of the romantic irony during the modernist period due mainly to both the scepticism about the representational power of art and the awareness of the inevitable mediating role of the artist that arose in the modernist literary atmosphere.

*Thus, we will first delimit the concept of romantic irony so as to study from a theoretical perspective its birth during the romantic period and its further evolution during Modernism. Finally, we will make a practical analysis by means of which we will be able to identify the presence of romantic irony in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*.*

1. Introducción

Durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, las muestras literarias del siglo anterior eran consideradas como algo realmente lamentable, algo que había que rechazar. Los escritores y críticos detestaban el realismo de la época previa, al que consideraban una reacción poco acertada contra el romanticismo, pero aún más rechazaban la literatura de las primeras décadas del XIX, es decir, la romántica. Se formó así una acti-

tud general anti-romántica que estuvo encabezada por T.S.Eliot ¹ y que se extendió tanto a las universidades como a las revistas literarias del momento². Como resultado, la relación entre modernismo y romanticismo estuvo marcada durante mucho tiempo por la tendencia modernista a luchar contra las ideas y estilos románticos.

Paradójicamente, en la actualidad es un lugar común entre los críticos que el modernismo echa una mirada atrás hacia el romanticismo en una serie de aspectos. Así, Jacques Barzun en su obra *Classic, Romantic and Modern*, publicada por primera vez en 1943, se pregunta: ¿está el romanticismo realmente muerto?, para llegar a la conclusión final de que lejos de estar muerto, el romanticismo subyace a algunos aspectos del modernismo.

Además de Barzun, críticos tales como Calinescu, Kermode o Langbaum consideran el modernismo como una secuela del romanticismo.

Matei Calinescu, por ejemplo, en su obra *Cinco caras de la modernidad*, sugiere la existencia de principios románticos en las ideas estéticas modernistas. Por su parte, Kermode (1972:163) afirma que las nociones del artista como necesariamente alienado, y la imagen como la substancia de la obra de arte están muy relacionadas entre si y constituyen la base romántica del modernismo. Y finalmente, Langbaum (1982) ve una gran similitud en los conceptos de “yo” romántico y modernista.

Nosotros vamos a centrarnos en un solo aspecto del romanticismo con el fin de estudiar su posible reflejo en la literatura de las primeras décadas del siglo XX. Este aspecto a analizar es la ironía, pero no la ironía entendida desde el punto de vista de la retórica tradicional que la define como la técnica narrativa utilizada para decir algo con el fin de significar algo distinto o incluso contrario, sino en el concepto de ironía desarrollado por filósofos, críticos y escritores durante el romanticismo, y que posteriormente sería denominado ironía romántica.

¹ Eliot demuestra en su obra crítica su desprecio por las ideas románticas. En oposición al pensamiento romántico, Eliot aboga por una primacía de los sentidos, siendo el intelecto del autor irrelevante en la composición literaria.

² Para una visión general de este movimiento “Anti-romántico” ver Jacques Barzun (1943).

La ironía romántica es, para nosotros, un concepto esencial para entender los movimientos literarios en los que aparece pues incluye una determinada visión de la realidad, del autor, y de la relación entre realidad, autor y obra. Es decir, incluye las consideraciones que componen la base ideológica de cualquier movimiento literario.

2. Ironía romántica: un nuevo concepto de realidad, arte y artista.

La ironía romántica es un concepto difícil de definir. La mayoría de las definiciones de ironía romántica con las que nos encontramos son o bien muy intuitivas, o no son lo suficientemente claras al mezclar diferentes puntos de vista.

Por lo tanto, considero imprescindible delimitar en primer lugar el concepto de ironía romántica sobre el cual vamos a basar este estudio. Para ello es necesario distinguir dos puntos de vista diferentes: el filosófico y el formal. El primero es el concepto surgido en el contexto filosófico cultural del idealismo romántico alemán. El segundo es un punto de vista más técnico que consiste, en términos muy generales, en la división de la subjetividad creadora en dos “yo”, situados uno dentro y otro fuera de la obra. El primero es, por lo tanto, una idea de tintes filosóficos; el segundo una plasmación de ésta en el nivel narrativo /textual de las obras literarias.

La identificación de la ironía romántica es por lo tanto más palpable desde el punto de vista “narratológico”. Aunque, eso sí, no debemos olvidar las ideas que provocan ese efecto formal, es decir, la perspectiva filosófica.

El alemán Friedrich Schlegel es considerado el padre de la ironía romántica. Según Wellek (1955) cabe atribuirle el haber sido el verdadero introductor del término ironía en el análisis literario moderno. Para éste, un autor romántico, aunque permanezca impersonal, no manifiesta menos su poder y su amor con respecto a su creación artística. Para éste la ironía es la consciencia del autor de su presencia dentro de la obra y sobre la obra.

Más tarde, el concepto pasó a Solger, que lo convirtió en el centro de

su teoría crítica, según la cual todo el arte es ironía. De esa manera, la ironía pasa de ser una técnica utilizada en momentos concretos dentro de una obra a ser una generalización aplicable a toda la obra.

La crítica del siglo XX retomó el intento de definir la ironía romántica. Uno de los más conocidos “ironiologos”, Muecke (1986), describe la ironía romántica como un “creative surpassing”, según el cual el autor es entendido como un dios que está por encima de la obra o como la naturaleza inmanente en cada elemento creado. Pero, paradójicamente, tanto el escritor como el lector son conscientes de la presencia del autor como una actitud irónica hacia su propia creación.

Es decir, el autor pretende estar fuera de su obra adoptando una actitud semejante a la de un dios omnisciente que observa su obra desde arriba, pero que a su vez tiene consciencia de su actividad creadora y como consecuencia, de su inevitable presencia en la obra (bien es sabido que uno de los tópicos con los que se describe a grandes rasgos este movimiento es la continua presencia del yo del poeta en la obra). Se produce así una disociación del yo que asciende a una capa superior, es el “yo transcendental”. El sujeto se divide para ser a la vez creador y observador.

Tomemos el ejemplo de William Blake. Éste, al igual que otros poetas de su tiempo, veía su actividad de escritor como una mera transcripción de lo que el “Genio Poético”, al que en otras ocasiones denominaba “Dios” o “Inspiración”, le dictaba ³. Esta concepción del “Genio Poético” queda reflejada en una de las iluminaciones que acompañan a las *Canciones de Inocencia y Experiencia*, concretamente el perteneciente al poema “Introducción” de las *Canciones de Inocencia*. En esta iluminación se puede ver como la Inspiración, en forma de niño, se sitúa sobre la cabeza del artista, en este caso un flautista. Para Blake, el verdadero artista participa de ese genio poético, situándose así en su misma esfera por encima de la obra.

³ Abrams en “The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor” (Abrams 1975: 37- 54) muestra como se produce un uso continuado en los poemas románticos de la metáfora del viento como inspiración, según la cual la mente del artista es una arpa que crea música sólo cuando el viento mueve sus cuerdas.

Paradójicamente, Blake creía que este poder creativo se sitúa a su vez en la mente del artista y por lo tanto queda reflejado en su obra, producto del acto creativo. De ahí que su subjetividad se divida y se muestre tanto fuera de la obra como dentro⁴.

Esta paradoja, ingrediente principal de la ironía romántica, es provocada principalmente por un cambio en la concepción de la realidad que contrasta con la idea de “inspiración” heredada del idealismo neoplatónico.

El primer elemento de la paradoja que compone la ironía romántica, es decir, la presencia inevitable de la subjetividad del autor dentro de la obra, es producto de una nueva forma de entender la “realidad”. En esta línea,

Ballart (1994:23) afirma que

la ironía es una modalidad del pensamiento y del arte que emerge sobre todo en épocas de desazón espiritual, en las que dar explicación a la realidad se convierte en un propósito abocado al fracaso.

En el romanticismo se pierde la fe en la realidad objetiva y certera que había prevalecido en el contexto cultural empírico de la Ilustración.

Así, por ejemplo, el poeta romántico alemán Novalis afirma haber perdido toda fe en la realidad externa entendida como algo definido.

El poeta romántico busca una alternativa y la encuentra en su propia subjetividad. El mundo externo es entendido como algo caótico, sólo el artista por medio de su “imaginación” puede ordenar el caos de datos sensibles que recibe del exterior para crear una realidad ordenada.

Retomando como ejemplo a Blake, vemos cómo para éste la percepción no es algo que pertenezca a los sentidos sino al poder creativo de la imaginación. Blake utiliza el término “Imaginación” para referirse al hombre como perceptor. No existe por tanto una realidad general externa al hombre aceptada por todos, la única realidad que existe es aquella que ha sido moldeada por la mente del artista.

⁴ Para una descripción detallada del pensamiento de W. Blake ver: Beer (1969) y Frye (1972).

Algo similar es lo que piensa S.T.Coleridge sobre la realidad y el sujeto, aunque Coleridge lo expone de manera más explícita en sus obras críticas. Para éste, es el sujeto el que proyecta un orden al caos externo creando de esa manera una realidad finita, delimitada. Así describe Spencer Hill (1978:3) el concepto de “Imaginación” en Coleridge: “The Imagination is a shaping and ordering power, a ‘modifying’ power which colours objects of sense with the mind’s own light”.

Abrams ilustra esta nueva visión del poder creativo de la subjetividad en oposición a la época anterior por medio de metáforas. En su obra *El espejo y la lámpara*, utiliza dos metáforas para comparar dos tipos de mente diferente, “la una que compara la mente con un reflector de objetos externos” que sería el espejo, analogía para describir tendencias miméticas; “la otra un proyecto radiante que aporta algo a los objetos que recibe”, es decir, la lámpara como analogía de la “concepción romántica de la mente poética”(p.12). El poeta romántico no se conforma con reflejar ese mundo caótico, sino que por medio de su mente creadora aporta a la realidad una forma finita.

Tras estas consideraciones parece difícil creer en el tópico según el cual el romanticismo es un escape de la realidad, cuando realmente lo que pretendían era cambiar, por medio de su actividad creadora, esas porciones caóticas de realidad que no les gustaban. Barzun (1943) sugiere el abandono del uso del término “escapistas” al referirnos a los románticos, más acertado es, para él, describirlos como “constructivos”.

Si nos situamos en el nivel textual, esto se traduce en la plena consciencia de la presencia del autor. El sujeto modelador de realidad por medio de la creación de la obra de arte no puede mantenerse invisible en ésta pues todo lo ahí reflejado es pura subjetividad.

Este predominio de la subjetividad en las obras románticas choca con el idealismo romántico según el cual, el artista recibe la obra de un ser superior de cuyo poder participa.

Langbaum (1982:6) explica así como el artista llega a considerarse un ser omnipresente con respecto a su obra al igual que Dios con respecto a su creación:

The romantic or post-kantians⁵ found that the values they had projected, that the beautiful and meaningful world of their liveliest perceptions was a world they had organized imaginatively. Since imaginative perception had to be self-consciously individual, a way of knowing the external world, the self had become the God-like creator of the world.

El artista participa de la “divina” inspiración. La imaginación es fuente de energía espiritual y creadora y, al utilizarla, los poetas participan de la actividad de Dios ya que adquieren un sentido de identidad con ese transcendente poder de energía creativa⁶. El sujeto se separa y se hace independiente de los objetos finitos, de ahí la visión privilegiada y superior del artista quien, incluso en el momento consciente de creación, mantiene intacto su estatuto de observador.

Coleridge, por ejemplo, admira de Shakespeare su capacidad de mantener su personal yo fuera de sus escritos. En un pasaje, Coleridge aplica a Shakespeare la analogía de la relación de Dios a su creación, aunque dando a dios las características de la Deidad de Spinoza: despersonalizado e inmanente (Abrams:431).

Más explícitamente, en el capítulo XIII de su *Biografía Literaria*, Coleridge une la actividad mental del poeta con la omnipotencia de la divinidad:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. (BL, XIII p.175)

Se produce pues, una aparente contradicción en la idea romántica del artista. En eso consiste la paradoja romántica. El autor crea realidad por medio de su subjetividad y como consecuencia, la presencia inmanente del autor se hace inevitable en su obra. Sin embargo, su idealismo le lleva a considerarse parte de la infinita Deidad creadora. Es por ello que el escritor romántico se encuentra dentro de su obra y simultá-

⁵ Según Kant en la *Crítica de la razón pura*, la mente humana construye el mundo a la vez que lo percibe.

⁶ Andrew Roberts en su artículo “Omnipotence and the Romantic Imagination” estudia la concepción del artista omnipotente desde el punto de vista del psicoanálisis.

neamente fuera de la misma manera que Dios está fuera de su creación, con una mirada superior y omnisciente.

3. La ironía ¿modernista?

El hecho de que el fenómeno literario que estamos estudiando se denomine ironía romántica no implica que su aparición se vea limitada a la época del romanticismo. De hecho, la ironía romántica está, según Behler (1997), indisolublemente ligada a la formación de la consciencia literaria moderna, lo que incluye tanto el romanticismo como los movimientos posteriores.

Sin embargo, si que es cierto que el concepto de ironía romántica aplicada a la literatura de nuestro siglo ha variado levemente. Lo que hoy en día es considerado ironía romántica es una versión destilada de la original a la que se le ha restado idealismo. La idea de que el autor está fuera de la obra por su identificación con la deidad creadora desaparece obviamente, las razones por las que el autor debe permanecer distanciado de la obra son ahora diferentes como ya veremos más adelante. Ahora la ironía romántica es el aparato de la literatura por el cual el autor está presente en su obra y lleva a cabo todos los juegos posibles del disimulo con el fin de desaparecer de ésta.

Finlay Marike (1988) ve la gran paradoja romántica en como el sujeto puede afirmar su existencia como una subjetividad discursiva, y simultáneamente dar una representación objetiva del mundo sin comprometer la objetividad con la intrusión de esa subjetividad. Pero esta paradoja no concierne sólo a los románticos, sino que también está estrechamente relacionado con algunas de las preocupaciones modernistas sobre la capacidad del arte para representar la realidad por medio de la subjetividad. Bajo nuestro punto de vista, tanto los románticos como los modernistas sintieron la misma crisis de representación y de mediación del autor.

Ballart (1994) nota una continuidad en el uso de la ironía del romanticismo a la literatura de las primeras décadas del siglo XX. Como ya hemos visto, este autor relaciona el uso de la ironía a esos años en los que la explotación de la realidad esta condenada al fracaso. Como Muecke

afirma (1986:35), la ironía y la decepción son vecinos cercanos. Los artistas románticos y modernistas comparten ese sentimiento de decepción con respecto al mundo que les rodea y su capacidad para representarlo.

Esto provoca un retorno a la primacía de la subjetividad. En el modernismo, al igual que en el romanticismo, se puede observar una preferencia por el mundo interno. Como consecuencia, una de las pretensiones modernistas es el análisis del comportamiento de la naturaleza humana por medio de la creación ficticia de la consciencia humana por medio de sus obras literarias.

Nos encontramos por lo tanto con que el “realismo” modernista se distancia considerablemente de la concepción positivista del realismo anterior. Podríamos hablar incluso de un no-representacionismo durante este periodo. Al considerar que no hay referencias del mundo exterior, la idea del arte como mimesis está totalmente olvidada y rechazada. Al igual que los románticos, los modernistas ven el mundo exterior como un caos que nosotros ordenamos por medio de nuestra mente. Como declara Henry James en una carta a Wells: “It is art that makes life” (Gillie: 1978).

Ahora, la realidad es entendida como algo elusivo, y consecuentemente, lo único que podemos aprehender es nuestra visión de las experiencias. La intensa subjetividad del espíritu romántico se mantiene central en las artes modernas. Como consecuencia, el escritor modernista se encuentra, como el romántico, solo en su mundo de percepción.

Esta visión de la realidad, que como vemos se acerca mucho a la propuesta durante el romanticismo, es el producto de varias fuentes de influencia, principalmente la de las teorías de Freud y Nietzsche⁷. Es este particular concepto de realidad y del papel del autor lo que lleva a los escritores a buscar nuevos medios narrativos.

⁷ Las teorías de Freud fueron muy influyentes en los escritores modernistas. Freud proponía que la mente ayuda a crear su propia realidad por medio de la selección y la evaluación. Además hay una clara relación entre el uso por Freud de la libre asociación de pensamiento, y el conocido *stream of consciousness*, que pretende presentar el fluir de pensamientos en la mente, capturando el ritmo de los pensamientos.

De igual importancia fue la influencia de Nietzsche quien afirmaba que no existen los hechos, sólo las interpretaciones. Nietzsche expone también su teoría de la “máscara” según la cual el escritor disimula su presencia en la obra.

Es sabido que el modernismo se caracteriza, entre otras cosas, por una considerable complejidad en las obras literarias. Esta complejidad esta basada, principalmente, en aspectos formales ya que las técnicas narrativas que estos escritores usan se apartan radicalmente de las técnicas utilizadas durante el periodo previo.

Lodge (1988:46) lo expone así:

Los escritores modernistas más representativos (Joyce, Woolf, Stein) en su búsqueda de lo que consideraban real, se encontraron con la necesidad de cambiar la forma de su discurso hasta que perdió todo parecido con la descripción tradicional de la realidad .

La nueva visión de la realidad relativa, de una realidad que es diferente para cada persona, provoca la desaparición del intrusivo narrador omnisciente, ya que si reconocemos el carácter único de cada mente, entonces, el proporcionar una única y verdadera visión de experiencia se convierte en una tarea imposible. Es por ello que la novela modernista presenta una experiencia ilimitada. La narrativa se convierte en algo realmente difícil ya que lo real no tiene una única verdad y el mundo deja de ser un campo de visión consensuado.

La complejidad formal de las obras modernistas resulta, no sólo de la concepción de la realidad que ya hemos visto, sino también de una nueva consciencia de la mente humana debida a la influencia de la nueva psicología.

W.James y H.Bergson convencieron a esta generación de escritores de que la mente tiene sus propios valores diferentes a los temporales y espaciales establecidos arbitrariamente por el hombre en el mundo exterior. Por el contrario, los pensamientos fluyen en la mente como la corriente de un riachuelo (Humphrey 1954). La influencia de estas teorías queda patente en el uso de diversas técnicas narrativas para representar la corriente de pensamiento como resultado del énfasis en la exploración de los niveles de la consciencia previos al lenguaje con el fin de describir fielmente la psicología de los personajes.

Las técnicas narrativas desarrolladas para representar la corriente de pensamiento son, por lo tanto, un gran artificio. Cuando los pensamientos en un estado caótico antes de ser estructurados por el lenguaje, fuera de los límites de lo temporal y espacial, son plasmados en palabras por el autor, la naturaleza artificial del texto y el papel del autor como creador se hace patente en la elaboración de la obra.

En este sentido, Kim Worthington (1996), en su libro *Self as Narrative*, propone que en el mismo acto de elaborar un texto escrito el escritor forma su yo personal ya que funciona como un agente responsable de su obra.

El “yo”, como agente creador de la obra literaria se hace especialmente visible en este movimiento debido a su preocupación por la forma y la gran complejidad que adquieren las obras en la constante búsqueda de nuevas técnicas narrativas.

La división del “yo” del autor modernista - división que, como ya hemos comentado previamente, es elemento indispensable de la ironía romántica -, es el resultado de la paradoja subjetividad-objetividad que resurge en el modernismo. La paradoja consiste en el hecho de que el escritor para ser objetivo debe ofrecer al lector un reflejo fiel de la subjetividad de los personajes como resultado de ese nuevo concepto de “realismo”. Por lo tanto, el escritor debe separarse de la obra para no dejar que su subjetividad acabe con la objetividad que pretende. Y sin embargo, su personalidad no puede quedarse fuera puesto que queda patente en la forma de la obra, en la elección de unas técnicas narrativas que se muestran más artificiales que nunca y que destacan la presencia del autor.

De nuevo, como en el romanticismo, el artista se encuentra a la vez dentro y fuera de la obra, muy a pesar del escritor modernista que, por lo general, preferiría mantener una visión objetiva distanciándose de la obra, sin entrometer su subjetividad. El problema sigue siendo el concepto de realidad que hace obligada la presencia de la subjetividad aún cuando la intención del artista sea diferente.

4. La ironía romántica en la práctica modernista: *Retrato del artista adolescente* y *Ulises*.

Todas estas consideraciones sobre la posible presencia de la ironía romántica en el modernismo quedan corroboradas en el estudio particular de algunas obras modernistas. En este caso vamos a centrarnos en dos novelas de Joyce: *Retrato del artista adolescente* y *Ulises*. En ambas podemos reconocer la ironía romántica en el nivel de la narración.

El *Retrato* pertenece al género del *künstlerroman*, es una novela de desarrollo de un artista, en la cual es representada la trayectoria literaria de Stephen Dedalus. En esta novela podemos seguir la evolución del artista desde sus jóvenes ideas sobre el arte, fuertemente influenciadas por principios románticos, hasta la consagración del artista en la elaboración de su modernista autobiografía. Se trata de una autobiografía ficticia, cuyo protagonista nos narra desde una perspectiva más madura los primeros pasos de su carrera literaria. Este hecho nos permite distinguir entre Stephen personaje y Stephen narrador.

Stephen personaje nos da pruebas a lo largo de la novela de su tendencia romántica y su concepción idealista del arte. Sin embargo, esta etapa de la vida de Stephen es narrada con unas técnicas que se acercan mucho a las que serían consideradas como característicamente modernistas. En el *Retrato* nos encontramos con una narración en tercera persona, siendo el focalizador casi exclusivamente el joven artista. La mayor parte de la narrativa esta dedicada a representar por medio del monólogo interior, los pensamientos del joven Stephen. Es este énfasis en la descripción a través de la subjetividad del personaje lo que nos permite definir la novela, y el narrador ficticio, como modernistas.

La distancia entre el joven y el maduro Stephen, no es solamente una distancia temporal sino que también lo es ideológica y de estilo narrativo. Mientras el uno es, hablando en términos generales, romántico, el otro lo es modernista.

El narrador ficticio se descubre así mismo, y a su posición ideológica por medio de la elección del monólogo interior como técnica narrativa para describirnos sus jóvenes teorías. Consigue, por medio de esta elección, el efecto contrario del previsto ya que el narrador no desaparece.

ce de la obra para dar paso a la representación objetiva de la realidad por medio de la subjetividad del personaje, como los escritores modernistas proponían; sino que lo que en realidad consigue es que el lector tome plena consciencia de la presencia del autor gracias a su estilo narrativo y al uso del narrador en tercera persona, dando lugar así a la ironía romántica.

Nos sumamos así a la interpretación que Riquelme (1983:59) hace de esta novela:

the narration of A Portrait supports Gennette's conclusion that all narrative is essentially diegetic and that pure mimesis is not possible. The speaking voice of the discourse is always evident.

La ironía romántica en *Ulises*, típico ejemplo de novela modernista, está basada en la toma de consciencia del autor, que intenta desaparecer de la obra por medio de la técnica narrativa utilizada, pero que se descubre ante sí mismo y ante el lector en la artificial forma de la novela. El total distanciamiento del autor y los personajes en el *Ulises* debido al uso del monólogo interior es la causa del aparente realismo de esta novela. El autor consigue así una inmediatez dramática ya que el mundo aparece de diferentes maneras tras ser modelado a través de la mente de los diferentes protagonistas. De esa manera nos son presentados diferentes mundos para diferentes personajes.

Pero ese distanciamiento no va a evitar que el lector avezado sea consciente de su presencia como agente creador de tal complejidad formal dentro de la obra, provocando de nuevo la denominada paradoja romántica.

5. Conclusión

El modernismo se desarrolla en un contexto ideológico similar en algunos aspectos al del romanticismo, lo que va a permitir la reaparición de la ironía romántica. Ambos movimientos suponen una primacía de la subjetividad como resultado de una nueva visión de la realidad. Este predominio de lo subjetivo va a chocar con el deseo de ambos por permanecer distantes de sus obras.

En el caso del escritor romántico este deseo resulta de su idealista concepto de “Genio Poético”, “Dios creador” o “Inspiración” como el verdadero responsable de la obra de cuya eternidad e infinitud el escritor participa.

En el modernismo, este deseo es provocado por el intento del escritor de dar una visión objetiva de la realidad por medio de la desaparición de la subjetividad del autor y su consiguiente distanciamiento de la obra.

Por lo tanto, en ambos casos, y a pesar de los esfuerzos del autor por distanciarse de su obra, tanto el lector como el propio autor reconocen la presencia del último dentro de su creación. El escritor está dentro y fuera de la obra simultáneamente produciendo así la paradoja que da lugar a la ironía romántica.

La ironía romántica no desaparece definitivamente al finalizar el periodo romántico sino que reaparece de nuevo con el cambio de siglo en el modernismo.

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FUNDIDO EN NEGRO: DE LOS “MYSTERY PLAYS” A LOS ESPIRITUALES.

Sofia García Martos

Abstract

The coincidences of two popular manifestations: the medieval mystery plays and the traditional negro spirituals are the object of the analysis of this paper. Two cultures separated in time and place and consequently, with totally different origins converge in their personal way to interpret the same religion looking back to the very source of its primitive doctrine in search for the hope they need to go on living. The Bible and its learnings turn out to be the basis of their production translated into a dramatic language through gestures, interpretation and music as the vehicle of an authentic spirituality, as an honest way of praying.

Uno de los fenómenos culturales derivados de la peculiar institución de la esclavitud brinda la oportunidad de mostrar la repetición de patrones de pensamiento bajo condiciones similares por un lado y cómo la combinación de estos elementos significó una vuelta a los orígenes de la religión cristiana primitiva: se trata de la aparición de los espirituales negros que fue el resultado de la misma dialéctica que hizo posible las «mystery plays» de la Europa medieval. Ambas manifestaciones parecerían en principio no tener nada en común por su alejamiento en el tiempo y el espacio. Sin embargo, es precisamente éste el que hace mucho más apasionante el encontrar similitudes entre ellas.

La génesis de ambos fenómenos se debe a un motivo común: la necesidad del ser humano de aferrarse a la esperanza de la salvación, el convertir una idea abstracta en una realidad palpable y cotidiana en unos momentos convulsos de crisis. Esto se debió a la inseguridad general creada por un constante temor por la vida al tener ésta un valor ínfimo y por la pérdida de los valores derivados del mal ejemplo dado por las instituciones portadoras de la doctrina que son las primeras en incumplirla. Partamos además de la base de que estamos hablando de manifestaciones que surgen en el seno de colectivos que se hallan en el estamento más bajo de la escala social, expuestos pues a la mayor de las indefensiones.

En el caso de los campesinos y los pequeños artesanos medievales, sus condiciones de vida están sujetas a la pobreza, la guerra, la peste y la práctica esclavitud de un trabajo constante. Carecían de una conciencia de clase en un sistema todavía feudal que los mantenía en el convencimiento de que las cosas son así simplemente porque así debían ser. A esto se une la paradoja de un clero que vive de una forma relajada, que parece haber olvidado la humildad del Jesús de los pobres a costa además de los impuestos que ellos mismos tenían que pagar. La situación llegaría a su peor momento con el triste espectáculo del Cisma de Occidente en 1378.¹

El esclavo negro, arrancado de su propio entorno de forma traumática, no tiene otra opción que verse obligado a obedecer y a adaptarse a las exigencias de unos amos que lo someten mediante el ejercicio de un poder absoluto en el que la violencia no se escatimaba. Se encuentran igualmente con la misma contradicción intrínseca al tomar de estos mismos amos una doctrina que se convierte en una ideología peligrosa. Por esta causa, los propietarios intentan manipularla y convertirla en un instrumento para conseguir la ciega obediencia del esclavo como si el hombre blanco del mismo Dios se tratara.

Genovese intenta reconciliar la doble vertiente negativa y positiva de la religión como refugio y consuelo:

¹ Estas condiciones son ampliamente descritas por diferentes autores: Myers en *England in the Late Middle Ages* (1952) o Hilton en *Bond Men Made Free* (1977) pero quizá donde sean resumidas de forma más clara sea en *El Otoño de la Edad Media* (1930) de Huizinga (43)

This cruel religion of painful subjection, he [Nietzsche] continues, softened the slaves by drawing the hatred from their souls, and without their own version of this interpretation of Christianity's political role. According to their widespread saying: «At first we had the land and you had the Bible. Now we have the Bible and you have the land.» (Genovese 162-163)

Es negativa desde la visión de Nietzsche como elemento manipulador para conseguir una total resignación que evite la revolución del esclavo y positiva desde el sentido revolucionario de una doctrina que predica la igualdad de todos los hombres frente a un poder superior que impartirá justicia. No importa la fuerza del dominio terrenal que ejerza quien haya logrado imponerse en un momento determinado. El equilibrio de ambos aspectos enfrentados impidió la disidencia inmediata en el caso del hombre medieval lo que no es cierto del todo. En 1381 se produce un dramático episodio, el llamado «peasants' revolt», una rebelión dirigida por Watt Tyler y el clérigo John Ball al mando de un contingente de campesinos y artesanos pobres de las ciudades que, aparte de protestar por la aparición de nuevos impuestos, denunciaban precisamente la relajación del clero.

A pesar de ello, si la teoría que propone Owst para la creación de las «mystery plays» es cierta, que salieron al aire libre como consecuencia de la predicación de los frailes y de ella tomaron sus elementos cómicos, el drama medieval sería consecuencia del deseo popular de volver a la religión primitiva a la imagen mucho más cercana ofrecida por dominicos y franciscanos.² Estos defendían la pobreza de la iglesia en sus orígenes practicando su ejemplo, frente a ese clero poderoso, lo que sería un síntoma más que mostraría de forma sutil que el pueblo se daba mucha

² Owst. *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* 1966 (487). La idea de las «mystery plays» como manera de mostrar de una forma más placentera la doctrina al pueblo aparece en *Medieval Drama* (1991) de Richardson y en el artículo «Génesis del teatro religioso medieval en Inglaterra: del drama litúrgico a los *Misterios* y *Moralidades*» de M^a Jose Crespo Allue. Owst no niega esta idea exactamente, sino que precisa que se debe al «nuevo estilo» introducido por las órdenes mendicantes y andariegas.

más cuenta de lo que parecía de la paradoja de la existencia de una manera diferente de vivir la doctrina para ellos mismos y para los pobres.

El pueblo negro sí hizo esto abiertamente demostrando mucha más inteligencia de la que sus amos les atribuían, trascendiendo las manipulaciones de éstos y de las mismas iglesias que se aliaron con ellos hasta llegar a captar el auténtico mensaje cristiano revolucionario por encima del Nietzscheano que se les ofrecía, aunque en su caso, la oposición era impensable.³

Los dos tipos de «mystery plays» describen un proceso que podríamos llamar interno y externo. El primero que serían las «morality» se ocupan del alma del hombre desde su estado de inocencia primitiva hasta su corrupción para llegar a la redención final por voluntad propia tras su arrepentimiento. El segundo, las «miracle» son la demostración a través de la historia sagrada de que este proceso se ha repetido a través del tiempo. Cada uno de los personajes bíblicos simboliza y representa la llegada de Cristo mostrándose como piezas clave en un plan de Dios para la salvación del hombre.

Characters or incidents in the Old Testament were seen as types prefiguring Christ or the sacrifice of Christ as a way of demonstrating both the inevitability of Christ's Birth and sacrifice and the part it played in God's predestined plan for Christianity. (Richardson 16)

Esta visión diacrónica sirve así de ejemplo para la consecución del mismo fin en el alma de cada individuo que de igual modo y reflejado en este espejo puede mantenerse firme en lo que sería la sincronía del mismo proceso. Cada persona es en potencia un personaje bíblico dentro de su humildad pero igualmente importante dentro del esquema al convertirse en parte de un colectivo que debe aspirar a obtener el mismo resultado.

³ Con todo, se atribuyó al papel de los predicadores las revueltas más notorias de los esclavos, particularmente la de Nat Turner en 1831. A partir de entonces arrecia el deseo de «censurar» la propia religión. En 1847 el reverendo Charles Colcock Jones publicó *Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States* que según Stamp en *The Peculiar Institution* 1978 podría ser «malentendida» por los negros y convertirse en un medio para «underwrite the status quo.» (160)

Los espirituales siguen externamente el modelo de las «miracle plays» ya que las canciones siguen el mismo proceso de selección de figuras sagradas que expresen con exactitud el mensaje divino en el que creen. Pero al mismo tiempo, su sentido interno está dirigido al alma del negro para que resista su sufrimiento ante la perspectiva de una próxima salvación al encontrar tantos parecidos entre ellos y la trayectoria del pueblo judío. Así las canciones se vuelven una concreción de ambas formas medievales, siendo la aventura interior del hombre un acto de fe constante. Cada episodio bíblico constituye no sólo, como en el caso anterior, un anuncio de la venida de Cristo, sino un ejemplo de que es la pérdida o la esperanza en esa fe en un Dios justo lo que determinaba el triunfo o el quebranto de un pueblo, el judío en el pasado, el negro entonces.

«When my Blood Runs Chilly and Cold» expresa esa dualidad desesepación/esperanza que sólo esa fe puede resolver en favor de la segunda. Las estrofas se muestran como una «contracción» de los sufrimientos de ambos pueblos. La confianza en Dios llevará a la victoria espiritual y real:

Ef you cain't bear no crosses, you cain't wear no crown,

Ef you cain't bear no crosses, you cain't wear no crown,

Ef you cain't bear no crosses, you cain't war no crown,

Way beyond the moon.

De harder yo' crosses, de brighter yo' crown,

De harder yo' crosses, de brighter yo' crown,

De harder yo' crosses, de brighter yo' crown,

Way beyon' the moon. (Lomax, John & Alan)

Consideremos el alma individual y la historia de los personajes bíblicos, que se convierten en una sola en el caso de los espirituales,

como el espacio en el que se desarrolla el mensaje de salvación de ambas manifestaciones. Si añadimos ahora el factor tiempo, el fenómeno es muy parecido.

En el caso de las «mystery plays» se establecen tres tiempos simultáneos pero delimitados:

In the Middle Ages, at least three different visions of time were discussed. At the highest level there is God existing outside time, seeing all instantaneously and so foreseeing our future without necessarily depriving us of free will. Within time, neat divisions of history, typological links, fulfilments of signs and prophecies, numerological symbolism, parallel and recreative patterns were enthusiastically stressed by theologians anxious to see time not as a destructive force but as the expression of divine purpose. Only at the lowest level do we have linear time, the time in which, necessarily, one event follows another; the time within which the audience watch, and the play (as action) progresses. (Jack 11)

En los espirituales se da una circunstancia diferente que provoca de nuevo una concreción esta vez temporal. Aunque una canción se refiera a un episodio bíblico concreto que actúa como un marco de referencia, hay constantes alusiones a otros episodios que se superponen. La secuencia de acontecimientos según la historia sagrada es diferente pero el contenido es el mismo: la plena confianza en Dios como la única fuerza realmente liberadora. Se produce una «contracción» temporal en el que cada relato está ocurriendo simultáneamente en la canción y a la vez es trasladado al presente cuando ésta es interpretada. La identificación con el pueblo judío es total y presentada de esta manera parece que la intención es mostrar cómo su situación de esclavitud no es más que el siguiente capítulo en esa gran obra divina por lo que el fin de la opresión estaría totalmente asegurado. No confiar en la consecución de la libertad no constituye ya el gran pecado sino un acto totalmente ilógico.

Todos los espirituales presentan el tema de fondo de la

importancia de la fe bien a través de los peligros de su ausencia o de los beneficios de su presencia que sería la aplicación práctica en el tiempo presente de la congregación que las interpreta y las escucha. El relato bíblico aparece inmediatamente como apoyo y ratificación de esta premisa.

«Ezequiel Saw the Wheel» por ejemplo aparece enmarcado en la historia del profeta exiliado cuyo libro está prácticamente dedicado en su totalidad a reprochar al pueblo judío el que su situación, bajo el dominio de Babilonia se deba a su alejamiento de Dios. Como estribillo se utiliza la imagen principal con la que se asocia al hombre santo, la rueda que es también el leitmotif del episodio bíblico en Ezek. 1:16 y 10:10. En la canción, con este símbolo, se exhorta a los fieles a ser un mecanismo dentro del mecanismo divino, a girar en armonía con sus designios.

*Ezequiel saw the wheel, way up in the middle of the
air*

*Ezequiel saw the wheel, way up in the middle of the
air*

And the little wheel runs by faith

And the big wheel runs by the grace of God

*It's a wheel in a wheel, way up in the middle of the
air. (Blood-Patterson 209)*

Las dos estrofas siguientes vuelven al presente centrándose en el aspecto de que no hay que descuidar teniendo presente el ejemplo que Dios muestra al profeta en su visión: la falta de honestidad.⁴

*Some go to church for to sing and shout, way up in
the middle of the air.*

*Before six months they are all turned out, way up in
the middle of the air*

⁴ «Honestidad» es una palabra clave para el espíritu del pueblo negro en general y para su música en particular. El intérprete lo es no solo de una composición sino del sentir de su comunidad de tal forma que ésta diferencia entre «mala» y «buena» música según sea o no capaz de comunicar con honestidad este sentimiento. Así lo expresa Richard Middleton en *Pop Music and the Blues* 1972 (50-51)

*Let me tell you what a hypocrite'll do, way up in the
middle of the air*

*He'll talk about me and he'll talk about you, way up
in the middle of the air.*

Para terminar en la última estrofa con la referencia simultánea a otros dos momentos bíblicos: el Apocalipsis y Noe que se funden en una sola alusión:

«One of these days about 12 o'clock/And this old world goin' to reel and rock» ya que «reel and rock» remite a otro espiritual, «The Old Ark is a-Moverin'» que la está usando asimismo como símbolo de un juicio final anticipado y no sólo eso. Según Lomax, la elección de estos dos verbos se refiere además al movimiento físico de los celebrantes. Esto introduce un aspecto que no se puede olvidar: la función de la interpretación del espiritual que contribuye a la superposición temporal en el sentido de que, al tratarse de canciones que siguen un esquema de pregunta/respuesta, el líder cantaría cada verso de las estrofas y el estribillo siendo respondido con las palabras «way in the middle of the air» en repetición constante del ejemplo bíblico que sirve de apoyo principal.⁵

La descripción de Bevington de la liturgia medieval de la Pascua como un posible origen dramático de los «mystery plays,» coincide prácticamente con la idea de este esquema interpretativo de los espirituales:

*These responsories and antiphons, not unlike their
modern counterparts, were anthems chanted by a
soloist (cantor) and choir singing in alternation, or
by two portions of the choir alternating with one
another. Alternation gave an effect not unlike
dialogue, although each speaker's utterances were
not consistently assigned to one singer or segment of
the choir as in a true dialogue. (Bevington 6)*

⁵ Alan Lomax *Folk Songs of North America* 1960 (463)

Estamos pues ante un acto dramático que, al fin y al cabo, remite igualmente al nacimiento de las «mystery plays» a partir del mismo esquema de la misa pero que en el caso de las canciones se convierte en prácticamente una «posesión» del mismo espíritu que movió a los profetas de antaño, el pueblo negro es la simiente de la siguiente generación de éstos, por ello la fe y la honestidad son fundamentales. Con todo, también en la Edad Media existió en la misa este sentido de «posesión.» Bevington cita la obra de Honorius de Autun que siguió las enseñanzas del obispo de Metz, Amalarius (ca. 780-850) quien defendía la idea de que la misa debería ser una representación alegórica, dramática de la vida, muerte y resurrección de Cristo. Esto produjo un curioso efecto:

Not surprisingly, when some celebrants of the mass during the ninth and tenth centuries made use of Amalarius' histrionic interpretation, the results were electrifying. . . The use of sights, groans, sudden silences, and contortions of «the whole body with histrionic gestures» became common enough to arouse the ire of ecclesiastical traditionalists, who objected that ritual and drama were essentially different and should remain so. (Bevington 5)

En el fondo de estas diferencias que producen estas concreciones espacio/temporales en el caso de los espirituales se encuentra la cuestión del concepto del pecado original. Según Genovese, éste no podía entrar en los esquemas de las religiones africanas y no fue asimilado por la redefinición del cristianismo que efectuó el pueblo negro.

Traditional West African religions did not espouse a doctrine of original sin, and the acceptance of Christianity by African peoples never did result in a full surrender to this most profound and fateful of Cristian ideas. (Genovese 211)

Con respecto a este extremo, la filosofía que se desprende de las «mystery plays» es que el hombre, puesto en la situación de elegir en pleno respeto divino del libre albedrío, sufre la tendencia de escoger el camino incorrecto del pecado por ser el más fácil. La religión es pues la

barrera que regulará esta tendencia sirviendo a la vez como control del individuo frente a la sociedad poniendo a cada sujeto ante su propia responsabilidad. De hecho, una de las características «novedosas» de las «mystery plays» era su carácter social como acontecimiento aglutinador de clases y por brindar la ocasión de un trabajo en grupo de los gremios a un primer nivel y de toda la ciudad en términos generales.⁶

El negro sin embargo, tiene una visión de la realidad como colectivo y como tal se dirigen al cielo para conseguir un favor que se traduciría en un bien para todos que así avanzan como un solo hombre y que en el caso del esclavo está totalmente definido como la consecución de la libertad. De este modo, Dios no es la entidad que castiga a causa del pecado sino el ser bondadoso que lo único que ha exigido a lo largo de la historia es plena confianza, lo que precisamente la Biblia demuestra una y otra vez.

Los espirituales superponen las sucesivas apocalipsis como destino del hombre blanco precisamente porque los ven como a los creyentes que se han alejado del camino, el pueblo ciego que está «al otro lado». Por lo tanto el hecho de la obtención de dicha libertad mostraría la otra cara de la moneda. Las canciones funcionan como una advertencia a los hermanos blancos descarriados, lo que muestra una vez más que los negros se daban cuenta de la contradicción intrínseca que pondría a éstos en la línea directa del castigo de la Providencia por desoir las palabras de su propio Dios.

Las composiciones que tratan del tema del Apocalipsis suelen aludir directamente a otros episodios bíblicos en esta superposición tiempo/espacio para llegar al resultado final: la obtención de la libertad y a la vez critican la hipocresía de aquellos que hacen una lectura falsa de una religión verdadera. El castigo será para unos y el fin de la esclavitud para ellos que creen con auténtica fe. Así aparece por ejemplo en «Wade in the Water»:

*Down in the valley, down on my knees,
Askin' my Lawd to save me please.*

⁶ Richardson (23)

*You can hinder me here, you can hinder me there,
But the Lawd in Heaven will hear my prayer.
The enemy's great, but my Captain's strong,
I'm marching to the city and the road ain't long
I tell you once and I tell you twice,
My soul's been anchored in Jesus Christ.
You may baptize Peter and baptize Paul,
But the Lord-God-er-mighty gonna baptize um all.
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Tell me where my Saviour gone?
My Lawd spoke in a 'ponstrous voice
Shook the world to its very jois'.
Rung through Heaven and down in Hell,
My dungeon shook and my chains, they fell. (Lomax
471)*

Los blancos, desde los «mystery plays» hasta los propietarios de esclavos temen la ira divina, los negros celebran una vida para la que Dios ha hecho firmes promesas de un tiempo mucho más placentero en el que por fin ellos serán libres porque la humanidad al fin habría escuchado el auténtico mensaje de la doctrina.

The slaves reshaped the Christianity they had embraced; they conquered the religion of those who had conquered them. In their formulation, Christianity lacked that terrible inner tension between the sense of guilt and the sense of mission which once provided the ideological dynamism for Western civilization's march to world power. But in return for this loss of revolutionary dynamism, the slaves developed an Afro-American and Christian humanism that affirmed joy in life in the face of every trial. (Genovese 212)

En realidad estamos asistiendo a dos momentos en el que dos grupos humanos cuya única posesión es prácticamente su propia vida se enfrentan a la pérdida de unos modelos a seguir por la propia debilidad de unas autoridades que se suponen respetables dentro de una doctrina que habían manipulado según sus propios intereses. La única salida válida era volver a la fuente primigenia, lo que hicieron los frailes y los predicadores negros en un renacimiento cristiano que volvía sus ojos a la comunidad primitiva, cuando fueron los pobres los primeros en escuchar el mensaje de Jesús. Él es la figura principal alrededor de la cual giran ambos ciclos. Bien es verdad que en el caso de los espirituales, Moisés ocupa la misma importancia como líder de un pueblo hacia la libertad pero es superado y absorbido en ese fenómeno de concreción por Jesús en su capacidad de sufrimiento en carne propia del dolor del mundo perdonando no obstante al mismo tiempo a sus torturadores. Este es el símbolo clave para la idea de una posibilidad de redención también para aquellos que los mantenían como esclavos.

Así aparece en «Never said a Mumbalin' Word» en una repetición obsesiva y constante de cada uno de los tormentos a los que Cristo fue sometido

Well, dey nailed him to de cross, to de cross, to the cross

Well, dey nailed him to de cross, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,

Well, dey nailed him to de cross, an' he never said a mumbalin' word,

He jes' hung down his head, an' he cried. (Lomax, John & Alan 588)

y de su silencio, «mumbalin'» no sólo significa valor y entereza sino ausencia de rencor al ser consciente de morir por aquellos que lo están matando y de su impasibilidad ante su mensaje. Los daños inflingidos a Jesús son también un símbolo de los soportados por los propios esclavos: «Dey whupped him up the hill», «Dey crowned him wid a thorny crown», «Dey pierced him in de side», en una descripción de lo que podría ser lo que a ellos mismos les ocurría frecuentemente.

Pero al final el progreso acabó con el proceso. El mundo medieval caminaba inexorable hacia la explosión del individualismo del Renacimiento y la Guerra de Secesión consiguió para el negro una libertad que no hizo más que alienarlo en esa misma individualidad del hombre blanco que había cruzado el océano. Cada persona está sola frente a sí y a los demás independientemente de que las condiciones sociales de salida sean muy diferentes. La repetición de estos patrones y su pérdida bajo el peso de la paradoja que los hizo posible plantean la cuestión de si no son un síntoma de una pérdida paralela del sentido de la colectividad cada vez más acusado que aún continúa en nuestros días.

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CHINUA ACHEBE AS A CRITICAL READER OF JOYCE CARY

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«It was clear he loved Africa, but only Africa of a kind: the Africa of Charles, the messenger, the Africa of his garden-boy and steward-boy. He must have come originally with an ideal -to bring light to the heart of darkness, to tribal head-hunters performing weird ceremonies and unspeakable rites.»

(Achebe, 1960: 96)

Abstract

The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe has widely reckoned that his literary path has been intensely marked by the reading of Joyce Cary's works. In fact, some of his novels are developed on African landscapes. Achebe had read these novels in his youth and was deeply astonished by the treatment received by the African population and civilization in general, and by the Ibo culture particularly. For this reason, Achebe has been said to write his novels as a reply to Joyce Cary's African ones. With them, Achebe attempts to transmit to the Western audience a radically different view of that presented by the European novelist, made of topics and prejudices. In this essay, I attempt to make a detailed follow-up of the conflict. All this to be integrated into the more general context of Postcolonial literature, one of whose common features is the antagonical perception of Africa that is maintained by the European colonialist writers in contrast to that of the African native writers.

1. Introduction

When a writer manifests that he has been inclined towards writing as a response to another writer, the reader can think that just admiration could provoke such a feeling. I am not going to say that Chinua Achebe started his literary career thanks to Joyce Cary but I might assure that Achebe decided to describe part of his traditional background due to the influence the colonial syllabus had on him, particularly impressed by the world described by Joyce Cary, the Irish writer, in his *Mister Johnson*, but no less impressed by those landscapes presented by Conrad, Greene or the others. Although he admired most of these writers, he was conscious of their stereotyped description of Africa. Everybody knows the opposition held by Chinua Achebe in the case of the concept offered by Conrad in his *Heart of Darkness*¹. And this controversy is extended to most of the «colonial» writers. Every time Achebe is asked about, he points out that Africa is not the *Dark Continent* to which most of these writers referred to, but an unknown place unfairly treated.

Joyce Cary had been member of the British Colonial Government in Nigeria from 1913 to 1920. After the First World he became ill and was retired from Africa starting his writings as an observer and so, a foreigner. In the Preface to *Mister Johnson* he points out that:

None of my characters is from life, but all of them are derived from some intuition of a person, often somebody I do not know, a man seen in a bus, a woman on a railway platform gathering her family for the train. (Cary, 1939: 7)

On a strict sense Cary represents the writer that expresses his opinions from outside. He comes from a different culture and he is unable to forget his own background. We should remember that Joyce Cary was, on a first stage, a Civil Servant who took an active part in the colonial Government. On a second stage, he writes about the colonies as a means

¹ «An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*» was published by Achebe in his collection *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965-87* (1-19). Initially, the essay was a conference held at the University of Amherst, USA.

to get an ideological justification² to the colonial activity. For Cary the Europeans were those who brought civilization to the Dark Continent. However, one of the most famous sentences by Achebe insists on the idea that Ibo people did not hear history for the first time from the Europeans.

Chinua Achebe was born in Iboland, Nigeria, in 1930 so he builds his own novels from inside. Every character shares some of his features as he sincerely admits:

Although I think every character that a writer creates ultimately comes from himself, his experience, his own imagination, and therefore also represents some aspect of the writer, even if the writer says this part of me is something to avoid, to keep at a distance. Because we really have no facility for exploring what we don't know. (Jeyifo, 1985: 13)

Besides, he preserves his own culture from the outsiders insisting on the traditional system of organization they are involved in. This system of government enables Ibo people to get an independent community. On this independency, so fragile and unstable, is based the easiest introduction of the colonial influence into Iboland.

With that distinctive background, I will focus my attention for this essay on the vision and attitude of Cary and how Achebe transforms it into his first novels. I will stress two of the most extended myths in colonial literature and how Cary assumes them. First of all, how the European colonisers perceive Africa and its reality. From this perspective I am interested in the way Cary interprets the function of the European people in the colonial civilization. Cary offers a quite particular description of most of the white men found there, working in the Nigerian «development». At the same time, it is also worth mentioning as a second

² As a reaffirmation of what I want to express here I quote from Achebe: "Ultimately the question of ideological sides which Mr. Allen threw in only to dismiss it again with contempt may not be as far-fetched as he thinks. For colonialism itself was built also on an ideology (although its adherents may no longer realize it) which, despite many setbacks, survives into our own day, and indeed is ready again at the end of a quiescent phase of self-doubt for a new resurgence of proselytization, even, as in the past, among its prime victims!" (Achebe, 1988: 55)

myth the European vision of the «Africans» that in most of the cases are described as a group, without distinguishing the differences between tribes or community groups. For example, Johnson, the protagonist from Cary's novel, comes from the South of Nigeria³; in Fada village people speak Hausa, Yoruba, and Pidgin English. However, there are no differences when Johnson or Waziri, the Emir employee, talk.

Secondly, I will show how Achebe translates all these elements into his novels presenting a rather contrasted version of the events, stressing the responsibility the western attitudes had on the destruction of communal life. He also stresses that the Ibo traditional society was self-sufficient and independent with a strong feeling of belonging to a group.

2. The Novels

My study will be centred on two novels by Achebe -placed on the Ibo village community- *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964). On the other side, I will call my attention to *Mister Johnson* (1939) by Cary where a similar village is found although the atmosphere is radically opposed.

Things Fall Apart and *Arrow of God* were conceived as part of a trilogy never written⁴. Both novels tell us the story of Umuofia, a village in iboland⁵, a region situated in the Eastern part of Nigeria. They are an attempt to make a record of the traditional Africa already existing before the Europeans arrived. In the first novel, Achebe tells us the story of a famous Ibo combative man, Okonkwo. He also recreates the life of the community stressing the values of a hierarchically well-organized society which is in harmony with the natural forces. This peaceful landscape

³ "In the north of Nigeria, where the people were somewhat better accustomed to direct rule and direct taxation before the colonials conquered them, the Emirs flourished under British benevolent non-interference beyond the essential. Missionaries were excluded because they threatened Islam, so schools (other than for the study of the Koran) were few. As the need for clerks and the like grew, southern Nigerians -many Igbo- found good jobs in the colonial administration. They were foreigners in the north, and they had some power and authority". (Wren, 1980: 37)

⁴ Initially, Achebe thought about writing a trilogy in which he should have described the world of his ancestors; The world of his grand-grandfather in *Things Fall Apart*, that of his grandfather in *Arrow of God*, and, finally, unwritten that of the young generation represented by his father.

⁵ Iboland was the region that got involved in the war of Biafra (1967). In this war the Federal Government defeated the Biafran Government that had proclaimed its independence from Nigeria.

will end up when Christian missionaries arrive at the village, modifying the fragile structures of the community, inviting *osu*⁶ people to become members of the new religion. The clash will be completed with the Colonial Administration intervening in the conflict. The lack of solidarity and the absence of a communal voice makes possible the destruction of the village life.

In the case of *Arrow of God*, Achebe studies the relation of power in traditional society throughout another Ibo character, Ezeulu, priest of Ulu. In this occasion, the colonial rule is mixed with the traditional system of government as Achebe places the story in the twenties. The clash takes place in three different spaces; that is, at Ezeulu's home where the sons quarrel to be the legitimated heir of the father's title; at Ezeulu's village as there is another priest discussing Ezeulu's power; and, finally, at the Administration as Ezeulu is defeated by the Colonial rule and the Christians. The novel finishes with Ezeulu's madness that is understood by the villagers as the gods' punishment for Ezeulu's *hybris*.

In both novels Achebe describes the historical situation of his community while he also interprets the changes that are transforming this small fragile village. He focuses his attention on the analysis of the communal life in such a way that the reader gets a lively picture of tradition in Iboland.

Meanwhile, Joyce Cary also describes the life of a place called Fada where Colonial Administration has already mixed with Local Government. The village, Fada, is situated in the North of Nigeria (in fact, they are building the road to the North) in a muslim region as the local characters have Arabic names and the local authority is an Emir. The main character is called Mister Johnson, a black man coming from the south which is very much impressed by western customs. He is an interpreter⁷ and it is seen by the local authorities and the colonial ones as a clown-like being. None of them trust him although they take

⁶ *Osus* were those members of the village whose ancestors had been devoted to the service of the gods. They could not have a common relationship with the rest of the members of the community.

⁷ The interpreter was a figure created by the colonial Administration. They were the link between the local authorities and the colonial ones. In most of the occasions, they were not members of the community and they were highly despised by it. That is also the case of Johnson who comes from the South and it is badly considered by the local authorities.

advantage of him. The action of the novel is developed in the twenties when the Colonial rule is already a fact. A group of British officers are in charge of building a road to connect the North and the South. They use the natives as labour workers and another natives (for example, Johnson) as intermediaries. Cary is not interested in depicting the original life in Fada as he is immersed in the description of the progress western life brings to the natives. The novel also has a tragic end: Johnson is accused of bribery and condemned to death. Johnson's trial becomes the best expression of colonial rule while the British officers remain uncondemned.

3. The Conflict

Achebe has to be both novelist and anthropologist. He succeeds in his dichotomy as the reader is unconscious in most of the detailed pictures of the Ibo Community that he is offering «anthropological» information. The first chapter in *Arrow of God* presents a good example of anthropological view as rituals, public debates and proverbs give shape to the sense of Ibo life. In spite of this, Cary shares many of the colonial views about the African People -their childlike attitude, the unruly atmosphere, the misuse of power and the undevelopment of the systems of government. He, as his character Celia (Rudbeck's wife), is frightened of the drums, the malaria and the heat: the so-stereotyped *Dark Continent*. For this reason, his characters are outsiders on their own backgrounds. Johnson does not belong to any African community, has neither roots, nor background nor social restraints. He comes from the Southern Region, from a Mission School. His vision of the continent is not better than the one of the Europeans: Rudbeck or Tring. He is as foreigner as the Europeans, so he cannot represent none of his mates. He is supposed to be an interpreter, an intermediary between the colonisers and the Fada community, but he has adopted the colonisers' views and methods: bribery, dresses, customs, and so on.

Most of the elements of this Fada Community are unconnected. So we have a rather fussy description of the political system or the religious one. About Fada we know that it is a community in Northern Nigeria with an Emir. Nevertheless, colonial government was based on «Indirect

Rule»⁸: the British officer ruled the Emir, the Emir ruled the people, and on the bottom of the scale we discover Johnson ruling the road workers.

Achebe's Umuofia is also fictional, but rather different. It is composed of nine villages and every village has a set of villagers ruling the place by means of an elder Council and a number of religious agents. Rule was communal till the British Indirect Rule settled in.

Chinua Achebe, as most of the educated Nigerians, had read Cary's *Mister Johnson* at the University and in some of his interviews he stressed the fact that it was necessary to re-write the story from the African side. Achebe as a reader of Cary shows these feelings in most of his novels, overall those which are placed on a village community. Most of the critics has insisted on the idea that Obi Okonkwo, the main character from *No Longer at Ease*, accepts briberies in the same way Johnson did it. But it is also in those Africans who accept European rule and take part in the Colonial Government. As far as I know Achebe prefers traslating Cary by means of events and situations instead of characters. For this reason I have chosen three events that are carried out in the novels of both writers with a contrasting attitude: the construction of the road, marriage, and feasts.

The most relevant of all of them is the construction of the road that is the outstanding event in *Mister Johnson*. Another road is built in *Arrow of God*, although on this occasion is just a marginal fact in the lives of the Umuofians. On a strict sense, both roads will have the same meaning: the commercial development of the region. Both will bring foreigners and larceny.

There was at that time a big programme of road and drainage construction following a smallpox epidemic. Chief James Ikedi teamed up with a notorious and drunken road overseer who had earned the title of Destroyer of Compounds from the natives. The

⁸The system of Indirect Rule was promoted by Frederick Dealtry Lugard, a British officer. It was conceived as a hierarchical system of government in which the British officer ruled a local authority (warrant chief) and he ruled his people. His policy was succesful in those part of the continent where there was a similar hierarchical system but it was particularly a failure in Iboland whose political system was based on a stateless community. (Wren, 1980: 88)

plans for the roads and drains had long been completed and approved by Captain Winterbottom himself and as far as possible did not interfere with people's homesteads. But this overseer went around intimidating the villagers and telling them that unless they gave him money the new road would pass through the middle of their compound. When some of them reported the matter to their chief he told them there was nothing he could do; that he overseer was carrying out the orders of the white man and anyone who had no money to give should borrow from his neighbour or sell his goats or yams. (...) Needless to say, Chief Ikedi took a big slice of this illegal tax. (Achebe, 1964: 57)

Although Achebe shows that corruption affects colonisers and colonised, he also recognises the responsibility held by the white men who were supposed to control a situation they had brought as new. Mr. Winterbottom is always aware of the corruption the road and the builders promote. He is responsible for what they do, bribes even.

The road is the central question in *Mister Johnson*. Johnson corrupts the people surrounding him at least twice but Rudbeck, the District Officer, is unable to see it. Nevertheless, assuming that Johnson controls the situation, seems unbelievable. None of the white men has any sort of responsibility in the process of corruption, so that they claim lack of knowledge.

The next passage is selected from one of the ordinary trials in which Rudbeck acts as a judge. Situated at the end of the novel wants to point out the fact that Rudbeck ignored all the trade suggested:

'Does he appeal?' Another sigh.

'Yes, lord. He claims that he paid both fees.'

'Both fees -in two zungos?'

'No, lord. Both fees in Fada zungo.'

'Oh, he had cattle?'

'No, I mean the lodging fee and the road fee.'

'What the devil is the road fee?' Rudbeck is at once suspicious.

'The fee for the road, lord, instead of ferry fees.' (Cary, 1939: 188)

A similar conversation was held when Mr. Tring is in charge of the post:

'Who are you?' Tring asks again.

'Road Treasurer, Zaki.'

'The road treasurer, sah,' Johnson explains.

'Who is the road treasurer -I never heard such an office.'

Audu keeps on smiling and bows still deeper.

Johnson explains that the road treasurer keeps the road money:

'Road money -what is road money?'

'For roads, sah -for road work.' (Cary, 1939: 123)

If we compare both moments in the novel we discover that the British Administration should not be blamed by the corruption simply because they (Rudbeck and Tring) did not know. Anyhow, both passages differ from what Achebe puts on Winterbottom's mouth:

This was what British administration was doing among the Ibos, making a dozen of mushroom kings grow where there was none before. (Achebe, 1964: 58)

The critical comment expresses Achebe's himself as the Nigerian writer has spoken in other occasions about the destruction of his own culture. But the myth he wants to destroy is not related to the idea that civilization -so the road- is ruining the traditional country as Cary says:

The road itself seems to speak to him. I'm smashing up the old Fada -I shall change everything and every-

body in it. I am abolishing the old ways, the old ideas, the old law; I am bringing wealth and opportunity for good as well as vice, new powers to men and therefore new conflicts. I am the revolution. I am giving you plenty of trouble already, you governors, and I am going to give you plenty more. I destroy and I make new. What are you going to do about it? I am your idea. You made me, so I suppose you know.'
(Cary, 1939: 186)

But the destructive force is partly associated with British hands, supporting foreigners for ruling a country and destroying its culture, system of government, and natural environment.

The second question is related to marriage and its value for the Nigerian dwellers. On one side, we find Cary's Johnson trying to get married to Bamu in the British way. The approaching to the bride is quite rude presenting her as a merchadise:

I want to marry her; of course I'm clerk Johnson. I'm an important man, and rich. I'll pay you a large sum. What's your name? (Cary, 1939: 14-15)

Once the price is established (Nothing to do with the detailed, beautifully described, Achebean bride price ceremony) trade goes on; the marriage is not an exception for a town which is based on commercial relationships; selling a wife is compared by Cary (1939: 31) with the selling of a horse:

The bargaining goes on all day. Finally, it is decided that Johnson will pay six pounds down, ten pounds at ten shillings a month and give the umbrella, wrist-watch, and coat. (Cary, 1939: 33)

The result of all this is that poor Bamu, without comprehending a word of the foreigner's (Johnson) speech, will abandon her family and compound while facing a new life. Besides we should remember that

Johnson has no roots, no family-links, no compound where Bamu can feel at home. According to Achebe such a character has no place in the village communities because in the early twentieth century it was uncommon to be so far away from your own village home. At the end, Johnson unwillingly will finish being married in the Fada way, with a party and most of Bamu's kinsmen although he insists on staying alone with his wife in the western way.

In Achebe's novels situated in Umuofia and Umuaro, ceremonies are of a great importance. Everything in the village is part of an impressive rite; paying visits, for example, is based on the close bond established between the host and the guest: kola and chalk symbolise it. Of all the activities the most ceremonious one is marriage as it represents the continuity of the clan. There are three major ceremonies described: the bride-price, the *uri*, and the *isa-ifi*⁹. In the traditional society the arrangements were a guarantee for a stable marriage. If he was a bad husband, she could return to her kinsmen. Before establishing the price -Chapter 8, *Things Fall Apart*- a number of meetings and gifts are held.

Uri ceremony is the occasion for exchanging visits and paying the final price. *Isa-ifi* «testifies to the girl's behaviour since the suitor first sought to marry her» (Wren, 1980:30). Each person knows his/her role and obligation, each one performs in strict accord with custom. Ceremonial courtesy becomes functional in the civil order:

'It was only this morning', said Obierika, 'that Okonkwo and I were talking about Abame and Aninta, where titled men climb trees and pound foo-foo for their wives.'

'All their customs are upside-down. They do not decide bride-price as we do, with sticks. They haggle and bargain as if they were buying a goat or a cow in the market'. (Achebe, 1958: 51)

⁹ *Uri*: It is the premarital visit of a bride to her betrothed's family.

Isa-ifi: The final marriage ceremony, the ceremony of confession, in which the groom's female relatives require the bride to name each man with whom she has had sexual relations since her family and the groom's began discussing the marriage. She confesses before the family *ofọ*, and the husband may claim reparation from the guilty men. (Wren, 1980: 129 & 139)

On this way, Achebe translates Cary's Conradian descriptions of ceremonies: savage practices, unspeakable rites, cries in the night, drums. Umuofia is a civilized place where rationality and custom mould the characters and their surrounding world. Traditional ceremonies acquire a new meaning for the foreign reader although Achebe is extremely careful with not being an anthropologist.

The third contrasted example is based on the description of feasts and festivals. For Cary every party Johnson organizes -almost one every night- is described as an orgy:

At half past eleven, when there are perhaps fifty people in the store compound, making noise enough, since they are mostly from the station and the barracks, for two hundred, a tornado breaks. (...) The dancers and singers take cover in the store itself, and Johnson, who sees that the party needs sympathetic encouragement, brings out gin. It is impossible to say, at any moment, whether the store is shaken by thunder or the dance; whether the crescendo which makes one feel that the top of one's head is about to split off is rain on the tin roof or kettle drums under the counter; whether the demoniac appearance of the naked dancers, grinning, shrieking, scowling, or with faces which seem entirely dislocated, senseless, and unhuman, like twisted bags of lard, or burst bladders, is due to sheet lightning reflected from the river through the front windows, or the success of the part. Johnson feels that it is a success; a triumph. (Cary, 1939: 153)

The most impressive element of this description -*the demoniac appearance of the naked dancers*- testifies that Cary's viewpoint is that of someone who perceives Africa as a terrifying place, quite connected with the idea of Conrad¹⁰. Feasts that are not prepared to celebrate any sort of event. They are an excuse to show the irrationality of a group.

¹⁰ "They shouted, sang, their bodies streamed with perspiration, they had faces like grotesque masks -these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast" (Conrad, 1902: 78)

Cary does not describe the gaiety of people but the demoniac influence of the continent. This fact exhibits a feeling taken from Celia, Rudbeck's wife:

But to Celia Africa is simply a number of disconnected events which have no meaning for her at all.
(Cary, 1939: 102)

The organized festivals of *Arrow of God* are the counterpart of this situation. The whole story demonstrates the importance of these occasions that are not only a way of celebrating events (marriages, burials, ...) but a way of counting the seasons of the year. Notice how Ezeulu calls the Festival of Pumpkin Leaves by means of the monthly ritual yam. The feast will bring tragedy to the community at the end of the story. Besides, there are minor festivals in honour of the ancestors or village gods, like that to Idemili (chapter 4), or the festival to placate the spirits (chapter 17). All these rituals give form and structure to the lives of individuals and of the community as a whole. None of these festivals is arbitrary. They link everyday life to the ancestors and the world of spirits.

4. Conclusion

Achebe has shown how a road does not transform a society, but the interaction of forces ancient and new; that the British did not contribute to create a dynamic society, because they were already a dynamic one. Cary's natives are rather flat, they just live the present so development and change are useless for them. Johnson remains the same from the beginning to the end of the novel. The stories of Achebe present round characters with an extraordinary dignifying past. Characters learn from their environment and they feel as historical human beings. Achebe shows a society which shapes its own reality; it is not an object to be discovered and changed.

Most of Cary's narrative in relation to African matters (*Aissa Saved, The African Witch*) encloses the myths and prejudices that British colonisers assume when they deal with Black African People. This circumstance is revealed of great importance to understand the literary

career of the Nigerian Chinua Achebe who employs a great effort for reflecting in his novels the everyday reality of Ibo society, from which he feels himself a member. Nevertheless, he is conscious that his works are directed to an audience who shaped their opinion throughout the colonial view and Cary is one of his most conspicuous representatives.

On these pages I have tried to demonstrate how the works by Chinua Achebe contain plenty of references -sometimes hidden, sometimes explicit- to the novels by Joyce Cary, particularly *Mister Johnson*. With this attitude Achebe pretends to counteract ideologically the prejudices that exist in colonial literature and tries to elaborate on this basis an authentic African narrative.

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EXTRAVAGANT FICTION, OR ON THE FICTION OF EXTRAVAGANCE: *HUMPHRY CLINKER* AND *TRISTRAM SHANDY*

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Abstract

This paper offers a comparative analysis of Smollett's The Expedition of Humphry Clinker and Sterne's The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy as examples of the original way in which the eighteenth-century English novel adopted a storytelling strategy in which characters' speech should appear to be as true as any real conversation. The basic principle both novels share is what we call intrusive discourse. Despite their obvious dissimilarities, we presume to demonstrate that these two fictional artefacts are organised around the concept of intrusion (as linguistic trespassing), or interpolation, an idea that is directly related to non-linearity and verisimilitude in narrative. In order to develop this hypothesis we study the specific means through which each novel builds its narratives, paying due attention to the use of the epistolary genre as the intrusive discourse par excellence, and the appearance of veracity thus brought about. Tristram Shandy, with its complex network of interpolated pre-existing verbal formulations, is examined more deeply to see how it is possible to imitate a communicative exchange in which some appropriate conditions have not been taken into account. A background interest of the paper is in looking at a historical period in which language, truth, thought and reality were the obsessions of many a scholar.

‘Pray, Sir, let me interest you in
this description’

Tristram Shandy (II, ix)

1. Introduction

We are sure that it would not be odd to hear the whistle of someone playing dumb but consciously conveying the whole sense of uncle Toby’s Lillabullero, as soon as we attempt to uncover some aspects of the eighteenth-century English novel we think innovative; meanwhile regarding our approach as perceptive and original when what is genuinely original is the strategy fiction had adopted in order to tell stories that should appear to be as true as any real conversation, and as linguistically aware as philosophy; or by expecting to end the cycle of linguistic criticism concerning these two masterpieces for the very fact of their obviousness. In fact, we have the feeling that, irrespective of the nature of the topic we try to deal with, the reader will keep on whistling once and again that Lillabullero.

The implications of this paralinguistic complex, here translated into linguistic terms, deserve thorough observation, particularly since the historical period on which we are going to focus our attention was itself obsessed with language - its power, its unfaithful relationship with truth, and, consequently, its limitations and its possible substitutes. Uncle Toby was not a great orator. His discursive presentation was characterised by simple structures, interruptions, occasional silences, or a clever whistle which, no doubt, would demand more attention from the reader’s part than any syllogism, and would convey much more straightforward meaning than any long-winded speech. This could sound somewhat paradoxical in such a logocentric period. However, it is out of question that the 18th century’s concern for language, reference and meaning implied at the same time an attempt to codify many other non-linguistic means that were as communicatively effective as the linguistic ones. Nevertheless, despite all this, and especially despite the Lillabullero we still presume to be hearing, we will consider some aspects that seem relevant for what some would name the period style, the basic reason for this paper: the so-called *intrusive discourse*.

Although the study of this topic may be justified simply by having a look at the allegedly crazy structural organisation of so shocking a fictional artefact as Sterne's novel, in which at certain points 'the discourse structure combines its various immediate components in an arrangement like a Chinese box, creating a text within a text within a text' (Sultana, 1987: 191), it is possible to consider it under other perspectives. At a metalinguistic level, when we talk of *intrusion* we are referring to a metaphorical amplification of the sense of this lexical item. In our case, *intrusion* is related to the idea of *linguistic trespassing* or to what is called *interpolation*, which Rosemblaum defines as 'an extended and contrasting insertion into the main narrative which actually follows or pretends to follow a pre-existing verbal formulation [and] does not necessarily imitate a specific speech act ... but the form of a speech act' (1978: 476-477). *Intrusion* implies the insertion of any material into the narrative as startlingly as any interruption could do. In other words, apart from the objective features that differentiate *interpolation* from *intrusion*, there is a subjective characteristic which makes *interpolation* not as acceptable as *intrusion*; the former is concerned with the action of an agent over a product-to-be (the narrative), the latter, with the effect of a similar action on the recipient (the reader). On the other hand, rhetorically speaking, our choice is due to the fact that this phenomenon is one of the most outstanding features of this type of narrative, whose lack of linearity makes the process of reading an intellectual challenge of understanding and complicity between reader and writer.

2. In search of verisimilitude

What was the eighteenth century in search of? Verisimilitude in the broadest sense of the word. People intended to get rid of social and political lies, reasoning that affected use deprived language of any transparency in its relation with thought and reality. The concept and nature of literature were also undergoing serious modification. In an issue of *The Rambler* dated 31 March 1750, Johnson confirmed his view that novels, addressed to 'the young, the ignorant and the idle', should turn into 'lectures of morality' (quoted in Shroff, 1983: 9). As Beasley explains, this author rejected the frivolous and untrue fictitious narrative.

He encouraged a 'mimetic defence of prose fiction as a mode for rendering the truth about life', as reproduction of both 'the surface of existence' and 'the circumstantial re-creation of the inherent structure of life' (1982: 6-7). At that moment, the goal was to exploit 'an entertaining, ethically authoritative literature that translated heroism into immediate contemporary terms ... moral, social, political' concerns (ibid. p. 11), and heroes into people rather like the readership, into characters 'engaged in the business of domestic life ... in the great public events ... or in both' (ibid. p. 13). Accordingly, literature would be requested to change from 'the posture of ornateness during the Commonwealth to that of plainness during the Restoration' (Howell, 1971: 460), and fidelity to empirical reality would become the essential feature of a genre which tried to get away from the untrue, the stigma of fiction. Something of the kind can be observed in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1988) (hereafter called *TS*) and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1985) (hereafter *HC*), though they achieve it in different degrees, by means of different tools and, to a certain extent, with different results. The former is presented as a collection of real letters obtained probably not very lawfully by a Mr Jonathan Dustwich, and printed by a Mr Henry Davis, a bookseller in London:

... with reference to the manner in which I got possession of these letters ... concerns my own conscience ... (p. 28)

... I will run the risque of printing and publishing, and you shall have half the profits of the impression. (p. 29)

The latter looks like an autobiography whose narrator and hero, Tristram Shandy, tries to preserve, in Overton's words, 'historical accuracy not only in providing exact dates of certain events in his past but also in stating precisely when he is writing about the past' (1966: 107), by making a careful use of apparently realistic material:

Now it appears, by a memorandum in my father's pocketbook, which now lies upon the table ... (p. 9)

The article in my mother's marriage settlement which I told the reader I was at pains to search for, and which, now that I have found it ... (p. 33)

Both texts introduce specific tokens that help the reader go into the novels as if they were true stories. On some occasions, Smollett writes the names of some people only partially; he includes some editorial explanations which imply an even more distant relationship between the process of letter-writing and its compilation; and he mentions his own surname, when listing some of the travel-book writers recently in fashion, when explaining the authorship of an ode sent to Dr Lewis by Matthew Bramble, or even when remembering the heroes of a not yet forgotten military victory:

a) *'C-S- has been threatened several times by the House of L-' (p. 29)*

'Then, turning to captain C-' (p. 145)

b) *'*This gentleman crossed the sea to France ...' (p. 218)*

*'*The par is a small fish, not unlike the smelt ...' (p. 287)*

c) *'Then there have been so many letters upon travels lately published -What between Smollett's, Sharp's, Derrick's ... together with Shandy's Sentimental Travels.' (p. 29)*

'Inclosed I send you the copy of a little ode to the river, by Dr Smollett, who was born on the banks of it.' (p. 286)

'... the Florida, a ship of the Spanish armada, was blown up by one of Mr Smollett's ancestors ...' (p. 294)

Furthermore, Smollett provides very accurate data on places and dates. He presents peculiarly truth-like commentaries on the present situation of utterance. Moreover, he adds what seems to be authentic

material (i.e. other people's letters and a poem) through Bramble's and Melford's richly characterised correspondence. Thus, we are able to discover the romantic feelings of Wilson towards Lydia, to witness how Mr Barton apologises for love matters as a gentleman, to verify the goodwill of a rascal flattering the esquire, or to experience the same images arising from an ode which is 'at least picturesque and accurately descriptive, if it has no other merit' (p. 286):

a) *'I shall tomorrow set out for London, where I have bespoke Lodgings, at Mrs Norton's in Golden-square.'* (p. 106)

'Nothing worth mentioning occurred, till we arrived on the edge of Marlborough Downs.' (p. 110)

'On the little river Nid, is situated the castle of Drumlanrig, one of the noblest sets ... belonging to the Duke of Queensberry.' (p. 308)

b) *'... my tears fall so fast that I cannot keep the paper dry.'* (p. 350)

c) *'Miss Willis has pronounced my doom ... what shall I do? ... all night long have I been tossed in a sea of doubts and fears ...'* (p. 43)

d) *'... I thought it my duty to assure you, that my devoirs to Mrs Bramble never exceeded the bonds of civility ...'* (p. 175)

e) *'... from the moment I was witness to your generous concern in the cause of ... I should think myself happy, if I could be admitted into your protection ...'* (p. 193)

f) *'Pure stream! in whose transparent wave
My youthful limbs I wont to leave;
No torrents stain thy limpid source.'* (p. 287)

As suggested above, it is by means of the direct insertion of all these elements conveying verisimilitude that Smollett makes use of what we labelled *intrusive discourse*. With regard to Sterne's own presentation of verisimilitude, he avoids writing the names of some places and some

characters; he insists on basing the novel on previous scientific research; he indicates the danger of his work being regarded as a romance when his duty, as a historian, is to 'represent the matter of fact and render it credible to the reader' (p. 257); he gives an appearance of life to the characters through their own seemingly real works; he introduces true historical events; he tries to be accurate at showing places and dates; and he scatters editorial explanations throughout the novel with an editor who, in MacArthur's opinion, generally 'devises a number of strategies for demonstrating his superior knowledge in comparison with the characters', and in that way 'undermines the reliability of their interpretations and secures his role as expert' (1990: 290):

a) '*... his paternal estate in the country of —*' (p. 8)

'Nor does it disturb my rest when I see such great Lords, and tall personages as hereafter follow; — such, ... , as my Lord A, B, ...' (p. 13)

b) '*I have not the time to look into Saxo-Grammaticus's Danish history, to know the certainty of this ... you may do it ... yourself:*' (p. 21)

c) '*... this plea, tho' it might save me dramatically, will damn me biographically, rendering my book, from this very moment, a profess'd ROMANCE, which, before, was a book apocryphal ...*' (p. 84)

d) '*... in case the character of parson Yorick, and this sample of his sermons is liked, -that there are now in the possession of the Shandy family, as many as will make a handsome volume ...*' (p. 114)

'You shall read the chapter at your leisure, (if you chuse it) as soon as ever the Tristapaedia is published.' (p. 317)

e) '*Sir Roger Shandy wore them at the battle of Manston-Moor.*' (p. 163)

f) '*... my uncle's Toby wound was got in one of the traverses, about thirty toises from the returning angle of the trenches, opposite to the salient angle of the demi-bastion of St Roch.*' (pp. 68-69)

'I was begot in the night, betwixt the first Sunday and the first Monday in the month of March in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighteen.' (p. 8)

g) *'*The author is here twice mistaken.'* (p. 119)

*'*Hafen Slawkenbergius means the Benedictine nuns of Cluny, founded in the year 940 ...'* (p. 203)

*'*Mr Shandy is supposed to mean +++++ +++ +++, Esq; member for ++++++, and not the Chinese Legislator.'* (p. 306)

Moreover, he inserts within the narrative thread another set of textual units with a basically similar function: to make the whole discursive construct seem to be true by trying to silence the voice of the author, and by letting the narrator organise the chaos of his remembrances. The series goes from a dedication to a very dubiously respectful character to a dreadful excommunication in Latin and English. Its genuineness should not be called into question:

a) *'... you will permit me to lay it ... at your Lordship's feet, —when you are upon them, —which you can be when you please ...'* (p. 14)

b) *'By the Authority of God Almighty [...] we sequester him, that he may be tormented ... delivered over with Dathan and Abiram ...'* (p. 137)

In between, we can observe something like a marriage contract; a theological deliberation of the doctors of the Sorbonne concerning prenatal baptism; a sermon delivered by Trim, a silent man too fond of listening to himself; a preface which, like other prototypical textual realisations in this novel (especially, ritualistic speech acts), disobeys its particular felicity conditions when flouting its principles of presentation/production, because it does not fulfil the purpose it should have been made for: to justify his work 'on moral grounds, and with simplistic defenses of its fidelity to life and human nature' (Beasley, 1982: 5); one of Slawkenbergius's mock romances, in Latin and English, which with

its heading might convey the mirage of the tranquillity a reader expects to find in a tale structured according to the canon; a fragment of a book on the art of war; an apologetic oration in uncle Toby's mouth, justifying 'his own principles and conduct in wishing to continue the war' (p. 368); the never-told story of the King of Bohemia and his seven castles; and, finally, an invocation to the inspiring genius of the new fiction:

a) *'That the said Walter Shandy, merchant, in consideration of the said intended marriage ... consummated between the said Walter Shandy and Elizabeth Mollineux aforesaid ...'* (p. 33)

b) *'... accordée d'employer le moyen qu'il propose si avantageux au salut de l'enfant [...] Délibéré en Sorbonne, le 10 Avril, 1773 ...'* (p. 51)

c) *'The SERMON, Hebrews xiii, 18. For we trust we have a good Conscience.'* (p. 98)

d) *'Now, my dear Anti-Shandean, and thrice able critics, and fellow labourers, (for you I write this preface).'* (p. 153)

e) *'It was one cool refreshing evening, at the close of a very sultry day, in the latter end of the month of August, when a stranger ...'* (p. 197)

f) *'... which words being heard by all the soldiers which were there, divers of them being inwardly terrified ... make room for the assailant.'* (p. 310)

g) *'O Brother! 'Tis one thing for a soldier to gather laurels, -and 'tis another to scatter cypress ... 'Tis one thing ... to hazard his own life ...'* (p. 369)

h) *'There was a certain king of Bo—he ...'* (p. 451)

i) *'GENTLE Spirit of the sweetest humour, who erst didst sit upon the easy pen of my beloved CERVANTES.'* (p. 521)

Nevertheless, though not to our surprise, Sterne also includes two letters. The first is undoubtedly literary/fictional. The second aims to be authentic. Both carry out the traditional functions of the letter: one being

the crude realism of subjectivity (Bourneuf and Ovellet, 1985: 106) and, the other, a sort of delayed conversation (ibid. p. 220). In this case, it has been delayed because Walter Shandy is more concerned with enjoying the sophistication of his mind, while trying to organise his thoughts (now by means of an impeccable letter of instructions), than with the explicit effectiveness of what had been written (cf. *Tristrapaedia*).

3. The epistolary genre

It is not by chance that we have finished this last section as we have. We had mentioned above our interest in analysing a so-called intrusive discourse, and it is noticeable that the letter is probably one of the most attractive means to produce the effect of intrusion.

The eighteenth century was the age of the epistolary novel, of the 'elevation of private experience to the status of public history' (Beasley, 1982: 43). The letter, regarded by Wagner (1948: 131) as 'half of a conversation or dialogue between the sender and the addressee', involved a 'quasi-presence and quasi-speech between the two' (Constable, 1976: 13), from which an effect of 'intimacy, spontaneity and privacy' (ibid. p. 11), that is, of immediacy (Violi, 1985: 156), was easily derived. This genre allowed the author to play with its freedom and flexibility, characterised as a 'linguistic production belonging to discourse rather than to historical narrative' (ibid. p. 151); a genre in which the traces of utterance and its 'internally inscribed communicative function' (ibid. p. 156) were the essential core of its constitution.

Many scholars have devoted their efforts to defining it and to observing its complex functioning under an appearance of simplicity that makes it - an *emotional voyeurism* - so appealing. Johnson prescribed that '[a]ll Epistles must be written in a low, short, and pithy style without affectation, periphrase or garrulity' (1665/1971: 16). Erasmus labelled the letter as an 'absentis ad absentem colloquium' (quoted in Wright, 1989: 557). Moreover, Patrizia Violi (1985), following Simonin-Gumbrach's orientations (1975), distinguishes between *Situation of the Utterance* and *Situation of the Sentence*. The former is the situation in which the sentence is produced; it comprises the deictic categories of space and time ('here' and 'now'), and the participants ('I' vs. 'you'). The latter is

defined by the elements inscribed within the text itself. Violi also suggests two pairs of opposites: *addresser* / *addressee* vs. *narrator* / *narratee*. The first are the real subjects of the communicative process, the second ones, the subjects in the text itself (ibid. p. 151). The representation of both narrator and narratee may be recognised by its marking: by the signature, or of an explicit form either in the opening (i.e. Dear X) or in the pronominal structure (i.e. I write to tell you); by their own time and space, which will be more or less distant in accordance with the distance imposed over those in terms of the status of addresser and addressee (i.e. friend-friend, father-daughter, boss-secretary, man-woman), by the content/purpose of the letter (i.e. love-letter, instruction-letter, business-letter, circular); or by its form/style (i.e. formal, informal, friendly, threatening, artificial, natural) (ibid., p. 152).

According to the criteria of form and content it is possible to establish at least four types of letters: formal vs. informal, and personal vs. non-personal; to these, Violi adds some others by basing her classification on speech act theory. She considers that if we take into account the propositional content and the illocutionary force of the letter, we will be able to discern several other categories: the autoreferential letter and the narrative letter. The first communicates no other content than its own communicativeness (i.e. thank-you letter, congratulation letter, commiserating letter, love-letter), its propositional content very likely to consist mostly of stereotyped set phrases. On the contrary, in the second one, it is the narrative content that predominates, reducing the utterance forms to fixed formulae of the genre, and making informativeness its unique and essential goal (ibid. pp. 160-161).

HC, as many other epistolary novels published in this period, is a brilliant example of letter writing 'planned to present the variety of different angles from which life is viewed by men of different temperaments' (Shroff, 1983: 166). It claims to be the compilation of eighty two letters (twenty seven written by Matthew Bramble, a landowner; twenty eight by his nephew, Jerry Melford; eleven by his niece, Lydia Melford; ten by W. Jenkins, the maidservant; and five by Tabitha, his sister). By means of these, characters give vent to their feelings or personal impressions; they tell the everyday and the most extraordinary events; they describe people and places; they give orders; they apologise;

they complain; they make accusations or digressions on the most varied topics; or, sometimes, they simply beseech:

a) *'... I hope you will give me leave to disburden my poor heart to you ...'*, Lydia to Mrs Jermyn (p. 37)

'Notwithstanding my contempt for those who flatter a minister, I think there is something ... more despicable in flattering a mob ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 136)

b) *'... worse than all this, Chowder has had the misfortune to be worried by a butcher's dog ...'*, Jenkins to Mary Jones (p. 35)

'The Indians themselves allowed that Murphy died with great heroism ...', Jerry to Phillips (p. 228)

c) *'... she is tall, raw-boned, awkward, flat-chested, and stooping ... in her temper; she is proud, stiff, vain ...'*, Jerry to Phillips (p. 90)

'Vauxhall is a composition of baubles, overcharged with paltry ornaments, ill conceived and poorly executed ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 120)

d) *'When this cums to hand be sure to pack up in ... let there be a fire constantly kept ...'*, Tabitha to Mrs Gwyllim (p. 34)

'I desire you will lock up all ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 33)

e) *'I have given just causes of offence ... I ought not to have listened to what the young man said ...'*, Lydia to Mrs Jermyn (p. 37)

f) *'... this place ... intended as a resource from distemper and disquiet, is become the very centre of ... dissipation ...'*, Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 63)

g) *'I hope, Doctor, you will not go to put any more such phims in my brother's head, to the prejudice of ...'*, Tabitha to Dr Lewis (p. 109)

'I should be glad to know, what offence it would give to tender consciences, if the house of God was made

more comfortable ... whether it would not be an encouragement to piety ..., Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 215)

h) *I beseech him not to write to me, nor attempt to see me for some time*, Lydia to Miss Willis (p. 39).

In *HC*, the letter resembles common discourse in conversation; it tends to expose the quick, sincere, disorganised thoughts of real people:

I had almost forgot to tell you, that I have had my hair cut ..., Jenkins to Mrs Jones (p. 141)

I take this opportunity to send you the history of the day ... and you will own I give you them like a beef-steak at Dolly's ... without ceremony and parade, just as they come from the recollection ..., Jerry to Phillips (p. 361)

You must not expect either method or coherence in what I am going to relate ..., Lydia to Miss Willis (p. 376)

And it also fulfils its primary communicative function of reducing the temporary void distance has placed between two human beings:

I shall grow vain, upon your saying you find entertainment in my letter ... barren ... of incident and importance ..., Jerry to Phillips (p. 169)

If we should come to Aberga'ny, you will be within a day's ride of us and then we shall see wan another ..., Jenkins to Mrs Jones (p. 73)

It can show how language establishes social status, national identity, or emotional distance; how a change of state may imply a change of speech habits, that is to say, how language in use makes up our image of every individual and her/his personality:

Don't forget to put up in the portmantel ... (p. 74)
vs. I beg you will take great care ... I wish you would

cast about ...' (p. 394), Tabitha to Mrs Gwyllim, before and after getting married.

'... your ever loving and discounselled friend ...' (p. 381) vs. *'... removed to a higher sphere, you will excuse my being familiar with the lower servants ... you will behave respectful, and keep a proper distance, you may always depend upon the good will and protection of, Yours, W. Lloyd'* (p. 395), Jenkins to Mrs Jones, before and after becoming a gentleman's wife.

In *HC* the letter always sounds real, although a large part of the correspondence is characterised by elaboration; although the picture of many of the characters derived from their own letters or from what the others could tell about them is stereotypical (i.e. the old esquire, generous, sarcastic, admirer of the countryside life; the spinster in search of a husband, irascible, querulous; the young maidservant, obliging or gossipy; and the romantic but obedient niece); and even although, on some occasions, it could look like rather a treatise either on morality or established customs.

What about *TS*? Is it not curious that Sterne's work appeared in the age of the epistolary novel and includes only two letters? The differences between our chosen texts - their structural organisation, their conceptualisation of reality, their characters' profile, their propositional contents, their illocutionary forces, and their final effects - are obvious. However, there is something they share as ideological products within the same social structure (cf. Fowler, 1981: 7).

4. *Humphry Clinker* and *Tristram Shandy* compared

TS was intended to be the autobiography of a man whose life and opinions, despite the expectations arisen by its title and Tristram's own intentions ('I have undertaken ... to write not only my life, but my opinions also ...', p. 10), are postponed once and again till the end of the last chapter. The contradictory relationship between the title of the novel and the importance of the character the novel is named after does not affect Sterne's work exclusively. Humphry Clinker is not the main character

in Smollett's novel; he writes no letters, and he is hardly ever represented through his own words. In this sense, it is noticeable that Melford, a good observer and recorder of life who had previously let other characters speak, makes Clinker visible by means of direct speech on not too relevant occasions, and uses reported speech when the man delivers his sermon in jail, an important moment in understanding the attraction the other characters feel towards him and of which we, as readers, are partially deprived:

a) '*... I distributed nothing, an like your honour, but a word of advice to my fellows in servitude and sin.*'
(p. 131)

b) '*In short, we found that Humphry was, at the very instant, haranguing the felons in the chapel; and that the gaoler's wife and daughter, together with my aunt's woman, Win Jenkins, and our house-maid, were among the audience ... I never saw any thing so strongly picturesque as this congregation of felons clanking their chains, in the midst of whom stood orator Clinker, expatiating in a transport of fervor, on the torments of hell, denounced in scripture against evil-doers, comprehending murderers, robbers, thieves, and whore-mongers.*' (p. 184)

If Clinker's story is secondary, if his late recognition as Bramble's son does not imply a shocking change in the whole narration, if even Bramble comes to mention that his correspondence '*may be truly called the lamentations of Matthew Bramble*' (p. 62), we should assert that, as far as the relationship between title and hero is concerned, at this point there is a repetition of the same phenomenon *TS* is determined by, but with differences related to the role Tristram and Clinker fulfil (i.e. one as narrator and the other as mere character). This applies both to their process of naming (i.e. one is misnamed by chance and the other, in order to receive his true name, has to undergo a hard journey of foolish, villainous and imperfect deeds, a parody of the heroic quest) and to the internal self-organising principles of these works (i.e. one has not been born at the end of the novel and the other ends with the end: marriage was happiness and closure).

TS and *HC* were produced in an era whose views of psychology would allow Smollett to tell his characters' impressions of any event or any emotion felt, and Sterne to make feasible Hume's principles of association (i.e. of resemblance, of contiguity in place or time, of cause and effect) defined as those 'principles of union and cohesion among our simple ideas [that] in the imagination supply the place of that inseparable connection, by which they are united in our memory' (1946: 138). Therefore, both novels are written in a first person which involves the possibility of other first persons (whether marked by the explicit heteroglossic nature of the epistolary genre, or by the faithful recording of the others' voices in narrative fiction proper). In other words, it implies the construction of a dialogic reality, and then, of the second person of any conversation. Accordingly, Sterne and Smollett brought into existence a new type of narrative. Both novels seem to have a conversation-like nature (cf. Martínez-Dueñas, 1996: 276), and each requires the presence of a new reader: the implied reader.

In a conversation, there must be at least two interlocutors, and we cannot deny that in *TS* and *HC* there is something of the kind. Nevertheless, it is more accurate to claim that these novels are a pseudo-conversation, whether between addresser and addressee, narrator and narratee, narrator and reader, or narrator and narrator. In other words, *TS* and *HC* seem to cause on the reader the effect of a conversation being held. As far as *HC* is concerned, the addresser makes use of direct address devices (DADs) with different conversational tones depending on different scales of 'politeness, of formality, of emotive key', and their either positive or negative poles (Leech and Short, 1987: 309):

'... you must remember ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 216)

'... they are in fact much more different from ours than you can imagine ...', Jerry to Phillips (p. 258)

'My dear Mrs Jermyn! my ever honoured governess! let me conjure you ...', Lydia to Mrs Jermyn (pp. 378-379)

'O, Mary Jones! ... I have had trials ...', Jenkins to Mary Jones (p. 256)

'I am surprised, docter Lews, you would offer to put my affairs in composition ...', Tabitha to Dr Lewis (p. 109)

There is a more or less uninterrupted turn-taking between the participants, of which we only can observe Smollett's characters' turns; implication and background knowledge will help us imagine the others':

'... craving your pardon, Molly, it made me suet to disseyffer your last scrabble ...', Jenkins to Mrs Jones (p. 141)

'This method of writing to you from time to time, without any hopes of an answer, affords me, I own, some ease ...', Lydia to Miss Willis (p. 348)

The letter can change from a topic to another, as naturally as if oral discourse:

'... I would give twenty guineas to have them tolerably presented on canvas. Northumberland is a fine country ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 243)

Its temporal/spatial location in the here and now of present is clearly marked with deixis:

'... I left a message, in consequence of which he called at our lodgings this morning ...', Jery to Phillips (p. 183)

'The old gentleman told me last night ...', Jery to Phillips (p. 56)

'I have now, dear Phillips, filled a whole sheet, and if you have read it to an end, I dare say, you are as tired as ...', Jery to Phillips (p. 133)

All the set of dialogic components together with sequencing, implicature, indirect speech acts (ISAs), or a realistic representation of

the idiolectal peculiarities of every character seem to be deployed here in order 'to create a verbal illusion of interaction' (Fowler, 1986: 109):

a) *'I hope there will be twenty stuns of cheese ready for market by the time I get home ...'*, Tabitha to Mrs Gwyllim (p. 189)

'I need not say your directions for drinking and bathing will be agreeable to ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 53)

b) *'... for I am much concerned about the state of her poor soul [...] His virtue is like poor gold [...] and the poor youth was sent to prison upon the false oath of a william ...'*, Jenkins to Mrs Jones (p. 188)

'The garden and the hind may lie below in the laundry [...] Let me know if Alderney's ... be sold yet... if the old goose be sitting', Tabitha to Mrs Gwyllim (p. 34)

Likewise, in *TS* the same feeling of connivance between several interlocutors is soundly based. Tristram not only asserts that 'writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure mine is) is but a different name for conversation' (p. 87), but also speaks directly to his reader, a Sir and a Madam who always listen and occasionally make their voices respond to Tristram's in wonder or doubt. They do all this in turns, with speech acts of different natures which sometimes flout Grice's (1975) maxims of quality, quantity and relation; with ISAs, very explicit DAD terms, and interruptions linguistically transcribed, as if giving a chance to the speaker to think; with some floor-holders, and other defining discourse markers; and even with many more linguistic expressions concerning that conversational nature which together invoke a sense of a natural production of discourse:

a) *'... besides, Sir, as you and I are in manner perfect strangers to each other ...'* (p. 10)

'How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter?' (p. 47)

'Now, don't let Satan, my dear girl, in this chapter, take advantage of any one spot of rising-ground to get astride of your imagination ...' (p. 179)

'I did not apprehend your uncle Toby was o'horseback.' (p. 127)

b) *'Madam, I beg leave to repeat it over again, That I told you as plain, at least, as words, by direct inference, could tell you such a thing.—Then, Sir, I must have missed a page.—No, Madam,—you have not miss'd a word.—Then I was asleep, Sir.—My pride, Madam, cannot allow you that refuge.'* (p. 47)

c) *'STAY—I have a small account to settle with the reader, before Trim can go on with his harangue. It shall be done in two minutes.'* (p. 291)

d) *'Will your worships give me leave to squeeze in a story between these two pages?'* (p. 282)

e) *'You will imagine, Madam ...'* (p. 54)

f) *'—That even my similies, my allusions, my illustrations, my metaphors are erudite,—and that I must sustain ...'* (p. 70)

g) *'I have undertaken, you see, to write ...'* (p. 10)

h) *'But let us go on.'* (p. 358)

i) *'I am determined shall be the case. —I need not tell your worship, that all this is spoke in confidence.'* (p. 32)

Moreover, Tristram also speaks to himself as a character whose life he is supposed to have to narrate, or to the other characters, especially to an uncle Toby full of innocence, who receives naturally Tristram's praises, promises, and pieces of advice:

'Sport of small accidents, Tristram Shandy! that thou art, and ever will be!' (p. 132)

'Truce!—truce, good Dr Slop ... stay thy obstetrick hand ... Hast thou, Dr. Slop ... been intrusted with ...' (p. 88)

'Dear uncle Toby! Don't go into the sentrybox with the pipe.' (p. 305)

'The days and hours of it more ... my dear Jenny!'
(p. 498)

And, of course, he lets his characters talk to each other, so that his distance from all of them should convey both his own insertion in the narration as an independent human being, and their own existence as individuals whose subjectivity is not linguistically coloured or interfered by any omniscience on the author's part:

'Nature is nature, said Jonathan—and that is the reason, cried Susannah, I so much pity my mistress.'
(p. 293)

To face all this, it was going to be necessary to create and encourage a new concept of readership. As has been said above, Smollett and Sterne had brought into existence a new type of reader: the implied reader, what Violi defines as 'sum of the competencies necessary for an adequate comprehension of the text' (1985: 158). Sterne's must be as free as his own narrator and "lúcido y atento ... que releve al narrador e invente la obra a su vez' (Bourneuf and Ovellet, 1985: 169). Smollett's 'must use his own imagination to bring about a co-ordination of the different aspects of reality' (Iser, 1974: 67), and, 'since none of the addressees writes in return ... must take their place' (ibid. p. 71).

As Iser points out, *TS* and *HC* marked the end of the traditional eighteenth-century novel, implying the introduction of that new concept of reader which should be induced 'through the form of composition, to take a fuller part in the co-ordination of events' (ibid. p. 78). In other words, in both cases 'we must supply (as readers) perspectives, definitions, properties, inferences, even facts which the text fails to provide' (Briggs, 1985: 501). That is how we can understand Sterne's game in volume IX, chapters xviii and xix (pp. 513-514), when he lets the reader imagine - according to their universal knowledge of any normal love appointment proceedings - the whole episode of uncle Toby's love-making to Mrs

Wadman, only to go back later on and break all the expectations his reader could have fed on the implications spread through the book; or, in vol. VI, chapter xxxviii (pp. 376-377), in which he encourages the reader not only to imagine but also to reproduce Mrs Wadman's physical appearance, by using ink and the paper he lends her/him. And, in the same way, that is how we can comprehend the process the reader has to undergo, when speculating on the content of certain unsaid things suggested by Smollett's characters:

'... if she is really in the condition you describe, I suspect Mansel to be at the bottom of the whole ...',
Melford to Phillips (p. 56)

'Your fable of the monkey and the pig, is what Italians call ben trovata: but I shall not repeat it to my apothecary ...', Bramble to Dr Lewis (p. 149)

Both of them are what MacArthur labels stories of 'disorder recounted from the perspective of order' (1990: 5). These, with their multiple perspectives and internal commentary, 'put into question the possibility of objective truth or stable authority' (ibid. p. 22). Both are fragmented narrative forms that produce identical effects, among others, their resistance to closure based on the predominance of an extended present, sometimes by making use of similar strategies, sometimes by using different ones. In short, they are examples of the modern novel, built on the principle of extravagance (ibid. p. 29).

5. Intrusion in *Tristram Shandy*

Having said all this, it is time to get to the heart of the matter: the letter as intrusive discourse. We could have devoted our attention to many other possible cases such as the sermon, the legal contract or the excommunication in *TS*, or Wilson's love-letter to Lydia, Barton's explanatory letter to Bramble, or Martin's request for a job in *HC*. And, surely, we could have done it in many other different ways, either by considering the role of chained-stories-construction in both *HC* and *TS*, or by comparing them with the frequent use of reported and direct speech

observed in *HC*, as a novel in letters ‘has the primary burden of telling a story, and thus narrative demands finally subvert the subjectivity of the epistolary (first person present tense) form’ (Wright, 1989: 577). Nevertheless, what was really amazing was that *TS*, ‘a narrative about the nature of narrative [...] an examination of the sloppy way in which less self-conscious narratives connect the discontinuous and disconnect the continuous’ (Rosembaum, 1978: 472), which could imitate any genre and keep on being unique, had almost forgotten the letter, alongside the autobiography the most fashionable eighteenth century genre.

As mentioned above, in *TS* there are only two letters. One, brief, sentimental, abruptly finished, is written by Julia (a character belonging in Slawkenbergius’s fictional world) to her lover, Diego. The other, much longer, not unemotionally personal, and more logically organised (going from spiritual matters to dietetic ones, and, considering in between, physical appearance, love-making strategies, speech habits and medical remedies for temperance) is Walter Shandy’s, a pseudo-essay on love-making addressed to his inexperienced brother, Toby. The former is built upon the model of love-letters, with a certain type of language used in that private interaction, the ‘language of the heart’ (Wright, 1989: 549); but, ironically, it does not remain a private means of communication, as long as it is not a real letter but a literary one which is part of a narrative inserted within another narrative, *TS*. Diego reads it first, Walter, Tristram, and anyone else, later. The latter, not far from being familiar and natural, tends to the perfection of composition of any formal treatise made in the manner of Medieval or Renaissance exemplars, except for its intended immediacy. Nevertheless, although it should become a public document, this letter of instructions is not to be read (not even by its supposedly real addressee, the actual narratee, Toby) till an external reader, the audience posterior to the publication of the narrative, approaches it guided by Tristram’s superior knowledge. The paradox is critical: what should be private at the level of its production, that is, at the secondary level of fiction, becomes public at the primary level in which Tristram’s ideas and opinions are told, and also at the zero level of fiction (i.e. reality) whence we are witnessing both. Likewise, what seemed to be likely to be public is taken no notice of at the primary level of fiction (being only a pseudo-private memoir with some personal

impressions), and comes to be public at the zero level of reality, through which anyone's product risks becoming the other's.

If we observe the way these two letters operate, it will not be difficult to discover that there are other features that make them different both from each other and from the specific pattern we should expect them to follow. Thus, the structural disposition of each of the letters, their rhetorical presentation or their final intent differ as long as they were not made for the same purposes, despite the role they should fulfil.

According to Haskins, '[a]fter the salutation ... came the exordium ... Then came the statement of the particular purpose of the letter (... the narration), ending in a petition ... and ... the conclusion' (1929: 2-3). To some extent, Julia and Walter's letters follow this scheme. They both address their words to someone with a purpose in mind; one sounds far from emotive, though personal, by using in its heading a first name attached to a title of respect (i.e. 'Seig. DIEGO', p. 214); the other, with a combination of endearment, a possessive and a noun establishing the social relationship between addresser and addressee, transforms the conventional opening into a meaningful sign of familiarity (i.e. 'My dear brother Toby', p. 476). One assumes both the first and the third person narrator, as if trying to 'appear to disappear' (Leech and Short, 1987: 268) behind the veil of her brother's imagined reported explanations:

*'How could I know so little of myself ...?' (p. 215) vs.
'... in what manner Julia has resented this ...?' (p.
215)*

The other only assumes the first one in order to show the reader his own experience, his own opinion embodied in plain language, without appealing to any intermediaries:

*'What I am going to say to thee, is upon the nature of
women ...' (p. 476)*

The addressee of the former is inscribed in the text by explicit presence of several deictic terms:

- a) DAD: *'I know so little of you, Diego...'* (p. 215)
- b) Pronominal structure: *'He will tell you in how few moments ...'* (p. 215)
- c) Determiners: *'... my suspicions of your nose were justly excited ...'* (p. 214)

And by means of all these (especially 'you' and its derivatives), Julia addresses Diego as a superior; in contrast, by the use of 'thou', 'thee' and 'thy' in Walter's letter of instructions, these forms need to be used at an affective level rather than as tokens of the addressee's inferiority (cf. Brown and Gilman, 1972: 252-282):

- 'I had been well content with that thou ... I begin to speak to thee upon the subject ...'* (p. 476)
- 'Shave the whole top of thy crown ...'* (p. 477)

Both letters are organised after the rules of two conventional models, the love-letter and the letter of instructions. Nevertheless, their peculiar adaptation of those models is quite significant. One is based upon repetition; repetition foregrounded in terms of repetition of patterns or parallelism (as rhetorical questions, powerful vehicle for conveying Julia's anguish), repetition of meaning, and immediate repetition or epizeuxis:

- a) *'How could I know so little of myself...? how could I know so little of you ...?'* (p. 215)
- b) *'... how her spirits deserted her - how her heart sickene'd.'* (p. 215)
- c) *'... will tell you: He will tell you ...'* (p. 215).

The linguistic representation of Julia's pain is rhetorically affected, pompous, redundant, in a sense poetic, obviously literary. There is nothing of the spontaneity and artlessness presumed to be in this kind of letter. Meanwhile, the other maintains a conversational tone that, despite the apparent seriousness of the topics dealt with and the authorities brought

up to answer for some of the pieces of advice expounded, is very close to the sense of immediacy of the epistolary genre:

'Thou must begin, with first losing a few ounces of blood ... according to the practice of the ancient Scythians ... Avicenna, after this, is for having ...'
(pp. 477-478)

Walter uses more simple sentences, most of which are directive speech acts presented as either imperative forms or declarative structures marked by modality; or explicit commentaries concerning its nature of unplanned discourse resulting from 'its writing to the moment' (Wright, 1989: 560):

a) *'Avoid all kinds of pleasantry ... do whatever lies in thy power ... suffer her not to look ... Stick a pin in the bosom ... beware of taking it ... Leave that ...'* (p. 477)

'... thou must eat little ... it must be the infusion of VERVAIN ...' (p. 478)

b) *'Mrs Shandy being close besides me, preparing for bed ... as I begin to speak to thee [...] I have thrown together without order, and just as they have come into my mind.'* (p. 476)

Each letter is a complete micro-world (it does not matter whether structurally finished or unfinished) reinforced by a set of cohesive lexical terms which make Julia's look like a rather richly ornamented romantic epistle, apologetic, beseeching, and indirect ('suspicions ... excited', 'rash message', 'frantic haste', 'spirits', 'heart', 'languishing', 'expire'); and Walter's, a barely affected pseudo-deliberative speech on the secrets of love-making deprived of its actio and pronunciatio ('sure maxim', 'conclusions', 'In the first place', 'There is nothing further', 'utter it in a low soft tone voice', 'feel the temper of thine').

These two intrusive discourses are the embodiment of paradox. Their propositional contents are appropriate for the type of speech acts they

are supposed to be (a love-letter which intends to show the feelings of a lover, and a letter of instructions devised to teach the reader how to behave in a very specific situation). However, they do not fulfil their generic expectations. One is too elaborated, the other, quite simple. The set of illocutionary forces implied in each letter is, to some extent, contradictory; in the first, love apology vs. love threat intending remorse, and instructions for love success vs. love deterrence, in the second one:

- a) *'How could I know so little of myself...?'* (p. 215)
vs. '... you will arrive but to see me expire...' (p. 215)
- b) *'Let not thy breeches be too tight ...'* (p. 477) *vs.*
'There is nothing further for thee ... unless the
breaking out of a fresh war.' (p. 478)

Something similar occurs with the perlocutionary effects provoked by both letters over the external reader; one, though intimate, sounds not very natural; the other, even adopting a pseudo-syllogistic presentation, seems emotive. However, there is something still more paradoxical: Julia's speech act is successful; Diego, in the end, has produced the pragmatic response demanded by his lover. Walter's, on the contrary, fails to get any (either pragmatic or linguistic) reply. It is, then, as if at the second level of fiction there were scarce possibilities of speech-act flouting, as long as, in this closed world in search of order, there cannot be any place for misunderstanding; while, at the first one, character and reader need to keep on adjusting their expectations once and again (cf. Briggs, 1985: 514), trying to impose some order in a world of experience defined in terms of provisional and unexpected nature.

In other words, these letters, included in the narrative thread of a convulsive new form of writing fiction, intrude in the novel and in the reader's perception of the coherence of the novel. In that way, Tristram has given every voice a chance to be heard. He has made every character their own independent being. He has produced a linguistic construction of reality in which a discourse is embedded in another discourse embedded in another discourse, embedded in ... The mind's working has taken the place of linearity's fallacy.

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HISTORY ON TRIAL: THE ROSENBERG CASE IN E.L. DOCTOROW'S *THE BOOK OF DANIEL*

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Abstract

In The Book of Daniel (1972), E.L. Doctorow explores one of the darkest periods of US political history: Cold War anticommunist hysteria during the nineteen fifties. The trial and execution of the Rosenbergs (the Isaacsons in the novel) is reconstructed amid the ideological turmoil of the late nineteen sixties by Daniel, one of their children. While writing his Ph.D. dissertation, Daniel seeks to explain the mystery surrounding his parents' trial. Daniel's book-both his dissertation and the novel we are reading-reaches beyond the character's biographical reconstruction and examines the limitations of language and memory in the representation of historical reality. As in many of his other novels, Doctorow reflects on the intellectual's ethical commitment within a climate of political change and epistemological skepticism.

All of Doctorow's novels revolve around important sociopolitical moments in US history. Historical motifs in *The Book of Daniel* encompass the four decades that extend from the Great Depression to the student uprisings of the late sixties. The novel's ultimate goal is to meditate on the evolution of the US left and to examine its impact on the nation at large. According to Doctorow, the contemporary United States owes a debt to its radical past, as of yet insufficiently recognized (Levine 1983:67-68). From a historiographic perspective, *The Book of*

Daniel deals principally with the hysteria of the Cold War period, at its apex during the Rosenberg case.

The Book of Daniel describes the process of its own writing through its fictional author, Daniel. Among the stacks of Columbia's Butler Library, during the turmoil of the student revolts of 1967-68, Daniel recreates the story of his parents, the Isaacsons (clearly the Rosenbergs): two young lower-middle class communists condemned and executed for conspiring to steal and convey the secret of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. Although the book he is writing is apparently a history dissertation on the Cold War, it is also a memoir about his childhood, an anthropological treatise concerning power and violence, a psychological study of the personality of US radicals, a meditation on the Old Left from the perspective of the New, and a journalistic report covering the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and US counterculture.¹ Above all, Doctorow's work seeks to present itself as a "false document," a crossing point for different discursive modes.²

Following revisionist historian William Appleman Williams, Daniel portrays the Cold War not as an attempt to avoid a nuclear catastrophe, but as one more episode in the economic expansion of the United States.³ US government and corporations sought to secure international markets to maintain and expand the country's prosperity and in this way overcome the fear of a new economic depression. The formation of military blocs in

¹ Critics differ when describing the specific field of Daniel's dissertation. While most consider it to be historical, Jerry O. Powell (1981:208) places it in political science, and T.V. Reed (1992: 291) suggests it is literary. The intentional ambiguity of this core fact stresses the recurrent intermingling of history, social science, and fiction in *The Book of Daniel*.

² Because of its diverse and all-encompassing nature, *The Book of Daniel* exemplifies Doctorow's concept of ideal fiction: "... fiction is the discipline that includes all the others. Its language is indiscriminate, it accepts the diction of science, theology, journalism, poetry, myth, history, everything" (Morris 1991:446).

³ As Daniel himself acknowledges, William Appleman Williams's *The Tragedy of the American Diplomacy* (1959) is his major source about the period. Williams's basic assumption is that the Cold War was not merely an incident between the two superpowers that emerged after World War II, but "only the most recent phase of a more general conflict between the established system of Western capitalism and its internal and external opponents" (10). Nearly all documents quoted in Daniel's discussion of the Cold War come from Williams's book.

⁴ Daniel portrays Henry Stimson, senior member of the cabinet, as the only sensible voice in the Truman Administration. The novel reproduces his letter to president Truman (September 11, 1945), asking him to reopen negotiations with the Soviet Union (BD, 284; see also Williams (1959:276). However, Truman ignored Stimson's advice and leaned more and more toward the aggressive position held by the new conservative Secretary of State James F. Byrnes.

Potsdam is described as the result of schemes plotted by the most reactionary sectors of US diplomacy.⁴ The Soviets had asked for help to reconstruct their country, completely devastated after World War II, but were offered instead “free hands” in their area of influence. In this way, the novel blames the uncompromising attitude of the Truman Administration for the expansionist politics of the post-war USSR.

According to Daniel's analysis, anti-Soviet propaganda led to a methodical falsification of reality aimed at masquerading instances of sheer imperialism as humanitarian assistance. Thus, the Truman Doctrine, and especially the Marshall Plan, were two-faced: although apparently dedicated to protecting “free” nations from communism, in reality they sought to give military assistance in exchange for economic favors. The reconstruction of Western Europe served to secure US investments abroad (290). Daniel's arguments are again in Williams's Marxist line of analysis, which tends to stress the economic aspect of US foreign policy and warns about the “firm conviction, even dogmatic belief, that America's domestic well-being depends upon such sustained, ever-increasing overseas economic expansion” (1959:15).

Throughout his digressions on the Cold War, Daniel utilizes the conventions of analytic historiography. He establishes a hypothesis that is supported by evidence, compared data, and cited authorities.⁵ Only at the end of this analysis is Daniel's voice finally heard. In the midst of a minute deconstruction of the official justification of anticommunist repression as a way to guarantee the existence of the so-called “free world,” Daniel remarks: “A MESSAGE OF CONSOLATION TO GREEK BROTHERS IN THEIR PRISON CAMPS AND TO MY HAITIAN BROTHERS AND NICARAGUAN BROTHERS AND DOMINICAN BROTHERS AND SOUTH AFRICAN BROTHERS AND TO MY BROTHERS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, ALL IN THEIR PRISON CAMPS: YOU ARE IN THE FREE WORLD!” (289). Daniel is obviously alluding to the Truman Doctrine, by which the United States granted military and economic support to democratic nations. Nevertheless, Daniel's list of countries tellingly maintained, in spite of their repressive regimes, excellent relations with the United States.

⁵ Daniel's parodic intentions frequently become evident by his abuse of academic formulae such as the expression “many historians have noted this phenomenon” (*BD*, 28-29), repeated excessively throughout certain historiographic discussions.

These brief commentaries, the selection of documentary sources, and Daniel's own personal conclusion regarding the Cold War seek to undermine the political rhetoric used by both sides to justify their positions. By Daniel's account, the US government is not the arbiter of international peace and democracy it purports to be, but is rather the agent responsible for the arms race and, indirectly, a contributor to political repression in the Eastern bloc. Likewise, Daniel depicts Soviet international politics as another form of imperialism that replicates the expansionist strategies of Western capitalism. The repressive technologies of both blocs are described in a similar manner. The eradication and manipulation of the past by methodical falsification of the archive, the humiliation of political activists by public admittance of "personal errors," the fostering of a general paranoia regarding an omnipresent foe, are only some of the strategies shared by US and Soviet intelligence services during the Cold War period.⁶ On both sides the threat of a foreign enemy served as a powerful weapon to repress all forms of dissent and challenge to authority.

To the seeming objectivity of the *grand récit* concerning the economic motivations of the Cold War, the novel adds the emotional microhistory of its victims. Through his novel/dissertation, Daniel seeks to examine the impact that "great politics" exerts on the individual—even on the physical level. To that effect, he abandons the stiffness of academic historiography and often adopts the private tone of the personal memoir and the psychological novel. The novel's shifts toward more subjective perspectives result in an increase in the number of poetic images. Unlike canonical historiography, where the author's voice remains hidden,

⁶ The parallel between the repressive practices of the two great superpowers is reinforced by continuous allusions to the Bukharin trials (*BD*, 18-19, 65-67), which strongly evoke those of the Isaacsons's. Like the Isaacsons of the novel, Bukharin was accused of espionage, convicted through false proofs, and finally executed. Political dissidence in the two cases was interpreted as a conspiracy against state interests. Furthermore, Daniel's discussion of the Bukharin trials follows the same formal pattern as his analysis of the Truman Administration. Written in the conventional style of a dissertation and citing authorities like George Kennan and E. H. Carr, Daniel's discussion moves from the specifics of the case to generalizations that try to explain the rationale of the Soviet betrayal of international radicalism. On two occasions the digression is violently interrupted by Daniel's subjective voice in one case to present a list of "subjects to be taken up" later in his book, in another to insert "A NOTE TO THE READER" (*BD*, 67) protesting against the reductionism of historiographic analysis.

Daniel's voice frequently emerges to interpret the facts or to establish a moral judgment.

Through an intimate portrayal of his parents, Daniel reconstructs the personality of the radical militants of the time. For the Isaacsons, politics is a means of recuperating their self-esteem, a justification of their present suffering and a promise of a better future. Educated during a period of economic hardship and personal sacrifice, they fight for the establishment of an ideal society in an indefinite future. Unlike Daniel's younger generation of radicals, his parents blindly believe in the insignificance of the individual in the face of the transcendental value of collective destiny. In spite of the obvious discrepancies in method and mentality, Daniel's portrayal of his parents does not lack a certain continuity. Paul's obsession with making everything connect, his pathological search for evidence which is always insufficient, serves as a precedent for Daniel's hermeneutic struggle. At the end of his life, Paul seeks in the writing of letters and memoirs a way of giving his complex reality coherence. But, like Daniel, he is unable to make the final connection.

Rochelle, on the other hand, represents the pragmatic current among the radical militancy, having entered the Communist Party not because of ideological sympathies but as a consequence of her poverty ("the politics of want" [40]). Unlike Paul, who believes in the honesty of certain US institutions, Rochelle radically distrusts the system. It is precisely the intuitive nature of her ideas that strengthens her political commitment to the Party: "She was truer to the idea, in her way she was the more committed radical" (49). Her eschatological interpretation of history is not very different from that of the Judeo-Christian tradition: "some purchase on the future against the terrible life of the present" (51). Like Paul, Rochelle begins to write in prison, her testimony becoming a new documentary source for Daniel.

From their dialogues we re-discover important historical moments and crucial figures of the US radical past, especially as it relates to the history of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). Paul and Rochelle first meet in the nineteen thirties, when the CP was enjoying its highest popularity. It was a moment when Communist organizations

around the world were making alliances with other progressive forces against the emergence of fascism, giving rise to the so-called “Popular Front.” Roosevelt’s triumphant reelection in 1936 inaugurated a period of political reform (“a Second New Deal”) in US society. In fact, Roosevelt’s campaign was the first occasion in which a US Communist organization gave its support to a non-Marxist political candidate. The CP publications reflected this reorientation toward social-democratic positions. Periodicals such as the *New Masses*, the *Daily Worker*, and the *Communist* were influential among the liberal middle class who harbored leftist sympathies (Buhle 1989:179)

The period of 1936-39 also coincided with the apogee of the nativist current of the CP as represented by Earl Browder. Elected as a General Secretary in 1934, Browder connected the organization to the US revolutionary and abolitionist traditions, conferring a genuinely American face upon it. His public appearances were often graced with portraits of Jefferson and Lincoln alongside those of Marx and Lenin, and in his speeches he tended to associate his political opponents with “Tories,” “Know-Nothings,” and confederate racists (Johnpoll and Klehr 1986:51). It was Browder himself who popularized the slogan mentioned in *The Book of Daniel*: “COMMUNISM IS THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICANISM” (236-37). Under Browder’s direction the CP reached its zenith of influence upon US society, expanding to include 100,000 members. His reform effort represented an alternative to the traditional dependency of the party on the Comintern, as well as an attempt to resolve the CP’s lack of relationship to US radical history.⁷

The Popular Front era ended worldwide with the German-Soviet pact of 1939. This event, along with a series of new Soviet measures, marked the party’s return to Moscow’s leadership and its loss of popularity in the United States. Until the German invasion of the USSR, World War II was not contemplated as a fight against fascism and was treated by the CP as an imperialist affair. That attitude set the basis for

⁷ The influence of Browder’s ideas on the party’s militancy is reflected in Daniel’s indoctrination by his father: “He told me about using imported Chinese labor like cattle to build the West and of breeding Negroes and working them to death in the South. Of their torture. Of John Brown and Nat Turner. Of Thomas Paine, whose atheism made him an embarrassment to the leaders of the American Revolution” (43).

the future image of the CP as a conspiratorial movement. The leadership of the CPUSA put an end to Browder's reforms in June 1945 with the election of Robert Thomson as the new general secretary and with the expulsion of Browder himself from the party in February 1946. The new policy of the CP was directed toward bolstering its relationship with Moscow, hence their total support for Soviet repressive politics both nationally (Stalin's purges) and internationally (the occupation of Eastern Europe).

Unlike other militants, the Isaacsons remain faithful to the CP's governing board. According to Robert Cottrell, Doctorow's novel is "the first extended portrayal, both critical and sympathetic, of the Communist who remained true to the party as it moved further and further outside the political pale." (1984-1986:63). Although the depiction of US communists has precedents in literary history (Cottrell mentions Dos Passos's *USA* and Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*), these were limited to a period easy to idealize: the years of the Popular Front, before the Stalinist purges ruined the international reputation of Communist parties.

The historical climax of the novel takes place during the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs in the nineteen fifties (1950-53). In his book, Daniel criticizes the myopia of Party members in their analysis of the consequences of the Cold War. While conversing with Paul, one of the Communist leaders suggests that in the long run the repressive politics of the Cold War were going to consolidate the CPUSA (106). Although this repression was used politically by other communist parties (especially in the Soviet Union), it meant the total disintegration of the CP in the United States. The Rosenberg trial is thus contextually placed within the larger general strategy of the fight against Communism in the nation and abroad. Three historical events of great importance occurred in 1949, laying the groundwork for the trial: the triumph of a Communist revolution in China over the nationalist forces supported by the United States, the invasion of South Korea by the communist North, and the successful explosion of a nuclear device by the Soviet Union. As these events took place, rumors about international espionage networks began to spread through the media, culminating in the Rosenberg case. In February 1950, the British physician Klaus Fusch,

who was involved in atomic research for the Manhattan Project, confessed to having engaged in espionage for the Soviet Union since the early nineteen forties. In July of that year Julius Rosenberg was arrested for “conspiring to commit espionage,” as was his wife Ethel shortly thereafter. However, the trial went beyond prosecuting an isolated case of espionage, and soon became a trial against political dissidence supported by political institutions in a period of panic and international instability. In his well-known essay “Afterthoughts on the Rosenbergs” Leslie Fiedler suggests the existence of two Rosenberg trials: the literal one in which the US justice system tried a case of espionage; and a symbolic one quickly transformed into Cold-War propaganda by both sides. Communist movements portrayed the Rosenbergs as victims of capitalism, while at home, they were presented as a clear example of an international conspiracy against Western democracies.

Many details in the novel’s plot were taken from the historical trial. For example, all the protagonists (the Isaacsons, the judge, the prosecutors, the main witnesses for the prosecution, and the defense) are Jewish. Judge Hirsch, like the historical Kaufman, also seeks a promotion through the case (Kaufman was in fact appointed to the Supreme Court shortly afterwards). As in the actual trial, the Isaacsons are accused, not of committing espionage, but of conspiring to commit it (in which case the testimony of a single accomplice is considered sufficient evidence). The irregularities of the legal process and the attitudes of the participants are substantially the same. Similar as well is the portrayal of the devoted, compassionate lawyer who defends the Isaacsons in court while looking after their children.

Doctorow’s fictional version of the trial, however, introduces changes of varying magnitude. In *The Book of Daniel* Julius and Ethel Rosenberg become Paul and Rochelle Isaacson; their two sons, Michael and Robert, become Daniel and his sister Susan; the main witness for the prosecution is not a relative of the defendants (David Greenglass, Ethel’s bother), but a family friend (Selig Mindish); the judge’s name is not Kaufman, but Hirsch; the defender is not a leftist but a conservative lawyer; and the name of the adoptive parents is not Meeropol, but Lewin. While these are clearly minor changes, other elements of the novel deviate substantially from the historical trial. In the real case, Julius Rosenberg

was not just the unskilled electrician Doctorow presents in his novel, but an engineer who had worked for the US Army Signal Corps. Moreover, the decisive testimony against the Rosenbergs was not given by a dentist (as in *The Book of Daniel*), but by a machinist (Greenglass) who had been part of the ultrasecret Manhattan Project. These two significant changes from the professional status of two key players in the real drama to their mundane status in the “fiction” contribute in highlighting the injustice of the case, which is interpreted as a hoax resulting from the conspiratorial climate of the Cold War United States. Although the novel never openly declares the Isaacsons’s innocent or guilty, Paul’s connection with a powerful spy ring is presented by his son as a delirious fantasy. Even when contemplating the possibility of espionage, he suggests that such an eventuality could never have had the importance attributed to it by the FBI.⁸

The Rosenberg case holds a twofold appeal for Doctorow: its inherent ambiguity and its symbolic transcendence. First, it is an historical event of tremendous opacity that has provoked the most disparate reactions among historians and political analysts. From the moment the trial began until now, an endless stream of books and articles have been published on the topic. Although the media unanimously promulgated the official version at the very beginning, in August 1951 the *National Guardian* published a series of articles in which the legitimacy of the trial began to be questioned. Since then, whenever an essay has been declared definitive, it has immediately been refuted by another one from the opposite perspective. The polemic has not wained even though part of the FBI archives were released to the public. A relatively recent essay—Ronald Radosh’s and Joyce Milton’s *The Rosenberg File: A Search for*

⁸ A minor character in the novel, journalist Jack Fein, provides an explanation that has been popular among some historians: “Your folks were framed but that doesn’t mean they were innocent babes. I don’t believe they were a dangerous conspiracy to pass defense secrets, but I don’t believe either that the US Attorney, and the Judge, and the Justice Department, and the President of the United States conspired against them . . . In this country people don’t get picked out of a hat to be put on trial for their lives . . . They were little neighborhood commies probably with some kind of third-rate operation that wasn’t of use to anyone except maybe it made them feel important” (BD, 260). In *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), historian David Caute quotes this passage from *The Book of Daniel* as a very suggestive explanation of the mystery surrounding the Rosenberg case. However, this is just one among many of the versions collected by Daniel, which also include dissenting views provided by Robert Lewin, Fanny Ascher, Artie Sternlicht, and Linda Mindish.

the Truth (1983)— attempted to establish the guilt of Julius Rosenberg and was hailed by the media as the final word on the case; it quickly became the target of scathing attacks by academic historians who pointed out the inconsistencies of the main argument, the lack of proof, and the authors' manipulation of data.⁹

Examples from this interpretative corpus are incorporated into Daniel's book. In his notes, Daniel alludes to six books written on the case, two which support the verdict and the sentence, two which support the verdict but not the sentence, and two in which the legitimacy of the case is categorically denied. Moreover, Daniel incorporates and comments on the apocryphal works of Sidney P. Margolis and Max Krieger, which represent two antithetical positions. Margolis's *Spies on Trial* reproduces the perspective of ultraconservative historians: "For all the hysteria drummed up by the commies, their fellow travelers, and their dupes, the Isaacsons received a fair trial . . . Who but the very ideologues committed to overthrowing our democratic way of life can dare claim in view of the defendants' use of every legal dodge available under due process, that justice was not done?" (277). The other fictional interpretation, Krieger's *The Isaacson Tragedy*, presents the point of view of leftist sympathizers: "History records with shame the persecution and infamous putting to death in the United States of America of two American citizens, husband and wife, the father and mother of two young children, who were guilty of not so much as jaywalking, for their proudly held left-wing views" (277). This imaginary polemic allows Daniel to stress once again the determinant role played the prejudices of the historian. History can no longer be considered an objective retelling of the past, but rather a vehicle through which historians legitimize their own ideas and views. As Doctorow points out in "False Documents:" "the most important trials in our history, those which reverberate in our lives and have most meaning for our future, are those in which the judgment is called into question:

⁹ In his review Gerald Markowitz (1984) dismantles the theses presented by Radosh and Milton. As an example of the favorable media coverage of *The Rosenberg File*, see Alan Dershowitz's review (1983:1). For works arguing the innocence of the Rosenbergs, the most convincing continues to be Walter and Miriam Schneir's *Invitation to an Inquest* (1983). In addition to Doctorow's novel, the Rosenberg case has inspired two other literary works, Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* (1967) and Donald Freed's *Inquest: A Play* (1969), both of which portray them as victims of the hysterical political climate of the era.

Scopes, Sacco and Vanzetti, the Rosenbergs. Facts are buried, exhumed, deposed, contradicted, recanted And the trial shimmers forever with just that perplexing ambiguity characteristic of a true novel” (1983:23). It is this ambiguity that, in Doctorow’s opinion, makes the novel an ideal discourse for exploring the past.¹⁰

The hermeneutic method employed by Daniel in his reconstruction of the historical case is thus a reflection of the multiple perception championed by Doctorow in all of his works. On one level, he examines the socio-historical forces behind the conflicts that overcome the Truman administration, the interior and foreign policy of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the United States, and US society at large. On another level, he recreates the psychology of the victims, their family and social relationships, their private motivations, their fears and hopes. On yet another level, the book discusses the symbolic dimensions of the case and their relationship to other similar events in US history. The final result is a multilayered work in which each level allows for multiple viewpoints, thus contesting the possibility of a definitive historical truth.

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¹⁰ For historical examples of these confronting interpretations of the Rosenberg Case, see the books by Gardner (1954), Meeropol (1975), Nizer (1973), Pilat (1952), Pritt (1953), Reuben (1955), Root (1963), Sharp (1956), and Wexley (1955), as well as Goldstein’s PBS documentary (1974).

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ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' SPECIFIC MOTIVATIONS FOR L2 LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Teachers are often unaware of their students' specific motivations for L2 language learning. However, optimal teaching demands that teachers understand why their students are learning a new language.

To this purpose, we developed a questionnaire to elicit relevant information about students of English as a foreign language's learning motivations, and carried out a factorial analysis to verify a series of hypotheses regarding the elements that motivate these students.

We discovered some key elements for L2 learning motivation and obtained some information about our students' attitude to L2 language learning.

1. Introduction

Motivation is considered by many to be one of the main determining factors in success in developing a second or foreign language (Gardner, 1985), both referred to as L2. Motivated students are actively and personally involved in L2 learning whereas unmotivated students are insufficiently involved and, therefore, unable to develop their potential L2 skills.

Research carried out by Ely (1986), Gardner (1992), Scarcella and Oxford (1992) shows that motivation directly influences how often

students use L2 learning strategies, how much students interact with native speakers, how high their general proficiency level becomes, and how long they persevere and maintain L2 skills after language study is over.

Teachers are often unaware of their students' specific motivations for L2 language learning. It is very important for teachers to understand why their students are studying a new language and how proficient they want to become.

Oxford and Shearin (1994) point out that the old definitional framework that limits motivation to instrumental and integrative (Gardner, 1985) might need to be broadened to allow for other kinds of reasons allowable as L2 learning goals and to allow for complicated changes over time in a student's reasons for learning a language. Also, according to these authors a source of confusion in L2 learning motivation centers on the need to expand the theory beyond the bounds of social sociology, which "while exceptionally important cannot answer all questions about motivation for learning a new language" (p.15). The social psychological approach to L2 learning motivation is concerned with the individual in the context of a group, usually the target culture, and therefore tends to focus on integrative motivation as a reflection of relations between individuals and groups. However, motivation, these authors state, has many aspects that do not deal specifically with such relationships.

Oxford and Shearing (1994) explore and discuss several motivation theories from general psychology in an attempt to enlarge the existing concept of L2 learning motivation. We will present them very briefly together with the implications for L2 learning these authors extract from them.

2. Relevant theories of motivation

The first class of motivation theories include need theories. Landy (1985:95) distinguishes between two types of need theories: hierarchies of need; and need achievement. These theories are based on needs that create tension until satisfied. The best known need hierarchy is

formulated by Maslow (1970). Maslow's hierarchy of needs progresses through five levels: physiological, safety and security, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. The basic concept is that fundamental physical needs must be met before more psychological needs can be satisfied.

Another need theory of motivation is based on the need for achievement and the related fear of failure and fear of success tendencies. The early work of Murray (1938) and of the McClelland group (1953) suggested that certain environmental cues motivate people because these cues are associated with some past success or failure. Past success in a particular situation would make a person more likely to engage in achievement behaviors in a similar situation in the future; past failure would generate fear and stifle achievement behavior.

Teachers must then design task that lead to success, these tasks must be varied so that they can take into account the factors (which will differ among students) that may stimulate their need for achievement.

A second broad class of motivation theories includes instrumentality theories which focus on the individual's expectation of receiving a valued reward. Thus they are sometimes called «expectancy-value» theories. Atkinson (1964:115) asserted that engagement in achievement-oriented behaviors is a function not only of the motivation for success, but also of the probability of success (expectancy) and the incentive value of success. As Oxford and Shearin (1994:12) state, Atkinson's expectancy-value theory helps remind us that L2 learners' expectancies of success or failure are very important in determining their motivation to learn the language. Goal setting can also have great importance in stimulating L2 learning motivation. Goals should be specific, hard but achievable, accepted by the students, and accompanied by feedback about progress. Moreover, they are directly influenced by the learning styles of the people involved.

Another group of motivation theories concerns equity (Pritchard, 1969), which is characterized by a mathematical ratio of inputs (intellectual ability, personal traits, experience, psychomotor skills, seniority) to outcomes (performance ratings, promotions, anything that results from the situation that the individual perceives as having personal value). The implication Oxford and Shearin (1994:19) draw from

this group of motivation theories is that if all the effort is viewed as leading to significant outcomes, that is, if the ratio is deemed positive, then the language learner will feel continuously motivated. It is important for L2 teachers to know what students' goals are so that they can provide the type of instruction that leads to the expected outcome.

Reinforcement highlights the fourth set of motivation theories. This set attributes individual behaviour to the association of stimulus, response and reward. Rewards may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards, those that come from within the student or from the language task itself, are often more powerful than teacher-provided rewards. Extrinsic rewards provided by the teacher are part of the L2 instructional design, but teachers can also urge students to develop their own intrinsic rewards through positive self-talk and through guided self-evaluation.

Industrial psychologists Locke and Latham (1990) have attempted to reconcile several of the motivation concepts above and have added social cognition theories (e.g. self-efficacy and attribution for success or failure). Locke and Latham describe two work stages, the motivation-performance stage and the rewards-satisfaction stage. In the motivation-performance stage, Locke and Latham explain the motivation to work by integrating goal-setting theory and expectancy-value theory with yet another theory: self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one's judgment of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations. High self-efficacy leads to setting higher goals and higher personal standards. The implication is that learners with established goals and a sense of self-efficacy will focus on learning tasks, persist at them, and develop strategies to complete tasks successfully so they can meet their goals. Oxford and Shearin (1994: 21) propose to help students who do not have an initial belief in their own self-efficacy develop a sense of self-efficacy by providing meaningful tasks at which students can succeed and over which students can have a feeling of control. Self-efficacy can also be developed by giving students a degree of choice in classroom activities from day to day. Use of appropriate L2 learning strategies is extremely helpful to learning performance (Cohen, 1990: Oxford, 1992-93). For the student to use them, his L2 goals must be clear, the student's expectancy of success must be strong, and the student's sense of self-efficacy must be high. Thus, L2 teachers should work on improving goal-setting and self-talk by students.

The relationship between motivation to achieve and satisfaction attained, according to Locke and Latham (1990), is revealed in the rewards-satisfaction stage. Self-administered rewards and self-satisfaction are important. Individuals compare their performance with internal goals or standards, which they have either set or accepted from others, and then self-administer rewards or punishments. Successful performance or progress leads to more satisfaction, pride in performance and sense of achievement than does substandard performance. Attribution theory (Weiner, 1986) adds the concept that higher satisfaction occurs when success is self-attributed than when success is attributed to external factors. Thus, L2 teachers can provide instructional activities, exercises and tests by which students will be challenged yet successful, so that the students can attribute their success to their own effort and hard work.

Educational psychologists, Ames and Archer (1980), have extended several motivation theories into classrooms in general. They have examined the relationship between motivation and goal setting in the classroom, particularly in terms of mastery versus relative performance. Mastery is a criterion-referenced concept in which student performance is compared against a clear criterion or objective. In contrast, relative performance in a norm-referenced concept involving comparing one student's performance against that of other students. Oxford and Shearin state that the mastery approach is much more positive than the relative performance approach in terms of students' beliefs in their own abilities and in their use of L2 learning strategies. It also fosters risk-taking, participation and involvement, all of which lead to greater proficiency in the target language. Serious competition (fostered by repeated comparisons of student performance) is not a particularly useful vehicle for L2 learning, although entertaining games and other forms of light competition can be good. The key lies in the classroom climate, which should be nonthreatening and positive at all times.

Motivation from a developmental viewpoint benefits chiefly from contributions of Piaget (1955, 1979) and Vygotsky (1978). Piaget's work suggests that learning a new language, like learning one's native language, is part of the individual's progress towards cognitive development. Language development (in the native language or a second

or a foreign language) deserves and requires a stimulating environment. Vygotsky's work implies that L2 learning goals must be clearly based on learners' needs and interests for motivation to occur, and the input from the teacher must be both relevant and demanding.

Oxford and Shearin (1994) present their work as the start of an expanded model of L2 learning motivation that enhances and enlarges the current L2 learning motivation theory in useful ways. The broader framework towards which they say they are working "does not obviate the current theory of L2 learning motivation. Instead, the broader framework includes other possible motivations and additional mechanisms by which these motivations become reflected in students' behaviors" (p.23). Within this broader framework we investigated our students' specific motivations for L2 language learning.

3. Our research study

The aim of this study was to find out our students' motivations, the elements or factors which are responsible for their perseverance in the learning process. To this purpose we began by synthesizing some key implications for the L2 classroom from the theories of motivation examined.

Teachers can make the L2 classroom an encouraging place, they can provide appropriate instructional frameworks. Some characteristics of optimal L2 instruction include variety in instructional content, its interest, the teacher's ability to explain it, the way the content is structured, clear and important activities, interrelation with the classroom, appropriate feedback and the possibility for the students' self-direction.

Motivation can be increased if the students perceive that the instruction is useful, if success is expected and if the activity is rewarding and satisfying. The problem is to make learners regard the instruction as useful. L2 teachers can provide instructional activities by which students will be challenged yet successful, meaningful tasks at which students can succeed and over which they can have a feeling of control. This will develop their sense of self-efficacy. Helping the students believe

that their learning performance will lead to something else (e.g. career enhancement) is essential for their motivation. Students can be given a degree of choice in classroom activities by means of the selection of topics, debates, projects etc. This will make them responsible for their own learning and satisfy their need for power which helps to develop their motivation.

Attitudes towards success and failure are very influential. Teachers can inculcate the belief that success is not only possible but probable, as long as there is a high level of effort. This positive set of attitudes is related to the setting of varied and challenging goals. In addition, knowing, being aware of the teacher's teaching strategies gives the students some certainty, thus teachers should inform students of their objectives, organizers and study techniques.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards favour the students' outcomes. Teachers can help students build their own intrinsic rewards system by emphasizing mastery of specific goals, not comparison with other students. Teachers can thus enable students to have an increased sense of self-efficacy, whereby they attribute the outcome of their study to their own efforts rather than to the behaviors of teachers or other students.

To all these motivational elements we can add attention (Keller, 1983; Keller and Kopp, 1987; Keller and Suzuki, 1988). It seems that the information received will be processed better if there exists attention. Attention (Allwright 1988:123; Amidon and Hough, 1967:85) is a selective concentration on something that matches previous schemata, and it is the first step to meaningful learning. Attention is increased by curiosity. This can be created in the classroom by means of problem-questions. Examples and anecdotes are also useful. Moreover, advance organizers can be used to aid comprehension by enhancing students' prior knowledge or by providing students with a conceptual framework that is relevant to their prior knowledge.

After synthesizing and explaining some of the key motivating elements for the L2 classroom extracted from the motivation theories examined, we will present the results of a motivation survey administered in order to find out our students' specific motivations for L2 language learning.

3.1. Subjects

Fifty-seven students of the third year of the Technical University School of Engineering of Gijón took part in this study.

3.2. Motivation questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed to elicit relevant information about the motivational factors which exerted a stronger influence on our students. We elaborated a questionnaire consisting of 25 items. Using a 1-10 scale (1=strongly agree, 10=strongly disagree), subjects judged twenty-five statements about the behaviour of the teachers in the classroom. The questionnaire was given at the beginning of the academic year 1997-98 so that the students' opinions wouldn't be influenced by the teacher who taught the subject.

We chose as variables a series of statements which refer to the characteristics of L2 instruction which could exert some influence on the students. These variables were related to all the factors considered influential in the motivation of the students. Thus, with respect to attention, we included fostering of curiosity, the use of organizers, examples and anecdotes; with respect to utility, we used variables that refer to obtaining positive results, sharing classroom responsibilities, facilitating students' participation, and setting future goals. With respect to the attitudes to success, we included promoting success on a regular basis, opportunities for the students' self-control, and informing the students of the teachers' strategies. Finally, we included style of the teacher (voice, modulation), unexpected incentives and the atmosphere created. They all appear in Table 1:

VARIABLE	MEAN
1. Clear exposition of the content	8.81
2. Capacity to communicate with the classroom	8.58
3. Organization of the content	8.14
4. Use of concrete and familiar examples	8.11
5. Use of negative examples	7.74
6. Dialectic fluency	7.54
7. Use of anecdotes	7.42
8. Extraction of the theoretical foundation of the examples	7.11
9. Voice: modulation, tone	7.05
10. Arrangement of the content through schemata	6.93
11. Interest the topic arises	6.85
12. Relating old and new information through films and clarifying explanations	6.57
13. Giving some a degree of choice in classroom activities, like choice of subjects, projects, etc.	6.44
14. Starting each topic with problem-questions of interest for the students	6.15
15. Exposing experiences to help students solve problem-questions	6
16. Relating new concepts and concepts possessed by the students	5.94
17. Adaptation of the subjects matter to the time available	5.87
18. Use of support material	5.87
19. Recommendation of study techniques	5.52
20. Giving unexpected incentives	5.46
21. Global and individual assessment of group work	5.44
22. Group work	5.39
23. Being given time to reflect over what the teacher has explained	5.33
24. Arranging content from easy to difficult	5.21
25. Body mobility	3.98

TABLE 1: Mean value of the items

3.3. Analysis of the questionnaire

Broadly speaking, we observe how students value highly the variables related to the teacher's provision of material which will help them in their future tests and exams, and which facilitates their coping with the subject matter -clarity, communicative capacity, arrangement of the content, use of examples and anecdotes, use of schemata-, while at the same time, the elements related to a more active participation of the students are undervalued (providing unexpected incentives, group work, giving time for reflection). Halfway in between these two groups of variables, we find those variables related to the interest the teacher creates in the students -interest created by the subject itself, by giving a degree of choice in classroom activities, by relating old to new information, by practising problem-solving activities, by presenting relevant experiences to help solve problems. We can so far conclude that our students are basically receptive, and hardly motivated to participate in the classroom.

3.4. Formulation and attempt to verify some hypotheses based on the elements that motivate students

As the number of items (twenty-five) was too large a number to work with, we decided to gather the items in groups and obtain a smaller number of factors that explained the students' motivation and thus, try to confirm the explanatory capacity of the motivational elements previously analysed from a theoretical point of view. To this purpose we used a statistical analysis called factorial analysis, which groups items together in smaller groups. In our case, we carried out a factorial analysis a posteriori, that is, an analysis in which the factors are known a priori, and in this way we tried to verify a series of hypotheses (Table 2), regarding the elements that motivate students. For the factorial analysis to be valid two basic conditions have to be met: parsimony and interpretability. According to the principle of parsimony, phenomena have to be explained using the least number of elements. Therefore, regarding the factorial analysis, the number of factors has to be as small as possible and these have to be open to interpretation. Moreover, a good factorial analysis is that which is, simultaneously, simple and interpretable.

HYPOTHESES	Description
H1	Teachers´ incitement to attention has a positive effect on students´ motivation
H2	Students´ awareness of the utility of what they learn has a positive effect on their motivation
H3	Students´ awareness of the kind of behaviour that leads to success has a positive effect on their motivation
H4	Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards given to students have a positive effect on their motivation

TABLE 2: Hypotheses formulated

3.4.1. Verification of the factorial analysis model

In this section, we will interpret the factors obtained after applying the statistical program SPSS Ver. 4.0 used to carry out the factorial analysis above. To this purpose it is necessary to follow the following steps: (a) study the composition of the significant factorial saturations of each factor and give a name to each one of them, according to their content; (b) decide the value from which saturations are considered significant. In this case, we considered relevant scores those higher than 0.5. Table 3 gives the factorial weightings (which indicate the weight of each variable with respect to each factor) which are significant.

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8
V1								
V2				0.65956				
V3								
V4								
V5	0.56873							
V6								
V7		0.72273						
V8		0.66236						
V9				0.65424				
V10							0.69142	
V11								
V12								
V13	0.6389							
V14					0.56509			
V15								0.67251
V16								
V17			0.81559					
V18			0.85601					
V19						0.55261		
V20								
V21								
V22					0.68553			
V23					0.788			
V24		0.55938						
V25								

TABLE 3: Relevant factorial weightings

According to the variables most relevant for each factor, the next step was to identify each one of them, giving them a name which clarified the information offered by the statistical analysis (Table 4)

FACTOR	NAME
1.	FOSTERING CURIOSITY
2.	USE OF ORGANIZERS
3.	FOSTERING COOPERATION
4.	COMMUNICATIVE CAPACITY
5.	TECHNIQUES OF EXPLANATION
6.	TEACHING STRATEGIES
7.	TEACHER'S DICTION TECHNIQUES
8.	STUDENTS' POWER NEEDS

TABLE 4: Explanatory factors

The first factor has to do with the interest in the subject the teacher succeeds in creating in his students. It includes starting a theme with problem-questions.

The second factor is related to arranging the content according to some schemata, providing subjects with previous knowledge about a topic to help understanding and acquisition.

The third factor deals with favouring cooperation among the students, while at the same time enhancing the personal contribution of the members. This can help avoid failure rejection fears.

The fourth factor is concerned with clarity of presentation, which is related to the communicative ability of the teacher.

The fifth factor deals with the use of examples and anecdotes for a better understanding of the subject matter.

The sixth factor deals with fully informing students of the teachers’ strategies, such as study techniques and relating old to new information.

The next factor has to do with physical characteristics of the voice (modulation, intonation, etc.). Although this factor does not appear in any of the theories studied above, we have called it teacher's diction techniques.

Finally, the last factor refers to allowing the students a degree of choice in classroom activities, which will satisfy their need for power.

3.4.2. Results

We can affirm that increasing students' attention is represented by factors 1,2,4 and 5 as factors that contribute to the students' motivation. Consequently, the first hypothesis is proved. The second hypothesis, that the students' awareness of utility increases their motivation, is proved through the third and eighth factors. The third hypothesis which states that the students' knowledge about their possibilities of success or failure has a positive effect on their motivation, is proved because the sixth factor points out that knowing the strategies the teacher employs has a positive effect on the students' motivation. However, the last hypothesis (intrinsic and extrinsic rewards given to students have a positive effect on their motivation) has to be turned down because there is no factor which bears a relationship with it.

4. Conclusion

An important part of the learning-teaching process involves understanding why students are studying a new language, knowing their actual motivations. Our study has made a contribution to such knowledge.

Our study has shown that encouraging and increasing attention, making students aware of the utility of what they learn and making them conscious of successful learning behaviours have a positive effect on their motivation.

In our view, this knowledge should be employed for establishing the nature of classroom activities. Teachers can select topics and activities that stimulate interest and involvement. Success and satisfaction,

confidence, praise and encouragement should be the defining characteristics of the learning environment.

We have also obtained some information about our students' attitude to the learning/teaching process. Students show a receptive attitude. This attitude can be explained because Spanish University students are more used to studying, observing and remembering than to understanding, experimenting and analysing. Intellectual passivity and obedience, which in general characterises the mental workings of the University students, and which is reflected in the results of the motivation questionnaire, stems from a long tradition of learning based on solving problems rather than discovering and planning them.

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A PROPÓSITO DE UNA COMPARACIÓN: DOROTHEA BROOKE, SANTA TERESA DE JESÚS Y LAS IDEAS RELIGIOSAS DE GEORGE ELIOT EN *MIDDLEMARCH*.

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Abstract

George Eliot's use of the figure of Saint Teresa in the prelude of her most acclaimed novel Middlemarch reveals the importance which in the Victorian period was given to the religious problem. Middlemarch is set in the background to a profound religious crisis and George Eliot makes use of the comparison of Dorothea Brooke with Saint Teresa to emphasize the emergence of a new form of religion based on the creation of the so-called "Angel in the House" which replaced more traditional beliefs.

La comparación entre Dorothea Brooke y Teresa de Jesús que abre el preludio de *Middlemarch* nos revela la preocupación constante de George Eliot por el problema religioso. Dicha comparación ha dado lugar a múltiples y enfrentadas posturas acerca del significado de este paralelismo.¹ No es mi propósito aquí realizar un estudio en profundidad

¹ Katherleen Blake representa una de las posturas feministas más claras en cuanto a la lectura no sólo de Dorothea sino de todos los personajes femeninos de *Middlemarch*. En su artículo aboga por una consideración seria y objetiva de la valía de Dorothea que, inmersa en las condiciones sociales de la época que le toca vivir, no puede más que ser una pálida imitación del misticismo casi heroico de Santa Teresa: «Eliot contrasts Dorothea's situation to that of Saint Theresa, who found the favourable medium for action that Dorothea lacks.» Al contrario que Franklin E. Court, Katherleen Blake no insiste en la búsqueda de un misticismo sino que enfoca la comparación con Santa Teresa desde un punto de vista social. Argumenta que las condiciones sociales no ayudan a Dorothea a realizarse como individuo y que ella no fue tan afortunada como la santa abulense: «significantly, the

de las resonancias religiosas que conlleva la metáfora teresiana, pero no me gustaría seguir adelante sin al menos referirme a la persona de Santa Teresa en relación a las aspiraciones de una mujer victoriana de principios del siglo XIX. Puede parecer extraño y hasta descabellado intentar rescatar la influencia de la escritora abulense y trasvasarla a las peripecias emocionales de Dorothea Brooke; sin embargo la comparación no es ociosa y la propia George Eliot así lo afirma en el prólogo de su novela:

Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life.(...). She found her epos in the reform of a religious order. That Spanish woman who lived three hundred years ago was not certainly the last of her kind. Many Therasas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept in oblivion. (George Eliot, 1994: 3)

Muchas Teresas quedaron en el camino y una de ellas es Dorothea, que no puede encontrar el medio de expresar y canalizar adecuadamente sus energías y recurre primero al matrimonio, y luego a la pasión religiosa de una Santa Teresa enclavada en la situación social, pareja a la Ávila del siglo XVI, de un pueblo de provincias inglés. Dorothea, hija de su tiempo y puritana de vocación, se encierra en su mundo de ascetismo y sobriedad sin otro recurso que el de la renuncia al placer mediante su matrimonio con un trasnochado estudioso de mitología universal. De este modo, Dorothea se pliega en torno a sí misma y olvidándose del

Prelude pictures a Saint Theresa not of mystic beatitude but of very concrete accomplishments as a reformer of a social order. But no coherent social faith and order aids later-born Therasas. Society offers women, especially those of the middle and upper classes, little to do besides the exercise of their affections, it expects less, and it fails to imagine that they need work as much as men..»(Blake, 1983:29).

mundo exterior cultiva la virtud del sacrificio personal y la elevación mística por encima de cualquier placer terrenal.²

Pocas veces se podrá haber constatado de manera tan contundente como en esta comparación de Dorothea Brooke con Santa Teresa, el hecho de que la mujer victoriana estaba ansiosa de dioses y que se agarraba, como a un clavo ardiendo, a cualquier argumento que el destino le deparaba para encauzar e institucionalizar una sed reprimida de religión y de conocimiento, una renuncia que, irónicamente, George Eliot nos describe en la persona de la joven Dorothea:

And she had not reached that point of renunciation at which she would have been satisfied with having a wise husband; she wished, poor child, to be wise herself. Miss Brooke was certainly very naïve with all her alleged cleverness. (Eliot, 1994:52)

¿Qué escondía esta permanente necesidad de alimento espiritual? Mantener el equilibrio emocional podría ser una de las respuestas. En un mundo en el que las aspiraciones personales se reducían a la entrega a los demás, muchas Dorotheas prefirieron sumarse a la corriente ascética de entrega ya no a un esposo o a unos hijos, sino, desde una humildad radical, a la mística personal. Bajo la aparente ingenuidad e infantilismo de tales propósitos se escondían los deseos vehementes de estas mujeres

² Court aplica el sentimiento religioso de renuncia mística de Santa Teresa a las aspiraciones ascéticas de Dorothea. La comparación, en mi opinión, es acertada, puesto que el modelo teresiano de encierro personal y mortificación en aras de la santidad no es sólo apropiado para el caso de Dorothea, sino que ella, al igual que muchas heroínas decimonónicas como Ana Ozores, nuestra Regenta, encuentra en Santa Teresa un ideal de vida interior cuando la vida exterior les falla : «Dorothea is primarily motivated by what appears to be an excess of religious missionary zeal. St. Theresa's reforms were hardly, if at all, actually practical in nature. In fact, her reforms were intended to eliminate the earlier, more worldly, socially directed life of the order in favor of ascetism. She looked intentionally to the model of the holy hermits of the thirteen century from whom the original order traced its beginnings. It was also, as Eliot surely realized, a life style that could exert an irresistible appeal in the mind of a naïve young devotee convinced of her own blessedness and desirous sainthood, a young innocent intent on sacrificing herself to some great, divinely conceived illimitable ideal or cause.» (Court, 1963:3).

victorianas de expresar e intentar conciliar los conflictos que asolaban sus espíritus. Vivían, al igual que Dorothea, a medio camino entre la realidad y el ensueño de alguien que renuncia a la vida consciente para ingresar en las filas de la experiencia mística que la propia Santa Teresa nos define en su *Libro de la Vida*:

Por estar ya fuera de mundo y entre poca y santa compañía miro como desde lo alto, y dáseme ya bien poco de que digan si se sepa. Y hame dado una manera de sueño en la vida, que casi siempre me parece estoy soñando lo que veo, ni contento ni pena, que no sea mucha, no la veo en mí. (Santa Teresa de Jesús, 1990: 480)

Pocas palabras tan precisas para referirse a la necesidad de la infinitud tanto de la pena como de la dicha, a la urgencia de sumirse en una vivencia religiosa más allá de la experiencia del mundo. Estas mismas podrían haber sido las palabras de Dorothea, ansiosa de una vida totalmente inmaterial cuya prioridad absoluta es la huida vertiginosa del caos mundano y la aprehensión casi intangible de un ideal de santidad. La historia de Dorothea bien podría identificarse con las palabras que Azorín dedica al *Libro de la Vida* de Santa Teresa de Jesús:

La vida de Santa Teresa, escrita por ella misma, es el libro más hondo, más denso y más penetrante que existe en ninguna literatura europea. Y eso que ella no ha puesto en este libro sino un poquito de su espíritu, pero todo en esas páginas, sin formas del mundo exterior, sin color, sin exterioridades, todo puro, denso, escueto, es de un dramatismo, de un interés, de una ansiedad trágicos. (Martínez Ruiz, 1985: 40)

George Eliot probablemente eligió a Santa Teresa como contrapunto de Dorothea porque, como ella, Santa Teresa era una mujer apasionada y dinámica: escritora y reformadora religiosa que encarnaba los valores

que George Eliot buscaba para sus heroínas.³ Santa Teresa ejemplifica la lucha entre el deber y la pasión interior, entre la presión del mundo masculino y su propia persona. Su vida fue una continua batalla, descrita magistralmente por Carmen Martín Gaité, que nos trae a la memoria ecos de otra batalla no menos fiera que Dorothea libra durante toda su vida :

Toda su vida fue una lucha grandiosa, como de auto sacramental, entre el entusiasmo y el decaimiento, entre la enfermedad y la entereza, entre la soberbia y la humildad, entre la libertad y la sumisión, entre la actividad y la contemplación, entre el orden y el desconcierto. Lucha que a veces la vencía y las más la aguijoneaba a sacar de su cuerpo—que fue siempre el que salió peor parado— nuevos subsidios extraordinarios para seguir costearo un combate que sólo acabó con la muerte. (Martín Gaité, 1992: 74)

Los libros religiosos y los sermones que significaban en esta época el pan espiritual y cotidiano de cada día, y que acostumbraban a mujeres idealistas como Dorothea a vegetar a la sombra de su auspicio, eran un conglomerado de enrevesados conceptos que contribuían a acentuar la modorra y la pereza de tantas mujeres hastiadas de una dura lucha personal con la polémica que las situaba a medio camino entre la beatería y el agotamiento moral. Para entender esta polémica, una de las más dilatadas del Victorianismo debemos analizar en profundidad el apego que al sentimiento puritano tuvieron no sólo las mujeres del siglo XIX, sino también los ideólogos del poder establecido. La crítica de las libertades sexuales de las que disfrutaba la nobleza y de las dobles normas que permitían todo tipo de licencias amorosas, incluidas las infidelidades, fue articulada principalmente por ciertos sectores de la nueva burguesía. En 1820 correspondió a los grupos más radicales de este sector burgués

³ «Theresa was chosen because she was passionate and dynamic: a reformer, a writer, an erotically charged woman, she expressed, in every aspect of her life, the energy and desire that obsesses George Eliot throughout the canon and is conveyed by the images of flowing water, currents, streams, rivers, and tides.» (Barrett, 1989:129)

abanderar una defensa a ultranza de una particular concepción de la familia y de la vida doméstica.⁴

La aparición de la doctrina evangélica a finales del siglo XVIII proporcionó la base para el desarrollo de estas nuevas ideas. Se trataba de un movimiento reformista, surgido en el seno de la Iglesia Anglicana, que comenzó a ganar poder e influencia a partir de finales de 1770. Nacido en parte como reacción al Metodismo, el Evangelicismo tenía como meta la reforma de la Iglesia desde dentro, apelando para ello a personas pertenecientes a clases sociales poderosas que, obnubilados por un fanatismo religioso, no dudaban en predicar con enconado empeño la nueva doctrina evangélica. En sus comienzos, los evangélicos se apoyaron en esta pequeña aristocracia venida a menos, y sus predicadores más conocidos, como William Wilberforce y Hannah More, intentaron atraer sobre todo a las clases altas con objeto de que éstas llevaran a cabo la imprescindible revitalización del modo de vida inglés.

El mensaje de los evangélicos se centraba en el pecado, la culpa y las posibilidades de redención. La conversión suponía una experiencia esencial; el reconocimiento de la naturaleza humana como irremediablemente pecadora aseguraba el descanso de las turbadas almas a través de dicha conversión. Sin esta percepción individual e intrasferible de los abismos del pecado, no podía existir la esperanza de la salvación eterna. Por lo tanto, la visión evangélica del mundo se basaba en la vida espiritual individual, y era el brusco deterioro de la claridad de vida que había experimentado una corrosión progresiva, fruto del libertinaje de siglos anteriores.

⁴ La creación de una nueva moral religiosa surgió a partir no sólo de una renovación de la conducta, sino también de una convulsión política: «La defensa de esta nueva concepción de la familia y la vida doméstica estaba ligada a un ataque dirigido al Rey. Dos de los partidarios más exaltados de la Reina fueron sir James Mill, amigo de Bentham y destacado utilitarista; en la Cámara de los Lores su causa fue defendida por Henry Brougham, uno de los fundadores de la *Edinburgh Review*. Pero este enfoque de la familia y la política de los radicales no existía un nexo ineludible. De hecho, muchos ciudadanos, escandalizados por las licencias de sus compañeros, apoyaron la causa de la Reina y participaron en la creación de una mayoría moral en la cual convergían los anglicanos y los unitarios.» (Ariés & Duby, 1989:55).

Una fe tan exigente como ésta demandaba un gran sacrificio por parte de los nuevos evangélicos. Convertirse en una persona regenerada en la fe de Cristo requería una ayuda muy poderosa; se hacía necesario recurrir no sólo a los sistemas de control interno utilizados por los puritanos, sino también a las ayudas externas procedentes del clero y de otros fieles, cuya colaboración era necesaria en la lucha para llevar una vida nueva. En todas partes, tanto en casa como en la iglesia, un Dios vigilante y atento escudriñaba cada uno de los actos de la vida cotidiana. Cada aspecto del comportamiento humano se sometía a un juicio implacable y minucioso: un evangélico debía llevar una vida espiritual satisfactoria cada minuto de su existencia.⁵ Las relajaciones burguesas y la comodidad aristocrática quedaban excluidas de la disciplina interna. No se podía permitir ninguna acción al margen de la salvación individual. El conocimiento profundo de uno mismo constituía la verdadera revelación. John Milton, poeta favorito de los evangélicos, ya decía que la sabiduría máxima consiste en conocer lo que nos espera en la vida cotidiana. La creación de una nueva vida comenzaba por la reforma de cada individuo para llegar a la imprescindible reforma de la sociedad.⁶ El individuo sostenía la piedra angular de la naciente construcción puritana. El esfuerzo personal bastaba para alcanzar las metas prefijadas: nacía una concepción de la moral próxima a los planteamientos modernos de autoconfianza y valoración individual. De este modo, los sacrificios de Dorothea no parecen del todo inútiles a la luz de la doctrina evangélica. Su matrimonio con un hombre austero y recio en sus costumbres parece que le sirve, al menos en principio, para conseguir su perfección individual. El trabajo sacrificado y la renuncia diaria proporcionaban las claves de acceso a la felicidad; la acumulación de sacrificios recibiría su premio al final de la vida:

⁵ Altick resalta la importancia de los detalles más insignificantes de la vida cotidiana y la relevancia que éstos adquieren en relación a la salvación espiritual: «The conduct of one's daily life was of utmost importance in qualifying the soul for eternity. Every act, no matter how trivial in earthly terms, would be of incalculable importance when the balance was struck at the gates of Heaven.» (Altick, 1973:166).

⁶ «The confidence the Victorians felt in their power to build an ever richer and more comfortable society undoubtedly owed much to the spiritual energy generated by Evangelical commitment, which spilled over into worldly affairs and prevented the age from sinking into a satiated lassitude.» Ibidem, pág.168 .

Happiness could be earned only through sustained labor and the sacrifice of immediate pleasure. So also to the Evangelical: the attainment of Heaven was a long-term proposition. By diligent application to one's earthly task, one accumulated money in the spiritual bank which would pay off later—how much later, only God could tell—in the accumulated capital, plus compound interest, of divine grace.
(Altick, 1963:169)

Se exhortaba a los jóvenes evangélicos al trabajo voluntario, a la ayuda al resto de la humanidad; no nos sorprende, pues, que en este contexto, Dorothea ansíe la realización de su voluntad filantrópica asistiendo a aquellos que la rodean, ni que su preocupación por el bienestar de sus prójimos agujonee a la joven y anime su espíritu para clarificar la reputación de sus amigos, como en el caso de Lydgate.⁷

Por ello, y debido a la preocupación que en el Victorianismo inglés existía acerca de la vida cotidiana, se sistematizaron las reglas de conducta tanto de la mujer como del hombre. Hannah More⁸, la célebre

⁷Dorothea siguiendo la disciplina de compasión y ayuda al prójimo proveniente de la tradición evangélica, se aplica en conseguir aclarar la confusión existente en relación a la situación profesional de Lydgate. La reputación de éste último queda en entredicho cuando las poco claras circunstancias de la muerte de Raffles salpican su prestigio personal y profesional. Dorothea, deseosa de cualquier actividad redentora, defiende ardientemente la causa de Lydgate y sus palabras denotan el entusiasmo dedicado a dicha actividad. No encuentra nada más elevado, ni siquiera ninguna otra cosa que hacer, que ofrecer su trabajo al bienestar de los que la rodean: «Do trust me, said Dorothea, I will not repeat anything without your leave. But at the very least, I could say that you have made all the circumstances clear to me, and that I know that you are in no way guilty. Mr. Farebrother would believe me, and my uncle, and Sir James Chettam. Nay, there are persons in Middlemarch to whom I could go; although they don't know much of me, they would believe me. They would know that I could have no other motive than truth and justice. I would take any pains to clear you. I have very little to do. There is nothing better that I can do in the world.» (Eliot, 1994:763).

⁸ «Hannah More destacó en los esfuerzos de proporcionar modelos a los hombres y mujeres cristianos, patrones de conducta que sirvieran de guía en los aspectos de la vida cotidiana. Amiga del conocido actor/empresario David Garrick y del famoso Dr. Johnson, Hannah era también de los Bluestockings, un grupo de damas interesadas por la literatura

escritora evangélica, predicaba la obediencia a las normas establecidas y prometía en recompensa las alegrías futuras de la paz celestial. Su atención se centraba en el más absoluto de los desprecios por las cosas de este mundo. Las posiciones preeminentes de la escala de valores evangélicos las ocupaban la familia, el disfrute de la vida doméstica, el desempeño del trabajo con entusiasmo religioso y el cuidado del alma, procurando evitar en la medida de lo posible el exceso y la disipación sexual.

George Eliot, al igual que Dorothea, tampoco pudo sustraerse a la importante influencia de las teorías evangélicas, sobre todo durante las primeras décadas de su vida. En 1824 Mary Ann Evans ingresó junto a su hermana Chrissey en la escuela de Miss Latham en Attleborough. La añoranza de su casa se le hacía casi insoportable a la joven Mary Ann en esta época, y es precisamente por estos días cuando comienza a interesarse por la lectura de libros de contenido fundamentalmente religioso como *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Un año más tarde, tras el merecido reconocimiento de sus tutores en la escuela como una alumna excepcional, se trasladó junto con Chrissey a la escuela de Mrs Wallington en Nuneaton. Aquí, su espíritu atrevido y necesitado de guía espiritual tomó contacto con las teorías evangélicas a través de su amistad con Maria Lewis, que iba a durar unos catorce años. Una de las consecuencias más significativas de esta amistad fue el lanzamiento impetuoso de Mary Ann a las teorías evangélicas que dominaron toda su adolescencia. Los entusiasmados sermones de su profesora y mentora seguían las líneas de actuación del polémico predicador John Jones⁹. Su alto rendimiento escolar le proporcionó el traslado a la mejor escuela para chicas de la localidad, dirigida por las hermanas Mary y Rebecca Franklin. Durante su estancia en su nueva escuela, Mary Ann se grangeó el favor de sus

que se reunían en Londres para hablar y reflexionar. Como en el caso de su amigo William Wilberforce, su conversión al cristianismo no fue repentina, sino progresiva, y en la década de los ochenta se dedicó a escribir una serie de libros con el objetivo de sacar a las clases altas inglesas de su autocomplacencia y exhortarlas a que llevaran a cabo una reforma moral.» (Ariès & Duby, 1989:588).

⁹ John Jones fue un activista y predicador evangélico cuyos sermones de 1828 encendieron las revueltas populares del mismo año y sirvieron de magnífica evocación para los sucesos narrados por George Eliot en su novela *Janet's Repentance*.

compañeras por su trabajo filantrópico y su «santidad», que la llevó a organizar reuniones de oración destinadas a facilitar la renuncia entusiasmada de los placeres mundanos. Jennifer Uglow describe con gran precisión los sentimientos religiosos de la adolescente Mary Ann:

She took the evangelical tenets very much to heart—indeed her Calvinism seems to have been stricter than that of her teachers. She believed that even for the «elect» few the true life of the spirit could only develop from a profound recognition of the essential sinfulness and unworthiness of the self. Care for the soul must predominate over care for the body and cultivation of the mind, and one should live through good works and renunciation. (Uglow, 1987:19)

A la luz de los comentarios de Jennifer Uglow, podemos deducir que el comportamiento ascético y de renuncia que George Eliot practicó a lo largo de los primeros años de su vida tiene su correlato en el comportamiento de Dorothea Brooke. El dimorfismo al que Dorothea somete el cuidado de su cuerpo y el de su alma es sintomático de su afán evangélico de promoción espiritual dejando a un lado las cuestiones puramente materiales como el cuidado del aspecto y el vestido. La religión se tornó en consecuencia legisladora y guía de cada una de las manifestaciones de las vidas, no sólo de mujeres como Dorothea, sino de toda una sociedad dispuesta a entregar una fe incorruptible a los dictados de formas tan rigurosas de religiosidad como las del Evangelicalismo. El empuje de un siglo como el XIX indiscutiblemente teñido de un sentimiento religioso tanto teórico como práctico fue inconmensurable. Las damas de clase alta y media sucumbieron ante los influjos de unos moldes religiosos concebidos en la legitimidad de las virtudes evangélicas. Sin embargo, según la opinión de muchos novelistas y predicadores, la mujer estaba imbuida de una fe simple, en la mayoría de los casos complaciente, que suponía un peligro cierto, ya que, la fe simplona recurrente en todas las mujeres podía fácilmente degenerar en una fe viciada y dogmática.

Durante la última mitad del siglo XIX el creciente espíritu de fervorosa religiosidad alcanzó de lleno a la concepción puramente teórica

de la mujer que se ha dado en llamar el «ángel doméstico». Dicho ángel doméstico, como apunta Laurence Lerner¹⁰, bien podía ser una figura de la más sólida urdimbre religiosa. Si consideramos el proceso de sacralización al que el matrimonio se ha visto expuesto hasta llegar a nuestros días, no podemos dejar de observar la patente coincidencia del matrimonio victoriano con los códigos de la moral religiosa. La obediencia que se le debía al esposo es sin lugar a dudas comparable a la obediencia debida a Dios, e incluso éste le reservaba a su futura esposa un lugar al lado mismo de los santos que ocupaban su corazón:

*You must tell me what I do and always shall feel for
you something which I can only reverence as well as
love. Think me silly if you please. Don't say
anything against yourself for I won't stand it. You
see, I have not any saints and you must not be angry
if I put you in the place where my saints ought to be.*
(Lerner, 1979:141)¹¹

En este proyecto final de la sociedad victoriana en lugar de, o quizá al tiempo que, se trataba a la mujer como una niña pura y casi inaccesible, se la erigió en diosa. En efecto, al margen de sus funciones maternas, era la fuente de los sentimientos sociales y religiosos, era la auxiliar de lo espiritual. Representaba el «sexo afectivo», pero no sólo vivía encerrada en el espacio familiar, sino que también se le confirió un papel en la religión. La madre y esposa se convirtió en un ángel para el hombre, en una diosa para la humanidad, en definitiva se convirtió en una nueva forma de moral y por lo tanto de religiosidad. La nueva religión que destronó a la antigua ponía a la mujer, a la virgen-madre, en el primer

¹⁰Lerner relaciona el repeto y la piedad propias del matrimonio decimonónico con las virtudes y demandas inherentes al deber religioso: «There cannot be any doubt about the explicit Christian nature of Protestant marriage. As for married life, mutual piety is at the center. Husband and wife will paray together, will be concerned for each other's salvation, will help each other to control sin. The obedience owed to a husband is explicitly compared to, and derived from, the obedience due to Christ.» (Lerner, 1979:141).

¹¹ Se trata de un pasaje de una de las cartas de Leslie Stephen a su futura esposa Julia en 1877 y que se ha convertido en uno de los fragmentos más conocidos y citados en relación a la devoción religiosa del esposo a su esposa.

plano. María, reina del Cielo, simbolizaba todos los valores femeninos: a la vez vírgen y madre, expresa el sueño de una espiritualidad descarnada, disociada de la conjunción carnal. La descendiente de Eva era también hija espiritual de María. Se perfilaba así el lado positivo de la femineidad. El siglo XIX buscó en la mujer el elemento positivo del hombre, su dulzura y su intangibilidad. Accesible a la piedad, nacida para la caridad, la mujer tenía la misión de ser mensajera de un ideal de paz y piedad. La creencia indudable en los seres inmateriales—los ángeles—implicaba la necesidad de un eslabón intermedio que impidiese la ruptura de la cadena divina en la tierra. Este papel de intermediaria divina se le asignó a la mujer. Ésta tenía como vocación propia e intrasferible su elevación hacia el estado intermedio de mediadora. Antes incluso de la promulgación del dogma de la Inmaculada en 1854 y del auge de la mariofanía, la literatura se hizo portadora de este mensaje místico de huida lejos de los peligros del cuerpo y de los placeres materiales hacia un angelismo diáfano.

La religión, debido al impulso de la nueva mujer-diosa, se desvió hacia parámetros menos teologizados y de algún modo más secularizados. Se instó al abandono de formas religiosas tradicionales y ante el imparable avance del inconformismo e incluso del ateísmo, se optó por la vía de la concordia. Se intentó conjugar las formas más puras y ortodoxas de la religión decadente y se insufló la mezcla con los aires semisecularizados de la emergente mujer religiosa. La suma de los dos pilares fundamentales de la esencia femenina—belleza y virtud—, que tradicionalmente habían sido imposibles de reconciliar sufren durante el Victorianismo una mutación de funciones que trastocó la cualidad perniciosa que a esta unión de belleza y virtud se le había venido atribuyendo en siglos anteriores. La intromisión de una nueva religión de la mujer en las formas religiosas tradicionales se consolida en nuestras reflexiones como una posibilidad más que probable. Una vez sustituidas la pasión y los deleites de la carne por los placeres mucho más sobrios del espíritu, la feminidad se convirtió en el anhelo eterno de perfección inalcanzable en la tierra. Si no puedes sojuzgar al enemigo, intenta aliarte con él; esta máxima ilustra el principio al que aspiraban los moralistas que poblaban la Inglaterra decimonónica. La mujer transformada en un ser angélico y, por definición inmaterial, apagaba las llamas de la tentación pagana y a la vez se encumbraba como monumento viviente

de la pureza, de las normas del pudor impuesto y, cómo no, de la idílica armonía entre el cuerpo y el espíritu. Si bien este panorama religioso surgía de una minoría culta y en su mayor parte burguesa, la gran mayoría de las mujeres aceptaba gustosa la condición semidivina que se les atribuía y no dudaban en alimentar una imagen de perfección y piadoso recogimiento. La nueva religión del «ángel doméstico» resultante de una rigurosa moralidad era un testigo que mujeres tan fervorosas como Dorothea recogían ansiosamente en virtud de una prometida recompensa y en favor de futuras generaciones.

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ENDEMONIADAS TRAS EL DOSEL DE LA HISTERIA: CATACUMBAS DE LA MORAL, ÉLITROS ENSOÑADOS, ALMIZCLE Y VAMPIRAS DE LA CENIZA. UN TRAYECTO...

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Abstract

In a marbled whisper, allegorical and dream-like at times for the delectation of the strange aura of the entity described, we intend to present some of the mythological antecedents behind the modern conception of the female vampire myth, both in literature and film, unearthing Frustration and Desire of Self determination against submission, as the eternal flame and scarlet ecstasy flowing, throughout the centuries, through the veins of the persistent malevolent fanged-diva.

Feminidad y el telar de los vientos caducos. Siempre cautiva en el alma cetrina de un retrato oval, no trascendente, tal vez inquieta en el sueño más allá del espejeo mundano, como la Alicia de Lewis Carroll, sumergida en el país de los embrujos y los carismas de estulticia, perdida en su ser, en el suspiro de supremacía que culmina su ritual iniciático; extrañada, desterrada, gélida bajo las aguas de noche cual ínclita sirena en cánticos de liberación, coronada en el sigilo de lo trascendental, acunadora cérea, virgen sosegadora, hagiográfica estampa de encajes obleados, o musa de alentada promiscuidad tersada sobre los versos de ébano y brasa, rubicunda o tizonada al tacto caprichoso del idealismo poético, henchida en delimitación de Venus embadurnada de estío, Medusa de espejeada alma pétrea en su mirada, agorera seductora de la perdición sensible, cautiva en un arrogante señuelo que condena o

mesmeriza en júbilo; más febril, sin embargo, decadente y escuerza cuando camina a solas, cuando pretende el espíritu de las sendas, cuando se atavía con la gasa blanca de la bailarina romántica, cuando se desvirtúa y se pierde, se diluye —se hace eterna en tal sacrificio, amor trágico, que es autodeterminación— tras la máscara de la lánguida encantadora de Frank Liszt, esa mujer inmaterial soñada por el romanticismo, corporeizada con talento mórbido y agónico por las bailarinas de la desidia¹, cuando tiraniza con ardiente mirada más allá del solaz de la tumba y torna, despersonalizada metamórficamente, «the foul Thing». (Stoker, 278: 1993)

En el XIX se murmuraba cautamente, cual si se preludiase el ocaso y la venida del castigo divino, acerca de su potestad absoluta y, por ello, con cincel, pentagrama, laúdano de color en pincel o estilizadas estrofas de delirio literario, entre otros, se anheló cautivar su abstracción ilimitada en tactos serenos, dominados y expuestos a la universalidad. Se la esbozaba sobre el lienzo de impresiones volátiles, se la reducía al antojo de los cánones apetecibles de la hermosura, siempre como esencia sentenciada a ser metonimia —dichosos ojos, labios de pócima, espalda de abisal plañido orgásmico, curvada pomposidad, obnubilador interregno de sus senos y otras cicatrices fetichistas—, petrificada para la contemplación extasiada.

Ella era titilar manifiesto de lo supremo, degenerado, extenuado y enajenado en las torpes manos y rencoroso corazón del artista, pero, al tiempo, era poderosa en esencia, deseada durante siglos como reminiscencias de la «Mona Lisa», como epicentro de las fuerzas naturales, delicadamente curtida en su interioridad por sueños, quimeras y flamas de pasión, renacida del corazón silente —sibilino en animalismo— de las diosas griegas o la lascivia de la época romana, y cenizada por el misticismo que la revistió en el medievo. Varada en la

¹ El sufrido ballet de «puntillas», mesmérico y trascendental, casi etéreo en su majestuosidad, estira melancólicamente a las sufrientes, las delimita gráciles —acuciadas también por una acechante fragilidad— y les permite evoluciones de una ligereza casi aérea, tal vez execrablemente autómatas y frías, aunque en sus facciones se advierte la vivacidad de lo metafísico, esa delicadeza vítrea que en su rostro espejea el alma, en reflejo de tormentas interiores. Esa lánguida palidez, matizada por moteadas nubes de polvo de arroz, murmurada por el abismar de muerte y la fantasmagoría de su esencia, contrasta con las ralas geometrías oscuras de su encantador pelo y los avioletados presagios que se guarecen en la holgada desazón de sus ojeras.

imposibilidad de llegar a ser ella en vida por histeria del eterno infortunio —llámese prejuicio y opresión— y lo absoluto arrebatado —inocencia y amor contaminado—, la mujer pasó a convertirse en objeto de la sociedad, del Estado, diluyéndose en una representación de los elementos públicos y privados, convertido su vientre y el morador latente, el vástago libador y nutrido, anulador, en espejo evolutivo de una sociedad de futuro, cripta de la propia identidad, tornado el suspiro de la feminidad, por tanto, inspirar del nuevo hombre llamado a ser virtuoso y sigiloso aprendiz de lo demiúrgico, o nueva esclava que seguiría los designios de la desventura materna.

La ensoñación escapista de unos párpados bañados por el rocío del hielo, la reprimida autorrealización, el desencanto y el ansia de poder mutilada, gestaron delirios utópicos en la desdichada feminidad —*Women, as compared with man, is of the nervous temperament. Her nervous system is therefore more easily acted upon by all impressions, and more liable to all diseases of excitement.* (Lylock, 1860: 317) y, de este modo, en los albedríos de su conciencia de desolación —parangón simbiótico de sus estancias sin alma—, en los ángulos muertos de su desdicha, acompañada por las siluetas de muñecas sin susurro, sumida en el musitar de los recuerdos, en su sereno cubil de sollozo en soledad, la feminidad halló leños fríos y desbastados para acunar la flama de sus sueños. La alcoba se convirtió en jardín y refugio embelesador², vitelo

² Las cartas y los diarios, esas otras estancias de intimidad y apartamento en las que la feminidad libera su ansiedad y doma los duendes de frustración, la revelan suave y tierna, acariciadora y ávida de un relámpago de anunciación del cambio. En el diario halla ella estelas de narcisismo más allá de sus planidos existenciales y aprende a adorar su ser, descubre la altivez oculta. La confesión epistolar, por otra parte, las revitaliza, las sulfura y enaltece, una vez crean en las sombras la imagen constante de ese acompañante sigiloso que las comprende y las ayuda a existir. Acerca de la entusiasta y fervorosa complicidad gestada en las líneas remitidas en *Dracula* entre las solteras de diferente sino, Lucy Westenra y Mina Murray, Linda Kauffman afirma:

“The letters of these desiring women are acts of ‘rebellion against the tyranny of fathers and lovers’, censures of ‘their control of women and speech’ and critiques of their ‘distorted representations of women.’” (citado en Pope, 1999: 82)

En la nueva jerarquía de ese mundo aparte, en el que comparte sus gemas de intimidad con su sufriente proyección simétrica, ese universo nacido a partir de efluvios del propio ser, reflejos prohibidos de la identidad, la feminidad renace, en el seno de la sombra que la custodia, creándose también cierta competitividad alentadora con su homóloga, lo cual fustiga sus ansias de superación.

No es raro, pues, que muchas adolescentes descubriesen en el internado la fraternidad custodiadora en su *alter ego* femenino y, así, dos corazones de feminidad se unieran en una amistad apasionada —afectividad y sensibilidad análoga al romance lésbico—, se hicieran inseparables y vivieran en simbiosis obsesiva, intercambiándose juramentos, mechones de cabello, retratos, alhajas y otros símbolos reveladores de afecto eterno.

sobre el que arañar la autonomía naciente, el primer espacio en el que se expresó la personalidad, silencio y sigilo de estruendos que culminó, hermosa, en la ansiada muerte mediadora y umbral de la coronación.

En el envés de la irrealidad, en los proskenios de su subconsciente, la mujer comenzó a desvestirse de los harapos de victimización, suspirando plácida y pasivamente, sin rubor, ante las pavorosas visitaciones nocturnas del vampiro, o, convirtiéndose, ella misma, en cruel antagonista de vehemente voracidad, vampira de la pasión letal o mascarada enfermiza del Eros, insuflado a su aura ese inconfundible halo espectral, reminiscente del almizcle y los pétalos mustios que cubren a los caídos.

Negada en vida, modelada a voluntad por el contexto, convertida, por un lado, en espejo edípico de virtudes y candidez —ejemplificado en la madre acunadora y ausente de Poe—, la que no muere en el recuerdo, o, por otro, y en respuesta refleja tanto a la opresión como a su propia naturaleza de irascible tentadora, tornada ardiente seda pasional, la feminidad pasó a materializarse en sueños como la eterna luna del desconsuelo, la que germina en la noche iluminando los confines del paisaje surrealista de madrugada, las noctíparas revelaciones de la libido y el desangelado exorcismo de los sueños fatales. Ella, esforzada en conservar un esmalte aperlado, de nácar —que mostraba su incomunicación, su «virtuoso» enclaustramiento—, halló en la muerte el pretexto para la resurrección más excelsa, conservando la riqueza postiza de su cabellera cuyo olor turbaba a los hombres, ataviada aún en el alba cenizosa, sin lustre, de su vestido de novia, marmóreo como lo había sido el de primera comunión o la blanca muselina transparente del primer vestido de baile, todos ellos emblemas primaverales, apetalados, del pudor intacto.³

El susurro las bautizó, por tanto, como eternas silentes y reinas del éxodo, nómadas insanes en busca de su propia identidad, huidizas

³ Esta respuesta por parte de la frustrada —«hysterical discourse», según Elisabeth Bronfen (1999: 57)— ante el estado de opresión que impone el abuso patriarcal del hombre supone, en palabras de Glennis Byron, «the breakdown of traditional gender roles, the confusion of masculine and feminine, (...) one indication of a more general threat of cultural decay and corruption, of a more widespread degeneration of society» (Byron, 1999: 15), una inversión de los roles sexuales entre hombre y mujer que nos presenta una feminidad en eclosión de la avidez, en plena iniciativa —abrumadora, por tanto— y un hombre expectante, dentro del juego de la seducción.

sumisas a la languidez que ensombrecía la arrogante hipocresía mundana en la oscura catacumba del siglo XIX; eran la belleza, sin embargo, coronada en proskenios de pesadilla, tras la niebla, ensoñadas con un ruego maldito más allá de las dunas de existencia mientras trababan sus vuelos de encanto excelso a las brisas del silencio. Su beldad, apocopada en vida, pues, despreciada ante la cómoda como hoguera de vanidades y briznas de tentación condenadora, llegó a transparentarse diáfana y hórridamente excelsa, sin limitaciones, en su sudario⁴, imagen de la que más recelaron y en la que más se apasionaron los hombres subyugados a su encanto turbulento. En la delectación «voyeurista» masculina, aquellas hadas frágiles libaban de la sombra de la frustración y encantaban el subversivo rumor de los deseos más primitivos. Tensa y altiva, enfundada en su frágil y acardenalada piel de danzarina, la incólume y lechosa tez de la sufriente, se aliaba con el abismo del deceso, se encadenaba a un abrazo mórbido de la dejadez esquelética y mórbida, la muerte. Por ello, licenciosa, insaciable y pretenciosa en exhibición de su cadavérica excelsitud preciada sobre un retablo de textura diáfana a la luz de la luna, la reviniente, la no muerta, la vampira, tejía su mecer sigiloso en el revuelo de las tempestades, en ámbitos de ruina lúgubre o trances de alienación densa, elevada en ataviados élitros diáfanos sobre la frustración milenaria.

La ensoñación rutilante de la vampira del XIX, esa potestad y carisma desafiador, su discurso contranatura y subversivo a la ideología masculina imperante, su propuesta de cambio análoga a la filosofía de la «New Woman», la convierten en victimizadora voraz de sus

⁴ En el trance de anhelo y desdén sin límite, la belleza es comparable, por su solemnidad de estrato inalcanzable, lo etéreo de su volubilidad y el afectado desespero de lo perecedero, con el clímax del pesar, el que nos lleva al ventanal para cautivarnos a ella, al deseo inconfesable que la idealiza. Tal es la suma tonalidad insoslayable y el garbo de la mujer irreductible, la que ha despertado de su letargo de muerte. Lucy Westenra y Carmilla danzan, así, tras el vidrio de la tentación:

«There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity». (Stoker, 1993: 278)

«She was above the middle height of women. I shall begin by describing her. She was slender, and wonderfully graceful. Except that her movements were languid—very *languid*—indeed, there was nothing in her appearance to indicate an invalid. Her complexion was rich and brilliant; her features were small and beautifully formed; her eyes large, dark, and lustrous; her hair was quite wonderful, I never saw hair so magnificently thick and long when it was down about her shoulders; I have often placed my hands under it, and laughed with wonder at its weight. It was exquisitely fine and soft, and in colour a rich very dark brown, with something of gold.» (Le Fanu, 1988: 88)

circunstancias y anclas sociales —aniquiladora de su amado en el caso de Clarimonda en «La Morte Amoreusse» (1836), victimizadora de su amada, como Carmilla en «Carmilla» (1872) de J. Sheridan Le Fanu, o alegórica devoradora de sus vástagos, como las tres vampiras de la cohorte de Drácula o la pérfida Lucy Westenra, una vez vampirizada (Olivares, E., 1996; Olivares, J., 1999). Tal revestimiento y esencia no es sino eco de un molde arcano, llegado hasta nosotros en recuentos de mitología ancestral, esbozos de bestiarios arcanos, que a menudo se suelen obviar en la contextualización caracterizadora de la mujer vampiro.

Así, podemos asegurar que el mito literario y fílmico de la no muerta libadora de sangre, nace como acuciante reflejo del sadismo reaccionario y victimizador de *Lilith* y su metódica devastación de lo íntimo deriva del cruel método exterminador de infantes que propugnan las entidades del desencanto maternal en los universos de la mitología. La herética *Lilith*, reina hebrea de la noche, originalmente *Liluti*, uno de los siete espíritus maléficos de Babilonia (Bunson, 1993: 157), primera mujer de Adán concebida como progenitora de la humanidad que, sin embargo, fiel a su naturaleza diabólica y embriagada de individualismo, deja el regazo de su desposado para cohabitar entre demonios de la sombra, renuncia, de hecho, a su designios maternos y a sus instintos acunadores, persiguiendo sus propios fines y propósitos. Feminidad de ilimitada beldad, autosuficiente, caracterizada por el displicente motear de abundante vello en sus piernas y el peculiar odio exacerbado hacia los infantes, ella se muestra como la primera estampa aunadora del espanto acervo y la sensualidad insoslayable, la intrepidez malévola de la amoralidad y la sed de sangre, primigenio esbozo de las constantes de la feminidad vampírica que llega a nuestros días.⁵

En tales abismos de infinito, custodiados por el signo de la temida madre fatal que representa Lilith, nacieron, asimismo, con el fulgor heredado de acecho en sus ojos, otros iris incubados entre las ondas de oscuridad, entidades y óleos de nocturnidad dentro de la galería de

⁵ La ausencia de Lilith, su desdén, trajo, además, a la amante perecedera, Eva, materialización de la entrega fugaz y mustia, aquella que abismaría a Adán, al hombre, a la condenación una vez comulgada su avidez con los ojos del espíritu enroscado al árbol de la sabiduría, la pretendida inocente, versada también en altivez egocéntrica y proclive a la tentación que, desde entonces, hizo del paraíso un concepto utópico para la humanidad.

escalofrío, espejos de plañideras y mitos representativos de la frustración femenina, la esterilidad forzada, el desencanto maternal, que pronto llegaron a convertirse en mácula hórrida y referente de la pesadumbre femenina a lo largo de los siglos.

Esos primeros vestigios de feminidad teromórfica, metáforas del resentimiento y la amargura son, en esencia, animalizaciones de la fertilidad caduca o infecta, además de plasmaciones compensadoras de la infortunada madre súbitamente coronada. Así, trazo de pavor en las tradiciones malayas, encarnación alada de la mujer estigmatizada por la desgracia, la *lansguir*, engendro monstruoso de largas uñas, ropajes verdosos y luengos cabellos ennegrecidos que cubren un orificio en su espalda por el que liba sangre de sus presas, se esboza anómala a otras concepciones legendarias propias de cada cultura, engendros que, apostados en la fronda o en la oscuridad, acechan a los pequeños para libarles la sangre e invertir el proceso de nutrición, convirtiéndose en donadoras de la muerte en su seno, sedientas chupadoras del elixir vital, madres fatales de la involución. Entre estas entidades de leyenda destacan las temibles *bruxsas* de Portugal, la vampira *Asanbosam*, de Ghana, que mora los bosques tupidos al acecho de los cazadores —de fisonomía similar a la humana aunque con ciertos rasgos de imaginería estremecedora: sus dientes de hierro y sus piernas con garras— o la *aswang* de Filipinas, engendro que adopta apariencia humana durante el día, pero, con el véspero, metamorfosea convirtiéndose en un singular demonio alado que, comandando las huestes de almas perdidas con su grito de ataque —«*Kikik!*» (Bunson, 1993 : 13)—, irrumpe en los hogares, acecha las yacijas y victimiza a los niños que duermen en la mullida parte central de los catres, huyendo al alba al resguardo de su cubil por escapar de la luz de la amanecida y preservar, así, sus ungüentos macabros.

Ataviada en hórrida desnudez, lustrada y ornamentada por sus amuletos de manos cercenadas y calaveras de tersura ósea, aletargada su majestuosidad bajo los escapularios de supremacía —como la carismática deidad femenina en *She: a History of Adventure* (1887), de Rider Haggard—, emerge de las tinieblas la escalofriante diosa *Kali* de la India, madre de la Tierra Oscura, acunadora de las más espeluznantes formas de muerte o infortunio, a cuyos pies los sacrificios

de sangre de los Thugees veneraron con trenzar hemático la memoria de la deidad.

Algo más decrepita, animalizada en extremo, es la bruja *chordewa*, criatura cuasivampírica y leyenda originaria de una tribu de Bengal, que posee la potestad de convertir su alma en gato negro —recuérdese la sibilina presencia que acecha a Laura en sueños, la alegórica silueta de Carmilla mientras liba de la sangre de su víctima y la sume en el trance del amor enervante— y victimiza a los débiles, enfermos o agonizantes, arrebatándoles la comida para, posteriormente, lamer sus labios y condenarlos a una muerte segura.

Citada en *Las Mil y una Noches*, criatura de ténebre exotismo según se reconoce en tales líneas de exquisitez casi prohibida, sinceramos también con el escalofrío la presencia de la necrófaga *Amine*. Demonio árabe o *agul*, esta entidad se afana en alimentarse de fuentes colmadas de arroz que toma, como capricho singular, grano a grano, junto a pequeños mendrugos de pan y jirones de carne humana, exquisitez de involución, sin duda.

Entre las deidades aztecas encontramos a la *civatateo*, sirvienta del dios lunar Tezcatlipoc y, según ciertas leyendas, princesa que tras su muerte justo después de nacer retornó a la vida a lomos de una escoba, exhibiendo su semblante albo, sus brazos y sus manos cubiertas de tiza blanquecina y se apostó, desde entonces, en los cruces de camino para victimizar a sus presas⁶, niños en particular de los que liba hasta la última gota de sangre. También mexicana, de concepción posterior, influida muy probablemente por la terrible leyenda alemana de la Dama Blanca —*Die Weisse Frau*—, es La Llorona, bella fantasmagoría ataviada en una especie de sudario albo, tras el que se esconde un alma siniestra, que trae la desgracia a los hombres, como venganza a una fechoría sufrida en vida, cuando su amante heló el delirante desdén en su corazón, aceptando el favor de otra feminidad a cuyo regazo acudió dejándola sumida en una pesadumbre y obcecación pasional que la llevó a acuchillar a sus tres hijos y a resucitar tras ser ajusticiada, quedando inmersa en

⁶ Recuérdese la creencia popular según la cual el vampiro folclórico, enterrado en la intersección de senderos para confundir la orientación del reviniente y evitar su regreso a la aldea, se aparecía a los caminantes en tales enclaves de fatales augurios.

la adimensionalidad de las almas errantes, para siempre cincelada en nuestros soslayos de desasosiego.

No podemos ignorar tampoco, en nuestro soslayo de preludiantes concepciones vampíricas, dos de las más sombrías hebras de leyenda que supuran en la cuentología irlandesa. Por un lado, la *leanhaum-she*, hada versada en encantamientos, procuradora del delirio masculino — reconocida como horrible chupasangre en la isla de Man aunque también descrita como oscura musa de los poetas (Froud & Lee, 1998: 123) en el folclore irlandés—, quien lograba urdir, valiéndose de su belleza radiante y su invisibilidad a ojos de todo aquél que no cayese en su encanto pasional, un abrazo de muerte o trance artístico en torno a su amante escriba, más pavoroso, extático, cándido y, a la postre, letal, que el de cualquier otra mujer mortal. Ella, la *leanhaum-she*, inspira, por tanto, tomando la sangre y la vida a cambio, drenando la juventud y tornando sumiso al mortal hasta hilar sus suspiros al sigilo de la muerte, como dicta una canción popular:

*I am a creature of the Fey
Prepare to give your soul away
My spell is passion and it is art
My song can bind a human heart
And if you chance to know my face
My hold shall be your last embrace.*

I shall be thy lover...

*I am unlike a mortal lass
From dreams of longing I have passed
I came upon your lonely cries
Revealed beauty to your eyes
So shun the world that you have known
And spend your nights within my own.*

I shall be thy lover...

*You shall be known by other men
For your great works of voice and pen
Yet inspiration has a cost
For with me known your soul is lost
I'll take your passion and your skill
I'll take your young life quicker still.*

I shall be thy lover...

*Through the kisses that I give
I draw from you that I will live
And though you think this weakness grand
The touch of death, your lover's hand
Your will to live has come too late
Come to my arms, and love this fate!*

I shall be thy lover...

Por otra parte, mencionamos el *Glaistig* (Froud & Lee, 1998: 133), morador de las tinieblas, hada igualmente, descrita como entidad que aúna características humanas y animales —mitad mujer, mitad cabra. Ataviada siniestramente con holgados sudarios verdosos, impelida a invocar su supremacía sobre el género masculino y ávida de castigar la lascivia de los hombres, suele seducirlos, invitándolos a una tenebrosa y embriagadora danza de muerte.

Asimismo, de liviana apariencia, etérea, cual heraldo de bruma, vocifera a nuestro subconsciente de pesadilla la *mara* anglosajona, temida en Islandia, Dinamarca o Suecia, súcubo letal que metamorfosea en

caballo para aparecerse en las estancias de durmientes y oprimir el pecho de sus víctimas, atisbando obnubiladamente, con sus horrendos ojos bermejos, la supuesta alma del yacente, libando gradualmente su hálito vital o su sangre.⁷

Entre las más diversas sombras de deidades griegas y romanas emparentadas con la concepción de la vampira, destaca, por encima de cualquier trazo de leyenda, la carismática soberana de las tinieblas, Hecate. Diosa iniciadora de las artes mágicas y los hechizos, enviada del más allá, considerada reina del mundo de las fantasmagorías, cuya etimología —que viene a significar «la que actúa por su voluntad»— explícita de manera diáfana y fundamental la analogía con el carisma individualista y dominador de la no muerta literaria del XIX, aparece descrita —en inversión paródica con la Santísima Trinidad, siguiendo la caracterización del vampiro literario como antagonista de Cristo y las constantes del cristianismo— como entidad tripartita que, además de sus delirantes ofrendas al mundo de las tinieblas, liba sangre en rituales espeluznantes de magia póstuma.

Acusadamente espantosas son, de igual modo, las horribas *empusas*, que forman hordas para acudir a los aquelarres de Hecate, o las *estriges*, insólita bruja de la mitología romana mencionada incluso en edictos del medievo, engendro que bebe la sangre de los niños y tiene la potestad de transformarse en ave nocturna —en búho generalmente—, para emprender un siniestro vuelo de victimización de hogar en hogar, sintiendo —tal vez envidiando también—, sólo fugazmente, como monstruosidad de las intemperies y la nocturnidad, el cándido ensueño de las delimitaciones de esas estancias de familia consagrada.⁸

⁷ En el infinito telar de concepciones arcaicas y legendarias, urdido en esencia con hilo común, hallamos otra referencia concomitante a esta entidad vampírica. Concretamente, en el folclore eslavo, cuna del vampiro folclórico y, por ende, de sus concepciones literarias, se alude a un engendro cuyo nombre, *mora*, deja a entrever ciertas analogías con dicha tradición. Esta quimera del este se muestra como vampira que seduce con su succión hemática y posee a la víctima, morando lúgubrementemente en sus sueños encantados, hasta la extenuación.

⁸ Similares entidades teromórficas, de enfatizada potestad mesmérica, preludio del ocaso de los hombres que sucumben a sus encantos físicos y cadencias, son las sirenas —*a sea fairy, half woman half fish, which can also haunt rivers and pools. Mermaids are usually dangerous to men, but they also have medical knowledge.* (Brown Sarah, 1996: 20)—, también metamorfoseadas en aves de rapiña. En sus estampas de exótico colorido, lustradas con coral, estrellas de mar y alhajas marinas, Gautier pudo basar los matices ensoñadores y majestuosos de la beldad natural y encantadora de su Clarimonda,

Por último, y como no podía ser de otro modo, nos hacemos eco también de las *lamia*, tipología de demonio capaz de sacarse los ojos y devorar a sus víctimas —exclusivamente masculinas—, macabras entidades aludidas en nanas de espanto y modelo de caracterización o referente de la mayoría de concepciones vampíricas femeninas dentro de la literatura.⁹

quien, cual sirena, encanta a Romualdo para desviarle de su singladura y aprestarlo al naufragio moral:

Allí tenía a la misma Clarimonda que vi en la iglesia en la ceremonia de mi ordenación. Ofrecía todo su encanto, como si la muerte fuese un adorno más de su sublime belleza. La blancura de sus pómulos, el leve rosado de sus labios, las alargadas pestañas que sombreaban los párpados cerrados le conferían un aire de castidad. Aparecía tan seductora.

Sus largos cabellos estaban sueltos, y entre los mismos alguien había colocado unas florecillas azules, sin impedir que los bucles ocultasen parte de los hombros desnudos. Sus manos hermosas me parecieron más blancas e inmaculadas que una hostia, y se hallaban cruzadas en un gesto de devoto reposo o de mudo rezo. Todo esto aliviaba la fascinación que el conjunto provocaba. En los redondeados brazos seguían estando los brazaletes de perlas. (Solana, 1997: 115)

⁹ Al parecer, el nombre y la voracidad violenta de estas criaturas proviene de la inclita reina *Lamia*, cuyos hijos, según la leyenda, fueron asesinados por la soberana Hera, haciendo que la desventurada madre errase, desde entonces, por el mundo de los vivos, presa de una pesadumbre y frustración eterna, ávida de venganza, libando la sangre de niños, incitadores de su frustración y vacío, infantes como los que ella acunó una vez en su regazo.

Explícita es la influencia de esta entidad mitológica en el poema «Lamia», de Keats, en el que la metamorfosis teromórfica, de mujer a serpiente en «Christabel», sufre una deconstrucción significativa —inversa—, una vez el poeta, consciente de la fisonomía serpentina de tal engendro legendario, pretende desvirtuar a la entidad mitológica para mitificar a la propia feminidad, a la que, pretenciosamente, da vida y crea, como demiurgo, en sus versos. Al plantear el paso de una esencia yerta y sibilina, la de la serpiente, a una aún más fiera y aterradora, la de la mujer, la animalización de la feminidad expresada por Coleridge es superada en efectismo y obnubilación horrida por la personificación de la serpiente que sugiere Keats. En su poema, la metamorfosis, la muda de piel, deviene en algo más que simple desnudez física, pues supone la pérdida de la altivez y la beldad —que significativamente lustra a la serpiente y no a la mujer— para esbozar un retablo de pesadumbre, fealdad, muerte y condenación. Así, convertida en mujer, la entidad se ve privada de sus alhajas y los metales preciosos tornan diluida tonalidad ambarina. Mientras el lustre de la plata de luna —que esmaltaría la majestuosidad de Carmilla— y el oro de su encanto se destiñen, se eclipsan, ella se ve cubierta por la lava irascible de la naturaleza salvaje, la pasión en deyección y la oscuridad de sus recelos:

«Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-ashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colours all inflam'd throughout her train.
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;

De la mitología, de las tradiciones orales, emanaron en trashumancia ténebre estas concepciones de la frustración, soberanas de la desolación, alegorías de la adversidad, hasta pasar a la cuentología popular, al alma inmortalizadora de los pueblos, principalmente a los bagajes orales del este de Europa, en los que, coincidiendo con las oleadas de peste negra, neumónica y bubónica, desatadas en la Edad Media y en los siglos XVII y XVIII, la histeria vampírica —reconocida incluso por la iglesia en tratados como el de Dom Augustin Calmet, *Dissertation sur les Apparitions des Anges des Démons et des Espits, et sur les revenants, et Vampires de Hingrie, de Boheme, de Moravie, et de Silésie* (1746)—, se instauró en la conciencia rural y gestó la concepción del *revenant* folclórico¹⁰, retornado de su tumba para victimizar a los vivos, libar la sangre de sus allegados y devastar las comunidades.

Fue tal la influencia de dichas referencias de escalofrío, exhumaciones y rituales de empalamiento, decapitación, cremación de los cuerpos aparentemente incorruptos de los no muertos, profanaciones constatadas y aventar de cenizas a la ventisca o al curso de un río— entre las que destaca la del serbio Arnold Paole—, que, en transfusión de delectación, onerosa influencia en los círculos académicos y universitarios de Alemania, los recuentos de vampiros o *revenants* del este dispusieron pronto el umbral de creatividad febril y apasionada de los primeros románticos alemanes. Destacan August Ossenfelder con su

And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
 Spoilt all her silver maol, and golden brede;
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
 Eclips'd her crescent, and lick'd up her stars:
 So that, in moment few, she was undrest
 Of all her sapphire, greens, and amethyst,
 And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
 Nothing but pain and ugliness were.» (Citado en Twitchell, 1981: 51)

¹⁰ Fantasmal y cadavérico, lejos del garbo seductor de la efigie literaria que focalizamos en nuestro recuento, se muestra el reviniente que preludia la aparición del vampiro pasional en la poesía romántica. Según Montague Summers, sus caracterización sería:

«A Vampire is generally described as being exceedingly gaunt and lean with a hideous countenance (...) When, however, he has satiated his lust for warm human blood his body becomes horribly puffed and bloated, as though he were some great leech gorged and replete to bursting (...) the nails are always curved and crooked, often well-nigh the length of a great bird's claw, the quicks dirty and foul with clots and gouts of black blood. His breath is unbearably fetid and rank with corruption, the stench of the charnel.» (Summers, 1960: 179)

Entroncada con esta concepción de superstición estaría la bruja vampiro que Nicolai Gogol nos presenta en su relato «Vi» (1833).

«Der Vampir», Bürger con «Lenora»¹¹ o Goethe con su «La Novia de Corinto» ('Die Braut Von Korinth') de 1797, ambientada en Grecia y protagonizada por una lamia signada por el infortunio, de exquisita apariencia y pasional influjo ejercido sobre su amante, una no muerta que se enfrenta a su madre por preservar su amor y exigir, al tiempo, su derecho a la promiscuidad, tras haber desligado su sino de los convencionalismos divinos. Ulteriormente, estancado el clamor del mito en el mar de sargazos de la conciencia romántica inglesa, por explícita influencia de las obras poéticas anteriormente citadas, murmuraron sus poesías ténebres autores como Coleridge, con 'Christabel' —impregnada de una impronta lésbica retomada posteriormente por Sheridan Le Fanu—, en la que la criatura Geraldine entabla una relación de victimización y libación mesmérica como huésped de las circunstancias y constantes existenciales de una ingenua muchacha de proclividad amatoria y de entrega particular, o Southey con su épica y legendaria «Thalaba el Destructor», compendio de aventuras sombrías en mundos exóticos, landas de ensueño y actantes mitológicos, acechantes, como Oneiza, la cruel vampira que encarna a la amada ausente, muerta años atrás, obstáculo para el héroe, envuelto en una misión de búsqueda de una espada o auxiliar mágico.

La encantadora y macilenta sílfide de las sombras siguió yaciendo sobre los manuscritos poéticos del marco decimonónico, en concepciones extremadamente sensuales y aterradoras. Así, las vampiresas —que no vampiras— del alma y la carne, la lascivia y la corrupción, que presenta Baudelaire en ciertos poemas oscuros —aunque explícitos y traumáticos— abanderan otras formas, aún más extremas, del discurso histórico femenino. «Las Metamorfosis del Vampiro», incluida en *Les Fleurs Du Mal* (1857), así como otras composiciones mórbidas en verso, son emblemas de una feminidad deífica, diva de los placeres, cuyo encanto y aura subyugan a propios y a extraños, a niños, a ancianos, incluso a

¹¹ Ambas composiciones nos presentan un prototipo de vampiro que proyecta alegóricamente la visión del amor de ultratumba, el que trasciende la muerte, encarnado en amantes ataviados con sudarios que se aparecen en el ventanal de la privacidad o montan a lomos de corceles fugaces para acudir a celebrar nupcias en camposantos dispuestos para la ténebre ocasión. Son, estos no muertos, feminidades o revinientes masculinos que de ninguna forma victimizan por su propio placer devastador, destruyendo a la presa, sino que pretenden la complicidad y conversión del vivo, un cortejo sobrenatural, por vencer a la frustración de un celibato sempiterno y consumir así lo que, en principio, evitó la muerte, la consagración del enlace amoroso.

ángeles, y fundamenta las bases o pilares de dominación de lo que hoy conocemos como *femme fatale* o mujer fatal, emparentada con la pérfida sombra de Bertha Rochester, la conciencia de feminidad subversiva en *Jane Eyre* (1847), de Charlotte Bronte, reflejo mítico de la sexualidad sublimada, de la ensoñadora tentación vehemente temida por los hombres, u otras rebeldes del XIX —Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary o Hetty Sorrell, entre otras—, confinadas a sus estancias de enclaustramiento y sometimiento a sus impulsos febriles.

En prosa, las siniestras, pero, a la vez, cautivadoras estampas de la mujer vampiro afloraron ya con los primeros escritos dentro del género, al tiempo que la feminidad cumplía, en otras obras de renombre, el rol de presa victimizada por el déspota vampiro masculino —Lord Ruthven, en *The Vampyre: A Tale* (1819), de John William Polidori, primera obra en prosa de vampiros dentro de la literatura inglesa, o el existencialista Varney, en *Varney The Vampyre or the Feast of Blood*, de Malcolm Rymer, obra publicada fascicularmente en la década de 1840. Entre las reinas de la penumbra, esbozadas sobre tapices de lustre, trenzadas tinieblas, melancolías de arpa, sonos de terciopelo, acariciado sumisamente por la muerte vencida, colmillos de ténebre anunciación sobre el turgente bermejo de sus labios entregados al ósculo que mata y aureolas de supremacía insoslayable —entidades imperiales, asociadas al áspid de Cleopatra¹², siempre ufana y macabramente bellas en su letargo vampírico, más aún que en vida—, contamos con la sensual Brunhilda, insaciable y apocalíptica vampira de la reminiscencia y la obsesión —serpiente en esencia— que John Ludwing Tieck proyectaría en «No Despertéis a los Muertos», escrita a comienzos del siglo XIX, la lánguida Aurelia de Hoffmann —influyente visión para los escritores neogóticos—, la ya referida Clarimonda, de Gautier, espectral reviniente, noble cortesana, de delicada apariencia, ángel de la muerte y de la tentación, mensajera de la némesis, prendida a los trazos oscuros de su

¹² Nos parece aquí oportuno hacernos eco de la explícita consideración de James Twitchell acerca de la divergencia referencial teromórfica que existe entre el vampiro masculino y la feminidad no muerta:

«And just as her male counterpart had characteristics of the wolf, the lamia retained certain serpentine qualities. For instance at the moment of attack her skin became moist and scaly, her breath became hot, her eyes contracted, and she would emit a soft hissing sound. Other than this, she performs like the male: attacking at night, alone with her victim, first mesmerizing and then enervating him.» (Twitchell, 1981: 40)

palacio Concini e incubada en el corazón y difuso raciocinio de Romualdo, un sacerdote recién ordenado, así como la sublime Carmilla, la gran enamorada, la poética trovadora del hechizo letal, creada entre el titilar de dos llamas de ensueño por el irlandés Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. Encarnación de la frustración y represión sexual, opuesta a los convencionalismos religiosos —pérfidamente satánica a pesar de la ambrosía de sus encantos— y abanderada del oráculo secreto de la naturaleza salvaje frente a la predestinación cristiana, Carmilla delimitaría un culmen en la concepción de la mujer prepotente, ávida de conceder potestad y encanto supremo —la revelación de la eternidad—, a su alter ego, a otra feminidad, el recuerdo de su propio ser estancado en vida, tornando regazo lésbico de Laura, colmillo horador que signa el encantador pecho cual cuna del mordisco letal¹³; Carmilla, por y para siempre Carmilla, vampira felina, aristócrata, de identidad plural, tras la que subyace la ilustre y egregia persona de la Condesa de Karnstein y en la que se adivinan rasgos, atributos y constantes históricas que rodean la ténebre figura de la Condesa Elizabeth Bathory.

En análoga onda de majestuosa aparición y delimitación en escena, se esbozan, en la consagrada obra de Stoker, las espéculas turbadoras de la tríada de vampiras desposadas con el Conde Drácula y la fantasmagórica Lucy. Enfundada esta última feminidad en sus hábitos funéreos como diva en la que la beldad se torna maldita y la ternura maternal condenación de infancia, ella representa el soslayo de rencor y anunciación intimidadora de la mujer emancipada así como otros muchos hologramas de histérica tentación sugerida, delirios de desangrar menstrual, incesto o consideraciones edípicas esbozadas por autores contemporáneos a nosotros como Tanith Lee, en su «Red as Blood», Richard Matheson —«Dress of White Silk»—, Fritz Leiber —«The Girl with the Hungry Eyes»—, Manly Wade Wellman —«The Last Grave of Lill Warren»—, además de Nancy Baker, con *Blood and Chrysanthemums* o *The Night Inside*.

La dama ensangrentada, la palidez marmórea, sin embargo, despunta singularmente mórbida y escalofriante en las umbrías creativas de Edgar Allan Poe, con sus pesadillas malditas en la morada Usher o

¹³ Véase Olivares, J., 1999, Capítulo I, sección 1.2.2.2.7., para detallada aproximación a esta magna y magistral historia de vampiros.

sus delectaciones intimistas, incestuosas en ocasiones, sus allegadas temidas —experimentadas en los secretos del amor, la desidia y la muerte, tras presentir y adorar el deceso como esencia, tras emerger de sus yacijas de cenizas. Entre tales majestuosidades, Berenice, Ligeia o Morella se delimitan como claros exponentes del vampiro psicológico, el huésped que mora en la esencia propia de la masculinidad para libar la personalidad y la vida hasta esclavizar por completo a su presa, anular su voluntad, constituyéndose, por ende, en extrapolaciones libertarias de la mujer sometida a la represión y tutela del racionalismo y la religiosidad misógina.

Nos resta por desvelar otras exánimes de ensueño. Cada trazo sugerido en los textos, cada una de esas briznas de horror gráfico, cada estampa de promiscuidad letal o tonalidad de turgencia analizada, cada entonación afrodisíaca de la feminidad en contienda constante con la convención, entregada a los sueños del devaneo concupiscente y subyugador de la masculinidad, reto en el abismo de las tinieblas, cada lamento en desnudez a la vera del titilar de vida y el musitar de los querubines del espanto, ha cobrado vida expresa, además, en la pantalla a través de la siniestra y lustrosa textura de ciertas pesadillas virulentas y reaccionarias. A ellas nos quedaba por referirnos, a esas criptas delineadas sobre el marco del espejo de las eras. Obviando las múltiples versiones de la obra de Stoker u otras narraciones vampíricas —incluso aquellos guiones originales, no adaptados—, en las que el vampiro se mece entre las sombras de alcoba al antojo de sus apetencias libidinosas y victimiza a la feminidad elegida o, como patriarca déspota¹⁴, se rodea de una cohorte de no muertas exuberantes¹⁵, simples objetos de tentación o actantes mediadores que rara vez, sólo en el empalamiento al que se

¹⁴ En estos casos, la mujer culmina su proyección y tras medrar en la no vida, más allá de la muerte, se idolatra a sí misma como magna beldad íntegra, pero vuelve a verse sometida por el eterno referente masculino, de su misma especie, aunque jerárquicamente superior por ser su iniciador y maestro, al que ella ha de subyugarse. Tal es el caso de la tríada vampírica de las «weird sisters» bajo el régimen autoritario del Conde Drácula en la obra de Stoker.

¹⁵ En el discurso de distorsionada tonalidad agostadora que promulga la Hammer, la feminidad vuelve a ser anhelo platónico, si bien se ve minimizada a su enfática voluptuosidad carnal, limitada su personalidad a un soplo fugado de una vida anterior —a veces ni tan siquiera explicitada—, arrancada del seno de un núcleo familiar humilde, tornada seductora y hechicera de la pasión, del deseo libidinoso, que se vale de la sinuosidad de sus formas sugerentes —el pecho y la pomposidad de unos semblantes lípidos, una expresión lasciva que juega un papel predominante como invitación al pecado—, encarnadas en ninfas del plañido, la falsa inocencia adolescente y la mirada extática, tentadora, de actrices modélicas como Fedra Jackson, Barbara Shelley o Ingrid Pitt, entre otras.

las condena por su nefasta infracción de los códigos de moralidad, transparentan o dejan ver la pesadumbre y el agrio esclavizarse al ansia hemática, obviando tales discursos visuales del hombre dominador — explicitamos—, emergieron del aislamiento y desaliento opresivo ciertas feminidades que conformaron un cortejo de peculiares divas del encanto, herederas del lustre silente, inopinado, y latente protagonismo de la triunfal y macilenta Ellen Hutter, la heroína de Murnau —que, a su vez, en plagio de la actitud de entrega de Mina Harker, logra urdir el baño letal de luz de alborada que consume al conde Orlock en *Nosferatu* (1922)—, abanderada de la feminidad con creciente peso específico en la jerarquía social. Instauradoras de la delirante potestad femenina, la de la mujer que se aferra a la contienda por sus derechos y vence sólo con la materialización en acto de su anhelo en potencia, aparecen, entre otras, la Carmilla encarnada por la impávida y gélida Yutte Stensgaard en *Lust for a Vampire* (1971), de la Hammer, —quien logra que el profesor Giles Barton (Ralph Bates) se arrodele ante ella antes de que la vampira le ofrezca su abrazo de muerte—, las libadoras lésbicas de Jesús Franco —*Vampyros Lesbos* (1970)—, las lechosas no muertas que surcan, fantasmagóricas, los prosenios surrealistas de Jean Rollin, producciones desgraciadamente perdidas en absurdos clichés de erotismo banal —*La Vampire Nue* (1969) o *Requiem Pour un Vampire, Sex Vampires* (1971)—, además de estampas indomables como la voraz, a veces espectral, vesánica y salvaje Grace Jones, en *Vamp* (1986), o el garbo y la galantería mustia de esos ojos hastiados y el carisma pretendido, que jamás llegó a aflorar en la mirada de Sylvia Kristel, en *Dracula's Widow* (1988) —dirigida por Christopher Coppola, nieto del ínclito director de la ambivalente, y falazmente titulada, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992).

Por esplendor macabro y majestuoso, destacan, además, ciertas vampiras de renombre y grávida influencia, entre las que sobresale la anacrónica, pero sibilina y suprema, efigie egipciaca de *The Hunger* (1983), de Tony Scott —basada en la novela del mismo nombre, escrita por Whitley Strieber. En este film, Myriam Blaylock, encarnada magistralmente por Catherine Deneuve, muestra los más innobles y perversos senderos de la eternidad¹⁶, además de la perdición postrera a

¹⁶ La frustración de Blaylock no es sino descubrimiento de la fragilidad esencial de su apuesta horadadora de los tiempos, concienciación gradual y espeluznante de su debilidad que, lejos de donarle

la que nos encaminan los excesos de poder y la febril sumisión a los instintos obnubiladores del placer. Suspira, asimismo, en nuestras pesadillas la siempre temida Lady Arabella de Stoker, alegoría de la sífilis de promiscuidad y la feminidad castigadora, corporeizada en pantalla por Amanda Donohoe, en *Lair of the White Witch* (1988) —la que, para muchos, ha sido la más sugerente y exprimida de las concepciones vampíricas dentro del cine—, hasta llegar casi a nuestros días para dormitar apesadumbrada y agónicamente en la demente languidez existencial, aún así carismática, de la nostálgica orfandad de Nadja —en la película del mismo nombre, de Michael Almereyda. Esta historia, concebida como revisitación de la obra de Stoker, nos presenta una vampira que desempeña el rol del conde antagonista, si bien se pierde en melancólicas cuitas propias de un retrato de antiheroína.¹⁷

Nadja se asemeja en exceso a las enfermizas vampiras de nuestras calles, las pretenciosas versadas en filosofía existencial, faltas de identidad, los guiñapos apátridas, drenados, de *The Addiction* (1997), de Abel Ferrara. En esta película, la mujer aparece privada de su fecundidad, velados sus horizontes, frustrada ante la debilidad del ser que la hace languidecer, extraviada en un dédalo de preguntas acerca del ser, estéril en sus reacciones, encerrada en sí misma, psicótica, mientras que el vampirismo, delirante abismar al exceso y latente aspiración espasmódica de involución, se solapa con el espanto endémico del SIDA, la confusión de géneros, y el ansia de la drogadicción ya adelantada en *The Hunger*. Se demuestra finalmente que, consagrada e integrada en nuestra realidad, desvestida de sus atavíos supremos de fantasía, de ficción, sin el carisma de la resurrección inspirada en su propia frustración, sin la máscara de nuestras pesadillas de ficción, la

la majestuosidad y altivez emancipada, la sentencian a una dependencia emocional con respecto a otro ego, el amante, en su trayecto sombrío. Su desespero viene dado curiosamente por ese temor infantil a la oscuridad y el sigilo de la estancia en la que danza la sucesión sempiterna de siglos, condenada a vagar a solas, sin desposado, y enmascarando finalmente su dolor en una relación lésbica que supone la negación del amor, su propia autodestrucción.

¹⁷ Venida a la gran urbe de Nueva York como la individualista irreductible, ávida de empezar una nueva vida una vez sus recuerdos y sus lazos familiares han quedado atrás, Nadja se ve finalmente condenada al retorno a lares de Transilvania donde halla la muerte, convirtiéndose en un reflejo lastimero que espeja la desgracia e infortunio de una no muerta absolutamente enajenada de nuestro presente y desterrada de su hábitat, estampa de una feminidad perecedera, a la deriva, privada por completo de los atributos de majestuosidad o beldad radiante e intensa que rezuman otros retratos vampíricos femeninos.

mujer vampiro, devuelta al contexto social —como el hombre caído y despoetizado—, deja de sentir la gravidez y el esplendor de su corona, cae de su trono y vuelve a postrarse ante la escarpada silueta masculina, nuevamente entregada a un discurso de sumisión, como la mortificada feminidad absorbida por Poe en *The Oval Portrait*, la real, la presente, la modelo que sucumbe sometida a los anhelos de su desposado mientras triunfa la imaginada que se gesta sobre el lienzo, la encaprichada del hombre, la que nace de sus deseos y trasciende para torturarlo y acecharlo.

Sea como fuere —y es ésta una regla que la ceniza del tiempo no ha derogado aún— si la subversión persiste, si su aullido encantador apasiona sin mustiar en la penumbra, la feminidad y su amenaza han de sucumbir, a la postre, al traumático empalamiento purgador de la estaca —*a penetration adequate to ensure her future quiescence* (Craft, 1999: 107)—, inspirar el hedor del ajo entre sus labios turgentes, moldeados para perfumar la tentación, y perder su mirada mesmérica, dejar de penumbrar a los acólitos de sus argucias exuberantes al ser finalmente decapitada, desenlace punitivo, instante de paz, reintegración del status quo, alivio de la histeria y exorcismo definitivo —*the final immobilisation (...) the corresponding stabilisation of the dangerous signifier*. (Craft, 1999: 109).

Tal vez la cruzada en pos de la libertad tuviese su valía...preciada vaharada de intrepidez...tal vez frague gloria recompensante algún día, cuando taña el hilar de sus pestañas, como arpa de armonía tentadora, y silbe la flauta de su histeria, cuando sea seguida en los senderos de la embrujada Hamelín por los hombres del desconsuelo, cuando la muerte deje de ser dama y el cielo y el fuego caballeros.

A nuestra vera, Vampirella mece sus tridentes de seda, clamando nuestro nombre desde la ensenada del pánico, allá donde el Apocalipsis se expresa en llamaradas de eclipse y los volcanes tienden terciopelo a sus pies, mientras en los ventanales de nuestro soslayo, una extraña sombra cérea nos ofrece su velo y roma para siempre la estaca que pretendíamos clavar en el pálpito espectral de nuestros delirios.

Ebrias bacantes del aquelarre de histeria han abierto ya el sepulcro de Lenora, su urna de olvido, despertando a aquélla que fue destronada

por las tutelas moralistas y el ciego tacto de los oráculos. Ellas han traído enramadas de loto dormido y malva gélida. Entre fetidez de reminiscencias enmohecidas y fragancias de despertar, sumimos nuestra entonación de exequia, bordada al silencio y la aguardamos. Ella retornará...tras el azote del relámpago...nuestro cuerpo, tendido sobre el incólume lecho de los anhelos, como llamada a su apetencia...nuestra pulcritud, la de este cuello ofrecido a ésa, su mirada, que nos contempla constante desde el otro lado del lienzo del escalofrío...

Musitará a nuestra vera, creedme. La bella tamizada en expresividad cetrina, pupilas albas, esterilidad aletargada en súplica y cabellos urdidos en tiniebla, ralos en desvelar de la penumbra o el titilar del candelabro, acunará almas, suspirándolas, para bautizar con sus siluetas la bruma, espantando a los duendes y a las hadas estancados en la oscuridad, entumeciendo la eclosión del añil de sus iris, en un instante tornado fragor de ceniza. Silabeará su fantasmagoría velada durante siglos.

«Sé mi espejo y mi amante...», dirá a su antojo aquel eco incubado en los visillos de la estancia...

Quedará de ella, tras el abrazo victimizador, la entonación de un violín y el fraseo acompasado, el oleaje de silencios y matices de pentagrama que habrá simulado la cadencia de nuestro pálpito de loor. La pensaremos melancólica.

Nevará en el exterior, acariciando los ventanales del mundo, disipando la errática huella de la dama del otoño...y desde entonces la añoraremos, sufriremos en la telaraña del desdén. Es un vaticinio en el umbral de un nuevo siglo.

Por todo ello os referí estas líneas en las que yace la tiniebla de su llamada en suspiros. Aprestaos a deleitaros en su encanto o a temblar en su edén acaramelado. El último eclipse lloró por ella, dicen los buitres.

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IMAGES OF POPULAR CULTURE IN BRITISH FICTION OF THE 1990s.

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Abstract

The following article explores the different ways in which the elements of popular culture, such as the mass media, music, youth entertainment, etc. have influenced the writing of the latest generation of British novelists. Such an influence may appear in the novel through the parody of the so-called pulp genres, which might be imbued with a more elaborate subject-matter transcending the mere entertainment and consumerism. One other trend consists in adopting the themes and images most dear to the popular field of culture in an attempt to bring Literature closer to literature and reach a wider audience. This paper will analyse these techniques and tendencies as well as their impact in terms of their potential to subvert and contest the dominant ideologies in the social and cultural milieu of the British literary establishment.

Peter Kemp (1992: 216), in an essay on the state of British fiction in the 1980s, states: 'Probably the most striking feature of British fiction of the 1980s is how much of it is set neither in Britain nor in the 1980s. In the decade when the heritage industry boomed, heritage - not usually cosy and not always British - became a central fictional commodity.' Kemp is referring to the post-colonial situation in literature and, to that purpose, he quotes the examples of Salman Rushdie, Timothy Mo, or Kazuo Ishiguro. To these we may add Michael Ondaatje, Derek Walcott and to

a lesser extent Seamus Heaney, most of whom have either won the Booker or the Nobel Prizes.

These writers embark in a depiction as well as a periodization of the state of affairs, regarded as a consequence of the influence the metropolis has exerted upon them. Although no specific picture of the British popular culture and society may appear overtly in their works, the impression that is being projected is that of a lost and crumbling empire and society. This may be the case of Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, where the decaying image of a burnt and dying man, apparently an Englishman, in combination with the memories of a sapper of Indian origin, proves a strong symbol of the condition in which the British colonial power was to end up after the Second World War. In fact, it is in 1947 when India declares its independence and 1956 when the Suez conflict takes place. However, such a situation could be taken as allegorical of a wider phenomenon taking place in the current times, namely the 1980s and 1990s, that was to be depicted by a new generation of writers addressing the social reality left behind by the «Enterprise Culture» advocated by Thatcherism. Hanif Kureishi could be mentioned as an example of this new wave of writers who set their fiction in the confines of Britain, most commonly London, though an important branch of Scottish fiction is certainly to be acknowledged.

David Lodge comments on the rise of the popular element in the contemporary novel. It is not a case of exclusion but, rather, fashion, for both the popular and the intellectual novel have coexisted alongside throughout history. Moreover, certain nineteenth century works conceived as popular fictions, such as those by Dickens, Stevenson and others, were elevated to the status of high art by the twentieth century academia. As Lodge (1992) puts it:

The novel has from its very beginnings had the equivocal status, somewhere between a work of art and a commodity; but in the twentieth century, under the impact of modernism, it seemed to split into two kinds of fiction - the highbrow novel of aesthetic ambition, which sold in small numbers to a discriminating élite, and the popular or middlebrow novel of entertainment which sold in much large

numbers to a mass audience. Now the gap seems to be narrowing again, and this has changed the attitude of the literary writer towards his audience and his peers, and his work. (Lodge, 1992: 211)

Kureishi's example seems appropriate in this context for it counteracts Rushdie's magic realism¹ with the already mentioned social realism of the 1990s. *The Buddha of Suburbia*, 1990, successfully serialised by the BBC, presents a British born youth from a Pakistani origin growing towards adulthood in the South London suburbs. In *The Black Album*, 1995, again the main character is a young man who has broken his connections with his family in Kent and with its Indian background, to go to university in London. These are attempts to show, through the classical theme of the loss of innocence and the form of the novel of growth and experience, not only the crossroads at which these young people find themselves, between two cultures, and the sense of estrangement such a state brings about, but also the political and social awareness derived from such a split conscience and cultural schizophrenia. The point being made in *The Black Album* when, at the height of religious fanaticism, the gang leader of the Muslim community decides to transform a stale aubergine into a holy relic to be adored, to which the local representative of the area, incidentally an Anglo-Saxon Labour MP, agrees for reasons too obvious, such as securing the vote as well as his place in office. The counterpoint to the main character is the figure of his older brother, a person liberated from the post-colonial dilemma by embracing the «worst» elements of the Western mainstream cultural apparatus, namely, drugs, adultery with white women, borrowing money from gangsters, etc.

The novel presents a hybridisation of elements taken from the tradition of realism, such as the descriptions of the squalor in which the Muslim community and the student protagonist dwell, and the thriller and suspense from the tradition of the adventure story; so that the main

¹ Salman Rushdie portrays the popular, not in the subject-matter of his fictions, but in the choice of genre alone. In his works he combines the style of the oral tradition, typical of ancient story-telling, the folk and children's tale, with its naiveté and moral purpose, the parable and moral fable, etc., all of which he subverts. The deployment of such techniques places this writer within the orthodoxy of post-colonial writing, where style indicates a departure from the inherited cultural and, particularly, literary British tradition.

character's rites of passage become so incredible and unbelievable within the frame of the social reality of the London slums that such a reality is vividly enhanced. What Kureishi, a fairly committed writer, is attempting in this novel consists in presenting the awakening of a prototypical middle-class sheltered provincial youth to the reality of the working-class slum of the urban environment, where certainties and values rest somehow unquestioned and valid due to the sheer necessity of survival. The main character, himself, a brand-new university student, has to learn, however, the relative and dual nature of things that is required of an intellectual. It is rather significant that he gets off with one of his female white lecturers, and that the novel finishes with an untroubled: '... what new adventure is this?

'Until it stops being fun,' she said.

'Until then,' he said.' (The Black Album, 276)

Valentine Cunningham (1992: 236) acknowledges the existence of this trend in fiction with the following statement: '...some extra estranging thrust clearly does help energise your fiction no end. And some specialised, particular, skewing angle on the reality of modern Britain is what unites and empowers important beginning fictionists...' Cunningham goes on to mention as exponents of this recent current, Kureishi himself, Alan Hollinghurst, 'poet, literary editor, homosexual and Robert Mapplethorpe apologist', Hugo Hamilton, born in Dublin, with a German father, who lives and writes in Germany and Austria, and Adam Zameenzad, born in Pakistan and brought up in East Africa; concluding in her characteristic ironic way: 'Such are our modern «English» novelists; from such matrices our most interesting current fiction is arising.'; certainly not from the mainstream or classical intellectual circles.

The popular in Kureishi belongs to the middle-class youth subculture of the 1980s and 1990s. It could even be narrowed down to the university student subculture, a distinct group division itself in Britain². Pop music, dance clubs, drugs, ecstasy and techno music are some of the elements

² The 1980s cult film *Withnail and I* could be cited as a case in question: two university students living in a tenement in Camden, whose main activity consists in 'getting pissed' and 'stoned' from early in the morning.

pertaining to this subgroup, significantly lacking any intellectual worry in spite of their status. These elements have been labelled by Paul Corrigan and Simon Frith (1993: 237), in relation to working-class youth subcultures, as ‘the symbols of commercial leisure (pop music, fashion)’, their argument running along the lines that they may have a crucial role in the establishment of a cultural identity and, eventually, with the appropriate canalisation and direction they may become a legitimate source to ‘transform resistance into rebellion’. (Corrigan and Frith 1993: 238). Such an idea can be traced in Kureishi’s works as well as other writers’, who draw, not only on youth subculture, but on popular cultural in general, in order to attain a certain degree of subversion and political edge in their works. Thus, their effort would not simply constitute an attempt at the depiction of an area of experience belonging to a particular social grouping: British working-class subcultural descriptions, whether working-class or alienated middle-class intellectuals, had been the main theme of British social realism in the 1950s and 1960s, focusing primarily on the division between ‘high’ and ‘low culture’³. In the 1990s, however, the reappearance of the theme of popular culture in fiction seems to have placed the emphasis in the elements that had been ascribed to ‘low culture’ and, especially, to the so-called subgenres in literature.

Among the writers that set out to experiment with the form of the so-called popular or pulp fiction Tibor Fischer’s *The Thought Gang*, published in 1994, could be cited as an outstanding example. He has won a Betty Trask Award for his first novel, *Under the Frog*, and has been nominated as one of the best Young British Novelists. He could also be included within the group to which Hanif Kureishi belongs, that is, brought up in London and, thus, with a British cultural background, though his parents come from Hungary.

The Thought Gang is an attempt at the thriller and *novel noir* subgenre, which acts as the backdrop for the crisis of identity that the main character is undergoing. The character’s name is revealing, Eddy Coffin, as is his occupation, professor of Philosophy at Cambridge. The story narrates the various hold-ups he and his French sidekick enact,

³ See Raymond Williams *The Long Revolution*, 1961, for a full discussion of these terms in the cultural context of the 1950s and 1960s.

each time using a different philosophical technique. The writing style is fragmentary in order to account for the disintegration of Coffin's personality, while mimicking the academic style of writing by dividing and subdividing the text into chapters, sections, subsections, etc., most of which do not have a connection or correlation elsewhere in the novel: section 1.1.2 does not have a previous 1.1.1, etc. The mixture of philosophy and pulp fiction, rather than elevating the status of the latter to a certain degree of seriousness and authority, achieves the opposite effect, that of demystifying the world of 'high culture' and enhancing its lack of connection with real life. To that effect, the pairing of Coffin with an impossible character from the underworld, Hubert, a failure in his criminal life but a survivor nevertheless, something that Coffin has not quite attained in his own environment, serves the purpose of highlighting the breach between social strata, substituting the traditional economic social-class division with the intellectual one. The novel, with its portrayal of the main character and the intertextual allusions as a device to bring the idea of crisis to the surface, resembles the work of a writer belonging to the previous generation, Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot*. However, in Fischer's work it all becomes a running joke on everything that pertains to the human existence, coated with ample doses of cynicism at the sophisticated business that life has turned into. By using the most naive robbery techniques, these two characters show how the world has gone much too far in its evolution, not in terms of mechanisation but in the social mores and attitudes sported by the average people. At any rate, this is a novel written in the first person where the main character seems to be looking for the meaning of his own life, rather than attempting to make sense of the world, coming to the conclusion that his has been a waste of time and effort and, more importantly, a lack of thrill, adventure and emotion. The structure of the thriller, then, acts at a secondary level as a commentary and parody of the primary narrative, the humorous tone reminding us of the carnivalesque advocated by Bakhtin.

The theme of the fall from grace is also reworked in this novel in a parodic fashion, for neither does Coffin hold a prominent status or position, nor is he restored to his former life, quite the contrary: the break in his routine life is so successful that he decides to move on into the uncertainty of the next step in his adventures, as Coffin points out at the end of the novel:

Hube leaves me intellectually much as he found me (a complete mess): albeit with a selection of diverting memories, and something that if it's not optimism, would be hard to tell apart... Perhaps it was Hube rescuing me in the olive warehouse, rather than me rescuing him. (The Thought Gang, 306-307)

An interesting instance of the fusion of popular and high culture is the collection of short-stories by A.S. Byatt, *The Matisse Stories*, 1993, where the theme of art as liberation is explored within the framework of three women's everyday lives. Taking Matisse as the exponent of official high art, we are confronted with the different reactions produced by the painter's work in these women. The conclusions arrived at are ambiguous, although their behaviour tends to be violent as a response to or as a consequence of Matisse, and the official culture it represents. The violence becomes a liberating element for the women, canalised mostly as a rejection of the social values they have been abiding by, or the sort of unquestioning and self-satisfied, if anonymous, life they have led to the point of their crises. The first story, 'Medusa's Ankles', introduces the reader into the stereotypical women's world of the hairdresser's, where the main character, Susannah, has her middle-age breakdown: "I look like a middle-aged woman with a hair-do." (*The Matisse Stories*, 24) to proceed straight away to vandalise the beauty shop without encountering any opposition. The stereotypical nature of the set is subverted by transforming it into a highly stylised place whose owner seems to be more sensitive about art than seems appropriate for this kind of environment. The story, confronts the everyday legitimate worries of the average person with the supposedly more elevated matters, such as art, by way of a suggesting parallelism between Susannah's concern for her physical beauty and the abstract concept of beauty applied to works of art.

The last story of the series, 'The Chinese Lobster' articulates the tension between 'high' and 'low', official and popular culture overtly through the conflict of a suicidal female art student who accuses her male supervisor of sexually assaulting her. In a condensed version of the process of growth and maturation that the human being goes through, the text depicts, also, the development of the artist, who moves from

transgressor in his/her early stages towards a certain form of incorporation by the mainstream. Byatt, at any rate, stays within the tradition that presents the disintegration of the middle-class conscience, although she shifts her emphasis towards the female conscience. An existential state of affairs is created out of the daily lives of the characters she describes, in a similar way as Tibor Fischer had done; but with the only difference that Byatt takes this condition rather seriously while Fischer mocks the whole tradition of literature that rests on it. Byatt's attempt is to portray female characters at a point of maturity in these fictions and, in this respect, it is very interesting to notice that all female main characters in *The Matisse Stories* are middle-aged liberated women whose lives are rather secure and commodified (the student in 'The Chinese Lobster' is just a side character, being the female lecturer in charge of her plea the main one.)

The combination of high and popular cultural components seeks, mimetically as well as symbolically, to reproduce the disruption in the middle-class universe the characters dwell in. The tension between the two types of elements articulates and provides the societal conflicts in ways that include parody and sheer criticism, its aim ranging from the representation of a confused state of mind in search of guidelines, to the accurate reflection of an end of millennium feeling, in what seems to be the portrayal of a permanent state of crisis. Hybridisation seeks to counterbalance the standardisation and stagnation Adorno assigned to the products of the culture industry when he referred to popular music: 'the listener to industrialized popular music is caught up in a standardized and routinized set of responses. Adorno argues that he or she is distracted and inattentive.' (Longhurst 1996: 8). Such a pairing of opposites is angled at producing a distinctive response in the reader, and, in many cases, it comes along with a certain conscience-raising and social-awareness purpose.

Will Self in *The Quantity Theory of Insanity*, 1991, relies on a highly humorous type of surrealism to account for the existential *ennui* of the anonymous middle-class urban citizen. Self's is a style indebted to Kafka's *Metamorphoses*, though stripped of the latter's grim and apocalyptic tone. The opening story, 'The North London Book of the Dead' presents a popular version of the afterlife that does not differ at all from the life of the

average living Londoner; the only feature missing in this afterlife is the existential *angst* itself. Life after death is as routinely as normal life may be, but for the stress and worries of the latter, which turns out to be a comic anticlimax to the main character's state of depression following the death of his mother. The whole collection of stories works towards the demystification of science, particularly the social sciences, and ultimately all established sources of knowledge, by connecting them with insanity and by filtering them through the perspective of the average person, encapsulated in the middle-class prototype.

The story 'Understanding the Ur-Bororo' describes a primitive tribe which has had no apparent contact with civilisation, but which suspiciously resembles far too much the average British middle-class citizen. The main characteristic in the behaviour of this tribe is: 'the Ur-Bororo don't really have any defining characteristic as a people... But their appearance as a people is so unremarkable that one - how can I put it - doesn't feel inclined to remark upon it.' (*The Quantity Theory of Insanity*, 91). The description that the narrator provides of himself at the end of the story could well summarise the sort of attitude and experience portrayed by this new wave of writers in their novels:

As for me, I went on teaching, playing volleyball and asking recalcitrant pupils the names of power stations. The lagging which had for a brief period been removed from my mind came back - together with new, improved, cavity-wall insulation. (The Quantity Theory of Insanity, 94)

The surreal images that appear in the book in connection with the reality of everyday life are complemented by others where madness and sanity are difficult to tell apart, thus fudging the limits between fiction and reality, so as to question the validity of our perceptions.

An exception to this depiction of middle-class disintegration can be found in the work of the Scottish writer Irvine Welsh. His fictions draw entirely on the deprived working-class youth of the most depressed areas in Edinburgh. As such, the characters in Welsh's fictions engage in the everyday attitudes and habits of the subgroup they belong to, relying mostly on any sort of consumerist cultural product: TV, violent films, pop and techno music, drugs, etc.; and being their main source of

entertainment going to the pub, getting wasted, picking up fights, football and the violence that accompanies it. All the negative connotations that may be attached to these elements, with the exception of football⁴, are transformed in Welsh's fictions into the positive and liberating force that carries the potential for change, providing the way out from a social reality that offers worse. In Welsh's books, popular culture is the source of energy and movement that can overcome the stasis that society has waiting in store for the younger generations. His work is outrageously funny and shocking in subject-matter as well as experimental in form and style. Welsh also adopts surrealism, though, in his case, reality has become too unreal and distorted for us to take it literally. His is what Robert Hewison (1990) has called "social surrealism", that is, the description of a social situation so accurately that in the process it becomes completely oniric or almost absurd, yet so painful that it is difficult to assimilate or escape it. Drugs play an important part in the negotiation of such a reality, although not as an evasion but an alternative. Welsh endorses the popular entirely in his choice of a pulp style that mocks the elevated status of literature, while showing the idea of crisis and dislocation by introducing experimental techniques that belong to surrealism proper. This is complemented by the choice of subject-matter, wholly working-class, in the depiction of social reality (its most salient feature being the use of the Scottish dialect), and the production of alternatives for his characters, which is the ultimate reflection of the author's committed resistance to being assimilated into the status quo. Welsh's fiction shows the articulation of the existing tension between the fossilised and obsolete aestheticism, and the purest examples of commercial entertainment, the latter being described by Held (1980: 94) as producing: 'an attentive but passive, relaxed and uncritical reception, which it induces through the production of «patterned and pre-digested» cultural entities.' Thus, it would be the function of the popular to freshen up the cultural pillars on which our society rests while avoiding the alleged passivity and uncritical response in the consumer. Such a revitalisation is articulated in very different imaginative ways ranging from the overt commitment to forms of social

⁴ Welsh shifts the angle of perception, giving prominence to the elements stigmatised by society, while denouncing the damaging effects of the established and accepted ones, such as football.

realism and surrealism, to the engagement in the endeavour to build or acknowledge a specific identity.

We may finish with a commentary by Malcolm Bradbury (1992) on the state of British literature at the beginning of the 1990s:

...writing out of Britain today portrays a world far less coherent and easily definable... Sociologically it portrays a Britain that is placed in a larger human world, a land of late modern stagnating cities, cultural, ethnic and gender division, entrepreneurial adventurers and post-modern consumers of instant style, but with a strong sense of being in change. Aesthetically, it is equally plural, ranging freely from one genre to another, from the detective story to science fiction, the historical novel to the post-modern pastiche, reviving forms of writing from the past while experimenting with the often media-based forms of the future. It is a writing open less than ever to the classic distinctions between the 'serious' and the 'popular', or the 'experimental' and the conventional... (Bradbury, 1992: 9)

If we should try and suggest a common element in this literary melting-pot, the best option would appear to be the endorsement, by a great number of contemporary writers, of humour and comedy as a disruptive element capable both of stirring the consciences of the readers as well as providing them with an enjoyable and pleasant experience. As David Lodge (1992) has suggested:

Humour is a very important component of this kind of writing, for without humour it is apt to become portentous, laboured and ultimately boring... The model for this kind of fiction is Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel, and its poetics Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque. (Lodge, 1992: 206)

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THE FACE OF SPAIN DE GERALD BRENAN: LIBRO DE VIAJES PROPAGANDISTICO A FAVOR DE DON JUAN DE BORBON

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Abstract

In this paper I endeavour to portray Gerald Brenan's propagandistic intentions in favour of the Monarchic followers of don Juan de Borbón and of Indalecio Prieto's Socialists in The Face of Spain (1950). I also analyse the circumstances that surrounded Brenan when travelling in Spain and when writing the travel book that followed the journey. His being a fervent Republican does not stop him from presenting a suspiciously favourable yet subtle account of the Monarchic cause in this unique travel book.

Gerald Brenan (1894-1987) nunca ocultó, y así lo manifestó en varias ocasiones, su condición de socialista, sus simpatías por el movimiento anarquista y su antipatía por el comunismo. No ocultaba tampoco haber trabajado para la BBC en la redacción y emisión de programas en español dirigidos a una audiencia española en un tono abiertamente anti-franquista, actividad que realizó hasta 1949 (Brenan 1975; Díaz López 1987). A partir de este año decidió visitar nuestro país y recorrer parte de él durante diez meses en compañía de su esposa, la norteamericana Gamel Woolsey, viaje que dio pie a *The Face of Spain* (1950). En ésta el hispanista inglés aprovecha para rememorar con cierta nostalgia su cooperación con la duquesa de Atholl años atrás ¹ en aras de conseguir la

¹ También explicada detalladamente en «Personal Record», 457-61.

intervención de potencias democráticas como Gran Bretaña en nuestra Guerra Civil a favor del bando republicano. La postura de No-Intervención que tomó el gobierno británico favoreció las pretensiones de la causa franquista. Al mantenerse oficialmente ajeno a la contienda española, el gobierno de Su Majestad pretendía evitar que la Guerra Civil española -en la que ya tomaban parte activa Alemania, Italia y Rusia- se extendiera por Europa. Esta decisión gubernamental británica no contó, naturalmente, ni con la aprobación de la duquesa de Atholl ni con la del propio Brenan, que eran posiblemente conscientes de que esta actitud tan escapista del gobierno británico contaba con el apoyo de ciertos sectores de la clase política inglesa simpatizantes del bando franquista (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:316). En *The Face of Spain* Brenan aprovecha la ocasión que le depara la publicación de este peculiar libro de viajes por España para recordar y lamentar la actitud que tomara su país años atrás, que se mantuvo oficialmente indiferente a la victoria de Franco. Para ello Brenan utiliza el recurso literario de poner en boca de un ciudadano español, supuesto portavoz de la opinión pública autóctona, críticas abiertas a la actitud de No-Intervención británica:

You English are to blame, said the young man. You defeated Fascism in Germany but you left it in power here. You had only to flick your fingers and Franco would have gone and the Republic come back. For your own reasons you preferred not to flick them.
(Brenan 1988:161)

En el Prefacio que redactó para *The Face of Spain* en 1950 Brenan vuelve a escribir desencantado:

Precious opportunities have been lost and one cannot expect that either the British or the American Governments will adopt in a period of crisis a policy which they refused to apply when the world situation was less troubled. (Brenan 1988:15)

Los temas recurrentes en *The Face of Spain* como la represión franquista, las ejecuciones masivas, la corrupción de las clases dirigentes, el

sombrío ambiente de la posguerra española, el racionamiento y la picaresca, el aislamiento internacional del país, el colapso económico, etc, ya habían sido esbozados por Brenan en un artículo, «Spanish Scene», publicado en *Current Affairs* el 13 de julio de 1946, que Díaz López considera escrito en un «tono y fin claramente didáctico» (Díaz López 1987: 61). Especial interés presenta el último apartado del artículo («Possible Alternatives to Franco»), pues Brenan se cuestiona sobre la forma de deshacerse del dictador (Díaz López 1987:63). Igualmente hace Brenan en *The Face of Spain*: plantearse el modo de acabar con el régimen franquista sin derramamiento de sangre. La finalidad propagandística de la obra en cuestión es también sugerida por John Wolfers, cuando escribe que *The Face of Spain* «should be read with a few reminders of the time when it was written, because it has a political purpose» (Wolfers 1988:8). Churton Fairman, autor de *Another Spain* (1952), publicada sólo dos años después de *The Face of Spain*, se lamentaba, no sin cierta razón y sin duda en clara referencia a hispanistas como Roy Campbell, que tomaron partido por un bando, o como Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell o el propio Brenan, que se decantaron por el otro, que,

almost the only people in England who know much about Spain at first hand seem to have taken such violent sides over the Civil War of 1936-1939 that they have lost all sight of the country as anything except a political problem, and envisage it either as a vast concentration camp or as a smoking volcano of communism only just controlled by the forces of justice and virtue. (Fairman 1952:vi)

Brenan estaba lejos de ver la contienda y posguerra española con absoluta objetividad y ecuanimidad. Asimismo es esto evidente en el hecho de que Brenan ponga en boca de los personajes de *The Face of Spain* comentarios de españoles desengañados del régimen, comentarios bajo los que flota el claro deseo de encontrar la forma de intervención extranjera más adecuada para borrar al Generalísimo del mapa político español. La intención propagandística de este libro de viaje resulta a todas luces evidente.

Pero queremos observar además en Brenan cierta evolución personal desde la época en que deseaba la intervención británica en nuestra

contienda a favor del bando republicano, a la época en que, transcurridos unos quince años, considera que la única vía para acabar con el régimen dictatorial de Franco, o al menos suavizarlo, pasa por una ayuda económica bien canalizada que potencias extranjeras democráticas como Gran Bretaña y los EEUU podrían proporcionar.

En su autobiográfico *Personal Record 1920/72* Brenan ofrece escasísima información de *The Face of Spain*. No sólo no menciona en ocasión alguna quién o qué le inspiró a hacer el viaje a España que dio como fruto el recuento viajero en cuestión sino tampoco el beneficio económico que por ella obtuvo, o las críticas que por ella recibió, lo cual sí hace generosamente de sus restantes obras. Todo lo que sobre *The Face of Spain* escribe Brenan en su autobiografía se reduce a declarar haber hecho el viaje por España con Gamel durante diez meses que daría pie a *The Face of Spain*, una vez acabado *The Literature of the Spanish People* (Brenan 1975:474).

Asimismo, la declaración que Brenan hace a Eduardo Castro en *El País* el 29 de enero de 1978 es muy similar a esa única y lacónica referencia que sobre *The Face of Spain* aparecía en *Personal Record 1920/1972*. Compárense:

No he escrito más que un libro que se pueda considerar como típico de viajes, The Face of Spain, escrito en 10 meses, entre 1949 y 1950, a consecuencia de un recorrido que hice con mi esposa por todo el país. (Díaz López 1987:69)

En el resto del Opus de Brenan tampoco se vuelve a hacer comentario alguno sobre *The Face of Spain*. Obsérvese además hasta qué punto llega a resultar evidente el intento de Brenan por evitar cualquier referencia directa a dicha obra. Al preguntársele por ella en un cuestionario que Díaz López le presenta, he aquí todo lo que Brenan se permite responder:

Pregunta A-3.- El carácter de estudio antropológico de sus españolas, ¿fue espontáneo o tenía usted intención de darle ese carácter? Por supuesto estoy

haciendo alusión a South from Granada, The Face of Spain y parte de su Personal Record.

Respuesta: Eran descripciones de lo que veía, nada más, con intenciones literarias y no antropológicas. (Díaz López 1987:190)

Pensar que Brenan se avergonzase de *The Face of Spain* es posiblemente ir demasiado lejos; pero sí creo evidente que el hispanista no parece mostrar precisamente una especial predilección por ella. La omisión sistemática de todo lo que pudiera referirse a las circunstancias que rodearon la redacción y publicación de esta obra parece indicarlo.

Podemos, sin embargo, tratar de especular sobre las circunstancias personales que pudieron llevarlo a escribir *The Face of Spain*. El matrimonio Brenan parecía estar atravesando un largo periodo de apuros económicos, periodo suficientemente intenso y extenso como para que el escritor lo recordase en su *Personal Record 1920/72*, obra escrita entre 1966 y 1969, es decir, nada menos que entre diez y seis y diez y nueve años después del viaje por España que daría pie a *The Face of Spain*. Brenan recuerda con lucidez esta etapa de su vida, a pesar de los años transcurridos, como una etapa de penuria (Brenan 1975:474-75).

El estado de ansiedad económica en que el matrimonio se encontraba pudo predisponer al hispanista a estar dispuesto a aceptar cualquier propuesta, incluida la de obras teatrales para niños. Si años antes, en 1946, había aceptado escribir un artículo («Spanish Scene») de tono y finalidad claramente divulgativa (Díaz López 1987:61) después de escribir *The Spanish Labyrinth*, ¿por qué no creer en la posibilidad de que se le hubiera ofrecido la redacción de un libro de viajes, género siempre bien recibido por el lectorado angloparlante y de indudable rentabilidad, y que presentaría el interés adicional de estar ambientado en la España franquista? En apoyo a esta hipótesis no podemos pasar de largo la rapidez con que *The Face of Spain* fue aceptada por una editorial, cosa que no ocurrió siempre con sus otras obras. Ésta fue publicada inmediatamente después de finalizado el viaje por España, hecho que pudiera deberse a que hubiera sido «patrocinada» por alguna entidad o persona(s) interesada(s) en difundir una imagen muy concreta del país.

Una prueba más, si no concluyente, sí suficientemente interesante como para ser tomada en cuenta, del celo de Brenan por ocultar sus actividades literario-crematísticas durante el periodo que abarca de 1947 a 1950, o sea, el periodo inmediatamente anterior a la publicación de *The Face of Spain*, es el hecho de que Brenan no nos cuente absolutamente nada de interés literario en la parte de *Personal Record 1920/72* que dedica a estos años. Se centra por el contrario en describir su relación con Gamel, cosa que podía haber hecho en cualquier otra parte de la obra, y en una visita de Dylan Thomas (febrero del 48) en Aldbourne. Y desde mayo del 46 a mayo del 50 sólo trata los siguientes asuntos familiares: en mayo del 46 fallece una tía paterna dejándole tres mil libras en herencia; en junio del 47 recibe la noticia del cáncer de su padre y su posterior fallecimiento con la consiguiente mejora económica del escritor, y en mayo del 50 visita a su hija Miranda en Francia una vez finalizada *The Face of Spain*. Pero nada de lo que escribe en *Personal Record 1920/72* durante estas fechas -fechas que abarcan un periodo de nada menos que 4 años- trata directamente de este libro de viajes, así como tampoco sobre «Spanish Scene».

No debemos dejarnos en el tintero el dato, que no considero casual, de que sea precisamente una editorial argentina, Losada, la que muy poco después de publicada la edición original en inglés («curiosamente» en el mismo año en que concluyera el viaje por España, es decir, 1950), sale publicada la traducción española: *La Faz Actual de España*. Ésta vio la luz tan sólo dos años después de la edición inglesa en Turnstile Press, es decir, en 1952, siendo además la primera de las obras de Brenan en traducirse a nuestra lengua a pesar de no ser, con mucha diferencia, la más reconocida. Para entonces, para 1952, seguían aún sin traducir obras del Opus breniano de la categoría de *The Spanish Labyrinth*, que, publicada en 1943, no tuvo su versión española hasta 1962, aunque sí una traducción pirata mejicana que circuló por ciertos ambientes a partir de 1946 (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:644), o *The Literature of the Spanish People*, editada en C.U.P. en 1951 y traducida por Losada en 1958, o sea, siete años después. La traducción de *The Face of Spain* se adelanta, pues, con mucho, a todas las demás versiones españolas de sus otras obras. Creo estar, en consecuencia, en posición de afirmar que existía un especial interés por que *The Face of Spain* (o *La Faz Actual de España*) viese la luz pronto.

Si, como creemos, nadie puede poner ya en duda la intencionalidad propagandística de *The Face of Spain*, no deja sin embargo de resultar curioso que Brenan muestre en el Prefacio al libro de viaje, escrito en 1950, un apoyo incondicional a la causa monárquica como alternativa al régimen de Franco, hecho que parece contradecirse con su republicanismo declarado años anteriores. En *The Face of Spain* este republicanismo aparece sin embargo un tanto suavizado:

I had -with some mental reserves- sympathized with the Republican cause (...) (Brenan 1988:72-73)

Sin embargo, en varias ocasiones del Prefacio y en la obra en sí, el hispanista inglés muestra un claro favoritismo por la idea de la restauración de la Monarquía en España. En una primera ocasión, en el Prefacio, Brenan califica al movimiento monárquico como el único que «offers a hope of any change» (Brenan 1988: 13). A continuación es más explícito, pasando a explicar las razones por las que el régimen monárquico es preferible al de Franco:

But, how, it may be asked, would a Monarchist régime of this sort be better than that of General Franco? In the first place it would invite the refugees to return and release the political prisoners. It would have the support of the Liberals and of most of the Socialists. The division between the two Spains, which is kept alive artificially by the Falange for its own ends, would be bridged: the bitterness left by the civil war would diminish. Then the new régime would come in on a great wave of popularity. It would not be obliged to buy and corrupt, as the present one does in its efforts to keep in power but would be able to put down abuses and govern with a strong hand. Doubtless no sweeping reforms would be carried out: neither the land question nor that of education would be seriously tackled. But something would be done, and the other nations of Western Europe would feel that there existed in Spain a government which, though not democratic, had a liberal orientation and could therefore be considered eligible for partnership with themselves. (Brenan 1988:14)

Pero todo lo explícito que Brenan es en su Prefacio en lo que respecta a la necesidad de una restauración monárquica no lo es tanto en el resto de la obra en sí, aunque no por ello deja de ser suficientemente evidente. En primera instancia presenta a un monárquico honrado y trabajador que critica la corrupción generalizada del país (Brenan 1988:102), lo cual hace con discreción. Sin embargo, en la ocasión en que Brenan muestra su interés por el regreso del rey de forma más clara tiene lugar en la conversación que el viajero inglés mantiene con un monárquico de toda la vida, ex-guardia civil indudablemente expulsado del Cuerpo por su no haber mostrado una total afinidad al régimen franquista, conversación que parece resumir la posición de los monárquicos del momento:

‘Were you a Falangist?’, I asked.

‘All my life I have been a Monarquist’, he answered proudly. ‘A Monarquist from the feet upwards. When I was in the Civil Guard I was one, and today I am more of that persuasion than ever. I wrote a letter to Franco to tell him so’.

‘And what did he say?’

‘He did not answer.’

‘And so you want the King to come back?’

Suddenly all his bitterness poured out of him. ‘Today even the dogs in the street are wishing that, let alone his old followers. I tell you that things couldn’t be worse here than they are. One can’t live, one can’t eat. Everyone is starving - everyone, that is, except the people who are plundering the country. Never, never, has Spain sunk so low before. And there is nothing to be done. So long as ese hombre, that man, is at the head of things, there’s no hope. You’re a foreigner - tell me, why don’t the other nations do something to help us?’ (Brenan 1988:190-91)

En Mérida, casi en la frontera con Portugal, conoce Brenan a un chófer perteneciente a una familia de rancio abolengo venida a menos, aunque aún muy respetado entre sus conocidos «because of the fidelity

he has shown to the King» (Brenan 1988:215) «King» transcrito con la nada casual «K» inicial en mayúscula, hecho que no deja de ser curioso cuando procede de un escritor que ha proclamado con frecuencia su condición de republicano. Brenan presenta a este Don F., personaje monárquico que goza de incuestionable credibilidad, mediante la proyección de su religiosidad. Se le podía ver «kneeling in the church with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross -no light thing for a man of his age- in front of the Virgen de los Dolores.» (Brenan 1988:215). Decía hacerlo para que la Virgen oyese sus súplicas y trajese al Rey de vuelta a España antes de morir. Su fidelidad a la causa monárquica no le impedía ver sin embargo a Franco como «a good general», pues, decía, el desastre en que se encontraba la España de la posguerra se debía a la corrupción tan generalizada de la Falange (Brenan 1988:215-18). Brenan procuró siempre no demostrar una animadversión personal a la figura de Franco, y menos en 1950, época en que el Generalísimo había dejado clara su intención restauradora de la Monarquía para nuestro país, pero a largo plazo; Brenan quiso siempre estar en condiciones favorables de poder regresar a España. Al fin y al cabo tenía posesiones e intereses económicos en España.

Aunque, decíamos anteriormente, no son excesivamente numerosas en la obra las intervenciones de personajes de ideología monárquica y las alabanzas a ésta son por lo general sutiles y discretas, resultan empero suficientes para demostrar el interés de Brenan por la causa, interés que se hace especialmente evidente tras la declaración abierta a favor de la Monarquía que hace en el Prefacio. El estado del país, más catastrófico imposible, lleva además al lector inglés (y poco después al hispano-hablante a partir de la traducción española, sólo dos años más tarde) a ver la imperiosa necesidad de un cambio de régimen como única vía para el progreso de nuestro país.

Es difícil demostrar la vinculación, si acaso la llegó a haber, entre Brenan y una familia tan anglófila como la Casa Real española. Pensar que ésta pudiera haber «patrocinado» la aventura del hispanista, tan repleta ésta de intencionalidad propagandística a favor de la causa monárquica, puede ser arriesgado, por lo que no podemos sino considerarlo como una mera hipótesis. Sin embargo podemos afirmar que los gran-

des beneficiados de *The Face of Spain* son los monárquicos, y eso sí es fácilmente visible y demostrable.

Sin poder por ahora llegar a nada concluyente, podemos empero afirmar que Brenan tuvo amistad, según Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, su biógrafo, con Negrín, ex-Presidente de la 2ª República Española, con Luis Araquistain, dirigente del Partido Socialista durante la República y ex-embajador español en París, y con el reputado e intelectual ministro republicano Salvador Madariaga, entre otros exiliados españoles de entre los muchos que rebosaban la capital londinense (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:357). Brenan siempre presumió, a pesar de su presunta colaboración con la causa monárquica en *The Face of Spain*, de simpatizar con la República española y de la amistad que le unía a algunos altos cargos de ésta. Decía en *Personal Record 1920/72* que era de todos conocido su apoyo al lado republicano durante la guerra civil española, así como su amistad con miembros de relevancia del gobierno republicano (Brenan 1975:471). Tales declaraciones no sugieren precisamente que hubiese tenido en algún momento de su vida «reservas mentales» en su apoyo a la República, como manifestaba en *The Face of Spain*, sin duda para hacer mínimamente creíble su colaboración con la causa monárquica, tan evidente en la obra. Efectivamente, Gathorne-Hardy nos describe el contacto que Brenan tenía con los antifranquistas residentes en Londres, su simpatía para con los opositores al régimen de Franco y las buenas relaciones que a su vez éstos mantenían con el Foreign Office:

There were meetings in the Foreign Office. London was full of exiled Republicans and seethed with plots against Franco - and, of course against each other. Gerald kept rather lightly in touch with these, though he met Juan Negrín, Araquistain and others from time to time. (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:357)

Durante dos años y medio (desde agosto de 1943, todo 1944 y todo 1945) Brenan trabajó como locutor y redactor de la BBC, concretamente en la realización de emisiones radiofónicas al extranjero («La Voz de Londres») en lo que su biógrafo califica eufemísticamente de la forma que a continuación citamos, y en lo que «traducido» al castellano no sería otra cosa que «propaganda política en contra del régimen franquis-

ta». Si de algo tenemos completa seguridad respecto de la vida de Brennan durante estos años es su familiaridad con la lucha de oposición al régimen franquista:

The object [of these talks] was to impress Spaniards favourably towards Britain, especially by describing liberal and democratic elements which would appeal to them and also encourage similar developments in Spain, but describing them in such a way as not to antagonise the Franco regime into jamming or banning. (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:357)

Y sin embargo, las mismas autoridades británicas del Foreign Office se vieron obligados a vetar las charlas radiofónicas (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:357), lo cual no creemos que fuera por capricho. Incluso Brennan reconoce en *The Face of Spain* que sus charlas estaban lejos de ser inocuas:

Later, during the European War, I had broadcast to Spain in a somewhat belligerent fashion. (Brenan 1988:73)

Es más: según Gathorne-Hardy, Brennan llegó a recibir ofertas de trabajo -que, según su biógrafo, rechazó- para el Foreign Office y para el Ministerio de Información británico (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:357). De lo que no nos cabe duda, sin embargo, es que Brennan compartía la opinión de al menos parte de la plantilla del Foreign Office, de que la solución ideal para nuestro país era una monarquía constitucional (= don Juan) con un gobierno de izquierda moderada (= socialista) (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:359), idea que coincide precisamente con la que expresa Brennan en *The Face of Spain*, y de forma más evidente, en su Prefacio. Esta coincidencia, que no creo casual, confirma una intencionalidad política y propagandística determinada del autor, visible por otra parte a partir de mediados de la década de los 40, época en que redactaba y publicaba «Spanish Scene».

La amistad de Brennan con Luis Araquistain fue más intensa que con cualquier otro -que sepamos- de los políticos españoles en el exilio,

aunque se contradice con la afirmación de su biógrafo de que mantenía con el político español «sólo una ligera relación». Brenan y Araquistain se conocieron en la embajada española de Londres, a donde el hispanista iba ocasionalmente de visita (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:317).

Luis Araquistain Quevedo (1886-1959) era el segundo de a bordo del partido socialista dirigido por Indalecio Prieto. De carácter tímido pero de brillante carrera como periodista, había sido confidente y colaborador de otro dirigente socialista, Largo Caballero, además de editor de *Claridad* y co-propietario de la editorial «España» junto con el doctor Negrín y con su cuñado, el también dirigente socialista Julio Álvarez del Vayo. Araquistain fue también miembro del Comité Permanente de las Cortes durante el exilio -junto a Martínez Barrio y la Pasionaria-, así como Embajador de España en París durante la 2ª República². Pero sobre todo, fue testigo de excepción de los primeros intentos de pacto en Londres entre los socialistas de Indalecio Prieto y los monárquicos de Gil-Robles bajo la batuta del ministro de Asuntos Exteriores británico Ernest Bevin (1881-1951) en agosto de 1947. Aunque Araquistain «hablaba inglés perfectamente» fue un intérprete el que hizo posible la conversación entre el político español y el ministro británico (Saiz Valdivieso 1984:248).

La colaboración informativa y literaria que Araquistain prestó al hispanista es calificada globalmente por Gathorne-Hardy como «of particular service to his [Brenan's] *The Spanish Labyrinth*» (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:317), colaboración que por cierto agradece en su Prólogo (Brenan 1990: xviii). Araquistain había tenido acceso al manuscrito de la obra, hecho que demuestra el grado de intimidad y afinidad al que sin duda hubieron de llegar y que ya venía de atrás (Gathorne-Hardy 1992: 317). Sin ir más lejos, Araquistain se permitió opinar de *The Spanish Labyrinth* que había sido la obra de historia de España mejor escrita hasta el momento (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:328).

La colaboración prestada a Brenan por Araquistain parece haber ido más lejos de la simple lectura aprobatoria del manuscrito de *The Spanish Labyrinth*. Gathorne-Hardy afirma que el ex-diputado socialis-

² Ver Thomas, Hugh. (1964) *The Spanish Civil War*. 65, 105, 107, 270, 318, 365, 382, 435, 509 y 605.

ta aportó al hispanista una «valuable and detailed information about communist methods of infiltration» (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:317), información que permitió a Brenan familiarizarse con el apoyo logístico, ideológico y humano de la guerrilla antifranquista, en su mayor parte de corte comunista.

Volviendo a las circunstancias políticas que pudieron influenciar la redacción de *The Face of Spain*, debemos tener en cuenta que en enero de 1947 el PSOE encargó a Trifón Gómez que iniciara relaciones con Ernest Bevin, ministro británico de Asuntos Exteriores (Foreign Office), y a través de él con los monárquicos españoles. En septiembre del mismo año Gil Robles, ex-dirigente de la CEDA durante la 2ª República y a la sazón jefe de la Casa Real de don Juan de Borbón, se entrevistaba por vez primera en Londres con Prieto, dirigente del PSOE, a la sombra discreta pero voluminosa de Bevin. Llegaron a un acuerdo de 8 puntos en lo que vino a ser llamado Pacto de San Juan de la Luz (30 de agosto de 1948) (Alba 1978:259-60), entre los que nosotros destacamos aquí el punto 6, que reza así:

Incorporar a España inmediatamente al grupo de naciones occidentales del continente europeo asociadas para el plan de recuperación de Europa, merced al auxilio económico de los Estados Unidos e incorporarla asimismo al pacto de los cinco -Inglaterra, Francia, Bélgica, Holanda y Luxemburgo-, núcleo inicial de la Federación de Occidente de Europa primero y de toda la Europa después, siempre dentro de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas promulgada en San Francisco. (Alba 1978:260)

Ésta era precisamente la postura que Brenan reflejaba en el Prefacio de *The Face of Spain* como la más sensata, evidentemente coincidente con la monárquica, socialista y, naturalmente, con la del propio jefe del Foreign Office (Bevin): la de integrar a España en el mapa político y económico de Europa occidental junto a los países mencionados en el punto 6 del Pacto de San Juan de la Luz. Así lo expresa Brenan en el mencionado Prefacio de *The Face of Spain*:

There is a strong case for helping Spain to emerge from the pit into which she has fallen. It is a moral case and therefore a political one too. Spain forms a natural and inalienable province of Western Europe and her prosperity is of concern to all the Atlantic nations. (Brenan 1988:12)

Y aún más; según Brenan, en caso de que España aceptara el regreso del Rey,

(...) the other nations of Western Europe would feel that there existed in Spain a government which, though not democratic, had a liberal orientation and therefore be considered eligible for partnership with themselves. (Brenan 1988:14)

Como podemos apreciar, el punto 6 del Pacto de San Juan de Luz menciona asimismo la necesidad de una ayuda económica procedente de los EEUU, lo que vino a llamarse Plan Marshall («Marshall Aid»), del que por cierto, como de todos es sabido, España no llegó a beneficiarse. No por ello dejó Brenan de considerar que las potencias aliadas habían cometido un grave error: al denegárselo a España estaban dificultando el progreso de nuestro país:

The only cure [for Spain] lies in a substantial injection of Marshall Aid. (Brenan 1988:11)

Esta ayuda económica, en opinión de Brenan, hubiera traído consigo un cambio de régimen de forma pacífica, previa llegada a un acuerdo (Brenan 1988:15), eso sí, acuerdo vigilado por Bevin entre las dos ideologías mencionadas. Pero este acuerdo no había llegado a cuajar, lo cual lamenta el hispanista. Este fracaso en las negociaciones entre monárquicos y socialistas pudo significar la no concesión de la ayuda norteamericana, con el consiguiente perjuicio para España y sus intereses. Así justifica Brenan en *The Face of Spain* la postura de los monárquicos, postura ya sugerida en el Pacto de San Juan de Luz:

And although by helping Spain today we may appear to be bolstering up the Franco régime, it may also be precisely in this way, by the influence that economic help usually gives, we may be able in time to bring about the change of régime which, as I have suggested, is so much to be desired. (Brenan 1988:15)

Naturalmente, ese «change of régime» habría de ser la restauración de la Monarquía en España en la persona del pretendiente, don Juan de Borbón, o al menos, en el de su hijo don Juan Carlos. El hecho de que la entrevista Bevin/Gil-Robles/Prieto de agosto-septiembre de 1948 no llegara a nada no impide que Brenan, sin duda informado de esta reunión por su relación con la Foreign Office -según su biógrafo relación sólo superficial y ocasional-, o por Luis Araquistain, testigo de excepción de dicha reunión, pueda escribir en el Prefacio de *The Face of Spain* a favor de una causa (la monárquica) que originalmente buscó el apoyo de la oposición antifranquista de corte socialista. Pero a partir de ahora los opositores a Franco (especialmente los monárquicos) se hacen cargo de que el régimen franquista tiene aún cuerda para rato. Así demuestra Brenan, una vez más en coincidencia con la causa del pretendiente a la corona española, que es perfectamente consciente de que la única posibilidad de conseguir el cambio político en España tiene que pasar por el beneplácito del general Franco, que no está dispuesto a retirarse del mando del país:

(...) there is no reason for supposing that Franco can be got rid of by reducing the country to its last legs. Anyone who could survive the past two years, when the drought led to a general economic collapse and famine, can survive anything. (Brenan 1988:13)

Según Víctor Alba, don Juan substituyó sus flirteos con la oposición izquierdista al régimen franquista por el flirteo con el propio dictador (Alba 1978:270), actitud que, una vez más, coincide con la postura que defiende Brenan en 1950, año en que redacta el Prefacio a *The Face of Spain*. Tanto los monárquicos como el mismo hispanista eran conscientes de que Franco iba a durar mucho tiempo en el poder y que por lo

tanto el acuerdo preconizado por Brenan en *The Face of Spain* por el cual se debía aspirar a un estado monárquico (=don Juan de Borbón) en coalición con un gobierno de izquierda moderada (=socialista) tendría que pasar necesariamente por el Generalísimo.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE PATTERNS OF COMPROMISE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *KNIGHT'S GAMBIT*

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is showing William Faulkner as a writer who took morals and commitment as essential conditions of any writer or writing. I will try to deepen in William Faulkner's attitude towards the links between life and literature by using his Nobel Acceptance Speech as the main summary of these opinions and the last work he published before obtaining that award, Knight's Gambit, as an example of the actual applications of the norms he considered indispensable in the writer's duty. It is also my contention that Faulkner used the main character of Knight's Gambit, Gavin Stevens, as an alter-ego in order to introduce the reader an example of his own attitude towards the age he happened to live and as an image of the role the writer was to fulfill society.

1. Introduction

The six stories making *Knight's Gambit* up are "Smoke," "Monk," "A Hand Upon the Waters," "Tomorrow," "An Error in Chemistry" and the title novella "Knight's Gambit." All the series is under the pattern of detective fiction and there are mysteries and murders to be solved in all these stories. Even though the plots and stories told in these tales are different and there is not a linear structure, the fact that *Knight's Gambit's* main characters are the same throughout the series provides the volume with a cohesion and coherence proper of a major narration.

2. The Time and The Space (A Faulknerian Guide To Compromise)

The place in which Faulkner settled the most part of his works is called Yoknapatawpha and it is found in the South, a region functioning as some sort of Biblical name. But Yoknapatawpha is also the bone of contention for readers of Faulkner. While some of us may celebrate that squeezing of the Universe into 2,400 square miles and 16,200 people, the troupe of his critics -Vladimir Nabokov leading them- considered that the only result of that squeezing was a shapeless dough in which values such as pride, loyalty and honor were confounded and mingled up with doses of sex and violence.

However, Yoknapatawpha is not just a place but an objective, a fundamental basis or a must that Faulkner imposed upon himself when building up his identity as a writer. Yoknapatawpha is a symbol that lets Faulkner get closer to the use of the types and classical myths, and a place in which to locate the constants of history.

In his works Faulkner refers to events that have happened after and before the point in which he is telling the story. We get the certainty that the situation we are being told is not accidental at all. The readers are dropped in the middle of some running water, getting then a sort of dragging effect that makes them grasp a whole sequence of facts and deeds that have flown into that story they read. As Faulkner pointed out, past is not past, it is not even gone. The never-ending consequences of the past is what we call present.

The human background is what underlines any Faulknerian story, a background that, because of the reduced extension of Yoknapatawpha, is essential to comprehend the place and the characters we read about. Yoknapatawpha leaves room only for what Faulkner called “the old verities of human heart”(Cowley, 1997:724), but overall, the impression the expert reader gets is that in Yoknapatawpha there are no other truths but those above. What we get in this place is the complete mix of the universal and the concrete facts. Faulkner considered that any story lacking these “old verities” was “doomed” and “ephemeral.” He could not accept that. If the writer’s labor was to write about these truths full of sweat and agony, the writer also had to suffer them. That is why he just

allowed himself to write two novels, *Mosquitoes* (1926) and *Soldier's Pay* (1927) before beginning his Yoknapatawpha cycle, and with it, his major duty and his major struggle.

Yoknapatawpha is the key to Faulkner's vision of history, the creation of a "slow running water" -that is what Faulkner said that Yoknapatawpha meant even though its translation from the Chickasaw language is split land- that not only flows but also carries all the previous mud to the place we are now. However, depicting this was not enough. Faulkner does not get satisfied with a scrupulous taxonomy of facts. There is not in his stories any aim of getting an objective truth. Faulkner knows that there are as many truths as characters undergoing the consequences of time and history, that is, the consequences of things they have never done but that are implicit in their natures. An example of this is found in the famous ending words uttered by Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!* when asked why he hates the South: "I don't hate it. I don't hate it. I don't. I don't," Quentin claims. Quentin has no way to escape from his nature and his nature is the South. However, he is not afraid of accepting it. As Antonio Muñoz Molina (1998:148) observes, hating the South could have been like closing his eyes to the sins of his ancestors, the people who came from a strange land and took the Indian's lands and drove them into alcoholism, and the people who created a greedy, puritan, racist and hypocritical society. Faulkner does not hate the South because he is not afraid of it, and because he could not attempt his work as a writer from fear but from the moral backing of his vision of the author's duty:

the basest thing of all is to be afraid [...] Until he [the young writer today] learns these things, he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough that man is immortal because he will endure [...] I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. [...] The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be

one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail. (Cowley, 1977:724)

There lays the final key to the compromise. Faulkner is committed in two ways which eventually happen to be just one: he is committed both with the human race and with literature because the only way of grasping one is by comprehending the other. Therefore, we should link Faulkner with all those writers considering literature as a moral tool, not merely a didactic one.

The reflections on literature and human kind that Faulkner shows in his novels influence his treatment of myth and time. There is not just a recreation of old myths in his stories, what might have led to the creation of an epic. Faulkner avoids that. He dares telling what was wrong in his society, and by doing that, he analyzes all the processes that had driven to it. He does not accept the situation and he denounces it. The basest of all his characters are those passive and stagnate who are unable to face their destiny, take for instance the role of Caroline Compson in *The Sound and The Fury*. Faulkner condemns this passivity but at the same time he will praise the mere trying.

One of the features of the Faulknerian stories is the feeling that there is a doom all over them, as the fight full of sound and fury that Faulkner thought that life and literature were. A fight that according to him provided literature and life with their real sense. This view of things is to be supported by the most outstanding writers of the following generations: Vargas Llosa and García Márquez, Juan Rulfo and, of course, Juan Benet (who also grew a moustache in order to look like his master) here in Spain. All of them have declared how much they took from him. García Márquez, for example, has always considered Faulkner as a Caribbean writer and novels such as *Cien Años de Soledad* and especially Llosa's *La Casa Verde* prove this affirmation as a true one. These novels take Faulkner's work not only as a main inspiration but as a structure to follow, as if they were part of a Yoknapatwaphan cycle for they could not have existed without Yoknapatawpha and could belong to this place by changing the Spanish surnames into *Sutpen* or *Compson* or *Sartoris* and translating *Comala* or *Macerta* as *Jefferson* or *The Frenchman's Bend*.

The form is also a common place in these novels. Form is not innocent at all¹. There is also a compromise here. It is not by chance that things happen in the order they do, it is not just a mere trick, not just form for form's sake². It really seems that it is the only way of writing these Faulknerian novels and at the same time, these contemporary writers are a way of helping considering William Faulkner as a contemporary and modern writer and not just the reactionary some people see (or want to see) in him.

The struggle and the failure are the two definite images in Faulkner's work. Knowing that perfection is never to be achieved, the best way of approximating to it is by the excellence of our failure. That is why he considered his best works as his best failures³. Making a long story short, Faulkner's view of literature and mankind was a Sisyphean one. We have to struggle as hard as we can, we are not required to complete any work, but neither are we free to desist from it.

3. Knight's Gambit: The Writer as a Lawyer

Stelle Oldham, Faulkner's wife, once told a journalist that her husband's tales had no sense and that she thought that even he was unable to understand then⁴. However, there was a simple explanation for her husband's love towards the tale. William Faulkner was a failed poet who considered that the excellence in writing was on brevity, that is why he thought that the short story was the most demanding genre after poetry. *Knight's Gambit* is a collection of five tales plus a novella that titles the volume. In it, Faulkner introduces a number of features such as the Quixotic spirit and the Greek tragedy under the form of detective fiction.

¹ It is curious how most of the writers dealing with the Yoknapatawpha trend are also considered as difficult authors, a thing to bear in mind when discussing whether form and content can ever be split.

² Even though Faulkner owned up that sometimes the complexity of his paragraphs were just an artifice for all those easily impressionable.

³ *The Sound and the Fury* was the time that he had been closer to what he had in mind. According to Faulkner the best failure of his generation was Thomas Wolfe, the second best was himself.

⁴ When asked about his novels she answered, "ah!, that is another thing" (Marías, 1997: 77).

Knight's Gambit was published in November of 1949, a year before Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize. This brief information is quite useful to understand the mood in which he was found in when he attempted the writing of these stories. William Faulkner⁵ was beginning to be introduced into a public role, the role of the successful man of letters talking about the South. A thing that, as Gray (1994: 305) points out, until the moment had been completely split but that then was beginning to get mixed in the author's works while, so far, one of his findings had been the mastery in weaving the private and public faces of the South -and specially his privacy, the only thing he never wrote or talked about.

This is the reason that many commentators have given the appearance of Gavin Stevens⁶, the main character in *Knight's Gambit*. By creating this new figure, Faulkner was able to reconcile these two roles (the private man who loved loneliness and needed great doses of it) and the writer who was asked for answers and opinions. Gray (1994: 305) is one of the scholars supporting this view of the character:

Stevens could act as a mouthpiece: making declarations of principle that were more or less coextensive with his creator's opinions, and which tended to go dramatically untested and unchallenged. And he could also act out deep-rooted fears and fantasies by recalling aspects of Faulkner's own emotional life and realizing Faulkner's instinctive need for imaginative mastery and control.

However, Gavin Stevens is not a mere tool, nor just a mouthpiece, but something deeper: a real alter-ego of the author, for even their biographies do coincide. In the novella that titles the volume, Stevens also has a childhood sweetheart who marries an older man, and goes abroad for some years. When she, once divorced, returns home she finds that Gavin, who was supposed to have been faithful to her, has another lover. A situation quite close to Faulkner and Stelle's.

⁵ Faulkner was a really shy man who once, when being asked by a group of journalists, stepped back until he was forced to face them because he found himself between a wall and the mics.

⁶ Not to be misunderstood with Gowan Stevens, occurring in *Sanctuary*.

The main character of these stories is not a writer but a lawyer, a Harvard graduate, who was given the Pi Beta Gamma insignia and was trying to translate the Bible to the original Greek. A man considered a cultured and cultivated citizen, known because of his logical reasoning and his knowing of the human nature, who, as his author, felt at ease in a number of different registers. The following description of Gavin -that could have also worked for Faulkner- is found in, "Smoke," the first of the stories:

[Steven was] *A loose-jointed man with a mop of untidy iron-gray hair, who could discuss Einstein with college professors and who spent whole afternoons among squatting men against the walls of country stores, talking to them in their idiom. He used to call this his holidays.*

In short, Gavin Stevens is a man who hoards the knowledge of mankind given in literature⁷. This role of literature as a compendium of human learning is what Gavin defends and it is the reason for the last sentences in "An Error in Chemistry." In this tale a murderer and *master of disguise* actor pretends being an old Southern man. However, he discovers himself when preparing a traditional drink made up by mixing sugar, water and whisky⁸. The foreigner tries to dissolve the sugar in the whisky when he should have known that sugar is never to dissolve in alcohol, being the right steps, water, sugar, and finally, whisky, steps that Faulkner defines as "a ritual." This ignorance is stronger than a self-accusation and eventually he is trapped. Once the case is solved, Faulkner lingers on a couple of paragraphs adding his view towards literature, his teaching, or better, those spots of solipsism that we, enthusiasts, celebrate so much. The sheriff of Jefferson asks Gavin whether he knows of any book exhorting mankind to fear their own pride and vanity, and the answer that Gavin gives is that it is said in

⁷ The same union that Faulkner considered inevitable.

⁸ Faulkner reminds the reader that the fact was not that Southerners were not manly enough to drink pure whisky, but that as this whisky was illegally distilled by the farmers, sometimes it happened to be too much strong and some of them preferred drinking what Faulkner calls a girlish syrup. The mixture with perfectly distilled whisky is a bit cloying.

any book, and later he specifies, in any good book, it is said in a thousand different ways, but it is always there, always.

A year after this volume was published, Faulkner delivered the Nobel speech in which he claimed that there were patterns to ignore some fashionable but useless topics and achieve good literature "...the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about" (Cowley, 1977: 724), that is, one of the infinite ways of writing what the sheriff expected to read in books. What we have now is the exact proof that Stevens and Faulkner are interested in the very same thing. Faulkner investigates the roots of his community in order to write books, and Gavin Stevens solves crimes and by doing this he deepens in the knowledge of the constants and customs of his neighbors. The two investigations are therefore a sort of atavistic deepening and, at the same time, they both have to apply logic in order to solve difficult puzzles, just like the situations that Faulkner created in his works, or is not making sense of works such as *The Sound and the Fury* purely a detective's duty?

Stevens and Faulkner are interested in the same sort of things. They both face bravely the most wretched sides of human tradition, in which has even been called a Miltonian fight (Ayala-Dip, 1997:13). The comparison with Milton is not gratuitous. *Knight's Gambit* is full of literary references -from the Greek Poets to Thomas Hardy- being the most important one that to Don Quixote. Not only because it is a book that both Gavin and Faulkner admire -the latter used to read it once every year- but due to the idea that they three -Don Quixote and Gavin and Faulkner- shared: that firm belief in the fact that there is always a moral obligation in men's journeys through this world; to face up our unavoidable fate. An absurd and trifling duty that entails an elevated sense of dignity and a searching for excellence, as de Juan (1997:24) calls it, 'a chispa que evoca la integridad de la vida en un instante.'

Gavin Stevens and William Faulkner are moving in the same territory and they both need books as an essential tool⁹, and none of

⁹ Books of fiction, I mean, as R. L. Stevenson pointed out, those are the most influential and the truest in their influence.

them gets satisfied just by retelling what happened in a given moment, just by providing us with what could be called truth. But truth is not enough it must be accompanied by justice. As Gavin Stevens observes, truth and justice are not the same thing, in my life I haven't seen any fair truth he says. Moreover, when asked about his main goal, he does not answer that it is truth, but justice and human beings.

Telling what truly happened is then a way of restoring the dignity of those who unfairly lost it. Faulkner and Stevens are not judges, all they can do is telling what happened. Gavin, at least, can tell it to a judge, but Faulkner cannot. So for Faulkner, the only way in which things, at least morally, can be restored, is by writing about them without waiting any sort of "official" punishment. He just could wait for his readers to condemn the situations he depicted. This is another parallelism, they both try to explain what happened while bearing in mind the weaknesses and virtues of the human spirit.

The tale summing all above up is "Tomorrow." In it, an old man forces a mistrial by standing out from the rest of the eleven fellow-jurors in a murder case. The verdict is for sure "not-guilty." The murderer killed a man called Thorpe because he had raped his daughter, but the old man resists because the killed man was one of the uncles of a child he happened to adopt, a boy that was taken away from him by the murdered. What the reader and Charles -the narrator of the tales- question is why the old man did not let the killer go. Gavin provides the answer and reminds us that if we had been the old man we would have done the same thing. He wants us never to forget it, never.

In this tale we find the most important reflections in the book. The first is the necessity of the effort and the endurance, the fate of our humble condition: resist and resist and resist tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow as Stevens defines it. The effort must be carried out even in all those aspects concerning morals. Stevens wants his nephew not to forget that he would have never let the other free: firstly because then he would have forgotten all that he taught him, and secondly because he would have lost his human nature, a human nature that is to be conquered by the effort and the sweat of the human spirit. That is why Stevens repeats it twice, both as a lesson and a threat, do not ever forget

it. Ever. The second is the role of Stevens as the keeper of communal lore, the guardian of a history that is at once the particular of Jefferson and the universal one.

It is clear enough that Stevens is not Faulkner because Faulkner existed and created Stevens and Stevens never existed, but if Faulkner ever wanted to see his view of life printed and put in some other's mouth, this is the book. Faulkner is to Stevens what Stevens is to Faulkner. Stevens is more than a mere mouthpiece, his labor is more that one of an investigator. Stevens's duty is not only showing us what Faulkner thinks, but also how he attempted his work, the transcription of Faulkner's literary creation. What Faulkner shows us by using Stevens is what and how he writes.

Both William and Gavin are mingled in crimes and judgements and punishments and sins, as if they were trying to create a catalogue of the human condition, a thing as ambitious as writing a new Bible, which happens to be the very same thing that Gavin Stevens had been trying to do for more that twenty years. If any good detective has a way of evading the world and concentrating in the case, Stevens's is translating the Bible into classical Greek. Even though this might seem a longing for quite old values, another interpretation can be found. Barthes in *Mythologies* observes that "the world enters language as a dialectal relation between activities, between human actions," later he adds "things lose their memory that once were made." What Barthes points out is that once a historical reality comes to be converted into communal knowledge and generally assumed, the process of conversion is forgotten. The translation of the Bible is not a reactionary sign then, on the contrary: it shows that things can be reversed. What was made can be unmade and re-made, and again this leads us to the rejection of stagnation and passivity and the ideas of effort and the necessity of an explanation of the past if things are to be improved.

The writer -as the investigator or the detective- must not be afraid of reality and must face it, he must dare his inner fears and only by doing that he will triumph. That is why Faulkner considered that writers were beginning simply to re-tell what had happened, and that was what he called "the universal physical fear."

The real moral commitment is what characterizes Faulkner and is what this essay is trying to prove, the fact that Faulkner's longing was writing about the essence of the human heart and the truth, "Until he learns these things, he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man" (Cowley, 1977:724). This compromise is what makes Faulkner -using his own words- write "about the heart, not about the glands." Therefore, if literature was also an arm and a tool to Faulkner, it is also loaded with unreachable aims, what happens to be another feature characterizing both Faulkner and Stevens and that, as said above, is inherited from that Quixotic spirit when helping all those who did not ask for justice and, especially, all those that did not know they had a right for justice.

In the tale "Monk," it is clearly exposed that Stevens's compromise is but a mere utopia, however, his responsibility is to strive, to fulfill his unattainable project. In that absurdity lies the essence of the human spirit. In "Monk," Stevens tries to free a man who has been accused of a crime that he did not commit. The point is that this man -a backward character, as so many others appearing in Faulkner's work- has been the object of abuses and has also been used as a scapegoat. Stevens' is a claim to do justice to all the defenseless, but not only that, Faulkner also commits himself politically. In "Monk" Faulkner defines the policy of this century as woeful, and criticizes the populism and demagoguery carried out by the politics of the age.

So far we have been dealing with all those *high* questions of human nature. However, Gavin Stevens's mouthpiece is also used by Faulkner to show his view of another *minor* problems just like tobacco in "Smoke," the virtues of chess in "Knight's Gambit" or the best way to mix whisky in "An Error in Chemistry."

Those above are not the only features of the book nor the only links between Faulkner and Stevens. Another topic to analyze is the importance of the power of story-telling and the certainty that stories are constructed by a number of different voices. If Faulkner used to take oral tradition as a basis for the construction of his works, this same tool is used by Gavin in order to find the solution of his cases. In "Smoke," we are introduced to the problem of the subjectivity of stories, the absolute

awareness of the impossibility of presenting the reader with an absolute historical narrative, a topic that Faulkner had investigated before. Using the same technique that he introduced in *Absalom, Absalom!*, we are told a story based on suppositions and guesswork in which tradition has a lot to say. Stories filled with sentences such as we knew old Anse so we could imagine something like this or probably it happened the following way.

In the second tale of the volume, “Monk,” Faulkner thinks over the difficulty of narrating any story while, at the same time, he mocks his own literary style when Gavin Stevens delivers his final speech. Another aspect related to this is the importance of the oral tradition. These tales that are studded with stories that tell and clarify and make the tales up. These are voices that repeat what they once heard or that own up what they have inferred or discovered and that, as in any conversation, make a number of backs and forwards that characterize Faulkner’s prose. These parallel narration are gathered by Stevens in order to reconstruct the origins and the hidden past of the characters. The very first paragraph of “Monk” summarizes the author’s view of history and the capacity of language of depicting it. In that paragraph, Faulkner deals with the difficulty of narrating and how literature and literary tools -such as inference and inventiveness- may help to puzzle out the inconsistencies of any story, that is, how art helps understanding all the nebulous and vague aspects of life.

The last of the parallelisms that this paper will focus on between Faulkner and Stevens is the complex use of language or better, the difficulty in understanding what they are saying. This feature of the tales may sound as a mockery of himself, while it is rather a justification for his conscious use of a register that, even difficult, is self-contained. Faulkner and Stevens just need themselves to be understood¹⁰. But this winding style is necessary both for Faulkner and Gavin. Charles, the narrator of the tales complains about his uncle’s inextricable methods and how he used to lead astray the accused, the jury and even his closest friends. The readers are not an exception and we are lost for we -following the typical patterns of detective fiction- are given the information through

¹⁰ Despite Faulkner’s fame any reader without prejudices or fears and loaded with patience enough knows that.

Gavin's eighteen year old nephew, who knows as much as we do. It is in the novella when this pattern of detective fiction is broken. What we get there is a third person narrator who, curiously enough, is not focalized on Gavin, but again in the character of Charlie.

As a matter of fact, it is in the novella that we learn more about Charlie. His age, his eagerness to go fighting in the Second World War, and we deepen in his relationship with his uncle Gavin, but, anyway, Charlie is still the vehicle used in order to talk about Gavin Stevens, that is why, even when quoting Gavin's words, he is told to be Charlie's uncle, we never read "said Stevens" or "thought Gavin" but "said Charlie's uncle" and "said the uncle." This third person narrator also refers to Stevens's way narrating and reconstructing facts, but now, Faulkner explains the reasons for Gavin's -of Faulkner himself- obscurity. This narrator observes that Gavin refused to explain his commentaries when they were really witty or brilliant. Faulkner considered that there was no need of explaining the characters' motives and reasons once and again. He provided the readers with a number of pieces and proposed a game in which he gave us food for thought but never chewed food, a thing to acknowledge for considering the readers intelligent beings is a gracefulness not all writers have.

4. Conclusion

Knight's Gambit is a volume lessening William Faulkner's fame as a complex and solipsist writer of inextricable stories or, at least, it may help the reader understanding why sometimes he seems to be so. *Knight's Gambit* is also a guide for Faulkner's positions towards the age he happened to live, and how, according to the ideas he defended in his Nobel Speech, the fundamental aspects of life are to appear in any text if good literature is to be achieved. The book also claims the idea that recovering the essences of the human spirit is indispensable in order to grasp the meaning of life, as Gavin Stevens's role proves.

There is nothing more to be added about the book but to insist in a value that, even known and praised by scholars, is generally not transmitted to the audience as a fundamental characteristic of this

author, that of his compromise towards mankind by his painting of the low states and miseries of human nature.

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On Literary Canons

HAROLD BLOOM, EL CANON OCCIDENTAL Y SU REPERCUSIÓN EN ESPAÑA

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Abstract:

In 1994, the American critic Harold Bloom publishes The Western Canon, a work which became the object of a great deal of controversy and debate, going very soon beyond the frontiers of the United States. The book comes out in Spanish in 1995, but, even before its appearance, it had been referred to in a series of critical notes of the most diverse tendencies. The global result of Bloom's theory manifests itself in our country in an enormous aftermath which has turned the literacy canon into one of the most debate theoretical questions in the last years, be it either to call it into question, to qualify it, to state the necessity of its existence or to make an innovative epistemological proposal in this respect.

En 1994 publica Harcourt Brace and Company, la editorial neoyorquina, la obra del crítico norteamericano Harold Bloom *The Western Canon. The Books and School of the Ages*, obra que traduce al español Damián Alou y publica Anagrama al año siguiente. Esta publicación venía avalada por la enorme repercusión que había tenido la obra y las abundantes polémicas que había suscitado. No en vano, Bloom es conocido en Norteamérica como uno de los críticos más polémicos de la actualidad, hecho condicionado en buena medida por el ambiguo vínculo del autor con la llamada Escuela de Yale y su conflictiva

relación con la institución académica, a la que siempre ha estado ligado, a la vez que por su ejercicio de la crítica en medios de la difusión del suplemento literario de *The New York Times*.

Desde que se doctorara en Yale en 1955, Bloom ha estado ligado a esta universidad, en la cual se ha reunido un prestigioso grupo de críticos y teóricos de la literatura que, seguidores de Jacques Derrida, han constituido la llamada Escuela de Yale -cuyos representantes más importantes son Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller y Geoffrey Hartman-, máxima expresión de la desconstrucción literaria contemporánea. Bloom ha intentado en todo momento distanciarse de esta escuela, y el magisterio que sobre toda su producción crítico y teórico literaria han ejercido Freud y Nietzsche es bastante significativo al respecto. Sin embargo, no se puede negar que hay elementos que lo ponen en contacto con sus compañeros de universidad como es la relación inseparable que establece entre crítica y creación literarias, entre las cuales no señala diferencia alguna, siendo éste uno de los principios teóricos que ha sido más cuestionado y discutido en el seno del pensamiento desconstruccionista y postestructural en general.

Su aparición en la antología de 1979 *Deconstruction and Criticism* contribuyó a mantener el equívoco. Bloom, que no niega su amistad con estos críticos, a los que llama «primos lejanos» desde un punto de vista intelectual, considera que su relación crítico-teórica con ellos es inexistente, por lo que no duda en dar una explicación irónica a su presencia en la citada antología:

«Yo inventé el volumen, yo creé el volumen, fue idea mía, conseguí el editor, junté a todos y di un título al libro, Deconstruction and Criticism. Soy un crítico cómico, y lo único que recibo son críticas serias. El título es una broma personal, que nadie comprende; quería decir que los otros cuatro eran la desconstrucción y yo era la crítica» (apud Salusinszky, 1989: 170).

Autor de una veintena de libros, su actividad se centra hasta principios de los años setenta en el estudio del romanticismo y de los autores románticos más destacados, interés éste heredado por lo menos en parte de su maestro N. Frye, del que pronto se va a alejar por discrepar

frontalmente de la poética de Eliot y de los *new critics* cuyos conceptos y métodos Frye había contribuido a extender. Bloom, al contrario que Frye, no ve el romanticismo como un protestantismo secularizado, sino como un movimiento en el que el elemento gnóstico -fundamental para el autor judío- aparece en todos los poetas fuertes del movimiento. De esta primera etapa del crítico de Yale se traduce al español su segunda obra, *The Visionary Company. A Reading English Romantic Poetry*, aparecida en inglés en 1961 y traducida al español por M. Antolínez para Seix Barral en 1974, aunque en nuestro país no tuvo gran repercusión en los estudios literarios de la época.

En 1973 publica el crítico *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, obra que, según declaraciones del mismo autor, había escrito en su mayor parte en 1967. Con esta obra Bloom no sólo expone la que es una de las ideas fundamentales de su pensamiento teórico literario, sino que también pasa a formar parte de los críticos más cuestionados y atacados por sus propios colegas debido al carácter novedoso y atrevido de su teoría. El libro es traducido al español por Francisco Rivera en 1976 para Monte Ávila Editores, en Caracas, por lo que la obra sólo se conocerá muy tardíamente en España y a través de alusiones o reseñas parciales en ensayos monográficos de carácter general.

El mismo camino sigue *Kabbalah and Criticism*, publicada en inglés en 1975 y en 1978 en español, en la misma editorial venezolana que el libro anterior. *The Breaking of the Vessels* (1983) es traducida por Federico Patán al español en 1986 y publicada por Fondo de Cultura Económica en México, por lo que su difusión en España tampoco fue muy destacable. Mejor acogida tiene *Ruin the Sacred Truths. Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (1987), obra que publica Cátedra en 1991 con el título *Poesía y creencia* bajo el signo del interés que suscita en la década de los noventa el postestructuralismo en nuestro país, interés que ha tenido una de sus principales manifestaciones en la traducción de textos críticos y teóricos especialmente representativos de esta tendencia.

The Book of J, obra escrita hace casi tres mil años en Jerusalén y de la que sólo queda un texto fragmentario insertado en el Génesis, el Éxodo y los Números, traducida al inglés por David Rosenberg y acompañada de un extenso y exhaustivo estudio de Harold Bloom en 1991, es publicada en español por la editorial barcelonesa Interzona en 1995 sin que llegara

a alcanzar gran difusión, hecho que contrasta con la acogida que tuvo en Estados Unidos, pero que se explica por la falta de interés en nuestro país por estos temas, y más si tenemos en cuenta que, si se desconoce que Bloom es un judío norteamericano ligado al estudio de la Cábala, entendida ésta como una mezcla de neoplatonismo y gnosticismo, no sólo como texto religioso, sino también como texto portador de no pocos valores literarios, no se entiende el verdadero sentido del estudio.

Aunque algunas ideas expuestas en las distintas obras que jalonan la amplia trayectoria de Bloom hasta la aparición de *El canon occidental* presentan indicios inequívocos de la posición del crítico al respecto, la publicación de la obra provoca un gran revuelo en los círculos más variados tanto por el lugar como por el momento histórico de su aparición: Estados Unidos, mediados de la década de los noventa, escenario de una multiculturalidad que lucha por obtener un lugar propio en la sociedad norteamericana y, por supuesto, en la cultura, en la que se reivindica la propia especificidad frente a la cultura anglosajona dominante, al igual que en el ámbito literario.

De extensión considerable, la obra de Bloom va a abogar por establecer un corpus literario cerrado y sistemático, hecho que se lleva a cabo tanto en la parte teórica del libro como en la consiguiente lista de autores canónicos occidentales que le sigue, pues entre los críticos están los que niegan la existencia única y universal de un canon y también los que, creyendo en la conveniencia de establecer este canon a manera de defensa frente a otras manifestaciones culturales y literarias que amenazarían la «buena» literatura tradicional, discrepan de los nombres que incluye Bloom en su lista.

En lo que se refiere a la última cuestión, Bloom ha declarado que su intención era seleccionar unos cuarenta autores que reflejarían distintas personalidades, periodos históricos y géneros, aunque finalmente tuvo que conformarse con veintiséis, cabe preguntarse si por desconocimiento de la amplia y rica tradición literaria occidental o por falta de valores literarios que pudieran justificar la inclusión. Desde distintos países occidentales las críticas, orientadas a señalar omisiones importantes, han sido numerosas. Hasta ahora Bloom sólo se ha justificado diciendo que no recomendaría ningún libro del que no existiera una buena

traducción al inglés (V. Barbara Probst Solomon, 1995), lo que confirma el anglocentrismo de la obra.

Autor de más de treinta antologías y colaborador habitual de *The New York Times Book Review*, Bloom conoce el poder que encierra toda crítica en tanto que determina la literatura que ha de perdurar y la que perecerá inevitablemente, como ha señalado Ignacio Echevarría (1995: 7):

«...lo que aquí importa -valga insistir en ello- no es tanto la lista propiamente dicha como la posibilidad misma de plantearla. En este orden, no cabe ignorarlo: la defensa del canon constituye, en rigor, una defensa de la crítica literaria entendida como garante de la existencia de la literatura».

Y no solamente de la literatura, pues, como ha apuntado Pozuelo Yvancos (1995: 172):

«Considero que la mucha actualidad que ha cobrado el debate en torno al 'canon' [...] sólo podrá entenderse en su globalidad en tal contexto de crisis de los sentidos tradicionales de la teoría y los lugares tradicionales de la crítica. De una cierta forma de proliferación de estudios, sobre todo en revistas norteamericanas muy vivas como Critical Inquiry o New Literary History, en torno a la cuestión del canon evidencia que la revitalización que en ciertos sectores académicos se hace del 'canon' ha actuado como reacción de la institución literaria, sobre todo académica, a la creciente crisis de los modelos epistemológicos en que se basó la crítica y la consiguiente revisión de sus categorías centrales, como la de 'autor', 'texto', 'interpretación lectora', 'valor', etc.».

Parece más que probable que, aunque la lista no hubiese sido incluida, algo posible si hemos de dar crédito a los rumores que circulaban por Nueva York y según los cuales fue la editorial Harcourt Brace la que insistió en la inclusión de la lista, la cual garantizaría el reintegro de 600.000 dólares anticipados, la obra de Bloom no habría pasado desapercibida. Su enfrentamiento y descalificación de la que llama

«Escuela del Resentimiento», «que desea derrocar el canon con el fin de promover sus supuestos (e inexistentes) programas de cambio social» (Bloom, 1994: 14), en la que incluye feminismo, lacanismo, nuevo historicismo o estudios culturales, marxismo, desconstrucción y semiótica, equivale a hacer tabla rasa en los estudios literarios norteamericanos actuales, y más si pensamos que el New Criticism ya había sido atacado por el mismo autor debido a su carácter reaccionario. Tras este ataque sólo queda, como venía promoviendo el crítico desde hacía años, y en una línea típicamente postestructural aun a su pesar, el ejercicio de la crítica como actividad profundamente individualista e individualizada, ajena a los avances teóricos y epistemológicos alcanzados a lo largo del siglo XX. Por lo tanto, no sorprenden declaraciones como ésta:

«...no creo -como continúo diciendo en mis libros- que exista ningún método sino uno mismo. [...] Creo que la crítica ha sido siempre tan violentamente personal y una cuestión de defensa psíquica como la poesía lírica» (apud Carlos Cañete, 1984: 56).

En la obra que venimos comentando aquí el teórico se adhiere, como forma de exorcisar cualquier vinculación a lo político, lo ideológico o lo social tanto del acto literario como del crítico literario, a la estética, «un asunto individual más que social» (Bloom, 1994: 26). Una obra sólo logrará irrumpir en el canon con fuerza estética cuando presente como características: «dominio del lenguaje metafórico, originalidad, poder cognitivo, sabiduría y exuberancia en la dicción» (Bloom, 1994: 39), criterios suficientemente amplios como para que el establecimiento de un único canon se convierta en una tarea ardua, si no imposible.

Si bien es innegable que el tiempo del que dispone cualquier ser humano es reducido y, en consecuencia, al no poder leerlo todo deberá seleccionar, este hecho, como justificación de una férrea imposición de un canon establecido por un crítico concreto, es insuficiente. Y es que no podemos recluir el canon, como quiere Bloom, en el ámbito de la estética, pues es histórico, y como tal sólo se explica situándolo política y culturalmente, como en el caso de Estados Unidos, donde se encuentran estudios sobre el tema desde hace un siglo -y en ocasiones procedentes de una literatura tan poco «canónica» como la llamada afroamericana.

No podemos olvidar un hecho político que tuvo gran repercusión en los estudios literarios norteamericanos: la reivindicación explícita de un canon literario que realiza William Bennet, Ministro de Educación durante el segundo mandato de Reagan (1984-1988), cuando recomienda una lista de autores que representarían la cultura occidental (V. Enric Sullà, 1998: 15 y ss.). El problema surge porque los representantes del multiculturalismo imperante proponen la consideración de la literatura y de la cultura en general bajo los parámetros de la raza, la clase y el género. En consecuencia, o se acepta que el canon es abierto y, por tanto, variable, o se suprime la idea misma de canon; lo que no parece posible es que las minorías -no siempre tan minoritarias- vayan a renunciar a ocupar un lugar propio en la sociedad a la que legítimamente pertenecen.

En Europa, a pesar de que el multiculturalismo no alcanza ni la profundidad ni la extensión que en Estados Unidos, no han faltado defensores de la multiculturalidad que han hecho agudas observaciones a la posición bloomena. Uno de los casos más destacados es el de Iris M. Zavala (1995: 53), autora de origen puertorriqueño afincada en Holanda:

«...el punto ciego de Bloom radica en no reconocer en estas luchas la contingencia radical del proceso histórico-social -el discurso social- y estar sordo para captar en esta pluralidad una multitud de respuestas al mismo núcleo. Intenta, así, abolir las diferencias en la economía del capital simbólico: el lenguaje. El proceso de canonización nos induce a aceptar como evidente la jerarquía instituida para limar la pluralidad. La ley (el Nombre-del-Padre, según Lacan) salvaguarda perfectamente la forma ordenada, sin alterarla. [...] Se trata de una lucha por el capital simbólico, y de su lugar en los programas de estudio y en la institución universitaria».

La crítica y teoría literarias españolas se hicieron eco de la aparición de la obra de Bloom muy pronto. Suplementos culturales de periódicos prestigiosos dedicaron no pocas páginas a la cuestión del canon -V. *El País* 24-12-1994, 21-1-1995, 30-12-1995; *La Vanguardia* 27-11-1994, 15-12-1995; *Diario 16* 8-10-1994.

También revistas especializadas dedicaron números monográficos al tema: *Ínsula*, nº 600, 1996; *El Urogallo*, nº 116-117, 1996; *Lateral*, nº 13, 1996.

Numerosos teóricos iban pronunciándose sobre esta cuestión y sobre la posición misma de Bloom a la vez que se adaptaba la teoría del canon a la peculiar situación literaria de nuestro país, más marcada ésta por la existencia de distintas nacionalidades que por las minorías étnicas o sexuales. De esta manera se está estableciendo el canon de la literatura catalana, gallega o vasca y el canon de la literatura española medieval, del Renacimiento, de la Ilustración, del siglo XIX o del siglo XX. Esta posición de distintos intelectuales españoles conlleva importantes discrepancias en relación a la teoría de Bloom ya que rompe la ortodoxia en la mayor parte de los casos al demostrar que no existe un único canon universal e intemporal, existen cánones plurales que responden a realidades históricas diferentes y que, en consecuencia, han de ser estudiados y fijados según los casos.

Ahora bien, lo que no se le puede negar a la obra de Bloom es el hecho de haber resucitado una cuestión vieja como la literatura misma y haber puesto a críticos y teóricos españoles a investigar sobre el tema. *El canon occidental* también ha despertado un interés destacable por la figura e ideas de su autor, cuyas obras anteriores, como ya se ha dicho, no habían tenido una gran repercusión en nuestro país. La obra de Cristina Álvarez de Morales Mercado *Aproximación a la teoría poética de Harold Bloom* (1996), y su posterior tesis doctoral, constituyen una aportación importante para el conocimiento del pensamiento del polémico crítico.

No es extraño, pues, que la prensa española empiece a dar noticias de la última obra de Bloom, *Shakespeare, la invención de lo humano* (V. *El País*, 26-11-1998, p. 43), obra de escritura casi obligada si se considera el lugar que ocupa el escritor británico en las teorías del norteamericano, cuya publicación prepara Anagrama, editorial que publicó en 1997, traducida por Damián Alou, *Omens of Millennium. The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams and Resurrection*, obra que ha pasado desapercibida ya que en ella no encontramos, ni en el tema ni en el tono, el carácter polémico y provocador que tiene *El canon occidental*.

Si, como hemos dicho, el libro de Bloom ha hecho que los estudiosos españoles retomen el canon como problema teórico fundamental de este final de siglo, las actitudes que podemos encontrar frente al autor de Yale se pueden agrupar en cuatro:

1. Crítica centrada fundamentalmente en la lista de autores ofrecida que se cuestiona por presentar ausencias notables; es la posición que encontramos en buena parte de las reseñas periodísticas.

2. Cuestionamiento teórico en tanto que la polémica sobre el canon no es nueva en los estudios literarios, pero las teorías bloomeanas no son aceptadas; es el caso de Francisco Abad, que no duda en calificar la posición de Bloom de «un pensamiento un poco a la defensiva y conservador» (1995: 350) para pasar a llamar la atención sobre elementos fundamentales que hay que tener presentes en el estudio del canon literario.

3. Apoyo de las teorías de Bloom, actitud que representa García Berrio en un significativo trabajo, «Necesidad y jerarquía de la estética: la polémica americana sobre el canon occidental» (1995). Defensor de los universales estéticos, e interesado, como él mismo declara, en realizar un «inventario ambiciosamente exhaustivo de causas antropológicas capaces de cimentar las razones canónicas de una axiología estética» (1995: 108), el teórico español no omite el contexto en el que se formula y difunde la obra bloomeana, hecho que no le impide afirmar la necesidad de establecer un canon y elogiar la figura del autor de Yale, aun en su narcisismo, su soledad, su resentimiento o su orgullo:

«A buen seguro me cuento entre quienes más sinceramente lamentarán ya el vacío de una argumentación más adecuada sobre el canon en la culminación madura de la obra de Bloom; pero es preciso reconocer que, por esta vez, las exasperaciones polémicas y la arrogancia desenfocada del cálculo de sus propias circunstancias personales han perjudicado lamentablemente la grandeza de una tarea que era asequible al talento de Bloom y que, en todo caso, sigue siendo necesaria y futura» (1995: 111).

En el ámbito español la posición mantenida por este autor es minoritaria.

4. Revisión y ubicación históricas de la polémica norteamericana seguidas de propuestas alternativas procedentes del pensamiento teórico europeo; es la posición de Pozuelo Yvancos, la más fructífera, desde un punto de vista teórico, hasta el momento. La teoría literaria norteamericana ha ignorado casi siempre las aportaciones que se realizan desde Europa, si exceptuamos algunas procedentes de Francia. Este hecho es especialmente desafortunado por cuanto, en lo relativo al canon, el pensamiento de distintos autores europeos pone de manifiesto que no es necesario enfrentar estética e ideología (lo individual frente a lo social, etc.) para quedarse con el primer término de la oposición, como propugna Bloom, pues es posible formular teorías integradoras y superadoras de tales dicotomías que contribuyan decisivamente al esclarecimiento del problema del canon literario. Dos propuestas realiza Pozuelo Yvancos en este contexto; la primera es la de las teorías sistémicas (expuestas por Steven Tötösy, Itamar Even-Zohar, etc.):

«La utilidad de las teorías sistémicas, cuya aportación para definir una verdadera teoría del canon considero capital, radica precisamente, como enseguida veremos, en que no han caído en la circularidad a la que remiten finalmente los debates entre ateos y creyentes sobre la existencia del Dios-canon, sino en la medida en que han convertido la cuestión del canon en un desafío epistémico, independientemente del lugar vocacional en que cada cual se haya ubicado. Los estudios sistémicos, en la medida en que han fraguado en sociedades como las eslavas o la israelita, que son por su configuración multiraciales, multiculturales y multilingüísticas, han llevado la cuestión del canon a un punto de equilibrio que integra muy diferentes vertientes y donde para nada encontraremos, por fortuna, las reminiscencias de un pensamiento antinómico, a menudo profundamente maniqueo» (1995: 18).

La segunda procede de Iuri M. Lotman, el maestro de la conocida Escuela de Tartu-Moscú, en la que una semiótica de la cultura no ajena

a las principales aportaciones de la tradición teórica europea ofrece respuestas conciliadoras y sistemáticas a distintas cuestiones planteadas en torno al canon literario. En definitiva, para Lotman «Todo canon se resuelve como estructura histórica, lo que lo convierte en cambiante, movedizo y sujeto a los principios reguladores de la actividad cognoscitiva y del sujeto ideológico, individual o colectivo, que postula» (Pozuelo Yvancos, 1995: 38).

Para terminar, cabe destacar que es éste -el de *El canon occidental*- un caso único en lo que se refiere a repercusión profunda e inmediata de las teorías de un crítico norteamericano sobre un país europeo como el nuestro en el que el pensamiento literario de los países vecinos es el que siempre ha recibido mayor atención y mejor acogida. Bloom, con un fuerte carácter polémico y provocador, ha logrado convertirse en una excepción aun cuando la mayoría de los nuestros intelectuales hayan cuestionado o rechazado abiertamente sus teorías.

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THE WESTERN CANON. UNA DEFENSA DEL CANON OCCIDENTAL

José Carlos Redondo Olmedilla

Abstract

In this article the author deals with some capital terms and ideas appearing in Harold Bloom's work The Western Canon. According to the criticism in the article, the book is interesting because it revitalizes and, at the same time, reminds us of the notion of canon in literature. In this study Bloom's statements are supported and efforts are joined to prove how the tradition of the Western canon is already and very much present in Western culture. In today's society, where the works of creation frequently don't reach the minimum standards of required quality, the writer of this article remembers how Bloom vindicates the keeping of the canon. It is a proposal based upon the excellence of the works that are peculiar to him Bloom. On the other hand, it shows how Bloom proposes the acknowledgment of the aesthetic quality of the works against the intellectual vacuities of much of today's literary criticism.

En 1994 apareció en el mercado editorial americano una obra: *The Western Canon (El canon occidental)*, una obra donde su autor, Harold Bloom, crítico y profesor de la Universidad de Yale, plantea, entre otras cuestiones, la pregunta de qué autores dentro de la tradición cultural de occidente merecen ser realmente leídos. Bloom ofrece en su libro toda una lista de autores con una serie de recomendaciones dirigidas a los lectores. Estas sugerencias parten desde escritores de la antigüedad como

Píndaro, Esquilo o Sófocles hasta escritores más cercanos a nuestro tiempo como son Oscar Wilde, Ernest Hemingway o Toni Morrison.

Para Bloom, la obra literaria debe ser leída simple y llanamente por su valor o por placer literario y no por su corrección política. Este es el punto de partida para elaborar una selección de los que él considera escritores capitales y fundamentales dentro de la tradición de la literatura occidental, escritores como: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Montaigne, Goethe, Cervantes o Borges entre otros muchos. Una de las ideas importantes que surge a tenor de esta lista elaborada por Bloom es la idea de discriminación entendida en el sentido técnico del concepto. Ya los críticos de la revista *New York* pronosticaban que el libro de Bloom suscitara las críticas más controvertidas, observación lógica si pensamos que no todo el mundo tiene el mismo criterio ni coincide a la hora de elaborar cuales han sido y son los escritores más significativos e importantes dentro de nuestra tradición. Muchos lectores de la obra también quedarán sorprendidos al no encontrar a alguno de sus clásicos favoritos en la lista. Pero lo que indudablemente nos sorprende por encima de todo es su subjetiva y valiente defensa de la estética, y más aún de lo que él considera valor estético. El mismo Harold Bloom se manifiesta avasallado por la vanidad moral que está destrozando los estudios literarios en nombre de la justicia socioeconómica. Aquí sería importante que recordásemos brevemente a lo que se dió en llamar moda PC, moda de lo políticamente correcto, de ahí sus iniciales con sus hipocresías lingüísticas y sus tremendos vacíos intelectuales.

Cabría preguntarse si un libro como *The Western Canon* podría haber surgido en Europa y si las actitudes de los críticos europeos siguen tan fijas e inmovilistas, incapaces de criticar a los clásicos menos aún de excluir la importancia de algunos e incapaces de reconocer los elementos más humanos de éstos. En Europa hemos seguido una tendencia hacia la deificación de algunos clásicos e incluso a deificar los aspectos más humanos de los clásicos; aspectos que, precisamente por ser de escritores clásicos, dejaban de ser «humanos». Siempre que nos hemos movido dentro de parámetros occidentales, hemos achacado a América su falta de tradición histórica y cultural. Pero, pensamos que, en el caso de Bloom y de su obra, la ausencia de gavelas históricas ha podido deter-

minar favorablemente su valentía crítica para elaborar una lista de qué leer y cómo leer¹.

Como vemos, esta valentía crítica de Bloom tiene bastante que ver con el deseo de innovar y de cambiar lo establecido, de ahí que nuestra reflexión se pueda extender al campo de la ciencia y de la tecnología e incluso al campo social.

La defensa del canon literario no es ninguna estupidez. Todo nuestro sistema de vida contemporáneo se organiza teniendo como base un sistema de leyes que se hace necesario para poder llevar una existencia más o menos organizada. El caos puede ser admitido sólo hasta cierto punto, pues el hombre siempre ha tenido la necesidad de reinterpretar su entorno para hacerlo más afín a sus posibilidades. Es igualmente cierto que por encima de las leyes elaboradas por el hombre, siempre han existido y existirán las leyes de la naturaleza, pero desde los primeros momentos de la civilización, el hombre ha tenido una necesidad de crear su propia ley, quizás porque ante la imposibilidad de doblegar las leyes de la naturaleza, el hombre ha tenido la necesidad de sentirse rey de su propio mundo. Esta idea es más que nunca extrapolable e incluíble al canon literario. Es cierto que cada vez somos más conscientes de que la denominada Galaxia Gutenberg es sólo una parte del universo de la información. Este hecho no es óbice para que los lectores dejen de plantearse la cuestión práctica de qué leer o más aún de qué no leer, así lo reconoce el propio autor:

«The overpopulation of books (and authors) brought about by the length and complexity of world's recorded history is at the center of canonical dilemmas now more than ever. «What shall I read?» is no longer the question, since so few now read, in the era of television and cinema. The pragmatic question has become: » What shall I not bother to read?»²

¹ Bloom reconoce la dificultad que conlleva el hecho de enfrentarse con las grandes obras de literatura: «Confronting greatness we read is an intimate and expensive process and has never been much in critical vogue. Now, more than ever, it is out of fashion, when the quest for freedom and solitude is being condemned as politically incorrect, selfish, and not appropriate to our anguished society.» *The Western Canon*, p. 524.

² *The Western Canon*, p. 526.

Como vemos Bloom manifiesta en *The Western Canon* la necesidad de un canon literario que nos haga diferenciar cualquiera de las elaboraciones en letra impresa de las elaboraciones de calidad y de las obras geniales. Así lo reconoce Ignacio Echevarría al referirse a la obra de Bloom:

«Para Bloom, defender el canon es defender la autoridad desde la que el crítico cumple su función principal, que no es otra que la celosa custodia del nivel alcanzado; la de suscitar siempre, ante cada nueva obra, «la antigua e inflexible pregunta del agonista; ¿más qué, menos qué, igual a ?»³

Podemos igualmente vincular la necesidad de un canon en literatura con la teoría de la información. Los psicólogos descubrieron relaciones interesantes entre la cantidad de información en un estímulo y el tiempo de reacción de dicho estímulo. Si recordáramos el experimento en el que aparecen cuatro luces conectadas a cuatro botones e hiciéramos que un individuo tuviera que apretar el botón de cada una de estas luces tan rápido como pudiera en un funcionamiento al azar, veríamos seguramente como el individuo respondería al estímulo con normalidad; pero, si a continuación incrementáramos la velocidad de las luces de encendido, veríamos, también con seguridad, como se incrementaría la velocidad de respuesta del individuo, pues, a pesar de que hay una mayor cantidad de información en directa relación con la velocidad de las luces de encendido, el individuo seguiría discriminando información positivamente ya que posee un canon-código que le permite seleccionar. Este hecho nos indica cómo el ser humano, al manipular información, puede adoptar códigos y normas selectivos, afines a aquellos usados en la teoría de la información. El canon occidental, un código estético de selección, sería uno de ellos.

La idea del canon no es algo nuevo; ya en la Biblioteca de Alejandría, la cual podemos afirmar casi con absoluta certeza ha sido la biblioteca más famosa de la antigüedad⁴, debió surgir la necesidad de elaborar y

³ Echevarría, Ignacio: «Una desesperada arrogancia», *Babelia, El País*, 30-12-95, p. 7.

⁴ Otra de las bibliotecas más famosas de la antigüedad y que casi rivalizaría con la de Alejandría, sería la de Pérgamo. Establecida entre el 197 y 159 antes de Cristo, sería recordada más por sus

clasificar las obras ante la magnitud de entrada de obras que hacían su camino en aquel lugar. No es difícil imaginarnos que ante estimaciones sobre el número de ejemplares que han variado desde los 10.000 hasta los 700.000 volúmenes⁵ surgieran ideas selectivas de clasificación y selección. Fueron a Aristófanes y Aristarco a quienes se les atribuyó la idea de confeccionar listas de los principales autores de las obras de los distintos géneros⁶ que había en la Biblioteca de Alejandría. Sobre éstas listas, como es lógico pensar, se ha hablado y especulado bastante; pero, en lo que los estudiosos no contienden es en señalar su valor como viático a lo largo del tiempo; pues, al aparecer determinados autores en ellas, estas obras pasaron a ser consideradas importantes y por lo tanto, a ser estudiadas y a prevalecer con éxito en el tiempo⁷. Por otro lado, podemos inferir, casi con seguridad, que se imponía, por mero imperativo pragmático, el recorrer caminos conocidos y seguros ante la avalancha de obras desconocidas. Era simple y llana economía intelectual. Amén del hecho que la jerarquización intelectual de las obras favorecía y favorece el conocimiento en profundidad. Sobre esta selección de autores de la Biblioteca hay varias listas en las que varían los distintos autores, pero, a la que habitualmente se le otorga mayor credibilidad es a la del inglés George Sandys⁸. En griego estos autores que aparecían en las listas fue-

avances en el plano técnico principalmente el cambio de papiro a pergamino como material de escritura; de ahí el nombre de pergamino (de Pérgamo) que por su gran colección de obras. La biblioteca sería finalmente legada a Roma.

⁵ Según la carta de Aristéas la biblioteca alcanzó al iniciarse la segunda década del siglo III los 300.000 volúmenes. El erudito bizantino Juan Tzetzes, comentarista de Aristófanes, afirma que la biblioteca tenía 400.000 *symmigeis* y 90.000 *amygeis*. Aulio Gelio en su obra *Noches áticas* ofrece la cifra más alta de volúmenes, 700.000. Finalmente en la obra *La cultura del libro* (obra coordinada por Fernando Lázaro Carreter y editado por la Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez) se habla de 10.000.

⁶ Frente a esta idea de «selección» de las obras más significativas, también en la Biblioteca de Alejandría tiene lugar uno de los primeros ejemplos de «inventario» de obras bibliográficas: los *Pinaques*. Los *Pinaques*, llevados a cabo según parece ser por Calímaco, son una especie de inventario crítico de la literatura griega. Estas obras trataban de obra antiguas que ya habían desaparecido y aparecían divididas en distintos géneros: Filosofía, Medicina, Retórica, Legislación... con divisiones, apartados y apuntes personales sobre cada autor. Estos, a su vez, completados con una relación alfabética de las obras del autor cuando era posible.

⁷ También podíamos criticar el hecho de que otras obras por el hecho de no aparecer en las listas, dejaron de estudiarse y leerse y se perdieron.

⁸ George Sandys (1578-1664) publicó una traducción de las *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio, pero su fama se debe más ediciones revisadas y a comentarios de obras clásicas de la antigüedad. Muchos críticos confirmarían el valor de sus traducciones. Sandys hace referencia a una lista en que los principales autores aparecen divididos en: poetas épicos, poetas yámbicos, poetas trágicos, poetas cómicos, poetas elegíacos, poetas líricos, oradores e historiadores.

ron llamados «elegidos» y en latín recibieron el nombre de *classici* en el sentido de que eran los escritores que pertenecían a la primera clase, a esta categoría se le llamó *ordo*. La expresión actual *canon*, a la que con frecuencia aludimos en este estudio, es una palabra griega que significa norma y fue usada por primera vez por David F. Ruhnken en 1763 para denominar a estas listas, él las tomó a su vez del canon bíblico⁹.

La tradición de los autores clásicos o de las obras canónicas permanecería y, con el tiempo, quedaría asentada en la tradición occidental, aunque, claro está, sujeta a modas, inclinaciones e influencias de diversa índole y dependiendo del momento histórico. Podemos citar por ejemplo como en la Alta Edad Media circulaban en las escuelas catedráticas unas listas de *auctores* escritores con *autoridad* didáctica que debían ser estudiados y comentados (la nómina era invariable e incluía autores muy diversos: Donato, Esopo, Horacio, Virgilio, Ovidio, u ocasionales escritores cristianos como Sedulio y Teodulo) o como en nuestros días M. Dunbar sugiere también criterios para seleccionar obras de calidad para una buena biblioteca basándonos en autores individuales:

«One of the most popular of all varieties of collections is that of the individual author. It seems a natural thing for us to develop special affinities for certain writers. Their souls seem to have been some-

⁹ Según parece ser en algunos pasajes del *Nuevo Testamento* ya aparecen referencias al canon. La primera ley individual de la iglesia se le llamó canon (del griego «kanon») regla, medida estándar y de ahí a los cánones se les llamó finalmente ley canónica». La primera colección y síntesis de la ley canónica la llevó a cabo Graciano en 1142. La unicidad de las distintas «codificaciones» canónicas no vendría tanto por sus elementos como por el elemento aplicador: la iglesia. Carlos García Gual diverge de Bloom en cuanto al origen de la palabra canon: la palabra griega *kanon* (caña, vara de medir, regla, modelo)... Contra lo que dice Bloom no es una «palabra religiosa en su origen». Pero la idea de elegir unos autores como los de «primera clase» o clásicos es ya de la época helenística». García Gual, Carlos: «El canon literario», *Babelia, El País*, 30-12-95, p. 8.

En algunas religiones no occidentales los tipos de literatura sagrada varían en valor según sea su autoridad sacra; así por ejemplo las obras más importantes se han reunido en cánones. Estas han sido confeccionados por los cuerpos religiosos o por el acuerdo general de los creyentes. En el Hinduismo aparece una clara diferenciación entre los escritos y obras canónicas y las semicanónicas o no canónicas. A los *Vedas*, *los Brahmanas*, *los Aranyakas* y *los Upanisads* se les considera más sagrados que cualquier escrito u obra posterior. A estas obras se les denomina colectivamente *Scruti* «oídos», comunicados por revelación mientras que a los escritos u obras posteriores se les denomina *Smrti*, «recordados»

how on the same frequency as our own. They seem to say the things we would like to voice ourselves.»¹⁰

De esta gran tradición es de donde Bloom retorna su particular defensa del canon occidental.

Para Bloom el canon es una «ansiedad lograda» *achieved anxiety*¹¹, del mismo modo que cualquier obra literaria de peso es la «ansiedad lograda» por su propio autor. En ella se manifestaría el logro del autor de plasmar sus propias angustias e inquietudes. Para Bloom el canon literario no nos libra de nuestras ansiedades, más bien confirma nuestras ansiedades culturales y les da forma y coherencia. Si partiésemos de la consideración de que el enfoque estético es una ideología, este elemento ideológico formaría un papel muy importante en la formación del canon¹². Así pues podemos encontrarnos apóstoles y apóstatas del mismo; entre los defensores estarían principalmente los seguidores de esta postura esteticista¹³ y entre los detractores estarían los que Bloom llama ‘The School of Resentment’¹⁴. Del mismo modo, pudieramos considerar que el canon o los canones literarios son producto de una clase social, de una raza, de un género, de intereses nacionales o meramente políticos. Podríamos incluso plantearnos qué elementos culturales no están mediatizados en su selección, o qué criterio no está influido por un determinado componente a la hora de incluirlo en una determinada taxonomía. Pero para Harold Bloom estas y otras serían relativizaciones que podrían aplicarse también a la música o a las artes visuales. En ese

¹⁰ Duríbar, M.: *Fundamentals of Book Collecting*. Los Altos, California, Hermes Publications, 1976, p. 20. Durnbar en cierta manera corrobora el criterio de Bloom cuando afirma: «Their souls seem to have been somehow on the same frequency as our own. They seem to say the things we would like to voice ourselves». Bloom en *The Western Canon* (p.11).afirma: «Great writing is always rewriting or revisionism and is founded upon a reading that clears space for the self, or that so works as to reopen old works to our fresh sufferings».

¹¹ *The Western Canon*, p. 526

¹² Bloom atribuye esta consideración a lo que él llama «The School of Resentment» y que estaría formada por seis escuelas: el feminismo, el marxismo, el lacanianismo, el neohistoricismo, el deconstructivismo y el movimiento semiótico. *The Western Canon*. p. 527.

¹³ Si nos situamos en el marco de la tradición, el criterio de selección que se llevó a cabo en la Biblioteca de Alejandría a la hora de elaborar las «listas» de los autores fue estético y no social o moral; así lo reconoce Carlos García Gual en su artículo «El canon literario».

¹⁴ Ver nota 12.

caso Matisse, Stravinsky o Joyce y Proust pasarían a la posteridad sin más.

Para Bloom los grandes críticos no modifican o alteran el canon de las obras literarias, aunque a veces lo intentan. Ellos, a sabiendas o no, simplemente confirman las obras susceptibles de canonización mediante el eterno conflicto¹⁵ entre el pasado y el presente. La auténtica y más profunda verdad en torno a la formación del canon, según Bloom, es que ésta no se lleva a cabo ni por críticos ni por academias, y menos aún por políticos. Los escritores y artistas, a veces determinan cánones tendiendo puentes entre grandes precursores y grandes sucesores, pero es el tiempo el que determina la especulación y selección canónica.

Creemos que Bloom acierta bastante en la necesidad de recurrir a un canon. El mismo nos ofrece en los apéndices del final de la obra varias listas que van desde *Gilgamesh* «La edad teocrática» hasta *Angels in America* (de Tony Kushner) «La edad caótica: una profecía canónica»¹⁶. Bloom aporta ideas nuevas y si bien es parcial¹⁷. Como todo buen crítico en sus apreciaciones de la crítica ideológica, muestra una valentía de afirmación y juicio que viene echándose en falta en los estudios modernos de literatura. Pensamos que esta obra de Bloom quizás no pretenda tanto hacer canon como mantener viva esa llama de la crítica, al menos en ese carácter apocalíptico que él confiere a los supervivientes de la tradición crítica occidental.

¹⁵ El término que Bloom emplea es *agon*. Curiosamente *The American Heritage Dictionary of The English Language* en su edición de 1992 en la tercera acepción que ofrece de «agon», define el término como «a test of will; a conflict» y usa una cita del propio Harold Bloom para ejemplificar el uso del término («Freud's originality stemmed from his aggression and ambition in his agon with Biology»).

¹⁶ En los apéndices al final de la obra Bloom clasifica las obras en las siguientes edades: Edad teocrática, Edad aristocrática, Edad democrática y Edad caótica.

¹⁷ Algunos críticos han reprochado a Bloom sus privilegios como angloparlante a la hora de efectuar una selección de obras anglosajonas, selección que proporcionalmente es mucho mayor que en el caso de las obras de otras literaturas. Dolores Conquero recoge las opiniones de algunos escritores sobre este hecho y señala como Pere Giraferer echaba en falta a Rubén Darío, como Caballero Bonald daba los títulos que siempre relee o como Francisco Pico se mostraba escéptico sobre este tipo de listas de preferencias. Conquero, Dolores: «Los cinco imprescindibles», *Babelia, El País*, 30-12-95, p.8.

Por otro lado, Barbara Probst Solomon señala que «aunque Bloom se había opuesto a la idea de confeccionar lista alguna, la editorial Harcourt Brace insistió en incluirla para utilizarla como mecanismo de ventas...» Probst Solomon, Barbara: «Harold Bloom», *Babelia, El País*, 30-12-95, pp. 67.

Finalmente, creemos que si no demasiados críticos¹⁸ contemporáneos se han planteado últimamente la necesidad del canon, del *Canon occidental* en nuestro caso; sí muchos lectores se han planteado a su manera la necesidad de un canon y han imaginado qué selección de libros se llevarían a un retiro o a una isla desierta, tal y como escribe el propio autor:

*"Everyone has, or should have, a desert island list against that day when, fleeing one's enemies, one is cast ashore or when one limps away, all warfare done, to pass the rest of one's time quietly reading."*¹⁹

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¹⁸ Según Ignacio Echevarría: «lo que importa valga insistir en ello no es tanto la lista propiamente dicha como la posibilidad de plantearla» *El País, Babelia*, 30-12-95, p. 7.

¹⁹ *The Western Canon*, p. 525.

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PENDULUM (SYMMETRY OF NINE SIGHS AND ONE WEAKEN DROP)

Tarns in chiaroscuro, sloth and riddles the wind facing West
chanteth.

Aligned aureoles of blissful mortuary dissonance,
lengthened shroud of forgotten hysteria,
the cry of armless and blind cherubs, for rapture of senses longing,
Thy chest will behold.

Swamps of a soul's reflection, the dance of a pendulum.

The masquerader thine own tears wept,

The angel and the siren in a romance, portraying skies.

Timeless eruption of silhouettes, from the bulk of dead...sightveilers
at dusk...

Nine sighs from the enchanted weeds.

Where all beauty lies, leaning on destiny,

No blemish of sonority in the thicket of desolation,

A crescent of howlings, a pounding, so distant for thy tragic
immensity...

Thou will find just solitude...

Trace the bracelet, my sweetest murmur, my Crypt Dancer...

And with a mourning eye at the depth of rhyme,
poetry and ribbons of melancholy, all in the wasteland of evenfalls,
thou will remain...in perfidity swollen.

To these words no tongue thou will behold,

enameled and embalmed by the calling inside, a mistress in the
shade...

Stoical oaths vanish as I remember the last dusk in thy shrine...

Wintry waters and one weaken drop of musk,

Is all that now echoes this unscriptured nowhere.

FORLORN CEREMENTS OF A REBIRTH

The craved mask in graven odes upon thy shore lieth...

...Upon thy haunted dreams feedeth, Symphonia, my deceased December.

A crimson veiled thorn, so-called winter, amidst the marbled angels danceth...

...Over graves of velvet and stigmata, under the protruding skies of nemesis...

A fainting embrace, languid flame of a whisper, a remembrance within.

Auroral macabre chiming, and the wolf fadeth...no shade...

Thou, night, partaking of the plenilunia, chorus animae...

The winged-Faustus-in-me for my wasted splendour blameth.

Wept vigil, for thee a ribboned oppressive wish in fathomless serenity.

Eden purged by the enchantress that ebony feareth, thou sense me...

And waters of sigils, the shroud of timelessness webs.

Tears of lamentia, a ritual of seduced lucidity...

As thou mourn me...

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As thou mourn me...

(Julio Ángel Olivares Merino, 1999)

Published fiction writer, poet and musician, Julio Ángel Olivares Merino carves the stone of this finally-inspired-epitaph page, illustrating this dark emotions within the bosom of the lines above, excerpts from the lyrics of two songs performed by his Gothic-Metal band "Candle and a Whisper".

Among his publications we underline two novels, *Condado de Brujas* and *Crepusculo Vitae*, some "novellas", *Las medusas de Algodón*, *Veloria*, *el Buhonero al Retorno*, several tales *Nystia* or *La Gaviota Azul* (Awarded with Premio Facultad de Humanidades de Jaén 1997), as well as a non-fiction study on vampires.

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