



volumen II. Nº 2 · Junio 2013

Hélice

Reflexiones críticas sobre ficción especulativa

REFLEXIONES

Fernando Ángel Moreno
Hayley Keight
Cornel Robu

CRÍTICA

Santiago L. Moreno
Mariano Martín
Alberto García-Teresa

TEXTOS RECUPERADOS

Leimar Garcia-Siino

DOBLE HÉLICE

Laura Luna
Inés Arias de Reyna



Sumario

- 3** Acogida
- Reflexión **5** «Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»: Desarrollo del contrato ficcional en dos subgéneros de la ciencia ficción
Fernando Ángel Moreno
- Reflexión **17** «Drinking up green matter»: Ray Bradbury: The Proto-environmentalist in *Fahrenheit 451*.
Hayley Keight
- Reflexión **23** «Time paradoxes in science fiction»
Cornel Robu
- Textos recuperados **40** «Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come» by Nilo María Fabra and «Future Time» by Leopoldo Alas «Clarín»
Leima Garcia-Siino
- Crítica **59** *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía*. Philip K. Dick
Santiago L. Moreno
- Crítica **64** *Steampunk: Antología retrofuturista*. Félix J. Palma [ed.]
Mariano Martín Rodríguez
- Crítica **73** *La nave*. José Pablo Barragán
Alberto García-Teresa
- Doble Hélice **77** *Cenital*. Emilio Bueso
Inés Arias de Reyna
80 Laura Luna
- 82** Normas de publicación.
- 83** Submission rules.

ISSN: 1887-2905 **Revista Hélice**. Número 2. Volumen II: junio de 2013. Elaborada por la **Asociación Cultural Xatafi**: Santiago Eximeno, Juan García Heredero, Alberto García-Teresa, Natalia Garrido, Ignacio Illarregui, Fidel Insúa, Iulius, Alejandro Moia, Fernando Ángel Moreno, Antonio Rómar, Natividad Sánchez, Juan Manuel Santiago, Eduardo Vaquerizo, Javier Vidiella y Mariano Martín Rodríguez.

Colaboradores: Elia Barceló, Gabriella Campbell, Pablo Capanna, Óscar Casado Díaz, Elena Clemente, Gabriel Díaz López, Eva Díaz Riobello, Julián Díez, Iván Fernández Balbuena, David G. Panadero, Pedro Pablo García May, Ana González-Rivas, Ignacio Illarregui Gárate, David Jasso, Santiago L. Moreno, Eduardo Martín Larequi, Mariano Martín Rodríguez, Ismael Martínez Biurrun, Pablo Mazo Agüero, Alfonso Merelo, Darío Miramón, Terri Ochiagha, Steve Redwood, Ana Sánchez Hijosa, Susana Vallejo, Mariano Villarreal y Arturo Villarrubia.

Corrección y maquetación: www.koine.es

helice@revistahelice.com | prensa@revistahelice.com

www.revistahelice.com

Todos los derechos reservados. Disposiciones legales en www.revistahelice.com



Acogida

Ya en el primer número de *Hélice* presentábamos una declaración de principios sobre la crítica literaria, hermana académica y social de la historia y la teoría literarias, y prima lejana de la creación. Como sabemos, si la historia estudia la evolución del fenómeno literario en relación con su contexto y la teoría pretende explicar la naturaleza y el funcionamiento de dicho fenómeno, la crítica literaria profundiza en el análisis de obras concretas. Esta división se radicalizó a lo largo del siglo XX hasta crear en ocasiones bloques estancos. Sin embargo, según fuimos avanzando y según entrábamos en el siglo por el que viajamos ahora, los tres campos se fueron fundiendo con la creación literaria. Nos encontramos así con un aumento de la metaliteratura, de los cuentos que reflexionaban sobre literatura, de la teoría que se fundía con la historia, de la historia que se disolvía en la crítica... Siempre habíamos encontrado estas contaminaciones, pero parecen haberse convertido hoy en un ejercicio usual que a nadie llama la atención.

Entre los diferentes motivos, se encuentra desde luego la velocidad de la información y las facilidades de interacción entre escritores, críticos, teóricos e historiadores, no solo a nivel personal, sino en cuanto a la posibilidad de lectura entre unos y de otros. Por otra parte, como defendió con tanto ahínco Roland Barthes, la crítica deviene hacia la creación y toda interpretación termina por transformarse en nueva literatura.

No aspiramos a tanto en *Hélice*. Pese a ciertas maldicientes y desinformadas voces sobre los críticos literarios, mantenemos aún en un pedestal a los autores y no nos atrevemos a invadirlos. Pero sí es cierto que, tras muchos debates, lecturas, reflexiones..., los críticos sí terminan por fundir historia, crítica y teoría.

Ésta es la escotilla por la que nos introducimos hoy en un nuevo número de *Hélice*. Cada vez más, nuestros críticos desarrollan sus propias teorías literarias a partir de las críticas sobre textos concretos. En primer lugar, tenemos a tres doctores en literatura que han trabajado en esta línea sobre la ciencia ficción y sobre la ficción prospectiva.

Mariano Martín Rodríguez, al hilo de la crítica de la antología *Steampunk*, editada por el escritor Félix J. Palma, diferencia este célebre subgénero del retrofuturismo, para proponer interesantes métodos de lectura.

Fernando Ángel Moreno nos trae un artículo publicado previamente en la revista *Interlitteraria*, de la Universidad de Tartu, sobre la diferencia entre ciencia ficción hard y ficción prospectiva. Para ello se centra en *The Road* de Cormac McCarthy y en *Distress* de Greg Egan. Este artículo quedó semifinalista en la última edición del Jamie Bishop Memorial Award, otorgado por la Universidad de Iowa.

El reciente doctor Alberto García-Teresa desgrana las posibilidades de una poesía de ciencia ficción desde el análisis del poemario *La nave*, de José Pablo Barragán. Esta vieja polémica entre poetas, aficionados y académicos es afrontada con su característico buen juicio y rigor, por un poeta, aficionado y académico.

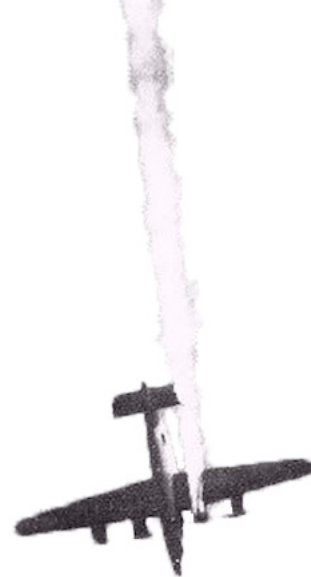
Por otra parte, la investigadora Hayley Keight realiza un acercamiento cultural, respecto a las relaciones entre la naturaleza y la literatura mediante la cuidadosa lectura de *Fahrenheit 451*, de Ray Bradbury. Este trabajo fue presentado en el congreso internacional de la SFRA celebrado en 2011 en la Universidad de Lublin, en Polonia.

En segundo lugar, desde fuera de la academia, Santiago L. Moreno dialoga con la célebre obra de Philip K. Dick *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía* desde un ejercicio crítico que contiene en sí una reflexión literaria. El responsable del muy recomendable blog *Literatura en los talones* problematiza con la excusa de la crítica literaria los límites que esta debe tener en el lenguaje, la figura del autor y la tradición que dicha figura crea para el lector.

En cuanto a la «Doble Hélice», hemos dado la vuelta al problema y presentamos en este número a dos escritoras que se acercan por primera vez a la crítica literaria. Para ello, han diseccionado el último éxito de la editorial Salto de Página: *Cenital*, de Emilio Bueso. Inés Arias de Reyna es desde hace años, además, profesora de escritura creativa en la Escuela de Escritores y Escuela de Fantasía. Nos ofrece, por consiguiente, un acercamiento desde una doble perspectiva creativa. Por su parte, la escritora Laura Luna realiza un acercamiento más positivo y personal. Entre las dos ofrecen visiones muy diferentes de esta novela apocalíptica y postapocalíptica a un tiempo.

Traemos también relatos de ficción. Presentamos en este número dos clásicos cuentos españoles de ciencia ficción, en esta ocasión traducidos al inglés para los lectores que no puedan disfrutarlos en su lengua original. Se trata de «Cuento futuro», de Clarín y «Teitán el soberbio», de Nilo María Fabra.

Por último, es un placer para nosotros cerrar la presentación de la teoría literaria de Cornel Robu sobre ciencia ficción. El doctor Cornel Robu, profesor durante años de Teoría de la Literatura en la Universidad de Cluj, en Rumanía, es uno de los más importantes especialistas del mundo en ciencia ficción. Sus teorías merecen una mayor difusión que la que hasta ahora han tenido. Por desgracia, sus escritos no han sido traducidos al español. En el número anterior, presentamos su formidable ensayo sobre lo sublime en la ciencia ficción. A raíz de las conclusiones de aquel trabajo, el profesor Robu escribió más tarde el ensayo sobre paradojas temporales en la ciencia ficción que presentamos aquí. Este viejo tema del género, tan inteligentemente atacado hace sólo unos meses por la extraordinaria



película *Looper*, de Rian Johnson, disfruta aquí de un cuidadoso acercamiento.

Presentamos, por consiguiente, un número donde teoría, historia y crítica viajan juntas entre las lágrimas de Dick, los árboles y los libros de Bradbury, los viajes en el tiempo, las Teorías del Todo de Egan, la infinita carretera de McCarthy, el apocalipsis energético de Emilio Bueso, el vapor del *steampunk* y los versos del futuro.

Recuerda, amable lector, que todos hablan del presente. ●

Bienvenidos a bordo.

«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

Desarrollo del contrato ficcional en dos subgéneros de la ciencia ficción

Fernando Ángel Moreno
Profesor de Teoría del lenguaje literario
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

1. Los contratos de ficción proyectivos

A menudo el estudioso de los géneros narrativos choca con los diversos problemas de la literatura de ciencia ficción. Uno de esos problemas es la pluralidad de subgéneros que la constituyen, pluralidad que produce la evidente confusión ante sus límites y ante las obras que podrían adscribirsele¹. Además escasean los trabajos académicos en español mediante los cuales pueda ser orientado el profano. Por todo ello, para facilitar el acercamiento al género, comenzaré por una definición: «Literatura proyectiva basada en fenómenos no sobrenaturales» (Moreno 2010: 71), donde por «ficción proyectiva» entenderíamos toda aquella construcción fic-

cional no encuadrable en la literatura «realista»². Por lo general, dado el desafortunado nombre del género³, siempre se ha entendido como «ciencia ficción» aquella narrativa que emplea futuros avances científicos como *novum* de los esquemas narrativos⁴. No obstante, la importancia de la ciencia empírica como principio narrativo ha decrecido con las sucesivas décadas y con los diferentes movimientos literarios⁵. Algunos autores incluso han descalificado las líneas más «duras»,

2. Por «realista», evidentemente, no refiero al movimiento literario decimonónico, sino a la literatura donde no se desarrolla ningún acontecimiento que entre en conflicto con los supuestos del mundo empírico de la sociedad en la cual se ha escrito el texto. En la ficción proyectiva entrarían la literatura maravillosa, la fantástica y la propia ciencia ficción. Para un estado de la cuestión, cfr. D. Roas (2001). Para un repaso bibliográfico de estudios en español, tanto sobre literatura maravillosa como fantástica, cfr. J.M. Sardiñas (2006).

3. Propuesto por el editor estadounidense Hugo Gernsback en la primera mitad del siglo XX para vender más ejemplares de su revista *Amazing Stories* y criticado en numerosas ocasiones (Scholes y Rabkin 1977: 36).

4. Como explicación de dicho mecanismo, Darko Suvin (1979: 94) acuñó el término «nóvum», que se ha mantenido hasta hoy para designar la variable argumental que es imposible sin ser sobrenatural y que impulsa toda la estética narrativa de una obra de ciencia ficción. Para un análisis en español sobre el término, cfr. N. Novell (2008: 201-6).

5. El más importante fue la *New Wave* anglosajona, con autores como J. G. Ballard, B. W. Aldiss o T. S. Disch, que mostraron mayor interés por las aplicaciones literarias que por la exposición científica.

1. Otros problemas habituales son: el exceso de obras centradas en pura formulación, los personajes poco complejos y la huida de los discursos estéticos tradicionales (Jameson (2005: 11), las presiones de cierta crítica hispanista obsesionada con el realismo (Santiáñez-Tiú 1995: 34-5; Roas y Casas 2008) y la casi absoluta ausencia de referencias en manuales de historia de la literatura o en programaciones de educación secundaria e incluso universitaria.

«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

es decir, los relatos más centrados en la descripción de tecnología que en lo literario, llegando a excluirlas de la ciencia ficción y considerándolas un género aparte. (J.I. Ferreras 1972: 24-33)

Por otro lado, en cuanto a la aceptación de estas novelas más «científicas» dentro de los estudios académicos, sus complejas relaciones entre literatura y ciencia exigen contemplarlas con detenimiento. Al fin y al cabo, la teoría literaria contemporánea ya no admite cotos cerrados, sino que aspira a no despreciar ninguna línea sin antes plantearse los efectos en los lectores que disfrutan de cada obra o las diferentes redes de significados que pueden construirse desde el texto o incluso desde fuera de él.

Desde esta problemática cuestión, propongo ciertos fundamentos teóricos sobre la naturaleza ficcional de estas «novelas científicas» y sobre el tipo de experiencia estética que persiguen, en contraposición con otro subgénero: la ficción prospectiva.

En este sentido, resulta sobradamente conocido el concepto de «pacto de ficción», por el cual un lector que se acerca a una obra literaria establece un acuerdo tácito más o menos inconsciente con el texto y da por cierto lo que en él se cuenta, suspendiendo la incredulidad. No obstante, todos sabemos que no resulta tan sencillo suspender la incredulidad en unos textos como en otros. Podríamos añadir que incluso existe cierto tipo de textos en los que esta suspensión obedece a reglas culturales muy específicas. Evidentemente, la aceptación de una hagiografía, por ejemplo, por parte de un lector será diferente según el sistema religioso que acepte, así como la creencia en una teoría científica podrá predisponer a dicho lector para el éxito o el fracaso del pacto de ficción⁶.

En este sentido, el tipo de pacto de ficción asumido es lo que produce unos subgéneros narrativos u otros. Ninguno de ellos implica una mayor o una menor intensidad de la ficción⁷, pero sí es cierto que cuesta por lo general un mayor esfuerzo acceder a los géneros proyectivos que a los «realistas» (Forster 1927: 112-3).

Este planteamiento conllevará las críticas de algunos lectores posmodernos que dudan de cual-

6. El presente artículo parte de la consideración previa de un lector modelo occidental educado en parámetros científicos de cultura general. Espero que futuros acercamientos desde otros parámetros culturales complementen el estudio de las ficciones proyectivas, como empieza a ocurrir (Ochiyama 2008; Marimón 2009).

7. Para un buen resumen de las teorías de la ficción, cfr. L. Dolezel (1997: 13-54) en una obra cuyas propuestas sobre la ficción comparto.

Cada uno de estos géneros plantea en sí mismo una manera diferente de enfrentar esa suspensión de la incredulidad y, por consiguiente, el pacto de ficción.

quier apriorismo sobre el conocimiento de la realidad (Feyerabend 1975: 120-3). Sin embargo, la ficción proyectiva se escribe y se lee por lo general desde una determinada concepción de la realidad y, por consiguiente, no considero que esas objeciones sean relevantes a la hora de analizar los géneros desde los principios que propongo, aunque ya existan algunos estudios interesantes al respecto⁸. Podemos incluir aquí, por tanto, los tres grandes géneros proyectivos: la literatura de ciencia ficción (con sus numerosos subgéneros: prospectiva, *hard* (o «dura»), utopía, distopía, ucronía, viajes en el tiempo, *ciberpunk*, *steampunk*...), la literatura maravillosa (con sus también numerosos subgéneros: absurdo, realismo mágico, fantasía heroica...) y la literatura fantástica⁹.

Cada uno de estos géneros plantea en sí mismo una manera diferente de enfrentar esa suspensión de la incredulidad y, por consiguiente, el pacto de ficción. La elección no es baladí, sino que conlleva en sí misma implicaciones estéticas de todo tipo, aparte de las evidentes digresiones filosóficas, sociales, políticas...

8. Para las relaciones entre la visión posmoderna de la realidad y la literatura fantástica, cfr. D. Roas (2009). La constatación de unos géneros diferentes de los «realistas» es necesaria para destacar la escasa relación entre ellos y para explicar su estética, enriqueciendo con ello su lectura. A menudo, al analizar textos proyectivos se realizan requiebros o interminables enumeraciones para referirse a los diversos tipos. Entre ellos sólo hay un elemento común: fenómenos dados por imposibles desde las leyes físicas en el momento de escritura (Fernández 1991: 288-9; D.F. Ferreras 1995: 102-3; Roas 2001: 18-9).

9. No encuentro convincentes los argumentos de Alazraki (1990) sobre una línea «neofantástica» que separe en géneros diferentes a Borges o Cortázar de Hoffmann o Lovecraft. Por ello me sumo a teóricos más puristas, como R. Campra (2008) o el ya citado D. Roas entre los remendadores del desaguado que dejó T. Todorov (1970), al continuar la estela de las primeras aproximaciones de Tomaszewski (1925: 218-9).



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

Todas estas maneras de enfrentar el pacto conllevan, respectivamente, una serie de cláusulas, cuya transgresión provoca la ruptura del pacto de ficción, con las consiguientes frases coloquiales: «Me ha sacado de la novela» o «Esto yo no me lo creo».

De este modo, aceptamos cláusulas proyectivas como: recursos mágicos o paradojas cómicas o mecanismos del futuro, según el género, por la coherencia interna del texto y conforme a una tradición genérica a la que se adhiere, asumiéndola como horizonte de expectativas. Así, en *The Lord of Rings* (Tolkien 1954-5), un lector que aceptara el pacto de ficción no tendría problemas ante el hecho de que Gandalf haga brillar su bastón mágico (cláusula del subgénero de la fantasía heroica, dentro de la literatura maravillosa), pero no entendería que en el último capítulo apareciera un ordenador con más inteligencia que nosotros (cláusula de la ciencia ficción). Del mismo modo, asumiría la existencia del ordenador inteligente en *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Clarke 1968), pero no aceptaría que en medio de la nave Voyager un elfo lanzara una flecha mágica.

En realidad, cada género implica lo que podemos llamar un «contrato de ficción», con unas cláusulas particulares que propician unos desarrollos estético-narrativos u otros, vinculados con las necesidades del relato y con las inquietudes del autor.

Cada contrato de ficción implica una manera de entender las relaciones entre realidad y ficción, por lo que su influencia afecta —si se desarrolla con coherencia estética— a todos los niveles retóricos (Moreno 2010: 217-35) con consecuencias estéticas

propias que el lector identifica más allá de la anécdota temática, a un nivel más profundo (Moreno 2010: 177-81).

2. El contrato «duro»

2.1. Definición

Me interesa ahora, entre todos estos contratos, señalar como ejemplo el del subgénero *hard* de la ciencia ficción, cuyo término traduciré por «dura» a partir de aquí¹⁰. Se trata quizás del más conocido, porque guarda ciertas similitudes con la primitiva novela científica de Verne que tanto ha despidado a los profanos¹¹.

La ciencia ficción dura se basa en un *nóvum* desarrollado con cierta obsesión por la veracidad científica y su desarrollo tecnológico, es decir: «ciencia ficción derivada del riguroso desarrollo de una tecnología»¹².

Dentro de las cláusulas del contrato duro se encuentra la de la argumentación técnica, realizada de la manera más divulgativa posible y a menudo como un juego a la vez literario e intelectual (Csicsery-Ronay 2008: 112-116)¹³. Por ello, muchas obras duras se transforman en meras excusas ficticias para la especulación sobre desarrollo tecnológico, como en el caso de *The Fountains of Paradise* (Clarke 1979). Otras, por el contrario, consiguen fundir estas explicaciones con mundos estéticos coherentes, tramas interesantes y personajes que no son meras comparsas actanciales, como *Mundos en el abismo* (Aguilera y Redal 1988).

10. No encuentro razones de peso para no españolizar el término, aparte de la mera costumbre.

11. Para la separación entre la novela científica de Verne y el género de ciencia ficción que la superaría, remito de nuevo a J. I. Ferreras (1972: 24-33).

12. Para una bibliografía sobre el subgénero, cfr. Samuelson (2009).

13. Al fin y al cabo, dentro de la ciencia ficción pero fuera del subgénero duro, podemos encontrar otras obras que no contradicen leyes de la física, pero que tampoco dan demasiadas explicaciones sobre el *nóvum*. Por ejemplo, Ursula K. Le Guin une dos sociedades antagonicas (capitalista y anarquista) por medio de un cohete espacial, en su excelente novela *The Dispossessed* (1974), pero no se molesta en explicar hasta el último detalle cómo funciona el cohete. A Le Guin le interesa sólo el desarrollo político-social y, por ello, jamás se le adscribe al subgénero duro. Un caso parecido es el de *Dying Inside* (Silverberg 1972) que, sin plantear ningún efecto desasossegador propio del género fantástico (es decir, respecto al horror de que interpretemos mal la realidad), tampoco entra en explicaciones científicas para explicar la telepatía de su protagonista.

Cada género implica lo que podemos llamar un «contrato de ficción», con unas cláusulas particulares que propician unos desarrollos estético-narrativos [...].



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

2.2. El sentido de la maravilla en la ciencia ficción dura: *Distress*, de Greg Egan

Como ejemplo de las cuestiones referentes al contrato de ciencia ficción dura, me centraré en el ejemplo paradigmático de *Distress*, por ser quizás las más conocida y accesible de su autor y una de las más representativas del subgénero. Además reúne compendiadas, a mi juicio, las características más comunes de este tipo de contrato: el tópico del personaje científico, la visión materialista de la existencia y la firme creencia en la potencialidad del ser humano, centrado en la obsesión por el progreso humano a partir de la tecnología, que habrá de aportar incluso modelos utópicos de sociedad. Leamos un ejemplo, en boca de un personaje científico:

The universe can't hide anything: forget all that anthropomorphic Victorian nonsense about «prising out nature's secrets». The universe can't lie; it just what it does, and there's nothing else to it. (Egan 1995: 77)

Suppose every human being was wiped off the face of the planet tomorrow, and we waited a few million years for the next species with a set of religious and scientific cultures to arise. What do you think the new religions would have in common with the old ones —the ones from our time? I suspect the only common ground would be certain ethical principles which could be traced to shared biological influences: sexual reproduction, child rearing, the advantages of altruism, the awareness of death. And if the biology was very different, there might be no overlap at all.

But if we waited for the new scientific culture to come up with their idea of a TOE, then I believe that — however different it looked «on paper» — it would be something which either culture would be able to show was mathematically equivalent in every respect to our TOE... just as any physics undergraduate can prove that all the forms of Maxwell's Equations describe exactly the same thing. (ib. 100)

El contrato de ficción dura asume que muchos (rehuiré, tímido, el escribir: «todos los») problemas de la humanidad se resolverán gracias al buen uso de la tecnología y al rechazo de otro tipo de «distracciones». Una característica derivada de ello sería la pasión por las descripciones tecnológicas y las extensas digresiones acerca del funcionamiento de la

realidad desde una óptica científica y tecnológica, como puede observarse en numerosos pasajes de *Distress* (como ejemplo: 123).

A menudo, estas descripciones digresivas devoran la trama para convertir el texto en una novela de tesis, en detrimento del equilibrio narrativo. Por ejemplo, en un extenso pasaje de la novela (98-102), una brillante científica desarrolla una prolífica crítica acerca de las diferentes sectas anti-ciencia que existen en la sociedad futura planteada. Puede detectarse sin problemas una crítica a las corrientes místicas, neoplatónicas, religiosas... que el autor considera poco ilustradas (98-108). El recurso no implica por sí mismo ningún problema estético, pero es tal la explicitación de valoraciones acerca de estas visiones del mundo que se rompe la cohesión cuando encontramos interrupciones en el discurso —de repente, sin justificación estética ni narrativa— para expresar que el protagonista de pronto se ha acordado de su ex-amante o de un contrato (99). Es decir, el discurso de tesis queda incómodamente roto por la irrupción de la psicología o de la narrativa en medio de un mero discurso argumentativo¹⁴. Cualquier enemigo del género podría afirmar: «el autor ha olvidado que la literatura de ciencia ficción es literatura». No obstante, dejemos al autor muerto posmodernamente e intentemos comprender el éxito de este texto, incluso fuera de los círculos científicos.

Lo que funciona a lo largo de estos pasajes es el sentido de la maravilla, presente en numerosas obras y experiencias a lo largo de la historia: desde las descripciones de la guerra de Troya hasta el síndrome Stendhal, pasando por toda la épica medieval, la forma de mirar el mundo de don Quijote, la descripción de las barricadas en *Les misérables*, la proyectiva manera en que recorre las calles la sangre de Santiago Nasar en *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, o en *Distress*:

I inhaled deeply, studying the events which followed the inrush of air. And I could trace the sweetness of the odour and the cooling of the nasal membranes, the satisfying fullness of the lungs, the surge of blood, the clarity delivered to the brain... all back to the TOE.

My claustrophobia evaporated. *To inhabit this universe —to coexist with anything— I had to*

14. Otro ejemplo lo descubrimos sólo con contar el número de páginas con digresiones científicas de al menos cinco o seis líneas: 45 en las primeras 105 páginas de la edición española.



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

be matter. Physics was not a cage; its delineation between the possible and the impossible was the bare minimum that existence required. And the broken symmetry of the TOE —hacked out of the infinite paralysing choices of pre-space— was the bedrock on which I stood. (ib. 335-6)

Estos pasajes científicos cumplen una función similar a las descripciones de Galdós de la batalla de Trafalgar:

La metralla inglesa rasgaba el velamen como si grandes e invisibles uñas le hicieran trizas. Los pedazos de obra muerta, los trozos de madera, los gruesos obenques, segados cual haces de espigas; los motones que caían, los trozos de velamen, los hierros, cabos y demás despojos arrancados de su sitio por el cañón enemigo, llenaban la cubierta, donde apenas había espacio para moverse. De minuto en minuto caían al suelo o al mar multitud de hombres llenos de vida; las blasfemias de los combatientes se mezclaban a los lamentos de los heridos, de tal modo que no era posible distinguir si insultaban a Dios los que morían o le llamaban con angustia los que luchaban. (Pérez Galdós 1873: 165)

O a las que despliega el individuo a partir del gozo de una suntuosa fiesta en la naturaleza en *Diana enamorada*:

Salieron luego de través seis ninfas vestidas de raso carmesí, guarnecido con follajes de oro y plata, puestos sus cabellos en torno de la cabeza, cogido con unas redes anchas de hilo de oro de Arabia, llevando ricos prendedores de rubines y esmeraldas, de los cuales sobre sus fuentes caían unos diamantes de extremadísimo valor. (Gil Polo 1564: 277)

En ambos ejemplos, el texto contiene elementos vinculables con el asombro y la desmesura: «como si grandes e invisibles uñas le hicieran trizas» o «sobre sus fuentes caían unos diamantes de extremadísimo valor». Se trata de la vieja sensación de lo sublime: «La categoría de lo sublime es provocada por un *exceso* o *desmesura* de naturaleza humana, no natural». (Trías 1988: 128). En los contratos de ficción dura, el individuo siente esta misma desmesura emocional ante «la comprensión intelectual de la naturaleza o la percepción del progreso tecnológico.» (Egan 1995: 20).

«La categoría de lo sublime es provocada por un *exceso* o *desmesura* de naturaleza humana, no natural»
(Trías 1988: 128).



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

A partir de aquí, el lector modelo del subgénero duro asimila perfectamente esta manera de mirar y entiende la obra en su conjunto como una obra lírica en la que el detallismo embriagador cumple una función similar al desarrollado por muchas obras realistas.

Un posible problema para el crítico tradicional surgiría cuando se sintiera capaz de apreciar este lirismo en las calles del *Cuarteto de Alejandría*:

Never had the early dawn-light seemed so good to Nessim. The city looked to him as brilliant as a precious stone. The shrill telephones whose voices filled the great stone buildings in which the financiers really lived, sounded to him like the voices of great fruitful mechanical birds. They glittered with a pharaonic youthfulness. The trees in the park had been rinsed down by an unaccustomed dawn rain. They were covered in brilliants and looked like great contented cats at their toilet. (Durrell 1957: 167)

Pero quizás no en un pasaje como éste:

I have symbionts providing a second, independent immune system anyway. But who knows what's coming along next? I'll be prepared, whatever it is. Not by anticipating the specifics—which no one could ever do— but by making sure that no vulnerable cell in my body still speaks the same biochemical language as any virus on Earth. (Egan 1995: 20-1)

Para el análisis no importa tanto afirmar el valor poético del propio discurso como señalar el ámbito de interés estético para el lector modelo de este tipo de contrato de ficción. A dicho lector modelo este lirismo «científico» le importa a menudo más que otros elementos literarios. Por ello, en estas obras, frente a este interés pueden encontrarse recursos de escaso valor estético y narrativo como forzadas descripciones físicas de los personajes, insulsas referencias al vestuario, excesivos diálogos y, si la trama lo requiere, sobreabundancia de científicas descripciones espaciales, herencia del estilo de Isaac Asimov y de otros autores duros de los años cuarenta y cincuenta, en detrimento de otros tipos de descripciones más vinculadas con la complejidad psicológica o con lo emocional o con la belleza del propio discurso.

Como ya he afirmado, esta línea tiene un claro antecedente en el científicismo de algunas obras

El lector modelo del subgénero duro asimila esta manera de mirar y entiende la obra en su conjunto como una obra lírica en la que el detallismo embriagador cumple una función similar al desarrollado por muchas obras realistas.

de Verne, donde se encuentra un placer discutiblemente estético en la exposición de cálculos, sin otro tipo de lirismo que los sublime:

Ainsi un litre de poudre pèse environ deux livres (—900 grammes [La libre américaine est de 453 gr.]; il produit en s'enflammant quatre cents litres de gaz, ces gaz rendus libres, et sous l'action d'une température portée à deux mille quatre cents degrés, occupent l'espace de quatre mille litres. Donc le volume de la poudre est aux volumes des gaz produits par sa déflagration comme un est à quatre mille. Que l'on juge alors de l'effrayante poussée de ces gaz lorsqu'ils sont comprimés dans un espace quatre mille fois trop resserré. (Verne 1865 : 46)

No obstante, autores como Egan no se limitan a disfrutar de los cálculos, sino que buscan con ahínco ese lirismo en las ideas subyacentes y, con cierta intención de crear efectos sublimes, plantean una semiosfera de maravilloso progreso que nos produce sentidos nuevos al chocar con la sociedad en la que vivimos. Por eso, el contrato de ficción dura es transgresor desde la utopía científica, es decir, crea compasión y temor respecto a nuestra propia realidad, en comparación con las maravillas prometidas, como en el siguiente pasaje:

I was the Keystone. I'd explained the universe into being, wrapped it around the seed of this moment, layer after layer of beautiful convoluted necessity. The blazing wasteland of galaxies, twenty billion years of cosmic evolution, ten bi-



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

llion human cousins, forty billion species of life — the whole elaborate ancestry of consciousness flowed out of this singularity. I had no need to reach out and imagine every molecule, every planet, every face. This moment encode them all. (Egan 1995: 337)

Por último, a menudo la destrucción de la trama consiste en el desarrollo —ligeramente hilvanado por un personaje o un tenue conflicto— de numerosas ideas científicas sin tensión dramática ni función narrativa.

De nuevo, *Distress* resulta paradigmática, aunque podemos encontrar esta tendencia también en muchas otras obras. En *The Forge of God* (Bear 1987), por ejemplo, los personajes aparecen y desaparecen como meros espectadores que permiten describir científicamente las diferentes maneras en que es destruido el planeta Tierra.

Pese a las evidentes diferencias estéticas, la obsesión de un autor por plasmar una realidad política, por ejemplo, no se diferencia en esencia de la obsesión de otro por literaturizar hipótesis científicas. La ciencia ficción dura se basa, por tanto, en la belleza de la verdad científica y en la de las próximas verdades que aún hemos de descubrir mediante la ciencia. Para un amplio espectro de lectores, el análisis de la realidad física desde la ciencia —con un lirismo propio— no desmerece respecto a los intereses de una crítica feminista que vanaglorie obras literariamente débiles o de un crítico historicista que edite una obra de vigencia estética ya agotada pero de valores históricos indudables.

El lector que acepta estas cláusulas ficcionales puede encontrar satisfechos sus intereses estéticos. Por consiguiente, la valoración crítica de una obra de ciencia ficción dura debería partir siempre de este presupuesto, pues de lo contrario los intereses estéticos del crítico anularían, con su horizonte de perspectivas viciado, enriquecedores acercamientos a dicha obra.

3. El contrato prospectivo

3.1. Definición

El caso de la narrativa prospectiva me ha resultado interesante para contrastar contratos de ficción proyectivos. La propuesta de la etiqueta corresponde a J. Díez (2008 y 2009), quien con ella pretende desvincular el género prospectivo de la ciencia ficción, creando una correspondencia a cuatro bandas:

Subgénero de literatura proyectiva	Cláusula del contrato de ficción o rasgo proyectivo dominante	Efecto (relación con la realidad)
Maravillosa	Fenómeno sobrenatural	Maravilloso
Fantástica	Fenómeno sobrenatural	Traumático
Maravillosa	Fenómeno plausible	Maravillosa
Fantástica	Fenómeno plausible	Traumático

En efecto, la narrativa prospectiva es aquella que plantea un mundo futuro plausible, pero que busca transmitir una sensación de desasosiego ante la humanidad o ante su destino. Así, la literatura prospectiva plantea una realidad alternativa plausible que conlleva una fuerte crítica cultural en algún nivel: social, político, económico, ideológico... Obras prospectivas célebres son *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess 1962), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell 1949), *Brave New World* (Huxley 1932) o películas como *Blade runner*, *Soylent Green* o *Gattaca*.¹⁵

3.2. La superación del humanismo idealista o La estética del caos: *The Road*, de Cormac McCarthy

Como vemos, los contratos ficcionales de la ciencia ficción dura y de la ficción prospectiva se plantean desde «cláusulas de relación con la realidad» muy diferentes. Mientras que la ciencia ficción dura observa su mundo maravilloso como algo deseable e incluso validado por las leyes de la naturaleza, la literatura prospectiva sitúa al lector en un punto similar al del espectador de la tragedia que define Aristóteles, impotente ante una realidad durísima que bien podría ser la nuestra. Este juego entre lo verosímil necesario y lo imposible (Aristóteles 1451b, 1460a y 1461b) despierta nuestra compasión hacia los personajes y el temor de que nosotros pudiéramos vernos en una situación semejante (1453b). Puede observarse en casi cualquier novela prospectiva de J.G. Ballard; por ejemplo, *High Rise* (1975)—donde vecinos de un rascacielos que colma todas las necesidades terminan por matarse mediante una primitiva lucha por el poder— o *Crash* (1973), novela en la cual profundas pulsiones sexuales se subliman a través de la fascinación producida por los accidentes automovilísticos (99).

Un excelente ejemplo prospectivo, tan representativo como *Distress* respecto a la ciencia ficción

15. Algunos ejemplos de prospectiva española son *La invención de Morel* (Bioy Casares 1940) y *Quizás el viento nos lleve al infinito* (Torrente Ballester 1984).



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

dura, es *The Road* (McCarthy 2006). En esta demoledora novela, el mundo ha quedado devastado por un feroz incendio que ha terminado con prácticamente todos los animales del planeta y, desde luego, con toda la vegetación. ¿Una guerra nuclear? ¿Alguna catástrofe natural como la caída de un meteorito? No se explica la causa. Lo cierto es que los escasos humanos supervivientes viven de la comida enlatada que queda, aunque pasados los años ésta escasea:

Late in the year. He hardly knew the month. He thought they had enough food to get through the mountains but there was no way to tell. The pass at the watershed was five thousand feet and it was going to be very cold. He said that everything depended on reaching the coast, yet waking in the night he knew that all of this was empty and no substance to it. There was a good chance they would die in the mountains and that would be that. (McCarthy 2006: 24)

En medio de este horror, un padre acompaña a su hijo de ocho años a lo largo de una carretera hasta el mar, por si hay suerte de que el chico lo vea antes de morir.

Como *Distress*, esta obra plantea una realidad que no contradice ninguna ley de la naturaleza. El lector sólo deduce que no existen razones científicas que nieguen la posibilidad de esta situación. Pero si ocurriera se vería la pequeñez del ser humano, sin que la anécdota de tal o cual momento histórico pueda despistar de las inquietudes que la obra implica.

En este sentido, la novela prospectiva no se basa necesariamente en ninguna ideología positivista, como el materialismo histórico, ni en planteamien-

tos ideológicos totalizadores como el feminismo o el conductismo. No pretende ser una novela de tesis, sino un desarrollo posmoderno que aparte al ser humano de su camino para que pueda mirarlo desde la cuneta. En resumen, su lirismo y su traslación de obsesiones psicológicas humanas son más fuertes que la necesidad de exponer postulados ideológicos o religiosos, provocando una ambigua e incluso contradictoria indefinición:

God knows what those eyes saw. He got up to pile more wood on the fire and he raked the coals back from the dead leaves. The red sparks rose in a shudder and died in the blackness overhead. The old man drank the last of his coffee and set the bowl before him and leaned toward the heat with his hands out. The man watched him. How would you know if you were the last man on earth? he said.

I don't guess you would know it. You'd just be it.

Nobody would know it.

It wouldn't make any difference. When you die it's the same as if everybody else did too.

I guess God would know it. Is that it?

There is no God.

No?

There is no God and we are his prophets.

I don't understand how you're still alive. How do you eat?

I don't know.

You don't know?

People give you things.

People give you things.

Yes.

To eat.

To eat. Yes.

No they don't.

You did.

No, I didn't. The boy did. (McCarthy 2006: 143 - 4)

La novela prospectiva no pretende ser una novela de tesis, sino un desarrollo posmoderno que aparte al ser humano de su camino para que pueda mirarlo desde la cuneta.

En el caso de la literatura prospectiva, la mera relación con la realidad del contrato de ficción aporta una pátina diferente a la que aportaría, por ejemplo, un realismo mágico. Si tuviéramos claro, por ejemplo, que este gran incendio ocurrido en *The Road* se debiera a que el gran Xiuhtecutli ha devastado el mundo, el horror resultante entroncaría con las energías incontrolables de la existencia, con los designios divinos, quizás con la culpa o con el destino.

Desde ninguna de estas premisas se obtendría una lectura coherente de *The Road* sin caer en la sobreinterpretación.



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

tación, sin salir de su semiosfera. Su contrato de ficción implica una visión de un mundo sin razones, sin orden y sin justicia, donde la muerte espera porque sí, sin nada que la explique o le dé un sentido. No existe un proselitismo claro a favor o en contra de ninguna religión ni ideología, sino la mera sensación existencialista de desesperanza hacia el superviviente:

In his dream she was sick and he cared for her. The dream bore the look of sacrifice but he thought differently. He did not take care of her and she died alone somewhere in the dark and there is no other dream nor other waking world and there is no other tale to tell. (McCarthy 2006: 27)

En la narrativa prospectiva, los seres humanos viven sus mezquindades sin necesidad de justificarse con magia, seres ultraterrenos o supersticiones arcaicas. Por ello, su vacío existencialista, la vulgaridad de su devenir, el horror de estar vivo entroncan con las críticas más duras de la posmodernidad contra las ilusiones positivistas, pero sin ninguna ideología específica, institucionalizada, por medio.

Hemos visto que en la ciencia ficción dura, la experimentación literaria no debe nublar el postulado científico-ideológico que anima la novela. En cambio, al no defender una tesis clara y argumentada, sino transmitir una serie de sensaciones, la literatura prospectiva constituye un fértil terreno para la experimentación:

They stood on the far shore of a river and called to him. Tattered gods slouching in their rags across the waste. Trekking the dried floor of a mineral sea where it lay cracked and broken like a fallen plate. Paths of feral fire in the coagulate sands. The figures faded in the distance. He woke and lay in the dark. (McCarthy 2006: 44)

Por ello encontramos técnicas como la fragmentación narrativa de *The Road*. La cita anterior, una de las muchas breves unidades discursivas de la novela, representa perfectamente los retazos de imágenes con los que está construido el texto. Mediante esta fragmentación, la realidad de *The Road* adquiere cierta atmósfera de continuidad. Cada unidad narrativa —todas ellas breves y a menudo de escasa significación por sí mismas— es una fugaz plasmación de la realidad, sin duda repetida en el mundo posible de la obra, presentada como pequeño ejemplo de la cotidianidad e instantanei-

dad de los personajes. Veamos otra breve unidad, situada sólo tres unidades inconexas después de la cita anterior:

No lists of things to be done. The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later. All things of grace and beauty such that one holds them to one's heart have a common provenance in pain. Their birth in grief and ashes. So, he whispered to the sleeping boy, I have you. (McCarthy 2006: 46)

La brevedad además resta importancia a los pasajeros momentos representados, que se olvidan tan rápidamente como aparecen los nuevos fugaces momentos. De este modo, el nihilismo y la desesperanza angustiada de este mundo apocalíptico se refuerza con la falta de trascendencia de las unidades narrativas mostradas y permite resaltar el verdadero centro emocional de la obra: el amor de un padre por su hijo incluso en el peor de los mundos posibles.

Defiende Iser (1976: 280-97) que el objeto estético se completa cuando el lector llena los vacíos de significado, invitado por el propio texto. En *The Road* se nos sustrae la mayor parte del camino que recorren en silencio padre e hijo; apenas se intuye entre los monólogos, los percederos encuentros y los fríos diálogos. El lector debe intuirlo desde las pequeñas unidades y, para ello, la fragmentación es un medio alternativo a las descripciones repletas de palabras y consideraciones de un narrador omnisciente. Así, el silencio es mostrado ante todo por el silencio previo de los vacíos existentes entre los numerosos fragmentos y sólo es roto por los pensamientos y emociones con que el lector completa dichos fragmentos.

La forma interior de *The Road* invita a la reflexión del lector, quien puede anticipar un futuro oscuro y adivinar el horror de unas vivencias no narradas. Este encuentro entre silencio, horror, amor y elucubración lectora se vincula directamente con la propia forma del contrato de ficción prospectivo: una realidad inexistente, pero intelectualmente plausible.

Por otra parte, dicho contrato, al precisar sólo de una relación de intuitiva relación con la realidad conocida —y no de la exposición de complicadas cuestiones científicas y su consiguiente literaturización—, ha permitido desarrollar las inquietudes culturales más allá del obligado ejercicio intelectual.

The Road representa en este sentido un ejemplo especialmente ilustrativo, sin ninguna explicación



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

que escape a nuestro entendimiento. Por ello introduce referencias de cotidianeidad que permiten una poderosa semantización, imprescindible para este subgénero:

The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didnt answer. He went into the bathroom and threw the lightswitch but the power was already gone. A dull rose glow in the windowglass. He dropped to one knee and raised the lever to stop the tub and then turned on both taps as far as they would go. She was standing in the doorway in her nightwear, clutching the jamb, cradling her belly in one hand. What is it? she said. What is happening?

I don't know.

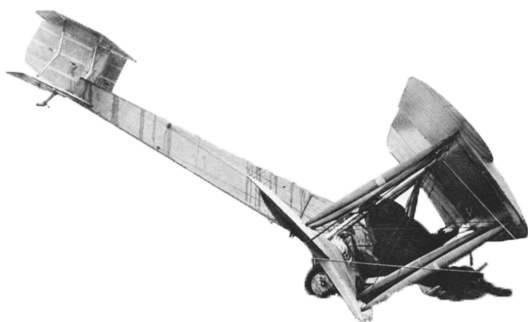
Why are you taking a bath?

I'm not. (McCarthy 2006: 45)

En una novela de ciencia ficción dura como *The Forge of God*, por el contrario, el autor dedica muchas páginas a la explicación científica del motivo de la destrucción del planeta y de las diferentes etapas de dicha destrucción (Bear 1987: 299), de una manera impensable en *The Road* y, quizás, en cualquier novela prospectiva.

Como puede apreciarse mediante la comparación textual, las diferentes inquietudes que sustentan ambos contratos de ficción se proyectan en el discurso, al igual que los intereses estéticos comúnmente asociados a dichos contratos.

Los efectos tienen que ver por tanto con las cláusulas escogidas para cada contrato.



4. Conclusiones

Puede dar la impresión de que definiendo una mayor potencialidad estética y técnica en la estética prospectiva que en la ciencia ficción dura. No considero que se trate de un postulado ni de una imposibilidad estética por parte de la ciencia ficción dura, sino que esta ha desarrollado su contrato de ficción desde cierta tendencia intelectual que ha influido en la estética. La defensa de una tesis, en realidad, no debería estar reñida con el uso de complejas técnicas narrativas. La misma evolución de personajes, por ejemplo, se inició como una revolucionaria técnica narrativa en textos como *La Celestina* —mediante el conocido caso de Pármeno—, *El Lazarillo* o el mismo *Quijote* y hoy es empleada sin problemas en novelas de ciencia ficción dura como *Marooned in Real Time* (Vinge 1986: 56-61, 87-99, 179-87), aunque es cierto que sin profundizaciones como las de *Eugénie Grandet* o *Les misérables*.

No obstante, la poeticidad del contrato de ficción de ambos géneros —prospectiva y ciencia ficción dura— no puede buscarse por el momento en los mismos lugares, por mucho que la complejidad de muchas obras del primero sea indudablemente mayor que la de la mayor parte de las obras del segundo. Como espero haber expuesto, el contrato de ficción prospectivo —pese a su evidente crítica cultural— no se enfoca por obligación a la defensa de una tesis, mientras que el contrato de ciencia ficción dura vincula la tesis defendida con el sentido de la maravilla inherente a la relación entre descripción científica y lirismo. Aquí debe denunciarse la frecuente incultura de mucho lector ajeno a las ciencias —yo mismo me encuentro incluido— que no participa de la misma fascinación científica o carece de los conocimientos necesarios para disfrutar de ciertas obras. Defender que existe una mayor poeticidad en la descripción urbanística de una ciudad —como en las obras de Galdós— o en una denuncia social que en la descripción de unas bóvedas construidas para vencer el aplastamiento del paso del tiempo —como en *Marooned in Real Time* (Vinge 1986: 23-4, 180-1)— revela sólo la falta de entrenamiento en el análisis de ciertos contratos de ficción. En fin, no definiendo el valor estético de las obras citadas, sino la perspectiva crítica desde la que considero que deben ser analizados los diferentes contratos y, de este modo, haber aclarado el funcionamiento de dos contratos de ficción narrativa poco conocidos, pero de al menos un siglo de tradición literaria y demostrada influencia en la cultura actual. ●



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

Bibliografía citada

Ficción:

- AGUILERA, J.M. y REDAL, J. 1988. *Mundos en el abismo*. Barcelona: Ultramar.
- BALLARD, J.G. 1973. *Crash*. Londres: Vintage, 1995.
- 1975. *High rise*. Londres: Jonathan Cape.
- Bear, G. 1987. *The Forge of God*. Londres: Legend, 1989.
- BIOY CASARES, Adolfo. 1940. *La invención de Morel*. Madrid: Alianza, 1999.
- BURGUESS, A. 1962. *A Clockwork Orange*. Londres: William Heinemann.
- CLARKE, A.C. 1968. 2001: *A Space Odissey*. Nueva York: New American Library
- 1979. *The Fountains of Paradise*. Londres: Victor Gollancz.
- DURRELL, L. 1957. *The Alexandria Quartet*. Londres: Faber and Faber, 1962.
- EGAN, G. 1995. *Distress*. Londres: Phoenix, 1996.
- GIL POLO, G. 1564. *Diana enamorada*. Ed. de Francisco López Estrada. Madrid: Castalia, 1987.
- HUXLEY, A. 1932. *Brave New World*. Londres: Chatto and Windus.
- LE GUIN, U.K. 1974. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. Nueva York: Harper & Row.
- MCCARTHY, C. 2006. *The Road*. Londres: Picador.
- ORWELL, G. 1949. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Londres: Secker and Warburg.
- PÉREZ GALDÓS, B. 1873. *Trafalgar*. Ed. de J. Rodríguez Puértolas. Madrid: Cátedra, 1992.

- SILVERBERG, R. 1972. *Dying Inside*. Nueva York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- VERNE, J. 1865. *De la terre à la lune*. [Raleigh, North Carolina]: Hayes Barton Press, 1977.
- VINGE, V. 1986. *Marooned in Real Time*. Londres: Pan, 1987.
- TOLKIEN, J.R.R. 1954-5. *The Lord of the Rings*. Londres: Allen and Unwin.
- TORRENTE BALLESTER, G. 1984. *Quizá el viento nos lleve al infinito*. Barcelona: Plaza&Janés.

Estudios:

- ALAZRAKI, J. 1990. «¿Qué es lo neofantástico?» — D. Roas (ed.). *Teorías de lo fantástico*. Madrid: Arco/Libros, 265-282.
- ARISTÓTELES. 2004. *Poética*, Madrid: Alianza.
- CAMPRA, R. 2008. *Territorios de la ficción: Lo fantástico*. Sevilla: Renacimiento.
- CSICSERY-RONAY JR., I. 2008. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- DÍEZ, J. 2008. «Secesión». — *Hélice: Reflexiones críticas sobre ficción especulativa*, número 10, 5-11.
- DÍEZ, J. 2009. «Analogía» — *Prospectiva: Miradas al futuro desde la ficción*, <http://www.literaturapropectiva.com/?p=2192>, último acceso: 21 de marzo de 2010.
- DOLEZEL, L. 1997. *Heterocósmica: ficción y mundos posibles*. Madrid: Arco/Libros, 1999.
- FERNÁNDEZ, T. 1991. «Lo real maravilloso de América y la literatura fantástica.» — D. Roas, (ed.). *Teorías de lo fantástico*. Madrid: Arco/Libros, 2001, 283-297.
- FERRERAS, D.F. 1995. *Lo fantástico en la literatura y el cine*. Madrid: Vosa.



«Hard y Prospectiva: Dos poéticas de la ciencia ficción»

- FERRERAS, J.I. 1972. *La novela de ciencia ficción*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- FEYERABEND, P.K. 1975. *Contra el método*. Barcelona: Folio, 2002.
- FORSTER, E.M. 1927. *Aspectos de la novela*. Barcelona: Debate, 1993.
- ISER, W. 1976. *El acto de leer: Teoría del efecto estético*. Madrid: Taurus, 1987.
- JAMESON, F. 2005. *Arqueologías del futuro: El deseo llamado utopía y otras aproximaciones de ciencia ficción*. Madrid: Akal, 2009.
- MARIMÓN, D. 2009. «La ciencia ficción en el mundo árabe: aproximación a sus posibles orígenes, panorama general y futuro del género.» — T. López Pellisa y F. Á. Moreno (ed.). 2009. *Ensayos sobre literatura fantástica y de ciencia ficción*. Madrid: Asociación Cultural Xatafi y Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 481-495.
- MORENO, F. Á. 2010. *Teoría de la Literatura de Ciencia Ficción*. Vitoria: PortalEditions.
- NOVELL MONROY, N. 2008. *Literatura y cine de ciencia ficción: perspectivas teóricas*. Tesis doctoral. Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
- OCHIAGHA, T. 2008. «Lo fantástico en la literatura nigeriana: ¿género o incidencia esporádica?» — *Hélice: Reflexiones críticas sobre ficción especulativa*, número 10, 18-23.
- ROAS, D. 2001. «La amenaza de lo fantástico» — D. Roas (ed.). *Teorías de lo fantástico*. Madrid: Arco Libros, 7-44.
- 2009. «Lo fantástico como desestabilización de lo real: elementos para una definición.» — T. López Pellisa y F.Á. Moreno (ed) (2009), *Ensayos sobre literatura fantástica y de ciencia ficción*, Madrid, Asociación Cultural Xatafi y Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.
- ROAS, D. y CASAS, A. 2008. «Prólogo.» — D. Roas y A. Casas (eds.). *La realidad oculta: Cuentos fantásticos del siglo XX*. Barcelona: Menos cuarto, 9-54.
- SAMUELSON, D.N. 2009. «Hard SF» — M. Bould, A.M. Butler, A. Roberts y S. Vint (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Science fiction*. Nueva York: Routledge, 494-499.
- SANTIÁÑEZ-TIÓ, N. 1995. «Introducción.» — N. Santiañez-Tió (ed.). *De la Luna a Mecnópolis: antología de la ciencia ficción española (1832-1912)*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 7-35.
- SARDIÑAS, J.M. 2006. «El pensamiento teórico hispanoamericano sobre literatura fantástica. Breve recorrido.» — *Semiosis*, número 3, 77-93.
- SCHOLES, R. y RABKIN, E. 1977. *Science Fiction: History. Science. Vision*. Nueva York: Oxford University Press.
- SUVIN, D. 1979. *Metamorfosis de la ciencia ficción. Sobre la poética y la historia de un género literario*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económico, 1984.
- TODOROV, T. 1970. *Introducción a la literatura fantástica*. México: Coyoacán, 2005.
- TOMASHEVSKI, B. 1925. «Temática» — T. Todorov (ed.). 1965. París: Seuil. Ed. mexicana: *Teoría de la literatura de los formalistas rusos*. México. Siglo XXI, 1970, 199-232.
- TRÍAS, E. 1982. *Lo bello y lo siniestro*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1988.

«Drinking up green matter»

Ray Bradbury: The Proto-environmentalist in *Fahrenheit 451*

Hayley Keight
University of Manchester (U.K.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was presented at the 2011 SRFA Conference in Lublin, Poland, on the panel *Environmental Science Fiction before 1962*. Since then, Ray Bradbury has sadly passed away. I would like to dedicate this paper to the memory of Ray Bradbury and his contribution to science fiction.

Although Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) is accredited to the popularisation of environmental interest, there is evidence of authors, such as Nevil Shute and Ray Bradbury, already engaging with the environment in speculative writing before this date. Ray Bradbury, who refers to his work as the genre of metaphors and ideas states how he grew up celebrating the wilderness acknowledging that his natural surroundings influenced his outlook. In 1953, Bradbury published *Fahrenheit 451*¹, a

narrative on political despotism, technological manipulation, and censorship of knowledge. This paper will explore the argument that Bradbury, in *F451*, displays evidence of engaging critically with thoughts that have since led to identifying environmental issues post 1962. However, defining the terms 'environmentalism' and 'nature' and even 'science fiction' is complex because they have gathered various connotations to date, and are usually resistant to any definitive definition. This paper will address the term 'environmentalism' as the regard for conservation of all living and non-living components of the earth. The term 'nature' will be used to refer to everything that is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity. Before writing *F451*, Bradbury noted how he had been too easy to imitate the work of others, without paying attention to «his own nightmares».² Reading *F451* with 'green lenses'³ along with an open mind to genre definitions, this paper focuses on certain moments of the text that engage with ecological thinking, with a point of entry to offer a close reading of the language used to project environmentalist thinking.

1. All subsequent references to the book will be as *F451*.

2. <<http://www.raybradbury.com/>> [last accessed 01/01/2013].

3. Rudd, G. 2007: 14.



«Drinking up green matter»

Chapter 1: Innate Human connection
with nature: 'Green Matter'

To begin, the implications of the quotation 'drinking up green matter' used as the title for this paper, must be addressed. When Montag arrives home to find his wife Mildred has overdosed and is unconscious, he rings what he believes to be doctors, and two unofficial, labour men arrive, who perform a procedure described in the following manner:

One of them [referring to the instruments] slid down into your stomach like a black cobra down an echoing well looking for all the old water and the old time gathered there. It drank up the green matter that flowed to the top in a slow boil. (21)

Firstly, the 'old water' and 'old time' can be interpreted as references to humanity's past relationship with nature and how there are residual aspects of this inside every living human body. Reference to the past can either be demonised or idealised and in this instant. Bradbury suggests the consensus was to hold a humble perspective towards nature, due to the previous movement of pastoral literature. The distant past suggests an ideal time, as opposed to the current privileging of our own human species which has been a noted product of the enlightenment period of 'humanism' suggesting there has, and continues to be, a gradual decline in the quality of human and non-human relations.

Bradbury engages with the human relationship to nature in his reference to '[G]reen matter', which I believe, is an analogy for the innate human bond with the earth. The term 'green' is related to the Old English verb *growan* meaning 'to grow' and the term also has endless connections with natural minerals and the natural green pigmentation of chlorophyll found in nearly all plants, which is a vital chemical that allows plants to perform photosynthesis. The term 'green' in 1950s America was associated with nature due to the new emphasis on conservation of the wilderness, in particular from such works as Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949. It therefore seems acceptable to suggest Bradbury's reference to 'green' is a reference to nature.

Green matter in this sense is a metaphor for the blood that is being drained from Mildred, it is 'green' as it refers to her biological affiliation with the natural world. Matter is the term used to denote the substance that all physical objects

The term 'green' is related to the Old English verb *growan* meaning 'to grow' and the term also has endless connections with natural minerals and the natural green pigmentation of chlorophyll.

Green matter in this sense is a metaphor for the blood that is being drained from Mildred, it is 'green' as it refers to her biological affiliation with the natural world. Matter is the term used to denote the substance that all physical objects consist.



«Drinking up green matter»

consist. In this instance, liquid matter —one of three matters of the earth— is used by Bradbury to represent both Mildred's biological connection with nature, but also that she is part of a larger cycle. Bodily fluids are vital to life and therefore symbolises the importance of Mildred preserving her own 'green matter'.⁴ The instrument, issued by the government, is drinking the life out of Mildred and her connection with nature that is part of her human make-up. This aspect of nature, this interconnection with the earth and its elements, is being taken and the process is replacing Mildred's natural blood, with artificial blood, creating tension between the natural and artificial, i.e. the manmade scientific instrument is described as the animal cobra. Harold Bloom also suggests that in this passage Mildred 'is almost always physically and mentally connected to some form of machinery that seems to be sucking the life out of her and replacing it with a worthless substance.'⁵ Bloom recognises the influence machinery is having over the natural state of humanity, her 'green matter'.

Chapter 2: A conscious human connection to nature

By the 1960's Rachel Carson notably stated 'we are only a tiny part of a vast and incredible universe'.⁶ The character Clarisse (introduced near the beginning) overtly expresses her affiliation to nature. The oxygen Mildred and Montag breathe is a product of the trees that are associated and acknowledged only by Clarisse in the text. Clarisse takes the time to feel the rain on her face, to taste the rain; she is mindful of her role in the world as a participant of a larger system. This is further suggested by the impact of her comments to Montag, such as, 'Bet I know something else you don't. There's dew on the grass in the morning.' (16) Clarisse looks at 'things' and the reader can presume these 'things' are the delights of nature. This not only creates tension between natural and material consumer objects, which Clarisse identifies earlier with a reference to the fact that cars that drive too fast passed flowers, it could be a possible displacement technique to convey how the meaning of nature has been

gradually lost in society, and these 'things' cannot be named. Due to Clarisse's perceived 'unnatural' behaviour within the laws of society, Montag becomes increasingly fascinated by her, a girl who is not only significantly different in age, but also by mindset. She is both a representation and a reminder of what Montag's life lacks, which is an awareness of his affiliation with nature.

Not long after meeting Clarisse, Montag begins to reengage with nature and he 'tastes' the rain, however their relationship is short lived and Clarisse vanishes from his world. At this point, the readers are offered an insight into what he saw, or may have seen, before Clarisse was present in his life, 'The lawn was empty, the trees empty, he felt unease, his routine had been disturbed' (37). The semiotic studies by Saussure are useful to explore Bradbury's engagement with the environment here. Signs are made up of both 'signifiers' (sound image) and 'signifieds' (concept), and the object the whole sign denotes is the referent. In the text, trees are a frequent sign, and Montag along with Mildred and other members of society fail to recognise the true associations to the tree throughout the text, such as trees are the bearer of life, actively part of the ecosystem in which they live and produce the oxygen that they breathe. Today, it is relevant in ecological thinking that many in contemporary society also fail to recognise the real associations of the physical environment around them. *F451* may potentially be aiming at the importance of the difference between humans seeing objects in nature and truly understanding their worth in their local and larger ecosystem.

Montag consolidates his humanity and relationship to nature when he runs to escape the city for the country. Montag 'carried a few drops of rain with him on his face' (131) as he heads towards the river. He is also being chased by the mechanical hound, a terrifying creation by Bradbury and a constant reminder of a non-being substitute that 'slept but did not sleep, lived but did not live'. (132) The Mechanical simulation of a living being is a common theme in *sf*, and the mechanical hound is a reminder of the cobra-like instrument. Fear of technology is embodied by the mechanical hound and a longing for a return to nature is realised when Montag arrives at the river. He finally has an experience with nature that interacts with the whole of his senses, he can smell the river like he can the 'solid rain' (133). The narrator states «He touches the river to make sure it's real [...] splashed his

4. The green matter is also a reference to liquid matter and its function in the environment and ecosystems, further engaged through Bradbury's reoccurring rain and river imagery.

5. Bloom, H. 2007: 18.

6. Carson, R. 1962: 22.



«Drinking up green matter»

The ambivalent nature of
fire and its positive and
negative aspects are explored
in the text

Just as the Firemen destroy
life instead of saving it,
they also invert the efficient
and safest way humans can
control fire, by manipulating it
to create unnatural fires.

body, arms... with raw liquor, drank it and sniffed some of it up his nose.» (134) He then dresses in Faber's old clothes and shoes, tossing his own into the river. As there is a sense of both cleansing and liberation, a somewhat secular baptism occurs as Montag immerses himself into the water, and tastes that it is 'real' as he had gradually began to doubt his existence. Bradbury incorporates nature that has previously been on the fringes of the text, into the focus of the narrative reminding readers of the previous 'green matter' mentioned at the start that had been sucked out of Mildred. In nature, water exists in liquid matter form, it has previously been 'drained' from Mildred, but at this point reconfirms Montag's human existence; water is the only common substance found naturally in all three common states of matter, essential for all life on Earth.

Chapter 3: Fire

Water is one of the classic four elements, as Bradbury engages and portrays the importance of liquid matter for human existence. Another popular element used in the text is Fire. Fire replaces water in the Fireman's job; they burn books, knowledge, life, instead of preventing fires through water. The ambivalent nature of fire and its positive and negative aspects are explored in the text, yet its underlying importance is its relationship and effect on the surrounding atmosphere. The Ecological Society of America⁷ states «how controlled fires can be used to maintain ecosystem health.»⁸ Just as the Firemen destroy life instead of saving it, they also invert the efficient and safest way humans can control fire, by manipulating it to create unnatural fires.

The captain of the Firemen is called Beatty who throughout the text constructs what he perceives to be rationale reasons for the use of fire. Beatty believes that it is a pleasure for him to see things burn, he thinks that «Fire is bright, fire is clean» (p. 63) which corresponds to the ESA statement, «While it is true that fire has a great potential for the destruction of homes, wildlife and even human life, fire is just one of many natural forces within ecosystems.»⁹ Beatty views fire as bright in the way it is a beacon of what he wishes for his future, it provides hope by

7. All subsequent references will be used as ESA.

8. ESA <http://www.esa.org/education_diversity/pdfDocs/fireecology.pdf> [last accessed 01/01/2012].

9. Ibid.



«Drinking up green matter»

reducing the potential of social revolution through knowledge obtained in books. Similarly, it is 'clean' as it burns through books and in some cases humans who pose a threat to his system, suggesting he views these as dirty. Beatty also states, «Fire is a mystery. Scientists say friction of molecules [...] its real beauty is that it destroys responsibility and consequences.» This suggests the responsibility that members of the society have in protecting the environment. Beatty dismisses any scientific data; he prefers to live in the speculative world of fire as 'mystical'. Whilst this point of view offers the potential to suggest Beatty is not 'enlightened', this contradicts itself because he is knowingly an instigator of science and technological advancement through his role as a Fireman. This is an example of Bradbury highlighting the ignorance of those who choose to participate in destroying and manipulating nature for unnecessary human purposes.

Therefore, the draining of green matter from humans by the state is met with the pursuit of printed matter by the fire department. Beatty controls and manipulates energy through burning books, fire is a slave to the machine, and the energy he produces is lavishly wasted. This contrasts with the frequent references to 'fireflies' through the text, a species of insect which use their energy to project a bright glow to allow them to function in the ecosystem, a light that is also cold that reminds readers how they are not harmful to humans. Furthermore, near the end of the text when Montag states concerning the campfire 'It was not burning; it was warming!' (p140) Montag, unlike Beatty, eventually recognises that the fire can be gentle and positive for humans if dealt with responsibly. The term 'burning' has negative connotations associated with greed and self-fish delights, i.e. the lines of the text «it was a pleasure to burn» was in reference to burning resources and knowledge. This realisation of 'burning' is offered by the narrator when Montag is en route to the river and states:

He saw the moon low in the sky now. The moon there and light of the moon caused by what? By the sun, of course. And what lights the sun? Its own fire. And the sun goes on day after day, burning and burning...It burned Time... So if he burnt things with the firemen, and the sun burnt Time, that meant that *everything* burned! (135)

This holds apocalyptic implications, yet the readers are offered a way into address what it means in

this society 'to burn', as Montag realises the sun burns naturally, and that impacts on human-time burning his hours away. He rationalises that if he and the firemen also burn 'things', on top of the already natural process of the sun burning, eventually everything will be burnt out. This message by Bradbury could be analysed today in light of the increasing concern with the greenhouse effect creating an overheated world. 'Warming' has now displaced 'burning' in Montag's mindset, an intimate view of nature and its positive effects on the human body. Instead of burning without association, he is being warmed to an understanding of the element.

Conclusion: The dichotomy between
books and trees

The ending provides a new dawn and a hopeful future. With the constant apocalyptic message burning through the narrative, the narrator states:

And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (158)

This is adapted from the *Book of Revelation* 22.2, which is the last statement by God to Humankind. The tree of life originally comes from the book of Genesis in reference to the Garden of Eden, the tree is a reminder of the earthly paradise in the garden. It is this point in the Book of Revelation where God claims to restore humankind after the fall, by offering the lamb, which will be the son of God. It is very appropriate of Bradbury to end on this quote because it is an example of how metaphor has been used throughout his text to engage with the greater picture and in my argument, the environment. The tree again reminds readers of the trees which made the books and this paper I am reading off from today and the precision of the countable 'twelve' fruits and 'every month' is a reference to the fact nature is measured numerically, it is a science, a process which is not infinite. There is an inherent symbolic opposition between the books, which represent culture, information, and artefacts, and trees, which are organic, natural, not subject to history.

Furthermore, Bradbury does not use any part of the text to describe a direct effect of burning or technological advancement as being destructive for the environment; he simply appreciates the beauty



«Drinking up green matter»

of nature. However, Bradbury does create examples of engaging with ecological thinking by having nature function in the background through the narrative and at the end at the forefront, even more so by his intricate relationships between the characters and their versions of nature. After all, nature is the original product of the material book, and it is reasonable to suggest that through material culture the book is distanced from its origins. The books that are burnt are made from trees, meaning the cycle of burning the page and the trees is interconnected. It appears to be the consumerist society depicted in the book which represses both nature and culture. Bradbury adopts a humanist stance, as opposed to a fundamentalist environmentalism that argues for man vs. nature. It could therefore be asserted that the underlying message is not about the loss of information and knowledge. The damage that is caused is from ignorance and denial of information about the loss of the environment, not that humans are opposed to the environment, and it is this premise in which Bradbury, in the early 1950's, was beginning to think about through the channel of science fiction. ●



Bibliography

- BLOOM, H., 2006. *Bloom's Guides: Fahrenheit 451: A Comprehensive research & study guide*. New York: Chelsea House.
- BRADBURY, R., 1996. *Fahrenheit 451*. London: Random House Publishing.
- CARSON, R., 2000. *Silent Spring*. London: Penguin Modern Classics.
- ESA, 2000. ESA. [Online] Available at: http://www.esa.org/education_diversity/pdfDocs/fireecology.pdf [Accessed 03/01/2012].
- RUDD, G., 2007. *Greenery: Eco-critical Readings of Late Medieval English Texts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- WEB, A. o. t., 2001. *Ray Bradbury*. [Online] Available at: www.raybradbury.com [Accessed 01/01/2013].

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

Cornel Robu
Antiguo profesor de Teoría de la Literatura
Universidad «Babes-Bolyai», Cluj (Rumanía)

«**T**ime Paradoxes in Science Fiction» was initially envisaged to be a subheading of limited scope within a more extensive book, *A Key to Science Fiction (O cheie pentru science-fiction*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, 612 p.)¹, but in the process of writing it grew so large that it exceeded its intended length, so that it proved necessary to put it aside for publication as a separate book². All the more so as «time paradoxes» in themselves constitute a well-known label, in fact, already forming a distinct thematic chapter within the SF field. However, as a general outlook and plan, this second book should be seen as an integral part of the first one, wherein its absence was suitably indicated and where the benevolent reader is kindly asked to reintegrate it, so that both the part and the whole may find their intended sequence and coherence.

The main idea proposed in *A Key to Science Fiction* was that SF is essentially a literature of the

1. Its abstract in English has been published in last issue of *Hélice* at http://www.revistahelice.com/revista/Helice_1_vol_II.pdf

2. The book's original title in Romanian is *Paradoxurile timpului în science-fiction*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2006, 318 p.

sublime, since this modern kind of literature (as well as its cinema and graphic art) is at present best positioned to generate, capture and communicate the millennial aesthetic emotion of the sublime, expressed here specifically as a «sense of wonder». This idea can also coherently incorporate and subordinate time paradoxes, as they themselves represent an additional source of a sense of wonder, owing to the underlying 'loop in time' that has an effect which stuns, confuses and overwhelms the mind; an endless 'merry-go-round' of cause and effect, an impossibility that offends one's sense of logic and which human minds cannot digest.

Taxonomically, *time paradoxes* fill a sub-genre within the larger genre of time in science fiction, while time-paradox stories are a subdivision of time-travel stories. Time-travel may be fictionally presumed either as physically corporeal (resorting to a «time machine») or as merely mental (resorting to a «time catalyzer»), but a time paradox usually implies a corporeal move along the timeline, a *chronomotion*. Once fictionally accredited and accepted due to the conventions of reading and fictional illusion, owing to «that willing suspension of disbelief» which S.T. Coleridge speaks about (1817)³, the chronomotion becomes the necessary condition of time paradoxes. This is the SF hypothesis which

3. Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Biographia Literaria* (1817), edited with his *Aesthetical Essays* by J. Shawcross, London, Oxford University Press, 1965 (1st edition, 1907), 2 vols., chapter XIV, vol. II, p. 6.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

underlies most time paradoxes (all of them, in fact, except for the «twins' paradox»), as a displacement through time is the only logical way of allowing the underlying «time loop» as an endless circle of cause and effect.

The primary sense of wonder pervading SF stories dealing with time results from the fictional «transgression» of the well-known *a priori* attributes of time: of its «flow» or «running» spontaneously perceived as unstoppable, infinite, inexhaustible, unidirectional, irreversible, and above all isochronal, self-equal during all the never-beginning and never-ending «flow» of time. This fictional transgression of the «real» time may be achieved by dislocating the scale of time magnitudes in the universe, by displacing the duration and, implicitly, the isochrony of time, that is, by apparently contracting or dilating the human life span as compared to given time lengths. Science fiction reaches thus the critical threshold where the human limit is overwhelmed. This is made by fictionally operating sudden and huge dislocations of scale in the isochronal length of time; by juxtaposing on the same page the «human scale» of time and its «cosmic scale», i.e. the «ephemeral» human life span to the «eternity» of the Universe; by drawing on the great cosmic durations of time which dissolve the short (individual) durations and even the medium (historical) ones; by adopting a «coarse» granulation of time (as opposed to the «fine» or «medium» granulation considered appropriate in the so-called mainstream literature); by utilizing the resulting lengths and segments as *time gradients* which slow down or speed up the flow of time⁴; and by means of the above and similar fictional treatments of the real. Only this way, by being physically overpowered and overwhelmed, will the fragile and ephemeral human being be forced to resort to the non-physical instance of reason, compared to which «everything in nature is small»⁵, even the endless and beginningless flow of time. This appears to be reduced then to subordination to the notion of timelessness, which only the human mind can conceive. The overwhelming of the human being (as everywhere in science fiction) and of the human mind

4. The isochronal «flow of time» may be accelerated or slowed down by fictional shifts in the rate of time gradients, by stretching or diminishing the «granulation» of time.

5. Immanuel Kant, *Critica facultății de judecare (Kritik der Urteilskraft, 1790)*, translated by Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu and Alexandru Surdu, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1981, p. 155. This is the Romanian edition used for the Romanian book, of which this essay is an abstract.

The primary sense of wonder pervading SF stories dealing with time results from the fictional «transgression» of the well-known *a priori* attributes of time: of its «flow» or «running» spontaneously perceived as unstoppable, infinite, inexhaustible, unidirectional, irreversible, and above all isochronal, self-equal during all the never-beginning and never-ending «flow» of time.

This appears to be reduced then to subordination to the notion of timelessness, which only the human mind can conceive.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

(as here, in time paradoxes) is precisely the necessary and unavoidable trigger of that aesthetic emotion or pleasure of the sublime which is specifically experienced and enjoyed as a «sense of wonder» in science fiction.

As true paradoxes, time paradoxes in science fiction share the *logical* nature and essence of every paradox: they arise from implications, contradictions and deadlocks, from logical disarrangements and often aporetic dead-ends, which the mere idea or hypothesis of chronomotion (the move along time, the travel through time) gives rise to, in the coherent but inherently *a priori* way with which the human mind conceives and perceives time and its attributes, organically and inextricably correlating them with the principle of causality (mainly the famous *post hoc ergo propter hoc*)⁶. Thus, at the

6. «Post hoc, ergo propter hoc» is a Latin phrase for «after this, therefore, because of this». The term refers to a rhetorical fallacy that because two events occurred in succession, the former event caused the latter event. «Post hoc ergo propter hoc» is a logical fallacy (of the 'questionable causation' variety) that states «Since that event followed this one, that event must have been caused by this one». X happened before Y, therefore X caused Y. It is often shortened to simply post hoc and is sometimes also referred to as false cause, coincidental correlation, or correlation-not-causation. It is subtly different from the fallacy cum hoc ergo propter hoc, in which two things or events occur simultaneously or the chronological ordering is insignificant or unknown. Post hoc is a particularly tempting error because temporal sequence appears to be integral to causality. The fallacy lies in coming to a conclusion based solely on the order of events, rather than taking into account other factors that might rule out the connection. «I can't help but think that you are the cause of this problem; we never had any problem with the furnace until you moved into the apartment.» The manager of the apartment house supposes, stating no grounds other than the temporal priority of the new tenant's occupancy, that the tenant's presence has some causal relationship to the furnace's becoming faulty. (From *Attacking Faulty Reasoning* by T. Edward Damer). In addressing a post hoc, ergo propter hoc argument, it is important to recognize that correlation does not equal causation. Magical thinking is a form of post hoc, ergo propter hoc fallacy, in which superstitions are formed based on seeing patterns in a series of coincidences. For example, «These are my lucky trousers. Sometimes good things happen to me when I wear them.» Another example: «The rooster crows before sunrise, therefore the crowing rooster causes the sun to rise». An example is the following statement: «In Romania, abortion was illegal under two decades of rule by the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, and the country enjoyed one of the lowest breast cancer rates in the entire world during that time, far lower than comparable Western countries.» Just because the breast cancer rate went down does not mean that the illegality of abortions caused it. Another example is the observation that, in the past 200 years, the average global temperature has been growing at the same rate the number of pirates has been falling. (From Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia).

very moment when the reader accepts that he/she might move or travel through time, s/he has accepted *ipso facto* the causal turmoil, the upheaval of causality. This havoc of logic, this causal confusion, which stuns and bends the mind and thus generates an additional potential for the sense of wonder, takes the form of a closed «loop in time» where the effect becomes its own cause and the cause is brought about by its own effect, a merry-go-round which may revolve this way endlessly. Put to this test, the human brain meets and has to face its insuperable limit, recognizing it by virtue of the fact that the brain tried to overcome it, and thus —and only thus— the human mind becomes aware of being limited at all.

This *a priori* limited perception of time, this inextricably intuitive representation of the «flow of time» is an essential component of the so-called «experience of reality», a central sustaining «pillar» which supports the so-called «sense of the real». If this ontological pillar collapses or is undermined, one's experience of reality feels aggressively offended, the sense of realness becomes acutely confused as one enters a «state of emergency» and perceives a mental distress signal. Man's ontological anchor to reality finds itself menaced and overwhelmed. It is a small step from this stage to the sublime, taking the form of a 'sense of wonder', as it happens systematically and paradigmatically in science fiction.

Put to this test, the human brain meets and has to face its insuperable limit, recognizing it by virtue of the fact that the brain tried to overcome it, and thus —and only thus— the human mind becomes aware of being limited at all.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

The overwhelming is set upon man's «head» itself, it is aimed at the very headquarters of that irreducible and inexpugnable faculty of reason, at the receptacle itself where it resides.

Time paradoxes in science fiction preserve their ultimate essence unaltered: the mind's confusion, its momentary blockage and stupefaction by aporia and paradox [...]



Compared to the general «time stories», the peculiar «time-paradox stories» may profit from an additional potential to overwhelm, intensifying the thrill-generating potential of the story to *nec plus ultra*, primarily its intellectual *frisson* but also its aesthetic emotion (where applicable). If the ontological «overwhelming» is a *sine qua non* condition in all sublime literature and science fiction, and if it is generally true that, when facing something physically overwhelming without any possible physical response, the human generic «I» reacts aesthetically by resorting to his generic «reason» (a faculty irreducible to the «overwhelming» nature and above it, according to Kant)⁷ in «time paradoxes». The overwhelming is set upon man's «head» itself, it is aimed at the very headquarters of that irreducible and inexpugnable faculty of reason, at the receptacle itself where it resides. The target is directly the human mind itself, which the paradox overwhelms and confuses using the mind's own methods and resources, its own logical joints, circuits and stereotypes, culminating in aporia and paradox. This is why time paradoxes in science fiction are so frequently revisited, so attractive and seductive, so thrilling and compelling, even at the risk of straying into sensationalism and byzantinism, into purposeless sleight-of-hand and over-elaborate record for the sake of record only (at times in an almost sporting manner), into ostentatious showiness and gratuitous bravado, examples of which are easily found.

Worn out and discredited by excess as they may sometimes seem, time paradoxes in science fiction preserve their ultimate essence unaltered: the mind's confusion, its momentary blockage and stupefaction by aporia and paradox, the self-blockage of the innate logical tropisms and stereotypes due to their own working inertia, driving the «sense of the real» into a state of perplexity, they all play their part in overcoming and overwhelming the human limit. That is —as Kant and Schiller conceptually stated two centuries ago and a century of science fiction genuinely confirms today— a necessary premise for generating the aesthetic emotion of the sublime, including its most recent hypostasis in the guise of the «sense of wonder».

«The essential paradoxicality of time travel is often dramatized by asking: “What would happen if I went back in time and killed my own grandfather?”—a question to which SF writers

7. Immanuel Kant: *op. cit.*, p. 156.



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

have provided many different answers.»⁸ The so-called «grandfather paradox» is the better known negative form of the «father paradox», the affirmative form, according to which, going back in time, the son may become his own father (the effect may become its own cause) and the father may find himself being his own son (the cause may be brought about by its own effect). Also as a result of time travel, the daring time traveller may find himself face-to-face with his own *alter ego*, former or future («double paradox» or «encountering oneself paradox»): He/she may also encounter people he/she knew sometimes in the past or will know sometimes in the future, but who don't recognize him/her anymore (or yet), or whom he/she doesn't recognize yet (or anymore) («the paradox of the unacquainted acquaintances» or «of the familiar strangers»). Along his/her route in the future, some useful piece of advice might await him/her which he/she himself/herself had sent (or will send) as if at *poste restante* («the paradox of the self-addressed letter»). He/she may receive, by «mail-error», unexpected parcels unwillingly sent from the future, containing sundry objects unknown in the present (the paradox of the «missent parcels»). If he/she is a would-be writer or artist, he/she may find in such a parcel some brilliant novel masterpieces already written or painted and ready to sign, or may venture personally in the future to get them, the author becoming this way not only his/her own plagiarist, but actually disappearing as an author («the paradox of the authorless works»). The time traveller may be caught, willingly or unwillingly, in a time-stream which carries her/him from the future to the past («the time-reversal paradox»). Travelling backwards in time, he/she may change the present or future course of time by operating minutely calculated changes in the past («time surgery» or «chronoplastia», «alternate history» or «uchronia», «allohistory» or «fictohistoria», «future history» or «fantapolitica», and even the non-fictional and «scientific» «counterfactual history» practised with serious intent by some professional historians —subsumable, all of them, to a widely-encompassing «paradox of the vulnerable time»). However, the time offender may find out, to his/her deserved exasperation, that he/she cannot change

anything this way in the present, despite any desperate manoeuvres («the paradox of the invulnerable time»). The only «physical» paradox amongst all these «logical» ones is «the twins paradox», in which one of the twin brothers grows old naturally and becomes a grey-headed man, while the other remains a perpetual young fellow, thanks to some «relativistic effects» which science presumes to appear at the near-light speed, therefore as a result of the space travel rather than of the time travel.

By summarizing and classifying this luxuriant and colourful array of varieties —and regretfully but inexorably leaving aside some individual specimen which are not representatives of entire subgenres, for instance «the paradox of prenatal suicide»⁹, «the paradox of temporal accumulation» and «the cumulative audience paradox»¹⁰, «the paradox of the plastic time» instead of «the vulnerable time», «the paradox of the elastic time» instead of «the invulnerable time» etc.— we arrive at a convenient number of eleven time paradox types in science fiction:

9. Pierre Versins: «O poartă poate fi deschisă și închisă» (fragmente). *Călătoria în timp* [«A Door Might Be Open and Shut» (fragments). *Time Travel*], translated by Horia Banu, in: Ion Hobana (Editor), *Viitorul? Atenție!*, Editura Tineretului, București, 1968, pp. 206-222.

10. Robert Silverberg: *Up the Line*, Ballantine, New York, 1969; Gollancz, London, 1987; cf. S. James Jakiel and Rosandra E. Levinthal: «The Laws of Time Travel», in *Extrapolation*, Wooster, Ohio, U.S.A., Vol.21, No.2, Summer 1980, pp. 130-138.

8. Malcolm J. Edwards & Brian Stableford: «Time Paradoxes», in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls. Contributing editor Brian Stableford, An Orbit Book, Little, Brown and Company, London, 1993; St.Martin's Press, New York, 1993; p. 1225.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

1. The twins paradox
2. The father paradox
3. The grandfather paradox (or the paradox of the murderous grandson)
4. The paradox of the vulnerable time (including «time surgery» or «chronoplastia», «alternate history» or «uchronia», «allohistory», and even «counterfactual history»)¹¹
5. The paradox of the invulnerable time
6. The double paradox (or the paradox of encountering oneself)
7. The paradox of the unacquainted acquaintances (or the paradox of the familiar strangers)
8. The paradox of the self-addressed letter
9. The paradox of the authorless works
10. The paradox of the missent parcels
11. The time-reversal paradox

As for the better known names of these paradoxes (at least those which already had a generally accepted name and were therefore not «baptized» here *ad hoc*), it must be noticed that these names are expressed in terms of biological filiation: the twins paradox, the father paradox, the grandfather paradox, even the less biologically colored paradoxes of the double (the paradox of encountering oneself) and of the familiar strangers. Why? Relating this «biological» representation and naming convention to the general coordinates proposed in my previous book, I would argue that it is because the subtle and «paradoxical» differences and discrepancies had an equalizing effect between temporal and complexional stages, in order to force the former ones (material, corporeal and accessible to the senses, thus intuitively perceptible) to spontaneously resort to the bodily impressive

11. See Barton C. Hacker and Gordon B. Chamberlain in: «Pasts That Might Have Been: An Annotated Bibliography of Alternate History», in: *Extrapolation*, Wooster & Kent (Ohio), Vol.22, No.4, Winter 1981, pp. 334-378. A revised and more comprehensive form of this ample bibliography authored by Hacker & Chamberlain («Pasts That Might Have Been, II: A Revised Bibliography of Alternative History») was included in the anthology: Charles G. Waugh & Martin H. Greenberg (Editors), *Alternative Histories: Eleven Stories of the World as It Might Have Been*, New York, 1986, pp. 301-363, together with a study signed by Gordon B. Chamberlain («Allohistory in Science Fiction»). The «counterfactual history» also offered a more recent bonus in the volume: *What If?*, published in 1999 by American Historical Publications, Inc., Robert Cowley (Editor), who is a prestigious military historian and the founder of MHQ: *The Quarterly Journal of Military History*.

(even if imaginary) complexion, to the «humanely touching» corporeality and, therefore, to biology. Thus, complexional nature or corporeality (an imaginary one, of course) is naturally implied, to different degrees.

1. THE TWINS PARADOX serves as our first example for the «biological» propensity described above. Usually named «Einstein's paradox» (in the Anglophone bibliographical sources) or «Langevin's paradox» (in the Francophone ones), it was also known as «the paradox of the two clocks», the latter name abandoned for obvious reasons: a clock is merely an indifferent mechanism, while a twin is an engaging biological organism, a «human being». This is even more true when brothers or sisters are replaced by lovers or spouses, as it often happens: for instance, throughout Richard Matheson's novel *Bid Time Return* (1975), or in the very end of Arthur C. Clarke's novel *The Songs of Distant Earth* (1986), among others. The «twins paradox» then shifts to a «paradox of lovers» painfully separated by huge gaps in time, which aesthetically results rather in a «sense of loss» (i.e. the emotion of the beautiful) than in the «sense of wonder» (i.e. the emotion of the sublime). This may be true as well in the case of brothers/sisters proper, twins or not, as are Ender and Valentine in Orson Scott Card's «Ender's trilogy», especially in *Speaker for the Dead* (1986). The deeper cause may be «the society of the sexes» which Edmund Burke¹² pointed out to be the ultimate source where the emotion of the beautiful springs from, but also in this peculiar case of time paradoxes, the «fine» granulation of time which must be paired with and contrasted to the «coarse» granulation of time in order to keep the time lengths intuitively perceptible and intelligible at the «human scale» of time magnitudes, whereto both the «twins» or the «lovers» inescapably belong.

2. THE FATHER PARADOX, which allows the son to go back in time and there to become his own father (as it happens in A. E. van Vogt's story «The Timed Clock» (1972), biologically embodies the »minimal time-loop», insightfully described and analyzed

12. Edmund Burke: Despre sublim și frumos. Cercetare filosofică a originii ideilor (A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 1756), translated by Anda Teodorescu and Andrei Bantaș, Editura Meridiane, București, 1981, pp. 67-73.



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

by Stanislaw Lem in one of his masterly essays¹³. Through fiction, the effect becomes its own cause and this cause is brought about by its own effect, thus putting into gear a «circular causal structure», a loop-in-time that is logically, though not biologically, coherent and even stringent: «From a purely genetic point of view [...] the causal circle is impossible»: since he is «genotypically identical with his mother», the son «is born parthenogenetically». These premises were ingeniously pushed to their extreme paradoxical consequence by Robert A. Heinlein in his famous story «All You Zombies...» (1959), in which «the circle is completely closed: the same individual comprises 'father', 'mother' and 'child'. [...] What we are dealing with here is an act of *creatio ex nihilo*. All structures of the time loop variety are internally contradictory in a causal sense.»¹⁴ Additionally, a certain apparent narratorial cynicism should be noticed, often encountered in time-paradox stories, as often as the implicit authorial conceit and almost sporting challenge: the «zombies» in the title and end of Heinlein's story

Through fiction, the effect becomes its own cause and this cause is brought about by its own effect, thus putting into gear a «circular causal structure».

13. Stanislaw Lem: «The Time-Travel Story and Related Matters of SF Structuring» (1970), translated from the Polish by Thomas H. Hoisington and Darko Suvin, in: *Science-Fiction Studies*, I, No.3, Spring 1974, pp. 143-154; reprinted in: *Science Fiction. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Edited by Mark Rose, A Spectrum Book, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1976, pp. 72-88; re-reprinted in: Stanislaw Lem, *Microworlds: Writings on Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Edited by Franz Rottensteiner, A Mandarin Paperback, Octopus Publishing Group, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., London, 1984, 1991, pp. 136-160.

14. Stanislaw Lem, *op. cit.* (1976), pp.74-75, respectively (1984, 1991), pp. 140-141.

are not at all the readers, still not the character's fellows, but rather the writer's brothers of the quill. The gauntlet was beforehand picked up by Pierre Versins in a lesser-known short story, «Time and Life» («Le temps et la vie», 1956), who tried to knot the time-loop even more closely, by reducing the two generations (father and son) to a single one (the son), thus appointing a so-called «paradox of prenatal suicide», which —as the French author is the first to admit— would be implausible. Therefore Heinlein's world record established in 1959 is still valid.

The grandfather paradox overbids the father paradox and converts the minimal time-loop into a mind-boggling vertigo.

3. THE GRANDFATHER PARADOX, which could possibly also be called «the paradox of the murderous grandson», though more famous than the «father paradox», is in fact its negative version, antiphrastically demonstrating the same indemonstrable aporia. The grandfather paradox overbids the father paradox and converts the minimal time-loop into a mind-boggling vertigo (the grandson killed his grandfather, so he doesn't exist, so he didn't kill his grandfather, so he does exist, so he did kill him, so he doesn't, so he didn't... and so on and on, ceaselessly and endlessly). At the same time, it pushes to an extreme degree and aporetically limits the very hypothesis of vulnerable time underlying both *uchronia* and *chronoplastia*, i.e. alternate history and time surgery. But the grandfather paradox also carries

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

an additional «clause of priority» or «of ulteriority» (it depends on the point-of-view), textually declared or subtextually understood. In his short story «The First Time-Machine» (1958), Fredric Brown relates that the murderous grandson, Smedley, kills his grandfather *prior* to him meeting his wife, Smedley's virtual grandmother. In order to produce the paradoxical effect, i.e. the grandson's disappearance, the grandfather must be killed *prior* to the virtual procreation of his son, i.e. the grandson's father. Apparently an anecdotal and trivial detail, this priority or ulteriority is a sure sign concerning the author's real intention: is he going to give free play to the paradox—as does Fredric Brown in the above-mentioned story—or is the author going to avoid the paradox? Is he aiming at «a singularly appropriate *reductio ad absurdum*», or rather «a cunning literary move which appears to resolve the paradox by removing or avoiding the seemingly inevitable contradiction»¹⁵—as does René Barjavel in his novel *The Imprudent Traveller* (*Le voyageur imprudent*, 1944), or Marcel Thiry in his novel *Time in Check* (*Échec au temps*, written 1938, published 1945)? In these latter cases, the grandfather paradox is finally resolved by combining it with another fictional solution subtly adjusted to science fiction: the killed grandfather belongs to a virtual, uchronical future, to an alternate history which is eventually restored and reconveyed to the «real» course of history—a solution examined at length in the next paragraph.

4. THE PARADOX OF THE VULNERABLE TIME. Two rich thematic branches of SF—time surgery (chronoplastia) and alternate history (uchronia)—may be gathered and enlisted under this heading of the «vulnerable time», since they both have as a common denominator a time which hypothetically may be altered and reshaped, dismembered and disfigured, arbitrarily displaced, derailed from its natural course and directed to follow another one, subject to all sorts of abuse, caprice, mistreatment, aggression, transgression, violation etc. Further on, these changes in the past are inexorably taken over, propagated and amplified by the «flow» or «torrent» of time itself, by virtue of its intrinsic attributes (by definition and *a priori*, time is presumed to be endless and ceaseless, unidirectional and irreversible). But how can this vulnerability of time, by its own nature, be a source of paradoxicality? Of course, the

«loop in time» of cause and effect may be optionally closed in an alternate time too, but it may be absent as well, as it often happens. The only thing is that causality is not the sole source and resource of time paradoxes in science fiction: there is also *the anthropic principle of time*; more precisely, the fictional infringement of this principle.

Time's peculiar anthropic principle may be logically derived from the general (cosmological) anthropic principle. «Since we wouldn't be able to notice that the Universe is different if we wouldn't be extant here, we can say, in a certain sense, that

[...] Causality is not the sole source and resource of time paradoxes in science fiction: there is also *the anthropic principle of time*; more precisely, the fictional infringement of this principle.

the isotropy of Universe is a consequence of our existence. [...] The answer to the question «Why the Universe is isotropic?» is: «Because we are here.»¹⁶. «Why is the Universe such as we see it? The answer is simple: If it would have been otherwise, we wouldn't be here! [...] We see the Universe such as it is because we are here.»¹⁷. So «the Universe exists because I see it», says the generic anthropic dweller and observer of the Universe, the human generic «I»; by extrapolation, the same might be said by the anthropic dweller of the Present and observer of Time: «the Past exists because I remember it!» Presented in the striking form of a paradox—if not of a sophism or even of a flash of wit—this *a posteriori*, inverse formulation of the anthropic principle only needs a logical reversal into an affirmative wording

16. C.B. Collins & Stephen W. Hawking, in: *Astrophysical Journal*, No.180, 1973, p. 317; apud John D. Barrow & Frank J. Tipler: *Principiul antropice cosmologic* (*The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, 1986), translated by Walter Radu Fotescu, Editura Tehnică, București, 2001, pp. 472, 480.

15. Malcolm J. Edwards & Brian Stableford, *op. cit.*, p. 1225.



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

in order to become obvious and self-imposing: had the time have flown otherwise, had the face of the present been different, then we («these ones») had not existed at all and maybe other ones, «those unborn others», would exist instead of us.

And this is exactly what time surgery and especially alternate history confronts us with, taking advantage of the perversely persuasive gifts of fictional illusion: a course of time which flowed «otherwise», a hypothetical and allohistorical past, an allochronic «alternate history», from which necessarily «another» present and «another» future results. But «the sense of the real» tells us and «the experience of reality» strongly confirms that «the sole possible is the real», i.e. the orthohistorical and orthochronical past, the immutable flow of time along the river-bed carved out by the same water flowing in it. In contrast, the fictional illusion tempts and attempts to seduce us by offering «other» possible reals and virtual realities, multiple pasts, alternate histories, and so on. That way, the anthropic principle of time is pushed into a self-contradiction, self-contravention and self-collision, it is turned against itself forced to dissolve itself, thus extremely straining that overwhelming potential which is necessary to generate sense of wonder, i.e. the sublime. If «I» (author, narrator, reader) remember so vividly and convincingly (by virtue of fictional illusion) this «another» past, then am I not myself (by virtue of the same anthropic principle of time) an «other» *ego* than I was confident to be, than I was feeling and believing to know I am? If those events causally concatenated in time, i.e. the history I resulted from, turn out never to have existed, then who is this present «I» who resulted from this another history, from this another concatenation of events, and who I was, until now, inherently confident in regarding as myself? *Je est un autre?*¹⁷ Am I another one? Is indeed the «real»

The fictional illusion
tempts and attempts
to seduce us by
offering «other»
possible reals and
virtual realities,
multiple pasts,
alternate histories,
and so on.

America where «we» (generic readers) dwell and are confident to live in, the well-known democratic and «presidential» America of today (recte 1962), which won the Second World War, or is it in fact a defeated America, divided and shared out between the victorious Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan? (There is no need, of course, to specify that we speak about Philip K. Dick's world-renowned novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), the leading title of «alternate history», discussed in this book in great detail, but innumerable titles might be added under this heading.)

The indeterminable dilemma which keeps the reader suspended between two disjunctive versions of time —undecidable because no experimental verification of the two versions is possible in the physical reality— therefore feeds into an identitary aporia, where a proper junction point may be found for sundry off-literary and off-aesthetical «messages» and «warnings». Since they are obvious, they are not given any special emphasis in this book, however to following brief overview might be useful. As it is fully the case in utopia, the propensity towards sociology and ethics, towards parable, allegory, satire, etc. is no less productive in the field of uchronia. It is a true vocation indeed, a natural and legitimate tropism in this genre. And this spontaneous predisposition to bear and carry away a «message» is, of course, perfectly

A person's definition of the 'Other' is part of what defines or even constitutes the self (in both a psychological and philosophical sense) and other phenomena and cultural units. It has been used in social science to understand the processes by which societies and groups exclude 'Others' whom they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society. The concept of 'otherness' is also integral to the understanding of a person, as people construct roles for themselves in relation to an 'other' as part of a process of reaction that is not necessarily related to stigmatization or condemnation. 'Othering' is imperative to national identities, where practices of admittance and segregation can form and sustain boundaries and national character. 'Othering' helps distinguish between home and away, the certain and the uncertain. It often involves the demonization and dehumanization of groups, which further justifies attempts to civilize and exploit these 'inferior' others. The idea of the other was first philosophically conceived by Emmanuel Levinas, and later made popular by Edward Said in his well-known book *Orientalism* (1978). Despite originally being a philosophical concept, 'othering' has political, economic, social and psychological connotations and implications. (From Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia).

17. «Je est un autre» (English: «I is another») is a famous dictum by Arthur Rimbaud, first mentioned in a letter to George Izambard, dated May 13, 1871. The whole passage reads: «Je est un autre. Tant pis pour le bois qui se trouve violon, et nargue aux inconscients, qui ergotent sur ce qu'ils ignorent tout à fait!» Translated into English: «I is another. Too bad for the wood which finds itself a violin, and brush off the oblivious, who quibble over things they know nothing about!»



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

legitimate and welcome, but on one condition: on the single condition that the «message» should not stand «alone», as it often happens, not to exclusively absorb the attention, the semantic emission and reception, thus establishing itself as the priority, if not sole, criterion of valuation. Such a criterion can be, in science fiction, only the ability to create a «sense of wonder», i.e. an aesthetic emotion of the sublime. Once present in the text—even to a small extent, transiently and fleetingly—the sense of wonder renders the whole work more powerful and gives it another resonance. And once legitimated and endorsed through a «sense of wonder», the off-literary «message» is aesthetically empowered and entitled to participate in the evaluating judgement. And the sources for such a sense of wonder in alternate history and uchronia remain inexhaustible, because they are continuously replenished by the universal and everlasting anthropic principle of time.

At this point, we are faced again with the same sense of «no way out», the same identitary aporia encountered in the grandfather paradox and also in chronoplastic time surgery: how can someone conceive themselves as simultaneously extant and non-extant? Inextricably caught in this aporia, the anthropic time collides with itself and dissolves by itself, implicitly removing human ontological certainties. An essential pillar sustaining man's sense of reality and ontological self-confidence is thus undermined, broken down or at least shaken, and the human mind finds itself menaced, overcome, overwhelmed. Exactly this overwhelming is responsible for bringing about that «pleasure in pain», that «pleasure possible only by the means of a displeasure»¹⁸, that «Lust durch Unlust»¹⁹ which is the aesthetic pleasure and emotion of the sublime, specifically and legitimately perceived and enjoyed in science fiction as a «sense of wonder». Thereby, the paradox of the vulnerable time provides uchronia (or alternate history, by itself an entire literary field), this vast SF genre, a high aesthetic potential, an inexhaustible source for the sense of wonder.

Sometimes—as happens in novels such as Marcel Thiry's *Échec au temps* (1945), Ward Moore's

Bring the Jubilee (1953), or Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)—the literary effect is additionally enhanced by resorting to an extra intricacy: a final simulated annulment of uchronia through an ingenious narrative turn which «rectifies» the allochronic «anomaly» and apparently brings back the alternate course of time to the «real» version of history, generally known and accepted. But this rediscovered comfort under the shelter of the real and sure time umbrella is merely an illusory refuge: despite it, the feeling persists that human identity had been suspended above the void of time, the «fright» persists, the frightened and shaken identity does not forget too quickly what it experienced. This, however, is good for the health, as such an experience prophylactically «vaccinates» the identity and subtly fortifies it in its own self-conscience: an additional hypostasis (among others) under which the ancient and illustrious Aristotelian catharsis may occur today in science fiction.

Though both are categorized under the heading of the vulnerable time paradox, alternate history (uchronia) and time surgery (chronoplastia) are distinguished by a cardinal difference: presence or absence of the *real* history as contrasting background, i.e. whether the anthropic principle of time is active as an underlying factor. In order to turn this anthropic potential against itself and to break it by making it collide with itself, the cliff on which the wave brakes necessarily has to be as steady as it can be, that is, the real history which the alternate history contradicts must itself be as steady as a rock: undoubtedly certified in documents and recorded in historiography, well-known and commonly accepted, renowned and even notorious if possible, well-discussed or even worn-out. This is why negative figures of history such as Hitler and Napoleon became top laureates of alternate history: the absolute champion (*der Führer*) and the vice-champion (*l'Empereur*). Portraying a fictional Hitler as triumphant may be regarded as a scandalous and revolting position, but exactly these types of «ideological» appearances are needed to convey an aesthetic essence which concentrates in itself an extreme level of determinism, according to which allohistory cannot exist without history, and alternate history cannot leave real history aside.

Beside the intentional factor—time surgery is usually more premeditated and calculated (e.g. a «deliberate murder»), while alternate history is usually more spontaneous and undeliberated, it may occur accidentally, sometimes even without

18. Immanuel Kant, *op. cit.*, p.154.

19. Friedrich Schiller: *Ideea de sublim. Contribuții la dezvoltarea unor idei kantiene (Vom Erhabenen. Zur weiteren Ausführung einiger Kantischen Ideen, 1793); Despre sublim (Über das Erhabene, 1801)*; in: *Scrieri estetice*, translated by Gheorghe Ciorogaru, Editura Univers, București, 1981, pp. 75-97, respectively 123-139.



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

The concept of the invulnerability of time is closely related to several other lines of thought, which presume either a multi-causal effect [...] or other logically plausible hypotheses.

initial awareness of the consequences put into action— the presence of the «real» history is therefore the main dissociating criterion between uchronia and chronoplastia. Time surgery may be operated inside a purely imaginary history as well (as it happens, for instance, in Isaac Asimov's novel *The End of Eternity*, 1955; in Pierre Boulle's novella «An Endless Night», («Une nuit interminable», 1952); in Gérard Klein's novel *The Overlords of War* (*Les seigneurs de la guerre*, 1973), while alternate history sine qua non needs a real historical background against which it can be brought out into a sharp relief.

5. THE PARADOX OF THE INVULNERABLE TIME, though appearing in a lesser amount of works, logically and conceptually counterbalances the more extensive paradox of the vulnerable time. Roughly speaking, it is merely a counter-paradox, diametrically derived by reversing the «basic» paradox of the vulnerable time. It is not identical and should not be confused with the avoidance *in extremis* of time-altering consequences, a feature of such «paradox prevention stories» as Robert Sheckley's «The King's Wishes» (1953). The concept of the invulnerability of time is closely related to several other lines of thought, which presume either a multi-causal effect (as in J.J. Coupling's story «Mr. Kincaid's Past», 1953), or a multi-dimensional time (as in Alfred Bester's «The Men Who Murdered Mohammed», 1958), or an *a priori* «resilience of time» (as in Poul Anderson's «Time Patrol» series, especially in the stories included in the collection *The Guardians of Time*, 1960), or «The Law of the Conservation of Reality» (set up by Fritz Leiber in his story «Try and Change the Past», 1958), or «The Law of the Non-Regressive Information» (set up by Gérard Klein in his novel *The Overlords of War* (*Les seigneurs de la guerre*, 1973) or other logically plausible hypotheses.

In addition to their bewildering and intellectually stunning effect, the two symmetrical paradoxes—that of vulnerable and that of invulnerable time— organically complete each other to finally give rise to a deeper underlying thought. Though seemingly accidental, apparently due to the imperfection and feeble fidelity of time, the existence of a metastable time that is generally easy to unsettle is, on the contrary, inherent in time itself. The disturbances and fractures in history caused by the metastability of time are endogenous and endemic, even necessary in their own way, and are therefore provided as such in the prime and ultimate project.



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

In order to preserve its freshness, integrity, fruitfulness and vigour unaltered, time must perpetually regenerate, be *ipso facto* ceaselessly unsettled, permanently subject to perturbation and disturbance. In order to achieve stability, time must first go through perpetual destabilization, it must prove its ability to recover from instability and metastability while resorting only to its own resources. In order to become invulnerable, time must pass the perpetual test and challenge of vulnerability, just as the cosmos must periodically pass the test and challenge of chaos, since a stable, «invulnerable» time finds its purpose and sense only within the framework of an ordered cosmos which puts itself in order (and to the extent to which such a cosmos actually exists). The rest is paradox.

6. THE DOUBLE PARADOX, sometimes also called «the paradox of encountering oneself»²⁰, takes over and specifically adapts to science fiction the ancient motif of the «double», illustrious in mainstream literature (Plautus, Molière, John Dryden, Edgar Allan Poe, E.T.A. Hoffmann, F.M. Dostoevsky, Oscar Wilde, Jean Giraudoux, etc.), known in the German romanticism as *Doppelgänger* (Heinrich Heine, among others), as Kagemusha in the Japanese cinema (Akira Kurosawa), and so on. Taking over the ancient motif, SF remakes and reshapes it in new ways: here «the double» is based on «scientific» grounds, thanks to new fictional opportunities opened by «time travel» and the consequent possibility, even probability, for a time-traveller encountering himself/herself somewhere in time (as a younger *alter ego* in the past or as an elder one in the future). From the atavistic obscure terror which tends to accompany «the double» in mainstream tradition, science fiction merely retains a vague reluctance of visualization, of facing one's own double in time, on whom but a furtive glance is usually cast. As for the rest, the fright is replaced by wonderment, the visceral sense of terror by the science-fictional «sense of wonder».

«Scientifically» disocculted and distabooed, «the double» offers many welcome literary possibilities: the narrative flow may be unblocked, if needed, by «the double» fighting side by side with the identity's holder, even saving him in critical circumstances (as in Poul Anderson's «Time Patrol» series, or in Gérard Klein's novel *The Overlords of War*). The same story may be told from alternate

and complementary points of view, a narrative strategy used in mainstream as well (here, in Robert A. Heinlein's novella «By His Bootstraps», 1941; in Isaac Asimov's novel *The End of Eternity*, 1955; or in above-mentioned *The Overlords of War*). In this latter novel, the double's paradoxical amnesia itself already calls for anamnesis, and this one, narratively displayed, is the story-telling itself. The narrative thus becomes a true temporal «Moebius band», as the successive «doubles» apparently glide at times on its face, then on its reverse, by virtue of the simple progression of the story-telling which appears linear but is in fact circular (as in Heinlein's «By His Bootstraps»), and so on.

Defining for the double paradox, as compared to other time paradoxes in science fiction, is a »loop in time« that is only half-closed. At most times, it remains merely physical, purely visual. It does not continue causally as it is discontinued at the very instant when it is about to be closed by a brief, furtive glance, by an unexpected —and suddenly prevented— visual contact. However, the paradox persists even as it is exposed to the reader for a brief

The double paradox,
sometimes also called «the
paradox of encountering
oneself», takes over and
specifically adapts to science
fiction the ancient motif of
the «double», illustrious
in mainstream literature
[...], known in the German
romanticism as *Doppelgänger*.

20. Stanislaw Lem, *op. cit.* (1976), p. 80.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

moment. The time-traveller —the identity's titular holder— is hardly willing to look in the face of his/her double, as mentioned above. In exchange, he/she proves much more willing to socialize with her/his double's contemporaries.

7. THE PARADOX OF THE UNACQUAINTED ACQUAINTANCES, or the paradox of the familiar strangers, is therefore an extension and supplement of the previous one, the paradox of the double. When a time-traveller encounters in the past his/her own double, the «law of the non-regressive information» necessarily calls forth an *incognito* of the identity's holder (the time-traveller) as seen by the double, and an *amnesia* of the double as regards his/her own condition. Hence humorous psychological effects of *jamais vu* and *déjà vu* occur, and also the theatrical *quid pro quo* scenes, which are mostly palatable in the double's paradox and especially in the familiar strangers' paradox. Travelling in the past, the identity holder naturally encounters there, besides his/her own double, a lot of people who are contemporary to the double (friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbours, various acquaintances of the double etc.) and who do not yet know him/her. But the situation may be reversed in the case of a more sophisticated plot (implying anterior future or ulterior past), and then the time-traveller is recognized at every corner by a lot of people whom he/she does not recognize at all and cannot remember to have ever met (as in A. E. van Vogt's story «The Timed Clock», 1972). A reciprocal change of roles is also feasible, and thus the unacquainted acquaintances become acquainted non-acquaintances and *vice versa*, because the *amnesia* alternatively strikes the recognized one and the recognizer. This reversal of amnesias spectacularly emphasizes the *anamnesis* acquired (by alternation and upon narratively crossing dozens and hundreds of pages) by the main characters featured by Gérard Klein in his *Overlords of War*, a novel which is essentially a story-telling of *amnesias* cathartically leading to *anamnesis*. The «law of the non-regressive information» is implicitly a law of *amnesia* and *anamnesis*, governing the equal chances of humans in relation to time and each other: the frustrating but merely ontological *amnesia* of man is equal and inescapable for all mortals condemned to living together and competing with one another in this world.

However, the «familiar strangers» are mostly cast in the role of amnesic lovers painfully separated by time, and hence «the sense of loss» prevails, as

in John Wyndham's story «Stitch in Time» (1961), or in Richard Matheson's novel *Bid Time Return* (1975). On the other hand, the *qui pro quo* situations latent in the paradox of the unacquainted acquaintances usually appeal to the reader's «sense of humour», as it happens in John Wyndham's story «Random Quest» (1961). And finally, moving the plot from the «fine granulation of time», which is considered to be of a «human scale», to the «coarse granulation» of megahistorical and cosmic durations of time, as in Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu's story «The Ten Lost Tribes» («Cele zece triburi pierdute», 1986) invokes the «sense of wonder».

8. THE PARADOX OF THE SELF-ADDRESSED LETTER is another extension of the double paradox, from which it is derived by virtue of contiguity, the same way as the previous paradox. This time, however, instead of contiguous persons we have contiguous objects. In order to avoid an embarrassing face-to-face encounter with his/her double, the brave time-traveller chooses to send a less-binding written message instead of himself/herself. The message's intent is usually to aid and guide his/her *alter ego* on the paths once covered by the time-traveller (or, in other words, the identity's titular holder often leaves the message down at an improvised *poste restante* somewhere on the path formerly covered «for the first time»). In doing so, the titular forewarns and saves the double from an array of deadly perils and, at the same time, saves the author from narrative blockage: should the protagonist be stuck in a tight fix, the logical and epical thread of story-telling would also come to a deadlock. Thus the self-addressed letter is often used as a facilitating device, rather than a paradox proper.


There is a diversity of forms which the self-addressed letter may take: it may be a personal notebook containing the vocabulary of an unknown language from a far future (as in Robert A. Heinlein's «By His Bootstraps», 1941); or it may be a hand-written note in an ancient book (as in Murray Leinster's «The Gadget Had a Ghost», 1952); or a crumpled piece of paper hidden in an old shoe (as in Robert Sheckley's «A Thief in Time», 1954); or a personal diary hidden in an antique clockwork (as in A.E.van Vogt's «The Timed Clock», 1972); or a bank-check (as in Mack Reynolds's «Compounded Interest», 1956); or, finally, it may even be an actual letter, as in Fredric Brown's «Hall of Mirrors» (1953), and in Gérard Klein's *The Overlords of War* (*Les seigneurs de la guerre*, 1973).

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

Whatever form the self-addressed letter may take, it always retains its function of a crutch to anamnesis, paradoxically subject to the same «loop in time» of cause and effect.

9. THE PARADOX OF AUTHORLESS WORKS. The English-Norkaalese vocabulary in Robert A. Heinlein's «By His Bootstraps» (1941) was written by hand in a personal notebook, thus it constitutes a self-addressed letter of the protagonist, Bob Wilson. However, supposing it would have been printed, not only manually transcribed again and again, a book (i.e. a work) would have resulted, and this work would not have an author, as the notebook itself had none, by virtue of the beginningless and endless «loop in time» of cause and effect. On the other hand, Bob Wilson takes a number of books by different authors with him into the far future; but supposing one of these books would have been written by himself, that book would have been written by nobody —thus, an authorless work, as a paradoxical effect of the same «time loop». The non-existent author may be a painter, as in William Tenn's story «The Discovery of Morniel Mathaway» (1955), he may be a pulp-writer of SF, as in Anthony Boucher's short-story «Transfer Point» (1950), or in Fredric Brown's short-story «The Yehudi Principle» (1944). The workless author might even be «The Great Will» himself, and the authorless work might be *The Merchant of Venice* (1595), a play nowadays attributed to one William Shakespeare, who in fact was but a rude imposter and plagiarist, as demonstrated by Anthony Burgess in his story «The Muse» (1968). Read in this science-fictional and paradoxical key, a mainstream work such as «Pierre Menard, Author of *Quixote*» («Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*», 1939) by Jorge Luis Borges confirms the famous *Don Quixote* (*Don Quijote de la Mancha*, 1605, 1615), a novel nowadays attributed to one Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, as an authorless work.

Besides the mental vertigo, besides the actual thrill arising in a mind stunned by the paradoxical «loop in time» of cause and effect —the common denominator and the basic intent of most time-paradoxes in science fiction—, an intermediary and a higher purpose are also at stake here. The intermediary literary intent is a plea for a genuine act of artistic creation, one that is unpredictable, follows no prescribed methods and does not aim to reach pre-established outcomes (as in William Tenn's «The Discovery of Morniel Mathaway»). The



The authorless work might be *The Merchant of Venice* (1595), a play nowadays attributed to one William Shakespeare, who in fact was but a rude imposter and plagiarist, as demonstrated by Anthony Burgess.

Jorge Luis Borges confirms the famous *Don Quixote*, a novel nowadays attributed to one Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, as an authorless work.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»



highest form, reached in a masterly manner by Anthony Burgess in «The Muse», may summarize the essence of the authorless work's paradox: «The Work exists because I keep reading and transcribing it, although I'm not the author and don't know who the author is», the same way as «The Universe exists because I see it» (the anthropic cosmological principle), and consequently «The Past exists because I remember it» (the anthropic principle of time —see above). The work exists, even though the author does not, but if this non-existent author would not carry on transcribing the work ceaselessly and incognito, this work would not exist either. However, it actually does exist, since we, the readers, are reading it. This is the paradox of the authorless work.

10. THE PARADOX OF THE MISSENT PARCELS. The self-addressed letter may sometimes turn into a self-addressed parcel: in Gérard Klein's *Overlords of War*, the protagonist, Corson, sends to himself a soldier's kitbag containing some foodstuff and clothes, or more exactly, he leaves it concealed somewhere on a remote planet, i.e. the improvised *poste restante*, in order to find it there at his next passage. In the given situation, it suffices to say that the «parcel» loses its way (and there is room enough for that, in such a long time), or is accidentally misplaced or has a misspelling of the name and address of the sender or of the addressee (who usually are dwellers of the future), and the parcel suddenly and unexpectedly falls into the hands of a random recipient (who usually is a dweller of the present or of the past, i.e. of a time prior to the date of dispatch). «In general, strange things are produced in the future, SF teaches us (e.g. polka-dotted paint as well as thousands of objects with secret names and purposes not known)»²¹. Each missent parcel carries the seeds of a time violation (potential chronoplastia or uchronia), but the risk is usually avoided and the stakes are limited to a piquant flavor of unusual or quaint curiosity.

The prime of the «missent parcels» seems to have been in 1940s and 1950s: «Mimsy Were the Borogoves» (1943) by Lewis Padgett (pseudonym of Henry Kuttner and Catherine L. Moore), «As Never Was» (1944) by P. Schuyler Miller, «Child's Play» (1947) and its sequel «Wednesday's Child» (1956) by William Tenn, «The Little Black Bag» (1950) by Cyril M. Kornbluth, «And It Comes Out Here»

(1950) by Lester del Rey, «Of Time and Third Avenue» (1951) by Alfred Bester, «The King's Wishes» (1953) by Robert Sheckley, «Absolutely Inflexible» (1956) by Robert Silverberg, «Thing of Beauty» (1958) by Damon Knight, among others.

The story's dénouement brings usually about a sudden anticlimax: the missent parcel disappears as unexpectedly and enigmatically as it has appeared, thus the paradox is abruptly dissolved. Yet the piquant flavor of novelty and surprise, the picturesque quaintness of unprecedented curiosity, at least this palatable taste lingers for a while on the reader's palate.

11. THE TIME-REVERSAL PARADOX. In the case of this paradox, the *a priori* attribute of time that is being fictionally transgressed is mainly its unidirectional irreversibility, «time's arrow» immutably directed from the past towards the future. This, too, serves as a major source of paradox and «sense of wonder». The time-reversal theme may be approached outside of SF as well, but as a rule, in science fiction it implies a «scientific» backgrounding rationale (at least, in a simulated form) and the prevalence of a «coarsely granulated» time that is segmented into time-gradients, represented by «time tunnels» or «time pits». Along these, time is perceived as flowing in a straight line, a causality is therefore laid out linearly, not circularly as in most time paradoxes: the closed «loop in time» is comparable to an hourglass turned upside down.

In the case of this paradox, the most striking and specific effect of confusing and «overwhelming» the mind results in an inability to distinguish between end and beginning, to differentiate the two ends of the thread of time and, consequently, in the sensation that «Universe is closing over us», as spoken by a character in Brian W. Aldiss's novel *Cryptozoic! / An Age* (1967). The thread of time still has two ends, those are not yet knotted in a time-loop, we have a line and not a circle, but we must traverse that line in reverse, and this time-reversal brings about a causal reversal, as temporal succession and causal consecution inseparably follow from each other. From «*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*», the human mind cannot help but inevitably derive the reciprocal «*propter hoc, ergo post hoc*», thus fatally confounding the two, rotating and whirling them around endlessly until the causal loop in time reappears.

Time reversal is not only spectacular in terms of logic, but visually as well: while time may be (at

21. Stanislaw Lem, *op. cit.* (1976), p. 79.

«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

least, in our imagination) reversible, the entropy which time brings about is categorically irreversible, even in an imaginary way. If however, by defying nature, the symptoms of entropy are imagined to be reversible (e.g. combustion, explosion, gravitation and falling, death and extinction, fracture and destruction, eating, drinking and every biological process etc.), the ensuing effects are flagrantly implausible to the mind, yet piquantly enticing to the eye, as the visual manifestations are circumscribed mainly on the «human scale» of magnitudes that entails a «fine granulation» of time. As it often happens, the visual splendor of time reversal provides plenty in addition to its logical thrill. And just how far this plenty is from being exhausted is illustrated by briefly listing the titles discussed in this respect: Camille Flammarion's «sidereal novel» *Lumen* (1869), Jules Verne's *Hector Servadac. Travels and Adventures through the Solar System* (1877), Albert Robida's *Clock of the Centuries* (*L'horloge des siècles*, 1902); «How Devil Ravished the Professor» («Wie der Teufel den Professor holte», 1902) by Kurd Lasswitz, «The End» / «Nightmare in Time» (1961) by Fredric Brown, «Divine Madness» (1966) by Roger Zelazny, *Cryptozoic! / An Age* (1967) by Brian W. Aldiss, *Counter-Clock World* (1967) by Philip K. Dick, «Reverse Universe» (ca. 1968) by William Jon Watkins, and *Time's Arrow* (1991) by Martin Amis.

By means of a conclusion, since time paradoxes in science fiction by their very nature call for being taken cum grano salis (with a pinch of salt), the author allowed himself a final excursion into the puzzling realm of palindromes. *Est modus in rebus.*²² ●



CORNEL ROBU

Born in 1938. Lecturer in literature, University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Editor of the first reprint and critical edition, with an afterword in English, of the first Romanian SF novel, *În anul 4000 sau O călătorie la Venus*, 1986 («In the year 4000 or a Voyage to Venus») and also of two other SF novels by Victor Anestin (1875-1918), the earliest SF writer proper in Romania. Editor of summarizing anthology of postwar Romanian science fiction, *Timpul este umbra noastră*, 1991 («Time is Our Shadow»), also with an afterword in English. Editor of the English anthology *TWELVE of the Best Romanian SF Stories*. Selected and introduced by Cornel Robu, 1995. Also author of entry on Romania and contributor of ideas to the entry on «the sense of wonder» for *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls, 1993 (and for 3rd edition, on-line, 2011). Articles on «sense of wonder» and the sublime in SF appeared in English, including «A Key to Science Fiction: The Sublime», in *Foundation*, No.42, 1988; «'The Sense of Wonder' is 'A Sense Sublime'», in *SFRA Review*, No.211, 1994; and «A Key to Science Fiction: Revisiting the Sense of Wonder», in *Hélice*, No.1, October 2012. Romanian books: *O cheie pentru science-fiction* («A Key to Science Fiction», 2004, 2nd edition 2010), which is a study of the connection between science fiction and the sublime; *Paradoxurile timpului în science-fiction* («Time Paradoxes in Science Fiction», 2006); *Scriitori români de science-fiction* («Romanian Science-Fiction Writers», 2008, 2nd edition 2012); *Teoria pierde omenia – Theory Kills Sympathy* (2009, a bilingual book).

22. We are deeply grateful to Adam Gerencser for having much improved here the English of the original abstract, which was published at the end of the Romanian original edition.



«Time paradoxes in science fiction»

Bibliography

- BARROW, John D. & TIPLER, Frank J. *Principiul antropoc cosmic (The Anthropic Cosmological Principle, 1986)*, translated by Walter Radu Fotescu, Editura Tehnică, București, 2001.
- Burke, Edmund. *Despre sublim și frumos. Cercetare filosofică a originii ideilor (A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 1756)*, translated by Anda Teodorescu and Andrei Bantaș, Editura Meridiane, București, 1981.
- COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria (1817)*, edited with his Aesthetical Essays by J. Shawcross, London, Oxford University Press, 1965 (1st edition, 1907), 2 vols.
- EDWARDS, Malcolm J. & Stableford, Brian. «Time Paradoxes», in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls. Contributing editor Brian Stableford, An Orbit Book, Little, Brown and Company, London, 1993; St.Martin's Press, New York, 1993.
- HACKER, Barton C. & CHAMBERLAIN, Gordon B. «Pasts That Might Have Been: An Annotated Bibliography of Alternate History», in: *Extrapolation*, Wooster & Kent (Ohio), Vol.22, No. 4, Winter, 1981, pp. 334-378; HACKER, Barton C. & CHAMBERLAIN, Gordon B. «Pasts That Might Have Been, II: A Revised Bibliography of Alternative History», in: WAUGH, Charles G. & GREENBERG, Martin H. (Editors). *Alternative Histories: Eleven Stories of the World as It Might Have Been*, New York, 1986, pp. 301-363.
- HAWKING, Stephen W. *Scurtă istorie a timpului. De la Big Bang la găurile negre (A Brief History of Time. From the Big Bang to Black Holes, 1988)*, translated by Michaela Ciodaru, Editura Humanitas, București, 1994.
- KANT, Immanuel. *Critica facultății de judecare (Kritik der Urteilskraft, 1790)*, translated by Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu și Alexandru Surdu, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1981.
- LEM, Stanislaw. «The Time-Travel Story and Related Matters of SF Structuring» (1970), translated from the Polish by Thomas H. Hoisington and Darko Suvin, in: *Science-Fiction Studies*, I, No. 3, Spring 1974, pp. 143-154; reprinted in: *Science Fiction. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Edited by Mark Rose, A Spectrum Book, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1976, pp. 72-88; re-reprinted in: *Stanislaw Lem, Microworlds: Writings on Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Edited

- by Franz Rottensteiner, A Mandarin Paperback, Octopus Publishing Group, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., London, 1984, 1991, pp. 136-160.
- SCHILLER, Friedrich. *Ideea de sublim. Contribuții la dezvoltarea unor idei kantiene (Vom Erhabenen. Zur weitem Ausführung einiger Kantischen Ideen, 1793)*; *Despre sublim (Über das Erhabene, 1801)*; in: *Scrieri estetice*, translated by Gheorghe Ciorogaru, Editura Univers, București, 1981, pp. 75-97, respectively 123-139.

«Two newly translated 19th spanish science fiction stories»

«Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come» by Nilo María Fabra
and «Future Time» by Leopoldo Alas «Clarín», translated by
Leimar Garcia-Siino (University of Liverpool)

Leimar Garcia-Siino

Introduction

Nilo María Fabra and Leopoldo Alas «Clarín» are two Spanish writers whose contributions to science fiction are practically unknown in international SF criticism. Born in 1843 and 1852 respectively, their particular brand of science fiction and fantastic literature is prime example of what might be called ‘nineteenth century bitterness’ combined with an inclination toward realism and naturalism that so permeated Spanish literature of the time (Porrás 215, 225).

When translating both of these texts, I had to take into account both the language of the period, 19th century Spain, as well as the language of the text, i.e. the somewhat absurd and exaggerated tone both narratives convey in Spanish. On one hand, I wanted to maintain the slightly antiquated feeling of the 19th century text, and therefore chose appropriate translations that would portray that same feeling as opposed to more modern-sounding words (particularly in «Teitan, the Proud»). At the same time, I wanted to make the text understood by modern English readers. To that end, I have included several translator notes that accompany the text, explaining, as briefly as possible, certain

words, terms, historicisms, etc. that might sound unusual, awkward, or be entirely unknown or incomprehensible to the modern reader.

For example, when discussing the best method to ‘universal suicide’ in «Future Time», the narrative tells us that «El doctor Adambis [...] había encontrado la fórmula de la aspiración universal», which translates as «Doctor Adambis had [...] found the formula of universal aspiration». While I might have translated ‘aspiración’ as ‘ambition’, I have chosen to use ‘aspiration’ instead. It implies both ambition and the action of taking a breath inward, which seems to me to be the intended meaning of Clarín. In the previous sentences, the story tells us that humankind wanted to blow themselves up, to ‘explode’ [estallar]. ‘Aspiring’ reflects this explosive image, as well of that of the ambition itself.

In other cases I opted for grammatical correctness and sense. For instance, again in «Future Time», doctor Adambis tells the masses that it doesn’t matter that the minority will not commit suicide, for the majority will make them. In Spanish, ‘suicide’ is a verb as opposed to in English where it is a noun. The sentence «las minorías no se suicidarán, es verdad; ¡pero las suicidaremos!» is therefore untranslatable literally — «the minorities will not *suicide themselves*, it’s true; *but we will suicide them!*» For the sake of good grammar and understanding, I’ve changed the translation slightly.



«Two newly translated 19th spanish science fiction stories»

In the spirit of preserving each author's voice and tone, however, the text has been translated as faithfully and literally as the translation allowed. I have also kept most of the punctuation and syntax of the original text, changing it only when it prevented clear understanding, despite changes or differences between both languages concerning correct grammar conventions. The authors' tones, particularly Clarín's, are a mixture of soothsayer, grandiose orator and baffled spectator. In the same paragraph the narrative might sound imposing and ominous (particularly in Fabra's story), reflecting the dire situation being told, and then it might swiftly change to comical or absurdist, with the author's voice commenting «I don't know what the hell this is all about» (as Clarín does on several occasions). It implies that while the subject matter of each story is dark or menacing, they are not meant to be taken too seriously. Clarín even calls the story a farce, interrupting the narration halfway through the story to provide both an apology and a reassurance to the reader.

Because the edition used to translate both texts came from an edited collection of Spanish science fiction and fantastic texts (*Cuentos fantásticos en la España del Realismo* [*Fantastic Tales in Realist Spain*]), it contained many footnotes and commentaries made by the editor, Juan Molina Porras. I have picked the ones that offer interesting or important information that aids in the understanding of the text.

Nilo María Fabra and Leopoldo Alas «Clarín» are two Spanish writers whose contributions to science fiction are practically unknown in international SF criticism.

[...] When approaching both of these stories, the reader should keep in mind that their intention is not necessarily the same as with many contemporary SF narratives, that is, their purpose is neither science nor, strictly, entertainment.

To conclude this brief prologue, when approaching both of these stories, the reader should keep in mind that their intention is not necessarily the same as with many contemporary sf narratives, that is, their purpose is neither science nor, strictly, entertainment. Fabra was a dedicated journalist with interests in history and politics, and Clarín's works tended to reflect satirical and moral tones. It is not unlikely that their fantastic stories are primarily intended as social, political and historical commentary and criticism instead of being intentionally comical, entertaining or even prescriptive in terms of actual foresight into the future. They are reflective of 19th century Spain socio-politics, and served as a medium for Fabra and Clarín to explore social ideologies. ●

References

PORRAS, Juan Molina (ed), *Cuentos fantásticos en la España del Realismo*, (Madrid, Ediciones Cátedra, 2006).



«Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come»

Nilo María Fabra

Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come

The great nationalities that answered to strategic reasons, geographic accidents and race origin, were followed by the continental confederations, and these, after long and terrible wars, were followed by the political unity of our planet, in which the speed of communications and the amazing ease of transportation had produced over the course of many centuries unity of language.

The advances achieved concerning matter were prodigious; but neither the social sciences nor the art of government, nor the principles of justice and equity, applied to public administration, progressed in any manner. All forms of government had been tried, and the views were still in disagreement over which was the best; subjected to experimental ground the theories of the various socialist schools, from anarchic individualism to the omnipotent state, the social oeuvre was being reconstituted according to ancient plans. Humanity sought its own perfection, dismissing the aid of religious beliefs, and falling victim to its own weakness. Laws, governments, institutions, political and social organisms; all were able to change, transform or reappear; but human nature remained immutable throughout time.

The hundredth century dawned, and Teitan the Proud (personification of the God-State) was king of the Earth, who had at his service the strangest and most extraordinary inventions conceived by the genius of science and perfected by the tireless activity of industry.

Immense webs of telegraphic and telephonic wires and subterranean and submarine cables crossed in all directions, and the universal Monarch reigned over the World with an army of electricians, to whom the Government's most powerful device was entrusted: espionage.

Because the roofs and walls of the buildings and the pavements in the streets and roads were covered in millions of microphones, in communication with

the Minister of Police, sounds, no matter how distant, could reach him and were printed on *telephonographic* devices while innumerable camerae obscurae transmitted via *teleteidoscopes* the distant images that *telephotography* reproduced in colours with notable fidelity and exactitude.

Even on the aereostats¹ and on the *aerocycles*, very common vehicles, there were devices dedicated to espionage, upon which the vibrations of air and light were stamped.

Never had the scourge of tyranny punished the human species to such a high degree, and never was there a species more worthy of pity. One mistaken word, pronounced perhaps in the bosom of intimacy or proffered involuntarily in dreams, and registered by the mysterious *telephonographic* eavesdroppers, was enough for the King's henchmen, appealing for electrocution, to turn into a citizen's executioner.

Enormous mines, whose ovens imprisoned explosive materials, superior to dynamite, stretched across the populations' subsoil, and the tyrant, via electric strings that communicated with his palace, had at his hand partial or general ruin. Thanks to the terror and the monopoly of electricity, he was owner of the world: the noble conquests and prodigious triumphs of the physical sciences over matter had turned into servile instruments of oppression and slavery.

Such immense power, that no mortal ever had, did not satiate, however, the hydroptic thirst for ambition of that ruler, without rival, without emulous, without rebellious subjects, before whom the whole of humanity lay mutely prostrate.

He wanted something more; and tired of this thought, brow downcast, arms crossed, frowning grimly and firing glares through his eyes, he paced with long strides across the throne room of his palace at Teitanopolis.

1. Modern spelling is 'aerostat'. I do not modify the names of the mechanical apparatuses in order to maintain the spirit of the age in Fabra's descriptions. Later he writes aerostats, which might make us think that it could be a printing error in the 1897 edition. (Translator note: I have chosen to use 'aerostat' in English as well, in order to present the same stylistic spirit, even though it might be a printing error originally.)

«Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come»

The regal residence was of colossal proportions and incomparable magnificence: of malachite was the pavement, of jade the walls and of the purest gold the columns. On the decorations of the bases, caps, panels, cornices and plinth, abounded the emerald, the ruby, the diamond and other precious stones, forming an artistic set. On the ample vaults, whose audacity denounced the presence of light yet hardy aluminium, pictorial art refined the most adorned enchantments of fiction.

Olympic games could be seen on one side: running horses, necks extended, long and abundant manes bristling, red nose opened, mouth rebellious against the bit, pulled fast cars in the middle of a cloud of dust, upon which handsome youths, with whips in the air, lose reins, bulging eyes, bent at the waist and burning in the heart, proclaimed themselves victors of the space.

In another part a Roman circus was presented: upon the sand, bathed by the meridian light, groups of Christians were thrown to the beasts; a half naked athlete, discovering the exuberant musculature of his arms, the rigidity of his legs that pressed the earth, and the corpulence of his hairy chest, defied, with noble and manly gesture, an arrogant lion that seemed subjugated by the fascinating stare of its victim; a tender maiden, her bright eyes uplifted to heaven, waited on bended knee, in mystic rapture, the palm of martyrdom²; a matron who, covered in mortal wounds, fell slumped and convulsed, clutched to her breast her small son, as though she tried, with the last drops of her blood, to prolong his life; a priest of venerable gray and furrowed face, fighting with the agony, making supreme effort, raised the shaking arm to bless his executioners; and the enormous and huddled crowd, on their feet on the immense stands, drunk on cruelty, applauded frenetically and devoured with their eyes that terrible and bloody spectacle of fierce animals tearing, ripping and shredding human bodies.

As though the artist, after presenting the apotheosis of animal strength, had proposed to make one of the natural forces overwhelmed by the science and the industry, in another place gigantic paintings representing aerostats could be seen that, moved by powerful and light machines, crossed the space; cyclopean hydraulic achievements destined to utilise the movement of the waves of the Ocean as motor; aluminium Eiffel towers a thousand metres high with insulating

bases, whose chief object was to gather, imprison and accumulate atmospheric electricity; and colossal burning-mirrors, as big as mountains, which followed the apparent course of the sun, and reflecting its rays, warmed the landscape during the hardships of winter in order to turn it into gentle spring.

But the most admirable thing of those artistic fictions was that, thanks to the ingenious mechanism of the cinematograph, all the figures were presented to the eye with their natural movement: even the leaves of the trees seemed agitated by the air.

Teitan the Proud, with visible signs of impatience, continued in great strides his pacing across that grandiose and magnificent enclosure. Suddenly, unable to restrain his fury, he brandished the electric whip he had in his hand, and with a spark shinning at its end, a deafening and prolonged noise was heard, like that of thunder, that reverberated in the spacious and dilated wings of the palace.

Shortly after a window on a cornice of the room opened and there appeared an old man upon an aereobicycle, who spiralled down slowly, and dismounting the machine, which remained suspended upon the air a hand's breadth from the ground, threw himself before the feet of his sovereign.

«Lord»³, he said with submissive and soft voice, «what does His Cosmic Majesty command?»

«Niketes», answered Teitan, sitting upon his throne and directing a haughty glance at the newcomer, «I called you because I do not want you to abuse my patience more. All that exists upon the globe and in its hidden depths is mine: the earth, the seas, and the beings which inhabit it: even the fluids that human intelligence ripped from Nature's mysteries and turned into docile instruments of their will, depend solely on my own. My power is so great, that all that exists upon the world we inhabit exists by my approval. I have in my hand the destruction of the human race... nay! even that of our planet, for one act of my will would be enough for it to burst like a pomegranate and, turned into thousands of asteroids, perturb the ordered movement of the stars. All men bow at my feet and worship me; but, what good is their servile submission, to discover their actions and know their words, even those pronounced in the bosom of the home and in dreams, for the walls are my confidants, if I lack the means to

2. Translator note: the 'palm of martyrdom' is a reference to the palm branch and its religious connotations regarding martyrs and hope for eternal life. It's a sign of victory in the face of despair.

3. Translator note: the Spanish here is 'Señor', which can be translated as either 'Sir' or 'Lord', but given that he is addressing his king, I have chosen 'Lord'.



«Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come»

scrutinise their thoughts? What good is having dominion of the external manifestations if my prying action does not reach their mind? I am the king of matter and I also want to be that of the spirit. It is not enough for me to know what men do and say: I want to inquire what they think. «Underneath my cloak I kill the king» goes the old saying, and I want to discover whether I have subjects capable of regicide at heart. Punishment ought to reach even the intention of the coward and impotent that hides in the recesses of his mind. Have you discovered at last the means to satisfactorily fulfil my will, upon which the impossible shatters?»

«Lord», replied Niketes, «I do not rest night and day. I have been able to discover the device; but it is still so imperfect, that I dare ask that His Cosmic Majesty might deign grant me a short term in which to complete my work.»

«Never! Never!», exclaimed Teitan rising in anger. «If within thirty hours you do not finish the machine to my complete satisfaction, with this electric whip, symbol of my royalty, I will give you death. Go and work without rest, for tomorrow night I want to test your new invention myself.»

The next day, at night (and I say night because the sun had already crossed the horizon, being substituted by enormous electric floodlights that illuminated the space with its same brightness), Teitan received in private and intimate audience Niketes, his Chamber Engineer.

«Lord», he said, handing the King a kind of aluminium helmet, «in compliance with the celestial orders of His Cosmic Majesty, I have the honour of placing in your divine hands the fruit of my labours and vigils, which I have happily and thoroughly concluded, baptising it with the name of *epistemograph*.»

«How it pleases me!», exclaimed the tyrant. «Rich and meaningful name, refractory to the understanding of the common peoples, and a torment to the tongues of the plebs. Proceed.»

«After profound and intensive studies I discovered that, just like the vibrations of the air leave behind permanent trace upon the phonograph's tin paper, whose lines reproduce the sounds, mental phenomena produce nerve vibrations in the cells of the brain, which remain engraved in the exterior part of the cranium. Thanks to the device of my invention, these external cerebral manifestations are transformed into sounds, and through them it's possible to discover, at the operator's will, not only what a person thinks, but also what they thought at any given time.»

«I will test this myself», said Teitan. And he placed the aluminium helmet on himself.

«What thoughts does His Cosmic Majesty wish the device to produce?», asked the wise man.

«The first from when I first had use of reason»⁴, answered the monarch.

Niketes pressed a little button that the helmet had on the part corresponding to the crown, and from a small trumpet, like that of the phonographs with which he judged, a shrill and vibrant voice emerged saying:

«Why do they not kill my father? I would be king.»

And Teitan, removing the helmet, remained pensive for a long time.

Suddenly, throwing down the helmet and giving it an electric whipping which shattered it, he exclaimed:

«I prefer to ignore forever the hidden thoughts of my son!»

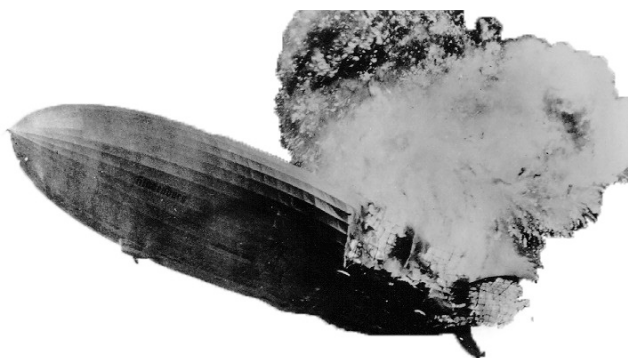
And turning to Niketes, he added:

«In reward for your services, I name you *Sage in House and Mouth*.»⁵

⁴ Translator note: meaning 'the first I can remember', but I have chosen to preserve the narrative style.

⁵ Translator note: the Spanish here is 'Sabio de Casa y Boca', literally 'Wise of House and Mouth', which implies Niketes will be an appointed 'advisor' to Teitan, and given 'board and food', presumably forever.

«Teitan the Proud – Tale of Things to Come»



NILO MARÍA FABRA (1843-1903).

Born in Blanes (Catalonia), he dedicated a great part of his work to journalism, even though he also published works of historical and political disclosure. His most interesting narratives are found in his three short story collections: *Por los espacios imaginarios (con escalas en la Tierra)* [*Through Imaginary Spaces (With Scales Upon the Earth)*] (1885); *Cuentos ilustrados* [*Illustrated Stories*] (1895) and *Presente y Futuro* [*Present and Future*] (1897). Fabra must be regarded as one of the pioneers of Spanish science fiction. Although the twenty-six stories included in the aforementioned collections are not exclusively science fiction or of a scientific expectation, they are the ones which most draw our attention today. In them we find stories that anticipate the colonial war between the United States and Spain (*La Guerra de España con los Estados Unidos* [*The War Between the United States and Spain*]), which predict a future socialist city hall in Spain's capital (*El futuro ayuntamiento de Madrid* [*Madrid's Future City Hall*]), which tell of the possible destruction of Barcelona by a meteorite (*El fin de Barcelona* [*Barcelona's End*]) or that highlight the impossible comprehension of the remains of our civilisation (*El dragón de Montesa o los rectos juicios de la posteridad* [*The Dragon of Montesa or the Righteous Judgements of Posterity*]). A description of a Martian civilisation is not absent in such a precursor to modern science fiction (*En el planeta Marte* [*On Planet Mars*])⁶. However, throughout all the narratives, a nineteenth century bitterness is quite evident, and more than stories of expectation they would need to be classed as traditionalist examples of science fiction.

Fabra, moreover, assigns an openly ideological finality to the story. This tone characterises not only his own body of work but that of nearly every science fiction writer of the period: Carlos Coello (*Hombres y animales* [*Men and Animals*]), Fernández Bremón, Rafael Comenge (*Sal neutra* and *El doctor Hermes Venidero* [*Neutral Salt and Doctor Hermes Forthcoming*]), Enrique Gaspar (*El anacronópete* [*The Anacronopete*]), Juan Giné y Partagás (*Un viaje a Cerebrópolis. Ensayo humorístico de dinámica cerebral* [*A Trip to Cerebropolis. A Humorous Essay of Cerebral Dynamics*]) and Alejandro Larrubiera (*La mujer número 53* [*Woman Number 53*]).

⁶ There is an English translation of this story in Andrea L. Bell and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán, *Cosmos latinos. An Anthology of Science Fiction from Latin America and Spain* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003, pp. 37-43).



«Future story»

Leopoldo Alas «Clarín»
Future story

I

Earth's humanity had tired of circling thousands and thousands of times around the same ideas, the same customs, the same pains and the same pleasures. It had even grown tired of circling the same sun. This final weariness had been discovered by a lyric poet of the genre of the desperate who, not knowing what else to invent, invented that: the *tiredness of the sun*. The poet was French, as it only could be, and he said in the prologue of his book titled *Heliophobe*: «C'est bête de tourner toujours comme ça. A quoi bon cette sottise éternelle?... Le soleil, ce bourgeois, m'embête avec ses platitudes...», etc., etc.

The Spanish translator of this book said: «*It's beastly* this notion of always turning thus. *What good comes* of this eternal foolishness? The sun, that bourgeois, rams me with his annoying *platitudes*. He believes he does us a great favour by remaining planted there, functioning as furnace to this great economic kitchen called the planetary system. The planets are pots placed at the fire; and the hymn of the stars, which Pythagoras thought he heard, is nothing more than the *cricket on the hearth*, the prosaic sputter of carbon and the bubbling of water in the boiler... Cease rotten pot! Let us turn off the sun, let us winnow the ashes from the hearth. The great ennui of meridian light has inspired this *little book*. He is sincere! He is the faithful expression of a noble pride that despises unsolicited favours, flatteries of the luminal rays that appear to him unbearable chains!»

«*He will find beautiful* the sun that insists on being beneficial; in the end he is a tyrant; the emancipation of humanity will not be complete until the day we loosen this yoke and stop being satellites of that miserable little king of the day, vain and boastful, who after all is nothing more than a slave that follows the triumphal race of an invisible master.»⁷

The prologue continued saying follies for which there is no time to copy here, and the translator continued making Gallicisms.

That's what made the book *all the rage*, especially in Central Africa and the Equator, where everyone was sure the sun had fried them already.

800 million French copies and 300 copies of the Spanish translation were sold; certainly not in the Peninsula, but in America, where booksellers continued making a killing without needing to deal directly with the most ancient metropolis.

After the poet came the philosophers and politicians siding with what was already universally called the *Heliophobia*.

Science discussed in Academies, Congresses and in the variety section of newspapers: 1st, whether life would be possible after separating the Earth from the Sun and letting her run free across the vacuum till it hooked up with another system; 2nd, whether there was a way, given how much the physical sciences had advanced, of breaking the yoke of Phoebus and allowing themselves to fall into infinity.

The wise said yes and no, and that 'what did they know?' concerning both issues.

Some specialists promised to break the centrifugal force as one would cut a hair; but they asked for grants, and the majority of the Governments were still in it up to their necks and were in no position to grant such things. In Spain, where there also were Government and specialists, several armchair politicians⁸ who offered to break all solar ties at once were sent to prison.

The oppositions, who were as many as there were families in the nation, screamed in outrage: the Peresists and the Alvarists and the Gomesists, etc., etc., said it was necessary to overthrow that science-oppressing Government, etc.

The Bishops, against whom up to date the gates of hell had not prevailed, praised every wise and ignorant person who declared themselves *heliophiles*.

«It's good that the world should end; for it had little worth, but it had to end like the sacred text said it must end, and not by cooling, as would certainly end if we in fact drifted from the sun...»

7. Translator note: the Spanish here is 'señor', which might be translated as either 'sir', 'mister', 'lord' or 'master'. On this case, I have chosen the latter.

8. Person who invents foolish plans or projects, in order to relieve public finances or to remedy political evils.



«Future story»

A scientific and retrograde journal, named *The Harmony*, reminded the *heliophobes* of a portion of biblical texts, threatening them with the end of the world.

The columnist said:

«Oh, you wretches! You want the Earth to be separated from the Sun, for it to run away from the day, to turn into the *wandering star*, to which the blackness of darkness is forever reserved, as Saint Jude the apostle says in his *Universal Letter*, v. 13.⁹ You want that which is announced already, you want death; but hear the word of truth:

«And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them (*Revelations*, chap. 10, v. 6).¹⁰ Because your torment is as the torment of a scorpion; your mortal weariness, your hate of the light, your eagerness for darkness, your tiredness of thinking and feeling, is the torment of a scorpion; and you want death in order to escape the *locust of metallic tails with stingers and with hair of women*, in order to escape the hosts of Abaddon.¹¹ Vainly, vainly you seek the death of the world before its time, and via other roads than those foretold. Death will come, yes, and soon; time will end, as it is written; the four angels will come on their day to kill the third part of men. But it will not be you, mortals, who give the signals for the extermination. Ah, you fear the sun! Yes, you fear he from whom punishment descends; you fear that the sun might be the cup of fire that the angel might pour upon the earth; you fear scorching with the heat, and you die blaspheming and without repenting, as is foretold (*Revelations*, 16, 9). Vainly, vainly you want to escape the sun, because it is written that this wretched Babylon will be burned with fire' (*ibid.*, 18, 8).»

Wise men and philosophers said nothing to *The Harmony*, which they never even read. The satirical newspapers took on the task of answering the *Babylonian* journalist, as they called him, with comic strips, treating him like yesterday's rags¹², and with colourful cartoons.

A most reputable wise man, who had just discovered the *bacillus of hunger*, and was liberating long

suffering humanity with inoculations of *fat broth*, acclaimed wise man across the whole world, and who already had in every continent more statues of himself than hairs upon the head, doctor Judas¹³ Adambis, born in Mozambique, emporium of science at that time, modern Athens, Judas Adambis took charge of the matter and wrote a *Universal Letter*, whose first edition sold by a quantity of millions.

A popular newspaper of the times, still conservative, gave account of doctor Adambis' letter, copying the concluding paragraphs.

The newspaper, which was Spanish, said:

«We lament not being able to publish in full this most interesting letter that is calling the attention of the entire civilized world, from Patagonia to La Mancha, and from the *cold to the burning pole*; but we cannot grant it more space because today is bullfight and lottery day, and we must not neglect neither the big list, nor the bullfight, which didn't exceed half, between parenthesis. Thus says doctor Judas Adambis:

«...I believe that earth's humankind should, in fact, break the chains that tie it to this planetary system, miserable and mean against man's flights of ambition. The solution that the French poet proposed is magnificent, sublime...; but it is no more than poetry. Let us speak plainly, gentlemen. What is it that is desired? To break an ominous yoke, like advanced politicians of bitter skin¹⁴ tell us. Can not the earth be called free and independent, while it lives subjected to the impalpable chain that ties it to the sun and the moon in circles around the tyrannical star, like the monkey that, mounted upon a dog and with a string around the neck, draws circumferences around its ragged owner? Ah, no, gentlemen! It is not this. There is something more here. I will not deny that this dependence on the sun humiliates us; yes, our pride suffers with such subjection. But that is the least of our concerns. What humanity wants is something more than freeing itself from the sun..., it's to free itself from life.

»What causes unbearable disgust in humanity is not so much that the sun is planted in the middle of

9. Translator note: Instead of translating directly from Clarín's text, I have taken this line from the *King James Bible*.

10. Translator note: Actually, this quote comes from *Revelations* 9:6, not 10:6, but I have left the incorrect reference in the text.

11. Abaddon or Abadon is the image of death. In the *Book of Job*, in the *Psalms* and the *Proverbs* it is the residence of death; in *Revelations*, the angel of the Abyss.

12. Translator note: The phrase here is 'poner como ropa de Pascua', a colloquialism which literally means 'to treat like Easter clothes', but which implies being treated as a rag or being defeated by way of being obsolete.

13. Translator Note: I chose to maintain Judas Adambis' name as 'Judas' instead of 'Jude'. I debated greatly about this given that in Spanish both names are translated as 'Judas'. On one hand, earlier in the text, the narrator quotes the book of St. Jude from the Bible, which seems to imply that the character's name is the same as the last of the apostles. On the other hand, his actions, betraying humanity's trust by killing them while escaping himself, are more in tune with a Judas Iscariot metaphor. I believe that this ambivalent double reference was intended by Clarín, but it is impossible to translate accurately into English; as 'Judas' is the more powerful and obvious reference I have decided to use that translation.

14. Politicians of progressive or very advanced ideas.



«Future story»

the ring, making us circle the track with his fire whippings, that a remote ancient civilization once called Apollo's arrows, but the circles themselves; this, this is what is tedious: this turning through infinity. There was a time, the wise can tell of it, which was happy for the entire world: it was the time in which we believed in the indefinite progress.

»The ignorance of such times made thinkers believe that the advancements they could note in human life, referring to the historical cycles to which their limited science could reach, were good proof that the process was constant. Today our knowledge of the planet's history doesn't allow us to form similar illusions; the hundreds of centuries that were formerly attributed to human life like a daring hypothesis, are perfectly known today, with all the details of their history; today we know that man always returns to the old ways, that our descendants are condemned to be wild, and their remote descendants to be like us, purely civilized bored men. This is the unbearable turning, here is the bad joke, that equates us to the wretched horse circus actor... It's not a matter of one of many pessimistic philosophies, *garrulous and cowardly* that have stunk up the world. It's not a matter of a theory, it's a matter of a virile fact: of universal suicide. Science and international relations allow us today to achieve this intent. Those who subscribe know how the suicide can be accomplished by all the inhabitants of the globe in one same instant. Does humanity accept it?».

II

Judas Adambis' idea was the secret wish of the majority of humans. Psychology had advanced so much, that there wasn't a bad old shoemaker who wasn't a perfected Schopenhauer. Already all men, or almost all, were separate superior souls, *d'elite'*, *dilettanti*¹⁵, like Ernest Renan or Ernesto García Ladevase¹⁶ can now be. In earlier centuries some Parisian writers had agreed that they, some ten or twelve, were the only ones who had an ounce of brains¹⁷; the only ones

who knew that life was a bankruptcy, *an abortion*, etc., etc. Very well; in Adambis' times, the vast majority of humanity were on top of it;¹⁸ almost all were convinced of this, that this must give on an explosion. But, how to explode? This was the question.

Doctor Adambis had not only found the formula of universal aspiration, but promised to facilitate the means by which to put his grandiose idea into practice. Individual suicide solved nothing; suicides were frequent; yet happy births even more so. The population was growing eagerly, and that was achieving nothing.

Mass suicide had been assayed many times, but it was not enough. Besides, suicidal societies or *death volunteers*, that had been formed in different times, gave terrible results; it always resulted in that the shareholders and backers bore the brunt¹⁹ in good faith and the managers survived and continued wasting the society's funds. The thing was to find a medium by which to achieve the universal suicide.

The Governments of all countries conferred with Judas Adambis, who said that the first thing that was needed was a great loan, and in addition, the reassurance that every nation accepted his project, for without it he would not reveal his secret or commence the preparatory work of so large a venture.

Even though there hadn't been an England for a long time, for it had been swallowed by the sea centuries before, there wasn't a lack of Anglomaniac politicians, and there were those who highlighted the *habeas corpus* as argument against it. Others, no less backward, talked about the *minority representation*. The matter was that not all, absolutely not all men accepted voluntary death.

The Pope, who lived in Rome, no more or less than Saint Peter, said that neither him nor the Kings could be comfortable with the idea of universal suicide; that the prophecies could not be fulfilled thus. A poet well read by the fairer sex, gave assurances that the world was excellent, and that at least, while he, poet, lived and sung, the desire to die was proof of bad taste.

15. Learned, knowledgeable of some branch of art. The term tends to be employed, chiefly, in music.

16. Ernest Renan (Trèguier 1823-Paris 1892) was a thinker and historian who applied rationalist thought to the study of biblical texts. His *Life of Jesus* was widely read. E. García Ladevase (Castro Urdiales 1850-Madrid 1914), battled tirelessly as journalist and politician against the Restoration and always defended the republican cause. In exile he published his esteemed *Memories of a Republican*. Both, Clarín appears to propose, are examples of cultured and critical characters.

17. Translator note: the Spanish here translates as 'having two fingers in front', which is a turn on the common phrase

'not having two fingers in front' which might be equated with the phrase 's/he's as dumb as a post'. I have chosen 'an ounce of brains' given that the phrase is usually 'not having an ounce of brains', and thus seems to retain the apparent comic tone of the sentence.

18. Translator note: the Spanish here translates as 'to be at the end of the street', a phrase used to denote being fully aware of something, to know all there is to know. Because of the colloquial nature of the phrase, I've translated it as 'to be on top of it'.

19. Translator note: the Spanish here translates as 'paying the duck', a colloquial phrase that means 'taking the blame', as in 'being left holding the bill (for the duck)'.



«Future story»

The genuine interpretation of *national sovereignty* triumphed, in spite of these protests and of some backward politicians' corruptions. Universal suicide was put to vote in all the legislative assemblies of the world, and in all of them it was approved by the majority.

But, what was done with the minorities? A writer of the times said that it was impossible for the universal suicide to be achieved from the moment that an opposed minority existed. «It won't be suicide, it will be murder, as far as concerns that minority.»

Sophistry! Sophistry! Metaphysics! Rhetoric! cried the furious majorities. «The minorities, warned doctor Adambis in another pamphlet, whose copyright sold for a hundred million pesetas, the minorities will not *commit suicide*, it's true; *but we will make them!* Absurd, it might be said, No, it is not absurd. The minorities will not commit suicide, inasmuch as individuals, or *per se*; but since the matter is the suicide of mankind, inasmuch as collectivity is a legal entity and the legal entity, since Roman law, manifests its will through voting in absolute majority, it follows that the minority, being part of mankind, will also commit suicide, *per accidens*.»

Thus it was agreed. In a universal Assembly, which in order to select its members had terrible unrest, clubs, stones, shots (so and so that there was almost no need for suicide); I say that in a universal Assembly the end of the world was definitely voted for, so it was up to mankind, and full powers were granted to doctor Adambis to cut and tear at his will.

The loan had covered one and quarter (less than the Panama one), because the humanity of then, like the one of now, lent itself to excitement, to commit suicide; it lent itself to everything except lending money.

With the aid of the Governments Adambis was able to carry out his magnum opus, which through mechanical devices of chemical conditions unknown today, put all men upon the earth in contact with death.

It was a matter of I don't know what the hell kind of recently discovered force that, by means of conductors of who knows now what, turned the globe into one great net that trapped every man in its deadly meshes, *velis nolis*.²⁰ It was guaranteed that not even one person could escape the universal explosion. Adambis reminded the public in another pamphlet, after revealing his invention, that an ancient wise man named Renan or Fustigueras, he wasn't sure, had dreamt of a power that would put the destruction of humanity into the hands of the wise, thanks to a destructive force discovered by science. That dream of

Fustigueras was coming true; he, Adambis, dictator of extermination, thanks to the grand plebiscite that made him executioner of the world, tyrant of agony, was going to destroy all of mankind, make it burst in one mere second, with nothing more than the press of a button.

Without paying attention to the cries and protests of the minority, everything that was necessary for the last hour of wretched humanity was made available to all civilised countries, which was the entire world. The ceremony of the tremendous critical juncture caused many discussions and disagreements, and the great project almost failed because of etiquette. In what dress, in what position, which day and at what time must humanity explode?

It was approved that dress should be of strict etiquette among the high classes, and traditional dress among the rest. A proposal to commit suicide in Adam's dress, pre-fig leaves, was rejected. He who proposed this based it in saying that humanity had to end as it began; but since the Adam matter wasn't a sure thing, the idea wasn't approved. Besides, it was improper. Concerning the matter of position, each person could adopt whichever one they thought most dignified and elegant. Day? The first of the year was appointed, given it is new year, new life. Time? Twelve noon, so that the abhorred sun could preside and could give testimony of humanity's supreme resolution.

Doctor Adambis passed on an attn. V.R.²¹ to all the inhabitants of the globe, notifying them of the hour and further circumstances of the event. Thus said the document:

Doctor Judas Adambis

V.R.

to the Gentleman Mr...

has the pleasure of notifying him that on the day of the new year, at twelve noon, at its meridian, his dorsal spine will feel a great commotion, followed by a tremendous explosion of the brain. Do not worry, Mr..., for death will be instantaneous, and you may have the comfort that there will be no one left to tell about it. This explosion will stand as the symbol of humanity's supreme moment. It is advisable to have finished digesting lunch at that hour.

Doctor Judas Adambis will take advantage of this occasion to offer..., etc., etc., etc.

21. Translator note: the Spanish here is a form of courtesy written in letters. It's abbreviated as B.L.M. and means 'Besa la Mano' or 'Kisses the hand'. I have chosen the abbreviated V.R. (Very Respectfully) as substitute.

20. Whether wanted or otherwise.



«Future story»

The day of the new year arrived, and at eleven thirty in the morning doctor Judas, accompanied by his dignified and beautiful wife Evelina Apple, presented himself at the palace in which the international Commission organising the universal suicide resided.

The doctor was dressed in a stern mourning suit, tails and black tie with chiffon on the hat. Evelina Apple, blond, tall, of wide hips and proud belly, clad in black as well, with cleavage and short sleeves, gave an arm to her dignified husband. The commission in full, in tails and black tie as well, emerged to receive them in the vestibule. They entered the room of the *Great Device*, the husbands sat on a throne, in individual seats; round the commissioners, and in silence they all waited for the great cuckoo clock behind the throne to toll noon. In front of it there was a small table, square, with a marble top. In the middle, a black button, most simple, drew the gaze of all those present.

The clock was an exquisite work of art.

It was manufactured from a strange stony material that current science guaranteed came from the planet Mars. There was no doubt; it was the projectile of cannon fire fired at us from over there, whether for war or to strike up a conversation it was unknown. In any case, Earth had not paid attention, given that everyone's suicide was already voted for.

The bullet or whatever it was, was used to make the clock from which the supreme hour was to chime. The cuckoo was a skeleton of that very ugly bird. Then it was wound. It did not sound the half hours or the quarters. Therefore it would sound for the first and last time at twelve.

Judas looked at Evelina with triumphant air at one minute to twelve. Among the commissioned there were already five or six dead from fear. The Spanish commissioner realised that he was going to miss the bullfight next Sunday (winter bulls were then as good as those of summer and viceversa) and he rose saying... that he preferred to withdraw and would retire. Adambis, smiling, warned him that it was useless, for his brain would explode just the same in the street as in the place of honour. The Spaniard sat, prepared to die bravely.

Clang! With a loud explosion the little door of the clock opened and the skeleton of the cuckoo appeared.

«Cuckoo, cuckoo!»

He cried six times, with long intervals of silence.

«One, two!»

The doctor counted.

Evelina Apple glanced then toward her husband with a look of anguish and somewhat distrustful.

The doctor smiled, and underneath the table he had

in front he took his wife's hand, Evelina clung to her husband like to a burning nail.

«Cuckoo!... Cuckoo!»

«Three!... Four!»

«Cuckoo! Cuckoo!»

«Five! Six!...» Adambis placed the index finger of his right hand upon the black button.

The international commissioners that still lived closed their eyes so as not to see what was going to happen, and were given up for dead.

However, the doctor had not yet pressed the button.

The fingertip, colour of used pipe²², remained without trembling brushing lightly the cold iron button's surface.

«Cuckoo! Cuckoo!»

«Seven! Eight!»

«Cuckoo! Cuckoo!»

«Nine! Ten!»

III

«Cuckoo!»

«Eleven!», Adambis solemnly exclaimed; and meanwhile the clock repeated.

«Cuckoo!»

Instead of saying «Twelve!», Judas became silent and pressed the black button.

The commissioners remained immobile in their respective seats. The doctor and his wife looked at one another: he pale and serious; she, pale as well, but also smiling.

«I confess to you», said Evelina, «that upon reaching the terrible moment, I feared that you would play me wrongly.» And she squeezed her husband's hand, to which she clung underneath the table.

«We are now alone in the world!», the doctor exclaimed in a deep bass voice, rapt.

«Don't you think that anyone else might have remained?...»

«Absolutely no one.»

Evelina drew near to her husband. That loneliness of the world was frightening.

«So that, therefore, all of these gentlemen...»

«Corpses. Come, come closer.»

«No, thank you!»

The doctor descended from his throne and approached the benches of the commissioners. None had moved. All were perfectly dead.

22. The colour of a used pipe (Translator's note: in Spanish Clarín uses the word 'culotada', which the editor explains in this note). Therefore, the fingertip was blackened.



«Future story»

«Most give signs of having succumbed before the discharge, from sheer terror. The same must have happened to many across the world.»

«How horrid!», cried Evelina, who had leaned out of a balcony, from which she withdrew running. Adambis looked at the street, and in the great plaza that circled the palace, he saw a tremendous spectacle, which he had not expected, and which was, however, most natural.

The crowd, close to 500,000 human beings that filled the grand circle of the plaza, forming a compact mass, tight, fleshy, were nothing more than an immense pile of corpses, almost all on their feet. A million open eyes, immobile, gazed with expressions of terror toward the balcony, whose banisters the doctor pressed with his clenched fingers. Almost every mouth was open as well. Only those in the last rows had fallen to the ground, in the intersections; upon these leaned others who had penetrated somewhat more into that sea of men, and further in there was nothing more than stiff corpses, standing, as though sewn to one another; many were still on the tips of their toes, with hands supported on the shoulders of those in front. There wasn't even one clearing in that plaza. Everything was a mass of dead flesh.

Balconies, windows, attics and rooftops were also clotted with corpses, and in the branches of some trees, and upon the pedestals of statues lay dead urchins, supine, or facedown, or hanged. The doctor felt terrible remorse: he had murdered the whole of humanity! Let it be said in his defence, he had worked in good faith when he proposed the universal suicide.

But his wife!... Evelina had him under her thumb.

The blond beauty was with the minority with regards to the suicide; not so much for fear of death, but to contradict her husband.

When she saw that the plan of everyone dying was in earnest, she had a row with her dear husband; at the hour of bedtime, and in her underwear, with her hair loose, she let him know what was what;²³ and sometimes crying, other times laughing, now proud, now humble, now sarcastically, now pitifully, she engaged the resources of her influence in order to compel her Judas to, if not retract from what he promised, then commit the felony of making an exception to that killing.

«Don't you have a way of saving you and me?...»

The doctor, even though he denied it at first, had to confess in the end that yes; that they could be saved, but only them.

Evelina did not have lovers; she was satisfied with saving herself, for her husband meant nothing to her.

Adambis, who was jealous, almost without reason, because his wife never went beyond just innocent flirting, experienced a great comfort upon thinking that he would be left alone with Evelina in the world.

Thanks to certain concoctions, the doctor isolated the deadly current; but, to test Evelina's faith, he did not want to anoint her with the saving ingredient, and forced her to trust in his word of honour. When the terrible moment arrived, Adambis, through the simple contact of their hands, communicated to his wife the virtue to free herself from the mortal shock that would end the human race.

Evelina was satisfied with her husband. But the notion of being left alone with him in the world was very boring.

«And how are we going to get out of here? Crossing that plaza is impossible; that wall of human flesh will impede us...»

The doctor smiled, he took from his jacket a little piece of very soft cloth; stretched it between his fingers, folded it several times and unfolded it, like someone who makes a little paper bird; the result was a regular polyhedron; through a hole in the cloth he blew several times; after placing a pill in his mouth, the polyhedron began to swell, turning into a sphere and reaching a diameter of two metres; it was a pocket balloon, very common furniture in that time.

«Ah!», said Evelina, «you have been thoughtful, you have brought the balloon. Then let us fly, and let's go far; because the spectacle of so many dead, among which there will be many acquaintances, does not please me.» The couple entered the balloon, which had everything necessary for the device's steering and for the comfort of two or three travellers inside.

And they flew.

They travelled far.

They were fleeing, without speaking to each other, from the earth in which they had been born.

Adambis knew that wherever they halted their flight they would find a cemetery. All of humanity dead, and because of him!

Evelina, when she calculated that they were already far from their country, voiced that they should descend. Her disgust, which did not amount to remorse, was limited to the spectacle of death in known lands... «Seeing foreign corpses did not scare her.» But the doctor did not feel the same. After his great crime (for that had been crime), he only found the air tolerable; not the ground. Floating among the clouds across the diaphanous blue sky... at least; but touching ground,

23. Translator's note: the Spanish here is 'le puso las peras a cuatro', which literally means to 'put him the pears to four', but which is meant to imply 'scolding'. Similar phrases in English might be to «read him the riot act», «give him an earful», «set him to rights», «fix his clock» or even to «teach him a lesson».



«Future story»

seeing the world without men... not that; he did not dare so much. «All dead! What horror!» The more the hours passed, the more Adambis's fear of the ground grew.

Evelina, leaning out of a little window in the balloon, was already contemplating the *landscape* distractedly. The fresh air animated her; a soft little wind, which played with the curls of her forehead, tickled her. «It wasn't bad there.»

But suddenly she remembered something. Turning to the doctor, she said:

«Boy, I'm hungry.»²⁴

The doctor, wordlessly, took out of his suit pocket a kind of case, and from this he took out a roll which resembled a pure cigar. It was a fifth food essence, invented by the doctor himself: With that *edible-cigar* two or three hours could be perfectly spent without any other food.

«No; I want to eat truly. Your chemical food stinks, and you know it. I don't eat in order to sustain the body; I eat to eat, for pleasure; the hunger I have is not satiated by eating, but by satisfying the palate; you understand me, I want to eat well. Let us descend to the ground; we will find provisions anywhere; the whole world is ours. Right now I crave to have the lunch or dinner prepared for the emperor and the Empress of Patagonia; there, steer toward Patagonia; go, and swiftly, full steam!...»

Adambis, pale from emotion, with trembling voice, to which he vainly attempted to give a tone of energy, dared to say:

«Evelina; you know... that I have always been a voluntary slave to your whims... but on this occasion... forgive me if cannot oblige you. I would first plunge myself head first from this balloon, than descend to the ground... to steal food from whichever of my victims. Murderer I was; but I will not be a thief.»

«Imbecile! Everything upon the earth is yours; you will be the first occupant...»

«Evelina, ask for something else. I will not go down.»

«And then... Will we die here from hunger?»

«Here you have my food cigars.»

«But, once they are finished?»

«With a bit of water and air, and two or three simple bodies, which I will seek in the highest places of some sparsely inhabited mountains, I will have enough to make the substance which is found in these extracts.»

«But that is very tasteless.»

«But it's enough to live.»

«And will we be forever be in the air?»

«I do not know how long. I will not go down.»

«Therefore I will not see the whole world? I will not seize all the treasures, all the museums, all the jewels, all the thrones of all the greats of the earth? Therefore is it in vain that I am the wife of the *Dictador in articulo murtis* of humanity? Therefore you have turned me into a little bird... after offering me the empire of the world?»

«I will not go down.»

«But, why? Imbecile!»

«Because I am afraid.»

«Of whom?»

«Of my conscience.»

«But, is there conscience?»

«Evidently.»

«Hadn't it been proven that conscience is an apprehension of organic matter in certain states of development?»

«Yes it had.»

«Well then?»

«But there is conscience.»

«And what does your conscience tell you?»

«It speaks to me of God.»

«Of God! Of what God?»

«I don't know! Of God.»

«You're *incapable*, dear. There is none to understand you. Explain yourself. Didn't you mock me because I *preached*, because I went to mass, because I sometimes went to confession? I was and am catholic, just like almost every lady in the world had become. But that did not prevent me from recognizing that you, just like almost every man of the world, must have your reasons for being an atheist and a rationalist, and you will remember that I never caused any disturbances for religious reasons.»

«It's true.»

«But, now, when it is least needed, here you come with conscience... and with God... And with good timing, when there is no one to absolve you because women cannot involve ourselves with that. You're a fool, Judas, I have always said so, you are a very foolish wise man.»

«Well, I will not go down.»

«Well, I will not smoke. I will not feed myself with that garbage you make. All of that must be poison in the long run. At least, man, let us descend where there would be no people..., in some region where there might be good fruit..., spontaneously, what do I know! You, who know everything, would know where there might be some. Lead.»

24. Translator's note: the Spanish here says 'Chico, tengo hambre' which would more aptly be translated as 'Man, I'm hungry', but this sounds even more modern than 'Boy, I'm hungry'.



«Future story»

«Would you be satisfied with that..., with good fruit?»

«For now... Yes, I can.»

Adambis remained pensive. He remembered that among modernist Bible commentators, both Catholics and Protestants, the geographic-theological problem of the place on earth that would hold Paradise had been approached, with great erudition and data compilation.

He, Adambis, did not believe in Paradise, but had followed the discussion in archaeological curiosity and had even joined, despite his belief that Paradise could not be anywhere, given that it had never existed. But it was true, hypothetically, supposing the data in Genesis accurate, and comparing it with modern discoveries made in Asia, that those who placed Adam's Garden in such a place were correct, and not those who put it elsewhere. Adambis's conclusion was: that «if Paradise existed, it would no doubt have been where Doctors A. and B. said, and not where the priests X. and Z. claimed.

His wife's words made him remember these famous discussions and his opinions of it. «If the Bible was right! If all of that had been true!» Who knows! Just in case, let us search.

And after thinking thus, he said loudly:

«Alright, Evelina, I will oblige you. I will seek that which you ask for: an uninhabited region that produces spontaneous and most delicate fruits.»

And the doctor continued thinking: «Assuming that Paradise exists and I find it, will it be what it was?

»Will God still be making it produce delicious fruits? Will it not have been somewhat damaged by the waters of the flood? What is indubitable, if the Bible tells true, is that no human being has ever put a foot there again. Those same wise men who have discussed where Paradise was haven't had the thought to specify the place, of going there, seeking it, as I will do.

»They said: it must have been toward this place, near that other; but they did not seek it. Maybe I will find it. And descending by balloon, though angels still be at the gate with fire swords, they will not impede my entrance.

»Oh, yes, let us search for Paradise! Paradise for me, because it will be the only deserted place on earth: that is to say, one that wasn't a cemetery; the only place where I will not find the horrible spectacle of dead and unburied humanity.»

Let us summarise. Searching, searching, from the air with a good spyglass, comparing his investigations with his memories of the famous theological-geographical discussion, Adambis arrived at a region

of Central Asia, where, either he deceived himself greatly, or what he sought was held. The first thing he felt was a satisfaction of self love... The theory of *his* people was true... Paradise existed and was there, where he believed it to be. The strange thing was that Paradise existed.

Self love in this sense was defeated.

And yet it wanted to defend itself by screaming in Judas' head:

«Look, in case you are mistaken! In case that is the large garden of some Chinese Mandarin or of a Pasha-Nine-Tails...»

The landscape was delicious; the foliage, like such that Adambis had ever seen.

When he doubted thus, suddenly Evelina, who also observed with a pair of theatre glasses, cried:

«Ah, Judas, Judas! A gentleman is walking through that field..., very tall, yes, looks tall..., with a white robe... with ample beard, white as well...»

«By Jove!», exclaimed the doctor, who felt a mortal chill.

And directing his spyglass toward the place Evelina pointed at he said with terror-filled voice:

«There is no doubt..., it's him. Him, rather!»

«But, who?»

«Yahweh Elhoim! Jehovah! The Lord God! The God of our elders!...»

IV

The author of this farce needs, upon reaching this point of his narration, to interrupt it, even if he regrets it and it annoys, in plain words, those Pleiades of young naturalists in plain words, who cannot stand seeing authors personality appear in the novel, or short story, or whatever it is, without being disgusted. I, in good will, would continue being as *objective* as I've been up to this point; but I have no other choice but to bring out my humble personality, though it be a sin against every canon and *False Decretals* of naturalism translated to the *culga-puck* (the people's universal tongue).²⁵

These naturalist beardless Pleiades (and I do not say Pleiad in singular, because Pleiades does not have nor cannot have a singular, even though the majority of our journalists forget it) will forgive

25. Clarín is laughing at naturalist aesthetic which imposes the absolute neutrality of the narrator and his complete absence from the text. Although Leopoldo Alas, Emilia Pardo Bazán o Galdós felt close at some point of their journey to Zola's school, they always showed their independence and maintained a critic stance in front of French naturalist postulates.

«Future story»



me; but on presenting upon stage nothing less than *Deus ex machina* of the *Bible*, I need to make some statements.

Painting Jehovah (he is called thus by the common people) such as he is, without *idealising* him or any of that, is the chief enterprise of my efforts, because I have never seen him.

Wise men argue whether Moses himself was able to see Him face to face; some claim that he only enjoyed His presence once; but I, without being wise, lean toward those who believe that neither Moses nor anyone else ever saw Him. The matter of feeling the Holy Spirit that passes by, the divine wind that wounds the face, etc., etc., is another thing. That is possible.

It would be easier for me, once Jehovah enters the scene, to make it so that His character *is sustained* from beginning to end, as preceptists, who by the way are hacks, ask of playwrights and novelists. In order to sustain the character of Jehovah I only need biblical documents, for in them it is seen that His energy doesn't decay not even one moment and that there are no contradictions in it; because having made the world, and regretting it later, is not a contradiction, in any case, if we wanted to go there, consider Cánovas²⁶, who first was a revolutionary and later repented, and yet Cánovas' energy is beyond dispute. And I am happy for having mentioned this character, because if you want to question Jehovah, according to how the *Bible* presents Him, an equal, the greatest that will be found in history, in order to have a notion of the Biblical *Zeus*, it will be that, Cánovas, the *Málaga Feus*.²⁷

And now I have to make myself understood with the religiously timid and scrupulous, who perhaps would want to see flashes of impiety in my story. There is no such impiety; first and chiefly, because it is only a joke, and I don't want to prove anything here, nor overthrow Peter's Church, nor even end the abuses of the Madrid clergy. Nor am I a clergyman of *El Resumen*, nor a writer for *Las Dominicales*, nor is that the purpose. Not wanting to, neither am I like the author of *Namouna*²⁸, a worshiper of Christ and also Ahura-Mazda and Brahma and Apis

and Vishnu,²⁹ etc., etc. These religious eclecticism have not been made for me. What I can swear to is that I respect Jehovah, however way it's written, as much as anyone, and that in this story I do not aspire to replace our elder's religion by another of my own invention. To show this respect properly, I leave out naturalist proceedings, and instead of introducing the new character working and talking, as good rhetoric demands, I will pass, as upon embers, over everything which refers to his communications with Adambis, my hero, employing an indirect narration and not a direct and plastic description.

I hasten to say that the robe that Evelina thought to have seen hanging from the shoulders of He who wandered through that Paradise meadow, shouldn't be such a robe, or the beard, a beard; but you well know that women materialise everything.³⁰

The fact is that it was Jehovah, effectively, and that he was wandering through that Paradise meadow, like He did every afternoon when the weather was good; a custom that had remained since the days of Adam.

Adambis, stunned by the presence of the Lord, whom he did not doubt, for if He was a man like all the rest He would have died at noon, Adambis, full of terror and embarrassment, let go of the reins... of the balloon, as if to say; that is, he stepped on the breaks, or in another way, allowed the machine that steered the aerostat to breakdown, and the balloon began to descend rapidly and became tangled with the branches of a tree.

Evelina screamed, frightening Paradise's birds, which flew in large circles around the unexpected travellers.

The Lord raised His head upon hearing so much noise, and seeing the commotion, rushed to save the castaways of the air.

In the presence of Jehovah, doctor Judas remained silent and ashamed. Evelina stared at the Lord with curiosity, but without astonishment. Encountering a personal God unexpectedly, seemed to her as natural, as a mathematical demonstration that God did not exist would have seemed to her. What she wanted was to have something to drink.

Following what has been said, I abstain from copying here the dialogue that took place between Jehovah and the wise from Mozambique. But the substance of it shall be said.

29. Gods from various religions are named here: Ahura-Mazda, principle of goodness in primitive Persian religion; Brahma, supreme god of the Hindu pantheon and giver of life; Apis, living representation of the Egyptian Ptah whose image was that of a bull; and Vishnu, preserver of the universe.

30. Translator note: This is a pun, playing on the perception that women are materialistic.

26. The most prominent politician of the Spanish Bourbon Restoration. Antonio Cánovas del Castillo was born in Málaga in 1897. He passed through the redaction of *La Patria* and published articles in *Las Novedades*. He was the founder of the Liberal Party, representative of the conservative tendencies of the society of the Restoration.

27. Translator note: Here Clarín is making a pun by combining the Greek god 'Zeus' and the word 'feo' (ugly).

28. *Namouna* is a poem by French Romantic poet and playwright Alfred de Musset (1810-1857).



«Future story»

The Lord did not take advantage, as Jupiter might have done, or *The Future Century*³¹, of His situation, which gave Him an incontestable superiority. No barbs, and much less any sarcasms. He knew too well that Adambis, ever since he studied comparative anatomy, had spent his life denying the possibility of a personal God. Both of them knew this. Why speak of it?

Judas believed in the need to humiliate himself and confess his error. But Jehovah, with a delicacy never attained by the Necedales³² in their beatings to *The Union*, made the conversation change course.

What's done, is done. The issue now was remaking humanity for a second time. The thing with Adam had turned out wrong; the flood remedy had not worked; maybe the problem was in leaving so many relatives alive; a world that begins with —in-laws cannot work out for the better. Besides, the first thing that Noah did, once the storm passed, was get drunk... Jehovah expected more formality from Judas Adambis. Judas had ended humanity... No problem. Little had been lost.

Pessimism was the foolishness Elhoim could stand the least; humanity had become pessimistic...; it was well dead. Now it was a matter of another attempt: Adambis was going to repopulate the world, and if that new offspring turned out bad as well, then no more retries; the world would be left fallow for now.

The marriage of Adambis and Evelina had been up to that point infertile; but with the waters of Paradise, Jehovah promised that fertility would visit the home of that lady.

«You will not be innocent», said Jehovah, «because that can't be anymore. But this very thing suits me. Innocent and all, Adam did what he did. You, Mr. Adambis, are a true wise man, in spite of your theological errors, and I want to see whether supreme malice is an advantage over supreme innocence. From today onwards the two of you take in lease all of this most enjoyable garden. The rent you will pay will be your good deeds. Everything you see is yours.»

«Absolutely everything?» exclaimed Evelina.

And Jehovah, although with other words, said:

«Yes, lady..., with no other exceptions except an... insignificant one. I set the condition... the same I set

to the other one. This apple tree, which in another time was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that now is nothing more than an apple tree of the respectable class of those that produce delicious Valsain apples, is not to be touched. By eating those apples you will know neither more nor less than you do now, nor will you be like gods, nor anything like that. If Satan shows himself again and tries to tempt this lady, pay no attention to him. Like this apple tree, there are dozens throughout Paradise. But I have my reasons, and I don't want you to touch this tree. If you eat these apples... it starts again; I will throw you out, you will have to work, this lady will give birth with pains, etc., etc. In essence, you know the program well. I say no more.»

And Jehovah Elohim disappeared.

And I am almost glad, because now I can copy the dialogue textually.

Evelina shrugged her shoulders and said:

«You, Judas, what do you think of all this?»

«Imagine!»

«Brave wise man you were. See how well I did in going to mass, just in case. You are a fool, who almost condemned us both. Luckily, the Lord seems very amiable...»

«Oh! Infinite Kindness...»

«Yes, but...»

«The Highest Good...»

«Yes, but...»

«Infinite wisdom...»

«Yes, but...»

«But what, girl?»

«But somewhat strange.»

«And as strange as He is the only one.»

«No, I do not mean strange in that sense, but in that... To think of forbidding us from eating those apples as though we were children!...»

«And we will not eat.»

«Of course not, man. Don't get angry. That's why I say He is strange. What does it cost us to ascribe to formalities and, chastened, to dispense with a few apples that are just like the rest?»

«Look, let's not get into that. God is God, right?, and what He makes, is well made.»

«But agree that it's a whim.»

«I agree to nothing, nor do you; I forbid you from further blasphemy. For the moment, think no more of apples..., for the devil carries them.»

«What is he to carry, wretch! I am good By the way, I'm thirsty..., I want of that, of that... of fruit..., of apples precisely, and from Valsain.»

«Woman!»

31. Translator note: The publication called *The Future Century* (*El Siglo Futuro*). This was a Catholic fundamentalist newspaper.

32. Throughout the entire paragraph Clarín makes references to catholic conservatives. One of the most significant was Cándido Necedal, who proposed Christian solutions for any civil or political issue. He published enraged articles against progressives and liberals in publications of the time such as *El Padre Cobos*, *La Constancia* or *El Siglo Futuro*.



«Future story»

«Simpleton! Didn't He say there are dozens of that class? Well let us search for another selfsame tree, that I may satiate myself. Do you know Valsain?»

«Yes, Evelina. (*He searches.*) Here is another tree similar to the forbidden one. Here. You see what a beautiful apple? Real Valsain.»

Evelina buried her tight white teeth into the apple her husband offered her.

While Judas turned his back and searched for another specimen of that beautiful fruit, a voice, like a whistle, screamed in Evelina's ear.

«That's not Valsain!»

She took the warning as an inner voice, revealed by her palate, and yelled angrily:

«Look, Judas, you cannot fool me. This is not Valsain!»

A cold sweat, like the one in novels, flooded Adam-bis' body.

«Now we're in for it», he thought. «If Evelina starts to mistrust... there won't be a Valsain in all of Paradise!»

Thus it was... The fruit of a hundred trees was plucked, and the voice always screamed in his wife's ear:

«That is not Valsain!»

«Don't tire yourself, Judas», she said fatigued. «There aren't any more Valsain apples in all of Paradise except those on the forbidden tree.»

There was a pause.

«Well girl...», Adam-bis dared to say, «you see... there is no other remedy... If you are set on the thought that there are none but those..., you will have to make do without them.»

«Fine, sir, fine; I'll make do! But that is no way of saying it.»

The same voice from before screamed in Evelina's ear:

«You will not make do!»

«Another man might be... more loving than you. Of course, a wise man doesn't know what passion is...»

«What do you mean, Evelina?...»

«That Adam, even being Adam, was a more dutiful lover than you.»

«Let us have the party in peace, and give up the Valsains.»

«Fine! Well you... since you prefer to comply to the whims of Him whom you denied an hour ago, than satisfying your wife's wish..., you, idiot, can give up the other.»

«What's the other?»

«Have we not been told I will be fertile from now on?»

«Yes, girl; I was just going to mention that...»

«Well there is no need. No fertility here.»

«But, dear...»

«No, I don't want it.»

«Like that, exactly!» said the voice that spoke in Evelina's ear.

She turned around and saw the devil in serpent form, coiled around the trunk of the forbidden tree.

Evelina contained herself from crying out, a sign of the devil, who understood perfectly; she faced her husband and told him smilingly:

«Well look, honey; if you want us to be friends, run off and fish me some trout from that river that winds through down there...»

«Most lovingly...»

And the wise man disappeared in all haste.

Evelina and the serpent remained alone.

«I imagine you must be the devil... like that other time.»

«Yes, lady; but believe you me: you must eat of these apples and make your husband eat. I don't say that afterwards you will be the same as gods; nor none of that. But the woman who doesn't know how to impose her will upon the matrimony, is lost. If you both eat, you will lose Paradise; so what? Outside you have all the riches of the civilized world at your disposal... Here you will do nothing else but get bored and give birth...»

«How horrible!»

«And that for an eternity...»

«Jesus! God-willing not. Come, come»; and Evelina approached the tree, plucked one, two, three apples, and bit into them with the appetite of a hungry beast.

The snake vanished, and soon Adam-bis returned... without the trout. «Forgive me, my dear, but in this river... there isn't any trout...»

«Evelina wrapped her arms around her husband's neck.»

He allowed her.

A cloud of voluptuousness enveloped them then.

When the doctor dared to request more intimate caresses, Evelina placed before his mouth half of the apple she'd already bitten, and smiling a smile capable of seducing Sakyamuni³³, she said:

«Then eat...»

«*Vade retro!*»³⁴, cried Judas, jumping backwards to save himself. «What have you done, you wretch?»

«Eaten, forsaken myself... So now forsake yourself with me, eat... and I will make you happy... my beloved Judas...»

33. Hindus call pious men who are free of passions this. Inspired poets and Buda himself, who is referenced here, are also called this.

34. Translator Note: The entire phrase is 'vade retro Satana', Latin for 'Get thee back, Satan'.



«Future story»

«I'd rather be hanged first. No, madam, I won't eat. I won't forsake myself. You don't know how Jehovah is. I won't eat.»

Evelina became irritated and left in vain. Pleading did not help, nor threats, nor temptations. Judas did not eat.

Thus they spent that day and night, arguing like madmen. But Judas did not eat the fruit of the forbidden tree.

The next day, very early, Jehovah appeared in the garden.

«How are you, have you eaten well?» He came to ask.

In the end, there were explanations. Jehovah learned everything.

«Then you know what the punishment is...», he said, without troubling Himself, «Leave this place, and go earn your life...»

«Lord», interjected Adambis, «I must inform your Divine Majesty that I have not eaten of the forbidden fruit... Therefore, exile does not apply to me.»

«What? You will let me walk alone?» she cried furiously.

«Believe it. This is as far as we go. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.»³⁵

«Therefore», said the Lord, «what you want is a divorce... *quo ad thorum et habitationem.*»³⁶

«Fair enough, that; *the separation of bodies*, as us classicists say.»

«But then humanity will end upon the death of your wife...; that is to say, there won't be any other men but you..., who alone cannot procreate», said Jehovah.

«Well let it end. I want to remain here.»

And effectively, Adambis remained in Paradise.

And Evelina left, dragged out by two guarding angels.

I refuse to describe the fury of the scorned wife upon finding herself alone outside Paradise. History doesn't say much of her except that she lived alone for some time as she could. One legend supposes she succumbed to the ugly vice of Parsifal, and another more plausible one tells that she ended delivering her charms to the devil.

Regarding prudent Adambis, he remained, for now, as though in glory, in Paradise.

«Now this is Paradise! Twice Paradise! All mine, all... minus my wife!... What happiness!...»

Centuries and centuries passed, and Adambis tired of the amenable garden. He tried suicide several times, but it was useless. He was immortal. He asked God to be taken, and Judas was transported from Earth, just like Enoch³⁷ and some others had once been.

And that was how, *in the end*, the world ended, as far as concerns men.

35. Translator Note: The phrase in Spanish says 'There's no tus tus for an old dog', which the editor of the collection explains as a form of calling a dog.

36. Separation implies fleeing from house and home. A divorce, then, in all sense.

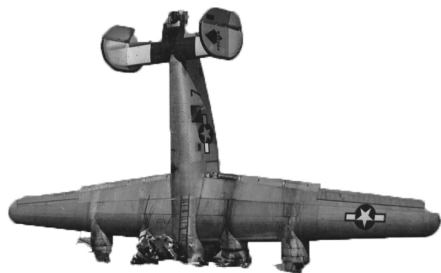
37. The prophet Enoch is among Adam's descendants and it was to him that the science of numbers was revealed.



«Future story»

LEOPOLDO ALAS, «CLARÍN» (1852-1901).

We cannot assert that among Clarín's the vast short story production his fantastic literature stories are the most numerous. For the most part, satire and moral reflection are the dominant tones that tend to be framed in contemporary landscapes. Despite this, imaginative elements are not unusual in many of them. However, it must be made clear that Clarín does not cease to vex the Spanish society of his time or reflect upon the human condition and its meaning. Among the publications of the decade of the eighties it is fitting to cite *La mosca sabia* [*The Wise Fly*], a fable against marriage full, like «Cuento futuro» [«Future Story»], of misogyny, and which tell of the conversations between the wise insect and his friend in the insect's room; *El doctor Pertinax* [*Pertinax the Doctor*], in which an unbelieving philosopher travels to heaven; *El Diablo en Semana Santa* [*The Devil at Easter*], where a demon makes his apparition in a church provoking desire between a priest and a young woman; *Kant, perro viejo* [*Kant, Old Dog*], a story of a poor animal who is cuckolded by his mate; *Mi entierro* (*Discurso de un loco*) [*My Burial (A Madman's Discourse)*], a narration of an unbalanced man who the reader doesn't know whether he is delirious or is truly buried; and finally, «Cuento futuro» [«Future Story»], Clarín's original contribution to Spanish science fiction literature.



During the following decade, the imaginative elements become lessened and the allegorical ones increase; although there are other stories that possess some fantastic features: *Diálogo edificante* [*Edifying Dialogue*], *Leon Benavides, Vario* [*Various*], *El frío del Papa* [*The Pope's Cold*], *La noche-mala del Diablo* [*The Devil's Bad-Night*], *El pecado original* [*The Original Sin*], *El gallo de Sócrates* [*Socrates' Rooster*], *Nuevo contrato* [*New Contract*], *Tirso de Molina*, *El cristo de la Vega... de Rivadeo* [*The Christ of la Vega... of Rivadeo*] and *El oso mayor* [*The Greater Bear*]. Perhaps the most significant quality in them would be the use, occasionally poetic, of Christian motifs and Greco-Latin culture. This trait is one of the characteristics of the period since neither Clarín, Galdós, Fernández Bremón or Pardo Bazán seldom appeal to the fantastic topics that were fashionable to the Romantics. For realistic or naturalist narrators, such as Clarín, fantasy spreads its roots on Biblical tradition or on classic mythology, never on the apparitions or ghosts that filled the pages of the Spanish press since the first half of the century.

«Transrealismo, lisergia y un aire para laúd»

Crítica de Santiago L. Moreno

U no se pone a hablar de Philip K. Dick y no acaba nunca. Siempre hay algo que decir sobre el autor y su obra. El libro en el que se centra esta reseña es sumamente importante en su carrera, notable en el orden literario y crucial en lo personal. *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía* (*Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, 1974), cuyo título procede de una obra para laúd compuesta por John Dowland en el siglo XVI por la que Dick sentía devoción, es una de las tres únicas novelas premiadas del escritor; consiguió el John W. Campbell Memorial en 1975 y fue nominada a los dos premios grandes de la ciencia ficción, el Nebula y el Hugo. En sus páginas, el chicagüense ahonda en sus obsesiones de siempre, la realidad alterada, la falibilidad de la percepción y la duda sobre la identidad. Es, debido a su calidad intrínseca, una de las novelas dickianas más reseñables, pero antes de pasar a desgranar su contenido narrativo se hace obligado mencionar algo de su contexto, la trascendencia que éste tuvo en la degradación mental de Dick, la persona.

En noviembre de 1971, Philip K. Dick denunció un robo en su vivienda de Santa Venetia. Buscando un motivo para lo que no suele tenerlos, su desquiciada mente hiló teorías conspirativas que tenían



**Fluyan mis lágrimas,
dijo el policía**
Philip K. Dick

Editorial: Minotauro, 2011
Trad.: Domingo Santos
272 páginas



«Transrealismo, lisergia y un aire para laúd»

que ver con sus escritos. Según cuenta Emmanuel Carrère en la biografía que escribió sobre el norteamericano, Dick pensó que la causa del hurto podía estar escondida en las páginas de *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía*, una novela que había abandonado hacía un tiempo y en cuya historia, comenzaba a creer, debían de encontrarse datos o hechos coincidentes con la realidad. Le habían llegado rumores de que los efectos de la droga que aparecía en la novela asemejaban los producidos por un derivado del LSD con el que experimentaba la CIA. Y no sólo eso. Pensando en ello, empezaba a darse cuenta de que el presidente de los EE.UU. y el país distópico que describía en el libro podían guardar similitudes con Richard Nixon y sus secretos planes de futuro, planes de tintes comunistas.

Si esto suena perturbador, lo siguiente va unos grados más allá. En el texto de un discurso que fue invitado a dar en la Universidad de Missouri y el cual tituló «Cómo construir un universo que no se derrumbe en dos días» (discurso que en realidad no llegó a dar y que fue publicado como ensayo años después de su fallecimiento), Dick detalla las numerosas coincidencias que su novela guarda con sucesos reales acaecidos posteriormente y —esto es lo más gordo— con acontecimientos descritos en la *Biblia*, concretamente en los *Hechos de los Apóstoles*, cuyo contenido él decía no conocer. De todo esto, Dick extrajo la conclusión de que el tiempo no es como creemos, que alternamos dos realidades, la convencional y otra radicada justo tras la muerte de Cristo. Ésa fue la tesis que, potenciada por el conocido suceso epifánico del colgante piscis, defendió en la convulsa conferencia de Metz en la cual se destapó su locura.

Ante estos episodios hay que concluir que *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía* es, al margen de su contenido literario, un libro fundamental, decisivo en la biografía de Dick. Pero, a pesar de ello, no hay que buscar en él los motivos de su locura. Quien acometa la lectura de esta novela con la intención de desentrañar algún tipo de misterio causal, de encontrar la fuente de los desvaríos de su autor, quedará decepcionado. En sus páginas no va a encontrar otra cosa que una de esas extrañas historias escritas por el gran ilusionista de las realidades impostadas, una trama de ciencia ficción que, como la mayoría de las imaginadas por el autor, va a introducir en la mente de quien la lee, de una forma tan efectiva como poco ortodoxa, la desorientación del protagonista y sus dudas sobre la solidez del mundo perceptible.

Quien acometa la lectura de esta novela con la intención de desentrañar algún tipo de misterio causal, de encontrar la fuente de los desvaríos de su autor, quedará decepcionado. En sus páginas no va a encontrar otra cosa que una de esas extrañas historias escritas por el gran ilusionista de las realidades impostadas [...]

En esta novela vuelve a apreciarse una de las más extrañas características con las que cuenta la escritura de Dick, esa gran capacidad para interesar al lector y traspasarle la sensación de haber leído un buen libro a pesar de haber utilizado para ello fundamentos literarios más bien pobres. Incluso dentro del género de la ciencia ficción, generalmente permisivo con este tipo de cuestionamientos, existe el convencimiento (al igual que ocurre con Isaac Asimov) de que Dick no fue un buen literato. No posee un gran vocabulario, no se sirve de tropos floridos y tampoco estructura correctamente sus libros. Esta novela, al igual que otras muchas, está construida de una manera rara, dislocada. Comienza con un pasaje que parece crucial y que no tiene incidencia en el desenlace de la historia. Distintos personajes se rifan el protagonismo, apoderándose unos y otros de distintos momentos de la narración sin un claro motivo. Ideas y subtramas antes ausentes aparecen y cambian el ritmo de la historia de un momento a otro, y hay un epílogo a modo de ¿qué fue de...? seguramente prescindible. Y sin embargo, todo parece tener sentido durante la lectura.

Las primeras páginas del libro tienen como personaje central a Jason Taverner, un famoso *showman*



«Transrealismo, lisergia y un aire para laúd»

televisivo que presenta un programa de variedades de gran audiencia. Una admiradora despechada lo ataca una noche arrojándole una criatura que hunde sus pseudópodos en su pecho. Taverner se desvanece y despierta en un universo que no parece ser el suyo. Nadie recuerda su existencia, carece de documentación y ni siquiera consta en las bases de datos de la policía. A mitad de novela, la responsabilidad de la narración se traslada al comisario de policía Felix Buckman, quien mantiene una relación incestuosa con su hermana y tiene la responsabilidad de atrapar al hombre inexistente. El desenlace, la explicación de lo que le ha pasado a Taverner, no guarda relación alguna con la desequilibrada admiradora del principio, sino con una droga que ha consumido —y he aquí lo inconfundiblemente dickiano— otra persona.

Con respecto a esa heterodoxia, Kim Stanley Robinson, cuya tesis doctoral versó sobre las novelas de Philip K. Dick, afirma que si éste no llegó a encabezar la *New Wave* fue porque sus propuestas eran bastante más extremas que las del innovador movimiento. Como he mencionado antes, las narraciones de Dick no son uniformes, y gustaba de introducir alguna que otra extravagancia en medio de ellas, como por ejemplo los párrafos en alemán y las líneas teatrales intercaladas en el texto de *Una mirada a la oscuridad* (*A Scanner Darkly*, 1977),

Puede llegarse a la conclusión de que Dick escribe las novelas por impulsos y que todo esto parte de un proceso negligente, no deliberado, pero si se mira el resultado final [...], la impresión es la de haber leído una obra tan fascinante como audaz.

pero donde realmente se rebela contra la ortodoxia es en el contenido de sus historias. La aparición del rostro equivocado en una moneda exige al lector de *Ubik* hacer un esfuerzo e ir más allá de toda lógica. En *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía* Dick propone una idea absolutamente audaz e inesperada. Es la historia de alguien que trastoca la realidad, pero no contada desde el punto de vista del sujeto, sino de otra persona que aún recuerda la originaria y no sabe nada del cambio.

Los relatos de Dick ponen a prueba la mimesis aristotélica. El elemento fantástico no actúa sobre su propio universo ficticio siguiendo una pauta lógica, no sigue una coherencia identificable con la realidad. El estilo con el que Dick elabora sus historias contamina la zona perceptiva con la que el lector juzga la relación entre el universo narrado y el real. Por ejemplo, si un individuo se droga, debería afectarle sólo a él, no a otra persona; o en todo caso, a su realidad, no a la de los demás. Pero así ocurre, sin embargo, en esta novela. Dick obvia ese pacto de verosimilitud, lo cual incrementa la sensación de irrealidad en el lector, pero a costa de estirar peligrosamente la suspensión de incredulidad. Si se coloca el foco sobre el autor puede llegarse a la conclusión de que Dick escribe las novelas por impulsos, según se le van ocurriendo, y que todo esto parte de un proceso negligente, no deliberado, pero si se mira el resultado final y se hace caso exclusivamente al libro, la impresión que se obtiene es la de haber leído una obra tan fascinante como audaz.

En cuanto a su contenido, esta novela presenta muchas de las recurrencias habituales en la obra de Dick. Al igual que en libros anteriores, el humor viene dado por la franqueza de los personajes, los cuales, lejos de sorprenderse ante las increíbles implicaciones de lo que van descubriendo, las asimilan con normalidad, actitud que produce un efecto risible en ciertos diálogos. Es significativo que el pasaje más cómico de la novela ocurra precisamente durante la explicación del misterio (p. 244), como si el propio Dick se riera de lo que propone. Por otra parte, la droga, elemento muy común en la obra dickiana, juega aquí un papel fundamental como elemento distorsionador, no sólo de la realidad, sino también del propio devenir de los personajes. La droga dispara la trama (el bicho tentacular con el que es atacado Tavernier), es la causante del misterio (a través de Alys, la hermana adicta de Buckman) y conforma la sociedad paralela en la que despierta el protagonista.



«Transrealismo, lisergia
y un aire para laúd»

El cruce de realidades que
Dick desarrolla en este libro
lo incluye a la par en los
subgéneros de la ucronía y la
distopía.

Al igual que en novelas anteriores, Dick vuelve a evidenciar su preocupación por aquello que determina la cualidad humana. *Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía* muestra en primera lectura puntos en común con *¿Sueñan los androides con ovejas eléctricas?* (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, 1968). Hay coches voladores (sutiles en la traducción), se hace referencia a colonias marcianas, el protagonista es un seis (un ser humano genéticamente modificado) y hay muñecos llamados Risueño Charly de cuyos labios sale la verdad como si de un oráculo se tratara, pero el mayor punto de contacto entre ambas obras se encuentra en el diálogo que mantienen los hermanos Alys y Félix. El cruce dialéctico que mantienen en la comisaría (el mismo lugar en el que sucede en la novela que dio origen a *Blade Runner*) profundiza en la cuestión de qué nos hace humanos. Alys se cuenta entre los adictos que se han sometido a una intervención quirúrgica cerebral. En ella se les extirpan los centros responsables de los sentimientos humanos, con excepción de los procesadores del placer, lo cual revierte en una significativa falta de empatía. Esta circunstancia da pie a una interesante conversación que deja constancia de la gran importancia que le da Dick a quienes piensan y sienten de forma distinta al resto.

Hay otro aspecto relevante en la novela y que tiene mucho que ver con el género al que pertenece. Sin llegar a las cotas de significación presentes en *El hombre en el castillo* (*The Man in the High Castle*, 1962), el cruce de realidades que Dick desarrolla en este libro lo incluye a la par en los subgéneros de la ucronía y la distopía. La línea temporal paralela a la que es desplazado Jason Taverner aparece casi siempre en segundo plano, al fondo de la trama principal, pero los detalles que deja entrever de ese mundo (y del que él mismo proviene) son terribles. Hay campos de trabajo forzado para quienes delinquen, pero también para los estudiantes, que están reclusos en diversos campus ahora vallados, convertidos en hordas hambrientas. Todos los ciudadanos se drogan, un hecho homologado por el Estado y controlado por medio de cartillas selladas. Y lo más terrible: casi toda la raza negra ha sido asesinada o esterilizada, conducida hasta el borde del exterminio. Que Dick llegara a creer que podía haber puntos en común entre esos EE.UU. ficticios y los planes de Richard Nixon da cuenta de su estado mental.

Fluyan mis lágrimas, dijo el policía sólo ha dejado huella entre los aficionados a la ciencia ficción. Lógico por una parte, puesto que su temática y

«Transrealismo, lisergia y un aire para laúd»

la presencia de algunas manías internas entroncan directamente con lo que se suele encontrar en el género. Por ejemplo, Dick menciona de pasada grandes títulos de la literatura universal como *En busca del tiempo perdido* o *Finnegan's Wake*, pero se limita a citarlos sin profundizar en ellos, como para, mediante su presencia, darle una pátina de distinción al texto. Sin embargo, junto a este tipo de añagazas pueden encontrarse pasajes de gran profundidad, como el que recoge el extraordinario diálogo que mantienen Tavernier y la adolescente Ruth Rae sobre la naturaleza del amor y el correspondiente dolor:

Uno ama a alguien, y de pronto desaparece. Viene a casa un día, comienza a hacer las maletas, y dices: «¿Qué sucede?». Y te contesta: «Tengo una oferta mejor de otra persona». Y se va.

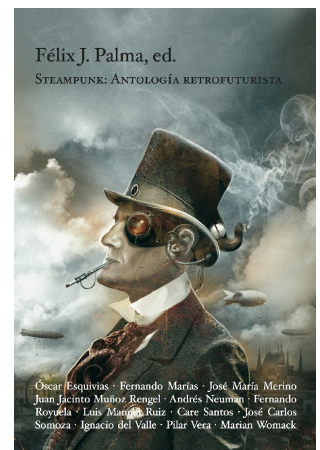
En ese mismo orden, el extraño capítulo 27, verdadero final del libro si obviamos el innecesario epílogo, se beneficia de un marcado tono intimista. Como ocurre también en muchos momentos de *Una mirada a la oscuridad*, da la sensación de que es el propio Philip K. Dick y no el personaje de la novela quien reflexiona ante al lector. Las lamentaciones de Félix Buckman por la muerte de su hermana parecen una transposición de las suyas por el temprano fallecimiento de su gemela, un hecho trágico que atormentó al escritor norteamericano durante toda su vida. El nivel de profundidad que consigue imprimir en gran parte de su producción de los años 70, no sólo en esta novela, se debe principalmente al carácter autobiográfico que vuelca en ella. Las obras escritas en esa década representan, sin duda alguna, la cima literaria del autor.

Treinta años después de su muerte, Philip K. Dick se ha convertido en un autor muy popular. Hasta hace poco se aseguraba que eran dos los grandes temas de la literatura, el amor y la muerte. Yo diría que tras Dick y su puesta en duda de la realidad, ese número ha aumentado a tres. ●



«El retrofuturismo literario»

En torno a *Steampunk: Antología retrofuturista*.



Steampunk:
Antología retrofuturista
Félix J. Palma (ed.)

Editorial: Fábulas de Albión, 2012
322 páginas

Crítica de Mariano Martín Rodríguez.

Traductor y miembro asociado del Centro de Investigaciones Literarias y Enciclopédicas (Centrul de Cercetări Literare și Enciclopedice) de la Universidad Babeș-Bolyai (Cluj-Napoca, Rumanía)

En el contexto de la literatura especulativa española contemporánea, varias antologías han desempeñado un papel crucial a la hora de configurar un género determinado, al menos entre los aficionados a la narrativa de la «imaginación razonada», como escribió el maestro Borges para designar las ficciones fantásticas que siguieran un desarrollo no escandaloso para la razón¹. Estas antologías son de dos tipos

1. Desde este punto de vista, «la confrontación problemática entre lo real y lo imposible» que caracteriza la literatura fantástica, según David Roas (*Tras los límites de lo real. Una definición de lo fantástico*, Madrid, Páginas de Espuma, 2011, p. 14) y otros teóricos, no entraría en la esfera de la literatura especulativa designada por el célebre sintagma borgiano. En la literatura fantástica, la vacilación entre lo real y la irrupción de un mundo posible alternativo se suele acabar resolviendo en una ambigüedad que sí suspende el ejercicio de la razón. En cambio, las ficciones de terror en que los entes monstruosos persiguen provocar el espanto, pero que actúan como seres realmente existentes en el universo posible generado por el texto, de acuerdo con unas leyes ficcionales

principales. Algunas se publicaron como recapitulaciones de una tradición ya consolidada y pretendían fijar, al menos implícitamente, un canon. Entre ellas, destacan la *Antología de la ciencia ficción española 1982-2002* (Barcelona, Minotauro, 2003) y *Prospectivas. Antología del cuento de ciencia ficción española actual* (Madrid, Salto de Página, 2012), sobre todo por los panoramas que constituyen los

fijas (recuérdense los dispositivos y rituales para acabar con los vampiros, por ejemplo), sí pueden considerarse especulativas, porque ahí la imaginación se desarrolla disciplinadamente. Aunque esas leyes no sean las naturales exploradas por la ciencia y explotadas por la ficción científica como género especulativo hoy hegemónico, sino otras de origen mítico, no por ello dejan de regir el mundo imaginario descrito, garantizando su coherencia. Este hecho tal vez explique la consideración frecuente de los mitos lovecraftianos dentro del macrogénero de la ciencia ficción, al igual que determinadas historias que explotan conceptos teológicos (por ejemplo, «El infierno es la ausencia de Dios» [«Hell is the Absence of God», 2001], de Ted Chiang). Tal clasificación obedece a la ampliación de la ciencia ficción desde su campo propio para englobar toda la literatura especulativa.



«El retrofuturismo literario»

prólogos de sus editores, Julián Díez y Fernando Ángel Moreno, respectivamente. Ambas aparecieron en un momento en que la ciencia ficción estaba bien asentada y definida en España y en que cabía mirar hacia atrás con la seguridad relativa de que existía tanto un corpus amplio del que partir como una conciencia pública de la existencia del género como tal en el país. En cambio, el otro tipo de antologías se sitúa, en general, en el período de reivindicación de la nueva clase de ficciones, cuando éstas ya se cultivan y hasta han producido obras de mérito, pero aún no han alcanzado la masa crítica suficiente como para constituir una manifestación literaria distintiva y respetable en la república literaria. Se trata de antologías *ad hoc* en las que una serie de escritores, consagrados o no, aunque pertenecientes en general todos al mismo grupo generacional, proponen textos inéditos, en los que cultivan conscientemente el género que se intenta promover y cuya calidad ha de convencer a los lectores del interés del mismo. Naturalmente, esa calidad es muy variable y no guarda el nivel medio que se puede conseguir en una antología recapitulativa si el responsable de ella conoce su trabajo. En las antologías *ad hoc* conviven lo mejor, aquello que saca pleno partido de los rasgos peculiares del nuevo modo literario, con las obrillas de encargo que traslucen más la desgana que el entusiasmo que lleva a dar lo mejor de sí mismos al cultivar el género que se promueve. Así se observa, por ejemplo, en la colección germinal de inéditos ficción de varios autores titulada *1ª Antología española de ciencia ficción* (Barcelona, Edhasa, 1966), en que vieron la luz relatos magistrales como «La otra luna», de Jorge Campos, «Nicolás», de Antonio Mingote, o «Kuklos», de Juan G. Atienza, junto a otros que podían dar la razón a los que acusaban la ciencia ficción de superficialidad y formulismo. Igual ocurre en una antología similar de textos encargados para promover un género concreto, la ucronía en este caso, *Franco, una historia alternativa* (Barcelona, Minotauro, 2006), editada por Julián Díez y con valiosa información contextual de éste y de otro buen especialista en la literatura especulativa española, Alfonso Merelo. Y tampoco escapa a parecida desigualdad en la consistencia literaria de los textos una antología reciente cuya importancia, al menos histórica, se habrá de reconocer. Sin embargo, tal desigualdad no parece deberse en este caso únicamente a las muy diferentes pericias literarias de los autores. El volumen que nos ocupa presenta asimismo un defecto de partida que puede explicar

Son los colaboradores que se han esforzado por conferir una función estructural a los motivos retrofuturistas los que parecen haber alcanzado en mayor medida el propósito de hacer valer el género, mientras que algunos autores parecen haberse limitado a aplicar superficialmente la parafernalia *steampunk* a una narración convencional.

el aire algo deslavazado de la antología, como si a los autores les hubiera faltado a veces la valla de seguridad de un género con unas reglas claramente definidas, que pudiera aportarles un esquema sobre el que construir sus artefactos ficticios, en vez de sólo una serie de cronotopos con una función meramente ornamental. Son precisamente los colaboradores que se han esforzado por conferir una función estructural a los motivos retrofuturistas los que parecen haber alcanzado en mayor medida el propósito de hacer valer el género, mientras que algunos autores parecen haberse limitado a aplicar superficialmente la parafernalia *steampunk* a una narración convencional. Otros, por último, se alejan del género mismo y escriben textos que se enmarcan mejor en otras modalidades de la literatura especulativa, aunque tiendan a dignificar la colección gracias a una escritura superior, que obedece a intereses propios y no realmente al objetivo de promover la literatura retrofuturista que parece animar esta empresa.

En *Steampunk: Antología retrofuturista*, se presenta por primera vez en España una recopilación de textos que, tomados en su conjunto y a la luz del prólogo del editor, Félix J. Palma, pretenderían explorar las distintas vías abiertas por el *Steampunk*



«El retrofuturismo literario»

internacional, aclimatando al mismo tiempo en el país sus cualidades universalistas, en polémica con la cotidianería estrechamente costumbrista de la literatura española hegemónica, al menos en cuanto a su presencia pública en la prensa cultural y en los manuales.² A este respecto, la antología posee, como sus predecesoras citadas, un carácter militante en favor de un filón estético nuevo que se desea dignificar por la vía de los hechos, lo que en literatura equivale a proponer textos que convenzan a los críticos del interés del género y a los escritores del interés de seguir cultivando, más allá de los prejuicios añejos con los que ha chocado, en una cultura dominada por una crítica tan reacia al justo reconocimiento del ejercicio del intelecto en la literatura como la de la España tardo y postfranquista, las distintas variedades de la fantasía especulativa, tales como la ciencia ficción y la ucronía, a las que se vendría a sumar ahora este vástago de ambos, el *steampunk*. En efecto, la definición del mismo que ofrece Palma en el prólogo señala su filiación, ya que se trataría de «un subgénero larvado dentro de la ciencia ficción que salió a la luz en los años ochenta, consistente en historias que muestran un

futuro alternativo presidido por esa extinta ciencia a vapor» (pp. 12-13). Expuesto en estos términos, el *steampunk* no sería más que una rama de la ucronía, caracterizada por el desarrollo de la tecnología y de la cosmovisión victorianas en una línea histórica paralela a la real, hacia «un futuro alternativo» al nuestro. A esta definición no corresponde, en puridad, más que un único relato de la antología, el titulado «Prisa». En éste, José María Merino da de nuevo muestras de su categoría de gran escritor especulativo al imaginar un presente alternativo en el que la bicicleta es el principal medio de locomoción, con las consecuencias imaginables para la salud de las personas y del medio ambiente, aunque se sugiere que el motor de explosión, ya inventado y de usos limitados por la ley y la costumbre, acabará imponiéndose y configurando una realidad como la nuestra, en la que los accidentes de tráfico provocan más víctimas que todas las demás calamidades artificiales. De esta manera, y aunque no se trate estrictamente del vapor, una tecnología decimonónica se ha mantenido, y la estética *steampunk* no es fruto de la nostalgia, sino algo cotidiano. El resultado es una ucronía ortodoxa, a la que se puede aplicar perfectamente la definición de la misma hecha por Éric B. Henriot como género que «describe de forma metódica universos creíbles y realistas en los que la Historia ha seguido un curso distinto al de la nuestra a raíz de un acontecimiento fundador»³, el cual sería, en este caso, la decisión de primar la tracción humana sobre la mecánica tras la invención del motor de explosión. Además, se trata de una ucronía original. En vez de recurrir a fenómenos históricos célebres y centrados en un personaje histórico concreto (Napoléon, Hitler y, en España, Franco) para ajustarles las cuentas a los enemigos nacionales e ideológicos del pasado, Merino prefiere acometer una reflexión sobre la tecnología y las tendencias subyacentes a las meras anécdotas de las guerras ganadas por unos o por otros, con lo que elude el provincialismo de tantas ucronías. Desde una concepción cosmopolita de la literatura, no hará falta insistir en su interés. Por otra parte, su excepcionalidad en la antología es indicio de un problema de categorización.

Si el *steampunk* es como lo define Palma, sólo la historia de Merino correspondería a tal definición y

2. Según Palma, se invitó a varios escritores a participar en este experimento retrofuturista «escribiendo una historia que suceda en ese entrañable escenario [el siglo XIX], que por otro lado también les facilita la huida del marco social y político de nuestra realidad, avivando ese espíritu cosmopolita y atemporal perceptible en la obra de muchos de ellos». (p. 14)

La antología posee un carácter militante en favor de un filón estético nuevo que se desea dignificar por la vía de los hechos, lo que en literatura equivale a proponer textos que convenzan a los críticos del interés del género [...]

3. «[L]’uchronie décrit méthodiquement des univers crédibles et réalistes dans lesquels l’Histoire a suivi un cours différent de la nôtre à la suite d’un événement fondateur», en *L’Histoire revisitée. Panorama de l’uchronie sous toutes ses formes*, Amiens, Encrage, 2004, p. 333.



«El retrofuturismo literario»

Si el *steampunk* es como lo define Palma, o bien la definición es incorrecta, o bien los relatos incluidos no pertenecen al género, lo cual se contradice con el aire de parentesco que guardan.

no podemos por menos de pensar de que, o bien la definición es incorrecta, o bien los relatos incluidos no pertenecen al género, lo cual se contradice con el aire de parentesco que guardan, salvo «Fahrenheit.com», de Andrés Neuman. Ésta es una historia futura, esto es, una narración que adopta el discurso historiográfico para presentar con objetividad escalofriante y sumamente eficaz una catástrofe tecnológica del porvenir, de manera que su ambientación la excluye del retrofuturismo para enmarcarla claramente en la ciencia ficción, y seguramente entre sus mejores ejemplos actuales. Los demás relatos transportan a los lectores a diferentes épocas del siglo XIX. Así, «El arpa eólica», de Óscar Esquivias, opta por la Francia romántica al imaginar en su cuento macabro y grotesco a la vez, a la manera de los de Edgar Allan Poe, a Hector Berlioz como compositor e inventor de nuevos instrumentos, como amante de la música hasta el fanatismo y el crimen. «Flux», de Fernando Royuela, utiliza el pretexto de una primera guerra carlista en vías de ser perdida por los liberales españoles para prolongar sin gran originalidad ni aprovechamiento de las posibilidades intelectuales del asunto la añeja tradición del costumbrismo hispánico, nacido precisamente por entonces. «Gringo Clint», de Fernando Marías, aclimata, por su parte, la modalidad *western* del *steampunk*. Un matón convertido en *cyborg* a vapor protagoniza una historia de venganza que acoge los tópicos de la épica del Oeste norteamericano, tal como los habían dado a conocer los bolsilibros o novelas de duro de José Mallorquí e imitadores, sin muchas más pretensiones y con peor estilo.

Las demás historias se ambientan en la Inglaterra victoriana, como corresponde al *steampunk* predominante. Esa ambientación es lo que más liga a unos relatos muy distintos en cuanto a sus temas y registros. Historias como «Dynevov Road», de Luis Manuel Ruiz, «Animales y dioses», de Ignacio del Valle, «*Lapis infernalis*», de Pilar Vera, e «*In a glass, darkly*», de Marian Womack, intentan reproducir los efectos de las ficciones góticas de la época victoriana, que imitan con mayor o menor habilidad y originalidad más bien escasa. Si hubieran aparecido en una antología de literatura fantástica, sección «gótica», no habría razones para extrañarse. Su publicación en una antología retrofuturista suscita la duda de sí, para sus autores, bastaba con situar la acción en la Gran Bretaña victoriana para creer que han escrito *steampunk*. Si fuera el caso, cualquier narración ambientada en esa época y que imite los modos literarios de entonces pertenecería



«El retrofuturismo literario»

a tal género, cosa que lo ampliaría hasta diluirlo, peligro del que no parece estar exento tampoco el propio *steampunk* anglosajón, por lo demás, y de ahí que la equivocación de considerar retrofuturista una variante de la narrativa histórica sea perdonable en el contexto literario actual. Con todo, uno puede acabar preguntándose dónde radica lo distintivo de la literatura retrofuturista supuestamente representada en el volumen si más de la mitad de la misma es ucronía, costumbrismo o literatura fantástica *stricto sensu*, modalidad a la que también pertenece «*That Way Madness Lies*», de José Carlos Somoza, pese a poner (torpemente) en escena a Lewis Carroll, de acuerdo con la preferencia frecuente de los retrofuturistas por convertir a intelectuales victorianos en personajes de sus tramas fantasiosas. De hecho, la actuación ficcional del creador famoso como héroe de la narración, de acuerdo con la imagen que se tiene de él gracias al conocimiento de sus obras y su biografía, y con ánimo de homenaje no paródico, es tan común que podría pasar por un rasgo esencial del *steampunk* o, en términos más generales, de la ficción retrofuturista. Así procede, por ejemplo, el propio Palma en *El mapa del tiempo* (2008) con H. G. Wells.

De manera análoga a como la figura histórica célebre suele estar presente en las ucronías, el intelectual famoso desempeña seguramente una función similar como punto de focalización de unos conocimientos de los lectores, sobre los cuales se puede construir ficcionalmente la alternativa a nuestro presente (en la ucronía) o nuestro pasado (en el retrofuturismo). Por supuesto, no todas las ucronías recurren a tal anclaje. Ya hemos aludido a la originalidad de Merino en «Prisa» desde ese punto de vista. Tampoco la literatura retrofuturista presenta siempre una figura famosa tutelar. En esta antología, no la hay en «Aria de la muñeca mecánica», de Care Santos, mientras que Juan Jacinto Muñoz Rengel realiza su homenaje a la literatura especulativa inglesa imaginando en «London Gardens» a unos científicos rivales que no remiten a figuras existentes, sino más bien a otros personajes del acervo especulativo decimonónico, como el profesor Challenger de varias novelas de Arthur Conan Doyle, aunque no se pueda afirmar tampoco que exista una correspondencia directa. Muñoz Rengel explota más bien la imagen del científico consagrada por la literatura de la época como un elemento generador de una atmósfera particular, a la que contribuyen asimismo la presentación discreta, al hilo de la narración, de un Londres

La actuación ficcional del creador famoso como héroe de la narración, de acuerdo con la imagen que se tiene de él gracias al conocimiento de sus obras y su biografía, y con ánimo de homenaje no paródico, es tan común que podría pasar por un rasgo esencial del *steampunk*.

eminentemente verosímil o las alusiones a los viajes a Marte con una tecnología basada en el carbón y con la misma facilidad aparente con que se viaja de un planeta a otro en la ficción científica de entonces, lo que a su vez confiere al relato un sabor *steampunk* en lo anecdótico, al igual que los procesos mentales del científico victoriano lo hacen en lo sustancial.

La estructura de «London Gardens» se basa en la reproducción tanto de los procedimientos de los *scientific romances* victorianos como de la mentalidad que se expresa a través de ellos, de forma que los motivos fictocientíficos aparecen como verosímiles en el contexto del pasado en que se ambienta la fábula. La perspectiva del futuro implícita en la ciencia ficción se funde así perfectamente con la perspectiva histórica de la época descrita, con lo que Muñoz Rengel acierta a ofrecer una ficción que sí nos parece auténticamente retrofuturista. A este respecto, «London Gardens» es seguramente una de las narraciones más representativas de la colección, además de ser quizás la que mejor sirve al objetivo de demostrar que el *steampunk* no sólo puede dar sus mejores frutos en el diseño. En unas pocas páginas, Muñoz Rengel hace gala de una capacidad sobresaliente, digna del mismo Wells, de que un mismo texto ofrezca al mismo tiempo una visión sublime de la grandeza y belleza del universo y un acercamiento humano al mismo, gracias a



«El retrofuturismo literario»

una ironía que temple su carácter sobrecogedor, sin renunciar por ello a unas perspectivas intelectuales que sirven de acicate a la curiosidad y el pensamiento. «London Gardens» puede resultar así tan estimulante como una ficción metafísica de Borges, a quien el autor homenajea al reescribir «La biblioteca de Babel», poniéndola al día cosmológicamente, en un pasaje apócrifo escrito nada menos que en un fósil marciano. Nada puede ejemplificar mejor quizás la combinación inextricable de lo sublime, lo filosófico y lo humorístico en «London Gardens», todo lo cual está servido, además, por una prosa de una fluidez cristalina y un ritmo uniforme que indican un cuidado sobresaliente de la escritura. Por un relato tal se justificaría cualquier antología y el mismo género en el que se clasifica.

Si consideramos que *El mapa del tiempo*, del prologuista de esta antología, constituye otra cima del género y que la excelencia de estas dos obras, la extensa y la breve, tampoco parece tener parangón ni siquiera en el mundo anglosajón, podremos concluir que el *steampunk* ha encontrado una tierra de elección en España, independientemente del número de títulos que al final se publiquen y de las confusiones que atestiguan esta misma colección, que hacen temer que el

género no se vaya a desarrollar en el país por lo que tiene de más profundamente original dentro del campo de la literatura especulativa, sino más bien por la facilidad con que se puede imitar lo que tiene de accesorio, como un acervo de simples decorados para cualquier tipo de historias fantásticas ambientadas en el siglo XIX, con la tecnología de entonces. Por ello, no estará de más tal vez reflexionar sobre el género y, a partir de las obras importantes que ya ha producido el retrofuturismo dentro y fuera de esta antología, intentar determinar lo que caracterizaría a este frente a sus matrices, la ciencia ficción y la ucronía, con las que se suele confundir popularmente. Esta reflexión no es baladí, porque de su resultado puede depender si el *steampunk* y la ficción retrofuturista en general sólo representan una moda más o si significan un enriquecimiento genuino del campo de la literatura especulativa con un modelo genérico autónomo, en contraste con la opinión corriente de que las «narraciones *steampunk* son esencialmente historias alternativas» [«steampunk stories are essentially

alternate histories»]⁴, esto es, ucronías, en cuyo caso no se entendería demasiado la utilidad del invento, si no es para sacarle partido como etiqueta comercial utilizada para vendernos, con un nombre nuevo y rimbombante, una mercancía ya bien conocida.

El adjetivo «retrofuturista» entraña una paradoja. El prefijo «retro» significa «hacia atrás» y supone, en términos temporales, una mirada hacia el pasado. Lo «futurista», en cambio, remite inequívocamente al futuro. Para resolver la contradicción, podemos considerar que nos referimos a una visión del pasado desde el futuro, cosa que hace lo que podríamos denominar la «historia prospectiva», esto es, aquella en que se imagina una voz enunciativa del futuro que narra su pasado, el cual no es otra

cosa que nuestro porvenir, tal como hace, por ejemplo, el representante de la 18ª especie humana en *La última y la primera humanidad* (*Last and First Men*, 1930), de Olaf Stapledon o, en español, el historiador implícito de la *Historia del futuro desde la llegada del hombre a la Luna hasta la caída del Imperio Galáctico según las obras de los principales autores de Ciencia Ficción* (2004), de Carlos Sáiz Cidoncha, así como el de «Fahrenheit.com», de Neuman, en esta antología. Pero también podemos

invertir los términos de la ecuación. En vez de conjeturar cómo se vería el pasado desde un futuro hipotético, encontramos terreno más firme si utilizamos los testimonios de las anticipaciones pergeñadas en épocas anteriores, en que se imaginaba el cariz de su porvenir, para lanzar a una mirada al futuro desde aquel mismo pasado. De este modo, adoptaremos una perspectiva distinta a la propia de la ficción científica. Ésta implica una mirada al porvenir desde el presente, mientras que nos colocamos en el lugar de nuestros abuelos al escribir o leer ficciones retrofuturistas. Aunque sepamos que la realidad evolucionó de manera distinta a la imaginada por ellos, ponemos entre paréntesis lo presente para situarnos en el mundo ficticio con una actitud semejante a la exigida por la novela histórica, como si estuviéramos viviendo el pasado

4. Lisa Yaszek, «Democratising the Past to Improve the Future: An Interview with Steampunk Godfather Paul Di Filippo», *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 3, 1 (2019), pp. 189-195. La definición citada figura en una pregunta de la entrevistadora al escritor, p. 191.



«El retrofuturismo literario»

desde dentro de él, con la diferencia de que, en lo retrofuturista, no nos identificamos con lo que ocurrió realmente en el pasado, sino con los sueños de futuro que se abrigan entonces, esos sueños que configuraron una enciclopedia de motivos ficción-científicos del pasado a nuestra disposición para emular los suyos desde nuestros días, entre la nostalgia y el distanciamiento irónico. Basándose en tales sueños, el escritor retrofuturista recrea no sólo un presente y un futuro imaginados como lo podrían haber hecho aquellos pioneros de la anticipación, sino también el mismo pasado, en el cual se hacen realidad, en el territorio de la ficción, los temores y las expectativas de entonces. Las especulaciones pretéritas alimentan así nuevas especulaciones que alteran el tejido de la historia mediante la intrusión de una ciencia ficción voluntariamente anacrónica, al obedecer idealmente a la cosmovisión de épocas pretéritas. Así se configura un pasado imaginario mediado por la tradición literaria, en que los autómatas y los *cyborgs* pululan en el siglo XIX o un súbdito de la reina Victoria puede descifrar el lenguaje marciano y atribuir a los habitantes del planeta rojo la idea de la biblioteca babélica de Borges, por ejemplo. Este pasado ilusorio difiere asimismo del hipotético de la ucronía.

La creación de historias alternativas parte de un punto de divergencia, desde el cual el pasado real y el hipotético se van separando hasta que se configura un presente más o menos distinto al que vivimos. Pese a la distancia entre ellos, nunca pierden el contacto. El efecto especulativo de la ucronía depende precisamente de la existencia de un paralelismo virtual entre ambos transcurso históricos. Con independencia del período en que se desarrolle

El efecto especulativo de la ucronía depende de la existencia de un paralelismo virtual entre ambos transcurso históricos. [...] En la historia alternativa, siempre existe una relación dialéctica implícita o expresa con el presente.

La ficción retrofuturista es indiferente al curso de la Historia, al funcionar normalmente en circuito cerrado. Ni los *cyborgs*, ni los viajes a Marte en cohetes a vapor, ni los *golems* mecánicos desencadenan proceso histórico alguno.

la historia alternativa, siempre existe una relación dialéctica implícita o expresa con el presente. Así pues, si esa relación es entre el presente y el futuro en la ciencia ficción y, *grosso modo*, entre el pasado y el futuro en la ficción retrofuturista, tal relación es entre el presente y otro presente en la ucronía. En ésta no se puede evacuar la Historia⁵, la cual es la sombra que no puede dejar de acompañar al universo histórico alternativo, tal como se puede observar en una ucronía como *Danza de tinieblas* (2005), de Eduardo Vaquerizo, cuya fábula, en la que una España tolerante con las minorías morisca y judía ha adoptado el protestantismo y protagoniza un desarrollo tecnológico de aire *steampunk*, no se entiende sin un conocimiento del desarrollo histórico real, tan distinto, del mismo país. En cambio, la ficción retrofuturista es indiferente al curso de la Historia, al funcionar normalmente en circuito cerrado. Ni los *cyborgs*, ni los viajes a Marte en cohetes a vapor, ni los *golems* mecánicos desencadenan proceso histórico alguno; son acontecimientos que no generan un devenir diferente al empírico. Simplemente están ahí, autosuficientes, y no exigen que adoptemos otra perspectiva que no sea la suya, la del pasado. A diferencia de la ucronía, la evolución de las sociedades humanas no es el objeto principal de un género cuya base no es la Historia, sino la propia literatura. La ficción retrofuturista es fundamentalmente metaliteraria, y

5. Escribimos «Historia», con mayúsculas, para designar la sucesión de acontecimientos realmente ocurridos en nuestro mundo real, empírico, y distinguirla de la «historia» como discurso textual.



«El retrofuturismo literario»

de ahí la importancia señalada de los escritores del pasado y de su obra, porque se alimenta de fábulas, no de hechos acaecidos de verdad. La Historia deja de ser un proceso y se convierte en un telón de fondo, en un escenario que exhala un agradable perfume de nostalgia, pero que no afecta gran cosa, en términos de comparación implícita, a la visión del presente. Aunque pueda existir un ánimo crítico hacia la sociedad del pasado descrita, no interviene estrictamente una dialéctica histórica, la cual tampoco resultaría relevante en el esquema genérico de este tipo de ficción. A este respecto, conviene recordar la respuesta de Di Filippo⁶ a la pregunta de cuáles son los puntos Jonbar cruciales del *steampunk*, en la entrevista citada en que se identificaba, abusivamente en nuestra opinión, tal modalidad con la ucronía:

Algunas historas *steampunk* pueden insertarse de forma invisible en el canon sin generar una división ucrónica de la historia. Mis tres relatos de *La trilogía Steampunk* podrían leerse como historias no descubiertas antes que no incurran en contradicción flagrante con las versiones de los acontecimientos que figuran en los manuales. Pero tiene razón al decir que las fantasías más radicales generan cursos temporales alternativos.

En cuyo caso, añadimos, podríamos considerar que esas fantasías radicales son ucronías de ambiente victoriano, mientras que las de la obra *steampunk* canónica de Di Filippo son ficciones retrofuturistas estrictas, en la medida en que el *novum* fictocientífico actuante en un tiempo pretérito queda circunscrito a tal pasado, sin repercusiones en el curso de la Historia.⁷ Unas veces, el escritor simplemente

hace abstracción de ésta, al no preocuparse por sacar las posibles consecuencias ucrónicas de los hechos narrados, por carecer de pertinencia en el género. Muñoz Rengel, por ejemplo, prescinde de ellas en su relato. Otras veces, se circunscribe el alcance de los fenómenos que las innovaciones fictocientíficas imaginadas podrían dar lugar en la sociedad descrita mediante el procedimiento de considerarlas aisladamente, como inventos o descubrimientos que no salen de la esfera de los personajes en juego. Se podría mencionar al respecto el arpa eólica asesina inventada por Berlioz en el relato de Esquivias, que no parece fuera vista por otros ojos que los del compositor Cherubini. En *El mapa del tiempo*, los hilos que se entrelazan en la compleja trama del libro acaban siendo todos compatibles con la historia de la Inglaterra de Wells. Y para mencionar otras obras importantes que son plenamente retrofuturistas, pero que nada tienen que ver con el *steampunk*, recordaremos *La mariposa de latón* (*The Brass Butterfly*, 1958), comedia en que un sabio griego inventa la máquina de vapor y se la ofrece a un emperador romano, el cual rechaza ese y otros inventos, al presentir los futuros horrores de la tecnología, al menos para el autor, William Golding. En España, *La locura de Dios* (1998), de Juan Manuel Aguilera, relata el viaje de Ramon Llull a una urbe asiática tecnológicamente muy avanzada y lo que descubre allí no da pie a un nuevo curso de la Historia europea, dada la destrucción final de aquella ciudad en la ficción. Por último, otras obras de este género ni siquiera afrontan directa o indirectamente la cuestión del conflicto de literatura e Historia, porque no hace falta alterar el curso de esta para crear un universo ficticio propiamente retrofuturista. Basta con presentar una visión imaginaria del futuro desde el pasado que coincida en su mayor parte con la historia real, como hace Tomás Borrás en un relato de aire borgiano cuyo olvido pone de relieve hasta qué punto urge repensar el canon literario español moderno. En «La última novela de Cervantes» (*Cuentacuentos*, 1948), Borrás no sólo se atreve a atribuir un relato de anticipación al supuesto padre de la novela (realista) moderna, sino que hasta lo reproduce, imitando hábilmente su estilo y sin caer en el mero pastiche, de manera que asistimos

6. «Some steampunk can be invisibly inserted into the canon without triggering an alternate history splitting. My three stories in *The Steampunk Trilogy* might be read as previously undiscovered histories that don't flagrant contradict the textbook versions of events. But you're right when you claim that the most radical imaginings produce alternate timelines», en Yaszek, op. cit., p. 191.

7. En una rama de la ucronía (o género paralelo a ésta), la introducción de un *novum* histórico en un momento dado no genera una evolución determinada de los acontecimientos en la esfera pública. Se trata de la «historia secreta», como aquellas en que se imagina que Napoleón no murió en Santa Elena (*Cómo murió Napoleón* [1930], de Augusto Martínez Olmedilla) o que los aztecas enviaron una expedición a la Península Ibérica (*Paraules d'Opòton el Vell* [1968] / *Palabras de Opoton el Viejo* [1992], de Avel·lí Artís-Gener), por ejemplo, a los que se suman numerosas novelas de suspense en que se imaginan conspiraciones o atentados abortados al final, pudiéndose citar a este respecto superventas como *El*

día del chacal (*The Day of the Jackal* [1971]), de Frederick Forsyth. Pero, a diferencia de la ficción retrofuturista, la historia secreta carece de cualquier elemento de anticipación o fictocientífico, además de cualquier perspectiva de futuro. El pasado se observa en ella sin salir de su presente.



«El retrofuturismo literario»

al sueño de su gloria futura del autor del Quijote, quien se ve asistiendo con irónico asombro a los excesos del cervantismo contemporáneo (en los años sesenta del pasado siglo, para ser más exactos, esto es, en un período posterior a la publicación del relato de Borrás, que sería, pues, también de anticipación). La apócrifa última narración de Cervantes, que habría destruido accidentalmente su mujer, reviste un carácter retrofuturista intachable, ya que explota su juego de perspectivas característico, esto es, pone entre paréntesis el presente para observar el futuro del pasado desde ese mismo pasado, con claridad meridiana y sin contaminaciones posibles de un planteamiento ucrónico, teniendo en cuenta el hecho de que Cervantes ve el futuro, nuestro presente, tal como acabó siendo. Si a esto se suma que Borrás presenta al escritor como personaje exactamente en los mismos términos que el retrofuturismo literario posterior, se impondrá por sí sola la conclusión de que esta modalidad ficcional es, con todo, menos nueva de lo que se cree, aunque tampoco quepa negar que sólo hoy, con esta antología y la serie de novelas que se han escrito en los últimos años siguiendo la moda del *steampunk*, puede hablarse de un género definible⁸, que crea sus propios precursores. *Nihil*



8. Aunque pocas cosas hay en literatura más discutibles que la definición de un género temático determinado, quizá sea útil, como simple propuesta para un debate ulterior, resumir en una definición propia las características distintivas de la ficción retrofuturista frente a los géneros especulativos afines. Según esta propuesta puramente taxonómica, la ficción retrofuturista sería aquella que introduce elementos de anticipación o fictocientíficos dominantes como motor principal de la intriga en una trama que se ambienta íntegramente en una época pasada, que protagoniza a menudo una figura intelectual conocida y cuyo desarrollo no tiene repercusiones en la Historia, esto es, no genera un curso histórico alternativo. Esta definición de orden estructural excluiría, pues, parte de lo que se suele etiquetar como *steampunk*, a saber, las ucronías en que se imagina un curso histórico alternativo en que se habría prolongado la tecnología y la cosmovisión decimonónicas (por ejemplo, *La máquina diferencial* [*The Difference Engine*, 1990], de William Gibson y Bruce Sterling, o «Prisa», de Merino), o las obras en que no hay elementos de anticipación, como aquellas que recrean los cronotopos fantásticos y góticos de la literatura decimonónica sin atender a la dimensión de futuro del compuesto «retrofuturista» (por ejemplo, *Las puertas de Anubis* [*The Anubis Gates*, 1983], de Tim Powers, o la mitad de los relatos de la antología española que comentamos). Por su parte, el *steampunk* parece tener más que ver con una ambientación determinada que con unos rasgos literarios estructurales definidos. Como señala Jean-Jacques Girardot en «Le *Steampunk* : une machine littéraire à recycler le passé», en *Cycnos*, 22, n° 1 (2006), <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/?id=472>, «el steampunk se caracteriza sin duda por una estética específica, una atmósfera de ciudad de inicios de la revolución industrial, bañada en una niebla

novum sub sole, pero hacía falta que el sol iluminara el rincón justo... Esta antología lo hace. Ante este servicio que presta, palidecen las deficiencias y las confusiones de la colección, entre las que no parece la menor el que se haya tomado la parte por el todo: a diferencia de lo sugerido por el título, *steampunk* y retrofuturismo no son lo mismo, sino que el primero puede considerarse más bien un avatar contemporáneo y parcial del segundo, el avatar en que el género toma por fin conciencia de sí mismo, inclusive en España. De ahí su trascendencia. ●

que permite camuflar misterios inconfesables, y en la que los personajes que salen de la sombra son todos iconos tomados de la literatura fantástica y la ciencia ficción...» [Le *steampunk* se caractérise sans conteste par une esthétique spécifique, une atmosphère de cité des débuts de la révolution industrielle, baignant dans un fog permettant de camoufler les mystères inavouables, et où les personnages qui sortent de l'ombre sont autant d'icônes empruntées au fantastique et à la science-fiction...].

Así pues, ésta es seguramente una antología «*steampunk*», pero «retrofuturista», sólo lo es a veces.

«¿Es posible escribir poesía de ciencia ficción?»

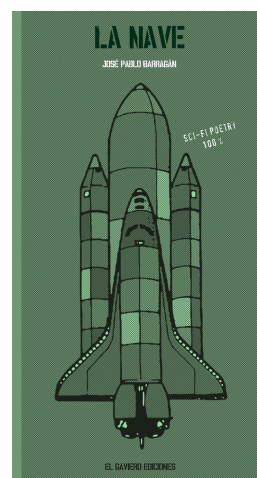
Breves reflexiones a partir del poemario
La Nave de José Pablo Barragán.

Crítica de Alberto García-Teresa
Doctor en Filología Hispánica y poeta

¿Es posible escribir poesía de ciencia ficción y no sólo sobre ciencia ficción? No hablo de una poesía que emplee referencias a la ciencia ficción, sino de una poesía que se inscriba dentro de la naturaleza prospectiva, especulativa, de este género, que narrativamente ha dado tan extraordinarios frutos. Esta tarea, ¿puede llevarse a cabo?

Este problema ha sido muy poco analizado. A nivel teórico, ha generado escasísimo material riguroso, puesto que los autores que se acercan a esta cuestión se centran más en la diferenciación de la ciencia ficción frente a otro tipo de ficción que en el propio problema de poesía y ciencia ficción. Así, dada la confusión actual, no es de extrañar que los editores de antologías o de revistas de «poesía de ciencia ficción» escojan para sus publicaciones poemas con temas típicos del género, sin discriminar si realmente se trata de verdadera poesía de ciencia ficción. En cualquier caso, resulta remarcable en esos trabajos que abunda el uso del término «speculative poetry» para referirse a este tipo de escritura.

Se ha señalado que la poesía de ciencia ficción surge en 1975 como entidad propia, fruto de la *New Wave* (aquel movimiento que, en el género,



La nave
José Pablo Barragán

El Gaviero Ediciones
Almería, 2012

52 páginas

ISBN: 978-84-15048-12-1



«¿Es posible escribir poesía de ciencia ficción?»

postulaba indagar en el «espacio interior» y que planteaba abordajes formales más complejos), aunque ya desde los años cuarenta se pueden registrar algunas manifestaciones. De todos los poetas que la han abordado, se debe destacar a Andrew Jordan (creador de *The Sound Mirror* o *Force Fields*); probablemente el mejor autor del género y el que posee mayor conciencia formal. A su vez, debemos mencionar los volúmenes *Rhysling Anthology*, que incluyen material de ciencia ficción, terror y fantasía, y en los que se recuperan los textos finalistas que The Science Fiction Poetry Association, desde 1978, lleva premiando como los mejores poemas de ciencia ficción publicados el año precedente. Además, podemos encontrar textos englobados en este género en las revistas *StarLine*, en *The Magazine of Speculative Poetry* y, parcialmente, en *Strange Horizons*.

Por otra parte, hay que reseñar distintas antologías destacadas que recopilan piezas del género, como *Holding Your Eight Hands: An Anthology of Science Fiction Verse* (1970), seleccionada por Edward Lucie-Smith, que incluye 58 composiciones de 36 autores; *The Umbral Anthology of Science Fiction Poetry* (1982), realizada por Steve Rasnic, con 141 poemas de 61 escritores; *Burning with a Vision: Poetry of Science and the Fantastic* (1984), que recoge 130 textos de 56 personas escogidos por Robert Frazier; o *POLY: New Speculative Writing* (1989), recopilada por Lee Ballentine, que ofrece 69 piezas de 25 poetas. Además, en 2001 se editó *A Science Fiction Poetry Anthology* (confeccionada por Keith Allen Daniels), que acoge 125 poemas de un buen número de cultivadores contemporáneos. Más recientemente, la antología *Voyagers: Science Fiction Poetry from New Zealand* (2009), realizada por Mark Pirie y Tim Jones, agrupa cerca de 80 muestras. Para finalizar, se debe señalar *Que la fuerza te acompañe / May the Force Be With You* (2005), una antología en edición bilingüe editada en España, que incluye 21 poemas inspirados en *Star Wars*, reseñada en el primer número de esta misma revista.

El problema de raíz que se nos plantea nos remite a un asunto básico, que consiste en la relación de la poesía con lo real, con los referentes; esto es, la función poética del lenguaje. Recordemos que Jakobson escribió que, en poesía, «la palabra es sentida como palabra y no como simple sustituto del objeto nombrado ni como explosión de emoción», y remarcaba «la orientación del mensaje como tal; al mensaje por el mensaje», hacia sí mismo. De esta

manera, el lenguaje poético tiende a poner de relieve el valor autónomo del signo. De hecho, Jan Mukařovský resaltó que la denominación poética no se destaca por su carácter figurativo, no sobre la realidad referida, sino sobre la relación semántica con el contexto.

Sin embargo, en la ciencia ficción se nos revela un mundo nuevo, y su descubrimiento es también ya algo fundamental por sí mismo. De hecho, Suzette Haden Elgin, fundadora de The Science Fiction Poetry Association, en su obra *The Science Fiction Poetry Handbook* (2005), señala: «A science fiction poem must be about a reality that is in some way different from the existing reality» (citada, entre otros, por F.J. Bergmann en «What Is This Thing Called Genre Poetry?», en http://www.versewisconsin.org/issue102/prose102/bergmann_genre.html, consultado el 25 de marzo de 2013). Por tanto, para asumir el pacto de ficción, en la ciencia ficción debemos tomar el referente como real. Pero, ¿qué hacer entonces con las metáforas sobre esos referentes que la poesía pudiera desplegar? Es más; esa búsqueda del «sentido de la maravilla» que postula la ciencia ficción, ¿no podría estar ya implícita en la construcción de metáforas e imágenes poéticas? Así, ¿tenemos la posibilidad de crear poesía

En la ciencia ficción debemos tomar el referente como real. Pero, ¿qué hacer entonces con las metáforas sobre esos referentes que la poesía pudiera desplegar? Es más; esa búsqueda del «sentido de la maravilla» que postula la ciencia ficción, ¿no podría estar ya implícita en la construcción de metáforas e imágenes poéticas?



«¿Es posible escribir poesía de ciencia ficción?»

de auténtica ciencia ficción? ¿Se corresponden con esa etiqueta todos los poemas que nos llegan como tales?

En ocasiones, algunos poetas emplean la ciencia ficción simplemente como un decorado, como un escenario, incluso como meras referencias (en una suerte de culturalismo popular). Esta práctica, sin embargo, no deja lugar a que se aprovechen las posibilidades cognitivas del género; aquellas que permiten indagar, explorar y experimentar con situaciones y posibilidades imposibles hoy día, pero que pueden existir si especulamos con los conocimientos actuales. Es decir, esta poesía se queda con la apariencia de la ciencia ficción, tal y como se puede emplear actualmente la mitología.

A pesar de ello, es cierto que existen corrientes en la narrativa de ciencia ficción que apuestan por el mero escenario (como es el caso del *space opera*, las aventuras espaciales), pero en ellas se cuela un componente prospectivo irrenunciable, dado que la distancia que crean esos textos con la situación del lector permite adquirir una perspectiva que pueden aplicar a su propio entorno social, filosófico o científico.

En ese sentido, debemos tener mucho cuidado con no confundir lo maravilloso y la ciencia ficción. En literatura, lo maravilloso consiste en la plasmación de algo irreal pero que es asumido por el lector sin

provocar un trastorno de su noción de realidad (que sería el efecto fantástico, siguiendo, grosso modo, a Tzvetan Todorov), y que no posee ningún interés especulativo, prospectivo o de proyección. En ese sentido, lo maravilloso está plenamente arraigado en la poesía, pero a través de una relación especial con el lector, no de igual a igual, mediante la metáfora. De hecho, la imagen surrealista nos presenta un problema crucial en esa teoría, pues, aunque trastoca nuestra noción del mundo, incide que es una parte (oculta) de la realidad. Por tanto, en el mundo ideológico de la imagen, a nivel lingüístico, operan otra serie de concepciones y funciones del lenguaje que se salen del planteamiento de la presencia o no de lo maravilloso, de la ciencia ficción o de lo fantástico en los versos.

Entonces, siguiendo esos razonamientos, sólo podríamos encontrarnos verdadera ciencia ficción en una poesía de principios narrativos. Sin embargo, como ejercicio lírico, la poesía de ciencia ficción igualmente permite la construcción de textos que sólo pueden ser enunciados desde un punto de partida de ciencia ficción (por ejemplo, un robot que vuelque sus sentimientos o un individuo que comparta sus impresiones ante situaciones sólo creadas desde un ámbito de la ciencia ficción). En ese terreno, de hecho, es donde se presentan más posibilidades para la poesía de ciencia ficción, en mi opinión, en cuanto a que corresponde a particularidades exclusivas suyas.

La editorial El Gaviero continúa apostando por este difícil género con decisión y valentía. No en vano, además de la edición del citado *Que la fuerza te acompañe* y una serie de postales-poemas (algunas francamente destacables, como la de Raúl Quinto), hicieron público un «SciFi Manifiesto» con una serie de afirmaciones sobre la capacidad de la poesía de ciencia ficción. En esta ocasión, nos ofrecen un poemario completo brillante, en una cuidada edición: *La Nave*, de José Pablo Barragán.

El autor se maneja bien en la gran variedad de metros y extensiones, desde haikus a largas piezas, que conforman los 25 poemas del libro. Barragán no emplea signos de puntuación, aunque sí emplea las mayúsculas que corresponderían tras cada punto. Combinado con los encabalgamientos, logra, de esta manera, crear un ritmo inquietante, acorde con los mundos que recoge.

De *La Nave* se debe destacar, especialmente, que la concisión lírica aporta una gran potencia y una descomunal sugerencia, pues en pocos versos se vislumbra toda una sociedad, todo un mundo.

Las manifestaciones de lo sobrenatural surgen espontáneamente como componentes indisociables del ambiente en el que la historia se desarrolla y la plagan de distintas voces a veces reveladoras, otras veces reguladoras o, incluso, punitivas.



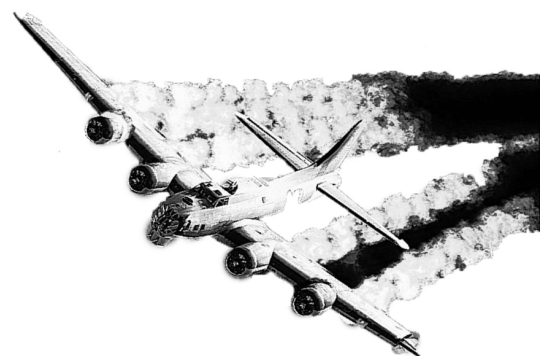
«¿Es posible escribir poesía de ciencia ficción?»

Ese es uno de sus mayores aciertos, el potenciar al máximo el «sentido de la maravilla». Además, se debe resaltar la gran precisión de sus descripciones. Barragán realiza juegos líricos con elementos de ciencia ficción, desde premisas sólo posibles dentro del género, sin perder un ápice las posibilidades expresivas de ambos; poesía y ciencia ficción. Por ello, José Pablo Barragán esgrime esta herramienta hábilmente, huyendo casi siempre de registros narrativos, manifestando la expresión lírica de los habitantes de esas realidades posibles.

El libro se compone de dos partes. El primer conjunto se titula «Las islas (Distopías)», y ofrece una serie de textos que no dan pie a la esperanza, y en los que sobresale la angustia y el desasosiego. Por otro lado, la cita de Tomás Salvador que abre el volumen y la misma mención en el título del poemario a *La Nave*, una de las novelas de ciencia ficción española más destacadas, ya nos coloca en la senda de una tradición rica y fértil, que José Pablo Barragán sabe aprovechar haciéndola propia; avanzando desde ella y no sólo recreándola. Esto ocurre de manera explícita en el segundo grupo de textos del libro, denominado «La nave (Homenajes)». En estas piezas, realmente, los homenajes constituyen, en el fondo, el empleo de escenarios de ciencia ficción ya creados para escribir poesía desde ellos. Así, consigue una expresión lírica de los personajes de esas obras, al mismo tiempo que los reinterpreta y, en definitiva, los enriquece. En ese sentido, esos poemas no buscan el guiño cómplice del lector (o sólo de manera muy puntual), sino que operan de manera autónoma. En algunos de ellos, además, el autor maneja extraordinariamente la tensión. En otros, juega con giros sorprendidos, que lo acercan al microrrelato.

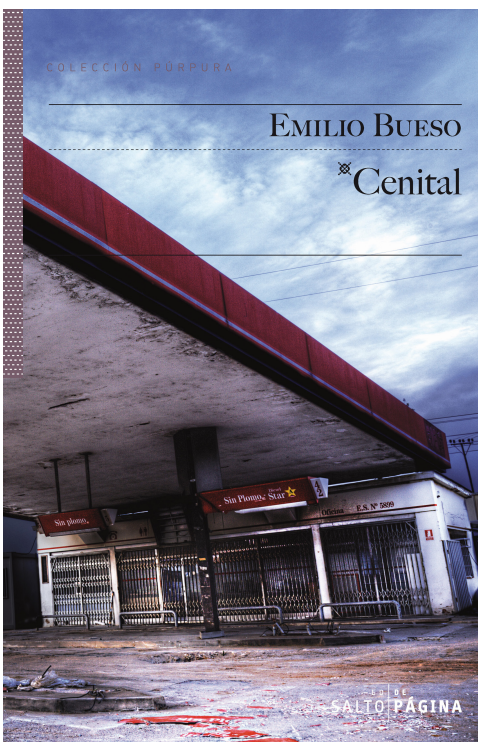
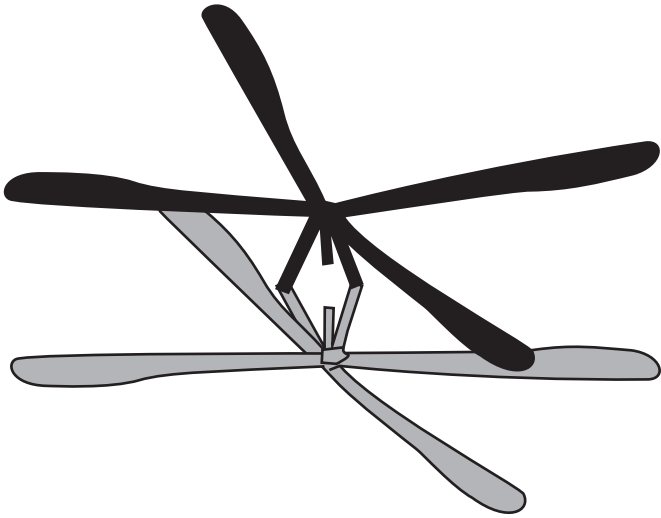
Con todo ello, José Pablo Barragán consigue un poemario perturbador, un conjunto de poemas excepcional. *La Nave*, por tanto, resulta una obra absolutamente recomendable, y que demuestra que sí, que es posible escribir poesía de ciencia ficción, y de gran calidad. ●

La concisión lírica aporta una gran potencia y una descomunal sugerencia, pues en pocos versos se vislumbra toda una sociedad, todo un mundo.



Doble Hélice: *Cenital*

por Inés Arias de Reyna
y Laura Luna



Cenital
Emilio Bueso

Madrid: Salto de Página, 2012
278 páginas
ISBN: 978-8415065265

Inés Arias de Reyna
Profesora de escritura creativa
Escuela de Escritores y Escuela de Fantasía (Madrid)

¿Qué pasará en la sociedad española cuando el petróleo se acabe? Emilio Bueso parte de esta premisa tan contundente para contar la historia de *Cenital*. En este planteamiento, no hay cabida para el «qué pasaría si...»: se asume que el suceso ocurrirá más pronto que tarde y la novela pretende situarnos en ese momento. Esto obliga al lector a que se plantee las consecuencias del «pico del petróleo» y a que reflexione sobre este hecho: ¿Es posible que llegue? ¿Tendremos que volver a la subsistencia? ¿Cómo será el cataclismo? ¿Qué haría yo si me tocara vivirlo? ¿Sería capaz de soportarlo?

Reconozco que cogí con ganas el libro porque me apetecía explorar esa posibilidad a través de una obra de ficción. Pero me temo que no pude sumergirme en la propuesta. Hubo un momento en el que dejó de ser relevante la prospección para que tomaran protagonismo ciertas fallas narrativas que no conseguí pasar por alto.

Habría a quien la voz narrativa de esta novela le resulte ingeniosa. A mí, en un primer momento, me lo pareció, pero, tras las primeras cincuenta páginas, acabé cansándome. Hubiera agradecido que el narrador abandonara las ocurrencias y los juegos de palabras y se hubiera centrado en contar lo que ocurre, sin llamar tanto la atención. Este narrador me recordó a esas situaciones en las que alguien

Doble Hélice: *Cenital*

está contando una historia y su pareja le interrumpe, una y otra vez, para puntualizar cuestiones que no vienen al caso con el tonillo del que se cree muy ocurrente. A la quinta interrupción uno o se va o le hace callar o desconecta de lo que se está contando porque, para el caso, no hay forma de seguir el hilo.

Es, además, una voz que mantiene un cierto tono recalitrante que puede resentir el acercamiento del lector a la historia, pues da la sensación de que hasta el mismo narrador está alejado de ella. Me da la impresión de que la utilización del distanciamiento propia del humor ha sido contraproducente para esta novela.

Esta se desarrolla en una ecoaldea, donde unos cuantos desarraigados se encerraron antes de que se terminara el combustible fósil y la sociedad española —y la mundial— colapsara. Nada que objetar al escenario escogido ni a la vida que se muestra en ella, aunque, para mi gusto, de forma escasa: habría agradecido más escenas que reflejaran la sociedad construida por esos pocos iluminados que supieron adelantarse al cataclismo.

El transcurso de la acción principal sucede en el 2014, seis años después de que se fundara la ecoaldea y un par de años tras el colapso (aunque admito que a mí no me quedó clara la fecha en la que el autor sitúa este hito). La elección de un tiempo tan corto entre el eclipse de nuestra sociedad y los hechos narrados, en mi caso, se convirtió en un obstáculo. Por mucho que lo intenté no conseguí creerme que una sociedad como la nuestra, tan hipócrita, sí, pero tan puritana también, pueda pasar en tan poco tiempo de llevarse las manos a la cabeza por que se hayan encontrado trazas de carne de caballo en algunos alimentos, indignados por la repugnancia, al

canibalismo del salvaje. Tal como yo lo veo, se exige al lector que asuma una evolución radical sin tratamiento dentro del argumento. Espero que no se me malinterprete, no es que dude de la posibilidad de que el ser humano pueda llegar en la actualidad a tal aberración —solo se necesita escribir en un buscador cualquiera las palabras «Congo» y «canibalismo» para comprobarlo—. Tampoco cuestiono que el tiempo en el que se llegue a esa barbarie sean seis o dos años. Lo que pretendo señalar es que, si el tiempo transcurrido es tan corto, no se muestre la evolución social para que ésta resulte verosímil al lector. Probablemente, si el lapso fuera mayor, no sería necesaria esta explicación porque podríamos asumir que los años han ayudado a tal degradación.

En una estética demasiado parecida a las películas de Mad Max para mi gusto, los personajes de la ecoaldea reciben a unos extraviados que no presagian nada malo. A estos personajes se les presenta como dos jóvenes que buscan formar parte de la ya famosa ecoaldea, aunque siempre desde esa distancia emocional que plantea el narrador y que nos aleja de percibirlos o bien como una amenaza (que hubiera servido, al menos, de indicio) o bien como unos posibles aliados. Los miembros de la ecoaldea, reacios a permitirles el paso en una primera instancia, los admiten al enterarse de que tienen condones. No sacaría a colación tal detalle, por considerarlo anecdótico, si no fuera porque esta resulta ser una pieza fundamental del cierre de la novela.

Un desenlace que adolece de un final sorpresa en el que el autor ha escondido ciertas piezas sin permitirle al lector participar en el juego de componer el puzle. Y en el que vuelve a prevalecer el distanciamiento, componiendo un remate que a mí entender está más cerca del chiste que de una novela prospectiva.

La estructura en la que se divide la obra tampoco me parece especialmente afortunada, debido a la suspensión constante de la acción principal. Entre los capítulos en los que se presentan a los personajes y sus vidas pasadas (muchas de ellas no aportan gran cosa a la acción principal y dan la sensación de ser inclusiones caprichosas más que necesarias), los fragmentos del blog del protagonista (que parecen disertaciones del propio autor que bien podrían tener mayor sentido en otro medio y a las que no les quito el mérito como ensayos que provocan la reflexión), las citas de otros autores (algunas de ellas muy interesantes) y los pasajes que cuentan lo ocurrido en el pasado de la ecoaldea, la acción principal se reduce a unas ochenta y cinco páginas.

Me temo que no pude sumergirme en la propuesta.

Hubo un momento en el que dejó de ser relevante la prospección para que tomaran protagonismo ciertas fallas narrativas que no conseguí pasar por alto.

Doble Hélice: *Cenital*

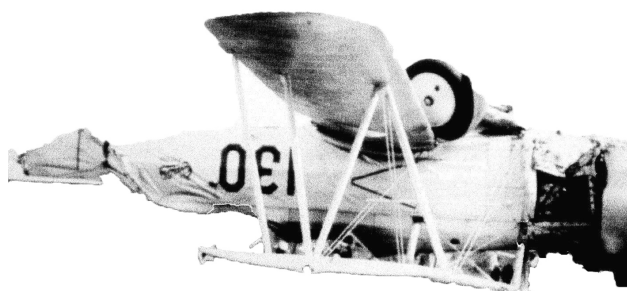
Cenital me resultó interesante por el planteamiento durante las primeras páginas, pero según iba avanzando me costó cada vez más creerme la historia e identificarme con los personajes.

Considero que esta novela habría resultado más efectiva si, en vez de presentar personaje tras personaje en una suspensión de la acción, se hubieran caracterizado a esos mismos actores dentro de la historia principal, sin que se viera frenado el devenir de la narración. Además, me aventuro a añadir que esos personajes hubieran ganado en visibilidad ante el lector, por lo que su impronta habría sido mayor.

Algunos de estos personajes están muy bien contruidos, como el de Braqui o el de Teo, pero en el formato en el que se encuentran sus historias pierden fuerza, al no tener apenas relación con la acción principal (Braqui participa de ella de manera más directa, pero Teo casi no aparece). La sensación que me dejaron estos capítulos en los que se resumen las vidas de los ecoaldeanos es que estaba ante un abanico de personajes cautivadores a los que no se les había dejado participar en la acción.

Para terminar, me parece que las cacofonías, las rimas internas, el ritmo fraccionado, el abuso de juegos de palabras y de retruécanos, de redundancias y de frases efectistas, hacen que la lectura se resienta.

En resumen, *Cenital* me resultó interesante por el planteamiento durante las primeras páginas, pero según iba avanzando me costó cada vez más creerme la historia e identificarme con los personajes. Entiendo que el autor prefirió centrar su atención en las cuestiones puramente especulativas, pero considero que la forma en este caso ha empobrecido el fondo, que podría haber resultado mucho más atractivo si se hubieran cuidado más el estilo y ciertos recursos narrativos. ●



Doble Hélice: *Cenital*

Laura Luna
Escritora

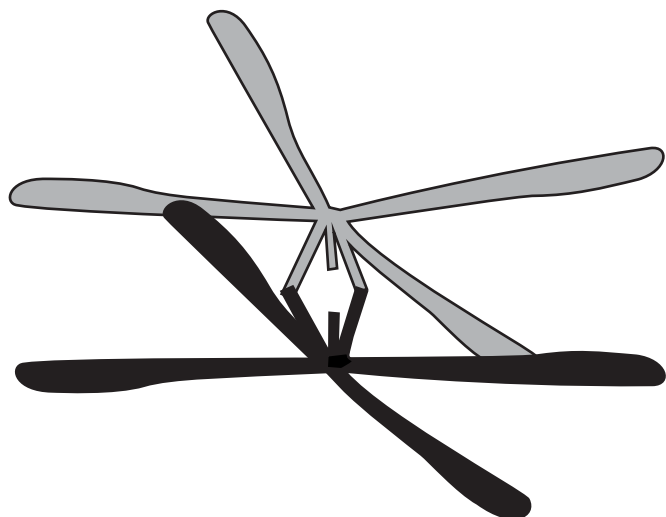
Cenital o un futuro muy probable

Durante la época de crisis afloran las obras sobre catástrofes mundiales y distopías. Releemos *1984* convencidos de que Orwell solo se equivocó en el año, *Los juegos del hambre* (*The Hunger Games*) introducen al público juvenil en esta temática y el género Z aflora en las librerías como una plaga del mismo tipo. Nos gusta evadirnos a otras realidades peores que la actual, como una especie de consuelo ante un mundo que no es agradable, pero que podría ser peor.

Sin embargo, para crear una distopía no es necesario irse 300 años al futuro. Para recrear el fin del mundo no hacen falta naves espaciales ni hordas de zombis. La época actual nos proporciona los materiales necesarios, justo delante de nuestras narices: la crisis del petróleo, el capitalismo, el agotamiento de los recursos, el descontento latente de la población. Y con estos ingredientes, una narración impecable, un vocabulario rico y un estilo mordaz, Emilio Bueso crea *Cenital*.

La novela trata sobre Destral, un antisistema que prevé el inminente fin del mundo que, guiado por aspiraciones mesiánicas, reúne un colectivo para sobrevivir en Cenital, la ecoaldea que da nombre a la obra. La historia se va tejiendo poco a poco, entre los discursos políticos incendiarios del protagonista, la vida en la ecoaldea y la presentación de cada uno de sus habitantes. Durante toda la lectura se cierne esa inquietud, ese presentimiento de que todo es una olla a presión que va a estallar de un momento a otro. Y al final estalla, con un giro inesperado, en una explosión brusca que hace que al terminar el libro, el lector se pregunte si han arrancado páginas.

En general, la novela me ha encantado. Muestra una distopía realista y creíble, con referencias a la actualidad que la dotan de una verosimilitud escalofriante. Sus personajes están bien dibujados y poseen buen relieve, sin caer en estereotipos absurdos; todos presentan historias estrafalarias, que les han llevado a convertirse en esperpénticos al más puro estilo de Valle-Inclán. A pesar de que no todos tienen la misma relevancia en la historia, Bueso, al profundizar en cada uno dedicándole un capítulo, hace que todos sean iguales en importancia, que cobren vida y que el lector sienta interés por cada



La novela muestra una distopía realista y creíble, con referencias a la actualidad que la dotan de una verosimilitud escalofriante.

Doble Hélice: *Cenital*

uno de ellos. Asimismo, se agradece leer una novela con un estilo narrativo tan bien cuidado, mordaz y realista que no deja de lado imágenes bellas ni metáforas que golpean en hábiles juegos de palabras, de los que especialmente me han gustado dos: «el testigo que decide hablar y no callar para siempre», que es la mejor frase que describe a Destral y su papel en la novela, y la función como banda sonora de la canción de «Faint» (Linkin Park) durante el capítulo de Dispo, en el que la letra de la canción se amolda a la historia del joven palabra por palabra.

De la narración también cabe destacar los discursos políticos de Destral, escritos en clave de publicación bloguera que ayudan al lector a ponerse en la piel del internauta que es en otros momentos, que navega por la red debatiendo sobre el problema socioeconómico actual y se ve alentado por artículos de opinión de gente que conoce con más o menos profundidad la situación. Otro detalle que me ha agradado y que valoro mucho en una lectura es el tratamiento de los diálogos; estos son naturales, reflejan la oralidad de los personajes, algo que se ve muy poco en la literatura actual y que, sin embargo, es fundamental para que un personaje cobre vida.

Pero por encima de todo, es una historia que deja poso, que te sacude la conciencia y te deja reflexionando sobre el destino al que nos lleva el tren descarrilado al que llamamos crisis. Este es el motivo principal por el que me ha gustado, porque tiene lo que busco en un libro, tanto a la hora de leerlo como de crearlo. Una historia no sólo debe estar ejecutada con una buena técnica literaria, sino que debe emocionar. Ante las páginas, el lector debe llorar (con o sin vergüenza), reír a carcajada limpia o no irse a la cama tranquilo. Y, tras pasar la última página, debe recordar esa obra días después, semanas e incluso años después, que rememore frases y párrafos (aunque no con una exactitud al 100 %) y que se le despierte el deseo de releerlo, a pesar de conocer todas las sorpresas y giros finales. Yo creo que Emilio Bueso ha logrado ese efecto, el efecto al que, personalmente, aspiro como escritora. *Cenital* es un libro que se acaba recordando tras haberlo terminado de leer, que se asoma a la memoria al tropezarse con una noticia más sobre el declive económico y te susurra la pregunta: «¿Y si acaba pasando?». Orwell se equivocó en el año, pero tal vez Emilio Bueso ha tenido más puntería y nos está presentado un futuro próximo y nada incierto. ●



Por encima de todo, es una historia que deja poso, que te sacude la conciencia y te deja reflexionando sobre el destino al que nos lleva el tren descarrilado al que llamamos crisis.

Normas de publicación

La revista *Hélice: reflexiones críticas sobre ficción especulativa* está abierta a la recepción de críticas, ensayos e investigaciones de cualquier ámbito que tenga que ver con las literaturas prospectiva, de ciencia ficción, fantástica, maravillosa o de terror.

Se aceptan artículos en inglés y español.

Formato de las colaboraciones:

Los trabajos se enviarán en formato DOC o RTF.

Información del autor

Con el fin de contactar con los autores, éstos incluirán la siguiente información:

Nombre y apellido(s).

Dirección de correo electrónico.

Citas, referencias bibliográficas en el texto y bibliografía final

Se respetará su forma según la voluntad de los autores, pero se ha de mantener totalmente la coherencia con el sistema elegido.

Notas

Las notas irán al pie de página.

Otras consideraciones:

Si el artículo contiene ilustraciones, la calidad de éstas deberá permitir su reproducción. Deberán enviarse en formato JPG.

Las imágenes deben insertarse en el texto acompañadas de un pie de foto en el que se indique el número de la imagen (se numerarán correlativamente) y el título o leyenda de la misma, si fuera necesario. Cuando el texto haga referencia a una imagen se debe indicar en el cuerpo de texto de qué imagen se trata.

Envío y recepción de originales

Los artículos se remitirán como archivo DOC o RTF a la dirección: revistahelice@xatafi.com, desde donde se acusará recibo de los trabajos en el plazo más breve posible.

Los autores de los originales son los únicos responsables de los contenidos de sus artículos, así como de solicitar los permisos pertinentes para reproducir obras, textos o ilustraciones cuya cita en el texto requiera la autorización previa de otro autor.

Selección y publicación de artículos

Se valorará la originalidad del tema seleccionado, la aportación de nuevas perspectivas y la calidad del contenido de los trabajos.

Observación final

En caso de duda o si desean información complementaria, pueden dirigirse a:

Fernando Ángel Moreno (helicefer@gmail.com)

Mariano Martín Rodríguez (martioa@hotmail.com)

Submission rules

The journal *Hélice: reflexiones críticas sobre ficción especulativa* publishes papers, essays and reviews related to prospective literature in general, science fiction, fantastical fiction, fantasy and weird and horror fiction.

Articles will be accepted in English and Spanish.

Format of the papers

The text will be sent in DOC or RTF formats.

Author details

To enable journal staff to contact authors, the following information should be included:

First name(s) and surname(s).

E-mail address.

Quotations, bibliographic references and bibliography

The author can choose the form of its quotations, bibliographic references, but he or she must be consistent in the use of the chosen system.

Footnotes

The notes must be located at the bottom of the page.

Other points

If the article contains illustrations, they must have a sufficiently good quality to be reproduced. They should be sent in JPG format.

Pictures will be placed in the text and they should enclose a caption which show the picture number (the pictures will be consecutively numbered) and its title. Author must clearly indicate where in the text the illustrations are to appear.

Submission and receipt of original works

Articles are to be submitted, as DOC files, to the following address: **revistahelice@xatafi.com**. The editors will confirm receipt of the works as soon as possible.

The authors of the original text are solely responsible for the content of their articles, and also for obtaining due permission to reproduce works, texts or illustrations, the inclusion of which requires prior authorisation from another author.

Selection and publication of articles

Originality, innovation, new perspectives and quality of works will be most valued.

Final remark:

In case of doubt, or for information requests, you are kindly invited to ask:

Pr. Dr. Fernando Ángel Moreno (helicefer@gmail.com)

Dr. Mariano Martín Rodríguez (martioa@hotmail.com).

