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**THE POSTMODERN TRACES OF  
PÉREZ-REVERTE'S NOVELS**

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**THE POSTMODERN TRACES OF  
PÉREZ-REVERTE'S NOVELS**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

To the fiction characters who made me love literature and  
to the person who introduced me to the pleasure of reading: my father.

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# **THE POSTMODERN TRACES OF PÉREZ-REVERTE'S NOVELS**

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This dissertation situates the core of Pérez-Reverte's literary work in the context of literary creation in Spain and in relation to its roots, analyzing it as a response to the postmodern world where it was created. One central question is posed in this study: is Pérez-Reverte a postmodern writer? In order to answer this question, I explore his work according to theories of postmodernism, which helps me discern which elements of his production can be considered modern and which postmodern. The main critics I use for this are Julia Kristeva, Linda Hutcheon, Umberto Eco, and Simone de Beauvoir. These critics were chosen for their deep understanding of the three main topics that I consider relevant to prove Pérez-Reverte's ascription to postmodernism: his usage of intertextuality, his treatment of history and his construction of characters.

My analysis focuses on Pérez-Reverte's long novels (his so-called "novelas gordas"), primarily on *El Maestro de esgrima*, *El Club Dumas* and *La Reina del Sur*. These works are the most representative of his writing as well as the richest in references. However, some other works are analyzed when needed. Through the study of these

novels, I show that Pérez-Reverte's work has much evolved in the span of two decades (his first novel, *El Húsar*, was published in 1986). During this time, he grew in the level of intricacy of his plots, and complexity of his characters and style have substantially developed. Moreover, the structure of his novels has gradually moved away from the traditional detective novel pattern, to incorporate more original features.

Similarly, this evolution is relevant to the question of whether Pérez-Reverte's novels are truly postmodern. It is difficult to briefly answer this question since he progressively incorporates postmodern features in his work. Indeed, we could consider that in the continuum from modernity to postmodernity, this writer leans more towards modernity at first, whereas later more towards postmodernity. In order to study this process, I focus my attention on his usage of intertextuality, history and construction of characters. In those three areas, Pérez-Reverte begins by following his models (i.e. mainly detective and action novels) very closely, but soon drifts away from closed structures and perfect moral characters, mixing truth and fiction as well as 'highbrow' and popular literature.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation closely examines the work of the Spanish contemporary writer Arturo Pérez-Reverte, who became particularly well-known in Spain in the decade of the 1990s. In the study of his work, special interest will be paid to discovering the main postmodern traces of his novels. His use of intertextuality, history and construction of characters prove to be the most relevant when trying to establish his adscription to postmodernism. However, this will not be an ascription easy to make since some elements in his work are still modern. The theoretical frame applied, therefore, will be the theory of postmodernism.

In the present chapter, I intend to briefly present Pérez-Reverte himself. My aim is to portray his journalistic profile as well as his literary career, since I believe that they are intertwined. Thus, careful attention will be paid to the years of publication and to the awards he won. Pérez-Reverte has rapidly changed from being an author just for young people to a writer studied by many scholars. This process of acknowledgement will be considered here. Afterwards, and to better understand the extent of his originality in the Spanish literary arena, we will summarily study the context where his work appeared. On the other hand, it will also be necessary to approach the theoretical frame that gave birth to literary creations similar to Pérez-Reverte's. Consequently, postmodernism will be examined.

### **II. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Arturo Pérez-Reverte (born in Cartagena –Spain-, November 25, 1951) is celebrated today due to the long list of novels that he has published, from 1986 to the

present. According to many, he deserves to be called the best-selling Spanish writer as well as the best-known outside the Spanish border. With a long series of awards and honors both in journalism and literature, he is definitely the most accessible writer to young readers in Spanish literature today, as well as one of the most broadly-read beyond Spanish borders.

Before he began to be famous due to his writing, he was already known to the Spanish public through his journalistic career. He worked for twenty-one years as a war correspondent. The last nine of those years, he was the face for the war conflicts in the most-followed Spanish news (TVE1). The preceding twelve years, however, he worked for the written press, at the newspaper *El Pueblo*, where he began to publish in 1973. He has observed wars in Lebanon, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Romania, the Gulf War and Yugoslavia, just to name a few. Due to his work on the Balkans conflict, the last war he reported on, he won the 'Príncipe de Asturias' award<sup>1</sup> (in 1993).

His work as war correspondent for TVE1 was key for his fame. He was always associated with serious conflicts, either at war, or inside Spain, where he worked in programs related to marginal social life. In radio, he produced *La ley de la calle* (for which he received the Ondas award, in 1993) and in TVE, he hosted *Código uno*. In both of these programs, he was covering similar topics: researching crimes or by preparing documentaries on topics such as Spanish drinking habits or drug use. He often interviewed people involved in such problems, people from all walks of life, mainly low-class. Researching and experiencing war and crime scenes first-hand left him with a dark sense of humor and a particularly somber vision of life, as he has repeatedly admitted. Nevertheless, these experiences helped him afterwards in his writing career, as he had a

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<sup>1</sup> Awarded by the Spanish crown to the best achievements during that year in a certain field, in this case, journalism.

wide repertoire to choose from, in terms of characters, morality types and vernacular speech variants.

In addition, he made himself known to the Spanish public through his articles, published each weekend in *El Semanal* (a publication of Grupo Correo). Since 1991, these articles reviewed Spanish society from a very critical point of view (later be reflected in his literary creations). This critical attitude has gained him comparison with Larra, since he reveals an idealist, nostalgic and always critical vision of life. In his first articles, a large amount of discontent was revealed, drawn in very dark tones, influenced by the tragedy of the Yugoslavian civil war (which he was then covering). Afterwards, he turned to use that weekly space to recreate daily images of Spanish life, where the reader could perceive his disapproval of the general trend of cynicism and immorality. His usual tone during the 90s is lonely and disenchanted, resounding like a voice in the desert, faced with a society that lives too comfortably, in oblivion of the moral principles that he was once taught. At that point, his articles showed nostalgia for an idealistic time now gone, never to return, although it can still be recreated in literature. Due to the preoccupations shown in these articles, he obtained the Correo Award for Human Rights in 1997. After the turn of the century, a change can be perceived in his articles, becoming less dark, more relaxed.

## **A. LITERARY CAREER**

His first novel was published in 1986, when his journalistic career was already well-established (after thirteen years of journalism). *El Húsar*, though, attracted little attention. It presented Pérez-Reverte's reflections on war, dramatized through the experience of a Napoleonic soldier fighting in the Spanish Independence War. Because

he was renowned as an authorized voice to treat war topics, crimes and base instincts, this novel seemed appropriate and not too distant from his previous writings.

However, his next novel, *El Maestro de Esgrima* (1988), received much better reviews and much more critical attention. This text, that has been called Galdosian for several reasons (e.g. its vocabulary, time period, descriptions reminding us of the literature of manners, etc.), was much more complex and successful than his earlier novel. With this publication, Pérez-Reverte began to have another facet for the Spanish public, even though it was still not taken seriously. The reason for this distrust was the genre chosen by Pérez-Reverte: the mystery-detective novel, taking place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and following the model of the ‘folletín’ (i.e. novel published in installments).

Neither of these two characteristics (detective novel plot and ‘folletín’ structure) were critically esteemed. They were understood as characteristics that mainly attracted an uncultivated young public, who is still not able to read difficult texts, and therefore, cannot appreciate high-culture techniques. Instead, according to literary critical suppositions, young readers prefer action, intrigue and easy-to-read stories where the main element is the plot itself; a principal element in all of Pérez-Reverte’s novels. At a superficial level, these structural elements are the ones that are most obvious. However, other elements that separate Revertian novels from the traditional detective pattern were at first not taken into account. Consequently, he was quickly assigned to the group of journalists or media personalities that, profiting from their fame, sell books, even though they lack the necessary talent; one-time hits. This first reaction to Pérez-Reverte’s work was a consequence of the prevalent idea that opposes mass culture to a more discerning minoritarian culture (an idea that will be further developed when studying postmodernism).

His next novel, *La Tabla de Flandes*, appeared two years later (1990), and gained him the recognition outside of Spain that he was not receiving inside his own country. For this novel, he was awarded the Grand Prix of detective novels in France (1993), and the prize from the Swedish Academy for Detective Novels (1994), as well as other minor distinctions. The French magazine *Lire* chose Pérez-Reverte as one of the best foreign novelists for this novel (1993), and the New York Times lists it as one of the five best foreign novels published in 1993 in the US (Alfaguara.com 2-3). The major foreign interest on this novel attracted some respect from the critics inside Spain, where Pérez-Reverte became a finalist of the National Critic's Award (in 1991 –Belmonte, *Sonrisa* 11). Working with a complex plot based on intrigue created by combining crime and erudition, he began to be better known to the broad public. After this novel received considerable attention, *El Maestro* was reedited, selling many more copies than in its first printing (Mora 1). With *La Tabla*, Pérez-Reverte began his long-lasting relation with Editorial Alfaguara, which published all his following novels as well as the reedition of *El Maestro*.

Another publication strategy that Pérez-Reverte tried was actual 'folletín', publication in installments. His works *La Sombra del águila* and *Un Asunto de honor* were first published in this way, and one year later in book format. They were first published in *El País Semanal*, divided into four installments that would match up with the four issues published during August. *La Sombra del águila* appeared during 1993. This narration again treats war themes from a historical perspective, using Napoleonic times as his context. However, this time the protagonists are Spanish soldiers, conscripted by Napoleon, fighting in the Russian campaigns. Pérez-Reverte introduces here a bitter-sweet tone, with which he criticizes the Spanish personality, as well as the French character, in an ironic, critical and empathetic way. *Un Asunto de honor*, on the other

hand, came out the following year, August 1994, and can be understood as a hybrid between a fairy tale and a road movie.

*El Club Dumas* (1993), his next full-length novel (or ‘novela de las gordas’, as Pérez-Reverte likes to refer to them), was received with greater acclaim in the critical world. Two reasons may be given for this change in the reception. First, there was a change of attitude in the literary world: the literary trend emphasizing story-telling was receiving respect and becoming established at that time. In addition, even if reluctant critics were not inspired by this new tendency, Pérez-Reverte was attracting more and more attention outside of Spain. On this occasion, due to the publication of this novel, he obtained the Rosenkratz Award from the Academy of Criminology, in Denmark (1994). In this novel, he combines again his particular detective scheme with more sophisticated elements, a procedure that had already been used in his preceding novels. With the publication of this novel, he had to be taken seriously within Spanish borders, as an existing and stable figure of the Spanish literary arena.

As Pérez-Reverte consolidated his career as a writer, he began to reconsider his relation with journalism. By May 93, in an interview with Rosa Montero, he can be heard voicing second thoughts about his media career, and especially about his position in programs like *Código Uno* (for TVE) and *La Ley de la calle* (for RNE), where he is crossing the line between journalism and reality shows. During that interview, he recognizes that leaving journalism is at that point just a matter of time:

ahora es cuando puedo escribir novelas, cuando puedo quedarme tranquilo, cuando lo que escribo me da suficiente dinero como para decirme: ‘Bueno, pues dejo el periodismo si quiero’. Porque eso de la televisión... Todo eso lo voy a dejar. Te doy mi palabra de honor que dentro de cuatro o cinco años no estaré ahí, me estoy retirando” (Montero, *Arturo* 4).

However, he did not wait that long to leave journalism. In November 93, he left the production of the TVE program *Código Uno* because, according to him, “it contained junk” (Agencias 1, *my translation*). His radio program followed. By February 94, he had already decided to leave *La Ley de la calle*, which had been on the air for 5 years.

By April 1994, it is pretty clear that Pérez-Reverte had already decided to leave his media career. That is the date of publication of *Territorio Comanche*, a departure in theme and form from his earlier publications. In its length and structure, it is not a novel or a short story, neither an opinion article nor a documentary or memoir, rather it is all five at the same time. It treats a real war, describing the human side of it, as is customary in the documentary, adding some of his own reflections and opinions, as may happen in the opinion article, and including many of his own autobiographical experiences as war journalist, which could be good material for a memoir. Moreover, the vocabulary and register used, as well as the somber tone of his reflections put this text in direct relation with his weekly articles in *El Semanal*.

All together *Territorio Comanche* is not a text that can be categorized under one clear-cut definition. However, with respect to the content, it can clearly be regarded as a farewell to the war correspondent life. Unfortunately, it also meant a complete farewell for him from TVE, as it provoked a series of accusations from TVE’s board of directors. The cause was Pérez-Reverte’s detailed portrayal of war correspondents’ life *in situ*. This entailed calling people by their real names and explaining their routine, relationships, their morality issues when in war zone, and even some illegal activities correspondents had to do to survive in this ‘territorio comanche’: a place where conventional social laws were lost, while survival and producing the daily report on time, remained imperative.

After the publication of this work, several people felt offended. As a result, Ramón Colom, director of TVE at the time, filed a legal complaint against him (ordering



an investigation for the illegal use of funds described in *Territorio*). By April 30<sup>th</sup>, Pérez-Reverte himself resigned, “harto de todos los jefes”, in a letter he sent to Ramón Colom and Jorge García Candau (Madrid 1). Ten days later, TVE made public their own dismissal of Pérez-Reverte.

During that year, 1994, Pérez-Reverte began to be given much more acknowledgment for his work as a writer than before. After eight years of continuous publication, he was accepted as a steady element inside the Spanish literary world. Proof of that is how Pérez-Reverte was given more space that year in the review of the Madrid book fair than before, treating him as a mass culture phenomenon, a bestseller writer who had grown popular and important in record time (Mora R. 1).

After dropping out of journalism, his career as a writer has been quite productive. Since then, he has published three long novels: *La Piel del Tambor* (1995), *La Carta esférica* (2000) and *La Reina del sur* (2002); five shorter ones corresponding to the series of *Las aventuras del Capitán Alatriste*: *El Capitán Alatriste* (1996), *Limpieza de sangre* (1997), *El sol de Breda* (1998), *El Oro del rey* (2000) and *El Caballero del jubón amarillo* (2004); and three books compiling his weekly opinion articles: *Obra breve* (1995), *Patente de corso* (1998) and *Con ánimo de ofender* (2001). Also he has prepared scripts and collaborated on several others. He did his own adaptation of *Territorio Comanche* to the screen, and wrote the script for the movie *Gitano*, as well as for the two TV series, *Camino de Santiago*, and *Los últimos de Filipinas* (Sanz 2). Even though he says that he takes three years in preparing a novel, one year for documenting and two for the actual writing process (working nine to three), it must be true that he is a skilled multipurpose person, who is able to work on several things at the same time. If not, it would be difficult to understand the variety and fruitfulness of his work. As he explained to Rosa Montero, he relies on good organization (Montero, *Arturo* 1).

Bad reviews of the 'Pérez-Reverte phenomenon' claim that it is due to a very well-orchestrated marketing technique (thanks to the extensive support of the very powerful publisher and media conglomerate Grupo Prisa). The fact that he was a media personality prior to his literary experience may also have contributed to his success. However, denying any literary value to his work would be excessive and probably caused by a very superficial approach to Pérez-Reverte's work. Besides, one more factor to take into account is that after closing the door to journalism, Pérez-Reverte devoted himself solely to the literary world, which may have resulted in a rise of popularity as well as in notable productivity.

While some of Pérez-Reverte's success may be attributed to good marketing and name-recognition associated with his media activities, I will argue throughout this dissertation that his novels are worthy of critical analysis due to many other more substantial, far-reaching considerations which are significant for their literary and cultural import, and merit close academic examination. I consider that Pérez-Reverte's work speaks so evocatively and persuasively of fundamental aspects of contemporary Spanish culture that they would no doubt have earned him widespread popularity and critical acclaim without the marketing support they have been given by Grupo Prisa, even if popularity and acclaim came at a slower pace. I intend, thus, to search for the elements that can establish his literary value. Therefore, I will analyze the most prominent features that illustrate the complexity and careful composition of his work. For this purpose, I will concentrate mainly on his full-length novels published before June 2003.

### **III. CHAPTER DIVISIONS**

The remainder of this introductory chapter further explores trends in contemporary Spanish culture and literature that have resulted in its postmodern traits,

which reflect in the increasing legitimacy of popular genres, and in a growing emphasis on the well-told, accessible and involving stories as a prevailing characteristic of contemporary Spanish narrative fiction. Subsequent chapters are organized around the three most significant aspects of postmodernism in Pérez-Reverte's novels, which are intertextuality, the ironic representation of history and his treatment and constructions of characters.

Intertextuality, discussed in Chapter 2, can be defined narrowly as the evocation of one literary text in another. That happens because "no text can live in isolation because each and every text exists within and among other texts, throughout its relations to them" (Jordan 119). In a broader sense, this term can encompass other modes of cultural production such as visual art, mythology, oral culture, games, etc. For my study, I will be using a restricted concept, following Kristeva and Bakhtin's theories on the topic.

Several of Pérez-Reverte's novels can be studied with respect to intertextuality. *El Maestro de Esgrima* and *El Club Dumas* are rich in the amount of texts cited directly, paraphrased, referred to, etc. Other texts, although with a much smaller occurrence, can be found in *La Sombra del Águila*, *Un Asunto de honor*, *La Reina del Sur* and *La Carta esférica*. All these intertexts are evidence for the author's erudition, while, at the same time, holding specific functions within the text.

His historical representation, the topic of Chapter 3, is always grounded in official history although at the same time being critical of it. His deep knowledge of history leads him to search for the truth and to know more than what official history has always publicized. It is not a mere recreation of history. His retelling of history, always from an unconventional angle, leads the reader to conclusions never implied by the official history. This revision falls under the rubric of neo-historicism. I will rely on Linda Hutcheon's theories about historiographic metafiction and Umberto Eco's comments on

postmodern ironic history, as context for my analysis. The novels analyzed in this chapter will be *El Húsar*, *El Maestro de esgrima*, *La Sombra del Águila*, touching also on his short story 'Jodía Pavía'. The series of *El Capitán Alatriste*, even though they would be very suitable to be studied under this theory, will not be reviewed here, due to space and time limitation, since they are part of a still-growing collection.

Finally, Chapter 4 examines this author's construction of characters. I would like to analyze here the characters who are most representative of his work, those who will make us appreciate his typical style. The central characters studied will be those who are the most attractive and charismatic: Jaime Astarloa, Lucas Corso and Teresa Mendoza. When studying them, attention will be paid to a certain evolution that happens in the way Pérez-Reverte represents his characters. This shift towards a more complex construction of his characters will be addressed. To better understand the relation of protagonists with their foils, an explanation of otherness will be here completed (mainly focusing on the theories provided by Simone de Beauvoir on the topic).

In my concluding remarks, Chapter 5, I intend to search for conclusions based on the previous analysis. Thus, I will try to define the extent to which Pérez-Reverte's novels are postmodern, and the limits that circumscribe postmodernism in his work. At such point, I will address in a more direct way the fundamental questions of my study, such as his ascription to postmodernism and his ultimate literary value, as well as the implications of his status as bestseller in relation to their consumption and revision. Finally, I expect to reach a coherent, well-founded conclusion about Pérez-Reverte's literary value.

#### **IV. CONTEXT FOR PÉREZ-REVERTE'S WRITING**

To complete this introductory chapter, it is important to put Pérez-Reverte's work in context, in order to better comprehend his true value and originality. Thus, this next section will first try to describe the state of affairs of Spanish society and literature, examining the situation of the Spanish literary arena in the years prior to Pérez-Reverte's literary publications. In addition, special attention will be paid to describing the postmodern traces of this context. Therefore, before we concentrate on the Spanish society and literature, it will be necessary to define what we are referring to with the term postmodernism.

##### **A. POSTMODERN THEORY**

To approach this very slippery term, we will review the theory accumulated about this topic. First a definition will be attempted. For this, its periodization, the causes for its appearance and the criteria it includes will be reviewed. Afterwards, we will examine the repercussions of this new thought in society and literature. And finally, it will be necessary to examine the scope of its effect specifically in the Spanish arena.

###### ***1. Defining postmodernism***

Postmodernity is a term that has been extensively used and applied to the most varied fields. Consequently, it has almost lost its meaning and the possibility of a clear-cut definition. Given this context, it is easier to find articles treating the difficulty of defining the term, than articles approaching a definition.

Whereas Vance Holloway recognizes that “todavía no existe un consenso crítico sobre su significación” (40), an idea repeated by Antonio Sobejano-Morán (who comments again on the lack of consensus –95-, as well as on the heterogeneity of criteria –ibid); others go as far as to negate the existence of the very thing. Brian McHale, for

instance, asserts that “the referent of ‘postmodernism’, the *thing* to which the term claims to refer, *does not exist*” (4). However, the existence of an ample body of theory about this topic can be easily proven. In it, we can find a good number of definitions that have been proposed to demarcate the scope of this very concept.

#### **a. Definitions**

According to Jrade, “‘the postmodern’ is a label that is now used to designate cultural trends that are linked to socioeconomic and political developments of late capitalism and postindustrial society with its virtual reality, electronic communications and cyberspace” (Jrade 7). It is well known that postmodern thought, mood, or sensibility is linked to the changes and new context of our society and therefore, this term appears frequently related to the “high tech media society, emergent processes of change and transformation” (Best and Kellner 3). Still, it is important to identify what those changes are as well as where this transformation is leading our society. According to Best and Kellner, late capitalist social changes have some direct costs for us. They are “producing increased cultural fragmentation, changes in the experience of space and time, and new modes of experience, subjectivity and culture.” (Best and Kellner 3).

Therefore, if these are the consequences of living in the postmodern stage, it is clear that we are not addressing a concept limited to the artistic domain, but rather a notion that affects all walks of life. Its broad scope may be a key reason causing difficulty to restrict the term and define it. In any case, and for the purpose of this study, the reflection of postmodern times and its consequences will be mainly guided towards its impact on the literary field and creation.

#### **b. Date of appearance**

To further define postmodernism, it will be useful to demarcate the specific timing of this change, trying afterwards to explore the reasons that led to it. In fact, there is some agreement about the timing, although not so much about the reasons why this occurred. According to Mario Valdés, “postmodernism refers to the second half of the twentieth century in Western Europe and the Americas, and somewhat later in Africa and Asia.” (Valdés, 455). A similar date is set by Gonzalo Navajas, who argues for the late 50s as the moment of appearance of the postmodernity, and proposes a differentiation of modernism and postmodernism based on a shift in knowledge (“un movimiento intelectual y estético euroamericano que se separa de la episteme modernista y propone una diferente” -as quoted in Sobejano-Morán, 96). For others, marxist thinkers such as Jameson, the main difference between modernity and postmodernity relies not so much on knowledge but on the economy, on the change from a capitalism of production to one of consumption (ibid). This economic change would once more coincide very closely with the date proposed by both Valdés and Navajas.

Nevertheless, some theorists judge that postmodernity began earlier. Lyotard considers that there are two differentiated phases of postmodernism, the first one beginning at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the second coinciding with the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lyotard’s first phase would mean the decline of modernity, the questioning of master narratives; whereas the second phase develop during late capitalism, in a postindustrial society where rationalism and mercantilism rule every area of society. During this second phase, master narratives are increasingly challenged. For some critics, this is indeed the defining trait: the move from belief to mistrust in master narratives (Holloway 43).

### **c. Causes:**

Now that the timing of this process has been indicated, I will discuss the causes that led to this transformation. What did exactly provoke this shift? Again, there are different views according to the ideological starting point. Whereas Marxist thinkers consider that it has an economic foundation, others consider that it has been motivated by the pressure of third-world countries on the Western world. Therefore, Jameson would answer that this transformation was provoked by “una ola de influencia militar americana, dominación económica en todo el mundo, desarrollo de una tecnología entroncada con el nuevo sistema mundial y la desintegración sufrida por el capitalismo de la burguesía hegemónica” (as quoted in Sobejano-Morán, 97).

Others, however, consider that the change was caused by the emergence of the literature and art of ‘marginalized countries’ (coinciding with the decolonization process, around the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century), and how they influenced the new artistic sensibility. According to Valdés, “the origins can be found in the revolt of the marginalized ends against the dominant cultural centers. In 1950, the cultural centers were in New York, Paris and to a lesser extent, in London, but not yet in Berlin or Rome. The margins were to be measured by the distance from these cultural capitals.” (Valdés 456). The strength and weight of these marginalized artists or thinkers (marginalized due to geography, color or sexual orientation -and thus, marginalized from the inside) influenced the centers: “It was when the novelists writing from the centre . . . recognized that it was impossible to write closed fiction any more, that the postmodern revolution ended the reign of modernism” (Valdés 461).

#### **d. Criteria:**

To delimitate the extension of this term, different criteria have been suggested. Some of the most significant are the ones that will now be examined. As noted, Lyotard



defines postmodernism as a shift in knowledge and in the position towards master narratives. In addition, a change in the attitude towards mass culture has been appreciated.

To approach a characterization of the postmodern period, Brian McHale begins by explaining the concept of 'dominant', which would refer to the trait that determines the change from one historical or ideological stage to the other. The presence or absence of a specific dominant in a certain moment demonstrates that the time period studied belongs to a particular stage (in history or thought). In this way, he is able to identify dominants for all periods of history.

According to him, the dominant for the modernist period is one of epistemological questioning, subsumed in the postmodern times and replaced by an ontological (post-cognitive) approach to the world. In postmodernism, the question, consequently, is not: "How can I interpret this world of which I am a part?", but "Which world is this?" (McHale, 9-10). If knowledge itself (cognitive or post-cognitive) is the basis of change, then, we can assert that the change applies to every area of life.

Another trait that can be similarly considered as a dominant is the position of modernism and postmodernism towards master narratives. Whereas modernism questions master narratives, it continues to live by them (belief in ideologies, freedom, democracy, idealism, etc. are still maintained); postmodernism has gone further in the criticism of these narratives, reaching the point of deconstruction and complete mistrust. 'Grands récits' of modernity (e.g. reason as the base of all progress, justice and kindness) are not believed to be the grounding of postmodern society, and even less of the human heart. It could then be said that modernity is a 'time of innocence' whereas postmodernism has become 'time of experience'.

Linda Hutcheon states very clearly her position about master narratives, understanding its challenge as the defining trait of postmodernism. Hence, she comprehends that “el postmodernismo es un movimiento de cuestionamiento y oposición, que desubica y desvaloriza absolutos ideológicos tales como los del padre, el Estado, Dios e incluso el sujeto humano” (as quoted in Holloway, 52). This questioning and opposition to the previous values is, therefore, the most prominent feature of the postmodern times and fiction according to her.

Sobejano-Morán also explores the application of this concept to postmodern fiction, where he appreciates how modernity’s master narratives, such as “–la dialéctica del espíritu, la emancipación del trabajador, acumulación de riqueza, etc.- han perdido credibilidad. La narrativa postmoderna está lejos de los grandes peligros, viajes, proezas u objetivos” (104). This prevalent mistrust spreads even to the vehicle of communication, the language itself. Not only the values, the beliefs of modern society but also their discourse, is deconstructed. Not believing in the language means not trusting the message (“La lengua, entonces, ya no comunica una realidad exterior trascendental” -Sobejano-Morán 104). It is no longer possible to elucidate if the element causing the fallacy is the content or the form.

Ihab Hassan, on the other hand, tries to reach a definition through a contraposition of the characteristics that define postmodernism and the previous stage, modernism. His definition is not limited to one prominent feature, but instead he provides us with a very complete list of binary oppositions (in which the first term would represent the modern attitude whereas the second would coincide with the postmodern): “purpose/ play, hierarchy/ anarchy, logos/ silence, totalization/ deconstruction, synthesis/ antithesis, centering/ dispersal, signified/ signifier, determinacy/ indeterminacy, transcendence/

immanence, etc.” (as quoted in Sobejano-Morán 97). Summarizing, postmodernism would be more ludic, anarchic, fragmentary and undetermined than modern art.

Another way in which we may define postmodernism is through its opposition to the modernist attitude towards art. Gonzalo Navajas understands that the main antagonism between modernism and postmodernism depends on the attitude towards mass culture (Navajas 221). While modernist art is purposely created for a minority, as individual expression of the author, without taking into account the constraints of the market, the postmodern artists expect the appraisal from the majority, and address in their works the topics and forms that mass culture anticipates. Postmodern artists flatter their public and often tailor their works to suit and profit from the market’s needs, whereas modernists intended to challenge them (as their well-known motto, ‘*épater la bourgeoisie*’, clearly shows).

## **B. SOCIETY**

Since this revolutionary process was happening inside the realm of society, it will be necessary to study the repercussions of postmodernism inside its concrete boundaries. With the appearance of postmodern thought in society, societal attitudes and values begin to change. First, it is possible to perceive an attack on previous and conventional principles, aggression that will achieve a modification in social values, affecting lifestyle. Two of the most important accomplishments are the new principles of pluralism and relativism. The study of the application of these concepts in relation to society will be of great value, as this concrete application will make easier the understanding of the postmodernist scope when seeing it exemplified and taking shape within the present society.

## ***1. Characteristics of the new mood***

According to Sontag, a mood change is observable by the mid-60s: a new feeling is in the air, a 'new sensibility', characterized by its challenge to "the rationalist need for content, meaning, and order" (as quoted by Best and Kellner 10). This new mood seems to be provoked by the new lifestyle. "Its advertising, credit plans, media, and commodity spectacles were encouraging gratification, hedonism, and the adoption of new habits, cultural forms and lifestyles" (Best & Kellner 15). Those 'new habits' will now be explained.

### **a. Lifestyle changes**

The transformation caused by technology's intrusion in daily life was accompanied by changes in societal values. The new sensibility fitted better this society's new context. Yet, it still remains the question of what happened first: the lifestyle influencing the values and society's needs, or the change of values shaping the lifestyle. It is difficult to answer this question. Very probably, they occurred as parallel processes in society's evolution.

Certain transformations occurred at the beginning of this mood. Urbanization and industrialization were common practices rapidly changing the landscape and socialization patterns of first world countries. Furthermore, the economic factors also imposed a very important alteration due to the mounting globalization. As Rosenberg puts it, this world "quickly gets urbanized and industrialized, as the birth rate declines and the population soars, a certain *sameness* develops everywhere. Clement Greenberg can meaningfully speak of a universal mass culture (surely *something new* under the sun)" (as quoted by Best & Kellner 7 –my stress). Sameness, globalization, universality are terms that describe our present society, as well as the high levels of industrialization, low birth rate, and the aging of population. Surprisingly, Rosenberg had foreseen this already in 1957.

However, what this section intends to do will not be to find out the causes or consequences of this shift, but rather to describe the defining traits of this new sensibility.

**b. Attack on previous values**

As was already commented, one of the most crucial traits of this new sensibility is the attack on long-established values. The postmodern mood challenges the foundation of the rationalist aesthetic, although not limiting the scope of its attack to the arts. In fact, it will oppose any application of rationality to our world. This means that it will attack any institution, hierarchy, totalization, or conventional idea, simply because it is part of the earlier modern and rational system.

Consequently, this new sensibility, which challenged and intended to destroy and deconstruct the preceding system of values and bases of society, provoked mixed reactions. Some feared the change and “interpreted this as a catastrophe for established traditional values, institutions, and forms of life” (Best & Kellner 7). However, some others were happy to witness a revolution in opposition to conventional values.

People who were until that time in the margins of society and who were not represented in institutions, literature or art, found then a means to express themselves. This attack on previous values led to two divergent forces that definitely characterize postmodern society: pluralism and relativism. Some groups, as those who were marginalized up to that time, were happy for the change, the more they managed to make their voices heard. Fueled by this aperture, a series of revolutionary events took place beginning in the 50s and finishing around the 70s. This was the time of the civil rights movement, the explosion of literature of color (Harlem Renaissance), the decolonization process, the increased prominence of third-world countries’ literature and figures (Gandhi), interest in remote lands’ clothes, philosophies, religions, etc. (hippie

movement), and all this not only from a curious anthropological point of view (as it occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century), but as a model adopted by many. These events helped to give voice to some formerly marginalized groups, setting grounds for what can be considered the postmodern times.

**c. Pluralism:**

The consequences of these cultural transformations led to a pluralist vision of our world and society. This new pluralist sensibility (necessary to embrace all the formerly marginalized groups and allow them as part of the center) is revealed in all the different cultural fields. A prominent example of the plural nature of postmodernism, is the hybridism shown in the newest artistic manifestations, for instance seen in current musical trends, such as ‘nuevo flamenco’, fusion jazz or Irish music (e.g. Riverdance). Folkloric music has combined with new rhythms, achieving its renewal thanks to the borrowings taken from other countries’ regional music. Being closed and faithful to tradition was rapidly leading to the exhaustion and imminent death for that music, whereas the incorporation of other rhythms implied the opening of new markets for it. Globalization and marketing, as well as pluralism, are evident in this artistic field as much as in any other. A global market requires a global product. Therefore, a type of music that incorporates several tendencies in one (and so appeals to several groups) will be more marketable than regional products. This hybridism and influence of the global market in music is a mere example of a broader tendency, which can also be perceived in the reblending of genres in literature. Clear-cut categories are no longer fashionable.

Another field where this hybridism shows is in the news programs, which appear to be more and more similar to entertainment. Likewise, entertainment copies from life itself, making programs for TV that mimic daily life and relationships. The fictional

element is lost in 'Big Brother' or 'The Bachelorette', where the boundary between real life and entertainment is blurred. The outcome of a program such as 'Married by America' (showing in 2003) happens to be a legally valid wedding that is expected to continue in real life. All fields are taking elements from others, leaving unambiguous categories in the past.

In relation to literature, this taste for hybrid products has led to a greater tolerance in mixing uneven categories (e.g. blending high/low culture, incorporation of voices unheard until that time, etc). This new attitude is a consequence of the challenging and deconstruction of the model proposed by the Western Canon. Whereas previously, there was a tendency of strong criticism, which did not leave room for other voices but the ones replicating the elitist mainstream (in aesthetic or ideological terms), formerly marginalized ideologies (by reason of color, gender or sexual orientation) became a strong voice in literature during postmodern times. Sobejano-Morán explains this topic in the following way:

Estas nuevas manifestaciones literarias tienen explicación dentro del marco de la descentralización del protagonista masculino, blanco, burgués que dominaba en la modernidad; y también se relacionan con la descanonización de los convencionalismos sociales y la transformación de la cultura elitista de la modernidad en otra de masas (Sobejano-Morán 105).

Literature is created inside a context and as reaction to it. Therefore, literature of the period will necessarily reflect its society as well as the general process of deconstruction of the previous values, which affects all areas of society.

According to Jade, the postmodern shift in literature shows itself to be a return to the poetic and sublime, a change that comes influenced by non-Western literatures and ways of thinking. "This shift", she says, "underscores a fundamental dissatisfaction with the dominant Western perspective that has emphasized materialism, rationalism, and

pragmatism since the beginning of modern times” (Jrade 11). This shift towards pluralism is ultimately responsible for the change of the literary postmodern canon, more inclusive than the previous one.

#### **d. Relativism**

A direct consequence of taking all these other peripheral views into consideration is relativism. It has been made clear that the Western Canon is not valid for Africa or Asia, for instance. Not having their works included in the Canon does not imply that these continents do not have any valuable literature, but that up to the 60s (approx.), they were simply ignored. The inclusion of marginal and forgotten elements leads to perspectivism and relativism.

According to some views, this is not a very positive change. Some consider our age as “one of anarchy and total relativism” (Toynbee as quoted in Best & Kellner 6). Tolerance with and inclusion of ‘the Other’ is sometimes confused with lack of values or priorities, which may be the cause for some people to understand that this trait, relativism, goes closely linked with anarchy. In fact, there is some reason for this last opinion, since postmodernism breaks away from concepts like hierarchy, unity or cause-effect, “se fomenta la disparidad, la dispersión y, al menos aparentemente, el caos se impone al orden” (Sobejano-Morán 103). Chaos, attack on the establishment, lack of depth or strong beliefs have become more pronounced. The earlier expectations or values that unified modern society are no longer effective. Both in art and society individualism is the trend, and core values have diminished.

Even the concept itself of the individual, touch-stone for modernity’s ideology, appears fragmented now. Thus, “postmodern theory abandons the rational and unified subject postulated by much modern theory in favor of a socially and linguistically



decentered and fragmented subject” (Best & Kellner 5). Human beings are not considered as a sacred self, with feelings and ideas originating in their unique soul anymore. Instead, ideas and opinions, the most private and personal part of human beings, are now theorized to be configured by context, history and language. Human experience is mediated by both the language and senses with which the messages are transmitted to us. The postmodern individual is not as much in control of himself as was thought during modern times.

## ***2. European Postmodern Society:***

In this section, the postmodern era in Europe will be studied, beginning with a revision of the May 68 cultural phenomenon. Additionally, this section examines Spain under Franco’s dictatorship, questioning if this same period studied in Europe can be considered postmodern in Spain. My main concern will be to understand the reasons why May 68’s spirit does not appear in Spain until 1975, with a special focus on the years of transformation in Spain (1960-1975). Finally, the arrival of democracy will be addressed.

### **a. May 1968:**

There is no doubt that May 1968 is a mythical time. May 68 stands as a symbol we have to refer to when explaining the new era about to arrive, even though it is probably a date too early to include in postmodern times. The revolution happening at that moment was already “a symbol of a crisis in modern society, a form of revolt against the growing importance of the impersonal forces of technology” (Savage Brosman 236). The 68 student revolt happened at that moment because of the specific transformations occurring at that time, and because of the young people’s need to express disconformity with the new world that was being created.

As was previously mentioned, postmodern society can be described as urban, consumerist, and influenced by mass media. Even though the world has continued to develop since 1968, the basic elements of postmodern society were already present at that time. The major migration of the population from rural areas to cities happened prior to that date. Societies began to trust their new condition of welfare state. Moreover, the media had already obtained a powerful influence on the population, since it had already established the infrastructure to reach most of it. For instance, proof of media influence on society is the strong reaction in opposition to the images released on TV at the moment of the demonstrations in Paris or the Vietnam War. With regard to the French student uprising, Savage Brosman states that “[w]ith television playing an important role in the events, claims of police brutality were heard. The trade unions began to support the students, although labor leaders were skeptical of the students’ motives. Eventually, some ten million workers went on strike, effectively paralyzing the country [France]” (236). Apart from being proof of the importance of the media of 1968, this quote also illustrates the involvement of a large sector of society in politics. This involvement shows as a trait of a still modern community, very rare in postmodern, cynical societies.

Therefore, it would be fair to say that even though this student revolt is the symbolic beginning of the postmodern era, it still can be considered as part of a transition stage leading to postmodernism. Since May 68, there has been a progression, but this date still remains as an important one, as it meant “a break in the history of contemporary France [and I would say of Europe], a point from which we can trace many of the social and cultural configurations of the last twenty-five years” (Forbes & Kelly 186).

The transformation we are discussing is mainly twofold: there is both a political and economic side to it. On the one hand, society changes from involvement in politics to apathy, and also from clear positions (occasionally extremist) to centered left and right

parties. The differences among the political options are not so obvious anymore. On the other hand, these political changes are accompanied by an economic revolution. After suffering the oil crises in the 70s, important losses happened in industries, bringing the consequent unemployment. Thereafter, the economy readjusted for the new era (around the 80s), not leaving much space for small commerce and owners. Furthermore, these changes in society, politics and economy have their counterparts in art:

The so-called *événements* (events) of 1968 . . . had an enduring psychological effect on French society and a considerable influence on French culture. They marked, or coincided with, changing tastes in literature and criticism, the eclipse of Jean-Paul Sartre and others as major spokesmen for youth and the rise of new cultural stars (Savage Brosman 235).

The phase of modernity, a phase led in its last stage by existentialist writers and thinkers, was finishing. A new spirit (revealed in philosophy and art) was taking place, attracting the attention of both readers and critics.

#### **b. Spain under Franco:**

During Franco's rule (1939-1975), there was strict censorship that pervaded all areas of Spanish life. This censorship was weakened or liberalized around 1960, although not for too long. Unfortunately, there was a return to restrictions after 1968, due to the events occurred in Paris that May (Altied 274). Paris' spirit encountered a very blatant obstacle to reach Spain (Franco's dictatorship), but once this obstacle disappeared in 1975, it was possible for the Spanish youth to embrace this spirit. Nevertheless, the change was not sudden.

Prior to this date, there was a major shift in the Spanish scene. The span between 1960 and 1975 was the time that witnessed a huge transformation. "In little more than fifteen years, Spain went from being a backward agrarian country on the periphery of

international capitalism, to one which could be considered fully industrialized, with a strong service sector, fully integrated into the global economic system” (De Riquer 259).

The revolution in the economic field that Spain underwent at this time happened at a much faster pace than normal, enabling Spain to reach a similar level of modernization as that of other nations that had started their industrialization process much earlier.

On the other hand, there was a parallel movement of ideological change, which could be observed in an increasingly critical attitude towards Franco. This criticism was present in demonstrations of political opposition, largely led by young university students wanting a government change. The new student organizations (both in Spain and France) presented themselves as critical and opposed to previous traditional values. These groups found their ideological guidance in the leftist revolutionaries of the time. The ‘New Left’ (“Mao Tse-tung, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro became the leaders of the so-called ‘New Left’” -Alted 274) provided them with a modernized, although idealized, version of social revolutions.

In Spain, this spirit revealed itself in constant confrontations between students and police during the 1960s (especially during 1966-67), taking place primarily in Madrid. Unfortunately, foreign events quickly brought about repercussions in the response from the government to these revolts.

This attitude of revolt and revolutionary protest, which erupted most spectacularly in the May 68 events in Paris, led in Spain to serious confrontations between the police and student extremists. The government responded with a return to hard-line measures. In the early 1970s, the student movement lost its impetus, having ‘peaked ideologically’ without having achieved a revolutionary transformation of society (Alted 274).

This response meant returning to strict limitations on social life, mainly at the university level, since it was a major focus of dissemination of critical ideas towards the dictatorship.

Interestingly enough, the presence of protest folk music was significant as a tool for change. Catalan *nova cançó* (such as the music by Joan Manuel Serrat) played an important role in this revolt. It is obvious that these songs were subversive since they “were pronounced ‘no radiables’ (unfit for radio transmission), for fear of popularizing a medium of protest” (Boyle 292). The censorship in the 1960s was still very strong, and it restricted the area of music as well as all other forms of artistic expression. This censorship, in turn, left the artists who disagreed with the dictatorship off the market and stages.

Television, on the other hand, showed music and news from outside of Spain. This medium helped to create a ‘modern mood’ (hippie era), and led to questioning the establishment. Therefore, it is fair to consider that “the youth culture of the 1960s had a startling impact on the rigid social world of Franco’s Spain, where enthusiasm for the Beatles or Bob Dylan, or emerging Spanish protest singers represented a more overt political statement than in democratic societies” (De Riquer 265).

The other field in which Franco found emerging opposition was in the Catholic Church, which until then had been his strong ally. The Spanish government had traditionally maintained a tight relationship with the Church, supporting it and, at the same time, using their pulpits for its own purposes. However, “[b]y the end of 1960s the Church, Francoism’s principal instrument of legitimization, was immersed in an acute internal crisis, exacerbated by the Vatican’s support for the reformers over hard-line traditionalists” (De Riquer 266). Due to a reform that the Church was undergoing at the time, more conservative ideologies lost power. The customary identification of Church

and State interests (a tradition that in Spain can be traced back to the Catholic Kings –e.g: conquest of America not for economic reasons but ‘to christianize the pagan people’) was then being revised. Unfortunately for Franco, the *Second Vatican Council* emphasized the independence of Church from State.

The postmodern mood of apathy and disbelief had made the Church concerned about their own modernization and their adaptation to the new times to be able to reach youths. Thus, the Catholic Church finally realizes that “a close identification with the dictatorship was more of a hindrance than a help to the Church’s mission of changing Spanish society” (Lannon 276). Being related to power and its ideology was no longer a benefit but an impediment for the Church, demanding a shift in the Catholic Church’s position. This change with respect to the State left Franco “disconcerted and suddenly displaced from the orthodox center they [Franco’s government] were sure had always occupied” (Lannon 278). One of the two essential constructs of Franco’s ideology, Spain as the reservoir of Catholicism for Europe, was then clearly showing its inconsistency. The other construct was based on the idea that the Spanish conservative party was well grounded on the tradition and model of some important figures in Spanish history, such as Elizabeth I and Phillip II, who led Spain through times of crisis, closed to Europe and guided by the only motto of doing everything ‘*para mayor gloria de Dios*’ (in the name of God’s glory).

As it had already been noted, the main transformations (economic and ideological) occurred in the span of twenty years, although the stabilization of those changes took longer. Spain’s rapid industrialization had direct repercussions in other fields, such as society and land organization. This transformation entailed an exile to the city and a new reorganization of the work force.

[This transformation] represented a radical redistribution of the Spanish working population: the number working on the land fell by half, a reduction of 1,500,000; the industrial sector took on 300,000 more workers, while the tertiary (service) sector provided 1,500,000 new jobs in services, and 500,000 in the building trade (De Riquer 262).

It had the effect of regrouping the population around large urban centers. The service sector, fueled mainly by foreign capital and for foreign tourists, provoked, along with the economic growth, a modernization in the attitudes of the Spanish population towards music, bikinis and consumerism.

### **c. Transition and Democracy:**

Some of the major historical dates that led Spain to democracy are the ones that will now be examined in the following section. The first and most significant one was evidently Franco's death in November 1975. His death enabled the start of the democratization process. Among all the changes that this implied, the referendum for the Constitution, held on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1978, was one of the major steps necessary. Finally, after several governments, stability came in 1982, when the socialist party (PSOE) won the elections. The period between 1975-1982 is, thus, named the transition period and is characterized by instability in the government, military coup attempts and the huge effort, from all the political parties, to make a successful democratic nation in which everybody would feel represented.

There have been numerous opinions evaluating this process. Several nations, which became democratic after Spain, have looked for model and guidance in the Spanish transition (like Equatorial Guinea, which invited the architect of this process, Adolfo Suárez, to work for their own transition), whereas other people have concentrated their evaluation on the problems that developed due to this process. Some of these problems are pointed out by Rosa Montero in the following quote:

The day before yesterday we were poor and now we are not, and the bonanza seems to have gone to our heads, bringing out in us all the defects of the new rich: pretentiousness, ostentation, superficiality, selfishness, and a rejection of the poor worthy for the new convert, manifested in an increase of xenophobia and racism. And the combination of easy money with the current loss of values, and the fact that we have acquired wealth before acquiring culture, provides a perfect breeding ground for one of the most glaring and harmful features of Spanish society today: corruption, and that climate of general cynicism which makes people think that anyone who does not dip his hand in the coffers is a fool (*Transition* 319).

It seems that Spaniards have achieved some good things, such as wealth and democracy, but at the same time, have acquired the vices that come with an accelerated process, not well established: corruption. Jo Labanyi considers that this rapid process has caused “‘modernity without modernization’: that is, technologically advanced cultural forms without a corresponding economic and social infrastructure” (398).

The most direct consequence of this uneven change is that Spain lived for some time split in two different worlds, the rural and the urban, experiencing the anachronism portrayed in Almodovar’s early movies. “As a result, traveling from village to city is like traveling through time; conversely, both worlds are exposed to the same mass media” (Labanyi 398). How is it possible to have left a part of society in underdevelopment, with no running water, in some instances until the 80s, and another that could already compare with ‘European standards’? Such was the astonishing situation during the transition. Even though both ‘worlds’ received the same TVE news and considered it as their standard for normalization (in terms of fashion or their Spanish accent, for instance), the truth is that nothing was ‘normal’ at that time.

Given this split in society, there have been critics, like Vázquez Montalbán, who have talked about *schizophrenia* to refer to this moment (14). It was difficult to consider themselves modern Spanish people who had gone through all the 60s rebellion against the preceding generation, learnt all about the Beatles’ music, been to ‘güateques’, danced



the new music, and who were still, nevertheless, far away (politically or ideologically) from European tourists who came to Spain during the summer and laid their towel by theirs.

Another area in which this sudden transformation can be perceived is in the press. After Franco died, there was a departure from controlled censorship (where media was working for the dictatorship), to free press. At the beginning, countless little newspapers and independent radio stations appeared. At the same time, there was an explosion of historical, political publications, and pornography (Labanyi 396). Occasionally, pornography was mixed with politics, like in the case of the successful magazine *Interviú*. This sudden flourishing was due to the ‘destape’ (the sense of sexual freedom that followed the dictatorship).

However, the Spanish press changed quickly towards what it is today. Similarly to other countries’, Spanish press is dominated by large capital, rather than by ideological values. Nowadays, there are two main groups: PRISA and ZETA (Bustamante 359), which are constrained by the need to meet requirements for an efficient business. At times, this counteracts the objectivity of the news itself, meaning that the tip of the scale is inclined towards profits and marketability rather than to reliability.

Closely related to this evolution, we find the situation of creativity in Spain. Like all the other fields that have been studied, creativity had been limited by censorship, thus, the artistic expression always implies (or is motivated by) an opinion and ideology. As a result of democratization and freedom, a boom in creativity occurred. This boom happened mainly in the area of designing, in both interior and fashion designers (e.g. Agatha Ruiz de la Prada), although it was also observed in cinema (e.g. Almodóvar is the best known example), music (e.g. *Alaska y Dinarama*, *Loquillo y los Trogloditas*) and other artistic expressions. This outburst in creativity happened to have much resonance

since it appeared in a “market hungry for new aesthetic ideas” (Dent Coad 376), rapidly obtaining great popularity.

This artistic boom is usually referred to as ‘la movida madrileña’, and it is defined as follows:

term applied to the explosion of creative activity, centred around youth culture which dominated the Madrid cultural scene in the late 70s through till the mid-1980s. Similar in many ways to British punk, it was nevertheless a response not to unemployment but to affluence and the new sexual permissiveness: in this sense, it could be seen as a delayed form of 1960s culture, but of an aggressive apolitical nature (Graham & Labanyi 423).

In accordance with this definition, it seems persuasive to understand this movement as the Spanish counterpart of the French May 1968, since both are explosions of young rebellious life, full of creativity and motivated by a generational clash.

This generation’s rebellious point of view was characterized mainly by the irony that was part of the youth’s vision of the world, and the parody, which played a big part in their approach to the previous institutions and canonical figures. There is also a presence of the cynical and ludic element in all the creations of the moment, as well as a very apathetic way of facing public or institutionalized life. This attitude, then named ‘pasotismo’, meant apathy to everything that did not affect directly the individual, such as institutions, religion, etc. It implied disinterest in politics, religion or the army and, at the same time, a lot of curiosity for drugs.

This approach to life was later complemented by the feeling that has been called ‘desencanto’, which can be defined as a “mood of political disenchantment/disappointment that prevailed in Spain in the later years of the transition period (1979-1982)” (Graham & Labanyi 421). Even though the great dream of democracy had arrived, many expectations could not be quickly fulfilled. It was not a perfect state and there was still room for a large amount of discontent and dissatisfaction. During the 80s,

“[s]ociological sources of the period tell a tale of alienation and polarization (due to unemployment, drugs and AIDS); atomization and violence (most particularly the rise of racism); and the privatization of leisure and domestic space” (Smith 108-109). Spanish society, which had believed in all the modern master narratives –freedom, progress for society, solidarity...-, realized that not everything that it had dreamed of was going to be granted.

Faced with disillusionment, it preferred oblivion. The new mass culture provided it with the bed of roses it needed (TV, spectacles, pornography, etc). Following this trend, by the 90s, Spain can be found subsumed in postmodern values of consumerism and marketing. Entertainment is the most important feature of the Spanish TV and press, as it is usual and common in postmodern media. Therefore, Paul Julian Smith can truly affirm that “Spaniards, grown indifferent to politics, are now [in the 90s] fascinated by politicians and the ‘soap opera’ of their daily lives” (18), more than by their ideas. Values have greatly changed in these twenty years of democracy. Spain has forgotten its revolutionary ideas and hopes, its master narratives, in a similar process to that of the majority of the European Union citizens, who trust and comfortably live in their welfare state.

The postmodern attitudes of apathy, questioning institutions, and disengagement were finally present in Spain. They made their arrival to Spain soon after Franco’s death (1975), which means 10 to 15 years late with respect to other European countries. This attitude arrived after the postmodern infrastructure had been established in Spain during the 60s, something that also appeared with delay with respect to other major European countries.

Until now, we have covered the evolution of the Spanish society in terms of ideological, political, economic, and cultural evolution. To understand the context of

Pérez-Reverte's work, one more field has to be addressed: literature. In the next section, the literary changes that occurred parallel to the processes already studied will be reviewed.

### **C. LITERARY CHANGES**

The first sign of change in the literary field is the waning of experimental literature, which can be perceived sometime around the transition period. Some critics consider that the key year for Spanish history and literature is 1975. In relation to the date, there is no possible discussion when it comes to the history of Spain, divided by the line of this year, when Franco died. Similarly in literature, this is the year to which most critics have referred to when trying to define the beginning of the new Spanish literature. Thus, they say that “1975 puede considerarse como la fecha inicial de un nuevo periodo de nuestra narrativa” (Sanz Villanueva, *Historia* 199), or that “[w]ith Franco's death in 1975, a new page was turned” (Gazarian xi).

However, other critics think that the year 1982 is more representative (Spitzmesser 3), as this date signifies the end of the transition period. It is understood that around that time, a shift towards a type of publication different from what was previously considered ‘canonical’ can be observed. For that reason, and in agreement with this, it would be coherent to state that the ‘change’ that was in the PSOE motto, and that helped them win the elections in 1982, happened to be of a political, cultural and literary nature.

Nevertheless, it should be questioned if finding a specific year is that significant. One thing at least is clear according to M. del Mar Langa: “nuestra narrativa de hoy [90s] es sustancialmente distinta de la de hace quince años” (11). Logically, the change to a postmodern literature did not happen overnight. It had a transition period (similar to the one of the political phase) with its own timing and schedule, which cannot be

summarized in just one year. Vázquez Montalbán agrees with this opinion, when he states that: “[e]n el terreno de la cultura no es tan claro que haya un antes y un después de Franco por cuanto las condiciones sociales que hacen posible el hecho cultural ya habían cambiado progresivamente antes de la muerte de Franco” (14). It may be, then, easier to argue the existence of a continuum moving towards the situation of contemporary literature rather than a specific turning point. What is obvious is the appearance of one new trait (differing from the 60s literature), which is the shift away from experimental literature, a clear sign of change.

### ***1. The Exhaustion of Experimental Literature***

Before proceeding, we need to define the trend of ‘experimental literature’, which was then coming to its end. It can be defined as one in which “el discurso y los modos de expresión se destac[an] muy por encima de la representación convencional de la realidad social” (Holloway 32). For the writer of this type of literature, the novel is his excuse to display his stylistic innovations. Hence, more traditional features, such as the plot or the formation of characters do not attract that much attention. This trend, which had its best moment in the 60s and 70s, reflects the revolutionary influence of preceding innovative writers such as Joyce, Faulkner, Kafka, Proust, Conrad, Rulfo, Borges or Cortázar, or movements like the French *nouveau roman* and the Latin American *Boom*. Some critics have even gone to the extreme of claiming that these novels “interesaron al lector culto exclusivamente como ejercicios de estilo, nunca como historias para ser leídas” (Langa 23). If these novels were only interesting for the educated reader, it may very well be because they were not intended as pleasure reading, for the common person. It was meant to be elitist (characteristic earlier mentioned as a modernist trait).

Some of the novelists who wrote following this experimental trend were Benet, Goytisolo and Martín Santos. The work and style of these authors will be analyzed in order to understand in a more concrete way its features. On the one hand, Juan Benet (e.g. *Volverás a región*, 1967), is innovative due to his prose “de gran riqueza léxica, rompió con el espacio, el tiempo y la linealidad tradicionales” (Langa 110). On the other hand, Juan Goytisolo’s style (seen in *Señas de identidad*, 1966) is praised by its “[p]reocupación por la técnica y el lenguaje . . ., utilizó técnicas vanguardistas como la falta de puntuación, los cambios de punto de vista, el uso de diversas personas narrativas, los saltos temporales, la mezcla de prosa y verso, de español y francés, de textos periodísticos e informes policiales” (Langa 165). Finally, the revolutionary work of Martín Santos (i.e. *Tiempo de silencio*, 1962), deserves the following comments from Langa: “asimiló el monólogo interior, e introdujo coloquialismos y vulgarismos en un lenguaje neobarroco que se alzaba contra el prosaísmo” (21).

Summarizing, we could say that most of the innovations used by these authors dealt mainly with the new use of colloquial vocabulary (influenced in this to some degree by the Latin American *Boom*), a pioneering concept of time and organization of the plot (changing from the preceding organization around a lineal time line), and even the incorporation of more vanguard techniques, like altering the traditional look of the page, scant use of punctuation to better represent stream of consciousness, or the mixing of languages in order to make the text incomprehensible for some readers and so be able to represent the alienation of the person through language. They also blend in texts that seem completely unrelated (e.g. a diary with newspaper articles –*pastiche*) and play with the narrative voice (which is no longer easily identified).

Another aspect also worth studying to understand this literature is the ideological tendency of these writers. As we have just seen, these authors reflect the influence of the

writers that they read and admired. Likewise, they also reveal their moment's influence.

According to Vance Holloway, these writers

se formaron influidos por las limitaciones impuestas por el ámbito político-social dictatorial de los años cincuenta y sesenta. También fueron afectados por la paulatina apertura económica e ideológica de los mismos años. Muchos de ellos participaron en el creciente activismo de oposición estudiantil de finales de los sesenta (20).

They were coherent in their work with their political ideas (generally associated with the 'New Left') and believed that the function of the writer in society was to be the intellectual leader of the group in order to stimulate the change. Therefore, these authors often manifest a political agenda in their writing, showing their opposition to Franco's regime.

They represented the next step after the trend of social realism, which peaked in postwar Spain. For social realism, a literary work was just another vehicle for dissemination of their ideology (literature as "instrumento de combate" –Vázquez Montalbán 24). Even though the generation of writers who wrote experimental novels had an obvious ideological goal, they also exhibited a clear stylistic intention. For this latter reason, they incorporated the innovations that had been recently achieved in literature. This stylistic preoccupation is the characteristic in which they differ from their social realist predecessors and which relates them to the literature written under the democracy, which will now be studied.

## ***2. Return of Story-Telling***

Indeed, certain things were expected after Franco's death, once censorship was ruled out. First, it was expected that writers would publish all the works that they had not been able to publish before, due to their strong political view or revolutionary techniques. However, instead of an explosion of revolutionary works, we find that Spanish literature,

even though it was uncensored, did not keep on going with the technical and ideological revolution. Instead, it returned to the conventional patterns previously used. It has been frequently suggested that this return could be due to the lack of creativity caused by the disappearance of censorship (and so of the motivation to hide the political meaning behind technical innovations).

On the one hand, the sociological features of the moment need to be kept in mind, characterized by traits of ‘pasotismo’ (apathy) and ‘desencanto’ (disenchantment), which mainly reflect the political scene. On the other hand, it is also necessary to understand the literary context of the moment, constrained by exhaustion of the previous trend. Occasionally, to move ahead in the history of literature, it is necessary to go back and research what tradition has to offer. It is possible that this is what was occurring during the Transition and early eighties. Vázquez Montalbán explains the logic of this return to old patterns by saying that “[l]a novela ha expresado todas esas posibilidades y en un momento determinado en el que hay que ir más allá . . ., escribir una novela implica volver a plantearse, como en un panorama, todo lo que es el patrimonio novelesco, y acogerse a la sombra protectora de una determinada tradición narrativa” (22). Perhaps, going back to a given pattern does not necessarily mean a return to something *passé*, but rather this earlier model can be used as inspiration for the form lacking in that very moment of literary crisis and formal exhaustion.

Therefore, given the new political situation of Spain (democracy had been peacefully achieved), literature no longer had its former political significance. To put it in Sanz Villanueva’s words: “[l]a polémica, por ejemplo, entre esteticismo y narrativa utilitaria ya no tendrá demasiado sentido” (*Historia* 199). Both the reception of literary works and their creation was affected by the political shift towards democracy. Formerly, the political context influenced the work in making present and obvious their ideological



goal, whereas afterwards, political stability led to a decrease of ideology in the literary work. Since in this new society all voices are represented, there is no need to join forces in literature to combat a common enemy.

Moreover, youth was no longer interested in being part of any common cause. This general attitude ('pasotismo' and 'desencanto'), which could be perceived in all the areas of the Spanish life by the 80s, led to a new orientation in literature: novels went back to telling a story, forgetting for the most part about political message and innovative techniques.

This new trend in literature led to works in which the plot and characters got to be the most important part of the novel. In these novels, it is not so much *how* it is said, but *what* is said. This characteristic is proof of the "recuperación del gusto porque en las novelas se cuente una historia" (Vázquez Montalbán 24). In this way, the novel goes back to "los orígenes del género, ante todo por el afán de contar las cosas, de narrar sucesos, de atraer al lector por el interés de una anécdota, por la creación de unos tipos o la reconstrucción de unos ambientes" (Sanz Villanueva, *Historia* 201). The style, constantly praised prior to those years, is then considered a subordinate feature, not a dominant one. This is the case at least among creative minds, although academic criticism may not coincide with this opinion. Therefore, as can be seen, the appeal of the novel is now given by the intricacy of the plot itself and the effective construction of characters.

### **3. Style**

At first, writers looking for an escape from engaged literature, turned their focus of attention to the style and techniques rather than to the message. In fact, at the beginning, there is no message but form itself: "the medium is the message" (McLuhan as quoted in Compitello 185). Discourse is highly appreciated over content (i.e. plot,

development of the characters, and truth vs. fiction). First, this shift to style illustrates the importance of the literary techniques over the exterior reality. However, postmodern literature is not only preoccupied by style, form and techniques. This aesthetic formulation of postmodern literature is appropriate to describe exclusively the transition stage in which the experimental novel develops. Although this aesthetic concept may be applicable to some postmodern novels, it does not need to be understood as applicable to all of them. The first step towards postmodernism was necessary as a way of revolting against the former structures, concepts and hierarchies. Therefore, this experimental literature stage was essential for the process of deconstruction of all previous values and thus, opened the way for further changes in novel.

The following step, a mature postmodernism, which in Spain begins around the 80s, reveals the primacy of the plot and the well-told story over the form. The revolutionary literary techniques and freedom used during the 'transition stage' were still incorporated later, although staying then at the service of the plot. This second stage means a 'return to narrativity': to the cervantine concept of novel, plot-driven and with well-defined characters. It often finds its expression in subgenres scorned up to that time (such as detective novel and romance). However, it does not go back to a simple formulaic novel, but rather combines the formula of these subgenres with the postmodern techniques, resulting in a renewed novel.

#### ***4. Technique***

Looking more specifically into the techniques used in postmodern novels, it can be seen that there are two techniques repeated constantly in their analysis. These are parody and irony, considered as essential postmodern traits. Other techniques will also be studied in this section, such as pastiche, metafiction and intertextuality.

Even though parody and irony are not techniques of recent appearance, it is true that their use is nowadays more recurrent since “se han intensificado en los textos posmodernos la apropiación de otros discursos o intertextos con intenciones paródicas o desacralizadoras” (Sobejano-Morán 101). The parodic intention can be traced back in Spanish and world literature (e.g. medieval comedy, Cervantes, Rabelais, etc.), but what is peculiar at this time is the frequency with which these techniques appear in postmodern works. Their recurrent questioning of previously untouchable truths gives the impression of an organized literary ‘crime band’ in charge of dismantling modernity’s master narratives.

A specific purpose is evident when using old techniques in postmodern works: “irony, parody and interior duplication, all features of art from the past, are used now to bring about a subversion of authority and have prompted an intensification of the interpreter’s interaction with the work of art” (Valdés 455). The content becomes more complex due to the use of irony, which provides the text with “mayor indeterminación y polivalencia, y hace que la verdad resulte más elusiva y difícil de aprehender” (Sobejano-Morán 101). The several meanings that may spring from ironic negation, instead of from the direct affirmation of what is meant, make the reading more difficult but at the same time more engaging.

Parody, on the other hand, also helps to make more complex “la relación de la obra de arte con su referente y aporta una visión de interconexiones” (Sobejano-Morán 101). Use of parody puts the text in relation with the parodied referent. To be able to read these postmodern texts, and understand them in their full extension, it is necessary to have a prior knowledge that will make the reading more pleasant.

Other techniques currently used are pastiche, metafiction and intertextuality. These techniques are certainly more recent than irony or parody. Pastiche, for instance, is

a 20<sup>th</sup> century discovery. It entails a grade of revolutionary and deconstructive thought not observable until this century. It contains several extracts from other texts, combined together through a collage technique but “carece de intención satírica, de los motivos ulteriores intrínsecos en la parodia y no provoca la risa, es una ‘blank parody’” (Sobejano-Morán 101), that is, parody without satirical intent. This postmodern technique is used in *La Verdad sobre el Caso Savolta*, which will later be analyzed.

Metafiction, however, can be found earlier, in *Don Quijote*, for instance, when the real world intersects with the fictional world, displaying, therefore, its fictionality. Nevertheless, it is rare to find this metafictional structure used recurrently prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The effect of confronting these two worlds provokes the recognition by the reader of the fictionalization of the world recounted in the novel, and also, perhaps, the fictional and narrative aspects of the real world.

Intertextuality functions in a similar way to metafiction, as it displaces meaning from one text to another, foregrounding the relativity of the addressee’s interpretation. Indeed, this technique can be associated with pastiche, as it is a conglomeration of quotes or references to other texts that ultimately contain the real meaning. Besides, like parody, its inclusion makes the resulting text more complex vis-à-vis its referent. According to Sobejano-Morán, intertextuality is one of the defining traits of the postmodern text:

El texto posmoderno es una especie de tejido compuesto por fibras de otros tejidos y mantiene una relación paródica con el original de modo similar a los signos lingüísticos. Thiler sugiere que la clave para comprender la escritura posmoderna está en que cada texto, conscientemente o no, tiene vestigios de otros textos donde en última instancia, se esconde el significado (104).

The use of all these techniques results in a literature “which is itself often postmodern in its non-linear, playful, assemblage-like style that constructs a pastiche text comprised largely of quotations and name-dropping” (Best & Kellner 11). It is a broken

text, very different from the prescriptive work, where the linear time-line followed the plot, and the stipulated rules for each genre had to be strictly kept. The postmodern novel, however, subverts not only the ideological basis of modern society but also attacks the rules given for each genre. As a result, traditional clear-cut patterns are becoming hybrids. There are no easy-to-define novels anymore as eclecticism has taken control, both in literature and society.

### ***5. Treatment of history***

Motivated by the postmodern concepts of pluralism and relativism, history has suffered a dramatic revision. Accompanying the Western Canon reevaluation, as explained, there has been a review of all the sacralized cultural expressions of the Western world. Historical texts and records have been severely scrutinized and reevaluated. Official history, as well as any other traditionally accepted texts, has become the object of suspicions of intentionally lying or being partial, since they implied or were written under a certain ideology. Due to this ideological revolution and revision, the historical novel corresponding to this new moment will necessarily reflect this new point of view. Its trademark will be the critical spirit lying behind the plot. As Valdés affirms, “[t]he postmodern approach to the cultural past is to problematize even its most basic assumptions of structures and values through a relentless, unlimited, critical reflection” (Valdés 455). Therefore, the new novel will have to find a way to incorporate the reevaluation and problematization of official history.

The postmodern trend resulting from this is called neo-historicism. These new novels have not been written primarily by academic historians but by writers with interest in history. Their main interest is not to be true to the historical figure or time period, but to unveil the other side of the story, another interpretation of what happened or could

have happened. Truth is not the prominent value but fiction itself, the story created developing and merging away from the original interpretation.

Time and temporality are also problematized in this new novel, where the writer does not intend to stand by what actually happened, according to history textbooks. To have readers that are also the writer's accomplices, to entertain them, to make them keep on reading is privileged over historical truth. Discourse becomes the guideline, the prime thing, not history. The text "immerses itself in the pleasures of form and style, privileging an 'erotics' of art over a hermeneutics of meaning" (Best and Kellner 10). The genuine referent of art is questioned, reviewed and criticized. The referent of the novel is not important by itself anymore.

Sobejano-Morán comments on the major difference of treatment given to this past where the action is set, in the modern and postmodern times, by saying that "[l]a modernidad no cuestionaba su existencia e identidad [i.e: referent], y el discurso textual oficiaba de vehículo de la tal realidad. En la posmodernidad, por el contrario, los términos de la ecuación se han invertido y el discurso pasa a un primer plano" (100). During the preeminence of engaged literature, in modern times, the ideologies lurking behind the plot and the resemblance of the character to the actual historical figure were more important than the style itself or the genre chosen to portray those ideas. Nowadays, we encounter the opposite case.

#### **D. CHANGES IN CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LITERARY CANON**

Since the Western Canon proved to be partial after the incorporation of new voices to the postmodern society, a major revision occurred. Therefore, I will be devoting this next section to explaining how this revision affected Spanish literature, leading it to a more plot-driven literature. In order to understand this process, I will first need to delimit

the previous context and reception of this more formulaic literature before the last quarter of the century in Spain. Therefore, a definition of traditional formulaic literature (genre fiction) will be necessary, followed by an explanation of the shift in Spain, as well as by the present state of acceptance of plot-driven stories nowadays.

### ***1. Genre fiction***

Even though the term genre fiction is widely used, it is difficult to find a descriptive definition for it. Therefore, I will try to approach a definition myself in order to limit its scope when using the term. This broad term covers several subgenres that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, primarily published in the form of installments, in daily or weekly newspapers. The following subgenres are considered to fall under this category: adventure novels (e.g. Alexandre Dumas), detective novels (e.g. Conan Doyle), historical novels (e.g. Walter Scott, Pérez Galdós) and sentimental novels (e.g. Jane Austin).

It is commonly considered that genre fiction is mass-oriented, low-level literature, written for an unsophisticated public, not expecting a high level of intellectual complexity, but rather solely to be entertained. Historically, this public would buy the type of novel that corresponds to the pattern they liked (either sentimental, adventures...) and value the work according to the intricacy of the plot, without giving much importance to the style by itself.

The defining element that can be found in these subgenres is that they are plot-driven and follow a predetermined pattern. Due to its conventional form and reduced interest in inventive style, many critics have condemned genre fiction, as it is considered that it provokes a limitation in the author's creativity, and thus, little ability is required from him. Another consequence of the fixed pattern is that the reader comes to the reading bringing a horizon of expectations, and with the anticipation that these

expectations will be met (Creeber 1). The novel, then, is not chosen for its innovative but rather for its recurrent and well-known elements.

Genre fiction works can be said to differ mainly “from non-genre texts in so far as they are commercially formulaic, marked by norms and conventions, and presumed to cater to consumer demand and audience expectation” (Neale as quoted by Creeber 3). This last characteristic is one of the best-known of these texts: they sell well and so, the author’s main motivation is considered to be purely economic. Genre fiction is written to be sold.

Going back to the situation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can observe that this economic factor imposed certain restrictions on the text itself. For instance, the quantity became more important than the quality (they were paid by page). Moreover, it was mandatory to have the next installment ready before the newspaper’s following edition. As a result, the level of complexity occasionally suffered. Another outcome of this need for fast-pace-literature was the widespread use of ghostwriters, employed by very prolific authors, such as Dumas and Victor Hugo. This enabled them to produce the enormous quantity of works that is today attributed to them. Apparently, their intention was not to express their opinion or feelings, but to sell quickly and in high volume.

In fact, this easy-to-sell product found a very welcoming market. Nineteenth century bourgeois society (then with higher consumer buying power than previously) was requesting entertainment products directed to them, for its own consumption. Therefore, this literature appeared “at a point in history at which art of all kinds began to be industrialized, mass-produced for a popular public” (Cohen as quoted in Creeber 3). It is a product of its times and needs. However, being successful within that context does not necessarily imply lacking quality. Writers such as Galdós, Clarín, or Dickens, who began publishing in installments, in large quantities, became canonical writers later on.



Yet, the first reaction towards this type of literature was to categorize it as popular, low-class, low-intellect novels. Stephanie Sieburth points out that such considerations may be influenced by a social prejudice more than by a literary judgment, since “[t]he new availability of serialized fiction was assumed to lead to corruption, and the development of this kind of mass cultural product was often seen as a metaphor for the development of an organized working class” (Sieburth 6). Given the “threat to social control” (ibid) that this meant for the upper class, a redefinition of culture and of literary categories occurred. The other literature, non-serialized, was the ‘authentic’ one, “enshrined in the university to preserve it in all its purity . . . [sealed] from the contamination of mass culture” (Sieburth 6-7).

This division represents a departure from the previous categorization of high and low culture, which was not defined by the public addressed but rather by the type of references enclosed in the text. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the presence vs. absence of reference to lower bodily functions had been the defining trait to classify whether it was a refined text, appropriate for a good-mannered audience, or if instead, it was more suitable for an uncultured and disrespectful public (Sieburth 10). Popular elements were identified with irreverent topics and language. Accordingly, medieval expressions of popular culture were full of Carnival laughter, with burlesque and impertinent elements (as can be seen for instance, in the English mystery plays, parodic representations of sacred texts). Hence, during medieval times, the serialized vs. non-serialized division did not apply.

## ***2. Increasing readership and legitimacy***

Moving on from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the transition period in Spain, we may say that this concept of ‘high’ culture was still maintained and applied when reviewing contemporary literary works. In fact, this prejudice provoked that the narrative trends

started during the transition years were generally critically disapproved. Critics considered that the new narrative styles followed “géneros generalmente poco cultivados de nuestras letras . . . , que cuando lo han sido no han captado la atención de los críticos por considerarse lo que se suele llamar los arrabales de la literatura” (Sanz Villanueva, *Historia* 201). This appreciation was written in 1986, when the change from the experimental, elitist literature to narrativity<sup>2</sup> was still not completely accepted.

However, there has been lately a critical repositioning towards genre fiction. Sanz Villanueva himself, in a posterior article (1997), comments on the evolution of the critics from a reticent position in the 70s to an evident praise of the virtues of this novel in the 90s. In his prologue to *El Juego de la intriga* (an anthology of Spanish detective novel), he comments on the disdainful attitude of the critics in the 70s towards this subgenre. Referring to changes since the mid 70s, he states that “[n]adie, entre los lectores de calidad que antes disimulaban su afición al género, la ocultó ya en público. En la prensa, se empezó a dar cumplida cuenta de las novedades criminales, aunque . . . persistía algún recelo” (*Juego* 12). It was accepted and publicized, but still placed in an inferior level than canonical literature. By mid 80s, though, the approach was gaining ground (“[v]encidas estas reservas, el triunfo de la narratividad proporcionó el impulso definitivo al relato criminal” –*ibid*). Even though the label of ‘popular literature’ persists attached to these subgenres, they are nowadays completely accepted, even receiving frequent attention from the critics.

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<sup>2</sup> This term ‘narrativity’ will be used in this study following Gerald Prince’s concept of it. He defines it in his *Dictionary of Narratology* as “The set of properties characterizing narrative as distinguishing it from non-narrative; the formal and contextual features making a narrative more or less narrative, as it were. // The degree of narrativity of a given narrative depends partly on the extent to which that narrative fulfills a receiver’s desire by representing oriented temporal wholes (prospectively from beginning to end and retrospectively from end to beginning), involving a conflict, consisting of discrete, specific, and positive situations and events, and meaningful in terms of a human(ized) project and world” (64). In contemporary criticism, this term has been applied to the plot-driven novel.

The acceptance of this shift in opinion has occurred through a slow although consistent process, conquering first the level of readers and arriving at last to the one of critics. This former group has shifted away from the elitist attitude and inflexible opinion, to have a more comprehensive and open view of literature. This shift in criticism is motivated by a previous change in the readers themselves, since “[e]l público, además ha dejado de interesarse por los asuntos que acapararon su atención durante la transición” (Langa 35).

The revolutionary ideas or techniques are now out of fashion, and the reader goes back to looking for entertainment in the reading, just as it happened during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is something of a paradox though that, as a consequence of the transformation in the taste of the majority of the readers, the critics, a selective group by definition, chose to accommodate their views. Something was obviously changing. The traditional distinction of high vs. low culture seemed to be blurring.

### ***3. Why the change?***

As was previously explained, having a postmodern society, and therefore a postmodern reader, implies that the reader is not engaged in politics, religion, or any other ideological polemic. He no longer wants to fight for ideals. Likewise, he does not expect to find those ideals reflected in literature. Therefore, one logical consequence of moving to this stage in society is having a more disengaged art. As a matter of fact, the reader is often just searching for an escape from his own reality, which is why he now approaches art in general and literature in particular. Thus, one of the most prominent feature of postmodern literature is the ludic nature of the artistic work and the author’s intention of entertaining his public.

Even though this element, the ludic nature of a literary piece, has often been disparaged (equating any work containing this trait with a bad work), it has also been defended by some. The Italian writer, semiologist and intellectual Umberto Eco has very frequently shown his position on the topic. “There is no question that if a novel is amusing, it wins the approval of the public. Now, for a certain period, it was thought that this approval was a bad sign: if a novel was popular, this was because it said nothing new and gave the public only what the public was already expecting” (60). Being ludic or comical became associated with low-quality. However, Eco himself feels sympathy for this ‘low’ culture and trivial purpose. In fact, he recognizes that he uses entertainment as a very efficient bait to attract the reader (ibid).

Nonetheless, this disengagement and search for entertainment is not the only motivation for the writer and his public to go back to plot-driven subgenres. Vázquez Montalbán, for instance, suggests another possibility when justifying his use of detective genre because of the need of a *new way* of expression for his critical review of the present society. “En el momento en el que necesito un discurso realista en un tipo de novela crónica de lo que está ocurriendo no puedo acogerme a los modelos del realismo completamente quemados, quemados y ultimados, que puedo constatar en aquel momento” (Vázquez Montalbán 22). When searching for a new expression, he goes back to exploiting an old and predefined pattern. His choice of genre is affected by preceding literary history. He returns to the old subgenres in an attempt to surpass the exhausted ways, searching for a viable solution to the crisis of realism in the Spanish novel. His goal is not to entertain but to criticize his society. However, in order to do this, he also goes back to the pattern proposed by genre fiction. Two very exploited subgenres in post-Transition Spanish novel: the historical and the detective novel. Therefore, in the next

section, we will explore how the evolution of Spanish literature arrived at its present state, focusing primarily on these two subgenres.

#### **a. Historical novel**

As historical subgenre can be understood, any novel that, in its plot, returns to a past moment to recreate it, study it or understand it, dramatizing this past in a creative way. Most of the literary histories trace the beginning of this subgenre to Romanticism, to works following the pattern given by Sir Walter Scott, master of this subgenre. It involves a certain level of freedom and imagination, as well as some historical and realistic context. Therefore, being a subgenre that is halfway between fiction and history, it leaves plenty of room for history to be retold from any ideological position. Therefore, it is a type of novel that has been popular in certain moments of history since they can easily be manipulated.

In Spain, there was an explosion of interest in history right after Franco's death, mainly of biographies and autobiographies. Indeed, "[t]he transition period saw a flood of autobiographies (a genre previously rare in Spain) as former political figures brought out their memoirs in a further ambiguous excavation of the past that was also an exercise of simulation" (Labanyi 402). Everybody wanted to give their own opinion about what happened during the war, the dictatorship and how they reacted to it. Often, it was meant to cleanse the authors' image and past in front of the public or possible voters, in order to construct a future in which he or she would not be marginalized due to their role in the previous government. However, this inundation of memoirs and biographies soon ran out of original topics.

During the 80s, though, another type of historical novel arose, interested in recreating a historical moment. The author is then concerned with providing a coherent

setting outside of the present time simply because of personal interest on the time, language, or society, but without any emphasis on criticism of today's world or values. This type of novel will be here illustrated with Juan Eslava Galán's novel, *En Busca del unicornio* (1987), which tells the story of Juan de Olid, a Castilian knight from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, who goes to Africa to look for the unicorn's horn. The language used reproduces very closely the one found in 15<sup>th</sup> century literature. Therefore, it has been criticized for being just a "juego de arqueología literaria" (Vázquez Montalbán 22). Vázquez Montalbán considers that this type of historical novel is simply "un alarde literario que tiene un interés de hecho, ensimismado, pero no nos engañemos: ese tipo de novela histórica contemporánea, no es una novela con voluntad de influir en la sociedad que le es contemporánea" (Vázquez Montalbán 22). It lacks engagement in its society. Erudition without criticism does not seem to be something to admire.

Umberto Eco has also been criticized for the same reason, accused of 'eluding the present' by setting his plots in a remote past. However, he argues that it is not his intention to do so (71). He considers that the past cannot all be classified under one only simplistic category. As a matter of fact, the past can take plenty of functions, as criticism may assume many forms. To believe that social criticism has to be exposed in obvious ways may not be the most complex approach.

According to Eco, there are actually three levels of incorporation of reality in historical novels. The first type of historical novel is 'romance', and it is characterized by its fantasy plot, set in the past, which has been chosen simply because it is far away from the present and thus, can be considered as a mythical time. (e.g. works by Tolkien) (Eco 74). The second type would include those works in which there is a recognizable past, with historical dates and people (e.g. works by Dumas) (ibid). The past is here used just as a background context for the development of the plot, with no further implications.

The third type, though, recreates a society coherent with the one given at that past moment. The understanding of that time and society implies thus a criticism towards present values. This is the category where Eco places *The Name of the Rose* (Eco 75). He considers that the postmodern approach to history cannot be naïve, but instead, he must revisit the past, “but with irony, not innocently” (67). Therefore, there is no evasion of the present, but subtle reference to it. This subtle model is in fact the most frequent type of historical novel corresponding to postmodern times.

The Spanish historical novel began to have a very important role in the transition period, due to the need of some parts of society (both Franco’s politicians and the opposition) to divulge their point of view about the censored period that had just finished. Writers selected the form that suited its need for expression in agreement with their historical moment, and so, it found the perfect scheme for it in the subgenre of historical novel. Later on, after this necessary period of justification, the historical novel kept its importance in the Spanish literary sphere, although evolving to a more subtle revision of the past.

#### **b. Detective novel**

Conventionally, detective novels begin *in media res*, right before or right after a crime has been committed. The protagonist is often the detective and the plot develops around the resolution of the crime. It is the subgenre that made Sir Conan Doyle famous, as well as Agatha Christie. Edgar Allan Poe and Jorge Luis Borges also mastered this genre, although in the form of short stories instead of novels.

This type of novel also became very popular during the transition period. There was a proliferation of detective novels. Well-known representatives of this category in Spain at the time included: Vázquez Montalbán, Eduardo Mendoza, Juan Marsé, Juan

Madrid and several others. The reason why this novel became so popular in precisely that moment is due in part to the interest in investigation that logically occurred at the end of the dictatorship. The end of long-lived restrictions and censorship had provoked curiosity for knowing more about the hidden cases, and in particular about corruption in the government. This literature, therefore, guides the reader towards this type of inquisitive revision. The structure of the plot (finding out about a certain problem, crime, or corruption case, and the subsequent search for the criminal, the cause and the final responsibility) suited very well in that instance the mood of the transition period.

The process the reader follows when facing this subgenre occurs because “[h]ay un desplazamiento del interés: se nos convida a buscar un culpable y descubrimos un mundo real, el nuestro . . . La investigación llega hasta el ‘subsuelo del subsuelo’ para desenmascarar las lacras (la corrupción, la violencia...) que nuestra sociedad genera” (Lissorgues 34). Looking for the criminal, the reader finds himself and his society. In fact, this detective novel, generally labeled as entertainment reading, leads to the questioning of our society’s values and mechanisms.

The most recurrent model, at this time, followed the style of the American Black novel (or ‘hard-boiled’ detective novel), which was developed in the US during the 30s and frequently had the Italian mafias and Chicago as its scenario. This model differs from the classical detective novel in the author’s concerns. It is especially suitable to portray social criticism. In this subgenre, the writer is essentially illustrating the world of corruption we live in. The crime is only an excuse to get the detective (habitually covering both: the function of protagonist and and that of narrator) in a context of corruption.

On the other hand, there is an economic factor that affects the popularity of the American model in Spain, 40 years after it was first created. Because the ‘hard-boiled’



novel was always set in an industrialized urban context (such as Chicago in the 30s, a setting that provoked the crime and corruption described), it was not an easily transferable scheme to the Spanish society of the time, since Spain, at that point, was still rather rural. Conversely, by the 1970s, Spain was already an industrialized country, and could relate to the world exposed in those novels. Hence, this model adapts perfectly to the new state of affairs in Spain. Spanish society was then industrialized and, as later history has proven, full of corruption, being the perfect setting for production and consumption of this subgenre. The form chosen, obviously, has not been selected naively. Once more, it suits the purpose.

#### **E. CONTEMPORARY SPANISH NOVEL**

Now that we have drawn a clear frame of reference, we will concentrate in the study of Spanish literature written after Franco's death, trying to identify its postmodern traits. According to Holloway, assuming that all post-Franco Spanish literature is necessarily postmodern, would be reductive (63). Paul Julian Smith agrees on that. Even though most of the commentators believe Spain to be postmodern, Smith demonstrates, through detailed study, that it would be better to consider that there are certain postmodern features, living side by side of other that are still modern.

Even, the 'movida madrileña' (generally understood as the clearest and earliest outcome of postmodern creation in Spain) is placed by this critic under the category of modernity, since they first called themselves 'the moderns' (43). Being 'modern', in opposition to the old-fashioned conservative way, was indeed the highest value for the 80s' youth. Therefore, Smith affirms that "[i]f, in Vattimo's apparent tautology, 'modernity' is that time in which 'the modern' is the highest and only value, then the Spain of the 1980s is surely the most modern of societies" (Smith 9). However, this

concept of ‘modernity’ used in the 80s proved to be a reaction and attack to the previous standards, which is by itself an obvious characteristic of the postmodern times.

Smith also analyzes other artistic manifestations, as well as urban space in Spain. Thus, he considers that the film work of Víctor Erice (continuing throughout the 90s) springing from his authorial view of art, unconstrained by the market’s needs, is a proof of the survival of modern creation and beliefs (i.e. in master narratives) in the Spanish creative arena. With respect to urban space, the postmodern tendency towards empty city and crowded suburbs “is hardly applicable to Spain”(Smith 43), which still keeps the modern structure of the historical center of the city as its center of life well into the 90s. Significant changes do not occur overnight and so, modern and postmodern elements can be found side by side for an extensive period.

Restricting our scope to the field of literature, a similar conclusion can be reached. There are both modern and postmodern elements in the literary works written after Franco’s death, and it should not be merely assumed that because the time of publication falls into the postmodern period that the work also happens to be postmodern.

As was previously explained, there are two differentiated trends in Spanish novels around 1975. The first one is more experimental, interested in discourse, while the other moves along the lines of narrativity, interested in the development of plot and characters, more concerned about content than about discourse. These two tendencies took place in Spain one after the other, and seem to be perfect illustration for two different stages leading to postmodernism. The first one, experimental, fits the explanation given about the emphasis on discourse, while the second one, more on the narrative side, exemplifies the return to humanism and the preeminence of the story. According to Holloway,

las dos acepciones principales del término posmodernismo coinciden con las dos fases de la Generación de los Setenta. La primera corresponde con el

experimentalismo de los Novísimos, aproximadamente entre 1967 y 1975. Por otra parte, tenemos el postmodernismo entendido como metaficción historiográfica, en la que predomina el retorno a la historia bien contada, pero dentro de un molde autorreferencial e irónico que subvierte la estabilidad de todo sistema de representación, bien de la historia, bien del sujeto humano. Esta vertiente del posmodernismo se asocia con la segunda fase de la Generación de los Setenta, a partir de 1975 (Holloway 62).

It is my understanding that the first stage corresponds to a transition phase, whereas the second one matches up completely the postmodern creative standards. The north American writer John Barth seems to have a similar perspective when he identifies, in his essay “The Literature of Exhaustion” (1967), the last consequences of the modernist experimentation, “evidentes en el énfasis en lo absurdo en el arte de los años sesenta, en los happenings, en los collages (montajes) y en la subversión de la importancia del autor así como del lector en los textos experimentales” (as quoted by Holloway 47). The characteristics that make this first, experimental phase part of the modern times, are the techniques used, taken from the modern authors along with the ideology that motivated the author, who still believes in master narratives. Even though we can perceive a certain intention of disruption in the way the techniques are used, the ideology remains modern.

McHale considers that the return to narrativity, what here has been called the defining characteristic of the second phase, is actually a decisive trait to classify the literary work as postmodern. This critic,

hace notar que la evolución de dominantes corresponde al alejamiento del discurso experimental, hermético y altamente autorreferencial del modernismo y se ajusta al retorno del placer de la historia bien contada sin dejar de cuestionar y desubicar los valores de la narración, la historia externa y el sujeto humano representado (as quoted by Holloway 55).

According to this quote, experimental literature would still have to be considered modern literature.

Compitello, on the other hand, shows the adaptability of the writers. Writers who have been part of the experimental literature can adapt themselves to the second creative stage (189). He offers the example of Vázquez Montalbán, who in his outdoing of experimental literature, “is able to redefine his relationship to the avant-garde in Spain by flying in the face of the return to realism that purportedly characterizes Spanish fiction from the late 1970s forward” (ibid). As a matter of fact, a return to an earlier concept of literature is not considered by this writer as a step back into modernity but a step forward into the literary model that portrays Spanish postmodern literature.

The next stage identified here is already entirely postmodern. It begins around 1975 and “consiste en un retorno de la primacía de la fábula y una atenuación de los aspectos más hiperbólicos del experimentalismo” (Holloway 39). There is not a complete obliteration of experimental techniques, but definitely a change of emphasis occurs, being now the plot the center of attention. This second stage follows Umberto Eco’s prescription for a postmodern literature that “incluya el retorno al placer de la anécdota y del texto asequible para una mayoría de lectores a través de elementos populares en las formas de expresión” (as quoted by Holloway 50). The type of novel that follows this prescription subverts the principle of master narratives and is postmodern due to the mood and techniques used.

### ***1. Variety of genres and ideological choices***

In fact, in post-Franco Spain, it is impossible to demarcate a common artistic project or shared ideology. The only common features that can be seen in literature beginning then are the lack of continuity with the previous experimental novel, and the individualism of the new writers. Democracy brought freedom of speech and choice, and writers are exercising it, in their style as much as in genre or chosen ideology. There is

now more freedom, less homogeneity among new writers, who cannot be referred to as a generation in the strict sense, since their common characteristic is simply to be different.

Return to traditional subgenres was possible once the rigid canon imposed by the intellectual elite had fallen into discredit. However, according to Gazarian, the narrativity trend is actually not so distant from the traditional canon as is usually conceived. In fact, she considers that the new forms adopted are nothing but the remake of old traditional canonical genres, and even asserts that: “[t]he so-called new genres are a modern adaptation of the traditional picaresque novel” (xiii). Even though it is clear that the main attraction of the picaresque novel is the development of an intricate plot, the anecdotes that they may tell or the evolution of the character itself (characteristics shared by this new novel), I believe that this statement is too audacious. However, her intention of trying to relate this trend of narrativity to canonical literature (conferring to it the legitimacy that it had formerly lacked) appears quite favorable.

The trends used in post-Transition Spanish novels are summarized by M. Dolores de Asís in the following way: “[e]n el panorama español de hoy como en el europeo son tendencias en ejercicio: la novela fantástica, la novela histórica, la de intriga y de aventura, la poemática, la metaficción, la autobiográfica o de memorias, [y] la novela testimonio o crónica o reportaje” (328). Most of these trends named by Asís fall under the big umbrella of ‘genre fiction’ due to their predetermined scheme. Apart from the traditional novels (e.g. historical novel, adventures, detective novel, and memoirs), also present now are new types of novels, hybrid, springing from the interplay of literature and journalism (e.g. the non-fictional novel), or the genres of novel and poetry (poematic novel).

## **2. Problems with labeling new genres**

Therefore, the first consequence of the existence of these new hybrid genres, which sprung from the combination of several traditional categories, is the perplexity of some critics, who would rather classify them according to clear-cut categories. However, categories are no longer distinguishably delineated. For instance, given the mixture of truth and fiction, it is not obvious anymore if autobiography or memoirs should be considered as part of the historical genre, or instead, they should be understood as *bildungsroman*, in the terrain of fiction. On the other hand, the historical genre of the chronicle has been published as both journalistic and literary work (e.g. *Crónica de un secuestro*, by García Márquez, is one of the most renowned examples). A new label, the ‘non-fictional novel’, had to be invented to describe this innovative phenomenon. Moreover, the metafictional novel overlaps with the terrain of the literary (and sometimes artistic) criticism. And these are just some examples. It is evident that the borders of all these categories are no longer precise. Although, were they ever as distinctly demarcated as Aristotelian principles dictated? In any case, it is currently manifest that these previous, traditional definitions are not sufficient.

Reblending all categories has been a fundamental process in the evolution of postmodern literature. It is one of the most prominent features of postmodern times and culture. This reblending phenomenon can be observed in any type of cultural manifestations (e.g. very obvious in kitsch art). In literature, it is manifested in the blending of high and low culture, popular and cultivated elements, as well as in a mixture of all different genres. To further explain this point, it will be useful to review Eduardo Mendoza’s novel, as these characteristics will be more clearly illustrated in the context of a specific novel.

If we analyze closely the example of *La Verdad sobre el caso Savolta* (1975), a detective novel, we will perceive that it presents characteristics of the sentimental novel, newspaper articles, and historical documents, apart from a deep sociological study and understanding of Barcelona during the First World War years. Should this novel then be considered a historical novel even though the main plot resembles the detective novel (as it follows the resolution of a murder and a crime)? Instead, because the protagonist happens to develop a romantic relationship with a very attractive woman of a lower class than his (who actually has a lover: the protagonist's best friend), should it be considered a sentimental novel? On the other hand, it also mimics other types of texts, such as journalistic articles or police reports. In that case, should it be regarded as a non-fictional novel? Obviously, we are facing a new type of novel that is not included in the old manuals and that cannot be studied in relation to old genres. Clearly, Sanz Villanueva's words ring true when he says that "cada vez resultan menos puras las clasificaciones convencionales" (Sanz Villanueva, *Juego* 12). Reblending previous clear-cut structures appears to be a usual process nowadays to create new forms.

Disparaging criticism based on negative value-judgements of traditionally marginalized subgenres is not valid anymore. The Spanish new postmodern novel may recycle old forms, but it also contains new elements. It reflects the influence of recent achievements in high literature, although at the same time, with a very good knowledge of popular traditions. It would have been impossible to suddenly forget these innovations, to go back to simplistic literature, which only intended entertain the reader (an opinion initially held by some critics). Langa supports this idea and considers that during the 70s "se volvió a un tipo de novela más tradicional en la que se dio una gran importancia al relato, al argumento, aunque sin olvidar las nuevas técnicas ya asimiladas, como las del

contrapunto y la de las acciones paralelas” (27). The new novel could not simply ignore all prior literary evolution.

As a result of all this change, one more modification has to be made to accurately define it. This postmodern, hybrid child needs new terminology, since it no longer corresponds to the one found in traditional poetics. *Neonovela* appeared as a new term, coined by Gonzalo Sobejano-Morán, to refer directly to the innovative nature of this novel. He defines it as a novel “que pugna por añadir algo nuevo a la forma más avanzada del género” (Sobejano-Morán as quoted by Langa 77). This is primarily the type of novel that can be found nowadays in Spain, a novel that reuses an already familiar pattern, although adding something new to it.

## **V. PÉREZ-REVERTE’S WORK**

Pérez-Reverte’s return to story telling in the mid 80s perfectly fits the pace of the literary evolution just explained. The subgenre chosen for his works formally situated him in a classical line of detective or action novels. However, critics soon had to realize that his novels also contained new ingredients that did not completely correspond to the old pattern. His works were already part of what was later termed ‘neonovela’.

He began to publish in 1986, when the return to story telling was becoming widespread, gaining acceptance at the beginning of the 90s, which coincided with Pérez-Reverte’s fame and first awards. Already in his first novel, *El Húsar*, “se situaba sin ambigüedades en una de las dos grandes corrientes del momento, y no precisamente en la que gozaba de más prestigio” (Sanz Villanueva, *Héroes* 14). His choice to exploit a trend still without the critical approval gained him numerous criticisms. Yet, he chose the trend that suited better his purpose of telling a story, without taking into account if the type of writing he was selecting was critically esteemed or not.



Even though Pérez-Reverte has occasionally talked about himself as a pioneer for this trend (Pérez Miguel), clearly others had already been struggling to open a way before him. Nevertheless, he was one of the most successful writers of this trend. Other authors, such as Eslava Galán or Juan Marsé, had already been writing following this agenda, although without receiving the same critical approval or popularity that Pérez-Reverte rapidly achieved. Hence, I argue that Pérez-Reverte's popularity helped enormously to validate both historical and detective genres in the Spanish horizon. The fact that he was and still is an active and conscious agent for their acceptance, occurred in part due to his well-conceived strategy for acquiring readers and respect.

Sanz Villanueva, for instance, who observed skeptically the return of the use of subgenres and criticized it as being part of the 'arrabales de la literatura' (*Historia* 201), began to take this trend more seriously due to Pérez-Reverte's and Eduardo Mendoza's work. In fact, he considers that "[p]ocos de nuestros novelistas de la hora presente están dotados de esa innegable facultad de convertir una anécdota en sugestiva materia novelesca, y quizás nada más Eduardo Mendoza y Pérez-Reverte de entre los recientes la poseen en grado máximo" (*Héroes* 15).

Therefore, since we have already described the sociological and literary context where Pérez-Reverte first started to publish, it will now be necessary to study more in detail why he fits his time and the literary trends that have already been described in this chapter. Thus, the following chapters will be dedicated to the description and analysis of Pérez-Reverte's work, paying special attention to those characteristics that make his novels postmodern.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **INTERTEXTUALITY**

Nadie le dijo en ningún momento que las cosas ocurrieran como usted creía. Por eso la responsabilidad es sólo suya, amigo mío... El verdadero culpable es su exceso de intertextualidad, de conexión entre demasiadas referencias literarias.

(Pérez-Reverte. *El Club Dumas*, 519)

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Is Pérez-Reverte postmodern? In the following chapters, we will try to answer this question. In order to do so, several characteristics of his writing will be discussed. His use of intertextuality, revision of history and construction of characters will deserve one chapter each. Yet, in his style, a mixture of both modern and postmodern concepts and techniques can be observed, which will cause difficulties when trying to give a definite answer.

Even though the three techniques mentioned may be understood as postmodern, other traits, such as the detailed description of milieu, his characters' personality (who long for a world in which heroism and morality could be established) or the triumph of reason over mystery and crime (following the classical detective pattern), can still be considered fairly modern. The identification and delimitation of these modern and postmodern elements in Pérez-Reverte's work will be the main goal of my study. A detailed analysis of all those traits will be presented in the dissertation. However, I consider that this answer, far from being unambiguous, will necessarily be rather complex. A conclusion will be reached, in the final chapter, after careful exposition and analysis of a variety of Pérez-Reverte's works.

Intertextuality will be studied in first place as it is the most noticeable and recurrent postmodern trace in this author's works. His novels often show an abundance of texts within his own texts, carrying a wide range of functions. These references are occasionally used to mislead the reader or even the detective (as happened to Corso in the opening quote of this chapter), often to illustrate the historical and literary context and on all occasions, to pay homage to Pérez-Reverte's beloved writers and texts. These functions, and many more, will be analyzed in this second chapter.

However, before we continue examining Pérez-Reverte's work, it will be useful to define more precisely the concept of intertextuality. Therefore, we will begin by defining intertextuality from a theoretical point of view, to then arrive at Pérez-Reverte's work, where the theory will be applied.

## **II. INTERTEXTUALITY**

This term was originally coined by Julia Kristeva in 1967 in her article "Word, Dialogue & Novel", and it defines the quality of a text to refer to another, previous text. Her development of this concept is very innovative and revolutionary as it implies that the text written by an author is not as unique or original as it had been traditionally believed. In fact, according to her, a text is nothing but a "tissue of quotations" (Allen 13).

However, in the context of poststructuralist criticism, the term 'quotation' needs some explanation, as it not only refers to the extract of text taken from already published works, but may also be understood in a broader sense. In such cases, the term 'quotation' is used to refer to popular sayings, popular wisdom, songs, and even things without words: paintings, sculptures, music, etc. Thus, the concept of text is not limited anymore to the written passage but is understood to refer to any semiological system. Both types of

intertextuality (i.e. direct reference to the literary written text or the cultural practice, and the presentation through non-verbal systems), are frequently observed in Pérez-Reverte's works.

## **A. HISTORY OF THE TERM**

Even though the term 'intertextuality' first appeared in the 60s, in the context of poststructuralist thought, this does not mean that intertextuality had not been present in previous literary works. In fact, it had long been used in literature, although studied under different terms. In classical rhetoric, it appeared under the name of quotation (when the reproduction of the previous text was literal) or allusion (when this reproduction was tacit). These two meanings were profusely exploited, given that the classical concept of authorship and authority (immensely different from our contemporary approach to the work of art as the original work of an individual).

As a result, classical orators would recommend that the best way to learn how to write a discourse was to read, study and reproduce well-known orators' style. 'Imitatio' was a well-reputed method during Greek, Roman and even through medieval times. Nonetheless, for "Cicero and Quintilian, the stylistic exercise of imitation is not an end in itself: it serves as apprenticeship in improvisation, facilitating a liberation from over-investment in admiration for past masters" (Worton & Still 7). Using imitatio as an educational method, a personal style would be developed.

During the Renaissance, imitatio maintained its preeminent status. Dependence on classical texts and the concept of authority can be easily observed. However, Montaigne shows a new turn on the concept. Instead of using only one style, he prefers to advice to study a diversity of sources, showing the dialogue among them in the new text. "His mistrust of a mere repetition leads him to valorize amnesia as a means of escaping the

silencing tyranny of predecessors” (Worton & Still 10). In this case, this new course of action detaches itself from the previous passive absorption, although still being strongly rooted in the preeminence of authority vs. originality.

A further detachment can be observed in *Don Quijote*, where the modern concept of intertextuality is already present. In this work, even though there is room for quotation and allusion, its usage does not always illustrate the classical concept of authority. On the contrary, it often appears with parodic intention, although not so much of canonical sources as of Cervantes’s own characters (seen in “Don Quijote’s quotations which are usually inappropriate and Sancho’s proverbs which are always apposite” -Worton & Still 14). Even though a recycling of classical quotations and popular wisdom can be witnessed, these quotes do not intend to be a model either of wisdom or good understanding of the previous texts (e.g. Don Quijote’s reproduction of the classical discourse over the golden and silver ages, becomes a parody when we realize that he has taken it literally: another example of his foolishness). In Don Quijote’s case, the usage of classical quotes fulfils a variety of functions inside the text. It is not limited anymore to a presentation of the author’s wisdom. In this sense, it can be perceived as a portrayal of the modern concept of intertextuality.

## **B. MODERN THEORY ON THE TERM**

As we have seen so far, the technique has always been present in literature, although the approach to it and its theorization has changed. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this concept suffered a great transformation. In this section, we will try to offer a succinct recollection of the most important events that led to the modern definition of intertextuality. Hence, we will approach the structuralist revolution led by Ferdinand de

Saussure, as well as its social use by Bakhtin, followed by Kristeva's introduction and revision of Bakhtin's theory in the poststructuralist context.

### ***1. Word: Relational Unit***

Both the fields of linguistics and literature experienced an utter transformation when Ferdinand de Saussure (and his followers from the Vienna School) approached the study of these two liberal arts from a scientific point of view. After breaking down the system of language in small workable units, he decided on selecting the word as unit of communication. The revolutionary step came later, when he characterized the word as non-referential and arbitrary sign (composed of both a signifying and a signified element). It was also a sign defined inside the system of signs, by its opposition to other signs. This last trait, being differential, also implied that it existed in relation to other signs. Every sign is shadowed by a vast number of possible relations. In the construction of a sentence (or a literary work) previously existing words are reused in a new context, consequently, being put in relation, with the previous contexts or meanings.

This relational and differential approach to the sign influenced the new restructuration of linguistics and humanities in general. This revolution provoked the structuralist movement, which affected both the linguistic and literary fields. Under the structuralist movement, numerous areas of linguistic study came to be described in series of binary oppositions. Likewise, literature was analyzed and expressed in mathematical terms (as can be seen in formalist studies). Nonetheless, even though Saussure's approach meant a groundbreaking achievement for the humanities, it also encountered some criticism.

## ***2. Utterance: Language in Social Context***

Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the intellectuals who demonstrated a critical response to Saussure's theory. He revised Saussure's linguistic studies from a social point of view. Language is a system of signs that lives and is transformed inside a specific society, being an important part of it, replicating the context where it is uttered. "Language, seen in its social dimension, is constantly reflecting and transforming class, institutional, national and group interests" (Allen 18). In view of that, Bakhtin criticized Saussure's language perception for being too abstract, lacking reflection on the specific context where it happened. Bakhtin's emphasis was on the belief "that all linguistic communication occurs in specific social situations and between specific classes and groups of language users" (Allen 15). Consequently, this shift of stress from the word in isolation to the word inside the context where it is voiced, led to establish a different unit: the utterance. This unit would already take into account the sign as well as its social implication.

Utterances, therefore, can present themselves in two different ways: monologic and dialogic. A monologic utterance would present itself as "possessing singular meaning and logic" (Allen 19). Examples of this type of utterances would be epic poetry and some types of lyric poems. Stalinist (and any dictatorial or sacred) discourse would also exhibit an independent, absolute meaning. On the other hand, dialogic utterances recognize their reliance on social relations. "[T]heir meaning and logic [is] dependent upon what has previously been said and on how they will be received by others" (ibid). The novel genre is by definition the most dialogic, as it allows the expression of different voices, personalities, worldviews, etc.

The definition of the dialogic utterance is a revolution in itself, as it entails the recognition that language does not live in isolation. On the contrary, the meaning

expressed in one utterance conveys also the meaning enclosed in the context. Moreover, its reception is influenced by the previous usage of that language, term, or concept. Language never belongs to the speaker: it is an illusion. “The word in language is half someone else’s. . . [It] becomes one’s own through an act of ‘appropriation’” (Allen 28).

### ***3. Text: Place of Resistance***

1960s was the decade of change from structuralism to poststructuralism. A turn was being experienced in the scientific study of liberal arts, trying to make it again ‘more human’. Since this return was in agreement with Bakhtin’s social twist to Saussure’s ideas, his work *Rabelais and his world* had a good reception among the French academia. This book, which was an expanded version of his doctoral dissertation (presented in 1940), had a great impact on any posterior literary criticism.

Julia Kristeva, of Bulgarian origin, was able to make an exceptional contribution to Western criticism due to her non-Western training. Having attended college in Sofia, she was “introduced to the Western literature through the innovative Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin” (Roth 1040). For that reason, she was able to read Bakhtin in the original Russian (there was no translation from Russian until 1968). Hence, she introduced Bakhtin’s work to Western academia, revising his major concepts. She gained recognition as she achieved further development in the theorization of Bakhtin’s social aspect of language.

In the poststructuralist revision of Saussure’s linguistic analysis, there can be seen not only a social but also a political intention (springing from Marxist thought), which leads to “view[ing] notions of a stable relationship between signifier and signified as the principal way in which dominant ideology maintains its power and represses revolutionary, or at least unorthodox, thought” (Allen 32). The word by itself has an



absolute meaning, despite its arbitrary or differential quality. Nevertheless, the word inside a specific context can be negated, suspected, undermined, etc..

For instance, the word 'God', by itself, is a 'transcendental signified', however, in Nietzsche's statement "God is dead", its absolute or transcendental quality is lost. Therefore, for the poststructuralist theory, the unit of meaning is not the word or the utterance, but the text as it is able to express complex (revolutionary) concepts. In this way, it "becomes the site of resistance to stable signification" (Allen 33). The meaning (and ideology) expressed in a word is challenged by the meaning of the complete sentence or context where it is placed. Nothing is stable. Even the complete text will experience the influence of the historical moment, the recipient's previous experience, cultural background, etc., consequently conveying several meanings along with the one intended. This emphasis on language in context, studied inside its social environment, had already been theorized by Bakhtin, as well as the concept of 'polyphony', the "language's ability to contain within it many voices, one's own and other voices" (Allen 29). However, Kristeva further developed these concepts when theorizing about the text, intertext and intertextuality.

#### ***4. Intertextuality***

As has been shown, Kristeva's concept of text is a step forward in the progression here described (from the recognition of the word as relational unit to the broadening of the communication unit from the word, to the utterance, to the text). By the time we get to Kristeva, the unit of communication has a much more extensive definition than how it was previously understood. For her, the text is now not simply understood as a segment of discourse, but as the manifestation of all the preceding influences (ideological, historical, pertaining to individual authors: their worries, emotional state, education...).

The text is then “a compilation of the cultural textuality” (Allen 36). Therefore, a text is no longer the work of an individual author. On the contrary, it is now defined as a “tissue of quotations” (Allen 13). The author is considered but a screen that reflects the plural marks left in him by society and culture. Originality’s value is gone, when seen under this light. Given this, it is coherent to affirm, with Barthes, that ‘the author is dead’.

This new approach to the text leads to new assumptions. Given that the text does not live in isolation, it must mean that smaller units compose it. This unit is called ‘intertext’, which has been defined as “a text (or set of texts) that is cited, rewritten, prolonged, or generally transformed by another text and that makes the latter meaningful” (Prince 45). For instance, one of the intertexts in *Ulysses* (by Joyce) would be Homer’s *Odyssey*. The relation between those two texts would be causing intertextuality. In other words, intertextuality is the “relation(s) obtaining between a given text and other texts which it cites, rewrites, absorbs, prolongs, or generally transforms and in terms of which it is intelligible” (Prince 46). Without the relation with the intertext, the main text would be missing part of its meaning or, occasionally, may be left unintelligible. It is the inclusion of the intertext (and the unveiling of its intertextual relation with the main text) that makes the main text richer in meaning and connotations.

The role of the reader changes to be both detective and partner in crime with the author. The reader of intertextual works will be called to uncover the hidden references as well as relating them with the rest of the puzzle pieces (coming from both his previous literary knowledge and personal experience). Adding this previous background to the reading means that each reading experience is different from others. Furthermore, this role makes the reader a constructor of meaning too, as he is expected to put this intertext in relation with his own experience (both literary and personal) and only then, he will be able to disclose the relation with the main text. This second role makes the reader

accomplice with the author in the creation of meaning. The reading experience grows thanks to the use of this postmodern literary technique.

Essentially, intertextuality has two different definitions according to a strict and a broader sense. “In its most restricted acceptance (Genette), the term designates the relation(s) between one text and other ones which are demonstrably present in it” (Prince 46). According to this definition, the reader’s personal experience would be left out of the reading. The intertextual relation would only be established with his literary knowledge. Yet, “[i]n its most general and radical acceptance (Barthes, Kristeva), the term designates the relations between any text (in the broad sense of the signifying matter) and the sum of knowledge, the potentially infinite network of codes and signifying practices that allows it to have meaning” (ibid.).

In this second sense, the possible intertext is not restricted to the written form. It implies any semiological manifestation. According to Barthes, “[a]ll signifying practices can engender text: the practice of painting pictures, musical practice, filmic practice, etc. The works, in certain cases, themselves prepare the subversion of the genre, of the homogeneous classes to which they have been assigned” (Cancalon & Spacagna 2). With the inclusion of references to all the spectrum of culture (including paintings, music, cinema), the literary horizon is broadened. Literature interacts with all the other cultural manifestations, growing richer in connotations and manifestations. As a result, limits between cultural practices blur, provoking confusion and contagious corruption in traditional clear-cut categories. Since meaning is not stable, nothing is stable. Intertextuality is another proof of the postmodern practice of combining together different categories.

Many contemporary writers nowadays use this postmodern technique. Its revival may be due to the fact that a large amount of those writers are also part of academia (e.g.

Javier Marías, Carmen Riera, Juan Eslava Galán, Adelaida García Morales), which causes their high level of erudition in other aspects of life to be incorporated in their writing. Many others, such as Pérez-Reverte himself, come from the field of journalism and also use this technique. In the following section, I will try to understand the reasons why this specific author uses intertextuality so frequently.

### **III. INTERTEXTUALITY IN PÉREZ-REVERTE'S WORK**

There is no doubt that Pérez-Reverte continually introduces intertextual references in his works. In this section, I intend to explore the appearance of intertextuality and try to understand the reasons why Pérez-Reverte employs this technique so recurrently. Sanz Villanueva has argued that the main reason for this frequent exploitation is his guilty conscience because “conserva algún rinconcito de mala conciencia o alerta suspicaz que le avisa que sus libros pueden ser tenidos por obras de amena y vaga literatura” (*Héroes* 18-19). However, I believe that Pérez-Reverte's intention when introducing other texts is not so much to show his knowledge as to pay homage to the authors, characters and genres that he has always valued. His admiration is often expressed as explicit references to other literary texts. Therefore, in this chapter, the cases studied will fall into a strict definition of intertextuality, and only references to other texts (mainly literary texts) will be considered. References to music, cinema or paintings (intertextuality according to a broad definition) will not be studied in this chapter, even though Pérez-Reverte's novels are abundant in them too. Also, references to historical texts will be analyzed in the following chapter.

#### **A. HOMAGE TO AUTHORS**

Pérez-Reverte has often stated that the main goal of his recurrent use of other texts in his texts, is to pay homage to those authors that he has always read and admired:

“Me permite hacerle homenaje a autores que me gustan mucho o que respeto mucho” (Pérez-Reverte 4). Those authors may be taken as much from canonical literature as from scorned subgenres. The books he read as a child are introduced now in his literature. Even though he has continued reading, his magical kingdom of imagination is still inhabited by pirates, detectives and swordsmen, a space created mainly in his childhood and youth.

Being a precocious reader, he read many complex texts as well as light entertainment readings. His young literary experience was wide-ranging, covering riddles, detective novels, cloak-and-dagger novels, classical literature, realism, romanticism, etc. Thus, in his novels, we can encounter as much reference to *La Chartreuse de Parme* as to *The Three Musketeers*. Galdós, Stendhal, Conrad, Valle-Inclán, Melville, Nabokov are referred to frequently when asked about the writers he admires. However, the models that appear most recurrently in his novels coincide mainly with so-called subliterate.

He pays homage to his beloved authors in several ways, directly or indirectly, quoted or alluded, in a preeminent position in the text, as a presence for the whole chapter that has to be taken into account, or just used in the middle of natural conversation. In this section, I will try to analyze Pérez-Reverte's use of intertextuality in each of these contexts.

### ***1. Epigraphs***

There are two different ways in which Pérez-Reverte shows his esteem for his revered authors at the beginning of his chapters: one is by introducing direct quotes used as epigraphs at the beginning of his chapters, and the other is by choosing a title that alludes to a famous text. Quotes used in this first way, as epigraphs, appear in most of

what he calls his ‘novelas gordas’ (i.e. long novels). This procedure can be observed in *El Maestro de esgrima*, *La Tabla de Flandes*, *El Club Dumas*, *La Piel del tambor* and *La Carta esférica*. *La Reina del Sur*, his last novel, is the only long novel that lacks epigraphs. The format is the accustomed one for an epigraph: quote, after the title, stating the source.

Chapter epigraphs have been carefully chosen to demonstrate some unity and agreement throughout the novel, at the same time that they relate to the novel’s theme. Thus, whereas *Maestro*’s quotes have been taken from fencing treatises, *Carta*’s have been obtained mainly from either sailing treatises or novels about a maritime theme. A greater variety of sources can be encountered in *Tabla*. Apart from chess treatises, there are allusions to chess, gathered from a variety of sources: a poem by Borges, a novel by Nabokov, interviews with the chess champion Kasparov, etc. Also, another recurrent source used in several works (used in *Tabla* and *Carta*) is riddle books, very appealing for our author (e.g. Lewis Carroll and R. Smullyan). *Club*, on the other hand, covers a broader range of topics in these epigraphs. We observe mainly a presence of detective stories (e.g. Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Edgar Allan Poe, Queiroz) as well as ‘folletines’ (i.e. serialized fiction: e.g. several works by Dumas, Paul Féval, Sabatini). Detective novels and folletines are also present in *Piel*, although here mixed with some romantic literature (Heine and Campoamor), the Bible and extracts from the book of rules of Templar knights.

*Maestro*’s case is exceptional. Each epigraph consists of a technical definition of a fencing movement. The definition of this movement, its danger and performance will, in some way, be related to the chapter’s plot or development. Yet, these epigraphs are different from the previous cases, since the source is not revealed. This omission leads the reader to suspect the fictitious origin of the quote. However, since this is Pérez-

Reverte's second novel published, and essentially the first one written with intention of being published, this difference may be just attributed to the immaturity of the style that Pérez-Reverte is attempting to create.

Pérez-Reverte's intention when introducing these quotes, is to demonstrate his familiarity with those previous works that interest him. Moreover, Pérez-Reverte is putting those quotes (or intertexts) in relation with specific chapters of his own novel. This relation with the prior work advances some traits of the plot developed in the corresponding chapter (e.g. mystery, danger, impossibility of the desired love, etc.). For example, in the fourth chapter of *Club*, titled 'El Hombre de la cicatriz' (*Club* 111), the following quote appears:

De dónde viene, no lo sé. Pero a dónde va, puedo decíroslo: va al infierno. (A. Dumas. *El Conde de Montecristo*).

This quote appears right after Corso's encounter with a mysterious character (at the end of the previous chapter). Is the quote referring to this new character? It is possible. Besides, apart from adding mystery to this already tense moment, this epigraph introduces the diabolic theme developed throughout the book. There had already been references to this topic, but the diabolic presence did not seem real until this chapter, where Corso becomes more doubtful (as he is researching *Las Nueve Puertas del Reino de las sombras*, which depicts cruelty and perversion, evidence in a more patent way of the presence of evil in this world). In this way, the epigraph's allusion to the Devil is related to the new theme introduced by its chapter. In some indirect way, the epigraph warns the reader of what is coming.

## **2. Titles**

The title of each chapter has a similar function to the one given by the epigraph. It often puts the chapters in relation to a previous work while previewing the content of the

chapter. Let's study again the example offered in chapter IV in *Club*, by the title of 'El hombre de la cicatriz'. Given that *Club*'s epigraphs focused on folletines and detective novels, it will not be risky to relate this title to a famous character of serialized fiction who had that same trait: Dumas's Rochefort. His physical description, with a facial scar, is indeed shared by this character's. Since he represents the protagonist's enemy (in Dumas's novel, he is D'Artagnan's, and in Pérez-Reverte's, Corso's), it is assumed that this presence means an uncertain danger for Corso. Likewise, in *Carta*, chapter XIV, the title of 'El Misterio de las langostas verdes', quickly takes us to the realm of of comics, where Tintin (in *The Crab with the Golden Claws*), solved the mystery by noticing the peculiar color of the crabs claws.

However, unlike in the epigraph's case, the source is not revealed. Only readers versed in the same type of texts as Pérez-Reverte (and so accomplices of the author in the literary experience), will be able to recognize the origin. As a result, these readers will benefit from one more key for the interpretation and enjoyment of the chapter, whereas the rest of the readers may only rely on the warning given by the quote. Certain titles are difficult to unveil, since well-known characters or traces are not always the ones chosen, making ambiguous the relation or warning.

Often, Pérez-Reverte uses the same works in both his epigraphs and his titles (therefore, continuing with sea novels for *Carta* and fencing treatises for *Maestro*), although title and quote do not necessarily correlate in the same chapter. Interestingly enough, Pérez-Reverte recycles titles already used in his sources as titles for chapters. In *Carta*, these titles have been borrowed from chapters in sea novels, whereas in *Reina*, they coincide with titles of 'corridos' (Mexican ballads). If we concentrate our attention again on *Club*, several of these chapters prove to be closely related to Dumas's 'folletines'. Chapter I ('El Vino de Anjou') corresponds to the title of chapter XLII in *The*



*Three Musketeers*; *Club*'s chapter III ('Gente de toga y gente de espada') is the title of chapter XV in that same work, whereas 'Remember' (chapter V in *Club*) appears twice: as chapter XXV in *Twenty Years Later* and as chapter XVI in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* (both sequels of Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*). In other cases, the title is not exactly the same, but it follows the pattern set by Dumas. For instance, the following *Club* titles, 'Buckingham y Milady' and 'Corso y Richelieu', resemble Dumas's style. Dumas has no title exactly the same, although there are titles such as 'Father and Son' or 'A Lover and a Mistress' (both from *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*), which follow a similar pattern of two names related by a simple conjunction. Likewise, titles like 'Se complica la trama', resembles 'La intriga toma forma' (chapter XI in *The Three Musketeers*).

Similarly, in *Piel*, where the theme is Spanish 'copla' (a music style very popular during the 40s and 50s, repeatedly dealing with betrayed love, bullfighters and gypsies), the titles are versions of titles either of 'copla' songs ('La Corbata de lazo' becomes 'La Corbata de Lorenzo Quart' in Pérez-Reverte's work), or related to the world of copla. Chapter XI has been titled 'El Baúl de Carlota Bruner', referring to the now colloquial expression 'el baúl de la Piquer', a renowned 'copla' singer (Concha Piquer). Only knowledgeable readers, with serious interest in those popular styles (of music or literature), can unveil those intertexts and thus, appreciate these more concealed references.

As can be seen, Pérez-Reverte follows a restricted definition of intertextuality as formulated by Genette, who describes it as "the relation(s) between one text and other ones which are demonstrably present in it" (Prince 46). There is no doubt that once the source is stated (as in the epigraphs) or clearly alluded to (as in the titles), its presence can be proved. In both cases, the intertextual reference is strictly related with the reader's literary knowledge. In the epigraph's case, the writer wants to make the reader aware of

his influences and debts, whereas in the titles, he is concealing more subtle rewards for the reader's investigating mind. In this second case, the reader's role changes to carry out a postmodern function: the one of writer's accomplice and co-creator of meaning.

### **3. Recreation of Styles**

Pérez-Reverte pays homage to his beloved authors in many other ways throughout his work. Explicit quotations may be the most obvious form of doing it but certainly not the only one. Rather than quoting the authors themselves, reusing and recreating their style, becomes more of a genuine homage. It is necessary to study these authors in order to follow their style. Pérez-Reverte does so mainly in two works: *Maestro* and *Club*, following Galdós's and Dumas's styles, respectively.

*Maestro*, his second novel, is the most evident example of this type of intertextuality. When Pérez-Reverte first thought about writing a publishable novel (*El Húsar* just happened to be published, but was not intended to be so), he consciously chose to follow Galdós's style. As he admitted, he wanted to write a novel "como Galdós y como Valle-Inclán, para ser justos. Eran mis dos modelos narrativos. Había muchos . . . Pero principalmente esos, Galdós y Valle-Inclán" (Pérez-Reverte 9).

In fact, Galdós is the easiest influence to recognize in *Maestro*. Here, Pérez-Reverte follows the realist model as much as possible: in his descriptions, in the recount of history (told through dialogue and interaction of the characters), in the vocabulary chosen (suitable for the epoch), the characters' names, etc.. There are certain noticeable features, intertextual borrowings that transport us immediately to Galdós's time. Galdós seal is definitely present in sentences such as the following: "Las cumbres heladas del Guadarrama arrojaban sobre Madrid un frío aguacero aquella noche de diciembre del año 1866, reinando en España su católica majestad doña Isabel II" (*Maestro* 16). Apart from

his vocabulary and borrowings, Galdós is present in this novel due to the historical moment and uprising portrayed, developed in many of Galdós's *Episodios Nacionales*. Two of these, *La de los tristes destinos* and *El Audaz*, have been chosen by Brian Dendle as the most obvious influences on *Maestro*. These two works treat the events leading to the uprising during summer 1868 ('la septembrina'). Besides, both, *Maestro* and these *Episodios Nacionales*, are created around the same political events. Moreover, the way in which Pérez-Reverte narrates history, "por medio de comentarios de personajes novelescos (como los contertulios del Café Progreso) o, con menor frecuencia, por presentación directa del narrador" (Dendle 124), is also similar to Galdós's presentation of political intrigue. A third element recognized by this critic is that Pérez-Reverte's characters, in this work, have very Galdosian names (ibid.).

This last trait pointed out by Dendle is curious as well as very accurate. Most of Galdós's names seem to have the common trait of being excessively long for the modern Spaniard. They are generally composed of at least three syllables, if not four, and convey some concealed meaning. Long and outdated names such as Torcuata, Leopoldo, Norberta, Eufrasia, Patrocinio are present in Galdós's *La de los tristes destinos*. Other people are called by their nickname, still following the rule of being fairly long and revealing a personality trait (e.g. la Generosa, las Zorreras, Juanito Confusio). Last names are also set to unveil the character's personality (e.g. Pilar Angosto –poor-, Malrecado –corrupt policeman-, Santiago Íbero –very patriotic-). Given this context, it is easy to understand now Dendle's exclamation: "Agapito Cárcelos, ¡Qué nombre tan galdosiano!" (124), since his name actually illustrates all these features. His first name is already relatively long (four syllables), outdated, and with a last name that reveals information about his personality: he is a revolutionary who very probably knows jail from the inside.

Nonetheless, apart from these superficial details, Pérez-Reverte tries to follow Galdós at a much deeper level, mimicking his style. Whereas the epoch reconstruction could be based in any history book, the word-choice, planned to recreate a verisimilar atmosphere and time frame, can only be pulled out of literary works from that moment. The word-choice reminds us of Galdós, as well as of his time.

Como Galdós, Pérez-Reverte crea cierto colorido histórico con el empleo de voces del vocabulario de la época ('pollo', 'lechugino', 'Por las llagas de sor Patrocinio', 'obstáculos tradicionales', 'La Niña' [la constitución de 1812]), con referencias antonomásticas a personajes históricos ('el Espadón de Loja' [Narváez], 'la Señora' [Isabel II], el héroe de los Castillejos' y 'el de Reus' [Prim]), y con alusiones a la vida social contemporánea (los cafés, la literatura, la ópera, los vestidos, la política, etc.) (Dendle 124).

However, even though the word-choice plays a very important part in the recreation of Galdós's style, what makes this recreation more complete is Pérez-Reverte's reproduction of realist descriptions. Pérez-Reverte's style, always so fast-paced, primarily led by dialogue and action, leaves room in this novel for long descriptions where he evidently tries to mimic Galdós's style. This can be observed at several instances in the novel, having the clearest example in the description that begins in the following way: "El Paseo del Prado hervía de paseantes bajo los árboles. En los bancos de hierro forjado, soldados y criadas tejían y destejían requiebros y chirigotas mientras gozaban de los últimos rayos de sol" (*Maestro* 193). Apart from the old-fashioned vocabulary (requiebros y chirigotas), this novel resembles Galdós's style in the recreation of literature of manners. All the traditional topics of a typical Madrid (the 'Madrid castizo') are present in this passage: iconic places (Paseo del Prado, Cibeles, Neptuno), characters that could very well appear in Zarzuela plays (the most typical expression of that Madrid) soldiers and maids, colonels with their wives, happy conversations, pleasant walks and colorful clothing.

Many of the elements described aspire to carry us to Galdós's and Astarloa's time. That would be the case of 'las chisteras', 'carruajes', 'el frufrú de las faldas', 'sombreros y sombrillas multicolores', women who suffer being 'encorsetadas', children 'vestidos con puntillas y medias negras', etc. All these elements, which are no longer used, do not only depict in a vivid manner this society, but also show the distance between our time and the novel's action, at the same time that they give us a taste of Galdós's texts.

On the other hand, the most patent influence in the last part of *Maestro* is not Galdós so much but Valle-Inclán, who demonstrates his influence on this work in the dark tones of some descriptions. Valle-Inclán is present in the suffocation that the last descriptions provoke, with closed spaces, lack of light, brutality and cruelty. The model is evident in two scenes. One is the scene where Agapito Cárcelos is found by Astarloa, dying after being tortured (*Maestro* 319-322). In this scene, there is a description of "ojos dilatados por el espanto" and "terror animal" (*Maestro* 319) that reminds us of Valle-Inclán's 'esperpentos'. The second instance is the description that the police gave Astarloa about the state in which they found Adela's body and home. A substantial amount of brutality can be witnessed in this description: "Mucha sangre, a decir verdad. Un gran charco de sangre en el dormitorio y un reguero en el pasillo... Parecía que hubieran degollado a un ternera si me permite el término" (*Maestro* 298). The lack of respect as well as the rough treatment of a recent death and its comparison with an animal's death (ultimate sign of disdain), relate this description with Valle-Inclán's dehumanizing techniques.

The relation with Valle-Inclán's 'esperpentos' as based on the description of Astarloa's friends from Café Progreso has also been noted. The reason given is that these characters, "[c]omo cualquier personaje esperpéntico, son en su planteamiento la

encarnación de una idea: don Agapito, el revolucionario, don Lucas, el aristócrata venido a menos y Marcelino, el romántico” (Moreno 286). Even though it is true that each of these characters represents just one idea, I am more inclined to believe that this may not be due to Pérez-Reverte’s ‘esperpentic’ purpose but to their minimal weight in the plot. It should also be taken into account that this is Pérez-Reverte’s second novel and first experiment when dealing with stylistic planning. It can then be argued that this so-called esperpentic trait is nothing but a limitation of the text.

A similar analysis can be done of *Club*, which tries to follow Dumas’s style in a number of ways (choice of adventure plot and folletín style). Pérez-Reverte pays a manifest homage to Dumas even in the title. In this work, there is a constant reuse of Dumas’s characters’ names, personalities, places, ‘folletín’ techniques, surprise endings, etc. However, this work’s style will be analyzed later, when studying the defining traits of ‘folletín’ texts, as well as when studying Pérez-Reverte’s homage to specific characters.

#### **4. Ideas**

Certainly, the influence of Pérez-Reverte’s idolized novels on him is not restricted to his narrative style. Among his readings, Pérez-Reverte included a good amount of philosophical ones, in addition to some literary texts with strong philosophical preoccupation. He also assimilated some of these views to the point of reflecting them in his works. Therefore, in his novels (as well as in his opinion articles), he demonstrates a philosophical perspective.

As we commented on earlier, Valle-Inclán was the second of Pérez-Reverte’s models for *Maestro*. In that novel, Valle-Inclán’s influence shows in a number of ways, but primarily it is noticeable in Spain’s portrayal, as a corrupted society, without ideals or

values in the public sphere, and easily betrayed (as is Astarloa) by the ones who called themselves idealists and revolutionaries. This work portrays a moment in history located too close to the end of the Spanish empire and its final decadence (in 1898) for it not to echo that generally pessimistic mood. Pérez-Reverte's dark, depressing depiction of the Spanish crisis has been borrowed from the Generation of 98 and more specifically from Valle-Inclán. Pérez-Reverte recognizes that his strong criticism of Spanish politics and the social scene springs from Valle-Inclán's writing: "a la hora de hablar de España: España, la República, todo ese tono descrito de la España exterior es muy valleinclanesco . . . Tenía el eco todavía de Valle-Inclán en la cabeza." (Pérez-Reverte 10).

To continue searching for other philosophical influences in this same work, we will have to leave the field of literature. Hippolyte Taine, one of the leading exponents of positivism, can be heard in several instances through Astarloa's voice, talking about the influence of the environment on his society's evolution ("sus dotes pronto quedarían anuladas por el entorno, donde otro tipo de diversiones encandilaba más a la juventud" – *Maestro* 49). Positivist influence can also be perceived here when Astarloa defines the fencing art as a science ("Constituye una ciencia exacta, matemática, donde la suma de determinados factores conduce invariablemente al mismo producto: el triunfo o el fracaso, la vida o la muerte..." – *Maestro* 53-54-). Pérez-Reverte's character has been cautiously tailored to fit his time: historical context, clothing, vocabulary chosen and even the thoughts that wonder through their minds are coherent with philosophical orientations of their time.

Another character that has been modeled according to an ample philosophical tradition is Lorenzo Quart, protagonist of *Piel*. In the description of this priest's behavior and way of life, a stoic viewpoint can be observed. To write this work, Pérez-Reverte did

a good amount of research on medieval Templar knights. There is repeated mention of Quart's respect for discipline, being often compared with a good soldier.

Writers, philosophers, historians, have all contributed to even the most simple of his works. This faithful reproduction of his admired authors, in style and philosophy, is only possible due to the long documentation stage that Pérez-Reverte usually completes before writing any of his works, a stage used as much to research on the topic and scenery, as to study philosophies that will shape his characters' ideology.

This fourth type of intertextuality has not been often taken from literary texts. Yet, its base is still other texts in the field of humanities (such as history or philosophy), which enables these references to be still considered as intertextuality in a strict sense. Its presence in the text is still very concrete and demonstrable.

## **B. HOMAGE TO CHARACTERS**

Apart from appreciating writers for their plots, style, or adventurous life, Pérez-Reverte feels admiration for certain characters to whom he makes frequent reference. On these occasions, it is not an idea or passage that is reproduced, but certain characters. These famous characters are always treated as icons, as characters that do not need introduction. They may symbolize hope, danger, or intrigue... Most of the characters that hold this standing are Dumas's characters: D'Artagnan, Milady, Rochefort (from *The Three Musketeers*), the Count of Monte Cristo and Abbot Faria (both from *The Count of Monte Cristo*) are alluded to frequently in his works. Also, Melville's characters from *Moby Dick* fit into this special category.

Understandably, the greatest confluence of characters modeled after Dumas characters can be found in his work *Club*, since here there is a group of people (i.e. the actual Club Dumas) who enjoy recreating Dumas's world by playing a role game in



which each of them acts, dresses and behaves as one of his characters. The director of this club, Boris Balkan, literary critic, plays the role of Richelieu, orchestrating the movements and functions of all the others. Rochefort, D'Artagnan's fiercest enemy, also has a role in this club. Like Dumas's, Pérez-Reverte's character (in reality, called Laszlo Nocolavic) also has dark hair, moustache and a scar in his face. Corso first sight of this modern Rochefort (*Club* 49) awakens in him a sense of déjà vue, since he already knows this model. Like the original Rochefort, his role in the novel is of the protagonist's enemy, which places Corso in D'Artagnan's role (even though this equivalence is not developed through a physical resemblance). Furthermore, Liana Taillefer becomes Milady inside their club. Similarly to Dumas's Milady, she suits the description of the *femme fatale*. She is blonde, beautiful and men find her irresistible. Besides, she seduces men to reach her goal (in Corso's and La Ponte's case, this is Dumas's manuscript). She even has a tattoo in the shape of a fleur-de-lis, just like the one held by the original Milady (*Club* 430).

Another author cherished by Pérez-Reverte, is Conan Doyle. One of his secondary characters, Irene Adler, appears in *Club*. She represents the only woman who ever beat Sherlock Holmes. She appears in *Scandal in Bohemia*, and is described as a fiendish lady, with "the face of the most beautiful women and the mind of the most resolute men" (*Scandal in Bohemia* 209). In Pérez-Reverte's work, she seems to be cooperating with the detective (Corso) although, for some reason, he does not fully trust her. She is an intelligent and mysterious young woman who somehow can infer everything about to happen. She is a complete mystery, both in Conan Doyle's version and Pérez-Reverte's adaptation.

Ishmael, from *Moby Dick*, also has a preeminent position among Pérez-Reverte's iconic characters, and so there is reference to him in several novels. In *Carta*, the relation

is thematic. Coy, the protagonist, feels a certain affinity with Ishmael, since he is also a sailor wanting to understand the world he lives in. Ishmael, thus, appeals to him as role model. In the same way, Coy also searches for other seamen to look up to by solely reading novels related to the sea (*Carta* 42).

On the other hand, an extraordinary reverence for *Moby Dick* appears in *Club*, although in this case, it has nothing to do with Coy's love for the sea. The relation between Corso and his friend Flavio La Ponte is based in their common worship of this book and its protagonist. They called themselves 'The Harpooners from the Nantucket Club', even though this club only counted with two members. The day they met each other, La Ponte asked Corso to call him Ishmael after the third beer, and "Corso lo llamó Ismael, citando además de memoria y en su honor, el episodio de la forja del arpón de Achab" (*Club* 37). Pérez-Reverte's characters, just like him, know by heart the text and love it with a fervor that is certainly uncommon. This friendship and zeal is founded in their mutual love for books in general and for this one in particular.

As can be seen, Pérez-Reverte's use of his admired characters fulfils different functions in the text. Often, he uses these characters as models for his own (as could be seen in the case of Club Dumas members), as well as like symbols. This particular exploitation of already famous characters allows Pérez-Reverte to present without much explanation his own character's personality, dreams or relations. The iconic work already provides the development, saving him from explaining again a trait that already counts on an unequivocal symbol. This is the usage of the Abbot Faria (from *The Count of Monte Cristo*) in *Reina*, where he is treated as an icon. He symbolizes hope for the incarcerated person who dreams of being free and finding a hidden treasure. The simile begins around the middle of the novel, when Teresa is imprisoned. Being in jail, she meets Patricia O'Farrell, who introduces her to the pleasure of reading. As a result, Teresa becomes

fascinated with the reading of romantic action novels, since they promptly connect with her own feelings and dreams, restoring hope in her.

Pérez-Reverte's choice of these characters and not others is due to his intimate and long-lasting relation with them. These characters won his allegiance early in life, attracted by their world, full of adventures and great exploits. His well-liked characters are heroes modeled after 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century principles. They are often naïve and brave people who stand by their moral codes against all odds, helping the underprivileged, believers in truth and kindness of others. They are representatives of modernity, believers in master narratives. If left untouched, these characters would not adapt very well to the postmodern world. Pérez-Reverte's dilemma is that, even though the characters that made him love literature and feel passionate about their adventures were valued and believed by him, they are incompatible with the world nowadays.

### **C. HOMAGE TO A GENRE**

If we pay attention to the list of authors and characters already mentioned, it will be clear that most of them are coming from the action novel, which is a privileged genre for this author. As a result, most of Pérez-Reverte's intertexts fall into the category of action novels (such as Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* and sequels –which is an intertext for *Club-*, Paul Féval's Lagardere's series –in *Maestro-*, Stevenson's *Treasure Island* –in *Asunto-*, or Dumas's *The Count of Montecristo* –in *Reina*). Undoubtedly, they qualify as action novels, since they contain a good amount of fighting. Among the mentioned novels, there is also a thematic subdivision: there are both cloak and dagger plots and pirates' stories. One more category within action novels (present in Pérez-Reverte's works, although not in the examples given) is the detective story. All these subgenres, which correspond to what has been called 'genre fiction', have strongly influenced Pérez-

Reverte's writing. Two, however, are especially important, the 'folletín' and detective novels, and in this section, they will be analyzed in relation with this author's assimilation and reproduction into his own style.

### ***1. Debt to 'Folletín' Literature***

'Folletín' works, such as *The Three Musketeers* or *Treasure's Island*, saw the light in a specific publication mode, as serialized fiction. They are known to be written for an unsophisticated public that merely expects to be entertained. This type of literature corresponds to what was previously explained as 'genre fiction', and is characterized for being a formulaic easy-to-sell product, interested more in the development of the action than in any literary techniques. Therefore, folletin works have been attacked for reasons of style as well as for lack of character's evolution. Other criticism focuses on the deficient historical setting, disregarded in favor of triggering action and surprising development.

Similarly, Pérez-Reverte's works are plot-driven and directed towards a mainstream public. The unending action proves to be the author's main preoccupation, aiming to cause and maintain tension and suspense throughout the novel. For this reason, there will be shocking chapter endings as well as surprising setbacks for the protagonists. These techniques, effective to maintain the reader captivated with the story, were not invented though by this contemporary author. He is indeed recycling the old techniques, already present in works by Dumas and Victor Hugo. Pérez-Reverte is very aware of this debt, up to the point that in *Club*, he even includes a quote by Dumas claiming the paternity of this 'folletín' style ("Nosotros fuimos los inventores, Hugo, Balzac, Soulié, De Musset y yo, de la literatura fácil" – *Club* 136).

Pérez-Reverte seems to have several motivations to follow so closely his admired authors' techniques. The most obvious motivation, and the one he has referred to most frequently, is his intention of paying homage and exposing his influence and debt to these authors (as seen in *Club*, where he even researches on Dumas's works). In addition, his use of them is driven by the determination to encourage a revival of plot-driven stories. He wants to cause a revaluation of these works and popular literature in general. As will later be explained, his concept of canon, does not exclude the commonly scorned popular literature. He is extremely conscious of his choice when he refuses to limit himself and to present his influences in his own creation.

Another characteristic that unites Dumas's, Stevenson's or Conan Doyle's works is their means of publication. These novels first appeared as serialized fiction, published in installments, in a newspaper section reserved for 'varieties'. This section always appeared in the lower third of the front page, separated by a double black line (Lecuyer 16). Little by little, this section became specialized in literature: only novels or short stories were published there. This mode of publication was a success in its time of appearance (around 1800 in France and 30 years later in Spain). The reasons seem to be the increasing literacy as well as the economical price of this product (Magnien 7).

The publication mode affected the creation of these works in several ways. The most direct effects were that the plots were indefinitely stretched and that the creative process had to be very rapid, since it needed to be ready for the following edition. This led to a widespread use of ghostwriters. Given that the publisher's profit was the deciding factor for publication, the longer, more surprising and shocking the novel was, the more marketable it would be and the better it would sell. In addition, the ending of each chapter became very important, since it was the hook that would leave the audience in suspense, waiting for the next installment.

Even though this mode of publication is related with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is not extinguished nowadays. Pérez-Reverte himself published two of his works (which later saw the light as books) in this format. *La Sombra del águila* and *Un Asunto de honor* were published in installements in the weekly magazine *El País Semanal*. Both works, too short to be called novels (Pérez-Reverte prefers to call them “relato ligero e informal” –*Sombra*, nota previa, 59-) were divided into four sections to be published on the four weekends of August (*Sombra* was published during August 1993, and *Asunto* during August 1994). They were written at an extremely fast pace (three weeks for *Sombra* and one for *Asunto*) and are considered light reading even by their author. These are two out of the many characteristics borrowed from the ‘folletín’ that can be observed in Pérez-Reverte’s work. In these two works, the ‘folletín’ techniques show clearer and more frequently than in other of his works. Some of the techniques present in these works are the surprise endings, sketchy development of just a few of the characters, and first person narration.

Given that the publication in installments needed to encourage the purchase of the next issue, the typical endings of the chapters were often the beginning of a mystery or a great revelation, to create suspense until the following installment. Similarly, Pérez-Reverte in *Sombra* and *Asunto* plays with this technique. He does not only leave us in suspense at the end of each publication unit but also at the end of each chapter. He is consistent all through the narration with this technique.

Similarly, in *Asunto*, he always starts an action that will be developed in the following chapter. Not even the final chapter resolves the action (which is stopped when the protagonist is about to have the final combat with his rival). At the end of the first chapter, the protagonist discovers that Cachito (the feminine leading character) has just run away from the brothel with him, putting him in a dangerous position. The pimp and

bodyguard will probably kill him if they know. During the second chapter, this disjunctive seems to be finished since Manolo, the protagonist, returns to the brothel to leave Cachito there. However, he hesitates about it, resolving this moral dilemma at the end of this second chapter by going back to save the girl from her awful fate. This risky decision will make him part of an all-night persecution that will provide for the rest of the story of the required astounding situations, that will necessarily be found at the end of each chapter. There will be tension breaks in the center of the chapters, this being a space for dialogue, romantic scenes or reflections, whereas the end will unmistakably be the beginning of a fight or escape scene. This is exactly the same position and use that Dumas makes of the end of his chapters in *The Three Musketeers*. He always places at the end, the beginning of the action or intrigue that will be developed in the following chapter.

*Sombra* behaves in an analogous way, placing the hook for the reader's attention at the end. However, the end results are more shocking than in *Asunto*. In this case, they will not represent tension peaks or openings of other actions but big revelations that will make the reader more captivated by the reading. For instance, in the first chapter, after listening to an undetermined third person describing an unusual development in the battle, the voice and provenance of the action is identified: "...el 326 batallón de Infantería de línea –o sea, nosotros- proseguía imperturbable su avance solitario hacia los cañones rusos" (*Sombra* 25). This last revelation, which changes the focus of protagonism from Napoleon to the anonymous Spanish soldier, appears in the last sentence of the chapter, surprising the audience and giving them a reason to identify with them. Once this common ground of nationality is specified, the readers will be more willing to listen to the rest of the story. The second revelation comes, consistently, at the end of the second chapter. After learning about the great courage of the Spanish people

who keep on advancing towards the enemy line, whereas the rest of the Napoleonic army retreated, the truth is revealed: “ningún herido que pudiera andar se quedaba atrás y avanzábamos en línea recta hacia las posiciones rusas, porque estábamos intentando desertar en masa... se estaban pasando al enemigo. Con dos cojones” (*Sombra* 40). This model, of astounding revelation in the last sentences of the chapter, is kept without fail all throughout the novel.

Another characteristic that Pérez-Reverte borrows from this popular genre is the Manichean vision of reality. In *Asunto*, there are only two characters that seemed worth developing. The rest are caricatures. Mean characters are extremely mean and are described with repulsive characteristics. The brothel’s owner, Almeida, the villain, is described in the following way: “[m]oreno, bajito, con sus patillas rizadas y sus andares de chulo lisboeta, el diente de oro y la sonrisa peligrosa” (*Asunto* 32), whereas his bodyguard, Porky is “una especie de armario de dos por dos, una mala bestia” (*Asunto* 20). Once the reader sees that description, he knows that he should not expect anything good from those characters. There will be no surprises. On the other hand, good characters (and even more main characters) will necessarily be handsome. The first time that Cachito appears, she is compared to an angel (“Vi unos ojos oscuros, enormes, que me miraban desde una puerta medio abierta y una cara preciosa, de ángel jovencito, que desentonaba en el ambiente del puticlub como a un cristo pueden desentonarle un rifle y dos pistolas” –18). Both good and bad people are so from the beginning until the end.

Nevertheless, Manolo and Cachito, who were first planned as flat characters, as it can be expected in a ‘folletín’, grew away from archetypes, acquiring depth and individualized personalities. Thus,

Manolo Jarales Campos, un personaje plano al servicio de la idea de una película, se transformó poco a poco en la encarnación de otras muchas cosas a medida que



su autor le iba dejando, en riguroso préstamo, ciertos personales puntos de vista sobre el mundo, la mujer, el Destino, y lo que Manolo habría definido como puta vida (Afterword to *Asunto* 117).

Manolo, being the raconteur, is able to take up more time for reflection and introspection. Conversely, Cachito is shown through Manolo's own point of view, without space for reflection. Even though she is not as developed as he, she is not as sketchy as the three villains either.

The separation between good and bad characters is even easier in *Sombra*, where the line is drawn according to nationality: the Spanish are good and courageous, with a sense of humor and a big heart, whereas French officials are cowardly brown-nosers. Pérez-Reverte makes fun especially of one of these officials, Marshal Murat, who exemplifies the look and behavior of all of them, although taken to an extreme. Pérez-Reverte describes him all through the story as a ridiculous character, very caricaturesque: "Iba de punta en blanco, con uniforme de húsar y entorchados hasta en la bragueta. Se rizaba el pelo con tenacillas y lucía un aro de oro en una oreja. Parecía un gitano guaperas vestido por madame Lulú para hacer de príncipe encantado en una opereta italiana" (*Sombra* 49). The only French person who is not ridiculed is Napoleon himself. Pérez-Reverte has shown on several occasions his attraction and respect for this historical character.

Another 'folletín' technique present in *Sombra* is its emotional tone, due to its first-person narration, reporting from the front line. Despite being based on historical events, this short story is not objective in any manner. It has been written as a testimony, and is not aimed at the reader's intellect but at his heart. The apparent lack of style and the colloquial register have the intention of representing the voice of a Spanish army as well their emotional states. This colloquial register, apart from being realistic, also connects better with the popular public towards which it is guided. Likewise, in *Asunto*,

the story is told in first-person, in a colloquial, almost oral manner, full of slurs and expressive terms, with reference to children's books and use of their formulaic beginnings.

These techniques learned from 'folletín' literature and so closely followed in these two works, are also applied to others of his works, although in a less systematic manner. Thus, surprising revelations or outcomes frequently occur at the end of the chapters of his long novels (e.g. in *Club* and *Reina*). Moreover, caricaturesque descriptions are occasionally present, for instance, in *Piel*. However, first person narration is absent in his 'serious' fiction.

## ***2. Debt to detective stories***

The other primary intertextual genre in Pérez-Reverte's novels is the detective story. Even though this subgenre has also been treated disrespectfully by prevalent criticism, it has not been so by Pérez-Reverte. He certainly enjoys detective novels and is not embarrassed to promote them. His opinion is obvious when we review his choice of genre for his works: out of his seven 'long novels', five are evidently detective novels. *El Húsar* (war narration/ reflection) and *La Reina del sur* (crime novel) would be the two works excluded from this list.

His works (i.e. *Maestro*, *Tabla*, *Club*, *Piel*, and *Carta*) resemble the conventional detective novel pattern. In them, the novel begins in *media res*, with a detective who needs to unveil a complicated mystery, conquered by the detective's superior mind, always able to find the criminal. This criminal is usually almost equally skilled, and able to put up a hard fight. In Sherlock Holmes series, this is the role of Moriarity, a good rival who, more than despised, is esteemed by Sherlock Holmes due to the intricate crimes he is able to create.

Nevertheless, unlike the series created by Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie, the detective (or criminal) in Pérez-Reverte's works is never repeated from novel to novel. On the contrary, in Pérez-Reverte's novels, the protagonist is not professional but an individual who becomes a detective by accident. These people need to solve a mystery, and often a crime, basically because they became involved and, as a result, feel threatened by it. This characteristic makes Pérez-Reverte's detectives, non-stereotypical ones ("héroe *malgre lui*, pero héroe a fin de cuentas" –*Tabla* 221). Even though his novels have some of the traditional elements (above mentioned), there are some others that make these novels atypical. Below, we will try to determine the characteristics that make him a follower of the traditional pattern and also which are his original traits.

As was briefly introduced in the first chapter, there are essentially two types of detective novel, the 'classical' detective novel and the 'hard-boiled' type. The first one is the novel oriented by the resolution of the problem, thus subordinating, other elements such as verisimilitude, depth or symbolism (Colmeiro 33). This detective novel occurs in the intersection of two temporal moments: the time-frame when the crime happened (retold and investigated, but absent from the novel time) and the time of the actual investigation (present time for the novel and led by the detective) (Colmeiro 44).

This type of novel is also known for conveying a conservative ideology since "[l]a fórmula exige que la investigación conduzca a una solución final reparadora del orden social" (Colmeiro 59-60). Whenever there is an irregularity in the bourgeois system, the detective will need to find a way to restore it to the usual state of peace. In this way, apart from restoring the system's values, it also recovers the trust in human reason (Colmeiro 52). Therefore, the principle implied in these novels entails the belief in an irrefutable power of human reason, capable of exposing any obscurity: a very optimist and modern concept. The detective's rational superiority and process is then the focus of

the novel. Since the novel's main preoccupation is the restoration of order, character development is often given less attention. As a result, the classical detective novel characters tend to be Manichean, revealing an obvious antagonism and rivalry between detective and criminal (characteristic shared with 'folletín' novels).

The second type, termed 'hard-boiled detective novel', shares some characteristics with the 'classical' pattern, such as the presence of the detective or the importance of the investigation in the development of the plot. Nevertheless, it does not stand for a conservative vision of life. It was created later in history (coinciding with the Great Depression in US) and hence it corresponds to a more uncertain moral perspective. The detective's function in this novel is not so much to restore the status quo but, in his search for the criminal, to expose his society's corruption. This genre implies criticism of an incipiently decadent society.

Unlike classical detectives, hard-boiled novel protagonists do not possess superhuman intelligence nor are they as concerned with formal justice either. Instead, this detective is a "ser marginal, curtido con una gran resistencia física y cierta moral ambigua" (Colmeiro 61). He will not hesitate to use unlawful tricks to catch the criminal and achieve justice. Moreover, instead of the ruling bourgeois morality, he will prefer to follow a personal and non-transferable honor code, critical and somehow superior to his society's (Colmeiro 63). He questions conventional behavior and feels apart from his society, reacting to it with cynicism and shrewd irony (Colmeiro 61).

The imprint of these two trends can be traced in Pérez-Reverte's novels. On the one hand, he incorporates traditional elements, since the intellectual game, deduction and search for the clues are the main ingredients of this story. Besides, his detectives are particularly gifted in intelligence and even though they may get confused or take long in realizing the truth, they are always capable of solving the mystery. Another classical

feature is the misleading of the reader, who is regularly surprised at the end when the most improbable character gets charged with the crime (such is the case of César in *Tabla* or the Duchess in *Piel*).

Moreover, the importance of the dialogue for the progression of the action links Pérez-Reverte's work to the classical detective novel. It is through the questioning of the witnesses and possible perpetrators of the crime that the detective collects much more valuable information than just with the study of the milieu. However, the classical model does not entirely fit Pérez-Reverte's novels.

On the other hand, the main feature that puts this author's novels in relation with hard-boiled novels is the nature of the protagonists portrayed, given that his usual detective is not professional and never stands for a conventional morality. The only character who defines himself as a professional detective is Lucas Corso, from *Club*, although not of the kind that investigates crimes, but books. Nevertheless, a common trait in all these characters is that they have been trained, for one reason or another, to use a deductive method. This is Muñoz's case (detective in *Tabla*), who has applied this deductive method throughout his life to learn his opponent's next move on the chessboard. Likewise, Astarloa, fencing master, had to think ahead of his opponent in the fencing court; as well as Coy, sailor without a boat from *Carta*, who constantly needed to read the signs given by the sea before encountering obstacles. Quart (priest in *Piel*), probably the character who best fits the role of the professional detective, even had some instruction in this method since he works under the direct supervision of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (previously termed the Inquisition). All these characters have in common a solitary personality and powerful intellect, which may be the cause for them feeling different from the majority.

Each of them is peculiar in their own way. Astarloa, for instance, is anachronic for his own time since he longs for romantic values while living at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (a time dominated by positivism). He is perfectly conscious that he is out-dated, but he will not change his way of living, thinking, behaving. He prefers to maintain his posture as a gentleman who believes in the sacred value of small things. Quart, on the other hand, is a priest who, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, still follows medieval Templar knight rules. He knows that he does not fit into the Catholic Church and the role he has in it. Indeed, it is said that he could have been the soldier of any other army (*Piel* 182), since his strength is his discipline and ability to maintain his vote of obedience. This discipline was strictly maintained even though his faith in God was long gone before he entered the seminary. His critical mind undermined the basis of the institution for which he works, but still he can be faithful to it while feeling detached.

Muñoz, however, is the most peculiar of Pérez-Reverte's detectives. He is described as bizarre physically too:

Viéndolo caminar con las manos en los bolsillos, el ajado cuello de la camisa y las grandes orejas asomando sobre la gabardina vieja, daba la impresión de no ser sino lo que era: un oscuro oficinista, cuya única fuga de la mediocridad era el mundo de combinaciones, problemas y soluciones que el ajedrez podía ofrecerle. Lo más curioso en él era la mirada que se apagaba al apartarse del tablero . . . Era el suyo el aire inequívoco del derrotado antes de la batalla; de quien cada día abre los ojos y se despierta vencido (*Tabla* 192).

Disenchanted and defeated on the inside, he reflects it on the outside, in his disheveled look and apathy towards life. However, not all of Pérez-Reverte's detectives are apathetic or unattractive. Quart, for instance, is picked on because it is rare to find a priest who is so good-looking (*Piel* 113). Nevertheless, for one reason or another, all his heroes are lonely. None of them has found a lifetime companion. Some of them had it and let them go.

This description of Pérez-Reverte's characters differs to a large extent from characters represented in the classical detective novel. Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot do not feel defeated in any manner but are always in control, powerful and with authority. They consider their investigation as an intellectual challenge whereas Pérez-Reverte's detectives are habitually threatened by the criminal. Therefore, they need to solve the mystery before the criminal catches them. These are some of the characteristics that place Pérez-Reverte's works closer to the hard-boiled novel.

Hard-boiled characteristics are, for instance, his characters' personal code, irony and cynicism with which they approach life. Pérez-Reverte's protagonists' honor codes can be considered 'ambiguous' when contrasted with conventional values. However, their morality dignifies these characters and gives them meaning in life. Quart maybe a skeptic priest, but he has found meaning in the discipline imposed by the Catholic Church (*Piel* 182).

Their inconsistencies are sometimes resolved since there are higher values they are serving when neglecting a certain law. For instance, when Corso asks Amílcar Pinto, a Portuguese policeman, to steal a document for him (*Club* 263), he is only trying to complete his duty (buying the document), which cannot be completed through lawful means, and so, given that his higher value is to fulfill his duty, he does not mind overlooking the laws that interfere with accomplishing his goal. He had already done some unlawful things before then, as Varo Borja makes sure to remind him (*Club* 100). This relativism, as well as a good amount of skepticism and cynicism, conform both to Pérez-Reverte's and to hard-boiled novel detectives.

Therefore, it can be fairly said that Pérez-Reverte incorporates features from both detective novel styles. On the one hand, his characters correspond to the hard-boiled novel, whereas the main structure and techniques used resemble the classical model. His

characters never stop longing for a world that could provide them with stability and trust. However, faced with their postmodern and unstable reality, they understand that they have to accommodate, trade in and adapt, compromising their own dreams. This disenchanted spirit characterizes not only Pérez-Reverte's detectives but also any hard-boiled novel and postmodern man, far removed from classical patterns and beliefs.

There is one more type of action novel springing from the model proposed by the detective novel: the crime novel. Even though this model may be closely related to the detective novel, its defining trait is, according to Anthony Hilfer, that the protagonist is not the detective but the criminal himself (or, although not so frequently, another important component of the crime, such as a witness, a falsely accused suspect or the very victim –Hilfer 3). Instead of encouraging values of justice and rationality, the crime novel rejects them, portraying an uncertain world where there is an absence of moral judgment, which leaves the reader confused, without a guide to decide the part he should take, identifying with the protagonist (i.e. natural sympathy inclines the reader towards him), or with the moral value, institution or individual attacked. This type of novel can be understood as the logical progression in the continuum of moral decadence, which goes from the classical detective novel, which restores confidence in the status quo, to the hard-boiled novel, which questions it, arriving at this last model, the crime novel, that inverts the protagonist's role (previously conferred to the individual who ensured the status quo and now given to the one who alters it).

This crime novel model is the one chosen by Pérez-Reverte for his last work *La Reina del sur*. This novel narrates the evolution of a Mexican woman who, from being the girlfriend of a drug dealer, progresses to being an important drug dealer herself. Therefore, this work can be described as both a crime novel and a *bildungsroman*, since, on the one hand, the protagonist, Teresa Mendoza, is a criminal; and on the other, we



witness the development of a person from innocence and passivity to sophistication and activity. The novels's absence of moral judgment, reached by introducing a split personality, is the clearest trait characterizing this work as a crime novel, as well as encouraging reader's approval and complicity.

However, since the reader meets Teresa at the beginning, when she is completely innocent and in danger, there is a quick connection with her. Her only mistake at that point is being too passive and choosing the wrong boyfriend (a drug dealer), a situation many people may consider understandable. At that point, she is just the passive accomplice of an illegal situation (since she is living on the benefits of illegal trafficking: "pantalones de piel muy ceñidos, uñas decoradas, tacones bien altos, Guess Jeans, Calvin Klein, Carolina Herrera..." –*Reina* 65). Therefore, when the reader observes that she is capable of growing out of that situation to become a stronger woman, defend herself and live on the fruits of her own work, the reader feels glad for her independence and proud of her development (although the job that enables her to be independent and fulfilled is entirely illegal).

On the other hand, there is no guide for the reader, no moral judgment from the author, which translates into a lack of punishment for the protagonist. Teresa Mendoza is the hero, as well as the criminal. On the contrary, in the classical detective novel, the criminal could only be the villain. However, here, the protagonist is a successful business woman who happens to have investments in the field of narcotics. As it can be understood, the characters in this type of novel cannot be Manichean (as was the case in 'folletín' literature). As a result, criminals can be heroes, while the protagonists' enemies can still have some worthy qualities. Even the person who killed her boyfriend, is recognized to have some good in him (as Teresa recognizes, "[u]sted nunca me hizo otro

mal que el que consideró imprescindible” –*Reina* 521). This ambivalent position is the effect of the shortened distance between reader and criminal in crime novels.

Therefore, the reader also reflects this ambivalent position. The traditional formula that absolves the reader from any guilt by considering the criminal as ‘the Other’, has been abolished (Hilfer 4). The distance is now fairly close. The reader may understand and feel pity for Teresa Mendoza anytime that she is tricked or caught (i.e. often by institutional justice). The reader then is not absolved but accused, since he remains a tacit accomplice of the criminal. This typically occurs in crime novels because the reader “is maneuvered into various forms of complicity” (Hilfer 3). In Teresa Mendoza’s case, Pérez-Reverte resorts to a split personality (which will be explained later in chapter four). The distance alteration (closer on the continuum side near the crime novel and further away in the other extreme) is intended to cause this sympathetic effect in the reader, who may understand and identify with the criminal at times, while feeling horrified by his crime(s).

Pérez-Reverte recognized that this last novel was more difficult for him to write because it did not follow the classical (or hard-boiled) detective pattern previously exploited in his other five detective novels (“esta vez no había un enigma que resolver ni museos ni bibliotecas en los que documentarse” –*Azancot* 19). Even though Pérez-Reverte is quite faithful to the detective novel pattern, he is also attracted to other popular genres and as a result, has cultivated several of these (reviewed up to now: detective novels, crime novels, and a good deal of ‘folletín’ literature), following the model proposed but incorporating some original twists.

#### D. INTERTEXTUALITY WITH HIS OWN WORK

One more type of intertextuality in Pérez-Reverte's work is the cross-reference that he does between his own novels. He weaves the separate worlds of his plots by repeating certain elements, in a rather subtle way. They appear in the form of a later reference to a previous character or detail, generally unimportant. Even though obvious references are rare, it is possible to encounter occasional reference to leading characters. That would be the case of Jaime Astarloa, protagonist in *Maestro*, who appears in *Club* as the author of a book cataloged in Varo Borja's library (81). Since *Club*'s plot occurs almost a century after *Maestro*'s, the presence of this book is possible and coherent, although surprising to the faithful reader. This second incidence is not casual, but quite well planned. Since the main action in *Maestro* happened in 1866-68, the book's publication date can very plausibly be (as it is) 1870.

More frequent, though, is the repetition of secondary characters, such as those of the inefficient police officer Casimiro Feijóo (who appears in both *Tabla* and *Piel*) and the art merchant Paco Montegrifo (present in *Tabla*, and *Club*). Both characters have a stronger role when used in the earlier novel and appear fairly briefly in the second. Paco Montegrifo, for instance, is mentioned in passing in a conversation in *Club* (337). A very quick comment about him ("Nunca lo habría conseguido sin la colaboración de Paco Montegrifo, ¿lo conoce?... Un hombre encantador" –*Club* 337) puts him in relation with his job (director of art auctions) and is consistent with the personality we had already observed (being charming and seductive in order to target the art pieces that he needs to progress in his job) in *Tabla*, where he appeared as Julia's untrustworthy seducer. This second appearance of Paco Montegrifo puts the world in *Tabla* in relation with the one in *Club*. Not only Julia and Corso live in Madrid, they are also contemporaries and know

the same people. These multiple appearances of secondary characters add reality, coherence and depth to Pérez-Reverte's world.

This recurrent appearance creates an articulate reverterian microcosm where characters interact and are allowed to appear on several occasions when the profession, business or location is repeated. Similarly, buildings can appear twice, although in different circumstances. Thus, what in *Maestro*, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was a palace where Marquis of the Alumbres lived, later, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is an old mansion that costs too much to maintain (“Si yo les dijera lo que he de pagar a Hacienda cada año, por tener esta casa en propiedad y vivir en ella, se echarían a temblar” *Tabla* 64). These references make the reader doubt the fictionality of these places, books or people.

Even though these references may be hidden to please Pérez-Reverte's faithful readers, his works are not only aimed at them. When asked about the reason why he includes this type of playful intertextuality in his novels, he answered: “Estoy jugando conmigo, claro, es un placer, una gozada. La literatura es un juego, claro.” (Pérez-Reverte 7). It is included as a hint to readers who will be able to put the old work in connection with the new and so will be able to assign a personality (previously developed) to a character just mentioned.

## **E. MISQUOTING**

Up till now we have only analyzed allusions that appear as accurate references or reproductions of the original. However, there is one more possibility: to misquote a well-known text in order to parody the text or the person alluding to it. In this second type, which will now be studied, Pérez-Reverte combines both his humor and parodic intention with rewards to the perceptive reader.

Characters who often misquote famous texts are represented as presumptuous and ignorant. These two characteristics will create the perfect environment for these characters to expose their ignorance while trying to show off. Characters who recurrently fall in this trap are Marshal Murat in *Sombra*, Menchu in *Tabla*, Flavio in *Club* and don Ibrahim in *Piel*. They are always caught in their arrogance (by the reader or their interlocutor) when they misquote famous sayings. All of these are secondary characters that have been integrated in the narration mainly for comic purposes. Menchu and Flavio have more significance in the development of the plot than the other two, who are somewhat decorative.

Don Ibrahim, the most ignorant of this group, likes to incorporate some Latin in his statements. Taking as example one of his quotes, we will now see that he is not able to quote well or even translate basic Latin sentences. The function that these sentences have in his speech is just to impose authority on people who are even more ignorant than he. Only they would stand in awe of his knowledge when hearing the following quote and free translation: “Como dijo, y dijo bien, Cayo Julio César –expuso cuando creyó transcurrido el tiempo conveniente para dar empaque a sus palabras-: *Galia est omnia divisa in pártibus infidélibus*. O sea, que antes de cualquier actuación se impone un reconocimiento óptico” (79-80). The only accurate thing in this quote, apart from the number of words, is its beginning. The real quote (indeed by Julius Caesar) is as follows: “Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres”. This is the very beginning of *De bello gallico* (page 9), and it continues by explaining the three parts in which Gallia was divided. There is certainly no mention in Caesar’s text (at least in this first sentence) of the need of any optical inspection. Don Ibrahim’s reproduction and translation can undeniably be called free.

Pérez-Reverte expects most of his readers to be able to understand this basic Latin sentence, since it belongs to a text often used in low levels of Latin courses. However, for those who will not be able to recognize it, Pérez-Reverte includes another type of warning. The hyphenated text included in the middle of don Ibrahim's sentence ("expuso cuando creyó transcurrido el tiempo conveniente para dar empaque a sus palabras") fulfills that function. It is warning the readers towards this character's ignorance, in case they are not able to recognize it on their own.

Pérez-Reverte seems to find predilection in including his Latin and classical knowledge as quotes that will confuse his characters half-baked erudition. Another occasion in which Pérez-Reverte uses this same procedure is when Murat quotes Caesar's well-known sentence 'vini, vidi, vici' (that appears both in Spanish –128- and Latin –130- in *Sombra*). This arrogant character uses Caesar's words to describe his easy victory, but has no clue where he took it from. Murat found this erudite sentence in "un libro de estampas de sus hijos, algo que un general griego, o tal vez fuera romano, había dicho frente a las murallas de Troya cuando aquella zorra dejó a su marido para escaparse con un tal Virgilio, después de meterse dentro de un caballo de madera. O viceversa" (128). In this case, Pérez-Reverte will not add any caveat, since the reference is definitely obvious. In case the reader is not able to understand the main reference, Pérez-Reverte expects that his uneven mixture of characters (Virgilio, Helena, Troy, Caesar...) will give it away.

In this case, this type of intertextuality has not been included to pay homage to authors or genres, but to entertain the reader and parody his characters. The reproduction of the original text is incomplete or mistaken and it implies an obvious ludic intention.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

As has been shown, the list of direct quotations and allusions incorporated in Pérez-Reverte's works is immense. If we add to that more indirect manifestations, the quantity of texts that constitute his writing becomes extremely vast. The main reasons motivating this author's use of intertextuality have been shown to be his interest in paying homage to his revered readings. However, some other answers can be given to this question as well.

Pérez-Reverte has often declared that he considers himself more as a reader than as a writer. He has repeatedly stated that being a writer is accidental ("Yo siempre digo que escribir es accidental, mientras que leer es fundamental" -Pérez-Reverte 2). Given that he read all kinds of texts since he was very young, he could not remove all the images and symbols that had already entered his mind via other works, the moment he became a writer, later in life. Having shaped his imagination primarily in action novels, he could not subtract himself from their influence by the time he wanted to write. His symbols and iconic figures were then recycled from these previously absorbed sources. Therefore, due to the importance that he places in his reader facet, the logical conclusion when posing the question of intertextuality is considering that his reader side interferes with his writer side. He cannot but use the images he has in his mind, and that have stood for him as symbols since the time of his first readings.

However, when faced explicitly with this same question, his answer is very different. He argues that he introduces such a large quantity of intertextuality in his work "[p]rimero por placer, me divierto, me lo paso bien. Después, porque yo soy lo que he vivido más lo que he leído. Entonces no puedo renunciar, me gusta la complicidad con el lector" (Pérez-Reverte 4). His beloved texts are so much a part of him that he refuses to omit them in his creations.

Popular works have influenced him as much as canonical ones. Limiting his popular sources would not necessarily result in quality work. On the contrary, doing so would be disloyal to his heroes. “Claro. ¿Por qué voy a renunciar a Agatha Christie o a Conan Doyle, si me han formado tanto como *El Idiota*, de Dostoievski?” (Pérez-Reverte 8). He did not choose his references, they came to him. Since he did not follow the parameters marked by the Western Canon when choosing his readings, he does not intend to do so as he composes his own writings.

Indeed, he rebels against the very concept and term of canon and prefers to replace it with the borgesian term of ‘biblioteca’:

Como sabes, para Borges, el lector está en el centro de una tela de araña, que es *la biblioteca*, y esa tela de araña se ramifica y ahí es donde está Dostoievski y aquí está Tolstoi, y aquí está Mann, pero también aquí está el tango, y aquí está Conan Doyle y Sherlock Holmes, y la novela policíaca. Y todo hay que verlo en conjunto, porque el lector no es lector de un solo libro, es lector de todos esos libros. Entonces, tan importante es Agatha Christie que Dostoievski para el lector, porque al final lo que queda es el poso que toda esa literatura deja en el lector. Quien ha leído a Corín Tellado y a Dostoievski, es los dos, y los dos pesan en él. Entonces, eso conforma a un lector (Pérez-Reverte 7).

Readers are not free, according to this viewpoint, to choose their allegiance to certain texts. On the contrary, the numerous books crossing their path will shape person, reader and imagination. It is up to the writer (shaped by years of reading) to select the texts he will reflect. Yet, Pérez-Reverte does not want to do this selection following a preeminent canon that ignores the range of his own favorite readings. In clear opposition to the concept of a unique canon, he considers that “cada lector tiene un canon, lo que significa que no hay un canon. Lo que hay es una gran biblioteca en la que el lector, el azar o su elección, le hace adoptar unos segmentos determinados” (Pérez-Reverte 8). Consequently, a general canon cannot be established, as it will always be partial, personal, subject to transient fashions.



Why is it necessary to draw up the boundaries of the literary personal history of each reader? Why when doing this, must the early readings, the ones that made us read more and be attracted by the adventure of reading, be left out? According to Colmeiro, this eclectic conception of literature does not need to be understood as a negative feature. In fact, this mixture of popular and cultivated elements, in widespread use nowadays, reveals one of Pérez-Reverte's postmodern traits. Colmeiro states that "el arte posmoderno contemporáneo consiste en la interfecundación del arte culto y el popular" (27), resulting in an enriched product<sup>3</sup>. This cross-pollination can be more enriching than closing the door to popular literature. Postmodern authors like Pérez-Reverte are aware of this fact and so, instead of restricting and impoverishing his literary memory, he chose to broaden his readers' horizons (ignoring literary prejudices). With his own reblending of popular and high culture, he was inserting himself in, and helping to create a return to narrativity, blurring the boundaries of homage, convention and postmodern intertextuality.

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<sup>3</sup> As studied previously, Spanish literature, when searching for a way out of experimental literature, needed to return to the popular forms in order to find an escape. The innovative style found was based then on an original reblending of those previously scorned subgenres and elements taken from high literature.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE USES OF HISTORY**

“Es posible que los especialistas puntillosos descubran ciertas inexactitudes en la historia que acabo de narrar. No sería extraño . . . la ficción confiere a veces al autor el divertido privilegio de hacerle trampas a la Historia”

‘Nota del autor’ (*Húsar* 171).

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The second trait in which Pérez-Reverte proves to be postmodern is in his use of history. In the previous chapter, we have observed the large amount of data and real objects that appear in Pérez-Reverte’s fiction. He enjoys giving a realistic, factual, authentic frame to his plots. In his novels, we can recognize real books, streets, people whose existence can be proven and whose presence in the work confers verisimilitude to it. However, Pérez-Reverte’s use of history can sometimes be deceiving, since he is able to introduce a false name side by side with a real one, making it difficult for the reader to delimit the boundaries of reality and fiction.

There are several ways in which Pérez-Reverte introduces history in his works. In this chapter, I intend to analyze the three ways in which this author approaches the incorporation of history in his fiction. To do so, I will analyze the novels that can be strictly considered historical, although I will also make reference to those other using historical subplots and data.

#### **II. CLASSIFICATION OF PEREZ-REVERTE’S HISTORICAL NOVELS**

As was already seen in the first chapter, the historical novel can be defined as the one that, in its plot, returns to a past moment to recreate it, study it or understand it,

dramatizing this past in a creative way. According to that definition, several of Pérez-Reverte's novels can be understood as historical. *Húsar*, *Maestro*, *Sombra* or his short story 'Jodía Pavía' fall entirely under this category. Other novels of his, such as *Tabla*, *Club*, *Carta* research the past (developed in the subplot) but occur in the present. In this case, the use of history is limited and subsumed to the treatment of the present. One obvious constraint of historical novels is their limitation to the realms of the past. Novels such as *Territorio Comanche* or *Reina* contain a great deal of historical data, however, according to a more restricted definition<sup>4</sup>, these novels would not be considered as historical due to their proximity to the present.

To try a different classification, it would be interesting to reconsider the three levels of incorporation of the past that Umberto Eco proposed in his *Postscript to the Name of the Rose* (see ch. I, pg. 52). The first level covers the historical novel that follows the Romantic model, set in the past to elude the present (e.g. *Ivanhoe*). In this case there is no development of social or historical traits. The second level of incorporation corresponds to the novel that uses historical characters and events, subsequently creating a coherent context where its plot develops. In the third level, the plot occurs in a past moment, reproducing it and implying a great understanding of that past time and society. This usage of the past opposes directly to the first type since it does not elude the present but rather it is precisely chosen with the purpose of reflecting, criticizing, and teaching something about the present (Eco 74-75). Pérez-Reverte has no novels that correspond to the first type but has several of the other two types as will be now explained.

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<sup>4</sup> According to Diana Tixier Herald, for historical fiction to be considered so, its settings should occur "in a time before the birth of the author" (1), which in most cases will translate into an action happening or beginning "prior to the middle of the twentieth century" (ibid). However, these two works, *Territorio* and *Reina*, are set in the 1990s.

The type that Pérez-Reverte exploits more broadly is the second one. In this second category, there is mention, or at times presence, of the main historical figures (i.e. kings, prime ministers, famous criminals...). However, the protagonists of the novel are not that well-known. The past appears then as the coherent context where the plot takes place. This is the case of Pérez-Reverte's *Maestro* and *Húsar*. Other works, such as *Tabla*, *Club*, *Carta* can to some degree be understood as part of this second level, although in these three novels, the subplot is the one developed in the past.

Eco's third category (the one in which the recreation of history has been achieved from a critical rethinking of the past and often of the present) is represented by *Sombra* and his short story 'Jodía Pavía'. They certainly revisit the past, but no longer innocently, rather, ironically, as Eco suggested it should be done (67). In the following pages, we will describe more in detail how these two categories are achieved. I also intend to analyze the degree in which they perform a postmodern revision of history.

### **III. PAST AS CONTEXT**

As was previously explained, Pérez-Reverte's works follow often a pattern that uses the historical background merely as context for the action. For the purpose of this analysis and the explanation of the characteristics of this second level, I will limit my study to just his two clearest works, *Maestro* and *Húsar*. In their study, we will observe two sublevels, since in *Maestro*, the history of the moment is of minimal relevance to the plot, whereas in *Húsar*, it plays a more important role.

#### **A. EL MAESTRO DE ESGRIMA**

In *Maestro*, the political intrigues and turbulent moment create the coherent frame where the action occurs. Recognizable historical characters appear in this novel (such as Narváez, Prim, Isabel II), as well as reference to real events (Carlist wars and military

uprisings) and places (Café Progreso, Oriente Palace, streets –Cuatro Caminos, Bordadores or Montera). There is also a portrayal of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century fashion and ideologies recreated in this novel (see ch. 2, pg. 79-85). However, the action that develops in this familiar and identifiable context is completely fictitious and divergent from the big political scene (and so from the official history).

The action is set in the summer of 1868. History is primarily explained through dialogue, when hearing the conversation of Jaime Astarloa and his friends at Café Progreso. In that way, the reader can listen to Astarloa's interaction with other people, more concerned with politics than he, who pass judgment on political choices ("El conde de Reus es un liberal . . . ¿Liberal? Permita que me ría, don Antonio" –*Maestro* 145), or pass on the latest news on the revolt's approach ("Parece que han detenido a media docena de generales... Dicen que los llevan a la prisión militar de San Francisco" – *Maestro* 147).

Yet, even though the explanation of the political context covers many pages, the turmoil of the time has not been chosen for its special significance to the plot, but rather for being the perfect context for a crude murder to pass unnoticed. The killing of the marquis, due to a personal revenge, can at that moment of confusion be interpreted as an anarchist action, part of the general revolt. Only the secret detective, Jaime Astarloa, has further clues to unveil the mystery. His personal relation with both the murderer and the victim (since he has been fencing master for both of them) provides him with the information that will lead him to the solution. Whereas everybody around him seems to notice the obvious, the political implications of the crime, Astarloa's lack of interest in this topic leads him to understand the hidden reasons. Certainly his ignorance of political intrigues makes him choose personal information over political matters.

Therefore, the past moment recreated here (i.e. the escalating violence and revolt) is only relevant as a time of confusion, which lends the appropriate context for the action to occur. The depiction of the time and politics follows very closely the official version. There is no criticism towards the institutions, values or any implication on how Spain should be governed nowadays. Therefore, this work can be categorized as a historical novel of the second type in its most pure form.

## **B. EL HÚSAR**

*El Húsar*, on the other hand, is the second novel ascribed to this category, but it cannot be considered as clear-cut. It is a hybrid in the sense that even though it may begin using the past in a very ‘decorative’ way (treating the Spanish War of Independence as a good background for its plot), it concludes with a reflection applicable to the present (characteristic of the third category). In this novel, history is presented in a variety of ways: through dialogue, digressions and explanation from the narrator.

Again in this novel, it is possible to observe a very detailed portrayal of the time, in which the historical figures chosen, the characters’ ideology and life-goals are consistent with the time represented. French soldiers (actual protagonists of this novel) express their opinion about Napoleon, José Bonaparte, Carlos IV, his wife and her promiscuous life, Fernando VII and his servile attitude while retained in France (*Húsar* 61-62); and intertwine this with references to historical events such as the Bailén battle (*Húsar* 63) or the famous May insurrection in Madrid (*Húsar* 25). All these events and characters are treated in their conversations with partiality, since the protagonists (and so the ones judging) are French.

Moreover, the vocabulary used as well as the philosophical ideas correspond to its time. D. Álvaro de Vigal, for instance, represents the difficult situation of liberal thinkers

in Spain at the time of the French invasion. Indeed this character symbolizes this position and the complexity of being enlightened and in favor of the French Revolution ideals (i.e. being ‘afrancesado’), at a time in which any French element was suspicious (*Húsar* 100-109). The idea, frequently repeated throughout the novel, of Spain as a land without sophistication vs. France as the origin of all elegance and liberal thinking is also coherent with this ideology.

On the other hand, the protagonists’ personality and values are also given by the selected time frame. The protagonist, an Austrian officer (Frederic Glüntz), is therefore portrayed as innocent, naïve and idealistic, the perfect gentleman and soldier. His profession, beliefs and destiny are given by his epoch, a very ‘modern’ one. Frederick clearly demonstrates his modernity in the acceptance of the given values (such as gaining honor and glory as well as serving his homeland and emperor). Indeed, the learned military master narratives are uncritically assumed by him, and even inspire him when, in his very first battle, he tries to seize the enemy banner (“Una bandera española era la gloria” –*Húsar* 146). However, even though he realizes at this battle that any preconceptions about the war, “en contacto con la realidad, resultan a menudo equivocadas o inexactas” (*Húsar* 120), yet he does not question his education in any general way. This first confrontation of reality vs. teachings does not make him review his learned values or attack them in any way.

Later, though, there will be growing criticism after suffering an ambush and so leaving behind all the glory (gained –he believes- with the banner he seized). The dreamt glory of war rewards is forgotten when facing a cruder and less romantic experience that no one had prepared him for. Astray in the woods, without horse or hope, he resorts to a survival fight of the most primitive kind, with hands and stones. All sign of honor or glory is here banished. He is demoralized; nothing makes sense. And it is then (only three

pages before the end of the novel) when, under the influence of a high fever, believing that he is going crazy, he dares to rebel against his military convictions:

Ya lo había entendido, ya lo había logrado entender. Como Pablo en el camino de Damasco, había caído del caballo... La idea lo hizo reír a carcajadas que sonaron espectrales en el silencio del bosque. Dios, Patria, Honor... (Gloria, Francia, Húsares, Batalla...). Las palabras salían de su boca una tras otra, las repetía cambiando el tono de voz. Se estaba volviendo loco, por su vida que sí. Lo estaban volviendo loco entre todos, allí, a su alrededor, susurrándole estupideces sobre el deber y la gloria . . . Mierda, barro y sangre, eso era. Soledad y angustia, frío y miedo, un miedo tan enloquecedoramente espantoso que daba ganas de gritar de pura y desnuda angustia (*Húsar* 168).

Only Glüntz's fatal end, in guerrillas' hands, and this speech, constitute any trace of overt criticism and challenging of modern master narratives.

This last reflection and the series of unglorious scenes leading to it allow the reader to discover the postmodern author behind the modern character. We can say that there is a growing postmodern feeling shown by the choice of voice and perspective throughout the novel. Whereas there is first a portrayal of Glüntz's innocence and excitement, this is shortly followed by the other characters' reaction to Glüntz's view. After having experienced war, they cannot share his romantic vision. Once in the battle, Glüntz has an opportunity to have a reality-check himself; but after the ambush and the fight with stones, quintessential of his survival instinct, nothing is honorable anymore. At last, he recognizes his mistake: naïvely, he has put his life at risk for an abstract concept like 'glory'.

However, even though the conclusion may be postmodern, the way the text is structured is not. A linear story is constructed to show the unpleasant consequences of war. It lacks reinterpretation or subversion of known historical facts. Hence, the novel moves from a completely modern vision to a somewhat more postmodern one. Yet, Pérez-Reverte has proven to be much more postmodern in his treatment of history,



completely inverting traditional interpretations of historical facts, as it will now be observed in 'Jodía Pavía' and in *Sombra*.

Nevertheless, before we continue studying these two other works, it will be necessary to explain how they differ from modern historical novels. Therefore, in the following section, the treatment of history in postmodern works will be analyzed. Once this is explained, it will be easier to understand Pérez-Reverte's treatment of history in 'Jodía Pavía' and in *Sombra*.

#### **IV. THEORY**

In agreement with the postmodern questioning of institutions, values and culture, a revision of history is to be expected. Old beliefs, of any type, will not be accepted without submitting them to a personal evaluation. Since, as Martha Tuck Rozett says, postmodern thought is characterized by a 'resistance to old certainties' (146), in the field of history, it will manifest itself as a skeptical rethinking of the facts told, the voice telling it, the purpose behind the voice or the selection of the events recorded.

##### **A. IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY IN POSTMODERNISM**

Even though some critics of postmodernism (such as Jameson) have criticized the ahistoricity of postmodern literature, others (mainly Linda Hutcheon) have argued that the presence of history is a definitive trace of postmodern works. Nevertheless, historical representation has substantially changed. It is no longer mimetic but questioning, provoking in this way a shift in the depiction of history. According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodern fiction uses and reuses history, although not following a conventional model, rather problematizing it (*Problematizing* 365). Even though history is recurrently used, it is not accepted in the form that has been taught. On the contrary, the intention is to attack the official sources, not to do a mimetic recount of them.

Postmodernism wants to fill the gaps that critical minds may find in the dominant version of history. Even though the objective is an admirable one, there is a lack of means that can lead us to the truth. In what form can we access history now but in the form that has been recorded in archives, chronicles, or epic poems? All of these are often the sources of traditional knowledge, conveying the viewpoint now challenged. How can we surpass that cycle? Through fiction.

Creative writers may have found a solution to this problem. Postmodern writers writing in the trend of ‘historiographic metafiction’ propose with their creations readings that diverge from the ones in historical records, and even suggest the existence of other possible records (now forgotten, forbidden or destroyed). This postmodern criticism may come from rereading previously known records or through the fictional creation of alternative records. The doubt they cause in the reader provokes distrust and reflection on the given knowledge or belief.

Is this revisionist behavior ahistorical? Apathy or obliteration of the topic could be termed so, but this constant presence and challenge does not seem to be ahistorical; contra-historical perhaps (if the meaning of history is reduced to the one given by official history). In any case, there is no doubt that, as Hutcheon says, the relationship of history with postmodernism is extremely controversial (*Provocation* 299).

## **B. IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTSTRUCTURALIST THOUGHT**

The embryo of this historical revision can be found in the poststructuralist deconstruction of the text (see ch 2, pg. 68-71). According to this view, a text can never be understood as a clean slate, as a transparent medium to express a direct message, and so hidden meaning and unconscious assumptions are believed to accompany the intended message. Revisiting the text from a critical point of view, “[t]he original text is reinvested

with its original ambivalences, duplicities, and dynamic contradictions” (Kaes 153), thus revealing subtle meanings, such as “the symbolic dimensions of customs and practices” (ibid) implied in narrative texts.

When this poststructuralist concept comes in contact with the field of history it provokes a revolution, since a historical record (in the form of an archive or textbook) is, after all, a text. Therefore, even though this text may contain an evident message, which intends to be expressed transparently, it will also enclose hidden signs of the culture, ideology and person who wrote that recount. Given that the text itself includes subconscious elements that were not intended by the author, it is fair to ask if we can trust any historical recount.

The main problem when trying to elucidate which facts were real and which became modified when put into words, is that nowadays, all we have to study those historical periods are texts written back then. History comes to us already in the form of a discourse, “already semiotized” (Hutcheon, *Problematizing* 375) and establishing an interpretation of the events (Hutcheon, *Problematizing* 374). This idea is repeated by Hayden White, who considers that “all original descriptions of anything are already *interpretations* of its structure” (White 128, *my emphasis*). There is no way around it. The archive, however, is our most direct link to research into the past. Because men, individuals, have written history, it will necessarily show evidence of their imprint. On the other hand, if both history and fiction are no more than texts, and so, human constructs, why should we confer more truth or authority to one instead of the other?

This concept leads to the belief that human errors or biases are present in the recording of history. Since history is a human product, not all of the historical events were recorded, just the ones that appeared relevant for the historian. Understandably, in

the writing process, there was a selection of events, as well as a purpose (hidden or obvious) for the historian to collect those events and not others.

Postmodern suspicion works as motivation to fill in the gaps, to unveil the forgotten events and reasons why they were forgotten. What purpose, ideology or power was the historian serving when obliterating them? The fact is that official history (i.e. traditional history, textbook history) was frequently written by (or from the viewpoint of) a few powerful people in order to legitimize their power, ideology or interpretation of the events<sup>5</sup>. Alternative views of the world (corresponding to the unprivileged or defeated people) were often censored, forbidden and destroyed. Using Bakhtin's terminology, we can criticize this prevailing historical recount for being monologic, since it is showing one ideological, authoritative point of view, not leaving room for others.

### **C. CHARACTERISTICS OF 'OFFICIAL HISTORY'**

When analyzing history as a discourse, it is clear that this type of discourse opposes fictional discourse's traits. First of all, the historical discourse intends to be transparent and autonomous, impersonal, to convey impartiality. In this way, it is opposed to fictional works, characterized by their subjectivity, lyricism and conscious manipulation of language. To explain it in detail, it will be useful to see Emile Benveniste's distinction of these two enunciative systems. According to Benveniste,

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<sup>5</sup> In order to clarify this point, I would like to include an example. When Columbus discovered America, it was first understood that his goal was to find a shorter route to get to the Indies, to make the commerce of spices cheaper and more efficient. However, once the American continent got in the way, a justification had to be given for its exploitation (i.e. of its gold and silver mines). Since the Portuguese crown wanted to dispute part of the territory with Spain, the quarrel was taken to the Pope, a discourse suitable for the occasion had to be constructed (to legitimize this conquest in relation to this audience). As a result, official history began to publicize the discourse of a conquest done in order to 'bring religion to savage people'. Nowadays the same practice can be recognized, although since the world has changed some, the values worth fighting for are different. Currently, 'democracy' has been substituted for 'religion' and the 'oppressed' for 'savage' people. However, the discourse constructed resembles very much the earlier model.

historical statements are characterized by their suppression of “grammatical reference to the discursive situation of the utterance (producer, receiver, context, intent) in their attempt to narrate past events in a way that the events seem to narrate themselves” (as quoted by Hutcheon, *Problematizing* 370). On the other hand, discursive statements, traditionally used by fiction are more aware and cautious of the language used and its expression (ibid).

In postmodern historical fiction, though, there is a contamination. Since both history and fiction are considered as discourses “deriv[ing] their force more from their verisimilitude than from any objective truth” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 105), traits from both historical and discursive texts are mixed, creating thus a fictional text that opposes the traditional model and in doing so, challenges “the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and, transparency of representation” (Hutcheon, *Problematizing* 370). If historical texts are successful in fooling the reader and making them trust their impartiality (by substituting personal subjects for ‘it’), similarly, the fictional text (characterized by its higher awareness and manipulation of the language) will be careful in recreating those writing conventions to also attain the desired verisimilitude. This textual manipulation and unification is coherent with Hutcheon’s understanding of the new historical fiction, which “refuses the view that only history has a truth-claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both fiction and history are discourses (human constructs or signifying systems) and both derive ‘truth’ from that identity” (*Problematizing* 371). Not only the form is similar, probably their value in interpreting history is too.

#### **D. IS HISTORY DIFFERENT FROM FICTION?**

Traditionally, it has been considered that what is based in reality pertains to the field of history, whereas what is based in imagination is the opposite, i.e. fiction. Yet, nowadays, this established belief has also been attacked since the relationship of both history to reality, and reality to language, have been questioned (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 15). Due to the discursive nature of historical records, history and fiction overlap. Once history has been deconstructed as a discourse, it is not clear anymore what part of the content is factual and which part is interpretation of the facts, or even intended manipulation.

Looking back in time, however, it will be clear that this artificial separation (between history and fiction) has not always been there. Previously, history and literature were not that far apart, as can be seen in medieval times, when chronicles fed epic poems and viceversa. The historian then had freedom to paint with heroic color battles that were not so. His intention was not just to record the facts for future generations, but to inspire his own generation. There was a certain identity at that time. As a matter of fact, “[p]rior to the French Revolution, historiography was conventionally regarded as a literary art” (White 123). It was not until the preeminence of positivism, that history distanced itself from fiction, trying to be considered as a scientific study. Therefore, in that moment, history began to be identified with “the realistic pole of representation” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 15). However, not everything that was until then accepted as historical record had passed through such scientific scrutiny. Medieval chronicles, for instance, were accepted as such even though they often included legends. The problem now with demarcating what is true and what is legend is that past culture can only be approached textualized.

## E. IMPLICATIONS

The expected implication of all those doubts about the interpretative nature of historical records is the distrust of the postmodern reader in the unstable boundaries of both truth and fiction. Motivated by this disturbing reflection, the presence of history in postmodern fiction is a constant that has been observed by numerous critics. Whereas Brian McHale talks about the ‘postmodern revisionist historical novel’, Hayden White prefers to call it ‘the fictions of factual representation’, while Linda Hutcheon uses the term ‘historiographic metafiction’. Even though the terms may change, all of them refer to the same literary and postmodern trend. Therefore, I will try to summarize the most important approaches and definitions.

On the one hand, Hayden White defines the dominion of this literary trend as “the extent to which the discourse of the historian and the imaginative writer overlap, resemble and correspond to each other” (121). On the other hand, Brian McHale considers that the objective of this postmodern manifestation is to revise “the content of the historical record, reinterpreting the historical record, often demystifying [it]” (Tuck 151), as well as revising “the conventions and norms of historical fiction itself” (ibid). To accomplish both purposes, the writer “supplements the historical record, claiming to restore what has been lost or suppressed” (ibid).

This last description comes really close to the one that will be used in this chapter and that mainly reflects Linda Hutcheon’s definition of historiographic metafiction. Her term stands for a “self-reflexive postmodern form of historical fiction” (Hutcheon as quoted in Tuck 148-149). In this case, we are certain that this type of fiction “does not mirror reality; nor does it reproduce it. It cannot. There is no pretense or simplistic mimesis in historiographic metafiction. Instead, fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality” (Hutcheon as quoted in Tuck

148-149). As can be seen, Hutcheon insists in treating this type of fiction as a discourse (a level to which she also lowers history: biased and so fairly fictive), whereas White's emphasis is on elevating fiction's truth to a level overlapping history's legitimacy.

Therefore, taking into account the interpretation given by these three critics, it is possible to affirm that the past is reimagined, recreated in this new historical novel. It is no longer as important what happened and was recorded, as what could have happened and was deleted. The new historical fiction intends thus to appear as an alternative historical record. To create the sensation of real historical record, the new text is written following the linguistic pattern of historical texts, and in doing so, these narrative conventions are both "installed and subverted" (Tuck 160).

The problematization of the past that characterizes these novels comes given by the awareness of the historical record as a human construct, which is articulated inside the novel as a permanent presence of the self-reflexive nature of the text, which unveils "the utter non-objectivity of the historian" (Hutcheon, *Provocation* 306). Given that the historian himself is not impartial, the fiction writer feels close to him in his construction of history. Whereas the creative writer will have as a basis for his alternative historical record a doubt or a hypothesis that will lead him to create or recreate events; the historian comes from the opposite pole, basing his record on the facts and thus, hiding his hypothesis under an impersonal style. Said in other words, the postmodern writer aims to unmask implied interpretations or beliefs, whereas the modern historian supports (consciously or unconsciously) a certain ideology that takes him to write in the way he does. Therefore, historiographic metafiction seeks to "undermine the authority and objectivity of official history" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 123). Its intention of deconstruction perfectly fits in the postmodern skeptic framework that had already been drawn in this study.



## **V. PÉREZ-REVERTE: A REVISIONIST WRITER**

There is no doubt that Pérez-Reverte has absorbed these new trends. Indeed, it has been logical in his case, due to his deep concern with history. Revision of history and alternative interpretations of historical events are clearly present in Pérez-Reverte's short story 'Jodía Pavía' and in *Sombra*. In both these works, the events recounted have been taken from history books, although they are presented considerably transformed. By studying how Pérez-Reverte alters the traditional representation of history, we will better comprehend his postmodern usage of history, and we will illustrate how these two works can be considered as examples of Eco's third category.

### **A. JODÍA PAVÍA**

In his short story 'Jodía Pavía', the protagonist is a historical character, the French king Francisco I, who is suffering imprisonment after the Battle of Pavía, in 1525. This narration coincides with official history in the recount of the facts, although it diverges in the tone and point of view selected. Following traditional recounts, Pérez-Reverte narrates the decisive battle in which Spain dislodged France from its hegemony over Europe. Likewise, in this short story, the French army is defeated, with the result of imprisonment of their king (Francisco I), who was seized by a Basque soldier, Juan de Urbietta. Up to this point, 'Jodía Pavía' recounts the battle 'as it was' in general terms, using as protagonists, victors and defeated, capturing the real figures.

However, it differs from historical versions in the manner in which the story is presented. In fact, it takes the form of a letter from the king to his fictional lover 'Mimí', in which he retells the battle in his own style and from his very personal perspective. The king's cry for compassion leaves his discourse in a very undignified position. Hearing him whine in such terms changes entirely the way in which the reader judges his royal

person. Given the context, the recount is much more subjective and the language used is more familiar, occasionally becoming colloquial or crude.

In a clear diversion from royal speeches (characterized by a distancing from the normal subject –usually expressed by the majestic “we”-, as well as by anachronistic expressions and formality), the register used by this fictional narrator is not customary for a king’s discourse. Observing this king in intimacy, showing his fears, feelings, weaknesses and cowardly nature, definitely reduces his stature. Moreover, by narrating the events in the context of this letter, from the defeated king to his lover, the epic distance is reduced (Aínsa 83). In agreement with this lower and more familiar context, the king’s treatment of other historical figures is also more informal than expected (almost disrespectful). Thus, the French emperor Carlomagno appears in the story as “el yayo Carlomagno”, Carlos V changes into “ese cabroncete de Carlos” and his mother into “Juana Majareta” (‘Jodía Pavía’ II). Despite the family ties that truly existed among these people, this treatment is not expected. It opposes the traditional exaltation of kings and heroes and obviously intends to demystify these figures. However, a shortening of the epic distance is verisimilar in this case since Francisco I is related to these other historical characters, and as such, he may feel entitled to apply some stronger adjectives to them (“Menudo cabrón, mi primo el Ausburgo” –‘Jodía Pavía’ II ).

Moreover, all through the story, there is an obvious manipulation of the vocabulary, chosen to emphasize the parody of the official version. This is done in two evident ways. On the one hand, French words that can easily be understood by Spanish speakers are intertwined with colloquial Spanish expressions. The usage of French (previously identified, as is all its culture, with high refinement) side by side with coarse Spanish words, such as in “me pregunto qué coño pasa, mondieu”(‘Jodía Pavía’ III), has an obvious parodic intention. Pérez-Reverte is not satisfied with only making fun of this

king's simplicity but also he makes fun of the French people and their language by putting it in a context where it appears to be ridiculous.

On the other hand, the selected vocabulary is, in general, anachronic with this time period, since very recent terms are preferred (e.g. *tía*, '*pasta gansa*', '*jugarme la del chino*', etc.). By using contemporary terminology, the historic distance is also shortened (another characteristic of this revisionist usage of history –Ainsa 83). Consequently, old Spanish uses (e.g. "*Pardiez, pareceme cordura recogernos un poco en aquel bosquecillo*" –'*Jodía Pavía*' IV) sound at odds with the tone of the story, again provoking parody and desacralization. This informal tone inverts the normal historical discourse and desauthorizes both the narrator and his point of view.

The choice of first-person as the narrating voice also shortens the historic distance. Given this choice, the narrator's perspective is notably biased, and so, the depiction of other characters has to be necessarily subjective as well. They are all portrayed as extreme either in their strength or refinement. Spaniards are the incarnation of barbarism, whereas French soldiers are characterized by their high-class manners. They are so refined that the night before the battle they are enjoying their bourgeois wine and cooked snails ('*Jodía Pavía*' III). On the other hand, the Spanish battalion is only composed of "*chusma meridional y sudorosa que carece de modales, . . . con tan mala follá que han sido capaces, contra toda lógica, de destrozar en una sola mañana y en campo abierto a la mejor caballería de Europa*" ('*Jodía Pavía*' IV). This Manichean representation, exploiting old clichés, implies this king's weakness. Since the French battalion is characterized by effeminate qualities (not precisely effective at war), Francisco I's ascription to this side, reinforces our judgment of him as frail and a coward. Taking into account these details, it is possible to read the opposite interpretation to the

one clearly stated by this king and narrator (i.e. Spaniards deserve to win because the French are in fact weak).

Summarizing, we can say that in this brief text, many clear characteristics of postmodern revision can be observed. Even though this short story may have found its inspiration in a real historical event, the rewriting of the story from a very peculiar perspective sets this text apart from official historical records. In doing so, the epic and historic distance have been shortened, throwing new light on the old facts.

## **B. LA SOMBRA DEL ÁGUILA**

Similarly, *Sombra* is enclosed in a real time frame, within a recognizable battle and officials. Yet, it includes a fictional detail that shifts our interpretation of the events. Even though there were Spaniards among Napoleon's troops, most likely fighting against their will, there is no record that proves that these Spaniards tried to desert. This novel takes on the possible facts (their desire to live in peace and go back home, the position of Napoleon's marshals –uphill and not within the battle-, the hard life of the little guy who is actually considered as the real war hero, etc.) and develops them as if they were real data. In fact, Pérez-Reverte's story follows closely the battle of Borodino (during the Russian campaigns) in the account of the battle details, such as its development and movements (a risky battalion advances very strongly on the right side, under intense fire), or in designating marshal Murat as the individual hero of the battle (and saviour of this battalion).

In this case, the main divergence in the interpretation of this battle from official history is created by the shift in perspective, from the officer's to the soldier's point of view. Since the selected storyteller is an anonymous Spanish soldier, the battle will not be narrated emphasizing the officers' actions or strategies, but rather the suffering of the

soldiers in the front line. It is a story that intends to gain the reader's empathy, to touch his heart more than his mind. This position, supporting the importance of the common man as the real war hero, is present in several other works by Pérez-Reverte (i.e. in his opinion articles, *Húsar* and *Territorio Comanche*). No doubt Pérez-Reverte, influenced by his experience as a war correspondent, prefers to emphasize this pole of the story.

He has chosen a participatory concept of history (unheard of in official history) that incorporates the views and positions of non-privileged groups. These alternative interpretations find expression inside the philosophical frame of postmodernism. As was previously explained, authorized historical versions often represent the dominant class. However, due to the current preference for alternative voices and views, unusual discourses are reaching to larger audiences. Therefore, the anonymous soldier's view seems to count with a larger audience than an officer's view.

Once the point of view of the battle has changed (from an individual famous hero to a plural and anonymous one –“nosotros”-) a reinterpretation of the facts is inevitable. Since the narrative choice is from the bottom to the top, the officers are observed from a distant and parodic prism. They are thus portrayed as cowardly sycophants who stay away from the battle, directing it from the top of the hill. They are not especially clever or famous for their strategic thinking. Their job seems to be limited to praising and applauding Napoleon once they have managed to “ascender, amariconarse y echar tripa” (*Sombra* 51). Only one officer stands aside in this indistinct crowd: Marshal Murat, the official hero of the battle of Borodino, is markedly ridiculed.

Murat was well-known for his courage, to the point that, according to some historical sources, “he was too brave, and never counted his enemy” (Headley 14). Hence, he could often be found in the centre of the battle, leading charges (as it actually happened in this battle, where he was said to have “caused a terrific charge of cavalry” –

Gaylord 248). These two details are inverted by Pérez-Reverte when interpreting his courage not as a value, but as lack of intelligence (*Sombra* 52). Besides, charges “[t]ienen la ventaja de que se hacen en línea recta. No hay que calentarse mucho la cabeza” (ibid.).

His attire and language are also criticized. In coetaneous texts, his costume is qualified as ‘theatrical’ and ‘extravagant’ (Headley 8-9). This commentary may be the basis for Pérez-Reverte’s criticism, who states that “[p]arecía un gitano guaperas vestido por Mme. Lulú para hacer de príncipe encantado en una operetta italiana” (*Sombra* 49). Since he is described as vain, Pérez-Reverte needs to construct a linguistic register that fits that portrayal and so he finds it in the contemporary model of the ‘pijo’ (Spanish preppy boy). Murat will then use the vocabulary and sayings of a wealthy but not especially bright Spanish youth. Other officers are also parodied for their way of speaking, mainly for their French pronunciation in Spanish (here called their ‘acento circunflejo’). This systematic distortion of official history transforms the officers from being the battle heroes to ridiculous caricatures, which is quite a change. Napoleon, though, is never parodied. Pérez-Reverte respects him, as he has shown in his various allusions in other works (i.e. *Húsar*, *Maestro*, *Tabla* and *Club*). The battalion, however, has transformed his famous nickname ‘Le Petit Caporal’ to ‘Le Petit Cabrón’ (this being the only ironic characterization he receives).

Something curious is that Pérez-Reverte allows his reader to listen to the official historical version while reading his own text. It is then introduced, in a very brief way but maintaining its conventional tone (univocal) and style (long complex sentences). For instance, the following summary can be heard: “Cuentan los libros, al referirse a la campaña de 1812 en Rusia, que acudiendo en socorro de un batallón aislado –el nuestro-, Murat dirigió en Sbodonovo una de las más heroicas cargas de caballería de la Historia” – *Sombra* 55). This version is not exposed for the sake of reproducing it, but mainly to

enable a direct attack towards it. In fact, these brief summaries usually precede the inclusion of his own parodic voice a few lines after (such as “Heroica mis narices, Dupont” –ibid). With an expressive and informal tone, the established truth is contested.

As can be seen so far, the story told by Pérez-Reverte largely differs in style and intention from the one written in Napoleonic times. On the one hand, the tone and register with which it is expressed is the complete opposite to the traditional historical narration, and on the other, the facts (which remain similar) have been reinterpreted. The soldiers’ motivation to approach the enemy line is certainly not due to their concern with winning but with deserting. In the following lines, we will see how both the reinvented style and intention join to produce a complete inversion.

Whereas official history is characterized by its grandiloquent tone and epic treatment, *Sombra* is narrated in an informal, colloquial tone that has more of orality than of written record. Thus, coordination is preferred to subordination and basic expressive techniques (e.g. use of onomatopoeias or repetition) are favoured. The introduction of onomatopoeias is coherent with the oral and informal tone, but it also provides readers with the sounds of the battle, approaching it and giving them a more realistic and verisimilar impression of the battle. These and other discourse traits, such as the narration in first-person, the use of free indirect style or of modern vocabulary (anachronic with the story, but effective in its context), create the intended effect already observed in ‘Jodía Pavía’: it shortens the epic and the historic distance. Once again, the discourse constructed plays an important role in the inversion of History.

On the other hand, moving now to the reevaluation of the facts, it is true that the events correspond in general terms to the authorized version (difficult advance –“arm to arm”- under intense fire –Gaylord 248), but the interpretation is different. The soldiers’ motivation for victory, paradoxically, is not at all courageous. Despite the historical

recount of the facts, nobody can tell nowadays the feelings or intentions of the protagonists of the action when it happened. Pérez-Reverte plays with the reader's ignorance, and so, while maintaining the external description, he dares to recreate the protagonists' feelings.

Indeed, the soldiers' motivation to advance in the battlefield had nothing to do with the sublimation of values that both official history and Napoleon's marshals quickly assign to them. Napoleon's voice is heard on this occasion explaining their behavior, saying that they are "soldados, ¿comprende? Soldados franceses de la Francia. Héroes oscuros, anónimos, que con sus bayonetas forjan la percha donde yo cuelgo la gloria" (*Sombra* 21). The inspiration and origin of their courage is (supposedly) their homeland. However, the first disappointment arrives four pages later when Napoleon is told that in fact these are Spanish soldiers (*Sombra* 25). Later on in the story, the reader will realize that not only does this battalion fight for the opposite reason that Napoleon believes (not to win but to desert) but that they certainly are not even moved by the expected values. As it can be observed in the following quote, military values are repeatedly deconstructed in a very expressive and ironic style: "un trocito de gloria que a ellos les van a endilgar los cañones ruskis a chorros dentro de nada, gloria para dar y tomar, un empacho de gloria, mi primero, lo que vamos a tener dentro de cinco minutos. Vamos a cagar gloria de aquí a Lima" (*Sombra* 93). According to this voice, glory is not a concrete value worth dying for. In fact, it even deserves being treated with vulgar expressions. On the other hand, these soldiers' homeland is not the one they are fighting for at that moment, and so it represents nothing for them ("la Patria dice aquí, mi primo, a ver a qué patria se refiere" –*Sombra* 136). As good postmodern subjects, these 'courageous' soldiers do not accept external values (i.e. military master narratives). Once the deconstruction of values is perceived, it can be clearly noted that this brief novel intends a systematic inversion



and deconstruction not only of any military value, but even of the legitimacy of war itself.

By rereading this battle from an atypical point of view, Pérez-Reverte is creating an alternative interpretation of history, replacing the altar of established heroes instead with unprivileged voices. The primary tool for this desacralization is the construction of an ironic discourse in which high concepts are allowed to be treated with disrespect and vulgarity. Moreover, since this alternative interpretation has been exposed with abundant historical details, it achieves as much verisimilitude as the actual truth.

More importantly, these two works (*Sombra* and 'Jodía Pavía') certainly carry a message about the present. Here a postmodern recreation of history has been achieved through a critical rethinking of the past, by returning to the past while reflecting on the present time, trying to solve a current problem. Indeed, his war novels were all written during the Yugoslavian War, and were intended to provoke the reader's reflection. The first-person narration (present in both texts) facilitates the identification of past and present (since it shortens the epic and historical distance) and so facilitates the reader's reflection (another characteristic of Eco's third type of historical novel –Eco 75).

### **C. A HISTORICAL SUBPLOT**

*Carta*'s historical subplot offers a very interesting treatment of history. This subplot expands on the causes and mystery of the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain, during Carlos III's rule. It is well-known that this king's enlightened ministers were not pleased with the strong power that the Jesuits had in Spanish education and society at the time. Furthermore, the mutiny of Esquilache (against one of the king's foreign ministers) was reputedly instigated by the Jesuits. Yet, the history of the year in between this revolt (1766) and their eviction (1767) is not completely clear. Pérez-Reverte adds to this

mystery by suggesting one more hypothesis. What if an anonymous ship going from La Havana to Valencia was in fact meant to play an important role in the decision taking? This ship, sunk in front of Cartagena, might have transported a hidden load of emeralds that was intended to pay for the Jesuits to regain their influence on the Court. However, this load never reached the Court as the Jesuits' enemies discovered the plot and attacked the ship. Therefore, since the ship never arrived to Valencia and the transaction never accomplished any patent result, this plot never made it to history books. The existence of an unsolved mystery provides a perfect frame for the reader to believe the fiction imagined by Pérez-Reverte.

The treatment of history in this work becomes noteworthy because instead of recreating a particular historical scene and giving it an alternative interpretation, the presentation of the chosen story is covered by doubt. There is a mystery that can be solved by researching in archives or by searching for archeological remains. However, at the time when the main plot occurs, neither of these procedures has been completed. Therefore, everybody who treats this topic does it with caution (not wanting to jump to conclusions), as well as with secrecy. Two discrepant voices will be the protagonist's guides through the historical intrigue. They will explain their own version to him from different points of view, sometimes coinciding and sometimes contradicting each other. These two people (Tánger Soto and her rival) are enemies and their recounts will therefore be partial and biased, provoking more doubt than belief in Coy (*Carta's* protagonist and 'detective'). Since he doubts both versions, he will seek independent clarification, comparing and contrasting their information.

Meanwhile, the reader will feel confused and forced to follow Coy in his elucidation process. Indeed, the reader will need to pose the same questions that Coy first encounters (i.e. Why should someone raise questions about a ship sunk in the same cape

where Roman, Carthaginians, Phoenician or Greek ships rest? Why would this one be different? What is unusual about an Algerian or English ship attacking a Spanish one coming from the Americas?). These issues are complicated by the two conflicting voices and the fact that no historical record provides a detailed account of what happened during that year (with respect to the process against the Jesuits). As a matter of fact, according to both researchers, the Archivo de Indias (real authority in any nautical traffic coming from the Americas) was not helpful when searching for this ship's trace. All they encountered was the evidence of gaps in their information. In this way, the authority of this celebrated archive is attacked and deconstructed. The historical recount has been proven false, incomplete and biased, since it was serving Carlos III and so hiding the attack against the Jesuits. If historical records cannot be trusted and even serious researchers who know where to direct their search are not able to find their information, if famous archives cannot help in the process and individual researchers hide personal interests (thus, offering partial truths), who can Coy (and the reader) trust?

In this novel, history is shown to be recounted in many verisimilar ways, all partial but not false, just incomplete and provoking the protagonist's and reader's doubt. Ultimately, it causes a distrust of any (un)official version, at the same time that it creates the perfect environment for the reader to believe Pérez-Reverte's version. The 'archive according to the author', the one he invents, is more complete and so, more convincing, since it offers a more detailed account of the events. His recount is accompanied by the fact that the protagonist, being a sailor, is capable of diving in Cartagena's cape to find the decisive evidence of what others were just searching for in libraries. Pérez-Reverte's fiction (*Carta*'s main plot) proves what others have not done: there were emeralds in the ship. However, is it a fiction that wants to serve as historical proof. Can it count? It

certainly provokes the reader's doubt and interest, even though it may not count as historical testimony.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

As it has just been observed, Pérez-Reverte is able to create works of historiographic metafiction, adopting alternative voices and perspectives to represent a more participative and polyphonic recount of history. With his innovative outlook on the subject, he provides an imaginative hypothesis on what could have happened. With it, he tries to fill in the gaps of the official recount, problematizing and critically revising that version.

Definitely, Pérez-Reverte's postmodern historical novels do not spring from an ahistorical behavior, but from a genuine interest and preoccupation with Spanish history. This writer's love for history is no secret, since he has repeatedly expressed it. In fact, not only is he interested in history, but also believes that "la historia es lo que explica el presente" (Pérez-Reverte 5). Indeed, when Pérez-Reverte goes to the past to depict traditional Spanish virtues, he is at the same time reflecting on the present, criticizing the lack of those virtues nowadays. He must return to the glorious times he admires to look for the values that he wishes his countrymen would still have (i.e. courage, honesty and passion for life). Paradoxically, his nostalgia for traditional Spanish virtues, feeling of a very modern nature, provokes Pérez-Reverte's postmodern response: by reinterpreting the past with irony.

His love for a detailed account of historical events translates into a serious preparation of the novels' background. His documentation stage (which usually lasts around two years prior to the actual writing stage) provides him with an extraordinary amount of resources, dates, and precise details that make the narration coherent. To be

able to create a verisimilar environment for his characters, Pérez-Reverte researches on the topic by taking pictures, collecting maps, gathering music, visiting libraries and interviewing people. Thanks to this process, highly cherished by the author<sup>6</sup>, the plot gains verisimilitude.

### A. EMANCIPATION FROM HIS RESPECT FOR HISTORY

A certain evolution can be observed in Pérez-Reverte with respect to his treatment of history. There is an obvious change from his utter respect for official history and mimetic portrayal of the political situation in *Maestro* to its complete inversion in *Sombra*. He also shows a progression in his degree of security in his new usage of history. In *Húsar*, for instance, there is a final note from the author that reads like a disclaimer intended for historians. He directs to them this note: “[e]s posible que los especialistas puntillosos descubran ciertas inexactitudes en la historia que acabo de narrar. No sería extraño . . . la ficción confiere a veces al autor el divertido privilegio de hacerle trampas a la Historia” (Afterword to *Húsar* 171). Why does Pérez-Reverte believe that he needs to provide an explanation? ‘Excusatio non petita, accusatio manifesta’. Does he have a guilty conscience for what he just wrote? He seems embarrassed to have allowed himself to engage in imprecision or inaccuracy.

Conversely, *Sombra* (written seven years later) does not show any feeling of embarrassment or any intention to ask for forgiveness. Instead, in this short novel, Pérez-Reverte seems confident and pleased by having envisioned these new twists and turns to history. He is proud of knowing well the official version and so, being able to play tricks on that established truth (“Sólo habiendo leído mucho de eso [historia de la época]

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<sup>6</sup> “una novela es un pretexto estupendo para que mi biblioteca siga creciendo, para leer, comprar libros nuevos, viajar, conocer más, ver películas, escuchar música, y todo eso incorporarlo al libro” (Pérez-Reverte 2)

puedes hacer una cosa divertida. Pero cada cosa que se dice en ese libro aunque sea broma es verdad. Contarlo así requiere conocerlo muy bien” –Pérez-Reverte 4).

Nowadays, Pérez-Reverte has arrived at a further stage in his emancipation than where he stood in 1993 with *Sombra*. With respect to the historical series of *Capitán Alatriste*, Pérez-Reverte stated in 2003 that

Una novela es un privilegio para el autor porque uno puede rehacer el mundo a su manera, uno puede amueblarla y poblarla de aquellos personajes, lugares y situaciones que uno quiere meter. . . . Yo no soy historiador ni lingüista, no tengo la obligación de ser rigurosamente fiel, aunque el rigor documental del libro es exhaustivo, aunque voy a todo ese material noble con la libertad del que sabe que puede manipular impunemente. Esa mezcla de rigor y manipulación literaria es un proceso muy divertido y satisfactorio” (Sánchez 1-2).

This writer constantly combines truth and fiction, life and dream with impunity. Not everything in his works is verifiable, but it certainly appears to be so. In *Reina*, which contains an abundance of real-life elements, there is a similar behaviour. The combination of verifiable details with verisimilar ones certainly creates a credible context where anything can be accepted as true.

Thus, Elmer Mendoza and César Güemes (in fact, the two Mexican writers who introduced Pérez-Reverte to the narcocorrido music and literature) are camouflaged as two Mexican drug dealers. By disguising his friends in the appropriate attire and usage of the language, they become verisimilar elements inside his plots. Another way to grant them more reality, is by putting them in relation with real drug dealers, known to the reader (e.g. Pablo Escobar –*Reina* 268, 458). As a matter of fact, Pérez-Reverte’s documentation is intended to be solid enough to pass the reader’s test. In *Reina*, for instance, his research included not only the context and culture of drug trafficking but

also other more mechanical elements of his plot.<sup>7</sup> However, this movement in and out of the reality realm can be disturbing for readers who may get confused and fall into the trap that Pérez-Reverte has prepared for them. The abundance of details (some real, some verisimilar) proves to be useful when trying to make certain scenes entirely believable.

## **B. TRUTH/ FICTION DILEMMA**

Therefore, a fair question to ask is if this constant mixing of levels (of truth and fiction) is a responsible behavior. How free should the author feel to do this? The answer to these question has changed throughout the years. Whereas during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century history was a sacred field that had to be approached with reverence, intending a factual representation (as can be seen in realist or naturalist works), nowadays history is no more than a discourse, as valid as literature. Likewise, whereas last century, literature was written in the form of historical or sociological account, nowadays the opposite process is encountered: history is reinvented from the field of literature, in a very creative even though verisimilar manner. Therefore, the answer to our previous question would be completely negative if asked last century (under modern ideology), but fairly permissive of the combination during this present one (during postmodern times).

History has fallen from its sacred altar and is now questioned. Since any text is “a human construct” (Hutcheon, *Problematizing* 371), the historical account given by official archives is now suspected. When was it established that privileged views represent exactly what happened? Could the historians forget, miss or consciously hide something? In that case, it would be fair to suggest other views and recreate them, which is what Pérez-Reverte does when freely recreating the Napoleonic Russian Campaigns (in

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<sup>7</sup> “Chema Beceiro y su dotación de la ‘hachejota’ aduanera de Algeciras le brindan la experiencia de las persecuciones navales y los secretos de la alta velocidad; Javier Collado . . . , junto con los del ‘Argos’, le llevaron de caza nocturna, y José Luis Domínguez le mostró cómo se salta el ‘molinillo’ a una planeadora a 50 nudos de velocidad” (Guerrero 132)

*Sombra*) or the Golden Age (in his series of *Capitán Alatriste*). By mixing freely, this writer may be adulterating reality, but he may also be enriching it by filling the gaps of our ignorance. His mixture of truth and falsehood provides us with a possible truth, his own hypothesis on what actually happened.

### **C. IMPLICATIONS**

What are the implications of this newly encountered freedom? The moral relativism previously listed as a postmodern characteristic provides a good response to this question. Since there are no limitations that stop the writer from mixing truth and falsehood, a “blurring of boundaries” (Hutcheon, *Provocation* 299) takes place between the field of history and the one of fiction. No moral restraint is imposed either on the author or the characters. They feel free to combine and appreciate truth and falsehood, as well as originals and fake copies. This relativism will allow Corso to admire the beauty of perfect facsimile copies (that will be sold as originals) and still consider them as pieces of art (*Club* 175).

The second implication, demystification, would also be another clear consequence of these postmodern times. Since there is suspicion of the partiality of established truths, there will be no respect for them, as well as no respect for master narratives. Likewise, History has lost its former consideration as an established truth or as a sacred realm. Writers now feel entitled to manipulate its content by combining it with their own hypotheses, as we have seen done by Pérez-Reverte. However, their addition can also be understood as enriching (and not only adulterating) our previously constrained vision.



## CHAPTER IV

### PÉREZ-REVERTE'S CHARACTERS

¿Qué papel juega el individuo en este planeta declinante, belicoso, taimado y desenamorado? Pérez-Reverte resulta ser un escritor barojiano: sus personajes se debaten entre el vitalismo y la abulia, que toma forma de escepticismo y casi de resignación. Se prefieren los luchadores, los idealistas, los que acometen con empeño una empresa por el único motivo de mantener una ilusión o por la simple razón de que no puede hacerse en la vida otra cosa que vivirla. Los grandes ideales y los tiempos de la búsqueda y de la aventura se terminaron.

(Sanz Villanueva, *Héroes* 22).

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Although some of Pérez-Reverte's characters have already been presented, until now they have been studied only in relation with specific topics, focusing on their adscription to modernity, postmodernity, their representation of the hard-boiled or the classical detective novel, or in relation with the concept of history. In this chapter, though, the focus will be Pérez-Reverte's protagonists themselves, their construction and the characteristics that make them kin with each other as well as those that make them peculiar and singular. With this analysis, I intend to better understand Pérez-Reverte's divergence from the given models as well as the evolution of his characters within his work.

At first sight, it is easily noticeable that in Pérez-Reverte's novels there are several recurrent character-types, borrowed from folletin and detective novels (see ch. 2, 86-88). These recurrent characters are the detective (who most of the time also fulfills the protagonist role), the mysterious and seductive woman, and the criminal. However, even

though superficially they are classifiable within these general types, Pérez-Reverte achieves originality in his new creation, individualizing them. Moreover, some of his characters are not easily classified within one of these three types. Such is the case of Teresa Mendoza, protagonist in *Reina*, who is at the same time the mysterious woman, the criminal, and to some extent, the detective (of her boyfriend's death).

On the other hand, there is no doubt that most of Pérez-Reverte's protagonists are kin with each other. Indeed, they seem to be variations over the same pattern. This would be a Spanish person, male, cultured, around 40, extracted from middle to lower class, living in Madrid, mainly urban, experienced and cynical.<sup>8</sup> These traits repeat in his characters' description, although not having all the characteristics or the same combination in all of them. Therefore, in this chapter I plan on analyzing three characters that will best illustrate these characteristics and with which it will be possible to understand the Revertian type. For that reason, I will concentrate on the description and analysis of Lucas Corso, Jaime Astarloa and Teresa Mendoza, addressing as well their foils and models. These characters represent the gradation from the highest concentration of typical features to the most deviant.

First, Lucas Corso is without a doubt the character that shows the highest number of these characteristics together. Indeed, he is male, middle class, cultured, around forty years old, living in Madrid, cynical, experienced, sophisticated, and fulfilling the role of the detective. He is extremely intelligent and lonesome, consumed by his job and with only a handful of friends. Like many other Revertian characters, he lives with his emotions well-kept in the drawer, nostalgic about previous battles, times and women who

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<sup>8</sup>Some exceptions to those general qualities can be found, though. For instance, two of his protagonists are women (in *Tabla* and *Reina*), two are uncultured (in *Asunto* and *Sombra*), one is of noble origin (French King in *Jodía Pavía*) and Jaime Astarloa is definitely older than forty years-old as well as very naïve and non-cynical (similar to Frederick Glüntz, and even Teresa Mendoza, during her first stage).

once loved him. He is a man with baggage: of previous failed loves, of readings, of intertextuality, of longing, with a very active interior life.

Secondly, Jaime Astarloa is also extremely representative of the proposed pattern, although he lacks some of the traits. Like Corso, he lives in Madrid and is lonesome, preferring to observe life from the outside, as a spectator, detached and believing that he can live better without passions. Nevertheless, Astarloa cannot be considered experienced at all. On the contrary, he seems to be too naïve to survive in late nineteenth-century Spain (as well as to fit the pattern). In fact, he is a romantic element in a realist time-period, outdated already by the time he is born.

On the other hand, Teresa Mendoza does not fit very well at a superficial level, since she is not at all similar to an educated male who lives in Madrid. However, she is still an expression of this pattern, which can be observed at a deeper level. Like other protagonists, she is strong, independent and detached from her surroundings to a certain extent. Even though she is not a detective, with a strict moral code (in fact, she does not even act in pursuit of justice), she is still closely related to these other two characters in her mood and view of life. Indeed, with this character, Pérez-Reverte has offered us one of his most interesting as well as complex protagonists.

Nevertheless, since every Revertian protagonist is accompanied by a foil, it will be necessary to first analyze these foils, in order to appreciate their relation with the protagonists. To better understand this topic, the concept of ‘the Other’ will be introduced. The initial explanation of these foils will be crucial to later understand the relation of protagonists and ‘the Other’, which (as will later be observed) progressively gains in complexity, in fact becoming more intertwined.

## II. THE PROTAGONISTS' FOILS

Before we see specific instances of this function, it would be useful to delimit the scope of our definition. "Literally [foil is] a 'leaf' of bright metal placed under a jewel to increase its brilliance. In literature, the term is applied to any person who through contrast underscores the distinctive characteristics of another" (Harmon 212). Therefore, characters who can be considered as foils share the protagonists spotlight, their focus and attention.

In Pérez-Reverte's works, this function is mainly fulfilled by attractive women who are somehow involved in the crime or in its resolution, bringing in an element of mystery and seduction to the narration, provoking the protagonist's reaction. As Belmonte explains, women in Pérez-Reverte's novels "son siempre una fuerza motivadora e indispensable en el desarrollo de la acción. Damas . . . que se erigen en co-protagonistas . . . o que son capaces, con su actitud, de modificar la conducta del héroe" (*Héroes* 57). Thus, these women are so mysterious and attractive that the detective always feels compelled to question them and to unveil their secret. Therefore, given the importance of these secondary characters, this section will be dedicated to understanding their representation and significance inside Pérez-Reverte's microcosm. This section will first examine the two most representative women of our writer's classical pattern (Irene Adler and Adela de Otero), and will continue with a more general discussion of how this writer's depiction of women is influenced by pre-existent models.

First, we will study the co-protagonist in *Club*, Irene Adler. She is a strong, young, independent woman, who travels alone and keeps finding Corso 'accidentally' until Corso and she decide not to part. Her name has been borrowed from a Sherlock Holmes story (see ch. 2, pg. 87), where she represents a fiendish, manipulative, independent and powerful woman. Even though in the original story (*Scandal in*

*Bohemia*), society sanctions this woman's behavior for being too independent for her time, this element is absent from Pérez-Reverte's story. However, she is still fiendish and powerful in some way.

Apart from being attractive and useful to Corso's investigation, she is completely mysterious. She never provides any explanation about her name or peculiar home address (21b Baker street –in fact Sherlock Holmes' address), about her deep knowledge of self-defense, or about the fact that she is traveling without a precise goal or destination. Moreover, when asked directly, she only provides a half-baked justification, implying that she is the devil. This topic of her being or not the devil has no religious implications, but rather, it provides another element of mystery. However, since Corso believes neither in God nor the devil, he distrusts her explanation. Even though certain details seem to prove her answer (i.e. her ample knowledge of literature, religion, or history on the topic), her explanation is difficult to accept in the contemporary, agnostic, postmodern world.

Her function within the text is to guide Corso to places, advise him, protect him and help him with the resolution of the crimes. She is then a collaborator with the detective apart from being herself an attractive mystery that should be solved throughout the novel (although it never is). Moreover, Irene is full of sexual tension and attracts Corso in many ways. Despite her pretended fiendish nature, she can be loving and sincere (*Club 532*). In fact, she ends up seducing Corso, who initially resists her.

On the other hand, Adela de Otero is the object of love and hatred of the protagonist in *Maestro*, Jaime Astarloa. Again, this woman is presented as a young, highly attractive woman, surrounded by a mystery. It is never clear what she is hiding but it is obvious that she does not feel comfortable disclosing too many specifics about herself. Certain details and attitudes reveal that she has lived in a foreign country, and

that she does not belong to the Madrilean society of the time. Adela is certainly unconventional: more independent and liberal than was deemed decent at the time.

If we compare her role with Irene's, we will see that her function within the text is very different. She is not the companion or collaborator of the detective but rather his rival and even his bait. If it were not for the curiosity and attraction she arouses in Astarloa, he would not have taken the detective role. She is indeed instigating Astarloa to look for clues, to unveil her mystery, her attraction, and to search for more information about her life and (suspected) death.

In fact, the growing attraction of the fencing master towards her is fueled by all the mystery that surrounds her. Not knowing the truth, Astarloa prefers to make romantic hypotheses about her. Thus, he imagines her to be a victim of society, assassinated for no reason, and suffering until the end. Yet, she has nothing in common with the model of the lady in distress, in need of a rescuer. On the contrary, Adela de Otero is strong, powerful, manipulative, and enjoys being in control herself. She practices fencing, not minding those who consider it inappropriate for a lady. She even lacks any type of feminine dislike for cruelty or blood, and is able to organize a criminal plot. Indeed, she can be very masculine sometimes and dangerously playful with her femininity at points.

As we could see in these two examples, Pérez-Reverte's women are always women with a secret, dangerous, manipulative and mysterious. Both the writer and his protagonists seem to have a hard time figuring out women's goals and behavior. In them, mystery and seduction is joined, resulting in an explosive cocktail that leaves no choice to the detectives but to follow these women until they can understand what they are hiding.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This is also the pattern followed in *Carta*, where the leading woman, Tángier Soto, is not only an attractive and mysterious lady but moreover, she is the fundamental question that Coy wants to solve throughout the novel. Tángier is fascinated with the mystery of a certain ship (*Carta* 152, 187), whereas

## A. PÉREZ-REVERTE'S WOMEN AS 'THE OTHER'

This model of mysterious women that Pérez-Reverte is using is not original to him but long-established. In fact, this depiction of women as a puzzle to men has even been theorized. Therefore, to be able to better explain Pérez-Reverte's position towards his feminine characters, it would be useful to put it in the context of feminist criticism. From this theoretical perspective, it is possible to say that his protagonists' feminine counterparts represent 'the Other' for his detectives.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, men have always been the natural category in the public life, leaving women as the odd unclassifiable element. From the masculine perspective, "anything which is not identical with itself [must be portrayed] as 'an unessential, negatively characterized object'" (Mararik 620). According to De Beauvoir, not only were women the unessential object, but they were also negated transcendence (quoted in Leitch 1405). Women were considered only material, natural products, and so, like nature, they were considered impulsive, unexpected, surprising, threatening, and without logic.

Given this lack of understanding, men had to invent different ways of approaching an explanation of women's behavior, without recognizing their difference or their transcendence. Thus, as De Beauvoir explains in *The Second Sex*, women have been represented as the most contradictory creatures, identified with "the Praying Mantis, the Mandrake, the Demon . . . the Muse, the Goddess, Mother, Beatrice" (quoted in Leitch 1408). These extreme depictions failed, according to De Beauvoir, because they were partial (quoted in Leitch 1405), and intended "to sum her up *in toto*" (quoted in Leitch

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Coy does not really worry about the ship itself or the details of its sinking. Instead, if he keeps on helping her on her research, it is just to understand the volubility of her heart (*Carta* 208). In fact, women are here compared with mythological mermaids, leading men to dangerous paths (*Carta* 118, 188). However, this feminine character will not be here studied in depth, since it will not add anything entirely new to the pattern already explained with Adela de Otero and Irene Adler.

1407). Moreover, these often-idealized depictions did not really grant a good place in society for women. Instead, their classification as ‘the Other’ was nothing but “a justification, by means of nonvalid exaltation of the Other, of demeaning the Other” (quoted in Roth 211), nothing but a compensation (“One can positively affirm woman’s subordinate status in human society and compensate for doing so by attributing ideal qualities to her. Placing woman on an imaginary pedestal, thereby entitles man to keep her in a veritable pit” –ibid). Both idealized and demonized, a differentiated treatment for women was justified.

Therefore, in agreement with these myths, a model of femininity that did not correspond to reality was created. In consequence, since men wanted to classify women with respect to a very limited number of models, they were puzzled when they met actual women and tried to understand them. Women in the flesh, who proved these myths wrong, were obviously either not acknowledged or considered imperfect, irregular (since “[t]he contrary facts from experience are impotent against the myth” –De Beauvoir as quoted in Leitch 1407).

One of the myths De Beauvoir comments on is the one of women as a mystery to men (which is indeed the one that Pérez-Reverte exploits the most). With respect to this myth, De Beauvoir theorizes that it has been easily spread because it has a practical application:

[I]t permits an easy explanation of all that appears inexplicable. . . in the company of a living enigma, man remains alone. . . The truth is that there is mystery on both sides: as the *other* who is of masculine sex, every man, also, has within him a presence, an inner self impenetrable to woman; she in turn is in ignorance of the male’s erotic feeling. (De Beauviour as quoted in Leitch 1409).

Therefore, seeing Pérez-Reverte’s feminine characters under this new light, it is obvious that Pérez-Reverte positions himself within that same male-centered tradition.



From this point of view, men are the norm and women the deviation. The lack of comprehension of who are these women, how they think or what they expect, appears as a mystery, attracting these men at an intellectual as well as at a more physical level. In Pérez-Reverte's traditional pattern, his women are always surrounded by an exceptional amount of mystery. For him, a woman is 'the Other', a rarity, something different from the self (i.e. different from his masculine protagonists).

Yet, why does Pérez-Reverte choose that traditional representation of women nowadays? Does he really believe in it? My guess is that the reason why he chooses to portray women in such a conventional way is not because he wants to dehumanize women or naively believes that simplified versions may correspond to a depiction of real life models, but because he is trying to be faithful to those representations that once captivated him. Therefore, in the following section, these models will be presented.

## **B. PÉREZ-REVERTE'S BORROWING**

There is a traditional pattern of women that seem to be very much appreciated by Pérez-Reverte: these are women who are extremely beautiful, as well as exceptionally evil. As a matter of fact, these irresistible women always represent a danger or hide a mystery. They are personifications of the *femme fatale* icon. These feminine patterns, frequent in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century popular literature, had already been exploited for a long time. Therefore, this section will first review some of these 19<sup>th</sup>-century creations (in order to perceive the resemblance –or not– with Pérez-Reverte's women) and later will show how Pérez-Reverte has departed from them.

### ***1. Femmes Fatales***

One of the most iconic women for Pérez-Reverte is Milady, the strongest feminine character in Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* (his favorite novel). She is a cold-

blooded agent of Cardinal Richelieu, tougher and crueler than many other of his male agents. Her beautiful appearance hides her very dark heart. She may look like an angel but is indeed closer to being a deceitful devil. Besides, she is astute and treacherous, not to be trusted.

This Dumas's character is used as a model for some Revertian women. It shows in a very patent way in Liana Taillefer, a secondary character in *Club*, who appears as a model of seduction and determination. She is so aware of her resemblance with Milady that she even has a tattoo of the fleur-de-lis on her hip (*Club* 519 –on Milady, it represents a sign of being a criminal). This woman knows how to use all her weapons to achieve her goal. As a result, a sexual interlude can be as permissible as any other means to get what she wants (enacted in *Club* 196).

Another character used by Pérez-Reverte as blueprint for his women is Irene Adler, originally created by Conan Doyle (the only woman to ever defeat Sherlock Holmes). She was a woman in command, in control, who even dares to blackmail a prince who did her wrong (took her virtue). She was able to react towards his pressure with strength, not needing anyone else's help. Pérez-Reverte's Irene Adler (in *Club*) obviously takes after this model in more than just the name. Like the original Irene, Pérez-Reverte's replica is capable of defending herself all alone apart from being extremely strong and intelligent as well.

Adela de Otero takes after both these women, Milady and Irene Adler. On the one hand, she behaves as *femme fatale*, completely irresistible as well as evil (just like Milady). On the other hand, Adela de Otero resembles the original Irene Adler, following this folletin model more closely than other Revertian characters. Since she lives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she is constricted by the same society as Sherlock Holmes's rival. Similarly, the original character was more rebellious and independent than it was accepted for

women at the time. This characteristic, her independence (nowadays considered positive) was then a cause of criticism towards women (something that both Doyle's Irene Adler and Adela de Otero had to endure). Consequently, these characters, very recurrent in popular literature, end up necessarily suffering in some way: either they are ostracized or reprimanded by justice.

The original Irene Adler, for instance, had to live hiding, fleeing from city to city, not to be caught. If a man instead would have been the one avenging Irene's lost virtue, he would have been well-regarded, surrounded by a halo of honor and altruism. However, the problem emerges when a woman leaves her place in society to make justice on her own, not respecting her limitations, and gaining independence and power. The conflict of interests that it provokes in society leads to the ultimate punishment of strong women. Milady for instance is finally brought to justice (and so, executed), whereas Irene Adler has to flee not to suffer a similar fate. Another example of society limiting women's choices and behavior can be seen in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.<sup>10</sup>

As a matter of fact, 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature is fascinated by these powerful and independent women, but it cannot yet grant them a happy ending. Even though this type of stronger woman may be beginning to exist at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is still no room for them in society. Since these strong women are not the natural category in the private sphere (as was seen before, men fulfill this natural category), they remain 'the Other', an odd, unclassifiable element, not similar in any way to the ideal of femininity created by men. Consequently, they have to be brought to terms with their society, that is, they must either be erased from it or escape from it.

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<sup>10</sup> In this case, a woman searching for her self and trying to find a voice of her own within her 19<sup>th</sup>-century society, sees no other choice but to commit suicide in order to be free.

## ***2. Upgrading the pattern***

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though, women cannot be depicted in exactly the same way, since society has much changed in a century's term. Indeed, women nowadays are not only allowed to be strong and independent, but rather they are praised for being so. In contemporary Occidental culture, nobody can legitimately punish women for being away from the private sphere or for speaking their mind in public. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century models, therefore, cannot be kept identical when Pérez-Reverte tries to portray a woman who fits into our postmodern society. She may still appear as a hybrid creation of tender seduction and strong independence, but she also has to be extraordinary in some other manner, so that she can still be treated as 'the Other' (i.e. by being mysterious, strange, or surprising).

Since those characteristics that made women exceptional in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are now common, Pérez-Reverte has to change his pattern in order to create women who are exceptional in the degree of strength or independence they show. Indeed, not only do his women not need help from men but they are perfectly capable of saving men themselves (*Club* 393-4). These are women in command, not victims, nor followers. They are still the object of the protagonists' love, as well as dangerous women who should be feared. Their extreme beauty though reads as a sign of danger for Pérez-Reverte's detectives, trained in folletin plots. They know that these women will definitely cause trouble (e.g. *Club* 309), since the beauty of these women is a clear sign of mystery and danger (following the traditional pattern).

Pérez-Reverte's women, though, cannot remain entirely faithful to the folletin model. His women would not be believable if they were just stereotypes, far from current reality. Therefore, Pérez-Reverte had to solve this problem by approximating his character-types to real women, as well as by attributing to contemporary women

characteristics from previous times (which provided them with a mysterious halo, infrequent nowadays). On the other hand, and since Pérez-Reverte is aware of his need to attract women readers too, he attributes qualities to his feminine characters that are well-regarded by women nowadays. Therefore, Pérez-Reverte's creations inevitably show a mixture of attributes, some borrowed from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century society and some other impossible to imagine at that moment. Thus, intelligence, independence and power, apart from the traditional beauty, must be present in his description of feminine characters. However, these characteristics are no longer the cause of these women's failure but instead, are reviewed under a very positive light, enabling them to feel pride and fulfillment.

It is obvious, looking at Pérez-Reverte's work from a chronological perspective, that he had to slowly separate himself from his chosen models, in order to create his own woman. The first feminine character of his creation, Adela de Otero, follows them more closely, whereas the last one (Teresa Mendoza) is far removed from them. Progressively, Pérez-Reverte has been growing in his comprehension and depiction of women, until he achieved the creation of a more complex woman, Teresa Mendoza (which indeed responds to a conscious decision to explore a woman's heart). This development towards a more personal representation of characters (both feminine and masculine) is obvious throughout Pérez-Reverte's novels. Therefore, in the next section, this evolution will be studied.

### **III. EVOLUTION**

Now that the theoretical basis for this study has been set, it is possible to go to a deeper analysis of Revertian characters. Until now, we have studied Pérez-Reverte's models and foils, in a way as preamble to studying his most interesting characters: his

protagonists. However, since it is not possible to treat them all under one unique category, we will have to break their study in three different levels of approximation. In terms of character construction, there are several differentiated stages in Pérez-Reverte's work. In the following section, my intention is to analyze them according to a different categorization that will allow us to get closer to answer the fundamental question of this chapter: are Revertian characters modern or postmodern representations?

We can easily perceive several stages in the construction of his protagonists, progressing in a gradual evolution towards a more complex and postmodern construction, growing from naïve and coherent beings to experienced characters, with room for moral ambiguity. This progression is divided in three stages that will here be labeled purity, adaptation and amorality.

In the first stage, his characters are naïve, less developed, more similar throughout the novel. In the second stage, though, Pérez-Reverte's characters undergo a process of adaptation, and become more responsive to life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, they are more complex, less equal, imperfect characters: with shadows, good values although they live in disagreement with them. The third stage is characterized by an even further development. Here, the character evolves throughout the novel, undergoing several stages of growth. This character cannot be deemed perfect in any way. Instead, it is broken, fragmented, amoral, although still attractive. These stages will now be studied in depth, using one representative character to illustrate each of these phases. We will first analyze two male protagonists, afterwards covering Pérez-Reverte's most complex character: a woman.

## A. STAGE ONE: PURITY

As the name of this category suggests, Revertian characters that can be placed under this section are pure, moral, without imperfections. Here, we can find Pérez-Reverte's first creations: Frederic Glüntz (protagonist of *Húsar* –see ch 3., pg. 115-118) and Jaime Astarloa. Even though these two characters are very similar in their mindset, Astarloa will be the one studied here since he seems to be more developed and charismatic than Frederic Glüntz.

According to Pérez-Reverte himself, Astarloa is his purest character (Pérez-Reverte 6). This is shown in Astarloa's elevated values and expectations. In fact, his personality was determined by his idealistic youth, which coincided with the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the highest peak of Romanticism. Therefore, he follows a strict moral code, inherited from this romantic upbringing.

Thus, he follows a frugal lifestyle, that allows him to live freely, never asking for favors or expecting more than what he can obtain with his own work. His moral rigidity is related to his military discipline and self-control, necessary to be proficient at his job as a fencing master. Moreover, he considers himself as a model of courtesy and even rejects God (although not his existence) on the basis that God is not a perfect gentleman (*Maestro* 163). He wants to follow the model of the individual in the initial quote of the book who is proud of “no haber sido grosero nunca, en esta tierra donde hay tantos insoportables bellacos” (Enrique Heine as quoted in *Maestro* 9).

On the other hand, his attachment to the old values gets mixed reviews from his contemporaries. While some consider him as one of the few honest men that still exist (“el único hombre honrado que conozco” –*Maestro* 210), others believe that he is an object from the past, a museum figure (*Maestro* 53,170). Either way, he is regarded as a misfit, unsuitable for his time, outdated, and definitely not willing to change. However,

he is not embarrassed but proud of being faithful to his ways (*Maestro* 132). His vocation is the clearest sign of his anachronism. Even though the use of firearms was fairly extended by 1868 (when the action occurs), Astarloa still maintains his allegiance to fencing, considering it as an expression of self-control, more dignified than the use of guns. This loyalty is due to his belief in the honorable value of sword fighting (“El día que se extinga el último maestro de armas, cuanto de noble y honroso tiene todavía la ancestral lid del hombre contra el hombre, bajará con él a la tumba... Ya sólo habrá lugar para el trabuco y la cachicuerna, la emboscada y el navajazo” –*Maestro* 55-56). Out of allegiance, he favors his old ways (since they certainly represent for him “el último patrimonio de que dispongo” –*Maestro* 64), even though he is repeatedly advised to leave them, given that it is not practical. As Adela de Otero tells him, “[d]e la estética no se come, maestro” (*Maestro* 132).

His idealism is privileged over more practical issues, making him unable to live efficiently during his time. He rejects things that experience teaches, not wanting to acknowledge the dark side of life. Therefore, by rejecting those dark corners, he ends up expecting much more than what he gets, which results in disillusionment and frustration. Indeed, he lacks the world knowledge to do well in Spain at that moment. The turbulent political situation of 1868 does not deserve his attention. He still prefers not to get involved. Unlike others from that moment, he is not moved by politics.

With respect to women, he shows again to be a product of the old mentality, expecting traditional roles: men as rescuers, and women as possible victims but never as criminals. He expects passive behavior from women, and so it is difficult for him to accept a woman who is strong and proficient in such a masculine sport as fencing. Nevertheless, even though his treatment of Adela is always respectful and correct, it is never between equals. The only situation in which he gets close to treating her as an



equal is on the fencing stage, where he had to learn to be aggressive with her, after having tried to be protective and paternalistic (an attitude that annoyed her in consequence -*Maestro* 117). In all other contexts (i.e. in conversation, when she is changing, on the several occasions when she visits him), he always admires her as a woman, as an attractive being, full of sexual tension (e.g. *Maestro* 73, 105, 108, 117).

After she (supposedly) dies, his first impulse is to consider her as the victim, the person who has to be protected and avenged. In this way, Adela makes him feel that he is useful, needed in life, much younger and attractive.<sup>11</sup> According to his ideology, it is not in women's nature to be cruel, but loving and maternal. This concept, though, is not necessarily true, and has been contested by Simone de Beauvoir, when saying that: "[t]o identify Woman with Altruism is to guarantee to man absolute rights in her devotion, it is to impose on women a categorical imperative" (as quoted in Leitch 1408). Adela proves this identification (of women and altruism) to be wrong, since she certainly does not conform to the ideal.

Therefore, these traditional values and expectations make it difficult for Astarloa to reconcile his concept of the beautiful woman with the aggressive feline-like swordswoman who faces him on the fencing stage. Since Astarloa idealizes women and believes in the romantic ideal of the exterior beauty reflecting the interior one, he cannot accept that a woman who has all his devotion (although never his treatment of equals), is not perfectly virginal and innocent. This traditional concept is the same premise Frederic Glüntz works with.

All of these reviewed characteristics show Astarloa as a very early modern character. He is coherent with his ideas, believes in certain master narratives and acts in

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<sup>11</sup> This is in agreement with Virginia Wolf's concept of women's role in patriarchal societies, where they serve as "as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (Virginia Wolf as quoted in Leitch 1404).

agreement with them. His modernity is reinforced when we study his take on reality. As a good 19<sup>th</sup>-century intellectual, he believes in science as a tool capable of explaining anything. Therefore, he considers that if the necessary factors are taken into consideration, the truth will always necessarily be discovered. His adscription to positivism can be perceived when teaching his students, when he says that fencing is “una ciencia exacta, matemática, donde la suma de determinados factores conduce invariablemente al mismo producto: el triunfo o el fracaso, la vida o la muerte” (*Maestro* 53-54). The vocabulary chosen and his emphasis in explaining all realms of life through science show his adscription to Hipolito Taine’s philosophical school. According to positivism, everything can be understood and easily explained through science. Therefore, partiality or complexity can no longer be a source for confusion since science is omnipotent.

Yet, Astarloa is not strictly modern since he is already broken in the inside. He is foreign to his society and feels lonely in it, given that he lives by a set of values that do not correspond to his time. On the one hand, he keeps his allegiance to the old values and practices (e.g. to sword fighting), but on the other, he lives in a world that represses and diminishes his values. In order to survive at that moment, he has to protect himself from the exterior. In a time of social revolutions, and the rise of practical ideologies (socialism and anarchism), Astarloa lives by a set of idealistic values (such as honor and harmony). However, he is not entirely innocent. He is aware of the fact that his world is crumbling down, and so, instead of adapting, he consciously decides to live in an outside sphere, interacting with the rest of the world only when he truly needs to (i.e. Astarloa needs Cárceles for clarification on a political matter – *Maestro* 283- or he needs to advise a friend on money and love matters – *Maestro* 197).

He had to learn to repress his feelings, in order to achieve peace within solitude (*Maestro* 231). Probably, this was due to his realization that he did not fit in his society and that he was not willing to negotiate in order to adapt. Consequently, he is a foreigner on his own land, someone who should have been born earlier or died younger. As Belmonte has put it, Pérez-Reverte's protagonists are,

héroes cansados . . . que aún creen en la existencia de un Grial que los redima de este mundo en el que apenas se interesan. Son conocedores del alma humana. Reyes, de un reino extinguido. Héroes que no murieron en el momento oportuno. Extranjeros en todas partes . . . A todo ello hacen frente con un reinventado código moral que les mantiene en pie y por el que estarían dispuestos a dar la vida. (Belmonte, *Héroes* 51).

This quote is especially appropriate for this first stage (therefore, for Astarloa and Frederic Glüntz) since the protagonists seem to find happiness in holding on to what is being extinguished. However, as we will now see, this concept is not completely applicable to Pérez-Reverte's characters in his second stage, addressed below.

## **B. STAGE TWO: ADAPTATION**

This level appears in Pérez-Reverte's work after his first two novels (*Húsar* and *Maestro*) and includes a great majority of his detective stories (i.e. *Tabla*, *Club*, *Piel* and *Carta*). In this second stage, characters are no longer perfect or pure. Instead, they may share some of Astarloa's values, but live by a very different set of rules, more practical and adapted to the world they live in. Some of the characters in this category are Julia, Corso, Lorenzo Quart and Coy. However, to explain the outlook of these characters, we will concentrate on just one, his most representative character, Lucas Corso.

Perhaps, the reason why Corso is so intriguing and representative of this writer's production is because he is indeed similar to Pérez-Reverte himself in many ways. In

fact, Corso has been considered as Pérez-Reverte's closest relative.<sup>12</sup> He resembles Pérez-Reverte in his personality traits: lonesome, efficient, and with a risky job for many years, as well as in his appearance suggesting a famished wolf (a quality attributed to both Corso –*Club* 80, 289, 451, 559–, and to Pérez-Reverte himself –inside cover of *Héroes cansados*).

He defines himself as a 'book detective' (*Club* 57), since he traces and buys rare and antique books. His job provides him with a sense of control and satisfaction as books always end up rendering all the information. If a specific one does not provide it, research libraries and knowledgeable people will direct him towards the right sources. He would like everything to behave in this same way (but women's mystery and attraction is not as easily controllable).

In relation to feelings, Corso again has a peculiar approach. According to some, he never loved anything or anybody, preferring his silent books to people (*Club* 321). Passionate people who interact with him cannot but question his attitude towards feelings (e.g. *Club* 310, 320), since he lives like a spectator, numb, unable to become emotionally involved (*Club* 320). His dreams could be of a world where it is possible to love and trust others, but his life is definitely lived otherwise, protecting himself by not doing so (giving into love or trust).

In a sense, Corso is a further development of the model already proposed in Jaime Astarloa four years earlier (1988). Like Astarloa, he is efficient at his job but uncomfortable around feelings. Moreover, Corso longs for a perfect world, of heroes and romantic love, and lives in solitude, enjoying hobbies that request only one person (i.e. books and strategy games). Once again, the leading character does not seem to be the

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<sup>12</sup> "Lucas Corso es su pariente más cercano. Aumentado y corregido en *El club Dumas*. Un nuevo lobo flaco y despiadado, de indumentaria arrugada y gafas torcidas" (Belmonte, *Héroes* 222).

protagonist of his own life, but the public of others'. Thus, Corso is not especially proactive when it comes to facing the enemy or to seducing women. Instead, he prefers to wait and see how others approach him.

Nevertheless, there are several characteristics that separate Corso from Astarloa. Even though Corso has the sense that he should long for perfection and moral values, he can easily be satisfied with a very different type of behavior. His life is definitely not ruled by his values, but by a practical sense that leads him to fight for anything he needs. In order to get what he needs, he is capable of lying (*Club* 82), of illegal jobs (*Club* 100), of using corrupt policemen (*Club* 261) and good forgers (*Club* 187), and even of paying the hotel receptionist in Paris to spy on the girl that just saved his life (*Club* 317). If the ends are valuable, the means seem to be justified for him.

In fact, he is also skillful at manipulating people around him, often exploiting his natural charm. When behaving in this way, he is described as a “conejito simpático” (*Club* 315) or “conejito miope” (*Club* 56). With his uneven glasses and his lack of taste in clothes (*Club* 25), he provokes pity in women and guidance in men. As Balkan (the narrator) says, “Corso era de esos individuos que poseen una rara virtud: son capaces de encontrar aliados incondicionales en el acto, a cambio de una propina o una simple sonrisa” (*Club* 315). However, facing opposition, Corso can also show a more sinister side. He is capable of threatening his rival in order to make this person release information (as he does when he blackmails the Countess –*Club* 371).

Moreover, he shows arrogance and very little tolerance of any mistreatment. When Varo Borja (his boss) behaves with superiority, he answers in the same tone, haughtily clarifying that he feels that he has nothing to lose. Obviously, pride is more important to him than money. It is curious that in these difficult situations, he is rarely the first one striking. Again, he prefers to direct his efforts to protect and defend himself.

Apart from the degree of morality, that definitely differentiates Corso from Astarloa, there are other characteristics where they are comparable. When it comes to the feeling of belonging to their time and land, they are actually similar. In fact, we could say that Pérez-Reverte has taken the blueprint of Astarloa, already anachronic for his time, and has adapted it to the world nowadays. Even though this adaptation has been successful (Corso is able to survive and even be moderately happy in his world), he has kept a feeling of not belonging there, of being an outcast.

One more point in which we can compare these two characters is in their take on reality. Whereas Astarloa had no doubt or suspicion on the partiality of his own views, Corso is convinced that multiplicity or partiality of views can be a source of serious confusion. In fact, he has practical experience of it in his search for Dumas's manuscript, when at the end, his belief of who committed the crimes is shaken: his mistake has been caused by a misinterpretation of the clues. As a result, Corso is led to wrong conclusions, due to the multilevel reality and narrative plot of *Club* (516). In this complex world, where a variety of perspectives and individual stories are woven together, the truth appears as a relative element, sometimes difficult to sort out. Even though his bright intellect has taken him far, it is not invincible.

With respect to women, we must say that Corso does not show any sexist behavior (as opposed to Astarloa's mere correction and admiration of women). In *Club*, men and women treat each other as equals, with respect and distance, until the sexual attraction develops. A clear example of romantic relationship between equals appears in *Club*, where Corso remembers Nikon, the woman with whom he had a long-lasting relationship, depicted as an independent woman (*Club* 74), neither a sexual monster, danger nor mystery. Irene and Corso, on the other hand, treat each other as equals too, although in this case, as friends, respecting and helping each other, never taking

advantage of the other. In fact, the woman in this occasion is not only independent, but also physically strong, very much capable of saving men (as she indeed does –*Club* 393-4).

Therefore, at this stage, men and women can talk as friends, lovers or at a professional level, negotiating the terms of a transaction. However, when formal negotiations fail, seduction is a permissible element to enter the game. At this point, when women transform into attractive seductresses (e.g. *Club* 196), their egalitarian perspective is forgotten, and so they go back to personifying once again mystery, causing surprise (*Club* 406), and occasionally fear in men (*Club* 309). Given that his characters (all through the three stages) move as satellites without a planet, lonely, wandering through space, their sexual encounters are always rare, and seldom due to real feelings but rather to physical attraction. This unexplored, uncontrolled territory provokes curiosity as well as fear in Corso (“Temo a los caballos de madera, a la ginebra barata y a las chicas guapas. Sobre todo cuando traen regalos. Y cuando usan el nombre de la mujer que derrotó a Sherlock Holmes” – *Club* 309). Another feeling that Pérez-Reverte’s women provoke in his men is surprise. All Revertian women are very knowledgeable in terms of seducing men, and using sexual stratagems to achieve their goals. This innate knowledge is a quality that always surprises Pérez-Reverte’s characters.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, women are always the ones leading in the intimate scene, thus appearing as manipulative and powerful.

Corso’s moral ambiguity can again be appreciated, now in relation to sex. He will accept any offer he can get, even though often there will be no feelings involved. In such cases, Corso may even exploit the situation towards his advantage in business deals (e.g.

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<sup>13</sup> Specially true in Irene Adler and Cachito, who seem too young to know so much.

with Liana Taillefer –*Club* 196 ). He behaves in this field as in many others: his efforts are directed towards achieving his goals. However, Corso's moral ambiguity still allows a certain recognition of what is good vs. bad, whereas in *Reina* we will observe a complete blurring of these two terms. As can be perceived, we are moving on a continuum that takes us from rigidity in moral values to living in a more practical way, although still longing for those values. Corso's education included some modern values and idealism but his behavior, adapted towards a more efficient life at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, does not incorporate them too often.

### **C. THIRD STAGE: AMORALITY**

Pérez-Reverte's third stage is characterized by the lack of any moral judgment. On this stage, Astarloa's strict moral values have already been completely obliterated. There is no nostalgia for other times or ideologies. We can merely perceive a longing for lost tranquility or protection. However, there is no implication or nostalgia for moral perfection of any kind. Teresa Mendoza, with her divided personality, will be its only representative.

This character will be here treated as the culmination of Pérez-Reverte's evolution towards a more complex and realistic character construction. Moreover, this last character will be considered as divergent from all previously analyzed characters, both male and female, protagonists and foils. In fact, she can be singled out for holding both functions of self and other, protagonist and foil, all in the same person. Therefore, given the complexity of this character, she merits a detailed study.

Teresa Mendoza (protagonist in *La Reina del sur*), is one of Pérez-Reverte's most original characters. In this case, the shift from his typical pattern (a detective who is male, Spanish and cultured) is very noticeable. She is not from Madrid, but from Mexico,



definitely not cultured, and certainly not a man. Moreover, we follow this character for a longer period of time (twelve years), which enables the reader to witness her evolution from being an innocent and passive character to an experienced and very active one. As can be seen, at the beginning of the novel, Teresa was not at all similar to Pérez-Reverte's typical pattern, but grows much more similar to it in her final stage.

Teresa is presented at the beginning as being 23 (although still making reference to her life when she was 21), and the novel leaves her at the age of 36, when she is already capable of taking action, making decisions, and having control over her own business, thus, becoming an efficient and successful person in her job. Still, like Pérez-Reverte's other protagonists, she is a lonely person who does not relate with trust to others. However, in this case, the readers can better understand her reasons, since they can witness her chain of deceptions and disappointments through this long period of observation. Consequently, the more she lives and learns, the less she believes in other people; as well as the more powerful she gets, and the bigger the circle of solitude becomes around her. Her evolution makes her complex and richer, very different in the end from the girl who was presented to us at the beginning.

One more way in which Teresa proves to be peculiar is because she holds at the same time the function of protagonist in *Reina*, and the one of foil. Given this crucial change, the previously explained pattern of foils cannot be kept identical for her. Thus, Teresa will not share the spotlight with an attractive person that she intends to seduce and who somehow can lead her to the resolution of the mystery. Instead, the protagonist's foil is her own alter ego.

Teresa first discovers that she has an alter ego, at the beginning of the novel (first appearing in *Reina* 41), when she is in a critical situation, needing to escape. Feeling threatened and unprotected made her aware of her vulnerability and triggered the

appearance of her alter ego. At that point, she becomes aware of the fact that she is capable of attacking too, when she realizes that 'la Situación' (i.e. a key moment when she can choose to live or to die, to act or to be the victim) "puede tener dos direcciones . . . Puede ser Tuya o De Otros" (*Reina* 40). After this realization, Teresa will feel that she has two women inside herself: one who observes and another one, capable of acting.

This second woman appears often in a mirror reflection (eg. *Reina* 13, 25, 113) looking at her in silence, with an inquisitive look, questioning her. Who is this shadow who comes to observe her from the other side of the mirror? Is she a vision, an obsession, or is this instead a sign of a personality disorder? My understanding is that even though Teresa was at first under serious distress (her first boyfriend –El Güero Dávila– was suddenly murdered and, as a result, she had to leave her city and country), Teresa did not become crazy or undergo any dissociation. Instead, Teresa learned how strong she could be, although, to be able to do so, she had to distance herself from her own feelings, in order to enable herself to become more rational, less sensitive or loving, indeed, less the conventional woman she was in Culiacán.

Due to this sudden and traumatic change in her life, she suffered a rupture. She needs to negate who she was in Culiacán, in order to survive. She does so trying to follow this advice: "procura enterrarte tan hondo que no te encuentren" (*Reina* 71). Therefore, since she has to repress one of her two Teresas, she has a very patent feeling of being two women at the same time (often expressed at the beginning – *Reina* 41, 92, 98...), one who is predominantly passive and another one who is bold and active.

When the reader meets Teresa, at age 23, her predominant self is the passive Teresa, whereas the active Teresa seems like a strange presence that comes to save her at absolutely crucial moments. However, after a few scenes, this 'Other', surprising Teresa

—strong and independent— becomes the predominant one, leaving the passive self as the secondary presence that peeks in to spy on the primary Teresa.

Out of the two Teresas, the one who will grant her survival is the active woman in her, since she is able to leave her feelings aside and think “con desapasionado cálculo” (*Reina* 41), feeling relieved, “lúcida y serena” (*Reina* 71). Therefore, given the benefits of this other self, Teresa decides to adopt this active, indifferent Teresa as her everyday self, leaving her sensitive side for sad dawn hours when she cannot escape her grief (*Reina* 129).

Both Teresas take turns in being predominant until she moves to Spain, the moment when the pro-active Teresa takes over completely. Therefore, beginning then (after the first seventy pages), we could easily say that the observing self, her alter ego is her ‘past self’, the girl from Culiacán. This alter ego appears regularly to check on the ‘independent Teresa’, to observe her movements, and to make her aware of how much she has changed since she left her city. At those points, the girl from Culiacán observes her from mirror reflections, as a spy, puzzled, with strangeness, not recognizing the woman she once knew. Curiously enough, soon after this secondary woman begins to appear, Teresa becomes accustomed to her presence and is not surprised anymore to have to grapple with her in the most awkward situations (*Reina* 135).

To denote that the dominant Teresa does not identify with her alter ego (i.e. her most consistent category of ‘the Other’ throughout the novel), there is a very precise choice of vocabulary expressing otherness. Therefore, this second Teresa is most often treated as ‘la otra’ (mainly at the beginning, e.g. *Reina* 38, 41, 44, 68, 69...), although she also receives other appellatives such as “mutación extraña” (*Reina* 93) and “desconocida imprudente” (*Reina* 36) (since this alter ego may act when she would rather be cautious or stay quiet).

These changes make her a very different woman than she was originally. In fact, we could say that, by the end, Teresa contains a 'saga of selves', not only one Teresa, flat, without evolution, but a real and complex person. According to Kristeva, who has studied the psychological distress of foreigners (in her work *Strangers to Ourselves*), this multiplicity of selves is a logical stage in any foreigner's evolution. This is just a common process for people who are living in a foreign land (as is Teresa's case). Given the change of place, lifestyle and customs, the foreigner needs to learn again how to behave in an appropriate manner. Therefore, this creates a 'disseminated oneself' (Kristeva 34).

This woman has definitely undergone a radical transformation, from passivity to activity, and from dependence on men to independence and absolute autonomy. Thus, in her relation to men, she shifted from first treating them as providers (El Güero), to then lovers and business partners (Santiago), and at last as equals and friends (Olag). This process is accompanied by a more active role in her professional life. Thus, she first lives off the profits of drug dealing until she learns the trade and begins to deal drugs herself. In agreement with what De Beauvoir says,<sup>14</sup> Teresa's subordination to men ends when her role in society changes and she does not limit herself to the private sphere. However, her choices are limited to a world of violence and crime since this is the only one she knows.

These changes and personal transformation have brought much complexity into her life. The world is no longer composed of black and white tones. It cannot be simplified with categories such as good vs. bad, men vs. women or criminals vs. detectives. On the contrary, in the world reflected here, our global world, we are exposed

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<sup>14</sup> "The subordination of women to men can end when women refuse to be reduced to immanence and, as a matter of habit, nurture to the self in projects that are predispositional to transcendence" (De Beauvoir as quoted in Roth 210).

to a multiplicity of voices and categories. The way to classify people has multiplied. In fact, Teresa finds a variety of categories to be in opposition to her, such as Spaniards vs. Mexicans, legal citizens vs. illegal immigrants, men to love and trust vs. men to use and discard, etc. One obvious category to be treated as ‘the Other’<sup>15</sup> is definitely men, but also conventional justice and Spaniards.

It seems as if after El Güero’s death she has lost all faith in men. Assuming that all are the same (i.e. they will all leave her after a time), she remains completely disappointed, and decides never to believe in men’s words. Beginning then, Teresa treats men as a homogeneous category separated from her, populated by self-centered and ambitious beings (“ambicioso y egoísta, como cualquier hombre” – *Reina* 111). They are also considered untrustworthy, simply “pinches hombres de mierda” (*Reina* 116), all in the same group, without differentiation. Even though men imply ‘the Other’ for the protagonist, they are not in this case, the protagonist’s foils (as they should have been if the previously explained pattern had been followed in this novel too), since these men quickly disappear from the spotlight.

On the other hand, Teresa acts on the margins of legality (on the other side of the spectrum, where all other Revertian protagonists move). Therefore, for Teresa conventional justice is ‘the Other’. Thus, she feels that mainstream society is ‘the Other’ for her, feeling isolated most of the time. The only moment when she is in Spain and still feels at home, is when she moves to Algeciras, where she finds another version of the same drug-dealing life-style she knew back in Culiacán (*Reina* 128). The changes she observes are merely superficial: flamenco music is substituted for narcocorridos, and the drug-dealers’ girlfriends dress in a more gypsy way.

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<sup>15</sup> “The Self/Other opposition posits that at the centre of personal experience is a subjective self which constructs everything alien to it as ‘other’” (Mararik 620).

Likewise, Spaniards are obviously also ‘the Other’, since Teresa is a foreigner living in Spain. Therefore, she notices certain details in which Spaniards behave differently than Mexicans (e.g. such as being cruder when giving compliments –*Reina* 112). In fact, Spaniards are less sweet and formal, but also less violent (“aquí la gente, aunque más ruda de modales y menos cortés, no se fajaba a plomazos y todo se hacía con mucha mano izquierda” – *Reina* 79). Moreover, to signify that Teresa does not belong to Spain, there is a recurrent opposition of ‘aquí’ (meaning Spain) vs. ‘allí’ and ‘su tierra’, (meaning México –e.g. *Reina* 79-80).

Besides, given the difference in customs, she has to relearn the feminine role when living among Spaniards. In fact, by facing ‘the Other’ (i.e. Spaniards), Teresa discovers her own incoherencies (Kristeva 2), which makes her reflect on who she is. Being left out of her shell (life under the love and support of El Güero), she needs to reposition herself in life, to learn who she really is. Consequently, this provokes a second period of maturation in a different place, under different circumstances, away from her roots.

The necessary feeling of separation that occurs when away from the native land is dealt with (according to Kristeva) by becoming indifferent, insensitive (Kristeva 7), numb to feeling, since one does not want to be conscious of one’s utmost solitude (Kristeva 8). This is indeed Teresa’s process: she resorts to this numbness explained by Kristeva. Indeed, we could say that this is what causes her “split identity” (also theorized by Kristeva 14, as a consequence of this insensitivity). Her repressed feelings and the interior distance between her and others causes the foreigner to perceive herself as “a kaleidoscope of identities” (ibid).

In agreement with what happens in *Reina*, Kristeva believes that foreigners will necessarily feel completely alone (Kristeva 8) and like orphans (Kristeva 21), by being

far away from everything they know. The physical distance between foreigners and their land or culture imposes a more interior distance, that shows on the surface when approaching others (Kristeva 27). This distance though can have a positive outcome (feeling of freedom) but also a negative one (solitude). This is what definitely happens to Teresa (*Reina* 87, 93). Moreover, since Teresa does not allow anyone into her past, she can only hope for “pseudo-relationships with pseudo others” (Kristeva 13).

Her secretive attitude about her past is directly related to her distancing from her own feelings. Her past is a closed chapter, for her and for others. It may represent a mystery and an obstacle to trust (*Reina* 115), but even like this, she will refuse to give any explanations to anyone. This silence is part of her survival plan, a defense mechanism made out of “reglas propias e impenetrables” (*Reina* 126). In this plan, she is the only necessary element, not wanting to rely on men ever again. Once in Melilla, she arrives at “la convicción de que era inútil desesperarse o luchar por nada” (*Reina* 126). Therefore, she does not trust people or even God (although she still allows religion into her daily life –*Reina* 126). This would be the reason why Santiago, her second boyfriend, considers that Teresa does not open up completely (i.e. with her, he feels “un poco fuera a veces” – *Reina* 114). Even men who did not know Teresa that well can observe her from a distance and realize that part of her is absent at times, escaping communication (*Reina* 164). Past and future, foundations and expectations, have been erased from her conversation. However, her secret seems to emerge in her expression or reaction sometimes. Thus, Teresa’s division and hiding of one of her two selves provokes others to regard her as a mystery.

Teresa’s divided self introduces an element of mystery and irrationality in the novel. The recurrent presence of her alter ego very much resembles what Freud called the

‘uncanny’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it appears as an unconscious fear that cannot be controlled and that continues showing up as an uninvited presence. According to Kristeva, the reason why we can find a foreigner within ourselves is due to this element, the uncanny. This is why she can state that truly, “foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided” (Kristeva 181). Again, this is what shows in Teresa’s case. Her split identity is maintained throughout the twelve years that the narrator follows her. During this time, she represses her past self, although for some reason, she does not let it go completely either, still keeping a window to the present.

On the other hand, a direct consequence of Teresa’s split personality and the recurrent use of numerous levels and mirrors, is the reader’s fragmented sense of reality and morality. It is here complicated to discern what is true or real, since there is a complete dispersion of reality (i.e. is my truth truer than yours?). Moreover, it is even more complicated to decide what is morally acceptable and what is not. The protagonist herself is no longer flat, Manichean, or perfect in any sense. Being divided, she is not completely good or evil, as well as she is not completely Mexican or Spanish. She is in fact more universal, at a human level.

No values are set as preeminent, people on either side of justice can be viewed as heroes if they risk their lives at their job. Teresa is attracted to men who are brave, no matter what side they are on. This includes as much her two boyfriends (El Güero -with his turbo-propped plane-, and Santiago -with his motor boat), as a suspected enemy, a border patrol officer (with his helicopter –*Reina* 150) who may have provoked Santiago’s death. Simplistic representations would allow criminals to admire only other criminals.

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<sup>16</sup> Uncanny emotions has been defined as “[t]he sense of weirdness and unreality that sometimes accompanies dreams, nightmares, states of intoxication and some mental disorders” (Corsini, 1032).



This works as clear proof that Pérez-Reverte has created a polyvalent and ambiguous character, difficult to simplify.

In fact, Teresa represents a complex, real person, with a face to the world and one hidden, alive, always growing. She is an advance with respect to his previous feminine representation and in the depiction of protagonists in general. This complex representation of reality as well as the non-simplistic morality is the one that definitely places this novel in the realm of postmodernism.

Another area in which Teresa proves to be a postmodern being (and an advance with respect to the other two Revertian protagonists studied in the continuum towards amorality) is in her relation to sex. Somehow, her approach is comparable to Corso's. Like him, she accepts sexual advances, without passing judgement on her feelings or her partners' intentions. Besides, she is never the first one to seduce, either. However, her experience is more extreme than Corso's, since she is capable of accepting sexual advances also from women (even though she is not attracted to them in the least) and of making love to a man that, she knows, has betrayed her and is doomed to be killed by her soon after. With him, she behaves as the praying mantis, who after being fertilized (she learns that she is carrying his child right before deciding to execute him –*Reina* 499), can discard the father. In the continuum of dependence from men, this is indeed the furthest she can go in her search for autonomy. It shows not only an absolute independence from men but even complete disregard for them, needed only for fertility purposes (and not as fathers).

As can be seen, Teresa's maturity process has changed her progressively from innocent passivity towards an active criminal life. However, in this novel, this progression towards corruption and criminal involvement does not carry a punishment (as could be expected in the classical detective novel) but instead, it brings a sense of growth

and fulfillment. At a personal level, Teresa has much evolved and improved after her traumatic escape, reaching a final feeling of accomplishment and even of heroism at the end of the novel. The reader, who has been accompanying Teresa in her evolution, cannot but feel proud of her.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

In studying these three stages, we have realized that there is a genuine evolution in Pérez-Reverte's works. His characters have gradually grown complex and richer in several respects. First of all, we saw how their view of reality changed from a strong belief and trust in positivism, science and what can be experienced by the senses, to a skeptical, contingent regard for them as well as for their own logical capacity. Besides, moral values, which were Astarloa's guide for behavior, are much less relevant later on. At the end of this continuum, there are no moral values set as preeminent, and so, there is no clear distinction between good and bad for Teresa.

Furthermore, Revertian characters have definitely gained in complexity. Their depiction is richer as his work evolves, allowing us to understand more of their interior life. His depiction of women may be the one that shows the most significant shift. From exploiting myths of woman as angel or devil, as cat chased or chasing, he began to use real flesh-and-blood women as his models. As a result, his women stopped being Manichean representations and began to be individuals, with weight of their own in the story. They gained room and began to represent stronger individuals with more leading roles in his novels: from being a mystery to the protagonist, they passed to be a mystery to others, even taking the protagonist role themselves.

Moving to the main concern of our study, it is possible to perceive a shift from modernity to postmodernity. Whereas Astarloa is very modern, Teresa Mendoza is a very

postmodern individual. The fencing master is a believer, ready to fight for moral causes, wanting to experience a passionate love that will save him from his routinary life. Corso, though, may have Astarloa's same dreams, but knows that, in his time period, he will not be able to find moral perfection or have any chance of being suddenly lovestruck. Therefore, he lives in a more cynical way, disappointed although successful. He works towards his goals and is very aware of what he needs to do to achieve what he wants (not minding about its morality).

Both of these characters are similar in their numbness to feeling. However, we do not know why they are like this. In Teresa's case, though, the reader knows very well why she stopped believing in a secure world or in eternal love. Following her during twelve years of her life, we can understand her disappointment with men, her distrust of others and her rejection of feelings. The explanation of the process (which in *Maestro* and *Club* is just narrated –both tell or remember stories of lost loves) is on this occasion dramatized throughout the novel. In this way, it is easier to understand why she is as amoral as she is, without needing to pass any judgment on her. Her adscription to postmodernity is also exposed in this dramatization. She is an independent and strong woman who can live alone although feeling lonely and divided inside herself. She is disappointed and longs for a secure world that, she knows, is never going to exist for her.

As a matter of fact, Pérez-Reverte's progressive departure from modernity corresponds to a departure from his first chosen models (as has been previously explained, completely modern). This drift away from his models produces a richer representation of his characters, more complex, full of life and of individuality. Their representation grows postmodern, first in an unconscious way and later in a conscious effort for making his work more blurred, less orthodox (Pérez-Reverte 6).

By creating characters who are less morally perfect, he creates characters that correspond more to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more in contact with his public, being in this way, more appealing to them. The reason why these characters function well nowadays is because they are as postmodern in their implications, as is the public that normally follows Pérez-Reverte. From his idealized world of moral values from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that he encountered in his models and that he represented in his first two novels, he passed to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, by shifting away from his models, he created something more personal, meaningful and particular as well more relativist and less morally perfect, definitely more similar to his own public, who applauded the change.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **I. STUDY OVERVIEW**

In this study of Pérez-Reverte's literary work, one central question has been posed when analyzing these novels: is Pérez-Reverte a postmodern writer? In order to answer this question, I have explored his work according to theories of postmodernism, which has helped me discern which elements of his production can be considered modern and which postmodern.

With respect to postmodern theory, I have applied a relatively specific definition of this concept. Therefore, for the purpose of my study, I understood that the term postmodernism defines a cultural response to a welfare state, highly dependant on technology, which can be observed in certain nations beginning in the 1960s, and in Spain in the late 1970s. It is characterized by an ideology that rejects idealism, traditional institutions, or religious beliefs (or in its mild version, it questions and challenges those concepts). The consequence of the new mood is a cynical and disillusioned society. In the artistic field, this generalized mindset translates into a rejection of master narratives, allowing now for relativism, pluralism and attack on the previously established canon. Due to the inclusion of many previously marginalized voices in the artistic discourse (following their inclusion in civil society), there are new views and a growing pluralism.

The main critics I used are Julia Kristeva, Linda Hutcheon, Umberto Eco, and Simone de Beauvoir. These critics were chosen for their deep understanding of the three main topics that I considered relevant to prove Pérez-Reverte's adscription to postmodernism: his usage of intertextuality, his treatment of history and his construction of characters

My analysis focused on Pérez-Reverte's long novels (his so-called "novelas gordas"), primarily on *El Maestro de esgrima*, *El Club Dumas* and *La Reina del Sur*. These works are the most representative of his writing as well as the richest in references. Aspects of other novels have also been analyzed (i.e. *La Tabla de Flandes*, *La Piel del Tambor* and *La Carta esférica*), and his short works (i.e. *La Sombra del águila*, *Un Asunto de honor* and *Húsar*) have been examined in reference to their intertextuality and treatment of history. Novels in *The Capitán Alatriste* series, as well as his testimonial work *Territorio Comanche*, were not included due to the fact that these works were not relevant to the central topics of my analysis. Other novels that appeared after the beginning of my research were also excluded (i.e. *Cabo Trafalgar* -published in 2004-). This dissertation has situated the core of this writer's novelistic corpus in the context of literary creation in Spain and in relation to its roots, while being analyzed as a response to the postmodern world where it was created.

Through the study of these novels, I have explored ways in which Pérez-Reverte's work is a product of his epoch and personal evolution. He did not arrive where he is by planning every single step. Instead, he began writing in a more spontaneous way, reflecting on his time and ideology, and treating topics close to the ones already covered by his journalist career. Thus, his first work (*El Húsar*) can be understood as a dramatization of his inner worries, reflecting on war, politics and Spanish history. Moreover, his treatment of historical battles shows an inclusive point of view, similar to the one already portrayed in his articles and reports (i.e. always paying attention to the little guy, the one who in his eyes, truly makes history happen).

This spontaneity also shows, for instance, in his freedom in allowing his most important literary influences to show. In fact, Pérez-Reverte's sources of inspiration are not frequently referred to by the preeminent canon. Instead, they are more often

overlooked as pertaining to popular literature. Therefore, his purpose when referencing these works has nothing to do with proving his broad knowledge of preeminent literature or fitting in the pre-established models of canonical literature. In fact, he began simply trying to pay homage to his heroes and beloved authors.

In relation to the main question that guided my study (is Pérez-Reverte truly postmodern?), I have to recognize that there is still no brief answer. Even though this writer shows to be postmodern in many respects, his adscription to postmodernism has to be qualified. It will be easier to locate him in a middle ground in the continuum from modernity to postmodernity, leaning at first more towards modernity and later, more towards postmodernity. In fact, throughout my dissertation, I have shown how Pérez-Reverte has progressed from a modern approach to literature (following his 19<sup>th</sup>-century models) to a more postmodern one in various ways.

On the one hand, Pérez-Reverte is postmodern in his use of intertextuality, because in his choice of popular sources, he is rebelling against the established canon. His choice is given by his true allegiance and personal likes, disregarding what is prevalent. By using and defending his choices, he is challenging the Western canon.

On the other, when analyzing the structure of Pérez-Reverte's works, it became obvious how his first works were more linear (often using a very traditional detective pattern), while as his work progressed, it allowed more complex structures. Therefore, his last novel, *Reina*, shows obvious divergence from the classical pattern. Its plot is no longer solely guided by the resolution of the opening crime, nor does it finish with the punishment of the criminal. The main premise of the classical detective novel (catching the criminal and so, restoring the status quo) is now disregarded. His detective novels do no longer end with the criminal's punishment. In this way, they oppose the previous pattern that sprang from the ideology of modernity. Indeed, now criminals (such as

Teresa Mendoza) end up being rewarded for their courage, instead of reprimanded in any way. Obviously, the lack of a prevalent morality (characteristic of postmodernism) makes this possible.

In chapter 3, it was observed that his concern for history and preoccupation for Spain has a very modern root (i.e. influenced by the same worries that inspired the Generation of 98). However, his treatment of history evolves throughout his work, going from an utter respect for official history, to a more playful treatment of its details. This means that whereas in his first novel, *El Húsar*, Pérez-Reverte cares to explain how his recount differs from ‘reality’ (in a way, included as a disclaimer), in his short story “Jodía Pavía” he enjoys inverting and ridiculing the well-known details. At that point, there is no trace of guilt or embarrassment in his deviation from the official recount.

In this way, history is freely reinvented from the field of literature, allowing for a more plural and relativistic view. New hypotheses are given room, despite their fictional nature. Truth and fiction, history and literature are mixed freely, as if they had the same weight or relevance. Whereas at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the observation of the facts was not only the base of science but was also ruling the study of history and even the writing of literature; at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is complete distrust of our personal perception of the facts. Therefore, history can no longer be considered as something sacred or untouchable, but is now simply another discourse: a particular, personal recount of the objective (and therefore unaccountable) facts. This new view, reflected in this writer’s challenge and disrespect for official history, springs from the questioning of established truths, which is in the root of postmodernism.

Furthermore, in chapter 4, a shift in his construction of characters occurred, showing an evolution towards more complex and postmodern characters. Whereas his first characters (i.e. Frederick Gluntz and Jaime Astarloa) were pure, ingenious, idealistic,



ready to stand and fight for good causes, his second batch of characters (i.e. beginning after *Tabla*) showed to be cynical, occasionally capable of illegal behavior and not always well-intentioned. In fact, Pérez-Reverte's departure from his initial models provided his characters with the necessary complexity (and lack of innocence) as to represent the actual inhabitants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, his stories were moving towards a more contemporary moment, now taking place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (whereas they had been previously taking place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). His creations stopped being completely good or bad, having now room for light and shade in every character. Moreover, the narrator does not judge his characters nor guide the reader's interpretation of the text. Plurality of voices and times finds a way into his work. This polyphony makes the univocal reading much more difficult to do.

Therefore, if we take Pérez-Reverte's production as a whole, it is still difficult to categorize him as clearly one thing or another, since his beginning is relatively modern in form and content. He should rather be considered as a writer who evolves towards a more postmodern vision inside his own writing style, having a clearer presence of modern traces in his first works, although showing a progressive change towards more postmodern features.

## **II. PÉREZ-REVERTE'S FAME**

Since I began to be interested in Pérez-Reverte as a writer (in the early 90s), his literary prominence has much changed. An obvious shift has happened in the way he has been regarded and treated by the press and the critics. At the beginning of the 90s, he was generally perceived as a turncoat, a journalist in search of attention and probably of quick profits, earned by exploiting his media fame. However, by the end of the 90s, after having published four long novels and several short works in the span of a decade, he

was getting much better reviews as well as many prizes. Even though most of the initial prizes were awarded outside of Spain, soon he began to gain recognition inside his own country as well.

In fact, by 2000, he was definitely attracting important critical studies. 2000 was indeed the year when the first congress exclusively about Pérez-Reverte occurred. It took place at the University of Berna, in Switzerland, and it included the presence of renowned critics such as Gonzalo Navajas and Sanz Villanueva. The works presented in that congress were later compiled and published as *Territorio Reverte*, which can be considered as the first serious work of criticism on this author. Two more congresses on him have been sponsored by the University of Murcia (the closest university to his native Cartagena): one in 2003 and another one coming soon, focused exclusively on his series *Capitan Alatriste*.

On the other hand and as confirmation of this writer's official recognition, it is necessary to keep in mind that Pérez-Reverte became a member of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE) in 2003. He was initially proposed for this honor by Domingo Ynduráin, although the final proposal had to be submitted by others (Gregorio Salvador, Eduardo García Enterría and Antonio Muñoz Molina) due to Ynduráin's death. In January 23, 2003, he was nominated and elected to be member of the RAE, becoming an effective member on June 12. His versatile and careful use of the Spanish language, as well as the fruitfulness of his work, gained him the honor of this election. Therefore, this validation by Spain's most prestigious academy demonstrates that Pérez-Reverte work and style has slowly but consistently achieved the respect of readers, writers and critics.

Nevertheless, the induction of Pérez-Reverte into the RAE was not without a polemic. During the reading of his entrance speech, some people demonstrated outside, criticizing his designation and comparing his use of the language to Jesulín's and

Chiquito's (a bullfighter and a comedian known for their atrocities to the Spanish language –Elmundolibro 1).

However, his election was not so astounding anymore, as it is the result of a steady progression on the part of academics and literary critics. Nowadays, high-culture literature and popular literature are perceived as less antithetical than before, since a growing emphasis on well-told, riveting stories has progressively served to unite these discursive tendencies. Therefore, Pérez-Reverte has stopped being on the periphery (although he may still position himself there –e.g. Pérez-Reverte 1) and now can be said to be part of the core of the system, dictating from the temple of the Spanish academy the prevalent uses of our language.

### **III. FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are still many questions about Pérez-Reverte's work that need to be addressed and could not be answered within the scope of this dissertation. For instance, it would be interesting to reflect on how Pérez-Reverte gained so much recognition in such a short period of time. When one considers the conservative nature of Spanish literary criticism with respect to the acceptance of bestsellers, it is curious to see how Pérez-Reverte achieved this so quickly. How is it that the Spanish critics have included a best-seller in their lists? Why is Spanish criticism more exclusive than others and slower to change? Moreover, it would be interesting to expand the scope of this research to understand the situation of other bestselling authors. I would like to study if bestsellers' fame is ever due to real literary value or rather to being well-connected in the media world or publishing houses.

On the other hand, the basic characteristics of our society, and so of the mainstream public, are changing. Nowadays, there is much more education and probably

less time to read, as well as a stronger influence of visual media and also of the visual element incorporated in literature. Is it important to measure these characteristics to understand why bestsellers become so? In fact, there are books called “How to write a bestseller”. If it is that easy, if there is a clear formula that everybody can follow, how is it that some make it to the fame and some others do not? How is it that some gain public and critical approval and some others will never be able to gain one or the other? How can they read the market to target exactly what their public wants? Is there a mathematical equation that editorial houses invented and currently use?

Therefore, if we could theorize that publishing houses have more power nowadays than previously, then, we would have to wonder about the influence of marketing on the reading public. Are they getting too much power in leading us to buy or read only those works that they consider profitable? How much of those works that make it to the number one of the bestselling lists will stay in a future canon?

Furthermore, taking this discussion to a higher level, it would be very interesting to reflect on how literature itself is changing. The literary world no longer reflects the opposition of disinterested creation versus profitable interest. Pérez-Reverte himself is an example of this. He is entirely involved in the promotion of his works and he has occasionally sent the publicity strategies to his publishing house before turning in the text itself (this is the case of his first *Capitán Alatriste*). He may still enjoy the creative process but he is also definitely interested in selling it well. As can be seen, he greatly differs from the previous model of the artist living in his ivory tower, untouched by material worries. Literature has now lost its innocence. Is this evolution a positive one? Is it consistent with the world we live in and so a necessary change for literature to stay alive? Or instead, is this change coming from a field outside of literature, with the overwhelming consequence of adulterating and degrading it?

Other works, such as the series of *Capitán Alatriste*, remain to be studied in a more serious way, as well as the relation of Pérez-Reverte's *Cabo Trafalgar* with Galdós's *Episodio Nacional* on this same topic. The relation of Pérez-Reverte with the film industry or how he promotes in an indirect way with his works also merits study.

#### **IV. RELEVANCE OF MY STUDY**

I believe that the study of this writer's work can open the eyes of many conservative critics who have a reductive concept of good literature as a place of linguistic and stylistic experimentation, without room for entertainment. Studying this author sheds light over new tendencies in literature that are gaining ground and need more attention.

For those who still need a little bit more persuasion on Pérez-Reverte's literary value, I hope that my dissertation helps them realize the intricacy of Pérez-Reverte's 'simple on the surface' work, good for young readers as well as for more demanding ones. Moreover, I would like to believe that my study has helped in some measure to change some of those outdated opinions about literature and prove that entertaining novels are not necessarily opposed to novels with complexity or literary value. As can be seen, Pérez-Reverte has already achieved the highest official blessing a writer can get: the entrance in the RAE. However, an exclusivist attitude still prevails in Spain and there is no doubt in my eyes that a shift from these outdated positions would be very beneficial to our literary arena.

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## Vita

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