

Radication of Modern Values in the Information Society: The case of Agustín Fernández Mallo

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Man only plays when he's a man in the full sense of the word,
and he's entirely a man only when he plays
Rüdiger Safranski¹

I.

Thomas Kuhn asserts in his work *Estructura de las revoluciones científicas* that when a worldview comes to an end, this does not suppose a complete erasure of the current paradigm, but rather the new paradigm coexists with it to explain aspects of reality that the previous one did not achieve to explain. Thus, the arrival of quantum physics in the scientific picture did not cause the full eradication of the classical Newtonian physics (that to this day remain suitable to handle subjects in a macrophysic level), but instead, the new scientific theory was implemented to describe phenomena of a different nature, quantum nature, where classical physics models proved to be limited. The same thing happens to the world of art and literature. Approaches like the one by Agustín Fernández Mallo in the Spanish literary scene have reached places where other poetic models did not reach. This type of poetry would come to, in some way, stitch up those cracks that have been gradually undermining not only the Spanish culture field, but all of the West's as well, ever since our Greek ancestors established the first dualisms (mind / matter, subject / object, space / time, reason / fantasy, self / world). In this setting, Ferández Mallo's poetic invitation pretends to recover the notion of the Whole. This explains his great thematic spectrum (art, science, technology, mysticism...), the incorporation of new tools (technological and audiovisual), and specially the reunion of separated pieces of knowledge in our literary tradition, in this case, humanities, science, and technology.

¹ Safranski, Rüdiger. *Romanticismo. Una odisea del espíritu alemán*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 2009. Pg. 42.

On the other hand, and in the same way that new paradigms come to join the previous ones, it is also possible for both traditional and avant-garde elements to live together within one same artistic proposal. Accordingly, our author's work cannot stop being post-modern given the moment of its emergence. Indeed, there is a list of characteristics regarding this paradigm, which fits his work like a glove: fragmentation, the coexistence of high and low culture, the thematic heterogeneity, etc. Nonetheless, staying inside this label would not be fair when observing the writer's will and effort to overcome the nihilism that characterizes classical postmodernism through his recovery of the "great topics" such as love, beauty, or eternity. From this perspective, the work of Agustín Fernández Mallo would not be, as we shall see, a mere invitation towards experimentation and heterogeneous assembly, that is to say, a part of a "disenchanted" movement within postmodernism (with the resulting loss of the aura or the inner perspective) but rather, instead, it will be noticeable how the themes of love and eternity are recovered in a setting of inherent connections. This approach is in accordance with the *performatist* theory proposed by the theorist Raoul Eshelman, whose proposal is to "regresar a la metafísica utilizando . . . Esto significa que los grandes postulados metafísicos- presencia, centro, amor, belleza, verdad, Dios, regresan pero solo si pueden ser aprehendidos en relaciones inmanentes" ("return to metaphysics using postmetaphysical means...This means that the great metaphysical postulates-presence, center, love, beauty, truth, God, they return only if they can be apprehended inside inherent relations") (Eshelman 194). Meanwhile, Eduardo García, in his essay *Una poética del límite*, proposes to place us inside a mindful *symbolic conscience* "capaz de mantener activas la proyección y la conciencia al mismo tiempo" ("capable of keeping both projection and conscience active at the same time") (García 249), that is to say, wakes up the world from the mythical projection (but without mythical bursts) and toward an aimed conscience without a mechanizing, excessive alienating rationalism. Only then will we find ourselves in front of an "open" poetry, in which reality bursts in endless vanishing points, in a world of possibility where secular adventure and symbolic adventure coexist, enriching each other, a non-dualistic field of knowledge that reflects the epistemology of the 21st century's hyper-complexity, and the posthumanist overview where re-enchanting the world is possible within a new setting of inherent relations.

In other words, and going back to the work of Agustín Fernández Mallo, it is one that, even while keeping postmodern characteristics such as the thematic heterogeneity, the

incorporation of the new technologies, and the fragmentation of the postmodern model, picks up values that fall into modernity (such as love and eternity) to playfully reinsert them in the new digital contemporary posthumanist paradigm. As a result, the play and the irony in his work turn into “serious” tools to radicate the aforementioned values. Just to add a personal note that will clarify this point: around the year 2008 I met and interviewed the author in the conference *Futures*, organized by Julio Ortega in Brown University. After one hour of interview where we talked about networks, fractality, the influence of Robert Smithson in his work, of Google Earth, or his planned performance of retracing Nietzsche’s route through the streets of Torino, the author himself looks at me and says: “you still have not asked me about the most important theme of my work.” Undaunted, I check my notes without knowing what to say. He answers himself: “love”.

With the goal of exploring this symbiosis between playfulness, irony, parody and modernity / inwardness, in the following pages I will proceed to present, first of all, the theorization by the author of his own aesthetic in the “Postpoetic Poetry” formula, resulting from said juxtaposition, to exemplify afterwards the theoretical issues with some poems from his book *Joan Fontaine Odisea [mi deconstrucción]* (2005) and the story “Una rosa amarilla”, included in his collection titled *El Hacedor (de Borges), Remake* (2011). I will support the analysis with ideas from the writer’s latest essays: *Teoría general de la basura* and *La mirada imposible*. These examples will demonstrate how, indistinctly of the genre,² the work of Agustín Fernández Mallo is an example of a new paradigm in contemporary Spanish literature by recovering playfully and ironically (in other words, in a postmodern way) that modern and pre-Socratic notion of the Whole where thoughts and feelings, science and poetry, logos and myth, knowledge and silence, they get together to result in new literary devices that have, in the last years, blurred and increasingly endorsed that new literary paradigm that the author was already proposing in his 2009 essay: *Postpoesía: hacia un nuevo paradigma*.

II.

Agustín Fernández Mallo (La Coruña, 1967) is a physicist and a writer. His trilogy, Proyecto Nocilla, composed of *Nocilla Dream* (2006), *Nocilla Experience* (2007) and *Nocilla Lab* (2009), turned him into a new cultural phenomenon in Spain with his literary renova-

² For Fernández Mallo, a poem is susceptible to be the substratum of an essay, while an essay, for example, the latest one, *La mirada imposible* (2021), can have a synthetic-poetic attribute.

tion proposal, promoting the creation of a generation³ of avante-garde writers. In addition to the poetry books *Yo siempre regreso a los pezones y al punto 7 del Tractatus* (2001), *Creta Lateral Travelling* (2004), *Joan Fontaine Odisea (mi deconstrucción)* (2005) and *Carne de Píxel* (2008), as well as his other works in prose, *Limbo* (2014) and his most recent *Trilogía de la guerra* (2018), his declaration of his theoretical-literary intentions made itself specially clear in his essay *Postpoesía: hacia un nuevo paradigma* (2009), finalist in the Essay Anagrama award of the same year, as well as in his most heterogeneous and polemic works, *El hacedor (de Borges). Remake* (2011)⁴, and it has been refined, broadened, expanded, and recycled in the last years with *La teoría general de la basura* (2018) and *La mirada imposible* (2021). His interest for interdisciplinarity, conceptual art, the complex systems theory, the so-called *Land Art*, the new technologies, the incorporation of the visual factor, the recycling, among many other matters, they all bring forth an “expanded” redefinition of literature (similarly to the label of *expanded cinema* through which the media has transcended the analog format). Thus, with the term *expanded literature*, the author already asserted in *Postpoesía* a new poetry resulting from the union and resemanticization of two poetic traditions, *the experience* (related to the poetic group of the late XX century)⁵ and *the difference*,⁶ from a metaphysics vein:

³ With more or less acquiescence due to him belonging to said group, there could be quotes of Vicente Luis Mora, Jorge Carrión, Javier Moreno, Eloy Fernández Porta, Javier Fernández, Milo Krmpotic, Mario Cuenca Sandoval, Lolita Bosch, Javier Calvo, Domenico Chiappe, Gabi Martínez, Álvaro Colomer, Harkaitz Cano, Juan Francisco Ferré, Germán Sierra, Diego Doncel, Mercedes Cebrián, Robert Juan-Cantavella, Salvador Gutiérrez Solís, Manuel Vilas and Sofía Rhei.

⁴ The work was withdrawn from the public by the Alfaguara publishing house in light of claims from the lawyers of José Luis Borge’s widow, María Kodama. See Rodríguez Marcos, Javier (2011): “Los peligros de rehacer la obra literaria de Borges”, *El País*, 1-X-2011. <http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2011/10/01/actualidad/1317420001_850215.html>.

⁵ Label used to encompass a poetic generation from the 80s and 90s in Spain. The study performed by Ana Eire regarding the three authors of experience, Luis García Montero, Miguel D’Ors and Andrés Trapiello, states that “there is a statement of man as a being more complex than postmodernity has offered us. This poetry critiques the view of the individual as being banal, and demands of us the enjoyment and comprehension of our routine, so that it does not alienate us” (Eire 2003: 229-230). Nonetheless, despite this poetry’s reinterpretation of the postmodernity world that Eire invites us to consider, for Rodríguez-Gaona the emphasis is within the poeticization of some bourgeois routines that focus in the world of “marriages and divorces, friends and vacations, nightlife and cars [which maintains the thematic between] optimism and nostalgia in light of the country’s rapid modernization” (Rodríguez-Gaona: 48).

⁶ Also called *poetry of silence*, it refers to a poetry with mystic tones where the goal is to descend into a territory of “illuminating” synthesis of the self’s conscience. Its highest representative, heir to the philosophy of María Zambrano, will be José Ángel Valente, in whose essay “La hermenéutica y la cortedad del decir,” recovers the regressive memory function towards the origin of this poetry: “Every poetic operation consists, knowingly, of an effort to perforate through the infinite tunnel of remembrances to drag them from or towards the origin, to somehow place them in the spot of the word, in the beginning, in *arkhé*” (Provencio 1998: 102-103). In the

está en el interés de la postpoética redefinir una *poesía de la experiencia*, pero, esta vez sí, instalada en una actitud de *experiencia* de su propio tiempo, el de las sociedades desarrolladas (con todo lo que ello implica en su relación con las sociedades no desarrolladas), y por otra parte redefinir una *poesía de la diferencia* tomando de ella únicamente la genética experimental y/o metafísica (actualizada en juego) que la ha caracterizado, olvidándose de su carácter puritano y en ocasiones mesiánico. (Fernández Mallo 2009: 68; cursivas del original)⁷

Therefore, the formula “Postpoetic Poetry = *experience* + *difference*” will have the goal of combining the *experience* of the time it takes up (that of the Society of Information), and thus update itself up in other formats (the image, digital, blog, website or book-object formats), with the poetry of *difference* through the recovery of the great, banished themes of classical postmodernism or, in other words, the project of “interiority” themes (love, beauty, eternity), but this time, from the immanence: “olvidándose de su carácter puritano y en ocasiones mesiánico” (“forgetting about its puritanical, and sometimes messianic, character.”) In other words, there would be an attempt to update poetry within the current scientific-technologic and social reality; transform it into the 21st century’s poetry of *experience*, with everything this implies. Or getting what the author had already announced in the blossoming article *Postpoesía*:⁸ for Spanish literature to be in the same wavelength with other plastic arts whose aesthetic proposals bore witness to the current scientific and technologic discourse (transgenic art, computerized art, fractal art, electronic theatre or chaos art) without getting stuck in an exteriorizing, nihilistic and evasive poetry regarding the interiority project.

The conceptual nature of *Postpoesía*, the use of scientific terminology (attractors, fractality, network theory...), the insertion of images, representational maps, advertising

poetry of silence we find a journey towards a synthesis land where the cohabitation of opposites (word and silence, light and darkness, knowledge and incomprehensibility), where the logos, devoid of its significance, is open to every possibility.

⁷“it is in the interest of postpoetry to redefine a *poetry of experience*, but, this time it will, installed in an attitude of *experience* of his own time, that of developed societies (with everything it implies regarding its relation to non-developed societies), and on the other hand redefining a *poetry of difference* taking from it only the experimental and/or metaphysical genetics (updated on the go) that are characteristic to it, forgetting about its puritanical, and occasionally messianic, character.” (Fernández Mallo 2009: 68; *italics from the original*).

⁸ Published in Spain on the magazine *Contrastes* (April 2003) and afterwards in *Lateral* (December 2004)

spots or internet links, etc., would come together in a theory about the poetic *drift*, inheritor of the French Situationism of an open and symbiotic nature, functioning, according to the author, in a similar way to the open networks in the complex systems theory within the setting of systems theory. The literature of Agustín Fernández Mallo and, specifically, his postpoetic proposal, would be in this way a literature that, in line with the posthumanist attitude, would not presume the ontological separation of *anything*⁹ in a literary universe mostly articulated around the value of analogy and metaphor and, therefore, epistemologically directed towards the democratization of the fields of knowledge through a game of “credible metaphors”. One of them is the depiction of an egg as the essay’s conceptual map, which works as an index in *Postpoesía*. The author says:

De la misma manera que las células actúan por duplicación de lo más pequeño a lo más grande, y acogen en su estructura toda la información del pasado para lanzarla al organismo futuro, la poesía postpoética intenta ser ese germen protico, esa célula, que recoja la tradición, experimente con ella, la ensamble a todos los ámbitos de la cultura del Siglo 21, y la relance hacia un futuro orgánico [...] (Fernández Mallo 2009: 12).¹⁰

Note the use of the term *organic*, which must be read in combination with José Luis Molinuevo’s proposal of a *technologic humanism according to which* “la visión de esta última [la tecnología] no corresponde ya (o únicamente) a un producto de la razón, sino que se trata de una tecnoorgánica” (“the vision of the former [technology] does not correspond (or not uniquely, at least) to a product of reason, but instead it is about a technoorganic”)(Molinuevo 2004: 28). It will later be evident in these pages how the incorporation of technology or the digitalized image in Fernández Mallo’s postpoetic proposal seeks for the aforementioned continuum be-

⁹ I will adhere to the definition given to us by the physicist and feminist of the Santa Fe group, Karen Barad: “Posthumanism eschews both humanist and structuralist accounts of the subject that position the human as either pure cause or pure effect, and the body as the natural and fixed dividing line between interiority and exteriority. Posthumanism doesn’t presume the separateness of any «-thing, » let alone the alleged spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart.” (Barad 137)

¹⁰ “In the same manner that cells act by duplication starting with its smallest components and advancing to their largest ones, and as they foster inside their structure all the information from the past so they can facilitate it to the future organism, postpoetic poetry seeks to be that protein seed, that cell, that resumes the tradition, experiments with it, to put it together with all the 21 Century’s culture areas, and it relaunches it towards an organic future [...]” (Fernández Mallo 2009: 12).

tween the organic / the technologic, mind / matter, inwardness / outwardness, which, as we have discussed, highlights the overcoming of the merely postmodern perspective of his work towards a non-partitioned notion of the Whole.

On the other hand, postpoetry tries to redefine poetry of *difference* by regaining said experimental genetics and metaphysics through the return to playfulness, experimentation, creativity and fantasy, in other words, the romantic interior spaces, but “without mystic trips”, just as pointed out by Fernández Mallo himself. It then becomes about recovering that romantic *homo ludens* that Schiller was telling us about. It was he who coined a definition of everything human through the theory of game: “Expresado con toda brevedad, el hombre solo juega cuando es hombre en el pleno sentido de la palabra, y sólo es enteramente hombre cuando juega” (“Expressed very briefly, man only plays when he’s a man in the full sense of the word, and he’s entirely a man only when he plays”) (Safranski 42). This seemingly naïve theory of game in Schiller in the year 1794 will be, nonetheless, the prelude to a romantic revolution.

The goal in Agustín Fernández Mallo’s work would be, then, to re-romanticize or re-enchanted literature, and our experience of it through the playful perspective; in other words, taking the game seriously: as a part of our humanity. This posture, however, does not imply at all the irrelevance or the banality. Quite the opposite, considering that in the work of Fernández Mallo there is a return of the great themes that have been demonized by the postmodern movement, but it happens inside a new posthumanist ontological scenario, fully working in the 21st Century. Postpoetry, then, would try to return to romanticism for the sake of it all, to the interior world (fantasy, freedom, beauty, love, truth, eternity, etc.), but without losing track of our century’s coordinates.

III.

Joan Fontaine Odisea [mi deconstrucción] (2005) was a catalytic book in a debate regarding the need of a periodization of Spanish literature in light of the emergence of a new paradigm positioned in the threshold of the modernity and the postmodernity project (in other words, the interiorizing and the exteriorizing perspectives that we have been discussing). That is the reason why we come back to it in this essay, since this is precisely the theme at hand. The book’s prologue, working as a notarial record, presents to us this “poetry book-performance” and all the elements around which the “event” of its writing is constituted.

We read: “El objetivo perseguido por esta performance es alcanzar un estado de disipación físico y mental de resonancias místicas por causa de la constante e ininterrumpida visión del film Rebecca de A. Hitchcock” (“The goal pursued by this performance is to reach a state of physical and mental dissipation of mystic resonances caused by the constant and uninterrupted vision of A. Hitchcock’s film Rebecca”) (Fernández Mallo 2005: 11). In this respect, the postpoetry, which could be considered the book’s backdrop, is actually the pixel (*experience*) and that the continuous playback of the film, in the form of a “pseudo-mantra” (*difference*), seeks again for that playful and ironic target of sacralizing the banal through the digital landscape. This would be the step, as written by the author in *Postpoesía*, from a *paint brush metaphysics* to a *pixel metaphysic*, or a similar metaphysic, a digital metaphysic. If the digital image is part of our visual ecology, then, it’s also the mission of the *postpoet* to tackle it without abandoning the realization, the “carnality” of the pixelated image¹¹. We read:

Escribiste y llegó tu noche, nieve
de televisor, *Pixel [Picture Element]*:
mínimo elemento de imagen que contiene toda
la información visual posible, y sin embargo es una cifra, está vacío,
hacia una metafísica del pixel
tu cuerpo
uso tópico
sin espesor se acristala
lo más curioso fue aprender a escribir,
el viento en la calle y las galletas María,
la estafa de Lou Reed en *Heroin*,
la de Hitchcock en *Rebecca*,
la del Séptimo Día,
el abrigo estrangulado a tu cintura,
la mecánica de los pezones y otras fuerzas,
nostalgia de un espacio interior;
de ningún lado venían no porque de ningún lado venían sino

¹¹ Another example of his poem books, *Carne de Pixel* (2008), refers to this idea, and the title has within itself the paradox between the coexistence of carnality and virtuality.

porque a ningún lado iban,
despedida y píxel,
despedida y ser,
despedida y cierre.¹² (Fernández Mallo 2005: 134)

If the pixel is, as the previous lines point out, the “*mínimo elemento de imagen que contiene toda / la información visual posible, y sin embargo es una cifra, está vacío*” (“*minimal image element that contains all / the visual information possible, and is, nonetheless, a figure, it’s empty*”), and other lines of the book also pray, in a poetry manner, “El poema: / instrumento de precisión / al servicio del vacío” (“The poem: / precision instrument / at the service of the void”) (44), then *Joan Fontaine* seems to be resolved within this informative containment paradox and this emptiness that it has as an analogy, in this poem book, the mourning of a past love. Hence, the choice of the film *Rebecca* that, as Rodríguez-Gaona comments, “ilustra el fracaso de un nuevo amor para borrar el recuerdo de una esposa ” (“illustrates the failure of a new love to erase the memory of a quite ambiguous wife”) (Rodríguez-Gaona 2010: 138). And it continues: “el poemario se articula, significativamente, al asumir como trasfondo un relato sobre la imposibilidad de reconstruir la identidad en el presente por la obsesión de un fantasma” (“the poem book is articulated, significantly, by assuming as a background a story about the impossibility of rebuilding the identity in the present due to the obsession over a ghost”) (Rodríguez-Gaona 138). This is a theme, the impossibility of the identity’s articulation, that reappears in the author’s last essay, *La mirada imposible*. Similarly, the fact that the central thesis of this last essay emphasizes the external agents (social, institutional, politic and, of course, technologic agents –in the form of servers, files, agencies, organizations-) as the true agents that conform our identity, the ghostly presence of a death similarly takes up part of the poem book in that impossible gaze and, nonetheless, real, that defines (and at the same time cancels and hurts) the protagonist’s identity. That ghostly gaze (virtual, yet real), is similar to the one being pointed out in the latest es-

¹²You wrote and your night arrived, white noise / of a television, Pixel [Picture Element] : / *minimal image element that contains all / the visual information possible, and is, nonetheless, a figure, it’s empty, // towards a pixelmetaphysics/ your body / topical use / crystallizes without thickness // the most curious thing was learning how to write, / the wind on the streets and the Maria cookies, / Lou Reed’s scam in Heroin, / Hitchcock’s in Rebecca, / the Seventh Day’s, / the coat strangled to your waist, / the mechanics of nipples and other forces, // nostalgia of an interior space; // they came from nowhere not because they came from nowhere but / because they were going nowhere, // farewell and pixel, / farewell and being, / farewell and closure.* (Fernández Mallo 2005: 134)

say: “Esta herida sería entonces similar a lo que Deleuze y Guattari denominaron Cuerpo sin Órganos (CsO), ese sistema físico, moral, antropológico o político que participa de una naturaleza escandalosamente contradictoria: siendo materialmente abstracto es virtualmente real” (“This wound would then be similar to what Deleuze and Guattari named Body without Organs (BwO) that physical, moral, anthropologic or political system that participates in a scandalously contradictory nature: being materially abstract, it is virtually real”)(Fernández Mallo 2021: 43). Announcing this way the concerns in the author’s latest essay, the poem offers us an impossible gaze as well: constant absences that are presences in the book’s central postpoetic analogy (the pixel and the love experience of the poetic self) and the *impossibility* of its materialization since, as the poem points out, both are “practices in the void”. What remains for the poetic self is the aforementioned topical (external), crystallized use, on the surfaces, and “the nostalgia of an interior space”, of love. These verses would be, then, using the postpoetry reference setting, explicit nostalgia regarding the interior space, which is characteristic of the poetry of *difference* inserted inside a setting of immanent relations, the *experience*. On the other hand, if the pixel’s metaphysics is paradox ground, then the mystic resonances (a common location for antinomy) become mandatory inside the author’s postpoetic proposal. Curiously enough, Valente, Zambrano, San Juan de la Cruz, Santa Teresa, Steiner, or Wittgenstein himself (masters of silence) make consistent appearances in Agustín Fernández Mallo’s work, and in particular, in this poem book, leaving, then, a reminder of the necessary *coincidentia oppositorum* of the spirit and the flesh: “Tertuliano lo dejó dicho, *la carne / es el fundamento de la salvación / y Teresa de Ávila, no somos / ángeles si no tenemos cuerpo*” (“Tertuliano stated it / *the flesh / is the basis of salvation / and Teresa de Ávila, we are not / angels if we do not have a body*”)(Fernández Mallo 2005: 119). The postpoetic result of combining pixels and mysticism is to finally proclaim a mysticism “different” from the modern one and the postmodern one:

Desde una mística moderna,

pides un día más y una voz

igual a la tuya te dice No.

Era éste el sentido de la vida, ir hacia la muerte

en busca de tu propia analogía,

hasta una mística posmoderna,

*hubiera preferido ser,
antes que alma en tránsito
que la muerte reducirá a química repetida
objeto repetido de supermercado
y en un ready-made obtener el alma.
pero en medio la mía
tus dedos códigos de barras
entre flashes de pasarela
0 y 1 en un mismo
estallido de tus huesos.*¹³(Fernández Mallo 2005: 127)

In Vicente Luis Mora's blog, *Diario de lecturas*, the critic pointed out that "what Agustín calls "mía" ("mine"), that mysticism already outside of postmodernity, is what should start being examined" (s.p). Postpoetically articulated inside the binary barcode, "the new mysticism" would be encrypted here between the 0 and the 1: the 0 is interpretable as postmodernity's negative nihilism (the kingdom of surfaces and barcodes) and the 1 as the modern positivism, regarding an apparent *meaning* of life —found within the experience of love. This way, the "new mysticism" proposed by Fernández Mallo seems to settle inside the paradox, "0 y 1 en un mismo / estallido de tus huesos" ("0 and 1 within a same / burst of your bones"), a belief and a disbelief at the same time¹⁴. In other words, these verses, even if using a seemingly playful and ironic tone, mark a rather "serious" moment where, around the year 2005, a certain necessity was imposed by the literary critic of the periodization of Agustín Fernández Mallo's proposal, one that pranced between modernity and postmodernity, or between postmodernity and a new post-postmodernity paradigm still on the works of being defined. This is a holistic last resort spot, about encountering the paradox or, as the author himself defines it, about an immanent metaphysics.

¹³From a modern mysticism, / you ask for one more day and a voice / just like your own answers No. / This was the meaning of life, going towards death / in pursuit of your own analogy, // even a postmodern mysticism, / I would have preferred to be / before being a soul in transit / that death will reduce to repeated chemistry // repeated supermarket object / and in a ready-made obtain the soul. // but in the middle of mine / your fingers, barcodes / between runway flashes / 0 and 1 within a same / burst of your bones (Fernández Mallo 2005: 127)

¹⁴To navigate, as the philosopher Salvador Pániker would say, with small certainties, the era of uncertainty.

IV.

If the theme of love articulates the aforementioned postpoetic example, I will now proceed to analyze the author's story "Una rosa amarilla" included in his polemic collection *El Hacedor (de Borges), Remake* (2010), to question through playfulness and parody the promises regarding eternity of the contemporary digital scenario. Once again, the interiorizing project (in this case, eternity, metaphysics), appears here in a text by Agustín Fernández Mallo, in conjunction with technology, to pose again a scenario of posthumanist nature characterized by one self sinner dialogue with the strength of the hypercomplexity mesh in the Information Age. Let's not forget that Borges him self had done the same appropriate gesture, who according to the author comment on in *Teoría general de la basura* "ejecuta el desplazamiento, el shift, de teorías bien establecidas en el campo de la filosofía, las matemáticas o la mitología clásica, al cuento, y al relato corto, no exento de grandes dosis de humor y manipulaciones de lo absurdo que llevan incluso a trascender a los materiales de los cuales se apropia." ("it executes the displacement, the shift, of theories well established in the philosophy field, mathematics or classic mythology, tales and short stories, not except of big doses of humor and manipulations of the absurd that even get into transcending the materials that it appropriates.") (Fernández Mallo 2018, 219)

"Una rosa amarilla" ("A yellow rose") presents itself as a remake of a short story from *El hacedor* by Borges, where it's told how the illustrious Giambattista Marino, from his deathbed, glimpses onto a yellow rose that a woman has put on a cup. In the Borges original we read:

Entonces ocurrió la revelación. Marino vio la rosa, como Adán pudo verla en el Paraíso, y sintió que ella estaba en su eternidad y no en sus palabras y que podemos mencionar o aludir, pero no expresar y que los altos y soberbios volúmenes que formaban un ángulo de la sala en la penumbra de oro no eran (como su vanidad soñó) un espejo del mundo, sino una cosa más agregada al mundo. (Borges)¹⁵

¹⁵"Then the revelation occurred. Marino saw the rose as Adam might have seen it in Paradise, and he thought that the rose was to be found in its own eternity and not in his words; and that we may mention or allude to a thing, but not express it; and that the tall, proud volumes casting a golden shadow in a corner were not — as

This Adamic look reveals a truth to the dying poet, that the rose was already in its eternity in the edge of all that is expressible and that the only thing we can do is “allude”, mention, but not express as in represent or that the place of other beings or consciousness. In that sense, you could say that Borges was replacing epistemology for ontology, meaning, the world cannot be explained in a epistemological way (as in its meaning to men and the how we know the world--- what the new streams of ontologists call correlationism) but relating to the faculty of thing to be themselves (let’s remember the notion of the Borges-like persistence: the tiger persists in being a tiger). This is precisely the revelation of Giambattista Marino: “Marino saw the rose...and felt that it was in its eternity and not in his words”. Likewise, for Borges books (literature) would not be the “mirror” (the knowledge) of the world but “added” to the world. In other words, and ironically, the epistemology, the knowledge, becomes this new Borges-like frame on an ontologic posthumanist object (that goes further than men). From there to the end of the tale: “This illumination reached Marino on the verge of death, and Homer and Dante perhaps reached them too” (Borges)

Now, in what consists Fernández Mallo’s equally named remake? At three in the morning, the main character of the tale, from the Cervantes Institute of New York’s library (note the already present Borges-like element in the library), write the lines that we read. Remembers being previously observed by a scanner at the airport and in the moment, he writes, through a yellow lens installed on the roof of his head. Speculates in this moment about the labyrinthine trajectory of its image through the current digital communication system (again Borges with the element of labyrinth but this time taken to the current information web).

ver rotar tu cuerpo en un escáner de baja energía en un aeropuerto, comprenderte un cuerpo en 3 dimensiones que gira en una pantalla, la cabeza apunta al Norte, volar antes de volar o cuerpo ya volando [...] y me siento completo o

his vanity had dreamed — a mirror of the world, but rather one thing more added to the world” (Borges) .
Translated into English by Mildred Boyer and published in *Dreamtigers*, University Texas Press (Austin, 1964).

eterno, algo me observa, existo, como ahora mismo algo me observa en esta biblioteca del Instituto Cervantes de Nueva York [...] en la que hay una cámara que enfoca directamente a mi cabeza y envía mis imágenes a una mujer que estará en la recepción [...], mujer que a su vez las envía a un sistema de seguridad que tiene su nodo principal en algún edificio lejano de esta misma ciudad de Nueva York, y los cables que transportan esas imágenes son cables que se extienden a lo largo de los túneles de metro [...] y que en realidad son tubos por los que circulan millones de electrones que más tarde se harán luz en una pantalla para reconstruir tu imagen, porque ahí adentro viajan, troceadas, todas las imágenes que recogen las cámaras de seguridad del Instituto Cervantes de Nueva York y, en especial, las imágenes que de mí ahora mismo está recogiendo la cámara semiesférica y de color amarillo que hay en el techo [...]

(Fernández Mallo 2011:46-47)¹⁶

If Fernández Mallo admits in another place to be influenced by what the incorporation of math and metaphysics of the original by Borges, we could say that here the postpoetic conjunction is from physics and metaphysics. On the first place, we observe the material presence of the new technologies in the current identity conformation: one in which the formulation of the self would be “Uno-Todo mediático sometido a flujos constantes y sin centro alguno” (Castro 35). (“Self-Everything mediatic submitted to constant fluxes and no center”). This material-discursive rhizomatic practice of the self appears in the tale on a clear process of experience assembling, events and mechanisms, *conditio sine qua non* for a realistic ontology of science (Bhaskar 2008: 46). Likewise, here is a self that experiments the event empirically though the reciprocal act of observation through a part of a scanner or of a camera (the mechanisms). Note how the Cartesian “something observes me, I exist”,

¹⁶ seeing your body rotate on a low energy scanner at the airport, understanding yourself as a 3 dimensional body that twirls in a screen, the head points North, fly before flying or an already flying body [...] and I feel complete or eternal, something observes me, I exist, as something observes me now in this library at the Cervantes Institute of New York [...] in which there is a camera that focus directly to my head and send images to a woman that will be on the front desk [...], woman that at the same time sends them to a security system that has its main node in some far away building in this same city of New York, and the cables that transport these images are cables that extend through the metro tunnels [...] and that in reality are tubes through which millions of electrons circulate that later will become light on a screen to rebuild your image, because inside there they travel, chopped up, all the images that the security cameras at the Cervantes Institute of New York pick up and, specially, the images that are being picked up right now by the semi-spherical camera and the yellow color that’s on the ceiling [...] (Fernández Mallo 2011: 46-47)

would replace the according “somebody” of a humanist ontology for a posthumanist: the object or, better said, the electronic-digital mechanism is in charge of executing the act of watching in this new frame of posthuman relationships. We are reminded here once again of the *La mirada imposible* essay where the author makes an emphasis in the main paper of the technology in the conformation of data and metadata, the Big Data, which will give place to construction for excellence of the self in current society.

La identidad nos la construyen los otros en un proceso que incluye exclusivamente su mirada, y en el que poco o nada podemos intervenir. Ahora mismo, a lo largo y ancho del planeta Tierra, y ya sea directamente con nuestros nombres y apellidos o a través de datos y metadatos de segunda mano, hay decenas, centenas, millares de informaciones en las que cada uno de nosotros aparece; la identidad individual es entonces la suma e interacción mutua de todas esas informaciones que no sólo no controlamos sino de las que ni tan siquiera tenemos ni jamás tendremos conocimiento; son para cada cual de nosotros una mirada externa e imposible (Fernández Mallo 2021: 72-73)¹⁷

The image of the self in the story becomes at the same time as a transitive object of the mechanism of the scanner and the camera and it travels in the form of an electron, throughout the digital web, nodal and rhizomatic formed by light, cable, electrons, screens and other entities (in this case, library watcher). What is human, or better said, the human identity in the current digital scenario, becomes an image that becomes part of a new ecology of this communication web in the Information era: in data. It's interesting to note at this point that in a different way to that panoptic Foucault according to which the institutions would be responsible of such identity assignation through its (hierarchical) mechanisms of vigilance, the new posthumanist scenario scatters and decenters heterarchically such information in a way that there's no longer only one mechanism, institution or responsible agent of such identity assignation, exponentially scattered in a summing of fragmented “looks” produced by the multiple vigilance mechanisms.

¹⁷ “Identity is built for us by others in a process that includes exclusively their gaze and in which we can intervene little to nothing. Right now throughout planet Earth, being that directly with our names and last names or through second handed data and metadata, there are dozens, hundreds, millions of information in which each one of us appears; the individual identity is then the sum and mutual interaction of all of this information that not only we can't control but of the one we don't even have and we will never have knowledge of; they are for each one of us an eternal and impossible look”

Until here, the physics of the event. But, both Borges and Fernández Mallo introduce in their respective narratives the metaphysics concept of the eternity and it is before the act of observation through the airport scanner, the self from the tale declares feeling complete or “eternal”; it would ironically enjoy that same eternity from the rose in Borge’s original when becoming a transitive object of technological mechanism observation that independently from the human, enjoys its own entity (the yellow lens). From there comes the analogy (ironic, playful and postpoetic) between the lens and the rose: Both would be completely functional objects within their own autopoietic systems. More so, in this sense (metaphysics), Fernández Mallo’s pink yellow lens not only rises anymore, like in Borge’s original, like an independent object of the human, but also is a codifying vehicle of the subject eternity: it lights it up. Likewise, Giambattista feels eternal, “illuminated” before the revelation of natural rose is eternal.

Now, despite both tales sharing the same philosophical premise (the ontology as base for philosophy and the corresponding death of the letter culture- of the epistemology-), the implications of Fernández Mallo’s remake goes beyond: although Giambattista Marino, before the revelation of the rose, can die calmly, into his full humanity and according to their ethical or religious convictions, (surviving maybe Manriquenally in the memory of others), the death of the writer at the central library of the “Empire” wouldn’t suppose its physical finitude because its codified image in data will persist in the new biotechnical of the eternity that offers the current electronic and digital scenario. And it is that the digital images, according to visual critic José Luis Brea, are properly “material forces”, electrons, information, archive, susceptible to being eternal (Brea 67). Meaning, we have switched that life of Manriquenal fame to the eternity of the technique.

In any case, the yellow lens of Fernández Mallo’s tale emerges like the new rose (the new promise of eternity) that “photosynthesize” the human to transport in a labyrinthine way the image of his atomized body throughout a world of cabling to finally “illuminate” other zones of the earth. As anticipated, this is the ensambling idea that philosopher José Luis Molinuevo refers to in his work *Humanismo y nuevas tecnologías* with the term *tecnología orgánica* (Molinuevo 28). Defined as a fusion of the organic and inorganic, the *tecnología orgánica* can, for the philosopher, be guarantor of a Nietzschean active nihilism:

Son estos dos puntos, la creación de un superhombre y la vuelta a la mitología griega, los que más están presentes en la intersección del humanismo con las

nuevas tecnologías [...]. Nietzsche señala que los románticos expresaron un profundo anhelo de la cultura occidental, la nostalgia del origen, de la seguridad, de la casa. Y esto es lo que siempre ha representado el mundo griego. El problema —concluye— es que ya no somos griegos, y que los puentes hacia ellos se han roto. De la ahí la construcción de nuevas mitologías en la era de las tecnologías [...] de este tecnorromanticismo nihilista, de una continua recreación de identidades tecnológicas, y de un hacer del ciberespacio la nueva “casa del ser”. (Molinuevo 24)¹⁸

If Giambattista Marino sees the rose as Adam was able to see it in Paradise, meaning, it comes back, to the mythological space of the house through Christian mythology, is not crazy to point that the narrator Fernández Mallo finds the new “home of the being” on the cyberspace. That’s why, in this last tale, after much labyrinthine path in which we read “my body atomized onto millions of electrons that go at a speed 200 times superior to the metro” (Fernández Mallo 2011:48), the image goes to finally land at a home and a television screen where it says “I light up the bedroom of a vigilant and his wife” (Fernández Mallo, 2011: 52). The image of the being finally finds a home, literally and metaphorically.

But the tale by Agustín Fernández Mallo does not end at this point, but we discover that “The yellow rose” invoke in the last pages another story by Borges, “La casa de Asterión”, in its reference to Theseus’s myth. We read at the end of Fernández Mallo: —¿Lo crearás, Ariadna? —dijo el muñeco Kinder Sorpresa [que descansas obre la mesa de noche del vigilante]—, el Minotauro apenas se defendió” (Fernández Mallo 2011: 53) (“-Would you believe it, Ariadna? - said the toy from the Kinder Surprise [that rested over the watchman’s nightstand]-, the Minotaur barely defended himself”. Here we have a new turn to the story: a Theseus that appears (now ironically transformed into a Kinder Surprise toy) to give death to the Minotaur. We find out then that the narrator has been mythically lost in the labyrinth of the new library of the digital world and the Era of communications, is in

¹⁸“It is these two points, the creation of the super man and the return to Greek mythology, the ones that are the most present in the intersection of humanism with new technologies [...]. Nietzsche points that the romantics expressed a profound yearning for the occidental culture, the nostalgia of the origin, of security, of home. And this is what has always represented the Greek world. The problem- concludes- that we are no longer Greek and that the bridge to them has broken up. From there the construction of new mythologies in the era of the technologies [...] from this nihilistic technorromanticism, from a continuous recreation of technologic identities, and from a doing of the cyberspace the new “home of the being”.” (Molinuevo 24)

that technological house of being that precisely that house of Asterion of “infinite dungeons, doors, backyards and corridors”. Like the Minotaur or the yellow rose, the narrator has already reached his eternity in the cyberspace while his physical body (mortal) continues inside of the Library of Cervantes Institute. He reflects finally on the Borges-like theme of the library.

me digo que ahora, en esta biblioteca del Instituto Cervantes de Nueva York, las estanterías que tengo a mi espalda están llenas de medicinas que son libros, pero todo libro es lo contrario de una medicina, todo libro es un virus, una enfermedad sobrevalorada, no conozco a nadie a quien la literatura haya hecho más feliz, o incluso mejor persona, por eso ahora siento remordimientos de estar escribiendo esto en esta biblioteca de un Instituto Cervantes, en concreto el de Nueva York, pero sería igual si fuera el de Pekín, el de Estocolmo o el de Malibú en caso de que existiera [...] (Fernández Mallo 2011: 47-48)¹⁹

If “every book is a virus” and the new Library in the era of hyper complexity is the labyrinth of communication of the digital Era, what exactly would be the virus of the technoorganic, the face of Jano of this promise of eternity? What identity, ecological and political repercussions would it have for the human that our identity goes to not only forming part of this digital library but to be built by the data of its multiple archives or digital racks? Fernández Mallo’s narration would leave these questions unanswered, but he adds: “esta noche del jardín del Instituto Cervantes de Nueva York es oscura, y el reflejo del jardín al que antes me referí refleja esa oscuridad, como si reflejar la oscuridad fuera posible” (Fernández Mallo 2011: 52) (“this night of the Cervantes Institute of New York is dark and the reflection of the garden to which I referred to before reflects that darkness, as if reflecting light was possible”). The garden and the library with its physical books are dark because we have bet on the techno organic with its promise of eternity as the new house of the being. We must ask ourselves if this is the eternity we choose, or if, like Giambattista Marino, we prefer to trust we prefer to trust in the art of memory or faith, or if there’s no going back

¹⁹ I tell myself that now, in this library of Cervantes Institute of New York, the shelves that I have on my back are filled with medicine that are books, but every book is the contrary of a medicine, every book is a virus, an overrated sickness, I don’t know any person that’s become a happier or even a better person by literature, that’s why I now feel remorse to be writing this in this library of one Cervantes Institute, specifically New York’s, but it would be the same if it was Pekin’s, Stockholm’s or Malibu’s in case it existed. [...] (Fernández Mallo 2011: 47-48)

anymore and our image it's already destined to wander eternally through the dark corridors of optic fiber, that house of Asterion that is not "the size of the world", like Borges would say, but that instead is the world. However, just like theauth or himself finishes hises say La mirada imposible, thebooks are in fact in formation "que viene de la oscuridad" y "antes de caer presos de la oscuridad total en la que tarde o temprano se convierte la oralidad, inventamos una oscuridad que sortea esa quinta pared, y que a través de la escritura se convierte en una nueva y completa luz: el texto, último escenario posible." (Fernández Mallo 2021: 89, 83). ("that comes from the dark" and "before falling prisoners of total darkness in which soon or later becomes orality, we invent a darkness that sorts out this fifth wall, and that through writing becomes a new and complete light: the text, ultimate scenario possible.")

As the reader would have perceived, the Borges-like parody is the explicit narration mechanism of *El hacedor* (by Borges), *Remake* by Agustín Fernández Mallo, already indicated by the presence of the original hypotext on the title and in the respective sections that form the work, like analyzed in these pages: "A yellow rose". However, is precise to make a final point regarding the term parody, just as the critic Jean Genette warns us in his *Palimpsestos*. For Genette, the term presents an "onerous confusion" since on occasion it refers to a playful distortion, in others to a mocking transposition and in others to a satiric imitation of the style (Genette 24). That is why, the French critic Jean opts to re-baptize the term and propose a taxonomic and terminological reform to distinguish from the mocking and satiric genre. In particular, the parody for Genette refers to "a form of hypertextuality whose literary significance cannot be reduced to that of the pastiche or of canonical parody, and which I shall for now on call serious parody" (26). And it continues "Parody does not actually subject the hypotext to a degrading stylistic treatment but only takes it as a model or template for the construction of a new text which, once produced, is no longer concerned with the model" (27). This is the definition to which *El hacedor* (de Borges, *Remake* by Agustín Fernández Mallo seems to adhere to with most fidelity. Without losing the coordinates of the game's seriousness (proper of the theory and the postpoetic praxis analyzed in these pages) Fernández Mallo's text would be, just as Genette proposes, a serious parody since it uses the original Borges-like formula to produce another text separated from the model, with its own narrative, theme and philosophical worries. The own author arguments in his essay *Teoría general de la basura* about the tales originated from the origi-

nal Borges-like displacement “Todo ello son residuos de las transformaciones – los cambios de punto de vista, los shifts- que los cuentos de Borges dejan a su paso, lo cual no menoscaba sus resultados, antes al contrario, los hace aún más meritorious en tanto la transformación, por inopinada, es extremadamente audaz” (Fernández Mallo 2021: 219) (“All of that are residues from the transformations- the changes on points of view, the shifts- that the Borges stories leave as they pass, which does not undermine their result, quite the contrary, makes them even more meritorious in reference to the transformation, for it being un-opinionated, is extremely bold”). “The yellow rose” by Agustín Fernández Mallo does not stop being another bold Borges-like residue.

V.

The posthumanist paradigm is, from its multiple fronts (science, sociology, philosophy, literature...) pointing to the revolution of thought that Thomas Khun was referring to. Is in this revolution where Agustín Fernández Mallo’s gesture took place for being a receptacle and becoming echo of the new time’s pulse and being its symptomatic literature of the social and technologic changes that are restructuring the societies, individuals, their artistic creations, their affects and sensitivities. Along these pages I pretend to have positioned his postpoetic proposal in a place that precisely announces such posthumanist frame in consonance with the Era of Image and the Society of Information, one that far from resulting in a mere technophile apology or postmodern nihilism, incorporates and over all questions the presence of technology in our lives. Further from the mere heterogeneity theme and playful experimentation, I have intended to demonstrate how the work of Agustín Fernández Mallo is able to reinsert in his work those interiors of the modernity’s project (in these cases specifically studied, the subjects of love and eternity) on a frame of imminent relations. With that, he proposes a new literary paradigm that rushes, with the seriousness of the game and of the parody, identity, philosophical and ecological questions prevailing in our vital experience on the 21st Century.

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