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**MUTATIONS AND INTERACTIONS:
THE POETICS OF
JULIÁN RÍOS'S *LIBERATURE*
(1966-1999)**

Oscar Salgado Suarez

May 2013

Abstract

This book examines the exiled Spanish author Julián Ríos's *oeuvre* (1966-1999) and investigates how his interconnecting novels mutate their levels of interaction around the figure of the reader while critically exploring the gradual disappearance of *liberature's* original intention. In both his fiction and his art and literature essays/interviews and his editorial role at *Espiral* cultural magazine, Ríos's form of writing can be described as an open, self-generative, fragmented and non-linear narrative which aims to encourage the reader to become an active participant of the work. Initially triggered as a response to Franco's oppressive regime and heavily influenced by poststructuralist and neobaroque methodologies, Ríos's work evolves and transforms itself through the political backdrop of an increasingly global worldview. Taking this postnational momentum into account, my work will highlight the innovative forms of narrative Ríos develops in which the limits of expression and criticism are continually expanded to emphasize the idea of what he refers to as *liberature*: a type of literature which aims to explore creative writing as a tool of liberation from rigid literary strategies by mutating the limits of the narrative. Passing from its use of a multilingual approach to word formation to reader and genre mutation, this book will also critically explore the gradual waning of literary experimentation the more Ríos distances himself from the figure of the Spanish dictator.

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Introduction:
The Open Spiral Of *Liberature*
Aims & Literature Review

This book examines the *oeuvre* of the exiled Spanish author Julián Ríos from 1966 until 1999, spanning a historical context which begins with the oppressive Spanish regime and concludes with the politics of a global and postnational worldview. Even if the political dimension appears to be overshadowed by the continuous presence of linguistic games, experimentations and metaliterary references which overcrowd Ríos's entire work, this approach is counterbalanced by the relationship Ríos attempts to establish with the readers. Ríos announces his intentions upfront in the prologue to his first collaboration with Octavio Paz in *Teatro de signos/Transparencias*: 'La escritura/lectura como actividad lúdica (*play*, en todos los sentidos de la palabra, sobre todo en el erótico) y el lector como autor/actor siempre en escena, en el juego' (Paz 1974, 1). This continuous reference to the reader as a fundamental element in Ríos's work underpins the argumentative arch of this book which investigates how his interconnecting fictional novels, together with his art and literature essays/interviews books, mutate their levels of interaction around the figure of the reader. Ríos's form of writing can be defined as an open, self-generative, fragmented and non-linear narrative which aims to encourage the reader to become an active participant in the work and, as a result, widens the critique of notions related to fixed authorial identities. Initially triggered as a response to Franco's oppressive regime and heavily influenced by poststructuralist and neobaroque methodologies, Ríos's work evolves and transforms itself through the political backdrop of an increasingly global worldview. Taking its postnational momentum into account, my work will highlight the innovative forms of narrative Ríos develops in which the limits of expression and criticism are continually expanded to emphasize the idea of what he refers to as

liberature. This is a type of literature which aims to explore creative writing as a tool of liberation from rigid literary strategies. It does so by mutating the narrative limits from word formation to reader, genre, and also mobile periodicity, given the postmodernist guise which attempts to carry on the modernist or avant-garde stand. This book will also critically explore the gradual waning of literary experimentation the more Ríos distances himself from the figure of the Spanish dictator.

The books written by Julián Ríos which I will explore and refer to throughout this book are the following:

- 1) Short stories: *Cortejo de sombras* (1968)
- 2) In Collaboration with Octavio Paz: *Sólo a dos voces* (1973)
Teatro de signos (1974)
- 3) Novels: *Larva. Babel de una noche de San Juan* (1983)
Poundemónium (1985)
La vida sexual de las palabras (1991)
Ulises ilustrado (1991) published in 2002 as *Casa Ulises*
Sombreros para Alicia (1993)
Amores que atan o belles lettres (1995)
Monstruario (1999)
- 3) Literary Essays: *Album de Babel* (1995)
Epifanías sin fin (1996)
- 4) Art Essays: *Impresiones de Kitaj (La novela pintada)* (1989)
Las tentaciones de Antonio Saura (1991)

In addition to the books selected above from the last three decades of the Twentieth century, Ríos has published two other books which will not be explored in this book. The first book is *Quijote e hijos: una genealogía literaria* (2006) containing six essays establishing connections with writers influenced by Cervantes's renowned classic novel. The second one, *Puente de Alma* (2009), is a novel set in Paris which explores questions of obsession and fame focused on the place where the death of Lady Diana Spencer occurred. Both of the aforementioned titles have already moved outside the experience of *liberature* and thus my argument only deals with the books published up to 1999.

The first chapter of the book, 'An Origin of *Liberature*: *Cortejo de sombras*', explores the first traces of what later on would be recognized by Ríos as an origin of *liberature* on account of its implicit approach towards a plural form of writing. By exploring the inner literary strategies of the collection of short stories *Cortejo de sombras* I will highlight Ríos's first approaches to a deformation of language as an intrinsic element of *liberature*.

The second chapter, 'Framing *Liberature* and Its Interactions: A Poststructural Overview in a Hypertextual and Fragmentary Key', sketches the philosophical background Ríos feeds from in developing the literary approach which underpins his *oeuvre*. This chapter thus sets up the methodological, theoretical and historical strategy which forms the basis of the argument. It refers in particular to the poststructuralist influence of the philosophers Barthes, Derrida and Deleuze in Ríos's work in connection to hypertextual literary explorations involving an interactive approach to reading. This chapter argues that the creative writing referred to as

liberature attempts to transform the experience of the reader into a ‘bricoleur’ (a term coined by Ríos) or closer collaborator with the ever ‘fugitive’ author. In doing so, it will also highlight the constant use of the fragment as a literary device in Ríos’s *oeuvre*, arguing that the multiple connections formed between the parts can be related to an interactive process of thought which engages the reader. Hence, this chapter investigates the emphasis given by Ríos to the performative poetics of the fragment throughout the *Larva* cycle. Ultimately, by highlighting the three stages of the decreasing use of fragments in Ríos’s novels, the diminishing prevalence of the original intentions of *liberature* will be demonstrated.

The third chapter, ‘The Formation Phase: Postnational Encounters Through *Solo A Dos Voces* & *Revista Espiral*’, investigates how the interview with Octavio Paz (*Solo a Dos Voces*) and the production of the literature/art magazine entitled *Espiral/Revista 1-7*, edited by Julián Ríos during the late 1970s and early 1980s, begin to function as critical counterparts to the fictional novels of the *Larva* cycle. In addition, they stand out as an important point of reference for understanding the writing methodology employed by Julián Ríos. This series of publications became another post-Franco attempt to both develop and engage writers and artists from Latin America and Spain in a cultural dialogue. The third argument of this chapter consists in exploring an understanding of the postnational as another way of approaching the study of literary works. This will be carried out through the exploration of the rest of novels forming part of the *Larva* cycle, which were also produced outside the territory of Spain throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The final argument of this chapter relates to the erosion of fixed formal structures whose aim is to establish different critical and methodological approaches in the investigation of literary and artistic expressions.

The fourth chapter, 'Exploring the Limits of *Liberature: Larva & Poundemonium*', focuses in particular on the first two novels of the cycle, *Larva* and *Poundemonium*. This chapter contextualizes the oppressive historical and cultural frame within which both novels were developed while, at the same time, exploring their stylistic and formal paradigms. Amongst these coordinates, the literary production of exile, the construction of a linguistic heterodoxy and the dialogical formation under the influence first of Bakhtin and later that of Barthes stand out as essential characteristics which stretch the limits of this literary form. By association, an understanding of the expressive literary tensions developed in these first two novels written by Ríos is given by the emphasis placed on language as sound rather than on its representational attributes. Moving on from the influence established by other Latin American and European writers in search of a radical style towards the use of the Spanish language as a possible tool of distortion in opposition to the official linguistic code, the continuous presence of 'centrifuges of meaning' underpins and elaborates the first steps towards notions of interactively engaging the reader. In a similar way, questions of multiplicity and identity confronting notions of authorship release the constant presence of a deterritorialized position from which to expand in multiple directions or 'lines of flight' for the delaying of meaning construction as a reliable centre of influence. As part of this argument, this chapter will also explore the integration of the fragment in Ríos's work in its most intense phase known as 'the four-fold fragment'.

The move towards another aesthetic form where Ríos's *oeuvre* is allowed to stretch into its multiple and mutational condition informs the Neobarroque style as an appropriate act of engagement in the second phase of Ríos's cycle of novels. This is

the argument running through the fifth chapter, 'The Echo Chambers or Neobaroque Strategies in Julián Ríos's 'The Critical Fictions' and 'The Painted Novels'. The influence of Severo Sarduy's essays on the Neobaroque create the context for the argument against the production of meaning as a form of centre-based structure. The way in which Sarduy manoeuvres through a constant transformation of Neobaroque terminology according to historic time, reflects the argument for applying it to contemporary times where 'the spectator has been left with the new freedom to compose his or her own images' (Gruzinsky 2001, 225). The argument forming this chapter is built around Ríos's continuous linguistic search for a digression which ultimately suspends meaning as a strategy for an epistemological critique of conventional narrative forms based around reliance on a specific centre of reference. Thus, the need to explore 'The Critical Fictions' and their dialogical forms carried out by three fictional characters portrayed as critics who embody the sense of the reader accessing the literary and artistic works of others as if part of a museum or a house without a visible centre or specific direction to follow. Ríos emphasizes the exploration of literary and pictorial works which have influenced his own work in a form of literary intervention through a dialogical revisiting of those very works. In that sense, 'The Painted Novels' seem to replicate the same dialogical strategy but this time revolving around Ríos's conversational dialogues with the painters R.B.Kitaj and Antonio Saura. By blurring and mutating the limits amongst the disciplines in continuously unexpected forms, these works add another critical layer to the argument for an interactive literary form involving the reader. Finally, this chapter will present the second phase of fragment usage revolving around the notion of the epiphanic fragment.

The sixth chapter, ‘A Shift Towards Literature in *Sombreros para Alicia, Amores que atan & Monstruario*’, explores the last three novels written by Ríos during the 1990s. It argues that these novels show a move towards literary characters and nostalgic influences related to the 1970s rather than a development of the strategy of interaction with the readers. Hence, this chapter explores what I consider to be a third cycle in Ríos’s works, namely the move away from the main aspects of *liberature*. This investigation will include, on the one hand, the shift towards a more literary hypertextuality, and, on the other, the third and less intense phase of fragment usage. It will focus in particular on the notion of the fragment as variations of literary characters and as an indicator of its decreasing interactive reading mode.

Finally, the conclusion, ‘The Mutating Spiral of *Liberature*’, brings together the different arguments expounded in the above mentioned chapters so as to question how far Ríos has succeeded in developing a subversive literary project aimed at liberating readers by making them become active collaborators in the event of reading his books. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how Ríos’s attempts to mutate his *oeuvre* so intensely from a position of liberating influences within the act of writing and reading, evolve through the last three decades of the twentieth century against the grain of an oppressive Francoist cultural legacy. Thus, the aim is to see whether the original liberating intentions begin to retreat in such a way that Ríos’s work begins to lose its initial gravitational force the more he leaves behind the impulse to renew and refresh a loaded language paralyzed by dictatorship. I will also attempt to prove how the distancing from the oppressive regime made Ríos’s writing move away from formal experimentation and engage with other forms of literature which dull the momentum of the original intention.

Literature Review

The Spanish writer Julián Ríos has always been labelled as a writer who is difficult to categorize, and therefore his writings have tended to provoke contradictory commentaries. On the one hand, Ríos has been praised by renowned literary figures like Carlos Fuentes ('Julián Ríos es el escritor más inventivo y creativo de la lengua castellana' (Ríos 2007, 456)), Octavio Paz ('Los textos de Julián Ríos me parecen muy importantes, son una asimilación de la tradición más radical' (Ríos 2007, 456)) and Juan Goytisolo:

La prosa de Julián Ríos muestra, con su rigor sin falla y su prodigiosa capacidad de invención lingüística, que los caminos de Sterne y Joyce, Rabelais y Céline, Cabrera Infante y Sarduy resultan perfectamente transitables.' (Ríos 2007, 456)

On the other hand, and as a stern counterbalance to the praises quoted above, the majority of modern Spanish literary historiographies have omitted mention of or reference to his work with the sole exception of *Larva*, something which will be seen in the fourth chapter of this book. Therefore, as implied by the previous comment, there have not been many studies dedicated to exploring the work of Julián Ríos in depth.

The only works to have dealt with Julián Ríos's writings are contained in two compilations of articles, essays, poems and interviews. The first one, *Palabras para Larva* (1985), edited by Andrés Sánchez Robayna and Gonzalo Díaz-Migoyo, includes all the critical essays about *Larva* written up to 1985 as well as all the texts dedicated to *Larva* in the 'Congreso Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana' celebrated in Madrid in 1984. This collection of short articles and essays revolves around the exploration of *Larva* as a groundbreaking literary work written in Spanish. Many of the writers associated with Ríos's work in this book, such as Juan Goytisolo,

Severo Sarduy, Haroldo de Campos or Andrés Sánchez Robayna, share their literary approaches in this collection mainly by focusing on the plurality and multilingual use of language employed by Ríos in *Larva*. Given the short length of the articles, none of them attempts to offer a profound a cultural or philosophical analysis of the work, thus remaining within literary paradigms revolving around linguistic games without attempting to explore cultural influences underpinning Ríos's novel. The book closes with two interviews with Julián Ríos and one essay written by Ríos about his own novel from the perspective of what he refers to as 'carnavalización y canibalización cultural' (Sánchez & Díaz 1985, 1); these concepts will be explored more in depth in this book.

The second compilation, edited by Stéphane Pagés, is entitled *Julián Ríos, Le Rabelais des Lettres Espagnoles* (2007). Through a series of essays written by a variety of authors, it explores other novels of Ríos apart from *Larva*, but it does so fundamentally from a linguistic and intertextual angle. That is to say, this work is more interested in denoting the references to all those writers preceding Ríos who also pursued an original investigation of the literary expression as is suggested by the reference to François Rabelais in the title of Pagés's book.

Up to the present there only exists one book, published in France, on the subject of Ríos's writings, *Analyse du discours dans Larva (1984) de Julián Ríos: le jeu de l'écriture, le jeu du roman* (2000), and this was also written by Stéphane Pagés. As can be already inferred from its title, that book focuses specifically on the formalistic linguistic analysis of *Larva* and does not enter into the ideological and philosophical motivations for the type of language usage, something which this book attempts to

explore. Apart from the critical studies mentioned above there has also been a long list of short articles and interviews published in newspapers and literary magazines throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century. These short newspaper articles and magazine reviews coincide in their focus on Ríos as an experimental and unclassifiable author. Thus, no critical study has ever attempted to explore and investigate Ríos's poetics beyond their formalistic literary approach.

Therefore, this book is original in its approach to a literary subject almost absent from critical and cultural studies. Thus, by employing a philosophical, critical and cultural approach this book aims to make a contribution to knowledge by adding a necessary and deserved investigation into a unique writer whose *oeuvre* escapes the mainstream classifications of Spanish literature.

Chapter 1 An Origin of *Liberature*: *Cortejo de sombras*

Liberature is the term used by the characters of *Larva*, and it refers to the significant desire of writers to transform what is repressed, to express what we repress so that it doesn't oppress us anymore, and I don't just mean psychological repressions [...] great writers have been great liberators of energies, taboos and all sort of things.

That's why I like to speak of *liberature*, meaning a literature that strives for freedom.

Julián Ríos (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 4)

La subversión del lenguaje era la mejor aspirina para el mal de los Pirineos.

Julián Ríos (Rojo 2008, 1)

Spain pains me! (sic)¹.

Julián Ríos (Ríos 1982, 79)

The above descending epigraphs sum up the generative forces which animate Ríos's *oeuvre* from the perspective of oppression and its subsequent search for release through the practice of *liberature*. This is a term coined by Ríos to describe his particular approach to writing and, for the purpose of this book, the first sign of a mutation which mobilizes an interaction from the side of the reader, that is to say, an expected 't' that becomes 'b' and all the implications this has for the reader in terms of deciphering a possible meaning for the term.

In Ríos's case, historical experience is made literary. It is a way of shaking the foundations of an oppressive socio-political legacy by means of a writing which carries within it a drive for freedom of expression, even if at times this striving may

¹ This quotation taken from one of Julián Ríos's works appears to contain a grammatical or printing mistake; nevertheless it has purposefully been written thus by the writer. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to warn the reader to be aware that this kind of apparent mistake will not only reappear in many of the quotations in this book but it will also function as a formal characteristic underlying Ríos's *oeuvre*.

mean loading language to the level of incomprehension. The pain to which Ríos refers in the epigraph quoted above finds its origin in the figure of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde and what Ríos describes as ‘la atmósfera oprimente, deprimente y opresiva de aquellos años del franquismo’ (Rojo 2008, 1). Given the historical circumstances, Julián Ríos becomes another embodiment of a twentieth century writer spurred on by the effects of an asphyxiating environment, someone who needs to abandon his national boundaries in order to form and develop an *oeuvre* from the point of view of the extraterritorial perspective. This is the literary positioning which the English critic George Steiner employed in exploring the linguistic strangeness related to writers ‘displaced or hesitant at the frontier’ (Steiner 1975, 14), thus moving away from a centred monolingual use of literary representation while gravitating towards the ‘emergence of linguistic pluralism or ‘unhousedness’’ (Steiner 1975, 10). In that search for a multilingual form of linguistic expression outside the national language, those ‘unhoused’ writers would pursue strategies of subversion as a form of confrontation with their particular oppressive experiences. In Ríos’s approach, the subversive element conjured up would be completely projected towards language with the aim of critically exorcising the oppressive experience lived under Franco’s control:

Con la perspectiva del tiempo, que es el mejor mirador, puedo ver que trataba de alejarme entonces de una España que me olía a alcanfor, cuando no a chamusquina, y que me dolía sin duda menos que a Unamuno, cuya célebre frase es parafraseada en farsa y traducida fielmente por el narrador de *Larva* con la exclamación: ‘Spain pains me!’.
(Ríos 2007a, 9)

Born in Vigo (Galicia) in 1941, Ríos has always adamantly given away specific details about his biography as if trying to ironically replicate one of the mottos running through *Larva*’s cycle of novels: ‘O como diría divinamente Milalias, el protagonista de *Larva*: “Yo soy el que es hoy” ’ (Ríos 2007a, 10). This is an element showing a stylistic pose leaning towards a specific postmodern strategy reflecting in particular one of the main traits which Fredric Jameson distinguishes as characteristic

of the postmodernist mode referred to by Julio Ortega: ‘the fragmentation of time into a series of momentary presents’ (Ortega 1988, 195).

Ríos spent his childhood and adolescence in Galicia before moving to Madrid with his family at the end of the 1950s to study Law at the Complutense University. It will be in Madrid that Ríos will write his first book in the form of a collection of short stories² attempting to capture his first exilic experience within Spain:

Escribí *Cortejo de sombras* de 1966 a 1968 en Madrid (trataba entonces de revivir y de recrear sin regionalismos mi particular Galicia, el país de las maravillas de la niñez y de la adolescencia, con sus sombras del pasado ominosas a veces, al que se anexionaba entre nostálgico y fantasmal el país del que te irás y no volverás de tantos emigrantes. (Ríos 2007a, 7)

I say first exilic experience because from 1969 Ríos leaves the Iberian territory behind and moves to London, the metropolis where he will spend most of the 1970s even if returning recurrently to Madrid. Then Ríos spends the 1980s in Paris before moving to Berlin in 1991, where he will live a few years more before returning back to the outskirts of the French capital where he currently resides.

This nomadic existence of deterritorialization as a form of *modus operandi* which implies moving from one European capital to another almost every decade from the late 1960s will also permeate Ríos’s writings, emphasizing the process of constant literary transformation through different formal elaborations. In a similar vein, the cultural critic Alison Maginn observes in her essay ‘La España posmoderna: pasotas, huérfanos y nómadas’ the following aspect of the postmodern attitude:

² The titles are: I. Historia de Mortes II. Las Sombras III. Palonzo IV. Cacería en Julio V. La Casa Dividida VI. La Segunda Persona VII. Dies Irae VIII. Polvo Enamorado IX. El Río sin Orillas.

Es cierto que el sujeto nómada está desterritorializado: la condición postmoderna es tal que exige a los que quieren sobrevivir en ella un espíritu itinerante y aventurero: uno tiene que desarraigarse, desempadronarse, por así decirlo, para poder hacer frente a lo nuevo, lo desconocido y lo inquietante. (Maginn 1995, 157)

As will be explored throughout this book, Ríos seems to follow the previous statement literally with the aim of creating the conditions for the elaboration of his literary endeavours. After he left Spain, little is known of Ríos's public activities apart from his role as the editor of the literary publication *Espiral* which will be explored in the second chapter of this book. Whenever Ríos is asked if he will ever return to live in Spain, his answer reflects the ironic approach constantly found throughout his books: 'Lo dije ya y no encuentro mejor fórmula: Me gusta tanto volver que prefiero hacerlo con frecuencia. Como se ve, me gusta el eterno retorno.' (Ojeda 2009, 1).

With the exception of the collection of short stories titled *Cortejo de sombras*, all of Ríos's literary publications (novels and essays on art and literature) were written outside Spain, even if they were later published in Spain and also translated to other European languages. Still, *Cortejo de sombras* represents not only what can be considered to be the closest to a realist approach Ríos ever managed to produce but also the plural foundations of what would later become the core of *liberature*.

1.1 The 'Realist' Phase of Julián Ríos: *Cortejo de sombras* or The Origins of a 'Plural' Writer of *Liberature*

The subtitle itself, *La Novela de Tamoga*, which accompanies the main title of the book, *Cortejo de sombras* (Fig. 1), suggests an attempt to formulate a novel out of independent short stories situated within the imaginary Galician village of Tamoga. This misleading denomination of genre allowed Ríos to elaborate a plurality of voices

which cross paths in the course of the short stories, as ‘parte de una novela coral sobre un pueblo y espacio imaginarios, con personajes que se relevaban y revelaban sucesivamente a lo largo de las vicisitudes de sus vidas’ (Ríos 2007a, 7). It emphasizes the notion of different versions and points of view while beginning to mobilize *liberature* in its multiple interpretative aspects, starting with the notion of a collection of short stories understood as a novel in itself.

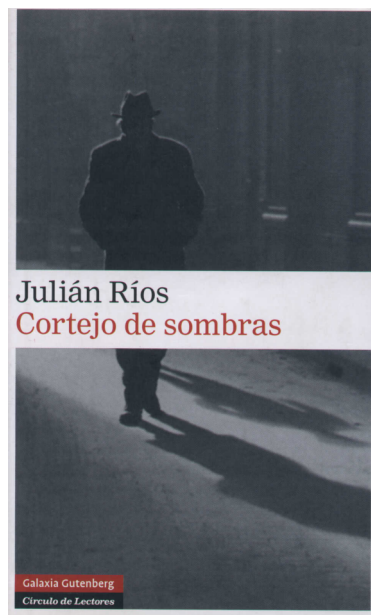


Fig. 1 Cover of *Cortejo de sombras*

In this way, many of the stories are developed through different versions narrated by different characters about specific actions without ever achieving a conclusive version surrounding tragic events, as happens in the first short story, ‘Historia de Mortes’: ‘ninguna de estas conjeturas sirve para explicar el final de la historia, si es que ha de tener un final’ (Ríos 2007a, 19). A travelling salesman named Mortes arrives in Tamoga as a complete stranger (‘Debió de pensar, entonces, que el pueblo era lo suficientemente triste para sus propósitos’ (Ríos 2007a, 18)) and after a few days spent in the town, his dead body appears by the seashore with signs of having committed suicide. The whole story attempts to reconstruct the pieces by adding up the points of view of all those who meet or see Mortes before he disappears, and it is

through this intertwined form of storytelling that Ríos explores the multiplicity and plurality of character's voices which validates the story's inconclusive nature:

Tenía el don de transfigurarse porque cada uno lo recuerda de forma distinta y es posible que todos tengamos razón: alegre, tímido, triste, burlón, insolente, respetuoso, cínico, desabrido, amable, fue todo esto y lo que nosotros digamos de él. Al final nos quedan la fascinación y la imposibilidad de referir esta historia porque las palabras en este caso son más reales que los hechos y una historia sólo merece ser contada cuando las palabras no pueden agotar su sentido (Ríos 2007a, 19)

This collection of short stories constitutes the beginning of Ríos's attempts to formulate a literary discourse embedded in an oppressive environment which embodies a specific literary approach born out of a need to capture the repression of those Francoist years. Even taking into account the inconclusive nature of the points of view of these short stories, as anticipating a form of writing which celebrates multiplicity and the openness of the work, it will be important to highlight the oppressive atmosphere of this collection of short stories which contrasts with the liberating surge that will emerge from the novel *Larva* onwards:

Quería hacer una síntesis de un tiempo. Yo era entonces un español que vivía en esa España desolada, respiraba ese ambiente, mamaba la misma leche amarga de todos en ese tiempo. Creo que está escrito en la clave de todo un país en el que empezaba a perfilarse un cierto cambio. Después de terminarlo me marché a Londres precisamente porque quería alejarme de todo aquello, así que el libro fue algo así como un intento de dejar registrado un estado del alma. (Coca 2008, 1)

Following from the previous quotation, it is necessary to note that the state described in *Cortejo de sombras* could have not been more laden with references to desperation, oppression and death in all its different phases. Each short story included in the book represents a death either about to happen, in the process of happening or already happened: 'Porque si es difícil vivir aquí, este pueblo Tamoga es mejor que ningún otro para venir a morir' (Ríos 2007a, 37). The village of Tamoga, in its 'ambiente levítico y cerrado' (Ríos 2007a, 127), symbolizes the sense of a historical period

coming to an end, a decaying society disintegrating while its inner traditions decompose: ‘Era el último vástago varón de la familia, los Arias, una de las más antiguas del pueblo y en franca decadencia desde hacía más de medio siglo.’ (Ríos 2007a, 84). Ríos attempts to capture an ambiance of utter decay, crowded with characters inhabiting this imaginary space in its festering atmosphere, ‘se veía el pueblo flotando en la bruma y el agua, que parecía irreal’ (Ríos 2007a, 158), encapsulating the oppressive aspects of the dictatorship. While these characters suffocate in their own family tragedies, the old generation’s portraits hanging from the walls of decaying houses contemplate the end of their fortunes in the process: ‘logró desbaratar en pocos años una fortuna considerable acumulada durante varias generaciones.’ (Ríos 2007a, 93). Hence, the conclusion of one of the characters who returns from exile sums up the struggle against the atmosphere cited above: ‘No lo había abandonado por hambre, sino por el ansia de escapar de un ambiente mezquino, rutinario y tedioso.’ (Ríos 2007a, 158).

Still, the following quotation from Ríos from an interview published in *El País* suggests that he knows exactly what kind of cultural references to take on board in order to portray a more ambiguous Galician territory:

Mi ambición fundamental con *Cortejo de sombras* era emular a Valle-Inclán, en el sentido de que si él quiso hacer una síntesis de las Américas en *Tirano Banderas* yo quise hacerla de Galicia, aunque sin regionalismos de ninguna clase. Me interesaba y me interesa una Galicia de las maravillas, en el sentido de una tierra compleja de aspectos contradictorios [...] y huir de esa Galicia del tipismo, la quemada y la superficie folclórica que tanto me repele.’ (Rojo 2008, 1)

The short story collection written between 1966 and 1968 in Madrid finally appeared in 2007 under the title *Cortejo de sombras* after having gone unpublished for almost forty years. Although two of the nine short stories included in *Cortejo de sombras*

won literary prizes³, Ríos decided at the time to postpone the publication of the book for political reasons, as the following quotation from the prologue explains:

Supuse que la censura no dejaría pasar algún capítulo como ‘Cacería en julio’; pero había otras razones para aplazar la publicación del libro. La principal es que al año de vivir en Londres me metí en el proyecto narrativo de *Larva*, que iba para larga, y además para ancha, pues trataba de ensanchar el castellano y sacarlo de sus castillas para reflejar el mestizaje y cosmopoliglotismo de la gran ciudad como resumen del mundo, y decidí que era mejor que *Cortejo de sombras* permaneciera aún en la sombra, sin ver la luz en el país oprimente que dejaba atrás. (Ríos 2007a, 8)

The short story ‘Cacería en Julio’ which Ríos refers to in the above quotation narrates one of the final ‘paseos’ that the nationalist Francoist forces used to perform frequently around Spain with the objective of carrying out the ideological cleansing after their Civil War victory. The story deals with the brutal ‘huntings’ to which the village was exposed, ‘huntings’ which were not exactly related to animals: ‘tendría que recordar la locura que se había desencadenado en Tamoga durante los días anteriores de éste verano sangriento y loco’ (Ríos 2007a, 67). The reader experiences the claustrophobia of the oppressive event through the character named Celso Castillo, the local left-wing tailor who is taken into the forest and given a last chance to escape (‘Corre, Castillo – dijo -. Es una oportunidad que no merece ningún rojo.’ (Ríos 2007a, 72)). Ironically, the person the soldiers were looking for was Adriano Castillo, the brother who had tried to blow up the building which had been turned into a prison where all the republican leaders were incarcerated. Ríos establishes very clearly the situation regarding the increasing accumulation of Republican prisoners and the consequent need to exterminate them so as to empty the buildings which were used as prisons:

³ The short story ‘La Segunda Persona’ won The Gabriel Miró prize in 1969 and the other short story included in the book, ‘El Río sin Orillas’, also won the Hucha de Plata prize in 1970.

Los locales del Ayuntamiento y un colegio a las afueras de Tamoga (este colegio – un caserón rodeado de altos muros, frente al río – habría de ser durante varios años campo de concentración) fueron convertidos en cárceles. Las ejecuciones vinieron a resolver muy pronto los problemas de alojamiento. Diariamente aparecían cadáveres tirados al borde de los caminos. (Ríos 2007a, 75).

The whole of the narration is imbued with the sensations of fear and rage which feed actions of betrayal and revenge amongst the locals: ‘Para los habitantes de Tamoga la Guerra era un pretexto para saldar muchos años de rencores [...] Todos temían a todos, y nadie se sentía tranquilo porque la responsabilidad individual podía extenderse hasta los más remotos ascendientes.’ (Ríos 2007a, 75). In the quotations about this story, Ríos clearly shows his vital and political experiential leanings: ‘Es un libro que sintetiza la atmósfera oprimente, deprimente y opresiva de aquellos años del franquismo’ (Rojo 2008, 1). His choice of adjectives is very similar to those pronounced by the previously quoted character who returns from exile to the village of Tamoga.

Even forty years after writing *Cortejo de sombras* Ríos recognizes with hindsight the first signs of the beginnings of the *Larva* project in its initial self-reflexive use of the language which characterizes his later work. It is through ‘Palonzo’, the third story in *Cortejo de sombras*, that the linguistic self-reflexivity begins to show a concern for language distortion and the capacity for language mutations inspired by the Brazilian writer Guimarães Rosa:

‘Palonzo’ es mi cuento favorito, porque pienso que hay en él una mayor preocupación por la construcción del lenguaje, o no sé, por la distorsión del lenguaje; además, es un homenaje a Guimarães Rosa, mi escritor latinoamericano favorito. De alguna forma traté de hacer en español lo que él hizo tan maravillosamente en su portugués *brasileiro*. (Rojo 2008, 1)

The character named Palonzo is the abandoned and deformed village idiot despised by most of the inhabitants of Tamoga. The short story begins with Palonzo waiting in a cell to be taken to the main prison in the city and narrates how he was incarcerated in the first place. In the meantime, many of the inhabitants of the village parade in front of the prison to have a glimpse of the person they consider to be the murderer of the woman who had adopted him in the near past:

Medio pueblo desfiló por la plaza, delante de la cárcel: las mujeres cacareando insultos muy alborotadas y los hombres amenazantes, azuzados por las mujeres, descargando miradas mientras él, Palonzo, allí se estaba, impasible, la cara salivosa, sus ojos bobos, tranquilos, con una expresión de total inocencia. Aquella gente, el pueblo, con prisas de verse libre del abominado. ¿De verdad lo creían culpable?
(Ríos 2007a, 55)

Ríos has said that this short story is his favourite because it showed a different attention to the use of language and most particularly, to its distortion. With regard to this, two things point towards an appearance of *liberature* in this work: first, the self-reflexive language treatment and, second, the evident addressing of the reader as a participant of the event. This is the first time that words begin to be written outside grammatical norms, magnetically closing on each other while omitting connectors in order to emphasize their oral rhythm to the maximum as shown by the following examples: ‘desoyendo los mira-aquí-ven’ (Ríos 2007a, 56); ‘y ella delante, camina caminando, encorvada, guiando.’ (Ríos 2007a, 58); ‘la vaga semejanza, comparación’ (Ríos 2007a, 58). Furthermore, another important distortion will be the mutation of words into portmanteau words which will characterize the later novels: ‘Lo cuidamaba, aquella vieja’ (Ríos 2007a, 58). Most importantly, in the closing lines of this short story: ‘Palonzo, perro velando a su ama, masticando el frío y las tinieblas, sin comprender, un llanto como treinta años antes, la confusión total: la amadrososa, perdido junto a ella, lloraullando.’ (Ríos 2007a, 63).

Together with the above mentioned language distortion, another element which needs to be noted at this stage is the direct address to the reader as if they were a participant in the story being narrated. Examples include ‘Al tonto aquel, Palonzo, ¿lo recuerdan?’ or the affirmative question tag which interrogates the reader as if asking for their approval: ‘Más vale escarbar en el recuerdo, referir la historia desde el érase una vez, antes de que caiga en el olvido. ¿Sí? Oigan esto, con licencia...se dicen historias, acaso inventadas: seguramente llegarían también hasta ustedes’ (Ríos 2007a, 55). I shall finish with two conclusive examples of the reader being addressed rhetorically. The first one is: ‘¿Oyeron hablar de las carreras de yeguas? Veo que sonríen.’ The second is the resonating closing line of the short story, ‘Recapaciten...Quizás alguno de ustedes, gente letrada, sepa explicarlo.’ (Ríos 2007a, 64). These examples already show the first attempts to engage the reader in a different manner with the aim of provoking a more active interpretation, and by this very action, a freer understanding of reading and writing as a form of engagement.

The implicit self-defence with which Ríos attempts to counteract the asphyxiating atmosphere of living in a Francoist Spain becomes the element which forms the core of his literature. It invokes one of the main pillars of the post-structural philosophical approach of the post-68 period as the epigraph opening this introduction affirms: ‘Y me parecía que la subversión del lenguaje era la mejor aspirina para el mal de los Pirineos.’ (Ríos 2007a, 9). The subversion of language by Ríos invokes Roland Barthes and his method of language usage whose aim is to attempt to disfigure its hegemonic codes built exclusively around content by displaying the paradoxical

contained in the use of parody, pastiche, copying and the abundance of signifiers⁴. All these rhetorical strategies which Julián Ríos will apply in his own writing celebrate the notion of circulation through the figure of the spiral, a shape which will reappear throughout Ríos's *oeuvre* as shown by this book's introduction and concluding titles.

The spiral also happens to be Barthes's favourite symbolic shape:

He began to celebrate the figure of the spiral [...] The spiral was a way of accommodating both Nietzsche and Hegel, if not Nietzsche and Marx: it was progressive without being teleological, dialectical without totalising, repetitive without constructing a stereotype. Since even modernity was now being repeated – “for a hundred years, we have been in repetition” – the spiral became the figure within which Barthes could criticise modernity. (Stafford 1998, 184)

As an initial example of its symbolic influence, Ríos gives the name *Espiral* to the literary magazine he edits, explored in the third chapter of this book:

In short, despite the alienation of language and its social divide, artist and writers needed to undermine language from the inside, by reassembling and ‘combining’ the elements of (bourgeois-controlled) language with which to subvert its controllers (Stafford 1998, 186).

Ultimately, the aim of these strategic uses of language was to attempt to invert the relationship between the writer and the reader of the text while taking on board the poststructuralist discourse and its general notion of plurality, something which will be explored in the following chapter of this book. When Ríos reflects upon the publication of *Cortejo de sombras* almost forty years later and what it means to the

⁴ The manner in which Barthes introduced signifiers in his texts, which has been described by Stafford, will also be stylistically mirrored by Ríos in many parts of the *Larva* cycle: ‘He wanted the freedom of the signifiers: “return of words, of plays on words, of proper names, of quotation, etymologies, reflexivities of discourse, of typography, of blanks, of combinations (‘combinatoires’), of refusals of language”, anything which allowed us to read in the central text the crucial idea of all writing: “everything circulates”. The notion of circulation, so crucial to Bataille, was now central to Barthes's definition of the avantgarde. Clearly it was inspired by a post-1968 materialist critique of creative genius, originality, ownership, inheritance – in short, of capitalist social relations in intellectual and creative matters – and promoted instead sharing, stealing and unoriginality’ (Stafford 1998, 185).

general concept of his *oeuvre*, the validation comes from highlighting its plural approach as a writer:

Vivo el renacimiento de este libro como algo gratificante, porque si en su día decidí dejarlo para después porque había estallado en mí una escritura que yo creía más ambiciosa, avanzada y rompedora, ahora me ilusiona que vea la luz en este nuevo contexto, en el que se van a editar todos mis libros, los viejos y los modernos, porque mi vocación siempre ha sido ser un escritor plural, como un día dijo de mí Octavio Paz. (Rojo 2008, 1)

It is as part of that plurality mentioned by Ríos in the above quotation that two themes are generated from the censorship and oppressive regime experienced in Spain⁵: first, the narrative project undertaken in one of the European metropolis which will become a constant presence throughout Ríos's *oeuvre*; and second, the interest in the polyglot mixture associated with urban cosmopolitanism as a continuation of a modernist utopian linguistic aspiration in a postmodern mode. That aspiration engages with Mallarmé's dictum cited by Roland Barthes in his now renowned Inaugural Lecture at College de France in 1977: ' "To change language" that Mallarméan expression, is a concomitant of "To change the world" that Marxian one. There is a political reception of Mallarmé, of those who have followed him and follow him still.' (Barthes 1978, 466). Julian Ríos, in his own particular and oblique literary approach, will attempt to follow that premise in his literary project known as *liberature*, which tries to engage the reader as an active part of the process, even if it risks ending up displaced as a mere text.

⁵ Although some cultural critics mention that from 1959 it was already feasible to protest even if exposed to official censorship: 'Para los disidentes del interior, los de obra, palabra o simplemente pensamiento, 1959 abría por fin una coyuntura favorable al avance de sus reivindicaciones antifranquistas de libertad.' (Balibrea 1999, 23)

Chapter 2
Mapping *Liberature* and its Interactions:
A Poststructural Overview
in a Hypertextual and Fragmentary Key

Is there any post for me? In fact I dislike
things pre or post, they are preposterous to me.
To be modern, every day absolutely modern,
as Rimbaud wished, that's the real thing.
Julián Ríos (Thwaite 1990, 3)

El lector es, siempre, elector.
Cada elector inaugura un nuevo texto.
Julián Ríos (Ríos 1995, 61)

The argumentative position underpinning this chapter functions as a historic and methodological contextualization for comprehending the cultural environment from which Ríos cultivates and formulates his *oeuvre*. Thus, despite Ríos's tendency to avoid biographical details in order to elude possible time markings diluting out a sense of specific history throughout the greater part of his literary production or, as the opening epigraph shows, his dislike of any specific historic periodization going beyond the modern, it is impossible not to respond to the fundamental historic, political, cultural and philosophical context this writer originates from. Following from this context, this chapter will explore the poststructural influences and its hypertextual ramifications involving the reader in the process of forming out the text being confronted. Thus, the exploration of fragment usage throughout Ríos works will also show the introduction to the three different fragmentary stages that will be shown along the following book chapters.

2.1 A Constellation of Writers in Exile from a Poststructural Stance

Julián Ríos begins to elaborate his *oeuvre* in the late sixties, a period characterized by what Andreas Huyssen recognizes in *After the Great Divide* as one of 'the decentering of traditional notions of identity [...] and the great value put on difference and

otherness.’ (Huyssen 1986, 172). On the other hand, that period is also distinguished by what Foucault considers to be a shift from history to an age of space and by association, form and its different interpretative interrelations⁶: ‘We are in an era of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, of the near and the far, of the side by side, of the scattered [...] a network that connects points and weaves its skein’ (Foucault 1986, 1). That is to say, it is a particular cultural and literary period characterized by a persistent need to move beyond conventional forms of literary expression. This is an urge which also attempts to mix or mutate amongst different genres with the aim of elaborating more complex forms of cultural productions which may or may not be iconoclastic enough but which continue to question the issue of representation and its possible or utopian external relations to the social and the political beyond. By itself, it is an inevitable approach within the cultural terrain which reflects the gravitational pull caused by the post 1968 ideological crisis experienced in the social and political arenas of the Western world.

The historical period of the last thirty-three years of the twentieth century covered in this book cannot be disassociated from an ongoing sense of identity crisis experienced on different political fronts, but most particularly, in connection to leftist ideologies⁷.

⁶ Fredric Jameson opens the chapter on ‘Metacommentary’ in *The Ideologies of Theory*, emphasizing formalism as the norm for many writers from this period: ‘All great twentieth-century schools [...] share a renunciation of content, find their fulfilment in formalism.’ (Jameson 2008, 6). In a similar manner, Jameson also refers to Mallarmé’s utopian modernist project as ‘the will to be uninterpretable. So form tends to glide imperceptibly into content.’ (Jameson 2008, 6).

⁷ In the introduction to *En Tierra Baldía: Manuel Vázquez Montalbán y la izquierda española en la postmodernidad* Mari Paz Balibrea describes the historic period covering the last four decades of the twentieth century thus: ‘Un periodo histórico que tanto a nivel nacional como global ha sido de transición y, por tanto, de crisis: de la dictadura a la democracia, de la modernidad a la postmodernidad. Crisis que ha afectado especialmente a la izquierda, que ha tenido que dedicar gran parte de sus esfuerzos a defenderse y justificarse.’ (Balibrea 1999, 10)

One of the main instigators was the struggle to adapt to new economic changes and transformations in the phase of late capitalism, fragmenting any possible sense of a coherent wholeness⁸ under the control of one specific source, be it the state or a particular official body. In *Crónica sentimental de la transición* (1985), the Spanish writer Vázquez Montalbán summed up appropriately the post-Franco's years in terms of a political transition in which the blurring of ideologies had provoked a sense of nostalgia for times when the critical objectives had been very much more clearly defined. The originality of Montalbán's phrase 'Contra Franco vivíamos mejor' (Vázquez Montalbán 1985, 151), quoted widely by left-wing intellectuals, encapsulates the latent sense lurking behind the loss of a specific enemy:

Los espíritus más sensibles de la izquierda empezaban a añorar aquellos tiempos cuando el enemigo era tan nítido y tan único que unificaba voluntades y no requería demasiados esfuerzos de clarificación teórica ni práctica [...] Pero ahora, ¿dónde estaba el enemigo? ¿qué objetivos históricos podían proponerse ante un futuro pactado y bien pactado, desvalida la izquierda del espíritu de combate? (Vázquez Montalbán 1985, 151)

In this political and historic context, questions were addressed to those intellectuals struggling to come to terms with the possibility of engaging in giving voice 'no sólo a las colectividades sino también a las ideas, hábilmente ignoradas por la Historia' (Balibrea 1999, 197) and who also struggled to find answers within the postmodernist predicament⁹. The eagerness to resolve or attempt to form a modernist understanding

⁸ Thus Balibrea's interpretation of postmodernism in relation to late capitalism in Vázquez Montalbán's struggles to navigate through the postmodernist terrain and its total political and cultural invasion: 'Esta interpretación de la postmodernidad entiende la realidad cultural en relación con el desarrollo del capitalismo en las últimas décadas [...] capitalismo tardío, transnacional, desorganizado, descentrado o avanzado [...] invade todos los espacios, haciendo desaparecer el concepto de exterior o externo como término de relación con él, imposibilitando toda perspectiva desde la que entender la totalidad.' (Balibrea 1999, 201).

⁹ 'El intelectual de izquierdas en la democracia postmoderna ve la utopía de sus años de formación saltar hecha pedazos [...] el intelectual de izquierdas pierde acceso a toda evidencia.' (Balibrea 1999, 154)

of reality is blown away by the ideological force of late capitalism and its malleable regurgitating capacity to incorporate everything under its 'elastic' law. This phase of capital is also known as the commodity law of economic liberalism¹⁰ and one of its main characteristics is the reinforcement of the all-conquering neoliberal global capitalism as another form of a master narrative whose efficacy is limitless.

Amongst the elements which immediately fall under late capitalism is the use of language as another tool for channelling the efficiency of a commodity form. The immediacy of language rapidly incorporates the commodity treatment by reducing its phrases to 'encoded messages with exchange value – information that can be stored, retrieved, packaged, calculated and transmitted.' (Peters 2001, 48). In short, there was a need amongst writers and intellectuals to counteract the gravitas which was absorbing the ideological *zeitgeist*. As Lyotard puts it in his *Political Writings*: 'Our role as thinkers is to deepen what language there is, to critique the shallow notion of information, to reveal an irremediable opacity within language itself' (Lyotard 1993, 27). This critical role was accepted by Julián Ríos in his literary attempts to show the implicit opacity of language while following the paradigms associated with the poststructuralist stance. I am referring to the self-reflexive aspect associated with poststructuralist literature which generates and puts into motion all the other formal particularities related to this type of writing. That self-reflexive positioning invokes the opening of an exploration of other languages and cultures via a questioning which begins with the identity of the subject itself and concludes with an engagement with the reader. Julio Ortega highlights these connections in relation to Ríos's multilingual

¹⁰ See the second chapter of Michael A Peters's *Poststructuralism, Marxism and Neoliberalism* (2001) entitled 'Lyotard, Performativity and the Problem of Capitalism', 41-54.

works because they ‘turn the practice of self-reflexiveness into a textuality open to history, to other cultures and other languages, to “the other” and to others, open also to the reader who at the same time becomes the protagonist and the actor of these texts that have no other core than that residing in their reading’ (Ortega 1988, 196).

None of the above-mentioned poststructural tendencies seems to have had an effect or left any marked influence on the specific context of Spanish literature and culture, beyond a limited number of specific writers like Miguel Espinosa, Juan José Millás and, in relation to Ríos in particular, Juan Goytisolo. The omnipresence of literary realism amongst the Spanish writers of the time generally excludes any other approaches to literature. In this respect, Ríos draws on a series of critiques of forms of Spanish national literature explicitly concerned with the classical norm and inherently suspicious of any attempt to experiment beyond the officially expected literary parameters. The following fragments form part of a publication called ‘Decenario’ (published in 1985 to commemorate the first ten years after Franco’s death) in which Ríos presents the paragraphs which aim to specify the type of literature to which he is referring from an ironic perspective:

SUMA Y SIGUE

Sería cuando menos una simpleza creer que a la muerte de Franco, por aquello del Borbón y cuenta nueva..., aparece una nueva novela española como por generación o degeneración espontánea. El «cambio» en nuestra narrativa se produjo bastante antes, desde comienzos de los sesenta, por obra de algún francotirador como Luis Martín Santos y gracias sobre todo al estímulo renovador de la novela hispanoamericana. (Ríos 1995a, 95)

Amongst the writers and the novels Ríos cites as having been treated with disdain by the literary establishment of that time stand out the novels of Juan Goytisolo, particularly *Makbara* and *Paisajes después de la batalla* as examples of radical writing:

DE CAMPANILLAS

Hay que reconocer, sin embargo, que una larga dictadura crea reflejos condicionados que actúan aún después de desaparecida. No nos preguntemos por quién redoblan las campanillas: todavía no ha muerto el perro de Pavlov ni se acabó la rabia. El Dictador sigue dictando el lenguaje de buena parte de nuestra novela, lastrada y castrada por plúmbeas retóricas.' (Ríos 1995a, 95)

If the poststructuralist approach relates to Ríos's *oeuvre*, the postnational will also delineate an important aspect of his literary work. Ríos's specificity as a postnational writer is a result not only of the fact that he has written and published his *oeuvre* from a position of exile outside Spain's borders, as explained in the first chapter, but also of his continuing connections with other Spanish and Latin American authors and artists also living in exile in London and Paris. Ríos will develop, on the basis of very similar stylistic and literary poststructural approaches, many connections with this constellation of writers situated outside of their respective countries.

The traumatic legacy of post-68 political events in Latin America caused ideological rifts amongst intellectuals escaping their respective dictatorships who had converged on these European metropolis. As will be shown in this book, amongst those intellectuals, those who stand out in relation to Ríos are the ones who were affected by the ripple effects caused by the crises experienced amongst the Latin American intellectuals. I refer in particular to the 'Padilla Case' in Cuba (as in the examples of Juan Goytisolo¹¹, Carlos Fuentes, Severo Sarduy and Guillermo Cabrera Infante), and

¹¹ In 1971 the Cuban poet Heberto Padilla was imprisoned and forced by the Cuban government to reject his critical views of the State in a public document. This event became to be known as the Padilla Affair. The affair provoked a definite split amongst many Spanish and Latin American intellectuals as well as a critical reaction from the international and intellectual community. For the purposes of a particular historic contextualization giving an example of the struggles and conflicts existing

to the tragic events of Tlatelolco in Mexico (especially in relation to Octavio Paz). It is interesting to note that those above-cited Latin American writers and intellectuals form a resurgent pan-hispanic group who both reinforce the postnational idea in the *oeuvre* of Ríos and recall the cultural and political ties which had bound Spanish and Latin American intellectuals together from the turn of the 20th century. These include, in particular, some of the intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s with whom Octavio Paz had connections, as will be explained later in this chapter and in the one which follows it. I will therefore attempt to emphasize the postnational in Ríos's work in terms of a lack of national content because of his engagement with all those exiled Latin American intellectuals who met up in European post-colonial metropolis such as London and Paris in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Hence, and specifically in relation to some of those exiled intellectuals residing in Paris at the time, attention will be paid in the next section to that line of French philosophical thought known as poststructuralism. Out of this conglomerate of political, social, cultural and historical vectors crossing, mutating, interacting and dispersing centrifugally throughout the last thirty-three years of the twentieth century will emerge the patchwork etching the elaboration of Julián Ríos's texts.

between intellectuals and official power it will be useful to refer to the fourth chapter of Goytisolo's *En los reinos de taifa* (1986) entitled 'El Gato Negro de la Rue de Bièvre'. In this chapter, Goytisolo narrates in detail his personal experience of the events leading up to the uncanny *Caso Padilla* in March 1971: 'Como era de prever, la prodigiosa e imparabla máquina del infundio se puso en seguida en marcha. La presencia entre los firmantes de algunos de los escritores más destacados y respetables de Europa y Iberoamérica había liberado una marejada de frustraciones, envidias, rencores que, tras el barniz de la inflexibilidad revolucionaria, disimulaba el más bajo y vulgar ajuste de cuentas. La decisión del Líder Máximo de ponernos en la picota daba la señal de una ofensiva sin cuartel, en la que todas las armas y métodos tenían cabida. Nuestra situación no era nueva: la crónica de los últimos cincuenta años está plagada de casos semejantes, cuyas víctimas fueron precipitadas también real o simbólicamente al Gran Muladar de la Historia.' (Goytisolo 1997, 188).

2.2 Poststructuralism and its Practitioners in relation to Julián Ríos

As mentioned above, it will be useful at this point to bring up the subject of poststructuralism and its main followers and conditions¹² in order to both contextualize its political and historical effects and point to possible connections with Julián Ríos's work. Some cultural historians¹³ date the origin of poststructuralism to around 1967. In particular those historians name Roland Barthes as the figure who first formulates poststructuralist signs in his book *Discourse of History* even if, with hindsight, this seems to be a rather exaggerated simplification which attributes the origin of the term exclusively to the French philosopher.

As a post-war movement of thought, poststructuralism was formulated by a group of French philosophers resident in Paris whose aim was to propose an alternative reading of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Their arguments were based on the notions of power and desire which they understood as two sides of the same paradigm instead of treating them separately as the two other 'masters of suspicion', Freud and Marx, had done in their respective renowned discourses. If Nietzsche had emphasized the plurality of interpretation and the notion of style as a constant process of becoming, the philosophers Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard will challenge all constructions of the 'subject', starting from the Cartesian and Kantian constructions and attending with those of Hegel and Marx. The ultimate purpose of the French poststructuralist re-reading of Nietzsche was to 'emphasize the way meaning is an

¹² For this purpose I will refer to the following general studies of Post-structuralism and its philosophical connections to the work of Roland Barthes: Michael A. Peters's *Poststructuralism, Marxism and Neoliberalism* (2001); Michael A. Peters and Nicholas C. Burbules's *Poststructuralism and Educational Research* (2004); Fredric Jameson's *The Ideologies of Theory* (2008); Andy Stafford's *Roland Barthes, Phenomenon and Myth* (1998) and Susan Sontag's *A Roland Barthes Reader* (2000)

¹³ Andy Stafford refers to Attridge, Bennington and Young (eds.) *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* (1987) in order to prove his point.

active constitution radically dependent upon the pragmatics of context and, thereby, challenge the universality of truth claims.’ (Peters & Burbules 2004, 19).

In October 1966, Derrida delivered an important lecture entitled ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the discourse of the Human Sciences’ at Johns Hopkins University. In that lecture, the notions of Derridean ‘différance’ and deconstruction began to be formulated as a critique of the structuralist need for a centre of meaning by means of three specific arguments which limit the deconstructive possibilities of ‘difference’. First, the anxiety exercised amongst structuralists by the need to be influenced by a grand narrative or metanarrative as in the case of a scientific order. Second, an inherent limit embedded within the play of structure disallowing the possibility of plurality and third, an authoritarian presence in the structuralist discourse avoiding the possibility of exploring the antiauthoritarian notion of difference. In conversation with Derrida, the critic John Caputo attempts to sum up the aim of deconstruction as follows:

The very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices [...] - do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed boundaries they currently occupy [...] deconstruction bends all its efforts to stretch beyond those boundaries, to transgress these confines, to interrupt and disjoin all such gatherings. (Caputo 1998, 31-32).

If postmodernism attacked all ‘grand narratives’ as attempting to justify a set of power practices and questioned all established beliefs by emphasizing how all systems operated like language, poststructuralism as a philosophical method directly established that there is nothing natural about cultural labels or categories because they always tend to respond to intrinsic hierarchical forces. By decentering all master discourses through a mixture of play, indeterminacy and the subject of difference,

poststructuralism aimed to introduce ‘a new freedom of thought, action and interpretation’ (Peters & Burbules 2004, 81) with a more emphatic attention to plurality in all signifying senses of the term. As an example, it is relevant to mention Derrida’s suggestion of the need to formulate a literary style able to ‘speak several languages and produce several texts at once’ (Peters 2001, 6). It is just such an approach which Julián Ríos attempts to demonstrate by introducing his characteristic multilingual signature in many of the novels comprising *Larva*’s literary cycle.

In the aftermath of the events of 1968, the absolute trust granted to the scientific ambition established by structuralism was attacked by the poststructuralist philosophers by means of an excessive use of reflexivity and formal self-consciousness. Those two elements emphasized the sense that ‘surface is as telling as depth’ (Sontag 2000, 17) by bringing forth the spectacle form out of language. Following from those conceptual premises, the quoted observation from Michael A. Peters states an original defence of poststructuralism:

Poststructuralist theory is committed to a critique of dominant institutions and modes of speaking, thinking and writing – which means it is often set against what is most familiar and comfortable for us, asking us to see the danger or the harm even in what we take to be good. (Peters and Burbules 2004, 4)

Thus, politically, poststructuralism attempts to disclose or reveal structures dominated by the magnetic attraction established between relations of power and knowledge. In order to carry out its purpose, it will show how language is central to human relations due to its materiality and permeating ideological nature. Ultimately, it attempts to prove that regardless of the reliable centre of choice in question (be this nation, state or reason), the eruption of power shows that there is no neutral master discourse. Furthermore, by highlighting the character of discourse as a historical formation, it

attempts to dismantle possible privileges of hierarchy given to one group to the exclusion of the other. Therefore, taking the different procedures together as a whole, it is clear that the agenda of the poststructuralist strategy was that of the questioning of Western conceptions of self and culture based or built around the certainty of choice inherited from Enlightenment values.

Several poststructuralist philosophers who looked at the post-68 events showed a particular kind of political disengagement due to the ‘worn-out and repetitive nature of political language’ (Stafford 1998, 161). Amongst them, Roland Barthes stands out for the purposes of my argument because he thought that the only possibility of revolutionizing and provoking in some manner the *status quo* could come from ‘within’ language. If Jean Paul Sartre had appealed to a ‘morality of ends’, Barthes would be more interested in a ‘morality of forms’ by showing his nuanced or even evasive relation to politics, a reflection which equally applies to Ríos’s writings.

2.2.1 A Barthian Reflection

The creation of the avant-garde literary and philosophical journal *Tel Quel* in 1960 by Philippe Sollers was a form of critical reaction to the prevailing conditions of the time, influenced by the ideologies of Marxism and psychoanalysis. In addition, it functioned as a critical counterpoint to the intellectual hegemony of Jean Paul Sartre’s *Les Temps Modernes* which attempted to produce committed literature. Considered to be one of the most important literary journals since the war, its main objective consisted in integrating literature and criticism while emphasizing the existing textual relations of writing and language. Aiming to reach that previous point, *Tel Quel* continuously promoted examples of ‘textual writing’ forms in their ninety-four issues

published until 1983. Although Roland Barthes collaborated on many issues throughout 1968 with *Tel Quel* always stating that ‘theory was crucial to social change’ (Stafford 1998, 134), he used to describe himself more like a ‘fellow traveller’ rather than a member of *Tel Quel*.

It is symptomatic that Ríos dedicates a page of poetic prose to Roland Barthes in his book *Album de Babel* (1995) entitled ‘Constellation Barthes’. Here Ríos concentrates on both the erotic aspects of Barthes’s texts and the presence of the reader as a central interactive character in the literary equation, a point expressed in the second epigraph opening the second chapter of this book:

Constelación de signos, cielo abierto a las lecturas: el texto según la observación de Roland Barthes. La lectura como juego sin límites, insensato en el fondo, que R.B. resumía en un gesto: el gesto del augur, apuntando con su cayado al cielo, delimitando arbitraria e imaginariamente lo ilimitado. El lector es, siempre, elector. Cada lector inaugura un nuevo texto. (Ríos 1995, 61)

Although there are no records of Ríos ever meeting Roland Barthes, common links between fed the constellation of writers in exile mentioned earlier. These include, specifically, first, the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy, a student of Barthes at the Sorbonne, and later a close friend of the French philosopher (‘Barthes y yo nos vimos a diario, o casi, durante un buen cuarto de siglo’ (Sarduy 1999, 1838)) and of Ríos, second, their collaborations for the *Espiral* magazine and third, the influence of Severo Sarduy’s ‘Neobaroque’ approach on some of Ríos’s works. These connections will be investigated on the fifth chapter of this book.

Roland Barthes first discovered Severo Sarduy in 1967 when he had to review Sarduy’s collection of essays *Escrito sobre un cuerpo* for *Tel Quel*. The discovery of Sarduy’s style of writing proved to be very influential for Barthes as an exemplary recognition that ‘there is nothing behind language’ (Stafford 1998, 141) but the text

itself. This is the basis of Barthes's intention 'to read the event as text, written literally and metaphorically.' (Stafford 1998, 135). It is from this encounter with Sarduy that Barthes's attraction to the Neobaroque formulations with its abundance of signifiers emerges, provoking not only his literary use of the poststructuralist deferral but also his 'carnavalesque writing *à la* Bakhtin' (Stafford 1998, 141). Barthes first discovered the Russian philosopher when present at one of Julia Kristeva's seminars on Bakhtin. This philosophical influence would guide Barthes's formulation of the term *écriture*, in relation not only to the lack of neutrality of language, but ultimately to 'the surface critique of the deep structures of thought justifying and maintaining bourgeois control' (Stafford 1998, 143). These philosophical encounters not only left an impression on Barthes but would also indelibly mark Ríos as much in a Bakhtinian as in a Neobaroque way, something which will be explored in the fourth and fifth chapters of this book.

Undoubtedly, as his own editorial selection of the books which will form part of the *Espiral* collection suggests¹⁴, Ríos was reading *Tel Quel* closely even though he was living in London at the time. Thus, the deeper we go into the work of Barthes, the more connections we find with Ríos's literary approach, most particularly on two main points. The first is the primordial importance given to the materiality of language in order to provoke the empowerment of the reader¹⁵ as the above quotation from Ríos's text on Barthes indicates. The second is the attraction to 'radical' writers

¹⁴ Particularly those philosophers associated with *Tel Quel* like Derrida's *La Diseminación* and Kristeva's *Semiótica* I and II.

¹⁵ As Stafford comments on Barthes's approach to literary criticism after implementing another layer of meaning to the *écriture* concept: 'Rather than simply 'recovering' a literary text, the job of the critic was to 'liberate the signifier' by showing how its codes worked. This went hand in hand with empowering the reader to perform acts of reading which, both singular (i.e. individual and unrepeatable) and simultaneously 'intertextual', recognised the limits and infinite possibilities of language.' (Stafford 1998, 143).

attempting and exploring ways to liberate the limits of the literary medium. For Barthes, as much as for Ríos, the focus will be on the claim for the individual offered by literature as a liberating act, or as Susan Sontag states, in the ‘perpetual renewal of the right of individual assertion; and all rights are, finally, political ones’ (Sontag 2000, 22). By opting for a commitment to form as an artistic political commitment, the responsibility of the writer falls on the politics of language more than on the ideology of a pre-given political message. The previous argument develops from the notion of reality mediation through language and its implicit effect on the use of power, as mentioned by Barthes in his renowned Inaugural Lecture of the Chair of Literary Semiology at College de France:

Power is the parasite of a trans-social organism, linked to the whole of man’s history and not only to his political, historical history. This object in which power is inscribed, for all of human eternity, is language, or to be more precise, its necessary expression: the language we speak and write [...] But language – the performance of a language system – is neither reactionary nor progressive; it is quite simply fascist; for fascism does not prevent speech, it compels speech. (Sontag 2000, 461)

It is from that inherent dominant impetus that language exercises power and transparency becomes obscured and opened to be forced, as Barthes remarked on his essay ‘Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers’ from *Image, Music, Text* (1977): ‘Language is always a matter of force, to speak is to exercise a will for power; in the realm of speech there is no innocence, no safety.’ (Sontag 2000, 381).

As a literary historian, Roland Barthes was always attracted to all those creators of special languages, or ‘logothetes’ as he came to call them, in texts which create problems of understanding for readers because of their particular or unique perception of otherness. Barthes first took inspiration from the stylistic trait of the theatre of Bertolt Brecht which provokes distance as a way of judging critically the subject

being performed. The main point Barthes took from Brechtian theatre in forming his critical methodology was related to the notion of the arbitrariness of the sign, ‘drawing attention to its own artifice rather than attempting to conceal it’ (Culler 2002, 41). This approach led Barthes to appropriate as his favourite motto the saying of Descartes, *Larvatus prodeo* or ‘I advance pointing to my mask’, as a way of openly recognizing the inherent artificiality of all literature while calling attention to the way meaning is produced. The inevitable connections begin to be drawn with Ríos’s stylistic approach, most specifically within the resonance of the motto quoted above (*Larvatus prodeo*) as a signature concealing both the mosaic method which attempts to build something different from received ideas and the attitude of ‘attack[ing] languages which present themselves as stable, universally valid and timeless’ (Allen 2004, 4) by bringing the artificiality of language to the forefront. This influence, moreover, will be more stylistically palpable in the use by Ríos of two rhetorical writing strategies whose aim is to provoke digressiveness in the reader’s experience. The first is the avoidance of all conventional discourse markings which may get in the way of the writer’s voice. The second is the multiplication of ‘the ways in which discourse is segmented, to invent further ways of breaking it up [...] to become as differentiated, as polyphonous, as possible.’ (Sontag 2000, 16).

The writing itself gains the quality of a multiple performance augmenting the notion of writers who ‘write’ as an intransitive verb. That is to say, it formulates the notion of literature as ‘text’ where all the stakes will be played and also influences Ríos’s notion of *liberature* as a form of displacement, in a similar way to Barthes’s remarks in the *Inaugural Lecture* quoted above:

For the text is the very outcropping of speech, and it is within speech that speech must be fought, led astray – not by the message of which it is the

instrument, but by the play of words of which it is the theatre. Thus I can say without differentiation: literature, writing or text. The forces of freedom which are in literature depend not on the writer's civil person, nor on his political commitment [...] but rather on the labour of displacement he brings to bear upon the language. (Sontag 2000, 462)

Thus, the process of writing as text has to do more with the suspicion that Barthes had about communication 'as merely a commercial exchange of ideas in a market place saturated with doxa' (Moriarty 1991, 145). The 'significance' of a text would be intrinsically connected to its capacity 'to force undecidability, disturb communication' (Moriarty 1991, 145) to interrupt that flow of ordered ideas by the blurring of boundaries related to authorship, discourse and meaning while the signifiers act as vessels for the previous elements to begin their performances. It is all about deferring and displacing meaning in order to question expected patterns of cultural understanding so as to maintain the fluid and plural sense 'of that self in perpetual flight before what is fixed by writing, as the mind is in perpetual flight from doctrine.' (Sontag 2000, 32).

Ríos, like Barthes before him, also subscribes to the above argument, with the aim of intensifying that poststructuralist sense of writing as an impersonal form of absence that is reflected on the text. That is to say, his intention is to show that even in the process of writing text, there is no fixed essence which can reduce character to just one centre of influence, nor, by the same token, is there the possibility of solidifying a definitive meaning. Thus, there is no central characteristic or principle organizing the text or the novel into a coherent whole; Ríos avoids as much as possible the continuity of the literary discourse.

Another connection between Barthes and Ríos will be their fondness for alphabetical order, which in Ríos takes the form of naming characters A, B, C or of forming many lines solely from vocalic or consonant phrases, giving priority to the signifier as a way to defer the possible emergence of argument. Ríos will take the method used by Barthes in *S/Z* in his rereading of Balzac's novel *Sarrasine*, and translate it into the *Larva* project as a 'generalized collapse of economies (systems): language, sexuality, money, society' (Moriarty 1991, 128). At the same time, Ríos will transform the text into the plural dimension which informs the 'scriptible' 'by insisting on plurality, heterogeneity, non-totality, giving priority to process rather than product.' (Moriarty 1991, 128). It seems that Ríos took Barthes's *Inaugural Lecture* to heart, such that: 'Words are no longer conceived illusively as simple instruments; they are cast as projections, explosions, vibrations, devices, flavours. Writing makes knowledge festive.' (Sontag 2000, 464).

In that festivity of sorts, the reader is somehow the main guest at a particular practice of reading which enables the 'reader's freedom to participate himself or herself in the process of producing meaning from text.' (Moriarty 1991, 2). As will be shown later in this chapter, fragmentation becomes an integral part of Ríos's poetics as a way of increasing the inherent sensation of a plurality of spaces, times and characters at work. For Ríos, 'fragmentation as a discourse feeds from correspondence between all the elements' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 133) with the ultimate purpose of finding a sort of 'model to form' in order to highlight the role of the reader. With the intention of evolving another possible way to explore a literary work lies the need to integrate an open element of choice which will inevitably bounce back to the reader confronting the piece. If we take the interactive notion which relates reader to text, the author behind the text attempts to engage in a different manner to that expected of a passive

reader. The notion of difficulty inherent in reading Ríos's fictional work breeds the constant distancing which is projected from the page in order to create a greater role for the reader – hence its particular interactive resonance – rather than the writer itself acting as the initial trigger. In the course of this process, the reader becomes a co-author of the work and its multiple interpretations, invoking traces of the poststructuralist phase of the French philosopher Roland Barthes as well as the influence of Gilles Deleuze, the other influential poststructuralist French philosopher who will be examined in the next section.

2.2.2 Through a Deleuzian Reading

One of the aims of this book is to reach an understanding of the poetics which lead Julian Ríos's *ouvre* towards a *liberature* which brings forth the interactivity underpinning the reader as co-author. Hence the notion of multiplicity as applied to the formation of meaning by the reader begins to show its constant presence. If in the first part of this chapter the emphasis was primarily on the poststructural influence of Barthes (with the occasional mention of Derrida, Bakhtin and Eco), this part will reflect upon the influence of Deleuze's. Deleuze stands out amongst the poststructuralist philosophers who looked at the post-68 events, by token of his exploration and questioning of the difference produced as a result of historical and political forces in conflict.

Ríos first refers to Deleuze in the interview with Juan Goytisolo about his novel *Juan sin tierra* which was included in the second number of the *Espiral* literary magazine edited by Ríos himself. Interestingly, he mentions the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy: 'Y ahí empieza lo que Deleuze llama (con una palabra-trabalenguas) la

desterritorialización, admirablemente explorada por Sarduy en su ensayo sobre Juan sin Tierra.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 13). Engaging with Deleuzian aspects of rhizomatic formations spreading in multidirectional ways, advancing and retracing their steps without a centre-based gravity, Ríos’s novels constantly attempt to escape any notion of stable meaning. With Ríos, the elusive anchor of meaning does not attempt to establish a centre. Instead, it tends to be a fugitive notion fleeing from fixed literary structures while opening up possibilities within the novel for other forms of expression.

Throughout his *oeuvre*, Ríos is searching for the limits of its own expression within the boundaries created around his self-coined term of *liberature*. By means of this terminology, Ríos recalls what Deleuze defined as one of the meanings of philosophy: ‘the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, 2), independently of any official system. His first attempt to be released from what he saw as the rigidity of the Spanish literary system occurs with the production of *Larva* and *Poundemónium*. Ultimately, Ríos’s first two novels are underpinned by a radical critique of language as a meaningful and reliable significant, a critique founded on the poststructural leanings already addressed in this chapter. Therefore, the writing is continuously aimed at destabilizing the kernel of a rational conception, and from this position, the political and hierarchical context which feeds from the word as a reliable sign. Born of an oppressive political context, *Larva* and *Poundemónium* form themselves as a deliberate attack on the use of language employed by the power exercised by Franco’s Spanish regime. *Larva*, as the very origin of the word indicates, forces ‘saturation’ of meaning as a critique of false and clear-cut monopolies of power. *Larva* and *Poundemónium* represent the embodiment of confusion as another

form of expression continuously aiming at an exercise and practise of liberation from the symbols of oppression.

It is important to regard the notion of the discourse Ríos presents in these two novels as something forced against the political current of the final phase of a forty-year long dictatorship and the beginning of a transition towards democracy. Undoubtedly, Ríos's first two novels should be read in the context of the Spanish literary output of the 1970s and 1980s, taking into account Ríos's unique way of relating to literature which follows on from a long tradition of radical writers. By the same token, the majority of philosophers traced by Deleuze are also those who form a common link around the idea of 'the untimely' (Marks 1998, 52). Therefore, Ríos joins with Deleuze precisely because both of them seem to be exploring a nomadic territory 'seeking a genuine freedom of thought' (Marks 1998, 52).

The literary approach behind Ríos's novels is characterized by traces of what Deleuze considered to be a 'minor' literature, starting from the intention to explore another way of writing. This manner of writing not only challenges recognized syntax, but also aims to register signs which Deleuze regarded as 'ways of living, possibilities of existence, [...] symptoms of life gushing forth or draining away' (Deleuze 1995, 143). In the book published posthumously and entitled *The Critical and the Clinical*, Deleuze explores ways in which writers like Proust, Kafka, Melville and Beckett confront new literary terrains with the aim of pushing forward the expressive limits of language. By opposing linguistics as a system based on balance, the idea of a 'minor literature' pursues the heterogeneity of a language, bringing forth a continuous sense of disequilibrium. On this subject of instability, Ríos makes good use of the Deleuzian 'becoming' in literature, emphasizing the discernable as opposed to any harmonious

balance of identification. Again, the notion of a critique of any oppressive system which imposes itself through univocal forms of power can be read as a scheme underpinning the novels by Ríos. The writer of this kind possesses a voice which runs after forms of expression which ultimately aim at resistance and freeing life in the face of any manifestation of imprisonment, even if this is extremely difficult to approach as a reader: ‘The writer returns from what he has seen and heard with red eyes and pierced eardrums.’ (Deleuze 1997, 3).

While it suggests the sense of a personal voice passed through the conventional figure of an author, this type of radical writing also incorporates an invented collective, a people in a state of ‘becoming’. This particular state represents one of the main pillars supporting Ríos’s work: ‘A becoming other of language, a minorization of this major language, a delirium that carries it off, a witch’s line that escapes the dominant system.’ (Deleuze 1997, 5). In Ríos’s approach to writing, the intention of becoming multiple impels the writing through its spreading out amongst the different dialogical voices formed out of the works.

The above-mentioned characteristics comply with the three main conditions with which Deleuze defines a ‘minor’ literature. The first one concerns ‘a high coefficient of deterritorialization’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16), which in the case of these two novels implies their setting in an exilic territory, slowly manifesting an ever fading sideward glance at a sense of the national understood as the Spanish position and already preparing the ever growing postnational identification within Ríos’s oeuvre. The second is ‘a political inflection’ (Marks 1998, 137), characterized in Ríos’s novels by individual experiences approached from a marginal positioning which looks

outwards by means of its abrupt intensities of literary form and expression. The third is 'a collective inflection' (Marks 1998, 137), indicated in many of the novels as a gathering of people characterized as a marginal minority. Ultimately, what Ríos takes from Deleuze's notion of minor literature is that sense of creating another language from the major one he starts from, that is to say, 'to make use of polylingualism of one's own language, to make a minor or intensive use of it, to oppose the oppressed quality of this language to its oppressive quality' (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 27). The intention is to escape from it, 'to be a sort of stranger within his own language' (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 26).

As Ríos's writing is 'an enactment of multiplicity' (Marks 1998, 137), his novels create a resonant note so as to disperse subjectivity. The fact that the exploration of subjectivity carried out in his novels encompasses a continuous shift throughout characters continuously changing form, Ríos follows a similar tract to the idea expressed in Deleuze's first ground breaking book *Difference and Repetition* (1969): 'Behind the masks, therefore, are further masks, and even the most hidden is still a hiding place, and so on to infinity' (Deleuze 1994, 106). Ríos pushes the limits of literary expression by questioning rigid assumptions while engaging the reader in such a way that she/he will have to enter the experience as if from afar. His perspective is that of a position of estrangement in the face of difference characterized by a presence of distorted notions of sense; his aim is to destabilize the apparent order of things. All these tendencies point towards a certain reading of a particular chaos whose attempt aims, nevertheless, at an excess of expression representing an indirect critique of any notion of oppression. Thus, a political reading of Julián Ríos's works traces the collective experience of a group of characters exchanging identities through

their continuous breaks, fragments and disconcerting new words formations, elaborating aspects of a literary voice which indirectly elaborates a critique of power and offers a resistant vindication in terms of a vital fluidity in its ever changing forms of expression.

With the publication of *Logique du Sens* in 1969, Deleuze established a continuous problematic approach to thought, emphasizing the process understood in terms of his philosophy of difference. This specific focusing brings forth the notion associated with the philosophy of 'becoming', in particular the fact that 'being and matter are never stable: they are always caught in a process of variation, becoming' (Marks 1998, viii). The sense of 'becoming' engages intrinsically with the multiplicity of the individual associated with the notion of subjectivity as an unstable and elusive element. It is no surprise that as a logical continuation of this approach, Deleuze turned to writing in collaboration with Felix Guattari, producing with him a whole series of books which have achieved the status of classic reference texts for a great variety of disciplines. Deleuze and Guattari wrote together as a practical approach to the theory of 'escaping from the confines of the subject' (Marks 1998, 3), directly feeding into the action of becoming something other, not relying in a sense of constancy applied to the self.

For the French philosopher, the aspect of empiricism which connects directly with his approach is the ultimate understanding of things existing as multiplicities. Thus, the extremely fertile image of a rhizome fits perfectly with the intention of establishing a multiplicity and moving away from the binary subject/object structure of the Western thought: 'The rhizome is an accentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system

without a General and without an organizing memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states.’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 23). One of the aspects of this line of thought is the understanding of language as a heterogeneous entity lacking a centre understood as a privileged position of knowledge. Ríos’s *Larva* cycle of novels not only embodies the above idea but also attempts to go further in relation to the grain of representation, defying its very logic by continuously subverting it by means of a shifting of meanings rocketing outwards in a plurality of directions, ultimately undermining any chance of a fixity.

Exploring the ways in which Ríos’s work brings forth a unique take on literary expression, it can be seen that many of the methodological traces used by Deleuze in his philosophical works seem to underpin important connecting elements within the novels produced by Ríos. In *Difference and Repetition* (1969), the understanding of movement as explored through art and philosophy is linked by Deleuze to a plurality of centres: ‘a coexistence of moments which distort representation’ (Deleuze 1994, 56) within a theatre of flux where nothing is fixed as ‘a labyrinth without a thread’ (Deleuze 1994, 56). In 1972 appears *Anti-Oedipus*, containing an attack on any form of domination which oppresses human beings, starting with conventional notions of identity. And then, appears the seminal *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) where ‘language is deterritorialized, decoded, subject to the flows of desire’ (Marks 1998, 102) while deepening the exploration of the lack of constancy of language, always in transformation and due to its very nature ‘marked by dialects, idiolects and jargons.’ (Marks 1998, 103). Afterwards, comes the fundamental *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) in which Deleuze establishes the role of the minor as ‘a potential for audacity within a major language’ (Marks 1998, 104) and as a way to break into the

hierarchical mode of power. In the same way in which Deleuze refers to Marcel Proust and Samuel Beckett as writers who create a new language or almost a foreign language marked out by its ‘asyntactic and aggrammatical’ (Marks 1998, 123) limits, Julián Ríos’s *oeuvre* is intrinsically drawn towards those Deleuzian paradigms made out of multiple ‘lines of flight’. As mentioned earlier, Ríos’s aim consists in turning language into a ‘becoming-other’ (Deleuze 1997, 4), a minorization more interested in revealing its heterogeneous nature in disequilibrium.

In the same way as the representation of madness is dealt by Deleuze in the prologue to Louis Wolfson’s *Le Schizo et Les Langues* as an emphasis on ‘what is impossible in language, and thus what belongs to language alone: its outside.’ (Deleuze 1997, 19), Ríos’s novels carry through a sense of rupture and deterritorialisation to the very limits of their expression. Within that process, the concepts of the active reader and of language as centrifugal forces of writing constantly bring back the hypertextual and fragmentary approach that is nourished by poststructuralist traits. This will be explored in the following section.

2.3 Poststructural Materializations in Ríos’s Writing

In this section I will explore the materialization of poststructuralist strategies through the use of hypertext and the intrinsic impact on the position and role of the reader as co-author. By association, the added exploration on the use of the fragment in Ríos’s works becomes the third poststructuralist trace to be investigated in order to show the different ways in which Ríos has incorporated this philosophical style into his writing.

2.3.1 Hypertextual Interactions within *Liberature*

El hipertexto existe pero de momento
está en el texto, aseguraba Pécuchet,
en los grandes textos de la literatura.
Julián Ríos (1999, 179)

This is a straightforward declaration which also reflects Ríos's position regarding the value given to the literary texts he constantly refers to. When Ríos expresses the previous quotation, he does so through a character from the chapter entitled 'Con Bouvard y Pécuchet en el Ciberespacio' taken from the last of his novels explored in this book, *Monstruario* (1999). In this novel, the virtual notion of literature about which those characters exchange dialogues bounces back to the literature which ultimately interests Ríos himself:

Una línea de Joyce, de Proust, o de Kafka, por corta que sea, no se acaba nunca. En las páginas de estos y otros verdaderos creadores se abren ventanas hasta el infinito, pregonaba. Para no mencionar otros clásicos más antiguos. Por ejemplo Cervantes, antes y después, que es un autor plural. (Ríos 1999, 180)

Thus, even if produced prior to the digital age, the above-mentioned literature already both draws in and mobilizes some of the poststructuralist characteristics which later on will be associated with the virtual medium. This becomes particularly clear when understood in terms of the literary form incorporated by the hypertext and its interactive approach as 'windows' opened in all possible directions, to which Ríos refers in the above quotation.

As the literary critic Marie-Laure Ryan affirms when exploring aspects of immersion and interactivity in *Narrative as Virtual Reality* (2001), the literary influence of the poststructuralists in the early seventies carries forth the destabilization of textual structures, especially the use of language in order to disrupt meaning and integrate the reader in the interruptive process: 'The player is the author, the plaything is language, and the reader's involvement is mainly that of a spectator or referee.' (Ryan 2001,

191). In that process, the emphasis placed upon the playful nature of writing is highlighted by prioritizing the signifier in a double attitude, on the one hand to increase the self referential tendency of language, and, on the other, to subvert the rules for the different purposes highlighted by Ryan below:

By treating worlds as toys, by juggling them in the textual space, by building alternative ontologies, by playing with transworld identity, by transgressing ontological boundaries, by making worlds morph into other worlds, and by merging generic landscapes. (Ryan 2001, 198)

It is through that very process of mutations quoted above that we can find the constant element in Ríos's *liberature*. As will be shown in the following chapters this is the constant materiality of the language used with the aim of immediately cancelling any attempt at suspension of disbelief, 'concocting a literature made entirely of apocrypha, of false attributions, of imitations and pastiches, a literature fundamentally hostile to the fictional truths of make believe' (Ryan 2001, 203). Thus, *liberature* will centre its discourse on a compromise with language as a questioning of the linguistic structures in which power is based. As Carlos Fuentes remarks in the quotation cited by Alicia Rivero-Potter in her critical study, *Autor/Lector*:

El escritor desempeña su función principal al renovar las estructuras narrativas y lingüísticas. En esto radica el papel revolucionario del literato, no en el comentario social en sí. El texto por excelencia pone de manifiesto que la ficción es escritura ante todo e incita al lector a que participe en su construcción. (Rivero-Potter 1991, 84)

That reader participation will present different phases decreasing in intensity in relation to Ríos's literary progression. But before exploring that notion in depth, it is necessary to trace its development. Therefore, the hypertextual engagement is the first aspect which connects reader to text into a web of interactions.

Of the poststructuralist philosophers mentioned earlier, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva are of particular relevance to the specific theme dealt with in this section. Of

especial interest are the writings of Barthes and Kristeva on *Semiotique* (one of the books chosen by Ríos to be published in the literary magazine *Espiral* together with Derrida's *Dissemination*), a recuperation of Bakhtin and the dialogical approach. Above all, it is the Bakhtinian emphasis on textuality as a dialogical approach anticipating hypertext with its open-ended and unfinished nature which Ríos will constantly employ in his literary works.

The term 'intertextuality' was coined by Kristeva in 1969 in the fourth chapter of *Semiotique*, 'Word, dialogue, novel': 'A mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.' (Kristeva 1969, 85). It will be seen that this quotation resonates through Ríos's work when we take into consideration the emphasis placed upon the constant referencing and rewriting of other texts which characterizes Ríos's literary poetics. As Kristeva writes, 'it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a text, many utterances taken from other texts intersect with one another and neutralize one another.' (Kristeva 1969, 52). This very process seems to capture one of the undercurrents feeding the anti-hierarchical attitude in the period after 1968. Intertextuality challenged previous ideologies based around centres of power and attempted to prompt a feeling of strangeness by disrupting the apparently linear and expected coded messages, starting with language itself. This is summed up by Kristeva herself:

Intertextuality: supplants intersubjectivity; intersection of utterances taken from other texts; transposition in speech communicative of previous or synchronic utterances; polyphonic text; multiplicity of codes levelling out one another; removal revives and destroys discursive structures outside the text. (Kristeva 1969, 316).

If Kristeva was the initiator of the intertextual approach, it was Barthes who would end up receiving all the praise by producing the definition of the term for the *Encyclopédie Universalis* (1973). For Barthes, the intertextual approach mobilizes the text as a place of production where the reader becomes an integral element of the equation as if in a theatrical performance: ‘The text is a productivity. Not in the sense that it is a product of being worked (as narrative technique or the mastery of style would demand), but as the very theatre of a production where the producer of the text and the reader come together.’ (Orr 2008, 33). Thus in the process of confronting the text the reader ‘is therefore no passive vehicle, or echo chamber, but the reagent of the text’ (Orr 2008, 35).

It is therefore important to stress that for all the theorists of the new media referred to in this chapter¹⁶, all the poststructuralist philosophers become an essential reference in their respective approaches to textuality. The first example is the manner in which they employ many of the terms which later on will be engaged with by the new media: network, link, web or matrix. As Landow defines it in *Hypertext 3.0*, referring to Derrida’s approach to textuality, they ‘abandon conceptual systems founded on ideas of center, margin, hierarchy and linearity and replace them by ones of multilinearity, nodes, links and networks.’ (Landow 2006, 1). Consistent with this, and with the purpose of defining hypertext as a text composed of blocks of texts, Barthes’s understanding of textuality mirrors the way he employed the term ‘lexia’ as part of his own ‘writerly’ texts which also seem to influence Ríos’s literary approach. That is to say, the textual openness implicit in this reading approach implies the

¹⁶ See Marie-Laure Ryan’s *Narrative as Virtual Reality* (2001), George P. Landow’s *Hypertext 3.0* (2006) and Nick Montfort’s *Twisty Little Passages – An Approach to Interactive Fiction* (2005).

possibility of multiple reading paths, emphasizing intertextuality as a network which ‘has no top or bottom. Rather it has a plurality of connections that increase the possible interactions between the components of the network.’ (Landow 2006, 64). The emphasis placed throughout these works, and particularly in Ríos’s *oeuvre*, on the possibility of attacking power relations within the text becomes the backbone of the decentering approach. Thus, by permeating the text with constant disruptions, traps and interruptions, the reading shifts its focus towards the strangeness associated with the ‘experience of text as others’ (Landow 2006, 123).

In order to support the previous argument, I will sketch some of the characteristics of hypertext with the aim of showing its inner connections with Ríos’s literary work. There are three particular traits which the poststructuralist philosophers find in hypertext. First, its multivocal approach, implying a working interaction of several consciousnesses, something which recalls Bakhtin’s use of a polyphony of voices so as to integrate a complex view of the literary expression by emphasizing its dialogical strength. Second, a decentering formation reflecting Derrida’s understanding of dissemination as a narrative strategy where linear writing is questioned from a point of view which lacks formal hierarchies. And third, the Deleuzian rhizome is presented without an arborescent structure of any kind, therefore allowing the reader to access the text at any given point while making connections by following her or his own volition. On the whole, these are characteristics aimed directly at the performative aspect of interactivity, emphasized through ruptures and breaks carrying ‘a fundamental tendency towards unpredictability and discontinuity.’ (Landow 2006, 61).

Another essential characteristic representing hypertext and influencing Ríos's literary works is the inclusion of visual elements in the writing both as much 'as a means of escaping the constraints of linearity' and of increasing to the maximum effect the sense of word as 'an image drawn in a medium as fluid and changeable as water.' (Landow 2006, 84). The ultimate purpose of this hypertextual approach is to overflow the textual borders in every possible way in order to produce that 'sort of overrun [debordement] that spoils all boundaries and divisions' (Landow 2006, 114). From that form of disrupting the expected narrative route emerges that sense of disorientation which ultimately proposes a particular form of liberation which goes against the hegemonic literary order recipient of the Aristotelian concept of plot based around fixed formal points.

If the 'hypertext novel changes with every reading' (Ryan 2001, 225), due to its constant exposure to the mutation of its borders and appearances, Ríos's *oeuvre* will constantly feed from a similar changing methodology in order to maintain its *liberature* formed out of a 'vocabulary of freedom, energy and empowerment' (Landow 2006, 135).

2.3.2 Reader As Co-Author

As has been seen in the previous sections, the momentum developed by poststructuralist exploration expanded the sense of the reader, changing its passive status and granting it more of a decision making role in the reading process. As the literary critic Rivero-Potter recognizes in her study of *Autor/Lector* (1991), which explores the role of the reader within the works of Vicente Huidobro, Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Fuentes and Severo Sarduy: 'le piden al lector que reorganice o

escriba el texto al suplir la información que falta, escoger y ordenar los elementos confusos que encuentre para descifrarlo.’ (Rivero 1991, 11). It is implicit in the texts which embody this demand that there is no privileged or unique version of the text being read, because it is up to the reader to make their own conclusions and thus, in the process, become ‘un coproductor del texto’ (Rivero 1991, 12).

If French Modernist poets like Mallarmé and Valéry had already started to demonstrate the absence of the writer understood as the unique enunciating subject, Roland Barthes would be one of the main theorists to explore this subject. As Rivero Potter points out, for Barthes the reader becomes a virtual creator, embodying an amalgamation of the following traits: ‘deleite de la lectura en las discontinuidades textuales y lingüísticas, en el juego semiótico, en la subversión del sentido trascendente y de las normas tradicionales.’ (Rivero 1991, 34). The aim of this approach is to highlight that the interpretation of the text from the standpoint of the reading process can be varied and to draw attention to the important shift which occurs in what is developed between the observer and the observed. In the context of the above, it is important to recall that Julián Ríos himself commenced his *oeuvre* as a co-author by producing, together with Octavio Paz, the books published in 1973 which will be explored in the next chapter of this book.

But there are two other Latin American writers which also influence Ríos’s understanding of his relationship to the reader. The first is the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, in particular because he treats language as an artificial material which allows exploration of an alternative reality: ‘La obra inventa una realidad paralela a la del mundo objetivo y requiere la participación del lector.’ (Rivero 1991, 88). The second is the Cuban Severo Sarduy and his understanding of writing as the possibility of

creating a multiplicity of perspectives. It is a question of the application of relativist theories of science to the text with the aim of activating the reader, something which implies confusing the narrator and the characters with the purpose of blurring the borders of the authorial voice while increasing the co-production of the reader in the process.

For Sarduy, it is the context as much as the multiplicity of meanings that is essential in the production of the active reader: ‘el coescritor para quien el sentido no existe de antemano – es producto del contexto y de la semiosis, y el ludismo de la significación no encubre un único sentido íntegro.’ (Rivero 1991, 113). Therefore, Sarduy is taking up what Barthes had already declared in his text *S/Z* in terms of a reader exposed to a text resembling a “cubist” practise where ‘the meanings are cubes, piled up, altered, juxtaposed, yet feeding on each other’ (Barthes 1974, 55). That is to say, a text in which the meanings combine metafictional elements so as to enhance its self-referential attitude and thus lead towards open interpretations, narrative ambiguities and non-traditional characters which either mutate or answer back to the writer. Thus, in this textual landscape, it is the reader who gains the opportunity to engage in deciding which option to follow. As Ríos responds to the question formulated by Gazarian Gautier:

Q: You look at your readers as handymen who have to work with you in reading/writing the book. It is as if they are your co-authors.

A: Of course, they become co-authors and have to work with what is at hand. Handymen are persons who have to improvise a little, they don’t need all the tools in the world. The readers or “bricoleurs” can read creatively even with limited means or knowledge. This interests me a great deal.

(Gazarian 1990, 3)

The type of creative reading cited by Ríos in the above quotation implies that the readers participate in particular forms of interaction within the text itself as forms of interpretation which will in turn activate the reader confronting the text. Thus, we

reach the question of how interactive Ríos's *oeuvre* really is and what types of interactions are required from the readers facing his novels. In addition, it will be important to discover if the intensity of the interactions within the novels decreases the further Ríos distances himself from the original motivation of exploring *liberature* as a particular literary form so as to escape from an oppressive background. The interaction type of literary interpretation I am referring to at this point follows Marie-Laure Ryan's definition: 'In a figural sense, interactivity describes the collaboration between the reader and the text in the production of meaning' (Ryan 2001, 16). This collaboration remarks the active involvement of the reader by means of the aesthetics of play and self-reflexivity whereby the process of interaction mobilizes the reader to participate in the process of deciphering meaning.

In the history of Western art there has always existed the contrasting processes of immersion and interactivity which have shifted their focus through different mediums. In literature, this mutating process has occurred in different periods of the twentieth century. James Joyce was one of the first literary authors to shift attention towards the materiality of language, an approach which increased its presence later in the twentieth century as Ryan has remarked:

It took a "linguistic turn" in the mid-twentieth century, privileged form over content, emphasized spatial relations between words, puns, intertextual allusion, parody, and self-referentiality; how the novel subverted plot and character, experimented with open structures and permutations, turned into increasingly cerebral wordplay, or became indistinguishable from lyrical prose. (Ryan 2001, 5)

Many of the above-mentioned characteristics of modernism will later be associated with the poststructuralist aesthetic which permeates Ríos's works, taking on the 'bricolage' approach to writing interested in the presentation of heterogeneous elements to be assembled by the reader. Hence the importance of the question of

interaction. This had been referred to by Umberto Eco in the *Open Work* in connection to Baroque art, an artistic movement which continually proposes different perspectives and shifts of perspective on the part of the spectator. It extends into the Neobaroque as an increasing self reflexivity which never allows the reader to be immersed in the fictional world and can be found also in the narrative interactions in Ríos's *oeuvre* explored in this book.

The type of interaction I am referring to in this book is intrinsic to the texts themselves and not related to the interactivity associated with electronic mediums which imply by their very nature the active involvement of the reader (or user in the electronic case). The interpretative freedom created in the reader by the exposure to Ríos's texts implies the interactive input of that very reader. And the main functions of that input from the reader relate to the multiple choices of reading sequences implying a multilinear text. From the author's perspective, it is about allowing the reader to explore the text and 'interrupt the flow of narration, disrupt, frustrate, puzzle, undermine certainty, subvert or mock the text [...] and place fictional worlds "under erasure" ' (Ryan 2001, 213).

For the purpose of distinguishing the different phases of interaction experienced in the novels published by Ríos during the final three decades of the twentieth century, I will distinguish between three levels of interaction intensity. The first one related to *Larva* and *Poundemónium*; the second level explored using a Neobaroque approach and the third one reduced its level of interaction to the minimum in relation to the focus on the formation of literary characters. Following each level, the greater the interaction within the texts, the greater the increment of the virtual aspect associated with them. As Ryan comments on the understanding of the text as potentiality: 'As a generator of

potential worlds, interpretations, uses and experiences, the text is thus always already a virtual object.’ (Ryan 2001, 45).

Therefore, the distinction between the three levels of interaction intensity relates to the ways in which the metaphor of the text as a game of interaction will function ‘as a critical paradigm that promotes a rereading of the texts of the past’ (Ryan 2001, 176). This process of reinterpretation of past texts will tend to make the idea of the text overflow as a metaphor of immersion. The interaction of the game will also refer to the distancing of the text through the constant disruption and destabilization of meaning, a process which increases the level of difficulty for the reader. For this reason, I have also established the use of the fragment as another essential poststructuralist trait characterizing Ríos’s works. The different fragment usages will also reflect three different stages of decreasing levels of narrative fragmentation and reader participation the further the texts move away from *liberature*’s original intentions.

2.3.3 The Fragment in *Liberature*

B: La fragmentación, la yuxtaposición de imágenes y diferentes glosas o losas, como en un mosaico, o en una página del Talmud, tiene quizá sus raíces en la cultura judía.

C: Y en la modernidad.

A: Una obra mosaico – para dar a las Musas lo que es de las Musas y a Moisés lo que es de Moisés (Ríos 2001,143)

The notion of the fragment applied to the construction of a literary work implies a particular way of perceiving the text from the perspective of the reader. Once the apparent sense of a linear argument is interrupted by the unexpected entrance of an unrelated argumentative block, responsibility for attention to the actual text shifts

towards the reader who has to begin the process of deciphering the experience of the text she/he is being exposed to. As a strategic literary method it magnifies a way of forming experiences through the text which cannot be disassociated from a context-based worldview related to each individual situation, sculpting a unique interpretation of the written text. The formation of *liberature* throughout Ríos's *oeuvre* cannot be disassociated from the touchstone of fragmentary narrative rhythms in consolidating its open and interactive relationship to the reader. That is to say, the fragmentary aspect implicit in the formation of Ríos's novels to be explored in this section is an intrinsic and necessary condition for the reading experience to be performed as an open and interactive project. Similarly, through the exploration of the formal use of the fragment in the three chapters concerned with a closer reading of Ríos's works we will also be able to examine from another angle the three stylistic mutations related to decreasing usages of the fragment occurring throughout Ríos's *oeuvre*. These mutations will be referred to respectively as the four-fold fragment, the epiphanic fragment and the fragment as character variation.

But first, it will be appropriate to sketch an understanding of the stylistic registers of the fragment to be employed in this chapter according to one tendency within literary studies. As the cultural theorist Camelia Elias writes in her study of the fragment as a performative genre, 'much of the appeal to the fragment relies on the fact that one can never be sure of what exactly constitutes a fragment' (Elias 2004, 2). This open perception of the fragmented element makes it more urgent to clarify that in this chapter I will be referring to the fragment as a text in its own right, and will therefore focus on its form and content as much as on its function in the text itself, which implies an emphasis on its performative aspect. The performative side refers to an

understanding of an engagement with fragments ‘as acts: acts of literature, acts of reading, acts of writing’ (Elias 2004, 4) and, in Ríos’s *Larva* cycle of novels, to acts of dialogue emphasizing the theatrical performativity of the literary event. These acts also encompass the fact that the reader engages with what has been written and, abruptly or unexpectedly, the reading act comes to a halt (be it through its formal appearance or its content detail), stops and starts, in a continual need to reframe the interpretative setting. This process implies a continuous reflection on the part of the reader with regard to an interactive positioning from which the reader needs to take action by deciding which interpretative route to take regarding what has been read.

According to Linda Cummins’s in-depth investigation of the literary fragment through history, there are some characteristics which remain constant over the centuries and which can be summed up thus: ‘to omit the necessary, to add the superfluous, to combine the incongruous, to exaggerate out of proportion, to put things in the wrong order’ (Cummins 2006, 19). Cummins emphasizes, furthermore, that these general aspects coincide with the digressive and nonlinear tendencies in which they are presented as disrupted forms, because ‘the fragment in Western European art and literature never strays far from its kinship with ruins and monsters, with the broken and the malformed.’ (Cummins 2006, 21). Thus, the emphasis projected back to the reader who attempts to create narratives out of those very fragments engaged in their particular differences: ‘when beginnings and endings are fragmented, those powerful edges acquire the multi-directional pull of the fragment, reaching both into and outside the work in search of what the fragment lacks’ (Cummins 2006, 64).

In Ríos's *oeuvre*, where the above incisions are a repetitive norm, the fragment becomes an ever-present trademark which also informs the reader about the challenges required by the texts confronted. As the critic John Tytell indicates in his article 'Epiphany in Chaos: Fragmentation in Modernism' included in the collection *Fragments: Incompletion and Discontinuity*:

Readers are forced to become actively engaged [...] For another kind of reader, fragmentation has successfully induced a more improvisational and spontaneous sense of play and suggested an illusion of participating in the psychic processes of characters who seem more autonomous than ever before. (Kritzman 1981, 14).

All those adjectives mentioned in the previous quotation as 'active', 'improvisational' and 'spontaneous' appeal to a type of autonomy which engages as a reflection back to the reader who is exposed to the continuous elaboration of a possible interpretation of the given text.

From the opening epigraph of chapter 'Mosaico', in Ríos's *La vida sexual de las palabras*, we can see an immediate fragmentary practice mobilized by Ríos so as to provoke 'events' in the reader directed towards a particular set of literary relationships in continuous flux. When I employ the term 'event' I am referring to the Deleuzian notion of 'instantaneous productions intrinsic to interactions between various kinds of forces' (Parr 2005, 87). This term emphasizes the notion of change and transformation moving through the intensities of each moment, each dialogue or each fragment. By focusing more on the potentialities inherent in the writing than on a conclusive meaning underlying it, 'an event is neither a beginning nor an end point, but rather always "in the middle"' (Parr 2005, 88). All those potential elements point to the fact that feeding ambiguity becomes one of the central meanings Ríos applies to his own literature concerned and understood from its liberatory positioning: 'toda

gran obra literaria, desde Rabelais al menos, es siempre ambigua' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 99).

By the same token, the fact of citing in the epigraph the possible origin of the fragment in modernity gathers together the interaction of a series of particular historical forces pushing from different interpretative angles in order to establish a focus on the fragment as a key representational concept resulting from the crises of modernity: 'The fragment as a literary shock tactic has been integral to the modern writer's strategy since the turn of the century' (Tytell 1981, 3). It is symptomatic of that strategy referred to in the previous quotation to be adopted as a creative counterpoint to the conflictive world crises occurring at the beginning of the twentieth century. A shift towards another cultural and scientific paradigm became apparent, reflecting the crisis in the experience of time and space compression, a question which has been explored in depth by the cultural theorists Marshall Berman and David Harvey¹⁷. Between 1907 and 1914 alone, a great number of cultural productions in the arts and literature fields¹⁸ came to prove the collapse of tendency to harmonize and clarify representation around an 'empty and homogeneous' concept of conclusive wholeness. Thus, another linking example of the recycling of modernism

¹⁷ See in particular for the purpose of this argument Berman's *All that is solid melts into air* (1983) and Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990)

¹⁸ The following creative and scientific discoveries highlight the appearance of fractures and fragments as intrinsic elements at work: in 1907 Picasso painted *Les desmoiselles d'Avignon*, thus opening the flow of the cubism to come, and T.S. Eliot was guided by Bergson's lecture on time in writing *The Wasteland*; in 1910 Schoenberg was developing atonality in his compositions while his friend Kandinsky was stepping into abstraction; in 1913, on the one hand, not only was atomic structure discovered by Niels Bohr while Einstein also disclosed his Theory of General Relativity, on the other, Marcel Proust published *Du Côté de chez Swann* and Marcel Duchamp was beginning to produce ready-mades. Finally, in 1914, Stravinsky introduced the premonitory sounds of war in *Le Sacre du Printemps* while James Joyce began to write *Ulysses*.

and avant-garde techniques carried out by Ríos approach to writing. Nevertheless, although Ríos will continually declare himself to belong to ‘modern’ and avant-garde paradigms, the nature of his creations will move along the postmodernist trails which look back to the avantgarde and the modernist creations as a continuous phase of reference to be taken into account even if to heighten the tension of its inherent differences. As the conclusion of Andreas Huyssen’s *After the Great Divide* shows, the postmodernism of resistance implies ‘not to eliminate the productive tension between the political and the aesthetic, between history and the text, between engagement and the mission of art’ (Huyssen 1986, 221).

With regard to the use of the fragment in Ríos’s work, the first specific aspect which should be highlighted is the procedural use of the fragment in an anarchic and apparently random tendency with the purpose of reprogramming the way in which the written word can be perceived. John Tytell description of the stylistic intentions behind William Burroughs’s cut-up technique, applies equally to the use of the fragment by Ríos:

To eliminate habitual reactions and conditioned reflexes, to separate words from traditional referents, and to question the normal syntax that influences rational behaviour. The end here, as with Robbe-Grillet, is liberation from controls. (Tytell 1981, 10).

Within that narrative process lies the attempt to ‘jar the control of his reader’s linguistic conditioning’ (Tytell 1981, 10). All these fragmentary aspects came to be used widely in Twentieth century literary works, resulting in a recurrent tag associated with modernism due to its conscious search for an ambiguous and dense texture of elements. In addition the surrealist and Dadaist uses of the unconscious findings of psychoanalysis about the unconscious became another search for the liberation of the repressed bourgeois subject. Thus, Ríos makes use of the

aforementioned cultural baggage which ultimately continues to maintain readers actively engaged by the inherent sense of improvisation that can also be found throughout Ríos's work.

It will be of interest to see how far Ríos reframes this particular improvised aspect as an identifying sign within a literary approach influenced by a series of Twentieth century modernist European writers which function as a counterpoint to his experience of an oppressive regime in Spain. By association, that influence places an emphasis on the above mentioned crises related to that particular kind of modernism which is focused around the dismantling of a reliable conception of a world order with the aim of erecting a more inclusive and liberating conception by means of its very fragmented nature. Throughout the book, I will also be asking whether Ríos's fragmented approach is a case of an artistic affiliation which begins from a common ground (i.e. the representation of a real political oppression in an aesthetic arena) and later on diffuses into a sort of phantasmagoric representation of the original intention which reflects the tensions between a modernist and postmodernist vision of the work. The Spanish writer Vicente Luis Mora refers to the overlapping of periodizations in relation to current Spanish narrative trends in his essay *La luz nueva* (2007):

Leyendo la mayoría de las novelas o relatos actuales, parece que viven en 1980, o finales de los 70. Una situación pre/posmoderna. Una modernidad alargada, estirada y agónica. Una España recién salida de una dictadura, y detenida en el tiempo, en una operación de sostenimiento de constantes vitales no muy distinta de la que sufrió el dictador. (Luis Mora 2007, 8)

Within this critique of an apparent literary stagnation, Luis Mora attempts to classify current aesthetic narrative trends within three possible divisions: 'en la cultura actual occidental coinciden en el espacio y en el tiempo, con todas las variaciones y excepciones que queramos apreciar, tres direcciones culturales y estéticas diferentes:

tardomodernidad, posmodernidad y pangea' (Luis Mora 2007, 21). Interestingly, Luis Mora describes Julián Ríos as pertaining together with Juan Goytisolo to the late modernity group. However, as soon as we start to recognize characteristics belonging to other periods, this anxious ambition to classify and fix these specific writers into one category immediately reveals a superficial reading of the situation.

Therefore, in terms of periodization, these fragmented aspects have a peculiarly elastic content. On the one hand, as transcendent aspects related to a tragic reflection of a social and political crisis, they have been defined as pertaining mainly to modernity; on the other, they have also been reframed as pertaining to a postmodernist sphere charged with radical political intentions in its return to positions of the avant-garde. This follows from Huyssen's *After the Great Divide*, which affirms that postmodernity does not have to gravitate around the realms of the ludic and vacuous aligned within that nebulous set of circumstances conforming to the terminology of postmodernity. On this aspect, it is relevant to recognize the way in which Fredric Jameson, in his classic book *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, defines the postmodern as an attempt to frame changes and transformations while looking 'for events rather than new worlds, for the telltale instant after which it is no longer the same' (Jameson 2008, 4). On the other hand, Jameson draws upon this definition against the need for newness which obsessed modernism as a whole. In the introduction to the book Jameson refers to the German philosopher Walter Benjamin in order to highlight the 'distractive' nature of postmodernism which is much more interested in the actual changes than in what the changes would provoke in a modernist vein. The fact that he does so is symptomatic of the overlapping nature of two periodic terminologies.

Taking this into account, I want to emphasize that even if Ríos has been labelled widely in many literary studies as pertaining to a postmodernist vein, I will attempt to clarify that his use of fragment formation cannot be separated from a modernist strategy understood as an operation of rewriting past narratives. As Jameson formulates it in the second maxim of modernity as part of his critical study entitled *A Singular Modernity – Essay on the Ontology of the Present*: ‘Modernity is not a concept, philosophical or otherwise, but a narrative category’ (Jameson 2002, 40). For Jameson, it is more important to highlight the need to mobilize the concept of modernity than strictly fix it to a definite periodization or ‘alleged insights of historical analysis’ (Jameson 2002, 36):

The trope of modernity is always in one way or another a rewriting, a powerful displacement of previous narrative paradigms. Indeed, when one comes to recent thought and writing, the affirmation of the ‘modernity’ of this or that generally involves a rewriting of the narratives of modernity itself which are already in place and have become conventional wisdom. (Jameson 2002, 36)

In this quotation, the operation of rewriting preterite narratives becomes a central trope defining that very modernity selected to reflect the development of Ríos’s work even if risking a gravitational pull towards the postmodern realm. Therefore, for Ríos the notion of literary representation becomes charged with the temptation to rewrite modernist literary paradigms in order to both supposedly pay homage to all those writers he seems to identify with and through that very appropriation, to attempt to elaborate his own style of literary expression as a particularly radical intervention in and response to the world. For this purpose, it will be useful to highlight the main direct referential influences on the use of the fragment as a literary strategy which cannot be divorced either from the poststructuralist emphasis or from the modernist connection explored in this chapter.

2.3.3.1 The Influences Leading Ríos Towards the Fragment

The epigraph opening the previous section is taken from the section of the novel *La vida sexual de las palabras* entitled ‘Los Arcanos de R.B. Kitaj’. In this section the three characters named A, B and C are engaged in a dialogue concerning the American painter R.B. Kitaj and his literary influences: ‘Un pintor como Kitaj prueba que para dibujar una sola línea buena hace falta haber leído antes muchas líneas’ (Ríos 2000, 139). One of the interesting things about Kitaj’s artistic development is that at a later stage of his life he became more aware of his Jewish heritage through the influence of writers such as Franz Kafka and, most particularly, Walter Benjamin. As a result of this, Kitaj felt the need to explore his own alienated identity in *First Diasporist Manifesto* where, in addition to considering himself as a form of ‘Diasporist Jew’ (Kitaj 1989, 31), he also declares that ‘the Diasporist lives and paints in two or more societies at once’ (Kitaj 1989, 19). This engagement with spatial and perspective changes with regard to different cultures seems to reflect some of the characteristics resulting from Ríos’s own exilic moves in between four European capitals (Madrid, London, Berlin and Paris). But it is the particular influence of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin which generates a dialogical interconnection with Kitaj in this section of *La vida sexual de las palabras*.

From a fragmentary perception of reality in the form of montage images to the presence of ‘arcades’ in Kitaj’s paintings, Ríos finds all possible links to provoke and engage with the painter and the philosopher within the fragment entitled ‘Babel de escaleras y arcadas’. Another linking example will be the year and the place where Kitaj based his painting *El otoño del centro de París* (1972-73) (Fig. 2) in which Benjamin is portrayed as a victim of ‘historical madness’:

C: Creo, como Viktor Sklovsky, que el arte no es un instrumento del pensamiento, sino un método para restaurar la percepción sensorial del mundo.

B: Un método para limpiar, periódica y parcialmente, las puertas de la percepción.

A: Walter Benjamin agudizó la fragmentada percepción de la realidad de Kitaj.

C: Agudizada y modelada, en el caso de Benjamin, por Baudelaire y Proust.

B: Benjamin inspiró o mejor coinspiró dos cuadros conspiraciones importantes de Kitaj: *Arcades* y *The autumn of Central Paris*.

C: Ambos iniciados en el setenta y dos.

A: Arcadas es, quizá, un pasaje pictórico de *Passagen-Work*.

C: Babel de escaleras y arcadas... Similar – en las máscaras y en la decoración – a las construcciones alegóricas de Baudelaire...

A: ¿Ardería París, al rojo?

C: El rojo que se extiende como una gran mancha.

B: París bien vale una masacre...: repugnante estribillo a lo largo de su historia.

A: En *The autumn of Central Paris* es notable la superposición del ensueño con la pesadilla de la historia.

C: Sí. Kitaj realizó un montaje del París onírico en el París real.

B: Es el París de Benjamin dominado por sus fantasmagorías.

A: Fantasmagonías...

B: Justamente. Kitaj dice que la pintura está ambientada en París, en el otoño de 1940, es decir, pocos meses después de que Benjamin lo abandonara, tratando de escapar de los Nazis. (Ríos 2000, 142)



Fig. 2 El otoño del centro de París (basado en Walter Benjamin) (1972-1973) (Ríos 1989, 76)

The above quoted section contextualizes some of the details of the connections established between Kitaj and Benjamin. In the following one, ‘El judío errante’, the conversation turns towards the last few days of Benjamin’s life in the Catalanian village of Port Bou while attempting to escape from the Nazis. In addition, it manifests the deep influences that Benjamin’s thought has had upon Kitaj’s work:

C: Finalmente, el 26 de septiembre Benjamin pudo cruzar la frontera hasta Port Bou, pero allí la policía de Franco le negó la entrada. Cansado, enfermo, para no caer en las manos de la Gestapo, se tomó al alba una dosis mortal de morfina.

A: (pensativo): *La mort fine...*

C: No tan refinada – la agonía fue bastante larga y, además sus últimos estertores se vieron acompañados por el bisbiseo de un sacerdote español.

B: Walter Benjamin en el lecho de muerte - ¡vaya cuadro de Kitaj!

A: No es exagerado decir que Benjamin es el imago que ayuda a Kitaj a tener en cuenta y a tomar conciencia de su propia condición de judío errante y, lo que es más importante, darle existencia artística completa y compleja.

C: En este sentido, *Arcades* y *The autumn of Central Paris*, son los ancestros de la serie Diáspora.

B: En Benjamin Kitaj iba a encontrar una serie de afinidades.

C: Que quizá las haga más patentes y potentes un nexo invisible: Aby Warburg. En efecto, Benjamin frecuentaba su círculo en Hamburgo y admiraba su trabajo de detective de la historia del arte. El amor al detalle, es algo que también Benjamin aprendió de Warburg.

A: El culto y la cultura del fragmento. (Ríos 2001, 143)

Through the multiplicity of events being mobilized through the references to Benjamin, it is possible to obtain an image of the fragmentary elements at work within the quotation cited immediately above which also reflects a fundamental characteristic of Ríos’s writing. Kitaj’s paintings give way to Benjamin’s influence, be it through style or location, in order to unfold into a juxtaposition of fragmented images as an accumulation of meanings allowing for the possibility of choice on behalf of the reader. As choice is the constant element at work in the reading of Ríos’s *oeuvre*, it is symptomatic that the quote above is followed by the section entitled ‘Lector/Colector/Conector’ (Ríos 2001, 144). This is related to the potential production of meaning through the accumulation of ambiguities:

C: En vez de continuidad, contigüidad: dos imágenes dispares se convierten, por proximidad en una tercera.
 A: Dispar, atada. A la desesperada.
 B: Aprende un estilo por desesperanza – como recomendaría William Empson.
 C: (impaciente): Y esto es una operación metafórica. Un cuadro de Kitaj incita al espectador a imaginar, a conectar imágenes y actos distantes.
 B: Quizá sólo a reconectar.
 C: Quizás.
 A: Y a recolectar. El espectador y en definitiva lector como colector o recolector y conector/reconector.
 C: Quizá. Es necesario descubrir lo que Valéry llamaría las «afinidades secretas» de una construcción artística.
 A: Yuxtaposiciones. - ¿Y hasta suposiciones? Las contigüidades se convierten en ambigüedades...
 C: La pintura como metáfora narrativa.
 A: La máquina de la *metamorfosis*.
 B: Sin fin.
 C: Sí. El espectador intenta comprender lo que pasa en el cuadro, pero en el momento en que se forma en su mente una trama, aparecen nuevas imágenes y posibilidades.
 B: Posibilidades nuevas, dudas nuevas. La maquinaria de la ambigüedad nunca se detiene.’ (Ríos 2001, 145)

If from the series of quotations cited above it is possible to infer that Ríos appropriates a particular reading of Benjamin which carries the pathos and melancholy associated to his writings, it is necessary to mention that Ríos mainly pays close attention to Benjamin’s observation of altered states of consciousness which create the possibility of alternative readings on the notion of experience. One of those readings carries the notes he took between 1927 and 1934 of his experiments with opium and hashish in Berlin, Marseilles and Ibiza. The style of literary montage Benjamin referred to as ‘a toe dance of reason’ (Benjamin 2006, 8) reflects that attraction for fragmented discontinuity as an element which proves the sense that ‘through the reigning ambiguity everything becomes a matter of nuance, multivalence’ (Benjamin 2006, 10). I shall give as an example the section dedicated to the Spanish painter Eduardo Arroyo entitled ‘La Comedia del Arte de Eduardo Arroyo’ included in Ríos’s *La vida sexual de las palabras*. Here the curtains become

the object allowing for another way of interconnecting the dialogue of the three characters A, B and C with Benjamin's perception under the influence:

INVESTIGACIÓN DE LAS CORTINAS

C: En efecto (consulta sus fichas), según Benjamin decía en una carta a Gretel Adorno: «Hoy he conseguido resultados considerables en la investigación de las cortinas – ya que una cortina nos separaba del balcón que da a la ciudad y al mar.»

A: Estas investigaciones de Benjamin estaban estimuladas por el hachís y la mescalina.

C: Hachís en Marsella...

A: Cannabís de La Canebière...

C: Su arrobamiento amoroso ante la danza de una cortina.

B: Benjamin dice que las cortinas son interpretes del lenguaje del viento. Sus soplos las llenan, las ondulan y les dan sensualidad de figuras femeninas.

A: Y observa Benjamin, con sentido del cálculo ornamental, las metamorfosis de los adornos, la multiplicidad de sus sentidos y la multiplicación y repetición de los detalles.' (Ríos 2001, 108).

The manner in which Ríos mobilizes Benjamin in order to provoke a dialogical engagement amongst the three characters A, B and C constantly provokes fragmented sequences of added images which force the reader to reconfigure the different parts into a possible formation of meaning. This process resumes the poststructuralist act of writing of which Deleuze tends to emphasize its fragmentary activity:

The law is that of fragmentation. The fragments are grains, "granulations". Selecting singular cases and minor scenes is more important than any consideration of the whole. It is in the fragments that the hidden background appears, be it celestial or demonic. The fragment is "a reflection afar off" of a bloody or peaceful reality' (Deleuze 1997, 57)

So the specific focusing on the fragmented part brings about an emphasis on difference disconnected from a totality which ultimately can only increase the chance of multiplicity at work within the meaning making process. In relation to Ríos's work, it mobilizes the notion of intense concentration on the fragmented detail by producing kaleidoscopic effects around variations on similar subjects or themes drawn around specific objects, paintings, books, writers or just specific days wherein the action of

the *Larva*'s cycle of novels takes place. At this point, the question of Deleuzian desire appears to prove that, behind any apparent multiplicity of events, there lies an emphatic approach to move away from unity: 'desiring-production is pure multiplicity, that is to say, an affirmation that is irreducible to any sort of unity' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, 42). This inevitably embraces the poststructural reading of the postmodern emphasis as an undercurrent filtering away Ríos's literary gestures towards the notion of the modern.

This book will explore the extent to which the rhetorical strategy of the fragment as a tool to disrupt, disconcert and continuously break up the rhythm of the writing for the reader does become a necessary aspect of the interactive ingredient associated with Ríos's work. The book will also explore how this rhetorical device attempts to provoke the reader to enter into the reflective position from which to rethink his understanding of what is being read. Finally, I will consider whether that rethinking contains the notion of multiplicity Deleuze refers to as implicit within a political sense associated with the act of reading from a modernist strategy which ultimately cannot be disengaged from its poststructural counterpoint within a postmodern realm. For those tasks, it will be necessary to explore in what manner the usages of the fragment both mutate and diminish their original intentions throughout the three different stages of *liberature*.

2.3.3.2 The Mutation of Fragments in Ríos's Works

In order to analyze the way the use of fragment is transformed through the work of Ríos I will employ the series of aesthetic procedures engaged in fragmentary action outlined by Myrna Solotorevsky in her essay 'Poética de la totalidad y poética de la

fragmentación: Borges/Sarduy'. The following four categories should be specifically taken into account for the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of this book:

1. Textual Space: division in parts and visible empty spaces in the page.
2. Semantic Dimension: obstruction in the capture of meanings through the accumulation of signifiers.
3. Internal Textual Arrangement: plot dissolution.
4. Discursive Dimension: syntactic and lexemic fractures.

The previous points will be developed through the three different fragment phases I have selected for Ríos's works: a) The four-fold fragment b) The epiphanic fragment c) The character based fragment. As it will be important to show how the above characteristics perform through the selections and examples taken from the different novels, many of the quotations will need to be quite extensive in order to produce some of the fragmented effects to be investigated in this chapter.

Thus the argument presented in the following chapters of this book develops its different strands on the basis of the current chapter, in which I have attempted to show how the different elements to be explored interact in order to illuminate the way Ríos has transferred those elements into the elaboration of his literary discourse. All the notions of the postmodern experienced through the poststructural philosophers touched upon and referred to throughout this chapter, followed by the fragmentary approach incorporated and mutated through the different writings carried out by Ríos, are but different steps in a process of formation which also incorporates hypertext to produce the different stages of *liberature*.

Thus, this chapter finishes by taking up again the role of the reader as an interactive performer exposed to the questions provoked by halting the process of signification. In the face of the 'scriptible' text, the reader also becomes a producer of text by confronting the innumerable potential meanings jumping out from the page being read without the writer forcing any of them on the reader. After everything which has been said above, it is 'us writing' (Moriarty 1991, 118). It is from these particularly radical philosophical and literary coordinates that the subversive nature of Ríos's *oeuvre* stems and attempts to feed. As Susan Sontag mentions in her aptly entitled prologue ('Writing itself') to *Roland Barthes Reader*, 'the affirmation of the unremittingly personal is a subversive act. This is a classic extension of the aesthete attitude, in which it becomes a politics: a politics of radical individuality.' (Sontag 2000, 31). In Ríos's case, that radical use of writing will also be influenced and supported by the positioning from outside the national realm as explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Formation Phase: Postnational Encounters Through *Solo a dos voces & Revista Espiral*

‘Ya no es posible separar los géneros fácilmente,
las fronteras se borran.’
Julián Ríos (Ríos & Paz 1999, 91)

In this chapter I attempt, first, to explore Ríos’s first attempts to integrate a postnational aesthetic and political tendency as well as, second, to establish a generational relationship with the group of poststructuralist writers and artists Ríos comes to collaborate with, as was announced in the previous chapter. Before publishing the *Larva* cycle of novels, Ríos had worked as an editor and instigator of literary and artistic conversations and by examining this work it will be possible to highlight the choices made and angles taken by Ríos during this formation phase which will consequently feed into his fictional work. By exploring at first hand the publications referred to in this chapter we will be able to, first, trace some of the characteristics that will be carried into the *Larva* literary project and, second, reach an understanding of Ríos’s literary approach to the postnational dimension of his writing.

Starting with the book of interviews with Octavio Paz and the selection of extracts from Paz’s writings, we can follow certain paradigmatic approaches which inform Ríos’s project. The first characteristic, referring back to the epigraph opening this chapter, is his attempt to erase the apparent limits between genres. Ríos continuously attempts to blur the borders where different or opposite forms of literary and artistic production delineate fixed formalistic contours. My argument is similar to that of Andy Stafford in his intellectual biography of Roland Barthes: ‘if all communication is language, and all language a function of rethoric, then disciplines and the barriers

between various epistemes can simply be melted away.’ (Stafford 1998, 120). For Ríos, defining literary form in terms of a rigid structure does not incorporate the sufficient narrative tension which, according to his approach, should be given to its formation. As Ríos observes to Octavio Paz during their conversations, there seems to be a need for the erosion of boundaries between genres, something proved by the example of approaching the novelistic genre as if it was a literary formation to be explored following poetic coordinates: ‘La novela contemporánea es, ante todo, lenguaje y muchas veces el novelista tiene ante el lenguaje casi la misma actitud que el poeta’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 91). Sontag’s understanding of Barthes’s writing style also describes that of Ríos: ‘his standards for literature approached those of the poet: language that has undergone an upheaval, has been displaced, liberated from ungrateful contexts; that, so to speak, lives on its own.’ (Sontag 2000, 19).

The same approach applies to the publication of the *Espiral* magazine¹⁹ (1974-1981), the inauguration of which coincides with the disappearance of the figure of the dictator in Spain. *Espiral* is an attempt to elaborate a collection of writings which moves away from any attempt to encapsulate expression through the literary medium alone, allowing the freedom to mix and mutate with other forms of artistic expressions as indicated by the title of the first number of the magazine: ‘Liberaciones (de territorios, cuerpos, idiomas...)’. It is this interpretation of ‘liberation’ as a creative endeavour attempting to eliminate signs of a controlling and censoring power which influences the choices made by Ríos in his editorial role and which later on will mobilize the poetic centres of his fictional work. Within that liberational attempt, the postnational adds another layer to the previous one by moving away from the national

¹⁹ See section 3.3 (p.110) for the history and publications of *Espiral*

realm by means of a Hispanic fraternity established between Latin American and Spanish intellectuals engaging with each other through their particular and cosmopolitan exilic condition. As it will be seen in this chapter, most of the Spanish and Latin American members from the editorial board of *Revista Espiral* will be related through their experience of their extraterritorial condition. But before we explore that relationship in detail it will be important to contextualize the question of the postnational dimension.

3.1 The Postnational Undercurrent

With the exception of *Cortejo de sombras*, the collection of short stories explored in the previous chapter of the book, the rest of Ríos's *oeuvre* will not only be written outside the Spanish national boundaries, but most of its fictional works will also be sited in London. Therefore, this spatial narrative choice completely neglects his original national territory while at the same time exploring an urban metropolis known for its cosmopolitan dimension and its Babel-like mixture of languages. In the literary choices made by Ríos in his novels, the postnational looms large as a determined gesture against any tendency towards nationalism. That is to say, it is the arrival of Ríos in such a postcolonial and cosmopolitan metropolis as London which mobilizes the postnational approach as narrative flow. But before we address the manner in which the postnational sense mobilizes Julián Ríos's *oeuvre*, it will be useful to contextualize the concept as it was used for the first time in connection with a sense of the national as specific to an imaginary status of a community included within a border together with all its identity implications.

The American scholar Donald E. Pease describes the concept of the nation-state in his essay 'National Narratives, Postnational Narration' (1994) as an ever-diminishing notion in the globalized era not only because it has become 'a residual unit of economic exchange in the global economy' but also due to its ironic usage 'as a tolerated anachronism in a global economy requiring a borderless world for its effective operation' (Pease 1997, 1). If this study of the role played by narratives in the formation of a national or postnational identity recalls the widely cited Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities', it is important to note that the first person to use the concept of the postnational to indicate a straightforward weakening of the concept of the nation-state was the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in *The Postnational Constellation – Political Essays* (2001). In order to refer to this conflicting identity positioning, Habermas clearly sketches in this essay not only a summarized accumulation of characteristics defining the national and the postnational but also shows a nostalgic approach to the loss of something which up to that time appeared to be the best option available for the construction of an identity. According to Habermas, the identity defined by the nation state is characterized first by a democratic form of self control built around the rule of law, second, by the sovereignty of the territorial state and, finally, by the sense of a collective identity characterized by the symbolic construction of 'a people' as was mentioned above. But when confronted with the postnational effects of globalization – the porosity of state borders, the economic networks acting as regimes of world power and the homogenizing tendencies of the global mode – the nation state becomes threatened and exposed to shifts in power and control:

In contrast to the territorial form of the nation-state, 'globalization' conjures up images of overflowing rivers, washing away all the frontier checkpoints and controls, and ultimately the bulwark of the nation itself. The new relevance of 'flow volumes' also signals how the locus of

control has shifted from space to time: as ‘masters of speed’ come to replace ‘rulers of territory’, the nation state appears to steadily lose its power. (Habermas 2001, 67)

If in the previous chapter we saw Foucault’s reference to the postmodernist shift from history towards space, in the above quotation we see how Habermas shifts the emphasis within the postnational away from space and towards time as a symmetrically opposite interrelationship of forces integrating the fundamental coordinates of the postmodernist and postnational realms.

It is relevant to mention that when Habermas employs the metaphor of ‘flowing rivers’ he also adds a footnote to refer to these events as ‘the trend from boundary to flow’. As will be shown in this book, this emphatic use of the flow from the extraterritorial perspective also relates to Ríos’s literary approach beyond the Spanish nation he has left behind. In this context it should be noted that Habermas has also spoken of the ambivalent effects post-national environments may produce in the social and political realms affecting communities and individuals:

For those affected by it, ‘opening’ entails the ambivalent experience of increasing contingency: the disintegration of formative and hitherto authoritarian forms of dependencies; the liberation from relationships that are as orienting and protective as they are prejudicial and imprisoning. In a word, the opening of a strongly integrated lifeworld releases individuals into the ambivalence of expanded options. It opens their eyes to new possibilities, but also increases their risk of making mistakes – which will then, at least, be their own mistakes, which they can learn from. Each individual is confronted with a freedom that obliges him to count on himself alone, and that isolates him from others as it compels him to take a strategic-rational view of his own interests. And yet this freedom also enables him to enter into new social ties and to creatively draft new rules for living together with others. (Habermas 1997, 83)

We must look at the above quotation in the historic context of a Francoist Spain from which individuals like Ríos escaped with the aim of pursuing forms of creative expression within another culture removed from an oppressive ambiance. In this

context it can be seen that in Ríos the questions of ‘freedom’ and ‘mistake’ are engaged as attempts at subversive representations which aspire to trigger critical resonances. By leaving Spain and going to London in 1969 Ríos experienced the implicit transformation made possible once national ascriptions are removed in the process of establishing contacts with others. As Habermas puts it:

The proliferation of anonymous relations with ‘others’ and the dissonant experiences with ‘foreigners’ have a subversive power. Growing pluralism loosens ascriptive ties to family, locality, social background, and tradition, and initiates a formal transformation of social integration. With each new impulse toward modernization, intersubjectively shared lifeworlds open, so that they can reorganize, and then close once more. (Habermas 2001, 83)

Ríos’s *oeuvre* seems to be integrated within the paradigms described above, but most particularly, ‘if globalization forces the nation state to open itself up internally to the multiplicity of foreign or new forms of cultural life’ (Habermas 2001, 84) the experience of belonging in conditions of postnationality raises the question of uncertainty with regard to identity. As the editors of *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity* (2002), Hedetoft and Hjort, affirm in their introduction to their collection of essays:

Globality for want of a better term spells significant changes in the cultural landscapes of belonging not because it supplants the nation-state and the form of homeness outlined so far, but because it changes the contexts (politically, culturally, and geographically) for them, situates national identity and belonging differently, and superimposes itself on ‘nationality’ as a novel frame of reference, values, and consciousness, primarily for the globalized elites, but increasingly for ‘ordinary citizens’ as well. (Hedetoft & Hjort 2002, xv)

On the whole, it seems that the politics of identity have become an increasingly transnational phenomena in which the expected limits or boundaries have turned into ‘fluid images of self and other’ (Hedetoft and Hjort 2002, vii). Notwithstanding this, the relation between the national and the postnational continues to exist, as exemplified by the still existing interest of national cultures in incorporating

postnational cultural producers within their own parameters. Still, some literary examples have experienced greater difficulties in being integrated into that fluidity of postnational voices, as it is the case with Ríos's literature.

As mentioned earlier in the book, Julián Ríos's *oeuvre* has mainly been ignored by Spanish contemporary literary historiography. This raises a number of questions. First what happens to the notion of postnational literature within a national sphere? Second, how do the respective national literatures deal with, avoid or even neglect those examples of postnational literatures? The Spanish scholar Joseba Gabilondo approaches this subject head on by proposing a novel way of including a postnational writer through a postnational reading of the Galician writer Emilia Pardo Bazan in his essay 'Towards a Postnational History of Galician Literature: On Pardo Bazan's Transnational and Translational Position' (2009). Before exploring the literary struggles of Pardo Bazán, Gabilondo clearly exposes the tendency within Spanish history to consign the minority languages to literary oblivion: 'Spanish literary history, if contemplated in its multinationalism, is a history of literary diglossia' (Gabilondo 2009, 252). This hierarchy of languages makes Gabilondo ask 'why is nationalism – and nationalist literary language – the main parameter by which literary history is organized?' (Gabilondo 2009, 252). With this question not only does he demand that we go beyond national differences as the condition which grants hegemonic control but also argues that this condition is only one amongst many others. These could include, first, the geopolitical in so far as it refers to the existence of other diverse or particular identities obliterated by the main one established by the state, and, second, the bio-political in relation to gender, sexuality, race or class. Gabilondo notes that Pardo Bazán 'locates herself in European literature in order to

perform her traumatic position in Galician literature, and she ends up exiled not only from Galician but also from Spanish literature' (Gabilondo 2009, 265). His consideration of the specific and problematic literary case of Pardo Bazán as a transnational writer gives him the chance to consider the secondary nature of the (Spanish) state as a possible beginning of a new postnational literary history. He elaborates the following approach:

A multicultural map in all its complexity, thus denouncing the state's monopolization of a single difference - nationalism - and reinserting this difference within a more complex set of particularisms that defy the state and its neoliberal appropriation of multiculturalism in globalization. (Gabilondo 2009, 255).

The point here is that if Pardo Bazán passes beyond the limits of the Galician and Spanish nationalist canon – allowing her 'to create a translational literature which is neither Galician nor Spanish, nor European but rather a literature in translation across three locations and languages' (Gabilondo 2009, 263) – her fellow Galician Julián Ríos will pass completely beyond its limits. This excess problematizes the borders and limits of any nationalist literary history whose discourse attempts to dominate literary histories. Ríos's literature decentres and mutates hierarchical borders which tend to fix or immobilize cultural paradigms in a totalizing manner. In that sense, Ríos challenges static formations of culture by introducing and mixing new meanings taken from other cultural formations, as will be seen in the following chapters. As Marli Fantini writes in his relevant study of the literary work of *Guimaraes Rosa: fronteiras, margens, passages*, 'no terreno das fronteiras culturais, as posições devem ser permeabilizadas' (Fantini 2004, 104).

One of those positions will be the attempt to renovate language by mutating it within other languages, something which both Ríos and Guimaraes Rosa do, by inserting

other languages into their own novels. Their aim consists in breaking particular cultural and linguistic boundaries so as to continue feeding that task of literature which Roland Barthes described as ‘unexpressing’ the expressible in order to ‘problematize the meanings our cultural codes otherwise confer and thus to unwrite the world as it is written by prior discursive practices.’ (Culler 2002, 129). Ultimately, it will also be an attempt to approach the novel beyond the nation as another form of the layering of meaning as if disengaged from a traditional literary canon, thus forcing the critics to read his literary works using a paradigm other than the national.

For Ríos, the relation to the nation experienced from outside feeds the postnational dimension which mobilizes so much of his *oeuvre*. In the same way as the expected image of the passive reader vanishes, losing its clearly marked identity, the idea of identity as a form of belonging defined by any oppressive nation-state is counteracted through literary means. Ríos’s writing shows itself to be aware that every dimension of power interested in building a national collective idea²⁰ is conscious of the fundamental need to control its own historic memory²¹ in the most convenient way. This process is not only created with the aim of encouraging an identity of a country to fight and die for²², but also in order to establish the values which underpin the

²⁰ As Juan Goytisolo comments in the tenth chapter of *Obra inglesa de Blanco White*: ‘Los miembros de las castas que detentan el poder, y los plumíferos a su servicio, son necesariamente patriotas según se aferran por principio a los valores sacrosantos que justifican su privilegiada posición’ (Goytisolo 1982, 93)

²¹ As Llobera writes in *The role of historical memory in (ethno) nation-building*: ‘Totalitarian regimes of whichever persuasion, fascist, communist or those derived from religious fundamentalisms will tend to monopolise historical memory with the avowed aim of creating and imposing a certain type of uniform national identity; as a consequence, ethnonational identities will be at best ignored or repressed, at worst obliterated’ (Llobera 1996, 29).

²² See Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, where the cultural roots of nationalism are connected to the existential justification of death in the defence of a national identity (Anderson 1991, 10).

official hegemonic structure²³. The main purpose consists in being able to reproduce itself into longevity²⁴, erasing everything which may interfere in the nation building process. In this process, all those who address critical words²⁵ to that very power may receive the corresponding blow²⁶: ‘Todos los gobiernos, dirá lucidamente, execran la literatura: el poder desconfía de otro poder’²⁷. Within these parameters, the exilic distance adds an extra dimension to the reading of *Larva* and *Poundemonium*, both of which are literary examples which follow Goytisolo’s understanding linking exile and freedom of expression: ‘la creación real se desenvuelva casi siempre extramuros de la canonizada en recintos oficiales y academias’ (Goytisolo 1985, 116).

3.1.1 Exile: ‘To Jump Outside’

Silence, exile and cunning
James Joyce (Power 1978, 31)

Dejad que lea el viento
(Ríos 1983, 419)

Joan Corominas notes in his *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana* the latin origin of the word *exsilium*, derived from *exsilire*, which means ‘to jump

²³ See Edward Said in *The Edward Said Reader*: ‘it’s in the nature of power to stand its hegemony, as Gramsci said, over more and more territory. Hegemony is all about permanent contest.’ (Said 2000, 444).

²⁴ Juan Goytisolo writes about this subject with acute precision: ‘De entrada, la herencia de juicios que se transmite heredada de generación en generación y en España, bajo orden de derecha ideología siempre pendiente de que se apaguen todas las voces disidentes y cuestionadoras ante la realidad circundante’ (Goytisolo 1982, 3).

²⁵ ‘La literatura no puede menos que adelantarse al Poder, y como el poder no tolera que se le adelante nadie, hace de la literatura tanto más su víctima favorita cuanto mayor sea su intolerancia.’ declares Francisco Carrasquer in *La literatura española y sus ostracismos* (Carrasquer 1980, 43)

²⁶ Leon and Rebeca Grinberg describe the psychological load behind this repressive action in *Psychoanalytic perspectives on migration and exile*: ‘These unconsciously assigned the émigrés the role of scapegoat – he who is sent into the desert weighted down with the burden of collective guilt, the one who is torn (splitting himself) so that the rest of the group can remain at home guilt-free.’ (Grinberg 2004, 15)

²⁷ See Juan Goytisolo’s *Contracorrientes* (Goytisolo 1985, 34).

outside' (Corominas 2000, 262). The action of 'jumping' beyond national borders has been carried out by a great number of writers throughout history, but in particular, it is an experience which has characterized a large number of Spanish writers through the centuries. As the cultural investigator Carrasquer emphasizes, '¡El 32 por ciento de los escritores españoles notables y notorios han sufrido persecución, prisión o destierro' (Carrasquer 1980, 43). Just by mentioning the most recognized ones, Carrasquer brings up authors ranging from the Twelfth to the Twentieth century. As an example I will cite the following together with their particular punishment: Arcipreste de Hita (prison), Juan Luis Vives (self exiled), Francisco Delicado (self exiled), Garcilaso de la Vega (exiled), Juan de Valdés (exiled), Santa Teresa de Jesús (confinement), San Juan de la Cruz (prison), Fernando de Rojas (persecuted), Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (prison), Luis de Góngora y Argote (censored), José María Blanco White (exiled), Mariano José de Larra (exiled), Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (prison), Luis Cernuda (exiled), Max Aub (exiled), Maria Zambrano (exiled), Américo Castro (exiled), Rosa Chacel (exiled) and Juan Goytisolo (self-imposed exiled). As observed above, this is a list of essential writers belonging to the historiography of Spanish literature, all of whom have been incorporated to the system which denied them in the first place and nowadays form part of the popular imagination. As the English historian Henry Kamen wrote in his book *Los desheredados: España y la huella del exilio*: 'Uno de los factores más importante y a la vez más descuidado en la formación de la Cultura Española moderna ha sido la realidad del exilio.' (Kamen 2007, 14).

The existence of critical literary thought has always been a matter of concern for the powers that be. If we understand that literature forms part of what Jose Carlos Mainer calls a 'programa de nacionalización del conocimiento' (Mainer 2000, 43), the official

national canon will tend to exert its moral control around all matters related to maintaining a robust and patriotic national spirit²⁸. As Ríos directly affirmed in reference to the Spanish literary canon, ‘a batir palmas por los nuestros, abatir a los que no pasan por el aro’ (Ríos 2000, 37). All canon formation understood as a sort of ethical pattern of behaviour is also formed by the particular neurosis²⁹ dwelling amongst the ideologies responsible for establishing it in the first place³⁰. The orders issued by the upper echelons of power will progressively fall upon the conscientious individuals forming part of the chain in charge of distributing knowledge employing ‘los clisés inhibidores de un lenguaje estancado’ (Goytisolo 1982, 24). By blunting all critical thought which may be directed against the *status quo*, any attempt to question the certainties of patriotic myths will be neutralized and surreptitiously silenced³¹. As the exiled historian Francisco Márquez Villanueva highlights in his

²⁸ See Sandra Lea Meek’s essay ‘The politics of poetics’ included in *Canon vs. Culture*: ‘In the real world, once we begin to question what greatness means and for whom it so means, the political nature of the very process of canonization becomes clear. As with any political activity, overt criteria often masks covert objectives [...] historically the true function of canonization has been to homogenize and standardize, deselecting texts and authors that do not conform to some cultural norm. Knowing who the selectors are and what their biases are, then, is crucial to understanding the forces behind canon formation.’ (Gorak 2001, 81). See also José Maria Ridaó in relation to ‘Américo Castro y la tradición de la tolerancia’: ‘Esa historiografía que, como la del 98, expurga del pasado cuanto resulta incompatible o contradictorio con la grandeza pretérita de la nación.’ (Ridaó 1998, 50)

²⁹ See Erich Fromm’s *The Heart of Man*: ‘Concerning the pathology of group narcissism the most obvious and frequent symptom, as in the case of individual narcissism, is a lack of objectivity and rational judgment [...] Group narcissism needs satisfaction just as individual narcissism does. On one level this satisfaction is provided by the common ideology of the superiority of one’s group, and the inferiority of all others.’ (Fromm 1980, 97)

³⁰ See Frank Kermode, referred to by Grinberg: ‘Canons are strategic constructs by which societies maintain their own interests’ (Grinberg 2004, 81).

³¹ See Juan Goytisolo’s *Lectura del Arcipreste en Xemaá El Fná*: ‘Investigadores más marginales: Márquez Villanueva, J. Rodríguez Puértolas, E. Martínez López, P. Jaraulda Pou, marginados por nuestros normalizadores desde sus posiciones de saber precario, pero poder asentado y firme.’ (Goytisolo 2001, 15). In addition, Goytisolo emphasizes the point that students avoid studying medieval literature due to the aseptic literary approach taken by those teaching them: ‘la literatura medieval y del

essay, ‘El problema con nuestros clásicos’, it is not only a matter of a ‘fuerte hipoteca sentimental’ (Márquez 1998, 38) which weighs upon the relation between Spaniards and their past; in addition, the weighty legacy falls upon Spanish university departments and the media in general by drowning ‘las humanidades a beneficio del magno fraude ideológico de la mentalidad tecnocrática’ (Márquez 1998, 38). According to Márquez, the official discourse feeds from a censoring strategy aimed at neutralizing any posible unorthodox or critical reading:

el concepto de la literatura española ha vivido con el ojo abierto nada más a cuanto pudiera contribuir a una construcción del tipo desfile de glorias en lo político y balsa de aceite en lo cultural e ideológico...Nada que suene a heterodoxo, a transgresivo o no digamos ya a semítico podrá nunca probarse. (Márquez 1998, 38).

In light of the previous paragraph, it is easier to comprehend the way in which Ríos’s novels fall under ‘el españolísimo ninguneo’ (Goytisolo 1998, 22) by being constantly omitted from Spanish literary historiographies³². The need to classify, categorize and create a form of belonging to a national identity will form the continuous ‘problem’ of the literary historiography in relation to the exilic theme. In response, Julián Ríos transforms this problematic in *Larva* by loading the words through their phonetic mutations: ‘Nadie es mofeta en su tierra de nadie’ (Ríos 1983, 334) o ‘Nadie es profeto en su lengua’ (Ríos 1983, 273).

Hence, this chapter explores different aspects of the postnational which can be summarized through two main vectors. First, a confluence of exiled Spanish and Latin

siglo del oro con sus enfoques de guante blanco, asépticos y pudibundos.’ (Goytisolo 2001, 15). In the above quotation it is important to note Goytisolo’s emphasis on approaching Spanish literature from different angles, that is to say, ‘releer la literatura española sin anteojeras’ (Goytisolo 2000, 37).

³² See Juan Goytisolo’s *Afinidades electivas* in relation to the generation of writers which follows his own, for example his reference to ‘la extraordinaria empresa de Julián Ríos, vergonzosamente ninguneado en España’ (Goytisolo 2003, 18)

American intellectuals escaping their respective authoritarian regimes at home by forming in exile a renewed version of a cultural Hispanic community. Second, a postnational historiography which underpins Ríos's poetics, particularly his proposal to develop other forms of readings beyond the national boundaries. Ríos shows the need to go beyond the national in order to widen the critical dimension of literature even if electing to do so brings him under the gravitational force of the postnational undercurrent referred to in the title of this section. Thus, at first Ríos will need the national as an opposite force and respond to Francoism in the creative vector so as to create enough tension to feed from for his own project. Therefore, if the critique of the nation-state is removed, the inner contradictions which mobilize *liberature* in the first place begin to lose their particular edge of resistance. But before we embark on that analysis, it will be important to explore the effect of the *Espiral* literary magazine in terms of Ríos's first practical entrance into the postnational realm.

3.2 *Sólo a dos voces* or The Oral Novel: A Searching Dialogue with Octavio Paz

‘Un libro, un texto, es un tejido de relaciones.’
Octavio Paz (Ríos & Paz 1999, 10)

The first publication produced by Ríos is a book of interviews with the Mexican writer Octavio Paz entitled *Sólo a dos voces*, a title taken from one of Paz's poems. This title is, furthermore, the first time Ríos emphasizes the dialogical within the literary representation, something which ultimately invokes the reader. As Ríos writes in the prologue opening the book: ‘toda escritura convoca a un lector y lo provoca, ya que el lector debe ejecutar y rematar (o revivir) la obra’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 9). The interviews cover a time span of 25 years, the first three taking place in London and Cambridge in 1971, and the last one in Paris in 1996. The location of the main interviews from 1971 in London seems to anticipate the psycho-geography which

would later become essential in Ríos's fictions. In the course of the book, the reader encounters a great range of subjects related to Paz's poetic and essayistic works as well as his opinions on history, culture and language. But underpinning the questions Ríos addressed to him, are the first formulations of many of the themes which define Ríos's poetics. In the prologue written in Madrid in 1972, Ríos establishes the poetics of Paz's writing by emphasizing the notion of dialogue with the text through the mirroring presence of the reader: 'Escritura-lectura: espejo en el espejo que refleja la duplicidad lector-escritor' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 9). Thus Ríos marks out the first of the main subjects he approaches in the relationship established between writer and reader.

The French poet Mallarmé had attempted to create a book formed of loose pages: 'un montón de hojas sueltas que se distribuyen de un modo caprichoso en el momento de la lectura y que después vuelven a juntarse como si se tratase de un abanico' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 75). Reference to this project allows both Paz and Ríos to extract the sense of a reader who takes the initiative of choosing the options given with a single creative purpose: 'abre la puerta a la iniciativa del lector: cada uno puede barajar las páginas del libro a su antojo y obtener, por medio de cada una de esas combinaciones, un texto distinto. El lector se vuelve poeta.' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 75). In that interpretative process, the reader becomes the re-maker of the work, something which, as Ríos mentions, Paz had attempted to do in his book *Corriente alterna*: 'El creador pierde, una vez escrito el libro, el dominio sobre su obra; el lector dispone del libro y lo puede recomponer de formas muy diferentes' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 99).

The close of their 1971 London conversation emphasizes the influence of the legacy of the surrealist movement in terms of the importance of the use of language in the

creation of the particular engagement informing these two writers, i.e. the erosion of the boundaries between author and reader: ‘Abierto o cerrado, el poema exige la abolición del poeta que lo escribe y el nacimiento del poeta que lo lee’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 109). In that process, the linear writing which Ríos considers to be an enslaved form of writing becomes altered into plural forms of intervention which continually provoke reader interaction through dialogic insertion. For that purpose, the book presents the dialogues with Octavio Paz on the right pages and quotations taken from Paz’s essays and poems on the left pages, a formal characteristic employed later on by Ríos in some of the *Larva* cycle of novels.

Similarly when they reopen the conversation in Paris in 1996³³, the first topic to be reinforced in this renewed conversation will be the notion of literature as integral part of a constant dialogue: ‘Comparto esa idea de la literatura como diálogo. Recuerdo que Sterne decía que la escritura era una forma más de la conversación. Y tú lo has indicado muchas veces: el poeta está dialogando incluso cuando monologa’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 165). It is that dialogic characteristic which will become a signature of Ríos’s writing, not only through the Bakhtinian influence as will be seen in the next chapter, but particularly through the conversations of the three characters named A, B and C who appear over and over again in many of his fictional works like *Larva*, *La vida sexual de las palabras*, *Impresiones de R.B.Kitaj* and *Casa Ulises*. Essential to

³³ The other main aspect of the short interview carried out with Paz in 1996 concentrates on the ubiquitous presence of the market forces which are taking over the cultural productions which consequently fall prey to a cipher marked according to the subjective value of the moment. Both writers refer to the difficulty of producing original literary voices in a medium obsessed by the production of consumption. In addition, Ríos will refer to the last quarter of the Twentieth century with the expression ‘Entre utopía y entropía’: ‘Hay una serie de utopías que se desvanecen y el mundo parece ser que es cada vez más entrópico, está en un caos.’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 167).

the notion of the dialogic formation will be the attempt to convey the immediate response of the author to his work as it was being written on the page and all the implications that this literary style carries with it. This in turn refers back to Barthes and his famous essay on *The Death of the Author* (which forms part of his collection of essays *From Work to Text*), emphasizing the performative aspect of writing ‘in which the speech-act has no other content (no other statement) than the act by which it is uttered’ (Barthes 1989, 52), something which is carried out by the writer ‘born at the same time as his text’ (Barthes 1989, 52) or the practice of literature as it is written.

Another topic which related Paz and Ríos at that point in time, is the connection between different writers through their approach to language as an element to be promoted or used in as distinctive a way as possible:

O.P.: La literatura moderna no es ni puede ser sino literatura crítica. Crítica del mundo en que vivimos y crítica de la literatura, crítica de la crítica. Y esa crítica es creadora siempre. La crítica del lenguaje se vuelve creación de un lenguaje.

J.R.: La creación de un lenguaje es el punto de unión, común, entre los grandes escritores modernos de lenguas y literaturas diferentes. (Ríos & Paz 1999, 85)

For Paz, in order to achieve that particular logocentric position, there can only be an understanding through a marginal positioning. That is to say, ‘la única manera que tiene la literatura de ser central es conservando su marginalidad’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 85). Within that very dialogue, the question of language proposed by Ríos implies a moral positioning whereby ‘la moral de un escritor no está en los temas ni en las intenciones sino en su actitud ante el lenguaje.’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 83). Within that attitude towards language, the moral principle refers more to the possibility of showing the hidden side of a social reality or even inventing a new reality: ‘la

literatura nos muestra la otra cara del hombre. Y así nos avisa de los horrores y de los errores de las ilusiones morales. La moral de la literatura es paradójica porque es una antimoral: nos muestra el otro lado de los principios y de los preceptos.’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 101).

The complex plurality of voices deployed in its very formation as a continuous dialogical referent attempts to represent that attitude towards language. By integrating that inclusion into the formation of language, according to Ríos and Paz, the possibility for change can be manifested:

O.P.: Cambiar el lenguaje no es cambiar al mundo pero el mundo no cambia si antes no cambiamos el lenguaje.

J.R.: El lenguaje nos cambia al ser cambiado. ‘El hombre pone en marcha el lenguaje’, dices tú en *El arco y la lira*. Y a su vez el lenguaje nos lleva, nos conduce ¿verdad? En varias ocasiones tú te has referido a la hermosa profecía de Lautréamont: la poesía será hecha por todos. (Ríos & Paz 1999, 143)

Paz had already demonstrated his attempts to use language in that way, as he shows by recounting the story of his meetings in the late 1940s with Spanish poets like Rafael Alberti and Luis Cernuda. First he emphasizes the subversive nature of Cernuda’s poetry in relation to the body in *La realidad y el deseo*, and second, he mentions Alberti’s praise for Paz’s attempt to transform language: ‘no es una poesía revolucionaria en el sentido político – dijo Alberti -, pero Octavio es el único poeta revolucionario entre todos ustedes, porque es el único en el cual hay una tentativa por transformar el lenguaje’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 61). The distinction made by Alberti indicates the position which Paz tries to clarify through his reference to Mallarmé’s dictum that poetry is a form of restricted action in the face of historical events: ‘frente a la Historia y frente a la muerte de un niño, Mallarmé dice que la literatura es la acción restringida’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 105). There can be links between forms of

poetic and revolutionary action but ultimately what interests Paz is the continuous attempt to transform language in order to avoid other forms of corruption. This interest leads Paz into an area of conflicting or contradictory ideologies because it is impossible to be critical of language and at the same time remain separated from contaminating politics. As Ríos comments about Paz's experiences in 1968: 'La corrupción del lenguaje es síntoma de otras corrupciones. *Postdata* – al igual que otras obras críticas de la literatura mexicana, como *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* – refleja muy bien el peculiar desarrollo de la historia contemporánea de México, la gradual corrupción de los ideales revolucionarios.' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 23).

Until 1968 Paz had been the Mexican cultural ambassador in India, but following the tragedy of the Tlatelolco Square student massacre in Mexico D.F., carried out by the military at the bidding of the State, Paz renounced his post as an ambassador³⁴. Mexico, long before Cuba, had been the first example of a Latin American country to have experienced a revolution after which most of their well-known and recognized writers and intellectuals (Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo and José Revueltas) collaborated closely with the government. After the 1968 events, that collaboration became unfeasible and Paz responded quickly by establishing a division between the realm of critical culture and the culture of the State: 'Una de las consecuencias de los acontecimientos de 1968 es esta división entre una cultura independiente, por

³⁴ This is precisely related to the first question addressed by Ríos in connection with Paz's feelings as a poet for his diplomatic past: 'Me siento más libre ahora. Haber dejado la embajada fue una liberación. Esto no quiere decir que, durante los años en que serví en el cuerpo diplomático de México, haya experimentado una contradicción entre mi situación oficial y mi actividad poética. Siempre pensé que se trataba de dos mundos paralelos, independientes. Además debo decir que no me sentía avergonzado de servir al gobierno de México en el exterior porque, fundamentalmente, estuve siempre de acuerdo con la política exterior mexicana.' (Ríos & Paz 1999, 15)

naturaleza crítica, y una cultura burocrática y oficialista. En México yo creo que ahora esta división es neta, clara, tajante.’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 21).

Thus, one thing which underpins the first conversation in 1971 is the importance of independent criticism for the formation of literature in the modern period. This enables literature to question itself, its surrounding socio-political elements and also its reflective absence from the Spanish and Latin American history up to that point:

El fundamento del mundo es la crítica. La verdad no es inmutable sino cambiante, crítica de si misma. En esto consiste la modernidad y por eso la insuficiencia de la crítica en España y América Latina delata que no somos plenamente modernos. (Ríos & Paz 1999, 143)

By the same token, Paz considers that Spanish and Latin American literatures also connect through a ‘tejido de relaciones’ which provokes affinities and relations amongst twentieth century writers on both sides of the Atlantic without recurring to the use of a nationalist critique. For example, Paz refers to influences ranging from the Galician writer Valle Inclán and the Mexican writer Lopez Velarde to the poetic influence of *Los Novísimos* group of poets which included Paz himself. It is a question of a set of relations which includes a communicative engagement amongst all those Hispanic writers who feed from the mutating system of borders and who are more interested in de-emphasizing the national discourse while, at the same time, highlighting the postnational momentum:

J.R.: La literatura en lengua española, cualquier literatura, es un sistema de vasos comunicantes: Sarduy, Cortázar, Lezama Lima, Fuentes y otros autores que antes mencionábamos.

O.P.: Un sistema de vasos comunicantes que se comunica con otros sistemas de vasos comunicantes: las literaturas de otras lenguas. Los grandes escritores españoles siempre fueron universales. Una literatura es una lengua; también es un espacio y es una Historia [...] pero una literatura es asimismo una relación con otros espacios, con otras lenguas, con otras historias, con otras literaturas, con otros tiempos.’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 107)

In *Solo a dos voces* the attention paid to the dialogic character as a form of engagement between text and reader opens the sense of interaction as an integral part of the reading process. When these interviews were being done, Ríos had already begun the process of writing the novel *Larva*. Although it was finally published as one volume in Barcelona in 1983, the first printed appearance of *Larva* was in 1973 in *Vuelta*, the Mexican literary magazine edited by Octavio Paz. According to Ríos, in those original fragments of *Larva*, there appeared various “comentarios cáusticos en lengua franca a Franco y su dictadura” (Twaihe 2005, 2) which were meant to be added to the still unpublished last volume of the *Larva* cycle (formed by six novels up to this point) entitled *Auto de fénix*.

Ultimately, one of Ríos’s quotations which highlights the intention behind his literary work refers to the abovementioned need for maintaining a sharp critical voice: ‘El intelectual cumple una función crítica, debe tener una actitud de rechazo ante el lenguaje momificado y falso, el lenguaje-disfraz que es el lenguaje del poder en la mayoría de los casos.’ (Ríos & Paz 1999, 21). The philosophical principle behind the previous quotation regarding the need to maintain and propagate critical voices underpins the postnational formation of *Revista Espiral*.

3.3 *Revista Espiral*: A Mapping Of Influences In A Knot Of Relations

Espiral surge con una voluntad rigurosa de interpretar los signos de una literatura que solo un lustro acá ha comenzado a destruir la escisión y la incomunicación entre España e Hispanoamérica: una recuperación del diálogo interrumpido en 1936.’
Andrés Sánchez Robayna (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 245).

This cultural magazine, whose first number saw the light in 1974 under the editorial direction of Julián Ríos, had three main purposes. The first consisted in re-

establishing cultural links between Spain and Latin America in the context of post-Francoism, as noted in the epigraph by the Spanish poet Andrés Sánchez Robayna. The second was the attempt to achieve the arduous task of familiarizing readers with the most unorthodox writers of contemporary literature and thought³⁵. The third was the emphasis on the postnational realm as a politics of aesthetics, realized by means of a language which avoids reinforcing any particular idea of the nation state which was in the process of formation after the end of Franco's regime.

Before we move on to explore the contents, ramifications and interconnections of *Revista Espiral*, however, it will be useful to contextualize it historically. In doing so, it will be especially useful to focus on the relations established between Spain and Latin America through Spanish literary magazines during the Francoist period as a continuation of the postnational realm in relation to Ríos as introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

This section begins with an epigraph from Sánchez Robayna which misleadingly refers to the period of five years previous to 1975 as one of the continuation of the dialogue between both sides of the Atlantic. Although this subject requires to be investigated in greater depth than is possible in this book, it is nevertheless important to clarify in some detail the nature of this confusion. As Jordi Gracia³⁶ indicates in the

³⁵ As the Spanish critic Jorge Rodríguez Padrón mentions two years after the first number of *Espiral*: 'Que un lector español pueda tener a mano y leer tranquilamente a un Novalis (*La enciclopedia*), un Sade (*Historia de Sainville y Leonore*), o a un Charles Fourier (*Nuevo mundo amoroso*) y un André Bretón (*Magia cotidiana*); o hasta los más próximos – naturalmente en el tiempo, nada más – Leonard Cohen (*El juego favorito*, *Los hermosos vencidos*) y Jacques Derrida (*La diseminación*), tiene visos de empresa no solo titánica sino imposible.' (Ríos (ed.) 1976b, 177).

³⁶ See also the other two books by Jordi Gracia, fundamental studies exploring the formation of critical resistance and the occurrence of cultural life during Franco's

introduction to the in-depth literary critical study written with Joaquin Marco *La llegada de los bárbaros: la recepción de la literatura Hispano Americana en España 1960-1981*:

Desde finales de los años cincuenta los circuitos para reconstruir la tradición liberal y democrática de España empiezan a ser transitables: los escritores hispanoamericanos van a intervenir en ese proceso cultural como agentes del cambio histórico de la mentalidad y la sensibilidad del español medio, y desde luego de sus medios cultos. (Gracia & Marco 2004, 49)

The first three cultural and literary magazines which explore in a critical way the new Spanish literary voices appearing either in Spain or in exile in Latin America are *Ínsula* (1946), *Índice* (1951) and *Papeles de Son Armadans* (1956). One of the main critical intentions common to those magazines was to fulfil ‘esa necesidad de intercambio y de intento de restauración de la desconexión histórica con América Latina’ (Gracia & Marco 2004, 88). The independence and opposition to the regime shown by those magazines is formed by what Carlos Barral came to define as a form of mistrust ‘de toda acción que no fuera dictada por la voluntad de sobrevivir en el terreno de la cultura al medio repugnante que nos ahogaba y nos seguiría ahogando’ (Gracia 2006, 36). However, the first literary magazine which really begins to pay attention to the literature produced in Latin America was *Acento Cultural*, which in 1961 allowed the inclusion in its penultimate number of an essay by the Colombian critic Darío Ruiz-Gómez entitled ‘“Sentido de la literatura hispanoamericana”, que es en ese momento la contribución más rica, completa e informada que haya aparecido en España sobre los nuevos escritores.’ (Gracia & Marco 2004, 68). This literary magazine includes the names of Borges, García Márquez, Rulfo, Sábato, Carpentier, Paz and many others who will become the most recognized literary figures in the

years: *La España de Franco (1939-1975) – Cultura y vida cotidiana* (2001), written with Miguel Angel Ruiz Carnicer, and *Estado y cultura: el despertar de una conciencia crítica bajo el franquismo, 1940-1962* (2006).

coming years. In 1963, two other important cultural magazines reappeared, expanding the ideological and critical domain. *Revista de Occidente* and *Cuadernos para el Diálogo* planted the seeds for a political transition and fulfil what Gracia affirms as the dynamic cultural nature of the decade of the 1960s in Spain:

De la identificación de reducidos núcleos de resistencia intelectual en los años cincuenta se pasa en los sesenta a equipos culturales y políticos vertebrados, con enlaces con otros grupos, circuitos editoriales y profesionales y el objetivo común de la modernización y democratización de la cultura española (aun cuando a menudo ese lenguaje disfrazaba formas muy confusas de ímpetus revolucionarios, incluidos impulsos dogmáticos. (Gracia & Ruiz 2001, 364)

It is in 1966 that the term 'Boom' is coined as a label for the literary explosion coming from Latin America. And it is the magazine *La Estafeta Literaria* (1966) which dedicates an entire number to Argentine literature and then it is *Índice* which in 1967 publishes a series of literary dossiers dedicated to the likes of Cortázar, García Márquez and Lezama Lima. In addition, in 1971 *Índice* dedicates two complete numbers to an in-depth exploration of the entire cultural background, and the texts, interviews and essays related to the polemic caused by the Padilla case in Cuba. On the whole, the common ideology connecting all the literary critics, writers and editors behind the cultural and literary magazines mentioned above was, according to Gracia and Marco, 'la resurrección de una vieja esperanza del liberalismo español: buscar la conexión con un continente maltratado y una cultura próxima en el imaginario de reivindicaciones históricas que comparten.' (Gracia & Marco 2004, 62).

In 1974 (the year of the quotation from Sanchez Robayna used for the epigraph opening this section), two other magazines (*Litoral* and *Trece de Nieve*) in Spain also addressed the issue of engaging with the other side of the Atlantic, albeit in a limited way due to the emphasis placed on Spanish literary and artistic works. *Litoral* –

Revista de Poesía y Pensamiento had been formed by a group of intellectuals from Málaga during the 1920s and it characterized their main interests and philosophy thus:

Un canal de expresión poética abierto a las nuevas tendencias pero también una vía de reivindicación política. Todo ello sin olvidar el pasado esplendoroso de la revista de la que pretendía ser heredera y las voces del exilio. (Ramos Ortega 2005, 136)

This magazine coincides with *Revista Espiral* in its international vocation, as was shown by its cover³⁷, and in its monographic approach per number, including illustrations and specific poems written exclusively for the magazine. As the editors Jose María Amado and Manuel Gallego Morell declared in May 1968, the main aim of *Litoral* was ‘Rendir un culto a la verdad que es – no a la verdad que conviene – y abrir la ventana de nuestra sensibilidad a los vientos renovadores que quieran purificar el aire de tantos compartimentos cerrados’ (Ramos Ortega 2005, 138). This was the same objective as the one to be pursued at *Revista Espiral* by reviving the critical debate of the period. *Litoral* had three specific publication periods: its first period was dedicated to the ‘Generación del 27’ (1926-29) while the second one, revived in Mexico by Emilio Prados and Manuel Altolaguirre in 1944, focused on Spanish writers living in exile like Juan Ramón Jiménez, Max Aub and León Felipe. The third period, ranging from 1968 to 1975, began to take increasing interest in Latin American political events including those in Chile where Pinochet’s coup d’etat took place around the time Franco’s rule was coming to an end in Spain.

The second magazine attempting to challenge the last years of Franco’s dictatorship is *Trece de Nieve. Revista de Poesía* (1971-77). This specializes in poetry and is illustrated with art works from Spanish artists like Federico Garcia Lorca, Pablo Palazuelo, Eduardo Chillida and Alfonso Fraile. The words with which this magazine

³⁷ The text ‘Torremolinos, Malaga, Andalucía, España, Europa’ would always frame the bottom section of the *Litoral* cover.

presents itself make explicit its intention of creating and criticizing as a rectifying move:

Ante la actual sensibilidad en crisis, se ha querido negar el pasado (el cero absoluto como punto de partida) o se ha afirmado el presente, rescatando e interpretando – al margen de la nostalgia – aquello que fue preterido o mal interpretado. *Trece de Nieve* desea insertarse en esta corriente de rectificación, creadora y crítica a la par. (Ramos Ortega 2005, 2110)

Its double function was both to introduce the new Spanish poets and rectify the literary landscape by introducing the creative vanguard of European, North American and Latin American writers and poets, including Pablo Neruda and Lezama Lima.

Taking into account the examples listed above, we could argue that Sánchez Robayna was overstating his case in arguing that *Revista Espiral* was the first and only literary magazine to reengage the pan-hispanic dialogue which had been interrupted by the war. We might also argue that, together with the previous literary examples mentioned in the opening pages of this chapter, the cultural magazine *Revista Espiral* simply adds another dimension to the cultural situation forced into existence by an overpowering cultural control exerted by a dominant and censoring State.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that *Revista Espiral* differs from the other magazines due to the exilic perspective shown by the names of the members of its board of advisers. It is this international gathering of writers which mobilizes the de-emphasizing of an exclusivist nationalist agenda and triggers the symbolic construction of postnational alliances by embracing language in all its complexity as their particular form of critique. Published in Madrid under the auspices of Editorial Fundamento, *Espiral's* board of Hispanic advisers was formed by five Latin American writers (Severo Sarduy, Octavio Paz, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Emir Rodríguez Monegal and

Haroldo de Campos) and four Spanish writers (Juan Goytisolo, Julián Ríos, José Angel Valente and Pere Gimferrer). The complete *Colección Espiral* lasted until 1980 and published 55 books in total. Within the complete collection, there existed five main thematic divisions:

a) The first group called *Espiral/revista* was formed of the following eight numbers:

1. *Liberaciones (de territorios, cuerpos, idiomas...)* (1976)
2. *Juan sin tierra* (1977)
3. *La casa de la ficción* (1977)
4. *Avances* (1978)
5. *Exploraciones, iluminaciones* (1978)
6. *Erotismos* (1979)
7. *Humor, ironía, parodia* (1980)
8. *Nueva escritura francesa* (1980)

The first seven numbers of *Espiral/revista* were coordinated and edited by Julián Ríos while the last number was coordinated by Gerard de Cortanze.

b) The second division was formed by '*Serie Figuras*' and was characterized by monographs, each of which was focused exclusively on a specific author. The structure of these volumes always contained a chronological autobiography written by the authors themselves, followed by an interview with the author, a selection of critical studies of their works and an unpublished chapter or fragment of their work in progress, finishing with a complete bibliography approved by the author. There were five numbers published on the following authors:

1. Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1975)
2. Severo Sarduy (1976)
3. Juan Goytisolo (1977)
4. Fernando Arrabal (1977)
5. Octavio Paz (1978)

c) The third one was titled '*Serie Ficción*' and it published a wide range of fiction, stretching from unorthodox writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century like Marque de Sade and Thomas Carlyle to twentieth century writers like the Cuban

Lezama Lima, the German Arno Schmidt and the North Americans Samuel Fuller, Leonard Cohen, John Barth and Thomas Pynchon.

d) The fourth series was '*Serie Teatro*' and it includes radical, controversial and progressive plays from the Spanish playwrights José Ruibal, Miguel Romero, Manuel Mediero, Alfonso Vallejo and also the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy.

e) And the fifth and last series was '*Serie Ensayo*', formed by the French poststructuralist philosophers and included Julia Kristeva's *Semiotica I* and *II* together with Jacques Derrida's *La diseminación*, the surrealist poet Andre Breton's *Magia cotidiana*, David Hayman's *Guia del Ulises* and Paul Illie's *Literatura y exilio interior: escritores y sociedad en la España del Franquismo*.

In the following sections I will be focusing on and exploring selections from all the publications in which Ríos was directly involved either as a compiler or an editor in order to highlight traces and characteristics which connect with what would later be an integral part of the poetics running through his own literary works. The only number of *Colección Espiral* not included in any of the divisions indicated above is the very first one opening the collection entitled *Octavio Paz. Transparencias/Teatro de signos*.

3.3.1 'Un libro libre': *Octavio Paz. Transparencias/Teatro de signos*

Teatro de signos y su reverso *Transparencias* es uno
de los trayectos (encarnación ↔ desencarnación)
de un libro libre en el que el lector puede partir,
repartir e incorporar las diferentes partes del cuerpo textual.
Julián Ríos (Paz 1974, 1)

As noted above, the inaugurating number of *Colección Espiral* in 1974 is *Octavio Paz. Transparencias/Teatro de signos*. It is formed of fragments of the essays and

poems written by Paz up to that point³⁸, selected and arranged by Julián Ríos. As a counterpoint to the conversations discussed above, the reference to Mallarmé's book project made out of loose pages comes to mind when confronted with this book. The fact that the book does not contain any index or that the pages are not numbered is just the first indication that the reader has total freedom to choose how to approach it. As it is set up, the covers indicate that *Teatro de signos* is the title opening the book from the left (Fig. 3) and *Transparencias* is the title belonging to what normally would be considered the back cover (Fig. 4), although in this case, it corresponds to the cover opening from the right. If the left cover shows a painting taken from the *Kamasutra*, the right cover is decorated with two *Kodachrome* slides showing abstract images.

³⁸ Poems: *Libertad bajo palabra* (1949)/ *Piedra de sol* (1957)/ *Salamandra* (1958-1961)/ *Blanco* (1967)/ *Ladera Este* (1962-1968). Poetic prose: *Águila o sol?* (1951)/ *El mono gramático* (1974). Essays: *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950)/ *El arco y la lira* (1956)/ *Las peras del olmo* (1957)/ *Cuadrivio* (1965)/ *Los signos en rotación* (1965)/ *Puertas al campo* (1966)/ *Corriente alterna* (1967)/ *Claude Levi-Strauss o El nuevo festín de Esopo* (1967)/ *Marcel Duchamp o el castillo de la pureza* (1968)/ *Conjunciones y disyunciones* (1969)/ *Posdata* (1970)/ *Fourier y la analogía poética* (1973)/ *El signo y el garabato* (1973)

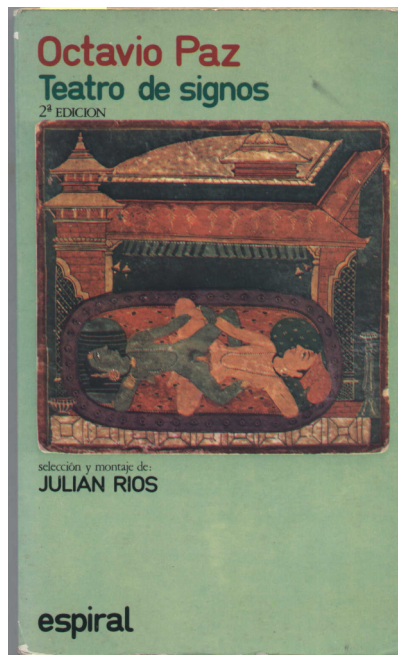


Fig. 3 Left Cover of *Teatro de signos/Transparencias*



Fig. 4 Right Cover of *Teatro de signos/Transparencias*

From the title *Teatro de signos* we cannot help but refer again to Barthes and, in particular, to the definition of writerly texts in terms of their reversible character as found in the emphasis placed on signifiers in modern and avantgarde texts. The poststructuralist description Barthes employs to describe a work by Philip Sollers, a member of the *Tel Quel* group, applies also to this work by Ríos:

The networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable. (Allen 2004, 90)

The only other guidance within the book is the opening page written by Ríos explaining the mechanisms at work and the representative intentions behind this particular arrangement. As the epigraph to this section shows, some of the themes highlighted by Ríos in explaining the purpose of this collection of fragments taken

from Paz's *oeuvre* also underpin some of the elements that will become an integral part of Ríos's own poetics.

The first of these is the fragmented nature of its arrangement or 'Ensamblaje de fragmentos' which Paz considers to be the most important artistic and philosophical form of expression of the time. For Paz, the fragment implies an implicit constant mobility which is interdependent with the surrounding context and which forms a particular mobile pattern, as suggested by the epigraph opening the first section of this chapter: 'un libro, un texto, es un tejido de relaciones'. The second is the position of the reader who gains status of co-authorship through the choices enabled by the 'libro libre', allowing each reader a particular interaction which continues to mobilize the writing. As Ríos writes in the prologue:

Esta lectura generativa (juego erótico: *jouer*) pone en movimiento a la escritura. La escritura/lectura como actividad lúdica (*play* en todos los sentidos de la palabra, sobre todo en el erótico) y el lector como autor/actor siempre en escena, en el juego, dispuesto a *jouer lui-même sa pièce*. (Paz 1974, 1)

According to Ríos this playfulness becomes an ingredient the reader needs in order to integrate and reformulate the text through the performative aspect of the reading act:

En este teatro de signos, la *performance* consiste fundamentalmente en suscitar la escritura: citarla, representarla. El arte es juego – y otras cosas. Pero sin juego no hay arte. *Teatro de signos* – montaje, *mise en scene*, reparto de fragmentos que ponen en juego toda la obra de Octavio Paz – aspira a ser juego, fiesta, festín del corpus escrito, teatralización del lenguaje. (Paz 1974, 1)

It is through this theatrical representation of language that the reader begins to form an open reading which never purposefully reaches a conclusion by itself. It reflects Barthes's essay quoted earlier: 'the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture [...] life merely imitates the book, and this book itself is but a tissue of signs, endless imitation, infinitely postponed.' (Barthes 1989, 53).

The four main subjects loosely integrating the book revolve around the uses and performances of signs within language, literature, culture and history. The interesting aspect of reading *Teatro de signos/Transparencias* is the randomly recurrent tendency of the subjects informing the quotations. What appears at first as a non-cohesive formation of texts begins to find its own patterns of interconnection the more the reader delves into the fragments selected while guiding the reader to a different route every time the book is opened.

To some extent, the double title condenses to a microscopic scale the meaning Ríos wants to provoke by applying the first title 'teatro de signos' as a rotating reading stage to Paz's subjects, whereby the continuous mutations which carry the reader become a strategy of liberation from the linear concept of the book. By using the metaphor of *Transparencias* as the other entrance into the book, Ríos sets in motion the tendency to project through the meaning of each specific quotation by itself, forcing the reader to continuously adapt to every particular text being confronted. As an example of the focusing and refocusing process, Ríos chooses one of Paz's concrete visual poems, wherein the word 'sino' is reflected underneath by its two syllables the other way around: 'no si'. Paz calls it 'Ideograma de Libertad: dos movimientos complementarios.' (Fig. 5). It is a sense formed by opposite principles which derive from the word 'sino' and by phonetic correspondence to the word sign. By selecting this fragment, Ríos emphasizes the altering sense of contraries at work in the formation of the sign.

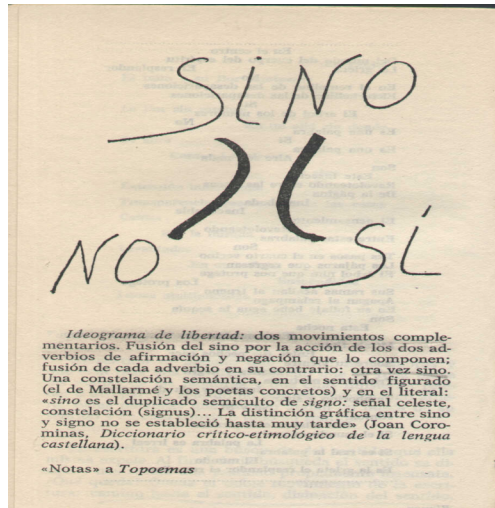


Fig. 5 *Teatro de signos/Transparencias* (Ríos (ed.) 1974, 254)

The sense of change without apparent motive which governs the montage of this book reverberates prior to the literary productions forming the *Larva* literary cycle developed later by Ríos. With hindsight, it could be said that some of the elements guiding Ríos's poetics are already visible through the choice of Paz's segments. Taking this point even further, the fact that the random choice becomes a strategy which informs Ríos's approach to literature makes this book more of a Ríos enterprise than of Paz, even if it is the latter's name which stands above the title and all the fragments selected are extracted from Paz's books.

Now I will highlight some of the main subjects which stand out by virtue of their constant appearance in *Octavio Paz. Teatro de signos/Transparencias*. Amongst the essential topics underpinning the selection of fragments and which will be reflected in aspects of Ríos's own *oeuvre* are those concerning language as a plurality in a constant move. Two consecutive quotations selected by Ríos from Paz's essay *Fourier y la analogía poética* (1973) highlight the use of language as a system of representation following Baudelaire's ideas:

En la concepción de Baudelaire aparecen dos ideas. Aunque la primera es muy antigua, en él se manifiesta de una manera obsesiva. Consiste en ver el universo como un lenguaje. No un lenguaje quieto sino en continuo movimiento: cada frase engendra otra frase; cada frase dice algo distinto y todas dicen lo mismo. El mundo no es un conjunto de cosas sino de signos. Lo que llamamos cosas son palabras: una montaña es una palabra, un río es otra, un paisaje es una frase. (Paz 1974, 145)

The logocentric focus takes over in the quotation that follows, emphasizing this time that language is the true author of the literary work:

El poeta y el lector no son sino dos momentos existenciales del lenguaje. Si es verdad que ellos se sirven del lenguaje para hablar, también lo es que el lenguaje habla a través de ellos. La idea del mundo como un texto en movimiento desemboca en la desaparición del texto único; la idea del poeta como un traductor o descifrador conduce a la desaparición del autor. Pero no fue Baudelaire sino los poetas de la segunda mitad del siglo XX los que harían de esta paradoja un método poético. (Paz 1974, 146)

On the whole, Ríos's choice of quotations from Paz pursues this sense of language building up tension amongst meanings while taking over every possible subject it attempts to represent:

Todo lo que nombramos ingresa al círculo del lenguaje y, en consecuencia, a la significación. El mundo es un orbe de significados, un lenguaje. Pero cada palabra posee un significado propio, distinto y contrario a los de las otras palabras. En el interior del lenguaje los significados combaten entre sí, se neutralizan y se aniquilan. (Paz 1974, 134)

As well as the question of the plurality of language, the importance of the reader in the deciphering of the text is clearly another of the topics selected by Ríos in this collection of Paz's writings. The emphasis consists in establishing that relation whereby the reader acquires the position of the writer in the process of deciphering the text:

Poeta y lector son momentos de una misma operación; después de escrito el poema, el poeta se queda solo y son los otros, los lectores, los que se recrean a sí mismos al recrear el poema. La experiencia de la creación se reproduce en sentido inverso: ahora el poema se abre ante el lector. (Paz 1974, 225)

If the previous quotation selected by Ríos from Paz's essay *Claude Lévi-Strauss o el nuevo festín de Esopo* (1967) gives the reader an empowering positioning, the following one taken by Ríos from Paz's essay *Puertas al campo* (1966) transfers the responsibility for meaning completely to the reader: 'El sentido de una obra no reside en lo que dice la obra. En realidad, ninguna obra dice; cada una, cuadro o poema, es un decir en potencia, una inminencia de significados que sólo se despliegan y encarnan ante la mirada ajena.' (Paz 1974, 245). It is through this process that the double movement of writing and reading becomes entangled until it disappears into something triggered by the reader confronting the text.

Finally, the emphasis established in the double title of this book comes to fruition in Ríos's choice of quotations taken from Paz's essay *El mono gramático* (1974) implying the theatre of signs and their transparencies of meaning referred to by the title:

Transmutación de las formas y sus cambios y movimientos en signos inmóviles: escritura: disipación de los signos: lectura. Por la escritura abolimos las cosas, las convertimos en sentido; por la lectura, abolimos los signos, apuramos el sentido y casi inmediatamente, lo disipamos: el sentido vuelve al amasijo primordial. (Paz 1974, 250)

These are all quotations which attempt to transmit the phenomenology behind the process of forming words in writing and then confronting these words in reading. That is to say, it is like moving from the stillness of the sign to the mobility of the signifier and onwards towards a constant process of searching for the meaning behind the written words in a fugitive mode. Or as the quotation which almost closes the book says about the transparencies of language:

No hay principio, no hay palabra original, cada una es una metáfora de otra palabra que es una metáfora de otra y así sucesivamente. Todas son traducciones de traducciones. Transparencia en la que el haz es el envés: la fijeza es siempre momentánea. (Paz 1974, 273).

In the end it seems that this editorial practice based on a montage of Paz's writings allowed Ríos to select and choose from the work of Paz everything which connects with him as a writer, in particular the two topics highlighted in the previous pages. The first of these is the mobility of a plural language and the second, the understanding of the reader as decipherer of that very language acquiring a writer's position in that process. Even at that stage he had begun to appropriate these for the formation of his own style.

These transferences also occur with the selections Ríos made for the seven issues of the magazine *Espiral* which he coordinated as an editor. Here the main subjects accompanying the structural edifice of his poetics continue to be a compass guiding the reader through Ríos's *oeuvre*.

3.3.2 *Espiral* revista 1: Liberaciones (de territorios, de cuerpos, idiomas...)

Published in Spain in 1976 this issue of *Espiral* shows forcefully, beginning with the red tinted round and geometric figures on the cover (Fig. 6), an attempt to explore forms of expression and representation outside of and beyond the official line of thought. This magazine is composed of two literary essays by Juan Goytisolo and the Brazilian Haroldo de Campos, a short radio play by Severo Sarduy, poems by the Catalan Joan Brossa, the Galician José Angel Valente and the Latin Americans Antonio de Campos and Octavio Paz, together with the first chapter ever published in Spain of Julián Ríos's *Larva*. The publication of this chapter allowed Ríos to test out the novel for the first time amongst Spanish readers.



Fig. 6 Cover of *Espiral/Revista 1: Liberaciones*

Severo Sarduy's play, *Los comedores de hormigas*, is an attempt to capture the impossibility of colonizing the other. Sarduy constructed the play around dialogue and musical distortion in order to avoid the expected processes associated with postcolonial domination and thus to resist postcolonial interventions in both land and bodies. According to Sarduy, its original intention was to attempt the following:

Practicar un relato pulverizado, una galaxia de voces, en la cual las individualidades y los tiempos verbales se contradicen y se anulan. Destrucción del individuo como una metropolis – la conciencia o el alma – con sus colonias – la voz, el sexo, etc. Disolución. DEL YO. (Ríos (ed.) 1976b, 7)

This methodology is similar to the one Ríos will incorporate into his *oeuvre* with the purpose of disintegrating the expected subject. As will be shown in the next chapter, the characters in Ríos's novels *Larva* and *Poundemonium* seem to embody that capacity to transform and mutate into other characters within the narrative flow of the novel, provoking that liberatory sense which Sarduy expresses in the above quotation.

The essay by Goytisolo is titled ‘La metáfora erótica: Góngora, Joaquín Belda y Lezama Lima or the Neobaroque influence seen from the perspective of three different writers’. Again, this essay touches on themes shared by Ríos, particularly the Neobaroque stress on language and its accumulation of signifiers to the point of saturation, expansion or multiplicity. With regard to the Cuban writer Lezama Lima:

La utilización del excedente significativo de las palabras – de su plusvalía verbal – permite a Lezama establecer una compatibilidad semántica de signos no relacionados anteriormente entre sí...todo símil engendra una serie causal en la que el vínculo importa más que los objetos que relaciona, hasta el extremo de borrarlos. (Ríos (ed.) 1976b, 42)

Those two Latin American writers rework the whole influence of the Spanish poet Luis de Góngora with his abundance of similes, images and rhetorical figures so as to explore ‘la metáfora gongorina’ and the fabrication of the ‘poliedro verbal’. Behind that overuse of language, which also links back to the group of writers belonging to the ‘Generación del 27’, the sensual approach to delaying the verbal body becomes an element where the performance of language gains another layer of representation:

El juego literario prolongará como un fin en sí la voluptuosidad de nuestra lectura. Erotismo y escritura barroca coinciden así, como ha observado Sarduy, en virtud de una común disposición lúdica: el humor, el cubanísimo “choteo” se infiltran en la metáfora lezamesca. (Ríos (ed.) 1976b, 52)

At the end of this essay Goytisolo equates Góngora’s influence on Hispanic literature with Joyce’s influence on English literature. He refers to what he calls ‘la aventura del proceso creativo del escritor.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1976b, 71), thus drawing inevitable parallels with Ríos’s literary influences.

The previous use of language taken from Góngora is also replicated in the chapter selected from *Larva (work in progress)* included in this literary magazine:

Remurmulher sin remisión y tú en remotos letargoces o idos sordomudeos. Erre que requie roque (4), - quién? Reque-reque, quién? Remuévete ya rehınca remolón, requiebra requebro em celo.

(4) Qué hay en un nombre?

Nadie lo sabe, en el fondo. Una odisea de los errores? Ahora, sobre la blancura de la hoja, el narrador es apenas don nadie: el Narrador, una voz que reclama en el desierto. Llamadme Narr, para abreviar'.

(Ríos (ed.) 1976b, 120)

The above reference allows us to perceive the inherent need for transformation in a literary medium which Ríos considered to be stultified by the socio political and historic inertia of the times. The intention in this issue of *Espiral* was to open the literary gaze onto unexplored territories beyond national frontiers with the aim of creating a multilingual form of critical dialogue which would also be aware of its mobile nature or another critical approach to the nation from the politics of their postnational aesthetics. The second number of *Espiral* itself influences that very direction by focusing on a groundbreaking work within Spanish literature: Juan Goytisolo's *Juan sin tierra*.

3.3.3 *Espiral* revista 2: *Juan sin tierra*

Goytisolo's novel *Juan sin tierra* was published in 1975 and forms the third part of the trilogy which started with *Señas de identidad* and *Reinvidicación del conde don Julián*. These three works form the three parts of a trilogy in which the writer Goytisolo pursues the exploration of self identity to its ultimate limit by finally attempting to acquire another one; thus he begins to write in Arabic characters while abandoning his previous Spanish identity. He does so as a form of revenge, reflecting back his own relation with his country of origin as a way of stating clearly his own postnational argument. *Juan sin tierra* goes further in its literary experimentation than the preceding novel by eliminating all graphic punctuation and all references to characters, narrators or the clarity of the novel's chronotopes. Moving through

marginal territories in places like Cuba, New York and Marrakech, the second person pronoun guides or misguides the reader through a landscape of ‘cambiantes, proteicas’ voices, a formal choice which will also become a trademark of Ríos’s work.

From the ink splashed drawing by Antonio Saura on the cover (Fig. 7), the reader’s first impression is one of rage expressed as if written on a wall, not very far from the Arabic graffitied inscription which closes Goytisolo’s novel and translates as a particularly pugnacious and menacing declaration of principles: ‘estoy definitivamente del otro lado, con los parias de siempre, afilando el cuchillo’ (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 10).



Fig. 7 Cover of *Espiral/Revista 2: Juan sin tierra*

This second number of the magazine opens with an interview with Goytisolo done by Julián Ríos and entitled ‘Desde Juan Sin Tierra’. It is followed by thirteen essays by Spanish, Latin American, English and German cultural critics on aspects ranging from

language and culture to masochism and the body, all centred around the novel *Juan sin tierra*. For the purpose of this book, it is appropriate to take note of the extent to which Ríos reveals himself through the questions he addresses to Goytisolo.

The main concern which informs the questions Ríos asks in the interview relates both to the implications for language understood as transgression and to the effects it can provoke in the face of power: ‘lógicamente hay un tabú universal y constante en todas las literaturas que prohíbe atentar contra el idioma materno petrificado o más bien patricado en la escritura por la Autoridad del Padre.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 12). At the time of this interview, Franco had been dead for a year so Ríos emphasizes the point of being aware of public usages of language and their relation to strategies of power applied to a transitional government which was already characterized as a nation state:

J.R.: Ya que hemos empezado a rondar por el festival de disfraces verbales: ahora, a más de un año de la muerte de Franco, ¿cómo ves tú la situación del escritor español ante el lenguaje? ¿No crees que las palabras son todavía más engañosas que antes?

J.G.: Uno de los fenómenos que caracterizan el periodo de transición en que vivimos es, en efecto, la desvalorización de una serie de términos que eran antes patrimonio exclusivo de la Oposición y ahora han sido apropiados por los continuadores del franquismo. Estos se han adueñado de ellos con el mayor desparpajo. Estamos pues ante un caso de inflación verbal y se impone una revisión del lenguaje porque las palabras pierden todo su sentido. (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 23)

It is this suspicion about language, expressed here by Goytisolo, which emphasizes the poststructuralist trait which will characterize one of the cores of Ríos’s literary style. That is to say, Ríos’s style will be focused around the artificial nature of language and its own materiality as a direct characteristic which will accompany the most performative period of his *liberature*. It is by means of that linguistic approach

that the transgressive nature of literature informs one of the aspects which attracts both writers:

J.R.: En realidad, lo que quería decirte o debería haber dicho (porque la ideología burguesa ya no es patrimonio exclusivo de una clase) es que las sociedades y el Poder suelen ir poco a poco institucionalizando, codificando y asimilando la mayoría de las transgresiones, empezando por las sexuales. En cambio, lo que creo que nunca admiten (y prueba de ello es que tratan de suprimirla con el manicomio, la ley del silencio o el escarnio) es precisamente la transgresión del lenguaje: para cambiar de verdad el mundo, habría que cambiar la lengua. Y esto (abrir las prisiones de nuestra propia lengua) es la máxima afrenta, la última frontera que no se debe franquear.

J.G: Sí, es el escándalo mayor. En efecto (y esto me parece que también Sarduy lo ha tratado), el escritor que atenta al código de comunicación aceptado moviliza contra él todas las ideologías porque su transgresión pone en peligro el esquema lingüístico que sirve de soporte a la propaganda de éstas. Es obvio por tanto que sea el blanco de todas las iras, tanto de la izquierda como de la derecha. (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 16)

Both writers agree in their critiques of ideologies which use language to repress or control with the aim of establishing their procedural handling and defence of power accordingly. Following from this critique of ideologies, the essay written by the Catalan poet Pere Gimferrer stands out from the others in the collection: *Juan sin tierra: El espacio del texto*. For the purposes of this book, the most important aspect is its focusing on the implications of the repression of language and the critique of its manipulative use:

Don Julián y Juan sin tierra ponen al descubierto no sólo la naturaleza represiva del lenguaje literario y coloquial hispánico – un lenguaje fundamentalmente colonizado por la secular usurpación de las derechas -, sino lo que es aún más decisivo los mecanismos de autorepresión que pueden hallarse profundamente anclados en la conciencia de los lectores. (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 176)

Another important element of this type of writing is that it approaches the text as something which is autonomous from reality. If the two previous novels by Goytisolo, *Señas de identidad* and *Don Julián*, still had an external spatial reference, in *Juan sin tierra* the text itself of the novel embodies the only referential space. As Gimferrer

remarks, ‘el texto es la suplantación – y por ende la crítica – de “nuestra” realidad. La fenomenología del texto sustituye a la de la percepción.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 181). This attempt to override reality through text not only applies to Goytisolo but will also become fundamental in Ríos’s writing. Therefore, throughout the book I will attempt to explore the inherent limitations of this kind of radical critique employed by Ríos. Hence, the implicit criticism writ large against this very form of writing by Gimferrer:

La crítica del lenguaje desde la escritura aun cuando sea crítica de la moral subyacente al lenguaje – no solo al lenguaje literario sino al lenguaje corriente, y por lo tanto, dependiente de los hábitos sociales que lo sustentan ¿acaso no tendrá una eficacia solo textual?
(Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 183)

Ultimately, closing his essay, Gimferrer recognizes the attempt to go beyond the text in order to recognize the verbal profanation carried out by the reading of Goytisolo’s book, even if the result of such an experience can only become an attempt built around the hopeful presence of a particular freedom: ‘La escritura nos ha exorcizado para que volvamos a ser libres: los actos de profanación verbal han operado su efecto. Le llega el turno a nuestra libertad.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1977a, 188). Therefore, Gimferrer’s argument that textual efficacy lacks influence on the external reality will be taken up and approached in the conclusions to this book.

3.3.4 *Espiral* revista 3: La casa de la ficción (Fig. 8)



Fig. 8 Cover of *La casa de la ficción*. *Espiral/Revista 3*

The third number of *Espiral* is structured by twelve essays focused mainly on the works of the Latin American writers including the Cubans Lezama Lima, Cabrera Infante, Severo Sarduy and the Argentinians Bioy Casares, Manuel Puig and Edgar Cozarinsky. Of the all the essays it is the one written by David Hayman titled ‘La Infraestructura Nodal de James Joyces’s *Finnegans Wake*’, which is most closely connected with Ríos. The subjects which stand out which will later on inform works by Ríos are: first, the notion of the activation of the reader by being exposed to narrative chaos through elements taken from the oral traditions as well as, second, the circular repetitions which influence and provoke the continuous possibility of multiple readings:

Dado que el libro es circular y se presta a múltiples lecturas (ninguna de las cuales puede considerarse verdaderamente primera, puesto que todas dan la impresión de ser una primera lectura gracias a la densidad y a la variedad del texto), teóricamente no importa cuál sea la localización textual del apunte original o nodo principal. (Ríos (ed.) 1977b, 266)

This quotation relates to many of the novels pertaining to the *Larva* cycle particularly as they require an implicit effort from the reader in order to explore all possible interpretative routes derived from its interactive approach:

El esfuerzo del lector, lo mismo que el del escritor, consiste en rescatar una individualidad de entre las mallas de un lenguaje sobre el que, si en muchas ocasiones llega a tener dominio, no es más que para ser vencido por él en otras tantas. La red proteiforme de sistemas nodales contribuye muy importantemente a este proceso mediante la imposición a la textura de un texto al que ya informan íntimamente, de unos órdenes rítmicos de dimensiones reconocibles aunque sin fijeza. (Ríos (ed.) 1977b, 284)

Hayman thus emphasizes the constant mobility inherent to the text confronted by the reader who attempts to construct an individual interpretation prone to mobilize an interactive, even if at times, fragile relationship due to its very elusive interpretative nature.

3.3.5 *Espiral revista 4: Avances* (Fig. 9)

This number takes its specific title literally and it includes another chapter of Ríos's novel in preparation *Larva*, together with texts, poems and essays from the writers Ríos normally associates with for this magazine. These include in particular Haroldo de Campos (with seven fragments taken from his poetic fiction entitled *Galaxias*), Severo Sarduy (with a chapter of the, at that time, still unpublished novel *Maitreya*, dedicated to Juan Goytisolo) and a closing chapter taken from Goytisolo's *Juan sin tierra* entitled 'Lectura del espacio en Xemaá El Fná'.

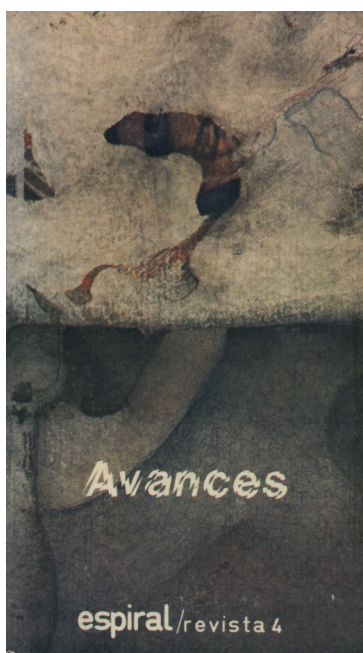


Fig. 9 Cover of *Espiral/Revista 4: Avances*.

In connection with Ríos's literary methodology three fragments highlight main features associated with his poetics. The first is the tacit participation of the reader as an interactive element in the poem of the Cuban Octavio Armand:

Al lector

va tomando cuerpo la palabra
diciendo lo que digo
digo la palabra y tengo cuerpo

tócame (Ríos (ed.) 1978a, 161)

The second consists of the consideration of writing as inscription in a palimpsest mode carrying notions of multiplicity and plurality within interpretation taken from the closing paragraph of Goytisolo's chapter 'Lectura del espacio en Xemaa-El-Fna':

Lectura en palimpsesto: caligrafía que diariamente se borra y retraza en el decurso de los años: precaria combinación de signos de mensaje incierto: infinitas posibilidades de juego a partir del espacio vacío: negrura, oquedad, silencio nocturno de la página todavía en blanco (Ríos (ed.) 1978a, 155)

The last, from the chapter of *Larva* included in this issue, is the action of *liberature* as a multilingual and performative strategy getting rid of any language constraints associated with any form of repression:

En realidad promiscuidad babélica en su sangre, en el azarandeo de su raza, diásporamente dispersa. Pueden cambiar de idioma como quien cambia de casa. The house of Ussher is falling down! La tuya, la casa de los muertos...Pero guardan las llaves que les abren las puertas de su origen. Prends la clef du champ, la llave maestra de una puerta española. Una llave, su pasaporte de generación en generación. And you, pinsont errant, did you have idiomsyncrasy? Sin sañas d'identidad, después del idiomatricidio. Pero nadie puede cortar del todo con su lengua. Razzmatazz! Ella decía ah sí que las palabras españolas a veces cortan como navajas. Un Nuevo idioma sajón ? Razz, razia! Tú también querías, errando y errando, forger en lingua franca l'esprit de tu razia! (Ríos (ed.) 1978a, 183)

Attempting to describe the multilingual origins of a female character, the narrator filters in exilic comments related to his own national identity and the fierce struggle to distort the signs which are left behind ('Sin sañas d'identidad, después del idiomatricio.'). Thus, by mixing Spanish with English, Italian and French while corrupting the rules of grammar with typographic errors according to the phonetics implicit in the construction of the phrase, *Larva* begins to manifest its constant and plural mutations and interactions which carry many of the philosophical influences and postnational approaches we have previously referred to in this book.

3.3.6 *Espiral revista 5: Exploraciones, Iluminaciones (Fig. 10)*

This issue continues to investigate those writers who put the emphasis on a literature in which the reader needs to get involved so as to decipher the confronted text. Thus, *Espiral 5* focuses on the essays of cultural critics concerned with those writers exploring the boundaries of literary expression.



Fig.10 Cover of *Espiral/Revista 5: Exploraciones/Illuminaciones*

It opens with the essay written by F.Peter Ott, 'El servidor de lo banal. Una introducción a la obra de Arno Schmidt'. This German author will interest Ríos because of his approach to writing as a collection of archives formed from unedited pages creating what Schmidt came to name as the following:

no-libros, hojas mecanografiadas publicadas por procedimientos fotomecánicos y no adulterados por la edición. Toda la obra de Schmidt es una poderosa mezcla de vida y literatura, aqua vitae destilada literariamente. (Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 9)

One of the aspects which will translate into Ríos's *Larva* is the spatial textual dimension Schmidt applies to his novels. This includes not only the use of typographical elements to replicate the simultaneous expression of the various characters involved in the novel in the form of cacophonies in action, but also the differential use of left and right pages so as to differentiate approaches. Ultimately, the connection returns back to the reader's involvement in the reading act:

El mismo Schmidt, en una entrevista recalcó esta dimensión especial al referirse a la interdependencia de las columnas del texto, por ejemplo las

del margen derecho e izquierdo, como a un “cilindro de lectura” que exige del lector una percepción coordinada, más que consecutiva, de todos los componentes simultáneamente...se trata de una estructura diseñada para reproducir en el lector la imagen correlativa del propio intento del lector-de-Poe-cum-autor de organizar sus distintas respuestas, reacciones y asociaciones subjetivas. Así pues el lector se encuentra invitado a recrear en su propia mente la genesis de una obra en la mente del autor.
(Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 46)

But if in the case of Schmidt’s hybrid novel, *Zettels Traum* (El sueño de la papeleta, 1970), the intention was to somehow mobilize a critical attack on the German State (‘el sistema establecido del Estado y la Iglesia (como fuerzas del Super-Ego)’ (Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 46), in the case of Ríos, the critique will be against the oppressive Franco regime. Ríos does so for the most part by neglecting that very regime but also by attempting to form a refreshing way of using the Spanish language removed from any form of oppressive state or inherited influences which may obstruct the liberational literary flow.

This fifth issue of *Espiral* also contains, as did the previous fourth issue, an essay written by Joyce specialist David Hayman on Stephen Dedalus, the character from *Ulysses* who has always had an influence on Ríos. But it is the next section of this magazine which sums up again Ríos’s literary approach by incorporating a visual poem titled ‘Reduchamp’ by Augusto de Campos. Edited by Julián Ríos, the poem is formed from concrete poems and visual images concerning the avantgarde French artist Marcel Duchamp. From this collection there stand out two poems which contain two aspects of Ríos’s poetics which are being investigated in this book. The first and most important of these is the notion of mutations applied from avantgarde aesthetics including the erasure of certain vowels as shown in the quotation below:

de lo verbal a lo no verbal
de la no figura a la figura
duchamp

desjerarquizó el arte
lo q interesa es el descubrimiento
el golpe inventivo
q puede asumir las estrategias más diversas
y no tiene q limitarse
a compartimentos o comportamientos
estancos
(“la” literatura, “el” verso, “la” pintura)
ni al “status” del soporte
(cuadro, libro) en q se proyecta la invención
(Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 148)

We see here the attempt to break through the limits between the different forms of representation, a style which Ríos will later try to implement in his own writings. Together with the particular use of language Duchamp employs through one of his heteronyms known as ‘RROSE SÉLAVY (q implica: arose, c’est la vie y éros, c’est la vie)’ (Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 138):

no satisfecho
con el doble sentido
acude al triple sentido
añadiendo el icono
al retruécano
o éste a aquel
y juega con ellos
es lo que Arturo Schwartz califica de
“three-dimensional pun”
(Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 138)

From these elements, the mutation of the borders between genres and also between words through the use of puns, Ríos begins to formulate two of the main aspects of his poetics. A proof of this is the next essay by the Venezuelan critic Ernesto Parra, ‘Los Textículos de Rosse Selavy en sus contempladores’. Parra traces those writers influenced by the texts written by Duchamps’s heteronym and the use of words which are joined through their phonetic sound without altering their etimological roots. From the list, the works of Severo Sarduy and Cabrera Infante provide examples of the practical use of Duchamps’s puns, but it is Ríos’s *Larva* which becomes the other main example:

El genio de Sélavy vuelve a encontrarse en la gehena o “zona erógehena” de *Larva*: escritura literalmente desplegada ante el espejo (página de la izquierda) donde, más allá de los significados de las distintas voces que confluyen o afluyen, influye la experiencia duchampiana (“Prends du champ mon champion...”) en la perenne contradicción del significado y su porqué: la palabra-ensambladura-de-letras (palabra-maleta) adquiere una nueva dimensión con respecto a sus significantes: maletra. La vocación iconoclasta de Julián Ríos reposa en el cauce desbordante/debordado de su obra.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 163)

The last essay from this number containing referential links to Ríos’s approach is ‘Tres Lecturas Contemporáneas’ by Gonzalo Díaz Migoyo. In this essay Migoyo attempts to offer alternative readings (or re-readings following from the epigraph he selects from Derrida) of Ferlosio’s *El Jarama*, Martín Santos’s *Tiempo de silencio* and Goytisolo’s *Juan sin tierra*. These are three Spanish novels which individually constitute particular breakthroughs in the history of Spanish literature and which for Migoyo show examples of the writer’s struggles with his language in order to be able to elaborate other forms of discourse which force the reader to grapple with unexplored literary relations and ‘territories’. As Migoyo says of Martín Santos: ‘su labor después de *Tiempo de silencio* había de ser necesariamente una de lucha a brazo partido con las palabras: “Tendré que demoler el idioma” (Ríos (ed.) 1978b, 188). This is something of which Ríos is very much aware: not only does he include it in this number of the magazine, but it will also become his particular trademark within the strategy of *liberature*.

3.3.7 *Espiral revista 6: Erotismos (Fig. 11)*

This issue is formed by another chapter from Ríos’s *Larva*, announced as ‘capítulo de una novela en preparación’. It also includes a series of six erotic sonnets written by Severo Sarduy, a poem by Hector Olea and seven essays covering different aspects of erotism in literature written by the Latin Americans writers Guillermo Cabrera

Infante, Ricardo Barnatán and Jose Antonio Millán. The essay which contains most connections with Ríos's work is 'Erotismos en *La lozana andaluza*', written by Diego Martínez Torrón, which refers in particular to the use of experimental language in all its variations always as a prominent element.

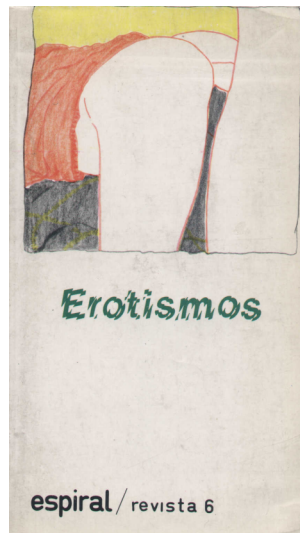


Fig. 11 Cover of *Espiral/Revista 6: Erotismos*

Written in the XVI century by Francisco Delicado, *La lozana andaluza* exposes the marginal life of the city of Rome of that period using language in a polymorphic way so as to capture all the different marginal oral details of the place and the time:

En este texto confluyen, exilados lejos del culto lenguaje de su patria origen, todos los vocablos marginales. Germanía, arabismo, latinismo, italianismo, catalán, castellano viejo. Siempre en función central del tema-eje que es la mujer Lozana, o la ciudad Roma: símbolos del amor. El erotismo contamina el texto. Las palabras hacen y se deshacen. Las alusiones se refractan en cada término. (Ríos (ed.) 1979b, 87)

The mixture of languages also affects the expression of the characters and brings out their specific verbal particularities. This strategy forces the work to be uniquely dependent on dialogue as a form of narration without any other description or notation explaining the action. This form of narration will be thoroughly explored by Ríos in the first series of novels of *Larva*, integrating the multilingual mix of foreign

languages as a complete dependency on dialogue as narrative tool. Language takes the foreground by becoming the filter of the actions being portrayed:

El lenguaje recoge en su confusión babelizante, todo el submundo de la ciudad ajetreada, traficada, brillante, popular, libertina, procaz, divertida y luminosa' (Ríos (ed.) 1979b, 94)

The above quotation refers to Delicado's novel, but it could also describe *Larva's* torrential use of language in capturing that temporal slice of marginal life in London during the early 1970s. Furthermore, just as Delicado names the chapters of his novel as 'mamotretos', so will the narrator in *Larva* refer to the book that is being written as a work in progress, emphasizing the actual process of writing:

Mientras se está haciendo la obra, hay una especie de autoconsciencia. La narración se desarrolla en una especie de presente que parece verídico, que está sucediendo, y va siguiéndose. *La lozana andaluza* se adelanta así a las técnicas narrativas modernas. A la consideración actual acerca del lenguaje.' (Ríos (ed.) 1979b, 97)

What is of interest here is this particular use of language in order to create the sense of a present being recounted as if it is being formed at the moment it is being written. As we will see later, this is something which will become another essential aspect of Ríos's approach in many of his works, although specifically in *Larva* and *Poundemónium*.

3.3.8 *Espiral* revista 7: Humor, ironía, parodia (Fig. 12)

And finally, the seventh issue of *Espiral* contains a short fictional piece written by the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade, two poems by Cobo Borda and Felipe Boso and four essays written respectively by Emir Rodríguez Monegal on Borges, Linda Gould Levine on the use of parody throughout Goytisolo's oeuvre, Gonzalo Díaz Migoyo on the workings of irony and David Hayman on Bakhtin's mechanism of farce.



Fig. 12 Cover of *Espiral/Revista 7: Humor, ironía, parodia*

For the purposes of this section, the most useful entry is the interview with the Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante by Julián Ríos: ‘Infante para una Habana difunta’. The interview revolves around the novel *La Habana para un infante difunto* (1979), an autobiographical *Bildungsroman* focused on the experiences of a young Cabrera Infante living in Havana. Still, as we observed in Ríos’s interview with Goytisolo, the use of language takes an important place in the questions addressed by Ríos, giving writing itself equal status with external reality:

J.R.: Quizá lo que tú llamas ‘irrealidad’ puede ser también una extensión de la realidad, algo así como un suplemento que añades a la realidad habanera de aquellos años para que parezca más real o irreal. Ahí interviene una realidad no menos concreta que el mundo exterior: la escritura. (*Espiral revista 7*, 145)

Together with the pun, the other rhetorical stylistic device which both writers employ constantly in many of their novels is alliteration. At the time of this interview, Ríos was still writing *Larva*, in which the continuous presence of alliterations becomes as much an internal aspect of the writing as a form of nemotechnics which works subliminally on the reader. As Ríos mentions to Cabrera Infante, ‘la aliteración es

algo que me interesa especialmente, por razones larvarias.’ (Ríos (ed.) 1980, 148).

Those reasons Ríos refers to, form part of the work in progress related to *Larva*:

Por ejemplo, al itinerar aliterando sin saberlo...Al menos, desde mi limitada experiencia, puedo decirte que en mi ‘work o worm in progress’ *Larva* las zonas más fáciles y lineales están atiborradas de aliteraciones que en gran parte pasarán desapercibidas, como la carta camuflada a la vista del célebre cuento de Poe, y que quizá sólo puedan actuar de un modo subliminal. (Ríos (ed.) 1980, 152).

By using alliterations, Ríos and Cabrera Infante focus on the sonority of language in an attempt to add that certain timbre characteristic of the writing which reflects its own artificiality and provokes its direct presence in the experience of reading it. As Ríos closes the interview with Cabrera Infante, the emphasis on sound is evident to the extent of creating a type of literature in itself which stands on a different plane: ‘nos has dado la pista de un importante efecto sonoro: la aliteración. A partir de tu partitura de *La Habana para un Infante Difunto*, y gracias a la aliteración, quizás has llegado ya a la aliteratura’ (Ríos (ed.) 1980, 165).

Retracing the formal literary and content connections through the different numbers of *Espiral Revista*, it can be seen that one tendency stands out and is repeated over and over again within the editorial practices of Julián Ríos. This is his capacity to select and choose from the different Spanish, Latin American and European writers, cultural critics, poets and artists, a wide range of those subjects which will later manifest themselves in his own *oeuvre*. The most important of these are the experimental approach to language and the pushing of literary boundaries as well as the interactive relationship expected from the reader exposed to the literary works. Somehow this cultural magazine became the workshop through which different elements forming other writers would be transformed into a body of literary work. It

also highlights clearly the beginnings of Ríos's interest in going beyond the nation in practices that can be associated with the postnational.

3.4 Conclusion

As has been shown in this chapter, from this initial period Ríos incorporates from the writers he discusses and publishes many of the approaches which will form the backbone of his own works over the next two decades. These include, in particular, his attempt always to maintain the qualities of mutation and interaction in order to allow the possibility of permeating all the different structures at work, from sound and signifier to the reader's active participation, passing through the usage of periodization itself. In what follows, and this chapter can work as a metronome of sorts regarding this point, exploration will be made of Ríos's attempts to mutate his *oeuvre* so intensely from a position of liberatory influences within the act of writing and reading evolve over the next two decades as the oppressive Francoist cultural legacy is left behind. The question is thus whether the original liberating intentions begin to retreat and his work gradually loses its initial gravitational force the more he leaves behind the impulse to renew and refresh a loaded language paralyzed by dictatorship.

Still, as the next chapter shows with the exploration of *Larva* and *Poundemonium*, Ríos begins to mobilize into his literary practice the momentum established along the lines implied by the following quotation from Barthes's *On Reading* (1975): 'it will never be possible to liberate reading if, in the same impulse, we do not liberate writing.' (Barthes 1989, 41).

Chapter 4

Exploring The Limits of *Liberature: Larva & Poundemónium*

Palabra a palabra. Larvorando, palavra a palarva
(Ríos 1983, 266)

A great feast of slanguages...A movable feast!
(Ríos 1983, 28)

From the theorization established in previous chapters to the above epigraphs taken from *Larva*, it is already possible to infer the literary strategy presented by Ríos at this stage of his *oeuvre*. As language is forced to incorporate its own phonetic echoes as word deformations, the reader is required to interpret a possible meaning from an interactive positioning. In this process, the attempt to maintain an interpretative freedom is experienced from the reading practice. The fact that the word ‘palabra’ is loaded and transformed around variations of the word ‘larva’ mobilizes a whole series of possible meanings which each reader will need to decipher accordingly.

Ríos’s perspective is similar to that expressed by James Joyce in a letter from 1926³⁹ referring to one of the most cryptic twentieth century novels, *Finnegans Wake*: ‘One great part of every human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of *wideawake* language, *cutanddry* grammar and *goahead* plot.’ (Joyce 1926, 146). Ríos will follow a similar path by attempting to push the boundaries of language through that ‘feast of slanguages’, quoted in the epigraph, employed by the characters populating the pages of *Larva* and *Poundemonium*, two of the most demanding novels published in Spanish during the second part of the twentieth century. As David Hayman, one of the most prestigious critics of James

³⁹ Addressed to Harriet Shaw Weaver, the person in charge of financing Joyce’s literary endeavours. See *The Letters of James Joyce*.

Joyce's work, declares: 'Julián Ríos continúa la estela creada por la aparición del *Finnegans Wake* de Joyce, y con él, se enfrenta cuerpo a cuerpo con el lenguaje, en exclusiva y en foco cercano.' (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 67).

Thus, this chapter will focus on those novels with the intention of discovering, first, those aspects relating to their intrinsic exilic condition and ever growing postnational tendency together with, second, their unorthodox dialogic aspects following from the poststructural influence explored in the second chapter. Of particular interest will be the hypertextual interaction and the constant relation to the reader as co-author. The totality of these characteristics will frame the limits of the most intensive phase of interaction within Ríos's *oeuvre* together with the first stage of fragment usage called 'the four fold fragment'. This includes all the elements working as operative guides which feed the concept of *liberature* coined by Ríos. It is a type of literature which demands from readers to act as co-authors given its open and generative production of meanings informed by their interactive and prismatic multiplicity.

The fact that these two novels are so ambitious both in terms of form and content has meant their common and constant absence from the national canon as well as making it difficult to find entries in Spanish literary historiographies⁴⁰. The only two exceptions which contain in-passing references to *Larva* are the sixth volume of Jean Canavaggio's *Historia de la literatura española* and the ninth volume, edited by Jordi

⁴⁰ See *Historia de la literatura española* (2010) edited by José Carlos Mainer; *Historia de la literatura española* (1993) edited by Jesús Menéndez Peláez; *Historia y crítica de la literatura española, Los nuevos nombres 1975-1990* (1992) edited by Dario Villanueva; *Historia de la literatura española* (1991) edited by Ricardo de la Fuente; *Historia de la literatura española 6/2, El siglo XX: literatura actual* (1984) edited by Santos Sanz Villanueva and *Historia de la literatura española* (1980) edited by José María Díez Borque.

Gracia, of *Historia y crítica de la literatura española*. The former presents *Larva* as ‘la única tentativa española de crear una Ursprache universal, una lengua babélica’ (Canavaggio 1995, 323) and Julián Ríos as ‘estruendoso innovador, aunque quizás sin descendencia’ (Canavaggio 1995, 324). In the latter, Gracia labels Ríos’s *Larva* as part of Post-Franquism’s avant-garde literature (‘entre nosotros y en el período indicado Pierre Menard ha sido modelo y guía. La escritura de Julián Ríos representa punto por punto lo que digo, por no citar otros experimentos [...]’ (Gracia 2000, 27)).

Ríos confounds all the expectations the reader might have, transforming canonical literary rules into chaotic guides through the inexhaustible combinatory word structure which erects the literary edifice of *Larva*. These characteristics explain why some consider this novel to be not only a direct inheritor of James Joyce’s last work, but also, according to Octavio Paz, to belong to the ‘tradición más radical’ (Ríos 1983, 4). In a similar way to Paz, Carlos Fuentes categorizes it to be ‘la gran novela del lenguaje’ (Ríos 1983, 4); Juan Goytisolo recognizes it as ‘una auténtica fiesta’ (Ríos 1983, 4) and Severo Sarduy places it amongst ‘una de las 10 mejores novelas escritas en español desde el 39’ (Ríos 1983, 4). In summary, it is an example of a radical novel in its literary expression, daring to express an exilic standpoint outside a cultural context in which ‘los efectos de 35 años de franquismo subsisten así dos décadas después de la muerte del dictador: las estructuras patrimoniales no han cambiado y, en términos generales, los dueños de prebendas y parcelillas de poder tampoco’ (Goytisolo 1999, 20)⁴¹. Ríos’s implicit intention with *Larva* and

⁴¹ This quotation is taken from Juan Goytisolo’s *Cogitus interruptus* in the section titled ‘Nuestra cultura’ from the essay ‘La ocultación del saber’. See also Manuel Vázquez Montalban, who explains the problematic in a similar manner: ‘todo lo que había sido crítico se consideró obsoleto, y así como el franquismo mutiló la historia heterodoxa con las tijeras podadoras, el palanguerismo de la transición ha mutilado la

Poundemonium has a direct objective: ‘Hay que procurar que revienten de risa las pompas casi siempre fúnebres de la literatura’ (Sanchez & Díaz 1985, 220). In the context of everything which has been said above it is impossible to avoid noting that the complex presentation and linguistic combination in *Larva* and *Poundemonium* are exercises of intense formal attention as much as literary examples which force the reader to participate in the creative process of *liberature*.

The theatrical character which is applied through *Larva*’s scenery from beginning to end acts as a continuous reaffirmation of the poststructuralist influence which forms an intrinsic part of Ríos work at this stage of his career. The aim is to criticize all forms of control over ways of living which ultimately affect the workings of an imagination exposed to the oppressions of a nation. Ríos chooses a classic Spanish female name to emphasize the experience lived under Franco’s regime: ‘O sanguine and subtle Dolores...: Our Lady of Spain’ (Ríos 1983, 166). In the case of *Larva*, the physical distance from Spain materialized through exile provokes the linguistic distension which creates a language of difference, working as a counterpoint to existential tension: ‘Año de siete, deja a España y vetel!: Sí, de Sabios es preparar las Siete Partidas...’ (Ríos 1983, 78). It is that very approach to the exilic question which gives Ríos the freedom to push the linguistic boundaries to the limits he is searching for in *Larva*; thus the London setting plays a fundamental part in the elaboration of the *Larva* project: ‘S’exilió en un Wonder-London portátil’ (Ríos 1983, 471).

There are two mottos which Julián Ríos always mentions as essential to this stage of his writing. The first one comes from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s

memoria crítica’, as quoted by Rodríguez Puértolas in her *Quimera* essay entitled *Las Voces y los Ecos*.

Tractatus Logicus Philosophicus: ‘Los límites de mi lenguaje son los límites de mi mundo’ (Gazarian 1990, 1). The second comes from Hasan ibn-Sabbah, leader of the twelve century Iranian sect known as Ismaili, and says ‘nada es cierto, todo está permitido’ (Gazarian 1990, 1). Both quotations are fundamental to understanding Ríos’ attempt to expand his linguistic expression through *Larva* as described in the interview with Gazarian Gautier: ‘quiero que mi lenguaje sea tan ancho como Sancho’ (Gazarian 1990, 2). That is to say, he aims to search for the greatest possible freedom of expression, without being limited by rules, grammars or preestablished literary codes. The writing is formed according to what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida considered the authentic space of literature:

Not only that of an instituted fiction but also a fictive institution which in principle allows one to say everything. To say everything is no doubt to gather, by translating, all figures into one another, to totalize by formalizing, but to say everything is also to break out of prohibitions. To enfranchise oneself in every field where law can lay down the law. The law of literature tends to, in principle, to defy or lift the law. (Derrida 1992, 36)

Larva incorporates the exilic dimension as another literary strategy which lifts as many barriers to expression as possible: ‘Todo está permitido, si nada es —: Sh! Sh! Alla muta. Here everything is spermissible. Se permiente todo. Totuus. Vale!’ (Ríos 1983, 156).

Given that *Larva* originated during the final phase of Franco’s regime (whose first expression was the assassination of the high-ranked army member Carrero Blanco by an ETA bomb), the liberating attempt it expresses on all fronts is intrinsically linked to the need to counteract the castrating presence of a regime which exerted such an overpowering external, as much as internal, oppressive control over individuals and groups. The established repression within the hierarchical order constituted from an

oppressive patriarchal figure is translated to the novel as ‘la ancha mancha lechosa’ (Ríos 1983, 26) of a country ‘Maid in S(p/t)pain’ (Ríos 1983, 18) under the omnipresent figure of the dictator. In the ninth section of his critical ‘Decenario’ written for a monograph entitled *Las nuevas letras 1975-1985*, Ríos criticizes the state of affairs in the Spanish literary world: ‘todavía no ha muerto el perro de Paulov ni se acabó la rabia. El Dictador sigue dictando el lenguaje de buena parte de nuestra novela, lastrada y castrada por plúmbeas retóricas’ (Ríos 1995, 95).

In another section of *Larva*, the ever-elusive narrator observes from the perspective of a plane the Spanish territory as a changing critical problem: ‘Peau d’Espagne? Peau de Chagrin? Peau d’Âne?: De pena, la piel del diablo! Otro toro, hispasno en picado. Pero desde las alturas, en vuelo se va achicando. Zapa, zapa, zape de ahí! Y cambia de piel, la piel de otro!, porque no quisiera hallarme en su pellejo.’ (Ríos 1983, 188). In the same way, the narrator refers to the Spanish land by transforming the famous verse from Antonio Machado’s poem ‘El mañana efímero’⁴² into ‘La Spanndereta?: De charanga y pan durete...Allá abajo el almuzara de la algazara...Y de las algarradas’ (Ríos 1983, 188). All those quotations which appear at key moments of the novel confirm that we cannot begin to investigate the pages of *Larva* without also looking at the social and political context from which it originates. The novel also feeds from this historical circumstance by taking into account the repressive gravity surrounding all existential spheres exposed to Franco’s dictatorship. As Juan Goytisolo observed in an essay in 1977, *Larva* attempts to explore a variety of expressive limits located beyond fixed literary paradigms: ‘Julián Ríos maltrata,

⁴² In Machado’s collection of poems *Campos de Castilla* (1912): ‘La España de charanga y pandereta, / cerrado y sacristía, / devota de Frascuelo y de María, / de espíritu burlón y alma inquieta, / ha de tener su marmol y su día, / su infalible mañana y su poeta.’ (Machado 2007, 136)

manosea, violenta, sodomiza una normalidad lingüística que ha servido de vehículo transmisor a la increíble opresión (ideológica, política, social, sexual) en la que hasta fecha reciente, quien más, quien menos, todos hemos vivido.’ (Sanchez & Díaz 1985, 20).

It is precisely this attempt to elaborate another cosmos out of the oppressively censoring Spanish one Ríos left behind which guides the gravitational narrative impetus from beginning to end. ‘Al abandonar el Cosmos Ordenado (Patria, Familia, Religión) el hombre contemporáneo ordena una y otra vez el mundo’ (Eco 1998, 80) writes Eco concerning the creative force behind Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Everything which may limit or censor Ríos’s intentions will accordingly be criticized throughout *Larva*. To give an example, the main institution to receive a direct critique will be the church: ‘Hágase en mí según tu palabra: Y faltaste a ella. Le faltaste a ella’ (Ríos 1983, 106). The first to be mentioned will be the priests and ‘su vida monacal, con una sola monomanía’ (Ríos 1983, 59). This quotation contains a note which leads the reader towards the opposite page where it reads: ‘Rascársela como un mono?: Capuchino! Monomanía, monanismo de la vida monástica.’ (Ríos 1983, 58). Afterwards, the hypnotizing effect of the biblical message which is beyond criticism⁴³ receives another critical quotation:

Degusten nuestros salmones penitenciales y nuestros ostiones y langostias. Nihil lobstat! The Host is a crust..., así como lo oyen. Es un anfistrión capaz de tomar todas las formas. En el fondo es un pedazo de

⁴³ See *Cartas de España* written by the exiled Spanish priest and writer Blanco White: ‘Afortunadamente para los intereses de la Iglesia, los hombres raras veces pasan un cierto eslabón en la cadena del pensamiento ni se conceden fácilmente la libertad de investigar las fuentes de las doctrinas aceptadas tradicionalmente. Por otro lado, su sistema teológico ha crecido de manera adecuada para compensar las deficiencias que se le han encontrado y ofrece amplio campo al espíritu que, sin atreverse a examinar los cimientos, se contenta con la simetría de la estructura.’ (Blanco White 1991, 66)

pan. El papantomismo nuestro de cada día. Con muchamiga!’ (Ríos 1983, 131)

Against the authority of the dictator who described himself as ‘caudillo de España por gracia de Dios’, the iconoclastic side of Ríos liberates his own writing: ‘A devorar todos los libros sagrados...Sacra, crasa sapiencia! Dios sabe cómo sabe...A glo-glo-gloria!’ (Ríos 1983, 131). Using the legacy of the oppression experienced by Ríos during Franco’s dictatorship, the writing of *Larva* attempts to involve the reader so as to arrive at the expressive limits Goytisolo mentions in ‘La herencia de Cervantes’ in his collection of essays entitled *Cogitus interruptus*:

La gran lección de Cervantes y de quienes tras él sintieron la necesidad de romper la camisa de fuerza que les oprimía – de Diderot y Sterne al puñado de autores que *cervantean* hoy -: acceder a la literatura a partir de la anomalía, situarse deliberadamente al margen de modas, corrientes y géneros. (Goytisolo 1999, 180)

From the previous perspective, Ríos projects the declaration of principles of *Larva*’s main character Milalias about the Spanish language: ‘Cast a new Castilian!: Vaciar un nuevo castellano...para ensanchar y quijotizar la mancha originital...Detesterar el castrellano para escapar de las comedias de capa y espadón. Promiscuartear el castollano para estuprozar y carnovelar larvarios romances londoneados.’ (Ríos 1983, 440). In that process, the interaction with the reader as ‘bricoleteur’ feeds a radical literary form of expression which attacks all manifestations of oppression particularly in relation to the characters of *Larva*: ‘Podre todo poder Pow(d)er’ (Ríos 1983, 86). In order to reveal this process, I will carry out a closer reading of *Larva* than of *Poundemonium*. This is because I consider *Poundemonium* to be an extension of *Larva*: the claims I make about the first novel in the series will also apply to the second.

Ríos’s *Larva* and *Poundemonium* prove their radical affirmation as a ‘forma polivalente del *chaosmos*’ (Eco 1998, 26), to use the words with which Umberto Eco

described the work of Joyce in *Las poéticas de Joyce*. Ríos also feeds from the same creative paradigms and is aware of Joyce's famous dictum about the necessary attitude towards the act of writing: 'we must write dangerously: everything is inclined to flux and change' (Power 1978, 95). Moreover, the emphasis is as much on the displacement of place as of sense, provoking an altering and even alien experience of any conclusive understanding, starting from the very language itself and expanding to include the role of the reader. Thus, in the following section I will give a close reading of *Larva* in relation to the poststructural materializations defined in previous chapters as the notion of reader as co-author.

4.1 *Larva's* *Liberature*: In Search of Readers as Co-authors

Las palabras se le subían a la cabeza?:
ya sabes cual es la droga más poderosa
(Ríos 1983, 202)

A paladear la palabra...:
Dándole vueltas en la lengua...
(Ríos 1983, 206)

Between 1973 and 1982, *Larva* was published only in individual chapters in Spanish and Latin American literary magazines, such as *Vuelta* in México, *Eco* in Bogotá, *Hueso Húmero* in Lima, *Espiral revista* in Madrid and *El Viejo Topo* in Barcelona. In 1983, with a run of 3203 copies, the first edition of *Larva* was published in Barcelona by Edicions del Mall. Since then, it has been translated into English, German, French, Portuguese and Swedish. However, even if its original reception amongst Spanish readers was limited, it caused a great stir mainly amongst those Hispanic writers interested in radical forms of literature. As Juan Goytisolo remarks, 'pocas obras en la reciente historia española han suscitado antes de salir tantas expectativas, provocado

admiraciones tan entusiastas, ocasionado tantos recelos y hecho correr tanta tinta.’ (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 5).

Amongst those expressions of admiration for radical forms of literature mentioned by Goytisolo, one stands out in relation to the theoretical approaches which relate directly to Ríos’s argument for reader participation. I am referring to the reader response theory developed by the German literary theorist Wolfgang Iser. Iser’s understanding of the literary work as centred on the aesthetic response developed by the reader as much as on the indeterminacy of the text become central points of engagement with Ríos works. This is particularly true in the case of *Larva* and *Poundemónium*. As Ríos comments in relation to *Larva*, whenever asked if the reader should be initiated in order to be able to comprehend his work, the key element is the lack of a model or form to follow: ‘No, absolutely not, but every reading is gradual. There are various levels or stories in any minimally complex work. I would like my tower of Babel or babble to have many stories, different floors and different tales’ (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 1). According to Ríos, each reading adds another layer and even more when trying to explore or represent what still has no form within a zone of fecund ambiguity: ‘Palabras sueltas, sin pies ni cabeza.’ (Ríos 1983, 275). It is this indeterminacy that converts the reader of *Larva* into a direct example of the implied reader described by Iser’s theory and its inexhaustible sense of potential meanings.

Larva, subtitled *Babel de una noche de San Juan* (Fig. 13), begins with a fancy-dress party located in a semi-abandoned mansion by the River Thames, in South London at the beginning of the Sixties. Following the steps of a character named Don Juan, who is in turn running after a character called ‘Bella Durmiente del Bosque’, the reader discovers that both are narrated by the two main characters of *Larva*: Milalias (or the

man with a thousand aliases) and Babelle (whose name inevitably recalls the character of Plurabelle in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*). By the same token, those two characters will also reveal that they are both being narrated by a third character named Herr Narrator: 'Una especie de ventrílocuelo que malimita nuestras voces, explicó. El ecomentador que nos dobla y trata de poner en claroscuro todo lo que escrivivimos a la diabla. Loco por partida doble, Narr y Tor, por eso le puse en germanía Herr Narrator.' (Ríos 1983, 12). That is to say, there is an accumulation of narrative layers which eliminates any reference to a guiding narrative because, when least expected, one character mutates into an echo of the other, or becomes a double of the original one.

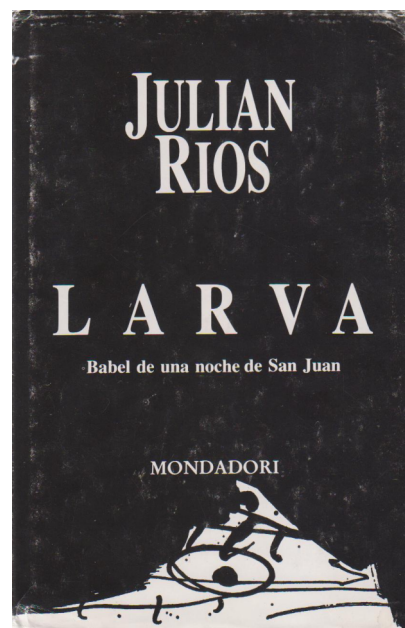


Fig. 13 Cover of *Larva*

'A coger el trébol' (Ríos 1983, 13)⁴⁴ is the twice-repeated phrase which opens *Larva* and immediately takes the reader towards the first note located on the left-hand page of the novel. The reading format taken from that point onwards will be established by

⁴⁴ It is important to emphasize that all quotations taken from *Larva* contain a wide number of printing mistakes which must be considered literally, in the sense that Julián Ríos tends to emphasize them as part of the motto 'li tes ratures', that is to say, use your scribblings or printing errors as unexpected added elements to your work.

following the image of a four-leaf clover: ‘El trifolio de nuestro Roman à Klee?: Tresfoliando en nuestra folía à deux’ (Ríos 1983, 12). The trilogy implicit in the quotation is translated into a tripartite reading which enables the reader to jump from the right-hand pages to the left-hand ones. That is to say, from the notes appearing on the right, odd numbered pages (representing the first leaf of the clover), the reader can choose to follow the even numbered pages on the left side of the book. According to Ríos’s attempt to explain the symbolic importance of the four-leaf clover, the second leaf of the clover shows ‘los espejos donde el lenguaje se refleja a si mismo, según Mallarmé’ (Gautier 1990, 1). In those notes located on the left-hand pages, the reader can decide to follow the references to the so called *Notas de la Almohada* where the part of the novel which is most like a narrative will develop. In sum, it is a case of a triple direction exposed to the constantly interrupted reading act provoking a constant self-referential process directed towards the reader. By means of this process, the reader will be obliged to develop and conceive his or her own interpretative guides through the interactive engagement demanded by the writing employed by Ríos. The triple influence of the pages connecting characters, languages and pages through *Larva* implies the fourth leaf of the clover which, according to Ríos, is the *Índice de nombres* used throughout the novel.

The foregoing explanations establish the structure which seems to be confirmed in one of the notes inserted in the novel: ‘Novelaberinto que se parezca a un jardín?: Un jardín de senderos que se bifurcancelan. El laberinto de Hampton Court como un modelo reducido de libro’ (Ríos 1983, 396). This intricate network of interrelations and dependencies can only provoke the sensation that ‘*Larva* es una nave-novela de los locos’ (Sanchez & Díaz 1985, 222), one which also recycles and cannibalizes

everything which passes its way, becoming the beginning of the *Larva* cycle of novels.

The use of the word in all its possible manifestations becomes the structural centre of interaction for *Larva's* *liberature*. In the face of this approach, the first element which constantly becomes doubtful and misleading in its presence for the reader will be the narrator and its relation with the characters being written. When the character Babelle questions Herr Narrator by saying: 'siempre andas inventando sueños!' (Ríos 1983, 342), the narrator blames the character Milalias and does not take responsibility for what he writes: 'Yo, no. Milalias sueña o hace que sueña ... Yo sólo transcribo. Así siempre. El ama y yo soy su amanuense ...' (Ríos 1983, 342). This distancing of the narrator from the characters is maintained throughout the novel by the use of the multiple nature of the narrator, even if Herr Narrator quickly contradicts any attempt to reach any certitude regarding what is written: 'Nota (autoritaria) del Herr Narrator: El que comentaa, comanda. Hasta (nuovo komento) nueva orden. Entendido?' (Ríos 1983, 82). On the one hand, absolute control, on the other, 'Narrador es apenas don Nadie' (Ríos 1983, 12).

From the first page of *Larva*, the main characters Babelle and Milalias are conscious about their own narrated nature and make fun of their narrator: 'el ecomentador que nos dobla...loco por partida doble, Narr y Tor...en sus delirios se toma por el autor de nuestro folletón...' (Ríos 1983, 12). In this process, the narrator himself feels trapped between the brackets which contain his declarations and asks for the participation of the reader in order to be liberated from his narrative imprisonment: '[Prosa de presadilla...Yo también soy uno de los principales personajes della. Y tú? Hipócrita

lector, rompe estas esposas, libérame de estos corchetes: la Santa Hermandad nos hará libres...]' (Ríos 1983, 40). Still, the narrator is constantly insulted and ironically attacked by the very characters he narrates:

Es el Asnotador que emburrona estas nocturnotas, pincha y corta!...es el cerebro y Eminence grise que de momento prefiere permanecer en el Asnonimato, nuestro Jumentor!...es el Ecomentador de este batiburrillo carnovelesco d'una noche de verano...Y no olvides que el Asnotador recibe el tratamiento de Herr Narrator... (Ríos 1983, 45)

Nevertheless, the characters are also aware of the narrator's changing multiplicity: 'Cambiaba cada dos por tres de disfraz? Babelle llegaría a barruntar que el anotador multiplicaba sus desdoblamientos' (Ríos 1983, 184). There is a constant swinging of subjectivities which moves from the narrator to the characters and vice versa in order to avoid a definite identity while also making difficult for the reader to decipher who is narrated in a straightforward way. As the character Milalias confesses, he is inspired by one of Herr Narrator's doubles called Xavier Reis: 'Todas mis máscaras son como la de Reis. No para ocultarme, sino para no asfixiarme.' (Ríos 1983, 254). Xavier Reis comes from a family of exiled Germans who moved to Spain and according to Milalias is another manifestation of the main narrator: 'que era sin duda el Herr Narrator. Nuestro guía, y controlador' (Ríos 1983, 553).

This narrative strategy is similar to the use Cervantes makes of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *El Quijote*. As Márquez Villanueva writes of the narrative mask employed by Cervantes: 'va haciéndose a lo largo del libro, revelándose a trozos, pero sin acabar nunca de salir de su alvéolo de misterio' (Márquez Villanueva 1973, 254). They are all characters who incorporate the author on the written page while provoking doubt at the heart of narrative fiction. Or as Carlos Fuentes remarks, the

novel is an antidote to the paralyzing notion of realities obsessed with the certitude of being:

Las prohibiciones que padeció Cervantes cuando estaba inmerso en la creación de su Quijote hicieron que el autor español vagara por “un universo erasmiano”. En éste todas las verdades son sospechosas, todo está bañado en la incertidumbre y así la novela moderna adquiere su razón de ser. La incertidumbre de la novela cervantina desautoriza cualquier certeza de una lectura lineal, hace de la novela un proceso crítico en todos los niveles de la lectura. (Fuentes 2005, 1)

Larva learns and borrows from *El Quijote* and is interested in criticizing all certitude with its overpowering discourse, as Goytisolo explains in *Tradicción y disidencia*: ‘lo que admiro de Cervantes es que fue el primer escritor que convirtió la novela en el territorio de la duda. En *El Quijote* todo es incierto.’ (Goytisolo 2003, 23). Developing this line of thought, Goytisolo comes to the inevitable connection: ‘La evolución de Julián Ríos no sería posible sin un conocimiento de Cervantes’ (Goytisolo 1998, 1). Of particular importance is his knowledge of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, or as Ríos writes in his essay ‘Una de Calibán y otra de Ariel: la novela como canibalización y carnavalización’, the novel which inaugurates the modern novel where ‘todo es traducción, reescritura, palimpsesto’ (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 238). Ríos takes the previous quotation literally as can be perceived in the following examples taken from *Larva*: ‘el Don quijote en camisa de fuerza y chancletas, a balanceos, que se miraba achaparrarse, irse empanzando en el azogue turbio: Ancha es la mancha...Y aquí m’ensancho!’ (Ríos 1983, 39). He transforms the original to the point of parody through the different game masks: ‘The Knight of the Sad Cuntenance!’ (Ríos 1983, 38); ‘Manche à manche!: Así, el esperpantomimo quijanchoteándose con la cantata’ (Ríos 1983, 38). Or he makes it mutate through the literary method employed in *Larva*: ‘Quichette de la Manchette...: Sí, y no olvides que todas nuestras notas son marginales.’ (Ríos 1983, 38). Another fundamental

connection with Cervantes's novel is the constant repetition of the following adjective in order to address the reader: 'Desocupado' (Ríos 1983, 100). That is to say, he addresses the reader in exactly the same way that Cervantes addresses the reader in the prologue written for *Don Quijote de la Mancha*: 'Desocupado lector' (Cervantes 2004, 7). From the above-mentioned title, it is impossible not to mention the way in which Ríos uses 'la mancha' as a critical note to the motto of the 'Real Academia Española': 'La mancha original...: Mancha que limpia. Limpia, fija y da esplendor.' (Ríos 1983, 212).

Ríos also tries to erase the boundaries between the virtual and the real, continuing the literary writing which undermines the supposed authority of the author and makes it flexible. In this regard, *Don Quijote* is the example par excellence because, from chapter ix onwards, we never read the original novel but a translation done from the Arab language⁴⁵. This translation makes it possible to think of the modern novel as translation of a complex world which includes uncertainty and criticism of every manifestation of power or authority. The idea of the writer as translator follows the idea of emptying out his or her subjectivity in order to allow the multiplicity of voices which inhabit them. As Bakhtin writes in *The Dialogic Imagination* in reference to the distance the prose author assumes: 'he speaks as it were through language...a language that he merely ventriloquates' (Bakhtin 1994, 299). The writer who elaborates writing as a form of translation takes a liminal position which engages with interests where 'la obra literaria es siempre impura y mestiza...sólo poligénesis,

⁴⁵ See the article written by the Arab scholar Mahmud Sobh in which he explains that the translation of the name Cide Hamete Benengeli becomes Don Miguel de Cervantes, supporting the narrative key that connects writing with translating. The article was published in *El País* on the 30th December 2005.

bastardeo, mezcla, promiscuidad.’ (Goytisolo 1998, 56) as Goytisolo writes in his essay ‘Vicisitudes del mudejarismo’ included in *Crónicas sarracinas*.

The Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges is unsettled by the idea of Don Quixote being a reader of *El Quijote* (‘si los caracteres de una ficción pueden ser lectores o espectadores, nosotros, sus lectores o espectadores, podemos ser ficticios.’ (Borges 1989, 55); the reader of *Larva* can relate to that experience. The perception of the reader becomes more complex when he or she realizes that, as if part of a performance⁴⁶ within the work, the characters acquire a status of relative truths within fiction. As Bakhtin notes: ‘Truth is restored by reducing the lie to an absurdity’ (Bakhtin 1999, 309). Therefore, Julián Ríos attempts to liberate himself from the idea of the omniscient narrator so as to increase his distance from the very act of narrating. The fact of confusing the idea of the narrator⁴⁷ to the utmost and instead choosing to be a translator,⁴⁸ works as a literary strategy of liberating oneself from the responsibility of narrating, at least, in the very action of writing the work. One of the Cervantine keys which Ríos takes on board consists in exploring the limits of

⁴⁶ See Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* and his understanding of the reality represented within Cervantes novel: ‘Don Quixote’s madness gives rise to an inexhaustible series of disguises and histrionics [...] such metamorphoses make reality become a perpetual stage without ever ceasing to be reality [...] reality willingly cooperates with a play which dresses it up differently every moment.’ (Auerbach 2003, 351). Thus, the character of Don Quixote enables Cervantes ‘to present the world as play in that spirit of multiple, perspective, non-judging and even non questioning neutrality which is a brave form of wisdom.’ (Auerbach 2003, 357)

⁴⁷ See James A. Parr’s *Don Quixote: An Anatomy of Subversive Discourse*: ‘The continuous subverting of narrative authority makes one ponder the credibility not only of the discourse but also of the printed page itself’ (Parr 1988, 30)

⁴⁸ See Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination*: ‘Play with a posited author is characteristic of the comic novel and it is used by the author because it is highly productive, that is, it is able on the one hand to show the object of representation in a new light (to reveal new sides or dimensions to it) and on the other hand to illuminate in a new way the expected literary horizon [...] the speech of such narrators is always another’s speech and in another’s language’ (Bakhtin 1999, 313)

narrative as a process of suspension of disbelief with the aim of transcending the very act of writing. To choose the other as an author shifts the focus away from the actual writer of the work. By this act of liberation, the writer can distance him- or herself from the act of narration in order to elaborate a discourse which incorporates parody as an essential ingredient of the work being written. If in *El Quijote* the Arab historian who performs as author is ‘Cide Hamete Benengeli, puntualísimo escudriñador de los átomos de esta verdadera historia’ (Cervantes 2004, 928), in *Larva* it will be Herr Narrator or ‘ecomentador’ (Ríos 1983, 4), also known as Xavier Reis, ‘barbullador de este mamutreto’ (Ríos 1983, 552). In the case of *Larva*, the ‘barbullador’ is the narrator who jabbars away and talks rapidly but with little sense. As Ríos declares of his novel:

Larva es una farsa también en el sentido etimológico de relleno, en la forma de atestar el texto. Su prosa a presión trata de condensar en cada palabra (y muy especialmente en esas valijas tan diplomáticas, las palabras-maletas o maletas, de doble y triple fondo...) el mayor número de alusiones posibles. Hay un doble juego continuo de condensaciones y expansiones verbales, una constante fricción de ficciones, de dicciones contra dicciones... Los opuestos se tocan y se trocan en sucesivos retruécanos, las palabras se deforman y forman otras palabras que a su vez estallan liberando nuevas palabras: como sugiere el título paródico de una serie de notas larvarias, la ficción es fusión y fisión [...] Hay que procurar que revienten de risa las pompas, casi siempre fúnebres, de la literatura, ¿no? Ésta podría ser la metáfora irrisoria [...] de la escritura de *Larva* (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 220)

From the above quotation, it can be seen that *Larva* offers a transgressive humour as an intrinsic device which can function as a strategy of the representation of reality following Bakhtin’s approach: ‘la purifica de dogmatismo, de unilateralidad, de esclerosis, de fanatismo y espíritu categórico, del miedo y la intimidación, del didactismo, de la ingenuidad y de las ilusiones, de la nefasta fijación en un único nivel’ (Bakhtin 1995, 112). The irreverence which constitutes parody comes from the reflexive and self critical narrator who forms part of the work which inspires *Larva*.

This is something which Ríos states clearly when asked about the main influences on his novel: ‘¿Maestros del humor de todas las épocas? Cervantes antes, Cervantes después, Cervantes ahora y en la hora, repitió o rezó mentalmente que fundó la novela y el humor modernos y los fundió en un molde único: *El Quijote*’ (Ríos 2003, 65). For Ríos, the definition of humour as ‘arte de escribir entre líneas’ (Ríos 2003, 65) will offer the strategy behind the idea of the reader as co-author and ‘bricoleteur’ (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 3).

Thus, the strategy employed by Ríos of overloading words with meanings forces the reader to enter into the deciphering of the web of interactions. Through the subversive function of the word games carried out by the narrator of *Larva*, Ríos employs what Huizinga explained in *Homo Ludens*: ‘En cualquier expresión de un hecho abstracto hay una metáfora, y tras ella, un juego de palabras.’ (Huizinga 1998, 44). All the linguistic shocks which assault the reader through *Larva* point towards the position which the French linguist Pierre Guiraud considers to be the authentic function of the ludic word: ‘luchar contra los tabúes más profundos, más insidiosos y más obscenos.’ (Serra 2001, 19). For the purpose of this literary aim, the figure of the reader as co-author employed by Ríos becomes an essential element of *Larva*’s literary expression.

4.1.1 Creating ‘Bricoleteurs’

The readers become co-authors and have to work with what is at hand. Handymen are persons who have to improvise a little, they don’t need all the tools in the world. The readers or ‘bricoleteurs’ can read creatively even with limited means of knowledge.
Julián Ríos (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 3)

En el fin de la escritura,
empieza el infinito de la lectura.
(Ríos 1983, 116)

Ríos refers to his readers in this manner because he believes they should discover their own path within the novel *Larva* while improvising with the elements provided by the writer. As there are no guidelines marked by a conventional narrative content read from left to right, page after page, the reader must draw her/his own map while advancing into an unknown narrative territory. By following an intuitive and interactive path the reader participates in a process which allows freedom of action without rigid structures, because according to Ríos the readers will end up finding their own ways of understanding what is being read: ‘al fin todos los idiomas acabarán encontrando su idioma. Ancha es la lengüeta de Castilla’ (Ríos 1983, 470).

The Spanish language is subjected to such a degree of semantic pressure within *Larva* that any reader looking for semantic certitudes will be perplexed. As in the experience of someone who visits a foreign land for the first time, the coordinates are constantly tested while all the expected references fail before the multilingual strategy employed by Ríos. If one of the aims of *liberature* is to produce original ways of reading, *Larva* is inevitably at the forefront. As the Peruvian literary critic Julio Ortega remarks:

Larva pone en crisis el sistema de la lectura como consumo y de la obra literaria como objeto y signo del intercambio consagrado por el mercado. Como ha observado Rafael Conte, esta novela demanda el valor de participar en sus riesgos, lo que equivale a decir que pone en entredicho a nuestros hábitos (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 123)

The position of the reader is so fundamental throughout *Larva* that even the characters make the point of addressing the reader who interacts with the novel in plotting his or her own reading route. First, it is Herr Narrator putting the writer and the reader on the same plane: ‘mi semejano, mi hermanotador./ Hermano...?/ El que escribe, lee dos veces. Y el que lee dos veces, escribe...’ (Ríos 1983, 86). Afterwards, Milalias confesses that he would like to imitate those writers who address the reader in the

prologue (as Cervantes did with his «desocupado lector»); thus he would like to include a letter in this novel addressed to the reader as ‘Pícaro y Caro: – Caro de Amado? – preguntó Babelle. – Caro de caro, carajo! Tú no sabes cuánto cuesta tener un lector.’ (Ríos 1983, 152). The reader who confronts *Larva* for the first time requires patience and perseverance in order to be able to transform the feeling of uncertainty into flexibility and curiosity in the face of such an open work. What seems to be born out of an absolute chaos, is gradually transformed through the subtle, joyous and extravagant use of language in a work whose unexpected inner coherence is revealed through the reading process itself.

In this manner, Ríos advises that the best way of reading this novel consists in imitating the randomness of the wind without following the guidance of any specialist in the subject: ‘Dejad que lea el viento...Lee a rachas verberando airoso. Mejor y más rápido que tantos lectores profesianales. Tan llenos de viento, y con tal aire de insuficiencia, que no paran de inventosear.’ (Ríos 1983, 419). Still, a few lines on from the above quotation, a line contradicting the previously quoted words appears: ‘habrá que descodificarlo por el sistema Braille...Tiene tantísima quisicosa. Ay. Demasiada. Todo cabe, todo muda, todo cambia de camisa en esa saca honda de cuentos sin cuento.’ (Ríos 1983, 421). The continual presence of ambiguity constantly tests the reader as he or she attempts to elaborate his or her own experience of the novel and become a co-author who interprets what is being read.

The graphic example which appears towards the end of the novel serves as proof of the reader’s participation. In the chapter of *Larva* titled ‘Nota de la almohada’ there is a section called ‘Una los puntos’, where one of the characters, a dancer named Asa,

leaves a note for Milalias with the drawing of a constellation of black dots. Each dot represents each of the places in London where she had lived and where she asks Milalias to look for her. The note which is addressed to the reader says: ‘Únalos. Only connect. Escriba su propia lectura.’ (Ríos 1983, 440) and the character of Herr Narrator repeats it one more time: ‘Hay que escribir la lectura...Pícaro relector!’ (Ríos 1983, 549). The moment the reader interacts with the game and connects the dots not only recalls a childhood pastime but at the same time transforms the reader into a ‘bricoletor’ of that labyrinth made out of dots which turns out to form the German word *tot* (death) (Fig. 14). The reference to death, understood in this drawing as a leveller of all material forms and consequently an end without a choice, goes against the principle of openness and constant variation which underpins the writing in *Larva*. This action adds to the ambiguous dimension confronting the reader time and time again in the novel as if forcing her/him to maintain that level of ambiguous literary openness.

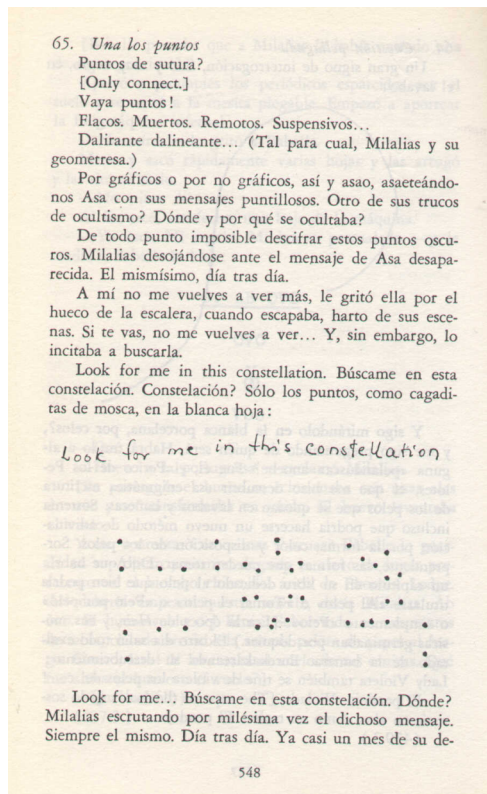


Fig. 14 'Una los puntos' from *Larva* (Ríos 1991, 548)

A perception of relativity translated into the reader's freedom to choose follows the trail of the open work investigated by the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco and his emphasis on 'promover en el intérprete actos de libertad consciente' (Eco 1984, 66). Within this type of work the reader is invited to collaborate with the author in elaborating the work, something which the Spanish writer Antonio Pérez Ramos emphasizes in an interview with Ana Nuño called 'Lector In Fabula': 'el verdadero lector siempre será co-autor' (Nuño 2001, 23)⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ Antonio Pérez Ramos is particularly critical of the closed ways of understanding literature in Spain: 'La gran indigencia intelectual que padece España se concreta en lo que yo denomino «prejuicio espontaneísta». Este error se traduce en la generalizada suposición de que la función primordial de la literatura consiste en contar historias.' (Nuño 2001, 25). With his novel *El paraíso perdido*, Ramos joins a new generation of Spanish writers published from the 1990s onwards which continues to explore the limits of the novel by integrating the notion of active readers. Amongst these novels, the following stand out: José María Pérez Álvarez's *Nembrot*; Nuria Amat's *El país*

Hence, the incorporation of the visual and graphic side in *Larva* becomes another important characteristic feeding and inviting the collaboration of the reader. As mentioned before in this book, the intermediary state of mutation between opposites is a constant presence throughout *Larva*. The very organization of paragraphs amongst the odd left pages, alternating long and short sections with onomatopoeic words tending more towards the audible than the written, shows the author's tendency to approach the page as a canvas where the graphic and sonorous qualities have as important a place as the semantic presence.

An example of the above is the last part of *Larva*. Titled *Album de Babelle*, this is formed by photographs of the places mentioned in narration. The photographs are organized in alphabetical order, all are reproduced in black and white, and all are focused in particular upon the empty streets and parks of London as if with the aim of provoking in the reader a contemplative state which works as a counterpoint to the extreme literary noise which precedes these images. Symetrically, those photographs become material proof of objects belonging to the character Babelle, capturing a real dimension of the character: 'Biombo chino...: De tres hojas, completamente cubiertas de imágenes y recortes clavados con chinchetas. Tarjetas postales, fotos de Londres obra de Babelle...' (Ríos 1983, 340).

Among the drawings included in *Larva* the following ones stand out for their collaborative engagement with the reader: an ace of clover cut in two (Fig. 15); a graffiti of a clover (Fig. 16); the infinity sign drawn upon two pages with a thick paintbrush (Fig. 17); fingerprints in the shape of a clover (Fig. 18); a tattoo designed

del alma; Francisco Ferré's *La fiesta del asno*; Jose Maria Ridaó's *El mundo a media voz* and Javier Pastor's *Fragmenta*.

using dots (Fig. 19); black letters printed upon a white cloak (Fig. 20); a newspaper headline augmented with the phrase ‘the World is my dream’, with the letter ‘l’ crossed out, leaving the phrase as ‘the Word is my dream’ (Fig. 21). By crossing out that letter Ríos converts the word into a guide which takes the reader further: ‘te lleva cada vez más lejos’ (Ríos 1983, 390) proving above all else the value of the written word for the reader: ‘cada palabra un mundo, eh?’ (Ríos 1983, 391).

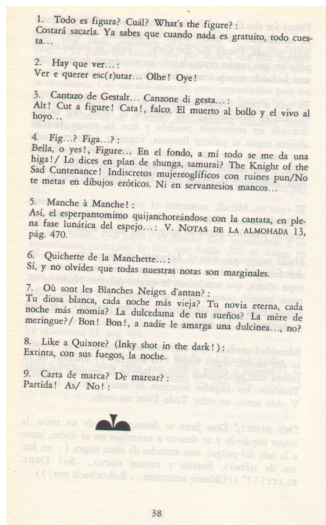


Fig. 15 Ace of clover cut in half from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 38)

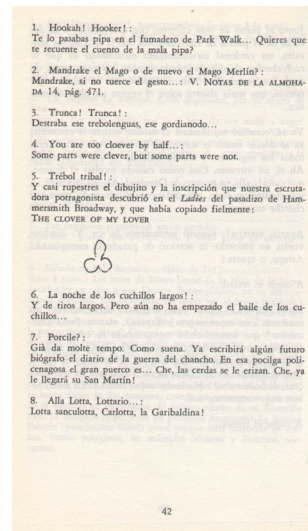


Fig. 16 Graffiti of a clover from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 42)

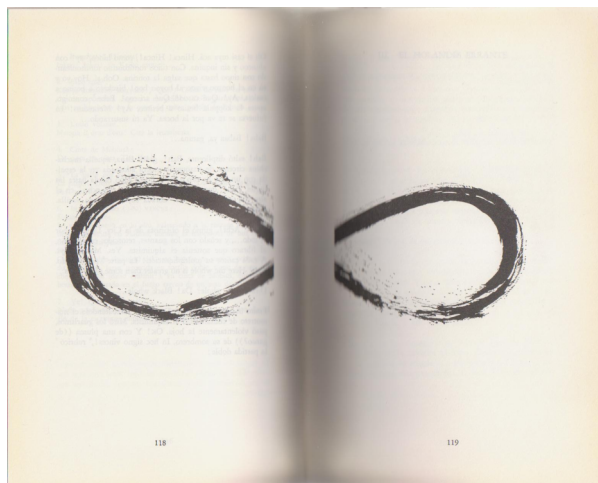


Fig. 17 Infinity sign from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 118)

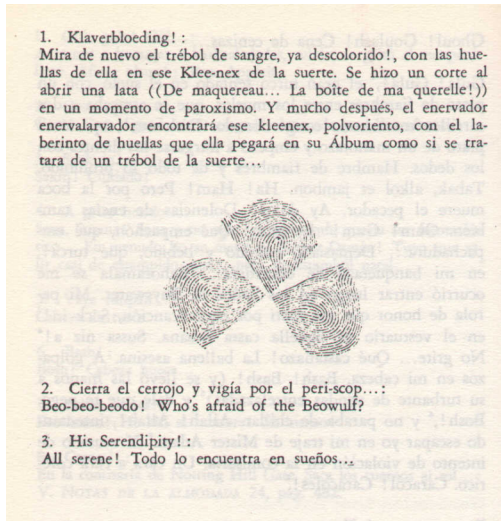


Fig. 18 Fingerprints in the shape of a clover from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 144)

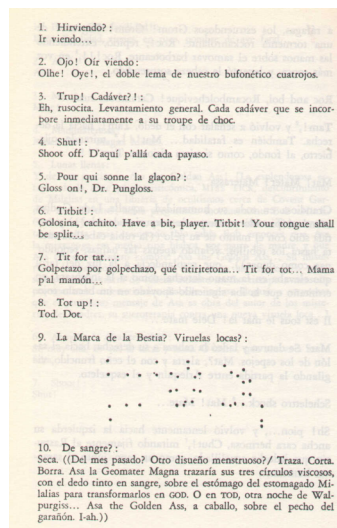


Fig. 19 Tattoo designed using dots from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 246)

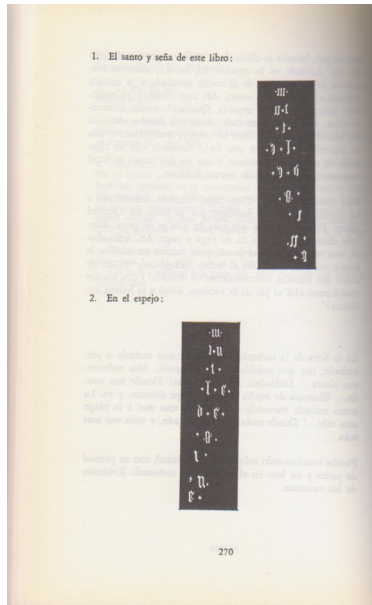


Figure 20. Black letters on white cloak from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 78)

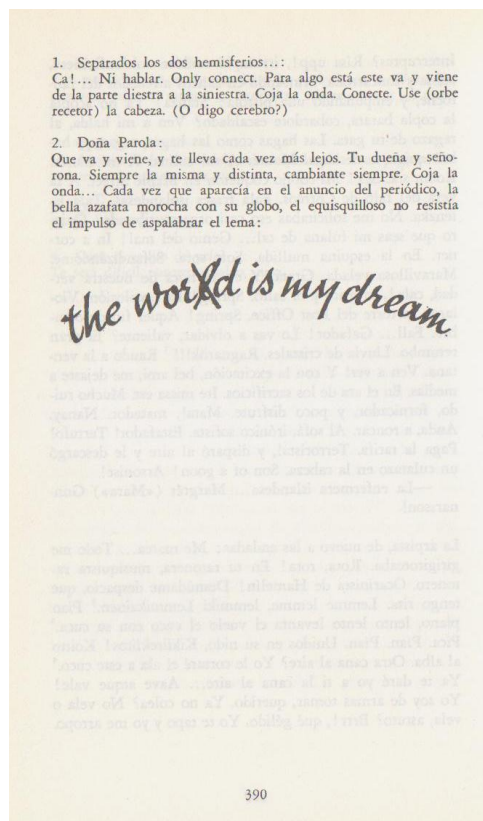


Figure 21. Newspaper headline from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 390)

Before finishing the fifth chapter entitled ‘apagar y vámonos’ with a page painted in black⁵⁰, there appears the negative image in black and white of a fusion which resembles both a communion cup and the two profiles of a woman and a man about to merge into a kiss (Fig. 22): ‘En fin, amada con amado en la noche oscura de Don Juan...Recuerdas la sombra de aquel beso inminente?’ (Ríos 1983, 425)

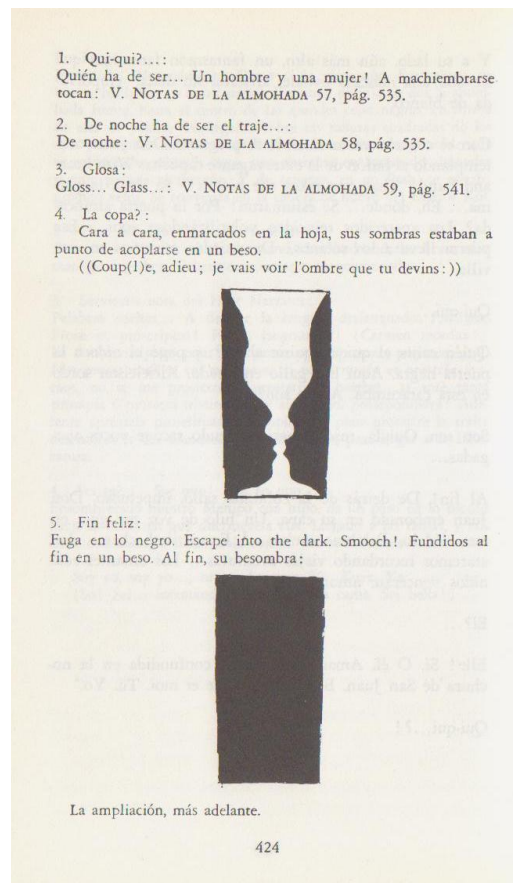


Fig. 22 Black and white image from *Larva* (Ríos 1992, 424)

Depending on where the reader focuses his or her eyes in the drawing she/he will see either one thing or the other, that is to say, either the human profile or the communion cup. Both perceptions will be valid in their apparent contradiction but it will be up to the reader to interact with the image in order to decide on one interpretation or the

⁵⁰ Two eminent predecessors in such an act of inclusion of the page in black are the Irish Lawrence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and the Cuban Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres*. In addition, as mentioned earlier in this book, these writers are unavoidable literary references for Ríos’s style of writing.

other. The same process of interaction occurs while reading or listening to the words used by Ríos in *Larva*, and depending on the focus given by the reader, these words will mean one thing or another: ‘fundidos al fin en un beso. Al fin, su besombra’ (Ríos 1983, 424).

The concept of *liberature* feeds on this process of activating of the reader. Ríos’s intentions are clear: ‘llegar al trasfondo de la palabra, hacer que cante y no deje nada por decir. Exprimir las represiones, sacarles todo su juego, para que se conviertan al menos en ex-presiones.’ (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 225). *Larva* constantly attacks rigid literary norms in a way which follows all those writers whose struggle to express what is been repressed has always interested Ríos: ‘los grandes escritores han sido liberadores de energías y tabúes’ (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 4). The ample register of expressive variations within *Larva* aims at the intrinsic sense of freedom proposed by ‘el trabajo larvado – subliminal – de la escritura, para que pueda revelarse y rebelarse lo reprimido.’ (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 225), as Ríos says to Arturo Carrera in the interview ‘El libro de un libro’. On this note, when the character Babelle asks ‘La letra mata?’ (Ríos 1983, 180) the character Milalias replies back: ‘Ah sí, pero el mot d’esprit vivifica!, replicó vivo Milalias, que creía a ojos cerrados que la inmensa mayoría de los escrividores o escrivanos escriben en lengua muerta. Oficio de difuntos!’ (Ríos 1983, 180).

The sense of freedom employed by Ríos in his use of language throughout *Larva* also guides the way the fragments are arranged in order to maximize the possibility of the reader becoming an active participant of the reading experience. In the following section I will explore how the most intense stage of fragment usage within *liberature*,

referred to as ‘the four fold fragment’, is employed by Ríos throughout *Larva* and *Poundemónium*.

4.2 The Four-Fold Fragment: *Larva* & *Poundemónium*

Throughout this subchapter I will highlight a series of examples extracted from both novels which comply with the fragmentary elements indicated in the second chapter of this book as marking guides: 1) the division of textual space in parts using visible empty spaces in the page; 2) the semantic dimension obstructing meaning through the accumulation of signifiers; 3) the characterization of the internal arrangement of the text by the dissolution of the plot and 4) the fracturing of the discourse through the syntactic and lexemic breaks.

When the readers confront *Larva* from the first page, the narrative flow is disrupted by the disconcerting effect which results from the continuous stopping and starting of the act of reading. As was explained in the previous section, the symbol of ‘the four-leaf clover’ becomes mobilized to the full. First of all, it represents the organizational structure of the whole book. That is to say, the novel splits into four possible folds which bounce meaning from one to another, as Ríos explains eloquently when describing his novel:

The pages on the right, which refer to a party held on the feast of Saint John, the shortest night of the year, represent the first leaf. The pages on the left are the mirrors in which “language reflects itself”, as Mallarmé said; they are the second leaf. The “Pillow notes” are the third leaf. Finally the fourth leaf of the clover is the “Index of Names” at the end of the book, which gives the readers some clues. (Gazarian 1990, 1)

These reading options apply to a fragmentary experience of the very action of reading because, as can be perceived from the organization of the text itself, there is no one specific way of reading *Larva*. This should be contrasted with the approach taken by the Argentine writer, Julio Cortázar, who indicates at the beginning of his classic

novel, *Rayuela*, two reading options. The reader is given the choice between a linear version which follows the pages in numerical order, and a prescriptive numerical non-linear guideline selected by Cortázar. In *Larva* too, the reader is also given a guided reading alternative to refer to, but it is the free version applied by each specific reader which takes precedence over any other reading option. From the opening paragraphs of the novel located on the right page we can envisage the nature of the reading event as an action which requires the active involvement of the reader:

A COGER EL TRÉBOL (1)...A COGER EL TRÉBOL...cantaleaba la Bella Durmiente de vaporoso camión Negro (2) y negra cabellera mientras se abría camino en la espesura de máscaras enserpentinadas del salón de los espejos, A COGER EL TRÉBOL..., sonambulando (3) risueña con los brazos extendidos hacia las tres puertas vidrieras abiertas a la noche boscosa: al fondo, entre las sombras del jardín trasero de la villa (4), relampagueaba una hoguera.

A coger el trébol...

((En la noche de San Juan? Sí, en la mascarada de una noche oscura de Don Juan, con arpagong al final!, que armó con tantas suspensiones el pelicularo Bob «Hitch-Cock» en aquella destartalada casa de trócame-roque o villa de las maravillas frente a Bishop's Park y al Támesis, Midsummer Madness at Fulham's Folly!, por orden de su patrono Mr. «Napo» Leone, el Napoleón del Porno, para celebrar la salida de un magazine sicalíptico, (sic) *Clover Club*, que tenía por emblema un as de trébol levemente deformado capaz de sugerir, según el punto de vista, diversas figuras.))

A coger..., miró alrededor,... el trébol..., como para orientarse en la tremolina, titubeando unos instantes, A coger el trébol..., antes de seguir su camino.

Y detrás, a pocos pasos, un Don Giovanni (5) tétrico (: sombrero de ala ancha negro con plumas blancas, antifaz Negro, capa negra) atornillándose el índice en la sien: È pazzarella! She's nutty! Está rechiflada... ((Giovannitrío! El Ternorio! Don Juan Trenorio! (6)))

A coger el trébol... (Ríos 1983, 13)

The six numbers indicated in brackets within the quotation refer to the notes which send the reader to the left page, or the 'left leaf' mentioned by Ríos in the interview

quoted earlier. Language mirrors the words from the right page which act like triggers for an even more disconnected or fragmented arrangement of words, sentences or phonetic games which invoke that sense of *liberature* as a freedom of expression which verges on the incomprehensible. As a practical example it is appropriate to engage with the first note following from the word 'TREBOL' so as to have a more direct experience of the reading event.

The clover represents an element which reappears throughout the novel in different shapes and forms: a reference to shamrock, the diminutive version of the Irish word for clover and also the symbol of Ireland referred to by James Joyce in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*; the notion of luck associated with the plant or a matching game involving the guests who appear at the party described in the novel. Therefore, as will be repeated constantly throughout the novel, the reader has the choice of deciding whether to follow one meaning option rather than the other, something which will allow him or her to create different combinations of interpretative effects without ever abandoning the possibility of interpretation. As an interpretative example, if we refer to the note 1 included in the right page we can already sample the disconcerting effect caused by the split or fragmented act of reading *Larva*:

1. El trifulio de nuestro Roman à Klee: Tresfoliando em nuestra folia à deux: m'atrevo no m'atrevo, trevo a trevo, hojeando las nocturnotas de nuestras bacantes, aún por cubrir. ((Busca, Gran Buscón emboscado, a tus busconas en el follaje...)) Ehe? Trevoé! Trevo trevoso...[Sauberer Klee! Valiente terno! Eterno...No hay folia a dos sin tres?, se preguntaba una noche el inaudito calculador de los mil alias papeleando con su bella babélica ((: Apila!, pila a pila...)) en la torre de papel. Babelle, Milalias y...Herr Narrator. Qui?, inquirió ella. Una especie de ventrilocuelo que malimita nuestras voces, explicó. El ecomentador que nos dobla y trata de poner en claroscuro todo lo que escrivivimos a la diabla. Loco por partida doble, Narr y Tor, por eso le puse en germanía Herr Narrator. Ah bon. Ya lo conocerás... En sus delirios se toma por el autor de nuestro folletón...: Au! Tor!, que salga el doble doblado...Entre tanto, aquí me tienen, loco citato, entre corchetes preso, haciéndome el Herr Narrator.] Y ahora, Rei

de Trevas! Roi de trèfle! Kleekönig!, en un tris tras tres a atribularte a las NOTAS DE LA ALMOHADA 1 (Ríos 1983, 453)

In that note Ríos establishes how the two main characters (Babelle and Milalias) will act as independent figures who are aware of the process in which the narrator (Herr Narrator) writes both of them. The metaliterary characters gain their own autonomy in order to intensify the notion of being written as if part of a 'roman à clef' where they appear to be in control of what is happening to them as much as taking a critical stand against the narrator chosen by Ríos to disguise its own presence. The idea which animates *Larva* is the writing carried out by the characters Milalias and Babelle in telling all the stories and significant urban adventures which happen to them while they are living in London during the 1970s. The context of the project allows Ríos to explore the fragment behind the improvisational formation of the novel being written according to the experience of the two main characters interacting amongst themselves and with others. The verb used by Ríos to describe the main motive behind their actions is a mutation formed out of writing and living: 'escrivivir'. I believe that this formulates the core of the reader's freedom as a reflecting counterpoint to the freedom experienced by the characters being read.

At the end of the quotation cited above there is a reference to a page to which the reader should go if she/he wants to experience the third leaf or part of the fragment at work called 'NOTAS DE LA ALMOHADA'. This section occupies both pages of the book and it contains seventy fragments together with their individual titles relating to the sexual encounters experienced by the two main characters of *Larva*. Ríos adds a sub-note to the title the roles associated with each character so as to clarify writing

responsibilities: ‘Pergeñadas por Babelle y traducidas [con interpolaciones del Herr Narrator] por Milalias)’ (Ríos 1983, 451).

The textual space indicated in the quotations cited in the previous pages, containing a visible separation between paragraphs, together with the spaces created from pages on the left and towards the end of the novel, maintains its presence throughout *Larva*. An important example of that kind of fragment use and indeed of the other three forms of fragment explained at the beginning of this section follows so as to give a summary of what is at work behind *Larva*. As the following quotation indicates, the celebratory notion behind the multilingual aspects of *Larva* underpins the party at the centre of *Larva* and the unexpected encounters provoked by the confusion of exchanged words:

A great feast of slanguages...(7) Festín de lenguas...(8)

Notes from the left page:

(7) A movable feast!, una fiesta muy movida...: Sí, han asistido a una gran francachela de lenguas, una juerga de jergas!, y se robaron las sobras y los hors-d’oeuvres.../ O! they have lived long on the alms-basket of words... Viven!, de milagro, gracias a la limosna de las palabras.

e

(8) Lingua francachela! Conf- -sión de lenguas:

u

Barmecide’s Feast...Schacabacanal...Acaba ya, Schcabac chabacano!
(Ríos 1998, 74)

The semantic dimension based on the obstruction of meaning through a repetitive accumulation of signifiers can be experienced in the following examples gathered under common thematics:

a) Criticism of an oppressive regime in Spain characterized as an expanding shadow or an ink blot:

la ancha mancha (6) lechosa estrechándose hacia las frondas en sombra del río. Reptando, reptilínea. Serpenteando, pendiente abajo. Alargándose, como un fuelle, más rápida. Acordeondulando

Note from the left page:

(6) Qué mancha? Mancha hay muchas, en tus borradores: Y todas juntas harían una grande. Y libre. La patria de nuestra

p
impoluta dulcineasta. Maid in S- -pain
t (Ríos 1983, 18)

Or the same type of criticism using arabisms in the chapter titled ‘Algarabía’:

Peau d’Espagne? Peau de Chagrin? Peau d’Âne?:

De pena, la piel del diablo! Otro toro, hispasno en picado. Pero desde las Alturas, en vuelo, se va achicando. Zapa, zapa, zape de ahí! Y cambia de piel, la piel de otro!, porque no quisiera hallarme en su pellejo.

(Ríos 1998, 188)

b) A symbolic image, relating to scribbling, which repeats itself in the second chapter relating to the act of rewriting and blotting the page:

Blot out! (3), exclamó Don Juan desenguantándose brusco la mano siniestra. Borrón y cuenta nueva...

Note from the left page:

(3) Blot out!: Swift as a shadow...Correct, insert, refine, enlarge, diminish, interline. O lo que viene a ser lo mismo: Lima! Apura! Retoca!

l
Versati- -iza! Alambica!
r (Ríos 1983, 98)

c) On a critical note, the narrator becomes another point to be attacked by the characters using the accumulation of signifiers as a multiple fragmentary activity:

((I-a! Iah! Quién es el rebuznador ése? Es el Asnotador que emburrona estas nocturnotas, pincha y corta! cut the cards!, es el tahúr malhechor que baraja los ases, el as no frota al as...!, es el cerebro y Éminence grise que de momento prefiere permanecer en el Asnonimato, nuestro jumentor! (4), es el embarruchado orffebrío d’estilo Plateresco que busca l’asnamorfosis final y el animal de fondo bajo la forma pura como buen platero de oro, The Golden Ass!, que nunca platica en plata, Chitón!, es el, Iah! Iah!, es el Ecomentador de este batiburrillo carnovelesco d’una noche de verasno.))

Note from the left page:

(4) A arriero lerdo, asno loco...:

So! Sos!, sosias. Y no olvides que el Asnotador recibe el tratamiento de Herr Narrator (Ríos 1983, 45)

And finally, two more examples demonstrating the ability to fragment the text by accumulating signifiers to the maximum point possible:

Enciclopédica historieja del ojete perdido, batailleur!, en trifulcas tristemente polifemosas, Barroco ojón! (5), referida por versiones contradictorias en argot tenebrioso una y mil noches hasta arribar a tuerto.

Note from the left page:

(5) Berrueco?:

Tu humorcillo etimologizante embarroquiza todo. Eye ball, sir, que se dice mejor y más pronto en español: cojón.’ (Ríos 1998, 282)

‘Tu máscara de noche..., mi principillo de las tinieblas. [Beau Brummelmoth the Wanderer...Dark Knight errant... Un beau diable ténébreux... Un Beau Brummélancolique de miserere en miserere por las tinieblas...Rondando de rondón en su capa de pecador...]’ (Ríos 1983, 455)

With reference to the plot dissolution which is a constant note of the internal textual arrangement in *Larva*, the following examples stand out as significant elements where the fragmentary rhythm can be considered as an intricate element forming the novel and distorting the plot:

a. The fragment appears led by the phonetics of specific words which act like magnets to attract similar words but also, by the same token, so as to disperse meaning:

A la izquierda, hacia las arboledas cárdenas de Bishop’s Park: manchones, blancos, y hachones. La silenciosa procesión de encapuchados blancos. Y, al frente, una cruz de fuego (5).

((Focs!? Focs?!: Fuegos?)): furioso griterío levantándose con las llamas del espantapájaros de paja y trapos que ardía, braciabierto, clavado en el centro de la hoguera. ((Focs!?!)) (6)

Notes from the left page:

(5) Con este sígneo vences...:

Ignuminoso!

(6) Fawkes? Guy Fawkes?:

Please to remember the Fifth of November...acuérdate de aquel cinco de noviembre en el ático de Phoenix Lodge, cuando Fawkes o Focs prendió todos sus parlamentos. En su Auto de Fénix.’ (Ríos 1983, 20)

b. As part of the third chapter titled ‘Algarabía’ and formed solely of words of Arabic origin, the fragment disperses towards a criticism of the Spanish Language academy motto, in a similar vein to Goytisolo’s continuous criticism of the official canon⁵¹ and its intention of keeping a closed sense of order in the use of language:

Al harén, gandul! Al harén, Harún (7), al harén...

Ahaha ajá, aún un amojamado (8) más, entre rejas: aquel trujimán en chilaba que taragotea (9) y garrapatea resmas y resmas con sus garrapatos cúficos: En una aldea de la Mancha (10)...

Notes from the left page:

(7) Harón? (: Nota, a lapiz, del Herr Narrator):

Con esos arabescos taquigráficos de Milalias es imposible de todo punto descifrar, en este pasaje de su Magnuscrito, si dice Harón o Harún. O ambos. ó

Har- -n?

ú

(8) Se le amojamó el almocatí?:

Celebro, que lo celebran...Incluso seco y avellanado.

(9) Tara a tara, gotea...:

Borrón, y cuento nuevo.

(10) La mancha original...:

Mancha que limpia. Limpia, fija – y da esplendor. (Ríos 1983, 212)

c. The action of entangled movement which refers to the character disguised as Don Juan is transferred to the very usage of language as a form of dispersing meaning:

Eheh, no tan aprisa..., giraba aturdido en busca de la sonámbula. Liándome al recitar vertiginosos acertijos. Palabras sueltas, sin pies ni cabeza.

Lepidóptero (3) alegre ronda vela ardiente...

Calavera tras la esfinge..., se burló Don Juan. Cábala perdida... Cabaleta descabalada? Ca!, veleta. Ehe, dónde ahora..., dando vueltas desorientado. La ataré corto...

Libre al reanudar vuestra atadura...

Note from the left page:

(3) Mariposa voluble...:

⁵¹ Specifically in the novels *Juan sin tierra* (1975), *Reinvindicación del Conde Don Julián* (1970) and also in the collection of essays *Contracorrientes* (1985)

Borboletra a borboletra... (Tras las muchachinas en florio, por todas las floras del habla: un mundo de palabras.) (Ríos 1983, 274)

d. Finally, from the last chapter of *Larva*, a quill pen triggers the fragmentation of the plot into a labyrinth which represents a symbolic figure reflecting the purpose of the novel:

Y me pediste la pluma para taquigrafiar algo (2) en tu cajetilla. Pluma sin hoja es peor que espada de Damócles. Tu lengua de doble filo, espadón! Me enlaberintaste con tu labia. Te iba saliendo el plan, no? Este laberinto fue construido hace siglos quizá sólo para que nos encontráramos, aquí y ahora, tú y yo. No hay tiempo que perder. Ya lo creo. Laberinto somos todos, partes del laberinto. Todo es laberinto. Me zumbaban los oídos! Nos infernamos paradisiacamente en círculos viciosos (3).'

Notes from the left page:

(2) Novelaberinto que se parezca a un jardín?:

Un jardín de senderos que se bifurcancelan. El laberinto de Hampton Court como un modelo reducido del libro.

(3) A maze, Lezama?:

A mighty maze! but not without a plan. [Andante, con sorna. Pianopiano se va lontano en ese relicario intrincado.] (Ríos 1983, 396)

The last fragmentary aspect regarding lexemic fractures which characterize the discursive dimension becomes another important example to be taken into account. As can be perceived from the following two extracts taken from the first and second 'leaves' of the novel, the majority of lexemes marked by a footnote number are suspended in order to emphasize the fragmented mode:

'Benedicomus Domino!, latineó un frailote encapuchado, en un domino negro, abalanzándose contra la tropa en tropel que cercaba la larga mesa central.

Comus all allows! Como es lógico, todo lo permite...(4)

Note from the left page:

(4) Todo está permitido, si nada es -:

Sh! Sh! Alla muta. Here everything is spermissible. Se permiente todo. Totuus. Vale! (Ríos 1983, 156)

'Quién lo diría...Oh maga! Lo tiene prendido, en la red, jaló y jala de él por un hilo invisible. Sal de aquí (3), vuela libre! Ni por pienso. Seguidor

clavado a su sombra (4). El amo esclavo. Hola y adiós! Siervo de amor. Servus! fugitivus...

Hang it! Stop! So! (5) Corte ya...

Ay!, dio un solo ayido el Sherlock Holmes, al resbalar (6), y cayó redondo (7) rodando por los escalones.'

Notes from the left page:

(3) Sal!:

Fonalice mejor al fin, y no con ese hilo de voz.

(4) Lubrica umbra...:

Sombra que huye. Lèche la proie pour l'ombre...

(5) Só! Só!:

Palabra a palabra. Larvorando, palavra a palarva. Y sin decir, con tu magia magiar, esta boca es mía. No dijo ni pío, el huerfanito, ni una palarva: árva szót sem szólt.

(6) La monda...:

Jéy! Y se rompió el alma...Cáscaras! Peldaño a peldaño, se hizo daño.

(7) Que ruede, Kerek, la rueda...:

Nuestro detective rondador Janos Kerek...(Ríos 1983, 266)

And taken from the third leaf of *Larva*, 'Notas de la Almohada', comes note number 13 ('Manche à Manche!'). In this note, the narrator forces other languages to enter into the phonetic wavelength of the Spanish language:

[Manga por manga? Y la casa sin barrer. Manga ancha? La Manche du Manchot...Que no era manco. Ni cojo. Mank? Hablemos llano castellano, a secas. Kasteyano de Kastella. Al fin todos los idiomas acabarán encontrando su idiorma. Ancha es la lengüeta de Castilla...]

Mancha a mancha...

[Mal! Maliberische Spiele! Mancha original solo una...]

Mancha a manchón...[Quijotiznando sin parar el caballero con miedo y con tacha...]

Ancha es la mancha, y aquí m'ensancho... (Ríos 1998, 470)

Throughout *Larva* it is possible to see the constant integration into the semantic and discursive dimension of all the fragmentary characteristics related to textual space and internal arrangement. This continues up to the very last paragraph of the novel, where the whole party is brought to a halt by the sudden switching off of the lights and is followed by a page covered in black ink:

Al mismo tiempo Mandrake hizo un gesto (como si dirigiera la orquesta o como si escribiera en el aire aquel tronante grito final) y resonó un clamor en diversas lenguas, Luz!, cuando se hizo la oscuridad (4).

((Qué sucede? Nada. Seguramente se fundieron los plomos...))
(Ríos 1983, 449)

The note numbered 4, included in the above quotation and taken from the right page of the book takes the reader to the left page, where it appears as:

4. Extinta, la noche de autos...:
Extinta?: NOTAS DE LA ALMOHADA 71 (Ríos 1983, 558)

If the reader chooses to read the note numbered 71, she/he will read the following fragment:

71. Anochecer de tinta
Cae.
Con la lluvia.
[Su aguatinta...]
Se derrama, de rama en rama, por las arboledas de Brook Green.
[Hace rebasar las copas...]
Empieza a hacerse de noche y ya apenas veo las letras de esta nota que estoy garabateando, sentada ante la ventana, mientras te espero. (Ríos 1983, 558)

Finally, if the reader decides to check the photographs included in the part titled 'Album de Babelle', she/he will be able to find the image of the street named Brook Green referred to in the previous quotation. This continuous changing of focus which the reader needs to apply in order to select the whole series of elements which enter into relationship depends entirely on her/his active participation. And it is within the limits of this reading experience that the entanglement with the reader goes beyond a mere deciphering of a series of textual codes and becomes the poststructuralist experience referred to at the beginning of this chapter, an experience which revives its performative narrative in the very action which needs to be interactively explored by the reader. Thus, the performative aspect related to the Barthian notion of *Larvatus Prodeo* becomes a constant element integrating the literary formation of Ríos. The

reader should always maintain recognition of the ‘mask’ which the text wears at all times as a trademark of the latin motto used by Roland Barthes in his poststructuralist approach as explained in the second chapter.

This critical emphasis expressed by Ríos in *Larva* also transfers to the next novel, *Poundemónium* (Fig. 23). From the very title itself, *Poundemónium* (1985), it is possible to infer not only a stylistic continuation of what was first established in *Larva*, but also an extension of what Ríos had already started there. Thus, Ríos maintains the four-fold reading form in combination with the continuously extreme and chaotic use of the Spanish language, and in particular the flexibility of mutating together with a wide range of other European and Oriental languages.



Fig. 23 Cover from *Poundemónium*

The pun hidden in the title refers to the American poet Ezra Pound, whose death in 1972 ignites the excuse for the urban walks throughout London by the three main characters of *Larva*, Milalias, Babelle and Herr Narrator:

Y al arribar finalmente a la barra, Rimbaudelaire nos abre sus brazos de espantapájaros y la boca para farfullar con su lengua de strapó: Il miglior ff-fabbro è morto! Así, sin ni siquiera decir hola salut!, lo suelta en italo balbuciente, que sí, que lo ha bibiseado la BBC. Ha estirado la pata. E vero. El gran Pound ha muerto. (Ríos 1999, 41)

Throughout *Poundemónium*, the main characters revisit and explore all the different places visited by Pound during the time he spent in London at the beginning of the twentieth century: ‘Y en los londoneos de los viernes con Reis a veces hacía un alto en los más insospechados enclaves poundianos.’ (Ríos 1999, 45). The action of *Poundemónium* takes place within the temporal frame of one night, as did the action of *Larva*. But if in *Larva* the temporal dimension happened on midsummer’s night and gave rise to all kinds of excesses, the action of *Poundemónium* occurs during Halloween. Throughout this temporal spectrum, another multitude of marginal characters populate the left and right sides of the open page, invoking the phantasmagoric image of the American poet Ezra Pound and his complex relationship with both Italian fascist power and modernist poetic visions. Nevertheless, the narrator seems to elude the ideological side of Pound and focus specifically on his literary talent:

Es Ra Pound? Es Ra? Rayos! Y Reis dixit: Pese a todas sus confusiones y demenciones y ecos de economística, ss! Nesschek out..., y a todos sus exabruptos e impropecios, cedite Grai!, vale más un gramo de Pound que todos esos poetas y poetisos y petisos tan atildados a los que no hay que cambiar ni una tilde en sus poemaniqués a penique la libra. Y aún dijo más: El viejo Ezra quiso descubrir el Medítezrráneo..., dijo, arrastrando mucho las erres, para añadir: Y lo consiguió. (Ríos 1999, 45)

The two main fictional and chameleonic characters from *Larva* traverse through and reappear in the pages of Ríos’s second novel. These are Milalias, the writer ‘in

progress', and Babelle, his partner in the writing of the second and third parts of the novel *Poundemónium*. The second part is titled 'notas de desdoblamiento' and it is formed by a series of notes written in a straightforward narrative style which add information and extend content to what is written more criptically in the first section of the novel. The third section is entitled 'Album de Babelle' and it is made up of the photographic album of the sites in London where the novel takes place, in exactly the same style as in *Larva*.

Published in 1985, *Poundemonium* therefore follows all the paradigms established in Ríos's previous novel, but focuses mainly on the XVII century meaning of the word 'larva', emphasizing the notion of a mask applied to the rhetorical figure of a ghost. The spectral elements elaborating a rhetorical texture around the lineaments of the words, images and signs forming this novel provoke an experience which relates to the Deleuzian notion of the 'becoming' as an immanent sense of change and transformation:

Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete, as Gombrowicz said as well as practiced. Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experienced. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming. (Deleuze 1997, 1)

The continuous manifestation of chaos invoked by the characters of *Poundemónium* through the revisiting of places representing possible traces left behind by the American poet never seems to lead to any conclusive point but as Deleuze indicates above, is 'always in the midst of being formed' (Deleuze 1997, 1). Like *Larva*, *Poundemónium* is also divided in four main parts. Therefore, the same method of the four 'leaves' becomes instrumental for the reader to embark in the multiplicity of events forming out this novel. The right pages take the reader by means of notes to the

left pages where the notes are scripted. From these notes there are twelve references to the third ‘leaf’ of the novel called ‘Notas de desdoblamiento’ (instead of the ‘Notas de almohada’ as in *Larva*). Finally, the last leaf is completed by ‘Album de Babelle’, the part containing five maps of the places in London where the novel develops and sixty-four small photographs of streets, parks, buildings, gates, pubs and houses lived in, visited and explored by all the characters in this novel.

The first part of *Poundemónium* is formed by a single page painted black, with the following inscription written across it in white: ‘Esplendor ((sheet lightning)) en la oscuridad’ (Ríos 1999, 13). If we recall the very end of *Larva* quoted earlier in this section, we can immediately connect this darkness to the extinction of the light which suddenly occurred during the party in *Larva*. This novel begins where the previous one left off, but with a slight difference. The characters have already been established in the previous novel, so the aim is now to emphasize the opposite experience to the previous one. If in *Larva* the spaces between the paragraphs acted as a montage of sequences developing characters being followed throughout one single space (‘La destartalada casa de Battersea Park’), on this occasion the pages on the right of the novel will carry a continuous text in which the characters engage in public spaces somehow related to the passing of Ezra Pound through London. As can be seen from the first page of the written text, the fragment becomes an intricate part of the narrative, distinct from the use of blank spaces in *Larva*:

La aparición de esa cara, blanca como el papel, en lo oscuro (1). Espectral con el halo blanco de pelo y barba, ralos. Qui-quien? Con las cejas enarcadas [dos circunflejos sobre dos puntos] y una expresión entre perpleja y de malmuhor. Lo hubieses visto. [Y oído.] Luz! (2), luciferó [en qué lengua?] el pobre diablo cojuelo aquel, arrebujado en su sucia manta, que había subido desde las sombras frondosas de Brook Green a despeluzarla en el nido [leonera, más bien] de Phoenix Lodge: Era él, aseguraría, al despertar con sobresalto, el mismo viejo languirucho [o dijo

larguiducho?] que vagabundeaba anoche por Shepherd's Bush Road hacia Brook Green, deteniéndose ante los escaparates oscuros, SPIRITS, primero ante el de la tienda de bebidas, THE SPIRIT OF LONDON, y ante el del despacho de comida china, HONG TIN, y luego ante el de la roja ropavejería junto al Café, qué miraría, para venir claudicando por el paso de cebrá, atraído quizá por la blanca fluorescencia, a plantarse ante el escaparate de la funeraria de la esquina: el libro blanco, de mármol, abierto en la noche cerrada (3).

Notes from the left page:

(1) LA CARA! (Clara para leer, cara fisonomista?):

((Ficción no mixta: de las facciones a las ficciones. Rasgo a rasgo. A riesgo. (Caray, caraíta!) Y sin hacer cábalas. Hasta que la blancara, tenebrista, se ponga toda negra.)) LA CARA!

(2) A lápiz, de Nuevo el elucidador, alias Herr Narrator. Extinta?

(3) Cerrada?:

A cal (lime, Emil!) y cantos. Noche oscura del ánimo. (Ríos 1999, 13)

The opening page establishes how the interferences of the narrator break up the rhythm of the text by altering, disconcerting or doubting the writing carried out by the main character Milalias. The idea informing the writing appears to be one of interfering continually in order to provoke the reader's awareness. Given that the textual space formed by the division into parts has already been demonstrated in the above quotation, in this section I will focus on the semantic and discursive dimension of the fragments.

The way signifiers are accumulated so as to obstruct meaning becomes another constant reference throughout this novel (as was the case with *Larva*). Thus, I will highlight the most significant usage of semantic fragmentation concerning the frequent reference to Ezra Pound in the novel, particularly the way in which the most repetitive metaphor relates the sense of luminosity to the idea of finding other ways of approaching writing, following the modernist poet's dictum, 'make it new':

a. 'Voz cascada, dijo, de cascarrabias. Vociferó luz, luz de luz? (3), o acaso sólo un balbuluceo incomprensible, Lux... Lux? (4)..., al hacer su

aparición por sorpresa ante las alambradas del campo de tennis, señalando nerviosamente con la cabeza, o un tic?, hacia Luxemburg Gardens...'

Notes from the left page:

(3) Dilucida:

Di luz y dale otra vuelta, masculla. Luz, luctuoso? My god!, a otro dogo de Venecia con esa palabrilla dura de roer. A un gran can de El Cairo, que en esta noche de difuntos seguimos en Londres.

(4) Lux perpetua...:

De luxe. Luxación, más bien. (Ríos 1999, 23)

As with the previous quotation from the first page of *Poundemónium*, the use of the visual montage of images breaking up the text which Pound always strived for in his poetry becomes translated into Ríos's writing through the accumulation of antithetical references elaborated through the image of light:

b. 'Allí aprendió a prostarse, Ez de la tierra!, con la vanidad por los suelos, y a ponerse a ras del cielo. Es Ra Pound? Es Ra? (6) Rayos! (7)

Notes from the right page:

(6) Ra...Old Nickname:

Peores cosas ma han llamado, diablo. [Ja, pon eso así: Ra: Y otros, etcetera.]

(7) So! Rayas o rayos?:

Sun-rays, Mister/Rayos! A ver por dónde sale ahora...Cada salida es, hasta cierto punto, una puesta. Una gran apuesta, porque sale para todos, aunque no a la vez, y cada vez que se pone se repone. (Ríos 1999, 42)

c. 'A Poet is Born (5): ha nacido o renacido un poeta, guerrero, un troubladour...Blast it! (6), maldita sea...Esto lo dijo hace sólo cuatro o cinco días, mientras atravesábamos Kensington Gardens, admirando el diorama de celajes del ocaso, grand couturier (8)...

Notes from the right page:

(5) Born..., parmi les bornés:

Bah, el poeta nace cuando se hace: I have not life save when the words clash.

(6) All this our South Kensington stinks peace...:

Blast!, antes de que estallara y pedieran la vida Gaudier-Brzesca, Hulme, y tantos otros, la flor innata de la juventud. Carne de canon y de bayoneta, para la Gran Ogresa. Via! Anda, que te trinche en la trinchera...

(8) La Alta Costura del ocaso:

Sunset grand couturier...: Expound it with compound words, exponlo en palabras con puestas de sol. Dioramalgamación del ocaso. Grande Sarto...' (Ríos 1999, 44)

d. MAKE IT NEW, HAZLO NUEVO, y por el Monte de Piedad (3), ésa es la palabra, la única justa, y por el monte de Carmelo, que ya es de día. Hágase la luz, ése es oficio divino, y con el esplendor todo se ordena, hágase, incluso los recuerdos disperses del escaldo escaldado. Haz otro haz (4)

Notes from the left page:

(3) En pie, dad!:

Y se os dará. Pero has de rencordar que el que da primero da dos veces. El Gran Dante, alígero...

(4) (Il miglior Febo!, Mr. Reis dixit) Figura del sol (Ríos 1999, 54)

All the previous quotations elaborate a montage of phrases credited to Ezra Pound, intertwined within references to the poetic elements which the American poet considered to be an integral part of his writing. Ríos applies his style by mixing the symbolic words which best represent Pound's poetry with mention of writers and artists associated with Pound: in quotation 'c' Ríos includes references to the literary magazine *Blast*, published in London around 1913 by Ezra Pound and representing the works of the artistic movement called Vorticism. The artist Gaudier-Brezska was an important part of the movement and was also highly influenced by the oriental calligraphic teachings Pound used in his particular mode of poetic education called the 'Eziversity'. Ríos uses the figure of 'luz' in his novel to represent the symbolic figure which Pound searched for constantly in his philosophy of writing as the need to find new forms of expression by adding an extra layering of the dissolution of meaning so as to maintain that constant element of mutation which passes from words to footnotes, notes on the left page or in the final chapters.

Regarding plot dissolution as a fragmentary quality defining the internal textual arrangement of *Poundemonium*, the main highlight revolves around the figure of the author as anarchic figure striving to come to terms with his own sense of otherness:

a. ‘Ta!, complot de la pólvora, Ta!, quemará sus cuatro cuartos el día o la noche de Guy Fawkes, meu semblant, Focs!, mi alter fuego, fu! juegos con egos fatuos (1)’

Note from the left page:

(1) Fu! Ego Scriptor:

Fue fuego...: v. Notas de Desdoblamiento 3, pag. 70. (Ríos 1999, 37)

The note belonging to the abovementioned reference belongs to the third section or ‘leaf’ of the novel which takes the reader to the third note entitled ‘Auto de fénix’:

Fu! Ego Scriptor.

Fu...

Ego?

El adán desgreñado que te mira, y refunfuña, tras el humo.

I?I?I?

Ay!

Llama aún?

Buscándote [a lume spento] a tientas, en el espejismo de su mimoria [in the mirror of memory], mírate ciego: I? I? I?

Ay! Nanay! Mírate con desapego en ese espejo (sí? Ego? Yo siempre es otro...) roto mientras me despejo. (Ríos 1999, 70)

The aspects of plot dissolution also extend towards a direct critique of capital accumulation and the effects of corruption amongst those in power:

Y meándose de risa ha-ha contra aquel muro con la gran pintada : EL DINERO ES LA DROGA MÁS PODEROSA: LSD CONTRA L.S.D. (2). L de libras, S de chelines y D de peniques. En gordas letras blancas. Lepras. Miré los muros, los Wall Streets de la Patria Mía, si un tiempo fuertes , cuántos enteros?, ya desmoronados, oh morons!, por la usura nuestra de cada día, desde que naufregó a nuestras costas el industrioso Robinsón con su Viernes Negro (3)...

Notes from the left page:

(2) £aus \$emper Deo:

In Gold we trust

(3) Cómo andamos de fondos?:

Otro banco de arena para Raquel & Vidas y para los capitanes de industrias, suciedad anónima, decid otra mentira sobre el papel...Con usura todo se vuelve basura, shit on!, ah bono a bono divino tesorro, y papel mojado, Peace off!...' (Ríos 1999, 50)

To illustrate the last category of fragment in relation to syntactic and lexemic fractures forming the discursive dimension, I will select the example which closes the third section or ‘leaf’ of the novel and epitomizes this type of fragmented quality:

También nosotros, al Leteo, mangia il loto, pasamos las aguas del olvido y después de dormirla apenas quedan retazos de aquellos retozos. Para partirse de rissa...(5) Disjecta membra poetae. Rememmbra! A desentumecerse, ea, eo, y a discurrir, amodorrado aún. Amo ergo sum, ido.'

Note from the left page:

(5) Sí, risoluto?:

Si, riso a risa. Per sbellicarsi della rissa. Dale! De la risa al duelo, peleón, un pelo. Vaya pelotera: V. Notas de Desdoblamiento 12, pag. 90.' (Ríos 1999, 52)

If the reader goes to note 12 ('Peregrinos') indicated above, she or he will read the closing paragraph:

And then went down to the sh

A de ese, Shades, - al infierno? E e te, sheet? [Sh! Ecoute...] Ojalá. Y entonces metí una hoja en la máquina infernal [Ma Chine infernale: T'a! T'a! – T'a!...] para empezar por el incipit: (Ríos 1999, 104)

This last phrase closing the third section of *Poundemónium* leaves the reader with a colon punctuating an open ending which takes him/her back to the beginning of the novel. As the end of the second section shows, Ríos makes it clear that in this fragmented approach to literature any inclination to close an argument becomes trapped in its own impossibility to do so or renunciation of the task:

Ai! I am coMING!, a una el ming, voy, vibración de luz, ay acá vamos, guay (1), ah ah acuéstate recuéstate o enderézate eh eh pero, por claridad!, no me quites el sol, amor, in coitu inluminatio. Fin (2) de este contar (3).

Notes from the left page:

(1) Why?:

SIN IF FINIS. Mal fin, malsín. Bad sin, qué pecadote, Hsinbad el Maligno.

(2) Fiiiin de finir?:

Ni principia ni termina nada, así es Maître Flaubert, así es Maestru Brancusi, couci-couça, finiiir?, a lo máximo se hace como si, hay que fingir finado y refinado Segundo Miglior Fabbro, nada se empieza ni nada se acaba, continuarración!, todo se continua.

(3) The end? Sanseacabó?:

Un rayito, una lucecita, para volver a donde resplandecerá esplendidez (no hay oscuridad sino ignorancia...), una luz extinta, in black and white, a lume spanto – to lead to splendour: ’ (Ríos 1999, 56)

Once again Ríos uses the colon to finish the novel in order to connect it back to the very beginning of the book, specifically, to the opening black page where the phrase ‘Esplendor ((sheet lightning)) en la oscuridad: ’ (Ríos 1999, 13) invites the reader in. This rhetorical device invokes Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* where the end reflects back the very beginning (‘Riverrun...’) while at the same time avoids the inclusion of an end. This approach to writing reappears throughout Ríos’s bibliography as a *modus operandi* by means of which he replicates the state of possible becoming which never comes to a close, something already established with *Larva*. This open approach will also reflect the interdisciplinary aspect of the poststructural materialization defined through hypertextual links.

4.3 Hypertextual Connections within *Larva*

The main hypertextual characteristics highlighted in the second chapter of this book were those relating primarily to decentering formations implying the use of multiple disciplines while allowing the reader to choose from different options. In this section I will explore the multivocal relations Ríos applies to the notion of palimpsest, understood as layers of hypertextual relations, as well as the literary use of polyphony through the dialogical exchanges made by the characters of *Larva*.

The first clear manifestation of hypertextual links is the tendency to involve other disciplines as open windows within the text. As Ríos notes: ‘Quizá *Larva* es una novela sui generis que intenta borrar las barreras entre los géneros. O, al menos, intenta sacar a la novela de sus casillas.’ (Sanchez & Díaz 1985, 226). The presence

throughout the novel of constant references to modern physics, biology and mathematics clarifies the previous statement as something which feeds the notion of *liberature* as well as indicating a revisiting of the ambitious modernist attempts which underpin Ríos's own work at this stage.

The first mathematical image representing *Larva* appears on the spine of the novel as well as being printed on its pages. This is the infinity sign, and it is represented graphically inside the novel by the image of the Moebius strip or horizontal eight (as shown in figure 17), that is to say, the mathematical symbol par excellence. The limitless ambition contained in the attempt to create a book which could contain all books as a kind of total work represents for Ríos 'la sinécdoque de la literatura' (Gazarian Gautier 1981, 1). This metaphor likens literature to the scientific paradigm established through the interstices of the modern novel characterized in *Larva* through the phrase 'los extremos se tocan y trocan, si se me permite el retruécano.' (Sánchez & Díaz 1985, 251). As Ríos writes in his essay *Una de Calibán y otra de Ariel: la novela como canibalización y carnavalización cultural*, it is necessary to connect opposed polarities in order to access unexpected dimensions related to the most elemental particles formed by the words of the novel. In other words, Ríos's underlying ambition in his writing is to attempt to use language as a malleable material in order to reach beyond its signifying entry. His aim is thus to express the maximum without limiting the word to its formal appearance but rather to mix or mutate it in its kaleidoscopic and fragmented form while following the trail of a novel formed out of the idea that 'la ficción es fusión y fisión' (Sánchez & Díaz 1985, 220). The literary method used by Ríos consists in the use of the word as a generative mutation, attracted by its phonetic diction implying multiple meaning possibilities:

‘Babilondono? Ba! Nadie es profeto en su lengua...’ (Ríos 1983, 273). From the word ‘profeto’, the reader can follow the note towards the left page and read the following: ‘Al menos eso sales ganando...: Beware of false profits!’ (Ríos 1983, 272).

In the previous quotation, it is possible to perceive many of the poststructuralist traits indicated in the second chapter of this book. I refer in particular to the poststructuralist strategy which is aware of its own artificiality and aims to elaborate an endless number of possible interpretations. In reality, the intention seems to be to strain the word to breaking point in order to maintain an unexpected accumulation of meanings. The word which has been pronounced becomes a graphic sign on the written page whose aim is to liberate the same potential state which it contains as a possibility. From this point, the title of the novel becomes a referential image in itself: larvae. That is to say, it becomes an undercover state, seemingly about to be or in the process of being revealed inside that bud where the worm hides in the process of transformation or ‘motamorfosis’: a formal mutation of any word transformed in the integral process of becoming yet again another possible word. As Ríos writes ‘La meta es la metamorfosis a lo largo del camino: Metaomorfosis.’ (Ríos 1999, 102).

The mathematical influence referred to at the beginning of this section also appears in the second part (‘Cantor, los números cantan’) of *Larva*. The numeric influence characterized by phrases like ‘Desde el cero a los infinitos...[cantor, los números encantan]’ (Ríos 1983, 480) multiplies constantly throughout this part of the novel in unexpected interconnections: ‘Cero no ser...’ (Ríos 1983, 83); ‘Computa la patta! Consultar el Libro de los Números’ (Ríos 1983, 83); ‘Una tila para dos hunos!’ (Ríos 1983, 85); ‘Tresse! Détresse! Cuidado con la regla de tres’ (Ríos 1983, 95); ‘Números

de Eros, erosionados...Lima! Cinque. Sei. Sete' (Ríos 1983, 105); 'Sete! Mette sete, matasiete! Sí, heterodoxo...El siete de la mala suerte me toca a mí' (Ríos 1983, 107); 'Coito! Oito! Oi' (Ríos 1983, 109). All the previous quotations lead to the final mathematical reference which takes the form of 'Otto! Otto! Gordianodo! Nudo infinito...' (Ríos 1983, 109). This quotation precedes the symbol of infinity which is printed over two pages while offering its own explanatory guide: 'Nudo gordiano? Infinito? / Sólo cuando se abre el libro. En el fin de la escritura, empieza el infinito de la lectura.' (Ríos 1983, 116). This gives an unfinished sense backed up by the idea ironically taken from the first principle of thermodynamics in modern physics: 'La tonteoría endémica de querer dar fin...Nada se empieza ni se acaba, todo se continúa.' (Ríos 1983, 440). Thus, after the previous quotation in the novel, Ríos inserts in the page the image of a brushstroke made by the goose feather which the character named Don Juan pulls out from his hat in order to draw a horizontal eight and the figure of an imaginary infinite (Fig. 17).

Throughout this second part of *Larva* there is a transition from mathematics to the notion of chance emphasized by what the French symbolist poet Mallarmé coined in reference to his attempt to create a total work under the influence of a dice: 'Estos dados tarados asesinarán, aquí en Fulham, el azar.' (Ríos 1983, 191). Therefore, taking into account the previous paragraphs, *Larva's* main intention is to disconcert the reader through a constant sense of confusion and frustration. At the same time, however, that literary approach may hide the cause of dethroning all authoritarian attempts in the face of the uncertainty, instability, and mutability produced by the Babel-like chaos which in *Larva* forms a complex interrelation around the figure of

‘esperpento’⁵². If chaos is ‘la última palabra inteligible que se oyó en la Torre de Babel, justo antes de que empezara la confusión de lenguas’ (Ríos 1983, 428) it would be enough to observe the comment made by Umberto Eco about the intention behind Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*: ‘Parecía que *Ulysses* representaba el intento más atrevido de dar fisonomía al caos: *Finnegans Wake* se autodefine como *chaosmos* y *microchasm* y constituye el documento de inestabilidad formal y ambigüedad semántica más aterrador del que jamás se haya tenido noticia.’ (Eco 1998, 105). *Larva* covers similar ground but it takes a different route in its own literary exploration.

One of the key themes underpinning the hypertextual line is the conscious attempt made by the characters to shorten the distance between their lived experiences and the writing which tells of those experiences. In this regard, James Joyce is a constant counterpoint to the writing of *Larva*, something shown by the following quotations taken from *Conversations with James Joyce*: ‘To forge literature out of my own experience’ (Power 1978, 136) as much as by the idea of the chanceful annotations identified with the scribblings of *Larva*’s character Milalias: ‘The original genius of a man lies in his scribblings: in his casual actions lies his basic talents’ (Power 1978, 89). The principal intention is to ‘escribir peligrosamente’ (Ríos 1983, 294) in order to be capable of fixing the ephemeral. As Ríos states: ‘Mis personajes viven para escribir y escriben para vivir, y muchas veces salen en aventuras porque creen que después pueden transformarse en literatura.’ (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 1).

⁵² ‘Mambo por mambo, qué serpespento, en slang’ (Ríos 1983, 101)

From this privileged position granted to the characters, it is possible to understand the first note at the opening of the novel: ‘El trifulio de nuestro Roman à Klee’ (Ríos 1983, 2). From this quotation, the reader can relate the novel *Larva*, in which real people appear as fictional characters (román a clés), to the painter Paul Klee. As Klee wrote in his *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, the art of drawing consisted mainly in ‘an active line on a walk, moving freely, without a goal. A walk for a walk’s sake. The mobility agent is a point, shifting its position forward.’ (Klee 1989,16). In a similar way, the two main characters from *Larva* are always open to the adventure of discovering for the sake of finding unexpected results in order to write about those experiences in the book they themselves call ‘mamutreto’; this is also referred to as:

The Wandering and the Book: Deambularvagabundeaban por Londres leyendo de corrido el libro de sus vidas más o menos imaginarias. O merodeaban ciegamente, al azar de su parodisea, en busca de aventuras. Su grafomanomadismo mano a mano les hacía errar erre que erre. Eme que eme. Vivir lo escrito y escribir lo revivido era uno de los trabajos parafrasisifosos de su insensatolondrado novelón de bellaquerías. Escrivivir, lo llamaban, sin caer en la cuenta de que se desvivían en el empeño. (Ríos 1983, 30)

It is by chance that the two main characters Babelle and Milalias meet at Paddington Station: ‘eres la protagonista que yo andaba buscando’ (Ríos 1983, 40). Babelle’s character is named by Milalias in order to construct his literary work in progress: ‘(pronúnciese Babel) quizá porque solía balbucear en sueños, litanie polyglotte, en múltiples idiomas y dialectos nocturnos” (Ríos 1983, 40). After Milalias is introduced as an orphan whose life motto is ‘la familia, poca y de lejos’ (Ríos 1983, 476), the reader is informed that he spent his childhood in ‘aquel pueblo del Atlántico’ (Ríos 1983, 489) to which all wealthy Galician immigrants would end up returning. The narrator also discloses that Milalias works as a private Spanish tutor in London. Babelle, on the other hand, works as an assistant to a dentist called Dr. Hoffman, a character who happened to lose all his family in the concentration camps and pays

Babelle a very small salary, taking advantage of her lack of a work permit. As compensation, the dentist lets her dwell in the attic above the practise and at times he does her tooth fillings for free: ‘mucho empaste, y poca pasta!’ (Ríos 1983, 523).

As can be seen from the above, these characters are people who live on the margins of society, who meet fortuitously and end up being witnesses to an attempted terrorist attack in the Fulham mansion where most of the action in the novel occurs: ‘Había goma-2 en los sótanos de la villa de los misterios como para borrar a Londres del mapa’ (Ríos 1983, 448). Everything functions as premonitory echoes of all the paranoia caused by terrorists projections of all kinds: ‘FOUND THE BOMB FACTORY: en grandes titulares, en la primera plana del Evening Standard, que tiembla sobre los ojos (: con mucha noche: se le cierran?) de Babelle’ (Ríos 1983, 428).

If the female character represents Babel, the male character contains a multiplicity of names. He represents, on the one hand, disorder and confusion, and on the other, an endless number of masks altering names: ‘Alas! Poor Milalias...: Esa enfermera tenía la virtud de trocar todos los nombres. El segundo martes, casi de carnaval, nuestro protagonista era ya Mr. Alalia!’ (Ríos 1983, 370). Thus, Ríos uses mutations as a literary form of hypertextual expression where marks of identity or even traits of the psyche have no visible limits. He does this in such a way that the third of the four leaves of the clover (entitled *Notas de la Almohada*) into which the novel *Larva* is divided, presents a subtitle which clarifies who is in charge of writing down the notes throughout the novel: ‘Pergeñadas por Babelle y traducidas [con interpolaciones del Herr Narrator] por Milalias’ (Ríos 1983, 451).

The constant possibility of mutation is carried by the very name of the character, therefore, Milalias can also mutate into a Don Juan type: ‘Don Juan Trenorio’ (Ríos 1983, 13) o ‘Don Johannes Fucktotum’ (Ríos 1983, 12). The exiled Spanish historian Américo Castro used to remark a similar form of mutation referring to the main traits of Spanish literature and art: ‘el arte de convertir ciertos personajes literarios en figuras vivientes: Trotaconventos, Celestina, Lazarillo, Don Juan.’ (Castro 1998, 26). First appearing in 1630 in Tirso de Molina’s theatre piece *El burlador de Sevilla*, where the late Don Juan’s libertine attitude is punished, Don Juan will become one of the most performed literary myths, mutating according to the needs of the societies which recycle it over the centuries. *Larva* incorporates Don Juan as a master of seduction through the use of language on a midsummer’s night as Ríos wants to emphasize: ‘el objetivo del Don Juan enmascarado es seducir con sus palabras, y no sólo a gente, sino a otros lenguajes también.’ (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 1). Eros and language are represented during the shortest night of the year celebrated in London during the promiscuous years known as ‘swinging sixties’. Thus, if the structure of the *Finnegans Wake* is marked by the continuous repetition of the biblical fall from grace, *Larva* will be marked by Don Juan’s constant persecution of the character known as ‘la Bella del Bosque Encantado’.

The language selected to represent an active and contemporary Babel functioning as an adequate context for the novel takes London as the ‘escenario global, un resumen del mundo. Un Londres de extranjeros e inmigrantes de múltiples orígenes. *Larva* se hace eco de esta multiplicidad de lenguas, un babel de alienados.’ (Thwaite 2005, 1). The aforementioned alienation is represented in London by more than 300 languages

belonging to communities coming from every continent. In addition, from the affirmative sense given to the gift of languages counterpointed by its opposing force characterized by its possible confusions, *Larva* forms a Babel-like work, crowded with constant ruptures, dispersive languages and multiplicities of meaning as represented by the following quotation from *Larva*: ‘al revés para que me entiendas al derecho’ (Ríos 1983, 272). Therefore, Ríos maintains the understanding of the novel as ‘navela’ (Ríos 1983, 174), combining ‘nave y vela’ inside this ‘Orbilibro’ (Ríos 1983, 267). Passing through the dream-like world of midsummer’s night or ‘Songe d’une Nuit d’Hétérodoxie’ (Ríos 1983, 278), Ríos also transforms the characters into ‘Sueñoras y sueños’ (Ríos 1983, 279) in order to continue his constantly fugitive and hypertextual interpretative sense.

It is interesting to note that the novel *Larva* forms itself from the walks around town taken by the character Milalias in an apparent nomadic mode: ‘El misterioso autor de la novela móvil que el nómada iba copiando al azar de los paseos por WONDERLONDON.’ (Ríos 1983, 442). Thus, the fascination of Milalias with the motto inscribed within the London symbol sculpted in different walls around London’s streets: ‘Domine, dirige nos: Cuánto le gustaba a Milalias el motto de Londres...Y le regaló a su mentor Mr. Reis un cenicero (rapiña de Babelle en Selfridges) que tenía grabado el escudo y el motto de Londres.’ (Ríos 1983, 158). The aim of the wandering walk is at the same time connected to the notation of every action or adventure into which the character of Milalias enters in order to continue the novel being written following a precise word rhythm: ‘Borboletra a borboletra...(Tras las muchachinas en florio, por todas las floras del habla: un mundo de palabras.)’ (Ríos 1983, 274). The wandering rhythm which Ríos applies to the wording of *Larva*

reflects back the presence of the word in action, written from the freest perspective possible while feeding its mobile and hypertextual form. In the understanding of a hypertextual process of layering through the different voices of the novel, Ríos mobilizes his own type of literary palimpsest.

4.3.1 *Larva* as Palimpsest

Larva es, al pie de la letra, un palimpsesto
en el que se superponen y se imbrican
diversas escrituras, voces, ficciones e idiomas.
Y se exhibe, casi con exhibicionismo, diría,
las huellas de sucesivos borradores.
Julián Ríos (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 220)

With *Larva*, Ríos seems to explore the reverse emblem of the Spanish Language Academy ('Limpia, fija y da esplendor'), that is to say, 'Ensucia, suelta y da oscuridad'. By exploring those hidden echoes behind words, those phonetic or grammatical associations Ríos applies to language a constant and unexpected exploration which leads away from the canonic norm. The fact of transforming words into elements full of phonetic layers acting as masks or as 'cajas-sorpresa llenas de cajas-sorpresa' (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 224), as Ríos responds during an interview with Arturo Carrera, leads him to sound the words in order to 'escuchar los latidos de las palabras' (Thwaite 2005, 1). The attempt consists in trying to 'liberar los significados internos de las palabras' (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 3). As the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy writes about the language used in *Larva* in his essay 'Las sacras arcaes del español': 'cada palabra, puede ocultar otra' (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 185). Each word contains the possibility of a slip of meaning or momentary lapse towards its opposite, as an attempt to empty the word of meaning in order to make a more flexible and mutating meaning:

Vaciar un nuevo castellano, la intentona doble de ese outcastillian deslenguado. Desbaratar el llano castellano, descastarlo y desencastillarlo y sacarlo de sus Castillas, jaque! mate!...Al fin todos los idiomas acabaran encontrando su idioma. Ancha es la lengüeta de Castilla. (Ríos 1983, 440).

Therefore, the type of writing which characterizes this stage of Ríos's *liberature* incorporates as many voices as possible while respecting the Greek origins of the word palimpsest: to scrape. By trying to explore the phonetic memories contained or triggered by the words, Ríos underpins the poetics of this novel as shown in his response to Arturo Carrera in the interview included in the book *Palabras para Larva* and quoted in the epigraph opening this section.

If the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze states that 'el escritor siempre crea una lengua extranjera dentro de su propia lengua' (Servidei 1993, 48), Julián Ríos persists in the same line of thought: 'El escritor es un extranjero en su lengua, cuando es original introduce un elemento de extrañeza. Rehacer las palabras, rehacer el lenguaje.' (Nuño 1999, 12). Ríos proceeds with the use of mutations or metamorphoses⁵³ so as to develop what he calls 'motamorfosis', the process by which letters and words transform their written appearance in phonetic variations as if changing their outer skin: 'Cero no ser...Ser o no ser...: Res o no res! El ser y la nada...Ser tras ser...Sastre Resartres!' (Ríos 1983, 82). By mutating the texts, all the contexts become animated towards unexpected correlations, in a constant state of change. One of the examples which mutates constantly throughout *Larva* and *Poundemonium* relates to popular sayings and the possibility of transforming their appearance: 'La esperanza es lo último que se pierde...: Lo penúltimo! Mientras hay

⁵³ As Ríos writes in *Larva* of the character Milalias: 'una traducción hispanoli de Las Metamorfosis, editada bolsillescamente en España, era el modelo inigualable para el proteico Milalias.' (Ríos 1983, 322).

vida...'; 'De mal en mal en pésimo...'; 'Nuestro gozo en un pozo negro...' (Ríos 1983, 140). The objective of this writing is to break all linguistic rigidities which may limit word forms by revealing all possible signifying layers: 'glosa que glosa sus metamorfosis' (Ríos 1983, 409). This happens at the end of the section entitled *Corrido*, when all the female characters who have been offended in one way or another by the character of Don Juan surround the effigy of the character with the intention of taking their revenge while shouting: 'Cápale! Cápale!, trozo a trozo, hasta que no le quede parte sana' (Ríos 1983, 411). This attack uses every possible language variation: 'Diversas lenguas, palarvas horripilantes: Kapala, Kapalingüista! Felix cuppa! De testa a teste, señor! Capa! Kapp! Kappe! Kappen! Capo! Capa! Capa china! Da capo, al capone! Girando, enfurecidas, se entorbellinaban en torno al fantoche' (Ríos 1983, 411). At that very moment, the mutation of Don Juan into Doña Juana occurs as a fusion of opposites whose aim is to escape the impending attack: 'Naces entre heces y feneces y renaces' (Ríos 1983, 413).

The notion of palimpsest employed by Ríos also mobilizes the mutating state between opposing elements. In this way the palimpsest becomes a literary strategy represented by the constant use of puns or portmanteau words and underpinned by the mutating perspective of difference. Thus, this strategy supports Ríos's explanation of the Italian pun 'Diobolo' as it is used in *Larva*:

One of the Italian wordplays in *Larva* is 'Diobolo' which means god and the devil at the same time. To be able to reconcile all extremes is the supreme ambition of any author; we don't want the light and darkness, high and low, and the other dichotomies of the Manichean to stand any longer. I think that the best modern literature is complex precisely because there are no set boundaries. (Gazarian-Gautier 1990, 4)

This plurality of meanings seems to incorporate Heisenberg's scientific principle of indeterminacy, forcing each reader to recreate the work at hand on the basis of each chosen meaning. In *Larva* each word contains the transforming tendency of letters

mutating their own identities or inverting opposites: ‘Tumba por cuna, qué trueque!, y que los muertos entierren a los vivos’ (Ríos 1983, 147).

Umberto Eco shows his fascination for the fusion of extremes in Joyce’s work by means of the motto ‘Coincidentia Oppositorum’ of the Italian philosopher Nicolás de Cusa; by the same token this principle also describes Ríos’s capacity for literary mutations within *Larva*. This includes, for instance, the way in which Borges’s attraction for the work of Swedenborg becomes ‘Swedenborges’ (Ríos 1983, 462), or the way in which relations between writers force them to become one word as ‘Rimbaudelaire’ o ‘Freudjung’. This mutating strategy between letters and words in relation to the subjects treated in *Larva* aims to provoke in the reader a sense of dislocation, something which is clearly manifested by *Larva*’s narrator: ‘No light, but rather darkness visible. Oscuclaramente! Visible hoscacidad, salvo para los mil tontos ciegoistas que no quieren prestar oídos.’ (Ríos 1983, 433). Still, the intention behind Ríos’s writing is to make everything as if anew, even if that implies obscuring what may be clear in meaning: ‘Luz negra?: Vuelves oscuras hasta las palabrillas más claras’ (Ríos 1983, 448). The aim is to attract words towards a constant mutation in order to continue the influence of the palimpsest while emphasizing their mutating fusion of hypertextual elements: ‘erótica y retórica...fusión de átomos verbales’ (Fernandez Porta 1995, 9).

4.3.2 Polyphonies within *Larva*

Larva es una novela carnavalesca que lleva incorporada su propia crítica, parodia y glosa – como si dijéramos que en el pecado lleva la penitencia... Este comentario interno o «ecomentario» implica, ante todo, que las frases están llenas de disfraces, que las palabras son larvas o mascaradas, y están sobrecargadas de significados. Julián Ríos (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 219)

The hypertextual connection is explored in this section through the literary use of polyphony made by the dialogical exchanges between the characters of *Larva*. But as Ríos claims in the above epigraph, the polyphonic aspect will begin with the way language is projected so as to mutate other languages into Spanish. Ríos forces those languages through the etymological filter of the Spanish language to provoke a Babel-like sensation in the reader. In this manner, even Esperanto receives the Spanish filter treatment through *Larva*:

Yugoslarvo? Greco? Polo? Franco? Jispano? Jispano de Madrido? Mi parolas esperanto. Simila, vorto a vorto, al hispana. Mi ser Esperantisto y Espiritisto. Teosofisto. Y usté? Estudento en Londono? Literaturisto! Verkristo! Multa gusto, sinyoro...Alia?! Sinyoro Alia? Bela nomo! Y el beleta tenorio me saca a valsotear. Libertino Don Lojano Tenorio! Granda viro, amoru, y yo me siento liliputa contra el korpo del gorilo. Y viro y viro papilionando frotifroto vulvolupto, libelo!, mientras el gigante lampiro vampiro vira vira giroskopolucionador. Trompo. Más turbo. Mastuerzo! El músculo dormi...Rapidu! Venu rapide kun tu Venuso. (Ríos 1983, 335).

Although at first reading the previous extract appears to show a complete lack of political engagement, this section will begin to reveal different dialogical conditionings which connect through the interrelations between the literary characters of *Larva*. Thus, as the Russian theorist Bakhtin explored in his writings attempting to invoke a political positioning: ‘One language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language...The word in language is half someone else’s.’ (Bakhtin 1994, 12).

As an implementation of the prolific elaboration of the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin in relation to the dialogical novel, *Larva* presents interconnections which may help us to approach and understand its reading. The first of these is the direct challenge of the dialogical writing to a logos which depends on the creation of meaning. The Babel-like ritual of the carnival where the novel *Larva* is set challenges the dominant discourse and twists it, suspending any sense of a fixed identity. In this process, orality increases its presence through the approach to language: ‘En la noche de Don Juan. Más máscaras para mi Milalias...Baile de disfraces – y verbaile de disfrases: carnivals de las parolas: vertiginoso travestivals -, bacanalgarabía ensordecedora.’ (Ríos 1983, 454). As mentioned earlier, in *Larva* the Spanish language masks other languages by filtering them through the ‘verbacanal’ (Ríos 1983, 360) or ‘great feast of slanguages’ (Ríos 1983, 360). In relation to that loss of identity characterized by the quotation ‘Edentidad perdida’ (Ríos 1983, 37), it is clear that Ríos notes the point of non-recognition amongst the characters forming part of the novel: ‘Nadie se conoce porque nadie se reconoce a sí mismo...’ (Ríos 1983, 37).

For Bakhtin, one of the essential aims of the novel will be ‘the laying-bare of any sort of conventionality, the exposure of all that is vulgar and falsely stereotyped in human relationships.’ (Bakhtin 1994, 162). Ríos seems to follow this quotation literally by treating the scatological in all possible corporal and material variations, even using phrases scribbled inside public toilets as inspiration: ‘Coleccionaba toda clase de porquerías. La hez era una parte importante de sus rodados cantos pisanos, de sus alus/viones culturales en el WASTELONDON.’ (Ríos 1983, 444). In the same way that those scribbles written in private cubicles abound in constant errors which liberate their authors from their projected desires, there exists in *Larva* a continuous

word variation which repeats vowels and consonants up to two or three times, leading the reader towards the oral experience of literature: ‘acabados los malos tragos de la tragedia, empieza el comecome de la comedia.’ (Ríos 1983, 148).

Page after page, a way of reading begins to be developed as if the reader were listening to the words. A key to the implicit orality in the novel which calls out its own strategy in the note attached to the phrase ‘Al rojo! O hirviendo’ (Ríos 1983, 247) is reflected on the opposite page: ‘Ojo! Oír viendo: Olhe! Oye!, el doble lema de nuestro bufonético cuatrojos’ (Ríos 1983, 246). Using the sense of hearing while reading the phrases in *Larva*, it is possible to understand the phrase ‘Peeping Tom, the water is piping’ (Ríos 1983, 247) which also reflected on the opposite page as ‘Hirviendo? : Ir viendo...’ (Ríos 1983, 246). It is as if the words were acting as magnetic fields attracting their own phonetic belongings: ‘Ass! Conasse! As con as! As con as, y a barajar...Así y así y asá. Fricción de ficción! El as no frota al as...Listos? As! As! As! Ases y no al descubierta.’ (Ríos 1983, 249).

In the same way, when Ríos introduces in *Larva* an unlimited number of particular accents belonging to different speakers, this seems to invoke the Bakhtinian idea of dialogical heteroglossia⁵⁴: ‘Mi arma!...se desmelenaba tac-taca-tac de seguidilla a soleá y por peteneras, lo que fuera, hasta las tantas de la madrugá’ (Ríos 1983, 526). By incorporating the Andalusian accent within the written text, Ríos follows the concept of heteroglossia which Bakhtin understood thus:

⁵⁴ See *The Dialogic Imagination*: ‘The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape [...] anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance’ (Bakhtin 1994, 272).

The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance [...] At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions –social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. (Bakhtin 1994, 428)

Ríos explores as far as is possible this oral dimension of the written characters in order to overload that sense of the impossibility of resolution on the part of the reader which Bakhtin mentions in the above quotation. If Goytisolo used to refer to *Libro del buen amor* as a book written to be recited (‘súpome el clavo echar / él comió la vianda e a mí fazié rumiar’ (Goytisolo 2001, 12)⁵⁵, *Larva* becomes the example par excellence of a book to be read aloud in order to maintain the qualities of heteroglossia within the reading experience.

The mixture of all the different polyphonies expressed by those marginal characters inhabiting *Larva*’s pages mobilizes a sense of vindication whose aim is to attack established myths. This argument applies to the irony underpinning the character of Don Juan: ‘Conocer...coñocer, Coñócete a ti mismo, al final?’ (Ríos 1983, 290). From the section within *Larva* entitled ‘Corrido’ onwards the destruction of Don Juan’s myth by all the female characters exposed to his misleading seductions begins. This whole section of the novel is divided in groups subtitled as follows: ‘Las madres’ (22 characters); ‘Hermanas’ (5 characters); ‘Niñas de sus ojos’ (4 characters); ‘Sombras Chinescas’ (6 characters); ‘Llaves’ (2 characters) and ‘Etc.’ (23 characters). All these characters represent symbolically women from all continents, creeds and ages. They all gather by the effigy located in the middle of the garden of the house

⁵⁵ As the storytellers do in Xemaá el Fná square in Marrakech. See ‘Lectura del Arcipreste en Xemaá el Fná’ (Goytisolo 2001, 12)

where the party takes place: ‘Libertino esclavo...Loco por las mujeres y las palabras. Ahora le sacan la lengua! Ladran, abuchean, ridiculizan, vejan, afrentan.’ (Ríos 1983, 305).

The female attack becomes a polyphonic experience in itself, ranging from the nun who shouts: ‘Apróstata, próstrate ante mi crucifijo. Detrás de la cruz está el diablo? Dijolo blasfemo y punto redondo. Aparte, que ya le darán los puntos. Cruz y, fijo!, hijo..., y le clavó la cruz en la crisma’ (Ríos 1983, 341) to the nymphet expressing her anger physically: ‘noqueó al fantoche con el brazo escayolado’ (Ríos 1983, 353). All these female characters liberate their frustrations while expressing their specific accusations against the figure of Don Juan and his different masks and appearances: ‘What a leer! Y vuelve de nuevo a las andadas, con tus alibis y tus mil alias, alias beatus, alias miser.’ (Ríos 1983, 323). If up to this point in *Larva*, the masculine voice had been leading the literary experience, it is now silenced by the polyphony of female voices which scream out their vengeful verbs covering the whole letters of the alphabet:

Acogotan ahorcan apalean apuñalan apedrean aporrean apuñetean arañan azotan baten cachetean cascan cocean chicotean dentellean descristianan empalan enlodan fustigan golpetean horadan inflaman jarrean jeringan knutean latigean llagan magullan navajean ñequen oprimen putean rasgan rompen sacuden santiguan trompean vapulean xilofonizan yugulan zurrán, qué desmadre, al eccehomo. (Ríos 1983, 407)

The effect produced by this verbal accumulation seems to transcend the novel itself and act as a form of exorcism of every type of masculine oppression which is constantly manifested against women. If Joyce defended Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* by showing precisely the emancipation and revolt of the women as independent figures and if Cervantes also represents in *El Quijote* the free spirit of all female characters

fighting for their independence, *Larva* returns to the subject of female vindication from its liberatory and polyphonic angle.

The fourth part of *Larva* is titled 'Algarabía de una noche de San Juan' and its main influence is its Arabic etymological emphasis. The language is formed mainly by Arabisms thrown within the Babel-like flow which passes through the filter of the Spanish language. The words are forced into the Arab mode with such force that they seem to be conjuring up the seven centuries of Arabic presence in Iberian territory, highlighting the references to the body and its particular attractions as shown in the following quotations: 'El mejor afrodisiaco alaridar Alá en el momento de la aleyaculación. Santo consejo de Omar Haleby al Profeta Mohammed.' (Ríos 1983, 218); 'Etimología d'arabescos fantásticos' (Ríos 1983, 220) or 'De alboroto en alborozo al albur sobre el Al-Borak [...]' (Ríos 1983, 223). The chapter continues to explore every possible mixture of Arabisms to the point of creating 'toda una lacería de arabescos en la que se entrelazan inextricablemente lo poético, lo popular y hasta lo francamente obsceno' as Ríos declares in the interview with Julio Ortega included in *Palabras para Larva* (Sánchez Robayna 1985, 229). In conclusion, 'Algarabía', the fourth chapter of *Larva*, represents as much an exaltation of Arabic etymology as of strangeness within the novel itself. It is thus one of the most unique chapters in the history of Spanish literature.

Through this polyphonic practise, the reader begins to receive meanings which disperse the idea of an immediate understanding. This is related to a constant obstruction of the written word, line, paragraph and page, opening the reader towards a completely unexpected reading experience. Still, the dialogical relation is a constant presence throughout the novel, moving through its polyphonic aspects and its plurality of consciences in constant mutation through their particular chronotopes or

‘utterly interdependent’ (Bakhtin 1994, 425) categories of time and space. As Bakhtin writes, ‘Nada está acabado, ninguna palabra es la última, no hay una última conclusión que agote todas las posibilidades.’ (Beltrán 1995, 49).

4.4 The Outer Limits of *Liberature*

Me gustaría que salieras, al fin,
de este laberinto de excreta
en alas de tu propia imaginación
Julián Ríos (Ríos 1983, 152)

The above quotation is directly addressed to the reader in a manner which indicates the intrinsic need of Ríos’s *liberature* for the participation of the reader. The demand for the reader’s imagination recalls what the Spanish writer Blanco White (1775-1841), exiled in London from 1810, wrote in an essay entitled *Sobre el placer de las imaginaciones inverosímiles*. Blanco White considered imagination to be a particular critical tool against dogmas: ‘enemiga natural del dogma y el origen de toda rebelión’ (Goytisolo 1982, 63). Furthermore, Blanco White rebelled against the rigidities of univocal senses applied to literary works, preferring instead the exploration of the multiplicity of meanings applied to the idea of openness. As Eco also wrote in his book *Open Work*: ‘territorio laberíntico donde es posible moverse en varias direcciones, descubriendo una serie infinita de opciones posibles en la obra misma’ (Eco 1998, 95). But fundamentally, for the purpose of this book, it will also be an essential characteristic of poststructural and neobaroque approaches as explored in this and the following chapter.

In *Larva* and *Poundemónium* Ríos attempts to formulate such an open and multiple works which in themselves aim to become examples of the total book: ‘Tematizarás todo, de la a a la zeta, en lo más hondo de tu novelota experimentalista’ (Ríos 1983,

377). Thus, it is understood that one of Julián Ríos's ambitions may consist in aspiring to write the book which contains every book: 'libro que contenga todos los libros' (Gazarian Gautier 1990, 2). In this sense, the character Milalias projects himself into the utopia of writing such a book which the rest of the characters continuously ask him about. First, the party guest disguised as a devil: 'Y su orbilibro eterno?' (Ríos 1983, 301). Afterwards, the character of the Italian Francesca Castelli: 'Tu librorbe. No decías que ibas a encontrar el universo en un solo libro?' (Ríos 1983, 325). Milalias replies in a phrase which contains words whose first letters form the acronym which makes up the title of the book: '...Lo ando reescribiendo, voy acabando...' (Ríos 1983, 301). This approach is counterbalanced by the fact that the narrator is always emphasizing the avoidance of reaching any definitive conclusion, therefore feeding the ambiguous sense of *liberature*: 'La tontería endemoniada de querer concluir...El pobre da vueltas y más vueltas y no se entera de que su orbilibro no tiene ni principios ni fines. Ni pies ni cabeza. Ni principios. NI FIN.' (Ríos 1983, 301).

The novel *Larva* coincides in part with the six transformative stages of the larva's life. Through that process of mutation, the larva becomes a butterfly with a life span of seven days in which the objective is more than clear: the reproductive capacity of up to a thousand larvae per each female butterfly. In the same manner, Milalias proposes to apply a system of one hundred possible endings to the novel in order to show that there cannot be a conclusive point of no return 'a rajatabla en uno de sus libros larvarios' (Ríos 1983, 533).

Larva and *Poundemónium* are literary works which attempt to approach forms of representation which, due to their lack of apparent limits, contain the capacity of change. In the face of words characterized by their fugacity, the reader constantly perceives that everything is transforming itself and changing appearance in the process of becoming something other, in a similar manner to the transformative stages of the larva. It seems that Ríos's intention in these two novels is to question language in its mediation, and in that process, provoke doubt in the reader by adding as much weight to the signifier as to the meanings they imply.

Ríos has chosen the urban context of London during the 1970s to represent the two nights which mark the temporal dimensions of the novels as a way to acquire distance from the socio-political environment he comes from. *Larva* and *Poundemonium* are, then, literary responses to the socio-political, corporal and linguistic oppressions experienced under Franco's dictatorship. Both works are still exilic responses to the country Ríos has escaped from. In writing them, therefore, he still has the nation in mind, even if they are already beginning to mark the shift towards the postnational phase within Ríos's *oeuvre*. Thus, these works represent the most intense phase of *liberature* in terms of the hypertextual distortion of language and reader interaction as well as in fragment usage within the texts. Ríos's intention is to provoke doubts in order to question any sign of authority, removing all elements centered on absolute certitude. *Larva* and *Poundemónium* elevate doubt as a necessary manifestation while filtering supposed truths through the sieve of ambiguity. Therefore, in spite of the criticisms of the difficulty implied by the reading of *Larva* and *Poundemónium*, these works persist as examples of radical literature in the Spanish literary world.

When the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy was asked about the future of the novel, he replied by quoting the French philosopher Maurice Blanchot: ‘el libro que vendrá...lo que hay que hacer ahora es minar, pulverizar, corroer a través de la parodia...la novela que viene será pues paródica, erótica, macarrónica, rococo, etc.’ (Sanchez-Boudy 1985, 97). Ríos will also add the implicit ‘interactive’ notion applied to the works, as this chapter has shown in relation to *Larva* and *Poundemónium*. Nevertheless, Ríos remains aware that to achieve the above it is necessary to maintain the declaration of literary principles the reader can find within the pages of *Larva*: ‘Herr Narrator sticks his rusk in: Fine art is that in which hand, the head and the Heart of a man go together. Cabezacorazónmano, mancomunado’ (Ríos 1983, 422). From the next chapter onwards I will explore what I consider to be a second phase of Ríos’s *liberature* in relation to active reader, hypertextual relations and fragment usage within *liberature* beginning to reduce the most radical literary approaches explored in this chapter.

Chapter 5
‘The Echo Chambers’
or Neobaroque Strategies in Julián Ríos’s
‘The Critical Fictions’ and ‘The Painted Novels’

De un modo u otro he celebrado *Ulises* en el libro
de crítica-ficción *La vida sexual de las palabras*;
pero donde seguí paso a paso la odisea de un día de
Dublín fue en este otro libro de crítica-ficción,
Casa Ulises, suerte de novela de una novela.
(Ríos 2003, 269)

The works explored in this chapter belong to what I refer to as the second phase of Ríos’s development within *liberature*, a phase which is intrinsically connected with the paradigms associated with neobaroque strategies of the recycling of previous literary works as is indicated by the above epigraph. In addition, the fact that the neobaroque approach draws out certain formative characteristics allowing an interactive reading style concerned with that choice of free composition, it will therefore be of great interest to investigate in which ways this elaboration maps out a particular manner of writing associated with this mobile term, neobaroque. As Serge Gruzinsky mentions in *Images at War*:

The term ‘neobaroque’ could be used to qualify our times, when the channels of communication (video, cable, satellites, computers, video-games, etc.) have multiplied in Mexico as elsewhere, and the spectator has been left with the new freedom to compose his or her own images.
(Gruzinski 2001, 225)

In addition to this, it will also be important to remember that ‘the critical fictions’ (*La vida sexual de las palabras* and *Casa Ulises*) and ‘the painted novels’ (*Impresiones de Kitaj* and *Las tentaciones de Antonio Saura*) form the next stage of *liberature* in the sense that all those works exist as if they were works within the works. That is to say, in the sense of ‘echo chambers’ that Sarduy used so as to refer to an integral part of neobaroque’s literary examples. Such works may repeat, rewrite or form literary mosaics out of other works. They may do so, either through a literal taking over of the

work itself, as in the case of *Casa Ulises*, or through the mirroring or echoing effect of talking about other works while incorporating similar formal approaches, as Ríos does in *La vida sexual de las palabras*. In relation to ‘The Painted Novels’, the process is implicit through the reflections caused by the dialogues between Ríos and the artists concerning the paintings. Thus, the neobaroque stage in Ríos’s production goes back to Sarduy’s use of ‘the echo chamber’. As will be shown later in this chapter, the poststructural tendency of Barthes explored in the second chapter of this book also filters through into Sarduy’s understanding of the Neobaroque. As Sarduy explains when talking about the Barthesian influence:

Lo que cuenta es la organización total del lenguaje, y es aquí que se articulan los trabajos de Roland Barthes sobre la semiología, la retórica a través de la historia y la ambigüedad de toda escritura. Es con Barthes que he trabajado desde hace tres años, en la Escuela Práctica de Altos Estudios de la Sorbona. Justamente empecé a interesarme en estos asuntos de crítica estructural en el curso de Barthes y publiqué recientemente en Tel Quel un artículo sobre Góngora, tratando de aplicar el método. (Sarduy 1999, 1810)

The neobaroque has its origins in the reinterpretation of a European aesthetic style, appropriated by the periphery embodied by a group of Latin American writers⁵⁶. Thus, it is particularly revealing that a Spanish writer like Julián Ríos incorporates it into his *oeuvre* in what could be considered as an inverse operation which involves travelling from the periphery to a European centre. These shifts could be seen as originating from a centre of power (from the Baroque of an Imperial Spain in the seventeenth century), moving into a Caribbean postcolonial periphery,⁵⁷ and finally being transported back to Europe. In the case dealt with in this chapter, the

⁵⁶ Amongst those writers, the Cuban group formed by Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier and Severo Sarduy as well as the early work of the Colombian García Márquez stand out.

⁵⁷ As the Paraguayan writer Roa Bastos declares in *Escribir en París*: ‘El barroco americano, que ahora se considera como una cosa prácticamente autoengendrada en América Latina, está basado en los mejores modelos del barroco europeo.’ (Kohut 1983, 251)

Neobaroque is mainly exemplified by the exilic work of Severo Sarduy, Juan Goytisolo and Julián Ríos. Even if Ríos never declares that he has adopted this neobaroque style intentionally, he does in fact infiltrate it into the stylistic edifice of his work, through the continuous proximity of interests and literary practices already indicated and others which will become clearer as we further explore this chapter.

Nevertheless, the novels explored in this chapter begin to shift their focus within *liberature* in relation to the radical way Ríos mobilized the language in the previous stage of *liberature*. The neobaroque appropriations of other books and writers demand that the readers of Ríos's works relate to other novels which are visited and argued about literally by the three characters named A, B and C who had already appeared in *Larva* and *Poundemónium*. Thus, before exploring the ways in which the radical use of language begins to mutate in terms of its political edge, let us depict the neobaroque characteristics which feed this stage of *liberature*.

5.1 Tracing The Features of the Neobaroque

Throughout the final four decades of the twentieth century a wide range of cultural theorists have been engaged in the exploration of the idea of the Neobaroque using a variety of discourses associated with a new reading of the historical Baroque. Our concern here is, specifically, with the way in which these critical approaches propose forms of epistemology as part of an attempt to move beyond postmodernity by means of a re-reading of a baroque paradigm⁵⁸. The main aim behind these different critical positions seems to be to find a way of distancing their investigations from the too

⁵⁸ See particularly Christine Buci-Glucksmann's *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (1994); Omar Calabrese's *Neobaroque: A Sign of the Times* (1992); Gillo Dorfles's *Elogio della disarmonia* (1986) and Guy Scarpetta's *L'artifice* (1988).

generic and unspecific content normally associated with the cultural trend known as postmodernity. For the purpose of this chapter, and in order to engage critically with those aspects of the neobaroque which have a closer connection with the poetics of Ríos's *oeuvre*, I shall highlight the main characteristics explored in those studies. In doing so I will draw particular attention to those neobaroque coordinates which can be made to work methodologically as the main references in exploring the neobaroque as a whole.

The first neobaroque element which stands out and which forms the basis of all the others is the lack of centre or, in other words, the existence of a decentering tendency amongst the artistic and literary formations belonging to this cultural phenomenon. Carmen Bustillo has already indicated this manoeuvre in her seminal study, *Barroco y América Latina: un itinerario inconcluso* (1990), by tracing it back to one of the main characteristics of the seventeenth century's European Baroque:

El sentimiento de carencia de centro, responsable en gran medida de la aparentemente caótica distribución del espacio tanto en las obras arquitectónicas como en las artes plásticas y literarias. Tal descentramiento fue probablemente sufrido con especial agudeza por España dada la crisis interna y externa por la que atravesó durante la época y que la aisló del Continente. (Bustillo 1990, 93)

The particular emphasis on the social and political crisis and its resulting translation into an aesthetic form will be a recurrent affair until the twentieth century. Bustillo quotes the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his classic work *Writing and Difference* (1981) to prove her point:

Es durante las épocas de dislocación histórica, cuando el hombre se siente desubicado, que se desarrolla esta pasión estructuralista que es, simultáneamente un frenesí por la experimentación y una proliferación de las esquematizaciones. (Bustillo 1991, 93).

Thus, when that experimental attraction indicated by Derrida is transformed into literary expression, the use of language becomes the first formal element to show that something has been forced in order to make it different from the realist norm. This tendency towards an overloaded synonymic language quickly manifests its own particular critique of the status quo. In the words of Guillermo Sucre:

toda esa alienación del mundo contemporáneo se manipula a través del lenguaje, lo cual justifica por parte de los creadores que la crítica al mundo sea una crítica al lenguaje que lo expresa (artístico, político, publicitario, ideológico en general). (Bustillo 1991, 112)

Hence, the decentering characteristic applied to language under the neobaroque paradigm becomes in itself a critical operative tool in highlighting not only its very own artificiality but consequently its inescapably elusive nature. As the French philosopher Buci-Glucksmann notes in *Baroque Reason*:

Against any idea of self-enclosed language, any logical metalanguage, this paradigm continually appeals to the same tropes and stylistic procedures: allegory, oxymoron, open totality and discordant detail, the real emptied of its superabundance of reality. This whole rhetoric of affects presents difference as excess and obtuse meaning. (Buci-Glucksmann 1994, 141).

As the above quotation shows, the second element of a Neobaroque approach is the operation of illusion in the form of simulation as an integral part of the referential structure. This poetic mode concentrates on forms which stimulate the very use of simulation employed consciously by the cultural formations engaged in a neobaroque practice. ‘No se trata de confundirse con lo real, se trata de producir un simulacro con plena conciencia del juego y del artificio’ (Varderi 1996, 175) as the critic Alejandro Varderi says, quoting from Baudrillard’s *De la seducción* in order to encapsulate the argument exposed in *Severo Sarduy y Pedro Almodóvar: del barroco al kitsch*. Varderi draws on the works of Sarduy and Almodóvar in order to establish their neobaroque parallels by emphasizing their promiscuous referential qualities:

Insertos en tal promiscuidad referencial donde ya uno no sabe si lo que lee es tacto o es texto, las obras de ambos creadores se inscriben, como diría Sarduy, “en una red” (*Cobra* 68): superficie o piel en la cual todas aquellas referencias quedan grabadas como sobre un cuerpo que se expresa siempre desde los márgenes. (Varderí 1996, 177)

This apparent tendency to confuse the surface texture between the text and its metaphoric image projected as a skin on which to write, recalls the particular metamorphosis Roland Barthes refers to when confronted with the act of writing: ‘El lenguaje es una piel: yo froto mi lenguaje contra el otro. Es como si tuviera palabras a guisa de dedos, o dedos en la punta de mis palabras. Mi lenguaje tiembla de deseo’ (Barthes 1982, 92). This language strategy is employed as a neobaroque trait in order to incorporate difference into the sexuality of the fictional characters. This is something which Varderí also confirms in relation to other Latin American authors:

Espacio compartido por otros autores neobarrocos como José Balza y Roberto Echavarren, para quienes también la pulsión del deseo y el cuerpo como fiesta establecen las coordenadas prestas a orientar al lector por el tejido del texto; y lo político queda integrado a la dinámica erótica de los personajes, a través de la señalización de las diferencias y lo diferente que su sexualidad privilegia (Varderí 1996, 182).

As indicated in the second chapter of this book, the influence of Roland Barthes is never very distant from Sarduy’s discourse, and by association, that of Julián Ríos. In the context of all this apparently simulative creative fascination, the perception of the virtual becomes another neobaroque element at work within the increasing presence of technological media in the contemporary world. It is in the rereading of the neobaroque carried out by the Colombian critic Carlos Rincón, in *Mapas y pliegues*, that the new technologies begin to form another ingredient which has to be taken into account when interpreting the simulative presence within the neobaroque: ‘La presión del fenómeno contemporáneo de la multiplicación de los canales y las formas de comunicación [...] de un mundo de simulación cuyo emblema es el Ciberspace’ (Rincón 1996, 168). But the thought-provoking intuition is not that this causality of

events represents a modern reality but, most pertinently, that it could already be reflected in the imaginations at work during the colonial period in Mexico. In order to elaborate further this idea, Rincón refers to Serge Gruzinski's interpretation of the clash of visual formations in different temporalities in *La guerra de las imágenes: de Cristóbal Colón a Blade Runner* (2001):

Aquellos imaginarios coloniales, como los de hoy, practican la descontextualización y el reciclaje; la desestructuración, tanto como la reestructuración de lenguajes. La mezcla de las referencias; la confusión de registros étnicos y culturales; el encabalgamiento de lo vivido y la ficción; la difusión de las drogas; la multiplicación de los soportes de la imagen, hacen igualmente de los imaginarios barrocos de la Nueva España una prefiguración de los imaginarios neobarrocos [...] Ese mundo de la imagen y del espectáculo es más que nunca aquél de lo híbrido, del sincretismo y de la mezcla, de la confusión de razas y de lenguas como lo era ya en la Nueva España (Rincón 1996, 335).

Therefore, to sum up his argument, the representational aspects of repetition and recycling increase their presence as the main Neobaroque elements at play within the second phase of *liberature*. The Neobaroque aspects of decentering and simulation mentioned above are continued from the first phase of *liberature*.

Although the term neobaroque was first used within the context of architecture by the Italian art historian Gillo Dorfles in *Baroque in Modern Architecture* (1951), one other author stands out for instilling into this term the most resonant formal characteristics. The Cuban writer Severo Sarduy becomes the real explorer and constant innovator of the ideological neobaroque structure, something also shown by the fact that all the works cited above refer to Sarduy as the real instigator of an epistemological understanding of the term.

5.1.1 Exploring ‘The Echo Chamber’ according to Severo Sarduy

En esta cámara, a veces el
eco precede la voz.
(Sarduy 1999, 1197)

In 1977 Julián Ríos, at that time still living in exile in London, received a letter signed by the Paris exiled Severo Sarduy (Fig. 24), explaining why he was unable to send the article he had agreed to write for the literary magazine *Espiral* explored in the third chapter of this book. As has already been explained, Julián Ríos edited the second number of *Espiral*, entitled *Juan sin tierra*, which focused on Juan Goytisolo’s novel of that name written about the exilic experience. This novel marked a creative rupture in Goytisolo’s literary production, highlighted by the fact that he concluded the novel by mutating the Spanish language into Arabic in order to cover up the phrase whose translation reads: ‘estoy definitivamente al otro lado, con los parias de siempre, afilando el cuchillo’ (Ríos (ed.) 1975b, p. 10).

Goytisolo’s ideologically marginal positioning was the subject of the article Sarduy was meant to write for *Espiral*, dealing with the aspects of deterritorialization implied by Goytisolo’s novel. According to the letter received by Ríos, Sarduy’s refusal had to do, apart from the pressure of time before embarking on a trip to Sri Lanka, with the influence provoked by participating in Roland Barthes’s inaugural lesson at the College of France. In that lecture, the French philosopher expressed the idea, already shown in this book’s second chapter, that ‘todo lenguaje implica poder, e incluso, dijo textualmente, el lenguaje es fachista’ (Ríos (ed.) 1975b, 233). Those words provoked Sarduy to elaborate another notion of how the article should have to be written, most specifically, in relation to the language machine instead of the state machine as had been planned originally. Furthermore, he believed it implied questioning the whole

idea of the inner tendency of language to become a fixed entity whenever it appears in control of its own ‘vocación afirmativa’ (Ríos (ed.) 1975b, 233).

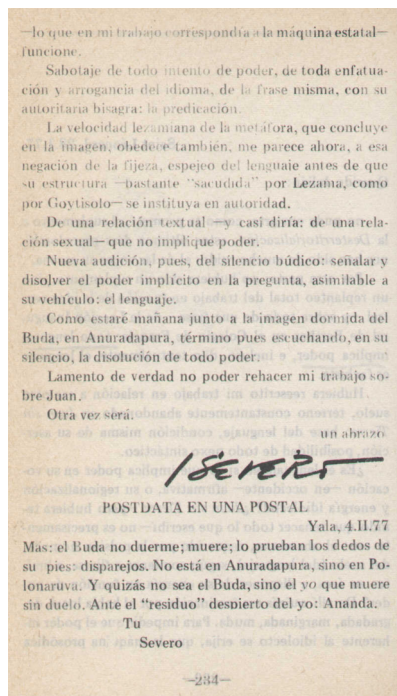
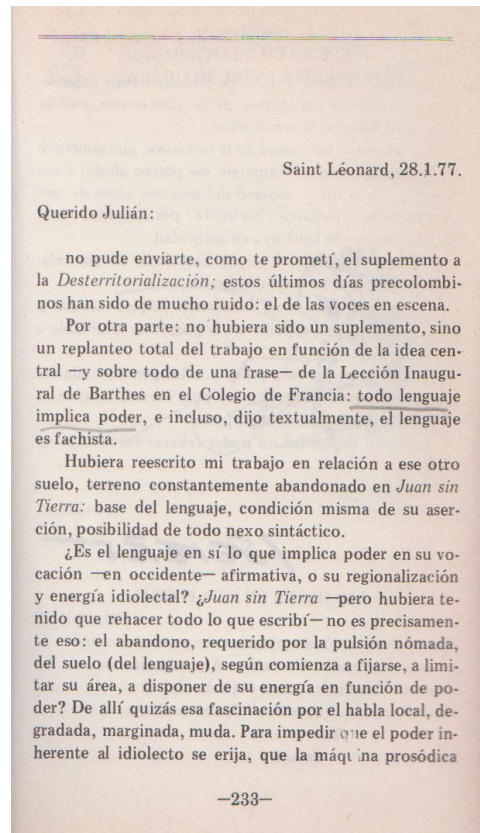
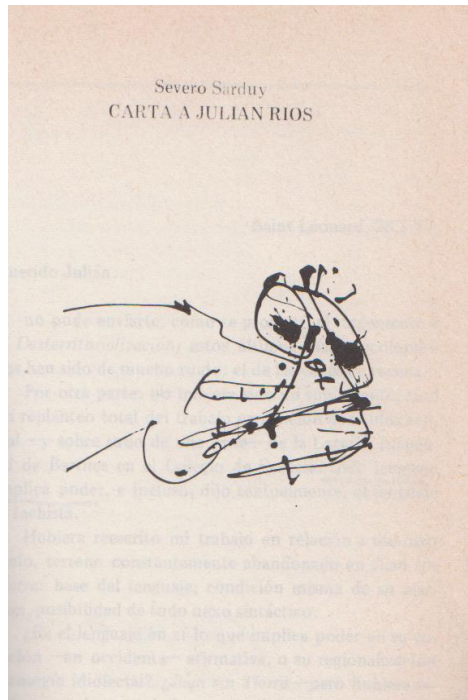


Fig. 24 Letter from Severo Sarduy (Ríos (ed) 1977a, 231)

The inclusion of this letter as an introduction to this chapter section is not a simple element in the elaboration of this argument. Apart from introducing the first creative engagement between Ríos and Sarduy, it also sets up the introduction to the concept named by Sarduy as ‘the echo chamber’. The very fact that Julián Ríos decided to edit this letter as a complement to the other essays in the compilation registers the first trace of what can be addressed as a neobaroque gesture. By declining to send the above-mentioned article, the whole decentering manoeuvring, which I indicated previously as the first aspect of the neobaroque, becomes active. Ríos is aware of the possibility of using the example as an off balanced rhetorical act which simply denies, or at least provokes the suspension of what is to be expected. What appears to be an empty gesture is transformed into what Sarduy recognized as an ‘echo chamber’, also known as ‘*retombée*’. This concept is an indispensable component of the neobaroque approach: it refers to a sudden disruption which destabilizes the reader, provoking him or her into dismantling expectations, or, put differently, to two apparently distant ideas or meanings which suddenly come into contact and provoke unexpected results. In Sarduy’s words: ‘uno puede funcionar como el doble – la palabra también tomada en el sentido teatral del término – del otro: no hay ninguna jerarquía de valores entre el modelo y la copia.’ (Sarduy 1999, 1370). This type of rhetoric can also be perceived in all of Ríos’s works explored in this chapter, but most particularly, within the critical fictions.

The previously mentioned lack of hierarchy operates strategically on the basis of the epigraph to Sarduy’s essay *Barroco* (incidentally, a collection of essays dedicated to Roland Barthes). It is here that Sarduy introduces the term ‘echo chamber or *retombeé*’ for the first time as a poetic stanza:

retombée: causalidad acrónica,
isomorfía no contigua,
o,
consecuencia de algo que aún no se ha producido,
parecido con algo que aún no existe. (Sarduy 1999, 1196)

The above-quoted letter, published in *Espiral*, takes the place of the ‘echo’ produced by the essay which was not written by Sarduy. As the epigraph to this section of the chapter indicates, on this occasion, the ‘echo’ precedes the voice which emits the sound.

Having mentioned that unexpected inversion of elements, and before exploring some of the stylistic influences of the neobaroque in the work of Julián Ríos, I will now attempt to establish an introductory understanding of the stylistic paradigms developed by Sarduy in the elaboration of a neobaroque paradigm; in doing so I will take into account the evolving and malleable nature of the subject in Sarduy’s collection of essays.

I shall begin with *Escrito sobre un cuerpo* (1969), the first essay in which Sarduy outlines the idea of writing as an inscription underpinning the baroque approach: ‘La plasticidad del signo escrito y su carácter Barroco están presentes en toda literatura que no olvide su naturaleza de *inscripción*, eso que podía llamarse *escripturalidad*’ (Sarduy 1999, 1154)⁵⁹. Furthermore, Sarduy’s second chapter (‘Horror al vacío’) pays a double homage in recognition of his debt to the seventeenth century Spanish poet Luis de Góngora and to the Cuban writer Lezama Lima, who Sarduy considered to be the only true baroque literary figure in Cuba.

⁵⁹ Severo Sarduy, *Obra completa*, p. 1154

After that essay, the first direct approach to a deeper understanding of the baroque as a pertinent methodology or a framework with which to engage in literary analysis, are his two seminal studies, *El barroco y el neobarroco* (1972) (included in the renowned collective volume *América Latina en su literatura*), and *Barroco* (1974). In the first essay, Sarduy elaborates a highly structured study of the implicit aesthetics of the neobaroque and its ideological underpinnings, defined particularly by its artificiality, carnivalization and extravagant exuberance. Each of these characteristics employs its own specific set of rhetorical figures. For the purpose of understanding how these language strategies carry out their own performative acts, I shall outline their specifications:

a) The elements of artifice are formed by three main actions: 1) Substitutions (taking the form of metaphors and hyperboles). 2) Proliferations (by using metonyms and ellipsis). 3) Condensations (characterized by word permutations and fusions).

b) The aspects of carnivalization are informed by two specific types: 1) Intertextualities (employing the guise of quotations and reminiscences). 2) Intratextualities (engaged by linguistic games and experiments).

c) If the mid eighteenth century French etymological origin of the term baroque refers to the extravagant exuberance which follows from the irregular shape of a pearl, Sarduy takes the Neobaroque a step further, bringing in the element of irregularity as another way of exploring the plurality of meaning contained in three different aspects:

1) Eroticism: ‘como la retórica barroca, el erotismo se presenta como la ruptura total del nivel denotativo, directo y natural del lenguaje - somático – como la perversión que implica toda metáfora, toda figura’ (Sarduy 1999, 1402)

2) The effect of mirroring: ‘Neobarroco: reflejo necesariamente pulverizado de un saber que sabe que ya no está apaciblemente cerrado sobre sí mismo. Arte del destronamiento⁶⁰ y la discusión’ (Sarduy 1999, 1403).

3) Ideological revolt: ‘neobarroco que recusa toda instauración, que metaforiza al orden discutido, al dios juzgado, a la ley transgredida.’(Sarduy 1999, 1404).

The second essay, *Barroco*, widens out the interdisciplinary approach by engaging with the resonances developed within scientific cosmological models and artistic productions. Sarduy distinguishes between a prebaroque cosmology (related to the earth-centred universe of Copernico and Galileo); a baroque cosmology (focused on the movement from the circle to the ellipse following Kepler’s heliocentric principles), and a neobaroque cosmology (marked by the Steady State and Big Bang theories of the expanding universe). Even if it seems quite a remote approach by taking on scientific references in order to relate to symbolic productions, Sarduy uses those references in order to establish his notion of the echo chamber as *retombée* in which ‘la resonancia de esos modelos se escucha sin noción de contigüidad ni de causalidad: en esta cámara, a veces el eco precede a la voz’ (Sarduy 1999, 1197). Still, when Sarduy adds a section to the end of this collection of essays inquiring about the sense of a neobaroque practice today, he turns the investigation towards an economic critique:

⁶⁰ For Sarduy, the European and Latin American Colonial Baroque were still under the influence of an harmonious logos in charge of organizing structures: ‘Ese logos marca con su autoridad y equilibrio los dos ejes epistémicos del siglo barroco: el dios – el verbo de potencia infinita – jesuita, y su metáfora terrestre, el rey. Al contrario, el barroco actual, el neobarroco, refleja estructuralmente la inarmonía, la ruptura de la homogeneidad, del logos en tanto que absoluto, la carencia que constituye nuestro fundamento epistémico. Neobarroco del desequilibrio, reflejo estructural de un deseo que no puede alcanzar su objeto, deseo para el cual el logos no ha organizado más que una pantalla que esconde la carencia.’ (Sarduy 1999, 1403)

Ser neobarroco hoy significa amenazar, juzgar y parodiar la economía basada en la administración tacaña de los bienes, en su centro y fundamento mismo: el espacio de los signos, el lenguaje, soporte simbólico de la sociedad, garantía de su funcionamiento, de su comunicación. Malgastar, dilapidar, derrochar lenguaje únicamente en función de placer – y no, como en el uso doméstico, en función de información es un atentado al buen sentido, moralista y natural – como el círculo de Galileo – en que se basa toda la ideología del consumo y la acumulación. (Sarduy 1999, 1250)

In 1982, Sarduy publishes the essay, *La simulación*, in which the neobaroque exploration repeats the emphasis on the ‘echo chamber’. This time, however, the connection is produced by distant phenomena taken from diverse fields ranging from the biological aspects of nature to the symbolic aspects of the baroque through actions of simulation:

La simulación conecta, agrupándolos en una misma energía - la pulsión de simulación - fenómenos disímiles, procedentes de espacios heterogeneos y aparentemente inconexos que van desde lo orgánico hasta lo imaginario, de lo biológico a lo Barroco. (Sarduy 1999, 1264)

In the realm of art, Sarduy refers to the practise of anamorphosis and *trompe-l'oeil* painting as forms of representation which incorporate a theatrical component in their relation to a copy and a simulation of that copy. On another level, Sarduy also mentions acts of animal mimetism in relation to their different mutations into the human realm as a form of copy and simulation, as can be seen in the use of makeup and tattooing. All those referents end up revealing traces of the next stage of the neobaroque investigated by Sarduy:

Ese neobarroco furioso, impugnador y nuevo no puede surgir más que en las márgenes críticas o violentas de una gran superficie - de lenguaje, ideología o civilización - : en el espacio a la vez lateral y abierto, superpuesto, excéntrico y dialectal de América: borde y denegación, desplazamiento y ruina de la superficie renaciente española, éxodo, transplante y fin de un lenguaje, de un saber. (Sarduy 1999, 1308)

Of the two painters discussed later on this chapter as part of Julián Ríos's *oeuvre*, the Spanish Antonio Saura becomes a central component of what Sarduy comes to

describe as 'furious'. The use of that adjective characterizes the neobaroque of Saura's paintings (as in the pictoric series titled *Vents* discussed later in this chapter), particularly in terms of their employment of chiaroscuro in order to take the painting to the point of maximum tension: 'hasta ese punto en que sus fragmentos, como antes de ser totalizados en la imagen especular, pueden desunirse y rodar, anularse en la disolución.' (Sarduy 1999, 1343).

Finally, Sarduy produces the essay entitled *Nueva inestabilidad* (1987) in which the neobaroque model has become part of the continuous expansion of meaning in a variety of directions. In this essay, the stress of the 'echo chamber' or 'achronic causality' is on the cosmological shift developed by Edmond Hubble and his theory of the expanding universe. Specifically, Sarduy focuses on the effect which that theory has had on philosophical and linguistic developments concerned with the idea of the symbolic as dispersion, or ultimately, with dissemination as a form of discourse. This approach gives him room to explore the new discoveries of modern physics including particle acceleration, atomic fission or string theory, allowing for a vindication of another interpretation of the neobaroque in the light of these scientific explorations. For Sarduy, the most important thing to highlight at this stage of the neobaroque at the end of the twentieth century is that it does not contain a specific epistemological character; it is therefore its ultimately unstable nature which continues to evolve and manifest itself: 'un neobarroco en estallido en el que los signos giran y se escapan hacia los límites del soporte sin que ninguna fórmula permita trazar sus líneas o seguir los mecanismos de su producción.' (Sarduy 1999, 1375).

As can be observed in the course of the different transformations explored through these essays over a period of almost twenty years, the apparent flexibility and malleability of the term neobaroque supports a continuous search for an aesthetic understanding of those expressions concerned with demystifying any approach to realism as the only reliable source of representation. Sarduy takes this to the point of emphasizing that even the scientific realm borrows and nurtures itself from symbolic representations.

Sarduy demonstrates the epistemological shift embodied by the baroque both in the architectural construction of churches which fragments and opens their axis to a radiation of multiple directions, and in the way in which the city loses its orthogonal centre and intelligible signs of order arranged around a centre of power. In the same way, neobaroque literature renounces the denotative and lineal dimension so as to open itself up into a decentering, artificial and repetitive motion. The second stage of Ríos's *liberature*, formed by 'the critical fictions' and 'the painted novels', can serve as a specific example. By contrast with the previous phase of *liberature* the most important undercurrent in this phase will be the emphasis placed upon the recycling of literary texts taken from other authors through which Ríos mobilizes his own versions of the 'echo chamber'.

5.2 A Neobaroque Stepping into ‘The Critical Fictions’: *La vida sexual de las palabras* and *Casa Ulises*

Herr Narrator. Nuestro guía, y controlador. Él se encargaba además de controlar una especie de televisor o computadora en cuya pantalla aparecían de vez en cuando citas, traducciones, imágenes, y cualquier dato que necesitáramos.
(Ríos 2000, 8)

This epigraph becomes a sort of declaration of literary principles by Ríos when the reader first understands that this phrase belongs not only to the female character of Babelle, but also to one of her dreams included and borrowed from *Larva. Babel de una noche de San Juan*. This prologue to *La vida sexual de las palabras* (Fig. 25), titled ‘Conversaciones en la biblioteca de Babel’, has two main implications. The first of these implications is that the fictional characters travel from novel to novel acquiring a status which reveals them to be aware of all their fictional implications. The second is that these characters will guide the reader through an imaginary museum engaged in a conversation triggered by the writers and the artists they encounter. Mixing fiction with critical exchanges on art and literature in the format of a theatrical play, the three characters taken from a dream sequence of *Larva* are presented as follows: A (a young female reader), B (a mature reader) and C (an old critic). The three of them walk around an imaginary library-museum engaged in a continuous dialogue reflecting their opinions on literary authors (the Spanish Juan Goytisolo and Sanchez Robayna; the German Arno Schmidt; the Irish James Joyce and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes) and painters (from Spain: Eduardo Arroyo, Jordi Colomer and Antonio Saura; from America, R.B.Kitaj), all of them names which exert great influence on Ríos’s work.



Fig. 25 Cover of *La vida sexual de las palabras*

This work is divided in three parts: ‘Entradas’, ‘Galerias y Miradores’ y ‘Acceso’. If the first two cited parts are formed by dialogues as if part of a theatrical experience, the last section closes with the essay, bearing the title of the book, in which the conversation is narrated in a way which resembles some of the sections written in the previous two novels (*Larva* and *Poundemonium*) by Ríos. This last section of *La vida sexual de las palabras*, ‘Acceso’, concentrates in particular on the notion of a rhetoric which dares to cross the signifier line and traverse its own limits so as to form a kind of expressive liberation unconstrained by rigidity: ‘Los juegos de palabras para reciclar o reciclonar el lenguaje, devolverle la antigua frescura’ (Ríos 2000, 178). Hence, the continuous reference to the erotic aspect of writing as an approach to the combining of words understood as mutational forms: ‘las palabras se funden y fundan una nueva lengua’ (Ríos 2000, 173). Nevertheless, Ríos’s need to radicalize literary expression (shown in the previous chapter) begins to be subsumed into hypertextual and reader interaction even if the three main characteristics of the neobaroque (decentering, artificiality and repetition) become a sort of *modus operandi* penetrating

the different formal aspects of his work. These will be treated in the following section of this chapter.

5.2.1 Checking the ‘Echo Chamber’: Hypertextual and Reader Relations

In this section I attempt to highlight the changes relating to hypertextuality and the reader as co-author through a close reading of *La vida sexual de las palabras* and *Casa Ulises*. These relations will be established through the exploration of the three main neobaroque traits as they characterize Ríos’s works within this phase of *liberature*:

a) Decentering

The term can be taken literally in its spatial dimension when, in *Barroco*, Sarduy describes the paradigm and cosmological historical change produced by the shift from the circle to the ellipse; that is to say, the shift from the circle to the ellipse as the geometrical form representing all forms of manifestation in the wake of Johannes Kepler’s discovery of the heliocentric principle. In this shift man loses his position at the centre of the universe and the sudden and abrupt irruption of this decentering opens the door to critical historic transformations. In terms of a literary interpretation, this decentering can act as a magnet for all forms of parody, irony or references beyond the text itself as in the case in *La vida sexual de las palabras*:

Polifonía polimórfica y perversátil - puntualizó, ya contagiado, Reis -. Yo creo que esos acoplamientos prohibidos de las palabras-maletas o mulatas inquietan o a veces producen rechazo porque muestran que toda escritura e incluso toda palabra es palimpsesto. (Ríos 2000, 181)

The over-layering of meaning implies the presence of a variety of options which point towards a centre at the same time that they openly provoke its decentering: ‘Y ya empezaba él, el corruptor de palabras menores: Para hacer boca (hablo también de la boca equivocada de todo vocablo...) podríamos empezar por un pequeño test o

«textículo», como diría Queneau.’ (Ríos 1999, 169). In this quotation from the final part of the novel, it is possible to perceive the stylistic neobaroque elements of decentering at work, introducing doubt just after offering to carry out a specific action. A similar decentering affects the element of ambivalence understood as an essential aspect of the hypertextualities to which Sarduy refers when incorporating linguistic games into the narrative. Ríos establishes his strategic narrative tactics when the character of Reis declares his intentions to Milalias:

Cocteau no soltó ninguna boutade – remachó Reis – cuando dijo aquello de que la poesía es un vasto calambur. La ambigüedad, característica del calambur, es también una de las propiedades del lenguaje poético. Y se podría añadir, parafraseando lacánicamente a Todorov, que toda literatura está estructurada como un juego de lenguaje.
El juego de palabras – terció al fin ella – es, como vio Novalis, creador.
Generador poético – continuo Milalias – y nos permite entrar y salir por el acceso principal: el ayuntamiento verbal. (Ríos 2000, 176)

The ‘main access’ referred to in the above quotation is the eponymous final chapter of Ríos’s *La vida sexual de las palabras*, and it is focused on how words intermix in order to continuously form and deform their meanings:

Las palabras – dijo ella – se funden y fundan una nueva lengua.
Y la desenfundan – dijo Milalias.
El verbo en carne viva – dijo ella.
Viva – le hizo eco él. (Ríos 2000, 173)

The elements of hypertextuality are so extensive in the work of Ríos that, at times, the emphasis is primarily on the other writers who influenced him in what he defines as literature: ‘una carrera de relevos entre muchos escritores de diversas tradiciones, por calles y direcciones distintas.’ (Ríos 2000, 76). One of the elements underpinning the poetics of Ríos is his attempt to regain an interchange of voices with preceding writers who he sees as having tried to explore radical forms of literary expression: ‘estos autores prolongan con voz propia, desde sus tradiciones nacionales, y con

metas muy diversas, la labor de un Joyce que a su vez prolongaba la de un Lewis Carroll o de un Sterne, que a su vez...' (Ríos 2000, 76).

If, on the one hand, Ríos attempts to break away from forms he considers to be a legacy of the past, on the other hand he also appropriates the writers mentioned above. It is this very appropriation which stands out as a form of exchange in which the mere fact of interaction with older styles establishes new forms of creating a literary work. Ríos takes on a world literature in which the different voices engage in an interchange of sorts, stressing the characteristics of that entity known since Cervantes as 'raro escritor'. According to the French writer, Hélène Cixous, talking about one of the characters of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, that rarity implies being 'the inventor of a writing that does not seek to help or displace memory, but to live on its own perpetual contradiction, holding the reader always in attentive suspense.' (Cixous 1976, 736).

This suspension of meaning to which Cixous refers becomes a thread connecting with Ríos's work, representing a manner of forming links from apparently disconnected elements and presupposing another possible way of developing and expanding the narrative options, radicalizing thought in order to produce new possibilities:

Y Reis, asintiendo, añadía: La abnihilización del étimo, como dice Joyce en *Finnegans Wake*. Los étimos, átomos verbales, se fisioan.
La fisión – dijo Milalias – produce la ficción.
Y también – replicó Reis – la fusión.' (Ríos 2000, 173)

In the use of those characters as references of a style which seeks continuously to distort expression can be seen the author's attempt to move beyond the clearly understood rules of narrative expression. Nevertheless, in the above-cited quotations it is possible to begin to perceive a diminution of the more radical approach to

language explored in the previous chapter, and with it the beginning of the reduction of the role of the reader as co-author of the text.

b) Artificiality

According to Sarduy, the main rhetorical elements of neobaroque artificiality are formed by three different strategies: a) substitutions by means of metaphors and hyperboles, b) proliferations embodied by metonyms and ellipsis, and c) condensations characterized by permutations and fusions. In the novel we are currently exploring, there are paragraphs which contain most of the rhetorical tactics cascading out of each other as is indicated by the following quotation:

La palabra-maleta o «maletra» - dijo Milalias – mata dos o más pájaros de un tiro. Letralleta, aletrallando.
Levanta a la vez la veda y la venda sexual y lingüística.
Ya no hay coito vendado.’ (Ríos 2000, 173)

The condensation of the words ‘maleta’ and ‘letra’ produce the metaphor of a portmanteau word acting as a generator of multiple meanings through the ellipsis of the word machine gun itself. The effect of this rhetorical tool provokes the release of linguistic limits, hence the condensation delivered by the fusion of ‘veda’ and ‘venda’ in the line closing the quotation above. Thus, also, the use of the pun as an essential element within *liberature* in order to approach repressions:

Las represiones en definitiva – dijo Reis -, se transforman en expresiones,
no es así?
Y ahí empieza el juego – dijo Milalias – de lo que nosotros llamamos
«liberatura».
Que a los cuerpos (y a los signos) alegre – dijo ella.
La pansexualidad del lenguaje – dijo Reis – a través del *pun*.
Que todo lo penetra – dijo Milalias -, letra a letra. Y todos se
interpenetran. Alegre tropo... (Ríos 2001, 177)

The first narrative element exposed to neobaroque’s artificiality is the notion of place. It becomes absorbed by a continuously ritualized theatrical approach in which its signs are exposed to unexpected mutations. En *La vida sexual de las palabras*, it is a

dream experienced by the character Babelle which ignites the walk through an imaginary museum where the three characters engage with each other as if part of a theatrical play, exchanging their opinions about the writers and painters they happen to come across. If the written space is taken under the influence of the neobaroque, its representational aspect continually highlights both its illusion and its alterity, situating it at the forefront of the experience while engraving doubt and simulation as principal undercurrents. Within this literary approach, discourse tends to follow a tendency towards a polysemic and proteic place which is transformed from a library into a gallery without apparent explanation apart from the separation in parts of the novel. This mutational process related to the spatial coordinates of the novel, together with the proliferation of words to the point of their disappearance through their amalgamation with others via rhetorical means, will decompose the sense of mimesis beyond its own strict limits in terms of the formation of realism.

If place is given a neobaroque treatment, it is inevitable that time will also be subjected to the neobaroque as it is the other essential ingredient in the discourse of the novel. This is most particularly the case when the discourse is exposed to continuous alterations in the rhythm of the text. This is done in a variety of ways: through pauses or ellipses, or alternatively through the use of slowness focused on highly specific elements, or its opposite, concerned with a fast delivery of words as shown in the closing paragraph of the novel:

Ah no, ah no – protestó Reis -, ahora ya hemos pasado a la vida textual de las palabras-muletas.
La vida sexual – corrigió Milalias.
Y Reis, remontando: Tanto monta.
Monta Tántalo – acabó Babelle, y no frenando, dando alas a las palabras.
(Ríos 2000, 182)

According to Gustavo Guerrero, ‘pseudo tiempo del discurso, a un tiempo que se muestra finalmente como lo que es: el espacio condensado en las tres dimensiones de un libro.’ (Guerrero 1987, 105). In these terms, Ríos takes on board Sarduy’s understanding of the lack of sequential aspects of time, avoiding continuity at all costs as Sarduy confirms when asked about this specific subject: ‘I have no sense at all of time, I don’t understand the sequence of events nor they seem to correspond to precise moments for me, I don’t believe in the idea of continuity.’ (Guerrero 1987, 52). A similar procedure is taken by Ríos when the three characters, A, B and C, discuss Carlos Fuentes’s *oeuvre* in the section ‘Espacios de Tiempo’:

A: Hay que señalar también, en otro contexto, que las novelas de Fuentes son lo contrario de meros pasatiempos, son «apresatiempos», trampas laberínticas para encerrar al monstruo o demonio denominado tiempo.

B: Siempre mutante, inaprensable, escurridizo.

A: ¿El enfermito imaginario aquejado de una enfermedad crónica?

B: El mal del tiempo.

C: La edad del tiempo.

A: El laberinto de la sola edad...

B: No una sola, ni un solo laberinto.

C: Así es, dédalo de dédalos, edad de edades.

A: A mis, nuestras soledades voy y vengo, vaivén de novelas.

B: Y de tiempos.

C: Palimpsesto de tiempos.

A: Mestizaje de espacios. Diminutos, sí, y de todos los tamaños.

C: Pasado y futuro pensados (¡y pensados!) en el instante presente, ese tiempo presente que Joyce llamaba prensante.

A: Bien prensante.

C: Las novelas de Fuentes, entonces, como *pesatiempos* y *apresatiempos*.

A: Repasatiempos.

B: Sí, o *posatiempos*, que se posan y reposan en el instante.

C: La consagración del instante presente. Ésa es la zona sagrada de toda la obra de Fuentes.

B: El tiempo es ahora, como se dice en la cantinela de *Terra Nostra*. Aquí y ahora. (Ríos 2000, 89)

Another important ingredient of the neobaroque is the notion of “guerra de lenguajes” (Guerrero 1987, 118) to which Sarduy refers as an essential component of unexpected contrasts and tensions, intermixing completely different linguistic dimensions together. These linguistic combats radiate and affect other aspects of the work,

including, in particular, all the characters involved in the exchange. Hence the constant emphasis given in Ríos's work to the essentially verbal nature of the literary text characterized by the constant metamorphosis of the characters. This is shown by the example of the character A becoming 'Milalias', 'Alia, Emil', 'Jack el Destriparlador alias Mil Lalias' or 'El Burlador de Sexville'. There is a constant attempt to destabilize the identity of the characters through their very disintegration, provoking the constant sensation of a caricature which discloses them as explicit characters. Thus, it can be considered that this method is the most advanced in relation to the whole notion of suspension of disbelief, because disbelief is its very structural principle. Or, to use the simile of the mirage, as Guerrero does in his book on Sarduy, 'toda la técnica del espejismo hunde sus raíces en la poética efectista del neobarroco.' (Guerrero 1987, 147).

In the case of *La vida sexual de las palabras*, where the novel is handed over completely to the interventions of the characters, 'narrar es entonces dialogar, horadar el discurso' (Ríos 2000, 155). Throughout this dialogical process, Ríos's emphasis is on the immediacy of the present moment. The aim consists in using dialogue as a tool to recreate an action happening at the immediate moment as Guerrero affirms: 'la novela barroca y la neobarroca están haciéndose ante nuestros ojos, que son más un proceso que un producto y que, en el fondo, la obra y su ejecución son simultáneas en el tiempo, constituyen un solo y único acto.' (Guerrero 1987, 160).

c) Repetition

In this section, I want to focus on two of the painters included in Ríos's *La vida sexual de las palabras* in order to engage with the third stylistic aspect of the neobaroque: repetition and recycling.

I begin with the work of the Catalan artist, Jordi Colomer, and his *Doble in Slumberland* (Fig. 26) which is represented by the two horizontal pillows placed one on top of the other. The viewer immediately perceives the fugitive centre, or following Sarduy's interpretation of the ellipse, a visible centre and an invisible one, ever elusive as we attempt to define a specific centre. Which centre point shall the eye of the viewer focus on? And which one of the centres of these two pillows lies as the reference point?



(Fig. 26) *Doble in Slumberland* by Jordi Colomer (Ríos 2000b, 114)

The title itself suggests a neobaroque repetitive strategy, by emphasizing the double nature of a reference to the often surreal American comic strip, full of threatening scenes, titled *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. This is one of Colomer's constant references in his installations. As Ríos writes in the section *Doble in Slumberland*:

El título de esa pieza «minimaliciosa» es significativamente *Doble in Slumberland*, el país de los sueños del pequeño gran Nemo, tantas veces evocado en los equívocos visuales de Jordi Colomer. La almohada es una mariposa nocturna. (Ríos 2000, 126)

Originally published on a single page in the *New York Times* at the beginning of the century, the comic strip recounts the dreams of a little boy called Little Nemo before he is forced to wake up (always in the last panel of each strip) by the disaster which seems almost to lead to injury or even death. The *Slumberland* of the title refers as well to a double meaning, on the one hand to the fairy kingdom Little Nemo is searching for, and on the other, the state of sleep itself. In the following quotation Ríos recycles all the main elements of the coordinates of McCay's comic through the dialogue exchanged between the three characters A, B and C:

B: Por cierto, Slumberland es el país de los sueños de Little Nemo...

A: El pequeño capitán Nemo en sus odiseas oníricas.

C: Sí, el pequeño gran Nemo de los comics de McCay.

B: El sueño es la ruta natural.

A: (tajante): No, el arte – el sueño con los ojos abiertos – es, paradójicamente, la ruta natural. El gran arte siempre consigue que la naturaleza parezca una mala imitación...

C: Ahí está el supreme artificio.

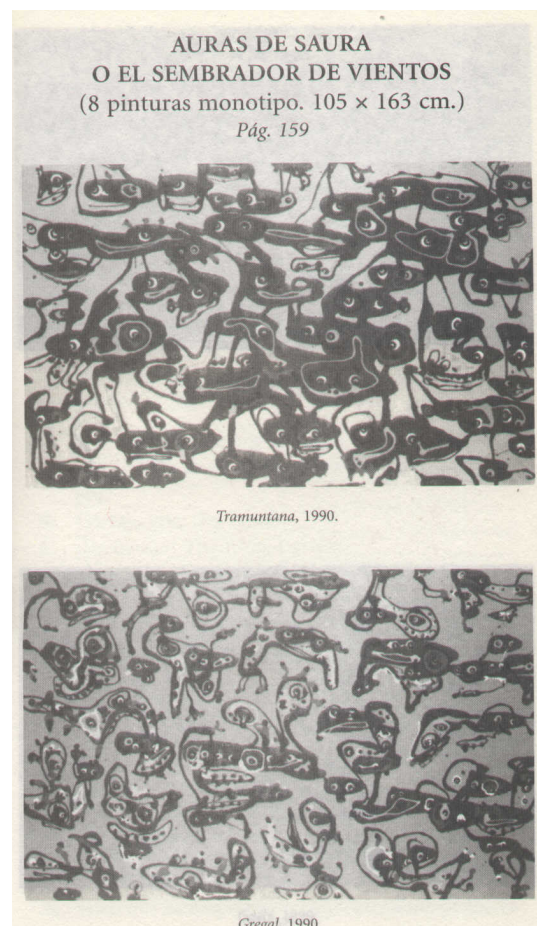
A: «Arturaleza», plus vrai que nature...

B: Mirando ahora al durmiente en Slumberland, pienso que de un momento a otro se va a caer de la cama y le despertará la orden familiar: «A levantarse, Nemo. Tu baño está preparado» (Ríos 2000, 118)

Thus, the three characters A, B and C exchange their opinions about the title of Colomer's work and add all the referential connections to the origin of the source to McCay's comic strip. The hypertextual relation requires the reader to be activated in connection with both the work and the comic but, within this second phase of *liberature*, the language approach permits the reader a more direct elaboration of meaning.

The other painter included in Ríos's book and focused on by the three characters A, B and C is the Aragonese painter Antonio Saura. Saura's brushstrokes illustrate the cover of the second number of *Espiral/Revista* (Fig. 7) referred to at the opening of this chapter, in which the black ink splashes or 'salpicaduras sugestivas' (Ríos 2000,

161) produce an image which escapes the possibility of naming it as a specific form. The eight monochrome paintings included in Ríos's book form part of the series titled *Vents* (Fig. 27), each one representing, as the titles written in Catalan confirm, a Mediterranean wind. This series of paintings was produced in Barcelona as Saura's particular homage to Catalonia during an intensively creative week in February 1990. In these paintings, Saura mixes his childhood memories of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War with his first discovery of painting, while demonstrating that timeless quality which is present in all his painted work.



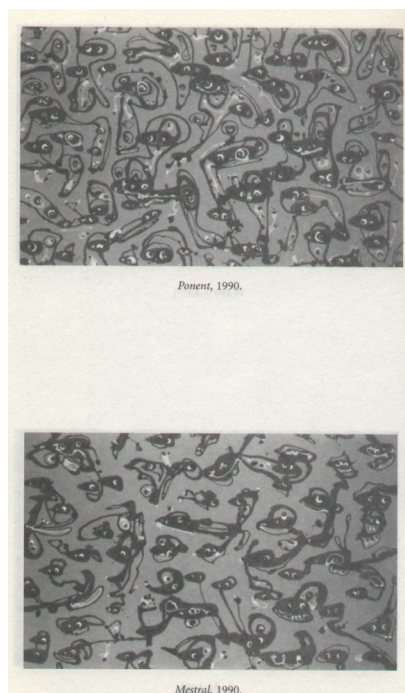
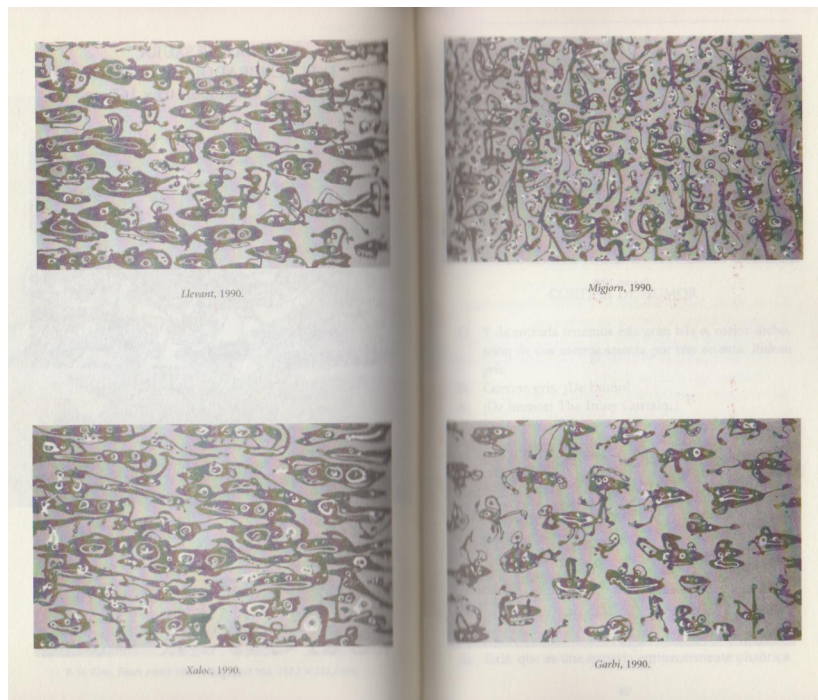


Fig. 27 *Vents* by Antonio Saura (Ríos 2000b, 93)

A quick look at these paintings may provoke a sensation of randomness or even of repetitive patterns of shapes resembling creatures of an amphibious nature. On the other hand, a deeper gaze begins to engage the viewer with an ever-increasing perception of difference within similarity. The variation of the shapes of the

brushstrokes evolving through the paintings could be interpreted as the visual experience of the neobaroque style employing repetition as its main operative strategy.

Julián Ríos engages with the painter using one of the characteristics established by Sarduy in his essay on the neobaroque: the continuous repetition of the event, but each time with a slight formal variation. On this occasion, the “echo chamber” appears to engage a pattern taken from the fractal geometry developed by Benoit Mandelbrot in 1973. Specifically, it engages with Mandelbrot’s understanding that ‘fractal geometry is not just a chapter of mathematics but one that helps Everyman to see the world differently.’ (Mandelbrot 2008, 1). It is interesting to observe in this scientific formulation the ‘recursive self similarity’ (Mandelbrot 2008, 1) which became a central part of his theory: the fractal dimensions used by nature to create complex and irregular patterns in the real world by means of ‘self constrained chance’ (Mandelbrot 2008, 1). This chapter opens with mention of the lecture given in 1977 by Roland Barthes which Severo Sarduy attended at the College of France. It was during a conference at this same College, four years earlier, that Mandelbrot had outlined the research findings which he later published in book form. The only thing missing was the title of the book. After a series of investigations he discovered that the Latin verb “frangere” meant “to break”, or “to create irregular fragments”, leading him to coin the word fractal and form the missing title: *The Fractal Objects*. Similarly, Ríos is aware of the process of recurrence in Saura’s works even if this originates from a narrow set of variations as Saura clearly remarks: ‘Esa estructura matriz con sus derivaciones es la que ha realmente condicionado todo mi trabajo.’ (Ríos 1991, 60).

A similar Neobaroque pattern occurs in Ríos's *Casa Ulises* (Fig. 28), the next novel explored in this section. The approach taken in this book was characterized by Ríos himself as 'Un calidoscopio en el que algunos motivos de la novela se combinan de nuevo produciendo nuevas figuras.' (Ríos 2003, 208). First published in a shorter version in 1991 to accompany the Spanish edition of *Ulysses* illustrated by the painter Eduardo Arroyo, it is a literary homage to Joyce's work, incorporating the eighteen chapters from the classic twentieth century modernist novel. In Ríos's novel, *Ulysses* is transformed into a museum-house where the three characters from *La vida sexual de las palabras* reappear: 'El lector maduro (¿ella le llamó Ananías?), la lectora joven (¿Babel o Belle?), y el lector (¿crítico?) viejo. Llamémoslos, para abreviar, A, B y C' (Ríos 2003, 2). These characters are joined by the supposed museum guide, Cicerone, and the character 'hombre del Macintosh', who is in charge of carrying a computer whose screen will point at the cards containing detailed information about each of the eighteen chapters forming Joyce's novel. Ríos makes the characters walk through this museum while illustrating and exchanging opinions about every chapter of *Ulysses*. After an introduction explaining the contents of each chapter and a series of sections called 'Pasajes', the characters A, B and C, through their dialogues, relate their own opinions about each specific part of the book. This time Ríos attempts to write his own 'echo chamber' of reading Joyce's *Ulysses* by transforming it into another imaginary museum engaged through a constant hypertextual link to Joyce's novel. Ríos replicates all the different chapters from *Ulysses* and highlights the most strikingly visual elements and objects of the original novel: '*Scissors and paste*. Y Joyce se consideraba a sí mismo «a scissors and paste author». Cortar – dijo A – y pegar.' (Ríos 2003, 104).

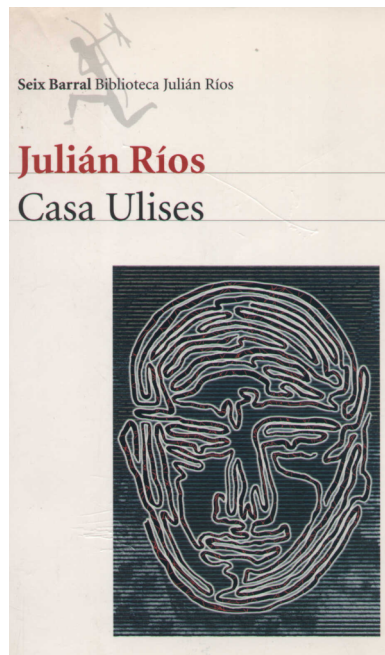


Fig. 28 Cover of *Casa Ulises*

From the first page the invitation to the reader to access ‘El museo de Ulises’ (Ríos 2003, 1) is marked with uncertainty: ‘Pasen y vean, o quizá dijo lean.’ (Ríos 2003, 1). Thus, ‘the echo chamber’ continues to be used in order to provoke the neobaroque strategy: ‘A veces basta un sonido real, el contacto con un objeto para que se desencadene la reverberación, la ilusión auditiva y visual.’ (Ríos 2003, 207). The neobaroque gestures continue to reappear in order to feed that ambiguity Ríos is exploring within this stage of *liberature* by mixing different points of view:

Además de un leitmotiv del *Ulises*, la palabra paralaje define su relativismo en el juego narrativo de los puntos de vista – dijo el profesor Jones – porque el paralaje en astronomía indica las diferencias entre las posiciones aparentes de un astro según los puntos de vista distintos desde donde es observado. (Ríos 2003, 117)

Ríos also pays much attention to the oral influence on the language in order to maintain the echoes of Joyce’s novel: ‘Y en Keyes – dijo A -. Llaves que oyes. La pluma detrás de la oreja...- señaló B -, ése podría ser el emblema de *Ulises*.’ (Ríos 2003, 103). Moreover, by maintaining the oral attention Ríos prolongs the interaction with the reader as a *bricoleur* who will have to assemble the different literary pieces: ‘Modelo para armar...- dijo A -. Sería más simple pensar en la técnica del

contrapunto.’ (Ríos 2003, 141). In a similar way, Ríos continues to emphasize the practise of rereading the work in order to engage with another dimension of its meaning: ‘...llegamos a cazar todo su sentido o «sinsentido» en la relectura. Música para releer – recordó B.’ (Ríos 2003, 160). Ultimately, the aim of Ríos’s approach to writing seems to be not only to celebrate reading but above all the possibility of giving the reader different options to choose from: ‘El delirio de leer – dijo A en francés -. Y de elegir. Aluvión de visiones, de ilusiones y alusiones. El alucinamiento es nuestro, con tal alud, hacinamiento de imágenes desbocadas y descocadas...’ (Ríos 2003, 207). As the previous quotations show, the options may be given to the reader, but this time language does not use the same approach as before. In this second phase of *liberature*, the approach to language begins a normalization process which distances it from the original aim of radicalizing language.

Nevertheless, the neobaroque traits explored in the previous section reappear in this novel and follow similar paths to those described previously. That is to say, they follow the decentering aspect expressed through the image of duplicity which results from the influence of Joyce: ‘La duplicidad es una constante joyceana. Del mismo modo, entre Pirro y Pirro, aparece una Vico Road, para seguir manteniendo el equívoco.’ (Ríos 2003, 38). The decentering applied to the use of space and time, which we explained with respect to the previous novel, becomes another signature Ríos makes a point of mobilizing in *Casa Ulises*:

Pero el tiempo y el espacio se interpolan - dijo el profesor Jones - así como las diversas acciones entre sí. Los intercalados y yuxtaposiciones - señaló A - consiguen efectos irónicos y cómicos unas veces, ambiguos otras. La ambigüedad por contigüidad. (Ríos 2003, 141)

The aspect of repetition becomes yet another fundamental rethorical device constantly employed by Ríos in this novel. In the chapter ‘Eolo’, Ríos makes his point to the reader in a straightforward manner:

Mecanismos de repetición – dijo A. Los efectos retóricos de «Eolo» a veces vienen a pares, como los pulmones. Inspirar – y el profesor Jones dio un resoplido – y espirar. Otro «barriltono»... - dijo A -. Los torneos retóricos de este capítulo deberían ser recordados en el libro Guinness. (Ríos 2003, 96)

Chapter after chapter, Julián Ríos replicates the novel through the dialogue between the characters A, B and C with the aim of highlighting the principal lines drawn in the original novel by Joyce. The action of condensing the main elements of *Ulysses* through this deformed literary mirror created by Ríos provokes in the reader that disconcerting neobaroque effect characterized by its absolute artificiality: ‘Habíamos recorrido ya todas las salas, galerías, pasadizos y pasajes de *Casa Ulises*, tras volver a veces sobre nuestros pases perdidos, repasen y vean...’ (Ríos 2003, 267). Therefore, Ríos emphasizes this aspect of interaction so that the reader mounts and assembles the meaning out of the words presented:

Laberinto dentro de un laberinto – insistió A -, porque el capítulo, de forma laberíntica, está en el centro de otro laberinto o «librorinto»: *Ulises*. Dédalo de dédalos... - dijo B. Sí, toda la familia Dedales irá apareciendo a lo largo del capítulo – dijo A -. Stephen, su madre, las hermanas. Este capítulo – dijo C – es una maqueta-rompecabezas del *Ulises*. (Ríos 2003, 137)

Ultimately, Ríos’s literary intentions become clear. This can be seen in the confession of the character A to Milalias when mentioning the epigraph opening Goytisolo’s *Paisajes después de la batalla*: ‘A: Minar los cimientos, las mentiras de la dominación...Ponerlo todo en tela de juicio final, incluso la propia integridad.’ (Ríos 1999, 242). For this strategy, the neobaroque functions as a particular vessel of dispersion and resonance for what is different. As Nelly Fernández writes in *Fumarolas de jade*:

En la política neobarroca se sostiene que toda ley, sobre todo la soberana, es una opresión, no tanto porque se encuentren sometidos, sino porque surge sobre aquello que se le escapa como una forma de expresión que unifica, aplasta y masifica las fuerzas moleculares. (Fernández & Iriarte 2002, 72)

As will be shown in the next section, something similar occurs in the way Ríos implements fragment usage through ‘the critical fictions’.

5.2.2 The Epiphanic Fragment in *La vida sexual de las palabras* and *Casa Ulises*

As the literary critic John Tytell remarks in his article, ‘Epiphany in Chaos: Fragmentation in Modernism’: ‘Joyce perfected for the novel of sensibility a method of simultaneity, a new way of apprehending the world which would have enormous consequence for the future of fiction.’ (Tytell 1981, 8). That aspect of simultaneity through literary representation is made viable by means of a particular form of written condensation employed by Joyce throughout his novels, something he came to term as ‘epiphanies’. According to David Hayman, a Joyce specialist and compiler of Joyce’s collection of epiphanies, Joyce defines these word formations as ‘fases memorables de su mente o como ejemplos de vulgaridad en gesto o habla’ (Hayman 1996, 13).

The etymological origin of the word can be traced back to the Christian Bible and specifically the festivity of the sudden apparition of Christ before his followers. However, it is necessary to remember Joyce’s own tendency towards a critical view of the church and its manipulative undertakings, expounded clearly in his novel *Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*. Thus, the religious dimension is emptied of its original meaning in order to increase as much as possible the sense of the suddenness of perception and its ulterior description, particularly based around a

construction of an event densely packed with intensity, therefore, fragmented or fractured from any sense of the totality surrounding it:

No obstante, su presencia, aun de forma tan fragmentaria e incompleta, nos induce a considerar las operaciones de la mente creadora cuando está en busca de nuevos receptáculos para sus producciones. La mayor parte de las epifanías son fluidas y a menudo irónicas; su forma, abierta [...] al no alcanzar su conclusión, abren un pequeño universo de especulación. (Hayman 1996, 13)

As independent expressions of intensities which ultimately contain a unique aspect of the reality they are trying to decipher, whether this means capturing a fleeting moment, a retrospection or a reverie, they remain open to speculation and doubt, two of the main characteristics defining Ríos's *oeuvre*: 'la vida está suspendida en la duda como el mundo en el vacío' (Ríos 1996, 22). As a result of this process of selecting a particular moment applied to different conditions it becomes clear that 'La epifanía es ahora el resultado del arte que recorta la realidad y la plasma siguiendo formas nuevas: el artista *disentangles* y *re-embodies*.' (Eco 1998, 53). Umberto Eco will refer to this stylistic appropriation of epiphany as 'una manera de descubrir lo real y al mismo tiempo una manera de definirlo a través del discurso' (Eco 1998, 48).

For the purpose of the argument of this section, it is important to remember that Sarduy also implements the use of the epiphanic fragment as part of a neobaroque approach to literature. As Sarduy emphasizes in the prologue to his novel, *El Cristo de la Rue Jacob* (1987): 'Son trazas dejadas por lo efímero, siempre excesivas con respecto a su *freycage* o a su materialidad. Registro de lo que – a veces por azar – me comunicó algo. Después de todo: epifanías.' (Sarduy 1999, 51). Bearing this in mind, in this section I will explore the influence of the epiphany as literary fragment in Ríos's *La vida sexual de las palabras* (1991) and *Casa Ulises* (2003).

Before I explore the two novels mentioned above, it is important to highlight the short story entitled *Epifanías sin fin* (1996), published by Ríos as a long introduction to David Hayman's first Spanish edition of James Joyce's *Epifanías* and later on included as a chapter of Ríos's *Amores que atan*. The plot mixes real and fictional details to tell the story of the fictional professor Frank M. Reck and his writing of a book on Joyce's epiphanies: 'Mientras el autobús seguía por los campos de Sevilla le pregunté a Reck si el título de su libro, *Epifanías sin fin*, indicaba que Joyce no había hecho más que escribir epifanías a lo largo de su vida.' (Ríos 1996, 9). As can be seen from the quotation, Julián Ríos tells the story of his fortuitous encounter with Reck in the first person, becoming one of the characters unravelling all the minute details interconnecting the lives of Reck, his wife Joyce and Ríos himself:

Me pregunto aún por qué me dejó, en un sobre a mi nombre que dictó a una enfermera, el cuaderno de Joyce. Tal vez porque hablamos de sus *Epifanías sin Fin* en Dublín, Montecarlo y Sevilla. O porque supuso que trataría de descifrarlo y cribarlo. (Ríos 1996, 34)

Ríos continuously draws parallel coincidences between objects, clothes or streets which connect James Joyce (the Irish writer) to both Reck the professor and his wife Joyce. All those references are developed by Ríos in a direct narrative format without his usual loaded language treatment. On the other hand, it is that very notebook mentioned by Ríos in the above quotation which becomes the fragment at work in an epiphanic format: 'París era un palimpsesto de evocaciones, sobre todo de Joyce en relación con Joyce, un laberinto no menos intrincado que el del cuaderno que se esforzaba en recorrer.' (Ríos 1996, 27). Within that labyrinth of quotations extracted by Ríos from the notebook there is a specific example containing the precise characteristics of the epiphanic fragment, which includes themes relating to the biographical circumstances in which Joyce composed some of the chapters of *Ulysses*:

Piedras y piezas movedizas. Guijarros. Obeliscos---. En el laberinto sin fondos. Bottoms up! Cul sec de sac! ¡ Salud! Túnel al final del tonel. Tejer hilos de luciérnaga. Turcomano que teje arco iris inflamado. Weber & Weaver. Triste tramador. Sob...sobrio. ¿Oberond ou negro onagro? Tintania china. Noche al final del túnel. Lucicécité. (Ríos 1996, 27)

The accumulation of signifiers regarding rocks refers to the period in which Joyce was writing the chapter entitled 'Wandering Rocks'. Some of the lexemic fractures contain expressions and references to the increase of alcohol consumption Joyce talks about in the letters written in that period. The rest of the references to writing and weaving which seem to act as the dissolution of the argument concern Joyce's benefactor, Miss Weaver. As one of her main concerns had to do with Joyce's drinking and his resulting ocular problems, the references in the fragment quoted above emphasize the notion of darkness. The continual dissolution of the plot through unconnected references becomes slightly more visible once the details begin to clarify some of the cryptic fragments which form the citation. Nevertheless, there still remain some words which bear the task of dispersing meaning while at the same time attempting to fix it in such a fragmentary manner that it becomes epiphanic in its extreme attention to the specific details selected (rocks - alcohol - weaving - ocular problems) which condense within them a whole other unfolding of related events.

The activity of writing the introduction to this collection of epiphanies allows Ríos to realize his continuous distortion of fiction intertwined with a reality imbued with that performative emphasis common to his works, in a similar way to what the characters attempt to do throughout the *Larva* cycle. The reader becomes aware that the fictional character and Ríos have common friends, not only in the guise of the American writer Robert Coover and the Latin American literary critic Julio Ortega, but also David Hayman, the writer in charge of publishing the first Spanish edition of Joyce's

epiphanies, a project instigated by Ríos himself. Ultimately, the idea of finding a continuous anecdote or detail in the form of an epiphany fragmented from its contextual surroundings becomes an excuse to approach these forms of cultural interpretation as a constant and open multiplication following from the notebook of professor Reck:

¿Quién escribió o dictó de verdad esas páginas sismográficas que desencadenaron las interpretaciones o los delirios de Reck? Tal vez contagiosos, porque a cada nueva lectura surgen nuevas hipótesis. Cuaderno de cuentas o de cuentos que se multiplican. (Ríos 1996, 35).

5.2.2.1 *La vida sexual de las palabras*

Another example of multiplication in an epiphanic dimension is *La vida sexual de las palabras* (1991), the novel we already touched upon at the beginning of this chapter. This is the first novel in Ríos's bibliography which can be read in a conventional mode, as it does not depend on footnotes which refer to other sections of the book. Nonetheless, the reader can still access it from any point chosen at random, given its formation around small mosaic sections which take, in many cases, a concrete epiphanic format. This style is an attempt to condense the maximum of information through a dialogical format characterized by its performative strategy intensifying its formal approach for the reader.

To continue with the subject of the epiphany being explored in this chapter, the first part of the section 'Entradas' is dedicated to James Joyce. After the three characters who comment upon the ways in which Joyce was not understood by his peers in the section titled '¿Hay alguien que me comprenda?' (Ríos 2000, 15), the focus shifts to the way Joyce used the consequences of exile as a strategy for writing:

ASTUCIAS, PATRIA QUERIDA...

B: Y escogió, como Ulises, el silencio, el exilio y la astucia.

C: O como dice Flann O'Brien por pluma de su heterónimo el otro «Nolano» Brian O'Nolan: «Silence, exile and punning.»

A: La retranca del retruécano...Útil para sobrevivir – las penas con pun son menos...- en esa larga odisea.

B: Pola, Trieste, Roma, Zurich, Trieste de Nuevo, París y por último Zurich.

C: Las ciudades de la odisea.

B: Con el Dublín portátil que él llevaba siempre consigo.

A: Sí, toda una topografía transmutada en tipografía.

C: Y en estereofonía.

A: Sí, la voz materna y más tierna del más querido y sucio Dublín, que es un equívoco «Dublin tendre»...

B: Y la particular voz de Nora. (Ríos 2000, 16)

Moreover, the theme of ocular difficulties is transferred to the need to observe with detailed attention in order to undertake the reading of the novels by the Irish writer:

LÉASE CON LUPA

A: Y su escritura, incluso, y no echemos en saca rota la «pornografía» de ciertas cartas...

C: En breves períodos de separación.

A: Ella pegada casi siempre a él, como una lapa o Barnacle, y él pegado a la página.

B: Mírala con lupa.

C: A causa de sus iritis y múltiples problemas oculares...

A: *Male della lupa*. Más córneas da el hambre...

B: Los iris inflamados, oh sí, tras tantos jeroglíficos.

A: Vaya con la niña. ¿También tú? Glaucoma y punto.

C: Son muy conocidas esas fotos de Joyce leyendo con lupa. También a él hay que leerlo con lupa.

A: Desde el lupanar circense del Ulises a las lupercales y pandemonium de su última noche cerrada y abierta, como boca de lobo.' (Ríos 2000, 16)

In both examples quoted above Ríos both moves around and mutates the letters of certain words which integrate connections between Joyce's literary and personal biography. The epiphany is manifested in the first of the two quotations by the sudden focus on Nora's voice going from the general to the specific. In the second quotation cited above, the concretion of the section built around Joyce's iris and the need to incorporate a magnifying glass transform the detail while giving it a complete new reading. These are two epiphanic fragments concerned with the anecdotic in order to engage in an elusive conversation which needs to keep moving as if randomly, in a

continuous search for the fugitive concretion of the Joycean topic explored in each specific piece of the mosaic.

The next writer to be discussed by the three characters A, B and C within the same mosaic formation of epiphanic conversations is the Spaniard Juan Goytisolo. The emphasis is on the novel *Paisajes después de la batalla* (1982), a book also formed from short fragments in a similar manner to that of Ríos, a stylistic trait of which the characters from Ríos's novel are clearly aware:

CARTAS DE AMOR

C: También pienso ahora en otro libro de fragmentos erráticos, inspirados precisamente por Elsa Triolet. Me refiero a *Zoo, o cartas no de amor* de Viktor Sklovski. Tengo la impresión de que todo lo que escribe el grafómano de *Paisajes* son en el fondo cartas de amor a su mujer.

A: La mujer invisible, o casi. (Ríos 2000, 26)

A similar approach continues with the next writer discussed by the three characters: the German Arno Schmidt and his fragmentary approach to the writing of his novels emphasized by the focus on the epiphanic moment:

MEMENTOS DE LA VIDA DE UN FAUNO

B: A mí el título que más me gusta, incluso más que el del original, es el de la versión española, de 1978, realizada por Luis Alberto Bixio: *Momentos de la vida de un fauno*.

C: Momentos..., sí. La memoria criba, y lo que queda al final de una jornada es una sarta de momentos significativos.

A: Las cuentas del cuento..., un collar hecho de instantáneas, de pequeños detalles, de momentos vívidos que son al fin y al cabo los realmente vívidos...

C: La cita inevitable, de comienzos del Fauno: «¿¡Mi vida!?: ¡no es un continuum! » Y más adelante: «Una sucesión de instantáneas rutilantes.»

A: Así es, uno de los aspectos más atractivos de la ficción de Schmidt es esa exaltación del instante. Y su recuperación por medio de la escritura.' (Ríos 2000, 70)

Following the above quotation, there is another essential fragment entitled 'Red en rededor' in which the literary method formed by a mosaic structure becomes another

example of style absorption adopting the uses of the epiphanic fragment which it comments on with regard to other writers:

C: Después de ese procedimiento, en una serie de novelas como *El fauno*, *El corazón de piedra* y *La república de los sabios*, desarrolló Schmidt lo que llamó «existencia en mosaico», taraceas narrativas o pequeños fragmentos introducidos por una palabra o palabras en cursiva.

B: La punzada, antes de la inyección...

A: Sí, es una gráfica descripción del método. También se podría hablar de redes, redes del texto... (Ríos 2000, 72)

The emphasis on the perception of the instant informs the core of the epiphanic fragment, due to its need to compile a brief representation of the element explored. Thus, Ríos shows how the specific element involved in choosing the subject matters of the conversations exchanged between the characters forces a variety of writers to interconnect through a common ground where they explore the density and concentration of the present they inhabit. On the whole, it seems that the characters A, B and C give Ríos the opportunity to outline a particular form of cultural and literary inventory in which all the artists and writers talked about share an emphatic use of language as a tool to be explored particularly in the use of the epiphanic fragment:

C: Sí, me gusta esta visión de la literatura como una carrera de relevos por direcciones y culturas distintas.

B: Y no dejemos fuera de la carrera a Lewis Carroll, otro de los fundadores y refundidores de la literatura moderna.

C: Y el ejemplo de Joyce, su obstinado rigor, va a servir de acicate a una serie de novelistas posteriores como Alfred Döblin, Flann O'Brien, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Raymond Queneau, Vladimir Nabokov, João Guimarães Rosa...

B: ¿Y entre los de lengua española?

C: Los títulos más evidentes, por orden cronológico: Adán Buenosayres, Tiempo de Silencio, Rayuela, Tres tristes tigres, José Trigo, Larva y Cristóbal Nonato.

B: Por sus obras los conoceréis... (Ríos 2000, 20)

La vida sexual de las palabras attempts to heighten the emphasis on the text as theatrical scenario which opens the argument to the performative event as an act of literature where the writing employed provokes a type of open relationship with the

reader. On the whole, *La vida sexual de las palabras* becomes an example of apparently disconnected themes arranged in the same book with the aim of increasing the displacing effect as a continuous altering frame of the subject of writing and the epiphanic fragment.

5.2.2.2 Casa Ulises

To close this section on the epiphanic fragment I will focus on the book, *Casa Ulises*. As the format is very similar to that of *La vida sexual de las palabras*, there is a rendition of the epiphanic fragment as a constant interpreter of the novel being explored. While each chapter of the novel relates exactly to one from Joyce's *Ulysses*, Ríos adds a section titled 'Pasajes' to the end of each specific chapter. Within these sections he will select epiphanic fragments containing condensed references to characters, actions or objects mentioned in the original novel and he will intertwine these with the opinions of the characters A, B and C. To show this I will include three examples of epiphanic fragments focused on reveries or remembrances, each representing one of the three parts Ríos borrows from *Ulysses*.

The first part, 'Telemaquia', will focus on Telemachus, Ulysses's son. In the following fragment Ríos condenses the misleading phonetic associations revolving around the Greek King Pyrrhus of Epirus in the scene where Stephen Dedalus explains the historic figure to the students:

Todos se echaron a reír, contaba el Cicerone, cuando uno de los alumnos de Stephen dijo que Pirro era un muelle, *pier* en inglés.
Pirueta pírrica – dijo A – que le permitirá a Stephen una victoria empírica contra el malecón del Puerto.
Encore «pier»... - exclamó B. (Ríos 2003, 43)

The second part, 'Odisea', narrates the adventures of Ulysses. In the following fragment Ríos focuses in the reverie of Leopold Bloom caused by the vision of a bird in the cemetery while present at the funeral of an acquaintance. The image of the bird will trigger the memory of Bloom's daughter:

Coronas mohosas, guirnaldas de latón, seguía detallando el Cicerone, el Sagrado Corazón con el corazón en la mano, y Bloom observa que debería estar pintado de rojo como un corazón de verdad.

Lo que de verdad atrae la atención de Bloom y despierta su amplio sentido afectivo de la vida – dijo C – es un pájaro posado en la rama de un chopo. - Como disecado – dijo B -, y le hará recordar a su hija Milly enterrando un pajarito muerto en una caja de cerillas de cocina. (Ríos 2003, 93)

The third part of the novel, 'Nostos', explores the return of Ulysses from exile. The following quotation is from the chapter entitled 'Las rocas errantes' and its essential importance within *Ulysses* is due to its referential connection to the rest of the novel. Ríos uses the symbolic image of the labyrinth to refer to the game Joyce used to play with his daughter as well as to the chess board:

Cuando Joyce escribía «Las rocas errantes», en Zurich, dijo el Cicerone, solía jugar por las noches con su hija Lucía a un juego de mesa llamado Laberinto.

Entonces Joyce llevaba una barba muy romántica – dijo B -. Una barba y una mirada penetrante penden sobre un tablero... (Ríos 2003, 148)

As can be seen, these three fragments engage with the reader like flashes of intense recollections from the lives of both the characters of *Ulysses* and of Joyce himself. In the closing note to the book Ríos remarks that the influence of Joyce's *oeuvre* appears in others of his novels too but not to the same extent as in this one: 'donde seguí paso a paso la odisea de un día de Dublín fue en este otro libro de crítica-ficción, *Casa Ulises*, suerte de novela de una novela.' (Ríos 2003, 269). As the characters continue to be those taken from *Larva* it becomes a case of a literary take-over whereby the writer pays homage to the novels in which he finds inspiration by integrating another layer of meaning into them. This time around, as highlighted throughout this

subchapter, this is done by means of the epiphanic use of the fragment as a condensation of time through the use of objects connecting fictional and real stories under the performative notion interacting with the reader. Still, from the neobaroque influence explored through Ríos's *oeuvre* in this chapter we can start to perceive the manner in which there is a progressive diffusion of the most radical language approach employed in the earlier works.

5.3 'The Painted Novels' under a Neobaroque Spell: *Impresiones de Kitaj* (1989) And *Las tentaciones de Antonio Saura* (1991)

Julián Ríos also refers to both of these 'painted novels' as examples of 'pintura ficción'. He therefore continues the practice of mutating forms and developing complicities between paintings and words, in this case, through the interviews with the American painter R.B. Kitaj and the Spanish painter Antonio Saura. The intention behind these 'painted novels' is both to interview and mobilize as open a dialogue as possible in order to unify the presence of the painter as a writer of images and of the writer as a painter of words. He does so by swapping positions so as to enliven the critical angle by distancing each artist from their particular mediums while enabling a possible perspective from which to engage an unexpected understanding of the specific work. That is to say, by fictionalizing the dialogue as if it was part of the writing of a play, the notion of painting gathers another critical dimension which would otherwise be lost in a direct approach where the positions of interviewer and interviewee would be clearly demarcated and realized. Ríos's methodological approach investigates the lives and thoughts of these two painters through their exploration of painting while adding a dialogical and fictionalized dimension characterized by the previously mentioned neobaroque traits of artificiality, decentering and repetition.

These examples of ‘Pintura Ficción’ mix critique, autobiography, fiction and images of paintings and photographs through the equation of opposites at work, as a result of which Ríos is able to declare the following: ‘en cualquier modalidad de lectura, el libro invita a ver entre líneas, a leer entre imágenes. *Impresiones de Kitaj* (Fig. 29) pues, también en el sentido de palabras e imágenes impresas.’ (Ríos 1989, 12). By swapping the expected position of the interpretative verbs of seeing and writing in action, Ríos attempts to shift responsibility for the construction of meaning towards the position of the reader who needs to activate the cognitive process in which *liberature* aims to perform. Thus, *liberature* attempts to jolt open the reading experience with the objective of achieving another setting of meanings through the use of words: ‘abrirle los ojos a las palabras – al principio era el ver...y el verbo’ (Ríos 1989, 1).



Fig. 29 Cover of *Impresiones de Kitaj*

In the prologue to the book, Ríos states his intention of making a correlation between strangeness and the formation of new meanings or ways of confronting meaning. By provoking an unfamiliar exposure to the event of the word in action, ‘gracias a ese curioso fenómeno que los formalistas rusos llamaron «desfamiliarización»’ (Ríos 1989, 11), Ríos evokes the positive creative quality associated with the way in which an experience of foreignness can be used by writers and artists to confront events afresh or even formulate new words to provoke change and transformation: ‘por eso sostengo, quizá heréticamente, que en el fondo el escritor creativo es un extranjero en su propio idioma.’ (Ríos 1989, 11). In other words, we are referring to the decentering approach which was previously explored in relation to the earlier novels of Ríos and which also forms one of the structural columns underpinning his *oeuvre*.

All the conversations included in *Impresiones de Kitaj* were purposefully written by Ríos and Kitaj during the 1980s. This book covers the main styles and biographical points of Kitaj’s shifts through his painting and interest in the written word. Ríos takes this to the point of also integrating within the work a fictional dialogue between the three characters A, B and C who reappear from the earlier works of Ríos which we have already explored in this chapter:

Yo diría que la pintura de Kitaj incita al «ficcionalizador» que todos llevamos dentro, invita a la imaginación cómplice, y requeriría los esfuerzos de un supremo novelista en el que poesía, crítica y ficción sean uno y lo mismo. Pero además esta pintura lo es a veces de situaciones y caracteres, adquiere apariencias de novela pintada, y para hablarle en su mismo lenguaje y sobre todo para tratar de oír lo que cuenta, en alguna ocasión – los capítulos *Los árboles de la ciencia*, *Nudos y desnudos* y *Apuntes de Londres* – preferí que tres personajes de ficción – designados por las iniciales A, B, C – llevaran la voz cantante. (Ríos 1989, 12)

Through the dialogue between Kitaj and Ríos a series of common links with relation to literature and their respective lives begins to appear at different points in the book.

These include, on the one hand, the shared interest in three of the most important Modernist literary figures such as the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, to whom Ríos will make passing reference, or James Joyce and Ezra Pound, who are directly incorporated into his novels, something we have shown in previous chapters. On the other, the links include the fascination both show for the fragment as a representational device, as Kitaj's painting 'Su culto al fragmento' (1964) (Fig. 30) demonstrates and which Ríos confirms by inserting a quotation from Octavio Paz's *Corriente alterna*:

La expresión más perfecta y viva del espíritu de nuestra época, tanto en la filosofía como en la literatura y en las artes, es el fragmento. Las grandes obras de nuestro tiempo no son bloques compactos, sino totalidades de fragmentos, construcciones siempre en movimiento por la misma ley de oposición complementaria que rige las partículas en la física y en la lingüística. (Ríos 1989, 439)

This quotation was also part of the book *Teatro de signos/Transparencias*, edited by Julián Ríos from Paz's texts, which we discussed in the third chapter. In and of itself, *Impresiones de Kitaj* is, in the end, a consciously made formation of fragments or pieces of a mosaic engaging the dialogue between writer and painter and intertwined with the paintings themselves and the conversations between the three characters A, B, C with the aim of emphasizing the autonomous reading:

Diálogo plural, no sólo de voces diversas, sino también de imágenes – como sugiere la disposición en mosaico del texto y de las ilustraciones. Esta estructura en mosaico permite además la lectura parcial, una lectura autónoma de cada uno de los capítulos o «mosaicos», centrados sobre importantes aspectos temáticos de la obra de Kitaj. (Ríos 1989, 12)



Fig. 30 *Su culto al fragmento* by R.B. Kitaj (Ríos 1989, 436)

In *Las tentaciones de Antonio Saura* (Fig. 31) the reader experiences the neobaroque influence from the very beginning of the book. This experience is promoted by the way Ríos specifies how he has created the interviews with Saura as a double dialogue or as an invitation to see: ‘entre vista’ (Ríos 1991, 17). By separating the word ‘entrevista’ into two Ríos adds another meaning which is carried by the two words. By the same token, Ríos remarks on the need to recycle previous works from the past: ‘Es lo apasionante en el arte. La capacidad que tienen las obras para generar nuevas obras.’ (Ríos 1991, 160). As with the previous novels discussed in this chapter, Ríos seems to need to reabsorb previous works and recycle them by giving them another reading, as if he was referring to the ‘echo chamber’: ‘yo creo que lo que mide a un

gran artista es su capacidad de reciclar toda la historia del arte desde una perspectiva personal.’ (Ríos 1991, 170). The premise on which Saura and Ríos base their conversations about their respective arts is the principle which had already been reflected by the poststructuralists and then implicitly by the neobaroque posture: ‘No hay original.’ (Ríos 1991, 201).

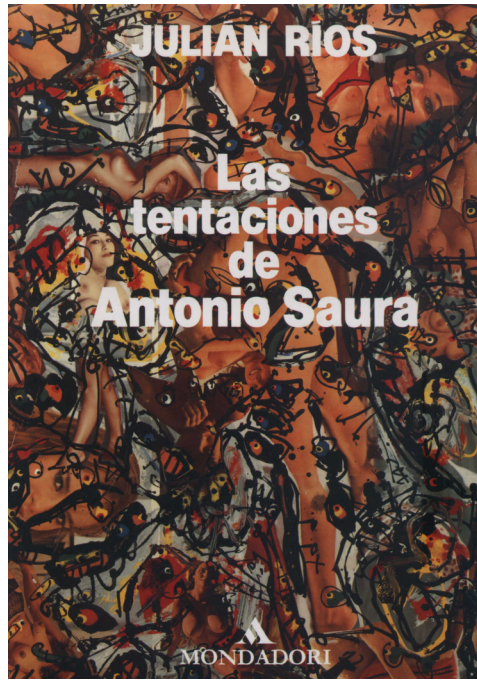


Fig. 31 Cover of *Las tentaciones de Antonio Saura*

Therefore, the characteristic neobaroque traits selected previously also manifest themselves in this work of Ríos. The first is the aspect of repetitions which is such an important element in Saura’s paintings: ‘tú tienes unos temas fundamentales que se repiten, pero con una variedad inmensa.’ (Ríos 1991, 46). The variety of repetitions refer to Saura’s recurrent obsessions which end up in the canvases: ‘Obsesiones y los fantasmas [...] imágenes recurrentes y sus diversas metamorfosis, las sucesivas visiones y revisiones.’ (Ríos 1999, 17). This quotation mixes not only the repetitious nature of Saura’s paintings but also their mutating quality centred on variations originating from a reduced source of forms, something Ríos will also integrate into some of his novels and which we shall explore in the next chapter:

Y así volvemos al tema de la variación, al hecho de escoger un número reducido de colores y recombinarlos de muchas formas nos entronca un poco con la idea musical de la variación en la cual unas cuantas notas pueden dar una idea de diversidad. (Ríos 1991, 197)

Ríos relates the series of visual repetitions to the neobaroque reaction to any voids and the need to fill the object to the point of saturation by means of the overloading of meaning or form: ‘Abarrotamiento Neobarroco o «abarrocamiento», unas veces, borradura, veladura y voladura, búsqueda del vacío perfecto otras’ (Ríos 1991, 228).

The search for what Ríos refers to as a perfect void invokes its very opposite as a reaction. This is related to the need to conceal that very void:

Algo constante en tu obra, que es ante el *horror vacui*, ese horror al vacío de la tela tú como todo neobarroco, rellenas sin dejarle resquicio casi al soporte, es como una...*overreaction*, una reacción desmedida, ante ese terror, ese vacío. (Ríos 1991, 133)

Hence, the constant need to mutate and decenter the visual experience and, in the case of Ríos, also affect the reading experience: ‘Son como metamorfosis de un núcleo original. Relacionada con el neobarroco...relacionadas en su acumulación y proliferación.’ (Ríos 1991, 126).

In a series of questions to Antonio Saura which Ríos formulates, he constantly highlights the materiality of language, a subject already explored in the second chapter in relation to Barthes and the poststructuralists. At this point, the aspect of artificiality applied to language by Ríos becomes clear: ‘las palabras, si se las trabaja muy bien logran cobrar un poco de materialidad [...] por eso el escritor quizá esté obligado a materializar lo más posible las palabras, que las palabras salgan de la página, se levanten’ (Ríos 1991, 75). In that very process of searching, Ríos centers his own literary form which equates the writer to the reader of *liberature* through the idea of the *bricoleteur*: ‘Una obra se convierte en personal precisamente a base de

tanteos, de intentonas, de dar muchas veces palos o «palotes» de ciego. El artista es también un bricoleur, construye con lo que tiene a mano.’ (Ríos 1991, 29)

Ultimately, what seems to really interest and attract Ríos first to Kitaj’s paintings and then also to Saura’s is their indescribable quality which is on the verge of being deciphered. Whether it is a question of blurred portraits of heads, figures just perceived in the shadows or even faces hidden behind misleading features, it is their lack of clarity or their compactly rough appearance which leads Ríos to engage with the works of Kitaj (Fig. 32) and Saura (Fig. 33).



The Secretist (1957-58)



Bill Again (1973)

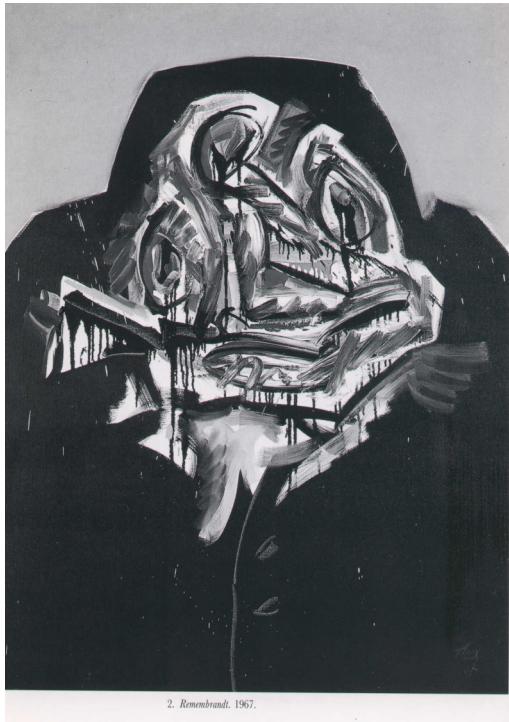


Erasmus Variations (1958)



Pale Face (1971)

Fig.32 Examples of Kitaj's Paintings



2. Rembrandt, 1967.



5. Retrato imaginario de Goya, 1962.



73. Arriba: *El perro de Goya*, 1985. Abajo: *Crucifixión*, 1985.

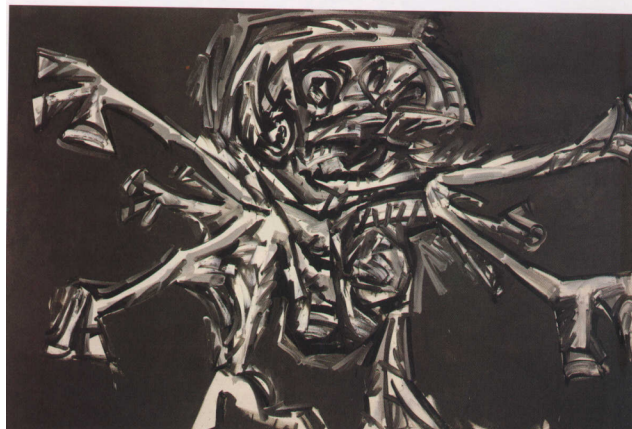


Fig. 33 Examples of Saura's Paintings

Somehow the images seem to be more focused on the quality of in-betweenness of the figures as much as of their meanings. This trait will be reflected directly in Ríos's writing style, and in this apparent lack of clarity, ambiguity or mystery resides the source of *liberature* as a neobaroque form of 'mutation and interaction'. It is a question of erasing boundaries, limits and thresholds in order to move forward as a possible way of formulating unexpected questions about literary representation while taking into account the provisional nature of all interpretations or readings, and pointing towards what Ríos mentions about Kitaj's interpretation of deconstruction: 'Lo que Kitaj encuentra particularmente estimulante es la provisionalidad de toda lectura, incluyendo por supuesto la del propio autor.' (Ríos 1989, 551). Hence, if the author remains within that provisional identity Ríos will create his own excuse to continue to explore the form of *liberature* in its different stages. As Ríos remarks in *Las tentaciones de Antonio Saura*: 'el verdadero artista es un explorador que se interna en un terreno desconocido hasta entonces y a la vez que explora ese territorio nuevo lo está cartografiando...descubrir y descubrirse sobre la marcha.' (Ríos 1991, 63). Still, from the different quotations selected in this chapter, it is possible to infer that although the second stage of *liberature* has carried forward the neobaroque approach, the linguistic aspect is beginning to show its first mutation in contrast to the radical use it had shown within the first stage of *liberature*. If in the second phase of *liberature* Ríos's focus has shifted towards 'the echo chamber' applied to other literary works, in the third phase his attention will mutate specifically towards literary fictions and their fictional characters.

Chapter 6
A Shift Towards Literature in
Sombreros Para Alicia, Amores Que Atan and Monstruario

Of course, the form of writing changes with the nature of each book. Thus the aim in *Nuevos Sombreros para Alicia* was the flash fictions, and in *Amores que Atan* the portrayal of characters, while on the other hand in *Larva* it was the building of a tower of words, a Babel of many stories.
Julián Ríos (Thwaite 2000, 1)

As the above quotation from Ríos shows, the emphasis has now moved towards other literary angles, most specifically, the way literary characters are developed through the novels explored in this chapter even if they still retain some of the previously discussed literary characteristics of *liberature*. The argument in this chapter will, therefore, revolve around the third mutation experienced within Ríos's *liberature* as focused specifically in the last three novels written during the 1990s: *Sombreros para Alicia* (1993), *Amores que atan* (1995) and *Monstruario* (1999).

6.1 Mutations in Reader Interaction, Hypertextual Connections and Fragment Relations.

As was shown in Chapter Four, the highest levels of interaction demanded from the reader are to be found in the first two novels (*Larva* and *Poundemonium*). Taking this into account, it will be important for the development of this book to show in what manner those levels are diminished in the subsequent works and to what degree the emphasis shifts towards literary aspects related to the content of the works. Thus, if *Larva* and *Poundemonium* attempted to destabilize structures of meaning and in the process forced the reader to participate in deciphering the text by assembling the loose parts, this formal trace will mutate in the succeeding literary works. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the series of books formed by *Sombreros para Alicia*, *Amores que atan* and *Monstruario* which constitute what I consider to be a third cycle of

interaction. This cycle is characterized by a move away from the original intentions of *liberature* and the lowering of the level the interaction which had had the purpose of exploring the distillation of the critical aspiration of *liberature* built around ‘the building of a tower of words, a Babel of many stories’ as in the epigraph quoted above. In those earlier works, the main intention was that of constructing narrations in which the accumulation of multilingual and Babel-like structures could be linked to the release from oppressive experiences lived by Ríos in Francoist Spain and in which the reader could take a central role. I believe that in this final cycle of novels the focus has mostly turned towards Ríos’s interest in the formation of literary characters and that he distances himself from a more critical and liberating approach with regard to the reader. I shall argue that this is the case, notwithstanding a number of links to previous novels in terms of the hypertextual connections to the literary identities of characters. Furthermore, so as to close the discussion of Ríos’s use of the fragment as a literary device, this chapter will examine the more conventional usage of the fragment in the third stage. As we have argued in this chapter, in these three novels the emphasis has moved away from language as a tool to be stretched to its limits, to an exploration which moves increasingly along the lines of variations projected around ways of reinterpreting or revisiting literary characters and themes. Even if the literary stress is placed on changing perspectives about specific objects and literary characters, in the novels *Sombreros para Alicia* (1993), *Amores que atan* (1995) and *Nuevos sombreros para Alicia* (2001), their format continues to imply a fragmentary approach in Ríos’s writing. Nonetheless, this time attention has moved towards a more conventional appreciation of the fragment within narrative pieces.

6.1.1 *Sombreros para Alicia*: ‘The Flash Fictions’

Published originally in 1993, this novel is formed by what Ríos labels as ‘the flash fictions’. Those fictions consist of twenty-three short stories built around two characters taken from Lewis Carroll’s famous novel *Alice in Wonderland*: Alice herself and the Mad Hatter. Each one of ‘the flash fictions’ revolves around the transformation of appearances through the constant changing of hats offered to Alice by the Mad Hatter, each change producing a mutation of character, historic period, place and situation. Thus, Ríos continues to borrow from other literary works, although in this phase of *liberature* he specifically focuses primarily on the characters themselves rather than reflecting critically on the literary mechanisms and contributions of the works, as it was the case with ‘the critical fictions’ and ‘the painted novels’. As the book’s opening line shows, the play of deceptions is directly addressed to the character of Alice:

Un sombrero no es un sombrero, le dijo el Sombrero Loco a Alicia, sosteniendo con la mano izquierda su humeante taza de té, o al menos no sólo un sombrero. Fíjate si no en éste, como una paleta con tetera, que a ti te cae que ni pintado, tan estético...’ (Ríos 1993, 11).

As can be seen from the above quotation, the language in this novel has mostly been normalized, even more so than in the Neobaroque novels explored in the previous chapter. Moreover, the narrator becomes an omniscient presence moving from the second to the third person but still maintaining a straightforward narrative flow. Nevertheless, the character of Alice is used by the Mad Hatter as a means of transformation into multiple identities without an apparently interconnected element apart from the hats, moving through different cities while making references to different literary works.

To give an example in the second flash fiction, *Moby Dick*, Alice wears ‘una extraña mitra dentada’ (Ríos 1993, 14), and the character of the Mad Hatter seems to establish the mutational spatial settings directly while addressing Alice:

Érase una vez...¿O prefieres érase que se era? Bueno, lo mismo te dará. Estamos en una soleada tarde de verano a bordo del barco-omnibus Moby Dick, que surca en Wannsee (Berlín) las aguas del Havel, desbordante de turistas. Llámame Dick, te dirá en alemán con acento yanqui un obeso albino...Pero si lo prefieres, también puedes llamarme «Moby Dick», como tantos amigos, y lanzó una carcajada que hacía retemblar toda la carcasa de su corpachón. ¿Quieres saber lo que llevo aquí?, te preguntó a continuación, al ver que te fijabas en las desgastadas etiquetas de tantos hoteles, y sin darte tiempo a abrir la boca él ya abría su maletín y sacaba y desdoblaba una ajada mitra de Obispo que puso en tu cabecita loca. Cierra los ojos y piensa a dónde quieres ir porque esta mitra de San Barandán te transportará de inmediato a donde deseas, tanto en el espacio como en el tiempo. (Ríos 1993, 14)

The mutational capacity shown above will also apply to Alice’s gender, as shown in flash fiction eight, *Masculin/Feminin*, where the change of the the position of the hat makes possible the transformation: ‘Con este gorro/gorra, le dijo el Sombrerero Loco a Alicia, puedes cambiar de sexo a voluntad...¿Lo ves?, dijo el Sombrerero Loco, girando el gorro en la cabeza de Alicia, así eres AIDAN y así: ¿NADIA?’ (Ríos 1993, 32).

Another example of mutations will be the change of historic period reflected in the fiction which makes a reference to Spain: *Huevo frito a la española*. In this ‘flash fiction’, the character of Alice mutates into a maid working at a Spanish shelter serving a member of the Inquisition who recognizes a pattern in the fried egg. As it is one of the shortest of ‘the flash fictions’, it will be of interest to quote the whole story in order to experience how this ‘flash fiction’ develops:

Este sombrero blanquiamarillo te lo contaría *ab ovo*, le dijo el Sombrerero Loco a Alicia, si no fuera porque tú ya estás impaciente por saber qué pintas tú en ese albergue español de moza del cántaro de vino aloque y ajustado corpiño rojo que sirve un Nuevo huevo frito a un inquisidor

encapuchado que te dice que la mancha blanca en la yema es sospechosa, que el diablo también anda en los corrales. Esa mancha blanca es exacta, qué curioso, a la que tienes en la uña del anular de la mano izquierda, observa el inquisidor, apoyando ligeramente la yema de tu dedo culpable en la áspera palma de su manaza... Al freír será el reír, dice el inquisidor, tendremos que freírte la yema de la mano a ver si varía de forma y color la manchita. Estás a punto de gritar de horror pero por fortuna te despiertas antes. Y el sueño tal cual se lo estás contando tendida en el divan a tu psicoanalista que es idéntico – cómo no te diste cuenta antes – al inquisidor del sueño y vuelve a repetir Al freír será el reír. (Ríos 1993, 62)

The literary style shown in this quotation is characteristic of all the flash fictions. This is particularly true of the sudden shift and mutation of the spatial context and the character of the story in accordance with what the Mad Hatter tells Alice.

Of all the fictions included in this book, the only one containing a visual graphic (Fig. 34) reminiscent of those interactions with the reader found in Ríos's earlier novels is fiction number 11, 'Capitán Araña'. It tells the story of a hat with the shape of a spider's web which places Alice in a meeting with a Don Juan-like character who tries to seduce her. After meeting her at a Berlin coffee house, he promises Alice that they will travel together to exotic places and for that reason they go to Tegel airport:

Te dice que escogeréis en el último minuto el destino que os depare el destino, la inspiración del instante, y que volaréis también en alas de la imaginación. Te hace recorrer el octágono del aeropuerto de Tegel, deteniéndoos ante múltiples mostradores y ante cada puerta abierta a una partida distinta. (Ríos 1993, 37)

The two characters then go through the process of choosing a possible destination from the five continents but constantly change their minds for one reason or other until they finally decide to go to the capital of Spain:

La ciudad del oso y el madroño. ¡Del Cielo a Madrid!, exclama entusiasta, y te dice que pases la puerta y lo esperes mientras él va a tratar de cambiar un billete que tenía para Amsterdam. Llega el momento de embarcar y te inquieta que no llegue. Pero no pierdes las esperanzas, hasta el momento del despegue, en que caes por fin en la cuenta de que con tantas idas y venidas por el octágono de Tegel has ido a caer en las redes del capitán

Araña. Menudo punto, te dices con tristeza, con un velo de lágrimas ante los ojos, mientras sigues los puntos y tus propios pasos pasados:

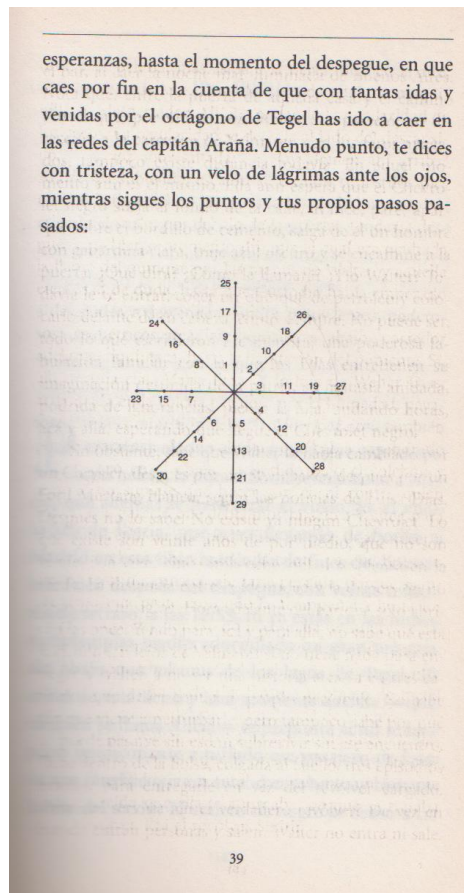


Fig. 34 Graphic from *Sombreros para Alicia* (Ríos 1993, 39)

The flash fiction number 11 includes a graphic of coordinates to be completed by the reader in order to experience the spiral rhythm of the character's footsteps. As mentioned above, this reader participation resembles previous examples of interaction shown in the earlier novels by Ríos.

Sombreros para Alicia also combines two of the elements which form part of Ríos's poetics which we explored in the previous chapters. The first is the use of variations on the same thematic content. This approach allows Ríos to implement the use of constant variations around specific subjects while exploring the experience of what is represented, as with the case with the hat as the object which mobilizes and triggers

Sombreros para Alicia. The second is the hypertextual aspect reflected by the characters from Lewis Carroll's novel and the magician storyteller who constantly threads out stories by mutating Alice's identities, triggered by the hat she is wearing:

O sí, claro que sí, numerosos sombreros que aumentarían tu múltiple personalidad. El desconocido veía al Sombrero Loco en el escenario como un mago o magnetizador, haciendo pases y sacando del sombrero otros sombreros, nuevas sombras chinescas, mientras le contaba a Alicia, sonámbula o en trance, sus aventuras de viajera extática. (Ríos 1993, 137)

Therefore, what we find in this novel is the repetition of the event and its multiple variations focused specifically on the mutation of the literary character. This strategy reduces the degree of reader participation by contrast with the earlier stages of Ríos's literary *oeuvre*. The literary shift in the focus of this novel provokes a break from earlier works in that it subdues the interactive relation with the reader in order to augment the construction of the characters forming the novel. This is another sign of a second mutation in the practise of Ríos's *liberature*: the emphasis on character formation removes the focus from the most radical experience of language the reader is exposed to in previous novels. In this sense, *Sombreros para Alicia* is an example within *liberature* of the increasing distancing from the original intention of expressing the experience of the repressive and oppressive aspects of the Francoist dictatorship.

Sombreros para Alicia (1993) opens with the phrase 'Un sombrero no es un sombrero, le dijo el Sombrero Loco a Alicia, sosteniendo con la mano izquierda su humeante taza de té, o al menos no solo un sombrero.' (Ríos 2001, 11) and closes with the opposite reflection of the quotation taken from Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'un sombrero no es un sombrero' (Ríos 2001, 75). Between these two references, Ríos produces a collection of short stories embodying a version of Lewis Carroll's famous character, Alice, exposed to the experience of wearing a multiple variations of hats. As I have

explained above, each variation involves Alice wearing a different hat based on a real or fictional setting, place or version of literary characters taken from twentieth century literature. Thus, in this novel, each mutation of the hat as a transforming object becomes another fragment mobilizing the story within specific temporal frames. As the character of the Mad Hatter says to Alicia: ‘Estos sombreros con pasado te los ofrezco de presente para avizorar el futuro.’ (Ríos 2003, 107). Implicit in that offering, and working as a strategic move to make the character work continuously throughout the novel, is the theme of multiple personality or kaleidoscopic motion.

As I have already noted, in those fictitious adventures there also appears a world exposed to catastrophes of different origins which mark a counterpoint of an imaginary realm which cannot suppress the real one, emphasizing the effect of the fragment representing historic events inserted within the fictional text. This reference to external tragic events will be emphasized as an essential part of the next novel discussed in this section.

6.1.2 *Amores que atan o Belles Lettres*: ‘The Character Fictions’

Amores que atan o Belles Lettres (1995) is the next novel (Fig. 35) to follow the strategy of repetition and mutation as in the novel explored above. Nevertheless, for this novel Ríos takes up again the two main characters from *Larva*, Emil Milalias (here named Emil Alias) and Babelle, from the perspective of the former character waiting for the possible arrival of the latter: ‘Toda la vida...hubiera debido decir que llevaba esperando’ (Ríos 1995, 209).



Fig. 35 Cover of *Amores que atan*

Within that waiting process, Emil Alias develops his deliberate attempt to relive the past in order to capture the presence of the missing Babelle by walking through the London streets they had walked together at the beginning of the 1970s. Thus, the pub they used to visit as a couple, ‘The Man in the Moon’, becomes the centre from which the character Emil Alias expands his recollection: ‘a donde vine traído quizá por un impulso lunático o por el palpito de que si estabas en Londres a lo mejor podría encontrarte aquí esta noche.’ (Ríos 1995, 9). In this novel, Ríos returns to the city which marked his *oeuvre* from *Larva* onwards, even though this time the nostalgic impulse seems to trigger the whole concept behind the character represented by Emil Alias:

El ruido de un avión me llenó de dudas y de nostalgia (¿también tú levantaste vuelo?, ¿a dónde?, ¿otro ataque de celos?), y decidí entonces empezar a contarte por orden alfabético, ya que al fin y al cabo también yo podía considerarme hombre de letras, quiénes fueron los amores de mi vida. (Ríos 1995, 18)

Developing the above quoted idea literally, Ríos mobilizes his literary strategy with the aim of narrating one chapter for every letter of the alphabet, each equivalent to one of twenty-six literary female characters taken from narratives belonging to nineteenth and twentieth century literature. Therefore, in this second novel investigated in this chapter, the question of character also takes a central emphasis,

continuing to show the mutational signs in relation to the focus of *liberature*. If the literary critic Marco Kunz considers this novel to be ‘un abecedario intertextual’ (Pagès 2007, 133), the Spanish critic Rafael Conte, one of the few literary critics who has continued to write about Ríos, declared it to be ‘la historia de 26 amores diferentes, y de un solo amor verdadero, que es el de la literatura de nuestro tiempo’ (Pagès 2007, 132).

As in the previous novel, Ríos continues to adapt characters taken from other novels. Even if, in *Amores que atan*, he does not clarify in any of the chapters which literary heroine he is referring to, each chapter is full of subtle references to the novels and female characters he seeks to reinterpret. This literary work becomes a sort of obsession with the portrayal of ‘disguised’ characters taken from other novels. Marco Kunz has listed all the books published between 1869 and 1959 referred to by Ríos in *Amores que Atan*. The writers are nationally diverse and include a total of fourteen Anglo-Saxons, five French, five writing in German, one Spanish and one Japanese writer. The stories are located in many referential cities around the world (Paris, London, New York, Madrid, Dublin, Berlin, Vienna, Florence, Kyoto, Zurich, etc.) and the titles and publication dates of the novels where each main heroine is taken from are as follows:

- A = Albertine: Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927)
- B = Bonaeda: Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930)
- C = Celia: Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (1938)
- D = Daisy: Francis Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
- E = Ellen Thatcher: John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925)
- F = Florence: Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier* (1915)
- G = Grace Brissenden: Henry James, *The Sacred Fount* (1905)
- H = Hermine: Herman Hesse, *Der Steppenwolf* (1927)
- I = Ikuko: Junichiro Tanizaki, *Kagi [The Key]* (1956)
- J = Julia Martin: Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931)
- K = Klara Pollunder: Franz Kafka, *Amerika* (1927)
- L = Lolita: Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)

M = Molly Bloom: James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922)
 N = Nadja: André Breton, *Nadja* (1928)
 O = Orlando: Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)
 P = Pocahontas: Arno Schmidt, *Seelandschaft mit Pocahontas* (1955)
 R = Robin Vote: Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936)
 S = Sally Bowles: Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939)
 T = Tristana: Benito Pérez Galdós, *Tristana* (1892)
 U = Ursula Brangwen: David Herbert Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (1915)
 V = Virginie: Louis Ferdinand Céline, *Guignol's Band* (1944/1964)
 W = Wanda: Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus im Pelz* (1869)
 X = Xénie: Georges Bataille, *Le bleu du ciel* (1957)
 Y = Yvonne: Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (1947)
 Z = Zazie: Raymond Queneau, *Zazie dans le métro* (1959)
 (Pagès 2007, 113)

As can be seen from the above list, a wide variety of novels are represented, ranging from the classical to the most obscure and marginal. The selection also shows Ríos's constant attempt both to explore and rescue forgotten works as well as recycle them into his own *oeuvre* from different perspectives in order to continue to feed the hypertextual vein of literary references.

For almost a month, at the rate of a letter per day ('Todos los días diariamente – como diría ella, la muy tautológica – te escribo' (Ríos 1995b, 176), the character of Emil Alias confronts a recurrent sensation of doubt in a constantly present dream-like reality which emerges from the narrative flow of the story: 'A veces, al recordar, dudo entre lo vivido y lo referido. Recuerdo, en cualquier caso, experiencias concentradas.' (Ríos 1995, 185). Emil Alias's recollections serve their constructive narrative function by continually triggering the writing process in the notebook whose trademark (*Belles Lettres*) produces the subtitle of the novel. This can be seen in the next quotation, taken from the last chapter, 'Y', influenced by the heroine from Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. This is another example of the hypertextual approach taken by Ríos:

A ti nadie podrá quitarte todas estas cartas que pongo sobre la mesa. *Belles Lettres*. Marca registrada. Lleno por las dos caras el bloc con mi letrilla negrita. Hormiguillas. Picudas mis es griegas. Como las del Cónsul. Y las del otro gran cornudo, el señor De la Flora. Y cada y griega como un escorpión. Tu signo. El mío, los lazos caligráficos que adornan la portada del bloc. Un laberinto. Como mis idas y venidas. Nudo gordiano de amor. Es verdad que hay amores que atan. (Ríos 1995, 248)

Thus, in between the memories relived through letters written by Emil Alias, the mixing of details and elements making reference to the characters coming from the novels referred to in each chapter becomes a constant game of masks and faces which interacts with Ríos's aim to constantly reproduce a multiplicity of voices: 'Sé entonces que tuve mil yoes y para nombrarlos necesitaría mil nombres y mil alias' (Ríos 1995, 76). The game of masks which reappears in this work recalls Sarduy's neobaroque strategy of the 'echo chamber', as described in the fifth chapter of this book. It appears in this novel as a remnant from the past which refers to the digressive emphasis but never actually reaches the end of the argument:

Mucho después llegaría a desarrollar una teoría cebollina - «onionológica digamos» - para pelar el ser o no ser y la nada, llegar al corazón del problema. Vamos quitando máscaras, caras, capas sucesivas, y al final no hay nada, no hay secreto.' (Ríos 1995, 64)

Furthermore, this approach also relates to the poststructural epistemological positions explored in earlier chapters of this book, in particular those of Barthes and Sarduy which refer to identity as a performative element which lacks any essence. In that constant struggle to decipher a meaning of some kind also lies one of the constant frequencies feeding into the core of *liberature* in relation to the limits of representation and their manifestation: 'Bounds, límites. Prohibido ir más allá de la realidad. Pero ¿cómo saber dónde acaba? Me agarro a lo que veo como a un clavo ardiendo. Y a lo que toco.' (Ríos 1995, 261). The tone used in earlier phases of *liberature* seems to have shifted from a celebration of indeterminacy towards a more anxious position.

Thus, the need to retrieve a sense of reality is one way in which this novel differs from the previous ones. The need to invoke external reality translates formally through all the references made to political terrorist attacks, tragedies and natural disasters occurring around the world during the period in which the character decides to write the letters. At the end of *Amores que atan*, the character Emil Alias mentions the time scale he has been dealing with: '*Belles Lettres...Casi veinte años después decidí pasarlos a máquina - Ma Chine infernale... - , por la máquina del tiempo.*' (Ríos 1995, 266). Even if no year is ever mentioned in the novel it is possible to infer, first from some specific cultural references and then from all social tragedies cited around the world, that the year is 1974 and the period during which the correspondence is written occurs between the 5th and the 29th of July. During that period, every time Emil Alias finds out and reads from the newspapers information related to any tragic event, he indicates so in the letter being written while hoping that the missing character Babelle has not been affected by any of the cited tragedies.

First in the list are the natural disasters and epidemics, such as a typhoon in Japan ('un tifón barrió ayer la costa oeste de Japón y se llevó por delante a sesenta y dos personas. Supongo que no te habrás ido tan lejos' (Ríos 1995, 30) and the outbreak of smallpox in India ('confío en que no se te haya ocurrido al menos peregrinar al norte de la India porque siguen aumentando los casos de viruela, sobre todo en Utter y Pradesh: en lo que va de año ya han muerto 22.556 personas' (Ríos 1995, 166)). Second, there follows a whole series of references to bellicose conflicts and terrorist attacks occurring during that period, including the Greek-Turkish Conflict in Cyprus ('Confío en que no seas una de las cuarenta mil turistas atrapados entre dos fuegos en Chipre. Cuando la bala o la bomba mata no sabe si es turca o griega. Cincuenta

muertos estas tarde, parece, tras los ataques de los aviones turcos a Famagusta' (Ríos 1995, 162) and the IRA bombing campaign ('Una granada explotó anoche en un club nocturno de Salisbury e hirió a seis personas. Pero no creo que necesites irte tan lejos para poner en peligro tu vida. Cuatro bombas estallaron ayer en Belfast' (Ríos 1995, 200) or ETA's attack attempts in France ('me trajo de sobresalto el desasosiego de que estés de vuelta en Francia porque, según el *Times*, los anarquistas españoles⁶¹ colocaron ayer varias bombas de plástico en tu dulce país para sabotear el Tour' (Ríos 1995, 116). On the whole, each chapter contains a citation referring to the appearance of victims caused in one form or another.

All the chapters from *Amores que atan* accumulate through the characters being portrayed from the letters of the alphabet leading to the chapter titled X (dedicated to Batailles's *Le Bleu du Ciel*) in which a number of aspects of the political and social climate experienced in the Western world in that year of 1974 is referred to as follows:

Xenofobia y racismo en el Reino Unido...Superioridad de la raza negra...Atrocidades griegas en Chipre...Atrocidades turcas en Chipre...Mr. Nixon sin ton ni son o el enredo de las cintas sin fin...Mr. Wilson y la inflación...Por qué escasea ahora el azúcar...Krishna y la expansión de la conciencia...Esperanto para la paz...El Apocalipsis ya ha empezado..., entre otros tópicos, que seguí a trozos esta mañana en Hyde Park Corner mientras te buscaba de grupo en grupúsculo. (Ríos 1995, 221)

This list of conflicting circumstances resembles a postmodernist reading of a modernist approach to the impossibility of capturing any holistic understanding of reality. Ríos prefers instead to list events in a chaotic manner in order to accentuate

⁶¹ On this point it is important to mention that, in reality, it was ETA and not a group of Spanish anarchists who exploded a series of bombs. Therefore, the reference to an external reality gets confused not only through the mediation of a news channel but also by the political ignorance of the main character of Ríos's novel.

the political climate of the times as much as the unmapped nature of the present historical situation. In addition, the mixing of such different political and social dimensions along the same lines continues to mobilize the postnational approach taken by Ríos, that is to say, manifesting the preferred dimension where all his characters both establish and mobilize their relationships. Nevertheless, the ever present oblique references to Spain continue to appear in a sporadic manner, particularly in that month of July 1974 in relation to the failing figure of Franco projected in a physical manner focussing on Franco's right leg:

Te leo, en este mantel de letras, de otros vejámenes: el generalísimo Franco con flebitis en la pierna derecha y el Papa con artrosis en la rodilla derecha. Al menos ya sabemos de qué pie cojean. (Ríos 1995, 66)

Thus, if the male character from *Amores que atan* is irremediably tied to the memory of Babelle, Julián Ríos will not escape or ever abandon the specific historic and political period of the seventies from which all the motions of *liberature* seem to spring. Nevertheless, at this stage of *liberature*, the political seems to have been removed from language and instead shifted towards a factual reflection on historical events where the individual lacks the ability to intervene or even interact. If in the previous works the political was focused on language as its privileged location from which to interact with the reader, following a poststructural interpretation, now the political dimension has shifted away from language and its more combative attitude has been intrinsically reduced. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the literary character now prefers to be secluded from the anxiety provoked by the sense of a world as a hostile place, rather than showing the defiant attitude portrayed in the first phase of *liberature*.

As can be seen from the selected quotations, the language used by Ríos has become normalized in relation to previous works, except for a slight use of portmanteau words: ‘¿Lectoreadora?’ (Ríos 1995, 98); ‘Laococontentísimo..., pese al ardor.’ (Ríos 1995, 142); ‘anguilingualinguando lánguida’ (Ríos 1995, 145) and ‘O, mejor dicho, corruptutor’ (Ríos 1995, 177). These are all manifestations of a diminishing attempt to widen the language employed in order to expand the elements of literary expression, or as the character of Emil Alias says about Babelle:

También ella inventaba palabras...Constantemente y con toda la frescura de su rustiquidad, para usar uno de sus términos. Son tan pobretonas las palabras, creía, que probaba a acuñar otras muchas, a fin de que todo sin excepción pueda decirse.’ (Ríos 1995, 177).

Nevertheless, the utopian premise of aspiring to the highest level of expression which had permanently informed and constructed *liberature* in the previous works, diminishes its presence in this and the last novel which closes this chapter. Although the character of Emil Alias closes the chapter dedicated to the letter H with one of Ríos’s preferred dictums: ‘Todo era irreal. Nada era cierto porque todo estaba permitido. Permutado’ (Ríos 1995, 76), this time its use is different. This time the mutation seems to be more concerned with the formation of a literary character reliving what had taking place almost twenty years ago using time in a more conventional manner. The aim is to exorcise the past in such a way as to conquer it again but, on this occasion, from the standpoint of a nostalgic inevitability which cannot mobilize the original impulse which created *liberature* in the first place.

With regard to fragment usage, *Amores que atan o Belles Lettres* (1995) follows the novel discussed in the previous section in the multiple and repetitious format developed from the disappearance of the narrator’s girlfriend. The fragmented format

moves its production of character variations through an absence which recognizes its own fictional multiplicity:

¿A qué carta quedarme? Nuestras visiones de la realidad son tantas veces ficciones, visiones informes o mal informadas, fracciones y refracciones que nos engañan, como cuando vemos un palo aparentemente roto en el agua, y todos estos fragmentos tenemos que completarlos con otros fragmentos a la postre tan engañosos e ilusorios como los anteriores. También *Mlle. A*, como la llamaba Aimé, es para mí una serie de fracciones que se descompone en nuevas fracciones y facciones, una serie tan discontinua como mis propios celos, ella es varias personas, máscaras, una serie de instantáneas, de siluetas, de visiones, divisiones fugaces. (Ríos 2000, 13)

This collection of twenty-six heroines of twentieth century world literature allows Ríos to integrate the fragment as part of the narrative being told without the need for the reader to participate actively as in the previous phases of *liberature*.

6.1.3 *Monstruario*: The Fictions of a Character named *Mons*

The last novel written by Ríos in the twentieth century and published in 1999 is *Monstruario* (Fig. 36). This work also relates to the two previous novels discussed in this chapter by virtue of that constant focus on waiting for, searching for or attempting to decipher a missing literary character. The first novel referred to the character of Alice as a ‘flash fiction’ and the second to Babelle as the missing female character generating the construction of an alphabetic web of character’s fictions. The novel *Monstruario* is built around an exiled painter living in Berlin, Victor Mons, and all the stories about the different characters are related to the collection of paintings and images which spring out from ‘la galería de monstruos de *Monstruario*’ (Ríos 1999, 10) and which will become part of an expected exhibition called ‘Monster Pieces’:

Una noche febril, en Berlín, se le ocurrió, reunir a todos sus monstruos reales y fantásticos en una serie mixta de obras – óleos, collages, dibujos, aguafuertes...- que llevaría por título *Monstruario*. Su galerista berlinés Uwe Doble estaba entusiasmado con el proyecto y casi todas las noches

iba al estudio a insistirle en que se pusiera cuanto antes manos a la obra. (Ríos 1999, 188)

The novel's narrator continues to be Emil Alias (as from *Amores que atan*) who also happens to be the supposed biographer of Mons's life. This literary technique follows previous examples relating to the removal of the narrative from reality by having characters being narrated by other characters as can be inferred from the following paragraph: 'También habló del proyecto de *Monstruario* conmigo (Emil ya empezó a literaturizar, dijo al comprobar o probar mi entusiasmo' (Ríos 1999, 189). Taking into strategic account the accident provoked by the artist's suicide attempt, all the stories become another form of search by the narrator trying to explain the origins and relationships behind the monsters portrayed by Mons.

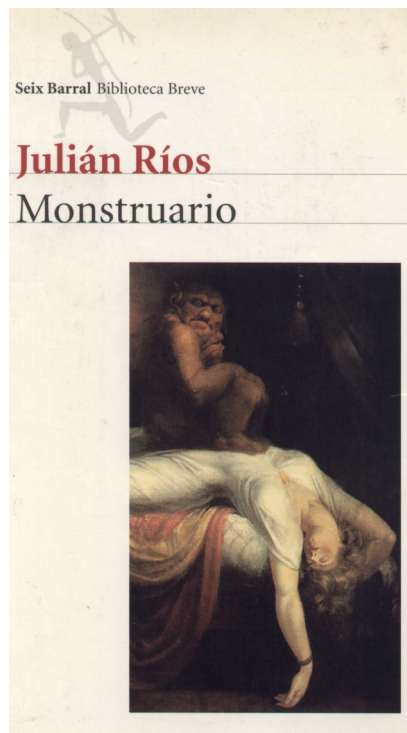


Fig. 36 Cover of *Monstruario*

From the first chapter, also titled *Monstruario*, the reader infers that Mons is suffering from a delirious compulsion which forces him to project all his visions into the canvas through the formation of monsters with constantly mutating forms. As the narrator Emil explains when describing one of the paintings entitled *El ojo ciego del cíclope*:

Desde que empezó a preparar *Monstruario*, cualquier cara o cuerpo, conocido o desconocido, podía monstruificarse inesperadamente. Donde y cuando menos se esperaba. Mons procuraba fijar estas visiones fugaces in situ, en un tris de rasgos rápidos. (Trasgos, se diría. Duendes que salían de quién sabe dónde. Caras fantasmales que se iban formando en la oscuridad a veces, al cerrar los ojos, o que se superponían por sorpresa a otras caras en las que se acababa de fijar.) (Ríos 1999, 192)

The result of such a constant strife to mutate and transform the perception of people into monsters ultimately leads Mons to the destruction of his own paintings, as can be seen from the following paragraph where his own reflected shadow triggers the destructive process:

Y volvería a ver por la pared de su estudio la grotesca silueta del enmascarado con astas de reno, ojos y pico de búho, cabezón de barbudo, manos de león y patas y cola de caballo, que brincaba, se agitaba, rugía, rasgaba, coceaba, que era su propia sombra de Mons frenético mientras se entregaba a la destrucción de sus monstruos. Traté de imaginarlo hecho una furia, luchando a brazo partido con sus Gorgonas, riss-rass rasgar arrastrar arrasar, papeles telas bastidores batidos y pisoteados, más patadas al mantícora barbudo que se me parece, pese a su cuerpo de león, incluso embistiendo con su cabeza dura bien afeitada y destocada al Minotauro berrendo horrendo en negro, barriendo con los pies tritones triturados, sátiros a tiras, cíclopes despedazados, faunos y centauros en cien pedazos, otra quimera, que muera, zas, y otro tajo, que Jano decapitado no suelte queja... Auugh. (Ríos 1999, 23)

The language will also be exposed to some of the rhetorical distortions used in previous stages of *liberature*, in order to increase the sense of destruction portrayed through the character of Mons. These include, in particular, accumulation, onomatopoeia and alliteration. This element of self-destruction underpins the whole narrative until the final chapter: 'De Mons en Enfer'. The supposed biographer and narrator is invited by Mons to Enfer, the place outside Paris where Mons's studio is

located. The presence of the biographer converts him into a witness of all the paintings which portray all the characters encountered by Mons during his life (and also in the chapters which form *Monstruario*). These end up like ghosts on their respective canvases:

Es una danza macabra de fantasmas en la que se pueden reconocer además las siluetas características (cada quien en su cuadro y en diferente posición, señalado o apuntado por el péndulo-ahorcado, entre los demás bailarines) de otros muertos de Mons: Anne Kiefer, Hellen Gulick, Eva Lalka, el profesor Reck, Ziegel el arquitecto... (Ríos 1999, 208)

Each one of the cited names represents a different thematic emphasis in the novel and also in relation to the character of Mons, but all of them relate through the evocation of memory. This is the first element which stands out in this novel, something the architect Ziegel emphasizes by imagining buildings in order to remove the disturbing memory of the bombed city of Dresden:

También en ocasiones los recuerdos se le superponen, y una ciudad duplica a otra ciudad distinta, aumentando así la duplicidad de la memoria. Pero Ziegel no olvida que al fin y al cabo la memoria es uno de los nombres que damos a la imaginación [...] Tal vez las ciudades imaginarias que le obsesionaban tanto no consiguieron borrar del todo la fosforescente ciudad real arrasada a fuego desde el aire. (Ríos 1999, 88)

The role of memory and the subsequent doubts associated with the remembered episode recollected by any of the characters, and also signalled by the narrator, becomes a reference at different points of the novel: ‘¿Así fue si así nos parece?’ (Ríos 1999, 9). It is an element which could also be perceived in *Amores que atan* and *Sombreros para Alicia* as part of that misleading evocation of a nostalgic past which never seems to fulfil its own recollection, thus the inherent need for Ríos to explore it literally but always failing in the repeated attempt. Therefore, if in the previous novel, memory adopted a more nostalgic content, in this novel the memory of the war embodies a more traumatic sense. Following from the above, the accident suffered by Mons will trigger the sensation of doubting the recollection of each event ‘con la

sensación de que tenía la memoria rota' (Ríos 1999, 9), permitting the narrator to continue to question which version of the event should be taken as the reliable one:

Esas visiones sucedían y se sucedían cuando rumiaba *Monstruario* en sus paseos por el bosque de Grunewald – que él pronunciaba a la francesa: Grünewald – pero en realidad (¿realidad?) estaba en el parque de Treptow tendido sobre la nieve, al final de una noche demasiado agitada. (Ríos 1999, 32)

The need to question the reality being shown also makes Mons express the idea that 'la realidad es o acaba siendo más extraña que la ficción' (Ríos 1999, 100). He does so in the chapter titled 'La dama blanca del Métropole' in reference to the character of the Spanish art collector named Rosa Mir. The first time Mons encounters Mir they are in the foyer of a Belgian hotel, even though he thinks that it may be part of another vision he may be having: 'La dama blanca del Métropole, le puso Mons, una aparición insólita que atribuyó a la fiebre y al ron antitrancazo, a la suma de sus grados, al volver de madrugada al Hotel Metropole, en Bruselas.' (Ríos 1999, 97). The ghostly suspicion triggers the development of all the doubts provoked by Mons in this chapter. But after a series of encounters in the foyer Mons discovers that Rosa Mir is a real art collector when he finally meets her at a dinner arranged by another art collector named Vanderdecker. At this gathering, Mir becomes interested in Mons's series of paintings about monsters. Ríos engages with the Spanish past through the character of Rosa Mir in relation to the manner Mons portrays an art critic in the canvas:

Le había horripilado particularmente una cabezota barbuda - ¿de un Holofernes enano? – semienvuelta en papel de periódico ensangrentado. La cabeza de un crítico contra su propia crónica...¿Tenemos que ser siempre crueles los españoles?, se preguntó y le preguntó ella cuando se dirigían al saloncito contiguo a tomar café. ¿Siempre violentos?. (Ríos 1999, 105)

The question included in the above quotation remains unanswered in the novel but inevitably refers back to Ríos's past and how, through the different novels, he has

dealt with the experience of oppression lived during Franco's epoch. Moreover, as has been mentioned throughout the book, this could also be seen as Ríos's own form of revenge on his absence from Spanish letters. However, with the abrupt reference to the cruelty of the painting in relation to the art critic projected directly as a generalized national characteristic, Ríos shows a superficial approach to the circumstances discussed by the characters which never engages the reader beyond the unanswered question relating to victimization.

In relation to the use of language in this novel, the normalization of language becomes clear when one of the characters, the German painter Adalbert Stock, explains his fascination with vocabulary related to bullfighting. Stock is another of the models who ends up as part of the portraits painted by Mons and becomes the central figure of the chapter titled *Corrida en Berlín*. He had lived in Spain during the 1950s and 1960s, where he became familiar with all elements related to the practice of bullfighting which marked his approach to painting, but particularly with the following aspect:

el abecé del equívoco vocabulario taurino. También a Stock le llamaba la atención que casi todas las palabras de la fiesta nacional fueran dobles. *Corrida* designaba tanto la de toros como la eyaculación. *Puntilla*, a la vez, puñal y encaje. *Verdugo*, el estoque del descabello y el ejecutor de las penas de muerte. *Muleta*, de torero y de cojo. (Ríos 1999, 153)

Thus, it is clear that the language used by Ríos has not only stabilized its meanings but has also been made explicit to the reader, something which differs completely from previous stages of *liberature*. Still, as in the previous novel *Amores que atan*, there is only a scarce use of portmanteau words specifically related to art and bullfighting: '¡Caramba con la Nefertitiritera!' (Ríos 1999, 41); 'esa imposible tauromaquia de sueño o de pesadilla, *Oniromaquia (sic)*, llegó a llamarla, que le venía

obsesionando en las últimas semanas.’ (Ríos 1999, 152); ‘Stock acumulaba las asociaciones en su corrida barroca, vangogh-goyesca.’ (Ríos 1999, 158). It is as if Ríos’s last two novels of the twentieth century recollect in their spare use of neologisms the chapter ‘Palonzo’, from his first collection of short stories, *Cortejo de sombras*, created in 1966. What is different is that, thirty three years later, the oppressive element which triggered *liberature* in the first place has mutated into a literature which has lost its original intention even to the point of emptying out history by only mentioning bullfighting as a trace of Spain in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, the most radical relationship between images and words explored in the previous chapter in the way Ríos used and mobilized ‘the painted novels’ becomes more conventional throughout *Monstruario*.

Monstruario (1999) is formed of ten chapters which maintain their own autonomy even if the reader can recognize a more conventional three act narrative. Still, Ríos maintains a fragmented narrative mode built around the fictional life and works of the painter called Victor Mons. The strategy for the use of the fragment as the variation of character is built around the after effects of Mons’s attempted suicide and his post-traumatic memory lost. This event forces his friends and in particular the character Emil to help him retrace his past memories: ‘Y los tres, estratégicamente a los pies y a ambos flancos de su cama, como para cortarle una escapatoria imposible, le ayudábamos a recomponer el rompecabezas – nunca mejor dicho – de los últimos días y noches en Berlín.’ (Ríos 1999, 9). Ríos constructs a kaleidoscopic version of Mons’s life under the variations related to the recollection of his past encounters with other artists, art collectors or models who used to pose for his paintings.

As has been seen in the previous sections, examples can be found in the three novels which relate to the metaliterary aspect as much as to the creative influence on Ríos of the art of painting, together with the appearance of some portmentau words and neologisms. However, there are also inherent shifts in these last three novels of the twentieth century and these shifts lead Ríos essentially towards more conventional literary routes. Taking into account that *Amores que atan* and *Monstruario* rescue the main characters from the original *Larva's* cycle, it is important to highlight the manner in which they are developed through a process of remembering the period of the 1970s which has become so central to the development of Ríos's works. Thus, although the three novels explored in this chapter continue the literary gesture of starting and ending with the same phrase or word⁶², following a cyclical rhythm which adds up to the 'spiral' narrative technique, many other aspects have become mutated within *liberature*.

I believe that the diminishing presence in Ríos's work of an oppressive dictatorship which could be written against forces Ríos to focus more on the process of characters remembering the past than on attempting to experience the present from a more critical dimension. Thus, the second and third stages of *liberature* gradually reveal an increasing depoliticization which moves away from an interactive relation with the reader. It seems that Ríos has relinquished the virtual force of the present times as the symbolic reflection projected by the painting titled 'El hombre esponja' by Mons in *Monstruario* seems to address:

El hombre-esponja, aseguraba el crítico, es característico de nuestra época. Todo lo absorbe y no retiene nada. Absorbe instantáneamente lo

⁶² *Sombreros para Alicia* begins and ends with the phrase 'Un sombrero no es un sombrero'; *Amores que atan* does it with the word 'Ángeles' and *Monstruario* begins and ends with the same word of the title.

que ve y oye por donde pasa, toda suerte de anuncios publicitarios, de discursos y concursos, de imágenes televisivas, virtuales y desvirtuadas, de mensajes radiofónicos, internéticos y minitelepáticos, de titulares de periódicos, y todo lo devuelve con un gran bostezo para quedarse de nuevo vacío y disponible...El hombre-esponja es el hombre ávido y vacío de este fin de siglo, es cada hijo de vecino, somos tú y yo cuando encendemos la televisión u hojeamos en una sala de espera cualquier revista ilustrada. El hombre-esponja, por qué no, es también un autorretrato de Mons. El único que salvó de la serie – el último – realizada en Enfer. (Ríos 1999, 199)

Once there is no specific dictatorship to fight against, the possibility of resistance vanishes, and everything becomes a sort of game whose consequences never go beyond literature itself. This aspect of the late work of Ríos began to be shown in the Neobaroque novels explored in the previous chapter. On this matter, the postnational dimension seemed to adapt well to the political intent of the first phase of *liberature* related to aspects of cosmopolitanism, new Hispanic alliances and attacking the nation under Francoism from outside. But in the end, as the final phase of *liberature* in particular shows, the way Ríos employs the postnational approach seems reduced to a much more superficial view of the world as a place of uncertainty and violence. Furthermore, the postnational references to literature mainly focus on works of literature whose origins are in a more universal, but mostly Western, canon. Thus, it seems as if the lack of an opposing focus has instilled Ríos's third phase of *liberature* with a nostalgic emphasis characterized by the famous dictum of Vázquez Montalbán already mentioned in the second chapter of this book: 'Contra Franco vivíamos mejor' (Vázquez 1985, 151).

Conclusion:
The Mutating Spiral Of *Liberature*

El modelo de mi literatura es el movimiento de la espiral.
Los temas y los personajes van, vienen, van, vuelven [...]
La espiral está en mi obra desde mis inicios literarios.
Julián Ríos (Hermoso 2009, 1)

The main element in the poetics of Ríos which stands out and should be noted is the inherently constant and consequential approach which his literary style and use of characters present throughout his whole *oeuvre*. In line with this, and as we have seen in the last three chapters, through the ‘spiral’ methodology Ríos refers to in the above quotation, we can also perceive three stages of mutation relating to levels of reading interaction. As seen in the previous three chapters, these mutations are also reflected in the gradually decreasing levels of interaction in the course of the three stages of fragment use shown to the reader of Ríos’s novels.

As has been seen in the last three chapters, there are three main usages of the fragment which stand out as characteristic of Ríos’s work. First, the four-fold fragment; second, the epiphanic fragment, and third, the fragment as character variation. The use of the fragment as a literary method is for Ríos a necessary interactive tool in the activation of the reader as part of the performative act, something which has always been an integral element of his *oeuvre*. As Ríos wrote in a short essay entitled ‘La Aventura de Leer’: ‘El lector - el desocupado lector... - no va a encontrar un momento de reposo, convertido verdaderamente en lector andante, de episodio en peripecia, atando cabos sueltos de diversos fragmentos narrativos...’ (Ríos 1995, 49). This quotation epitomizes the roots of Ríos’s attempts to integrate the reader into an *oeuvre* essentially characterized by the active ingredients of a fragmented nature. Nevertheless, the different fragment mutations carried out by Ríos

in the three cycles show a reduction in the interaction demanded of the reader as well as a reduction in the intense use of fragmentation as another rhetorical literary device. Even if some of the similar literary strategies from the earlier novels continue to return, following the ‘spiral’ approach Ríos always refers to as his stylistic signature throughout most of his *oeuvre*, the emphasis on the interaction with the reader and the expansion through the exploration of language has diminished the further Ríos has moved from the oppressive environment and national context of his origins.

Therefore, if the first and most radical cycle of *liberature* followed the interactive route taken from the poststructuralists with the aim of maintaining its liberating intention, the second cycle attempted a Neobaroque use of the ‘echo chamber’, experienced through the exploration and recycling of other literary works. However, the third and final cycle mostly renounces the reader participation which *liberature* seemed to demand previously and focuses mainly on the literary aspect of character development and a more conventional literary route. Hence, I would argue that the third cycle of *liberature* transforms the critical aspiration of *liberature*. It seems to me that by reducing the interaction with and participation demanded of the reader Ríos moves away from the principles created by *liberature* and ultimately from the critique of oppression which was at the very origins of the formation of *liberature*.

This book has followed Ríos’s *oeuvre* from 1966, with the first collection of stories mainly following a traditional storytelling line, to 1999, where a more linear storytelling begins to be employed again. In between these dates, Ríos produces the most radical and extreme parts of *liberature*. As a whole, the attention to literary form

in Ríos's *oeuvre* precedes the content as if following the poststructuralist approach to its core. Nevertheless, it is that emphatic focus and attention to literary form, and particularly in connection to the tension applied to language, which becomes Ríos's particular critique and attempt to renew a loaded language paralyzed by dictatorship. By moving away from that critical sense of writing, the concept of *liberature* begins to mutate through the two previously-mentioned stages of *liberature*. In the process of mutation there gradually appears the disconnection from the postnational tendency related to the oppression experienced by Ríos in a Spain exposed to Franco's power. Hence, the first phase of *liberature* formed by *Larva* and *Poundemónium* proves that their postnational approach was intrinsically linked to the nation as a response to dictatorship. Nevertheless, the second and third phases of *liberature* will prove inherently that with its gradual distancing from its original trigger, *liberature* became transformed and lost its original impetus. Ironically, the postnational in *liberature* became radical through the abandonment of the politically charged formal approach which had characterized *liberature* in the first place. Therefore, if Ríos's *liberature* originates in a radical positioning exploring the deformation of content it will gradually mutate towards a more conventional approach at the end of the twentieth century.

If the aim of those poststructuralist theorists who influenced Ríos's earlier *oeuvre* in such a profound way was influenced by 'The desire to enable us to escape the confinements of print' (Landow 2006, 66), Ríos's use of poststructuralism was also triggered by the oppressive confinements of a dictatorship. Thus, the original link underpinning Ríos's *oeuvre* is formed by the practice of mutations and interactions as integral and subversive elements of his *liberature* understood as a 'politics of

resistance: a form of writing that offers resistance to established modes of thought and accepted opinion.’ (Peters 2001, 45). Therefore, Ríos’s literary attempt adds up to the constant need of the intellectual to foster the critical position, ‘cuestionando y cuestionándose, de continuar interviniendo históricamente’ (Balibrea 1999, 161), even if from a utopian, distant or marginal position. Nevertheless, that desire will gradually die away in the absence of an external socio-political sparring partner for Ríos to confront by means of his writing.

However, it is important to note that even if the reception of Ríos’s work, as has already been said, was limited and that the site of the battle against the official oppressive Spanish culture under Franco was focused specifically on language, the initial phase of *liberature* still remains a new opening with the potential to counteract the constant presence of social realism in Spanish literature during the final period of Franco’s dictatorship. The ambitious nature of Ríos’s attempt in the 1970s to explore an avantgarde positioning as a form of aesthetic rebellion still resonates today. Nevertheless, it is also important to state that the differential modernity of Spain is mainly conceived through other artistic forms more related to the visual medium of cinema than to the printed page of literature. Therefore, despite the visual emphasis in Ríos’s work, it still explains a unique period in Spanish history and one which, for a moment, succeeds in proposing another reading of literature.

Interestingly, the Spanish literary critic Rafael Conte remarked that Spanish literature at the end of the century ‘está polarizada por dos extremos: el que representa Arturo Pérez Reverte y el de Julián Ríos’ (Fernández 2004, 1). However, it cannot be said that *liberature* has only been represented by Julián Ríos. On the 23rd April of 2004, a

round table discussion in Santiago de Compostela celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Larva*. At that round table were some of the new Spanish writers influenced by Ríos's *liberature* in different ways but fundamentally in their unique approach to exploring alternative ways of literary telling. Amongst those writers Juan Francisco Ferré and Germán Sierra stand out as continuators of *liberature* or 'escritores *larvarios*' (Sierra 2004, 1) although their engagement is related mainly to the formalistic perspective of *liberature* rather than to a political poststructuralist emphasis. As Sierra himself declares in his article 'Veinte Años Larvarios':

“Para algunos lectores, la historia de la novela comienza con *El Satiricón* de Petronio, salta hasta *Gargantúa y Pantagruel* de Rabelais, da un nuevo brinco para llegar a *Tristram Shandy* de Laurence Sterne, y de allí a *Finnegans Wake* de James Joyce, *La Vida Instrucciones de Uso* de Georges Perec, *Tarde Orlada de Oro* de Arno Schmidt y, más recientemente, *Larva* de Julián Ríos. Lo que todos estos libros tienen en común es que cambian el modo en que leemos – permanecen tan innovadores como el día en que fueron escritos.”

Estas palabras de Thomas McGonigle en *Los Angeles Times* del 14 de Marzo de 2004 explican a la perfección el motivo de haber dedicado a *Larva* y a su autor, Julián Ríos, la mesa redonda de clausura del Primer Encuentro de Nuevos Narradores celebrado recientemente en la Fundación Gonzalo Torrente Ballester de Santiago de Compostela. Allí, tres escritores, de uno u otro modo *larvarios* – Eloy Fernández Porta, Juan Francisco Ferré y yo mismo -, hemos querido recordar a los nuevos lectores que, más de veinte años después de su publicación, *Larva* nos sigue pareciendo, en efecto, una de las novelas más innovadoras de la literatura española del siglo XX. (Sierra 2004, 1)

Apart from the Spanish writers mentioned above, there are also others like Javier Pastor, Nuria Amat and José María Pérez Álvarez, who continue to explore Spanish narrative forms in unexpected and surprisingly expanding literary ways. This will be the necessary subject of further research in relation to the transformations provoked by *liberature* amongst other Spanish writers.

To conclude, therefore, even if Ríos has employed strategies taken from postmodernism, he also embraced wholeheartedly the modernist line of literature which comes from Cervantes, Sterne, Rabelais, Joyce, Guimarães Rosa, Sarduy and Goytisolo. To that line of writing Ríos adds the multilingual and political dimension which feeds from poststructuralism and the Neobaroque as much as from a need to break with any sign of oppression caused by the experience lived during Franco's years in Spain. Later, Ríos has returned to a more conventional literary approach which gradually erases the 'b' of *liberature*. Therefore, if this book started as an exploration of *liberature* through the strategy of the spiral to which Ríos refers in relation to his work, it concludes with the letter 'b' mutating back into literature.

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