

Francoism and the Dialectics of Space: The Case of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *Angst-Ridden Executive*¹

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*The workers have nothing to lose in this but their chains.
They have a world to gain. Workers of the world, unite!*

(Last words of the Communist Manifesto of 1848)

In a recent study, Caragh Wells has written convincingly on the importance of an 'urban dialectics' in Vázquez Montalbán's fiction (2004). Wells argues, drawing upon theoretical studies, that the real and imagined space of Barcelona, and all the socio-political mapping it entails, is as central to the Carvalho detective novels as the plot and characters themselves. The present study seeks to pursue another related stratum of this dialectical question: 'national space' as an extension of, and dialogical engagement with, urban and political spaces. Benedict Anderson's influential notion of 'imagined communities' (1983) raises the question in its present form.² What is the relationship between the collective imaginaries of the diverse constituents of a 'nation', or of 'nations' within a 'nation', and the urban space portrayed in a novel? How can an author metonymically and metaphorically negotiate these collective imaginaries within the confines of a text using only the narratological devices that can be categorized as constitutive of novelistic structure?

¹ This article started out as a paper entitled 'Carvalho's Franco: *Franquismo* and the detective fiction of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939-2003)' presented to the LI Conference of the Anglo-Catalan Society, 18 November 2005 (Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge). I am grateful to the conference organizers and the participants for their helpful comments.

² As John Payne states: 'Benedict Anderson's phrase "imagined community" is so useful because it does remind us that we create and recreate our identities in our minds. A rethinking of the Catalan national project now seems more probable than possible. It might or might not include the acceptance of the complexity of identity and community within Catalonia' (2004: 251).

One of the most frequent methods of applying categories of separation to nationalities in Spain is to divide them into two opposed camps: the minority nationality (e.g. the Catalan) and the majority nationality (e.g. the Spanish). In the case of Catalonia, this division is often taken for granted. So it is customary to speak of a Castilian and a Catalan-speaking Catalonia, as an exchange between Georges Tyras and the late Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939-2003) illustrates (from an interview conducted in 1996). The passage that will be quoted next is representative of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's non-binary view of Catalonia's linguistic and national-ethnic pluralism and is of particular interest here because it demonstrates the metonymical value of the Provincial capital (Barcelona) as representative of wider communities (Catalonia). The discussion of *charneguismo*, in the second half of this long but fascinating passage, is especially revealing of the author's engagement with, and experience of, living in a multiethnic and bilingual society where symbolic imaginary structures are constantly in dialogue. The pejorative designation, *charnego*, generally applied in the 1950s and 1960s by Catalan speakers to the new wave of migrant workers encouraged by the Franco regime to boost Catalonia's programme of post-war industrialization, is particularly relevant to *La soledad del manager* (Vázquez Montalbán 1978 [1977]) as a novel that negotiates national identities and loyalties. In fact, the term is dialogically reassessed and re-appropriated by Montalbán so that it becomes multi-accented. In a single word intersect the polyphony of ethno-cultural voices that resonate across the physical and imaginary space of Barcelona (an example from the novel is discussed later in this article):

Georges Tyras: Quel est ton rapport à la langue catalane? N'y a-t-il pas un problème de vraisemblance à utiliser le castillan pour un écrivain qui situe l'essentiel de ses romans dans la capitale de la Catalogne?

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán: Eh bien, à Barcelone, en Catalogne, il y a cinquante pour cent de personnes de langue castillane, qui parlent presque toujours en castillan, bien que tout le monde comprenne le catalan.

G.T.: C'est le phénomène du charneguismo...

M.V.M.: Il est important ici. Tu sais sans doute que charnego est un mot, péjoratif à l'origine, qui se rapportait à l'immigrant né ici, mais fils d'immigrants... Moi, je serais un charnego. Et, si je suis bien informé, c'est un mot d'origine française, comment dit-on carne en français?

G.T.: «Viande», ou «chair», selon le cas...

M.V.M.: «Chair»... voilà c'est cela. On appelait les émigrés catalans qui allaient faire les vendanges dans le sud de la France des «Chairs nègres». Je suppose que «nègres» était une catalanisation de noir comme couleur de la «chair», sans doute de la peau. Comme ils allaient faire les vendanges dans le Roussillon, du côté où l'on parle catalan, ce néologisme s'est appliqué à eux. De «chair nègre»... «chair negro»... charnego. Quoi qu'il en soit, ma relation à la catalanité a toujours été de cohabitation... [...] cohabiter, c'était savoir qu'il y avait quelqu'un de différent, parce qu'il parle différemment, et qu'il y a des us et coutumes différents, des référents symboliques autres, dont tu t'imprègnes peu à peu comme d'une nourriture précise, le club de football de Barcelone par exemple. (Tyras 2004: 63-64)

Vázquez Montalbán's novel, *La soledad del manager*, from the popular *serie Carvalho* detective novels, depicts Barcelona in the spring of 1977 when the book was written. Thirty years on, it now represents a historical contribution to a theme (the impact of Francoism on Catalan life) that was especially relevant to the author at the time of writing. Montalbán wrote the novel at a time of social upheaval in Spanish society generally, and in Barcelona and Catalonia in particular. The rapid composition of the novel as momentous events unfolded in the wake of Franco's death, a year and several months earlier, means that today, in addition to a tightly structured detective novel, *La soledad del manager* provides a peculiarly candid evocation of an atmosphere that is now part of the history of the *Transición*. Although the book is fiction, the fact that the author was a career journalist whose life work was dedicated to bearing witness to, and documenting Spanish society, means that several descriptive passages of the novel may be said to represent quasi-journalistic sources, if not for actual events, then at least for the atmosphere of social and political unrest that engulfed Barcelona in early 1977.

Vázquez Montalbán wrote extensively on Francoism throughout his life in numerous articles and books. Moreover, his vision of the plurality of Barcelona's socio-political and cultural components, its history, present and future (see Vázquez Montalbán 1987; 1991; 1998) go hand in hand with his profound knowledge of, and interest in the philosophy of the dictatorship (1978; 1985; 1992). In this article I shall examine the use of a novel in the creation of a dialogical, or dialectical, space where politics and social comment are communicated to the reader through the narratological triad of point of view, characterization and plot structure. References to Catalonia in *La soledad del manager* have been collected and analysed narratologically to relate these *indices* to the main theme, developed through the plot of a detective story. This novel has been selected because it is the first of the Carvalho series to make an important impact. The eight thousand exemplars of the first edition of December 1977 sold out in less than a month and by January 1978 a second edition was already available. It is also the first Carvalho novel that is the work of a fully accomplished and mature literary talent and, as it was published in the wake of Franco's death, is of particular interest to the theme under consideration.

La soledad del manager portrays the divisions and animosities of three generations. They are victims of, or collaborators with, central state repressive system. The novel emphasizes the role of multinational capital in the manipulation and control of the Spanish state's emergent democratic machine; and the author explores the repercussions of this phenomenon through the sociology of characterization and plot. The semiotic method as adopted by José Valles Calatrava in his study, *La novela criminal española* (1991), employs a number of narratological terms which are particularly pertinent to this study. The first is the concept of *function*, developed in the sixties and adapted from the work of Vladimir Propp (1968 [1917]) though preference in this particular case will be shown towards Roland Barthes' (1966) model of Distributive and Integrative Narrative Functions. In this scheme, the former define narrative action

whilst the latter refer to narrative meaning.³ They can be listed as follows:

- (1) Cardinal functions or *nuclei*.⁴ These are the principal motors of action in the narrative, which inaugurate, move forward and develop plotlines.
- (2) Secondary functions, or 'catalysers'. These depend on the nuclei, and are structured around them.
- (3) Integrative functions are called *indices*.⁵ (i.e. those parts of a narrative that do not serve to move forward the action, but delay it, by invoking character, feeling, or atmosphere).
- (4) *Informants*: references to pure data, time, place, etc.

It is useful at this point to remember the *histoire/discours* distinction first posited by Émile Benveniste (1966: 237-250). *Histoire* refers to that which is signified by a narration, the virtual sequence of events as they happen in time and space. *Discours* refers to the particular disposition of these events in narrative.⁶ This

³ Vázquez Montalbán lived through the formative years of European structuralism in the 1960s, and its presence is reflected in his intellectual and fictional work. For example, in his first novel, *Yo maté a Kennedy*, he places the following opinion (laden with burlesque surrealist irony) in the mouth of the American President: 'El estructuralismo es un vano esfuerzo neopositivista, escogido por el capitalismo imperialista para meter una cuña ideológica dentro del pensamiento marxista. Y sobre todo para restar votos al partido comunista francés, votos procedentes de los normaliens de izquierda y de toda la pequeña burguesía intelectual en general' (1972: 30-31).

⁴ 'Verdaderos nudos o núcleos narrativos, hechos centrales en la progresión del relato unidos entre sí en el discurso por relaciones lógicas y cronológicas' (Valles Calatrava 1991: 185).

⁵ 'Los indicios revisten especial importancia porque van permitiendo al protagonista ir avanzando paulatinamente en su búsqueda y llenando de sentido los diversos interrogantes; hasta cierto punto podría decirse por ello, en general, que el relato criminal de investigador es una "novela indicial", un relato donde los indicios tienen un peso más específico para el desarrollo de la acción que en otras modalidades narrativas' (Valles Calatrava 1991: 186).

⁶ The Russian formalists sought to disentangle the Aristotelean *mythos* (which seems to refer both to *mimesis* and the arrangement of the incidents, often translated as both story and plot [Roberts 1927]). Thus, to distinguish story –the events as they actually occurred (*fabula*) – from plot (*sjuzet*) as Tomashevsky did (1965 [1925]: 67) provides

distinction is of peculiar significance to the genre of enigma stories. The creation of suspense depends upon the author holding back vital parts of the *histoire* in order that the disposition of material in the *discours* presents an enigma to be proposed, developed and, only when the whole narrative has run its course, finally resolved. In this sense the detective genre is characterized by various strategies that produce necessary delays to the action; the more prolonged, and the more tantalizing, the better. *La soledad del manager* is an excellent example of this process; and one of the key features of this type of narrative is the relationship of the indices to the functions.

Dramatic tension and psychological insight are also achieved through the process of focalization (Genette 1980), which divides into three classes:

- (1) Zero focalization is where there is no ostensible limitation of point of view alignment with characters or protagonists; traditionally equivalent to the 'omniscient narrator'.
- (2) Internal focalization may be fixed or variable. Point of view is limited to a particular character.
- (3) External focalization. No point of view is ascribed. Characters are viewed from outside by the results of their actions (a technique often associated with Hemingway).

The way the functions are organized within the narrative sequence is partially determined by focalization. *La soledad del manager* begins when, on a flight from Las Vegas to San Francisco, Carvalho meets Antonio Jaumá, a top-level executive in a multinational company ('La Petnay, una de las compañías multinacionales más importantes del mundo' [Vázquez Montalbán

a simplified, but still workable distinction, which has born many subsequent qualifications and modifications, especially in the wake of Genette. The present study retains the concepts in their basic form, relying on Todorov (1966: 157-158) and Valles Calatrava (1991: 183). I shall not enter the linguistic debate opened by Benveniste and continued more recently by, amongst others, the cognitivists (e.g. Ryan 1991).

1978: 12]).⁷ The chronological location of the meeting is imprecise, and for a reason; the events recounted, the reader discovers later, are in fact *flashbacks*. Carvalho met Jaumá while he was working for the Central Intelligence Agency in the late 1960s and their acquaintance, Carvalho afterwards explains, lasted three days. This three-day meeting is a cardinal function of the plot: ‘Sus dos compañeros de asiento hablaban de España y uno de ellos en un inglés evidentemente acentuado en catalán’.(12)

This beginning *in medias res* is typical of the genre, and attests to the freedom of authors of detective fiction to set up an enigma without, at first, declaring its nature. Montalbán juxtaposes Carvalho’s meeting Jaumá, the first cardinal function, although its status as such is concealed, with another seemingly unconnected event, which turns out to be the second cardinal function of the novel: the discovery of the body. Chapter 2 contains a descriptive passage detailing a new location, in which narrative time and perpetrator are left at first unexplained. In fact, the individual is a minor character, whose sole function is the discovery of Jaumá’s murdered corpse. But Montalbán disguises this function, by introducing a minor character as if he were a leading protagonist. Because this is achieved through a shift in focalization, which is directly relevant to the spatio-temporal location of the narration as a Catalan phenomenon, it will bear more detailed commentary.

The descriptive passage that will next be quoted is not limited through the eyes of the character but is an instance of the omniscient narrator, or zero focalization. The indicial contrast between the first and second chapters is therefore striking. In the first chapter, focalized through Carvalho, we have a blurred representation of time and place alongside a sharp portrayal of Antonio Jaumá. By contrast, chapter 2 begins with a lengthy passage describing the countryside and geology of one of the northern strongholds of Catalan culture, the city of Vic. Here, I suggest, Montalbán assumes the dominant voice of the traditional narrator, in order to reinforce thus an ideological opposition at the heart of the text, between, on the one hand, the shimmering

⁷ All quotations of the novel are taken from this 1978 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.

near-dream-state subjectivity of far-away America, and, on the other, the solidified geographical space of long-dead volcanoes, objectified as an almost atemporal zone:

Como si los vapores de los viejos volcanes se hubieran vuelto niebla fría y húmeda, de la tierra gris cada mañana de invierno suben los vapores que empapan las viejas geometrías de las casonas que limitan Vich. Expulsada de la villa por el aliento de los primeros portales abiertos, la niebla se ceba en las casillas de adobes encalados que marcan la transición entre la vieja ciudad y su paisaje de turrones grises. A estas horas de la mañana no se percibe plenamente el paisaje de antiguo desastre prehistórico, de fin del mundo limitado que alguna vez debió ocurrir en la hoy llamada llanura de Vich, un ceniciento terreno salpicado de autocontrolados cerrillos de cenizas petrificadas. Tampoco se percibe el caserío de piedra desnuda, oscura, cubierto por tejados cejijuntos no se sabe si por la lluvia o por subrayar la gravedad de una ciudad a la que uno de sus escritores locales calificó de ‘ciudad de los santos’. Los curas aún no han salido de sus infinitas madrigueras olorosas de cera y mazapán. Las únicas propuestas humanas son payesas que bajan hacia el mercado y obreros que salen de la ciudad en busca de fábricas de embutidos y muebles, bóvilas o factorías de piedra artificial. Herramientas mismas del frío, las bicicletas zigzaguean con su luz loca, nerviosamente estudiadas por los ojos humeantes de los faros de los coches o por el iceberg de un camión del que sólo emerge la frente de inmenso animal cúbico. (15-16)

The author is engaged in mapping out, literally and figuratively, the space in which his fictional world encounters the real one. Catalonia, through the metonymy of Vic, is thus placed at the centre of the narrative. From the universal to the particular, from volcanic prehistory to the prehistory of an individual’s childhood memories, Montalbán takes us step by step, first to a radio weatherman and finally to a radio listener, Joan de can Gubern, who is concentrating on the temperature read out. La Coruña is at minus two; there is no readout for Granada, Bilbao at two degrees, Barcelona is at four degrees: ‘¿Y en Vich? Se pregunta el hombre. Seguro que por debajo de cero. Si en Barcelona están a cuatro.’.(16-17) This is an example of an *informant* – which is indicial – to set the scene, reminding us that,

in Catalonia, Barcelona is the central reference point by which all else is measured. It is also an example of interior monologue (an index posing as a catalyser to create suspense): '¡Hay que ver los recuerdos! Cualquier cosa te desencadena un amontonamiento de imágenes rotas!'.(17)

From the prehistoric volcanoes of Vic we have finally arrived inside a man's mind, and he is remembering the past. It turns out the radio he is listening to is a car radio, and that he is waiting in a traffic jam at a level crossing that has been described earlier. His chain of thought is followed and leads him to a childhood memory of drinking early morning *cafè amb llet*. The way he was told off by his grandfather ('*Joan, no emprenyis més i pren-te la llet!*' [17]) reminds Joan of how he tells off his own children: '*Oriol, un dia m'acabaràs la paciència i et fotaré un calbot!*' (17). Joan also describes how he loses his patience with his wife because she criticizes him for insisting on drinking his morning milk out of a large mug (psychonarration leads to Free Indirect Style): 'El tazón de leche le permitía recuperar la infancia, rostros de fondo, casi imposible recuperarlos del todo' (17).

All these indicial elements of characterization of Joan de can Gubern are absolutely of no relevance to the story; and yet they are important as *indices* to introduce a theme. They serve to evoke an atmosphere, a Catalan everyman waiting in the cold, in a queue of early morning traffic, in the fog, thinking about his situation. This apparently mundane scenario presents the novel's themes subtly through a kind of foreshadowing of *leitmotifs* and, at the same time, leads chronologically to the introduction of the cardinal function of chapter 2, which is the discovery of the body of Antonio Jaumà. Apart from its strongly evocative Catalan atmosphere, I suggest that the thematic integration which the passage as a whole, and not only the snippets I have quoted, achieves is threefold: (1) the theme of generational conflict; (2) the role of individual memory; (3) the problem of sex. First I will illustrate the theme of sex with an example that combines index, catalyser and cardinal function.

Joan de can Gubern's chain of thought is interrupted by his noticing that he has an erection. His immediate response is one of self-congratulation, which turns to panic when he realizes that he

desperately needs to urinate. As an index, this points forward in the narrative to the large role that sex plays in the thoughts and speech of the male protagonists. It also foreshadows the complication of the novel which involves the discovery of a body that seems, according to the police, to have been a sex-related murder (a smokescreen, as it turns out). As a catalyser, Joan's urgent need to relieve himself sends him out of the traffic into the mist and the snow; and this leads to the discovery of the body. It is a fountain of yellow urine in the snow that uncovers the hand of a man, a dead man, Antonio Jaumá. This illustrates the interlinking of formal distinctions – indices, catalysers and functions –, so that the fabric of the text produces a holistic reading experience that is thematically embedded.

The theme of generational conflict is the link to the next chapter, which sees a youngish man in his forties be described by Carvalho as 'Un muchacho que se ha quedado anclado en la gesticulación de James Dean' (19-20). Focalized entirely from Carvalho's perspective, this character functions, according to the Lithuanian critic A. J. Greimas' actant model (or list of six *actants*) (1966), as both sender and helper, conveying information of the death of Antonio Jaumá to Carvalho, sent by Concha Hajar, wife of the dead man. Thus Montalbán avoids but also reappropriates the *film noir* topic of the grieving widow, whom the forty-something *muchacho*, Marcos Núñez, takes Carvalho to visit in chapter 4.

Marcos Núñez was also a friend of Jaumá; and it is through him that the widow, not trusting the official version of Jaumá's murder, contracts Carvalho to investigate her husband's death. Following Greimas's list, the friends of the deceased Antonio Jaumá may be categorized into two camps: helpers and opponents. Those who wish to find out the truth about the executive's political assassination and those who would prefer that the matter were soon forgotten. Interestingly, this group of six friends, whose interviews occupy a large part of the book, brings the theme of generational conflict into the fore. They also drag Carvalho into the problem and the enigma of the story, because Carvalho is implicated in the generational, cultural, linguistic and political conflict which the book describes taking place in Catalonia during this period. As a problem not only of the present, but of history, it is a theme first introduced by

Jaumá in the conversation with an American passenger overheard by Carvalho in the opening flashback:

–Los americanos sabemos vender.

–No diría yo lo mismo. Lo que ocurre es que están en condiciones políticas de hacer comprar a los demás.

–Es ley de historia, amigo mío. Ustedes también tuvieron un imperio...

(12-13)

Jaumá, the angst-ridden executive, as the English translation by Ed Emery is entitled (Vázquez Montalbán 2002), saw himself as a cog in the capitalist machine. Trapped by financial considerations into sustaining his position within a multinational company, he was once an idealistic revolutionary and his heart lay with the ideals of the left-wing insurrectionary student movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The group of seven of which he formed part as a student consists of two distinct halves. On the one hand are the left-wingers Marcos Núñez, exiled to East Germany until Franco's death, Jacinto Vilaseca, a beatnik filmmaker and Tomás Biedma, 'abogado laboralista... el más rojo... Capitanea un grupúsculo de extrema izquierda' (72). The other part of the group is illustrative of the Catalan bourgeoisie: Jordi Argemí, a yoghurt manufacturing magnate and secret poet, and Miguel Fontanillas, 'abogado, como todos nosotros, pero ejerciendo y bien. Es decir: abogado de no sé cuántas empresas, tres casas, cuatro piscinas' (72). In between the two groups is the egomaniac novelist Juan Dorronsoro, a meticulous example of 'la pasión del escritor racional dispuesto a dejar testimonio de la mediocridad colectiva de la ciudad franquista' (107). Carvalho's condescending attitude towards this novelist is indicative of the low esteem in which Montalbán held the Spanish and Catalan novel during this period. These political oppositions mirror a wider contrast. In turn, 'la ciudad franquista' is opposed to 'la ciudad vencida' (113). These refer us to the two Spains, the bourgeoisie that arrives at a cosy arrangement of co-existence with Franco and the underclass who have trouble making ends meet, and it is 'la trama estrecha y satánica de la ciudad vencida' (113) to which it is Carvalho's fate to bear witness:

Cuando me muera, conmigo desaparecerá la memoria de aquellos tiempos y aquellas gentes que al parirme me situaban en la platea de su propia tragedia. (113)

Before returning to the roles played by the friends of Jaumá, the theme of Catalonia's experience of fascism may be pursued further. The lasting influence of the failed coup d'état of 18 July 1936 extends far and deep into the book's thematic and therefore structural nucleus, because it provides the historical background to the resolution of Antonio Jaumá's murder. This fact is reiterated at a number of points in the novel, and illustrations of it provide much of the material studied over the course of the following pages. For example, and to follow Greimas once again, the principal opponent of the subject (Carvalho) is veiled until right at the end of the novel's *discours*. From the moment Carvalho enlists the help of Pedro Parra, however, a revolutionary guerrilla leader in waiting, whose *nom de guerre* in the sixties was *el coronel* (incidentally, Carvalho's was Ventura), it becomes clear enough that the principal suspect is the multinational organization for which Jaumá worked. When Carvalho visits Pedro Parra to pick up an initial report on Petnay's organization he encounters an apartment porter reading Cernuda, which reminds the detective of an exiled poet he had once met in Tijuana, who said: 'Hasta que muera Franco no vuelvo. Es un hecho moral' (68):

Cada vez que me ha llegado un rumor de que Franco estaba enfermo o de que estaba a punto de caer, he dejado de afeitarme, he hecho las maletas y no me he cambiado las sábanas de la cama. Para que todo me empujara a marcharme de aquí. Hace unos meses me desesperé. Tengo veinte libros de poemas inéditos, amigo. (69)

Jaumá's private accountant, Alemany, refused to die until he had seen the fascist dictator dead: 'Ha vivido tantos años para conseguir que Franco se muriera antes que él' (127). Although Alemany serves an important functional role in the novel, his characterization provides Montalbán with another opportunity to lend meaning to the whole story in terms of his theme of Catalonia's experience of fascism: 'En este país hay tanta basura, tanta basura acumulada bajo la dictadura de

aquel... *brètol*.... De aquel *pòtol*!’ (125). Interestingly, Alemany then refers us to the underlying unity of right- and left-wing *catalanistas*:

Ya había llevado la contabilidad de su padre, un auténtico industrial de los de antes de la guerra. Era de la Lliga, pero no de los que se marcharon a Burgos... Siempre nos habíamos entendido... porque los dos éramos catalanistas de verdad. Él de la Lliga y yo de la Unió Socialista de Comorera, pero catalanes los dos, catalanes de verdad. (125)

Alemany is portrayed as a stalwart *culé*, and his view of the club’s trajectory during Francoism is dismal:⁸ ‘Se baja las ropas de la cama y sobre el pecho del pijama aparece un escudo de oro del Barcelona F. C...’ (126). Alemany also explains, in a tirade, that:

–Si no fuera por los *bandarres* que se apoderaron del club después de la guerra civil. Yo fui un dirigente del Barça durante la República, cuando el Barça sí era más que un club. Porque ahora esos *brètols*, esos *pòtols*... venga a decir que es más que un club. Claro que es más que un club. Es un apéndice del Valle de los Caídos hasta que nos se saquen de encima la basura de la Federación Española de Fútbol. Yo lo dije en Madrid en los años treinta, a Hernández Coronado, un periodista que luego fue directivo del Atlético de Madrid... Le dije : ‘Si por mí fuera, el Barça se retiraría de la Liga española y jugaría en cualquiera otra, en la de Francia o en la de Australia, me da igual.’ (126)

Alemany interrupts his doleful soliloquy with a comic interrogation of the *charnego* detective. The passage is important because Carvalho’s reappropriation of a pejorative and racist term comes at a key moment of the novel’s development of the theme of Francoism and Catalonia. The accountant inquires:

–¿Usted es catalán?
–No lo sé. Yo más bien diría que soy charnego.

⁸ On the importance of soccer and Barcelona F. C., see Vázquez Montalbán (1992b).

–En Catalunya los verdaderos charnegos son algunos catalanes. Como Samaranch, Porta y otros *botiflers* que han hecho el caldo gordo al franquismo. Ésos son los charnegos de primera. (127)

Thus, by redefining Carvalho's use of the term *charnego*, Alemany applies it to those who collaborated with the regime. Both Carvalho's trips to visit Alemany are obviously cardinal functions and, as Barthes predicted, the first one anticipates the second, as a correlate (coming close to the narrative peak of the novel, when functions become more intense); but indicial information still accompanies these visits, and reinforces the impact of Carvalho's discoveries. On the first visit, the documentation of Petnay's accounts which Carvalho seeks is accompanied by documentation of another kind:

Ya desde el recibidor, el piso de Alemany era una declaración de principios. Sobre una bandera catalana, las fotos enmarcadas de Macià, Companys y Tarradellas, los tres presidentes de la Generalitat de Catalunya en el siglo XX. Muy cerca de la foto de Macià, un marco convierte en reliquia y proclama una carta autógrafa de Companys dirigida al dueño de la casa: '*Estimat Alemany, em va dir el nostre amic Rodoreda que vostè està malalt...*' (123)

But when Carvalho visits the accountant a second time, Alemany is ill and both his accounts, together with his papers concerning the Generalitat, have been purchased by a mysterious visitor on behalf of Petnay. Thus, commercial subterfuge goes hand in hand with the political suppression of Catalonia's historical memory. As such, it is through indices of this kind that Montalbán lends depth to characterization while also subtly extending the socio-political dimension of his novel. This narratological tension (which may be conceived as essentially dialectic) is also central to the relationships established between Jaumà's friends and Carvalho.

Carvalho had once looked up to Marcos Núñez as a semi-mythical leader of the first generation of student protests in the 1950s; and this merger with authorial experience is fictionalized through references to Carvalho's own left-wing activism. Núñez, like Carvalho, fled Spain into exile during the 1960s and so their fates

during the transition are comparable; both are outsiders looking in on a society that has not yet decided what their position, or contribution, could or should be. Carvalho sides naturally with the underclass of El Raval, metonym par excellence of 'la ciudad vencida': 'Carvalho conoce estos caminos y estas gentes. No los cambiaría como paisaje necesario para sentirse vivo, aunque de noche prefiera huir de la ciudad vencida' (48). At its heart, the generational conflict described by the novel unveils the principal theme of the book, which is the historical or collective memory of Catalonia and, in particular, the memory of the Spanish war of 1936. To sum up, the dialectic structures that emerge from this analysis, especially in terms of indices and functions, result in the build-up and release of narrative tension, thus manifesting the dialectical friction that Todorov describes as the oscillatory relationship between *histoire* and *discours*.

At the heart of this tension, depth of character is created for Carvalho who struggles between his professional function to discover the murderer of Antonio Jaumá, and the extra-professional nature of the wider facts uncovered about Petnay and Catalonia's relationship to the regime more widely. Nowhere is this tension clearer than at the microcosmic level of narratological analysis. For example, it seems no coincidence that Jaumá's former acquaintances split into two tripartite groups: one with left-wing political sympathies, and the other with more bourgeois leanings. This provides a clear dialectic structure of thesis and antithesis. The tension is negotiated via Carvalho, who serves as the synthetic nexus uniting these two groups; and his own relationship with each in turn serves not only a functional role in the discovery of new facts that move forward the investigation, but an indicial purpose of revealing new facts both about Carvalho himself, and his internal struggle in the face of political and socio-cultural confrontations. An example of the way the process of detective work results in Carvalho facing his own personal demons is provided by the details he discovers concerning the relationship between Argemí and the murdered Jaumá.

Two crucial twists of narrative sequencing await the reader. The first is that Jaumá was betrayed by his close friend Argemí who, following orders from Petnay, organizes Jaumá's murder and that of his associate Dieter Rhomberg. Jaumá became expendable not

because he found out that since 1974 Petnay had been siphoning off considerable amounts of cash to fund armed right-wing groups for the purpose of frightening the bourgeoisie and coercing the left-wing in preparation for the transition to democracy but because he wanted to do something about it, thereby showing loyalty to his political beliefs and, more importantly, to his old friends. The greatest betrayal in this affair was committed by Argemí, the covert political agent of Petnay who, by remaining faithful to his class masters betrays something more sacred. Such is Carvalho's disgust upon discovering this treachery that he pours a 1966 vintage of *Nuit de Saint Georges* on Argemí's carpet rather than drink the brew of the enemy. Given the whole book's obsession with enological and gastronomical pleasures, this act acquires the status of symbol. The second betrayal is committed by Jaumá's widow, Concha Hajar, who conspires with Argemí and the police to silence an investigation which she herself had begun.

In opposition to all this stands no-one. The hero himself is powerless as only an anti-hero can be. This powerlessness of the protagonist is figured through the increasing irrelevance of Carvalho's enquiries. The original commission by Jaumá's widow gradually fades into insignificance. The financial reward promised becomes less and less the incentive for detection, to the point that, quite soon, the widow's employment is merely an excuse for the investigation, and the detective actively seeks to avoid speaking directly with her for fear, justified as it turns out, that she will want him to drop the case. Carvalho's escapism is laden with narrative tension.

He seeks to elude the widow, and prevent her speaking with him in order to postpone as long as possible the inexorable moment she will call the investigation off. On this issue, indices and functions come together, because the main figure of characterization has to do with another form of escapism, namely: gastronomy and hedonism. This 'index type' functions to engage dialectically with the functional advancement of plot, by delaying it, and therefore increasing our appreciation of the impending doom. But its employment by Montalbán does not stop at this. One is surely entitled to surmise that the protagonist's indulgence of the senses underscores his apolitical and cynical nature.

For instance, the night before Carvalho visited Alemany for the first time, he woke up his neighbour in Vallvidrera, *el gestor* Fuster, a Valencian, to eat a *salmis de pato* at two in the morning. Amidst the nightmare it sometimes seems to Carvalho that the only consolations are small ones: the pleasures of the flesh or an early morning walk along the Rambla in the light of the rising sun. Carvalho's insouciance is comically set against Bromuro's neurosis, and tragically juxtaposed with Jaumà's erotomania. The 'gastronomical/hedonistic' type of index also gives Montalbán ample room for the development of an inner tension within the protagonist himself. It could almost be said that it serves as a way of digesting (quite literally) the wider socio-political theme of the novel. Consider, for example, the poetic ruminations of the protagonist's neighbour at Vallvidrera, conducted during a late-night *sobretaula*. At four in the morning, having consumed a young and tender duck washed down with Montecillo, Fuster complains about missing his sleep. Carvalho advises him to vomit in order to sleep well: 'digerirlo es completamente accesorio e inútil' (122). Fuster thanks his friend, quoting the second, third and fourth lines of Ausiàs March's poem 'Lo jorn ha por de perdre sa claror' which continues:

Quan ve la nit que espandeix ses tenebres,
pocs animals no cloen les palpebres
i los malalts creixen de llur dolor. (Archer 1997 [XXVIII: 1-3])

To which Fuster adds: 'Mi paisano Ausias March no hubiera escrito estos versos de haber tenido un vecino como tú' (122). But Carvalho is himself unable to sleep and it is in a state of asphyxiating digestive sleeplessness that Carvalho, at four in the morning, phones his office where his personal assistant, Biscuter, is waiting for news of Dieter Rhomberg. The intertextual reference to Ausiàs March underscores the deference of Montalbán to the unity of the culture of the *Països Catalans*, intentionally dismantled by the fascist dictatorship. The scene as a whole also signals the detective's restlessness in this particular section of his investigation.

Carvalho's 'pequeño mundo ramblero' is heavy with the same sense of loss and fearful for what the future will bring. The theme of

the 'ciudad vencida' emerges from the detective's memory (temporal shifts), but also remains grounded in Carvalho's inability to spend the night in the city, his need to escape to Vallvidrera at sundown (spatial shift). Out of this tension internal to the character, Montalbán opens up the spatio-temporal possibilities of narrative to explore the wider collective memory, as evinced not only through Carvalho's recollection of the Civil War through his childhood and his father, but through the other characters who remember and talk about these themes. Examples of this tension will be discussed in the remainder of this article.

The picture Montalbán paints of Catalonia is a space of potential, frustrated by the ignorance of years of intolerance and manipulated by the puppet masters of international capital. The police brutality depicted in journalistic form by Carvalho in the indices of nightly riots on the Rambla is real enough; but when it moves from index to cardinal function it acquires a surreal and at times comic flavour which even humanizes the police, showing them to be ignorant victims, the unknowing school bullies of the establishment. Their counterparts, the *macarras* and *macarrones* of the Raval are quite as ignorant, and Montalbán places both these character-types side by side deliberately. A local pimp explains that the police are putting pressure on an associate to concoct a false testimony; but when pressed by Carvalho to explain who is behind this, the pimp confesses he hasn't a clue: 'Mi territorio termina en la plaza de Catalunya, como quien dice' (128). The police who come to pressure Carvalho into leaving the case are the butt of a joke on police brutality:

¿Usted cree que arrancamos las confesiones a punta de pistola o a hostia limpia?

– Hay quien solo con entrar en comisaría ya se caga en los pantalones y firma hasta su propia orden de fusilamiento.

–¿De qué tiempos habla usted? Ahora la policía tiene otra formación. Yo mismo he estudiado métodos científicos para estudiar la conducta del delincuente sin brutalizarle. No le niego que antes se iba a hostia limpia, pero ahora las cosas han cambiado. (130)

At every level of the narrative, these indices can be seen to exercise a triple effect. In addition to the creation of narrative tension in terms of plot, their indicial purpose in thematic development is clearly structured in terms of thesis and antithesis, whereby, for example, petty criminals and uniformed officers mirror the wider political tensions portrayed in the novel, thus also providing tragicomic interludes.

The place of synthesis and focal point of this dialectic structure is the protagonist himself. Although his tough persona may give the impression of his being removed and at times disinterested in the events that unfold around him, he is in fact the main locus of the novel for digesting the socio-political buffet. A telling example is when Carvalho gets annoyed with a German woman, who accuses him of possessing a stereotypically Spanish temperament:

– Me parece que usted tiene un temperamento muy español. Muy trágico.

To which Carvalho replies:

Mi temperamento es el de un solista de arpa y no me he puesto unas castañuelas en las manos en toda la vida. Las alusiones a una supuesta complicidad con los tópicos patrióticos le sacaban de quicio. (133)

This character index is of peculiar relevance to the present discussion. Given the fact that ‘tópicos patrióticos’ are part of the socio-political dialectic under examination, the protagonist’s distancing from either a pro- or an anti-nationalist position of whatever denomination is suggestive of his synthesizing function in the novel.

Like Agatha Christie’s *The Body in the Library* (1942), the book gets darker as it progresses. Carvalho describes his experience of the police station as: ‘Como antes y después de la primera vez que te violan’ (148). The police in charge of the inquiry have framed an ex-chicken thief from Andalucía to take the rap and describe the case as closed: ‘Todo está atado y bien atado’ (151). This mimicry of Franco’s famous phrase betrays the darkness of Montalbán’s irony whereby plot becomes a reflection of theme. But it is neither the political foresight of the dead dictator nor the praeternatural abilities

of detection displayed by the uniformed *gendarmerie* which explain, respectively, the Catalonia of 1977, or the nature of the enigma surrounding Jaumá's murder. On the one hand the left-wing stands by, impotent, while the power of capital extends its influence and infects the Catalan bourgeoisie with the promise of new-found European prosperity.

Por las Ramblas viejos y jóvenes se gastaron el miedo que les quedaba el mismo día en que murió el dictador. Alegría en el cerebro y en el corazón, silencio en los labios. En las tiendas se agotaban las botellas de champán barato, calles y terrazas llenas de gentes en busca del placer de estar juntos sin la gran sombra aplastante, pero en silencio, todavía la prudencia como virtud garantizadora de mediocres supervivencias, últimos resultados de la educación del terror. Mas aquel pasado le pertenecía de alguna manera. Sabía su lenguaje. En cambio el futuro abierto por la muerte de Franco le parecía ajeno, como agua de río que ni has de beber, ni te apetece beber. Gausachs, Fontanillas, los mangantes de la nueva situación.

– Si volviera a armarse otra Guerra civil [sic], los dos se irían a Burgos.

¿Y Argemí? A Tahití vía Suiza.

¿Y tú, Pepe Carvalho, dónde coño irías? A Vallvidrera, a hacerme una espalda de cordero a la Périgord o una escudella i carn d'olla. (113)

The detective's feigned or real weariness, his *desengaño* or cynicism, are not enough to encapsulate adequately his character. Gastronomy is not, in spite of his frequent insinuations to this effect, his panacea. Carvalho's actions and reflections go further in this regard to develop his characterization as a matter of substantial importance to the novel's overall impact. An example of the depth afforded by Montalbán to his detective is provided when, in sober mood, Carvalho thinks about Dieter Rhomberg's orphaned child who reminds him of his own childhood amid the generalized misery of the disastrous economic situation of Spain in the long post-war period:

La solidaridad con Jaumá era profesional, en cambio la solidaridad con el desconocido niño alemán la llevaba en la sangre, le salía del pozo de los terrores infantiles hacia la orfandad, del espectáculo de la miseria de los

niños del barrio despadrados por la Guerra o por las cárceles, fusilamientos, tuberculosis de la posguerra. La fragilidad de aquellos huérfanos que asomaban su cabeza rapada entre los geranios de balcones tan oxidados como el alma colectiva del barrio, le hacía nacer en el estómago la interesada congoja del animalito que descubre en la desgracia ajena la posibilidad de su propia desgracia. (166)

And this leads him to the memory of his father, don Evaristo Carvalho, who felt the guilt of bringing a child into this world of injustice. The confluence of autobiography and fiction is peculiarly strong in these nostalgic sections of the novel, as the author's own father was also called Evaristo (Saval 2004):

– Fíjate. La del número siete ha tenido otro hijo. Ay, señor. Qué falta de cabeza. Traer víctimas a este mundo.
Carvalho se quedó con las ganas de preguntar a su padre si hubiera pensado lo mismo en caso de no haber perdido la Guerra civil [sic].
(167)

If nostalgia is the right word to use to describe these reminiscences, Carvalho is certainly not characterized as a sentimental researcher of past times, but as a man of action. Therefore the poignancy of reminiscence cannot be simply written off as an autobiographical tangent. Its indicial function, rather, is one that has been calculated to produce a more politically meaningful space of dialogue. The boldness of such a move in 1977 can only be fully comprehended with the benefit of hindsight.

The Carvalho that emerges fully formed in *La soledad del manager* is a man living not on the fringes of society, but at the intersection of two worlds. On the one hand this interstitial space is represented physically as the detective's location in El Raval and the Rambla during the day, with his night-time escapades to Vallvidrera. On the other hand, his self-imposed exile in the world of the 'underclass' of the *Barrio Chino*, represents a paradisiacal return to the land of the fictional detective's (and the real author's) childhood landscape (Saval 2004). Superimposed upon this world of anti-bourgeois freedom are the childhood demons of autarky, not in terms

this time of actual material hardship and suffering, but in the conflict produced by the dismantling of the old order (Franco's dictatorship) and its replacement with a new taskmaster (international capital, with links to the old regime). The key to the novel's negotiation of cultural identities, therefore, is provided by a complex interweaving of juxtapositions that this article has attempted to delineate and explicate in terms of a dialectic, described with reference to narratology.

The result is a novel that revels in the carnivalesque. The real hierarchy of power is upturned as in the Feast of Fools, but the most striking outcome of this comes in the type of hero that we have in Carvalho: down to earth and close to the people in a way that goes back not only to the origins of the novel, but to the great novelistic heroes, from *Tirant lo Blanc* onwards. To what extent, one wonders, is Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the 'carnavalesque hero' not also applicable to Carvalho?

Carnavalesque legends in general are profoundly different from traditional heroicizing epic legends: carnivalistic ends debase the hero and bring him down to earth, they make him familiar, bring him close, humanize him; ambivalent carnivalesque laughter burns away all that is stilted and stiff, but in no way destroys the heroic core of the image. (Bakhtin 1984 [1963]: 130)

If there is a Bakhtinian aspect to the characterization of Carvalho in *La soledad del manager*, then it may have been appropriate to the uncertain time in which the novel was written. Perhaps Carvalho provided, in his own escapism, a fantasy of release. According to this view, the social pressures and anxieties represented in the novel achieve their catharsis in the creation of a fictional universe in which the real losers, society's underclass, find themselves, at least, represented (after having suffered the Francoist deletion from the symbolic imaginary). Carvalho becomes, in this reading, an antithesis either to the pseudo-revolutionary (Pedro Parra) or the angst-ridden executive (Jaumá). Both of these opposites rise and fall at the expense of personal fealties and wider historical interests, figured in the novel in terms of ethnicity, political and national allegiances. Not so in the case of Carvalho, who rides between both worlds, accepting neither. Sentinel of El Raval from his lookout post and hideout in Vallvidrera, the detective almost seems to

be endowed with, in his inverse heroism, all the attributes which Franco, as the *Centinela de Occidente*, lacked.

By way of a final example, if Carvalho is the traumatized child of 'la ciudad vencida', his actions underscore a greater depth of character than his discourse alone would seem to indicate (novelistic discourse thus inscribes the protagonist within a wider frame of reference, changing meanings, negotiating boundaries). Beyond Carvalho, lending a depth of field to the photographic collage of novelistic memory that stands as a backdrop to the historical and personal memory of the protagonist and the lost generation he represents, President Lluís Companys occupies one of the points of intersection of the personal and the collective. As far as the national consciousness of Catalonia is concerned, the allusion to Companys in the novel reminds the reader of the 'stolen space', usurped by Francoism. Companys' letter to Alemany is visible only for a moment, at which point it is made to disappear by agents of Petnay. In this sense, the novel's nostalgic return to a past forbidden discussion is not only that of a 'ciudad vencida', but also that of a 'nación vencida'. Discussion of Catalonia, like President Companys' letter, remains almost outside the confines of discourse. Catalonia, after all, as a reprisal for siding with the Republic in the Civil War, almost ceased to exist symbolically under Francoist sleight of hand.

When the victorious fascists brought President Lluís Companys to face a firing squad at Montjuïc on 14 October 1940 (Preston 1995: 393; Payne 2004: 101), his last words are reported to have been 'Per Catalunya!'⁹ Thus the president, (metonymic) political representative of the nation, was shot under the rather vague catch-all of 'military rebellion'; but as his last words testify, his death was in every sense of the word, *for* and *because of*, Catalonia.¹⁰ If the greater

⁹ In an article on Montjuïc, Carme Meix explains that 'durant i després de la guerra del 36, hi van ser empresonats molts oponents polítics a l'alçament franquista, el més representatiu dels quals fou el president Lluís Companys, que hi va ser afusellat' (Meix 2005).

¹⁰ As Payne puts it, military and political defeats have, historically, raised 'national reinvention' to the status of a necessary political project, ongoing in spite of – and in large measure because of – historical discontinuities from the Antequera buy-out of the nine electors of the Compromise of Caspe (1412) to the fall of Barcelona to troops

defeat for Catalonia in the long term was the symbolic death of its idea of nationhood, then it was indeed crushed by the nationalist forces. While its geographical space was re-designed and given new names, its imaginary space was manipulated in a darker fashion.

Carvalho may be described as a patriot who cannot believe in patriotism, but can he believe in Catalonia? As an imaginary space in the novel, Catalonia barely exists except as a negation. It is fitting, therefore, that Carvalho himself denies everything but that which has been negated. According to the reading presented above, this might lead one to conclude that his own indicial function becomes more widely symbolic of Catalonia, as he is also a denizen of a nation without citizens.¹¹ However, the subtlety of Montalbán's social critique is perhaps most notable for its almost complete evasion of the national question,¹² i.e. the binary opposition of the Catalan to the Castilian imaginary. In this regard, it can be said that the overall structure of Montalbán's oeuvre does not result in a direct confrontation between nationalistic ideologies. But this outcome is of itself relevant to the book's structural cohesion. There is no overtly pro-Catalan voice in the novel, with the singular exception of the elderly and rather unsympathetic accountant, Alemany. And yet, the structure I have attempted to describe produces a discourse of a rather different calibre.

in the pay of the House of Bourbon (1714). The subsequent Europe-wide fall of the *Ancien Régime* led, in the Peninsula, to the series of Carlist wars that found their bloody *dénouement* in the Spanish Civil War, the scars of which continue to be felt in Peninsular politics at the present time. In the post-colonial *status quo* as it now stands 'the nation that chose (in its great majority) the losing side in the 1936-39 war was a different nation from the nation that kept backing the wrong horse in the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Generalitat of the Middle Ages is not the Generalitat of the twenty-first century. No doubt Catalonia will continue to reinvent herself' (Payne 2004: 320).

¹¹ In terms of constitutional law, Catalans living on Catalan territory may only be citizens of Spain, France or Italy; their territories defined legally as belonging to one of the three states.

¹² Lenin corrected Marxist internationalism vis-à-vis the 'national question'; so, from a Leninist perspective, Carvalho is truly a disenchanted patriot: 'the proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that its own nation oppresses' (Lenin 1970: 7-8).

Narrative structures tend to persuade us in more powerful ways because they are covert, because they create an organic whole that seems cohesive; more than the sum of its parts. Certain features of Carvalho's characterization, such as his cynicism and apparent world-weariness, his embodiment of the carnivalesque man of the people, may be put down to the author's desire to create a necessary sense of *estrangement* ('ostranenie') or *defamiliarization* (Shklovsky 1965 [1917]), so crucial to the development of the detective genre. And it may be this feature that narratologists would want to have recourse to in order to explain the novel's tendency to depend heavily for its effect upon indicial over functional components, thus reconfiguring the world in new and strange ways. It might even be said that Carvalho is most effective as an embodiment of the novel's thematic tension, the novel's very self-reflexivity as discourse becoming not only an aesthetic, but a political act. If so, the question of the configuration of Catalonia as a negated space within the texture of the novelistic discourse is one that cannot be ignored. Carvalho, the underclass anti-hero, makes his awareness of Catalonia's frustrated nationhood and its fate compellingly relevant to the sociology of the text. Catalonia's resistance or acquiescence to the destructive forces of central state oppression is inscribed within Carvalho's thinly-veiled hatred for the state apparatus: any association with official notions of national identity Carvalho treats with contempt. Such types of reasoning embedded within the novelistic discourse make the *indices* of the novel all the more compelling. I can only conclude by observing that it is, almost without exception, upon the emotional responses of Carvalho's character that Montalbán in *La soledad del manager* constructed a complete work of fictional escapism, in which the character himself is unstable, prone to spontaneous action and largely dismissive of the constructions of texts and institutions. Carvalho as a metafiction, as a bond between reality and imagined spaces of political negotiation, is configured within a symbolic space yet to be reconstituted, but which survived in the certain knowledge that it had been negated by Francoism.

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