

The unresolved idea of subject. On the subject of *Affairs of a Dissolute Gentleman* by Héctor Abad-Faciolince

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Abstract

In the interest of reviewing the novel *Asuntos de un hidalgo disoluto* (*Affairs of a Dissolute Gentleman*), this text auscultates its ideological force orbiting the idea that man is an incomplete being and unable to complete himself. In this sense, he looks for the strategies of the story to configure this idea and finds that intertextuality (and its mysteries) serve as an alibi to achieve its goal. Man, always seeks, in relations with other texts, answers to his own questions. And in this case a novel, as a text, reveals that self-referential game.

Keywords: Man; Subject; Reader; Abad-Faciolince; Irresolute.

1. Overture

One of the constant concerns, not only contemporary, but of the so-called modern period, revolves around the conformation of the concept of subject. Great dilemma, whose solution, in principle, promised to be the guarantee of a new era. The formula: “the object is but for a subject” (suggested by Kant) was dissolved when those who called themselves subjects became aware that they were unable to define themselves. Literary theorists, who have emphasized the theory of reception, have, for reasons that are obvious, interest in one of the manifestations of this poorly defined subject: the reader. Difficult problem that again raises questions about the idea of a receptive subject, which rests, traditionally, on the sobriety of creative heteronomy.

Ingarden² does not hesitate to make this reading subject, other indispensable for the existence of the text, an active subject responsible for filling the textual indeterminacies that the author generates in his work (and thereby allow the interpretation to have a body). Thus, the biographical burden of the subject-reader will tend to generate hypotheses that

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2 See Ingarden's thesis on reception theory developed by Eagleton (1994, p. 98).

are updated as the text itself is traversed, updated in the reading, while acquiring the temporality provided.

On the other hand, Barthes (in Eagleton, 1994, p. 104), in accordance with this poetic conception of reception, suggests that the reader, active subject, in the words of Ingarden, is drawn up little by little (in terms of time) by the novel. With this, gradually, that finished idea of subject is dismantled, given that it serves as the basis for knowledge.

The novel by the writer Héctor Abad-Faciolince, *Affairs of a dissolute gentleman*, suggests, from its title, the problem of the subject stated above. Equate yourself, in a prosaic verbal analogy, gentleman with subject, and dissolute with unfinished, and see how this pun reveals the conflict that humanity has lived for years. The story told is a temporary game in which the main character, Gaspar Medina, tries to describe his memories, interspersing the chapters that dictate his hazy memories, with the peculiar circumstances in which he tries to write such stories.

Without going into the recesses of the story, in the socio-political backgrounds of historical imprint that lie behind the words of Abad-Faciolince, it is interesting to look at two specific situations. The first, a particular notion of a disintegrated subject that is an interesting portrait of that unfinished condition of a subject that is made and remade in relation to the objects that surround it until reaching an ethical pragmatism, free of orthodox moralities. The second, a possibly involuntary situation, meta-linguistic auscultation of the active reader and its construction from the author of the text; The idea of a model reader.

Don Gaspar Medina, and that projection of his alter ego in an imaginary friend called *Quitapesares*, is debated throughout history in the face of the inability to determine himself in a text. He faces the difficulty of trying to make a written self-portrait of past events that, in theory, are the key to the writer's being. In the title of one of the chapters, such a problem is expressly revealed: '*How the attempt to make a self-portrait can result in a swelling*'. Abad-Faciolince manages to challenge the problem of the definition of the subject, of the idea set forth in the reception's poetics about what is done and remake, in the continuous narrative stumbling blocks that *Don Gaspar* has when trying to make his memories. Repeatedly he admits that he is not sure of the facts, that his story may be made up, that details, as well as essential moments, escape him.

Without existentialist pretensions, as we previously suggested, the title of dissolute gentleman suggests the inability of man to define himself, to deal with the intersubjective problem of writing the history of others and the history itself. In the last chapter, this literary incarnation of the irresolute subject (just when Don Gaspar takes a tour of the slight line of his life) is materialized by means of objects: shoes, a telegram, some shirts, accentuate the idea of the active reader, of a subject, of a gentleman who is being made (only until death, until nothing) in his relationship with the world around him.

On the other hand, the meta-linguistic reflection on the problem of indeterminacies that the active reader must solve, is exposed throughout the work. *Don Gaspar Medina*, writer of his memoirs, at multiple times, speaks directly to the reader, to a real, non-potential

reader, because he knows well who is the one who makes the text and lets himself be done by him, telling him what he should or should not do. He asks for attention in detail, warns of inconsistencies, warns him, imperatively, of his inability as a rapporteur.

A whole exercise that exposes the indeterminations so that the reader can replace them, update them. Such an act of reflection on a problem of codifications in literary language, reveals, in this novel, the problem of reader participation, of the imperative need to get involved, to abandon heteronomy and assume a critical position. The aforementioned model reader is not inscribed in this instance, in the idea of a univalent, one-dimensional subject, capable of identifying the codes of the work and interpreting them as appropriate, but in the broad notion of an irresolute subject that he interprets in his own way, which as a model, it retains only the ability to deconstruct such a dubious notion.

2. Interlude

To broaden the subject's problem, it is worth moving to the fields of intertextuality, of which, no doubt, he drinks the novel by Abad-Faciolince. In particular, we consider that, in *Affairs of a Dissolved Hidalgo*, echoes of Gerard Genette's idea of hypotext and Pérez Firmat's idea of paratextuality (cited in Correa, 1997, p. 7) and possibly many textual strategies more than Other readers will find.

The interest is not to review the totality of intertextual relationships that this novel possesses, its links with other works, with traditional genres, even with post-romantic scriptural postures, (which appear everywhere), but to emphasize how the text, in itself, around the idea of subject, leave the door open for the reader to interpret and make sense of the multiple clues that our novel gives to each page.

Abad-Faciolince puts into play a beautiful idea that Roberto Vélez Correa (1997, pp. 3-9) delineates around hidden texts. After the story, after the appearance of a man who does not wish to have children, a philosophical subtext emerges about the idea already drawn of an irresolute subject. Our writer does not stop converting all his allegation into a set of digressions with which he interrupts his story to put the accent on the way of writing his tortuous memories, to express the man's existential impossibility of grasping the truth. His novel becomes a subtext, as Velez (1997, p. 23) thematizes, which is a paratextual strategy, in which the origin is sought. Behind the story, there is the subtext of the impossible search and paratextually that search leads to literature, especially the blurring of the limits it has with the philosophical task, to the existential doubt that not even the best discourse can solve.

This thesis may well be exposed when the statements that, in the memoirs of Don Gaspar Medina, refer to the fact that the character himself, as a subject, as a literary copy of a human being, has to discover, throughout his life; the truth about that world that haunts him. He confesses, thus, that as a subject of words it is irresolute, it is a search, lost beforehand, that must be satisfied with simple approximations, meaningless fragments to satisfy in a bittersweet way the desire for knowledge. As the answers do not arrive, or are defective,

or do not satisfy, there is nothing left to make him declare dissolute than to peremptorily accept that all matters are about to end, although they will not end. In other words, that the world as a whole, escapes it, that all existential disquisition is useful only if it serves to recognize a reality shattered by fragments, without continuity. There is nothing left but to use ellipsis, an incomplete discursive exercise to survive (because what else is intertextuality, but an attempt to make the fragments, the pieces, the same discourse; an attempt to erase the traces that separate or to fill the empty spaces?).

3. Postlude

On the other hand, and this is by way of a corollary, it cannot help feeling that the greatest intertextual strategy in this work is self-referentiality. Exercise that is recognized in history a man who writes a text and converts the act of writing into another text. The emphasis lies on the creative exercise, on the character that tells his life, which tells the vicissitudes of the scriptural exercise, which faces the interpretation of the facts, the difficulty of the thought itself. Thus, memories are a text that meets a new text: anecdotes about how memories are written and this is a relationship, returning to the problem of reception poetics, for the reader of the novel. The succinct reader, in these lines, cannot fail to make an intertextual reading, forced reading, imperative if desired, because to understand the logic of this text, the narrative pact as such, but it is understood that two texts converge in their hands : the memories, document of the past, and the time of writing of such words, allegation of the present. Both, hypotext and hypertext, end their abrupt course in the idea of unresolved, unfinished endings, simply canceled by the imperative arrival of death, out of nothing. "One ends up having at last, a single desire, to stop being. Not to be. Never be anymore. Not to be. I will soon be nothing. To be me. It was me, me, me. And become nothing, nothing, nothing" (Abad-Faciolince, 1994, p. 232).

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