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Masculine Masochism as Dominant Fiction in Minority Literatures in Spain: An Analysis of Manuel Rivas's Narrative

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Abstract

This article analyses the way in which Manuel Rivas has articulated masculinity as the dominant fiction and subject of his literature, from *Un millón de vacas* (1989) and *Qué me queres, amor?* (1996) to *O lapis do carpinteiro* (1998), *A man dos paños* (2000) and *Os libros arden mal* (2006). The article argues that the performance of a castrated masculinity is at the core of Rivas's narratives. This masochist masculine structure enables Rivas's work to become the dominant fiction in Galician literature and to represent Galician literature as minority literature for the literary institutions of the Spanish state. The article ends by briefly comparing his work with that of José Angel Mañas (*Historias del Kronen*) and Javier Cercas (*Soldados de Salamina*) to demonstrate that the sadistic masculine structure present in contemporary hegemonic Spanish literature requires the complement of a minority literature, such as Rivas's, to perform this masochist powerplay.

Resumo

Este artigo propón que os textos de Manuel Rivas artellan a masculinidade como ficción dominante, desde *Un millón de vacas* (1989) e *Que me queres*,

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amor? (1996) ao *O lapis do carpinteiro* (1998), *A man dos paños* (2000) e *Os libros arden mal* (2006). O artigo suxire que a representación dunha masculinidade castrada está no mesmo cerne da narrativa Rivasiana. A estrutura masculina e masoquista permite á obra de Rivas converterse na ficción dominante da literatura galega e representar a literatura galega como literatura minoritaria para beneficio das institucións do Estado español. O artigo remata cunha breve comparación da súa obra coa de José Ángel Mañas (*Historias del Kronen*) e Javier Cercas (*Soldados de Salamina*) e demostra que a estrutura sádica e masculina da literatura española contemporánea precisa que unha literatura minoritaria e complementaria (como a de Rivas) represente a devandita dinámica masoquista.

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I would like to thank the anonymous reader of the article and José Colmeiro for their generous readings.

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The other two novels written by Rivas, *En salvaxe compañía* (1994) and *Os comedores de patacas* (1991) have not received the same acclaim. Similarly, among the numerous short story collections published by Rivas, the two studied here have received the most critical acclaim, based on the prizes won, and the widest reception among the reading public, based on the number of editions.

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In this article, I will study the narrative work of one of the most canonical writers in contemporary Galician literature, Manuel Rivas, in order to map out partially the issue of masculinity and its relationship to nationalism and globalization in Galicia and Spain.¹ In order to do so, I will study two of Rivas's short stories from two different collections: 'O Inglés' from *Un millón de vacas* (1990: 39-43; 'The Englishman') and 'A lingua das bolboretas' from *Qué me queres, amor?* (1995: 19-34; 'The Butterfly's Tongue'; henceforth 'The Butterfly's'). I will then use this analysis for an extended review of Rivas's most recognized and/or popular narrative

works: *O lapis do carpinteiro* (1998; 'The Carpenter's Pencil', henceforth 'The Carpenter's'), *A man dos paños* (2000; 'The Immigrant's Hand', henceforth 'The Immigrant's') and *Os libros arden mal* (2006, 'Books Burn Badly'; henceforth 'Books Burn').²

As most critics have recognized, contemporary Galician writers such as Rivas are engaged in a redefinition of Galicia in a context of globalization. Dolores Vilavedra states that these writers 'se esforzan por recuperar e reelaborar vellos mitos cos que contribuír a devolver a fe en si mesma, e a ilusión no seu futuro como colectividade, á sociedade galega' (2000: 23-4). More recently, Cristina Moreiras-Menor has emphasized the geopolitical complexity of these writers' task: 'In their narratives, Manuel Rivas, X.L. Méndez Ferrín, Suso de Toro, Susana Fortes, and others create geographies under constant construction and deconstruction, seeking to excavate the residual layers left in silence by histories of loss and encounter, emigration and return' (2008: 111).

Most critics have centred, however, on the issues of history (memory) and geopolitics (migration) and on their connection to Galician nationalism, ethnicity, and globalization. Their analyses often imply the difference of a literature and culture that is posited as a 'minority culture' and therefore different from the majority Spanish one. A biopolitical analysis, however, centred on the issue of gender and class, underscores a more problematic and complex picture whereby a biopolitical continuity (rather than break or difference) with contemporary hegemonic Spanish nationalist ideology emerges. More specifically, the issue of masculinity, understood as the structure that legitimizes the hegemonic subject of nationalism, allows us to study this other problematic biopolitical relationship, which also explains the success that canonical writers such as Rivas have had among Spanish audiences and institutions —and the legitimizing effect that this Spanish recognition has had on Galician literature. Ultimately, the examination of the issue of masculinity will resituate Rivas' work in Galician literature and culture, and more generally, it will shed a different light on the way a Galician 'identity' —and any geopolitical 'minority identity'— is negotiated in Spain.

Masculinity and the Dominant Fiction

Although a complete discussion of the articulation between masculinity and ideological hegemony would require more space than the one available here, Kaja Silverman's groundbreaking work, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1996), stands out for its consistent engagement with feminism,

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Masquerade, in this context, refers to an activity and position whereby the subject performs a sexual-gender identity that the subject knows is not “natural or biological” but it is demanded from him/her in order to occupy a position in the symbolic order of society. In this context, masquerade is performed from a non-hegemonic position.

psychoanalysis, and (post) Marxism. She borrows the term ‘dominant fiction’ from Jacques Rancière to go beyond Althusser’s more strict Marxist definitions of ideology and hegemony. Following Lacanian feminism, she argues that a dominant fiction seeks the ideological identity between male biology (penis) and political hegemony (phallus), whereby the male subject appears as not castrated, that is, as possessing the biological ‘proof’ of his hegemony over ‘woman’:

‘Our dominant fiction calls upon the male subject to see himself, and the female subject to recognize and desire him, only through the mediation of images of an unimpaired masculinity. It urges both the male and the female subject, that is, to deny all knowledge of male castration by believing in the commensurability of penis and phallus, actual and symbolic father’ (1996: 42).

Departing from Freud, Silverman shifts the narrative of castration from the female subject to the male, thus emphasizing that any male attempt to turn female lack or castration into the only ‘biologically real one’, ultimately represents a disavowal of the male subject’s own castration, as shown in the case of fetishism:

Disavowal also has a crucial part to play within the constitution and maintenance of sexual difference. However, whereas the Freudian account of the psychic mechanism explicitly posits it as a male defence against *female* lack, ‘Fetishism’ implicitly shows it to be a defence against what is in the final analysis *male* lack [...] the castration against which the male subject protects himself through disavowal and fetishism must be primarily his own. (1996: 46)

Unlike non-Marxist psychoanalysis and feminism, Silverman attempts to expand male castration and its disavowal beyond the relation between biology and language. She incorporates the issues of class, race, ethnicity, and age as elements that can challenge the disavowal of male castration and, therefore, masculinity’s hegemonic position in society:

The male subject’s identification with power and privilege is threatened from many directions. It is under siege, first of all, from the Law of Language [which legitimizes castration as a gender/sex difference], to which no fully constituted subject is immune [...]. Oppression experienced in relation to class, race, ethnicity, age, and other ideologically determined ‘handicaps’ may also pose major obstacles in the way of a phallic identification, or may expose masculinity as masquerade. Finally, history may manifest itself in so traumatic and inassimilable a guise that it temporarily dislocates penis from phallus, or renders null and void the other elements of the dominant fiction with which it is closely imbricated. (1996: 47)

Masculinity’s disavowal of its own castration, as a means to legitimizing its hegemony, can undergo political and historical contestation and violence to the point that it loses its privileged position of power. Silverman points out two outcomes for masculinity under historical duress: masquerade³ and loss of hegemony (or historical trauma and psychosis; 1996: 47).

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A more complete discussion of male masochism would have to include the non-castrated mother.

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The only novel in which a female character takes center place in Rivas's work is *En salvaxe compañía*. This work would require a separate analysis that would have to explain its lesser success among critics and readers, on the one hand, and the organization of masculinity around the protagonist, on the other, as the magic-realist aspects of the novel are also centered on male characters—mainly the last King of Galicia. See Eugenia R. Romero's article for the gender implications of this (2009: 302).

Among the different strategies adopted by masculinity on the brink of masquerade, masochism stands out as one of the most important ones and, as I will be discussing, this is particularly pertinent in Rivas's writing. Although the performance of masculine masochism is complex, the structure that is most crucial to its articulation, both heterosexual and homosexual, is what Deleuze calls 'A Father is Being Beaten', which reverses the title of Freud's most important case analysis on the issue: 'A Child is Being Beaten' (1955). Deleuze affirms that the masochist ensures that 'what is beaten, humiliated and ridiculed in him is the image and likeness of the father, and the possibility of the father's aggressive return. *It is not a child but a father that is being beaten*. The masochist thus liberates himself in preparation for a rebirth in which the father will have no part' (1991: 66). Following Deleuze, Silverman concludes that in masochism, 'paternal power and the law are present only negatively, thought their repudiation' (1996: 211). In short, male masochism opens the performative space where a non-castrated masculinity can be invoked, performed and enjoyed beyond the law, the father and castration; hence its masquerade-like structure.⁴

Many, if not most, of Rivas's narratives are structured around the idealization of paternal characters whose masochistic scene is precisely performed by 'children'. Rivas's narratives resort to the infantile internalization of a masochist scenario. What makes Rivas's narratives ideologically enjoyable and complex is the fact that the performance of a masochist scenario is carried out by the young male protagonists of his stories through an elaborate process of remembering violent historical events in which 'a father is being beaten'. Rivas's narrative is an active and masochist remembrance of a historical violence centred on father figures through which he articulates Galician masculinity. Ironically enough, these historical narratives have secured Rivas's location as canonical in Galician narrative and, in Spanish literature, as a canonical Galician writer—as a minority or 'ethnically marked' writer.⁵ Therefore, it is important to study the politics of a Galician and Spanish 'dominant fiction', in which the hegemonic subject is legitimized through the historical articulation of a masochist masculinity that performs the father's castration in order to disavow its own. In short, I will argue, the politics of masculine masquerade are at stake in Spanish and Galician literature and culture.

Galician Masculinist Hegemony, Minority Cultures and the Spanish Other

Rivas is aware that his narrative is embedded in the social and cultural logic of Galicia, whereby he sees a violence that closely resembles the masculinist and masochistic structure that is at the centre of much of his narrative:

Yo creo que el gallego tiene una apariencia de mansedumbre que viene dada por la historia de trabajos que tiene—el gallego era el segador de Castilla, el sereno en Madrid, criado en Paris, trabajador en la rapa en Cuba [...]. Pero se ve también muy bien en la literatura de Valle-Inclán que es un ser que puede ser muy duro, y una sociedad que puede llegar a ser muy cruel también, y también muy rebelde. (Bollo-Panadero and Picanço 2002: 397)

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The articulation of a masculinity, which ironically enough, becomes modern and hegemonic through its masochist performance, subtends a subject position and structure that can be found in many minority cultures. Other Galician novelists such as Suso de Toro (particularly in *Tic-Tac*) structure their writing by resorting to similar representations of masochist masculinity.

In the case of Basque literature, its most canonical writer, Bernardo Atxaga, populates his stories with boys and height- or size-handicapped male subjects that stand for masochist representations of castrated masculinity (1988). Atxaga's most accomplished representation of adult masculinity, *The Lone Man*, also ends in a masochistic self-sacrifice, which ultimately performs a castrated Basque masculinity—similarly to the other canonical writer of Basque literature, Ramon Saizarbitoria and his 1995 novel *Hamaika pauso* (Gabilondo 1998).

Following Xoán González Millán, Josebe Martínez highlights that, in the case of Rivas, this strategy can be traced back to Álvaro Cunqueiro: 'Rivas continúa con esa narración una tradición gallega de escritores radicalmente periféricos [...] que se automarginaron de la realidad española fabulando cosmos que resultaban insospechados para la novela de la España franquista o para la literatura social' (2002: 338-39). Moreover, she isolates the trope of incest as a structure strategically manipulated to signify this auto-marginalization. Yet, in my view, incest is not as centrally present in Rivas as is masochist masculinity.

Arnaldo Cruz Malavé points out that, in the context of the Puerto Rican literature, the figure of the impotent male and father, as subject of masochist identification, is also canonical and hegemonic:

It is my contention that, in a brilliant Nietzschean-like reversal, Puerto Rican canonical texts have not ruled through potency but through impotence; that unlike those Latin American foundational texts that Doris Sommer has so passionately analyzed, Puerto Rican canonical texts have rallied us and bound us through failure and impotence.... An impotence that has cunningly incited us to close ranks around the father, with righteous indignation or with rage. (1995: 140-41)

This masculinist approach to inscribe the oppression of minority cultures and groups in the male body —through the masochist performance of different forms of violence such as castration or impotence— renders the masculine body the hegemonic subject of the dominant fiction of the nation— be it Galician, Basque, or Puerto Rican. This masquerading masculinity can monopolize the historical enjoyment of violence and oppression: masculine masochism becomes the true and only form of national oppression and, therefore, the sole form of enjoying the violence of national history. As a result, this hegemonic position marginalizes other forms of masculinity and/or femininity as non-national. In the case of Rivas, these marginalized forms of masculinity and femininity become represented as non-Galician subjects. In 'The Butterfly's', the mother becomes, not a historical subject contradicted by the effects of having a political agency, but rather a calculating and a-political subject who writes the family script but is left outside the masculinist history of the story in the end. In 'The Englishman', the mother dies, and no other woman occupies a position in the protagonist's life. Similarly in

'*The Carpenter's*' and '*The Immigrant's*', women are transitional objects that facilitate male homosocial desire and dis/identification (Marisa da Barca), or even transitional transmitters and receptors of male homosocial memory (Castro's mother and María da Visitação respectively). Therefore, it is important to read Rivas's literature, from its canonical and hegemonic position, against well-intentioned critics who see him mainly as an 'orfebre' who 'prefiere engarzar los diminutos eslabones de su cadena narrativa con personajes marginados, estigmatizados, sensibles, vencidos, derrotados' (Kalenic Ramšak 2005: 133).

Yet, in order to map out the dominant fiction articulated by Rivas's literature, which legitimizes modern Galician masculinity as the hegemonic national subject of literature, it is necessary to analyze the political meaning of the masochistic masquerade that underlies most of his narrative. Doing so will also allow me to advance a theory about Rivas's success in Spain and abroad.

The Articulation of Masochist Masculinity in Manuel Rivas

In the short stories 'The Englishman' and 'The Butterfly's', the protagonist is a boy who has a free-floating class position in the social structure of the small town in which he lives. In this context these boys navigate back and forth between several class and social positions. Moreover, the stories of both boys are defined by their (forced) choice of a new identity that negates their earlier one. As a result, the boys of the two stories perform a masochist castration of their identities which yields a new masculine subject that stands for the violence of Galician history. Both short stories also point to the male homosocial character that Rivas's dominant fictions take: the identities that they embrace —and then masochistically negate— are formed by dis/identifying with the father. Moreover, a comparison between both short stories reveals the increasing centrality that paternal figures take in the homosocial bond, so that ultimately a Galician father is invoked and articulated as the central subject of the performance of male masochism.

In the case of 'The Englishman', the boy is introduced in the following way: 'Naquel recanto de pescadores, o seu mundo era a escopeta. Vivía só coa súa nai nunha casa sen hórreo e sen redes, a carón das brañas e da lagoa de Mindoao' (1989: 39). The protagonist, Roxo, is outside the fishing (and to a lesser extent, agricultural) economy that defines the village and its class structure. Although not rich, his status is not socially defined. Similarly in 'The Butterfly's', the boy, Ramón, is introduced by a negative positioning: 'Eu ía para seis anos e chamábanme todos Pardal. Outros nenos da miña idade xa traballaban. Mais o meu pai era xastre e non tiña terras nin gando' (1996: 22). The text does not make clear whether, as a tailor, his father is wealthy or poor; the reference to that profession, rather than signifying middle-class, simply denotes an exceptional position that could be either. The main difference between both protagonists is the role played by the father, as the latter is actively absent in 'The Englishman' and present in 'The Butterfly's'.

In both cases, the boys' unfixed social position allows them to join a modernity, against which the village is defined. As Dolores Vilavedra states, Rivas's work is defined by 'unha constante tensión [...] entre rural e urbano' (1999: 279) and, therefore, the issue of modernity is at the core

of his narratives. In the case of 'The Englishman', Roxo travels to England where he makes a small fortune and, later returns to the village with a newly acquired modern identity, signified by his nickname and new ability to play golf: 'O Roxo, a quen xa chamaban por novo alcume o Inglés, aseguraba entre bromas que había de chegar o día en que Porto Bremón tería un campo de golf' (1989: 40). Similarly in 'The Butterfly's', Ramón, unlike his entire family and relatives, enjoys going to school precisely because the teacher, who is not a local, brings a new pedagogical approach, a modern approach, signified by the announcement that a microscope will soon be shipped from Madrid. He declares that the microscope will allow the children in the school to observe everyday nature (butterflies) from a modern, scientific point of view, which will in turn reveal a new nature hidden to the naked eye: the long, coiling tongue of the butterflies. Ramón concludes with admiration: 'A que parece mentira iso de que as bolboretas teñan lingua?' (1996: 27).

Ramón's homosocial bond with the fatherly teacher is signified by his embrace of a new modern identity. His admiration for the modern teacher becomes complete: 'Porque todo o que tocaba era un conto engaiolante' (1996: 28). Ramón's unfixed social position and his homosocially regulated relation with modernity has been characterized by Ignacio Muñoz López as an 'Arcadia pre-fascista', where the teacher plays the role of 'demiurgo' (2009: 221) and therefore 'este ejercicio de reivindicación se ve perjudicado [...] por el componente mitificador e idealizador del relato' (2009: 222). As I will explain later, the homosocial character of this mythification and its ultimate masculinist structure requires idealization to work ideologically. Although in the case of 'The Englishman', the idealization and mythification of a British modernity is clearly articulated, its male homosocial character is only signified negatively. He does not marry, even though he is a wealthy man settled in a small Galician town and recalls a British version of the *indiano* — the rich emigrant returning from the Americas. Moreover, there are no references to his mother after his return. In turn, the absence of the father makes possible the credibility of his new identity — an identity that requires him to renounce his past and therefore the symbolic importance of his father as masculine bio-graphic/political reference.

Contact with modernity in both cases allows the male protagonists to acquire a new identity. In the case of 'The Englishman', Roxo becomes the richest man in town by subjecting the population to the lure of modernity: meat shipped from the capital instead of fish, neon lights and automatic toilets in the new club he inaugurates, etc. As a result, he no longer is perceived as a local but rather as an Englishman: 'Todo o mundo o tratava xa de Míster, e o que comezou sendo unha broma acadou carta de natureza, ata o punto de que moi poucos recordaban xa a súa procedencia' (1989: 42). Similarly, in 'The Butterfly's', Ramón becomes a specialist in insects and learns the scientific vocabulary of zoology, which makes him a young entomologist of sorts: 'Os luns, na escola, o mestre dicía: "E agora imos falar dos bichos de Pardal"' (1996: 29).

Yet in both cases the embrace of modernity ultimately requires that the protagonists negate their old identities and articulate a masochistic subjectivity within a male homosocial structure. In short, their contact with modernity becomes a process of self-negation and, in the last instance, of performing a symbolic castration. In the case of 'The Englishman', he no longer is perceived as a villager, but rather as a foreigner, as a 'true'

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Englishman. As a result, and in order to signify his new status as a rich Englishman, he builds a golf course precisely in the wetlands where he grew up. He literally places a new modern layer over his past. It is his negation of his past and his dis-identification with an absent father, which makes him ultimately rich and successful. Moreover, as doubts are raised about the likelihood that the golf course will remain green in a place surrounded by rocks and arid land, he remains the only villager who knows that the golf course will always stay in perfect shape. He is the only one who remembers his birthplace and connection to an absent paternal figure: the wetlands of the lagoon. This final masochist memory, as a symbolic castration of his own origins and fatherly genealogy, closes the story and signifies the new hegemonic position that the Englishman occupies in society. He walks down the golf course with the only man with whom he can have a homosocial bond, the governor of the province:

O día grande para o Inglés foi cando, finalmente, se inaugurou un campo de golf [...]. Viñeran autoridades da capital. Todos sorriron cando a banda de música interpretou na súa honra unha marcha da familia real británica. No percorrido, o gobernador eloxiou aquel céspede que se estendía coma un manto de veludo, en contraste coa imponente paisaxe lunar de area e pedra dos arredores.

—Non vai ser fácil manter isto así, tan verde—comentou o gobernador.

—Non hai problema. Sempre será verde—dixo el.

Sabíao mellor ca ninguén. Estaban a camiñar sobre un mar doce soñado polas aves viaxeiras nas terras frías. Soterradas, baixo os seus pés, as brañas e a lagoa de Mindoao. (1989: 43)

It is important to emphasize that, as the Englishman walks along with the governor, he is no longer the signifier of a foreign modernity (British culture), but rather the masochist performer of a British-modernity-in-Galicia, a hybrid British-Galician modernity that is local and historically newer. It is not a foreign British modernity, which could be interpreted as imperialistic and violent-sadistic, but rather a new local (post)modernity, which is signified by its irreducible masculine and masochistic subjectivity: it contains within itself the negation of both a Galician rural non-modernity and a foreign British modernity. It is the performance of the violent negation of both positions that makes such a subjectivity (post)modern and local, hegemonic and Galician. The resulting narrative is therefore enjoyable for Galician readers as it contains a subject position that allows them to perform and enjoy the historical violence that Galicia has undergone in modernity.

In the case of 'The Butterfly's', when Fascist troops arrive in the village and arrest the teacher, Ramón uses the entomological vocabulary learnt from the teacher —the very same vocabulary that has given Ramón a new identity— to insult the teacher and distance himself from him, in this way adjusting to the new Fascist regime installed in the village. It is important to emphasize that the father, Ramón senior, is pro-Republican and the mother is conservative but without a clear political ideology. When the Fascist troops begin to make arrests, the mother takes the initiative and forces the father to distance himself from both his Republican past and the teacher he had befriended. Ramón senior ends up insulting the teacher as the latter is arrested in public:

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‘Berra ti tamén, Ramón, polo que máis queiras, berra!’ A miña nai agarraba do brazo a papá, como se o suxeitase con toda a súa forza para que non desfalecese. ‘Que vexan que berras, Ramón, que vexan que berras!’

E entón oín como o meu pai dicía ‘Traidores!’ cun fío de voz. E logo, a cada vez máis forte, ‘Criminais! Roxos!’ (1996: 33-34)

Following his father’s symbolic self-castration and his mother exhortation (‘Bérralle ti tamén, Monchiño [Ramón junior], bérralle ti tamén!’; 1996: 34), Ramón junior uses his newly learnt scientific vocabulary to insult the teacher, i.e. to distance himself from a modernity that brought him a new identity. In that way, he attempts to deny his own modern identity as young entomologist and to make a masochistic adjustment to an ever newer historical modernity, fascism:

Cando os camións arrincaron cargados de presos, eu fun un dos nenos que corría detrás lanzando pedras. Buscaba con desesepo o rostro do mestre para chamarlle traidor e criminal. Mais o convoi era xa unha nube de po ao lonxe e eu, no medio da alameda, cos puños pechados, só fun capaz de murmurar con rabia: ‘Sapo! Tilonorrinco! Iris!’ (1996: 34)

Ramón junior does not resort to the Fascist discourse used by his father to perform his separation from the teacher (‘traidores’, ‘criminais’, ‘roxos’) but rather the modern language of science and progress taught by the Republican teacher. Therefore, and unlike in the case of Ramón senior, the son uses the language that has become the signifier of his own modern identity. If the father masquerades as a conservative man and succeeds in using the right symbolic language, the son does not do so, as he uses the wrong vocabulary: that of a progressive, Republican modernity. Therefore, the resulting male masochist performance captures both moments, the Republican and the Fascist, a progressive and a reactionary modernity, as the irreducible violence that defines the child’s masochist identity. He is neither Republican nor Fascist, as he defines himself by negating masochistically both through a double identification and dis/identification with the two different father figures: his father and the teacher. It is the masochistic performance of the violent negation of both fatherly positions (Republican and Fascist) that makes such a subjectivity hegemonic and Galician; this subject position goes beyond any political Manichaeism whereby only the Republicans or the Fascists are the subject of Galician history. The resulting narrative becomes, therefore, a dominant fiction for Galician readers as it contains a subject position that allows them to perform and enjoy the historical violence that Galicia has undergone in modernity. As a result of the masochist structure of masculinity, history and violence are not observed from the safe distance of a preconceived ideological place: they are enjoyed through masochist pain.

Later Narrative: *The Carpenter’s Pencil* and *The Migrant’s Hand*

Some of the most recognized and celebrated novels by Rivas have centred on recent history — the Second Republic, the Civil War, and Francoism. Yet, as his narratives have become more historical, his articulation of a

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A more detailed analysis would also have to incorporate the Painter. However, the omission of the Painter does not invalidate the critique developed in this article.

masochist masculinity has become more ahistorical and hegemonic, so that earlier contradictions between modernity and rural Galicia begin to disappear and the presence of an idealized father figure —with whom a younger male figure dis/identifies masochistically— becomes more central in detriment of other subaltern characters and subjects.

The Carpenter's Pencil (1998) is a narrative about the obsession of a poor man, Herbal, who becomes a jail guard for a Republican leader named Doctor Daniel da Barca during the Civil War and Francoism. The novel begins with an interview that a young journalist, Sousa, conducts with an old da Barca in the present. The rest of the novel, however, is told from the point of view of Herbal as he narrates his life to a prostitute from an unnamed African island, María da Visitação, with whom he works in a prostitution club as bouncer. Herbal's most prominent characteristic is constituted by the fact that he hears the voice of a carpenter whom he had executed during the Civil War. He inherits the carpenter's pencil and, at the end of the story, gives it to María da Visitação. Yet, in the last page, a new unnamed customer visits her, who may be Sousa and the journalist of the introductory chapter.

At the end of the novel, after Herbal gives the pencil to his listener, he steps out of the club to the sidewalk and sees Death coming his way: 'Polo camiño areoso que levaba á Estrada, viuna vir por fin. A Morte cos seus zapatos brancos. Por instinto, palpou na procura do lapis de carpintero. ¡Ven, cabrona, xa non teño nada!' (1998: 147). As the owner of the club asks him to come back in he feels the pain of something that is missing, that is in the past and which, following an explanation given by da Barca years before, he calls 'phantom pain' or 'ghost pain': '¡Entra, Herbal [...]! ¿Que fas aquí fóra só coma un can? A dor pantasma, murmurou el entre dentes. ¿Que dis, Herbal? Nada' (1998: 148). Although the end of the story is open, the novel implies that María da Visitação will carry on the tradition of the pencil and therefore will pass it on to the journalist, and will tell him the story of Herbal and da Barca.

The male homosocial triangle that Sousa, Herbal, and da Barca organize has the latter as the apex.⁶ Da Barca is the only man who is married and embodies a progressive, enlightened modernity. Neither Sousa nor Herbal is married. Moreover, neither character embodies modernity: Sousa is engulfed in post-dictatorship disenchantment ('Queimárase. O mundo era unha esterqueira'; 1998: 10) and Herbal comes from a poor, rural, abusive family and joins the Nationalists. Unlike in the narratives analyzed earlier, here social class differences begin to appear more clearly: Herbal is subaltern, Sousa is part of a middle class in crisis, and da Barca comes from the progressive Galician bourgeoisie. Yet, both Sousa and Herbal seek their identitarian reflection on da Barca. Therefore, the idealization and mythification of da Barca as father figure comes hand in hand with a social and political polarization. Sousa's reaction to meeting the old da Barca in the opening chapter is narrated in the following way:

Sousa sentiuse perplexo. Levaba a idea de ir ver un agonizante. Afrontou incomodado o encargo de arrincarlle as derradeiras verbas a un ancián de vida axitada. Pensaba escoitar un fío de voz incoherente, a loita patética contra o mal do Alzheimer. Endexamais puidera imaxinar unha agonía tan luminosa, coma se en realidade o paciente estivese conectado a un xerador. Non era ese o mal, pero o doutor da Barca tiña a beleza tísica dos tuberculosos.... Aquel grave

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Tasende makes for a compelling case and reading of Daniel da Barca as the prophet Daniel in her article 'La guerra civil española como apocalipsis' (2004).

doente, hospitalizado ata había dous días, animoso coma un campión ciclista. (1998: 10)

Sousa even calls him 'deses feiticeiros que le na mente dos demais' (1998: 11). Similarly Herbal narrates the story of da Barca in a crescendo of perfection and mythification whereby da Barca becomes the idealized leader of the community of Republican prisoners in a Galician jail and, later on, one of the leaders of the internal resistance to Francoism who is capable of giving orders from a Valencian jail by resorting to football vocabulary as secret code. da Barca even reaches an almost super-human status when he 'returns from the dead' after the Nationalists attempt to execute him twice:

¡Virxe Santísima! Estou por creer que isto é un milagro, unha mensaxe. Ata no inferno hai certas regras, observou o capelán da cadea [...]. O xefe tamén se sentía inqueda: Non sei que pasa por aí enriba, están moi nerviosos. Din que ese doutor Da Barca debería estar morto hai tempo, dos primeiros des que comezou o Movemento [...]. En fin. Os mortos que non morren sonlle una complicación. (1998: 56-57)

Therefore the stories told by Herbal to María da Visitação constitute a way of rescuing the memory of da Barca while idealizing and mythifying him.⁷ William J. Nichols states that 'la tradición oral en la novela de Manuel Rivas se propone como un acto subversivo que desafía los principios ordenadores de la escritura —sea ya oficial, periodística, o novelística' (2006: 157). Yet the heterogeneity of oral and written genres deployed by Rivas come only together as a means to rescue this paternal subject that, on the one hand, is the ideal figure of a progressive bourgeois modernity and, on the other, undergoes all forms of historical violence inflicted upon him for representing this idealized modernity. The fact that a modern journalist, Sousa, introduces da Barca's idealized figure at the beginning of the novel and appears at the end to rescue his memory once again shows that the reader must also contemplate it as an ideal mirror of Galician identity and discourse, which relies on a literate masculine bourgeois modernity—as opposed to an oral subaltern rural feminine one. Moreover, Nichols explains that the idealization of da Barca undertaken by Herbal (and therefore also by Sousa) becomes a collective memory:

'Al narrar la vida de da Barca, Herbal inconscientemente cuenta su propia historia de envidia, odio, redención y salvación al insertar su memoria individual en una experiencia colectiva por medio de las referencias a las personas, los lugares, y los objetos que encarna y evocan el pasado' (2006: 169).

Yet, Nichols and other critics do not address the importance and centrality of the figure of the literate modern bourgeois father (da Barca). This subject is the literary cornerstone that allows Rivas's work to become a collective narrative and memory. That is, only in so far as Rivas legitimizes a modern masochist masculine subject as hegemonic does he represent Galicia as collective (a collective that is neither subaltern nor oral). Teresa Tasende has correctly identified this predicament as a 'realidad trascendental habitada por figuras de la talla de da Barca y el

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pintor' (2001: 218). Mariela Sánchez calls it 'plano mítico' (2008: 5). In so far as da Barca's reality is transcendental, it defies historical questioning and, in this way, becomes ideologically hegemonic.

Jessica Folkart is one of the few critics who have analyzed the importance of the mythicized and idealized father figure of da Barca in detail. By identifying with and performing masochistically the image of the paternal figure in his own body, Herbal can access a new subjectivity in which historical violence is experienced as both Republican and Fascist, as suffered by Republicans and inflicted by Fascists:

'If previously Herbal felt incapable of acting, now he cannot stop acting on his desires. Having defied the established order, he is sent to prison, just like the Republicans he had formerly guarded [...] his desire for Marisa and Daniel [da Barca] transmutes into something else: the desire to tell' (2006: 310).

Similarly to "The Butterfly's", here too Herbal absorbs the discourse of the idealized father figure who represents a bourgeois modernity while, at the same time, undergoing a new historical violence that cannot be reduced to Republican or Fascist ideology. It represents a new (post)modernity that performs Galicia's history of violence masochistically in its complexity and with which, therefore, all Galicians can identify as collective.

Yet, Folkart does not analyze the masculinist structure of historical masochism that underlies Herbal's transformation. Instead, she generalizes and, thus, legitimizes this masculinist structure:

'Herbal's desire to find a semblance of identity by telling his story is met by an 'other' who is even more imprisoned within the social space of Spain than he is—a non-European, immigrant female who has been sold into prostitution. This intercultural exchange pushes the novel beyond gender implications to a consideration of how identity is shared by politics, culture, race, and, of course, space' (2006: 311-12).

As the possible return of the journalist Sousa in the last page of the novel may suggest, the homosocial circle of storytelling is closed by the other masculine character that identifies with da Barca; *María da Visitação* is relegated to a marginal role of listening and transmitting masculine memories, as many female characters do in Rivas's narratives.

The 'phantom' or 'ghostly pain' that Herbal invokes in the last page of the novel, as he encounters Death, points to the fact that the masochist performance of a masculine-centred historical violence is an irreducible structure that is at the core of the identity of the narrator, Herbal, and, in so far as he is the focaliser of the narrative, of the Galician reader of the novel. It is only in so far as the narrator performs this modern, bourgeois, masculine, fatherly identity in a masochist fashion in his Nationalist, non-modern body, that Galician history can be enjoyed by the reader. In this way, the novel gives no other ideological choice but to identify masochistically with this masculine dominant fiction: the reader might actively dis/identify with Herbal's initial Nationalist position but, at the same time, he remains the focalizing narrator that gives the reader access to da Barca's story. Therefore the reader has no choice but to identify and dis/identify, at the same time, with Herbal, and through him, with da Barca.

Similarly, *'The Immigrant's'* (2000), which contains two separate stories, begins in the present but eventually leads the reader to the Civil War. In the first story, entitled 'A man dos paños' ('The Hand of the Storm-Petrels'), two Galician friends, the narrator and his friend Castro, work in London. They take a taxi to the airport to return to Galicia for the holidays but, on the road, they have an accident. Castro dies and the narrator loses his hand. The narrator thinks that the doctors have not reattached his own hand but Castro's. As a result, he idealizes Castro while feeling guilty for owing his new hand to the latter's death. As the narrator takes Castro's ashes to Galicia, he discovers his friend's history, told by Castro's mother, Chelo, and finally accepts that his reattached hand is his own. However, he duplicates on his hand the tattoo that was present in Castro's and, in this way, he transplants the symbolic memory of Castro into his own body. As Folkart states, '[T]he narrator accepts the transplant of Castro's hand and what he idealizes as Castro's cohesive identity if they could fuse his dismembered self together again' (2008: 12).

Castro's history is connected to the trauma of being separated from his Republican father who, like many of Rivas's father figures, represents a progressive modernity. Moreover, in the absence of Castro's father, Castro himself becomes the father of his younger sister, Sira, but fails to save her when she is thrown in the water by a wave and he cannot hold her hand: 'El tiña unha fixación con aquela man, dixo a nai. Levábaa como unha culpa. Coido que era polo da irmá. Que se lle escapara foi algo que nunca puido entender. Causáballe moito remordemento' (2000: 58). Sira's corpse is discovered by Castro's father, who is hiding from the Fascists in a cave, unbeknownst to Castro. Thus, he comes out of hiding but dies shortly after.

Therefore, in this story we have again a triangulated homosocial bond between three male subjects, of which the father becomes the idealized masculine figure with whom ultimately the other two characters dis/identify. Moreover, Castro retells his father's discovery of Sira's dead body in a pub in England and, in a fantastic refashioning of the story, he impersonates his father as the discoverer of the corpse: 'Ese mariñeiro fun eu, afirmaba Castro' (2000: 55). Castro's friend, additionally, dis/identifies with Castro as a second father figure. Whereas Castro's father remains a national father bound by the Galician homeland, Castro becomes a diasporic father. The story of the two fathers, the national and the diasporic, learnt by Castro's friend, from the widowed mother in Galicia, has the effect of turning the death of Castro and his amputation into a true historical castration. It no longer is a freak accident, but the acknowledgement that both fathers were castrated by Galician history: a national and a diasporic history full of hardship. After Castro's friend hears the paternal stories from the widow, his hand, paralyzed till that point as the reminder of a freak accident caused by him and in which Castro is castrated, regains mobility: 'Pareceume notar que a man reaxía, punzada pola verdade' (2000: 55). As a result, the surviving character can masochistically perform these two father figures in his body and, thus, become the subject of a (post)modern Galician history that is located in both homeland and diaspora and ultimately opens through masochism a new place that is neither. The birds that Castro's friend tattoos on his hand becomes the inscription, the literature that reminds the reader that there is a masochist memory that can capture Galician history, as represented by Castro's father and family in its violent complexity.

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'*The Immigrant's*' contains a middle section in which the author incorporates photographs he has taken in London, in the every-day milieu of the Galician diaspora. Yeon-Soo Kim further elaborates the homosocial bond between narrative and author. This bond, in turn, explains the way the author performs the same masochistic masculine structure at the authorial level by incorporating photographs in the shape of postcards:

The name of the author and the title of the book are positioned tactfully to turn the author into the addressee, who is then assumed to have gathered and transcribed someone else's stories in his book. In turn, Rivas becomes the transmitter and 'transplanter' of memory rather than an authentic storyteller. This narrative strategy plays with the book's principal idea of transplantation since it blocks a rigid sense of ownership. Like Castro's transplanted hand and the postcards, Rivas renders himself a partial component of an entire book. (2000: 125)

Yet, it is important to underscore the ideological masculinist structure that makes the strategy of 'transplanting' hands, stories, and memories a dominant fiction.

Rivas's book contains a second story about the survival: 'Os náufragos' ('The Shipwreck Survivors'). As Folkart states, '[I]f the emigrant and the shipwreck survivor are both from the realm they know and thrust into the tumult of the unknown, each finds that the only way to reconcile the two is to suture the different sides of themselves into a new identity and to accept the altered whole' (2008: 25). Here too, sailors tell stories of fathers who died in the ocean and of dead fathers whose sons have also perished in the sea. Rivas uses the word 'birth' to account for the sailor's survival of a shipwreck: 'Avelino Lema, pola súa parte, naceu catro veces' (2000: 123). At the end, Rivas tells the story of Lino Pastoriza who, as a child, did not recognize his father on his return from a fishing trip and became frightened. Only at that point tells Rivas the story of a son, Lino, who breaks the cycle of death and paternal castration that defines Galician fishing life. Lino's lack of recognition of his father becomes the scariest moment in which the performance of the father no longer can take place. At that point, the Galician history woven by sailor fathers and sons is reconstituted: the sailing father who sails to other seas and lands is performed by a son who is home-bound in a 'ship with roots':

Lino Pastoriza aínda volveu ao mar, na mercante. Até que decidiu construír a propia casa. Paseniño, coas súas man. Un barco chantado, con raíces. Non quería que os fillos preguntasen, ao velo chegar, quén viña sendo aquel home estraño, coa maleta na man, que petaba na porta, e oír de novo: Non teñas medo do teu pai. (2000: 142)

Most critics have not paid attention to this second story, or have not underlined the continuity with the first. Yet, the way in which the father is performed by the son binds the two stories that constitute the book and give meaning to this narrative work.

Folkart concludes that 'Rivas foregrounds the concept of dynamic, diasporic identity in order to undermine the notion of homeland as the sole, static center in the spatial configuration of Galician identity' (2008: 8). My own analysis would rather emphasize that diasporic Galicia is also 'transplanted' or incorporated to the masculine masochist structure of Rivas's narratives and, therefore, rather than undermining the notion of homeland/nation, it further expands and solidifies it. Similarly,

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Moreiras-Menor, in her insightful analysis, does not privilege diaspora over homeland. While not making any direct reference to the masculinist biopolitical structure underlying Riva's narrative, she condenses such structure as (masochist) *morriña*, and emphasizes the importance of this book in Rivas's attempt to articulate a dominant fiction of the nation by performing the historical violence experienced by the diasporic subject: "A man dos paños' is a narrative, representative of this form of thought, which seeks to recover the sediments accumulated throughout a long experience of loss—unspeakable in the paralysis of *morriña*—in order to integrate in the present a nation which collectively forms itself from a permanently dislocated frontier" (2008: 112). It is a redefinition of the nation, rather than its undermining by critically resorting to the diaspora, that is at stake in Rivas's narrative. As Kirsty Hooper has noticed, citing Kim, "[T]his reading of Rivas's Galician London as a restrictive, limiting geography sits paradoxically alongside the overwhelming critical consensus that the work is emblematic of a liberated Galician identity in constant motion, which can find 'home' anywhere" (2011: 100). Indeed, it is only from Rivas's redefinition of the nation that the diaspora becomes a restrictive space, in direct contrast with the openness of 'home' and its fatherly dominant fiction.

Canonization and the Writer as *Father in Books Burn Badly*

In the long and intricate *Books Burn Badly* (2008), Rivas once again revisited the confluence of history and violence in Galicia, from the Second Republic to the late Franco era, in order to give a polyphonic rendition of Galician history unfolding in the northern city of A Coruña, populated by hundreds of characters intersecting in a complex social web.

However, the central story that ties the others together concerns intellectual relationships between men, mediated by books, which define their lives before and after the Civil War. Unlike in previous novels, in *Books Burn*, Rivas centres his focus on homosocial bonding exclusively among upper-middle class masculine subjects obsessed with books, so that, as I will argue in this final section, the novel could be read as a metaliterary reflection on Rivas's authorial masculinity and literary location in Galician history. Seemingly to compensate for this homosocial relationship—same gender, same class—that binds the main characters, political differences between Republicans and Nationalists, losers and winners, are more polarized than in previous novels. Moreover, real historical characters are mixed with fictional ones. Thus, Santiago Casares Quiroga, a progressive Galician intellectual and prime minister during the Second Republic, establishes accidentally through writing a relationship with Gabriel Samos, the son of a fictional Fascist judge, Ricardo Samos, who is in charge of burning Casares's library and belongings during the Civil War. Although this relationship is mediated by another fictional intellectual who goes on exile for ten years, Héctor Ríos, Rivas once again centres the novel around a boy and a father figure: Gabriel Samos and Santiago Casares. Yet, the relationship cannot be politically more polarized: the child, Gabriel Samos, is the son of a Fascist judge and Santiago Casares represents one of the most progressive, modern, and elite figures in 20th-century Galician history.

Héctor Ríos is the second father figure who introduces Gabriel Samos to literature. Upon his return from exile, Ríos begins to write 'A

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The first line of the back cover of the Spanish translation states: 'He aquí la historia dramática de la cultura?'

9

Rivas juxtaposes H.G. Wells to Carl Schmitt and Donoso Cortés: '[Samos] Vía agora a Ríos, ao mozo maduro, como un inxenuo. O seu admirado Schmitt falaba do "providencial" encontro co *Discurso sobre a ditadura* de Donoso Cortés. E agora el tamén sentía, respecto de Schmitt, ese punto "providencial". Dáballe unha información da que Ríos carecía: a historia dispúñase a moverse con ferocidade de aceiro. El, Ríos, ía confiado coa ficción de Wells [...]' (2006: 345).

10

'A Antonio de la Trava, o Valente de Fisterra' (2006: 23).

historia dramática da cultura'. The novel contains an excerpt of this fictional book, which narrates the reception Manuel Fraga Iribarne gives to the Fascist theorist Carl Schmitt when visiting Galicia (2006: 546-56). Ríos's manuscript is confiscated by the police and never sees the light. However, given the metaliterary nature of the novel, it is safe to assume, as does the back-cover of the Spanish edition, that Rivas's novel is meant to take the place of Ríos's missing text '*The Dramatic History of Culture*'.⁸ In order to emphasize the fatherly position of this character, the novel presents Ríos and Ramos senior as committed bibliophiles and rivals at the university during the Second Republic.⁹ After the Civil War, Ríos sees his future career as legal prosecutor shattered, while Samos rises to the position of judge; yet, Ríos writes cowboy novels, under the pseudonym of Black Eye, where he ridicules the "Judge of Oklahoma", a caricature of Samos.

The story begins when 1936 Samos supervises a Fascist burning of progressive books in A Coruña. Coincidentally, his hobby is the compulsive collection of old editions of the Bible. A rare protestant version of the New Testament, published by the 19th-century British missionary George Borrow and dedicated to a Galician guerrilla combatant,¹⁰ gets lost in the burning. The shadiest police officer in town, Ren, locates it and hides it for future personal gain, as he is aware of Samos's hobby (2006: 130). As a result, Samos becomes obsessed with the 'lost' copy of Borrow's edition. At the end of the novel, Ren lets Samos know that the copy has been 'found'. Samos senior, old and recovering from a heart attack at a hospital, instructs Samos junior to fetch it from Ren. The confrontation between Ren and Samos junior over Borrow's New Testament and a first edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* closes the novel.

It is important to analyze the way Rivas constructs this literary plot. Casares is introduced at the beginning as the owner of an impressive book library, which stands for the ultimate sign of modernity among a Galician bourgeoisie that bypasses the Spanish state's control and acquires foreign books through the maritime traffic of A Coruña:

Era sabido que Santiago Casares posuía a mellor biblioteca privada da cidade. Panadeiras 12 tiña dous tipos de paredes superpostas. O muro exterior e os andeis dos libros por dentro. Iniciada polo seu pai, subministrábanlle novidades algunhas das mellores librerías de Europa. Moitos deses libros chegaran por correo marítimo. O xefe da queima recordaba ter lido algunha entrevista en que Casares contaba que había mariñeiros que ao seu pai lle traían en man libros prohibidos ou que non se podían atopar en España. (2006: 76)

Casares's daughter, María, narrates the way in which the ultimate embodiment of a bourgeois, progressive modernity, his father, is erased from Galician memory by Fascist officials:

'Durante moitos anos, Casares, que entre outros cargos foi presidente do Consello de Ministros da República, non figurará nas enciclopedias españolas. María Casares, sabe que en gran parte o fascismo español conseguiu o seu propósito. Borrouno da xeografía mental. Era o símbolo da República, e agora é un cráter' (2006: 185).

Yet, the books rescued from the burning also become the means by which Casares's memory survives in history. They end up in Samos's library

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and some of them contain postcards written by Casares. Samos junior discovers the forbidden books and, thus, creates a secret bond of friendship with the Republican exiled leader who is dead by then (in 1950):

Estaban a la altura de Panadeiras 12. Le entró una espina en el cuerpo. Ahí dirígíala sus postales desde el sanatorio francés el joven tuberculoso. Su amigo secreto, el que estaba escondido en los libros de cantos quemados. El que le aprendió a usar la báscula y a controlar el peso. Santiago Casares Quiroga. Casaritos” (2007: 43, my emphasis).¹¹

11

This extract belongs an additional text that the writer published afterwards in Spanish.

12

Gabriel finds a physical way of making a restoration on behalf of Casares, a man he never met. In the only chapter that is clearly situated in a post-dictatorship period, in the year 1994 (*‘La Coccinella septempunctata’*; 2006: 700-06), Gabriel seeks Casares’s daughter, María, in France. She is a well known actor, now interpreting Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. He returns the two books that her father read to her when she was a child and were saved from the burning: Manuel Curros Enríquez’s *‘Melodía galega’* and *Aires d’a miña terra*.

At the same time, Gabriel Samos’s homosocial friendship with Ríos, the second father figure, is sealed in the latter’s typewriting school. Writing literature and learning typewriting allows Samos to overcome his stutter and become an adult man (2006: 536-45).¹²

At the end, Ren delivers the protestant Bible sought by Samos senior since the book burning of 1936, as well as an original edition of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. At this point, books stand for the collective memory of a Galician bourgeois modernity that has not been completely erased. This memory, however, appears as absence: the missing *ex-libris* torn from the first page of the *Ulysses* is Casares’s. It is interesting to analyze the shift in the conversation from the Bible to the *Ulysses*, which is not justified by the narrative but signifies the universality of that Galician progressive modern bourgeoisie who could read—and in fact translated fragments into Galician of—the most foundational novel of the 20th century before it appeared anywhere else in Spain:

[Gabriel Samos] Brandiu o Ulysses: Polo visto, medio mundo tolearía por este carallo de libro. Só ten un pequeno defecto, á parte de que non se lle entende. Fáltalle unha garda.

Gabriel pasou as follas con ansia. Dixo polo baixo: Se cadra tiña o ex-libris de alguén.

Ren suaba [...]

Sí [sic], talvez tiña un ex-libris. Non o sei nin me importa.

Tería máis valor, dixo Gabriel.

Máis valor? Difícil. Que carallo importa a propiedade? Son pezas de valor incalculábel [...].

Canto de incalculábel, Ren?

Ren secou as mans con pano e gardouno con desleixo no peto da chaqueta, colgante e murcho. Dixo: Xa sabe que estes bens son moi difíciles de valorar. Hai cousas que non teñen prezo. O seu pai pagaría ben. Moi ben. Neste caso, eu diría que sería espléndido.

Canto?, repetiu Gabriel. (2006: 740-41)

By turning his father’s obsession over books that seem almost invaluable into a simple commercial exchange whereby he demands the price as a matter of fact, the son renounces his father’s religious obsession with non-modern books—he performs his father’s obsession with books while negating any religious and Fascistic meaning to that obsession. At the same time, he assigns a new value to the book by focusing on the missing page where Casares’s *ex-libris* should have been present—he performs the modern father but as absent, as castrated by Fascist violence. In this way, Samos junior’s male masochist performance captures both histories, the

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Fascist and the modern, and their irreducible violence as one that defines his identity. He is neither Fascist nor modern, as he defines himself by negating both masochistically.

In Gabriel's unanswered question, Rivas and his literature emerge as the memory bridge that sutures a Galician history and modernity reduced to books—equated with Galician literature. This memory-as-literature turns the writer into the subject of a nation whose history is now literary history. In this way, the writer becomes the discursive subject of the Galician dominant fiction. Unlike in previous narratives, in *Books Burn*, an (ex-)Fascist child assumes in his body the modern bourgeois father of the nation and the historical violence exerted by the Galician reactionary father, thus performing Galician history in a masculinist and masochist fashion. Here, however, the father(s) and the child are both literary subjects, defined by their relation to literature: Samos senior is obsessed with Bibles and conducts the book burning with which the novel begins; Casares is the father that is defined by his modern library, which the Fascists burn; Ríos makes possible Samos junior's passage to adulthood by exposing him to modern literature. Thus, the three literary fathers and the son legitimize literature and the writer, Rivas, as the single subject of Galician history. In this novel, the writer Rivas, as the ultimate subject of history-as-literature, encompasses the father subject and the masochist child, thus collapsing the masochist difference between both and turning it into a metaliterary reflection on books and literature.

Many working-class and subaltern characters appear in the novel. Most notably Polca, a Republican worker who is in charge of disposing and burying the ashes from the 1936 book burning. In due time, he becomes a professional undertaker who meets Samos at the hospital and reminds him of Borrow's Bible and the *Ulysses*. Yet, and as Ren reminds Gabriel at the end of the novel, '[A]quí até os obreiros tiñan bibliotecas' (2006: 740). In short, here the working class also becomes part of a Galician modernity *qua* literature that the bourgeoisie legitimizes for its own hegemony. Similarly, the most central women, from Olinda (Polca's surname-less wife) to Chelo Vidal (Samos senior's wife), are simple transmitters of information for the underground.

The novel also subordinates the working and subaltern classes to the narrative and metaliterary project of condensing Galician history as a masculinist literary object, of which Rivas is the chief author. In this way, Rivas leaves behind the contradiction between rural and modern characters, which was so present in his earlier narratives; the tension between oral and written cultures, subalternity and modernity, disappear from the novel. Even his writing style, so skilfully honed from mixing oral-subaltern and written-modern registers, becomes in this novel exclusively written and literary. Ultimately, Rivas subordinates orality and subalternity to the articulation of a written-literary dominant fiction in this novel.

The Return of the Francoist Father

In his Levinasian reflection on *The Carpenter's*, Angel Loureiro aptly captures the presence of the dead and the fantasmatic position they occupy as other: 'de ahí que la irrupción de la muerte provoque la confusión de los tiempos, el pliegue del presente y el pasado, la aparición de fantasmas.... La escandalosa desaparición del otro lleva a una obsesión por el otro, con

su recuperación, con su resurrección fantasmática' (2005: 153). Moreover, Loureiro emphasises that the relationship that the living establish with the dead is always fantastic ('engañosa') but necessary if they are to have a memory —one that, nevertheless, generates guilt: 'Sólo cuando re-enterramos a los muertos, sólo cuando los enterramos por segunda vez, sólo cuando los convertimos en memoria [...] podemos restablecer la *engañosa*, pero necesaria, continuidad mortal de pasado-presente y futuro. Debemos a los muertos nuestro tiempo fugaz [...]. Les debemos todo, en una deuda infinita, impagable, a la que sólo podemos corresponder con una *culpa* igualmente infinita' (2005: 157-58, my emphasis).

Yet, it is important to conduct a biopolitical analysis of the dead, of the other. In Rivas's narratives the dead/other always stand for the father subject, for the symbolic father who regulates Galician history, discourse, and memory. Therefore, beyond the ontological or existential guilt pointed out by Loureiro, there is a more precise form of guilt that is generated by the father subject. According to Freud, the interiorisation of the agency of the father as super-ego is what generates guilt (1962: 39-41). But according to Deleuze, the masochist male, when he masquerades his masculinity through the performance of the punishment of the father in his own body, '[H]e stands guilt on its head by making punishment into a condition that makes possible the forbidden pleasure' (1991: 89). In short, as the masochist performs the punishment/beating of the figure of the father in his own body, he rejects guilt and seeks the pleasure of abolishing the father and his threat of castration. And yet, Rivas's characters do experience guilt. Herbal or Gabriel Samos are driven by a guilt that defines their destiny.

The reason for this guilt cannot be traced back to the bourgeois, modern father. There is another father subject in Rivas narrative that remains hidden but generates a guilt against which the narratives deploy a structure of masculine masochism: the brutal Fascist father, which stands for the hegemony that Francoism and democratic conservatism has had in Galicia (from Franco, and Fraga Iribarne all the way to the current leader of the right-wing Partido Popular, Mariano Rajoy). We have two father subjects in most of Rivas's narratives. It is therefore important to analyze both.

The modern, progressive, bourgeois father that is at the centre of Rivas's narratives takes a very specific shape: it is a castrated father. It is the father of the losing party who is going to be castrated, eliminated from Galician history by the Fascist father. If the non-modern child-young man ('The Butterfly's', 'The Englishman', *The Immigrant's*) or the later Fascist child-young man (*The Carpenter's*, *Books Burn*) performs in masochistic fashion a castrated father, the scenario is more complicated than the above analysis has so far outlined. The goal of the masochist performance of a castrated father is precisely to become more like him, instead of abolishing him. The reason is identification rather than abolishment and/or dis/identification. Thus, if the non-modern/Fascist child identifies with the castrated modern progressive father (da Barca, Casares, the teacher...), he does so in order to incorporate the violent scenario of the Fascist father beating/castrating the modern father, so that ultimately the Fascist father, not the modern one, is masochistically punished in the body of the non-modern/Fascist child. Therefore, if Deleuze turns Freud's formula 'A Child is Being Beaten' on its head by stating that, in the case of masculine masochism, 'A Father is Being Beaten', in the case of Rivas, a triangular formula must be deployed: 'A Fascist Father (Beating a Modern Father)

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I deliberately use the distinction between a progressive modernity and a Fascistic anti-modernity when naming the two fathers as Fascist and Modern Fathers. Ultimately the Fascist father is as modern as the Republican-bourgeois father, if not more modern, as fascism is a modern reply to a modern historical crisis.

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Miralles's involvement in World War II also gives the novel a global dimension that situates it in a more contemporary history relevant outside Spain.

is Being Beaten'. In Rivas's narratives the guilt is not towards the Modern Father, but rather towards the Fascist Father, which then is masochistically performed.¹³

Only in *Books Burn* has Rivas finally defined the non-modern/Fascist child as a reader and writer of literature, and through its metaliterary structure, as the author of his novel. As a result, in this novel the Fascist Father is more clearly represented and, through his relation with the Modern Father (Casares, Ríos), is more literarily performed and 'beaten'. Yet, this is also the novel in which the tension between classes and genders is most clearly subordinated to the masochist masculine performance of the Fascist Father. As a result, this is perhaps Rivas's most masculine and elitist book, where subalternity and femininity become simple conduits of literacy and masculinity for the articulation of a dominant fiction. This is also the most hegemonic and contradictory moment of Rivas's writing: as he finally can articulate a full masochistic masculine performance of the Fascist Father, the resulting articulation subordinates and excludes any other historical Galician subject from the narrative. Most subaltern characters are mobilized only in so far as they support and justify a literary structure and order: the order of books. This is the most modern, masculine, and masochist of Rivas's stories, yet it is also, according to the view presented in this article, the least collective and 'Galician' of all.

From Galician to Spanish Dominant Fictions of Masculinity

The above analysis can also shed some light on the success of Rivas in Spain and Europe. Following from the theoretical rationale laid out in this article, his narratives could be defined as 'The Fascist Child's Masochist Performance of The Modern Father Being Beaten by the Fascist Father'. The goal of these narratives, as I have stated above, is to articulate the fiction of 'the Fascist Father Being Beaten'. Yet this structure is complementary to the more sadistic and Fascistic representations of Spanish history that become popular in Spain throughout the mid 90s and early 2000s. It is worth examining two extreme examples in order to compare them afterwards with Rivas's work: Jose Ángel Mañas's *Historias del Kronen* (1994) and Javier Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina* (2001).

In Mañas's novel, the main protagonist, Carlos, a young man from a well-to-do progressive family, experiences an attack by a neo-Nazi gang at the beginning of the novel. By the end, he ends up performing sadistically this violence on a homosexual friend who, as a result, dies. *Historias del Kronen* signifies the arrival of a new generation of young writers, a new form of literary discourse, and a literary celebration of globalization in the Spanish state. This novel, rather than performing masochistically fatherly castration as Rivas's, disavows masculine castration and therefore articulates a sadistic fatherly position of enjoyment. It celebrates the protagonist's new, supposedly global (neoliberal), capacity to castrate—a sadistic celebration of its own law. The protagonist is endowed with the power to uphold a new form of non-castrated global masculinity as the ideological-fantastic subject of national Spanish literature: a sadistic subject. Obviously this is an ideological contradiction (global/national) but precisely one that solves the marginality of Spanish literature (and more generally culture) in globalization, by creating the ideological sadistic fantasy of a non-castrated masculine subject that is both Spanish and global.

In Cercas's novel, the author, who is the main protagonist, searches the life of the founder of the Spanish Fascist party, Falange Española, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, in order to shed light on an incident, told by Sánchez Mazas himself, in which he escaped from his own execution and, when a Republican soldier found him hiding, the soldier let him free. Thanks to his friend Bolaño, Cercas traces an ex-soldier, Miralles, who is in a French retirement home awaiting his death. The novel ends with a long conversation between Cercas and Miralles about war and memory and leaves open the possibility that Miralles is the soldier who let Sánchez Mazas escape from a sure death. In this novel, the Fascist Father and, according to Cercas, the main responsible for the Spanish Civil War, Sánchez Mazas, is invoked and then replaced by the Modern Father: the forgotten Republican soldier Miralles who, in his anonymous retirement, appears as the true hero who stands for the memory of all the Republican soldiers and World-War-Two combatants who upheld 'civilization' against Fascist barbarism—hence the reference to the Battle of Salamis where the Greeks defeated the 'barbarian' Persian army in 480 BC. The inquiry about who freed Sánchez Mazas organizes the entire narrative since the goal is to understand why the Modern Father could have castrated and killed the Fascist Father but did not. However, this inquiry is then substituted by performing masochistically the Modern Father who is being beaten by the Fascist Father: the long history of the Republican Miralles at the end of the novel. It is only in so far as the possibility of castrating/beating the Fascist Father is raised that the novel manages to capture the historical violence and enjoyment of the reader. Otherwise, the idealization and masochist performance of the Modern Father would not have held the interest of readers and critics; it would have amounted to an hagiography of the Modern Father Miralles.¹⁴

These two novels exemplify a more general climate in Spanish culture and politics during the 90s and early 2000s, whereby a new celebration and enjoyment of the Fascist Father was rescued: from the rise of the PP and Aznar (1996-2004) to the comic celebration of the Fascist cop in the all-time blockbuster of Spanish cinema, Santiago Segura's *Torrente* (1998; the first instalment of the 'Torrente' tetralogy), majority culture in Spain tended to rescue and perform a sadistic subject that could be traced to the Fascist Father of Francoism—the fact that democracy as law could forbid the Fascist Father and its sadism made it all the more desirable and enjoyable as the true forbidden subject of Spanish history. The Spanish nationalist dominant fiction became precisely the performance of the sadistic Fascistic father that was not castrated. The proof of the father's lack of castration was on the fact that it was beyond the law—and therefore the ideological enjoyment of the dominant fiction was beyond the law—which settled the basis for all the corruption that erupted afterwards.

Therefore and returning to Rivas, one can see that, in comparison with the Spanish sadistic culture of the moment, Rivas's option (to articulate a masochist national Galician masculinity as the subject of his literature) was a very specific option by a minority writer, which nevertheless complemented a non-Galician Spanish nationalist subject articulated through the sadistic performance of the Fascist Father.

Although they might appear symmetrically opposed (Galician-masochist/Spanish-sadist), Rivas's literature, just like Mañas and Cercas's, implies a non-castrated, sadistic, fatherly, Spanish subject as

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the fantastic-ideological subject of their literatures. Therefore, their literatures cannot be approached as separate or opposed —separated by their national languages or by the geopolitical landscapes they inhabit and invoke. Rivas's literature cannot be considered as nationally Galician and separate from Spanish literature— that is, as a minority literature. It rather complements the masculinist structure of nationalisms in Spain (Spanish, Galician, Basque, etc.). Such structure could be called the meta-Spanish dominant fiction: one that encompasses not only Spanish nationalism, but also Galician, Basque, etc. One could further argue that Rivas's literature is a bilingual literature which writes, in an absent Spanish language, a negative, yet, hegemonic masculine Spanish subject as the central subject of his literature. Galician is the palimpsestic language in which an absent or negative Spanish language and subject (non-castrated Spanish masculinity) is written. Only in so far as Rivas can move beyond a masculinist articulation of nationalism, by recentering his literature in non-masculine, non-hegemonic subjects, might he be able to challenge the Spanish-Galician dominant fiction and its sado-masochist masculinist articulation in his future narrative: his earlier narratives have left this gate open for him.



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