Lapurdum

Euskal ikerketen aldizkaria | Revue d'études basques |
Revista de estudios vascos | Basque studies review

20 | 2017
Numéro XX

So dead, so alive: Harkaitz Cano's *Twist*, or what the grass did not cover

Mari Jose Olaziregi

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lapurdum/3544>

DOI: 10.4000/lapurdum.3544

ISSN: 1965-0655

Publisher

IKER

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 January 2017

Number of pages: 205-216

ISBN: 978-2-95534-135-3

ISSN: 1273-3830

Electronic reference

Mari Jose Olaziregi, "So dead, so alive: Harkaitz Cano's *Twist*, or what the grass did not cover", *Lapurdum* [Online], 20 | 2017, Online since 01 January 2021, connection on 03 September 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lapurdum/3544> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/lapurdum.3544>

This text was automatically generated on 3 September 2021.

Creative Commons - Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International
- CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

So dead, so alive: Harkaitz Cano's *Twist*, or what the grass did not cover

Mari Jose Olaziregi

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all. (Carl Sandburg)

- 1 Carl Sandburg's well-known poem *Grass* is very moving. Here the principal character, grass, speaks about a matter of pride, and describes the "work" it carries out. Among other things, it tells us that it covers lands that have been witness to massacres that have taken place from Austerlitz to Verdun, that it covers past tragedies. I have seen myself looking once more at images of Foya de Coves in the municipality of Busol, Alicante, assessing the presence of grass in that landscape that more resembles a desert. These are the thoughts that come to me on reading the plot of Harkaitz Cano's novel *Twist*, triggered by the desire to imagine the place where the bodies of Joxean Lasa and Joxi Zabala were deposited and which were discovered in 1985. Because literature often reawakes old ghosts, and that is, precisely, the main theme of what follows, namely an analysis of the emotions triggered after reading Harkaitz Cano's novel. I will be accompanied on this journey by, among other things, *fantasy literature*, or, to put it more precisely, the analytical arguments, when speaking of the contemporary presence of ghosts, made by Foucault, or the followers of Derrida, or those experts who discuss the representation of terror. At the same time, I will address the implications of metafiction in *Twist* when it comes to representation and the capacity of literary expression.

1. *Let's Twist Again*¹

- 2 It is the 1960s, and three friends, the main characters of *Twist*, Soto, Zeberio and Lazkano, have spent a memorable summer night to the tune of Chubby Checker's "Let's

Twist Again" (1961). Everything is joy and hope, everything the promise that the future holds, enlivened by the colorful twist crazes. However, and as another meaning of "twist" stands out, the reader soon notes that the story takes a sudden twist, a dramatic twist, I would say, one that is more concerned with representing or "imagining" rather than telling, (T: 569),² as the narrator says, because he cannot express the horror.

- 3 *Twist* (2011) marks a milestone in Harkaitz Cano's career. And this is evident in both the various projects to translate the book (into Spanish (2013); Bulgarian (2016); English (2016); and Serbian (2016) and the awards it has received (the Euskadi Prize, the Critics' Prize, and the Beterri Book Prize, among others). The new direction Cano took with the novel, the change/twist undertaken in his poetics by basing his novel on an appalling event in Basque history, is commended in that warm reception. Furthermore, I would highlight the innovative structuring of the novel, a structure that is made up of eight almost independent chapters that narrate the central characters' past by means of analepsis. One alluded intertext of the novel is *As I Lay Dying* (1930) by William Faulkner, and although the latter is richer when it comes to narrative voices, Faulkner's novel underlines, like a premonition, the tragic ending of Soto and Zeberio. For Faulkner's Addie life was a preparation, in the long run, for being dead, whereas for Cano's narrator death is a means of achieving eternal life. And that life is suggested with repetitions that make us recall the sad fate of Soto and Zeberio, with those "there and there and there" (sic) references to the place where they were buried (1st and last chapters), or with the "they look so sad, like they may disappear" premonitions repeated in the first and "Legis Silva" chapters. I will explore these formal aspects in more detail below and, in particular, the ghostly dimension of *Twist*, the narrative techniques and strategies that suggest the eternal life of the reawakened.

2. The kingdom of ghosts

- 4 When we speak about literature, and especially narrative, the issue of literature's capacity to represent what is considered "reality" is often open to debate (Olaziregi 2004). However, following the contribution of post-structuralism, calling into question the world-text binomial and acknowledging that there is no reality beyond language have several consequences and lead to several reflections, within the so called Memory Studies as well. History, in capital letters, has been one of those disciplines to affirm that narration/fiction is one more discipline and, consequently, to recognize that the "truths" making up the subject matter of literature can be as truthful as historiographical discourses. Historiography, in the end, is just a form of cultural memory (cf. Erll 2011: 39). Certain other debates, though, have focused on the old boundaries between *realism/fantasy literature* and their singularities, mostly following the impact of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993). It is acknowledged that the weight and shadow of history extends to the present day and exists in revelations, epiphanies, memories, or images. Or in ghosts, in those beings that are so important in contemporary literature about memory. The sudden apparition of a ghost is called "Haunting," following the thread of the term popularized by gothic fiction. The ghosts that are markers of a conflictive past become an appropriate critical methodological tool, therefore, for a political reading of literary works that recover the past. At root, as Kirsten Mahlke (2012, 196) contends, one should recognize a capacity conferred on literature by Freud, that is, the special capacity of literature to create feelings of

anxiety that can be provoked by real events: "It is not coincidence that Freud chose a fantastic tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann for his analysis of the uncanny as an ambivalent form of anxiety" (Mahlke, op cit. 196). Hence, likewise, the value Memory Studies scholars such as Astrid Erll or Angsar Nünning give to mediators (*mediale Konstrukte*, Erll 2004: 5), in other words, to literature, photography, oral literature, and so on, which help establish collective memory, when it comes to expressing both individual and collective memories. It is argued that novels and memories function in the same way, that both make use of narration in order to join fragments of memory together (Erll 2005c, 258-260).

- 5 Joan Ramon Resina (2000: 1-15), meanwhile, persuasively makes the case for several potential precedents prior to Derrida's 1993 work, especially Michel Foucault's defense, in the early 1970s, of a "philosophy of the *phantasm*." In Foucault's opinion, several pillars of modern thought were questioned by the *phantasm*, such as the body, rules, reason, image, and the internal/external opposition, etc. Moreover, "Phantasms do not extend organism into an imaginary domain; they topologize the materiality of the body. They should consequently be freed from the dilemmas of truth and falsehood and of being a non-being" (Resina 2000: 3). The change that phantasms cause in the body, especially its topologizing, would be worth highlighting. That is because phantasms call the whole body into question (Resina 2000:4). Furthermore, we need those ghosts that are markers of a conflictive past, they are indispensable, and we are condemned to learning how to live with them. Overcoming those ghosts would be living, in Derrida's opinion:

If it—learning to live—remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death (...) It is necessary to speak *of the ghost*, indeed *to the ghost* and *with it*, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living (Derrida 1995: 13).

- 6 The key question, however, is to know the reasons that drive the dead to appear in the world of the living in the form of ghosts. Silvana Mandolessi outlines some of those in her work, based on the different contributions of other scholars. Thus, the revelation of a hidden trauma may be at the root of a ghostly appearance, or the need to give closure to an unresolved past event, or in order to cover up because of a serious hidden secret ... (see Mandolessi: 2015). Once the secret exposed by the ghost is revealed or whatever was sought is resolved, that ghost will disappear to the place it came from. The ghost appears in order to return to the place it came from, so, in Davis's words: "... the ghost returns *in order to be sent away again*" (Davis 2007: 3).
- 7 Recognizing the centrality of ghosts, then, it is hardly surprising that Derrida's previously noted *Specters of Marx* is cited in several works about memory, such as those published by Jo Labanyi on contemporary Spanish literature (see Labanyi 2002, 2007); or the "Narratives of Terror and Disappearance" research project headed by Doctor Mahlke at the University of Konstanz. There, as well as Mahlke, Silvana Mandolessi, Mariana Eva Perez, and others have researched the representation, in contemporary Argentinian literature, of thousands of people's *arrest-torture-disappearance* during the military dictatorship of Argentina between 1976 and 1983. Researching ghosts, then, insofar as they remind us of the past, becomes a means of researching history (Smith 2007:153), as in *Twist*, because it reveals the marks of those killed by torture. One could say that those bodies punished by state violence become a kind of resistance;

specifically, a kind of resistance against the carnage and injustices of history. As Mahlke recalls (2012, 198-199), it is estimated that around 30,000 people disappeared during the dictatorship in Argentina by Videla and others between 1976 and 1983. Later, thanks to Law 24.321, those *desaparecidos* were categorized as *not alive/not dead*, that is, beings that would be outside the world of both the living and the dead. And that is exactly where the ghost of *Twist*, Soto, is when he “wakes up” at the beginning of the novel: “Isn’t beautiful to be alive? But you are not alive exactly: you’re dead and awake. It’s not the same” (T:37). As we see, in the Basque context, too, one there has been mention of the ghosts of the dead caused by state terrorism (T: 468).

- 8 Focusing on the word *terror*—scholars of Gothic fiction often make a distinction between *terror* and *horror*. What was defined in fourteenth-century French as “*terreur*,” namely the paralyzing effect, anxiety, and silencing effect that a violent act has on human groups, is still valid today (see Mahlke 2012: 199). Terror, then, has sociopolitical features and that differentiates it from what we frequently term “fear” or “horror” (Punter 1998: 235). As a result, the ghost of the missing feeds our collective memory and in the case of *Twist*, it is the dramatic disappearance of Lasa and Zabala that permeates the Basque collective memory. That, at least, is exactly what the narrator in the novel tells us in quote (1):

(1)	<p>a. “Oraindik ez al dakizu zer bilakatuko zaren, Soto? Esatea nahi? Ez dut uste entzutea gustatuko zaizunik. (...) Bilakatuko zara martiri guztiak bezala hasieran herriaren adrenalina. Eta bilakatuko zara martiri guztiak bezala gero herriaren anestesia. Formola aipatzea krudelegia litzateke, eta bestalde, herria hitza bera jarriko dute urte gutxi barru formoletan. Zergatik esaten dudan hori? Zentzua galduko duelako herri hitzak, lagun maitea, cher ami, my friend. (...) Eta esan dut bilakatuko zarela martiri guztiak bezala hasieran herriaren adrenalina, eta bilakatuko zarela gero herria den tuberkulu zatar horren anestesia. Adrenalina lehenbizi, desarrazoiaren kontrako ikur, haserre askoren hodi-eroale zarelako. Ezteiek eztei berriak eta hiletek hileta berriak egiten dituztelako. Anestesia gero, beste gauza askoren arrazoa zure larruan bilatuko dutelako askok urte askoan. Adrenalina eta anestesia, akaso biak aldi berean.” (T:31-32)</p>
	<p>b. Soto, you don’t know what you’re going to become yet, do you? Want me to tell you? I don’t think you’ll like it. (...) Initially and like all martyrs you’ll become adrenaline for the people. And later, like all martyrs, you’ll become anesthesia for the people. Mentioning formaldehyde is perhaps too cruel, and anyway, in a few short years they’ll put the word people itself in formaldehyde. Why do I say that? Because the word people will lose its meaning, my dear friend. (...) As I was saying, like all martyrs, at the beginning you’ll be the people’s adrenaline, and later you’ll become the anesthesia of that ugly tubercle called people. Adrenaline in the first instance, a symbol of injustice, because you’ll be the common thread of many outbursts. Because weddings bring weddings, and funerals, more funerals. Later on, anesthesia, because too many people for too many years will find too many things on your skin. Adrenaline and anesthesia, maybe both at the same time. (T: 30-31).</p>

- 9 *Adrenalin/anesthesia*, hence the antithesis used by the narrator to summarize the reactions to the disappeared by people. In his affirmation, though, the changing nature of the word or concept people (=nation) is emphasized, because the Nation, like Memory itself, is a constructed concept. And both also stem from the needs of a collectivity, as Maurice Halbwachs stresses in his well-known work on memory *Mémoire Collective* (Halbwachs 1968).

3. Cambalache, 1983: What the tango did not hide

- 10 When Enrique Santos Discépolo wrote the tango *Cambalache* in 1934 he had no idea that the extortion, lying, or corruption would be never-ending for many years in the twentieth century. For Argentina would experience six military dictatorships during the previous century, six, and the last of these, between 1976 and 1983, was, in the opinion of experts, that which most breached human rights. Those known as the *desaparecidos* and their spectral presence have conditioned recent decades in Argentina, but not just that, as Mandolessi and Perez contend, they have also become the architects of images and narratives of a resistance that has touched society profoundly: "(...) Argentina not only popularized the term, but also provided the figure with a set of concrete and recognizable images and narratives of resistance that have the capacity to condense and awaken a particular emotion" (Mandolessi & Perez Mariana 2014: 606). The shadow of the disappeared and that spectral presence hangs over their children and grandchildren in many Argentinian literary works, because the authors themselves have often known a family member, friend, or acquaintance that disappeared. As in the case, precisely, of Diego Lazkano, as recounted in the chapter titled "First Diffusions" (whether of his father or his friends) is what has conditioned his life and make it take a turn for the worse, and not just that, because the disappeared instill in him a dose of disappearance as well. In the end, as Diego confesses, he feels or experiences three lives. Appropriating Soto's work, sleeping with Zeberio's girlfriend, he lives the life they could not, and thanks to that, he gives life to his disappeared friends.
- 11 The chapter title "Cambalache 1983" refers to the 1983 disappearance of Lasa and Zabala rather than the democratic era ushered in after the 1983 elections in Argentina. Yet there are multiple references in the novel to the dictatorships in Argentina and Chile, and especially to torture and those killed (see T:11...). Naturally, as Mandolessi and Perez observe (2014: 604), the term *desaparecido* has entered into contemporary studies of memory nowadays in Spain (for example, in order to analyze Isaac Rosa's 2004 novel *El vano ayer*), becoming, due to that impact, a transnational concept.
- 12 The issue, then, could be whether, in order to narrate the drama of those "disappeared," which the Uruguayan sociologist Gabriel Gatti has defined as a "linguistic catastrophe" (Gatti 2006: 28), fantasy is really appropriate or not, and if so, which narrative strategy is worth employing. In another work (Olaziregi 2005), I highlighted the importance of fantasy literature and its narrative techniques in several well-known works by Bernardo Atxaga, such as his book of short stories *Obabakoak* (1988). Moreover, I also discussed the attitudes that fantasy narrative techniques demand of the reader, positions far removed from *normal* (=usual) interpretations, which specifically call into question the credibility of what is narrated. My starting point was Tzvetan Todorov's well-known work (1970) and I analyzed the kinds of narrative techniques that fantasy literature directs the reader toward doubt. In fact Todorov saw that doubt felt by the reader as the basic characteristic of the fantasy narrative that started in the late eighteenth century all the way to the stories by G. Maupassant. While such narrative strategies, those designed to create doubt in the reader, were very appropriate when it came to narrating the story of the lizard in *Obaba*, they are not so effective in the case of *Twist*. At least not those designed to create doubt about events, because when we read *Twist* Soto's awakening creates

curiosity rather than doubt in that unexpected narrator. Revealing what has been hidden, the secret that ghost conveys is truly more disturbing than the otherworldliness of the ghost itself:

(2)	a. <i>allez hop!</i> [...] Hori, ikusten duzun lehen gauza. Animaliairen baten burezurak begitantzen zaizkizun adar lehorrak harrespilaren gainean. Zure burezurrea. [...] Kosta egin zaizu zutik jartzea, zaila da orporik gabe eta oinik gabe: hezurak ez daude beren lekuan eta haizea dabilkizu hezur batetik besterako hutsuneetan txirulari. (35-36)
	b. <i>allez hop! (...) It's the first thing you see. Dry branches that look like the skull of some animal on a circle of stones. Your skull. (...) You find it hard to stand up, it's difficult when you don't have heels: the bones are not where they should be, and the wind whistles through your gaps. (T: 33-34).</i>

- 13 The goal of Cano's use of fantasy in *Twist* is to denounce a past crime and, in that sense, I agree with the function Rosemary Jackson (1981) gives this kind of literature. As Jackson says, modern fantasy literature is subversive literature within the secular culture created by capitalism, because it is developed at the margins of a dominant culture that we consider "reality," in the form of a silent presence, an allegorical *Other*. It rebels against what it considers structurally and semantically oppressive and inappropriate organization (Jackson 1981: 180). It originates from the Menippean satire, that is, from the carnivalesque literature that questions the oppressive system. Among its most significant formal characteristics, those that come to highlight the constructed and invented nature of literature itself should be noted, i.e. metanarrative passages, for example.
- 14 In truth, there are not many characters that are presented as having been resurrected in contemporary Basque narrative. In this sense, one might cite Juan Luis Zabala's memorable novel *Agur, Euzkadi* (2000) as one example of those. Here, the celebrated poet and Basque nationalist Estepan Urkiaga, Lauaxeta, who was executed during the Spanish Civil War, comes back to life, is resurrected, sixty years later in Gernika, and meets Julen Lamarain, a forty-year-old Basque journalist. Both characters take a physical journey all over the Basque Country that enables them to traverse the spectrum of Basque culture, and a reflection on Basque nationalism forms the chief thematic thread of the novel. If the encounter with Lauaxeta offers Julen anything, it is a return to the strong and optimistic sense of nationalism that writers had during the Pizkunde or Basque cultural renaissance era of the 1930s. Ultimately, although Lauaxeta's attachment to the nationalism of the traditional Basque Nationalist Party seems reactionary to him (2000: 110), he also sees a positive side to it: the strength of nationalism that persists even after death. At the end of the novel Julen is clear that he does not want to be like "one of those contemporary poets and artists, allegedly modern whose work can only stem from their desperation" (2000: 158) and he wants to maintain a clear positive attitude toward his homeland ("Homeland or death" he says, but even after death the nationalist's love of the homeland does not diminish" *Agur, Euzkadi*, 157. or.). In this way, the pro-nationalist declaration at the end of *Agur, Euzkadi* supersedes all other themes in the novel, revealing explicitly the ideological message (and goal) of the text. As we can see, there is little in common between the resurrection of Lauaxeta and that of Soto and Zeberio (Lasa and Zabala). On the one hand, although acknowledging that all three were killed, because the macabre *disappearance-torture-*

murder process conditions that of Soto and Zeberio, the goal of their awakening is to denounce the violence of those past events. Put another way, while the Lauaxeta-ghost may be exemplary and comforting, the Soto-ghost is utterly alarming.

4. "Spectra that we swallow and that turns us into spectra in turn. Transparent souls. Intermittent beings." (T: 455)

- 15 From the beginning we are surprised by the "awakened" Soto when he reveals his plans, for example, he tells us that he feels like living, taking revenge and laughing, that of enjoying the beauty of life and seeing his aging friends. He is not a scary ghost, as the narrator says, like those of Northern Europe that are scary and loud, more than the happy and playful Mediterranean ghosts. That said, ghosts, wherever they may come from, are inherited as birthrights he says, when least expected.
- 16 Soto's awakening is described in detail in the first chapter. He sets off on foot (T: 38), on foot and sad because his friend Zeberio, who has remained in the hole, has not woken up. The difficulties in being upright are, likewise, "understandable": his bones are all out of place, some are missing, his heels, for example, also have holes, and Soto himself must blow away the lime, and all his efforts to put his ribs back together, on and on (T: 36). He contemplates his skull, clicks his fingers... at the end of the chapter Soto tells us that he is in his "skin" (T: 39), as if it were some miracle of Januarius of Naples, blood is flowing once more from a wound in his forehead (T: 39).
- 17 Whatever the case, if anything catches our attention it is the narrator himself who describes the ghost's awakening. As Ceserani says (1997: 111), among the narrative strategies that fantasy texts employ, I would highlight those that accentuate the fictional nature of the text itself. The emphasis is on underscoring the distance from all other narrations, making use of metanarrative comments and black humor, in order to draw in whoever is reading the story from the beginning. Laughter, black humor, as Bergson, Freud, or Bakhtin said, something that can be useful in order to relieve tension and alleviate fear (Roas 2011: 70), but there are also upsetting moments in *Twist*, mixed up with the horror of those buried underground, because at times the text takes on a grotesque air. And that is exactly how we imagine this narrator when, smiling and rather slyly, he boldly speaks in the more formal *zuka* "you" form to the ghost, rather than the informal *hika*,
- 18 The narrator has his doubts because he does not know what is the most appropriate form to speak to a ghost, and we readers are warned about the unusual nature of the narration, telling us, as we see in quote (3), that it would be a good idea for us to be careful:

(3)	<p>a. Narratzaile hau bere buruaren bila dabil, pistaren bat hika ala zuka hitz egin behar dizudan argituko didana. Hainbeste zakurkeria egin dizkizut. Ez naiz beti ongi portatu zurekin, gorrotatuko nindukezu bizirik bazina. Egon adi buruak uzten dizkizun arrasto inkoherenteetara ere, irakurle. (T: 8)</p>
-----	--

b. <i>This narrator is looking for himself: a clue that will reveal whether I should address you formally of informally. I've been such a bastard to you. I wasn't always good to you; you would hate me if you were alive. Reader, pay attention to even the most random details my mind leaves for you. (T: 11).</i>
--

- 19 One cannot say this is a typical narrator, not by any stretch of the imagination, not just because those uses of the second narrative person see both the Soto-ghost and also the reader addressed, but also because of the distinctive nature of the language and expressions used by the narrator himself. It is, unquestionably, humor, a humor that is revealed in comments the narrator makes in allusion to well-known songs, sayings, expressions, and so on, which from the beginning surprises us. Thus, for example, the macabre paraphrasing of a well-known verse: “Deliver thy bone unto the world.” (T: 35) —a play on the line “give and extend your fruits throughout the world” from the traditional Basque song “The Tree of Gernika”—or the repetition of a line from a well-known pop song inserted into one metanarrative comment:

(4)	a. <i>Baina ez dezagun sobera aurreratu denboraren gurpila, oh, qué será, qué sera, horretarako urteak falta dira oraindik, gutako inor ez da narratzaile orojakile anpulosa oraindik, gurpil horren jabe erabatekoa (T: 25).</i>
	b. <i>But let's not get ahead of the wheel of time, oh what will be, will be, it will be years before any of that, none of us is a pompous a narrator to claim omnisciente, or absolute ownership of that wheel. (T: 25).</i>

- 20 As if they were searching for some hidden treasure, the location of the bodies' grave itself is signaled with a well-known expression, removing all the drama: “X marks the spot” (T: 19).
- 21 Undoubtedly, all these strategies become traces, marks of the implicit reader of the text, and we note ourselves asking the questions that the narrator continually asks of Soto. We know that we are in 1983, and the narrators doubts accentuate the horror of the events “in the country of the bull” (sic): “It doesn't look like you were alive when they brought you here. Or maybe you were?.” (T: 12), or “Did they bring you wrapped in a brown blanket by any chance?.” (T: 23).
- 22 Ultimately, as in many horror fantasy stories, “It ought to be nighttime and it is.” (T: 14), because darkness and everything hidden marks the setting, the world of the dead, archetypal journeys toward the beyond.

5. On the limits of literature

- 23 Much has been written, and profoundly, about how literature writes about past carnage, its capacity or legitimacy to recount that brutality. Following Adorno's penetrating affirmation, however, poetry has continued to say the unsayable. Because that, in fact, is the dispute between competing forces at the heart of literature, as Judith Klein (1992:14) says when speaking at length about the relationship between literature and genocide: the impossibility of telling, on the one hand, and the need to tell on the other. And what goes without saying: that of the undoubted capacity of that

literature on historical memory to get closer to the emotion of those that lived through that harsh past (Resina 2011: 25).

- 24 Our past political carnage has become a stimulus more than a hindrance when it comes to searching for new means of expression in Art (Huyssen 2002: 217). The novel *Twist* embraces this reflection that has also become central to contemporary literature, and clearly poses the question: "Can torture be sublimated through art? Can terror be overcome through art?." (T: 455). The novel itself, as is evident, provides the answer: sometimes literature itself is not enough but having said that, it must make an effort, because telling is necessary in order to redeem, in order to heal:

(5)	<p>a. Dena esan. Bere kiratsean biluztu. Bere burua irentsieta suge-azalaren mudantza baino ez laga. Miseriarik ez ezkutatu. Liburu hura idatzi eta bere burua sendatu. Erredimitu esaten zaio orain sendatzeari, zer axola dio berba bat edo beste.</p> <p>Arrazoi duzue, axola dio. (T: 493)</p>
	<p>b. Tell all. Get maladorously naked. Gobble himself up and leave nothing but a snake's shed skin behind. Don't hide any infamies. Write that book and heal. Some people call that redemption, as if using one word or another mattered.</p> <p>You are right: it matters. (T: 419)</p>

- 25 The tributes *Twist* pays to memorable theatrical works, performances, and readymades comes to highlight the boundaries of literature. Ultimately, the fact of choosing fantasy literature in certain chapters means that horror can be shown, more than told literally, narrated, and that innocent notion that Realism could reflect the world has been interrupted as the twentieth century progressed. The installation that one of the characters, Gloria, makes with the big portrait of the dictator Franco, *Rats* (T: 456), for example, demonstrates that precisely. The image of those trash-eating rats that devour Franco's portrait could semiotically be more powerful than any literary piece. From memorable ready-mades dating from the beginning of the century shown to us, starting with Duchamp, to amazing performances in the 1980s, the group of artists listed in *Twist* is significant, especially in the Ready Made chapter. There we find Robert Lewis, Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramovich, Esther Ferrer...examples of the aesthetic concerns of the implicit author of *Twist*.
- 26 Professor Mikel Ayerbe has accurately expressed the role of metaphysical and theatrical levels in the novel:

(6)	<p>a. Por otro lado, la reescritura adquiere especial relevancia no solo por la cuestión del plagio o de la recreación, sino también porque Lazkano será el encargado de adaptar la traducción de la obra <i>Platonov</i> de Chejov, que de manera metaficcional versa sobre los temas tratados en <i>Twist</i> y cuyo texto se explicita extensamente hacia el final de la novella. De la misma forma es parcialmente transcrita una conferencia de Lazkano en torno a la obra de Joseph Beuys. Existen, además, diversos acercamientos a plantamientos discursivos de otras expresiones artísticas como instalaciones o perfomances, pudiéndose deducir que la novela plantea una alegoría sobre la necesidad y la imposibilidad de representar fielmente la realidad mediante el artificio de la ficción. (Ayerbe: 108).</p>
-----	---

b. On the other hand, rewriting takes on special significance not just because of the question of plagiarism or recreation but also because it will be Lazcano who is charged with adapting Chekhov's work *Platonov*, which in a metafictional way discusses the themes explored in *Twist* and whose text is outlined extensively toward the end of the novella. In the same way, a talk by Lazcano about the work of Joseph Beuys is transcribed. There exist, moreover, diverse approaches toward discursive methods from other artistic expressions such as installations or performances, thereby leading one to deduce that the novel suggests an allegory about the need and impossibility of representing reality faithfully by means of the artifice of fiction (Ayerbe: 108)³.

- 27 The multiplicity of narrative levels, the abundant intertexts, make *Twist* an interesting palimpsest. From one text to another, the novel becomes a fascinating travel through literature and Art milestones. The same as regards Cano's extraordinary short story *Fikzioa, fikzio hutsa, fikzioa besterik ez* (Fiction, simple fiction, just fiction, 2010) that resembles the poetics of *Twist*. Paying homage to Ramon Saizabitoria's novel *100 metro* (100 meters, 1976), in the abovementioned Cano's short story we are presented with a fugitive in the novel fleeing through the Old Quarter of Donostia-San Sebastián. At least for a while, he will flee his sad fate, by attending, by chance, a literary circle that takes place in the library in the Old Part of Donostia. Reading, that is, in fact, a mere rewriting of other texts, protects him from death. The story the members of the circle are reading, *Darkness* by Andrejev, resembles his own and functions, in this way, as a *mise en abyme* of his fate. Literature becomes, in this way, an endless journey through different texts, and an endless quotation of other texts. As Bloom says, because that is what literature is, simple plagiarism (1995: 481), and the writer, from one text to another, from one fiction to another, is a kind of artist-thief. The second-person narrator in *100 metro* speaks to the corpse and forces readers to permeate that corpse. That in *Twist*, however, is faced with no corpse, no body, just the ghost of a body, its specter. As we see, Cano is paying homage in *Twist* to Saizarbitoria's *100 metro*, as he did, in *Fikzioa, fikzio hutsa, fikzioa besterik ez* to Leonid Andrejev who wrote lines memorably about darkness, and about ghosts as well.

6. Conclusion

- 28 Great literary works challenge us to consider and reflect on the world around us, on the functions and limits that literature itself has while giving sense to it. *Twist*, by Harkaitz Cano, is one of those memorable literary pieces. This novel, inspired by heartbreaking political events of our past, that is, the kidnap-torture-disappearance of Lasa and Zabala, reflects on the capacity of literature to relate horror. Highlighting the aesthetic-ethical reflection and contribution of theater, performance, and ready-made, it makes use of narrative strategies from fantasy literature in order to tell the story of the missing protagonists, Soto and Zeberio. Ultimately, Soto's awakened ghost, as in contemporary spectral narratives that discuss the disappeared in Argentina, suggests that the past always returns, revealing unconfessable secrets that were hidden. In this way, giving a voice to that has been silenced or marginalized, literature contributes to grounding a peaceful coexistence that can only be constructed out of knowledge and a recognition of the past.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ayerbe, Mikel, 2015. Work in conflict: (Meta)literatura y escritura en novelas que abordan el conflicto vasco. In Ezeizabarrena, María José & Ricardo Gomez (arg.). *Eridenen du zerzaz kontenta: Sailkideen omenaldia Henrike Knörr Irakasleari (1947-2008)*. 97-112. Bilbo: Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea.
- Cano, Harkaitz. 2010. Fikzioa, fikzio hutsa, fikzioa besterik ez. *Erlea* 2, 104-109.
- Cano, Harkaitz. 2011. *Twist*. Zarautz: Susa.
- Ceserani, Remo. 1999 (1996). *Lo fantástico*. Madrid: Editorial Visor.
- Davis, Colin. 2007. *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Derrida, Jacques 1994. *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New international*, translated by Peggy Kamuf. xii-xiii. New York: Routledge.
- Gatti, Gabriel, 2006 "Las narrativas del detenido-desaparecido (o de los problemas de la representación ante las catástrofes sociales)". *Confines* 2.4, 27-38
- Huyssen, Andreas. 2002. *Cultura y memoria en tiempos de globalización*. Mexico: FCE & Goethe Institut.
- Klein, Judith. 1992. *Literatur und Genozid. Darstellungen der nationalsozialistischen Massenvernichtung in der französischen Literatur*. Wien: Böhlau.
- Mandolessi, Silvana. 2014. Haunted houses, horror literature and the space of memory in Argentine Postdictatorship literature. In Schindel, Estela and Pamela Colombo (arg). *Space and the Memories of Violence. Landscapes of Erasure, Disappearance and Exception*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mandolessi, Silvana. 2016. Narrativas espectrales en la literatura postdictatorial argentina. In Feierstein, Liliana and Lior Zylberman (eds.) *Narrativas del terror y la desaparición en América Latina*. Argentina: EDUNTREF, 193-207.
- Mandolessi, Silvana & Eva Perez Mariana. 2014. The Disappeared as a Transnational Figure or How to Deal with the Vain Yesterday. *European Review* 22, 4. 603-612.
- Olaziregi, Mari Jose. 2005. *Waking the Hedgehog. The Literary Universe of Bernardo Atxaga*. Reno: Center for Basque Studies. University of Nevada-Reno.
- Resina, Joan Ramon (ed.). 2000. Introduction. In *Disremembering the Dictatorship. The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*. 1-15. Amsterdam: Rodopi. Resina, Joan Ramon. 2011. Denegación y ética de la memoria. *RIEV. Literaturas ibéricas y memoria histórica* 8. ed. by Olaziregi, M. 18-26. Donostia-San Sebastián: Eusko Ikaskuntza.
- Jackson, Rosemary. 1981. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, Andrew. 2007. Hauntings. In Spooner, Catherine & Emma McEvoy (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*. 147-154. London and New York: Routledge.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1970. *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*. Paris: Seuil.

NOTES

1. This article is part of the project IT 1047-16 (Basque Government) and FFI2017-84342-P (Mineco). It was published in 2015 as: "Hain hilik, hain bizirik. Harkaitz Canoren *Twist*, edo belarrak ezabatu ez zuena" (in Arroita, I. & Otaegi, L. (eds.), *Oroimenaren lekuak eta lekukoak. Gerra Zibilaren errepresentazio artistikoak vs kontaera historiko potilikoa*. Bilbo: EHU, 2015, 171-184). Translated from Basque by Cameron Watson.
 2. The pages come from the edition in English (Archipelago Books, 2018; translated by Amaia Gabantxo). I have used the abbreviation "T" to refer to the title of the novel.
 3. Translated by us from Basque.
-

INDEX

Subjects: littérature

AUTHOR

MARI JOSE OLAZIREGI

University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU
mj.olaziregi@ehu.eus