

From Globalizing Logic to Contemporary Fragmentation: Latin American Crime Novels

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Este trabajo compara dos perspectivas formales de la novela que se ocupa del crimen como género. La primera, la de la denominada novela negra definida por la *ratio* a la que se refirió en su momento Siegfried Kracauer, que toma como base la relación de causa/efecto para llegar a una resolución que es la sanción; y la segunda, la novela de crímenes donde esta relación cambia sustancialmente y se describe una verdadera situación de anomia, esto es, aquella en que no hay ley o la ley existente ha perdido vigencia en el mundo narrado. La lógica causal del crimen y la pena, base de la globalización, corresponde a la totalidad de la ley del capitalismo que protege ante todo la propiedad individual y determina en su momento las pautas de la novela negra o detectivesca. Por el contrario, la lógica causal da paso a la fragmentación formal que permite hablar de la novela de crímenes sobre la base de condiciones locales. Para sustentar esta tesis se analizan tres novelas de crímenes latinoamericanas: *El capítulo de Ferneli* (1992), del colombiano Hugo Chaparro Valderrama; *Los detectives salvajes* (1998), del chileno Roberto Bolaño; y *Los minutos negros* (2006), del mexicano Martín Solares.

Palabras clave: Novela de crímenes, anomia, *ratio*, globalización, fragmentación

This paper compares two formal perspectives of the crime novel as a genre. First, the noir or detective novel defined by Classical causal logic (as discussed in the concept of *ratio* by Siegfried Kracauer), which seeks a resolution grounded in penalization; and, second, the fragmentary crime novel in which this relationship is substantially changed and we find a situation of anomie, that is, one in which the law has lost validity or cannot be applied in the narrative world. The Western causal logic of crime and punishment, the basis of globalization, corresponds to the totality of global capitalist law protecting personal property, which serves as the formal foundation of noir or detective novels. In contrast, the social anomie corresponding to local conditions, for example, in Latin America, that question this global causal logic is reflected in the formal fragmentation of what can more precisely be referred to as crime novels. By way of illustration, three Latin American crime novels are analyzed: *El capítulo de Ferneli* (1992), by Colombian Hugo Chaparro Valderrama, *Los detectives salvajes* (1998), by Chilean Roberto Bolaño, and *Los minutos negros* (2006), by Mexican Martín Solares.

Keywords: noir novel, crime novel, anomie, capitalist logic, globalization, fragmentation.

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This paper compares two formal perspectives of the crime novel as a genre. First, the novel as defined by Classical causal logic (as discussed in the concept of *ratio* by Sigmund Kracauer), which seeks a resolution grounded in penalization; and, second, the fragmentary novel in which this relationship is substantially changed and we find a situation of anomie, that is, one in which the law has lost validity or cannot be applied in the narrative world. This first perspective alludes to the absolute and intellectual nature of the genre which aims to mirror life in an impossibly complete fashion. The second focuses on the difficulty literature faces in representing reality as a whole and on a resolution of crime that is not achieved through penalization¹. I have worked with the concept of anomie in my previous critical writings (2007-2014) to explain the conflict recreated in this second kind of novel. This concept also defines the narrative situation in which the characters' behavior exceeds normative guidelines, either because these guidelines have lost validity in the narrative world or because this kind of behavior is not yet seen as criminal in that world². I therefore prefer the denomination 'crime novel' for this type of novel, as opposed to 'detective novel' or 'noir novel,' as it does not reestablish a given order, but rather marks a distance from the artificial dichotomy of good and evil. In order to understand this contrast, I will present the two points of view previously mentioned: that focused on noir novels (the first model) and that focused on crime novels (the second).

1. Noir Novel and Totality / Crime Novel and Fragmentation

The structure of the noir novel in the Western world responds to largely formulaic standards that fit the classic model: a criminal act, its investigation, the presence of a detective, and the logical resolution of the crime, which takes the form of a final punishment. Bogomil Rainov characterized this kind of noir fiction as "bourgeois" and individualistic, belonging to capitalism: in this case, the crime occurs as the exception in a legally constituted system, and the resolution is punishment. The prevalence of this "rational" mode of understanding life therefore had, in this genre, the liberal basis of the rule of law, because this law protected the system. This relationship is at the heart of the formal configuration of the noir novel, that is, the way in which crime fiction narratives are structured and, above all, the way their discursive resolutions unfold through methods such as punishment (or punitive methods).

¹ This, it would seem, is a response to the planetary situation. In accordance with recent research, "la economía de lo ilícito mueve tanto dinero como una de las primeras 20 economías del planeta" ("Crimen organizado: el negocio más rentable del planeta" par. 2). In this sense, "[e]l crimen organizado, según la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito (UNODC, por sus siglas en inglés), continúa siendo una de las actividades más rentables del planeta y equivale al 3,6% del Producto Interno Bruto del mundo" ("Crimen organizado" par. 1).

² The following definitions of anomie in the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* are therefore useful for the object studied: "social instability resulting from a breakdown of standards and values" with the following etymology: "French *anomie*, from Middle French, from Greek *anomia* lawlessness, from *anomos* lawless, from *a-* + *nomos* law...". These definitions of anomie are nonetheless enriched by the theoretical frameworks indicated in this article.

In recent years (more or less since 1990³), however, elements such as the protagonist's identity, his or her particular personal or sexual characteristics, the community conflicts supposed by a crime, the regional, social, or political circumstances of the event, etc., and, in general, a lack of confidence in modern states tend to be presented outside the global logic embodied by the law. These elements are therefore proposed within the realm of social anomie, that is, on the fringes of legitimate order. As Hubert Pöppel indicates for the Colombian case, noir fiction tends to undergo a transformation:

Los investigadores parecen concordar en localizar el nacimiento del género negro en un ambiente que se distinguía por dos corrientes. La optimista, con su fe ilimitada en las posibilidades que ofrecía la razón para develar todos los misterios y con su fe en el desarrollo de la técnica criminalística, que iba a apoyar el proceso intelectual de la detección; o la corriente caracterizada por la irrupción de los cambios sociales en sociedades estables con clases cerradas y claramente separadas. El desorden de la modernidad clamaba por el orden en la narración (18).

With a spirit similar to that of the artistic vanguards of the 20th century, this formal frontier between two modalities of the genre tends to demonstrate the social disorder in which the very idea of the law is put into question. This situation is a reaction to writers' increasing lack of confidence in dominant ideologies or the nature of the State. In this regard, Marc Zimmerman has analyzed the situation of some cities in Latin America located in what he calls "the new world disorder" (2002) in which "procesos de inestabilidad, ingobernabilidad, fragmentación, desorden y hasta oposición por su propia supervivencia y expansión" (par. 17) prevent the peaceful development of strictly democratic relationships. In such extraliterary conditions, the novel necessarily seeks different ways of representing the world which go beyond cultural homogenization to show a complex perspective of the phenomenon of crime. Some novels in these contexts fall within the field of the noir genre with its well-known variants (hard-boiled, detective novel, spy novel, etc.) on the one hand, but on the other they develop their narration on a unique battlefield that questions the intrinsic value of the law itself as a regulation for conduct to guarantee social coexistence. In these cases, which I consider crime novels, the writers denounce spaces in which there is no law applicable to a conflict; if there is a law, it can be ignored or is impossible to be duly enforced given the very weakness of the state system. In this regard, in *Guerra civil, terrorismo y anomia social*, Peter Waldmann points out the

³ Events such as the slaughter at Tiananmen Square, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the attack on Iraq, the Gulf War, or the coup d'état against Gorbachov, for example, determined historical changes and, as a consequence, the development of a new way of understanding crimes. In Latin America, the end of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile and that of Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, the disclosure of the Archives of Terror, the Washington Consensus for the continent, and the birth of Mercosur, for example, have determined a new vision for the continent. In Colombia, the promulgation of the National Constitution in 1991 caused some of these effects.

relativity of the intrinsic value of the law in certain anomic spaces which are damaging to some individuals:

...la sola existencia de normas no basta para crear un espacio social libre de anomia. Más allá de ella es importante el que se trate de normas relacionadas entre sí de un modo funcional o jerárquico; es decir, de una estructura normativa coherente. ... es evidente que un sistema normativo solo puede cumplir la función de garantizar cierta seguridad tanto en cuanto al comportamiento como a la orientación cuando se lo impone. El atributo "obligatorio" alude a este aspecto. ... Si las normas no son obligatorias o si pierden su carácter obligatorio, o sea, si queda a discreción de cada quien decidir si respetarlas o no, la situación se acerca a aquella en que faltan las normas que regulen la vida en comunidad y el trato social, de modo que cada quien debe contar con todo tipo de reacciones de cada quien (106).

To understand this new narrative, it is therefore interesting to revisit the theory of social anomie, and especially the writings of Jean-Marie Guyau, an anarchy theorist for whom anomie could be defined as the morality of the future which would replace the universal, obligatory, and categorical law defended by Emmanuel Kant as the foundation of modern states. In his "Author's Preface" to *A Sketch of a Morality Independent of Sanction or Obligation* (1885), Guyau stated: "instead of regretting the moral variability, ... we consider it, on the contrary, as the characteristic of the future conception of morality. In many respects, this conception will not only be autonomous but anomos" (4)⁴. Developing this thesis in the work, Guyau establishes:

We intend, therefore, to investigate the character and extent of a conception of morality in which "bias" should have no part; in which everything would be supported by reason, and appreciated at its true value, whether with regard to certainties or with regard to merely probable opinions and hypotheses. If the majority of philosophers, even those of the utilitarian, evolutionist, and positive schools, have not completely succeeded in their task, this is because they wanted to put forward their rational moral philosophy as nearly adequate to the ordinary moral philosophy, as having the same scope, and also pretending to have rendered it as imperative in its precepts. This is not possible. When Science has overthrown the dogmas of the different religions, she has not pretended to replace them all, nor to immediately supply a distinct object, a definite food, for the religious need; her position with regard to morality

⁴ The original French includes the Greek: "...la variabilité morale qui en résulte dans de certaines limites, nous la considérons au contraire comme la caractéristique de la morale future; celle-ci, sur divers points, ne sera pas seulement αυτονομος, mais ανομοσ" (in Greek: anómos, anómica, anomía)" (Esquisse 6).

is the same as with regard to religion. Nothing indicates that a conception of morality which is purely scientific, that is to say, based solely on that which is known, must agree with the general conception of morality, composed for the most part of feelings and prejudices. (*Sketch 1-2*)

In this sense, the concept of moral variability that can be applied to contemporary crime novels is the deepest criticism of the world described by logic and, therefore, of the legal basis of the inherent dialectic between law and penalization, which is considered to be the foundation of any organized social system. This variability implies that each individual can have an idea of freedom that transcends the limits of universal behavioral norms, such as the law, and can demand his or her own ethical path. In opposition to the narrative path in noir detective novels, which led from a crime to a possible punishment, the crime novel as a literary genre offers an array of representations of what can be considered a crime at a given moment and the different social effects to which it may give rise. Bearing this in mind, we can refer to a formal fragmentation in this kind of novel since such a supposed morality has deep repercussions on the novel's structure. In the narrative adventure of contemporary Latin American crime novels, the causal relationship between crime and punishment is most definitely affected, and, therefore, they contain an anomic dynamic like the one proposed by Guyau.

In contrast to Guyau's moral variability, Émile Durkheim's theory of de-regulation betrays an evident pessimism regarding anomie given that it trusts in the rule of law and embraces the need for punishment above individual freedom. This latter tendency alludes to the existence of an established order which is exceptionally affected by anomic behavior. In this same vein, Robert K. Merton's theory of deviance, which is mainly interested in the individual condition of a behavioral problem, and, in general, contemporary anomie theory, a product of the phenomenon called class struggle (Richard Cloward, Albert K. Cohen, Antony Giddens, or Peter Waldmann), continues the line that presents penalization as the inherent outcome of crime. The relationship between different abstract elements-law, freedom, punishment, anomie, democracy-is resolved into the benefit of repression, and this dynamic provides the epistemological material for noir novels as it supposes faith in the cause-and-effect logic leading from the intention to the crime, and from the crime to its punishment. The impossibility of explaining the hero's or the antihero's psychology outside the norm, the incomprehensible content of his or her psyche, the ultimate relativity of any legal investigation, and, principally, the artifice of resolving the story via the dubious route of punishment, are resolved based on the traditional standards of order, rights, and the system.

On the contrary, Pöppel affirms the following regarding contemporary detective fiction in Colombia:

Si a partir de esta discusión sobre el orden intentamos fijar coordenadas para nuestro sistema, tenemos que diferenciar entre la situación en la cual irrumpe el asesinato (orden-supuesto orden-supuesto desorden-desorden), la investigación (ordenada y sistemática-desordenada, violenta, caótica, con la predominancia del azar) y la solución

(restablecimiento del orden-descubrimiento que (sic) el supuesto orden era desorden-transición del desorden al orden-descubrimiento de que el supuesto desorden era orden –transición del orden al desorden-permanencia en el desorden) (19).

This methodology is basic for the criticism of crime novels which I have developed in my analyses using anomie as a key. This criticism is above all determined by the increasingly evident absence of punishment as the resolution of the novel, or, as I have mentioned above, by the evidence of a relative capacity for punishment among states in the new world disorder, referred to by Marc Zimmerman.

From my point of view, the situation can be analyzed using what I have called the modulation of this anomie, that is, the greater or lesser degree of a law's application –understood as punishment– and, therefore, of the systemic effects of what Guyau referred to as moral variability, which would make it impossible to speak of punishment in absolute terms. The criminal's exoneration from responsibility for reasons such as the evil that inhabits him or her, the lack of conscience in his or her actions, or the extreme situation of the society in which he or she lives, as well as the success of the justification of the executioner,⁵ for example, allow us to note the consolidation of a new literary genre which I insist upon denominating the crime novel, as opposed to noir or detective novel, for its evident emphasis on this anomic situation in lieu of other elements, such as the detective or the investigation.

These two perspectives on the novel can be interpreted in terms of the contemporary discourses on globalization and cultural localization, which can be adapted to the tension between the discursive unity of noir novels and the formal fragmentation of contemporary crime novels, as is proposed below.

2. Globalization, Law, and Punishment / Localization and Social Anomie

From the methodological perspective of social anomie, I aim to connect the aforementioned dialectic between law and punishment with that between globalization or discursive unity and localization or formal fragmentation. In this regard, we must note from the beginning that while it has been repeated that globalization is geared toward the economic development which a series of goods and services offer to all humankind (as established by Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman), its spirit is derived precisely from the generalized dominance of the capitalist logic that supports it and defines a specific mode

⁵ Regarding the exoneration from responsibility due to the existence of evil, see "Cormac McCarthy's Mosaic of Crime and Evil" by Allen Josephs, in Gustavo Forero (ed.), *Trece formas de entender la novela negra*, 2012. In Colombia, the novel *Satanás* by Mario Mendoza can also illustrate the theme of evil as an explanation for crime. In terms of the impossibility of charging the criminal, the considerations of Colombian academic Nodier Agudelo Betancur are of interest. In regards to the critical situation of society as an efficient cause of criminal behavior, Isabel Santaularia's assessments in "¡Así que se trata de un caso político después de todo! Ficción detectivesca emplazada en China y Rusia", in Gustavo Forero (ed.), *Novela negra y otros crímenes. La visión de escritores y críticos* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2013) are pertinent. Finally, the Ripley sagas by Patricia Highsmith and the Commissioner Montalbano series by Andrea Camilleri illustrate a certain justification of the executioner.

of thought which marginalizes other social models with goals different from economic prosperity⁶. As the Argentine author Ricardo Piglia points out, linking capitalism and the law: "Ya no hay misterio alguno en la causalidad: asesinatos, robos, estafas, extorsiones, la cadena siempre es económica" (9). This dialectic brings us back to the abstract identity between order, law, punishment, and freedom: ultimately, to what in Antiquity was referred to as *ratio*, logic.

In this sense, I use the word 'logic' to refer to all human matters that stem from the causal logic that, in capitalist societies, has as common denominator the desire for economic gain protected by the law. So, according to what I have indicated above regarding the transformation of new systems, I could establish the following contrasting hypothesis: in all current societies, money is not the goal of all citizens, and, if this principle is recognized, the causal relationship between crime and punishment can also be split. The artifice of this relationship was noted by Bertolt Brecht when he evaluated the reasons behind the popularity of the noir genre, affirming that "[f]ijar la causalidad de las acciones humanas es el placer intelectual principal que nos ofrece la novela policiaca" (345).

In opposition to what we could define as the homogenizing discourse whose vital goal is economic success, other proposals emerge that are grounded in the fragments of what could be considered meaning in a time that is eager for it. These proposals seek to distance themselves from the fixed objective of economic gain. They are discourses founded in increasingly diverse values and derived from sociopolitical situations determined by a context that we can call local. This relativity questions the very existence of a rational, globally-aimed law, but above all, it questions the logical relationship that may exist between a dominant legal code and the penalty that, from this point of view, can respond to the injustice of the system itself, as Jacques Derrida proposes when discussing the rogue State.

El abuso de poder es inherente a la soberanía misma. ¿Qué significa esto, respecto de los rogue States (Estados canallas)? Pues bien, que Estados Unidos está en condiciones de denunciar las violaciones al derecho, su incumplimiento, las perversiones y los desvíos cometidos por cualquier rogue State. Estados Unidos, ese país que se considera garante del derecho internacional, impulsa la guerra, efectúa operaciones de policía o de mantenimiento de la paz porque posee la fuerza para hacerlo. Estados Unidos y los Estados aliados en estas acciones son ellos mismos, en cuanto soberanos, los primeros rogué States ("La razón del más fuerte" párr. 1).

Thereby, local cultures with currents of global information indeed find themselves in permanent interdependence (as Roland Robertson and Martin Albrow explain), but we must consider a kind of "glocalization" like that defined by Robert Eric Livingston (2001) in order to link two apparently exclusive epistemological spaces in the world and in literary studies: two spaces, global law and local anomie, which can be explained using the theory of social anomie, leaving aside the common denominator of economic gain as a goal for societies:

⁶ There are peripheries in the West where this way of understanding life is not dominant. Indigenous groups, to provide just one example, consider their identification with the Earth to be fundamental, and they place more importance on this relationship than on the economic benefits that natural resources might provide.

The figure of the glocal has the advantage not only of making visible the mutual articulation of our two spatial coordinates but also of insisting, neologically, on the need for a careful rereading of the means of articulation. The sheer awkwardness of the term, meanwhile, should slow down its assimilation to more familiar positional schemes (147).

In this context, we can confirm the hypothesis that cultures or “localities” that do not hold monetary success as their ultimate goals can exist (as Rosanna Reguillo suggests within the dynamic of fear and the search for serenity in the city), or rather, that they have been pushed into the background by the rational model of capitalist democracy which does express this ultimate goal. Regarding this point, Zygmunt Bauman (1998) establishes the relationship of dependence between a global economy (characterized by multinational companies, planetary business, or the development of communications) and ideological or cultural fragmentation –including the production of literature– in “weak states” (68). The tension between different models of social organization tends to go beyond a simple dialectic opposition between empires and nations and must be understood with more contemporary ideas of pluriculturalism, such as the one presented here related to anomie and the modulation of anomie, which questions the cause-and-effect relationship of law in contemporary societies. Robert J. Holton (1998) considered the consequences of globalization for the idea of the nation-state constituted on the base of law and, therefore, of penalization. In this sense, it is necessary to contemplate the existence of these spaces in which the law is absent or has lost its validity in the novel in order to understand the formal transformation both of the novel and of the society it reflects, as pointed out by Saskia Sassen regarding exclusion and immigration, and by Jürgen Link when reflecting on the contrasts between different “rationalities” as a definition of the multiculturalism that currently forms a part of modern systems⁷.

From this point of view, and at the risk of conserving binary Western logic, I will evaluate two formal perspectives of the novel, which, according to their cultural frameworks, globalization, or localization, include the very dynamic of the literary genre in what we can refer to as postmodernity. The first is determined by Western causal logic, and the other by the formal fragmentation that can be observed in certain Latin American novels. A study of the differences between them is highly important as it also implies a contemporary reflection on the literary meaning of what the State or democracy may be as their definitions continue to move into new contents according to the necessities of the different societies analyzed.

⁷ In the field of analytical discourse (*Versuch über den Normalismus. Wie Normalität produziert wird* 2006), Jürgen Link studies the problem of normalism and develops the notion of “interdiscourse” in literature (2006). Regarding the first, criticizing a concept like normality in Durkheim and in opposition to Merton’s structuralist functionalism, Link defines “normalism” as a specifically modern network of sectorial and general normative strategies (flexible normalism and protonormalism); regarding the second, the author analyzes the role of literature in terms of normality. Using writers like Balzac, Céline, or Heidegger, he illustrates the particular methods of modern subjects for relating to that normalization: “la vida como curvas (no) normales, viaje simbólico a través de paisajes” (213). Thereby, for conflict resolution, Link proposes a flexible anomie like that derived from the literary world.

3. From Causal Logic to Formal Fragmentation

In the first years of the 20th century, Siegfried Kracauer (*Der Detektive-Roman. Ein Philosophischer Traktat*, published in 1922) showed the demystifying function of the detective novel in terms of the “pensamiento que oscila libremente en el vacío, que sólo se refiere a su vacío profano” (81), which he referred to as *ratio*. According to Kracauer, the genre questioned an intellectual and all-inclusive mode of understanding the world which was established as the dominant system of knowledge in the West. Derived from Enlightenment thinking, *ratio* came to constitute the paradigm of capitalist modernity. Thereby, the first noir novel of the 19th century was explained as just another representation of that globalizing mode of thought that allowed for a “logical” resolution of the criminal problem (“The mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis” is the first sentence of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841) by Edgar Allan Poe). In this sense, “su estructura formal ha asumido formas precisas. En sus expresiones más representativas ... se trata ... de un género estilístico bien definido que exhibe un mundo propio con medios estéticos propios” (23). From this point of view, Kracauer states:

A la novela policial no le interesa, de hecho, reproducir de forma naturalista lo que esa *Zivilisation* considera la realidad, sino antes bien, destacar desde el principio el carácter intelectualista de esta realidad; son [sic] un espejo deformante que enfrentado al proceso civilizatorio, refleja una caricatura de su sustancia perversa (*Unwesen*)⁸. La imagen que ofrecen resulta bastante aterradora: muestra un estado social en que el intelecto, libre de toda restricción, ha logrado su victoria final, una acumulación y confusión –sólo aparente– de figuras y cosas que resulta desvaída y perturbadora, porque deforma la realidad, la deja de lado artificialmente y la convierte en una mera mueca (25).

In opposition to systems with *a priori* principles (such as those proposed by Hegel or Kant), Kracauer warns of the distorting character of the noir novel, which places rational discourse above reality. The author studies the detective novels of Doyle, Gaboriau, Elvestad, and Leblanc and establishes their condition of sharing a world seen through rational eyes. From this point of view, the detective novel can appear in the middle of “singularidades nacionales” absorbed in different relationships to what is considered civilization, and he points out that “no es casual que los anglosajones, con su elevado grado de civilización, hayan descubierto y perfeccionado al máximo el modelo” (25). In a society duly regulated by the law (watched over by the police), the detective “personifica” (75) *ratio* (causal logic) and assures a resolution through what is believed to be justice: “Él no conquista el absoluto incierto

⁸ Another translations of this expression could be ‘negative essence’ (*Unwesen*). Regarding this, I follow the comments of my colleague Sophie von Werder, who considers this to be a better translation of the original German.

luchando en el mundo condicionado, sino que lucha en el mundo como si fuese lo absoluto mismo" (Kracauer 80). Therefore:

Para que su personificación [del detective] pueda resultar estéticamente comprensible, la novela policial (y muy en particular la anglosajona) le confiere rasgos puritanos, lo convierte en un modelo de ascetismo intramundano, es decir, que en el mundo reduce la importancia del mundo y lo traslada por completo a la cosa (84).

This kind of novel, above all of Anglosaxon origin, favors a way of seeing life that is determined by the instrumental logic derived especially from the Enlightenment revolutions: "Como el crimen, su autor no es más que la negación de lo legal: un perturbador en sentido estricto, alguien que altera el desarrollo normal de la sociedad sin estar contenido en ella" (Kracauer 107).

Such a model analyzed by Kracauer would be transformed by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, but not sufficiently so as to distort the rational discourse in which the law and penalization are erected as civilized ideals. For Todorov, these authors maintain mystery, but in the noir novel they give it "una función secundaria, subordinada y no central" (38), configuring a narrative in which "toda preocupación sobre los procedimientos literarios le es extraña, no reserva sus sorpresas para el último párrafo del capítulo" and which presents its descriptions "sin énfasis, fríamente, inclusive, cuando se trata de acontecimientos extraordinarios, puede decirse 'con cinismo'" (38). In these cases, the plot continues to describe the (still possible) intellectual makeup of the represented world given that, despite its paradoxical relationship with 19th-century Expressionism and the fantastic literature of the first years of the 20th century, the dynamic between law and penalization is maintained in the noir novel. As Mempo Giardinelli indicates when discussing North American authors of the genre, "todos han confiado, en el fondo de sus conciencias, en el orden y en el optimismo de que habla [Carlos] Fuentes. En síntesis: porque todos creyeron en el sistema norteamericano" (II, 33). Perhaps, given the persistence of elements in the genre that are close to Realism, those that subsume the solution of an enigma to the game of logic, North American writers suppose a certain faith in the old Enlightenment morality and in an epistemological methodology that demands formal unity in the novel. Or, rather, they automatically offer answers to modern conflicts in developed societies that show some repairable cracks. This traditional game of logic that defined Poe's analytical narrative, the Expressionist literary *Unwesen* of the precursors of the 20th century, and, in general, the criticism of the dominant values of industrial development in the cultural centers of Europe and the United States have endured in novels like *The Goodbye Look* (1969) by Ross Macdonald, *Gone Fishin'* (1988) by Walter Mosley, and *Mystic River* (2001) by Dennis Lehane. These novels reveal a basic confidence in the system, a capitalist and democratic system, which turns their fictional worlds into defenses of the civilized nations of that developed and industrialized West grounded in modern logic. In these works, the novels' resolutions make up the narrative action within the general principle of the definitive rule of law, which culminates the literary exercise of the analysis of crime.

In contrast to the above, in Latin America, the genre clearly questions the very model of that Western logic, as the region does not culturally have a firm base in a legal order that might gain the confidence of writers. Rubem Fonseca gives an excellent summary of the value of the cause-and-effect relationship with an omniscient narrator which offers the character's inner voice:

¿La relación entre causa y efecto sería esencial a la naturaleza de todos los raciocinios referentes a los hechos?, pensó Mattos. ¿De qué servían las inferencias resultantes de una cadena de suposiciones? Sabía que las proposiciones alusivas a los hechos no podían dejar de ser contingentes. Las conclusiones a que estaba llegando, al observar la trémula pareja delante de él, eran producto apenas de los sentidos, de las impresiones de aquel momento, y podían ser falsas. Todo podía ser falso. Dios mío, mi mente se está volviendo bestialógica como la de Rosalvo. ...No quería confundir más sus ideas y sus percepciones. Para una mejor comprensión quería disponer de más hechos, más percepciones y más ideas. Procurar entender las cosas siempre lo conducía a un frustrante círculo vicioso (68).

In the novel *Agosto*, from which this quote is taken, the character Alberto Mattos admits to being overly emotional and impulsive, but he believes that he has the necessary lucidity and shrewdness to avoid the classic traps of criminal investigation, mainly the "trampa de la lógica" (151). For him, logic is an ally of the police, a critical instrument that, in the analysis of ambiguous situations, holds one back from knowing the truth. Yet, just as there is an appropriate logic for mathematics and another for metaphysics, one for speculative philosophy and another for empirical investigations, there is an appropriate logic for criminology, one that has nothing to do with premises and syllogistic deductions in the style of Conan Doyle. In Mattos's logic, knowing the truth and understanding reality can only be achieved by doubting logic itself, and even reality. Mattos therefore admires Hume's skepticism and regrets the fact that his readings, not only of this Scottish philosopher, but also of Berkeley and Hegel, at university while he studied Law, were so superficial (151).

Similarly, in novels such as *El capítulo de Ferneli* (1992), by Colombian author Hugo Chaparro Valderrama, *Los detectives salvajes* (1998), by Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, and *Los minutos negros*, by Mexican author Martín Solares (2006), this thesis is confirmed: the characters do not seek to restore an order that is considered to be in danger, nor does the crime present in the narration fall within the dynamic of an attack on a rational civilization that must be defended and is worthy of salvation. In this sense, there is no definitive relationship of cause and effect, nor a restoration of order by the probable means of penalization. The distorting mirror that reflects an *Unwesen* in a mere grimace gives way to a clash of the individual with the fragmentation of reality, which is nothing more than the legal world determined by the development of a dominant and imposing logic in a historical moment, and, moreover, the dominant and imposing rationality of a civilization historically placed above social groups defined by other "local"

values. In this aesthetic field, then, we must speak about the modulation of anomie, that is, of differing degrees of distance taken by the narrated reality from a normative world that serves as a frame of reference for this type of novel (Forero, *La anomia* 67-70). This last tendency can be noted in the novels mentioned above and can be understood with the formal fragmentation typical of contemporary crime novels.

4. Formal Fragmentation: The Explosion of the Mirror

In Latin America, the very evolution of the genre forced writers to create novels that were plausible in their own contexts characterized by “[u]na violencia esperpéntica [que] hace par con la corrupción pasmosa del sistema judicial” (Samuelson 464). We have therefore seen the appearance of a series of novels that bring into question the model of Western logic itself given that they do not have a firm base of confidence in legal order. In this context, the genre’s different denominations –detective novel, *neopolicial*, or crime novels– not only lead to changes regarding the evaluation of their content, but also regarding the dialectic of this narrative form in terms of what could be called the globalizing logic that tried to define it (from what Kracauer referred to as “el contexto humano integral, incomprensible para la ratio” [131]). In opposition to that Western logic, the Latin American fragmentary novel of recent years expresses the impossibility of art to speak about life in all its meaning. For example, an interest in monstrosity in a country like Colombia, the “desperate” vision of Latin American vanguard poets in the seventies and eighties of the 20th century, and the persistent nightmare-like atmosphere in Mexico at the end of the 20th century go beyond what scientific thought proposed as a legal system to understand contemporary social models. In contrast to countries like the United States or England, the anomic reality of life in several parts of Latin America forces authors to seek out new forms of the noir genre. Moreover, since traditional logic (or *ratio*) cannot encompass the totality of this anomic reality, the plot is fragmented: it becomes impossible to maintain the fundamental logical relationship between crime and penalization that restores a supposed order, since in reality the law either does not exist or does not work. Different perspectives on morality, among other elements, are added to the fact that the State is not able to enforce its official regulations. Behaviors themselves do not have an effect of the field of punishment, which is confirmed in the novel, even in sequential absences in the plot or in elements acquired from fantastic or Expressionist literature, which break the causal relationship of Realism.

The Latin American novel therefore suffers from the moral eagerness of North American Puritanism, and perhaps it hopes to defend certain marginalized social groups from the macroeconomic problems of rational democracy. “La transparencia que se intenta transmitir con las tres figuras –la policía, el detective y el delincuente– crece en la medida en que a través de ellas se apunta a lo auténtico que ellas mismas deforman” (119), stated Kracauer, and the authors of the 20th and 21st centuries, or, rather, the authors referred to as postmodern or subaltern in this postindustrial and technological era in Latin America, more than confirm it. As culture became secularized and “derationalized” (with the First World War, for example, which questioned the infallibility of logic in the whole of the West), the configured will of the intellect made strides in this context toward fragmentary discourses, and, in

some cases, hermetic or cryptic discourses (lacking a relationship of cause and effect) that in today's world obstruct univocal resolutions that guarantee unity in the narrative model. The detective, then, when there is one, does not aim to defend a vulnerable society from an enemy that wishes to "irrationally" destroy it. The very conflict between sectors of power hinders a simplistic presentation of the situation. In the novels produced in recent years, the order is denounced in its appearance and becomes the best breeding ground for crime (the preeminence of this element in the genre's name should be sufficient to illustrate this point.) Such is the case, for example, of this type of novel in Colombia, where crime defines society as a whole, and the narrative world hinders the univocal configuration of a resolution bound by norms that serves to set an example.

In general, Latin American novels produced in recent years, close relatives of the postmodern discourse, follow the uncertain paths of representable fragments to arrive at a relative ending in which the *ratio* proposed by Kracauer is blurred in its Classical imposture (that is, in virtue of which it aimed to reliably describe the normative world, like the one studied by Émile Durkheim). In some cases more than others, the suspicion of a description of reality marked by modern rationality or so-called globalization as the only key for understanding it opens or closes the narrative fan slowly, configuring a more or less comprehensible world with differing degrees of systemic explanation (hence the concept of modulation of anomie). These cases seem to be the two-headed limits of the discussion regarding contemporary names for the subgenres (there are more, of course), and they can be illustrated *grosso modo* using some emblematic novels for Latin America. In each of the narrative forms that we might wish to distinguish with these denominations, this fact has a particular literary form that likewise implies some kind of resolution of that rational unity. This has led to numerous theoretical reflections in the field of literature, which range from an attack on the detective novel as a subgenre to its defense as the social novel of this era. Here it is proposed with the classic opposition between totality and fragmentation, or, rather, between globalization and localization, to understand it. We can appreciate this in three emblematic cases.

El capítulo de Ferneli: The Monster That Expresses "toda clase de miedos"

Written by Colombian author Hugo Chaparro Valderrama (Bogotá, 1961)⁹, *El capítulo de Ferneli* is a reading of crime embodied in the symbol of a monster¹⁰. According to the narrator, the purpose of this novel is to *plas-*

⁹ Chaparro Valderrama has also published the novels *Si los sueños me llevarán hacia ella* (1999), *No me olvides cuando mueras* (2007), and *La sombra del licántropo* (2012).

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Guyau, regarding the novels of Flaubert, Zola (*Nana y Germinal*), and Balzac, stated: "Los autores modernos no sólo se inclinaron por el estudio de los defectos o las pasiones fuertes, sino también por el estudio de monstruosidades, y esto por varias razones: la primera es el interés científico; sentimos una mayor curiosidad respecto de todo lo que es una anomalía, un 'fenómeno'; además, la ciencia moderna –la fisiología o la psicología– concede gran importancia al estudio de los estados mórbidos, porque estos estados permiten verificar la degradación de nuestras diversas facultades, constatar aquellas que tienen el mayor poder de resistencia, establecer así leyes de la vida

mar (give expression to or translate) the generalized situation of terror in Bogotá in the seventies and eighties of the 20th century in the symbol of a monster, "Plasmar en la ficción toda clase de miedos" (86). The adaptation of the promotional poster for the movie "Frankenstein: The Man Who Made a Monster" (1931) –based on the novel written in 1818 by Mary Shelley, directed by James Whale, and adapted for the screen by Peggy Webling– to these new circumstances demonstrates from the beginning such a task is included in the novel: "Un diseño basado en este Frankenstein original, Frankenstein que, como Ferneli, también construyó su monstruo" (249), as the writer explains. This transformed poster from the classic film presents the novel as a horror movie with its own monster and literary characters that are classics of the genre that serves as a foundation for the narration: "El capítulo de Ferneli. Novela policiaca e ilustrada de los últimos tiempos. Con Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Graham Greene, Julio Cortázar, John Fante, Rubem Fonseca, Daniel Defoe y Anne Rice" (11).

In this sense, the monster emerges as a cause and a consequence, as an external and internal element of the novel, and, in summary, as a symbol of the social environment and the psychology of the main character, since Ferneli, the protagonist of the story, is simultaneously its writer, scribe, or reporter (243), or the intellectual who has created it.

The total disfiguration of the investigator is produced when the narrator states that Ferneli is also the detective (20, 118), a witness to the facts, an accomplice (105), or the victim of organized crime –"sumido en una situación de la que aún no comprendía nada" (28)–; or when the narrator affirms that he is even the scapegoat (243). This character is, above, a reader (20, 165) who:

amaba los detectives, las historias de detectives y los juegos con la muerte a la que se veían enfrentados por obra y gracia de sus autores. Personajes que trataban de comprender, a través de individuos clásicamente rudos y en conflicto permanente con una ley burocrática y corrupta, el malestar de una época (165).

From this point of view, "La imaginación se convertía entonces en el último refugio a situaciones como aquella en la que se encontraba" (69). Therefore, at the end of the novel, there is a photo of the character Ferneli, which is really a photo of the author, Hugo Chaparro Valderrama (268), expressing his own intellectual context:

Su biblioteca exquisita, la forma como observaba el mundo a través de la lupa de su erudición, la publicación regular

física o psicológica, válidas incluso para las personas sanas" (*L'art* 381-382). Translation by Gustavo Forero. In the original French: "Les écrivains modernes ne sont pas seulement amenés à l'étude des vices ou des passions fortes, mais aussi à l'étude des monstruosités, et cela pour diverses raisons: la première est l'intérêt scientifique; on éprouve une plus grande curiosité à l'égard de tout ce qui est dans l'espèce une anomalie, un 'phénomène'; en outre la science moderne, - physiologie ou psychologie, - attache une importance croissante à l'étude des états morbides, parce que ces états permettent de saisir sur le fait la dégradation de nos diverses facultés, de constater celles qui ont la plus grande force de résistance, d'établir ainsi des lois de la vie physique ou psychique valant même pour les êtres bien portants" (381-382).

de historias o artículos con los cuales trataba de aclararse a sí mismo o a un posible lector el lúgubre panorama que en el momento era norma, lo habían llevado a vivir en una ficción que se había convertido en su realidad cotidiana (25).

Later, to better explain the nature of Ferneli's monster, the narrator states:

El suyo era así un espectro entre los espectros y no era una aparición exclusiva de sus pesadillas: sus visiones hacían parte de un horror colectivo, tolerado con la dificultad o la resignación de alguien condenado a un vicio; un horror que asaltaba a una comunidad estafada en su buena fe por una violencia sin límites. Y la escritura –exorcismo, conjuro o terapia–, permitía aniquilar a los peores demonios o, por lo menos, colocarlos en su sitio, aunque fuera en el mundo imaginario y real de los libros (210).

In this way, the monster expresses or represents the character's nightmares, and, at the same time, the collective horror that exceeds rational causality in the noir novel. Confronting it, this novel appears as a method for annihilating it, or at least for symbolically putting it in its place. This process or "exorcismo, conjuro o terapia" is what defines the path of the plot since it is through writing that the monster is defeated; the monster that, ultimately, represents original chaos. In this sense, the cause of crime falls outside logic, and what could be assimilated as a penalty is erected in the elimination of the monster which is the product of the writer's imagination. In the end, Sara (Ferneli's lover, a double agent?) is the one who defeats the monster, imposing a parody of penalization that is also the resolution of the work created by the reporter/detective/victim, who has no control whatsoever over the situation despite the fact that he is writing it.¹¹ This literary device is closely related to one used by an author from the other side of the South American continent who links crime novels with images belonging to the artistic vanguards of the 20th century.

Los detectives salvajes: "los juegos imposibles de descifrar"

*Los detectives salvajes*¹², written by Chilean author Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003), also provides an original perspective on the noir genre when we take into account its anomic recreation of elements like the detective, the investigation, the resolution of an enigma, or the absence of a final penalization. As for the first element, the figure of the detective is split into two emblematic characters: Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima, who are, at the same time, the antithesis of this figure: a far cry from those investigators bent on discovering the truth, these characters are poets, desperate men, occasional

¹¹ Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) by Dashiell Hammett has a certain autonomy and cunning, but even so, the decisions of the male characters are what determine the outcome of the plot. A similar case is found in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934) de James M. Cain. My thanks to Mallory N. Craig-Kuhn for this observation.

¹² This novel won the Premio Herralde in 1998 and the Premio Rómulo Gallegos in 1999.

drug traffickers who are constantly disappearing. Belano is a Chilean writer, the alter ego of the writer Roberto Bolaño¹³, and Ulises Lima, a friend of his, is a literary recreation of the Mexican poet Mario Santiago Papasquiaro¹⁴, founder of the Infrarealist movement that inspired the novel¹⁵. Both men (who appear in "Mexicanos perdidos en México (1975)", one of the novel's sections) investigate the whereabouts of Cesárea Tinajero¹⁶, a Mexican poet thrown out of the Stridentist movement of the beginning of the 20th century and "madre de los realivisceralistas" (461), who has also disappeared. These metafictional games, the literary references, the false citations made by Bolaño, etc., are an evident representation of the formal fragmentation of the initial pact between the author and the reader that was based on crime and penalization. Their voices converge with those of the most dissimilar characters to express an effectively fragmented world in which there is no unequivocal line for grasping reality.

Like in a Greek epic poem, the goal of the search in the novel is stretched out over 20 years, from 1976 to 1996, a period during which the novel transcribes the testimonies of different characters who speak about what happened to the poets. These testimonies also identify with the historical and literary context of the author: from his arrival to Mexico to the publication of the text in Spain in 1998. The recreation of the figure of the detective, which brings under judgment that core figure of the genre who rationally restored order, or the very proposal of the poet as detective who is constantly disappearing, which is repeated again and again throughout the novel, can be understood within the general field of what I have called social anomie and discursive fragmentation. Although the goal of the poets in this text is poetry itself (hence the metaphor of the search for the vanguard poet Cesárea Tinajero), the novel is a parody of the legal investigation in noir novels and, therefore, of the classic causality of the genre.

Alluding to these singular characteristics of the noir novel in *Los detectives salvajes*, Carolina A. Navarrete González states:

el viaje de Arturo Belano y Ulises Lima tras la pista de Cesárea Tinajero, la peripecia característica de la novela negra. ...la persistente búsqueda de la verdad originándose su objeto narrativo desde la necesidad de develar un hecho oculto/misterioso que nos mantiene intrigados. Otro rasgo que se aplica a la novela es el que tiene que ver con la acción esencial, en otras palabras, si entendemos la novela negra como una narración itinerante que describe ambientes y personajes variopintos mientras se

¹³ This same character appears in other works by Bolaño: the short novel *Estrella distante* (1996), *Amulero* (1999), in *2666* (2004), and in the book of stories *El secreto del mal* (2007), among others.

¹⁴ His real name was José Alfredo Zendejas Pineda (1953-1998).

¹⁵ A poetic movement that was originally created by the Chilean Roberto Matta when André Bretón threw him out of the Surrealist movement. According to Piel Divina, Belano is the "Andre Breton del tercer mundo" (168). Around 1975, Infrarealism appeared in Mexico with a group of Mexican and Chilean poets, among them Mario Santiago Papasquiaro and Bolaño himself, and others. In the novels this movement is called visceral realism. Infrarealism took its slogan from Matta's phrase "volarle la tapa de los sesos a la cultura oficial".

¹⁶ Inspired in the Mexican poet Concha Urquiza.

persigue el fin, la investigación y la búsqueda, entonces, la novela de Bolaño evidenciaría estas características constituyéndose como narración que va de un lugar a otro remitiéndose a un eje central que estaría dado por la búsqueda incesante de Cesárea Tinajero, sin embargo, y en esto radica su originalidad, esta novela no pretendería seguir el canon de la novela negra, sino más bien utilizarla como un puente para el planteamiento de un nuevo orden más bien subversivo cercano a la parodización (par. 3).

In this sense of a rather subversive new order, it must be noted that what is most interesting about this novel is its progressive and even parody-like treatment of the theme of penalization. The poet Ulises commits robberies in Austria in order to survive and even stabs two men in unfortunate circumstances; Belano and another man become entangled in a duel, which goes to show the nearly implausible nature of illegality given that this anachronistic event for the setting of the novel appears as an isolated happening in the natural discourse of the plot. In short, as in a true parody of the rational order that they attack, the poets finally become criminals, murdering a pimp and a police officer, who are their victims purely by chance. This resolution shows the general rule in this kind of novel in which, in addition to the fact that there is no penalty whatsoever for those responsible for the crimes, the punishable acts take place in the vanguard manner of the fantastic.

In these circumstances, the narrative space in *Los detectives salvajes* is so vast (it occurs in Mexico, Austria, Israel, France, Spain, the United States, etc.) that, first of all, it could lead to defining the novel as global (similar in that sense to Roberto Ampuero's novels). Still, this is nothing more than the appearance of the work to bring it into line with that dominant discourse in Bolaño's narrative and that of other contemporary authors. The most important aspect is that this geographical characteristic adds to the text's large number of monologues, events, anecdotes, feelings, or thoughts that determine its discursive explosion and, as it has been referred to here, its formal fragmentation. A good part of the text, then, is the diary of Juan García Madero, a 17-year-old law student¹⁷, which gives way precisely to what is called, in the second part, "Los detectives salvajes (1976-1996)" to finally pick back up the line of the narration. Hence, this book has been related to *Adán Buenosayres* (1948) by Leopoldo Marechal; *Rayuela* (1963) by Julio Cortázar, or *Paradiso* (1966) by José Lezama Lima (according to the critic and writer Jorge Edwards; as he affirms in back cover of another of Bolaño's books, *Putas asesinas*, published by Anagrama). From my perspective of the social anomie evident in *Los detectives salvajes*, it is important to point out that many crimes live alongside the main story and determine its criminal environment as one in which penalization is wholly absent: Piel Divina, one of the poet characters in the novel, perishes in a police operation against drug trafficking, and the editor Lisandro Morales, another such character, fears that hit men will kill him and ends his narration claiming that literature has no value. The reflection of one of the characters, Abel Romero, a

¹⁷ His diary is the first and the last part of the novel: "Mexicanos perdidos en México (1975)" and "Los desiertos de Sonora (1976)."

Chilean exiled in Paris, on Pinochet's dictatorship and crime in general, is highly pertinent in this respect:

el meollo de la cuestión es saber si el mal (o el delito o el crimen o como usted quiera llamarle) es casual o causal. Si es causal, podemos luchar contra él, es difícil de derrotar pero hay una posibilidad, más o menos como dos boxeadores del mismo peso. Si es casual, por el contrario, estamos jodidos. Que Dios, si existe, nos pille confesados (397).

Indeed, Bolaño's literary proposal is on the limit of logic. It is therefore interesting how the novel is defined by the character Guillem Piña when, in Mallorca, he remembers Belano's words: "me explicó que su penúltimo libro y su último libro tenían unas semejanzas que entraban en el territorio de los juegos imposibles de descifrar" (474). These indecipherable games, similar to those of Marechal, Cortázar, and Lezama, are what make up the fragmentary reality of *Los detectives salvajes*. This work, then, defines a mode of understanding literature that is quite distinct from that of 19th-century Rationalism, which in that surreal perspective of crimes, detectives, or literary movements, like *El capítulo de Ferneli*, is linked with the European vanguard of the early 20th century in which Kracauer lived. This perspective can also be related to a recent Mexican novel that questions a simply rational description to reach other planes of life expressed by Guyau, such as sensation and intuition.

Los minutos negros by Martín Solares: "la consistencia de una pesadilla"

In concordance with what I have proposed in this article regarding the fragmentation of traditional logic, Mexican writer Martín Solares points out the following about his novel *Los minutos negros*:

Me interesaba que mi novela tuviera la consistencia de una pesadilla, y que fuese contada por un policía mexicano ...en mi opinión ya no se puede seguir contando novelas policiacas con los mismos detectives literarios de hace ochenta o noventa años. ...Yo quería que los cinco sentidos, pero también los sueños, el pensamiento e incluso las alucinaciones formaran parte de mi novela y eso fue lo que intenté (Méndez párr. 20).

Indeed, much like a nightmare, the novel *Los minutos negros* relates two detectives' curious police investigation of the death of several girls at the hands of El Chacal in Paracuán¹⁸, Tamaulipas, an oil port in the Gulf of Mexico,

¹⁸ According to the author, "Paracuán es una ciudad completamente imaginaria: más que un espejo es un espejismo. Está hecha con recuerdos de al menos tres ciudades en el Golfo de México: Tampico, Ciudad Madero y Altamira, pero en sentido estricto no es ninguna de las tres. ...Paracuán se fue construyendo como un reflejo distorsionado de la vida en el Golfo de México, como los escenarios que se perciben en las pesadillas" (Méndez par. 28 and 29).

which occurred in the 1970s. The story is told from two narrative perspectives. The first covers the action of agent Ramón Cabrera, also known as el Macetón, in 2003, when he is investigating the death of journalist Bernardo Blanco, an act perpetrated because the victim was following the trail of the girls' death. The second is determined by the investigation carried out by Vicente Rangel González, a detective who once detained El Chacal in 1977 as the one responsible for the death of the girls, but who finally sees the guilty man set free for political reasons. After twenty-five years, these two stories have a significant meeting point in that the two detectives are in love with the same woman: La Chilanga, a socialist photographer who learns about the case through them and represents the permanence of leftist discourses on the fringes of true justice in the history of Mexico. In the novel's present, she works as a journalist with *El Mercurio* and is the one who finally finds out the truth about the events. As in *El capítulo de Ferneli*, it is the woman, who is no longer simply a partner or love interest but a vaguer figure, who ends up "solving" the crime.

So, while in Paracuán the novel relates the murder of the journalist who is writing a book about a forgotten bit of the town's history, the girls' murders, the reader finds out that, years earlier, El Chacal was none other than the brother of Professor Edelmiro Morales, leader of the National Professors Union in Tamaulipas, which ultimately guaranteed his impunity. Therefore, in accordance with the different evidence collected, it is revealed that in 1977, Rangel managed to clarify the facts enough to realize the political reasons that led to the unjust sentencing of René Díaz de Dios, a scapegoat for the crime; it also revealed in 2003, journalist Blanco had also been murdered for discovering this fact, which is, at any rate, unrelated to a terrorist cell that could perhaps have been blamed for the crime.

In this context, numerous nightmarish sections appear. Once again, they remind us of the environment of the European artistic vanguards of the 20th century in their eagerness to provide a vision different from Western rationality: the title, which alludes to the revelation of a great truth –"¿Verdad que en la vida de todo hombre hay cinco minutos negros?" (13)– in the middle of a nightmare; the division of the book in three parts determined by their symbolic field –"Mil lagunas tiene tu memoria," "La ecuación," and "La espiral"–; or the generalized anomie in which the police, national administration, drug trafficking, etc., all fall under the general rule of corruption. Thus, in the case investigated, Jorge Romero, el Ciego, Rangel's "madrina" or collaborator, states the following as he considers El Chacal's liberation: "Pactaron todos: pactó el gobierno, pactó el presidente, pactaron sobre el cuerpo de las niñas. Como ocurre en todo el mundo, la ciudad creció alrededor de las tumbas" (406). Detective Quioz Cuarón speaks in the same vein regarding the anomie of the Mexican democratic system speaking about the country's history: "Para mí todo empezó a corromperse con Alemán, empeoró en el sexenio de López Mateos y terminó de pudrirse cuando llegó Echavarreta. Del crimen con cuchillo pasamos a las pistolas, de ahí a las ametralladoras, a los secuestros y a las masacres" (343). So, through a singular method of narration in which local problems show that "el poder parcial transforma parcialmente y el poder total corrompe en definitiva" (414-415), as Commander Taboada affirms after dreaming of a dead man, society is defined within the pattern of anomic impunity. Among graves, dreams, and hallucinations, the reality of Classical logic is questioned.

Likewise, in this fantastic context in which the detectives' characteristics distance them from the emblematic figures of the first noir novels or classic North American hard-boiled novels, images such as Rangel's fight with a lion are illustrative of a new way of understanding the genre outside of rational causality:

No puede ser, se dijo, no puede ser. Se acercó tan silencioso como pudo, y alcanzó a ver los cuartos traseros de un animal que se adentraba en el sembradío. Ay, cabrón, pensó, un jaguar de dos metros. ... Con asombro vio que tenía grandes y puntiagudos colmillos pero sus labios y la forma de la boca eran humanos. Lo oyó decir: "Por eso nos dicen animales de garra, por la manera como dejamos a nuestra víctimas". Y eso fue todo (377-379).

The novel thereby synthesizes the fundamental confrontation of a man with the legal system he has denounced in a surreal encounter. The dream image explains the situation and calls into question the very field of causal logic. This in addition to the most important occurrence in the novel: at the end there is no punishment for El Chacal and the system remains in the disorder referred to by Pöppel as the story's general key which, from the perspective of this article, defines crime novels in which anomie explains literature.

Conclusion

From my point of view, the ways of understanding the genre discussed in this paper, derived from Classical *ratio* and that associated with formal fragmentation, are related to the cultural differences between the West (mainly understood based on the English-language and Spanish models) and, particularly, with the dominant ideologies in its sphere. The first perspective is linked with the discourses of globalization, and the second with cultural localization. Both models can be understood within the dynamic of modulation of anomie which allows us to discuss contemporary crime novels that assimilate to different degrees a supposed democratic and, above all, legal model. The novel is understood, then, as a genre that responds to the homogenizing dynamic of a culture forged around intellect or, rather, to its discursive atomization in different spheres of expression. This can be appreciated in the three paradigmatic novels analyzed in which the investigator no longer "personifies" Classical logic: the investigation is combined with a form of therapy or a literary quest, the narration is developed along numerous channels of meaning, and punishment is conspicuous by its absence. This interpretation can be the key for analyzing what literature means in Western culture today, particularly the novel.

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