

# Negotiating Memoria Histórica in 'Mágina': narrating the past in Beatus Ille and El Jinete Polaco

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## **Negotiating *Memoria Histórica* in ‘Mágina’: narrating the past in *Beatus Ille* and *El Jinete Polaco***

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### RESUMEN

Este artículo evalúa el papel de la Memoria Histórica en las novelas del escritor jienense Antonio Muñoz Molina. Mediante la constante reevaluación del papel de la imaginación en la construcción de un pasado traumático, se considera el papel de la ficción en la creación del espacio imaginario dentro del cual los personajes de Muñoz Molina negocian con el pasado, en concreto con episodios relacionados con la Guerra Civil española o con los difíciles años de la posguerra. El artículo examina la sugerencia, presentada por las novelas de *Mágina*, *Beatus ille* (1986) y *El Jinete Polaco* (1991) de que la recuperación de un pasado traumático debe incluir la capacidad para la intuición, e incluso la invención. En ambas novelas, la imaginación se convierte en parte intrínseca del proceso de recuperación de la memoria perdida, bien anulada por el discurso vencedor, bien reprimida. En dicho sentido, ambas obras sugieren el peligro de la erosión de la realidad causado por narrativas de índole mitológica, gótica y de otros tipos, para, de forma última, admitir su papel en la historiografía, que, en el caso de España, se vuelve irregular y problemática. En lugar de ser desafiadas por otros discursos, la ficción y la imaginación son reapropiadas del discurso vencedor por los personajes de ambas obras, y transmutadas en un fructífero diálogo con el pasado.

“Inventar y recordar son tareas que se parecen mucho y de vez en cuando se confunden entre sí”.  
Antonio Muñoz Molina, “La realidad de la ficción”

The above quote is certainly true for Minaya and Manuel, principal characters of Andalusian writer Antonio Muñoz Molina’s two Magina novels *Beatus Ille* (1986), and *El Jinete Polaco* (1991). Both characters are allowed a look into the past in order to see a recreation of history, becoming entangled in a personal quest to learn, understand, or even invent the past if necessary. The novels interrogate Muñoz Molina’s preoccupation with the role of fiction in the creation of collective memory, and ultimately history. They both explore the role of fictitious memories and fictions in narrating the past; the weight of this same fabricated “history” in our increasingly dispersed identities; the subversion of old myths by new ones, nevertheless achieving a similar result in the form of a static time affected by the difficulty in distinguishing between reality and imagination. In *El Jinete*, through a complex narrative structure<sup>i</sup> in which past and present are presented in a continuous dialogue, Manuel, (a long voluntary exile from his hometown of Magina) looks into the collective past of his town, interacting with his personal memories to such an extent that it becomes impossible to discern between them. His voice and that of the omniscient narrator blur with each other freely. Time and space become entangled entities, as Manuel narrates memories from other characters he cannot have known.

The constantly intertwined memory and experience suggest an insistence on the fluidity of time and an idea of memory as a living entity, susceptible of change. Paradoxically, events seem unmovable: they are endowed with the heavy disposition of faith and destiny. Things had to happen, whereas at the same time memory is reinterpreting these actions. Memories are words, which have hidden the actions. And as Galaz explains,

actions are what matter, not words. This process of the reevaluation of language and fiction, and their immobile sense of order, leads directly to the reevaluation of History itself.

The preoccupation here is with Spanish historiography, at least during the crucial first twenty years of Franco's dictatorship (Herzberger, 1991: 35) which create the subsequent reference points of remembrance and understanding of the Civil War in the mythical terms of a *cruzada*. Manuel and Minaya's gazing into the past demystifies the notion. Still, in Muñoz Molina's case, the unmasking of these techniques will not necessarily imply a substitution of old myths by new ones, preferring instead to comment freely on the unreliability of history and its role as a construction bordering the fantastic. Obliteration of memory, of truth, which is ultimately lost, is interrogated through the ghostly depiction of the Civil War, which is treated in both novels as little more than a setting amongst which the character's personal circumstances revolve, at the same time being the single most important element of a confused past. This obliteration could be read as a comment on the final loss of our grasp on that past, after the long years of Francoist reevaluation of history and subsequent *desmemoria*. Both works do not simply refer to the faulty capacity of memory to reconstruct the past, but also, through the notion of the mediation of imagination and fiction in memory, to the active role of the imaginative mind in the process, re-evaluating the very grounds of history-making itself. Recuperation of the past, in any form, must to a certain extent involve capacity for intuition and invention. Ultimately there is no pretension to achieve truth.

Muñoz Molina has questioned the idea of a history impermeable to fiction. As he writes in his historical essay, *Córdoba de los Omeyas*:

¿No es la Historia una rama de la novela, una ficción de sombras nacida de las ruinas y de los libros, un rumor de escrituras y de voces del pasado, de indicios dudosos, de mentiras que los siglos han vuelto verdad y de verdades tan inaccesibles

como las estatuas ocultas a muchos metros bajo tierra? (...). Sin darse cuenta, el historiador también construye una invención, usando, como el novelista, materiales y fragmentos dispersos de la realidad, edificando con ellos un libro (Muñoz Molina, 1991b: 20)

This pairing of imagination and memory highlights the ambiguity of the foundations of historical knowledge. History, being recorded and understood *from* the present, must dwell on memory's subjective, but also fictitious, approach. The constant mentions of memory and remembering in *El Jinete*, if they remind us of Spain's problematic relationship with historiography during the transition, also evoke what Labanyi refers to as "the tendency of many Spanish intellectuals since the late nineteenth century to construct a vision of Spanish history in terms, not of what happened, but rather of what 'it may have been'" (Labanyi, 2006: 1). This is also true of *Beatus ille*, a novel which "demonstrates that so-called 'impersonal' or 'historical' narration is an illusion" (Rich, 1999: 47).

The similarities between the narrative techniques and structures of fiction (especially mythological) and history have been noted<sup>ii</sup>, in that they both endeavour to achieve a particular effect of persuasion. The mythification of the Comandante Galaz is a perfect example, his isolated action on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936 disproportionately augmented in the collective imaginary to that of a national heroic figure capable of changing the course of history, although this idea is ludicrous, even to himself<sup>iii</sup>. Galaz story is the clearest example of the falsification of the history we are told, and of truth appearing as an unattainable, vague construct. There is however a further, more worrying proposition: as Chamorro burns his "true" memory-objects, and Florencio Pérez's invented biography is preserved, the comment is on the disappearance of memory and its substitution for an invented, fictitious version of history.

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Magina's past resembles a collage of legends, local mythologies and superstitions, which echo the winner's vision of the Civil War as mythological narrative of its own. The structural device to hold this together is fictional. *El Jinete*'s structure is carefully framed by an object, the engraving of the Polish rider, and Manuel is quick to make the connection with the first book he ever read, *Miguel Strogoff*, offering an insight into the role of the object in encapsulating the myriad of symbolic intertextual connotations which reflect Muñoz Molina's historiographic conception, that is, the permeation of fiction into our sense of what is real. From there, a line of confused and intertwined memories of time lived, remembered or imagined concur. Memories blur and "el tiempo se bifurca (...) como en cortinajes sucesivos de niebla" (Ibid: 25). A memory that expands signals an expansion of time, mixing past and present. The effect of this is paradoxically to stop time altogether from moving, to transform it into an static set of scenes captured in amber, there for Manuel to comment on or interpret.

This idea of time stopped is suggested by the fictional models Muñoz Molina favours, including Gothic writing, mythically oriented narratives or the *folletín*. Fluidity of time displaces the narrative voice and focal point, and Magina stops being a place and becomes a mere memory where we are accompanied by the voices of ghosts and shadows (Muñoz Molina, 1991: 57). Magina is a place presented in the midst of the blackest of gothicisms. These horror stories set the tone for the first section, "El reino de las voces", which departs by recollecting don Mercurio's first encounter with the woman who will become mummified, told in a scene of gothic perfection, but also bringing to memory the *folletín* genre (Muñoz Molina, 1991: 35-42) – the scared eyes of the terrified woman about to give birth, the abduction of the young doctor by masked men, etc. The codes of the gothic prevail: Don Mercurio's laboratory, we are told, resembles "uno de esos laboratorios de

doctores lunáticos que se ven en las películas” (Ibid: 125), with antediluvian medical instruments which will provide more pain than relief, all bringing Jack the Ripper to the reader’s mind (Ibid: 51). The big door behind him closes him into a cript-like room with “una definitiva resonancia de lápida” (p.52), and the legend will be evoked “prolongando con una cadencia fúnebre el final de las palabras” (p. 53). The tale of the mummified woman of the gargoyle-studded Casa de las Torres recalls Edgar Allan Poe’s stories “The cask of Amontillado” or “The Black Cat” – and we are told that Manuel counts Poe amongst his heroes (Ibid: 10). This gothicism takes us unaware, until it covers all, and includes a mixture of boogy-man stories, soft-core necrophilia and urban legend, that forms the skeleton of the town’s life.

There are also the men who extract blood from young children (Ibid: 21), the version of the boogy man in post-war Spain, who find their innocent victims in the calle del Pozo (or Pit street, reminding also to a Poe’s tale), which is “empedrada y oscura” (Ibid: 21), or the terrifying Juancaballos, half man and half horse, centaurs who live in the Sierra (Ibid: 23, 26), or “la Tía Tragantía” (Ibid: 26), “los desconocidos que ofrecían caramelos a las niñas o llevaban al hombro un saco que tal vez contenía una cabeza cortada” (Ibid: 46), the “cuartos en penumbra y puertas entornadas” (Ibid: 46), “las salmodias de las brujas y los cuentos atroces del tío Mantequero” (Ibid: 49), “la letanía de la madre y la hija que oyen desde la cama los pasos del asesino que viene a degollarlas” (Ibid: 46), “el cochero de la Macana con su cara de verdugo o de muerto, el médico jorobado, don Mercurio (...) que parecía de antemano enviado por la funeraria” (Ibid: 49). The photographer Ramiro Retratista, who falls in love with the mummified woman, will feed his longins on liquor, Schubert’s “Dead and the Maiden” and “la necrofilia blanda de (...) *Espérame en el cielo*” (Ibid: 97).



Horror conforms to the everyday qualities of the common-place existence, serving as a marker of the passing of time in Magina, as each season had “sus narraciones y terrores” (Ibid: 44). Hence, they align themselves to Myth in making Magina a place stopped in time, where the same ghosts and dangers lurk behind close doors generations after they were firstly discovered, perhaps imagined. Fear becomes the clearest of childhood memories. And like history, this constant, indefinite fear is circular and can be transmitted (Muñoz Molina, 1991: 44). We learn of the fear of Manuel’s mother as a child, and how she grew up “[c]reció (...) sometida por el miedo, alimentada por él” (Ibid: 134). This is the same fear inherited by Manuel a fear that has always been there since after the Civil War, recaptured through the image of “esquelas mortuorias (...). Voces, caras sin nombre (...) de muertos, de verdugos, de inocentes, de víctimas” (Ibid: 57). Manuel understands how in his own memories have been impregnated by the fears and the remembrances of the rest of his family (Ibid: 27). The prominence of these stories is in some way reinforced by the silence that seems to surround all communication outside them, a silence which augments their importance in the town’s imaginary, as if the its whole ambience is impregnated, primarily, by them, as it is

un silencio *de augurio*, poblado por los fantasmas nacidos del miedo de varias generaciones, por el eco de los cerrojos y de los llamadores en las puertas, por los pasos de los desconocidos, por los borrachos, los asesinos y los locos que perduraban en la memoria acobardada de Mágina y en las palabras siempre clandestinas o ambiguas de nuestros mayores (Ibid: 75-6) [my italics]

and which unites fear and silence, fear and alteration of the truth.

But pain is also a factor. As Solana explains about Mariana’s death in *Beatus Ille*, certain types of pain act as “amnesia para la memoria” (Muñoz Molina, 1986: 248). The cult of violence and terror in post-war literature has been called the “cathartic process in which pain and suffering purge the Spanish soul after centuries of neglect” (Thomas, 1990:

70). The suggestions of how to be careful and silent refer to a social, political fear in post-war Spain. Fear is given a more “tangible” expression, paradoxically, in these “intangible” presences, in ghosts, monsters, assassins and apparitions, which sublimate painful past experiences. The insistence on returning to the legend of horror exists in order to mask greater, political and social fears, symbolised by the mummified woman. She is the metaphor who unites all the fictional tropes of the *folletín*, gothicism and myth. She represents that static, terrifying mythical past detained in amber, stopped in time by the official versions of history as much as by the fear she is come to stand for. The “emparerada”, symbolises this double pathos of mythic time, the static, neverending flow of repetitive, orderly narrative, but also obliteration that these inventions contain. For if the folletín – which also appears in *Beatus Ille* as *Rosa María, o la flor de los amores* – and the mythically orientated narratives assert the world order, the unreality paradigmatic of the fantastic genre, as Todorov has shown, integrates ambiguity into the narrative discourse of the real (Todorov: 1982): 41. Of course, “history is not a text”, as Jameson has put it, but he continues: “not a narrative, (...) but, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form”, and therefore “our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through prior textualization” (Jameson: 1981: 35).

One of the major structural tropes of Myth according to Roland Barthes, is this notion of stasis, or Myth’s capacity to stop time and, crucially, history. There are many examples in both novels of Magina’s alteration of time into a static realm. Time in mythical Magina is unique, static, invented, magical. In Magina all epochs are the same, all ages interpenetrate rather than substitute each other, as a kaleidoscope of images. It is not surprising that, as Cobo Navajas has rightly argued, the other Magina novel *Beatus Ille*, is technically composed of “recurrencias narrativas, que tienen que ver también con la

relentización del tiempo” (Cobo Navajas, 2000: 36), something which brings to mind the structural composition of the Gothic Novel. The villa where Minaya looks for refuge is also a place where many characters stay stuck in time – his uncle living in the past, Solana pretending that he is dead, Elvira gazing over old magazines. They are all ghosts, “náufragos” (Muñoz Molina, 1986: 75), moving through the galleries as ghosts or shadows, as if they were only memories, as Solana himself suggests (Ibid: 138). We are told that clocks and watches “no sirven para medir un tiempo que únicamente ha existido en esa ciudad” (Ibid: 29), and to signal this, very tellingly the clock in the tower of the square General Orduña stopped working on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936 – the day of the Nationalist uprising leading to the Civil War – and did not work again until the end of the conflict, once the town was taken by the winning side: to enter yet another section of time and history which in itself will be static, collected by the protagonist’s musings in *El dueño del secreto*, who refers to the dictatorship as the “eternal night” (Muñoz Molina, 1994: 94).

The inhabitants of Magina exemplify this: Don Mercurio’s anachronistic style “sus trajes y modales y su capa de principios de siglo” (Ibid: 51), is the living embodiment of time stopped. He is said to have found the secret of eternal life (Ibid: 53), almost like the mummified girl, a living being condemned to remain static for all eternity. These anachronisms reach language itself, with old-fashioned terminology. As if the town was outside time, but also outside the conflicts of history, its inhabitants hardly mention the Civil War. Manuel’s uncle turns back his mule when he is going to the front, and amazingly no one notices it or comes looking for him. This is a relevant moment, worthy of a magic-realist novel, as it shows the masking of reality by the mythical status.

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But time is circular, repetitive, paradoxical. Magina's time is not only static, but curiously malleable, allowing the characters to venture also into the future, as happens to policeman Florencio Pérez: if Don Mercurio was stucked in the past, Florencio Pérez starts an imaginary journey into the future as he writes his invented memoirs from a distant future which still has not happened: "ya había llegado al momento justo que estaba viviendo (...) y empezó tranquilamente a contar sus recuerdos del día siguiente" (Ibid: 60-1). Past and present alternates fluidly and time moves backwards and forwards in a recollection process which rather resembles travelling on a time machine. This static time is therefore also eternal, infinite: an idea which reinforces the notion of Magina as a place where time is almost something tangible. It is precisely this vision of time as cyclic which allows for personal and collective memories and versions of truth to become entangled in Manuel. He never quite grasps time, comparing it with "un traje que siempre me cae mal, se me queda corto y ando desesperado, o de pronto me sobra y no sé qué hacer con él" (Ibid: 415). The story that Nadia and Manuel tell each other has no beginning or end<sup>iv</sup>. The unreal flow of time in Magina, "lugar sin tiempo, sin formas precisas" (Ibid: 157), affects its inhabitants in their capacity to recollect, to move beyond the legends they clutch. Magina is trapped in the vicious circle of being incapable to discern between what is real and what is not, helped by the circularity of the novel, which structure is that of *mise-en-abîme* with stories inside other stories, in a never ending circle, or inside "un sueño dentro de otro sueño" (Ibid: 111). Equally, the photographs in *Beatus Ille* function as mirages, simulacra, which emphasise the unreality of what Minaya is told, and his subsequent search for the truth.

For Minaya, as much as for Manuel in *El Jinete*, the meeting with the mythical figures of Solana and the teniente Galaz poses the problem of distinguishing for the first time between reality and unreality, something Muñoz Molina's characters seem to be

particularly bad at<sup>v</sup>. The invented/imagined future memoirs by Florencio Pérez are a good example. But there are more telling signs indicating that the characters do not desire to conform to a given version of reality coming from outside, but prefer to invent their own. Minaya has the feeling that the square he has just abandoned has never existed (Muñoz Molina, 1986: 26). And for his uncle Manuel, “de tanto pensar en Mariana y en el que fue su mejor amigo se le gastaron los recuerdos, de modo que ya no estaba seguro de que hubieran existido verdaderamente”. In *El Jinete* Manuel repeatedly refers to Nadia’s and his past together, as “nuestro pasado común, inventado, imposible” (Muñoz Molina, 1991: 80). As soon as they meet he is aware of this feeling of possessing “un pasado común en el que sin conocerse ya estaban juntos” (Ibid: 16).

What worries Muñoz Molina is the effect that this blurring between reality and imagination has on collective memory, as Manuel’s capacity for remembrance is compared to “uno de esos sueños livianos tan fácilmente interferidos por la realidad” (Ibid: 109). Nadia invokes a Spain filtered through her father’s recollections from exile (Ibid: 152). Manuel says:

Puedo inventar ahora, impunemente, para mi propia ternura y nostalgia, uno o dos recuerdos falsos pero no inverosímiles, no más arbitrarios, sólo ahora lo sé, que los que de verdad me pertenecen, no porque yo los eligiera ni porque se guardara en ellos una simiente de mi vida futura, sino porque permanecieron sin motivo flotando sobre la gran laguna oscura de la desmemoria (Ibid: 189)

It is the “olvido”, la “desmemoria” in which the town has been stopped, stuck forever in their own mythological explanations of the world, which he now rationalises gives him the right to resort to a kind of fiction. Imagination and fabrication form part of the town’s understanding of the world around it, as Galaz experiences before his exile. Even the minor duties of his post as Comandante of the town garrison put him in contact with imagination:

Chamorro le presentó una relación minuciosa y seguramente imaginaria de soldados (...) y raciones (...) y la firmó, ésa era otra de sus tareas ficticias (...) las cantidades exactas pero también falsas (...) y la suma detallada de todo, ilusoria y perfecta” (Ibid: 325).

He reflects that he is living a kind of double life, with a real life, imposed by social circumstances, and a fictitious, imagined one, and in order to keep his reputation all he needs to do is not “interrumpir la cadena usual de los actos ficticios” (Ibid: 325). Other characters are also contaminated by this. Manuel’s painter friend inaugurates an exhibition in Manhattan which is “toda de paisajes inventados de África” (Ibid: 395). His grandfather revels in telling lies, in magnifying his past actions, as if the old man represented the conscience of the town, so filled with wrong recollections and lies that he cannot discern what is real anymore.

This faculty for imagination impinges on a memory which is selective and fabricated. As Manuel says, “lo que yo supongo invención es en realidad una forma invulnerada de la memoria” (Ibid: 194), for, after all, he tends to mix “los hilos de la imaginación y de la memoria” (Ibid: 508). The problem is that if perception and memory are tainted by fiction, it follows that interpretation of the hurtful episodes of the past will also be.

We find further examples in *Beltenebros* (1989), or *El invierno en Lisboa* (1987), where the characters consciously visualise and make sense of their experiences through the narrative codes proposed by fiction. So much of the world of Darman is fictionalised, hidden amongst lies and deceptions – he is a spy – that reality can only be paradoxically found through the fictionalised worlds of the novels Rebeca Osorio writes. In *El invierno en Lisboa*, Santiago Biralbo seems to adapt reality, or rather understand it, through the fictionalised world of cinema, for example when he notes that a lovers meeting is the last

because it is raining ‘(...) por las películas (...) cuando llueve tanto es que alguien se va a ir para siempre’” (Muñoz Molina, 1987: 34). The teenager Manuel engages frantically with a reinvention and imagination of possible lives as he works in the family orchard (Muñoz Molina, 1991: 252), not a mere pastime, but of the utmost significance to the young Manuel, worthy of careful attention, and “había días y semanas enteras que dedicaba a la invención detallada de una sola vida” (Ibid: 252). Solana resorts to the orderly codes of narrative to make sense of Mariana’s death (Muñoz Molina, 1986: 219). Possible identities are stolen from novels, copied from singers who lived exciting lives in distant cities (Muñoz Molina, 1991: 338-9), signalled by Manuel’s adoption of a “manera tan artificiosa y literaria de fumar” (Ibid: 271). The arrival of Minaya makes Solana return to his own literary-status of “hero”. Two worlds collide, the world of reality and the world of desire, of imagination. His suicide becomes his manner of uniting both.

Manuel seems to think that he has a certain right to reinterpret this history, that one’s personal memory reorganises the “orden de los hechos”. Recollection is a hard, unattainable goal, impregnated by fiction and lacking any guarantees (Ibid: 236). Memories can wait for who is willing to do the retelling: “[e]ra como si el recuerdo hubiera estado esperándome aquí todos estos años” (Ibid: 533). But there is no pretension of objectivity, as the protagonist of *El dueño del secreto* is aware of: “[u]no tiende a favorecerse en los retratos del pasado que traza la memoria” (Muñoz Molina, 1994: 96), as if memory did in some way belong to whoever decided to trade on it. Memories “remembered”, evoked or invented are the same, and the characters accept freely the delimitations imposed by mixing them, aiming at achieving not truth, but a manner of knowledge.

As the story of the “emparedada” demonstrates, if to search into the memories of the collectivity means to unmask these same stories as legends, myths and untruths, instead of proposing new myths, Muñoz Molina suggests that a look at our individuality beyond any “collective” considerations is the way forward. The return to Magina signalises that Manuel sees things anew understanding, precisely, that he didn’t understand much before, that the collective imaginary wasn’t composed of real facts faithfully transmitted. Manuel sees that, beyond the recuperation of this past, there is a better thing to do: to attain a reality of one’s own. Nadia is reclaiming the knowledge, the possession of a particular memory about them both, precisely, because she is the one doing the retelling at that point. And the power of orality refers directly to the power of Myth to take over history, as Solana’s reflection to Minaya in *Beatus Ille* shows: “No importa que una historia sea verdad o mentira, sino que uno sepa contarla” (Muñoz Molina, 1986: 277).

Muñoz Molina has said that “la tarea del que cuenta es salvar e inventar la memoria”, and in fact his Magina novels argue that fictions can help us understand who we are when the facts have been so painfully lost as to never be able to be located again, something true of Spanish recent history. There are no lost paradises, and if the Republic sported any Myths these are also challenged, for example, the myth of the Christ-like figure of Solana or Galaz. In Muñoz Molina’s world not much remains from the ideals of the Republic, not much more than few scattered signs, forgotten and invisible to the oblivious passers-by, as the one which the impressionable protagonist of *El dueño del secreto* is shown by his mentor Ataúlfo: “una modesta fuente pública en la que había un letrero que yo no habría observado si él no me lo llega a enseñar: *República española, 1934*” (Muñoz Molina, 1994: 99).



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<sup>i</sup> The relevance of this fact becomes apparent when one remembers that, during and after the Civil War, “the full diversity of the past is (...) either expanded or constricted into particular types of narrative structures” (Herzberger, 1991: 34), for clear political reasons.

<sup>ii</sup> See for example Fernando Aínsa, “Unidad textual y doble discurso: la invención literaria y la “reconstrucción” histórica”, in *Histoire et Imaginaire dans le roman hispano-américain contemporain*, *Cahiers du CRICCAL*, No. 12 (Paris, 1993, Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle), p. 29

See also Christine Pérès: “l’écrivain considère l’Histoire comme une branche de la littérature parce que ses limites sont évidentes”, *Le nouveau roman espagnol et la quête d’identité: Antonio Muñoz Molina* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001): p. 134.

<sup>iii</sup> Notice how in the popular imaginary events with little – not beyond – local importance are equalled to the larger sphere of History with a capital letter for whoever enacts them.

<sup>iv</sup> This has also been noted by Pérès (2001): 68

<sup>v</sup> One can also see these in other works by the author, i.e. *El invierno en Lisboa*, *Beltenebros*, *Beatus Ille*, *El dueño del secreto*. This is also apparent in some of the short stories of his collection *Nada del otro mundo*.