Asturias sem 3

El señor presidente

Focus on mood/atmosphere rather than objective etc

Atmosphere in novel – atmosphere of terror living under dict. – this feeling of terror/anxiety is consistent through novel; upside down, no control

^to achieve that, what new novel/Asturias has to do is extend features of novel rather than jut describe – moving to a type of writing that tends to express feelings/ emotions/ sensations, which is how we experience reality – not just rational process, move “away from realism”

New novel rejects antiquated assumption that reality can be described objectively etc, rests in assumption that people (us) experience reality subjectively, each person experiences reality in a different way, so therefore what the novel does is to abandon that conventional system between objective/ subjective reality

Instead what it does instead is to project inner world of characters onto outside world

EG – C32 Carajal ? wife running round trying to find out what’s going on, she sits down on bench n street facing smth etc – El banco desapareció en la oscuridad de la noche como una table en el mar

Bench doesn’t really disappear – language is objective language, but what really is happening is that she’s feeling so disorientated, that she feels world is disintegrating around her – loses all sense of self/feeling, total helplessness – her foundation (husband has gone) personal connection gone = connection to world gone, but author expresses stuff simply as if it were reality

Abondons conventional system of subjective/objective language, describing subjective feelings with objective language which gives this novel its feel – basis of what will become magical realism, projection of emotions/ feelings onto the descriptions of everyday objects

Following on from avant-garde poetry, what this novel does is basically to use language in a new, and for more expressive way: rather than use language to describe stuff accurately, using language to describe how stuff feels

C15 – 3 pages in, paragraph beginning Don Juan…

In this paragraph introduced to character tio… someone, passing character who just appears – lottery ticket vendor – 8 lines in? towards end? Inverted commas – selling lottery tickets, metaphorical point he’s making about life: truth is false/false is truth, buy a lottery ticket bc life here is just a lottery, not determined by logic, morals, values etc – whether your successful or a failure is just sheer lottery, don’t get punished or rewarded for good or bad, simply chance in this world

^describing this idea of world that is distorted, reality of thee people and habits is a distorted reality, reflected in, not what he says, but language itself is distorted basically – don’t know what’s going on? Etc, character made to talk in distorted language which reflects the distorted values he’s talking about – eg of how novel uses language in a more unusual expressive way to create emphasis on idea of mood/atmosphere

Various elements of atmosphere/mood which tie the various episodes etc together:

Linked by character/plot development etc similar pattern repeated over and over again, allows us to make some kind of sense in this apparently chaotic novel

Obvious atmospheric element- darkness, both outside and inside

Opening of novel: Shadows of the cathedral, church bells clangs- noise people screaming etc, lack of communication – all fumbling around in dark, light shrinks, darkness descends creating nightmarish feel which dominates entire novel

Most of it takes place at night time, often there’s darkness inside too – general roda’s room, prison cell etc complete darkness

Most of the characters live in fear of the dark – screaming beggars tormentado por la oscuridad

General rhodas screaming out in night for someone to turn on the light

Fear of the evil terrorising regime or president, but also characters living in some kind of void – disorientated – can’t see where theyre going/ what to do, breaking up normal relationships = people alone in dark – they don’t have choice of their future -> fear of unknown? Nothingness? Unable to make connections with other people – infinite solitude (translate in Spanish for quote), people menaced by some terror they cannot see = president, everywhere but no where

Darkness, void of time – void characters inhabit also seems to be a temporal one as well as a spacial one – everyone seems to be trapped and disorientated in the present, nothing to look back or forward on. Cell that 3 prisoners are in: conversations in the dark, dialogue in the dark – “when does the jailer come around” “I think it’s once a century” – time skewed no real sense of order/ chronological progression, characters all like caricatures – don’t come from background or context, just appear and often disappear from nowhere – characters often confused by time, trying to work out what day it is – Lucio Basque? Planning something, mistakes time looking at cathedral clock – time = void, confused by time getting it wrong

Used to realist fiction – novel divided into 3 parts = some kind of structure? But the

21st 23rd 24nd / 24th 25th 26th.. / last part called? Brief illusion of temporal coherence, yet left which this never-ending void -> structure shows it too – anguish terror of characters becomes more and more qccute they become more disorientated as sense of time distinguishes

Novel starts just as it ends – cathedral, president’s re-election, time just like politics has gone no where

Sense how this special/temporal void feels – time and space are two things we use to make sense of reality.

Something else we get: time is broken, vision/space is broken, also distinction between dream and reality is broken down too – constant emphasis on nightmares or delirium or hallucinations

There are so many:

Eg – when nina? in prison cell? Losing all sense of space

* Nightmare of massive eye attack – surveillance culture anxiety
* Filelele? Fantastic dreams running away travelling through cosmos can hear dead mother screaming
* C6 nightmare confronts president

Idea that world these characters inhabit is a nightmarish one: breaks down conventional connection between dream and reality

C8 when Felele/Pelele flees to countryside and comes back to city – description of him coming back to city is ? not real ? bc carajndsm finds him later still in countryside

Emphasis on nightmares dissolves conventional distinction between dream and reality and suggests nightmare becomes reality and vice versa

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Another atmospheric element:

Not just darkness, but noise is a big thing – not just dark when it’s opening but screeches and cries and coughs and clanging bells etc, people being beaten up etc

2nd page – paragraph beginning comidos ? bit further (10 lines?) now description all about ssound (a veces…) los gritos… (repetition of a veces = it’s not just sometimes, it’s all the time – another way language breaks down temporal space – whilst connoting this broken down world with lack of communication – lots of a veces, not able to connect) constant noise but always “a veces”

Another – noise and unsettling – environment made to seem threatening – characters made to seem threatened by the very environment they live in

C3 – peleles running away from city in state of terror – 3rd para – “sueno” running and being pursued by dogs and by rain – described as nails, the very physical environment he inhabits seems dangerous

^he stops with hands over his face, “defending himself from the telegraph poles” – they’re not attacking but seems as they are, whole environment becomes threatening

C5 when doctor bureño comes home, comes to house he instinctively checks rooves of neighbouring houses bc he’s scared of gigantic hands coming over the rooves and strangling him – inanimate objects taking on expressive/emotional dimensions – made to feel dangerous and threatening

Which brings us to another element: characters never rest – always running from place to place, chased – he’s running around etc, carajal going through town office to office, ferdina .. doing same thing, caraje angel also going around lots – sense of constant restlessness

^all of these things = atmospheric void being created

Characters all in state of helplessness, trapped in circular, dark void, and cant’ do anything to stop it- trapped in a situation from which there’s no escape – reflected in constant references to prison cells and cyclic structure – novel itself starts over with new victims of the system

Dark – same outside than inside, prison reflects whole society – they’re all prisoners in society: president’s regime = one big prison

Pelelels? Towards end of C3 – people running around but trapped – pelele good eg, con lavios y sin lavios – paragraph

^tormented by people calling out madre etc – running away to escape tormentors, eventually he reaches un volcano? Leaping from one volcano to another, one sky to another sky, one star to another star – but he can’t escape the cries no matter how far he goes despite entering apparent cosmic journey, he is still trapped

Caraje Angel something similar happens – think he can escape and go to USA and be safe, but it’s all a trap laid by president and he’s caught and laid into dungeon, illusion of escape but never can escape – he is trapped

Idea of cat and mouse game and manipulation, trying to be free, thinking they are free but never being able to reach freedom reflects about motif of novel – puppeteer – people run a puppet show Don Benjamín – v tiny? “ín” and wife doña venjamón – v big “ón”? C8 puppeteer at cathedral front – he is a puppeteer himself, but is held us by his wife, his legs are kicking helplessly – no control of own destiny fate – even puppeteer is trapped – chaos – reversal? They’re all controlled and manipulated even puppeteers themselves are controlled by someone above them, everything helpless – unsees hand of president – irony in it being a woman – could never be the reality?

What lnks all these episodes together? And creates this expressive state of characters constantly terrorized trapped in void -> the atmosphere ties all the bits and pieces of action together – no dependency on realist techniques like plot and character – something we come to associate with new novel

Rather than develop plot or character it enforces reoccurring motifs etc that connects characters

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Plot is not much more than framework, instead our reading of novel isn’t structured by, not external links, but in a sense is structured by internal links that we create: what we mean by this – is that there are lots of repeated motifs that crop up again and again, this repetition of same motifs prompts us to make links between various episodes and strctures our reading of it/ makes us read it in a particular way

thematic reading:

all about social destruction and oppression

One obvious set of motifs is to do with the breaking down of society/conventional relationships – broken down repeatedly into individuals

* Family ties
* Mothers and children
* Fathers and daughters
* Friendships

Etcetcetc

(find names when revising and put here)

No one talks about dictatorships, Asturias just shows us things and we make links and one of those things is break down of conventional relationships and isolation

This physical separation and loss of physical contact I s often accompanied by some symbolised/ nonliteral/ non rational symbol/metapho

* When General … leaves Camila
* Le faltaba le voz – they suffer los of verbal contact which reflects physical separation that follows
* When ferdina rhodas separated from child, desperately trying to shove into womb to keep safe – bond between mother and child is broken and she is stammering senselessly – !hij! !hij! !hij! !hij! -.. loss of physical contact reinforced by loss of verbal contact when conventional language breaks down – !hij! no longer able to say hijo – broken word symbolises broken bond between mother and son

Constant linguistic references/ break down/loss of language which reinforce the break down/loss of physical contact

Motif of lack of communication

Lots of married couples in these novels linked, not by plot, but theme of lack of communication

Doctor Bareño and puppeteer man C5 and C8 – cant express themselves to their wives

End of C8 convo between don Benjamin and doña venjamon – dialogue that takes place – he says “illogico” she says “logico” he says “illogico illogico illogico” she says “logico logico logico” – not a real conversation – “relogico”? – re- before something makes something bigger ie “es rebuena”? - anyway, these two having an argument about whether something is logical or illogical but they’re not really communicating, just adding more augmentatives to same word – long passage of dialogue, but dialogue goes nowhere – no real discussion/communication – once again the use of language reflects the theme of non-communication

Non communication is reinforced by further mini motifs/scenes which deal with the theme of non-communication which reflects how people aren’t bonding and don’t have functioning relationships with one another

Eg C18 caraje angel and camila wandering streets and bump into drunk postman – so drunk that he can speak – lack of c o m m u n I ca t I o n – he drops his letters every they get dropped in rain, communication that is never going to happen -> this episode contributes nothing to plot, but little episodes like this reinforce lack of communication and bonds – no plot/character dimension but yet another motif

Whispers – etc seems like only communication, but is inverted form of comm bc spreading lies and exaggerated stories

All characters isolated from each other in this society – can’t form relationships with one another or act collectively

Brought out again right at start by hostility that characterizes the beggars – first page – 3rd para – first people we see are the beggars (in a book called el señor presidente) – no bond between them – cursing/ insulting each other between their teeth, act like enemies looking for a fight - don’t even sleep properly bc they sleep protecting all their stuff from each other, separados – all on a state of alert – suspicious of one another/ it was never known for them to help one another, would have rather have given belongings to the dogs than to other comrades

^right from start there’s this emphasis on isolation

Camila rejected by family – isolated

Pelele? – hounded and isolated

Puppet show on same page as illogico convo – what they’re arguing about is in para before, he is putting on puppet show for some kids – he says the sadder/ more violent it got the more they enjoyed it, children were laughing at seeing people crying and being hit – fact that children were laughing at suffering sums up nature of this society where people have little remorse for one another and are completely isolated

Breaking society down into individuals then breaking the individuals down themselves/ in spirit

^ this is pattern throughout novel

Beggars are described as p inhuman, not described sympathetically – nothing going for them, semll bad, violent, mean to one another – reduced to one another, described as a collection of human waste – why do we start off with these physically – physical deformity of beggars reflects moral deformity of presidente and system – the degrading of the beggars is foreshadowing of how the rest of the characters will also be degraded

Ties back to Motif of physical disintegration when physical connections are broken down and lost – broken in spirit/ morally degraded as well as physically broken down – demoralization and dehumanization is reinforced by several egs of motif of dehumanization etc

Canales about to be separated from daughter and loses voice – body breaks down – C10 beginning about 10 lines in, language breaking down – whats happening to him? All he an speak is leftover of words, little noises/ words “chopped up in pieces” – he feels like he has to literally physically hold himself together like his body is disintegrating

Another case of disintegration moral & spiritual

Another eg = C32 when caraje angel called to meet president – first page second para – CA in a carriage – being summoned to president’s palace, he’s going along in carriage, few lines into para = literally what’s happening is that he is being bumped over the cobbles and he’s seeing the shop signs – cant see them poeprly seeing bits of it, and his speech is physically interrupted, btu also he’s in a state of terror/ anxiety/ uncertainty – fragmented nature of signs and Chinese letters on signs = moral disintegration, his inability to read words/ speak words is falling apart

^technique which brings out physical disintegration without telling us directly

Another eg: C31 mrs. someone given news about husband – she’s told he’s been executed, all she can say is “!le, le, le…” speaking but doesn’t make sense – her language breaks down, bit more than that: they say he’s been shot “conforme a la ley” – in accordance to the law- le, le, le conjunction of “ley” – what used to be meaningful structured construct, now her concept of justice just like the system of the ley itself is repetitive and broken down and makes no sense

2 stages: motifs for breaking down of society / motifs for breaking down of individual

Few other motifs –

Names of the characters: Pelele/ Muda?/ etc are they real names? no – v few characters have proper names, their identity is removed from them and replaced with mock names/ nick names – caraje angel – angel face/ joke/ doña venjamón <- jokes/ caricatures/ or titles - estudiante/ presidente etc

Even naming of characters have non individualising names

Beggars are indistinguishable mass repeatedly referred to as sombras?/shadows of human beings – the naming or non-naming of characters dissolves their human identity and makes them ghosts or shadows of human identity

^this naming is reinforced by yet another motif: human beings often described as animal imagery – dehumanized – loads of egs – prostitutes in nightclub, waiting for clients like cattle for slaughter – couples dancing at brothel described as 2 headed animals - a man approaches prostitute in club, like a dog approaching bitch – when man has eye nightmare he screams like wild beast – person who isspeaker at celebration day la lengua de vaca – doctor buriñal? Only described as ese animal by el president/ best eg maybe C15 – when CA is trying to find camila somewhere to live visits camila’s uncle – they refuse to let her in, the only thing they can hear is dog barking inside CA reflects later “el perro sigue siendo el alma? de la familia” – soul of family represented by animal, people aren’t acting like humans anymore – no love and family values at heart of family, but instead animal degradation

These diff motifs build up to show us how this society is constructed

One slightly less obvious motif that underlines all this: C12 – about 5 pages in, las sala? Camila is having a childhood memory, recalling a scene from her past – memory of her in a cinema – room where films are shown – plantaje? Screen – recalling visit to cinema as a child, on the screen she saw blurry shadowy figures walking like puppets as if they were breaking apart – black and white silent moving with flickering screens / picture quality v poor etc – recalling the comic, slapstick movies she used to see as a child and they jerk-y figures of these early movies, who didn’t look like real people, like caricatures of people – significance?: she’s reflecting on her past through jerky, silent film – puppets – no communication, not free people – Charlie chaplin etc, it’s comedy meant to be funny – suggestion is that these characters/ people in this novel have become so stripped of their humanity that they’re not taking seriously as people anymore, they’re just parodies of human beings, just like actors in these early silence movies – may be explained to degree as black comedy in novel? One people goes wrong at beginning of novel then whole load of people get caught up in this almost comical farce – interrogation scene with beggars, torture scene in one sense – but like a slapstick comedy? Scene of degradation and torture is portrayed as slapstick comedy movie

Why is \_\_ arrested? Bc he’s disrespecting president’s wife, but what is actually happening is he cant find glasses and accidentally takes down flier advertising president’s wife’s jubilee so he’s jumped on and arrested

When someone else \_\_\_ is arrested, he’s in full dress, but taken down formal way to be arrested – comedy built on contrast

Lucio basque? With lover waiting for kidnapping he’s trying to touch her in dark but they miss each other ? clumsiness

CA and camila are out trying to find somewhere to stay and the wind blows his hat off, and when he reaches down to pick it up it gets blows away more

Novel ends in comedy – after president’s celebration, it ends with the musician dropping drum down stairs – sounds like bombs/guns etc – ends in pub or wherever in chaos – terror symbolized by comedy

Contrast and contradictions between absurdity/ benignity of evil?/ novel becomes absurd etc – idea of dehumanization, theyre stripped from their human values so much that they lose integrity and become laughable, we as reader end up laughing at them – almost stop getting sympathy of reader? By reducing them to farce it breaks from norms of conventional realism, not describing world in objective terms but creating subjective/ expressive reactions etc – final point to make is novel represents shift from objective to expression of subjective reality

Novel isn’t realistic but it’s talking about the real world – may seem illogical and nonsense etc but that’s the world we live in