

Hauntologizing the (un)foreseen present: The 2008 financial crisis in Antonio Muñoz Molina's *La noche de los tiempos* and *Todo lo que era sólido*

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Abstract

This article deals with Antonio Muñoz Molina's *La noche de los tiempos* (2009) and *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013) and provides an interdiscursive analysis of both works, aiming at highlighting their thematic and affective connections. Similarly, I contend that these works belong in the fabric of cultural narratives around the 2008 financial crisis. On the other hand the spectral nature of the narrators of both *La noche de los tiempos* and *Todo lo que era sólido* is scrutinized, departing from Derrida's notion of hauntology. Finally, the role of metaphors in the construction of reality is examined, paying heed to Muñoz Molina's lucid analysis of the dominant metaphors that were used during the years prior to the 2008 financial crisis. His analysis leads us to consider the necessity of creating a new narrative for Europe which helps shape and redefine a new sense of Europeanness.

Keywords:

crisis, hauntology, Antonio Muñoz Molina, constitutive metaphors, new narrative for Europe

In Search of a New Narrative for the Europe of Crisis

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, we feel urged to gauge the consequences that this financial crisis has generated in Europe. In the case of peripheral economies like those of Spain, Portugal or Greece, the European Union resorted to bailouts and austerity measures which provoked the impoverishment of a considerable part of the populations of these countries (Álvarez Peralta et al., 2013: 197-217). As we know, history is often stubborn and the combination of this adverse economic scenario with the increase of migration flows towards Europe is usually a fertile ground for the menacing rise to power of populist and nationalist leaders who easily obtain immediate support from a substantial part of the population, as is occurring currently across the continent. As a result of these populist and nationalist policies, borders are being put into question more than ever. The final outcome of the Brexit referendum is still unpredictable and the very questioning of

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the borders of the European Union which it implies has undoubtedly set an ominous precedent for ongoing crises in other member states which might result in an undesirable fragmentation of Europeanness. In opposition to this rise of neo-nationalist identity politics and populist policies, i.e. the triumph of the politics of unreason (Rensmann, 2018), a new narrative for Europe is required which highlights and conveys the many achievements of a story of transnational success. If we take for granted that the 2008 financial crisis was also a symbolic crisis, as Paul Crosthwaite (2013) contended in his article ‘Is a financial crisis a trauma?’, then it seems plausible to affirm that of all human discourses literature is one of the most suitable to analyze the social, economic and cultural contradictions resulting from the 2008 financial meltdown (Valdivia, 2016). Thus, the present article attempts to offer an interdiscursive analysis of Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *La noche de los tiempos* (2009) [*In the Night of Time*] and *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013) [*All that was solid*] which highlights the thematic and affective connections between both works (Moreiras, 2014), each one belonging to a different genre, one being a novel on the Spanish Civil War and the other an essay shedding light on the origins of the 2008 financial crisis. In this sense, I contend that both works are part of the warp and weft of the cultural narratives around the 2008 financial and symbolic crisis. Yet these cultural narratives of crisis are not restricted to the Hispanic context, as they are interconnected in their local specificity with a broader and transnational European context. Thus, the national specificity of the themes dealt with in Antonio Muñoz Molina’s works acquire a universal dimension if they are addressed from a transnational approach. As a matter of fact, after the transition to democracy Spain followed the same neoliberal policies adopted in Europe and America. In the Spanish case this resulted in an economy based on the real estate bubble (Catalá-Carrasco, de la Fuente and Valdivia, 2017: 109). Accordingly, if Europe is demanding a new narrative, the two works I am dealing with provide an analytical key to elucidate some reasons for that necessity. In this sense, departing from Muñoz Molina’s lucid analysis of the metaphors which were privileged before the 2008 financial crisis, I would like to scrutinize the central role of metaphors in the construction of our reality and the possibilities new metaphors offer in order to avoid the fragmentation of the very notion of Europeanness.

‘Blindness in the midst of the agitation of the present moment’: an interdiscursive analysis

As previously mentioned, the present case study centers on Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *La noche de los tiempos* (2009) and *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013). This section of the article aims to highlight the thematic and affective connections between two literary works belonging to different genres: a novel and an essay. An interdiscursive analysis (Albaladejo, 2008a) of both works allows us to elucidate those links. This methodological approach permits contrastive analyses among different works from different authors and literatures and also among literary works from the same author (Albaladejo, 2008b). However, before we proceed to illuminate the links that connect both works, we should consider how a novel about the 1936 Spanish Civil War could be thematically connected to an essay on the 2008 financial crisis and the particular effects it had in Spain. Similarly, we should address the question of why Muñoz Molina’s novel on the Spanish

Civil War might be classified as a cultural narrative for the 2008 financial crisis. The answer to both questions can be found in the following passage from *Todo lo que era sólido*:

Confusion and restlessness a sensation of danger and collapse, while being the pulse and subject of my writing then, responded to an entirely contemporary experience. However, I was not capable of recounting it with the materials I had then. This brought its own feeling of remorse which could not find relief, not even in the moments when I was most dedicated to my novel, most possessed by it. I was writing about the blindness of those who do not know how to see what is happening right in the midst of the agitation of the present moment, whether out of distraction, or irresponsibility, or going about their own business, or deciding out of deep fear to not accept the possibility of disaster, or out of pure inertia of believing that things are much more solid than they are in reality. I myself could not see anything, absorbed as I was in my writing, enclosed in 2007 in my 1936 time capsule.¹

In the words of the Spanish author, ‘blindness’, ‘distraction’ or ‘irresponsibility’ constituted the thematic core of *La noche de los tiempos*. At the same time, the narrator of *Todo lo que era sólido* reveals that his novel about the Spanish Civil War stemmed from the distraction and blindness that the Spanish author himself experienced during the time he was writing the novel, which were the years prior to a crisis which was apparently foreseeable. Muñoz Molina’s acknowledgement of blindness and distraction as an engine of his own writing responded, in his own words, to a contemporary experience, which may back up my thesis that *La noche de los tiempos*, a novel which takes place not only during the first months of the Civil War but also in the months immediately preceding it, is thematically and affectively a literary brainchild of the days that preceded the outburst of the financial crisis. What, then, could be the implications of this hypothesis? On the one hand, I support the statement that the label ‘Literatura de la crisis’ (crisis literature) was created in Spain to commercially exploit a set of literary stereotypes, as Pablo Valdivia has contended (2017: 163). In this sense, some of the mass media and mainstream publishing houses who coined the term ‘literature de la crisis’ failed to see beyond the contours they outlined (Valdivia, 2017). In this case study, both literary works are critical of the lack of attention to the agitation of the present in two different periods of recent Spanish history. Thus, Muñoz Molina criticizes our ‘dormant thoughts,’ and it is out of this distraction and blindness that the Spanish author seems to write *La noche de los tiempos* as an attempt to trace back the origin of the vice and political corruption he criticizes in contemporary Spain (Sanz Villanueva, 2010; 2013). The same lack of attention to the agitation of the present moment appears to thematically link his essay on the 2008 financial crisis with his novel about the Civil War, as Alberto Moireras has lucidly argued (Moreiras, 2014). Actually, the prefiguration of *Todo lo que era sólido* in the 2009 novel ‘comes up almost *verbatim*’ in some paragraphs (Moreiras, 2014: 52), as the following passage demonstrates: ‘As disconcerting as how easily everything that seemed *solid* [my emphasis] collapsed in Madrid in the course of two or three days in July was his own skill in adjusting without complaint or much hope to this transitional state’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013b: 372).² In this passage, the narrator of *La noche de los tiempos* is describing the hero of the novel, Ignacio Abel, an architect with Republican and Socialist ideas who is willing to accept that all that is solid vanishes into air out of distraction or irresponsibility. It would not be over-exaggerating to suggest that

some passages from *Todo lo que era sólido* could be literally cut and pasted into *La noche de los tiempos* without creating any dissonance in the fabric of the novel:

All this seems very solid to us. Not because it is, but because we have always seen it like that, and because our imagination is very limited. We imagine, if at all, a gradual or passing deterioration, but not a definitive collapse. However, things gradually do deteriorate, and suddenly instead of continuing in this state which has become tolerable, things completely crash, without a transition period, without warning, like when a house which seemed detained in slow ruin suddenly collapses[...] (Muñoz Molina, 2013a).³

The fact that *Todo lo que era sólido* is thematically prefigured in *La noche de los tiempos* might lead us to conclude that the 2008 financial crisis works as a basic thematic feature of both literary works and thus possesses an axiomatic role in the genesis of both texts. Thence, the genotext crystallizes as a phenotext (Kristeva, 1976: 281) in two texts which belong to two different literary genres written by the same author. It is in this sense that we can affirm that both works can be viewed as a literary product of the cultural narratives of the 2008 financial crisis, since the interdiscursive relationship between both genotexts is thematically and affectively grounded and solid.

‘What now in retrospect seems so clear was invisible while it was happening’⁴: Spectral narrations

As argued previously, the two literary works I am analyzing appear to stem from a similar thematic core and genotext, i.e. blindness, irresponsibility, distraction and a poignant inability to see what is in front of us. This emotional palette determines Ignacio Abel’s behaviour in *La noche de los tiempos* as well as the narrative voice of the novel. The same could be said about the narrator of *Todo lo que era sólido*. In this sense, Derrida’s notion of hauntology can be useful in understanding the spectral nature of both narrators. As Moreiras has accurately pointed out, ‘Muñoz Molina writes about 1936 ‘hauntologizing’ his present, and at the same time both 1936, 2009, and 2013 are dates in or about which [he] writes of his own conditions for writing’ (Moreiras, 2014: 52). In *La noche de los tiempos* the present moment is contingent (Loureiro, 2010: 33) and the narrator explores all the possibilities contained in that present where he is settled. As if he were a spectre coming from the future, the narrator haunts the past as a present absence since, according to Derrida, ‘the present only exists concerning the past’ (Valdivia, 2018: 19). Esther Peeren’s study *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (2014) takes Derrida as a point of departure and affirms that:

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida attributes a futural dimension to spectrality, which he sees as pertaining not only to ‘those others who are no longer’, but also to ‘others who are not yet *there*’ (xix, emphasis in text). The specter is both *revenant*, that which returns from the past, and *arrivant*, that which is to come, ‘the future that cannot be anticipated’ (168). (Peeren, 2014: 14).

The story of Ignacio Abel is always told tentatively (Amezcuca, 2016) by a spectral and *arrivant* narrator who doubts the faithfulness of his narration, revealing the very mechanisms of the process of writing and therefore making his narration more veracious: ‘I see Ignacio Abel as if I were seeing myself, with his maniacal attention to

detail, his incessant desire to understand everything, his fear of missing something of consequence, his anguish over the passage of time [...] (Muñoz Molina, 2013b: 7).⁵ Both Ignacio Abel and the narrator who identifies with him ‘desire to understand everything’ and it is out of this desire that the narrator reveals the basic impulse of his writing, as the following passage acutely reveals:

In history books names have a crushing finality, and events follow one another like necessary links in a chain of cause and effect. In the infinite present that one would like to imagine in its entirety, in the innermost throbbing of time, every detail entangled, voices upon voices, page after page in newspapers half read, waves of words breaking against the unknown of the day, against what tomorrow will bring and what no one can foresee. (Muñoz Molina, 2013: 398).⁶

This passage encapsulates the spectral nature of the narrator in similar terms to those expressed by Peeren in her commentary on Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*. The narrator is anguished about his inability to imagine and faithfully narrate a contingent present which is infinite and not yet abolished. The so-called ‘innermost throbbing of time’ is the pure present which is never provided faithfully by history books. The anguish of this spectral narrator originates from his inability to narrate ‘what no one can foresee’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013: 398) but that seems so clear now in retrospect, or, as Peeren puts it, ‘the future that cannot be anticipated’ (Peeren, 2014: 14). Haunting the past, both the narrator of *La noche de los tiempos* and *Todo lo que era sólido* reveal their bewilderment at not having been able to foresee that which was to come. In the words of Muñoz Molina reflecting on the 2008 financial crisis: ‘What now in retrospect seems so clear was invisible while it was happening’ (2013a).

I have referred before to a passage from *Todo lo que era sólido* which could fit in the warp and weft of Muñoz Molina’s novel of the Civil War. It could be argued that there are several instances of passages that are interchangeable between both works. This solid and basic thematic and affective core that connects both books is also evinced when we consider the discursive role played by the appearance of juxtaposed newspaper headlines in both works. In chapter 24 of *La noche de los tiempos*, immediately after the narrator declares his desire to depict faithfully ‘the innermost throbbing of time’, a series of news pieces published in 1936 in *The New York Times* and in the Spanish newspaper *Ahora* are intertwined in the fabric of the novel so as to make us aware of what seems so clear to us now but was invisible at the time:

Two atrocious crimes in the space of a few hours. An Assault Guard lieutenant and Señor Calvo Sotelo assassinated in Madrid [...] Four armed men attack a radio station in Valencia and gag the announcer in order to give a Fascist-leaning speech in which they proclaim that the hour is near and the redemptive moment will come soon. [...] Medieval festivities in Hitler’s Germany a great success. [...] An army unit that represents Spain in Morocco has rebelled, turning on its own country and committing shameful acts against the nation. [...] The Republican government is in control of the situation and states that in a matter of hours it will report to the nation (Muñoz Molina, 2013b: 398-401).⁷

At the same time, in *Todo lo que era sólido* the narrator tells us that while he was writing his essay in 2012 he spent a month in the newspaper and periodicals library of the Spanish newspaper *El País*, reading the papers published between January and February 2007: ‘Every day when I finished reading the newspaper I felt dizzy, intoxicated. Every day I copied figures and headlines in my notebook’.⁸ Immediately after revealing his plan

to copy into his notebook the figures and headlines which might have gone unheeded or ‘half read’ at the time of publication, Muñoz Molina provides a selection of those headlines which, now, read carefully, page after page in 2012, reveal the multitude of corruption cases in Spain and the excess of the housing bubble that we were all witnessing:

In the Canary Islands some businessmen have acquired rustic land for 30 million euros. The Town Council have bought part of that land from them for 53 million euros, then they redesignated all the land and the entrepreneurs sold it for 120 million euros [...]. The Civil Guards have arrested the former mayor of Alhaurín (Málaga) and found 160,000 euros under his mattress, seemingly from commissions he received for allowing thousands of illegal houses to be built in an area of 3,000 inhabitants where 58 construction firms and 75 real estate agencies are registered [...]. The former Head of City Planning in the Community of Madrid has received four million euros for a real estate operation [...] Francisco Roca, former consultant of city planning in the Council of Marbella, has amassed a fortune of 210 million euros in fifteen years (Muñoz Molina, 2013a).⁹

The discursive role of juxtaposed headlines plays a constructive interdiscursive function in both *La noche de los tiempos* and *Todo lo que era sólido* which reinforces their thematic connection. The spectral narrator of both literary works acknowledges his own distraction and uses the concatenation of newspaper headlines as a literary device demonstrating that what no one was willing to foresee was actually before our eyes.

Metaphors we are haunted by

As mentioned previously, according to Paul Crosthwaite (2011; 2012) all financial crises are also symbolic. In his seminal study *Criticism, Crisis, and Contemporary Narrative: Textual Horizons in an Age of Global Risk*, he contends that “‘Crisis’ and ‘criticism’ (as well as the latter’s immediate cognates – ‘critic’, ‘criticize’, ‘critical’, ‘critique’) both have their roots in the Greek *krinein*: ‘to separate, judge, decide’” (Crosthwaite, 2011: 2). Yet the current conceptualization of the notion of crisis implies a negative connotation as a result of political discourses which overshadow the very notion of crisis as a possibility of cultural and symbolic renewal. Thence, this cultural and symbolic renewal might adumbrate alternative ideological and symbolic schemes (Valdivia, 2016: 21). In this sense, we should pay heed to the role of metaphors as posited by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their seminal study *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) when they affirmed that ‘our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003: 3). This view is connected with the cognitive perspective on metaphor, as well as the constructivist one (Watzlawick, 1984; Maturana, 1994). Indeed, metaphors are the result of a cognitive process (Indurkha, 1992, 2007; Arduini, 2007) that is carried out by speakers and writers as well as recipients, connecting *vehicles* and *tenors* as the present and absent components of metaphors (Richards, 1986: 85-86), and thus both of them are able to adopt the reality created and provided by their awareness. This reality is rhetorically constructed and it is supported by metaphors (Pujante, 2016, 2017). According to it, metaphor is granted a central position in the construction of our reality, yet the conceptual system which is sustained by a given set of metaphors might disappear and be renewed as a result of a financial or symbolic crisis. Metaphors constitute a

communicative cultural-rhetorical code (Albaladejo, 2016: 21-23), and this code, like all codes, can be modified or substituted. This code includes living metaphors, but also dead metaphors (Ricoeur, 1975; Albaladejo, 2014) with different cultural roles. Muñoz Molina is aware of the role of metaphors in shaping our experience in *Todo lo que era sólido*: ‘Each moment in time has its metaphors. They spring without us knowing from where and they become familiar and everyday and then they disappear, no longer remembered by anyone. They belong to the background noise of an era, sounds which leave as faint a trace as visual impressions and smells [...]’.¹⁰

In his essay on the 2008 financial crisis, Muñoz Molina lucidly identifies the metaphors privileged by that epoch and seems aware of their expiration date. As a symbolic crisis, the 2008 financial crisis opened a path to a cultural and symbolic renewal. In this sense, according to Muñoz Molina, some of the constitutive metaphors of the years prior to the eruption of the financial crisis ‘belong to the background noise of an era’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013) and as such they have been replaced by ‘new metaphors [that] create new realities’ (Pellizoni, 2014: 78), though they may still haunt us. Muñoz Molina puts into question the so-called ‘respectable metaphors’ in a very revealing passage from *Todo lo que era sólido*:

The language of economists, who see themselves as scientists, consisted of repeating a few simple metaphors; the deceleration of a vehicle which has advanced at great speed over a long time; the comfortable landing of an airplane.

These were the respectable metaphors. The one which had to be used more carefully was the metaphor of the bubble [...]. In the language of that time, when the bubble metaphor did not exist, it was used in particular to be refuted. There was no real estate bubble. A very famous and respected economist wrote in January 2007 that in any case the bubble, if it did exist, would gradually burst. If we had paid somewhat more attention to what was happening, to what we were saying and to what we were hearing someone would have noted that metaphors require the same precision as equations and that there is no way that a bubble can burst gradually (Muñoz Molina, 2013a).¹¹

Of all the respectable metaphors referred to above, the bubble metaphor was certainly the most frequently repeated in Spain during those years. In hindsight, when we read that an expert economist affirmed that the real estate bubble would gradually burst we cannot help but feel puzzled; we actually heard such assertions ‘with dull ears,’ without paying attention to the inconsistency of that metaphor. In this sense, the Muñoz Molina’s brilliant reflection on the accuracy metaphors require leads us to reconsider how vigilant we should be when we listen to the narratives created by politicians. In this sense, Lise-Lotte Holmgreen has brilliantly analysed the metaphors privileged by the neo-liberal agenda and the way in which these have shaped socioeconomic realities (2003). As an illustration of this procedure, Holmgreen refers to several instances in which ‘the economy is conceptualised as a person [...] via the HEALTH metaphor’ which puts forward ‘the state of the economy in terms of our own health’ (2013: 106). Such conceptualisation is hardly innocent, as some of the headlines that the author selects from different newspapers demonstrate. The following passage provides examples from selected news articles published after the September 11 attacks:

(22) (...) weakening prospects for future **recovery** (FT 25.09.01)

(23) (...) the rapid slowdown in the US had started to **infect** Europe (G 27.09.01)

(27) (...) tax cuts and spending to **resuscitate the ailing** economy (G 01.11.01) (Holmgreen, 2003: 107).

Holmgreen contends in her article that events such as the September 11 terror attacks were manipulated to produce support for a neo-liberal agenda via the use of certain clusters of metaphor (Holmgreen, 2003: 112). In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis the necessity of new constitutive metaphors, which led to a renewal of our cultural imaginaries, has become more urgent than ever (Valdivia et al., 2018). Neo-liberal policies, alongside the rise to power of neo-populist movements are forcing the displacement of some of the foundational principles of the European Union, i.e. the principles of democratic warrants (Valdivia et al., 2018). If social scientists and humanities scholars have failed to provide a cultural narrative that both unmasks the polarized narrative of political populism and denounces the political corruption that has promoted this populist turn (Valdivia, 2017: 169; Valdivia et al., 2018) then it is high time to search for a new narrative for Europe which first departs from a revision and analysis of the recent financial and symbolic crisis of Europe so as to envision and build a new and solid sense of Europeanness.

At this point I would like to pose the following question: why should we read *Todo lo que era sólido*? First and foremost, because it puts forward a lucid analysis of the 2008 financial crisis in Spain, helping us to understand Europe's current crises. However local his analysis of Spanish political corruption or the real estate bubble may be, his narrative should be viewed through a transnational lens, as Muñoz Molina warns us against blindness and distraction by reminding us how all that was solid vanishes *gradually* into air. In other words, a new and solid sense of Europeanness should stem from this awareness:

All this seems very solid to us. Not because it is, but because we have always seen it like that, and because our imagination is very limited. We imagine, if at all, a gradual or passing deterioration, but not a definitive collapse. However, things gradually do deteriorate, and suddenly instead of continuing in this state which has become tolerable, things completely crash, without a transition period, without warning, like when a house which seemed detained in slow ruin suddenly collapses [...] (Muñoz Molina, 2013a).¹²

Conclusion

In this article I have tried to offer a rationale for reading Muñoz Molina's essay on the 2008 financial crisis in the current context of European crisis. Yet, the work cannot be fully understood without having read Muñoz Molina's novel of the Spanish Civil War. As argued previously, the Spanish author's essay is prefigured in his novel so that both are thematically connected. The workings of a spectral narrator who is blinded and distracted reminds us how certain ghosts of Europe's may return from the past like *revenants*. Whether these ghosts return as *revenants* or they reappear as *arrivants* – 'that which is to come,' according to Peeren – may depend on our ability to foresee, in a contradictory present, the undesirable future which will definitely not come if we create new metaphors and new narratives that shape a reality where these ghosts are simply banished. Muñoz Molina reminds us that all that was solid may vanish gradually and easily into air. Therefore, if a new narrative for Europe is needed we should not forget the

key, solid, achievements that confirm that the story of Europe has actually been a story of transnational success.

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Notes

¹ ‘El desasosiego, la sensación de peligro y derrumbe que eran a la vez el impulso y el tema de la escritura respondían a una experiencia del todo contemporánea, pero yo no era capaz de contarlo con los materiales de mi propio tiempo. Eso me producía un remordimiento que no se alivió del todo ni cuando estaba más entregado a la novela, más poseída por ella. Yo escribía sobre la ceguera de quienes no saben ver lo que está ocurriendo en medio de la agitación del presente, por distracción, por irresponsabilidad, por ir cada uno a sus propios asuntos, por la decisión en el fondo asustada de no aceptar la posibilidad del desastre, por la pura inercia de creer que las cosas son mucho más sólidas de lo que en realidad son. Pero yo tampoco veía nada, absorto en mi escritura, encerrado en 2007 en mi cápsula de tiempo de 1936’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013a: 151). All quotations in Spanish from *Todo lo que era sólido* are from the 2013 edition (Barcelona: Seix Barral). All English translations of the book are by Anita Morgan.

² ‘Tan desconcertante como la facilidad con la que todo lo que parecía más sólido [my emphasis] se derrumbó en Madrid en el curso de dos o tres días de julio era su propia destreza para acomodarse sin queja y sin mucha esperanza a este estado de tránsito’ (Muñoz Molina, 2009: 541).

³ ‘Todo eso nos parece muy sólido. No porque lo sea, sino porque siempre o durante mucho tiempo lo hemos visto así, y nuestra imaginación es muy limitada. Imaginamos si acaso un deterioro gradual, o pasajero, pero no un derrumbe definitivo. Pero las cosas se deterioran poco a poco y de pronto en vez de continuar en ese estado que se ha vuelto tolerable se hunden del todo, sin transición, sin aviso, como se hunde una casa que parecía detenida en una lenta ruina [...]’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013 a: 223-224).

⁴ ‘Lo que ahora nos parece retrospectivamente tan claro era invisible mientras sucedía’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013a: 17).

⁵ ‘Veo a Ignacio Abel como si me viera a mí mismo, con su atención maniática a todos los detalles, su deseo incesante de captarlo todo y su miedo a pasar por alto algo decisivo, su angustia por la velocidad del tiempo [...]’ (Muñoz Molina 2009: 20).

⁶ ‘En los libros de historia los nombres tienen una rotundidad abrumadora y los hechos se suceden como cadenas inapelables de causas y efectos. En el presente puro que uno quisiera saber imaginar, en el pulso íntimo y verdadero del tiempo, todo es una agitación minuciosa, un aturdimiento de voces que se superponen, de páginas de periódico pasadas apresuradamente y leídas a medias, olvidadas en seguida, mezcladas entre sí, disgregándose casi en el momento en que parecía que se ordenaban para cobrar un sentido inteligible, un día y otro día, olas de palabras viniendo una y otra vez a romper contra el límite de lo desconocido, lo que sucederá mañana mismo y nadie puede predecir’ (Muñoz Molina, 2009: 585).

⁷ ‘Dos crímenes abominables en el transcurso de unas pocas horas. Un teniente de Asalto y el señor Calvo Sotelo asesinados en Madrid [...]. Cuatro individuos armados asaltan la radio valenciana y amordazan al locutor para pronunciar en tono fascista en el que la hora está próxima y anuncian para una fecha cercana el movimiento salvador [...]. Gran auge de las fiestas medievales en la Alemania de Hitler [...]. Una parte del ejército que representa a España en Marruecos se ha sublevado contra la República, volviéndose contra su patria, realizando actos vergonzosos contra el poder nacional. [...] El gobierno de la República domina la situación y afirma que no tardará muchas horas en dar cuenta al país’ (Muñoz Molina, 2009: 585-590).

⁸ ‘Cada día he salido del periódico mareado, intoxicado. Copiaba cifras y titulares en mi cuaderno’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013a: 154).

⁹ ‘En Canarias unos empresarios adquieren unos terrenos rústicos por 30 millones de euros. El ayuntamiento les compra una parte por 53 millones, y a continuación los recalifica todos, y los empresarios los venden por 120 millones [...] La Guardia Civil detiene al ex alcalde de Alcaucín (Málaga) y le encuentra 160.000 euros debajo del colchón, al parecer producto de las comisiones cobradas por permitir miles de viviendas ilegales en el municipio, que tiene 3.000 habitantes, y en el que hay censadas 58 empresas constructoras y 75 inmobiliarias. [...] El ex director de urbanismo de la Comunidad de Madrid gana cuatro millones por una operación inmobiliaria [...] Francisco Roca, exasesor de urbanismo del ayuntamiento de Marbella, amasó en quince años una fortuna de 210 millones de euros’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013: 157-159).

¹⁰ ‘Cada tiempo tiene sus metáforas, que surgen sin que se sepa de dónde y se vuelven familiares y diarias y luego desaparecen y ya nadie las recuerda. Pertenecen al ruido de fondo de una época, los sonidos dejan tan pocos rastros tangibles como las impresiones visuales o los olores’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013a: 39).

¹¹ ‘El lenguaje de los economistas, que se ven a sí mismos como científicos, consistía en la reiteración de unas cuantas metáforas simples: la desaceleración de un vehículo que ha avanzado a gran velocidad durante mucho tiempo; el aterrizaje confortable de un avión.

Ésas eran las metáforas respetables. La que había que usar con más cuidado era la metáfora de la burbuja [...]. En el idioma propio de ese tiempo que ya no existe la metáfora de la burbuja se usaba sobre todo para ser refutada. No había una burbuja inmobiliaria. Un economista muy célebre y muy respetado escribió en enero de 2007 que en todo caso la burbuja, si existiera, se pincharía gradualmente. Si hubiéramos prestado algo más de atención a lo que sucedía y a lo que decíamos y lo que escuchábamos alguien habría apuntado que las metáforas pueden requerir la misma precisión que las ecuaciones, y que no hay manera de que se pinche gradualmente una burbuja’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013a: 9-10).

¹² ‘Todo eso nos parece muy sólido. No porque lo sea, sino porque siempre o durante mucho tiempo lo hemos visto así, y nuestra imaginación es muy limitada. Imaginamos si acaso un deterioro gradual, o pasajero, pero no un derrumbe definitivo. Pero las cosas se deterioran poco a poco y de pronto en vez de continuar en ese estado que se ha vuelto tolerable se hunden del todo, sin transición, sin aviso, como se hunde una casa que parecía detenida en una lenta ruina [...]’ (Muñoz Molina, 2013a: 223-224).

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