

## Old Wine in New Bottles: Cela's Galician Triptych

*Mazurca para dos muertos* (1983; *Mazurka for Two Dead Men*, 1992), *La cruz de San Andrés* (1994), and *Madera de boj* (fall 1999) are the three novels<sup>1</sup> which this study terms Cela's "Galician triptych." Written over the course of two decades, and featuring completely different characters, time-frames, and locales, they may seem unlikely candidates to comprise a tripartite novelistic series. To my knowledge, Cela has not suggested that he intends them to be so grouped, and such a grouping would be novel in his long fiction, which to date consists only of independent novels, although he has favored multiple volume formats in his brief narrative, such as *Los viejos amigos*, the *Apuntes carpetovetónicos*, and *Nuevas escenas matritenses*. On the other hand, Cela has been from the beginning an admirer of Baroja, who frequently employed trilogy formats (often grouping seemingly unrelated novels under trilogy headings). The three novels in question share common Galician settings, probably sufficient pretext for critics to begin terming them a trilogy, since this unique geography appears nowhere else in the author's fourteen full-length novels. These three together portray rural Galicia, contemporary "urban" Galicia, and timeless, maritime Galicia. Logically, Galician culture looms large in all three, affording the novelist the opportunity to display his familiarity with Galician topography, toponymy, patronymics, gastronomy, history, legend, superstition, and a vast array of regional minutiae.

Cela's contacts with Galicia date

from his birth in 1916 in the ancient Roman village of Iria Flavia del Padrón (La Coruña). An idealized, somewhat fanciful portrait of his early childhood in Iria appears in *La rosa* (1959), the first volume of his truncated memoir series, "*La cucaña*." The Cela clan's deep roots in Galicia endured despite the future writer's family moving to Madrid when he was nine (1925); they returned periodically, and he has continued the practice. He spent many months of the Civil War there, as detailed in his 1993 *Memorias, entendimientos y voluntades*,<sup>2</sup> and the experience of wartime Galicia provides real-life "inspiration" fictionally transformed in *Mazurca*. Before publishing this first Galician novel in 1983, Cela had written only occasionally and somewhat peripherally of the region of his birth. A few early short stories are set in Galicia, and one collection of his short fiction offers a symbolic nod of recognition with its title, *El gallego y su cuadrilla y otros apuntes carpetovetónicos* (1949), although by no means all pieces are set in Galicia. One of Cela's early incursions into the travel genre, *Del Miño al Bidasoa* (1952), presents a walking tour of Galician back roads, and constitutes his first full volume devoted to Galicia. But the overwhelming bulk of Cela's writings during the first four decades of his literary career lacks visible connections with Galicia. With few exceptions, his fiction before 1983 emphasizes Madrid, or the towns and villages of Castilla (primary exceptions not already cited are his first novel, *La familia de Pascual Duarte* [1942], set in Badajoz;

and *La Catira* [1955], set in Venezuela). *Mazurca* would stand alone for eleven years before another Galician novel appeared, but receipt of the Premio Nacional de Literatura for *Mazurca* in 1984 was significant in two ways, first because it marked the beginning of significant critical recognition for the novelist who had often told interviewers in previous decades that he had never received a prize and saw that "distinction" (unusual amid the overproliferation of prizes in postwar Spain) as something of a badge of honor. In 1980, Cela was inducted into the Real Academia Gallega, possibly prompting him to write *Mazurca* at the particular time that he did so. This was also a time of reaffirmation of regional autonomy and cultural diversity, a culturally propitious moment for a gallego focus. *Mazurca* enhanced the strengthening of Cela's ancestral ties with Galicia. During the 1980s, he officially re-established his residence in Iria Flavia, and around the end of the decade, he inaugurated the Fundación Camilo José Cela there. Given increasing immersion in the Galician environment, it is unsurprising that the Galician presence in his novels increases markedly in the decade to follow.

In addition to their common Galician locales, culture, personae, and ambience, the three novels in question share numerous aspects of Cela's fiction as a whole, aspects which critics have long identified as constants of his novelistic art: his peculiar personal style, characterized by abundant *estribillos*, reiteration of extensive names and *apodos*, irony, his combinations of the academic and the obscene, the ludic and the absurd, constant emphasis on sexuality and death, Eros and Thanatos. These ruling deities of his narratives acquire heightened visibility

in what I have termed Cela's "second period," beginning with *San Camilo 1939* (1969), at which point he breaks definitively with the allegedly Neo-Realist mode prevailing in his earlier fiction.<sup>3</sup> In reality, exceptions to Neo-Realism appear as early as *Pabellón de reposo* (1943), while *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo* (1953) may be recognized with the benefit of present-day hindsight as a clear antecedent to postmodern structures characterizing the seven "later novels." Postmodern structures, discourse, attitudes and devices are common to the three Galician novels, as are the constants of Cela's fiction identified by prior scholarship, and serve to explain my title metaphor, "old wine in new bottles." The form (now definitively postmodern) has changed, but what those "bottles" convey—the content—has changed little except for refining and strengthening in the aging process. The metaphor, in other words, encapsulates a thesis: long established thematics, character types, attitudes, and personal trademarks are recast in postmodern guise without altering much except their appearance.

*Mazurca* differs markedly from the extreme experimentalism of its immediate predecessor, *Oficio de tinieblas* (1973), a *non plus ultra* of the anti-novel whose radical fragmentation, absence of identifiable characters, time, setting, and sequential action apparently led to a blind alley, prompting Cela's announcement of his novelistic abdication at the time of the book's release. Ten years of novelistic silence followed, eventually broken by *Mazurca*, which reincorporates several conventional elements: resumption of capitalization, punctuation, paragraphs, indication of dialogues, traditional setting, and clearly-sketched and iden-

tified characters. Significant thematic links exist between *Mazurca* and two predecessors, *La colmena* (1951), and *San Camilo* 1936. These two novels treat very specific, clearly limited historical time frames, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in *San Camilo*, and its immediate aftermath in *La colmena*—temporal parameters closely resembling those set in the opening pages by the narrator of *Mazurca* when he mentions the two symbolic renditions of "Ma petite Marianne," the mazurka allegedly played only two times by the blind accordionist Gaudencio, first in November 1936 when Fascists assassinated the heroic Galician clansman Afouto, and in January 1940 when the victim's clan avenged him by killing Moucho (the cowardly Falangist collaborator responsible for Afouto's death). These dates frame the present-tense action in *Mazurca*, exclusive of retrospective events or antecedents—civil conflicts of earlier generations—which reappear repeatedly, suggesting the cyclical and endemic nature of internecine strife in Spain. By framing the action between the two symbolic performances of "Ma petite Marianne," Cela insinuates images of the Civil War as a dance of death—not a dignified, solemn, liturgical dance but a frantic, fast-paced, disorganized mazurka—an ironic image which proves grotesque in its tragic context.

*Mazurca* relates a tale of murder and revenge, and the two deceased men of the title symbolize contending sides in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Afouto's quasi-mythical proportions are attributed to his clan as a whole—the same clan to which the author belongs (several Celas are mentioned, and the novelist makes cameo appearances, albeit not spe-

cifically as author of the novel-in-progress). Moucho, almost a polar opposite, is an outsider, neither a member of the clan, nor a *gallego*; seen as a foreigner in a close-knit rural community, he is scornfully called a *zapatero*. Minimalized both symbolically and in terms of his physical attributes (while those of the clan are aggrandized), he is marginalized and ostracized. Moucho represents an emphatically post-Franco view of Fascist terrorists as cowardly perpetrators of personal violence masked as political action while his larger-than-life, heroic antagonist represents "authentic" indigenous Galicians, earthy, lusty, and irrepressibly free. The allegorical encounter between these two quasi-mythical figures reduces the national conflict to a personal dispute or clan feud, unequal because Moucho has allied himself with organized political oppression to accomplish his personally-motivated murder of Afouto under the guise of political execution. Moucho is later linked with "ten or twelve" additional assassinations.<sup>4</sup> The forces of totalitarian aggression win in the short term, but Moucho's triumph is short-lived as the clan's vengeance is so thorough as to wipe all traces of his remains from the earth. Additionally, Cela employs a quasi-omniscient narrative perspective whose vision encapsulates the future—beyond the end of the novel's action—as two characters doubling as erstwhile narrative voices discuss long-term implications, foreseeing the post-Franco return to democracy and prophesying the recovery of regional autonomy, a narrative ploy which further emphasizes the transitory nature of the Fascist interlude.

In *Mazurca* for the first time in his long fiction Cela accords heightened

visibility to Galician language and culture, and many reviewers and critics commented at length upon these aspects in the emphatically multicultural climate of years immediately following the novel's release, debating such questions as possible antecedents and the authenticity or inaccuracy of his portrait of Galicia and use of Galician lexicon. Use of *gallego* words is relatively limited, falling fall short of the "bilingualism" suggested by one critic; Castilian remains unquestionably the dominant narrative vehicle. Much stronger impacts result from the pervasive Galician climate, landscape, customs, folklore, legends, beliefs, economy, foods, drinks, physical types, anecdotes, etc., which often play active parts in the action, most significantly when Afouto's clan plots to exploit the mountain people's superstition and credulity in order to wreak vengeance upon his killer with impunity. Moucho's death is so staged as to suggest that he falls victim to a werewolf, at the juncture where Galician ambience is most closely integrated with the action.

The epic anecdote of murder and revenge functions somewhat as a *leitmotif*, reappearing with minor variations numerous times from beginning to end of the novel and forming a kind of chain which functions much as did the medieval framing tale, to enclose innumerable anecdotes and incidents that present the complex history of the clan and several related clans. The accumulation of related, subordinate histories depicts the personal lives of three or four characters who serve at times as narrative voices, retelling an enormous number of violent, grotesque, and sometimes pathetic anecdotes that together portray the Civil War as viewed from the somewhat detached and privileged perspec-

tive of Galicia. Because no major battles were fought in Galicia, the region was spared much of the suffering in the rest of Spain. Additionally, because Galicia—the most undeveloped part of the country—had continued to be predominantly agricultural, food there was relatively abundant in contrast to wartime hunger in the cities. Cela's *Memorias* repeatedly stress these differences, and contain numerous tidbits offering insights into characters and incidents in *Mazurca*.

While *Mazurca* differs markedly from Cela's prior novels because of its prominent Galician ambience, most of Cela's constant preoccupations and motifs reappear: eroticism, violence, aberrations, cruelty, mutilation, deformity, materialism, venality, and all manner of shocking deaths. As in *La colmena* and *San Camilo*, readers see more of brothels and bedrooms than all other locales, and characters engage more in sexual activities than all other pursuits combined. The novel's obsessive linking of sexuality and death reappears with such "constant" types as the blind, lame and crippled, deformed, mad, tubercular, perverse, deviant, and retarded. Characters without physical handicaps almost invariably exhibit moral, social or psychological blemishes: alcoholism, pedophilia, sadism, criminality, religious fanaticism, hypocrisy. Illness and aberrations vastly outnumber health and "normalcy," and admirable or exemplary characters prove as rare in Cela's portrait of Galicia as in the remainder of his novels. While some observers saw *Mazurca* as a tribute to Galicia, his depiction of Galician society contains no idealization—with the possible exception of Afouto and his paradigmatic kinsmen (the author and his clan included). The world-view in *Mazurca*



coincides more closely with that purveyed in Cela's prior novels than with most visions of Galicia.

The small minority of more or less judicious and physically sound characters includes the three major narrative voices: Raimundo el de los Casandulfes, a homespun philosopher and member of the same clan as Cela's persona, "el artillero Camilo," also an occasional narrative voice, along with another of the novelist's alter egos, Robín Lebozán (Castro de Cela), a principal narrator and presumptive amanuensis. Both Raimundo and Robín are lovers of Ramona, who shares her favors impartially with both kinsmen. Robin and yet another alter ego of the author, a vague "don Camilo," carry the burden of the narrative. Don Camilo, the clan intellectual, known as Camilito to his slightly grotesque Tío Claudio, may or may not be *el artillero Camilo* seen at a later stage in life; the two represent narrative perspectives that appear to speak for the author, and identifying the moment at which the various narrators speak—a moment definitely long after the events recreated—is not always feasible, given the shifting time planes, the lack of sequentiality and paucity of definitive clues as to chronology apart from the initial dates noted.

*Mazurca*, like *San Camilo* 1936, is a novel of the Spanish Civil War, and quite logically, as Dinneen observes, "blood is the predominant motif in both novels" (74).<sup>5</sup> Curiously, however, most deaths in *Mazurca*—like many of those in *San Camilo*—are not war-related: they are freak accidents or murders. Cela subliminally underscores death's pervasive presence by the large number of widows. And death becomes a given from early in the novel as Afouto's kinsmen refer to

Moucho as "el muerto" from the moment the clan decrees his fate, long before his actual demise. Sentiments expressed in *Mazurca* subvert the supposed glory of war, satirize Falangist propaganda, burlesque official Francoist rhetoric and historiography, and offer implied revisions of the dictatorship's idealized version of the war. Such revisionism is enhanced by portraying the war in miniature, from a vantage point largely behind the lines. As in *San Camilo*, unreliable "news" and outright disinformation are purveyed by the media on both sides, confusing and disorienting the populace. In typically postmodern fashion, Cela presents contradictory versions and insistent rewriting or un-writing of accounts of the war—including his own. He jumbles together rumors, advertising, sporting events, speculation, gossip, grotesque sexuality, violent deaths and tragedies unrelated to the distant political conflict, juxtaposing trivia with world news, military communiqués with commercials promoting cures for urinary dysfunction, thereby demythologizing official versions of the conflict and subverting the image of the media. *San Camilo* emphasized sexuality at the expense of military and political coverage, provoking outrage at perceived trivialization of events generally idealized by both sides; Cela's seeming impartiality, painting corruption on both sides, suggests the biblical imprecation, "a plague on both your houses." *Mazurca*, written nearly fifteen years later with a Socialist government in place and Cela a senator by royal decree reflects these changes: the narrative perspective now openly favors liberty and democracy and caricatures the totalitarian insurgents—but still suggests that the primary human interaction is sexuality.

Unlike most of Cela's prior novels (excepting *Pascual Duarte*), *Mazurca* features a clearly delineated protagonist and antagonist, plus a semblance of plot, susceptible of summary. Protagonist and antagonist in *Mazurca* personify heroism and abjection, respectively, ruling out the possibility of objectivity. Elsewhere, however—in *San Camilo* and in *Memorias*—Cela reiterates his sense of identification with both sides. *Mazurca* differs from prior novels also in that the novelist returns to closed form by contrast with several open-ended antecedents. Nevertheless, the narrative is by no means simple, given the numerous characters, abundant interpolations, condensed biographies, legends, narrative digressions, and discussions between narrative voices. The primary action (i.e., the murder-revenge plot) usually appears unrelated to numerous potential subplots, except for thematic coincidences: death, cruelty, and violence prevail throughout. Several secondary plot lines (many involving sexual relationships) are taken up intermittently, not so much with variations as in the case of the primary murder-revenge plot as to continue them; however, all reappear and disappear somewhat in fugal fashion. Characters are nearly as numerous as in *La colmena*, but that novel's urban alienation and existential solitude are replaced by family and clan ties, typical rural face-to-face relationships, and a seemingly healthier, less furtive, less inhibited eroticism than found in *La colmena* and *San Camilo*. Degrees of acquaintance and duration of interaction between characters in *Mazurca* exceed those in any other Cela work, as scores or hundreds of characters maintain lifelong relationships. And unlike the cultural differences of the me-

tropolis and its general anonymity, characters in *Mazurca* share a common culture, observing the *ley del monte*, and identifying themselves in relation to a complex clan structure. Cela repeats his practice (fully developed in *La colmena* and frequently repeated thereafter) of using multiple names and nicknames for many characters, often without specifying the correspondence between patronymic and nicknames, which adds to the confusion of identities (typical of much postmodern fiction, as seen, for example, in the prevalence of this device in Juan Benet's *Volverás a Región*).

Despite the large number of characters and of sub-plots, *Mazurca* conveys an impression of unity, thanks to a series of essentially lyric devices: repetition, alliteration, litanies, parallels, enumeration, accumulation. The most significant recurring motif binding multiple narrative threads and characters together refers to the rain, another leitmotif.<sup>6</sup> The *orvallo* or Galician mist, like biblical rain, falls upon the just and the unjust. Regular, almost obsessive repetition of this motif functions as lyric glue binding together multiple themes and variations, the multiplicity of narrators and characters, the proliferation of family histories, intercalated stories, and extraneous anecdotes. A final index, listing only three parts to the novel, subtly underscores the rain's significance. The first part, "Llueve mansamente y sin parar," comprises the entire narrative, per se—one long chapter without internal subdivisions. The sound of falling raindrops metaphorically equates to the monotony and repetitiveness of a litany, with Christian virtues attributed to the rain.<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically, ever-present rain constitutes the norm, and its cessation spawns fear and dread, a

prophetic premonition of war's horrors; the lyric *orvallo* motifs reappear only after the clan meets and decrees Moucho's death. Functionally parallel to reiterations of the nuclear incidents of murder and revenge, falling rain provides a contrasting counterpoint to the horrors of war, an analogy between history and Unamuno's *intrahistoria* (the atypical, transitory, political conflict as opposed to Nature's peace which returns when guns fall silent). Rain is the most lyrical of several repetitive motifs (the murder-revenge plot, the "seven attributes of the bastard" associated with Moucho, corresponding to opposing attributes of Afouto and his kinsmen, other water motifs), woven together to form a quasi-lyrical or poetic structure, employing not only repetition and other devices already noted, but also cadence, metaphor, simile, and complex imagery.

Rain likewise appears in retrospective action—earlier instances of civil conflict dating back to Spain's war in Melilla and the nineteenth century Carlist wars. Repeated references to the Moors extend the time frame still further backwards, evoking yet other events whose common denominator is civil conflict. As a polyphonic composition with multiple themes, enunciated by several voices, *Mazurca* features a contrapuntal or fugal structure, with variations—a technique re-used with minor modification in essentially every novel since, including *Cristo versus Arizona* (1988), *El asesinato del perdedor* (1994), and the remaining two Galician novels, *La cruz de San Andrés*, and *Madera de boj*. Repetition is the major connecting device in all these essentially plotless, complex, contradictory, disconnected narratives as themes with variations and even entire passages recur again and again.

Linked to the rain is narratorial unreliability, a specifically postmodern trait which acquires major significance for Cela's subsequent novels.<sup>8</sup> The narrator contradicts himself repeatedly concerning the rain, waxes cynical concerning the reliability of history (another postmodern theme), and echoes multiple assertions concerning his own narratorial fallibility and that of his informants. Having noted lacunae, errors, contradictions, and falsehoods during his demythologization of official versions of the war, Cela refuses to replace them with myths of his own invention. Instead, he demythologizes the war itself, undermining fictional as well as "historical" accounts, alike marred by memory's failings, human egotism, and inaccurate documentation. The fugal structure in *Mazurca* and subsequent novels aptly imitates memory's intricacies, as it doubles back upon itself, unable to grasp and fully recover. Sobejano stresses that form in *Mazurca* is dictated by the process of wandering memory (141) and emphasizes the novel's musical rhythms and elegiac character (150). These aspects reappear to a greater or lesser degree in all of Cela's subsequent novels, most notably in the later Galician novels. Because the narrative so insistently doubles back upon itself in all three, ending without having noticeably advanced beyond the point at which it began, analogies with other art forms present themselves, especially with painting, to which movement is often attributed even though that movement necessarily remains always within the frame. The analogy is especially appropriate for Cela's "Galician triptych" because of the unusually high visibility of descriptive elements which further underscore the static qualities. It is even possible to

postulate a specific graphic antecedent, Hieronymous Bosch's *El jardín de las delicias*, to which Cela alluded specifically in interviews during the 1970s in relation to his experimental play, *El carro de heno o el inventor de la guillotina* (1968), indicating his intention to dedicate a second play (apparently never completed) that the same artist. The sense of a vast Surrealist canvas intensifies in the remaining novels of the Galician triptych.

*La cruz de San Andrés* won the 1994 Planeta Prize, the most-heavily endowed of Spain's commercial literary prizes, provoking controversy among those who considered his competing inappropriate for a Nobel Prize winner. As Iglesias Feijoo comments, Cela's receipt of this polemical award produced "commentaries that were less than benevolent."<sup>9</sup> *La cruz* differs from *Mazurca* in its largely urban landscape, primarily the shipbuilding centers of La Coruña and El Ferrol. The predecessor's larger-than-life characters and mythic conflict have vanished together with the sense of purpose that conflict provided. Characters in *La cruz* are, if anything, smaller than life, most of them desperately seeking purpose. Whereas *Mazurca* narrates the beginning of the end (of old ways of life in Galicia), *La cruz* seems to present the apocalyptic end product of that process, the collapse of a family dynasty, symbolizing rents in the larger social fabric. The narrative voice affirms in the opening lines that the work-in-progress is a chronicle of disintegration, and a pervasive sense of futility and absurdity is periodically underscored by affirmations of writing on toilet paper (a ploy which subsequently introduces periodic comments by the narrator on the merits of different brands —another repetitive device).

While not apocalyptic in the biblical or science fiction sense because of the absence of cataclysmic catastrophe —although the novelistic world essentially ends with the mass suicide of an apocalyptic sect to which many characters belong— there is no new beginning.

The novel has been viewed as literarily apocalyptic by Charlebois who notes the intentional deconstruction of certain narrative and theatrical devices.<sup>8</sup> The narrator's remark (16) concerning the sixty-first anniversary of the Second Republic (declared in 1931) places the probable narrative present or time of writing in 1994. As in *San Camilo*, Cela interpolates world news, local advertising, snatches of conversations, and random headlines, suggesting current events during moments of the reconstructed action which apparently spans a period from the 1960s to the moment of writing and covers the family history of at least one generation of the López Santana family (many of whose congenitally unstable members died in the mass suicide). In one paragraph summarizing that family history, the narrator jumbles together the first man on the moon (1969) and such present-day issues as a cure for AIDS, illustrating the multiple chronological perspectives employed (sometimes simultaneously) and the tendency to combine and compress time periods. Such confusion of time and dates presumably reflects the narrator's disordered memory (a structuring principle of Cela's novels from *Mazurca* onward). Narrative flow is governed by free association rather than orderly chronology, themes, or anything so outdated as finishing one anecdote before beginning others.

The disjointed, "invertebrate" narra-



tive concerns a couple with five children—a family riddled by congenital mental instability—their relatives, friends, acquaintances, business associates, sweethearts and lovers. Several become involved with the cult precipitating the final tragedy, whose “schoolmaster” Julián Santiso uses hypnotic techniques to convert followers—especially individuals who are immature, not too intelligent, or suffering emotional problems, e.g., the sexually insatiable and perennially disappointed “Betty Boop,” as well as lonely widows, frustrated housewives, and timid, maladjusted males. Although the numerous characters initially appear unrelated, successive anecdotes facilitate the imaginative reader’s construction of linkages, tying together disparate themes and narrative threads as the chronicle traces the family from grandmothers to grandchildren, hinting at congenital madness, and suggesting some empirical basis for the narrator’s occasionally irrational assertions.

Because Cela has experimented with novelistic structure from early in his career, *La cruz* presents not so much innovations as [re]combinations of prior elements in different proportions, together with changed setting, a new kind of characters and a focal incident unprecedented in his fiction (the apocalyptic cult and mass suicide), periodically reintroduced with variations or additional information, much in the fashion of the nuclear murder-revenge in *Mazurca*. The novelist employs sudden, cinematographic shifts (first introduced in *Pabellón de reposo* [1944; *Rest Home*, 1961]), enhancing the sensation of motion in an otherwise passive, enigmatic painting of suffering and slow deaths. The narrative consciousness alternates between per-

spectives of Matilde (who has at least three different last names and possible identities), Cela qua author, and an unidentified narrative voice which appears primarily in an intervening “intermission” concerned primarily with alleged criticism of the novel-in-progress (parodying an episode in the second half of *Don Quijote* where characters react to their “history”). Other “recycled” devices first utilized in *Pabellón* include parallel structures, repetitive refrains, Surrealist imagery, antithesis, anaphora, cadence, and “idea rhyme”—regular recurrence or echoes of ideas, including quiet desperation and the indifference of the strong toward the weak. More specifically lyric vocabulary and rhetorical figures (metaphors, similes, images) characterizing *Mazurca* and reappearing in *Madera de boj* are less in evidence, however.

Cela also adapts aspects of *La colmena*: the absence of a protagonist, or use of a collective protagonist; an essentially plotless narrative, non-linear chronology, and occasional experiments in simultaneous action. *La colmena* abandoned conventional chapter divisions in favor of five major parts, the same structure utilized in *La cruz* (although these divisions are so titled as to suggest the five acts of classical tragedy). Cela reintroduces the protagonist-narrator of *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo*, alleging a re-encounter with her wherein she emerges as a self-conscious, metaliterary writer who reads him portions of her work-in-progress and discusses numerous alternative titles (a major structuring device of *El asesinato del perdedor*, written the same year as *La cruz*). The former similarly contains a nuclear episode, oft-repeated with minor variations, employing numerous

unrelated interpolations and multiple narrators, two or more identifiable with Cela or his authorial masks. Other devices drawn from *Mrs. Caldwell* include Surrealist descriptions, repetitive maritime motifs emphasizing shipwrecks (which proliferate in *Madera de boj*), and the absence of identifiable chronology or linear progression. Frequent mentions of wind and waves and references to the "Torre de Hércules" (a legendary Roman lighthouse near La Coruña) offer contrapuntal glimpses of nature in an intensely subjective text, functioning somewhat like the lyric interludes of rain in *Mazurca*. Nature occupies much less space than in *Mazurca*, however, as do folklore, superstition, atavism, and mythic elements. *La cruz* is emphatically post-Franco while *Mazurca* portrays a time now past, and *Madera de boj* is timeless. Mrs. Caldwell, eccentric, arbitrary, and apparently unbalanced—and Cela's only previous female narrator—is the inevitable antecedent for Matilde Verdú in *La cruz*.

As in *Mazurca*, Cela employs insistently repeated focal incidents or situations: the act of writing, interrogation or trial of the narrator, alleged crucifixion of the narrator and her husband, scenes from the lives of López Santana family members (mostly disciples of the cult). Also as in *Mazurca*, he superimposes differing and sometimes conflicting versions of the focal incidents, creating a multivoiced, polyphonic whole (Bakhtin would call it "heteroglossia"<sup>10</sup>). The resulting palimpsest with its intimately contradictory, self-cancelling discourse, is characteristically postmodern. *La cruz* contains legacies from *Cristo versus Arizona*, as well, including an unreliable author-narrator-character with considerable metefictional self-con-

sciousness, who constantly retouches, contradicts, rewrites, questions, and corrects the manuscript-in-progress. Another inheritance from *Cristo versus Arizona* is the inclusion of theatrical elements: the earlier novel contains a brief dramatic episode (146-47), comprising dialogue with typographical indications of speakers' names and stage directions. Dramatic elements in *La cruz* are largely parodic but highly visible aspects of intertextuality and metafiction (again, characteristically postmodern).

*La cruz*, like *Cristo versus Arizona* and *El asesinato del perdedor*, foregrounds fatal errors by interpreters of texts (whether oral, religious, or legal) and exhibits skepticism concerning history and the media, also typical of the postmodern, as is the characteristic, shifting ontology which acquires heightened visibility in *La cruz* and *Madera*.

Interwoven with the chronicle of dynastic disintegration are such sacred motifs as the crucifixion and celebration of the sacraments (mass, Holy Communion, etc.). Religious motifs multiply in Cela's novels following *San Camilo*, with its title references to vespers, feast and octave (or novena), *Oficio de tinieblas*, whose title refers to a portion of the Easter high mass celebrated in darkness, and *Cristo versus Arizona*. Dangerous topics under the dictatorship included secret organizations—such as the cult in *La cruz*—and the Freemasons, officially anathema. Allusions to the triangle and pyramid (Masonic symbols) are also associated with the cult leader and the sect is described as a pyramidal organization. Besides numerous references to devils and demons, initial pages mention trumpets signaling the "black Mass of confusion" (9), and parody

sacred processions and religious pageantry. Rather than intending to offend the orthodox believer, however, *La cruz* foregrounds problems resulting from blind fanaticism, whether of tyrannical cults (not a widespread problem in Spain), the Inquisition, or extreme traditionalism—more likely targets of Cela's satire.

Turn-of-the-century European modernism expressed lack of respect for the concept of genre and its putative boundaries, enunciated early on by Benedetto Croce and enthusiastically affirmed by Unamuno and Baroja, among others. Cela likewise has expressed his scorn for genre, especially as regards the limitations imposed upon the novel by definitions of the genre. His ongoing experimentation with the genre, pushing the concept of novel beyond the point of disintegration in *Oficio de tinieblas*, found other avenues of expression in subsequent novels, as evinced by his insertion of dramatic elements in *La cruz*—not only the aforementioned titling of chapters as through drawn from classical plays but also reference to characters as puppets, allusions to Shakespeare throughout, mentions of farce and mime, etc. Another case in point, the use of lyric devices and the inclusion of poems in *Mrs. Caldwell*, further serves to demonstrate Cela's violation of genre boundaries in literature from early in his career. And much as turn-of-the-century modernists sought to tear down barriers between literature and other arts (especially poetry and music, painting, and sculpture), Cela moves toward the visual arts with the increase of static, presentational elements in novels where the main thing "narrated" is the struggle to compose a narration (*Cristo versus Arizona*, *El asesinato*, *La cruz*). Increases in repe-

titive motifs, fugal structures and counterpoint attest to his efforts to cross the boundaries between prose and music. Musical, painterly, and lyrical ingredients multiply in the Galician triptych.

*El asesinato* and *La cruz* abound in postmodern attributes (according to Lyotard's definition<sup>11</sup>), expressing characteristically iconoclastic attitudes and challenging canonical norms of the cultural, social, and political establishment. Differences notwithstanding, both novels repeat formulas previously utilized in *Mazurca* and *Cristo versus Arizona*. Noteworthy, however, is the growing emphasis on the narrator, whose unreliability increases significantly in the later novels, at the same time that doubts concerning narratorial identity multiply in *El asesinato* and *La cruz*. In both, Cela resuscitates narrator-protagonists from earlier works. Pascual Duarte from Cela's apprenticeship novel reappears in *El asesinato*, and Mrs. Caldwell in *La cruz*; both function specifically as authorial alter egos, more or less acknowledged as such. The late Torrente Ballester, in his seminal study of *Don Quijote*<sup>12</sup> (with much relevance for metafictional novels), affirmed that the essential question is "¿Quién narra?" This query proves nearly impossible to answer in *La cruz*, as Cela obfuscates the issue by contradictions, rewriting and narrative erasure while simultaneously depriving readers of any reliable "factual" version of events. The novel offers readers no "objective" indication of reality via perspectives external to the subjective, unreliable, and apparently unbalanced, allegedly multiple narrator (much as in *Mrs. Caldwell*, with the difference that the question of multiple identities for her was never suggested). The narrator frequently confesses

ignorance, repeatedly admits lying, and advises readers to disbelieve, while shifting from first to third person, from singular to plural, from abject confusion and ignorance to a form of omniscience that foresees and interpolates the future. An oft-repeated device underscoring Matilde's unreliability is her treatment of names, repeatedly rectified (sometimes three or more times in a single sentence). Cela specifically parodies the name game in one of many interpolated dialogues between the narrator and an unidentified interlocutor. As in *Cristo versus Arizona*, most names have multiple variants (an extension of his numerous earlier characters known both by names and nicknames, but often not specifically connected). Augmenting the ambiguity and confusion created by multiple names, the cult which many López Santana family members join requires that recruits adopt new names symbolizing their break with the past (153); the narrator's obsession with St. Andrew's Cross may reflect cult emphasis on adopting saints' identities (or perhaps the cult's ritual name-changing inspires this practice in her narrative). Demonstrations of the narrator's limitations and numerous mechanisms subverting textual or narratological authority typify the postmodern. While allegedly feminine, the narrative voice lacks attributes that might reaffirm femininity or distinguish feminine gender, although "she" speaks several times in the plural, mentioning her kinship with other women. No identifiable feminist attitudes or themes appear.

Matilde, the narrator, one of three entities with that name, identifies herself as an inspector of primary schools, and the cover blurb terms her the protagonist. However, her professional life (if it exists) has no bearing either

upon her narratorial role or the action, and readers never see her act, beyond her role as spectator, commentator, and putative author or scribe. She indicates that her mother was also named Matilde Verdú and that she is the daughter of a single mother who was fond of literature, writing biographies for schoolchildren of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz (11). Iglesias reveals that a book entitled *San Juan de la Cruz* and signed by "Matilde Verdú" was published in Madrid in 1948, and that this was a pseudonym of Cela.<sup>13</sup> Cela's resuscitation of this pseudonym for the author-narrator of *La cruz* parallels his revival of the supposedly executed Pascual Duarte who dialogues with the author in *El asesinato*, befriends "el perdedor" in prison, and proffers comments implying that he (Pascual, under yet another name) is the "real" narrator of the 1994 novel. Such blurring of ontological boundaries between the fictional and real or literary and extra-literary worlds recalls the dialogue between Unamuno and Augusto in *Niebla*, as creator and creature seemingly share equal ontological footing. Some postmodern fiction depicts the extra-literary author as trapped within the same "reality" as his fictional entities (for example, Torrente Ballester in *Fragmentos de apocalipsis*—but Torrente specifically mentions *Niebla* as an antecedent). Cela does not so much call into question his own reality qua author as do Unamuno and Torrente, but implicitly underscores postmodern notions that the (implied) author is a fiction, just as the narrator and characters are fictions. Further blurring boundaries between everyday, empirical "reality" and the world of writing, some seven or more devils—representing incarnations of Satan apparently peculiar to Galicia—occupy



equal social and ontological footing with the other characters, working at various mundane trades while simultaneously going about their metaphysical business of temptation and seduction. The resulting tropological world suggests postmodern allegory (as does the title, with its religious and metaphysical connotations). Character awareness of their fictive condition, typical of postmodern fiction, exemplifies the metafictional game wherein the fictitious character, creation of a likewise fictitious author, seems to achieve autonomy, only to be annihilated in what Gerard Genette terms *metalepsis* (retroactively applicable to *Niebla*) as the fiction creates numerous ontological levels resembling concentric circles.

*La cruz* presents numerous stylistic constants associated with Cela, according high visibility to language per se at the same time that it demonstrates that no necessary correspondence exists between words and reality, between signs and the "real" objects they supposedly designate. As do other postmodern novelists, Cela creates a verbal construct where things simultaneously exist and are erased, are narrated and cancelled. A good Surrealist like her creator, Matilde transgresses many sexual and social taboos, and challenges orthodox Catholicism. Possibly schizophrenic or paranoid, she also claims to receive secret messages, repeatedly refers to victimization and persecution, mentions reincarnation (195), and relates such a succession of strange events, bizarre deaths, ominous behavior and exaggeratedly uncontrolled adulterous affairs that readers eventually question whether any such happenings exist outside Matilde's hallucinations, fantasies, and self-confessed lies. Given hypothetical "objective reality" within

the novel of the López Santana family's mental instability and bizarre cult activities, including the final, apocalyptic mass suicide, readers probably conclude that within the fictional "reality," some things (such as the alleged crucifixion of Matilde and her husband) never happened, while others (including some cult activities and the final tragedy) did happen, and that the remainder cannot be clearly determined either to be fantasies within the fiction, or fictionally "real." Indeterminacy is yet another trait of the postmodern.

Cela in *La cruz* (as in *El asesinato*) suggests profound skepticism concerning history, first enunciated in *San Camilo* where he demonstrates the fallibility of eyewitnesses. *Mazurca* and *Cristo versus Arizona* similarly show that witnesses of the same event do not necessarily see the same thing. Vagaries of the several narrators further depict the fallibility of memory. Cela thereby demonstrates that writing is not an "innocent" act, regardless of genre, but especially in the case of "history." By no coincidence, therefore, Matilde never refers to her narrative as novel, narration, or story, but repeatedly terms it *historia* and *crónica* at the same time that she confesses that she has fabricated untruths. The fact that her interlocutor is presumably her confessor suggests another motive for history's unreliability—it is written to satisfy others. Matilde's receptiveness to others' suggestions on organizing her chronicle and incorporating variations between her version and others also bear upon the biases of historiography and the questionable content of "historical" documents. Even the stopping-point for the narrative is arbitrary, occurring because Matilde has exhausted the supply of toilet paper

(237), possibly silencing significant parts of the chronicle. Closure per se confers an emphasis by virtue of placement that may unduly privilege insignificant moments which might otherwise appear in another light, given a full narration of all relevant events. Cela leaves no doubt as to his wish to subvert history (and especially the formerly sacrosanct Francoist historiography), as seen in the narrator's affirmation that history is based on history books —a tautological enterprise, a process whereby the blind leading the blind acquires official sanction. The same passage observes that history is nothing but literary fallacies (200), simplifying and possibly distorting but unmistakably echoing a position of the New Historicism (specifically affirmed by Cela in *Memoorias*).<sup>14</sup> The novelist further demonstrates that what is omitted or deliberately silenced has the potential to change radically the meaning of an historical account, as seen in Matilde's handling of her chronicle, especially as concerns the cult. Her conversion provides yet another reason to mistrust the narrator, as cult membership obviously constitutes a particular bias, a context suggesting strategic and rhetorical reasons that underlie her metanarrative reflections as she discusses questions of placement in the overall narrative, authorship of certain sections by others, and the like. Such seemingly casual "technicalities" as context determine or modify meaning. Contextualizing events is never an innocent exercise, for it bears upon motivation, ethics and morality (a point explored by Cela at greater length in *El asesinato*). In *La cruz*, Cela deconstructs historiography, memoir, eyewitness accounts, and similar "documentary" genres, no more credible than

their patently unreliable narrators. These objectives render *La cruz* the least Galician of the novels comprising the Galician triptych, notwithstanding the proliferation of references to the sites, sounds, monuments, icons, and history of La Coruña.

Cela first announced the imminent apparition of *Madera de boj* in 1983, and later explained its failure to appear with statements that the 1989 Nobel Prize disrupted his writing schedule, forcing postponement of *Madera*. Meanwhile, Cela published three other novels, each emphatically more post-modern than its predecessor, all featuring narrators of such limited "omniscience" that more time is devoted to emendations, self-criticism, rectifications, contradictions, corrections, and confessions of ignorance than to the job of narration. They are ontologically unstable or destabilized, featuring multivoiced discourse and frequent dialogic exchanges between the narrator and unidentified interlocutors. Discourse progressively replaces narration, as the interest in language per se displaces action, or action gives way to a constant succession of outlandish, eccentric, unlikely characters of little significance or duration. The interim between the announcement and eventual publication of *Madera* is reflected by the heightened presence of many characteristics of the intervening novels (less visible in *Mazurca*). The fact *Madera* was announced the same year in which Cela published *Mazurca* nevertheless suggests closer connections between these two novels in the author's mind than between either of them and his remaining Galician novel, *La cruz*. Galician locale is less essential in the latter; nothing in *La cruz* could happen "only in Galicia" and not elsewhere, while the opposite is

true of *Mazurca* and *Madera de boj*. In both of these, the narrative is so thoroughly integrated with the Galician landscape, culture, character types, customs, beliefs, superstitions, idiosyncrasies, and demographics that transplantation is unthinkable.

But whereas *Mazurca* is primarily a novel of the Civil War from the perspective of Galicia, *Madera* is a narrative of Galicia from the perspective of millennia. Beside their common Galician landscapes, culture, character-types and ambiance, the two share the same repetitive style and lyric structures, which intensify to the maximum in *Madera*, less a narrative than a paean to Galicia and an exercise in poetic prose. The epigraph from Edgar Allen Poe's "Ulalume" proves eloquent in this regard. Emblematic of many lyric qualities sought by Cela (although *Madera* lacks the rhyme), it features rhythmic reiterations with minimal variations, creating an atmosphere, sensation, or emotion rather than a specific communication of content. Old age, decadence, and nature are repetitive motifs in the reflections of the lyric persona of "Ulalume" and all three become major themes of *Madera*.

Because an illustration, like a picture, may be worth a thousand words, readers should note the close resemblance between the epigraph from Poe, and immediately afterward, three unidentified lines in Gallego clearly composed in imitation:

The skies they were ashen and sober;  
The leaves they were crisped and sere,  
The leaves they were withering and sere.

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober  
As the leaves that were crisped and sere,  
As the leaves that were withering and sere.

Era xa noite no solitario outubro  
As miñas lembranzas eran traidoras e  
murchas Pois non sabíamos que era o  
mes de outubro. (15)

The recurring subliminal stress upon autumn, the dying leaves, night, and the poetic persona's clear identification with the withered leaves sets a mood obviously in harmony with the litany of death in the never-ending roll-call of shipwrecks, echoed by a series of violent deaths on land, even though frequent intrusions by humorous or erotic episodes briefly interrupt the dominant lugubrious notes. Lest there be any doubt that Cela intended readers to notice the impact of "Ulalume," he includes the narrator's uncle Knut Skien who sings Poe's verses in Gallego, accompanying himself on the accordion:

A Poe hay que cantarlo en gallego  
para que se entienda maior incluso  
que en inglés.

Os ceos eran cincentos e sombríos  
As follas eran crispadas e secas,  
As follas murchas e secas. (17)

Some seventy pages later, Cela inserts the Castilian equivalent of the Poe epigraph first as an unidentified intertext; then followed by rhetorical commentary and identification: "era ya de noche en el solitario octubre y mis recuerdos eran traidores y mustios porque no sabíamos que era el mes de octubre, ¿por qué no sabíamos que era el mes de octubre?, sin duda alguna los versos de Poe quedan mayor en gallego" (85-86). Elsewhere, another character, James E. Allen "toca el acordeón y recita misterias poesías de Poe en gallego, no es ningún secreto que Poe gana mucho leído en gallego y sin perderle cara al mar" (143).

Several lyric meditations by the narrative conscience reflect and simultaneously expand upon the syntax and structures of "Ulalume" as exemplified in the following:

La mar no se paró nunca desde que Dios inventó el tiempo hace ya todos los años del mundo, Dios inventó el mundo al mismo tiempo que el tiempo, el mundo no existía antes que el tiempo, la mar no se cansa nunca, el tiempo no se cansa nunca, ni el mundo, que cada día es más viejo, pero no se cansa nunca...(13)

The pattern of repetition with minimal variations, followed by a kind of reprise, is common to the three examples cited as are lyric devices including alliteration, cadence, and prosopopeia. These and other repetitive rhetorical figures prove easier to identify and describe than the characters, the epoch or time in which the narrative is set. No doubt is possible, however, about the locale, or the portrait of Galicia with its myths, legends, superstitions, witches and warlocks, enchanters and sirens, werewolves, demons, saints, and shipwrecks.

The latter, forming a kind of never-ending chain, continually extended, exercises a structuring function similar to that of reiteration of the nuclear murder-revenge in *Mazurca*, although rather than being variations on a single incident, each of the hundreds of shipwrecks cited is different. In each case, Cela provides extensive detail: the exact date, hour, and location along the *Costa da Morte* stretching from La Coruña down to the Portuguese border; depth of the water and the ship's displacement; weather conditions; the precise name of the vessel and its captain, flag under which it sailed, intended destination, its propulsion system, number and nationality of crewmen, nature of cargo, and tonnage; cause of the accident, sometimes including efforts to avoid it; the number of survivors, if any; salvage operations; and in the case of multiple wrecks in a small area, details as

minute as the size, shape, or name of the rocks involved in each disaster. While it is not possible to verify without a maritime map (much more detailed than typical road map), the reader receives the impression that it would be possible to sail along the Galician coast from one end to the other with the novel in hand and identify the site of each wreck as well as the names of ships whose remains are still visible. The novelist must have done a great deal of background research into provincial and local archives, as well as questioning older coastal residents, and obviously spent time in many of the fishing villages as he refers to numerous local inns, taverns, and eateries, and pauses to interpolate regional lore and anecdotes from several wreck sites or nearby villages and towns. Besides its aforementioned structuring function—its unifying of what would otherwise be a collection of disparate narrative fragments—the litany of shipwrecks serves to create the illusion of motion, a surrogate for action, as the narrative focus travels down the coast.

Contrasting with the stark reality of the shipwreck-strewn waters along the *Costa da Morte*, the number of vessels shattered against its gigantic rocks, is the often mythic, supernatural, or fantastic nature of the remainder of the narrative whose pages are populated as much by the dead as the living, by legendary, fanciful, or monstrous creatures as much as by what Unamuno called *el hombre de carne y hueso*. A continuous stream of those drowned in the shipwrecks emerges from the waters, some unaware that they are dead and others who refuse to die, or who seek Christian burial in order to rest in peace. These and others of the deceased mingle with the living on equal



ontological footing, as do werewolves, demons, saints, and even a papier-maché puppet who comes to life like Pinocchio to become a prophet or oracle, together with various other creatures whose origin seems more literary than legendary. What appears most real in *Madera* is frequently the unreal—and the novelist leaves no doubt that this is precisely the millennial essence of Galicia. The villagers and fishermen interact—often matter-of-factly, some-times with fear or awe—with the marvelous, the dead, and the supernatural, just as they live with the constant proximity of death and disaster. To an even greater extent than in *El asesinato* and *La cruz*, the novelist erases or obscures boundaries between the living and dead, the sane and the insane, reality and illusion. Legend occupies the same plane as “fact,” as Cela incorporates various Galician myths, for example, numerous accounts of submerged cities (variations of the Atlantis myth) and apparitions of the *hueste de las animas*, with which other characters interact on the same basis as with each other, much like the matter-of-fact exchanges between the sane and the mad.

Although most of the vast gallery of characters are as fleeting in their appearances as are those in *La colmena*, several reappear with a certain regularity, at least within a particular one of the four major parts into which *Madera* is divided. These each have titles and subtitles, the titles alluding to a major motif or narrative thread, with subtitles all beginning, “Cuando dejamos de” (alluding implicitly to the theme of aging enunciated in the epigraph from Poe, the significant motif of dry leaves, and more distantly, to death, omnipresent throughout). The title of Part I,

“El carnero de Marco Polo,” alludes to a putative (never elucidated) gentlemen’s game of common interest to the narrator and various bourgeois masculine relatives and acquaintances in or near La Coruña where British influence was strongest. Subtitled “Cuando dejamos de jugar al rugby,” it satirizes the provincial anglophiles’ pretentiousness but also celebrates youth and the role of clan and tradition, although such content must be assiduously sought among the innumerable interruptions by portrayal of numerous local types, Galician myths, interpolated tales of ghosts and phantoms, maritime legends, wrecked ships and sunken cities, public executions and torture, abuse of those who are different or defenseless (a deaf-mute, penniless foreigners, a woman accused of witchcraft for her misguided efforts to assist those in need), recipes, intertexts, *autocrítica* and mini-dialogues.

Part II, “Annelie y el jorobado,” presents the oft-suspended and renewed saga of sado-masochistic loves between the bourgeois widow of a philatelist and a marijuana-smoking, hunchbacked French shipwreck survivor, amateur astrologer and pastry-cook given to quoting Camus. An early hint of their differences appears in their divergent reading tastes, as Annelie reads Carmen de Icaza and Concha Linares Becerra, approximate equivalents of “Harlequin Romances.” The tale of their unfolding relationship is frequently interrupted by the litany of sunken ships, biblical allusions, magical incantations, recipes, mini-dialogues, ironic narrative asides, folklore and local superstitions, *non sequiturs*, children’s songs, lyric interludes, rituals for casting spells, recipes for exorcisms, fragments from other ongoing, repeatedly suspended tales,

and authorial reflections on such things as capital punishment, the Galician language, racial prejudices, cruelty to animals, etc. The arrival of an alleged nephew of Annelie's dead husband—his possible heir—interrupts her idyll with Vincent, as both fear his laying claim to her inheritance. After a deal to pay off the heir and get rid of him, however, the two begin to have problems over money, with Annelie intensifying her humiliations of Vincent, whose resentment eventually grows to the point that he murders her and disappears, ending what appears to be the only fully-related or closed-ending "story" in *Madera*.

Part III is entitled "Doña Onofre la Zurda," the name of one of its most visible characters, "viuda de Cela, don Celso Camilo de Cela Sotomayor, official de notaría jubilado" (182) and protagonist of this part, entitled "Cuando dejamos de pescar con artes prohibidas." Doña Onofre—conventional, orthodox, filled with inhibitions, prejudices, and superstitions—lives a monotonous existence tortured by frustrated libido, as her chance of satisfactory sexuality was implicitly ruined by her convent education. Constituting a counterpoint are the promiscuous Dosinda, and Dorothy (it is said that the latter is lesbian). The "artes prohibidas" are obviously *ars amandi* and include not only varied hetero-sexual and homosexual relationships, but an imaginative list of potential combinations for bestiality (222), with commentary on which animals work best for each gender and which simply cannot be utilized, together with varied reasons why. This section expresses some extreme *machista* attitudes: "...la mujer es sierva del hombre como debe ser porque Dios así lo manda...la mujer debe tener tres

hombres a quienes servir, el marido, el amante y el suplente, la mujer debe entregar su alma a Dios cuando no tiene un hombre al que servir" (208). Whatever unity there may be within Part III inheres in the emphasis on eroticism, although notable increases occur in the number of legends and bits of local history and folklore recounted, folk sayings and popular wisdom, as well as episodes of cruelty to animals (especially cats and wolves), tales of demons and demonology, and anecdotes of superstition, prejudice, hypocrisy and abuse, especially of people with even minor defects (being left-handed, cross-eyed, slightly lame). Other interpolations include refrains, bits of prayers, and more details of shipwrecks, intertexts, mini-dialogues, recipes for incantations, etc.

Part IV, "Las Llaves de Cíbola," is subtitled "Cuando dejamos de jugar al cricket," perhaps suggesting that each stage of life has activities that must be progressively renounced as one grows older or more sedentary. Cela continues to introduce more characters, extending the litany of shipwrecks, refrains, legends, and popular lore. The section title reflects an increase in tales of sunken or vanished cities, represented by Cíbola:

A la ciudad de Cíbola se la tragó la arena del desierto, se la llevó el viento volando por las aires y la enterró más allá de Pexatlán, se oíó que la sepultó muy hondo porque no aparece por lado alguno, cuenta la tradición que las meigas indias fabricaron la mágica llave de la ciudad de oro y miel y la pusieron a secar al sol del Polo Norte...(264)

The legend of Cíbola, fragmented as are most narratives in *Madera*, is interrupted and resumed repeatedly, interspersed with episodes of gratuitous cruelty, abuse of the defenseless, of

orphans and of animals, reflections on capital punishment, explanations of magic rites, and the ever-present litany of sunken ships, superstitions, and popular sayings (frequently recalling similar cruelty, magic and myth in *Cristo versus Arizona*). One of the more humorous passages has to do with the location of purgatory: "está según Lutero entre Dinamarca y el Schleswig-Holstein, el limbo es de más difícil localización, dicen que queda en el borde de la Anatolia" (265). The fourth part functions as a kind of *coda*, as Cela reintroduces or reaffirms many motifs that had all but disappeared after the first part, pays heightened attention to geography, and heretofore neglected maritime lore such as marine sign language, and a boat pilot's directions for entering and navigating a harbor or the mouth of a river. Another motif recurring throughout but which receives more emphasis in Part IV alludes to the title, listing bits of popular lore concerning boxwood as well as reiterating the narrator's intention to "hacerme una casa con las vigas de madera de boj....en mi familia no hemos sido capaces de levantar una casa con las vigas de madera de boj" (267). "La madera de boj tarda en arder, es como el hierro, pero cuando arde devora todo lo que toca, es lo mismo que el temporal" (270). Boxwood was supposedly used in the construction of ships, and again the narrator declares, "ya tengo algún dinero ahorrado y que me voy a hacer una casa con las vigas de madera de boj, no sé donde, con los pesos y las escaleras de madera de boj, a la beira de mar, eso sí, no quiero ni pensar en un incendio, al final arden hasta las piedras y las planchas de hierro y de acero del casco de los buques" (276-77). The repetitive motifs become more

frequent in the final part, together with the reiteration of portions of stories which were completed or suspended, with references discontinued, creating a huge effect of heteroglossia with the polyphony of many story-tellers speaking at once, an effect augmented by intertextuality (Zola, Pardo Bazán) and auto-intertexts, as Cela "revives" bits of earlier novels, evoking especially *Cristo versus Arizona* (282), *La colmena* (288), and *Mazurca* (303).

Many characteristics of postmodern discourse appearing in the three or four most recent predecessors of *Madera* recur: the limited, fallible narrator more or less constantly rectifies and corrects himself, and carries on a running dialogue with an unknown or invisible interlocutor, never identified for the reader. Usually the mini-dialogues take the form of commentary on the narration by a putative listener, or the narrator's concern for his listener's reaction. A high degree of orality characterizes the discourse, sometimes humorous or satiric, as in the following passage that introduces a character and ends with one of the self-reflective, metaliterary mini-dialogues:

El cura de San Xurxo dos Sete Raposos Mortos hace los milagros con una sola mano de mañoso que es, se llama don Xerardiño

Aldemunde y lleva ya muchos años difunto, se le nota en el hedor, en el cheirume a rayos podres, pero por artes mágicas finge la vida y hasta anda de un lado para otro como si tal cosa, confiesa al pecador, juega al tute con quien va de camino, le saca brillo al serpentín del alambique, canta de balde en el funeral de los percebeiros muertos y cocina almejas con cebolla, ajo, perejil y vino blanco.

—¿Esto no va demasiado revuelto?

—No, esto no va más que algo revuelto.

—¿Cómo la vida misma?

—Sí, pero esto procuro no decirlo.

(14)

Constant themes include gratuitous cruelty, man's inhumanity to man (and especially women and children), the motif of executions, the combination of eroticism and death. Other constants involve numerous characteristics of Cela's easily recognizable personal style: tag lines, caricature, the grotesque—often juxtaposed to lyricism—touches of the picaresque and expressionistic imagery. As in *Mazurca*, but to a greater extent, Cela employs Gallego vocabulary and phrases with sufficient regularity that the novel's text is followed by an eighteen-page glossary or dictionary translating most of the relevant lexicon to Castilian. The variegated throng of characters comprises the logical and foreseeable sailors and fisher-folk as well as the blind, the idiots, the deformed and mutilated of every imaginable ilk, prostitutes and their clientele, sacristans, healers, midwives, fornicating priests and martyred virgins, murderers and suicides, pan-

derers and hypocrites, plus token representatives of the "solid citizenry." Save for the strong maritime emphasis, these characters abound in most of Cela's prior fiction, yet readers of *Madera* will probably conclude that his latest long narrative is not "just another" of his novels, for it is unique in representing the only time since he wrote *Pisando la dudosa luz del día* that this younger poet of the Generation of 1927 surrenders entirely to the pleasure of the text and especially to the lyric essence of Galicia and its language as evinced in the closing words:

el vientre de todos estos horizontes es de oro, no encierra oro, raposos de oro, rorcuales de oro, gaviotas de oro, sino que está tupido por el oro que no deja lugar para los raposos, ni los rorcuales ni las gaviotas, por Conwualles, Breñaña y Galicia pasa un camino sembrado de cruces y de pepitas de oro que termina en el cielo de los marineros muertos en la mar.  
(303)

## Notes and References

1. Page and textual citations refer to the following: *Mazurca para dos muertos* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1983); *La cruz de San Andrés* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1994); *Madera de boj* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1999).

2. All references are to *Memorias, entendimientos y voluntades* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1993).

3. See Janet Pérez, *Camilo José Cela Revisited: The Later Novels*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 2000.

4. By implicitly reducing the civil war to the dimensions of a backwoods feud, Cela reiterates and underscores

a point repeatedly made elsewhere: that the Spanish Civil War was a conflict between Spaniards. He insisted in the epigraph to his wartime poetry collection, *Pisando la dudosa luz del día* and the dedication of *San Camilo* 1936 that the "foreign adventurers" on both sides had no business being there and played no significant role "at Spain's funeral." This notion is reiterated in practically the same words in *Memorias*. Cela thus creates a counter-myth in *Mazurca*, minimizing ideologies and exalting the Spanish people.

5. See Nancy Dinneen, "Setting in



*San Camilo* 1936 and *Mazurca para dos muertos*," 70-75 in *Camilo José Cela: Homage to a Nobel Prize*, ed. Joaquín Roy (Coral Gables: University of Miami, 1991).

6. Cela's use of lyric structures in *Mazurca* is more fully discussed in Janet Pérez, "Mazurca para dos muertos: Demythologization of the Civil War, History and Narrative Reliability," in *The Contemporary Spanish Novel: 1936-1986*, ed. Kathleen Glenn, et al (Special number of *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 13:1-2 [1988], 83-104).

7. Sobejano stresses the structural significance of litanies not only in *Mazurca* but also in *San Camilo*, *Oficio de tinieblas*, and *Cristo versus Arizona*. See Gonzalo Sobejano, "Cristo versus Arizona: confesión, crónica, letanía," *El Extramundi* 9 (Spring 1997): 139-162.

8. Fallibility of the narrator is highly visible in *Cristo versus Arizona*, *El asesinato del perdedor*, *La cruz de San Andrés*, *Madera de boj*, and Cela's *Memorias*, where it complements the demythologization of history, echoing deconstructionist attitudes concerning received "truths."

9. See Luis Iglesias Feijoo, "La cruz de San Andrés, última novela de Cela," *El Extramundi* 9 (Spring 1997): 163-95. Primary emphasis in this excellent study is upon the narrator's identity.

10. In "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1981), Mikhail Bakhtin underscores postmodern subversion, ridicule and eventual destruction of "monoglossic" or single-voiced structures/genres.

11. Jean François Lyotard, translated to Spanish as *La cuestión postmoderna* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1994),

defines postmodernism as the state of culture following transformations that "change the rules of the game" for science, literature and the arts in the twentieth century.

12. Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, *El "Quijote" como juego* (Madrid: Guadarrama, 1975), analyzed how the Cervantine "found manuscript" device—repeatedly used by Cela—functions to affect reader perception of levels reality as the author is progressively distanced from the text by inventing additional intermediaries or "transmitters."

13. Iglesias Feijoo (184) cites F. Torres Yagues, *Medio siglo de escritores* (Madrid: Gráficas Yagues, 1972; 36) as the first to publicize Cela's authorship of this pseudonymous biography of San Juan; Cela has elsewhere mentioned his interest in Santa Teresa. Rafael Conte also states that Cela published a "biographical essay" on San Juan under the pseudonym of Matilde Verdú, but gives the date as 1941 (50). See "Camilo José Cela en busca de la novela perdida," *El Extramundi* 12 (Winter 1997): 43-70.

14. This is fully treated in Chapter 2 of *Camilo José Cela Revisited*.