

Feminism and Postmodernism in Paloma
Díaz-Mas's "The World According to Valdés"
and "In Search of a Portrait"

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There has been an increase of postmodernist characteristics in the narrative fiction by women writers in Spain since 1975, and at the same time a change in the feminist attitude of these writers has been expressed through their literary works. I believe this change has a correlation with the democratic development which occurred in Spain after Franco's death, and with the influence of postmodernist ideas. The democratic process created an ambience of freedom that allowed writers to redirect their social and political attention toward aesthetic interests.¹ However, the democratic process did not fulfill all expectations, and different political events in right wing and left wing political parties frustrated people's hopes, spreading disappointment among them (Subirats 207-09). In spite of this situation, intellectual and artistic expressions from the left carried on the initial euphoria and happiness which led to "La Movida" during the 1980s.² During this decade, intellectuals from the left adopted an hedonistic individualism, which masked the pessimism resulting from the successive failures of the new democracy (Subirats 212). Some artists and women writers identified with the ideology of the left and focused their work on the aesthetic and literary aspects of their text along other European postmodernists (Oleza 40). Literary works by women in Spain after 1975 clearly show that these au-

thors have directed their attention toward metaliterature and relegated women's issues to a secondary position notable in Paloma Díaz-Mas's work. I will analyze postmodernism's influence on Paloma Díaz-Mas's œuvre through two short stories, "The World According to Valdés" (1987) and "In Search of a Portrait" (1988).³ I have focused on these two short stories because most critics have concentrated on the study of feminist and postmodernist aspects in Díaz-Mas's novels rather than on her short stories and, also, because these two particular narrations expose the interference between her postmodernist point of view and her feminist concerns.⁴

Postmodernism started in Spain with the cultural and economic growth that occurred during the 1960s, and became more intense after Franco's death in 1975.⁵ The relationship between feminism and postmodernism has been extensively discussed. For example, Linda J. Nicholson, in *Feminism / Postmodernism*, refers to the alliance of these two in establishing their common opposition to the "Academy," and to the objectivity and universality the latter pretends to have, even though it represents only the values of a particular culture, ethnicity and gender, namely Western white man (5). Although some feminists consider postmodernism a danger because it espouses relativism and the abandonment of theory (Nicholson 6-11), Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson look at postmodernism as an ally because it offers "useful ideas about method, particularly a wariness toward generalizations which transcend the boundaries of culture and region" (5). The main difference Fraser and Nicholson see between feminism and postmodernism is that postmodernism emphasizes a critique of philosophical systems, and feminism emphasizes a social critique, "even though both have offered deep and far-reaching criticisms to the institution of philosophy" (19). In my perception, literature written by women in Spain during the 80s and 90s is more concerned with philosophical aspects of literary reality than with the radicalism of the 70s when women's social issues were the center of attention.⁶ Spanish women writers of the 80s concentrate more on metaliterary aspects and philosophical reflections to explore issues related to women.

Postmodernism in Paloma Díaz-Mas's work is expressed by her questioning of the epistemological character that modernism associates with literature. For her, literature is mainly an hedonistic expression of language which does not pretend to represent reality and which does not have a transcendental and universal value. She is concerned with the artificial nature of fiction, and, in this way, her literature becomes a metafiction.⁷ In an interview with María Luz Diéguez, Díaz-Mas states that creation, research and teaching of literature are a whole, "es todo literatura" 'all is literature' (79), and that this is the reason why metaliterature is becoming so important: "Yo creo que cada vez escribimos más sobre literatura. . . . Me parece más literario y más interesante plantearme la escritura como una creación intelectual, más que como un trozo de mi vida" 'I think that we are increasingly writing more about literature. . . . It seems to me more literary and interesting to think about literature as an intellectual creation, than to think about literature as a part of my life' (Diéguez 79, 90).⁸ One of the goals Díaz-Mas tries to achieve through metafiction in her work is to establish a distance between reality and fiction. For Díaz-Mas, the purpose of fiction is not to represent reality, since fiction is understood as the articulation of a subjective and hedonistic view. She states that: "Escribo porque me lo paso bien escribiendo y, como no me parece que la misión del escritor sea muy trascendente, no tengo ninguna ambición de que eso quede por los siglos de los siglos como legado al Universo" 'I write because I have fun doing it, and since I do not think that the writer's mission is very transcendental, I do not have the ambition that it will remain for centuries to come as a legacy to the universe' (Diéguez 80). Díaz-Mas denies the transcendental character of literature because she does not think that literature can change the world. That is why she does not like to be classified as a feminist and feels limited by that label (Diéguez 88). In literature she gives priority to hedonism over political concerns. The view of literature as primarily an expression of language with an hedonistic purpose is a postmodernist concept, originated during poststructuralism (Huyssen 260).⁹ Díaz-Mas formulates her position on women's issues in her critique of hu-

manist philosophy which, according to the postmodernist view, has been the basis for Western thought and modernism since Descartes (Hutcheon viii-ix; Navajas, *Teoría* 13). She develops her critique by questioning the concept of unity which, according to Iris M. Young, is responsible for the epistemological character associated with Young literature and the discriminatory elitism that exists in society (303-04). Díaz-Mas's hedonistic position on literature subverts the transcendental character that modernism associates with it.

The universal and transcendental character that modernist thinking associates with literature is the result of a limited interpretation of the text. In "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference," Iris M. Young speaks of the metaphysics of presence as one of the main notions in the Western conceptualization of writing and speech, which Derrida calls the "logic of identity": "This metaphysics consists in a desire to think things together in a unity" (303). Young points out that this conception generates a "logic of hierarchical opposition" (303), and as such is doomed to failure because it represses difference and constructs unreal essences, which in the field of written language constitutes a limit to the interpretation of the text:

Any utterance has a multiplicity of meanings and directions of interpretation and development in which it can be taken. For Derrida, the metaphysics of presence seeks to detemporalize and despatialize this signifying process, inventing the illusion of pure present meaning which eliminates the referential relation. This is idealism: conceiving the being and truth of things as lying outside time and change. (304)

Díaz-Mas denies the transcendental character of literature, exposing the difficulties of language in representing reality, thus demonstrating that literature cannot have a universal character. She indicates that the literary text cannot represent the whole reality due to the subjective character of the linguistic utterance and the effect of "historicity" (Hutcheon 257) associated with it. Linda Hutcheon alludes to how postmodernism makes us re-think History and fiction as "human constructs" (246) and teaches us that the accessibility to the past is, in this way, "entirely condi-

tioned by textuality" (256). According to Hutcheon, postmodernism "suggests no search for transcendent, timeless meaning but rather a re-evaluation of, and a dialogue with the past in the light of the present" (261).¹⁰ Contrasting present and past, Díaz-Mas reveals the contradictions and problems that the concept of unity generates in literature. In this way, she questions the epistemological character that humanism has associated with literature.

The short story "In Search of a Portrait" shows how artistic expression is a human fabrication, that is, a fictitious one. The narrator forms certain impressions of her grandmother from a photograph taken during grandmother's old age. To confirm these impressions she wants to see grandmother as a youthful woman. The plot centers around the search for a photograph from the grandmother's youth, and the narrator's subsequent disappointment when she finds it. The narrator wants to learn about her grandmother's past through an image, and assumes, incorrectly, that a photograph will be a reliable source. She says: "A una vejez tan dorada y bella, tan pulcra y perfecta, tan vivaz y venerable, sólo podía haber precedido una madurez espléndida, una juventud de belleza fascinante" 'Only a magnificent maturity, a youth of fascinating beauty, could precede such golden and beautiful, pure and perfect, lively and venerable old age' (91). The narrator assumes the unity, first, of the grandmother's identity, and second, of the photographic image and the reality. While contrasting the present and the past, Díaz-Mas analyzes how time and subjectivity interfere in the reproduction of reality and demonstrates that image and language are the production of an idiosyncratic perspective, representing only a part of reality.¹¹ Díaz-Mas resorts to a photograph because it offers a relationship between image and represented reality that seems closer to the exact reproduction of reality than that of linguistic expressions. However, the story points to the fact that the photographic image elicits as many representational problems as any other kind of expression. Hutcheon comments that photographs, within a positivistic frame of reference, could be accepted as neutral representations, but that in postmodernism "what they represent is self-consciously shown to

be highly filtered by the discursive and aesthetic assumptions of the camera holder” (248). It is the same idea that Díaz-Mas develops when she talks about the process of interpreting a photograph, in which she argues that memory is displaced, first, by the graphic image, and then, by the interpretation of this image:

Mi propia memoria, se ve substituída primero por las imágenes gráficas que yo misma he sacado; lo que voy a recordar no son el lugar donde estuve, sino las fotos que hice de él. Un intento de recuperar esa memoria es escribirla, pero entonces estoy metiéndome en otra capa. Lo que voy a recordar de este lugar en el que he vivido no es tampoco lo que viví, sino lo que he escrito sobre ese lugar.

My own memory is substituted, first, by the graphic images I have taken; what I am going to remember is not the place where I was, but the pictures I took of it. You can try to recover that memory by writing it, but then you are entering into another level. What I am going to remember about the place I lived is not what I experienced either, but what I have written about this place. (Ferrán 334)

Within “In Search of a Portrait” Díaz-Mas manifests the difficulties of representing reality through the narrator’s reflections on her grandmother’s identity when she compares both photographs. The narrator’s perception of her grandmother’s identity from the first photograph does not reflect the grandmother’s complete reality. When the narrator looks at the second photograph representing the grandmother as a young woman, she is disappointed because this image completely contradicts the idea she had formed of her grandmother’s identity from the photograph taken at a later age. These are the narrator’s comments about her grandmother’s photograph as a young woman:

Y eso era todo: una muchacha de pueblo con su vestido de boda pobre, con un rostro de muñeca de china, con un cuerpo menudo como hay millares, con una mirada en que ninguna luz se reflejaba. La dorada vejez de la abuela María no era, pues, producto de la decadencia de una hermosa juventud: su belleza se había forjado a lo largo de los años

That was all: a girl from a village with a simple wedding dress, with a doll face, with a tiny body like thousands of other ordinary women, with a dull, lifeless expression in her eyes. Grandmother Maria's beauty was not the beauty of youth, but that of a mature beauty formed by years of living and experiencing. (93)

Through the narrator's disappointment, Díaz-Mas confirms that the image of the photograph of the old woman does not correspond to the image from the past. Each image represents only a fragment of the self. The objectivity of the photograph does not reflect the whole reality and truth of the person represented. The image only represents a moment of her life, and is the result of the photographer's work. The interpretation of the image does not confer an exact picture of the reality represented either. The interpretation of the image is only a subjective perception, as is shown in the narrator's description of the grandmother's beauty: "Pero de esto último no me di cuenta hasta el día de la foto. Y quede claro que no son recuerdos de infancia: a la abuela María la conocí siendo ella ya vieja, y yo casi tenía treinta años" 'But I did not realize this [her beauty] until I saw the photo. And it has to be clarified that what I am talking about is not something that belongs to my childhood: I met my grandmother when she was old, and I was almost thirty' (90). The narrator's memory does not coincide with her impression from the first photograph, nor does the image of the first photograph match the one from the youth, indicating that the photographic image is not an exact representation of reality, and that the subject of this reality is not stable and unitary, but variable and complex. And since the photographic image does not reproduce reality accurately, it cannot be a reliable source of complete knowledge about the reality. Díaz-Mas's analysis of artistic expression reflects a postmodernist approach because she concentrates on the philosophical aspect of art and reality, and in this way, semantics becomes the main topic of the story.

A postmodernist approach can be recognized also in the treatment of women's issues within "In Search of a Portrait." Díaz-Mas defends women through the critique of humanist philosophy. She questions the unity of the self, the concept of unity, which

according to Young is the cause of elitism in society (303-04). The same concept of unity establishes a hierarchy based on the distinction of gender and class in Díaz-Mas's short story. This hierarchy gives a position of superiority to males and to the upper classes; therefore excluding those who do not belong to these categories. The concept of unity establishes individual identities according to different roles, and, as a consequence, discriminatory practices result. According to Young, "any move to define an identity, a closed totality, always depends on excluding some elements, separating the pure from the impure," creating a vast number of exclusive oppositions (303). Lacanian ideas have had an influence on the way postmodernism questions the unity of the self by bringing to the fore the conflict created in the development of identity through language. Africa Vidal states that in the postmodernist perspective the self does not exist anymore as something that has to be discovered, but as a cultural product formed by the artificial "symbolic" order, which is created by language (45). Gonzalo Navajas, in *Teoría y práctica*, also comments on the precarious position of the self in language (23). Postmodernism questions the unity of the self in an attempt to undermine the discriminatory hierarchies established by humanist philosophy.

"In Search of a Portrait" focuses on the effects that the category of gender has on women's identity. Díaz-Mas considers the social division between masculine and feminine a sexist one. It is not a result of biological conditions, but rather a cultural concept used to control society, which results in curtailing women's identity. The reader can see an example of it in the short story when the woman's role is transformed after she is placed at the head of the family. The grandmother changes, after losing her husband, from a rather insignificant person to a strong one because she becomes the center of reality. Díaz-Mas questions the unity of the subject as gender based, and shows how identity changes through time and circumstances. Indeed, this short story depicts the evolution of a woman's identity through two photographic images taken at two different moments of life. The images, even though they represent the same person, seem to present

different subjects. That in turn, introduces a doubt concerning the continuity of identity, best illustrated by the main character's disappointment when she compares the two photographs of her grandmother. The strength and beauty that she had seen in her old grandmother did not exist in the grandmother as a young woman. The circumstance that changes the grandmother is widowhood which, perhaps, allows her to adopt a masculine stance giving her the strength that the granddaughter recognizes: "Mujer madura y fuerte, enfremtándose al trabajo duro de una recién viuda en aquellos tiempos que los viejos de hoy, cuando recuerdan, llaman aún 'los tiempos difíciles' " 'An old strong woman, facing up to the hard work of a widow during the time that even today old people refer to as the hard times' (92). Here the grandmother assumes a different individuality when she is able to adopt her husband's role after his death. By presenting two different and contradictory photographic images of the same historical subject, Díaz-Mas questions the subject's unity and underscores the fact that the subject's identity does not constitute a simple unity and is affected by cultural impositions. Through the grandmother's change the reader can observe how women's identity is defined by the role they have to perform in the presence of men. In the story, this is reflected in the weakness and anonymity that the photograph of the youthful bride vs. the elder widow has. The grandmother's action in the husband's absence contradicts the passivity traditionally associated with the feminine. Díaz-Mas's work presents the inhibition of women's actions in front of the masculine presence. By developing this point "In Search of a Portrait" presents a feminist position, although Díaz-Mas might not describe it as one.

Even though some publications have attempted to show Díaz-Mas's feminist approach, she rejects the idea of being considered a feminist: "Me parece perfectamente lícito que algunas escritoras elijan como tema la condición de la mujer, pero que no sea obligatorio porque eso me parece paternalismo por parte de las mujeres hacia las mujeres" 'It is perfectly understandable that some women writers include women's issues in their work, but it should not be required because this requirement seems to

me a paternalistic attitude from women toward women' (Diéguez 88).¹² Díaz-Mas is trying to escape the limitations involved in feminist theories. She does not want to write in the first-person to avoid the subjectivity associated with feminine literary expression, as she states in her interview with María Luz Diéguez: "No me interesa tanto contar mi historia como contar historias. . . . Desde el momento que escribes como autora militante que denuncia la situación de la mujer, eso puede derivar en contar tus penas o las de una amiga tuya que a su vez te las contó y esa actitud me parece poco literaria" 'I am not as interested in telling my story as I am in telling stories. . . . From the moment you write as a militant author who denounces women's situation, it's very likely you will tell your own sorrows or those of a friend, and I do not consider this a very literary stance' (90). Díaz-Mas's postmodernist position in questioning patriarchal society does not limit her critique to gender issues, but includes other categories and notions, such as class, when talking of humanist elitism. In "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," Susan Bordo questions the studies which are concerned solely with the category of gender and joins Fraser and Nicholson (34-35) in recognizing that this category is just one more among others, such as class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation (139). In this sense, Díaz-Mas's attack on patriarchal society is developed from a wider perspective, by including gender and class categories as discriminatory factors in women's condition, and by locating the process of women's discrimination in History, contrasting present and past, as we can see in her short story "The World According to Valdés."

In this short story Díaz-Mas stages a defense of women once more from within a postmodernist perspective. She presents women's position in the twentieth century connecting present and past to analyze women issues from a philosophical perspective of reality. In "The World According to Valdés" Díaz-Mas criticizes the limitations of women's identity in the public sphere of modern society. She locates the origin of the problem in the modernist attitude that started with Renaissance humanism. She emphasizes a major contradiction of this cultural period, a period

that defends human freedom, but which simultaneously marginalizes women and some social classes. In this way, Díaz-Mas combines gender and class categories in the analysis of women's identities. She shows that women's inclusion in the intellectual and artistic public sphere does not imply the acceptance of feminine difference, but their adaptation to masculine and socially dominant values. In "The World according to Valdés," Díaz-Mas revisits the past by mixing present and past through a dialogue between a renaissance man, Juan de Valdés, and the narrator, a twentieth century female middle class intellectual. Díaz-Mas chooses a renaissance character to contrast and parallel that period of time and the present, and to better understand both of them.¹³ Her interest in this comparison could be related also to the fact that both periods of time are moments of fundamental change of values in Western Culture.¹⁴ She challenges the past and the present to criticize the values associated with them.¹⁵ By mixing both periods of time, Díaz-Mas undermines humanist values.¹⁶ This is evoked in the story through the attitude of Valdés towards the narrator and toward women as a group. The narrator and Valdés talk about different aspects of daily life and literature and review the narrator's books.¹⁷ In their conversation, both characters are intellectual equals, proving that women outside the dominant class can reach the same intellectual level as men. However, during the narration, Valdés gets increasingly discomfited because of several aspects of contemporary life. Through Valdés's astonishment with the twentieth century, the reader realizes that women and people from the lower social classes were excluded from the intellectual world in the humanist society. The elitist character of Western Culture is evident in Valdés's ideas about the roles associated with men, women, and different social classes. At the beginning of the story Valdés thinks the narrator is a servant because she opens the door herself, and for that reason, he adopts an authoritarian and haughty tone of voice that befit his role as a well-educated man from a privileged social class (129). Not only is Valdés astonished when he discovers all the new technological advances, sees the narrator's books, and engages in an intellectual conversation with her, but he is even

more surprised when he sees that she combines her intellectual knowledge with housework. Valdés's astonishment questions, as postmodernism does, the distinction between "high" and "low" which in art becomes "high art" and "mass culture."¹⁸ This dichotomy imposes uniformity in masses by repressing difference which results in the predominance of upper class male social values. The division between masculine (action, intellectual and social) and feminine (passivity, domestic and private) activities and between high (elite, knowledge and exclusiveness) and low (masses and uniformity) social classes is cultural. This division is advantageous to men and to the upper social class since it places them in a position of power. Valdés associates intellectual activities with masculine characteristics and accepts women as equals only if they adopt these characteristics. He rejects women when they are merely part of the masses.¹⁹ His inclusion of women in the artistic, intellectual public sphere does not challenge the distinction high and low, high art and mass culture. The equality of women is thus obtained by their alienation from womanhood and their inclusion inside the limited, elitist group. Art is in the hands of a minority and is formed by those who know its particular rules. Such equality is not granted when the inclusion of women threatens to bring about change to the elite. That is why Valdés cannot accept the freedom that women have obtained, because, as the narrator comments: "Una cosa es para él el trato—cercano, delicado, casto—de una mujer venerada en el entorno hogareño, en la recogida intimidad de la casa, y otra muy distinta e inquietante es ese desfile callejero, anónimo, incesante y vital de cuerpos libres y de rostros que miran de frente" 'For him one thing is the close, delicate, and pure treatment of a venerated woman at home, in the quiet privacy of home life, and another thing, very different and disturbing, is that anonymous, endless, and vital show in the streets of free bodies and faces which look forward' (145-46). Through Valdés's astonishment the reader realizes women's sexual limitation in the humanist and modernist perspectives. Valdés's rejection of women's bodies implies a rejection of their sexual difference, an element repressed in modernist patriarchal society. The rejection of this free public manifes-

tation also implies a resistance to the dissolution of the limitations established by the high and low duality intrinsic to the modernism.²⁰ In "The World according to Valdés" we can see how the ability of women to become intellectual implies an adaptation to masculine and elitist values. Women can truly challenge the world of masculine and modernist values only when they invade the public sphere and are also able to express their own characteristics, like their sexuality. Valdés's astonishment at women's free sexual manifestations in the street constitutes, in this sense, a parody of liberal humanism, showing how this liberal position applies only to masculine and socially privileged values and does not recognize the plurality and difference of groups excluded from these categories.

In "The World According to Valdés" and "In Search of a Portrait," Díaz-Mas questions the modernist rhetoric and presents a postmodern view about literature and women's issues. Her postmodernist attitude defends women in the same way that the feminist stance does. But her attitude is different from the literary expressions of Spain during the 1970s which concentrated on the analysis of the social and political reality of the moment, in that Díaz-Mas investigates the conflict by concentrating on philosophical aspects. When Díaz-Mas critiques women's conditions, she adopts a postmodernist perspective because she includes gender and class categories in the analysis of women's issues, and she questions the modernist division between high and low. Another postmodernist element in Díaz-Mas's work is the presentation of the limitations of women's identity inside modernism. She questions the concept of unity from a philosophical point of view. This aspect extends to literature making metaliterature a central topic in both works. She questions modernist concepts about literature, in particular its allegedly universal and transcendental character, and demonstrates how these notions are based on false conceptions. Díaz-Mas is opposed to the modernist idea that considers fiction an absolute truth, and she supports the postmodernist notion that language is only an artifice and should never be confused with reality. In this sense, although she pays attention to women's position in society, she does not consider that the main

goal of literature should be to transmit a political message, but to create a fiction and to enjoy the pleasure of the text, a position in accord with postmodernism. If it is possible for Díaz-Mas to combine an hedonistic approach to literature with the defense of women's issues, it is because she adopts a postmodernist position in the latter. With the failure of political ambitions during the democratic process of Spain, she opts for the literary code where she establishes a distance between art and life, and concentrates on the philosophical aspects of reality and art.

Notes

1. Juan Oleza speaks of a postmodern "realism" which originates during the 60s as a reaction against the former social realism, a postmodernist perspective that tries to socialize the esthetic pleasure of beauty and language (40) and reacts against modernist explanations and beliefs (42).

2. Eduardo Subirats describes the intellectuals in Spain during these two decades ignoring the problems which accompanied the birth of a new democracy in Spain (209-10, 216). In "Mapping the Postmodern" Andreas Huyssen relates the abandonment of criticism in literary expressions with poststructuralism, and considers it a consequence of failed political ambitions: "The gesture of poststructuralism, to the extent that it abandons all pretense to a critique that would go beyond language games, beyond epistemology and the aesthetic, seems at least plausible and logical. It certainly frees art and literature from that overload of responsibilities—to change life, change society, change the world—on which the historical avantgarde shipwrecked" (261). A similar political disappointment seems to be the reason that led women writers in Spain during the 80s to turn towards the postmodernist perspective.

3. "The World According to Valdés" is included in the collection of short stories *Nuestro milenio* (1987) and "In Search of a Portrait" was published in *Nuevas Letras* in 1988 (cit. Díaz-Mas, *cuento español* 47).

4. Almost all critics concentrate in Díaz-Mas's novels *El rapto del Santo Grial* and *El sueño de Venecia*: Paloma Díaz-Mas, "Memoria y olvido en mi narrativa"; Maria Luz Diéguez, "La 'polifonía' como imperativo

feminista"; Kathleen M. Glenn, "Reading and Rewriting *El sueño de Venecia*"; Juana Amelia Hernández, "La postmodernidad en la ficción de Paloma Díaz-Mas"; Linda Gould Levine, "The Female Body as Palimpsest"; Elizabeth Ordóñez, *Voices of Their Own*; Amalia Pulgarín, *Metaficción historiográfica*; Phyllis Zatlin, "Women Novelists in Democratic Spain." Eunice Myers's article "The Quixerotic Quest" concentrates on the feminist aspect of the short story "La discreta pecadora, o ejemplo de doncellas recogidas." In Díaz-Mas's "Memoria y olvido" and Glenn's "Reading and Rewriting" appear short references to and comments on "El mundo según Valdés," concentrating on the topic of distortion of reality through textuality. My analysis of "El mundo según Valdés" goes beyond by treating this point in conjunction with postmodernism and feminism.

5. Amalia Pulgarín, in *Metaficción historiográfica*, locates the beginning of postmodernism in Spain at the end of the 1960s, related with the opening of economic structures and the development of tourism in Franco's period (13). Gonzalo Navajas, in *Teoría y práctica*, recognizes postmodernist expressions in literature in the 60s in the work of Juan Goytisolo, Juan Benet, Luis Martín Santos and Carmen Martín Gaité. Elizabeth A. Scarlett, in *Under Construction*, considers that the late 1980s "mark Spain's full entry, 'for better or for worse, into international postmodernism'" (168).

6. Scarlett, like Zatlin (41), also views a different perspective in women writer's attitude toward women's issues during the 80s in Spain: "Many of the most innovative of them see the female subject as divorced from a dialectical struggle against patriarchy" (170).

7. For the theme of metafiction in *El rapto del Santo Grial* see Juana Amelia Hernández's "La postmodernidad en la ficción de Paloma Díaz-Mas."

8. All translations are my own.

9. Paloma Díaz-Mas's hedonistic conception of literature was emphasized already by poststructuralists like Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, which Huyssen (1), in "Mapping the Postmodern," refers to as a "canonical formulation of the postmodern for many American literary critics" (262). In "Narrativa y género" Gonzalo Navajas refers to the "present epistemic paradigm" as poststructuralist in philosophy, and postmodernist in aesthetic and cultural critiques (38). However, Huyssen calls our attention to the fact that the most significant dif-

ference between poststructuralism and postmodernism is the opposition of postmodernism to modernism, and in particular to its hostility to mass culture (263).

10. As Oleza expresses, postmodernism is more concerned with asking questions than with giving answers (42).

11. In Ofelia Ferrán's interview, Díaz-Mas describes how memory is selective and interferes with the depiction of reality, a recurring topic in her work (334).

12. María Luz Diéguez defends Díaz-Mas's feminist position in *El Rapto del Santo Grial*, showing that she contests the power structures dominated by men, represented in the novel by the society of chivalry ("La 'polifonía' como imperativo feminista" 74-147).

13. In "Memoria y olvido" Díaz-Mas interprets the mix of both periods of time as a way to understand them since History is subjective:

Se concibe la idea de convivir con un autor del pasado para poder entender su obra. . . . El contacto mutuo no sólo servirá para que Valdés descubra el siglo XX y para que la protagonista se acerque a la mentalidad y la sensibilidad de un hombre del siglo XVI, sino . . . para que la mujer que vive en el siglo XX redescubra su propia realidad a través de los ojos de un hombre del siglo XVI, que ve en nuestro mundo cosas que a nosotros nos pasan desapercibidas.

One conceives the idea of sharing the same life with an author from the past to be able to understand his work. . . . The shared experience will help not only Valdés to discover the twentieth century, but . . . twentieth-century women to rediscover their own reality through a sixteenth-century man's eyes, who sees in our world things that are unnoticed by us. (95)

14. Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, in *A Postmodern Reader*, compare the change introduced by humanism during Renaissance, and cartesian rationalist theory during the seventeenth century, with the change introduced in the twentieth century by postmodernism: "The Renaissance perspective which preceded the modern in fact echoes, in some ways, the postmodern one which followed it, especially in its questioning of the importance of logical analysis and universal meaning" (4).

15. Díaz-Mas often uses parody and metafiction to question the past. For the use of both techniques in *El sueño de Venecia* see Mercedes

Mazquiarán de Rodríguez, "Parody and Truth of History in Paloma Díaz-Mas's *El sueño de Venecia*."

16. Hutcheon relates the concept of "the presence of the past" to postmodernist perspective, and says: "This is not a nostalgic return; it is a critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society" (244). Hutcheon comments that postmodernism rethinks History, the past, and often does it by parodying what it is questioning (251). Even though Hutcheon is talking about architecture, this notion is applicable to other postmodernist expressions of art.

17. In "Memoria" Díaz-Mas interprets the conversation between Valdés and the narrator about books as a meditation about the subjectivity involved in the reading of books (93-95). In "Reading and Rewriting *El sueño de Venecia*" Kathleen Glenn refers to the same scene as an example which illustrates how time, space and culture interfere in the interpretation of books (483).

18. Huyssen refers to the postmodernist denial of "High Modernism" and its hostility to mass culture (241).

19. In *Uncommon Cultures*, Jim Collins agrees with Patrice Petro about the sexist character that the distinction between traditional art and mass culture has for feminists: "Patrice Petro has exposed the sexist presuppositions of the traditional art / mass culture dichotomy by arguing that 'it is remarkable how theoretical discussions of art / mass culture are almost always accompanied by gendered metaphors which link 'masculine' values of production, activity, and attention with art, and 'feminine' values of consumption, passivity, and distraction with mass culture' " (19). Díaz-Mas also recognizes this distinction by presenting Valdés's acceptance of women in the intellectual world at the private level and his rejection of women as a group.

20. Huyssen considers a significant difference between modernism and postmodernism the attempt of the latter to break the duality high and low: "There emerged a vigorous, though again largely uncritical attempt to validate popular culture as a challenge to the canon of high art, modernist or traditional" (246).

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