
SPR

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE REVIEW

OPEN ACCESS

Review: Celorio, Gonzalo. *El metal y la escoria.*

Lale Radmila Stefkova

Spanish and Portuguese Review 1 (2015): 147–48

Spanish and Portuguese Review files are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



vez más transnacional, Apter se ocupa de hallar esas zonas y ángulos donde hay rupturas en la comunicación y los puentes son más inciertos. No se oculta la filiación con Derrida en el cuestionamiento de términos aparentemente claros como “world”, “gender” o nociones como la soberanía nacional o la propiedad intelectual. La labor de Apter es socrática en cuanto a la incesante interrogación y puesta en crisis y al tiempo radicalmente antiplatónica en cuanto niega la posibilidad de cualquier esencia estable, sea lingüística, nacional o académica. Como la autora declara, el suyo es “an effort to relate linguistic pluralism . . . to a practice of *Wellliteratur* that takes full measure of linguistic constraints and truth conditions in the investigation of singular modes of existing in the world’s languages” (27). Los límites, salvedades y áreas inciertas señalados por Apter se enfocan en la lengua, no solo la incertidumbre de la traducción, sino las consecuencias políticas de los conceptos. En últimas, la intraducibilidad se convierte en una metáfora no solo de la literatura sino del mundo globalizado.

La militancia y pluralidad de *Against World Literature* tiene como una de sus consecuencias el no proveer soluciones a los problemas que plantea; es un libro que enseña falencias que no pretende resolver. Esta impresión se acentúa si se tiene en cuenta que el último capítulo del libro, titulado “Planetary Dysphoria”, está dedicado a la angustia nihilista y la fascinación contemporánea con el fin del mundo. No obstante, apenas pasada la mitad del libro, la autora dedica un capítulo a la condición de “exiliado” de Edward Said y cómo, dentro de esta incertidumbre, él halla la base para un humanismo terrenal, uno que pervive a la intraducibilidad de lenguas y conceptos. De sus dieciocho capítulos, este es quizá el que ofrece una luz más positiva y una dirección posible dentro un libro que deliberadamente enfatiza la incomunicación.

Against World Literature se une a aportes de otros teóricos de la literatura comparada como Franco Moretti o Gayatri Spivak (por nombrar un par) en el refinamiento de campos ahora en boga, el *Wellliteratur* y los estudios de traducción. Como tal, es un aporte que plantea interrogantes necesarios. Las respuestas, las salidas a estos dilemas sobre los estudios literarios, son por ahora inciertas pero igualmente necesarias.

Gabriel Villarroel

Georgetown University

Celorio, Gonzalo. *El metal y la escoria*. México: Tusquets, 2014. Pp. 233. ISBN 978-607-421-637-0.

Gonzalo Celorio’s novel *El metal y la escoria* is a story about the history of the Spanish-Mexican family Celorio. The story develops with the early beginnings of the Spanish immigrant Emeterio Celorio who moves to the Americas in search of a better life. Through hard work and dedication, Emeterio becomes a rich owner of an alcohol trading business in Mexico’s

capital and a well-respected man. The story continues with the experiences of Emeterio's children who waste their father's inheritance due to their chaotic life and the fraud committed by Emeterio's best friend Ricardo del Río. Only one of Emeterio's sons, Manuel, manages to rebuild a stable life and maintain a family. The primary narrator is Emeterio's grandson and Manuel's son, Gonzalo Celorio, who carries the same name as the author of the novel, pointing out to a biographical relation. The story has a clear chronological development, although the narration is structured within episodes that move back and forth in time starting in the late nineteenth century through the present twenty-first century. Rather than a time sequence, the episodes focus on the individual life stories of the family members, creating a complex puzzle of interrelated experiences and memories. Gonzalo's brother, Benito, the eldest of the living grandchildren, frequently participates as a narrator through a dialogue with Gonzalo. The two narrators share memories and personal reflections on the family history, trying to complete the missing pieces of the complex puzzle. The narrator meditates upon the historical contexts that surrounded his family members and their stories. The reader experiences a time journey beginning with the end of colonial Mexico, through the civil war, the revolutions, the governments of Carranza, Madero, and Obregón, and concluding with the modern republic. These historical contexts help the narrator shape the personalities presented, but also personalize these historical processes. Like in other novels by Celorio, the physical space plays a crucial role in the establishment of the tone and the creation of the personalities. The external and material world often describes the most intimate world of the Celorio family. The detailed descriptions of Mexico City, Madrid, and the village of Vibaño, just like the homes of the Celorio family members and their furniture, often evoke the internal world of memory and emotion. Using photographs, letters, and oral stories, the narrator is presented as a careful collector of memories who documents the experiences of his ancestors. He internalizes the experiences of people he has never met, like the humble beginnings of his grandfather Emeterio, the alcoholism of his uncle Ricardo, the solitude of his aunt Luisa, and the memory loss of his brother Benito. All of these distant stories appear as a crucial part of the narrator's identity. Recreating and remembering these stories are the only way for the teller to discover and maintain his own identity. Memory and fantasy stand side by side in this search for his origins. By remembering or imagining, the narrator desperately strives to preserve the memory of his family and, thus, his own existence. In this struggle, writing becomes the only remedy against oblivion.

Lale Radmila Stefkova

University of Oklahoma