

Novelistic characters as an analogy of projective life: a metaphysical foundation for María Zambrano's ethics

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María Zambrano positions her poetic reasoning based on the coordinates of Ortega's vital reasoning; she assimilates it at first, without subjecting it to a rigorous critical analysis, and she later distances herself to bring her poetic reasoning closer to more vitalist positions. On this journey of poetic reasoning, until it finds its definitive location, its metaphysical foundation of the analogy of novel characters as a representation of existential ethics is paradigmatic: in Ortega its development is insufficient, but she (more sensitive to literature) is capable of giving the metaphor more depth, with a bolder analysis, thanks to her understanding of the genre of the novel, which owes nothing to the theory of her master's novel. She accepts Ortega's premise that we are unfinished. But she takes the conclusions further to mark the terrain of her poetic reasoning, which rebels against the sacrifice of life to the being: Faced with life as a project, she understands, from Benito Pérez Galdós' character Nina, that what we have to do to finish doing is not pre-determined. She rejects a programmatic life.

Key words: inventiveness, Ortega y Gasset, projective being, realism, Zambrano.

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1. Literature as a space for reformulated reasoning

Spanish philosopher María Zambrano (1904-1991) required thought to be rooted in life.¹ With that starting point (common in critical philosophies) she builds a bold proposal that demands from thought a meta-theoretical reflection on its limitations and a new critical attitude (also towards itself). Philosophy has to discover its condition. It has to justify itself: it cannot be transparent to itself. Zambrano's proposal is a paradigm shift to capture from one's own life what the system leaves out: intuition, rather than a system of reasons. The reason as the primordial act of life, she writes in *De la Aurora*: »All except Goddess, a reason that is no presented, penetrating everything without being noticed«.²

She aims at a radical modification, critical of her tradition, ruptured. But she presents it as complementary to previous methods, instead of opposing or confronting them: only as reparation, to be able to broaden her field of research with what reason leaves in the shadows.³ Without intending to focus her proposal on an attack on classical forms of philosophy, but in legitimizing this other field that had remained as irrational or indiscernible as the object of philosophical reflection. In this way, from there, she can claim another methodology, another way of understanding reality, which she understands as being closer to poetry.

She wrote the following about the motivation for her proposal:

»Perhaps the triumphant forms, the great philosophical systems, do not exhaust the needs of Western man's understanding and life; perhaps, by their very speculative audacity, they have left something important unattended; demanded too much in one sense, and left abandoned in another. In the restoration of man which becomes necessary, these triumphant forms cannot be exclusive, but rather other humbler forms will have to come to their aid, less ambitious in terms of dialectical discovery, while at the same time carrying some specific and necessary action«.⁴

Careful with the forms without intending to appear abrupt, although her proposal is in bringing philosophy to poetry to bring it to the *intimate forms* of life, she looks for a *reasoning* that becomes poetic, without ceasing to be reasoning: »that welcomes the *original feeling* without coercion, almost naturally free«.⁵

Poetry is the discipline that has best approached the soul: it is the mediator between the self and the outer nature,⁶ because it has known how to distance

¹ Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*, Madrid, Alianza, 2000, 53.

² Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *De la aurora*, Madrid, Turner, 1986, 13-14.

³ Cf. Carmen REVILLA GUZMÁN, *Entre el alba y la aurora*, Barcelona, Icaria, 2005, 106-107.

⁴ Cf. Zambrano, *Hacia un saber...*, 73.

⁵ Cf. Zambrano, *De la aurora...*, 30.

⁶ Cf. Zambrano, *Hacia un saber...*, 33.

itself from will and power: it does not want to violently dominate the being. She explains it with the attitude of a poet, in opposition to that of the philosopher: by her passivity, by the non-violent, contemplative way in which she accesses reality. In that, she uses a new language made up of images, beyond the established conceptual framework, to look for *submerged* logos: that which runs through the entrails,⁷ since there can be no science of the soul.⁸ The soul does not allow itself to be captured by concepts, only with an indirect language, with vocational logos, instead of an enunciative one, as Pedro Cerezo has written.⁹ An analogical, metonymic reasoning, in which – as Ana Bundgaard writes – »multiple times converge in conjunction and dispersion and in which meta-physical and poetic discourse intertwine«.¹⁰

Zambrano looks at Spanish »philosophy«, as is unorthodox, non-systematic, wrapped up in other forms, such as novel or poetry, in which one finds *dissolved, dispersed* thought, dealing with the essential themes, but without being dressed up in authority, without being dogmatic.¹¹ According to her, it is because Spanish thought is not the child of violence, but of admiration, which does not want anything. She writes in *Thought and Poetry in Spanish Life*:

»Reasoning, the thinking in Spain, has worked differently and therefore Spain can be the virgin treasure left behind in the crisis of European rationalism. Spain has not fully enjoyed this power, this horizon. We have reproached our philosophical poverty, and this is true if philosophy is understood as the great system. But from our poverty will come our wealth«.¹²

Her approach is not far removed from the declaration of intent of the first Ortega, who also wants (or at least aims at) a synthesis of modern European rationalism with Spanish man's resistance to the excesses of idealism. However, Zambrano is looking for another approach: she is interested in realism, which Ortega despised (especially at the beginning) for its lack of invention, as a negation of art. For Zambrano, realism is a way of knowing and being: of looking at the world in admiration without trying to reduce it in any way.¹³ She says that it is the attitude of the lover, with a receptive behaviour, faithful to the world: the attitude that things require to let themselves be known, to let the man know of that revealed and undecipherable truth that is beyond the being. She is close

⁷ Cf. Revilla, *Entre el alba...*, 109.

⁸ Concha FERNÁNDEZ MARTORELL, Amor y mística en la razón poética de María Zambrano, *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía*, 47 (2020) 503-521.

⁹ Cf. Pedro CERESO, El alma y la palabra. Bases para una antropología pneumática en María Zambrano, Pedro CERESO (ed.), *Filosofía y literatura en María Zambrano*, Sevilla, Fundación José Manuel Lara, 2005, 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹¹ Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *Pensamiento y poesía en la vida española*, Madrid, Endymion, 1996, 27-28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35.

to Zubiri, because of that sentimental intelligence that is open to reality as an original feeling, in a pre-logical environment.

The »Aurora« is a reformulated reasoning. Intuited on a new stage for knowledge and, at the same time, the *trace of a lost land*,¹⁴ it is a logo that reaches one's entrails, like an *episteme* (a key to physis) that demands from man an attitude before his own being, as a guide that takes the subject out of his own situation of ignorance,¹⁵ taking reasoning to the shadows (instead of to the light), to bring it closer to man. This is what Zambrano understands that Ortega y Gasset is doing, when he writes in 1914 about the *logos* of Manzanares (a small river that runs through Madrid), with his phenomenological program of attention to the small things that are hidden by the great ideals: an *exercise in love*. However, Ortega did not influence Zambrano in her aesthetics: to build her proposal she could not start from that marginal space in which Ortega had confined art when he integrated it definitively into his vital or historical reasoning, in the 1920s. Ortega lacked sensitivity for literature, especially for poetry. The opposite is true of Zambrano, who works on it insistently: with a theoretical exercise around its possibilities of knowing reality, moving to an original center already lost, that *lost word* that some poets have found, as an auroral space for the birth of being, and as a revelation (as opposed to other forms of creation of man, which intend to impose):

»This word, still isolated, opens the so often dormant capacity of expression; it gives value and supports the subject who, at the same time, accompanies and torments; it dances. It is the working dance that unifies being and feeling. It joins and separates and thus purifies«. ¹⁶

It is a theory – suggestive although scarce, not very developed – that is completed through its practical application with hermeneutic exercises from different texts (including novels, like the one by Galdós) in which she looks for that »forest clearing« that intends to be an alternative to the answer to *Meditations on Don Quixote* for the Mediterranean's incomprehension of the abstract, to its frustration for the impossibility of seeing the patent forest (not only the latent one). The forest clearing as a possibility to see the forest as a whole, patent, not just as an abstraction.

¹⁴ Cf. Zambrano, *De la aurora...*, 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

2. *Poetic reasoning confronted with Ortega's vital reasoning: the concept of »inventiveness«*

Zambrano uses the account of her personal relationship with Ortega as a resource to explain her poetic reasoning from the progressive logic of a *telos* for the story (a series of stages that point towards a goal): To hide or disguise the disruptive nature of her proposal, she wraps it up in a global understanding of the history of philosophy that makes Ortega's vital reasoning the stage before her poetic reasoning: the one that favours it and announces it, but has not reached it (Ortega did the same with Husserl). Taking advantage of Ortega's irrepressible claim to be a new stage in philosophy, she situates poetic reasoning by using it as a point of reference, with a double movement: the first one of approximation or communication, and the second one with which she marks the differences, although with Ortega generally not named.

She uses it to legitimize her poetic reasoning by including it in the same dynamics as those philosophies that seek self-evaluation, at the beginning of the 20th century, with its criticism and purpose of amendment; although later, in more detailed works, she gives Ortega the (negative) traits of canonical philosophy because she understands that Ortega was not completely free from it. For this reason, her presentation of poetic reasoning does not seem to be a theoretical proposal of renouncing philosophy in favour of poetry, but rather the confirmation of a change of paradigm, in which it can be seen that the deficiencies of rationality can be solved with poetry, with the conjunction of philosophy and poetry.

Her proposal is a vindication of the non-rationalist methods to find what philosophy has understood as irrationalism, but she does not want to transmit a break, or a will to break, with the previous: as if she understood it as her origin, necessary, but in itself insufficient, very close to existentialism. Although different philosophers and philosophies have been called existentialists, many of them are uncomfortable with that name, but they shared, as a unanimous response to the idealism which at the beginning of the 20th century showed symptoms of exhaustion, their will to rescue the individual, specific man that had been forgotten by rationalism.

The »I exist«, as a subject, not as an object of knowledge (as a consequence of his condition as a thinker), becomes the »original intuition«, in Bergson, or the »central point of reference of philosophical reflection«, in Marcel. An »I« that is no longer nature, but story: a project, using Ortega's term, or a possibility, using Heidegger's term: The Dasein as »a being in the world« that must develop an existential project from its original situation of abandonment, by being thrown into the world and in time: a »being in the world« that must accept its precariousness in its temporal existence. The world is no longer seen as a sum of things that are there to be discovered by man, but as an offer of

possibilities and obstacles: given to man as a situation, whether favourable or unfavourable. It is the same or a similar understanding of life as a starting point for philosophical reflection as the so-called existentialists have to explain by renouncing the conceptual tools of canonical philosophy. Or with new terminology that in Heidegger, for example, remains obscure, difficult to follow, with the ontological difference with which it separates the entity from the being, the ontic from the ontological. Or with metaphors to surround the new object of study, as in the case of Ortega, and also Zambrano, who corrects her teacher, because Ortega presents his metaphysics as a system of images around the novel as a metaphor for life, but confuses the referential subject and object in his explanation of life as action because previously the character had not worked enough on his aesthetics (as an autonomous actor within the fiction, not from the novelist viewpoint).

Unlike Ortega, Zambrano offers a worked-on reflection of the character, which allows her to explain the analogy better, and to see more aspects of it. Likewise, from the ethical point of view, the reverse of the projective condition of the human being (neutral, without a moral evaluation in Ortega): For Zambrano, it is a reprehensible attitude as sought-after behavior because it is the sacrifice of life towards a preconceived reductive scheme. What she calls »novelería« in Spanish, inventiveness, in her reading of Galdós' *Nina*.¹⁷ In *Towards a Knowledge of the Soul*, Zambrano alludes to Ortega's image of life as a novel, but she hardly explains it, nor does she qualify it, nor disagree with it. The question is secondary to her: written as part of her memoirs, rather than as an object of philosophical analysis. Zambrano wrote before having her proposal of a profiled poetic reasoning:

»In the last explanations of her University Courses in Madrid, [Ortega] was moving closer and closer to the question of personal life; I remember a phrase outside formal lectures: "Human life is more like a novel than anything else. The novel, the character and the situation that we create for ourselves for life, what we think we are living, would be the *a priori* species of our life; woven with the circumstances, the irreducible material of our life that we have to transform into freedom"«.¹⁸

She thus adds her master's approach to her own, more general, without finding major differences, or intending to highlight them, with the same or similar notion of vocation: »the very essence of life, what makes it the life of *someone*, being, in addition to life, a life«. ¹⁹ However, later on, when in 1960 she went back to studying Benito Pérez Galdós' narrative, she became suspicious of some aspects of the image: With her notion of *inventiveness*, she developed both her

¹⁷ María Luisa MAILLARD GARCÍA, *Novela y novelaría en María Zambrano*, *Aurora*, 19 (2018) 54-66.

¹⁸ Cf. Zambrano, *Hacia un saber...*, 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

criticism of the novel and her understanding of life as a project (at least the ethics that legitimize this behavior). She does not allude to Ortega: she does not stage the confrontation and the (insurmountable) distance between the two,²⁰ but the elided reference of the comparison is the notion of a projective life: the ethical response of the subject to his circumstance to shape his life understood as the creation of a character for whom he foresees a plot. For Zambrano, the sacrifice of life to the being one believes oneself to be.

In her first approach to *Misericordia* [Mercy] in 1938, she takes (Spanish) realism as a sign:²¹ in search of another way of knowing to reach that which – for Zambrano – matters most, although in Galdós' novel – *humble, scattered, merciful more than any other*, she says – there are no theoretical clues. She finds in Galdós an author who disappears behind his work as if his creatures were out of his control: as if the novel were the very discovery of reality (not the realization of a scheme), which also puzzles him.²² In her second approach to Galdós, she also moves the reflection – more ambitiously – to metaphysical terrain. She turns *Nina* into a reference point for the attitude she proposes as an alternative to the programmed construction of life. *Nina* is her example for her ethics, becoming anonymous, invisible: not wearing any mask, after passing through hell, which is typical of life as a novel: undoing the *inventiveness* of life, unlike the other characters.²³ She writes about the truth of life:

»When one is no longer dependent on an idea of oneself, on that concept of self from which one's esteem is born. When one is no longer under the chimera's fascination, one objectifies the incommensurability of the yearning and that initial confusion of life of going through all the forms«. ²⁴

She does not elaborate minutely on the opposition she perceives between being and life in the aesthetic and metaphysical spheres, but those few notes are the theoretical framework that supports her understanding of Galdós' novel, and her attention to *Nina*. She writes:

»A true story would not novelize life, that is step by step the path that someone takes out of necessity, entering life, living it; and where, if there is a sacrifice, it is not to any *being* that is projected, invented, imagined; where the sacrifice itself is not even known. An uncontaminated sacrifice of suicidal desire«. ²⁵

²⁰ Cf. Roberto SÁNCHEZ BENÍTEZ, Las lecciones del silencio: María Zambrano y José Gao ante José Ortega y Gasset, *LiminaR. Estudios Sociales y Humanísticos*, 19 (2021) 2, 82; Beatriz CABALLERO RODRÍGUEZ, José Ortega y Gasset y María Zambrano: el intento fallido de establecer una relación intelectual bidireccional, *Daimon. Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, 8 (2020) 73-74, Supl.

²¹ Cf. Adolfo SOTELO VÁZQUEZ, María Zambrano y la novela: una nueva forma de conocimiento, *Aurora*, 19 (2018) 94-95.

²² Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *España, sueño y realidad, Obras completas III*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011, 525.

²³ *Ibid.*, 541.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 555.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 536.

The theory then from aesthetics to metaphysics: »Life is first and foremost that confusion in which living creatures' debate. Nothing living is initially clear and different«. ²⁶ It is an opposition between *being* and *life* which explains from poetic reasoning and which renounces to explain reality with concepts (to capture and not to hunt, writes Zambrano).

3. *Against the programmatic life of the character and person of Ortega's existential ethics*

The philosophical development of this poetic reasoning is insufficient: Zambrano's proposal assimilates the discourse of other *reasonings* that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries advocated an act of contrition and a reorientation of the functions and capacities of reason. There is no meta-theoretical, reflective exercise in poetic reasoning on itself, or at least on the disruption that its alternative in the history of philosophy implies. Zambrano does not believe that this is necessary, at least it is not a priority. It is partly because the bulk of her work is not philosophical, nor does it have philosophy as its object of reflection, but literature, especially poetry. It is as if it were an exercise in hermeneutics that justifies its new name for that more measured reasoning: She makes her own those master lines of the critical reaction to rationalism, to later build from this opposition two instruments for knowledge: philosophy, which she leaves aside, and poetry, to which she entrusts the task of proposing new reasoning. ²⁷ She recognizes that passivity in contemplation ²⁸ in the poet:

»The poet opens up to all things, offering himself entirely without resistance to anything, remaining empty and still so that all creatures can nest in him; he becomes a simple empty place where what needs to settle down and wander without a place finds its own space and is possessed«. ²⁹

What she pursues with her poetic reasoning is a reconciliation between philosophy and poetry, as Antonio Machado asked for: ³⁰ a return to the origin, when they were together -in intimate, essential, and living unity³¹ – and to reach through poetic revelations where philosophy that intends to be systematic does not reach: to search in the entrails, in »the innermost parts of the soul,« using her words. A spermatic, germinating, cordial logos. An intuitive, integral, cre-

²⁶ Ibid., 539-540.

²⁷ Cf. María Ángeles JIMÉNEZ HERRERA, Nuevas vías para el humanismo en la filosofía de María Zambrano, *Disputatio. Philosophical Research Bulletin*, 8 (2019) 10, 6-9.

²⁸ Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *Los bienaventurados*, Madrid, Siruela, 1991, 13.

²⁹ Cf. Zambrano, *Pensamiento y poesía...*, 48.

³⁰ Cf. Goretti RAMÍREZ, *María Zambrano, crítica literaria*, Madrid, Devenir, 2004, 86.

³¹ Cf. Zambrano, *Pensamiento y poesía...*, 55.

ative reasoning.³² A reasoning that knows that it walks in the shadows, in the twilight: more modest, less powerful, like a mumble, but which intends to be accepted by life, not to float disengaged.³³ It is poetic because, without ceasing to be a reason, it embraces the original feeling, without coercion,³⁴ free from the established conceptual frameworks which are too rigid.³⁵

Zambrano's proposal is an exercise in honesty. Also, of self-exclusion: of knowing oneself outside the philosophical tradition, in a certain way liberated, exonerated from the impositions accepted by those who consider themselves philosophers, like Ortega, comfortable with his role as Professor of Metaphysics. María Zambrano searches in the spaces that have remained uncovered, or have been falsely covered. She turns methodology into deontology: she saves the philosophical (or rational) method with the revaluation of the lyrical.

Her proposal is far from the vital reasoning, which for her was above all the *Meditations of Don Quixote*: a theory of knowledge and very basic ethics or deontology with which she intended to save the Spaniards. Although at the time when Zambrano and Ortega met, the philosopher from Madrid had already reoriented his vital reasoning into historical reasoning, less malleable to function as a source of that other reasoning that is recognized as poetic (or Orphic-Pythagorean), far even from both of them, only as aesthetic theories, because Ortega is suspicious of art, a scrooge with its possibilities or its mission, he focuses his studies on the novel from the outside, from an external point of view: he understands the aesthetic object as an artifact that is constructed and contemplated; he studies art only as it is made and how it is effective for the spectator. He does not offer himself a perspective from the inside: delving into fiction it is too naïve for him, to simulate a point of view within fiction, with which to study, for example, the journey of the characters not only from their narrative efficiency but from the novelist's ability to capture the reader's interest. Ortega's attitude is dismissive of art as an intellectual product capable of transmitting non-trivial knowledge: incompatible with that complicit attitude in which other philosophers place themselves within fiction to study some of its elements not only as fictional but as real within fiction, as fictionally real: with the characteristics of the real, although within the realm of fiction.

Zambrano does not hold Ortega's reserve or lack of interest: she allows herself to explore that naïve attitude for a more suggestive reading of fiction: with the characters, whose trajectory is used for a better-constructed reflection on life, because it works in both directions, feeding both reflections (the one that goes into aesthetics and the one that goes into metaphysics). The image or comparison of the novel and life is in Ortega, and Zambrano refers to it.

³² Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *Algunos lugares de la poesía*, Madrid, Trotta, 2007, 11-12.

³³ Cf. Zambrano, *Pensamiento y poesía...*, 73-77.

³⁴ Cf. Zambrano, *De la aurora...*, 30.

³⁵ Cf. Revilla, *Entre el alba...*, 117; Cerezo, *El alma y la palabra...*, 21-34.

But in Ortega the comparison of life and novel remains incomplete because he lacks the reflection on the character (of fiction). Ortega is satisfied with just a few conventions on the subject, which he accepts without hesitation, to try from that perspective to elaborate a reflection that ends up without a path forward: the explanation of his understanding of life from images of fiction appears chaotic, without order, a mixture of different references (the novelist, the playwright, the characters, the actors...) that reveals the careless treatment of the first element of the comparison: that taken from fiction.

In *Ideas on the Novel*, Ortega gives the novelist guidelines in making his characters interesting souls: a fundamental question for the novel to fulfil the functions assigned to it.³⁶ But he limits it to the technique; without alluding to the simulated action of the characters within their environment, as elements to which fiction grants a certain autonomy. The opposite is true of María Zambrano, who is less interested in the theory of the novel than in the hermeneutic, or in a philosophical reading of certain novels, placing the reflection on the level of the characters, on their condition, which she calls *novelería* or *inventiveness* in English, and which she then applies to her own life, as a condition also of the people (the opposite of the programmatic being): which, in her ethical proposal, she asks to change.

In her reflection on the novel, Zambrano ignores Ortega's theory, which she only mentions to refute: She writes that the novel isn't useful to the reader as an evasion. At least, that distraction that its reading produces does not imply the evasion to another world different from the real one (as it does with poetry and tragedy), because its measure is the human measure, it does not go beyond the limits of daily life: a real novel always keeps us in this world, she says.³⁷ The perspective with which she studies it is not that of the reader (or of the author pending on the reader) that Ortega uses: Zambrano approaches it from within, from the reality of fiction, with her interest in the development of the characters. Her attitude is less distrustful, which allows her to stretch the novel as access to metaphysics: to elaborate on that first image of the analogy, at which Ortega stops, and goes deeper into an ontological and ethical explanation for man. The novel is the genre that corresponds most to the human.³⁸

Zambrano accepts the general framework of Ortega's theory in approaching the problem of life. In *Towards a knowledge of the soul* she explains the meaning of the expression she remembers hearing when she was his student, which she then assimilates. She writes that life is like a novel: »It would be the form of freedom extracted from, not imposed by, circumstances«. ³⁹ She also thinks

³⁶ Cf. José ORTEGA Y GASSET, *La deshumanización del arte e Ideas sobre la novela* (1925), *Obras completas*, III, Madrid, Taurus, 2005, 907.

³⁷ Cf. Zambrano, *España, sueño y realidad...*, 687.

³⁸ Cf. María ZAMBRANO, *El sueño creador*, *Obras completas*, III, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011, 691.

³⁹ Cf. Zambrano, *Hacia un saber...*, 89.

the person is not finished, as Ortega defended, and Julián Marías later with his existentialist metaphysics. However, she adds another condition to her metaphysics, which ends up confronting – when her development is complete – the ethics derived from vital reasoning, with the obligations that Ortega (who does not separate metaphysics and ethics) derives from his understanding of life as a project, or of the individual as a future one: »We are not finished doing,« writes Zambrano, taking for granted the premise of her master, but not stopping there, »nor is it evident to us what we have to do to finish ourselves; it is not predetermined how we are to finish ourselves.«⁴⁰

She accepts the image of the novel for life, or the image of the character for the person, as a synthesis (and access) of a metaphysics which she, fundamentally, makes her own (although she does not manage to delimit with precision those points, she does not agree with). However, she rejects the ethics implicit in this metaphysics, with a tone that is sometimes imperative: Her proposal is the opposite, to renounce a programmatic life, that scheme for life that she understands as reductive. She separates being from the duty to be. She separates metaphysics (the programmatic character of life) from ethics (that inciting of man to pursue an end), submitting Ortega's image to a more exhaustive, more critical interrogation, also with the limitations that giving life a mould implies. She, like Ortega, understands that the character is a good analogy for the understanding of the person, but the trait that connects them is negative for Zambrano: The fictional character its inventiveness (its *novelería*), a condition that she also finds in people's lives. The same thing that – although from another perspective (and another evaluation) – explains the metaphysics that Ortega writes on from 1929 onwards, when trying to minimize certain irrationalism in his early vital reasoning. This is what Ortega writes when he assimilates for his philosophy the image of the arrow or of Aristotle's archer (here once again mixing up the subject and the object):

»It is not that projects are made in life, but that all life is in its root projects, especially if the full ballistic sense that lies in the etymology of this word is galvanized. Our life is something that is launched by the sphere of existence, it is a projectile, only that this projectile is at the same time the one that has to choose its target.«⁴¹

Ortega stops at the comparison, highlighting only the creative role of the individual to give content to his own life: at the same time novelist and character, with the plot for his life that he writes himself. He is not concerned with the inconsistencies and blank spaces in his aesthetics and metaphysics, which are supported or pointed out by the latter. On the other hand, in *Galdós' Spain* Zambrano demands greater precision to scrutinize the images and extract

⁴⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁴¹ Cf. José ORTEGA Y GASSET, *Intimidades* (1929), *Obras completas*, II, Madrid, Taurus, 2004, 736.

revealed information from them. She does not equate character and person: the comparison implies a scale or a gradation in its ambiguity, in which the exaggerated features of the character also allow us to see the inventiveness in the person. She writes:

»There is nothing more ambiguous than a character in a novel: the ambiguity that envelops every human creature seems to go to the extreme in the character of novels [...]. The novel character dreams and has reveries himself, it is kept in suspense by this dreaming and daydreaming, which adds to the initial tragic ambiguity of the human creature, so given to not recognizing himself«. ⁴²

On the characters, she writes of their phantasmagorical nature, of the fading away of their being, in reducing life to what they believe their life is. ⁴³ It is an extreme to which the person aspires when sacrificing his life to the being, but he does not reach it, also taking a metaphysical theory from aesthetics, but without intending to make the image appear to be an exact identification (or without any additional scope than the literary one); only as a reference (certain proximity) to move from aesthetics to metaphysics, with her reading of *Nina* as an ethical proposal of rebellion against *novelería* as an intrinsic condition of the character and the person. For her aesthetic or literary analysis, she writes:

»A true story would not novelize life, that is step by step the path that someone takes out of necessity by entering life, living it; and where, if there is a sacrifice, it is not to any “being” that is projected, invented, imagined; where the sacrifice itself is not even known. An uncontaminated sacrifice of suicidal desire«. ⁴⁴

Only Nina lives life. Because in *Misericordia* only she is anonymous, invisible. Instead of consuming her life in being, the being is dissolved in life. It is the starting point – making her attitude the exception – for a profound metaphysical explanation that makes the isomorphism of life with novel a condemnation (a reduction or impoverishment):

»Only Nina lives life. Life more than her life, because the one who lives *their life* is precisely the one who is living a novel, life elevated and reduced in a novel. It is elevated because it has an ostensible plot, already revealed to the one who lives it, who thus knows what he is living and is insensibly accommodating himself to it, and is *reduced to it*, also abstracting himself from the rest, that is, from life itself, keeping it out of the place where his scheme walks. The novel character and those who in reality live *their* lives in this way sacrifice life, reducing it to a scheme, to an abstraction. It could be said that they sacrifice life for the being they believe themselves to be«. ⁴⁵

⁴² Cf. Zambrano, *España, sueño y realidad...*, 530.

⁴³ Ibid., 534.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 536.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 531.

Zambrano explains life as a novel as hell, as an offering to fiction.⁴⁶ Using this comparison – on which Ortega is general, supposedly neutral or candid –, it is reduced to just a possible attitude towards life which, by programming it, by sticking to a scheme, ends up limiting it, reducing it. Life -she warns, stretching that metaphysics of vital reasoning towards the irrational- is confusion: nothing living is clear and different. It is that same thing that Galdós' realism reveals.⁴⁷

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*Novelistički likovi kao analogija projektivnog života: metafizički temelj etike
Maríje Zambrano*

Sažetak

María Zambrano svoje pjesničko promišljanje temelji na koordinatama Ortegino vitalnog razmišljanja: ona ga isprva asimilira ne podvrgavajući ga rigoroznoj kritičkoj analizi, a poslije se distancira da bi ga više približila pozicijama vitalizma. Na tom putu poetskog promišljanja, sve dok ne nađe svoje konačno mjesto, paradigmatičan je njezin metafizički temelj analogije romaneskih likova kao reprezentacije egzistencijalne etike: kod Ortege je njezin razvoj nedovoljan, ali je ona (osjetljivija za književnost) sposobna dati metafori veću dubinu, uz hrabriju analizu, zahvaljujući njezinu razumijevanju žanra romana što ne duguje teoriji romana svoga učitelja. Ona prihvaća Orteginu premisu da smo nedovršeni. Ali ona daljnjim zaključivanjem označava područje svoga poetskoga razmišljanja koje se buni protiv žrtvovanja života biću: suočena sa životom kao projektom, ona shvaća, iz lika Nine Benita Péreza Galdósa, da ono što moramo učiniti nije unaprijed određeno. Ona odbija programiran, unaprijed određen život.

Ključne riječi: inventivnost, projektivno biće, realizam, Ortega y Gasset, María Zambrano.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 521.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 539-540.

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