

**MODERNITY, REPRESENTATION, AND PERSONALITY**  
**IN ANTONIO FLORES' *AYER, HOY, Y MAÑANA* (1863-64)**

Antonio Flores (1818-1865) was a critic and writer of articles on Spanish *costumbres*, the editor of the periodical *El Laberinto* (1843-45), as well as the author of the socially concerned novels *Doce españoles de brocha gorda* (1846), and *Fe, Esperanza, y Caridad* (1850).<sup>1</sup> He also worked at Court, producing the chronicle of the autumn 1860 Royal tour of Spain. Flores' seven volume literary work *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana; o, La Fe, el Vapor, y la Electricidad: Cuadros sociales de 1800, 1850, y 1899 dibujados a la pluma por D. Antonio Flores*, supported by the patronage of the King Consort, Francisco de Asís, is an important representation of changing times in mid nineteenth-century Spain, coloured with humour and irony.<sup>2</sup> But, while its significance has been acknowledged, it has been little studied.

The importance of *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana* rests on its exploration of two interconnected issues. The first is the potential contradiction in Liberal modernity between the needs of the human person and the dominance of transparency, accountability, and public corporations and activity. The second is the perceived prominence of representation in modernity. As is well known, these two matters were to be recurrent concerns throughout the modern period. By dint of its sophisticated discussion of and literary response to them, *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana* is one of the most

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<sup>2</sup> The edition of 1863-64 is the first complete version of the work: earlier editions provided only part of the text, which takes on its full significance only when the full 7 volumes and three parts can be read together.

important texts in nineteenth-century Spanish literature, and makes a correspondingly significant contribution to Spanish thought.

### **Modernity as Representation; Representation as Repression of Personality**

The contents pages present the text as a gallery, and each chapter is consequently entitled a *cuadro*. Within this gallery covering different moments in time, Flores highlights specific schools, the most important of which are those identified in the subtitles: *La fe*, *El vapor*, and *La electricidad*. Flores has thus taken from earlier *costumbristas* the metaphors of painting and sketching (to which he adds the daguerrotype) and has cast them on a grand scale. In so doing, he echoes the terminology of contemporary catalogues, like that written by Pedro de Madrazo for the Museo Real de Pintura y Escultura (now the Prado), accompanying the emergence of these relatively new public institutions (Madrazo 1854)

That Flores should choose to do this sets him at odds with the veteran *costumbrista*, Mesonero Romanos. Mesonero had always argued that the representation of modern life was necessarily sketchy; its blur too quick to catch (Mesonero Romanos 1967a). Indeed, by 1862, Mesonero's position had become more extreme. It was now impossible even to sketch the contemporary world, he said, because change was so rapid. His last work of *costumbrista* publication was therefore presented as mere fragments of what might have been, and the writer symbolically laid down his brush (Mesonero Romanos 1967b: 202-03). Mesonero's state of shock before a mutating Spain is substantially a reaction to developments after the end of the first Carlist War. Successive

governments and municipalities in combination with large scale capital had launched a series of major enterprises at that time: the building of railways, the expansion of banking and stock market activities, the passing of new education acts, the creation of a reformed central administrative apparatus, the demolition and reconstruction of the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, and the completion of the Canal de Isabel II to guarantee the water supply of the capital, to name only a few (Fusi & Palafox 1997: 61-71, 116-33). Flores also saw the period around 1850 as quite different from that leading up to and including the 1845 Constitution. Apparently uninterested in the temporary co-existence of past and present, Flores relegated the period from 1808 to the 1840s to a small, caricaturesque history of revolution and reaction. The relevance of this would soon disappear, for Flores saw the world of *Hoy* as utterly unlike old Spain in almost all respects (III, 65-104, 89): 'Alumbrado por el faro de la civilización, con viento de libertad por la popa, y con bogadores románticos, hemos perdido de vista el pasado' (III, xv). However, as is evident from his art-gallery-like guide to past, present, and future, Flores does not share Mesonero's belief that this modernity could not be represented.

The reason for Flores' marked difference from Mesonero seems to be twofold. For Flores, the past can be viewed as a gallery of the dead ('este museo necrológico', II, 189) (things which are easy to depict). The present, on the other hand, is intimately connected to representation itself. Whilst echoing the *topos* that the world is moving ever more quickly, ('este siglo de las carreras de caballos quiere que todo se haga corriendo y de prisa', III, xv), Flores suggests that nothing can be concealed any more, everything is in full view. Society 'vive dentro de un escaparate de cristal' (V, 8), unlike the past when privacy was still respected (he speaks of 'la vida privada a que tanto culto rindieron sus

padres' (V, 9)). The public character of all aspects of life makes it easy to portray (V, 9). Moreover, as Fontanella has explained, Flores had an ongoing concern with the impact of modern media and their relationship to representation (Fontanella 1982: 85-90, 107-10). The advances in production and manufacturing in modern times provided a wide range of instruments with which to depict different phenomena, including, of course, the daguerrotype. Flores even says that when producing portraits today 'todos los pintores de fama arrojan los pinceles' (III, 23). The paper, writing instruments, and rubber of the present day mean that 'ya podemos hacer los cuadros cortos o largos según convenga al asunto'. All kinds of figures can be drawn clearly (III, 1-2). Representation is the essence of modernisation, and everything modern is easy to represent. Modernisation even provides easier means to represent modernity.

The principal importance of what Flores is doing here arises from his highly ironic and critical investigation of the Liberal concept of modernity in his time, and its possible evolution in *Mañana*. In Flores' account, modernity requires all aspects of life to be public, visible, and available for scrutiny. Moreover, in so doing, it represents (and quantifies) human existence in forms that are depersonalised, because it is primarily concerned with the provision of information, not with the personal experience of life. In parallel, the rise of public corporations means that private life is no longer important. Additionally, modernity's obsessive preoccupation with rendering matters public and visible means that it is overwhelmingly concerned with how things are represented, not with how the inner experience of how they are. Flores sees modernity as requiring public scrutiny in the form of statistical knowledge (III, 152). It entails continual public representation in the form of advertising for sale (V, 8) and in the guise of impersonal

discussion through the press, and the telegraph ('ese gran noticiero moderno, que ni de día ni de noche se cierra la boca [...] la imagen satánica del siglo XIX, indiferente a las penas y a las alegrías de la humanidad' (IV, 143-44)). In turn, public enterprises and the public activity of commerce undertaken by collectives substitute *el espíritu de la asociación* for individual persons (III, 163). The pursuit of money is the prime objective of many of these developments (IV, 235). And money is itself a numerical form of public representation: it represents what people and objects are worth. In summary, modernity is representational because it is concerned with the publicly visible world, not with private, personal life.

Flores' central contention is that the representational obsessions of modernity are consequently antipathetic to human personality. The latter is killed off by information, accountability, economic activity, and the formation of social groups and associations (III, 163). Flores thus establishes a profound opposition between, on the one hand, modernity as pure representation, and, on the other, authentic individual existence. The ever-representational modern world is, in his view, empty of any true human content.

In arguing this, Flores asserts that Liberalism presents us with a profound contradiction, as do ideologies related to it, such as Democratic thought. Liberal modernity promises the liberation of the individual, but actually subjects the latter to profound alienation and oppression. Flores' arguments about the representational (because public) character of modernity thus entail a wide-ranging criticism of social, economic, and political developments in the Liberal period. This is not least the case because of his concern with the (unjust) impact on people's lives of large public corporations, whether the latter are run by capitalists or the State. Ultimately, as we will

see, the contradictions that Flores identifies extend to people's spiritual lives too: in its efforts to revive the inner life of spirituality that it has eroded, modernity succeeds only in re-asserting the profoundly impersonal character of the modern world.

Flores' stance here appears to be a response to recent Spanish thought, on left and right, from Pi i Margall's individualist revision of Hegelianism to Campoamor's *Personalismo*, which had explored how human personality and authentic individuality could be reconciled with modernity, indeed might be its true expression (Pi i Margall 1982; Campoamor 1855; Abellán 1979-84: IV, 582-99; Lombardero 2002: 195-204). Flores opposes this conclusion: 'A medida que vas conquistando libertades, vas añadiendo eslabones a las cadenas de tu esclavitud [...] has perdido tu personalidad' (III, 151) (compare Rubio Cremades 1977-78: II, 80). In *Hoy*, Flores effectively tells us that the process of modernisation is irreversible, and that resistance is useless: like a new Inquisition, he comments, statistics will eventually know everything, 'no se le escapa nada' (III, 161).

Much of what Flores has to say about such changes, at the mid-century and in the future, closely parallels the ideas of Democratic Party intellectuals. It is no coincidence that the leading female character in *Mañana*, Safo, is President of the Socialists. Flores coincides both with earlier critics of *desamortización* such as Flórez Estrada (Rubio Cremades 1977-78: II, 140) and with the new left in saying (as had Pi i Margall) that land reform just turned one sort of property into another equivalent form, without providing, for example, better schools. He also joins in the attack on credit speculation by 'capitalistas', as he does in his allusions to a restricted and corrupt electoral system (III, 227-59), and in his criticism of the way that Liberalism serves the wealthy and fails the

poor (Pi i Margall 1982 :93, 200, 376, 387, 419-20). In *Hoy*, such sentiments are voiced by the lowest of the employed low, Asturian water sellers, one of whom comments 'tengo oido fablar mucho de paz y de riqueza des que mandan los constitucioneirus y cada dia estamus mas arrematadus y mas pobres' (IV, 50-51). Flores agrees too that what he calls a cold centralisation has taken over, and even asserts that the present feeling of homogenous nationhood ('las grandes y homogéneas familias nacionales') is a creation of the Liberal state (III, 163-64) (Pi i Margall 1982: 225). Even his insinuation that redistribution of land is less important than proper industrial growth (hinted at again in the future, (VI, 43-44)) might conceivably echo sentiments of the Socialist Garrido (Garrido 1859-60: 39).

Flores can see the material and even moral advantages of progress, most exhilaratingly in the fantastical projections of *Mañana*: a world without customs controls (VII, 45), where all Europe is united (by the spread of population and housing) (VI, 36), in a way reminiscent of the hopes of the Cosmopolitan left and its dreams of a confederation of nations (Garrido 1859-60: 44, 84). His future speculations, particularly, echo key elements of Democrat Party and Socialist thought. There will be full democracy, and wide rights will be guaranteed (VI, 39-43) (Pi i Margall 1982: 204). In the line of leftist anti-statism of the time (Aranguren 1965: 142; Castelar 1858: 115; Pi i Margall 1982: 384), the state will retreat, being replaced by insurance schemes (health care is partially subsidised) and private enterprises that bid for tender (VII, 182-91, 221). As Garrido had hoped, industry will reduce the need for labour (VII, 21) (Garrido 1859-60: 53). Merlin's home has no kitchen, because he simply goes to communal *comedores* (VI, 20), just as Garrido has spoken of the advantages of associationist organisations

preparing meals (Garrido 1859-60: 299). Garrido too had made a strong case for the liberation of women to be able to realise their individual talents and desires (Garrido 1859-60: 253-90). In turn, in Flores' view of the future, daughters are free to choose their husbands and do not become the latter's property (VI, 157-58). Safo is a public intellectual and a writer, and thereby realises her unique talents. In a clear allusion to the popular author Manuel Fernández y González, she is depicted dictating four *feuilletons* to four young men simultaneously (VI, 167-75). Women are not portrayed doing domestic duties, from which they have been released, mostly by machines (VI, 155). Women even have the vote in local elections (VII, 130). Penal reform, a frequent leftist demand (Garrido 1859-60: 302-06), has been enacted so that criminals are treated as cases of mental illness (VII, 225-26). Demonstrations occur peacefully, and the violence of change is restrained. No-one is prevented from expressing their opinion or holding any beliefs that do not endanger public order (VI, 252-53, 262-63). These facts reflect Pi i Margall's claim that revolution would bring lasting peace through freedom (Pi i Margall 1982: 65), and Castelar's remark that democracy would permit 'esa revolución pacífica que, derramándose por la sociedad, renovará constantemente su vida' (Castelar 1858: 55). Safo's efforts to lead the next wave of change are particularly striking. Her demands for the abolition of force and authority (the police, army, courts, but also locksmiths and sealed papers) closely parallel Pi i Margall's ideas about a future without the state.

Whilst not blind to the attractions of this vision, Flores portrays the future in a way that not only contradicts the intellectuals of the Democratic Party in principle, but also differs from their diagnosis of future developments. It was central to the thought of all the leading intellectuals of the left (Castelar, Pi, Barcia, Garrido) that association and

practical modernisation would release individual talent, leading to a recognition of the uniqueness of each individual. This is what Garrido had in mind when, as we have seen, he talked about relieving women of obligatory domestic duties. However, in Flores's future, the effect is that no-one has personal feelings at all. Safo remarks that 'el mundo de las ilusiones no ha existido jamás sino en la mente de los poetas [...] si para unirse a un hombre no se consultase más que el amor, bueno andaría el mundo' (VI, 192) Safo's friend Norma follows the usual path to marriage by using adverts and an agency and arranging to tie the knot with a Lap writer she has never met (VI, 183-84). When he jilts her, not so much at the altar as at the balloon which takes her from the high speed Madrid-Denmark train to Copenhagen, Norma's main concern is not emotional sadness, but how much she can claim in compensation (VII, 69, 77-84). In this respect, *Mañana* is an unmitigated version of *Hoy*. The emblematic replacement of feeling by reason may represent not just a broad sense that the present is calculating, as an allusion to the cult of Reason in the transcendental Idealism of writers like Pi and Castelar. Association and Reason reinforce, and fail to resist, the alienation of today.

*Mañana* also accentuates contradictions and problems in the historical process of modernisation. Liberalism and its rights are supposed to protect privacy. This is why there are references in *Mañana* to the right to open someone else's correspondence ('el más santo de los derechos del hombre' (VI, 159)) and to freedom of private belief and life (VI, 252-53). However, the statistical needs of the state are such that every individual must have every thought recorded for statistical use: 'La nación que posea una estadística perfecta, será la más feliz' (VI, 65). All Spaniards should confess 'con franqueza sus ideas, sus pasiones y sus afectos, sin ocultar ninguna de sus faltas' (VI, 66). A state guard

is placed at Safo's doorway to ensure that everything inside is recorded, telling the provincial Venancio that he has 'la misión sagrada de llevar un registro exacto de todo lo que ocurra en la casa a mi vista, sacando un duplicado para el ministerio de Policía' (VI, 118). Needless to say, the Liberal state is bound by its own rules never to reveal any of this information; the minister will keep them as a 'secreto impenetrable' (VI, 66). But as Venancio points out, whilst his Madrid-born friends speak proudly of their right to privacy, their lives are conducted entirely in public. In response to Nicomedus' claim that Spiritualism is a private religious belief, Venancio comments, 'Vida privada llamáis a publicar diez y seis periódicos' (VI, 253). The impossibility of keeping anything private is symbolised by the gigantic, mechanical *Árbol de la Publicidad* whose branches constantly sprout transmitted notices and news (VI, 47-56). The Liberals of 1850 had gained what they thought was liberty at the expense of a tyranny on their personality. By 1899, society will be run on principles of accountability and transparency that annihilate all traces of the individual's feelings: 'Aquí todo se da con su cuenta y razón, porque la cuenta y la razón es la *razón social* de estas gentes de MAÑANA' (VI, 210). Electoral majorities reduce right and wrong to numbers (VI, 278); and courtesy can have a price tag (VII, 10). Indeed, in Spain, *Hoy* is shown as doubly alienating: not only are Spaniards said to be caught up in the public, commercial world of Liberalism, but (in an echo of Larra) they have to travel all this historical distance in less time than in more advanced countries: 'hicimos en pocas horas las jornadas que debimos hacer en muchos años' (III, xvi). For Flores, Spanish modernisation is superficial. Words of hope (not deeds) matter: 'aquí las palabras valen más que las obras' (III, 6), Liberal politics is conducted by soldiers (III, xvii), and the *desamortización* and the race to the stock market shift *manos*

*muertas* sideways to banking capital, without fundamentally altering the role or pattern of land ownership. Paper money and credit take the place of real industrial wealth (III, 137-50, 210; IV, 237-45). Liberal Spain is only a simulacrum of Liberal modernity, a mere representation of a representational world.

The role of capital provides a further twist. In *Mañana*, the businessman, Nicomedus, wants to extend transparency, but not when it comes to the secret of his cologne recipe. Business ideas and confidences enjoy special protection from the all-seeing gaze of the brave new world, a point on which Venancio again ironises, noting how revolutionary ideas have ended up serving 'las prerrogativas y las inmunidades del dinero' (VI, 100, 274-75). Similarly, the equality and decency of the future will ensure that poor people do not feel bad by making them all live in the same part of town. Nicomedus finds this perfectly satisfactory (VI, 98-99); Venancio, understandably, does not, calling such places 'grandes centros de miseria pública' (VI, 99). As to the elections, they are still run by *caciques*: there is universal suffrage only in the sense that citizens vote for influential people who then become electors (VII, 132-33). Corruption lives on.

The interplay of Liberal ideas of privacy with accountability, and the central role in Liberalism of capital, ensure that the future which in so many ways alludes to the visions of the Democratic Party actually ends up contradicting them. (One glimpses Flores' scepticism earlier when he argues, against Proudhon, but it might as well be against Barcia (Barcia 1855: 82-88), that the origins of property are lost in time, known only to Christian faith, and most probably was a case of first come, first served.) Faith, the underlying principle of a lost society that once valued personality, provides the last major contradiction. In *Hoy*, Flores is amused to find that the rejection of past fanaticism

and superstition coexists with the cult of Spiritualism and Magnetism: 'gracias sean dadas a la ilustración que nos distingue, podemos hacer eso y mucho más sin que nos tengan por supersticiosos ni fanáticos, ni menos por herejes' (III, 290). The second part shows that a charlatanistic pseudo religiosity is now a fundamental trait of modernity, as was also the case in the text's exact contemporary, *El doctor Lañuela* by Ros de Olano. The description of Lañuela indeed matches with striking precision Flores's account of a magnetiser and his female somnambulist, as well as his portrayal of a homeopathic 'médico ambidiestro' (III, 281-851; IV, 294) (Ros de Olano 1863: 63-65; on Ros's response to modernity, see Ginger 2000: 21-89). An era that has demolished the buildings of the past, Flores comments, now converses with their constructors (III, 280). It is one of the most disconcerting features of *Mañana* that such practices are now widespread and underpin the whole text. The putative author of the third part, Merlin, is claimed as a Spiritualist by a contemporary French practitioner (VI, 17); his insight into the future explicitly relies on Magnetism (VI, 34-35). The famous magician subsequently expresses disgust at Flores' incredulity (VI, 16). Within the story, Safo does historical research by chatting with Felipe II (VI, 192-93), and Nicomedus ceaselessly proselytises for the Spiritualist cause, taking Venancio to a wonderful temple (VI, 218-41). The businessman's justification for this behaviour is illuminating: the faith of the past is lost, yet the world has become too materialistic: 'el hombre no puede vivir sin creencias' (VI, 250). It is time for a modern, scientific spirituality to take its place. The echo of innumerable nineteenth-century thinkers is quite evident. The point for Flores, though, is the way that a society which rests on the abolition of faith now seeks an alternative that it can reconcile with its impersonal world. In this regard, Flores' sceptical view of modern

beliefs is clearly at odds with the rationalist religion of Pi i Margall, or the new, democratic Christianity of Barcia. The reinvention of faith is a product of contradictions within modernity, not a brilliant insight into ultimate truths.

### **The Definition of Personality and the Divide Between Past and Present**

Flores's dark prophecies rest fundamentally on his definition of *personality*. In his view, the latter depends on the absence of a public, levelling force in class and gender and on a self-contained local identity. These together guarantee the two things upon which personal identity fundamentally rests. Firstly, different kinds of people need to have distinct identities which arise from their place in society, their gender, and their local or national customs and allegiances. Secondly, private life must be protected. In this respect, the description of the past in *Ayer* has a profound significance for Flores, whatever the truth or otherwise of his account of the eighteenth century. It is only in his vision of an obscurantist, repressive, ignorant, backward Spain that we find human personality preserved. The levelling, public force of modernity, on the other hand, destroys the domestic, private focus of daily life. Moreover, it erases all the key distinctions upon which personal identities depend. Indeed the prevailing tendencies to uniformity and centralisation would lead directly to collective Socialism, were it not for the specialisation produced by the modern economy. These allow meaningful distinctions between different identities to persist, though they are not the equivalent of personality (IV, 222).

In *Ayer*, differences between genders were secured by the strict, and natural –so Flores tells us- exclusion of women from literary matters (with rare exceptions in the form of *marisabidillas* whom he satirises) (II, 334). In the modern world, such restrictions on women are vanishing. Class identity is also disappearing with the erosion of the hierarchical division of social groups. Flores observes that in 1850 'La igualdad ante la diosa Euterpe ha acabado de confundir todas las clases, y de quitar el carácter a las costumbres' (V, 310). He goes further still and links the rise of capital and decline of the established nobility to the end of the family: 'Disueltas las familias era preciso disolver las fortunas' (IV, 235). People's family names no longer matter; everything is reduced to a question of numbers: 'La sociedad autónoma es la fórmula verdaderamente gráfica de este siglo en que los nombres han sido suplantados por los números' (IV, 237). Moreover, in the time of Crown and Altar, the provinces had their own distinct ways of life. But the centralised power of the modern state has put an end to that: 'Madrid no era toda España, antes que la medicina centralizadora dejase frías las extremidades' (I, 276). At the same time, the entire Spanish nation is losing its peculiar characteristics, and becoming part of a homogenous Europe. In this regard, women are a particular focus for concern. Flores describes traditional *majas* as nothing less than 'La bandera nacional', and writes at length on their dark skin and black hair, once found so attractive in Spain (II, 335-38) (compare Rubio Cremades 1977-78: II, 122-35). Yet, in the modern world, such distinctive physical features are almost literally blotted out. In *Hoy*, we encounter a female friend of Flores who, driven by shame at her Hispanic characteristics, is now virtually unrecognisable: she has used the artifice of make-up to become a white-skinned blonde (V, 48-62). In the future, all remaining obstacles to the obliteration of Spanish

femininity will be removed. At present, women suffer a serious limitation in their efforts not to be Hispanic: they cannot actually move their modern French features because their makeup will fragment if they do. The technical advances of *Mañana* may solve the technical difficulties but not the underlying problem (V, 64).

So, Flores's view that all life is disappearing into representation rests upon a fear of the loss of social and gender hierarchy, as well as on a deeply entrenched suspicion of the Democrats as peddlers of a bogus vision of human personality. However, it would be wrong to attribute to Flores a straightforward antipathy to the present-day, or even to his own vision of the future. Rather, his fears are part of a deeper series of ambiguities in the text, evincing a lack of clarity in the face of fundamental change. Flores's view of the past is, as often as not, hostile: he sees it as both metaphorically and literally a dark place, lacking as it did, effective street lighting (I, 193). *Ayer* presents a world that, for all its charm, is stupidly cut off from learning and progress. As Rubio Cremades observes, there are tensions throughout the text between praise and criticism of advances, and nostalgia for the past (Rubio Cremades 1977-78: II, 80). Personality, fundamentally a property of a past which is, by turns, quaint and deplorable, serves as a critical counterpoint to modernity. However, on the account given in *Ayer*, it does not offer a terribly attractive alternative.

At the same time, each era is radically separated from the next, and especially from the past, in a way that precludes any kind of settlement based on the good in each. After all, how can the values of today and yesterday be combined if they belong to utterly discrete historical worlds? Only a few elements remain constant between the three eras, in Flores' account. Indeed, there is a considerable emphasis on the division between the

periods discussed, separated as they are into three parts. At the end of the first two we even see the physical demise of the allegorical personifications of yesterday and today. At the end of part one, *Mañana* writes its will and drops dead; part two culminates when *Hoy* (rather fashionably) commits suicide. As Flores puts it early on, the people of 1800 had no more idea that their world was about to end and no more sense of 1850 than we have of 1899 (I, 135).

The dramatic changes dividing the three epochs are evidence of Flores' sense of intensified modernisation around 1850 (which, as we have seen, he shared with Mesonero). But, unlike Mesonero, Flores places a remarkable emphasis on the almost absolute closure of the old Spain to innovation and thought. *Ayer* is depicted as completely sealed off from the future and its modernisation. As the personified Yesteryear says in its will, it leaves 'las ciencias pudriéndose en los calabozos del Santo Oficio' and 'en manos muertas los mejores bienes del reino' (II, 441-43).

Flores' approach here contrasts markedly with the *costumbrismo* of the recent past as practised by some other figures of the time. In Barbieri's *zarzuelas*, like *Jugar con fuego* (or later *Pan y toros*), popular *costumbres* are highly important, yet unlike Flores, Barbieri also sees the end of the eighteenth-century as a time containing valuable seeds of dynamic change as well as conflict. In *Jugar con fuego*, a mountain-born *hidalgo* (typical stock of the modern administrative and business class of Madrid (Cruz 1996: 29, 238, 255)) aims to marry a Grandee. In *Pan y toros*, the Princess, in alliance with Goya, tries to resist the encircling forces of reaction.

In making so trenchant a distinction between the past and the modern world, rather than seeing the germs of the latter in the former, Flores sets himself against the

grain of innumerable Liberal efforts to reconcile modernity and tradition. Previous thinkers often endeavoured to find a synthesis between opposed principles arising from the revolutionary present and the past. They conceived of history as not just a conflict, but as a dynamic interaction between such principles, and believed that the outcome of history would be their reconciliation. With his intense sense that modernity is utterly unlike the past, Flores seems to undermine any such hopes.

### **The Means of Representation**

At the same time, as we have seen, the modern ability to represent things is what enables Flores to create his museum gallery of paintings which exhibits to the public gaze today, yesterday, and tomorrow. In turn, the manner in which these three periods are depicted further underlines the key tensions in developing time between personality and modernity. It also leads us to the second key problem with representation in *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana*: how to depict the development of modernity.

In the line with other *costumbristas*, Flores is not trying to give us analytical (and often then dialectical) history. Rather he is attempting to portray changing times as they were experienced in people's lives, for an audience with expectations of a light humorous touch. Often, therefore, he attends to the smallest, most detailed aspects of daily existence which may nevertheless be significant, 'las que tú crees más leves, y más sencillas, serán acaso las más fuertes y las más importantes' (I, 201). This is why, in Flores as in other *costumbristas*, the sections are somewhat fragmentary, even though they constitute something like a panorama of their time (one thinks of the articles that make up *Escenas*

*matritenses* or Fray Gerundio's *Teatro social*). In order to represent changing time, Flores varies his literary approach across the three parts. The *cuadros* of *Ayer* are frequently drawn together by a thread of personal relationships in which, at times, the author himself participates. These help to show the development of lives across the years, such as that of an impoverished *galleguito* who is taken to court and becomes a minister (II, 147-69), or the gossiping hairdresser, introduced early on, who appears again and again in different scenes (I, 1-14, 105; II, 177, 226, 298) (Rubio Cremades 1977-78: II, 76-78). Such narrative techniques are appropriate to a world where personality reigns supreme. *Hoy* has a few such elements, most notably the account of Doña Eduvigis and her daughters in volume 5 (V, 49-66, 291). But its recurrent themes, and thematic sections, seem to reflect the fact that personality is disappearing in collective, public endeavours that are eminently representational. In turn, *Mañana* centres on a clash between the personal feelings of the Extremaduran Venancio (and his old-fashioned mother) and the rational, impersonal world of Madrid in 1899: Venancio worries whether 'estas gentes han suprimido el corazón (VI, 131). Here we find a strong futuristic narrative, in part, to highlight the fact that it is the most fictional of the three parts. But the strong narrative plot also enables the central problem of modernity to be understood through Venancio's developing relationship with his beloved Safo, the female Socialist writer, and with the businessman and spiritualist Nicomedus who becomes his friend. Thus the narrative form of *Mañana* can be seen to reflect the potential survival of personality in a future hostile to it.

However, if our ability to represent things facilitates the depiction of history, the depiction of time is problematically affected by the nature of representation itself. In

*Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana*, our perception of history is always evidently mediated by the means through which it is depicted. We can only see the representation, and cannot experience history itself. Flores reminds us, as would contemporaneous historicists, that the past is necessary to understand the present and to look to the future (I, 202). But two of these cannot be directly experienced by contemporary minds (our writer was not born until 1818), whilst the second is explicitly a representation, arising from and depicting a predominantly representational era.

The future evoked in *Mañana* is self-evidently fictional: the vision of 1899 is conjured up by a Spiritualist experience in which the magician Merlin takes possession of Flores's arm and, using his powers to see all periods of time, writes *Mañana* (VI, x-18). Throughout *Ayer*, too, there are playful reminders that we are reading a work of literature rather than actually experiencing life in the past. Flores repeatedly addresses his reader as if the latter were accompanying him on a literal, time-travelling tour of the Spain of 1800. He reminds female readers that they may not accompany him to the male section of the theatre (I, 72), and suggests that readers would do best to sleep during the scenes set at night, to avoid getting into trouble with the Inquisition for their modern beliefs (I, 202). At one point, the writer even quarrels with his rebellious quill, which demands its constitutional rights to discuss matters. In *Ayer*, our apparently immediate experience of daily life in the past is manifestly an illusion. In turn, in the ever-representational present, Flores's literary hand is evident even when he is at his most photographic. A very substantial section of *Hoy* claims to be daguerrotype reproduction of a newspaper. Needless to say, the text is not genuine, but a parody invented by the author (V, 137-244). The ever-problematic relationship between parody and realism is, in this way, underlined,

but our attention is also drawn to two other aspects of a representational world. When people are portrayed posing for daguerrotypes in *Hoy*, they adopt particular postures (and thus, Flores says, become public objects for sale, 'nadie se escapa de ser retratado y de ser vendido' (IV, 107-120)). Knowing they are to be represented, people make artificial images of themselves. Similarly, in a world where so much depends on how things are depicted, both men and women make widespread use of make-up, thus concealing their real physical features (IV, 194). Moreover, Flores claims that newspapers in fact distort public opinion with their insatiable appetite for scandal, thus limiting the space given to other realities. Indeed, throughout the text, Flores explicitly limits what he says according to the needs of the genre within which he is writing. These are satirical articles about national customs, and much that is positive, he tells us, is omitted because the aim is satirical laughter (II, 322-33).

In *Mañana*, such difficulties with the depiction of modernity become particularly acute. This is because the two key aspects of the problems of representation come together: the relationship between representational modernity and authentic personality, and the question of whether the depiction of the clash between them is anything other than a representation.

The story of *Mañana* appears to suggest the possibility of a reconciliation between personality and modernity. The modern *madrileña* Safo, has enjoyed the company of the backwards provincial, Venancio, mainly as a quaint literary curiosity (VI, 186). But suddenly she falls in love with him when their eyes meet in a Danish hot-air balloon and they kiss (VII, 58-59). They decide to marry for love. The clash between Safo's expectations of a woman and those of Venancio's mother remains: Safo's

fashionable clothes, lack of old-world courtesy, and enthusiasm for philosophy and Socialism, amongst other things, vex the already bewildered mother (VII, 259-60, 270-71, 274). Yet, inspired by love, Safo finds herself drawn to Doña Ruperta's rural world saying 'Desgracia [...] no poder vivir como aquellas gentes vivían' (VII, 272). To the old lady's pleasure, the couple settle in backwards Extremadura. Venancio's friend Nicomedus heads for the countryside too, renouncing Spiritualism, and all, at last, is well (325-26).

At the end, modernity and the past might appear to coexist peacefully. Ruperta, though appalled by Madrid, is not opposed to all things modern (VII, 90-93); Merlin tells us that, for all her outlandish behavior, Safo is basically decent (VII, 268); Venancio has been elected to parliament (VII, 122); and the practical measures of the future, after the supposed 1871 coup, seem to enjoy some authorial approval in contrast with the deedless words of 1850 (VI, 36-45). Symbolically, Safo and Nicomedus might represent *Mañana*, the partially modern Venancio *Hoy*, and his mother *Ayer*. In truth, however, the triumph of the past is much more absolute. There are few concessions to the advanced metropolis in the ending. Safo, like all true women in love, we are told, now looks at the ground and blushes; she has no will but the matriarch Ruperta's (VII, 58-59, 268-69, 326). The restoration of personality seems to be an idyllic rebirth of the lost past: 'todos viven en paz y en gracia de Dios, sin acordarse para nada de la corte' (VII, 326).

The question is whether we are disposed to believe any of this. Merlin expresses his frustration that, whereas he can view the future, he cannot see the readers' reactions to *Mañana* (VI, 162). Of the final transformation of Safo he comments, 'De Safo, lector, quisiera no decirte nada porque temo que has de tenerme por embustero' (VII, 326).

Leaving aside our willingness to give credence to any number of fabulous machines, the role of Magnetism and Spiritualism is crucial here. If the restoration of the past means the end of Nicomedus's Spiritualism, then how is it that the account of Safo and Venancio's love, which is the key to the restoration, is based precisely on the magnetic fluids passing between their eyes? This, after all, is the explanation Merlin offers us for the otherwise inexplicable transformation of a previously heartless woman (VII, 71-73). Magnetism is shown to be 'el verdadero conductor del amor' (VII, 63-64). Flores seems to have presented us with a deliberate paradox in order to undermine the credibility of the happy ending. What is more, there has been a Quixotic air throughout to Venancio's pursuit of his love: Safo is termed his Dulcinea and he is compared to the Cervantine knight (VI, 132-33). Much is suggested by the bizarre image of him at one point flying to Safo's house on a new invention, mechanical wings of love drawn by a homing device in the form of Cupid's arrow (VI, 148-48).

The real point of the ending, and indeed of the plot of *Mañana's* futuristic fiction, seems to be to challenge the readership humorously with the question of whether personality –and the strength of feeling Flores associates with it- can be brought back into modernity. The fictional, representational status of the third part, and its self-contradictory story, is meant to provoke. In so doing, it raises a further series of doubts: we are led to wonder about the relationship between *Hoy* and what might be. *Mañana*, both technologically and ideologically, is an extrapolation of the present, but not one that we can straightforwardly believe; it depends not least on the most questionable aspects of 1850s modernity, Spiritualism and Magnetism.

The representational world of *Hoy* and its projection into the future require debate. Flores had opened that section by reminding his readers that they should now discuss what was published, for such was the spirit of the age (III, xix). The predominance of representation within modernity, however, means that discussion of the latter can only take the form of rival series of representations. *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana* is an open text, but it is also an assertion that our perceptions of modernity and its development are themselves no more than representations. At the very start of *Hoy*, supposedly obliged to sing his own praises, Flores exploits traditional jokes about prologues and the promotion of books, and invents the prologuist Barón de la Taravilla (Académico de su lengua). The latter figure, whose name and mock academic title do little for his credibility, insists on the merit of Flores' work in singularly unconvincing terms. We are informed that the customs of an era are its history, that the history of peoples is the life of humanity, and that the latter is in turn the source of all philosophy. So far so good, but the good Baron rounds off his argument with the much less persuasive statement that 'Así lo afirman varios filósofos | Los que no lo afirman no lo niegan'. His concluding, mock eulogistic remarks are even less convincing, with their telegraphic sequence of unjustified, trivial, and trite statements.

## **Conclusion**

Flores' *Ayer, Hoy, y, Mañana* is centrally concerned with the threat to authentic personality presented by Liberal modernisation. The benefits and freedoms are seen as problematically intertwined with the tyranny of transparency, publicity, and

accountability, not to mention the insidious role of capital, all drawn together in a world that becomes pure artifice. In Flores's view, modernity is fundamentally concerned with public representation, and public representation is at odds with distinctive, individual, private identity. There is no evident way of reconciling modernity and personality: the relentless march of the one must come at the expense of the other. Modernity is, by definition, a radical severing of the past, and cannot incorporate the values of another era, to which personality is confined. The only glimpse of a solution that we are offered is itself self-evidently a simulacrum. Indeed, our accounts of the development of modernity are themselves only representations: the purely representational nature of the present day and the inherent difficulties of depicting the past and the future ensure that is the case. On the one hand, modernity seems to present us with an irresolvable dilemma. On the other, even our perception of that fundamental problem is just a representation. For both these reasons, our depiction of modernity can only take the form of an open text.

*Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana* is, in consequence, one of the most important works of literature, and indeed of thought, in nineteenth-century Spain. It raises and explores with great sophistication two key issues that were to be of lasting importance in the modern period. The first is the tension between the needs of human personality, and the transparency, accountability, and powerful public corporations demanded by Liberal modernisation. This problem includes the contradictions inherent within the latter, not least as regards its declared aim of liberating the individual. In this respect, one has only to think of the Frankfurt School, for example, to comprehend the resonance of Flores' critique of modernity. The second key issue is the perceived prominence of representation within modernity, and the consequent focus upon representation in itself as

the central problem of the modern period. It hardly needs to be said that this matter has been continually revisited since Flores' time; for some, it is the very essence of modernity.

Flores' exploration of those two issues doubtless sounds attractive, precisely because it chimes with repeated preoccupations of the modern period. But there is a serious danger both in blindly celebrating such achievements, and, more particularly, in conflating Flores's views with those of the highly diverse spectrum of thinkers and cultural figures who have said something similar. The risk is that we ignore the historical specificity of Flores' (or indeed anyone else's) arguments, and that we merge diverse versions of apparently similar propositions into a series of monolithic claims about the nature of modernity. Flores' 'open-text', to borrow the celebrated term, rests on an insistence that personality is a product of an archaic, repressive civilisation, of rigid class and gender hierarchies and blind faith, and not of the modern world. The point of *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana* is not least to address and undercut the beliefs of the Democratic Party (and others), that modernity might bring existential realisation for all individuals, as individuals. Flores' invocation of a closed, undynamic past of Spanish *costumbres* may well be presented in the text as the imaginative recreation that it necessarily is for a modern; but that scarcely means that this part of the representational strategy is not intended as the primary weapon in Flores' ideological armory. Anyone who hopes or believes that individuals might live fulfilling lives in modern conditions will take leave of Flores at the very root of his arguments.

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