A tribute to Stephen King: Hispanic gothic and cultural globalization

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Abstract

King: Homenaje al rey del terror (*King: Homage to the King of Terror*) (Cáceres, 2018) is an anthology of short stories written by Latin American and Spanish young authors in tribute to Stephen King and compiled by Ecuadorian writer Jorge Luis Cáceres. The anthology has been published in Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Spain, and some of the texts in the collection have been translated into English by the online webzine Palabras Errantes. The stories illustrate some of the new directions that contemporary Latin American and Spanish cultural production are taking, such as the exploration of non-mimetic forms of fiction (other than magical realism), the embracing of international influences and the understanding of the local in relation to the global. As a tribute to 'the king of terror', the short narratives collected in the anthology use resources of the Gothic, horror, the fantastic and science fiction; I concentrate my analysis on the first two. My reading of the Gothic and horror devices in the stories is informed by recent criticism on the gothic mode, as well as contemporary theories of cultural globalization and glocalization. The aim is to recognize and analyse the processes of translation, circulation, deterritorialization and multiterritorialization exemplified in the narratives, and the different ways in which these processes define contemporary Hispanic Gothic.

Keywords

Gothic literature

Latin America

Spain

Globalgothic

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> 'Todos cabemos en la frontera. Y la frontera, por suerte, no le pertenece a nadie' ('We all fit in the border. And the border, luckily, belongs to nobody'). (Neuman 2011: 207)

These words conclude Andrés Neuman's literary reflection on the state of Latin American letters in the essay 'Pasaporte de frontera (10 fragmentos hacia ninguna parte)' ('Border passport (10 fragments towards nowhere', 2011). The Spanish Argentinean writer aims to deconstruct fixed concepts of nation, borders, languages, as well as generalizing notions of 'Latin Americanness' by exploring the possibility of the border as a literary space. This endeavour is just one example of the different ways in which Latin American and Spanish writers are aiming to claim a universal, transnational, border-like space in contemporary global culture. In order to do this, some Hispanic authors are exploring fictional genres or modes that were once cast out of the national canons, such as the fantastic, horror, the Gothic, science fiction and other forms that do not correspond to a mimetic representation of reality. The anthology *King: Homenaje al rey del terror* (*King: Homage to the King of Terror*) illustrates some of the new directions of contemporary Latin American and Spanish cultural production.

The anthology was compiled by Ecuadorian writer Jorge Luis Cáceres and first published in Quito under the title *No entren al 1408* (*Do Not Enter 1408*) but reprinted (and re-branded) by other publishing houses in different Spanish-speaking countries.[1] In total, almost 35 authors have collaborated with this anthology, either republishing one of their stories or offering unpublished material. Some of the stories have been translated into English by the online project 'Palabras Errantes' ('Wandering Words'), which has made the texts available worldwide – both because they are now accessible to a readership that might not understand Spanish, but also because the translations are made available freely online. The volumes include examples of different kinds of fantasy writing, whether it is fantastic narratives, gothic stories, science fiction or weird tales. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on the stories that use horror and the Gothic to pay a literary homage to 'the king of terror'.

The stories pay tribute to Stephen King in different ways, which include the reproduction of tropes and characters, as well as the suggestion that the most fearful terrors are often lurking in the shadows of quotidian spaces. The family home is one of the settings used to generate a sense of claustrophobia, of 'privacy and enclosure' (Punter 1996: 166) that is common in King's fiction. The family itself is often a source of dysfunctionality, grief and violence. In many of the stories, these everyday horrors are presented through the perspective of children or deal with topics such as child abuse or violence against women. Some texts are self-referential because – as King's narratives habitually do – they refer to the act of writing. One of the characters in Cáceres's story, for instance, is novelist Bill Denbrough, the leader of the Losers' Club in King's *It* (1986), who is also a professional

writer. Other texts situate themselves in the gothic tradition by appropriating some of King's characters and rewriting their stories as a means of tribute to the author: apart from Bill Denbrough, some of the stories portray characters such as Jack Torrance (also in Cáceres's tale), the Grady sisters (in Patricia Esteban Erlés and Espido Freire's stories), or King himself (in Jorge Enrique Lage's narrative). Other stories, such as Francisco Ortega's and Juan Terranova's, collaborate in the global re-writing of the zombie figure by imagining the undead in Chile and Argentina, respectively. In this article, I will concentrate on the analysis of Mariana Enríquez's 'Los Domínguez y el Diablo' ('The Domínguez family and the devil'); Patricia Esteban Erlés's 'El juego' ('The game'); Fernando Iwasaki's 'El ritual' ('The ritual'); Nicolás Saraintaris' 'El Pedregoso' ('The Pedregoso'); and Espido Freire's 'La vejez de las gemelas de *El Resplandor*' ('The old age of the twins from *The Shining*').[2] These narratives will allow me to explore some ways in which contemporary Hispanic Gothic participates in transnational cultural flows, exemplifying processes of consumption, appropriation and transformation of stories in a global context.

Hispanic glocalgothic

Stephen King is a literary representative of gothic consumer culture, a role which he seems to embrace. In an interview in 1983, he claimed to be 'writing about a generation […] grown up under the influence of the icons of American popular culture, from Hollywood to McDonald's' (quoted in Badley 2007: 96). What King probably never anticipated is how far these influences would reach and how broad and culturally heterogeneous the 'McDonald's generation' will be. When asked about the presence of terror in his narratives at a conference on fantasy literature, Spanish author Ismael Martínez Biurrun said about the writers of his generation that 'somos todos hijos de Stephen King' ('we're all children of

Stephen King') (2017: n.pag.). Martínez Biurrun, like most of the authors in the anthologies, grew up in a world of global cultural products, which coincided with King's international reputation. Therefore, even though the premise of the Cáceres anthology includes a tribute to a best-selling Anglo-American writer, the collection does not merely represent a case of 'Americanization'. It is, I want to suggest, an example of the creation of new forms of writing coming from a group of Spanish and Latin American authors that grew up exposed to cultural models created internationally. The authors anthologized do not choose to reflect 'the global' or 'the foreign' over 'the local' and 'native'; what they do is to participate in the multi-directional flows that make up the very fabric of contemporary cultures around the world.

The conception that Hispanic culture can be Americanized is problematized by a contemporary understanding of culture as an entity necessarily affected by external forces and therefore 'not homogeneous, discrete and bounded' (Hopper 2008: 40). If we understand cultures as being in constant movement, continuously adapting, changing and 'in motion' (Lury 1997: n.pag.), then the fact that they are subject to international flows becomes not only to be expected, but also an essential part of their very fabric. Moreover, the concept of 'local' (as opposed to global) can also be understood in terms of its relationship to the universal. As Roland Robertson claims, '[m]uch of what is often declared to be local is in fact the local expressed in terms of generalized recipes of locality' (1997: 26). Hence, we should talk about 'local cultures' instead of *a* local culture, and challenge fixed definitions of locality in order to understand the multifaceted realities of these cultures and their textual manifestations.

If there were a 'generalized recipe' to define the local fears of the American small town, it would unquestionably include King's fiction. The author, who has claimed to be an observer of 'ordinary middle-class American life' (Rich quoted in Magistrale 2014: 356), has often been described as a clear example of 'a distinctly American literary tradition' (Magistrale 2014: 356). In *Danse Macabre* (1981), a non-fictional analysis of horror in popular culture in which King discusses many novels and films printed and produced in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, the author recognizes the influence in his writing of other masters of American Gothic, such as Edgar Allan Poe or H. P. Lovecraft. British writers, such as Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker, are also mentioned. However, King does not write in isolation from the rest of the world and it would be short-sighted to assume that his literary and cultural influences are exclusively anglophone. Examples of international referents in King's texts are, among others, his own comparison of the monsters in *The Mist* to the work of Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch (Campbell 2016: 169) and his mention of Francisco de Goya's paintings and Dario Argento's films as examples of the artistic value of 'gross-out' horror (King 1981: 217) that the author often resorts to. Moreover, as Cáceres himself emphasizes in an interview with the journal *El telégrafo* (Anon. 2017), *Danse Macabre*'s dedication to various writers includes the Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. Whereas this fact can be understood as evidence of the far-reaching implications of Borges's fictions (Infante 2001: 198), it is also an example of the crossing of cultural flows present in literature globally. Defining King's writing as exclusively a product of the Anglo-American tradition would neglect this fact. Similarly, reducing King's influence in Spanish and Latin American writers to a process of Americanization might imply falling into generalizing considerations of 'what is Spanish'

of ‘what is Latin American’ (as opposed to ‘what is Anglo-American’), consequently neglecting the multi-centred and multi-layered qualities of Spanish-speaking cultures.

Some of these notions have been emphasized by contemporary literary groups and movements that formed during the last decade of the twentieth century in the Hispanic world. To take the Latin American debate as an example, Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez, in their introduction to the anthology *McOndo*,[3] declare their intention to combat reductionist essentialism that defines Latin America as a place where ‘todo el mundo anda con sombrero y vive en árboles’ (‘everyone wears a sombrero and lives in trees’) (1996: 14) by advocating for a global understanding of the subcontinent ‘más cercano al concepto de aldea global o mega red’ (‘similar to the concept of global village or mega web’) (1996: 14). Bolivian writer Edmundo Paz Soldán, one of the members of the group and also one of the collaborators in the tribute to King, describes the McOndo movement as a demand to be ‘Latin American and not […] ashamed of embracing American popular culture’ (Milian Arias 2005: 142). The movement ‘was accused by some Latin American critics as being “sold out to American imperialism”’ (2005: 142) but, according to Paz Soldán, it merely registers the impact of Anglo-American popular culture in Latin American societies:

> A fact that cannot be denied is that more Latin American kids have watched *The Simpsons* or *The X Files* than read *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The critics should focus on analyzing why this happens in contemporary Latin American urban youth culture, instead of discarding too quickly the authors that register this phenomenon in their novels. (2005: 142)

These opinions are echoed by Latin American academic criticism. Some scholars, such as Ángel Esteban and Jesús Montoya Suárez, have recently demanded the use of a wider perspective to interpret Latin American literature and the need to work on 'la superación de los cajones de sastre epistemológicos nacionales en el estudio de la literatura hispanoamericana' ('the overcoming of the epistemological and national catch-all conceptions in the study of Latin American literature') (2011: 7). According to these critics, reducing Latin American literature to a number of literary modes, tropes and characters that allegedly represent an abstract conception of 'Latin Americanness' would hinder the exploration of many other forms of fictions by Latin American authors.

Esteban and Montoya Suárez echo conceptions put forward by recent criticism of cultural globalization, such as the notion that global cultural messages – even when they come from the United States – are always heterogeneous: these messages are 'differentially received and interpreted' because '"local" groups "absorb" communication from the "centre" in a great variety of ways' (Robertson 1997: 38; Tomlinson 1991: n.pag.). In their discussion of contemporary Latin American literature, Esteban and Montoya Suárez theorize the prevalence of the local in global processes:

> Por este motivo [porque no hay desterritorialización sin una reterritorialización] sería conveniente no negar las fuerzas centrífugas que desterritorializan la experiencia de la escritura y la lectura, pero sí recalcar la medida en que siguen estando vigentes unas cuestiones identitarias afectadas por los procesos de globalización en autores y obras que podrían pensarse entonces, no desde una desterritorialidad entendida como una

> no pertenencia a ningún espacio identitario, sino desde una multiterritorialidad ya real, ya imaginada.
>
> ('For this reason [because there is no deterritorialization without a reterritorialization] it would be advisable not to deny the centrifugal forces that deterritorialize the reading and writing experiences, but instead to emphasise the ways in which issues of identity affected by the processes of globalization are still prevailing in authors and literary works that could be conceived not as deterritorialization –understood as not-belonging – but rather as a multideterritorialization that already exists, that has already been imagined'). (2011: 9)

In the critics' view, the processes of globalization allow the local to persist in a multiterritorialized way, which is reflected in literature through an investigation of a transnational identity of which the authors are perfectly aware.

The processes outlined in the Latin American case also apply to the wider Hispanic world in the texts anthologized by Cáceres. As the editor declares, 'cada uno de los autores escribe desde sus propios territorios. Entonces, por ejemplo, el chileno escribe sobre la dictadura de Pinochet' ('Each of the authors writes from his/her own domain. So, for example, the Chilean writes about the dictatorship of Pinochet') (Anon. 2017: n.pag.). Cáceres is referring, in this example, to Francisco Ortega's 'Setenta y siete', a story that writes zombies into a retelling of Chilean history. He places the anthology in a long-established tradition of Latin American short stories that has been explored by internationally renowned authors such as Horacio Quiroga, Julio Cortázar or Juan Rulfo (personal communication, 3 May 2018). The texts, therefore, combine the local and the

global in complex ways. The cultural messages that emanate from US popular culture (whether via the world-wide broadcast of TV programmes such as *The Simpsons* (1989–), or the international reach of King's novels) go through a process of deterritorialization when other cultures accept them as their own; but as they begin to inhabit other spaces (Latin America and Spain, in this example), they become multi-local. At the same time, as these new spaces appropriate them, these messages are indigenized [4] and necessarily transformed to respond to different cultural and historical realities. As Cáceres suggests, this is the case in the short stories being explored in this article and, in a more general sense, also in the adaptation that Latin American and Spanish culture has made of anglophone Gothic models in contemporary texts.

When specifically discussing the global cultural flows in which Gothic participates (and which the Gothic generates) and their deterritorialization in the Latin American context, critics have recently used the term 'tropicalisation'. According to Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez, the tropicalization of the Gothic is a 'mecanismo por el cual se recicla y transforma el género gótico en América Latina, poniendo *fuera de lugar* (original emphasis) a personajes y temas' ('mechanism that recycles and transforms the gothic genre in Latin America by putting characters and topics *out of place*') (2017: 10) in order to illuminate the artificiality of the genre and its dynamics of construction and formulation of the Other. This deterritorialization (or 'putting out of place') of the Gothic in Latin America implies breaking with the thematic and geographic connexions of the Gothic – for example: vampire-castle-Transylvania, in Eljaiek-Rodríguez's words – by placing these elements in a strange setting: the subtropical rainforest, the Colombian hot-lands or the urban jungle of Mexico City (2017: 10). This process helps the Latin American Gothic serve two purposes:

first, it pays tribute to the masters of European and North American Gothic; second, it criticizes and parodies such tradition (2017: 18). Critics of the Spanish Gothic have also mentioned the use of parody as an element present in recent explorations of the mode. David Roas, defining the Spanish fantastic,[5] argues that irony and parody are used by contemporary writers to distort the perception of reality and to update themes and topics that might have been overused (2011: 174–75). These tropes are often anglophone: in his discussion of what he terms 'the postmodern fantastic', Roas lists numerous referents of North American TV, film and literature (as *Knight Rider*, 1982–86, David Lynch's *Lost Highway* of 1997 and William Gibson's 'The Gernsback Continuum' of 1981) as examples of popular referents to contemporary writers and readers.

So how do we theorize the presence of *The X Files* (1993–) in Latin America, Transylvanian vampires in the subtropical jungle and, more specifically, Stephen King's tropes in Spanish-language literature? In my view, these are examples of a complex cultural interchange that illustrate the transnationalism of the gothic mode. As such, they cannot be reduced to examples of Americanization or cultural imperialism, or even simply defined as cultural forms of globalization. Their interplay between the local and the global requires that we think past theories of homogenization and begin to outline the multidirectional flows that define the transnational Gothic in contemporary times. This aim corresponds to an understanding of globalization similar to the one presented by Robertson. The author's work, which defines the local as an essential part of the global, inspired a pragmatic understanding of a concept that becomes relevant to my discussion: glocalization (Roudometof 2015: 776). Robertson understands global/local cultural flows as products of the 'blending, mixing, and adapting of two or more processes, one of which must be local'

(Roudometof 2015: 781). An approach to literature from the perspective of Glocal Studies, therefore, defines the elements of the binary local/global as a dichotomy in which both sides are mutually constituent and reform-oriented (Roudometof 2015: 782) – instead of being opposed and engaged in a power dynamic. Moreover, instead of focusing on issues of Americanization or cultural imperialism, a glocal perspective explores the existence of hybrid cultures and creative appropriation. I believe that this is a much more valuable standpoint from which to build our understanding of Hispanic Gothic and, more specifically, the young authors' tribute to King. Since, in these texts, the local elements are blended with (and not submissive to) the tropes 'inherited' from King, the use (and redefinition) of these tropes by young Spanish-speaking authors should be understood as a creative appropriation rather than as an example of cultural imperialism.

The idea that the global is more powerful than the local and, therefore, runs the risk of being a dangerously homogenizing force, is also subverted in this case by the multi-directional quality of the cultural flows at play. It is essential to keep in mind that the creative appropriation of King's tropes by the young generation of Spanish and Latin American authors transcends not only national, but also language borders. Therefore, it is not merely a transposition of tropes that we are discussing here, but also a complex process that involves translation and transnational circulation of cultural products. This process starts with the translation into Spanish of King's novels and short stories, and their subsequent distribution in Spanish-speaking countries. A simple search in the Index Translationum (2018), UNESCO's database of book translations, points to the relevance of King's texts in world literature-in-translation. King is listed as the ninth author in the list of Top 50 most translated authors in the world, with a total of 3357 translations (as of April

2018). Additionally, a database search for the author's translations into Spanish since 1979 gives a record of 460 entries, of which 414 were published in Spain and the rest in Latin American countries (23 in Mexico, eleven in Colombia, seven in Argentina, among others). King is the sixth most translated author in Mexico and the eighth in Colombia.

These figures provide a numerical equivalent to Martínez Biurrun's statement; considering the significant availability of King's texts in translation, as well as his international popularity, understanding the contemporary Spanish-speaking writers of fantasy as 'King's progeny' is not too far-fetched. This translation process is particularly interesting because it allows for King's depiction of small-town America's fears to be presented to an international readership. As they are translated, King's tropes are also deterritorialized only to be creatively appropriated (consumed, digested, parodied and/or tropicalized) by the Hispanic authors anthologized by Cáceres. This also means that the international publication of the tribute transforms these tropes into cultural counter-flows that exemplify the interplay of the global *and* the local – the parodied, tropicalized, indigenized tropes that were once King's representation of small-town Unites States.

But the texts in the Cáceres anthologies are also translated into English. This is one of the missions of the literary webzine *Palabras Errantes*, a 'collaborative online project that publishes contemporary Latin American literature in translation' (Palabras Errantes 2018a: n.pag.). The objective of the project is to forge 'a dialogue between Latin American writers and Anglophone readers interested in getting beyond Borges and Bolaño' (Palabras Errantes 2018a: n.pag.), and the contributors are academics and translators from England, Canada, Ireland, North America, Venezuela, Mexico, Bosnia and Argentina. Even though

their project is centred on the translation of Latin American writers, the project *King: Tribute to the King of Terror* includes translations of authors from Spain, such as Patricia Esteban Erlés or David Roas (Palabras Errantes 2018b: n.pag.). These translations inaugurate another phase in the glocal flow of cultural forms that originated in King's fictions, this time exemplifying a movement from Spanish into English, 'the *lingua franca* (original emphasis) of globalization' (Hopper 2008: 91). English, in the case of this project, is a vehicle that illuminates the 'shifting borders' (Palabras Errantes 2018a: n.pag.) between Latin America and the rest of the world, allowing the translators to cross paths and create 'novel co-ordinates in the geopolitical sphere' (Palabras Errantes 2018a: n.pag.). This is aided by the creation of an online space in which the Spanish and the English language glocally collaborate in the circulation of cultural flows. Through translation, and by inhabiting the global space of the Internet, a project conceived transnationally such as 'Palabras Errantes' can make the reinterpreted texts written by Spanish-speaking authors in tribute to King available to an international readership.

But this is not only a glocal process, but also a gothic one. As Glennis Byron claims, the gothic mode has always been characterized by a propensity 'to prey upon itself, to delight in consuming and recycling certain persistent motifs' (2012: 373). When theorizing the presence of Spanish Gothic in the global context and the 'infiltration' of foreign elements into the mode, Ann Davies also argues that 'the Gothic is about infiltration […], of the present by the past, of the rational by superstition, of the sane by the insane, and so on' (2016: 12). Considering this quality of the mode, it is to be expected that the mode has been reinvigorated by transnational flows characteristic of globalization. By opening up 'multiple new fields of play' (Byron 2012: 373), these flows have intensified the Gothic's

tendency to consume itself, recycle old motifs, and infiltrate other traditions and times, resulting in a process by which 'the literature and film of different countries are feeding off each other to produce new forms of Gothic that reveal the increasing cross-cultural dynamics of the globalised world'. In the case of Spain, Davies indicates that Spanish Gothic has always been 'subject to international circulation', partly thanks to the consumption of gothic novels translated into Spanish – mostly via French translation (2016: 10). Davies also argues that Spanish gothic film has often been infiltrated by global elements and presents this infiltration as an indication of the transnationalism of Spanish Gothic: in Spain, 'Gothic film, and horror film more widely, became part of a transnational gothic flow that film-makers and scriptwriters adapted to their own ends' (2016: 13). I would like to argue that this transnational circulation is not only reflected in contemporary Spanish cinema but, more broadly, in literary and filmic texts written in Spanish. Whether we talk about glocalization, multiterritorialization, tropicalization, infiltration or even translation, it is essential to consider Hispanic Gothic not as being Americanized, but as a mode which actively participates in the complex transnational flows that characterize globalization.

In the following sections, I will explore some examples of the processes discussed above as they are illustrated by specific short stories in the anthologies *King: Tributo al rey del terror* (Argentina, 2015), and *King: Homenaje al rey del terror* (Spain, 2018). The first section analyses short narratives by Mariana Enríquez, Fernando Iwasaki and Nicolás Saraintaris in which the encounter with the horrors of religion and the supernatural mark the young protagonists' passage into adulthood; the second section before the conclusion

briefly studies the creative appropriation of King's Grady sisters in two tales by Patricia Esteban Erlés and Espido Freire, respectively.

Religion and its discontents

'Los Domínguez y el diablo', written by Argentinean author Mariana Enríquez, is a short story included in all the versions of the anthology. The tale combines the trope of the dysfunctional family from the perspective of the young protagonist with a dreadful view of the terrors of religion: both of these topics are often central to King's novels and short stories. Jesse W. Nash situates King's portrayal of adolescence as the key to understand the author's critique of the modern American family. According to Nash, 'it is the sorry state of the relationships within the family that makes the adolescent vulnerable to the enticements of the supernatural' (2007: 170). This is illustrated, in Nash's analysis, by the portrayal of families in *Christine* and *Pet Sematary* (both originally published 1983). Other examples of children and adolescents in dysfunctional families include the character of Danny in *The Shining* (1977), Carrie in the eponymous novel (1974) and the young adults in The Loser's Club of *It*, among many others. In some of these narratives – among which maybe *The Shining* is the most obvious example – the true threat to the young protagonists comes from the violence within the home. In terms of the portrayal of religion, on the other hand, King has been labelled as 'America's dark theologian' (Cowan 2018: 13) because of his critical portrayal of institutionalized religion. The author himself reflects on the relevance of religious faith for horror imageries and interprets the contemporary popularity of horror as a consequence of the failure of religion (Cowan 2018: 14). Some of the novels that can be read in this light include *The Stand* (1978) and *Salem's Lot* (1975). On a similar line, Enríquez's engagement with religion – which has been considered an involuntary gesture to

a country that excessively celebrates the election of a local pope (Muñoz 2013) – imagines organized faith as the source of fear, as well as the threat to the adolescent protagonist.

'Los Domínguez y el Diablo' narrates the story of Victoria, a young adult who tries to escape the depressive atmosphere of her own home, which mourns the loss of her brother Martín, by spending time with her neighbour, Mariela Domínguez. The Domínguez family are part of a religion simply called the Cult, which shares with Christianity the use of Jesus Christ as a figure of veneration. The paintings hanging from the walls of the Domínguez home, described at the beginning of the story, offer an example of religious horror and anticipate terrors to come:

> La casa tenía demasiados cuadros religiosos, escenas que Verónica no podía comprender pero le parecían vagamente amenazantes o violentas: un hombre de barba blanca metiendo la mano entre las costillas descarnadas de Jesús; el Cristo con dos hombres a cada lado, las manos retorcidas por los clavos, la sangre chorreando sobre la madera; una estatua blanca que miraba arder a una ciudad, el fuego del incendio en el horizonte de la noche. Y la peor de todas: Jesús abriéndose el pecho con las manos, dejando el corazón a la vista. (Enríquez 2018: 22–23)
>
> ('The house had too many religious paintings, scenes Veronica couldn't understand, but which she found vaguely threatening or violent: a man with a white beard putting his hands between the fleshless ribs of Jesus; Christ with two men on either side, his hands pierced by nails, blood dripping down the cross; a white statue casting a seething eye over a city as a raging fire lit up the night's horizon. And the worst of

all: Jesus pulling open his chest with his hands to reveal his heart, a bright red heart surrounded by flames or wings'. (Enríquez 2017)

Whereas a devout Christian might recognize (and normalize) these images and scenes (what might be the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Passion and Resurrection of Christ and the Sacred Heart), from the perspective of a non-believer like Victoria they understandably become gruesome. In the climax of the story, the protagonist finds herself witnessing a black mass that the Domínguez participate in as part of their Satanist cult. In it, she sees how the Domínguez grandmother undresses to enter a baptismal font, her skin becoming green and hairy 'como una mandarina podrida' (Enríquez 2018: 32) ('like a rotten tangerine') (Enríquez 2017n.pag.). As the rest of the mass continues, the Devil arrives: '[el pastor] tiene los pies deformes, pensó Verónica. Eran lo suficientemente grandes como para calzar la pezuña de una vaca. O de una cabra' (Enríquez 2018: 32) ('[the priest]'s got deformed feet, Veronica thought. They were big enough to fit the hoof of a cow. Or a goat') (Enríquez 2017: n.pag.). In this moment, Verónica remembers that her dead brother (who, in a grotesque version of the Christ of the Sacred Heart, appeared in her window the night before with his chest open and his heart exposed) warned her not to attend the mass. Enríquez's story uses gothic means to satirize the Christian marvellous. The ritual of the black mass, conceived to invert Catholic rituals, is merely one of the elements of gothic subversion delineated by Enríquez: the traditional family of Verónica is a cause of pain (instead of joy), religion is the source of fear and terror (instead of hope and faith), the priest officiating the religious ceremony is the Devil himself and the only symbol of protection is the protagonist's dead brother – who, like Jesus Christ, also comes back from the dead.

The story in 'El ritual', by Peruvian writer Fernando Iwasaki, is similar to Enríquez's narrative in that the story is focused on the experiences of a young protagonist who faces the death of his/her sibling. The narrator's brother, Dieguito, falls terminally ill and after all conventional medicine proves incapable of curing him, a friend of the family takes him to see *Madame* Pacheco, a witch who had 'los secretos de las huaringas, las shiringas y otras pingas' ('the secrets of the *huaringas*, the *shiringas* and other things') (Iwasaki 2018: 69). The Huaringas are a group of lagoons in Northern Peru, close to Huancabamba (Piura), which are believed to have telluric and cosmic powers. Local *curanderos*, or quacks, use them for healing purposes and the plants growing around the water ascertain different virtues (Giese 1991); the *shiringas* are rubber trees that grow in the Peruvian Amazon. The treatment that Dieguito undergoes includes being rubbed with a black cat, bathing in garlic soup, pray to a stuffed bird and being connected to his brother through a ritual involving blood and a gold chain. The witch does not cure him, but his magic allows Dieguito to come back from the dead at the end of the story: 'Cuando entró por la ventana me asusté, todo negro y apestoso, pero sino fuera por la medallita no lo habría escondido en mi ropero' ('When we came through the window, blackened and stinking, I got scared. If it hadn't been for the gold medal, I wouldn't have hidden him in the closet') (Iwasaki 2018: 70). To emphasize the dark parody that the text exemplifies, the encounter with the dead is narrated by a child who does not seem to understand the implications of the situation but accepts (and embraces) the supernatural event.

Similarly to Iwasaki's text, the premise of the story 'El Pedregoso', by Argentinean writer Nicolás Saraintaris, includes a supernatural element which, in the logic of the story, is related to non-Catholic beliefs. The protagonist and narrator, also a young man, grew up in a Chekura

reservoir close to El Pedregoso, in Southern Chile.[6] An indigenous woman called Mailén reveals to him that he possesses an ancient gift that allows him and the Chekura people to carry the pain of others and leave it in the river in the form of a stone. This implies that he can feel the painful experiences of people around him as if they were his own. He suffers, for instance, the sadness of his girlfriend Sol after her aunt's death in a car accident, or the grotesque sexual aggression suffered by an old woman in a permanent vegetative state. This series of moments shape the narrator's coming of age and their horror taint the end of his childhood: he feels Sol's distress for the first time as they are about to lose their virginity and when 'Loquito' – another one of the teenagers in town – is run over by a car, the narrator concludes: 'Cuando lo subieron en la ambulancia y le taparon la cabeza tuve un impulso que marcó el final de mi adolescencia' ('As they were putting him inside the ambulance and covering his head, I felt a pulse that marked the end of my adolescence') (Saraintaris 2015: 48).

The stories narrated by Enríquez, Iwasaki and Saraintaris explore the horrors of religion and the sacred supernatural, presenting a grotesque view of religion's promises of community, healing and life after death. There is, in some of the stories, an obvious attempt to connect these tropes to the presence in Latin America of indigenous systems of belief. As is the case in many of King's fictions, however, the source of fear is not so much the supernatural/magical event, but the terrors lurking in the shadows of the quotidian spaces and their family home. The hero-child, a concept that 'has held King's fascination for decades' (Magistrale 2007: 62) is, in the author's fictions, a character more susceptible to the horror monster due to the nature of childhood. As Tony Magistrale analyses, '[c]hildren may eventually grow up to become adults, but before this process is completed […] they gain

insight into a set of intuitive ethics that adults eventually forfeit' (2007: 62). Like the heroines of the first gothic novel, King's fictional children appear, according to Magistrale, as perfect victims: 'their confrontations with evil are initially overwhelming – and their plights elicit intense sympathetic responses' (2003: 22). This sympathy with the adolescent characters is emphasized by the writer's choice to situate the young characters in the centre of his fictions, something mirrored in Enríquez, Iwasaki and Saraintari's narratives. The protagonists in these stories, one child and two teenagers, face dreadful adult situations from the radical subjectivity of childhood; two of them grow up in the process. In the case of Iwasaki's tale, the encounter with horror is presented from the perspective of the innocence of early childhood, which does nothing but highlight the grotesquery of the encounter. In Enríquez and Saraintari's stories, as in the case of King's pre-teen children of The Losers' Club, the dreadful events mark the protagonists' passage to adulthood.

King's visual literature and the Grady sisters

Byron states that film and visual products are best suited for thinking about the globalgothic because of their ability to cross linguistic barriers and 'lend themselves to the marketing of a popular culture that can be easily commoditised, sold and consumed' (2016: 3). This idea will help me theorize some of the tropes that the young Spanish-speaking authors use in their literary tributes to King as a cultural appropriation of visual artefacts. Because of King's enduring ability to reflect cultural change through the use of popular culture, he was called, even as early as the 1980s, a master of 'postliterate prose' (Gray, quoted in Badley 2007: 96). According to Linda Badley, King absorbed 'the images, sounds, and textures of consumer culture seamlessly into his style', creating a new literacy and a new literalism 'that reflected the changing consciousness of our time' (2007: 97). The

focus on action as the centre of storytelling and his visual narratives has made critics describe him as 'a novelist who often writes as a screenwriter' (Magistrale 2003: xvi). King himself states his intention to 'write cinemagraphically' (Magistrale 2003: 9). These characteristics of King's fiction – as well as the billions of dollars generated by the commercialization of the adaptations – attract film producers who see in adaptations of King's narratives a safe proposition (Magistrale 2003: xv). I have already discussed the importance of translation as the means by which King's tropes and images cross over language borders (and, therefore, become multidirectional) but, if there is one process that aided the author's international prominence, it is precisely the adaptation of his novels to film. This process does not only involve the crossing of language borders but also an intersection of different media, easily accessible to be 'commoditised, sold and consumed'.

The Internet Movie Database lists almost eighty adaptations of King, most of them released during the eighties and nineties. These adaptations have become so prominent in popular culture that, in many cases, their notoriety has surpassed the literary original in fame. Cáceres himself acknowledges that many of King's readers (even some of the writers of the anthology) discovered the author's fiction through film (personal communication, 3 May 2018). I want to suggest that King's influence in Spanish-speaking authors of the Gothic goes beyond processes of adaptation and becomes, in fact, an essential element of Spanish and Latin American popular culture. To prove this, I will analyse two of the stories in the Cáceres anthology: 'El juego' and 'La vejez de las gemelas de *El Resplandor*', by Spanish writers Patricia Estebán Erlés and Espido Freire, respectively.

Esteban Erlés' story is narrated in the first person by a young girl who describes the grotesque game that her sister (Laurita) forces her to play: 'el juego de la muertita' (Esteban Erlés 2018: 50) ('the little dead girl's game') (Esteban Erlés 2016: n.pag.)[7] – which involves Laurita playing dead. The description that Esteban Erlés offers of Laurita, which mentions the little girl's blue silk dress, her white socks and her black Mary Janes, reveals an attempt to reference *The Shining*. The allusion, however, refers to Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation (1980), in which the ghost of the Grady sisters who Danny finds at the end of the long hallway of the Overlook hotel are dressed in blue dresses, white socks and black shoes. The title of the short story ('The game') emphasizes this interpretation, since it echoes the filmic girls' famous demand that Danny Torrance plays with them 'forever and ever and ever'. Freire's story, on the other hand, also pays homage to the adaptation by using the girls as protagonists. This time, however, they are old ghosts (but still wearing socks and dresses) who feed on the fear they instil among the living. The originality of Freire's approach lies in the narrative voice, as the story is told in the first person by each one of the sisters:

> Yo prefiero el dolor acre de la angustia, el que produce un sudor frío por las noches y puede olerse a distancia […]. Yo, en cambio, sigo el dolor agudo, el que producen los golpes en la carne tierna, o las malas palabras. (Freire 2015: 121)
> ('I prefer the acrid pain of dread, the one that produces a cold sweat at night and can be smelled at a distance […]. I, on the other hand, seek out the sharp pain produced by blows to soft flesh, or curses'). (Freire 2017)

This game of doppelgangers that is a part of the narrative process introduces a sense of ambiguity and collaborates in the gothic uneasiness generated by the story. It also mimics one of Kubrick's recurrent patterns of imagery in *The Shining*: mirrors and reflections. In this sense, the film's cinematography – exemplified by the perfectly symmetrical shot of the girls in the aforementioned scene – is echoed by Freire in strictly narratological terms.

In these examples, the Grady sisters become characters originally created by King, reimagined by Kubrick and repurposed by Freire and Esteban Erlés. In this process, the girls become more and more central to the fictions that conceive them. In King's novel, the sisters' fate is only briefly mentioned during Jack Torrance's job interview at the Overlook, in which he learns that the previous caretaker had 'murdered the little girls with a hatchet, his wife with a shotgun, and himself the same way' (King 2011: 9). Even though they are central characters to the collective imagery surrounding *The Shining*, the literary girls do not collaborate in the haunting of the Torrances. It is this imagery, however, that seems to inform Freire and justify the author's depiction of the girls as twins, since, both in the novel and in the film, they are described as sisters of different age – of 'eight and six' in King's piece (2011: 23) and 'about eight and ten' in Kubrick's. The director's choice of symmetrical visual structures and the inspiration he drew from Diane Arbus's famous photograph, *Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey, 1967*, explain the aesthetics of the Grady 'twins' shot. Kubrick's rendition of Arbus's picture, undoubtedly central to the film's horror imagery, allows the sisters to become prominent characters who are identified with *The Shining* – whether Kubrick's or King's. It is precisely in this typified form that the girls make their way into the collective imagery of Spanish-speaking authors: in their journey

from page to screen – and back to page – the sisters have ceased to be a secondary character to become a multiterritorialized archetype.

Whereas Kubrick's rendering of King's story is a process of adaptation of literature to film (with its expected modifications), Esteban Erlés and Freire's interpretations can be considered a 'transfictional' process taking place across media. Transfictionality, according to contemporary Adaptation Studies, describes 'the phenomenon by which two texts, of the same author or different ones, relate together to the same fiction, whether by reprising the same characters, continuation of a foregoing plot, or sharing the same fictional universe' (Saint-Gelais quoted in Marciniak 2015: 81). In opposition to adaptation, which 'tries to preserve the story but sometimes changes the world, transfictionality tends to preserve the world, either in part or in whole, but to change the story, or to add more stories to the world' (Ryan 2017: 525). In this example, both Esteban Erlés and Freire's reinterpretation of the Grady sisters relate to the same fiction (*The Shining*): the sisters are the 'world' that remains unchanged (or unaffected enough that it is still recognisable), while their stories are transformed. This process unquestionably underlines the global reach of commodification and consumption of visual texts that Byron refers to when describing the globalgothic. In order for transfictionality to be successful, the reader/viewer should be able to recognize the original characters and their contexts, which is why transmedia storytelling emerges when an element of popular culture 'goes viral' (Ryan 2017: 525). Esteban Erlés and Freire ground the efficacy of their narratives on the reader's recognition of the Grady sisters, only granted by the prominence in Spanish popular culture of a reterritorialized archetypal image of the sisters at the end of the Overlook hallway. The fact that the stories in which the characters appear are part of an anthology paying tribute to King, however, suggests that

the girls, despite the fame of Kubrick's filmic adaptation, are still perceived as the writer's creation.

Conclusion

Davies (2016: 55–56) argues that the fact that Spanish Gothic texts derive from anglophone models does not reduce their worth; I believe that the anthology compiled by Cáceres is illustrative of her point. The images, tropes and characters that once were representative of the dark corners of the American dream turned into nightmare become, though a process of deterritorialization at the hands of Hispanic authors, part of transnational cultural flows of ever-changing intertextualities that simultaneously reflect the native and the universal. The texts by Enríquez, Isawaki, Saraintaris, Esteban Erlés and Freire, as well as the rest of the authors who participated in the anthology, embrace a process of infiltration that, although very contemporary, responds to the traditional workings of the Gothic. At the same time, these examples of Latin American and Spanish writing that assimilate (and reconfigure) these 'foreign' infiltrations are in line with recent literary and critical approaches to Spanish-speaking literature. Tropes of King's fiction become global cultural artefacts that are creatively appropriated, honoured and, through translation into English, re-inserted in the flow of global circulation of culture, ensuring that the traffic in characters and tropes is not unidirectional. The intertextual gothic elements are distributed, consumed and re-marketed, in a multidirectional process that enriches both the globalgothic and the literary tradition of Spain and Latin America.

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Notes

[1] The publishing house of the first edition, in 2013, was Biblioteca de Babel. The book was republished in Mexico in 2014 by La Cifra Editorial, in Argentina by Interzona in 2015 (as *King: Tributo al rey del terror* [*King: Tribute to the King of Terror*]), in Chile by DasKapital in 2017 (as *King: Un tributo al rey del terror* [*King: A Tribute to the King of Terror*]), in Peru by Casatomada in 2018 (as *King: Tributo al rey del terror* [*King: Tribute to the King of Terror*]) and in Spain by Apache libros also in 2018 (as *King: Homenaje al rey del terror* [*King: Homage to the King of Terror*]).

[2] The first two tales appear in all the versions of the anthology; Saraintaris' and Freire's stories are part of the Argentinean version of the anthology (*Tributo al rey del terror*, 2015), and Iwasaki's only appears in the Spanish version (*Homenaje al rey del terror*, 2018).

[3] McOndo is a Latin American literary movement originated in the last decades of the twentieth century. The movement aims to break with the use of previously assumed forms of Latin American literature (such as magical realism) by advocating for a type of literature associated with the cultural and narrative languages of urban living and the mass communication media. The name of the group is a wordplay mixing Macondo (the imaginary town in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*]) and McDonald's.

[4] Milly Buonanno defines 'indigenisation' as 'the process through which forms and expressions of external cultures, elaborated by other societies, are appropriated, re-elaborated, and restored by diverse local societies in configurations that are consistent with their own home-grown systems of meaning' (quoted in Davies 2016: 20).

[5] Even though Roas disregards the term 'Gothic', much of his definitions of the fantastic overlap with current understandings of the Gothic so, in this case, I am treating both modes as analogous. For an illustrated differentiation that engages with Roas' theories, see Ordiz Alonso-Collada (2014) and Aldana Reyes (2017: 9–13).

[6] I have not found any information on an indigenous population called Chekura in southern Chile, which makes me suspect that they are a literary invention of the author.

[7] I am quoting the translation by Palabras Errantes, which has a different publication date to the original.