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El último sueño, a novel of Anthropocenic Posthumanistic sensibility

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This essay analyzes the novel *El último sueño*¹ (López 2018) and concludes that it is an optimal example of a Posthumanistic Anthropocenic sensibility, via operating the Burkean notions of “Symbolic action” (Burke, *Language As Symbolic Action* 1966) and “dramatism” (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* 1945). To reach this conclusion, it will utilize the value of Science Fiction (SF) as an intellectual tool for reflecting about countless possible futures, as well as profiting from several literary and philosophical concepts to disclose a renewed awareness of our troubled times. Firstly, it will reprise the “cognitive estrangement” nature (Suvin 1973) of the SF genre to call into question all pervasive but transient ideologies. Secondly, it will focus on the ethical and socio-cultural propositions that substantiate all SF works (Csicsery-Ronay 2008), then it will explain how SF’s particularity, being a main feature of the genre, denounces the contradictions of our times (Jameson 2005). Next, it will go over the notions of “Posthumanism”, a decentering movement that rejects any anthropocentric ideology, and the “Anthropocene”, our new present marked by Global Warming, mass extinctions and global inequality (Wess 2017). Thus, it will clarify in what way these two concepts come together through a “counter-nature” feeling (Burke 1984) that affects the modern subject. And finally, it will justify the statement that the modern subject portrayed in *El último sueño* pursues to retrieve that missing Humanist sensibility lacking in the Anthropocene, producing vicariously a new understanding of Posthumanism.

SF is a literary genre that by its mere nature is forced to deal with all the challenges imposed to us by the stagnated immobility of modern society. SF tends to be classified along with genres of fantasy. Contrarily, its goals to be achieved are closer to a naturalistic approach representing reality, in the sense that in SF the political and sociological hypotheses are key themes to be debated and explored through its fictions. For instance, Darko Suvin concluded that the only strategy to properly understand the distinctive features of SF was to frame the genre “as the *literature of cognitive estrangement*” (Suvin 4). As such, the main goal of SF is to promote a sense of “defamiliarization” (*ostranenie*), in the manner of Viktor Shklovsky (Crawford 210) in his canonical essay “Art as Technique” (1917), and “alienation effect” (*Verfremdungseffekt*), as it was proposed by Bertolt Brecht (Brecht and Willet 1964).

Frequently, SF’s main purpose is to call into question any ideological approach that is seen as eternal and faultless, since it makes us come to the realization that the human world is an ever-changing object that cannot hold an *ad eternum* fixation of reality. For Darko Suvin, the mutability affecting the human condition through time and space that we experience in SF is what he calls “*cognitive view*” (Suvin 8), and is precisely the factor that holds SF away from other genres anchored to fantasy and realism in all its forms. Suvin contemplates the genre according to this conceptualization: “SF is, then, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement

and cognition, and whose main formal devise is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (8-9). Accordingly, SF stands as a literary genre that by way of creating fictional narrations confronts our contemporary stagnant beliefs, and thanks to the mechanism of "cognitive estrangement" helps us to comprehend that another kind of world is always possible, for better or for worse.

The world that is yet to come is represented in SF in a double effort that deals not only with the *novum*: "a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (Suvin 64); but also with "broader ethical and social-cultural implications and resonances" (Csicsery-Ronay 3) due to incidents still to happen. These novel fictional worlds, born out of the mind of a myriad of authors from a myriad of national and linguistic backgrounds, are not accidental representations of reveries, on the contrary, they are the uncoordinated but deliberate efforts of a writing community that aim to speculate critically about legitimate concerns due to technological developments and biological alterations taking place in our lives.

Consequently, SF aims to underline potential quandaries, even when the present understanding does not regard them as such, and is fundamentally the genre of the future: "The exact ontological status of sf worlds is suspended in anticipation" (Csicsery-Ronay 4), for it transforms its works in a variety of simulations of what is still to come, no matter how improbable or unavoidable the futuristic scenes, that the forthcoming will brings us, are.

Furthermore, the attention of SF reaches all human practices, highlighting an intention for questioning all past and present axioms and rendering them updated dialogues between synchronic and diachronic expectations. And with that, sending us, dwellers of an information age, into the ever faster techno-biological unknown of potential societies that in a few years will have hardly anything to do with our present moment: "Indeed, sf is ingrained within the quotidian consciousness of people living in the postindustrial world; each day they witness the transformations of their values and material conditions in the wake of technical acceleration beyond their conceptual threshold" (Csicsery-Ronay 5). Precisely, since SF produces a set of simulations of possible alternatives projected and framed from our present times, the representations of our Anthropocene epoch springs up in our daily life as a way of cogitating about the mutations that we will be experiencing soon and the outcome that we will have brought upon ourselves.

Being on the brink of a new age, the Anthropocene gives place to a sense of modification of our immediate natural environment that puts into question even the possibility of human survival. As coarse as it may sound, the mutation that our planet is already suffering compels for a recycled sensitivity that would allow, in the most upbeat of cases, to understand our existence from an absolute different perspective than the one that pervades the present. SF as a pertinent form of

thinking and artistic practice (Csicsery-Ronay 5), becomes a tool to create potential solutions for our survival in the face of adaptive ways of life that are to happen in barely a couple of decades, provided that we wish to remain as species.

Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin in their volume *Art in the Anthropocene* (2015) concede that “art, as the vehicle of *aesthesis*, is central to thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene” (3); therefore, SF manifestations are adequate apparatuses to elucidate strategies to open the human world “onto the life worlds of other species” (13). SF reaches out to the present, assesses its deficiencies and yields a diagnosis that is, at the same time, a “posthuman” alternative to the collapse of our species. Beyond petrocapiatim and postindustrialism there are hopes of resistance being written in new mindsets just on the basis of promoting a different reality: “[...], terms such as ‘Anthropocene’ produce estrangement by positing the hegemonic and imperialist history of western modernity as itself a fabulation (and a dangerous and inaccurate one at that)” (Evans 485); indeed, these revelations of potential futures to happen that contest the myth of progress and perpetual growth are engraved in SF.

Actually, SF denounces the unrealistic ontology of alleged naturalistic representations by pointing out that they pretend to convey a sense of total reality, when in fact they do not relate any sense of it. Instead, SF propounds a set of hypotheses of infinite alternatives that escape any intention of perpetuating transmissions of complete perfect experiences. For “The merit of SF is to dramatize this contradiction on the level of the plot itself, since the vision of future history cannot know any punctual ending of this kind, at the same time that its novelistic expression demands some such an ending” (Jameson 283). SF breaks the taboos of every present time and marches toward the infinity of possible surrogates. Therefore, in our times, SF frames our contemporaneity in the emergence of the Anthropocene, urging to demythologize the capitalistic notion of endless progress, as synonym for limitless production and boundless consumption.

In a previous paragraph I made reference to the concept of “posthumanism”. One must understand the concept of the posthuman within limited and well-defined coordinates, for a debate to be possible. Rosi Braidotti sets about such an intent with her definition as “[...] a navigational tool that enables us to survey the material and the discursive manifestations of the mutations that are engendered by advanced technological developments (am I a robot?), climate change (will I survive?), and capitalism (can I afford this?)” (Braidotti 8). The field of the posthuman action states that “anthropocentric thinking” (15) has expired and failed “to encompass the varieties of non-human lives” (129). And to that extent a renewed way of thinking, a neo-materialist ideology, rooted in and grown from hope and subjective experience must be the answer for acknowledging and making effective the *potentia* of life by way of acting collectively to produce “[...] alternative subject formations and forms of life [...]” (130). Incidentally, Donna Harway does not feel

comfortable using the concept of posthuman and prefers to think about “compost” (Haraway 216) as a valid metaphor. She deems our times as taken by the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene, which she perceives as “exterminating forces” (2). Instead, Haraway favors what she calls “tentacular thinking” and “Sympoiesis—making-with—” (5) that she embedded in the term “Chthulucene”: “It is a compound of two Greek roots (*khthôn* and *kainos*) that together name a kind of timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth.” (2). Additionally, it is relevant for this paper to report that she also values SF as the device for rejecting human exceptionalism, but not in favor of posthumanism, but to “tell the story of the Chthulucene” (Haraway 31).

In the same vein, in “Burke's Counter-Nature: Posthumanism in the Anthropocene” Robert Wess hybridizes the concepts of Anthropocene and Posthumanism, even when at first glance they seem to designate differing realities: “The Anthropocene makes humans central, whereas Posthumanists go in the opposite direction, rejecting humanist assumptions that distinguish humans from and elevate them above all other inhabitants of planet Earth”. Nevertheless, the state our planet finds itself in shows a major lack of human rationality, which is what the Anthropocene comes to embody: the failure of human rationale that has traditionally been called humanism. Such a dire situation our world is in suggests that Wess is right when he states that: “posthumanists should welcome a turn to Anthropocenic posthumanism” as a project for providing a new significance to the Anthropocene, retrieving in the process that missing humanist rationality.

Despite the fact that both concepts set their focus on distinct subjects, Anthropocene and Posthumanism equally refer to a reality where human beings are not at the center anymore, in the sense that reality affects all beings evenly, making us “indistinguishable” from any other species living on planet earth. Additionally, Wess in his effort to prove this statement, resorts to Kenneth Burke’s ideas when he asserts that “his theorizing also encompasses levels, *à la* posthumanist ‘embodiment’, in which human and nonhuman are indistinguishable”. Burke’s concept of “counter-nature” is particularly important for Wess in his determination to substantiate the validity of “Anthropocenic Posthumanism”.

According to Robert Wess, Kenneth Burke seems to believe that the linguistic skills of humankind do not award us supremacy over all other species. Therefore, we find similarities between Burke’s ideas and Posthumanist axioms. At the same time, Burke understands all-encompassing transformations that technology provokes in modern society as a problematic phenomenon that triggered a “counter-nature” existence: “Burke saw the need for a new term to designate these ‘alien’ conditions of living” (Wess). In accordance with Dr. Wess’ account, it is reasonable to consider that these “alien conditions of living” are the ones that have laid the foundations for the arrival of the Anthropocene and the expansion of a Posthumanist sensibility in our modern times.

Considering this special relationship between the “counter-nature” existence of modern life and the concepts of Posthumanism and Anthropocene, it is fitting, then, to delve into the literary apparatuses conceived by Kenneth Burke in order to comprehend the contributions that SF can make to the Anthropocenic Posthumanist sensibility. Precisely, this essay will make use of “symbolic action” (*Language as Symbolic Action*) and “dramatism” (*A Grammar of Motives*) in order to analyze the novel *El último sueño* (2018) by Guillem López.

The notion of “symbolic action” is based in the generative, recursive and displaced nature of human language, together perceived by Burke as a very special kind of human action that produces predictable results and has real consequences in our lives: “Language is a species of action, symbolic action-and its nature is such that it can be used as a tool” (Burke, *Language As Symbolic Action* 15). Subsequently, symbolic action gives way to express metaphors that link parts of our experience, which are not understood sometimes in daily life as attached to each other:

I define literature as a form of symbolic action, undertaken for its own sake, and when I note that metaphor rates high among the sources of stylistic appeal. [...]; for it brings together classes of terms that might otherwise be kept in separate compartments of the mind. Thus it enables us to experience strikingly new combinations, thereby letting us see things in a fresh light. (Burke, *Language As Symbolic Action* 488).

The fact that “symbolic action” permits us to become aware of connections that have potentially been there, but had gone unnoticed until then, links this theory to Suvin’s notion of “cognitive estrangement”, reaffirming the continuity between Burke’s idea and SF.

Once we accept the validity of Burke’s notion of symbolic action, it is necessary to explore another of his theories: “dramatism”. This is defined as the study of “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* XV). According to Burke’s ideas, to find out about it, in our enquiry “We shall use five terms as the generating principle of our investigation. They are: Scene, Act, Agent, Agency, Purpose” (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* XV). This essay uses the five of them to analyze the novel *El último sueño* by Guillem López with the goal of exposing how this SF work in Spanish language merges the notions of Anthropocene and Posthumanism, becoming a perfect example of Anthropocenic Posthumanist fiction.

I would like to briefly discuss my aim at choosing *El último sueño* as a Spanish novel that epitomizes a new Anthropocenic Posthumanistic sensibility². For the English language reader who wishes to become minimally acquainted with this author’s creations, I believe that in the Anglo-Saxon scene Guillem López’

fiction shows parallels with the works by China Melville and Paolo Bacigalupi³. Guillem López has manifested publicly to hold the belief that we already live in a dystopia, and claims that this situation is what brings us to keep creating other dystopias, other fictions. Thus, in his words, what pushes our addiction to give place to new stories is the need of finding a proxy that will fool us to think that our world is in some way better than the nightmares writers create in their fictions: “Ya vivimos en una sociedad deshumanizada y materialista. No necesitamos máquinas que nos esclavicen porque ya lo hemos hecho nosotros. Así que, en ese caso, inventamos distopías porque vivimos en una y no queremos admitirlo” (Álamo 2016).

In the interview, which the last citation comes from, Guillem López was referring to his work *La Polilla en la casa del humo* (2016), a previous novel that is set in the same “universe” as *El último sueño*⁴. In fact, both novels react to a capitalistic fiction, in words of their author: “Porque, llegados a este punto, ya tenemos aceptado que lo que denominamos realidad no es más que un constructo colectivo sustentado sobre la ficción capitalista” (López 2020). I decided to focus my analysis only on *El último sueño*, rather than on *La Polilla en la casa del humo*, because the former encompasses a broader number of characters and produces a systematic exploration of social groups and societal gears.

Hence, taking our necessity of a collective construct, Guillem López expresses in his narration, under the punk motto “La mugre y la furia”⁵, the anger of alienated misfits that make up the most part of the main characters in these two novels: “[...] La rabia de los marginados por el sistema, por los abandonados [...]” (“Presentación De El Último Sueño, De Guillem López”, 28:55-29:05). Likewise, the author fosters a fictional account that highlights another slogan from the punk culture⁶, ascertaining without a doubt the profound punk influences that shape his literary work: “Do-it-yourself [...] gente que está construyendo otro mundo ya, están haciendo su propio mundo paralelo que nosotros a lo mejor no lo estamos viendo. [...] Cuando este se venga abajo, o no, estarán ellos” (“Presentación De El Último Sueño, De Guillem López (Celsius 2018)”, 11:50-12:40). And, by the same token, he gives place to a story of alienated beings that run away from their real dystopia in pursuit of building their own new world.

Accordingly, the universe of *El último sueño* shows how Guillem López concocts a narration through what he calls “panspermia literaria”⁷ (“Presentación De El Último Sueño, De Guillem López”, 14:00-14:30), where he aims to promote this “Do-it-yourself” maxim amongst his readers, seeking out expanding his anti-neoliberal ideology opposed to any kind of authority over the individual: “Soy un ácrata, sí” (López 2019). The punk agency of Guillem López’ characters fighting for a better future⁸ (embodiments of the “Do-it-yourself” philosophy) and his descriptions of dystopias that have so much in common with our factual everyday lives (according to him, a capitalistic environment that survives promoting a never-

ending alienation of individuals), agree with the necessity of giving a new value to human rationality by correcting the “counter-nature” existence of these characters. And, at the same time, by means of his “panspermia literaria” the author aspires to inspire readers to continue with the same subversive attitude against our actual economic system that he so honestly hates.

After enumerating all these qualities, I believe, that through a rigorous analysis of the novel and the aforementioned intentions of the author, I will be able to highlight the coincidences in thought and interpretation that make Guillem López’ *El Último sueño* a perfect candidate for a novel of Anthropocenic Posthumanistic sensibility.

Returning to Burke, scene and act are bound together by the dramatic nature of the fictional representation: “Using ‘scene’ in the sense of setting, or background, and ‘act’ in the sense of action, one could say that ‘the scene contains the act’” (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* 3). In *El último sueño* the reader is placed in the middle of the capital of a degenerate empire, ironically named Paraíso. Here is the scene. This megalopolis supposes a generalized practice of architectural inequality where the rich minority lives in an isolated ziggurat that extracts all the wealth from the impoverished conurbations. Logically, the rest of the population in the contiguous suburbia barely gets by: “Entonces, solo entonces, se comprendía la verdad: la decadente y superpoblada urbe, abandonada cual animal moribundo que lleva a costas la maloliente carga de la muerte, era el abono sobre el que germinaba la opulencia.” (López 37-38). The metropolis described by the author, while prototypical, summarizes the gloomiest projections provided by the Posthumanist movement and Anthropocene complainants alike. It is in itself a dystopian setting that because it has been naturalized long ago, it is perceived by its inhabitants as the only livable possibility: “Paraíso: la más grande ciudad imperio parida por la ambición. Si tenía un límite más allá de los tejados puntiagudos, tras la densa contaminación y las chimeneas industriales, la mayoría de sus habitantes no lo había visto ni jamás llegarían a verlo” (8). Its residents are those who, living in a dystopian world, have been blinded by this apocalyptic environment and done nothing to correct it until they do, and this subversive reaction is the story that Guillem López chooses to tell us.

El último sueño’s act, understood as central action to the plot, gives an account of the escape of one of the main characters named Midkemia. She is a sort of genetically designed vestal capable of producing magically clean energy (*Kamé*) in a planet lacking natural resources to keep up with its overwhelming energetic consumption: “Midkemia no era un prisionero normal. Es una psiKa, elegida por ellas para liberarlas. Comparten su poder o eso creo. Por eso los monjes tienen competencias sobre ellas hasta que se complete el ritual” (López 44). Of course, her unexpected escape causes a chain reaction that ends up involving a multifaceted set of new characters that get engaged in the actions of two forces, one going to war

for protecting the vestal from her masters, tearing apart the *status quo* of the city forever, and another fighting to returning her to slavery and preserving the current political situation: “[...] la guerra entre bandas que había comenzado con el visto bueno del Gobierno y caldear los ánimos de la población civil. Se escucharon disparos y alguna que otra explosión. Algunos vecinos reportaron la presencia de La Brigada de Demolición en la zona y también grupos de pandilleros que se habían hecho con las calles. Caos, angustia, indignación por doquier. Ni rastro de la psiKa” (244). The uprising and subsequent turmoil caused by total war elevates the plot from an adventure novel to one of political and allegorical tone in which the characters’ actions are congruently explained by their societal and economical location within Paraiso’s grid.

The agents that take part in the narration and perform the sub-acts that lead the main plot of the story (“act” in Burke’s terms) are categorized in two groups: The first group being Kébemon’s acolytes, a group of religious extremists commanded by a theocratic dictator that could even be immortal thanks to technological mastery. They are the main pursuers of Midkemia and the nightmarish hybrid of the fusion between monstrous biology and mechanical technology:

¿Quién sabe si eran hombres todavía? La silueta así lo sugería: en alguna parte, allí dentro, había un ser humano o, por lo menos, órganos vibrantes rodeados de bobinas y servomecanismos. Sin embargo, sobre los hombros, un yelmo cerrado, muy bruñido y curvo hasta tocar la espalda, les daba el aspecto de insectos ciegos. (López 87).

Kébemon’s acolytes are not human anymore, but a biomechanical synthesis that hypothesizes one possible evolution of humankind. They epitomize an ill-fated future in which petrocapiatalism has not been replaced world-wide by ecology rationalities and sustainability ethics, but has just continued forever in the form of non-renewable energy depletions.

The second assembly of agents encompasses Adaxas’ gang, a group of orphaned children that survive in one of the poorest neighborhoods of suburbia by means of criminal activities:

De todas las bandas callejeras de Paraíso, Los Abandonados era la más débil e insignificante. La integraban dos docenas de chicas y chicos harapientos y sucios que conocían como la mugre de sus manos cada puente, pasadizo y recodo, cada alcantarilla, portal, escondrijo y madriguera del barrio. Era su territorio. (López 21)

These misfits will give shelter to Midkemia, as they did in the past with other misfits like Zaid (a mysterious golem-like figure who later in the story will have a decisive role for the salvation of Midkemia). For their own reasons, they will protect her against other rival gangs and Kébemon's acolytes, who will not stop until they return her to the ziggurat, where she would be treated as a super-battery until her death of exhaustion. Dying of exhaustion is the fate of individuals in a dehumanized materialist society like Paraiso. Consequently, it will be the fate of most of the characters in this novel, no matter in which side of the war they are on⁹. Nimbará, a patrician member of the highest class who is conspiring to throw *a coup d'état* against Kébemon and take the power for himself becoming a dictator, summarizes perfectly the immoral philosophy that pervades Paraiso in the following statement: “[...] Solo es un juego. ¿Comprendes? Hay que apostar fuerte para ganar la partida. Tú mismo lo dijiste: va a morir gente, mucha gente. Pero es un mal menor para conseguir un bien mayor. ¿Qué es el sacrificio de unos pocos por el futuro de millones? A veces, tipos como nosotros toman decisiones así —afirmó con resignación impostada—, pero lo hacemos por su bien” (López 354-355).

Agency and purpose, “how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)” (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* XV), are intertwined along the multiple fights and breakouts that crowd the narration, since the ultimate fate of Midkemia and her kinship is not disclosed until the end. In a final epic scene Midkemia confronts Kébemon, her fiend father, and she rejects to become the emperor of Paraiso, sentencing the city and its society to cease its unaffordable energy consumption:

—¿Sacrificarte? —Rio como si hubiese escuchado una broma ridícula—. Soy yo el que va a sacrificarse. Tú te convertirás en aquello para lo que te concebí: heredero de mi imperio y canal del poder de las Kas. Cuando me desconecten, moriré y dejaré paso a tu estirpe. Mi cuerpo será tu cuerpo y mi ciudad, tuya. Gobernarás Paraiso desde el zigurat. ¿Es demasiado sacrificio para ti? —¡Sí! —gritó, y su padre abrió mucho los ojos—. ¡Sí lo es! (López 383)

Ultimately, Adaxas' gang decides to fight for Midkemia's liberation, triggering unintentionally a revolution among Paraiso's lower classes, a violent uprising against the imposed alienated existence that perpetuates a society funded in a never-ending exploitation of energy and human resources. Surprisingly, Midkemia along with what is left of Adaxas' gang succeed in their final plans of escape. Thus, the crowd of children flees from Paraiso, a city on the edge of civil war, putting behind their “counter-nature” existence (employing Burke's notion) in a world that is already dying:

A lo lejos, Paraíso era solo un leve resplandor colorado. Burr trató de imaginar la ciudad, las barricadas, los disparos, la milicia y los sindicatos. ¿Qué vendría ahora? Sin la Kamé las fábricas se detendrían y llegaría el caos y los saqueos, las bandas armadas y los señores de la guerra. Porque el Gobierno caería si no lo había hecho ya, eso era seguro. ¿Cómo habían permitido que todo llegase a aquel punto de no retorno, a perder lo que podrían haber solucionado tiempo atrás? ¿Qué les esperaba ahora? (López 395-396)

Symbolically, Midkemia's crew escape represents the dawn of a new society on a par with the Anthropocenic Posthumanist sensibility and the fulfillment of the punk maxim of "do-it-yourself".

All in all, *El último sueño* (López 2018) illustrates an example of a socio-cultural critique of our times embodied in a SF literary work. It depicts a dystopian society inhabited by captive agents in a "counter-nature" existence, victims of "alien conditions of living" (Wess) who break free through logical and violent acts fueled by their own agency and purpose, in a contextual scene where humans, as Abraxas' band, and non-humans subjects, as Midkemia and Zaid, cooperate successfully for achieving a better future in an Anthropocenic Posthumanist community. Meanwhile the inhuman Kébemon and his biomechanical hybrids, even failing in their mission, end up perpetuating a new form of old petrocapi-talism in Paraíso, where instead of fossil fuel the city burns the last remnants of the mysterious "Kamé" and eventually it will adopt its upgrade, literal human suffering:

—¿Qué es? —Su curiosidad brotó sin aliento. —Sufrimiento —susurró Adoh. —Seis veces más potente que los sueños de las Kas —apuntó Jubal. —Y ¿podemos almacenarlo? preguntó suspicaz—. ¿Cómo funciona? —Exactamente igual que la Kamé —explicó el siniestro monje—. De la fuente de extracción a las baterías, pero... —Aquí viene lo mejor de todo intervino Jubal, dando un toque enigmático a la escena. Nimbará levantó una ceja durante la pausa que siguió a sus palabras. —No hay intermediarios —concluyó Adoh. (López 155)

In this way, Midkemia and her new family manage to flee from an extreme Anthropocenic capitalistic paradigm, which, embodied by the city of Paraíso, also pushes for an odd cooperation between human and non-human subjects, but in pursuit of anti-humanist goals.

Summarizing, this paper points out how SF is an intellectual tool for thinking about the future by means of the notion of "cognitive estrangement" (Suvin 1973). Therefore, it generates a never-ending set of ethical and socio-

cultural fictional propositions of future worlds (Csicsery-Ronay 2008), since these fictions stress the contradictions of our times (Jameson 2005), that could be easily perpetuated and accentuated in future societies. Together, it ponders over the logical notions of Posthumanism and Anthropocene (Wess 2017) and how they get unified through a “counter-nature” feeling (Burke 1984), a phenomenon born out of the technological environment that saturates human life. Finally, taking advantage of the SF nature, it proposes the novel *El último sueño* (López 2018) as an example of a socio-cultural critique of our times expressing a Posthumanist Anthropocenic attitude. To analyze the novel and reach this conclusion within a “counter-nature” frame, it turns to the Burkean notions of symbolic action (Burke, *Language As Symbolic Action* 1966) and dramatism (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* 1945). Finally, it concludes that *El último sueño* is an exemplary case of Posthumanist Anthropocenic sensibility, for two reasons: it depicts a set of acts that seek to retrieve the humanist logic lacking in the Anthropocenic scene of this portrayed infernal Paraíso (an obvious metaphor of our times); and it considers that the novel’s agents dramatize a revolution whose main purpose is the restoration of a fair society by virtue of promoting boundless cooperation and environmental rationality.

Notes

¹ Guillem López, author of *El último sueño* (2018), is one of the most brilliant popular genre writers in Spain who has been nationally and internationally awarded with the Kelvin 505 award, the Ignotus award and the Spirit of Dedication Award by the European Science Fiction Society.

² And not the only one, since recently there are expressions of similar sensibilities in published works such as *Bionautas* (2018) by Cristina Jurado, *Voces en la ribera del mundo* (2019) by Diana P. Morales, and *Ciudad nómada, rebaño miseria* (2020) by Pablo Loperena; amongst others.

³ But obviously, this is a nuanced statement that requires at least the extension of another paper to make the case sound.

⁴ He made the connection in 2018 during the book presentation of *El último sueño* (“Presentación De El Último Sueño, De Guillem López (Celsius 2018)”, 6:05-6:15)

⁵ To find out about the origin of this punk slogan, please read the *Daily Mirror* front page, 2 December 1976, and Bennett 2016.

⁶ For a deeper understanding of the “Do-it-yourself” movement in recent decades please read Moran 2010.

⁷ Metaphor originated in astrobiology.

⁸ I pair this goal with the new human rationality that Anthropocenic Posthumanism must foster on people.

⁹ Death for all citizens once they are useless for Paraiso's powerful stratum, since the most of them are but resources to consume in the power wars between Kébemon and the mysterious and mischievous Kas.

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