

SUMMARY

Masculinity and phantasy in the prose of Javier Marías and Antonio Muñoz Molina

The considerations in this paper apply to the relationship of two categories: masculinity and phantasy. The studies have a literary character, and the subject of analysis is the prose of two contemporary Spanish writers: Javier Marías (b. 1951) and Antonio Muñoz Molina (b. 1956).

Masculinity is treated as a theoretical and ontological category. The first chapter of the work examines the conceptual evolution of the meaning of “masculinity” as an idea, recalling the most important modern developments in the conceptualization of its essence; starting with Freud, who was one of the first to recognize masculinity as a phenomenon worthy of theoretical reflection to the latest interdisciplinary “post”-concepts which attempt to define the male subject.

The quoted concepts of masculinity point to the multidimensionality inscribed in this category, which, in simplistic terms, can be reduced to the difference between what the male subject actually experiences in the world around him and the masculinity understood as a cultural ideal. Masculinity appears as a vague aspiration rather than something practiced on a daily basis. It is an illusion, a phantasm woven from various imagined aspects of it.

The basic methodological tool used in the analysis of the identity of male characters in the prose of Marías and Muñoz Molina is the notion of “phantasy” which is derived from psychoanalytic theory. The second chapter of the theoretical part focuses on this theory and it traces the most important stages in the creation of the term phantasy, with particular attention to the issue of the relationship of phantasy and the category of masculinity; a relationship problematized primarily by Jacques Lacan. He had made the notion of phantasy part of his concept of how human identity is shaped, while Freud, from the very beginning, linked it to literature. According to the simplest definition, phantasy is an imaginary scenario, organized around desire. Freud emphasized the narrative structure of phantasy and studied their presence in literary texts. Later psychoanalysis followers argued that phantasy can be considered in the individual as well as collective dimension. As a result, the emerging concept is one that connotes psycho-narrative and social phenomena. Phantasies in this work are observed from the position of a literary scholar; treating psychoanalysis as a theory of literature, and a method of critical reading.

Javier Marías and Antonio Muñoz Molina are one of the most important contemporary Spanish writers and at the same time one of the most exemplary ones. Both of them are published regularly to this day; in the case of Marías, for almost half a century as he debuted in the early 70's. Molina started publishing later – his debut novel appeared in 1984. The narrators and at the same time the main protagonists of the novels of both authors are men. Experts in their work indicate that, regardless of the story being told, one of the most important topics of their books, both Marías's and Muñoz Molina's, is the reconstruction of the identity. The main aim of this work is a literary analysis of the phantasmatic core of the identity of male characters in the discussed prose.