

Two pages stored in Rubén Salazar Mallén's studio

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— Abstract—

This collaboration presents two brief fragments kept in Rubén Salazar Mallén's studio, one is a flyer that was distributed on the street with the title MASCULINITY. / BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY. / MANIFESTO OF OCTOBER 31, 1934. The first decades of the 20th century show a weighing of values —ethical, moral— exacerbated by the Mexican Revolution and that today seem decidedly obsolete, the same as the brief scene that was eliminated due to self-censorship the author of the novel *The Initiation* in its first two editions.

Keywords:

Masculinity; suggestiveness; self-censorship

Around 1981, Rubén Salazar Mallén showed a group of students meeting in his studio in the El Rosedal neighborhood of Mexico City, two brief polemical documents, which are analyzed below. The first is a manifesto. It should be remembered that since André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924, manifestos by different collectives were frequent and, around 1934, the one we are referring to appeared. It was also very common at the time to hand out hundreds of flyers to announce a new commercial product or a new radio program. The extraordinary thing is that this was a proclamation against homosexuality.

One of the topics of that evening among the guests around Salazar Mallén's desk was the literary group of the Contemporaries. This name was taken from the magazine published by Salvador Novo, Jorge Cuesta, Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano and Carlos Pellicer, among others, with a format and layout inspired by the *Revista de Occidente*, edited by José Ortega y Gasset.

Salazar Mallén belonged in his own right to this literary group, as he collaborated in their editorial projects on different occasions. However, he said he never felt he was part of the group, "although with as much recognition as they get now, I think it would be good for me to proclaim it," he said. It could certainly be said that he was part of the Contemporaries. It should be remembered that several chapters of his novel *Cariátide* were published in the magazine *Examen* directed by Jorge Cuesta, and that because of that publication they went to jail, Cuesta as editor and Salazar Mallén as author. According to the committee overseeing morals and decency, the story was inappropriate and its language extremely foul and scandalous. After a trial, accused of publishing bad words, they were acquitted and Mexican literature began to use these words as a resource of literary realism. "Cariátide as a novel was bad, but the writers felt free to write rudeness and swearing. That's what it was good for."

Regarding the homosexuality of his Contemporary colleagues, he proposed to make a survey among them. Curiosity made him wonder why they were so frowned upon and why there were so many taboos and prejudices towards homosexual writers and artists of those generations. So he went to interview each of them to find out why they preferred him: "I said to Elías Nandino: 'Tell me, Elías, why are you a faggot?' He replied, 'If you could only see what a tragedy it is!'" The society of that time saw it as a scandal for someone to have an inclination towards individuals of his own sex and, what is worse, that stigma became a tragic fact for a sensitive and artistic being like Nandino. He asked Villaurrutia the same question: "Why are you a faggot, Xavier, if women are so tasty?" Villaurrutia made fun of me, shook his head and said, as if it were something very obvious, or as if I did not know the truth of life: 'Oh, Burrén!

Being recognized as a homosexual was the worst situation an individual could face. They had a wide variety of derogatory names: "They were called cuarentaiunos, femenine, faggots, and queer from the other side. For this reason, as there were several of us in the group, people thought we were homosexuals. Actually, there were some who, yes, were heterosexual, some had tendencies of that kind, just tendencies, and others were blatantly so, like Salvador Novo, the most blatant of all. He was not ashamed and confessed it with great cynicism and with great grace. When I asked him the same question as the others, Novo, why are you a faggot? He just said "Oh, I'm starting to like cadets more than boleros!"

Salazar Mallén (2015) continued: "The group gathered around the publication, but personally we were all solitary, individualistic, and independent, each one in his own way. A closer friendship could be seen between Novo and Villaurrutia, or between Cuesta and me, but I did not attend the editorial meetings or be invited to the selection of materials. My important link with all of them was Cuesta, to whom I delivered the essays they published." He also said that Contemporaries were of enormous intellectual density, but that their prestige was diminished by their sexual inclinations, and as they were considered despicable people, their publications did not get the attention they deserved. Before, on the contrary, Mallén said: "Of course, the magazine we have been talking about, *Contemporáneos*, as well as *Ulises* and *Examen*, were elitist magazines, whose contents were not understood everywhere." He observed that they were publications of great editorial elegance, with English and French poems translated by the members of the editorial staff themselves, Ortiz de Montellano, Novo, Villaurrutia. "I can't say if it was elitist in response to the environment that detested them, or if the very essence of the magazine was elitist. Surely it was a mixture of both. The Group without a group, as Villaurrutia defined it, imposed its quality, achieved enormous respect, literally speaking, even when everyone spoke horrors of its faggotry."

This group without a group came to have recognition in the aesthetic plane and to have a public presence and power due to the remarkable talent of its members, although, Mallén observed, "supported by the patronage of Genaro Estrada, who was a minister. Estrada took advantage of their intellectual capacity, and they, especially Novo, of the power he conferred on them."

This situation of seeing the Contemporaries positioned in the literary field caused annoyance and displeasure: "Among my papers I found this sample button. I have in my hands a curious document that I think is worth quoting, he said, and began to read the first of the documents to which we alluded at the beginning of these pages:

MASCULINITY.
 BETTER TO DEBUG THAN REGRET.
 MANIFESTO OF OCTOBER 31, 1934

Since an attempt is being made to purify the public administration, we request that their agreements be extended to individuals of dubious morality who are ruling official positions, which, with their effeminate acts, in addition to constituting a punishable example, create an atmosphere of corruption that goes to the extent of preventing the rooting of virile virtues in youth. If the presence of the fanatic is fought, the presence of the hermaphrodite, unable to identify with the workers of the current reform, must also be fought.

Of course, the use of words that reveal the values of the time is striking: "masculinity", "effeminacy", "virile virtues". It should be remembered that just ten years earlier, in 1924, the pages of *El Universal* published the controversy over whether *Los de bajo* by Mariano Azuela was the most representative novel of revolutionary *virility*. In the discussion initiated by Francisco Monterde and Julio Jiménez Rueda, it was assumed that "masculinity" was a virtue and "effeminacy", on the contrary, was "a punishable example".

After joking and laughing about "masculinities" and "effeminations"—words that have certainly reappeared in the social imagination along with that of visibility, such as in some cultural propaganda that announces a "Masculinities Workshop"—, Salazar Mallén took out another letter that he had hidden under his sleeve and said: "In addition to it being a grid against Estrada and the Contemporaries who positioned themselves in positions of government administration and who take refuge in the macho values that we already know, who do you think signed the Manifesto?" He immediately began to read the names that came at the bottom, before the gaze of those present: Mauricio Magdaleno, master of the Mexican novel, author of *El resplandor*. Every time he said a name, a cry of disbelief could be heard, while Salazar Mallén laughed. Renato Leduc, of whom no one was surprised that he appeared as a signatory, because he was known for his homophobia which he never hid, because, very shortly before, in 1932, he had written "Corydon o de los amores" in the book *Los banquetes. Quasi-novela*, where he says in that tone of guasa, almost with double meaning, that predominates throughout the essay, that homosexuality "is acquired with birth or by a later situatio, precisely after, birth".

After that, José Rubén Romero came up, the great narrator of *Mi caballo, mi perro y mi rifle*, as well as the famous story *La vida inútil de Pito Pérez*. Every time Salazar Mallén mentioned a new name, something was said about his work and miracles. Rafael F. Muñoz, the author of the novel *Vámonos con Pancho Villa*, made into a film by Fernando de Fuentes, with adaptation

and screenplay by the aforementioned Xavier Villaurrutia. Juan O'Gorman, the great muralist, who made the fabulous coating of the Central Library of Ciudad Universitaria. Francisco L Urquiza, one of the fundamental writers of the so-called Novel of the Mexican Revolution, especially for the extraordinary *Tropa vieja*, a masterful piece of Mexican letters.

It is now worth noting the point made by Carlos Monsiváis (1998) regarding homophobia. In those years of the controversy in *El Universal* about virilities and effeminations, there was an evident machismo, however, Monsiváis explains, Leduc is not homophobic, because when publishing pages such as "Corydon o de los amores" fragment the book *Los banquetes. Quasi novela* in 1932, no one complained about his attitude. At that time, not only is it normal but his criticism does not admit censorship, not even "the natural inferiority, or, better, the evident inhumanity of the homosexual," was discussed. Whoever practices sex with their peers, lacks virtues and only deserves that form of forgiveness that is mockery". The term *homophobia* was unthinkable back then, which catalogs almost clinically that sexual condition.

Something similar happens in the other document that Salazar Mallén was already preparing to include in the next edition of his novel *La iniciación* (1966), published in Costa-Amic after an author's edition made by his friend Olga Arias, in Durango. Here appears a theoretical aspect regarding whether pornography can be considered to be excluded from all literary value. According to Salazar Mallén, he was carried away by the opinion of a colleague and removed a pornographic passage from his story.

Salazar Mallén explains that a friend warned him that he ran the risk of *La iniciación* looking like a erotic novel. The paragraph was excluded from the edition of Durango and also from that of Costa-Amic. Of course, the author retained the self-censored part: "I deleted that page because I was impressed to hear the argument that it would turn my novel into a erotic work, that it would thus cease to be a literary work. Now I've changed my mind. I don't think there's any sicalipsis there, and if there is, that's not why it ceases to be literature. " He said that, in the third edition, if there were to be a third edition, he would include that part:

"[Luis] Mario Schneider wants to publish it in the Oasis publishing house, let's see if they allow it and he's not stopped by morality and prejudice. The case, "he continued," is that my friend's opinion made me doubt. I certainly didn't want to turn my novel into such a novel, so the page I'm going to read to you was deleted. It remains unpublished and reads as follows:

No supo lo que aquello quería decir. Los sonidos resonaron en sus tímpanos sin proyectarse. Sin adquirir significación: su inteligencia y su voluntad estaban abolidas. Por eso, dócil, dejó que Isabel lo llevara hasta un sitio de la habitación en donde la imagen de ambos se duplicaba en el espejo del tocador.

“No te muevas”, conminó casi afónica de tan ronca. Tan fuera de sí estaba Diego y tan lejano de su facultad de pensar que no se le ocurrió inquirir que intención guiaba a la ramera, pero de repente aquella atonía ascendió y él se llenó de un espasmo que lindaba con el terror. Isabel había caído de rodillas. “¡No! ¡no!”, gimió, enronquecido también. “¡No te muevas!”, exigió ella nuevamente. De hinojos, como estaba, diestro el ademán, tomó en sus manos la erecta virilidad del joven y empezó a llevársela a los labios con ese ademán lento y goloso. Previendo lo que iba a ocurrir, se retajo ligera, casi imperceptiblemente, dando un vuelco del asombro al asco; no un asco físico, sino un estado en que la repugnancia, una repugnancia súbita que se apoderó de él, se entreveraba al desprecio y al desencanto. Había oído hablar en la escuela de acto que iniciaba Isabel, pero desde su inocencia creyó siempre que se trataba de hipérboles fraguadas en la vanagloria, o de exageraciones inspiradas en una lujuria insana, y he aquí que una mujer a la que hasta ese instante había admirado se disponía a incurrir en la repugnante acción. “debe ser más sucio que limpiar excusados, que comer tlaconetes, que...”, se dijo rápidamente, sin encontrar un término de comparación que lo satisficiera. Sintió el impulso de darle un puntapié, pero no se atrevió a hacerlo. “¡Qué vergüenza!, eso es, vergüenza de que alguien pueda rebajarse a tanto”, se decía atropellada, vertiginosamente, de tal modo que las ideas cabalgaban unas tras otras en el informe asco que se fundía en un pequeño odio superpuesto a la excitación suscitada por la desnudez de la prostituta. “¡Qué grande! ¡qué bueno estás!”, articuló Isabel embelesada después de hacer estallar un beso suculento. No había terminado: echó a cabeza hacia adelante, imitando a la fiera que lanza un mordisco; sus labios rodearon como un cinturón de pez el enhiesto miembro; sus mejillas palpitaron hinchadas de él; la rubia cabellera resbaló blandamente sobre los testículos del muchacho.”

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