



Hipertexto 18  
Verano 2013  
pp. 19-32

**Neo-carnavalesque Culture in  
Eduardo Mendoza's  
*El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* (2012)**  
Tiffany Trotman  
University of Otago, New Zealand

[Hipertexto](#)

Since 1979, Spain's preeminent novelist, Eduardo Mendoza has published four novels in the crime fiction series often referred to as the Ceferino series. The first of these three novels, *El misterio de la cripta embrujada* (1979) introduced Mendoza's popular readership to his unlikely detective, Ceferino, an eccentric psychiatric patient who is periodically released to help the police solve problematic cases. This novel was followed three years later by the publication of *El laberinto de las aceitunas* (1982). Nearly twenty years would pass before Mendoza released a third novel in the series *La aventura del tocador de señoras* (2001) and another eleven years before the latest instalment *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* (2012). Mendoza's crime novels attracted the interest of literary critics early on with scholars quickly defining his work within the Spanish tradition of *novela negra*. Like his contemporary writer, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Eduardo Mendoza uses his works as an instrument of social critique built upon parody and an ironic inversion of the North American detective novel.

Patricia Hart, David Knutson, María José Giménez Micó, Chung Ying-Yang and José Colmeiro, have written about the late-arrival of crime fiction to Spain as well its role within the culture of the Spanish Transition. In contrast to other studies, my research defines Eduardo Mendoza's crime writing as contemporary or neo-carnavalesque fiction. In a previous publication entitled *Eduardo Mendoza's Crime Novels: The Function of Carnavalesque Discourse in Post Franco Spain, 1979-2001*, I undertook an analysis of the first three novels in the series using a framework based on Mikhail Bakhtin's interpretation of the literary carnivalesque. This theory, elaborated in Bakhtin's works, *Rabelais and his World* (1965) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929), is used as a critical framework to elucidate the carnivalesque nature of Mendoza's writing. In the present essay, I will extend this analysis to include the latest of Mendoza's novels *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* and demonstrate that the author continues to depict Spanish culture as one entrenched in the postmodern, subversive, neo-carnavalesque.

## Carnival and Literature

During the Middle Ages, carnival was celebrated in Europe and Russia and consisted of popular festivals held annually during specific proscribed periods. These festivals blurred the distinction between “official” and “carnival” life through a suspension of social hierarchies. Bakhtin explains, “The official is based on inequality, rank, order, stability, unchanging timelessness, the past, values and norms. In contrast, carnival celebrates liberation from prevailing truths and established order. It marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions” (*RW* 10). Unlike popular carnivals today, the original festivals were not a show, but rather a change to every day life.

Carnival waned towards the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was ultimately relegated to specific events such as Renaissance masquerades or fancy dress balls. However the *spirit* of carnival continued as a theme in the creative arts. Rutland explains, “In the Bakhtinian history of culture, carnival decays as an institution of cultural semiosis at the dawn of the modern era; it passes over into literature as the carnivalesque and the carnivalization of literary and other forms and practices” (131). Bakhtin traced the *spirit* of carnival in the works of Rabelais, Dostoevsky, and Cervantes. As will be demonstrated, Eduardo Mendoza also writes within this tradition.

The traits of carnival can be perceived artistically within four categories of behavior outlined by Bakhtin: *free, familiar contact among people; eccentricity; carnivalistic mésalliances* and *profanation*. These categories are applicable to “lived” carnival as well as within carnivalesque literature. Bakhtin explains:

These carnivalistic categories are not abstract thoughts on equality and freedom...No, these are concretely sensual ritual-pageant “thoughts”, experienced and played out in life itself, which have taken shape and survived over a period of millennia in the broadest masses of the European peoples. They were therefore able to exercise such an immense formal, genre-determining influence on literature. (*PDP* 101)

Bakhtin’s categories provide a framework for classifying Eduardo Mendoza’s works as carnivalesque and will be explored in greater detail ahead.

Contemporary literary critics have attempted to further understand carnivalesque literature by expanding upon Bakhtin’s original analysis. Robert Stam elucidates a process in which “Art becomes carnivalized in those texts which productively deploy the traces, whether absorbed directly, or through intermediate links of carnivalesque folk culture” (96). He describes the Menippean satire of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, which Bakhtin asserted as the origin of carnivalesque literature, and links several traits of the genre that appear in contemporary works. These traits include extraordinary freedom in plot; an emphasis on the adventure of an idea; a fusion of the fantastic, symbolic and slum naturalism; an engagement with “universal” or “ultimate” truths; an emphasis on moral experimentation and psychological issues; a fondness for scandal; frequent oxymoronic

combinations; elements of social utopia; a wide use of inserted genres; polystylistic language; and hidden polemics and ideological mockery (97-8).

In her essay, "The Novel and the Carnival World: An Essay in Memory of Joe Doherty", Barbara Babcock-Adams summarizes the distinction between the narrative "norm" and the carnivalesque. She explains "...the norm of the novel is a rite of passage – the eighteenth and nineteenth-century narrative of the development and education of the hero, the Bildungsroman...categories of fiction are profoundly linear, logical and metonymic". In contrast, works that are 'non-logical' or that rely heavily on discourse, as is the case in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and *Tristram and Shandy*, deviate from or transgress traditional forms (915).

Literary critics have also acknowledged the importance of parody to the carnivalesque. Bakhtin explains, "In the Middle Ages, the voluminous literature of comedy and parody in the vernacular languages and in Latin was in one way or another connected with celebrations of the carnival type..." (*PDP* 106). Carnavalesque literature often appropriates a well-known style or genre and challenges the textual norms. This literary style exposes a gap between the official discourse and the unofficial discourse. In the case of Eduardo Mendoza's crime fiction the parodied traditional discourse is the hard-boiled detective novel.

While Bakhtin originally associated carnival with literature of an earlier period, one cannot deny the existence of the genre within contemporary narrative. Stacy Burton has explored carnivalesque discourse within the modern and postmodern environments and contemplated the limitations of Bakhtin's work. In her article "Paradoxical Relations: Bakhtin and Modernism" Burton explains that Bakhtin may have intentionally limited his studies to literature written prior to his birth. She notes that his major analyses included classical literature yet did not consider modern narrative. This is ironic as, "from the point of view of Western literary theory and criticism at the century's end...Bakhtin's theories have proved popular among critics of modernist and postmodernist literatures" (Burton 520). Burton includes the theorist's specialization in classical and medieval literatures and limited access to contemporary texts as reasons for his limited chronological scope. She also considers the potential risks to Bakhtin, an intellectual exile, should he have written about "recent writers instead of deceased, canonical ones" (521). Finally, the importance of historical perspective to identify chronotypes within narrative is seen as a limiting factor.

### **Eduardo Mendoza and the Neo-Carnavalesque**

In the case of Eduardo Mendoza something slightly special may be elucidated from his continued use of a carnivalesque atmosphere as the backdrop for his stories. These works illustrate a carnival that was initiated over thirty years ago. His settings, characters and their interactions no longer appear as incidentally carnivalesque but rather deliberately fixed in this milieu. This represents an interesting twist, as traditional carnival was limited in duration. Because of this, I believe that the works indicate a more permanent vision of the carnivalesque, a "neo-carnavalesque", exhibited through a

continuous state of play. Mendoza's work suggests that contemporary Spanish culture exists as a permanent *mundo al revés*.

There is no doubt that the carnival Mendoza's describes is determinedly Spanish. Within the narrative there is a stark socio-political critique of Spain and its current state of affairs. This critique is facilitated by the carnivalesque nature of the work. The protagonist blames the downturn in his salon business on the Spanish economic crisis (17). External pressures from the European Union and Spain's stressed relationship with Brussels (125) provide further context to the work. Ceferino complains "Hasta ahora el Gobierno ha sido indulgente. Pero con la crisis, las cosas han cambiado. Toda asociación ha de pasar un control estricto. La prensa husmea y Bruselas no tolera despilfarros" (93). Later, whilst visiting the Costa Brava, Ceferino marvels at the rich and powerful who continue to spend "con el único fin de no sembrar desaliento en los mercados bursátiles" (125). The old Chinese neighbor from the oriental bazaar across the rode describes the situation from his own perspective:

Occidente está en crisis y causa de crisis no es otra que arrogancia. Mire Europa...Cambió moneda nacional por euro y ahí empezó decadencia y ruina. Occidentales son malos matemáticos...Ahora europeos no saben cuánto dinero tienen en banco ni cuánto valen cosas. Gastan sin ton ni son...(158-9).

Eastern wisdom sits in judgment of the West's endless spending.

In addition to economic affairs, international terrorism plays a significant part within the plot of the story. The narrative is driven by fears of an Al Qaeda or Mosad inspired assassination of the German Chancellor by a terrorist that the police are attempting to track after his sudden appearance on the Costa Brava (98). The author also critiques the status of illegal workers, and in particular Latin American immigrants, through the inclusion of Juan Nepomuceno, an Andean hotel worker who has assumed the identity of another and is earning his wages illegally (127). By incorporating current affairs into the novel, Mendoza reflects on the issues, invites critique and firmly defines the work as Spanish. The reader becomes engaged in current social debates and reflects on concerns of contemporary Spain. With this theory and context established, it is now time to turn to the novel itself to uncover the carnivalesque.

### **Tracing the Carnavalesque in *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida***

Like earlier Ceferino series novels, *El enredo* is a tale of detection led by an unlikely detective. The novel opens with the reuniting of Ceferino and a previous fellow inmate from the psychiatric hospital named Rómulo el Guapo. Unlike Ceferino, who has attempted to reinvent himself as an upstanding member of society through the running of his brother-in-law's salon, Rómulo's path has been more sordid. Despite Rómulo's efforts to engage him in his latest plot, the protagonist averts involvement in dubious activities. When Rómulo goes missing however, Quesito, a teenage girl whose mother was friends with Rómulo, convinces Ceferino to solve the mystery of his friend's disappearance. Through the recruitment of several eccentric co-investigators, the protagonist deduces that Rómulo may be involved in the assassination plot of the

German Chancellor during her impending visit to Barcelona. Ceferino plans to kidnap Merkel at the airport, replace her with his sister, Cándida, and release the Head of State only after the assassination attempt has failed. This plot unfolds amidst a backdrop that can be defined as neo-carnavalesque through a linking of Bakhtin's categories to various elements of the novel.

### **Free and Familiar Contact**

In his studies, Bakhtin developed *free and familiar contact* as a carnivalesque trait to describe human interaction during a carnival period. Within this atmosphere there is a "*new mode of interrelationship between individuals*, counterpoised to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life" (PDP 1984 pp. 122-123). Mendoza's novels include relationships that have been stripped of hierarchy as well as pseudo-familiar relationships. While in earlier novels Ceferino never engages in committed relationships nor considers having children, in *El enredo* he displays a clear capacity and interest in providing parental support and advice to Quesito. While she implores him to find Rómulo, her other pseudo-father, Ceferino advises her to stay out of the case. He takes a personal interest in her as if she is his own daughter: "Estudia, sé aplicada y obediente, no te metas en líos, ve a la universidad, saca buenas notas..." (32). Similar to Ceferino's penchant for Coca-Cola, Quesito eats Magnum ice creams yet he advises her, "tendrías que comer algo más saludable y nutritivo" (32). He instructs her to eat everything on her plate and to watch educational films instead of silly special effects movies (66). Because of his interactions with Quesito, the Chinese family across the road refers to her as Ceferino's "honorable hija" and neither the girl nor the protagonist corrects them (99). Indeed, Ceferino contemplates his role as a surrogate father to Quesito (101). This relationship represents a new aspect of his character and illustrates Mendoza's extension of the character beyond his familiar relationship with Cándida and his brother-in-law.

Familiar relationships are also demonstrated through Ceferino's interactions with the Siau family, a multi-generational Chinese family who own an oriental bazaar directly opposite the hair salon. Lin Saiu, his wife and son welcome Ceferino to their dinner table and provide advice, support and counsel to him on numerous occasions. The Siau family entrusts Ceferino with looking after the shop, "como si fuéramos viejos amigos" (50-1). Their prosperity and generosity is ultimately reflected in the purchase of the salon, employment of Ceferino and the conversion of the premises into a Chinese restaurant.

It is also important to mention the role of banqueting and food within the realm of the *free and familiar* environment. According to Bakhtin, banqueting feasts demonstrate man's advantage and triumph over the trials of the world (RW 281). In her book *Charlamange's Table*, Nichola Fletcher describes carnival feasts as "... reminiscent of food folklore such as the mythical Land of Cockayne, where dishes of custard, mountains of pasta and other delicious food tumbled all around and never ran out; as much food as possible" (98). Carnavalesque literature celebrates this theme through the incorporation of banquet feasting and frequent references to food and eating. In

*Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin notes: “the themes of table talk are always “sublime” and filled with “profound wisdom” (*RW* 285).

The Siau family expresses their familiarity and acceptance of Ceferino through food packages and invitations to share Chinese banquet-style meals with them. These lavish banquets include exquisite Chinese food “para chuparse los dedos” and the grandfather’s invitations are flawlessly hospitable, “Será un honor si acepta compartir nuestra humilde mesa” (64). Señor Siau’s extends Ceferino a standing invitation to share their time and food any time he chooses (101). As carnivalesque novels of detection, these banqueting scenes are often as a meeting point to summarize the clues, “consejos de guerra” (71) and propose solutions to the crime. Ceferino’s relationship with Quesito and the Chinese family indicate an emphasis on free and familiar relationships linking the novel to Bakhtin’s category describing the open contact characteristic of carnival.

### **Eccentricity**

Within the context of the neo-carnivalesque and contemporary society, eccentricity reflects a positive evolution. As non-conformist behavior, *eccentricity* implies an element of subversion that relates well to the *mundo al revés*. While eccentricity is often associated with pejorative judgments placed on individuals, psychological studies conclude that the phenomena may indicate a thriving, healthy society.

Eduardo Mendoza’s novels are full of eccentric characters whose presence seems to underscore society’s overall move towards greater tolerance and acceptance of the slightly unusual. This eccentricity is played out in the form of confused identities, aliases, costuming and disguises. In his article, “Becoming Carnival: Performing a Postmodern Identity”, Ted Hiebert writes that postmodern carnival requires a “nihilistic subversion of identity” which allows a performative counterpart to emerge in the exertion of a “free-play of the self”. The assumption of new identities reflects a process in which one “thinks the self carnivally” and thereby transforms from a static assigned identity to an evolving ever-changing self (113).

The team Ceferino enlists to assist in solving the mystery includes a number of characters with multiple identities that rely on disguises and costuming as part of their daily trade. Surveillance of Rómulo’s apartment is provided by two of Ceferino’s friends, Pollo Morgan and Kiwijuli Kakawa (Juli) who both work as living statues. This occupation implies a carnivalesque profanation of sacred historical figures. For example, Juli, an illegal albino west African, works half days as a living statue of don Santiago Ramón y Cajal. La Moski, a Stalinist from Eastern Europe who sought membership in the Catalan Communist Party, earns her living playing the accordion in bars and also assists in following suspects in the case. Eccentric behavior extends to Lavinia Torrada, Rómulo’s wife, who provides fortune-telling services for a swami named Pashmarote Pancha. The swami, whose real name is Lilo Moña, gave himself an Indian name when he started his business because, “ En la India hay tanta gente que alguien se llamará así” (193).

As in the previous novels, Cándida, Ceferino's sister, continues her role as an eccentric figure. A former prostitute, she is the embodiment of grotesque realism. Having recently retired, Cándida has dedicated herself to Christianity and recently converted as an "incauta beata." She attends holy services and processions and purchases relics and religious medals. Unfortunately the grotesque traits are not entirely resolved through her religious devotion and ultimately Cándida is black-listed from all religious buildings after being caught igniting farts in front of an altar to Saint Rita (56-7).

Ceferino's own eccentric behavior manifests itself through the assumption of various aliases and disguises. He poses as a postman with a certified letter to gain entry into Rómulo's apartment (39), Placidísimo Sugrañes, on an official mission for the central *swami* offices in Tibet, (90) and Jaime Sugrañes, Hollywood producer (117). This is all fairly easy to achieve given that Ceferino works in a hair salon where he gathers various remnants to create new appearances: "recogí unos cuantos pelos del suelo me confeccioné un bigote y cejas hirsutas, dándome un aspecto amenazador" (85). Costuming and disguises have long been an integral part of carnival. In Mendoza's novels these are taken to an extreme, blurring and dissolving identities. The overall effect is a high degree of carnivalesque humor generated by the eccentric behavior of Mendoza's cast of characters.

### **Carnivalistic *Mésalliances***

The third carnivalesque category developed by Bakhtin, *carnivalistic mésalliances*, describes the nature of discourse within the narrative. The language used by characters is misaligned or unexpected given their natures. Carnival language is prone to exaggeration and excessive description. It incorporates pledges and oaths and confuses by simultaneously praising and abusing (*PDP* 107). When employed consistently within a work these tricks result in a discourse of *mésalliances* that provides humor. Clark and Holquist describe *mésalliances* as "unusual combinations, mixings, the interpenetration of elements regarded at other times or by less-heterodox contemporaries as mutually exclusive" (296). The barrier between expected language and the unexpected disappears through the coexistence of many variants of language.

In *El enredo* and the other Ceferino series novels, Mendoza incorporates a baroque or gothic style discourse that is incongruent with the characters. This discourse often occurs in the form of flattery or exaggeration. For example, when Quesito tries to convince Ceferino to investigate Rómulo's disappearance, she refers to the stories that Rómulo used to tell of Ceferino's adventures, "siempre elogiaba sus virtudes, encomiaba su ingenio y celebraba su valor...en mi imaginación me lo representaba como Batman o como el Incredible Hulk" (27). Lin Siau's elderly father also addresses Ceferino with language demonstrating excessive flattery. He describes the protagonist as the "honorable dueño de gran peluquería" (52). Lin's ten year old son, Quim Siau, introduces himself to Ceferino as an "aplicado estudiante durante el curso y esforzado aprendiz de nadar en época de asueto" (53). These baroque descriptions demonstrate playfulness with language that extends the humor of the novel.

A great deal of *mésalliance* surrounds the character and occupation of the swami in particular. While Ceferino initially believes that the swami may be responsible for Rómulo's disappearance because of his relationship with Rómulo's wife, Lavinia Torrada, the character inevitably becomes one of Ceferino's co-conspirators in the thwarting of the terrorist plot. When Ceferino rings the swami's yoga and meditation centre to begin his investigations, the phone is answered with a misaligned message:

Llamé desde la cabina y respondió una voz femenina sobre una música acariciadora. La verdadera paz está en nuestro interior. Si desea meditar en catalán, pulse uno; si desea meditar en castellano, pulse dos; para otros asuntos, manténgase a la espera.

Transcurrido un rato, amenizado con flautas y sonajas, la misma voz dijo en tono agrio:-

-¿Qué coño quiere? (60)

The automated nature of the bilingual meditation service is humorous in itself however the receptionist's stark reprimand does not match the peaceful nature of the business. When Ceferino visits the swami later in the novel, he greets the receptionist with "Ave María Purísima, ¿está el swami?" again demonstrating an incongruence in appropriate cultural usage of language (90). The existence of a swami with a thriving meditation service in a country that was so predominantly Catholic for many years provides an opportunity for juxtapositions underscoring the novel's carnivalesque atmosphere.

Mendoza's characters also use foreign languages throughout the work that are jarringly out of place. When describing Rómulo el Guapo's previous escapades, Ceferino refers to a failed "*capolovoro*" to highjack the Barça players (20). After kidnapping Chancellor Merkel later in the novel, the *swami* drives the getaway car whilst providing touristic commentary in various misaligned foreign languages: "Voilà Pronovias. Voilà El Corte Inglés de Cornellà. Y allí lejos, in der ferne, el nuevo estadio del Espanyol. Hier alles Barça - Barça, aber ich, periquito de toda la vida" (214). Each of these examples is indicative of an abrupt break from or incongruity with the discourse expected of lower class characters.

In addition to the misalignment of discourse in the novel there also exist various incongruities between signifier and signified. The structuralist concept of sign, signifier and signified originated in Ferdinand de Saussure's lectures given at the University of Geneva. Saussure's model revolutionized linguistics through the argument that meaning is created by a network of relationships between signifier (the form that a sign takes) and signified (the concept it represents). According to Roy Harris, the translator of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*: "The essential feature of Saussure's linguistic sign is that, being intrinsically arbitrary, it can be identified only by contrast with coexisting signs of the same nature, which together constitute a structured system" (x). This sort of structure is precisely the type of target carnival seeks to destroy.

Barbara Babcock-Abrahams argues that within carnival there is a rupture in the relationship between signifier and signified. In the place of previously linked signifiers and signifieds, elements that are normally *incongruent* appear. These new elements



equate to Bakhtin's 'oxymoronic combinations' or linguistic *mésalliances*. Incongruent elements do not result in a lack of sign or meaning rather, Bakhtin argued, they result in a new set of signs. The structuralist system that generates meaning in 'non-carnival life' implodes during carnival into an atmosphere of language freed from traditional meanings. This is Babcock-Adam's 'anti-signified' world of carnival discourse and constitutes the final type of *mésalliance*.

The new meanings that are generated in *El enredo* result from odd contrapositions of elements that would be disassociated in a traditional atmosphere. For example, the reader learns of Ceferino's co-conspirator, Moski, and her journey to Spain from Eastern Europe. The circumstances on her arrival are nothing less than a mismatch of cultural signifiers. Moski discovers that the Secretary General is not available because she is planting lilies in the gardens of the Tertiary Franciscans of the Divine Shepard. This demonstrates an unlikely association of the Communist Secretary General with the Catholic Church. Moski learns that she may be able to catch up with her later in the afternoon when the Central Committee meets to dance sardanas in front of the Cathedral. If she misses her there she will be off to see the football. Moski interprets this schedule as "el astuto disimulo" with which the party was preparing for revolution (88). After settling in to Barcelona, Moski earns money by playing the accordion. Tourists perceive her music to be "música catalana de los tiempos del comte Arnau" and the locals take it to be Balkan folk music when in fact she plays Luis Miguel boleros. Again there is a confusion that allows for multiple and variant meanings from the same signifier. Yet another example occurs through an orchestrated diversion at the moment of kidnapping Angela Merkel. Ceferino arranges a protest through the Siau family of 116 Chinese people dressed as Tyroleans carrying a placard announcing, "WILKOMMEN, COLONIA ALEMANA DE CATALUNYA, VISCA ANGELA MERKEL I VISCA GENERAL TAT" (213). The odd juxtaposition of Chinese immigrants dressed in traditional German clothing represents an oxymoronic combination of elements.

Carnavalesque theory elucidates a process in which meanings established through structuralist relationships are disrupted by new signs generated through aligned or incongruent elements. Mendoza's novels demonstrate the use of *mésalliances* to create a carnivalesque narrative.

## **Profanation**

Bakhtin's final category, *profanation*, involves a process of "debasings and bringings down to earth...parodies on sacred texts and sayings" which level all that is considered sacred, including upper society (123). These untouchable elements are forced to interact with the rest of the world. Clark and Holquist describe profanation as a "reverse hierarchy" which is a "humbling, debunking, or debasing of whatever is lofty by the lowly" (309). This process exposes an underlying order, questions its validity and suggests an alternative order that is often subversive.

Profanation is affected through various mechanisms including uncrownings of authority, scatology and parody. While subversive, this process is also humorous. For

example, the seriousness associated with committing felonies is profaned through the mishaps of the eccentric characters. The reader is entertained with stories of Rómulo el Guapo's failed endeavors including a plane hijacking in which he forces his way into the lavatory rather than the cockpit (22) and a later attempt to rob a jewelry store that resulted in the theft of a fresh chicken from a rotisserie shop (139). The profaning of such serious crimes affects the 'sacred' nature of the crime fiction genre as it is not traditionally humorous.

The uncrownings of important historical figures also provides ground for profanation in the novel. Ceferino's allies work as living statues of doña Leonor de Portugal (45) and don Santiago Ramón y Cajal (67). By manipulating the identities of these historical figures and using them as mechanism for earning money through popular street culture antics, there is a lowering of their status. When Pollo Morgan provides his detailed surveillance report he attempts to do so without compromising his statue's character, "Tenía mucho mérito contarme tantas cosas sin mover la boca ni alterar la expresión trágica de quien afronta su destino y prevé la pérdida de las colonias de ultramar" (86). One cannot help but to laugh at the odd contraposition and identity conflict that occurs in this scene. Unfortunately the living statues' profitability has dropped as the iconographic nature of society has changes and few people can identify important figures. Pollo Morgan explains, "Ahora, la gente no sabe quién es nadie. Hasta Elvis y el Che han de poner un cartel en varios idiomas para identificarse" (45). Further profaning of Spanish aristocracy occurs when Juli equates the appearance of the *swami* to Valle-Inclán. He describes him as "un tipo alto, enjuto, con gafas redondas, barba cana hasta la cintura, túnica blanca. O era el swami o era Valle-Inclán saliendo de la ducha" (71).

Mendoza's uncrowning of aristocracy or hierarchy extends to the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. Cándida plays the role of Chancellor Merkel in the Ceferino's plan to foil the terrorist's assassination attempt on her life. By kidnapping the Chancellor and replacing her with an impersonator, Ceferino hopes to save her, whilst sacrificing his own sister. Her costume includes sumptuous clothing (over a tracksuit), cumbersome imitation jewelry, a wig of ringlets and a cardboard crown (209). This ridiculous getup equates to a symbolic uncrowning of authority. The prestige of the Chancellor is further profaned when it is revealed that her willingness to follow Ceferino out of the airport is due to her having mistaken him for an old Spanish lover, Manolito, who she assumes would like to rekindle their romance whilst she is Spain (218).

Profanation often appears through grotesque realism or scatology, which includes "obscene language or literature, especially dealing pruriently or humorously with excrement and excretory functions". Scatology holds an established position as a popular theme in literature. Bakhtin identified these elements as important themes within Rabelais' writing (RW 147). According to the theorist, grotesque realism forces "official culture" to engage with the mundane:

Grotesque realism is based on degradation: lowering of that which is high, transferring of the abstract to the material. This is carried out through laughter. Degradation is associated with the following terms: bury, sow, kill, the belly, the

organs, defecation, copulation, conception, pregnancy, birth, destruction and regeneration. (RW 19-21)

Scatological humor abounds in this novel. For example, when Ceferino visits Lavinia Torrada, Rómulo's wife, he appears slightly awkward because the need to urinate forces him to dance "como un masái". He alleviates this urge by urinating on a mat on his way out of the building (41-42). Not even characters of a holy nature, like the swami, are immune from this sort of humor. Whilst investigating the crime, Ceferino discovers the swami bound and gagged by the terrorist who has been secretly occupying the meditation center. The swami explains that, if he could levitate, he would because he has soiled his underpants. Unfortunately, he has not yet reached the necessary level of purity to levitate and if he had, he would not need underpants (186). The mixing of scatological discourse with notions of spiritual enlightenment indicates a profaning of the sacred. The spiritual guidance that the swami provides replaces religion, something he believes "hace tiempo perdió el tren" (193).

In addition, Cándida, disguised as the Chancellor, appears to suffer from flatulence on the morning of the assassination attempt, as a result of consuming too much Penny Royal. Ceferino has to remind her, "piensa que vas a sustituir a una mujer muy importante, cuyas órdenes no se discuten. Estés donde estés, si te sobrevienen ganas de hacer menores, o incluso mayores, te vas a un rincón y haces lo que tengas que hacer con toda parsimonia" (208). Scatological humor profanes within the novel to level the sacred and higher echelons of society.

Parody within *El enredo* profanes the rules upon which crime fiction typically relies. As mentioned earlier, writers like Eduardo Mendoza have manipulated the investigative nature of detective fiction in order to observe and criticize Spanish society. According to Chung-Ying Yang, "El elemento de la parodia ocupa un lugar esencial en la trilogía de Mendoza. A través de ella, el autor cuestiona los cánones establecidos, explora y recrea los géneros populares o menores, específicamente el policíaco" (119). Yang argues that the *novela negra* is an ironic subversion of the 'whodunit' novel incorporating a comic, marginalized, anti-hero as the detective. According to Yang, parody in the *novela negra* genre targets both the traditional who-dun-it detective novel and the American hard-boiled novel. She writes, "...el detective antiheroico parodia a su vez la postura ética del investigador de ambos subgéneros policíacos. No está interesado en restablecer el orden social (Holmes), ni su actuación está orientada por un código superior al de la injusta sociedad (Spade, Marlowe)" (120). Spanish *novela negra* destroys the boundaries distinguishing high and low art. The non-formulaic nature of Eduardo Mendoza's novels breaks the categorization of the genre as uniform, homogenous narratives. The use of parody exaggerates and destroys the formulaic models typically associated with detective fiction.

## Conclusion

Eduardo Mendoza's latest installment in the Ceferino series, *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida*, carries on the tradition of carnivalesque literature established in the previous three novels. The novel's setting in contemporary Barcelona permits free and

familiar contact between its eccentric characters who engage in misaligned discourse whilst profaning the sacred elements of their society. All that remains to understand is why Eduardo Mendoza depicts contemporary Spain an on-going carnival. It is my belief that the introduction and development of the genre in Spain occurred during a time that demanded a questioning of values and a subversive wink at all that was serious. The disenchantment that occurred due to the slow evolution of democracy in Spain coupled with two decades of *festivales* including the 25th Olympiad in Barcelona (1982), the Seville World Expo (1992), the EU European Capital of Culture (Madrid 1992 and 2016) placed Spanish culture within a milieu of *festivalización*. While Hispanic culture has long been one in which carnival and popular festivals have played an important role, contemporary Spanish literary culture is reflecting the importance of carnival in all aspects of life and providing a platform to examine and critique modern day concerns.

### Works Cited

- Babcock, Barbara, Ed. *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978. Print.
- Babcock-Abrahams, Barbara. "The Novel and the Carnival World: An Essay in Memory of Joe Doherty." *MLN* 89.6 (1974): 911-37. Print.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. 1975. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Print.
- . *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 1963. 9th Edition. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.
- . *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 1963. Trans. R.W. Rotsel. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973. Print.
- . *Rabelais and His World*. 1965. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968. Print.
- . *Rabelais and His World*. 1965. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Midland Book Ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984. Print.
- Burton, Stacy. "Paradoxical Relations: Bakhtin and Modernism." *Modern Language Quarterly* 61:3 (September 2000): 519-43. Print.
- Clark, Katrina and Michael Holquist. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984. Print.
- Colmeiro, José F. "The Hispanic (Dis)connection: some leads and a few missing links." *Journal of Popular Culture* 34.4 (2001 Spring): 49-64. Print.

- . "The Spanish Detective as Cultural Other." *The Post-Colonial Detective*. Ed. Ed Christian. Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2001. Print.
- . "The Spanish Connection: Detective Fiction after Franco." *Journal of Popular Culture* 28.1 (1994): 151-61. Print.
- . *La novela policíaca española*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1994. Print.
- . "Posmodernidad, posfranquismo y novela policíaca." *España Contemporánea* 5.2 (1992): 27-39. Print.
- . "La narrativa policíaca posmodernista de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán." *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 14.1-3 (1989): 11-32. Print.
- Fletcher, Nichola. *Charlemagne's Tablecloth: a Piquant History of Feasting*. London: Phoenix, 2005. Print.
- Hart, Patricia. *The Spanish Sleuth: The Detective in Spanish Fiction*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985. Print.
- Hiebert, Ted. "Becoming Carnival: Performing a Postmodern Identity". *Performance Research* 8.3 (2003): 113-125. Print.
- Knutson, David. *Las novelas de Eduardo Mendoza: La parodia de los márgenes*. Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1999. Print.
- Mendoza, Eduardo. *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2012. Print.
- . *La aventura del tocador de las señoras*. 2001. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2003. Print.
- . *El laberinto de las aceitunas*. 1982. Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 2003. Print.
- . *El misterio de la cripta embrujada*. 1979. Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 2003. Print.
- Giménez Micó, María José. *Eduardo Mendoza y las novelas españolas de la transición*. Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 2000. Print.
- Rutland, Barry. "Bakhtinian Categories and the Discourse of Postmodernism." *Critical Studies* 2.5 (1990): 123-36. Print.
- Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Roy Harris. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1986. Print.
- Stam, Robert. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. Print.

- Trotman, Tiffany Gagliardi. *Eduardo Mendoza's Crime Novels: The Function of Carnavalesque Discourse in Post Franco Spain, 1979-2001*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009. Print.
- Yang, Chung-Ying. "Parodia, humor y crítica de Eduardo Mendoza: crónica de un detective sin nombre." *La verdad sobre el caso Mendoza*. Ed. José V. Saval. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 2005. 117-32. Print.