

# Visitors from beyond the Grave

## Ghosts in World Literature

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**TOMORROW IN THE BATTLE THINK ON ME:  
HAUNTING GHOSTS, REMORSE AND GUILT IN SHAKESPEARE'S  
RICHARD III AND JAVIER MARÍAS**

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this chapter is to analyze the novel *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* (Javier Marías, 1994) in its relation to the Shakespearean play *Richard III* and its film adaptation (Laurence Olivier, 1955). A notable section of the play depicts a parade of ghosts haunting the psyche of Richard III, which constitutes the source of the exceedingly bright title of the novel. This scene also provides quotations that appear all over the narrative, in form of long nonstop sentences and paragraphs. It can be argued that *Richard III*, Marías' basic hypotext, provides the key for the interpretation of the novel. In what follows, I intend to analyze Marías' text as an extended reflection on guilt and remorse based on *Richard III* (5. 3), and as a postmodern rewriting of the ghost theme.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Javier Marías, *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí*, ghosts, guilt.

## INTRODUCTION

*Richard III* is the last of the four plays in the Shakespearian minor tetralogy of English history. It concludes a dramatic chronicle started by *Henry VI Part 1* and also containing *Henry VI Part 2* and *Henry VI Part 3*, and depicts the Machiavellian rise to power and subsequent short reign of Richard III of England. The entire four-play saga was composed early in Shakespeare's career, most scholars giving *Richard III* a composition date of 1591 or 1592. Concluding with the defeat of King Richard III at the battle of Bosworth, *Richard III* is a dramatization of actual historical events that culminated in the year 1485, when the rule of the Plantagenet family over England was replaced by the Tudor monarchy<sup>1</sup>. Today, readers and audiences may find extremely difficult to follow the overlapping webs of political intrigue, family relationships, and personal hostilities and retaliations, but Shakespeare's audiences were definitely familiar with them. They were particularly fascinated with the character of Richard III, a pure, self-professed villain of gigantic proportions whose evil drives the plot. Until his final defeat by the Earl of Richmond in the last act of the play, the good forces opposing him are a ready prey for his killing schemes, which affect his enemies,

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<sup>1</sup> For Shakespeare's treatment of history, cf. Etty 1900-1901, Churchill 1976 and Becker 1977.

his kinsmen, his wife, and most of his supporters. Because Richard's personality, rather than the issue of the Wars of the Roses, is of most interest to modern audiences, many current productions focus more closely on Richard himself and the motivation for the evil he commits than on the historical background.

So, both Ian McKellen's *Richard III* and Laurence Olivier's 1955 film version of the play simplify the text, leave some characters out of the script, and give Richard even more prominence. Richard is indeed a fascinating character, one who speaks directly to the audience and involves them in his own plots. In this sense, he is not very dissimilar from Víctor Francés, the main character in *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* (Javier Marías 1994)<sup>2</sup>, who, like Richard<sup>3</sup>, has been described as "histrionic"<sup>4</sup>. Marías' novel, which takes a sentence from *Richard III* as a source for its exceedingly bright title, also explores the dysfunctional mind and heart of Víctor, a screenwriter and a ghostwriter, and, like Richard III, a blatant usurper of things and people that do not belong to him<sup>5</sup>. The novel begins when Víctor's prospective mistress, Marta, dies of a sudden illness in her own home. Instead of calling the police, Víctor prepares breakfast for Marta's sleeping two-year-old son, and leaves. Inexplicably drawn towards intimacy with Marta's distraught family, including her husband, Víctor engages in extended monologues on ghosts, horses in the city of Madrid, the roots of certain Anglo-Saxon words (mostly in reference to different men having intercourse with the same woman), hotels and restaurants in London, sleeplessness and dreams, memory, the role of change in our lives and, most of all, death. The ravings of Marta's Polonius-like father, the digressions by the King of Spain, referred to as The Only One, and the final monologue of Marta's widowed husband, Deán, punctuate the splendidly handled plot.

It is precisely in the thick rhetorical fog cast over the novel by Víctor's exhaustively digressive monologues where Shakespeare's quotations feature prominently. Quotations from *Richard III* appear not only in the title, but all over the narrative, as Wagnerian motifs, in the form of long nonstop sentences and paragraphs. What is more, it could be argued that *Richard III*, Marías' basic hypotext, provides the key for the interpretation of the novel, which I intend to analyze in what follows, as an extended reflection on guilt and remorse based on *Richard III* (5. 3).

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<sup>2</sup> The English translation by Margaret Jull Costa will be used for quoting purposes throughout this paper (Marías 2003). Scarlett 2004: 400-403 has explored the multi-layered forms of intertextuality between the tragedy *Richard III* and the novel by Marías.

<sup>3</sup> Rossiter 1989: 20.

<sup>4</sup> Morales Rivera 2006: 227.

<sup>5</sup> When studying Marías' novel as a rewriting of *Richard III*, Scarlett 2004 emphasizes, in fact, the usurpation subtheme rather than the issue of guilt that will be examined throughout this chapter. For the influence of Shakespeare's tragedies in Marías' novel, see also Herzberger 2011: 139-178.

### **RICHARD III (5. 3): GHOSTS HAUNTING THE PSYCHE OF A VILLAIN**

Richard is a villain who seems unbothered by conscience. The dark shadow of guilt, dimly perceived in the depth of his soul, does not appear to surface until towards the end of the play, when he is preparing to meet on the battlefield his enemy, the forces led by the Earl of Richmond (later to be King Henry VII), who relish the prospect of relieving England of Richard's tyranny. More concretely, Richard awakens to conscience in Act 5, Scene 3, after he is cursed by the ghosts of his murdered victims. The significance of the ghostly procession and Richard's subsequent monologue will be analyzed in what follows.

#### **1. A ghostly procession: accusations and curses**

The temporal setting for the scene is "dead midnight", the "witching hour", the time of night when "the lights burn blue", which refers to an old superstition according to which, when ghosts or spirits are about, they affect the lamps. On the eve of battle at Bosworth, King Richard is haunted by the ghosts of his victims, including King Henry VI (the Lancastrian king defeated by Richard's family and succeeded by Richard's brother King Edward IV), young prince Edward (son of Henry VI), Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, the two murdered young princes, Hastings, Lady Anne, and Buckingham. Each ghost accuses the sleeping Richard of the foul deeds committed against them and curses him with death and despair, while at the same time visiting Richmond to bestow him with blessings.

The effect of the ghosts' procession is that of eleven bitter curses cast upon Richard in sequence. In these curses Shakespeare is at his best. For one thing, the substance of what each ghost says is entirely appropriate to the speaker and by referring back to past events in the tetralogy serves to reinforce the unity of the set of tragedies. For another thing, Shakespeare gives his/her language the maximum of personal differentiation of which he was capable. He achieves this differentiation not by surprising conjunctions of words or new imagery, as in other excerpts of the play, but by subtle musical variations within a context of incantation.

These subtle musical variations affect, above all, the sentences "Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow" (119, 132, 140, 163), "despair and die" (126, 127, 128, 136, 141, 149, 164), "tomorrow in the battle think on me" (135), or "fall thy edgeless sword" (136, 164), including variations, such as "bloody and guilty / guiltily awake, / and in a bloody battle end thy days. / Think on..." (147-149), "Think upon... and let thy soul despair" (142), "Think upon..., and with guilty fear, / Let fall thy lance" (143-144), "Dream on ... / Let us be lead within thy bosom,... / and weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death" (152-154), and "O, in the battle think of..., / And die in terror of thy guiltiness. / Dream on, dream on of bloody deeds and death; / Fainting, despair: despairing, yield thy breath" (170-173).

## 2. Inside Richard's conscience: a shadow of guilt

When Richard wakes, he is shaken by a bout of self-doubt and soul-searching that is unparalleled in the play, and that many readers consider one of Shakespeare's greatest moments of insight into human psychology. Richard –the greatest villain ever, the bloody “hell-hound”– is pushed to look into his soul, and what he finds there terrifies him. Sweating and horrified, Richard asks desperately, “What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by. / Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I. / Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am” (183-185). With this sudden, terrible revelation that there is a murderer in the room, and that it is him, Richard is suddenly uncertain of whether to be afraid even of himself. Once he realizes that he is afraid of himself, because he is a murderer, his immediate question is whether or not he will kill himself. His answer is ambivalent: although he claims that he loves himself and therefore would not kill himself, he also realizes that he hates himself for the hateful deeds he has committed. In this scene it is very clear that Richard has moved beyond a simple, flat version of the medieval, allegorical character Vice, and experiences the deeply divided emotions that characterize real human beings<sup>6</sup>.

In an outlandish, haunting, and even touching conclusion, Richard unexpectedly turns to thoughts of others, and grieves for his isolation: “I shall despair. There is no creature who loves me, / And if I die no soul will pity me. / Nay, wherefore should they? —Since that I myself / Find in myself no pity to myself?” (201-204). With these words he realizes, angry and desperate, that he does not even sympathize with himself. Even if he manages to put aside his terror and resumes the semblance of his old arrogance<sup>7</sup>, this sensation does not fade<sup>8</sup>. Clearly, for Richard, the end is near.

In reference to the play as a whole, this speech by Richard reflects the disorder he has inflicted on the kingdom by clearing his path to the throne through murder and wickedness. In a Machiavellian way, Richard, the greatest among English tyrants<sup>9</sup>, had attempted indeed to set aside the moral order of the world through a policy of ruse, treachery, and murder. Richard's real crime, according to the Elizabethan view of the “divine right of kings”, had been to take his own destiny and that of his country into his own hands. He had disturbed the natural order of things, and for that he must be punished.

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<sup>6</sup> Spivack 1958; Frisch 1993.

<sup>7</sup> The tone of the speech changes as it progresses, paralleling Richard's confusion when he first wakes up, his growing awareness that what woke him was a dream, and his returning confidence in himself. Unlike Macbeth, Richard, unrepentant, does what he always does: acting expediently to prevent the curses of the ghosts from coming true with a mind bent on the weaknesses of other.

<sup>8</sup> The echoes of his dream in the pre-battle speech contribute to this effect: “You sleeping safe, they bring you to unrest” (5. 3. 321).

<sup>9</sup> Spivack 1958.

## JAVIER MARÍAS: A SHAKESPEAREAN VOICE IN SPANISH CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

### 1. Mariás' intellectual background: an anglophile

Garlanded in literary prizes and signaled as a future Nobel winner, the Spanish author Javier Mariás (1951-) is a much-travelled man, an excellent linguist, a translator, and an anglophile. He was born in Madrid, lived parts of his childhood in the United States –where his father was exiled and taught at various institutions, including Yale University and Wellesley College–, and attended the Complutense University of Madrid, where he studied English Philology. He went on to translate English and American authors into Spanish, including Sterne<sup>10</sup>, Updike, Hardy, Conrad, Nabokov, Faulkner, Kipling, James, Stevenson, Browne, and of course Shakespeare. For two years in the early 1980s, Mariás was a lecturer in Spanish translation at Oxford, an experience he drew on for *All Souls* (1989), in which a Spanish lecturer in Spanish translation at Oxford has an affair with a female lecturer (the affair, emphasizes Mariás, was fictional)<sup>11</sup>. For some time he was also a lecturer in English translation at the Complutense University of Madrid<sup>12</sup>.

Even Mariás' narrative voice epitomizes an ideal of English masculinity, cool and urbane in tone, ironic, somewhat studied. The shadowy first-person narrator in most of Mariás' novels is in no hurry to get to the point. His style is one rich in clauses and qualifiers; his favorite word would seem to be “or”; his books question the border between truth and fiction, and the hidden influence of the past versus what he has called “the prestige of the present moment”, in a style that is mesmerizing, crackling with sly wit, above all, prolix, and which has been defined as “angloaburrado”, and even as “anglosajodido”<sup>13</sup>.

Mariás barely starts a story before breaking into a side story, into a meditative digression, into fictionalized family history, or into a disquisition on a word, sometimes Anglo-Saxon words, as in *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*. In this novel he refers indeed to a disappeared Anglo-Saxon word designating different men having congress with the same woman<sup>14</sup>, and also to

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<sup>10</sup> His translation of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* was awarded the Spanish National Award for Translation.

<sup>11</sup> The same narrator recurs in the trilogy *Your Face Tomorrow* (2002, 2004, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Although Mariás does not elaborate upon this fact, the narrator of *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* also declares to have been an English lecturer at University (290).

<sup>13</sup> Apparently, it was Francisco Umbral, a political enemy of Mariás and his family, who described him first in this non-flattering way. His entry for Mariás in the *Diccionario de la literatura española* reads as follows: “Máximo representante de una novela aseptizada, de una prosa despersonalizada, de un victorianismo que se agrega al panorama español con reservas y escrúpulos” (Umbral 1995: 156).

<sup>14</sup> “When I learn of sexual infidelities or I am a witness to changes of partner or to second marriages –also when I see prostitutes in the street (...)– I always remember my time as a

the etymology of *nightmare*, which he connects not to mere 'mare', but to *mara* 'incubus', the malign spirit or demon that squatted or lay on the sleeping person, crushing their chest and creating the oppressive sense of nightmare<sup>15</sup>.

## 2. Shakespearean intertexts in Marías' novels

Marías, who honed his craft by translating English novels, uses parallels and echoes deliberately. In this sense, the fact that many of his titles have been drawn from Shakespeare seems significant. "Shakespeare opened so many byways, and didn't explore them", said Marías himself<sup>16</sup>.

The first novel to bear a Shakespearean title was *Heart so White* (1992), a novel at whose center are the costs of ambivalence, like in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "My hands are of your colour; but I shame / To wear a *heart so white*" (2. 2. 64-65)<sup>17</sup>. *Dark back of time* (1998) is an extended novel, whose main theme is the exploration of how fiction and reality interpenetrate and influence one another in story-telling and, ultimately, in memory and in history. In this novel Marías expands on the "dark back of time", a phrase and a concept borrowed from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "What seest thou else / In the dark backward and abyss of time?" (1. 2. 49). The trilogy *Your Face Tomorrow* (2002, 2004, 2007) takes its title from *Henry IV Part 2*, more concretely from the scene where Henry IV, being still Prince Hal, comments to his unsuitable companion Poins shortly before he abandons his bosom friend Falstaff for duty to the State: "What a disgrace it is to me to remember thy name, or to know *thy face tomorrow!*" (2. 2. 14-16). From *Richard III* Shakespeare takes not only one, but two titles. Apart from *Tomorrow in the battle think on me* (1994), Marías has written *When I was mortal* (1996), a collection of twelve stories whose title was inspired by the words of King Henry VI to Richard III in the ghost parade (5. 3. 125).

All these sentences and phrases –"When I was mortal", "Your face tomorrow", "The dark back of time..."– recur, like echoes, within novels. Marías likens his technique to music: "That reappearance –I wouldn't say repetition,

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student of English, when I learned of the existence of an ancient verb, no longer in use, an Anglo-Saxon verb that has not survived and, which, besides, I cannot quite remember (...). The word describes the relationship or kinship acquired by two or more men who have lain with or slept with the same woman (...) The verb probably bore the prefix *ge*, which originally meant 'together' (...), and that verb, which has now disappeared and which I no longer remember, was perhaps *ge-licgan*, since *licgan* means 'to lie' in the sense of 'to lie with someone', 'to fornicate', and this the translation and the idea would, therefore, be something like "co-fornicate" or, rather, "co-fuck", if the word were rather cruder" (176). Since further reflection on this word is found later in the novel (205, 207, 213, 288), it could thus be considered as one of its main leitmotifs.

<sup>15</sup> The narrator mentions this etymology for the first time when reflecting upon Spanish horses (216) and comes back to it later in the story (268).

<sup>16</sup> Edemarian 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Italics are mine.

because it's not exactly that– that reappearance of a motif is very often extremely moving. The fact that you recognise something...<sup>18</sup>. In fact, in *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* one can find all these quotations which would provide titles for later books. The expression “When I was mortal” features in excerpts quoting *Richard III* (48, 160), and the phrase “dark back [of time]”, along with an extended commentary on the concept –referred to the enormous swath of time which is not captured by human memory or subject to our limited perception–, appears both at the beginning of the novel, when Víctor is watching the sleep of Marta's child –

So much else goes on behind our backs, our capacity for knowledge is so limited, we cannot see what lies beyond a wall or anything happening at a distance, someone only has to whisper or move slightly away from us and we can no longer hear what he or she is saying, and our life might depend on it, all it takes is for us not to read a book and therefore not know about the principal danger, we cannot be in more than one place at once, and even then we often have no idea who might be watching us or thinking about us, who is about to dial our number, who is about to write to us, who is about to want us or seek us out, who is about to condemn us or murder us and thus put an end to our few evil days, who is going to hurl us over on the reverse side of time, on to its dark back... (55)

–and at the end of the novel: “where we travel slowly towards our dissolution, merely in order to traverse *the back or reverse side of time*, where one can no longer keep thinking or keep saying goodbye” (311). This fact highlights the relevance of the motif. In any case, Marías' repetition –or “reappearance”– technique could be connected, to a certain extent, with that of Shakespeare in the ghost procession of *Richard III*, whose subtle musical variations within a context of incantation were praised above.

#### MARÍAS' *TOMORROW IN THE BATTLE THINK ON ME: RICHARD III* AS A KEY HYPOTEXT

##### 1. *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*: a literary puzzle

In *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*, Marías explores the guilty mind of his own troubled protagonist, Víctor. What was expected to be an evening of passion with Marta, a married woman he barely knew, ended unexpectedly when she suddenly became sick and, over a few hours, died. It was 2 a.m., but instead of calling the police he set up breakfast for Marta's two-year old son in the other room, watched part of a television program, and went out the door

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<sup>18</sup> Edemariam 2005.



carrying, among other things, the only copy of her husband's telephone number in London, and the tape from their answering machine.

Víctor thinks obsessively and guiltily about Marta, whom he might have saved had he taken charge. In hysterical and dreamlike speculation, he also reflects upon the members of Marta's family and his relation to them, and the tenuous, and often ironic connection of the dead to the living. Over the next few days, Víctor cleverly arranges to get into a lunch with Marta's father, her sister, and her widower. Marta's elderly father is afflicted that his daughter died alone, but the rest of the family are aware that she was not alone when she died. Deán, the widowed husband, is strongly determined to find out who was sharing her bed that night. All might have remained undiscovered, but Víctor confesses. Further complications are added to the plot by means of Víctor's job as a ghostwriter, working even for the King of Spain, and by means of his ongoing and deeply confused détente with his ex-wife Celia.

We are apparently on a ramble, but, in fact, the story is carefully plotted. Due to the strange characters involved, most of the scenes, built up with their troubling and extended meditations on various subjects, are packed out with tension. Marías' clotted monologues have led critics to compare him to Proust, but he is probably best seen as a 21st century version of Henry James, who provides us with interesting and believable variations of his leitmotifs in the experiences of the characters. This is especially true for Marta's husband –whose trip to London and the accident wherein his mistress dies supply an eerie commentary on the tragedy of Víctor and Marta–, and even for the King of Spain, who confesses having been watching, during a night of insomnia –the same during which Víctor failed to take care of Marta–, a film which the narrator is able to identify as *Chimes at Midnight* (Orson Welles 1956), whose script, significantly enough, contains text from five Shakespearean plays: *Henry IV Part 1*, *Henry IV Part 2*, *Richard II*, *Henry V*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*<sup>19</sup>. *Tomorrow in the Battle* is, in short, a disturbing and dreamlike literary puzzle, which comes together with great force and clarity in its final few pages.

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<sup>19</sup> Though filtered by the film adaptation, these Shakespearean plays also appear as key hypotexts for the novel. The allusions are numerous and varied in form. First, the night Marta dies, Víctor, while changing channels, realizes that *Chimes at Midnight* is being shown (53). That same night –as we learn later in the novel and as it has been described above– the King of Spain was also watching the film. The images of Henry IV and Henry V the latter, when he was still the Prince of Wales, impress him deeply, making him think about how “our actions and personalities were in part determined by people's perception of us, as if we came to believe that we are different from what we thought we were because chance and the heedless passing of time change our external circumstances and our clothes” (128). Further references to the film and quotations from it feature in later sections of the novel (152, 168, 242, 266). *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* ends, in fact, with a quotation of Falstaff: “Goodbye laughter and goodbye scorn. I will never see you again, nor will you see me. And goodbye ardour, goodbye memories” (311).

## 2. Intertextual connections: *Richard III* as a leitmotif in *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*

As detected by Scarlett<sup>20</sup>, the connection with *Richard III* is, primarily, an intertextual one, which is displayed through the title –the most obvious sign of literary kinship–, and through the quotations which appear, as a leitmotif, throughout the novel: “Tomorrow in the battle think on me” (24); “Tomorrow in the battle think on me, and fall thy edgeless sword” (27); “Tomorrow in the battle think on me, and fall thy edgeless sword: despair and die” (34); “Tomorrow in the battle think on me, when I was mortal; and let fall thy lance” (48); “Tomorrow in the battle think on me, and fall thy edgeless sword. Tomorrow in the battle think on me, when I was mortal, and let fall thy pointless lance. Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow, let me be lead within thy bosom and at a bloody battle end thy days. Tomorrow in the battle think on me, despair and die” (160-161). These quotations refer to Marta’s death. However, the quotation turns up in its most complete form on the night Víctor arrives home having just concluded a tête-à-tête with a woman who may be a prostitute and whom he has identified as his ex-wife Celia in disguise. The TV program Víctor happens to see when he turns on the TV is a broadcast of the film *Richard III* (Laurence Olivier 1955)<sup>21</sup>, which is a faithful rendering of Shakespeare’s tragedy:

The scene immediately changed to show another man, this time lying down, fully clothed, a king, I thought, when I saw the flounced sleeves of his shirt, a king suffering from insomnia or who was perhaps asleep with his eyes wide open, he too was in a tent of war, although he was lying on his back in a real bed with pillows and sheets, I don’t remember much about it, but I do remember that. And then, one after another, ghosts began to appear, superimposed on a landscape, perhaps the site of a future or imminent battle: a man, two children, another man, a woman, and another man bringing up the rear, shaking his fists in the air and crying out like someone calling for vengeance, all the others had sad, desolate faces, their hair had grown white and their bitter words were pronounced by pale lips which seemed to be reading something in a quiet voice rather than speaking it, those who are now ghosts do not always find it easily to talk to us. That king was haunted or under a spell or, to be more exact, he was being haunted that very night by those closest to him, who were reproaching him with their deaths and calling down misfortunes on him in the battle that would take place the following day, they were saying terrible things in the sad voices of those who have been betrayed or killed by the person they loved: “Tomorrow in the battle think on me”, the men, the woman and the children said to him

<sup>20</sup> Scarlett 2004: 401.

<sup>21</sup> For the presence of this film in Mariás’ novel, see Scarlett 2004.

one after the other, "and fall thy edgeless sword: despair and die!" "Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow, let me be lead within thy bosom and in a bloody battle end thy days: let fall thy pointless lance". "Think on me when I was mortal: despair and die", they repeated one after the other, the children and the woman and the men. I remember those words clearly, especially those spoken to him by the woman, the last to address him, his ghost wife whose cheeks streamed with tears: "That wretched Ann thy wife", she said to him, "that never slept a quiet hour with thee, now fills thy sleep with perturbations. Tomorrow in the battle think on me, and fall thy edgeless sword: despair and die!". And that king sat up or awoke terrified or awoke terrified and screaming at those terrible night visions and I too was afraid when I saw them and heard his scream coming from the television; I felt a shiver run through me –the sheer power of the performance, I suppose – and I changed channels with the remote control (207-208).

What is more, Shakespearean quotations also occur much later, in connection to Deán's mistress: "let me be lead within thy bosom, let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow, bloody and guilty" (308).

As a conclusion, Marías, by using these Shakespearean iambs about curses and haunting, despair and death, is revealing the core of his novel. As Scarlett (2004: 401) asserts, the tragedy by Shakespeare, through the mediation of its broadcasting in television, constitutes a global intertext with a possible generative role in both story and discourse of the novel. It must be recognized, however, that this core is probably hidden away in one of the doppelgangers or in the throwaways which pervade the narration. What T.S. Eliot said about Shakespeare is also applicable to Marías' novels: "I would suggest that none of the plays of Shakespeare has a 'meaning', although it would be equally false to say that a play of Shakespeare is meaningless"<sup>22</sup>.

### **3. *Richard III* as a key for the interpretation of *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*: ghosts and guilt**

As it was previously indicated, *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* begins with the narrator witnessing the sudden death of his lover. Because the affair was secret, and because the lover had died while her husband was away, the narrator feels the necessity to escape without leaving fingerprints. Although he has made sure that the little boy will have his breakfast, he cannot help feeling guilty, since he thinks Marta might have saved if he had taken charge. Víctor thinks compulsively and uncomfortably about Marta, and his remorse leads him to find out information about the woman's family and the aftermath of her death. Regarding her husband, he asserts:

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<sup>22</sup> Eliot 1963: 309.

I want to meet that man, and talk to him and call him to account and tell him what happened because of him, in particular, I want to tell him exactly how I spent that whole day when he thought Marta was still alive and when she was, in fact, dead, and how I feel about that day now when it's repeated in my nightmares and I hear the voice that says: *Tomorrow in the battle think on me, and fall thy edgeless sword. Tomorrow in the battle think on me, when I was mortal, and let fall thy pointless lance. Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow, let me be lead within thy bosom and at a bloody battle end thy days. Tomorrow in the battle think on me, despair and die* (160-161).

The description of the feeling of guilt along with the quotations of Shakespeare and the allusions to the nightmares that torment the narrator confirm the connection between *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* and *Richard III*. The narrator indeed is constantly referring to ghosts and even gets into digressions about the meaning of the English word “to haunt”, closely related to the French verb “hanter”, and more or less untranslatable to Spanish. Both words describe what ghosts do to the places and people they frequent, watch over or revisit:

The etymology is uncertain, but it seems that both come from other verbs in Anglo-Saxon and Old French meaning “to dwell,” “to inhabit,” “to live in” permanently (dictionaries are as distracting as maps). Perhaps the link was merely that, a kind of enchantment or haunting, which, when you think about it, is just another name for the curse of memory, for the fact that events and people recur and reappear indefinitely and never entirely go away, they may never completely leave or abandon us, and, after a certain point, they live in or inhabit our minds, awake and asleep, they lodge there for lack of anywhere more comfortable, struggling against their own dissolution and wanting to find embodiment in the one thing left to them that can preserve some validity and contact, the repetition or infinite resonance of what they once did or of one particular event: infinite, but increasingly weary and tenuous. I had become the connecting thread (66-67).

Víctor's relationship with his ex-wife Celia, with whom he displays a paternalist attitude and for whose behaviour he feels responsible, also evidences this connection. The strange, albeit mesmerizing, chapter that shows us Víctor conflating the identity of his ex-wife and that of a prostitute, while considering the concept of co-fornicator<sup>23</sup>, is, precisely, the sequence which includes the longest Shakespearian quotation in the novel (207-208, see previous section above). There is, besides, another linking point between Marta and Celia. In the tape from the answering machine that Víctor took from Marta's house, after various trivial messages,

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<sup>23</sup> See note 14 above.

a final voice emerged, a voice that said one thing only, the voice of someone crying (...) please ... please... please... it was not so much a genuine plea intended to have some effect as a conjuration, ritual, superstitious words, empty of meaning, spoken either to overcome or to fend off a threat (71).

Fearful, Víctor is on the verge of stopping the tape when he realizes that it had not happened when Marta died, since she had not complained or pleaded, nor had he committed any brutal act. Later on, he relates these words to those of Celia, who, some years before, had also said to him: "Please... please... please" (172). In *Tomorrow on the Battle Think on Me* guilt and remorse are pervasive. The words from Marta and Deán's answering machine belong neither to Marta, not to Celia, but to Eva, Deán's mistress.

As it was anticipated in section 1 of this part, the business trip of cheating and cheated-on Marta's husband, Deán, to London, supplies an uncanny commentary on the tragedy of Víctor and Marta. During those hours Deán himself was participating in the death of another woman, Eva, his mistress. After having disputed over a feigned abortion, she had escaped from the bus where they both were, and she had had the misfortune of being hit by a taxi. Deán did nothing about this:

I did nothing, I mean. I didn't get off at the next stop or at the next set of traffic lights in order to accompany the dead Eva and to help with the formalities (...). Strictly speaking, I hadn't killed her, the taxi had, but a minute before, I had wanted her death and sought it and now it was done, and by my own wavering will, if not by my hand (307).

When he learnt that he had spent twenty hours unaware of his wife's sudden death, Deán became obsessed by what he might have done differently in that situation. Deán, who, as the narrator realizes, also wants "to escape from the enchantment" (284), explains that Eva's death "was just that of another tourist over in London from the Continent" who, yet again, forgot to look in the right direction after getting off a bus on the left-hand side and then, trying to cross the road, failed to remember that the traffic was coming from the other direction. Deán emphasizes that he "hadn't done anything, no one had, a mere accident, a misfortune" (308), but he feels guilty in any case. Víctor then reflects on the connection between guilt and ghosts:

The dead person who haunts and watches and revisits him is different from my dead person, the person who lives in his thoughts and mine does in mine like an incessant beating, awake or asleep, his *unfortunate wife* and his *unfortunate lover* mingled and both lodged in our heads for lack of anywhere more comfortable, struggling against their own dissolution and seeking embodiment in the one thing that remains to them if they are to be preserved

their validity and maintain contact, the repetition or infinite reverberation of what they once did or what happened one day: infinite, but ever wearier and more tenuous. And his dead woman, like mine, belongs to the very recent past and was neither powerful nor an enemy, yet her unreality grows apace (310).

Even if Víctor and Deán are not villains, like Richard III, they are both guilty of non-assistance to people in danger. And Víctor is doubly charged with guilt, since he failed both to help Marta and to phone Deán so that he could have acted otherwise with his mistress, since Marta was already dead. Marta and Eva are thus the ghosts who, like the “wretched Anne” from the ghost procession in *Richard III*<sup>24</sup>, haunt, watch over, and revisit Víctor and Deán, who are still alive, and who, for one reason or another, have become their “connecting thread” (67) with the world. These shadows, of course, are psychological projections of their guilt and remorse.

### CONCLUSIONS

Neither Shakespeare nor Mariás are fond of stereotypical literary ghosts. Rather, they prefer to create ghosts that are eerie symbols of the characters’ conscience and extensions of everyday reality, by embroidering the strange and the sinister on it. *Richard III* and *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* are not exceptions to this formula. In fact, some critics have wondered if the authors did not intend the strange and sinister to be embroidered only on the characters’ deranged minds, and not on objective reality.

Richard successfully conceals his nightmares for a long time. He rarely mentions his troubling dreams prior to the one nightmare that almost completely unnerves him. The dark shadow of guilt surfaces only through the ghostly procession haunting him the night before the battle at Bosworth field, which obliges him to face up to the horror of his crimes and curses him to “despair and die”. Richard had never dreamed possible that conscience could get under his skin, and he even attempts to defy it: “conscience is but a word which cowards use, devised at first to keep the strong in awe” (5. 3. 310-311), but he is clearly at war with his conscience. The action of the play moves between Richard’s announcement in the opening scene of his determination to prove himself a villain and the eventual realization, after the ghosts appear to him in a dream, that he is a villain. It is a moment in which he confesses to himself that he hates himself for the hateful deeds he has committed. He is stricken with remorse and he almost completely loses his presence of mind,

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<sup>24</sup> This excerpt contains, in fact, a textual echo from *Richard III*, somehow lost in translation. For “unfortunate wife”, the Spanish text reads “su desdichada mujer” (Mariás 1994: 365). Mariás was probably thinking on Shakespeare’s “wretched Anne, thy wife” (5. 3. 160), but the translator, apparently not noticing the Shakespearean echo, used, instead, “unfortunate”, a synonym.

crying to Jesus for mercy. In Act 5 Scene 3, Richard, who refuses to recognize the existence of conscience, gives himself over to the terrible tortures of his conscience<sup>25</sup>.

Marías' characters are also haunted by Shakespearean ghosts. As an anglophile and even a translator of Shakespeare, he has drawn from the bard the titles for some of his novels, being *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* a meaningful example of this. Marías uses quotations from *Richard III* in the title –borrowed from 5. 3. 135–, but also to punctuate the splendidly handled plot. Long sentences and paragraphs taken from *Richard III* (5. 3), and also from the film version (Laurence Olivier 1955), occur as Wagnerian leitmotifs throughout the narration. These Shakespearian intertexts could be said to be providing the key to decode the novel, which might be interpreted as an extended reflection on guilt and remorse.

Víctor cannot help feeling guilty, since he thinks that Marta might have been saved if he, instead of shamefully running away, had taken charge. The narrator thinks obsessively about the events, sharing his meditations and his remorse with the reader. Finally, given the fact that he cannot endure living with shadows, he decides to reveal the truth. But, even if Deán also brings his secrets into the open, both continue to be haunted by the dead women who are lodged in their heads and whose destiny seems to be to recur and reappear indefinitely and never entirely go away. In Marías' novel the classical and the postmodern mingle, as Shakespearean ghostly quotations, are combined with images on television screens and messages on answering machines. This is a fast-paced, urban world full of antiquarian echoes from the past. And it is, for another thing, a nightmarish world of refraction and repletion, of reflection and echoes, of doppelgangers and ghosts, not unlike the late medieval world, filtered through Elizabethan eyes, depicted by Shakespeare in *Richard III*.

Shakespeare's plays deal very often with the reestablishment of order in the Universe, and so do Marías' novels. But whereas Richard has to pay for having disturbed the natural order of things by clearing his path to the throne through murder and wickedness, Marías' characters keep a hope for redemption. In spite of the ghostly procession which will continue to haunt his existence (Marta, Celia, Eva), Víctor dreams indeed of a thriving future<sup>26</sup>, in which he will marry Marta's sister and will adopt the child. This is probably the most relevant difference between the play and the novel whose comparative analysis this chapter was endeavored to undertake.

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<sup>25</sup> Frisch 1993.

<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, according to Morales Rivera 2006: 225, "lo que en verdad Víctor obtiene al final de la novela no es tanto el castigo a su extraño sentimiento de culpa o el alivio de su angustia (...) sino el sentimiento de culpabilidad que le produce la ausencia de resolución y de significación de su rol o de sus roles dentro de las historias de Marta y de Eva".