

Why Don Fulgencio Entrambosmares del Aquilón's "Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología"¹ belongs in the Spanish Cultural Studies curriculum—followed by a concise argument to the contrary

A manuscript by the great-great grandson Entrambosmares, translated from the original with editor's notes by

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Abstract

*Cultural Studies as a discipline has taken traditional literary studies to task—quite rightly in fact—for the narrow approach used to define the object of traditional investigation. Even so, there must be a place for narrative in the Spanish Cultural Studies curriculum. Seeking texts that might suitably fit into the goals of a less traditional syllabus, the present essay advances a novel proposal. Whereas “Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología” is presented in Miguel de Unamuno’s *Amor y pedagogía* (1902) as the work of a fictional*

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character named Don Fulgencio Entrambosmares, when extracted from the context of the novel it squares with the key paradigmatic shifts of Cultural Studies—interdisciplinarity, hybridity, post-colonialism, self-reflexivity, and the question of method. Writing with a tone that echoes the self-effacement of Unamuno’s work itself, Fraser—I mean the great-great grandson Entrambosmares—scientifically dissects a treatise that may one day become a staple of the discipline... or if not, one recognized to be at least as insightful as it is humorous.

Introduction

Scholars of twentieth-century peninsular literature have long cherished the great hush that tends to fall over a crowd at the mere mention of Don Fulgencio Entrambosmares—mentor, philosopher,² pedagogue, and friend to all. These same scholars will also surely recognize that Entrambosmares, no stranger to investigation himself, chose to speak to the public only through the writings of Miguel de Unamuno, for reasons upon which, lamentably as you will agree, we may only speculate. In spite of this undoubtedly malicious hand that history hath dealt, it is through Don Miguel’s good deed that we may bear witness to don Fulgencio’s greatest gift. I make note of none other than the gift of academic, yes, I shall say it, even *scientific*, rigor.

Before I go on, I must be frank with you, dear reader,—there are some who may try to convince you that Don Fulgencio is a mere literary jest, a fictional creation of Unamuno’s,³ and, having pored over his text myself with the requisite amount of scientific objectivity, even I must admit that such a theory is not completely untenable.⁴ Ultimately, however, I am forced to question whether it would be possible, in the end, to eradicate all but the most apodictic of doubts concerning authorship of the work at hand. Nevertheless, as anyone knows, even in the sophist’s jest there is more than a mere kernel of truth, and it is with this in mind that I shall plod forward—in the words of the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado, “one makes the road by walking just beside it in the dirt.”⁵

Don Fulgencio’s short work, *Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología*, is delivered to us as an appendix of Unamuno’s early

work, *Amor y pedagogía* (1902), and, regardless of its source, or irregardless if you prefer, it remains an excellent point of departure for discussing the issues most pertinent to the instruction of Spanish Cultural Studies today—interdisciplinarity, hybridity, post-colonialism, self-reflexivity and not least of all the question of method. First, I plan to address the relevance of these aspects of the work to what I take to be the main tenets of an Introduction to Spanish Cultural Studies syllabus. Second, for a second may come only after there has been a first as the spirit of Don Fulgencio's analysis makes transparently clear,⁶ I shall present an argument to the contrary—one no less contrarian for its brevity. Throughout, my intention shall be twofold. I seek not only to salvage from the literary dustbin an undervalued work in order to pay homage to its author, but also to pay homage to a great author by rooting through the dustbin to find his undervalued work.

Cocotología, as the reader who has been properly instructed as to the value of endnotes will no doubt have already surmised, is the study of paper birds made through the simple and repeated act of folding said paper again and again. And again. In his twenty-one-plus-page opus, Don Fulgencio subjects the habits and evolution of these wondrous creatures of nature to a critical eye. This he does while managing to do so with the most minimal division into subsections permitted by the merciful economy of scientific method—we find sections titled “Historia de la cocotología,” “Razón de método,” and “Etimología;” and also “Definición” and “Importancia de nuestra ciencia;” and then there is “Lugar que se ocupa entre las demás ciencias y sus relaciones con éstas;” and to finish it off, “División,” “Embriología,” “Anatomía,” and “Origen y fin de la pajarita.”⁷ This treatise on *cocotología*, while certainly more amusing than its circumspect author may have intended, in fact poses a question central to cultural studies—“What is and what is not an appropriate object of investigation?”

Hinting at an answer to this important question, contemporary scholars—who are unfortunately ignorant of the roots of their field in the work of Don Fulgencio—have improved upon the blind spots of traditional literary studies to investigate pop music (Pérez), radio (Hopkinson and Tacchi), popular dance forms (Castro), and new cyber-narrative forms such as blogs (Quiggin) for example, as well as far-less-traditional objects of analysis such as *la lotería* (More and

Rodríguez), mobile phones (May and Hearn), and even bagels (Katz and Feldman). It would seem that in the current intellectual climate, anything can be analyzed. This questioning of traditional analyses has not, for the most part, however, resulted in the creation of an entirely new field, but rather in the reconciliation of other disciplines with literary studies. Fiction and history have now pulled chairs up to the coffee table for innovative approaches from the fields of anthropology, disability studies, economics, geography, linguistics, marketing, media studies, musicology, philosophy, psychology, queer studies, sociology, urban studies, and women's studies. The resulting conversation has been quite caffeinated, to say the least, and has led the cultural studies approach to ask important interdisciplinary questions of class, identity, culture, politics, and nationhood.

This interdisciplinary concern has arguably been a part of cultural studies since its inception.⁸ As Raymond Williams retrospectively describes it in "The Future of Cultural Studies" (1986), those who were the first to engage the eclectic and extra-literary approach that characterized the precursor to Cultural Studies as we know it today started a project that went beyond the universities to demand the relation of literature to the "life-situations which people were stressing outside the established educational systems" (152) and engaging with popular culture, popular fiction, advertising, newspapers, etc. (153). In this way, Cultural Studies moved from the realm of adult education and 'extramural Extension classes' (Thompson, Hoggart, Williams and many others) to finally take its seat at Cambridge. Nevertheless, years before Cultural Studies pioneers such as Thompson, Hoggart and Williams started their commendable effort, there sat none other than Entrambosmares, chipping away at disciplinary norms and charting out a novel epistemological position through his treatise on paper-folding. Thus although Entrambosmares was in fact a pioneer in his own right, his ground-breaking interdisciplinary approach has been neglected for over a century because it could not be assimilated by the hard-boundaries of disciplinary borders.

Even today there is cause to bemoan the restrictions placed on interdisciplinary inquiry. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi merely hint at the lack of interdisciplinary scholarship in Spanish culture in their edited volume, saying that "We do not wish to discuss here the ways in which the teaching of Spanish culture at educational

institutions in Spain and abroad has inhibited the development of interdisciplinary approaches and the study of popular and mass cultural forms” (1). Well, if two distinguished scholars such as Graham and Labanyi will not discuss it... I would thus like to be the first to do so, suggesting that “the teaching of Spanish culture at educational institutions in Spain and abroad has inhibited the development of interdisciplinary approaches and the study of popular and mass cultural forms.” (**Editor’s note: this citation is actually from Graham and Labanyi, 1**). Contemporary scholars may take solace in the fact that there has been at least one soul brave enough to mete out a warranted critique upon the hide of traditional analysis—and in the well-reasoned and measurable doses required by science I might add! Oh Don Fulgencio, “[m]ay God deny you peace but give you glory!”⁹

Although certainly the field of *cocotología* is ripe for harvest by scholars who adhere strictly to the precise limits of their own disciplines, Don Fulgencio himself foregrounds the interdisciplinary nature of his own treatise. In the far-from-perfunctory section titled “Lugar que ocupa [la cocotología] entre las demás ciencias y sus relaciones con éstas,” he astutely makes note of the many disciplines that are required to adequately take on the *cocotte* as object of study:

Relaciónase con las [ciencias] físico-químicas porque el papel, sea fino, sea de estraza, con que las pajaritas se hacen, está sujeto a las leyes todas físicas y químicas; pesa, refleja un color, da un sonido si se le hiere, se dilata por el calor, arde al fuego, es sensible a ciertos ácidos, etcétera. Se relaciona con las ciencias naturales porque dicho papel se extrae de materias vegetales, y sin conocer éstas mal se puede conocer bien tal papel. Relaciónase con la psicología porque las pajaritas de papel ayudan al desarrollo de la psique infantil, y con las ciencias sociales por su valor como juego de los niños. Pero ante todo y sobre todo se relaciona, como veremos, con las ciencias matemáticas definidas y puede someterse a fórmula analítica. (193)

In what some may consider a reckless move, Entrambosmares cautions that the physical-chemical sciences, the natural sciences, the

psychological sciences, the social sciences and mathematical sciences all have a role to play in the science of understanding the lives and times of these wondrous paper birds. Would it not be easier to list the disciplines to which the cocotte is *not* relevant?!

As any savvy reader will have discerned, Don Fulgencio's focus on interdisciplinarity has as its natural complement the concept of hybridity. Although reputedly made popular in recent Hispanist scholarship by Néstor García Canclini's masterful work *Culturas híbridas*, the concept of hybridity itself arguably originates in a trenchant analysis buried deep, deep, deep I say, within the text of Don Fulgencio's mysterious "Tratado" itself:

La primera cuestión que surge respecto al nombre de nuestra ciencia [cocotología] es que es tal un nombre híbrido, como el de sociología, compuesta de una palabra latina y otra griega, y son muchas las personas graves que han visto en eso del hibridismo de su título un fuerte argumento en contra de la nueva sociología. (189)

Entrambosmares's mention of hybridity comes, if not a full decade, then at least *years* before Unamuno himself would note the subtle mixture of "la verdad en la vida y la vida en la verdad" ("Verdad y vida" 22) or the eternal and paradoxical struggle at the heart of his philosophical treatise *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*. I cannot help but wonder, had Don Fulgencio's work been given the attention it deserved, and for that matter which it does deserve today and which it may well continue to deserve tomorrow, or even the day after that, how very far the study of hybridity might have come in all these years. Just imagine what such a field—might I suggest the name of "hybridology"?—might have elucidated with regard to more contemporary -ologies? It is unfortunate that this cry must, for the moment at least, go unanswered.

"Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología" is noteworthy not merely on account of its explicit interdisciplinary approach and reconciliatory spirit but also for exploding the simplistic dualism between East and West—one of the most pernicious intellectual categories. Although Unamuno was himself critical of abstract categories, here Don Fulgencio goes beyond the more well-known

philosopher's superb capacity for reconciliatory analysis. It is more than merely *intriguing* that at the heart of Entrambosmares's manuscript (which may be considered, which *should* be considered a classic of *western anthropology*¹⁰) there is an *eastern* orientation. He writes:

Vamos ahora a la China, a ese país antiquísimo que guarda las más venerables reliquias de la infancia del género humano. Y una vez en China haré un caluroso elogio del interesante pueblo chino para concluir encareciendo la importancia del *tangram* o *chinchuap*, especie de rompecabezas chinesco, que sirve de distracción a los niños que se ha adoptado en no pocas escuelas de Europa para desarrollar el sentido geométrico de los niños. Consta el tangram de siete piececitas de madera u otra materia, cortadas al modo que se ve en la figura adjunta, y con las cuales puede hacerse todo género de combinaciones. Es un juego muy conocido. (202-03)

In his compelling essay, Joseph Rikapito even suggests that, within the “Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología” these paper birds reflect “important philosophical and religious questions, some of which are also to be found in Buddhist and Oriental thought” (89). Perhaps not far at all from the critique made by Edward Said in his classic text *Orientalism*, Don Fulgencio seems to be similarly dealing with a Western discourse that has legitimized itself through providing, structuring and categorizing knowledge of its eastern counterpart. Certainly, Cultural Studies as a discipline has the resolve to critique the ways that Western literary and philosophical projects have advanced themselves only due to and through contrast to the great concepts of the east—fortunately, Entrambosmares's text provides an opportunity to do just that.

Yet the “Apuntes para un tratado” does more than suggest topics of interest to contemporary Cultural Studies such as interdisciplinarity, hybridity, and orientalism, it provides an insightful opportunity to assess the very foundations and preconceptions of knowledge. It is not altogether unweighty that significant passages of the “Tratado” are written in the future tense. Surely this is because it is a manuscript that, in the main, has yet to be subjected to a precise,

selective and most thoroughly comprehensive editing process. Nevertheless, the vital reasoning of science is such that it need not find itself exhausted at the first suggestion it has come across, and it appears that in this case, a tentative examination of other evidence shall prove acceptable, at least initially. Take for example, the first paragraph of the section titled “*Historia de la cocotología*” where it is clear that the author must have labored over each word as a painter over his choice of brush or a portly gentleman over the choice between his dinner and his wife’s!

Empezaré diciendo que la historia de la cocotología, como la de todo lo existente, posible y concebible, se pierde en la noche de los tiempos y acudiré al Larousse a ver qué dice de ella. Y como es de suponer que no diga nada, consideraré a las pajaritas de papel como un juego infantil y haré la historia de los juegos infantiles y de todos los juegos en general. Con esto bien puede llenarse otro tomo. (187-88)

This is clearly an example of a narrative conscious of its own narration. It is evident that the practical benefits of this practice are quite satisfactory indeed—i.e., minimalism/economy of language speeds up the writing process considerably, not to mention that errors made in the process may be attributed to the aforementioned hurried pace. The reader may thus rightly conclude that there is absolutely no need to pursue the matter further. Nevertheless—in the name of science—in this case I am forced to reluctantly suggest another interpretation.

In this interpretation I would argue that, through this self-reflexivity that relentlessly pervades the text as a burnt roast the house, Entrambosmares successfully undermines the faith of the rational scientific project in its own arbitration of truth. I would refer the reader to the self-reflexivity of such important texts of Hispanism as the *Quijote*, as Luis Goytisolo’s *Antagonía* tetralogy,¹¹ and as the newly hard-boiled detective novels of Paco Ignacio Taibo II.¹² I would point out that the self-reflexive nature of these texts brings the conflict of different voices to the surface, exploding the traditional paradigm of monolithic narrative authority and moving to accept plurality as the natural base from which individual views are abstracted and subsequently repackaged and sold back to a populous

willing to pay money for what was theirs to begin with. I would go on to suggest that this self-reflexivity is in fact the greatest pedagogical weapon available today if we are to produce students capable of forging new democratic processes and inclusive notions of citizenship in a troubling post-colonial, commodity-obsessed, and war-torn capitalist global market. Of course, as any fool can see, this interpretation is definitively unsound, and we may thus return to our examination of Don Fulgencio's text satisfied that we have satiated the more errant and questionably tolerant postulates of the scientific method.

Here, after a brilliant paragraph that spells out precisely why the question of method is preeminent, I will support this idea with a quotation from the *Tratado*, perhaps this one, in fact—"Sabido es, en efecto, que el método lo es todo y que la ciencia se reduce al método, es decir, al camino, pues método significa en griego camino" (188). I will then concisely summarize the history of the philosophical debate regarding how the position adopted with reference to ontological questions affects subsequent methodological procedures. It will be necessary to argue that don Fulgencio's text undermines its own faith in scientific rationality at the same time that it presents that critique through a strict rational framework, and many penetrating comparisons to Unamuno's literary and philosophical works will need to be made in order to further belabor the point. I will then suggest that a key methodological question of the *Tratado* involves what Paul R. Olson, making reference to Richard Rorty's *The Linguistic Turn*, calls "the problematic relation of language to 'reality'" ("Unamuno's Break," 308). Put simply, this tradition seeks to investigate the linguistically-negotiated basis of our experience. Don Fulgencio's opinion, which tends toward an absurd parody—legitimizing itself in the biblical story of genesis, is that the word comes before the idea, which in turn is completely given in the former. Language is not a mere path into reality but reality itself—it has become another Kantian *a priori* of the same priority as space and time.¹³ In this sense, Entrambosmares's work seeks merely to affirm its own intentions, and ends up destroying them entirely in what amounts to a superb materialist critique of pure idealism.

If Spanish Cultural Studies boils down to one precept, it is not that language does not structure our experience, but rather that the language of traditional scholarship has itself functioned as a

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disciplinary power—carefully sculpting limited critiques that isolate themselves to such saccharine-coated realms as the fictionality of the novel, the lyricality of poetry and the displaced ideal world of bourgeois escape. In this sense, the major contribution of the field is an invitation to question method itself—what is the purpose of scholarly investigation, how does it *work*, does it only seek out what confirms its own hypotheses or is it concerned with the very articulation of research questions themselves?

These may all be important questions. Nevertheless, they are not. I started this essay with the intention of proving that “Apuntes para un tratado sobre la cocotología” belongs in the Spanish Cultural Studies (SCS) curriculum, and it is in the interest of securing such a masterful work a suitable position in the newly-forming canon that I wish to return to that discussion with a concise argument that points out why it, in fact, does not.

If the reader of this essay has somehow managed to forge a path through the labyrinthine scaffolding of ideas that form this essay, admittedly the reasons given for incorporating “Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología” into the Spanish Cultural Studies curriculum must seem staggering, indeed. And initially, I myself have no choice but to agree with your astute assessment. Interdisciplinarity, hybridity, post-colonialism, self-reflexivity, and methodology continue to be the key arms of Cultural Studies.

Fortunately for you and I, however, such things need only be taken as seriously as scholarship itself. And it is not merely with the relief that comes from mistaking pedagogy for thought that I say, as concerns the proper way to inculcate¹⁴ students to critical thinking, anything will do. Simply stated, Entrambosmares’s text does not belong in the Cultural Studies curriculum because there is no need to standardize a field that is characterized by such interdisciplinary inquiry.

Allow me to review the road we have followed today, though it may have been a long one. First, we suggested that don Fulgencio Entrambosmares del Aquilón’s “Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología” embodies many key ideas of Cultural Studies. Second, we argued that this treatise paves the way for a great broadening concerning the selection of objects of critical investigation. Third,

fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh, we saw that Entrambosmares's work foregrounds the dilemmas of interdisciplinarity, hybridity, post-colonialism, self-reflexivity, and methodology, respectively. Eighth, we pointed out that perhaps Don Fulgencio Entrambosmares del Aquilón's "Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología" is best left out of the Spanish Cultural Studies curriculum. Ninth, we began our concluding remarks, which include the sentence now being read by the reader of this essay.

In summary, years before the great names of Cultural Studies (Thompson, Hoggart, Williams) began to break apart an antiquated notion of intellectual activity, years before university scholars were willing to go beyond the traditional understanding of cultural texts, there was Don Fulgencio Entrambosmares, sitting at his desk, patiently observing the rich cultural world and the mating practices of paper birds in their natural habitat. It is clear that his work should continue, and I have decided to return to his project today in the eclectic and interdisciplinary context that characterizes the field of Cultural Studies today. I thus leave you in anticipation of a more expansive monograph on *la cocotología* that I plan to write, three tomes of some 400-odd pages apiece. Although my publisher has advised me not to say too much lest I place the future sales of the work at risk, let me at least disclose that the first and last volumes will be a revision of my great-great grandfather's work on paper-birds in light of deceased philosopher Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold*—which I hear is a noble work on paper-folding that, interestingly enough, makes no explicit reference to the treatise of my great-great grandfather.

—The great-great grandson Entrambosmares

Notes

¹ *Apuntes para un tratado de cocotología* appears as part of Unamuno's *Amor y pedagogía*. Cocotología is defined there in the following way: “la palabra cocotología se compone de dos, de la francesa *cocotte*, pajarita de papel, y de la griega *logia*, de *logos*, tratado” (189, original emphasis)—making birds out of folded paper.

² Thomas Franz has pointed out that the philosophical bases for the work include, among others, Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Spinoza.

³ This is the opinion of one Julia Barella, whose existence, because I have never met her, I am forced to concede is plausible at best. **[Editor's note: The author is referring to the Julia Barella who penned the introduction to Alianza Editorial's 1989 first pocket edition of *Amor y pedagogía*.]**

⁴ I must insist upon the distinction between Unamuno and Don Fulgencio. Martin Nozick characterizes Unamuno as one who “could accept no given conclusions and labored against stiff-necked righteousness in pedagogy, science, politics, and above all, religion” (204). I do not think it imprecise to state the obvious—that this stands in stark contrast to the not-quite-loose-necked righteousness of Don Fulgencio. Therefore, I am forced to maintain that Don Fulgencio cannot be a mere fabrication of Unamuno's.

⁵ **[Editor's note: the original quotation of Machado's is “Caminante y no hay camino / el camino se hace al andar” from the XXIXth poem in *Proverbios y Cantares*. Here it appears to be, well, somewhat changed from the original.]**

⁶ In Don Fulgencio's text “Apuntes...,” included in Unamuno's *Amor y pedagogía*, he writes the following: “Aquí expondré el por qué trato primero de lo primero y segundo de lo segundo, y por qué lo tercero ha de ir antes de lo cuarto y después de éste lo quinto. Esta es una parte muy importante y en que se requiere mucho pulso” (188).

⁷ Olson comments further on these headings.

⁸ Paul McEwan argues that Cultural Studies need, in fact, to solidify themselves as a discipline. As this suggestion squares well with the tendency of rightly *scientific* knowledge to classify and categorize, my faith in the methods of reason requires that I support it.

⁹ Upon a second reading, I have found the following passage, taken from an obscure part of *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (1995) known as, for lack of a better moniker, the “Editor’s Preface,” which suggests that Graham and Labanyi have indeed been brave enough to voice a concern. “Because of the lack of existing interdisciplinary work in the Spanish field, we have commissioned a large number of short essays from a wide range of specialists working in Britain, Spain, France, and the USA” (v). Oh!, if only this seed had been cultivated throughout the whole volume! **[Editor’s note: I was alarmed to discover that this sentence, ‘May God deny you peace but give you glory!’ is that with which Unamuno ends *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*—although this may only serve as grist for the mill, I feel it is my duty to report such obvious plagiarism.]**

¹⁰ Olson notes that the treatise may be classified as “antropología general” (in “*Amor y pedagogía en la dialéctica interior*,” 651; quoted also in Barella, p. 18).

¹¹ Note for revision—what might Entrambosmares’s “hybridology” have had to say regarding this prominent –ology?

¹² See Fraser.

¹³ See Franz.

¹⁴ **[Editor’s note: here the word “indoctrinate” appears scratched out in the manuscript and to the side is written “inculcate.”]**

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