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NOSTALGIA AGAINST MELANCHOLY: ARTISTIC CORPOREAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ETERNAL RETURN AS A SOLUTION. A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO THE WORK OF JON MIRANDE AND BALTHASAR KLOSSOWSKI¹

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that 20th century human beings found in art a place in which to satiate their need of avoiding the melancholy that the idea of death and passage of concrete real time carry with them. In order to do so, I will approach the ideas of memory, melancholy and nostalgia from the point of view of art and anthropology.

Following Mircea Eliade's theories, I will show how, throughout history, by mixing memory and imagination, nostalgia has helped human beings to avoid the melancholy that the idea of death carries with it. I will then try to demonstrate that, even if during the 20th century this attitude of trying to abolish concrete real time that I will call "mythical behaviour" has no longer an hegemonic collective and homogeneous social dimension, it has still found its place in art. Finally, I will give different examples of artistic corporeal representations of the 20th century to illustrate my thesis. I will start with the examination of the National Socialists' cosmogonic view as reflected in their propaganda, probably the last collective popular artistic expression of "mythical behavior" in Western civilization, which had a great influence on many artists –such as the Parisian writer of Basque descent Jon Mirande. I will then compare artistic corporeal representations of pubescent girls in the work of Jon Mirande (1925-1972) and the Parisian painter of Polish descent Balthasar Klossowski (1908-2001). In both cases, there have been studies of their corporeal artistic representations of girls entering puberty, especially those of Klossowski. My aim in this work, however, is to offer a new and different perspective on these representations.

Death and the passage of concrete real time as a source of melancholy

The Word 'melancholy' originated in Ancient Greece, where it was a scientific or medical term. Nowadays, it still has a scientific meaning, but it also has a place as a source of art or an artistic subject. On the basis of definitions in different dictionaries like the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, –Ologies & -isms (2008) and the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (2012), omitting those linked to medicine, I would define melancholy in the following terms: "Deep gloom or depression of long duration".

A human being may feel melancholic for many different reasons, but one stands out above all the others. As the anthropologists David Hicks and Margaret A. Gwinn explain in *Cultural Anthropology* (1995: 341):

“Perhaps the greatest of all human misfortunes is death. Men and women may avoid other trials-sickness, accidents, social failures-for a long time, hoping their run of luck continues unabated, but their intellects oblige them to accept the inevitability of death. They know for certain that whether death befalls tomorrow or in 60 years’ time, it is an inevitable part of life, so it may be this certainty that prompts humanity’s endless speculation about what, if anything, follows death.

Such universal interest suggests how earlier human beings might have come to imagine the existence of some kind of life after the death of the body, and why many contemporary people continue to believe in an afterlife. There is no evidence to suggest that modern-day people are ceasing to think about death and its possible aftermath, or that twentieth-century science is succeeding in explaining this mystery to their complete satisfaction. So human beings continue responding to what might almost be called a religious instinct. One way to interpret the universality of religion, therefore, is to view it as an attempt to deny the dismal possibility of our own permanent extinction.”

Since the dawn of humanity, death and the passage of concrete real time have always been a major concern for human beings. Reacting to it in a constructive way, in order to avoid melancholy, they have developed different solutions which, taken together, consist of abolishing concrete real time. This is not a case of real solutions aimed at avoiding death and the passage of concrete real time, but rather about imaginative responses to the issue. Here is where nostalgia and memory appear, since they form an important part of these imaginative solutions.

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Mythical behaviour: memory, nostalgia and imagination

David Hicks and Margaret A. Gwinn talk about a “religious instinct”, yet one could say that religion is just one of the means developed by human beings in order to avoid the idea of death and the passage of concrete real time. In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1959) and *Myth and Reality* (1963)² Mircea Eliade talks about “mythical behaviour” as a tendency to abolish concrete real time which has its origin in archaic societies. To understand this idea it is necessary to take into account the meaning he gives to the idea of *myth* in *Myth and Reality*:

“Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in a primordial Time, the fabled time of the “beginnings”. In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality —an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a “creation”; it relates how something was produced, began to be. Myth tells only of that which really happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the “beginnings”. (Eliade 1963: 5-6)

² In this work I will use the English translations for the references. In the case of quotes from works originally written in Basque, Spanish or French, the translations are mine.

According to Eliade in *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, the philosophy of archaic societies, based on an eternal return to idealized beginnings or *in illo tempore* (meaning the *chaos* and the cosmogonic act that follows it), repetition and archetypes, denied linear time by advocating a totally anti-historical attitude. He speaks about:

“[...] archaic societies—societies which, although they are conscious of a certain form of “history”, make every effort to disregard it. In studying these traditional societies, one characteristic has especially struck us: it is their revolt against concrete, historical time, their nostalgia for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things, to the “Great Time”. (Eliade 1959:11)

By repetitions of archetypes and different rituals which updated the myth of the eternal return, archaic societies abolished concrete real time.

“Differing in their formulas, all these instruments of regeneration tend toward the same end: to annul past time, to abolish history by a continuous return *in illo tempore*, by the repetition of the cosmogonic act.” (Eliade 1959: 81)

That eternal return to an idealized *in illo tempore* of beginnings involves a mixture of memory and imagination apart from nostalgia, insofar as it is an idealized place which is located in the past memories built by imagination. As Eliade suggests, one might find this strategy childish, but it did help people to avoid falling into total despair or melancholy (Eliade 1959: 152). From the 17th century on, the idea of progress and linear time increased to the detriment of cyclical time. This abolition of concrete real time thus ceased to be a collective solution to avoiding that melancholic destructive attitude faced with death and the passage of concrete real time. However, as Eliade states, that does not mean that “mythical behaviour”, the need to abolish concrete real time disappeared altogether:

“We must wait until our own century to see the beginnings of certain new creations against this historical linearism and a certain revival of interest in the theory of cycles; so it is that, in political economy, we are witnessing the rehabilitation of the notions of cycle, fluctuation, periodic oscillation; that in philosophy the myth of eternal return is revived by Nietzsche; or that, in the philosophy of history, a Spengler or a Toynbee concern themselves with the problem of periodicity.” (Eliade, 1959:146)

Moreover, in his opinion it would not be surprising if, in the future, at a particular moment, and in order to survive, people returned to this anti-historical behaviour based on repetitions, archetypes and the idea of cyclical time. In fact, talking about his own time or era, Eliade states that even if they are not collective and homogeneous “some forms of mythical behaviour still survive in our day. This does not mean that they represent “survivals” of an archaic mentality. But certain aspects and functions of mythical thought are constituents of the human being” (Eliade 1959: 181-182).

In the 20th century it remained difficult for people to confront. One might then ask what kind of solutions were developed in order to abolish concrete real time and, thus, avoid the melancholy associated to the idea of death and the passage of concrete real time. As I will try to show, art has played an important role in offering human beings a place in which to update the nostalgic myth of the eternal return.

The myth of the eternal return as a corporeal artistic representation

“Mythical behaviour” and art have a direct relationship at different levels, two of which I am especially interested in:

- 1) The level of image: this refers to the direct representation of the myth of the eternal return, as often portrayed in 19th century romanticism, rebuilding the idealized *in illo tempore* of a person, country or humanity as a whole; in other words, rebuilding an idealized childhood.
- 2) The level of creation and reception: the time of creating and receiving an artistic work can be understood as another time, separated from concrete real time and moments which make creators and recipients part of a new creation, of the return to an *in illo tempore*. When Eliade refers to this connection between “mythical behavior” and art in *Myth and Reality* he focuses on literature:

“But it is especially the “escape from Time” brought about by reading—most effectively by novel Reading—that connects the function of literature with that of mythologies. To be sure, the time that one “lives” when reading a novel is not the time that a member of a traditional society recovers when he listens to a myth. But in both cases alike, one “escapes” from historical and personal time and is submerged in a time that is fabulous and trans-historical. (...)” (Eliade 1963: 192-193)

In my opinion, every kind of art form offers human beings the opportunity to develop their “mythical behavior” or that need to avoid the idea of death and passage of concrete real time. Moreover, while Eliade talks only about the reception of the artistic work, I believe that the process of creation has the same value.

As this work focuses on corporeal artistic representations, one should bear in mind that, as Lourdes Méndez states in *Antropología de la producción artística* (1995: 143), western artists have devoted a considerable amount of their works to these kinds of representations and that, in this regard, the human body is a cultural construct:

“Every society has sought to explain in its cosmogony the apparition of human beings on Earth, how and from which materials they have been created, who has given them life; all of them have made a distinction between “real” human beings—that is, themselves- and the “others”; and all of them have manipulated and

transformed the human body. In that sense, the human body is a cultural body, a product of the wishes, beliefs and expectations of the society it belongs to.” (Méndez 1995: 146)

Although identity is symbolized by corporeal representations, these representations are varied (Méndez 1995: 147). One such representation is that of the myth of the eternal return which symbolizes this return to the desired and idealized *in illo tempore* of chaos, the cosmogonic act or the beginnings. Such representations can be expressed through both individual and collective creations and, to give a clear example, I will start with the corporeal artistic representations constructed in 1930s Germany by National Socialist propaganda. Specifically, I will analyse corporeal artistic representations in the film *Olympia* (1936), directed by Leni Riefenstahl on the occasion of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.

As Joan M. Marin states in “La estética parda. El arte y la estética bajo el nacionalsocialismo” (2010: 91-105), German National Socialists made a link between “good” and “beauty” and stated that physical beauty must demonstrate the supremacy of the German people (2010: 97). The historical roots of what the Nazis regarded as good and beautiful corporeal representations are evident in *Olympia*: Ancient Greek civilization. At the beginning of the film there are people with chiselled athletic bodies who look like Greek sculptures among the ruins of Greek temples and other buildings. Then, a runner takes a torch and starts running to Berlin, where the torch is delivered.

That symbolizes the German National Socialists’ proclamation of themselves as the inheritors of Ancient Greece’s culture. Furthermore, the Ancient Greeks believed in the idea of cyclical time and this was also a philosophy embraced by National Socialists, against the ideas of linear time and progress that prevailed in most of their contemporaneous Western countries. Taking into account that all these ideas are epitomised in these artistic corporeal representations, they are a clear example of the updated myth of the eternal return insofar as it symbolizes a nostalgic return to an *in illo tempore* where, moreover, time was cyclical. In Marin’s words (2010: 96):

“The idea of linear time, of Judeo-Christian origin, with a beginning and an end of history, allowed enlightened thinkers to develop the notion of “progress”, according to which, living conditions will improve from generation to generation if we exercise rationality. This idea, which was to be developed by both the liberal and Marxist ideologies, was dismissed by fascism (particularly by Nazism). They chose the cyclic conception of eternal time; and advocated a return to a Golden Age. From a progressive and revolutionary conception, the best is still to come and it has to be created; according to the cyclical-reactionary conception, the best is still to come and it has to be recovered. A rational conquest of the future against an emotional return to the past. The Nazis turned Ancient Greece into the cradle of their mythic past.”

The reason for the inclusion of this example is that it is the closest case to us in time and arguably the most vivid illustration of these kinds of collective artistic corporeal representations of the nostalgic myth of the eternal return. Besides, the expansion of this cosmogonic view and its artistic corporeal representation implemented by the National Socialist movement influenced in different ways many artists such as Jon Mirande, who developed a revival of Basque pre-Christian mythology from a nationalist point of view, as the Irish writer W. B. Yeats (amongst others) had done so before him. In the following sections I will move on from the collective to the individual and start analysing the artistic corporeal representations created by Jon Mirande and Balthasar Klossowski, popularly known as Balthus.

Balthasar Klossowski “Balthus” and Jon Mirande

Both of them were born in Paris and they were contemporaries; the former belonged to a Polish family of painters, the latter to a Basque family of farmers. They were both sons of immigrants, although they each had a different socio-cultural status. They both started their art work very early, Balthus with his paintings and Mirande with his writings, and both refused to follow the dominant artistic trends of the time. Besides these similarities, there is an especially meaningful coincidence: both of them pictured nymphs, artistic corporeal representations of girls entering puberty and both had one called Thérèse. The symbolic meaning of these nymphs was very similar for the two of them, but these are just coincidences and there is no evidence to suggest that they ever met each other.

Balthus' girls' postures have been often wrongly interpreted as merely erotic and provocative. In most of the paintings they are reading, dreaming or completely involved in their thoughts, as in *Thérèse rêvant* (1938), *Thérèse éveillée* (1938), *Les beaux jours* (1946) and *Katia lisant* (1974).

In his own words, as revealed in his *Mémoires* (2001: 249), he only deliberately set out to be provocative on one occasion. It was with the painting *Leçon de guitare* (1934).

“(…) we did laugh at the definition that the authors of the dictionary, the Robert I think, had given: my painting was described as *glaucque*... (..) The word taken somewhat in its moral sense, that is, perverse, suspicious, and bated in ambiguity? Of course the adjective was used towards that end. Nevertheless, that misinterpretation of my painting made me smile. I secretly noticed that it was not entirely unpleasant to me to be perceived that way. The young girls whose drawings and portraits I have often done, including that voluntarily scandalous *Leçon de guitare*, could reveal a compulsive and excessively erotic bearing.”

Mirande wrote in the Basque language and the third grammatical person the controversial *nouvelle* entitled *Haur besoetako* (The goddaughter (1970)), which tells a love story between a 30-year-old man and an 11-year-old girl called Theresa. The man lives with a servant in a house inherited from his parents and he is to marry a bourgeois woman called Isabela. He adopts Theresa, whose parents have died, and, suddenly, he experiences a spiritual crisis and revelation: he falls in love with Theresa, the love is requited and he realizes that he has, up to that moment, been unhappy. Everything he has done in life he has done because he was supposed to do so, because that was the right thing to do. He does not agree with the materialism or the idea of progress in his society and decides that he is not going to marry Isabela. Instead, he wants to go to a place of eternal youth and immortality called the Country of Youth. However, society does not accept this kind of love and the man is given ten days before Theresa is taken away from him. As a last resort, the couple decide to walk into the sea and let themselves drown after ritually celebrating a communion of their bodies, in the hope that they will stay together for ever in the Country of Youth, where the sea is going to take them. But at the last moment, the man gets scared and decides that it is not the right time to die. He tries to rescue Theresa but finally the ocean swallows her up. Later, he visits a painter who was their only friend and who wanted to take a portrait of the couple. The man tells the painter the whole story and leaves. At the end of the *nouvelle* the painter is happy because the couple are probably together in the Country of Youth already, but he feels sorry for himself because he feels just like the man did at the beginning of the story. Then he decides he is going to do a painting of the couple.

The structure of the *nouvelle* is totally circular, since it seems that the story is going to be repeated by the painter and, what is more, it is suggested that the *nouvelle* itself is the painting he is going to create, implying that the painter himself is the narrator of the story. Moreover, the corporeal artistic representations that Mirande pictured in his *nouvelle* have much in common with those of Balthus. As an example, at the beginning of the story, Theresa is sitting by the fireplace, reading; she seems to be fully concentrated and there is a whole paragraph that describes how the flames of the fire light up the girl's hair and face:

“The man cast his eye from the window upon the fire. By the fireplace, Theresa was sitting in the armchair and the flames made her slender shadow dance on the wall. She was reading, her mouth a bit open and her eyes too close to the book, as young children often do. Now and then, a spark gave her hair, which was kind of a deep dark red, a golden colour, and now and then, while a longer flame caressed her face, she moved to the side with a sigh. It looked like her mind was absorbed in the thick, red covered book, (...).” (1970: 36)

This artistic corporeal representation shares similarities with both *Katia lissant* and *Les beaux jours*.

Both artists had problems as a result of misunderstandings about their artistic creations, which were often interpreted as mere pornography. In contrast, they insisted on the profound and symbolic meaning of their artistic corporeal representations of nymphs. That said, however, and here there is a considerable difference between the two, Balthus did actually exhibit most of his paintings while although Mirande finished his work in 1959, it was not published until 1970, two years before he killed himself. The language they used to express these corporeal representations is an important factor, since painting is a universal language while at that time there were very few readers in the Basque language. He could have chosen French or another language in which to publish the book, but he did not, because he was a Basque nationalist.

Balthus' Thérèses:

Whatever the case, those original misunderstandings persist to this day when it comes to Balthus too, as demonstrated in a recent review published in the digital edition of *The Guardian*, of the exhibition "Balthus: Cats and girls" that took place in the Metropolitan Museum of New York in 2013:

"The girls are self-possessed and serious, and Balthus always denied any hint of paedophilia. But get real: these are erotic images of children. Some, especially the Thérèse portraits, show real invention and even a little humour that make them difficult to dismiss outright. Others, especially the mannered domestic scenes of his later career, are barely competent acts of voyeurism"

By paying attention to what Balthus says in his *Mémoires* (2001: 165) and Mirande in the *nouvelle* about their way of understanding art and girls entering puberty, one can grasp the real meaning of the Thérèses much easier. Otherwise, as Balthus says "c'est rester au ras des choses matérielles que de croire à l'érotisme pervers de mes jeunes filles. C'est ne rien comprendre des languissements adolescents, de leur innocence, c'est ignorer la vérité de l'enfance". These girls respond to "mythical behaviour" and are nostalgic artistic corporeal representations which update the myth of the eternal return. Balthus insists over and over again on the fact that artistic creation is a way of stealing a piece of time, a means of capturing immortality and going beyond time.

"One painting one prayer, it is the same thing: one innocence finally trapped, a piece of time ripped out of the disaster of the time that goes by. A captured immortality." (Klossowski 2001: 20)

"The painting is what teaches me how to reject the frenetic wheel of time. It does not run behind the painting. What I try to reach is its secret. The immobility." (Klossowski 2001: 33)

“To remember the artisanal work of the Ancients, the ritual preparations that gave the effect of suspension, of surprised expectation, of time finally defeated.

Defeated time: is that not, perhaps, the best definition of art?” (Klossowski 2001: 15)

This way of understanding artistic creation as a means of abolishing concrete real time involves “mythical behaviour”, a need to abolish concrete real time. If art is a way to get beyond time and eternalize moments, his objective was to immortalize the passage from childhood to puberty, the final moments of the idealized *in illo tempore* of childhood, the moment of *chaos* and creation when everything is still to be done:

“Certainly, there will be biographers and art critics (there already have been!) who will seek to find my models’ postures erotic, to sully this work of innocence that I have wanted to lean towards, this pursuit of eternity. But, whatever! It will even be said that I have imitated Pygmalion. But that way, these people will demonstrate that they have not understood anything of my work. The objective was always to get closer to the mystery of childhood, its languid grace within wrongly drawn boundaries. What I wanted to paint was the secret of the soul and this tension obscures and illuminates at the same time their as yet unfinished shell. The passage, I might say, yes, that is it, the passage. This uncertain and problematic moment where innocence is total and will soon give way to another Age, more determined, more social.” (Klossowski 2001: 194)

These artistic corporeal representations of girls on the verge of puberty symbolize an eternal return to the beginnings, implying once again the abolition of concrete real time. Moreover, by painting the girls reading, dreaming or simply self-involved, this abolition of concrete real time becomes stronger, since they are not part of concrete real time but instead involved in another creation and time, another dimension.

“I have often painted young girls reading. Probably I saw this act as a more profound way to get inside the secret of existence. Reading is the major access path to myths. (...) My Young girls reading, Katia, Frédérique or The Three Sisters escape as in their dreaming postures, from a fleeting and deleterious time. What matters, by immobilizing them in this act of reading or dreaming, is to prolong the privilege of a glimpsed time, marvellous and magic, by the grace of a drapery suddenly open to another light, in another window, which allows viewing only to those who know how to see. The book, then, is a key that enables opening the mysterious trunk, to the perfumes of childhood, we run to open it as a child does after butterflies or a young girl after moth. Time powdered with gold which has not undergone the alterations of the world, time which glows in a magic halo, immobilized time inside which one sees the dreamers smiling.” (Klossowski 2001: 138)

Mirande’s Thérèse

In the 1950s and 1960s Basque culture went through a period of major transformation and profound modernization. After the imposed silence during the Spanish Civil War and the early

years of Franco's dictatorship, Basque culture experienced a degree of revival and modernization. Jon Mirande was one of the most remarkable figures of that change but unfortunately his work was not understood at that time and its value was not recognized. Profoundly alone, and suffering problems with alcohol abuse and nervous breakdowns, he finally killed himself when he was forty-seven years old in 1972.

Although he theorized about politics, he never published any explanations about his idea of art or artistic corporeal representations of girls entering into puberty. In fact, it was not necessary since, as I will try to demonstrate, all the clues were inside his *nouvelle*. Beyond superficial interpretations, one realizes that in *Haur besoetakoa* there are theses that coincide with those of Balthus:

First of all, the man in the story sees another world when he looks at Theresa, a world that makes him feel nostalgic: the Country of Youth that he desires. Thus, Theresa's attractiveness is not so much about sensuality, but, rather, resides in the space and time that she represents:

"In that short while in which they looked at each other, the child's noticeably light eyes remained transfixed on his eyes in that moment of eternity, what to say, what could he demonstrate? (...) The man, when looking at Theresa, could see the birthplace of his nostalgia with his inner eyes, and gave wings to his unspeakable dream to take him to the blessed Western islands, to the hidden Country of Youth (...)." (Mirande 1970: 37)

Furthermore, he is afraid of the changes that the passage of concrete real time will bring about in Theresa, because she would cease to be a promise and instead become an adult shaped by society.

"*Et les fruits passeront la promesse des fleurs...* Unfortunately yes! In a few years, about three or four, her childhood would be gone; instead of being a new flower she would be a ripe summer fruit to be bitten into by the teeth of ruthless lovers and, which would soon be withered by autumn... In a few years, all that gold would be blackened for the sake of the species, and for the sake of her sex that light and tender meat would become too thick and too filling. Her eyes would be as light and clean as always, of course, but the soul that was looking at him at that moment, even if it could not change, would cover up and hide for the rest of Theresa's life and in its place, the empty and blind spirit of a woman would look at him... Disgusting! It would be better if she died right now while her childlike femininity was not yet wounded, even if his heart would be injured hopelessly." (Mirande 1970: 45)

Finally, at different moments throughout the narration the reader is told time and time again that Theresa's body is a *symbol*. It could not be confessed in a more explicit way:

"If she hadn't been so beautiful, would he have paid attention to his goddaughter? Perhaps not, he took her out of pity, when Theresa became an orphan, it was a long time since he had seen her and he did not even know what she was like. Little did he imagine that in a few weeks he would be troubled because of that little Theresa. And now, he started to suspect that that beautiful body, above its heady beauty, was no more than

a symbol, a symbol of something that struck his nervous heart with nostalgia, but oh! Now he would never have the time to explore that symbol properly.” (Mirande 1970: 44-45)

With regard to the two different levels of relationship between art and the myth of the eternal return, there are the same connections as those represented in Balthus’ artistic corporeal representations. In both cases, at the level of image, the artistic corporeal representation of the girl on the verge of puberty symbolizes an idealized *in illo tempore* of childhood and the *chaos* or the doors of creation. At the level of artistic creation and reception, there is also the idea of abolishing concrete real time, since Theresa and Balthus’ girls are often pictured reading or self-involved. Moreover, at the end of the story, it is confessed that the only way to eternalize and immortalize something is to turn it into an artistic work, just as Balthus does in his *Mémoires*; in this case the painting that the painter is to do or, what amounts to the same thing, the *nouvelle Haur besoetakoa* itself.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to demonstrate that the field of artistic creation was, for 20th century humanity, a place to satisfy its need to find solutions to deal with the melancholy that the idea of death and the passage of concrete real time could imply. During that time, people found new and, especially, individual solutions, except in the case of the National Socialist movement, to sublimate the same concerns that ancient societies had and faced in a collective way. But, essentially, like “mythical behaviour” itself, the mechanism here is the same: the nostalgic eternal return to an idealized divine *in illo tempore* created by mixing memory and imagination in order to abolish concrete real time. Therefore, I am simply talking about the updated myth of the eternal return.

If Balthus’ and Mirande’s artistic corporeal representations of girls entering puberty have been and are still often misunderstood it is because their basic philosophy was and is too far from that which prevailed among their contemporaries and prevails among ours. Balthus and Mirande would probably have perfectly understood the meaning of each other’s work. Since it was written and published in Basque, there is no way that Balthus could have been familiar with Mirande’s work, but the reverse is not necessarily true, for painting is in many ways a universal language.

Finally, regarding to future areas of research, it would be interesting to continue searching for artistic corporeal representations of the myth of the eternal return during different periods, countries, cultures and artistic forms. Another fascinating subject to study from the point of view

of gender studies would be to try to answer to the following question: Why have male artists chosen women's bodies to symbolize the myth of the eternal return? Have women done the same thing? Such research proposals may be of interest both to anthropologists and to those who work in the field of art criticism.

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SUMMARY

Nostalgia against melancholy: artistic corporeal representations of the eternal return as a solution. A comparative approach to the work of Jon Mirande and Balthasar Klossowski

This paper focuses on the role that nostalgia and memory play in avoiding the melancholy that the idea of death and passage of concrete real time convey to human beings. While archaic societies found collective responses to the issue and believed in the myth of the eternal return and cyclical time, their modern counterparts started to understand time as linear and, as a consequence, had to find other strategies to abolish concrete real time. By analysing art works from the anthropological and comparative approaches of art criticism, it is contended that art has been an important means to resolve the problem, as some of the corporeal artistic representations of the eternal return created during the 20th century demonstrate.

KEYWORDS

Art, literature, anthropology, the myth of the eternal return, memory, melancholy, nostalgia

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