

Ferrater Mora: A Philosopher as Novelist

Priscilla N. Cohn

Pennsylvania State University
pferraterm@aol.com

Abstract

«A Philosopher as Novelist» compares and contrasts Ferrater Mora's first two novels, *Claudia, mi Claudia* and *Hecho en Corona*. Although quite different, both novels share a number of common characteristics such as a rich and extensive vocabulary, detailed descriptions that indicate a kind of «visual style», and complex characters often related in intricate and complicated ways. Although Ferrater creates characters that may be violent and unscrupulous, he avoids moral judgments and is never judgmental. His characters, however, often serve as a mouthpiece for his own ironic observations and witty criticisms of contemporary life. The structure of his novels reveal a world that is many faceted and almost infinitely fragmented.

Key words: Ferrater, Novelist, Philosopher, Rich language, Fragmented reality, Story teller, Movie maker.

Resum. *Ferrater Mora: un filòsof com a novel·lista*

«Un filòsof com a novel·lista» compara i contrasta les dues primeres novel·les de Ferrater Mora, *Claudia, mi Claudia* i *Hecho en Corona*. Malgrat les seves diferències, les dues novel·les comparteixen un seguit de característiques comunes, com ara un vocabulari ric i extens, descripcions detallades que creen un «estil visual», i personatges complexos que sovint es relacionen entre ells de maneres intricades. Encara que Ferrater crea personatges que poden ser violents i despietats, evita fer-ne judicis morals i donar lliçons. Els seus personatges, tanmateix, li serveixen sovint com a portaveus per a les seves pròpies observacions iròniques i crítiques enginyoses de la vida contemporània. L'estructura de les seves novel·les revela un món amb molts vessants i gairebé infinitament fragmentat.

Paraules clau: Ferrater, novel·lista, filòsof, llenguatge ric, realitat fragmentària, narrador, cineasta.

Philosophers do not usually write novels. Some of the greatest philosophers such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Kant or Hegel never wrote one. For that matter, their works can hardly be classified as «literature». Yet some philosophical writing is undeniably «literary». Plato's dialogues or Augustine's Confessions come immediately to mind, but of course, neither the dia-

logues nor the Confessions are novels. Is there an incompatibility between the activity of the philosopher and that of the novelist?

Apparently not, for there are a few philosophers who have written novels. Rousseau, for example, wrote *The New Eloise* and Voltaire is the author of *Candide*. In more recent times, philosophers such as Kierkegaard have written what might be called novels, while Sartre and Unamuno have written not one, but several. It is interesting to note that in this period, it seems to be these philosophers who have been called Existentialists or who were sympathetic to this kind of thought that have produced novels. It might be argued that we should include Camus in this group, but if we do, then we would have to include in this category other novelists like Dostoevsky and Thomas Mann and in so doing, we would hopelessly blur the distinction between novelists and philosophers.

Two points have to be made, I think. First, perhaps all great novels and even all great short stories have a philosophical content of some sort. Think of the novels of Dostoevsky or Thomas Mann or even of Mann's short story *Death in Venice*. Implicit in these novels or short stories are philosophical ideas. Nevertheless, these ideas are neither fully analyzed nor developed as such. They can only be «artificially extracted» or revealed. Such novelists are not, strictly speaking, philosophers for the philosophical ideas in their literary works are, for the most part, at the service of the story whereas in philosophy an idea is explicitly developed, examined, analyzed, its presuppositions probed, its implications studied, and so forth.

The second point is that the novels of the above mentioned philosophers were to a large extent extensions of their philosophical thought. Nor does this seem to be an accident. Kierkegaard specifically mentions several of his protagonists as examples of the various levels or stages of life that he examined in his more philosophical works. Similarly, Unamuno's novels and many of his short stories are clearly exemplifications of his philosophical ideas. Consider how his story entitled *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* provides «flesh and bone» for his views on religious belief. In fact, Unamuno goes one step further in that his poetry also reflects his philosophical views.

Not all thinkers would agree with my assertion that one can distinguish between philosophy and «literature». Unamuno, in particular, would deny this distinction for he claimed that there is no difference between philosophy and literature or even philosophy and poetry. He described Spinoza's *Ethics* and Hegel's *Logic* as «great poems».

Few philosophers have written novels that are not echoes or exemplifications of their philosophical thought. At the moment I can think of only two: Santayana, who wrote *The Last Puritan* and Ferrater Mora, who wrote five novels: *Claudia, mi Claudia*, *Hecho en Corona*, *Juego de verdad* (Nadal Prize finalist), *Regreso del infierno* and *La señorita Goldie*.

The fact that these novels are not mere examples of their author's philosophical thought, does not mean that Ferrater Mora does not make philosophical allusions in these novels. Of course he does. Nor would I contend that he

is not influenced by his knowledge of the history of thought. Of course he is. What I mean is that any philosophical content is not the most important ingredient of any of his novels. I would go even further and assert that knowing that Ferrater Mora is a philosopher or knowing his philosophical thought is not a prerequisite either for enjoying his novels or for understanding and appreciating them.

There are some very general characteristics —probably inherent in Ferrater Mora's style of thinking— that are also present in all his novels. So while his novels are quite different including those that are set in Corona, it is not surprising that they share certain very fundamental similarities. For example, Ferrater Mora is always a story teller. In his first two novels, however, he is still honing and perfecting his skills as a novelist so that some of the characteristics of his style are easier to spot than in the later, more polished novels. For this reason, I will concentrate on his early novels.

Ferrater Mora's first two novels are quite dissimilar. Even superficially the contrasts are marked: the second novel is longer than the first; it has a much larger cast of characters and so forth.

One of the notable aspects of all of Ferrater's novels is the richness of the language and this, of course, is true of the first two. Now there are various ways of talking about this characteristic. One way is simply to consider the abundant, although never merely florid or rhetorical vocabulary Ferrater employs. Look, for example at the vast number of derogatory expressions in *Claudia, mi Claudia* used by the Observer to refer to «the man in the gray suit», the head of the Special Services for the Repression of Antiterrorist Activities. I became aware of this abundance when trying to produce an English version of this book. Translating demands that one pay special attention to how something is written; it readily reveals the richness of the language just because a text with an abundant vocabulary is so difficult to reproduce in another language. «The gentleman in the gray suit» is described, among other ways, as *un viejo cretino*, *un majadero estúpido*, *un memo senil*, and *un pedazo de bruto* which I loosely translated as «a cretin, an imbecile, a fathead», and «a moron». The «gentleman» is also insultingly described as *un gris mamarracho* and *un seco alcornoque* which may or may not be equivalent to «a pompous jerk» and «an old fart».

This richness of language is also notable in *Hecho en Corona*, especially in the descriptive passages where not a detail is missed by the author's observant eye. The description of the ornate, public reception in the Oval House requires a large vocabulary for Ferrater describes not only the rooms themselves, but also the people attending this festivity.

The descriptions in Ferrater Mora's novels remind one that he also made movies and videos. One can easily imagine films being made of all his novels. The film of *Claudia, mi Claudia*, for example, would contain lots of color and action: all sorts of sexual couplings, explosions, buildings tumbling down, people being blown up, police investigations, the seductive Claudia walking back and forth swinging her ungainly pocketbook, and so on. *Hecho en Corona* would include: parties of all kinds, from political receptions, musical galas, to

book presentations in both Corona and the United States; palatial gambling casinos as well as dingy gambling joints, horse races, narrow streets and broad, tree-lined avenues, ornate public rooms, orchestrated orgies, luxurious restaurants, outdoor cafes, corpses and so forth.

Part of the visual aspect of both novels is a sense of color. Consider, for instance, the shop owner, Madame Bianco in *Claudia, mi Claudia*. She is always dressed in white. When recuperating in the hospital, she is delighted with the whiteness of the sheets on the bed, the walls and so forth. Incidentally, the description of this white hospital world is reminiscent of the last scenes of Ferrater Mora's movie, «The Call» where the camera dwells on the patient in the mental hospital, dressed in white in a room with white walls, cared for by a nurse also completely clad in white.

Adding to the details of color, we learn that Claudia's enormous pocket-book is blue, that her eyes are steely-gray and that the mysterious gentleman often wears a gray suit.

Color also plays a part in *Hecho en Corona*. The presidential palace, or Oval House, is ivory white with black wrought iron balconies on which stand the green and red flag of Corona. We know that Dorita wears a lilac dress to the orgy, that Coco makes love on black satin sheets embroidered in red with the hotel's initials H.P.G. and that at a musical recital, Ofelia wears a golden-colored dress enhanced by a sparkling diamond necklace. We almost «see» the pale golden light filtering through the tulle curtains above Rómulo Redondo's desk.

Although both novels are extraordinarily visual, there is a difference between them in this respect. *Claudia, mi Claudia* has more action or more movement. Often what is described is in motion: people walking on the street, cars passing, trash containers being hurled and rolling along the sidewalk and so forth. The climax of this book involves the explosion of a bomb: stones hurtling into the sky, and a violently spreading fire. The actual death of the man in the gray suit is described so that you can visualize it. In *Hecho en Corona*, however, you are simply told that both Stanley Clothier and Rómulo Redondo have been murdered. We are presented with a *fait accompli*: they are found dead. The action has taken place «off screen» so to speak. Many of the scenes in *Hecho en Corona* have this kind of static quality. It is as if we are offered a series of pictures—the still frames of a movie rather than the movie itself.

Yet another way of looking at the richness of language—more important perhaps than examining the nature of the descriptions and more significant than referring to an abundant but still precise vocabulary— involves looking at how language is used to differentiate character or perhaps more accurately to present a complex and varied world. In some sense Ferrater Mora's two novels resemble a Bach fugue with different themes, supported by their own «language» appearing and disappearing, themes heard in slightly different keys and subtly modified. We have what I will call a number of «voices» in his novels.

There are a number of such voices in *Claudia, mi Claudia*: the clear, neutral, descriptive voice of the narrator; the often, but not always, logical, well-

educated although sometimes impatient and occasionally emotional voice of the Observer, who, on closer inspection, has really two distinct voices: his voice as it is preserved in his notes and papers, and his voice, so to speak, as it appears in his stream of consciousness. Contrasted with these voices are the voices of the neighborhood: Madame Bianco's coy and cliché filled voice; Elenita's youthful, self-assured, but sometimes cautious and fear-filled voice. Then, too, there are the coarser voices of the street: Alfredo, Ignacio, Felipe and the others. In addition to this myriad of voices is that of the police reports: formal, stilted, dominated by expressions peculiar to law enforcement agencies. Still other voices are heard from time to time: old lovers, friends from childhood, parents, and of course, the witty, idiosyncratic voice of Uncle Al.

Equally numerous are the voices in *Hecho en Corona*. Each character has his own distinctive way of talking. Rómulo Redondo's voice reveals his character's power of observation, but also his imagination and his intellectual pretensions. Harold Jensen speaks in the jargon of the CIA, Dominguin is street wise, Coco absurd and naive, Philip Ward self-consciously intellectual and literary, condescending and tough. The rhythm of Stanley Clothier's speech, even in Spanish, is reminiscent of American English.

The voices in both *Hecho en Corona* and in *Claudia, mi Claudia* are skillfully woven together—to change my metaphor—as if in a tapestry. No one voice is completely dominant. Each character possesses his or her own voice; the «language» of each voice varies so that the expressions, syntax and vocabulary fit the character to whom it belongs, yet all of this is done so masterfully that it seems perfectly natural. One voice appears to flow into another or sometimes to converse with another and yet each voice is distinctly clear and unique.

In Ferrater Mora's novels we find a characteristic that is also very evident in his philosophical thought—a characteristic which for lack of a better word I shall call «respect» or «tolerance». In his philosophical works, when Ferrater Mora evaluates or criticizes different philosophical systems, he is always tolerant in the sense that he never rejects a system out of hand, but always carefully examines it to see what he can find of value.

As a matter of fact, this philosophical tolerance is sometimes a problem for Ferrater Mora because it means that he cannot give in to the temptation of creating a straw man in order to destroy an opposing position. Hegel attacked Kant in this way in order to show that Kant was mistaken, just as both Marx and Kierkegaard «misread» Hegel in a manner that suited their own quite different purposes. Furthermore, Ferrater Mora sees the flaws or weak points in his own position as well as those in the views of others, so that he is capable of criticizing his own position, criticizing this criticism and so forth endlessly. Not for him the fanatic belief that almost everyone else has been mistaken and that he alone has found the one and only TRUTH.

We can find this characteristic «respect» or «tolerance» in Ferrater Mora's novels in the sense that he «respects» his characters. By this I mean that he never creates a character which is so one-sided that it becomes a caricature.

For instance, in *Claudia, mi Claudia* Madame Bianco is foolish and even ridiculous at times, but we never feel that she is merely a comic character —someone to be laughed at— for she has another side to her character that demands a certain kind of respect: she is a shrewd and successful business woman. The same kind of comment could be made about Uncle Al, also a humorous person, but whose conversation reveals his often clear understanding of many contemporary social customs. Ferrater's characters all have their own inner logic, as well as, of course, their own inner life and he treats each one as if he respects him or her.

Nor does Ferrater Mora make moral judgments about his characters. If such judgments are to be made he leaves that to other characters in his novel, none of which can be identified as representing Ferrater's own view. Nowhere, for instance, do we get Ferrater Mora's personal judgment about the Observer or the bomb-throwing Claudia. Does Ferrater Mora sympathize with Rómulo Redondo's writer's block? Does he think Rómulo Redondo prostitutes his talent by writing little more than a gossip column? Does he consider Rómulo Redondo foolish in his refusal to hand over the papers of Stanley Clothier thus endangering his own life? Ferrater Mora does not give us a hint. He neither praises nor condemns Coco, apparently anxious to please but so gossipy—or is it calculating—that she is responsible for the death of her lover. Does Ferrater Mora think it immoral for Dorita to deceive her parents and attend an orgy in the Oval House? If not immoral, does he at least think it is foolhardy? The reader has to draw his own conclusions and make his own judgments. Here I must add that unlike an author such as Thomas Hardy, who tries to make the reader empathize with his characters, Ferrater Mora merely describes. Half jokingly we might characterize Ferrater Mora the novelist as a phenomenologist in that he describes what he sees without comment, as if following Husserl's advice: «zu dem Sachen selbst» (to the things themselves).

Although Ferrater Mora does not make moral judgments about his characters, that does not mean that he refrains from making intellectual judgments about our contemporary world. The novel as a literary form provides Ferrater Mora with a medium in which he can give free rein to his sense of satire, his irony and his wit.

In *Claudia, mi Claudia* it is not at all difficult to tell from the description of the Observer's early education how Ferrater Mora feels about such matters and in particular about certain aspects of contemporary psychology. Through the idiosyncratic Uncle Al, Ferrater Mora can comment with impunity on contemporary phenomena. One of the amusing, although very minor, episodes involving Uncle Al concerns his comforting remarks on the subject of short pants. The Observer remembered feeling embarrassed about having to wear them, wishing that he could have long pants so that he could feel «grown up» and consider himself a man rather than a child. He even remembered on occasion trying to hide the fact that he was wearing short pants. Uncle Al, on noticing the boy's discomfort, reminds him that such strong and brave men as mountain climbers wear short pants. Uncle Al then remarks that, at least in

summer, it is advantageous to wear short pants rather than long ones, although skirts would be better still since they are so much cooler. The Observer then imagines what Uncle Al would have said if he had lived long enough to see the vast number of women wearing jeans. What follows is a commentary on contemporary life, including perhaps the women's movement, concluding with the observation that in trying to free themselves, in some cases women may have made the mistake of copying the idiocies of men.

Through Uncle Al, Ferrater Mora can express not only his irritation at many of the everyday stupidities that confront all of us, but he can also mock various contemporary intellectual or scholarly tendencies. Uncle Al's dislike of his own name—or more accurately his dislike of the spelling of his name—provides Ferrater Mora with the opportunity to poke fun at some of the inconsistencies and absurdities of language and even gives him the opportunity to make «an inside joke» for the benefit of Spanish professors and scholars in the person of Xavier Mostekin (Jesús Mosterín).

The full brunt of Ferrater Mora's satirical wit in *Claudia, mi Claudia* is directed at the police who while painstakingly and carefully gathering evidence, completely misconstrue almost everything, constantly coming to incorrect, although plausible, conclusions—probably because they cannot view the evidence at hand objectively, but insist on interpreting what has happened in the light of their own prejudices and preconceptions.

Ferrater Mora's satirical bent is no less evident in *Hecho en Corona*. How ironic that the whole economy of Corona, so efficient and well-managed on the surface, so readily explicable in historical terms, an island so neatly divided into regions, sectors and jurisdictions, so rationally numbered in permutations of one, two and three, is supported by gambling, graft, and murder. Only extreme corruption allows the citizens of Corona to enjoy their high standard of living. How ironic and yet how very amusing—or pathetic according to one's own view—that this orderly little island exists on the basis of chaos. How ironic that public virtue arises from private vice.

One of the unique factors that must be considered in Ferrater Mora's first novel is the ambivalence or indistinct character of the Observer himself. Although we learn a lot about this man: his early life at home, his political ideas, his sexual preferences and so on, we do not know his name. Perhaps it is this lack of a name that sets the stage for the character of the Observer. It is difficult to describe him because he is not one-dimensional. Although he has feelings, he is eminently rational. His disappointments and even his triumphs seem to be minor perturbations in the placid course of events that make up his life. He is neither the classical tragic hero with a major flaw, nor the more contemporary Mr. Everyman. The Observer is changeable and sometimes even inconsistent just like a real person. For instance, while he is generally sophisticated in sexual matters, he is quite prudish when considering Claudia's relationships with other men. Most of the time his attitude seems to be to live and let live, yet his feelings toward the man in the grey suit are certainly anything but tolerant. Apparently unmarked by jealousy or even any intense emo-

tional feelings in his sexual encounters, he is extremely jealous of Claudia's other admirers—or imagined admirers.

The Observer is also marked by a curious duality. We notice that the papers of the Observer, assumedly reflecting the nature of their author, are extremely logical and well reasoned. The Observer takes a fact—what he has actually seen on his monitor—such as the regular passing of Claudia or the size, shape and color of her pocketbook and tries to see what, if any, conclusions can be drawn from these observations. He often lists the various possible alternatives in order to investigate if there is any reason why one or more should be eliminated. Yet at the very same time that he is reasoning so carefully and precisely, he is drawing conclusions demanded by his own longings and desires. This is not uncommon: many people see only what they want to see, but the Observer is unusual in that he is intelligent enough—or introverted enough—to realize exactly what he is doing. In fact, he constantly tries to check his desires so that they do not influence his conclusions. Thus, the Observer is neither the cool rationalist, nor the passionate believer. He is somewhere in between these extremes or perhaps he oscillates between them. Ferrater Mora provides us with a picture of a person who defies easy classification because there is something essentially ambivalent or indeterminate about his character. He is not a hero, but he is not an anti-hero. Every time we try to describe the Observer we have to qualify our description: the Observer is clear-thinking, but not completely. He is cut off from the world, but not entirely. He is in love with Claudia and yet... he has never met her.

If there is something unyielding about the character of the Observer, this is even truer of Claudia about whom we know even less save for her physical appearance. What kind of a person she is, why she behaves as she does is never revealed. We are tempted to say that the Observer, as his name implies, merely contemplates the world whereas Claudia is a very active agent in the world, but perhaps this is an oversimplification.

Hecho en Corona has not one, but at least three important characters: Rómulo Redondo, Stanley Clothier and Philip Ward. Perhaps it is because these men are quite dissimilar that they see the world so differently. Trained in the academic world, Rómulo Redondo writes about both the history and geography of the island of Corona as an intellectual. His description of the geography reads like an entry from an encyclopedia. He is precise and detailed, describing the topography as well as the climate of each part of the island: north, south, east and west. Only when he writes of the social gatherings does his style become more elaborate and almost baroque, but regardless of his subject matter, his love of his island and his delight in its democratic history and its current economic success is evident. He believes that it is important to try to explain the factors which lie behind the commercial and democratic triumphs of this tiny speck of land, and he is confident that he is uniquely qualified to do so.

Stanley Clothier, on the other hand, encounters the seamy side of life in Corona. Where Rómulo Redondo sees economic success, Stanley Clothier

finds squalor and sordidness. Behind the national pastime of gambling on nearly everything, he realizes that those who run the island have taken advantage of this perhaps natural love of gaming and have corrupted it into something quite sinister. Life on the island is not what it appears to be: he discovers that the economic successes of which Rómulo Redondo is so proud rest on avarice and bribery. The secret management of the economy demands an iron hand, an elaborate number of secret police agencies that do not hesitate to play «dirty tricks,» to indulge in coercion or even murder. Unlike Rómulo Redondo who is surrounded by musicians and singers, Stanley Clothier encounters pornographers and pimps. Just as Rómulo Redondo longs to present his island as it is, or at least as he thinks it is, so Stanley Clothier feels the strong obligation of the crusading journalist to uncover the «true» Corona. So while both Rómulo Redondo and Stanley Clothier are determined to write about Corona, their respective views of the island are quite different, although not utterly incompatible.

Neither nationalistic pride nor journalistic fervor motivate Philip Ward. He has no interest in revealing the truth about Corona or about anything else—in fact it is not at all certain whether he believes in truth as such. Philip Ward's efforts are directed at producing the book of the year, a best seller, a winner of literary prizes and he is quite adept at achieving the results he desires. Perhaps he is unscrupulous or maybe he takes childish delight in the deception of presenting the murdered Rómulo Redondo as the author of a book largely written by someone else. Does he view the success of this book as a kind of joke at the expense of New York book critics or as a kind of poetic justice? That this book has been chosen book of the year and that finally the Coronese novel has been «put on the map» amuses him greatly. On the other hand, we do not know if Philip Ward is telling the truth when he asserts that he had to rewrite much of the material he received from Rómulo Redondo or if he is merely trying to impress his friends.

Each of these three characters presents a different aspect of the world in which they live. The reader is left to his own devices: he has to decide which is the true picture or whether reality is some uneasy combination of these views. Thus, the reality that is presented in *Hecho en Corona* is much more fragmented than that of *Claudia, mi Claudia*. This fragmentation of reality, raises the question of who is telling the truth or who sees things as they really are. Is it not an echo of the old philosophical question of appearance and reality? The problem of what is real or what is imagined is also evident in Ferrater Mora's last three novels, and is particularly marked in *Juego de verdad*. Incidentally, the same problem could also be said to be the main theme of Ferrater's movie, «The Call».

This fragmentation of reality is also revealed by an examination of the structure of both novels. During the development of the novel as a literary form, plot was very important. Traditional novels still have plots. In many contemporary novels, however, there is none. If we ask the apparently simple question: Is there a plot in the novels of Ferrater Mora, we find that the query

is, after all, not so simple. If we answer affirmatively, we have problems describing just what the plot is in both *Claudia, mi Claudia*, and *Hecho en Corona*.

If we try to discover whether there is a plot in *Claudia my Claudia* or if, convinced that there one, we try to describe it, we might ask what happens in *Claudia, mi Claudia*? Almost everything and yet nothing. On the one hand, we have what looks like an adventure story: seductive terrorist outsmarts police and assassinates the chief of the secret service. Yet this is a very strange description —very one-sided. On the other hand, it would be equally deficient to describe *Claudia, mi Claudia* as simply the story of someone who sits alone and isolated in his cellar observing the world through his television monitor.

What gives this novel its unique flavor is that it consists not only of the character of the Observer, but also of the activities that take place «out there» in the world. *Claudia, mi Claudia* is the interplay of both «worlds». It is when this interplay is no longer possible, when for all intents and purposes the outside world disappears that the Observer finds his life has lost its taste and he begins to withdraw into himself and to die. In the end of the novel, it is not that the Observer is observed by another television monitor as some reviewers have mistakenly thought; it is just that his world —the world he can see through his monitor— has receded even further. When his television monitor is focused on the newly built, almost blank wall across the street from his house, it reveals a second television monitor that is viewing —not him— but the almost antlike people walking back and forth in what is probably a gigantic bank or perhaps a large office conglomerate. What the second television reveals is too far away to be clearly viewed by the Observer —it is a distant world, likened by Ferrater Mora himself, to the distant world of H.G. Well's blue cascades.

Describing the plot of *Hecho en Corona* gives us even more trouble. In the first place, it is not at all clear that there is a plot, although it is true that all sorts of things happen and the characters react to the events that occur and are motivated to further action. Rómulo Redondo wants to write about his native island. He receives the papers of Stanley Clothier who, sent to Corona by his boss Phil Ward to write an article for an American journal, is gruesomely murdered. Refusing to hand over Clothier's notes to the secret agency because he wants to incorporate them into his novel, Rómulo Redondo is also murdered, but not before he sends his novel to Phil Ward in New York, who introduces it at a grand reception. Ward, however, tells intimates that this is really the literary fraud of the century. Is this complicated series of events the plot of the book? We have to answer both yes and no.

What is particularly intriguing about *Hecho en Corona* is the «shifts in reality». Ferrater Mora, of course, is the author of this book, but in the very first paragraph, we are told that the pages which follow are the work of Rómulo Redondo who is going to write about a real place —one that actually exists. Thus, what we have from the very beginning, once we enter into the novel, is a fictional character who asserts that he is going to write about a real island and that he is going to use his friends as characters in his novel, disguising them by changing their names. In this manner, Tania becomes Ofelia, Rodol-

fo Marchesini becomes Christian Gerlach and so on. So now we have a fictional character writing about his «real» friends. Are we to believe that Tania is real, but Ofelia fictitious? Is Ofelia a fiction of a fiction? Furthermore, it is not at all certain who has written what: although it looks as if Rómulo Redondo has written the first, second and fourth chapters, he certainly couldn't have written the sixth that describes him from another's point of view. The latter seems to consist of Stanley Clothier's notes. Once we reach the last chapter we hear Phil Ward say that Rómulo Redondo was a miserable writer and that he, Phil Ward, had to edit very heavily —really to rewrite— the material sent him by Rómulo Redondo which was either Rómulo Redondo's own material or Stanley Clothier's material rewritten by Rómulo Redondo. In the end, we really do not know who is the author of the book of the year introduced in New York.

Just as *Claudia, mi Claudia* is the interplay between the inner world of the Observer and the outer world of the street, *Hecho en Corona* juxtaposes the shifting «reality» of Rómulo Redondo's novel, Stanley Clothier's notes, and the edited novel of Phil Word.

Ferrater Mora's novels are a little bit like looking at the infinite images reflected in a pair of mirrors. As an aside it is perhaps interesting to know that Ferrater Mora delighted in these visual allusions and had several in his home.

It is amusing to note that in a sense both his first and second novels play with the notion of literary fraud. It is perhaps not generally known, but at one time Ferrater Mora toyed with the idea of writing *Claudia, mi Claudia* under a pseudonym precisely so that the public would regard it as a «real novel» written by a novelist rather than novel written by a philosopher —a work that many would assume must be philosophical and difficult to understand. He had planned to sign only a Preface to *Claudia, mi Claudia*. In fact, he actually wrote such a preface. It is, I believe, still among his papers. In this Preface, he asserted that *Claudia, mi Claudia* was a splendid first novel written by a young linguist named Ricardo Corbin, whom he (Ferrater Mora) had happened to meet at the University of Pennsylvania, near Ferrater Mora's own home, outside of Philadelphia. For a number of reasons, this duplicitous scheme was never carried any further. But apparently the notion of literary fraud continued to amuse him since it plays a role in *Hecho en Corona*.

I hope it is now very clear that neither of Ferrater Mora's first two novels is a literary extension of his philosophical thought. It is probably equally clear that both novels implicitly contain longstanding philosophical questions such as: What is real or how do we know what is real? Certain moral or ethical questions are also implicit: How are we to understand good and evil? Is it possible that private vice becomes public virtue? These are certainly basic philosophical questions, but the answers to these questions are not even hinted at in the novels. If you want to know Ferrater Mora's ontological or epistemological views, you have to read *El Ser y la Muerte*, *De la Materia a la Razón* or *Fundamentos de Filosofía*. If you want to know his moral views, you have to read *Ética aplicada* and that is as it should be.