

Marian Womack and Jennifer Wood (eds)

Beyond the Back Room



New Perspectives on Carmen Martín Gaité

PETER LANG

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Edited by

Claudio Canaparo



PETER LANG

Oxford • Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • Frankfurt am Main • New York • Wien

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Spoken Discourse in the Narrative of Carmen Martín Gaité

This chapter examines how colloquial or spoken language is reproduced in the narrative of Carmen Martín Gaité. In order to do this, I will conduct a comparative analysis between the syntactic structure of authentic conversations and those from some of the texts of this author. The attempt to simulate spoken discourse constitutes a constant worry throughout the work of this novelist, as she makes manifest in *La búsqueda de interlocutor*:

La expresión oral que se plasma en el decir y en el contar es la cantera principal de donde extrae material la novela. Aunque exista también la descripción de lugares, cerrados o abiertos, de fenómenos meteorológicos y de ruidos, sombras y luces diversos, esos paisajes y habitaciones no albergarían 'historia' si no estuvieran transitados por personas. ¿Y cómo se manifiesta la vida de estas personas que más tarde o más temprano se enlazarán unas con otras, qué es lo que convierte en historia individual su vida? Sencillamente aquello que intercambian a través del habla.¹

[Oral expression as manifest in speaking and telling tales is the primary seam for material for a novel. Although there are also descriptions of places, both open and enclosed, of meteorological phenomena and noises, shadows and strange lights, these rooms and landscapes do not preserve any 'history' unless they are crossed by people. And how does the life of these people, who sooner or later will meet each other, and whose meetings will turn into the individual history of their life, how does it manifest itself? Only by what they exchange by means of speech.]

Nevertheless, recreations of the spoken word in literature can never be complete or perfect, as they deal more with a feigned oral speech. As Wulf Oesterreicher points out: 'Es el autor del texto, o sea, la conciencia lingüística del autor, la que selecciona ciertos rasgos lingüísticos considerados

¹ Carmen Martín Gaité, *La búsqueda de interlocutor* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2000), p. 200.

característicos de la lengua hablada [It is the author of the text, or rather the author's linguistic conscience, which selects the individual linguistic traces that it considers characteristic of spoken language].² Martín Gaité carries out a manipulation in which she dispenses with the context proper to colloquial spoken discourse. As a consequence, this *mimesis* of oral speech can never achieve full authenticity. The most elevated degree of accuracy is seen when the author is able to imitate the elaborative technique of the spoken word, so that one does not notice the elimination of everything that would slow down the reading process provoking rejection from the reader. Therefore, the study of syntax – much more than that of diction or the lexicon used – is what will reveal the level of reproduction in this type of literary text, of the uses characteristic of spoken discourse.

In order to characterize the syntax of spoken discourse one speaks of its 'centrifugal trend',³ or of its 'fragmented appearance',⁴ as the statements seem to go on accumulating as and when they come to the mind of the speaker, apparently without link, as one can appreciate in the transcripts of real conversations carried out by members of the group Val.Es.Co.:

E: °(claro)°/// a(de)más fíjate↓ yo voy a conseguir un temario de oposiciones/ me pasan a mí uno↑// me pasan no↓ me lo venden/ yo hice contacto [con gente↑=]

L: [¿peroo todo el mogollón?]

E: = hombre↓ imagínate/ te voy-te voy a decir el currículum del tío// ese tío↑ lo conocí en la facultad↓ en el departamento de catalán/ un día que fui a protestar por un examen/ °(los exámenes los tiene todos allí)°/ el tío éste acabó↑ hace↑ – este año↑/

- 2 Wulf Oesterreicher, 'Textos entre inmediatez y distancia comunicativas. El problema de lo hablado escrito en el Siglo de Oro', in R. Cano, ed., *Historia de la lengua española* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2004) pp. 729–57: p. 729.
- 3 'Los elementos de la frase tienden a flotar separados unos de otros, ajenos a una estructura orgánica, liberados de un centro magnético que los engarce en una oración unitaria [the elements of the phrase tend to float separate from one another, distinct from any organic structure, free of a magnetic centre that pulls them into a unified oration]' Manuel Seco, 'La lengua coloquial: *Entre visillos* de Carmen Martín Gaité', in *El comentario de textos 1* (Madrid: Castalia, 1973) pp. 361–79: pp. 366–7.
- 4 For a discussion of this concept, see the work of Antonio Narbona Jiménez, in particular *Sintaxis española: nuevos y viejos enfoques* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1989).

aprobó la oposición/ el anterior se presentó y suspendió↓ y el anterior aprobó↓ °(o sea que no hay ni enchufes ni leches)°⁵

[E: °(too right)°/// wha(t)'s more see ↓ I'm going to get a set of state exam topics/ they give me one ↑//they give me no ↓ they sell me it/ I made contact [with people↑ =]
L: [buut the whole lot of them?]

E: = man↓ just imagine/ I'm gonna – I'm gonna tell you the track record of the guy// that guy↑ I met him at the university↓ in the Catalan Department/ one day that I went to complain about an exam/ °(the state exams he has them all there)°/ that guy there finished↑ about↑ – this year↑ / he passed the exam/ the one before he took and failed↓ and the one before that he passed↓ °(so there's no cushy numbers or any such damn thing)°]

Although nothing analogous occurs in literature, as it would end up hindering the reading process, Manuel Seco points out in the dialogues of *Entre visillos* clauses in which there is an attempt to imitate this type of 'segmented structure',

Él escribe guiones, los argumentos, ¿sabes?, o por ejemplo para adaptar una novela al cine. Porque tienen que cambiar cosas de la novela. No es lo mismo. Cambiar los diálogos y eso. Pero también hace él argumentos que se le ocurren.⁶

[He writes scripts, the plots, you know?, or for example to adapt a novel for the big screen. Because they have to change things from the novel. It's not the same. Change dialogues and that. But also he does plots that just come to him.]

and we can also find something similar in other later works such as *Irse de casa*:

—Yo lo que no entiendo, la verdad, Manuela, y papá tampoco, bueno, no lo entendemos ninguno, es por qué no te vienes de una vez con nosotros, pensamos quedarnos hasta mediados de septiembre y está haciendo un tiempo de fábula —le decía su hermana Rosa, que la telefoneaba a diario desde la casa de la playa—. Tienes tu

5 Antonio Briz Gómez, *El español coloquial en la conversación. Esbozo de pragmática* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1998), p. 69.

6 Carmen Martín Gaité, *Entre Visillos*, in *Obras completas vol. 1* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg Círculo de Lectores, 2008) pp. 107–303: p. 114.

habitación preparada; anoche, cuando la chica mayor de Fabi, que ha invitado a una amiga suya a pasar unos días, le pidió permiso a papá para alojarla allí, no veas cómo se remontó papá, ¡ése es el cuarto de la tía Manuela!, pero casi gritando, hasta flores nuevas te pone Sebastiana cada dos días ...

—Por favor, Rosi, ni que fuera un muerto. Dile a papá ...

—Mira, yo a papá ya no le digo nada, porque se le está agotando la paciencia, que te da una semana, ha dicho, lo tienes enfadadísimo, y ya sabes cómo se pone papá cuando se desborda, que no se libra nadie de la inundación, bueno, como tú, qué te voy a contar si sois los dos iguales, por eso mismo se toma tus cosas tan a pecho.⁷

[‘Me, what I don’t understand, to be honest, Manuela, nor dad either, well, what none of us understand, is why you don’t come with us just for once, we’re thinking of staying until the middle of September and the weather at the moment is fabulous’, her sister Rosa, who rang her on a daily basis from the beach house, was saying, ‘Your bedroom is all ready; last night, when Fabi’s eldest girl, that’s invited a friend of hers to spend a few days, asked dad permission to put her up there, you should have seen how dad went up, that’s Aunt Manuela’s room!, but almost shouting, Sebastiana even puts fresh flowers in there for you every couple of days...’

‘Please, Rosi, not even if I were dead. Tell dad...’

‘Look, me I say nothing to dad anymore, because his patience is running out, he’s giving you a week, he’s said, you’ve got him so so angry, and you know how dad gets when he goes overboard, that no-one’s free from the soaking, well, like you, what can I say to you since you’re both the same, that’s why you take things so much to heart.’]

The oral clauses are similar to the drafts of a written text in which the discourse moves forward by means of successive approximations. In the same way, just like in the example conversation, in this text we are able to perceive self-corrections (‘Yo lo que no entiendo, la verdad, Manuela ... bueno, no lo entendemos ninguno; ya sabes cómo se pone papá cuando se desborda ... bueno, como tú, qué te voy a contar si sois los dos iguales [Me what I don’t understand, to be honest, Manuela ... well, what none of us understand; you know how dad gets when he goes overboard ... well, like you, what can I say to you since you’re both the same]’), additions (‘y papá tampoco [nor dad either]’), reported speech clauses that are introduced into the narration without an explicit verb of communication (‘no

7 Carmen Martín Gaité, *Irse de casa* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1998), p. 63.

veas cómo se remontó papá, ¡ése es el cuarto de la tía Manuela!, pero casi gritando [you should have seen how dad went up, that's Aunt Manuela's room!, but almost shouting]) or interruptions ('Dile a papá ... -Mira, yo a papá ya no le digo nada ... [Tell dad ... Look, me I say nothing to dad anymore...]'). The novelist has recourse to all of this in order to simulate in the dialogue of her characters a *feigned* spontaneity, similar to that which exists in the example conversation.

The 'accumulative' character of oral exchanges has led to speaking of the predominance of coordinate paratactical constructions in conversation. Thus, for Juan Manuel Lope Blanch juxtaposition and coordination are 'simpler' procedures, hence their frequency in popular speech. On the other hand, in his judgement, subordination predominates in the speech of more highly educated people, with greater linguistic knowledge. According to Luis Alberto Hernando Cuadrado, 'la yuxtaposición es una de las constantes más relevantes de la lengua hablada, frente a la subordinación, propia más bien de la escrita [juxtaposition is one of the most relevant constants of spoken language, as opposed to subordination which is more a property of written language]'.⁸ And for Ana María Vigara, 'entre los rasgos prototípicos de los enunciados del discurso conversacional destaca el predominio de la yuxtaposición sobre la expresión relacional con nexo explícito y la preferencia por la coordinación o parataxis sobre la subordinación o hipotaxis [among the basic signs of conversational discourse is a predomination of juxtaposition over relational expressions with an explicit nexus, and a preference for coordination or parataxis over subordination or hypotaxis]'.⁹ Such quotations could easily be multiplied.

However, this supposed predominance of parataxis in spoken language should not be interpreted as proof of a lack of education, nor even of the strong influence of expressiveness or subjectivity. This belief is due to the traditional consideration of the *sentence* as the basic unit of grammar.

8 Luis Alberto Hernando Cuadrado, *El español coloquial en El Jarama* (Madrid: Playor, 1988), p. III.

9 Ana María Vigara Tauste, *Morfosintaxis del español coloquial: Esbozo estilístico* (Madrid: Gredos, 1992), p. 116.

However, for the study of spoken language it is essential to take, as a point of reference, not the sentence but the discourse. Furthermore, in spoken language, the fragmentation of a sentence can result in it becoming unviable, as we can observe in the following conversation:

869 E: [igual] que por ejemplo una – una chica que antes vivía conmigo/ en esto un día estaba yo en casa/ y estaba por las tardes y por la mañana// un jueves y un viernes que no teníamos clase// suena el timbre// y voy a abrir ¿no? mm abro la puerta/ y me pregunta por una de las tías que vivía conmigo// era un chico ¿no? ((y dice)) *¿está Olga?* tal/ y le digo *no que se ha marchado porque está en la facultad*// y dice *mira se ha dejado el bolso en mi coche*// *que es de mi mujer*// y me quedé en la puerta tirá/ me quedé/ sentá/ y yo acepto esa relación/ que yo/ tengo amistades muy ((ceranas que tienen la relación así))

G: normal§

E: § me quedé sentá// o sea vino ella y le dije *oye mira que ha venido un chico a dejar tu bolso que te lo has dejado en el coche*/ yy – y ella *sí ¿qué más te ha dicho?*

[869E: [just like] as for example a – a girl who before was living with me// so one day I was at home/ and I was at home in the afternoons and the morning// one Thursday and one Friday when we didn't have class// the bell rings// and I go to open the door yeah? erm I open the door/ and he asks after one of the girls who was living with me // it was a guy, yeah? ((and says)) *is Olga there?* etcetera/ and I say to him *no she's gone because she's at the university*// and he says *look she's left her bag in my car// it's my wife's*// and I was left there in the lurch in the doorway/ I was left/ sat there/ and I accepted that relationship/ see I/ have friendships very ((close ones that have a relationship like that))

G: s'normal §

E: § I was left sat there// that is she came and I said to her *hey look [that] a guy's come to drop off your bag [that] you've left it in his car*/ and and – and her yes, *what else did he say to you?*¹⁰

Speaker E has recourse to an accumulation of clauses in order to go on connecting his own thoughts with a description of the facts, and with the different fragments of reported speech. Martín Gaité employs a similar tactic in her novels:

10 Editors' note: additional thanks to Daniel Zubía Fernández for his suggestions and kind advice in the translation of this passage.

Era un alma de Dios el niño aquel. Y mimo no sería el que le dio su madre, que nunca lo quiso, ni quiso a su suegra, ni nos quiso a ninguno de aquí. Un pedazo de hielo era esa señora. Y siempre con la manía de la limpieza y de los microbios y de hervirlo todo, y que si en su país se hacía así o asá, que parecía como si nos estuviera viendo a todos como a salvajes. Vamos, que cuando me dijo aquel verano que no besara al niño porque me había notado que olía mal, no me olvidaré por muchos años que viva. Por eso te digo, ¿entiendes?, que el niño ese es un ángel, porque él fue el único que me defendió y se vino junto a mí al ver que me había echado a llorar: 'tú no llores, Rosa, anda, no hagas caso', agarrado a mis faldas, y la otra con una cara que daba susto: '¡te he dicho que vengas aquí ahora mismo!', y él pataleando cuando lo quiso arrancar de mí a viva fuerza; hasta que empezó a gritos que a él le gustaba mi olor y el olor del estiércol y de la tierra y de la basura cuando se quema y de las vacas, y que no quería más agua de colonia.¹¹

[He was a sweetheart that child. And pampering wouldn't have been what his mother gave him, who never wanted him, nor her mother-in-law, nor anyone from around here. A block of ice she was, that woman. And always the obsession with cleaning and microbes and boiling everything, and that in her country they did it like this or like that, that made it seem as if she saw us all as savages. Well, like when she told me that summer not to kiss the boy because she'd noticed I smelt bad, I'll never forget it as long as I live. That's why I'm saying to you, understand?, that that child there is an angel, because he was the only one who stuck up for me and came up close next to me when he saw I'd started to cry: 'don't cry, Rosa, come on, don't take any notice', clinging on to my skirts, and her with a face that would give you a fright: 'I've told you to come here right now!', and he kicking up when she went to drag him off me by force; until he began shouting that he liked my smell and the smell of the dung and the earth and the rubbish when it was burnt and of the cows, and that he didn't want any more *eau de cologne*.]

Here, the 'abuse' of the parataxis in the speech of an old village-woman gives it a certain appearance of spontaneity. The clauses seem to go on accumulating as the speaker remembers the behaviour of her mistress's sister-in-law, or the details of an anecdote that took place years ago. However, the role of the copulative conjunction 'y' is seldom related to the sentence structure, but is rather discursive, allowing digression, and this role is not always identical. Therefore, far from simply fulfilling a mere coordinative

function, it is used, for example, to mark the contrast between the words of the two antagonists, the boy ('y se vino junto a mí al ver que me había echado a llorar: "tú no llores, Rosa ..."; y él pataleando ... [and came up close next to me when he saw I'd started to cry: "don't cry, Rosa ..."; and he kicking up]') and his mother ('y la otra con una cara que daba susto: "¡te he dicho ...!" [and her with a face that would give you a fright: "I've told you...!"]').

It is not difficult to find in the prose of Martín Gaité examples in which different types of semantic relationships are shown via the paratactical association of two or more clauses:

Era un relato por entregas: *Abandonada*, traducción del francés, y el dedo lo tenía encima del grabado del principio, anoche me lo encontré de sopetón y fue reconocerlo y revivir la escena que te cuento, los ojos de la abuela abatiendo los míos y mi dedo infantil señalando como una acusación esa viñeta que luego he asociado de forma irreversible a mi primera noción de pecado.¹²

[It was a story in instalments: *Abandoned*, translation from French, and my finger was on the initial illuminated letter, last night I came across it out of the blue and it was the recognition and the reliving of the scene that I'm describing to you, the eyes of my grandmother beating down on mine and my young finger pointing like an accusation at that vignette that ever since I've associated irreversibly with my first notion of sin.]

—Oye, ¿y a ti qué te pasa?, ¿que vas de abstracta por la vida?

—¿Por qué?

—No sé, por cómo lloras, yo es que te veo llorar y alucino.¹³

['Hey, and what's up with you? You're going through life in the abstract?']

'Why?'

'I don't know, because of how you're crying, me, it's that I see you crying and I'm amazed.']

12 Carmen Martín Gaité, *Retablos*, in *Obras completas*, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg Círculo de Lectores, 2008) pp. 617–789: p. 635.

13 Carmen Martín Gaité, *Nubosidad variable* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2000), p. 68.

—Mujer, pues debíamos haber esperado a la salida por si acaso era ella. ¿Cómo no te fijaste seguro?

—Es que vi cuando se metía en su banco, y luego me la tapaba el púlpito casi del todo. (*Entre*: 110)

[‘Well in that case we should have waited at the exit just in case it was her. How come you didn’t make certain?’

‘It’s that I saw when she was getting into her pew, and then the pulpit was blocking my view of nearly all of her.’]

Esta vez el argumento central parecían ser unos jarrones, que Consuelo daba por supuesto que eran míos.

—Y, como yo he dicho al hombre, que desde el tercero los ha tenido que subir a brazo, eso es de la otra casa, eso tiene que ser cosa de la señora, pero él las señas que trae apuntadas son éstas y el nombre del señorito Lorenzo aunque debajo dice ‘para Antonio’, y yo, claro, como no están ahora ninguno no se lo puedo preguntar, pero desde luego aquí en el refu no pegan ni con cola, y dónde los ponemos si además es que son enormes, ¿cómo se le ha ocurrido a usted comprar unos jarrones tan enormes?, por cierto que debían ser dos, pero de uno viene sólo el soporte, espere un momento... ¿Cómo dice ...? Ah, nada, dice este hombre que a él se los han dado así, que no le líe. (*Nubosidad*: 42)

[This time the main argument seemed to be some vases, which Consuelo had taken for granted were mine.

‘And, as I’ve said to the man, who had to carry them up by hand from the third floor, that’s from the other house, that has to do with the mistress, but he the instructions that he brings written down are these and the name of young master Lorenzo although underneath it says ‘for Antonio’, and me, of course, as no one’s here now I can’t ask anyone, but of course here in the hideaway they don’t fit in at all, and where do we put them as besides it’s that they’re enormous, how did it occur to you to buy such enormous vases?, by the way they should be a pair, but the stand only comes with one of them, wait a minute ... What are you saying...? Oh, nothing, this man says that they gave them to him like that, that don’t involve him.’]

The relevance of the pragmatic elements in the conversation diminishes the asymmetrical relationship between syntax and semantics. Therefore, the contextualizing procedures shared by the speaker and the listener, allows the listener to imagine the meaning of the two utterances, even though the relationship between them has not been explicitly made syntactically.

Hence the possibility of linking, through paratactical processes, sentences in which the context allows one to establish a relation of causality, as we can see in the first example: 'anoche me lo encontré de sopetón y fue reconocerlo y revivir la escena que te cuento [last night I came across it out of the blue and it was the recognition and the reliving of the scene that I'm describing to you]'; or in the second: 'yo es que te veo llorar y alucino [me, it's that I see you crying and I'm amazed]'. While the expressive force of bipolar comparison is shown in sentences like: 'es que vi cuando se metía en su banco, y luego me la tapaba el púlpito casi del todo [it's that I saw when she was getting into her pew, and then the pulpit was blocking my view of nearly all of her]'; or in: 'él las señas que trae apuntadas son ..., y yo, claro, como no están ahora ninguno no se lo puedo preguntar [the instructions that he brings written down are ..., and me, of course, as no one's here now I can't ask anyone]'. Here we have another example, taken from one of the earliest works of the author. In it, two old acquaintances meet each other again in a train as they are returning from their summer vacation:

—Nada, al año que viene a Cestona. A Cestona conmigo ... Lo malo es que nos ha llovido un poco, eso ...

—Bueno. Y a nosotros también. Harto vengo de lluvia y de no lluvia, que no sé qué era peor si estarse en el hotel comido de moscas o el achicharradero de la playa debajo de aquel toldo y con aquel gentío: unas patatas fritas, seis pesetas; una coca-cola, diez, vamos, quite *usté* hombre; y luego el tranvía abarrotado a la vuelta; y el tenerse que poner de punta en blanco para bajar al comedor... —iba contando estas cosas por los dedos, disparándolos al aire sucesivamente en firmes sacudidas, empezando por el pulgar—. Y uno que papá veinte duros, y otro que nos vamos en bici a Ygueldo, y otro que llegaba tarde a cenar ... Nada más que disgustos, se lo digo, y gastar dinerales. Y para eso, deje usted la partida de mus del Casino. ¡Cada vez que lo pienso! No, no se ría ...¹⁴

[Anyway, next year Cestona. To Cestona with me ... The bad thing is that it has rained a bit on us, it's that ...]

'Well. And on us too. I'm fed up with everything rain or no rain, I don't know what was worse being stuck in the hotel eaten by flies or the inferno of the beach under that sunshade and with that throng of people: chips, six pesetas; a coke, ten, come on, and get outta the way for God's sake; and then the tram jam-packed on the way

14 Carmen Martín Gaité, *La charca*, in *Obras completas*, vol. 1, pp. 1107–81: p. 1110.

back; and having to get all dressed up to go down to the dining room ...', he went on counting these things off on his fingers, firing them successively into the air with steady jerks, starting with the thumb. 'And one with Daddy 20 bob, and another with we're off cycling to Ygueldo, and another that would be late for dinner ... Nothing but hassle, I'm telling you, and spending a fortune. And for all that, you give up the card game at the club. Every time I think about it! No, don't laugh ...']

The words with which the second speaker interrupts the discourse of the first to talk about his holidays in San Sebastian illustrate the need to go beyond the study of the sentence (microsyntactic) and to conduct an analysis of the discourse (macrosyntactic) because, in the great majority of these examples, 'y' acts more as a discursive marker than as a sentence 'coordinator'. The speaker uses this type of syntax to introduce a commentary ('y a nosotros también [and on us too]'), to quickly describe the atmosphere at the beach ('y luego el tranvía ...; y el tenerse que poner de punta en blanco [and the tram ...; and having to get all dressed up]'), or to go on linking the clauses of the reported speech of his children ('y uno que papá veinte duros, y otro que nos vamos en bici a Ygueldo, y otro que llegaba tarde a cenar [and one with Daddy 20 bob, and another with we're off cycling to Ygueldo, and another that would be late for dinner]'). Therefore, just like in spoken language, in these types of texts, the discourse moves forward, progressing almost of its own volition. This could be said even 'in spite of' the constant presence of the connector 'y', because this progression is something that does not depend on it.

The supposed scarcity of hypotactic constructions in spoken language does not mean that there is a lack of elaboration. Antonio Narbona has demonstrated¹⁵ that, as happens in colloquial speech, it makes no sense to try to describe the role of 'que' in constructions such as these,

—¿Y adelgazas?

—¡Qué va! No se adelgaza con ninguna. Yo el peso ya lo he subido al maletero. Que, por cierto, ¡la cantidad de trastos que se almacenan en un maletero, madre mía! (Irise: 46)

15 Antonio Narbona Jiménez, 'Sintaxis coloquial', in M. Alvar, ed., *Introducción a la lingüística española* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2000), pp. 463–78.

['And are you losing weight?']

'No way! You don't lose weight with any of them. Me the weight by now I've put it into storage. Hey, by-the-by, the amount of junk that collects in a storage room, my God!']

nor its paratactic or hypotactic function in

—¿Viene Mercedes?

—No. ¿Por qué?

—No le digas nada de esto ..., si no te importa.

—No, mujer. Descuida. Pero dime, ¿qué es lo que te pasa?

—Nada —La voz se le había vuelto más tranquila—. *Que* nos entendemos mal, *que* me vuelve loca en las cartas, con las ventoleras que le dan de que le quiero poco, y siempre pidiéndome imposibles, cosas que yo no puedo hacer. *Que* no se hace cargo... Fíjate: por ejemplo, se enfada porque no voy a Madrid. Si mi padre no me lleva, ¿qué querrá que haga yo? Pues con eso ya, *que* no le quiero.

—Ah, eso siempre, eso todos. ¿Por qué te crees tú que reñimos Antonio y yo? Pues por eso, nada más que porque no me daba la gana de hacer lo que él quería.

—No, si nosotros no creo que terminemos. Si me quiere mucho.

—Tú, de todas maneras, no seas tonta, no te dejes avasallar. Yo por lo menos es lo que te aconsejo. Si te pones blanda es peor. ¿*Que* riñes? Pues santas pascuas. Ya ves yo, me pasé un berrinche horrible. Acuérdate, la primavera pasada, *que* ni ganas de ir al cine tenía; pero luego se alegra una, yo por lo menos ... (*Entre*: 113)

['Is Mercedes coming?']

'No. Why?'

'Don't tell her anything about this..., that's if you don't mind.'

'No, God. Don't worry. But tell me, what's going on with you?'

'Nothing.' Her voice had become much calmer. 'That we're not getting on, that he drives me mad in his letters, with the strange notions that he gets that I don't love him much, and always asking me impossible things, things that I can't do. That he doesn't get... Get this, for instance, he gets angry because I'm not going to Madrid. If my father won't take me, what does he want me to do? Well with that now, that I don't love him.'

'Ah, same old story, they're all the same. Why do you think me and Antonio fell out? Well, for that, no more than for because I didn't feel like doing what he wanted.'

'No, its not that I think we'll break up. He loves me so.'

'You, in any case, don't be silly, don't let yourself be steamrollered. Me at least that's what I advise you to do. If you go soft-hearted its worse. So you fight? Well, so what. See me, now, I threw a terrible tantrum. You remember, last spring, that I didn't even feel like going to the cinema; but then you get happier, at least I did...']

nor to qualify as *incomplete* or *unfinished* constructions with 'si' acting as a reinforcement, as we can see in the following example: 'No, si nosotros no creo que terminemos. Si me quiere mucho [No, us it's not that I think we'll break up. It's that he loves me so]; in which this structure cannot be interpreted as the result of an ellipsis of a subsequent clause.

The existence of suspended sentences ('que no se hace cargo ...; ... yo por lo menos ... [that he doesn't get ...; ... me, at least ...]') or syncopated sentences ('pues con eso ya, que no le quiero; ah, eso siempre, eso todos; ya ves yo, me pasé un berrinche horrible; ... la primavera pasada, que ni ganas de ir al cine tenía [well with that now, that I don't love him; ah, same old story, they're all the same; see me, now, I threw a terrible tantrum; ... last spring, that I didn't even feel like going to the cinema]') is common in spoken language.

Si hubiera tenido más tiempo →(↑)
 De haberlo sabido →(↑)
 Si me lo hubieran dicho antes →(↑)¹⁶

[If I'd only had more time →(↑)
 Having known it →(↑)
 If they'd said something beforehand →(↑)]

This cannot be attributed to the lack of skill of the speaker either. With even more reason, in these literary texts the presence of such constructions – 'plenamente comunicativas precisamente en cuanto suspendidas [fully communicative precisely because of the extent to which they are suspended]'¹⁷ – is not due to a lack of linguistic skill, but rather to the desire to imitate the spontaneity of conversation and to demonstrate graphically, with the limited signs available – suspension points, quotation marks, exclamation marks, question marks, and little more – the prosodic and suprasegmental features of oral language.

On the other hand, the lack of a prior design for phrases in spoken language gives rise to an arrangement of the syntactical elements that cannot be seen as *altered* or *irregular*, as authors such as Vigara have pointed out.

16 Briz, *El español coloquial...*, p. 86.

17 Narbona, *Sintaxis española*, p. 166.

A special sort of sentence pattern permits the spontaneous expression, at the beginning of the sentence, of a dominant element (usually, but not necessarily, the sentence element with principal stress). These patterns consist of rearrangements or 'dislocations' of the *subject-verb-object* sentence order. Because of this, it is necessary to abandon the notion of the spoken or colloquial phrase as the result of a 'disordering' of the logical syntactic structure. Only then will one be able to analyze examples such as the following:

Me acuerdo de que en la guerra fui con ella a escondidas varias tardes a llevarles comida a unos rojos del pueblo que andaban escondidos por política, los *maquis* los llamaban, y yo no lo entendía porque eran el Basilio y el Gaspar, amigos de la infancia de mi madre; se los encontró un día ella por lo intrincado estando de paseo, ya cerca de las ruinas, salieron de repente, se hincaron de rodillas: 'Ay, Teresa, por Dios, no digas nada a nadie de que estamos aquí, pero sube otro día y tráenos de comer, nos morimos de hambre', y a nadie se lo dijo, sólo a mí, ni la familia de ellos ni nadie lo sabía en qué lugar paraban, pero a mí me lo dijo, me dijo 'es un secreto' y sabía seguro que yo se lo guardaba. 'A la niña la traigo para no venir sola, pero ella es como yo', les explicó la primera tarde que fuimos, y a mí me había ido advirtiendo por el monte arriba que tenían barba de mucho tiempo y la ropa muy rota y que por eso les llevábamos unas mudas además de comida, que vivían en el hueco de una peña como bichos y que casi no los iba a conocer, que no tuviera miedo, pero sí, miedo iba a tener yo, una novela es lo que me parecía tener aquel secreto a medias con mamá. (*Retablos*: 629)

[I remember that in the war I went with her secretly on several evenings to take food to some reds from the village who were in hiding due to politics, the *maquis* they were called, and I didn't understand it because they were Basilio and Gaspar, childhood friends of my mother's; came across them one day she did in an out of the way place on a walk, when close to the ruins, they popped up suddenly out of nowhere, fell on their knees: 'Oh, Teresa, for God's sake, don't say anything to anyone about us being here, but come up another day and bring us something to eat, we're dying of hunger,' and no-one she told, only me, not their family nor anyone knew where they were at, but me, me she told, she said 'it's a secret' and she knew for certain that I would keep it. 'The child I bring so as not to come alone, but she's like me,' she explained to them the first evening we went, and she'd gone on warning me on the way up the mountain that they had well grown in beards and very raggedy clothes and that was why we were taking them some changes of underwear as well as food, that they lived in the hole of a crag like beasts and that I would hardly recognise them, that I shouldn't be scared, but yes, scared I was going to be, a novel is what it seemed like to me having that half-secret with mum.]

In this example, the parenthetical sentences used by the protagonist ('los maquis los llamaban, y yo no lo entendía porque eran el Basilio y el Gaspar [the *maquis* they were called, and I didn't understand it because they were Basilio and Gaspar...']') allow for the integration of one clause into another, provoking the interruption of the syntactic structure. This parenthetical structure is used in direct speech to integrate one discourse into another, while keeping their diversity and their own deictical system ('se hincaron de rodillas: "Ay, Teresa, por Dios" [fell on their knees: "Oh, Teresa, for God's sake..."]'). The postposition of the subject ('se los encontró un día ella [came across them one day she did]'), the duplication of the direct object ('ni la familia de ellos ni nadie lo sabía en qué lugar paraban [not their family nor anyone knew [it] where they were at]') or the *thematization* of one or various sentence elements by placing them in first position ('miedo iba a tener yo; ... una novela es lo que me parecía tener aquel secreto a medias con mamá [scared I was going to be; ... a novel is what it seemed like to me having that half-secret with mum]') also constitute other means employed by the author to highlight certain parts of the sentence or to mark the contrast between two different elements.

Naturally, the degree of 'distortion' always has a limit in writing, which imposes the 'recuperation' of the prosodic and of the paralinguistic elements of the conversation. That Martín Gaité herself is aware of all of this, we can tell from *La búsqueda de interlocutor*:

[...] oír hablar a una persona es también descubrir las huellas del cuento en el rostro que lo emite, 'verla hablar', en una palabra. Los cambios de gesto y de tono son como un segundo texto que refuerza el primero. Hacer visibles esos gestos requiere en la novela una serie de estrategias más o menos acertadas que se añaden al discurso mismo, de la misma manera que se describe el lugar donde va a celebrarse. (*Búsqueda*: 213)

[(...) to hear a person speak is also to uncover the traces of the story in the face that expresses it, 'to see it spoken', in a word. The changes in gesture and tone are like a second text that reinforces the first. To make those gestures visible demands in the novel a series of more or less appropriate strategies, which are added to the discourse itself, in the same way that the place is described where something is going to be held.]

Because of this, she decides to replace these gestures that the readers are not capable of seeing with their own eyes, with commentaries from each speaker about the attitude of the other. For example, these are the words with which Germán, the protagonist of *Retahílas*, opens the chapter that follows the reflection of Eulalia on the deterioration of her face caused by wrinkles:

—*Quitate la mano de la frente, anda, no tienes arrugas tú, no te empeñes en tenerlas. Te aseguro que ahora, a esta luz, eres exactamente la amiga de mamá que estaba abrazada a ella junto a las rocas de una playa que nunca he sabido cuál sería, las dos tan jóvenes, yo os veía como niñas; era una foto preciosa, no sé si sabes cuál te digo.* (*Retahílas*: 647)

[*'Take your hand away from your forehead, come on, wrinkles you don't have you, don't insist on having them. I assure you that now, in this light, you're exactly mum's friend that was holding on to her next to the rocks of a beach that I've never known which one it was, the both of you so young, I saw you both as girls; it was a lovely photo, I don't know if you know which one I'm talking about.'*]

It is of little importance that the imaginary dialogue between a young man of twenty and a woman of forty-five does not produce a 'taking of turns' in the speakers, as in the real conversation – the length of each chapter corresponds to the participation of only one character. This is something Martín Gaité tries to reflect in parts of *Entre visillos*, such as the following:

—Me llamo Emilio del Yerro —se presentó deteniéndose un momento para alargarle la mano—. Suelo tener bastante tiempo libre y me molesta que se aburra la gente que viene aquí. Si quiere usted podemos ser amigos. Mejor dicho, si quieres. Te voy a tutear.

—Sí, claro. Yo me llamo Pablo Klein [...].

Hablaba muy de prisa y me aturdí un poco.

—Estos mismos hermanos, particularmente ella, Elvira. ¿Tú ya los conocías de antes, no?

—¿A los hijos de don Rafael? No, no los conocía.

Pareció muy asombrado.

—Como ella se ha emocionado tanto al verte, y has dicho que viviste aquí de pequeño.

Hubo una pausa, pero yo no tuve tiempo de contestar nada.

—¿Y qué te ha parecido de ellos? —preguntó—. De Elvira, ¿qué te ha parecido?

—He hablado con ella poco rato, pero parece una chica de gran temperamento.
 —Es extraordinaria, maravillosa —dijo con fuego—. Y Teo lo mismo —añadió un poco cortado porque yo le miraba—. Son de lo mejor de aquí. (*Entre*: 148)

['My name is Emilio del Yerro,' he introduced himself pausing a moment to offer me his hand. 'I tend to have quite a bit of free time and it bothers me that people that come here get bored. If one would like we can be friends. Better said, if *you* want. I'm going to treat you as an intimate.'

'Yes, of course. Me, I'm called Pablo Klein [...].'

He spoke very quickly and it took me a little aback.

'These here siblings, especially her, Elvira. You knew them from before, didn't you?'

'Mr Domínguez's children? No, I didn't know them.'

He appeared very surprised.

'As she got so emotional when she saw you, and you've said that you lived here when you were little.'

There was a pause, but I didn't have time to say anything in response.

'And how have they seemed to you?' he asked. 'Elvira, how has she seemed?'

'I've spoken to her very little, but she seems a girl with a lot of character.'

'She's extraordinary, marvellous,' he said with fervour. 'And Teo the same,' he added a little hesitantly because I was looking at him. 'They are among the best ones around here.']

Through the direct intervention of different characters, the author 'hides' in order to feign an open verbal interaction between the speakers in the conversation. However, Martín Gaité just hides momentarily, because the discourse of the protagonists is interrupted by annotations introduced by *verba dicendi*, where she specifies who speaks and how it is done: 'dijo con fuego, añadió un poco cortado, hablaba muy deprisa [he said with fervour, he added a little hesitantly, he spoke very quickly]', etc.

In later novels, such as *Irse de casa* or *Los parentescos* Martín Gaité also utilizes this recourse to insert into the text the 'charla intrascendente, donde nadie escucha a nadie ni se pretende aclarar nada [the non-transcendent chat, where no one talks to anyone or intends to clear anything up]' (*Búsqueda*: 222), thus achieving a better resemblance to real conversation. For example, the second chapter of *Irse de casa* begins with the conversation *in medias res*, between two characters about which the reader does not know anything:

—La zarzuela es de trogloditas, perdonad que os lo diga, ya ni a los extranjeros les gusta. 'Hubo un tonto en un lugar que se creyó golondrina', ¿a quién se le ocurre?, estamos a tres años del dos mil; y con los cambios que va a haber en todo ... Yo porque me encuentro ya mayor, que es lo que me da rabia, que si no..., muchas veces lo he pensado, me encantaría aprender inglés, pero a fondo. Otro gallo nos cantaría si hubiéramos estudiado idiomas a su tiempo.

—¡Qué pasadas estáis con los idiomas! No sé qué otro gallo nos iba a cantar.

—El de estar al tanto cuando venga el euro, Margarita, y esas cosas. A ver. Por lo menos nos enteraríamos mejor de lo que pasa. Tú es que eres muy cerrada. Oye, qué ricas están las tostadas esta tarde. Veo que ninguna las untáis con mantequilla, pásame tu platito, Feli. Lo siento, pero de la mantequilla no puedo prescindir, es un vicio, y cuidado que luego me pesa.

—Tampoco te obsesiones, mujer. Yo ahora estoy siguiendo un régimen que no prohíbe la mantequilla, ni la pasta, ni el vino en las comidas, ni las patatas; se están arrinconando las dietas de pasar hambre. Porque la ansiedad también da muchos gases. En ésta se trata de comer despacio. (*Irse: 47*)

[‘Light opera is for troglodytes, forgive me for saying it to you all, now not even foreigners like it. ‘There was a fool in a place that thought he was a swallow,’ who comes up with this stuff?, we’re three years from the year two thousand; and with the changes that there’ll be with everything ... Me, because now I feel I’m getting on, which is what annoys me, because if not ..., often I’ve thought, I’d love to learn English, but properly, in depth. They’d be singing us a different tune if we’d studied languages at the right time.’

‘What fuddy-duddies you’re being about languages! I don’t know what tune they were going to sing us.’

‘The one about being up on things when the Euro arrives, Margarita, and all that stuff. Let’s see. At least we’d get to know what’s going on better. You, you’re very close-minded. Hey, how tasty the toast is this evening. I see that not one of you is spreading butter on it, pass me your side plate, Feli. I’m sorry, but butter I can’t do without, it’s a bad habit, and guaranteed later I regret it.’

‘Don’t get obsessed, girl. Me now, I’m following a diet that doesn’t ban butter, or pasta, or wine with meals, or potatoes; all those starvation diets are on the way out. Because anxiety also gives you a lot of wind. On this one it’s about eating slowly.’]

The dashes indicate the changes in speaker, and the author inserts some proper names (*Margarita, Feli*), subject pronouns (‘tú es que eres muy cerrada [you, you’re very close-minded]’) and other terms of address (‘mujer, perdonad que os lo diga, oye ... [girl, forgive me for saying it to you all, hey ...]’), but the identity of the speaker who intervenes at each moment

is not made clear. The absence of all explanation of the context obliges the readers to play an active role, as they should be able to imagine the prosodic features and the appropriate accompanying gestures. And, at the same time, should go on discovering the necessary information in order to understand the plot. The dialogue seems to develop without any 'external controls' since Martín Gaité decides to keep herself in the margins and to let her characters do the talking 'on their own', so that we get to know them, 'por lo que dicen y por cómo lo dicen, no por lo que el autor predique de ellos [...], se nos meten en el alma ellos solos, porque los oímos hablar [via what they say and how they say it, not for what the author tells us about them, they get into our souls by themselves, for we hear them speaking]' (*Búsqueda*: 183).

In conclusion, although recreations of the spoken word in literature can never be complete or perfect, Martín Gaité is able to simulate a *feigned* spontaneity, similar to that which exists in real conversation. As I have tried to show, the attempt to simulate spoken discourse constitutes a constant concern throughout the work of this novelist, as she makes manifest in *La búsqueda de interlocutor*, a reflection on the process of creation of her novels. In order to achieve this *mimesis* of oral speech, she uses a wide range of syntactic structures such as self-corrections, additions, interruptions, clauses in which there is an attempt to imitate a segmented structure, successive approximations, suspended sentences, *syncopated* sentences, reported speech clauses that are introduced into the narration without an explicit verb of communication, the 'abuse' of parataxis, and so on. Thanks to these, characters can penetrate slowly into the memory of the reader, through their own words.