

**Breaking Almost All the Rules:
Joaquín Camps's Police Non-Procedural *La silueta del
olvido***

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Joaquín Camps's *La silueta del olvido*, Premio Azorín de Novela 2019, has been labeled by the author as well as by much of the press and literary critics as a "thriller policiaco" ("El valenciano"). Many, however, have realized that the novel is a bit more complicated than *simply* that and, while agreeing with that description, have also tempered their remarks with qualifications such as "un thriller policiaco, distinto en cuanto a las dosis de ironía y crítica social que nos muestra en sus páginas" (Yunta and Santamaría), or, as in the case of ABC's reviewer, emphasizing the "'profundidad humana' de los personajes y también el hilo de humor negro y la 'extrema habilidad del autor en descubrir sentimientos complejos'" ("Joaquín"). Lola Torrent, meanwhile, highlights "el carácter 'imperfecto' de sus personajes, a los que enfrenta a situaciones complejas 'moralmente ambiguas.'" At the same time, Europa Press, in its analysis of the novel, has preferred simply to quote the author himself: "Una novela tiene que entretener, pero no es suficiente. Tiene que hacer reflexionar sobre problemas personales y también sociales." And in similar fashion, Alejandro Ferrer also defers to the author's own words when he notes that this "intriga policiaca" is intended to be "'una montaña rusa emocional' con la finalidad del que 'el lector aborrezca y ame a los personajes para que reflexione sobre los prejuicios que existen a la hora de abordar situaciones moralmente ambiguas.'" Obviously, then, Joaquín Camps has produced a novel that goes beyond the traditional and somewhat formulaic police procedural paradigm interested in concluding with a restoration of justice and a sense that all is right once again in the world. In fact, it is my argument that Camps has ingeniously subverted widely-accepted characteristics of that model to create a new narrative form—not just a new type of police protagonist—that both harkens back

to the police procedural style while foreshadowing something totally different, something I am calling a police non-procedural.



Perhaps the reason why so many, including the author, have labeled the novel a police procedural is because Claudia Carreras, the main character in charge of the investigation of the kidnapping of Lara Valls, is a police officer being assisted by her subordinate Ramón Linares and other investigators on the force. Her being the main detective stands in opposition to the principal “investigator” being one of the other, more traditional character types of detective fiction such as an amateur detective (e.g.: C. Auguste Dupin or Miss Marple), a private investigator (e.g.: Holmes or Marlowe), or a forensic specialist (e.g.: Quincy or Scarpetta). Additionally, she does conduct the investigation in more-or-less typical police fashion, although, as will be examined in greater detail later in this essay, those interrogation techniques do present their own variations from the expected norms of the police procedural subgenre. Certainly detective fiction in general has matured substantially since the time of George Dove’s widely respected analysis of the traditional police procedural, and no longer is it considered “mandatory” that the main character of a police procedural be male. In fact, many contemporary police procedurals contain female officer protagonists: for example, Petra Delicado, Alba Díaz de Salvatierra, Valentina Redondo, and Amaia Salazar, to name only four of the perhaps most famous serialized examples from Spain. Having said such, however, Camps’s policewoman does stand out from the crowd.¹ Claudia Carreras has a surname that ironically plays on a noticeable, physical characteristic: she suffered a ski accident as a young person and since then has walked with a noticeable limp. In fact, such is the pain that persists from that accident that even now, as a 50-something-year-old adult, she suffers “la sensación de que la cabeza del fémur va a brotarle por la cadera” (21). Her hobble, it should be noted, is the one thing that almost all of the suspects and new acquaintances immediately notice about her. The suspected rapist Francisco screams at her, “¿Quién es esta

tetona coja?! ¿La bruja del cuento?!” (54), to which she responds, “Sí, esa soy yo, la bruja coja del cuento, eres un chico listo”

¹ Giménez-Bartlett’s police detective protagonist is perhaps the closest of any of these to being a *new type* of detective. She is female, has a male assistant, and also has a revelatory name that describes her complicated relationship with suspects: Petra Delicado (i.e., both hard and soft). And while the series begins with Petra, a divorcee, being single, she does get married in *Nido vacío* (2007). However, because many other parts of that series retain traditional, expected, traits of both the hard-boiled and the police procedural – Camps’s variances are examined in this essay –, it is my argument that the Petra Delicado series represents more of a hybridized model than a prototype (see my “Police Procedural”). Dolores Redondo’s series – with Amaia Salazar as the police detective – also represents a hybridized model of the country noir and the neo-gothic (see my “Spain’s ‘Country Noir’” and “Dolores Redondo’s”).

(55). The first observations by an unnamed witness (the suspect Matías's mother?) of the journalist Héctor and Claudia's quite public confrontation are "¿es policía!? Pues con esa pierna no sé yo cómo va a perseguir a los delincuentes" (214). And when Claudia's assistant Ramón accuses Dr. Valls, the father of the kidnapped girl Lara, of having raped the child six years prior, the suspect explodes, screaming at Ramón: "¡A ver si se cree que no he notado cómo le mira las tetas a su jefa! Ponerse cachondo con una coja como esa..., hay que estar muy enfermo" (270). In addition to the irony of her surname, however, the author states that Claudia's lameness is "una metáfora de su superación personal en un mundo muy masculinizado" (Galdeano), a world of policemen, investigations, crime, and action to which Claudia is never able to fully adapt.²

Another distinction that sets Claudia off from the more typical police procedural protagonist is her civil status and inability to maintain relationships. According to Dove, the main character of a police procedural is always a happily married policeman, but with family problems (112). Even excluding the issue of gender, such is definitely not the case with Claudia. As opposed to other police procedurals in which marriage—or at least long-term relationships—seems to be the model for female protagonists, Claudia is not married, has not been married, and seemingly has no intentions of ever getting married; nor is she able to maintain a long-term relationship with any member of the opposite, or same, gender. In fact, she seems opposed to any sort of close, long-lasting friendship of any sort; she even tells Ramón that "Ya lo dijo Shakespeare: 'La amistad es sobre todo ficción'" (454). If truth be told, Claudia's relationships seem to be only fleeting sexual encounters; such apparently are her *modus operandi*. When she meets the new policeman Bruno, a recent academy graduate assigned to her case, "no puede evitar echarle un último vistazo al nuevo: este hombretón es el primer ejemplar que ha conocido en su vida capaz de ennoblecer una camiseta interior de tirantes" (93); later, in the interrogation room, she is proud of her team members' questioning of suspects, but she takes special delight in giving "un buen repaso al trasero de Bruno" (360). She has long been lusting after the aforementioned journalist Héctor before spending one night in his apartment fulfilling her fantasies. One

² Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones note that in the police procedural genre, "much of the reader's pleasure is derived from the novel's focus on police teamwork [...]. In these books the central character is traditionally viewed as part of a collectivity, integrated into the state structures of law and order that function as the corporate hero of the novels" (13-14). Obviously, *La silueta del olvido* deviates from the genre's norms given that Claudia on multiple occasions forcefully and directly opposes her superior and, as will be noted later in this essay, the novel ends with her having been placed on administrative leave for rules violations.



evening at her home, “gracias a la música y al alcohol” (168), Claudia’s libido becomes aroused; finding no other outlet, she knocks on her neighbor’s door, and when he answers, she “agarra su nuca con la mano, se lo arrima y le da un beso en la boca” (170). Never before having ever liked him or found him attractive, however, she quickly releases him, telling him “Esto no ha pasado, y no volverá a pasar. No me gustas, pero necesitaba hacerlo” (170), before turning away and returning to her apartment. Such impetuous, erotic initiative, however, is not out of her character: even prior to her transfer to Valencia arising from an attempt to escape her memories and past questionable behavior (seen via flashbacks to pre-novel times), she is the one who instigated the affair in Madrid with her married police partner Tomás by unbuttoning her blouse while they are at dinner (68). And at the end of the novel, Claudia returns to Héctor’s apartment and invites herself in (459) even though they had separated after their prior dalliance with her cursing him for reporting in the news media that the hostage ransom had been paid, telling him “¡Sí, lárgate con el rabo entre las piernas! ¡Rata cobarde!” (215) and that she never, “jamás” (316) wanted to see him again (459).

Self-destruction seems to be another character trait that distinguishes Claudia from the typical detective protagonist of contemporary police procedurals. Claudia is the one who, while she and her partner/lover Tomás had been staking out a reported crime scene, briefly pushed him to leave his wife and be with her; his noncommittal responses resulted in her getting mad at him and leaving the patrol car only moments before he was shot by the criminal(s) they had been pursuing (104, 113). Her remorse at having left him alone in the car resulted in a self-imposed period of leave from her job due to depression (36), but in spite of the passage of time, official clearance from any wrongdoing on her part, and a transfer to Valencia, Claudia still suffers from guilt for his death. Such is her mental anguish that she continues to take Prozac some three years after that tragedy, even while on the job conducting official business. Ramón warns her that “Si los de Asuntos Internos se enteran de que sigue con el Prozac... ¡No puede ir armada y drogada a la vez!” (63) and “Jefa, no haga eso, por favor, sabe que no le hace bien” (323); she, however, continues taking the pills, a behavior that ultimately leads to a one-year suspension from the force at the end of the novel when the substance is detected in a “routine” urine test (379, 453). Unsurprisingly, this urine test itself arises from yet another example of Claudia’s self-destructive behavior: When Claudia discovers that the “kidnapping” of the 18-year old Lara is really a contrived stratagem of revenge by the youth against her abusive parents – and no true kidnapping at all –, Claudia’s boss congratulates her and instructs her “Caso cerrado” (329).

The detective, however, is unable to accept the case as finished and continues to work behind her superior's back in an attempt to bring both Lara and her parents to justice. When Lara's mother complains to the commissioner about Claudia's subsequent questioning of her "de una manera 'muy agresiva y prepotente'" (359), he confronts the investigator regarding her disobeying of his order. Claudia responds by casting in his face that "sus ambiciones políticas le hacen ser un mal policía. [...] Insinúo que quedar bien con sus amigotes de las altas esferas le preocupa más que conseguir que se haga justicia..., y eso, le aseguro que no lo voy a permitir" (359). Taken aback, rather than engaging her any more, he simply turns his back to her and departs with the words: "No te enfrentes a mí si no quieres que te joda la vida" (359). It is shortly thereafter when agents from Internal Affairs show up at the restaurant where she is dining for the aforementioned "routine" urine test (379).

Claudia has other emotional weaknesses that seem to interfere with her abilities to be an effective investigator and result, instead, in her being a paradigm-shifting detective. For no logical reason she absolutely hates Lara's father, Dr. Valls, even prior to ever meeting him; she first accuses him of having raped Lara when she was fifteen, then of manipulating the emergency-room medications in such a way that Matías—the one actually convicted back then of raping Lara—wound up in a vegetative state two years prior to the events of the novel. When she calls the father in for questioning, he initially claims ignorance of the events and challenges Claudia to prove his guilt. Her response is, "Lo haré, ¿y sabe por qué? [...] Por una razón muy sencilla. Te odio, y acabaré contigo" (284). Later, she confronts him with the proof of intentional medical malpractice against Matías, something he finally admits and justifies as "Ojo por ojo" (299). And with tears in his eyes, he asks her "¿Qué hubiese hecho usted en mi lugar? ¿Qué hubiese hecho usted si le han violado a su hija, y el criminal que lo hizo se ha pasado tan solo un año en la cárcel y está por ahí suelto, disfrutando de la vida?" (299). His emotional breakdown results in her own feelings starting to get the better of her; his tears "lo cambia todo. [...] Y las lágrimas de este hombre cruel, sus dudas, limpian muchas cosas" (299). In fact, such is her change of mindset that "A la inspectora le sorprende su propia transformación interior, el cambio de percepción sobre el individuo que tiene enfrente tan solo gracias a una pregunta, una pregunta de la que ella no conoce la respuesta" (301). Claudia, in short, allows his suffering to affect her ability to adjudicate properly his behavior, a character trait that José Colmeiro notes as a fundamental requirement of all detective fiction: "el detective es racionalmente impasible [...]. Tampoco hay lugar en él para la compasión por las víctimas" (60).

Conversely, however, Claudia's *lack* of compassion is also, at times, problematic. At the beginning of the novel, she goes to Lara's house to investigate the kidnapping and meets Lara's mother, Cristina Manuela. Claudia's first impression of the suffering woman is to call her, internally, a "muñeca de porcelana" (22), imagining that someone who "se presenta como Cristina Manuela porque le gusta que la llamen Cristina Manuela, y te obliga a pronunciar cada vez esa mierda de nombre interminable, alguien así, solo puede ser una gilipollas" (23). Because of her own emotional prejudices, Claudia quickly begins to blame Cristina Manuela for leaving the 18-year old Lara alone at home for two hours and is able to stir up within herself no sympathy at all for the mother even though she can offer no justification for why an 18-year old needs twenty-four hour surveillance. Indeed, Claudia's questioning of Cristina Manuela sounds, in the narrator's opinion, as if she has asked "¿Por qué en lugar de pasarte el día en la estetición, no te dedicas a preocuparte de tu única hija?" (26). And Claudia's inner thoughts are even less charitable: "¿Cómo será ser tan guapa? Te levantas por la mañana y ya están ahí. Esas miradas. Deseosas. Siempre ahí, poniéndotelo todo fácil. Si desde que naciste has vivido eso, no debe de ser difícil volverte una sacerdotisa que tan solo se dedica a cuidar de su templo. Incluso no debe de ser difícil olvidarte un poco de tus hijos, porque tú y tu belleza sois el centro del mundo" (26). That is, even though Claudia's assistant Ramón does feel compassion for the mother, Claudia is incapable of such and remonstrates her assistant with a judgemental comment concerning the mother, "la única prioridad en su vida es mostrarle al mundo lo guapa y elegante que es" (35).

While in *La silueta del olvido* Claudia does employ some of the normal investigative techniques "ordinarily" expected of policemen, like using informants, tailing suspects, and availing [her]self of the resources of the police laboratory" (Dove 2), often these techniques are imbued with a level of violence that shocks her colleagues and subordinates and which are generally more associated with the hard-boiled subgenre than with the police procedural. The narrator's excuse for such, however, is that "para ascender en una organización tan machista [como la policía] por desgracia ha tenido que convencerse de que es una *macha*, ya nada la afecta" (54). She has, then, in effect subsumed traditional, masculine gender roles in order to survive and advance in her career. When the suspect Francisco mocks her halting gait, she responds, "Te contaré un pequeño secreto: me he quedado coja de tanto patearle los cojones a scoria como tú" (55). She immediately, and before anyone has time to react, then stomps him in the groin, justifying her actions with "Con una legislación adecuada se comportarían [los criminales] como angelitos, y yo no tendría que

ir por ahí repartiendo patadas" (56). Ramón, watching the scene, enjoys himself, knowing that Claudia "es como un buldócer que arrasa el bosque virgen hasta llegar a la ermita. 'Hay una carretera por hacer, le joda a quien le joda. Apartad de mi vista a estos putos ecologistas'" (58). In fact, when she orders Francisco arrested, "le soltaría otra buena patada, a ver si esta vez le revienta las joyas de la corona" (58), but she refrains herself, not wanting to force all the other cops to prevaricate should the suspect file a grievance against her abusive behavior. Later, Claudia tells the policeman Bruno to take the video of the kidnapped Lara being drowned in a vat of water to the university to get an engineering professor to calculate how much time remains before Lara dies, advising him to tell the professor that "como difunda el video, yo personalmente le corto los huevos" (99). In fact, even though she is a police investigator, much of the time Claudia's comportment actually more closely resembles the violence-laden *noir* protagonist than the generally law-abiding and deductive reasoning police procedural. Even Claudia herself, in the privacy of her own home, for a moment questions her people skills: "Es consciente de no poseer excesivas habilidades sociales, abre sendas a machetazos que luego no sabe cerrar. Es una buena policía, pero una exploradora incompetente. [...] ¿Pero ¡qué demonios haces flagelándote?! [...] Los buenos policías no pueden permitirse ese lujo" (110).

And when she's not resorting to violence, she does things that make others think she is crazy, actions that sometimes unexpectedly end with positive results. When she returns to visit Matías's mother Concha following the son's suicide, Claudia becomes frustrated at the mention of Héctor's name, tears a page off the wall calendar, makes a paper airplane out of it, and launches it down the hall. The result is that Concha believes "Esta mujer está poseída [... y] se santigua" (219) before voluntarily offering information concerning the hospital's videotape of Matía's death, a recording of which the investigators are totally unaware. This video ultimately will play a pivotal role in leading investigators to proof of Dr. Valls's culpability in injuring Matías. Later, geolocation of the kidnapper's phone signals reveals the kidnapper's hideout. The police go there, and Claudia climbs down into the cistern where the videos of Lara's drowning obviously had been recorded. Once inside, Claudia orders the door closed behind her, leaving her in total darkness; such is her reputation for craziness, however, that "Nadie se atreve a abrir la boca, saben que sería contraproducente para su salud" (321). Fortuitously, however, while in the cistern Claudia murmurs "Lara, cuéntame tu historia" (321), after which "Lara le cuenta su historia. Esos diez segundos son tan intensos, tan epifánicos, como los diez segundos en los que Dios decidió que el Antiguo Testamento pasaba a ser el Nuevo Testamento: ha visto la luz"

(321). When Claudia emerges from the cistern and orders Ramón to get the video from the subway station near the Valls home, he says he understands nothing and “¿Qué es lo que pasa?” Claudia’s response is that “esa niñata [Lara] nos ha tomado el pelo a todos” (323), letting him know that Lara is the perpetrator of the kidnapping, not the victim. Clearly, such reveals, then, that the resolution of the principal crime (i.e., the “kidnapping”) occurs outside of the realm of normal, deductive police detective work; clairvoyance and serendipity are the keys to its resolution.

Claudia’s experiences with ESP have been recurring since the morning of her skiing accident; “Ojalá le hubiese prestado atención” (128). And she has learned to take professional advantage of these fairly frequent incidences of intuition and ESP in her duties as a police detective. In the novel, Claudia is communicating with the kidnapper via text messaging when “se ha sentido como un ratoncillo al que cada vez están metiendo en cajas más pequeñas. ¿De dónde viene esa sensación?” (107). Her paying attention to the telepathy results in her having the Valls home searched for possible hidden listening devices placed there by the kidnapper, two of which are subsequently found. Later, before Dr. Valls hands over the ransom money to the kidnapper, Claudia “conversa con el circuito de su cerebro que le insinúa las cosas” (128), a “conversation” that causes her to suspect that the operation will not end successfully. This “corozonada” eventuality does come to pass when the kidnapper demands that the money be placed in a drone which, when flown beneath the tree canopy, then disappears from police helicopter observation. And after having been reprimanded with a year’s suspension for the failed urine test at the end of the novel, she tells Ramón that finding Lara depends on that the policemen who want to solve the crimes “tirad por [Cristina Manuela], mi instinto me dice que no nos equivocamos” (400). Even though Lara manages to escape police capture, it is, in fact, in Cristina Manuela’s bedroom where the investigators do find her carrying out the last assassination of the series. Thus, in all of the cases, Claudia’s instinct, ESP, and/or clairvoyance are correct and play pivotal roles in the ultimate resolution of the various crimes.

Another key area in which *La silueta del olvido* violates normal rules of the police procedural is through the lack of justice being meted out at the conclusion of the novel and the narrative ending with the detective “beating out his report (in triplicate or quadruplicate as required by regulations) with two fingers on the squad’s ancient typewriter, hoping to finish in time to get a few hours’ sleep before his next shift begins” (Dove 250). Such resolution of the crime(s) and meting out of justice by forces of law and order are necessary since, as the famous novelist P. D. James notes, detective fiction narratives are “celebrations of reason and

order" (196). Many critics of the genre have even likened the stories to fairy tales since both help satisfy humanity's "yearn for order to be restored [...and quest for] achieving at least a measure of justice, though it too is never perfect or complete in this broken world" (Haack).³ Camps's novel, however, simply does not end this way; at the end of the narrative a lack of justice prevails since the kidnapper/murderer Lara eludes detention. Additionally, the case has been officially closed by the less-than-principled *comisario* and inspector Claudia has been removed from the force, essentially because she will not bow to her superior's demands. While it may appear, superficially, that Lara's escape is justifiable given that she has served a type of justice on her abusive parents (i.e., an arguably understandable revenge), a deeper examination of the case dispels such an opinion. Lara, in addition to killing her parents,⁴ also kills the wives of three men to whom her mother had forced her into prostitution and with whom her father had affairs; Lara also has wounded Tano, a police officer whom she shoots during an unsuccessful attempt by the officers to apprehend her. In addition, Lara is actually the one who instigated the relationship with Matías when she was 15 years old and then reported it as rape. When he is freed from jail, she arranges a meeting with him at a bar close to the hospital where her father is on emergency room duty that evening, spikes his drink so that he has coronary issues, and makes sure that Matías enters that particular medical facility before disappearing without a trace. She stages her own kidnapping, in the process causing an enormous, unnecessary expenditure in public funds and man hours. Finally, the manner in which Lara kills the three women, as well as her own mother, can hardly be called simply "justice"; Lara, instead, meticulously forges replicas of medieval torture devices, employs them, and then stands by, watching while the women suffer a slow and painful death. Lara's subsequent escape and complete freedom to reconstruct a new identity and life free of any repercussions for her own sadistic actions is markedly distinct from the normal restoration of societal order and stability found in police procedurals – if not most detective fiction in general.

In 1928, the critic Willard Huntington Wright published an essay in *The American Magazine* in which he laid out twenty rules for writers of detective fiction. The first of these rules was: "The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described" (Van

3 See Shaw (18-21) for a bibliographical review of detective fiction as fairy tale.

4 It bears clarification that Lara's father actually commits suicide while he is in jail awaiting trial, but Lara sets the stage knowing that he will be detained and that his own personal "code of honor" and *lo que dirán* at his being arrested will result in suicide.



Dine). While such was written in the “Golden Age” of American detective fiction, and the genre has evolved substantially since then, this tenet is still considered a fairly standard requirement by crime fiction writers; in fact, a plethora of references to this tenet can easily be found on the internet. Camps’s novel, however, deviates substantially from the paradigm at several key points in the investigation when the investigators’ have already established proof of malfeasance prior to revelations of the depravity – or proof of such – to the reader. Dr. Valls, for example, is in the police station being interrogated – and the police already have a warrant for his arrest due to criminal intent in medical malpractice – when the author reveals three important points of the investigation to the reader: Valls’s telephone call to his wife revealing the “rapist’s” appearance at the hospital and the doctor’s intent to kill Matías, the presentation by the police to the doctor of Matías’s diabetic necklace which had been found hidden in one of his homes, and the police explanation of how/why Dr. Valls carried out the plan (282-97). Cristina Manuela is being interrogated at the police station when the police charge her with having prostituted her daughter beginning when the child was 12 years old (420), but no proof or hints of this have been noted prior to this in the novel. Neither the brief conversation between the investigators and the equestrian instructor (369), whose scheduled, but never attended, lessons served as the alibi for the mother and daughter’s outings, nor the police investigators’ questioning of Lara’s closest school friend (265-69) contain any allusions to a potential forced prostitution. And until Claudia’s clairvoyant “discovery” at the scene where the kidnapping videos are recorded, no obvious clues are revealed which would lead the reader to suspect that Lara is anything other than the innocent kidnapping victim; even Claudia’s sidekick Ramón responds to her command to re-examine the metro station videotapes and search for Lara with “¿A... a Lara? No entiendo nada. ¿Qué es lo que pasa?” (323). And the author himself even responds with pride, “es un halago que te hayas dado cuenta,” when the Noticias CV interviewer asks “¿Es intencionado que no haya ninguna pista de lo que será el desenlace hasta casi el final de la novela?”

Perhaps an even more blatant “transgression” of the narrative rules of detective fiction, however, involves the author’s intentional deception of the reader. Wright’s second rule, in fact, is that “No willful tricks or deceptions may be placed on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself” (Van Dine). While many of the plot twists and false starts in the novel do correspond to typical detective fiction conventions, Camps does admit to a distortion of this aspect of the paradigm when he explains to Patricia Millán that “La novela negra es un juego entre el escritor y el lector, un juego al que

ambos están dispuestos a jugar. Yo voy a intentar engañarte y tú vas a intentar pillarte. Es un juego de manipulación. Trato de generar ese morbo." The author's narrative verbiage proves the subterfuge that Camps confesses: the wording contained with the descriptions of Lara's kidnapping are an intentional attempt to deceive the reader. The video sent by the kidnapper of Lara drowning in a vat of water could be excused as equivalent to criminal deception of the police were it not for the fact that in each of the three different occasions the reader sees Lara in that water, she is mentally anguishing for help and for someone to get her out (102, 116, 131). Further complicating the issue is the detail of the *narrator's* qualitative annotation of "the victim" as "pobre Lara" (91) as well as the *narrator's* statement that "el aire no la matará. Es el agua la que no deja de subir" (102), thereby directly casting Lara as innocent and a victim. In addition, Lara's own thoughts concerning her condition further substantiate the deception of her being a victim: "Aquí, *atrapada* en el pozo de Murakami, echo tanto de menos mi biblioteca, mis libros" (102, emphasis added), and "¿Por qué habéis venido a por mí?!" (131). She in no way is "trapped" and "you (plural)" certainly have not come after her; while her past may include emotional and physical abuse by her parents, her current situation is entirely of her own choosing. Additionally, the novel opens with Lara (at that point an unknown killer) in the bedroom of an elderly woman whom she is torturing to death; there, in the dark, the narrator states that "esta mujer que tiene enfrente no le [a Lara] ha hecho nada. Ha sido la elegida tan solo porque vive sola, y porque vive en ese lugar" (10). That the woman is a random victim who coincidentally lives in this location is obvious duplicity on the narrator's part since, as is explained toward the end of the novel, this woman also is a wife of one of the three men to whom Lara's mother had prostituted the child as well as a business partner of her father, Dr. Valls. It is for these very reasons that the elderly lady is *targeted* for elimination by Lara; the death is in no means coincidental.

A final element that demonstrates quite forcefully that with this novel Camps has contorted characteristics of the police procedural into a new genre is not subtractive, but expansive: the author includes an almost unlimited number and ubiquity of different narrative voices. These include comments by different characters concerning what they are doing, hearing, or observing as well as comments and thoughts by individuals about what other characters are doing or saying. In addition, the novel also incorporates a typical third-person omniscient narrator who is not a part of the narrative action itself. Sometimes it is obvious who is making the comments or thoughts; other times, determining the provenance of those thoughts or comments is

quite complicated, if not impossible. A substantial portion of the text, in short, is composed of those inserts, and a multitude of critics in the blogosphere have noted the distinctiveness that such gives to the text, some highlighting the positive nature of these multiple narrators and others, as might be expected, focusing on the more negative aspect—or the mentation required to understand adequately the narrative. To say the very least, this type of narrative commentary complicates the reading in that it forces the reader to keep track of a central narrator, an implied author, characters themselves, and the characters' inner selves. One advantage of this, however, is that it offers a distinctive view of character traits, thoughts, and reasons for their actions more commonly either left unstated or more overtly explained. Camps, by using this technique, draws the reader into the story, in essence thereby creating an inference reading which establishes a more intimate connection between the reader and the various characters in the novel. Consequently, the result is that Camps' work becomes a type of psychological thriller, a page-turner in which the narrative voice is as equally important as is the action. That is, the "thriller"—or page-turning—aspect of the novel derives as much from the reader's emotional relationship with the characters as it does to anticipating subsequent actions on their part.

The reader understands first-hand, for example, the complicated relationship that Claudia has with her assistant Ramón. While she likes and trusts him, she sometimes finds it difficult to communicate efficaciously with him: "¿Por qué tiene a veces la sensación de que sus conversaciones con Ramón están plagadas de topicazos de mala novela negra" (13). On another occasion she opines, "Hablar con este hombre es siempre apocalíptico. Sientes que estás hablando con Isaac Asimov tras cometer el error de pedirle predicciones sobre el futuro de la humanidad" (16). And Ramón, in turn, constantly is walking on eggshells when Claudia is tense—a frequent occurrence—such as when the kidnappers have not appeared ten minutes after the appointed time: "En ese ambiente, a Ramón no le apetece romper el silencio. Vete tú a saber si la jefa la emprende conmigo, ahora que está lanzada..." (126). When Claudia interrogates Dr. Valls, she has a milk mustache, something that upsets terribly the OCD Ramón. Instead of the author overtly writing that Ramon stands up and makes gestures to Claudia for her to wipe her mouth, he chooses to describe Ramon's behavior through Claudia's eyes: "Pero, ¿qué hace este hombre? ¿Por qué se ha levantado y ahora está detrás del doctor? ¿Qué son estos gestos? ¿Señales? ¿Será para mirarme mejor las tetas?" (281). When she finally sees a reflection of herself, and her white upper lip, in the interrogation room's one-way window, she realizes Ramón's intents, wipes her mouth, and calms down.

Claudia's emotional railings against others are also commonly portrayed through her inner voice, such as her less-than-charitable first impressions of Lara's mother: "¿Cómo será ser tan guapa? Te levantas por la mañana y ya están ahí. Esas miradas. Deseosas. [...] La inspector suspira: demasiada belleza, demasiadas miradas... ¿Vale la pena ser tan guapa?" (26). But Cristina Manuela's own thoughts concerning Claudia and the other investigators are equally uncharitable and also recorded through the non-vocalized expressions of her inner self: "Primero consiguen acabar con mi marido, y ahora quieren que yo les ayude a acabar con mi hija... Ustedes me han dejado sola, váyanse al demonio" (339). Similar to that of his wife Cristina Manuela, Dr. Valls also obviously has a low opinion of Claudia: "'¿Un policía que mea sentado va a salvar a mi hija?' El doctor también recapacita y verbaliza algo más práctico. 'Tiene razón, son los nervios'" (96-97).

Claudia's complicated relationship with her superiors is exposed through her inner thoughts. When the police commissioner turns from the city mayor, with whom he is conversing, and requests that Claudia bring him a "zumito" at a gala at the Palau de la Música, the mayor becomes obviously nervous at the commissioner's overt sexism. Claudia, seeing the politician's apprehension, immediately thinks, "¿qué debe hacer un demócrata-marxista en una situación como esta? Yo te lo enseñaré, campeón, que vosotros los bipolares..." (82), and she tells her boss to go get his own juice. Later, when she informs the commissioner that should the payoff to the kidnappers go poorly that she will request forty men to search the entire neighborhood for Lara, her boss thinks, "No tengo ni puta idea de lo que estás hablando, pero te voy a escuchar como si tú la tuvieses" (130).

But it is not just the peace officers whose cogitations are recorded via a narrative inset. While Claudia and Héctor are arguing in front of the suspect Matías's home, a neighborhood woman sees them disputing and thinks: "Normal que sea solterona, con ese vocabulario... Y es una lástima, porque fea no es. Pero se la ve poco aseada, una mujer como Dios manda no sale de casa con un lamparón de aceite en los pantalones" (214). In fact, this woman's narrative voice does more than merely reflect her opinions of the couple and their argument; it foreshadows the novel's concluding paragraph when the observer opines: "Mucho insultarle, señora policía, pero a mí no me engañas: a ti te gusta el señor Santos" (215).

And even inner-Lara appears in key moments as a narrator. In addition to the previously examined musings employed by the author in deceiving the reader, in the latter half of the novel Claudia attempts to use her seductiveness in order to lure one of the construction workers; her ultimate objective is to thereby gain access to the elderly woman Cirilo's apartment. She first

goes by the construction area and observes the men working; then she sits at a nearby outdoor cafe reading a book and waiting for the worker to pass by. When he stops and comments to her that he finds it strange that such a beautiful girl as she is would watch him working and coincidentally then just be sitting at a nearby outdoor cafe, she says to herself: “¿Y no te extraña que las probabilidades de que, por casualidad, te encuentres con la misma chica hoy son bajísimas? ¿Justo en la terraza del Ramdani, enfrente del piso de Cirilo Amorós que estás reformando? ¿Y no te extraña que, aunque haga frío, leer un libro llevando guantes es muy incómodo? No, todo eso no te extraña, porque vas tan caliente que se podría freír beicon en tu entrepierna” (356). The reader, then, becomes even more attuned to Lara’s evilness, learning from her own “mouth” how conniving and deceitful she really is; she employs her own seductiveness against an innocent bystander—whom she also kills—for the sole purpose of carrying out her execution plans against her father’s business associate’s wife.

In conclusion, Joaquín Camps’s *La silueta del olvido* distances itself quite remarkably from the typical police procedural. Its main character is a physically handicapped and mentally tortured female officer unable to maintain long-term relationships with anyone. Her emotions quite frequently get the better of her, even in official investigations, and her untypical use of intuition and clairvoyance in official, police investigations stands out. Additionally, she is more than just a rule-bender; she is a rule-breaker, unable to assimilate herself into the force and become one of the team. This results in a tragic end for her since it indirectly triggers the death of her professional partner and lover Tomás prior to the novel’s beginning and directly produces her own suspension from the force at the end of the narrative because of her on-the-job consumption of Prozac. A second major distinction of this work from the traditional paradigm is the lack of justice being served on the principal perpetrator at the end of the novel. Lara has achieved her main objectives: she has triggered her father’s suicide; she has murdered her mother and the elderly wives of her father’s three business associates (the husbands have died prior to the events of the novel), and she has extorted enough money to be able to start a new life, with a new identity, in another place. A third, major distinction between this novel and traditional crime fiction is that, here, the reader is not able to “discover” who the perpetrator is concurrently with the investigators due to key facts/clues being hidden until the police officers reveal those discoveries *post factum*. That the author intentionally deceives the reader is a fourth crucial peculiarity of this novel that distinguishes it from the traditional; while the fifth modification of the genre is expansive in nature: Camps’s innovative use of

multiple narrative voices gives the reader a view into the various characters' thoughts and feelings not common in the typical detective story. This serves to make the reader's relationship with the various characters more intimate and inferential. In short, with *La silueta del olvido* Joaquín Camps has produced a novel that goes beyond the traditional and somewhat formulaic police procedural paradigm, ingeniously subverting widely-accepted characteristics of that model to create a new genre of detective novel—not just a new type of police detective herself—that both harkens back to the genre while simultaneously foreshadowing a type of crime fiction, a prototype, yet to mature on the Spanish national scene—a police non-procedural.



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