

BALTHASAR'S MILL

Balthasar was not an epic character like Achilles, Patroclus, Helen, Odysseus or Penelope. Not like Richard the Lionheart, Joan of Arc, El Cid or Agustina de Aragón. No. Some maintain that he never existed, others claim that he was a wise man who only brought toys to well-behaved children and left coal for the rest. A minority states, with complete certainty, that he was a man who dedicated himself to grinding the wheat that the farmers of the region brought to his mill. He paid them a reasonable amount per kilo and then sold the flour to the bakers at a significantly higher price. For this reason, in certain areas they do not hesitate to maintain that he was a clear antecedent of the intermediary. That figure that today we are suspicious of when there is a significant increase in the cost of products on the market. Others have even come to consider him the inventor of capitalism. However, I think that is saying a lot, but, since today with the information that appears on our mobile phones we are all experts in everything, this nonsense and many more become enthroned as absolute truths. I believe that absolute truth does not exist. Why?, you may ask. Because no two people have the same perception about a certain situation or event, not even homozygous twin brothers. As popular wisdom says: everything depends on the lens through which you look.

This introduction was not necessary and I am happy to admit that it is insubstantial and uninteresting. On the other hand, it does not reveal the plot of what is going to be told next.

Let's get to the point. The Baltasar mill is located in a small city in the north of the country, whose name I will not mention for two reasons. On the one hand, the party that has governed since the democratic period began, some forty-five years ago, would not like it and I am not willing to lose its favors either because, colloquially speaking, it is very cold outside. The second is more material and less spiritual, if its name were made known it would be filled with tourists and this would bring two undesired consequences: they would leave the sidewalks and squares very dirty, the waste from those from here is enough; they would also bring new customs and ideas and this would probably distance some residents from the traditional postulates so strongly defended by our authorities.

The previous fragment allows us to know, even briefly, the context. However, details are still missing that could be considered basic to later be able to analyze the plot. Note that "context" and "plot" are terms that refer to the same thing, that is, in a certain way, they represent the opposite definition of "antonyms", we would say, therefore, that they are

“synonyms”. Finally, I feel the obligation to confess that as a child I never missed a program of “Sesame Street”, “One balloon, two, balloons, three balloons” and “The crystal ball”. I felt very sad with Marco and Heidi, but since my parents let me eat ice cream, well... I was very happy. “Sad” and “happy”, two opposite adjectives, that is, two antonyms.

Surely you will deduce from what has been written so far, the enormous sensitivity towards human development of television programmers and executives. Humbly, I think they are wrong, the Witch Breakdown already said it: “Long live evil, long live capital.” Millions and millions of eyes silent and totally absorbed for hours by the silly box.

Then, since human beings are very impressionable, and children even more so, the following happened. “Mom, mom, buy me this pack of gum, this bag of chips, these yogurts. “They are very good, they announced them today.” And the mother, she didn't even pay attention to my requests. “Take a bag of pipes and that's it, I'm not the Bank of Spain.” If I fell on the floor and bawled, two things could happen: I would get what I wanted because my mother felt embarrassed in front of everyone, especially the neighbor on the fifth floor, or she wouldn't pay any attention to me and I wouldn't even get the bag. of pipes. My father only occasionally took care of the shopping, well, the shopping, the food, the washing machine, etc. While he was in the supermarket, one day I started the aforementioned strategy, he approached me, pulled me up and told me very seriously, pointing at me with his index finger: “If you do it again I will give you two fucks.” At that time, as now, we kids adapted quickly to different situations. The same couldn't be said about adults, my father continued doing nothing at home even though my mother threatened to separate. Result: they yelled at each other, they threw things at each other's heads (glasses, plates, pans...), he went to live in her lover's apartment and, finally, although it was very archaic, they got divorced. I still remember the anger he showed when the “Divorce Law” was approved in Congress (BOE-A-1981-16216 Law 30/1981, of July 7). I have used the expression “archaic” instead of “traditional” because in this case the latter is somewhat scarce. Later I learned that he divorced his lover and got together with another one. I don't know anything else, nor am I interested.

Years later I inherited the mill from my grandfather who, coincidentally, was also called Baltasar. At first, I continued with the business for a few years, but then it was impossible because next to the mill they built high-rise apartment blocks, that is, skyscrapers. “They are not skyscrapers – my friend Gaspar got angry. You always giving yourself importance. To be skyscrapers they should have at least thirty floors and these only have twenty-nine.” I had to admit that Gaspar, although just barely, was right. To make

the land profitable, I kept the mill, planted trees and various plants and opened a small campsite and a bar. One day the members of a group from Liverpool and others from London arrived. The latter left after three months without giving any explanation, later someone let me know that my plants had not convinced them, and some of them had been very bad for their leader. Those from Liverpool were very kind, they were very modest, but the success went to their heads and they also left, although, if it had been up to Juan, one of their members, they would have stayed longer. Then, after years, he would return and compose "All together, we are more people." I thought it was simple, two is always less than five. The fact is that this song became an anthem and sold like hotcakes. I sensed that this boy had something special and that he would go very far. "You didn't intuit anything, Baltasar. "Don't pretend to be an expert now," Gaspar told me. Melchor, a new colleague who was very sparse in words, who had invested in the business to obtain twenty percent of the capital, shook his head up and down, implying that Gaspar was right again.

As a result of the stay of these musical groups, the hippies, mostly children of wealthy families, settled in our campsite. "I don't know why you say they were children of wealthy families, what do you know" – Gaspar intervened again. In case you haven't caught on yet, Gaspar was the curmudgeon of the triumvirate. It is true that we assigned him a monthly salary for doing his critical work. It bothers me a little, but my partner didn't seem to mind, in fact, he liked it. "No one is perfect and these comments keep us on our toes." Five years later, he joined the country's opposition party and served as spokesperson. He was still scathing, as always. He had not lost faculties. At the end of the legislature, he was accused of corruption and, although the opposition party opposed him at first, they eventually fired him. "That happened a long time ago" – said some colleagues when barely a week had passed. "Who are you talking about, I don't know that person" – others declared. "Do you realize, Melchior? Didn't I tell you that there was money missing from the cash register? – he snapped very angrily at the partner. But he did not flinch, at most he expressed with extreme laxity: "Well, they are part of the job. (Long pause) Everything has its pros and cons."

When hippies began to become scarce, young parents arrived who left the big cities on weekends like hell. Some had one offspring, some had two, and some had none. These consumed less, but since there were more of them, the final balance hardly changed. They used to leave the store for the whole week and on Friday they returned to their nest.

Later, new tenants arrived: they liked to play at killing each other with guns that threw paint and celebrate bachelor parties. With this expression they referred to all the tricks and mockery that they made of a young lady or a bearded man who weeks later was going to join his life with another person and that, in general, this union would be broken later with serious insults or, as I already said before, throwing things at each other's heads, like my parents. The god Eros, already in ancient times, said that he did not fully understand human beings. "They are rare, very rare," he maintained. Vigo's father said the same thing, a man who loved to look at the moon from the steps of the caravan. "Strange, very strange" – he said loudly, irritating the rest of the campers.

As it could not be otherwise, we became a little old. Not much just a little bit. Enough to get rid of the establishment and move on to the contemplative life. A good opportunity soon presented itself to us and we didn't let it slip away. We transferred all the assets of our company to a vulture fund. "But you keep yourself very well, Baltasar" – the young people insisted. Melchior looked at them out of the corner of his eye and whispered in my ear that I should not pay attention to them because they were flatterers. I was about to ask him what that word meant, but I didn't because Melchior was still an extremely slow and indolent being and the answer could reach me two or three days later.

Observe, dear readers, the obsession of the millennial and zeta generations to establish relationships between human activity and the natural world. Sorry, the Zetas, no; They are still very young and there is a lot of unemployment at those ages. In reality, a vulture fund is a group of strange people, called shareholders, whose goal is to make the maximum amount of money in the shortest possible time. Once again we are faced with two meanings that are not synonymous, but antonyms. Don't forget it. Returning to the plot, later, there, on our old properties, they built a resort for high-class people with addiction problems.

If you have made it this far, I am indebted to you. So I propose two possible endings so that you can choose the one that turns out to be most to your liking.

END 1

Melchior and Gaspar went to live in a foreign country, where the climate was very mild and the per capita income was below their economic potential.

I needed more time to make a decision. I had to reflect, concentrating on myself, because my spiritual arts teacher, very popular at the time, had told me that this was the

best way to get to know yourself.

Introspection, this is the word that makes the previous paragraph concrete. To be concise, you will agree with me, there is nothing better than having a wide vocabulary. A high-profile writer already said it: "It is concise if appropriate, twice appropriate." Well, I have doubts. Maybe it wasn't exactly like that and I have distorted his words.

My state became so ascetic that I ended up in a very rugged mountainous area, satisfying my thirst, my hunger and my sleep, with what nature selflessly gave me. Those of the alpha generation said with glee: "Oyster, you, Baltasar has become an anchorite."

END 2

Gaspar remained in jail because he once again engaged in activities that were not very advisable and not very well regarded by the justice system.

Melchor had a blind date with an elderly girl and they both instantly fell into the paradise of love. When winter came, they would leave the beach and fly to their nest, in the Soho neighborhood of New York, where Julieta, that was the name of the lover, owned a luxurious two-hundred-square-meter apartment.

I went to the mountains and the neighborhood never heard from me again. Until one day I came down from the mountains and asked Melchor for a glass of water, who, not recognizing me, denied it to me.

I'm sorry, the two previous endings are apocryphal. The real one is the following:

END 3

I became unbearable, I couldn't live without working. So Melchor decided to go to New York for a few days. The further away he was from me, the better. He needed a quiet life without falling into excesses, something that was not possible at my side. In Central Park, one spring day, he defended a woman from a thief who wanted to take her purse.

Once the trance had passed, he invited the troubled lady to eat at the restaurant closest to the scene of the incident. After a week of continuous meetings and the occasional dalliance, they were completely hooked on each other. They live happily, but they do not eat partridges because they are on the verge of extinction and it is a protected species. So they settle for eating vegetables and fruits which, without a doubt, are more

advisable for their health.

Gaspar, although he is very old, is still in prison, I don't know why.

After a few years of ascetic life, I have ended up in the vulture bottom resort. Do you remember it?

_ Baltasar, it's time to go to bed! – He reminds me every night, from the desk, of him, the night receptionist.

Then he takes the cane, I get up and, leaning on the security guard, I limp towards my room. Instantly, Morpheus's arms wrap me with affection and love.

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Jesús Claver Giménez