

Comprehensive Analysis of Digital Harassment and Narrative Structure in Alba Quintas Garciandía's 'Al Otro Lado de la Pantalla'

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In the contemporary landscape of young adult (YA) literature, few works have managed to capture the intricate intersection of digital technology and adolescent psychology as effectively as **Alba Quintas Garciandía's** debut novel, "**Al otro lado de la pantalla**". Published in 2012 by **Ediciones SM** after winning the prestigious **VII Premio Jordi Sierra i Fabra**, the novel serves as both a literary achievement and a sociological diagnostic tool. This analysis explores the technical dimensions of cyberbullying depicted in the text, the innovative multi-perspective narrative framework employed by the author, and the broader implications for digital ethics in the 21st century.

The Prolific Origins: Alba Quintas Garciandía and the Jordi Sierra i Fabra Award

To understand the depth of "**Al otro lado de la pantalla**," one must first examine its author and the context of its creation. Born in Madrid in 1994, **Alba Quintas Garciandía** emerged as a significant voice in Spanish literature at the remarkably young age of seventeen. Her background as a novelist, playwright, and audiobook producer provides her with a multi-sensory approach to storytelling that is evident in the rhythmic and evocative prose of her work.

The **Premio Jordi Sierra i Fabra para Jóvenes** is a critical catalyst in the Hispanic publishing world, designed to discover and nurture literary talent under the age of eighteen. By winning the seventh edition of this award, Quintas Garciandía demonstrated not only linguistic mastery but also a profound capacity for empathy and social observation. The novel was integrated into the "Punto y seguido" collection by SM, a series known for its focus on contemporary social issues and educational value.

Thematic Framework: The Mechanics of Cyberbullying

The core of the novel revolves around **ciberacoso**(cyberbullying), a phenomenon that escalated with the ubiquity of smartphones and social media platforms. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying operates through specific technical and psychological mechanisms that the novel dissects through its characters.

The Architecture of Digital Aggression

The novel highlights several key characteristics of digital harassment that differentiate it from physical altercations in a schoolyard setting:

- **Asynchronicity:** The ability for an aggressor to post content at any time, which the victim may discover hours later, leading to a state of perpetual anxiety.
- **Permanence:** Digital footprints are difficult to erase. A single humiliating photo or comment can remain accessible indefinitely, compounding the trauma.
- **Viral Reach:** The scale of the audience is no longer limited to a single classroom but can extend to the entire school or community within seconds.
- **Physical Distance:** The "screen" acts as a barrier that desensitizes the aggressor to the immediate emotional

reaction of the victim, often leading to a more severe level of cruelty.

The Responsibility of the 'Spectator'

One of the most significant technical contributions of the book is its focus on the **bystander effect** within digital spaces. Quintas Garcíandía posits that there are no neutral parties in a cyberbullying scenario. Every individual who sees, likes, or fails to report a piece of harassing content becomes a functional cog in the machinery of the abuse. The novel meticulously tracks how silence serves as a catalyst for the escalation of violence.

Narrative Engineering: The Power of Multi-Perspective Storytelling

Technically, "Al otro lado de la pantalla" is structured as a series of first-person accounts. Each chapter is narrated by a different character, providing a 360-degree view of a single central conflict. This **polyphonic narrative** serves a specific educational and psychological purpose.

Character Archetypes and Social Roles

The novel breaks down the social ecosystem of a school into distinct roles, which can be categorized as follows:

Role	Psychological Motivation	Narrative Function
The Victim (Luis)	Internalization of shame, social withdrawal.	Humanizes the statistics of harassment.
The Aggressor	Desire for status, lack of digital empathy.	Explores the root causes of cruelty and insecurity.
The Active Collaborator	Fear of becoming the next target; social conformity.	Demonstrates the mechanics of peer pressure.
The Passive Spectator	Indifference or "bystander apathy."	Highlights the collective responsibility of the community.
The Protector	Moral courage; risk of social ostracization.	Provides a model for intervention and resolution.

Functional Analysis of the First-Person POV

By utilizing the first-person perspective for each character, Quintas Garcíandía forces the reader to inhabit the headspace of individuals with varying degrees of guilt and awareness. This creates a **cognitive dissonance** in the reader, who may find themselves sympathizing with a character only to realize that character's complicity in the central tragedy. This structural choice is a deliberate technical maneuver to bypass the reader's defenses and provoke deep introspection regarding their own digital behavior.

Technical Breakdown: Cyberbullying vs. Traditional Bullying

In a technical study of the text's themes, it is essential to compare the traditional models of school harassment with the digital evolution presented in the book. The following matrix outlines the technical shifts identified in the narrative:

Feature	Traditional Bullying	Cyberbullying (The Novel's Focus)
Location	Physical (School grounds, park).	Ubiquitous (Anywhere with an internet connection).
Visibility	Often hidden from adults but visible to peers.	Hidden from adults; amplified visibility to peers.
Anonymity	Aggressor is known to the victim.	Aggressor can be anonymous or pseudonymous.
Evidence	Ephemeral (words, physical marks).	Documented (screenshots, logs, links).
Safety Zones	The home is a sanctuary.	The home is invaded via the device.

The Psychological Impact: A Procedural Overview

The novel provides a harrowing look at the psychological deterioration of the victim. This can be mapped out as a technical progression of trauma, which educators and psychologists often refer to as the "spiral of silence" and "internalized victimization."

Stages of Impact in the Narrative

1. Phase 1: Initial Disbelief and Minimization. The victim attempts to ignore the digital comments, hoping they will dissipate.
2. Phase 2: Social Paranoia. As the digital content spreads, the victim begins to suspect every peer they encounter in the physical world of having seen the content.
3. Phase 3: Cognitive Distortion. The victim begins to believe the insults or the narrative being spun about them on the screen.
4. Phase 4: Behavioral Manifestation. This includes school avoidance (truancy), changes in eating/sleeping patterns, and ultimately, severe clinical depression or suicidal ideation.

Educational Implementation: Using the Novel as a Tool

For educators and institutions, "Al otro lado de la pantalla" is more than a story; it is a **pedagogical instrument**. Its structure allows for specific classroom activities that can help mitigate the risks of digital harassment.

Step-by-Step Workshop Framework

Based on the novel's structure, the following implementation guide can be used to conduct empathy workshops in secondary education settings:

- Step 1: Role Identification. Students read a chapter and must identify the narrator's position in the bullying hierarchy (Victim, Aggressor, or Spectator).
- Step 2: Ethical Re-routing. Ask students to rewrite the end of a chapter from a spectator's perspective where the character chooses to intervene. What are the risks? What are the rewards?
- Step 3: Technical Analysis of Media. Analyze the "screen" as a metaphor. Discuss how the interface of a social media app changes the way we perceive the person on the other end.
- Step 4: Developing a Digital Manifesto. Inspired by the failures of the characters, students collaborate to create a "Classroom Digital Charter" regarding how they will handle sensitive information shared online.

Case Study: The Metaphor of the Screen

The title "Al otro lado de la pantalla" (On the other side of the screen) serves as a profound technical metaphor for **deindividuation**. In social psychology, deindividuation is a state where individuals lose their sense of self-awareness and personal responsibility when part of a group or when hidden by a mask—or in this case, a digital interface.

Failure Modes in Digital Communication

The novel illustrates several "failure modes" in human interaction caused by the screen:

- The Loss of Non-Verbal Cues: 93% of communication is non-verbal. The screen strips away tone, facial expression, and body language, leading to rapid escalation of misunderstandings.
- The "Gamification" of Cruelty: Likes and shares turn harassment into a social game with quantifiable rewards (social capital), encouraging participants to push boundaries further than they would in person.
- The Illusion of Consequence-Free Action: Because the aggressor cannot see the victim cry, the brain's mirror neurons are not activated, preventing the natural empathetic response that usually halts aggression.

Comparative Evaluation: Literary Context

When placed alongside other works in the YA genre that deal with similar themes—such as Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* or Raquel J. Palacio's *Wonder*—Quintas Garcíandía's work stands out for its stylistic restraint and its focus on the collective rather than just the individual. While other novels often focus on the victim's ultimate tragedy, "Al otro lado de la pantalla" places the technical focus on the **social web** that allows the tragedy to occur.

Strengths of the Quintas Garcíandía Model

- Realism: Avoids the sensationalism often found in American YA literature, opting for a grounded, Spanish-centric school environment.
- Brevity and Impact: The novel is concise, making it highly accessible to reluctant readers while maintaining a high density of thematic content.
- Authorial Voice: Written by someone who was a teenager themselves at the time of the book's conception, the dialogue and internal monologues carry an authenticity that older authors often struggle to replicate.

Broader Implications: Digital Citizenship and Future Ethics

The enduring relevance of "Al otro lado de la pantalla" lies in its prescience. Although written in 2012, the core issues of digital ethics it addresses have only become more complex with the advent of AI, deepfakes, and more sophisticated social algorithms. The novel challenges us to look beyond the hardware and software to the **humanware**—the ethics and choices of the people operating the devices.

The "screen" is no longer just a window; it is a mirror. It reflects the best and worst of our social structures. Quintas Garcíandía's work suggests that the solution to cyberbullying is not just better privacy settings or more restrictive laws, but a fundamental shift in how we educate children about empathy in a virtual world. Responsibility, as the novel argues, is not divided among a crowd; it is multiplied. If ten people see an act of harassment and do nothing, there are ten instances of moral failure, not a tenth of one.

In finalizing this analysis, it is clear that "Al otro lado de la pantalla" remains a cornerstone of Spanish educational literature. It provides a technical and emotional roadmap for navigating the digital age, reminding us that there is always a living, breathing person on the other side of every pixelated interaction. For students, educators, and parents, the book serves as a vital reminder that while technology evolves at an exponential rate, the fundamental

human need for respect, belonging, and safety remains constant.

Tags: #Alba Quintas Garciandía #Cyberbullying Analysis #YA Literature #Digital Ethics #Educational Psychology

