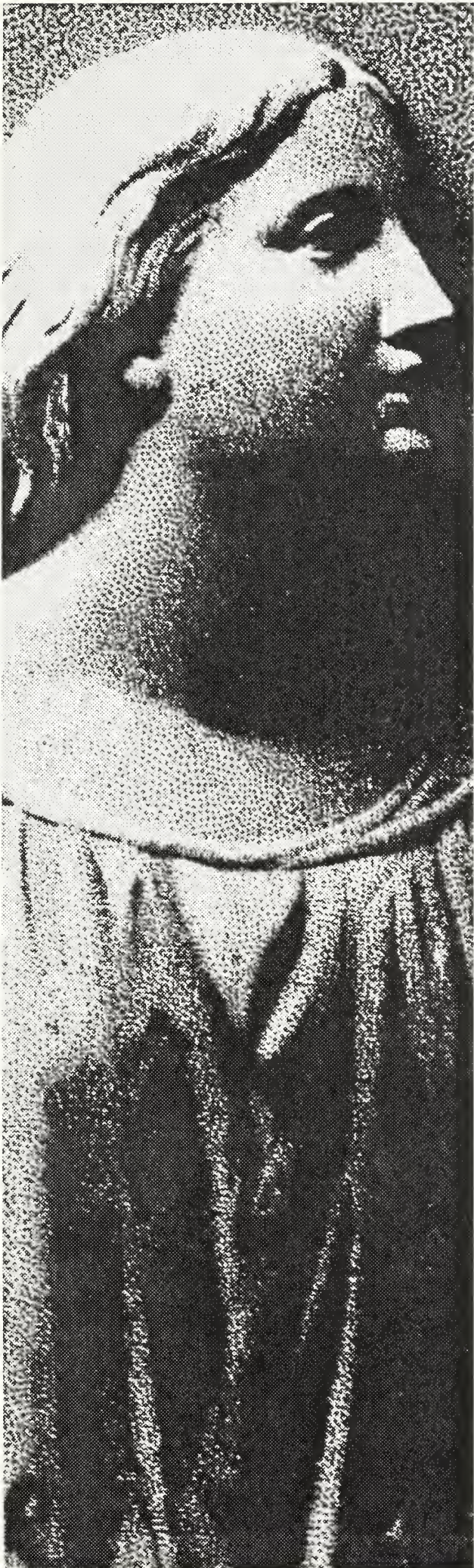






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EL BACHILLER ACEVEDO EN EL CONTEXTO  
DEL TEATRO MEXICANO



Anne Lombardi Cantú  
*Boston College*

**E**n 1684 fue representada por primera y única vez una comedia hagiográfica escrita por el bachiller Francisco de Acevedo titulada *El pregonero de Dios y patriarca de los pobres*. Basada en la vida de San Francisco de Asís, dicha obra se estrenó el día 4 de octubre en el Coliseo de las Comedias en la Ciudad de México donde, casi de inmediato, fue denunciada ante el Santo Oficio de la Inquisición por incluir “dichos y representaciones que han causado escándalo a los agentes” (Acevedo 5). La denuncia citaba “...invención indecentísima notablemente ofensiva e injuriosa a la seráfica santidad del glorioso patriarca San Francisco” (Suárez Radillo 130) y resultó en la cancelación de la obra de Acevedo en cuanto se estrenó (Acevedo 6). A primera vista, no se explica su denuncia puesto que en la obra se encuentran elementos barrocos con un tema didáctico y rasgos del auto medieval típicos de las obras escritas para Corpus Christi; el resultado fue una comedia híbrida, popular a la vez que moralista. Es preciso, entonces, examinar más de cerca los hechos.

La comedia religiosa con elementos seculares era típica del teatro del Siglo de Oro en España, pero la censura parece haber sido más rigurosa en el teatro colonial que en el peninsular debido a los prejuicios respecto a la ingenuidad del público americano. Trataremos a través de este análisis de identificar los elementos que provocaron la condenación de la obra de Acevedo a pesar de su alineamiento con las fórmulas vigentes de la época. A este fin es preciso considerar las influencias que forjaron el teatro colonial mexicano del tardío siglo XVII tanto como las fluctuaciones en la opinión oficial eclesiástica hacia el teatro.

Las representaciones teatrales no constituían un género nuevo en la Nueva España sino que existen indicaciones de su práctica en la civilización indígena prehispánica, y el teatro español que filtró a las colonias se fue adaptando a su nueva tierra y a sus costumbres.<sup>1</sup> Varios cronistas coloniales, entre ellos Fray Toribio de Benavente y Hernán Cortés, escribieron sobre las artes de los indios, comentando la existencia en Tenochtitlan de la poesía dramática. Según Fray Diego de Landa, los mayas también tenían “recreaciones muy donosas y principalmente farsantes” (Trenti Rocamora 297). En algunas presentaciones indígenas unos bufones pasaban entre los dansantes, haciendo reír al público. Algunos de los elementos extravagantes del teatro indígena fueron repetidos en las representaciones de los autos sacramentales puestos en escena por los frailes españoles quienes, a partir de 1538 utilizaron el teatro religioso en idiomas autóctonos para evangelizar a los nativos, tomando como temas la vida de Cristo y de los santos, los misterios de la fe y los días de fiesta, en especial Corpus Christi (Usigli 27)<sup>2</sup>.

En cuanto a la aceptación de estas obras, se nota la vacilación en la opinión oficial que podía dejar a un joven dramaturgo como Acevedo algo desconcertado. A pesar de su obvia utilidad para cristianizar a los indígenas, ciertas autoridades se opusieron desde su principio, entre ellas Fray Juan de Zumárraga, el obispo de México, ya que él no aceptaba las fiestas populares—el lazo cultural indígena—que se acoplaban a las celebraciones religiosas (Trenti Rocamora 301-2); esta actitud se intensificó en términos generales con la Inquisición. El teatro de la época se manifestó sujeto a las mismas incertidumbres y prejuicios que afectaban a la sociedad colonial en general en su desarrollo de una identidad propia. De las influencias indígenas sobre la producción teatral, Zumárraga escribió:

...And it is a thing of great disrespect and shame that before the Holy Sacrament men should go about with masks and in women's attire, dancing and jumping about with immodest and lascivious motions....And it would be not with slight prejudice to their souls and to doctrine to those who teach this to the natives (Usigli 32).

La sujetividad de las autoridades respecto al teatro en la Nueva España se percibe todavía en los sucesores de Zumárraga. El Cabildo Eclesiástico autorizó la reinstalación de las representaciones de Corpus Christi en 1565 pero la práctica fue anulada casi en seguida por el Cabildo Secular (Trenti Rocamora 302). Sin embargo, en lo que seguía en el ámbito teatral a partir de esa fecha destacan las fuertes influencias españolas que complacían los gustos de un público cada vez más numeroso.<sup>3</sup> La disposición del Tercer Concilio Mexicano en 1585, al prohibir la celebración de las fiestas dentro de los templos, sólo sirvió para intensificar el interés del público (Trenti Rocamora 304). Más adelante las representaciones religiosas empezaron a convertirse en farsas popularuchas<sup>4</sup> que provocaban sanciones continuas por parte de las autoridades tanto eclesiásticas como civiles (Trenti Rocamora 306).

Con la fundación del primer teatro colonial propiamente hablando en la Ciudad de México en 1597, se iba concentrando toda la actividad teatral allí y disminuían las exhibiciones conmemorativas tanto civiles como religiosas (Trenti Rocamora 312). Muchas obras de los dramaturgos españoles fueron montadas en la Ciudad de México, siendo las más populares las obras de Lope de Vega. El teatro colonial del siglo XVII quería atraer a las masas, el mismo propósito que lograron con tanto éxito los dramaturgos españoles como Lope y Calderón al responder a la necesidad del público español de “participación y goce sensorial.” Como señala Orozco Díaz, el teatro adquiere “su pleno carácter de espectáculo para todos precisamente en esta época, a partir de los fines del siglo XVI, el momento en que comienza a manifestarse el estilo barroco” (Suárez Radillo 6-7). Esta fusión de lo religioso y lo profano produce evidencias de cambio en las obras americanas a través del siglo XVII. Rodolfo Usigli indica que la primera mitad del siglo XVII vio una decadencia literaria en el teatro americano a la vez que se aumentaba su popularidad (46), esto a pesar de las denuncias pronunciadas desde los púlpitos, y las presentaciones teatrales



tenían mucha influencia sobre las costumbres y la moral de la época (Leonard 106).

Así que en el nuevo siglo aparecieron elementos barrocos en el teatro americano provenientes del teatro metropolitano. Los que premiaban o aprobaban las obras en México eran los doctos, y para su gusto el barroco era lo más propio. En este sentido cumple la obra de Acevedo con las exigencias de la época. El desarrollo del teatro en México incorporaba las dos actitudes prevalecientes en España como reacción al desengaño del desplomo político: por un lado, se impulsaban a la búsqueda del placer, característica que empieza a presentarse en el teatro profano; por otro, se arrastraban hacia la fe que era su única salvación, cual énfasis religioso está patente en el siglo XVII en las obras hagiográficas como la de Acevedo (Suárez Radillo 5).

En medio de esta evolución en el teatro de la Nueva España se interpuso el Santo Oficio de la Inquisición que estableció un Tribunal en 1571 para revisar “las comedias, representaciones, pasos espirituales y profanos,” temiendo resultados dañosos en una gente “ignorante, lasciva y dispuesta a caer en inadvertencias y errores” (Trenti Rocamora 302). Al citar la actitud de Zumárraga al respecto, Usigli comenta: “The innocence of the Indians was doubtlessly another fabulous pyramid upon whose ruins he urged Spain to erect a medieval and Christian church” (32). Las preocupaciones del Tribunal reflejaban los prejuicios de los españoles que, con su mentalidad medieval, no pudieron valorar la inteligencia indígena, y la misma actitud prevaleció en cuanto al teatro de los criollos.

No obstante la condenación de la obra de Acevedo y las instrucciones del Santo Oficio de destruir todos los ejemplares, el manuscrito sobrevivió intacto como ejemplo del teatro mexicano del tardío siglo XVII, aunque no a la vista de los críticos.<sup>5</sup> Es difícil saber los alcances de la obra en su época, pero en su breve introducción a la edición aquí citada, el editor Jiménez Rueda cuestiona si nuestro bachiller es el mismo al que se refiere Sor Juana en el sainete segundo de su comedia de enredo, *Los empeños de una casa* (6). Es interesante la posibilidad porque indicaría que la obra era conocida, es decir que había recibido cierta notoriedad a pesar de no poder presentarse en los teatros. El interlocutor del sainete, llamado Muñiz, comenta que las comedias de España son siempre mejores y que “no puedo sufrir los disparates de Acevedo” (675-6). Cuando los compañeros empiezan a silbarle, Acevedo, quien es otro personaje del sainete, se desespera:

¡Ay, silbado de mí! ¡Ay desdichado!

¡Que la comedia que hice me han silbado!

¿Al primer tapón silbos? Muerto quedo. (678)

Concordamos con Francisco Monterde en que, dada la coincidencia cronológica y la evidencia de que Sor Juana y el bachiller se conocían, es muy factible pensar que la crítica de Sor Juana sea dirigida en contra del bachiller por ser su obra mediocre en la opinión de la monja (Suárez Radillo 134).

Esta crítica aparte, el texto tiene interés para el lector moderno porque le permite adentrarse en el ámbito teatral de la Ciudad de México en las últimas

décadas del siglo XVII. Estructuralmente, Acevedo sigue muy de cerca las normas aplicadas en sus comedias por Lope de Vega y explicadas en su “Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo.” El bachiller divide la comedia en tres jornadas. La versificación de la comedia, amena y correcta, sigue las fórmulas de libertad métrica que eran típicas del teatro barroco peninsular de la época. Además Acevedo introduce un gracioso que facilita la transmisión de información tanto entre los personajes como con el público, siendo éste de bastante relieve cómico como lo fueron también los graciosos lopescos y los bufones del teatro indígena americano.

Al escoger su tema, Acevedo se inspiró seguramente en lo propuesto por Lope en su “Arte nuevo”: “Lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado.../que aquesta variedad deleita mucho” (Rozas 187). En la obra de Acevedo las intrigas de un triángulo amoroso se mezclan con el desarrollo espiritual de la vida de San Francisco. En la primera jornada se trata del tema de la honra y se descubren los enredos amorosos que son tres. Irene ama a Francisco, hijo del adinerado don Pedro Bernardo, mientras que don Juan, el amigo de Francisco, intenta enamorar a Irene. A la misma vez el hermano de Irene, don Leon, pretende a Fénix, la hermana de don Juan, quien está enamorada de Bernardo de Quintaval, el criado de don Juan y por quien su amor es correspondido. Por último, Cañón, el gracioso, es el objeto amoroso de Lucrecia, quien sirve de alcahueta para Irene; de la burla entre ellos dos surge el elemento cómico/erótico. Al final de la jornada, después de observar los conflictos entre las otras parejas, Lucrecia le pregunta: “Y dí, Cañón, tú por mí/¿qué pondrás?” a lo que él responde “La puntería.” “Pues,” le replica ella, “te quedarás en blanco”(72). Cuando sale Lucrecia del escenario, Cañón se lamenta:

Maldita sea Lucrecia,  
sus pies, su lengua y sus tripas;  
su cara no, que es de un ángel,  
pero no, no tan bendita. (74)

Lucrecia, como alcahueta, le hace un doble juego a Irene pues obedece el mandato de Irene de llamar a Francisco a su casa mientras por otro lado cita a don Juan, como ella misma nos informa en un aparte. Desde el principio Francisco no se comporta como amante con Irene sino como caballero, cual actitud a ella le frustra, pero la actitud de él es ambiguo; en cuanto se descubre la presencia de don Juan en la casa de Irene, los dos jóvenes riñen con espadas y Francisco llega a decirle a Juan: “¡Daréte, traidor, la muerte!” (21) mientras que Irene se preocupa más bien por su reputación: “Mirad por mi honra, ¿quien vió/tal desdicha y tal afrenta?” (21) Gracias a que se descubre la intrusión de Bernardo en casa de don Juan, se suspende el duelo y se salvan los dos amigos, coincidencia necesaria a la trama para no manchar la integridad del futuro santo, aunque éste, en un aparte, sí denuncia su interés por Irene:

¡Ah, ingrata! de tu traición  
se vengará mi pasión,  
pues a engañarme te atreves. (31)

Bien sabido es en la historia que Francisco tuvo una juventud poco

espiritual, de manera que no nos sorprende cuando su padre recrimina a don Leon respeto a su hijo “que sus mocedades/con vos gasta en liviandades/de deleites y de juego” (35). Sin embargo no hay evidencias biográficas para sostener los eventos amorosos de la primera jornada de Acevedo. Luego, los jóvenes olvidan tanto la censura de don Pedro como el duelo inconcluso cuando se arma un escándalo afuera de la casa. Sale Francisco vestido de soldado a defender a Asís contra sus enemigos y termina en prisión. Hasta aquí su figura no tiene razgos de santidad, pero en cuanto sale libre, sus palabras adquieren otra dimensión, aunque no abiertamente todavía. A su compañero Cañón, le pide:

Espérame aquí, entretanto  
que me llevo a una forzosa  
diligencia, para ver  
si acaso tenemos forma  
de asentar aquí la plaza,  
que es lo que ahora nos toca.  
Así mi intento encubro. (Aparte)  
Que a vuestra misericordia  
el alma quiero ofrecer... (46)

A lo que Cañón dice:

Obedezco, aunque mi amo  
me quiere encubrir sus cosas;  
ya de ninguno se libra  
el que en la oración se arroba... (46)

De acuerdo con los preceptos del “Arte nuevo”, “En el acto primero ponga el caso”(Rozas 191). Entrometido en este primer acto caballeresco se revela el lado religioso con la aparición del Demonio disfrazado de capitán, quien quiere llevar a cabo una venganza contra Dios en la persona de Francisco. A partir de aquí cambia del todo el enfoque de la obra, ya que los amoríos y la satisfacción de la honra pasan a segundo término. Procede una conversación entre el capitán/Demonio y Cañón en que el gracioso se muestra hábil y le coge desconfianza; sobre la manera en que se identifica el capitán dice Cañón que “Este mismo papel hizo el demonio” y además “La confesión en duda se le ha oído, que pocas muestras da de arrepentido.” (57) El Demonio, por su parte, propone derrotar a Francisco de la misma manera como trató de hacerlo con Cristo, a base de tentaciones, las que le darán los mismos resultados que se le dieron en la biblia. En la primer instancia, les guía a Irene y a Lucrecia a donde está Francisco para que Irene le ruegue a Francisco velar por su honor acercándose a ella. Francisco reconoce la tentación y se defiende invocando a Cristo:

Visión, ¡apártate!, ¡quítate!,  
que cuanto al cuerpo te acercas  
de ti el alma se desvía.  
Valedme, Jesús piadoso, (Arrodíllase)  
Y vuestra palabra diga  
¿qué es lo que quiere de mí? (73)

Con esto viene la primera aparición de Cristo encargándole al santo reedificar su



iglesia porque se está cayendo, lo que introduce una sugerencia mística en relación a Francisco, pues este mismo encargo le dio Dios Padre a su hijo. Hay que tener en cuenta que los espectadores de la época estaban familiarizados con las historias bíblicas por medio de los sermones, sin cual conocimiento una obra como ésta no sería tan efectiva.

En la segunda jornada el Demonio vuelve a tentar a Francisco, acercándole otra vez a una Irene implorante, con la esperanza de que don León y don Juan reprendan el duelo y maten al santo. Aquí el Santo Oficio se habrá fijado, pues el duelo siempre fue condenado por la Iglesia al igual que el suicidio. Francisco reconoce que esto es obra del diablo y por sus palabras inspiradoras convence a todos los presentes de su santidad, a tal grado que antes de terminar el segundo acto, León, Juan y Bernardo se convierten en sus discípulos. Cuando el santo le pide a Dios que guíe su decisión, sus palabras son un eco de la poesía barroca al estilo de Góngora y de Sor Juana:

Eso ha permitido el cielo,  
sólo por *desengañarlo*  
de que el oro es *humo y nada*..  
[la énfasis es mía]<sup>6</sup> (153)

A consecuencia de este fracaso, el Demonio hace aparecer en la tercera jornada a tres hermosas mujeres, la Vanidad, la Lujuria y la Avaricia.<sup>7</sup> Cañón aprovecha la ocasión para opinar jocoso sobre las mujeres en general cuando le advierte al santo que “no son éstas mujeres del mundo” porque “no tienen dos caras” y luego observa que

Ellas ... dirán [su identidad] volando,  
que hasta ahora mujer ninguna  
ha habido que haya callado. (156)

Incitada nuevamente por el Demonio a buscar a Francisco, Irene lo encuentra rezando en una cueva, abrasado de una mujer que en realidad es sólo una ilusión. Le acusa de hipócrita mientras Francisco lucha contra la tentación de la carne. Según las indicaciones del dramaturgo, Francisco desaparece con muchas elaboraciones de tramoya, técnica que recuerda tanto el teatro barroco como el indígena. Se hecha en la zarza al mismo tiempo que aparece “un jardín en que se irá elevando el Santo, mientras están representando todo lo de arriba, e irá bajando en empezando estos versos” (184).

Finalmente, al resistir la tentación de la música y de las danzantes del amor, Francisco declara que todo aquello es obra del Demonio y le ordena a Luzbel que se aparte del lugar (201). El santo se eleva y habla con Cristo, provocando que Irene y Fénix acepten la vocación de Francisco y Bernardo, y se van para casarse con otros (205). El elemento místico se entromete otra vez cuando a San Francisco le aparece la estigmata de Cristo y con eso el Demonio regresa al infierno<sup>8</sup>. Cuando luego muere el santo, las indicaciones de tramoya requieren que suba una paloma hasta una nube donde se encuentran Cristo y la Virgen, es decir que se representa gráficamente el alma de Francisco que se recibe con elogios en el cielo.

Asimismo las apariciones de Cristo, la Virgen y los ángeles forman

parte de una notable influencia bíblica en la obra, lo que reafirma las intenciones espirituales del bachiller. Además de las tentaciones de Cristo en el desierto que el Demonio repite con Francisco, hay varios otros ejemplos. A la pregunta del Demonio a Cañón sobre quién es su amo, Cañón le cuenta que “Bautizado sin desgracia fué por Juan” (49), que nació en un pesebre pobre y que tenía los brazos fuertes para estar en la cruz, alusiones a la vida de Cristo. En otra ocasión Lucrecia riñe contra los hombres y dice “malditos sean los hombres entre todas las mujeres” (93), variante de las palabras del Ave María, “bendita seas entre todas las mujeres.” Se nos informa en el diálogo que Don Juan se desespera porque no logra obedecer las reglas establecidas por Francisco y se ahorca como Judas se ahorcó por haber traicionado a Cristo (169). Para completar las alusiones, los frailes, una vez convencidos de la buena obra de Francisco, lo llaman Padre, ya que han sido testigos de que se eleva cuando reza.

Las ‘comedias de santos’ fueron populares y abundantes en el teatro del siglo XVII tanto metropolitano como americano. Wilson observa que “las obras religiosas figuraban entre las comedias más notoriamente espectaculares que se representaban en los corrales”(100), observación que explica las tramoyas tan elaboradas que sugiere el bachiller para crear el aura de santidad de Francisco. Aunque los moralistas peninsulares y coloniales encontraban escandalosas estas obras, generalmente fueron escritas con toda reverencia y afán de educar a un público analfabeto (Wilson 100-101), empezando con las comedias del maestro Lope.<sup>9</sup>

Si la Inquisición condenó la obra de Acevedo, sospechamos que fue porque el bachiller aplicó las técnicas y los temas del teatro popular a la vida de uno de los santos más venerados por la Iglesia de la época. No es de sorprenderse que *El pregonero de Dios y partiarca de los pobres* captase la atención de la censura, pero tampoco se puede negar que la obra merece atención como ejemplo de lo divertido que resulta tal mezcla de elementos. Bien cumple Acevedo con las dos funciones clásicas según Horacio: “dulce et utile.” La técnica de unir elementos marginales al desarrollo del tema central religioso no originó con Acevedo sino que viene en la tradición teatral medieval y “llega al teatro de Lope de Vega, en cuyas comedias hagiográficas hay, junto al asunto religioso principal, una buena acción secundaria, ‘usualmente entre rústicos y reminiscente de los pasos de realismo bufo intercalados en el teatro religioso primitivo’” (Weber 14). La diferencia entre la aceptación de su uso por Lope y la condenación de Acevedo consta precisamente en que Acevedo aplica el elemento secular, no a los rústicos, sino al santo, lo que pone en duda la santidad de Francisco en la primera jornada de la obra.

En 1682 fue nombrado arzobispo de México Fray Aguiar y Seijas, de mentalidad puritana, quien consideraba el teatro generalmente pecaminoso e hizo lo posible por limitar las representaciones. En esto tuvo considerable éxito ya que el Inquisidor, el jesuita Antonio Núñez de Miranda, lo apoyaba (Leonard 111, 115). La condenación de la obra de Acevedo en 1684 pudo haber sido una coincidencia de estas circunstancias dado que el Inquisidor precedente, Fray García Guerra, había sido mucho más tolerante, el antítesis de Núñez de Miranda



(Leonard 111); en este hecho está la constancia de que la opinión oficial seguía vacilando. Se puede conjeturar que Acevedo no pulsó adecuadamente el clima oficial en el momento de presentar su obra, confiándose más en la popularidad de las comedias barrocas que en la severidad de la censura inquisitorial.

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NOTAS

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<sup>1</sup> Los mexicas, como tantos pueblos antiguos, utilizaban estas representaciones para conmemorar los eventos importantes de su historia o de la mitología, incluyendo los ritos religiosos.

<sup>2</sup> Además muchas obras de la época fueron escritas para acontecimientos de tipo civil como la llegada del Virrey, el onomástico de los Reyes, los acontecimientos universitarios, etc. (Weber 16).

<sup>3</sup> La población indígena disminuía a causa de las enfermedades y los trabajos forzados, entre otros factores, pero la población española triplicó entre 1574 y 1650, época en que España sufrió una decadencia política a la vez que entró en el Siglo de Oro de las letras (Lucena Salmoral 22-25).

<sup>4</sup> El franciscano Fray Francisco de Gamboa escribió una obra sobre la Pasión de Cristo a fines del siglo XVI, tema que luego se degeneró en versiones poco religiosas, lo que provocó mucha crítica por parte de las autoridades religiosas de la época. De todos modos, las representaciones de la Pasión siguen vigentes hoy día en algunos pueblos mexicanos, la más conocida de ellas en Ixtapalapa, cerca de la Ciudad de México; a pesar de su aspecto popular, son recreaciones reverentes hechas por un pueblo cristianizado.

<sup>5</sup> José Toribio Medina no menciona la obra del bachiller en su catálogo *La imprenta en México* porque no llegó a publicarse en su época, pero dice que Beristain cita a Acevedo como uno de los autores de sermones publicados por la Compañía de Jesús en 1672 en ocasión del festejo en honor de San Francisco de Borja, dato que le da credibilidad en cuanto a sus dotes literarios y sus conocimientos religiosos.

<sup>6</sup> Véase el último verso de “Soneto CLXVI” de Góngora y “A su retrato” de Sor Juana.

<sup>7</sup> Los vicios, el Demonio y también las virtudes eran personajes comunes en los autos sacramentales; además está presente en estas figuras el concepto de la bella mujer, tentadora y perdición de los hombres.

<sup>8</sup> No obstante la invención de varios detalles en la obra para recalcar la santidad de Francisco, la referencia a la estigmata es verídica, según sus biógrafos.

<sup>9</sup> Lope termina su “Arte nuevo” con la insistencia en la función didáctica del teatro:

Oye atento, y del arte no disputes,  
que en la comedia se hallará modo  
que, oyéndola, se pueda saber todo. (Rozas 194)

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**B**audelaire écrivait à propos du monde balzacien: “Depuis le sommet de l’aristocratie jusqu’aux bas-fonds de la plèbe, tous les acteurs de [la] comédie [de Balzac] sont plus âpres à la vie, plus actifs et plus rusés dans la lutte, plus patients dans le malheur, plus goulus dans la jouissance, plus angéliques dans le dévouement, que la comédie du vrai monde ne nous les montre” (692). Si Baudelaire a raison que *La Comédie humaine* est une hyperbole du “vrai monde,” Balzac, en habile conteur, arrive néanmoins à enjôler son lecteur à croire à son monde incroyable. Comment le texte de Balzac nous fait-il arriver à ce “willing suspension of disbelief” dont Franc Schuerewegen nous rappelle opportunément la pertinence (253)? Afin de gagner à ce jeu mimétique et de faire passer le hors commun pour le commun, Balzac doit tricher dans son emploi de certains éléments linguistiques qui trompent le lecteur et l’entraînent malgré lui dans l’univers de *La Comédie humaine*. Ce sont ces éléments linguistiques trompeurs que cette étude propose analyser. Pour être spécifique, je ferai l’étude et de l’emploi que fait Balzac des articles définis et démonstratifs à valeur anaphorique et de son usage d’une polyphonie qui sert à établir la vérité du récit. Ces deux éléments (anaphores et polyphonie), sous la plume rusée de Balzac, deviennent des outils qui nous font croire initialement à la possibilité des improbabilités de son œuvre.

### **Les démonstratifs et les articles définis à valeur anaphorique.**

Typiquement, dans un texte, des groupes nominaux sont introduits pour la première fois par l’article indéfini. Ce n’est qu’après cette introduction liminaire que le groupe nominal se trouvera précédé par l’article défini ou par l’article démonstratif. On peut très facilement imaginer, par exemple, un début de texte comme suit: “Par une matinée pluvieuse, au mois de mars, un jeune homme se tenait sous l’auvent d’une boutique....” En revanche, on imagine mal une phrase comme la suivante en-tête d’une nouvelle: “Par la matinée pluvieuse, au mois de mars, le jeune homme se tenait sous l’auvent de cette boutique....” Les groupes nominaux définis et démonstratifs dans un texte renvoient anaphoriquement à d’autres groupes nominaux déjà introduits dans le récit. Lorsqu’un de ces éléments anaphorisants apparaît sans un élément anaphorisé complémentaire, la critique cherche, à mon avis vainement, à inventer des cas exceptionnels pour le décrire. Michèle Noailly, par exemple, signale pas moins de trois cas exceptionnels à qui elle accorde des titres différents (cité dans Maingueneau 174). Je préfère penser qu’il n’existe pas d’exceptions, que chaque article défini et démonstratif à valeur anaphorique renvoie à un élément précédent. Si nous suiv-

ons cette règle sans exception, lorsque nous lisons la troisième phrase de *La Comédie humaine* (“Quel autre nom le flâneur pouvait-il donner..”) nous supposons que “le flâneur” est la reprise d’un groupe nominal introduit dans une des deux premières phrases. Quand nous découvrons qu’il n’existe pas dans le texte de référence anaphorique, que “le flâneur” n’est introduit qu’à notre troisième phrase, faut-il chercher à inventer une exception, un nouveau classement pour cet article défini? Je propose que “le flâneur” fait référence, en effet, à un déjà-dit, mais c’est à un déjà-dit qui est hors texte, dans l’imaginaire de la lectrice. C’est “le flâneur” par excellence, un être composé de tous les flâneurs que la lectrice aurait observés dans son monde visible. De cette façon, l’emploi d’un élément anaphorique sans antécédent crée un pont entre le texte et le monde (dit “réel”) ou les expériences vécues de la lectrice et ajoute ainsi un trait mimétique à l’œuvre.

En d’autres termes, si un nom est précédé par l’article défini ou démonstratif, les lecteurs, grâce à leurs expériences dans la “réalité,” sont censés déjà avoir en tête la personne ou l’objet en question. Si je vous parle de “l’opéra,” même sans introduction vous pensez tout de suite à un bâtiment à Paris que vous connaissez déjà, et même si vous ne l’avez pas encore vu, le mot seul évoque une image préconçue. Ainsi, un pont se crée entre notre discussion et le monde “réel.” Par contre, si je vous parle d’*“un opéra,”* vous vous attendrez à recevoir plus de renseignements avant même de décider s’il s’agit d’un endroit ou d’une œuvre musicale.

Pour prendre un autre exemple, si on lit *“la femme,”* sans introduction quelconque, un lecteur imagine une certaine généralisation, une femme munie de caractéristiques “typiques.” Par contre, s’il lit *“une femme,”* il attendra une description plus détaillée avant de classer ce personnage. C’est pour cela que le narrateur de *“La femme abandonnée”* (où même le titre évoque une figure préconçue) emploie tant d’articles définis en décrivant *“le personnel immuable que les observateurs retrouvent dans les nombreuses capitales de ces anciens Etats qui formaient la France d’autrefois,”* c’est-à-dire le petit village *typique* de la province (2: 206, je souligne).<sup>1</sup> Qu’est-ce ce village? Le narrateur nous dit: *“C’était d’abord la famille dont la noblesse [...] passe, dans le département, pour incontestable et de la plus haute antiquité”* (2: 206, je souligne). Et ensuite: *“Puis viennent les astres secondaires, les gentilshommes...”* etc. (2: 206, je souligne). Cet emploi de l’article défini sans article indéfini préparatoire suggère que tout lecteur est supposé connaître d’avance ce que c’est qu’un petit village, il est supposé avoir déjà en tête l’image des gentilshommes typiques de la province, et une bonne idée de ce qu’est “la famille” noble à la campagne.

Cet emploi de l’anaphore, fréquent chez Balzac, devient problématique lorsque le groupe nominal en question ne fait partie ni des expériences vécues ni des connaissances de celle ou celui qui lit. On peut supposer que chacun ait observé bon nombre de flâneurs dans leur expérience ou que tous soient au moins au courant des caractéristiques du “flâneur idéal.” Mais que se passe-t-il si la personne ou l’objet en question dans le texte ne figure pas parmi les déjà-dits ou les “déjà-vus” du lecteur? Que faire si une lectrice n’a ni vu ni entendu parler



d'une famille de nobles qui vit en province? Prenons en exemple une question que pose le narrateur de la nouvelle "Sarrasine" aux lecteurs: "Avez-vous jamais rencontré de ces femmes dont la beauté foudroyante défie les atteintes de l'âge, et qui semblent à trente-six ans plus désirables qu'elles ne devaient l'être quinze ans plus tôt?" Comme l'indique le "ces" de sa question, le narrateur assume une connivence avec le lecteur et présuppose une réponse affirmative. Il fait comme si "ces femmes" étaient déjà connues de ceux et celles qui auraient entamé la lecture de la nouvelle. Cependant, si les lecteurs réfléchissaient sérieusement à la question posée par le narrateur, ils répondraient par un "non" définitif. Comme c'est le cas pour la plupart des personnages balzaciens, la comtesse de Lanty est un être irréel sans référent dans le monde dit "réel." C'est une idéale munie de caractéristiques extrêmes qui ne se retrouvent pas dans la nature. Mais en employant un élément anaphorique, le narrateur impose non une vision du monde mais un nouveau monde sur la personne qui lit. Le narrateur, en employant une expression à valeur anaphorique, suppose et impose que la lectrice connaisse "ces femmes." Si par hasard elle ne connaît pas cette catégorie féminine, puisque l'anaphore indique qu'elles existent déjà, la lectrice est forcée par le texte à inventer un monde où elles existent. Ainsi, si Balzac n'arrive pas à reproduire le réel, il arrive toutefois à nous entraîner dans son monde irréel, voire à nous faire créer ce monde à l'insu de son emploi des articles définis et démonstratifs.

La marquise, à qui l'histoire de Sarrasine est relatée, interrompt le narrateur, qui est en train de louer ses qualités "exaltées," et lui adresse cette reproche: "Vous me faites à votre goût. Singulière tyrannie! Vous voulez que je ne sois pas *moi*" (6: 91). L'auteur de *La Comédie humaine* impose un monde aux lecteurs de ses nouvelles, comme le narrateur de cette nouvelle le fait à son interlocutrice: il exerce une tyrannie autoriale par l'emploi d'anaphores pour créer les lecteurs "à son goût."

Dans une discussion de la grammaire de texte, Dominique Maingueneau écrit que l'usage de l'anaphore et du cataphore chez Balzac "permet de manifester la supériorité du narrateur sans écraser le lecteur" (175). A mon avis, le lecteur est écrasé: écrasé sous le poids d'un monde fictif qui lui est entièrement imposé; il est "fait" au "goût" du narrateur qui lui enlève tout accès à la parole.

### **Polyphonie.**

Si le narrateur balzacien arrive à tromper ses lecteurs par un usage singulier des articles définis et démonstratifs, il augmente cette tromperie par son emploi de la polyphonie. Les multiples voix de la polyphonie se trouvent mises en scène de plusieurs manières différentes, mais leurs emplois différents servent tous à créer des effets de réel (mimétiques) et à entraîner les lecteurs dans un monde incroyable.

Dans de nombreuses nouvelles, pour décrire les bâtiments et surtout les personnages de ses nouvelles, Balzac met en scène un observateur par le biais de qui la description est filtrée.<sup>2</sup> Le plus souvent, ce focalisateur n'est pas constant

à travers le récit et la lectrice se heurte à un tableau narratif polyphonique (créé par les multiples voix des multiples focalisateurs). Lorsque plusieurs focalisateurs contemplent un même focalisé, deux résultats qui contribuent à l'effet mimétique de l'œuvre peuvent se produire.

Premièrement, si l'objet ou personnage tend vers l'incroyable ou le peu commun, les multiples voix et descriptions établissent la "réalité" de la chose décrite, comme le feraient un grand nombre de témoignages concordants dans un procès légal. Caroline Crochard, personnage principal de la nouvelle "Une double famille," est un de ces personnages incroyables: elle habite un coin boueux et ténébreux de Paris, travaille jour et nuit pour gagner son pain, s'occupe constamment de sa vieille mère; néanmoins, elle est dotée d'une beauté resplendissante. "Ses laborieuses insomnies ne se trahissaient guère," sa peau est "fraîche," et malgré sa triste besogne elle possède assez de gaieté pour "apercevoir sans frémir l'aride chemin de sa vie" (1: 929). Pour nous faire croire à cet être incroyable, Balzac met en scène plusieurs focalisateurs qui attestent tous de sa beauté. "Les passants," "le passant le plus égoïste," "bien des gens," "un étudiant," "un rentier," "l'employé," "l'habitué," "l'observateur" et "plus d'un jeune homme" apportent tous des témoignages qui placent l'existence douteuse de cette créature au-delà du doute et font croire à l'incroyable.

La polyphonie produit un tout autre effet lorsque les voix différentes ne s'accordent pas. Madame Firmiani, dans la nouvelle qui porte son nom, est décrite par un "Positif," un "Flâneur," un "Lycéen," un "homme du genre Niais," "deux vieilles dames," "un attaché d'ambassade" et par un bon nombre d'autres voix distinctes. Le Positif dit qu'elle possède cent mille livres de rente alors que l'Envieux explique que sans sa beauté elle n'aurait pas un sou. Le Niais la calomnie tandis que d'autres louent sa vertu. Le narrateur nous dit, en fait, que

les *gens* répandaient [...] tant d'opinions différentes sur madame Firmiani qu'il serait fastidieux de les consigner toutes ici. Nous avons seulement voulu constater qu'un homme intéressé à la connaître [...] aurait eu raison de la croire également veuve ou mariée, sottise ou spirituelle, vertueuse ou sans mœurs, riche ou pauvre, sensible ou sans âme, belle ou laide; il y avait enfin autant de madames Firmiani que de classes dans la société, que de sectes dans le catholicisme.

(1: 1032-1033)

Cette cacophonie a l'effet de désespérer le lecteur qui cherche quelque point stable où il peut fixer sa lecture. Il se met alors à chercher n'importe quelle voix à laquelle il peut faire confiance. Dans le cas de "Madame Firmiani" le narrateur se présente dans le calme qui suit l'orage des voix contraires afin d'établir "la vérité." Faisant semblant d'être fiable, il pourrait faire croire n'importe quelle sottise au lecteur, et le lecteur se laisserait enjôler. Le narrateur de "Madame Firmiani" procède, en fait, ainsi. Tirant avantage de l'état de faiblesse où le lecteur se trouve, le narrateur peint une image de la femme la plus pure, la plus spirituelle, la plus polie et la plus parfaite qui ait jamais existée au monde. Le



pauvre lecteur avale cette description, la croit vraisemblable, parce que, jusqu'à ce point de la narration, il n'y a pas eu de voix à laquelle il pouvait se fier. Maintenant il se trompe à croire que le narrateur est plus honnête que les voix précédentes. Ainsi, le lecteur, dupe de la présentation polyphonique de la nouvelle, finit encore une fois par croire au monde incroyable du narrateur balzacien.

La polyphonie se manifeste également dans l'emploi fait par Balzac du discours indirect libre. Ce genre de discours s'indique par des expressions, parfois en italique, qui sont tirées d'un autre registre et incorporées, d'habitude avec beaucoup d'ironie, au discours du narrateur. L'usage du discours indirect libre fournit à l'œuvre un trait mimétique car il relève en théorie d'un discours du monde "réel" (c'est pour cela que le discours indirect libre se trouve en abondance chez Flaubert et Zola, les champions du "réalisme"). Au début de la nouvelle "Etude de femme," le discours mimé est celui du milieu politique de la Restauration. Le narrateur nous dit que le mari de la marquise de Listomère "vote *bien*; il se comporte dans son ménage comme à la Chambre. Aussi passe-t-il pour être le meilleur mari de France. [...] Pour une femme à principes, il était difficile de tomber en de meilleures mains. N'est-ce pas beaucoup pour une femme vertueuse que d'avoir épousé un homme incapable de faire des sottises?" (1: 1048, 1049). Evidemment ce n'est pas le narrateur qui croit que le mari vote "*bien*." Certainement ce n'est pas lui non plus qui croit la marquise bien mariée et en de bonnes "mains." Selon Martin Kanés, cette manière de mettre en scène sa propre voix, met le narrateur "in the omniscient position from which alone his sarcasm [can] flow" (197). Pour employer la terminologie d'Oswald Ducrot, le narrateur est en train de ridiculiser, ou d'ironiser un "énonciateur," ici la noblesse de la Restauration, qui s'oppose à sa voix supérieure (192-195). Ayant mis en scène cette voix ridicule, le narrateur, par opposition, peut établir son savoir et son autorité. Plus loin, lorsque la lectrice rencontre la voix du narrateur débarassée des voix ridiculisées auparavant, elle ne peut que la croire quand elle lit:

7Ni laide ni jolie, madame de Listomère a des dents blanches, le teint éclatant et les lèvres très rouges; elle est grande et bien faite; elle a le pied petit, fluet, et ne l'avance pas; ses yeux, loin d'être éteints, comme le sont presque tous les yeux parisiens, ont un éclat doux qui devient magique si par hasard elle s'anime. (1: 1049)

Voit-on dans la vie des personnes "ni laides ni jolies"? Rarement. Rencontre-t-on dans le monde des "teints éclatants" ou des yeux "magiques"? Peut-être. Un œil peut-il vraiment s'animer d'un "éclat doux" (expression qui me paraît contradictoire)? Malgré les qualités de cette description qui tendent vers l'incroyable, ou le peu commun, les voix ridicules qui la précède préparent la lectrice à accepter comme autoritaire et fidèle le discours monophonique du narrateur.

Armine Mortimer écrit: "The components of [Balzac's] 'whole conceptual world' mandate an ignorant reader" (47). Je dirais que le monde fictif de Balzac, en plus d'exiger un lecteur ignorant, crée un lecteur ignorant, un récipient vide que le narrateur de *La Comédie humaine* peut gaver d'un monde fictif érigé à l'aide de la polyphonie et d'un emploi non-conventionnel des anaphores.



Le narrateur limite la liberté du lecteur qui, s'étouffant sous un amas énorme de mots, est mené, voire obligé, et à se recréer et à se créer un univers incroyable. L'ultime monomanie de Balzac, ce chercheur de l'absolu, consiste à chercher un lecteur absolu, c'est-à-dire un lecteur créé absolument à la guise de et sous le contrôle de l'Auteur.

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NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Citations de *La Comédie humaine* sont des 11 tomes de l'Édition de la Pléiade, 1951. J'indique entre parenthèses d'abord le numéro du volume cité, suivi du numéro de la page citée.

<sup>2</sup>Cet observateur ou focalisateur qui sert à ancrer le texte de manière spatio-temporelle crée ce que Roland Barthes appelle "l'effet de réel" ou, en termes plus propres à cette étude, ce que Perron et Debbèche appellent "l'effet du crédible" (Perron 183).

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Per questo saggio, ho preso in esame un particolare gruppo di sonetti del Canzoniere di Francesco Petrarca e precisamente i numeri CXCIV, CXCVI, CXCVII, CXCVIII, CCCXXVII e CCCLVI. I sonetti in questione hanno in comune l'esordio (L')aura, il che, oltre all'ovvio richiamo al nome della donna amata dal poeta, racchiude una notevole ambiguità che viene a esprimersi nell'evocazione della donna attraverso il vento immateriale e sfuggevole in contrasto con la materialità della natura circostante.

La critica che si è occupata di questo determinato tema della raccolta, più che soffermarsi sulla realizzazione e sugli effetti dello stesso topos nella poesia di Petrarca, si è occupata delle sue origini. Il dibattito comprende il contributo della Spiaggiari, del Roncaglia, del Contini e del Rossi. Prendendo spunto dalle *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio, risalirò alla realizzazione del tema nella poesia petrarchesca e, precisamente, in questa serie.

La serie presenta molti, forse troppi riferimenti all'opera ovidiana per pensare che essi siano solo casuali. Petrarca in questo suo mini-Canzoniere sfrutta ed elabora l'equivoco tragico del mito di Cefalo e Procris (*Metamorphoses* 685-865). Le notevoli somiglianze con Ovidio sono a due livelli; prima di tutto a livello testuale, e poi, e molto più importante, a livello intertestuale. Petrarca comunque non si limita alla mera ripresa del tema ovidiano dell'aura ristoratrice che può essere confusa con una donna, come vedremo, egli lo elabora, nelle varie stesure dei sonetti, fino ad elevare l'aura stessa a soffio spirituale dopo la presunta morte di Laura. Il gruppo, se isolato dal resto del Canzoniere, presenta un determinato schema che mira all'evocazione della donna attraverso l'aura ma anche un abile sovrapposizione, grazie alla polisemia del nome aura, fra la donna e l'aura le quali appaiono, in alcuni sonetti, totalmente fuse.

La vicenda in Ovidio è ambientata in un luogo idillico e il richiamo dell'aura da parte di Cefalo perché gli porti ristoro dà adito al terribile equivoco che culminerà nella tragica morte di sua moglie Procris, la quale pensava egli si stesse riferendo alla sua amante. Petrarca riprende il tema sfruttando l'incipit ovidiano (dove l'aura è all'inizio del verso, quasi sempre in vocativo) all'inizio dei suoi sonetti per invocare, così come Cefalo, l'aura ristoratrice ma perché questa gli porti l'immagine della sua amata; al contrario di Cefalo, Petrarca vuole veramente evocare una donna (o almeno così vuole farci credere). Il testo ovidiano non viene rielaborato ma serve da intertesto per richiamare continuamente e sottilmente il lettore all'atmosfera delle *Metamorfosi* e al dolore di Cefalo. In Ovidio i due amanti non si fidano l'uno dell'altra e si sottopongono a continui esami, si cercano, si spiano; questa atmosfera è certamente presente anche nel Canzoniere, ma la presenza delle donne nelle due opere è sostanzialmente diver-

sa: in Ovidio esiste un certo livello di comunicazione fra Cefalo e Procris, che si crea equivoco, ma che nel Canzoniere è totalmente inesistente. A Francesco non riesce mai di comunicare con Laura; inoltre, mentre nelle *Metamorfosi* Procris è presente (ma scompare dopo la sua morte per lasciare spazio al ricordo) nel Canzoniere Laura, come vedremo, appare a Petrarca solo dopo la sua morte, in sogno.

Nei quattro sonetti della serie in vita di Laura il crescendo evocazionale è molto accurato. In CXCIV la donna è fisicamente assente e l'aura serve da richiamo e da spinta per il poeta che così si muove alla sua ricerca:

Per ritrovar ove il cor lasso appoggi,  
Fuggo dal mi' natio aere toscò;  
(... )

Cerco il mio sole e spero vederlo oggi. (CXCIV, 5-8)

In CXCVI l'aura gli porta il ricordo di Laura e della sua bellezza (vv. 3-4), ma la donna non è ancora fisicamente presente. Nel terzo sonetto, il CXCVII, attraverso il mito di Medusa, vediamo finalmente apparire una parte di Laura, benché immateriale: la sua ombra (v. 12) e, infine, in CXCVIII la visione della donna: Vedendo ardere i lumi ond'io m'accendo (9). Petrarca, partendo dall'uso dell'equivoco ovidiano, usa i vantaggi della polisemia per elaborarlo a vari livelli sia di significato che di significante.

Ad una prima lettura, risulta evidente un certo divario nella rappresentazione della natura fra i componimenti che precedono e quelli che seguono la morte della donna. Prima della morte di Laura le poesie sono ambientate in un *locus amoenus* di ovidiana memoria che predomina tutto il Canzoniere:

L'aura gentil che rasserena i poggi  
destando i fior per quest'ombroso bosco (CXCIV vv. 1-2)

L'aura serena che fra verdi fronde  
mormorando a ferir nel volto viemme (CXCVI vv. 1-2)

L'aura celeste che 'n quel verde lauro  
spira, ov'Amor ferì nel fianco Apollo (CXCVII vv. 1-2)

L'aura soave al sole spiega e vibra  
l'auro ch'Amor di sua man fila e tesse (CXCVIII vv. 1-2)

Quando Laura viene a mancare, nondimeno, si registra un brusco cambiamento:

L'aura et l'odore e'l refrigerio et l'ombra  
del dolce lauro e sua vista fiorita,  
lume e riposo di mia stanca vita,  
tolt' à colei che tutto'l mondo sgombra (CCCXXVII vv. 1-4)

Il *locus amoenus* è scomparso. La morte, spietata livellatrice, ha eliminato, insieme alla donna, questi elementi gioiosi per il poeta. I versi richiamano alla memoria l'invocazione dell'aura da parte di Cefalo, il quale cercava solo refrigerio ma che ha trovato tragedia. Insieme con la donna, che Petrarca aveva sempre rappresentato fusa e inscindibile con la natura, anche gli elementi naturali a lei



collegati scompaiono. Ancora una volta, è la rima a darci la chiave del paesaggio, adesso tragicamente vuoto e desolato. L'accoppiata rimica ombra/sgombra esprime non solo eliminazione fisica, ma, come ha sottolineato il Greene: "Sgombra means conventionally 'clears out' or 'removes'; here the context and the rhyme oblige one to make out a meaning something like 'dis-shadows.'" L'immagine offertaci dal Petrarca è senz'altro più forte; egli vuole qui esprimere il vuoto lasciato dalla dipartita di Laura, e la sua disperazione; vuole che il suo lettore senta lo stesso vuoto e quindi non può scegliere un termine qualunque: la morte, non solo ha eliminato Laura, ma ci ha anche dis-ombrato, dematerializzato del lauro.

Rimasto solo, il poeta esprime desiderio di morte come preghiera di essere liberato dal fardello della vita. Il verso i' cheggio a Morte incontra Morte aita (CCCXXVII v. 7) richiama senza dubbio le parole di Pier della Vigna nel girone dei suicidi: (L'animo mio) ingiusto fece contra me giusto che sottintende pensieri suicidi (Dante Inf. XIII.72). Da questo momento egli cerca di accettare la morte di Laura, ma si rende conto che ella deve cambiare, non essendo più corpo ma anima. Ecco dunque la trasformazione in spirito eletto, l'aura da gentile, da portatrice di refrigerio, diventa sacra (in CCCLVI) e spira al suo riposo per farlo sognare. La figura aura si presta agilmente alla metamorfosi. Di conseguenza, Laura non viene più presentata come corpo desiderabile, bensì come amica e consolatrice:

....i' prendo ardimento  
di dirle il mal ch'i' ò sentito et sento

...

Ella si tace, et di pietà depinta  
fiso mira pur me; parte sospira,  
et di lagrime honeste il viso adorna (CCCLVI vv. 2-3 e 9-11)

Petrarca sente qui di potersi abbandonare a lei. Anche al livello del significante ci sono dei cambiamenti; l'abbondanza di vocali scure o nella prima coppia di versi citati e anche il ritmo che si è fatto grave e solenne.

Nei sonetti scritti in vita di Laura la natura è materiale, è natura fisica. Solo l'aura è immateriale e perennemente in movimento e mi sembra questa la ragione per cui il poeta abbia scelto proprio questo elemento per rappresentare la sua donna: nella sua immaterialità, l'aura si presta sia all'evocazione della donna sia al trapasso dalla vita alla morte dove viene trasformata in soffio spirituale fonte di consolazione per l'uomo in pena. Con la morte della donna anche la natura deve perdere la sua materialità poiché Petrarca ce le ha rappresentate come inscindibili. Il poeta sente l'inadeguatezza del suo continuare a parlare dei poggi e del lauro, visto che adesso Laura non è altro che terra, il suo corpo non esiste più: è diventata spirito. Per questa donna egli doveva trovare un altro modo di rappresentazione e cosa meglio di un soffio, per esprimere il suo stato spirituale?

È necessaria, a questo punto, una più specifica analisi dei testi per documentare le mie affermazioni. La materialità della natura è data in CXCIV dai poggi, dai fiori dal bosco:

L'aura gentil, che rasserena i poggi  
destando i fior' per quest'ombroso bosco (vv. 1-2)

dove la sovrapposizione fra Laura, il poeta e la natura è evidente e l'ambientazione è tipicamente ovidiana. Mi sembra di potere agilmente scorgere Laura dietro l'aura, e dietro il bosco ombroso l'animo del poeta i cui fiori sono destinati dall'aura mattutina. Nei fior dell'ombroso bosco vogliamo identificare la poesia nell'accezione medievale di fiore, fioretto come raccolta di poesia. L'abbondanza di sinalefi, ai versi 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 contribuisce alla scioltezza del ritmo che scorre fluido e festoso.

In CXCVI le verdi fronde del lauro mosse dal vento mormorante ci portano ad immaginare la voce delicata di Laura che aleggia sul poeta facendo scattare il meccanismo del ricordo; il mormorare delle fronde lo riporta alla Laura buona (qui serena); l'aura/Laura gli mostra il bel viso mentre Laura cattiva glielo nasconde. Ecco il gioco degli amanti che si nascondono, che non si fidano l'uno dell'altra. Il ricordo della donna lo spinge ad un altalenarsi fra passato e presente che rende la poesia più drammatica (vv. 7-12). Anche qui sia la presenza di diverse sinalefi (ai versi 6, 8, 12), sia, ai versi 2, 3 e 6, il pronome diretto in posizione suffissale (in rima), accelerano il ritmo di lettura.

Nel sonetto CXCVII troviamo ancora il verde lauro di Apollo e l'aura celeste che congiungono Laura al mito e quindi al mondo degli immortali. Il lauro non è un albero qualunque, ma un albero divino, sacro ad Apollo e simbolo della gloria poetica a cui egli aspira. C'è aria soprannaturale e mitologica anche nel richiamo a Medusa il cui sguardo trasforma in pietra e che è fermente temuto dal poeta; richiama, inoltre, a stregoneria, a poteri soprannaturali della donna per far innamorare il poeta (Foster 75-6). Il sonetto è avvolto nella sua interezza da aria magica a delineare la personalità di Laura/maga dal cui sguardo il Petrarca non può sottrarsi. Significative nell'ultima terzina, le parole-rima ghiaccio e marmo, le quali appartengono al patrimonio naturale e materiale tipico di questa prima parte del Canzoniere. La natura è qui presente anche sotto forma di lauro e l'auro (notare la rima equivoca).

In CXCVIII, il paesaggio non è chiaramente delineato con immagini ma nella figura della donna coi lunghi capelli biondi sparsi al vento che provocano reazioni sensualissime nell'uomo Petrarca. La donna lo seduce fisicamente; è il suo aspetto a sedurlo, frammenti del suo corpo e, precisamente gli occhi e i capelli che ondeggiano da una spalla all'altra. L'abbondanza di sibilanti s'accresce la figura dello spirare dell'aura del movimento delle chiome.

Dopo la sua morte, Laura sembra essere scomparsa nella sua materialità per lasciare il posto alla spiritualità. L'aura ha ancora la funzione di ricongiungere il poeta alla sua donna ma non è più da vedersi come elemento della natura, della terra, della materialità, ma è diventato un elemento immateriale, spirituale, sacro. Intorno a questa figura, Petrarca tesse l'immagine della sua nuova Laura. Egli cerca di accettarne la morte, cosa che gli riesce troppo difficile, trasformandola, nella sua poesia, da donna in carne ed ossa in spirito. Ha bisogno di sentirla ancora vicino e ciò gli riesce grazie alla memoria. La morte è conveniente nella dinamica del Canzoniere, poiché gli consente lo sviluppo,



l'evoluzione della sua poesia. La morte della donna attiva il ricordo, la memoria, da Agostino indicato come unico mezzo atto al superamento del dolore della perdita, così come la riflessione sulla sua condizione di uomo e sulla sua spiritualità. Egli comunque sente ancora dentro di sé il conflitto fra anima e corpo e non può fare a meno di sognare la sua donna, di amarla come donna anche da morta.

Nei sonetti di questa serie scritti in vita di Laura l'amore per la donna è indubbiamente fisico e sensuale:

Non ò medolla in osso, o sangue in fibra,  
ch'i' non senta tremar (CXCVIII vv. 5-6)

I' chiedrei a scampar, non arme, anzi ali;  
ma perir mi dà 'l ciel per questa luce,  
ché da lunge mi struggo e da presso ardo (CXCIV vv. 12-14)

Le reazioni di Petrarca sia alla vista che al pensiero della sua donna sono fisicamente intense, sono reazioni da uomo innamorato, manca qui la spiritualità.

La morte di Laura gli fa realizzare in maniera spietata che questa fisicità non esiste più e che non potrà più esistere. Si deve rendere conto che è tempo di andare avanti, di cambiare se vuole sopravvivere al dolore della perdita. Il sonetto numero CCCXXVII mi sembra esemplare in questo senso. La dipartita di Laura è accompagnata da una susseguente mancanza di elementi naturali: anche la natura è morta (l'aura, l'odore il refrigerio e l'ombra e la sua vista fiorita) essendo state le due sempre inscindibili. Il richiamo all'eclissi di sole della seconda quartina è perfetto ad indicare l'oscurità che avvolge ora la sua vita e così egli esprime al verso 7 sentimenti di morte: i' cheggio a Morte incontra Morte aita. Allo stesso tempo, il sonetto è esemplare per la sua rappresentazione della metamorfosi di Laura fatta da Petrarca da donna a spirito electo (vv. 9-11) e per il nuovo ruolo della sua poesia che ora deve fare memoria eterna del nome della donna (vv. 12-14). Le parole-rima si aggiungono a delineare l'atmosfera con ben quattro termini derivati dall'ombra del primo verso e, precisamente, sgombra del verso 3, adombra al verso 4 e ingombra al verso 8. Anche il ritmo si è fatto più solenne e lento: abbiamo abbondanza di m e n, soprattutto nelle parole-rima, il che serve a rallentare la cadenza. Ancora, mentre al verso 4 la morte è evocata solo per perifrasi, ai versi 7-8 è interessante la personificazione di Morte e Amore, i quali, essendo così vicini nel verso, risultano quasi consonantici per accentuare il contrasto fra i due ma anche la loro vicinanza in questo momento di dolore. Laura non apparirà più come aura al sole ma come spirito, in vista del suo nuovo ruolo. Come egli molto bene nota in CCCLXIII:

terra è quella ond'io ebbi et freddi et caldi  
spenti son i miei lauri, or querce et olmi (vv.3-4)

La terra l'ha inghiottita, ne ha assorbito il corpo, e Petrarca deve accettare ciò. Egli insiste sul disfacimento del corpo, ora trasformato in terra. L'anima sì, splende in cielo, ma il corpo no. Ma, come ho già notato, l'accettarne la morte non è semplice ed egli rimpiange la donna e sente che il suo poetare non è più adeguato alla sua rievocazione:

Fammi sentir de quell'aura gentile  
di for, sì come dentro anchor si sente;

la qual era possente,  
cantando, d'acquetar li sdegni et l'ire,  
di serenar la tempestosa mente  
et sgombrar d'ogni nebbia oscura et vile,  
ed alzava il mio stile (CCLXX, vv.31-7)

Il poeta sente di non essere più capace di elevarsi poiché ha perso la sua fonte d'ispirazione poetica. La ricerca di un nuovo stile più adatto alla rievocazione, sembra gettarlo nella disperazione più profonda. In CCLXXVIII Petrarca rimpiange la dipartita della donna/aura che ha lasciato in terra "la terrena scorza", si è liberata del suo corpo, ed è diventata spirito salendo al cielo "bella et nuda":

Ne l'età sua più bella e più fiorita,  
quando aver suol Amor in noi più forza,  
lasciando in terra la terrena scorza,  
è l'aura mia vital da me partita,  
et viva et bella et nuda al ciel salita (vv. 1-5)

Laura si è risvegliata fra gli spiriti celesti; in questa poesia Petrarca vuole sottolineare la sua immaterialità. E quand'ella riappare al poeta lo fa in sogno ma egli non fa riferimento al suo aspetto fisico. Il sonetto CCCLVI presenta ai primi due versi un chiaro richiamo alle Metamorfosi nel riferimento allo stanco riposo: *auram expectabam, requies erat illa labori*. (812) dice Cefalo; e Petrarca:

L'aura mia sacra al mio stanco riposo  
spira sì spesso, ch'i' prendo ardimento  
di dirle il mal ch'i' ò sentito et sento,  
che, vivendo ella, non sarei stat'oso. (CCCLVI vv. 1-4)

Laura si comporta da amica e da confidente; essendo ora solo spirito, è diventata la rappresentazione ideale; ha pietà di lui e si commuove davanti al suo dolore. Le parole-rima della poesia tradiscono l'inquietudine del poeta: il riposo, tormento, roso, vinta, adira. L'uso del verbo al verso 3 *sentito et sento* e lo scandire del tempo al verso 8, *di dī in dī*, sono tutti artifici atti a farci penetrare nel cuore l'intensità e la lentezza con cui Amore lo ha torturato dolcemente facendolo misero e contento (v.7). L'abbondanza di m e n contribuisce al rallentamento del ritmo ed al suo farsi più solenne. Molto bello l'uso della sibilante all'incipit del verso 2, che offre una visione quasi onomatopeica del soffio dell'aura. Laura non è più sfuggibile, si ferma ad ascoltarlo e lo guarda fiso (v. 10). Non gli nasconde il viso, come in CXCVI, ma glielo mostra ornato di lacrime. Anche Petrarca ha finito la sua corsa: sia in CXCIV che in CCXXVII era sempre in movimento, impegnato nella ricerca di Laura e della sua propria spiritualità. Trasformando ed elevando a spirito la sua donna ideale, Petrarca ha finalmente trovato il modo di nobilitare la sua poesia. Adesso si è fermato e può finalmente liberare la sua anima.

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Il problema del tempo nel *Canzoniere* di Francesco Petrarca costituisce una nozione molto importante, che è alla base della struttura e della composizione di questo libro poetico. Infatti tutti i critici che hanno esaminato le *Rime sparse* come un testo intero, con un ordine dei singoli componimenti attentamente premeditato e con la propria cronologia interna, inevitabilmente si riferiscono alle idee temporali del poeta. Ricordiamo anche la presenza nel *Canzoniere* di date precise, di anniversari, dei motivi collegati con il tempo (p. es. la memoria, il ritorno); la nozione del tempo esplicitamente espressa (p. es. la sollecitazione di fare a tempo per rincorrere la prematura morte); infine i concetti del tempo del Petrarca, che si trovano a tutti i livelli poetici nel testo, inevitabilmente richiedono l'attenzione di ogni lettore.

Però l'indagine del testo intero del *Canzoniere* esce dai limiti della presente ricerca. Qui mi propongo l'esame di alcuni dei componimenti, i quali ho considerato tra i più caratteristici per rivelare la nozione del tempo del Petrarca. Per questo scopo il metodo che ho scelto come più adeguato è di cercare lo sviluppo di questi concetti nella cornice del singolo poema a tutti i livelli - di nozione del tempo esplicita, di motivo come parafrasi poetica e anche a livello di espressione verbale. Quello che cercherò di delineare è che il Petrarca vede il proprio tempo, sia esso chiamato personale o dell'autore, staccato e contro gli altri possibili fili temporali. Certamente mi aspetterei di trovare alcuni tratti narrativi nel tessuto poetico<sup>1</sup> e, come succede con tutte le concezioni nelle *Rime Sparse*, osserverò una ricchezza delle idee del poeta anche per quanto riguarda il tempo<sup>2</sup>, basata sul paradosso e l'antinomia. I rapporti tra i diversi componimenti non potranno essere esaminati dettagliatamente in questo aspetto a causa dei limiti posti, ma vedrò come l'idea del tempo cambia da poesia a poesia e come il flusso temporale di un sonetto può essere ripreso da un altro.

La sestina 22 del *Canzoniere* è molto interessante per quanto riguarda i concetti temporali ed infatti è stata esaminata da molti studiosi (v. p. es. Barolini e soprattutto Shapiro 1983). Essa è uno dei componimenti iniziali, nell'ambito dei poemi che ricorrono alla mitologia greca e possiamo aspettare un avvicinarsi delle linee temporali del componimento a formule di tempo mitologico, cioè ciclico. Marianne Shapiro ha mostrato l'evidenza in questa sestina del tempo ciclico della natura, il quale Petrarca ferma e inverte con l'*adynaton* alla fine (Shapiro 1983:250). Osserviamo i possibili rapporti di valore (generale e temporale) tra le parole finali che formano la *retrogradatio cruciata*:

alba → giorno	stelle ↔ sole	terra+selva,
oppure:		
stelle → alba	sole+giorno	terra+selva,
oppure:		
alba → sole	giorno ↔ stelle	terra+selva.

Solo due vocaboli qui (terra e selva) non hanno un esplicito riferimento temporale e solo loro sono immobili<sup>3</sup>. Gli altri sono parte del ciclo giorno-notte della natura (selva e terra). In ogni caso nelle tre possibilità di combinazione ci sono rapporti di sequenza, opposizione e coordinazione/copresenza.

Osserviamo i fili temporali. Il movimento ciclico ripetitivo predomina all'inizio, anche a livello della struttura verbale (il presente). Nella seconda stanza lo stesso presente iterativo coinvolge pure la vita del poeta nel ciclo - essa ha lo stesso ritmo e direzione. Tuttavia "Ed io...", v. 7, indica un parallelismo e non una completa coincidenza - il poeta distingue il proprio tempo dal tempo naturale. Lui non ha tregua e sospira tutto il giorno, d'altra parte neanche la notte è un periodo di posa per lui come per gli altri esseri - essa è invece tempo da lagrimare<sup>4</sup>. Il tempo naturale, come abbiamo visto, è ciclico e privo di un inizio e una fine. Sarebbe valido lo stesso anche per il tempo dell'autore<sup>5</sup>? Nella terza stanza conosciamo che esso ha un inizio - il tempo personale ciclico assume i tratti di tempo cronologico e lineare:

...miro pensoso le crudeli stelle  
che m'anno fatto di sensibil terra,  
e maledico il dì ch' i' vidi 'l sole... (vv.15 - 17).

L'inizio del tempo personale è il giorno nel quale ha visto il sole. (E il sole non è il soggetto della frase, l'agente è l'io.) Ma di quale sole si tratta, che il protagonista ha visto e così attivamente ha cominciato la propria vita? Questa frase è un luogo comune, un nesso per denotare la nascita. Però lasciando a parte il significato idiomatico potremmo ammettere che si tratta anche (simultaneamente) del giorno nel quale il poeta ha incontrato (visto) per la prima volta Laura, siccome lei viene spesso paragonata al sole nel corso del *Canzoniere*. Così la nascita si identifica ambiguamente con un momento storico e cronologicamente noto nella narrazione delle *Rime sparse* - il primo incontro, cioè, l'origine della vita attiva attuale del poeta. Ovviamente anche l'amata partecipa nel ciclo giorno-notte. Nella quinta stanza il tempo personale, ciclico fino a quel momento, si stacca dalla ciclicità del naturale accennando ad una possibile fine. Il risultato di un improbabile avvenimento - vedere pietà in lei - porterebbe ad un'accelerazione del tempo ciclico. Un elemento della catena (una notte) conterrebbe molti altri elementi (anni di notti perdute in sospiri) per ricuperarli, per neutralizzare le differenze tra l'amplitudine del tempo naturale e del personale (sotto amplitudine qui si intende la completezza sincronica che manca - mentre per gli altri esseri la notte è riposo e il giorno è travaglio, con lo schema  $\cap\cup\cap\cup\cup$ , per il poeta giorno e notte sono ugualmente travaglio ( \_\_\_\_\_ ). Consecutivo al desiderio "vedessi" (v.33) è il "con lei foss'io", v.31. E subordinati a "foss'io", ma coordinati tra di loro, sono "mai non fosse l'alba", v.33, e "non se trasformasse", v.34. Seguendo il sogno del poeta arriveremmo al fermarsi del tempo in un eterno stato immutevole ( \_\_\_\_\_  $\circ$  )<sup>6</sup>. Proprio questa eternità è il desiderio irraggiungibile, paradossalmente mascherato con il contrario "sol' una notte".

Non è tipico per la ciclicità contenere un fatto fisso e non ripetibile. Questo non vuol dire che il tempo inaspettatamente diventa lineare. Anche se Shapiro scorgesse qui la trasformazione del tempo naturale in lineare, a mio avviso quello che abbiamo sarebbe una duplicità temporale - la sestina 22 rappresenta il tempo personale del poeta come parallelo, ma distinto da quello della natura - con lo stesso ritmo, ma con un'altra amplitudine, ed ha un proprio inizio e



fine pur sempre generati dalla stessa natura. Laura partecipa nel ciclo naturale come il sole che gli ha dato l'inizio (creatrice e nello stesso tempo motrice del ciclo) e comparata alla fiera selvaggia. Un desiderio, che pure viene dalle stelle, se realizzato prima della fine potrebbe portare alla ripetizione accelerata di moltissimi elementi del ciclo in uno solo, oppure, e questo è sicuro, sarà spostato dopo la fine, e in questo caso sarà impossibile nei limiti della natura (Shapiro 1983:235). Petrarca vede il proprio tempo staccato dal tempo naturale ciclico del quale ha preso l'origine e ulteriormente agisce inversamente - lui stesso procede a ricreare il ciclo naturale<sup>7</sup> nell'ambito del paradosso per raggiungere l'eternità (nel quale l'amore di Laura è l'elemento essenziale). Il paradosso può realizzarsi nei limiti di questo tempo creato da lui e quello della natura viene abolito.

Osserviamo adesso due sonetti con lo scopo di comparare in essi i concetti di tempo presenti in essi. Sono i 272 e 317, tutti e due della seconda parte e in tutti e due c'è presente il motivo della morte. Il movimento rimico allude, a livello dei suoni, che le relazioni temporali siano il nucleo del componimento. Nella fronte del sonetto 272 la rima *-ora* è sottolineata anche dalla presenza della parola "ora", appena nel primo verso. Mentre *ora* si può allungare nel tempo, essendo la sua consonante una sonante liquida, *-ate*, l'altra rima della fronte, è marcata temporalmente, essa fonicamente ricorda i tocchi dell'orologio o i passi di un andamento regolare. Nella sirima abbiamo un susseguirsi di tre elementi differenti. Prima di tutto, l'effimera *-mai* (pure la parola "mai" è la prima rima della sirima, sottolineando così lo staccarsi della fronte dominata da "ora" dalla sirima dominata da "mai"). La prima rima *-mai* marca l'assenza di una misura di tempo; la seconda, *-arte*, è il suo contrario con l'accumulazione di due consonanti; la terza rima, *-enti*, è pure di due consonanti contigue, ma quasi concilia la contraddizione fonica tra il sonoro *-mai* e il secco *-arte*.

Nel sonetto 272 troviamo un'affermazione esplicita del poeta riguardo il tempo. Si apre con "La vita fugge e non s'arresta un'ora" (v. 1) che impone la velocità del passaggio del tempo. Il discorso della prima quartina è tessuto da opposizioni, d'altro canto i contrasti hanno il ruolo di rendere non un'alternarsi, ma piuttosto una la direzione della corrente temporale (la vita fugge, seguita dalla morte). Il concetto poetico filosofico è visualizzato con questa quasi personificazione della vita e della morte. La linea del sonetto dall'idea astratta del primo verso (se letto isolato) passa attraverso la personificazione dei versi 2 - 4 e si avvia verso il punto più importante del componimento - gli stati d'animo del poeta. Il rimembrare (del passato) e l'aspettare (del futuro) quasi rivolgono la vista nelle due direzioni opposte. Anche il tono del discorso, con le frasi coordinate e l'*e* anaforica rallentano il ritmo veloce dell'inizio, che adesso è andante, ma continua senza interruzioni verso la metà della seconda quartina. Questo ritmo tuttavia oscilla con la congiunzione "se non" di ammissione (v. 7) e suggerisce l'idea dello scappare dai pensieri, cioè dal ricordare e dall'aspettare, dal passato e dal futuro. Però siccome il filo temporale, la successione dei pensieri, è senza inizio e fine<sup>8</sup>, l'unico modo di fuggire è tagliare il filo (della vita).

L'immagine dei pensieri (e stati d'animo) il cui susseguirsi marca il ritmo temporale è frequente nel *Canzoniere*. Ricordiamo solo "Di pensier in pensier" del 129 e il rimembrare del passato ad ogni passo del 15. In questi due esempi c'è anche la spazializzazione del filo temporale che trasforma il tempo in un'entità palpabile, sotto la forma della successione. Quindi la vita come cammino, la vita che fugge e la morte che la segue (nella fronte del sonetto 272) è

dello stesso genere dell'immagine delle dolci memorie che tornano, quasi materialmente, davanti agli occhi. Sono dello stesso genere in quanto in tutti questi casi si tratta di nozioni visualizzate in successione, alternazione o ritorno in un ordine, inverso o retto che sia. Una visione trasparente, siccome dall'altra parte il poeta intravede il futuro amaro. La speranza del futuro (con il simbolo dell'ancora, che viene dall'anticipazione dei naviganti di trovare il porto) è spezzata, il faro (i bei lumi) è spento, la nave è rotta e il tempo non è favorevole. L'anafora "veggio" che concatena le due terzine, si riferisce non solo al vedere nello spazio, ma anche nel tempo. Il poeta è un chiaroveggente del proprio, triste, futuro.

In questo sonetto l'asse temporale è lineare. Il protagonista, che si trova nel presente e parla sempre in presente non può sfuggire il ritmo veloce del movimento (se non che abbia pietà di se stesso, cioè che rompa la linea vitale). Nel sonetto la vita è seguita dalla morte, ma alla fine paradossalmente, la vita è quella che rimane indietro e la morte si vede nel futuro<sup>9</sup>. Passato e futuro però ugualmente accorano, danno amarezza, malgrado i pochi dolci pensieri che ritornano alla vista, senza poter occultare il quadro del futuro (immobilità). Il ritmo veloce dell'inizio del sonetto gradualmente si rallenta per arrestarsi senza raggiungere il fine. Il tempo esterno visualizzato nell'inseguirsi della morte e della vita viene interiorizzato dal poeta quando esso attraversa il punto che rappresenta il poeta stesso - un punto dopo il quale il futuro diventa presente e poi passato, cioè è lì dove il tempo si realizza. Questo è anche l'unico possibile punto che offre una via d'uscita dalla linea temporale senza inizio e fine - è lì dove la linea si può spezzare con il menzionato suicidio.

Nel sonetto 317 c'è un parallelismo alle rime del 272. Come nella fronte, così nella sirima le rime sono un susseguirsi di due tipi di suoni. Da una parte, un'agglomerazione della consonante fricativa *s* e la dentale *t*: la rima *-esta*, più chiara, nella fronte, la *-osto*, più cupa, nella sirima. D'altra parte, accumulazione di sonanti: nella fronte troviamo *-ore*, un'associazione di senso con il vocabolo "ore", che infatti è l'ultima parola in rima della fronte; nella sirima vediamo anche *-oma* (simile a *-ore*, ma più tranquilla e piana essendo nasale) e *-ando* (a metà tra la cupa *-osto* e la sonora *-oma*, pure contenente un'accumulazione, ma di sonante e di dentale sonora, quasi una preparazione per la tranquillità di *-oma*, il suono di un'eco in dileguo).

Questo sonetto inizia lì, dove ha finito il 272 - con l'immagine del porto, ma è un'immagine cambiata, sostituita. E' una visione che Amore ha mostrato alla tempesta (la passione, l'errore). Un'immagine che si intravede tra gli anni dell'età matura, una rassicurazione che sembra di togliere la validità della triste immagine anteriore. Eppure c'è una inconsistenza. Il sonetto 272 conclude con la visione del futuro (il porto) vista dal presente (e infatti tutto il sonetto è costruito sul presente - il presente del momento attuale). Qui invece sin dall'inizio ci imbattiamo al trapassato prossimo: scorgiamo una prolessi su analessi<sup>10</sup>:

*Amore aveva mostrato...* (v. 1)

...  
↓  
...  
↓



...un tranquillo porto (da raggiungersi in un momento ulteriore, v. 1)



*Veggio fortuna in porto* (v. 12, 272)<sup>11</sup>

Nella prima quartina manca informazione sul secondo e sul terzo momento. Ed il poeta non si affretta di rivelarceli. La descrizione del futuro tranquillo porto, tramandata dalla visione iniziale, occupa l'intera prima quartina. Nella seconda quartina (vv.5-6) otteniamo il primo momento sconosciuto - il secondo elemento della catena. Ecco l'effetto della tranquillità, generata dal gesto anteriore di mostrare la felicità da parte di Amore: il sentimento del poeta sarebbe stato corrisposto. E subito dopo un presentimento: una maledizione nei confronti della Morte, la quale è capace di distruggere il frutto di molti anni in poche ore (maledizione inversa alla scena erotica del 22, dove una notte ristorerebbe molti anni). La prima terzina continua il movimento temporale. Quasi si arriva al compimento della promessa di Amore, seguita da altri desideri realizzati. Una catena, questa, di desideri, che il poeta non manca di prevedere, di prenarrare; tutti espressi con il futuro anteriore del futuro nel passato.

Manca sempre l'elemento centrale, il "perché" della sospensione temporale di queste immagini che si susseguono. Dobbiamo cercarlo proprio nel centro del sonetto, nei versi 7 e 8, quando il discorso si ferma con l'esclamazione diretta alla Morte ria. Non c'è un collocamento temporale di questo momento, non viene neanche menzionata alcuna azione. E' solo un presentimento, ma annulla, sospende, rende impossibile la visione amorosa che segue nelle terzine, semplicemente per il fatto che esse si trovano temporalmente posteriori a essa. Assomiglia al pianto di un amante che rammenta il passato e le possibilità perdute, ma ha paura di menzionare il più importante e accorante - che l'amata è morta e quindi niente può seguire dopo la morte. Ecco la sequenza, nella quale tutti gli elementi dopo il terzo vengono sospesi:

Amore aveva mostrato... (v. 1)



Traluceva a' begli occhi il mio cuore (v. 5)



Ai, Morte ria...! (v. 7)



...un tranquillo porto, fra gli anni dell'età matura (v.1)



In quelle caste orecchie avrei parlando (v. 10)



Ella avrebbe a me forse risposto (v. 12)



Cangiati i volti (v. 14)



*Veggio fortuna in porto* (v. 12, 272)



In altre parole, qui abbiamo una prolessi multipla (la visione amorosa aspettata), progettata sulla base dell'analessi iniziale (il ritorno nella memoria verso il momento passato primario). Il poeta vuole ritornare per progettare, per ricostruire il passato ed i sogni irrealizzati, ma omette con un'esclamazione convulsiva il momento cruciale della morte dell'amata - un momento che è capace di "inghiottire" molti anni - passati, e come risulta, anche futuri, eliminando la possibilità dei desideri di realizzarsi. Di fronte alla linearità del sonetto 272 qui c'è l'inversione, di fronte all'amarezza rassegnata, qui c'è l'agonia del filo dei sogni spezzato. In questo sonetto non c'è semplicemente l'opposizione presente ↔ passato; quello che c'è è piuttosto l'opposizione tempo immaginario ↔ tempo reale, dove l'immaginario è ana-prolettico e il reale è un presente averbale (comparabile ad un'interiezione). Certamente il filo poetico personale tende al tempo immaginario - il poeta di nuovo ricrea il proprio tempo, senza nominare esplicitamente quando esso finisce: in realtà il grido "Ai, Morte ria" può riferirsi alla morte di Laura, che ha distrutto la visione del futuro probabile, ma nello stesso tempo non si esclude che sia un'invocazione della morte futura, quella del poeta... In ogni modo, nel 272 possiamo paragonare il tempo ad un filo e la personalità del poeta ad un grano di rosario che si muove lungo il filo; nel 317 invece il presente, abitato dalla morte, è un presente indefinito, senza azione, rispetto al quale la memoria, il tempo immaginario del poeta ricrea la storia amorosa del futuro nel passato.

L'osservazione dei componimenti esaminati ci offre uno sguardo verso la ricchezza di idee temporali che possiamo trovare nel *Canzoniere* - il tempo si disgrega a molti "tempi", principale tra i quali è il tempo psicologico del poeta, staccato e spesso opposto agli altri. Come abbiamo visto anche con gli esempi dei sonetti 272 e 317, i concetti di tempo possono sovrapporsi, fondersi, continuare ed evolvere da una poesia ad altra. La sestina 22 invece mostra la complessità di queste idee entro la cornice del singolo componimento. Anche esaminati per sé, le singole opere sono abbondanti di concetti di tempo, i quali non vengono presentati nel tessuto testuale staccati, ma costruiscono il discorso poetico a tutti i livelli e interferiscono con le altre nozioni nel testo. La passione amorosa, la morte, la natura, strettamente collegate nella visione poetica del Petrarca con la speranza e la disperazione, con la nascita, il ritmo della vita, la memoria, sono motivi che esistono sulla base della molteplicità dei fili temporali.

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#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Teodolinda Barolini afferma che la non-narratività predomina nella prima parte del *Canzoniere* (Barolini 11) e invece nella seconda subentra la narratività; nello stesso momento nei luoghi narrativi l'autrice scopre tratti caratteristici della narrazione e viceversa, un argomento per la ricchezza delle idee di tempo del Petrarca.

<sup>2</sup> V. nota 1 e anche Foster (53), secondo chi la reminiscenza e la varietà sono i due accenti principali nel *Canzoniere*.

<sup>3</sup> Sono immobili per quanto riguarda il loro rapporto con altri termini: immobili come coppia tra le altre coppie che costituiscono le parole in rima. Ciò non esclude che presi separati questi termini mutino: cfr. p. es. "verde selva" (v. 34) e "secca selva" (v. 37) indicano chiaramente un cambiamento nel tempo, ma non entro i limiti del ciclo giorno-notte; questo cambiamento semantico entra nell'ambito dello sviluppo dei significati delle parole menzionato in nota 4.

<sup>4</sup> Da notare la similitudine anche sintattica del nesso “tempo da travagliare”, v. 3, con l'*Ecclesiasta* biblico.

<sup>5</sup> Likhachev definisce, tra gli altri “tempi”, il tempo dell'autore (Likhachev 216), però applicabile sulla prosa letteraria, perciò questo tempo infatti è tempo del narratore. Per ragioni di differenziazione io chiamerei il tempo dell'autore qui “tempo personale” o “tempo psicologico del poeta”.

<sup>6</sup> Shapiro invece parla del fermarsi del tempo e poi l'inizio di un nuovo tempo inverso (Shapiro 1983:250).

<sup>7</sup> Per Agostino il tempo si muove con la stessa, impietosa, velocità per tutti, ma Petrarca sviluppa questa concezione con l'idea che l'uomo può dare una sua individuale forma al tempo - una caratteristica che sarà ripresa dai suoi seguaci (Yandell 115).

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. v.1, “La vita fugge e non si arresta...” o anche l'idea espressa in v.5 che il rimembrare e l'aspettare sono uniche alternative di esperienza vitale, almeno nella cornice di questo sonetto.

<sup>9</sup> Però questo è un paradosso solo a prima vista, il quale si risolve se consideriamo che se la vita si veda seguita dalla morte o viceversa dipende dal punto di partenza. Nel momento attuale, se rimaniamo immobili, “vedremo” susseguirsi le ore della nostra vita, ore che fuggono (in direzione dal futuro al passato, da future diventano passate - un'idea platonica), dopo le quali vengono le ore (l'ora) della morte (cioè la morte segue la vita:

Pr ← vita ← morte). D'altra parte, se camminiamo rivolti al futuro, lì troveremo la morte in aspetto, mentre la vita che abbiamo vissuto rimane nel passato (cioè la vita è dietro e la morte è avanti:

vita Pr → morte ; Pr=protagonista).

<sup>10</sup> G. Genette strumentalizza questi termini sulla narrazione nella prosa letteraria. Siccome in questo sonetto c'è un filo narrativo, essi sono giustificabili anche qui.

<sup>11</sup> Chiaramente “fortuna” in questo verso vuol dire “fortunale”- osserviamo come la parola è circondata, nella seconda terzina del 272, da termini riferentisi alla navigazione, tanto usata come metafora dal Petrarca. Non ci può sfuggire però la molto utile qui per il poeta coincidenza omonimica con il significato di ‘destino’. Se consideriamo la parola ‘fortuna’ nella sua duplicità, questo verso staccato dal contesto del sonetto 272 può assumere diversi valori dipendenti dal momento al quale è giunta la narrazione.

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THE HAND OF GOD AS A NARRATOLOGICAL INSTRUMENT IN *LE ROUGE ET LE NOIR*  
AND *MADAME BOVARY*



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J. Hillis Miller has spoken of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as marking the culmination of the disappearance of God from the world. This paper examines how the nineteenth-century novel registers this disappearance from French culture. Using as points of departure Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, I suggest that transformations in nineteenth-century novelistic form both reflect and enact the culture's detachment from God.

The detachment of French culture from God in the nineteenth century is a subtle phenomenon. 1830 and 1857 (the years of publication of *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *Madame Bovary*, respectively) are each significant moments in it, and that significance is present in the writing. 1830, the year that *Le Rouge et le Noir* claims to chronicle, is a time of revolution and virulent political anticlericalism. This anticlericalism manifests itself significantly through government language: the name of God disappears from official discourse, and the name of Christ is eliminated from the courts. Elimination of God's name, though, does not constitute an elimination of God. And despite political argumentation, it is a curious fact that the period from 1825 to 1835 is one of religious expansion. The foundation of France's Société Evangélique, the spread of Lamennais and mennaisianism, the foundation of various Catholic journals, stable attendance at church — these phenomena represent some abiding contact with religious ideas and with God. Three decades later, when *Madame Bovary* appears, the political religious atmosphere is far less conflicted. Church attendance is stable and has even increased. But the nature of this attendance has transformed. As one Orléans priest puts it in 1850, “[les paroissiens] prient Dieu avec ferveur quand ils sont malades, quand ils se croient ensorcelés: quand leurs bestiaux sont malades: ils demandent à Dieu les biens temporels, mais jamais les biens spirituels” (Cholvy 103). The experience of God and religion is changing. And that change is not situated in language or politics this time, but rather in modes of understanding. Questions of causation, motivation, coherence, reason, prediction, originality, harmony, and inconsistency — questions that had long been considered through religion — are regarded through the lens of science. This phenomenon has been considered at length by Foucault and other critics but it merits recapitulating. Darwin's *Origin of Species* appears in 1859. The Société d'Anthropologie is founded in this same year. The biological mode of comprehension is peculiar to the second half of the nineteenth century. It is distinct from Enlightenment philosophies of reason or mathematical theories. The scientific model of understanding blends the human and the omnipotent, between absolute and ephemeral, subjective and objective, visible and invisible. God becomes more distant.

That is not to suggest that God disappears — there are constant attempts at recuperation — but the sense of immediacy diminishes. So it is in the culture, and so it is in the works to be examined.

Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* appeared in 1830. Its protagonist, Julien Sorel, embodies the anticlerical sentiments of his time, demonstrating a worldliness in his dialogue and in his manner of being. He has of course a conventional distrust of institutional religion: "l'idée de la religion était invinciblement liée dans son esprit à celle d'hypocrisie et d'espoir de gagner de l'argent" (275). And again at the end, as he awaits execution: "si je trouve le Dieu des chrétiens, je suis perdu: c'est un despote" (479). In addition to this criticism of religious ideology, though, is a fear of external forces as a whole: a suspicion of the uncertain, of phenomena that cannot be grasped and manipulated. This distrust — "une méfiance du destin et des hommes," as the narrator presents it — is a profoundly secular quality, and one that is fundamental to his character (59). The desire to dominate episodes and ideas propels Julien's existence. Fortune, chance, fate, and accident are elements of arbitrariness, and arbitrariness would impede (or threaten to impede) a course that Julien wishes to determine alone and unhindered. The desire to grasp and conquer is palpable throughout the novel. As he puts it, "à l'avenir, je ne compterai que sur les parties de mon caractère que j'aurai éprouvées" (73). Or again, as the Abbé Pirard interrogates him, Julien "ne répondait qu'avec sa mémoire. De ce moment, Julien fut réellement très bien" (191). As he considers his seminarian enemies and how to elude them, "Julien fut sans cesse sur ses gardes. Il s'agissait de se dessiner un caractère tout nouveau" (197). Both the form and the content of this statement ("se dessiner un caractère" suggests artistic composition or calligraphic formulation) reveal Julien's directorial aspirations. These aspirations are also manifest in Julien's admiration of Napoleon and others who are (or appear to be) talented strategists. Watching a young ecclesiastic prepare for a religious procession, Julien is impressed: "Que ne fait-on pas avec l'adresse!" and tries to guess his income (129).

Despite Julien's desire to eliminate and elude arbitrariness, despite his distaste for such concepts as accident and destiny, *Le Rouge et le Noir* is not in the end a tale of pure human determination. The world in Julien's imagination is secular, but the world of the narration, significantly, is far less so. The language of an omnipotent and structuring principle abounds in various narratological incarnations — accident, chance, heaven's wish, the hands of fortune, grand coincidence. These are the extra-human phenomena that Julien had intended to ignore or circumvent, but that are nonetheless there, present and directing the course of the narration. What is more, these elements often appear at those moments when Julien is most confident that he is eluding them — that is, when he is most confident of having mastered his game. For example, as Julien rides in the king's parade: "Par un grand hasard, il ne tomba pas, de ce moment il se sentit un héros" (124). His sense of heroism in this passage is born of an event that cannot even be attributed to him. The event is instead the result of "un grand hasard" — an agent of the outside world that is beyond his control and perception. The same phenomenon determines the courtship of Madame de Fervaques. As Julien adheres to the strategic prescriptions of Korosoff and carries out the



courtship, the narrator reveals that “le hasard avait révélé à Julien le moyen d’être éloquent” (406). Again, the personal triumph is neither. At the seminary, as Julien sets about to “se dessiner un caractère tout nouveau,” the narrator writes that “une fatalité du caractère de Julien” is responsible for his discontent among the seminarians, and, consequently, for his very desire to re-create himself (336). In these scenarios, Julien’s attempts at control are determined by the phenomena of “hasard” and “fatalité,” “sort” and “les mains de la fortune” — the same phenomena that he was so determined to elude altogether. Sometimes he is helped and sometimes frustrated, but the sense remains that he is not acting alone.

Something other than Julien’s resolution — indeed, other than human resolution — is directing these and other episodes. This is the understanding gleaned from the language of the narration. What is more, this language is presented through a coherent and unambiguous narrator. That is, the narrator’s position does not change and does not disorient. Only once does this narrator bring attention to himself, making reference to his position and furnishing this opinion of our protagonist: “C’est, selon moi, l’un des plus beaux traits de son caractère; un être capable d’un tel effort sur lui-même peut aller loin, *si fata sinant*.” (423). This “*si fata sinant*” [if the fates permit] not only signifies the narrator’s erudition and distance from his subject, but points to a structuring principle that contradicts Julien’s secular imagination.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of outside forces is the scrap of paper in the church at the beginning of Julien’s adventures, a scrap “étalé là comme pour être lu,” detailing the execution of one Louis Jenrel (53). This paper can be read as an emblem of fatalism. This sort of detail is not so unusual, but it allows a curiously ironic comparison to Julien’s humanistic strategems. “Pauvre malheureux,” thinks Julien, “Son nom finit comme le mien” (54). So it does, and it is not just the name whose end is the same as Julien’s. *Le Rouge et le Noir* is about the extremes of human determination — about manipulating and eluding outside forces. At the same time, it is about about principles that, in spite of the protagonist’s resistance, are nonetheless responsible for his experiences, his triumphs, his desires, and his death. When Julien tells the Abbé Pirard: “Je ne me plaindrai plus du hasard,” the jansenist admonishes: “Il ne faut jamais dire le hasard, mon enfant, dites toujours la Providence” (252). This admonishment — this insistence on “seminarial words” — can be understood on the one hand as a pious extreme. On the other hand, Pirard’s words constitute a sort of dictionary for reading and interpreting *Le Rouge et le Noir*. According to Pirard, the religious notion of “Providence” is inscribed in the word “hasard” — a word that, though not attached to institutional religion, is nonetheless attached to the idea of God and supreme forces. And so it is. Chance in this novel, whether in the narratological construction and presentation (“les mains du hasard,” “le hasard voulu,” etc.) or in the apostrophic musings of the characters, does not constitute meaningless disorder; rather, it constitutes an order, a world of meaning, that is outside human determination and understanding. It is interesting also to note that Pirard is one of the subtle heroes of *Le Rouge et le Noir*. His character is strong and calm. There is no execution or death from anguish for him, as there is for the others. Pirard’s continuing devoutness is never glorified, but neither is it



ridiculed. This is not to argue that *Le Rouge et le Noir* is a religious work. It is to remark that the emergent secularism represented in it is combined with residual religious sentiment. In this sense, it is indeed a “chronicle of 1830.” Omnipotent principles contain and contradict the character’s imagined world, just as, in a phenomenon peculiar to novelistic formulation, the language of the narration contains and complicates the protagonist.

In Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, published in 1857, this configuration is inverted. The vision of the narrator contradicts the imagination of the protagonist, just as in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. But in *Madame Bovary*, the positions of secular and religious sentiment are exchanged. Religious sentiment does not appear in the dominant narratological registers. Rather, that sentiment is contained within the romantic and deluded imagination of the characters.

Emma Bovary is neither a skeptic nor a strategist. She is not a Julien who resists the uncertain; on the contrary, she dreams of the possibilities that religion or an omnipotent principle might offer her, imagining these elements sometimes with despair but never with doubt or dismissal: “Elle se demandait s’il n’y aurait pas eu moyen, par d’autres combinaisons du hasard, de rencontrer un autre homme, et elle cherchait à imaginer quels eussent été ces événements non survenus” (63). Alone and discontent in the home, “elle attendait un événement...elle ne savait pas quel serait ce hasard, le vent qui le pousserait jusqu’à elle, vers quel rivage il la menerait” (84). These words represent a sense that the future is going to unfold — that the hand of fortune will come bearing a multitude of possibilities. This sentiment continues throughout the novel: “Elle tâcha de se figurer sa vie, cette vie retentissante, extraordinaire, splendide, et qu’elle aurait pu mener si le hasard l’avait voulu” (270). At the sight of Léon, she exclaims: “je m’imaginai quelquefois qu’un hasard vous amènerait” (279). It is a question of reaching outside of nature and the real, into the more promising realm of the omnipotent and infinite.

Charles also inclines towards the domain of divine explanations, particularly when he wants to understand some misfortune or unhappiness. When a foot operation that he has performed fails, he declares: “la fatalité s’en était mêlée” (222). At his wife’s suicide: “c’est une malédiction” (395). The last words that he articulates in the novel are, in conversation with Rodolphe: “c’est la faute de la fatalité!” (409). He searches out the rationale for these episodes, listening for a celestial significance. It is so from the beginning; in the first pages, Charles “écouta ses léçons, attentif comme au sermon” (16). Throughout, there is this dramatic language, this inclination of both Emma and Charles to consider the supernatural origins of their experience. Emma pursues these through religion, attempting to bring faith on herself, “mais aucune délectation ne descendait des cieux” (258). She is looking for a miracle — “un événement extraordinaire” — for a God of thunder and excitement, of wonder and grand revelations, of a great romance, which, “croyait-elle, devait arriver tout à coup, avec de grands éclats et des fulgurations — oragan des cieux qui tombe sur la vie” (126).

Instead, she encounters Rodolphe, a seductive rhetorician: “Nos âmes se réuniront, la fatalité l’exige,” he promises (180). “Pourquoi nous-sommes nous

connus? Quel hasard l'a voulu?" (182) And again: "On ne lutte pas contre le Ciel!" (190) At last, in the final farewell letter: "O mon Dieu! n'en accusez que la fatalité!" (244). In the hands of Rodolphe, the language of predestination and of supernatural determinism becomes a pure mechanism of explanation, without substance or real meaning. Rodolphe is conscious of this: "voilà un mot [fatalité] qui fait toujours de l'effet," he thinks, using drops from a water glass to simulate tears on his letter (244). This gesture is strikingly reminiscent of Julien's courtship of Madame de Fervaques. In comparison, though, it is interesting to remark that Rodolphe does not perish at the end of *Madame Bovary* but rather outlasts both Emma and her husband. Although he is by no means praised, there is no suicide or despair or decline for Rodolphe. These ends are not for the manipulator but for the romantic — for those foolish enough to imagine that the language of divine order represents something real. The rhetoric of omnipotent force outlasts the substance — the error is in attempting to extract meaning and strength from this rhetoric rather than treating it (as Rodolphe does) as pure form. Wishing for and calling upon a structuring force is a misguided gesture, and faith in an abiding order either incongruous with or insufficient for what is becoming a modern world.

*Madame Bovary* is about the longing for a world of the imagination, for a world just outside the door, of fate and destiny and celestial intervention. It is also, and perhaps primarily, about the foolishness of that longing. For while Emma's imagination is replete with the hand of God and with its possibilities, the world of the narration is secular. The elements of "hasard" and "fatalité" et "malédiction" are as absent from the narratological presentation as they are present and valuable to the mind of the heroine. Episodes do not come about "par hasard" or "par coincidence," "par fatalité" or "parce que le ciel l'a voulu." The language of such structuring principles is not there. What is more, the secular narration is itself presented through a fluid and ambiguous narrator. Jonathan Culler goes into this phenomenon at length in his book on Flaubert. At no point can one turn to a coherent "narrator," for language or for structure. The hand of God, an abiding force of structure and order, is a figment of the imagination. Its existence is substantiated neither through the narratological construction nor through the experiences of the characters.

As Emma lies in her deathbed, Charles asks: "Pourquoi? Qui t'a forcée?" Her answer, "Il le fallait, mon ami" (374), represents *Madame Bovary's* idea of God and eternal order. The abstract "il" is unidentifiable, and the sense of obligation is resolutely without origin. Emma's statement, like Stendhal's "dites toujours la Providence," is a clue for reading and interpreting the novel. As the Abbé Pirard discerned the hand of God in human incidents, Emma on her deathbed discerns its absence. The hand of fate and fortune, once situated in the heavens, is no longer situated there. It is no longer situated at all: it becomes a secular fact, the force of the real. Again, as in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, the contradiction between character and narration registers the contradiction between cultural tendencies. Religious sentiment, which had been dominant and fundamental at the time of *Le Rouge et le Noir's* publication, is receding. And as it recedes,

it disappears from narrative patterns and is relegated instead to the imaginations of the characters. There is of course no clean and certain delineation between character and narration, or between religious and secular modes of thinking, or between dominant and emergent cultural tendencies. Questions of origin, in religion as in literature, cannot be so decided. These questions can however be considered through novelistic writing — the site in which cultural change is both represented and enacted.

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FOLLOWING THE PROCESSION: DIALOGUE WITH THE SIGNIFICANT OTHER IN ELENA  
PONIATOWSKA'S *HASTA NO VERTE, JESUS MIO*



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Jesusa Palancares, the protagonist in *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, by Elena Poniatowska, often mentions her desire to return to Tehuantepec, the region she refers to as her place of origin, or “mi tierra.” In other scenes throughout the book, however, she declares that she has no homeland, or that she is unsure as to where her homeland is; she also states that she does not feel Mexican because she has no fatherland, or *patria*, nor does she acknowledge Mexicans—rejecting at times both her race and nationality. As has occurred to many Mexicans who have been forced to leave their towns in order to find employment, Jesusa, on leaving Tehuantepec, loses her connection to a particular place she associates with origin, and is left to ponder her identity throughout three-quarters of the novel as she crises-crosses Mexico, first following her father and brother fighting on the side of the Carrancistas, and then her abusive husband, even crossing the boarder at one point and spending time in Texas. Acutely aware of her displacement, she struggles with it, confronts it, and even seems to resolve questions of identity and origin. However, even after experiencing a kind of epiphany on her brief return to the land where she was born, she ultimately cannot shake feelings of ambivalence and self depreciation; she is paralyzed by what Charles Taylor refers to as the “misrecognition of others” that has imprisoned her and prevented her from attaining self-fulfillment and self-realization. And so she opts to affiliate herself with a spiritual group that conveniently relies on the comforting belief in reincarnation.

From the very beginning of the novel we learn that a nearly constant state of vagrancy molded her childhood. She describes how she was obliged to leave Tehuantepec after the death of her mother and live wherever her father could find work, roaming from one stepmother to another. When her father and brother enlist in the army, she is even more rootless, trailing behind the troops and performing various duties for the soldiers. Perhaps because her voice in the narration is that of an older woman reminiscing, her nostalgic, idealized memories depict a young girl who once felt affiliated with the land, and this technique increases the sense of displacement throughout the book. For example she remembers swimming in the river in Tehuantepec and fishing for fresh-water oysters with her father, oysters she cannot afford to buy now in her deprived, marginalized life in Mexico City. People from Tehuantepec are warm, whereas in Mexico City “Todo huele, todo se pudre, puras calles jediondas, puras mujeres

jediondas, todo es un mismo pantano” (303). Testifying from Mexico City, she focuses on the purifying, liberating qualities of the natural world of Tehuantepec, depicting her happiness and sense of self worth at once having had a home; at the same time, her loss of connection to Tehantepec, and her contradictory statements about homeland and patria, leave the reader wondering where her affiliations really lie.

Her later memories of adolescence, after having left Tehuantepec, evoke images of a young woman who regrets her unstable life, who is conscious of the vanishing connection to her land of origin, and who has begun to meditate on the fragmentation and dispersion of her family. In fact at fourteen she begins to tire of the vagabond life and oddly this nascent awareness of displacement causes her to turn against herself. It is as though the loss of a sense of homeland and origin weakens her, breaks down her immunity to others’ judgment and criticism. Internalizing the ugliness of her life, without any resources, any stable references or connection with a home or community, she begins to refer to herself as “perra,” and “arruinada” (79), and states that there is no point to this desperate, wandering lifestyle. She imagines a more acceptable and conventional life by evoking memories of her birth and early years in Tehuantepec, thus consoling herself. For the first time she expresses her longing to return home, pleading with her father: “¿Por qué no me dejaste allá donde estaba? Ahorita mismo quiero que me entregues a mi hermano vivo y me regreses a mi tierra” (78). Her attempt to connect with her home at a crucial point when she is a young woman trying to figure out who she is, is disrupted when she is just about to leave for Tehuantepec, but is denied passage for being underaged and female. According to her, the only alternative is to marry a soldier, an unfortunate occurrence that simply prolongs her migratory existence. Thus begins a destructive stage in Jesusa’s life in which she suffers at the hands of an abusive husband, in unfamiliar territory, wandering farther and farther from her land. The interruption of her return to Tehuantepec, combined with a marriage she dreaded from the start, nevertheless strengthens her determination to define herself through affiliation with a homeland, however distant and idealized.

The death of Jesusa’s husband, with whom she had had a turbulent relationship, begins a new and significant stage in the novel for she leaves the troops with other widows and heads Mexico City. Once again she intends to return to Tehantepec but is prevented from doing so when all her belongings are stolen. With nothing but the clothes on her back she is forced to stay in Mexico City. Stationary for the first time since childhood, amidst dirt and poverty and inequality, she becomes aware of the people and things around her, which in turn stimulate her into meditating on her position as a woman in this unalterable social structure:

Nomás sabía hablar dentro de mí, quedito me hablaba yo y las

ideas medaban vueltas adentro como pelotitas. Pensaba en el pasado, en todos los huizaches que atrevese, en lo que iba a ser de mí.... Nunca he pensado tanto como entonces; tanto que hasta me dolía la cabeza. (138)

In these dialogues “dentro de sí,” the environment, Jesusa’s actual physical surroundings, are the device that incites reflection. The citizens, the architecture, the garbage, are all recruited as participants in her self discovery.

Taylor’s theory on “the dialogical” is useful here in better understanding this process. He defines the importance of language of expression (dialogical as opposed to monological) and the role of exchanges with others (or, for my purposes here, other things). He states:

We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression. We learn these modes of expression through exchanges with others. People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own. Rather we are introduced to them through interaction with others—what George Herbert Mead called ‘significant others.’ (32)

Jesusa admits throughout the book that she does not relate well to people and so for her, in many cases, what awakens her and stimulates self-reflection, are the “non human” aspects of the city. “Subía y bajaba por la calle y por la misma calle me regresaba.... y así iba yo paso a paso, piense y piense puras tristezas” (138).

For Jesusa, dialogue, the need to converse in some form, and to exchange ideas, has always been essential to her existence. In various scenes throughout the book, she complains about the people in her life who refused, or who were incapable, of communicating with her. Her sister never spoke to her: “Petra me daba miedo por silencita” (32). And of her husband she remarks: “Mi marido tenía de amigos a todos los oficiales pero no platicaba conmigo” (96). Her stepmothers during her youth didn’t speak to her, and were bothered by the idea of conversation, a trait that greatly disturbed Jesusa: “La Señora Evarista no platicaba conmigo nada, nunca platicó” (35). Of another stepmother she states: “No me hablaba en todo el día” (45). “¿Para qué se ponía mi madrastra a platicar conmigo? Si ni con los grandes platicaba ella nada. Su quehacer y ya, cada quien su quehacer y nada de platicar cosas. Ninguno dice nada, Nadie tiene que andar diciendo nada” (49). Jesusa’s longing for personal and intelligent dialogue was discouraged at an early age, however we see her strength in her determination to learn and perceive and communicate; her desire to exchange ideas has always been essential to her survival and only increases when she arrives in Mexico City. The enlightenment she acquires, however, brings with it not only



the confession that she is a poor, single woman, but also the painful realization that many others judge her by these qualities alone.

The city promises opportunity for Jesusa, as it has for many people who leave the countryside for large urban centers. On the other hand she experiences extreme loneliness, chaos, filth, and an existence she admits is sometimes intolerable—far from the pueblo that, in her memory, abounds with the comforts of community and tradition. The extreme contrast of wealth and poverty she confronts in Mexico City intensifies her despair, constantly reminding her of “*esta chingadera de vida*” (148). With every step towards self-awareness, she observes the disdain directed towards the poor who live in irrevocable situations like hers; and her self-criticism only increases. She is so obviously influenced by the judgment and prejudices of those who dominate. When she sees Cardenas, whom she claims to have known many years earlier when he was a soldier in her father’s regiment, she says to herself: “*El no me reconoció porque los jefes no se pueden fijarse en las gentes y más cuando son pobres como yo*” (266). Or when she thinks about her relationship with a man from a higher social class than hers:

“*Era una persona más decente, más educada que yo. Pues ¿cómo? Su familia, los hermanos y las hermanas, ya le tenían lista una mujer de mejor clase. Ella no trabaja. Y de mí sí sabían que era una pobre fabricante. . . eso no les parecía*” (204).

In the city she is desperately conscious of and seems to fixate on her situation as a poor woman and is affected, more than ever, by what Taylor calls the “*misrecognition of others*” (25). In other words her attempt at self-discovery is discouraged by messages directed at her social class and gender, and her sometimes homeless existence. “*And so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves*” (25). The result can be destructive; the distorted self-image, according to Taylor, becomes a potent instrument of one’s own oppression. Jesusa is sensitive to acquaintances who exclude her, who “*se meten en altanerías*” (262). So she is left alone to contemplate her miserable life, without recourse, judging herself against the panorama of inequality, the projected messages of ineptitude and inferiority of her social class. She declares: “*Yo no era nada allí*” (135). “*Yo que no soy más que basura*” (307). “*Yo nunca he servido para nada*” (307).

The culmination of living in Mexico City and gaining this often debilitating knowledge that can also be seen as the device that forces the kind of contemplation that leads to self discovery, occurs when Jesusa, fleeing the police, joins a regiment of soldiers and travels to Oaxaca, the state in which she was born. While she is in a store buying provisions for the soldiers, the storekeeper innocently asks her where she is from. “*¿De dónde eres’?*” turns out to be a loaded question for Jesusa, alluding to issues of social class and race, with which

Jesusa has been struggling since her arrival in Mexico City. The dialogue with the shopkeeper provokes and agitates Jesusa, causing a significant crisis, and then to some extent a kind of reconciliation with her family history, allowing her to retrace her family's origin and reconstruct its identity, which we then learn is strongly tied to the land (*la tierra*) of Oaxaca. If the earlier references to Tehuantepec as homeland are idealized earlier in the novel, the Oaxaca she returns to is presented in a very concrete context: It is land her grandparents bought and worked, and which later caused a feud amongst her father and uncles, and ended in Jesusa's family's expulsion and then arrival in Tehuantepec.

If we return to the theory about the "significant other," we see that Jesusa needed an intermediary, a catalyst to facilitate self-discovery. Taylor points out: "Thus my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others" (34). This dialogue and later epiphany that occur in a dusty old town on her return to Oaxaca, relies on the exchange of words as well as other types of interaction—with the physical landscape of Oaxaca, for example, memories of traveling with her brother and father in the army, earlier peregrinations that confused her sense of self but ultimately defined her.

As the dialogue with the storekeeper proceeds, Jesusa's emotions fluctuate between the enthusiasm she feels in conjuring up memories, and the pain of self-reflection. In her response we see her wit and keen ability to make jokes with the storekeeper, while at the same she is quite aware now of the prejudices with which others judge her.

¿De dónde soy? Pues adivínele si tanto le importa?

Usted no habla como gente de allá arriba.

¿Dónde es arriba?

Por allá es arriba?

Y aquí, ¿qué es?

Pues aquí es abajo.

Ah, pues, entonces, yo soy de arriba, con permiso de usted. (217)

Jesusa's sensitivity here illustrates Taylor's statement that our identity can be formed or malformed through our contact with a significant other. (25) In the paragraphs that follow, Jesusa alternates between reflecting on her present situation, and on her own history, her lack of home, the early fragmentation of family structure, and her own ambiguous feelings about identity and homeland. She then responds to the shopkeeper: "Pues de plano no se de dónde soy" (217). Her ambiguity about land and origins, combined with the negative self-perception conjured by the question, throws Jesusa into a state of considerable consternation. "Al fin de cuentas, yo no tengo patria. Soy como los húngaros: de ninguna parte. No me siento mexicana ni roconozco a los mexicanos" (217). Feeling



marginalized and vulnerable, she employs self-denigrating language which, in Taylor's view, is simply society's contemptible, demeaning language mirrored back, working in full force. At the same time she has inverted this judgment and projects it back at society, refusing to recognize "a los mexicanos."

Her thoughts in this scene pass through different stages of self-criticism that are always associated with social class: "Si yo tuviera dinero y bienes, sería mexicana, pero como soy peor que la basura, pues no soy nada" (218). So she is nothing because she has no material goods, no social rank. She compares herself to the lowest forms of life: "Toda mi vida he sido el mismo microbio que ve" (218). And she continues to blame herself for the lifestyle into which she was basically forced at a young age: "Así soy, hija de la mala vida, acostumbrada a ir de un lado a otro. . . ." (238). She not only refers to herself as garbage, or worse than garbage sitting in a dump, but takes this simile one step further by describing herself as garbage that is blown into the air and tossed about and finally dispersed wherever the wind takes it—clearly alluding to the stigma of being homeless.

Still standing in the store, contemplating her existence, her history, her identity, she admits that during various times in her life she intended to "volver a su tierra" (218); but that she never accomplished this dream. In her struggle with identity, and in facing the class-driven insecurities that the storekeeper's questions evoke, she obfuscates the truth and wavers in her testimony: "Dónde más he sufrido es aquí en la capital. Aquí se me ha dificultado mucho la vividera. Pero no estoy triste, no. Al contrario, vivo alegre. Así es la vida, vivir alegre" (218); perhaps not too convincing for the reader, yet nonetheless an indication that she has begun the difficult process of coming to terms with her past. She projects an image of herself she deems acceptable in terms of what she believes people want to hear. "La chingadera de vida" is whimsically turned into "así es la vida, vivir alegre."

Nevertheless, after this agonizing process of self-evaluation and criticism, Jesusa manages to reconstruct bits of family history, history specifically related to the land of Oaxaca which she learns, with the help of the storekeeper, is her real birthplace. She pieces together the story of her grandfather's arrival to Mexico, his purchase of land and the ensuing hard labor to provide for his family, a family conflict involving brothers fighting for inheritance, and the flight of her family to Tehuantepec. Although at the beginning of this scene she seems frustrated and disconnected, toward the end her ability to record and contemplate her origin, permits some degree of catharsis; and the tone of the prose begins to change. She remembers a certain period during her childhood when harmony existed in her family. "en las noches, mi papa se ponía a platicar de las tierras, a recordar junto al fogón, y yo le oía, mientras volteaba las tortillas" (21). Her father, she recalls, told her to listen well to stories: "Mira, para que no comas



olvido" (224). In her recollections, then, she verifies that the process of contemplating one's own history and origin—listening and engaging with others—was extremely important to her father as well, emphasizing the connection between self-reflection, history, origin and homeland.

As a result of this dialogue and of the epiphany that follows, Jesusa finds consolation. We learn of her affiliation with the religious group: la Obra Espiritual which, on the one hand, alleviates her loneliness and gives her a greater sense of purpose; she learns to heal people and is even referred to as "la monja." On the other hand, however, this affiliation functions somewhat as an escape from her oppressive life by relying heavily on the belief in reincarnation: this less than comfortable life is not permanent, therefore we persevere, we bear it, we move on; The possibility for reinvention is uplifting: "Esta es la tercera vez que regreso a la tierra" Jesusa tells us in the opening sentence of the book. Coming to terms with the futility of poverty, and her marginalized existence, she concentrates on recalling her other lives and keeping in touch with the dead, an act which she herself can control, yet one which Gonzalez Lee refers to as "la patología de la pobreza" (134). Jesusa explains that in her anterior life, she was a queen who wore white clothes, a description that contrasts greatly with her constant references to homely, badly behaved, dark people with Indian blood like herself: "estas carnes indias como las mías" (227). Her negative perception about her own race, even after her dialogue with the storekeeper, persists, emphasizing the possibility that societies prejudice against Indian's, internalized and further distorted by Jesusa, has triumphed; it has become "the instrument of oppression" that Taylor talks about, affecting Jesusa's self perception to the point that it impedes any progress, even after catharsis and spiritual satisfaction.

In fact, in certain sections of the book, Jesusa obsesses over the color of her skin, a more notable physical feature and one on which people focus heavily, and judge others, according to Jesusa. When a man in Mexico City falls in love with her, she tells us that he was worth nothing, and to illustrate this she focused on his color: "horroso, " "pobrecito, " "negro, negro, negro, prieta yo y prieto él, pues vaya par de ajolotes. . . " (266). In the paragraph that immediately follows, she describes a woman who was albino "blanquita, blanquita..... con sus pestañas de nieve y su pelito de copos de algodón, bonita la niña" (266). Her distorted view that contrasts the "good" inherent in whiter-skinned people with the "bad" inherent in darker-skinned people, is reflected in her recollection of her earlier life as a queen in white whose life was "good," unlike her present life in which she is "a dog," "a microbe," "garbage" without even a dump in which to rest.

At the end of the book, though still given to moments of self-depreciation, Jesusa attains a somewhat harmonious state; indeed assisted by the storekeeper's question, she comes to terms with her identity and her history. She does

not, however, manage to combat most of the problems of urban poverty that inhibit her and hamper any chance of progress. She survived a vagabond existence, fought in the Revolution, and overcame many obstacles. This life is simply one of many and so, as she herself states, she will “continue following the procession.” (218).

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Jean Genet's "Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et foutus aux chiottes" ("What remained of a Rembrandt torn up into very even little pieces and chucked into the crapper") presents, as Jacques Derrida suggests, a theory of the equivalence or identity of opposites.<sup>1</sup> A plurality of opposing terms are mingled, confused, exchanged and doubled throughout the text, foremost of which is the opposition between self and other, the one who looks and the one looked at. Everything in this text is double. The text itself is double: published first in Italian as two separate texts, it is printed in French, both in *Tel Quel*, where it first appeared, and again in Genet's *Œuvres complètes*, as a single text comprised of two columns which look at and, if you will, read each other across the space which separates them.<sup>2</sup>

Genet's piece inaugurates the issue of *Tel Quel* in which it first appeared. Facing Genet's text, on the inside cover, is a short citation, chosen by the journal's editors, from Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which reads: "Nous opérons toujours avec un grand X que nous introduisons *Tel Quel* dans chaque formule" ("We are [...] operating all the time with a large unknown factor, which we are obliged to carry over into every new formula" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 35)). The journal's editors regularly selected passages containing the words "*Tel Quel*" as epigraphs to the various issues. One would imagine that the passage from Freud was selected more for the appearance of these words than for any organic relation to the text that it precedes. The juxtaposition of Freud and Genet, however, strikes me as felicitous. I, for my part, would have chosen a sentence from an essay which, according to James Strachey, was written contemporaneously with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* - "Das Unheimliche" ("The Uncanny") - a sentence that summarizes the peculiar nature of the supposed opposites, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*: "*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*."<sup>3</sup>

I will return to Freud's conception of the strangeness of the familiar, the *Unheimlichkeit* of the *Heimliche*. Let us begin, however, by looking at Genet's "Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt." The left-hand column describes an event that Genet experiences when, seated across from a voyager in a train car, he has the revelation that he is identical to this man. It is not a question here of resemblance, but, rather, of absolute identity and equivalence. And this identity includes all men, a point on which Genet insists repeatedly in various forms: "any man *is worth* any other" (21/78); there is "a kind of identity common to all men" (22/78); "any man is identical to any other" (24/81); "every man *is* every other man" (26/84), etc.



The right-hand column presents a meditation on Rembrandt's portraits. The remarkable thing about these portraits, according to Genet, is their depersonalization of the model: "the portraits of Rembrandt refer to nobody identifiable" (26/84, translation modified). The characteristic trait of these portraits - their particularity - is precisely their lack of character traits and the absence of any particularity vis-à-vis the models. A general equivalence of sorts is established among the models because of their lack of specificity. The portraits retain nothing particular or individual: they are images which refer to no distinguishable models.

The exception to this dissemblance is the self-portraits of Rembrandt. "Only Rembrandt himself," Genet says, "perhaps because of the acuity of his gaze contemplating his image - retained some modicum of individuality" (27/85, translation modified). There is something quite strange in the expression "Rembrandt himself." This expression appears several times in the text, but to whom does it refer? Is this Rembrandt the painter or Rembrandt painted, Rembrandt the portraitist or a portrait of him? Concerning the title of Genet's text, "Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt," does "a Rembrandt" refer to a work of Rembrandt among others, perhaps one of his self-portraits, or to the painter of these works? And, if it refers to the latter, why does Genet say "a" Rembrandt, as if there were several?

In the sentence quoted above, "Only Rembrandt himself - perhaps because of the acuity of his gaze contemplating his image - retained some modicum of individuality," there is a possible explanation for the self-resemblance of the self-portraits of Rembrandt: it is perhaps because of "the acuity of his gaze contemplating his image": not Rembrandt who looks at himself, but the acuity of his gaze which contemplates his image. This explanation refers to the so-called "narcissism" of the young Rembrandt, which Genet describes as a "simulated search for self [*simulée quête de soi*]" : "He loves himself, fancies himself, so young and already in the mirror!" (24/81, translation modified). Who is Rembrandt "himself" in this self-admiration? Where is he? In front of the mirror or in the mirror? Is he the one looking or the one looked at? Rembrandt doubles himself in the mirror, before the mirror. The young Rembrandt's search for self produces, rather, a multiplication of self.

The simulacrum is everywhere in this scene. The search itself is a simulation. There is also, in the expression "*quête de soi*," which we have translated as "search for self," the possibility of a double genitive. It reads first of all as an objective genitive, but the possibility remains, in French, that it is the self which searches - not only a search *for* self, but a search *of* self: a search, in other words, for self undertaken by the self. Finally, the word "*soi*," here rendered as "self," can have a multiplicity of possible referents, including: (1) a determined subject, (2) an undetermined subject, and (3) all subjects, determined or not.

This multiplication of *soi*, in all senses of the term, is precisely what the left-hand column describes, though there is, in this case, no search involved. In this column, a narrator - let us call him Genet - is seated in a train compartment, as oblivious to himself as he is to the traveller seated across from him, when,

“inadvertently and in the oblivion of [him]self,” (22/79) he sees his own look in the look of the other. A perfect mimesis or mirroring occurs in their exchanged gaze. What Genet sees is not the look of another, but his own look, reflected in a mirror. As he says: “His gaze was not that of someone else: it was my own gaze that I was meeting [*rencontrait*] in a mirror.” (22/79)

The text continues:

What I was feeling at the time I can only translate in the following terms: I flowed [*je m'écoulais*] out of my body, and through my eyes, into that of the traveller *at the same time that the traveller flowed into mine.* (22-23/79)

Genet is no longer distinguishable from the voyager. They exchange a look and, through their eyes, exchange bodies. They are of the same body. They mingle and merge together with such blending that they efface and can no longer find the distance that separated them.

If, however, one reads the text literally, their bodies do not change places. It is, rather, “I” that flows into the voyager’s body, and he that flows Genet’s. The bodies stay where they are. Could this I-which-is-irreducible-to-the-body be the soul - the soul which, according to Freud, was probably “the first ‘double’ of the body” (247/235)? Is it their souls which mingle and merge?

Genet asks himself the question, “What was it that then that flowed out of my body,” to which he responds, “I fl... [*je m'éc...*].” (23/80, original ellipsis) Genet begins to answer to his question - begins to say, “I flowed [*je m'écoulais*]” - but cuts himself off. However, as Hélène Cixous points out, the partial response offered here, “*je m'éc...*,” suggests, through the homophone “*mec*” (a slang term for a “man,” roughly equivalent to “guy” in English), an important aspect of the exchange: the encounter on the train is strictly masculine. It is an exchange between two *mecs*, who enter each other, who flow into one another.<sup>4</sup>

This union produces, as we have seen, the revelation that “any man is worth another.” The French text reads, “*tout homme en vaut un autre.*” Cixous relates this verb, “*vaut*” (is worth) - a homonym of the noun “*veau*” (calf) -, to the description, in the right-hand column, of the effect that Rembrandt’s latter portraits have on the viewer: “our look becomes heavy, slightly bovine” (21/77, translation modified). Cixous suggests that if one returns back to the left-hand column, this bovine metaphor becomes “the staring but not expressionless eyes of the bodyless heads of sheep, stacked in pyramids” that Genet saw at the Halles of Paris (25/83). This vacant - but not expressionless - look in the mutton heads at the marketplace is the image to which Genet has recourse in order to describe his revelation of the equivalence of all men - a revelation which can be summarized in the form: *tout homme en vaut un autre comme tout veau en vaut un autre* (any man is worth another just as any calf is worth another).

We have, in sum, an exclusively masculine encounter, in which two men, or, if one prefers, two bovines, see each other as absolutely exchangeable. There are no women in the text. Perhaps it would behoove us to put the French word for encounter (*une rencontre*) into the masculine, and say that it is a question here of *un rencontre*. This word, *un rencontre* - which is the same word as



*une rencontre*, with the difference of gender -, means an animal's head seen from the front. And it is precisely this that Genet sees in his encounter with the voyager, this *tête de veau qui en vaut toute autre*.

But let us pick up the narrative where we left off:

The train continued to pass indifferently through French villages. Night was falling. The idea of spending these twilight moments, these moments of complicity, with this partner made me extremely uncomfortable. (23/80, translation modified)

The final words of this passage, "made me extremely uncomfortable," are a translation of "*me gênait beaucoup*." The narrator is, as the French idiom would have it, *vachement gêné*. He feels like a cow, a bit bovine, radically equivalent to any other piece of meat. But could one also read, in the imperfect homonym of the author's name, a denial on Genet's part of this negation of self? Could one read, in other words, this as an affirmation to the effect: "I am not just anybody, identical and equivalent to all men. I am *gêné*"? Perhaps what distinguishes him from others is precisely his sentiment of *gêne*. Or does he see, on the contrary, all men as so many Jean Genets? Are there an infinity of *gens gênés*?

In any case, this sentiment of *gêne* remains. Genet *reste gêné*. What remains of his encounter in the train car is a sentiment of *gêne*, accompanied by a profound sadness, which leads eventually to a methodical disintegration of everything Genet hitherto held dear, and especially the splendors of the flesh: "it was impossible," he says, "for me to see the world as I had"; "I remained sickened and disgusted by my discovery, but," he continues, "I had a premonition that within a short time it would compel me to make some serious changes, which I rather suspected would be renunciations" (27/85-86, translation modified). These renunciations are clearly described at the end of the text: "Eroticism and its attendant furies seemed denied me, once and for all" (30/89). Genet, in sum, realizing that he is every man, is unable to love any man.

Let us leave, for the moment, these *gens gênés* and pass to another encounter in another train, which doubles, in certain ways, the one described above:

I was sitting alone in my *wagon-lit* compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet, which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I realized at once to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass on the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance. (270/248)

This passage is from a note to "The Uncanny" in which Freud tries to demonstrate that the uncanniness of the double belongs to material reality. One finds many of the same motifs in the two texts: the train car, the elderly man (Genet



and his double were in their fifties), the mirror; even Genet's *chiottes* appear in Freud's much more polite term, "washing-cabinet" (*Toilette*). But one finds, in particular, the sentiment of *gêne*: the displeasure that Freud experiences in seeing his double. The German word is *mißfallen*, which implies nothing *unheimlich*, and Freud says as much in the sentence which follows:

Instead [...] of being *frightened* by our "doubles," both Mach and I [in this note, Freud recounts two analogous adventures of Ernst Mach] simply failed to recognize them as such. Is it not possible, though, that our dislike of them was a vestigial trace [*ein Rest*] of the archaic reaction which feels the "double" to be something uncanny? (270/248)

What is so uncanny about the image of the double? Why is that which so familiar, so *heimlich*, at the same time so strangely worrisome, so *unheimlich*? According to Freud's analysis, the image of the double harks back to an archaic conception of the world in which the distinction between self and other does not yet exist. And it is this preliminary phase - the stage of primary Narcissism - which returns in the image of the double. One sees that which is most familiar - oneself - as unfamiliar, strange, other. What comes back to us in the image of the double is ourselves as another. One sees oneself "other."

I would suggest that Genet's encounter with his double can be read as the mirror image of Freud's, which is to say that is the same encounter, but *in reverse*. The two experiences are inverses of each other for at least two reasons: First, in Freud, the vision of oneself outside oneself refers to a previous moment when "I" was not yet distinguished from the other; in Genet, this vision happens only once, but it remains with him forever. Or, if you will, in Freud's case it is a question of the *reste qui gêne*; in Genet it is the *gêne qui reste*. Secondly, in Genet's case, he sees himself, as if in a mirror, in the look of another; in Freud's case, he mistakes his mirror image for another. Whereas Genet's experience is what I would call a homo-vision of another, Freud's is a hetero-vision of himself.

In guise of a conclusion, I wish to briefly suggest several ways in which Freud's hetero-vision and Genet's homo-vision relate their respective hetero- and homo-erotic "visions" of the world. Freud calls self-love "narcissism," after the child-god Narcissus who falls in love with his reflection. Homosexuals, or "inverts," as Freud calls them, are "narcissists": they are people who "are plainly seeking *themselves* as love-object" ("Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" 155; "On Narcissism: An Introduction" 88). This diagnosis is the one which Genet invokes to describe the young Rembrandt. Genet uses the very term "narcissism" to describe the young painter who "loves himself, fancies himself, so young and already in the mirror." But this diagnosis does not describe Genet's own sexual inclinations.

Let us conclude by comparing two parables. Freud begins his famous book on the theory of sexuality with the parable that "the original human beings were cut up into two halves" ("Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie" 30; "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" 136). These beings were double in every way: they had four hands and feet, and two sets of genitals - male and female.

Erotic love is, then, according to this parable, the attempt to reunite this divided being. Genet offers a similar parable in “Ce qui est resté d’un Rembrandt”: “There exists,” he says, “and has only existed, but one single man in the world” (26/84). Men are but “a fragmentary appearance of a single being” (30/90). It is as if there were only one being - a man - that had been divided, fragmented, torn up into very even little pieces, of which individual men retain the appearance. But, in contradistinction to Freud, the reuniting of this original being is by no means, in Genet’s case, constitutive of the erotic quest. On the contrary, Genet’s revelation that “any man is every other man, and that includes me” (30-31/90) ruins the possibility of eroticism. In Genet’s eyes, the erotic quest “is possible only when one recognizes the individuality of every being, when that individuality is irreducible and the physical form attests to it and only it”(30/89-90). This vision of Genet, his old vision of the world, was annihilated, torn up and chucked into the crapper. What Freud thinks excites homo-eroticism is precisely what ruins it for Genet: the image of oneself, one’s double. Homo-eroticism is, for Genet, precisely not a love of the same, but a love of difference. It is a hommo-eroticism, as Luce Irigaray might say, without being a homo-eroticism: a love of men, not a love of the same. How precisely this *other* ho(m)mo-eroticism inverts the Freudian notion of “inversion” is a question that I will leave in suspense.

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<sup>1</sup>See Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (52 and *passim* ) or Leavey and Rand’s English translation (43 and *passim*).

<sup>2</sup>All page references to this text will be to the *Œuvres complètes* version and, unless otherwise indicated, to Seaver’s English translation, which I will incorporate, in this order, in my essay, enclosed in parentheses, following the citation to which they refer. All modifications of the Seaver translation are my own.

<sup>3</sup> All subsequent page references to this essay will be to these two texts, in this order, enclosed in parentheses, following the citation to which they refer.

<sup>4</sup>Cixous’s remarks were made in her seminar, “Poétique de la différence sexuelle,” Collège de philosophie/Université de Paris VIII, 1995-96.

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SIGNIFICATION AS PARALLEL PRESENTATION IN THE POETRY OF ARTHUR RIMBAUD  
AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY PAINTING



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Long gone are the days when the poem professed to reflect reality, or the painting claimed to mirror the external world. Today we read the work of art, be it a poem, a painting, sculpture or song, as a dynamic act of signification, a presentation, a theatrical flourish. Two poems by Arthur Rimbaud, "Le Dormeur du val" and "Sensation," and Pablo Picasso's painting *Le Poète* [fig. 1], clearly demonstrate the dynamic of presentation rather than representation. The visionary nature of these works signals a departure from the pre-Romantic idea of art as a reflection, or even reproduction of the external world. Instead, autonomous, artistic realities speak a self-referential language. Readers and viewers of these verbal and visual constructions experience them through time as they mentally incorporate parts into dynamic wholes.

Poems and paintings announce themselves and present their contents according to parallel modes of signification. Since both types of expression function as aesthetic signs, they can be read in terms of self-referential languages. Each poem and each painting depends upon a greater language system, but each individual work determines its own parts in context. The way poems and paintings signify sense relates to and comments upon the way human beings perceive both external and artistic realities. The primary consideration in comparing these two art forms involves a look at their different mediums.

Verbal art finds its medium in the web of linguistic significance. The material of a painting, in contrast, is paint. Unlike a word out of textual context, the blue paint in the pot does not evolve, denote, or even function as a sign until the moment one smears a smudge on the canvas. Then, according to its placement within context, the blue paint can signify the sky above, the sea below, or even an eye, in relation to other details of the face. Signification of the whole (and of each element) depends upon the combination and contiguity of its parts. In fact, we are so accomplished at this sort of reading in context, that we easily accept such ambiguous signs as that of Carlos Mérida's *Paisaje* (ca. 1915) [fig. 2], in which the central blue section could read house, shadow or body of water. Just like a word in language, the spot of blue has no "meaning" in itself. The poet may apply a term to an object, in an act of denotation, but the referent remains always absent from the page itself. Like the word "eye," the blue spot can announce the concept eye, but can never carry the full weight of its presence on the canvas.

We might also speak in terms of the form or shape of a line or patch of color. Like colors themselves, volumes and lines can also metaphorically function as place holders in a Saussurean system of signification. In a drawing by

Federico García Lorca titled *Self-Portrait in New York* (1932) [fig. 3], the shape of an ellipse reads “eye” in relation to an oval that reads face, but reads “leaf” in relation to other parts of the plant on the left. Due to a proportional relation to objects in external reality, and to our commonly held conventions of illusion, we read moon tears on the face of the poet. Similarly, in Picasso’s *Le Poète* (1912), the curve that points to the concept “cheek” does so in negative relation to the curve that suggests nostril and the to the one that suggests ear lobe. The cheek curve would no longer signify in that way if placed outside the frame of the canvas.

Both poems and paintings speak an auto-referential language, but what do they say? These sonnets and scribbles no longer profess to mirror reality. In fact, they can be read as refutations of a Kantian, static, knowable world and of the traditional representation of that world, or mimesis. The term mimesis, Greek for “imitation,” comes from the humanist Aristotelian theory of imitation of reality and action. Gerard Genette warns that mimesis is simply the representation of language. He would deny that any reality, subjective or objective, can be presented through language, for language only writes itself. We can consider both the language of literature and of painting in this regard. The most highly mimetic (and thus illusory) works of art, those we consider less “difficult,” such as Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* (late 1490’s) [fig.4], claim the dubious label “realistic.” To employ Genette’s terminology, such works are most subject to the Cratylitic fallacy of assuming actual presence of an object rather than its absence. The more “difficult” the work, the more enigmatic its private language, as the critic George Steiner explains, the deeper the reader’s or viewer’s involvement must be. He or she beholds an unfamiliar world.

The hypothetical nature of these artistic projections reminds us of Rimbaud the self-styled visionary. The poet claimed that the things he saw with the mind’s eye were as real as phenomena perceived with the other senses. He writes in *Une Saison en Enfer*, “Je voyais très franchement une mosquée à la place d’une usine, une école de tambours faite par les anges, des calèches sur les routes du ciel, un salon au fond d’un lac” (216). This suggests that Rimbaud would find absurd the notion of a commonly experienced external reality, let alone its representation.

The philosopher Susanne Langer returns to the seventeenth-century generative idea of the bifurcation of nature into an inner and outer world, in order to ground her theory of signification. Rejecting the empirical study of external “reality” in terms of quantifiable entities, Langer develops a psychological approach. External phenomena available to our perceptions, she considers as concepts in the abstract, mathematical sense, rather than as concrete data. The mind does not simply record and combine sense data, but symbolizes it. The mind denotes sense impressions in the form of symbols and re-expresses or re-presents them in the form of signs (or language) (99). Whereas the symbol refers to things in absentia, the sign, as the very first manifestation of mind, announces and presents the concept.



This basic human act of symbolic transformation Langer calls the “parent stock” of both verbal and non-verbal formulation. Once again, we find a convergence of the seemingly diverse arts. As the philosopher suggests, the mode of handling problems assigns them to an age (3). Paintings and poems in the early twentieth century tend to ask the questions, “How do human beings perceive external reality?” and “How do they express new artistic realities in terms of signs?” Langer’s emphasis falls on the activity of the human mind. The Czech Structuralist Jan Mukarovsky, however, concentrates on the work of art itself as a dynamic system of signification.

Mukarovsky explains how the artistic sign functions in both literature and the visual arts. Mukarovsky’s aesthetic function, which dominates poetic language, operates in violent opposition to the standard literary language of communication. When I speak, I speak to you, and hope you understand me. I am using “practical” language. Aesthetic language, calling attention to itself as a new reality, exactly counteracts a practical orientation towards communication. Since the domination of the aesthetic function is never exclusive, we witness a constant struggle and tension between self-orientation and communication. This conflict energizes the artistic expression or presentation. Therefore, art sometimes strikes us as difficult: communication is not clear.

A look at paintings clearly illustrates Mukarovsky’s idea of “contexture,” or the total, dynamic structure of the work of art. Unlike a poem, the painting presents its entire content simultaneously. However, the unpuzzling we just did, in making some sense of the visual works above, involved our choice in plotting a personal path through the work’s contexture. This process, complicated by the work’s difficulty, drags a time element onto the once still canvas. In a similar fashion, the reader takes in a poem in all its intricacy. The work exists in its reading. Were Mukarovsky to comment on a poem, he would analyze it in terms of poetics and literariness, both products of the aesthetic function. He would also consider aural aspects such as the tone of voice of the reader, the speed of his or her recitation, even the force of exhalation. The interrelation of all these linguistic and performative details constitutes the contexture of the poem. The linear process involved in taking in aspects of a work of art, or even the totality of an unfamiliar living room, has long been acknowledged in the art world.

The Cubists Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger let Leonardo da Vinci speak “in defense of Cubism.” Here, the Renaissance painter describes the syntagmatic process of perception. Mukarovsky could well have called on him also, to speak in defense of “unfolding contexture.” On the subject of reading, Leonardo writes:

We know well, that the sight, by rapid observations, discovers in one point an infinity of forms: nevertheless it comprehends only one thing at a time. Suppose, reader, that you were to see the whole of this written page at one glance, and were imme-

diately to judge that it is full of different letters; you do not at the same moment know what letters they are, nor what they would say. You must go from one word to another and from line to line if you wish to attain a knowledge of these letters, as you must climb step by step to reach the top of a building, or you will never reach the top (52).

Rimbaud's poem, "Le Dormeur du Val" provides an example of poetic "contexture" that reveals itself through the syntagmatic or linear reading process.<sup>1</sup>

"Le Dormeur du val" begins with lush and lively nature: "C'est un trou de verdure où chante une rivière," but ends with a more violent image of penetration, the shocking revelation of death by gunshot. The predominant hue has evolved from green to its contrary, red. On first reading, none of the words, "Pâle," "froid," "Tranquille," "souriant," nor the images (la) "bouche ouverte," "un enfant malade," nor the insistence on fatigue demands special attention. However, once the reader experiences the surprise of the terminal line, the implication of each of these preceding words and images turns grotesque. The young man no longer sleeps like a child, but rather grimaces like a cadaver. The lexical constellation of fairly neutral words now glows as a morbid skeleton. The associative reverberations between these words throws a ghastly light upon the poem. Therefore, one cannot comprehend the sense of a single word until the moment in which one assimilates the entire poem, including sound aspects and semantic units. This process clearly relates to that of "reading a painting" discussed earlier.

In "Le Dormeur du Val," aspects such as the sonnet form, the assonance of the "u" sound of the first line, the near symmetry of "Souriant comme / Sourirait," and the ironically deadpan tone of the final line make us recognize the work as poetry. Commanding our consideration as readers, such artful components insist upon the poem's literariness or aesthetic function. Art calls attention to itself *as art*. This dynamic revitalizes language, on all its levels, and invigorates the visual theater as well. The Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky writes, "Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*." He continues, "Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important" (12). Such ideas enjoyed an enormous vogue in European intellectual circles where poets and painters met.

In an Expressionist, Impressionist, or Cubist painting, radically new modes of presentation replace conventional techniques of illusion. Learning the new "language" of late nineteenth and early twentieth century poetry challenges those of us fed on photography and more traditional illusions of reality. Numerous critics agree that the development of photography at the turn of the century took over the task of Realism or mimesis, freeing the other visual arts for revolutionary experimentation.

Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece *The Last Supper*, in contrast to more modern works, exemplifies the high Renaissance "plane style" of painting. Receding planes signify depth in a manner at variance with actual human visual



perception. A moment's consideration of the way the human eye sees, reminds us that we have before us not a "mirror held up to life" but another convention of visual illusion. The eye focuses on quite a limited portion of any given scene. Like Leonardo's reader, our eyes wander around the external environment, fragmentarily taking in sense data. As Langer explains, these sense data seem like facts, but actually change constantly. To treat them objectively is to mistake their inherently dynamic quality. Just as the Russian Formalists Jurij Tynjanov and Roman Jakobson repudiate the illusion of pure synchronism in language, so would Langer reject the notion of a precise time-slice of experienced reality. Although scientific study of language demands sturdy theoretical platforms, bracketing a slice of *la langue*, or even *la parole* forever from its evolving, historical, cultural context is impossible. Even the synchronic, argue Tynjanov and Jakobson, tends towards innovation (79).

Picasso's painting *Le Poète*, simply provides us with a revolutionary idea of how the human eye takes in the world, and how painters can present such experience in terms of signs. The artist bragged that after 1905 he had no use for a physical model, thus emphasizing the conceptual nature of his art. In the same way we can move down Leonardo's table, naming the Apostles, so can we move about this nearly monochromatic painting, identifying a possible ear lobe, cheek, or mustache with its referent. Just as Rimbaud gives us a functioning portion of language, so does Picasso limit his palette to a narrow range of earth tones and shapes. This painting privileges different aspects of visual experience; it suggests the fragmentary aspect of vision, multiple point perspective through time, and a sense of movement. In contrast to the transparency of Leonardo's window-like work, this self-referential, hermetic painting asserts itself as art, the qualities of its aesthetic function thrown into relief. Like one of Rimbaud's poems, this artistic sign presents an alternate, aesthetic reality that does not belong to the artist, but to art itself.

Examination of the more subtle impact of an individual word on the dynamic of Rimbaud's entire *œuvre* yields an example of the deformative power of aesthetic language over the practical language of communication. Flipping through the complete, published, poetic works of Rimbaud, one encounters numerous instances of the word "bleu" or "blue." Think of the sense of these expressions out of context: "Le ciel bleu" "un fin nuage bleu," "des coussins bleus," "le frais cresson bleu" "un tout petit chiffon / D'azur sombre" "ce bleu qui cerne / Ton gran œil noir." One can easily imagine all these images, these absent, denoted objects, without reading the rest of each poem. Continue reading: "le bon matin bleu," "Venus sœur de l'azur," "les azurs verts," and we have reached the unmistakable realm of poetry. But what does one do with "Bleu laidéron!" an "apothéose / Bleu," or a vowel just as blue as an "O?" The visual images in our heads become far less precise.

Mukarovsky would say that each word is static, in the immediate sense,



but that it becomes dynamic in its syntactic context. This inventory of indigo traces a progression from language that could double as a practical, communicative idiom, to that which could only be called aesthetic language. While I might urge you to take in the blue sky above, or to toss me a blue cushion, the more figurative instances of blue, the “blue morning,” for example, make us stop short and look again. Such linguistic deformation calls attention to itself as art. With every addition to our tally, the vagaries of our associations increase. Whatever variety of hue the poet presents expands infinitely in our minds. Langer takes this phenomenon as further evidence that the mind is no motor, computing sense data in the form of external facts, but rather a mental force, transforming input into symbolized thought.

Spending a few more minutes with *Le Poète*, we understand that the subject or content is simply the face of a man. The form however, has been rendered complex by a foregrounding of the aesthetic language of the painting. We cannot read this painting instantly, but our involvement in the work enriches our experience of it. In a similar fashion, the young man of “Le Dormeur du val” is not what he, at first, appears to be. The subject of Picasso’s painting, like these last, mysterious examples of “bleu,” is de-automatized. The words have been employed in such an unexpected way that the reader has to work more than usual in order to determine a sense.

Herein lies the great value of the work of art for both Mukarovsky and the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky. Since our perceptions become “automatic” through habit, the “defamiliarized” art work forces us to notice, thereby revitalizing “language” in its many forms and our human experience as well. By the process of *ostranenie* or “making strange” explains Shklovsky, the artist lays bare the techniques that distinguish the work’s “literary” quality. Mukarovsky emphasizes the transcendent nature of aesthetic language, and its value to society: “Language, operating outside of literature, is the most important system of signs, the cement of human coexistence and regulates man’s attitude toward both reality and society” (10). Thus critics applaud the hermeticism of early twentieth century poetry and painting on the almost moral ground of its contribution to human vitality and well-being.

In a similar vein, the critic Aimée Israel-Pelletier cites many scholars who have attacked notions of reference and coherence in Rimbaud’s poetry. Since the 1880’s, critics have used certain poems from *Les Illuminations*, “Voyelles,” and “Le Bateau Ivre,” to support the notion that, “poetry must seek to free language and art from the vulgar task of communicating its intentions to a general audience.” Elitism aside, this cry calls for a release from the idea of art as representation. Jean-Louis Baudry explains that to “decode” a meaning in the work is to throw out the radical nature of the Rimbaudian poetic. Elaborating on Baudry’s ideas, Tzvetan Todorov claims that *Les Illuminations* do not function in a “representational” manner, but rather in a “presentational” manner. Leo

Bersani takes this idea even further when he says that the ideal expression of Rimbaud would be without reference, nor relation, and devoid of attitude or tone (Israel-Pelletier 49). Here we note a radical move towards abstraction — away from any sort of acknowledgment of mimesis or equality between external reality and the work of art — within the criticism itself of Rimbaud's *œuvre*. One poem in particular provides an example of the presentational dynamic.

Rimbaud's poem "Sensation" asserts itself with great theatricality. Due to the theme announced by the title, its claim as art stands far from the idea of mirroring external reality. It rather alludes to external phenomena, as virtual sense data, without claiming a coincident, historical presence. The foregrounded aesthetic qualities operate so plainly that its literariness shines intensely. Written in the future lyric tense, the poem literally functions as a proposition. As Langer explains, until terms are built into propositions, by being incorporated into discourse, they assert nothing. A proposition simply pictures a structure, and this picture is a sign, not a duplicate of what it represents. All that this consequent image, poem or picture, shares with reality is a proportion of parts (66). "That which all adequate conceptions of an object must have in common," she writes, "is the concept of the object" (71). We have returned to Shklovsky's focus on the mode of expression (here a proposition of individual experience) rather than the object itself, the referent of the poem as sign.

The poet alludes to external reality as virtual sense data, without claiming a coincident, historical presence for his strange, constructed world. The syntax of "Sensation" is deformed from the standard for communication to such a degree that one would not confuse this poem with a practical, conversational utterance. Language contorts on the page as Picasso's *Poète* dissolves on the canvas. Attention to sound weaves a sonorous web. With the repetition of terminal "-é /- ai / -er" sounds, ten times in the first quatrain, even the pattern of phonemes exerts a musical semantic. The quantity of internal and end rhymes creates a frenzy of sound.

Throughout the poem, hypotactic asyndeton begs the reader to step lightly in his or her quest for sense. Rimbaud capitalizes on such multivalent connotation as that of the word "menue." "Menue" denotes both the fine, diminutive quality of the grass, and reiterates, figuratively, the central action of the poem, tripping or mincing along in a carefree fashion. As though to emphasize the mind's transformative role in the experience of sensation, Rimbaud allows the speaker's "tête" to rend the near identical aural repetition of "ma tête nue." The close reader can imagine the speaker's grassy-haired head breaking through the poetic line.

Triplicate rhymes within the first two Alexandrains expand the lines past their modest dimensions. By the seventh line, the poet has added a surprising second caesura. Sense resonates with the expansion of ideation: "Et j'irai loin, *bien loin, comme un bohémien,*" (my italics) in which words tumble over themselves in an effort to modify the concept of distance. Like Picasso's *Poète*,



who shatters conventional notions of illusion, Rimbaud's voice explodes traditional formal poetry, as he develops his revolutionary verse style. Perhaps the so-called prose poetry of *Une Saison en Enfer* and *Les Illuminations* constitutes the natural extension of this innovative process. The syntactic formation of negation, comparison, and repetition of entire words, "loin," "comme," creates a pattern of similitude, providing an artistic integrity.

We are reminded again of the necessary transparency of the words themselves. As Langer explains with humor, words are not peaches, for if they were, they would be too distracting. We would be too caught up in the peachiness of them to pay attention to the expression itself (75). Mukarovsky and Shklovsky allude to just this peachiness in discussing foregrounded aesthetic language or defamiliarization. The Spanish critic José Ortega y Gasset employs the metaphor of a window overlooking a flower garden to describe the dynamic of early twentieth-century painting. The content or reality-based aspect of the work, he likens to the garden itself, seen through the window. However, if the viewer arrests his or her focal depth at the window pane (or the aesthetic essence), the garden appears as blurry patches of color pasted on the pane itself. If a word such as "bleu" catches our attention, it is only to slow us down and set us off on the path to the aesthetic quality of the art work. Ortega explains, "not many people are capable of adjusting their perceptive apparatus to the pane and the transparency that is the work of art. Instead they look right through it and revel in the human reality with which the work deals" (11). The critic Michael Riffaterre sees the text not as a window, but as a lens: "the text multiplies details and continually shifts its focus to achieve an acceptable likeness to reality, since reality is normally complex. Mimesis is thus variation and multiplicity" (2), rather than the still, clear mirror.

Rimbaud's "Sensation," a fascinating projection, like "Le Dormeur du val" and *Le Poète*, cannot be attributed to the external world, for it is only a sign. Here, we seek not an origin of the subject (in the external world) but we encounter a form of expression, a symbolization of human experience. The human, unconscious appreciation of form, Langer explains, suggests the primitive root of all abstraction (83-85). Reading paintings allows us to experience new, artistic realities, just as poems present images to our mind's eye. If a poem literally lurks within the painting, can we find the painting within the poem?<sup>2</sup>

### Appendix 1

Le Dormeur du val

C'est un trou de verdure où chante une rivière  
Accrochant follement aux herbes des haillons



D'argent; où le soleil, de la montagne fière,  
Luit: c'est un petit val qui mousse de rayons.

Un soldat jeune, bouche ouverte, tête nue,  
Et la nuque baignant dans le frais cresson bleu,  
Dort; il est étendu dans l'herbe, sous la nue,  
Pâle dans son lit vert où la lumière pleut.

Les pieds dans les glaïeuls, il dort. Souriant comme  
Sourirait un enfant malade, il fait un somme:  
Nature, berce-le chaudement: il a froid.

Les parfums ne font pas frissonner sa narine;  
Il dort dans le soleil, la main sur sa poitrine  
Tranquille. Il a deux trous rouges au côté droit.

Octobre 1870

## Appendix 2

### Sensation

Par les soirs bleus d'été, j'irai dans les sentiers,  
Picoté par les blés, fouler l'herbe menue:  
Rêveur, j'en sentirai la fraîcheur à mes pieds.  
Je laisserai le vent baigner ma tête nue.

Je ne parlerai pas, je ne penserai rien:  
Mais l'amour infini me montera dans l'âme,  
Et j'irai loin, bien loin, comme un bohémien,  
Par la Nature, - heureux comme avec une femme.

Mars 1970

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### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>This interpretation by Mukarovsky constitutes a striking parallel to that of Michael Riffaterre's "second reading" published forty-four years later in *Semiotics of Poetry*, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>A question raised in conversation with the poet and critic William Harmon, February, 1997.

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Fig. 1: **Pablo Picasso, Le Poete. 1912** (accession nr. G 1967.14)

Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cm

Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum

© 1997 estate of Pablo Picasso / Artist's Rights Society (ARS), New York



Fig. 2: **Carlos, Merida, Paisaje. ca. 1915** (accession nr. G 1967.14)

Oil on canvas, 39 x 46.5 cm. Collection of Rolando Keller

Photo: Angela Caparoso





Fig.3: **Federico Garcia Lorca, “Perspectiva urbana con autorretrato”**  
**/ Self-Portrait in New York, 1929-1932**

© 1997 Artist’s Rights Society (ARS), New York / VEGAP, Madrid

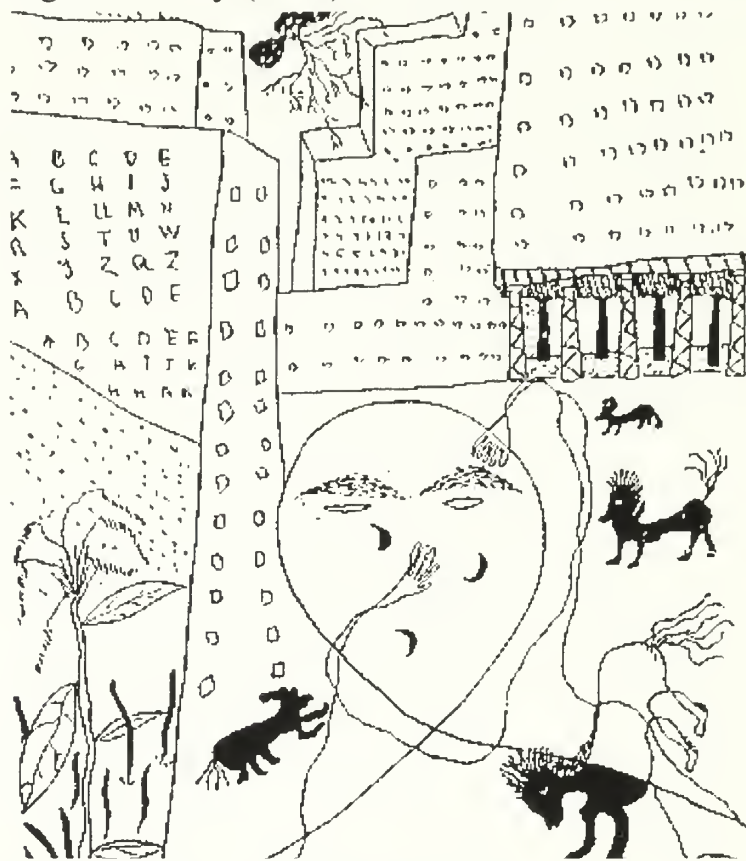
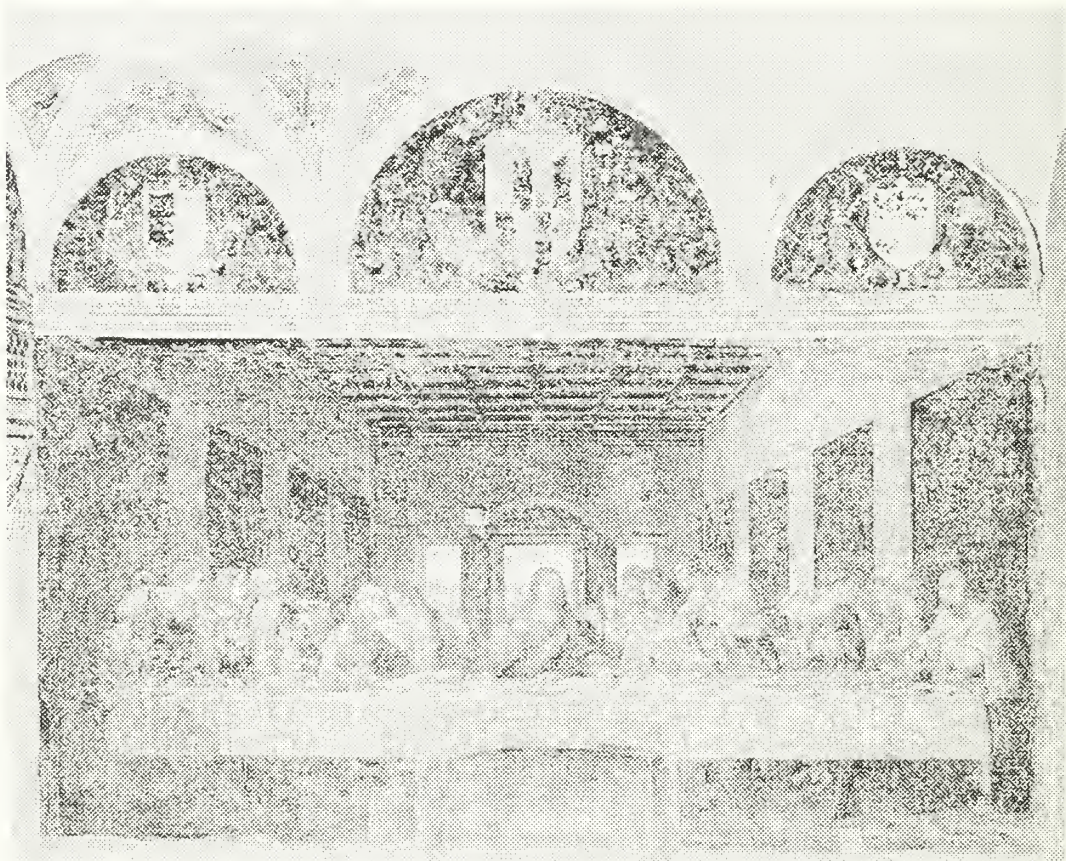


Fig. 4: **Leonardo da Vinci, the Last Supper, 1495-98**

Wall-painting in oil tempera, 460 x 880 cm. Milan, Santa Maria delle Grazie



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