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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Articles

- On the Representation of Androgynous Figures in the Renaissance Art
Jordi Redondo 5-22
- Vattimo's Decline of Art in Gertrude Stein's "A Substance in a Cushion"
Mahnoosh Vahdati 23-39
- "Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo": la recepción de Cicerón en la poesía de Jorge Guillén
Gema María Molina Mellado 41-54
- Postmodern Aesthetics in African Literature
Damlègue Lare 55-78
- Environment, Climate Change, Insecurity and World Peace: A Critical Examination of Selected African Literary Texts
Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun, Waidi Adewale Akanji 79-95

Interview

- Entrevista con Rafael Santandreu
Gabriel Laguna Mariscal 97-109

Review

A. Vara López y F. Cuadrado Hidalgo, *Hacia la recuperación de la memoria. Canon escolar y poesía escrita por mujeres (1927-2020)*, Universidad de Córdoba-UCO Press, Córdoba, 2021
Gema María Molina Mellado

111-114

ON THE REPRESENTATION OF ANDROGYNOUS FIGURES IN THE RENAISSANCE ART

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Abstract

For Renaissance thinkers, the ancient idea of the androgyny –a variant of the metamorphosis’ myth– conveyed the ideas of perfection and completeness, as a way to overcome the opposition of the female and male natures. This paper shows the origin of the motif and its development according with the interests, beliefs and concerns of theologians and thinkers, from the one hand, and artists on the other.

Keywords: Metamorphosis, androgyny, perfection, completeness.

SOBRE LA REPRESENTACIÓN DE FIGURAS ANDRÓGINAS EN EL ARTE DEL RENACIMIENTO

Resumen

La antigua idea de la androginia –una variante del mito de la metamorfosis– transmitía en la opinión de los pensadores renacentistas las ideas de perfección y plenitud, como medio para superar la oposición de las naturalezas femenina y masculina. El presente trabajo muestra el origen del motivo y su desarrollo según los intereses, creencias e inquietudes de teólogos y pensadores, por un lado, y artistas, por otro.

Palabras clave: Metamorfosis, androginia, perfección, plenitud.

ON THE REPRESENTATION OF ANDROGYNOUS FIGURES IN THE RENAISSANCE ART

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Introduction

In the ancient Greek religion, one of the most common rites of passage is that of metamorphosis, willingly made or not by its protagonist. Although our most known collections of metamorphoses are those gathered by authors living in the Hellenistic Age, such as Nicander of Colophon and Boios, later on repeatedly alluded to by Antoninus Liberalis and other compilers of the Imperial Age, it would be a plain mistake to ascribe the metamorphic act to a later stage in the development of the Hellenic culture¹. As a matter of fact, metamorphosis brings to the Hesiodic poetry, especially to his *Catalogue*, one of its central subjects (Hirschberger 2008). Otherwise said, the broad use of cases of metamorphosis in literary texts, as a reflect of a popular anthropological discussion incorporated to the domains of mythology and religion, was not a post-Classical creation, but a very ancient theme for whom we should probably look for an inherited tradition, that is to say, Indo-European. Having this in mind, it is important to understand that the metamorphosis theme was not borrowed to an exogenous culture in the Hellenistic or the Imperial Age.

Our paper will deal with the androgynous' theme in some sculptural, pictorial and graven representations of the Renaissance art. The attention to the contemporary literary sources and to the influence of the humanistic culture in some geographical areas will cast light on the spread of this artistic motif.

The overcoming of oppositions in the Renaissance culture

The aim for filling the gap between the Antiquity and the present led the intellectuals of the Italian Renaissance to an exercise of contrast executed by means of reflection and debate. The Aristotelian syllogism was not

¹ Buxton 2009: 110 alludes to theurgeon of the metamorphic narrations in the Hellenistic Age. But he does not devote a monographical chapter of his diachronic exposition of the genre to Hesiod, so that he jumps from the Homeric *Odyssey* to the Athenian drama.

enough for their purposes because of its limitations, but the Platonic gnoseology provided them with an alternative method: knowledge was not only possible within the frame of reality, but it was also in a superior cosmos where the ideas were able to neutralize the contradictions revealed by the senses. Hence, harmony of contraries became one of their preferred mechanisms to make progress.

In a similar way, Renaissance literature and art were fond of mixing characters and values initially opposed, as for instance love and war. When the poet Angelo Poliziano –dead in 1494– wrote his epigram “Εἰς Ἀφροδίτην ὀπλισμένην”, that is to say, *In Venerem armatam*, he was actually following a well-known literary tradition², but at the same time he was anticipating an artistic topic. The almost contemporary painting *Venus Victrix* of Marco Zoppo, now at the British Museum and dated between 1465 and 1474³, seems to reproduce in a pictorial composition what Poliziano was telling in his poem: war actions, armours and struggle are counterbalanced with delicacies, love beds and desirable weddings. Similar antithetical plays were based on the pairs sweetness / bitterness, wisdom / ignorance, love / hate, sexuality / chastity, and so on⁴.

The merger of antithetical entities was a consequence of this search for harmony within a steady world ruled by mathematical laws. As misogyny or homophobia were two current ideological trends of the Middle Age – probably because of their deep rooting in some mystical and cenobitic traditions with a large influence of the veterotestamentarian culture–, the Renaissance art was open to show the integration of both genders in an only physical body. Therefore, under the image of an androgynous creature lies the reversal of the former ideological system, as a part of the Renaissance programme. Needless to say, religious beliefs were also at work behind this operation, whose artistic representation involved also a defiance towards the Church authorities more bound by their commitment to the Mosaic law and its Christian continuation.

In principle, the androgynous’ theme is independent from that of the feminization of the image of crucified Jesus Christ, as this one appeared

² The motif was already attested at the *Palatine Anthology* (16.174) and was later imitated by Ausonius in his poem LXIV. Cf. Herrera 1998.

³ An alternative view is that of Wittkower 1939, according to whom the goddess should be interpreted as Minerva.

⁴ Attention to this Renaissance aim for blending opposite concepts is largely paid in the book of Wind 1958.

formerly in central Europe and had a quite different origin, not related with any belief of the ancient religions; not featured with the objective of overcoming through their integration the opposition between female and male; and not linked to a complex discourse found in theological, philosophical and literary texts as well as in the artistic creation, but to a vindication which aimed only at opening a new time not ruled by the patriarchal concept of gender relationship⁵. Already in the 14th century, Pierre Bersuire, author of the so-called *Ovide moralisé*, tried to give a mystical sense to the Hermaphroditan metaphor as a symbol of the double nature of Jesus Christ himself, masculine and feminine as well as both divine and human⁶. The theme has of course some implications with the androgynous representation⁷, but the abovesaid reasons make preferable not to include it in our present contribution.

Last, the feminization of divine masculine characters was in fact no restricted to the sole Jesus Christ, for it is attested in the representation of saints and biblical heroes as well⁸.

⁵ Clague 2005, Friesen 2001, Newman 1995, Nightlinger 1993, Schweizer-Vüllers 1997, Zänker 1998.

⁶ P. de Bersuire, *Metamorphoseos Ovidi moralizatae I* 12.322-323: *Mercurius incantator, qui aliquando, secundum poetas, de masculo in feminam se mutavit* etc.; XIII 348-349: *Sed Mercurius, id est Christus, qui de masculo factus est femina* etc.

⁷ A first commentary on the androgyny of this painting was made by Stefaniak 1992: 713: “Assuming that Christ’s body was incarnated in the common condition of humanity about 1525, including cultural attitudes towards sexuality, then as a wounded hero, he was like a woman. At the same time, as an embryo in the process of being born again at the moment of the Resurrection, still in the same wounded body, he was surely destined to be reborn feminine. This viewpoint should be also applied to the *Ignudi* of Michelangelo.” A more detailed analysis is that of de Halleux 2011a: 131: « L’androgynie pourrait alors être l’un des symptômes d’une tendance religieuse, d’autant qu’il est bien connu que dans le courant mystique (on pense entre autres à Angèle de Foligno ou Julienne de Norwich) figurent précisément des allusions à la féminité du Christ. . . . Si les représentations androgynes du Christ se développent à la Renaissance dans une mesure si importante, c’est sans doute parce qu’elles correspondent non seulement à un idéal esthétique mais également à l’orientation de la spiritualité contemporaine. » Their views have been rejected by other scholars: cf. Nova 2006: 323 and 331-332.

⁸ Just to limit our data to the Valencian country, we must take into account early artworks as the altarpiece of Saint Martin, saint Ursula and saint Clement by Gonçal Peris Sarrià (monastery of Porta Coeli, 1443) and the painting of saint Michael by Miquel Esteve –under a probable influence of the Saint Michael (Oriola, after 1490)

The androgynous representation in the Renaissance art. An exceptional model

Androgyny as an artistic matter became so frequent as it was in literature. Of course, the artistic representations needed something else than the short descriptions given by Plato and other literary authors, so that the ancient sculpture and engraving became a relevant paradigm for the Renaissance artist. Maybe the best model was the so-called Modena relief, in which Phanes, the Pythagorean Eros, appears just after his birth from an egg. This hermaphrodite god was the only one in the ancient pantheon that assumes both genders as a natural androgynous being. The relief, which is made in marble, has as measures 74 x 48.7 x 5-6 cms., and is dated in the second quarter of the second century AD, was purchased in the 18th century for the art collection of Francesco III Marquis d'Este at his palace of San Martino in Rio, close to Modena, and it is nowadays exposed at the Museo Lapidario Estense di Modena. It was there where it got the appreciation of the scholars after a notice published by Celestino Cavedoni (1863), who rightly suggested the Orphic frame of the piece. His view was later on confirmed by Franz Cumont (1902), who recognised the Mythraic god Chronos. Eisler (1910: 400), however, rightly identified the figure as Phanes' and took for granted the Roman origin of the piece. Yet Cumont changed opinion after comparison with other archaeological pieces and replaced his former identification of Chronos by a new one based on the character of Phanes, the Orphic Eros (Cumont 1934). The syncretic cult of both Mithra and Eros was however kept by Guthrie (1934: 254-255), who tried to suggest a double reflection of both Orphism and Mithraism. The same syncretic religious of the piece, both Mithraic and Orphic at least, was underlined by Pettazzoni⁹. In a recent paper, nevertheless, Ewa Osek (2018) rejects this syncretic view and gives support to the sole consideration of the Orphic character of Phanes.

What is important for our point is that nearly a century ago Panofsky already argued for a perfect interpretation of the relief both by the Renaissance artists and by their *committenti*¹⁰. This means that the

by Paolo di san Leocadio, an Italian painter trained at Ferrara—. In both cases the faces of saint Martin and saint Michael show feminine stylized traits.

⁹ Pettazzoni 1949: 274 suggests that the relief “rappresenta una combinazione di idee mitriache con idee orfiche ed altre”.

¹⁰ Panofsky 1930: 9, n. 2. The Modena relief was imitated, for instance, by Girolamo Olgiati in the 1569 engraving entitled by modern scholars *Allegory of*

purchaser of the piece was perfectly aware of the philosophical and religious sense of the androgynous representation. The Modena relief had formerly been part of the collection of Sigismondo IV d'Este (1433-1507), lord of San Martino in Rio and fellow of the Catalan king Alphonse the Magnanimous between 1445 and 1460. At the Napolitan court of this Catalan Renaissance sovereign, Sigismondo and his elder brother Ercole received a complete political, militar, literary and artistic education. Later, in the year 1473 Ercole was given as spouse the elder daughter of the king Alphonse, Eleonora, and this way the duchy of Ferrara was strongly linked to the Aragonese kingdom (Manca 1989). Ercole has attracted much more attention than Sigismondo, although both of them shared the same spiritual and cultural instruction and the same political training.

Even if it is an ancient piece instead of a contemporary artistic creation, this image of the Orphic Phanes must be understood as an exceptional witness to the interest of the Renaissance for harmony of contraries to understand the cosmos, both divine and human. And its influence had its pole in the sophisticated culture of the House D'Este at Modena and Ferrara, from where it inspired very signified art works, as we will try to expose.

Evidencies of a strong influence of the motif

A short examination of a selected sample of artistic works will help to understand how the above theories inspired the Renaissance artists. The iconic representation of androgyny is clearly shown by sculptures, paintings and graven icons and medals. Some of them will help to understand how the motif of androgyny expanded and evolved. One of the first examples of our artistic subject is the magnificent statue of victorious David by Donatello, a masterpiece dated towards 1440. It is indeed an explicit androgynous sculpture, where the nudity of the character is also underlined by physical and psychological features expressing delicacy and, therefore, effeminacy; even the reduced scale of the piece, 158 centimeters tall, conveys the impression of looking at a female body; the personal erotic trends of the author should have been also at work, according with some views¹¹. Of

Alchemy, now exhibited at the British Museum; this piece was in turn imitated by a painting with this same title by Bartholomaeus Spranger (1546-1611), as reminded by Panofsky 1939: 73, note 7. On Spranger see also de Halleux 2011b.

¹¹ Schneider 1973: 213 explains this artistic work as a blend of the Neoplatonic influence and “the evident homosexual aspect of Donatello’s character”. In the later

course, the Modena relief had nothing to do with this marvellous representations of a new kind of beauty; but we suggest instead that the new ideas put into discussion in contemporary Florence pulled Donatello to take this step forward. Neoplatonism and Orphism, in the years to come settled at the headquarters of the Accademia Neoplatonica, seem to provide the soundest arguments for a correct evaluation of the innovations accomplished by Donatello.

The link between the representation of androgyny and homosexuality has been also proposed in other cases. It has been applied to some paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, namely *The last supper* (1495-1498) and especially *Saint John the Baptist* (1513-1516), whose model was the young lover of the painter. This interpretation was supported by Péladan¹², and in our time has obtained the plain favour of many scholars. In our opinion, however, this kind of explanations does not contribute a valid analysis of our data because of their exogenous methodology and their dependence on subjective appraisals¹³.

After Donatello and Leonardo, it was Michelangelo to follow this artistic tendency. He certainly gave a conspicuous androgynous character to some of his *Ignudi* at the Sixtine Chapel, namely to those numbered 4 and 6, painted in the year 1509, and 2, 3 and 7, painted in 1511. Butler Wingfield cogently argues for the theological basis of this androgynist artistic rhetoric, where female and male features merge in an only human body (Butler Wingfield 2009: 272).

The artistic circles of Ferrara and Modena –a single one in fact, as both belonged to the court of D’Este– were the scenario in which showed his high skills the Ferrarese Girolamo da Carpi (1501-1556), author of the paintings *Ganimedes* (1544) and the undated *Kairos*, this one executed by

years this queer interpretation has gained intensity and space in contemporary criticism. On the homoerotic Florentine culture, see Rocke 1996.

¹² Péladan 1910 is one of the studies devoted to Da Vinci by this French unconventional thinker. Some years before Péladan had published the essay entitled *De l’androgynie. Théorie plastique*, Paris 1891.

¹³ For a more nuanced and accurate interpretation, see de Halleux 2011c and 2012a. Just for a short statement, see de Halleux 2011c: 39: « Si, à la Renaissance, les délateurs de l’homosexualité confèrent souvent un caractère efféminé au partenaire ‘passif’, on ne peut pour autant avancer que, réciproquement, l’androgynie signale nécessairement l’homosexualité. » It goes the same for the opposite application of the idea, insofar as the homosexual habits of an artist does not imply or even explain any androgynous bias of her/his work.

order of the Marquis Ercole d'Este (de Halleux 2012b). Both artworks can be called examples of the mannerist style, an artistic trend to some extent developed by da Carpi himself (Antal 1948, Dauner 2005).

Not directly related to the Ferrarese court, albeit he occasionally worked for it and of course was under the influence of the new tendencies in vogue there, Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, called il Parmigianino (1503-1540), is the following author to be considered here. The wonderful *Cupido carving his bow*, painted by Parmigianino towards 1533-1534, deserves a special recognition. Its androgynous matter has been of course recognised¹⁴. A second, even more noteworthy work by this author is his *Apollo playing the cithara*, a ca. 1525 drawing now exhibited at the Louvre Museum after a statue which the artist saw at Rome and can be now admired at the National Museum of Naples. Here the god is given only male genitals, while every detail of his, rather her, body constitution has the volume, the texture, and the gesture of a woman.

Towards 1549 Giovanni da Cavino designed and coined a bronze medal in honour of Marcantonio Passeri (1491-1565), professor of philosophy at Padova, a piece now exposed at the British Museum (Altwood 2003: 194-195). The inscription *philosophia comite regredimur*, "we come backwards under the guidance of philosophy", casts light on the image of two human beings united by their front part, with of course two heads, four legs and arms; their bodies are slightly different, for the left one is thinner in complexion and shows evident breasts. It is therefore an androgynous representation where philosophy is allegorized as a perfect human being which is not damaged by the defaults of either female or male individuals, as it includes both natures perfectly integrated in one single body.

Last, attention will be paid to some of the paintings by Michelangelo Merisi, il Caravaggio (1571-1610). The androgynous representation dominated a complete period of the late Caravaggio, between the years 1595 and 1608. In many of his extant pictures we can notice the presence of naked young boys provided with gentle, feminine expressions and gestures. The series includes the paintings *Bacchus* and *The musicians* (1595), *The lute player* (1596), *Victorious Cupid* and *John the Baptist and the ram* (1602), and *Supper at Emmaus* (1601), where nakedness of the character of Jesus had to be excluded, but his young age, suggested by his beardless face, and the composure of the gesture offer a sharp contrast with his partners, three adult individuals, severe in attitude, bearded in aspect, and

¹⁴ See Thomas 1988, Viola 2007: 71, Kingsley-Smith 2010: 138.

provided with a clearly male physiognomy. The 1602 first version of the painting entitled *Saint Matthew and the angel*, also quoted as *The inspiration of saint Mathew*, continues this trend of representing religious scenes through pagan motifs. A last example of the motif was painted by Caravaggio in 1608 in his *Sleeping Cupid*.

The philosophical and religious sources of the theme

The nature of the Renaissance conceptualization of love and gender has been the object of a recent highly valuable contribution by Webb (2018), in which she offers an accurate and extensive argumentation on the matter. She explains how Plato as well as the Neoplatonist thinkers Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola and Leone Ebreo promoted the development of a revaluation of love and lovers, where androgyny was established as a state of perfection. Webb exemplifies her conclusions by referring to the *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti*, by Raffaello (1514).

More precisely, on the matter of androgyny one of the axiomatic biases of the Renaissance was the aim for change in a Heraclitean way, as it was proclaimed by Pico della Mirandola in his *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, conceived as the introduction to his main treatise, published in 1484. His defence of the principle of change took as emblem the character of Proteus:

Quis hunc nostrum Chamaeleonta non admiretur? Aut omnino quis aliud quicquam admiretur magis? Quem non immerito Asclepius Atheniensis versipellis huius et se ipsam transformantis naturae argumento per Protheum in mysteriis significari dixit. Hinc illae apud Hebraeos et Pythagoricos metamorphoses celebratae.

Who among us could not admire this Chamaleon? Otherwise, who will rather admire anything else? Not without reason the Athenian Asclepius said that in mysteries he was known under the image of Proteus with the help of his changing nature. Hence were so celebrated the metamorphoses among the Hebrews and the Pythagoreans¹⁵.

The ancient character of Proteus was already attested at the Homeric poems. The *Odyssey* shows him as a servant of the marine god Poseidon, as an old man endowed with the power of transforming himself (Hom. *Od.* 4.384-386, 417-418 and 455-458). This god –maybe as important in older times as it was Thetis, which in the Homeric poems is given a minor role as

¹⁵ G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, 32-35 (our translation).

a nymph— is not, however, the only one being able to change nature: also Periclimenos, son of the King Neleus, received the gift of the metamorphosical faculty; as Proteus, he was also given this power from Poseidon, something that must be kept in mind. Yet it should be a big mistake to think again of Periclimenos as a result of a Post-Classical culture, just because many scholars grant a preponderant role to the Ovidian *Metamorphoses*, where this character features prominently (Ovid. *Met.* 12.536-579). Some scholars will remind the brief mentions to Periclimenos in Apollodorus' *Library* (Apol. *Bib.* 1.9.9 and 2.7.3). But the first literary author who often had Periclimenos in mind was Hesiod, since his *Catalogue of Women*, even if fragmentally transmitted, quotes the name of the hero four times at least¹⁶.

Besides Proteus and Periclimenos, a third ancient mythological character is featured with the power of metamorphosis: it is Mestra, whose myth was also extensively dealt with by Hesiod¹⁷. That is to say, metamorphosis was at the very core of many old mythical stories and gender shift was one of its variants. Consequently, the alleged Oriental origin of the motif as a borrowing dated in the Hellenistic and Imperial Age is an illusion that must be taken out from our interpretation of the androgynous theme.

In the ancient Greek culture, long before any influence of Oriental religions in the frame of the Alexandrian empire, its epigones and finally the Roman empire, the androgynous as a character has often been specifically linked to the Pythagorean theogony, since already the comedy-writer Aristophanes gives us a short account of the birth of Eros as the firstborn son of Night; yet he was not issued as a human being from the womb of his mother, but from an egg. This feature is expressed by means of the epithets *ᾠογενής* 'egg-born', and *διφυής* 'provided with a double nature'. Also Plutarch assigns to the Orphic and the Pythagoreans the symbol of the egg as the origin of life (Plu. *Mor.* 635 d-e). This means that the motif of androgyny was given a central role in the Pythagorean theology, as featured in the Modena relief.

A parallel, non-philosophical use of the term itself *ἀνδρόγυνος* was that used by the common people, and therefore bare of any transcendental connotation, be it religious, legal, or political. It is with the simple sense 'effeminate, womanish', that it is used by Herodotus on the Scythian seers

¹⁶ Merkelbach & West 1970, fr. 33a ll. 12 and 33, 33b, 35 ll. 2 and 4.

¹⁷ Merkelbach & West 1970, fr. 43a, ll. 4, 54 and 66, 43b l. 3, c l. 11.

called ἀναρεῖς, *anareis*, i.e. *unmanly* (Hdt. 4.67.2)¹⁸, and by the *Hippocratic Corpus* (Hipp. *Vict.* 1.28) without any pejorative connotation, which is not the case for the orator Aeschines, who chose the term in order to blame Demosthenes in the worst possible way¹⁹. The comedigrapher Eupolis (Eup. fr. 46 KA), the *Septuaginta*²⁰ and the *Palatine Anthology* (AP 6.254) also used the term as a pejorative indictment against men, as well as Artemidorus and Lucian applied it to women (Artem. 2.12, Luc. *Am.* 28). This slanderous meaning was also that collected by the ancient lexicographers: Hesychius explains the term as ‘those who have woman’s heart’ (Hesych. α 4745), and the Byzantine *Suda* gives it as a synonyme of ‘weak’ (*Sud.* α 2177). In short, there was a double reception of the androgyny as a concept, and here we should keep only one of them, that related to the philosophical and religious thought²¹.

Actually, the Orphic cosmogony and theology offer a cogent ideological frame for the presence of androgynous creatures in Renaissance art²². Still, the artists were just following the tracks of their literary colleagues. Already in 1425 Antonio Beccadelli (1394-1471), also in strong relation with the Catalan court at Naples, composed an epigrammatic collection entitled *Hermaphroditus*, although later the book was condemned by the Vatican censors because of its alleged obscenity. Therefore, the contemporaneous Catholicism stated a complete refusal of the androgynous bias, and its strong condemnation could explain why prominent humanists as Lorenzo Valla, Francesco Filelfo and Guarino da Verona rejected any support to the lecture of the book and denied any prestige to its author. Modern criticism

¹⁸ The Greek term Ἐνάρεες is unsound, for it should be substituted with the etymological Iranian formation **a-nar-*, that is to say, an adjectival compound with a negative prefix, derived from the term ‘man’.

¹⁹ Aesch. 2.127 Δημόσθενης, τοιαύτην δίκην δός· ὁμολόγησον ἀνδρόγυνος εἶναι καὶ μὴ ἐλεύθερος ἐναντίον τούτων, “Pay this fine, Demosthenes: confess in front of all these people that you are an effeminate, not at all a free man” (our translation).

²⁰ *Prov.* 18.8 ὀκνηροὺς καταβάλλει φόβος, ψυχὰι δὲ ἀνδρόγυνων πεινάσουσιν, “Fear smashes lazy people, the lives of the effeminate will suffer hunger” (our translation).

²¹ For a complete reassessment on the matter, see Brisson 1997. This monograph replaces with huge advantage the old and short report of Jessen 1913.

²² Wind 1958: 199: “‘Composite gods’ became the rule rather than the exception in Orphic theology.”

has not overcome most of the ancient prejudgments against Beccadelli²³. Of course the emblematic symbol of the book was Hermaphroditus, the feminine son of Aphrodite and Hermes having the aspect of a girl as well as male genitals. His/her myth was narrated by Ovid (*Met.* 4.285-388).

Again in Renaissance Florence, the diffusion of the Platonic theories by means of the translation and commentaries of Marsilio Ficino had a strong impact on his treatise *De amore. Commentarium in convivium Platonis*. This work was published only in 1489, alongside with the whole translation of the Platonic corpus, but the manuscripts were circulating already in 1469. Its influence can be recognised in a sample of treatises on love²⁴. Moreover, although for a long time it has been taken for granted that the Catalan Napolitan court was mainly dominated by the Aristotelian philosophy, whose chief advocate was Giovanni Pontano, nowadays we know that the Florentine connections of the royal milieu had already constituted a circle of Platonic readers and followers (Soranzo 2011).

Back on the religious sphere, a concurrent Jewish background of the androgynous' theme was provided towards 1501-1502 by Judah Abranavel, also known under the name of Leon Hebrew, in his *Dialoghi d'amore*. This is the passage of interest for our present purpose:

Ancora nel fine, volendo narrare la progenie di Adam, dice (come hai veduto) che Dio gli creò in somiglianza di Dio, maschio e femmina creò quegli, e chiamò il nome loro Adam nel dì che furono creati: adunque pare che nel principio de la creazione sua di continente fussero maschio e femmina, e non di poi per sostrazione del lato o costa, come ha detto. . . . Di poi creando Dio Adam, e non Eva, solamente maschio creò, e non femmina e maschio, come dice. . . . Mira che dice che, creando Dio Adam, fece maschio e femmina, e dice che chiamò il nome di tutti due Adam, nel dì che furono creati, e di Eva non fa menzione, che è il nome de la femmina di Adam; avendo narrato già innanzi che di poi, essendo solo Adam senza femmina, Dio la creò dal suo lato e costa, e chiamolla Eva (Leon Hebrew, *Dialoghi d'amore III*, XVII).

²³ Kidwell 1991; 4, considers the poem a *repulsive obscenity*. For a reappraisal of this view, see O'Connor 2001.

²⁴ Just for a short quotation, have in mind *Il Cortigiano* of Baldassarre da Castiglione, *Gli assolani* of Pietro Bembo, *Raverta, dialogo nel quale si ragiona d'amore e degli effetti suoi* of Giuseppe Bettusi, *Specchio d'amore* of Tullia d'Aragona, *Dialogo d'amore* of Sperone Speroni, and many others. However, the *Amorum libri tres* of Matteo Maria Boiardo, published in 1469, belong to a quite different tradition, where medieval elements are blended with the Renaissance flavour contributed by the Petrarchan poetry.

Again, at the end of the narrative, speaking of the offspring of Adam (as you have seen), we read that God created man in the likeness of God, ‘Male and female created He them, and He called their name Adam in the day that they were created’. It would appear, therefore, that there was at once both male and female at the beginning of the Creation, and that the woman was not made subsequently by the withdrawal of the rib, as is narrated. (...) God, therefore, in creating Adam, and not Eve, only created a male, and not male and female as the text says. (...) Look it how it says that God, in creating Adam, made both male and female; yet he called them both by the name Adam in the day that they were created. And no mention is made of Eve, which is the name of the female part of man, although we have already been told how, Adam being alone and without woman, God created her out of his side and rib and called her Eve (Bacich & Pescatori 2009: 276).

The integration of the opposites also included a panoramic view of all the extant religious traditions in such a way that the ancient myths could afford some part of the truth to the complete history of mankind. Therefore, many theologians and thinkers should be interested in adding the Hebrew interpretation to the sample of sources for the androgynous motif. Again, it has been suggested that the *Love Dialogues* inspired to the painter Paolo Veronese his composition *Omnia Vanitas*, composed towards 1565, some thirty years after the publication of the treatise of Leon Hebrew (Pescatori 2006 and 2020). However, the direct, even indirect relationship between mystical literature and artistic representation is far from being accurately established.

As an offspring of this reappraisal, we will pay attention to another literary tribute to androgyny. Mario Equicola d’Alveto (*ca.* 1470-1525) was a humanist related to the Napolitan Catalan court, and later to the Ferrara circle of the family D’Este. That is to say, he frequented the same circles where the androgynous representation of the Modena relief was honoured and imitated. In 1525, the year in which he passed away, he published a treatise entitled *Di natura d’amore*, where androgyny is presented as the real nature of manhood and the authentical kind of beauty²⁵:

Il volto della donna si loda se ha fatezza di uomo; dell’uomo il viso se ha fatezza femminile. Onde il proverbio quasi per ciascun luogo, femmina maschio, e maschio femmina hanno grazia.

²⁵ A recent major contribution is Villa 2006.

The woman's face is praised if it has man's shape; man's face likewise, if it has woman's shape. From there comes the saying present in nearly every place, 'male female and female male possess charm' (Equicola 1607: 113).

A second passage exposes more explicitly, following the aetiological myth of the Platonic *Banquet*, the subject of androgyny:

Da quel tempo in qua fu innato l'amor dell'uomo al'uomo, sforzandose di due far uno. È adunque ciascuno di noi mezzo, e ciascuno cerca il suo resto, cioè quella stirpe donde fu separato. Se questo per caso si incontra, di quelli è amor vehementissimo, e quelli si amano per tutto il tempo della loro vita.

Since that time until now has been innate the love from a man towards a man, as they make their best to become a single being from the former two. So, each one of us is a half, and everyone looks for his remaining part, that is to say, this lineage from which he was separated. If casually this part is found, the love of these people is the strongest, and they love each other for all the time of their lives (Equicola 1607: 173).

Equicola should have exerted some influence on the matter, as shown by so much read books as Baldassarre da Castiglione's *The Courtier* (Venise 1528) (Kolsky 1991:103-226). The point now is nevertheless another one, namely the coincidence of literary sources and artworks around the poles of Ferrara and Modena.

Conclusions

At the end of this paper some conclusions come to mind. First of all, the existence of a dual representation of the androgyne, sometimes as Eros, sometimes as an angel, could be at first sight explained as a transformation of a pagan subject in the way called in Spanish scholarship *a lo divino*. Yet the roots of this double insight can be traced back to the Antiquity, where also a contradictory judgment on androgyny conveyed two opposite notions, one of them frankly pejorative and damning. This means that the adoption of a sexual perspective for the analysis of a matter which is not at all biological is disturbing and elusive, and therefore negative.

Our following remarks have to do with the methodological scope of our research. As a result of it, we should emphasize the merely Hellenic and Indo-European origin of the theme, whose alleged 'Oriental' origin must be rejected; as a consequence of this fact, androgyny arises from very ancient times, not at all in the Hellenistic and Imperial Ages. The interference of the

sexually-oriented approach, in the ancient as in the modern times, has been also alluded to, no matter if many contemporary scholars think of it as a necessary input in modern research. Finally, the role of the Ferrara humanistic circle, as an offspring of the Catalan royal court at Naples, does not explain the whole diffusion of the motif, but constitutes a relevant factor of the spreading of the androgynous representation.

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VATTIMO'S DECLINE OF ART IN GERTRUDE STEIN'S "A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION"

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Abstract

Reading the poem "A substance in a Cushion", by Gertrude Stein, and at the same time reciting the old, elevated poems of the great poets of the past, one would unconsciously question what it means to be a poet in the modern and postmodern world. When someone recites a traditional poem, like any simple piece of poetry by Wordsworth or Coleridge, he or she will be stunned by how they would make lots and lots of momentous lines out of a straightforward natural element in the world. This contrast is what Gianteressio Vattimo calls the decline of art in the modern world. This essay focuses on one of Gertrude Stein's iconoclastic poems called "A Substance in a cushion" and applies Vattimo's ideas concerning the decline of art to his interpretation. Most people nowadays detest the tendency of the modern and post-modern works to shatter the forms, meanings, and the whole notion of real poetry. Poetry should have some rules and obligations, which are what makes it exquisite. Modern artists present anything as art or poetry. Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) was an avant-garde and feminist poet. Her poems do not hold a fixed meaning but offer a kind of unconventional experience.

Keywords: Gianteressio Vattimo, Decline of Art, Gertrude Stein, Avant-Garde, Postmodern Poetry.

EL DECLIVE DEL ARTE EN “A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION” DE GERTRUDE STEIN SEGÚN VATTIMO

Resumen

Leyendo el poema “A substance in a Cushion” de Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) y si al mismo tiempo recitamos los poemas sublimes de los grandes poetas del pasado, podríamos preguntarnos inconscientemente: ¿Qué significa ser un poeta en el mundo moderno y postmoderno? Pues cuando alguien recita cualquier poema tradicional, como uno de Wordsworth o Coleridge, se queda pasmado ante cómo extraen memorables versos de un sencillo elemento natural del mundo. A este contraste es a lo que Gianteressio Vattimo llama el declive del arte en el mundo moderno. Este artículo estudia un poema iconoclasta de Gertrude Stein, titulado “A Substance in a Cushion”, y aplica las ideas de Vattimo a su valoración. La gente, en su mayor parte, detesta la tendencia de los poetas modernos y posmodernos a sacudir las formas, significados y la noción misma de poesía real. La poesía debería seguir ciertas reglas y obligaciones, que son las que la convierten en un producto exquisito, mientras que la poesía moderna presenta cualquier cosa como obra artística. Gertrude Stein fue una poeta vanguardista y feminista. Sus poemas no tienen un significado concreto, sino que, más bien, ofrecen un tipo de experiencia no convencional.

Palabras clave: Gianteressio Vattimo, declive del arte, Gertrude Stein, vanguardia, poesía posmoderna.

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Introduction

Modern poetry proposes two ideas regarding form and content: the first one is that nothing matters and the second is to always follow your heart. This means that there are no rules and prescribed forms for modern and postmodern poetry, just a set of ideas, whether they are meaningful or not. There are no productive poets in our times. Probably, if poems such as Poe's *Raven* or Grey's *Elegy* were composed today, people would again gather around the fire and read them aloud. Nowadays, elevated and eloquent poetry has lost its voice and its readers around the world.

Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) was an American novelist, poet, playwright, and art collector. Born within the Allegheny West neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and raised in Oakland, California, Stein moved to Paris in 1903 and made France her home for the rest of her life. She organized a Paris salon, where the leading figures of innovation in writing and craftsmanship, such as Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Ezra Pound, Sherwood Anderson and Henri Matisse, would meet. Gertrude Stein is marked as one of the most innovative and ambiguous modernist poets. We always detect a colloquial tension between meaning and non-meaning, order and chaos in her poems that cannot be interpreted completely. In the present study, we will demonstrate that phenomenology provides an effortless method to discuss the dialectic of her poem "A Substance in a Cushion". The question is how in the age of decline of art, the work of art challenges its traditional values and in what way poetry is meaningful only when estimated by modern language and images.

In a private letter to his brother Karl, Anderson said, "As for Stein, I do not think her too important. I do think she had an important thing to do, not for the public, but for the artist who happens to work with words as his material" (Mellow 1974: 260). This playing with words and not the meaning is of prime importance here. Stein's treatment of language

compels the reader to make sense of it. This struggle with language forced her to “make it ugly”; she held the same opinion about Pablo Picasso’s work when he inaugurated the cubist movement, a style which many critics linked to Stein’s poetry. She declared, “something had been coming out of him, certainly it had been coming out of him, certainly it was something, certainly it had been coming out of him and it had meaning” (Stein 1972: 293).

An Italian philosopher, Gianteressio Vattimo was born on January 4th, 1936 in Turin, Piedmont. He studied philosophy under the existentialist Luigi Pareyson at the University of Turin and graduated in 1959 with a thesis on Aristotle that was published in 1961. He was also involved in activism and participated in protests against South African apartheid. Vattimo took up a position as an adjunct professor at the university in 1964 to teach aesthetics, especially those of Heidegger. He later became a full professor of Aesthetics in 1969. He became a professor of theoretical Philosophy in 1982. He is currently a visiting professor at several American Universities. Vattimo is considered among the most influential living philosophers and is known for his interpretation of Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s philosophies. His nihilistic reading of history involves a certain attitude towards modernity (Harris 1995).

One of Vattimo’s fundamental theories is the “weak thought notion”, the idea that the history of western metaphysics is the history of the weakening of strong structures (Harris 1995). He implies one should not aspire to settled philosophical answers or certainty in knowledge but expect the numerous interpretations proper of late modernity. Weak thought attempts to devise an ethic of weakness.

2. Vattimo’s Decline of Art in Getrude Stein’s “A Substance in a Cushion”

In his article “The Decline of Anglo-American Poetry” (1978), Christopher Clausen remarks that poetic spoken language is so constantly and relentlessly manipulated for the function of salesmanship that it has become almost impossible to express anything with ebullience or joy or utter a sentence without running into the danger of sounding as if you were selling something. How can the poet write in a heartfelt way about green fields in springiness if a great voice of the audience one-half-consciously associates them with toilet paper? How to talk affectingly about erotic love to any but the most unsophisticated when love is the staple of advertising

for everything from children's toothpaste to Geritol? What about freedom and commonwealth in an era of televised war and political campaigns? The consequence is: "There are no poets today —not even Robert Frost—who can communicate with as large a portion of the literate public as Tennyson and Longfellow did in their time." (Hayakawa 1949, quoted by Frost 1978: 76).

The judgment is on the side of the reader. Both Heidegger and Vattimo truly acknowledged that what presents you with truth can be considered art nowadays, even if it is the artist's rubbish. Yet what is the definition of art for a specific reader? The meaning reader is attempting to find in a piece of poetry is another side of the coin. Stein's poetry may seem flawless and perfect to a modern reader but the opposite to another. According to Vattimo, as long as art presents truth and endeavors to alter established notions, its acceptability is a matter of taste. In the mentioned poem by Stein, one simply cannot locate any fixed meaning. In short, it's chattering jargon. They call it verbal cubism. The poet may make sense from some words without having a singular meaning in mind. It is like a painting that just looks nice: there's no deeper meaning other than beautiful lines and contrasting colors. It's a mere appeal to the senses. This idea immediately reminds Vattimo's comments on the aesthetics of the decline of art. In the chapter from *The End of Modernity* entitled "The Death or Decline of Art", Vattimo defines three forms of "death of art" characteristic of aesthetic thought in the twentieth century: 1. Reintegration into existence; 2. Aestheticization of experience through mass culture, where the common consensus is produced through instituting the aesthetic sense of sharing the same criteria; and 3. Adorno's theory of the avant-garde as silence in response to the kitsch of modern culture (Ziarek 2011: 24). Vattimo maintains a Heideggerian view of art, in which art is caught beyond aesthetics and its metaphysical thought, concerning the truth of the work of art. He assumes that the experience produced in a work of art is possible by shattering its words, the exact thing that Stein does in this poem. Stein's poetry is going to have meaning, essence, and content but what it presents us is just noise and music. This poem is a kind of segmented and jumble of words which don't make sense when you put it together. You may not know what the meaning is altogether; they are just a series of words. This is exactly what Heidegger and Vattimo call "nothing" in a work of art. That is the exact concept that Nietzsche exposed in *On Truth and Lie*.

If you are looking for something graceful and elegant in modern poetry, then you are proceeding completely wrongly. There are no objective forms

of aesthetics or beauty, as Vattimo explains. One should not pursue sublimity in modernist and postmodernist poetry. The contemporary poets have gone far away from their ancestors Shakespeare, Tennyson, Shelly, or Keats. These poems were the most elevated gauges of brilliance and excellence. Yet, something occurred in the transit to the twentieth century: the significant, the rousing, and the delightful were supplanted by the new, the different, and the monstrous. What arrived was the temporality of work of art in the modern world, as Vattimo declares. Since a poem does not arouse any deep feeling in us, why should we learn it by heart or recite it?

In *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* (2001), Krzysztof Ziarek acknowledges that this iconoclastic and even humorous poem by Stein is the reoccurring and rethinking of every day. It is something ordinary according to what Heidegger and Vattimo consider. And this ordinariness is something that just happens in modern art. Ziarek accepts that even the language of this poetry is typical and mundane, considering that Stein's work is an avant-garde "poetics of event", since Stein states the nouns and names without using them, thus adding to their everydayness. (Ziarek 2001: 26 and 151-185).

Stein brings art to the deck of the prosaic and the mundane, so everything depends on our interpretation of this ordinariness in the modern world. We are now living in a world that is a facet of the more general condition of the end of metaphysics. It is the end or decline of artistic forms of literature, especially poetry. This doesn't mean that free verse is not beautiful or lyrical. The first generation of poets who endeavored to write free verse like Ezra Pound, Walt Whitman, and Eliot were great poets of prominent impact. Reading their poetry is enjoyable, but from then on, some kind of nasty poetry emerged which one may reluctantly call art or even a piece of literature. One of the main reasons that people nowadays do not read poems is the fact that no good ones have been written by any good poet. The main readers and admirers are now poets themselves. Today the senseless, the futile, and the offensive are held up as the best of modern art. Vattimo believes in the nothingness and the nihilistic view of art in the modern world. And that is really what's going on in the literature of our time. Our literature is going to pave a boring and vague path for the next generation of artists.

To better discuss Stein's poem, one should consider that she has completely discarded intense language and artistic meters for the sake of everyday words and prose rhythms. Meter is the fundamental aspect of

traditional poetry but at the same time, it is the very thing we cannot locate in modern poetry. Modern and postmodern philosophers of poetry do not believe in rules or regulations regarding art. Stein's poem has no meter, it seems more like prose than poetry, and it still claims to affect the readers so much as a traditional poem with metrical elements. The funniest coincidence is that today those poets who write in traditional meters, like Edgar Bowers, have to apologize for their backwardness (Clausen 1978: 79).

Stein's poem is an outstanding example of what Vattimo calls the death of art. The death of art is one of many different events that occur to the post-metaphysical subject. But how did this happen? Beginning in the late 19th century, a group called the Impressionists opposed the French institute des Beaux-Arts and its established measures. The Impressionists or the new modernists inaugurated aesthetic relativism. Based on aesthetic relativism, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. But with each new generation standards declined until there were no standards. Today we can call this phenomenon the decline of artistic standards and all that was left was personal expression. The first person who proposes the idea of the death of art was Giorgio Vasari, a sixteenth-century biographer, and historian, and less than 300 years later, it was Hegel who in 1828 alluded to the concept of the death of art. In his last speech, Hegel predicted that with the emerging of the industrial and modern world, art will decline sooner or later. In 1984, Arthur Danto published an essay called "Death of art". He claimed that this essay is an answer to the awful situation of the world of art, for which he was searching for a solution. Although we cannot consider industrialization and modernism as the only causes of the death of art, such developments had vast effects on the changing of tastes and views on art.

Gombrich in his *The Story of Art* ends this debate by declaring that nothing as art exists but an artist: "There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists" (Gombrich 1951: 5). Vattimo thinks that with the death of art in modern times, the truth of art will reveal itself. Although this poses a contradiction, what Vattimo means by truth is that "nothing" which Heidegger assumes that happens in the painting of Van Gogh. Vattimo warns us against understanding the idea of the death of art as a strictly defined fact. It is impossible to establish exactly when art terminated because this notion does not relate to the actual exhaustion of humankind's creative potential, as one might expect. Vattimo witnesses the end of art as a utopia of reintegration, as an anesthetization of mass culture, and an

authentic art's suicide and silence. So, the death of aesthetic philosophy mirrors the death of art.

Christopher Clausen in his paper "The Decline of Anglo-American poetry" cunningly remembers that Robert Frost in a famous exaggeration compared writing free verse to the act of playing tennis without a net (Clausen 2003: 80). This kind of game is funny and tedious enough even to watch, like the modern kind of poetry is not worthwhile to read and discuss. Modernist poets and critics believe that traditional English meters are outdated and should be replaced by the rhythms of everyday speech. This norm has prevailed since Pound blamed iambic pentameter. Nowadays, only children's poetry has the traditional rhyme and meter. Even Percy Bysshe Shelly, the great poet of the romantic period, assumed that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. Modernist and postmodernist poets like Stein, Riley and so many others reveal nothing about truth and teach us nothing. As Vattimo accepts, poetry makes nothing happen in the modern world. So, he assumes that the death of aesthetic philosophy mirrors the death of art. And it is something to which we must yield, from which we must heal ourselves, and to which we must resign ourselves (Vattimo 2000: 192).

The situation of death or decline of art in which we are living today is philosophically interpretable as one aspect of one more general event, concerning the term being. In Nietzsche's nihilism, the being is what disappears and perishes. Being is not what remains but rather what is born and dies. So, we deal with the framework of an accomplished metaphysics that has arrived at its end (Vattimo 2000: 192). From Vattimo's point of view, the death of art is the end of metaphysics, as prophesized by Hegel, as lived by Nietzsche and as registered by Heidegger. What is destined for us, and is something which we simply cannot ignore is the prophesy or utopia of a society in which art no longer exists as a specific phenomenon but has been suppressed and ablated through a general anesthetization of existence (Vattimo 2000: 188). As in the case of Stein's poetry, we use every other art as a mere equipment or tool. For instance, we deal with an art like photography, not for creating certain artistic effects but for its most elementary function of duplication. Therefore, it is not a matter of self-reference but a question of facts linked to the death of art in the sense of an explosion of aesthetics (Vattimo 2000: 188). This form of utility and usefulness happens when there is no genius on the part of the artist. The world that we live in today is the world of the death of art, the poetry that we read and hear today is the poetry of the age of decline of art. In this

artificial world, Vattimo believes that silence would be the language of real art (Sosnoski 1992: 310).

As long as the true concept of art concerns, one does not consider Stein's poetry or any new form of art real, because they intentionally distort the traditional meanings and values of art. When we encounter such poems or artworks like the one of Stein, we should consider the fact that we didn't lose the real art, but the reality and the values have been degraded and lost their essence. The modernist and postmodernist truth is that the core and essence of an artist's point of view has been reduced to something defective and nonsense. From the Marx period to modern times, art is being produced in large amounts like products. Marx believes that art has a deep connection with economics. Therefore, what we read today as lines of poetry and the fact that we sometimes appraise artists and critics is not for aesthetic enjoyment but sale and trade.

Still, Vattimo's viewpoint is that we cannot estimate the true value of art when we still believe in the traditional norms, and to grasp the real essence and meaning of a piece of poetry, architecture, or painting, we should evaluate them by the postmodernist language and images. If we want to estimate the worth of Stein's poem "A Substance in a Cushion", we should read her contemporary poets or the postmodernist poetry, like a composition by Theophile Marzial's, entitled "A Tragedy" (1873), which begins like this: "Death! / Plop. / The barges down in the river flop. / Flop, plop". That's exactly what Lynne Tilman mentions in her essay "Reconsidering the Genius of Gertrude Stein" (2012): "Stein's work of consciousness depends on the reader's consciousness and unconsciousness to engage them". Just like Foucault, Vattimo rejects the idea of the evolution of art and supposes that art just moves from one level to another. In every phase, each paradigm loses its qualification and gives its way to another paradigm. Yet unfortunately, Vattimo acknowledges that the modern paradigm is the distortion of all traditional ones. That is what we are witnessing in Stein's poem as a modern type of art.

Another crucial factor is the role of the artist and poet that is being shattered in the modern world. There is no trace of dignity and worthiness concerning the traditional role of the poet anymore. No longer has the poet any access to the ultimate realm of the truth. The poet has lost the ability to move the reader as traditional poetry accomplished so many times. Nowadays, the poet has been put out of the stage and people are reluctant to read any line of poetry: they prefer listening to music or watching movies that impress them more. From the twentieth century on, the role of the poet

is superfluous, and we do not feel their need anymore. In the case of the artist as a poet, with the breakdown of these objective ideas of what constitutes the beautiful or what constitute the sublime, anything that art can display, do or say, anything that labels poetry can be practiced and put on display, whether it has any meaning or significance at all. What happens is that nobody ever trusts the role of the poet in this sense anymore. Hence modernists and postmodernists like Gertrude Stein somehow began to deconstruct these ideas and metaphysical thought systems. They became the suspects and so many individuals targeted them as a kind of criminal for misleading the readers from the true core of the real poetry. What happens in Stein's poetry is the rejection of any specific standard proper of traditional poetry. Poets like Stein are bored of the normal way of exploiting words and are searching for a new method of expressing themselves. Some may think that poetry does not affect much in the ground scheme of things, but it emulates life and therefore informs us something about the health of the society in which we are living in. We cannot live without poetry, and that poetry should awaken the sense of sublime and exquisite in us, the dream that modern and postmodern poetry can no longer fulfill. And this degradation is a cultural tragedy for postmodern art.

Stein's poem requires a new way of reading, a journey into starts and stops by juxtaposing merely no emotional lines of poetry. One should not read the poem to make sense; rather it is read for the sake of its sounds and music. In reading this poem we should abandon completely any preconceptions about traditional usual poetry. This poem consists of some dull, no descriptive words. At first glance, one may think it is prose, not poetry since the lines are long and there is no rhyme. The question is how can we infer deep meanings from poetry like this? How can we compare these lines to the traditional poems of the eighteenth or even nineteenth century? Is it not just like a painter who throws paint on the canvas and then attempts to find meaning for his art? Some may find this kind of art innovative, but the truth is that there is no technique, no essence or soul in these works. By rejecting the conversions of early nineteenth-century literature, Stein developed a different way of expression that was more like the work of post-impressionists and cubists in visual art. Renate Stendhal in his essay "Why the witch hunts against Gertrude Stein?" (2012) mentioned that Stein was one of the most well-known but least read American poets. Her writing was not welcomed in her lifetime, and she was forced to publish them. Vattimo does not believe in the Hegelian Death of art. Art cannot perish. As long as we live, we encounter different forms of art,

whether we applaud it or not. What Vattimo means by the death of art is the decline of artistic creations. It is not death because when we consider phenomena to be dead, we mean that it can no longer exist and get reborn. When we consider the death of poetry for the modern times in which we live, we mean that we no longer have any kind of grandiose poetry. Although everybody knows that we can still have so many poets that regenerate the sublimity, the truth is that the traditional brilliant substance cannot be recreated in our time. There is no regeneration of those old, elevated poets. Something has declined and lost its essence in our time. That's the captivating and efficacious shapes and contents in poems. Gertrude Stein is not an exception. We should not expect a modern poet not to follow the fashion of her contemporaries. Picasso at her time painted several pictures which were greeted as a new form called cubism, while the public knew that those pictures didn't keep any adherence to the traditional rules.

B. L. Reid in his book *Art by Subtraction: A Dissenting opinion of Gertrude Stein* (1958) states that most of Stein's writing and poetry is unreadable and there is no intellectual value in her art. He further added that her poetry is not written for the normal mind and that one may waste his or her time reading her poetry (Reid 1958: 93). In an article called "Gertrude Stein: A Literary Idiot" (2007), Michael Gold frankly criticized Stein for her art and poetry. He expressed that Gertrude Stein's work shows a vivid example of the most extreme subjectivism of the contemporary bourgeois artist and a reflection of the ideological anarchy into which the whole of bourgeois literature has fallen. He goes so far as to call her art insanity. And he even calls this madness deliberate. He believes that she makes bad poetry just because she didn't grasp the nature of art and the function of language fully (Gold 2007: 24-25).

We may try our best to grasp what is hidden inside Stein's poem and still we may be unsuccessful. Stein somehow shatters the normal way of using grammar and syntax. As Gold claims, she does not care to communicate with her readers, because so far she does not have anything to communicate at all (Gold 2007: 25). Gold blames her wealth for this error. He supposes she did not have to worry about anything but producing nonsense (Gold 2007: 25). Modern philosophy believes in what the reader conceives from the total idea of the work. As long as the artist is successful to convey a truth, we can call the work a piece of art. In "Heidegger's Philosophy of Art", Julian Young mentions Heidegger's view that while the art of great Homer and Sophocles gathered an entire culture together, the

modern art only exists for the enjoyment of a few groups (Young 2001: 12). What it means is “for us today, art belongs in the domain of pastry chef” (Thomson 2011: 46). Stein’s poetry may appeal to some modern readers who advocate the irregular forms of art and adhere to them just for the sake of its beauty. But in fact, it is what Hegel, Heidegger, and Vattimo call the loss of true sense. In the *Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger beautifully explains:

Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself. One may well hope that art will continue to advance and perfect itself but it’s for has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit. In all these relationships, art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past (Heidegger 1971: 80).

Therefore, according to Heidegger, we should not expect from a line of poetry like “A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” to convey truth. Or in the poem “A Substance in a Cushion”, discussed in this article, “Sugar is not vegetable” does not satisfy our highest need of the spirit. As it has been mentioned several times in this paper, true art is of yore. Natalia Cecire in her article “Ways of not reading Gertrude Stein” maintains that Stein’s works establish a tight loop between the unreadable text and the non-reading of that text: the unreadable text precludes reading, while the conventions of non-reading (diagnosis, sampling, and viewing) produce the text as unreadable—indeed, as, in a certain sense, not text. Like the body itself, Stein’s writing cannot be read, only sampled, tested, anatomized, and diagnosed—treated quite literally like a corpus (Cecire 2015: 293).

Something worth mentioning is that newness is one of the most vital qualities of avant-guard. Everything can be coined and regarded as a new element in poetry. For instance, the line “Callous is something that hardening leaves behind what will be soft if there is a genuine interest in there being present as many girls as men” does not seem like the ordinary line of poetry, even in a blank poem. Although these kinds of poems do not have regular rhyme and rhythms, they follow some rules regarding the breaking of the sentence into readable musical lines. We do not witness such points in this poem. It is as if Stein has some pieces of a puzzle in her mind and she just strained to put them all together neglecting their right order. It is remarkable how many times the words “difference” and “change” are repeated in the poem. For sure she is adhering to changes. But is this change the medium which would alter the spirit of art in society?

Will it upgrade art to a better stage? Modern poets like Stein tend to put an end to something that had a beginning and a middling. Poetry and art in the modern and postmodern world maintain a necessary feeling of ending a phase that has commenced a long time ago. Stein protests the fact that the poem should have legibility, structure, and fixed meaning. From the modern time forward, everything is about the end. It is all about taking over a precious burden that so many artists have carried on their backs for a long time, as if they desired to make themselves free of these confinements, regulations, and hardships that make the poetry what it is and what it should be. The question here is whether the excuse for inserting something new and odd which does not possess any beauty at all is convenient or not. Stein is just like so many spoilers who try to ruin the ending. And she thinks it is just a beginning of an ending, the beginning of the ending of poetry and art. This is the end of metaphysics as mentioned occasionally by Vattimo.

We can skim Gertrude Stein's poetry from a different angle. She somehow breaks the rules as Pound and Eliot did, as Picasso designed in his paintings. It is a new form and at the same time a new being. She inaugurated a tradition that shatters the old ways of meaning and content of poetry. She injected everydayness and mundane into her poems. She constructed something new. As Vattimo has maintained, the perpetual innovations of modernity build conditions by which innovation alone is primed to flourish (59). Tony Tost in his thesis "Machine Poetics: Pound, Stein and the Modernist Imagination", confirmed this fact by a reference to another icon of modernism: Marcel Duchamp's submission of a urinal, titled "*Fountain*" with the pseudonym R. Mutt, for an exhibition in New York in 1917 (45), which was a big shock. Later Duchamp wrote this in defense:

What were the grounds for refusing Mr Mutt's fountain: -- 1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar. 2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing. Now Mr Mutt's fountain is not immoral, that is absurd, no more than a bathtub is immoral. It is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers' show windows. Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view -- created a new thought for that object. As for plumbing, that is absurd. The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges (Duchamp 1917, in Harrison and Wood 2003: 63).

When Duchamp formed a new thought and presented it as a new kind of art, he assembled the first brand new thought for it. The urinal was successful not because it was placed in the exhibition, but by shattering the norms through its refused entry (Tost 2011: 46). Perhaps it's the same refusal and objection that Stein was expecting to receive to authenticate that her art possessed an innovation and distinction. In a 1924 letter published in the *Transatlantic Review*, Mina Loy condemns those who ignore the impact of modernity and modernism by saying:

Modernism is a prophet crying in the wilderness of stabilized culture that humanity is wasting its aesthetic time. For there is a considerable extension of time between the visits to the picture gallery, the museum, the library. It asks what is happening to your aesthetic consciousness during the long long intervals? The flux of life is pouring its aesthetic aspect into your eyes, your ears—and you ignore it because you are looking for your canons of beauty in some sort of frame or glass case of tradition . . . Would not life be lovelier if you were constantly overjoyed by the sublimely pure concavity of your wash bowls? (Loy 1924: 429-430)

On the other hand, in “Sense, Science and the Interpretations of Gertrude Stein”, Robert Chodat calls Stein the creator of unrelenting randomness and states:

Are Stein's portraits no better than a linguistic random-number generator? Stein of course spent a long time in crafting her texts, sometimes months. What, then, could she have been doing all that time if her texts are simply akin to an infant's rambling mutterings? And what reason is there for us, in turn, to continue reading her texts at all? (Chodat 2005: 597)

Conclusion

Apart from all these criticisms and acclamations of Stein's work, what is truly evident in Stein's poetry is the undeniable decline of art that Vattimo discussed in his objections on the part of art and the artist. As Vattimo noticed, the main motivation for this decline is the growing technology that modern society is struggling with. The technology and the extension of mass media in the modern world paved the way for the new artists and poets to disturb the quiet harmless atmosphere of tradition. It's somehow the echoes of Nietzsche's diagnosis of modern nihilism. Therefore, in this ontology of decline, every thought like that of Stein's underlying concepts of her poems opens itself up to the fallen and negative

meanings in art. What the readers today encounter as poetry is a mechanical reproduction of ideas and validities that would rarely awaken the feeling of sublimity in them. For Vattimo, this witness of the decline of art is not so negative, since this is the only condition that we can find to understand the being, the founding of true art. Poets like Stein and artists like Duchamp assist us to come to a new understanding. That new achievement is the appreciation of true work of art.

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“AL MARGEN DE CICERÓN. QUERIDO AMIGO”:
LA RECEPCIÓN DE CICERÓN EN LA POESÍA DE
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Resumen

“Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo”, incluido en la sección “Al margen” de *Homenaje* (1967), nos invita al estudio de una manifestación de la recepción clásica en la obra poética de Jorge Guillén (1893-1984). Tras su acercamiento al tratado ciceroniano *Laelius* o *De amicitia*, el profesor-poeta desarrolla una profunda reflexión sobre la naturaleza de la amistad y las dificultades que debe afrontar, hasta llegar a la conclusión de que la amistad es uno de los valores más importantes de la vida humana. Si se ha afirmado que el grupo de poetas del 27 es la “generación de la amistad”, Jorge Guillén, como destacado miembro del grupo, es también el poeta de la amistad: de ahí que sea este el aspecto que más le interesa de Cicerón.

Palabras clave: Jorge Guillén, Cicerón, *Laelius de amicitia*, Recepción Clásica, hipertextualidad

“AL MARGEN DE CICERÓN. QUERIDO AMIGO”:
THE RECEPTION OF CICERO’S *DE AMICITIA* IN
THE POETRY BY JORGE GUILLÉN

Abstract

The poem “Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo” by Jorge Guillén (1893-1984) was included in the “Al margen” section of the poetry book *Homenaje* (1967). This text invites the reader to explore an exciting manifestation of Classical reception in Guillén's poetry. After delving into Cicero's treatise *Laelius* or *De amicitia*, the professor-poet offers a profound reflection on the nature of friendship and the challenges it must confront. Ultimately, Guillén concludes that friendship is one of the most crucial values in human life. Allegedly, the group of poets known as the “Generation of 27” is often referred to as the “generation of friendship”, and Jorge Guillén, as the poet of friendship, shows particular interest in Cicero's treatment of this subject matter.

Keywords: Jorge Guillén, Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, Classical Reception, intertextuality

“AL MARGEN DE CICERÓN. QUERIDO AMIGO”: LA RECEPCIÓN DE CICERÓN EN LA POESÍA DE JORGE GUILLÉN

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1. Introducción

Abordamos en este estudio un aspecto de la recepción de la cultura clásica en la poesía de Jorge Guillén: su reflexión sobre *Laelius* o *De amicitia* de Marco Tulio Cicerón. Mostramos parte de los resultados alcanzados en una investigación más extensa, que conformó una tesis doctoral finalmente presentada en la Universidad de Córdoba (España), en el año 2020, con el título de *La Tradición Clásica en Jorge Guillén*¹.

Jorge Guillén (1893-1984) es un poeta-profesor con una gran formación clásica. Sus cuantiosas y extensas lecturas, sus constantes estudios literarios y su pasión e imaginación artística configuran su poética de manera relevante. En cada uno de los cinco poemarios ampliados que componen *Aire Nuestro* (1968, con nuevas versiones en 1977-1981, 1987, 1993 y 2008), *Cántico* (1928, 1936, 1945, 1950), *Clamor* (1957, 1960, 1963), *Homenaje* (1967), *Y otros poemas* (1973, 1979) y *Final* (1981), Guillén manifiesta su familiaridad con célebres autores de la literatura clásica, personajes históricos de la Antigüedad, así como con los dioses, héroes y criaturas de la mitología clásica.

Sin embargo, Guillén va más allá de la mera exhibición erudita de su vasto bagaje cultural y entabla una conversación intertextual con los textos de la literatura clásica grecolatina. De ahí que se haya afirmado: “entre los de su generación, Jorge Guillén es el que dejó en su obra poética una huella más profunda, continuada y bien documentada de su pasión por la cultura clásica grecolatina, reveladora de una buena lectura de los autores antiguos” (Díez de Revenga 2013: 159). También Cristóbal López, en su estudio sobre la presencia de Virgilio en la obra de nuestro vallisoletano, comenta:

¹ Doctora: Gema María Molina Mellado. Directores: Miguel Rodríguez-Pantoja Márquez y Gabriel Laguna Mariscal.

Jorge Guillén se nos revela como lector entusiasta por igual de las grandes figuras de la literatura griega y de la latina. Y como recreador de sus argumentos con una —inusual en su momento histórico— gran proximidad a las fuentes. Actitud classicista no muy distinta, a veces, que la de los poetas renacentistas. (Cristóbal López 1997b: 39)

Asimismo, numerosos estudios han examinado la presencia de la tradición clásica en Jorge Guillén². Como manifestación concreta de ese interés por la cultura clásica, Jorge Guillén nos ofrece una reflexión personal, derivada de su lectura de *Laelius* o *De amicitia* de Cicerón, en su poema “Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo”, incluido en la sección “Al margen” del libro *Homenaje* (1967).

Por su parte, Marco Tulio Cicerón (103-43 a. C.) pertenecía a una familia plebeya, elevada a la clase ecuestre. Alcanzada la mayoría de edad (90 a. C.), tomó la toga viril y, a instancias de su padre, recibió educación del jurista Quinto Mucio Escévola y del epicúreo Fedro. Un año después prestó servicio militar en la guerra de los Aliados. Sin embargo, como el campo de batalla no era de su interés, se inició en el estudio de la filosofía con Filón de Larisa, el pontífice Escévola y el estoico Diódoto, a quien acogió en su casa hasta que murió (60 a. C.) (Pineda 2015: 63). La filosofía, definida por Cicerón, era *omnium mater artium, quid est aliud nisi, ut Plato, donum, ut ego, inventum deorum?*³ (*Tusc.* 1.64).

Tenía sólo veinticinco años cuando defendió a Publio Quincio en los tribunales y veintiséis cuando consiguió que absolvieran a Sexto Roscio. Este último logro le proporcionó una gran reputación, pero también se cernió sobre su cabeza la amenaza de Sila y su entorno (Ranz 1957: 32-3). Por ello, decidió retirarse y permanecer dos años entre Atenas, Asia Menor y Rodas, donde profundizó en sus estudios con Zenón de Sidón, Antíoco de Ascalón, Apolonio Molón y Posidonio de Apamea, entre otros. Alejado del epicureísmo, los pitagóricos y el dogmatismo estoico, quienes proponían el ocio especulativo, siguió de cerca los postulados utópicos de Platón. En el

² De Cuenca (1976), Alvar López (1984a, 1984b), Ballcels (1993), García Gual (1993), Cristóbal López (1997a, 1997b), Guerrero Contreras (2001), Cristóbal López (2002) 145-164, Richeux Diano (2005) 61-92, Molina Mellado (2008) y Molina Mellado – Laguna Mariscal (2020).

³ “Madre de todas las artes, ¿qué otra cosa es sin, o, como dice Platón, un regalo, o como sostengo yo, un hallazgo de los dioses?”. Todas las traducciones de los fragmentos de las *Disputaciones Tusculanas* proceden de Medina (2005).

filósofo debía recaer la obligación de dirigir el Estado con la única finalidad de enseñar y educar a los ciudadanos la virtud, que queda definida así:

Appellata est enim ex viro virtus; viri autem propria maxime est fortitudo, cuius munera duo sunt maxima, mortis dolorisque contemptio. Utendum est igitur his, si virtutis compotes, vel potius si viri volumus esse, quoniam a viris virtus nomen est mutuata. Quaeres fortasse quo modo, et recte; talem enim medicinam philosophia profitetur (Cic. *Tusc.* 2, 43).

En realidad, la palabra virtud deriva de *vir*; ahora bien, la característica esencial de un *vir* (hombre) es la fortaleza, cuyas funciones principales son dos: el desprecio de la muerte y el desprecio del dolor, de manera que debemos ponerlos en práctica si queremos estar en posesión de la virtud, o, mejor dicho, si queremos ser hombres, puesto que la virtud ha tomado su nombre de *viris* (hombres). Tú me preguntarás quizá de qué modo y con razón; en realidad tal es la medicina que la filosofía proclama poseer (Medina, 2005).

Desarrolló un completo *cursus honorum* como cuestor en Sicilia (75 a. C.), edil en Roma (69 a. C.) y pretor (66 a.C.). Finalmente fue nombrado cónsul y proclamado “pater patriae” en el 63 a. C., cuando desmontó la conjuración de Catilina (Vicuña 1994: 90).

De este modo, su trayectoria política y su apasionada dedicación a la abogacía fueron intensas y prolíficas, pese a que sufrió peligros y desgracias, como la tentativa de asesinato por Catilina (63 a. C.) o su forzado exilio impuesto por Clodio (58 a. C.). En el 53 a. C. los clodianos llegaron a destruir su casa del Palatino y a destrozar sus fincas en Túsculo y Formias, hasta el punto de hacerle pensar en el suicidio, como vemos en algunas de sus cartas de ese año (*Att.* 2.3 o *Fam.* 114.4), César lo persigue durante la guerra civil y le obliga a abandonar Roma (49 a. C.), hasta que consiguió su perdón dos años más tarde. Además, su obra filosófica quedó ensombrecida por cuatro funestos acontecimientos acaecidos durante los tres últimos años de su vida: la derrota de Pompeyo en Farsalia (48 a. C.), el divorcio de su mujer Terencia (46 a. C.), la derrota de los pompeyanos en Munda (45 a. C.) y la muerte de su hija Tulia al año siguiente.

En cuanto a las obras filosóficas que compuso en el 45 a. C. destacan *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, *De natura deorum* y *De divinatione*. Por último, un año antes de ser asesinado (44 a. C.), compuso *Cato Maior de senectute*, *De fato*, *Laelius de amicitia* y *De officiis*, los cuales, hasta hace poco, como recoge Torrego, han sido casi

olvidados, porque se les reprochaba eclecticismo y escasa originalidad. Pese a esto, es necesario reconocerle su labor de adaptación del pensamiento griego al contexto romano, así como la transmisión de esa filosofía al pensamiento occidental, a manera de eslabón de una cadena (Torrego 2009: 14).

Jorge Guillén se incluye también en esa lista de autores que rinden culto a la labor filosófica ciceroniana, participando, de este modo, en “la cadena de la memoria, que es la que conserva viva la esencia de las personas” (Torrego 2009: 29). El poema “Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo” se presenta, como decíamos arriba, como una reflexión personal del poeta, derivada de su lectura de *Laelius de amicitia*⁴. A continuación, recogemos el texto completo del poema de Guillén, por la edición de *Aire Nuestro* de Barrero Pérez (2006: 28):

AL MARGEN DE CICERÓN

QUERIDO AMIGO

*...veritatem sine qua nomen amicitiae
valere non potest*

“De amicitia”, 25

Amigo: no querrás que te confíe
 Todo mi pensamiento,
 Porque te dolería inútilmente
 Cruel veracidad.
 Simple rasguño hiere al delicado. 5
 Una sola palabra acabaría
 Con la dulce costumbre
 De entendernos hablando entre fricciones
 Evitables, silencios.
 Ocurre a veces que alguna alma clara 10
 Sin dolor no podría oscurecerse,
 Y resiste y se opone a la tan íntima
 Discordia entre vocablo y pensamiento:

⁴ Este diálogo latino, dedicado a su amantísimo amigo Tito Pomponio Ático, está situado dramáticamente antes de la muerte de Escipión Emiliano (129 a. C.), varón muy elogiado por su virtud y contertulio de Catón el Viejo. Lelio, amigo de Escipión, y sus yernos (Cayo Fanio y Quinto Mucio Escévola el Augur) conversan sobre el origen y los fundamentos de la amistad, que se basa principalmente en la virtud.

Verdad a toda costa.
 ¿Lujo quizá imposible? 15
 Embrollo diario es más complejo
 Que la verdad, acorde simplicísimo.
 La sutil, la difícil vida impura
 Va con el corazón. Vivamos. Hombres,
 Y aquí. ¿Drama final? 20
 —Querido amigo...

2. *De amicitia sine dolore* (vv. 1-5)

Fiel devoto de la comunicación epistolar con familiares y amigos, Guillén comienza el poema como si de una carta se tratara mediante la fórmula “Querido amigo” y, acto seguido, cita como epígrafe estas palabras del tratado de Cicerón: *veritatem sine qua nomen amicitiae ualere non potest* (Cic. *Lael.* 25.92).

En primer lugar, se observa que el destinatario para nosotros es un desconocido, pero para Guillén un apreciado amigo que tiene muy presente desde el principio hasta el final de la composición y al que quiere ocultar algún asunto para impedir causarle cualquier daño:

Amigo: no querrás que te confíe
 Todo mi pensamiento
 Porque te dolería inútilmente
 Cruel veracidad.
 Simple rasguño hiere al delicado. 5
 (vv. 1-5)

En estos versos se pone de manifiesto un claro propósito, no hacer sufrir al amigo. Es decir, antepone el bienestar y la felicidad del otro a los suyos propios. En este sentido, en “Guillén por Guillén (El poeta y su poesía)”, el poeta declaraba:

Éramos amigos y con una comunidad de afanes y gustos que me ha hecho conocer por vía directa la unidad llamada generación . . . Nosotros seguimos haciendo amigos, nunca hubo pequeñeces que echaran a perder la amistad. Por eso, cuando me ha preguntado algún periodista majadero qué me parecía el premio Nobel a Vicente Aleixandre, yo he contestado, perplejo: “Es un amigo de toda la vida, un amigo entrañable. Me he alegrado mucho”.

Mi gran amigo fue Salinas⁵ . . . Fue mi hermano mayor. Me hice más amigo suyo desde que leyó mis versos. Nadie se hubiera alegrado como él de ver mi obra cumplida (Dónoan 1987: 51).

Así, ese comportamiento generoso y leal lleva a Guillén a estar incluido en la categoría ciceroniana de los *boni*. Sin ellos la amistad, entendida como *omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio*⁶ (Cic. *Lael.* 20), no existiría: *Sed hoc primum sentio, nisi in bonis amicitiam esse non posse*⁷ (Cic. *Lael.* 18). Desinteresadamente se pone en el lugar del otro, prevé su sufrimiento y le comunica su intención de evitárselo, como lo haría cualquier “hombre de bien”: *Multaeque res sunt in quibus de suis commodis viri boni multa detrahunt detrahique patiuntur, ut iis amici potius quam ipsi fruantur*⁸ (Cic. *Lael.* 57). De esta forma, ambos se unen en un mismo espíritu: *se ipse diligit et alterum acquirit, cuius animum ita cum suo misceat ut efficiat paene unum ex duobus*⁹ (Cic. *Lael.* 81). El dolor de uno implica el dolor del otro. La amistad se tasa aquí como el más puro, elevado y perfecto amor, una virtud compartida y desinteresada:

Ipsae enim se quisque diligit, non ut aliquam a se ipse mercedem exigat caritatis suae, sed quod per se sibi quisque carus est. Quod nisi idem in amicitiam transferetur, verus amicus numquam reperietur; est enim is qui est tamquam alter idem (Cic. *Lael.* 80).

Pues cada uno se ama a él mismo, no para que él mismo exija de sí alguna recompensa de su afecto, sino porque por sí cada uno es querido para sí. Sí

⁵ Aparece en la dedicatoria final de *Cántico* dirigiéndole estas sentidas palabras: “Amigo perfecto, / que entre tantas vicisitudes, / durante muchos años, / ha querido y sabido iluminar / con su atención / la marcha de esta obra, / siempre con rumbo a ese lector posible / que será amigo nuestro: / hombre como nosotros / ávido / de compartir la vida como fuente, / de consumir la plenitud del ser / en la piel plenitud de las palabras.” (Barrero 2008: 541).

⁶ “El acuerdo de todas las cosas divinas y humanas con benevolencia y amor.”

⁷ “Pero primero siento esto: que la amistad no puede existir a no ser entre los buenos.”

⁸ “Y hay muchas cosas en las cuales los hombres buenos quitan y sufren que se quiten muchas cosas de sus propias ventajas, para que los amigos disfruten de ellas mejor que ellos mismos.”

⁹ “Este no sólo él mismo se ama, sino que busca a otro, cuyo espíritu mezcle con el suyo de tal modo que casi haga uno solo de dos.”

esto no se transfiere a la amistad, nunca se encontrará un verdadero amigo; pues éste es ciertamente como otro él mismo. (Medina, 2005)

3. *Amicitia versus veritas* (vv. 6-14)

En los siguientes versos el poeta expresa su temor de que una palabra acabe con la complicidad entre los dos. Supondría poner en peligro su *amor amicitiae*, que llega a vislumbrarse aun cuando la palabra no interviene:

Una sola palabra acabaría
Con la dulce costumbre
De entendernos hablando entre fricciones
Evitables silencios
(vv. 6-9)

Pero, ahora bien, ¿es preferible el amigo que se propone disfrazar su dolor para no alterar al otro o aquel que está preparado a enfrentarse a cualquier obstáculo para salvaguardar su relación amistosa? Guillén opta por la verdad frente al engañoso agrado:

Ocurre a veces que alguna alma clara
Sin dolor no podría oscurecerse,
Y resiste y se opone a la tan íntima
Discordia entre vocablo y pensamiento:
Verdad a toda costa.
(vv. 10-14)

En esa misma línea, Cicerón había aconsejado la verdad radical frente a la adulación, propia de los “falsos amigos”:

Molesta veritas, siquidem ex ea nascitur odium, quod est venenum amicitiae, sed obsequium multo molestius, quod peccatis indulgens praecipitem amicum ferri sinit; maxima autem culpa in eo, qui et veritatem aspernatur et in fraudem obsequio impellitur. Omni igitur hac in re habenda ratio et diligentia est, primum ut monitio acerbitate, deinde ut obiurgatio contumelia careat; in obsequio autem, . . . comitas adsit, assentatio, vitiorum adiutrix, procul amoveatur, quae non modo amico, sed ne libero quidem digna est; aliter enim cum tyranno, aliter cum amico vivitur (Cic. *Lael.* 89).

La verdad es molesta, puesto que nace de ella el odio, que es el veneno de la amistad, pero mucho más molesta es la complacencia, que, indulgente con

los pecados, permite que el amigo sea llevado de cabeza. Pero la mayor culpa está en aquel que desprecia la verdad y es impelido al fraude por la complacencia. Así pues, toda medida y diligencia debe ser tenida en esta cosa, primero, para que la amonestación carezca de acritud, luego, para que la reprensión carezca de ultraje; pero en la complacencia, . . . esté presente la cortesía; apártese lejos la adulación, ayudante de los vicios, que no es digna, no sólo de un amigo, sino ni siquiera de un hombre libre; pues de un modo se vive con un tirano, de otro modo con un amigo (Medina 2005).

Ante el lamento de la otra persona, a menudo se dibuja el perfecto perfil del amigo que nunca falla, cuya confianza (*fides*) y cariño (*caritas*)¹⁰ afianzan y fortalecen el auténtico sentido de la amistad, que hunde sus raíces solo en la verdad: *Cum autem omnium rerum simulatio vitiosa est (tollit enim iudicium veri idque adulterat), tum amicitiae repugnat maxime; delet enim veritatem, sine qua nomen amicitiae valere non potest*¹¹ (Cic. *Lael.* 92).

3. *Vera amicitia in dolore* (vv. 15-20)

Llegados a los últimos versos del poema, Guillén se plantea si la amistad y la verdad, como propone Cicerón en el *Laelius*, pueden concebirse unidas. Esto se debe a que el entorno en el que se encuadra la especie humana no es precisamente el más apropiado para una relación amistosa leal, íntegra y honesta, ante las connotaciones negativas que le afectan: complejidad, fragilidad e impureza.

¿Lujo quizá imposible?
El embrollo diario es más complejo
Que la verdad, acorde simplicísimo.
La sutil, la difícil vida impura
Va con el corazón . . . (vv. 15-19)

15

¹⁰ *Haec enim est tyrannorum vita nimirum, in qua nulla fides, nulla caritas, nulla stabilis benevolentiae potest esse fiducia, omnia semper suspecta atque sollicita, nullus locus amicitiae.* (Cic. *Lael.* 52-53) (“Esta, en efecto, es ciertamente la vida de los tiranos, en la que ninguna fidelidad, ningún afecto, ninguna estable confianza de benevolencia puede haber; todas las cosas son siempre sospechosas e inquietantes; ningún lugar hay para la amistad.”)

¹¹ “Pero no sólo la simulación de todas las cosas es viciosa (pues quita el juicio de lo verdadero y lo adultera), sino también repugna especialmente a la amistad; pues borra la verdad, sin la cual el nombre de amistad no puede mantenerse.”

Aun así, el poeta invita a seguir viviendo el aquí y ahora: “Vivamos. Hombres, / Y aquí,” (vv. 19 y 20). Aunque ello suponga un probable “¿Drama fatal?” (20), la apuesta guilleniana por la amistad, asentada en la verdad y limitada a unos pocos¹², reafirma en el poeta su condición de “sabio” u “hombre de bien”, que se “contrae” con las desgracias de su compañero, como defendía Cicerón:

Quam ob rem si cadit in sapientem animi dolor, qui profecto cadit, nisi ex eius animo extirpatam humanitatem arbitramur, quae causa est cur amicitiam funditus tollamus e vita, ne aliquas propter eam suscipiamus molestias? Quid enim interest motu animi sublato non dico inter pecudem et hominem, sed inter hominem et truncum aut saxum aut quidvis generis eiusdem? Neque enim sunt isti audiendi qui virtutem duram et quasi ferream esse quandam volunt; quae quidem est cum multis in rebus, tum in amicitia tenera atque tractabilis, ut et bonis amici quasi diffundatur et incommodis contrahatur (Cic. *Lael.* 48).

Por esto, si el dolor del alma cae sobre el sabio, que ciertamente cae, si no creemos que la humanidad ha sido extirpada de su alma, ¿qué causa hay para que quitemos totalmente la amistad de la vida, para que no recibamos algunas molestias a causa de esta? Pues ¿qué diferencia hay, quitado el movimiento del alma, no digo entre un animal y un hombre, sino entre un hombre y un tronco o una roca o cualquier cosa del mismo estilo? Pues no deben ser oídos esos que quieren una virtud dura y casi de hierro; esta es ciertamente, no sólo en muchas cosas, sino especialmente en la amistad, tierna y manejable, de modo que en cierto modo se difunde con los bienes de un amigo, y se contrae con sus desgracias. (Medina 2005)

4. Conclusiones

Llegados a este punto, podemos afirmar que el poema “Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo”, perteneciente a “Al margen” de *Homenaje* (1967), está planteado como una reflexión personal derivada de su lectura de *Laelius* o *De amicitia*. Sus versos construyen una trascendental

¹² *Quanta autem vis amicitiae sit, ex hoc intellegi maxime potest, quod ex infinita societate generis humani, quam conciliavit ipsa natura, ita contracta res est et adducta in angustum ut omnis caritas aut inter duos aut inter paucos iungeretur* (Cic. *Lael.* 20): (“Pero cuánta es la fuerza de la amistad puede entenderse especialmente a partir de esto, porque, de la infinita sociedad del género humano, la cual concilió la propia naturaleza, este hecho se ha contraído y reducido a algo estrecho, de tal manera que todo amor se juntara o entre dos o entre pocos”).

exhortación a la amistad y a la superación de los escollos que esta puede conllevar. Entre ellos, en el poema se mencionan la adulación, la falta de veracidad o la controvertida dualidad entre “vocablo” y “pensamiento” (v.13). Sólo de esta forma, tal y como defendía Cicerón, la amistad puede llegar a convertirse en la eminente relación efectiva entre los hombres.

Jorge Guillén entiende la amistad como uno de los valores más importantes de la vida humana. En este poema “Al margen de Cicerón. Querido amigo” retoma la amistad concebida como un ideal exigente que, pese a que pueda quebrarse, corromperse o no ser eterna, definitivamente lo es todo y “el resto es selva”, como proclama en el poema “Los amigos” de la sección “El pájaro en la mano” de *Cántico*:

Amigos. Nadie más. El resto es selva.	
¡Humanos, libres, lentamente ociosos!	
Un amor que no jura ni promete	
Reunirá a unos hombres en el aire,	
Con el aire salvándose. Palabras	5
Quieren, sólo palabras y una orilla:	
Esos recodos verdes frente al verde	
Sereno, claro, general del río.	
¡Cómo resbalarán sobre las horas	
La vacación, el alma, los tesoros! ¹³	10

¹³ Otros poemas dedicados a sus amigos: “José Moreno Villa”, “Pedro Salinas”, “Emilio Prados”, “Federico García Lorca” y “Manuel Altolaguirre” (sección “Atenciones” de *Homenaje*), “Con amigos” (sección “Fin” de *Homenaje*), “Pasado en presente” (sección “Estudios” de *Y otros poemas*), “Un fondo” (sección “Sátiras” de *Y otros poemas*) y “Hombre soy que nunca se aburre” (sección “Epigramas” de *Y otros poemas*).

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POSTMODERN AESTHETICS IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article examines contemporary critical positions in African literature that mark off perceptible shifts in focus from issues of primal postcolonialism to a more self-reflexive treatment of postmodernism in contemporary African literature. Contemporary African literary works, novels, and plays have become markedly self-reflexive in the way they rewrite one another and draw attention to their own functionality and fictionality. These works present stylistic and thematic departures that challenge the nationalist and realist trend of earlier writing. Creative works further depart from the tradition of “writing back” to the European colonial center by focusing their gaze on local forms of oppression that are seen to parallel classical colonialism. Yet, while critics have separately studied postmodernism and self-reflexivity in African texts, the intersection of the two has not been given sufficient attention. The purpose of this analytical paper then is to decipher postmodernist aesthetics in African literary works, novels and plays, as developed to a higher level of self-consciousness. The specific question I address is to what extent postmodernism expresses itself as an outgrowth of modernism and postcolonialism?

Keywords: Modernity, postmodernism, postcolonialism, African literary theories and criticisms.

ESTÉTICA POSMODERNA EN LA LITERATURA AFRICANA

Resumen

Este artículo examina las posiciones críticas contemporáneas en la literatura africana, que muestran cambios perceptibles de enfoque, de un poscolonialismo primario a un tratamiento más autorreflexivo del posmodernismo en la literatura africana contemporánea. Las obras literarias africanas contemporáneas (novelas y obras de teatro) se han vuelto visiblemente autorreflexivas, en la medida en que se reescriben entre sí y llaman la atención sobre su funcionalidad y ficcionalidad. Estas obras presentan una evolución estilística y temática que desafía la tendencia nacionalista y realista de los textos anteriores. Las obras estudiadas también representan una ruptura con la tradición de responder al centro colonial europeo al poner el foco en las formas locales de opresión, paralelas al colonialismo clásico. Sin embargo, aunque los críticos han estudiado por separado el posmodernismo y la autorreflexión en los textos africanos, la intersección entre los dos no ha recibido suficiente atención. El propósito de este artículo, pues, es estudiar el posmodernismo documentado en las obras literarias africanas, en la medida en que es desarrollado con un grado superior de autoconciencia. La pregunta específica que se intenta responder es hasta qué punto el posmodernismo en la literatura africana debe leerse como un desarrollo del modernismo y del poscolonialismo.

Palabras clave: modernidad, posmodernismo, poscolonialismo, teorías y críticas literarias africanas.

POSTMODERN AESTHETICS IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

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Introduction

Many critical positions in African literature have tried to locate the postmodern and showcase its functions but have arrived at diverging views that further complicate the critical apprehension of postmodernist aesthetics. New approaches have emerged that attempt to reconfigure the theoretical claims of postmodernist literature. Steven Connor, for instance, suggests that “Postmodernist theory responded to the sense that important changes had taken place in politics, economics, and social life, changes that could broadly be characterized by the two words delegitimation and dedifferentiation” (Connor 2004: 3). He argues in favor of decentralizing the authority and legitimacy of grand narratives and adds: “Authority and legitimacy were no longer so powerfully concentrated in the centers they had previously occupied” (3). Emmanuel Obiechina points out the fact that postmodern aesthetics in African literature stems from the African writers’ expression of “differences that derive from culture, experience, language, outlook, and so on. Thus, because the social and cultural background of the West African novel and the major impulses that bring it about differ from those of the English novel, we notice obvious differences between them” (Obiechina 1990: 53). Charles E. Nnolim, theorizing the postmodern, adopts a different position by saying that “The African writer in the 21st century should forget the complexes of the past and be more imaginatively aggressive, invading other continents and even the skies as new settings striving to have a global outlook in his creative output, mounting a new international phase and not limiting his canvas to the African soil” (Nnolim 2006: 4). On his side, Evan Maina Mwangi postulates that postmodern African literature occurs when “The [African] literatures mix local values with global desires and anxieties to signal what Bhabha has called ‘interstitial spaces,’ locations in which precolonial practices are not separated from colonial modernity but are mediated through mutual exchange” (Mwangi 2009: 138). These critics do not reach a consensus as to what aesthetics or ethics guide the postmodern African literature and the debate is still open to postulate new directions of

African literature criticism in postmodern aesthetics. I will use a metacritical approach to highlight the interface between postmodernism, postcolonialism and modernity. The specific question I aim to address is the extent to which modern African literary critical reception embraces postmodernism as a guiding framework to explore new horizons for fresh critical approaches in the 21st century. Two points will be discussed: how to circumscribe the postmodern in African literary theory; and the development from modernism to postmodernism.

Circumscribing the Postmodern in African Literary Theory and Criticism

The 1950s were a formative decade for writers of Achebe's and Ngugi's generation. During this period, there was a significant literary movement aimed at reclaiming African identity, dignity, and cultural revitalization. Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike's manifesto-book *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike 1980), in the words of Charles Nnolim, "made waves in the critical annals of African literature" (Nnolim 2006: 5). Nnolim's stance highlights the issue that the language debate and the determination of the accepted standards of aesthetics in African literature have created a division among African writers and critics. Consequently, a range of perspectives leads to diverse interpretations of the African literary canon. Within this framework, Catherine Fishburn advocates for an approach to literary analysis that allows critics to engage with African texts from a postmodern standpoint (Fishburn 1995: 1). Another critical response is presented in *New Directions in African Literature*, edited by Ernest N. Emenyonu, which offers an in-depth view of the position of African literature at the end of the 20th century and an examination of the directions that African literature is now taking with new and emerging writers and the growth of writing by African women (Emenyonu 2006). Contributions examine the impact of new concerns such as globalization and perspectives from Diaspora. Additionally, they explore established themes like childhood and war. After the debate over African cultural identity has been sufficiently advanced, new critical standards have emerged to question the uniformity of African ideology and to assert the necessity to have pluralistic views of African society that rhyme or dissent with Western standards. Stuart Sim in his introductory preface to an edited book about postmodernism asserts:

In a general sense, postmodernism is to be regarded as a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been structured over the last couple of centuries. It has called into question our commitment to cultural 'progress' (that economies must continue to grow, the quality of life to keep improving indefinitely, etc.), as well as the political systems that have underpinned this belief. Postmodernists often refer to the 'Enlightenment project', meaning the liberal humanist ideology that has come to dominate Western culture since the eighteenth century; an ideology that has striven to bring about the emancipation of mankind from economic want and political oppression. (Sim 2001: vii)

This critical ground is based on the idea that at the heart of the postmodern thought in African literature stands the aesthetization of critical standards that reformulate African values in the context of globalization. The postmodern African literary text embraces the ethical values cherished in Africa, assesses them within the broader context of global changing scene and redefines critical standards that put writers, critics and society in equilibrium. One may raise the question of whether it is possible to speak of authentic African values in the 21st century. African aesthetic values were defined by the Achebe generation of writers and encompass African morality, communal values of solidarity, intercommunal help, political wisdom and a pragmatic and intellectual approach to change. They were summarized by the author of *Arrow of God* through Ezeulu's voice: "The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place" (Achebe 1964: 46). Here the postmodern perception of society is encrusted in the statement that the world is constantly changing. It is engaged in an irreversible race of change, modernity, postmodernity, construction and deconstructions of values, facts and experiences, to which man has to adapt. In the African context, as Abdul R. JanMohamed foregrounds, the colonial praxis has produced "the dilemma of denigration and historical catalepsy" (1983: 151-152).

Because the moral validity and the social momentum of the indigenous culture, have been negated by European denigration and by the autocratic rule of the colonial and postcolonial government, the African finds that if he adheres to the values of his own culture he chooses to belong to a petrified culture. (JanMohamed 1983: 151-152)

However, if he accepts only the Western cultural ideology, he finds himself engulfed in a form of cultural catalepsy, because, by rejecting his

own past, he belongs to a society that has no direction and no control over its own historical evolution (151-152). Achebe's critical response to these aspects of colonial pathology foregrounds the imperatives underlying his fiction. From a postmodern approach, one can postulate that, as an intellectual and a writer he is more sensitive to cultural denigration and the necessity to preserve African values that were falling apart from the European imperialist sword. For him, the lack of self-confidence in the face of Western wind has become a pervasive ailment that is challenging to remedy.

This critical position is corroborated by Stuart Mill, who asserts:

In the view of postmodernists this project, laudable though it may have been at one time, has in its turn come to oppress human kind, and to force it into certain set ways of thought and action. It is therefore to be resisted, and postmodernists are invariably critical of universalizing theories ('grand narratives' or 'metanarratives' as they have been dubbed by the philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard), as well as being anti-authoritarian in their outlook. To move from the modern to the postmodern is to embrace skepticism about what our culture stands for and strives for (Mill 2001: vii)

Theorizing the poetics of postmodernism in African literary and cultural practices involves a critical reformulation of the African artist's function because Postmodernism as a literary movement is a border crossing theory that assembles cosmopolitan writers and different disciplines. Edward Said has argued in favor of such a border crossing theory, which he refers to as "supervening actuality of 'mixing', of crossing over, of stepping beyond boundaries" (Said 1985: 43). For Linda Hutcheon, postmodern theory enables an intertextual play and acknowledges the intellectual contingency, which reflects the intertwining nature of literary, philosophical, and critical discourses as a characteristic of the postmodern phenomenon. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, she offers a perspective of postmodernism:

What postmodern aesthetic practice shares with much contemporary theory (psychoanalytic, linguistic, analytic philosophical, hermeneutic, poststructuralist, historiographical, discourse analytic, semiotic) is an interest in interpretative strategies and in the situating of verbal utterances in social action. Although the names of Lacan, Lyotard, Barthes, Baudrillard, and Derrida tend to be the most cited in discussions of postmodernism, the other perspectives listed are just as important to any consideration of contemporary theoretical discourse and its intersection with art. We cannot ignore Marxist,

neo-pragmatist, and feminist theory, to add only three more important ones to the list. (Hutcheon 1988: 53)

Hutcheon's critical perspective encompasses an intellectual pragmatism that forms the foundation for the reevaluation and reformulation of African literary theory. That theory should not arise from what the Westerners have chosen to believe about Africa but from a more cognitive apprehension of African socio-political and cultural positions in the present world's geopolitics. It is an intellectual momentum that will gear the synergy of developmental praxis of African thinkers toward a rhetorical assertion of self to cohere with the other in a redefinition of new values for a better world. Implicitly, it is to see Africa not only as part of what Chidi Amuta calls "the changing world" but also as "a highly heterogeneous and multivalent geopolitical entity whose problems need to be confronted at the level of theories with practical implementations for both the present and the future" (Amuta 1989: 35).

Sara Mills has advocated the kind of postmodern discursive agendas that mark out African postmodern aesthetics:

An extensive body of theoretical work has been developed, mainly building upon the work of Edward Said (1978, 1993), who attempted to fuse Foucauldian discourse theory with insights from Antonio Gramsci's political writings. Some of the work by theorists such as Peter Hulme (1986) and Mary Louise Pratt (1985, 1992) is detailed... to exemplify the use of the term discourse and to show the ways in which discourse has been modified. In general, this work is described as colonial discourse theory. That work which tries to question some of the assumptions of Said's work on discourse and representation, which is largely informed by psychoanalytical theory rather than discourse theory, and which is more concerned with the effects the colonial enterprise has had on current social structures and discursive formations, is known as post-colonial discourse theory. (Mills 1997: 105)

In this excerpt, Mills advocates that Edward Said has sparked the beginning of postcolonial criticism, based on the premise that European imperialist literature has severely misrepresented the realities of Third World nations, Africa included. Consequently, these nations have had to respond and react to such distortions. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) discusses the idea of the worldliness of imperial texts. Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwhalia attempt to interpret Said:

What is crucial about the cultural productions of the West is the subtle way in which the political realities of imperialism are present in them. In the British novel, for instance, the issue of empire and imperial dominance is continually, subtly and almost ubiquitously inflected. The significance of the worldliness of these texts is that, in their writing by authors who may have had no conscious idea of the way in which the empire was represented in them, they demonstrate that there is no empire without its culture. (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 2001: 8)

Culture and Imperialism also revisits one of Said's favorite subjects: how should the post-colonial world react to the dominance of imperialism? Said's focus in this book on Western classics seems to have led many critics into the belief that he does not have a theory of resistance. But his position is more subtle. Recognizing that a "rhetoric of blame" is ultimately stultifying, he advocates a process he calls "the voyage in", where post-colonial writers take hold of the dominant modes of literary writing to expose their culture to a world audience (Mills 1997: 106). Edward Said has shown that there are a number of features which occur again and again in texts about colonized countries and that these cannot be attributed simply to the individual author's beliefs but are rather due to larger-scale belief systems structured by discursive frameworks, and are given credibility and force by the power relations found in imperialism. This aesthetic reformulation describes colonial discourse as an ensemble of linguistically based practices unified in their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships. The concept of colonial discourse is based on the assumption that, during the colonial era, significant portions of the non-European world were constructed for Europe through a discourse that interwove various questions and assumptions, methods of inquiry and analysis, and forms of writing and imagery. Hence, colonial discourse does not solely pertain to a collection of texts sharing similar subject matter, but rather encompasses a range of practices and principles that generated those texts and shaped the methodological framework underlying them. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said described the discursive features of that body of knowledge which was produced in the nineteenth century by learned scholars, travel writers, poets and novelists, which effectively created the Orient as a repository of Western knowledge, rather than as a society and culture functioning on its own terms. The Orient was generated in relation to the West and was described in terms of the way it differed from the West. Said argues that these colonized countries were described in ways which denigrated them, which represented them as a negative image, an Other, in order to convey a positive, civilized

image of British society. These representations were structured largely according to certain discursive formats which developed over time, but which accrued truth-value to themselves through usage and familiarity. Each new text which was written about the Orient reinforced particular stereotypical images and ways of thinking. As Said argues:

Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself [sic] vis-à-vis the Orient, translated into his text; this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kind of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text—all of which adds up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient and finally representing it or speaking in its behalf. (Said 1978: 20)

This struggle for representation had profound consequences as it influenced racist knowledge and practices. It established the framework within which discussions about race predominantly took place and shaped the classifications to which indigenous people and their descendants were compelled to conform and self-identify, as exemplified in works like Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* or Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*. The apparently linguistic and textual choices regarding racial categorization had extensive real-world ramifications that impacted the rights and livelihoods of indigenous populations. These consequences included the denial of human rights to certain groups, the exploitation of others as slave labor, and the dehumanization and targeted extermination of certain communities akin to the hunting of animals. Furthermore, these representations played a significant role in determining which countries were perceived as being receptive to colonial expansion, and thus deemed to require the 'civilizing' influence of European powers. I will now describe the discursive structures which Said has identified as constituting imperial knowledge, in order to delineate the ways in which his definition of discourse has modified Foucault's discursive model.

For instance, Chinua Achebe in his *Hopes and Impediments*, a collection of essays which x-rays the literary and cultural dimensions of colonial and postcolonial literatures, does not simply focus on the jingoistic, openly propagandist texts which circulated within the colonial period; he also analyses the texts which were produced in the name of scholarship: linguistic and philological analyses, history and ethnography, together with travel writings (Achebe 1989: 30). Achebe argues that those countries which had been colonized were reduced to being seen as objects of knowledge (Achebe 1989: 65). Their reality was not portrayed as being on par with that of

Western Europe. Instead, the task of colonizers, when they wrote accounts of colonized countries, was to produce what they themselves referred to as information.

Achebe argues that discursive structures circulating within the nineteenth century informed the way that knowledge was produced, so that seemingly ‘objective’ statements were, in fact, produced within a context of evaluation and denigration. Value laden statements about the inhabitants of colonized countries were presented as ‘facts’ against which there was little possibility of argument. Once this process begins, even anecdotal or fictitious information begins to accrue to its own factual status because of its production within the colonial nexus of power relations. For Said, the colonized people are dehumanized by a series of generalizations made about them within colonial texts. The practice of making sweeping generalizations about specific cultures reduced them from communities of individuals to an undifferentiated mass. This approach facilitated the accumulation of ‘knowledge’ or the application of stereotypes to these cultures. To garner the essentials from the above statements, one can say that Postmodernism includes the following phenomena as enlisted by Sky Marsen, quoted by V. Nithyanantha Bhat:

1. A conception of personal identity as fragmented or dispersed owing to our participation in various contexts, such as geographic dislocation, drastic career changes. An instance of this can be read in Ade Solanke’s *Pandora’s Box*, where the heroine Toyin and her teenage boy Timi experience cultural fragmentation and dispersal in London.

2. An abandonment of the search for origins, the original, universal, or transcendental cause. This includes the dislocation of the modernist–romantic notion of genius, the inspired creator of the new. The original work displaced by intertextuality (cross reference), parody, self-parody, and acceptance of contradiction as having no resolution, and a strong use of irony. An illustration can be found again in *Pandora’s Box* through the experience of the heroine as she finds it difficult to reconnect with her cultural roots. She relocates her dreams in London, and yet seeks a remedy for her cultural nostalgia in imported Nigerian movies.

3. A questioning of notions of linear reality and linear causally-based narratives, opting for parallel universes or multiple realities. Here, Sefi Atta gives an example through her narrative verve in *Everything Good Will Come* (2005). The protagonist Enitan Taiwo’s story is told not in a linear ethos, but is interrupted from time to time with flashbacks that reinforce the progression of the plot.

4. Socio-cultural developments associated with the mass media, such as internationalization of information (through global channels) and a dramatization of information that tends to blur the distinctions between truth and fiction. This aspect is emphasized in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah*, where the characters are created in a mass media dominated and information and communication techniques sprawling world. Thus, through a highly advanced assimilation of mobile phone applications, the manipulations of complex electronic devices, characters like Dike, Efemelu, Aisha and Mariama tend to blur the distinction between truth and fiction (Sky 2006: 30).

These points highlight the presence of postmodernism in African literature as an innovative and evolving sphere that embraces progress and change. It equates what Karin Barber says:

The literature is permeated with the vocabulary of novelty: almost every study speaks of innovation, freshness, inventiveness, modernity, topicality, change or fashion. This is not to say that popular arts are seen as being necessarily recent, only that at any given period in the past they were perceived as something new, the latest fashion. What gave them their claim to novelty, it seems to be agreed, is principally their incorporation of elements not previously present in the indigenous traditions — that is, elements imported from other cultures, usually the metropolitan ones. We have already seen that when popular arts are defined against the traditional arts, what makes people see them as popular is their syncretism. This identification is so strong that anything syncretic almost automatically qualifies as popular... What are identified as popular arts are in effect the new unofficial arts of colonialism and post-colonialism, produced by the profound and accelerating social change that has characterized these periods. (Barber 1987: 12-13)

The significance of this assertion is that many first and second-generation African writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, particularly in the Anglophone context, have sufficiently reacted against the West (Europe) as the center. They have written back to the West giving the right account of African identity, personality and cultural lores. Staying in the logic of Edward Said, Ngugi wa Thiong'o advocates the imperious necessity to move the center by struggling for more cultural freedom. He has advocated the importance of African artistic creativity that has nothing to envy to the Western Eurocentric literature. Chinua Achebe asserts that it is his responsibility to educate his audience about the fact that Africa was not introduced to culture by Europe for the first time.

The 21st century recent trends in African literature and theory have advocated the necessity to write back not to the West (Europe) but to their self. The act of Africa writing back to itself presupposes a reconsideration of critical objects to react against. Writing back to self is a new theoretical trend in African literature that goes beyond the post-independent disillusionment discourses. It is already established by most postcolonial writers that the general malaise that befriends African intellectual analysts of the post-independent period is the problematic mismanagement of African politics imprinted by the general leadership incompetence, the neglect of women's rights, the inhuman child treatment and labor, the armed conflicts on the continent, the unemployment challenges and the general poverty conditions that put the underprivileged masses of the society in confrontation with infectious epidemics and diseases.

These problems previously perceived as the direct consequences of the mismanagement of the postcolonial state by African leaders, themselves ruling as the remote-control sets of European ex-colonialists, should now be shouldered solely by the African political intelligence. In other words, there is no point indicting the West for problems whose solutions can possibly be designed by African leaders and intellectuals.

Postmodernism in African context should be a reconfiguring of critical positions that consider the self-indexation of Africans in the resolution of our own problems. Maina Mwangi suggests:

It is therefore crucial to define the term metafiction in relation to postmodernism and African literature, not only because postmodernism has a vexed relationship to indigenous African literature but also because of the various shades of meanings the term metafiction takes in different contexts. Following Dilip Gaonkar's (2001) and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's (1998) questioning of Wallerstein's view of modernity as a Western virus spreading to the rest of the world, I view metafiction not as an exclusively Western phenomenon but as an aesthetic practice that has grown simultaneously in different parts of the world. (Mwangi 2009: 8)

And adding to this, he says:

Metafiction in African literature is situated, interlinked with similar practices across the globe but entailing unique disruptions of Western postmodernisms. There are, of course, links between the different practices of metafiction, but metafiction in African literature, as in other literatures, is conjectural. It gestures to its own indigenous specific location, even when it is linked to global metafictional productions. (Mwangi 2009:8)

Postmodernism permeates African cultural theory as many African art works grapple with how to keep the essence of originality, commonality, and sameness. Postmodern temperament in African literature is self-conscious. It subjects itself to the most glaring scrutiny and to endless commentary on language question, feminist pluralism, cultural identity, and ethnicity. Writers, including novelists, playwrights or poets and independent thinkers, play a significant role in this process, alongside academics and other intellectuals. So far, the cast-list of these scrutinizers and commentators is a familiar one. What has changed is the role of these agents in the age of globalization and mass media. The postmodern age is one in which cultural activity is dominated by media industries capable of appealing directly to a public (itself the beneficiary of ‘mass education’) over the heads of any cultural elite. Katherine Fishburn in her approach to Buchi Emecheta’s fiction has underlined how Catherine Belsey rebukes Stanley Fish for failing to recognize that a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings (Fishburn 1995: 22).

African postmodernism is a pluralist confrontation of dissenting voices, diverging opinions and cosmopolitan interpretations of postcolonial issues in literature. To begin with, the language question has been much debated among African writers and dissenting voices have raised to suggest the type of language to adopt in writing African literature. While Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Fagunwa opted for writing in African language, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Alex La Guma, Nadine Gordimer, Buchi Emecheta, to mention but a few on the Anglophone side, wrote in English the colonial language. Some of Ngugi’s works were originally written in English before being translated. Examples include *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)*, *Caitani Mutharaba-ini (Devil on the Cross)*, *Maitu Njugira (Mother Sing for Me)*. Wole Soyinka translated Fagunwa’s novel *Forest of Thousand Daemons* (originally written in Yoruba) into English. Since any colonial language is inadequate in capturing the true essence of the African experience, incorporating African local names and telling African stories accurately, these writers opted for a transgression of linguistic norms, translation techniques, pidginization, and transliteration. Achebe and Soyinka are famous for their pidgin languages and the translation of Igbo and Yoruba proverbs and folktales, while Gabriel Okara is known for his hybrid Yoruba-English grammar. From a postmodern standpoint, the African writer is still grappling with the question of originality in transmitting African experience in foreign languages. From a textual

perspective, there is a notable presence of hybrid works within African literature, evident through the diverse languages employed, the usage of characters' names, the selection of settings, and the thematic considerations.

The Growth from Modern to Postmodern: A Landmark for Literary Aesthetics

The postmodern creative aesthetics feature in the images offered by the settings of African creative works. Most of the urban novels by African writers, like Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City*, *Lokotown* and *Jagua Nana* or Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, or Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* are set in cities like Lagos and Nairobi and try to capture the physical and social atmosphere of the city and to show how the characters are influenced by it. Emmanuel Obiechina infers that the reader is made aware of the constant noise of the traffic, the honking of cars, the loudspeakers blaring out high life or hip-pop tune from record shops or advertising articles from commercial vans (Obiechina 1975: 149). The hawkers are crying their wares along the streets; and there are unstable crowds massing wherever there is a pedantic magic maker, or an accident or any other short-lived street spectacle, holding up traffic, and adding to the hubbub. There are crowded slums side by side with ultra-modern office blocks. At night, there are radiant streetlamps, the desperate gaiety of nightclub life and the sordid activities in the dingy, ill-lit areas inhabited by the underworld, the pimps and the prostitutes (Obiechina 1975: 149). All these provide a setting background against which the postmodern African writers portray some of their characters playing out the hectic game of survival. Ekwensi is very successful in relating his characters to their physical and social environment of Lagos. Obiechina further maintains that he knows the Lagos of the underworld and the slums better than any other Nigerian writer (Obiechina 1975: 149). His success in relating social situations with the physical environment and at revealing characters through the setting seems intermittent, which gives rise to a panoramically developed narrative.

The postmodern African texts highlight the difficulty of the survival of genuine values and characters. The postmodern African character in novels like Sefi Ata's *The Man of Two Worlds* or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americana* is hybrid, trapped in-between home and foreign values, in search for an identity. Pressed between ideological stands and the emergency of survival, he/she opts for the current needs of life. By crossing borders through immigration, the characters embrace new values, borrow beliefs, while abandoning their original ones. In the process, the old self reloads and leaps

into the surface, so that the individual subject lives through a cultural simulacrum. As V. Nithyanantha Bhat states, “Postmodernists question notions of objective reality” (Bhat 2010: 4). Jean Baudrillard, a well-known postmodernist theorist, believes that “reality” cannot be known or accessed in an immediate fashion through the senses or through the intellect. Instead, we know it through its representations, especially through its media representation. Baudrillard uses the term “simulacrum” to describe the various artificial environments that mediate our perception of the world. The critical debate in process in African literary circles is whether the African characters in works of fiction should be termed postcolonial or postmodern. Since the publication of two important books, *Postcolonial Identity in Wole Soyinka* by Mpalive-Hangson Msiska, and *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality*, by Evan Maina Mwangi, there has been a landmark turn taking in the postmodern aesthetics in African literature.

Sefi Atta’s *A Bit of Difference* can be rated a postmodern novel since it depicts the condition of a Nigerian expatriate in London in quest of an identity: material, spiritual and cultural. The information on the back cover page unveils the notes that, at thirty-nine, Deola Bello, a Nigerian expatriate in London, is dissatisfied with being single and working overseas. Deola works as a financial reviewer for an international charity, and when her job takes her back to Nigeria in time for her father’s five-year memorial service, she finds herself turning her scrutiny inward. In Nigeria, Deola encounters changes in her family and in the urban landscape of her home, and new acquaintances who offer unexpected possibilities. Deola’s journey is as much about evading others’ expectations to get to the heart of her frustration as it is about exposing the differences between foreign images of Africa and the realities of contemporary Nigerian life. Deola’s urgent, incisive voice captivates and guides us through the intricate layers and vivid scenes of a life lived across continents. With Sefi Atta’s characteristic boldness and vision, *A Bit of Difference* limns the complexities of our contemporary world.

Femi Osofisan advocates the overlapping decline of drama/theatre tradition to the detriment of film industry as an important landmark of postmodernism in African literature, culture and theory. Leaning on Jean Baudrillard’s concept of simulacrum, he explains that as far as painting or sculpture is concerned there is an original work by an artist and there might be thousands of copies. But the original is the one with the highest value (particularly monetary). He contrasts this with CDs or Music records where there is no “original” as in painting; there are only copies, all of them the same. When for instance, the Nigerian born English playwright Ade Solanke

has her character Bev exclaim: “There are over 40 million mobile [phone] subscribers in Nigeria, right? That’s millions of people with phones but no bank accounts. Why not serve them with mobile wallet?” (Solanke 2012: 53), the writer insinuates the postmodern effects of technology that not only impoverish Nigerian citizens, but also turn out to be fake copies with no original designs. The concept of virtual reality is another version of Baudrillard’s “simulacrum” – a reality created by emulation, for which there is no original. A prime example of this is found in computer games (Baudrillard 2004: 369). What we know about reality is influenced by the way we know it – the media through which our objects of knowledge are represented and communicated. In this conception, signs function as commodities and operate in a universal code that generates, as all aspects in modern societies depend on these grand narratives. But postmodernism is the critique of grand narratives, the awareness that such narratives serve to mask the contradiction and instabilities that are inherent in any social organization or practice (Lyotard 2004: 355).

Modernity in African literature has often been associated with the refined ways and styles in human life and activities. In works like Ade Solanke’s *Pandora’s Box*, Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*, new technologies, the replacement of manual labor by machinery, the shift from traditional mud house with raffia thatches into modern cement, copper and zinc buildings, the use of mobile phones, the airplane in Ola Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, mark a new landscape of the footing of postmodernism in African literature. These technological shifts contrast with the traditional lifestyle and values of values portrayed in works with precolonial settings like Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Healers*, Elechi Amadi’s *The Great Ponds*, and Wole Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forests*, where the traditional mode of life is imprinted with cultural practices that point to genuine and authentic African traditional life: instruments like the drum, the *ogene*, dressing style like the goatskins, and the loincloth. Mpalive-Hangson Msiska postulates that “While affirming the value and integrity of African culture, Wole Soyinka has endeavored to foreground the contradictions inherent in it using his critique as a basis for constructing a new critical consciousness not only for the colonial cultural heritage but also of the indigenous culture” (Msiska 2007: 45). For instance, in *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka examines the relationship between tradition and modernity and finds that a modernity that fetishises surface things rather than its essential spirit ends up being inimical not only to the progressive elements within the discourse of modernity itself but also to those of tradition, creating

conditions for more exploitative interpretations of tradition to assume a validity that a more critical view of modernity would easily have undermined. Lakunle's desire to cut down all trees so that he can create parks in which modern lovers can have their romantic strolls is self-evidently not only superficial but also environmentally destructive. As for Baroka, he is not a simple antithesis of the shallow village schoolteacher but part of a mercenary breed of politicians, traditional and modern, who have found a way of seeing cultural hybridity as a means of pursuing an individualist project in a manner inimical to the postmodern public good. In this respect, Soyinka goes beyond the conventional tradition-versus-modernity opposition, exposing both negritudist return to the past and the ruthless mindless modernism of the tree cutting variety as representing infertile soil for the necessary reconfiguration of postmodern society (Msiska 2007: 45).

In other words, there is no longer any faith in the great belief systems of the past, in history, progress, or truth. Our capacity to hold such beliefs has been eroded by the constant bombardment of images and information available to us through the new technology and the mass media. We can no longer make sense of the world because there is no cohesive world to make sense of. Instead, we occupy a state of what Baudrillard calls "hyper-reality", an unreal world of dreams and fantasy, of "simulacra"—the world of TV, of the shopping mall, of video games, of Disneyland. People have been reduced to mindless consumers, and the dominant language is the language of packaging and advertising. According to Baudrillard, there is no point in trying to resist the hyper-real, we should simply enjoy it.

Such a view has of course been criticized as being absurdly negative – apocalyptic even. But Joe Staines feels that as a cultural critique, though of an exaggerated kind, postmodernism functions best when it analyses the extremes of mass-consumerism and the media. (Quoted in Linda Hutcheon 1988: 55)

The evolution of popular forms of entertainment in Africa nowadays has taken new turns with the development of new information and communication technologies. The film industry, the home video industry, and the Internet have modernized and facilitated the recording, performing, marketing and distribution of CDs, DVDs, and Diskettes so that the live theatre consumerism has lost its audiences to the detriment of modernized dramatic performance, the TV movies and serials. In addition, these new technologies have introduced a form of counterfeiting of works of arts, namely CDs, DVDs, sculptures, mobile phones and other electronic

appliances so that it is very difficult to distinguish the fake copy from the original or the genuine one. This has given rise to new drama elites, actors and spectators who no longer need to go to theatre halls to watch performances. Femi Osofisan in an influential article “African Theatre and the Menace of Transition: Radical Transformations in Popular Entertainment” stresses the point:

With particular reference to the discipline of theatre, however, and to the phenomenon that has come to be called the ‘home video industry’ –the industry which now goes by various names such as ‘Nollywood’, ‘Gollywood’, ‘Riverwood’, and so on, depending on which country one is focusing on– Nigeria becomes even more glaringly significant . . . For theatrical activity –defined, that is, as live performances before live audiences– is in a state of crisis on our continent. It has lost its popular appeal, and is rapidly on the wane. In its place, bubbling and noisy like a newly sprung waterfall, is this new shock stock of video films, which has completely overwhelmed the culture market. (Osofisan 2012: 362-363)

The premise of Femi Osofisan here is that the modern African theatre develops in a lively and ebullient setting in terms of theatrical activity especially in places like Southwestern part of Nigeria. Certain factors make me advance the proviso that African theatre has attained the age of post-modernism. The factors of its blossoming are rapid progress of modern technologies of information and communication as favoured by the wide spreading of home videos, so that film makers use accessible digital video technology, especially as the old video cameras have given way to their digital descendants and the new High-Definition cameras. The editing, music and other post-production work is all done with common computer-based systems, thus reducing the total cost of production by almost 80 per cent. Afterwards, the films go straight to DVD and VCD disks, which are also cheap to reproduce and distribute.

According to J. A. Cuddon,

Postmodernism beckons changes, developments and tendencies which have taken place (and are taking place) in literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy since the 1940s or 1950s, postmodernism. In drama one might cite experiment with form, content and presentation in such developments as the *Theatre of the Absurd*, *Total Theatre*, the ‘happening’ and, latterly, the *Théâtre de Complicité*. Other discernible features of postmodernism are an eclectic approach, aleatory writing, parody and pastiche. Nor should we forget

the importance of what is called magic realism in fiction, new modes in science fiction, the popularity of neo-Gothic and the horror story. (2013: 552)

The burgeoning of Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic criticism since the 1970s is yet another aspect of postmodernism. It also shifts to a critical position in criticism, in which a complete relativism exists —hence its proximity to post-structuralism. Perhaps among the most significant contributions are the revolutionary theories in philosophy and literary criticism encapsulated in structuralism and deconstruction.

Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith seem right when they approach postmodernism from the perspective of the ability of modern man to cope with technological changes and especially the nation building challenges:

A [post]modern nation needs participating citizens, men and women who take an active interest in public affairs and who exercise their rights and perform their duties as members of a community larger than that of the kinship network and the immediate geographical locality. Modern institutions need individuals who can keep to fixed schedules, observe abstract rules, make judgments on the basis of objective evidence, and follow authorities legitimated not by traditional or religious sanctions but by technical competence. (Inkeles and Smith 1976: 4)

This position holds that postmodern criticism in African literature projects the image of modern institutions and characters who win more and more freedom of choice in residence, occupation, political affiliation, religious denomination, marriage partner, friends and enemy. They have sought to replace a closed world, in which their lives tread the narrowest circles, with a more open system offering more alternatives and less predestination. From a desperate clinging to fixed ways of doing things, some characters have moved to postmodern ideological stand. In place of fear of strangers and hostility to those very different from themselves, they have acquired more trust and more tolerance of human diversity.

J. Ndukaku Amankulor in his article “English Language Theatre” has offered a critical survey of the development of African dramatic performances, an approach that lays much emphasis on western cultural domination of African theatrical scene. This provides me with the opportunity to assert that African drama has forged new paths and directions in postmodern times. These directions operate in three basic modes in which various scenes of performance characterize postmodernity: the dramatization of life by the indigenous traditional performances before the intrusion of

European culture, the theatrical playfulness of African art appearing in masquerades, ritual dances and festivals and a focus on cultural practices. In the words of Amankulor,

The strength of indigenous African theater before the coming of the Europeans and Arabs resided in cultural associations and community institutions. These associations, which were community-based, were often distinguished in their varying functions by the age, sex, and sometimes occupation of the members. In addition to the political, social, and artistic obligations they fulfilled for their people, which included the initiation of new members, the associations formed performance groups for drama, music, and dance, as well as sculpting, decorative, and other artistic groups. Drama, dance, poetry, storytelling, music, and the creation of sculpture lent themselves readily to performances, which naturally exploited contemporary religious and social realities. (Amankulor 1993: 138)

In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), Jean-François Lyotard formulated the postmodern critical theory of ‘drama’ as an act of performance. According to Iain Hamilton Grant,

Announces in drama the type of performance that has had perhaps the greatest impact concerning the status of the plays he calls ‘meta-’ or ‘grand narratives’. While grand narratives such as the Enlightenment narrative of infinite progress in knowledge and liberty, or the Marxist narrative of progressive emancipation of laboring humanity from the shackles imposed upon it by industrial capitalism, have played a crucial role in anchoring knowledge and politics in modernity, postmodernity has entailed a crisis of confidence in them. (Grant 2001: 28)

In other words, as Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis say, “he suggested that Western thought has grounded its truths in ‘grand narratives’ such as Marxism, Christianity and Freudianism. These conditions of knowledge were now generally apparent and that defines the “postmodern condition”. To live postmodernity is to live the performative nature of ‘truths’” (Shepherd and Wallis 2004: 134). In *Postmodernism and Performance* (1994: 5-23) Nick Kaye takes a closer focus and specifies the aesthetic genre performance as a postmodern phenomenon. So, performance is twofold. It is first the generic term that defines the field of performance, and especially here art performance. And secondly, it is an operational term since the argument revolves around the performativity and rhetorical strategies of live art within the context of postmodernism.

Conclusion

The contribution of this article has been twofold. First, the postmodern African literary politics is becoming reconstructed and redefined. Beyond these two key elements, identity becomes a modern innovation. In the postmodern African literary aesthetics, the issue is how to construct and maintain our identity to secure our place in the globalized world and better face uncertainty. This is because in the modern world the avoidance of uncertainty has been considered an individual problem. With novelty issues like covid pandemic it becomes a collective problem. Secondly, given the predominant view that African literature is about “writing back” to the European canon, my suggestion is that African arts are primarily writing back to themselves. In doing so, I am further developing the ideas presented in authoritative and influential analysis, following the direction they have suggested, particularly in their discussion on rethinking postcolonial studies. Noting the shortcomings of postcolonial studies and charting the way forward toward postmodernism, the postmodern aesthetics underscores that, as the field has developed over the last decade or so, it becomes clearer that perhaps postmodern theory in African context needs to be further grounded in specific analyses of the effects of large movements and ideologies on particular localities.

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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE,
INSECURITY AND WORLD PEACE: A CRITICAL
EXAMINATION OF SELECTED AFRICAN
LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract

The interest in African literary texts has increased significantly in recent times. However, crucial issues such as climate change, environment, insecurity, and world peace have not received adequate attention, despite their relevance. This study explores these topics in African literary texts of various genres by employing ecocriticism as a theoretical framework and using content analysis as the primary methodology. The corpus of this study focuses on the works of Ramonu Sanusi (novel *Un Nègre a violé une Blonde à Dallas*), Niyi Osundare (poem “They Too Are the Earth”), David Rubadiri (poem “African Thundersorm”), and Ahmed Yerima (play *Ipomu*), all of whom have been selected for sharing the primary objective of this work - to shed light on the environmental realities of modern society by describing the rates of environmental and climate change and their adverse effects on humanity. Moreover, the authors emphasize the need for world peace to ensure global sustainable development. By critically analyzing the African literary texts, this research seeks to contribute to the academic understanding of these significant global issues and the critical role that literature can play in addressing them.

Keywords: African literature, climate change, Environment, Insecurity, World Peace

MEDIO AMBIENTE, CAMBIO CLIMÁTICO, INSEGURIDAD Y PAZ MUNDIAL: UN EXAMEN CRÍTICO DE TEXTOS LITERARIOS AFRICANOS SELECCIONADOS

Resumen

El interés por la literatura africana ha crecido en la comunidad académica en años recientes. Sin embargo, temas cruciales como el cambio climático, el medio ambiente, la inseguridad y la paz mundial han recibido una atención insuficiente por parte de los estudiosos, a pesar de su enorme relevancia. Por lo tanto, el presente estudio se centra en el análisis de estos temas en textos literarios africanos, pertenecientes a diversos géneros, utilizando la ecocrítica como marco teórico y aplicando como metodología el análisis del contenido. El corpus de estudio se centra en obras de Ramonu Sanusi (novela *Un Nègre a violé une Blonde à Dallas*), Niyi Osundare (poema “They Too Are the Earth”), David Rubadiri (poema “African Thundersorm”) y Ahmed Yerima (drama *Ipomu*), autores seleccionados precisamente por compartir la principal inquietud de este trabajo: mostrar las realidades ambientales de la sociedad moderna. Dichos autores describen los índices del cambio ambiental y climático y sus efectos adversos en la humanidad, así como la necesidad de la paz mundial para asegurar el desarrollo sostenible global.

Palabras clave: Textos literarios africanos, cambio climático, medio ambiente, inseguridad, paz mundial

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, INSECURITY AND WORLD PEACE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SELECTED AFRICAN LITERARY TEXTS

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Introduction

Interestingly, African writers have started to shake off the nostalgia induced by the Negritude ideology, which blamed the woes of the Black race mainly on the high-handedness of their colonial lords. A new generation of more committed African creative writers has made social realities of the modern society the main focus in their artistic creations. Environmental degradation, climate change and insecurity can slow down development. Food security and the well-being of humanhood also depend on a safe environment and on climate. Certain factors such as anthropogenic activities and increased greenhouse gases are responsible for high temperature, flooding, biodiversity loss, shortage of water, loss of soil nutrients and even diseases around the world. Gemeda and Sima (2015: 256) remark:

It is predicted that the temperature in the African continent will rise by 2 to 6^o C over the next 100 years. In terms of economy, the sub-Saharan Africa will lose a total of US\$26 million by 2060 due to climate change.

In recent times, global temperature and precipitation have increased because of the greenhouse effect and the destruction of the ozone layer. In Africa, burning of fossil fuels such as petroleum, coal, natural gases and bush, has caused deforestation. Besides, human beings have seriously altered the vegetation types one can find anywhere in the world. In Africa, for instance, the environment is negatively influenced by the activities of

man. Trees are cut down without replacement, and bushes are burnt recklessly. Hence, the nitrogen cycle is adversely affected, and life becomes difficult for both plants and animals, including man, the “superior animal”. The exchange of oxygen for carbon dioxide between man and nature has turned out to be inadequate because of the nonchalant attitude of man.

High level of dependence on agriculture, extraction of solid minerals, poor technology and inadequate financial potential as well as institutional incapacity among other things make countries in Africa to be the most negatively affected by environmental challenges and climate change. The continent is characterized by acute land degradation and wide range of desertification (Nordhaus 2006, Hummel 2015, Rose 2015).

The word eco-criticism is a fusion of ecology and criticism. Hornby (2000) sees “ecology” as “the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment, the (scientific) study of this.” The same authority defines “criticism” as “the work or activity of making fair, careful judgments about the good and bad qualities of something/somebody, especially books, music, etc.”

“Eco-criticism” is the study of representations of nature in literary works or any art for that matter, and of the relationship between literature and its milieu (Ogundokun 2014: 39). In other words, adopting ecological philosophy and concepts to the study as well as the understanding and explanation of literature could be viewed as eco-criticism. The term “géocritique” is used by French-speaking scholars to mean eco-criticism. As an academic field, eco-criticism started in the 1990s, but its roots date back to the late 1970s, when the term was coined by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” (Rueckert 1978). In 1996, Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the main theorists in the field, considers eco-criticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty 1996: xviii; see also Cronon 1996, Garrard 2008 and Ogundokun 2013b).

This study, it is evident, cannot be conducted without a thorough understanding of the ecological crises of modern time and must underscore personal and political actions, which undoubtedly make it a kind of activism. Using this theoretical framework, some critics articulate the interdisciplinary nature of the inquiry, which is informed by ecological variables such as science, politics, ethics, women’s studies, cultural studies and history, as well as sociology and criminology.

William Rueckert (1978) proposed that Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural

artefacts of language and literature. However, citing Huggan and Helen Tiffin, Ben Bunting (2015: 1) observes:

Today, ecocritics not only study the ways in which literature and the environment interact and have interacted, they have also cultivated an interdisciplinary interest, extending the scope of their work into the fields of environmental philosophy and bioethics as well as the environmental sciences, especially ecology.

Ramonu Sanusi's *Un Nègre a violé une Blonde à Dallas*

For the purpose of redirecting human thinking and attention with regard to environmental challenges, many creative writers in Africa have in recent times used their literary texts as a veritable platform. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the debate on how to fight the adverse effects of environmental degradation, climate change and insecurity. Ramonu Sanusi, in his novel *Un Nègre a violé une Blonde à Dallas (A negro raped a blonde in Dallas)* (2016) raises the issue of climate change, which, according to the author, is now a universal plague. Sanusi writes thus:

J'ai vu beaucoup de Présidents et des Premiers Ministres du monde entier là-bas. L'homme blanc a dit à la télévision que c'est une conférence sur les changements climatiques. Il y a cent quatre-vingt-dix pays du monde entier au total qui sont représentés là-bas. C'est pour parler! C'est pour discuter! C'est pour trouver une solution commune contre les dangers des changements climatiques. (Sanusi 2016a: 96)

The novelist gives reasons for the meeting of the world leaders. He points out that if the environmental degradation and climate change are not addressed there will be flooding, erosion and oil spillage among other things. For instance, the oil spillage will contaminate water body and eventually cause the death of water animals and even human beings. The lands will become barren. The author also warns that it is important to note that the smoke pollution released from industrial activities everywhere in the world is responsible for climate change which destroy the nature. The writer adds:

Les Changements Climatiques sont dangereux. Tellement dangereux même. Il faut lutter contre ça. C'est comme un cancer. Si l'on n'agit pas maintenant. Si l'on croise les bras. Si on regarde tout ça là comme un mouton sans prévenir ce danger, on n'aura pas de nourritures à manger dans

l'avenir. On n'aura pas d'eau à boire dans l'avenir ! Et tout ça là c'est grave ! (Sanusi 2016a: 96)

Before, the novelist holds the opinion that it was only armed robbers, drug barons, warlords all around the world and, especially, in black Africa who threatened nature, but it is now clear to him that climatic change is so dangerous that all hands must be on deck. Hence, it is time we stopped declining the clarion call to our responsibilities. If we folded our arms, if we just kept gazing at it like sheep, without preventing the danger, we would not have foods to eat and there would be no water to drink in the future.

Moi, je croyais auparavant que c'était les cambrioleurs, les barons de drogue, les Seigneurs de guerre partout dans le monde et surtout en Afrique noire qui embêtaient la nature, mais aujourd'hui l'homme blanc m'a enseigné une autre leçon.

La pollution est un grand danger car ça cause aussi le cancer ! Ça cause l'asthme ! Ça cause beaucoup de maladies nuisibles. Voilà pourquoi les enfants meurent prématurés. Voilà pourquoi les femmes enceintes perdent leurs grossesses. Et voilà pourquoi il ne pleut pas. Voilà pourquoi les terres de l'Afrique noire deviennent le désert. C'est pourquoi les terres meurent. Voilà pourquoi les herbes et les arbres meurent. (Sanusi 2016a: 96-97)

From the excerpt, it can be understood that the adverse effect of climate change is more dangerous than calamities coming from the activities of armed bandits, drug dealers, terrorists and wicked warlords. It is as dangerous as cancer. Apart from pollution, that causes asthma and other deadly diseases, there is the erosion, which accounts for the washing away of the essential soil nutrients and the eventual poor farm yields. Simply put, climate change will affect food production and food security. Flooding and drought are caused by climate change and they have negative influence on agriculture. Decline in food production and supply is capable of bringing food insecurity as well as malnutrition. In other words, flooding and drought will bring about scarcity of food and this will force prices to go up. The increase in prices of basic necessities of life will make things difficult, especially for the low income earners. The level of poverty will undoubtedly increase. The fall out of this ugly trend is an economic slowdown. In a economic recession, there is no possibility of sustainable national development because per capita income as well as the national foreign reserves are below expectations. Desertification will lead to

displacement of people and dangerous migration, which can bring about land grabbing syndrome.

It is also evident that environmental degradation, climate change and insecurity in Africa will force people to flee their territories for fear of dying. And when people are displaced from their countries, it will aggravate humanitarian crisis such as interborder movement and refugee palaver.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 2011, Africa is the most susceptible continent to climate change related health issues because of the existing poverty and weak institutions to cope with health problems caused by climate change, unfair treatment of the environment and food insecurity.

Examining the possibility of human survival and of other living things, the presence or absence of vector and water borne pathogens is often determined by the amount of rainfall recorded at a particular time. Gemedá and Sima (2015: 259) remark:

Climate change can affect the well-being of human beings either directly or indirectly. For instance, changing in the quality of air, water and food can disturb human health indirectly. Climate change will likely discomfort the environmental and social conditions which might lead to social and economic disruptions.

On the issue of insecurity, through his major character, Ajanaku, Sanusi makes references to some terrorist groups around the world and the atrocities they cause from time to time. He mentions dreaded terrorists such as Boko Haram, ISIS and Al Shabab. The novelist's account shows that contemporary African creative writers are conscious of the level of insecurity not only in the immediate environment but also across the globe:

Deux jours après, c'est-à-dire le 15 novembre 2015, les Boko Haram du Nigeria: des Kamikaze sanguinaires ont coupé court la vie d'une centaine de gens. (Sanusi 2016a: 91)

Two days after a terrorist group bombed Charlie Hebdo in France, 15 November 2015, precisely, Boko Haram, a dreaded terrorist group in Nigeria massacred about a hundred innocent souls. However, the protagonist/writer is eager to disassociate himself from any form of terrorism. The narrator, in a first-person narrative technique, says that he is not a member of Boko Haram, ISIS or Al Shabab. He further explains:

Moi, je suis contre ce qui s'est passé a Paris hier le 13 novembre 2015. Je ne suis pas d'accord avec ces meurtriers qui ont tué CENT-TRENTE innocents, selon les dernières. (Sanusi 2016a: 89)

It is obvious that the main character, Ajanaku, and/or the writer (Sanusi) is against the heartless operations of the terrorists anywhere in the world. Therefore, there is a need to find a workable solution to the problem. This has to involve all nations of the world. There cannot be any meaningful development where there is no peaceful co-existence.

Underscoring his commitment to matters affecting the ecosystem, insecurity and world peace, Sanusi in another novel, *Le bistouri des larmes* (2005), frowns at Africans that instead of destroying the ecosystem and encouraging barbaric practices in the name of culture, they need to find ways of solving their socioeconomic and political problems that impoverish the African States as well as providing solutions to the environmental degradation, climate change and insecurity; especially in the crude oil producing areas. Sanusi believes that the economic meltdown is caused by dictatorship, incompetent administration, faulty policies, corruption and ignorance of the followership. Most countries in Africa are in serious debts: even with purported cuts in government expenditure such as the removal of subsidies on basic daily commodities and upward increase in taxes, Nigerian economy is still in a mess (see Ogundokun, 2013a and 2014).

However, the world leaders are advised not to make the conference on climate change in France, tagged Paris 2015, a matter of just drinking coffee morning, afternoon and night. The deadly impact of climate change on agricultural produce such as reduction in rainfall, soil infertility, and drop in food production (crops, animal husbandry and poultry) that needs urgent attention. The author notes the impact of climate change on human health. According to him, pollution lays in the root of life-threatening diseases like cancer and asthma. He equally points out that children die prematurely and women suffer miscarriages due to environmental issues. For fear of uncertainty, desertification is forcing many inhabitants to abandon their homes. As people flee their areas and migrate to other areas, there is an increased pressure on natural resources of the destination areas. This alone can foster further internal crisis or interethnic conflicts, like the issue of Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers in Nigeria at present. The impact of

climatic change on agriculture and human health will eventually paralyse meaningful socio-economic and political development.

Niyi Osundare’s “They Too Are the Earth”

In addition, contributing to the fight against climate change through literary composition, one cannot ignore the genuine clarion call of Niyi Osundare in his poem entitled “They Too Are the Earth” (Osundare 1986: 45). A close reading of the poem will provide some basis for this study:

THEY TOO ARE THE EARTH

They too are the earth
The swamsongs of beggars sprawled out
The brimming gutters
They are the earth
Under snakeskin shoes and Mercedes tyres 5

They too are the earth
The sweat and grime of
Millions hewing wood and hurling water
They are the earth
Muddy every pore like naked moles 10

They too are the earth
The distant groans of thousands buried alive
In hard unfathomable mines
They are the earth
Of gold dreams and blood banks 15

They too are the earth
The dying distant deaths
In narrow abandoned hamlets
They are the earth
Women battling centuries 20
Maleficent slavery

Are they of this earth
Who fritter the forest and harry the hills
Are they of this earth
Who live that earth may die 25
Are they?

From her deep unsearchable mines
 Hitch up a ladder to the dodging sky
 Let's put a sun in every night
 Our earth is an opened grain house 20
 A bustling barn in some far, uncharted jungle
 A distant gem in a rough unhappy dust

This earth is
 Ours to work not to waste
 Ours to man not to main 25
 This earth is ours to plough, not to plunder
 (Osundare 1986: 48)

In this poem Osundare preaches for orderliness and carefulness on how human beings treat nature and the resources there-in. He holds the view that earth, which represents nature, needs to be handled with care and respect. The earth provides man's food, water, shelter, wears and other useful things.

The first part of the poem reflects on the theme of agriculture. We "plough and plant" (l. 1). With the hoe, the land is tilled, and crops are planted for man to get his food. The second stanza (4-7) shows the time of harvest. Farm implements like "mattocks" (4), "machetes" (4), "calabash trays" (5) and "Rocking baskets" (5) indicate that it is a season to enjoy the fruits of one's labour. "Heavy heaps" (7) and "earth roots" (6) demonstrate that the resources from mother earth are inexhaustible.

In the third stanza (8-13), the poet advocates for obedience in following the natural course of events: The fourth (14-22) and the fifth (23-26) stanzas continue the poet's line of thought that earth is capable of providing man with all he needs for a happy living. The expression "let's put a sun in every night" (19) suggests that the poet is calling for technological advancement, which will translate to progress and sustainable development. The poet believes that there are still resources yet untapped from the earth: "Our earth is an unopened grain house".

In the last stanza (23-26), the poet re-echoes that earth remains the most veritable and inexhaustible asset for mankind. Hence, man must not destroy it. Man only needs to "plough" the earth, but "not to plunder" it (26). In a mildly sharp tone but hopeful mood, Osundare calls for caution in the way and manner we carry out certain activities on earth, with advice that earth must be respected and preserved if our future is to be guaranteed.

Babies clinging on their backs	20
Dart about	
In and out	
Madly;	
The wind whistles by	
Whilst trees bend to let it pass.	25
Clothes wave like tattered flags	
Flying off	
To expose dangling breasts	
As jagged blinding flashes	
Rumble, tremble and crack	30
Amidst the smell of fired smoke	
And the pelting march of the storm.	
(Rubadiri 2004: 21-22)	

David Rubadiri, an African poet from Malawi, reflects on climatic condition in his poem titled “African Thunderstorm”. A careful reading of this poem provides a picturesque detail of what an unusual climate situation can cause both plants and animals, including humanhood.

In fact, Rubadiri’s poem is a demonstration of the havoc which climate change can wreak on man. The poet depicts an atmosphere of commotion and confusion to recreate and explain an African experience of a thunderstorm. The poem depicts a total panic, discomfort and uncertainty caused by the climatic condition called thunderstorm. In the words of the poet, the thunderstorm is “Turning sharply / Here and there” (3-4) and this situation is compared to the plague of locusts, which is equally destructive. As a means of warning, the poet designs a clear imagery of nature and explains how human beings can be affected by a given climatic situation. The lines “In the village / Screams of delighted children / Toss and turn / In the din of whirling wind” (15-18) and also “Women, / Babies clinging on their backs” (19-20) picture the unpleasant situation human beings found themselves. The thunderstorm destroys trees and clothes as the poet captures it (24-28).

Whether directly or indirectly, man’s carefree attitude towards his environment could have been responsible for the destructive thunderstorm, which ravaged the African community as presented in the poem.

Ahmed Yerima's *Ipomu*

Although the main concern of Ahmed Yerima in his play *Ipomu* (2011) is socio-political awareness in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria, the playwright extends his discussion to the ecosystem of the said region. He identifies environmental degradation, illiteracy, poverty, hostility such as blocking of oil wells, pipeline vandalism, arms running and proliferation, as well as kidnapping, as the major social challenges in the Niger Delta. *Ipomu*, Yerima's hero in the play, explains:

We walked in the oily stained river; the oil river mixed with shreds, carcasses of dead fish . . . and burnt crayfish half fried with the river oil and the basking heat from the sun. Oh! the sickening smell (Yerima 2011: 121).

From the foregoing excerpt, the unhealthy environmental condition in the Niger Delta is vividly captured. For instance, "the oily stained river" illustrates that the fish farming activity, which is the major occupation of the Ijaws and other ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta, is no longer feasible. This has added to the problem of unemployment and shortage of essential food. There is, therefore, malnutrition and traces of kwashiorkor. The phrase, "basking heat from the sun" shows a proof of the destruction of the ozone layer, while the expression "the sickening smell" indicates pollution, which eventually brings about dreaded ailments like cancer, asthma, and other air or diseases.

Yerima attempts to warn all the concerned authorities to urgently do what is required to control the negative effects of oil exploration in the Niger Delta areas. The issues of oil spillages and gas flaring should be tackled squarely by the government and the multinational oil companies to ensure continue existence of people and other living things in that part of the world.

Recommendations and Conclusions

In their artistic compositions, the four purposively selected literary writers have proved it beyond doubt that climate change can lead to people's displacement, suffering and death. The essence of a good research in the field of cultural studies is to provide workable solution(s) to human problems to bring global advancement. This study, therefore, recommends the following solutions to curb the menace of climatic change in the world.

There is a need for adequate information sharing and dissemination on issues relating to environmental and climate changes and how to adaptn /

acclimatize to the changes. Awareness on ecological education must be created. The media, both online and on print, as agents of socialization and mobilization should carry out their social responsibilities in this regard. Governments at various levels, private sectors/companies as well as non-governmental organizations should take matters that concern the ecosystem very seriously by sponsoring programmes, seminars, workshops and events that will provide information on environmental education and measures to reduce the adverse effects of environmental challenges, climate change and insecurity that are associated with them.

Construction of dams, development of river basin and irrigation farming should be encouraged to downsize the effects of drought. Farmers and herdsman conflicts should be resolved with all seriousness and faithfully too. Mining activities should be done in line with the best practices around the world. Illegal mining and vandalism must be checked.

The culture of tree planting and forest reservation should be advocated for at all levels of government. Climate smart initiatives should be encouraged in agricultural practices. It is high time countries in the world embraced the idea of comparative advantage as regards agricultural produce and natural resources to prevent overstressing the available resources and unhealthy competition.

Research activities in the areas of climate change, strategies to reduce pressure on available natural resources and ways of managing environmental risks and disasters must be of interest to scholars of higher institutions.

The study has established that it is not only the activities of armed bandits, drug traffickers, warlords and terrorists that are dangerous. Illegal mining and climate change are potential threats to human existence on earth. Applying an eco-critic perspective, this paper has identified major adverse effects of climatic change on agricultural produce, human health and socio-economic development of a given nation. The writers of the examined texts demonstrate that literary works are also capable of debating ecological issues, with a view to suggesting constructive solutions to challenges which are associated with climatic plague. They believe that human activities on earth must be guided, and the earth must be treated with care to ensure human sustainability and development within his ecosystem. The study holds that all hope is not lost in coping with ecological challenges if the whole world can exercise utmost mutual co-operation.

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ENTREVISTA CON RAFAEL SANTANDREU: “DESTERRAR LA CULTURA CLÁSICA AUMENTA LA NEUROSIS GENERAL”

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Resumen

Entrevista con el psicólogo español Rafael Santandreu, sobre variados aspectos: entre otros, su formación, vocación y trayectoria profesional, la importancia de la cultura y filosofía clásicas, la futilidad del progreso, la conveniencia de una actitud cínica para confrontar las ideas establecidas y la necesidad de la racionalización ante las aparentes desgracias.

Palabras clave: Rafael Santandreu, psicología, filosofía, estoicismo, educación.

“BANISHING CLASSICAL CULTURE INCREASES GENERAL NEUROSIS”: AN INTERVIEW WITH RAFAEL SANTANDREU

Abstract

Interview with Spanish psychotherapist Rafael Santandreu, about various subject-matters: among them, his education, vocation, and professional career; the futility of progress; the relevance of Classical culture and philosophy; the desirability of a Cynical attitude for fighting social preconceptions; and the need for rationalizing in face of apparent misfortunes.

Keywords: Rafael Santandreu, psychology, philosophy, Stoicism, education.

ENTREVISTA CON RAFAEL SANTANDREU: “DESTERRAR LA CULTURA CLÁSICA AUMENTA LA NEUROSIS GENERAL”

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Rafael Santandreu (Barcelona, 1969) es un psicólogo que, según adscripción propia, se encuadra en la escuela conductual-cognitiva de la psicología moderna, en gran medida desarrollada por el psicólogo americano Albert Ellis (2014). Divide su ejercicio profesional en tres grandes ámbitos: la psicología clínica, en centros ubicados tanto en Madrid como en Barcelona; la impartición de conferencias y su participación en programas de televisión, como *Para Todos La 2*; y, finalmente, la publicación de libros de psicología aplicada que suelen ser bastante exitosos en las listas de no-ficción (2013, 2015, 2017, 2021). En sus libros confiere nueva vida a algunos preceptos estoicos, sin concesiones a lo políticamente correcto. Como personaje público, a veces adopta la pose del filósofo cínico antiguo para decir verdades incómodas y despertar conciencias (Bracht Branham y Marie-Odile 2010, Molina Mellado – Laguna Mariscal 2020). Por ejemplo, sostiene que los problemas son, en gran medida, constructos mentales del sujeto (Santandreu 2015); cree que es posible ser feliz en circunstancias muy adversas (Santandreu 2017); y se posiciona incluso en contra del progreso, como se verá en esta misma entrevista. Para Santandreu, en términos de felicidad, menos es más. En esta entrevista hablamos sin concesiones a la corrección política sobre estas cuestiones y otras muchas: su formación, la actualidad de la filosofía clásica, su trayectoria profesional y sus tres ámbitos de trabajo (psicología clínica, elaboración de libros e intervenciones en los medios), los celos y los libros de autoayuda.

GABRIEL LAGUNA.— Aunque eres un profesional de la psicología, tanto en tu práctica clínica como en la teoría subyacente tiene una importancia crucial la filosofía clásica (volveremos en esta entrevista sobre este punto). ¿Cuál es tu opinión sincera sobre el desmantelamiento en las enseñanzas de Bachillerato de asignaturas como el Latín y el Griego? ¿Qué presencia, en tu

opinión, debería tener la impartición en la Enseñanza Media de la Filosofía, el Latín, el Griego y la Cultura Clásica?

RAFAEL SANTANDREU.– Cuanto más opulenta es una sociedad, más necesita educación en valores, en historia, “en letras”, como se decía antes. Y se da la paradoja de que se hace lo contrario: se prima la educación en saber tecnológico. Esto es equivalente a construir Ferraris y no dotarlos de grandes frenos y gran volante. La educación en valores te permite no volverte loco con la abundancia de oportunidades, con la hiper-exigencia, con el alud de bienes y posibilidades. Por lo tanto, desterrar la Filosofía y la Cultura Clásica es un error. En gran medida, es aumentar la neurosis general, que ya es galopante.

G. L.– Hablemos de tu formación y carrera. Estudiaste la licenciatura de Psicología en la Universidad de Barcelona. Después, según informas en tu propia página web (<https://www.rafaelsantandreu.es/psicologo-rafael-santandreu/>), has recibido formación de postgrado en la Universidad de Reading (Inglaterra) y en el Centro di Terapia Strategica de Arezzo (Italia), trabajando, durante esta segunda estancia, con el conocido psicólogo Giorgio Nardone. También fuiste profesor (supongo que profesor asociado) en la Universidad Ramon Llull. ¿Por qué no continuaste con la carrera académica en la Universidad, por ejemplo, elaborando una tesis doctoral? ¿Fue una decisión consciente o producto contingente de las circunstancias? Retrospectivamente, ¿crees que la decisión (si es que la hubo) fue correcta? ¿echas de menos la dedicación a la docencia e investigación universitarias?

R. S.– En la Universidad de Barcelona cursaba un doctorado y hacía investigación. Al mismo tiempo, ejercía como profesor ayudante de Estadística en Esade, una prestigiosa escuela de negocios de la Universidad Ramon Llull. Fueron cinco años muy buenos porque en Esade me pagaban muy bien y tenía muchas opciones de conseguir un contrato fijo. En la UB era uno de los miembros más activos de mi departamento y ya estaba metido en la tesis doctoral. Todo marchaba muy bien, pero yo no estaba satisfecho. Ahora sé que estaba neurótico. Me quejaba de todo: de mi novia; de Barcelona, mi ciudad; ¡de mí mismo! Y, por casualidad, cayó en mis manos un libro de Albert Ellis que hablaba de Psicología Cognitiva (Ellis – Harper 2003, traducción española de Ellis – Harper 1973). Y, pum, se hizo la luz. Me di cuenta de que me estaba amargando la vida yo mismo. En realidad, no

tenía ningún problema real. Todo era fruto de mis quejas, ¡de mi diálogo interno! Y durante unos meses, me dediqué casi exclusivamente a transformar mi mente: cambié mi sistema de valores completamente. Y todo cambió. De repente, estaba encantado de mi vida y de mí mismo. Donde solo veía quejas, ahora veía montones de oportunidades. La verdad es que aluciné con el poder de la mente, tanto para hacerte feliz, como para hacerte infeliz. Y, entonces, decidí que iba a dedicarme a hacer llegar el mensaje a otros: la psicología cognitiva es una joya siempre a nuestro alcance. Nuestra filosofía es el activo más importante de nuestras vidas. Y cambié 180 grados de rumbo. Me puse a estudiar psicología clínica y peregriné a Arezzo, Italia, con el célebre Giorgio Nardone, uno de los psicólogos más prestigiosos del momento. Allí cursé un máster en Clínica y pude empezar a trabajar con Giorgio.

No me arrepiento en absoluto de haber tomado esa decisión porque la clínica me ha dado inmensas satisfacciones. Aunque hoy sé que, tras mi cambio de mentalidad, hubiese sido también feliz trabajando en la universidad. En realidad, sé que puedo ser feliz en cualquier lugar, en cualquier ocupación; porque la clave está en nuestra actitud. Eso sí: siempre que dejemos de quejarnos y le echemos amor a lo que hay.

Y “echar de menos” no es la expresión adecuada. No “echo de menos” enseñar e investigar porque mi vida está colmada con lo que hago. Pero muchas veces se me ocurren temas de investigación que me encantan y considero cruciales. Pero no pasa nada: hay tantas posibilidades en el mundo. Esa abundancia es genial siempre y cuando no la convirtamos en necesidades absolutas.

G. L.— En gran medida, repartes tu dedicación profesional en tres campos: la psicología clínica (sesiones de psicoterapia, en tus centros de Barcelona y Madrid); la impartición de conferencias, entrevistas y cursos; y la redacción de libros, que suelen convertirse en *best-sellers* de la sección de no-ficción. ¿En cuál de los tres medios disfrutas más y en cuál crees que haces una mayor contribución a la salud psicológica de la población?

R. S.— Los tres ámbitos son maravillosos para mí. Y los tres se alimentan entre ellos. Viendo pacientes estableces unas relaciones de intimidad únicas: mega hermosas. Y pones a prueba nuevas ideas terapéuticas. Además, ayudas a la gente. ¡Es realmente un privilegio casi sagrado! Los libros, por otro lado, ayudan a la gente en grandes números. Y, además, me permite comunicar mis

ideas terapéuticas: mostrar mi estilo y mis hallazgos. Y las conferencias y cursos son como un ensayo de esa comunicación. Lo que explico en las conferencias y cursos irá luego a los libros. Tener una actividad laboral variada hace el trabajo mucho más satisfactorio. En la vida natural, los cazadores-recolectores como los Yanomami del Amazonas hacen cosas muy diferentes en su jornada. Especializarse demasiado es un rollo. Pero, por otro lado, dirigir tus diferentes esfuerzos a una misma meta final, te hace ser mucho más productivo. La enseñanza sería: haz tareas variadas, pero hacia un objetivo común.

G. L.– Tú mismo reconoces que tu visión de la psicología está basada en la psicología cognitivo-conductual del psicólogo americano Albert Ellis (Ellis – Harper 1973, traducción española: Ellis Harper 2003; Ellis 2014). A su vez, Ellis tomó bastantes principios y pensamientos de la filosofía estoica antigua. En tus libros sueles recordar muchas ideas y doctrinas de los filósofos estoicos Epicteto y Marco Aurelio. Por ejemplo, de Epicteto tu pensamiento favorito, que sueles repetir, es que «No nos afecta lo que nos sucede sino lo que nos decimos acerca de lo que nos sucede». Y no sé si eres consciente de que tu postulado de la Aceptación Incondicional de los Demás (AID) (Garrido Martín 2021) está claramente anticipado por Marco Aurelio (por ejemplo, en *Meditaciones* 10.35.4: “Así pues, también, la reflexión sana debe estar dispuesta para todos los sucesos”). Otro postulado estoico que manejas es que algunos bienes (como ser rico, tener pareja, tener consideración social) no son requisitos para la felicidad personal, solo son ventajas preferibles. De hecho, Marco Aurelio y el estoicismo en general están de moda, como pauta de conducta, incluso en libros de auto-ayuda (Robertson 2019). Entonces, tus libros (y, antes, los de Ellis) funcionan como una especie de mediadores culturales entre la filosofía estoica y el lector moderno. ¿Qué reflexión te sugiere esta continuidad cultural entre la filosofía antigua y la psicoterapia moderna?

R. S.– Fíjate que yo no soy muy consciente de que Epicteto, Marco Aurelio, etc, decían todo esto hace veinte siglos. Yo estudié a Albert Ellis y, acto seguido, me dediqué a aplicar esos principios a mi vida con toda la profundidad que pude. Pero me sorprende mucho que muchas de las conclusiones ulteriores a las que llegué con ese trabajo, coinciden increíblemente con ellos. Creo que la “racionalidad natural”, como a veces,

lo llamaba Ellis, te lleva a las mismas conclusiones maravillosas, como que “necesitamos muy poco para ser felices” o que “la muerte es buena” o que “en realidad, en el interior de todos anida el impulso del amor”. Pero sí, de los primeros que sistematizaron este saber fueron ellos. Así que sí, somos mediadores de aquellos pensadores geniales y quiero pensar que podemos continuar su obra aportando más conclusiones. Ellis nos traspasó ese saber, nosotros lo continuamos e incluso intentamos aportar algo más (poco).

G. L.– ¿Qué crees que es más efectivo para un público amplio, no especialista: que accedan a estos pensamientos directamente en las fuentes antiguas (leyendo traducciones de Epicteto o de Marco Aurelio) o través de libros de psicología aplicada (como los tuyos o los de Ellis), que se basan en la filosofía estoica?

R. S.– Todas las vías son buenas. Casi todos los conceptos que manejamos han sido formulados y reformulados por muchos pensadores a lo largo de la historia. En los vedas hindúes, en el cristianismo, en la filosofía naturalista de Thoreau... (Thoreau 2014). Un buen concepto es aquel que te ayuda a ser más feliz, armoniza las cosas, trae paz, propicia el entendimiento, resuelve las fricciones, explica mejor un fenómeno, aporta soluciones mejores. Proviene de donde sea, pruébalo en tu mente y adóptalo profundamente, si aporta todo eso. En la medida que una fuente te expone ese concepto y te demuestra su utilidad, te seduce para que lo adoptes, es bueno.

G. L.– Sé que no te gusta la etiqueta de “libros de autoayuda”. Yo prefiero, igualmente, hablar de libros de psicología aplicada o de psicología práctica. En cualquier caso, si partimos de la premisa de que la salud psicológica de gran parte de la población moderna está mal (tú hablas de un 30 por ciento) y teniendo en cuenta que tus libros de psicología práctica han vendido cientos de miles de ejemplares, en sus diferentes ediciones, ¿percibes algún efecto de la lectura de tus libros en la mejora de la salud emocional? En otras palabras, ¿crees que tus libros tienen eficacia terapéutica?

R. S.– Sí. Mis libros se venden mucho principalmente porque son eficaces. Cientos y cientos de personas me dicen de primera mano que les han cambiado la vida. Yo lo entiendo perfectamente porque a mí me sucedió lo mismo tras leer a Ellis y aplicarme profundamente su filosofía. Pero hay muchas más pruebas de su eficacia. Hace décadas que se publican estudios

de eficacia de la psicología cognitiva-conductual y no hay duda: funciona muy bien. En psicología y medicina se considera el tratamiento “gold standard” para la depresión y la ansiedad. Eso significa que el consenso es muy grande y piensa que la clase médica tiene unos estándares de objetividad y efectividad enormes (y hacen bien).

G. L.– Criticas frecuentemente el ideario de la sociedad occidental a aspirar siempre a más. Frente a ello, crees que el ser humano puede ser feliz renunciando a muchas (la mayoría) de las cosas. Esta postura revitaliza la tendencia al Downshifting, que se puso de moda en la década de los 90 del pasado siglo (Saltzman 1991; Schor 2001; Laguna Mariscal 2021). ¿No crees que esto te lleva a ir en contra del progreso, que tanto bien ha hecho en campos como la medicina y la higiene, la educación o los derechos cívicos? ¿Debemos volver al buen salvaje de Rousseau? ¿De veras crees que es preferible efectuar un retroceso en la civilización?

R. S.– Sí. Entiendo que poner en cuestión la bondad del “progreso” es todo un reto para la mente humana. Y eso es debido a que tenemos una mente básicamente “univariante”; esto es, tendemos a razonar de forma lineal y solo lineal. Sin embargo, los fenómenos de la naturaleza suelen ser mucho más complejos: dibujan curvas, parábolas, se retroalimentan... La mayor parte de lo que sucede no tiene un solo causante, sino muchos que además interactúan entre ellos. La bondad del progreso es una idea propia de una mente demasiado lineal. Se dice: “Si 10 gramos de chocolate me dan 10 medidas de placer, entonces 1.000 gramos me darán 1.000 medidas de placer”. Y ya sabemos que eso no es así. La idea de “cuanto más mejor” choca con la mayor parte de cómo funciona la Naturaleza que se basa mucho más en la homeostasis o el equilibrio. En términos humanos, se traduciría en una renuncia consciente y armoniosa.

A mí el “progreso” no me parece tan deseable. Prefiero el “equilibrio”, lo “natural”. Sé que soy hijo de una inteligencia tan infinitamente superior a la mía que no quiero contradecirla porque eso sería loco de mi parte. Así que sí: yo creo que lo mejor es volver a vivir como cazadores-recolectores. La “medicina”, la “educación”, “los derechos cívicos” son, para los que pensamos así, presuntos bienes que no parecen reportar más felicidad al ser humano. Entonces, ¿para qué los quieres? Por ejemplo, a mí me encanta Dinamarca. Visitas Copenhague y te deslumbra su nivel de vida, su capacidad

para la cooperación, el civismo. Los daneses son más guapos y altos. Ganan sueldos estratosféricos, el desempleo no existe. Es una de las cumbres de las sociedades modernas. Pero cómo te quedas si te digo que es uno de los países donde más anti-depresivos se consumen y donde más suicidios hay. Mi explicación es que “cuanto más, mejor”, no funciona.

G. L.— Aunque, como ya se ha comentado en esta entrevista, en tu teoría claramente enlazas con la filosofía estoica, a veces también has asumido posturas más bien propias del cinismo. Me estoy refiriendo a algunas polémicas en las que te has visto envuelto, como el “rifirrafe” con Buenafuente (Redacción ElHuffPost 2017; Buenafuente 2017; Santandreu 2017) o la reacción de los nutricionistas, que se quejaban de tus recomendaciones dietéticas para adelgazar (Zumaquero 2014). También detecto actitud cínica, “provocadora”, en tu idea de la “no conferencia”: te presentas ante un auditorio y finges que no llevas preparada la intervención, porque se te había olvidado el encuentro; a partir de ahí, en lugar de impartir una lección “magistral”, vas construyendo la conferencia sobre el diálogo con la audiencia. Me parece que esta propuesta de la “no conferencia” retoma, en realidad, la “diatriba” (que significa “conversación”) cínico-estoica. ¿Recurres a la actitud cínica porque estás convencido de su validez o solo como pose o recurso retórico? ¿Qué aspectos del cinismo antiguo te parecen más relevantes y aplicables hoy? (Molina Mellado – Laguna Mariscal 2020)

R. S.— Sobre el cinismo, no sé nada. Nunca lo he estudiado.

Sobre mis intervenciones que me comentas, puedo decirte varias cosas. Más que “provocar” lo que me gusta es “enfrentar” de golpe a alguien a una visión totalmente diferente. Esto es muy interesante porque, si se deja llevar, puede experimentar una especie de satori, una mini-iluminación donde, de repente, no solo comprenderá esa nueva visión sino que la “experimentará” a diferentes niveles. Es como un “eureka” donde parece como que todos los ángulos de un concepto se presentan ante uno. La desventaja de esa pedagogía es que muchos rechazarán mis ideas simplemente porque son demasiado disonantes con lo que creen. Pero no se puede tener todo en la vida; así que me quedo con esta gran herramienta.

Por otro lado, hay otra ventaja en parecer irreverente (no lo soy, en realidad) y es que te enfrentas voluntariamente a algo que tarde o temprano te tocará asumir: que no se puede gustar a todo el mundo. Con mi estilo, me

toca asumir más rápido este hecho. ¡Y qué libertad cuando ya no intentas agrandar a todo el mundo! Existe una herramienta mental para llevar bien la crítica: cada vez que te critiquen injustamente, concéntrate en el ejército de partidarios que tienes. Piensa: “Es verdad que hay un ejército que me critica, pero aún hay otro mayor que está conmigo”. Los que no se mojan, no tienen esos maravillosos aliados. No tienen nada. Concéntrate y regocíjate en tus aliados: qué privilegio tenerlos. Además, tú atesoras tu libertad.

G. L.— La terapia psicológica que propones se caracteriza por un rasgo que, en mi opinión, es al mismo tiempo su fuerte y debilidad: el énfasis en la racionalidad como medio para vencer las neurosis, la ansiedad y la depresión, que, según tú, nacen de sentimientos irracionales o de constructos mentales. Simplificando algo, postulas que la neurosis surge por no “pensar bien”; una vez que “nos mentalizamos”, que “pensamos bien”, los problemas psicológicos se desvanecen. Hay algo de tautológico en esta propuesta. Ya esta confianza en la razón humana como respuesta a los problemas del hombre está en Marco Aurelio, quien llamaba a la razón humana el “guía interior”. Con este racionalismo, de alguna manera, enlazas no solo con Marco Aurelio, sino con los postulados de la Ilustración del siglo XVIII. Ahora bien, creo que las personas decidimos, actuamos y nos movemos mucho más por las emociones que por la razón. Y muchas veces, aunque conozcamos la manera correcta de pensar y de actuar, seguimos arrastrados por nuestras creencias y emociones irracionales. Como decía Medea, enloquecida de celos y antes de matar a sus propios hijos por venganza, en las *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio: *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* (“Veo y apruebo [racionalmente] el camino mejor, pero sigo el peor”). Si esto es así, me temo que muchos lectores pueden leer tus libros como ficción: es decir, para pasar el rato o entretenerse, pero sin ser capaces de aplicar las recetas “racionales” (básicamente, cambiar su forma de pensar), porque son adictos a sus ideas irracionales. ¿Estás de acuerdo con esta dificultad? ¿Qué se te ocurre para superarla?

R. S.— Yo no creo que a Medea le ocurriese eso de “Veo y apruebo el camino mejor, pero sigo el peor”. Estoy convencido de que Medea “aprobaba sólo superficialmente el camino mejor”, al tiempo que “le convenía bastante el camino peor”. Y el tema de los celos me va perfecto para explicar este concepto. Yo tengo el orgullo de haber vencido a los celos casi totalmente. Y

haber ayudado a algunos hiper-celosos a dejar de serlo. ¿Cómo he conseguido ese milagro? Ayudándoles a convencerse ¡hasta las trancas! de que es muchísimo mejor compartir que encerrar a alguien en un cercado como si fuera tu posesión exclusiva. ¡Todas las ventajas están en ser no celoso! Ser celoso es absurdo, aberrante, perdedor, estúpido, ¡burro! Pero atención: le doy a la persona montones de argumentos mega sólidos. ¡Una cascada entera! Y los vemos por delante y por detrás. Día tras día. Hasta que hace, “eureka”. Y ya no es celosa. Es todo un trabajo: convencerse de que ser celoso aporta “CERO” ventajas. Y no serlo es absolutamente maravilloso. En mi experiencia, (casi) todas las emociones surgen de un ideario, de una experiencia previa que has interpretado: por lo tanto, de unos pensamientos. Lo que sucede es que son tan automáticos y pre-conscientes (que no inconscientes) que no te das cuenta de que están ahí y tienes la percepción de que es “el corazón” el que domina. En realidad, es tu cognición, tu mente. O al menos, la cognición (casi) siempre media esos impulsos.

G. L.—Para finalizar, ¿algún consejo para ser feliz que no hayas expuesto ya en alguno de tus libros? Si ya los has expuesto todos, coméntanos el que crees más relevante.

R. S.— En mi último libro, *Sin Miedo* (Santandreu 2021) hablo exclusivamente del método conductual. Éste entronca con los principios fundamentales de la meditación budista. Es otro método —muy diferente— para domesticar las emociones: se trata de desensibilizar a la mente frente al miedo. A base de exponerse abiertamente, deja de tener fuerza. Y funciona muy bien, especialmente frente al miedo agudo.

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A. VARA LÓPEZ Y F. CUADRADO HIDALGO
(EDS.) (2021). *HACIA LA RECUPERACIÓN DE LA
MEMORIA. CANON ESCOLAR Y POESÍA ESCRITA
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A. Vara López y F. Cuadrado Hidalgo (eds.) (2021). *Hacia la recuperación de la memoria. Canon escolar y poesía escrita por mujeres (1927-2020)*. Córdoba: UCO Press. ISBN 978-84-9927-653-3.

El presente libro aborda el acuciante problema de la ausencia de voces femeninas en el canon escolar. La primacía de un enfoque androcéntrico en el entorno educativo tiene consecuencias negativas para la sociedad en general, pero sobre todo para las mujeres más jóvenes, quienes, al carecer de referentes, tienden a sentirse poco estimuladas en sus capacidades literarias y artísticas. Es necesario hacer visibles las contribuciones de las mujeres al mundo cultural y literario en particular. Y este es el enfoque del presente libro, orientado a recuperar la figura y obra de poetas que han hecho aportaciones esenciales al acervo literario sin haber recibido el debido reconocimiento. A través de capítulos sobre autoras concretas que desarrollaron su obra desde la primera mitad del siglo XX hasta la más estricta contemporaneidad se traza un recorrido amplio y significativo de estas voces olvidadas a lo largo de casi un siglo. Además de una clarificadora introducción (pp. 9-16), integran el volumen dos bloques de trabajos. El primero, que consta de 13 capítulos, se titula “Las poetas en el canon literario” (17-198). El segundo, integrado por 5 capítulos, lleva por nombre “Las poetas en el canon escolar: propuestas didácticas” (199-268).

Los trabajos del primer bloque pretenden poner de relieve la valía artística de autoras a veces no tan reconocidas como debieran. En “Las escritoras, el canon y la percepción del éxito: el caso de María Teresa León, ¿‘la cola del cometa’?” (17-38), de Irene Muñoz Cerezo, se habla de la recepción de la obra de María Teresa León, que siempre quedó en segundo plano frente a Rafael Alberti. En “El desvelamiento de María Zambrano: acercamiento teórico desde el Romanticismo” (39-44) Beatriz Domínguez López efectúa una aproximación a la filósofa y ensayista española desde la perspectiva de la teoría romántica. En “La presencia a oscuras de Ernestina de Champourcin. Reflexiones sobre una poeta varada entre el silenciamiento y la incorporación al canon” (45-60) Inmaculada García Haro ensalza la labor traductora de Ernestina de Champourcin en el exilio, bajo el amparo del Fondo de Cultura Económica de México. En un cuarto trabajo, titulado “‘Versos con faldas’ o cómo hacer de la cultura una herramienta de lucha. Poesía femenina en la España de posguerra” (61-70), Isabel Llamas Martínez destaca el rol fundamental que tuvo la creación de la tertulia literaria “Versos con faldas”, creada en 1951 por Gloria Fuertes, María Dolores de Pablos y Adelaida Las Santas; y las fuertes presiones que acabaron por provocar su desaparición en 1953. Versan sobre un eje temático común, el de la infancia, los trabajos “La vuelta a la infancia en María Beneyto: un recurso polisémico” (71-89), de María Eugenia Álava, y “Paca Aguirre pone en pie la infancia. Para una recuperación de la memoria histórica” (89-108), donde Rocío Castro-Llanes reivindica la figura de Paca Aguirre, la poeta que puso voz a la generación de niños y niñas de la Guerra Civil cuya infancia quedó truncada por el conflicto y marcada por dolorosas pérdidas familiares. Siguen otros seis trabajos sobre autoras concretas: “Aprendizaje, nacimiento y vuelo. La poesía de Begoña Abad” (109-128), de José María García Linares; “Así era el amor, volver a casa: la poesía amorosa de Almudena Guzmán” (129-138), de Micaela Moya; “Beatriz Orieta: la depuración de maestros y el ‘holocausto español’ en la poesía de Raquel Lanseros” (139-148), de Nieves García Prados; “Desengaño estético en *Las moras agraces* de Carmen Jodra Davó” (149-168), de Ignacio Alba Degayón; “Elia Saneleuterio Temporal: 180 grados de vida” (169-180), de Juan de Dios Villanueva Roa; y “Redes sociales y difusión de la poesía joven: Luna Miguel, poeta sénior” (181-188), de Marina Fernández Lores. Este último trabajo conecta temáticamente con el que cierra la sección: “La revolución de las poetas jóvenes: la voz de un pasado cargado de futuro” (189-198), de Elena Carrilero Jiménez. Como contrapunto a los trabajos donde se habla de la poesía escrita por mujeres durante la posguerra española entendida como arma de resistencia, estos dos últimos trabajos ofrecen una

aproximación a la poesía femenina más actual, la *millennial*, con énfasis en el modo en que algunas autoras –Luna Miguel, así como Elvira Sastre y Loreto Sesma– han podido conectar a través de las redes sociales con un público joven que, de otro modo, seguramente, no se habría aficionado a la poesía.

El segundo bloque, que tiene por eje temático la presencia de las poetas en el canon escolar, se abre con el trabajo de Mónica Martínez Sariego, titulado “Pino Ojeda: una incorporación reciente al canon de la literatura canaria” (199-220). Además de ofrecernos un completo panorama sobre la poliédrica figura de esta artista poeta y feminista grancanaria, reivindica la necesidad de incorporar al canon escolar estas figuras femeninas rescatadas del olvido por los estudiosos. El caso de Pino Ojeda es paradigmático porque esta autora recientemente pasó a formar parte del elenco de escritores que componen el temario de las pruebas de acceso a la Universidad en las Islas Canarias (elenco en el que, significativamente, solo había otro nombre femenino: el de Josefina de la Torre). En el segundo trabajo de esta sección, titulado “Recuperar la memoria: Pilar Paz Pasamar en el canon escolar. Una propuesta para segundo de bachillerato” (221-230), Luz Verónica Triviño Cazalla ofrece propuestas concretas de abordaje de la poesía de esta autora de la Generación del 50, olvidada por desarrollar su obra en la periferia, en las aulas de 2º de Bachillerato. También versan sobre autoras concretas y sobre el uso de sus textos en el aula las aportaciones de Víctor Abel Jiménez Jódar y Lucía Cabrera Romero, tituladas, respectivamente, “A propósito de la incorporación al canon escolar de las poetas de la generación del 80. Ángeles Mora en el aula de secundaria” (231-244) y “La poesía en el aula de Español como Lengua Extranjera. Propuestas didácticas a partir de tres poemas de María Rosal” (245-260). Concluye la sección “MANIFIESTO. Las autoras del Grupo ALAS. Libertad de pensamiento y compromiso” (261-268), de Aurora Gámez Henríquez. Las autoras que lo firman –ALAS es acrónimo de “Autoras por la Literatura y las Artes”– expresan su ideario artístico, su compromiso feminista y su deseo de convertirse en una plataforma de difusión y promoción de la poesía femenina, propósito plenamente relacionado con el volumen que aquí se reseña.

En definitiva, este libro monográfico sobre la recuperación de la obra de poetas olvidadas pretende cuestionar la visión y organización patriarcal del mundo en virtud de la cual las mujeres poetas han sido silenciadas y desautorizadas a lo largo de la historia literaria. El libro, que recoge 18 trabajos sobre diferentes autoras, tiene por objetivo fundamental dar visibilidad a su legado poético y ofrecer propuestas concretas para luchar

contra el androcéntrico canon literario y permitir, en última instancia, la incorporación de sus figuras y obras al idealmente democrático canon escolar. Quedan así recuperadas, entre otras, las esenciales figuras de María Teresa León, María Zambrano, Ernestina de Champourcín, María Beneyto, Paca Aguirre, Begoña Abad, Almudena Guzmán, Raquel Lanseros, Carmen Jodra Davó, Elia Saneleuterio, Luna Miguel, Pino Ojeda, Pilar Paz Pasamar, Ángeles Mora, María Rosal y, en general, diversos colectivos: las poetas de posguerra, las poetas más jóvenes y actuales y, finalmente, el grupo ALAS (Autoras por la Literatura y las Artes). Todas las autoras seleccionadas tienen en común, como tantas otras artistas, haber sido excluidas en mayor o menor medida del canon literario y escolar mayoritariamente por el hecho de ser mujeres, aunque no se descarta que hayan contribuido otros factores. De ahí el interés de volúmenes como el que aquí reseñamos. Es preciso continuar investigando y difundiendo resultados para que todas estas autoras –y las que todavía no han sido rescatadas– tengan el lugar que les corresponde en el canon literario.