

PARALENGUA, THE OHTHER POETRY

The ruptures in the Argentinean poetic tradition throughout the XX century

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We will not refer to the ruptures that occurred concerning the concept of constrained literature -that is, the literature that only makes use of verbal signifiers in order to communicate its contents-, but to the ruptures of that limiting conception of literary art to which only are valid the communicability of the essences and the unsolved conflicts of the human spirit by means of WORD, in the form of verb.

In that sense there are dozens of alterations and tendencies and forms of the poetic saying, through the ineffability of the verb: from the initial Rubendarian Modernism to the neobaroque it have been originated not only in Argentina but all throughout Latin America, movements as important as Neosimbolism, Nativism, Cosmogonism, Colloquialism, Intimism, Antipoetry, Realistic Poetry, Conversational Poetry, Hermetic Poetry, Popular Poetry, Indigenous Poetry, Folkloric Poetry, etc.

In general, these innovations regard the syntactic disposition of words, altering their sequencing and creating combinations rarely frequent, to the point that particular styles are created (or collective styles when regarding poetic movements). Another place for innovation concerns the strength of the topics, determined by the attitude toward the technological advances of the era, id est, if the past is craved or the future is praised (for example: Rubendarian Modernism or Ultraism), or a fluctuation among personal and subjective topics (Hermetic Poetry, Neosimbolism, etc.), or among social and/or objective subjects (Conversational Poetry, Antipoetry, etc.). In all cases the confidence and security offered by the established linguistic coding does not give place to questioning, therefore reassuring the poetic expression of the dominating tendency only through words and those particular forms called "verses", such as described by Samuel Beckett's poem: "Listen/join/words/to the words..." (who, on the other hand, cannot avoid whatever he condemns).

Concomitantly, the preservation and reinforcement of the official system of the arts is performed: by not questioning the present system, the existing one is legitimated, preserving the structures untouched. Paradoxically, the system can be reinforced by questioning its ideological contents: what matters are the media, the forms of expression.

For that reason, when referring to ruptures in the field of poetry, we will regard to the situations in which the vernacular principle stating that poetry is only possible through words and verses is transgressed, that is, when, together with the verbal expression -if existing-, is detected the existence of other languages or supports.

In this sense, three moments may be observed in the Argentinean poetic tradition. The first occurs at the light of Vicente Huidobro, either under the sparkiling star of Ultraism (Spanish version of the Chilean Creationism) mainly with the work of Oliverio Girondo, in Buenos Aires, in the mid '20s; or under the glitter of his Manifests ("To make a poem in the same way as nature makes a tree") which already towards 1940 prompted the movement *Concrete-Invention* of Río de la Plata and, later, *Madí* art. The second occurs with the eclosion of visual poetry and other tendencies in the mid '60s, including Edgardo Antonio Vigo's proposal for a participatory poetry. And the third happens in the mid '80s with the creation of *Paralengua, the ohther poetry*. The alterations may be basically grouped in two main orders: in the use of the space in which the symbols are rendered and in the writing-reading field (oral).

The New Image

The first rupture takes place with the incidence of ultraism in Latin America and Argentina in the early 20s. Ultraism is a poetic movement originated in Spain in 1918 which was started by Vicente Huidobro, a Chilean poet who introduced in Spain the novelties of French poetry along with his own movement, Creationism. Ultraism, which comes up at the moment in which the Rubendarian Modernism was fading, spreads rapidly: in Uruguay appears around the 20s the magazine *Los Nuevos* (*The New*), directed by Morador Otero and Ildefonso Pereda, being a prominent figure Alfredo Mario Ferreiro, author of *El Hombre que se Comió un Autobús* (*The Man Who Ate a Bus*, 1927); in Chile operates the *Runrunist* movement, in Mexico the Estridentism, guided by Manuel Maples Arce and, in the rest of the region, renewing poets supersede. The greatest contribution from the ultraist movement was a new treatment of metaphor, also called "image", without the habitual nexus of the classic metaphor and, regarding the contents, new topics which imposed the changing ways of living due to the new technologies derived from scientific developments: railroad, aviation, skyscrapers, radio, etc. In Argentina were prominent Jorge Luis Borges, especially for his work in diffusing the movement and Oliverio Girondo, a poet that not only exploited the possibilities of linguistic orality in a form similar to Alfonso Reyes' "jitanjáforas" but who also took advantage of poetic space as a privileged component of poetic creation by including iconic images -as in the poem *Croquis en la Arena* (*Croquis on the Sand*)-, or by interpenetrating the verbal and visual elements of the poem in the way of the ideographic poetry in which the shape of the poem takes the form of the verbal object, as in the poem *Espantapájaros* (*Scarecrow*).

The New poetry

The second rupture took place in the mid '60s, starting with the 20th issue of the magazine *Diagonal Cero* (*Zero Diagonal*), edited and directed by Edgardo Antonio Vigo in the city of La Plata (Argentina). On those years several experimental tendencies were showing their influence: from French Lettrism via the Cuban author Robert Altmann and the magazine *Signos* (*Signals*) edited by Samuel Feijóo in Santa Clara de Cuba, to visual poetry, principally the one produced in Mexico by the German-Mexican poet Mathías Goeritz in the field enriched by the Madí group from the River Plate area (River Plate (*Río de la Plata*) is the river at which margins was constructed Buenos Aires; the other margin of the river leads to Uruguay) and all the Latin American constructivist tradition; from Brazilian Concretism with its three tendencies, structuralist, metaphysical and spacial to the Italian *Poesia Visiva*; from Pierre Garnier's Spacialism to Phonic Poetry, of lettrist origin, that had grown stronger thanks to the appearance of magnetic recorders, etc. At the same time the mechanisms of creation, distribution and reception of works of art (including poetry) were being revisited at the instance of situacionists and other revolting tendencies that would appear due to the French May: *Poesía Dos Puntos* (*Two Points Poetry*), *Public Poetry*, etc.

Amid this fermenting broth would appear all over Latin America groups corresponding to the "New Poetry" which distributed their materials through magazines, publications and principally, exhibitions. In that sense we could mention in Chile *Ediciones Mimbres*, directed by Guillermo Deisler; in Brazil, after an early start of the concretist Noigandres group and its magazine *Invenção*, the magazines of process-poem *Virgula*, *Ponto*, *Proceso* and others were founded; in Venezuela, Dámaso Ogaz's *Pata de Palo* (*Wooden Leg*) and, peripherally, *El Techo de la Ballena* (*The Roof of the Whale*); in Cuba, the already mentioned *Signos*; in Uruguay, *Los Huevos de Plata* (*The Silver Eggs*) and *Ovum 10*, and in Argentina, apart from *Diagonal Cero*, *WC* and *Hexágono 70* (*Hexagon 70*) have to be mentioned, all of them directed by Vigo. Initially, Vigo reelaborates the texts in visually structured configurations, by using letters as well as numbers. Later, the concept of participation dictates most of his work, proposing objects and situations in which the active and creative participation of the spectator is crucial for the consummation of the poem. This characteristic, that would be a constant factor in his work, can be already observed in *Poemas Matemáticos Barrocos* (*Mathematical-Baroque Poems*, Ed. Contexte, Paris, France, 1967), and would crystallize later in his most important theoretical text *De la Poesía Proceso a la Poesía para y/o Realizar*

(*From Process-Poetry to Poetry for and/or Realize*, Ed. Diagonal Cero, La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1970), in which after analyzing all the changes occurred in poetry during the latest years proposes “the most profound activation of an individual: his own realization of the poem”, id est, translates the center of artistic creation to the enjoyer -now creator- reserving to the artist the rol of projector.

To the same poetic group pertains Luis Pazos, a visualizer of sounds and onomatopoeias, forms to which he regards as “poetic realism”; also Carlos Raúl Ginzburg, who visually elaborates linguistic matter according to the racionalist principles of symbolic logic which he alters and reconstructs; Jorge de Luxan Gutiérrez who proposes the expression *actualidad (here and now)* instead of *poetry* and primarily uses graphic images as his expressive element. Not part of this group but also worth mention are the lettrist poet Mirta Dermisache and the author of phonic poems Ana María Pelli. Also Luis Catriel, Alberto Pellegrini, Marie Oresanz, Luis Benedit, Luis Turcovich, Horacio Zabala, Armando Zárate, Bertetche, Héctor Puppo and others, closer to conceptualism than to visual poetry.

The Ohther Poetry

The third and last chronological era of this subverting process of the verbal poetic language takes place in the late '80s with the appearance of the group *Paralengua*, propeller of the *Ohther Poetry*, and constituted by Roberto Cignoni, Fabio Doctorovich and Carlos Estévez, being their organs of expression the magazine *Xul* directed by Jorge Santiago Perednik and the various poetic actions and performances organized from 1989 by the group together with other experimental poets. The best description of *Paralengua, The Ohther Poetry*, may be found in the homonymous article written by Carlos Estévez in *Xul* #10, December 1993:

“*Paralengua* is a poetic space which aggregates those proposals that attempt an alternative to the traditional techniques represented by books and other publications printed by the usual methods.

The *ohther poetry* is then defined from the use of a different medium (stage, cassette, illustration paper, voice, etc.) and a different interpretative technique (gesture, orality, vacillate, etc.). In this way, to the classical but revamped modes of theater, drawing, singing, sculpture, dance, photography, recitation and typography, the more novel ones such as video, multimedia, computing, recordings and all their possible combinations add up.

Paralengua is then converted into a magnet that attracts poetics and, for the same reason, into a hyperactive melting pot which is the product of this attraction/interaction. This turns *Paralengua* into an autodefying status that seems to create its own esthetics on the bases of change.

The ohther poetry implies also a modification of the relational spaces, for these can change to more immediate and shareable forms, generating ways of direct participation such as in Ricardo Castro's ludicrous poems, Fabio Doctorovich's chorused poems, or Cazenave-Cignoni dialogued ones.

The use of open and closed spaces, modern technologies, mass-media and the increasing participation of the public give to *Paralengua* a non-marginal character (even considering its scarce diffusion and its intermittent appearances), therefore preferring a frontal attitude with respect to the rest of society.

Maybe that is the reason why there are strong referential components in most of the presented works, although these elements have been meshed up to subtle suggestions or buried under deceiving illegibilities.

The amplification of the concept of poetic matter, the redefinition of its specificity, the poetic corporeity and the dissolution of the limits between poetry and the rest of the artistic activities are some of the matters derived from the exposed premises.

In summary, *Paralengua* has a tentacular and proteinic character which does not lack desprejudice, festivity, intellectualism, sensitivity and, above all, a passion which possesses all the dimensions of the WORD”.