

Mercedes ARRIAGA FLOREZ¹

Universidad de Sevilla, Ateneum University Gdansk

Daniele CERRATO²

Universidad de Sevilla, Ateneum University Gdansk

Alessia DELLA ROCCA³

Universidad de Sevilla

Interlinguistic crosses and transexuality in María Rosal

Summary

The objective of this article is to analyse the different textual strategies with which María Rosal Nadales makes a transtextual construction in her anthology "Al este del andén". The use of this technique responds to different reasons: the active role that is assigned to the reader and the playful character in which the writing is framed, the tribute to and poetic concordance with other authors, the surprise effect and the irony, the postmodern fusion of classical culture and popular culture and, finally, the ethical-aesthetic commitment to point out contradictions, create new metaphors and encourage the reader's reflection together with new ways of thinking, especially around the figure of the woman poet and the representation of the female body.

Keywords: María Rosal, poetry, Interlinguistic crosses, transtextuality, gender

1. Introduction

The objective of the present contribution is to analyse linguistic intersections and transtextuality (Genette, 1997) in some compositions of María Rosal's work, *Al este del andén* (2015), where discourses and statements of different origin and condition (cultural, filmic, philosophical, of everyday life) are inserted, together with quotations from other poets, revisited and adapted to new contexts.

The use of this technique refers to the active role that our poet assigns to her ideal reader (Eco, 1979), explicitly invited to discover passages and references, since the interpretation of the quotation or the allusion is not mandatory but optional, and it completely depends on the abilities and skills of the reader.

¹  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6039-6949>.

²  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7238-1381>. The research activity of Dr. Daniele Cerrato that has led to the compilation of this article has been funded by the "VI Plan Propio" of the University of Seville.

³  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1373-134X>.

The playful character of this proposal, with its Barthesian flavour, which offers itself as "pleasure of the text" (Barthes, 1974), with regard to language games, ironic variations or surprise closures, intersects with the condition of what Borgues defines "labyrinth"⁴, where the already known verses of tradition are not closed or finished, but continue, they widen, branch out in the variants, in the comments, and are used as materials of new compositions, without end. This way of proceeding rests on a deliberate ethical, aesthetic and social commitment to transform the imaginary and the categories with which reality is conceived, through what Umberto Eco (1979) calls "an inferential walk", that is the assimilation, interpretation and appropriation of elements coming from other texts, through a personal reading.

María Rosal is not limited to quotation, allusion or mention, but highlights the relationship of affinity and sisterhood with other ancient and modern authors and the process of constructing her poetry through other people's materials⁵. Her transtextuality accounts for her aesthetic practice, which absorbs and cannibalizes other texts to build its own ethic-aesthetic. It is so evident that even the autobiographical perspective "is contaminated by the lives of others, either real or imaginary" (Arriaga Flórez, 2019: 12), and narrated through linguistic materials or quotes from other poets, in a sort of autobiography by means of third parties or polyphonic autobiography, which contains fragments of other people's biographies.

Also the postmodern pastiche finds space in *Al este del andén*, where we find sonnets in the Baroque style of Francisco de Quevedo or Lope de Vega, where elements are superimposed in a real montage made of paradigmatic relations of substitution or selection of part of previous texts and, at the same time, of affirmation of new meanings.

Even if the concept of transtextuality is applied above all in narrative and not in poetry, we can extrapolate it for our analysis, considering the narrative vocation of many of María Rosal's compositions, a feature reported by critics (Vara, 2018). We can observe in "*Al este del andén*" three out of the five basic types of transtextuality: intertextuality, that is the formula of textual coexistence, the

⁴ The poem "Laberinto", by the Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges, which says:

"No esperes que el rigor de tu camino
que tercamente se bifurca en otro,
que tercamente se bifurca en otro,
tendrá fin. Es de hierro tu destino".

⁵ María Rosal herself points out that the use of parody, collage, eclecticism, quotations and intertextuality are not only features of postmodernity in Spanish poetry, but more concretely can be found in poetry written by women (Rosal, 2007).

reference or inclusion of some parts of a text in another; metatextuality or critical relationship between the text and its metatexts; hypertextuality or constraint that unites a text with another previous one, in which it is based, by transformation or imitation. It is obvious that these typologies do not appear in a pure state, well delineated, but sometimes amalgamated or superimposed in a bricolage exercise.

The title of María Rosal's work itself already responds to these modalities, in a clear allusion to the 1955 film "*East of Eden*", "*Al este del Edén*" in Spanish, a film version of director Elia Kazan of the novel by the American Nobel Prize winner John Steinbeck (1952), with the relevant added irony and desecration: from the eternity of the idyllic "Eden", to the haste which is implicit in the "binary", meaning not the distance between the two, but the syncretism and the coincidence.

2. Intertextuality

It can be said that some compositions present a high degree of intertextual complexity (Bernardelli, 2000) and are configured as syllepsis (Riffaterre, 1979), referring simultaneously to different discursive contexts.

Nosotros, los de entonces,
no sabíamos besar.

Mientras Bogart pensaba –el muy ingenuo–
que siempre les quedaría París,
nosotros,
los de entonces, hacía tiempo
que habíamos asaltado

la Bastilla.

In the passage, belonging to the lyric "*Ars amandi*", we can observe a quote by the poet Pablo Neruda in the first verse but, while he finishes the sentence by writing: "ya no somos los mismos", María Rosal modifies it to adapt it to the theme of her poetry and the autobiographical context in which it develops, which is adolescent love.

In the second stanza, the name of "Bogart" refers to the film "Casablanca" and, consequently, to the quotation of a line that the American actor has in the film and that, although it comes here as an indirect speech, it keeps all the characteristics of the line of the protagonist of the film. María José Porro

(2002), points out that María Rosal makes a parodic use of intertextuality and tends to reverse and re-read all the myths and stereotypes, merging the traditional and cultured linguistic registers together with the modern and popular.

The space-time fusion is very evident, on the one hand, París-Casablanca-Fernán Núñez (the village where the poet was born and lives, near Cordoba), on the other the French Revolution, the Second World War and the discovery of sexuality in the province during the Francoism, a syncretic and personal journey on the trail of one's desire, against the moral of the time. The use of the metaphor-metonymy "La Bastilla", to refer to the disobedience-revolution that assumed such behaviour (kissing in the darkness of a cinema), hides the hypertextual procedure that supposes the use of this euphemism, clear mimesis of linguistic impositions of that era, where one could not talk openly about any aspect that had to do with sexuality.

"Eterno retorno" is an intertextual example of adaptation, where the first two lines are a reference to Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. Only a difference in verbal time ("Volverán las oscuras golondrinas"), differentiates his verse from María Rosal's ("Volvieron las oscuras golondrinas").

Volvieron las oscuras
golondrinas,
volvieron los vencejos,
volvió a crecer la zarza en las enredaderas
del jardín,
volvimos a podar los árboles frutales
y volvimos a hacer la declaración de la renta.

Intertextuality is placed at the service of bringing the literary text closer to everyday life, the abstraction of the romantic poet becomes the routine of life, passing from the idealism and lightness of the future ("volverán") to the certainty and heaviness of the past ("volvieron"). The "golondrina" (swallow), symbol of spring and love, turns into "vencejo" (swift) which, despite the same black colour, does not present the poetic glamor of the swallow. Moreover, in Spanish, "vencejo" has another meaning that refers to the "bond" and, therefore, to the wear and tear that everyday life produces in two people linked not by love, but by habit; the garden is not a locus amœnus anymore, but a place where people work to collect the fruit to eat, up to the income statement (declaración de la renta), following a descending scale.

Bécquer's text becomes a palimpsest (Genette, 1997) on which to rewrite a love story that loses all its romantic character in favor of its repetitive aspect,

which transforms spirituality into materiality. This kind of intertextuality becomes a process of thesis and antithesis, where María Rosal brings together two different contexts of signification: romantic love vs postmodern love, which does not mean the denial of love at all, but another version of it, where passion and desire are overwhelmed by trivial and venial gestures, through an ironic and sly look, which replaces and rewrites the romantic relationship in the joint gesture of the income statement, building a surprise closure.

3. Metatextuality

In "Venenos y otras hierbas", eclecticism joins parody, constituting an "intertextuality coming from different and opposite sources: liturgy, advertisement, songs" (Benegas, 1997: 59). It appears as a collage of interdiscursivity (Segre, 1984; Robyns 1999), which approaches plurilingualism, polyphony and dialogism (Bachtin, 2003). The narrative tendency configures the text as a micro-story, in which the synecdoche acts, concentrated in partiality and in the fragment of every collected opinion.

The subject of the verse by Jaime Gil de Biedma "que la vida iba en serio uno lo empieza a comprender más tarde", is significantly modified with the term "poesía", thus emphasizing their interchangeability, in a composition that is in fact a "textual genetics", which reflects on the meaning of writing:

Los estúpidos: ¡Pero mira que es fácil!
Los prácticos: Ahora vivirás en paz.
Los poetas: Que la poesía *iba en serio*,
uno lo empieza a comprender más tarde.
Los astrólogos: Cuando Marte descanse
en el campo de Venus
volverá la palabra.
El hereje: Oh, tú, poesía, que estás
en los cielos, no me dejes caer
en la tentación de olvidarte.
El inocente: ¿Por qué
me has abandonado?
El ebrio: Ja.
Ante tanta opinión y tan experta:
Nihil obstat.

It is a complex form that blends metatextuality with intertextuality, in reporting the opinions of different characters on the reasons for the lack of inspiration of the poetic ego. Their voices in this "interdiscursive strategy" (Zinna, 2004), form a kind of very heterogeneous and variegated "Greek chorus" that ranges from the figure of the mother to that of the priest, the gravedigger, the doctor, the midwife, the fortune tellers or, more generically, those who don't have a trade: the stupid, the practical, the optimistic, the stubborn, the romantic, etc.

Jaime Gil de Biedma's verses which are "nestled" in this speech, cover a first order centrality, since they constitute the only words that come from a poet, and therefore the only affinity that María Rosal establishes, while dis-authorizing all other words, through the irony concentrated in the last two verses. We see then that two types of devices are used: the homodiscursive and the heterodiscursive (Zinna, 2004: 279). The former refers to the quotation of the verses by Jaime Gil de Biedma, which tends to homogenize the instances of enunciation. The latter maintains the alterity of the reported speeches of other people and allows interdiscursive dialogism (Bachtin, 1975), through the presence and pluralism of the voices, which also represent different visions and perspectives.

María Rosal presents the affirmation of a poetic ego that does not suffer "the vertigo of evaluation" (Gergen, 1992), although it is besieged through the words that others pronounce on the profession of poetry and therefore, sometimes, not so indirectly on the woman poet. With this siege we allude to the centrality of language in the conformation and durability of social relations in our society, where the ego is in the middle and at times harnessed to a network of opinions.

The quotation of the nihil obstat is, in turn, a concentrate of intertextuality and metatextuality. A surprise ending that looks like a kind of litotes that denies everything, affirming it with this Latin formula. First of all, because it refers to the final judgment of the poet, who gives her consent to all the different and contradictory opinions, which means not agreeing with any of them. This Catholic "final judgment" is prepared in the religious atmosphere of the last voices of the heretic, which reads a modified version of the Lord's Prayer, and of the innocent who reports the words of Jesus on the cross "why have you forsaken me". Secondly, because the expression was used as the approval, by the ecclesiastical censorship, of the moral content of a text so that it could be printed. With these final words, María Rosal refers so much to the meaning of censorship and disapproval of all these voices, which constitute themselves as a sort of inquisitorial court on poetry and the poet, as the meaning of their uselessness

since, after all the speeches made by unqualified people (who ironically turn into "expert opinions"), however the text will see the light and go to the press.

The textocentric feature, which appears in many of the compositions of this work, refers to the multiphrenia (Gergen, 1992), that is, to the simultaneous presence of several contextual references which, in turn, form a constellation of feelings and sensations around the poetic ego.

4. Hypertextuality

In "A manera de epílogo", hypertextuality is presented in the form of an echo of the famous composition by Lope de Vega, where instructions are given on how to construct a sonnet. Once again, the textocentric feature appears as an abyss construction: the text that contains itself in a metatext and also Lope de Vega's text which, in turn, contains another metatext. A game of mirrors, which compares and fuses the classic and the modern, the past and the present, the baroque master and the postmodern apprentice, in a kind of gloss understood in the musical sense, as resonance and harmonics, in which they make variations of some borrowed words, and where the profession of writing poetry is made to coincide with the itinerary of life.

¿Un soneto me manda hacer *Violante*?
¡En mi vida me he visto en tal *aprieto*!
No oculto mi pasión por el *soneto*.
Capricho y devoción vayan *delante*.

Ya puestos a jugar ¡oh *consonante*!
acude al folio en blanco y al *cuarteto*
brinda perfil airoso que el *terceto*
se va engendrando en él. A nadie *espante*.

Si ya en mi edad madura voy *entrando*
dudando de mi hacer y de mi *derecho*,
si a mi vida futura le estoy *dando*

rima y ritmo, no sé por qué *sospecho*
que así como el soneto va *acabando*
se me escapó el latido. Ya está *hecho*.

The homage to the Baroque master is implicit through this integrative and dialogic game of consonances, which goes beyond the phonic material, the metric and the words. We are witnessing a transformation of the poetic ego, which is presented in the first two verses as a reader of Lope, in the literal quotation that begins the composition, and then supplants it in the second quatrain, becoming an author, following a liminal path, in which we can find the border and the differentiation with respect to the words of the poet but, at the same time, also their dissolution.

The same hypertextual mode can be found in the sonnet "Hortus clausus", with some variations. The anaphora she repeats at the beginning verse, "érase" and "era", refers explicitly to the sonnet "A una nariz" by Francisco de Quevedo which, again through this rhetorical figure, the poet described the hyperbolic and very visible nose of his rival, Luís de Góngora. Instead, María Rosal, in an inverse manner, works to talk about a hidden organ, silenced and almost never represented in the poetic tradition with its own identity: the female sex. As Alicia Vara writes, the classic materials "are decontextualized and available for the benefit of a new creative energy linked to contemporary philosophical and artistic approaches" (Vara López, 2018: 17).

*Erase un cráter dulce, almibarado,
era un hueco ancestral, grieta festiva,
érase cicatriz con lomo y giba,
érase una quimera de cuidado.*

*Era un cuenco de anís certificado,
érase una hendidura en ofensiva,
érase sombra astral, vuelta en ojiva.
Era un pozo sin fin, nunca saciado.*

*Erase del placer audaz distrito,
era volcán umbrío, cordillera,
era de los deleites el garito.*

*Era, según se mire, una chistera
guardada de ilusión. Fuera delito
que no llevara el mundo por montera.*

The aulic lexicon and the baroque composition concur to give a carnival vision, where simultaneously the social and discursive norm on modesty is

expressed and, therefore, on the use of euphemisms to refer to this part of the body of women and, at the same time, the his transgression, also following a common tendency among other Spanish writers who use classical elements to break gender barriers (Hermosilla, 2005). In this sense, María Rosal represents “a dissident author self with established symbolic networks” (Vara López, 2018: 24).

Cultured and poetic hypertextuality, face to face with Francisco de Quevedo, serves as a pretext for another macro-intertextuality, which is that of the different cultural references (scientific, medical, philosophic) that in our culture have constituted the different discourses on sex and feminine sexuality. Thus, María Rosal represents it under a discursive heterogeneity (Authier-Revuz, 1975):

- 1) in a traditional way as lack or passive void ("hueco ancestral"), but also as an active organ ("hendidura en ofensiva");
- 2) under the most complex and opposite form of the ledge ("cicatriz con lomo y giba", "chistera", "montera"), which refers explicitly to a proper sexuality;
- 3) in the misogynist version built around it as a place of unregulated sexuality ("Era un pozo sin fin, nunca saciado").

On the frame of both (hypertextuality and macro-intertextuality) María Rosal constructs a new vision and a new version which, starting from the first triplet, insists on the meaning of its freedom, ("Erase del placer audaz distrito", "era de los deleites el garito"), On the sense of pleasure, and not on sin or guilt, also through senses such as taste ("cráter dulce, almibarado", "cuenco de anís"), implicitly signaling concrete sexual practices. But above all, this organ is unusually linked to transcendence, ideals, aspirations and dreams ("érase una quimera de cuidado", "guarida de ilusión"), breaking with all the tradition that sees it as mere flesh.

The final metaphor of the cylinder ("era, según se mire, una chistera"), which has its redundant double in the image of the Phrygian cap ("montera"), is especially polysemic and hypertextual. The "chistera" syncretizes and summarizes in itself the intellectual and philosophical aspect: a magical and, therefore, divine instrument, as much as the popular aspect of the rabbit (totem of female sexuality) that is hidden in it. The collage operation once again tends to what Jameson (1991) calls border dissolution, that is the overlap of high culture and mass culture. The strategies of fragmentation and recomposition are aimed at talking about sexuality and the female body in a positive and transgressive key, contravening the form of thinking of Francisco de Quevedo, remembered here for his technical skill as a composer of sonnets, but at the same time, also for his fierce misogyny.

5. Conclusions

Transtextuality as a dialogue between poets or between cultural contexts marks in María Rosal the suturing of different divisions: that of time, in bringing together past and present, that of life and literature, that of high culture and popular culture, that between the classic and the postmodern. In the case of quotations from other poets, it develops in two main ways: as a metaphor, where the voice of María Rosal merges in harmony and concordance (Jaime Gil de Biedma and Lope de Vega), or as a metonym, where the voice approaches, compares and contrasts in dissonance (Francisco de Quevedo and Gustavo Aldolfo Bécquer). These effects of syntony or dystonia are forms of declared heterogeneity, which openly highlight the linguistic intersections and the (inter) enunciative alterity of our author.

María Rosal, in a game of simultaneity, re-enacts the literature of the past and, especially the Spanish baroque classics, with the aim of making them an integral part of her poetry, as a collage or as *déjà vu*. The reader immediately recognizes these verses for their popularity, and therefore, our author uses them as references to face new themes, sometimes antipoetic, such as daily love, the reasons for writing and the feminine sex. These are hybridizations and grafts that motivate through shared references, which open, just like in the labyrinth of Borges, to new roads, new interpretations of life and poetry.

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