
I Can See Queerly Now, the Reign is Gone: The Path to Liberation and the Development of Homoerotic Themes in Pureza Canelo, Andrea Luca, and Ana Rossetti

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Much like some of the best poetry of Ana Rossetti, the title of this article is chosen in dedication to an American “Solid Gold” hit song made famous in the 1970s by a pop band called The Fifth Dimension. Unlike Rossetti’s faithful rendering of actual song titles, like “Strangers in the Night” and “I Say a Little Prayer,” which she thoroughly deconstructs and critiques throughout the course of the poems that follow, the title above is meant to subvert immediately the original chorus of the song, “I can see clearly now, the rain is gone. . . . It’s gonna be a bright, bright sunshiny day.” The song is representative of the historical decade—if not the country—in which Canelo, Luca, and Rossetti produced some of their best work. In addition, the use of the term “reign” is meant to refer to the Franco era, a time in Spanish history where authoritarianism and dictatorship spelled censorship not only for artists and writers but also for all individuals living on the edge of society simply by virtue of being different—whether by choice or not. Most importantly, the reconfigured title accurately portrays the path to political and aesthetic liberation undertaken by these three poets in their attempts to define and depathologize homosexual, primarily lesbian, identity in post-Franco Spain. Through an analysis of the voices of Canelo, Luca, and Rossetti, the development of queer consciousness can be traced within the spectrum of “feminization” initially proposed by Elaine Showalter in three phases and later contextualized with respect to peninsular poetry by Sharon Keefe Ugalde: “embrace,” “subversion,” and “revision.” In order to provide insights as to what stage this process has reached in the poetry of Spanish women writers, it will be necessary to examine seven collections written during a twenty-year range, from 1971 to 1991, while simultaneously considering the psychosexual development—self-discovery and in some cases a painful coming-out process—of the three authors. After considering recent theory treating the lesbian postmodern and subversion of gender categories, an analysis will be made of the contributions of each

of the three poets to the reconfiguration of sexual identities, beginning with Pureza Canelo's poetry (b. 1946). A comparison of notions of self in "*El vencejo y la voz*," from her collection that earned the Adonais prize, *Lugar común* (1971), with the radically transformed persona nearly twenty years later exemplified in "A contra moda," from her daring work, *Pasión inédita* (1990) will serve as the basis for the analysis. A consideration of representative queer-themed poems by Andrea Luca (b. 1957) follows, including two from her anguished collection—the only one written under her real name, Dolores Alvarez Rodríguez, *A golpes del sino* (1979). The discussion continues with an analysis of four poems from Luca's powerful *En el banquete* (1987). Finally, two striking utopian examples from Luca's project in revising the role of woman in biblical mythology in order to achieve the ideal of the androgyne, *El don de Lilith* (1990), are considered. A selection of poems by Ana Rossetti (b. 1950), perhaps the most eclectic and experimentally "advanced" of the three in terms of exploration of homoerotic motifs, is analyzed in the last section, including five poems from *Los devaneos de Erato* (1980). The discussion ends with a contemplation on the ambiguity of the speaker's posture and the elaboration of themes of desire and narcissism in two more recent poems from *Indicios vehementes* (1985) and *Yesterday* (1988).

A brief overview of both the general social background in which the above poets are writing is necessary. Andrea Luca discusses the atmosphere in which she has produced her poems in an interview conducted by Sharon Keefe Ugalde, where she admits to seeing the androgyne figure of Lilith as an integral part of women's liberation. However, her admission seems to indicate guardedness and some degree of fear: "*Bueno, si digo que sí, me pueden matar algunas, y si digo que no, me niego a mí misma*" (239). The dilemma Luca echoes is clearly the same one that she experienced on a more significant level in her struggle to accept her sexual orientation—a process initially delegated to a pseudonym, perhaps out of fear of society or perhaps due to fear of self. Regardless of the source of her inhibited and hesitant answer, the dilemma is clear: be true and honest to oneself or adhere to the truths and norms created by the society in which one lives. Luca welcomes the coming of a new era, one in which women will not be the object in a phallogocentric universe, but her reservations are unfortunately appropriate and historically well-founded. As she asserts a few sentences later: "*Estamos ante una nueva cosmovisión. Espero que no reaparezcan las hogueras inquisitoriales*" (239). It is nothing new to concede that lesbian voices have been historically subjected to public censorship and self-censorship; however, we must also acknowledge that censorship is only a minor variable in the long list of personal and psychological limitations that must also be transcended to overcome the silence. Liz Yorke un-

derscores this situation in her essay, "Constructing a Lesbian Poetic for Survival": "Above all, the struggle to articulate a poetic for survival has meant a struggle with fear, with internalized homophobia, and, of course, with the otherness and difference of being lesbian" (188). To some extent, it is dangerous to universalize lesbian experience, for the poet writing openly as lesbian as well as the poet struggling to come to grips with her own lesbianism is subject to the particular forms of oppression in her own geographical location and historical era. However, a double minority status in any context worldwide is evident, and thus overcoming societal oppression is indeed central to a personal coming-out process. Andrea Luca states in the same interview mentioned above that she does not find much in common with Ana Rossetti, affirming her focus to be more profoundly centered on intention rather than final outcome of a poem (237). While she distinguishes herself from other poets of her own generation with whom she may easily be linked primarily because of her goal to revise masculinist and phallogocentric mythology, I believe that the way in which she conceives poetic theory as conducive to self-discovery would find a similar voice in both Pureza Canelo and Ana Rossetti, as we shall see: "*Creo en la poesía como una teoría de conocimiento. Conocimiento del yo, de sus múltiples estados, de su conciencia retrospectiva, casi arcaica, y de su proyección hacia lo futurible*" (Ugalde 240).

There are different avenues of homosexual liberation: 1) the political, whereby lesbian discourse is used as a strategy to overcome phallogocentric oppression; 2) the social, in which the reader enters a world of intimate explorations of same-sex love, despite, as Luca contends in her interview with Ugalde, "*la injusticia y el absurdo de una sociedad que no le permite ser quien es.*" The analysis that ensues focuses predominantly on the recourse to 3) the mythic, especially fertile in Rossetti's *Los devaneos de Erato* and Luca's *El don de Lilith*. An additional level of freedom is attained through the actualization of 4) erotic desire, where Hélène Cixous' "jouissance" is achieved within the bedroom and beyond, as well as a look at the space in which we see Eros and Thanatos emerging and interconnecting, with representative examples in Canelo, Luca, and Rossetti. A final avenue of liberation is basic but perceived as radical if asserted by lesbian poets: 5) the psychological, where self-discovery is the ultimate project, combating to reconcile, sometimes in vain, the "*yo dividido y fragmentado.*" Luca and Canelo, to differing degrees, both undertake this ambitious goal. The latter three categories will serve as a framework to analyze the poems at hand.

Is lesbianism patriarchal? Often, critics who analyze gay and lesbian writing are quick to jump to the following conclusion: if gay motifs are at the crux of a particular piece, then the author is naturally attempting to subvert the patriarchal

system and consider alternative categories of gender and sexual orientation. Now, in the postmodern era, this logic, while often true, is no longer enough. By the assertion made above, we have not resolved to any satisfaction the fact that gender categories are being renovated by virtue of a more fluid representation of sexuality. Rather, we are simply creating more compartments—albeit less oppressive and more profoundly representative ones—of identities. Furthermore, as Elizabeth Grosz asserts, homosexual and heterosexual relationships are both labels that have been invented and constructed from within the patriarchy: “Lesbian relationships are no better, nor any worse, than the complexities involved in all socio-sexual interrelations. Nor are they in any sense a solution to patriarchal forms of sexuality, because lesbianism and gay male sexuality are, as much as heterosexuality, products of patriarchy” (77). Liz Yorke states that historically lesbian poets have often found it necessary to hide behind “the mask of gender neutrality” in order to avoid rejection and censorship (189). While this assertion is undoubtedly true, I disagree with her prescription that “Lesbian writing needs to contest these sites of gender-neutral language, and this means resignifying differences and desires in gender-specific language to re-produce the lesbian sexual body in both its variation and its specificity” (189) because it perpetuates the notion of conformity to designated gender categories, however enlightened or unenlightened they may be. While it is indeed true that the most immediate way to combat silence is for the one silenced to actively and concretely assume a voice, asserting her identity as clearly and as completely as possible, the ultimate consequence of such an act is one of further classification, thus subscribing to both the patriarchal paradigm as well as Modernism’s fetishistic tendency for over-categorization. Furthermore, Yorke’s authoritarian insistence on defining the project of lesbian writing in terms of what it “needs” to do, excluding all other creative possibilities, ironically reflects the oppression of the phallogocentric world. In my view, Yorke, as a critic, reflects the stage of “embracement” of lesbian consciousness but has yet to achieve the “subversion” and “revision” of poets like Rossetti and Luca.

Robyn Wiegman, in her introduction to *The Lesbian Postmodern*, tries urgently to break from the remnants of Modernism and modernity that still repress identities in a postmodern age. In objecting to the commodification of the lesbian as a category of identification, she counters notions like the one stated above, which would explain gay-themed writing merely on the grounds of subversion of gender roles. Wiegman takes up contemporary sub-categorizations within the compartment of “lesbian,” such as the characterization of the “lipstick lesbian.” How many queer theory critics have we read that view the role of the “lipstick lesbian” as that of challenging the “bulldyke” stereotype, a woman “feminizing” her appearance

in order to make a political statement that would hold that not all lesbians are butch? Can a lesbian woman not possess features or characteristics that are “genuinely” feminine? The use of “genuinely” must be qualified, of course, as established and defined societally by ideals of femininity and beauty. The problem, as Wiegman maintains, is not so much the need to identify diversity within minority categories but rather the obsessive notion of category itself. A “lipstick” lesbian is rejected from her peers and a “leather” lesbian, for example, is masculinized and perceived as aggressive by other members both within and outside her category of sexual orientation: “If she [the lesbian] appears outright, wearing boots and flashing her whips and nipple clips, she is debated according to contemporary sex-correct definitions. If she shows up in her party dress, she risks being dismissed as too overtly unqueer . . . *so much rests on categorical fashion*” (15-16; emphasis mine).

Luca and Rossetti resolve the difficulty through recourse to a utopian idealization of the androgyne. Luca also introduces the reader to radical notions of “post-male” poetry, offering idealizations of woman-to-woman love. In the treatment of lesbianism in these poets, it is important to note a distinction between the interrelated themes of homosexuality and homoeroticism. As we consider Rossetti, for example, we must recognize that the poet’s intellectualized inversion of conventional gender roles—the objectification of men by the female or male subject—is not the same as “*la mirada homoerótica*” that Rosa Sarabia (347) attributes to “Chico Wrangler.” A more straightforward distinction is evident in contrasting Luca’s *A golpes del sino*, in which she becomes intellectually and psychically aware of her sexual orientation, and *En el banquete*, in which an erotic need for lesbian love, in addition to an awareness based on identity issues, emerges.

Loneliness, but even more importantly, aloneness, is an essential theme in the poetry of Pureza Canelo. As Carlos Murciano states in his review of *Lugar común* from the June 10, 1971 edition of *La Vanguardia*: “*Ella es su propia razón, su propia fuente y su propio tema, su sola compañía*” (qtd. in Janés 96). Known for her use of colloquial language, Canelo is linguistically accessible yet psychologically complex, as she brings the reader along on her journey of self-discovery. Conveying only a somnambular state of awareness, “*El vencejo y la voz*,” in the space of five pages, establishes the speaker as the owner of the night. The image of the nocturnal does not, however, signify the romantic love consummated in the dark by secret lovers. Rather than its erotic potential, the darkness of the night is exploited for its capacity to provoke deep emptiness and loneliness. The night is also the space in which the anguished and arduous poetic process takes place, as the poet steadily realizes her “*deuda de hacerme esta trenza de poema en la noche*.” Her attitude toward love is complex; intellectually, the poet comprehends it with clarity. How-

ever, as she undertakes a more prolonged look, a sensation of fear emerges: “*siento que el amor es una cosa clara / que me pone pálida cuando lo miro.*” The imagery of light, particularly in contrast to the darkness of the night is also significant—the reader perceives a bright light of clarity that consoles as well as the whiteness of a pallid face that shocks and sickens. Some other images that appear in the poem include the mirror, which reveals faithfully the poet’s anguished identity and is thus perceived as a threat; the rock, symbolizing an obstacle to both self-expression and self-acceptance (“*la lucha grande de colocar la piedra encima / de este hule*”); and the boiling moon, which suggests the lapse in sanity required to engage oneself in the struggle of poetic expression: “*unas ganas locas de cavar después de la tarde / caída / una locura que se llama días seguidos de poemas / bajo los astros.*”

The repetition of terms like “*diariamente*” and “*cotidiano*” (lines 29, 36, 46, 72, 114) reinforces the notion of paralyzed temporality in a psychological world where “*temprano es todo lo tarde que se quiera.*” The poetic process, suspended in time, is characterized by strong images that connote the idea of imprisonment, both with respect to the difficult task of writing and to the urgency of self-discovery within that process: “*mendigo soy de una vista mía obligada a decir / lo que tropiezo, / cumplo con mi pluma de oro como si fuera flor / y la tinta sello único para mi carta.*” Other than the power of the word that is produced by controlling the gold pen, traditionally the phallic symbol of masculine authority, not much enjoyment comes from the poetic process; it is portrayed, rather, as an urgent act that consumes her, forcing her to remain writing “*hasta que me entren ganas de dormir por la puerta.*” The written word is concretized, linked to blue lettuce growing in the earth that she can easily cultivate. However, it also has other dimensions, “*rondando,*” that may serve to veer her sail off course.

The image in “*El vencejo y la voz*” that resonates most powerfully is the condition of feeling imprisoned and condemned (if only by the self) to silence: “*me siento presa en la boca de un perro, poema, que me quiere con sus dientes.*” The poetic process requires the rawness and fullness of the authentic self—one which the poet is not ready or willing to acknowledge. The voice locked up in the mouth of a dog is significant in the frustration it conveys, for a dog possesses the wonderful quality of being able to bark instinctively, without having the laborious task of rationalizing or organizing—or self-censoring—any verbalization that is produced. As Murciano affirms, “*Pureza Canelo está presa en el poema, es por él conducida, y no lo contrario . . . el poema se rebela y atrapa, feroz y dulcemente, al poeta*” (97). Silence, for Canelo, is only overcome through “*la voz por una puerta cerrada*”—not immediately her own—that “*rozará mi nido como un dedo fijo, / y entonces el abandono estará en más de quince palabras seguidas.*” The reference to masturbation is also

implied in the above verse. In “*El vencejo y la voz*,” the final word foreshadows the freedom that Canelo would find nearly twenty years later, in *Pasión inédita*: “*pájaro*”: the symbol of liberty.

“*A contra moda*,” the final poem in the collection, *Pasión inédita*, is nothing short of a declaration of independence. The terms are strong and charged with rebellion, as the speaker bravely confronts her readers and, by extension, society, using the familiar plural “*vosotros*” form: “*escribo a contra moda. . . . Siempre/ a contra moda/ peino, calzo, vivo.*” The poetic voice, successful in accepting her identity as different, asserts herself on two levels—professionally and personally. As a poet, she reserves the right to break with the norms of literary conventions; as an individual, she demands to be unconventional in her daily life, at all times. The use of “*siempre*” seems somewhat ironic in that it may also serve to imprison. In other words, when one accepts and assumes the role of being different, of rebelling against societal expectations, any act undertaken that happens to conform to the social conventions of the day is intolerable: “*Y si una sola vez no pareciera (a contra moda) / castigadme definitivamente.*” The poet has reached a level of embracement of her identity and has even crossed the line to subversion. However, the more sophisticated level of revision is not visible in this poem, in which the need to uphold difference is so strong that any act of accidental conformity—ironically of deviation from the abnormal—is viewed as dangerous. “*A contra moda*” attains the same level of maturity reflected in literary critic Liz Yorke’s assessment of what lesbian writers should be aiming for: “she [the lesbian] defiantly identifies herself, *for* herself: she makes herself, her sexuality, and her body visible—in spite of repressive discursive practices” (188). The poem, whose principle goal is that of freedom in poetic verse, ends with a challenge to anyone and everyone who would stifle or repress her new-found freedom. She dares, with pride and anger: “*Atreveros ahora/ a pisarme las alas.*” The imprisoned birds in “*El vencejo y la voz*” are transformed into words in “*A contra moda*,” words which can now fly freely.

One of the first images to emerge in Andrea Luca’s “*Retrato Incompleto*” (*A golpes del sino*) is that of a bird. However, in stark contrast to the liberty that it represents for Pureza Canelo, the bird carries with it “*el mal agüero.*” The omen-bearing bird, portrayed as being “*prendido en el costado*,” is not free to fly but essentially paralyzed, its mobility entirely restricted by the angle accidentally assumed. Frustration is also implicitly reflected in this image, for not only is the bird’s natural inclination to fly made impossible but any struggle to reach a more comfortable position that would permit movement is in vain. A powerful analogy for the kind of self-entrapment that the poet experiences in her inability to accept her sexual identity and move to a happier place in life, the bird is simply stuck in that awk-

ward position. Rain is a secondary image in the poem, but unlike the way it is portrayed in Canelo's "*La voz y el vencejo*," that is, in connection with the madness and emotional outpouring of the boiling moon needed for the poetic process ("*y la luna hierve y conmueve lo mismo que la lluvia*"), Luca's rain merely serves to make the persona feel dirty: "*Me llueve, me salpica / el lodo de la calle*." This physical dirtiness is easily extended emotionally to infer a sensation of filth that emerges from guilt and shame. Self-hate resonates in every verse of the poem, as does the almost masochistic urge to feel pleasure in pain: "*Mantengo la dulce bandera / de la angustia constante*." The poet bitterly and completely deconstructs the notion of romantic or "true" love, acknowledging it as an illusion but also as "*la vil mentira*." There is a clear distinction made in the poem between the past and the present, although both are equally painful and destructive. The past is presented as the memory of an anguished life that has been abandoned but not resolved, while the present is conceived as an ache, reflecting a failure to reconcile the pain of the past, which would enable a present with greater internal peace.

In terms of notions of the fragmented self in "*Retrato Incompleto*," the reader is easily reminded of Pureza Canelo's struggle in her early work. In fact, Luca makes this anguished division and self-abandonment more apparent than Canelo: "*Lucho y me definiendo / de mi propia persona*." The duplicitous use of the word "*persona*" questions both her own personhood—her lesbianism—and the "*persona*" she should be, according to societal conventions. Luca's fragmented self, contemplated in the same insomniac night as Pureza Canelo's "*yo*," is more than just divided—she is actually cut off, cut out, not permitted to develop naturally or even at all. The image is powerful: "*Aún no soy más / que aborto de mí misma*."

The poem progresses into a dichotomous consideration of envy and hate. Various metaphors, the majority personified, convey the hatred and bitterness felt for any pair, any double, for by nature their union has conquered loneliness. There is however only one metaphor for hatred: the image of a single lip, a metaphor strong enough to communicate her sexual isolation: "*Odio la monotonía / de un labio sin otro labio*." The envy she feels for "*todo aquello / que tiene un compañero*" is motivated by two factors: the sadness of a solitary life, and the knowledge that couples are more content "*porque entre ellas se distraen*." In this phase of the poet's own psychosexual development, it would seem that she seeks an Other to alleviate the pain and hatred that she suffers within herself, a distraction from the self-incrimination and flagellation of her abusive self.

A second poem from the same early collection, "*Que no me abandone*," is much briefer in length and less conceptually complex but emotionally powerful in its expression of a state of sheer desperation. Almost a prayer, including a reference

to God, the poem constitutes a painful struggle to consolidate the self into a self-accepting person. Abstractions like love and desire are left without further concrete development. The subject “yo” appears two times, but without stability or even knowledge of identity. The poem is an insistent plea to save the subject from herself, although it also identifies two somewhat tangible threats to her self-preservation: “*el ayer*,” encompassing a past filled with anguish, lies, and self-deception, and “*el adiós*,” which points to either total abandonment of the authentic self or, more literally, to suicide.

When, in her interview with Andrea Luca, Sharon Keefe Ugalde raised the question of how the poet would characterize her first book, *A golpes del sino*, in light of her second collection, *En el banquete*, she received the following response: “*Quizá la diferencia es que en el segundo libro hay una aceptación de mi forma de ser y hasta casi un orgullo de haberlo podido aceptar y reivindicar, mientras que en el primero hay una búsqueda, preguntaba por qué las cosas eran como eran*” (235). In “*Poseedora de pensar tantas veces*,” the present and past merge into one time frame. The reference “*penetro en el reverso*” may indicate the sex act itself, or more likely, the condition of being “*a contra moda*,” as in Pureza Canelo’s *Pasión inédita*. La “*cenagosa cueva*,” in addition to representing the vagina and by extension the place of sexual self-acceptance, resembles the “*lodo*” of “*Retrato Incompleto*,” with one essential distinction. The dirtiness of the image used in early poems now appears as a rich substance, filled with minerals and nutrients that symbolically facilitate a process of transformation. In touch with a more authentic self, the poet finds “*mi sacro íntimo donde yace / ese sátiro hermafrodita*,” a precursor to the ideal of androgyny that Luca develops more completely in *El don de Lilith*. The word “*sátiro*” evokes multiple significance, ranging from the equivalent of “satire” or “satirical” in English, to the mythological “satyr,” which *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines as “a lecherous woodland deity represented as a man with goat’s legs, ears, and horns; or a lecherous man.” A third alternative denotation is that of relating to “satyriasis,” defined as “an uncontrollable desire by a man for sexual intercourse.” With the evolution of Luca’s poetry toward eroticism, and the presence of sexually charged images such as “*penetro en el reverso*” and “*cenagosa cueva*,” the latter meaning predominates. As the speaker moves toward the revelation of a more authentic self, she observes a gradual loss in the concreteness of her prior self, a healthy letting-go process that enables the discovery of other mysterious sides of her being: “*Mi persona / se vuelve silueta oscura*.”

The verse “*y entre dolor y gozo me devoro*” indicates that the knowledge obtained is carnal in nature. The ritual is portrayed as cannibalistic, achieving an ambiguous and therefore developmentally mature state of feeling. The contradiction of

her location on the border between pleasure and pain is maintained and needs no reconciliation. In this poem, the self is enriched through erotic knowledge, and the speaker's contentment with such awareness transcends the fearful reactions of the voice in *A golpes del sino*.

The poem, "*Bajo el puente una gran araña*," opens with the following dedication: "*A Dolores Alvarez, que colgó su futuro de un hilo*." The self implied here is not the Andrea Luca she has become in this later stage of her poetic and personal development but a prior self, whose name has now disappeared. This play with names is indicative of the poet's awareness of her own psychological transformation through the years. Images that are usually associated with the dark, mysterious feminine abound in this poem, but they are not charged with fear or discomfort; rather, they portray a gentle erotic seduction. The spider's web serves as the ultimate space where the seduction of the "*mosca poeta*" will be fulfilled, much like the image was developed in Manuel Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña*. The presence of the moon serves a Dionysian purpose, enhancing the mysterious attraction to the "*tela*," with its double meaning of "cloth" and "web." The role of the poet is two-fold: at once, she is the "*poeta araña*" as well as the "*mosca poeta*." The poetic process is revealed as a function of the former, "*que teje en la noche sábana de seda*." The latter serves as "*manjares de espíritu*," satiating the spider-poet in a banquet that is both carnal and spiritual in nature.

"*Bajo el puente una gran araña*" reveals the relativity of filth, establishing that what one may consider mud and dirt is another's feast. In this sense, *la suciedad* is also *la saciedad*: "*Cuando al río se vierte la succulenta inmundicia / una corte de insectos se dispone al banquete*." The conclusion for the voice who assumes the role of "*Tú, mosca poeta*," is simultaneously orgasm and death; the spider-poet assassinates the fly-poet lasciviously, with caresses and love and desire ("*con mimo*"), incorporating, again in a cannibalistic rite, the voluntary victim into her own essence. The idea of killing off the old self, subjected to a warm and succulent death, exemplifies beautifully the reconciliation of Eros and Thanatos, without referring to limited and limiting gender classifications: "*y bebe de ti mientras mueres en rítmicos espasmos*."

"*Me decías tras la toma de peyote*" reveals another side to sexual love other than the tender seduction seen above: the development of the female warrior ("*bélica amazona*"). Reappropriating the ancient mythologies surrounding the fearful and aggressive tribes of Amazonian women, Luca discovers the pleasure in the preparation for combat with her "*amante compañera*." The enjoyment she derives from such a fantasy is carnivalesque in nature: words like "*delicioso*" and "*gusto*" are paralleled by the more explicit "*libar en la flor de las delicias / con docilidad*." But the

sexual union fueled by aggression is ultimately one of gentle mutual compromise. Night is filled with seduction, with drug-induced fantasies, with chaos, with mystery, with Dionysian lust, while the return of daylight signifies, with the reappearance of the Apollonian sun, the return of logic, order, reason: “*hasta que la luz del sol nos sorprenda / y amenace rutina.*” A posture definitively against the guilt-ridden, shame-producing institution of Catholicism, which tries to deny all pleasure, “*y no permitas que los envidiosos hados, / malabares de una religión mortecina, / nos roben ni un ápice de gozo,*” is forcefully expressed in the poem.

The erotic quality of the poem, “*Hay otra paz distinta a aquella que recuerda el incienso,*” is of such a private nature that readers are cast in the role of voyeur. The lover discovers the most intimate dimensions of the body of her beloved: “*la candorosa placidez / con que en tu piel mis dedos averiguan / secretas catacumbas de solidaria humedad.*” What distinguishes this particular poem from many others in the collection is the lack of self-acceptance of the woman who is the recipient of the speaker’s caresses. Indeed, she seems to vacillate between intense pleasure and a sense of disquiet provoked by internalized homophobia; that is, the need to act in accordance with societal expectations. The speaker tries to calm her hesitant partner: “*No me digas del extraño desasosiego / que te sacude el sueño como un cataclismo.*”

By the end of the poem, the reader receives a message of hopefulness as the speaker sinks back to think about the future arrival of a more tolerant era, indeed a utopian one by today’s standards: “*Mañana te arrepentirás de esos miedos / cuando los tiempos cambien y comprenderás / que no son tan distintos los ritos / y que los conceptos de virtud o pecado / sólo los diferencia la costumbre o la historia.*” In addition to a utopian idealization of the future, these final lines also reveal the relativity of virtue and changing notions of the concept of sin, which differ from one era to the next.

El don de Lilith develops the ideal of the androgyne posited in some of the poems contained in *En el banquete*. Ugalde contends that *El don de Lilith* “*es, en su mayor parte, un libro que busca sanar la herida del yo dividido. Un proceso de autodescubrimiento lleva a Luca a unas ‘imágenes conciliadoras’*” (131). Luca’s progressive development of the folkloric figure of Lilith demonstrates her successful appropriation of an oppressive patriarchal tradition with intent to revise it. Lilith, according to Jewish folklore, was the first wife of Adam. When she failed to submit to Adam’s sexual domination and attempted to portray herself as his equal, Adam attempted to force her to submit to his power. Rather than undergo this humiliation and become Adam’s wife, she traveled to the bottom of the Red Sea, where she lived with demons, cursing and seeking revenge against men. The title

of the poem, "*Cuando destruidos los tiempos, vengan otros tiempos,*" suggests historical evolution, the possibility of new eras and new orders with changed attitudes, differing conceptions, and the hope of an enlightened tolerance of sexual difference and an abolition of confining gender categories. In *El don de Lilith*, Lilith is judged to be insane because people of her age do not understand her embracing of androgynous ideals. Others, who are more enlightened, will perceive Lilith as a goddess desiring to lead her people to a more contented existence. In classic utopian verse, Luca writes: "*y como nueva raza / poblarán mi superficie.*" Sharon Keefe Ugalde regards the above poem as the ultimate example of Luca's revisionist process, as she wishes for the dawning of a new era. But the poem has political dimensions as well, as it urges solidarity among women. According to Ugalde, "*hay una sugerencia de que para alcanzar la 'nueva feminidad' es necesario un sentimiento de unidad entre los que creen en un futuro diferente para la mujer*" (132).

No analysis of Luca's recent poetry would be complete without an examination of the poem that best demonstrates her post-modern conception of the androgynous ideal: "*y como hombre y mujer cohabitan un mismo cuerpo.*" The fluidity and the flexibility of the ideal human sexuality and the theme of overcoming binary divisions in general are exemplified in the reference to "*tú vaporoso estado*" as well as in the inclusive, gender-neutral posture toward "*tu humano instinto*" in the third verse. It is almost impossible to read the poem without reference to the loaded gender categories of "man" and "woman." The speaker uses teluric features to represent the sex organs of both sexes. In order to sexually satisfy the female, the androgyne invokes "*el álamo,*" its tall height and its soft, fibrous wood clearly phallic. For the male's sexual gratification, the androgyne exposes "*dos montañas y un volcán,*" clearly objects of heterosexual male desire. With this formulation, the categories of heterosexual and homosexual can be abolished as irrelevant for beings imbued with the powers to sexually satisfy both sexes and therefore all three orientations, bisexuality representing the ideal. According to Ugalde, the poem is the ultimate embracement of bisexuality in that it "*sugiere que para la mujer, el encuentro sexual intensifica la posibilidad de desechar los roles sexuales y de compartir los dos sexos*" (134).

The speaker continues, stating, "*Y si en vaivén mi dualidad se pierde / sé espejo da abrazador azogue / donde el vaho de mi suspiro quede atrapado / y sea también foto de nuestro álbum familiar.*" These lines retain the hope that should intolerance of sexuality return, a glimpse of the advanced sensibility of the androgyne would be preserved, bottled up so that humanity might re-learn the freedom from persecution so valued in the cosmovision of this poem.

Even the long, colloquial titles that Ana Rossetti uses to label her poems are charged with irony. In “*De cómo resistí las seducciones de mi compañera de cuarto, no sé si para bien o para mal,*” the poetic voice assumes the position of a potential recruit who has failed to join the ranks of lesbianism. The poem is filled with violent images of conquest into the lesbian realm—verbs like “*arrancar,*” “*aniquilar,*” and “*escarbar*” subvert the notion of aggressive sexual conquest usually attributed to the *machista* heterosexual male. The poem is thoroughly erotic yet succeeds also in making a strong sociopolitical commentary on contemporary Spanish society, critiquing the vigilant control it keeps on sexual identities. The speaker’s surrounding environment—and especially her internalization of its norms—does not allow her to make an “*ofrenda a Eros*” and experience woman-to-woman sex because “*mis vigías / me impiden avivarte en tu hoguera.*”

Similar to the female sexual aggression unleashed in Luca’s “*Me decías tras la toma de peyote,*” the speaker of “*Cierta secta feminista se da consejos prematrimoniales*” perceives the man (i.e., future groom) programmed to conquer his once-virginal wife—as the enemy, characterized by greed that “*se yergue entre sus piernas.*” The implication is not only that the man is controlled by his own penis but that the desire for sexual conquest has also been ingrained into his identity. “*Desvalijar,*” the sect proclaims, should not be reserved for masculine privilege. Rather, women should make a pact to lose their virginity within their own gender circle. The sect continues the attempt at seduction, desiring to conquer virginal females with “*felpa absorbente*” and soft caresses, opposing itself to the violent penetration (even the act of rape can be inferred in the poem) that the male *conquistador* would desire, intent, as he is, on “*saquear del templo los tesoros.*” The feminist sect pleads for young virgins to open their eyes and not be deceived. After all, “*es preferible siempre entregarla a las llamas,*” implying that it is better to realize one’s sexual desires by giving of herself voluntarily than to be forced to surrender to the opposing gender. The pleasure offered to young women is entirely that of carnal knowledge, as the following verses reflect: “*Rasgando el azahar, gocémosnos, gocémosnos / del premio que celaban nuestros muslos.*”

While male greed is emphasized in the poem, so is masculine pride and narcissism: “*arrebátanos / la propia dote. Que el triunfador altivo / no obtenga el masculino privilegio.*” If the young women subscribe to the “*llamas*” of their own gender, the male can no longer deflower a sexually “*experienced*” woman. The sect derives great pleasure from stealing the treasures of the conquest away from the male enemy: “*El falo, presto a traspasarnos / encontrará, donde creyó virtud, burdel.*” Although the sect assumes the *machista* role of conquest in its attempt at seduction, it is the violent ideology of conquest that is critiqued, regardless of the orientation

or gender of the perpetrators in question. Martha Lafollette Miller affirms the genderless configuration of sexual conquest: "these flames may be the delights of lesbian love; nevertheless, the destructive power of desire, and the predatory aspects of pursuit and possession that turn virginity into a trophy, are evident" (271).

The sexual objectification of the man as opposed to the woman is a common motif in Rossetti's work, especially in *Los devaneos de Erato* and *Yesterday*. "*A un traje de pana verde que por ahí anda perturbando a los muchachos*," from the earlier collection, introduces the "*mirada homoerótica*" that Sarabia identifies in later poems, like "Calvin Klein..." and "Chico Wrangler." This glance, when transformed into a prolonged gaze, signifies an uncontrollable attraction that invites the viewer to delight in a banquet of desire, "*un banquete tan inesperado*." Unexpected implies uncontrolled, and for the phallus to renounce control in a phallogocentric universe is a rare and dangerous occurrence. The carnal feast is reminiscent of Luca's imagery. However, in Rossetti, the physical attraction is never consummated into an act where desire is satisfied. Rather, it lingers obsessively in the hypothetical world of "If only...": "*Nutriéndose de ti se inundarían de oro*." The Luquian imagery of the "*tela*" also appears in the poem. In addition, the reader encounters biblical allusions that appropriate the Adam and Eve story but recreate the dilemma in terms of "Adam and Steve." Rossetti uses the image of the peel or shell of the forbidden fruit to symbolize the desire for sexual transgression, prohibited within the patriarchy. The victim who has been drawn into the web of physical attraction must now face the anguish of unrequited lust, "*un irresistible y acuciante deseo*."

The power of the "*mirada*" is more complex in "*A la puerta del cabaret*." Thematically, the poem closely resembles Luca's *El don de Lilith*, for the ideal of androgyny reigns supreme here too. The subject in "*A la puerta...*" is consumed with desire for an Other who possesses both the "feminine" and "masculine" traits that he/she finds irresistibly attractive. The adored "*tú*" has both "*el poderoso pecho, como el de un dios*" and "*tan femenina boca, / bello desdén del curvo labio*." The double-gendered attraction causes the reader to doubt not only the gender of the object of seduction but also the sexual orientation of the poetic voice. "*Tu luz primitiva*" confers an almost archetypic if not magical essence upon this admired androgynous figure. In this poem, time comes to a complete halt; the memory of the burning desire for this ideal love remains and nobody can transcend or replace the magnificence of this godlike figure: "*Y ninguna invención que trajeron los días / mejoró a aquél fugaz momento*." The space created in this cosmovision is one where technology and modernity do not enter, and, of course, one in which the sacred is imbued with carnal reality.

Male narcissism, or, as Sarabia calls it, “*religión del cuerpo*” (342), is the primary motif in “*Un señor casi amante de mi marido, creo, se empeña en ser joven.*” The man in this poem demonstrates an obsessive need to remain youthful in appearance in spite of a physical state “*al punto destronado*” and the truth of “*entregado tu imperio.*” The man’s excessive pride requires that he constantly reflect on the lost past, trying vainly and desperately to recover his own physical beauty: “*deseas asirte al último vestigio / de la inútil memoria.*” As he slowly becomes aware of his own aging process—“*tu cuerpo devastado sufre, tiembla*”—he loses the will to objectify any individual that may bring sexual gratification his way. He does not even have the will nor the energy to commit a delicious sin, for he has lost the confidence to “*pedir asilo / en ningún otro templo de Sodoma.*”

In “Chico Wrangler,” the force of desire depicted is so strong that it affects the one engaged in the “*mirada*” physically—the “*corazón asaltado,*” toys with the prohibitions of any gaze of adoration that becomes a prolonged deep look. Patriarchal society permits only an instantaneous glance, followed by the imposition of guilt and a turning of the glance downward. “Chico” is objectified both for elements that constitute his physical being as well as for external artifacts that accompany his presence: “*el cigarro,*” “*la boca,*” “*la ropa,*” “*la camiseta,*” “*el pecho,*” etc. As Sarabia points out, it is false to assume, as Mary Makris has done, that the speaker in the poem is definitively female: “*existe un co-espectador que comparte esa mirada . . . los homosexuales . . . como observadores activos del cuerpo masculino . . . la articulación del deseo erótico femenino se desplaza hacia diversos puntos de convergencia y divergencia que impiden que su focalización sea privilegiada. De ahí que a menudo la voz poética rossettiana se presente indeterminada o andrógena. Ya por una voluntad de trascender los géneros*” (347). If erotic desire, as conceptualized in “Chico Wrangler,” is felt by either a masculine or feminine subject, then we can conclude that *la mirada* is genderless in nature and, by extension, deconstruct the old dichotomy that limited male sexual response to the “*mirada*” and the female to the “*tacto.*”

Finally, although strong parallels are often made between “Chico Wrangler” and “Calvin Klein, Underdrawers,” a few basic differences should be accentuated. “Calvin Klein, . . .” as Sharon Keefe Ugalde states, is “*el poema que mejor ejemplifica la festiva inversión de la poesía amorosa,*” for it completely subverts the age-old man-as-subject / woman-as-object paradigm. Yet the poem accomplishes this ambitious task by resorting to comic irony, such as the reverence for the “*flor de algodónero.*” The sexual attraction conveyed in this poem stems more from what is concealed than from the body exposed: “*en su nube ocultara / el más severo mármol travertino.*” Of the abundant examples of erotic desire created by Rossetti, “Calvin Klein, . . .”

is the fruit of the loom, so to speak, for the speaker imagines him/herself in positions where easy access to the desired organs can be obtained: “*Fuera yo tu cintura,*” and “*el abismo oscuro de tus ingles.*” Sarabia traces Rossetti’s elliptical technique to the baroque tradition but also notes a significant revisionist intention: “*En el caso de Góngora, la elipsis tenía como función hacer desaparecer lo feo, lo desagradable. Rossetti, en cambio, invierte este procedimiento en un doble efecto elíptico y oculta el nombre de lo más agradable y placentero, destacando así el objeto erotico que no es precisamente el calzoncillo sino el miembro viril por él cubierto*” (349).

Not surprisingly, male readers of Rossetti’s poetry are most likely to run the risk of misinterpretation of both the content of the author’s work as well as her subversive intentions. Andrew Debicki provides a necessary tutorial for men who attempt to read Rossetti: “Any male reader who might be shocked enough to want to dismiss this text as bad poetry will first have to consider how it relates to prior poetic conventions. Is the stance taken by this female speaker significantly different from that adopted by the male speakers of ‘carpe diem’ poems by Góngora or Quevedo, . . . of poems by Neruda and Paz that describe women’s sexual allure?” (176). The answer, of course, is a resounding “no.” While Debicki has, like many critics, jumped to the shortsighted conclusion of identifying the sex of the ambiguous speaker, his point is still well taken as it relates to sexual objectification in the Western literary canon.

In order to transcend the imprisonment of gender classification, the temptation to name and to define must be resisted as much as possible. Rossetti is remarkably successful in accomplishing this goal. In poems such as “Calvin Klein, Underdrawers” and “Chico Wrangler,” the reader is never even given so much as a hint that would reveal the gender identity of the speaker who is adoring, or rather salivating, in the presence of these objectified male figures. As such, not only does she subvert the centuries-old male-as-subject-female-as-object paradigm, but she also leaves the option for homosexual eroticism on the part of the speaker for the enlightened reader to consider.

Returning now to Robyn Wiegman’s important introduction to the lesbian postmodern and one of the thoughts essential to her own argument: while poets like Canelo, Luca, and Rossetti often engage the reader in a game called gender-fuck, the implications of their projects are far more serious. One must also consider the disquieting reality that their subversion reflects: “there can be no map of the lesbian postmodern, no setting her definition in place. She can be located only in excess . . . somewhere between and beyond categorical crises and the logic of a system that visibly fails” (16). Tracing the development of consciousness of lesbian sensuality and sexuality in contemporary Spanish poetry reveals how diffi-

cult it is to resolve the question of whether or not homosexual and homoerotic motifs are still repressed in recent poems. The “coming-out” process that defies mainstream societal expectations is evolutionary in nature and, for many, a life-long project. Reflecting, finally, on Showalter’s spectrum of “feminization,” one can say that Pureza Canelo has successfully attained a level of “subversion” in her work yet the insistence on rebellion demonstrated in *Pasión inédita* does not allow a revisionary process to emerge. Andrea Luca, on the contrary, takes her readers through nearly two decades of progress toward discovering a more authentic self, beginning with an anguished self-consciousness of difference, continuing through an acknowledgment of a past shaped by lies, and culminating with a perspective of revision that strives to attain total erotic freedom and an ideal of androgyny. Finally, Ana Rossetti’s poetry reflects both the “subversion” and “revision” stages of feminization, as she simultaneously dismantles socially-accepted gender categories and enriches sexual identities with new possibilities of expression. ❀

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