

#12

STYLISTIC LEGACY AND THE WILL FOR RENEWAL IN SPANISH LITERARY CRITICISM OF THE 1970S: DÁMASO ALONSO, CARMEN BOBES NAVES AND ANTONIO GARCÍA BERRIO

Vicente Tuset Mayoral

*Centro de Estudios de Teoría y Crítica Literaria
Universidad Nacional de Rosario – CONICET*

Illustration || Raquel Pardo

Translation || Eloise Mc Inerney

Article || Received on: 20/08/2014 | International Advisory Board's suitability: 06/11/2014 | Published: 01/2015

License || Creative Commons Attribution Published -Non commercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.



Abstract || This article develops the hypothesis that the prevalence of stylistics in Spanish literary criticism obstructed the reception of the most novel and fertile aspects of the epistemological paradigm of structuralism. We develop this idea by focusing on two moments. The first is Dámaso Alonso's initial considerations about Saussure, which inaugurated the conditioned reception to structuralism. The second is the publication, in the early seventies, of Antonio García Berrio's *Significado actual del formalismo ruso* (1973) and María del Carmen Bobes Naves' *La semiótica como teoría lingüística* (1973). These two works reveal the extent to which Alonso's views continue to influence the reception of structuralism at a key moment in the theoretical renewal of Spanish literary criticism, even when the two books, of very different tone and perspective, marked polar opposites in the agitated Spanish university system of late Francoism, when demands for democratic institutions, labor improvements and curricula modernization all became part of the same struggle.

Keywords || Stylistics | Structuralism | Dámaso Alonso | Antonio García Berrio | María del Carmen Bobes Naves

0. Priorities and constraints: a version of Spanish stylistics

In Spain the theoretical innovations associated with structuralism and *nouvelle critique* are usually considered to have had a rather lukewarm reception. The reason, it is claimed, is that much of what was proposed by those tendencies at that time was already implicitly found in home grown advances in philology and, more specifically, in its stylistic aspects. It has also been affirmed that this circumstance provided Spanish criticism with a type of safeguard against certain “theoretical excesses”¹ which had weighed down other traditions. We are further told that stylistics as established by Amado and Dámaso Alonso already displayed a scientific interest in the linguistic properties of literary texts. Thanks to the solid philological training of the most conspicuous promoters of that movement—nearly all of them inheritors of the Pidalian School—Spanish criticism anticipated by several years the linguistic turn which was imposed by the international diffusion of the structuralist paradigm.² The benefits of stylistics are thus summed up as moderation and anticipation in terms of pure gain without corresponding losses.

This is obviously a self-interested version of history; it responds to an old power game of the Spanish academy which is—or should be—already well-known, so we will not spend much time on it. The reader will easily note, for example, that among those who defend the beneficial influence of stylistics with greatest determination are several significant members of Opus Dei. In a more general sense, this same “interest” is also manifested on the rhetorical plane. If we take the first of their arguments, structuralism’s “lack of moderation”, we can see that this is not an epistemological category, but a moral one, the Greek *hybris*, to which stylistics would of course oppose its particular *sophrosine*. Those who judge in this manner are not exactly pursuing a disinterested inquiry, but rather its end, its conclusion, or at the least, the regulation of its parameters: this is theorisable, that is not.

The belief that in some way stylistics anticipated, encompassed even, the main developments of structuralism cannot be other than a misunderstanding which ignores the radically different epistemological bases of both movements.

Our hypothesis, to which we have already dedicated some efforts—see Tuset 2010 and 2013—proposes a reading against the grain, according to which Hispanic Stylistics, rather than containing and anticipating anything, was converted into a glass ceiling which, contrary to appearances, obstructed the reception of the most productive aspects of the new structuralist paradigm.³

NOTES

1 | The idea evoked by this phrase, fundamentally anti-intellectual and irrationalist, has its contemporary roots, long before the emergence of structuralism, in the vitalist currents that stirred philosophic and aesthetic thought, not only in Spain, but also in the west, during the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries. We can illustrate this with an example which is more relevant than it seems since, as well as being somewhat recent, it comes from the very heart of its dissemination: in Volume 278 (November-December 2012) of the journal *Arbor*, edited by Spain’s Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), there is an interview with Miguel Ángel Garrido Gallardo, president of the Spanish Association of Literary Theory (ASETEL). The interviewer, Sebastián Pinedo, asks: “¿Se puede decir que [Amado Alonso, Dámaso Alonso y Raimundo Lida], con todo, no se precipitaran – como sucedió en otras tradiciones – en el formalismo excesivo, adelantando excesos del estructuralismo y posestructuralismo?” (Piñedo Buitrago, 2012: 1199). To which Gallardo categorically replies, “Si lo que quiere decir es que la evolución de este ultimo medio siglo de crítica literaria que nace en París (se llamó por antonomasia, la *Nouvelle Critique*) hace añorar muchas veces los grandes textos de nuestra tradición, de Menéndez Pelayo, Menéndez Pidal, Américo Castro, Dámaso Alonso, Amado Alonso, Pedro Salinas, Alfonso Reyes, Pedro Henríquez Ureña y demás padres fundadores, le digo rotundamente que sí” (2012: 1202).

2 | Another interview serves as an example for this point. This time it is Francisco Rico, interviewed by Daniel Fernández, who recalls that “yo me formé en la época

We will locate this error in two moments: Firstly, its inauguration in Dámaso Alonso's commentary on Saussure in *Poesía Española* and other similar texts, the primary sources of this alleged moderate structuralism and the cream of Hispanic stylistics. Secondly, we will examine two titles published at the beginning of the 1970s: *Significado actual del formalism ruso* (1973) by Antonio García Berrio; and *La semiótica como teoría lingüística* (1973) by María del Carmen Bobes Naves. In this second section we will show the extent to which Alonso's opinions continued to condition the reception of structuralism at a key moment in the theoretical renewal of Spanish literary criticism; this includes works with very different tones and perspectives which—as we will see—could be said to represent opposite poles in the context of the final years of the Francoist Dictatorship. This period saw a great deal of agitation in the academic world, where the demands for worker's rights and the democratisation of institutions went hand in hand with those for the updating and modernisation of programmes of study.

However, in order to do this well, we will need to pinpoint what we mean in this article by the structuralist paradigm. What does stylistics oppose itself to in structuralism, what are we ignorant of when we say it contains it, anticipates it, rectifies it? We will dedicate a few lines to this question.

Defining structuralism is no easy task. The terms with which we try to represent it—to circumscribe it, in a certain sense—fluctuate; its own members (that is to say, many of those named on its suggested roll call) forswore the term, which never managed to rid itself of the contemptuous overtone it acquired during the times of greatest polemic. “School,” “movement,” “moment,” “new dawn” even, are some of the terms which have been used to describe it.

Our approach, however, is not historical and we are consequently free of having to adhere to precise limits in a periodic or sociological sense. Our approach is theoretical and, for that reason, we will demarcate and use the term “structuralism” in as much as this noun can be correlated with a series of concrete theoretical effects. In this sense, we will lean largely on the conclusions made by José Luis Pardo in his essay *Estructuralismo y ciencias humanas*.

We will summarise this work as briefly as possible without doing it injustice. According to Pardo, the rise of structuralism came to alter the epistemological distribution that, at least since the Enlightenment, had divided the field of knowledge between the exact sciences—or empirical-mathematic—and those which, with Dilthey, would receive the name of sciences of the spirit, or in Pardo's words, the phenomenologic-hermeneutic sciences. This is, in short, the old

NOTES

en la que la novedad era el estructuralismo. Un estructuralismo que todavía no era el francés ni la versión luego tan popularizada que acabó por cuajar en los Estados Unidos. Piense, por ejemplo, que yo estudiaba la gramática y los libros de Hjelmslev en la universidad en los tiempos en los que ni Barthes ni Greimas habían leído a Hjelmslev; ni siquiera sabían quién era. Y, sin embargo, Hjelmslev estaba en la universidad como libro de texto, porque Emilio Alarcos lo había introducido en España, y por entonces era el pan de nuestro día” (Rico 2003: 45).

3 | We are not entirely alone or original in this case: Lázaro Carrete in the introduction to his volume *Estudios de la poética* declared, “Los españoles e hispanoamericanos, que contamos con una tradicional compatibilidad entre los estudios lingüísticos y los literarios establecida por la escuela de Menéndez Pidal, y que hemos conocido el auge de la Estilística idealista por obra de dos de sus más preclaros maestros, Dámaso Alonso and Amado Alonso, tal vez no estemos en condiciones de atribuir a esta nueva alianza entre lingüística y la literatura los caracteres de auténtica revolución que tiene en el seno de la ciencias humanas. No obstante, debe advertirse que la moderna Poética y la Estilística que nos es familiar sólo tienen puntos tangenciales de contacto” (1976: 11). This work will seek to specify these points, or even better, to clarify the divergences and their effects.

dispute between explanation and analysis on the one hand, and comprehension and synthesis on the other. With a generous and illuminating use of the famous Lacanian triad, Pardo maintains that between the real, to which the hard sciences aspire, and the imaginary, which is the subject of the discipline of understanding, structuralism came to institute precisely the field of the symbolic:

Tanto las hipótesis empiristas y atomista como el contra-argumento fenomenológico-hermenéutico se avienen al reparto [...] entre un saber que se ocupa de la comprensión y del sentido (en el vocabulario estructuralista, de lo imaginario), efectivamente irreductible a la realidad material, [...] y otro saber que se ocupa de lo real [...]. El terreno de las causas (reales) se divorcia así del de los efectos (imaginarios), siendo tan *inexplicable* como *incomprensible* por qué tales causas producen tales efectos. Lo que se convierte en una recomendación para que los físicos se conformen con ocuparse del ruido sin pretender explicar la comprensión o producir el sentido, y los hermeneutas y fenomenólogos se atengan a sus significados dados a la experiencia (“imaginaria”) de la conciencia sin entrar en colisión con los científicos. El Todo imaginario para uno, las partes reales para otros, pero sin pasaje alguno de un escenario al otro. Y éste es [...] el cómodo reparto que el estructuralismo vino a cuestionar al introducir, de la mano de la noción saussureana de *signo*, el territorio de lo *simbólico*, tan irreductible a lo imaginario de los significados fenomenológicos como a lo real de los componentes materiales, tan irreductible al cuerpo o a la materia como al alma o al espíritu. (2001: 27)

Here lies the essence of our point: the theoretical effect of structuralism would then consist of establishing an order equally strange to the material elements—since its minimum components are, as Saussure would say ‘non-existent’, pure opposite realities—and the already-constituted signifieds—since they function at an unconscious level. By not conforming to either of the disputed parts, its results are either reproached for idealism on the one hand or positivism on the other.⁴

As far as our field is concerned, when structuralism was applied to literary studies, the Spanish scene found itself incontestably dominated by idealist perspectives. As a consequence, the criticisms directed against the structuralist trend would mostly come from those who saw it as a reduction of the spirit to pure materialism, accusing it of being a type of resurgence or inheritor of positivism, or, at best, the expression of a technocracy which can neither understand nor resolve anything about “man,” whose essence—which is at stake in literature as in the other arts—can be found in the *misterio* and that irreducibility of the soul elucidated so well by Pardo above. It must also be added that due to stylistics, criticism did not satisfy itself with mere rejection, but specifically took on the appearance of improving assimilation that would end up justifying the version of history with which this article began.

In this way the epistemological controversy, rather than being

NOTES

4 | José Luis Pardo adds to these criticisms two others which he locates in the French sphere: that of anti-humanism, launched from Catholic ranks, and that of anti-historicism from the Marxist camp. He signals penetratingly, “Si reparamos en lo mucho que estas dos objeciones se parecen a las que el propio Sartre (en un célebre ‘El existencialismo es un humanismo’) detectó en los años cuarenta como las principales resistencias contra el existencialismo [...] quizás lleguemos a la conclusión de que la polémica suscitada por este tipo de acusaciones u objeciones no dice gran cosa acerca del estructuralismo (o del existencialismo), sino que más bien revela que —al menos desde los años cuarenta hasta los sesenta del siglo XX— el ‘campo ideológico’ o ‘cultural’ estaba *guardado* y vigilado por el marxismo y el cristianismo, y que cualquier ‘corriente’ que aspirase a habitar en él tenía que aceptar su paso por esas objeciones como una suerte de bautismo o de rito de iniciación que legitimaba su presencia como vigencia cultural” (2001: 30-31, n. 16).

confronted, was avoided and, in fact, in pre-democratic Spain it was never formulated to its full extent. Below, we will look over its most important moments.

1. The roots of misunderstanding: the Saussure of Dámaso Alonso

Dámaso Alonso's book *Poesía Española, ensayo de métodos y límites estilísticos* (1950) is important in several ways. One of these is that it is one of the few texts of the Spanish school of stylistics which offers a theoretical guide and methodology for its fundamental precepts. The link with structuralist thinking is made evident because it is referred to in order to indicate distances which, apart from rhetorical reservations, are proposed strictly as improvements. The favourite target of Alonso here is Saussure and his theory on the arbitrariness of the sign, which he considers in its consequences as "tan aséptica como plana, pobre" (1950: 22). In order to give it some prominence, and without fear of ambiguity, Alonso recuperates the terminology of the *Cours*, the binary *signifier-signified*, but radically transforms its meaning. "Significante," he declares "es, para nosotros, lo mismo a) (el sonido (físico), que b) su imagen acústica (psíquica)" (1950:21). Which is to say that there is no real reason to use this word. Nevertheless, Alonso does so,—insists on it, in fact—erasing the distinctions it was fruit of in order to return it to its state prior to Saussure's conceptualisation, a pre-critical state, it might be said, at the same time as putting it incorrectly into circulation.

Saussure's determination to distinguish between the resonant aspect of the sign and the perception of it as an acoustic image was fundamentally directed towards escaping the empiricist confusion that considered the signifier as merely a sound, with the unsystematisable infinity of its possible realisations; in other words, he sought to shift the great dichotomy *langue/parole* to the restricted sphere of the signs. In treating effective linguistic productions, literary works, Alonso proposes instead to elaborate a type of linguistics of speech—of literary speech, in this case—although without formulating this explicitly. This is why the idea of signifier as potentiality seems narrow to him, since in his criticism he claims to account for signifieds which, in his opinion, are already accomplished: literary works. The same occurs with the signified reduced to a concept. Alonso tests certain pragmatic avenues—certainly pioneering—asserting the existence of partial signifiers and signifieds under the general slogan that everything signifies (the sign, of course, but also the intonation with which it is pronounced, and the speed or accentuation). However, in the examples he gives to illustrate his point he is lacking one fundamental element in the process of signification: ambiguity. Every

single one of the communicative situations that Alonso conceives of in order to illustrate his point has a univocal signifier, recoverable either through the features of accent or those of rhythm, thanks to extralinguistic elements such as the context.⁵ This welding of meaning is without doubt a major distinguishing mark of the methods adopted by stylistics researchers and their disciples in their work. For, as conceived of by stylistics, literature is a message with a guarantee of meaning.⁶ These guarantees are implicitly collected in the many and repeating allusions to the “spirit” and “mystery” of poetry, as ultimate limits to the possibilities of knowledge. Effectively—and Alonso explains it like this—there is an unknowable remainder to which the progress of literary science can only aspire asymptotically. However, unlike the other epistemological options such as those of structuralism itself, this remnant is not an empty box in the game of signifiers, a decentred, hollow core which is a pure condition of possibility without content; it is a hidden, solid nucleus, a totality which ultimately guarantees, even if tendentiously, the ‘correct’ interpretation of a work. This is the “unity of spirit” which Croce took from Hegel, and which Alonso inherits as an aftereffect of romantic metaphysics. “La realidad es unidad espiritual” writes Croce: “En la unidad espiritual nada se pierde. Todo es en ella eternal posesión”. Here we can see the reach and limit of his declared anti-historicism. He could then say:

En efecto, la crítica verdadera y completa es la narración histórica de lo que ha sucedido, y la historia es la única y verdadera crítica que puede ejercitarse sobre los hechos de la Humanidad, que no pueden ser no-hechos, porque se han realizado, y que se domina con el espíritu desde que se les comprende. Y como la crítica de arte no se puede hurtar ni separar de las demás críticas, así tampoco la historia del arte, por razones de preferencia literaria, puede escindirse de la historia compleja de la civilización humana, dentro de la cual recibe el movimiento histórico, que es del espíritu todo, y nunca de una forma del espíritu unida a las demás. (Croce, 1985: 109)

That is to say, history, true history, is one, and coincides with the spirit, a metaphysical guarantee which then permits any rhetorical game between the universal and the individual, but also between the factual and the “mysterious”, the arbitrary and the deliberate, between matter and spirit according to the classical dichotomy: “Lo verdaderamente universal es lo universal individuado, [...] lo sólo verdadero *effabile* es lo llamado *ineffabile*, lo concreto y lo individual” (1985: 89). And in this sense, it can be said that Alonso is fundamentally Crocian, and the influence of Croce can often be found in later critical works, both his own and those of his direct and indirect disciples. Beneath this idealist predominance, the “Saussurism” to which Alonso appeals becomes at the least a source of confusion. Firstly, and most importantly, because it breaks up the unity of language according to how the Genevan conceives it, into normal language

NOTES

5 | “La tristeza de mi amigo bien expresada en la lentitud y en las pausas de su elocución”, Alonso writes for example (1957:28). But, who determines the criteria of this “kindness”? Description and prescription are confused in stylistics more often than it might appear. On the other hand, nothing indicates that this slowness and these pauses have emerged from the differential context in which it would be fitting to consider them under Saussure and which makes them, in effect, signifiers.

6 | This argument had already been made by Lázaro Carreter in examining another characteristic of the stylistic method: the localisation of “las formas idiomáticas más características” as an objective of criticism: “¿Cómo realizar esta selección, por qué procedimiento cribarlas y extraerlas de las no características? Sin duda, por la impresión del crítico. Con lo cual, se produce un movimiento circular: esa impresión [...] lleva a elegir y señalar como característicos ciertos rasgos del lenguaje; y estos, en camino de vuelta, acuden a confirmar la impresión que los ha seleccionado” (1976: 52).

on the one hand and poetic language on the other. This dichotomy, in short, at times reproduces and at others contains the entire two-part structure in which the expressive theory of stylistics is situated: communication/expression; body/spirit and, ultimately, depending on the political humanist project to which it subscribes: human/inhuman. All of these themes reappear in the pages which follow, articulated in different ways according to the perspective of each of the modernising projects—that of Bobes Naves and that of García Berrio. We will finish, for the moment, with a Saussurian reference by Alonso which is somewhat less popular than those most often quoted from *Poesía Española*, but which is probably more clarifying. The master stylist writes in *Cuatro poetas españoles*:

Adaptando al análisis literario el sistema de análisis lingüístico de Saussure a ese mensaje que el poeta quiere transmitir lo he llamado “significado”.

Pero nada se ha obtenido, nada es posible, si al poeta le faltan los medios de transmisión. La transmisión del mensaje poético se logra por la palabra. A la palabra poética (adaptando el mismo sistema) la he llamado “significante”. El poema no está conseguido si no hay adecuación entre el significante y el significado.

[Joan] Maragall se ha expresado sobre esto en términos que con otra nomenclatura se aproximan mucho a los míos. Léase su *Elogio de la Palabra*. (Alonso, 1962: 106-107)

In Maragall's *Elogi*, we see many things, of course, but not the emergence of a symbolic instant which comes from the appositional and non-essential consideration of its constituent parts. More than this, the very motivation of *Elogi* ultimately places us in the territory of the unspeakable, the mysterious, the miraculous. “Doncs jo crec que la paraula és la cosa més meravellosa d'aquest món perquè en ella s'abracen i's confonen tota la meravella corporal i tota la meravella espiritual de la nostra naturalesa” (1955:19), writes the poet. In short, it is necessary to consider to what point understanding Saussure within the terms and conceptualisations provided by Maragall in the *Elogi* is largely equivalent to not knowing him.

2. La semiótica como teoría lingüística (1973) by María del Carmen Bobes Naves: a continuist attempt

La semiótica como teoría lingüística, published in 1973 as a revision of a book first written in 1965, is perhaps the most explicit attempt to adapt theoretical renewal to the presuppositions of stylistics. With the express desire of bringing Spanish literary theory up to date, Bobes Naves devotes time to extended considerations of what is meant by semiotics and the relations this general science of the

sign, as it is commonly called, would have with linguistics. This effort, however, is made while maintaining a series of basic unquestioned principles which are unconnected to the movements they seek to examine and propagate. One of these is the definition of language as a human creation. This formulation, repeated with variations throughout the entire book,⁷ contradicts one of the basic axioms of structuralist thought, according to which such a definition should in reality be reversed, considering the “human” in its widest sense, if not as a product, at least as a result of language, and not the opposite. Structuralism, from the time of its Saussurean prehistory and explicitly since Lévi-Strauss, does not consider the possibility of a pre-linguistic humanity and thus removes this question at the origin, considering it a pseudo-problem. In contrast, the perspective of Bobes Naves is indebted to romantic linguistics at one extreme and the positivist myth of unlimited progress at the other. For Bobes Naves, language is effectively a dynamic, changing structure, but with a progressive sense in its development, which, going back in time, would lead to a type of *Ursprache*, a primary creation of “man” out of the acute need to communicate or express himself, and which would gradually become richer and more complex, constituting itself in this way as an inheritance that society gives to itself, and whose value would depend on the level of development which each particular society has reached. It is almost unnecessary to note that this is precisely what Lévi-Strauss refuted at the end of *La Pensée sauvage* in his polemic with Sartre.⁸

Speaking in terms of “creation” to refer to language emerges almost inevitably from an individualist-intentional perspective, since, even when one concedes the possibility of collective creation, it is usually at the price of attributing to the said collective the features of an intentional subject. This seriously compromises the possibility of treating cultural phenomena in a structuralist mode, or in other words, of dealing with the symbolic organisation of their manifestations without the need to establish them metaphysically in an intention, in a unique and creative act. Consequently, Bobes Naves dismisses the possibility of a semiotics which postulates itself as a general theory of culture, claiming that such pretensions have not been verified and that, in a wider manner, studies about systems of non-linguistic signs end up reducing their objects to the forms of natural language. In this way, the ambiguous state of language is confirmed, being at the same time a cultural creation among others (law, painting, religion) and the unavoidable explanatory matrix of them all. Perhaps Bobes Naves does not realise this ambiguity; however, she makes great use of it to reduce the sphere of the semiotic to the linguistic, and even more so, to communicational linguistics. From her intentional and archetypically stylistic conception, language possesses two primary functions: communication and expression, which are, we might say, the two human necessities that would have led to its creation.

NOTES

7 | “A medida que la civilización avanza en el dominio y en el conocimiento del mundo natural, se enriquece el lenguaje objetivamente y se amplían las posibilidades expresivas del hombre. Las generaciones que sucesivamente usufructúan un sistema de lengua, se benefician de los incrementos que experimenta en el tiempo. La lengua se constituye en patrimonio de la sociedad y de los individuos, que reciben a través de ella una cultura determinada y en un nivel determinado” (Bobes Naves 1973: 36). This perspective has its correlation in the dichotomy material/spirit which, as in the case of Dámaso Alonso, contact with structuralism has not managed to upset. “Las creaciones humanas como cultura objetivada, tienen dos componentes reales que podemos denominar, en forma general, materia y espíritu. [...] La lengua descubre así los dos elementos señalados como formantes de todo objeto cultural: una parte de materia, y un contenido de valor, añadido por el hombre intencionalmente” (Bobes Naves, 1973: 37-38). This point will be further developed later on.

8 | The survival of the Sartrian moral subject in Bobes Naves’ discourse can be identified in phrases such as the following: “La naturaleza de las cosas creadas por el hombre participa de la nota fundamental en la naturaleza humana: la libertad” (1973: 63).

This natural “dual purpose” has its unquestionable reflection in the division of studies about language: linguistic for communication and stylistics for expression. Here again we have the problem of the distribution of knowledge in the emerging light of the symbolic. Evidently, from this dichotomous point of view, (structural) semiotics implies a disturbance in the “natural” order of things. Hence, the long introduction which opens Naves’ volume—and occupies a third of it—can be interpreted as an effort to respond to this questioning and even resolve it, to return things to the point at which they had been left by Dámaso’s Saussurean closure. The first move that Bobes Naves makes in this direction is to offer a partial definition of semiotics, which she identifies almost exclusively with analytical philosophy:

La finalidad de los análisis semióticos se orientó, al menos en sus autores primeros, a fijar las leyes que siguen los sistemas de signos en sus modos de significar para aplicarlos a la lengua y conseguir así un sistema estable de signos, apto para la expresión científica. (1973: 14)

From here on, there follows a long discussion about the possibilities of the scientific nature of linguistics which finishes with the following distribution of scientific work:

La lingüística aborda el estudio de la lengua con método funcional [...], y es, por ello, ciencia de la cultura. La estilística está, en cuanto a método se refiere, en el mismo nivel de la ciencia, si bien altera un tanto los cauces del método funcional al valorar previamente la forma de lenguaje que analizará. Mientras la lingüística se enfrenta con cualquier manifestación de la lengua, aunque se limite en cada caso a un aspecto de ella, la estilística valora inicialmente el lenguaje considerado literario. [...] La semiótica utiliza hasta un determinado momento el método funcional —mientras analiza los lenguajes naturales—, pero parte también de una previa valoración que le lleva a seleccionar o calificar de adecuados o inadecuados unos usos frente a otros, en razón del criterio de exactitud. (1973: 67)

This is how language is shared out: linguistics, a functional and general science, occupies itself with system, wherein lies the structuralist part of Bobes Naves’ focus; meanwhile, stylistics occupies itself with language in its expressive function and, therefore, in its individual dimension. Later, she says,

La estilística analiza el lenguaje ya configurado en una obra literaria, que tiene un indudable valor social, pero no le interesa tanto esta dimensión como los indicios que lo convierten en algo individuante, en la lengua específica de un autor. Los términos “estilo”, “idiolecto” coinciden en su referencia a un sujeto único. (1973: 69)

In Saussurean terms, the stylistics proposed by Bobes Naves, as happens in the case of Dámaso, would be something similar to the linguistics of literary speech; but it would be a speech without language, without a system beyond language where the social

dimension “no le interesa tanto.” If we disregard the connotations of excuse attached to this mitigation, we can see that what Bobes Naves proposes is a return to humanist perspectives which seek to preserve the unity of the cultural construct “man” as an individual who is fundamentally asocial or at least anterior to all socialisation.

The intentional perspective, in addition to the expressive consideration of literature, leads finally to a reduction in the role of criticism to that of an idealist hermeneutics which considers the meaning of the text as an emanation of the intention of the author, which the critic, thanks to a privileged sensibility, can access, if not fully, at least to an approximation whose limit tends to zero and which therefore gives truth value to her work. In this point, the mark of Dámaso Alonso is unquestionable. With these criteria a hierarchy of the purity of genres can be established as done by classical rhetoric, its pinnacle obviously occupied by poetry, which Bobes Naves defines in the following terms:

En el lenguaje literario, la lírica busca [...] los casos de expresividad: las palabras, las expresiones sugieren más que comunican y tratan de crear en el lector un estado emocional semejante al del autor. (1973:195)

In this way, all possibility is once more closed off from considering literature as a symbolic event whose reality is exhausted neither in its institutional manifest existence nor in the scrutiny of the intentions of its authors. And once more, this originates from a misunderstanding, a change in the definition and concepts of the new disciplines that are being tested abroad, reducing them to the field of what is locally known and discrediting them, in the end, as something they are not.

3. *Significado actual del formalism ruso (1973) by Antonio García Berrio: a rupturist attempt*

As we have seen, Bobes Naves situates her argument in a continuous line that seeks to alleviate the ruptures which might be occasioned by her methodological renewal, being careful not to alter the traditionally maintained division of knowledge in matters of language and literature. In addition, Bobes Naves manages to avoid all contamination or linkage of scientific modernisation with political objectives to remodel the university institutions. García Berrio, in contrast, expresses very explicitly the desire to reform and modernise the Spanish academic field with all the complexity this entails, beyond a mere notional updating. We will reproduce in its entirety a paragraph from the prologue he inserts at the beginning his study, as we consider it an exemplary illustration of the situation faced by a new generation of academics approaching courses which were often immersed in routine:

Quizás mi condición de profesor de la disciplina que en nuestro país se explica bajo la denominación de Gramática General y Crítica Literaria⁹ sea algo positivamente revelador para el lector y le ayude a formarse una idea exacta, desde el principio, de mi propósito al escribir este libro, y de lo que éste pretende aportar. [...] Ante todo debo aclarar que, al escribir el libro, he tenido siempre en cuenta la experiencia resultante de mi condición de profesor [...]. He procurado, pues, escribir una obra que sirva en la coyuntura actual científica y social de los universitarios españoles. Los que a diario veo en mis clases y en mi seminario, estudiantes y jóvenes graduados. A todos los jóvenes lingüistas y críticos que quieran saber, se les ofrece esta obra, que a mis colegas profesores pocas novedades y aciertos puede brindarles. Salvedad ésta, por cierto, que hoy en nuestro país, desgraciadamente, es preciso extender, en ocasiones con mucha más razón, a un buen número de esforzados profesionales de la especulación humanística, a los que el tradicional anquilosamiento casi general de nuestros centros universitarios mantiene alejados de la docencia, ya sea por expresas o tácitas interdicciones, ya -lo que de modo alarmante va siendo caso más general- porque la ubicación universitaria, integrada, no les ofrece alicientes ni garantías científicas que compensen los sacrificios del laborioso proceso administrativo de integración. Unos y otros, los de afuera y los de adentro de España, conocen de sobra las dificultades inherentes a un proceso autónomo de despliegue cultural realmente actual sin contar con la propulsión de las estructuras sociales y científicas oficiales. [...] Consecuentemente con el posible público y sus circunstancias, he juzgado oportuno enriquecer el libro en todo momento con la transcripción de numerosas citas, en ocasiones bastante extensas, así como abundantes referencias bibliográficas que permitan poner en directo textos fundamentales al alcance de lectores con mucha frecuencia aislados y en medios de difícil acceso a bibliotecas de la especialidad bien abastecidas. (1973: 7-9)

NOTES

9 | These professorships were instituted in 1948 under the impetus of Rafael Balbín Lucas. “La vinculación de la “Gramática general” y la “Crítica literaria” en los programas oficiales”, says Garrido Gallardo (1978-80: 346) in the obituary dedicated by this key figure of the fascist university, “dejará una huella perdurable, sean cuales fueran los avatares que sigan los planes de estudio”.

The length of the quotation, as we anticipated, is justified by the exceptionalism of the testimony: it recognises, with appropriate reservations, the precariousness of a university institution “anquilosada” which banishes, either through activity or omission, its most restless elements, as well as the general lack of material means and institutional supports for higher education. The beginning, in short, promises something different than the vacuous glorification of the national element in universal science—the hackneyed “esto nosotros ya lo sabíamos” which Lázaro Carreter (1976: 124) dates back to the polemic with French realism as a sad tendency of Spanish criticism and which we have already seen several times in these pages—and without doubt, this unusual point of departure has sociological roots. Some years ago, José-Carlos Mainer described them in brief, evocative terms.

A fines de los sesenta, se hablaba mucho de sociología literaria y de estructuralismo. Por debajo de aquellos nuevos horizontes epistemológicos, bullía una tectónica histórica que hoy empezamos a entender con más claridad: la fuerte ideologización izquierdista que acompañó todo el decenio y la presencia de una nueva promoción de profesores que se preguntaba por su función en una sociedad en acusado (y desordenado) crecimiento. (Mainer, 2003: 93)

García Berrio, as he himself admits, found himself immersed in this rift, in which the non-tenured professors played no minor part. The book must be read in this context in order to understand the double axis upon which it is articulated: theoretical modernisation and political compromise. Both aspects are mutually conditioned, even in the very title of the work. *Significado actual del formalismo ruso* explicitly interrogates the possibilities of a literary criticism, which as well as being scientific, guarantees and offers a moral response to the acute political situation in Spain and in the world. The question, for García Berrio, is to rehabilitate the merits of formalism, disputing the hegemony of the “*contenidista*” or stylistic focus as the only safeguard of the human in art. This and nothing more should be its “current significance.” The common unquestioned base would then be humanism, and it is from this perspective that an attempt is made to place the structuralism which was at that time dominant in the international scene as an inheritor of formalism:

Por encima del epidérmico fenómeno, pero partiendo de la incuestionable y única realidad, de dato, del ámbito fenomenológico, el llamado “estructuralismo” busca con sus corrientes más maduras y actuales establecer del modo más concreto y profundo posible la fisonomía exacta de la condición humana. (García Berrio, 1973: 226)

This subject necessitates a detailed examination. The question of the presence of humanism in structuralist hypotheses is controversial. Derrida, as is known, discusses it in exemplary fashion in relation to Lévi-Strauss in *De la grammatologie*. Althusser, who could have added so much, hardly receives a mention in García Berrio’s book. Anyway, structuralism historically had to contend more usually with the opposite accusation, that of anti-humanism. García Berrio’s position could then be interpreted as a defensive strategy which permitted him to debate stylistics as the principal movement of the “antiquated academy” which he seeks to both modernise and democratise, contesting its main endowment: man.

This perspective, however, is only reformist in the specific context of Spain, whose political circumstances leave little space for such frivolities as the “death of the author”. Berrio will even dedicate some space to the rehabilitation of Ortega’s elitism in *La deshumanización del arte*. The critical dialogue in Spain, came, in the end, with a certain amount of delay. On the other hand, and this is what matters, the humanist compromise acted like a kind of glass ceiling, fostering a partial reception of structuralism, to say the least, and promoting a debate with stylistics that would unsettle less than was apparent its deepest epistemological fundamentals.

In any case, the debate takes place. García Berro is perfectly clear on this point, and although his analysis occasionally encourages

the well-known identity among the “three immanentisms” (stylistics, formalism and *new criticism*), it proposes a different order, and, especially, extricates stylistics from its place as an umbrella term, the alpha and omega of literary criticism. Note what he says in a footnote:

No nos parece ni tranquilizador ni agradable el que nuestra opinión sobre los formalismos todos, incluida la estilística – como parcela metodológico-crítica importante, pero no única de la ciencia de la literatura–, contraste con el parecer de admirados maestros españoles, después difundido e imperdonablemente deformado y caricaturizado por torpes sedicentes epígonos. La identificación, sin distinguos, de estilística y ciencia literaria como totalidades fue, según creemos, en el caso de algunas mentes realmente próceres, fenómeno episódico, fruto incluso de circunstancias históricas, en definitiva sometido a la extremosidad de cualquier polémica intelectual, y en suma perfectamente defendible desde esas mismas circunstancias. Nada más; en los demás casos nos parece o un mero juego con meras palabras innecesarias, o un craso error. (1973: 72, n. 20)

García Berrio maintains the polemic tone throughout the book with particularly strong instances. His proposal is clearly to contrast Russian formalism, its anti-psychologism, the caution of its assertions, its accumulative systematicity, to fundamentally idealist stylistics. At the same time, he always maintains common ground with humanism:

Lo que las meticulosas disecciones de los formalistas sobre las obras de arte, obras humanas en definitiva, nos proporcionan de real e incuestionable conocimiento de mecánicas del comportamiento humanas y sociales, tiene quizás más valor, en su mismo silencio, que las expresas evocaciones, con menos peso analítico, de los reinos insondables y, por ende, poco comprometedores de las ideas directamente inefables. (1973: 81)

It is true that in his polemic approach García Berrio does not always refine the concepts he treats. His desire to offer as wide a panorama of contemporary theory as possible forces him at times to be brief, to equate positions which should be nuanced rather than conflated, and to risk ambiguity,¹⁰ but it is no less true that, beyond this, he is capable of locating with great pertinence the problematic nuclei of the controversies he addresses. Thus, for example, in treating the relationship between linguistics and literary criticism in the frame of a possible definition—or dismantling—of “poetic language”, García Berrio compares the situation experienced in France with that of Spain and concludes with the following:

En España, con una gloriosa historia de colaboración lingüístico-crítica fundada en los moldes de la estilística y la lingüística diacrónica, con nombres tan significativos como los de Dámaso y Amado Alonso, Menéndez Pidal y Rafael Lapesa, el espíritu de colaboración no aparece planteado de modo tan problemático [como en Francia]. Y ello se debe, quizás, a que el modelo de descripción lingüística que

NOTES

10 | Let us take, for example, his narrow list of authors favourable to a conception of poetic language as a deviation from the norm, “Los teóricos del Círculo de Praga ya aludidos [...], llegaron a informar serias formulaciones de base rigurosamente lingüística-estructural, como la de Pierre Guiraud o Knud Togeby en Europa, y las de Samuel R. Levin o Roger Fowler en América; pasando por análogas opiniones sustentadas en campos críticos menos específicamente lingüístico-estructurales, como Walter Benjamin o Max Bense” (García Berrio, 1973: 119-120).

perdura preponderantemente sea el idealista-estilístico, que no plantea demasiados problemas de adaptación. (1973: 108)

These terms, however, will not be further developed in García Berrio's volume, which bases the polemic against stylistics in its scientificist confidence in a discourse which could overcome the vagueness of the academic rhetoric which was then in vogue. He correctly locates the heart of the problem in a conception of language whose roots are to be found in idealism and, at times, appears to establish clearly its differences with this position:

Hemos tenido ocasión de examinar el principio de la textualidad del hecho literario en los formalistas rusos y sus secuelas inmediatas, la dinamización de los elementos poéticos, su desautomatización, y la condición radical de pluralidad de la palabra poética. Conceptos básicos, jamás formulados como tales por ninguna escuela crítica o pensador aislado, y que constituyen la base, como hemos mostrado, de las más importantes explicaciones actuales de la esencia poética. (1973: 160)

In a circuitous manner García Berrio firmly proposes the irreducibility of formalism to stylistics and locates the heart of this very irreducibility in what was once the particular preserve of the stylisticians: the essence of poetry. However, this formulation should put us in a state of alert. Even when the allusions made by García Berrio to formalism can be extended and identified, in his own words, to structuralism, in as much as this name encompasses "la general renovación metodológica" instigated by the former, the truth is that he never proposes to abjure entirely the strong humanist paradigm in which "man" continues to be an unquestioned centre and bearer of meaning.

At the level of linguistic theory this perspective implies remaining within the limits of the classical dichotomy, communication/expression, although what it now fights to express is a general human nature. For this reason, García Berrio dedicates so much space in his work to the problematic of poetic language in order to conclude that the key, and indeed main, contribution of formalism that should be recovered can be found in "la dinamización rítmica y las distorsiones de la sintaxis lógico-comunicativa merced a las exigencias rítmicas" (1973: 198). This is no more than a variation, with new jargon, of the opposition between language (communication) and poetry (expression) according to how a stylistician of such indisputable importance as Carlos Bousoño might formulate it:

Mezclamos *lengua* y *poesía* en nuestra cotidiana conversación; no debemos realizar esa mezcla en el poema. Precisamente la causa de que un poema no esté conseguido del todo se debe a la presencia de elementos de lengua dentro de él. El poema debe ser por entero una sustitución: un sustituyente. (Bousoño, 1952: 55)

This subject has its complexities because the quotation above was taken from the polemical volume in which Bousoño programmatically adopts the slogan of Aleixandre “poesía es comunicación”. Of course, there are historical reasons¹¹ that explain how a critic so closely associated with Dámaso Alonso could reach such a formulation, which is, in principal, diametrically opposed to the more foreseeable “poesía es expresión” and which, in short, appears to be what he advocates in the quoted paragraph. The theoretical explanation, however, brings a more general light to the question and we must be able to see how all these positions resonate in the work of García Berrio. The key lies in understanding that the concept of expression presupposes the existence of a concrete message in that which has gone before, a guarantee of meaning, which expression simply recovers with individualising features. At most, as we have seen in the case of Dámaso Alonso, this guarantee becomes tendentious, “mysterious,” but no less present and sanctioning.

In the opposite corner, it is useful to recall Gil de Biedma’s reply:

Lo comunicado es, ante todo, el signo afectivo que la realidad del poema confiere a las experiencias que lo integran, y que desprendidas de él carecerían de sentido [...]. Si es el poema en curso quien orienta y conforma la emoción, si ésta no es origen sino consecuencia que existe sólo en función de él, y que no puede existir sin él, ¿no será el poema quien despierta esa emoción y pone al poeta, consciente o inconscientemente, en comunicación con ella? (cited in Ramos, 2008: 15)

There is no point in making Gil de Biedma a structuralist *sui generis*, because his explicit source of theory is Eliot, but it is worth paying attention to the change of direction his arguments imply regarding the stylistics position: The meaning, he says, emanates from the sign and not from any other place, and since the sign is a purely negative differential entity, it is not guaranteed to be anything more than an event, like the simultaneously full and evasive presence of what it provides, what it insists on providing, in its recursive reality as sign. There is no outside of the language which justifies it, and consequently, there is no “man” outside language. Once more, the linguistic presuppositions are echoed in the burning issue of humanism. Gil de Biedma writes:

El fallo de toda doctrina de la poesía como transmisión reside en olvidar que el poeta trabaja la mayor parte de las veces sobre emociones posibles y que las suyas propias sólo entran en el poema (tras un proceso de *despersonalización* más o menos acabado) como emociones contempladas, no como emociones sentidas. (14-15, *our emphasis*)

On the other hand, it is not necessary to underestimate the identification—or assimilating reduction, if you prefer—between structuralism and stylistics current at that time in order to understand

NOTES

11 | This, for example, is how Jose Ángel Valente clarified it, although without referring to the critical fortunes of the formulation: “En los años cincuenta el medio literario era muy primitivo. Se estaba asistiendo a la irrupción de la poesía social, y algunos poetas mayores, los de la Generación del 27, advirtieron la influencia del estado de la poesía en esos tiempos y se asustaron. Creían que iban a perder pie en lo que estaba sucediendo y entonces se hicieron más papistas que el Papa y quisieron reabsorber la postura de la gente joven (que estaba recibiendo influencias muy politizadas, sobre todo ideológicas). Como consecuencia, nace de ellos, y en particular de Vicente Aleixandre, la fórmula primaria de ‘Poesía es comunicación’”(cited in Ramos, 2008: 11).

that those who most lucidly proclaim their opposition to the latter, dismiss or do not pay attention to the possible arguments they might have been able to extricate from the former. In any case, the result is that by proposing a guaranteed meaning, prior to language itself and a guarantor of the human,¹² stylistics is able to oscillate so widely between the two extremes in Bousoño, between communication and expression, its foundational opposition in appearances only.

In the same way, by remaining within the territory of humanism, García Berrio gives way first to those apparent dichotomies than to the epistemological potential of this third order of the symbolic which is instituted with structuralism. Thus, despite welcoming with open arms the list of new critics who would gnaw away at the theoretical bone until it was reduced to splinters (Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Kristeva, Genette, Greimas are mentioned in various occasions) the Albacetican critic prefers to conclude his work by presenting himself as a moderator of the much feared “theoretical excesses” in the name of the man of stylistics, permanently threatened by degenerating contamination, and who structuralism, in brief, does not dissolve in Spain’s reactive earth.

Resulta obligación ineludible de los historiadores de las ideas literarias aceptar y prevenir los riesgos que los movimientos de que se ocupan pueden proyectar sobre la realidad artística contemporánea. En nuestro caso, el formalismo, que no puede ser olvidado lícitamente en modo alguno como cantera de enseñanzas histórico-técnicas aún no agotada, constituye por contraposición, en especial con su repentino descubrimiento tardío en Occidente, uno de los indiscutibles sustentos intelectuales, precursores del estricto estructuralismo, en que podría asentarse una modalidad de degeneración artística que comienza a insinuarse insistentemente en los últimos años. (García Berrio, 1973: 423)

Thus, García Berrio maintains positions which are scientifically and politically different to those of Bobes Naves, and discusses the priority and role of stylistics in the orbit of literary criticism. However, the deaf hegemony of this tendency, the comforts of its common sense, and the impossibility of breaking the territory of the polemic within the academic ambit—a feature exacerbated in Spain, but not exclusively a phenomenon of this country (recall the late and problematic institutional insertion of a large part of the French structuralist critics)—ended the rupturing intention of the Albacetican critic midway. In particular, it rendered him insensitive to the terms in which the debate was framed in other places—the already-mentioned neglect of Althusser in his book, for example, or the scant echo in him of the anti-humanist arguments of Barthes, Kristeva, and Derrida.

Bobes Naves and García Berrio are two exemplary cases, or two poles of a field, which, as we have seen, provide fertile ground

NOTES

12 | This needs to be well comprehended, as it is another common misunderstanding: it is not language which defines the “man” of humanism, but his prior reason, a fact which permits the branding of those without reason as inhuman, even though they share the same language. The genocide perpetrated during the Civil War is nothing but a painful example of this fatal humanist current.

for many others. At the beginning of the seventies, when it was already late in other places, the genuinely profound discussion which took place below the fertile umbrella of structuralism—the break with the expressive paradigm of language, the break with the intentional conception of the subject, of the dichotomous division of the sciences and letters etc.—could not happen the same way in Spain in the terrain of literary criticism. It was impeded in the first place by a totalitarian regime of Catholic humanist stamp, which, for obvious ideological reasons, could not have any interest in it; and, in second place, by a critical tendency which knew how to prosper well under this regime, which became hegemonic and which, from what we have seen, would have to ask itself to what point did it did not give expression to this regime. The self-interested versions which we mentioned at the beginning, those which highlight antecedents and moderations, end up concealing, whether they like it or not, the seriousness of this final point.

Works cited

- ALONSO, D. (1950): *Poesía española: ensayo de métodos y límites estilísticos*, Madrid: Gredos.
- ALONSO, D. (1962): *Cuatro poetas españoles: Garcilaso, Góngora, Maragall, Antonio Machado*, Madrid: Gredos.
- BOBES NAVES, M. (1973): *La semiótica como teoría literaria*, Madrid: Gredos.
- BOBES NAVES, M. (dir.) (1974): *Crítica semiológica*, Santiago de Compostela: Secretaría de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Santiago.
- BOUSOÑO, C. (1952): *Teoría de la expresión poética*, Madrid: Gredos.
- CROCE, B. (1985): *Breviario de Estética*, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- GARCÍA BERRIO, A. (1973): *Significado actual del formalismo ruso*, Barcelona: Planeta.
- GARRIDO GALLARDO, M.A. (1978-80): "Necrología. Rafael de Balbín", *Revista de Filología Española*, vol. LX, 345-355.
- LÁZARO CARRETER, F. (1976): *Estudios de poética (la obra en sí)*, Barcelona: Crítica.
- MARAGALL, J. (1955): *Obres completes*, Barcelona: Sala Parés Llibreria, vol. XIX.
- MAINER, J.-C. (2003): *La filología en el purgatorio. Los estudios literarios en torno a 1950*, Barcelona: Crítica.
- PARDO, J. L. (2001): *Estructuralismo y ciencias humanas*, Madrid: Akal.
- PINEDO BUITRAGO S. (2012): "Tradición, aportes y desafíos de la Teoría Literaria en lengua española", *Arbor*, 758, 1197-1205.
- RAMOS, J. (2008): "Madrid Barcelona, ida y vuelta: revisión de una polémica poética de los años cincuenta" in Saz, S. M. (ed.), *Acortando distancias: la diseminación del español en el mundo. Actas del XLIII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Europea de Profesores de Español*, Madrid: Uned, 10-18.
- RICO, F. (2003): *Los discursos del gusto*, Barcelona: Destino.
- TUSET MAYORAL, V. (2010): "La primera recepción del estructuralismo literario: España, Argentina, México: Apuntes para una investigación", IX Congreso Argentino de Hispanistas, <http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/trab_eventos/ev.1181/ev.1181.pdf>, [11/11/2014].
- TUSET MAYORAL, V. (2013): "El lenguaje y la estilística hispánica. Notas para un estudio de su influjo en la Argentina de los años 50", III Congreso Internacional "Cuestiones Críticas", <http://www.celarg.org/int/arch_public/tuset_mayoral_vicentecc.pdf>, [11/11/2014].