NOTES


3. See Wolfgang Kuyser’s discussion of this concept in “La Doctrine du langage naturel chez Jacob Boehme,” *Poétique* (1976), 338-49.

4. MacGregor Mathers classified the Kaballah into three systems: the “Practical Kabalah, which deals with talismanic and ceremonial magic,” the *Dormanic Kabalah, which “consists of the Qaballistic literature,”* and the *Literal Kabalah, which deals with the use of letters,”* as quoted in Dion Fortune, *The Mystical Kabalah*, tenth ed. (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1972), p. 21. While *gematria* and *notarikon* involve permutations of letters and numbers and are part of the *Literal Kabalah, temurah* is part of the *Practical Kabalah.*


6. Occult philosophy classifies the pre-Adamites as part of the third and fourth root races—civilizations that preceded the biblical Adam and Eve.

7. Saint-Martin’s theory of mirrors was written as a response to empiricists like Locke who found sensation to be the foundation of knowledge. For Saint-Martin, root ideas are derived not from sensation (man’s tactile center) but from images. When these images come into man’s “center,” ideas are formed.


10. In scholastic philosophy, the doctrine of traducianism (as it was defined by theologians such as Saint Augustine) referred to the transmission of original sin through a type of cosmic heredity.


12. The Atlantean Book of Colors is a book of white magic supposedly lost when Atlantis was destroyed.


14. In contrast to Darwinian evolution, which traces man’s evolution from the ape, Mosaic evolution stresses man’s divine origin (from angels) and his retrograde evolution from a pristine state.


17. Novalis’s magical idealism is based on a vitalistic notion of the cosmos in which all of nature is imprinted with the sign or signature of the universal soul. He studies the Book of Nature to deduce universal laws.


The “Cocopleonasm” of Oliverio Girondo’s Poetry

S. Ofelia Garcia

The international fame of Jorge Luis Borges has reduced the importance of other Argentinian writers who have shaped the literature of that country in the 20th century. The poetry of Oliverio Girondo parallels that of Borges in time and space.

Oliverio Girondo’s wealth afforded him the luxury of living in Europe during the years of cubism, dadaism, futurism, surrealism, and surrealism. His circle of friends included such well-known international leaders of the avant-garde as Apollinaire, Jules Supervielle, Tristan Tzara, Marinetti, and Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Although deeply shaped by the European avant-garde, it is significant that Girondo always wrote in his native language, unlike other Latin American poets with the same preoccupation for the nature of the poetic sign (Vicente Huidobro, César Moro). His fluency in both English and French merely provided him with the opportunity to read those who so closely shaped his interest in the maximum foregrounding of poetic speech: Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Paul Morand, Leon Paul Fargue, Henri Michaux, Lewis Carroll, and James Joyce.

Saul Yurkievich has named Girondo as one of the six founders of Spanish American contemporary poetry. Although the other five—César Vellejo, Huidobro, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, and Borges—have been internationally recognized, Girondo remains relatively unknown even in his own country. With few exceptions, the critics have seen his literary world as chaotic, anarchic, fragmentary, and illogical. Yet, if we focus on Girondo’s appreciation of the signifier over
the signified, we can integrate his mimetic chaos into a unified higher significance. This manifestation of semiosis becomes apparent in the linguistic disorder of his last book, *En la masmédula* (1954). However, it is already present in his first two books of poetry, *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía* (1922) and *Calcomanías* (1928). The semantic humor of these two texts distorts the mimetic reality in order to produce the semiosis. Although critics have identified these texts as part of the “ultraísta” movement led by the Borges of *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923) and *Luna de enfrente* (1925), Girondo’s poetics of metaphysical humor separates him from the abstract and intuitive metaphors of what Borges has called “la equivocación ultraísta.” Girondo, then, precedes Borges in bringing the avant-garde spirit to Argentina in 1920. In addition, his effort to supersede the limitations of conventional language—the arbitrariness of the sign—introduces in Argentina the motivation of the linguistic sign that is so characteristic of modern poetry.

A comparison of two poems of the same matrix—Borges’s “Dakar” and Girondo’s “Fiesta en Dakar”—will elucidate the differences between the two founders of contemporary Argentinian poetry. The first statement of Borges’s poem—“Dakar está” (Dakar is located)—contrasts with the beginning of Girondo’s—“La calle pasa” (The street advances). Borges’s poetic universe presents an eternal Dakar that has passed through a metaphorical process to acquire absolute value. Girondo, on the other hand, presents a linguistic carnival where humor has penetrated the sign in an effort to “deautomatize” it; that is, in an effort to present it in a new perspective that will force the reader to emancipate it from its denotative function. “Dakar” will then experience its metathesis into the English vocable “dark,” which is semantically reinforced through the blacks that appear in the poem (“un friso de negros sentados sobre el cordon de la vereda,” “negros estilizados con ademanes de sultán,” “negras vestidas de papagayo”). “Dakar” also points to the sordidness of an absurd world where there are “discursos en cuatro mil lenguas oscuras” (discourses in four thousand “dark” languages). The dual sign *oscuras* not only functions in its humorous mimetic relation to the blackness of its interlocutors, but also acts as a synonym of ignorance. Language has been dissociated from myth and art through its use by a society like those “Europeos que usan una escupidera en la cabeza” (Europeans who use a spittoon on their heads) who appear in Girondo’s poem. This last humorous image also conveys Girondo’s contempt for this “logical” human race. All this carnival of blackness will be eliminated through the final exclamation of the poem “¡ILUMINACIÓN/a cargo de las constelaciones” (ILLUMINATION/in charge of the constellations). It almost seems as if Girondo anticipates Roland Barthes’s idea of the plural text as a “galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds.” That is, the true illumination as infusion of Intellectual light will occur when poetic discourse ceases to be obscure and functions instead as a galactic circle of acoustic images. The task of the reader will not then be to recover the signified that is irrecoverable, but to interpret the signifier. Girondo thus moves away from the “logocentrism” of Western culture that has placed the signified as the sole essence of the sign.

The exclamation “¡Plantas calicidas!” (Plants that extirpate corns) that seems unmotivated at a mimetic level is related to the first affirmation of the poem—“La calle pasa”—through the phonological alliance of the velar stop of “calle” and “calicida” and the bilabial stop of “plantas” and “pasa.” Thus “plantas” loses its denotative meaning and functions as a synecdoche of “plantas de los pies”; (sole of the feet) of those streets that repeatedly and habitually advance through the poem. “Calicidas” phonologically repeats the word “calle,” reinforcing its component “-cida” and its semantic connotation of “to kill.” The mimetic reality (la calle) is abolished (-cida) by the de-automatization of the poetic sign. The poet thus confronts us with a poetic universe that by functioning as a galaxy of signifiers will destroy (kill) that callousness, that hardness that has been produced by the artificial friction of the signifier and the signified.

Girondo’s effort to find a poetic sign free from all cultural restraints does not end here or in the metaironic eroticism of the prose poems of *Espantapájaros* (1932). He first attempts to completely purify the sign in the poems of *Persuasión de los días* (1942). But his desire of the “Puro No” (the pure nothingness) is answered in the pampa he internalizes in the long poem *Campo nuestro* (1946). It is precisely from the joyous position of having found a reply to his desire, not in an oriental asceticism but in a “gauchito mysticism,” that Girondo writes *En la masmédula*. The title already reveals Girondo’s use of morphological humor in the creation of neologisms by *agglutination*. Although he violates the laws of the semiotic system of language, he does not separate himself from it.

The scandal of the poetic sign of *En la masmédula* forces the reader to push the act of reading toward the higher level of significance that is the proper domain of semiotics. Since the texts violate not only the syntagmatic unfolding, but also the morphological code, and move toward the paradigmatic axis, only a hermeneutic reading of *En la masmédula* is possible. Although it is difficult to isolate one poem, a careful look at Girondo’s marvelous distortion of the
linguistic sign in his poem “Al gravitar rotando” will manifest the
esemiosis of the paradigmatic significance.*

En la sed
en el ser
en las psiquis
en las equis
en las exquisítas respuestas
en los entramientos
en lo erecto por los excesos lesos del erofrote etcétera
o en el bisueño exhalado del “dame toma date hasta el
mismo testuz de tu tan gana”

ten forma hundido polimellado adroto a ras afaz subtripeo
cocopleonismo exтро
sin lar sin can sin cala sin camastro sin coca sin historia
endosobienlutido
por los engendros moviles del gravitar rotando bajo el prurito astrífero
junto a las mussiluhnas chupaporos pulposas y los no menos
pólipsos hijos del hipo lutio
voluntarios del misma

al desplegar la sangin sin intrito enanos en el plecoito lato
con todo sufeo insomne y todo espectro apuesto
gociernando
améntec
en lo no noto nato

The title “Al gravitar rotando” (While gravitating/gravid (pregnant) rolling/broken) once more introduces the Gironian text as a
galaxy of signifiers rather than a structure of signifieds. The mean-
ingful use of “rotando” instead of the more common “rodando” rein-
forces its phonological component “rota” (broken), which is em-
phasized by the neologism “adrroto” that appears in the poem.
“Gravitar” accentuates semantically the idea that the signs will fall
upon each other (the agglutinative technique), but also phonologi-
cally connotes “grávido” to indicate that the poet will now fertilize the
“puro no” of his earlier stage in order to produce the original lin-
guistic sign. Thus, the title is connected to the last verse of the poem: “en lo
no noto nato.” This true “sign-womb” will result from the extension

* Since Girono’s poetry places the signifier over the signified, a direct translation
would hinder the reader’s semiotic process. Thus, I have decided to quote the text in
Spanish and give the English equivalents of Girono’s “de-automatized” signs in the
analysis.

of the absolute zero in Persuación de los días to the absolute fullness
of the pregnant womb in the texts of En la masníduela. The semantic
reduction of the sign in the previous stage had freed it from its il-
legitimate status (“noto”). “Nato,” with its phonological and semi-
tic relation to the past participle “nacido,” stresses its phonological
component “ato” (to tie). This sign-womb will tie and combine words
in a superior bond.

The texts of En la masníduela are built on the maximum excess or
redundancy of the signs that Barthes has called “catography.”10
But Girono’s neologism seems to be more exact—“cocopleonismo.”
This portmanteau word is an example of the value of Girono’s poetic
signs. Not only can they be considered nonsense words like those of
Lewis Carroll, but since as agents of semiosis they are intratextually
determined, they are examples of what Riffaterre has termed
“scrambling.”11 “Pleonismo” (to use more words than those that are
necessary) is repeated by the word “coco,” which through its
phonological duplication of the “o” reproduces its signified of a
bacterium of spherical or round form. The empty circle will become
gravid. “Pleonismo” also liberates the true “sous-texte”12 of the
poem: the “pleno onanismo” (full masturbation) and the “pleno
orgasmo” (full orgasm) of the signs. The “pleno onanismo” is
repeated by the neologism “erofrote” (erotic rubbing) that is
characteristic of Girono’s writing. “Pleno orgasmo” is reinforced by
the phrase “plecoito lato” (full diffused coitus). “Lato” liberates its
component “ato” (to tie) in this “erofrote” of signs. We can relate
Girono’s poetics to Francis Ponge’s assertion:

It is necessary to conceive of writing not as a transcription according to a con-
ventional code of some exterior or former idea, but truly as an orgasm, as the
organism of a being or of a structure which must, in order to accomplish itself,
give itself up with joy as itself, in one word, signify itself.13

This “pleno orgasmo/elanismo” of the signs is repeated throughout the poem. The signs are “engendros móviles” (movable
embryos). The poet finds himself “polimellado” with its semantic
indetermination of “polimerizar” (to convert into others of more
weight), “pólipo” (polyposes/with tentacles), “polillas” (moths that con-
sume), “mellar” (to notch), all semantically related to “Al gravitar
rotando” until finally discovering the “ella” (the true sign-womb).
The poet lies near the “pólipsos hijos del hipo lutio” (polyups children of
“muddy” desire). The neologism “lutio” arises because of its
phonological relation to “lúteo,” which is reflected in the next verse of
the poem in the sign “míasma.” But the “i” of “hijos” and “hipo”
destroys the semantic reality of “lútea.” The pollution that is phonologically associated with “hipo lítio” is abolished through the extreme desire that causes the orgasm, the emission of semen that is semantically contained in the liberated sign “pollución.” “Hipo lítio” is also related phonologically to Hippolythus, object of extreme desire to his stepmother. The signs must be passionately attracted toward each other.

The vertical accumulation of the preposition “en” in the first lines of the poem is followed by a horizontal projection of the preposition “sin,” which is resolved not “en el sin,” in the nothingness of the previous stage, but in the innermost “masmélula.” The poet, along with his discourse, will now be “endosorbienlúteo,” a portmanteau word that again points to Gironde’s agglutinative technique. There will be signs within others (“endo”), swallowed by others (“sorbién” → sorber bien) and tied to others (“glutido” → gluten).

This amalgamation occurs not only in syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, but also in phonological ones. For example, the neologism “exquisitisicas” occurs through the interpenetration of the two previous signs—“psi quis” and “equis.” The change of the superlative suffix “-ismas” to “-isicas” occurs precisely because of the insertion of the velar stop of “equis” and “psi quis.”

The neologism that follows, “enlumentamos,” suggests the three semantic realities that provoke the other signs of the poem: “luna” (moon), “amante” (lover), “demente” (without a mind). This last semantic reality is related to the neologism “amante” in the next-to-last line of the poem. “Amante” goes beyond its signified (a-mente, without a mind) and functions as an “acronym” of “amante demente” (crazy lover).

Gironde’s poetics does not respond to the illogical automatism of the surrealists, but to a superior logic of love, of agglutination, of indiffereintiation, which destroys logocentrism. The reality of “enlumentamos” is repeated by the phrase “prurito astatico,” not only a great desire (“prurito”), but a heavy body full of love (“astatico”) that reinforces the galaxy of signifiers making love. “Astro” is phonologically reflected throughout the poem (“camastro,” “historia,” “exhausto”). Even a sign like “camastro” loses its signified as a poor, miserable bed, and acts only in its capacity as a signifier: “camastro” (the bed where the heavenly bodies make love). “Camastro” also functions in its phonological relation to the Kamasutra, that treatise on love that Gironde read so avidly.

Gironde does not write from a surrealist sleep, but from a “bisueño,” a repeated dream that will always change and be “bisoño” (new, inexperienced), from a “sueño insomne” (sleepless dream). The poet will be “amante” and his “excesos lesos” (wounded exuberance) will turn into “ex sesos lesos” (perverted judgment) through the excessive “erótico” of the signs. The oral vision of the lovemaking in the poem, the “dame toma data,” thus repeats the semantic reality of “endosorbienlúteo” when it liberates “dar, amar, meter, tomar, más dar, alar” (to give, to love, to put into, to drink, to give more, to tie).

Gironde’s tautological discourse is a joyful act of enunciation, a “gociferando” (“vociferando/gozando, vociferating joyously”). The poet absorbs all corruption by the act of naming, and his poetry becomes a sensual exploration of the arbitrary sign in order to fertilize it.

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NOTES

9. This metatronic eroticism refers directly to Marcel Duchamp’s “meta-ironie.”