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THE POETICS OF EPIPHANY: RECENT WORKS BY ABRAHAM GRAGERA AND JOSEP M. RODRÍGUEZ

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LA POÉTICA DE LA EPIFANÍA: LA OBRA RECIENTE
DE ABRAHAM GRAGERA Y JOSEP M. RODRÍGUEZ
—

Judith Nantell
University of Arizona

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS { Recent Spanish Poetry, Poetics of Epiphany, Abraham Gragera,
Josep M. Rodríguez }

The vitality of the poetry published in Spain during the recent and most contemporary 2005-2015 decade is palpable. Two different poetic voices, in particular, have made significant invigorating contributions to advancing the lyric into uncharted territories in Spain today. This article studies one of the most salient themes emerging in significant works appearing during this decade: the poetics of epiphany. Two different poets in particular have admirably developed this perspective. It underlies *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* (Pre-Textos 2005) and *El tiempo menos solo* (Pre-Textos 2012), two remarkable works by Abraham Gragera, and *Raíz* (Visor 2008), *Arquitectura yo* (Visor 2012) and *Ecosistema Analogía poética*

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(Pre-Textos 2015), three stunning collections by Josep M. Rodríguez. The books, the representative poems and the poets this article examines are very distinct and no attempt is made to compare or contrast them. Rather, the essay considers each of these two poets and the exemplary role that each displays in innovating the poetic word, in the case of Gragera, and the poetic image, in the case of Rodríguez, so that these become original epistemic methods for discovery and illumination.

RESUMEN

PALABRAS CLAVE { Poesía española reciente, poética de la epifanía, Abraham Gragera, Josep M Rodríguez }

La vitalidad de la poesía publicada recientemente en España y más concretamente durante la década de 2005-2015 es palpable. Dos voces poéticas distintas en particular han realizado importantes contribuciones para estimular el avance de la lírica hacia territorios antes inexplorados en la España del presente. Este artículo estudia uno de los temas más recurrentes en las obras significativas de dicho periodo: la poética de la epifanía. Dos poetas en particular han desarrollado admirablemente esta perspectiva, que subyace en *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* (Pre-Textos 2005) y *El tiempo menos solo* (Pre-Textos 2012), dos poemarios notables de Abraham Gragera; así como en *Raíz* (Visor 2008), *Arquitectura yo* (Visor 2012) y *Ecosistema Analogía poética* (Pre-Textos 2015), tres colecciones deslumbrantes de Josep M. Rodríguez. Dichos libros, los poemas representativos, y los poetas que este artículo analiza son extremadamente singulares, y no existe intención aquí de compararles o contrastarles. Por el contrario, este ensayo considera estos poetas en su particularidad, así como el papel ejemplarizante que cada uno juega al innovar, con la palabra poética, en el caso de Gragera, y con la imagen poética, en el caso de Rodríguez, de manera que éstas se convierten en métodos epistémicos originales para el descubrimiento e iluminación.

The vivacious presence of outstanding poetry in Spain today has enlivened recent critical studies and discussions. One cannot ignore this new literary vitality and the exemplary poetry that will be examined in the present article. The emergence of a number of distinguished poets together with the dynamic strength and potential of their salient voices are both developing and advancing the course of this genre since the inception of the 21st century. The initial fifteen years, in particular, both mark and shape this vibrant period. It is time to look back so as to record the accomplishments many of these poets have achieved since 2000 as well as to look forward to the progress that lyric poetry in Spain will demonstrate in the future. The 2014 January-February Special Issue of *Ínsula* distinctively features significant studies concerning “Poesía Española Contemporánea.” This issue provides a landmark critical appraisal that is at once a reflective retrospective of the poetry written at the intersection of two centuries and also a hallmark publication underscoring the directions the lyric has taken during the early decades of the new century. This Special Issue is fundamental to any scholarly investigation of recent Spanish poetry. In this sense, it is an enticing forward-looking volume gathering critical essays by a number of leading literary critics in Spain today together with a copious assembly of poems, and in some cases “poetics” and commentaries, by many different exemplary poets of the current period. Visor Editions presented in 2015 the ground-breaking transatlantic *El canon abierto: Última poesía en español* featuring Spanish and Latin American poets born between 1970 and 1985 together with selections from their latest poetry. Based on the novel idea of providing a questionnaire to a chosen number of participants in the fall of 2014, this work features the work of forty poets who received the largest number of “votes” as a result of the survey. Spain is represented by thirteen poets. Both recent literary events, each in their own way, indicate the solid trajectory for Spanish poetry of today.

When investigating Spanish lyric poetry published since 2000 a number of significant themes arise. For example, self-reflexive

personal identity, the construction and reconstruction of the poetic voice, pensive inquiries into the nature of poetry, meticulous scrutiny of the present instant, acute awareness of reality, metaphor as metamorphosis and various conversations with the quotidian often occur. Such thematic matters serve as a worthwhile portal through which to enter into a study of the evolution of Spanish poetry both at the beginning of and in the first decades marking the third millennium.

One significant theme, however, embraces all others and that is poetry as epiphany, poetry as the means by which the striking revelation of an overall truth begins to develop and ultimately results in an illuminating discovery and knowledge. This epiphany often concerns what Octavio Paz insightfully refers to as poetry where “El poema nos hace recordar lo que hemos olvidado: lo que somos realmente (109).” Poet and reader alike, in the poetry that will be examined, familiarize themselves with various ways in which to engage the poetic text, in both writing and in reading, so as to gain new and substantive illumination. The present study will examine the theme of poetry as epiphany in selected and representative works where the poem unfolds as a process for acquiring knowledge. The point of departure for this epistemic inquiry is the recent work published during 2005-2015 by two different contemporary Spanish poets: Abraham Gragera and Josep M. Rodríguez. The works by each of these poets is examined separately and no attempt is made to compare or to contrast their collections. Rather, as will be demonstrated, the poetry of each provides excellent examples of the epiphanic potential of the poetic text manifested during the last ten years.

Since 2005 Abraham Gragera has published *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* (2005) and *El tiempo menos solo* (2012). In 2013, the latter work won the distinguished *Premio Ojo Crítico de Poesía*. The singularity of his poetics is manifested in his poetry and two noteworthy poems embody the art with which he crafts the poetic word. “Estrella fugaz” from his 2005 work and “La poesía” published in the 2012 collection accurately reflect Octavio Paz’s

dictum which could be viewed as the underlying *ars poetica* of Gragera's work to date: "... el lenguaje es poesía y cada palabra esconde cierta carga metafórica dispuesta a estallar apenas se toca el resorte secreto, pero la fuerza creadora de la palabra reside en el hombre que la pronuncia (37)."

Expertly conceived and astonishingly innovative Abraham Gragera's *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* is a triumph for the poetic word. The twelve poems constituting this collection incarnate the rich and vast potential of language in the hands of a master poet. It is the poetic word that propels this collection and the titular poem "Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres" (16-17) indicates how and why. Here Gragera solidly demonstrates that recent poetry emerging in Spain has bid adieu to earlier and now clichéd language in order to initiate and to foster an original linguistic identity for the provocative poem of today. For Gragera, this means exhibiting the fresh and exciting referential capacity in the creation of the poetic word. His richly metaphoric "telaraña," in the poem naming the collection, is itself a fine example as it catches past verbal expression and worn out discourse completely unaware while simultaneously disclosing: "Así, la telaraña dice adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres, mecida por el aire, la presa, el cazador..." It is within this elliptical and suspended moment where the talented Gragera stimulates different expectations and exploits unexpected nuances when developing one of the most ingenious poems and books of poetry from the period under consideration. Fellow poet Martín López-Vega provides perceptive insight into Gragera's 2005 collection: "... llevaba a la práctica la evidencia de que buscar decir cosas nuevas ... equivalía a buscar nuevas formas de decirlas (2013)." Although not placed as the initial poem of the 2005 book, "Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres" epitomizes Gragera's scrutiny of outmoded expression so as to vivify the original and provocative poetic word. For him the time is right: "Alzar ahora la voz en este cuarto vulgar de primer piso, vertedero de armarios y secretos generalizables, resulta algo ridículo. Aunque también lo sea depurar ciertas pal-

abras de su exceso de infinito.” In this poem, as well as in others from the 2005 collection, the poetic word transforms ordinary language into extraordinary poetry.

Such a farewell both establishes this poet at the forefront of recent Spanish poetry and also allows for him to welcome and to champion its future. In his 2005 book Gragera examines ephemeral knowledge with hope (“Estrella fugaz” 11), reveals contemplative introspections (“Casi demasiado serio” 12-13), engages in instructive conversations with everyday objects (“El susurro del polvo” 22-23) and provides illuminating discoveries while unfolding various facets of the compressed temporal moment in “Siete presentes” (28-34). In each, borrowing Ada Salas’s affirmation, “El poema hace ver lo visto, lo vivido, como si fuera nuevo” (*El margen* 55). This is Gragera’s approach to poetry and to metaphor. He demonstrates throughout this collection that metaphor, again utilizing Salas’s observation, is the “principal instrumento para ‘desautomatizar’ nuestra percepción de la realidad” (*El margen* 19) when and where each of his poems offers the poet unique opportunities in which to ponder and produce imaged transformations: “Aún es pronto, demasiado pronto para el ojo / pero tarde, muy tarde ya para el pensamiento” (“Estrella fugaz” 110), “la orilla añora el roce de sus eles: mirar un río es también ahogarse” (“Casi demasiado serio” 12), “Esta tarde las rosas tenían el aspecto de saberse orejas” (“Sexo sordo” 18), “Sujeto por la percha / de una interrogación / vivir es predicado” (“El susurro del polvo” 22-23), “Por eso ahora / tras el relámpago / cuando las nubes pugnan por echar raíces / las palabras se reúnen para preguntarse // dónde se encuentran / los que desaparecen” (“Siete presentes I” 28), “Anocheciendo // Como en el interior de las manzanas” (“Siete presentes 3” 30), “permítenos dormir // así // fetalmente abrazados // como dicen que duermen // las interrogaciones” (“Siete presentes VII” 34).

In the words of Ada Salas: “Orogénesis. Altercación. Complicación. Fractura. Ahí, de ahí nace el nuevo paisaje, y la extrañeza, la metáfora nos presenta lo conocido como extraño, y la forma en

que nos lo presenta hace que nos detengamos en ello” (*El margen* 19). These observations by fellow poet Salas synthetically capture the process of writing and of reading *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres*. In 2003 in *La lógica de Orfeo* Gragera presents his own lucid self-observation as a poet: “El germen de casi todos mis poemas es la extrañeza ... Un poema es, entre otras cosas, un intento de organización verbal que suele cristalizar cuando la extrañeza se manifiesta con distintas caras y de un modo obsesivo, tanto en la conciencia del autor como en la del lector” (219, 220). In *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* Gragera manipulates and exploits creative expression in such a way that this work is a remarkable poetic achievement of the era. No single poem from this collection better illustrates this point than “El susurro del polvo” (22-23). The intensity, freshness and depth of penetration evident in the combinations and re-combinations of imagery in this work both illuminate and attest to two different and significant descriptions that are relevant to this poem. When examining Spanish poetry in the new century José Andújar Almansa’s incisive 2008 observation readily applies: “... lo que encontramos en los jóvenes no es un simple rechazo del realismo o de sus formas de expresión; lo que apreciamos es una nueva intuición de lo real, que opera como conciencia poética. Una realidad de distintas densidades y superficies, caleidoscópica y desconcertante, abierta a nuevas vías de significación, reclamando una sensibilidad y una atención distinta (34). Importantly”, both the perspective and the perception of the poetic voice in this marvelous synesthetic poem point to the engaging conversation with everyday objects and also with the poem conceived as a linguistic object. Gragera reveals that unexpected imagery transfigures quotidian and existential self-reflection while at the same time he, using the words of Roberto Juarroz, skillfully shapes and demonstrates “el oficio de la palabra.” Juarroz writes: “El oficio de la palabra, / ... es un acto de amor: crear presencia. // El oficio de la palabra / es la posibilidad de que el mundo diga al mundo, / la posibilidad de que el mundo diga al hombre. // La palabra: ese cuerpo hacia todo. / La pal-

abra: esos ojos abiertos” (19-20).¹ In dialogue with everyday things and events the poetic voice discovers both a genuine appreciation for what endures, “Me sobreviviréis / sin excepción, objetos: / lámparas, llaves, vasos, / cuartillas, ceniceros,” and also becomes more keenly aware of the transitory nature of human existence, “mientras cuelgo mi ropa / usada ya, sin dueño, / en un armario, al fondo, / donde solo se escucha, / como nieve que cae, / lenta, sin viento, / el susurro del polvo” (222-23). By reconfiguring language through metaphor the poetic word illuminates and transforms the perception of quotidian objects and events into epiphanic moments realized when “El poema hace ver lo visto, como si fuera nuevo” (Salas, *El margen* 55).

In his review of *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* fellow poet Rafael Espejo accurately indicates: “... si tuviéramos que definir la poética de Abraham Gragera, bastaría una sola palabra: poesía.” He astutely affirms: “En definitiva *Adiós a la época de los grandes caracteres* es un pequeño libro mayor” (109).² Manuel Borrás rightly observes in 2006: “Quien ha dicho adiós a una época, requiere el lenguaje que le impone el nuevo instante sin grandes caracteres, ese nuevo instante en que apenas puede ver algunos objetos que lo sobrevivirán y que forman parte de él mismo.”

What inspires *El tiempo menos solo*, Gragera’s next collection, is not the study of time, as the title might at first seem to suggest, but rather the conscious experience of the word by the poet during the act of writing. By recording the conception of the word as an object with infinite potential, Abraham Gragera enriches and expands the use of metaphor articulated throughout the poems constituting this book. This poetry offers astounding insight into

1. “Desbautizar el mundo” *Sexta poesía vertical*. (1975) <http://poeticas.es/?p=1219> Later this work was republished in *Poesía y Realidad* (Valencia: Pre-Textos 2000): 19-20.

2. Espejo indicates that some of the poems in Gragera’s 2005 collection were earlier published in anthologies and literary magazines. He further observes that during that time the poet continued to work on his poems in order to make them better (107). The final versions of a number of these are presented in the 2005 work. I note that an earlier version of “Casi demasiado serio” appeared in 2001 in *Yo es otro* (Ed. Josep M. Rodríguez) with the title “Una escala sentimental en el aburrimiento” (78-79).

the conception of the poem where metaphor is the central figure. Because metaphoric language makes use of both verbal and cognitive processes it propels Gragera's poetry in such a way that it "invokes a transaction between words and things, after which the words, things and thoughts are never quite the same," in mining the rich definition posited in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (761). Reflecting on "El susurro del polvo," from this poet's earlier 2005 collection mentioned earlier, the provocative image "Sujeto por la percha / de una interrogación / vivir es predicado" (22-23) brilliantly underscores this. In Gragera's work metaphor is not a substitution nor is it a decorative expression; rather in this poetry he consciously and continually allows for it to exhibit the potential and the vitality of the poetic word. By impressively articulating the transformative capacity of the word during the interval of writing as genesis, Abraham Gragera adds new figurative dimensions to recent Spanish poetry.

Gragera makes this clear in the poetry comprising *El tiempo menos solo*. The eminent panel of judges for the 2013 *El Ojo Crítico de Poesía* award recognized "la gran capacidad del autor para construir realidad desde la palabra" by fully exhibiting that this expressive potential would further "ensanchar los caminos de la poesía."³ The 2012 collection also accurately displays Paz's concept of the poet's encounter with the poetic word: "Cuando un poeta encuentra su palabra, la reconoce: ya estaba en él. Y él estaba en ella. La palabra del poeta se confunde con su ser mismo. Él es su palabra. En el momento de la creación, aflora a la conciencia la parte más secreta de nosotros mismos. La creación consiste en un sacar a luz ciertas palabras inseparables de nuestro ser. Ésas y no otras (45)."

The introductory poem, "Los años mudos" (11-12), firmly establishes the presence and capacity of the poetic word. Gragera conceives his collections as organic works and this opening poem

3. <http://lagirandula.com/2014/02/23/premios-ojo-critico-2013-abraham-gragera-un-poeta-un-sophoi/>

clearly both situates and activates metaphoric language as a key to the work as a whole. In the recent poetry of Spain today, the poet, as evident in both Gragera's 2005 and 2012 collections, must abandon the linguistic cliché in order to reveal and revere the potent capacity of the word as "una posibilidad inesperada" (11) as evidenced in these lines from "Los años mudos:" "Pero también perdimos la palabra // mucho antes, antes de que supiéramos siquiera // que la palabra existía // mucho antes de nosotros y de los que existieron antes // junto a nosotros, en los huecos que dejamos al cambiar de lugar / en cada instante // que inauguramos. Así que no es motivo de preocupación, más / bien una posibilidad inesperada // de amar nuestra lengua porque una vez que amamos la palabra // que dispersó las lenguas, sin ser estrictamente religiosos, ni / vulnerables a las profecías" (11).

The act of writing leads to a further discovery in the cornerstone of the collection, "La poesía" (16-17). This poem is more than a metapoetic text and it also is more than an *ars poética*. Rather, "La poesía" displays a profound and unswerving respect for the craft in which the poet fully engages while actively participating in and being fully aware of the creative act. In "La poesía" one could argue that there are two *dramatis personae*, poet and poetry, and each character delivers an enlightening performance. "La poesía" establishes an imaged and imaginary account concerning a number of the quality characteristics each "character" possesses, "La imagino también imaginando / lo bello más que todo cuando es uno, / cada cosa más bella si fuese / única, porque ha sido imaginada // para serlo y, por tanto, imaginada / hasta el más mínimo detalle," as well as aspects of the intimate relationship sustaining and benefiting them both during the various "acts" concerned with the writing of the poem, "es difícil imaginar que no / lo hemos estado siempre / hasta este día / de la historia que acaba, como siempre, / entre el polvo y los puntos suspensivos, // o entre paréntesis, como las grietas." Masterfully demonstrating his own creative skill as a poet Gragera's subtle introduction and development of the presence of another formidable figure in this story cannot be overlooked. The

present moment is the temporal instant in which the activities just recognized occur. The present interval itself displays another significant aspect of the poem as the final two quartets reveal. The poetic word thrives in the present when its invigorating potential metaphorically energizes the act of writing and metaphoric language unfolds in such a way so as to transform the intense moment of composition into vital illumination. Here poet and poem, word and metaphor, writing and reading converge in the suspended temporal instant imaginatively imaged in “La poesía.”

The poem “Nuestros nombres” (21-22) is a companion piece to “La poesía” because here Gragera further discloses the direct encounter with the word, his word: “Que callamos, y al callar descubrimos que el silencio también lo disfraza todo. // Que todo lo que existe tiene un nombre para cada cosa que existe y existimos, porque las cosas saben cada nombre // que cada una de ellas nos ha dado” (21). In so doing this poem reveals what is essential to a poet, “al decir nuestros nombres como las cosas los dicen, sabiendo / que callar es poco hospitalario con los que ya no tienen qué decir” (21). Fellow poet Mariano Peyrou provides additional insight: “Abraham Gragera nombra con una voz nueva, y también pone nombre a lo que no lo tenía, pero sobre todo nombra lo que no existía, una mirada, una sensibilidad, una manera de estar en el mundo, es decir, de usar las palabras”.⁴

The importance of the word in *El tiempo menos solo* also concerns the process of activating and reactivating what fellow poet Martín López-Vega perceptively refers to as the “capacidad epifánica” of poetry and language (2013).⁵ One way in which Gragera excels at this is by expressing illuminating situations involving hu-

4. Peyrou’s 2015 review offers original interpretations of the title of the 2012 collection. It also is an excellent study because this poet comprehends Gragera’s work, in particular, and the nature of poetry, in general. His essay should be considered as a significant article on Gragera’s 2012 collection because it intellectually challenges the boundaries of a standard review.

5. López-Vega also points out Gragera’s awareness of tradition in his 2012 collection—poetic, biblical, classical, and mythological—in his 2013 review.

man existence, as the following examples demonstrate: “Los días van borrando el país donde el amor nos hizo” (“Obedecí” 34), “... como si el hombre fuese solo // la forma humana del tiempo, y no la forma temporal del hombre el tiempo que los ha soñado así, a la altura de la siembra, a medida de la siega” (“A la altura, a medida” 38), “Somos como los siglos / antes de separarse. / Espera un poco más, amor, / que el mar está lloviéndonos aún, / que no llegamos tarde” (“Albada” 48) and “El amor que murmuran sus dos cuerpos / se ha asomado otra vez al primer día / por vez primera, como si lo oscuro / fuese una pausa en la conversación.” (“Los insomnes” 49). Throughout his 2012 collection Abraham Gragera fully comprehends and puts into practice what Paz claims is the poet’s most fundamental role: “El poeta no quiere decir: dice” (110).

During 2005-2015 Josep M. Rodríguez has published two collections of poetry, *Raíz* (2008) and *Arquitectura yo* (2012) as well as his selections from his own poems in the innovative anthology *Ecosistema. Antología poética* (2015). Since 2000 his work has been awarded a number of the most prestigious poetry prizes in Spain. These include the 2003 Premio Internacional de Poesía “Emilio Prados” for *La caja negra* (2004), the 2008 Premio Internacional de Poesía “Emilio Alarcos” for *Raíz* and the recent 2012 XIV Premio de Poesía Generación del 27 for *Arquitectura yo*. The most distinguishing characteristic of his poetry is its outstanding quality. Another important feature of his poetry is that Rodríguez fully grasps, always is attentive to and expertly employs the concept of the poetic image in his work. In his 2008 retrospective poetics, “Memorias de un lector,” included in *Deshabitados*, he explains: “... la imagen se me antoja una herramienta imprescindible. Hasta el punto de considerarla el corazón de mis poemas” (203). His poetry also manifests a profound and relentless search for the Poem as he explains in 2003 in his poetics “El grito” appearing in *Veinticinco poetas españoles jóvenes*: “... todo poeta persigue una idea de Poema, absoluta, previa, no menos volátil que el resto de abstracciones. Y cada poema escrito es una tentativa que le acerca y, a la vez, le

aleja de su objetivo: una tentativa fallida, un grito inalcanzado ... En mi caso, conozco algunos rasgos del Poema que busco: equilibrio, precisión, sugerencia, respeto por la tradición ...” (178). A poetics published in 2003 in *La lógica de Orfeo* outlines another important aspect of his work. His self-observations articulated there soon would be viewed not only as a prediction, evidenced in his subsequent collections, but also as an epistemic method surfacing as early as *Frío* (2002). Rodríguez indicates: “La poesía, como ya dejara escrito Altolaguirre, ‘es mi principal fuente de conocimiento. Me enseña el mundo y en ella aprendo a conocerme a mí mismo.’ Pero la poesía es conocimiento en la medida en que también es misterio, comunicación o refugio: un lugar donde descansar y donde cobijarse, como un área de servicio. Ahora bien, si lo dicho hasta aquí sirve igual para el lector que para el poeta, la tarea de este último exige algo más: un punto de partida, una especie de palanca de Arquímedes que le permita empezar a moverse, empezar a construir su propia voz” (269). Throughout his poetic trajectory Rodríguez is fully cognizant of the dynamic involved in presenting a poetic self to a participatory reader, as he indicates in 2008: “Entiendo el yo como el punto de llegada de todo lector, del mismo modo que entiendo ese yo biográfico como el punto de partida del todo poeta” (197).

In the 2009 interview “Dejo huecos para que el lector se cuele por ellos” Rodríguez explains: “Mi obra parte de tener constancia de lo que somos, de contar lo que veo, pero no solo en cuanto a la realidad que conocemos, sino también en cuanto a aquello que está más allá de la evidencia, de ese tronco y de esas hojas que tenemos delante. Que está, finalmente, en la raíz de todas las cosas.” Appearing one year after the publication of *Raíz* the interview sheds considerable light on this mode of being that pervades the 2008 collection. Furthermore, the observations by Rodríguez just cited genuinely encapsulate his concept of poetry as a method of discovery in *Raíz*. Throughout this work scrutiny of a common quotidian event often divulges illuminating findings as the poem “Indecisión” (51) illustrates: “Dura pocos segundos.

/ Tras la lluvia, / el pájaro está atento / y le arranca a la tierra una lombriz / y vuela hasta que ya no puede verse.” Hesitation must be brief. Attentiveness to vital details at times overlooked during direct observation is required. Snatching a glimpse so as to probe more fully essential elements in reality is rewarding. Being fully cognizant of all of these undertakings has beneficial results, as the personalized poetic voice in “Mantra” (11-12) clarifies: “Fijar la realidad / me ayuda a comprender lo que sucede.” By following sage advice this speaker learns: “No hay que bajar los ojos —me decía mi padre—, / quien sólo mira el suelo / se acaba lastimando con las ramas.” This “mantra” realizes the guiding principle underlying *Raíz*: “Estar atento a lo que me rodea / como una forma de conocimiento.”

Raíz invites the participation of the reader especially when the poem’s speaker offers instructive assistance regarding interpreting and comprehending the “mundo de sensaciones: / vuelvo a encerrarme en mí / y en la quietud de lo que nos rodea” (“Pequeña digresión” 35). At times the poetic voice summons the presence of the reader by articulating directives in the familiar-*tú* command form. Attentive to the proximity of his reader, Rodríguez proposes guidelines for delving into “la raíz de todas las cosas” thereby positioning both writing and reading as associative methods for gaining new understanding. “Indecisión” (51) is exemplary: “Es curioso, / la vida / se reinventa a cada instante: / Lo sabe el caracol / que ha perdido su punta de peonza // y la savia / que nadie puede ver, pero existe. // La vida se reinventa a cada instante: // Aprende su lección / y sé valiente.” The poem “La charca” (55-56) also delineates other aspects of the reader’s participatory role in *Raíz*: “Profundiza. / Fíjate en los patos: / parece que nadar les sea fácil // y es algo muy distinto bajo el agua.” This poem closes the collection and its final hendecasyllabic verse underscores: “No olvides los anillos de los árboles.” These imperatives, because they come at the end of the work as a whole, point to the intrinsic im-

portance of the activity of reading and rereading in *Raíz*.⁶ In the aforementioned interview Rodríguez, when asked about the role of the reader in his poetry, responds: “Que juegue, que rellene espacios con su experiencia. Quiero dejar huecos para que el lector se cuele por ellos y deje su propia huella.” This poet’s cognizance of the reader is an essential characteristic in *Raíz* and throughout Rodríguez’s poetic trajectory.

Full immersion into finding, penetrating, and disclosing the fundamental nature of various elements populating reality also is fundamental to this 2008 work: “A cada instante, / una realidad. / A cada realidad su equivalencia: // La noche sin estrellas sólo es párpado” (“Nocturno y mar” 29), “Hace frío / y el arroyo está helado. // En su interior, / se ha quedado atrapada una pequeña hoja. // La mirada está atenta” (“Erosión” 30-31), “Todo nace de contemplación, / incluso la memoria. // Eso quise decir, / que en la mirada empiezan nuestros límites / y nuestra forma de entender el mundo” (“Las nubes *Versión segunda*” 50) and “Me transforma / la realidad” (“Autorretrato” 54). *Raíz* elucidates as well as illustrates what Andújar saliently denominates “la conciencia de lo real” (34). He observes: “Lo real, hablando de los nuevos poetas, es una mirada otra sobre la realidad. Sus menudos y múltiples acontecimientos, sus objetos, su transcurso, son como luces de posición que nos hacen en conciencia, significando” (“Paisaje” 35).⁷ The images Rodríguez presents in *Raíz* are the epiphanic “luces de posición” illuminating attentive moments of discovery: “Caminamos. / Somos como los radios de una rueda. / Estamos

6. See Andrew Debicki’s pioneering chapters examining the reader’s participatory role in “Francisco Brines: Text and Reader” (20-39) and “José Angel Valente: Reading and Rereading” (102-122).

7. Andújar draws on and credits the excellent 2006 article by Alberto Santamaría. The latter offers a number of insightful observations that will be relevant to *Raíz* published two years later. For example, Santamaría indicates: “... el objetivo de buena parte de la poesía joven supone no el romántico hacer visible lo invisible, sino, de otro modo, hacer más visible lo visible, ... desde una clara pluralidad estética ... Se trata de poetas conscientes de que no es posible enfrentarse a la realidad desde una sola perspectiva, por eso no aparece como viable reducir a un solo mecanismo poético la expresión de esa realidad” (104).

juntos, / la realidad se mueve gracias a nosotros.” (“Ecuación *Versión segunda*” 13) and “En mitad de la noche, / parpadea una vela. // Mi corazón, / el viento” (“Estación japonesa” 25). Even what is hidden from direct observation should be seized as a revelatory opportunity as the closing hendecasyllable of “La charca,” the final poem of *Raíz*, advises: “No olvides los anillos de los árboles” (56). In his 2008 poetics “Memorias de un lector” Rodríguez explains: “... observar la realidad hasta captar la esencia de los más evidente ... y de lo que no lo es tanto.” This is both the subject matter and the means of poetic investigation and discovery in *Raíz*.

Josep M. Rodríguez displays throughout this work an intense awareness of “lo real” by activating and employing subjective perception with, what he refers to as “La inocencia de quien descubre una realidad todavía con el hilo umbilical” (“Cuaderno de un viaje” 88). In “Memorias de un lector” he further delineates this process:

No hay duda de que ese extrañamiento o ingenuidad del que mira las cosas con ojos nuevos es una de las conquistas más importantes de la vanguardia, y que sigue vigente en la actualidad. Todo poema tiene más de cuadro que de fotografía. Más de interpretación que de representación. Las cosas que nos rodean esconden pistas de lo que oculta o guarda una realidad más amplia. La mirada nos muestra sólo un fragmento. Y es función de la poesía enseñarnos a trascender esa realidad, desvelándonos lo que que Emerson denominó ‘el lenguaje hablado de las cosas.’ (2008: 203)

Raíz incarnates Rodríguez’s poetics of perception where he studies “las cosas” inhabiting exterior reality, the interiority of the self and the condensed moment. The opening poem “Amanecer” establishes this at the outset: “Apenas amanece, / el sol / es como un gajo de naranja. / Desayuno. // Este día que empieza es lo que soy” (9).

Informed attentiveness enhances self-introspection a theme that Rodríguez will develop more fully in his next collection, *Arquitectura yo*. The poet images this mode of perception in a number of moments of discovery in *Raíz*: “También ahora sé que estoy de paso” (“Despertar” 14), “La infancia de mi padre. // En eso

pienso / mientras voy de visita al hospital. // ... ¿Cómo puedo decirle / que lo mejor no está en lo que ya fuimos?” (“Contradicción” 16), “Sólo tengo interés por el instante. / El resto es erosión / o me erosiona” (“Erosión” 30-31), “La escasa luz se nutre de mis dudas” (“Autorretrato” 54) and “y este poema / no es más que la corteza de lo que está pasando” (“La charca” 55-56).

In recent Spanish poetry *Raíz* embodies the belief that Roberto Juarroz voices in his significant work *Poesía y Realidad*: “... pienso que la única forma de reconocer la realidad y recibirla, de ser realidad, es crearla, creándose y recreándose con ella. La poesía y la realidad aparecen así como la más íntima afinidad que se da en el ser del hombre” (*Poesía* 15). *Raíz*, however, does even more than this especially when the following observations by the Argentine poet are taken into further account: “La poesía abre la escala de lo real (espacio, tiempo, espíritu, ser, no ser) y cambia la vida, el lenguaje, la visión o experiencia del mundo, la posibilidad de cada uno, su disponibilidad de creación” (*Poesía* 17). Alert, attentive, ever-aware the tone of *Raíz* reveals the extraordinary transformative and epiphanic capacity of poetry: “No es abrir los ojos, // es ser abierto” (“Las nubes Versión segunda” 50).

Antonio Lucas observes: “Lo visible en el poema es parte de lo indecible. Esa realidad aumentada en la que uno se adentra como en peregrinación por un extraño destino. Y en ese viaje la realidad se genera a sí misma. De ahí la construcción de lo visible tenga algo de reemplazo; de espeleología íntima por las profundidades del ser que escribe, de quien lee.” (2013: 74) Although, in part, Lucas is writing about his own poetry, as well as poetry in general, he also is offering for consideration a poetics applicable to *Arquitectura yo* by fellow poet Josep M. Rodríguez. What is particularly striking about this poetics, as retrospectively relevant to Rodríguez’s already published 2012 collection, is that Lucas metaphorically renders and illuminates the activity of exploring the depths of the self as a speleological endeavor. It is this activity that most precisely describes the penetrating process of Rodríguez’s expedition into “reflective self-consciousness” (Gallagher and Za-

havi 2015) in the poetry of *Arquitectura yo*. Here poetry presents, as the poetic voice of the work entitled “Yo, o mi idea de yo” (36) elucidates, entry into the process of constructing self-identity as the overarching title of the 2012 collection figuratively proposes.

This auto-investigation will reveal a number of existential aspects of the self-reflective first-person singular speaker encountered in *Arquitectura yo*. Here, for example, Rodríguez probes in more depth the precarious nature of personal being in time, a subject evident in his earlier poetry. In “Ecuación” from *La caja negra*, for example, the poetic-*yo* divulges: “Extraña paradoja, // la piedra testimonia lo fugaz, / la carne solo es cauce para el tiempo. // (Cada hueso que tengo es una lápida / por los muertos que escondo en mi interior.) // ¿Por qué contar el tiempo que nos queda?” (39). The poetic voice of the 2012 collection, however, is now much more attentive to the contradiction inherent in personal finitude and consequently this mode no longer remains hidden “en mi interior.” Rather, *Arquitectura yo* openly exhibits in various poems acute self-awareness of the precarious nature of being in time: “Es por el ataúd que comprendo quién soy. // A cada instante existo un poco menos” (“Madera” 37). The poem “Yo, o mi idea de yo,” (36) cited above, offers an additional ontological perspective: “Y sin embargo a ratos me construyo. / Y sin embargo a ratos me derribo. / O incluso las dos cosas: // como un niño que nace / en un barco que se hunde.”

Octavio Paz indicates that “La poesía es entrar en el ser” (113) and this could be viewed as the foundation upon which Rodríguez builds *Arquitectura yo*. The poem “Crudo” (9) introduces the framework for imaging self-exploration within the “paradox” and “co-occurrence” (Verelest and Coeke I) of being simultaneously becoming non-being: “Nos construyen las pérdidas: / instante // tras instante // tras instante” (9). Unlike “la inocencia del fósil” forever unaware that it is fixed in time, the first-person voice of this poem is keenly attentive to being and non-being in each concentrated “instant” that itself exhibits the site for and the constancy of perpetual ontological and tempo-

ral transition.⁸ Being is not static like a snapshot, and capturing the moment in a photographic image is itself an illusion because that instant, as “Enseñanza” (22) demonstrates, exposes personal being in time as always already having become something else: “Somos tan solo una fotografía: / sonrientes / y jóvenes. // No saben que escondemos / tras el marco / los márgenes gastados y las esquinas rotas.” Immersion into the self provides remarkable insights into everyday objects as well as everyday actions manifesting the transitory nature of personal being, as the first line of this same poem elucidates: “Cruzo una habitación y soy otra persona.” The pertinent poem “Prospección” (43-44) heightens the act of self-scrutiny orienting the collection as a whole: “¿Seré capaz de acostumbrarme a todo? // Los fracasos se enlazan, / crean hábitos, // y a menudo me escondo en mi interior / como si fuese una muñeca rusa, // cada vez más adentro.” What is learned from speleological exploration during self-reflection? In “Tejados” (21) being and non-being converge in the world and in the self: “En los tejados, / nieve, / y en los dedos la misma sensación, / el lento / deshacerse / de todo lo que toco.” “Sensación” (23) provides essential insight into *Arquitectura yo*, human existence and the personalized poetic voice in particular: “Me refugio en la sensación de cambio.” The poem “Interior” (35) reveals a fundamental existential fact: “Otra vez me equivoco: / la vida no está fuera, sino dentro.” While “Tejados *Versión segunda*” (49) discloses a possible way to initiate introspective reflection concerning the enigma of being and non-being: “saber que todo es víspera; / amar lo impermanente.”

Arquitectura yo also presents other aspects of reflective self-consciousness. In “Postal de otoño” (11) the first-person poetic voice finds solace when realizing that the erosion of personal being in time is a shared existential mode: “Reconforta // pensar que en

8. I use the term “instante” in the sense employed by Verelest and Coecke who reference the thought of Heraclitus of Ephesus: “Everything that is at this moment changes at the same time, therefore it is not.” For Heraclitus “flux is the characteristic of time, by virtue of which all things change inevitably.”

otro tiempo, / incluso otro lugar, / alguien vivió un instante igual a éste: // así me siento un poco menos solo.” Memories, however, do not offer consolation; rather they serve as reminders of the temporality of personal being, as “Fábula de la casa abandonada” (30-31) discloses: “¿Hasta dónde nos llevan los recuerdos? // Hoy he vuelto al jardín / donde la primavera / se ha posado de nuevo en el manzano. / Pero no me confío: // sé bien que hasta las flores tienen sombra.” In “Canción de amor oscuro” (29) even the act of love underscores subjective awareness of the finitude of being and the ephemeral nature of this intimate act: “Frágil serenidad / que no se debe / al calor de tu piel ni a los latidos, // sino a la sensación de no ser yo, / de poder no ser yo por un instante.”⁹

Arquitectura yo is a profound existential exploration into the depths, the inner-recesses, the metaphoric caverns originating deep within the self as it becomes, using Rodríguez’s words, “Mi forma de buscarme en cada verso” (“Creer” 12). As such the book offers a penetrating self-study of structural and first-personal analyses of reflective self-consciousness. This collection, however, also embodies and also foreshadows a mantra that Rodríguez would soon express in his 2014 poetics “Cuaderno de viaje”: “Respetar al lector, saber que él también forma parte del acto poético” (89). The 2012 work calls for a keenly attentive and participatory self-reflective reader actively engaging in reading as an introspective opportunity to study his/her being. Constructing the self and personal identity in this collection is a reciprocal as well as a revelatory activity.

Arquitectura yo presents poetry as ontology, epistemology and epiphany by incarnating and imaging an introspective poetics of self-discovery. This outstanding collection signals a highpoint in the development of the recent poetry from Spain today while at the same time confirming Andújar’s affirmation: “*Arquitectura yo* es uno de los poquísimos libros que llegará a convertirse en seña de identidad de todo una generación poética” (2013).

9. In the 2015 “Prologue” to Rodríguez’s *Ecosistema* Andújar offers additional insight into this poem (14-15).

One feature common to Rodríguez's poetry as a whole is that he conceives each of his collections within a framework where the first poem highlights many of the central themes and images that soon are to be developed and the last poem offers both conclusions regarding this process as well as imaged promises of what is yet to come. In this way Josep M. Rodríguez skillfully suggests, even requests, a reflective reading and rereading of the collection at hand, a rereading that will prove to be enlightening. His 2015 *Ecosistema. Antología poética* presents his thoughtful selections of his own poetry in this same way. *Ecosistema* is not a chronological ordering of what might be his favorite poems. Rather, this anthology displays an attentive and self-reflexive thematic and stylistic reconsideration of Rodríguez's own published poetry to date as well as invites the reader to anticipate his next and future collection. By gathering five new poems throughout the course of his 2015 anthology, where the singular "Casi variación Lowell" appears as the final poem, Rodríguez provides a distinctively original reconfiguration of his poetry by presenting an enticing look forward to what is to come. In *Ecosistema* Josep M. Rodríguez does not join together his complete works to date, but rather carefully chooses to exhibit his poetry through a unique and pioneering method. Another novel feature of this re-collection is that his selected poems do not appear chronologically nor do they adhere to the specific ordering evident in the original work in which they were first published. This is a ground-breaking approach as the author thoughtfully places each of his poems in such a way that they become interactive texts with the poems to which they are adjacent. True to its metaphoric title, *Ecosistema* reveals that the poetry of Josep M. Rodríguez is vitally integrative.

During the last ten years other contemporary Spanish poets have looked back on their own poetic production by retrospectively gathering together their works into specific collections. *Limpiar pescado. Poesía reunida* (2005) by Luis Muñoz, *No duerme el animal (Poesía 1987-2003)* (2009) by Ada Salas, and the recent publication of *Un día negro en una casa de mentira (1998-2014)* (2015) by Elena

Medel readily come to mind. Other poets have chosen to assemble their earlier published poetry by providing in an anthology specific selections and *A las órdenes del viento: Antología poética ampliada 2005-2015* (2015) by Raquel Lanseros is a case in point. The metaphoric title of Martín López-Vega's recent *Retrovisor [Poemas elegidos 1992-2012]* (2013) underscores this poet's own active hindsight concerning his gathering together of selected poems from his earlier work while at the same time providing insights into the evolution of his poetic creations.

There is much to anticipate as the recent poetry from Spain moves forward into the next ten years. The present article highlights two gifted poets, Abraham Gragera and Josep M. Rodríguez, and their works published during 2005-2015. Both of these poets and their poetic collections, as has been demonstrated, underscore the essential and formidable presence of each in advancing lyric poetry in contemporary Spain during the past decade.¹⁰ There are other original and exceptional poets whose works merit further investigation and scholarship. Recent Spanish poetry provides numerous and ample territories to be explored. As such it exhibits a wealth of opportunities for further discoveries and illuminative moments of epiphany.

10. At present I am engaged in a book-length study that will bring to light poetry as epiphany in the recent 2000-2015 work of Martín López-Vega, Antonio Lucas, Elena Medel, Ana Merino, Luis Muñoz and Ada Salas, listed alphabetically, along with the two poets and their poetry discussed in this essay.

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