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The influence of anxiety: The life-long presence of Rubén Darío in César Vallejo's work

La influencia de la ansiedad: la presencia vitalicia de Rubén Darío en la obra de César Vallejo

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ABSTRACT

Harold Bloom established the concept of the «anxiety of influence», that is, the phenomenon whereby the author has the need to escape the influence of a predecessor and promotes, in itself, a coloring of the later writer's work. In this article, we examine what we call instead the «impact of anxiety». It is argued that this phenomenon could be found in the mark that the Nicaraguan modernist, Rubén Darío, left on the work of César Vallejo, and that, contrary to what is generally assumed,

this impression was, in fact, lifelong, rather than just hovering in the poet's first collection of poems, *Los heraldos negros*.

Key words: César Vallejo; Rubén Darío; impact of anxiety.

Indexing terms: literary criticism; poetry (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Harold Bloom estableció el concepto de la «ansiedad de la influencia», el fenómeno por el cual la necesidad del autor de escapar de la influencia de un predecesor promueve, en sí misma, una coloración de la obra del escritor posterior. En el presente artículo, se examina lo que, en cambio, llamamos la «influencia de la ansiedad». Se sostiene que este fenómeno podría encontrarse en la marca que el modernista nicaragüense, Rubén Darío, dejó en la obra de César Vallejo, y que, contrariamente a lo que está generalmente asumido, esta impresión fue, de hecho, para toda la vida, en lugar de quedarse flotando únicamente en el primer poemario del poeta, *Los heraldos negros*.

Palabras clave: César Vallejo; Rubén Darío; influencia de la ansiedad.

Términos de indización: crítica literaria; poesía (Fuente: Tesouro Unesco).

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The title of this presentation is, of course, a playful reversal of Harold Bloom's concept of the «anxiety of influence»: that a writer, in striving to avoid the influence of a predecessor, may be falling under the spell of that predecessor. But just as many critics have been over-anxious, in my view, to trace Pablo Neruda's departure from his early position under the literary wings of Rubén Darío, the Nicaraguan he called «the father of all poets», so I believe other critics —occasionally the same ones— have been too hasty to over-delineate César Vallejo's process of distancing himself from «modernism» and from the weight of Darío's influence after his first collection, *Los heraldos negros*. I think this haste stems from an excessively simplistic perception of Darío's work, rather than Vallejo's, that is to say, a misguided tendency to divide the Nicaraguan's poetry up into early lyricism and later colloquialism, when in fact he found a colloquial, ironically witty and satirical anti-lyrical voice very early on and was capable of great lyricism later on.

Of course, many of us will recollect Jorge Luis Borges' verdict on Darío: «Todo lo renovó Darío: la materia, el vocabulario, la métrica, la magia peculiar de ciertas palabras [...]. Lo podemos llamar el Libertador»¹ (1968, p. 13). Less well-known is Neruda's

1 «Darío was an innovator in everything: subject matter, vocabulary, metre, the peculiar magic of certain words [...]. We can truly call him the Liberator» (this and all translations are mine).

allusion to Darío as a bull in a China shop —well, that’s a little poetic licence on my part—. In his memoirs, Neruda actually describes Darío as «un gran elefante sonoro que rompió todos los cristales de una época del idioma español para que entrara en su ámbito el aire del mundo. Y entró»² (1984, p. 142).

Vallejo considered Darío a master, a father figure, much as Neruda did. Vallejo’s early poetry —some written when Darío was still alive— bears many of the hallmarks of his debt to the Nicaraguan. You will know the anecdote from 1920 when Vallejo gave a poetry recital at his old school in Peru, the Colegio Nacional in Huamachuco. Faced with the conspicuous absence of any applause from the audience, Vallejo declared, rather haughtily: «¿Cómo no me aplauden? A mí que llegaré a ser más grande que Rubén Darío y tendré el orgullo de ver a la América prosternada a mis pies»³ (Coyné, 1999, p. 509).

A number of these early poems by Vallejo even have the same titles as Darío poems. Take Vallejo’s «Primaveral», written in 1915, a year before Darío’s death and bearing the same title as the Nicaraguan’s poem from his first major collection, *Azul*. Both poems use nature as a key theme, as you would expect: spring representing the rebirth in the natural cycle. Both employ birds as symbols. But where Darío chooses to adopt imagery from classical mythology, Vallejo’s poem is more overtly Christian, with pantheistic overtones.

From «Primaveral» by Rubén Darío:

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- 2 «A big elephant smashing every window of a whole period of the Spanish language to let the fresh air in. And in it came!».
 - 3 «How come you’re not applauding me? Me, who will one day be greater than Rubén Darío and will be proud to have America prostate at my feet».

El nido es cántico. El ave
incuba el trino, ¡oh, poetas!;
de la lira universal
el ave pulsa una cuerda.
Bendito el calor sagrado
que hizo reventar las yemas.
¡Oh, amada mía! Es el dulce
tiempo de la primavera.

 Mi dulce musa Delicia
me trajo un ánfora griega
cincelada en alabastro,
de vino de Naxos llena (1954, pp. 577-578).

From «Primaverál» by César Vallejo:

¡Oh juventud! Sostén del Universo.
Rosas, amores, cánticos y aromas.
Volar de sueño a Dios, junto a mi verso,
cual millón de eucarísticas palomas...

 Tuya es la Creación. Tu pensamiento
hará en ella una más fuerte vida
que el fecundo calor del sentimiento
primavera eternal dará en seguida (2013, pp. 62-63).

Another early Vallejo poem, «Estival», once again bears the identical title to a poem from Darío's *Azul*. But here the «disparities» between the two poems, rather than their similarities, are more noteworthy. Vallejo's poem has no thematic or tonal link to Darío's poem. Darío's «Estival» is an extraordinary fable of love between two tigers, one of whom (spoiler alert!) is mortally wounded by a hunter. The final stanza of Darío's poem is an utterly remarkable, grotesque, Goya-like depiction of the surviving tiger dreaming of

devouring his young. Vallejo's «Estival» is very different. For me, it has echoes of another Darío poem entirely, his lovely «Sinfonía en gris mayor» from his 1896 collection, *Prosas profanas*. In both poems, there's a «human being» at the centre, this time: in the case of Darío's poem, it is an old, sun-scarred sailor looking out to sea. There's a sense of melancholy, of solitude, which gets lost in the haze. In Vallejo's poem, the man at the centre is a pauper in a park, similarly cut off from society and similarly fading into the shadows of the sunset.

From «Sinfonía en gris mayor» by Rubén Darío:

Las ondas que mueven su vientre de plomo,
debajo del muelle parecen gemir.
Sentado en un cable, fumando su pipa,
está un marinero pensando en las playas
de un vago, lejano, brumoso país... . . .

Es viejo ese lobo. Tostaron su cara
los rayos de fuego del sol del Brasil;
los recios tifones del mar de la China
le han visto bebiendo su frasco de *gin*.

La espuma, impregnada de yodo y salitre,
ha tiempo conoce su roja nariz,
sus crespos cabellos, sus bíceps de atleta,
su gorra de lona, su blusa de dril (1954, p. 663). . . .

From «Estival» by César Vallejo:

En una roja tarde de verano
cruzó como una sombra penitente,
el calmoso perfil de un indigente
alargando doquier la débil mano.

Rumorosa de júbilo la gente
veía con desdén al pobre anciano,
era un parque de fiesta, donde en vano
suplicaba el ayuno amargamente!

Luego, desengañada, paso a paso
la trémula visión de la pobreza
perdióse entre las sombras del ocaso (2013, p. 65).

Interestingly, I believe Darío's poem, «Sinfonía en gris mayor», may have meant more to Vallejo than some critics have acknowledged. Vallejo might have remembered some of its music when he came to write his own poem «Mayo» in *Los heraldos negros*, especially in the line: «oh cruzada fecunda del andrajol!» (2013, p. 150), with those melancholy «a» sounds so reminiscent of the line from the first stanza of Darío's poem, «lejanas bandadas de pájaros manchan» (1954, p. 663).

I cannot resist a brief tangential aside at this point. In 1919, Vallejo wrote a remarkable poem, «Oscura», set in a workshop. It begins:

Trabajo del herrero
fiero,
junto a la lumbre de la fragua!
Fresco aroma del agua
que ha llorado la lluvia:
sangriento luto de la tarde rubia!

Nervuda faz de cobre
del pobre
que anochece caldeado de esfuerzo...!
Perfil que, acaso terso,
reflejó el sol de oro
en la cima vertiendo el primer lloro! (2013, p. 76; emphasis mine).

Just four years after Vallejo wrote those lines, Pablo Neruda published his first collection, *Crepusculario*, in 1923. It contains an equally notable poem, also set in a workshop, «Maestranzas de noche», which opens like this:

Maestranzas de noche

Hierro negro que duerme, fierro negro que gime
por cada poro un grito de desconsolación.

Las cenizas ardidadas sobre la tierra triste,
los caldos en que el bronce derritió su dolor.

Aves de qué lejano país desventurado
graznaron en la noche dolorosa y sin fin? (1999, p. 34).

Apart from the resonances (the darkness, the heat of the forge, the blacksmith), what are we to make of Vallejo's unusual adjective, «Nervuda», so intriguingly close to the surname of the Chilean poet he would go on to meet and befriend in Paris, before circumstances (and a personality clash) sent them spiralling away from one another? The linguistic link is fanciful, but delicious nonetheless!

Let me rapidly return to the topic of my presentation. We know, of course, that Vallejo, at the beginning of his career, was indeed heavily influenced by modernismo and its reluctant captain, Rubén Darío. André Coyné (1958) and Xabier Abril (1958) have pointed out that the very title of his first collection, *Los heraldos negros*, has a clear modernista after-taste: one of the poems in Darío's *Prosas profanas* is called «Heraldos». However, the image of God in *Los heraldos negros* is far bleaker (blacker, indeed) than in Darío. As Stephen Hart (1987) has written, it is clear that the concept of God that appears in *Los heraldos negros* is that of

a malevolent, impotent and moribund Being. In many of these early poems, suffering is a crucial element, and this «dolor», this existential angst, allows the poet to participate in and merge with the secret of humanity's suffering. It's all very Dariano, as is Vallejo's insistence that suffering runs parallel with love.

Of course, there is no sign of Darío's Graeco-Latin swan in Vallejo, or any other breed of swan, for that matter. Vallejo instead uses Andean animals laden with symbolic or totemic significance: the llama or the condor. But Darío himself gets name-checked in Vallejo's poem, «Retablo», in *Los heraldos negros*:

Yo digo para mí: por fin escapo al ruido;
nadie me ve que voy a la nave sagrada.
Altas sombras acuden,
y Darío que pasa con su lira enlutada.

Con paso innumerable sale la dulce Musa,
y a ella van mis ojos, cual polluelos al grano.
La acosan tules de éter y azabaches dormidos,
en tanto sueña el mirlo de la vida en su mano (2013, p. 181).

The early Vallejo, like Darío, was making constant use of religious and liturgical allusions. The «lira enlutada» (v. 4) is probably a reference to the fact that Darío had died in 1916, two years before Vallejo wrote «Retablo». But Ainhoa Segura Zariquiegui (2013), for one, has claimed that Vallejo was already attempting to flee the traditional trappings of modernista language by using an image of tender «localismo» accompanying «la dulce Musa»: «a ella van mis ojos, cual polluelos al grano» (v. 6). As I hope to show, however, Darío himself would later come to realise (like Vallejo) that there was more to life than modernismo and that the Muse that most mattered was the «Musa de carne y hueso». In other words, for Darío, the Muse would become

more than a source of creativity: it would become a very real, earthy force of carnal pleasure.

Luis Alberto Ambroggio (2016) has noted that the emblematic blue of modernista aesthetics is present throughout *Los heraldos negros*. For example, in the poem «¡América Latina!» Vallejo refers to «una montaña azul» (2013, p. 69, v. 2); he uses blue in the poem «Comunión» as an echo of both Darío's idealisation and eroticism of love: «Tus brazos dan la sed de lo infinito, / con sus castas hespérides de luz, / cual dos blancos caminos redentores, / dos arranques murientes de una cruz. / Y están plasmados en la sangre invicta / de mi imposible azul!» (2013, p. 96, strophe 4).

Interestingly, in Poem 46 of his next collection *Trilce*, from 1922, Vallejo decided to expunge the reference to blue from the first version of the poem. The first version read: «La tarde cocinera se detiene / ante la mesa donde tú comiste; / y muerta de hambre tu memoria viene / sin probar ni agua, del azul más triste» (vv. 1-4; in Espejo, 1965, p. 77). The expression «del azul más triste» in that first quatrain of the poem was later altered by Vallejo to «de lo puro triste» in the final version of the poem. If Vallejo thought of Darío as his poetic father, and if we accept the generally held view that Vallejo was striving to break away from modernismo after *Los heraldos negros*, then I suppose we must also agree with Juan Carlos Ghiano that Vallejo was indeed committing patricide in *Trilce* (as quoted in Ambroggio, 2016, pp. 30-31).

Meanwhile, that «dulce Musa», the muse of creativity, can dry up —if there is such a thing as a dessicated muse—. And both Darío and Vallejo —and Stéphane Mallarmé before them, of course, with his celebrated poem, «Brise marine»— wrote of the very real anguish of the writer who feels unable to express himself. Much has been made of the thematic similarities

between Darío's poem, «Yo persigo una forma», from *Prosas profanas*, and Vallejo's poem, «Intensidad y altura», a sonnet dated 1937, in other words towards the end of Vallejo's life, confirming André Coyné's statement that Vallejo «never disowned his devotion to Darío» (1999, p. 193).

Vallejo's poem is clearly a homage to the Nicaraguan's. Formally, both poems are classic sonnets. Even though Vallejo uses the more flexible endecasyllable, in contrast to Darío's alexandrine, which allows for greater rhythmic variations, the two writers' sensations of impotence in the face of the precarious nature of inspiration are very similar. Indeed, the poets use virtually the same word to express the desperate search for signs of creative life: «botón» in Darío, «cogollo» in Vallejo. But Vallejo's quest, or rather, the outcome of this quest, is far more bitter. In Darío's poem, Venus and the swan inspire hope. In Vallejo, this hope has been transformed into a pair of sinister, hellish crows. And this sinister sensation is matched by the music of Vallejo's poem, its dark and despairing repetition of «vámonos» contrasting strikingly with the purity and luminosity of Darío's verse. Of course, it must be recalled that Vallejo was writing in the midst of the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War. Hope was in short supply at the time.

So Darío writes:

Yo persigo una forma...

Yo persigo una forma que no encuentra mi estilo,
botón de pensamiento que busca ser la rosa;
se anuncia con un beso que en mis labios se posa
el abrazo imposible de la Venus de Milo.

Adornan verdes palmas el blanco peristilo;
los astros me han predicho la visión de la Diosa;
y en mi alma reposa la luz, como reposa
el ave de la luna sobre un lago tranquilo.

Y no hallo sino la palabra que huye,
la iniciación melódica que de la flauta fluye
y la barca del sueño que en el espacio boga;

y bajo la ventana de mi Bella-Durmiente,
el sollozo continuo del chorro de la fuente
y el cuello del gran cisne blanco que me interroga (1954, p. 699).

And here is Vallejo:

Intensidad y altura

Quiero escribir, pero me sale espuma,
quiero decir muchísimo y me atollo;
no hay cifra hablada que no sea suma,
no hay pirámide escrita, sin cogollo.

Quiero escribir, pero me siento puma;
quiero laurearme, pero me encebollo.
No hay toz hablada, que no llegue a bruma,
no hay dios ni hijo de dios, sin desarrollo.

Vámonos, pues, por eso, a comer yerba,
carne de llanto, fruta de gemido,
nuestra alma melancólica en conserva.

Vámonos! Vámonos! Estoy herido;
Vámonos a beber lo ya bebido,
vámonos, cuervo, a fecundar tu cuerva (2013, p. 535).

What is clear, to me, is that Vallejo's literary dialogue with Darío never ceased. There may have been some differences and disagreements, but the debt remained intact. Take another example written towards the end of Vallejo's life, this time from his posthumous collection dedicated to the Spanish Civil War, *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. When Vallejo writes: «si las férulas suenan, si es la noche, / si el cielo cabe en dos limbos terrestres, / si hay ruido en el sonido de las puertas» (2013, p. 642). Can we seriously deny the echoes of lines from the beginning of Darío's great nocturne: «Los que auscultasteis el corazón de la noche, / los que por insomnio tenaz habéis oído / el cerrar de una puerta, el resonar de un coche lejano, / un eco vago, un ligero rüido» (1954, p. 770).

It is true that, in his second collection, *Trilce*, in 1922, Vallejo dispensed with rhyme. The modernista images and metaphors have vanished. Vallejo is now addressing the reader confidentially through his poetry. There is a new, shared intimacy. But that does not mean a departure from Darío, as so many critics have suggested. And I return here to the misconstruction of Darío, or the false schism that is so frequently drawn between the early romantic, lyrical Darío and the later more intimate and colloquial Darío. Apart from the fact that he was perfectly capable of being both lyrical and colloquial in one and the same poem, the artificial carving up of his career simply ignores the fact that his very first collection, *Epístolas y poemas*, published in 1885, contains a remarkable long poem, «Ecce homo», in which Darío mocks the romantic tropes brutally, sarcastically, mercilessly. And his second book, *Abrojos*, already contains colloquialisms: ironic, witty ripostes addressed directly to the reader. There is certainly a shared intimacy here, a reaching out to the reader for empathy.

The late Argentinian critic, Saúl Yurkievich, wrote that:

La importancia de Darío en relación con la poesía posterior es que el nicaragüense devuelve el verbo a su origen; pronunciarlo provoca un contacto mágico con el principio generador de su energía [...]. Si la realidad de la experiencia concreta se ha vaciado de sentido, si la transcendencia es inalcanzable por vía intelectual, lo mejor es desrealizar y desintelectualizar, acceder por la magia y el misterio [...]. Tal es el proceso que desencadena Darío y que llegara a su máxima explosión con la vanguardia⁴ (cited in Lucas, 2018, par. 8).

Yes, indeed. Read Poems 13 and 14 from Vallejo's *Trilce*: they are concerned precisely with the conflict between instinct and the intellect, and transcendence is elusive because humans are doomed to be trapped in thought.

Carmen Alemany Bay (2007), for her part, wrote that the colloquial poets who came after Darío would recover the least known and most sincere part of Rubén Darío: those lines where *prosaísmo*, humour and poetic freedom are at their clearest. The intimate, colloquial poetry which was cultivated in Latin America was the late fruit born out of modernism and its emblematic author, Rubén Darío. For the colloquial poets of Latin America, what felt new in Darío's poetry was not the introduction of «*términos cultos*» and neologisms (although he did introduce them, of course), but rather the quotidian turn of phrase.

4 «The importance of Darío in relation to the poetry that came afterwards is that the Nicaraguan sends the word back to its origins: uttering it sets off a magical contact with the generating principle of its energy [...]. If the reality of concrete experience has been emptied of meaning; if transcendence is unreachable through intellectual routes, the best option is to remove the reality, remove the intellectualism, and to arrive by magic and mystery [...]. Such is the process which Darío launches and which would reach its explosive heights with the *avant-garde*».

The Colombian essayist, Baldomero Sanín Cano, said that, in Darío's poetry, «en lo exterior de las formas, el cambio se hizo visible rápidamente: consistía en introducir en la poesía los modos corrientes del decir, las expresiones y fórmulas usuales en la conversación ordinaria»⁵ (1977, p. 423). For precisely this same reason, the great Uruguayan poet, short story and novelist, Mario Benedetti, found such joy in Darío's long poem, «Epístola de la señora de Leopoldo Lugones» (which first appeared in Darío's 1907 collection, *El canto errante*). Benedetti wrote that this poem «es tan inobjetablemente actual que puede leerse como si hubiera sido escrita la semana pasada, es decir sin que sea necesaria la previa acomodación histórica de nuestro ánimo»⁶ (1995, p. 167). For his part, Octavio Paz in Mexico called the «Epístola» the «indudable antecedente de lo que sería una de las conquistas de la poesía contemporánea: la fusión entre el lenguaje literario y el habla de la ciudad»⁷ (1965, p. 45).

Of course, I am not suggesting that the intimate Vallejo consciously modelled his register, in any way, on Darío's colloquial voice. After all, delightful though Darío's «Epístola» undoubtedly is, the Nicaraguan chose to write the poem in rhyme and in alexandrines. And yet, inappropriate as this might appear, at first sight, as a choice for a colloquial, autobiographical letter (and indeed, at the time the poem was published, it came in for criticism in some circles for its supposed verbal clumsiness),

5 «In its outer form, the change rapidly became visible: it consisted of introducing every-day speech into poetry, normal utterances and formulas into ordinary conversation».

6 «Is so incontestably current that it can be read as if it were written last week, that is, without requiring any previous historical adjustment of our mind».

7 «The undoubted precursor of what would be one of the great conquests of contemporary poetry: the fusion of literary language and the language of the city streets».

those critics did not realise that it was precisely the unusual rhythms and rhymes, so transgressive, at times, that formed a key part of the ironic, conversational tone that Darío deliberately chose to employ and which attracted—and continue to attract—Latin American poets before and after Mario Benedetti and Octavio Paz.

Vallejo's «Epístola a los transeúntes» is undoubtedly very different from Darío's «Epístola». But when, in Poem 57 of *Trilce*. Vallejo writes «bebo, ayuno, ab- / sorbo heroína para la pena» (2013, p. 319, vv. 2-3), it is as if he had been given «permission» to transgress (breaking that line so startlingly) by Darío before him, perhaps by lines in Darío's «Epístola» such as «Me recetan que no haga nada ni piense nada / que me retire al campo a ver la madrugada / con las alondras y con Garcilaso y con / el sport» (1954, p. 850, II, vv. 19-22). It's a breathy moment, in both poems, of which Charles Olson and the Black Mountain poets would have been proud! And could Vallejo have written his deliciously comical prose-poem, «El momento más grave de la vida» without having read Darío's «Epístola»? Although Vallejo's poem is ostensibly about «other» men, it shares the same intimate, wittily confessional register.

In a sense, therefore, Vallejo could be seen to have «inherited» Darío's transgressiveness. That was certainly the view of the Cuban poet, Roberto Fernández Retamar, for example. Retamar came to the conclusion that the originality of Rubén Darío lay in those lines that drifted away from pure aestheticism—that is, the most colloquial lines—. In an interview in 1992, Retamar specifically declared his view that it was precisely Darío's conversational poems which would live on. In Darío's poetry—Retamar observed—you can already find

el ilogicismo, el dismantelamiento de la cohesión, lo inconsciente y lo anormal, la tensión propia de la poesía moderna, la amplificación de lo decible, una abolición de las censuras morales que prepara el terreno a la desenvoltura expresiva de Vallejo y Neruda. Hay en su poesía humor, prosaísmo y esa marca inconfundible de la poesía moderna, la voluntad de reflexión teórica sobre la práctica poética incluso en el seno mismo del poema⁸ (1995, p. 298).

The point I would like to emphasise here is that it must not be forgotten —although it all too often is— that Darío himself was aware, from early in the twentieth century, that modernismo was living on borrowed time. It was actually another Uruguayan poet (long before Benedetti), Delmira Agustini, who picked up the new, incipient post-modernist voice in her 1913 collection, *Los cálices vacíos*, for which Darío himself wrote an admiring prologue.

The post-modernist Darío, like the Vallejo with whom he overlapped towards the end of life, was no longer a pure poet (if he ever had been) who abstracted himself from immediate time and space. He is grounded in the here and now, the earthy, the «Musa de carne y hueso». His concerns in his «Epístola» are not esoteric but universal: his fragile health, his need to earn a living (in his case, from his articles for the Argentinian daily, *La Nación*). Indeed, what makes Rubén Darío a universal poet is his very modern contradictions and inner tensions: the revolutionary vying with the traditionalist, a drive for

8 «The illogicality, the dismantling of cohesion, the unconscious and the abnormal, the very tension within modern poetry, the amplification of the sayable, an abolition of the moral censorship which prepares the ground for the expressive assurance of Vallejo and Neruda. In his poetry, there is humour, prosaism, the desire for theoretical reflexion on poetic practices even within the body of the poem itself».

erotic fulfilment accompanied by potent spiritual impulses, his obsession with death and his passionate need to live life to the full, hope and despair, sometimes within the same poem.

Are these contradictions so different from Vallejo's? Think of two poems which I find intriguingly similar in the nature of their eroticism: Darío's «Que el amor no admite cuerdas reflexiones» from *Prosas profanas* and Poem 71 from Vallejo's *Trilce*. In both poems, sex is pleasurable but has a crazed, violent side, a tangle of uncontrollable limbs:

Darío writes:

Señora, Amor es violento;
y cuando nos transfigura
nos enciende el pensamiento,
la locura.

No pidas paz a mis brazos
que a los tuyos tienen presos;
son de guerra mis abrazos
y son de incendio mis besos (1954, pp. 687-688).

And here is Vallejo:

Cállate. Nadie sabe que estás en mí,
toda entera. Cállate. No respire. Nadie
sabe mi merienda succulenta de unidad:
legión de oscuridades, amazonas de lloro.

Vanse los carros flajelados por la tarde,
y entre ellos los míos, cara atrás, a las riendas
fatales de tus dedos (2013, p. 345).

As for hope and despair within one and the same poem, Vallejo's prose-poem, entitled «Voy a hablar de la esperanza», is virtually a hymn to suffering. And yet, compare Darío's defiant will to live in the face of the many tragedies in his life (the death of his young wife and several of his children) with Vallejo's defiant «Tengo fe en ser fuerte» (v. 1) in Poem 16 of *Trilce* in the midst of the pessimism of so much of this book.

René de Costa (1991) wrote that Vallejo did not invent words to describe new things. Rather, he used terms which, although they did not exist in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, «should» exist, given the naturalness of the context in which he uses them. I would argue that Darío's neologisms, though rarer than Vallejo's, also feel natural in their context, and also, like Vallejo's, have a function which is both ludic and practical, such as Darío's invention of verbs like «panamericanizar» and «piruetear». In both poets, the neologism contributes its own appropriate harmony. As Darío wrote in his prologue to *Prosas profanas*: «Como cada palabra tiene un alma, hay en cada verso, además de la armonía verbal, una melodía ideal. La música es solo la idea, muchas veces»⁹ (1954, p. 613).

Darío, like Vallejo, rejected the idea of pure formalism. In his prologue to *El canto errante* in 1907, Darío declared his faith in «lo sincero, lo consciente, y lo apasionado» (1954, p. 784) and expressed his belief that poetry could never be static because it would always be seeking new ways of escaping the dangers of verbal and mental clichés:

9 «Since each word has a soul, there is, in every line, in addition to verbal harmony, an ideal melody. The music is only an idea, as often as not».

La palabra no es en sí más que un signo, o una combinación de signos [...]. Los que la usan mal serán los culpables si no saben manejar estos peligrosos y delicados medios. Y el arte de la ordenación de las palabras no deberá estar sujeto a imposición de yugos, puesto que acaba de nacer la verdad que dice: el arte no es un conjunto de reglas, sino una armonía de caprichos¹⁰ (1954, pp. 794-795).

Could César Vallejo have put it any better?

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10 «The word, in itself, is no more than a sign, or a combination of signs [...] Those who use the word will be to blame if they are incapable of handling these dangerous and delicate means. And the art of ordering words must not be subjected to heavy yokes, because a truth has just been born, namely: art is not a combination of rules but rather a harmony of whims».

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