

## Snares: Pere Gimferrer's *Los espejos / Els miralls*

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The well-known Catalan writer, Pere Gimferrer, a member of the "novísimo" generation of Spanish poets, effected a shift in philosophical and linguistic perspective when he chose to publish his works in Catalan, rather than only in Spanish.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I wish to concentrate on Gimferrer's collection entitled *Els miralls / Los espejos [(The) Mirrors]*, published originally in 1970, later anthologized with two other of his later works in the collection *Poesía 1970-1977*, and put into circulation by Visor in 1978.<sup>2</sup>

As Gimferrer himself indicated in an interview that appeared in Federico Campbell's *Infame turba* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1971), *Els miralls* represents a change of direction for him as a poet. It is his first work to be written in Catalan, but this change in direction is far and away more complicated and pre-meditated than a superficial change in language coding. The author states: "Imagino que las razones y circunstancias de este cambio no son siempre fáciles de entender para los no catalanes, y menos aún para un latinoamericano. . . . *Els miralls* es un libro de replanteo; es, casi, un ensayo o discusión teórica sobre la poesía; se trata al mismo tiempo de un libro de poemas y de una indagación sobre el sentido de la poesía. Lo que he escrito después también es distinto. Existe, pues, una ruptura más profunda que un mero cambio de idioma" (73-74) (I imagine that the reasons and circumstances of this change are not always easy to understand for those who are not Catalan, and even less for a Latin American. . . . *Els miralls* is a book about marking out a game plan; it is a book of poems, but at the same time it is an exploration of the meaning of poetry. That which I have written since then also is distinct. There exists, thus, a more profound rupture than a mere change of language). Guillermo Carnero, in commenting upon this change, notes

that it resolves a personal issue for the poet, as well as allows him to utilize his native language in a new context, that of poetry: "La que supone obtener nuevas dimensiones expresivas posibilitadas por las disponibilidades que ofrece una lengua nueva. Nueva no para la persona, pero sí para el escritor" (5). (That which allows the poet to have contact with new expressive dimensions, made possible by the availability of a new language. The language is new not for the person, but rather for the writer).

Thus it would seem that this contemporary writer makes a break with the fruits of his initial artistic efforts in order to establish an entirely new direction for his verse. Although one may note elements of structure and thematic threads that had not appeared in his earlier collections, it is also evident that *Els miralls* does indeed contain echoes of the past, in both an individual and a collective sense, as well as intertextual links to other contemporary artistic works, whether verbal or visual. The title is a case in point. In it, the poet makes reference to the mirror, an object of ambiguous conception. Cirlot comments that it "is the instrument of self-contemplation as well as the reflection of the universe. . . . It is a surface that reproduces images and in a way contains and absorbs them" (201). Thus, the mirror symbolizes the power of reflection in both senses of the term—as meditation as well as reduplication upon or of an object exterior to itself. This same observation can be made as well for this collection of verse, since Gimferrer attempts to formulate his reflections upon the art of the poet and the art of the poem. But he does so in such a way as to bring to the forefront links with voices and other artistic forms that are outside the limits of his own texts, while still managing to keep the collection's focus on the question of textuality and the questionable value of the poetic word and language in general. One should not forget the mirror's ambiguous nature: It captures the essence of an object, but on closer analysis, one discovers that the reflection ultimately is not the object itself, but rather only a flat approximation. Thus, by pointing to the collection's reflective nature, the poet also underlines the difficulty of the writer's (impossible) ambiguous task, namely, to force language to refer to something outside itself. The poet succeeds in capturing an essence, not of the object itself, but rather of its linguistic sign. As Fanny Rubio has commented, there is evident "el sentimiento de inutilidad de la literatura, de la poesía, la pérdida de la fe en el valor activo de la palabra poética" (76) (the feeling of uselessness of literature, of poetry, the loss of faith in the active value

of the poetic word). But this seeming futility does not lead to total nihilism. As Andrew Debicki notes, in speaking of the poetics of the "novísimos" as a group, "its poetics and its poetry are grounded in a vision of the literary text as an open-ended system rather than a closed and fully explainable work. Gimferrer, Carrero, and several of their contemporaries are more skeptical than their predecessors about the efficacy of poetic language in discovering reality. These younger poets view the text as revealing only whatever reality it can build with words—which explains their metapoetic bent. This attitude, however, brings them to a view of poetry as creative play" (40).

An aspect of this "view of poetry as creative play" signalled by Debicki is the bilingual format that Gimferrer chose for the 1978 edition of his work. This format illuminates as well as complicates the reception of the text by the reader, an effect that does not escape the purview of the poet. The collection also continues the leitmotiv of reflection established by the evocative title. For this bilingual edition, in Catalan and Spanish, the poet himself serves as both his own translator and as commentator on the product. The product as such is not the definitive one, since the reader is yet another link in a chain that leads to uncertain signification, the bifurcation of the Self into the Other. As Gimferrer comments, "En este caso el traductor es el autor; debe pedir, pues, doble indulgencia para su trabajo. O tal vez no, en rigor; apenas he pretendido traducir, si por tal cosa se entiende recrear el original, crear un poema equivalente" (29). (In this case the translator is the author; thus, he should ask for forbearance twice over, for his work. Or perhaps not, strictly speaking; I have scarcely attempted to translate, if for such a thing one understands to recreate the original. I have created an equivalent poem). That is, the poet indicates that the two versions, one in Catalan, and the other in Spanish, are each original poems. The poet then goes on to state that "El texto castellano que ofrezco al lector no pretende, pues, otra cosa, que ser un calco fiel del texto catalán, y facilitar su lectura a quienes no conozcan dicho idioma" (The text in Spanish that I offer to the reader thus does not attempt anything other than to be a faithful tracing of the text in the original Catalan, to facilitate its reading by those who do not know that language). Thus it is clear, based on his own explication, that the poet's intent is to foreground the original Catalan version of his work. But in the refracted image of the translated text, the reader is brought face to face with the impossibility of that task, and the impossibility of the perfection and oneness of the sign. It should be

noted that the author himself goes against his own statement about the primacy of the Catalan version. On the title page *Los espejos* appears at the top of the page, while *Els miralls* appears in parentheses. Also, the Spanish version of each poem is located on the right-hand page, the better to catch the reader's eye, while the Catalan text is on the left. Thus, the Spanish version is the supplement to the poet's Catalan text, but this Spanish version has established for itself a subversively primary function. Gimferrer states that the secondary Castilian version can reflect only imperfectly the primary Catalan text. But the typographical arrangement belies his ordering. In addition, the poet also states that he has made several corrections to the Catalan version of the poems, and thus, "esta edición bilingüe es, pues, por ahora, la edición definitiva de mi poesía posterior a 1969" (This bilingual edition is, thus, for now, the definitive one of my poetry published after 1969). In so stating, the poet effectively establishes the mirror-image text—in Catalan and Spanish—as the 'author'-itative one, but also undermines that very authority with the phrase "por ahora" (for now). The image of/in the mirror becomes that of the mirage. The poet—in (his own) word(s) and deed—points to the mutability of the linguistic sign, in spite of his own protestations to the contrary. He declares the primacy of one version over another, yet installs the supplement in a central position.<sup>3</sup> And in so doing, he also points to the metapoetic cast of this collection, a mode that will be developed in several poems from a variety of perspectives.

The collection opens with two citations from other writers. The first is from Joan Brossa, which states "Un juego de espejos permite ver el otro lado del poema" (A play of mirrors allows one to see the other side of the poem), and the second is from Wallace Stevens, "Poetry is the subject of the poem." Here one can clearly discern a very decided metapoetic dimension, a characteristic that has been identified as central to writers of this particular group, and which obtains in this collection as a whole.<sup>4</sup> The opening poem, entitled "Paranys" in Catalan and "Celadas" ("Snares") in Spanish, does in point of fact indeed establish a series of snares for the reader as the title would indicate.<sup>5</sup> This single opening text duplicates the edition as a whole, as well as the function of the poet-translator-commentator. It has a bipartite structure, wherein the poetic voice offers a vision of the artistic task in the first part, only to comment upon it and ultimately put that vision in question in the second. The poet creates a reflected image of other authors creating, and draws upon examples taken from

many sources. Apollinaire, Juan Gris, Goethe, Hölderlin, Rimbaud, Pavese and Yeats are named directly, while other authors and texts are re-created in a more oblique fashion. The speaker juxtaposes different worlds, such as that of Orpheus and his love, Eurydice, with a more contemporary and rather jarring context:

El mundo de Orfeo es el de detrás de los espejos: la caída de Orfeo,  
 como el retorno de Eurídice de los infiernos, las  
 bicicletas, los chicos que venían de jugar al tenis y  
 mascaban *chewing gum* (41)

The world of Orpheus is the one from behind the mirrors: the fall of Orpheus,  
 as the return of Eurydice from the nether regions, bicycles, the boys who came from playing tennis and were chewing *chewing gum*

What is the reader to make of this? How is the Orphic world of mythic time related to the contemporary one represented by the clatter and crack of bicycles, tennis-playing boys, and chewing gum?

The image of reflection and the reflection of images plays a central role in the questioning of the value of language and representation, and in truth, sets a snare for the unwary reader, who is encouraged to partake in this game of creative play of the type signalled by Debicki. The poetic speaker makes reference to various art forms, verbal as well as visual, in a kaleidoscope of forms, colors, and perspectives reminiscent of surrealist art:<sup>6</sup>

perspectivas cubistas,  
 como los recortes de periódico de Juan Gris,  
 celadas  
 cuando el fondo es más nítido que la figura central,  
 en primer término, algo deformada, enteramente reducida a  
 ángulos y espirales—los colores son más vivos en los  
 ventanales del crepúsculo: (39)

cubist perspectives,  
 as the clippings of newspapers in the style of Juan Gris,  
 snares,

when the background is much sharper than the central figure, in the foreground, somewhat misshapen, entirely reduced to angles and spirals—colors are more vibrant in the church windows of twilight:

Gimferrer's description of the art form known as collage takes on a metapoetic dimension from various perspectives.<sup>7</sup> First and foremost, it calls attention to the process of artistic creation; it lays bare the underseams of how art "means," whatever the medium, and thus draws attention to textuality as the prime focus of the text. And secondly, by focussing on collage, the poet points to the vexing problems of the representation of reality and reference as well as the role of the producer of that hybrid art form. As Marjorie Perloff comments, "each element in the collage has a dual function: it refers to an external reality even as its compositional thrust is to undercut the very referentiality it seems to assert" (49). Thus, one can grasp the significance of the snares the speaker refers to in the title of this poetic text. The reality to which the speaker refers is not the reality of all of our days, but rather that which is encapsulated in words. Moreover, the words to which the speaker makes reference fulfill not a mimetic function, but rather a semiotic one. They communicate a value associated not with the world of objective reality, but of art, a sphere twice-removed from the reader's grasp, since the speaker refers the reader to art's process by alluding to words and contexts that are not his own but rather those of other writers and artists. (It should be noted that the text begins with "Dicen que Apollinaire escribía / reuniendo fragmentos de conversaciones / que oía en los cafés de Montmartre." In one very important sense, then, these words are even three or four times removed from the reader. The poet creates a speaker; this speaker tells us that other people have said that the poet Apollinaire wrote his words based on the tatters of conversation that he overheard; those conversations, in turn, could be quoting still other voices.) Thus, the form of collage is evident not only through reference to visual art, but also in the pattern of pastiche in the text that the speaker creates from the words of other writers (there are snippets included in French, German, and English) and also in the posture of the poetic voice as well.

These snares are entrapments not only for the receiver of the text, but for the producer as well. Perloff further comments that "the mode of detachment and re-adherence, of graft and citation, collage

inevitably undermines the authority of the individual self, the ‘signature’ of the poet or painter.” (76) The speaker of the poetic text is well aware of the quicksand upon which his text is based. At the close of the main section of the poem, the speaker elaborates upon some lovely fictional characters, and stops to comment upon the questionable “author”-ity of his posture:

las que se bañaban desnudas en las novelas de Pavese y las  
 llamábamos chicas topolino,  
 (no sé si habéis conocido el topolino: era un coche de moda,  
 o frecuente, en los *happy forties*).  
 Pero ahora ya soy más viejo, aunque decir viejo sea  
 inexacto, pero el color del gin con naranja  
 où sont où sont the dreams that money can buy? (41)

those who swam naked in the novels of Pavese and  
 we called them “topolino” girls,  
 (I don’t know if you’re familiar with the “topolino”: it was  
 an “in” type of car,  
 or common during the *happy forties*).  
 But I’m older now, although to say older may be  
 not quite accurate, but the color of gin with orange  
 where are where are the dreams that money can buy?

The speaker now not only fulfills the function of poetic voice but also that of commentator as well, where he directs his comments directly to his audience, in the form of “vosotros” (“you” plural familiar), and thus indirectly makes reference to the textuality of his work. He describes “las chicas topolino,” and then comments upon his own description.<sup>8</sup> In essence he lays bare the frame of his composition, by placing himself outside that frame of reference, even removed in time, and comments upon the linguistic reality that he has created in the collage of his own creation and those of other artists. But in so doing, he undermines and ultimately relinquishes his authority over textuality. In the decentering of discursive power—from the speaker’s text to outside a frame of his own making, and then back again—the speaker points to the pitfalls of linguistic representation. The reality reflected is that which is to be found only within the text; moreover, the speaker must cede his authority to the overriding presence of the

mutable sign. Thus, the poetic voice becomes ensnared in a trap of its own making. By placing himself outside his text in order to comment upon it, the speaker foregrounds the primary role of the sign in shaping not only meaning, but also the reader's perception of the speaker himself. It is significant that this first part ends with a question framed in two languages (French and English), neither of which had been targeted by the author in his opening commentary as those that would express in their own way his two versions of a similar text:

Pero ahora ya soy más viejo, aunque decir viejo sea  
inexacto, pero el color del gin con naranja  
où sont où sont the dreams that money can buy?

But I'm older now, although to say old may be  
not quite accurate, but the color of gin with orange  
where are where are the dreams that money can buy?

It would seem that the poet wishes to dissolve and disperse still further the superficial boundaries between poet and text, speaker and text, and commentary and text. All become entwined in the snares of language.

In Part II of this opening poem, the speaker continues his questioning stance in regard to textuality, but views the text from yet another entirely different perspective, namely, as a product that fulfills distinct functions for very different kinds of receivers. He also repeats the technique of self-commentary, but now his focus is on the poetic text from the perspective of product, rather than signifying object:

Este poema es  
una sucesión de celadas: para el  
lector y para el  
corrector de pruebas  
y para  
el editor de poesía. (41)

This poem is  
a succession of snares: for the  
reader and for the  
proofreader

and for  
the publisher of poetry.

Here the text is viewed not so much as an artistic product but as a social or even commercial one that simultaneously entraps and is entrapped by a series of snares, only glancingly manifest on the surface level of the text. All those receivers named by the speaker—reader, proofreader, publisher—are readers of the same text, but they each produce a different text, each interpreting the text's signs from a different perspective. Once again, the reality to which the speaker refers is ephemeral, since this reality is linguistic and textual, in both the literary and coldly commercial sense. The text is only an object, to be held in one's hands; this limited and more limiting perspective seemingly deprives the text of its originality, its creativity, and its connectedness with other texts and with art in general. This view could be construed as a very pessimistic stance toward textuality, but, as will be shown in a moment, the speaker transforms this seemingly negative perspective into something totally different and unexpected.

This opening text of the collection ends with the speaker emphasizing his lack of power and authority in the process of signification:

Es decir,  
que ni a mí me han dicho lo  
que hay detrás de las celadas, porque  
sería como decirme el dibujo  
del tapiz, y esto  
ya nos ha enseñado James que no  
es posible. (41)

That is to say,  
that even to me they have not revealed what  
there is behind the snares, because  
it would be like revealing to me the figure  
in the carpet, and this  
as James has already taught us is  
not possible.

This disempowerment is evident in the speaker's dependence upon several linguistic choices, all of which indicate dispersion and

ambivalence: his hesitation and use of paraphrasis, "Es decir" (That is to say) as well as "sería como decirme" (it would be like revealing to me); his forceful use of negation, "ni a mí" (not even to me) and "no es posible" (it is not possible), to indicate his exclusion from the secrets of the oft-cited snares; the decentering of authority through the use of the impersonal "me han dicho" (they have revealed to me); and finally, his use of a simile to explain what he meant, not in his own words, but in terms of those of another writer, namely, Henry James.<sup>9</sup> The poetic voice recognizes the snares of textuality at its many levels, but is unable to disentangle itself from their grasp. His final attempt at explication is to make reference to yet another mirrored art form,—"el dibujo del tapiz" / (the figure in the carpet / the tapestry drawing)—, only to admit, once again using the words of another, that to see what lies behind and beyond the "celadas" (snares) is an impossible task.<sup>10</sup>

One could view this opening poem of *Els miralls / Los espejos* from a very pessimistic perspective and arrive at the conclusion that the poet views artistic creation as totally derivative at best, or completely moribund at worst. But this view, I believe, is off the mark. Rather, both the structure and the content of this poetic text may be viewed as the poet's commentary about art within its contemporary social, political and cultural context. Art in general and poetry in particular no longer need be fettered by artificial frames of reference, whether temporal, prescriptive, or referential, nor be limited to one monolithic, authoritative voice. The snares of the title serve as sign posts to the creator(s) and receivers of the text and mark the points at which the functioning of intertextuality is at its most obvious, where the presence of Otherness may be most deliberately noted. As Jonathan Culler comments, "intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture" (103). The snares inherent in discursive space point to the Otherness of language, the slipperiness of the sign which is not content to remain attached to one particular meaning. And the poet views this state of affairs as positive rather than negative.

Based on this perspective, the reader is given an opportunity to view the text in a new light. Rather than being a closed system, the text is now viewed as a concourse of voices and threads of signification

which reflect, echo, parody, and otherwise repeat in a refracted and dispersed manner each other and their entire cultural context. Keeping this in mind, the reader can then proceed to the succeeding poems of the collection, and look upon them as yet other perspectives in the poet's meditation upon poetry and all verbal art as differing yet connected reflections of and upon a much larger system that we know as culture. The trade-off is obvious: even though textual authority is decentered, the gain is that the text is enriched by an ever-widening gyre of signification. The text that follows "Paranys" / "Celadas" ("Snares") is entitled "Sistemas / Sistemas" ("Systems") and begins with "La poesía es / un sistema de espejos / giratorios, que se deslizan con armonía, / desplazando luces y sombras en el probador:" (43) ("Poetry is / a system of revolving / mirrors, that slip and slide in harmony / shifting lights and shadows in the fitting room:") The third text, "Segona visió de marc / Segunda visión de marzo" ("Second vision of March"), may be read as solely within the context of this collection, or as a once again further refracted image of the author's own "Primera visión de marzo" ("First vision of March"), which hails from an earlier collection of his entitled *Arde el mar* (1966) (*The Sea is Burning*). This latter poem ends with

Así nosotros  
 movemos nuestras lanzas ante el brumoso mar  
 y son ciertas las luces, el sordo roce de espuelas y correaje,  
 los ojos del alazán y tal vez algo más, como en un buen  
 cuadro. (35)

Thus we  
 rattle our spears in the face of the misty sea  
 and true are the lights, the muffled jangling of spurs and tack,  
 the eyes of the chestnut-colored horse and perhaps something  
 more, as in a good painting.

Thus, his "second version" enters in dialogue with the poet's previous stance, and the speaker is able to declare at the end:

Nunca he vivido la  
 distancia entre lo que queremos decir y lo que decimos  
 realmente,

la imposibilidad de captar la tensión del lenguaje, de establecer  
 un sistema de actos y palabras,  
 un cuerpo de relaciones entre el poema escrito y su lectura.  
 Quizás un discurso eliotiano en ocasiones, pienso  
 que este poema pone realmente en peligro  
 uno de los niveles de mi poesía: es decir, que el discurso  
 muestra aquí a un tiempo las dos caras del espejo.

Lo cierro, y da la vuelta:  
 de noche, con luz, en la oscuridad dorada, en las calles o en la  
 muerte,  
 como el rumor del bosque y los árboles que en él caen talados  
 en silencio  
 —(dónde, sino en mi corazón?) (49)

Never have I lived the distance between what we want to say and  
 what we really say,  
 the impossibility of capturing the tension of language, of estab-  
 lishing  
 a system of acts and words,  
 a body of relationships between the written poem and its reading.  
 Perhaps an Eliot type of discourse on occasion, I think  
 that this poem really puts into danger  
 one of the levels of my poetry: that is to say, that the discourse  
 shows here at one time the two sides of the mirror.

I close it, and it turns around:  
 at night, with light, in the golden darkness, on the street or in  
 death,  
 as the rustle of the forest and the trees which in it topple,  
 felled  
 in silence  
 (—where, but in my heart?)

And one final example of the many that find expression in this  
 pastiche of poems, a highly original collection. In a text entitled  
 “Interludi / Interludio” (“Interlude”) the speaker offers an enigmatic  
 message of ekphrastic inclination to the reader, where the allusion is  
 to fiction as well as cinema.<sup>11</sup> The entire poem reads as follows:

Construir un montaje  
     un film de espías  
                     Sherlock Holmes en el bosque  
 Amigo Watson  
     me han herido  
                     dame la mano  
                             amigo Watson (55)

To construct a montage  
     a spy movie  
                     Sherlock Holmes in the woods  
 Friend Watson  
     they have wounded me  
                     give me your hand  
                             friend Watson

The speaker constructs his own visual and poetic montage from the bits and pieces of cinematic as well as narrative discourse. The words on the printed page faintly resemble the film advancing through the camera, and evoke the fictional characters of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The poetic voice is decidedly uncentered: it may pertain to the poet-speaker, who contemplates making a film based on a fictional narrative, that of a spy thriller whose central character is the colorful and rather eccentric Sherlock Holmes. Or in the second half, the poetic voice may be that of the fictional character himself, Sherlock Holmes. It is significant that Gimferrer has opted to include a reference to spying, since this activity slyly represents the redoubtable presence of a perceptive Other, one who witnesses, and gathers information that might justify action. In either case, the wound to which the speaker refers is symbolic of the opening of the textual body by an alien Other, be it the body of the fictional Sherlock Holmes or that of the text (poem, novel, or film), by the spy, the poet or the reader. (Or are they one and the same???) He, Holmes or poet-speaker, asks for a hand from Watson, the receiver/reader/supplement, in support of his endeavor to find a cure for the textual body's involuntary and inevitable penetration, in his desire to be helped along the way in the process of signification, to counterbalance the loss of wholeness and oneness. Thus, the speaker (Holmes or the poetic voice) becomes one more reader of his own text, as well as a variety of

other texts. Implicitly, he also asks the reader to participate in this process of creation, emission, reception, and evolution of text and sign. There can be no Sherlock Holmes without the supplemental presence of Watson, just as the poet's supplement is to be found in the reader. And the textual wound is the site at which their complementary yet subversive roles are simultaneously reflected. Each is and is not the Other. Neither can exist without the Other. Oneness is illusory, for its image is always reflected in the Other. And the mirror is the creative membrane that joins one and the Other in fragile, complementary and subversive unity.

The power of Pere Gimferrer's collection *Els miralls / Los espejos* is founded upon the power that it derives, ironically, from the decentering of authorial voice, the breaking of limits, and the questioning stance that it communicates in regard to language as a closed system of signification.<sup>12</sup> The image of the mirror encapsulates the ambiguity, duplicity and power that the poet recognizes in language, as reflected in this collection of his verse. The mirror represents an object, but does not hold the object in its power. The representation of the object by the mirror is veridical, but only if perceived in a certain fashion, that is, visually rather than tactilely.<sup>13</sup> The image produced by the mirror is more a "reflection" of the nature of the mirror than that of the object. Likewise, in this collection, Gimferrer offers his views on the ambiguous power of language. Language represents / creates an object, but it is not the object beheld by the poet; rather, the object created is linguistic in nature. The linguistic object is veridical, but refers to itself rather than to objective reality. And lastly, this linguistic object reflects the nature of the sign—mutable, elusive, expanding—rather than that of objective reality. In the final analysis, this collection of verse by Pere Gimferrer embodies and exemplifies the ideological and ethical posture that the poet sees as central to poetry's function: "Toda poesía que no persiga la contravención expresa o tácita del sistema represivo de la sociedad, debe ser considerada como cómplice de este sistema" (Rubio 79) (All poetry which does not pursue the clear or tacit contravention of the repressive system of society ought to be considered as an accomplice to that system). Gimferrer views poetry as a means of resolutely questioning the status quo and putting into practice his philosophical stance concerning the nature of language. In this collection he decenters authorial voice and attempts to displace Castilian in favor of a more fully Catalan perspective.

The collection ends with a query:

(El giro  
se ha cumplido en sentido inverso, y así la música  
restablece el silencio y la pintura el vacío—y la palabra  
el espacio en blanco?) (87)

(The rotation,  
has it been accomplished in the opposite direction, and thus  
music  
reestablishes silence and painting, the void—and the word  
the blank space?)

This questioning stance represents the poet's coming to terms with his own view of language—as slippery and deceptive, yet challenging and exhilarating—and art's place in a much larger cultural system. By opening up his text to the presence of the alien Other and acknowledging the decenteredness of textual authority, this twentieth-century poet reinforces the discursive power of his text rather than diluting it. Pere Gimferrer's poetic voice reflects not the nihilistic void posited by cultural doomsayers of the present day, but rather his sense of rapture in the presence of Otherness that is all language.

## Notes

1. See Castellet's *Nueve novísimos* for an overview of this generation of poets. This nomenclature provoked a polemic, and the anthologist was accused of "creating" a generation of writers which did not in fact exist for commercial reasons (among others). See Rubio and Falcó for illuminating commentary upon the *novísimos* anthology; also Debicki, "novísimos."
2. All translations into English are my own. In this paper, I use the Visor (1978) edition of Gimferrer's poetry.
3. As an added complication, it may be noted that my own text unintentionally privileges the Castilian version, which is just the opposite of the declared intention of the poet. But once again, the centrality of marginality is underscored.
4. Although Castellet held that this group of writers represented a break with previous generations, succeeding critics have downplayed or even denied this view. Their decidedly metapoetic stance ties them most firmly with the immediately preceding

generation of Spanish poets, the so-called "second generation of post-Civil War poets." See Debicki's articles.

5. In a bilingual edition entitled *Five Poets*, D. Sam Abrams prefers to translate the title of this poem as "Pitfalls." I prefer "Snares," since the latter choice, in my opinion, gives a more palpable cast to the word.

6. In the survey conducted by José Batlló, Gimferrer himself makes reference to the influence that he felt upon his work by poets of the surrealist era. See also the article by Timothy Rogers.

7. Timothy Rogers studied the technique of collage in Gimferrer's earlier collected works, *Poemas, 1963-1969*.

8. Carmen Martín Gaité, in her *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, has a fine discussion of the "chicas topolino." See her Ch. IV, "La otra cara de la moneda."

9. I believe this reference to the noted American author Henry James may be to his short story entitled "The Figure in the Carpet" or to his treatise entitled *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts*. I am indebted to Dr. Martha LaFollette Miller for the former suggestion.

10. "The figure in the carpet / the tapestry drawing" is an ambiguous image. In the Henry James story, a young critic seeks to find the unifying factor in a writer's work, which he refers to as "the figure in the carpet," the shadowy existence present, but also absent if one is not aware. He attempts to identify this figure, and even seeks out an interview with the author himself, who refuses to reveal it, but encourages the budding critic to continue with the search. Ultimately, at the end of the story, everyone who could have aided his search is dead, and the sadder but wiser critic is left with the knowledge that there is indeed a figure in the carpet, but its identification is forever beyond his grasp. The Oneness of the text is inhabited by an Other, whose presence is supplemental yet intrinsic to the text's very nature. It is for each reader to decipher in unique fashion the nature of "the figure in the carpet." Each reading will acknowledge the presence of the Other, but will also be incomplete.

For this reader, "the figure in the carpet / the tapestry drawing" brought to mind several distinct readings, all of which may apply to and are consistent with the concepts studied here. First, I thought of a visit that I made to the Royal Tapestry Factory in Madrid, where the weavers demonstrated how the design of the tapestry is sketched onto a series of vertical cords already in place on the loom, cords which will serve as the basis for the final product. The chalk marks are significant only if one is aware that there is indeed a design on those cords; otherwise, they appear to be random smudges. Secondly, one must remember that the tapestry, as a final product, has two sides. Each is a mirror image of the other, each is inseparable from the other, each an indispensable supplement to the other; but each is hidden from the other in the viewing process. And finally, before each tapestry design is handed over to the weavers, a drawing or cartoon is produced, so that all of the details of composition and color may be worked out (the

drawings of Goya come easily to mind). Once again, drawing and tapestry are inextricably "interwoven" in a subversive relationship of text and supplement. Each is and is not the Other. The One is both present and absent in the Other. Each reflects as well as subverts the Otherness that is art, representation, and ultimately, all forms of discourse.

The poet states "ni me han dicho lo / que hay detrás de las celadas" (They haven't even told me what's behind the snares). Perhaps it's not so important to look at what is behind them, but rather to look at the snares themselves, how they are and what they are, and what they reveal about the signifying process. For that may be the only solution to the seeming impossibility of final meanings with which we are presented in a work of art, or in language.

11. Pere Gimferrer's interest in film is well-documented. See his *Cine y literatura*.

12. In his latest collection, Gimferrer decenters textual authority to an even greater extent. For the publication of his *El vendeval* (Barcelona: Ediciones Peninsula / Edicions 62, 1989), the poet wrote his poetic texts in Catalan and then asked other Spanish-speaking poets to translate his poems into Spanish. Thus, each Catalan text is accompanied by at least two different translations into Spanish, by at least two different translators. Octavio Paz, Antonio Colinas, and Ramón Xirau are among those who acted as translators.

13. I have deliberately chosen the term "veridical" because of its Latin origin, namely, "to say the truth," rather than the word "truthful," which comes from an Old English root.

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