

THE SYNTAX OF ASSERTION IN THE POETRY OF CLAUDIO RODRÍGUEZ

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Claudio Rodríguez, the Spanish poet who was the 1983 winner of the prestigious Premio Nacional de Literatura, has been recognized as the most original poet of his generation. In particular, various critics have praised his work not only for its metaphorical innovation but also for the simplicity and directness of the language employed. Typical plaudits are those of José Olivio Jiménez, in describing Rodríguez's mode of expression: "a language style delightfully extracted from the reality of things and from the popular reserves of language, with which the poet attains one of his most outstanding expressive virtues: that of visualizing and giving sparkling, plastic form to the least significant detail of thought, thus eluding any possible barrenness to which this poetry would be inclined, considering the overload of intellectual resonances that it carries."¹

It would seem then that the semantic message of Rodríguez's poetry would also be endowed with the same characteristics as that of the poetic language employed, namely, directness of statement and clarity of meaning. But such is not the case. Carlos Bousoño, Andrew P. Debicki and others point to the unnerving results of Rodríguez's innovation on the lexical level. While Rodríguez for the most part employs a language level derived from ordinary experience, his poetic texts are anything but ordinary.² In spite of their supposed simplicity these texts are shown to be imbued with an obscurity and hermetic deepness that both confound and intrigue the reader.

The difficulty of Rodríguez's poetry resides in not only original lexical combinations, but also unexpected and seemingly contradictory syntactical arrangements. This poet's techniques of assertion, like his lexical experimentation, work on two different levels. The poet on the one hand purports to describe, explain, clarify and illuminate, but on the other, constantly presents to the reader for

consideration alternative possibilities of significance. His syntactic divergence includes exploiting such devices as multibranching relative clauses that eventually fold back upon themselves, the inherently ambiguous nature of negation and antithesis, and the subjunctive mode to create incongruity. All these stratagems of unconventional syntax are verbal signs and symptoms of the general and resolute textual indeterminacy that obtains in Rodríguez's poetry as a whole.

In order to understand Rodríguez's original approach to syntax, first it would be well to review briefly the current thinking on the linguistic concept of assertion. A typical definition of assertion is that put forward by Tracy D. Terrell: "a proposition expressed in a declarative sentence. More specifically, the speaker claims the position that he has announced to be true to the best of his knowledge. An assertion is a claim to truth which, on at least one reading, may be taken as *the semantically dominant position* in the discourse context."³ What is unique about Rodríguez's mode of assertion is that he employs negation, the juxtaposition of antithetical elements, rhetorical questions, and the subjunctive mode—all of which run contrary to the spirit of the preceding definition—to convince the reader of the veracity of the statements that he puts forward. In addition, he often suppresses the copulative *ser* (to be) or conjunctions, thus forming strings of seemingly disconnected images, which generally are contained in multibranching clauses.⁴ The verbs *saber* (to know well) and *conocer* (to be acquainted with) pose a special problem in Rodríguez's poetry: both imply assertion at its most basic and straightforward level, yet they regularly appear in contexts that engender doubt, ambiguity, and ambivalence concerning the speaker's attitude. Because of all these syntactical variations, it is oftentimes exceedingly difficult or impossible for the reader to ascertain the "semantically dominant position in the discourse context" that was mentioned earlier. In turn, the reader is confronted with problems of interpretation that go beyond the individual texts at hand, problems that suggest broader linguistic and ontological implications.

As various philosophers of language have noted, language shapes one's outlook on reality.⁵ A study of Rodríguez's uncanny modes of assertion thus will illustrate the poet's method of confronting reality on a variety of levels, from the most specific and linguistic to the most general and psychological. Moreover, a study of the surface

level of the poet's language will reveal his views on the linguistic communication of meaning, the poet's function, the reader's role, and the relationship of life to art.⁶ Now let's take a closer look at each of the previously mentioned syntactical deviations. Rodríguez's systematized divergence from linguistic convention will illustrate well his subversion of the traditional rules of the communicative act.

NEGATION

Rodríguez employs negation purposefully, in order to decenter the focus of his texts. In contrast with a positive assertion, negation contains inherent and systematic ambiguities. For example, the statement "Mary kissed John" is not ambiguous, whereas "Mary did not kiss John" could allow any of the following semantic interpretations, according to a given context:⁷

Someone may have kissed John, but not Mary.

Mary may have kissed someone, but not John.

Mary may have done something, but not kiss John.

Mary may have done something to John, but not kissed him.

Rodríguez takes full advantage of this language universal and utilizes negation in a wide variety of syntactic structures in order to present the reader with a host of ambiguities. Indeed, he often begins a poem with a negative statement, thus forcing the reader to consider several alternative interpretive paths. "Gorrión" ("Sparrow") begins in such a fashion:

No olvida. No se aleja
este granuja astuto
de nuestra vida. Siempre
de prestado, sin rumbo,
como cualquiera, aquí anda,
se lava aquí tozudo,
entre nuestros zapatos. (*AC*, p. 178: lines 1-7)

He does not forget. He does not withdraw
this astute urchin
of our life. Always
as a loan, without direction,

as any other, here he walks,
he washes up here, obstinate,
between our shoes.

The use of negation in the opening line proves to be subversive. Instead of providing a definite context for the reader and sharpening the focus, the speaker instead disperses the meaning of the text through the multiplicity of inherent, possible contexts for the original negative statements. What is it that the sparrow does not forget? Why doesn't he forget? Does the speaker wish to communicate a positive or negative value to the sparrow's memory? What relationship is there between the bird's faithful recollection and the poem's message? By using the all-inclusive "*nuestra vida*" the speaker draws the reader into the text, and inexorably into the vortex of undecidability. Lines 3-5 take on a new meaning; the reader like the hapless sparrow flits from one place to the next, never staying long enough in one spot to be able to solve any of the textual riddles satisfactorily, without engendering new ones. The reader and the sparrow alike remain close to the ground: "*aquí abajo, seguro, / metiendo en su pecho / todo el polvo del mundo*" ([here below, safe / putting in his craw / all the dust of the world], p. 178: 14-16). Neither soars, neither is able to leave behind the dreariness of a base existence: for the sparrow, that of eking out a life filled with hunger and dependence, for the reader, that of remaining tied to less than satisfactory circumstances, be they social, philosophical, or linguistic.

JUXTAPOSITION OF ANTITHETICAL ELEMENTS

This procedure is constant throughout Rodríguez's poetic production. He employs this technique in order to bring to the reader's attention dialectical tensions and, consequently, alternative possibilities of interpretation. As Tzvetan Todorov suggests, if antithesis were replaced by a direct and monosemic description, "there would no longer be the same *meaning*; all that would remain the same is the object evoked, the referent."⁸ Thus, antithesis is not so much a matter of linguistic space as psychological space created by the speaker for the reader. The aim of antithesis is not to reduce the act of naming to a literal and compact correspondence, but rather to open up the text to the readers, in a pattern of ever-widening circles of association.

Take for example the second poem of *Don de la ebriedad* which ends with:

Así yo estoy sintiendo que las sombras
abren su luz, la abren, la abren tanto,
que la mañana surge sin principio
ni fin, eterna ya desde el ocaso. (p. 44: 25-28)

Thus, I am feeling that the shadows
open the light, they open it, they open it so much
that the morning surges without beginning
without end, eternal already since sunset.

The pairing of the terms “sombras/luz”(shadow/light) “sin principio/ni fin,” and “mañana/ocaso” all within four lines of verse encourages the reader to see and feel the passage of time in its cyclic continuity. The speaker does not describe each minimal change between night and day. Rather, by providing the two extremities, he allows the reader to evoke an individual vision of eternity within the temporal flow. The speaker further evinces time’s passage by utilizing the present progressive of the verb *sentir* (to feel) and the threefold use of the verb *abren*.

The use of antithesis, like the other assertion techniques examined here, tends to decenter the focus of the text at hand, and encourages the reader to go beyond the surface level of significance. The textual referent, be it ordinary object, situation or circumstance, is only the pretext for Rodríguez’s contemplation and acclamation of more transcendental themes. Thus, in effect, present elements define absent ones, and vice versa. The process catalyzed by the juxtaposition of antithetical elements points to the whole problem of language itself, and secondarily to the ever-shifting relationship among poet, reader, text and language.

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

A question is similar in linguistic properties to negation, namely, it contains inherently and systematically its own ambiguities. Rhetorical questions, like negative statements, serve to disperse the discourse context rather than to bring it into clearer focus. The speaker posits a question whose expected yet unexpressed answer

It would seem that the intermediate text (3-17) should offer possible answers to those questions, but it provides little assurance, leading in many different directions at once. There is a puzzling aphorism, “necesito dinero para el amor, pobreza / para amar” ([I need money for love, poverty / to love], 3-4), which is stated in antithetical terms and plays on the subtle morphological and semantic differences between noun and verb. And a concatenation of simple sentences seems to place in apposition money and language’s efficacy, but in truth only obscures it further:

Y su triunfo, su monopolio, da fervor,
cambio, imaginación, quita vejez y abre
ceños, y multiplica los amigos,
y alza faldas, y es miel
cristalizando luz, calor. No plaga, lepra
como hoy; alegría,
no frivolidad; ley,
no impunidad. (11-18)

And its triumph, its monopoly, concedes fervor,
change, imagination, it reverses again and opens
rings, and multiplies friends,
and raises skirts, and is honey
crystallizing lights, heat. It does not plague, leprosy
like today; happiness,
not frivolity; the law,
not impunity.

The repetition in lines 18-19 of a version of the opening question (“¿Voy a vender, entonces, / estas palabras?”) is a sign that the speaker recognizes his failure to furnish an answer to that question. The remaining three questions (19-26) are not answers but further (futile) attempts to express the speaker’s original intent. He has become mired in the trap of language, having been pushed even further away from the desired object. Furthermore, these parting questions are replete with terms connoting absence: “pérdida,” “carestía,” “desahucio,” and four aphoristic phrases beginning with *sin*. This annotation of absence is another way of pointing to language’s inexact function.

SUBJUNCTIVE OF SENSORIAL INCONGRUITY

According to Ramsey and Spaulding, the subjunctive mood is based "upon doubt, desire or some emotion or mental inquietude."⁹ Yet Rodríguez employs this verbal mood frequently to express his assertions concerning sensory experience. It is a style of expression that communicates two quite different messages. On the one hand is the poet's supposed claim of certainty concerning his message, but on the other is the mode/mood of that message, that points to a level of uncertainty. Rodríguez most commonly presents first an object, scene, or circumstance as fact. He then offers to the reader other details that are contrary to the first perspective, are as yet unattained, or cast doubt on the original statement. It is then up to the reader to assimilate the two contrasting visions, or at least recognize that the subtly presented paradox is a central element of the overall message of the poetic text. In *Don de la ebriedad* (poem 4), the speaker describes the images that appear around him and their movement in a continuous flux of creativity.

Las imágenes, una que las centra
en planetaria rotación, se borran
y suben a un lugar por sus impulsos
donde al surgir de nuevo toman forma. (*DE*, p. 48: 1-4)

The images, one that centers them
in planetary rotation, are erased
and arise to a place because of their impulses
where, upon springing forth, they take form anew.

But later, he expresses doubt of this vision, choosing to back away from his previous declaration of ironclad certitude:

Quizá pueblo de llamas, las imágenes
enciendan doble cuerpo en doble sombra.
Quizá algún día se hagan una y baste. (11-13)

Perhaps a village of flames, the images
ignite a double body in a double shadow.
Perhaps one day they will become one and that will suffice.

The speaker does not wish for the reader to choose one vision over the other; if that had been the case, he would have presented only one option. Rather, in giving two, one in the indicative and the other in the subjunctive, the speaker impels the reader to adopt his stance, namely, that reality is a changing, dynamic structure. One can only hope to catch a brief glimpse, attain a flash of insight into its complexity in scattered moments in time. This is the only certainty that will withstand the test of time.

“Cáscaras” (“Shells”) embodies perfectly this certainty of mutability:

ese prieto vendaje
de la costumbre, que nos tapa el ojo
para que no ceguemos,
la vana golosina de un día y otro día
templándonos la boca
para que el diente no busque la pulpa
fatal, son un engaño
venenoso y piadoso. (AC, p. 160: 16-23)

that constricting bandage
of habit, that covers our eyes
so that we may not be blind,
the vain tidbit of one day and another day
appeasing our taste
so that the tooth seeks not the flesh
that is fatal, they're all a trick
poisonous and pious.

The subjunctive phrases introduced by *para que* serve to cancel out the meaning of the indicative verb forms that precede them. Like the previous example from *Don de la ebriedad*, this one prompts the reader to search for the truth somewhere between the two possibilities of (un)certain truth and (less than) total skepticism. The speaker further emphasizes the intermediate quality of truth, through the juxtaposition of blindness and sight, sweetness and decay, poison and pity. The search for truth, relative at best, must be individual. The speaker ends the poem with:

Centinelas

vigilan. Nunca, nunca
darán la contraseña que conduce
a la terrible munición, a la verdad que mata. (23-26)

Sentinels

keep watch. Never, never
will they give the password that leads
to the terrible ammunition, to the truth that slays.

The incongruity achieved by the novel use of the subjunctive mode suggests a basic and unresolvable paradox, which the poet so clearly recognizes. The message of his texts is in counterpoint to the means that he has at his disposal to impart that message. The clarity, light, and oneness of Rodríguez's lyric voice both denies and confirms language's (im)perfect success as a naming device. The message indeed has been communicated, but the vehicle available to the poet to communicate that message is riddled with ambiguity, inconsistency and inexactness.

SABER AND CONOCER

The inherent assertion of these two verbs notwithstanding, Rodríguez generally employs them in contexts that tend to negate or undermine their denotative level of significance. Therefore the problems that arise are two-fold: First, the speaker casts doubt on his own statements and thus the reader is left to wonder if he is reliable, in the mode of Dámaso Alonso's speaker of *Hijos de la ira* (*Children of Wrath*).¹⁰ Second, since the reader presumably understands these verbs in their dictionary definition, their prevalent usage in ambiguous or ambivalent contexts will inevitably bring into focus the broader issue of semantics. The reader expects to know or learn something from the text; but there is a deception, because what Rodríguez's use of *saber* and *conocer* reveals is not the certainty or knowledge that was expected from an act of assertion, but rather the *syntax* of knowledge. In other words, the reader learns that syntax permits knowledge, even though the conventions of language are dispersed on the surface level of the text with Rodríguez's unsystematic assertions with *saber* and *conocer*.¹¹

In "Ajeno" (that which belongs to another, or, he who is

alienated) *saber* and *conocer* paradoxically point to the speaker's knowledge of "unknowledge." His involuted assertions are posited in terms of absence, negation, interrogation, and antithesis:

Prisionero por no querer, abraza
su propia soledad. Y esta seguro,
más seguro que nadie porque nada
poseerá; y él bien sabe que nunca
vivirá aquí, en la tierra. A quien no ama,
¿cómo podemos conocer o cómo
perdonar? Día largo y aún más larga
la noche. Mentirá al sacar la llave.
Entrará. Y nunca habitará su casa. (AC, p. 198: 14-22)

Prisoner by not loving, he embraces
his own solitude. And he is certain,
more certain than anyone because nothing
will be his possession; and he knows well that never
will he live here, upon the earth. How can we
know or pardon
one who doesn't love? A long day, and an even longer
night. He will lie as he takes out the key.
He will enter. And never will he inhabit his own house.

In truth, the poem's title "Ajeno" could also refer to the poet's relationship to his art. Language is in him, of him and from him, but forever remains alienated from him. The poet knows that which he wishes to express, but language becomes one more barrier in achieving the perfect correspondence between the object and its naming.

The knowledge that results from Rodríguez's deviation from conventional modes of assertion goes beyond the set of circumstances of the particular text: by confirming on one level and denying on another the assertions with *saber* and *conocer*, the poet brings into question the entire framework of assertion itself. Rodríguez casts doubt on language as an act of naming and as a finished product.¹² To know is to enter into and experience personally the process of the poem and not merely to observe the linguistic object produced by the poet.¹³ By reshaping and redefining the syntax of assertion according

to his own needs, the poet reveals various levels of textual significance: one that is self-reflective, another that is linguistic, and still another that is philosophical.

All of the syntactical innovations mentioned here tend to diffuse the central focus of Rodríguez's poetic texts and suggest to the reader multiple paths of interpretation. Rodríguez's poetry is hermetic, but it is not closed. The titles themselves of all his collections of verse imply this freedom: *Don de la ebriedad* with its suggestion of abandon to Dionysian levels of consciousness; *Conjuros* for its preternatural power; *Alianza y condena*, embodying the irrational, uncanny merging of opposites and the overall indeterminacy of supposedly objective reality;¹⁴ and *El vuelo de la celebración*, signalling the flight to a level of understanding that lies beyond normal human capabilities.

In order to illustrate precisely the far-reaching effects of Rodríguez's syntactical arrangements, it is important to note their operation within the context of an entire poetic text. I have chosen a rather long poem taken from *Alianza y condena*, Rodríguez's third collection of verse.¹⁵ This poem demonstrates how Rodríguez's subversion of the traditional rules of the communicative act paradoxically allows language to communicate on two different levels, one that is linguistic and one that is extra-linguistic. In commenting about Mallarmé's style, Barbara Johnson observes that "Writing becomes an alternation between obscurity and clarity rather than a pursuit of either, a rhythm of intelligibility and mystery, just as time is a rhythm of days and nights" (*Critical Difference*, p. 69), and the same holds true for Rodríguez's. The rhythm of indeterminacy is what the poet avers in his texts.

The alternating rhythm of clarity and obscurity is perhaps best exemplified in the two-part poem "Brujas a mediodía" ("Witches at Mid-day").¹⁶ Its very title alludes to the interplay of the forces of darkness and light which prevail on the poet in his search to poeticize and to become one with the reality of his surroundings. The poem's subtitle, "Hacia el conocimiento" ("Toward knowledge"), unequivocally reveals the relationship between the continuous struggle and the end result. An awareness of reality, ultimate knowledge, comes to the speaker (and the reader) from the constant ebb and flow of darkness and light, rather than from one winning out completely over the other in a static and finalized achievement. The preposition *hacia* of the subtitle succinctly captures the essence of

movement in the direction of, but not quite arrival at the desired destination. It is in the perpetual and unceasing interplay of ambiguities and inconsistencies that the speaker is able to conjure up individual forms of magic, which is both linguistic and extra-linguistic:

I

- No son cosas de viejas
 ni de agujas sin ojo o alfileres
 sin cabeza. No salta,
 como sal en la lumbre, este sencillo
 5 sortilegio, este viejo
 maleficio. Ni hisopo
 para rociar ni vela
 de cera virgen necesita. Cada
 forma de vida tiene
 10 un punto de cocción, un meteoro
 de burbujas. Allí, donde el sorteo
 de los sentidos busca
 propiedad, allí, donde
 se cuaja el ser, en ese
 15 vivo estambre, se aloja
 la hechicería. No es tan sólo el cuerpo,
 con su leyenda de torpeza, lo que
 nos engaña: en la misma
 constitución de la materia, en tanta
 20 claridad que es estafa,
 guños, mejunjes, trémulo
 carmín, nos trastornan. Y huele
 a toca negra y aceitosa, a pura
 bruja este mediodía de setiembre;
 25 y en los pliegues de aire,
 en los altares de espacio, hay vicios
 enterrados, lugares
 donde se compara el corazón, siniestras
 recetas para amores. Y en la tensa
 30 maduración del día, no unos labios

- sino secas encias,
 nos chupan de la sangre
 el rezo y la blasfemia,
 el recuerdo, el olvido,
 35 todo aquello que fue sosiego o fiebre.
 Como quien lee en un renglón tachado
 el arrepentimiento de una vida,
 con teson, con piedad, con fe, aún con odio,
 ahora a mediodía, cuando hace
 40 calor y está apagado
 el sabor, contemplamos
 el hondo estrago y el tenaz progreso
 de las cosas, su eterno
 delirio, mientras chillan
 45 las golondrinas de la huida. (*AC*, pp. 151-54)

- They are not old women's things
 nor needles without eyes or pins
 without heads. [It] does not leap,
 like salt in the flame, this simple
 5 sorcery, this old
 spell. Not even hyssop
 to fall like dew nor a candle
 of virgin wax does it require. Each
 form of life has
 10 a point of ferment, a meteor
 of bubbles. There, where the raffle
 of the senses seeks
 exactness, there, where
 being itself takes shape, in that
 15 living stamen, sorcery
 finds shelter. It is not only the body,
 with its legend of dullness, which
 tricks us: in the same
 constitution of the material, in so much
 20 clarity that it is a deceit,
 winks, potions, flickering
 carmine, turn us about. And it smells
 of widow's weeds, of pure
 sorceress this September mid-day:

- 25 and in the folds of air,
 in the altars of space, there are vices
 entombed, places
 where the heart is compared, sinister
 recipes for love affairs. And in the tense
 30 maturation of the day, not some lips
 but shrivelled gums
 suck from our life blood
 a prayer and a blasphemy
 memory and its forgetting,
 35 all that which was tranquility or fever.
 Just as he who reads in a scratched out line
 a life's repentance,
 with doggedness, with pity, with faith, even with hate,
 now, at mid-day, when it is
 40 hot and appetite
 is at a low ebb, we contemplate
 the deep desolation and the tenacious progress
 of things, their eternal
 delirium, while the swallows
 45 shriek in their escape.

This first part of the poem begins on an ambiguous note, since the speaker on the one hand asserts with the verb *ser*, but on the other hand states his assertion in negative terms, and does not specifically identify the subject of the verb, only its predicate. The negation of all that he asserts opens up to question the validity of his statements and causes the reader to consider the various possible solutions to the text's inherent ambiguity. The dispersion is intensified by a series of negative comparisons within prepositional structures, "ni de agujas sin ojo o alfileres / sin cabeza." All the objects designated in the first three lines of verse also contribute to the ambivalent nature of the text. While "cosas de viejas," "agujas," and "alfileres" are objects that one perhaps would associate with a kindly grandmother who lovingly knits pretty little things for her grandchildren, the mutation to "agujas sin ojo" and "alfileres sin cabeza" effectively destroys their usefulness in regard to their intended purpose and thus suggests a darker, more sinister interpretation. A new and perplexing problem arises in lines 3-6. It should be remembered that the verb *ser* was used

in its third-person plural form, "son," but in line 3, the speaker states:

No salta,
como sal en la lumbre, este sencillo
sortilegio, este viejo
maleficio.

Syntax is what permits meaning to be communicated. But in this sentence, the speaker presents to the reader a syntactical arrangement whose meaning cannot be pinned down between two distinct possibilities. The subject of the Spanish verb "salta" could very well be unspecified at this juncture in the text, and thus "sortilegio" and "maleficio" could be in apposition to "sal en la lumbre." Or, "sortilegio" and "maleficio" combined in the text without benefit of explicit conjunction could act as the singular subject of the verb "salta." But in denying a specific context so that the reader can decide which of the two is the reading to be favored, Rodríguez's text once again inevitably points to the whole issue of assertion. The reader's task is to integrate the two possibilities of interpretation into one, which is the task that goes beyond the conventions of language. But that is the whole point of Rodríguez's poetic message. As he states in the following lines of verse,

Cada
forma de vida tiene
un punto de cocción, un meteoro
de burbujas.

The "punto de cocción" and the "meteoro de burbujas" are the location where ambiguity, inconsistency and dispersion act upon one another to expand rather than destroy the text, moving it in the direction "hacia el conocimiento." What is lost by not attaining one static, finalized meaning is balanced by the ongoing adventure of the text itself. The sorcery to which the speaker refers is not the stereotyped vision of witches' brew, bats' wings and flying broomsticks. Rather, it resides in the common, everyday objects, circumstances and events that surround us on a daily basis. The poet's method of communicating this witchcraft is precisely through the metaphor of language. In pointing out how language reveals its own limitations and can be forced to give up its own secrets, the speaker emphasizes that

the ordinariness that meets the eye, that which one takes for granted, is the source of deepest mystery. His unconventional syntax is a metaphor of his view of reality. Neither syntax nor reality can be reduced to complete comprehension. Their enigmatic nature *is* the message, and not merely a problem to be solved on the way to total and perfect knowledge. In the tension that results from this undecidability resides the true nature of “El conocimiento.” “Brujas a mediodía” then is a metaphor and a metonymy combined: the witches’ sorcery is the closest approximation that the poet can find to express the cause/effect relationship of reality and mystery. It is through the rapprochement with the unexpected and the acceptance of unresolvability that the reader is able to have an experience that is similar to the poet’s when his imaginative and creative power has to make the leap, leaving language behind. Therefore it is the union of antithetical elements and not their contrast that will carry the magical message.

One should no longer trust the physical senses (“el sorteo de los sentidos”) or whimsical inclinations (“en tanta / claridad que es estafa, / guiños, mejunjes, trémulo / carmín, nos trastornan”) in making black and white judgments, since nothing is what it seems. The magic of reality resides in “las cosas, su eterno / delirio,” and one’s knowledge of it can only result from the flash of insight that occurs only sporadically, and on an intuitive rather than rational level.

Part II of “Brujas a mediodía” follows:

II

- La flor del monte, la manteca añeja,
 el ombligo de niño, la verbena
 de la mañana de San Juan, el manco
 muñeco, la resina,
 5 buena para caderas de mujer
 el azafrán, el cardo bajo, la olla
 de Talavera con pimienta y vino,
 todo lo que es cosa de brujas, cosa
 natural, hoy no es nada
 10 junto a este aquelarre
 de imágenes que, ahora
 cuando los seres dejan poca sombra,
 da un reflejo: la vida.
 La vida no es reflejo

- 15 pero, ¿cuál es su imagen?
Un cuerpo encima de otro,
¿siente resurrección o muerte? Como
envenenar, lavar
este aire que no es nuestro pulmón?
- 20 ¿Por qué quien ama nunca
busca verdad, sino que busca dicha?
¿Cómo sin la verdad
puede existir la dicha? He aquí todo.
- Pero nosotros nunca
- 25 tocamos la sutura,
esa costura (a veces un remiendo,
a veces un bordado),
entre nuestros sentidos y las cosas,
esa fina arenilla
- 30 que ya no huele dulce sino a sal,
donde el río y el mar se desembocan
un eco en otro eco, los escombros
de un sueño en la cal viva
del sueño aquel por el que yo di un mundo
- 35 y lo seguiré dando. Entre las ruinas
del sol, tiembla
un nido con calor nocturno. Entre
la ignominia de nuestras leyes, se alza
el retablo con viejo
- 40 oro y vieja doctrina
de la nueva justicia. ¿En qué mercados
de altas sisas el agua
es vino, el vino sangre, sed la sangre?
¿Por qué aduanas pasa
- 45 de contrabando harina
como carne, la carne
como polvo y el polvo
como carne futura?
- Esto es cosa de bobos. Un delito
- 50 común este de andar entre pellizcos
de brujas. Porque ellas
no estudian sino bailan
y hacen pis, son amigas
de bodegas. Y ahora,

- 55 a mediodía,
 si ellas nos besan desde tantas cosas,
 ¿dónde estará su noche,
 dónde sus labios, dónde nuestra boca
 para aceptar tanta mentira y tanto
 60 amor?

- Flower of the woods, seasoned ointment,
 a child's navel, vervain
 of the morning of St. John, a crippled
 doll, resin,
 5 wonderful for women's hips,
 saffron, low-lying thistle, a stew
 from Talavera with peppers and wine,
 all that is the witches' domain, things
 that are natural, today all this is nothing
 10 compared to the witches' sabbath
 of images that, now
 when living beings leave little shadow,
 gives its reflection: life.
 Life is not a reflection
 15 but, which is its [true] image?
 One body on top of another,
 does it feel resurrection or death? How
 to poison, to cleanse
 this air that is not one with the lung itself?
 20 Why is it that he who loves never
 seeks the truth, but rather prefers to seek good fortune?
 How is it that without truth
 good fortune can exist? There is a bit of everything here.

- But we never
 25 touch the suture,
 that seam (at times a patch,
 at times an embroidery),
 between our senses and things,
 those fine, small particles of sand
 30 which no longer smell sweet but rather of salt,
 where the river and the sea merge together,
 an echo within another echo, the debris

- of a dream in the quicklime
of that other dream for which I gave a world
35 and for which I will continue giving. Among the ruins
of the sun trembles
a nest with nocturnal heat. Among
the infamy of our laws, is raised
an altarpiece adorned with aged
40 gold and aged doctrine
of new justice. In which markets
of high petty theft water
is wine, wine blood, and thirst blood?
Through which customs-houses pass
45 as contraband flour
as flesh, flesh
as dust, and dust
as future flesh?
- This is a simpleton's quandry. A common
50 crime, this, to walk among witches'
trifles. Because they
do not study but dance,
and urinate, they are friends
of the wine cellars. And now
55 at mid-day
if they kiss us from the vantage point of so many things,
where will be their night,
where their lips and where our mouths
to accept so much deceit and so much
60 love?

This part begins with an inventory of items generally associated with the magical arts; but it is not until lines 9-10 that the reader realizes that the speaker has mentioned all of those magical objects in order to reject them summarily, as an impoverished and frankly inadequate metaphor of the mystery of life: "todo lo que es cosa de brujas, cosa / natural, hoy no es nada." In a sense then, Part II of "Brujas a mediodía" is a response to and a rejection of the speaker's own assertions of Part I. Therefore the two parts are set up in an antithetical relationship, like so many of the individual images included in each separate part. He rejects his own assertions not

because they are untrue, but because they are too base. Once again his only recourse is to further disperse the text in ever-widening circles of association.

Lines 14-23 contain a series of rhetorical questions which pose more problems than they resolve. The negating force of “la vida no es reflejo” is further dispersed by the question that follows: “¿cuál es su imagen?”: The reader is presented with one possible reply, “Un cuerpo encima de otro” (which itself lacks specificity but once again communicates the idea of coupling or suturing together), but it too is further decentered by various antithetical elements and in turn by other rhetorical questions that the supposed answer inspires in lines 17-23.

The spacing between lines 23 and 24 suggests a distancing on the part of the speaker and implies that there is a change of direction; and in truth the speaker once again states that his attempts to capture reality’s magic have failed. But as would be expected, his assertion of failure is a failure of assertion in the conventional mode. He couches this assertion in a negative and therefore more ambiguous format, and offers a series of synonyms for what he admits he has failed to name. The dissipation of his assertion is intensified further by the temporal hedging of “a veces” in lines 24 to 30. Therefore his text embodies the several images that he uses to describe his experience, “un eco de otro eco,” “los escombros / de un sueño en la cal viva / del sueño aquel,” and “Entre las ruinas / del sol, tiembla / un nido con calor nocturno.” The image of “la sutura” of line 25 and all of the following synonyms remind the reader of the “punto de cocción” and the “meteoro de burbujas” of Part I, and also indicates a meeting point where a certain type of change takes place. And indeed in lines 41-48 the speaker refers to the mystical process of transubstantiation in his interplay of religious and secular images. The water that turns into wine and in turn into blood and the flour that becomes flesh and then dust is vaguely reminiscent of the changes that occur in those substances within a Christian context. But here the associations are more magical than theologically and doctrinally exact (and yet the context of change is given a practical and realistic cast with the words “mercado,” “aduana,” and “contrabando”). At the marriage feast of Cana—in itself an image of suturing or joining—Christ turned water into wine, and in the Mass wine is used to represent his blood; the flour of the offertory host represents his flesh, which in turn resonates with the Biblical caveat, “Remember man, dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return” (in the Biblical saying, flesh turns to dust, while in

Rodríguez's text, flesh turns to dust and then back to flesh once again). In combination, all of these images of magical joining embody and enact the mystical transubstantiation of ordinary and common reality into the poetic process of Rodríguez's text.

But once again the speaker steps back and asserts his failure, the distancing being indicated anew by a typographical separation between lines 48 and 49. His assertion, "Esto es cosa de bobos. Un delito / común este de andar entre pellizcos / de brujas" (49-51) sets off several associative reverberations for the reader. It will be remembered that Part I opened with the negative assertion, "No son cosas de viejas." The similarity of the syntactic structures invites the reader to establish a clear-cut semantic relationship between the two statements, yet in the following lines of Part II the speaker admits that he may have misrepresented "las brujas" after all, once again dispersing the text in a most disconcerting manner. The reader then is not sure exactly where the speaker stands. At this juncture it would be well to review the speaker's assertions throughout Parts I and II. He first asserted in a manner that tended to undercut the entire framework of assertion (Part I), then disparaged those assertions as being inexact (Part II, 1-23); and finally he asserted that his assertions concerning his assertions were perhaps off the mark from the very beginning (Part II, 24-60).

It is in the pursuit to unravel Rodríguez's syntax of assertion that "El conocimiento" is revealed. The poem ends not with a bang, but with one more question, predictably stated in antithetical terms:

Y ahora,
a mediodía,
si ellas nos besan desde tantas cosas,
¿dónde estará su noche,
dónde sus labios, dónde nuestra boca
para aceptar tanta mentira y tanto
amor?

The images of lips and mouth that may meet in a kiss of simultaneous deceit and love captures the sensorial cast of Rodríguez's message. The speaker has brought the reader to the highest point, "mediodía," the moment of most intense clarity and obscurity, where the flash of insight overtakes for an instant the reader's imagination.

All of the unsystematic methods of assertion that have been

considered here—negation, the juxtaposition of antithetical elements, rhetorical questions, the subjunctive, and *saber/conocer*—function counter to their conventional usage and serve to decenter, disperse and displace the main focus of a given text. But just as importantly, they also serve to point to the whole problem of language itself. As Sala already has noted, Rodríguez does not give himself over to metapoetic reflection in his verse;¹⁷ his texts are not overtly self-conscious. But because of the innovative lexical combinations and unusual syntactical methods of assertion, language speaks not only about the topics at hand, but also about itself. In effect, Rodríguez's texts embody the difficulty of making language coincide with something that is exterior to it, in this case the enigmatic reality of ordinary experience. Rodríguez strives to become one, to be possessed by the poetic experience that he creates in his texts.¹⁸ It is the most direct way in which he can approach and know the mystery, wonder, and enchantment of the reality that surrounds him.¹⁹ As Jesús Hilario Tundidor points out, "it is knowledge that permits that being become object, and object being; so that *poesis* may be realized, it needs to be in others and in oneself, it needs to be existence and to participate in the very existence of the poet."²⁰

In giving himself over to this unique experience, knowledge in its most direct and purest form, Rodríguez achieves the "ebriedad" to which he refers throughout his poetic production. He states in reference to his poetic intentionality:

My only intent, in truth, is that my poetry be natural (not direct, or realistic, or symbolic, etc.) in accord with that which I can do and that which I am living. Why speak of how a poem is master and servant, at the same time, of oneself? I go on believing, as I have from the beginning, in this inebriation, in this adventure, in this danger that is defeat and triumph. I believe that this mystery, this clarity, is a good and a gift. The only truth that a poet is able to say of his verse is that "he who has tried it, knows it."²¹

It is from the perspective of irrationality, intuitive suggestion, and a rupture of conventional syntax that one can best situate Rodríguez within the trajectory of twentieth-century poetry, more specifically within the Surrealist tradition.²² As Bousoño has noted, Rodríguez admitted to an early influence of Rimbaud and other French Surrealists (*Poesia*, p. 10). But the influence is more specific

and stylistically motivated than has been noted previously. One must first take into account Rodríguez's manner of viewing concrete reality. Anna Balakian notes that

the dominant characteristic of this exterior nature and of the state of mind which classifies and simplifies is *order* and the mental activity based on order, i.e., logical thinking. This, according to the Surrealists, is adequate only in dealing with minor problems. Hence the revolt is not really directed against the world of matter, against the concrete, but against the mode of grasping concrete matter, i.e., through reason and rational thinking based on the concept of order, whether it be in perceiving nature or in imagining the 'unreal' of eternity.²³

This view of course is embodied in Rodríguez's rejection of a rational approach to the poetic experience.

Secondly, Rodríguez places great emphasis on the visual experience, as an enactment of the communion between the poet and exterior reality.²⁴ It is only through vision, on both a physical and mystical level, that the poet can know reality. Balakian delineates this same relationship for the Surrealists:

The Surrealists set out to revitalize matter, to resituate the object in relation to themselves so that they would no longer be absorbed in their own subjectivity. In fact, instead of abstracting the object, instead of emptying it of its physical attributes, they decided to add to its qualities through their ability to *see*. A strong identification took place between the see-er and the seer. Seeing was no longer considered a receiving process but an interchange between subject and object. With conscious training, the senses were to reach a point of acuity whereby their function would not be limited to accepting and storing sensations.²⁵

It is within this context, then, that the rationale for such terms as "sutura," "conjuro," "hechicería," "brujas," and others becomes evident. Rodríguez is the see-er/seer who, through his creative power as a poet, makes visible the link between ordinary reality and its enigmatic underpinnings.

On a more specific level, with Rimbaud Rodríguez shares an ebullient excitement, the wish to attain the unknown through poetry, to

"view the invisible, to hear the unheard" and an unconventional usage of syntax.²⁶ From Mallarmé Rodríguez has inherited a preoccupation with the power and mystery of language.²⁷ And ironically, all three of these poets—Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Rodríguez—coincide at the paradoxical moment of silence, the ultimate act, the lyrical leap into the unknown beyond language. Rimbaud stopped writing at the age of nineteen: "His silence is an act of his poetic creation" (Friedrich, *Structure*, p. 67). Mallarmé also viewed silence as the final step in his poetic trajectory: "In Mallarmé's reflections, 'silence' is one of the most frequent concepts. Thus he calls poetry a 'tacit flight of abstraction,' and the written page a 'fading,' 'silent' concert from which they emanated. The ideal poem would be 'the silent poem of pure white.' In statements like these, mystical thoughts recur, attributing the insufficiency of language to the experience of transcendence" (Friedrich, *Structure*, p. 88). Martha LaFollette Miller already has noted in her astute observations on linguistic skepticism that "the devaluation of words and loss of faith in them is accompanied, in Rodríguez's poetry, by an exaltation of the world beyond human subjectivity and language, of the purely physical universe that is mute. Their silence (and visual absence of emptiness as well, variously termed clarity, light or winds) frequently assumes a positive connotation that contrasts with man's entrapment within verbal limits ("Linguistic skepticism," p. 107).

Through a detailed examination of Rodríguez's unusual syntactical procedures of assertion and their functioning within specific texts, an important characteristic of his poetic style has been brought to light; the reader is confronted with texts whose contradictory interpretive paths of signification continually subvert one another. Rodríguez wishes to communicate that it is not one static integration of superficial signs that is the ultimate meaning, but rather the entire process of confronting disparate elements.²⁸ Concomitantly, this same characteristic also firmly joins him to the more general currents of twentieth-century European literature. Like the Surrealists, Rodríguez becomes one in mystical communion with the reality that surrounds him. But unlike those predecessors, he retains a very Castilian grasp on the ordinariness of daily life. His originality lies in his ability to create new modes of linguistic and extra-linguistic communication without forsaking his allegiance to a particular social milieu and humanity's responsibility to it.

NOTES

1. José Olivio Jiménez, *Diez años de poesía española* (Madrid: Insula, 1972), p. 149.
2. Carlos Bousoño, in his prologue to Claudio Rodríguez, *Poesía 1953-1966* (Madrid: Plaza & Janes, 1971), pp. 9-35, attributes the young poet's originality to what he terms his "realismo metafórico" and "alegoría disemica." Through this process, Rodríguez is able to endow the most common everyday objects and situations with transcendental value. Andrew P. Debicki, in his *Poetry of Discovery* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), pp. 40-58, proposes that Bousoño's explanation is valid, but places too much emphasis on the separation of the various levels of meaning that surface in the reading of the texts. He applies the Barthian concept of linguistic codes, which suggests how a literary work may point in several different directions at once. The value of this second approach is that it favors the plurality of meaning, resonances and innuendos contained in the text.
3. Tracy D. Terrell, "Assertion and Presupposition in Spanish Compliments," in *Current Studies in Romance Linguistics*, ed. Marta Luján and Fritz Hensey (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1976), p. 225. (Emphasis mine.)
4. In her article on "Transcendent Reality in the Poetry of Claudio Rodríguez," *Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century*, 7, No. 2 (1979), 133-46, Carole Bradford mentions Rodríguez's use of multi-branching clauses for a metonymic effect.
5. See Dell Hymes, ed., *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), especially Part III: World View and Grammatical Categories; Part IV: Cultural Focus and Semantic Field; and Part V: Role Socialization and Expressive Speech.
6. Claudio Rodríguez has published the following books of verse: *Don de la ebriedad* [The Gift of Inebriation] (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1953); *Conjuros* [Conjurations] (Santander: Ed. Cantalapiedra, 1958); 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Taifa, 1985); *Alianza y condena* [Alliance and Condemnation] (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1965); *Poesía 1953-1966* [Poetry 1953-1966] (Madrid: Plaza & Janes, 1971); *Antología poética* [Poetic Anthology], ed. Philip W. Silver (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1981); *El vuelo de la celebración* [The Flight of Celebration] (Madrid: Visor, 1976); *Desde mis poemas, edición del autor* [From my poems, edition of the author] (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983). In the preparation of this study I utilized the *Poesía 1953-1966* edition as well as *El vuelo de la celebración*. All page references are listed in the body of the text; the abbreviations are DE (*Don de la ebriedad*), C (*Conjuros*), AC (*Alianza y condena*), and VC (*El vuelo de la celebración*). The translations are my own. Because

of the basic indeterminacy of Rodríguez's language, oftentimes I have had to choose between two or more options possible in the original Spanish.

7. One must differentiate between presupposition and assertion. According to Paul and Carol Kiparsky, "Presuppositions are constant under negation. That is, when you negate a sentence, you don't negate its presuppositions; rather, what is negated is what the positive sentence asserts. For example, 'Mary didn't clean the room' unlike its positive counterpart does not assert either that the room became clean, or, if it did, that it was through Mary's agency. On the other hand, negation does not affect the presupposition that it was or has been dirty." This is quoted directly from their study entitled "Fact" contained in *Semantics*, ed. Danny D. Steinberg & Leon A. Jakobovitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 345-69. The examples of negation in English listed in the body of this study are those of the Kiparskys.

8. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 38. (Emphasis is Todorov's.)

9. Marathon Montrose Ramsey, *A Textbook of Modern Spanish*, rev. Robert K. Spaulding (1894; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956), p. 413.

10. See the article by Andrew P. Debicki, "Satire and Dramatic Monologue in Several Poems by Dámaso Alonso," *Books Abroad*, 2 (1974), 276-85.

11. This description of contradictory assertion was employed by Barbara Johnson in her study of Mallarmé's poetry. See her chapter on "Poetry and Syntax: What the Gypsy Knew," in *The Critical Difference* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 67-75.

12. In her article on linguistic skepticism, Martha LaFollette Miller discusses this issue in regard to Rodríguez's *El vuelo de la celebración*. See her "Linguistic Skepticism in Claudio Rodríguez: A Counterpoint to Jorge Guillén's Linguistic Faith," *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 6 (1981), 105-21.

13. In his *ars poetica* Rodríguez defines poetry in the following manner. Germane to this discussion is the poet's use of the word *conocer* and its derivatives: "Creo que la poesía es, sobre todo, participación. Nace de una participación que el poeta establece entre las cosas y su experiencia poética de ellas, a través del lenguaje. Esta participación es un modo peculiar de *conocer*. No es este el lugar a propósito para indagar la naturaleza de tal participación ni las características genuinas de ese *conocimiento*. Una característica esencial de este último consistiría en lo que se *conoce* acontece, está actuando en las tablas del poema. Y sólo ahí. El proceso del *conocimiento* poético es el proceso mismo del poema que lo integra." In Francisco Ribes, *Poesía Última* (Madrid: Taurus, 1963), p. 87. (Emphasis mine.)

14. The title *Alianza y condena* has inspired much spirited debate over its meaning. Claudio Rodríguez himself, in two separate interviews, comments on the essence he was attempting to grasp with such an antithetical juxtaposition. "Ambas palabras

pueden orientar, no definir el contenido del libro. Tanto nuestro vivir, como la poesía, se suma de sus formulaciones, y se amasa con ambos hechos: de acercamiento o alianza, y de distanciamiento, repulsa o condena. Las dos vías se entrecruzan, mejor, se desembocan." Cited in Antonio Núñez, "Encuentro con Claudio Rodríguez," *Insula*, 234 (1966), 4; Rodríguez also has stated: "Cuando en mi último libro digo 'alianza y condena,' no me refiero a la alianza como concepto. Dentro de la alianza existe la condena, igual que dentro de la condena existe la alianza. Es un proceso (para decirlo con una palabra muy cursi) dialéctico." Cited in Federico Campbell, *Infame turba* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1971), p. 230.

15. The unorthodox techniques of assertion discussed in this essay are apparent in all of Rodríguez's poetry, as evidenced by the wide variety of examples drawn from each of his collections of verse. It is my opinion that Rodríguez has refined and systematized these techniques with each new collection.

16. For other studies of "Brujas a mediodía" see Bousoño's prologue to *Poesía 1953-1966*, pp. 20-22; José Olivio Jiménez, *Diez años*, pp. 150-52; William Mudrovic, "Claudio Rodríguez's *Alianza y condena*: Technique, Development and Unity," *Symposium*, 33 (1979), 248-62; and Arturo de Villar, "El don de la claridad de Claudio Rodríguez," *Estafeta literaria*, 592 (1976), 20-23. Bousoño, Jiménez and del Villar point to Rodríguez's rapprochement with the mystery of life, while Mudrovic interprets this text as ironic, and views Rodríguez's perspective as the ultimate rejection of the material world.

17. José M. Sala, "Algunas notas sobre la poesía de Claudio Rodríguez," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 334 (1978), 125-41.

18. See Bradford's "Transcendent Reality." Nancy B. Mandlove also espouses this view in her "Carnal Knowledge: Claudio Rodríguez and *El vuelo de la celebración*" (*The American Hispanist*, 32-33 [1979], 20-23), but approaches the issue from a phenomenological point of view.

19. See Rodríguez's poem entitled "Porque no poseemos" (*AC*, p. 157) and "Un momento" (*AC*, p. 201). Both of these poems embody the poet's unique manner of becoming one with concrete reality.

20. Jesús Hilario Tundidor, *Seis poetas de Zamora* (Zamora: Caja de Ahorros provincial de Zamora, 1976), p. 63.

21. Quoted in Ribes, *Poesía última*, pp. 91-92.

22. Philip W. Silver and E. Inman Fox already have noted Rodríguez's relationship with the Surrealist movement, both basing their observations on the poet's originality on the lexical level. The former, in his prologue to Rodríguez's *Antología poética*, examines his striking metaphoric structures, and the latter in his essay entitled "Poesía 'social' y tradición simbolista" (*Actas del Tercer Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas* [Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 1970], pp. 355-63), mentions briefly the poet's "expresión metafórica, alusiva y algunas veces irracional" (p. 362).

23. Anna Balakian, *Literary Origins of Surrealism* (1947; rpt. New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 10.

24. See the poems entitled "Visión a la hora de la siesta," (C, p. 127) and "Un suceso" (AC, p. 193). This connection is especially evident in *El vuelo de la celebración*, in such poems as "Una aparición" (VC, p. 47), "Hacia la luz" (VC, p. 45), and "La contemplación viva" (VC, p. 43).

25. Anna Balakian, *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1970), p. 46.

26. In *The Structure of Modern Poetry*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974), Hugo Friedrich describes Rimbaud's style in the following manner: "The syntax is simple, giving the statements a formal clarity. The explosions are in the ideas rather than in the sentence structure. And the effect is all the more vehement for the formal disharmony in regard to the syntax. The ideas are protuberances of the imagination; to the wildness and distance they add even more wildness and distance, not merely in successive stanzas, but from line to line, and sometimes even within a single line. . . . Furthermore, individual image complexes mix extreme opposites, uniting things that are incompatible in practice . . ." (p. 52).

27. In Mallarmé's poetry "mystery is crucial; the poet wants to come as close to it as possible. His poetry and ideas do not move from the empirical world into ontological universality; they take the opposite course. . . . The poem *is* a process, taking place not in the object but in the language. . . . Poetry has always enjoyed the privilege of letting a word quiver with its multiplicity of meanings. Mallarmé forges ahead to the utmost limits of this license. He makes the infinite potential of language the actual content of his writings. . . . The language passes by as if it were expressing the most natural things—and yet it states enigmas. . . . The depths of Mallarmé's poems are governed by clarity. But the language is a singing mysteriousness which shields the ontological thought, preventing its deterioration" (Friedrich, *Structure*, pp. 70-79).

28. Marjorie Perloff, in her *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), identifies this process as a major identifying characteristic of Post-Modernist poetry. See especially her chapters 4, 5, and 7.