

Thinking Styles in *The Black Heralds* by César Vallejo / *Os estilos de pensamento em Os heraldos negros, de César Vallejo* / *Los estilos de pensamiento en Los heraldos negros, de César Vallejo*

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ABSTRACT

Los Heraldos Negros is the first poem collection of César Vallejo in which the struggle between the three styles of thought, namely, the separative, the distinctive, and the confusive, is observed. The author is based on General Textual Rhetoric and the stylistic typology proposed by Giovanni Bottirolì to analyze two poems of Vallejo on the basis of the functioning of rhetorical figures and the fundamental theme in these texts.

KEYWORDS: Metaphor; Separative; Distinctive; Confusive

RESUMO

Os heraldos negros é a primeira coletânea de poemas de César Vallejo na qual se percebe uma luta entre três estilos de pensamento: o separativo, o distintivo e o confusivo. O autor se apoia na Retórica Geral Textual e na tipologia estilística proposta por Giovanni Bottirolì para analisar dois dos poemas de Vallejo, tomando como base o funcionamento das figuras retóricas e na temática fundamental destes dois textos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Metáfora; Separativo; Distintivo; Confusivo*

RESUMEN

Los heraldos negros es el primer poemario de César Vallejo donde se observa la lucha entre los tres estilos de pensamiento: el separativo, el distintivo y el confusivo. El autor se sustenta en la Retórica General Textual y en la tipología estilística planteada por Giovanni Bottirolì para analizar dos poemas de Vallejo sobre la base del funcionamiento de las figuras retóricas y de la temática fundamental en dichos textos.

PALABRAS CLAVES: *Metáfora; Separativo; Distintivo; Confusivo*

Traditionally, we have understood the notion of *style* linked with the concept of speech described by Ferdinand de Saussure. Language, in this sense, has two aspects: social language (*langue*) and the individual speech (*parole*). The first aspect is abstraction and virtuality; the second is the individual and concrete act of using a language. However, it is a complementary opposition because speakers can incorporate new words into the repertoire of a language. In the same manner, the syntax of a language provides a mental structure to its users. It is known that Saussure privileged the study of language and linguistics as a system that has its own rules and form of functioning. The stylistics of Leo Spitzer (1948, p.10),¹ Dámaso Alonso (2008, p.483), and Amado Alonso (2011, p.89) have highlighted the idea that only one style prevails in a literary work. Nevertheless, the creative assimilation of the contributions by Mikhail Bakhtin 1986;² 1984)³ in his study of the literary style has questioned the monologism (the idea that there is a single voice that is expressed in a poem, story, or novel) to propose the notion of dialogism (that there are several voices and styles that appear in a literary text) that allows the study of popular culture expressions, such the ones in the work of Rabelais, for example. In the area of the so-called General Textual Rhetoric, which covers the overarching dimension of Aristotelian rhetoric to overcome the rhetoric restricted to *elocutio*, authors such as Antonio García Berrio (1989, p.177), Stefano Arduini (2000, pp.101-129), Tomás Albaladejo (1991, pp.43-116), and, particularly, Giovanni Bottirolì (1993, pp.27-79, 1997, pp.83-86; 2006, p.256) have emphasized a new vision of literature. Bottirolì believes that there is no single style in a literary work but that different styles are manifested in a poem, novel, or story. Therefore, the researcher's task is to address how these styles oppose each other within the fabric of a literary speech. It must be added that the so-called General Textual Rhetoric, which came into light in the 1980s, does not exclusively zero in on the *elocutio*, nor does it seek to prepare a mere list of figures of speech, but tries to approach the *dispositio* and *inventio* without neglecting the essential role of memory and *actio*. Bottirolì (1993, pp.27-29; 1997, pp.83-84; 2006, pp.256-257) considers that

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¹ SPITZER, L. *Linguistics and Literary History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1948.

² BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.60-102.

³ BAKHTIN, M. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélene Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984.

styles are strongly related to thought processes and to the world of ideologies of a text, not only in a literary but also a philosophical sense. In the expression *styles of thought* we see 1) the polyphonic conception of style, 2) the link between *elocutio* (style refers to that part of rhetoric as knowledge) and *inventio*, and that 3) style cannot be fully understood without a structure (that is, without a *dispositio*) because ideologies are expressed, with a certain order, in a certain stylistic position in the literary or philosophical sphere.

1 The Styles of Thought, the Legacy of Mikhail Bakhtin and Figural Spheres

Bottiroli (2006, p.294) considers that although Bakhtin failed to develop a systematized theory of style, he was guided by social stylistics or by speech genres. Thus, he overcame the language–speech dichotomy posed by Saussure, since the Russian theorist considered the dialogical character to be in the realm of speech. The word is a dialogue and an encounter with the other, but it is also a permanent conflict, because style is conceived as a divided language (BOTTIROLI, 2006, p.13). This is linked to the project of translinguistics, formulated by Bakhtin (1986),⁴ which privileges the analysis of dialogism as a key principle in the speech of the characters or the senders of speech. In his study of Rabelais, Bakhtin (1984)⁵ proposed the notion of the “carnivalization” of literature that leads to a parody and to inverted hierarchies, as highlighted by Bottiroli (2006, p.331), who, on the basis of the dialogical principle, formulates his theory of the three styles of thought.

The first is the *separative* style, which, based on a disjunctive logic, discards ambiguities and is of a rigid nature. It is based on fixed oppositions and conceives that the world is stable and solidly characterized (BOTTIROLI, 1993, p.166). The second is the *distinctive style*, which displays the functioning of a strategic intelligence that involves the treatment of oppositions and the flexibility of thinking; it is in contrast to the rigidity of the separative style. In this case, dichotomies are not rigid but have greater dynamism. Finally, the *confusive style* emphasizes the instability of the signifier in relation to the signified (BOTTIROLI, 1993, p.167) and tends to be cyclical due to its opposition to the rigidity of the separative style.

⁴ For reference, see footnote 2.

Undoubtedly, the 19th-century positivism is framed in the field of the separative style, because it considers that sociology is social physics, as argued by Comte, and that social sciences are therefore conceived as a reflection of natural sciences. Gadamer's hermeneutics, on the other hand, is a statement of the distinctive style, because it emphasizes the opposition between natural and human sciences since the latter are not guided by the concept of evolution, typical of sciences such as biology or physics. Finally, Nietzsche's philosophy lies in the sphere of the confusive regime since it presupposes mixing poetry and philosophy creatively and the valuation of cyclical time performed by the author of *Thus spoke Zarathustra*.

Bottioli (1993, p.36) also conceives the notion of figural intelligence, a fact that emphasizes the need to relate the *elocutio* (figurative procedures) to the processes of thought (*inventio*) through *dispositio* (structure). To this end, he proposes the operation of *four figural spheres* (or cognitive spheres for the organization of the world). Inside each sphere certain literary figures are situated. The first sphere is the *metaphorical sphere*, where metaphors or similes of the most diverse nature are located. The second is the *synechdotic* sphere, which indicates, as its name implies, the presence of synecdoches that propose one-part-for-the-whole, the-whole-for-one-part, genus-species, species-genus relationships, among other cases, in a certain poem, novel, canvas, or philosophical treatise. The third is the *metonymic* sphere, in which we recognize the operation of metonymy based on the cause-effect, effect-cause links, among other possibilities. The fourth is the *negation* sphere, which includes rhetorical figures such as antithesis, irony, oxymoron, or paradox because they highlight the functioning of oppositions. The figural sphere (deep stratum) should not be confused with the rhetorical figure (superficial stratum) since the former involves thought processes (there is a metaphorical, metonymic, synchronic, or antithetical thinking), whereas the latter constitutes a rhetorical resource that is a means for the act of ordering the environment according to a certain conceptual organization.

⁵ For reference, see footnote 3.

1.1 The Separative Style in the Literary Field

Rubén Darío's Hispanic American Modernism is one of the examples of the separative style because, according to Rama (1970, p.44), it implies the specialization of work because it isolates poetry language in relation to colloquial and everyday lexicon, a fact particularly observed in *Profane prose*. For the Nicaraguan poet, poetry is synonymous with a repertoire of techniques, rhythms, and types of stanza. Although Darío renewed Spanish–American poetry, he fell into the *préciosité* style. This is why poets like César Vallejo question the modernist legacy by using colloquial lexicon and themes such as poverty, which are exempt from all artificial exoticism, such as Darío's recurrent allusions to Chinese and Japanese cultures, in order not to assimilate the mythical thought of these but to captivate the reader with unusual and surprising twists.

Another example is Mario Vargas Llosa's essay *The civilization of Spectacle*. Here the Peruvian writer considers that culture is only that which is illustrated, that which is from Western civilization (FERNANDEZ COZMAN, 2016b, p.529, 2017, p.190), and that which separates culture from the elites to that of the *populi* so that the latter is considered inferior to the former. In fact, authors such as Gabriel García Márquez and Vargas Llosa themselves were nourished from the popular culture to produce high quality narrative works such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *Conversation in the Cathedral*.

1.2 The Distinctive Style in Literary Production

A representative case of distinctive style is the poetry of Octavio Paz in *The Violent Season*, in which the Mexican poet deals with the contradiction between Western and Amerindian culture in Sunstone, a poem referring to the Aztec calendar of 548 days. However, it simultaneously analyzes the contemporary society where violence and eroticism prevail, which has a liberating and rebellious purpose regarding the alienation of the modern individual.

Another example is *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality* by José Carlos Mariátegui. This is a book in which the Peruvian thinker distinguishes between the West and the Andes. To do so, he recognizes three periods in Peruvian literature: the

colonial (in which Peruvian literary creation is an imitation of that produced in Spain), the cosmopolitan (in which Peruvian poetry taps into the contributions of French literature), and the domestic (when Peruvian literature acquires its own personality).

1.3 The Confusive Style in Literary Creation

The surrealist poetry of the Peruvian writer César Moro exemplifies the confusive style because it questions Darío's modernist legacy and the classic patterns of beauty. Moro published much of his lyric work in French, but the collection of poems *La Tortuga Ecuestre* [*The Equestrian Turtle*] is in Spanish. In this book, he uses an overflow of dreamlike imagination that freely associates metaphors with echoes of surrealist automatism.

Another sample is *The Golden Fish* by Gamaliel Churata, who uses a type of literary essay that assimilates the sources of mythical Andean thinking (both Quechua and Aymara) and Western philosophy, through a metaphorical style that raises the idea of cyclical time, typical of Amerindian civilizations.

It is important to note that pluralities of styles in a literary or philosophical work are always present. Bottirolí discusses the idea of the uniqueness of a style and tries to understand it dynamically by emphasizing the notion of the struggle between different stylistic stances. For this reason, we now turn to the *The Black Heralds* on the basis of Bottirolí's theoretical proposal.

2 The Plurality of Styles in *The Black Heralds* by César Vallejo

The Black Heralds (1918) is Vallejo's first collection of poems, which contains three periods (FERNANDEZ COZMAN, 2016a, p.53): the modernist (represented by the aforementioned book), which implies a learning stage; the avant-garde, which is revealed in *Trilce* (1922) and supposes the functioning of an experimental poetry of argumentative nature (FERNÁNDEZ COZMAN, 2014, p.103) that questions Darío's legacy; and the post-avant-gardist, the most relevant examples of which are *Human Poems* (1939) and *Spain, Take this Cup From Me* (1939). In this case, Vallejo writes poetry of a political nature, influenced by Marxism, which deals with conjunctural

issues such as war, Spanish civilization, or the socialist utopia as to the liberation of man against the alienation that reigns in capitalism.

The Black Heralds is comprised of a liminal poem, which bears the same title as the collection, and six sections. Our hypothesis is that, in this book, the separative style predominates but conflicts with the distinctive and, eventually, with some traits of the confusive regime. In the first part (Agile Soffits), the separative regime prevails through metaphors coined in the hegemonic literary tradition (modernism sprinkled with romantic features and conventional biblical symbology), such as the wine glass (associated with the blood of Jesus), the atmosphere of Christmas Eve, and the symbolism of the cross: “Tilia will hold the cross/that in the final hour will be of light” (VALLEJO, 2007, p.37).⁶ As we pointed out earlier, Dario’s Hispanic–American modernism implies, in *Profane Prose*, the departure from the colloquial tone; however, some glimpses of the distinctive Vallejo style of Half-Light appear in Agile Soffits: “I’ve dreamed of a flight. A ‘forever and ever’/ whispered on the ladder to a prow; /I have dreamed of a mother; / some fresh sprigs of greenery; /and the aurora-constellated trousseau” (VALLEJO, 2007, p.39).⁷ The Peruvian poet substantivizes the colloquial expression “forever” and uses the diminutive (“sprigs”),⁸ an aspect that refers to the Andean Castilian as opposed to the formal register that is so characteristic of Dario’s poetry. In the second, third, and fourth parts of the collection (Divers, Of the Earth and Imperial Nostalgias), the separative style of a modernist nature again triumphs; however, some features of the distinctive style are seen in two poems: *The Spider and Dead Idyll*. In the first one, the absence, in certain stanzas, of the “sweetened” adjectivation of Spanish–American modernism (FERRARI, 1998, p.229) is complemented by how opposition is handled between life and death, through the suffering body of the animal. All this constitutes an indubitable manifestation of the distinctive style because it emphasizes the death of the spider in the day-to-day existence, which differs from the one idealized by Darío’s modernist code:

It is a spider that tremored caught
on the edge of a rock;

⁶ VALLEJO, C. *The Complete Poetry*: Bilingual Edition. Edited and translated by Clayton Eshleman. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

⁷ For reference, see footnote 6.

⁸ In the source text, “sprigs” is in the diminutive form [“matitas” (VALLEJO, 2009, p.108)].

the abdomen on one side,
head on the other.

With so many legs the poor thing, and still unable
to free itself. And, on seeing it
confounded by its fix
today, I have felt such sorrow for that traveler (VALLEJO, 2007,
p.49).⁹

In *Dead Idyll*, Vallejo, in Mariátegui's style, the Andes is opposed to the modern city, symbolically represented in Byzantium. He does not consider modern lifestyle in higher esteem than Amerindian's or vice versa. The individual migrates from a traditional space to a modern space and is split between two worlds, as if his memory were divided between "here" and "there" (POLAR CORNEJO, 1995, pp.101-103, 1996, pp.841). Thus, Vallejo moves away from the separative style to approach the distinctive style:

What would she be doing now, my sweet Andean Rita
of rush and tawny berry;
now when Byzantium asphyxiates me, and my blood
dozes, like thin cognac, inside of me (VALLEJO, 2007, p.99).¹⁰

Nevertheless, there is the ellipsis of the preposition "a" ("What would she be doing now [at this hour], my sweet Andean Rita"),¹¹ which represents a violent appearance of Andean Castilian and is ascribed to the confusive style. From a cosmovision perspective, it materializes a categorical questioning of the modernist formal register and the literate city (RAMA, 1996, pp.16-28)¹² because it implies an Amerindian orality that questions the supremacy of the written formality of Darío's diction in *Profane prose*.

In the fifth section of *The Black Heralds* (Thunderclaps), the religious theme prevails in Vallejo's poetry. In *The Eternal Dice*, there appears a separative metaphor that is sustained in foreseeable biblical symbolism: "My God, I am crying over the

⁹ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁰ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹¹ The translator of *The Complete Poetry* (reference on footnote 6) opted to translate "esta hora," from the verse "Qué estará haciendo esta hora mi andina y dulce Rita" (VALLEJO, 2009, p.108), as "now." However, had he opted to translate it as "this hour," the ellipses of the preposition "a" (at) would be more noticeable.

¹² RAMA, A. *The Lettered City*. Translated by John Charles Chasteen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.

being I live; / it grieves me to have taken your bread” (VALLEJO, 2007, p.135).¹³ However, in the following stanza, the distinctive style is manifest through the contradiction between God and man:

My God, had you been a man,
today you would know how to be God;
but you, who were always fine,
feel nothing for your own creation.
Indeed, man suffers you; God is he! (VALLEJO, 2007, p.135)¹⁴

The stability of the relationship between the signifier and the signified is tottered through the conditional proposition (“had you been a man”). Faced with the security of the distinctive style that did not question the divine character of the Creator, the poet now opens the way to ambiguity and conceives that there is a possibility of learning to be God. Finally, the Nietzschean feature of the last verse emphasizes that man happens to become God and this announces a resonance of the confusive style, because it implies that hierarchies have been inverted. Human being approaches the center of the scene and leaves God in the periphery in a sense.

In the sixth section (Songs of Home), there are two poems that we will analyze: To My Brother Miguel and Distant Footsteps. We have chosen these two texts because the struggle between styles of thought is observed at point blank.

2.1 Analysis of To My Brother Miguel and the Styles of Thought

In memoriam

Brother, today I am on the stone bench by the door,
where we miss you terribly!
I recall how we would play at this hour, and Mama
would caress us: “Now boys . . .”

Now I go hide,
As before, all those evening
prayers, and hope you do not find me.
Through the living room, the hall, the corridors.
Then, you hide, and I cannot find you.
I recall that we made each other cry,

¹³ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁴ For reference, see footnote 6.

brother, with that game.

Miguel, you hid
one night in August, at dawn;
but, instead of hiding laughing, you were sad.
And your twin heart of those extinct
evenings has grown weary from not finding you. And now
shadow falls into the soul.

Hey, brother, don't take so long
to come out. Okay? Mama might get worried (VALLEJO, 2007,
p.155).¹⁵

The poem, with four verses, develops the familiar theme that already implies a departure from the aesthetics of *Profane prose*. The *enjambements*, polymetry, and the dialogical tone make the text one of the most typical Vallejo-styled writing in *The Black Heralds*.

Undoubtedly, the title, as a paratext, implies that the discourse is addressed to Miguel as a dedication to the deceased brother. Three characters appear in the poem: the announcer (FERNÁNDEZ COZMAN, 2009, pp.157-168), Miguel, and the mother. Bottiroli (1993, p.115) argues that the relationships between the characters can be metaphorical, metonymic, synecdotic, and antithetical, but since plurality of figural spheres or styles always wins, there are two types of relationships between the characters represented in a literary text. Thus, the mother, the announcer, and his brother, Miguel, establish metonymic or contiguity relations because they move inside home. But when the poet says that Miguel hid “on night in August” (that is, he died), then an antithetical bond between the two brothers is revealed, because it means the confrontation between life and death.

The fundamental macro-speech act is suggestion. The announcer suggests that the represented recipient (Miguel) return home. In this sense, the last two verses express the essential axis around which the poem revolves. Let us now see how the figural styles are part of the struggle between styles of thought.

The *separative style* is evidenced in some canonical or conventional metaphors, such as “and now/shadow falls into the soul,” where the isotopy of darkness is associated with the sadness accumulated in the speaker's conscience. There is no impetus for innovation in the verses cited above. It is an iteration of how light is linked

to joy, the lack of luminosity with melancholy. Darío, in *The Inner Kingdom*, writes: “My fragile soul looks out at the dark window/ of the frightful tower in which it has been dreaming for thirty years” (2002, p.127).¹⁶ As we can see, the Nicaraguan poet and the Peruvian coincide in their stylistic predilections.

However, Vallejo seeks to break with modernist poetics and embraces the *distinctive style*, revealed in the hide-and-seek play between the two brothers, as they both move throughout the house. The flexibility of interpersonal relationships occurs in the exchanging of roles: one brother hides and the other seeks him; then the roles are reversed. The rupture of this modality becomes evident when it is categorically stated that Miguel sadly hid “one night in August,” that is to say, he passed away. Then, the announcer was left helpless.

The last two verses of the poem concentrate the central information of the poem. The *confusive style* clearly becomes evident because of how the cyclic time works. Miguel is dead, but he will return home. The birth–growth–death process is broken, because it implies a rebirth of Michael, who will return to his parents’ house. “[D]on’t take so long/to come out” emphasizes that the brother will return, that is, he will reappear in the house. Utopia (i.e. the speaker’s social project) is to rebuild this daily space that is incomplete (there is a lack) due to the death of Miguel.

2.2 Analysis of Distant Footsteps and Styles of Thought

My father is asleep. His august face
expresses a peaceful heart;
he is now so sweet . . .
if there is anything bitter in him, it must be me.

There is loneliness in the house; there is prayer;
and no news of the children today.
My father stirs, sounding
the flight into Egypt, the stypic farewell.
He is now so near;
if there is anything distant in him, it must be me.

My mother walks in the orchard,
savoring a savor now whitout savor.

¹⁵ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁶ DARIO, R. *Stories and Poems*. Translated by Stanley Appelbaum. New York: Dover Publications, 2002.

She is so soft,
so wing, so gone, so love.

There is loneliness in the house with no bustle,
no news, no green, no childhood.
And if there is something broken this afternoon,
something that descends and that creaks,
it is two old white, curved roads.
Down them my heart makes its way on foot (VALLEJO, 2007,
p.153).¹⁷

This five-stanza poem takes up the theme of family *locus*. It has three characters: the father, the mother, and the announcer. The relationship between the latter and his parent is antithetical to the interior of the family's house, while the mother is outside the family's house. The psychological space has changed: the maternal space is associated with tenderness, while the predominant space between the son and the father entails the contradiction between physical closeness and affective remoteness.

The macro-speech act is to affirm the communicative impossibility between the announcer and his father. Therefore, the feeling of loneliness prevails in the family. The speaker perceives his father both asleep and awake, but, in both cases, he perceives that the affective bond between them has deteriorated. Let us see, now, how the styles clash in Vallejo's text.

Without a doubt, the *separative style* of modernist lineage is perceived in an allusion to Egypt: "sounding/the flight into Egypt." This reference manifests the assimilation of Darío's exoticism, as there is almost no relationship between the daily atmosphere of Distant Footsteps and the Land of the Pharaohs. It does not contribute much to the text and, rather, distracts the reader's attention with an unusual twist. Darío dedicated *Metempsychosis (The Wandering Song)* to Cleopatra and wrote, "I was taken to Egypt with a chain/ around my neck. Then one day I was devoured/ by dogs" (2005, p. 43).¹⁸

The *distinctive style* is based on the daily life of the family referent and is the strategic approach of the contradiction that transgresses Darío's rigid modernist poetics. The flexibility of the poet's reasoning is seen in the expression "He is now so near;/if there is anything distant in him, it must be me." Physical proximity does not imply

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁸ DARÍO, R. *Selected Writings*. Translated by Andrew Hurley. United States of America: Penguin Books, 2005

communion of affection, but it gives the impression that the two characters lived in distant countries, that is, one distant from the other. There is the affability of the face of the father vis-à-vis the sadness of the speaker, an opposition that indicates how poetry for Vallejo, unlike Darío, is nourished of the quotidian and does not exclude the use of colloquial turns.

Finally, the *confusive style* breaks out, which, through a poetics of rupture, strongly questions the separative modernist poetics: “She is so soft,/so wing, so gone, so love.” For Bottirolì, “a confusive metaphor transforms resemblance into perfect identity” (2006, p.256; our translation).¹⁹ The mother is not like a bird, but becomes a bird that protects its children with its wings. Besides, the anomalous use of the adverb “such,” which is improperly qualifying the adjective, is added. It is undoubtedly an avant-garde resource that transgresses the limits of Darío’s modernist aesthetics.

To sum it all up, there are a number of styles in *The Black Heralds*, but Vallejo, similar to every great writer, seeks to free himself from the models imposed by modernism. For this reason, the Peruvian poet uses two styles of meaning (the separative and the confusive) to emphasize his stylistic independence and open his discourse to the creative assimilation of colloquial language and avant-garde imagery.

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¹⁹ Source text: “[...] una metafora confusiva transforma la somiglianza in perfetta identità.”

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