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FOUR MOMENTS IN THE LUIS CARTAÑA'S POETRY

Introduction

The collections of poems Luis Cartaña left us in his brief life position him among the most original and passionate lyricists of our language, in the 1960's and 1970's. His work, from the time when he gathered his first poems, reveals a desire to declare order – Apollonian – in the spectacle of the world in which he had to live.

Reading his hymns which begin in *Estos humanos dioses* (These human gods, 1967), like other instants in his production, we remember the words of Alfonso Reyes, the exemplary teacher of precise words, as he says in his essay *Jacob o idea de la poesía* (Jacob or the idea of poetry): "Art is a continuous victory of conscience over the chaos of external realities. Struggle with the ineffable, we have called it combat of Jacob with the Angel."

The idea of Apollo's triumph over Dionysius, in the first lyrical expressions as well as in the ones that followed, constitutes a straight element in the work we now discuss, event we have named – as a parody to the Mexican writer – victory of order over the conflictive world of chaos.

Four Moments in Luis Cartaña's poetry

Let's look at a catalog of the booklets published by the author since 1967: *Estos humanos dioses* (These human gods, Carabela-Barcelona), *La joven resina* (Young resin, 1971), *Idem, Tocata, Fuga y Presencia*, (Tocatta, Fugue, and Presence, 1972) "Atenea" University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez, P.R., *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs, Chansons Oublies), two editions in 1977, "Jardín de espejos" (Garden of mirrors), Mayagüez, *Chansons Oublies* (Canciones Olvidadas), prologue by Carlos Morales, (1985), Madrid, *Canciones olvidadas*, (Forgotten Songs, 1988), prologue by Pere Gimferrer, Madrid; *Sobre la música* (About music, 1981), *Jardín de espejos*, Mayagüez; *La Mandarina y el fuego*, (Mandarin and fire, 1983), "Jardín de Espejos", Mayagüez; *Los cuadernos del señor Aliloil*, (Alioil's booklets, 1985), *Jardín de espejos*, Mayagüez; *Permanencia de fuego* (Fire's stay), Prologue by Rafael Soto Vergés (1988).

It is always pertinent to offer at least brief information about the poet. Luis Cartaña Otero was born in Havana in 1942. He attended elementary school at Colegio Belén, high school at Colegio La Salle, also in his home town.

He leaves his country after a year of studying law at the University of Havana. He goes to the nearby state of Florida, where he lives for one year and then transfers to Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. He then settles in Madrid, where he becomes a lawyer. After completing his studies in Spain's capital city, he begins a procession through peninsular lands in Galicia and Cataluña; in the city of Barcelona he mingles with Catalan poets and writers by participating in the cultural environment of the city. He also goes to other European countries where he enriches his inner self with the vision of the countryside and cities he visits. He comes to Puerto Rico to visit family members and stays in our country for twenty years, in which he teaches language and literature courses at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. This is where he completes mature poetic work, possibly the most significant part

of his work. He deals with relevant figures such as Francisco Matos Paoli, great Puerto Rican poet, whose Nobel candidacy leads to Oslo, leading the way for professors of the Department of Hispanic Studies in Mayagüez; he has Spaniards Miguel A. Feal Deibe, Angel Crespo, José Luis Couso, Ezequiel González Mas as peers in teaching and creating poetry and literary critique, as well as Puerto Rican peers: María Teresa Babín, Juan Martínez Capó, Carmelo Rodríguez Torres, Fernando Bayron Toro, Luis Hernández Aquino, Félix Franco Oppenheimer, etc.

I. First Moment in Luis Cartañá's Poetry: Chaos and Hope in These Human Gods, 1967

The first instant in Cartañá's lyric expresses itself as a sign of fragmentation, a kaleidoscope that seeks unity to integrate itself as a whole. It is a universe subjected to the law of dispersion with a tendency to reunify the disseminated elements almost anarchically in the poem.

Let's look at *Poema V* in *Estos humanos dioses* (These human gods) as an example of what we call signs of dispersion; where each word becomes elevated; an image in continuous movement:

Que un ocaso / That a sunset
 así sufrido / long-suffering
 se hizo día, ejemplo / became day, example
 magnitud de todo / of the magnitude of all
 esperanza. / hope.
 Parido con dolor / Born with pains
 callado silently
 a destempele de auroras más perfectas / disrupting the most perfect dawn
 de arcos más elípticos / with more elliptical arches.

Observe the rhythmic image, the sunset as a sign of dispersion. However, the sign of sunset is a tremendous but fleeting reality which undergoes temporary change. The sunset transmutes into day and in doing so hope arises. Since the first verse of the poem the reality level is altered and from sunset comes the rising dawn of day.

The second verse of *Canto V* chaotically disseminates the signs that specify temporary reality in disorganized agglomeration. Let's listen to the voices that act like kaleidoscope particles. Here it is:

Amor, enamorados, quiso, / Love, in love, wanted,
 quiso llegar -calvario de oro y plata- / wanted to arrive -calvary of gold and silver-
 Fuego y agua, / Fire and water,
 gravedad sin espacio: / gravity without space:
 Cae, viene, se acerca, llega. / Falls, comes, approaches, arrives.
 Conocido su final y quiso / The end is known and loved
 en pleno; desbordante / completely; bursting
 se ofreció en luna, / offered itself as a moon,
 se ofreció en capullo, / offered itself as a bud,
 sabiéndose que no sabía ser flor. / Knowing that it didn't know how to be a flower.

The scattered elements whether they are nouns: fire, water (contradicting each other); verbs: *falls, comes, approaches, arrives* are agilely resolved in the composition.

The prevailing atmosphere in it is surrealist: there is a series of linguistic elements (signs) that intertwine among themselves producing the effect of dynamic round, it is always in crescendo until it ends in the repetitive singing of the main idea, in the contradictory image

of the sunset (nightfall): day. It is the poet's desire – probably unconsciously – to arrive in a Thule, which is the magnitude of everything, a carrier's hope, or ignoring the logical development of the process of time, which, in this case, should have been: *sunset-night-dawn-day*, in the poems it is reduced to sunset-day. This repetition of time is possible because of the word hope. Without this element that creates balance – in terms of desire, the fact that it has been divided – we would face a world without redemption. The case, cannot at this time, establish its control. There is always a Messianic possibility, an ideal Ultima Thule.

In the fifth verse of the quoted *Canto V* the composition's leitmotiv is reiterated, *the sunset that became day*, always seen as the magnitude of everything, once again reaffirming its Messianic characteristic. However, new signs come together chaotically, which add a desperate atmosphere, as this phenomenon is produced to dominate insanity.

The VI poem begins with a negative expression in which the existing and the non-existing are absurd: universe, being, non-existence, love, hope, desire to live, etc. Everything is useless, vain effort of achievement, everything is absurd. Sartre's philosophical ideas which support that existence could be the essence of the entity, that *the entity* is not "passive nor active, affirmation nor negativity, but rather it simply responds if it is compact and rigid. Finally, the entity is what it is, another being is completely excluded".

Nada en mí fue real, tal es la afirmación del poeta: Nothing in me was real, is the poet's expression

Nada fue real / Nothing was real
Lo veo todo claro / I see it clearly
entiendo los sueños. / I understand the dreams.
Siempre soñamos / We always dream
en alguien en quien vivimos, / of someone we live in,
en alguien en quien morimos, / of someone we die in,
magnitud de todo magnitud / of everything
esperanza o fetiche, / hope or fetish
reflejándose en la muerte, / reflecting on death,
en la vida, aún allá... in life, / even over there...
sin dar cabida a una ilusión, / without allowing an illusion,
al beso: Era beso e ilusión sin fin. / a kiss: it was a kiss and illusion with no end.
Sin preguntarme nada / Without asking me anything
-destino, no destino-, / -destiny, no destiny-
nada. Nothing.

Falling into nothingness, could establish a link with the fall of the being into the nothingness of existentialist thought influenced by Sartre.

The best poem in *Estos humanos dioses* (These Human Gods) is, in our opinion, number XII, *Hay que aprender a nacer* (We must learn how to be born). Extensive love composition conceived in the surrealist manner where a full and brilliant subjection of the dispersed elements is achieved in an attempt to defeat vertigo and chaos. In this poem, Luis Cartañá has provided us with one of the best love poems of the defining lyrics with some distant evidence of the best of Pablo Neruda, Lezama Lima, and Vicente Huidobro. Its atmosphere is very original and the verses flow with first-order naturalness and spontaneity. Cartañá knew how to dominate chaos here and with true naturalness details facts, feelings, moods, and in some passages he creates happily exposed images with a luminous sensuality that makes us remember Renoir.

Suéltate las trenzas que caigan como árboles. Let down your braids so that they fall as trees.

Hay una tierra fértil donde germinará la sombra. There is fertile ground for shadow to germinate.

The most humanly intense moment in the entire poem where the creator, not satisfied with this stay in his loved one's company, desires, beyond time and space, to meet her again, idea that summarizes one of the best and most delicate passages.

Y aún así puede el camino torcerse, dividirse / And even so, the path may twist, divide
en desengaños; pero no habrá quebrantos, / in disappointments; but there will be no
affliction,
ya que entonces, / because then,
en el otoño, en la noche, tendremos la certeza / in the autumn, at night, we will have the
certainty
de un próximo encuentro. / of meeting again.

The certainty of another meeting in the autumn of life, because the composer refers to the maturity of man, as we have said, this is one of the best and most original instants.

The poet continues to refer to the tremendous reality of time. ... and the unconscious years of establishing a balance over the land serve as counterpoint between order and disorder.

With *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs), which is the final part of the poetry collection titled *Sobre la música* (About Music), our poet provides us with what we consider the top expression he offered us, and at the same time a work that places him among the most distinguished West Indian poets of what someone has already appropriately called "generation of the 1960's" in Puerto Rico, which naturally has ideological and stylistic correlation with the expression of other Spanish speaking countries at the time.

Let's go back to *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs), generational digression would distance us from the purpose of these notes, which is no other than to express our reaction to the work we are studying. The reaction offers a message of the private matters, of what is generally forbidden in a work made into "a minimum of sad life and in crude state – which has not become a word but could do so if it were necessary – (according to Antonio Artaud in a quote Cartañá uses at the beginning of the opuscle), and without which the soul cannot live and life is as if it were no longer".

It is necessary to stop at Artaud's quote because it gives us the key to understanding the symbol expressed in the title. We are, to say it at once, in a closed zone, in a register of vital experiences of difficult access, because all reference to that private mood, is now a recently discovered mumble, that struggles to express that which "has not become a word" because it underlies in man's experience.

The poet himself refers to his childhood, to the past he relives in memories, with these verses:

Desde niño no he vuelto a tener / Since I was a child I have not had
un caballo de madera y una espada de mar / a wooden horse or a sword
amarrada en mi cintura. / tied to my waist again.

In *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs), which we consider our poet's "diamond axis", there are two guiding aspects; music, which permeates all variations of the suite and eroticism, and the loved woman, with which the poet undertakes a return in the being's golden expression of harmony, stabilizing subject to pacify the Dionysian elements and try to discover the complete happiness of the spirit.

Its aspects refer to the loved one, the woman, delicate object of pleasure — in this case — and companion who determines the song, that song that is nothing else than a happy mumble that comes from the inside and overflows, categorically and successfully, in the poem.

---/ escribo la canción que vas dejando. ---/ I write the song you leave behind.

Precisamente el canto que no pertenece. Precisely the song that does not belong.

And so, that loved lady, not only determines the search of the man's being, but his own meeting, in her own reunion, "in the small music box" where she hides. The woman, intact in the splendid beauty of her small, wicker body and "orange zest", is not only the living companion in the world, but also who inspires, searches for the loved man, and finds him when she finds herself, and leaves in him a song destiny to "locate things in a different manner".

The loved one has varied representation in *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs), it is what has not arrived and is yearned for, what arrives only in an image, almost like a myth, it is imagining of belonging to the yearned possession, presence that is essentially an object of pleasure, that from "darkness itself can be discovered, the burning jasmine of fingers that melt the skin when they walk through the world's body; cause for euphoria to fill, to culminate the existence of the being in the world; apotheosis of a love struggle ("Cantata I"); extension of euphoria in their company, dimming an instant for: a premonition of obscurity "but never / observe me / with / the hours of obscurity" and the successful exhibit of the lovers' symbiosis, of the fusion of their spirits. "I want you to continue sleeping / while I remain in your dream." (Cantata II); a solitary world because the woman is absent: "Far away, far away, far away like two lighthouses / the sweet distance has never repaired / the bodies' clamor" [*Canción de la ausente* "Interludio" (Song to the absent woman "Interlude")].

Tremendousness continues, with an obvious agglutination of dispersed elements that when regrouped create a changing effect, dispersion and reunion remind us of something, the erotic world of *Residencias* by Pablo Neruda, like the beautiful poem by Cartañá *Redondata en Caguabo* (Circle in Caguabo), which I do not know why reminds us of *Valse Oublié Núm. 1* by Liszt, from where Luis Cartañá probably took the title of the collection: the same affectionate jolt, the same hyper-esthetic feeling of worlds in conflict, the same duty of life, the same great rediscovery of the intermediate zone between dream and reality, who saw the great figures of the spirit's rebellion that were the romantics — Liszt dominating passionately between them in music and Byron in poetry — until the anarchic boom of the surrealist and creationist world (Neruda, Lorca, Octavio Paz), with everything of Dionysian affirmation that said movements have.

The last instant is "Pequeña redondata de los olvidos" (Small circle of obscurity) with which the book ends, composition in which we see the chaos of the previous compositions calm down, when the poet — according to himself — deposits himself "like a single river of blood and abominations". The world of signs in anarchic movement, expresses exaltation and erotic passion, becomes mellow and tempers itself, and is seen in the instant of a delicate expression and a lovely evocation of childhood. See how in the fragment we transcribed, as in Rilke, the angel also appears in the child's memory. Consider a third element in this world of milestones in kaleidoscopic rotation, which is Cartañá's expression: the *man* used next to the child (a world of experimentation, of search, of taking things in ingeniously) and the *angel* (possible symbol of desire for absolute perfection, of facing an additional world with the inevitable demiurge).

The element of *man* is the one who "wears shoes of fire and air", he is the one who lives the lovely world, and the one who exposes it after an interior rediscovery of a contact with the woman, who operates on the surface, he is the one with cosmic happiness, and the one in the sub-world that rests in the intermediate zone between desire and reality, which can only

be reached by mumbling. It is precisely the man who lives the dichotomy of the passionately fulfilled experience, the one who shares it in a precise rhythm, and the one who experienced the passionate rediscovery of a world that is also spiritual; a world that only psychoanalysts (Freud, Jung, etc.), and surrealists (Dalí, Chirico, Bretón, Apollinaire, creationist Huidobro, etc.) have been able to approach.

Let's here the poet at the end of the opuscle, in which the panorama of its creation demiurgically calms down and the Dionysian atmosphere becomes serene.

Sangro por mis dos alas abiertas / I bleed through my two open wings
de comprensión y cariño, voy a retroceder / of understanding and affection, I will go back
hasta que llegue al equilibrio de la / until I reach the balance on the
punta de mis dedos / tips of my fingers
sobre una sola lágrima / over a single tear
que no se entalla sobre los párpados llenos / that fit over the eyelids full
de polvo y olvido. / of dust and obscurity.

The allusion to the child, the man, and the angel, triad of characters who do not lose their identity, not even in the instant of the Apollonian triumph in the poem, which is seen in this fragment:

Sólo de la niñez recojo las lágrimas precisas / Of my childhood, I only collect the precise
tears
para no llorar como un príncipe sobre los / so that I don't cry like a prince over the
acantilados. / cliffs.

El llanto no revienta en el hombre que calza / Crying doesn't break out in a man who wears
zapatillas de fuego y aire, nunca se es el ángel / shoes of fire and air; we are never the angel
que se espera ser, ni el hombre fuerte que se sueña. / we want to be, nor the strong man we
dream of.

Canciones olvidadas (Forgotten Songs) presents a world of personal experiences lived in the poet's two worlds: an intermediate zone in which things were distant in the dimension of obscurity and an immediate zone which is presented in complete chaos, in a warm vertiginous atmosphere, which reminds us of Pablo Neruda in *Las furias y las penas* (Furies and sorrows), with much romanticism and surrealist expression with an obvious Neo-baroque atmosphere. Remember that the baroque permeates in a great amount of poetry in written in Spanish in the 1920's and 1930's, which reaches our time and our West Indian poet.

Luis Cartañá shows a surrealist trace in a formal aspect and the *Culteranismo*-baroque atmosphere which reminds us of Góngora, but achieves – after all, he was a great poet – his own original expression, in which he handles innovative similes and metaphors and uses symbols, a nervous and agile style, a sense of rhythm, rarely matched in today's West Indian lyrics, which sometimes tends to sacrifice, in fury and lurch, the lyrical flight and the presence of music.

In rereading *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs) we see the author continues to provide the collective unconscious in the almost complete loss of equilibrium and expressive sobriety; but he shows himself as a diver of his interior seas, loyal presenter of intimate moments, some lived others recreated in the lack of control the word reaches as a specific expression of reunited intuitions by the power poets have to visualize hidden areas, felt as if they were lived, subjecting these details to a serene voice of maturity, or at least, to a voice that becomes serene when the poem comes in contact with things.

However, we do not want to close these lines without pointing out the Apollonian tendency, the need to calm disorder, to subject it to order and balance, it is not – as we have

said— absent in *Canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs). As we have said, it is true that agglutinated milestones prevail in vertiginous rotation, there is —and we believe that the miracle is in the rhythm, the music— a tendency to calm down the disintegrated factors and what the poet expresses like this:

Sangro por mis dos alas abiertas / I bleed through my two open wings
de comprensión y cariño. / of understanding and affection.

Canciones olvidadas (Forgotten Songs) represent the last moment of the book titled *Sobre la música* (About Music). They were published in an opuscle in 1977 and they are collected, as we have said, in *Sobre la música* (About Music, 1981) book we consider essential in the poet's work as a whole and which presents some of his most significant achievements. *En franca camaradería* [Frank camaraderie (Coral)] (First part of the booklet); *Guajataca nocturno* [Nocturnal Guajataca] (Second part); *Canto al hombre del futuro*, [Song to the man of the future] (Third part), *Sinfonía a la bestia en cinco movimientos* [Symphony of the beast in five movements] (Fourth part) and *Estancia del alucinado* [The hallucinated man's stay] (Fifth part).

Cartaña's lyric becomes dense and highly rhythmic and more symbolic in this truly original set, where fragmentation is reduced and the expression continues attentive to an effective audible phenomenon. The poet continues to be loyal to his romantic and surrealist origin, attentive to an art we consider West Indian and South American, although Cartaña does not adhere rigorously to the phenomena of history and scenery, essentially speaking. As an example, let's look at the poem Nocturno (Nocturnal) in which descriptive elements are shadowed or decreased by the sentimental and personal note it provides. The night, in this case, is perceived in the verb "to feel":

Hoy siento la noche caliente, / Today I feel a hot night,
y que lejanas piedras golpeándome. / and distant rocks hitting me.

.....
Siento la noche caliente / I feel a hot night
y en sus lejanas piedras, camino. / and over its distant rocks, I walk

.....
Hoy siento la noche y su música / Today, I feel the night and its music
de ladrido de perro / of a barking dog
extraviado y llorándome. / lost and crying to me.

.....
Siento la noche caliente / I feel a hot night
y estoy frente al mar / and I am in front of the sea
porque has de comprender / because you must understand
que estoy solo, solo. / that I am alone, alone.

.....
Siento esta noche caliente / I feel a hot night
y mis ojos dan vueltas y se / and my eyes roll and
van y regresan / go and return
y mis brazos dan vueltas y se van / and my arms turn and go
y regresan / and return
porque giro en molino y solo, solo, solo. / because I spin in the mill, alone, alone, alone.

.....
Siento la noche caliente / I feel a hot night
me revuelco y me hiero en su cáncer / I roll over and I hurt myself in its cancer,
generoso de estrellas / generous with stars,
me desato en su bóveda, toco, / I untie myself of its vault, I touch,

me desamparo, cuando / I neglect myself, when
me derroto y me armo y reafirmo / I defeat and arm myself and reaffirm
en su pulmón cansado / in its tired lung
pero también sé que estoy solo, solo, solo. / / but I also know that I am alone, alone, alone.

If we abide by the transferred verses, we perceive that the scenery is seen according to feeling, the author's emotional state, and it is a backdrop to state the being's note. We should also take into account how the aspect, already noted many times, of the fragmentary signs, chaotically offered, are visualized in the artist's own being:

Y mis ojos dan vueltas y se van y regresan / And my eyes roll and go and return
y mis brazos dan vueltas y se van y regresan / and my arms turn and go and return
porque giro en molino y solo, solo, solo. / because I spin in the mill, alone, alone, alone.

It is interesting to point out that this tendency which, in our opinion, comes from surrealism and creationism, with a distant memory of *Residencias* by Pablo Neruda, is only perceived in a few narrations, because in *Sobre la música* (About Music) the erotic element, the counterpoint of nature's music, and especially of the sea – which serves him as a constant companion – prevail.

The living element prevails in the collection of poems, except some moments such as *Canto al hombre del presente* (Poem to the man of the present), *Canto al hombre del futuro* (Poem to the man of the future), in the *Sinfonía a la bestia en cinco movimientos* (Symphony to the beast in five movements).

In *Guajataca*, there is one of the most beautiful love poems in this repertoire. If it is true that he could have used the extraordinary scenery of the sea that is seen in said Puerto Rican region, we must admit that it is a beautiful symphonic set. Let's listen to the diaphaneity of language, the rhythm and melody the poem expresses.

Escúchame / Listen to me
escúchame: no quiero usar símbolos guerreros / listen to me: I don't want to use war
symbols
huyo de las condecoraciones del te amo / I flee from the decoration "I love you"
escúchame, sufrí con todos los seres / listen to me, I suffered with all beings
para poderme ir contigo a solas. / so that I could go away alone with you.

Another poem in which love manifests itself entirely, a poem we call "tremendous": *Cantata I*, it is included in the sixth part of the collection of poems, and is part of the *Las canciones olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs). This poem begins with underground and underwater elements to register the living geography and record it in the wings of music in an atmosphere of cosmic affirmation. Here is the game of phonetic compass that words achieve as combined in the poem, expressing clearly discernible agglutinated elements:

Nunca he dicho / I have never said
que la vida sea una derrota / that life is a defeat
sino una plaza donde irrumpir / but rather a place to invade
con toda la carga del músculo-pezuña. / with the entire strength of the hoof-muscle.
.....
Para que tus hombros / So that your shoulders
de surco y siembra, para que tu cara que me repite / of furrow and sow, so that your face
lucha. / that repeats struggle to me.
.....

Pero no sufras mientras te muestro / So that you don't suffer as I show you
mis manos de estructura precisa / my hands of precise structure
para amarrar tu cuerpo que es sembrar la tierra / to tie your body which is to sow the land
de perfumes y raíces. / with perfume and roots.

The elements that disseminate in the fragment above are *shoulders, face, and body*. They are all words (signs) nouns with their corresponding metaphor in a gradual movement that in crescendo goes from the particular to the general. Here is the breakdown, in the order in which they appear in the fragment with their metaphors, a phenomenon that is not only descriptive but also conditions the fundamental reality.

The metaphor *hombros de surco y siembra* (shoulders of furrow and sow) alters the conventional comparative phenomenon: in a fantastic or unreal image. We identify the third comparison as one of cause and effect. The phrase *cara que me repite lucha* (face that repeats struggle to me) expresses a mirror phenomenon. The face of the loved woman is a mirror that reflects the poet's struggle at the time of chaos. Coincidentally, the image begins with the loved man's face which is the one that determines the loved woman's expression. The coordinating element *mis manos* (my hands) *para amarrar tu cuerpo amado* (to tie your [loved] body) which is "to sow the land". *Cuerpo* (body) is the substantive element, synonymous with *surco* (furrow), of land, which ought to be sowed. The noun *cuerpo* (body), generalizing or recollecting factor of the substantive semiotic elements which have been disseminated, is not a comparison or a metaphor, but rather that the *cuerpo* (body) is the entity that ought to be sowed. The last sign expressed in this case, the recollecting factor, requires two integrated elements in one verbal phrase in order to be precise: *sembrar la tierra de perfumes y raíces* (sow the land with perfume and roots).

Sobre la música gathers various topics that appear repeatedly in Cartañá's work: eroticism, music, chaos, order (Apollonian and Dionysian), included in *Chansons Oubliées* (1985) and, as has been previously expressed, reappear in the sixth part of the booklet we discuss. Generic nature is the background in which the poem takes place. The essential sign in the opuscle is still the lyrical subjectivity that fuses the poetic universe with the creator's life experience, seen in the light of what one of his best critics, Carlos Morales, has accurately named an intimate Neo-romanticism.

VI. Fourth Moment in Luis Cartañá's poetry:

La Mandarina y el Fuego (The mandarin and the fire, 1983) and *Los Cuadernos del Señor Aliloil* (Aliloil's booklets, 1985) or the Primitive Sparkles of Logic. In *La mandarina y el fuego* (The mandarin and the fire), according to the author of its prologue, Francisco Matos Paoli, "Luis Cartañá names things", and he adds, "He finds Palandin's revelation in things. His formal abundance emerges from an interior consistency as full of words as it was of shadows".¹

Matos Paoli's critical view was accurate. We name that abundance surreal Neo-baroque. The poet again agglutinates elements in a Wagnerian dimension in which shows a true interior revolution, somewhat hermetic, demiurgic, like almost all of Luis' work, done in the light of Platonic and Alexandrine readings.

In referring to Mallarmé, Hugo Friedrich says in *Estructura de la lírica moderna* (Structure of modern lyrics):

Siempre serán pocos los lectores / There will always be few readers
que tengan la paciencia necesaria para / with the patience necessary to
descifrar el insólito lenguaje de / decipher Mallarmé's unusual language...
Mallarmé... Mallarmé se ocupó / Mallarmé tried
repetidamente en sus reflexiones / repeatedly, in his reflections,

de justificar su lenguaje particular. / to justify his particular language.
Y todas ellas dan vueltas a la idea / And all of them ponder the idea
de que al lenguaje hay que devolverle / that language needs the
aquella libertad en la que tiene abiertos / liberty in which it has open
los caminos de los primitivos destellos / roads to the primitive sparkle
de la lógica² / of logic.

Mallarmé's concept is that language needs to have its freedom to express returned to it, rediscovering, the old sparkle of the lost logic, and our poet's language is like that, especially in his last moment.

In *La mandarina y el fuego* (The mandarin and the fire) poetic plenitude is achieved, an encounter with the ineffable, which has allowed Matos Paoli in the collection of poem's prologue to state: "Luis Cartaña / is / a great poet of our language".³

This booklet repeats topics from the previous ones. However, they now have an accurate and restrained balance between the verses of *arte menor* (lesser art) and *arte mayor* (greater art) [see Azarcón], *Acuarela en tres tiempos* (Watercolor in three times), *De la palabra* (About word), *De la piel y los cuerpos* (About skin and body), *Pequeño canto a las palabras* (Small poem to words), *Onomatopeya* (Onomatopoeia), etc. The main topics: love, childhood, language (words), social realism (the leveling idea of social elements), art (tendency to see a poem like etching or altarpiece).

Let's review the most accurate instant: reflections of a late altarpiece of Fra-Angélico, *Frente a una ciudad, Mayagüez vista de lejos* (In front of a city, Mayagüez seen from far away), in its second fragment, the idea of equalizing or leveling men in the world is presented in a rather original way.

The image of the illuminated mandarin is subjected to what Friedrich calls *primitives sparkle of logic*. The mandarin is an image of the world in lights. Let's see the type of metaphor or primitive analogy (as we have decided to call it for reasons we shall explain in another work).

La mandarina sigue girando sobre su misma esfera /
The mandarin continues to orbit on its own sphere
y ya mostrando su otra faz / and when it shows its other face
y la linterna mágica sin espiral, redonda, / and the magic lantern without a spiral, round,
va girando (la misma ley diurna) como su dueño /
spins (the same daytime law) as its owner
indica. / states.

The fourth fragment is a recount of objects seen as pieces of the painting, of the altarpiece that the poem is.

It is interesting to list the objects which are so different. All of them involved in the light of the canvas; *clock, binoculars, microscope, telescope, harp, spider, fly*. They are inanimate animate elements that seem to be resting on the canvas. Keep in mind how the poet wants to dominate irrationality, how he turns to what has already been quoted: *los primitivos destellos de la lógica* (primitive sparkles of logic). The poet does not explain: clock that ends the hours and the light of the painting; binoculars, which allow us to see at a distance, microscope, to scrutinize details, telescopes, to see the most distant stars.

See how the poet takes us to the meaning of the mandarin:

Encontramos juntos / Together we found
unos telescopios preciosos para ver las / some precious telescopes to see the
estrellas, más distantes / the stars, more distant

a otras horas del día, cuando ya la mandarina / at another time of day, when the mandarin
already
lanzada al espacio, imprecisa, / thrown into space, imprecise,
queda sin fuego, sin la luz / remains fireless, lightless
de la magia que nos rodea de luces de color / of the magic that surrounds us with color
lights
de tiempo. / of time.

Time and light are the attributes of the mandarin disseminated in the poem. The last fragment is beautiful and everything is involved in it, like an orange Fra-Angelico light; they reunite, they come together as companions at the table, while God is invited and the mother stirs the soup. "Se sirven/las legumbres, el pan, se hace el milagro" (The legumes and bread are served, the miracle takes place). The miracle is provided by the internal light of peace and silence. In this poem, Cartañá praises two elements that are very distant from the rest of his work. Words become serene and allow silence to be captivated.

Los cuadernos del señor Aliloil (Aliloil's booklets) close, for now, the lyrical production Luis Cartañá provides us with. Very original poems. The booklet opens with an introduction A manera de prólogo (To serve as prologue), signed by its author.

El Señor Aliloil, is no one else than the author himself. He gives us the key to identifying his being with *Aliloil*.

Aliloil había nacido en una / Aliloil had been born in one
de nuestras tierras de la América hispana, / of our lands in Hispanic America,
había emigrado a otras tierras, / he had emigrated to other lands,
donde muy joven había conseguido / where very young he had found
una cátedra de ética. En cuya / an ethics course. In which we
cátedra supimos, tuvo diferencias / knew, he had unresolvable differences
inanzables con los organismos rectores / with the authorities
de dicha institución. / in said institution.

The book is shaken by an authentic melancholy which is a consequence of the disappointment of a man who has given his all and is denied what he has a right to. The poem titled "En la selva" (In the jungle) reveals a personal experience, the anecdote is clear, which is not common in the lyric we discuss here. The poet reaches caricature in the following foreshortened figure:

Ellos a sí mismo entonces / They did not deny anything to
no se negaron nada. Todo lo conseguían, / themselves. They got everything, everything
todo, la campiña, la hierba, la libertad, los / countryside, grass, freedom, the
montes donde correr, los colmillos. Sí, de tanto / forests to run in, cuspids. Yes, from getting
conseguirse hasta los colmillos les brotaron. / so much even their cuspids showed.
Afilados y peligrosos colmillos de jabalíes. / Sharp and dangerous wild boar cuspids.
Jabalíes, esas especies de cerdos, pero salvajes / Wild boars, those species of pigs, but wild
que deambulan por la selva, jadeando. / that wander in the jungle, panting.

The booklet is a succession of Aliloil's mood, who moves within the formulas of social realism and feels the pain of his existence and reflects on life and death.

Very pretty poems *Renoir* (1875), *Renoir* (1900), *Renoir* (Colección privada - Private Collection) and *Renoir* (Colección privadísima II Parte - Very Private Collection II Part), great poems of arte menor (lesser art), with a synthesis power of first order. Possibly, the instant

(*Renoir* - 1900) is the happiest one of the brief art poems. Luis Cartañá knew how to capture sober brushstrokes and an economy of words focused on the moment they describe. Let's see:

la noche sin vestido: / The undressed night:
la estrella es un clavel blanco / the star is a white carnation
sobre mi piel que espera. / over my waiting skin.
Mientras tú y yo dormimos / While you and I sleep
la noche sigue siendo / the night continues to be
un pájaro negro con sus alas abiertas. / a black bird with open wings.
La caja es un arroyo / The box is a stream
donde reposa tu cuerpo... / where your body rests...

The vision of death is repeated in the collection of poems. The final poem is a joy for Aliloil, written by the author of the prologue. Remember that Aliloil is a part of Cartañá himself. Here are some rhetoric questions that no one answers.

Pero, dice Aliloil, ¿Existen los muertos? / But, Aliloil says: Do the dead exist?
¿Es verdad que nos esperan / Is it true they wait for us
y en la gran fiesta celebrarnos? / and that in the great party we celebrate?
Y ¿Si no hay puentes? / What if there are no bridges?
Y ¿Si al morir, no nos acuden alas? / What if when we die, we are not given wings?
Y, ¿Si solamente es la fe que nos mantiene vivos / What if faith is the only thing that keeps
us alive
y los mantiene muertos, en fiesta? / and keeps us dead in party?

Conclusion

We have covered the poetic work of Luis Cartañá, born in Cuba and resident of Puerto Rico during twenty long years.

We study his poetry in four moments to subject it to critical analysis. The first moment is limited to the vision of chaos and hope in *Estos humanos dioses* (These human gods); the second, *Canciones Olvidadas* (Forgotten Songs) which expresses a complex reality of state of mind that goes from Dionysian plenitude to an Apollonian place of peace. It is the moment of affirmation of fragmentation over units. The third moment is limited to the poems included in *Límites al Mar* (Limits to the sea, 1978), which we have identified as a new vision of existence, in which the poet is immersed in social realism. The poems titled *Sobre la música* (About music, 1981) are collected in that same moment, which we call Melodic Intermezzo of this poetry. In this moment the poet continues to work the concept of fragmentation of kaleidoscopic things, especially in music. In addition, there is a dialectic struggle between chaos and order where eroticism imposes hegemony by establishing the communications between the loved man and the loved woman.

The fourth moment gathers the collection of poems titled *La Mandarina y el fuego* (Mandarin and the fire, 1983) and *Los cuadernos del señor Aliloil* (Aliloil's booklets, 1986), with which we finish the analysis. It is important to say that lyrical plenitude is seen, in our opinion, in the last two quoted booklets where his own human vicissitude is presented, painful experiences expressed with the least possible amount of rhetoric elements. The first booklet *La Mandarina y el fuego* (Mandarin and the fire) summarizes all topics and almost all forms of Cartañá's poetry. Metaphors and similes become pristine and primitive. In the second booklet, of very personal character, where we feel that Aliloil is Cartañá himself, in its greatest degree of melancholic beauty there is a farewell, the swan in its poem disappears.

He knows how to use metaphors, similes, and symbols; the language is clear, burning with life, and the most varied elements of the being and things express plenitude. He goes

from chaos to order and order to chaos, within an eccentric and amazing view of the world. We believe this vision expresses itself completely. Surrealist poet with romantic attitudes, Neo-baroque, he always reveals his identity without forgetting the man who suffers exploitation and misery. He knows how to play demiurgically with words achieving a rhythm that sometimes becomes syncopated; disseminating noun or verbal elements in the verses he magically gathered or collected.

When we study the work of Luis Cartañá we can state what Francisco Matos Paoli once said, which we have already mentioned: "Luis Cartañá (is) a major poet of our language".

Footnotes

¹ Francisco Matos Paoli, "Poesía sobre Poesía" (Prólogo), *La Mandarina y el Fuego*, P.2.

² Hugo Friedrich, *Estructuras de la lírica moderna*, p. 182.

³ Op. Cit., p.2.