

THE ROLE OF THE OTHERNESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE POETIC SUBJECT IN THE WORKS OF MIQUEL ÀNGEL RIERA

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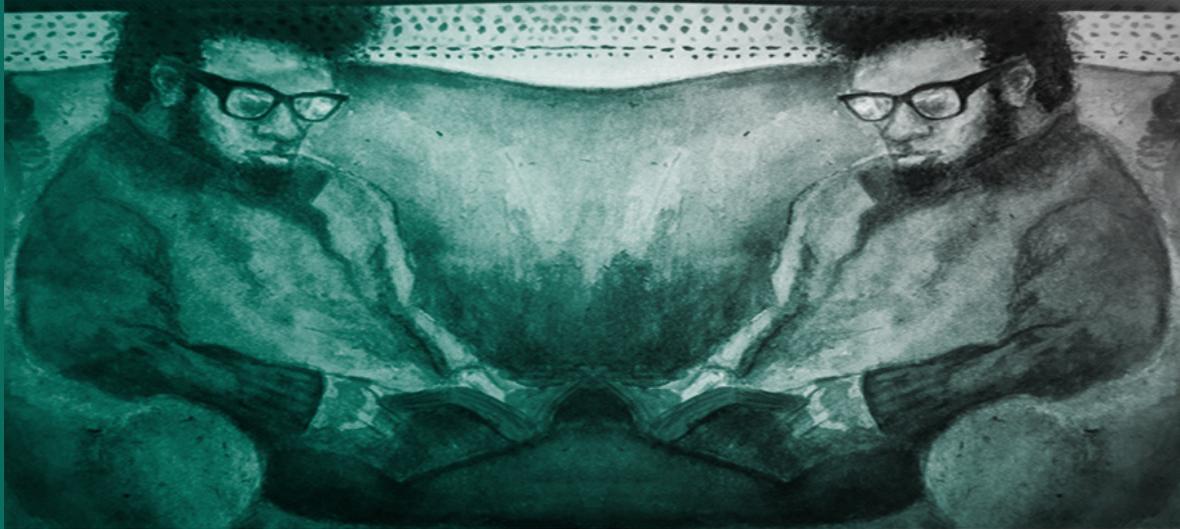
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Summary || In this article we discuss the role of otherness in the poetic universe of Miquel Àngel Riera (Manacor, 1930-1996) taken as an official ideology that is intersubjectively accepted. In the construction of the poetic subject his own discourse is presented as a dialogical relationship with other particular discourses, which work as hypotexts more or less tacit and utterly alien to him. It is for this dialectical logic self/other that the subject of the enunciation is not questioned, but it remains reinforced as a model of what is described as the human condition.

Keywords || Miquel Àngel Riera | poetic subject | alterity.

0. Introduction

This article discusses the construction of the lyric subject in the poetic works of Miquel Àngel Riera (1930-96) taking as a starting point the relation among the exclusion/inclusion of the Other. The materials selected cover almost all his works, from *Poemes a Nai* (1955) to *El pis de la Badia* (1992)¹. The procedure will consist of the application of some theoretical proposals, as for example those that understand the text as a weave of discourses or hypotexts and re-elaborate the antique dialectics of I/Other placing the Otherness as a poetic element within a dialogical dynamics². All these approaches are strongly associated to the criticism of experimental poetics that surrounded Riera's production environment and from which he moved away. However, what we try to demonstrate is that the application of this framework is also productive and pertinent to a different corpus which, flanked by Blai Bonet's formal rupture or Damià Huguet's experimentation, offers us a re-founded classicism that articulates in a well-balanced and clear way about the individual's freedom and its right to its unquestionable subjectivity³.

Just to introduce the characterization of Riera's poetic, it is important to stress that the internal enunciator keeps a recognizable identity book after book whereby he draws a unified system of thinking that conforms the logic of its poetic universe. Thus, the whole of his production becomes a weave of interrelated pieces that completes the global sense of this universe⁴ and the self becomes a constant voice of enunciation that amalgamates other discourses and identities. The subject of the enunciation is shaped by the necessity to love others so they will cease to be the others, at the same time disobeying the alterity that it considers unacceptable. The self claims itself in a way that allows to be itself and not the others. Only thus, protected, the self will continue to resize itself through the free exercise of love, which is inclusive and makes the others become the self.

1. Ontology, epistemology and morality

1.1. About anthropocentrism and the transcendental

From the beginning, the solution to deal with the coexistence with the Other starts from a commitment in favour of the human condition, understood as the sum of the individuals that participate in it and focusing on its physical dimension. This also results in terms of an anthropocentric bias, as opposed to a theocentric one.

According to Rosselló, the proposed alternative regarding the conception of "dehumanization", which for the self implies a religion

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1 | We will stick to *Obra poètica completa* (1953-93) edited by Salobre in 2004, as it includes the latest versions of each book with a critic edition by Pere Rosselló. However, this time we will dismiss the young poetic production – which is included in the complete works maybe with a documental intention, but which Miquel Àngel Riera decided not to publish in life – and we will take *Poemes a Nai* as the work that initiates his poetic career, and it follows *Biografia*, *La bella de l'home*, *Paràbola i clam de la cosa humana*, *Llibre de les benaventurances* and *El pis de la badia*. We will also exclude the poetic versions and occasional poems in order to not scatter the focal centre that these six books conform. We will use the following abbreviations: *PN*, *Poemes a Nai* (1965); *Bio*, *Biografia* (1974); *PiC*, *Paràbola i clam de la cosa humana* (1974); *BH*, *La bella de l'home* (1979); *LiB*, *Llibre de les benaventurances* (1980), and *PB*, *El pis de la badia* (1992). All verses cited belong to this edition.

2 | Martínez (2007) has been of great help to select the theoretical references that vertebrate this text.

3 | Josep M. Llopart describes three promotions of writers that coexist in Mallorca during the 60s: the survivors of the Mallorca school or old group, the post-war writers or intermediate group and the youngsters that started to write in the 50s. Nevertheless, the critic noted the independence of our writer: "Un cas a part és el de Miquel Àngel Riera, que per l'edat hauria de figurar entre els més joves de la promoció dels cinquanta" (Llopart, 1964: 225). And as he later stated in the prologue of *Poemes a Nai*: "No va caldre a Miquel Àngel Riera lliurar-se a la modesta revolta provincial que els seus companys de promoció vam assajar" (Llopart, 1965: 5).

that preaches a hierarchy of a divine entity, is based on the fact that it must recover the etymological and original meaning of *re-ligare*, or that which allows the bonds among individuals to be maintained (Rosselló, 1981: 119-128)⁵. The difference that implies to the self the intangible transcendence over which the man would impose himself is not dealt with the annihilation of the alien notion, but with its use and subversion⁶. Because all of this, it is often used a language with religious roots to describe different human activities, for example the emotional relationships: “Suprema eucaristia del paisatge / consagrat a ser entès / per mor de ser, tu i jo, de carn alhora” (*LiB*: 147). Thus, it is showed the sacralization of man’s own kind of love, the carnal love⁷.

In the following verses: “Benaventurat, entre tots i amb un cel propi, / aquell que posseeix el cos que estima” (*LiB*: 165), Riera puts into practice the idea of heaven as a privileged space of well-being, the place of a *post-mortem* peaceful rest that some religions promise. According to the notion of quotation that Compagnon proposes in *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation* (1979), to say “heaven” would be to say/quote the Other, making it evident and taking a position regarding it. To quote is to borrow, and a borrowing is a kind of appropriation – the self uses the word “heaven” but, at this point, this place already means something different. This second step in the poetic process could be explained through what Bakhtin calls “semi-alien words” (1989 [1975]), a concept based on the idea that language is not a system of signs with an arbitrary, denotative and stable meaning, but that this meaning is ideologically connoted⁸. It is true that the poetic self would use words that are no longer neuter, but they have been taken from contexts of a decisive cultural and historic dimension. These words are full of multiple intentions of the agents that had used them previously but also contemporarily. These intentions define the general horizon of prospects where the self bursts in and denounces as fraud. That is the way the *pathos* transmits it, and this is the game that reveals what is *ego* and what is *alter*.

1.2. About the concrete and the abstract

We are moving through a poetic universe where the possibility of knowing and loving is reduced to the closer and empirically recognizable individual. Any other alternative is hypocritical or it refers to a feeling of low human quality. Thus:

Mai no escriuré el poema o pasquí gesticulant
 contra el peu maleït que engruna els negres
 ni tractaré de salvar les bones formes
 amb el gest fàcil
 d'alçar el puny d'un vers
 contra la guerra del Vietnam.

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Rosselló agrees: “no hi trobam, per exemple, els tòpics de l’explotació dels obrers ni les reflexions sobre Espanya, tan freqüents en la poesia realista” (1999: 202). He does not categorise Riera into any of the generations, but, as a narrator, he would belong to the 70s promotion (1997: 46-47). Therefore, Riera is a difficult-to-classify author.

4 | “Cap dels meus llibres és el que en diuen un aplec. Ben al contrari, si una virtut tenen [...] és la de la seva rigorosa unitat dins la qual es respecta sempre fidelíssimament l’ordre estricte de creació dels poemes. Des de mi, me sembla clar que cada un d’ells és sempre conseqüència de l’anterior i principi generador del que segueix. Així, tota la meva obra és sempre una ‘ampliació’ i s’aguanta, si s’aguanta, com les pedres d’un arc antic: per l’intercanvi de forces que és resultat d’un curós arrencament sense fissures”. Introductory note by the author in *La bellesa de l’home* (Riera, 2004 [1979]: 71). Other comments thereon: “Tots els meus llibres de poesia posteriors a *Poemes a Nai* són ampliacions d’ell, formant entre tots un llibre unitari” (Busquets i Querol, 1981: 33) and *El sistema de valors existencials, ètics i estètics en l’obra poètica de Miquel Àngel Riera* (Nadal, 2010: 3-4).

5 | This interpretation has also been adopted by Arbona:

Sí, parlaré, vull parlar, cara a cara,
de l'home que conec, del que
encalenteix el meu paisatge de viure.
(*Bio*: 66)

This is the way the self reflects about the human condition, and it understands it as something shared by all men and women of all times which can only come from the case of the “contemporary man”⁹: “parlem d’ara mateix, parlem d’aquí, / parlau amb mi d’avui, d’aquesta vida, / d’aquesta que s’esmuny, de la que ens dol i ens rapinya” (*BH*: 79). One of the main issues relating to this contemporary man would be precisely the freedom of the unbounded individual (Dolç, 1979: 211) and one of his ethical tendencies the will to know the “unknown man”:

Duent posada tota la fam de viure
per endavant,
la delícia major és aperduar-se
pels barris tristos de l’home
desconegut,
captirar-se a trescar-lo
pam a pam,
(*BH*, 82)

The individual who can be known must be chosen and specified, the mass that cannot be identified with concrete identities is abstract. What is concrete/recognizable/lovable as the antithesis of what is abstract/unrecognizable/unlovable, that is, man versus mankind¹⁰. The poet presents this to us in the following way: when we “parlam amb lletra gòtica de la humanitat”, we cannot commit ourselves with that who “[...] que en pèl és home / unitari i concret” (*BH*: 89). The proposal comes closer to the Hegelian thinking about the necessity of limiting the being: establishing limits saves the being from abstraction. The emerging dialectics runs between the being and the abstract non-being, that is, the Other (Hegel, 1979: 148-50). All of this helps us to realize that the coexistence of the self alongside the alterity, if we understand both as poetic elements, is the representation of a relation based on phenomenology. It would be interesting to compare this relationship with the postulates of Ricœur, Buber o Levinas.

The Rieran self refuses the distinction that Western metaphysics drags between the phenomenon (sensory and concrete) and noumenon (related to the mind and abstract) – to say it in Kantian words – and it concentrates everything in a worldly and anthropocentric dimension. Its knowledge method is directed to the sensory phenomenon as the only possible reality. According to this same approach, goodness is not external to the being as an ultra-sensitive notion, but it emerges from the subject’s experience and *praxis*. Ethics and knowledge are tightly bound in the Rieran logic because the self is committed to deliver judgment only about what it knows intimately, taking into

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“Per a Miquel Àngel Riera, la religió agafa el sentit etimològic de *relligació* amb alguna cosa, sobretot amb els altres homes, i potencia així la vessant més solidària d’aquest concepte” (Arbona, 2004: 12).

6 | According to Vidal i Alcover, this is a Blai Bonet’s genuine resource: Miquel Àngel Riera and Jaume Santandreu would have inspired themselves by Blai Bonet’s mixture of vitality and sensuality, as well as his re-elaboration of the religious element. Vidal cites Joan Oliver: “ ‘En Bonet parla sempre amb un sant Crist a la mà; però se’l treu de la bragueta’. Bonet, com Riera, ens parlarà d’un erotisme i una passió que es relacionen amb el sagrat, però mai a través del misticisme: la sensualitat és i parteix de la carn” (Vidal, 1993: 195).

7 | There are plenty of examples: “posant la mà tranquil·la dalt la Bíblia dels homes / jo dic i jur / *solemnement* i escric / que vull la flor salvatge d’una paraula teva” (*BH*: 97).

8 | Not until the enunciator has appropriated the words facing the different meanings these may have, has he shaped his ideology (Bakhtin, 1989 [1979]: 110).

9 | Vicenç Llorca justifies the necessity of the self to talk necessarily about the man of its time because only from him, from the known example, the self could refer to the whole humanity (Llorca, 1995: 143).

10 | The preference for considering people individually is expressed recurrently. We shall read these verses that state that man has the condition of being an individual. The idea is boosted with the fragmentation of the verse in monosyllabic units:

account that to know people means an ethical gesture of inclusion and salvation of the individual from that which is anonymous, as it is abstract and alien.

1.3. Relativism and Absolutism

From this non-submission to abstract, non-real ideas, it will be justified that general rules and dogmas cannot contradict an individual decision nor suppress any will resulting from experience. In other words, the self uses a code of antidogmatic ethics because it identifies rule with abstraction. Any generalized guideline is speculative, it only responds to standard situations without considering their specificity or their particular and unrepeatable circumstance in which any real episode must take place.

Moreover, we must add that life is dynamic and thinking is alive and non-definitive (Rosselló, 1982: 48). The moral decisions would be relative subject to the historicity of experience. The issue about relativism derives from the scarcity of perennial certainties: “Tenim poques certeses: / i, amb tot això, he après / mitja grapada de mitges coses...” (PiC: 122). Apart from this minor detail, the rest is changeable and conscious of this natural instability.

Then, it becomes difficult to trust what at first sight seemed unshakeable convictions from the enunciator, who, in turn, theoretically shares with us some keys about existence and salvation, absolute and imperative assertions, such as: “[...] Estimaràs l’home singular / part damunt dels déus / i els homes plurals” (Bio: 66). It seems we are dealing with contradictions until we realize that to resort to this relativism is the only guarantee of being able to boundlessly exert the individuals’ freedom to be and to decide, not once and for all, but each time successively. The license to destabilize truths and adapt them to the particularity and episodic nature of subjective experience is like a wildcard that the subject saves to apply to itself in relation to its own certainties¹¹:

Caldria que tinguéssim sempre
obsessivament en compte, a l’estil de
tenir-ne, de tant saber-ho, una crostera
infectada, que tota referència a l’home la
farem sempre, irremeiablement, en termes
relatius.
(PiC: 128)

Thus, statements like the following: “Més principi tenc que el clar de no tenir-ne” (LiB: 160) must be explained within an internal logic that considers relativism not as just an absence of ethical intuition, but as a faithfulness to the conclusions derived from vital experimentation and a precaution against absolutist moral judgments¹². When exposed

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“[l’home té] / l’escairada i mineral condició de ser-ho / inapel·lablement / cada dia, / un / a / un, / un darrere l’altre” (BH, I, v. 35-41).

11 | Another sample of this, but from prose, is the character of Gabriela in *Panorama amb dona*, who is full of rage and hatred but develops through the story and gains a high level of awareness of the meanness of her enemies, people from the town, and she cannot put herself to the same level as them. Rosselló describes it as an example of the comprehension of the relativity of values (2005: 88), which helps her to go through a legitimate act of taking revenge on the murders of her husband. This comprehension arises from the faithfulness to her own feelings, which would take her to a noble position and would lead her to abandon the village, despise its inhabitants and to retire in a place called Vinya Nova, on purpose for her. Gabriela stands for a case of superiority obtained in relation to others which can parallel that of the poetic self: it has also gone along a path through a love experience and it has understood the meaning of life.

to danger, the self rebels: “Vull pecar molt i de totes les maneres, / a contrapèl de tots els manaments” (*PB*: 183). The use of the words “sin” and “commandments” define the existence of an ideological Otherness that understands the concepts of lack and prescription, in relation to which the self constructs itself as a dissident.

1.4. Alterity

For the above mentioned reasons, we can determine transcendence, abstraction and absolutism as the main ingredients of alterity, against which the self wants to impose the discourse of its own difference. This alterity can be easily identified with the Platonic-Christian metaphysics that creates a duality and places a heavenly reign at a superior level to the world; a morality, which could be Catholic Conservative, that stigmatizes sexuality and the body and some political and social values of control and repression associated to Francoism and post-Francoism – we will see examples further on –, as well as a generally absolutist and unique pattern of thought. It is not the intention of this essay to put forward concrete correlations with the extraliterary field. What arouses our interest is the fact that the self demands an alternative to this Otherness which is intersubjectively assumed – occupying an hypothetical centre that the self wants to displace – and it is presented in three transverse sections: the human one, still the manifested philanthropy, as the individual can get lost within the abstraction: “[l’home] quan deixa de tenir un nom propi i es converteix en un corpuscle inserit dins la gran massa es converteix en una bèstia perillosa proveïda d’una infinita capacitat de fer mal” (Busquets i Querol, 1981: 32); the metaphysic one, because in the name of entelechy undermines man’s autonomy and responsibility: “precisament perquè és home se sent impulsat a elevar la seva condició sobre la de qualsevol possibilitat metafísica o teològica” (Rosselló, 1982: 26); and the epistemological and moral one, which follows a natural relativism of the human condition, the denial of which would lead to the absolutism of the idea supposedly pure and innate and to the possible morals values derived from it. To sum up, any ideology that includes these characteristics would be something alien to the self, a model of man that exhibits the achievable higher degree of what, according to the self, the human condition is supposed to consist of. As we will see, the analysis could be formulated as a tension between the discourse (people I/you) and history (tertiary) in Benveniste’s terms. Needless to say that in this case we are referring to a literary discourse that occurs in a story or poetic-cognitive context consisting precisely of the alterity we have just described and which explains the consolidation of the self as a poetic element in relation to alterity.

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12 | Riera cites Jaume Santandreu: “Crec que els tractats de moral i altres herbes / són els invents dels coixos / perquè els altres no corrin”. Riera’s poetic reflection includes a discourse that breaks with the idea of a moral code: “I és que aquí ja no hi ha tractats que hi valguin. Cal anar directe cap a l’home, per alliberar-li la persona urgentment [...]. Quin aire fresc, Jaume. Quin posat de llunyania el teu, enfront d’aquell terrible, cruelíssim catolicisme que, de petits, tan ocupat estava desxifrant, dent a dent, tota la maquinària del temor, que no li quedava temps per a parlar-nos prou de l’home” (Riera, 1970: 5-8).

2. Personal pronouns

Que ningú no digui «l'altre» a un altre.
Que ningú no digui «jo» al seu nom.
(Blai Bonet, «GASPAR HAUSER. núm. 2»)

2.1. About you and the nonperson

Consequently, *alter* is a discourse that relates to those who disseminate a manipulative ideology against the free will of the individuals. The relators of this discourse, who like the Hobbesquian wolf are in a dehumanized state, and from whom the self tries to move away, are called *he/she/they*, a third person who has not got a direct discourse, the nonperson (Benveniste, 1966). In short, the Otherness is something that dehumanizes, that impedes the man to be man, and as an ideological enemy, it acts through the manipulative ruling classes of all kinds who exceed their authority and try to eliminate others' possibilities of personal development, as in:

No cal fer l'esforç
de voler,
ni pensar,
ni sentir:
ells ho fan en nom nostre.
(*PiC*: 120)

In the restriction, they are also: “[...] aquells que han admès l'ofici / tan assenyalat / de conrear el prohibir” (*PiC*: 120). Either way, the problem with the abuse of ideological and structured leadership is that the doctrine is presented as an absolute truth: “amb l'arrogància infinita del que està i es veu / tan segur del seu gest com de la data exacta / de naixença de la Veritat: la pròpia” (*PiC*: 119)”. That is why the self dissociates itself from it:

Des d'aquest coster t'estim, no d'altra banda,
no des dels bancs amb respatller de les esglésies
reservats per a uns homes esveltíssims
que Déu supòs que estima més,
vora la cadira del cacic, des de la qual
ens quadriculen la fe i la fam amb un tira-ratlles
(*PiC*: 120)

When it does so, the self clearly uses alterity as a benchmark to situate itself. The Apophatic description that determines where the self is not would imply the dialogism between the self's ideology and that of the Otherness¹³. At the same time, the self counts on a positive referent, that is, its own experience of free love, especially with Nai, a counterexample of the ideology of difference: “no comprenc ni de lluny / el secular anatema contra la carn, / la rara paradoxa dels gaudis anomenats prohibits, / la catalogació jeràrquica de les innobleses de

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13 | El dialogisme és la noció bakhtiniana antònima del monologisme. Implica construir el discurs poètic en contínua interacció amb els discursos aliens (Bajtín, 1989 [1979]: 279).

la carn” (*BH*: 97). Again, it is clear that there is a previous appropriation of the words that had bestowed a specific value to facts – according to the ideology of alterity, the flesh is ignoble, but the self contradicts it and concedes an ironic value to the same adjective. In terms of grammar, the third person cannot assume a statement, because its natural position is that of someone who does not speak nor listen, but this is not an impediment for the third person to be present as a hypotext. The self states this and talks to it.

From *Biografia* (1974) on, the love typology that goes beyond that of the lovers’ is clearly extended and it is applied to other closer people. Nai would share prominence with other guests, like family and friends: “Mumare, germà Toni, / per tots / l’amor” (*Bio*: 48). The *yous* have made their appearance, and with the self they would become us.

Paràbola i clam de la cosa humana (1974)¹⁴ is where Riera better draws the distinction of roles between the self (enunciatory voice), the *you* (Nai) and the *we* (I + you + other beloved people), all of them belonging to a group of individuals that can save each other. In another more ambivalent category there is the plural *you*, that can be part of the *we* or not, depending on the internal context. Finally, the *they* are described meticulously as alienated identities that would always substitute “els noms d’aquells que sols són gent / i res tenen a veure amb els altres que ens salven” (*PB*: 212). At a paratext level, the author assumes the same classification than the dedication in *Biografia*: “A tots quants heu assolit categoria de vosaltres, havent pogut no passar mai de just ser ells. I, entre tots, a Tu, que em tens engrunada la biografia” (*Bio*: 28).

2.2. Another third person

To finish with this repertoire, in *Llibre de les Benaventurances* (1980) Otherness is analysed from a new perspective. The self, which before had confronted the *they* – the ones who forbid, the manipulative, etc. –, now will defend those who, unlike the self, have allowed themselves to be dominated by these *they*: they are the traditionally marginalized due to the prejudices spread by the alien discourse. The self does it granting a provocative degree of blessing to all who, in sharing a disapproved characteristic by the status quo, have been victims of alterity’s effect, without anybody having taken into consideration their human validity and nor respected their difference. For example, those accused of being impure by puritanism: “Benaventurats aquells als qui trastorna / la més indefugible necessitat de tocar” (*LiB*: 158), or those accused of lying: “Honor etern als mentiders! Embullen” (*LiB*: 163). Here, alterity is defined again as a predominant ideology, for which considers that liars and the impure ones – among other examples – can be stigmatized. The self defences them, and with

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13 | Dialogism or dialogic are notions formulated by Bakhtin about monologism. They imply the construction of the poetic discourse through the continuous interaction with alien discourses. (Bakhtin, 1989 [1979]: 279).

14 | The book *Paràbola i clam de la cosa humana* (1974) has been considered as one of the more explicit works regarding denunciation and rebelliousness, yet Miquel Dolç remind us that, in different ways, rebelliousness is an attitude which is present in all the works by Riera, starting with the intimate *Poemes a Nai*: “el poeta, des del seu començ, esquarterava sense miraments tota una teoria de rutines, d’hàbits i de prejudicis” (Riera, 1979: 5-9). But it is in *PiC* where the poet “estableix en aquest context (els anys conflictius previs a la mort del dictador) un parèntesi necessari, més aspre i més sarcàstic en l’arrencada, per situar el protagonista en el món real i històric” and that is why he writes “fora del seu to habitual”, (Díaz de Castro, 2003 [1979]: 11-24).

the same intention, denounces all kind of broad classifications into good and bad, because: “Jo els conec i els estim...” (*LiB*: 163). And it is stated that only through this direct knowledge they can be judged: “és la gent més veraç, ho són [mentiders] per vici” (*LiB*: 163). Liars as well as the impure ones are third persons. The self externalises in this new tertiary category an image with which it shows solidarity, a new category that could become its own reflection of those who are the *they* for the self, but who from their centrality perceive the rest as others. This subversion of centres and peripheries represents an inclusive drive, almost a humanitarian one, of the subject who is willing to love whoever it considers lovable without considering any prejudice, and who at its turn defines itself as a rebel to oppose the predominant judgement.

2.3. Singular and plural

We have seen that the self is divided between the need to love, to know the unknown man, and to be in communion with people. At the same time, the self needs to protect itself by excluding the bearers of the alien discourse. This intolerance, as we have stated, is fixed in the self's rebellion, who is the owner of its destiny, although it is a Sisyphean destiny: “Benaventurat aquell / que sempre ensopega amb la mateixa pedra” (*LiB*: 148). And this is because one cannot have a pre-established life course. Therefore, the self rebels and says no. As in Camus' existentialism, the defence of individual's freedom makes licit the individual's defence of its space of liberty and the substitution of the subdued attitude for a rebellious one. As in Camus' *L'homme révolté* (1951) his no is also a yes¹⁵:

Deixau-me decidir per quin pelatge
de bèstia humana
m'agrada dur eixerida l'espina
i per quin almud de persona
em vull sagnar tot jo
(*PiC*: 108-9)

With either an assertion or a negative, one must position itself and face those who try to dominate and to end with the right of self-managing one's own existence and coexistence:

Així la veu, de cop i de per sempre,
d'una urpada feresta, deixaria un signe
indeleble, com una destrallada enmig del front,
de tots aquells que ens agafen per l'ansa
i ens arrossequen lluny
del nostre estil de ser humans de pinte en ampla
agermanats i clars, escollidors i tranquils.
(*PiC*: 121)

It seemed that the eagerness to fight for individuals' rights has

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15 | “What is a rebel? A man who says no: but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes as soon as he begins to think for himself. [...] He rebels because he categorically refuses to submit to conditions that he considers intolerable and also because he is confusedly convinced that his position is justified, or rather, because in his own mind he thinks that he ‘has the right to ...’.” (Camus, 2000)

reclaimed all the prominence of the self's demands. Nevertheless, we have just heard it talking in the name of the tribe, using the first person plural, since there are collective rights that exceed that of the individual, such as the defence of the cultural identity. In this case, the self addresses the alien: "A cadascun de vosaltres / que, tot sovint, volem ser terra / però no poble amb nosaltres" (*PiC*: 112). The self who used to deal with issues regarding the private sphere and who talked from itself, now talks as if it was the spokesperson of the community. It is evident that the radicality of the self's rebellion has generated a tension between the individual right and the collective right. The self is part of the *we/us* as a sum of individuals that conform the village, but if this plural refers to a group, whose spokesperson is the self and which is included in the self's unique discourse, its identity could be reduced to abstraction or maybe obviate a possible plurality of opinions of any of the individuals that belong to that group. Thus, the individual's legitimacy to act as the bearer and transmitter of a new code, even so it is not the traditional one, could degenerate into what Camus warned us: that the rebel, once is victorious, can become the oppressor. Díaz de Castro suggests the contrary:

A obra sucesiva de Miquel Angel Riera (1930-1996) preséntasenos boxe como un conxunto de coherencia admirábel no que o poeta e maillo narrador obedecen a un impulso único de crear beleza na súa procura de sentidos á natureza paradóxica e fráxil dos seres humanos, á pugna contradictoria entre pensamento e corazón, entre o ser social e o ser íntimo, facetas inseparábeis da existencia de cada un. (Díaz de Castro, 2002: 9)

From the first poems in *PiC*, we can observe the wide variety offered. The piece that opens the book proclaims: "deixau-me ser qui som" (*PiC*: 109). It is a demand for the personal right to decide freely and responsibly: "Deixau-me que m'equivoqui jo tot sol i de per ampla / i que acuradament esculli jo el lloc perfecte / on engrunar-me els dits i l'ull del créixer" (*PiC*: 108). The II poem starts like this: "També vosaltres, / prohoms, potser déus, que teniu a cura / el regiment de la cosa pública" (*PiC*: 110). Once again, it demands to be able to be as it is, this time at a more public and political level than at an intimate one, and it questions its supposed authority with a displacement of the self to the third person singular. As with the previously mentioned passionate and liars, let it be as it is:

Però heus aquí el rebel,
l'íngnat que es palpa el cos i es destria persona
i us gosa a dir, prohoms,
que el deixeu ser com és
també vosaltres.
(*PiC*: 111)

The third piece says "deixau-nos ser qui som" (*PiC*: 113): it focus on the united community and the second person plural represents those

who are not integrated. There has been an opening: “El jo s’havia d’unir al nosaltres per aconseguir configurar-se millor com a individu amb dimensions, per ser més jo, definitivament, des de l’assumpció de la companyia dels altres” (Díaz de Castro, 2003: 14). The idea is reinforced from the fourth poem on, where the philosophic message becomes more sophisticated: the first person singular addresses to the plural *you* once again, but this pronoun, which until now was referring to the *they*, now refers to the *we*. The personal *dixi* may seem ambiguous but actually the plural *you* is simply used because it is a direct appeal. In this case, what allows us to distinguish who the self is addressing is the adversative and the adverbial of negation: “però vosaltres, no, [...] deixau-me ser qui sou” (*PiC*: 114, 116). We are dealing with the mutual integration of something that at first was not part of the self (“deixau-me ser qui som”) and that later, in a way, has been incorporated. This fact is not solved just by the suspicion of the displacement from the periphery to the centre by the self, who would like to become dominant, but it is a way of radicalize the contact until it becomes a kind of contamination among people. That is, the transfer of what is one’s acceptance and recognition inside the other. It had already been introduced:

Us cerc i em trob a mi.
la condició
meva
fa grau
de vosaltres
(*Bio*: 55)

The permeability that enriches the self’s identity with that of the plural *you* could arouse the suspicion about the dissolution of the dialectics I/Other by the annihilation of the limits that define the individual, but the fact is that such rapport can only occur among concrete and “limited” people. Consequently, the concept of subject maintains its consistency without becoming liquid enough to cease to be an idea that remains stable at the foundations of reasoning. Indeed, as we have mentioned above, the self works both the inclusive and the exclusive art: “No vull ser més com sou, una desgràcia / d’homúnculs desinflat i reticents” (*PB*: 183). Because we must remember that its independence is a condition and, although we have seen it in complete disagreement with the *they*/alien, the self does not accept to be criticised. However, it seems that to love the Other one must be oneself: “La humanitat i jo som una sola cosa. Però la conec i l’entenc des de mi, necessàriament. Per tant, si la vull servir hauré de recórrer a servir-me a mi mateix” (Rosselló, 1982: 279). And from the poetic thinking to the verse: “No us podré servir si no em serviu / deixant-me ser qui som” (*PiC*: 107).

3. Conclusions

The role of the Other is relevant to Riera's literary world, since it represents the reason why the self describes and defences a different view of the human condition exemplified by itself. The fact is that Otherness is a discourse conformed by ideas that cannot be assumed by a man without constituting an attack against what the self has established as its own nature – these ideas are about a creator god, a universal morality, absolute truths, etc. Against this, the self represents the ideology of the difference: a comprehension of the world based on experience, the body and the concrete, free, historical and unstable individual. To put it briefly, everything that would allow man's salvation as a consequence of one's own ethical and enriching exercise of “desesperat amor per la carn humana” (*Bio*: 50).

As we have seen, the proper functioning of this alterity stipulates that, first of all, its character must be predominant and constituent of the poetic situation in which the self's enunciation takes place, which is a dissident and outsider voice. Then, that the dehumanization that disseminates must be transmitted by the nonpersons: the “polític malgirbat d'espina”, the “jutge compromès”, the canon who “guaita el món des d'un balcó d'argent” (*Bio*: 39), and so on.

Concerning the first idea, the relationship between central and peripheral roles, the fact that the self is a rebel situated on the margins who sometimes adopts a preacher's tone or talks as the spokesperson of a community, makes us presume the classical potentiality of the poetics of rupture which are capable of displacing the margins to the centre.

Actually, when Díaz de Castro talked about the *we* as a way of being more *I* from the company, it seemed difficult to resolve the philosophic problem that epitomizes talking from a plural perspective when the self is felt as part of a group, a fact which includes various voices in just one which makes the self become a reference point: a step forward to a more central situation through adhesion. There are two poetic reasonings that try to soften this inconsistency: on the one hand, the relativism the self tells us to interpret and to be aware of its contradictions; on the other hand, the original contamination of identities which combines specifically singular and plural: “cop en sec comprenem / que la contemplació d'aquella criatura ens ha fet un empelt, / que la seva permanència en nosaltres és ja irreversible” (*PB*: 193-4)¹⁶ and to make the limits penetrable is paradoxically necessary to perform “l'acte de posar / la primera pedra de ser jo mateix” (*PiC*: 115). Maybe from this participatory activity of all the individuals we can use the plural, but not from a will to generalize.

NOTES

16 | Other examples include: “heus aquí un home / que de sobte té un ressò / i ens mira, / ens mira i ens veu, / i comença / a fugir d'ell cap a nosaltres” (*Bio*, V, v. 52-57), or: “Que aquest cos que tu ets sigui jo sense perdre / ni l'aire de distant ni el to de ser distint, / em fa sentir molt viu...” (*Bio*, V, v. 13-15).

To resize oneself because of love (*re-ligare*) bring us to the second idea: the self combines an exacerbated philanthropy – an acceptance of mankind, in spite of his changeable status: he can be an angel, he can be a wolf – with an intolerance towards the dehumanization of the individual accomplished by the nonperson. According to this tension, the relationship with the Other would be based on the self’s dynamic and complex love and refusal strategies: “Ja sé que us necessit, però deixau-me / tota per a mi la tasca de desentotsolar-me” (*PiC*: 108). Both paths become original modes of conceiving the relationship between the self and the no-self.

Regarding the inclusive path, because alterity is presented as relative if we talk about people, as the limits between the self and the Other can overlap when they are susceptible to love each other. For example, Nai, the co-enunciator *you*, asserts and increase the self: “Quan el contagi teu em deixi blava / la carn del meu fervor, i la meva vida / feta un per-mor-de-tu, ben tuejada...” (*PN*: 24).

Concerning the exclusive path, because it implies a dialogical discourse with alterity that is not reducible as it constitutes the dominant ideology. The self protects itself without escaping and uses this ideology to promote its own discourse. From an intertextual paradigm (Kristeva, 1969), we can assert that alterity would function as a poetic element, as the typical hypotext in the mind’s artifice of the self which is revealed in the textual weave of its voice. The strategies aimed at making the hypotext evident are, first of all, to make alien enunciations evident in the self’s enunciations and to denounce them, as well as appropriate them and change the semantics of the alien words. This implies the retaining of the binomials. For example, in the case of *homos/theos* there is not an intention of eliminating hierarchies: the self just substitutes faith and god’s supremacy for another faith and supremacy: that of man. The pair is not destroyed but inverted. The inescapable ideological load of the discourse places man on top. The elements of both man and god contaminate each other – the man acquires divine qualities – and god, as traditionally understood, survives as a discredited entity that can be subjugated and that has definitely become alterity.

Another interesting binomial is the one confronting concretion and abstraction. If we apply these concepts to mankind, these would result in terms of individual/humanity. However, how is it possible to call malevolent the use of the word “humanity” – to talk about humanity in general terms, “d’estimar-la i, al damunt, fer-ne bandera / és un terrible estil / de no passar comptes amb l’home” (*BH*: 87) – but still using it in the expression “human condition”? Rosselló solves this problematic when noticing that the self is against abstractions – related to Platonism, the transcendental, etc. –, but cannot disregard the use of generalizations to express itself (Rosselló, 1982: 32)¹⁷.

NOTES

17 | Riera addresses the question and declares that “el sentido de la convivencia establece lógicamente unos puntos de referencia porque el hombre siempre tiende a dimensionar actitudes y convertirlas en mitos a fin de estrapolarlas de su vida cotidiana y que le sirvan como punto de referencia” (Llorca, 1990).

Some critics have proposed a solution by inductive reasoning: “el crit de la condició humana no es fa des de l’abstracció especulativa, sinó des d’una concreció històrica finalment estilitzada” (Llorca, 1995: 15). But this stylization would have been undoubtedly provisional, since any certainty had to be necessarily immediate and transitory. The subversive radicalism of the Rieran relativism makes the self non-deductive because it cannot apply what is particular to universal premises, but it cannot be inductive either since it does not want to extrapolate general principles from what is particular, not even from its own doctrine. Therefore, relativism is important when applied to itself. Riera proclaims the same about relativism than Bakhtin proclaimed about dialogism: the impossibility of an absolute truth (Todorov, 1984: 86-87). The apparent non-solution, actually, is not pessimistic nihilism, but an acceptance of man as what he is – as he is according to the self. Once more, alterity is not destroyed but it is ideologically undermined, criticized and used to defend a counterproposal.

Taking everything into consideration, we can say that the self’s conscience is created by its comparison with antithetical proposals: the self is relativist, concrete, worldly, corporeal, free, and rebel. This is because alterity is absolutist, abstract, transcendental, general and dominant: the old dialectics that confronted the self with the Other works still in a case like this where the figure of the subject-substance remains solemn and strong.

Riera’s poetic production, although it presents a non-experimental classicist display and refuses the new critic strategies that Europe offered during the second half of the 20th century, is easily penetrated by theoretical concepts such as hipertextuality, quotation, dialogism, and both the dialectic and phenomenological views. These categories help us to perform an in-depth analysis of the discourses that coexist unequally and dependently within the same poetic ecosystem, since the self needs alterity as part of its mental context and as a connotative agent of a language appropriated by the self. We insist, however, that this is the way it is because the poetic I – regardless of the innovation of the individuals’ participation and the preached relativism – is never destroyed nor dissolved completely.

All things considered, an internal poetic mechanism that describes the poetic I as a subject, although it can be penetrated by other voices that participate in, compose and counter this poetic mechanism, maintains its structural unit. The rebel subject, however, as it is presented to us, does not cease to be masculine, heterosexual, egocentric, heavy, consecrated, substantial, and essential. A step towards a post-dialectic subject without the Other, ductile, diaphanous, and post-narcissistic is rarely achievable in Rieran poetics. And even though subjects have changeable characters and behaviours, the

self is still presented as a model of the human condition, consisting of a series of clear and necessary characteristics. Its voice is that of the nonconformist hero of the periphery, but highly self-centred and deeply rooted in the ambitious centre of its own discourse.

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