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**TESIS DOCTORAL**

**Estética de lo inestable:  
incertidumbre, multiplicidad y desplazamientos poéticos  
en José-Miguel Ullán**

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POÉTICOS EN JOSÉ-MIGUEL ULLÁN**

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## SUMMARY

*Aesthetics of instability: Uncertainty, multiplicity and poetic movements in José-Miguel Ullán*

### INTRODUCTION

The degree of complexity reached by certain aesthetic manifestations of the twentieth century runs parallel to the very circumstances from which they emerged. This turbulent period has witnessed moments of artistic production of such a diversity that covering it like a *one-way street* would imply neglecting the many cross-wise routes and reverse paths that such practices have opened over several decades, moreover, being perfectly conscient, both of his own story and of the events that fostered them. It is conceivable, thus, that one of the most visible properties in the contemporary arts is its lucid disparity: the large number of elements and trends involved in their formation. Furthermore, this particularity does not only imply a clear heterogeneity of artistic movements, but in many cases it refers to the inside of a unique proposal. For this reason, one of the main challenges to be faced by theorists of Aesthetics and Arts Theory, is raised by an artistic reality as multiple as described, in which to the weight of a continuously fiscalized tradition, it is added a type of literary work — and now I am trying to come closer to the field I have analyzed here— strongly diversified.

“I am happily unstable” declared José-Miguel Ullán in a brief news story of 1985. A statement with which, perhaps, the poet was trying to put on the table a sense of his writing. This statement has been, then, the hypothesis with which we try to begin a thorough comprehension task, linked to the poetry of this author. A first approach to his poetry may indeed detect certain traits that helped

confirm those words of Ullán. The varieties of shapes, materials, ideas or positions that are perceived in his writing are, without doubt, a property that becomes evident to any reader who approximates his texts. We have found that, in addition, such a condition does not refer only to the method of work, techniques, resources or disciplinary procedures contained in the discursive production of the author. It is also about an attitude to art practices and, especially, to reality. Basically, it is all about the relationships that the poet has with reality through certain linguistic activity, through his aesthetics. A proposal which the eponymous discipline traditionally has been commissioned to study, in inseparable coexistence with the general problems associated with the practice of the arts.

This work has been proposed, therefore, in order to trace the mechanisms and principles governing a hesitant poetic position as the mentioned, through a detailed analysis of the characteristics that constitute the poetry of José-Miguel Ullán. In this sense, this research is the first PhD project monographically dedicated to this author. There are, on the other hand, different academic journals in which Ullán persists as a prominent object of study, as well as countless reviews, articles, and critical essays that cater to his work. This circumstance forced us to consider this set of materials as a fundamental part of our analysis because, together with Ullan's production, it embodies an essential component of the research, i.e. the imaginary created around the figure the poet. This corpus integrates, then, one of the best sources from which to explore the way that has been read Ullan's poetry, and its reach in his writing. However, far from adopting a complacent disposition against these documents, we have attempted rather to criticize the story there generated, so evaluating more effectively the relevance of such interpretations, as well as the influence generated by the models created in that environment in Ullan's writing.



## SECTION ONE

Therefore, first, we have focused on the creative and theoretical context that surrounds the poetry of this author. The aim pursued in these pages has been, then, to measure how it has affected the way of structuring the Spanish poetic reality of that period in the formation and reception of poetry wrought by Ullán. We have tried to clarify, then, what were the formative dynamics of poetic ideologies rooted in national literary studies (encompassing here those generated from the main poetic practices, and those generated during the last decades of the last century by Historiography, Literary Theory, and other agents of the system), in order to continue locating Jose-Miguel Ullán in relation to the same paradigms. It is well known that this problem has been widely studied by different specialists from diverse disciplinary fields, works that, on the other hand, we have referred to extensively throughout this first section. Our proposal has tried, then, to focus on the analysis of the figure of the poet, but without sacrificing the critical overview of national lyric stage, that would allow us to test the effective matching between the accounts concerning Ullán and Ullan's praxis.

The poetry of José-Miguel Ullán represents an atypical case in the context of Spanish lyric. The variety of categories with which his writing has been analyzed and classified hinders the task of framing this author in any of the streams, groups, generations and models so far defined within national literary studies. Its rarity, then, would be produced by this lack of strong holds to support a precise and not contradictory location of their approaches. In this sense, this poetic work is reluctant to install his performance space in a well-defined territory, to be ascribed to a landline. This uniqueness, makes difficult the typing of an author, and explains some inconsistencies in critical and theoretical approaches to his work. The application of different labels describing it has failed to exhaust the complexity of Ullán's poetry. The need to revisit it, the discourses that have covered it, and

the relationships it may have with other proposals, has proved, therefore, an essential requirement to understand Ullán approaches.

Therefore, the first section of this work has tried to present interpretations which have been generated around his figure and how they connect, oppose or refute the main poetic models or paradigms established by Spanish literary studies. To accomplish this purpose it was necessary to go, in addition to the texts by Ullán, to the set of facts that have marked more decisively the national lyrical creation. A situation perfectly represented by historical studies, criticism, anthologies, the poetics of the authors, etc. On the other hand, this same review has also detected possible flaws in some of these interpretations, by contrasting them with each other and with the author's own work.

We have referred, first, to the facts and circumstances relevant to Spanish poetry of the late twentieth century (the scenario where it is generated and read the work of Ullán) and, in particular, we have used an approach that emphasizes the large blocks from which he has been interpreted. By addressing the Spanish poetry of the second half of the twentieth century, it is easy to detect, thanks to the terms that have been defined, that it is torn between two extremes, two aesthetic paradigms, which only rarely converged. On the one hand, that which in certain contexts has been called *symbolism*, *modernism* and *formalism*. And on the other hand, practices sponsored under a certain concept of *realism*, which not less often reformulated or free of made names. The use, in this case, of the term "discussion" adds a nuance to the fact mentioned, because another major determination of Spanish poetry of this period is its effort to confront the "other", to create groups, movements or generations able to oppose their older, contemporary, or future adversaries, to safeguard their newly formulated identity.

In this way, the tendency to generate antagonistic poetics can be understood as a constant that will not forsake this literary genre throughout this phase of development. That dichotomic account

generated and advocated on several fronts, has proven to be the most widespread and most established in the collective imagination concerning this stage of national literature, thereby conditioning the reception of the poetics alluded, and their own production. And this has occurred determining the reading parameters applied to them, and the lines of creation to be taken to gain access to such a reading. Also, this situation has caused the formation of a literary context in which being left out of a group, regardless of one side or another, ended up being equivalent to not exist. Thus, if you think of a poetry as uneven as that of José-Miguel Ullán, is not too difficult to notice the difficulty for its proposal to fit the narrow limits of comprehension that were drawn.

In order to demonstrate this polarity in the first chapter of our work it has been exposed the main critical discourses, theoretical or historiographical that have helped shape a biased bimembre story at this stage of Spanish poetry. We have referred, also, to those who, by contrast, have sought the cracks and vanishing lines, as a counterpart to the more general interpretation. In this sense, this tour has gravitated around the poetry of José-Miguel Ullán and its time and its space of action, in order to, thus, trying to verify the operability of these analyzes, at least, in a clearly unstable writing.

After this review, we have sought to further understand the space of poetry enjoyed within the context of the author recently reviewed. To do this, in the second chapter, we have connect the major explanatory lines found there, with the categories that have traditionally provided a benchmark on which to place José-Miguel Ullán's work. Specifically, and constituting a not too general or homogenizer approach to his poetry, we analyze the relevance of labels such as «social» or «experimental poet», «novísimo» or «of silence», once judged their operation on the parameters detected in the previous chapter. As it was emphasized on those pages, the poetry of this author has tended to escape the simplification and homogenization processes developed in the national literary discourses. Whether through their

exclusion from the various described scenarios, either by its resistance to fit into those labels by the agglutinating stories contained in different anthologies, or because the explicit rejection, by the poet of some of his programmatic readings, the truth is that Ullán overflowed the categories usually employed in our studies of poetry. Hence, at this point, the objective has been to compare the models and to analyze positions with the specific poetic approach of the author.

We have tried to study, then, if approaches made in accordance with certain interpretive categories deeply rooted in Spain have managed to grant a full position around José-Miguel Ullán. We have also sought to expose the peculiarities of writing of Ullán within the area in which it is inscribed, thus confirming the relevance or not of a not too general hermeneutic approach and in line with the national literary studies. Hence, too, these pages have emphasized the different singularities targeted to his work, which have been addressed from a different perspective than that of dualism (similarly to what previously did Miguel Casado and Antonio Mendez Rubio), which actually is the most common methodological approach in historical, theoretical or critical of contemporary Spanish poetry.

What therefore has been relevant to this second chapter has been to place the poetics of Ullán in full autonomy and without the need to mold it —but making reference— to the polarized Spanish literary analysis, mentioned in the preceding paragraph. With this, we have tried to put the author in a space that takes into consideration the fundamental issues raised in the Spanish poetry of the end of our century —as evidenced by the presence in his aesthetic proposal of the events surrounding the concepts of realism, formalism, production, representation, etc.,— but we have sought an approach, at the same time, which would not require to subsume Ullán under the national poetic trends and currents.

On the other hand, such a variety of categorizations and interpretations in conflict, then confirmed the assumption that the

labels offered to discuss Ullán's poetry were not conclusive in establishing an approach to the aesthetics of this author. The typecasting of this poetry in the groups of social poetry, experimental, *novísima* or of silence forced certain attributes, minimizing the relevance or presence of other, thereby molding the concrete proposal of the poet to the logic of most rooted binary distribution in the official reading of national poetry. In other words, it became clear that while it is obvious that Ullán participates in such programs and share with them some concerns and modes of action —its contemporaneity could hardly make him being substracted entirely from them—, so it is that none of them gets to determine their poetic in a fundamental way.

Therefore, if the excessive generalization made in the study of the poetics of the late twentieth century had resulted in a series of speeches privileged by certain readings, and thus, meanings, in detriment of other interpretations less systematic, but more complex, it was necessary to propose a different path which, despite considering the preceding analysis, avoid the shortcomings identified in it. It, thus, should be emphasized that the specificity with which the poet addresses and manages some of the most important problems of poetic practice requires a critical and theoretical approach able to take the complexity and multiplicity of senses involved in such questions. Key issues such as experience and its role in the poem, its capacity to generate knowledge, its usefulness in society, the way in which faces the reification of language, etc., capital in the spanish picture that has been drawn, showed in José-Miguel Ullán a treatment that reversed the usual positions, subjecting them to ongoing review and metamorphosis. Among these movements, it was emerging as an essential feature, the alteration the poet proposed for sensitivity and how it connects us with reality. Thus, we devote the next section of the paper to analyze those issues, directly related to reality and its position within the whole of the author's work.

## SECTION TWO

The question of the experiential burden of the literary work is one of the classic questions of Aesthetics. Regardless of old debates about the identification between author and real or imagined experience, the fact is that the issue that seems to have taken more relevance is that of what are those experiences that literature approaches to, how they were generated, which type of relationship with reality they are proposing, and more specifically about our goals, what factors are involved in writing poetry when formalizing the empirical. Such approaches are presented in the work of José-Miguel Ullán as determinative, they have acquired a unique treatment within the literary context of the author. Thus, for example, linked to the controversy of “poetry as knowledge or communication” and its undeniable connection with the problems associated with aesthetic experience, the position of this author concerning the origins of what the poem expresses, the degree of knowledge it can provide, its purpose, etc., raised such a number of nuances that it required the reformulation and analysis from other perspectives —such as those that offer certain approaches linked to Aesthetics and the philosophical analysis of artistic practices— of some of more established interpretive parameters in studies of contemporary Spanish poetry. In this sense, the fact that José-Miguel Ullán never came to fit completely within the limits set by the official reading of national literary narrative, highlights the need to go to these points of conflict, these peculiarities, which prevented his taking poetic in a general framework.

Thus, the second section of the study focuses on one aspect that may lead to consider the poetry of José-Miguel Ullán as a deed of margins, the border between spaces, the boundary between life and writing. More specifically, we have analyzed the reasons why his poetry is a strong run out of law and practice in contemporary literary creation, in relation to the possibilities offered by the aesthetic

experience associated with it. Under a perspective that encompasses both the time of production of the work, and his reception, Ullán poetry aims to blur the boundaries that have devoted to the visual an almost exclusive preference in most of Western literary practice. His aesthetic approach represents a continuing inquiry on linguistic coding experience, and in particular on the possibilities offered by the sonorous, the oral discourse, the listening activity, etc. In this sense, not only attention to the oral and the various human sensory channels, but also the invitation to participate in other sensations, —among which dominate the hearing— and therefore, different ways of perception and knowledge, within the writing of the poet, are the core of the second block. To this end, the section is structured in two chapters, third and fourth for the whole job, trying to show what was the sensorial slip treated as constant flow operated in Ullán poetry. Also, these have been subdivided into three and two sections, respectively. Within the first chapter, and the first of its parts, we have tried to show that the weight sensitivity and its various perceptive organs take on the writing of this author, paying special attention to what his poetry reveals in a first reading: opening the aesthetic experience, and the codes that one find in its base, into a space that is not conditioned by the traditional logic of the literary representation. In this regard, we have sought to make clear that while José-Miguel Ullán is understanding this openness to the sensory antidote for the homogenization of literary discourse, most of his work lies in the perception of sound as his best ally. Such positioning of the poet, forced us to perform a detailed analysis on the sensory field which has most prominently determined Western literary practice, namely, the visual, because only through this route was possible to gauge the extent of investment Ullán operated. Therefore, in the second section, we have tried to provide a study of the theoretical and practical framework that has favored the dominance of the visual in poetry, in detriment of other sensory environments. In the third section, we have specified the possible relationships that writing poetry

has kept or can keep with sound in order to define what was the specificity of the approach of Ullán, opening the door to the next chapter of the work, which organized in two parts, sets out in detail the relationship between poetry and sound in Ullán. Since it is the last link which more emphasis has sought to open new avenues of creation in his writing, the first part of this fourth chapter includes various headings and subheadings intended to interpret the origin and effect of such an inclination toward the sound. A journey that, in turn, has enabled us to emphasize some of the main areas from which articulates the poetry of this author, those that characterize it as a critical writing, melancholic, productive, and closely linked to listening. Therefore, we have also devoted the last section to this kind of analysis of the poetry of Ullán, i.e. the practice of listening understood as writing engine.

The sensory relevance assumed in the work of José-Miguel Ullán goes beyond audio and visual possibilities related to the structure and composition of the texts. Certainly, the distribution of the elements of the poem in a space that brings out images that contribute to the sense of the text, including photographs or other visual or phonological strong rhythmic work in order to conform a repertoire of practices with unquestionable presence in the work of this author. But, in close relationship with all of them, we must highlight the continued dependence that all his writing has with the field of emotions, the sensitive and the aesthetic experience. The apprehension of reality lies not only, here, in abstract and rational thinking, but also imaginative and sentimental thought.

Quite usually, the perceptual field surrounding poetry practice has focused almost exclusively on one of the five senses in charge of forming the sensations: sight. Of all the possible relationships with reality that they supply, has been the visual perception that has emerged as a privileged process, being their product the most used in the Western poetic creations, from its beginnings to the present. Such a circumstance extends to all cultural productions, and authors such as



Martin Jay have described it as “ocularcentric”. It has reduced the presence of other senses, from the cognitive point of view, in the panorama of our Modernity. Therefore, if it is true that there are poetic and rhetorical formulas in which the touch or hearing, for example, figure prominently in the making of these literary compositions — sound description, recurrence to qualities perceived by the sense of touch, etc.— in no case, it becomes developed as much as in the case of the presence given to the visual.

Different consideration would require in this sense, the use of both in the metric and in the rhetoric —two of the most present techniques in the poetic production— of different accentual cadences, rhythmic-syllabical compositions or phonological figures. Here, the role of sound acquires an undeniable relevance, even determining what is poetry and what is not, based on the verse. Also, the oral nature of much of our literary tradition insists in this direction. Thus, once become evident that from the point of view of poetic imagination has been the presence given to the visual regime what has prevailed over other sensory stimuli, it became essential, similarly, to refer to the role held by auditory sensations, as much as to oral utterance in poetic composition. Consequently, it was necessary to distinguish, first, between the metric resources and the phonological-rhetorical, as much as in the case of the established relationship between sound, object and word in poetry —given the perspective to be adopted later— as we would be able to calibrate the most characteristic aspects of the work of our author. But, also, secondly, you had to underline the importance that has sustained unwritten speech and, therefore, perceived through the ear, as a transmission channel of oral poetic tradition, and indicate its specificity against the use of sound in poetic composition, as we understood Ullán did.

After this analysis we determine that it was not possible to say that the sense of hearing does not have an unquestionable presence within poetic creation and its reception. However, the use of discursive

formulas, in the field of metrics and rhetoric, related to sound, would be more aimed at the creation of auditory processes strictly related to the reception of the work, than at the use of auditory experiences as a material —this was the case with the visual— for poetic composition. And concerning the weight of oral culture in literature, we determined that our work is closer to conversational spoken language than to a universe under the absolute control of orality. The relevance sound acquires in the poetry of José-Miguel Ullán in detriment of the visual inclination tracked in our aesthetic tradition, is located at a distinct level with respect to the one which could be occupied by metrics and rhetorical techniques and oral literature with respect to the sound.

Thanks to this tour it was easier to circumscribe and limit, in the most accurate way, the space that we should occupy, and understand, thus, its uniqueness. The question addressed, then, was the use of sound elements, both those that are naturally present in the environment, like those developed by humans using speech —or music, in some cases—, in poetry and, more specifically, in the poetry of José-Miguel Ullán. Thus, such productions, which no longer depend on oral communication and that despite the use of metrics and rhetorical techniques, do not rely on them as the only link with the ear, seem to seek a relationship with the listening experience similar to that the literary tradition have had with the visual. Make clear such an approach was the purpose of the analysis presented in the fourth chapter of this work. In this way, delving into the reasons that support the irreducibility of Ullán to preset explanatory parameters and homogenizing interpretations, we understood that careful examination of the uniqueness of its proposal would allow us to study the particular position that oral, auditory sensations, the perception of sound and the listening attitude maintain in his poetic.

In this sense, the inclusion of interjections, animal call voices, onomatopoeia, words in charge of designating a sound, musical compositions or alien talk, fundamentally determines poetic discourse

by this author. As a result of this attention to the auditive, Ullán writing elaborates impressions which do not depend only on the transmission of visual sensations, but it combines both in the part of perception, and in creation, those elements with those from the sound field. In such attention to other sensory experiences there is then obtained in his poetry a more holistic and complex perspective on the reality, based on this reality, not imitating, it proposes alternative paths to an eminently visual configuration of the world. Similarly, interest in various oral records also causes that the enunciation of the poem is distributed among several voices and that his weight does not inevitably fall in a unique poetic self. Ullán recreates a space of talks with dialogue, brands, etc., which, without being equated with dramatic discourse, allows the presence of a plurality of consciousnesses not under the exclusive voice of the poet. This author robs from the word its original context, forces it to dispose of the supposed unity of sense from where it belongs and reinserts it into a new space of meaning, in which the echo of a primigeneious speech is added to all the semantic load generated by the new communicative environment and its own constitution process.

Thus, in his firsts books (*El Jornal, Amor Peninsular, Un Humano Poder o Mortaja*), the vocative, voices or silenced voices, words from obvious rural background, the sounds of the “soundscape” that enveloped the context in which the texts were gestated, tend to create a space for memory, the memory of a life lost and truncated by the inevitable experience of the exile. At the moment those sounds, still close in time and fully contextualized, are no longer able to evoke the absences, we find the use of these objects that are the closest to proximate experiences in order to try to fill the void left. Therefore, all the sound material that was previously treated as correlate of a common experience and key to the recovery of a collective memory now enters the field of loss and becomes “object of desire”. And now, when melancholy assimilates irony and all these elements are used

towards the creation of new “soundscapes”. On the other hand, it should be noted that this proposal is not equivalent to a simple restatement of the popular oral culture in a literary space. Incorporating speech must be understood as reappropriation and redefinition of a language —poem-material— perceived through the ear. Thus, the constant attention and focus on sound translates into a poetry that leaves room for this kind of landscapes, which live, nuance and even criticize the visuals.

When we understand, then, that the poetry of Ullán is determined by a set of discursive procedures related to perception, sensation and acoustic representation, it is essential to go to the action in which all of them originate and are promoted, always from the same linguistic strategies we have been working with. So we dedicate the last section of the fourth chapter to the attitude of listening, as analyzed above that seems to govern the writing of the author. It would, therefore, be an activity focused on “make the language say”, in relative opposition to wanting to “say exactly”, the desire to set an accurate word. The poet is involved in the statement to get the most out of language and not only to express a subjectivity, as Roland Barthes has suggested. Of course the activity of the self on the linguistic system is irrevocable, but is at the same level as that of other subjects and that of the system itself over the speakers. We do infer that if this inclination to listening, in detriment of a primacy of observation in poetry, would predict a special fondness for the voice of others, certain empathy, a peculiar way to accommodate the “other” or what has been left out of the system, all end up placing the lyrical subject of Ullán in a limited space of critical distinctivity and within a transversal location. It seemed, then, that the language of the poet was composed of a lot of languages, which tried to get more out of language, and not only of denotative but also of connotative language. The multivocity of the poetic word appeared, therefore, as one of the lines in a stubborn ran through the texts of the author and, hence, as a fundamental guide for our research.

### SECTION THREE

We put the third section of this paper to examine those semantic indeterminacy procedures employed by the poet. The refusal of José-Miguel Ullán to stay within carefully demarcated spaces, stationary and independent, manifests itself explicitly and insistently, perhaps more than any other approach, in its discursive strategies. If its difficult assignment to national aesthetic systems or his final commitment to the decentralization of sensory experience in his aesthetic proposal, evidenced that this author certainly cultivated a poetic of deviation, the set of interventions language and poetic thought are subject to by Ullán do insist in the same direction. Both the decontextualization and fragmentation of texts, and also his installation of post production of meaning chains or persistent ironic treatment of expression continue deepening in formulating a writing with a unstable base and purposes.

For this reason, in the third block of this work, we deal with those processes of lexical-structural organization that generate a wavering space in the poetry of Ullán. To do this, in the first section — chapter five—, we try to deepen into those linguistic strategies with which the poet fosters this openness to semantics, which many of his critics have identified with a conduct governed by irony. The weight that this category has remained in disciplines as varied as Rhetoric or Philosophy of Art, as well as the multiplicity of meanings that the discourse of tradition has given to this notion, forced us to make a thorough examination of the affinities and divergences of Ullán's ironic proposal and its relation with all of them. We demonstrate what mechanisms of inadequacy, denial or discursive contradiction, to mention only some of the traits associated with the ironic, this poetry puts into play and, and thereby, what is the type of irony that best defines the poetics of our author. Once the relevance of this approach was calibrated, we try to delve into the different discursive procedures

that, by reversing a large part of the rules or more conventional uses of literary language, presumably are linked with it. Among them stood out the juxtaposition resources, the appropriationist practice or the text staging. The final chapter of the study is devoted to this last analysis.

After a thorough analysis of theories designed to interpret the figurative ironic, it has been possible to check that against the antiphrastic use of irony promoted by classical tradition, its use in the poetry of Ullán rests on a greater place than that represented by simple inversion of opposites. It is a mode of enunciation in which not only calls into question the word of others, but also itself is under discussion. By relating the hesitant position Ullán shows in his poems with the most popular idea of irony in literary studies, soon it is sensed that the use of this figure by the poet does not respond to a simple opposition between opposites, and it is inserted into a much more complex field of tensions. For this reason, we were forced to trace some of the most important extensions operated on the concept of irony in the field of Aesthetics to measure the degree of involvement that these notions maintain in the poetic ullanesca. This is hoped to assess both the suitability of such approaches to our goals, as its validity in order to analyze and understand certain poetic behaviours, based on oppositions but not carrying a conciliatory synthesis, and, more specifically, that of José-Miguel Ullán.

In this sense, we realized that despite a constant opposition to the theories of *Frühromantik*, especially those of Schlegel, the truth was that most developed approaches to irony in the realm of theory of art held some debt to them. The recovery of the concept by the German Romantics of Jena circle was what allows to begin talking, more precisely, about the literaric or artistic character of irony, its capacity to link the tragic and the comic, its basis in the ability to structure new cognitive routes, its ambivalent character, etc. Therefore, if indeed the prospects generated from this field of philosophical reflection helped interpreting certain ironic strategies that escaped or went beyond the

simple reversal of opposites, or dissimulation, and stood also in a place completely dependent of artistic analysis, we see its capacity to act as a basis for understanding this complex field of tensions that remained unresolved when we looked into some aspects of Ullan's use of irony.

Thus, in line with schlegelian irony, the poetry study revealed that this poet —Ullán— is carrying out the task of maintaining a constant dialectic between the real and the ideal, the outer and the inner, the objective and subjective, promoted by the German philosopher. This proximates Ullán to the procedures of the use of irony of the first German Romanticism. From that perspective, the irony has in itself a process of affirmation and denial identical to the one exercised in it, because, on one hand, the artist's subjectivity faces the objectivity of the created by the irony of the material, and on the other, the unique character of every work is put in relation to the totality of art, thanks to the irony of the form. It is not, therefore, mere expression of an interior self, but a reflection about the self from the creation. And this awareness that the author has on art, possess, according to the ideas of Walter Benjamin assumed at this point, two aspects or positions concerning the work of art, involving either the destruction of the material, or the destruction of the form. Thus, if the irony of the material is practiced against the subject, the irony of the form is directed against the work itself, through the continuous questioning of his unit. With such a background, the commitment of Ullán to linguistic ambiguity situates poetry in a perpetual becoming that made it impossible to clausurate the senses, keeping them as something inexhaustible. The primary purpose of his writing was thus to make linguistic material grow to infinity, and that the senses were increasing in an endless progression, thanks to the amphibology of the word. Unlike traditional rhetorical irony or Solger and Kierkegaard's proposals, this irony does not operate with a defined set of contradictory options where it is impossible to make a choice, but it rather lies in a constant uncertainty, where the assertion and its denial

are never dissolved in a synthesis or in a clear answer. So romantic irony and that of Ullán constitutes an unconditional bet on ambiguity and rupture with the literary artifice.

We find ourselves in front of a poetic writing which makes use of the ironic resource to expand its lexical-formal limits as much as possible and avoid thereby, the closure of sense. It fosters also through this resource the dialectical movement between the inner and outer of the author. A poetic that, if not completely, it is anyway closely linked with schlegelian theories on literature and, in particular, on the irony, which has served here to discern more fully some of the discursive practices of Ullán. So, from some of the characteristics of the ironic, such as semantic ambiguity, the juxtaposition of disparate statements, the absence of synthesis, or the reader uncertainty, the way to other textual resources in Ullán's poetry was an obligatory trip. In the last chapter of this work we therefore address these writings means with which the poet emphasizes the significant logical disruption of the normative and the standardized. An attempt was made to collect there not only the primary repertoire of methods used by the author, but also the poetics behind them. Thus, for example, it is fundamental to consider here notions like appropriation, collage or hybridization, but also some aesthetic principles associated with the avant-garde or the baroque spirit.

Therefore, first, we address the practices of linguistic denaturalization outlined in this writing. Based on the analysis of Phillipe Sollers and Julia Kristeva on the ideological burden of discourses, we highlight the way in which José-Miguel Ullán tries to highlight it. In this sense, the poet does not reject the ideological aspect of any text, but rather its masking. Therefore he proposes to make clear both the origin, and the processes of formation of his compositions through the systematic use of speak strongly dependent on different contexts. It turned out, in this respect, particularly interesting how the author appropriates the word of others through the reintegration of his



own readings in the texts. Unlike what was stated in other chapters, where listening is constituted as a germinal activity of writing, we try to show here that it is the reading that assumes the task of production.

In this sense, the poet chooses as a method from which problematize the link between reality and writing, the techniques of appropriation and assambling. They are intended to alter the way in which readers perceive the language of everyday life and its gradual conversion into linguistic merchandise. Ullán robs the word from its original context, force it to reject the supposed unity of sense, and reinserts it into a new space of meaning, in which the echo of a primal speech is added to all the semantic burden generated by the new enunciative environment and its own constitution process. Is important to note, at this point, that the disconnection with which operates the allegorist, Ullán in this case, here takes a manifest critical character, and it is not limited to imitate and replace the formula that has now been transposed to the new text —on a kind of innocuous pastiche—, but it questions and highlights the appropriate word formation and, at the same time, the technique that has been imposed. Thus, the poet vacuum the speech of others, makes it shell and in doing so, puts it on the same level than the hollow form of a statement without context to refer, the insignificant mold in which the structure has become the emptiness of the consuetudinary word. That is, he faces and equates his working material, both the one which comes from literary language, and that extracted from everyday experience (now doubly objectified by the action of the poet), with the reification suffered by a language that has lost their specificity and its use value. It is therefore a mechanism which, as noted Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, plays a critical role and generates a new dialectic in which, when re-submitting to a process of linguistic impoverishment, in this case, the object allegorized, it may be recovered from the degenerative environment in which it had been located. Therefore, the interest of the work of the poet lies, as on other occasions, in rescuing the language —

and use— of modes of discursive normalization experienced by it in our contemporary society. Again, the formation of political discourse, the one from the media, or the social one, is the target of subversive activities undertaken by Ullán. Thus, disruption of these messages on small excerpts of meaning and its subsequent relocation to a new textual semantic environment caused by the confrontation of these elements generates as a result a unique network of juxtaposed propositions, ranging between supply and delayed disparate meanings. There is not, therefore, substitution of one statement by another, but staging of a conflict of interpretation. As occurred with Ullán's irony, the act of appropriation and montage of a given language prevents any resolution or stable meaning, opting rather for the demonstration of the contradictory. It is that attitude which connects the author with some attitude associated with the Baroque.

Thus, to the already mentioned syntactic and verse-related rupture presented in many of his books, it joins an equally radical use of archaic and popular lexicon, continually subverted by the courts, associations, and enjambments generated in the compositions proposed by the poet. Cumulative series that paradoxically contribute to the spread of their constituents, and paradigmatically, to the dispersion of the self. There is not, therefore, a single consciousness fixed and determined in the same way that there was a stable sense to the words of this enunciative subject. If both the materials and the way they are presented and represented, were perverted to give rise to a new discourse in which the intervention of the poet shared a space with what was already pronounced, it could be said that, here, the hybrid reacquires a deserved position in detriment of purity. The mixture of tones, records, structures, techniques or thoughts, warned of the presence of some baroque in Ullán. A textual proposal that crosses the line between literary genres —and even, among other disciplines—, and offers thereby the possibility of altering the links that art maintains with the real. In this sense, the ways in which the poet has worked —

and questioned— such ties run on very diverse ranging, from the appropriation of the alien word (heard or read) to collaboration with other artists or use of graphics devices of high artistic value. And, indeed, it is within the question of the relationship between art and reality, where authors such as Wendy Steiner and Antonio Monegal have estimated the origin and motivation of such a hybrid or interartistic behaviors, in which the boundaries between the different systems of representation are constituted as a specific work space. Therefore, to complete our study, we try to delve into some of the poetic works of José-Miguel Ullán in which the textual interaction goes beyond the verbal margins traditionally associated with writing.

The samples, in this sense, of textual devices linked to plastic are scattered throughout the poet's production: *Frases'* ideograms, scribbling in *Alarma*, collages in *Ardicia* or *De un caminante que se enamoró donde fue hospedado*; typographic games and the semantization of its space in *Maniluvios*, *Mortaja*, *Alfil* u *Órganos dispersos*; the reactivation of the plastic dimension of words or letters rehearsed in *Rumor de Tánger*; the incorporation of small bocetos, little drawings, appropriate images, illustrations, etc.; all these sharing a space, clarifying, expanding, challenging or supporting the written word. For this reason, it is necessary to note its particularity, but in no case independently of other oral procedures implemented by the author, given that both things would be participating in an identical transgressor impulse.

Also, the numerous occasions when the poet made explicit its links with painters, printmakers and sculptors represents equally, a clear indication of his interest in the plastic. Thus, books such as *Funeral mal*, *Sentido del deber* o *El desvelo [Por juguete]*, for instance, evidence Ullán's disposition to the cohabitation between the plastic and the word. However, measuring the degree of involvement of the author in such projects is presented as a complex, despite the fact that the complicity between his poetry and the proposal of the artists becomes

quite evident. In this sense, some works like *Acorde* or *Anular* do show a direct involvement in the resulting plastic texts, while in other cases the collusion is much lower. Therefore, the interdependence between them holds a quite uneven value, which tips the balance toward the autonomy of written text. This is demonstrated, moreover, in the fact that the poet published some of those works regardless of the contributions made by the artists. A sort of *anti-ekphrasis* trying to subvert the logic of the traditional union between poetry and painting, through these pieces together, and through the implementation of ekphrastic as a critical resource. Indeed, José-Miguel Ullán does not only served as art critic in the pages of catalogs and publications, but sought to bring together his poetic writing with the other discursive field offered by his interest in art. It is not, therefore, a simple thematic description, but rather a kind of affirmation that seeks to combine different aesthetic experiences through the poetic word.

Therefore, it can be said that, for José-Miguel Ullán, poetry is, above all, a question of language, although the plastic dimension in his writing takes a position as prominent as in the case of the other of the formulas the author exercises in his production and his significant subversion:

*El lenguaje no es un bien más del ser humano: es el bien esencial. De ahí mi atención obsesiva a todos los lenguajes: no como prótesis programadas para alcanzar la percepción, sino como materia oscura y esencial de ésta. Remover las palabras, jugar con ellas o sacarlas de sus casillas es darles y, por consiguiente, darnos otra oportunidad, otro enfoque. En consecuencia, escuchar debería ser la tarea cimental de todo escritor. Retener lo dicho, desplazarlo a nuestro interior, otorgarle distintos contextos, conservar su tonalidad y enfrentarlo a otros decires desinteresados son funciones naturales, a la vez que misteriosas, de la escritura.*

*[Language is not another commodity human beings possess: is the ultimate good. Hence my obsessive attention to all languages: not as prosthesis programmed in order to reach perception, but as dark and essential matter of it. Stir words, play with them or take them out of their square equates to give them, and therefore, give us, another chance,*

*another approach. Accordingly, listening should be the foundational task of every writer. Retain what is said, move it to our inner self, give it different contexts, retain their tone and face it to other disinterested sayings are natural functions, while mysterious, of writing.]*

## OBJECTIVES

The main goals of this thesis may be summarized as follows:

- To demonstrate the need to approach the work of José-Miguel Ullán from a method capable of combining all the elements involved in a linguistic work of multiple and variable nature that, in most cases, put on hold the kind of comprehension of the logic of dualistic opposition.
- To characterize the poetry of this author through a diachronic and synchronic re-reading of his immediate context, which problematize consuetudinary accounts and which avoid falling, thus, in simplistic or homogenizing interpretations.
- To show its particular aesthetic proposal in relation to the classic conflict between writing and life, or more specifically, experiential reality, subjugating his poetry to a detailed analysis of the positions, resources and materials brought into play by the author.
- To clarify the discursive strategies employed by Ullán, with a clear interest in the subversion of artistic models and codes that have lost some of its semantic potential, as a result of a process of standardization and reification of these languages.
- To understand, finally, the foundations of a poetic of unstable sign, in order to connect the particular approach of José-Miguel Ullán with this complex set of artistic practices —and theories— mentioned at the beginning of these pages.



## CONCLUSIONS

The set of analysis developed along these pages, concerning the work and the figure of the poet José-Miguel Ullán, allowed us to clarify and deepen those questions we posed as initial attempt from which to address our study. As part of this process, we have tried to highlight the different notions and writing practices that were emerging as fundamental in order to understand the poetics of Ullán; properties that have emerged indeed as a network of constantly changing textual links —challenging ideas from one book to another, reformulating techniques, etc.— within this writing. Our task, therefore, has been to locate these peculiarities and concomitants in order to make clear that Ullán poetry has a number of distinctive features that situate it in a space that is hard to enclose, especially for those interpretations and categorizations that present a normative character and certain willingness of permanence.

Moreover, through this experience we have found that both the work material and the discursive procedures implemented by the author obey to an identical interest in sustaining a poetic thought and a poetic writing of unstable condition. In this sense, we have been concerned especially with employing the critical tools that respect the versatility and the changing nature of a poetry that does not allow for stagnated compartments. Hence, this research has sought to keep pressing those cores of work disposed by the poet as a non hierarchical plot of conflicting approaches, also subject to constant revision, which prevents for all types of closures. Assuming, then, the complexity of an aesthetic project that avoids raising certainties and rather bets for a type of knowledge based on the persistent questioning of the well-known has allowed us, in turn, to detail the capital interests of this writing. Interests which, as we have tried to show here, are developed in line with the same textual resources that generate and promote them.

Thus, we have tried to show that if, indeed, the poetic program of José-Miguel Ullán did not quite fit the dualistic story contemporary Spanish poetry, this is due, among other things, to this poet's resistance, which opposes to the formulation of exclusive propositions. Trying to situate him within a "side" means to ignore an important set of specificities that are present in his work. The multiplicity of practices, positions and materials used by the author thus forced us to stop at the treatment given to all these elements, while it was required to question about the uniqueness of a work based on such disparate components. As a result of this analysis we have tried to suggest here that the most representative features of Ullán poetry as opposed to the logic compatibility with other contemporary poetry, prevents from assuming his writing within those discourses of approval and generational promotion, exposed in the first pages of the Thesis. In this sense, it is now possible to argue that his poetry keeps a close bond with some drifts of the Spanish poetry of the late twentieth century. But also an aesthetic like heirs, oblivious to all types of synthesis and closed programs, demands to be read regardless of certain general literary categories, although referring to them becomes equally necessary for the proper understanding of their badges. This complex balance between affirmation and negation of each of the postulates is what has led our approach, since that is the way Ullán conceives his literary work. The ambiguity and suspension imposed on his texts confirm this, as it is in these two specific procedures where much of that irresolution oriented attitude, typical of his writing. Therefore, if one of our main purposes sought to analyze the poetry of this author from a perspective capable of combining the many principles it involved, the study carried out in these pages can help now to secure that purpose, showing that this method is what the texts themselves executed and demanded.

Moreover, these same traits of semantic ambiguity and suspension, which led us to characterize this poetry as ironic, are linked, likewise, to the analyzed discursive patterns throughout all of



our work. All of them insist on the special notion of irony that, from the theories of Friedrich Schlegel, we have tried to outline here, and which in the rejection of resolving conflicts in a synthetic manner find its main support. Thus, both the multiplicity of voices involved in the poem through the incorporation of the soundscape experienced by the author—reviewed in the second block— and the plurality of declarative subjects that provided by the appropriation strategies—discussed in the last chapter— refer to an identical drive to diversify consciences, just as showed by the “ironic” dialogues of the poet. One use and stance against foreign word that could hardly fit into those theories that emphasized the subjectivity inherent to lyricism and irony: «Nunca me planteo para quién escribo; uno ya tiene lo suyo con escribir lo que escucha en el interior y en el exterior»<sup>1</sup>.

However, these are not the only textual axes that, according to the objectives of this research are intertwined in the poetry of Ullán. The some lines back evoked network is therefore the figure which best describes this literary practice. In this sense, if the poet's writing could not opt for any of the poles where much of the national studies structured the fight of “knowledge versus communication” is again because his poetry escapes dichotomous organizational systems. The focus was on this same issue, but the perspective varied significantly. In Ullán all this problematic around epistemological and expressive capabilities of the poem must necessarily involve the question of the aesthetic experience, both concerning the poet and the reader. And the purpose of this writing, in relation to this issue, restores the capacity of language to generate and transmit experiences, and therefore knowledge, from a strong work de-automatization. For this, as we have tried to show in the second section of this paper, this poetry repeatedly comes to one of the sensory and emotional areas that most rarely has been encoded in a literary standard, which is conceived also as a

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<sup>1</sup> Interview of J. Á. M. to José Miguel-Ullán, published by *La Gaceta*, Salamanca, Sunday 12th of April, 2008, p. 18.

stronghold for the experiential and affective poetic work. Recurrence of sound materials in the compositions of the author proposes, therefore, a slip in road of the perceptual apprehension of the real humans use to travel. So on the one hand, her poems question ocularcentric environmental approaches, and on the other, they offer access to other kind of experiences marginalized by them. For this reason, the desire to recover a forgotten experience and enhance social memory —homing shown in tune with the idea of “poetry as communication”— is associated here to the need to seek an approach to reality that dissents from the textual conventions most damaged by custom, ie that originates another knowledge. Only in this way will be achieved, according to this poetic, to restore the inextricable link between “form” and “content” of the literary word and provide to the reader an aesthetic experience that ensures their disagreement with other reified perceptual states and of states of consciousness. Basically, it's about showing the other side, while accepting that such approaches will always be multifaceted.

Hence, on the other hand, we have also stopped in denaturing linguistic resources exercised by Ullán's poetry. In this sense, if incorporating audio experiences to literary composition evidenced the interest of this aesthetic in facing a excessively conventionalized worldview, the way the author alters lexical and syntactic patterns of the dominant discourses assumes a similar textual pretension. Thus, in relation to the first of these issues, we have seen how Ullán's writing exerted a continuous appeal to a disused vocabulary and, on the other hand, of apparent oral origin, but also the way in which certain melancholic attitude decompose the statements into small semantic fragments without explicit causal relation. Such procedures were intended to disrupt not only certain poetic structures of standardized and reproductive character, but also a kind of reading accommodated in the recognition of what has already been mastered. There is thus a strong analogy between these formulas and the discursive subversion

strategies discussed in the sixth chapter, where the juxtaposition of texts with a strong ideological interest or dependent on a very particular language environment, tried to find the artificiality of apparently neutral uses of language. Revealing the formation processes of these discourses, connected to the theories of Barthes, Kristeva and Sollers, was the objective of the treatment provided by the author. Also this hypostatic tendency was opposed, then, to the commitment of José-Miguel Ullán to stay in the space of the “neutral”, where instead of veiling the positions of the enunciative subject, they remained in a zone of indeterminacy that looked to face, without actually reconciling, the conflicting utterances.

This respect for —and promotion of— the contradictory, already announced when studying Ullan's irony, also shows a special attraction for those moments of artistic and literary production, such as Baroque, sought to point the crisis of more conformist interpretations of reality and the ties that the arts have with it. The variety of methods and concepts contained in this writing are revealed as closer to this type of aesthetic vicissitudes than to certain artistic programs with well-defined projects, as in the case of visual or experimental poetry, field where traditionally literary studies situated the hybridization manifested by this poetry. Thus, we have tried to see how the practices of collage, montage, decontextualization and discursive appropriation and other forms of textual combination, tested in Ullán poetry, delve into the same preference for multiple condition productions. Also, all these practices emphasize Ullán's aesthetics disposition to stay in an area of hesitation against any axiom, and also to effort to provide a reading experience in which the ambiguity of poetic writing or confrontation between recognizable cultural codes cause an impression of uncertainty in the reader of his poetry: «de tener la poesía un territorio, sería el de la duda»<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> ROJO, José Andrés, «No conozco poesía que no tenga una querencia por lo oscuro» (interview), *El País*, Madrid, 10 of April, 2008.

We are, for all that, in front of a notion of poetic text in which the likelihood of literary device is constantly called into question —as so clearly manifested the ironic parabasis— in order to destabilize the orders and representative regimes of customary nature. The breaks, changes and alterations this author subject language have, then, its roots in a common interest for re-meaning the word instead of expressing through words. Those “un-say” or “un-name”, encouraged by the poet from the suggestion of Conde de Villamediana, will confirm its position on the idea of literary creation: revitalizing speech («Se escribe, entre otras cosas, para probar a desdecirse a solas de lo aquí consabido»<sup>3</sup>). That is why Ullán before executing a detailed observation of their surroundings, he listens, thinning from what is said what is yet to say or has been covered by certain linguistic habits already stereotyped. The mechanisms that are signing their listening are, therefore, strongly related to the way in which he makes explicit his acts of reading. Two ways for understanding the task of seeking a new meaning to the linguistic material.

It could be argued, then, that although the forms, techniques, materials, attitudes and proposals of Ullán respond to an aesthetic of unstable character, where variability stands as a guiding principle, all this refers, however, to the same concern: the capacity of poetic language to rename. Make clear this approach has been the theme of this doctoral thesis, which is focused on the set of textual possibilities opened by the poet's tendency to alter the modes of artistic production entrenched in conventional behaviours unrelated to versatility. Thus, we have tried to demonstrate that Ullán's writing seeks to subvert this logic through a highly diversified poetic work, which thanks to this nonconformity, is able to generate new ties with the reality that literature confronts and comprehend.

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<sup>3</sup> ULLÁN, José-Miguel, «Música rasta para blanco olvido», *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, nº 86-87, Madrid, July-August, 1988, p. 23.

However, this approach does not exhaust, in any case, the complexity of the author's poetry, neither the entire scriptural work. Our analysis is, however, a first explanation of Ullán's poetic activity, from the point of view of its specificity as a tactic of unstable siege to a reality no less fickle. On the other hand, we may have not emphasized enough that, within the multiple tasks that Ullán was dedicated to, poetry occupies a very prominent space, but a space shared with other activities, which makes of the discourse of the author, and not only his poetry, a very heterogeneous textual network. His work as art critic and curator, in the context of the new art institutions of democracy —that we have only tangentially addressed due to the restriction imposed by our corpus—, it is still a territory to explore by contemporary art historiography. The affinity between his poetic texts and art critiques has been demonstrated in our research; however, it still remains to be seen whether this closeness between aesthetic parameters obey to asimilable aesthetic parameters or, conversely, they enjoy different conceptions about the artistic and even, in the case of Ullán, that they are contradictory. No doubt, here, also the work of the poet with different painters would help to shed light on whether there is an actual line of convergence between the poetic of Ullán and those artists, at least one that extends beyond the mere collaboration between authors (a practice, on the other hand, very common among poets proximate to Ullán, as Gimferrer and Valente, and many of those same artists). It would be worth, therefore, to continue this valuable work-field — comparison of plastic and poetic theory of the author— and transform these intuitions in a rigorous research exercise.

And in this line of confrontation there are also other important issues pending -and as necessary as- how to connect the creative context of Ullán and of many other poets contemporary to him, with that other cultural and linguistic framework that represents Latin American poetry. The sharing of a language, something that moves in various directions, has only begun to be taken into consideration by

Spanish literary studies very recently, through perspectives such as the “transatlantic”. In particular, the proximity of our author with other Mexican, Peruvian, Chilean or Bolivian poets, as well as much of the culture of these countries, is palpable through many of his texts both poetic and critical or journalistic, and exceptionally, in his role as editor. Ullán essential contributed to the consolidation in Spain by authors such as Gonzalo Rojas, Jorge Eduardo Eielson, Gerardo Deniz, Jaime Saenz or Eduardo Milan, maintained a constant dialogue with people like Octavio Paz and made of American culture and literature one essential and vital aesthetic reference. So, exploring these links in greater detail would have provided greater scope for this research.

Also in recent years Ullán's poetry has begun to regain a special interest among younger authors and readers. It seems that the position occupied by the poet during the final decades of the twentieth century has been inverted at the beginning of the new century. The current reality of Jose-Miguel Ullán's work is reflected not only in the fact that many poets begin to consider him now as an essential part of their literary tradition, but also in the validity of some of his most characteristics textual proposals<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, if one of our initial motivations answered the interest to highlight the writing of one of the most important authors of contemporary Spanish poetry, adding to our work this new reception his work is experiencing within the creative field, could also contribute to a fuller understanding of his poetry. These recent readings, which drink from those which has been done by authors such as Miguel Casado, Olvido García Valdés, Pedro Provencio, Túa Blesa or Antonio Mendez Rubio, add an important area of work both in relation to the condition of the poet in the national literary system, and to the sense that these updates add to its poetic. Therefore, after this initial analysis we hope to continue exploring these and other

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<sup>4</sup> A good example of these situations would be the book of Enrique Cabezón, *Desdecir*, published in the early 2013 by Amargord.

lines of research that, undoubtedly, a figure as rich as that of José-Miguel Ullán will never cease to open.