

THE 'GIFT OF GAP': PUNS IN THE POETRY OF ANGEL GONZALEZ¹

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The question...was whether metaphors and puns and riddles, which also seem conceived by poets for sheer pleasure, do not lead us to speculate on things in a new and surprising way...

(Umberto Eco: *The Name of the Rose*, 82).

"A vegetarian is someone who gives peas a chance. (...) A romeo is someone who ends all his sentences with a proposition. (...) Are Eskimos God's frozen people? (...) Is polygon another name for a dead parrot?" (Chiaro 66). Given these examples, which one got it right: the rhetorician who derided punning as "the lowest species of wit" or the punster who replied, "Yes -- for it is the *foundation* of wit" (Espy 201)?² Rather than attempt to resolve the debate, this study will examine this type of verbal play in Angel González's poetry by using as its primary point of departure studies on puns, jokes and humor. In "Homo Ridens," G.B. Milner observes that laughter is triggered when "two normally quite distinct universes . . . have been juxtaposed or superimposed" either by accident or design and that the resulting collision "makes many forms of humor possible"(16). For Milner, phenomena that produce laughter frequently involve a "reversal of one kind or another," among them the pun (16). He initiates his discussion of clashes and reversals by quoting from *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, which defines a pun as "the use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings, or the use of two or more words of the

¹ I am indebted to R.A. Shoaf for the phrase "Gift of gap" (53). Please see bibliography of works cited for complete information.

² In *The Encyclopedia of Language*, David Crystal writes that John Dryden commented that puns are "the lowest and most groveling kind of wit"(63).

same sound with different meanings so as to produce a humorous effect”(16). Joel Sherzer, in “Oh! That’s a Pun,” expands upon this definition by observing that this “. . . form of speech play unexpectedly and simultaneously combines unrelated meanings” (336). Furthermore, he outlines various possibilities regarding questions of “intentionality and consciousness,” the most common being that “the speaker produces the pun consciously and it is noticed by the hearer” (336). Because of the multiple meanings contained within them, Susan Stewart asserts in *Nonsense* that puns split discourse in two, ultimately infusing it with the simultaneity of two or more meanings within one word (161-63). She also avers that when “puns are intended and attended to, they move the discourse into another plane, interrupting the purpose at hand by introducing a universe that ‘does not count’” (161). Edmund Leach, meanwhile, views the pun as “a purely linguistic taboo” which “occurs when we make a joke by confusing two apparently different meanings of the same phonemic pattern” (qtd. in Wilson 13). This “seems funny or shocking because it breaks a taboo which forbids us to recognize the ambiguity of words” (Wilson 13).

The one-liners that open this study illustrate the points made by Milner, Sherzer, Stewart and, to some extent Leach, particularly comments that address a pun’s ability to move discourse to another level and to suggest simultaneous as well as ambiguous meanings. Upon examining these utterances, we readily observe how puns juxtapose universes of discourse which collide, thereby making humor possible as Milner believes (116). For example, in order to fully appreciate and attend to the speech play in the first one, a reader would have to be familiar with the eating habits of vegetarians as well as the peace movements of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s in which war protesters in the U.S.A. chanted “All we are saying is give peace a chance.” The effect also depends on the phonic similarities between peas / peace. The second item hinges on a similar set of circumstances. In this case, it refers us to writing rules learned in school, specifically “Never end a sentence with a preposition.” The punster substitutes “proposition” for “preposition” in order to make a point about the behavioral habits of romeos. In addition, the hearer must also be willing to accept

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Shakespeare's tragic hero as a womanizer in order for the joke to have its intended effect. The third example continues to play with language by exploiting the phonetic resemblance between "chosen" and "frozen" and exploits the biblical assertion that the Jewish are God's chosen people. (In a similar vein, "Many are cold but few are frozen".) The fourth offers a similar yet different verbal play because it obligates listener to interact with and manipulate language in order to make connections between an implied punch line and a definition posited as a question. S/he needs to know that "polly" refers to a parrot and "gone" is a euphemism for "dead;" and based on this knowledge, the hearer understands "polygon" as "polly gone." With these linguistic gymnastics performed, the listener conspires with the speaker in order to engage in, reproduce and arrive at the verbal play originally intended. As you may have noted, several of the examples discussed above also turn to intertextuality for their humorous effect. They draw upon cultural as well as literary knowledge and they assume that those capable of "getting" the jokes, in all likelihood, share some common ground with respect to their linguistic and cultural heritages or, at the very least, have some familiarity with both.

What do the one-liners have in common with poetry in general and Angel González's verse in particular? Well, in a genre frequently characterized by short, elliptical texts, puns offer a poet the opportunity to exploit language to the fullest and display his/her verbal prowess. Through well chosen and well thought out puns, a poet may also juxtapose and/or superimpose several universes of discourse in a relatively short, compact text. The reader, in turn, can pass from one type of discourse to another or from one meaning to another at will for, as Milner observes, "...meaning is a matter of choice of available options" (14). Or the reader may opt to attend to all meanings generated by a pun in order to appreciate the poetic text's simultaneity as well as its ambiguity. In this respect, what puns do reflects the intertextual processes as Stewart outlines them in *Nonsense*. For her, "[t]hese processes are 'inter' in the sense of interaction . . ." and the "metacommunication" model that they follow is "... both reflective and transforming. . ."(48). According to Stewart, "A finite providence of

meaning [is] impossible, for the boundaries . . . are constantly merging into one another and reemerging as transformed fields of meaning”(48).

In González’s poetry, humor in its various forms characterizes much of his work and, by the poet’s own assessment, jokes become increasingly more prevalent in collections pertaining to his second period initiated in 1969 with the publication of *Breves acotaciones para una biografía*.³ In *Poemas* (1993), an anthology which he prepared, González writes:

. . . los <<chistes>> a que soy propenso son el resultado de la manipulación de las palabras y que, por lo tanto, no se salen de lo que suele considerarse como estrictamente poético. Y aún podría añadir que en alguna ocasión el chiste ha sido una forma de liberarme de sentimientos que no podría expresar de otra manera, sin incurrir en lo patético... (22-23)

In broader terms, humor, particularly as manifested by / in puns, serves to highlight the poetry’s tendencies towards self-consciousness and indeterminacy as well. That is, verbal play, humor and jokes give González’s more recent poetry an unmistakable metapoetic dimension which, in turn, offers the reader the opportunity to relate to the text in different ways. No one meaning assumes more important than the others and the poems never become fixed, easily knowable entities. Rather than function in a passive capacity as a receptor of a text, the reader assumes a more active, involved role as a co-creator / co-conspirator in generating meaning(s).

“Monólogo interior” appears in *Procedimientos narrativos* (1972), a collection which ironically insists on a prose focus. Its humor draws on verbal, visual, and to some extent, auditory effects and, in this

³ In his introduction to the anthology *Luz, o fuego, o vida*, Víctor García de la Concha establishes a third period, or new direction, of González’s poetic production with the publication of *Deixis en fantasma* (1992). For a global discussion of the collection, see pp. 53-57 of his study.

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sense, it approaches the ideals of concrete poetry:

Manolo go
interiamente za
cuando su mujer dice *fornica* por *formica*. (256)⁴

Here the poetic speaker constructs his text around the idea of an interior monologue. He begins with the name “Manolo” and follows it with the nonsensical syllable “go,” creating the first ungrammaticality: “Manolo go.” This type of linguistic play continues in the second line when the speaker places the nonsensical syllable “za” after an adverb thus giving rise to another ungrammaticality: “interiamente za.” Upon encountering these syllables, the reader’s immediate reaction is to ask “What’s that?” and then to struggle to make sense of the nonsensical. Faced with this confusion, the reader, sooner or later, realizes that s/he must solve a riddle in order to appreciate the poetic text fully and ultimately to understand it. So, the reader begins to manipulate language, testing out and rejecting various readings until s/he discovers the speaker’s intent. When the reader successfully combines the material presented in the poem, s/he produces the statement: “Manolo goza interiamente cuando su mujer dice *fornica* por *formica*.” By framing the adverb “interiamente” within the two syllables of “goza,” the speaker not only “graphically” (re)creates the idea of an interior monologue, using the textual space for this purpose, but also emphasizes the joke that “Manolo” secretly enjoys at his wife’s expense. But more importantly, the reader encounters an obstacle which hinders her/his ability to read and to decipher this text effortlessly. This obstacle highlights the text’s simultaneity while it also complicates as well as undermines its reception.

Within this short poem, “go” has a pivotal function: the reader must decide whether it somehow completes and complements “Manolo” or serves some other purpose. Let us

⁴ This and all future quotations from Gonzalez’s poetry are from *Palabra sobre palabra*. Please see the list of works cited for complete bibliographic information.

consider the insinuations of the first pairing, “Manolo go.” By changing just one letter and separating the last syllable from the others, the speaker clearly refers his readers back to the poem’s title but at the same time, he effectively foils the reader’s attempts to make the association, especially if one approaches the text with only Spanish pronunciation in mind. However, one comes to appreciate the speaker’s verbal play more when taking influences from another language into consideration. Martha LaFollette Miller observes that the “... purely phonic similarity between the word ‘monólogo’ and the name ‘Manolo’” was “... very possibly intensified by interference in pronunciation from the English word *monologue* among González’s American students”(208, n. 31).⁵ In the speech of such students, the first “o” of “monologue” would sound very much like the “a” of “Manolo.” Indeed, the phonetic transcription, using the International Phonetic Alphabet, reveals that the initial three letter sequence, “mon” (of monologue) and “man” (of Manolo), are pronounced identically: /man/. On the one hand, approaching the first line from English stresses the “phonic similarity” between “monologue” and “Manolo go;” on the other, it broadens the poem’s humor by incorporating yet another universe of discourse through recourse to another language.

In the last line of “Monólogo interior,” the speaker uses “a paradigmatic reversal of two items”(Milner 17) by substituting “n” for “m,” which produces the humorous contrast *fornica / formica*. Through this reversal, we see that while there is “...a sameness on the aural level there is a splitting into difference on the semantic level” (Stewart 38). In this particular instance, “fornica” depicts sexual activity in unsavory terms while “formica” refers to a counter top. Because of this disparity, universes collide and trigger laughter, which manifests itself in two very different ways: the reader laughs out loud once s/he gets the joke communicated visually as well as verbally while the poetic protagonist,

⁵ Between 1972 and 1993, González taught at the University of New Mexico. He held the position of Visiting Professor until 1975, when he became a permanent member of the faculty.

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“Manolo,” secretly smiles at his wife’s malapropism. Traces of the sexual connotations of “fornica” also surface in the separation of the syllables of “goza” because their placement, at one level, evokes the rhythmic movements of sexual intercourse. On another level, we observe that “go,” a syllable with the most common masculine ending sits atop of one with the most common feminine ending (“za”). These visual ramifications, accompanied by a willingness to recognize the carnal connotations of “gozar,” generate a semantic splitting of “za”: it keeps traces of the more commonplace “zas,” an onomatopoeic interjection which denotes an unexpected sound or blow (pun intended) before the reader but at the same time, it has additional sexual connotations as a reference to the male thrust. Thus, “za” quite figuratively and literally functions as a double ejaculation, both verbal and literal. Despite its brevity, the word play in this “textículo”⁶ shows the speaker “intently or playfully working to reveal structures of language, motivating linguistic signs, allowing signifiers to affect meaning by generating new connections” (Culler 3). In so doing, the speaker highlights the arbitrary nature of the linguistic system as well as the text’s status as artefact — a construction of words, intents and meanings that don’t say what they mean and don’t mean what they say.

Like “Monólogo interior,” “Calambur” (*Muestra de algunos procedimientos narrativos y de las actitudes sentimentales que habitualmente comportan*, 1976 / 77) also responds to the call of the phoneme. At its most basic level, the text offers a highly defamiliarized description of a woman sunbathing in the nude. The speaker draws the phrases and images used to construct this anecdotal scene from numerous poetic conventions and traditions, which have lost their

⁶This double entendre appears in González’s “Eruditos en campus” in which he describes professors walking around on campus in this manner:

. . . comen hojas de Plinio
y de lechuga
devoran hamburguesas, textos griegos
diminutos textículos en sánscrito . . . (371)

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originality, freshness and vigor through overuse and abuse. Thus, poetic language, within this context, becomes little more than a series of meaningless clichés. This recycling of conventions points to a second metapoetic level: the text is also about these very conventions and traditions, which, in turn, have become defamiliarized within the context of the nude sunbather. Since the text exploits prior poetic conceits and imagery, it reflects back upon itself as it exploits its own literary heritage. As Nancy Mandlove observes, “the poem is a metapoetic pun — full of intertextual echoes and revitalized conventions” (306); and, it contains simultaneous meanings.

Throughout the text, the speaker recycles “self-conscious poetic language and convention,” which evoke prior literary epochs and imagery (Mandlove 305):

La axila vegetal, la piel de leche,
espumosa y floral, desnuda y sola,
niegas tu cuerpo al mar, ola tras ola,
y lo entregas al sol: que le aproveche.

La pupila de Dios, dulce y piadosa,
dora esta hora de otoño larga y cálida
y bajo su mirada tu piel pálida
pasa de rosa blanca a rosa rosa.

Me siento dios por un instante: os veo
a él, a ti, al mar, la luz, la tarde.
Todo lo que contemplo vibra y arde,
y mi deseo se cumple en mi deseo:

dore mi sol así las olas y la
espuma que en tu cuerpo canta, canta
— más por tus senos que por tu garganta —
do re mi sol la sol la si la (298)

In the poem, the speaker turns to metaphors from the courtly love

tradition (“la piel de leche” y “rosa blanca”) and mysticism (“todo lo que contemplo vibra y arde / y mi deseo se cumple en mi deseo”) as he fuses the woman’s body with nature (“la axila vegetal”). Mandlove interprets this fusion of body and nature as an intertextual reference to André Breton’s classic surrealist poem “Ma femme” and considers “dore mi sol así las olas” as a possible reference to Antonio Machado and Juan Ramón Jiménez (305). Víctor García de la Concha also believes that this text plays with “los tópicos léxicos de un poema del Siglo de Oro” and he alludes to influences from Rafael Alberti’s *Cal y canto* (49).

Although the content primarily consists of “used” or trans-parent language, the poem’s purpose centers around punning, particularly the type of verbal play announced in its title. A “calambur” is a rhetorical device in which an “idéntica secuencia de sílabas se agrupan de diferentes maneras constituyendo palabras distintas” (García Martín 61) and which produces a new meaning in the process. The “calambur” surfaces in the last stophe the first line “dore mi sol así las olas y la” becomes “do re mi sol la sol la si la” in the last. Given the new arrangement of phonemes, the poem quite literally dissolves into music: one artistic form “morphs” into another thereby blurring the distinction between music and poetry while at the same time reaffirming the traditional association between the two. As Stewart would observe, discourse splits in two and the second of the discourses threatens additional splits. Since each syllable of the poem’s last line may correspond to three different musical notes, flat, sharp and natural, many possible combinations exist; and these, then, point to additional melodies and / or song lyrics. Whether or not the speaker (or even the poet himself, for that matter) specifically intended to refer the reader to one or more songs is not as important as the intriguing possibilities suggested by the last line. Discourse splits, moving from linguistic to musical, when the speaker executes his “calambur” and as a result, the poem not only encompasses several intertextual musical references but also simultaneously alludes to two artistic discourses. Such a “procedimiento,” according to García de la Concha, “relativiza el valor del sentido” (49).

In addition to the punning announced in the title and realized in

its last strophe, Mandlove discusses another type of verbal play in “Calambur.” First, she notes a hidden reference to the calamander tree, which resembles ebony, in the poem’s title (304). With respect to hidden references to tress, a closer association would be the “calambuco” (agallochum or agalloch in English), “a soft resinous East Indian wood with a highly aromatic smell” which is “burnt as a perfume”⁷ — an intriguing possibility given the role afforded to the sun’s burning rays in the poem. Moreover, Mandlove believes, the speaker/poet exploits another sort of pun, the *asteismus*, in this text. In this type of verbal play, “one speaker replies to another using the first one’s words in a different sense.”⁸ Hence, when González’s speaker turns to mysticism fusing the woman and nature and man and woman and states, “todo lo que contemplo vibra y *arde*,” he means it quite literally (Mandlove’s emphasis, 305-306). Likewise, “dorar” not only refers to the sun’s rays burning the woman’s pale skin (“pasa de rosa blanca a rosa rosa”), it also explicitly suggests that the sun’s heat cooks her. Within the new context, the hyperbolic imagery of the courtly love tradition, like the symbolic imagery of mysticism, also has literal ramifications, which is yet another hallmark of the pun.

Besides the intertextual echoes which link the poem’s images to prior poetic conventions and traditions, this text also has mythological reverberations. By erasing the distinction between woman and nature, the speaker casts the woman in the role of a nymph, a personification of some aspect of nature; and by describing how the foam splashes around her body (“la espuma que en tu cuerpo canta, canta / — más por tus senos que por tu garganta —”), the speaker evokes the image of Venus rising from the waves. When the speaker identifies himself with the sun and adopts its superior perspective, and supplants it, in relation to the

⁷ See *Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*.

⁸ In *Webster’s*, the rhetorical device “asteism” is defined as “genteel irony; a polite and ingenious manner of deriding another.”

nude woman (“me siento dios por un instante: os veo / a él, a ti, al mar, la luz, la tarde” in the third stanza intratextually alludes to the image “la pupila de Dios” of the second), the reader recalls the myths and legends in which voyeurism played a central part. For example, s/he might recall the myth of Actaeon, who aroused the wrath of the goddess Artemis when he saw her bathing at Orchomenus. Indeed, the voyeurism in the third stanza makes the poem more sexually charged because of the forbidden presence of the male speaker/observer. By incorporating this male presence, the speaker underscores several interrelated dichotomies: male/female; viewer/object; active/passive; and gaze/silence. The reader, too, adopts a voyeuristic relationship with the sunbather as s/he experiences the eroticism of the sunlight, the sea, and the warm afternoon through the speaker’s eyes. Images emphasizing light, warmth and sounds in the line “dore mi sol así las olas y la . . .” not only underscore the stylization of the scene but also aid the speaker in creating a multi-sensorial experience for the reader, appealing to the latter’s tactile, visual and auditory senses. This stylization, the puns, and the recycled language and images make the reader highly aware of the text’s metapoetic intents as it explores the methods and devices that contribute to its creation. By weaving an elaborate system of puns and double entendres, exploiting both conventions and imagery pertaining to prior poetic discourses, the speaker obligates the reader to focus on the text’s strategies and its status as a linguistic artifact.

Mandlove concludes her fine analysis of “Calambur” with the observation that, in the poem, language becomes trans-parent as the reader “sees through the conventions to the new use of old language” (306). In her remarks, she points out only one of the functions of language within the poem. When the speaker rearranges the letters of the first and last lines of the fourth stanza, thereby infusing them with a new meaning, he also illustrates the arbitrary nature of language and how certain sounds generate a new significance when rearranged. And, as Jonathan Culler states in his essay, “The Call of the Phoneme,” “...combinations of letters suggest meanings while at the same time illustrating the instability of meanings” (4), something we clearly see in González’s “Calambur.” In either case, each function highlights

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language's ability to insist and reflect upon itself within a creative context thorough verbal play. So, the text expresses its seriousness through playfulness and emphasizes that boundaries between sounds, letters and meanings remain capricious at best.

Like the preceding poetic text, "Entonces," also from *Muestra...*, contains another "calambur," albeit, not as elaborate:

Entonces,
en los atardeceres de verano,
el viento
traía desde el campo hasta mi calle
un inestable olor a establo

y a hierba susurrante como un río

que entraba con su canto y con su aroma
en las riberas pálidas del sueño.

Ecos remotos,
sones desprendidos
de aquel rumor,
hilos de una esperanza
poco a poco deshecha,
se apagan dulcemente en la distancia:

ya ayer va susurrante como un río

llevando lo soñado aguas abajo,
hacia la blanca orilla del olvido. (270)

This text abounds with nostalgia and melancholy created through the evocation of a "mítico pasado feliz" which contrasts with the "desperazado presente" (García Martín 61). The whispering sounds suggested through out the poem, through the use of /s/, help compliment the tone the speaker establishes in his recollections and musings. Such

a tone distracts the reader, causing her/him not to be as attentive to the puns the speaker incorporates into his text because the poem's bucolic discourse creates a different set of expectations. But, at the same time, the idyllic scene the speaker verbally paints, leads to the first discursive split: "el viento / traía desde el campo hasta mi calle / un inestable olor a establo." The speaker plays with the binary opposition "inestable"/"estable": he uses "inestable" to modify a smell and insinuates "estable" through the noun "establo." This binary opposition converges within one line in which both adjectives coexist along side a noun that closely approximates them in spelling, and to some extent, pronunciation, but splits away from them semantically. As Culler observes, "the relations perceived by speakers affect meaning and thus the linguistic system, which must be taken in to include the constant remotivation produced by impressions of connection or similarity" (5). Readers, no doubt, also perceive such relations. Moreover, the use of "inestable" in this context also serves as an "instance of a projection of the paradigmatic onto the syntagmatic" which is "precisely the Jakobsonian definition of poetry" (Sherzer 339). For example, the meaning communicated by the phrase "inestable olor a establo" would not have substantially changed had the speaker opted to substitute "inconstante" or "efímero" for "inestable," but such a change would have destroyed the effect the speaker wanted to produce.

In the line immediately following this pun, the speaker seemingly continues to paint his sensorial picture by describing an aural impression; in addition to the unstable odor of a stable, the wind also brings the sounds of rustling grass to the speaker's street: "y a hierba susurrante como un río." This line contains the fragment which undergoes transformation later when it becomes "y ayer va susurrante como un río..." Although the adjective and the simile that follows it remain unchanged, the meaning of the two lines changes because the speaker reconfigures the initial phrase of the lines cited above ("y a hierba" ==> "y ayer va"). Obviously, the words resemble one another phonetically but differ semantically. As José Luis García Martín comments, the rhetorical figure "ocupa sólo una parte de un verso y la lejanía de los dos segmentos entre los que se establece (hay siete versos

entre ellos) la hace menos perceptible” (61). As the critic insinuates, the rearrangement of the syllables may not be readily apparent, especially when recited because a hearer would have difficulty attending to the verbal play; s/he may merely perceive it as the repetition of a phrase. A reader would initially focus on the semantic differences between the two lines but the simile (“susurante como un río”) catches her/his attention and causes her/him to reconsider the phrases. This results in a retroactive reading in which the two are compared and at this point, ideally, the “calambur” becomes apparent. In essence, the speaker uses repetition effectively if not elusively: the technique both obscures and emphasizes the presence of this particular type of verbal play.

Throughout the text, the speaker places continual emphasis on the illusory nature of the scenes he describes: odors are unstable; echoes, remote; and, sounds, disembodied and detached. Ultimately, the images, particularly the one of the remote echoes and the distant rumblings, the speaker uses to re/construct his experience for the reader become threads of an experience that slowly break apart before fading away in the distance (“... hilos de una esperanza / poco a poco desecha, / se apagan dulcemente en la distancia...”). Images, experiences, memories blur and fade with the passing of time, making it impossible to recapture them even with words. Sights, sounds, smells are ephemeral and therefore difficult to capture through memory and to express adequately in writing. In broader terms, the scene described within the poem reflects the function of language and the meanings it generates, particularly in a pun. As seen in the preceding discussion, puns signal tears in the textual fabric, they point out gaps, which permit a hearer/reader to move between two meanings. They enable a reader to enter a realm in which nothing is stable and where words may or may not say what they mean and/or may or may not mean what they say. They provide her/him with a conduit into another universe of discourse which s/he may manipulate at will given the ample opportunity the reader has to “manufacture, engage in and transform domains of meanings” (Stewart 48). Moreover, puns and other types of verbal play allow the reader to straddle two or more universes of discourse because no

meaning is ever allowed to be completely "... eradicated from the mind of the reader . . ." (Miller 125).

In his discussion of González's "poesía última," José Luis García Martín, lists, but does not discuss, additional examples of phonic/verbal play related to the "calambur," among them "antanaclasis" and "dilogía" (antanaclasis and dilogy in English). The former, according to García Martín, consists of the use of "dos palabras de idéntico significante, pero diferente significado, esto es, de dos homónimos" (61).⁹ We find an example in González's poem "Siempre lo que quieras" from *Breves acotaciones para una biografía* (1969): "Haces haces de leña en las mañanas..." (García Martín 61 / González 239). In the first instance, "haces" means "you make;" in the second, it is the plural form of the noun "haz." In this context, "haz" refers to a bundle or bunch (of kindling) but in others, it may denote a beam (of light) or a surface (of a cloth). And given the nature poetic language, the reader accepts the inherent ambiguity of the isolated image "haces de leña" and may entertain meanings as diverse as "you make from kindling" and "bundles of firewood." Another example of antanaclasis surfaces in a sonnet, the second of the homages to Blas de Otero, included in *Prosemas o menos* (1985): "era dura esa voz: todavía dura" (García Martín 61 / González 374). In an initial reading, "dura" functions as an adjective when it first appears and then as a conjugated verb. This seems straightforward enough; still, ambiguities arise in retroactive readings: Does "harsh" describe an inherent quality of Blas de Otero's voice or does it refer to his tone? Is the second "dura" a verb or does it still function as an adjective? Should the reader interpret "todavía dura" as "todavía [es] dura," thereby emphasizing a point about tone and a manner of speaking, or does the phrase address the durability of Otero's social message and / or poetic voice? The reader has the opportunity to decide which meaning(s) to foreground but none is ever completely removed or rejected as an option.

⁹*Webster's* concurs: antanaclasis "consists of repeating the same word in a different sense." The dictionary gives the following examples: "While we *live*, let us *live*" and "Learn some *craft* when young, that when old you may live without *craft*."

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According to García Martín, dilogy, a variant of antanaclasis, is “un único significante el que, gracias al contexto, evoca dos significados diferentes” (61) — in other words, it is ambiguous.¹⁰ Again, the sonnet dedicated to Blas de Otero provides an example: “era fuego esa voz: todavía llama” (García Martín 61 / González 374). The reader may associate “fuego” with “llama,” thereby maintaining the metonymy of fire and flames or s/he may join “voz” and “llama,” in which case, “llama” functions as a verb but points to a (second) metonymic association in that one generally calls using her/his voice. Whatever the association, “llama” straddles two universes of discourse neither of which can be completely ignored.

Similar associations as those discussed above and achieved through dilogy also surface in the opening lines of “Crepúsculo, Albuquerque, otoño” (*Prosemas o menos*):

En la distancia, el horizonte
arde:
 llama

Responde la montaña con un largo
vagido intermitente:
 eco que quema,
brasa.

El valle,
entre dos fuegos. (336)

Here, the poetic speaker describes a mountain landscape at twilight or dusk. To a large extent, he exploits two metonymic chains in this

¹⁰ The *Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado* (París: Ediciones Larousse, 1964) defines “dilogía” as “ambigüedad” or “equivoco.” *Webster’s* provides two definitions: repetition used to emphasize something or an expression which intentionally has one or more meanings.

description. The first centers on fire and underscores the vivid colors (red, orange and yellow) characteristic of sunrises and sunsets: “arde”=> “llama”=> “quema”=> “brasa”=> “dos fuegos.” The second focuses upon phenomena associated with a human voice: “llama”=> “responde”=> “vagido”=> “eco.” The common element, the point in which the two metonymic chains converge, is “llama,” which simultaneously means “flame” and “[it] calls.” Thus, “llama” possesses indeterminate qualities and causes discourse to split: one pertains to visual phenomenon (the sun on the horizon at twilight or dusk); and the other, to phonic ones (an echo reverberating in a valley). Both options remain before the reader.

R.A. Shoaf writes of “the dual and duel of sounds” evident in a pun, which “opens a (w)hole in the text for the reader to enter into the play of poetry” (54). On the one hand, this play allows the reader to manipulate language in order to generate multiple meanings; and on the other, it emphasizes polysemy, ambiguity, ungrammaticality and simultaneity in a word or phrase, making the interpretation/meaning of a poem, line and/or image indeterminate. Not only do puns “lead us to speculate on things in a new and surprising way” (Eco 82) but they also focus our attention on how language functions. Such verbal play ultimately make a poem self-reflective because, at some level, it examines its own process of artful composition and comments upon its status as a linguistic artefact. The reader who attends to puns becomes highly aware of this metapoetic dimension and enters into an interactive relationship with the text because of the opportunity it affords her/him to answer the “call of the phoneme.” The reader can determine meaning by selecting from a series of available options, pass from one universe of discourse to another or consider all possibilities insinuated by or within a poetic text. S/he discovers as well as revels in the tears in the textual fabric which allow her/him to enter into the play of poetry through the (w)holes. Once the reader attends to a poem’s “gift of gap,” s/he finds her-/himself in a realm in which words don’t mean what they say and don’t say what they mean either. In short, the reader has ample opportunity to manipulate universes of discourse, transforming as well as generating fields of meaning(s). Angel González effectively

underscores this elusive quality of language through poetry which contains well thought out and well-chosen puns.

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