
Los límites de la forma en la poesía de Joserramón Melendes

The Limits of Form in Joserramón Melendes's Poetry

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RESUMEN

La poética literaria del puertorriqueño Joserramón Melendes (1952) propone una ortografía alternativa llamada a reproducir la lengua hablada. Esta práctica de escritura fonética simplificadora del español se justifica como una dicción que se acerca más al habla popular, argumento que instala el proyecto estético de Melendes en un terreno político. Este artículo propone una lectura de *La casa de la forma* (1986) centrada en el lenguaje como aparato de subversión. Como se verá, en *La casa de la forma* la escritura fonética de Melendes termina atrapada en los límites de su propio andamiaje.

Palabras clave: Joserramón Melendes, Literatura puertorriqueña, poesía, poética.

ABSTRACT

The poetic project of Puerto Rican Joserramón Melendes (1952) proposes an alternative orthography aimed at reproducing the spoken language. This practice of a simplified phonetic writing of Spanish is justified as a diction that is closer to popular speech, which installs Melendes's aesthetics in a political field. This article advances an analysis of *La casa de la forma* (1986) centered in language seen as a form of subversion. As will be seen, Melendes's phonetic writing ends up trapped within its own limits.

Keywords: Joserramón Melendes, Poetry, Poetics, Puerto Rican Literature.

In 1955, Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969) published in the magazine "*Ciclón de la Habana*" (*in English: "The Havana Hurricane") the text of a lecture delivered in Buenos Aires eight years earlier: "Against Poetry". In it, the Polish philosopher criticizes the authors of that time for making poetry an inaccessible space for those who did not share the codes of "that hermetic world" (Gombrowicz, 2009, p.17). To overcome this flaw, Gombrowicz appeals to "the new generation", which in his opinion brings along the key to get out of the limitations established by the previous poets: "not to be committed to anyone or anything" (Gombrowicz, 2009, p.23). With this gesture of interpellation to the youth, typical of the modern-day intellectual in the Latin-American context, *Gombrowicz* seizes the opportunity to rehearse a harangue with utopian overtones in favor of the renewal of poetry. *Gombrowicz's*

ideas come to mind when examining the work of Puerto Rican author *Joserramón Melendes* (1952), who since the publication of his first collection of poems: "*Desimos décimas*" (1976), and through his work as anthologist and editor, has assumed the poetic work based on similar guidelines.

In the history of Puerto Rican poetry, the work of *Melendes* holds a paradoxical place because of the hybridity of its register. Since his early production, *Melendes's* writing has swung between the neo-avant-garde and traditionalism. Perhaps "*Desimos décimas*" (1976) is the most precise reference to illustrate this peculiar gesture of stylistic hybridity. In this youthful work, *Melendes* recovers the tradition of the *décima*, so deeply rooted in the popular imaginary of Spain and Latin America, to address mainly political issues related to the status of Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States and the extension of the imperialist practice of that country to other scenarios of the world, as was the case of Vietnam in the horizon of expectations to which this first book by *Melendes* responded. In that sense, his return to the ancient strophic structure of the *décima* is not

limited to the simple recovery of an old poetic form, but also entails a close approach to the Puerto Rican popular sphere, as well as the revitalization of the element of social denunciation that is still attributed to the *décima* in the Latin American oral tradition.

Melendes has been a controversial and eccentric figure in Puerto Rico's cultural scene since the early 1970s. His intellectual activism has earned the island's literary history the rediscovery of important poets such as Francisco Matos Paoli (1915-2000), *Juan Antonio Corretjer* (1908-1985), *Anjelamaría Dávila* (1944-2006) and *José María Lima* (1936-2009), whose works he collected and promoted through the *geAse* publishing label. *Melendes*, a cultural promoter, is also associated with a certain image of *l'enfant terrible* who abhors both the academy and the colonial condition of Puerto Rico. However, none of the facets mentioned above may be as iconoclastic in its projections as the attempt of linguistic revolution that *Melendes* develops in his own writing. To investigate this aspect of his production, I would like to develop a reading of what is perhaps his most ambitious and iconoclastic book: *La casa de la forma* (1986). The analysis will focus on language, specifically on the way in which the subject identifies with the functioning of poetic language as an instrument of subversion. As it will be seen, *Melendes's* foully flawed writing ends up trapped in the nets of his own discursive framework.

Melendes practices an alternative and in his opinion more "logical" orthography, since it reproduces the nature of the spoken language:

"The spelling, falsely etymological, which is used in normal Spanish, and which has been imposed by an academy, has moved with an infinitely slow speed; because we must accept that the Academy, founded in the eighteenth century, was precisely to impose an "aristocratizing" norm to spelling. The direction was then to make an orthographic archeology, and to try to make the language more and more

like Latin. This even though there was always a tendency for orthographic transcription to be simpler, and to respond to sound in a more logical way, closer to acoustics. An example of this is "Juan de Valdés". (Acosta, 2000, p.4)

In fact, by advocating in favor of simplifying the "phonetic" writing of the Spanish language, Melendes proclaims himself a proponent not only of the ideas of Valdés in the "Diálogo de la lengua" (1535), but also of Andrés Bello and his proposals for a more "democratic" Spanish: "Andrés Bello said that when democracy took over the language, American Spanish speakers would control the way it was written" (Acosta, 2000, p.4).

In another interview -the one conducted by Francisco G. Navarro- in 2013, Melendes elaborates on further nuances about his peculiar orthography adducing considerations related to social class and what he considers the "aristocracy of culture":

"...I use a non-traditional orthography, because I studied linguistics and I realized that the relationship between the grapheme and the phonetic question was out of tune, so it seemed - to me- that it was simpler to do what I call orthography (sic)".... The spelling we use corresponds to a spelling that was fixed a long time ago, it refers to a spoken form of the language from two centuries ago. The difference between b and v is false, among many other examples. And it occurred to me to simplify it". (Navarro, 2013, pp.2-3).

It is important to note that one of the most recurrent justifications argued by Melendes when explaining his "simplified" orthography is the closeness of his writing to popular speech, an argument that also anchors his project in a markedly political terrain. Lilliana Ramos-Collado has dwelt on this gesture in Melendes's poetry and explains it by resorting to an accurate architectural metaphor: Melendes's poetry as "peralted writing."

"What Che does is not mere phonological parody or parochial poetic affectation - as many scholars propose to dismiss the political depth of his gesture - but to place himself in the ear and eye of the reader, so that the reader can better cate this "writing in a loud voice" -which is Che's-, a writing in a loud critical voice, a voice at the height of consciousness, a gesture of peralted writing, written on a body, written as a corpus that links us to the traditions in which we have been watered".

What Ramos-Collado underlines as typical of Melendes' orthography opens the discussion to thoughts about the Puerto Rican's work that link it to a peculiar writing style in the continent, what Julio Prieto has called "errant writings" or "bad writings" in a remarkable recent study:

"The errant writings are "bad writings" because they would like to be something more (or something less) than writing: in that something more (or something less) begins the passage to a political Poiesis -the unstable trace by which the perspectives of reimagining the social as well as the repositioning of artistic practices are opened".

Prieto sees marks of this tension towards a "political poiesis" in bad writing in a wide range of aesthetic manifestations arising from the ambivalence of Latin American modernity, but his focus is on the literature of *Roberto Arlt*, *César Vallejo*, *José María Arguedas*, *Joao Guimarães Rosa* and *Néstor Perlongher*, as well as the cinematography of Glauber Rocha. One of the most significant theoretical findings of Prieto's analysis is the identification of a certain "becoming unlettered" common to Latin American wandering writings, a gesture that pushes these writings into a tantalizing dynamic with respect to the "imagination of the other". In the words of the critic:

"Exploring the historical path of the impossible that proposes an "unlettered becoming" implies interrogating these proposals not only for what they have of "going out of

oneself", but also, in a very specific sense, a project of deterritorialization of the literary: a "plebeian" and subaltern becoming of the cultured tradition, as well as a particular re-registration of low and popular practices." (Prieto, 2016, p.26).

Clearly, the writing of Joserramón Melendes is immersed in that tension common to the unlettered becoming of the wandering writings of Latin America that Prieto underlines.

Latin America that Prieto underlines. Even Melendes himself, in explaining his orthography, seems to intuit that sociopolitical drive patent in the aporetic approach to the other:

"*Los segmentos populares que he leído mis textos ni notan la ortografía*". The difference between my way of transcribing the language and the popular one is the regularity. The privilege in the attention of some of my texts is due to their oral diffusion; I cannot say that they imply "oxygraphic" sympathy. Intellectual officialdom has received my handwriting with distrust, fear, and hatred: if it shakes its structure of security and locks while screwing its photo-motor reflex, so pavlovianly cultivated, it is understandable. But the best understand that there is something there". (Melendes, 1992, p.14).

Although this body that Melendes calls "*segmentos populares*", and that supposedly reads his writing without noticing the orthography, is not defined in the text, this equalization of popular speech and the spelling used by Melendes is a rhetorical strategy that allows him to legitimize a literary poetics while advancing a defined political project. In other words, in Melendes's writing we can appreciate a desire to break away from the linguistic level to emphasize a cultural citizenship proper to Puerto Rico, which *Juan Duchesne-Winter* interprets as "a certain logic of anticolonial action. (Duchesne-Winter, 2011, p.3)

"La casa de la forma"(*in English: "The House of Form") was published in 1986. The numbered, hand-bound copies were a far cry from the practice of mass publishing for the public. The front and back cover of each of these handcrafted copies was presented as a unique artistic object; in that sense, Melendes would seem to have wanted to restore to the work of art what Walter Benjamin understood as its "aura existence." (Benjamin, 2003, p.49). The second edition of *The House of Form* (1997) attempts to take up this anti-modern bias of the book-object with the repetition of the artistic work in the binding of the copies.

What does transgression consist of in *The House of Form*? One of the most obvious levels of interpretation has to do with the singular orthography I described earlier. But the antecedents of this way of destabilizing language had already been seen, for example, in the poetry of *Juan Ramón Jiménez*, *Vicente Huidobro* and *Oliverio Girondo*. Melendes, however -in my opinion-, proposes a much more radical linguistic transgression since his poetry attempts to undermine the authority of writing from the materiality of the grapheme. To do so, he resorts to a writing that simulates a direct transcription of orality. In *Cintio Vitier's* letter-epilogue to *The House of Form*, the Cuban critic understands this aspect of Melendes' literary poetics as follows: "But what Joserramón wants above all is to put speech into writing in such a way that it reveals itself to be indestructible, hieratic, incurably iconic and, of course, hopelessly Egyptian". It is then a matter of privileging orality over writing through a pretended graphic representation of this orality.

Another way of explaining this reading of Melendes' poetics lies in tracing in *La casa de la forma* the itinerary of a subjectivity in the process of forging. The journey of this subject under construction begins with the identification of the other who speaks as the object of desire and ontological guarantee. The identification that causes the subject's journey generates a writing characterized mainly by inconsistencies,

lapses, and breaks in meaning. However, if "La casa de la forma" is the space in which the journey to integration with the other manifests itself in a writing of liberation, it is striking that the poetic form chosen for it is the sonnet, which since Petrarch typifies structural rigidity. Faithful to the impulse towards communion, typical of this inveterate poetic archive, Melendes' texts seem to pursue a certain fusion with the other and its heritage, which in this case involves the entire Western tradition, in the manner postulated by the *Pedro Henríquez Ureña* of the "Seis ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión" (1928) (*in English: "Six Essays in search of our Expression": "we are entitled to the benefits of all Western culture" (Henríquez Ureña, 2013, p.171). Indeed, the archive of sonnets that constitutes the corpus of La casa de la forma describes a variegated organizational chart. *Melanie Pérez-Ortiz* understands it as a baroque ensemble: "[t]o be baroque is the word that best describes the house made of opposites: the sublime and the profane, the said and the unsaid, the contradictions" (Pérez-Ortiz, 2011, p.3). For his part, *Vitier* resorts to a playful tone when describing such intertextual scaffolding: "The result is a suite, in principle infinite" (Vitier, 1997, p.216).

The catalog of influences that the author shows in his texts reveals a consciously elaborated tradition in the manner of T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). The personal tradition Melendes attributes to himself is vast; it includes *Mallarmé*, *Chaucer*, Puerto Rican writer *Esteban Valdés*, *Vallejo*, *Neruda*, *Fray Luis de León*, *Huidobro*, *José Santos Chocano*, *Francisco Matos Paoli*, *Lezama Lima*, *Rimbaud*, *Mariano Brull*, *Rilke*, *Jorge Guillén*, *Juan Ramón Jiménez*, *Borges*, *Baudelaire*, *Góngora*, *Gabriel Zaid*, *Homer*, *Democritus*, *Darío*, *Keats*. A precise explanation of this dynamic appears in the poem "El lector": "Ser Góngora, ser Borges, ser Omero,/ ser lo que no se puede ser por sido;/ ser instantáneamente el rostro erbedo/ de la sera perdida en bronses fieros". (Melendes, 1997, p.130)

(* in English: "The reader: "To be *Góngora*, to be *Borges*, to be *Homer*/ to be what you cannot be due to having been/ to be the instantaneous face/ of the lost wax in fierce bronze sculptures").

So important is the catalog of sources in the project of La casa de la forma that *Melendes* begins the text with quotations from *Jorge Guillén*, *Chaucer* and *Jorge Suárez*. Then he introduces a brief text that would seem to describe an "ars poetica": "These are not words: they are pieces of wind/ grouped around a *sí-laba de aire:/ el fulcro madre inmóvil i la trensa del ritmo,/ cabeza i trensa, ueco i agua: el berso es un pulpo*. (Melendes, 1997, p.9). This "fulcrum motionless mother" that is the syllable for the lyrical speaker refers to its sonority as a unit of language, a sonority that in turn underpins the rhythm of the poem, symbolized here in the metaphor of the "trensa". This image, close to the idea of production because of its connection with the way in which the genetic sequence is represented, serves to condense the heuristic modality that the poetic subject defends as what drives the articulation of the poem from sound.

On the other hand, the image of the octopus to describe the usurping nature of verse could also reflect the indefiniteness of the subject who undertakes the pilgrimage, a gesture widely explored in poetry amid the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in the works of *Vallejo* and *W.H. Auden*, for whom experimentation with the form of the poem went hand-in-hand with the attempt to capture the murky experience of the modern subject at the level of content. A good example of this is the "Sonnet of 16 sonnets", included in the first part of *The House of Form*. This poem, which is a series based on a 1969 text, forcefully highlights the precariousness of a subject in search of definition. The "Poema a la luz" (*Ode to Light), a sonnet from his youth that is established as a base text, consists of a description of nightfall in a city neighborhood, a detail which reaffirms the space of art through the symbol of the night. In

this poem, the territory of art appears from the first line: "*Cae la noche*" (Night begins to fall).¹ Once this space is conjured up, the description of the place that welcomes the poet is developed. The other sonnets, the "*Glosa a la sombra*" (*Gloss to darkness), function as a commentary on the almost *costumbrista* material of the first poem. In the manner of the rhizomatic orderings described by *Deleuze* and *Guatarri*, each of the lines of the base text gives rise to another sonnet that elaborates a line taken from the first poem. The first sonnet-gloss raises the question of the indefiniteness of the subject, which marks the thematic rhythm of the whole: THE NIGHT FALLS, extensive without time and with space (as half of being in order not to be); always an always hidden in a here: it is possible to be everything and to be half.

Tomorrow when it falls again, thus, falling - tomorrow, when, when, again? time? or will it only be, always, falling (always? time?):

I, who look, put it;

[he is not.

Movable in the space of tomorrow - I say - with an eternal time to change place: it is possible to be half and to be all.

The extensive night falls, without time, and I say falls, the verb: I say the verb: the action is me: the immovable of being falls for [me.

-(I am half.) (Melendes, 1997, p.25).

It is striking that this exercise of auto-analysis of the poetic subject is elaborated according to the standard orthography that Melendes criticizes so much. By including in "La casa de la forma" a sonnet from his youth, the author could be trying to show an idea of continuity in his literary poetics, but in any case, this would be applicable to that first text from 1969, not to the fifteen additional sonnets that function as a critique and gloss of that early text. The question that immediately arises is why these fifteen sonnets-glosses are not written

according to the rules of bad writing defended by Melendes. This detail reveals an inconsistency in the project of phonetic writing that the author claims for La casa de la forma. Even so, the abovementioned poem shows important elements to advance the hypothesis of a subject in search of concreteness.

Certainly, the poetic Self reaches in the last line of the first quatrain and in the last line of the first tercet what would seem to be an ontological certainty: "it is possible to be all and to be half", and then: "It is possible to be half and to be all" (Melendes, 1997, p.25). Enunciated in the key of apothegms, these two verses seem to allude to a subject reconciled with its selfhood, and even more, to a subject that recognizes itself linked to a cosmic type of order, as in the romantic analogy of the self and the universe. However, the last tercet contradicts all the above. In this sort of coda, a totally different conclusion is reached: "The immovable of being falls for me/(I am half.)" (Melendes, 1997, p.25). The fullness is not reached, and the subject continues in his unending quest.

Vitier interprets the fifteen sonnets-glosses of this series as an "impossible sum, broken in their summands. Except for the quenepa tree, everything is contaminated with impossibility. A marginalized sonnet, not even proletarian, with many children and grandchildren, all hungry for being and being, for identity. Prestidigitation, phenomenology, metaphysics (poetic physics) of a neighborhood postcard" (Vitier, 1997, p.218). This is a suggestive reading in that it points to a feature of the poetic voice that implies classicist, specifically Platonic, airs that go beyond the interpretation of these poetic texts to shed light on the intellectual and political practice of their author. What Vitier's commentary on Melendes' sonnets suggests is in such a virtue an identification of the lyrical speaker with what Jacques Ranciere calls "geologist or archeologist poet":

"The new poet, the geologist or archeologist poet, does, in a certain sense, what the wiseman in The

Interpretation of Dreams [Balzac] will do. He argues that there is nothing insignificant, that the prosaic details that positivist thought disdains or reduces to mere physiological rationality are signs in which a story is encoded. But it also raises the paradoxical condition of this hermeneutics: for the banal to release its secret, it must first be mythologized". (*Ranciere*, 2005, pp.50-51)

In "La casa de la forma", Melendes exploits this archaeological will that *Ranciere* highlights in the archetype of the writer by making the poetic subject of his texts a producer of myths. This lyric speaker who maps and names things is also immersed in an endless search for materialization. In "*El poeta desata su nombradía*" (*in English: The poet unleashes his reputation"), the subject would seem to accept his indefiniteness as the obligatory requirement of what seems to translate into a metaphysics of the poem; in other words, the poem becomes the only instance of fullness: "*Si alguna besita lo que e e escrito/ de todo lo que tube (o tubo) i pasa,/ puede que se conserbe este soneto*" (Melendes, 1997, p.59). The permanence of the written word as a direct result of the subject's condition of indefiniteness activates another form of anxiety in the poetic self. Now it is not only about the irresolute situation of his subjectivity, but that this very condition claims an almost unappealable productivity. "To write is to echo what cannot stop speaking" (Blanchot, 1992, p.21), argues the Maurice Blanchot of The Literary Space.

The subject of Melendes' poetry would seem to endorse this aphorism: "Outside the world vibrates its chamber/ as if it were its chamber that vibrates/ and in everything this passion of a rare cloud/ of imprisoning everything: What I tell" (Melendes, 1997, p.185). The above quotation belongs to the fifth part of *La casa de la forma*, entitled "*La casa de la forma (teoría)*". In this section Melendes places texts in which he exercises an attempt to explain his poetics, which ends up revealing the contradictory nature of this project in terms of form and substance. The remaining three stanzas of this sonnet condense the peculiar aporia of the lyric speaker:

*No ai brida que se atreba, el esperpento me amaga,
atisa, sierra toma cara.*

*I la esperansa mía no se para como un castiyo
maldito i suculento*

*¿Adónde iré qel tiempo me repuje, me orade, me
someta, me sonsaque, sin esta eternidá, sin este
buje?*

*Lo muerto que me tiene no es cosa qe plasca
solo: condena es este empuje. Mi mano planta
un bosque de estoraqe.*

"Where will I go without this eternity, without this
hub, without this eternity, without this hub?"

The dead thing that has me is not a thing that pleases
alone: condemnation is this thrust. My hand plants a
forest of tolu".

(Melendes, 1997, p.185).

At the level of form, the rigidity of the strophic structure of the classical sonnet contrasts with the singularity of the phonetic writing, an effect that could underline a triumphant iconoclasm. However, the analysis also shows that the subject assumes a certain impulse of concreteness in the knowledge of the futility of his endeavor. To register in the poetic word this failure points to an activity impossible to contain, since it would seem to be marked by a drive of an ontological nature: "*la esperansa mía no se para/ como un castiyo maldito i suculento*" (my hope does not stop/ like a cursed and succulent punishment). The hope presented by the poetic voice recalls the theorization of this concept in the work of Ernst Bloch, for whom the "presentiment of hope" (Bloch, 2007, p.183) is inherent in what he calls the "utopian function" of the subject of modern reason:

"[I]t is the utopian function that is the only transcendent function that has remained and the only one that deserves to be given: a transcendent function without transcendence. Its hold and correlate is the process that has not yet given birth to its most inherent content, but which is always in progress. A process that, consequently, finds itself in the hope and in the objective presentiment of that which has not yet come to be, in the sense of that which has not yet come to be that which ought to be". (Bloch,

2007, p.183)

In Melendes' sonnet, the consonance of the hope expressed by the poetic voice with that state of "militant optimism" (Bloch, 2007, p.183) that is the utopian function for the German thinker is also patent: "*I en todo esta pasión de nube rara/ de aprisionarlo todo: Lo que cuento* (*Translation: I in everything this passion of a rare cloud/ of imprisoning everything: What I tell" (Melendes, 1997, p.185). This idea is expanded in the third sonnet of the "*Afuera*" series, in which the poetic voice acknowledges the difficulty inherent in the consciousness of hope:

"Es difísil dudar de la materia,/ es difísil morir de la otredá,/ es difísil tener cualquier edá/ que la propia, i es difísil la arteria/ de las cosas torser, la fuerte feria/ de fieras y payasos y equilibrios" (Melendes, 1997, p.186).

Translation:

"It is difficult to doubt the matter/ it is difficult to die from old age/ it is difficult to be any age/ one's own age is difficult enough, and the string of heart/ of things to bend/ the strength of what is fair, and façades and balance"

The anaphoric impulse that establishes the rhythm of these verses seeks to underline the volitional mark of the subject even in the throes of disappearance, a gesture similar to that of the agonizing voice of the lyric speaker in Vallejo's poetry. Likewise, the subject of Melendes' poetry praises difficulty as the motive of creative activity. The third "Soneto de otoño" (*Autumn Sonnet) begins by repeating the precepts of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and José Lezama Lima regarding difficulty as the starting point of the literary act:

Lei de mi berso es evitar lo fásil: forjar en un diamante una qimera. (Que gustara al futuro o a las fieras me tiene sin cojones.) En volátil persebsión -qe ni el sueño te asegura- cojer un par de sílabas al vuelo i, desde la raís de tus abuelos, rebentar para fruta la montura.

(mi biejo si no entiende es cosa suya. De todas formas, la cosa no es tender ese puente fatídico: entender.

Lo contrario: una fruta qe enguya como una fruta beya! a qué supiera!: forjar en un diamante una qimera).

(Melendes, 1997, p.177).

Translation:

(Father, if you don't understand, that's your problem. Anyways, the secret lies in not burning bridges: to understand.

On the contrary: What would a juicy, delicious, yet deadly fruit taste like! To forge an illusion in a diamond)

It seems that for the indefinition of the subject there remains the materiality of poetic speech as a form of communication with otherness, something in which Melendes himself has inquired in dialogue with Ángel Darío Carrero: "[t]he fundamental commitment to language as the place of meaning and communication -and communication is love- is poetry" (Carrero, 2010, p.3). With this statement, Melendes approaches 62 Vol. 63, issue 3, July-December 2018 ISSN:0254-7597, Alfredo Bosi's visions around the poetic craft:

"Poetic work is sometimes accused of ignoring or suspending praxis. In truth, it is a momentary suspension and, well thought out, an apparent suspension. By projecting into the reader's consciousness images of the world and of man that are much more vivid and real than those forged by ideologies, the poem kindles the desire for another, freer and more beautiful existence. And by bringing the subject closer to the object, and the subject closer to itself, the poem exercises the lofty function of making up for the interval that isolates beings. Another

target does not have in view the most energetic and daring action". (Bosi, 2010, p.24)

In *La casa de la forma*, some lines of "*AQÍ CABE UN SONETO, JUSTO: CUEN-TE*" forcefully highlight that communicational drive of poetry identified by the Brazilian critic: "*No tengo otro/ remedio qel soneto i qe lo otro*"

Translation "I have no other cure but the sonnet and the other".

Translation: "Here lies a sonnet, JUST: TELL THE TALE (Melendes, 1997, p.183). The subject faces a situation in which, to reach the other, he needs the materiality of the poetic form. But the paradoxical thing is that this materiality that the sonnet gives him does not become a guarantee of fullness. Thus, the subject persists in his indefiniteness: "*Mi vida se a basiado de sentido/ se a yenido de formas, re sipientes/ sin contenido i se an creído su suma/ un nuevo contenido continente./ yo no soi nadie ya, yo no soi nadie./ Solo qedan las palabras de desirlo*" (Melendes, 1997, p.161).

Translation:

My life has become devoid of meaning/ it has filled with shapes, vessels/ without content, and they have become the sum/ a new continent of content/ I am no one anymore, I am no one/ There are only words to describe.

It is evident that the poem that should be a remedy ends up being the mirage of that cure. The lyrical speech in the work of the Puerto Rican seeks, as Gombrowicz suggested of poetry, "to open the windows of this hermetic house and bring out its inhabitants to fresh air" shaking "the heavy, majestic and rigid form that

overwhelms them" (Gombrowicz, 2009, p.23). But, as we have seen, this eagerness to revivify entails a journey that the subject of Melendes' poetry does not manage to complete, although the unmistakable traces of his uneven semiotic and political displacement persist.

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Note

¹Joserramón Melendes, *La casa de la forma*, [n.19], p.176.

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