

The Fracturing of the Poetic Ego in the Verse of Joan Salvat-Papasseit and Vicent Andrés Estellés

*La fractura de l'ego poètic en els versos
de Joan Salvat-Papasseit i Vicent Andrés Estellés*

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Abstract: Joan Salvat-Papasseit and Vicent Andrés Estellés were both highly politicised and committed writers. This article seeks to focus on the nature of the poetic ego fashioned by both authors and its function as a key element for the communication of the ideological message. The toxicity of the capitalist system regarding mental health, as elucidated by countless theorists from André Breton to Mark Fisher, will act as framework for the assessment of the creative identities of the two poets. Far from being a straightforward evocation, it is argued that Salvat's protagonist is a complex and contradictory figure whose multiplicity suggests a dissociative identity disorder. In Estellés the diagnosis is more severe, offering clear indications of schizophrenia. However, authorities from Otto Rank to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari will be referenced to illustrate the creative results generated by this psychopathology.

Keywords: Salvat-Papasseit; Otto Rank; Vicent Andrés Estellés; poetic ego; schizophrenia; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari.

Resum: Joan Salvat-Papasseit i Vicent Andrés Estellés van ser dos escriptors polititzats i compromesos. És per això que aquest article pretén centrar-se en la naturalesa de l'ego poètic i com aquest s'ha modelat en els dos autors, especialment pel que fa a la seva funció com a element clau per a la comunicació



del missatge ideològic. La toxicitat del sistema capitalista pel que fa a la salut mental, tal com han dilucidat innumbrables teòrics des d'André Breton fins a Mark Fisher, servirà de marc per a l'avaluació de les identitats creatives dels dos poetes. Lluny de ser una evocació directa, s'argumenta que el protagonista de Salvat és una figura complexa i contradictòria la multiplicitat de la qual suggereix un trastorn de la identitat dissociativa. En el cas d'Estellés el diagnòstic és més greu, oferint clars indicis d'esquizofrènia. Tanmateix, es farà referència a autoritats des d'Otto Rank fins a Gilles Deleuze i Felix Guattari per il·lustrar els resultats creatius generats per aquesta psicopatologia.

Paraules clau: Salvat-Papasseit; Otto Rank; Vicent Andrés Estellés; ego poètic; esquizofrènia; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari.

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The month of August 1924 separates the death of Joan Salvat-Papasseit from the birth of Vicent Andrés Estellés. The two writers, however, have far much more in common than a date on the calendar. Their celebration of proletarian life, one from the Barcelona dockland the other from the green belt of Valencia, combines in their output with a fierce defence of their national consciousness as Catalans. In the case of Salvat, we need only posit the experience described in *Les conspiracions* (LC, 1922). Here the alienation experienced in the journey to a sanatorium in the heartland of Spain joins with the corollary of a re-affirmation of the demands for official recognition of collective sentiment crystallised in its final line: “mil sagetes al vent que clamen llibertat.” (114)¹ For Estellés, the herculean labour of his *Mural del País Valencià* (MPV, 1996) and its exposition of the cohesion of the region and its centrality within the culture of Catalonia attests an identical and deep-seated militancy.

Apart from LC and a handful of other pieces, the focus of Salvat’s poetic landscape rarely strays from his native city and especially its port area. One of his last poems, the transcendent “Nocturn per a acordió” from *Óssa menor* (OM, 273-274) is a resilient reaffirmation of his experience as a nightwatchman on the docks with all its class interest, power and mysticism. Similarly, when Estellés iterates “Ací em pariren i ací estic” in his *Llibre de meravelles* (1971, 15), the declaration is far more than the simple communication of biographical data. In terms of Austin’s speech acts (1962), the statements are performative rather than constative, requiring a committed *prise de position* of a linguistic and class awareness in the context of a repressed minority. Borrowing sociologist Stuart Hall self-referential statement, this pair consciously “write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always “in context”, *positioned*.” (1996, 111)

The creative embracing of such a dissident and challenging attitude, however, comes at a cost. From the time of Marx and Engels onwards, social historians have denounced the noxious effect of Capitalism on the mental health of the oppressed, often described in terms of an epidemic.

1. All references to the work of Salvat-Papasseit will be taken from the *Obra completa* of 2006.

(Eisenberg-Guyot & Prins 2022, 195) Indeed, in *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher was to insist on this interpretation when he described the exponential increase in psychopathology since the dawn of the present system as an “invisible plague”. (2012, 21) And it is the intention of this article to consider how this toxic ethos compromises and conditions the creative ego projected by these two poets and the psychosocial implications of the strategies they employ.

In the case of Salvat-Papasseit, the discursive technique of preference is the persona poem which pervades the verse. The most salient guise adopted in this area is that of the hero. Unfortunately, however, it was precisely the primacy of this figure which gave rise to a reductivist reading of the verse. In the case of an impoverished consumptive, the evocation of a dashing protagonist who commands mastery over all was to provoke a straightforwardly biographical explanation for the compensatory, escapist fantasy of a bed-ridden tubercular. Recent apologists have identified the same symbiosis between author and creation but in much a much more positive light, allowing some space for aesthetics, as epitomised by the device coined by Ferran Aisa and Mei Morros: “La vida de Joan Salvat-Papasseit i la seva obra són una sola cosa indestriable: Poesia!” (2010: 13)

Though the power of this affirmation attests the affective intensity of the verse, the textual perspective of the Anglo-American tradition can allow for further appreciation of the sophisticated machinery which Salvat sets in place for the creation of this lyrical whole. In this endeavour, the close reading employed by Jordi Mas (2004) in his excellent analysis of this interchange regarding the relevance of the *haiku* to the overall creative vision has proved exemplary. Two considerations, however, should be borne in mind for our purpose: the subject matter under scrutiny is art not biography; and Salvat’s recourse to the rhetorical device of multiple personae is both complex and troubled.

The renowned literary anthropologist Joseph Campbell (1968) was to speak of the hero with a thousand faces. Salvat’s adaptation likewise covers many significant varieties of the figure which are culturally external in nature rather than autogenous. In the 1970s, for example, Joaquim Molas was to identify the dependence on Carlyle’s theory of the hero (1978, xi); and Jordi Mas (2004, 178) has isolated the philosopher Diego Ruiz as source of the libidinous enthusiasm so characteristic of the protagonist. This is

apparent also with reference to the embracing of the seditious personality of the vanguard militant prevalent throughout his work but condensed in the three devices of *La gesta dels estels* (GE), particularly the final element:

Fem l'escamot dels qui mai no reculen
i sols un bes els pot fer presoners,

fem l'escamot dels qui trenquen les reixes
i no els fa caure sinó un altre bes.

Fem l'escamot dels soldats d'avantguarda:
el primer bes que s'ens doni als primers. (162)

Salvat was a highly politicised and socially committed writer. And it is patent that his subscription to the subversive aesthetic was not autogenerated but embraced through a sympathetic awareness of the revolutionary creative mode sweeping Europe, one which was particularly welcome in Catalonia. For example, the martial celebration evident in a line from the second "Divisa", "creure en la guerra perquè és bo el combat", is lifted straight from the militarism of Italian Futurism. What is interesting in this formulation, however, is how the creative and erotic dimension of the construct reduces the martiality of the metaphor, placing the formulation entirely in the context of fiction.

Viatjar terres
no quedar-se en cap
amar en totes una noia verge;

creure en la guerra perquè és bo el combat,
cada ferida la sang d'un poema.

Quan Déu ens cridi poder contestar:
—tant estimava que es vessava el veire. (150)

The subscription to conflict and belligerence, however, is merely one facet of vanguard personality. The circus was also a particular favourite of the seditious aesthetic. From Picasso's *Saltimbanquis* (1905) to Satie's *Parade* (1917) the atmosphere and performers of the big top are repeatedly evoked across the continent in what became a creative commonplace. And "Marxa nupcial", from *L'irradiador del port i les gavines* (IP, 1921) could be considered as one of the most impressive essays on this theme produced in

Catalan. The circus clearly fulfills the function of a foucauldian heterotopia. As David Shane describes, these sites involved miniaturisation and mobility in their elaboration of mirroring strategies: “Heterotopias were always complex, ambiguous and multicellular structures, capable of containing exceptional activities and new urban immigrants because of their flexible codes and their unusual, multiple compartments.” (2005, 260) These *loci* reflect and invert the hierarchies of their host societies; and the circus offers a grotesque representation of the power structures largely invisible in the social norm.

Salvat prefaces the action with a foreword evocative of a ringmaster’s booming call to order: “Èxit! Èxit!! Èxit!!!” (80) Authority is implicit in the title of this figure and visible in his costume and top hat. As Margot, the love interest looks on the autobiographical protagonist, a clown with the forced smile of (social) compliance painted on his face, falls from the trapeze. The dashing corporal elegance of the big top’s flying gymnast is not for him. Neither is the privileged position at the heights of this miniature order: his buffoonery and ridiculous outsized uniform are confined to the lower echelons of the sawdust of the ring and, by extension, are associated with the lumpen proletariat both urban and rural at the bottom of the pyramid.

There is a sudden change in direction, however, with the insult “Escopiu la closca pelada del cretins”. (81) The fall from grace is thereby countered from below by the belligerent spirit of the avant-garde, signalling a development in the narrative. Herein, other vanguard favourites — the magic spell of electric illumination and cinema — revitalise the protagonist whose involvement in the fulfilment of the sexual act, concludes with the liberating “ha nascut el meu JO dins el Tot”. (83) The singular and triumphant empowerment of this identity — underlined through celebration in the taboo sphere of sex — is duly celebrated but will, however, be compromised as will be seen elsewhere.

Heterotopias are, of course, sites of transition. And the triumphant development — the self-fulfilment of the clown’s conversion into champion with all its rebellion — may best be understood with reference to Otto Rank. Confirming his break with Freud’s reading, the psychiatrist held that the hero is symbolic and not exemplary, as Nancy Gordon Seif explains:

The actions of the hero do not expose a basic antisocial human nature (...) The apparent hostility displayed by Oedipus and other heroes toward their parents is not directed toward destruction of those parents, but rather toward severance of the bonds of parental dictates that would subvert an individual's development. (1984, 376)

In the first instance, then, the revolt of this figure functions on the personal level representing "the natural need for every person to realize himself as a separate, autonomous being [and] indicate one's drive toward personal mastery and self-determination." (Seif, 1984: 376) There is a further positive element to the belligerence, however, if the sedition is extended to an ideological level, consistent with the political creed which pervades Salvat's prose. The full force of Mayakovsky's social command, for example, may be readily extended to Rank's formula:

If the individual and society are to remain vital and avoid stagnation, change is requisite; but change, of course, defies the established order for it entails the disruption, even the destruction, of that order. The hero signifies the agent of change; the hero is the strong-willed individual, in Rank's future terminology, who acts because he must express his will in spite of the great pain implicit in separation and in the opposition between generations. (1984, 376-377)

It is in this context that certain lines from the confusion of this calligramme make their meaning clearer in the affirmation of the vibrant singularity of the individual against the background of the crowd: a uniqueness emphasised by vanguard passion for velocity as opposed to the negative stasis of existential conformity:

La sombra de les comparses en el sol de les taules
Mourés i projectar-se no existir:
La **VIDA** al Dinamisme (81)

The gestation of this understanding is communicated by the lexis of reproduction with the unrestrained treatment of this taboo topic dealing a further blow to the delicacy of bourgeois decorum. The dial of the clock "fecunda les hores que vindran" followed by the "connubium" of self-awareness. Nancy Gordon Seif describes the psychiatrist's outline of the process as follows:

Eventually Rank would describe the trauma of psychological birth in terms of two basic opposing fears: the “fear of life,” which is the fear of being born, and the “fear of death,” which is the fear of not being born. The fear of life derives from one’s consciousness that to be born as an individual is to lose the safety and comfort of a symbiotic unity with others, and to know that one is alone, with the ultimate state of aloneness represented by death. (1984, 377)

Needless to say, the heroic persona that the Catalan adopts rises to the challenge of the “fear of life” with the utmost alacrity and dynamism. And the notion of risk, along with the pervasive motif of enthusiasm, underline the peril implicit in the process of individuation in the severe fracturing of the figure’s cohesion and his division into various entities: rebel, *mestre/lladre/pirata d’amor*, voyager; warrior; avant-guardist, etc. In “Canto la lluita” (IP), for example, the loss of symbiotic unity with the anonymous crowd is conveyed in violent terms indicative of the danger involved. The mounted “incendiari de mots d’adolescent” curses the established order in his resolve for rebellion:

Blasmo els deus a ple vol:
 l’arraulit bestiari
 tem el fuet del meu cant!
 I he maridat la lluna...
 (Però no dormo amb Ella si el filisteu governa els meus domenys) (69)

Similarly, in “L’absurd” the poet is sworn to the hazardous wager to “jugar la vida amb el misteri.” (IP, 71) What is continually affirmed, however, is the inevitability of change, of either a personal or social nature. This modification may be outlined — in the most general of terms — by the threat to the social order (*Poemes en ondes hertzianes*, POH); the liberation of Catalonia (LC); the female loss of virginity (*Poema de la rosa als llavis*, PRL) and the militancy and transcendence of the working class. (GE/ OM)

Summing up the critical consensus, Jordi Mas has charted the implications of the most salient reading which posits the protagonist as “una mena de mascle alfa, de soldat o heroi hipermasculí preocupat només per fecundar tantes noies com pugués.” (2011, 235) Though the critic posits this formula as programmatic in an artistic rather than a biographical sense, the singularity of the deliberation might leave much of the artistry involved without recognition. Narrative theory has, for example, advised of the dan-

gers of any straightforward reading from a nonfictional perspective. Enric Bou has cited Lejeune's vision of a "double jeu" in these cases: a construct which seeks to be "à la fois un discours véridique et une oeuvre d'art." (1993, 71). He continues with reference to Genette who insists on the ambiguity involved in this type of narrative: "el jo 'real' es revela com una il·lusió. Hi ha una tendència al desdoblament, a crear una mena de joc de miralls." (1993, 95) With Salvat, the mirror effect is clearly visible not only in the fracturing of Rank's hero into various guises, as noted above, but also the adducement of a further series of personae who carry an opposing charge.

The dauntless revolutionary intensity of "Columna vertebral" (POH), for instance, is countered in the same collection by the stasis of the repression in "El record d'una fuga de Bach" and crystallised by the emblem of popular subjugation: "Aquí on tot valor universal duu per nom Montjuïc." (59) The same polarity is illustrated between the energetic optimism for national liberation in poems like "El somni" (LC, 107) and "Cançó futura" (302) when contrasted with the inertia of the nation's subordination apparent in "Les gorges" which registers Catalonia as "Esclava a Espanya (...) també a França." (304) The command and mastery exuded by the hero is also countered by the self-doubt expressed elsewhere. The trembling in "Bodegom" (POH, 44), for example, anticipates the fragile uncertainty of the home in "Vibracions" where "Tot és la por" (IP, 78), or the endemic poverty of the proletarian family in "Nadal" s "—i tan pobres que som—" (IP, 86).

A further fragmentation underlines the ambivalence of the equation, throwing into relief the reductivism of any interpretation in the singular, as a series of motifs accompany the duality. The hero is associated by a powerful display of exhibitionism in a lyrical context of exteriors. The projection is often accompanied by a lively chromatic spectacle as in the *haikus* of "Vibracions".

Bru mariner d'amor
de peu dret a la proa
quina noia no el vol (IP, 79)

"L'home bru ros del port" (GE, 143) continues the colourful pageant. Whilst in "Prometença", the warrior protagonist: "muntaria un cavall de crinera lluenta/ i el meu nom s'alçaria/ més alt que la congesta." (GE, 145) This exhibitionism, however, is just one side of a symbolic projection where an opposing vision is also privileged. In several pieces, the autobiographical

narrator is portrayed as a voyeur. The most celebrated would be “Encara el tram” where a frustrated scopophilia forms the basis of the speculation enhanced by the anaphora of the line: “Però els ulls no se’t veuen.” (IP, 74) The most powerful version, however, would be the disturbing prose poem “Una nit de nadal” (459) where the narrator contemplates the implication of a darkly redemptive street scene from the frosty impotence of his balcony.

What is more, the perspective described above is frequently associated with stasis, interiors and infirmity. The most disarming example is the supine bed-ridden narrator in the celebrated “Tot l’enyor de demà.” (IP, 91-93) A more spectral and unnerving example, however, is “Missenyora la mort” which portrays the powerless, prostrate poet perceiving the ghostly lady of death creeping salaciously round the four walls of his bedroom, “impúdica en son plaer.” (298)

Similarly — and as a counterpoint to the mastery usually associated with the autobiographical protagonist —, a group of poems evoke the passivity of this individual. The sonnet “Pantalons llargs” portrays the vulnerability of the adult poet as a powerless child — “i soc infant encara” (IP, 90) —, woefully immature and unable to deal with the responsibilities of life in the modern world. The sense of helpless entrapment affects even a figure as commanding as the *mestre d’amor*, as in “I el seu esguard”: “I el meu esguard damunt el meu esguard/ soc presoner”. (PRL, 181) Indeed the ambiguity of the master/captive relationship is epitomised in the line “i jo era alhora l’heroi i l’esclau” from “La meva amiga com un vaixell blanc.” (OM, 286)

As a result, the lasting impression when confronted with a poetic projection of such polyvalency is precisely that of complexity. Salvat-Papasseit’s recourse to the rhetorical device of personae is extensive to the point of excess. His evocation includes not only a plurality of autogenous guises but also a dialectic of modes constructed on the juxtaposition of opposites. Indeed, the polyphony involved in this disunity is highly reminiscent of the Dissociative Identity Disorder (known formerly as Multiple Personality Disorder.) (Braude, 1995) If commentators have focussed almost exclusively on the figure of the hero, this is understandable as it is usual in this condition for one of the states to be the dominant or host identity. However, what is equally important is the choral nature of the experience in all its conflictive variety which offers a clear representation of the psychological instability associated with the autobiographical narrator. It should

not be surprising to find the creative ego of the ingenuous and salubrious Salvat-Papasseit described in such terms. Psychopathology within an ideologically belligerent framework provided a fertile field of exploration for vanguard sensitivity. Whilst the example of Fernando Pessoa may offer an extreme version of the phenomenon, such classical essays as Dalí and Bunuel's *Chien andalou* (1929) and Breton's *Nadja* (1928) underscore the adage of the toxic effect of capitalism on mental health.

A similar indisposition surrounds the portrayal of the self in the verse of Vicent Andrés Estellés though the condition is more palpably extreme. The devastation wrought by the cot death of infant daughter Isabel in early 1956, at the tender age of three months, occasioned a complete breakdown of the individual and creative personality. The title of the extensive monologue "Coral romput" (1957) is indicative of this disintegration though its effect is most striking example in *Primera soledad* (PS, 1956) which remained unpublished until 1988. The scarcely controlled outpouring of grief is testimony in itself of the hysteria experienced in reaction to the event as is the astonishing recourse to the medium of Castilian which Estellés himself was unable to explain with any conviction.

The trauma provoked a reaction of a patently schizoid complexion which was far more severe than those symptoms evident in Salvat's work. This disorder "takes many forms, but the pathology always concerns an inability to unify the ego" (Cross 2021, 246); and whereas the Catalan manages to retain coherence despite the threat posed by dissociative disorder, the poetic personality of Estellés collapses completely. This psychic disintegration is exacerbated by the experience of abjection. In her excellent doctoral thesis, Irene Mira-Navarro (2019) references Julia Kristeva's meditations on this condition and their relevance to the present collection and *La nit* (1956), which are of significant interest to this essay.

The etymology of the word — from the Latin *ab iacere*: to cast off — refers to the expulsion of fluids from the body which accompany the experience; and its association with death is a literary constant, especially in the face-to-face encounter with a corpse. A classic case would be the emetic reflex visited upon Hamlet when holding Yorick's skull in the graveyard scene: the prince's "gorge rises at it". A similar effect is encountered in Ausiàs March's CVII, where the Gandian recalls, in turn, the passing of a buffoon: "Toni amic vostra carn és ja fem". (Calvo, 2011: 226) Significantly, the line

is cited by Estellés as paratext to his most morbid of collections, *L'engan conec*. (1959-61)

In this respect, Joan Fuster's critical instinct is seen to be as sure-footed as ever as he summarises the style of Estellés as "un vòmit de llengua." (1972, 28) In this discourse everything is to be found "al seu lloc, la merda o el semen, i l'afecte més innocent, i l'alegria, i el difunt que tots serem un dia." (1972, 33) And PS is the epitome of this incontinence. The title chosen for the collection is indicative of the loneliness of the event. In the Castilian tradition the term is inevitably associated with Góngora and Machado. And both authors were known to reflect on the inevitability of death in the context of corporal decomposition. The Cordovan's impressive *carpe diem* "Mientras por competir con tu cabello" ends precisely with the process of decay of bodily beauty: "En tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada." A similar reference in Machado's *Soledades*, the painfully understated "En el entierro de un amigo", evokes the same sinister response with the line: "Un golpe de ataúd en tierra es algo / perfectamente serio."

Kristeva describes the threat to the ego which is contained in the border territory of abjection:

The corpse (cadavre: from cadere, to fall), that which has irremediably fallen, sewer and death, throws the identity of the one who is confronted by it into still greater turmoil, like some fragile and fallacious event. A sore of blood and pus, or the sugary and acrid odour of sweat or of putrification, do not signify death. Faced with death signified — for example by the straight line of an encephalogram — I would understand, I would react or I would accept. No, as if in a real theatre without make-up or mask, the refuse (*déchet*), like the corpse, indicates to me what I keep permanently at a distance in order to live. (1982, 127)

Reference to the sweat on the baby's clothes at the time of death is a constant in the collection: paradoxically what the doting father must keep "at a distance in order to live." And the final poem of the first part evokes the fascinating horror of abjection in the most harrowing manner, as Estellés stands in the graveyard before his daughter's niche:

Hay una pequeña caja de madera barnizada
y dentro unas telas blancas que

se van descomponiendo,
un jerseyquito blanco, unos peúcos
y un montoncito todavía tierno de masa,
de masa espesa y pegajosa, casi láctea,
semejante a la que suelta el escarabajo reventado
o, si quieres, el grillo,
algo. No sé.

pero me da horror,
me esfuerzo, pero me da horror;
es como si tuviera que tragarme esa masa gelatinosa,
[insoportablement dulce,
es una náusea
es una gana enorme de vomitar,
aquí mismo,
y vomitar y vomitar. (PS, 94)

It is difficult to conceive of a more immediate representation of the morbid attraction of this interminable threat to the self, or as Kristeva has it:

The corpse — seen without God and outside science — is the height of abjection. It is death infesting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one is not separated, from which one is not protected as is the case with an object. An imaginary strangeness and a menace that is real, it calls to us and finishes by devouring us. It is not then an absence of health or cleanliness which makes something abject, but that which perturbs an identity, a system, an order. (1982, 127)

The final piece of the collection, in more measured but no less macabre and tortured prose, emphasises the poet's inescapable fixation with the topic:

Es cierto que he pensado aquí, en voz alta,
en la descomposición de tu cuerpo,
pero no lo he dicho todo, yo no he dicho que tú estás
realmente, realmente, enterrada aquí en mi cuerpo (...)
y yo te he llevado y te llevo entre pecho y espalda (...)
descompuesta, deshecha, y por eso no
tengo ganas de comer
y siento un gran deseo de vomitar. (PS, 243)

The concept coincides completely with Kristeva's analysis of its relevance to the creative writer who "fascinated by the abject, imagines its logic, projects himself into it, introjects it and in consequence perverts language — both style and content." (1982, 137) The introjection is obvious above: as is the "perversion" of the adoption of Castilian and the seemingly uncontrolled *mélange* of metred verse and prose. The damage to the self occasioned by the sinister fascination with this personal chaos "solicits and pulverises the subject" who "finds the impossible in himself (...) discovering that he is nothing other than abject." (1982, 128)

The collapse of the poetic ego is both desperate and total; and symptomatic of the schizoid, condition as we see exemplified in the text. The expression in the desperate and frenzied *cant espiritual* — addressed simply to God (*Señor*) — evinces the collapse of the ego and superego: "no sé dominarme." All control is lost, overwhelmed by a crazed fear of death as the syntagm "Me da miedo la muerte/ y tengo que morirme" is repeated over two dozen times. (PS, 105-106) A similarly futile and impenetrable reaction is apparent in "Tener y no tener". Hemingway's novel deals with the triumph of force majeure over individual volition as a small boat owner, swindled in the depths of the Depression, is forced into crime to make a living. The lack of context or explanation, exacerbated by the frenzied repetition, is indicative of the hopeless loss of control experienced by the distraught father.²

TENER Y NO TENER. TODO SE NOS HA VUELTO

*tener y no tener. No se puede explicar
cómo es esto o en qué consiste por lo menos.
Eso es, tal vez, eso: tener y no tener.
Es eso, nada más. Tener y no tener.
No lo puedo explicar. No se puede explicar.* (PS, 179)

Despite the peril of the psychopathology, however, there is a positive dimension of interest to our case. In the words of Eugene Holland, the condition may also facilitate: "revolutionary breakthrough rather than psychological breakdown, as Deleuze and Guattari (following R.D. Laing) put

2. Film addict Estellés may well have seen Hawks's film version of 1944 where the actions of the protagonist (Humphrey Bogart) are determined by circumstance until the finale when an unconvincing twist allows for the required happy ending.

it.” (2002, 3) According to the speculation of the French theorists, it forms an essential part of the psychological make-up of the creative artist: “des peintres et des poètes, ce sont aussi les schizophrènes qui montrent la voie, non sans périls d’ailleurs.” (Duportail 2011, 94)

It is not difficult to perceive the relevance of these comments to the lyrical development of the Valencian. As the poet moves on from the fertile if orthodox narrativity of the mid-1950s — the exception would be the extremes of PS —, the re-orientation entails the construction of an astonishing dialectic with two key figures of classical Rome: *Horacianes* (H), composed 1963-1970 and published in 1974; and *Exili d’Ovidi* (EO), written 1959-1977 though not published until 1982. In critical history the notion of originality — as with influence, its opposite — lost currency many decades ago. However, as the late Amador Calvo explained in his peerless intertextual reading of the Valencian, it is difficult to find another term for what may well be a unique rhetorical invention: a plethora of sentient autobiographical voices:

En l’obra poètica d’Estellés no crec que es pugua parlar d’una real evolució en la utilització de les tècniques intertextuals i en els jocs autorials; s’hauria de parlar, per contra, d’una capacitat fora de norma en diversificar, des de primera hora, de manera polimòrfica i singular, cadascuna de les seues ficcions poètiques. (2011, 231)

In both these “poetic fictions”, the creative self implodes as the Valencian embarks on a symbiotic relationship with his Latin predecessors. Estellés had alleged that the strategy adopted was merely a means to avoid censorship by speaking in the distant voices of previous authors. (Bou 1978: 59) The device would therefore be similar to Salvat Papasseit’s employment of fictive personae as a vehicle for self-expression. In these cases, however, the identity assumed is no mere medium but becomes a psychosomatic experience of vital proportions. The intense fatherly grief which collapsed the creative self in PS is replaced in H by a schizoid reaction to the trauma of dictatorial repression and the local scourge of *blaverisme*, the anti-Catalanist movement of the locality. As Estellés himself explains: “El vaig començar com per joc; després, l’acte incivil dels atacs, sense defensa, dels quals fou objecte el meu bon amic Joan Fuster, va derivar en una mena de crònica ‘periodística.’” (1974, 308)

The journalistic aspect is easily identified in poems about the burning of Joan Fuster's monograph and effigy in the *falles* of 1963 (LV); or the release of an album by protest singer Raimon (LIV) in the repressive depths of the Franco regime. The lyrical response to this oppression is, however, much more sophisticated as Estellés presents a plurality of perspectives from which to portray the antagonism. Firstly, contemporary Valencia is fused with Augustan Rome given the identity, perceived by Estellés, of the imperial and moralistic dogma imposed by Octavian and Franco as *pater patriae*. The experience is thereafter accompanied by a multiplication of autobiographical narrative voices. Not only are we privileged with the enunciation delivered either by Horace or Estellés but also, as Jaume Medina intimates, several points in between: "Així a voltes tindrem un Estellés-Horaci (ja que el primer s'ha atansat a l'època clàssica) i a voltes un Horaci-Estellés, puix que el primer viu entre nosaltres." (1977: 108)

Elsewhere I have dwelt on the psychological mechanics of this creation in an effort to account for the affective charge of the representation. The literary commonplace of the lone resister to criminal authority is, of course, a tried and tested formula for the transmission of emotional solidarity. Emblematic of this orientation would be a number of Salvat-Papasseit's positive personae, Ibsen's doctor in *Enemy of the People* — so cherished by the Catalan —, E. E. Cummings's conscientious objector "Olaf", and the magnificent Sissy Spacek and Jack Lemmon in Costa Gavras's *Missing* (1982). What is more, the invitation to empathetic involvement in the social conflict of the *Batalla de València* of the 1960s is ensured by the placing of the narrative within the family environment of Freud's primal scene. (Keown 1996, 121-155)

In the synchronism of this poetic reality — and through a series of emotive paeans —, Estellés posits his own father as the symbol of culture and civilization, whose authority is imagined as usurped by both these repressive autocrats. Resistance to this rogue establishment is provided by licentious and freedom-loving Horace who launches tirade after tirade of abuse on the sinister evil twin Suetonius, imagined heir and disciple of despotic power in Rome and Valencia. The sibling rivalry — and the struggle to reclaim the figurative paternal legacy of culture language and personal and collective freedom — is communicated in the most demotic of registers, providing one of the most hilarious episodes of Catalan verse of the last

century. Moreover — and as Tomkins indicated and practitioners of Rap would attest —, the unrestrained rage produces an immediate affective reaction in the readership, regardless of era or nationality. (2008, 687-778)

Curiously, the same formula is only partially transferable to EO which, despite its concomitance, is a more nuanced and polymorphous construct altogether. As Amadeu Calvo makes clear, this collection is perhaps the most latent and intricate of all the *oeuvre*. For the commentator it is “singularíssim” with aspects which are “originalíssims”; and he proceeds to explain the extraordinary plethora of narrative voices: “La seua veu [d’Ovidi/Estellés] es confon amb les veus de Neruda i de Lorca per certes analogies biogràfiques: l’exili (Neruda i Ovidi), la mort miserable de l’autor silenciats per l’exili (Ovidi), i el silenci del poeta assassinat (Lorca). Totes aquestes interaccions entre els tres autors es retroben en un mateix cant de mort que les evoca i reuneix en la veu simbòlica d’Ausiàs March.” (2011, 229) What is more, the convolution is enhanced by

un dialogisme canviant que passa per diferents instàncies poètiques: un jo poètic que correspon a un «amic» que parla a ovidi a la segona persona en tots els poemes de la secció a l’excepció del [x], una instància poètica femenina que representa en la ficció poètica la veu de la filla d’ovidí en el [viii], fins i tot una altra instància que assumeix la primera persona del plural, la del col·lectiu anònim que celebra una mena de meeting a la memòria d’ovidí [iii/v/vi/vii/ix/xii/xv/xvi]. S’endevina una altra instància (una veu que parla també a la segona persona del singular), car certs poemes es diferencien dels altres per una utilització gràfica diferent, els ii, iii, vi, xv, xvi, o fins i tot la primera persona del singular associada a la primera persona del plural [x]: «aquest jorn. jo dic ovidi per ells, és el nom que sabem.» A tantes veus no s’ha d’oblidar d’afegir la del jo poètic que assumeix la veu d’Ovidi, personatge de la ficció poètica, veu que representa el testimoni verídic dels llibres autobiogràfics d’exili *Tristia* i *Epistulae ex Ponto* del poeta llatí. (2011, 229-230)

As is indicated, the author of the original *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* displays an identical collapse of the self in exile. And the instrument which Estellés applies to communicate his version of this auto-oblivation is the seemingly boundless plurality of narrative voice. The polyphony is pure excess and, forging the remnants of cohesion of Salvat-Papasseit and the

comparatively straightforward binary control of *Horacianes*, authorial integrity is severely compromised. The condition is exacerbated additionally by delusions of self-reference as, in a long harangue, the poet comes to consider himself as the embodiment of universal evil: “cante un odi estelar, fosca fundació,/ jo soc l’odi i avance, personifique l’odi.” (EO, VI, 366) Exile has evidently destroyed the social status and identity of this individual — “que ha perdut muller, fills i pàtria” (VI, 361) — and has produced the same effect as the tragedy of *Primera soledad* which, as cosmic and destructive as this “stellar hatred”, is introjected into the body, inducing a frenzy for self-harm:

lo mejor es casarse, trabajar, tener hijos...
 y de pronto ha venido este cataclismo.
 Y ahora me miro el sitio que tengo en la entrepierna,
 y me da horror, me da horror, un miedo enorme,
 porque él no trajo sólo la vida, porque él trajo
 la muerte al mismo tiempo. Cogería una piedra
 y lo machacaría a golpes contra el suelo. (PS, 216)

Evidently, the Oedipal family paradigm advanced by Freud would be unable to contain the polyphony witnessed here. Eugene Holland, however, has explained the possibilities latent in such a condition as advanced by Deleuze and Guattari where, as evident in this frenzy of phallic annihilation, the psychic structure “might be actively dis-organ-ized so as to enable the production of other forms of organ-ization — or no fixed organ-ization at all, which is the state they designate as schizophrenia.” (2002, 28) And Guy-Félix Duportail has elucidated further the coincidence of this creative plurality with the context of the *Corps sans Organes* (CsO) as imagined by schizoanalysis:

À la différence du corps de chair du phénoménologue, le CsO n’est donc pas imputable à un Moi, il ne sera jamais mon corps ni le tien; comprenons qu’étant multiplicité apersonnelle, un CsO est aussi bien un corps collectif, social ou politique, que divin. On est bien loin du corps propre. Ainsi, l’individu n’est «nullement indivisible» comme le précise Deleuze, bien au contraire, c’est une multiplicité variant par intensité (...) L’individualité n’est donc jamais une unité durable ou permanente à la façon d’un moi, elle est toujours une multiplicité de fusion en métamorphose continue.” (2011, 96-97)

Curiously, this deterritorialisation of the self — as the psychic hierarchy collapses with the foundering of ego and superego — runs parallel to the levelling process seen in the topography referenced. From his earliest work onward, Estellés tends to base his lyrical purview on specific locations of his homeland. This may be exemplified by the onomastica of the *Mural del País Valencià*; or, additionally, by the specificity of the urban and rural hinterland — Valencia (*Llibre de meravelles*) and its green belt (*Coral romput*) —, their heterotopia of home, hotels, cemeteries, etc., (PS, *L'Hotel París*) and selected chronotopes (cinema, neighbourhood, home, etc.)

In H there are the first signs of departure from this strategy with the ambiguity of the overlay of the cities of ancient Rome and Valencia and the plurality of narrative voice. In the banishment of *Exili d'Ovidi*, however, this urban specificity is constantly challenged by a reterritorialisation into the featureless isolation of the place of exile, described simply as “el cofi de la terra.” (VI, 394) As Calvo rightly argues, here we see Estellés experimenting once again: this time with the security of location. Comparatively little is revealed about the locus of Ovid's exile: the narrative limits itself merely to an account of the pervasive cold along the coast of the Black Sea, with the harshness and deprivation of detention in this borderland.

As such, the ontological experience described is essentially interstitial. Rome — the striated, hierarchical centre of empire and the poet's personal and cultural home — is recalled insistently. On the other hand, Tomis is the complete opposite: a locus described by the original Ovid as “a town located in a war-stricken cultural wasteland on the remotest margins of the empire.” (Williams 2006, 235) In contrast to the Latin capital this wilderness by the sea concurs with what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a “nomadic smooth space”:

Nomadic war machines do not control a territory by dividing it, striating it and distributing themselves within it, but by the multiple affective ways in which they occupy it. Being capable of appearing anywhere upon it, they turn it into a 'smooth space'. A smooth space is open and dynamic, both territorially and in terms of the habits and affects it affords. Smooth spaces are created by the way in which they are occupied. Whereas the steppe, the prairie and the ocean are typical examples of smooth space and the urban grid is a typical example of striated space, initially striated spaces may be enacted by nomadic war machines that move across them as if they were smooth spaces (Munro & Thanem 2018, 73)

As such, the destratification of urban and social echelons mirrors the psychological levelling of the self as ego and superego implode. Both Ovids are seen as marginalised on the frontiers of the two systems. Despite their precarious position, however, the experience is laden with possibilities for personal and social renewal:

nomadism may be employed to attack capitalist and State power. Both schizoanalysis and nomadism operate along a vector of 'detritorialization', where desire and matter spread beyond the boundaries of property, where identities and bodies are pushed towards absolute destratification, and where radically new forms of social life may be created on a 'new earth'. These deterritorializing processes can challenge existing social codes and boundaries. (Munro & Thannem 2018, 70)

The geopersonal development is significant in terms of ideological orientation. Grounded in the 1950s, Estellés's output directs itself towards the fight against the dictatorship in terms of utmost immediacy, as crystallised by the overture to *Llibre de meravelles*: "Ací em pariren i ací estic" cited at the start of this study. The tendency towards the addition of a more generic critique, however, becomes noticeably concurrent in the output of the 1960s. The innovative biographical symbiosis of *Horacianes* and its controlled duplication of experience gives rise to the extensive polyphony and "nomadic" dimension of *Exili d'Ovidi*, whose schizoanalytical postulations offer a lyrical landscape where the ontology concerned extends the local strategies of resistance more generically to wider systems of repression. Indeed, Amador Calvo's sophisticated textual reading allows an illustration of this phenomenon. Concluding, from the semantic field of "el 'Llibre Quart: Cants de mort'" that Estellés was familiar with Elie Wiesel's *Le chant des morts* (1966) he then extends the relevance both to Ausiàs March and the Nobel laureate. The implications of such a juxtaposition are explained accordingly:

En associar l'Holocaust jueu al programa d'extermini i de repressió dels enemics republicans als camps de concentració franquistes, el poeta de Burjassot podia haver pretès reajustar, denunciant-la, la veritable dimensió i abast de la violència del règim feixista de Franco, assimilant-la a la de la barbàrie nazi, violència que no ha de ser minimitzada davant la desproporció numèrica de les víctimes jueves. (2016, 224)

In this way the importance of the poetic ego for artistic exploration is manifest in the output of these two irrepressible writers. Despite a general impression to the contrary, Salvat's autobiographical projection is never straightforward but, through an exponential recourse to personae which destabilises the integrity of the narrative voice, provides an impactful impression of the trauma related to the Catalan proletarian experience of the early decades of the last century. The Valencian's response is similarly psychopathological though even more extreme. Unlike his predecessor, whose creative ego may be weakened by its plurality yet still retains an underlying coherence, the anguish of personal loss registered in the *Primera soledad* brings about the total implosion of the authorial self.

Sadly, tuberculosis — the scourge of proletarian existence and its prophylactic inadequacies in the first half of the last century — was to bring the Catalan's life to a tragically premature close. One of his final poems, "Nocturn per a acordió" (273-274), however, witnesses the appearance of yet another new identity: the hierophant who, in the guise of a night-watcher on the docks, officiates over a mystical ceremony evoking the transcendence of the working-class experience. In this way, the poet's death would leave unrealised any further opportunities offered by the projection of a lyrical dissociative disorder. By way of contrast, the breakdown suffered by Estellés in the mid 1950s was total and despairing. It remains coherent, however, to follow a schizoanalytical line and posit that the mental collapse suffered might well be taken as a key factor in the elaboration of the innovative visitation of the classics in the following decade. Herein, the startling artistic formula not only serves to communicate of the extent and severity of Francoist repression but also the savage nature of the capitalism system, of which military dictatorship is surely the most inhuman of versions.

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