

JOSEP MARIA JUNOY'S FOUR- AND FIVE-LINE POEMS IN *EL DIA*: A MEDITATION ON THE HAIKU

In June 1920, in the volume *Poemes i cal·ligrames*, Josep Maria Junoy presented for the first time the results of his experiments with the haiku form,¹ which at that time was very popular in France.² 'Arc-en-cel', dating from 1918, was a five-line poem in which the fourth line was a repetition of the second, and the fifth line a repetition of the first, and it was therefore easily identified with the haiku form from which it took its inspiration. From about that time, Junoy published in various newspapers and magazines a number of four- or five-line poems featuring this kind of repetition; some remained unpublished until Jaume Vallcorba edited the author's complete poetical works.³

The few critics to have discussed these poems (Joaquim Molas, Vallcorba, and Enric Balaguer) have criticized their repetitive structure and stressed the improvement that came with the subsequent reduction of the poems to the prescribed three-line haiku form in the book *Amour et paysage*. However, despite the validity of their observations, the discussion they offer is not entirely satisfactory. Molas enumerates the types of repetition found in these poems:

Junoy [. . .] sotmeté el hai-kú a una sèrie de variacions que, a grans trets, podríem resumir en els punts següents: 1) ampliació simètrica, o no, de tres a cinc versos; 2) ampliació a quatre o, al contrari, 3) reducció a dos i, finalment, 4) dissolució sense perdre l'estructura paradigmàtica, en un discurs en prosa.⁴

Elsewhere, Molas characterizes their technique as comparable to a baroque mirror effect.⁵ Vallcorba says that

es fa difícil ara de saber si Junoy simetritzà el poema per tal d'occidentalitzar-lo' o bé per altres raons. Començats aquests experiments el 1918, contemporanis de poemes de factura avantguardista, mai no sabrem què va empènyer Junoy a transformar l'haikú d'una manera tan peculiar.⁶

Like Vallcorba, Balaguer believes that Junoy made the form symmetrical in

I am grateful to Professor Jacqueline Minett for the English translation of this article.

¹ In the present article, I shall use the word 'haiku', although the term used by Junoy and his contemporaries in the West was 'haikai' or 'haikaï'. The term 'haiku', which ultimately came to predominate but was not yet current in Europe in the 1920s, was introduced by the Japanese poet Shiki to distinguish this genre from the 'non-renga haikai'. Moreover, it should be remembered that Junoy himself never referred to these poems, not even the three-line poems, as 'haikai' until the post-war period, when he wrote and published in Spanish.

² See Fernando Rodríguez-Izquierdo, *El haiku japonés: historia y traducción*, 3rd edn (Madrid: Hiperión, 1999), pp. 190–92.

³ Josep Maria Junoy, *Obra poètica*, ed. by Jaume Vallcorba Plana (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1984); henceforth *OP*.

⁴ Joaquim Molas, 'Els moviments d'avantguarda: Joan Salvat-Papasseit', in *Història de la literatura catalana*, ed. by M. de Riquer, A. Comas, and J. Molas, 11 vols (Barcelona: Ariel, 1980–88), ix (1987), 328–76 (p. 341).

⁵ Joaquim Molas, *La literatura catalana d'avantguarda, 1916–1918* (Barcelona: Antoni Bosch, 1983), p. 43.

⁶ Jaume Vallcorba Plana, 'Introducció', in *OP*, p. xcvi.

order to westernize it, recalling that ‘el gust per la simetria és un dels elements que caracteritzen la cultura occidental enfront de l’oriental’.⁷

Interestingly, although Vallcorba had referred to Junoy’s desire to westernize the form,⁸ he fails to restate this view in the introduction to his edition of Junoy’s poetical works. Certainly, these poems are thoroughly western in their aesthetic stance, but was this the rationale behind the poet’s use of repetition in the poems? In the present brief study I propose a global view of the poems in question, which were published in the Terrassa daily newspaper *El Dia* during 1920, and by doing so hope to shed some light on Junoy’s intentions in manipulating the haiku form.

The poems published in ‘El Dia’ as transition between ‘Poemes i cal·ligrames’ and ‘Amour et paysage’

Junoy published two books in 1920: *Poemes i cal·ligrames* on 25 June, and *Amour et paysage* at the end of the year. The poems that concern us here were published between those two dates in the ‘Noucents’ section of the Terrassa daily newspaper *El Dia*: ‘La Cendrosa’ and ‘Nit de lluna’, five-line poems with the same structure as ‘Arc-en-cel’, appeared on 3 July and 7 August respectively; ‘Cinq petits poèmes’, four-line poems in which the fourth line is a repetition of the first, appeared on 9 October.⁹

A cursory glance at the number of lines in the poems and the dates of publication reveals that Junoy’s intention in this series was to move gradually towards the haiku form, progressing from the five lines of ‘Arc-en-cel’ to the four of ‘Cinq petits poèmes’ and, finally, the three-line compositions of *Amour et paysage*. There is, however, another important piece of evidence to support such an interpretation: Tomàs Garcés’s article ‘*Poemes i cal·ligrames*: la trajectòria del Junoy’, also published in *El Dia*, on 10 July 1920.¹⁰ This article, which focused on Junoy’s recently published collection of poems, was written by a close friend of the book’s publisher, Joan Salvat-Papasseit, and it could well have been published on the initiative of either Salvat or Junoy himself. Basically, the article is part of the advertising campaign for the recently published book—at the end of the article there is an insert printed in considerably larger type than that used in the body of the article, which includes the address of the publisher, Llibreria Nacional Catalana, a company owned by the Salvat-Papasseit brothers. Garcés must have had ample opportunity to talk to Junoy during the book’s publication and, although the point of view expressed in the article is no doubt his own—Junoy would probably not have agreed with the description of the poem ‘Data’ as a ‘magnífic epigrama incoherent’, and ‘Mira, passant, eixa fontana . . .’ as ‘d’una absoluta insignificància’—his knowledge of the author was certainly first-hand.

⁷ Enric Balaguer, *Ressonàncies orientals: budisme, taoisme i literatura* (València: Eliseu Climent, 1999), p. 75.

⁸ Jaume Vallcorba Plana, ‘Josep Maria Junoy: uns textos i algunes perspectives de lectura’ (unpublished undergraduate dissertation, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1977), p. 138.

⁹ ‘La Cendrosa’, *El Dia*, 650 (3 July 1920), p. 9; ‘Nit de lluna’, *ibid.* 678 (7 August 1920), p. 6; ‘Cinq petits poèmes’, *ibid.* 731 (9 October 1920), p. 4.

¹⁰ *El Dia*, 654 (10 July 1920), p. 7.

First of all, Garcés points out that *Poemes i cal·ligrames* reflects a path consisting of ‘petites passes armòniques’ that takes Junoy from a strictly Cubist stance—the preface to the book is a letter by Apollinaire—to the ‘penediment classicista’ expressed in the final poem of the book, the translation of a stanza by Malherbe. This affirmation of the harmony of Junoy’s career is significant in that the poet, after making a name for himself in Catalonia as a champion of Cubist aesthetics, publicly dissociated himself from the movement and was accused by his detractors of being fickle and inconsistent.¹¹ According to Garcés, the most delightful point in this transition from staunch Cubism to an espousal of Classicism is to be found in ‘Arc-en-cel’, a poem that he relates to the haiku:

L’Arc-en-cel, i altres poemes no recollits en el volum, ho proven. No són tan breus ni tan rics com els haikai, coets lluminosos que es perden sense una fi certa. Tenen, no obstant, amb ells el parentiu de la gràcia, de l’aparent fragilitat. Encara, un recel academicista fa que els poemes japonitzants del Junoy es donguin. Per què? Per què aquest intent de ofegar el lliure examen, el lliure acabament?¹²

Garcés concludes his article with an invitation, or rather a barely disguised advertisement, since, as is shown by the fact that he refers to ‘altres poemes no recollits en el volum’, he was already familiar with the poems published in *El Dia*: ‘Ni Apollinaire ni Malherbe. J.-M. Junoy és de segur l’únic dels poetes catalans qui podria produir haikai, dignament.’

Garcés’s article provides valuable pointers to anyone wishing to trace Junoy’s path. Firstly, he explicitly links ‘Arc-en-cel’ (and the poems that were later published in *El Dia*) to the haiku, and refers to Junoy’s intention of cultivating the form in the future. Secondly, he raises the question that is fundamental to our reading of Junoy’s four- and five-line poems: what is the meaning of the repetitions that we find in them? Finally, he suggests a possible reason for the variations introduced by the poet: haiku are, indeed, like ‘coets lluminosos que es perden sense una fi certa’ and Josep Maria Junoy, advocating as he did an aesthetic in harmony with Mediterranean Classicism, could not approach the haiku without addressing the inherent conflict posed by the asymmetry and open-endedness of the poems.

The structure of the five-line poems ‘La Cendrosa’ and ‘Nit de lluna’

In approaching these poems, we must consider how the use of repetition brings the haiku back to the serene, static, autonomous quality of the work of art sought by both Cubism and literary Classicism. Let us begin by considering ‘La Cendrosa’, a poem that was published before Garcés’s article:

Solitària en la penombra s’esfulla una poncella
 una llàgrima s’iritza
 trista rosada!
 una llàgrima s’iritza
 Solitària en la penombra s’esfulla una poncella.
 (OP, p. 104)

¹¹ See Vallcorba Plana, ‘Introducció’, p. lxxxix.

¹² Garcés, p. 7.

At the centre of the poem Junoy places one of the ‘evocative images’ that Garcés considers to be the finest quality of his poetry: that of the dew. The dew is associated, first of all, with the tears shed by Cendrosa (Cinderella), the budding flower (which, in the version published in *Amour et paysage*, will significantly become a rose), as she watches her youth pass in vain. However, in classical Japanese poetry, dew has other associations, all of which are relevant in Junoy’s poem: firstly, it symbolizes the brevity of human life; secondly, the pain experienced by lovers on parting (in Japan in the Heian period, men had to leave their lovers before dawn, and their sleeves became wet with dew, so that, in many poems, they cannot tell whether it is the dew or the tears of separation that moisten their garments). Therefore, the image of the dew, which contains both the ‘denouement’ and the emotional charge of the poem, is placed in the middle line, in counterpoint to the first and last lines (‘solit ria en la penombra s’esfulla una poncella’), which, although poetic in tone, contain only information relating to the tangible world. The function of the second line, with the verb ‘iritzar’, meaning ‘to gleam iridescently’ (in Junoy, words conveying colour are often used to introduce the emotional element, as in ‘Arc-en-cel’), is to move the poem on from the tangible reality of the first line to the emotional content of the middle line, and then back again to the tangible reality of the last line.

‘Nit de lluna’, a poem dedicated to none other than Tom s Garc s, has a very similar structure:

nit de lluna
 estesa per la mar salada
 escata de sirena
 estesa per la mar salada
 nit de lluna.
 (OP, p. 105)

Once again, the first and fifth lines contain references to material reality and serve to introduce the theme of the poem. The middle line alludes subjectively to the reflection of the moon on the sea: the moon is like a mermaid’s scales. The evocative power of the mermaid image in the Mediterranean tradition is self-evident, although the mermaid that Junoy evokes here is Nordic rather than the kind inhabiting the waters of the Mediterranean. We are therefore led to think of seductive sirens, their alluring song, the *Odyssey*, Odysseus’ longing to see Penelope once more (in addition to the fact that, in Oriental poetry, the moon is a frequent image for the separation of lovers). The second and fourth lines, once again, are used to link the others, providing necessary information (the presence of the sea and the phenomenon of the reflection) and introducing the sensual element (in this case, the adjective ‘salada’, which refers both to the sea and the mermaid’s scales), a gustatory image that serves to bring the reflection of the moon closer to the spectator’s senses. If ‘salada’ is not interpreted in this way, but instead is considered merely as a complement of ‘mar’, its meaning is purely tautological.

In both these poems, therefore, we find the same balancing effect between material and emotional elements, the same return journey to and from an inner experience. There are two possible explanations for this. First, Junoy believed

that a work of art must necessarily achieve this sort of balance, a view that is clearly exemplified in his Cubist calligrammes and poems. He maintained that, while a purely objective approach was insufficient to produce a work of art, an over-emphasis on feelings led to the pitfalls of Romanticism.¹³ If these poems had finished at the third line, the emotional impact on the reader might have been greater, which is why Junoy gives the reader a ‘round trip’ experience. The resulting effect is to create a tension between the two poles of tangible and emotional reality, preventing the rocket from soaring beyond our field of vision. The best haiku in the Japanese tradition make an intense impact on the reader, while providing very few clues as to the poems’ interpretation; these five-line poems, in contrast, make a concrete impression on the reader, thanks to their technique of returning to the material reality from which they sprang.

Secondly, in my opinion, these poems should be seen as Junoy’s original transposition of the *kakekotoba* of Japanese poetry. This technique, which is more typical of the classical *tanka* than the haiku, involves the use of a word with two different meanings, which are simultaneously exploited in the poem.¹⁴ These words very often refer to a physical detail of the landscape or the poet’s surroundings, and to the feelings—frequently on the theme of love—expressed in the poem. The tension in these poems by Junoy between the material and the emotional aspects, therefore, can also be seen as a transposition of the *kakekotoba*.

The ‘Cinq petits poèmes’ cycle

In ‘Cinq petits poèmes’, published on 9 October 1920, the only line that is repeated is the first, and the overall effect, which is much lighter in touch than that of the earlier poems, is more reminiscent of the traditional haiku. The interplay between the tangible and the emotional elements is now subtler, playing a less obvious role in the poem.

‘Jeune nageur’ is a good example of the four-line structure conceived by Junoy:

jeune nageur
qui fends l’onde bleue d’un bras couleur safran
prends garde à la pieuvre!
jeune nageur.

(OP, p. 107)

Once again, the first line introduces an element of tangible reality, while the third introduces the emotional charge. The second line is mainly descriptive narrative and (as in all the four-line poems) no longer acts as a bridge between the first and the third. The emotional element surfaces suddenly in the third line with the verb in the second-person singular, expressing a fear that is alien to the youth, strength, and optimism of the swimmer. The key to the poem

¹³ See Vallcorba, ‘Introducció’, p. xvi.

¹⁴ In ‘Notes d’El joc i del foc’, Carles Riba refers to *kakekotoba* as words with a dual meaning. See Carles Riba, *Del joc i del foc* (Barcelona: Selecta, 1946), 97–102 (p. 97). Riba and Junoy were very probably familiar with *kakekotoba* through Michel Revon’s anthology *Anthologie de la littérature japonaise des origines au XX^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Delagrave, 1910).

lies in the fact, insinuated rather than explicitly stated, that the sea is stronger than the young swimmer: the octopus has eight arms as opposed to the boy's two, of which only one is visible at any given moment. The young man might even be Leander, who swam across the Hellespont to be united with his love, and who was eventually drowned in a storm at sea. The third line, therefore, introduces a note of pessimism that contrasts with the youthful strength of the first. Thus, the fourth line's repetition of the first has a much more complex resonance: we have a premonition that this handsome young swimmer will eventually be drowned in the sea. There is a sense in which the fourth line bears no resemblance at all to the first.

'Maquillage', the fourth poem in the series, works in a similar way:

défaillant
entre deux fox-trot
je mets du rouge à mon cœur
défaillant.

(*OP*, p. 109)

Although the first and fourth lines are literally identical, their meanings are completely different: in line 1, the exhaustion is due to the fatigue caused by dancing the foxtrot; in line 4, it is caused by the amorous passion of the dancer. Line 3 is unclear, but at the same time extremely effective: its referential ambiguity intensifies still further the emotional element introduced. Moreover, whereas in 'Jeune nageur' the effect of the third line was to offset the optimism of the first, in this poem the effect of the third line is to enhance the dynamic power of the first two lines, evoking the dance in the reader's imagination as a whirlpool of passion, frenziedly drawing the lovers into its vortex.

Although the opposition between material and emotional aspects is therefore also present in the four-line poems, Junoy no longer insists on the contrast between the two, preferring now to fuse the opposing elements. Whereas, in the five-line poems, he forced the reader to retrace his steps, clearly distinguishing between tangible and emotional reality, closing the cycle of the poetic experience within the reading of the poem, he now merely reminds the reader of his point of departure, inviting him to reflect on what has happened during the reading of the poem.

There is another feature of 'Cinq petits poèmes' that should be taken into account: the fact that they form a cycle. These five poems show a progression from the entirely optimistic frame of mind of 'Barca joiosa' to the utter pessimism of 'Cocktail d'oubli', from summery, daytime seascapes to nocturnal, urban settings that are cut off from the natural cycle. This progression gives a foretaste of the more thorough and pronounced shift that will appear later in *Amour et paysage*.

Conclusions

All these four- and five-line poems that Junoy published in the pages of *El Dia* were subsequently included in *Amour et paysage*. The versions contained in this volume appeared without the repetitions and the titles and they incorporated

a number of modifications in order to adapt the poetic discourse to the new, three-line format. Thus, 'La Cendrosa', for instance, took on the following form:

solitària en el capvespre s'esfulla una rosa
una llàgrima s'iritza
trista rosada!

(OP, p. 78)

'Maquillage' now appeared thus:

entre deux fox-trot
défaillant
je mets du rouge à mon cœur.

(OP, p. 97)

In their new form, these poems would undoubtedly have exemplified 'la poesia més suggeridora, més evocadora, més feta de dolces reticències' that Garcés hoped and expected Junoy would write,¹⁵ and conformed perfectly, at least superficially, to the haiku model, with all its delicacy and lightness of touch, which was at the time so fashionable in France.

Nevertheless, Junoy was aware that there was a risk that his readers might misconstrue his haiku. In his gloss 'Elogi del coet, per a dir en la nit de Sant Joan', Eugeni d'Ors contrasted the haiku with the 'ritme arquitectural i simètric' of the sonnet, in a sense thereby implicitly disqualifying the haiku as a form compatible with the Classicism of the Catalan Noucentisme aesthetic;¹⁶ in fact, Junoy was forced to justify the compatibility of cultivating the haiku form with his aesthetic principles in an article interestingly entitled 'Orient? Occident?'.¹⁷ Apart from the intrinsic literary value of the poems under discussion, the attentive reader will find in them a guide as to how the author wished his haiku to be read, and how he intended the multiple evocations they unleash to be made to converge in a cohesive, architecturally structured reading, seeking material portraits in those poems that are apparently the most emotional, and feeling in those that at first appear to be snapshots of tangible reality.

The seven poems published in *El Dia* pave the way for this orderly reading on two different levels. Firstly, they invite the reader to distinguish between the tangible and emotional aspects of the poem and to reflect on the passage from one to the other; the four- and five-line poems explicitly encourage such a reading, while in the three-line poems the task is left entirely up to the reader.

Secondly, the progression in 'Cinq petits poèmes' anticipates on a smaller scale the progression that will be structured along a dual axis in the later *Amour et paysage*: on the one hand, the shift from a natural summer setting to an urban context in which the rhythm of the seasons is absent; on the other hand, the transition from the initial plenitude of love to separation from the loved one and the gradual decline of the lover. Junoy therefore not only shows us how to organize the resonances suggested by each of the poems, he also provides the

¹⁵ Garcés, p. 7.

¹⁶ Eugeni d'Ors, 'Elogi del coet, per a dir en la nit de Sant Joan', in *Glosari 1906-1907* (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1996), pp. 164-65.

¹⁷ Josep Maria Junoy, 'Orient? Occident?', *Revista de Catalunya*, 14 (August 1925), pp. 150-59.

context in which those resonances are to be perceived, thus preventing their rippling out indefinitely 'sense una fi certa'; this latter feature, of course, is a typical feature of the Japanese haiku.

Because of Junoy's public break with Cubism, triggered by his cultivation of the haiku, he is remembered as a fickle, volatile aesthete,¹⁸ although, as Vallcorba observed, this image has little to do with reality.¹⁹ Superficially, his haiku seem to have little in common with the calligrammes he composed during his Cubist period, and yet there is a great affinity between them, as Vallcorba also points out:

Aquest mínim esbós dels continguts i temes de l'haikú, amb una lleugera variació en la terminologia, la podríem aplicar a moltes de les obres que, de Junoy, hem vist com 'cubistes'. De fet, Junoy hauria volgut extreure de la realitat —i més exactament de les obres pictòriques ressenyades— les seves essències, les seves sensacions, l'instant en dinamisme, amb una barreja d'objectivitat i subjectivitat, amb una àmplia especificitat, etc.²⁰

The poems published in *El Dia* constitute an invitation to read Junoy's haiku from a Cubist—and, therefore, a classical, Western—perspective, and represent an explicit link between the two periods of his poetic production, a link that, unfortunately, few readers have managed to recognize.

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¹⁸ In this regard, the portrait penned by Josep Pla is paradigmatic. See Josep Pla, 'Josep Maria Junoy, inestabilitat', in *Homenots: quarta sèrie* (Barcelona: Destino, 1975), pp. 89–122.

¹⁹ See Jaume Vallcorba Plana, 'Sobre l'evolució ideològica de Josep Maria Junoy (1906–1939)', *Els Marges*, 13 (1978), 33–44.

²⁰ Vallcorba Plana, 'Josep Maria Junoy: uns textos i algunes perspectives de lectura', pp. 147–48.

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