revista letral
Número 17, Año 2016

La comprensión de la poesía de David Rosenmann-Taub: Un enfoque formalista/hermenéutico

Understanding the Poetry of David Rosenmann-Taub: A Formalist/Hermeneutical Approach

Kenneth Gorfkle **(Visiting Scholar, UNC Chapel Hill; Independent Scholar, NCIC)**
kgorfkle@bellsouth.net

RESUMEN

Un enfoque teórico de la poesía de David Rosenmann-Taub parte de un análisis formalista que proporciona al lector una comprensión básica del poema. Luego, incorpora las estrategias hermenéuticas de Paul Ricoeur, tales como la búsqueda de los rastros de los fenómenos invisibles fuera del texto, el uso de la imaginación, la ejemplificación por la representación metafórica y la integración del texto con la vivencia del lector para extender y aumentar aquel entendimiento. Se aplica este enfoque doble al estudio de uno de los poemas de Rosenmann-Taub, con el objetivo de acceder al significado personal y multidimensional profundo de su obra.

Palabras clave: Rosenmann-Taub; hermenéutica; análisis formalista; conciencia; Ricoeur; realismo científico.

ABSTRACT

A theoretical approach to the poetry of David Rosenmann-Taub begins with a formalist analysis that provides the reader with a basic understanding of the poem. It then incorporates Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical strategies, such as the search for traces of unobservable phenomena that lie outside the text, the use of the imagination, exemplification through metaphorical representation and the reader's integration of the text with his or her lived experience, to extend and expand that understanding. This two-pronged approach is applied to the study of one of Rosenmann-Taub's poems, with the goal of accessing the profound personal and multidimensional meanings inscribed in his opus.

Keywords: Rosenmann-Taub; hermeneutics; formalist analysis; consciousness; Ricoeur; scientific realism.

In Latin American literature classes the work of contemporary Chilean poet David Rosenmann-Taub is seldom taught, which is surprising given his stature as one of the foremost living Hispanic poets[1]. An obvious reason is that his work presents a number of difficulties for the reader. First of all, his work is difficult to classify since the poet writes in a style that does not fall into the typical poetic categories: the poetry is neither narrative, dramatic or epic in that it does not relate a story, nor is it lyric in that it does not emotions or feelings. Secondly, since the poetry emphasizes universal concerns that transcend the particularities of time and space, it is not related to the cultural and historical concerns that currently predominate in Hispanic poetry.

The poet states in interviews that his goal is to "express the truth with precision" (Castellanos: 2). This statement would lead critics to characterize his poetry as a mimetic representation of reality. However, this characterization itself requires further clarification, since both reality and its textual representation have been characterized in many ways in the Western world since Plato. The question also arises as to the viability of poetic expression as a means to objectively represent reality, especially since it is so foreign to the scientific realism that predominates in this domain. In fact, scholars now question the ability of language to represent reality to such a point that the entire concept of mimesis has fallen out of use[2].

The most critical of all these difficulties is that of comprehending Rosenmann-Taub's poetic expression. The poet has stated that his poetic expression is intricate because he needs a complex language to describe a complex world. Coupled with an extraordinary command of the Spanish language, the poet's vast storehouse of knowledge in philosophy, the natural sciences, poetry, music and the visual arts[3] enables him to understand reality profoundly and present it in a literary genre far more expressive than narrative prose. Nevertheless, due to its anomalous lexicon, complex imagery and unusual syntactic structures, his poetry at times defies comprehension.

In order to understand this dense poetry, what is needed is a complex theory. To develop a theoretical model that meets the demands of this complexity I begin with formalist criticis[4]. Over and above the semantic

---

[1] According to Armando Uribe Arce, winner of the 2004 Chilean Premio Nacional de Literatura, "The most important and profound living poet in the entire Spanish language is David Rosenmann-Taub" (1998).

[2] See, for example, "The Mimetic Bias in Modern Anglo-American Criticism" by Herbert Lindenberger for a thorough discussion of how mimesis has recently fallen out of favor in literary criticism.

[3] Biographical information on the poet is taken from his website: http://davidrosenmanntaub.com.

[4] Although this term is often associated with the work of the Russian formalists, I use it in a more general sense. According to Kennedy and Gioia, formalist criticism regards literature as '…a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms'. All the elements necessary for understanding the work are contained within the work itself. Of particular interest to the formalist critic are the elements of *form* —style, structure, tone, imagery, etc.— that are found within the text. A primary goal for formalist critics is to determine how such elements work together with the text's content to shape its effects upon readers" (1790-1793).

and discursive systems that characterize narrative prose, poetry also contains prosodic, phonological and syntactic systems, all of which contain information that can convey, confirm and/or extend meaning[5]. In addition, the poetic genre utilizes figurative language to a greater extent than prose narrative, and the combinatory power of words in figurative language gives the poet additional semantic and discursive resources beyond that of prose narrative as well. Since Rosenmann-Taub utilizes all of these systems to convey meaning, a formalist approach is essential: I therefore examine the elements of all these systems, both individually and collectively, in order to comprehend the poem.

However, a purely formalist analysis has its limitations, particularly in poetry such as that of Rosenmann-Taub's. Since the examination of all the poem's formal elements is limited to formalist analysis limits its investigation to elements within the text itself, the reader is prevented from using his or her own knowledge, experience and subjective reactions to approach the text's meaning; nor may he relate its meaning to extra-textual information. To achieve an understanding of these texts that includes both the reader's experience and the external world, I employ the hermeneutic approach of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur uses an interpretive model that understands reality as a composite of observable and non-observable phenomena; takes into consideration the possibility of non-ostensive as well as ostensive reference[6]; understands that language cannot perfectly represent the world; considers mimetic activity a creative process; and allows the reader the use of his or her imagination and subjective experience in the interpretation of literary texts[7]. I begin by presenting my general critical approach, based on formalist criticism. I then examine various concepts of reality and mimesis. I outline Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach to the literary text. Finally, I demonstrate how these two approaches work together in the analysis of the poem "¿Posteridad?" to confirm the legitimacy of this theoretical model as a viable approach to the illumination of Rosenmann-Taub's poetry and worldview.

Introduction to formalist criticism, mimesis, hermeneutics

A formalist approach examines all the poem's systems to obtain the information necessary for comprehension. Most of these systems are governed by patterns. For example, the rhyme scheme may follow a traditional

[5] Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman observes that poetry is a "system of systems", which gives it an expressive ability beyond that of other literary genres.

[6] I define non-ostensive briefly here as not pointing to a person, place or thing and will deal with the term more extensively in the next section.

[7] I rely primarily on Sanja Ivic's summary of the Ricoeurian hermeneutic model for the information presented herein.

pattern, such as "a b a b", or the metric scheme may limit every poetic line to seven syllables. However, the poet may deviate from these patterns to highlight a word, phrase or idea. Accordingly, the approach searches for deviations from the norm, such as repetitive sounds; the isolation of words in a poetic line; asymmetrical rhythms or versification; and syntactic deviations, such as hyperbaton and grammatical conversions. Recognizing that the poem is a coherent and cohesive unity, formalists seek to understand one unfamiliar image by relating it to another more comprehensible one. The poet will use isotopies—phonetic, syntactic and/or semantic similarities —to draw attention to relationships between words or phrases, and formalists search for those as well[8]. The poems' figurative language and lexicon are rich sources of meaning, and formalists study them individually and in relationship as another avenue to the comprehension of the text.

As noted above, while effective in plumbing meaning within the poem, a drawback of formalist criticism is its failure to connect the text to an outer reality. Nevertheless, the poet's stated wish to express the truth with precision and to make the invisible visible[9] indicate that for him there is indeed a reality beyond the text. Ricoeur's hermeneutic model recognizes this extratextual reality within the poetic text and validates the lived experience of the reader as subject in the world in his or her interaction with the text. In order to understand Ricoeur's model, I first summarize the various ideas of mimesis–the textual representation of reality.

An expression of reality, mimesis is closely tied to the concept of reality itself. Scientific realism has been in vogue for hundreds of years: equations, formulas, categorizations and laws developed through experimentation and data collection represent the workings of a verifiable and consistent mind-independent world. Although this "realist" understanding of knowledge within the natural sciences has led to the acquisition of vast amounts of knowledge about the physical world and continues to enjoy a privileged status in academia, other and opposing theories on mimesis and reality have existed and continue to exist that also claim validity.

In the nineteenth century, for instance, philosophers such as Schliermacher and Dilthey argued that reality and its mimetic representation were subjective, a result of the individual's psychology and subjectivity and the socio-historical moment in which the individual lived (Ivic: 131). In the early 20th century, art historian Ernst Gombrich defined reality in cultural terms; for him, mimesis had nothing to do with the external world (Frigg: xxiii). Contemporary discourses, including those of postmodernist

---

[8] The concept that the poem is a coherent unit and the use of isotopies to draw out meanings from a text are both fundamental tools in semiotic analysis; I employ both in the analysis of Rosenmann-Taub's poetry in my doctoral dissertation "The Intersection of Life and Death in the Poetry of David Rosenmann-Taub".

[9] In an interview with Laura Castellanos the poet states, "I use the visible to get to the invisible".

scholars, cultural theorists, feminist scholars, scholars of race, and critical theorists challenge scientific realism, insisting that reality and its mimetic representation are not objective and absolute but instead a social, political or cultural construct.

Even within the very practice of the sciences traditional notions of objectivity have imploded. For example, with the development of quantum physics in the twentieth century, the validity of scientific realism itself came into question; if, during experiments at the quantum level, the observer affects the results of an experiment, then the world may no longer be considered so consistent as was previously believed[10].

Over the course of the last few decades, the idea of reality has continued to evolve within the scientific paradigm; according to physicists such as Nicolas Recher, reality continues to be mind-independent; however it is understood as consisting of both observable and unobservable phenomena, with the latter controlling the former (Ivic: 21). Scientist Terence Deacon goes even further, emphasizing that science's refusal to recognize absence and incompleteness are at the very heart of the disconnect between scientific knowledge and everyday life (14).

Ricoeur sets the stage for the aforementioned debates regarding the nature of reality insofar as he introduces a contemporary hermeneutics, one that not only affirms objective components of interpretation in contrast with the subjective romantic and cultural mimesis of Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Gombrich, but also utilizes unobservable as well as observable phenomena. For him, the literary text discloses the visible and points to the invisible as it suspends referentiality (Ivic: 130). Thus in the same way that contemporary scientists such as Galison, Recher and Deacon view the world, Ricoeur's hermeneutical model grants to literature, in particular, poetry, a capacity for mimetic expression equal to that of scientific expression. This conception of reality also resonates with the poetics of David Rosenmann-Taub. In a recent interview with Laura Castellanos, the poet stated that

> To say the truth with precision, with certainty [...] as in a scientific investigation that has reached its ultimate consequences [...] The function of art is to express a knowledge in the most exact possible way; otherwise, it has neither function nor destiny (2).

The poet's words here demonstrate his affinity for the scientific orientation to mimetic representation. In that same interview, when asked the question "What is a poem?" he responded, "In a literary sense: to express, with exactitude, in its own particular rhythm, a knowledge of which I can be sure. I use the visible to get to the invisible" (2). Like Ricoeur and contemporary science, he recognizes these two levels of reality.

Ricoeur's inclusion of unobservable phenomena in his hermeneutic model allows him to assert that a literary text can indeed approximate the totality of this world. For him, mimesis is a process that begins with the

[10] According to physicist Hans Halvorson, only some aspects of reality can be considered verifiable and consistent (2015).

writer's ¨prefiguration" of the world: his or her initial conception of the world and of human activity. In a second activity, the writer "configures" the text as he or she tries to imitate the reality that he or she has observed or understood in language. Finally, the reader reads and understands the text and in so doing transforms his or her understanding of the world (Ivic: 128-29). So mimesis is not just the act of representation, but first, the writer's comprehension, representation and communication of reality and then second, the reader's understanding of the writer's reality that leads to the transformation of his or her concept of the world. This again coincides with Rosenmann-Taub's poetics: in a day and age where postmodern scholars focus on the inability of language to represent reality, which leads to relativism, Rosenmann-Taub, as I illustrate below, uses every resource that the poetic genre offers to configure a text that represents and communicates a complex and deeper reality, by going beyond the visible to apprehend and represent the invisible motors of reality.

In articulating his hermeneutical approach, Ricoeur emphasizes that language by itself does not correspond precisely to reality, since language is not a perfect system of signs (Ivic: 129). In addition, language has the even greater burden of disclosing unobservable phenomena. Ricoeur and Rosenmann-Taub set a high bar indeed: if language can only imperfectly achieve correspondence with the visible (objects and events), how can it hope to articulate the invisible? For both the answer is identical. Ricoeur theorizes that through "sense," that is, the ways in which discourse is created, produced and transmitted (or prefigured, configured and refigured) the non-ostensive (not pointing to a person, place or thing) will become evident. Rosenmann-Taub's poetic praxis illuminates both the non-ostensive as well as the ostensive in order to represent reality in a more complete way.

Using examples of unobservable or non-ostensive phenomena from the long-ago past, history and fiction, Ricoeur emphasizes the value of identifying and interpreting "traces"–objects in the text that point to or stand for these unobservables–to represent reality (Ivic: 136). In the same way, Rosenmann-Taub embeds non-semantic traces in his poems that point to meanings beyond the text[11].

Ricoeur also asserts that the invisible may be made visible through exemplification, the metaphorical representation of the object, as opposed to denotation, which is a metonymical representation. Rosenmann-Taub uses both metaphor and metonym to poetically convey the observable and the unobservable phenomena that comprise reality. Ricoeur stresses the importance of imagination as a hermeneutic tool to apprehend reality, affirming that "… maybe there is something like a world of the text that lies not behind the text but metaphorically in front of it as something to be explored by the interpreter's imagination" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/)[12]. Rosenmann-

[11] Deviations from the norm in rhyme, rhythm, meter, syntax, grammar, punctuation and typography all become "traces": clues that lead the reader to meanings beyond the actual words of the poem, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

[12] Imagination is not employed here as a contrast to the real, i.e., literary fiction or fantasy, but rather understood as a fundamental component of the toolkit of human consciousness.

Taub's reader must play a part here. I suggest that the reader use his or her imagination as he or she examines the figurative language of the poem to comprehend the poet's message and reconstruct his or her own vision of reality accordingly. A hermeneutical approach that includes the use of the imagination is necessary, since no direct correspondence exists between language and reality.

Finally, according to Ivic, "Ricoeur maintains that poetic qualities ... are 'true' to the extent that they are 'appropriate', that is, to the extent that they join fittingness to novelty, obviousness to surprise" (132). Just as current scientific inquiry now explores subjective experience in the production of scientific knowledge, the apprehension of objective reality in a literary text requires a hermeneutical process that also includes subjective experience. The reader's reaction in the moment that he or she understands one of Rosenmann-Taub's poems parallels Ricoeur's description above: a reaction of surprise and novelty with the realization that the message is fitting, obvious and appropriate. The reader's own subjective experience, which forms part of reality, thus becomes the criteria to verify the validity of the poet's mimetic representation of reality.

Poetic analysis

I now employ this approach in the analysis of one of Rosenmann-Taub's poems. The poem "*¿Posteridad?*" from *La Opción* addresses a truly universal concern: the question of what happens to the totality of the human being –both his or her body, the observable phenomenon and his or her consciousness, the unobservable phenomenon– at the end of his or her life.

VIII

¿Posteridad?
Superávit? ¿Decoro?
¿Ínterin? ¿Otra etapa
de anulación? ¿Reposo?

La máquina
se desbandó.
Se empalará:
mondongo.

*
* *

Oh
tizne,
te diriges
impersuasiblemente hacia tu No.

Posterity?
Surplus? Decorum?
Interim? Another stage
of annulation? Repose?

The machine
disbanded.
It will become stiff:
Tripe.

*
* *

Oh
soot,
you go
unpersuadably towards your No.

(Translation mine.)

From a formalist perspective, the poem has an internal coherence, and this coherence helps the reader to achieve a basic understanding of the poem in and of itself. From the perspective of Ricoeur's hermeneutic model, the reader can relate the text to his or her own lived experience and understanding of the world. Ricoeur's understanding of mimetics is that it is a three-tiered process; however, since it is impossible to enter the poet's mind to understand how he prefigures the world or configures it in the text, I focus only on the third tier: the reader's reconfiguration of the world through his or her interaction with the text.

The poem's first stanza is characteristic of the poet's general aesthetic, which combines brevity with density. The nine words of the stanza contain six different images that convey different aspects of the poem's preoccupation. The formal elements that stand out in this stanza are the punctuation, the short sentences and the oddity of the pentasyllabic first line in a stanza that is otherwise heptasyllabic. The one-word interrogatory questions, interrelated in this coherent and unified literary text, lead to the understanding of the poem's central concern: the exploration of the aftermath of life. However, the questions perform other functions as well. Since the words are complete sentences in and of themselves, the grammatical structure requires that the reader repeatedly pause during the reading of this stanza, allowing him or her the opportunity for reflection and the use of his or her imagination. Thus, both the questions themselves and the punctuation and grammatical structure of the stanza invite the reader to use the imagination to search for the non-ostensive and to thus move from sense to reference, two basic Ricoeurian hermeneutic strategies (Ivic: 129).

Examination of the first stanza's meter reveals that in this heptasyllabic stanza the first line contains only five metric syllables. The reader uses his or her imagination once again, to search for the unobservable phenomena in this text. What are these missing syllables? The line could start with the two syllables "*Morir*," or the two syllables "*¿Qué es…",* thus completing the reference of "*¿Posteridad*?". Or, since the line's deviation from the norm in its versification separates it from the other lines of the poem, this separation may simply indicate that "Posterity…" is the poem's title and subject. What does "*Posteridad*" mean? Although in both English and Spanish the word denotes future generations, the Real Académica Española also lists "future time" as another definition, so the title of the poem might be "What is the future?" Since its central preoccupation is what happens at and after the moment of death, the text is clearly an exploration of unobservables.

The second stanza contrasts with the first; in a mimetic representation of observed reality, the poet objectively describes the physical and physiological changes of the material body that occur at death. Instead of the heptasyllabic lines of the first stanza, this stanza contains two broken octasyllabic lines. This metrical contrast complements the semantic contrast between this stanza and the preceding one. The nouns of the two outer trisyllabic lines of the stanza depersonalize the human being, first describing him or her as a machine, and then, after death, as alimentation

for other life forms. The pronominal verbs of the two inner pentasyllabic lines characterize death even more graphically. As a biological system, the machine that is the human being is highly coherent and organized; the defining feature of death is the loss of this coherency and organization. On the more superficial, visual level, the defining feature of death is the stiffening of the corpse. *Mondongo*, the last word of the stanza, metonymically[13] captures the essence of the human being after death: the viscera represent the totality of the human being that is now only a source of nutrition for other life forms. The figurative language of this stanza demonstrates Ricoeur's concept that fictive language may articulate reality more precisely than factual and denotative language[14]. The body and brain of the living human being are the most complex machine known to humanity; yet after life ends, the function of the corpse is only to provide nourishment. Rosenmann-Taub here examines the aftermath of life objectively, denoting and labeling as scientific investigation is wont to do. However, his use of metaphor and imagination continue to ground him in the Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach.

In the last stanza, the poet returns to non-ostensive reference. A number of formal elements stand out. The triangle of asterisks between the second and third stanza ask the reader to pause for an extended period of time, to contemplate what he or she has already read and to distinguish the previous two stanzas from the stanza that follows. The stanza's versification is peculiar. The poet breaks the heptasyllabic line that constitutes the first three lines of the stanza, and with the pauses that the breaks create highlights all the words in those lines. The "Oh" that is either a realization or begins an address is an "Oh" of consciousness. It stands in contrast to the "No" of oblivion that ends the stanza. In the second line, the poet continues to suggest that consciousness exists after life: he apostrophizes "soot" to imply that it has the intelligence to understand. The third line also suggests consciousness, the ability to direct oneself. The fourth line, describing the soot's negation, again implies that it has a certain substance.

Rosenmann-Taub thus presents us with a mimetic representation of reality that corresponds with Ricoeur's concepts: not the reality that can be seen, but an underlying and invisible reality. Although the poet does not refer to it directly, *consciousness* permeates the entire stanza; it cannot be seen, heard or felt, but it affects everything[15].

The visual aspect of this stanza is quite unusual, and provides another trace through which the reader can "extend one's experience and one's

---

[13] Metonyms are a form of figurative language in which the part represents the whole.

[14] Ivic summarizes Ricoeur's argument as follows: "By entering into the fictional world, fictional narratives have an unfolding and transformative effect with regard to the human praxis, because their relation to reality is not referential, but refigurative" (138).

[15] Philosopher David Chalmers champions the view that consciousness is a world property as fundamental as the electric charge or gravitational mass (Deacon, 7).

picture of the world and time…" (Ivic: 131). The effect of the poetic lines of one, two, four, and finally eleven syllables is to create a curve in which the "Oh" of consciousness asymptotically approaches the "No" of oblivion due to the passage of time and the physical degeneration of the body, but never quite reaches it. This visual trace leads the reader to consider that consciousness is always present, regardless of time or place, life or death.

A final trace is the capitalization of the poem's last word: "No". If the "No" represents the negation of one's life, then its capitalization means that this negation may be a new life, of a grander scale than the life we lived. Now, the questions posed in the first stanza may be pondered with a different frame of reference, as I illustrate below.

The poem's trajectory thus begins with the stimulation of the reader's own consciousness as it posits questions and suggests alternatives for what the individual's own future might be. It continues with a denotative description of the observable phenomena that occur at and after death, using metaphor and imagination to deepen one's understanding of the topic. The third stanza presents the implicit idea that consciousness, as a self-organizing property, continues after death: the human being has died, his or her remains have been cremated, the ashes have become soot, and now even the soot is moving towards its negation; yet even at this stage, consciousness remains.

However, the trajectory does not end here; the understanding that consciousness is omnipresent takes the reader back to the first stanza and a re-examination of its questions, now in the context of a consciousness that even death cannot eliminate. I repeat the last three lines of the stanza below, for the reader's convenience:

¿Superávit? ¿Decoro?	Surplus? Decorum?
¿Ínterin? ¿Otra etapa	Interim? Another stage
de anulación? ¿Reposo?	of annulment? Repose?

Yes, death contains a surplus, not of the body but of a consciousness that spills over into this next stage of life. It cannot be decorum, politely making way for future generations; nor can it be an interim state, because the presence of consciousness makes it as vital a state as those that precede and follow it. It *is* another stage of annulment, since as the last stanza indicates, soot moves to its negation just as life moves towards death. Yet also it is *not* a stage of annulment, since consciousness is indestructible. Finally, it cannot be considered a repose, since consciousness is continually active: wondering, inquiring and searching for answers.

In pondering these questions, the reader cannot help but think of himself or herself as the poem's subject. Rereading the second stanza, the reader wonders: Am I simply a highly organized machine that will inevitably break down, flesh and bone to be consumed? Rereading the third stanza, the reader suddenly realizes that *he or she* is the soot and asks: Am I obstinately directing *myself* to my own negation? If the aftermath of life is *another* stage of annulment, then our lives are a stage of annulment as

well. In what way am I different from that soot? Do I not also have consciousness like it does? Do I not proceed to my annulment, my negation, my death, as it does? Do I proceed with my consciousness or despite it?

Weighing his or her own lived experience against the content of the text, the reader understands and accepts the validity of this mimetic representation of reality. He or she knows the poem speaks a precise truth, because he or she realizes that every day brings death one day closer, that he or she is directing himself or herself to that moment, that he or she himself or herself is in a stage of gradual annulment. The poem does not tell the reader anything he or she does not know; instead, it *awakens* the reader to what he or she knows but has not kept in his or her consciousness. Ricoeur's criteria of appropriateness, that the text's truth is as obvious and fitting as it is surprising and novel, enables the reader to verify the truth of the poem, not from observation or experimentation, but from coupling his or her own subjective experience with the ostensive and non-ostensive elements of the text. Through reading, interpretation and verification, the reader thus reconfigures both the text, the world, and his or her relationship to the world.

Finally, the pauses that separate the questions of the first stanza ask the reader to consider the substance of those questions. They ask the reader to apply his or her own consciousness to reconfigure the understanding of this universal concern: to use his or her consciousness to study and understand his or her consciousness. The poem deals with consciousness; but its "unobservable" intent is to *provoke* consciousness.

As the preceding analysis has shown, the poem's formal elements contribute to its understanding. The changes in metrics, the grammatical structure, syntax, punctuation and even typography all contribute to its meaning along with the semantic and discursive elements of the poem. In contrast to the latter, however, these more subtle traces are the "unobservable" phenomena that for both Rosenmann-Taub and Ricoeur support and sustain visible reality. The formalist analysis of the various formal, semantic and discursive elements leads the reader to a basic understanding of the text; and the exploration of traces, the use of the imagination, the application of fictive metaphors to expand reality to include both the ostensive and non-ostensive reference, and the determination of appropriateness through one's own subjective reaction to the poem that are all aspects of Ricoeurian hermeneutics permit the reader to deepen that understanding and to apply it to his or her own understanding of the world.

Conclusion

The form and substance of the literary text under consideration are the factors that determine the critic's theoretical approach, and the poetry of David Rosenmann-Taub is no exception. In his poem "¿Posteridad?" the poet uses traditional versification patterns only to deviate from them in order to highlight key words, dictates the tempo of the poem through punctuation, and conveys meaning through sound, rhythm and syntax,

through his lexicon and figurative language, and even through the use of grammatical and typographical devices within the text. As a result, formalist analysis is essential to uncover meaning in this laconic, dense and complex poem.

Nevertheless, a theoretical approach that includes a *deep* understanding of the nature of reality and takes into account both the objective and subjective experience of both poet and reader can expand the meaning of the poem even further, and for that reason formalist analysis is complemented by Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach to literary texts. Non-semantic traces –prosodic, phonological and syntactic anomalies—lead to the elucidation of unobservable phenomena that will either modify or more deeply ground the observable reality that the poem presents. The poet uses dense metaphorical language to transmit his view of reality; accordingly, metaphors and other literary tropes are examined to see how they exemplify this reality. Imagination is essential: first to conceive unobservable phenomena and then to weave them into the fabric of observable reality. Finally, the Ricoeurian criteria of appropriateness, obviousness and fittingness verify the truth of the poem as it coincides with the reader's own subjective experience.

With its focus on all of the formal elements of the text, how they relate to each other and how they create meaning, formalist criticism has proven itself efficacious in the study and comprehension of poetry and other literary texts. Yet weaknesses to that approach have surfaced over time. First, the approach limits itself to the world of the text, ignoring author, reader and external world, and as a result the text becomes divorced from that external world and less relevant to the reader. Second, the approach depends to a large extent on the expressive and communicative aspects of language, both of which have been called into question in postmodern scholarship. A hermeneutic approach to literary texts also contains strengths and weaknesses, a chief weakness being its exclusive identification with subjective elements of thought. The hermeneutic approach developed by Paul Ricoeur over forty years ago is as contemporary as today's emergent scientific paradigm that includes unobservable as well as observable phenomena in its view of reality and also takes subjective experience into account. However, this model still faces the challenge of an imperfect language, the subjectivity of both author and reader and the difficulty of moving from theory to praxis.

The coupling of formalist criticism with Ricoeurian hermeneutics as a new theoretical approach to the comprehension of a literary text offers theoretical implications that transcend the interpretation of this one poem. Using formalist criticism, the reader has the necessary tools to explore the nuances of all the systems of the poem, to understand the text objectively and to find traces that will lead to non-ostensive reference as well. Simultaneously, the hermeneutic model allows the reader the ability to use his or her imagination to use these traces to go beyond the text, to understand the text in relation to his or her own lived experience, and to test its validity against his or her subjective reaction. The strengths of one

approach overcome the weaknesses of the other, with truly astonishing results. A more grounded meaning returns to language, as formalism works to understand it; then, Ricoeur's hermeneutic strategies expand and interpret it. The reader's own lived experience becomes an additional ground and valid source of information as he or she interacts with the text. Fictive imagery and the reader's imagination are legitimatized as sources of knowledge, and the representation of reality takes on multidimensional aspects unavailable when objective observation is the only legitimate source of knowledge. Finally, the poem offers a mimetic representation of the world that not only may transform the individual's relationship with the world but also is arguably more realist than the scientific realism that relies purely on objective and ostensive reality.

Can poetry represent the world more accurately than scientific realism? David Rosenmann-Taub, whose poetics include the precise expression of reality, whose academic background includes the natural sciences, who like contemporary scientists recognizes the existence of unobservable phenomena and writes to make them visible, and who uses both objective and subjective lenses to understand reality, attempts the task with a poetry both complex and dense. The critical approach explained and utilized above demonstrates that, at least in this case, poetry can indeed accomplish that task.

Bibliography

Castellanos, Laura (2013). "Vine al mundo a aprender" (entrevista a David Rosenmann-Taub), in *Reforma.com*. 14 May 2005.

Deacon, Terence (2012). *Incomplete Nature*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Eagleton, Terry (2007). *How To Read a Poem*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Frigg, Roman and Matthew Hunter, eds. (2010). *Beyond Mimesis and Convention: Representation in Art and Science*. Springer Dordrecht: New York, NY.

Gorfkle, Kenneth (2014). *The Intersection of Life and Death in David Rosenmann-Taub's Tetralogy "Cortejo y Epinicio"*. Chapel Hill, NC. http://gradworks.proquest.com/36/22/3622361.html

Halvorson, Hans (2015). "What Does Quantum Mechanics Suggest About Our Perceptions of Reality?". https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/2015/02/24/what-does-quantum-mechanics-suggest-about-our-perceptions-reality/.

Ivic, Sanja (2009). "Hermeneutical Aspect of Reference," in *Praxis Filosófica*, 127-142.

Kennedy, X.J. and Dana Gioia (1995). *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*, Sixth Edition. New York: Harper Collins.

Lindenberger, Herbert (1984). "Mimetic Bias in Anglo-American Criticism", in *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory. Volume 1: The literary and philosophical debate*. Mihail Spariosu, Editor. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Lotman, Yury (1976). *Analysis of the Poetic Text*. D. Barton Johnson, Translator. Ann Arbor MI: Ardis.

Pellauer, David and Dauenhauer, Bernard (Fall 2016). "Paul Ricoeur", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta (ed.). http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/ricoeur/.

Recher, Nicholas (2005). *Realism and Pragmatic Epistemology*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Rosenmann-Taub, David. http://davidrosenmann-taub.com.
--- (2011). *La Opción*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones.

Uribe Arce, Armando (1998). "The Greatest Poet", in *El Mercurio*, Santiago de Chile.