



UT PICTURA POËSIS: SINBAD THE STRANDED OF GILBERTO OWEN

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The aim of this investigation is to develop a visual interpretation of Gilberto Owen's poem: *Sinbad the Stranded*. The project *Ut Pictura Poësis, Literature y Visual arts* tries to transfer some literary texts to visual supports such as Digital Illustration. The idea that Ciceron and Simonides of Ceos that the poetry is silent painting and painting poetry that speaks is the reason that gives rise to a project that tries to develop a visual interpretation of some of the most important works of mexican poetry from the first half of the 20th century. One of the most influential groups in mexican poetry of this period is the so-called *Generación de Contemporáneos*, which brought together figures such as Salvador Novo, Antonieta Rivas Mercado, Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, Gilberto Owen, among others.

In Mexico, this generation marked an important course in national literature because it tried to overcome a nationalist behavior of artists and promoted the universalization of mexican poetic expression. The work of these authors investigated the classical poets; he had a very deep fondness for authors such as Paul Valery, André Gide, T.S Eliot and other avant-garde authors. This attitude earned them that critics have judged them as a group uprooted from the cultural problems of Mexico at the time of their production. However, at the same time, reading his works forces readers to accept that Culture in Mexico took a definitive shape from the publication of his works.

In this work we want to refer to one of the most important poetic works of this Generation: *Sinbad el varado* (Sinbad the Stranded) by Gilberto Owen. In the route of the immersion of these Mexican poets in poetic traditions, *Sinbad el Varado* identifies with the Middle Eastern literature and is linked with the work of TS Eliot that serves as an epigraph and allusion to the impossibility of the voyage of the sailor from *Las mil y una noches* [*Arabian nights*]. As we know, the story of the sailor is a journey in which there is no hope of return. That is why the poem begins with an epigraph by T.S. Eliot who says: *Because I do not hope to turn again/ Because I do not hope/ Because I do do not hope to turn.*

In the introductory study to Owen's book entitled *De poesía y prosa en el mismo viaje* (*From Poetry to Prose on the Same Trip*), Juan Coronado believes that Owen's work represents: "the renewal, the possible modernity of a cultural space (Mexico) that has to adjust its local clock to the clock of the universal square" (1990, p. 10). What Owen's poem offers is the possibility of witnessing how Mexico affirms itself as a cultural zone that is no longer afraid of opening up to other literatures or other cultures, but incorporates them to affirm itself. For this reason, in *Sinbad*, Owen traces the



itinerary of a motionless journey into the deepest part of being. This Sinbad's journey is the journey to himself. The paradox is that Sinbad is route and destination at the same time. We represent this intention as follows.



Picture 1

Juan Cornado defines Gilberto Owen as a traveler and affirms that the adventure of the poet born in Sinaloa, Mexico:

[...] está marcada por la búsqueda poética. No es un poeta de fácil acceso porque no viajó por un mar tranquilo. Luchó contra las turbulencias de un obsesionado para sacarle nuevo brillo a las palabras. Se negó a la poesía



adormecedora y tranquila. Buscó la poesía audaz y deslumbrante. Su poesía le habla a la inteligencia primero, después al sentimiento (1990, p. 12-13).

Owen's poetry [...] is marked by poetic search. He is not an easily accessible poet because he did not travel across a calm sea. He fought the turbulence of an obsessive to give words a new shine. He refused the numbing and quiet poetry. He sought out bold and dazzling poetry. His poetry speaks to intelligence first, then to feeling.

In this journey towards describing the poet's internal motivations, in this attempt to reach the universe in which Gilberto Owen's poetic development moves, the figure of Sinbad offers us the possibility of discovering ourselves when he tells us: “Esta mañana me consume en su rescoldo la conciencia de mis llagas; / Sin ella no creería en la escalera inaccesible de la noche ni en su hermoso guardián insobornable”. [This morning the conscience of my wounds consumes me in its embers; / Without it, I would not believe in the inaccessible staircase of the night or in its beautiful, indefatigable guardian] (1990, p. 60).

Sindbad traces the literary tradition in which Owen himself wants to establish himself and which he faces with difficulty: “Y luche contra el mar toda la noche, / Desde Homero hasta Joseph Conrad, / para llegar a tu rostro desierto /y en su arena leer que nada espere, /que no espere misterio, que no espere”. [And I fought against the sea all night, / From Homer to Joseph Conrad, / to reach your desert face / and in its sand read that nothing is waiting, / that it does not expect mystery, that it does not wait] (1990, p. 61). After this verse, in which he identifies the search for himself with the journey to *The Heart of Darkness* and with the return of Ulysses to Ithaca, the poetic voice alludes to the immobility of the sea and affirm his shipwreck in the Sea retired sky, sea stranded, sea of poetry that leaves a bitter taste in the poet, that of the breeze that hits the masts because “sabe amar colérico”. [He knows how to love choleric] (1990, p. 6) and in its manifestation it forces the poet to discover himself in front of poetry while saying: “Hoy me quito la máscara y me miras vacío / Y ves en mis paredes los trozos de papel no desteñido / Donde habitan tus retratos/ Y arriba ves las cicatrices de sus clavos” [Today I take off my mask and you look at me empty / And you see on my walls the pieces of unbleached paper / Where your portraits live / And above you see the scars of their nails]. In this way, this static Sindbad is inserted in the path of a "succession of shipwrecks, unfinished] (1990, p. 65) where it confronts its being a poet. To that work where poetry forces him to climb the pianos that remain lit until dawn. In that February in which the poem takes place, on the twenty-third day it talks about poetry and on the twenty-fourth it comes a horror gale of emptiness. Here, the poem reaches its highest point.



Picture 2

Gilberto Owen's work is a work that rests on the search for the poet's self, his voice, his meaning, which is poetry. Owen's work is a reflection on the existential condition of the poet. Owen's motive in *Sinbad el varado* is the description of his internal searches. For that, Owen draws on the universal literary tradition. Gilberto Owen's poetry feeds on symbolism and makes a rereading of mythologies and stories outside his culture to express his poetic search. Thanks to the blog of February days, Owen reinterprets Sindbad and offers us an image of the navigator from *Arabian nights* in which he searches inside himself for the reason why the poet discovers poetry.

As conclusion, from the image of a hummingbird, Owen elaborates his description of the immobile journey. He makes us partakers of the course that he himself follows while he affirms that there is no hope of return because Sinbad's journey is the journey without return to the poetry.

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