



EKPHRASIS: DESIRE AND WOMAN IN THE WORK OF JUAN GARCIA PONCE

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*“La obra de arte es el lugar del encuentro.
El artista choca con el mundo, éste se le revela y puede expresarlo”.*

Juan García Ponce

Ekphrasis is a literary figure that is characterized by its power to evoke an image, scene or episode in the reader's mind. This image described in the text is recreated in the reader's mind in such a clear way that it allows us to fix the literary experience in an Illustration. Simonides of Ceos was the first to discover this mechanism by stating that painting is "silent poetry" and poetry "speaking painting." Later, Horacio establishes the sentence of "Ut pictura poesis" which allows us to say that everything that can be said can be painted.

Ekphrasis allows us to indicate a particular form of relationship between literature and the visual arts. Through Ekphrasis, the Illustration is a representation of what is represented in the reading process. In this way, the illustration of a literary text suggests an inter-artistic relationship that starts from the image that is displayed when reading.

Gerard Genette defines Intertextuality as: “a relationship of co-presence between two or more texts, that is eidetically and frequently, as the effective presence of one text in another” (1989:10). In a way, Ekphrasis is a mechanism of allusion of a text in the reader's experience. Thus, an illustration that offers a visual work of the reading experience is an intertext and allows us to represent the reading experience. We can say that the Illustration is an interpretation of the literary text and allows us to describe the route of the representation of an Ekphrasis.

In “The eyes of the word. The construction of the concept of Ekphrasis, from ancient rhetoric to literary criticism” (2011), Pedro Antonio Agudelo reviews several proposals on ekphrasis and highlights the one elaborated by W.J.T. Mitchell. According to Agudelo, Mitchell proposes the existence of three levels in Ekphrasis: “1) ekphrastic indifference, 2) ekphrastic possibility or hope and 3) ekphrastic fear” (Agudelo, 2011:3). Ekphrastic Indifference assumes that “a verbal representation refers to a described and invoked object” (Agudelo, 2011: 3). That is, Ekphrasis happens in the mind of the reader who produces an image in the experience of the text.

Ekphrastic possibility or hope is the level at which “indifference is overcome in imagination or metaphor” (Agudelo, 2011: 3), that is, an interpretative mechanism that discovers the possibility of transferring the reader's experience to a visual image.



Ekphrastic fear is a moment of resistance in which “the imagination makes possible a visual representation in a verbal one. This fear stems from the possibility that the verbal could be displaced or effectively replaced by the visual” (2011: 78). It is worth noting that it is possible to assimilate the three levels of Ecphrasis to the construction of an Enlightenment, that is, Ecphrasis becomes the object of representation by means of Enlightenment.

This paper develops an illustration of the female character in the novel by Mexican writer Juan García Ponce (1932-2002). It has been taken as a starting point his novel *The invitation* (*La invitación*) (1969). The novel describes the relationship the protagonist “R” has with Beatrice an imaginary woman.

“R” is coming out of a convalescence associated with a state of minimal consciousness. Recurrent fevers confuse him and the everyday world attacks him, causing reality and dream to become confused in his mind. Thus, the Reality Principle and the Pleasure Principle are mixed and his perception becomes complex. Because of his state, the reality principle breaks down and causes the dream world to confront the outside world in which social reality is convulsive and problematic.

The story of *The Invitation* is set around the events of October 2, 1968 in Mexico City. The context of violence experienced in Mexico at that time means that “R” sublimates the effects of reality. In *The Invitation* we can read: “R. listened to them talk about movies, concerts and then, from one day on, with intense passion, about the serious commotions provoked by the government's action against the students” (García Ponce, 1999: 17). At another point, the episode in which the protagonist is captured for no reason by the police is described:

- If you knew of any culprit would you denounce him? - he then asked.
- I don't know what they might be guilty of,” said R.
- Of asking for the impossible, of disturbing the peace, of committing criminal acts, of disrespecting everyone, of attacking my boys when they are doing their duty,” said the commander slowly (García Ponce, 1999: 136).

Juan García Ponce identifies the tension between the principle of reality and the principle of pleasure as a fusion “between immobility and mobility in which the truth of the instant appears” (García Ponce, 1974: p. 240.). That instant is the sublimation that allows us to assume that it is possible to carry out the fixation of our acoustic image with the fixation of that experience of reading that was proposed above. Thus, the three levels of Ecphrasis can be identified with three levels of fixation of the reading experience: visual representation, metaphor and illustration. In *The Invitation*, Beatrice represents that fusion between the real and the imaginary that produces the sublimation of the desire for “R”. Following are the images that refer to our vision of ekphrastic Indifference; ekphrastic hope and ekphrastic fear.

In addition, these images allow us to confirm the inter-artistic relationship that exists between the novel and the illustration (fig. 1-4).



Figure 1 – Ekphrastic indifference. (Source: own elaboration)

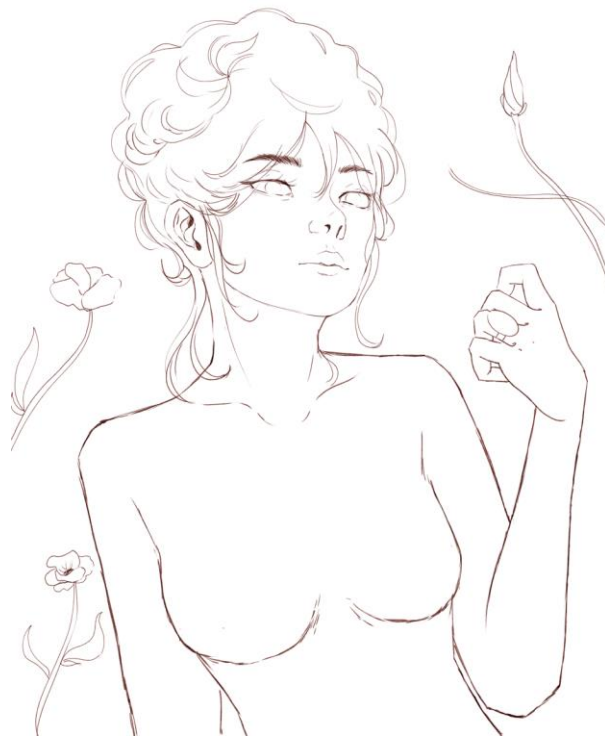


Figure 2 – Ekphrastic hope. (Source: own elaboration)

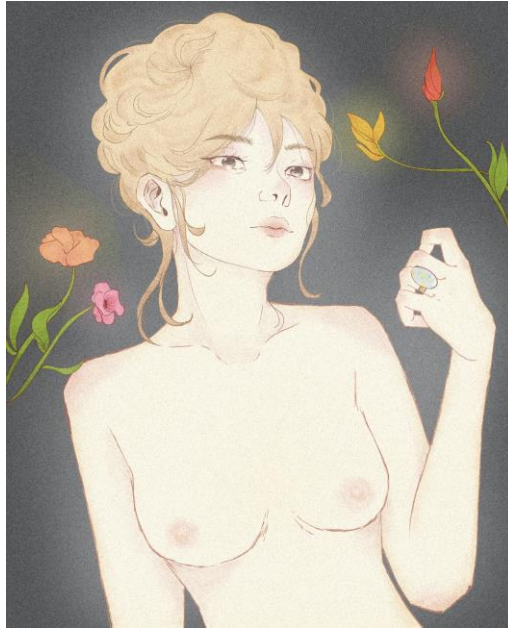


Figure 3 – Ekphrastic fear. (Source: own elaboration)



Figure 4 – Beatrice. (Source: own elaboration)

It is possible to transfer the reading experience suggested by Ekphrasis to a visual manifestation. In the proposal it can be seen that each level of the Ekphrasis represents a visual correlate.

References

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