

CLARA
JANÉS

OPHELIA'S
VOICE

TRANSLATION AND CRITICAL EDITION

BY

ANNE M. PASERO

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E-mails: unprsouth@aol.com; universitypresssouth@gmail.com

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Clara Janés.

Ophelia's Voice.

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To Clara, Joe and Tony,
for their belief and encouragement.

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for their inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	6
Foreword	7
Introduction	9
I Clara Janés: Life, Work and Writing the Self	9
II. <i>Garden and Labyrinth</i> [<i>Jardín y laberinto</i>]	25
III. <i>Ophelia's Voice</i> [<i>La voz de Ofelia</i>]	33
IV. Related Poetic Works [<i>In Search of Cordelia, Kampa</i>]	64
Conclusion	72
Translation: <i>Ophelia's Voice</i>	73
Works Consulted	108
Index	117

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OPHELIA'S VOICE

It fills me with joy to see my book *Ophelia's Voice* translated into English. This is one of the works that best represents me and through which is made manifest how the relationship between poetry and life is produced in me, that which makes implicit not only the reasons that inspire me to write, but also those which are the links between my sensibility and intuition and my thought process.

Was it an intuition that made me select -- I think at the beginning of my adolescence -- a form of approach to life linked to English literature through Shakespeare? And can one talk in this case of literature? I think not, I think that even though it was made concrete in a regular reading of the Stratford genius in the middle of the night, it had to do with a study of the possibilities of the human soul and the different models offered us. I would identify with male and female characters, and Hamlet and Ophelia seemed close to me. In the case of Ophelia -- I, a child cloistered within a garden, always loved, by the way, a rose with that name -- probably because of the rejection I felt and the resulting lunacy, evident in the flower scene. Since childhood, I had felt rejection, abandonment and separation as something tragic and fundamental to life, without realizing that this feeling was caused by the irrevocable reality of death: the definitive separation. Each rejection is a death. But each approximation brings with it the opposite possibility, as in the book, its hero, its reason for being, the Czech poet Vladimír Holan, remains identified with Orpheus. When one writes one intuitively that the reader carries out an analogous act, provoking a resurrection.

With these words I thanked the Turkish poet Fazil Hüsni Dağlarca for some lines from his poem: -If one more person reads me / I am alive / once more.‖ May these words suffice now to express my gratitude to Anne Pasero, for her work, her friendship and her constancy.

Clara Janés
(translated by Anne M. Pasero)

LA VOZ DE OFELIA

Me llena de alegría ver mi libro *La voz de Ofelia* traducido al inglés. Esta es una de las obras que mejor me representa y a través de ella se pone de manifiesto cómo se produce en mí la relación de vida y poesía, lo que lleva implícito no sólo los móviles que me impulsan a escribir, sino cuáles son los nexos de mi sensibilidad e intuición con mi pensamiento.

¿Fue una intuición lo que me hizo elegir –creo que a comienzos de la adolescencia- una forma de acercamiento a la vida vinculada con la literatura inglesa a través de Shakespeare? ¿Y puede hablarse en este caso de literatura? Creo que no, creo que, aunque esto se concretó en una lectura ritual del genio de Stratford en medio de la noche, se trataba de un estudio de las posibilidades del alma humana y de los distintos modelos que se nos ofrecen. Yo me identificaba con personajes masculinos y femeninos, y Hamlet y Ofelia me resultaban próximos. En el caso de Ofelia –yo, criatura encerrada en un jardín, amaba, por cierto, una rosa de este nombre- probablemente por el rechazo sufrido y la locura consecuente, manifiesta en la escena de las flores. Desde niña sentía como algo trágico y fundamental en la vida el rechazo y el abandono, la separación, sin darme cuenta de que esta captación era causada por la irrevocable realidad de la muerte: la separación definitiva. Cada rechazo es una muerte. Pero cada aproximación otorga la posibilidad contraria, así en el libro, su héroe, su motivo, el poeta checo Vladimír Holan, queda identificado con Orfeo. Cuando uno escribe intuye que el lector lleva acabo un acto análogo, provoca una resurrección.

Con estas palabras me agradeció unas versiones de sus poemas el poeta turco Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca: –Si uno más/ me lee/ vivo/ una vez más.‖ Valgan ahora para expresar mi agradecimiento a Anne Pasero por su trabajo, su amistad y su constancia.

Clara Janés

INTRODUCTION

I. Clara Janés: Life, Work and Writing the Self.

In her recently published work *La voz de Ofelia* [*Ophelia's Voice* 2005], the well-known Spanish poet and writer Clara Janés recounts her meetings with the Czech poet Vladimír Holan and the profound influence they would have on both her life and work. But this text represents much more than just an anecdote, for her relationship with Holan would affect not only her writings but her entire spiritual and creative outlook from that point forward. While it was published just over five years ago, *Ophelia's Voice* was a work in process for over 12 years and is intrinsically linked to a previous autobiographical work, *Jardín y Laberinto* [*Garden and Labyrinth* 1990], memoirs of the poet's youth in Pedralbes, outside of Barcelona. In the course of this introduction, I will discuss the nature of autobiographical writings by women and their relationship to Janés and her work, especially as embodied in the figure of Ophelia, and then relate that same critical theory to the expression of the female self in Janés' poetry, focusing on *En busca de Cordelia y poemas rumanos* [*In Search of Cordelia and Rumanian Poems* 1975] and *Kampa* [*Kampa* 1986], works that have special relevance to Holan.¹

Clara Janés is a writer whose work and life reflect a passion for writing and the beauty of the word. Born in 1940 in Barcelona, she studied Philosophy and Letters at the Universities of Barcelona and Pamplona, graduating from Pamplona. She also holds a Master of Letters in Comparative Literature from the University of Paris, Sorbonne IV. She creates in all genres, including novel, essay, short story, biography, and fundamentally poetry. She has written more than thirty books of poetry, important among them *Las estrellas vencidas* [*The Conquered Stars* 1964], *Límite humano* [*Human Limit* 1973], *En busca de Cordelia y poemas rumanos*, *Libro de alienaciones* [*Book of Alienations* 1980], *Eros* [*Eros* 1981], *Vivir* [*To Live*, City of Barcelona Prize

1. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from Spanish to English are mine. Holan translations to English were done by Josef Tomas and are as yet unpublished. Subsequent references to *Jardín y laberinto* will be either *Garden and Labyrinth* or simply *Garden*.

1983], *Kampa*, *Lapidario* [*Lapidary* 1988], *Creciente fértil* [*Fertile Crescent* 1989], *Ver el fuego* [*To See the Fire* 1993], *Rosas de fuego* [1996; *Roses of Fire* 2004], *La indetenible quietud* [*The Unceasing Stillness* 1998] with engravings by Eduardo Chillida, and *Arcángel de sombra* [*Archangel of Shadow*, City of Melilla Prize 1998].

During this past decade alone, Janés has published several books including *Los secretos del bosque* [2002 Jaime Gil de Biedma Prize; *The Forest's Secrets* 2002], *Paralajes* [*Parallaxes* 2002], *Vilanos* [E-mails 2004], and *Fractales* [*Fractals* 2005]. Her literary activity continues to be prolific and in 2010 she has published two new works of poetry, *Río hacia la nada* [*River to Nowhere*, City of Torre Vieja Prize 2009] and *Variables ocultas* [*Hidden Variables*]. In addition, she recently presented a study of the life and work of the well-known Spanish philosopher María Zambrano: *María Zambrano: Desde la sombra llameante* [*María Zambrano: From Within the Flaming Shadow* 2010]. In 2010 she also published a collection of her love poetry, *Poesía erótica y amorosa* [*Erotic and Love Poetry*]. Other important prose works relevant for this study, apart from *Ophelia's Voice*, include *Garden and Labyrinth*, *La palabra y el secreto* [*The Word and the Secret* 1999], and *El espejo de la noche* [*Mirror of the Night* 2005]. Significant literary prizes awarded Janés are the Fine Arts Medal of Merit from Spain's Ministry of Culture in 2004 and the Teresa of Avila Prize in 2007 for the entirety of her work.

Janés is also well-known as a translator and, as such, has helped acquaint audiences with the work of contemporary authors such as Czech poets Holan and Jaroslav Seifert, Turkish poets İlhan Berk and Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca, Persian poets and the Hindu poet Sujata Bhatt, both within Spain and beyond. With the help of native language experts, she has translated the work of ancient mystic poets into Spanish. Janés has also translated from French (Marguerite Duras, Nathalie Sarraute and others) and from English (Katherine Mansfield). In addition to her work as a writer and translator, Janés is distinguished as a literary critic for her work on Juan Eduardo Cirlot, Rosa Chacel and Zambrano, among others. She also compiled and edited an anthology of early Spanish women poets, *Las primeras poetisas en lengua castellana* [*The First Women Poets in Castilian* 1986]. Because of her work in translation, she received the Tutav Foundation Prize from Turkey (1992), the National Prize of Translation for the entirety of her work from Spain (1997), and the Medal of Merit of First Category from the Czech Republic (2002). Her poems have been translated into more than 18 languages (Pasero, Introduction, *Roses of Fire*).

Janés began to write poetry as a university student, and throughout her career has exhibited a movement between existentialism and essentialism, ultimately achieving an affirmation of life, made tangible in her book *To Live*. Since that moment, every object, creative work, living being, landscape, phenomenon or natural element have become part of her poetry, in a kind of mystical communion with the Cosmos. All of her poetry is a search for discovery and definition of the female self and, through

phases of development reflected in the distinct moments of her work, reveals a process that evolves from an initial questioning and denial toward a more complete affirmation and the -writing of her body, both real and imaginary, as French feminists define it. The focus on the body, through the writing of her own female discourse, enables Janés to transcend internal and external limits that initially entrapped her and to reach out and integrate that -other, either within herself or beyond (Pasero 1993). The exploration and evolution of this poetic process is developed first of all, and more tentatively, in *Garden and Labyrinth*, Janés' earlier autobiographical reflections, and is then reworked and refined in *Ophelia's Voice*, the more complex continuation composed over a period of 12 years and published in 2005. In addition, the tragic death of Janés' father Josep in a car accident in 1959 and her later encounters with Holan in the 1970s play an essential part in these writings.

In the trajectory of Janés' poetic development, *Ophelia's Voice* represents a kind of culmination and yet introduction to the essence and totality of her work. Not only is the figure of Ophelia and its significance at the heart of all of Janés' writing, but this recent work embodies strains and representations of the multiple aspects of her poetry. As such, it is in itself a synthesis while also an innovative and imaginative approach, in that it fuses genres creating a kind of poetic prose in an autobiographical format which is unique but also representative of the writing of women's -life narratives. I orient this study from diverse perspectives, i.e. the literary, mythical, and symbolic significance of the figure of Ophelia seen from a contemporary feminist viewpoint in relation to the theory and nature of women's autobiographical writings and their meaning for the discussion of Janés' poetry. Janés' expression of the self as an integration of distinct and multiple elements, fluid and inconstant, in search of an ultimate union with the -other, is consistent with the process that French feminists, including among them Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, describe as -writing the body. I will explore this approach as it relates to Janés and as is reflected in her work, for it is particularly significant in terms of the autobiographical format she develops in *Ophelia's Voice*.

In reading Janés' work, then, one must approach it from this multidimensional perspective, which presupposes a more fluid identification of the self, a fusing of boundaries both spatial and temporal, and a recognition of the feminine presence in diverse and multiple forms. For French feminist critics such as Cixous and Irigaray, -women's writing or -l'écriture féminine, signifies a discourse that by nature crosses boundaries of time, space, subject and object. According to Cixous, as referenced by Toril Moi, the feminine being is enclosed within a permanently fluid space, and is -free to move from one subject position to another, or to merge oceanically with the world (Moi 117). Her vision of feminine writing is -...a space in which all difference has been abolished (117). And Irigaray defines what she terms -womanspeak as a style or language that accentuates the female need to rid herself of the patriarchal masculine logic; she stresses difference and -other in her description: -

‘She’ is definitely other in herself...in her language ‘she’ goes off in all directions and in which ‘he’ is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning... *One must listen to her differently in order to hear an ‘other meaning’ which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time carelessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized* (—This Sex, Marks 103). Candelas Newton describes feminine discourse as representing –voices of difference, for incumbent upon it is the need to express a continually changing and dynamic relationship with self and –other, especially as in contrast with a male perspective more typically fixed and unidimensional (140).

Throughout all of her work, Janés extends and transcends boundaries, to arrive ultimately at a sense of being that is more dynamic, open and unlimited (Pasero, –Clara Janés). She thus begins to assimilate and to incorporate that –other dimension, stressing the female need to establish her identity through relationship with an / other. The concept of pleasure or –jouissance, as defined by Cixous, refers to that incredible moment when disparate elements fuse in an overwhelming synthesis, resulting in a powerful sense of harmonious oneness, expressed both sexually and textually through the force of language (—The Laugh of the Medusa, Marks 245-63). In the works to be examined in this study, this same sense of –jouissance becomes evident for, as distinct from Roland Barthes’ definition according to Moi, the discourse in these texts represents a space in which differences can be assimilated and ultimately reconciled in a symbolic fusion of opposites: –*In the end*, then, the contradictions of Cixous’ discourse can be shown to be contained and resolved within the secure haven of the Imaginary (Moi 120).² In all of Janés’ work, and particularly in *Ophelia’s Voice*, the author evidences this kind of initially and apparently disconnected vision, only to weave all elements together in a structural, symbolic and semantic union.

In a lecture that Janés presented in 1995 entitled –Cuerpo, texto y sensibilidad [Body, Text and Sensitivity] later published as —Cuerpo secreto [Secret Body] in *The Word and the Secret* (1999), she stresses the relationship between body and text, as anticipated from the outset in *Garden and Labyrinth*, which opens with the famous line from Ramón Gómez de la Serna’s *El libro mudo* [The Mute Book]: –Literature is a state of body (Garden 10). As she herself affirms in –Secret Body, Janés incorporated this line because it corresponded exactly to what she had in mind, to the importance of body being manifested through writing and vice versa. The text must emanate from within, as if from a sexual encounter, and its creation corresponds to a kind of compenetration of one with –other: –Its internal-external orientation, among

2. Moi defines the difference in the definition of *jouissance* between Barthes and Cixous as one in which, while the –former signals absolute loss, a space in which the subject fades to nothing, the latter will always finally gather up its contradictions with the plenitude of the Imaginary (121).

other meanings, carries with it that of erotic overflow, of penetrating and fusing with the -other,|| that 'engendering of a platonic beauty'...||³ She goes on to define expressly those three bodies and what they represent for her: One's physical body, that of the -other,|| and that of the text (19), which work together to project an energy and effervescence that animate that text. The body of the text itself becomes the space that joins one with the other, body and soul, and serves as the mediating agent between self and -other.|| As such, it also takes on a life (body) of its own, having absorbed and transmitted the surrounding energies and having assimilated both body and soul, as Janés describes: -Not only do body and soul remain in the text, but the text begins to break up, to become a body in itself, a body that is object of desire and love, a revealing body, secret and unattainable.||⁴

Garden and Labyrinth represents exactly that for Janés, an emanation from the soul, a body that takes on an autonomous life that can lead to erotic identification as well as mystic fulfillment. Because the text functions as a vehicle by which multiple energies are generated, it enables the writer (and reader) to reach another sphere, to arrive at a deeper level of understanding, to achieve a state of oneness either (or both) physical or spiritual -- body is transformed into text, text into body, energies from the former transform the latter and vice versa, and culminate in a moment of complete and overwhelming ecstasy. Relationship between body and text (-cuerpo|| / -texto||) and the pleasure that ensues can be characterized as a form of -jouissance,|| as Roland Barthes declares in *The Pleasure of the Text* (51-52). Cixous, in *Coming to Writing* (1991), also characterizes writing as an act of erotic lovemaking, much like Janés does. According to Cixous, writing and lovemaking are one and the same: -Writing: making love to Love. Writing with love, loving with writing|| (trans. Jensen 42). And Ciplijauskaitė, referring to the presentation of love in Janés' work, equates corporeal pleasure with textual pleasure for the writer: -Erotic pleasure leads to spiritual fulfillment. The 'jouissance' of the body becomes 'jouissance' of the Text.||⁵ Janés takes the relationship one step further, for making love to the text allows one to transcend self and thus to extend beyond and absorb the -other:|| -For this reason the text allows the reader to traverse not only herself, but also that which is the object of

3. -Su orientación interior-exterior, entre otros significados, tiene el de desbordamiento erótico, el de penetrar y fundirse con lo otro, aquel 'engendrar en belleza' platónica...|| (*La palabra* 18).

4. -No solo quedan, pues, alma y cuerpo en el texto, sino que el texto pasa a desgajarse, a ser cuerpo en sí, cuerpo objeto de anhelo y amor, cuerpo revelador, cuerpo secreto e inalcanzable|| (*La palabra* 20).

5. -El gozo erótico lleva a plenitud espiritual. La *jouissance* del cuerpo se vuelve *jouissance* del texto|| (-Medusa|| 93).