

LITERARY ONOMASTICS OF FEAR

Grace Alvarez-Altman

State University of New York

College at Brockport

FEAR KILLS!!! Psychiatrists have been doing intensive research attesting to this fact.

Jeannette Miller, a young, contemporary, Spanish poetess from the Dominican Republic, in 1979, published FORMULAS PARA COMBATIR EL MIEDO (Formulas to Combat Fear). The chapter "La Semana" (The Week), consists of seven poems depicting the journey of a modern eighty-year life span, which elaborates in an unusual poetic form what plagues all of us, and then ends with the solution to fear. This chapter lends itself to a literary interpretation within the perspective of Literary Onomastic Typology of relevance to Ontology (the nature of being or stark reality). The stages of FEAR portrayed in these poems are: DREAD, ALARM, TERROR, CONSTERNATION, DESPERATION AND PHOBOPHOBIA. A compendium of all six stages of modern man are laconically introduced in the Prologue.¹

Decapitated of my last sun
 I continue running through life
 yelling my bitterness
 my profound loneliness
 It is my life
 It is what I have always had
 It is FEAR.

e names of the days of the week in Spanish are most apropos to the concepts
FEAR.

I - DREAD

The first poem LUNES (Monday), skillfully presents lunacy, mental
erration, frenzy seen in people getting into the subways, rushing out of
their private driveways on Mondays, late to work.

Each morning
Upon arising
I initiate my path towards death
Before perforating the day with my disconsolate face
I cry a little
I smile trying to be agreeable and inoffensive
.....
as if precipitating
in the previous postulance of lament
defecator of roots, of inhospitable walls
accelerated by the rhythm of pain
arising from days where only the sun reviews the paths.
.....
I begin my journey.²

The cosmic force of FEAR drives man to all his inhuman and immoral acts
against himself and others. The lunacy-dread of the poem LUNES dramatizes
the fear starting at birth and the effort of the fetus trying to survive.
One hundred thousand newborns are survivors of a greater population of
fertilized eggs, many of which never get to birth. Eighteen per cent of all
fetuses are aborted during later months of gestation. Childhood-lunacy from
ages of approximately 0-12, the first of six stages of the modern life span
of 80 years or so, then develops into the frustration stage of euphoria -
CRAZY BIRTH.

II. ALARM

MARTES (Mars), "Roman God of War," is the title of the second poem that
starts with PLANETARIUM, guiding us to look into the cosmic globe within the
enclosure of our lives.

Planetarium
 as this time of clear sounds
 as the primary light that guesses the borders
 contouring the angles
 making the glass weep.

.....
 Your genesis
 was that time of soft mud and wet trees
 of innumerable perfumed branches covering hills and pregnant
 prairies.

.....
 Your calculation
 the night fall of smoke from the west
 among dying shouts and crickets.

.....
 I am your present.

This second stage of YOUTH from ages 13-26 brings to mind the ever-increasing intensity of our FEAR. Suicide clubs are on the increase from ages of middle school children throughout the college ages. Suicide is the second cause of death among teenagers in the U.S.

III. TERROR

The poem MIERCOLES (Wednesday) derives its name from the planet Mercury and the Roman God of merchandise, merchants and wealth.

Situated under the breeze I feel how the night becomes humid
 shaken by the presence of the moss
 without waiting for anything
 I would like the lateral voices to cease.

In the midst of the movement I detain myself
 open
 dressed with sky and smoke.

A sound of air
 ants
 men in gangs arise in the horizon.

The lukewarm night
 with the monotonous noise of the rocks on the roofs,
 penetrates into the fire place of my thoughts.

I've become acquainted with a rain fall of lead suspended by he who
 I have negotiated hurriedly with the life of your hands. ^{gives light,}

You have not yet found your color, nor your shovel nor your jugs.

My eyes are fractured in the center of the star.

hood between the ages of 27-40 has its job securities, family, material
h, yet Fear intensifies into TERROR (divorces, loss of jobs, unfulfilled
s, and disappointments in all phases of life). It brings to mind the
DOS ESPEJOS (Two Mirrors) by a modern Spanish poet, very renowned for
human insight, Ramon Campoamor.

In the crystal of a mirror
at forty I saw myself
and finding my visage old and ugly
with anger the crystal I shattered

In the transparency of my soul
I looked fixedly into my face
and in my conscience I saw myself
that I angrily alarmed my heart

And it's that mortals in losing
faith, youth and love
look in the mirror and ALARM
look into their souls and TERROR

IV. CONSTERNATION

JUEVES (Thursday) is named after the King of Gods, Jupiter, God of rain
and profuse growth of fruits.

Penetrating the arid night
entwining trees and pathways with my eyes a fright with ice
I make my howl be heard
filled with shadows and quirks of dead earth.

In the midst of the night the unforeseen voices scare me,
the coloring tone of the foliage,
the gathered daily bitterness
the unnecessary words
supposedly to fortify

to confront again
to disguise this fog of insufficiency.

I cover myself with silence
and then the harsh phantoms of my childhood reappear
beating upon my back.

Here is an insight into the fears felt by humans during maturity, menopause for both men and women, between 41-54. Consternation is the intensity of fear when at the apex of careers, reflection of progeny, savings-accounts, there is no satisfaction, and the soul and body yearn for more.

V. DESPERATION

As we climb the ladder of fear, we come to the poem VIERNES (Friday) from the Goddess Venus, who possessed the attributes of Ishtar, the "self-waterer." In Babylon it was common for every woman to wait at least once in the courts of the temples of Ishtar and lie for an hour with a stranger to overcome sterility. The priests who willingly supplied the place of the "stranger" became rich with the price of harlotry, and yet we think of her as the Greek Aphrodite, Queen of Love. In the Pre-Old Age of modern humans' lives, i.e. 55-68, Fear becomes more insufferable, just as the poem indicates, and man is driven to desperation.

The horripilating feet of the past nightmare
could very well be those that were lacking in the picture of the last CONTEST
or the deboucher of my nasal happiness
accelerated by an absurd cold.

The truth is that they frightened me.

I felt submerged in a dream more real than that in which I now live,
an atmosphere of humid, disagreeable heat,
smell of incense and garlic,
the shouts of my friend as a terrible introduction
dragging the deep pain of an inconclusive life.

Frogs,

shrouds,

and those cut up feet as something that used to live,
as something all of us had to worship
fell upon me,
forcing me to scream to God begging for his protection.

Gregorian chants,

the last suicide of my cousin,

æ continuous smell of seasoning from the neighbors,
æ repeated classes (social), vocalized
æ proximity due to hate,
æ the things of today;
æ tired return of the days,
æ retreat toward dark nights where death appears
on television
succeeded by commercials.

VI. PHOBOPHOBIA

Phobophobia is the phobia of fear itself. As we come to the last stage modern humans, 69-83 approximately, we are impressed with the poem SABADO (Saturday). Saturn was the Roman God of sowing (reaping). His cult partner is the very obscure Goddess Lua from the Latin "lues" meaning plague or destruction. She was a fire-goddess in whose honor spoils were sometimes burned.

If you were to live inside of a dry tree because of HATE

If the stifled fear of always
were suddenly to parade on the sidewalks and interrupt your path.

If life tasted bitter, fragmented
and millions of tongues were to open into fetid ulcers,
and the terror of humanity, blinded you.

If night were to await you behind the mirrors,

Only thus could you be able to understand me.

At the average life expectancy of the early or middle seventies, which many times goes into the 80's and 90's, modern humans reach the apex of FEAR. Just observe our senior citizens vegetating in rest homes and hospitals filled with FEAR as I observed in the last three years of my mother's life who once was so vibrant and dynamic.

SOLUTION FOR FEAR

This talented poetess does not permit us to remain in the lurch. The

last poem DOMINGO (Sunday), from Latin "Dominus" meaning "Lord," translates into the Greek as "belonging to God, or consecrated to God." Domingo is a very popular agnomen in the Hispanic world. The poem is like a breath of fresh air in the last days of the existence of modern man. I have known individuals past 100 years old still lucid having no phobophobia. The Old Age Olympics in California last year were televised, and the 80- and 90-year old athletes were outstanding.

After all
to go out
to breathe
to forget the monotony of the rabbit stew
the artificial air of the offices
the gullet of the hungry city.

To revolve my eyes through the river,
through the waters that encircle the arms of the earth
and makes it appear human,
protector.

To skin the entrails trying to look for the origin of the dream
to become dizzy from the sun and saltpetre.

To dilute oneself
scurry across the slopes of the congested jungle
entangled with green and brilliancy,
to touch the animals
to feel the blood
recognize life, the love that it produces,
to hear the time pass without voices.

After all
to look for the night without eyes
see her appear under the leaves, enwrapping the trees,
hiding the angles

To let yourself BE
without recognizing anything
LOVING,
being one with the world
dying to self.

Here is the message of hope for humanity in the contemporary age of violence, economic-contrasts, permissiveness, sexual licentiousness, inflation, unemployment, diplomatic hypocrisy and world chaos. Love, love without

remunerations, without recompense. Scientists know what only love can do. Love, properly applied, could virtually empty our asylums, our prisons, our hospitals. Love is the touchstone of psychiatric treatment. Love can be fostered, extended, used to subjugate hate and thus cure diseases, the worst one of them being FEAR. Thus Jeannette Miller's chapter The Week or Journey of Life brings us to a conclusive solution: the necessary mandate of survival is that we love others as ourselves. Love is the mandate. Now to the laboratory of life with love! Dread, alarm, terror, consternation, desperation and phobophobia will melt into "Agape-Love."

Grace Alvarez-Altman
State University of New York
College at Brockport

NOTES

¹ See my article, "A Methodology to Literary Onomastics: An Analytical Guide for Studying Names in Literature," Literary Onomastic Studies, VIII, (1981), 220-230.

² Only excerpts of these poems are given. They are my own translations from Spanish into English.