Vantages of a Song about Love

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This is a letter to the organizers of the Summer School on Blending in Context, August 12-17, 2002, University of Southern Denmark, Odense (for more information, cf. http://www.pierregander.com/phd/courses/blending_in_context/blending_in_context.html). Its fragment is made available here, after very minor editing, with the permission of both the authors and the addressees (Professor Johannes Wagner and Professor Chris Sinha)

Dr. Johannes Wagner
Dr. Chris Sinha
Summer School on Blending in Context, August 12-17, 2002
Syddansk Universitet, Odense / University of Southern Denmark, Odense

Dear Participants in the Summer School:

Many thanks for the invitation to join your seminar and to speak on vantage theory, August 13. We enjoyed Monica Gonzalez-Marquez’s presentation and blending analysis of Ricardo Arjona’s poetic lyrics to his song Ella y El (on disk in Sí el Norte Fueren el Sur (1996) and Vivo (live version, 1999) released by Sony; the text with mostly Monica’s translation is included herein), and we listened with interest to your discussion of its symbolism. The poem progresses through a sequence of internally contrasting she-he couplets, which characterize the protagonists, transform to their electrifying encounter and plunge into love, and end with removal of the twosome to a mutually foreign venue, whereupon the couplets resolve or “blend” into lines that refer to both actors simultaneously.

Last night we thought about the poem, which seems to us to convey two vantages on the clash and fusion of mighty opposites, a rare but conventional category of human relations. Throughout the poetic story, two themes prevail, group (G) and individual (I), which we pose as inherently fixed coordinates and combine with attention to similarity (S) and attention to difference (D). The latter participate in any category as its inherently mobile coordinates. We notice that before she and he meet, strong emphasis on G—that is large and salient public symbols—gradually localizes to emphasis on public symbols of circumscribed sites and, further, to emphasis on (I) in the form of individually rendered but conventional choices. But after their meeting, the emphases entertain personalized bodily acts and reactions, and they individualize the protagonists by name. Then the emphasis expands to include detachment from past positions, a union of opposites into the smallest possible group of two, and finally, a removal of the pair to a distant, exotic place – again large scale – where blending occurs on this remote and neutral ground. The processes appear to parallel the zooming posed by vantage theory, which leads us to this model of cognition and its entailed behavior of symbolic lyrics.