

POLITICAL POETRY IN THE WAKE OF THE SECOND SPANISH REPUBLIC:

RAFAEL ALBERTI, PABLO NERUDA, AND NICOLÁS GUILLÉN

DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

For some, it is a common conception that if a poet includes politics in his poetry then he has degraded it. For others, politics must be included in poetry or it has no purpose. The purpose of this dissertation is to debunk the myths that surround political commitment and poetry; to build up the relationship between poetry and politics. This dissertation explores the simultaneous development of politics and poetics in three Spanish-language poets: Rafael Alberti, Nicolás Guillén, and Pablo Neruda. I argue that the simultaneous development was nurtured by the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939). Beginning in these years, Alberti, Guillén, and Neruda strove to tackle the challenge of committing to their own independent poetic projects and to their politics simultaneously. Later, these three poets maintained their Communist Party affiliation until their deaths and produced collection after collection of quality poetry. Despite the differences in their overall poetic trajectories and projects, the ability to maneuver between politics and poetry without sacrificing either one is common among them. The poetry of these three artists is not simply political propaganda nor is it “poetry for poetry’s sake.” In other words, the poetry strives to bring together issues such as communism, anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, class struggle, worker’s rights among others; yet for these three authors these topics strengthen their poetics and challenge traditional thought about what poetry is. Because of their unique experiences during the time of the Second Spanish Republic in Spain, each author explicitly turned to denounce the

injustices that the opposing Franquist forces had committed against the Republic, a place that had given more rights to workers. After the fall of the Republic in 1939, Alberti, Guillén, and Neruda continued to intertwine their politics with their poems only in a less obvious manner. Therefore, the poets could solidify their position within the poetic canon while at the same time they could maintain their position as committed Communists.

Dedicated to God, Mindi, Paul, Eve Montserrat, AnaSofia, Luke, and the future

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## CHAPTER 1: INTELLECTUALS COMMITMENT TO THE SPANISH REPUBLIC

### INTRODUCTION

The Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939), known as “the Intellectuals’ Republic,” provided writers and artists with a chance to contribute to the creation of a progressive utopian-like society. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), or the “War of the Poets,” was the final straw after years of turmoil that destroyed that possibility. Yet, amidst the chaos and ideological battles of the Republic and the three-year war that followed, literary and poetic production exemplified politically-charged and, at the same time, aesthetically-pleasing poetry like no other period in history. Pablo Neruda, Nicolás Guillén, and Rafael Alberti, three of the most prolific Spanish-language poets of the twentieth century, contributed to that dynamic of political and aesthetic commitment.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore and analyze the impacts of political and aesthetic commitment during and after the Spanish Republic on the above three Spanish-speaking Communist/fellow traveling poets. My hypothesis is that Alberti, Guillén and Neruda found a balance between politics and aesthetics that their experience in the Second Spanish Republic fostered. The aesthetic and political development of these three poets allowed both support for the Communist Party and support of their own independent aesthetic project.

I am attracted to Neruda, Guillén, and Alberti because they remained committed to the Communist Party even after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939 when Stalin made a covenant with Hitler that discouraged many other Communists. All three also maintained their political commitment to the Communist Party until their deaths. However, beyond their official Party affiliations, the three authors are also attractive because they maintained a commitment to their respective aesthetic projects. In other words, they sought, each in their own way, a balance between two distinct realms, aesthetics and politics. Their works did not promote purely political propaganda, like many of the poets of the anarchist tradition who have been forgotten. Neither did they concern themselves solely with the supposed non-committed aesthetics of poetry like the “purists” or the avant-garde. My hypothesis is that the three poets of this study reconciled their politics with their aesthetic without compromising either one. Also, I believe their experiences during the Spanish Republic nurtured that reconciliation. So, the broader implications of my project are two-fold: poetry can and does flourish midst deep political commitment, and politically committed poets can still be independent, cutting edge writers despite their political affiliations. That is, aesthetics (poetry and literature) can and does survive deep political commitment and politics can and does survive deep aesthetic commitment. That, at least, is what I hope to explore in these pages.

## HISTORY OF INTELLECTUALS’ POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Let us begin by turning to the emergence of political commitment among writers and artists during the era leading up to and including the Second Spanish Republic. First

we will focus on international (European) commitment to politics from 1848, beginning with the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* and ending with the October Revolution in 1917. Then, we will look at the developments in Spain, which followed its own peculiar tendencies in political commitment from 1868 until 1917. Later, the analysis will center first on developments of intellectual political commitment in Europe from 1917 until the proclamation of the Spanish Republic in 1931 and then on the parallel developments in Spain. Last, the focus will be on the fusions and confusions of intellectuals' political commitment that arose during the Republic itself from 1931 until 1939.

#### EUROPE 1848-1917

In the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels proposed a way to organize left-wing politics in order to obtain rights for workers. Their work would commit them to the proletariat, a step that many intellectuals did not want to make because it might compromise their commitment to aesthetics, or their freedom of expression. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels continued to work on behalf of the proletariat. In 1864, alongside Mikhail Bakunin, they founded the first international workers organization in history, the International Workingmen's Association (also known as the First International). The Association looked to provide a vehicle toward a society where workers, the bourgeoisie, and the upper tier of society could live and work in harmony and equality.

After a couple of years, divisions arose on how to achieve that goal. The rift in the First International was based on how to order the organization; Marx wanted all parties involved to be subjected to the general council (his “dictatorship of the proletariat”), while Bakunin wanted each little group to govern itself without the interference from any other group. Marx wanted political intervention to be legal (or established through institutions already in place), whereas Bakunin understood that the groups that he represented might never be able to participate legally; they could not enter into politics because they were uneducated and could not vote. Both sides were committed to the success of the political platforms that represented the working class, only Marx took on a view where an intellectual group would make decisions for the masses, while Bakunin supported decision-making among small units or individuals depending on their needs. In other words, he created what is now called anarchism.

He sent Giuseppe Fanelli to Spain amid the revolution against Isabel in 1868. Bakunin’s principles incarnated in Fanelli led to a conference in Córdoba on December, 26<sup>th</sup>, 1872, that would give birth to the first official anarchist organization in Spain. Despite some immediate success of Bakuninist anarchism in Spain, by 1878, industry of mass production created a proletariat that slowly began to steer away from smaller industries; that is, followers of Marx began to increase in the industrial centers with the growth of capitalism while followers of Bakunin remained in the *campos*.

On the other hand, Marx’s new organization, known as the Second International (designed after the First International except that it excluded the anarchists and the anarcho-syndicalists), reorganized officially much later in 1889 and placed new emphasis



on the formation of the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” a program that focused on establishing commune-like utopias where the masses were governed by a central ruling body. Among the adherents of this Second International was Vladimir Lenin. Lenin joined the organization in 1905 and spoke out harshly against reformists, he being himself a revolutionary. Instead of focusing on changing the governing bodies through reform, Lenin talked of massive uprisings led by the proletariat to replace the institutions in power. His international call to revolution opposed the reformist tactics of the majority of the Socialist parties of Europe of the time. In other words, Lenin challenged the intellectuals to commit not only in speech and writing, but also in action.

After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, a rift in the Second International grew between reformists and revolutionaries. Those who supported Lenin’s ideas (where the international proletariat would declare war on the bourgeoisie, also known as “internationalism”) opposed what they deemed the on-going bourgeois war, while the reformists supported their various countries instead of supporting international solidarity.

#### SPAIN 1868-1917

When Fanelli went to Madrid, he met with Fernando Garrido, Anselmo Lorenzo, and others. The Italian did not speak Spanish, and the Spaniards did not speak Italian or French. Yet, as Brennan states:

Within the space of less than three months, without knowing a word of Spanish or meeting more than an occasional Spaniard who understood his French or Italian, he had launched a movement that was to endure, with wave-like

advances and recessions, for the next seventy years and to affect profoundly the destinies of Spain. (140)

In the early years, very few members of the Spanish working-class joined the ranks of the anarchists. This phenomenon was not particular to Spanish anarchism; it also occurred in other countries of Europe (Brenan 131-169). Anarchism did appeal to the peasants who worked the land and to the industrial workers in Barcelona because of the fact that these peoples were not represented in the government, although even then they were slow to join anarchism's ranks. Although the growing bourgeois *intelligentsia* who wrote for the newspapers (and began to survive economically from that profession) was not represented in government either, they gradually came to support the cause of the workers through their writing without having to commit head first to the cause.

Even the search for a new monarch outside of the Bourbon line between 1868 and 1870 did not give the landless workers, the industrial workers of Barcelona, or the bourgeois intellectuals any say in the government. When Amadeo of Savoy became the king of Spain, his main supporter, General Prim was murdered. To worsen matters, after two years, the Carlists began a second war against King Amadeo. In this same year (1872), as disputes among the members of the First International (between Marx and Bakunin) grew stronger, both groups in Spain sought to rid themselves of the monarchy once and for all.

The eventual split in the First International after Fanelli's short stay in Spain would also affect the political and intellectual environment south of the Pyrenees. Marx sent his son-in-law, Paul Lafargue to Spain in 1871 in order to denounce the Bakuninists. Lafargue denounced the Alliance that Fanelli had set up in Spain as not following the

rules of the General Council of the First International and he forced it to disband. The anarchists then responded by rejecting all of the Marxist *autoritarios*.<sup>1</sup> This difference contributed to the final fall of the First International.

The Bakuninists in Spain established a congress based on principles of anarchism that took place in Córdoba on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, 1872, only a few days after the split in the First International. This Córdoba conference promoted the anarchist line by maintaining the policy as a “revolution from below.” Each small group could decide on what was best for the members of the group, and did not have to take action unless they wanted to do so. The movement became known as “the International” and its members known as “internationalists.”

Shortly after the Congress in Córdoba, in February of 1873, and after Amadeo claimed that the Spaniards were ungovernable and abdicated, a Federal Republic was born. Francisco Pi y Margall, the first President of the new Republic expressed views that, according to Brenan, “were of course pure anarchism,” (149). True or not, Pi y Margall’s *acercamiento* to anarchist thought demonstrates the links that were developing between left-wing politics, the working class, and liberal intellectuals. By the same token, Pi y Margall’s role as an intellectual accentuated an important transformation among writers during these years: they could dedicate themselves to newspaper writing (for and in behalf of politics) and their literary productions at the same time. Recognized authors used the newspapers of the period to give their opinions about politics as well: Benito Pérez Galdós, Palacio Valdés, Leopoldo Alas (“Clarín”), Emilia Pardo Bazán, José de

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<sup>1</sup> The group that followed after Marx became known as the “autoritarios” and many of the most capable men in Spain belonged to that small party (Brenan 143).

Echegaray and many others. Sympathy for the plight of the workers and journalism written by intellectuals seemed to go hand in hand. Yet their sympathy rarely transformed into action; the sympathy was that of a detached intellectual, one who could sit safely in his bourgeois state while criticizing the system. Yet, in one way or another, that very criticism was action; it suggested intellectuals' commitment to political platforms was part of their role in society.

In fact, various writers supported the Cantonalist uprising in Cartagena even though it only lasted until January of 1874, when General Pavía dissolved the *Cortes*.<sup>2</sup> Later that year, the weakened government gave way to Alfonso XII's recuperation of the throne, after an exodus from Sagunto. The return of monarchism ushered in a new period of Spanish history referred to as the Restoration. During the first years of the Restoration, General Serrano suppressed the anarchist International (1874) and Práxedes Mateo Sagasta declared it illegal (1881). Anarchism remained alive underground, even after intellectuals' commitment in the press practically disappeared.

In the 1890s, because of the lack of published support, the Spanish anarchists strove for a voice of their own instead of the bourgeoisified version offered by intellectuals in the press when it was convenient for them. This search for their own voice created a shift in anarchism in Spain, a sister to "revolutionary unionism" in France: anarcho-syndicalism. Anarcho-syndicalism claimed the right to express itself without the help of the bourgeois newspapers. Despite rejection by anarcho-syndicalists, many Spanish writers once again wrote in newspapers and literary journals in favor of various

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Galdós wrote positively of the federalist movement in his *Episodios nacionales*.

anarchist principles. For example, Brennan claims that Ramiro de Maeztu and Azorín had considered libertarian modes of thought during the 1890s, yet did not join the ranks of the anarchists (166). Sympathy for the anarchist cause grew in 1897 when the police in Barcelona beat anarchists after a bomb exploded in the Catalan capital. But after all was said and done, the anarchists rejected these sympathizers, and the sympathizers were out of harm's way in their bourgeois state. Yet these writings teach us that the writer's position in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was far from apolitical.

Furthermore, more political entities began to surge during the 1890s. For example, despite being founded in 1879 by Pablo Iglesias and José Mesa, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), began to grow after establishing a labor union in 1888. The *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) gained steady support in the 1890s; its growth was due partially to the fact that the 1890s were filled with extremist, anarchist bombs. The president of the *Cortes*, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, was also assassinated by an anarchist. Because of the extremism of the anarchists, many intellectuals looked to support a more moderate party in order to enter the public sphere en masse. Nevertheless, during these years, the great majority of intellectuals who sympathized with either anarchism or socialism were *pequeño burgueses*: their actions were limited to sympathy. Since the socialists were not as extreme as the anarchists and had not been defeated like the republicans, the intellectuals saw socialism as a possibility to participate in the political sphere publically (and vicariously) during the next twenty years. This vicariousness does not suggest that intellectuals did not commit to politics; questions of social reform abounded in their work.

José Paulino Ayuso points out that there are three characteristics that the literates of the late 1800s and early 1900s share: 1) as a group, these intellectuals were part of an ascending petit-bourgeoisie rejected by the oligarchy; 2) at the same time they were accepted as cutting-edge producers of liberal cultural life of Spain and Latin America and wrote in the press; and 3) and they rejected the systems of the past that stemmed from the Restoration (Paulino Ayuso in Palacios Fernández 138). The literature and poetry of this period in Spain comes from Miguel de Unamuno, Ramiro de Maeztu, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, and Pío Baroja. As in France, *Modernismo* was a “síntesis de ideas sociales y nuevas perspectivas artísticas” (Ayuso in Palacios Fernández 139). After the loss of Cuba in 1898, despite their sympathies, many Spanish intellectuals generally became more critical of the government in Spain. The loss of the colonies discredited the reputation of both the government and the army. The dissatisfaction among the majority of Spaniards toward the politics of the crown reflected how the artistic generation built upon the critical tradition that “Clarín” and Galdós had bestowed upon them.

At the turn of the century, a shift toward a literature where intellectuals criticized modern life became more apparent. Ramiro de Maeztu’s *Hacia otra España* (1899), for example, reproduced common ground among younger Spanish intellectuals that was reflected in their literature: “simbolismo, introspección angustiada, autobiografía” (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 31). The possibility of a future Spain that Maeztu refers to offered more than the decadent nineteenth century. Yet intellectuals felt trapped in that bourgeois decadence, searching for a future Spain, a feeling epitomized by Maeztu. The

political implications of his “other Spain” increasingly brought to the forefront his move toward a more open political commitment.

Also, at the turn of the century, the International Exposition in Paris in 1900 fostered influences of foreign artists and writers in Spain, an important element to the development of the politics and literary life of the Spanish authors. Many foreign texts appeared in Spanish for the first time during the first years of the twentieth century (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 58). Besides the European texts that abounded in Spain, expansion for Spanish intellectuals’ works turned to the Americas, and many of the authors from the Americas turned to Spain because of the economic possibilities. Rubén Darío’s modernist movement influenced the Spanish scene because of its “[...] inesperado rehermanamiento de las literaturas latinoamericanas y española, una fórmula económica muy rentable [...]” (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 76-77).

Coinciding with the turn of the century and continuing earlier work by the *Krausistas*, Santiago Ramón y Cajal and Francisco Giner de los Ríos promoted university reform as a new vehicle for intellectual development. This reform contributed to a liberal society that continued to sympathize with the workers; intellectuals published more on behalf of the working class. Rafael Altamira and others dedicated their time to creating canons for workers; however, their limitation was that the great majority of that working class could not read. Despite their small amount of success among the workers, their publications illustrated the intimate (and often confrontational) relationship that would develop between left-wing politics, the university, the intellectual, and the education of workers.

In order to educate the workers, Pablo Iglesias and his PSOE leadership created sites where members of the party could meet: *las Casas del Pueblo*. Beginning in 1905 these places of refuge for workers acted as a library and meetinghouse for the members of the Party. The initiative of the *Casas* gradually spread throughout the country and helped to foster class consciousness among the working class. Class conscious was seen by the ruling classes as uprising and had to be repressed. That repression culminated in the violent *Semana Trágica* (Tragic Week) of 1909, which pitted workers groups against the army in Barcelona. It inspired many intellectuals to slowly take a position on the left and enter the political sphere. Since the army had been discredited in 1898, the left *intelligentsia* sided more openly with the workers. However, at the same time, the failure of the proletariat against the institutions during the Tragic Week also discouraged many intellectuals from committing to the cause.

Although they might not have committed entirely, a boom of political commitment among the entire Spanish population to either one position or another also influenced intellectuals to avoid their supposed apolitical stance. For example, in October 1910, when libertarians officially created the anarcho-syndicalist *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (CNT) during a meeting held in Seville, intellectuals sympathized with but also doubted the political success of such an organization based on previous anarchist failures in Spain. In 1911, the newly-formed, loosely-organized syndicate met in Madrid to hold its first congress. This congress created an official organization of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain, based on the notion of general strikes. From then on, Spanish intellectuals, the majority with bourgeois upbringings, were faced with three different social forces that



did not necessarily reflect their views: “[...] el ejército, la organización sindical del proletariado y la radicalización del regionalismo” (Bécarud and López Campillo 7). The outbreak of the First World War complicated that tension further; intellectuals committed to certain aspects of political thought that reflected their own ideals.

The First World War allowed intellectuals to criticize the monarchy because of Alfonso XIII’s support of the Germans (Bécarud and López Campillo 11). By the same token, some intellectuals (such as Ortega, Maeztu, or Luis Araquistáin) who had lived or studied in Germany supported the Allies, which in the mind of other Spanish intellectuals discredited them as part of the *intelligentsia* (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 145-147). This was only the beginning of an “[...] enfrentamiento muy hondo entre quienes anhelaban un cambio en el sentido más *européico* de la expresión (inglés o mayoritariamente francés) y los que suspiraron por la disciplina y el orden prusianos” (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 146). These international challenges led to the *novecentismo* group. These authors rejected the nineteenth century as backward, as Maeztu had at the turn of the century. José Ortega y Gasset even claimed that the previous century was “essentially anti-intellectual” (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 177). By defining the nineteenth century as anti-intellectual, the *novecentistas* could promote Spain as on the same level intellectually and economically as those who were fighting in the war.

Although from this group of Spanish intellectuals only Juan Ramón Jiménez had a claim to fame, as Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez and Milagros Rodríguez Cáceres have shown, the *novecentistas* pushed Spanish poetry toward free verse, a poetry that they claimed as pure or aesthetically dominant. This question of purity (a problematic term as

Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres have pointed out) in fact demonstrates the aesthetic commitment that authors of the post-First World War Spain pursued while they implied rejection of political influences on their work. In fact, Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres say that in Spain, “La nueva poesía pura sigue la vereda abierta, pero se separa radicalmente de sus ilustres predecesores por eliminar los resabios sentimentales y sustituirlos por una más rigurosa intelectualización del poema” (17). This *intellectualization* of poetry (to use Ortega y Gasset’s terms), coincided with the birth of the *avant-garde*, where authors either tried to tear down the ideological barriers of content (where the form still reflected the autonomy and control of the aesthetic) or to destroy the form while keeping the content alive. In the meantime, Juan Ramón and his followers created a lyric that was “más filosófica y complicada de lo que cabría esperar de su aspiración a la pureza” (Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres 18). In other words, for many, reason, practice, aesthetics, and politics got in the way of each other. Midst the bombs of war, literature became committed either to experimentation or to conservatism; *avant-garde* authors looked for answers in an intellectual regeneration represented by the Allies while conservatives wrote against the scare of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917...

#### THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE 1917-1931

Amidst the growing explosion of *avant-garde* literary creation and that of the October revolution in Russia in 1917, Lenin formed his own Third International (also known as the Communist International or the Comintern). This organization openly invited left-wing workers’ groups and parties to join, but the underlying goal was that of

provoking an international revolution of the proletariat with a Russian dictator at its head. The organization pushed for the unification of the proletariat of all the countries of the world. The Comintern strove for that civil war of the proletariat, instead of the reformation socialism that had previously divided the Second International. Artists, writers, and poets became increasingly caught in a demand to choose between the proletariat and a more comfortable bourgeois lifestyle.

The official policy of the Comintern in the first years after the revolution became known as the “united front from below” or “socialism in every country.” This strategy instructed workers to accuse their bourgeois companions and bosses of being traitors. Intellectuals who came from the bourgeoisie but felt sympathy toward Lenin’s revolution turned more toward reform and moved away from Lenin’s idea of total war. Slightly before Lenin’s death, Stalin pushed for a change to a “united front from above” strategy. The change in policy promoted contact among the party leaders and intellectuals instead of Communist uprisings from below. By so doing, the Comintern could stray slightly from the “socialism in every country” and “death to the bourgeoisie” policies in order to consolidate power and allies after the brutal civil war in Russia and in the aftermath of the First World War (Payne 1-82). The Machiavellian changes would cause difficulties for intellectuals who supported revolution by the proletariat, difficulties that, as I will point out later, would culminate later in 1939.

With the death of Lenin in January, 1924, Stalin maneuvered his way to the top by ousting Leon Trotsky, Lenin’s right hand. Under Stalin, the Comintern classified all other parties or ideologies besides the “united front from above” as anti-USSR and anti-

communist. Instead of focusing their attack specifically on the bourgeoisie, they began to work on destroying other left wing parties (Socialists, anarchists, and Social-Democrats). In other words, Stalin began to focus on building his own country and ridding himself of his left-wing political enemies, which did not necessarily reflect Lenin's international civil war against the bourgeoisie. Leon Trotsky recognized that Stalin was straying from Lenin's goal and pointed out the dangers of a divided left—one that would rather have a right wing party in power instead of another left wing party.

The result of that policy was seen in Germany. Hitler rode the wings of a right-wing party amid the lack of left-wing solidarity and rose to power in 1933. Hitler's win, among other things, was a result of Stalin's policy towards reformist Marxists (the Socialists). The German Social-democratic union, the strongest in Europe, gave way to the strongest fascist regime in a matter of only a few years. Trotsky correctly predicted Hitler's rise. He had warned of the dangers of the new Comintern policy toward the Socialists as early as 1931. Although this policy proved to be disastrous for Stalin, as history has shown, Stalin would recover, and attract intellectuals once again.

#### SPAIN 1917-1931

As in Russia, the year 1917 in Spain also ended in a revolution of sorts, a general strike that would discredit the Socialist party and usher in a new period of violence. Pablo Iglesias did not approve of the strike, but Francisco Largo Caballero and Daniel

Anguiano went over his head (Brenan 228).<sup>3</sup> The anarchists did not help as the Socialists had hoped. Within the national borders of Spain, the influences- of the Bolshevik Revolution had a conflicting effect on the left. The revolution had shown the masses in Spain that an organized effort could oust a regime. The Russian successes gave more life to Spanish anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism yet the revolution in Spain failed.

After the Russian Revolution, the Allies won the World war, and literature published in favor of the Allies among Spaniards won over the population. So, the traditional, decaying old world began to give way to the vanguard, in both politics and literature. The Allies had represented a bourgeois vanguard, while the Russians represented a proletarian vanguard. For example, in the magazine *España* (1915-1924), the three directors (first Ortega y Gasset, second Luis Araquistáin, and third Manuel Azaña) gave intellectuals the possibility of collaborating with the proletariat which, for the majority of the intelligentsia, “era de buena nota” (Bécarud and López Campillo 20). That is, if a writer contributed to *España*, he was considered on the cutting edge of political commitment. The magazine’s motto “seminario de vida nacional,” suggested that Spanish political life was represented by cutting-edge political thinkers (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 147).

It is during this post-First World War time period that the various –ismos of the *vanguardia* began to surface in Spain. During the aftermath of the Great War in Europe, two Spanish writers found themselves in the limelight and would act as liaisons between the intellectuals of 1914 and the later *avant-garde*. Rafael Cansinos-Asséns and Ramón

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<sup>3</sup> Largo Caballero later became known as the “Spanish Lenin” because of his revolutionary rhetoric while Daniel Anguiano became one of the leaders in the PCE.

Gómez de la Serna embodied the transition from that decaying, disciplined world of the German forces to the experimental rupture from forms of the overcoming Allies. The influence of Cansinos-Asséns and Gómez de la Serna and a turn toward a more socially committed literature that grew on a parallel with the *poesía pura* of Jiménez would push the next generation to either choose one or the other or combine the two. One of these movements that can be considered as an attempt to understand the two parallel commitments is the *Ultraísta* movement. Influenced by the Chilean, Vicente Huidobro, *ultraísmo* provided greater receptivity to experimental form but also authors' ability to perfect the traditional forms.

The generational shift in literature strove to bury the nineteenth century, which also had repercussions on the Spanish political sphere. Revolutionary extremism also endeavored to put an end to the nineteenth century. The anarchist organization *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (CNT) led by Andreu Nin and Joaquim Maurín was in the forefront of this cause. In 1919, the CNT organized another general strike in Barcelona, like the one in 1917. This strike showed many working-class Spaniards the great possibilities of general strikes, and many joined the CNT. Nevertheless, anarchism was not the only political entity that wanted to break free from the past.

In 1920, when Lenin convened a meeting of the Comintern, the CNT sent a group, the PSOE sent a group, and the recently established *Partido Comunista Español* (PCE) sent a group. Each of the three delegations at the Congress would then either have to accept the 21 points of the Comintern and get rid of reformists or risk expulsion. For the Spanish representatives in the Second Congress of the Comintern, this resulted in a

difficult task indeed, which would later manifest itself again during the next decade, making Spain a unique place where imposed international policies of the Comintern shifted in their scope. In Spain, bourgeois intellectuals would decide whether they would participate in the demands of the Comintern or not.

Although the PCE accepted the Comintern's 21 points, it was still very small, so the influence of the Communist Party as far as numbers were concerned was limited in Spain. Nin and Maurín united the CNT to the Third International without the consent of the other leaders of the CNT. However, in 1922, a CNT congress held in Zaragoza denied any relationship with the Comintern. The PSOE sent Fernando de los Ríos and Daniel Anguiano to Russia to see if the Party should join the Third International. When they returned to Spain, de los Ríos rejected the 21 points that Lenin had proposed for all those who wished to enter the International while Anguiano was for them. Iglesias supported de los Ríos and that support caused the party as a whole to reject affiliation with the International. Many of the members of the PSOE who were in favor of the Bolshevik revolution then went the other way and joined the PCE.

The Spanish situation at the beginning of the 1920s complicated the Spanish intellectuals' role in politics and society. The Spanish defeat in the "Disaster at Annual" during the war with Morocco in 1921 enhanced the intellectuals' disapproval of Spain's foreign policy, which reminded them of the not too distant fall of Cuba. Then General Miguel Primo de Rivera took over the government with support of the king in 1923, and heavily censored newspapers and literary production. This atmosphere for intellectual

creation produced criticism among both conservative and progressive intellectuals, and the criticisms grew stronger during the seven year military dictatorship.

The dictatorship's censorship fostered various texts that supported a change toward a Republic. Manuel Azaña was the founder of this *neorrepublicanismo*; he wrote two manifestos, "La dictadura en España" and "Apelación a la República." Both circulated as underground texts during the first two years of the Primo de Rivera regime (1923-1924) in order to stimulate the Spanish public toward a republican regime. The Spanish intellectuals' collaboration against the dictatorship then manifested itself in a "Carta al Dictador" "[...] firmada por 170 intelectuales (escritores, catedráticos, abogados, periodistas, médicos, ingenieros, etc.), destinada a desmentir las declaraciones del Dictador, quien afirmaba reiteradamente que toda España se adhería a su política, salvo los que estaban a favor de los viejos partidos políticos" (Bécarud and López Campillo 9). The authors that signed the *carta* contradicted the dictator's claims, and he responded with more intellectual repression.

Primo de Rivera's repression culminated in the closures of the Republican *Ateneo* and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. The dictator was pushed to enforce extreme censorship, a decision that would cause friction with the intellectuals. Because of his iron fist, the dictator found himself falling back on the Army and the landlords for support. As Gerald Brenan states, at least up to that point in Spain,

No government which has to depend on the Church, Army, and landlords can secure more than temporary support in Spain. No government which represents a purely material well-being at the cost of liberty can satisfy Spaniards. And in a country where half of the population sits in cafés and criticizes the Government no dictator can prosper for long. (84)



That criticism spread through the intellectuals, who leaned more and more to the left because of the repression by the right-wing dictator.

In fact, various young Spanish intellectuals of the late 1920s published some of their criticisms in *Post-Guerra*, directed by Rafael Giménez-Siles and José Antonio Balbontín. *Post-Guerra* attracted Joaquín Arderús (author of *Campesinos*) and César Muñoz Arconada (author of *Los pobres contra los ricos* and *Reparto de tierras*), whose texts incarnated political commitment that stemmed from the fight with the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and the hope to defeat oppressive class institutions (Elorza and Bizcarrondo 193-194). This commitment fostered more support for a Spanish Republic.

Yet at the same time, republicanism was not the same as during the First Republic of the 1870s. Because of the repression and censorship of Primo de Rivera, Republican politics shifted. A majority of intellectuals found themselves among the Republicans. For example, in his *El ocaso de un régimen*, Luis Araquistáin showed the changing relationship between republicanism and socialism during the course of the dictatorship: “Ya no es el socialismo el impregnado de republicanismo puro, sino el republicanismo es el que quiere impregnarse de socialismo” (Araquistáin in Bécarud and López Campillo 20). So, if approximately eighty percent of the intellectuals at the time of the declaration of the Republic identified with the Republicans (Brenan 231), a move toward socialism would be much easier.

Among cultural producers during Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship of the 1920s, “se produjo una honda simbiosis entre tradición y modernidad” (Pedraza Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres 256). For example, Alberti won the *Premio nacional de literatura* in

1925 using traditional verse, and nothing could be more traditional than the homage to Góngora in 1927. Some have even argued that “Esta generación de vanguardia practicó [...] la forma gloriosa del barroquismo: no ‘lo uno o lo otro,’ sino ‘lo uno y lo otro’” (Montesinos in Pedraza Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres 256). The ability of those who participated in the famous *Homenaje a Góngora* to commit aesthetically to a social synthesis between tradition and modernity transformed slowly into a commitment to aesthetics and politics during the 1930s Spanish Republic.

The “Generation of 27” arose out of the cries for the Republic, growing socialist tendencies, and the repression caused by the dictatorship. Through their congress in Seville dedicated to Góngora, Jorge Guillén, Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Dámaso Alonso, Manuel Altolaguirre, Luis Cernuda, Vicente Aleixandre, Gerardo Diego, Emilio Prados, and Pedro Salinas strove to break from their intellectual predecessors. Influenced by Juan Ramón Jiménez at the *Residencia de estudiantes* (Juan Ramón was their teacher; he educated them so that they could teach the rest of the population through social and political regeneration), the young poets benefitted from the policies of the *Liga de Educación Política Española* which forwarded the idea that intellectuals must act as politicians as well as teachers (García de la Concha 22, 54).

As both a political and teaching force, the intellectuals (with the *Generación del 27* in the forefront) distanced themselves from the dictatorship. That detachment grew wider with the economic crisis of 1929. The break of the capitalist system pushed various Spanish intellectuals toward not only an anti-dictatorial stance but also an anti-capitalist

stance. The international break of capitalism guided them toward more committed, liberal ideological stances, and more criticisms of the monarchy and the dictatorship.

In 1930, the political fight against the dictatorship through literature came to be called *literatura de avanzada* (Aznar Soler, *I congreso internacional de escritores para la defense de la cultura* (París 1935) 23). This literature took one step closer to a balance between the *vanguardia política* and the *vanguardia artística*, that is, between progressive active politics and progressive active aesthetics. Yet, at the same time, not all intellectuals supported that tie, a tie incarnated in the policies of the *Residencia de estudiantes* in Madrid. Those who opposed such a tie found themselves on the right (such as Ramiro Ledesma) and on the left (such as César Muñoz Arconada); they remained faithful to the separation between politics and literary creation (Suárez 40-41). Despite those that were against it, the transition toward a politically-committed literature unavoidably filtered into the intellectual sphere. The dictatorship contributed to this move, a move that fostered “[...] confusiones ideológicas y tensiones sociales” (Aznar, *I Congreso* 18) that intellectuals faced on the eve of the Republic.

In fact, the tensions that writers faced as either “advanced” or “decrepit” affected how they presented themselves in Spanish society. The novelist and essayist, José Díaz Fernández epitomized the challenges for how intellectuals positioned themselves. In his essay, *El nuevo romanticismo. Polémica de arte, política y literatura* he argued that to belong to a “true” avant-garde in Spain (an avant-garde of the 1930s), intellectuals had to continue to be on the forefront of creation, which meant that they also had to contribute to the forefront of political thought. In other words, aesthetic commitment was awaiting

some kind of discursive approval from the intellectuals to converge with political commitment.

Also in 1930, the *Ateneo de Madrid*, which acted as the Republican meeting place for political and intellectual debates, reopened (or better said, with Primo de Rivera's resignation, Dámaso Berenguer lifted censorship) and the 350 members from six years before (the 20th of February 1924) grew to almost 900 (Ruiz Salvador 50). The growth in membership of the *Ateneo* would unite intellectuals who were dissatisfied with the monarchy, a monarchy that had oppressed them through the military dictatorship. From that oppression, the bourgeois intellectuals' push for a Republic then culminated in the *Pacto de San Sebastian* in August of 1930, where republican groups (led by bourgeois intellectuals such as Manuel Azaña and others) prepared for a coup against the regime.

Two months after the pact, in November, 1930, the police killed two workers and injured forty others during a funeral. The middle-class intellectuals solidified their empathetic relationship with the workers and showed that the dictatorship and the monarchy only led to more violence and oppression. An example of the oppression against intellectuals reappeared, as Berenguer reclosed the *Ateneo* for a period of three months from December to February, 1931. However, despite the censorship against the intellectuals, the relationship between intellectual and *pueblo* still remained one of sympathy. As Aznar Soler points out, "La vocación popular del escritor *de avanzada*, la tendencia populista de un arte *hacia* el pueblo se iba a convertir en la orientación clave de la literatura española de los años treinta" (*I Congreso* 31, author's emphasis). This

tendency, then, also demonstrated a populist political commitment among the majority of intellectuals in Spain would then shape their role to 1939 and beyond.

Hence, writers' tense relationships with workers affected the political commitment that they would give. In fact, those authors who did commit to the Republic and the masses many times idealized that reality. Manuel Aznar Soler writes that:

El compromiso del escritor español con ese pueblo ascendente estaba escrito con un amargo sabor de optimismo histórico. La realidad supuso la consumación de ese compromiso de la inteligencia española con la premura y violencia de un pueblo en armas y en una circunstancia histórica de guerra civil. (*I Congreso* 32)

Manuel Azaña, Antonio Machado, José Ortega y Gasset, Miguel de Unamuno, Rafael Alberti, María Teresa León, Federico García Lorca, and other intellectuals (young and old) optimistically advocated for that idealized Republic. In fact, even Ortega y Gasset and Machado were two of the *intelligentsia* who fostered a student strike in the final months of 1930 in order to show King Alfonso XIII that his time in power was over. Yet, the intellectuals' ideals of political commitment would soon become more tense than ever.

## THE SECOND SPANISH REPUBLIC 1931-1939

When Plato wrote his *Republic* more than two millennia ago in 380 B.C., his ideal land would be governed by an “enlightened group” of intellectually stimulated people who would make decisions for the whole. More than two thousand four hundred years later, in 1931, the Spanish Republic, also known as the “Republic of Intellectuals,” became a reality in the Iberian Peninsula, promising some of the same principles that

Plato had written about. The proclamation of the Republic in Spain on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1931, however, was chaotic from the beginning; its goals were far from clear.

Aside from varying political platforms, the Spanish Republic openly converted intellectuals into politicians and politicians into intellectuals, a conversion that contributed to the tensions of the 1930s. The proclamation of the Republic gave artists and writers the possibility of not having to repress the political ideology that they held dear, but that stance questioned how far they would commit to politics in their works. The socio-historical position of the Spanish Republic allowed for an aesthetic-political balance to grow if the authors were willing to commit to that balance, which many of them were not willing to do.

The proclamation of the Spanish Republic on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1931 gave Spanish intellectuals an opportunity to participate in politics openly as leaders who made decisions, especially in the *Cortes*, where their work was not only dedicated *hacia el pueblo* but also *con el pueblo*. The stressful shift from the monarchy and the dictatorship to the Republic fostered a cultural modification, what José Carlos Mainer calls “el fin de la cultura burguesa” (*Años de víspera* 62). Whether the 1930s represented an end to bourgeois culture or not, these years made it difficult for intellectuals to avoid any commitment to politics: “Eran ya muchos los que pensaban que, a fin de cuentas, la literatura importaba menos que la definición política. Y la vida cultural parecía darles razón” (Mainer, *Años* 63).

The victory of the Republic gave way to *Cortes Constituyentes* that were dominated by Left-wing Republicans (150 seats), right-wing Republicans (110 seats,

which included 90 seats filled by Lerroux's Radicals), and Socialists (115 seats), groups that included the majority of the intellectual class (Brenan 232). The elected, Republican-dominated *Cortes* held the country together by a thread between two oppositions. The first represented the Catholic Church, the Army, and the *terratenientes*, while the second represented the working classes led by the anarcho-syndicalists, the anarchists, and left-wing socialists. The majority of the intellectuals positioned themselves in the middle of the ideological battle between the left and the right (since eighty percent sympathized with the republicans). Despite the fact that the electoral policy of the *Cortes* gave the most number of seats to the winning coalition, tensions for intellectuals grew because this policy urged parties to form leagues with other political groups who did not share their views.

So, the intellectuals' role in the development of the Republic, not only as the theoreticians but also as the actual law-makers fell on the shoulders of men with differing ideological and generational stances, stances that grew more polarized during the years of the Republic. Two senior intellectuals for example, Ramón Pérez de Ayala and Miguel de Unamuno were elected to that first *Cortes* in 1931, yet quickly became disillusioned by that commitment. Other younger intellectuals such as César Muñoz Arconada, José Gaos, Pla y Beltrán, Joaquín Arderius, José Bullejos, Ramón Sender, Juan Gil-Albert, León Felipe, Emilio Prados, Arturo Serrano Plaja, and Luis Cernuda adopted revolutionary ideas that implied support for the Republic, whereas José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, Manuel Machado, and others headed to the right, which slowly translated into opposition to the Republic.

In the beginning both left-wing and right-wing Spanish *intelligentsia* provided much of the groundwork for the new Republic by focusing their efforts on democratic equality through institutional cooperation. The new “Republic of Intellectuals” or “the Republic of Professors” (Bécarud and López Campillo 33) was led by Manuel Azaña, a republican, anticlerical intellectual during the first two years (the *bienio azañista*, 1931-1933). However, intellectuals’ direct involvement in the law-making process waned as both right-wing radical parties and left-wing extremist parties began to attend to their own agendas instead of the agendas of the coalitions that put them in power (Bécarud and López Campillo 35).

The union between some intellectuals and the Republican government undoubtedly became sour. Two of the most prominent and respected writers of the time who had been part of the first parliament elected during the Republic, Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset quickly began to criticize Azaña’s government. Unamuno voiced his dissent as early as October of 1931 when he spoke to open the academic year in Salamanca. Ortega y Gasset gave up his parliamentary position in 1932 and claimed to reconsider his position about the Republic. These oppositions among the older intellectuals against the governing body of the Republic, however, were not shared by all of them (Mainer, *Edad de Plata* 277-340).

The oppositions found among the intellectuals either for or against the Republic were strengthened by party commitment both on a national level and on an international level, as well. Nevertheless, that commitment was not always favorable for members of the same party. For example, the republican *Ateneo* turned on Azaña because of his



failure to respond quickly to their suggestions on how to govern the country. Then the *Ateneo* headed farther to the left. It became the meeting-place where committed communists, such as Rafael Alberti, María Teresa León, and César Muñoz Arconada, met to discuss the promises of revolution proportioned by the Spanish Republic.

Two of the major challenges that the government faced during the first two years of the Republic were the questions of universal education and agrarian reform. As for education, the government established *las misiones pedagógicas*, a program designed to take education to rural areas. Also beginning in 1932, a traveling group known as *La Barraca* led by Federico García Lorca, performed various theatrical works throughout the country. Stemming from the influence of writers, poets, and thinkers in the government, the goal of mandatory schooling for children also progressed through these programs. Yet secularization of the education system caused rifts among Catholics and non-Catholics.

As for the agrarian reform, the differences between Republicans and Socialists in the government made it so that the reform did little. Article 26 of the new constitution expropriated many lands that the Catholic Church owned in order to give them to working-class peasants. This article pushed the Catholic Church toward an anti-republican stance. In fact, both laws contributed to a failed *golpe de estado* in 1932 when Sanjurjo rose up against the provisional government. Even though he did not have enough backing and the CNT defeated it, the *coup* showed the discontent of the armed forces because of the legislation. On the other hand, the working class was disenchanted with the slowness of the reforms, which created a more politicized atmosphere.

Outside of the Republic, other areas in Europe strove to combine intellectual tradition with governmental control in order to tie politics and aesthetics. For example, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR led by Stalin replaced the Association of Proletariat Writers (RAPP) with its International Union of Revolutionary Writers in 1932. The Central Committee's resolution, written by Stalin, was titled "About the Reorganization of Literary and Artistic Organizations" (Aznar Soler, *I Congreso* 15). The new organization intended to counteract the growth of fascism in Europe (Stalin had finally opened his eyes to the realities of his previous policy), specifically the dangers of growing fascism in the German state. It also opposed vanguard art as decadent.

Hence, the Comintern set up the World Congress against Imperialist War. This congress, held in Amsterdam in 1932, united intellectuals who, like Henri Barbusse, were worried about the possibilities of counterrevolution against their beloved idol the USSR. Barbusse and Romain Rolland directed the conference that was set up by Willi Münzenberg behind the scenes (Aznar Soler, *I congreso* 13-18). Though the congress had been held to unite intellectuals against war, the underlying issue was that of rejecting the counterrevolutionary and imperial measures that Italian Fascists employed in Italy and Ethiopia (Abyssinia) and German Nazis in Germany. In other words, the congress became another stepping stone toward an "antifascist" front among left intellectuals and party control of aesthetics. The organization that was formed as a result of the Congress in Amsterdam was called the World Committee for the Fight against War and Fascism, or the Amsterdam-Pleyel Movement. At the congress the intellectuals talked of

*rassemblement* against the imperialist/fascist modes of obtaining world power in order to counteract propaganda coming from Italy and Germany.

Midst these international tensions, to make matters more tense in the young Spanish Republic, anarchist strikes rose. On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1933, an anarchist revolt led by *Seisdedos* in Casas Viejas (Cádiz) was put down and the leaders of the movement were killed by government soldiers (Mintz 201-225). This act led to more opposition toward the government. According to Brenan, the government would never recover from their repression of the strike in Casas Viejas (248). Since the government was formed by intellectuals, the people began to reconsider supporting them in future elections.

Moreover, some intellectuals who had criticized the government felt isolated by a Republic that had censored them. They felt that the repression and censorship of the government was even greater during the first two years of the Republic than during the Primo de Rivera regime (Brenan 259). The censorship caused divisions among the intellectuals in the *Cortes*, and the political alliance that they represented began to disintegrate. The results of the lack of cohesion among the progressive sectors of the political left (that lack was not restricted to dissent about the Soviet Union) gave way to the *bienio negro* a period of conservative policies that began in 1933. The elections transferred power to the radical monarchist president, José María Gil Robles. The change in controlling powers was partly due to the fact that the Socialists refused to form a united front with the Republicans because of differences of opinion about the educational and agrarian reforms. On top of everything, the anarchists abstained from the vote, which ushered in the right-wing coalition.

Coinciding with Hitler's rise in Germany, the right-wing coalition's win turned all of Europe's eyes to Spain. The fight between fascism or Communism would play out there. The new governing coalition assembled around a new party known as *Acción Popular*, founded by Ángel Herrera. Because of its Catholic base, the party gave new life to conservative voters, and various organizations combined to form a greater party called *Confederación Española de Derechos Autónomos* (CEDA). This new party encouraged voters to support Herrera's choice for President: Gil Robles. After the victory of the CEDA during the elections of 1933, the new government began its tenure by either changing or repealing most of the legislation that had been passed during the first two years of the Republic. These actions were easy for a government where 110 seats belonged to the CEDA and the Radicals, a number that had increased from the previous election. The conservative changes to the previous legislature contributed to deeper political polarization either on the right or the left during what became known as the *bienio negro*. It also led to an almost complete lack of center politics in Spain, as had similarly occurred in Germany and Russia. For example, on the left, the Socialists were pushed more and more toward revolutionary action. Largo Caballero contributed to the revolutionary fervor by acting out his new role as the "Spanish Lenin" in the PSOE. Nonetheless, not all of the members of the PSOE shared his vigor. The party's ranks separated into three groups: Largo Caballero's revolutionaries, Prieto's moderates, and Besteiro's small number of conservatives. These groups also differentiated the intellectuals who supported socialism.

Well established publications of left-wing intellectuals' stances also grew more

politicized during the *bienio negro*. Many of the contributors to *España*, *Heraldo de Madrid*, *El Sol*, and *El Socialista*, had been elected to the first *Cortes* in 1931, and their political stance was reflected among the pages of each publication already. Because of the change toward conservatism in 1933, these magazines criticized the new government in power. Other new publications were born with the same political-aesthetic zeal such as *Gaceta Literaria*, *Nueva España*, *Caballo verde para la poesía*, and *Octubre*.

For example, in the summer of 1933, Alberti and León put out their first issue of *Octubre*, a magazine of the Spanish Communist *intelligentsia* that incited many progressives toward antifascist commitment, a commitment that also implied a commitment to Stalinist communism (Aznar Soler, volume 2, 51; Elorza and Bizcarrondo 193). Through the articles of *Octubre*, the goal was to give voice to popular culture (Bécarud and López Campillo 97). A Spanish group of intellectuals that would include the working class instead of creating art *hacia* the workers now had a publication.

Despite various left-wing committed publications, part of the challenge for intellectuals was how to infiltrate the working class. One way that the intellectuals could do so was to attack traditional methods of knowledge and literary creation as being archaic. The debate that had been growing since the beginning of the Republic among intellectuals was that of “pure” intellectuals, who as Bécarud and López Campillo explain, “[...] quisieran permanecer con la función crítica y creativa exclusivamente [en la sociedad][...]” (137) and their opponents, who blamed traditionalists for the lack of progress. This debate was exemplified in Neruda’s *Caballo verde para la poesía*, a literary magazine born in 1934 that disagreed with Juan Ramón Jiménez and others who

claimed that poetry was only poetry if it were “pure.” Purity for the new generation did not reflect the reality of the Spanish situation nor did it include the workers, nor was it completely and solely pure in its dedication to art anyway. These skirmishes fostered breaks among intellectuals in Spain and confirmed one of the misfortunes of the Republic, the lack of cohesion between intellectuals and government, what Aldo Garosci calls the “tragedy of Spanish intellectuality” (Garosci 13).

Alberti and León, however, looked for cohesion between intellectual production and politics despite the ideological and aesthetic battles. They attended the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 in Moscow. Although they were the only Spanish delegates at the congress, they met with others who were also concerned about the general notion of political and aesthetic compatibility. At that First Congress, Stalin was credited with creating a policy towards the intellectuals. Control of the intellectuals defined the very relationship that intellectuals were questioning throughout the entire world: what is my role compared to, or related with the masses? Stalin’s official answer came during the sessions of the congress: socialist realism, that is, Party-approved literature only. Although Terry Eagleton refers to socialist realism as, “[...] one of the most devastating assaults on artistic culture ever witnessed in modern history [...]” (*Marxism and Literary Criticism* 38), communist commitment plus aesthetic achievement does not necessarily equal socialist realism.

Mikhail Parkhomenko and Alexander Myasnikov have called socialist realism, “[...] the struggle for the practical achievement of communist ideals [...] devotion to Party and people” (17). Socialist realism, besides the political commitment that it implies, also

carries with it an aesthetic commitment that caused discord among authors and intellectuals of the 1930s. The aesthetic commitment returned to a controlled “realist” mode of interpreting the world, in response to the avant-garde –isms of the 1910s and 1920s. That realism however was far from realist. Régine Robin points out that “explanation[s] blur[red] the distinctions between the author’s point of view, his political and social position, and the literary text. From the very outset, then, confusions were manifold [...] the notion of socialist realism was a confused one” (39). Because of the confusion, the ambiguity that socialist realism supplied provided many escapes for writers. In fact, Robin calls socialist realism “an impossible aesthetic” and states: “On the whole, the set of statements concerning socialist realism establishes a space of discursive data that is at once quite precise and very vague, even contradictory” (63) and then she lists off all of the possibilities that socialist realism contains:

The new realism is to be rooted in folklore [...] it will be forged in the party spirit and/or in the partisan spirit, developing a class viewpoint. The new realism will be in the first place a great realism (characterized by totalizations, typical situations, theatrical or novelistic plots representing typical characters in their complexity and contradictions). It is not a photograph of reality, not a slice of life, not a hypertrophic fragment cut off from the whole; socialist realism is to account in Balzacian fashion for the dynamics of social life. In this sense it will not be schematic. Far removed from the slogans of agitprop, it will not try to embellish reality. At the same time the new realism will be socialist. It will include heroic elements of revolutionary romanticism in its fictions; it will privilege the new over the old; it will present historical development in the direction of history to the detriment of static empiricism; it will take pains to educate the masses for socialism, to fulfill its social function of awaking and mobilizing the masses. Translating dialectical materialism into the language of art, the new realism will privilege content over form [...] it will be concerned with making itself accessible to a newly literate public [...] it cannot be imposed by administrative or political fiat [...] it must involve each individual writer. (63)

From the various and vast elements of the definition of socialist realism that Robin provides, the purpose of the movement in Russia and beyond was twofold: subsume any kind of denunciatory writing and force writers to produce what the Party would publish to avoid dissent. As for authors who were not Russian, the pressure to publish exactly what the Party decreed was not a matter necessarily of life or death, literarily and literally. Hence, socialist realism became an undesirable aesthetic, especially for authors that were not Russian. In Robin's excellent analysis of socialist realism, there are only various mentions of French and British authors, since her focus was the aesthetic among the Russians who were trying to produce it according to a confused and undefined set of rules. So if socialist realism was undefined, which I believe was the purpose of Stalin's plan in order to attract sympathizers, it would be very difficult to succumb to its principles entirely, except under the watchful eye of the Russian censors.

The aesthetic of socialist realism depicted the proletariat as heroes because of their sacrifices for the cause of an ideal form of communism, which from the standpoint of the leaders, was Stalinist communism. The aesthetic was designed for a proletariat audience as well, designed to serve the Communist party instead of any other socio-political or aesthetic commitment. The aesthetic overstressed and inflated the positives of the workers, which turned it into more anti-realist and more propagandistic than anything else. This here is the dilemma for many western left-wing artists; as supporters of socialism, they looked to socialist realism as an inspiration, yet they were not convinced that their whole-hearted dedication to that ideologically controlling rhetoric would pay off. In other words, the aesthetic tried to control any kind of criticism toward the regime.



Through the use of certain principles of socialist realism, authors, especially poets, became more accessible to a wider audience, which helped them to gain a niche that they had lacked in society in general. By the same token, if a writer was Communist, he/she was not necessarily a socialist realist even if his political enemies deemed him/her as such.

In Russia, Maxim Gorky and A. Zhdanov forwarded the new socialist-realist methods of controlling the intellectuals amid calls for that socialist-realist literature. From his exile in Germany, Trotsky foresaw the dangers of that practically undefined aesthetic, rejected the new policy as contradictory, and denied the utility of any kind of union between literary creation and the Party (he says nothing of the utility of combining literature with politics generally speaking, however). Other intellectuals such as Ilha Ehrenburg spoke of the ability of an intellectual to create, but Karl Radek said that individualism must come only after the revolution's victory. The artist should be at the service of the Party.

As late as the 1970s, the backers of socialist realism claimed that the movement “affords the writers every opportunity of exercising creative freedom and initiative with regard to content and form of displaying individual talents [...]” (Parkhomenko and Myasnikov 20). While typical of the doublespeak from the Stalin era, this statement represents the ways in which the Party expropriated and controlled creativity. In fact, the farce grows and subsumes any kind of international left-wing writings into the movement: “the existence of one creative method common to all national literatures and all Soviet writers and artists, does not exclude the development of specific national

styles” (19-20). Despite the skepticism of the movement that the preceding statements imply, the incorporation of some of the principles of socialist realism in literature, such as the policies of a writer as “an engineer of human souls” or the literature as the beginning of the “making of a new man,” strengthened a wide variety of works and also made the art more accessible for a larger audience especially in Spain and Latin America.

In Spain, the tension between the authors’ creative independence and their attraction to a political commitment or declaration grew deeper during the 1930s as the advent of socialist realism with the revolution of 1934, often called the miners’ revolution or the Asturias Rebellion. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1934, the Gil Robles government resigned and President Alcalá Zamora asked Lerroux to form a new government by including three *cedistas*. This action by the President of the Republic contributed to a general strike less than a week later. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, the UGT instigated the strike, a strike that had three main epicenters: Madrid, Barcelona, and the mines in Asturias. In Madrid the strike did not have sufficient cohesion to succeed and was put down easily. In Barcelona, the divisions among the leaders of the left in Catalonia led to the quick demise of the strike. In Asturias, however, the fighting lasted until the 17th because in this region of the country, the only coalition between the UGT and the CNT had taken place among the miners (Brenan 284-285). Conservatives who feared a Russian-like revolution were relieved that the rebellion had not been successful, while liberals grew angry at the government for its “brutal” repression of the miners.

In 1935, the ambiguous socialist realism policy began to gain steam, yet intellectuals could remain with one foot in the Party and one foot outside it, especially in

Spain. Through the First Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in France, the Writers' Association attracted more and more international intellectuals to the antifascist cause. René Crevel headed to Spain in order to recruit a Spanish Delegation. The Spaniards who went to that congress were Julio Alvarez del Vayo, Arturo Serrano Plaja and Andrés Carranque de Ríos. Pablo Neruda and Raul González Tuñón who were living in Madrid at the time also went to the congress, held in Paris. André Gide and André Malraux gave the most influential speeches at the First Congress, and gave an honorary seat on their committee (Bureau) to the dying Ramón María del Valle-Inclán. Yet hesitancy reigned for many intellectuals. Commitment to antifascism might tie them to socialist realism and hamper their credibility to criticize the regime if things went sour.

The Comintern's representative during the Spanish Republic, Palmiro Togliatti complicated political-aesthetic tensions for intellectuals through a policy that defined Spain as "a democratic republic of a new type."<sup>4</sup> Togliatti, the representative of the Communist International in Spain beginning in 1934, used this heavily loaded terminology to take advantage of the ideological, political and aesthetic confrontations and confusions that the Republic fostered. For Togliatti, his definition meant a Republic that was preparing the Spanish soil for social revolution. But, he knew that others would interpret his motto as a definition of the place where finally reason, practice, politics, and aesthetics could unite harmoniously. He could slyly attract others who had different political views to at least sympathy with the Communists, people who claimed to uphold the values of a democratically elected government.

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<sup>4</sup> Togliatti represented the Comintern in the Spanish Republic from 1934-1939.

The “democratic republic of a new type” policy ultimately had a two-fold mission. First, it wanted to attract both western intellectuals and western political (foreign) policies to support the legitimate, democratically elected, Spanish Republic by defending it as the ultimate beacon of democracy in Europe among so many unjust monarchies. In the wake of the fall of the largest socialist party in Germany, all eyes turned to Spain. Second, the “new type” rhetoric in reality meant a place where the roots of communist revolution were planted, that would later lead to a communist state similar to the Soviet Union. Although supported early on by the Communist Party, the Communist International’s policy actually did more damage than good for the Communist Party’s goals in Spain.<sup>5</sup> Intellectuals and politicians who supported the Spanish Republic could support both bourgeois idealism and communist freedom at the same time. At the same time these authors could commit to certain ideological premises and continue with their own literary independence simultaneously.

The Comintern’s change in policy occurred shortly after the Asturias Rebellion’s failure (1935). The Spanish Republic would from then on be known as a “democratic republic of a new type” in order to win the elections of 1936.<sup>6</sup> The policy went hand-in-hand with the Popular Front declaration, wherein the Communist Party should strive to form coalitions with bourgeois parties to win elections. Because of that rhetoric,

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<sup>5</sup> Established in 1919, the Communist International, also known as the Comintern or the Third International (the First International had disappeared after a division between Marxists and anarchists in 1872 and the Second ended in 1916 after a rift between Leninists and Reformist socialists as already mentioned) was an association that consisted of various left-wing organizations (Communist Parties, Socialist Parties, Labor Parties, and Workers Parties). Although Lenin set up the Third Communist International to attract other left-wing parties to the Communist Party, often the Comintern’s policies did not contribute to the goals of the CP. Because of that dilemma, Stalin disbanded the Comintern in 1943.

<sup>6</sup> This is the first time that “democratic republic of a new type” was used in Communist Rhetoric. It would later be applied to the Eastern block countries after the Second World War.

commitment to the survival of the Spanish Republic shifted toward support of the Communist Party not only because it was the most organized party in Spain, but also because it appeared to be the most democratic. Many intellectuals latched on to the idea, despite their political stances, in order to preserve the Republic.

The Popular Front won the elections of 1936 by a narrow margin.<sup>7</sup> Because of the Republic's reward system for the best coalition, the Popular Front ended up with double the seats than its counterpart to the right maintained in spite of winning only a small majority of popular votes. However, the Popular Front united only to win the elections. No real union existed among the various factions of the left except for the desire to win the elections and their hatred of the right during the previous two years. One of the first things that the government set out to do after the elections was to get rid of Alcalá Zamora as President. The left-wing *Cortes* elected Azaña, while the Right abstained. The road to civil war became more and more obvious and blatant through the actions of the right.

Yet the left-wing Popular Front attracted many Spanish intellectuals; they committed to the doctrine of antifascism, a doctrine which Stalin used to denounce any of his enemies, not only fascists. New organizations arose based on the fight against fascism. For example, in May, 1936, André Malraux, Jean-Richard Bloch, and Jean Cassou visited the *Ateneo* to insist on the creation of an Antifascist Writers' Association in Spain, and to incite Spanish intellectuals to support the Soviet Union and that

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<sup>7</sup> Brenan shows that "[...] the Right [...] gained 3,997,000 votes, the Popular Front 4,700,000, the Centre 449,000 [...], the Basque Nationalists 130,000" (298).

communist regime's "progress" (Bécarud and López Campillo 25). Nevertheless, "progress" would also be the last straw for the conservatives. As part of the terms of the Popular Front, the coalition gave the majority of the seats in parliament to the Left Republicans, even though they formed only a small part of the coalition (Payne 80). The small Republican group was powerless against the possibility of a military insurrection.

With the uprising of the generals, in July, 1936, the intellectuals' role intensified. In August, the rebelling armies executed Federico García Lorca, who subsequently became the symbolic incarnation of the Spanish Republic and antifascist sentiment. However, injustices against intellectuals were not limited to the insurgents' side. The uncontrolled masses that had taken arms to fight against the rebels, assassinated right-wing leaders such as José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, and Ramiro de Maetzu in response to the massacres in Badajoz.

The political demarcation of left-wing intellectuals rode on the fact that only two countries in the entire world helped the Republic: the Soviet Union and Mexico. The Soviet Union helped the Republic despite the Non-intervention pact.<sup>8</sup> The Russian help began to shift an already liberal, socialist-leaning republic toward communism that the USSR promoted. The USSR's support of the Republic invited many Spaniards and foreigners living in Spain to consider the Communist Party. The party began to grow especially during October 1936 when France and Britain proclaimed the Non-Intervention pact yet the Soviet Union still sent support to the isolated Republic.

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<sup>8</sup> The Non-Intervention pact was designed by France and Great Britain so that no country would interfere with the fight in Spain. This farse only put off the Second World War for another couple of years: Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin sent representatives to the committee, but also sent military assistance to Spain. Hitler and Mussolini supported the insurgents while Stalin helped the Republic.

For some authors, political commitment to the Republic slowly changed into commitment to the Communist Party. For intellectuals, support for the Republic after the coup incited further tensions between commitment and literary independence, because Communists began to eliminate their enemies in order to consolidate their power. Their lives were at stake. Many openly committed or sympathizing authors had been martyred either by one side or the other. The atmosphere of “extreme dehumanizing and demonizing of the enemy by both left and right” (Payne 117) not only involved mass murders on both sides during the first days of the war, but the intellectual productions of the war, which in turn spurred on the masses to commit more cruelties and deepened the polarization of Spanish society. Lack of support for the Communist Republic, masked by the façade of a democratic republic put any one in danger, especially the intellectuals.

As active political commitment to the Republic quickly shifted to active political commitment to the Communist Party on an international level, Communist authors from France such as Andre Gide and Henri Barbusse gave their pledge to help preserve the Republic despite the French government’s adherence to the Non-Intervention policy. The German Communist intellectual, Arthur Koestler, also supported the Spanish Republic.<sup>9</sup> At the end of 1936, after André Malraux’s (another Communist) recommendation, the Spanish *Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas* was founded. As an appendage to the larger International Writers’ Association for the Defense of Culture, this communist puppet organization was committed to defend the Republic, which became a synonym for

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<sup>9</sup> The list of foreign supporters of or sympathizers with the Spanish Republic is large. Among others not mentioned above are: Julien Benda, Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Langston Hughes, Pablo Neruda, Nicolás Guillén, César Vallejo, Jef Last, etc.

defense of culture. José Bergamín became president of the organization in August of 1936 and Rafael Alberti became its secretary. The main production of the Alliance was the weekly cultural magazine *El mono azul*.<sup>10</sup> The magazine demonstrated the antifascist unity of what was becoming the largest organized party of the left, the Communist Party, although as Aldo Garosci makes clear, “Es preciso guardarse, por tanto, de reducir a propaganda comunista la corriente que llevó a muchos, comunistas y no comunistas, hacia España” (Garosci 230).

The Communist Party gained steam and numbers because it slowly became the backer of the most organized army in the country, *El Ejército del Pueblo*. Because the USSR was the only backer that the Republic could count on in the entire world, Communism was seen as a defender of the legitimately elected government, and many began to join its ranks. This new popularity stemmed from deeming Spain as a “democratic republic of a new type” in 1935 and culminated in a Communist purge of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) and the Anarchists in Barcelona in May, 1937.

George Orwell, who joined the POUM, gives the best eyewitness account of the occurrences in Barcelona in his autobiographical work, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). The occurrences have been referred to as “the civil war within the civil war” where the factions of the Republic vied for power, and the strongest survived. In general, Orwell shows how the Communist Party consolidated its power, discredited the CNT and POUM by calling them “Trotskyist traitors” and “Francoist spies,” and began to systematically

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<sup>10</sup> Rafael Alberti was the director of *El Mono azul*.



murder their members. The founder of the POUM, Andreu Nin, was kidnapped and murdered. Other leaders were also either imprisoned or assassinated. The CNT grew weaker and appeared more extreme than ever as a result of the events in Barcelona as well. The Communists had taken over within a year of the outbreak of the Civil War.

Only a month after the Barcelona purges, many foreign authors would travel to Spain for the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture that would take place in Valencia, Madrid, and Barcelona during the summer of 1937. While there, the Comintern policy that described the Spanish Republic as a “democratic republic of a new type” was at its peak. Also, Communist consolidation was also at its highest point. So, commitment to the Republic and to the defense of culture was also defense of that democratic republic of a new type policy, a Comintern policy with endorsement from the Communist Party.

Now, despite the implications that the Second Congress was a Communist lure for intellectuals, the Comintern policy in fact allowed the Spaniards and visitors in Spain alike to maintain both their political commitment (which did not equal a commitment to Stalinist socialist realism) and their literary freedom. That is, Stalin’s socialist realism was put in check by the Comintern’s policy in Spain, and even intellectuals who remained in the Communist Party after the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov pact could maneuver between Stalinism and bourgeois creativity; they could maintain a political poetics that did not sacrifice one for the other.

At the conference the topics of the talks went hand in hand with the double-talk policy of a “democratic republic of a new type.” The ambiguous topics were the writer’s

role in society, dignity of thought, the individual, nation and culture, problems of Spanish culture, cultural inheritance, literary creation, strengthening of cultural ties, and help for Spanish Republican writers (Aznar Soler 148). The vagueness of the topics to be presented matched the vagueness of the Comintern project in Spain, and reinforced it.

The support of intellectuals from many areas of the world also fortified the policy's duration. During the conference various intellectuals participated in the sessions. Among the European authors were: Steven Spender, Ilha Ehrenberg, Jaime Cortesão, Julien Benda, Andersen Nexø, Anna Seghers, José Bergamín, and Rafael Alberti. Authors from the Americas included: Langston Hughes, John Dos Passos, César Vallejo, Pablo Rojas Paz, Cayetano Córdova Iturburu, Juan Marinello, José Mancisidor, Carlos Pellicer, Vicente Huidobro, Octavio Paz, Alejo Carpentier, Alberto Romero, Nicolás Guillén, and Pablo Neruda.<sup>11</sup> During the majority of their talks these authors alluded to the combination of socialist and democratic principles, the base of the “democratic republic of a new type” policy. Because these authors were present in Spain during the peak of the Comintern policy and adhered to protecting the Republic during the congress they could employ the very doublespeak that the Comintern promoted.

After the defeat of the Spanish Republic (Franco proclaimed victory in April, 1939), Stalin made a treaty with Hitler in August 1939 (the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact), and a great majority of intellectuals immediately left the Communist Party or stopped sympathizing with Stalin because of his Machiavellian decision-making. Neruda, Guillén, and Alberti were three who did not, for reasons to be explored further on. Historically

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<sup>11</sup> Other authors participated as well. Aznar Soler united the presentations during the conference and the speeches given during each of the sessions.

and politically speaking, 1939 was a year of contradictions and challenges. Intellectually speaking, politics and history enhanced the tensions of authors who committed to a political ideology. The fall of the Republic in Spain forced many intellectuals into exile in France, the USSR, and the Americas. Despite the fact that the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact between Stalin and Hitler disillusioned many committed or sympathetic communist intellectuals, a small minority of them remained committed Communists, three of whom are the topic of this study: Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, and Nicolás Guillén. These three men could maintain their adhesion to the Communist Party and still try to preserve their creative independence enhanced by the Comintern's policy in Spain; Spain was literally a different "democratic republic of a new type" and as such, intellectuals could retain their role as sympathetic toward the cause and avoid complete immersion into state-controlled socialist realism. They established equilibrium between their political stance and their poetic.

## THE POSSIBILITIES OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN POLITICS AND AESTHETICS AFTER 1939

Questions and concerns about how to reconcile political commitment and aesthetics did not end with the fall of the Second Spanish Republic in 1939. In fact, the debate has intensified for the past seventy years. The underlying challenge of aesthetics in general has been whether to commit to a social cause or not. I believe that equilibrium can exist in poetry, and that politics does not necessarily subsume aesthetics nor does aesthetics necessarily cancel out politics.

Various authors since 1939 have tried to support or justify the possibility of a political and aesthetic balance. In the following pages, I will present the developments of how critics have tried to sustain that equilibrium. First, I will look at Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy of commitment that stems from his *What is Literature?* (1943). Then, from there, I will look Guillermo de Torre's ideas about authorial autonomy and its influence on "social responsibility" and aesthetics. Then, I will mention John Mander's 1960 response to Sartre as he looks at the dual political and aesthetic commitment in the texts themselves. Sartre, de Torre, and Mander then influenced Jan Lechner's text *La poesía comprometida española del siglo XX*, where the author focuses on both the poems themselves and the author's life to understand commitment. To end, I will explore the ideas of a contemporary author, Terry Eagleton, who has explored the link between politics and aesthetics and determined that that link is indispensable, despite traditional criticism's opposition.

First of all, the political and aesthetic debate was heavily influenced by Jean Paul Sartre's *What is Literature?* in 1943. When Sartre wrote of the term *engagement*, he referred to an author's social commitment through his literature, or how the author used his literature to denounce or praise certain political platforms. Sartre looked to reconcile art (literature) with politics (in his case left-wing politics). He wrote in 1943, "[...] writers, though they vigorously protest to the contrary, all defend ideologies" (202). So, theoretically, Sartre's claim is that in all reality every author is committed to an ideology. By making such a bold statement, Sartre could justify the fact that aesthetic quality was not necessarily affected by political commitment if everyone was committed. He attacked

a more traditional bourgeois stance, a stance that claimed that political commitment degraded literature. At the same time, he supported a Marxist stance that exalted commitment to a worker's party, but he did not approve of succumbing completely to socialist realism. What would happen if a balance could be found between the bourgeois and the Marxist stances? Aesthetic and political commitment could be preserved at the same time. However, Sartre writes toward the end of *What is Literature?* that "If the two alternatives are really the bourgeoisie and the C.P. [Communist Party], then the choice is impossible" (259). Although choosing between the two positions might be impossible, that does not rule out choosing both at the same time.

The ultimate goal then would be to find balance between the two positions. Although for Sartre that goal might be attainable in art, he claimed that poetry was a medium that could not be committed; it would be impossible to find a balance between politics and aesthetics in poetry according to him. He stated that "Poets are men who refuse to *utilize* language" (Sartre 6, author's italics). So, by refusing to use language, he claimed that poetry could not possibly be committed to politics because it was completely dedicated to aesthetics. Therefore, commitment to anything besides aesthetics in poetry was impossible for Sartre.

Differing with Sartre, I believe that political or social *engagement* is accessible through poetry and that such commitment, filled with ambiguities, allows a balance to exist with aesthetics. In fact, Sartre's theory that in poetry "the ambiguity of the sign implies that one can penetrate it at will [...]" (6), points out that ambiguity only enhances poetry's ability to commit to other possibilities, including political possibilities. The fact

that poetry cannot exist without ambiguity (one of the most important theses of Terry Eagleton's *How to read a poem*) makes the commitment of a poem more acute because it can enhance the possibility of various perspectives and/or interpretations. Ambiguity then can also politicize poetry. Although Sartre's thesis on poetry misses the mark, I do agree with him when he states that "art loses nothing in engagement" (20), and that art should include poetry.

After Sartre, Guillermo de Torre looked to steer away from the use of the word "commitment," and replaced it with the word "responsibility" in order to palliate the political connotation that commitment implied. Building from Sartre's idea of *engagement*, de Torre also holds the opinion that the difference between commitment and non-commitment is in reality whether or not authors "quieren ser responsables" (de Torre 101-115). Therefore, de Torre claims that if an author wanted to be committed he would be, and vice versa. By focusing on "responsibility," he strove to turn the focus away from commitment as a reference to left-wing politics only.

De Torre's worry about the relationship between "responsibility" and aesthetics is the very thesis of his life's work, *Doctrina y estética literaria*. He writes: "¿Adónde va la literatura? ¿Hacia su pérdida de sustancia por falta de contenido o hacia su desnaturalización estética por exceso de intención? ¿Llegará a alcanzar la síntesis integradora reclamada?" (de Torre 163). Although de Torre was convinced that commitment did not only refer to left-wing politics, his search for a synthesis between responsibility and aesthetics remained strong, as with Sartre. During the 1950s however, he wondered if authors could even obtain a political and aesthetic synthesis at all, or if

one element would overshadow the other. Undoubtedly, in many works, either politics overpowered the aesthetic or vice versa. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate in the case studies of this work, many authors fused the two positions together for the benefit of both.

More than a decade after Sartre's *What is Literature?* and after many of the essays of de Torre's *Doctrina y estética literaria*, John Mander published his critical work of various "politically-committed" British authors in 1961. In the introduction to his text, he reminds us of the debate that had accompanied the word "commitment" up until his time: "Does it represent a political assault on the integrity of the artist? Is it part of a Left-wing plot to deprive him of his freedom [...]?" (Mander 7). Mander also wonders if commitment should be focused on the author's works instead of his life (7). His final question gets to the base of the question: "And could one not reverse the question and ask whether, since every artist is committed to something (even if only to the significance of his own art), the idea of a wholly uncommitted art is not a contradiction in terms?" (7). To get over the hump that hindered politically committed authors, Mander focused on their works directly. He wrote, "Too much attention is being paid to a writer's views, and too little to his work" (Mander 21). He sees beyond the author's choice to join a political party and the representations of such in his work. He continues, "If the commitment is not to be looked for in the work of art itself, then the term has no place at all in literary or dramatic criticism" (22). I agree with Mander that the term commitment must be applied to the works of an author beyond his life.

In Mander's study of John Osborne's *Look back in Anger*, for example, he criticizes the play as being "[...] fundamentally non-committal. And [Mander does] not

mean this as a political judgment, but as an aesthetic one: the play simply does not add up to a significant statement about anything” (22). In other words, it is the text itself that should be examined for its commitment, not the author’s political affiliation. Although Mander talks of focusing on commitment in the works themselves, it is as if the text is an autonomous entity that does not need the author at all. That interpretation does not provide a full picture of the political poetics.

In the 1960s, however, the question of commitment began to encourage more studies on the relationship between “responsibility” and aesthetics, beyond focusing only on the text or the author’s life. In 1968, Jan Lechner focused on both text and the role of the poet’s life to understand commitment in Spanish poetry.<sup>12</sup> While challenging Sartre’s dismissal of commitment in poetry, Lechner was quick to reiterate the debate from the previous years that although the word “commitment” (*compromiso o engagement*) is usually “adoptada casi siempre por escritores pertenecientes a la izquierda política,” in reality it “puede muy bien ser producto de una actitud conservadora, tradicionalista, de extrema derecha, reaccionaria en los fines que persigue y regresiva en cuanto a sus medios de expresión [...]” (Lechner 36). Through this definition, Lechner does not differ much from what de Torre had talked of a decade before, but now he applied it specifically to poetry. He strives to define “committed Spanish poetry:”

Por poesía comprometida española entendemos la escrita en español por poetas españoles residentes en su propio país y conscientes de su responsabilidad como miembros de la sociedad y como artistas y que asumen conscientemente las consecuencias de esta actitud, tanto en el terreno civil como en el literario; una poesía cuya fuente de inspiración no está sólo en el propio vivir del poeta, sino también, y principalmente, en el

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<sup>12</sup> Lechner republished his work in 2004.



del español concreto, contemporáneo del poeta, en su situación real; una poesía que no persigue exclusivamente fines extraliterarios. (Lechner 50)

However, he writes that at the end of his study, he is not satisfied with that definition and even doubts that a definitive definition is possible.<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that he was not satisfied with his definition, Lechner's study was the first to focus on what poets did aesthetically in order to determine whether they subjugated aesthetics to ideology or not, and he focused on their works and lives to achieve his goal. That is, during the next twenty years, commitment in poetry, specifically in Spanish poetry, depended on two factors: the life of the poet (and his political or social commitment) and the poems themselves.

Now, the focus on the life of the poet and the poems themselves urged Terry Eagleton to respond on behalf of the Marxists. He concludes in *Criticism and Ideology* that "[...] if Marxism has maintained a certain silence about aesthetic value, it may well be because the material conditions which would make such discourse fully possible do not as yet exist [...] The 'aesthetic' is too valuable to be surrendered without a struggle to the bourgeois aestheticians, and too contaminated by that ideology to be appropriated as it is" (187). Eagleton recognized that, in criticism, somehow a political and aesthetic tie must be found; otherwise, an analysis of the works that strove to obtain such a tie would fall short of the mark. This is particularly important for Communist poets. I believe that Eagleton's Marxist approach contains a possible answer to understanding political and aesthetic links in poetry written by dedicated Communists. In essence, a study of

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<sup>13</sup> "Al empezar nuestro trabajo creíamos poder encontrar una fórmula aplicable, sin demasiadas excepciones, a lo que en estas páginas íbamos a denominar la poesía comprometida [...] pero a medida que avanzábamos veíamos desaparecer nuestras seguridades [...]" (Lechner 49).

politically-committed poetry that does not recognize politics' contribution to that poetry begs the question.

The struggle to defend the fusion of politics and aesthetics has continued. As recently as 1990, Terry Eagleton has still argued against those who believe that to combine aesthetics and politics is to blaspheme. On the other hand, he also argues against those on the left who claim that aesthetics is simply a bourgeois ideology (Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* 1-12). He writes in his *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*:

The aesthetic, then, is from the beginning a contradictory, double-edged concept. On the one hand, it figures as a genuinely emancipatory force – as a community of subjects now linked by sensuous impulse and fellow-feeling rather than by heteronomous law, each safeguarded in its unique particularity while bound at the same time into social harmony [...] On the other hand, the aesthetic signifies what Max Horkheimer has called a kind of 'internalized repression,' inserting social power more deeply into the very bodies of those that it subjugates, and so operating as a supremely effective mode of political hegemony. (Eagleton 28)

So in other words, simply put, the aesthetic is political, any way you look at it. Criticism that avoids that fact then will not be able to provide the necessary framework for analysis, especially of texts that openly contain both elements. Eagleton concludes: "The discourses of reason, truth, freedom and subjectivity, as we have inherited them, indeed require profound transformation; but it is unlikely that a politics which does not take these traditional topics with full seriousness will prove resourceful and resilient enough to oppose the arrogance of power" (415). In other words, a political stance that does not consider its role in aesthetics cannot possibly succeed, but neither can aesthetics succeed without the political.

I agree with the aforementioned authors that it is necessary to search for a political and poetic synthesis, especially since various poets have been able to embody that synthesis in their poetry from at least the 1930s. What lacks is exploration of that fusion, one that increased during the Second Spanish Republic among Spanish and Latin American poets, specifically Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, and Nicolás Guillén. By exploring their works (during and after the Republic), we can see if they maneuvered to maintain an equilibrium or not after the fall of the Republic. That way, we can gain insight into how criticism can approach and assess the understudied works of political poets. Though many of their works have been attacked as inferior or valueless, we hope to take a fresh look at how they sought to bring the aesthetic and the political into a workable partnership.

## CHAPTER 2: RAFAEL ALBERTI: BETWEEN AESTHETICS AND POLITICS

### INTRODUCTION

When a youthful Rafael Alberti began his search for a lyric that combined the abstract with the real, he probably never realized that his answer could solve one of the most difficult problems of the twentieth century and beyond: how to reconcile political commitment and aesthetic achievement. Not everyone agreed with that reconciliation. On the one hand, some authors criticize Alberti for his turn to politics during the 1930s because they claim that that shift compromised his poetic achievement.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, others praise Alberti for breaking away from an “art for art’s sake” stance in 1930 and dogmatizing his poetics through his Communist Party affiliation. Either way, the majority of critics on both sides imply that Alberti’s political poetics declined quickly after the Spanish Civil war ended in 1939. However, the purpose of these pages is to argue that neither his poetics nor his politics were compromised because he fused them together and his political poetics remained intact far beyond the end of the Spanish Civil War. In order to explore Alberti’s political poetic trajectory, first it will be necessary to look at the brief history of his poetics and his life up until the 1930s. Following that, we will look at various criticisms of Alberti’s work. Then, we will turn to his works during the 1930s Republic as expressed in two anthologies: *El poeta en la calle* and *De un*

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<sup>14</sup> See pages 60-63.

*momento a otro* in order to trace his fusion of politics and poetics. Finally, we will focus on various works after 1930 to explore a continuation of that political poetics after the fall of the Republic in 1939: *Vida Bilingüe de un refugiado español en Francia*, *Entre el clavel y la espada*, *Pleamar*, *Signos del día*, *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*, and *Coplas de Juan Panadero*.

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY LEADING UP TO THE REPUBLIC

Born in 1902 in Cádiz, Spain, Rafael Alberti did not begin life as a poet. In fact, when his family moved to Madrid in 1917, he spent most of his time painting at the *Museo del Prado*.<sup>15</sup> In 1923, when Alberti headed to the Guadarrama mountains because of health issues, he began his first book of poems, *Mar y tierra*. In this work, Alberti's search for a poetics that tied the real with the abstract won him the *Premio Nacional de Literatura* in 1924.<sup>16</sup> From 1924, the poet began to pursue a poetics that constantly escaped him. Three collections that demonstrate his search are: *La amante* (1925), *El alba del alhelí* (1926), and *Cal y canto* (1929). During these years Alberti participated in the *Homenaje a Góngora* in 1927; this experience solidified his fate as one of the group that would later be called the *Generación del 27* and pushed the poet to search for unification between tradition and the *avant-garde*. In other words, his search for his poetic voice led him on a search for a balance. That pursuit led to his most celebrated work *Sobre los ángeles*. Although it was well received, the poet was not completely

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<sup>15</sup> See his autobiography, *La arboleda perdida*, Book 1.

<sup>16</sup> In this same year (1924), Alberti changed the name of this collection from *Mar y Tierra* to *Marinero en Tierra*.

satisfied. During the two years that passed from *Sobre los ángeles* (published in 1929) to the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, Alberti looked to reconcile his political situation and the poetic environment that surrounded him. He dabbled in surrealism with his *Sermones y moradas* and questioned globalization with his *Yo era un tonto y lo que he visto me ha hecho dos tontos*. Yet neither of these texts gave him the voice that he wanted.

His poem, “Con los zapatos puestos tengo que morir” (1930), signals how the poet began to conscientiously write about the society around him and to discover the answers to his search for a balanced poetics. Speaking of that poem, José Carlos Gallardo wrote: “A partir de 1930, con la elegía ‘Con los zapatos puestos tengo que morir,’ una nueva manera de poetizar se asienta en su palabra. Y esta manera ya no la abandona: morirá ‘con los zapatos puestos,’ como Neruda en Chile y Guillén en Cuba” (95). Subtitled “(Elegía cívica): 1 de enero de 1930,” the poem acted as an announcement: the poet found two elements in his quest for a balanced voice: politics and aesthetics.

“Elegía cívica” was very different from Alberti’s previous poems in that it was prose-like with a denunciatory tone that cried out against the dictatorship in Spain. However, this poem did not represent the balance that he was looking for. On the other hand, his more abstract poetry from the 1920s did not achieve his poetic mission either. He would need a tie to the historical and political environment of the times; that tie would give him the balance that he needed. Some consider this poem to be Alberti’s introduction into the political realm, and they believe that afterward his poetry did not

have the same quality as before.<sup>17</sup> It is my view, however, that his later poetry (produced during the Republic and after) fused the tone and language of “Con los zapatos [...]” with the lyricism of *Sobre los ángeles*. The poem shows that Alberti had obtained a social awareness that would mix with his previous poetics for the benefit of both. The rest of his poetry from the 1930s (written after the proclamation of the Republic) demonstrated his commitment to create a synthesis between political denunciation and poetic pleasure.

## CRITICISM

*No faltan quienes censuren este giro que, a su juicio, desvía al autor de sus objetivos estéticos. Otros [...] valoran más positivamente esta poesía revolucionaria liberada de las cadenas del purismo.* (Pedraza Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres 608)

Many of Alberti’s critics claim that his poetry during the Republic either degraded his poetics or gave him the necessary tools to survive as a poet. Until relatively recently, most criticism responded negatively to his 1930s poetry. Robert G. Havard’s “Rafael Alberti’s *De un momento a otro*: The Matter of Poetry, Politics and War” describes that stance:

The quality of Alberti’s 1930s poetry is a matter of some debate. Many critics take the view that after the peak of *Sobre los ángeles* in 1929 the poet went into sharp decline when he adopted the role of political agitator and that, essentially, in this period, he sacrificed his art for the sake of voicing trite communist propaganda. (81)

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<sup>17</sup> See the “Criticism” section that follows.

Many respond negatively to Alberti's so-called "political" poetry.<sup>18</sup> More recently, however, other works look to find value in the "political" poetry as part of Alberti's lifetime project.<sup>19</sup> Yet both of these *acercamientos* lack an interlocking way to analyze Alberti's post-Republic poetry where aesthetic pleasure and political awareness could complement and build up one another.

In fact, many of the global analyses of his entire life's work claim that in reality Alberti's poetry had always simply been "art for its own sake." For example, José Ramón López's "Exilio, metapoesía y compromiso en Rafael Alberti" points out that "Alberti, leída su producción *globalmente*, es un perseguidor de paraísos y con ello de una idea de armonía final plena que es negada por las circunstancias de la existencia" (12, my italics). López then tries to justify Alberti's work as simply a poetics that had a 10 year hiccup in the 1930s. By focusing solely on the ideal, utopian bourgeois idea of poetics, many of Alberti's political interventions appear to have no contribution to his overall poetic goal. That assertion does not reflect the poet's political poetics.

In a similar fashion, other critics fall short of the mark when striving to value the political aspect in Alberti's poetry. Antonio Jiménez Millán's article, "El compromiso en la poesía de Alberti (República, guerra, exilio)," practically cancels out Alberti's political commitment by claiming that: "A pesar de que se haya querido devaluar la poesía comprometida de Alberti con el término despectivo de 'propaganda,' lo cierto es que la

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<sup>18</sup> Pieter Wesseling, Ricardo Gullón, C. B. Morris, Solita Salinas de Marichal, and Geoffrey Connell.

<sup>19</sup> Such as Judith Nantell's, *Rafael Alberti's Poetry of the Thirties: The Poet's Public Voice*, Antonio Jiménez Millán's, *La poesía de Rafael Alberti (1930-39)*, and Salvador Jiménez Fajardo's *Multiple Spaces: The Poetry of Rafael Alberti*.



literatura ‘de consignas’ ocupa un espacio muy reducido en el conjunto de su obra. El compromiso albertiano es lucidez y, al mismo tiempo, entusiasmo por la poesía” (161).

This focus devalues and excuses Alberti’s political commitment, as if his only commitment in reality were his commitment to poetry. Devaluing the political aspect of Alberti’s poetry creates an incomplete analysis of the poet’s poetics as well.

On the other hand, Alberti’s poetry cannot be reduced to simple socialist realist rhetoric either. In other words, his political commitment did not completely subsume his poetics. In his essay on *De un momento a otro*, Benjamín Prado writes that through this collection of poems, Alberti “deserta de sus orígenes burgueses e intenta convencer a los oprimidos trabajadores de que él es ahora uno de ellos, nunca más otro de sus explotadores” (299). Although Alberti’s poetry also strives for what Lenin claimed in *Sobre arte y literatura* (“La literatura debe ser una literatura de partido”) I believe that we will see that his complete dedication to that Party did not overshadow his poetics during the Second Spanish Republic and beyond; his politics worked with his poetics to create a synthesis and did not end simply because the Republic had fallen.

Also, the fusion between his politics and his poetics goes beyond explanations that the poet’s double-speak ability or his geographical location allowed him to commit partially to the Communist Party.<sup>20</sup> So maybe he could somehow stay aloof of the Party. Yet he remained a committed Communist even after Stalin made his notorious Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Hitler in 1939. Alberti’s political program through his poetry cannot be forgotten despite its supposed reduced space throughout his work or the fact

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<sup>20</sup> Millán writes for example that “Alberti no se encuentra, como ocurría con los escritores soviéticos, con una serie de líneas ya marcadas de antemano, con un programa más o menos elaborado [...]” (97).

that he did not live in the Soviet Union. In fact, it begs the question. The poet did maintain his allegiance to the party despite his distance from it, and that is a factor in his political poetic fusion.

The critic Salvador Jiménez Fajardo realizes that a focus on both politics and aesthetics is necessary for complete study of Alberti's collections. Jiménez Fajardo writes that through *El poeta en la calle* and *De un momento a otro* Alberti "[...] finds again his personal idiom, and abstractions give way to immediate contact with the real [...]", but later in the 1940s "[...] Alberti returns to lyrical resources" (159). Although Jiménez Fajardo suggests that Alberti's political poetics indeed does end in the early 1940s, he concludes practically the opposite that in *Entre el clavel y la espada* "[...] the double symbol of its title already hints at the unitary mainspring of *all* his work" (160, my italics). It is that double symbol of his political and poetic synthesis that needs to be explored further in his later work. Alberti's political poetry after the war and his exile in Argentina, far from "queda[n]do al otro lado del mar, amordazada" as Concha Zardoya writes (166), can continue to work for an equilibrium between political and poetic elements. We will now explore that possible equilibrium in his works during the Republic and then in his collections after.

## ALBERTI'S POETRY DURING THE REPUBLIC

The following pages focus on how Rafael Alberti's poetry reflected the fervor of his politics and contributed to his poetic trajectory during the 1930s. We will investigate how politics and poetics could work hand in hand in the poems themselves. That

potential balance will be explored through two anthologies from these years: *El poeta en la calle* (this anthology contains various separate works produced during the 1930s) and *De un momento a otro*. I believe that the poems in these two works reflect both political and poetic dimensions, where one does not overshadow the other but where they work in harmony for the benefit of both, as we will now attempt to see.

### *EL POETA EN LA CALLE*

In 1931, when Spaniards proclaimed the Republic, Alberti began to write the poems contained in his work, *El poeta en la calle*. This anthology contains the majority of his poetry from 1931 until 1935. In these poems, I believe that the seed of his political poetics begins to grow. True, he focuses on the injustices of what he sees in his own society. But at the same time he fights for aesthetic pleasure, which I will strive to show contributes to a fusion in his work that does not privilege either his poetics or his politics.

The poems found in the first section of the collection are: “Los niños de Extremadura,” “Juego,” and “Romance de los campesinos de Zorita.” These poems contain a similar denunciatory tone that appeared in “Con los zapatos puestos tengo que morir” from a year earlier; however, the poet had two things to support that he did not have in 1930: the Republic and the Communist Party. These two influences allowed the poet to develop his political poetics with commitment to a specific political platform and a specific place.

When Alberti first writes of Extremadura in his poem “Los niños de Extremadura,” although the children of Extremadura do not have shoes (because of their

extreme poverty), that should be the least of their worries. They are also without clothing and homes. But, most importantly, they do not have access to education. Each stanza ends with a question; each question challenges the reader. He asks who is responsible for each of the wrongdoings (“¿Quién les robó los zapatos? [...] ¿Quién les rompió los vestidos? [...] ¿Quién les derribó la casa? [...] ¿Quién les cerró las escuelas? [...] ¿Quién fué el ladrón de sus juegos?” (*Poesías completas* 339)).<sup>21</sup> Each of these questions makes the reader consider whether or not it is he/she who had contributed to the children’s state. True, the simplicity of the poem may lead one to think that traditional poetry is not present here or that Alberti has compromised his poetics because of his tone. But, if the goal of his poetics was to move the reader, in more ways than one the poem moves him: either to anger because of the accusatory tone, to repentance because of guilt, or to remorse for the plight of the children. Here, in one of the first poems he wrote after the proclamation of the Republic, the focus on the plight of the *niños* blended Alberti’s recently encountered class consciousness with his poetry. These *extremeño* children were the poorest of any in Spain; therefore if the poet could give them voice their pleas would have a better chance of being heard. Alberti’s use of poor children instead of adults (or people in general) showed how their situation was not a result of their actions, as many believed of the poor. Therefore, actions by governments and leaders in power must work on their behalf.

When the poet asks in the last line of the poem, “¿Quién fué el ladrón de sus juegos?” he gives a lead into the next poem “Juego.” The ultimate goal of their game is

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<sup>21</sup> The page number listed refers to Alberti’s *Poesías completas* published in 1961 by Losada. The rest of the page numbers in this chapter will also refer to that volume unless indicated otherwise.

union in order to win: “--¿Quiénes son sus vencedores? / --Los revolucionarios trabajadores. / Camarada, ¿y dónde están? / Desunidos, divididos. / ¿Pues cómo los vencerán? / Camarada, ¡todos unidos!” (340). Beyond recognizing class differences, Alberti poeticizes about workers, more specifically, about revolutionary workers. In this way, he can craft his poetry to represent the political dogmas of the Communist party such as “unity,” the poem plays with the reader as the title implies. This poem’s aesthetic impact appears in the play between the title of the poem and its development throughout. The poet admits that each line could be a statement by his inclusion of the “—” at the beginning of each line. He can claim that the words belong to someone else; he only reproduces them as part of the game. His craft continues to combine rhetorical spoken language with poetry: a revolutionary politics that “plays” with the rules poetry.

Alberti’s second section of *El poeta en la calle* is called “Homenaje popular a Lope de Vega.” Through a tie with Lope de Vega, Alberti could help the intellectual class to recognize that other poets, long before the 1930s also looked to find a balance between politics and poetics (and did not sacrifice one in favor of the other). His example: Lope de Vega. In other words, he might be able to justify his conversion to a synthesis between politics and poetics by claiming that Lope had done the same. The titles of the poems in the second section, “Dialoguillo de la revolución y el poeta,” “Si Lope resucitara...,” “El alerta del minero,” “Libertaría la fuente,” and “El gil gil,” already show how the poet ties his politics and poetics.

The first poem “Dialoguillo de la revolución y el poeta” includes allegory as a political force. The poem is made up of two parts; the first stanza is a six-verse

declaration where the personified revolution speaks to the poet while the second stanza (eight verses), is the poet's response. The revolution asks the poet to "toma[r] ejemplo y mira[r] en mí, / que yo nunca jamás me cansé, que yo nunca dudé ni temí" (342). This suggests that commitment should never falter, and asks the poet to be loyal as well. The poet's response is, "Tomo ejemplo y miro en ti, / que si yo, gloria roja, te pierdo, gloria roja, es que yo me perdí" (342). This response implies that he will not waiver, just as his political poetics will not waiver. His immediate past reminds him of his recent official commitment to the Communist Party in 1931; beyond his Party ties, the poet responds to the revolution that "Duro es ir contigo. / Pero tú ante mí" (342). Here, the phrase shows that the revolution would not vary and its preservation was more important than even the poet himself. Yet I propose that the poet could also be referring to his own poetics, one that combined his two responsibilities. That type of dedication is what poetry is all about. He tried to tackle the issue of how to attract others to his political poetics, and second, he strove to defend it as legitimate and move his reader.

The references to hammers and sickles, redness, and revolution abound in these poems. At the same time, these references coincide with a moment in the collection when Alberti compares himself with Lope de Vega. The next poem "Si Lope resucitara," speculates what Lope would do if he were resurrected in the fervor of the 1930s. Each stanza ends with the two lines "Siega, siega, / que la hoz es nueva" (343). If Lope were alive, he would use that new sickle to cut down and harvest those who "han impedido / que el sol llegue a la bodega" (343). Those who impeded the light of the sun were politically neutral or opposed the poet. Therefore, it would make sense that Lope would

be on Alberti's side whereas "José Antonio, Miguel, / Queipo y Gil" would be against him (343). The people would also be on Alberti's side; just as the people in Lope's *Fuente Ovejuna* rebelled against their enemies. Their tool: a sickle. This sickle "de oro y plata" reaps "al estilo / de aquellos que ahora segamos" (343). So here we have a tool, uniquely made of precious materials that would change the world, beginning with its traditional ideas of poetry. This tool can also represent Alberti's dual dedication. It is "puro" but it also has an "inclemente filo" (343). Alberti plays with the implications of purity in poetry of the 1930s; his poetry is not impure (like Neruda would say in 1934) but neither was it pure fluff. It would attack conservatives with its double edged sword.

So far, class consciousness, revolution, and attacks against conservative thinking litter the collection. Then in part three, the poem "Un fantasma recorre Europa" appears. This title repeats the first line of Marx and Engel's *Communist Manifesto*. In the first stanza, the poet points out that in Spain "las viejas familias cierran las ventanas" (348) in order to keep the Communist phantom out. So, now he challenges the Spanish aristocracy. In fact, in the second stanza, the poet represents the voice of those oligarchic families, and speaks from their standpoint to stop Communism from arriving in Spain. In the third and final stanza, however, the poem then speaks from the voice of the intellectuals; they promoted the arrival of Communism anyway: "nosotros lo seguimos" (349). This *nosotros* inspired others such as workers, *campesinos*, soldiers, and sailors. By the use of this pronoun, Alberti asserts that "true poets or intellectuals" are those who "lo hacemos descender del viento Este que lo trae [...] lo sentamos a la mesa del campesino pobre / presentándolo al dueño de la fábrica, / haciéndolo presidir las huelgas

y manifestaciones [...]” (349). The voice that represented the oligarchic stance in the second stanza then becomes the voice of inspired intellectuals in the third stanza. This inspiration should not limit itself to producers of poetry: it should encompass Spanish society as a whole. This poem universalizes the work that poets have before them to inspire beyond art-for-art’s-sake. It also moves beyond simple denouncement of societal injustices. As the poet used his Communist Party affiliation as a means to an end, his poetry would also contribute to class consciousness among the elites, not only among artists.

During the time that Alberti was writing the poems contained in *El poeta en la calle* he and María Teresa León (in 1933 they had married) also founded the magazine *Octubre*. Later that year, when they traveled to the Soviet Union to participate in the First Congress of Soviet Writers (they were the only delegates from Spain who attended), Stalin officially implemented his aesthetic of socialist realism. After the First Congress of Soviet Writers the Albertis went to the Americas, and in 1935 they visited Mexico. Years after their visit, Octavio Paz reminisced that:

En ese dominio [de representante del CP] nunca le oí decir a él nada que no fuesen vaguedades y fórmulas devotas. Su marxismo, más que una ideología era una fe, un ritual. En cambio, se transformaba al decir en público sus poemas. Los decía muy bien, quizá demasiado bien. (63)

Here Paz implies that Alberti’s political commitment might have been pure Communist rhetoric in public. His poetry made the poet who he was. Alberti knew that through his work, he could move his audience more than through institutionalized rhetoric; Paz even considered Alberti’s poetics to be his true political motivator. Although Paz concluded that “[...] las conversiones al comunismo no sólo son fulminantes, sino contradictorias



[...]” (64), Alberti’s political conversion, be it contradictory or not, never weakened, and that is what contributed to the longevity of his poetics and the balance that existed between these two elements.<sup>22</sup>

During the years when Alberti wrote the poems contained in *El poeta en la calle*, the fusion that existed between his politics and his poetics became more apparent. Up to this point, I believe that I have shown that the dogmas of the Communist Party and poetry connected and built up each other. The next pages will examine if Alberti struck the same balance in *De un momento a otro*, another text written during the Spanish Republic.

#### *DE UN MOMENTO A OTRO*

In the prologue to his 1938 edition of *De un momento a otro*, Alberti claimed that he wanted to write about everything that disgusted him within Spanish society, anything anti-Republican. That is, he denounced the bourgeois families of Spain from which he “arrancó y procedió” (53). In the second prologue, he writes that “[...] mi vocación, mi jamás rota fe en la poesía, mi dolorosa, alegre y continúa exploración de las nuevas realidades líricas y dramáticas de España y del mundo, me han conducido lenta y difícilmente a este cambio de voz, de acento” (53-54). The poet recognized that a shift occurred in his poetry of the 1930s. After that shift, it is as if the poet might consider a lack of a political stance in poetry as anti-poetry; he linked his “vocation” with his “faith

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<sup>22</sup> Paz wrote: “[Alberti] Admiraba al poeta chileno [Neruda]: ‘un temperamento anárquico’, decía [Alberti], ‘pero hondo; un pez de las profundidades; un extraño cetáceo de la poesía.’ Y agregaba, moviendo la cabeza: ‘Por desgracia, está lejos de una revolución’” (64).

in poetry” and he could continue to question the traditional definition of poetry and produce his political poetics and move his reader, as we will now explore.

The first poem of *De un momento a otro* called “La familia (poema dramático),” gives Alberti an opportunity to invite his readers to challenge tradition. The first section of the poem, “Hace falta estar ciego,” for example, claims that a person has to be blind not to see the light and illumination that not only his work provides but also the historic moment that allows politics and poetics to go hand in hand: “Hace falta estar ciego, [...] para no ver la luz que salta en nuestros actos, / que ilumina por dentro nuestra lengua, / nuestra diaria palabra” (369). The possessive “our” could refer to either his Party ties or his vocation as a poet because he challenged both those who have apolitical (or do not participate openly in political activism) and apoetic (who deny poetry as a legitimate form of communication) tendencies. For example, when he stated, “Hace falta querer ya en vida ser pasado, / obstáculo sangriento, / cosa muerta, / seco olvido” (369), he refers to the fact that only supporters of anti-progress or regression would want to avoid the historic moment in which they lived. His poem accuses conservatives of living in the past both concerning their interpretations of poetry and their ignorance of Communist thought.

The next part of his poem, “Colegio (S. J.),” refers to his youth during his years in *colegio*. Here, he questions the idea of what spirituality should be. He states: “Nos enseñaron a esperar / con la mirada puesta más allá de los Astros, / así, / estáticos. // Pero ya para mí se vino abajo el cielo” (373). Beyond a simple denunciation of his Catholic education, I believe that the last line refers to the poet of the 1930s: heaven (essence or spirituality) was already in the poet’s midst. His political poetics gave him interior drive,

and he did not have to wait for the future. His heaven was already there. And he was convinced that that same balance would move others.

The second section of *De un momento a otro* contains four subsections: “El terror y el confidente,” “El perro rabioso,” “La revolución y la guerra,” and “Geografía política.” The first two subsections each have two sonnets, “La revolución y la guerra” has one sonnet, and “Geografía política” is a potpourri of verses of various lengths and rhyme schemes. The focus on order and tradition shines through by the structure of the first three subsections; they are hendecasyllables with the typical rhyme scheme ABBA ABBA CDE CDE.

In the last poem of the second section (which is not a sonnet), “Geografía política” (dedicated to José Herrera Petere) breaks from the traditional forms and talks of the place where this political poetics can grow: “Los montes de Toledo, / los Ojos [sic] con que sueña el Guadiana” (69). Every inch of Spain is the place where his poetics will gain steam. Furthermore, the title of the poem suggests that if the geography of Spain is political, then everything else also should be political. Everything from “los sauces” to “el tiempo [que] nos despinta las regiones” makes way for the creation of a politically and poetically balanced Spain, what Alberti calls a “celestial geography” where “[...] en el mapa unifican los colores” (70). This idea refers back to his heaven on earth from section 1, an allusion to his political poetic fusion. The ultimate dual commitment would unify the Republic; although it was suffering during the *bienio negro*,<sup>23</sup> it would pass from a “triste Geografía” to a “definitivamente nueva y roja” Spain (71).

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<sup>23</sup> See chapter 1 of this dissertation 32-33.

This second section demonstrates the feelings that the writer has about his commitment: traditional verse that embraces Communism. Sonnets, a medium not normally associated with social commentary reflect the poet's denunciatory political position. His craft shows that his poetics can still produce difficult forms without simplifying his political insight. Beyond that, he can still move his reader and break with that tradition, just as in *Sobre los ángeles* or even in *Marinero en tierra*.

Alberti wrote the third section of *De un momento a otro* while he and León were in the Americas in 1935. The first subsection is called "13 bandas y 48 estrellas" and contains four poems dedicated to the United States: "New York," "Barco a la vista," "Cuba dentro de un piano," and "Casi son." After the initial four poems, the rest of the subsections are dedicated to other countries or areas of the Americas: Mexico, El Salvador, Panama, Venezuela, the Caribbean, and Martinique. In the final poem, "Yo también canto a América," dedicated to Langston Hughes, the last line of the poem states "Yo también canto a América futura" (91). The poem looks to his double allegiance during the Spanish Republic as a model for future political poetics syntheses in the Americas as well.

If his political poetic model might affect the rest of the world, he would first have to embody it in the defense of Madrid. In 1936, Alberti returned to his homeland and wrote the poems of the fourth part of *De un momento a otro*, titled "Capital de la gloria." The Popular Front had won the elections in February, 1936, but the cohesion of the various factions quickly dissolved, proving that they only joined together to win the elections away from the conservatives. The conservatives said that their electoral loss

would provoke a civil war, and in the middle of July the uprising began. However, the cohesion that existed between Alberti's two allegiances, politics and poetics did not decay like the Spanish situation. Through the final poems of the collection, Alberti demonstrates that Madrid was more than just the heart of the country geographically and politically; Madrid was the heart of the Republic where politics and poetics dwelt simultaneously in harmony.

The fourth section focuses on the Civil war and the defense of the democratically elected Spanish Republic. Through these poems we have glimpses of various characteristics that the poet believed that the ideal, balanced Republic should contain. For example, in the first poem, "Madrid-Otoño," the first part contains seven stanzas of varying length (anywhere from four to eight verses), that show where the "germen más hermoso de tu vida futura" can be found: in Madrid. In fact, the second part of the poem focuses on the fact that the city is a cultured city, one of palaces and libraries, of paintings and books; at the same time, the city is besieged, a city of death, destruction and political dedication. The role of the speaker is to help the city to give birth to its two-sided culture (402) of Communism and aesthetics exemplified in the poet's work.

The next six poems of *De un momento a otro*, "¡Soy del Quinto Regimiento!," "Defensa de Madrid / Defensa de Cataluña," "A las brigadas internacionales," "Al General Kleber," "Monte de El Pardo," and "A Hans Beimler, Defensor de Madrid," demonstrate how the poet considers himself part of the defense of the cultured, politically-charged Republic as he fought alongside of the defenders of it. The first two poems are *romances* (octosyllables, where the odd lines are free verse and the even ones

carry rhyme in assonance), the third is made up of *alejandrinos*, the fourth tercets, the fifth returns to alexandrines, and the sixth returns to the ballad. Here he does not sacrifice his craft in favor of his politics. For example, in “Defensa de Madrid / Defensa de Cataluña” the poet personifies Madrid with “pulsos de fiebre” and “Si ayer la sangre le hervía, / hoy con más calor le hierve” (403) while maintaining the quick rhythm of the *romance*. His interjections in the second part of the poem strive to move readers toward reconciliation between Catalans and *Madrileños*: “La libertad catalana / ¡sábedlo!, en Madrid se juega” (405). In these poems, the poet tied tradition with innovation, practicality with industry, and administration with organization, a common thread now in his poetics.

After the initial poems of the fourth section, Alberti denounced other countries that would not help the Spanish Republic. For example, in February, 1937, he traveled to Paris, and wrote “Lejos de la guerra” a poem that condemns the French government for its support of the Non-Intervention pact.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, the poem focuses on the city of light, Madrid, in comparison with a city of darkness and emptiness, Paris. Madrid, in fact, will teach Paris how to be a city with *alegría*, aurora, liberty and dreams. These characteristics contributed to Alberti’s definition of the Republic; furthermore, it symbolically could refer to his poetics as light because of his political defense of the Republic, whereas much of French poetry in the 1930s was darkness because of its lack of intervention. Madrid had character midst the bombings whereas the city that should have had cultural character, Paris, did not because there was nothing to defend. Similarly,

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<sup>24</sup> The Non-Intervention pact was signed by the leaders of Britain, France, Russia, and Germany in 1936. See chapter 1 of this dissertation, footnote 8.

Alberti's poetics had character because of his open adhesion to defend the Republic whereas French poets did not have that same inspiration. Therefore, their productions might not be as aesthetically pleasing as his.

When he returned to the Republic, his poetry (epitomized in "18 de julio") inferred that Spain's suffering would only lead to a better world. The comparisons with his poetics, a poetics that suffered because of his open political commentaries, are apparent; his momentary alienation would be worth it in the near future. The final stanza reads: "Sufre el mapa de España, grita, llora, / se descentra del mar y su mejilla / tanto se decolora, / que se pierde de grana en amarilla. / Se retuerce su entraña en tal manera, / que lo que va a parir ya está en la aurora: / 18 de Julio: Nueva Era" (414). Alberti's political poetics and the Second Spanish Republic would both work toward a new era; each would overcome trial and eventually benefit from ridicule and criticism.

Verses from the fourth stanza of "18 de julio" introduce the next poem ("Elegía a un poeta que no tuvo su muerte"): "¡Mucho, mucho ha caído. / Cuántos y cuántos buenos camaradas! / Mas nada inútilmente se ha perdido" (414). García Lorca, although he did not die the way that he was supposed to, would survive through Alberti. The beginning lines challenge death: "No tuviste tu muerte, la que a ti te tocaba. / Malamente, a sabiendas, equivocó el camino" (415). Alberti, however, would take García Lorca's place by offering light to humanity:

Mas si mi muerte ha muerto, quedándome la tuya,  
si acaso le esperaba más bella y larga vida,  
haré por merecerla, hasta que restituya  
a la tierra esa lumbre de cosecha cumplida. (415)

These final lines show that Alberti planned to restore García Lorca's lost light. He would do what he could poetically and politically to deserve the life that García Lorca would have lived. And his dual-sided poetry would be the only possibility that could do justice to the memory of both Lorca who had already fallen, and the Republic that was about to fall.

From *De un momento a otro* we can see that Alberti continues his political poetics in at least three ways. First, various poems combine traditional poetic forms with Communism. Second, other poems break from the traditional forms and look toward a future utopian world where all of his principles could flourish. Third, the poems compare the lives of other intellectuals (in this case, Federico García Lorca) with Alberti himself; the words build him up as the voice for those who were misrepresented politically or martyred unjustly. Now we will turn to various post-Republic works and examine them to see if they continue to unite politics and aesthetics.

#### ALBERTI'S POETRY AFTER THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

After *El poeta en la calle* and *De un momento a otro* and the fall of the Republic in 1939, Alberti went into exile first to France. While in France he worked for *Radio-Paris Mondiale* with Pablo Neruda, and wrote *Vida bilingüe de un refugiado español en Francia*. I hope to show in the coming pages that his political poetics did not end with his short stay in France, either. I believe that after his *Vida bilingüe de un refugiado español en Francia* and his move to Argentina, Alberti's works continue to reflect the synthesis from the 1930s. Among these are: *Entre el clavel y la espada* (1940), *Pleamar* (1944),



*Coplas de Juan Panadero* (1949), and *Retornos de lo vivo lejano* (1952). I hypothesize that Alberti's later poetry takes his political and poetic blend to a new level; he combines nostalgia for the Spanish Republic and auto-analyses of his own poetic trajectory to keep his political poetics aflame. Through this combination, he could reminisce of the Republic which had provided a place where his political poetics could flourish and he could also examine his balanced poetics from the past to conserve that equilibrium in his present.

#### *VIDA BILINGÜE DE UN REFUGIADO ESPAÑOL EN FRANCIA*

After the fall of the Republic, Alberti and León headed to Paris where they found refuge in Pablo Neruda and Delia del Carril's home. Here Alberti began his *Vida bilingüe de un refugiado español en Francia*. The short collection reproduces the nostalgia and rupture with his fatherland that Franco's victory had forced on him. The first poem exemplifies his anguish, a feeling that tears him away from his ideal, dreamlike Spain: "Me despierto. / París. / ¿Es que vivo, / es que he muerto? / ¿Es que definitivamente he muerto? / Mais non..." (427). So, despite his exile, he would keep on living, and this collection is an example of how he would keep his poetry alive as well; now it is necessary to examine the collection for a continuing political poetics fusion.

He first of all asks, "Es que llegamos al final del fin / o que algo nuevo comienza?" (428). The ambiguity of the poem allows this question to be a possible reference to his political stance, his Republic, or even his political poetics. As he nostalgically poeticizes about whether his political and poetic commitment was worth it

or not, the other two are also affected, and vice versa. With the fall of the Republic, he wonders if his political poetics might be “al final del fin.” On the other hand, maybe “something new [was] beginning.” His final decision about his poetics appears in the second to last stanza: “Es la vida de la emigración / y un gran trabajo cultural” (428). In other words, he would convert his political exile into a great cultural work, and build up his political poetics further. He would use his nostalgia for the Republic and his exile as driving forces to maintain his synthesis and he was conscious that his poetic trajectory was inseparably united with his political situation.

That continued dedication to union between politics and aesthetics leads him to Poem 2, where he claims that the principles that guided the Second Republic had not been defeated although the Republic had fallen. Despite the fact that Franco was in power, the poet shows that the “real” Madrid was still alive. To back up his argument he writes, “Porque Madrid no ha sido derrotado. / Allí vive Madrid, allí vivía, / allí llora, allí cruje, / vivo, bajo la sangre todavía. / Y vivirá mañana” (430). The poet would help the heart of Spain, to survive *allí* through his commitment to the principles that defined his poetry during the Republic.

These comparisons surface more specifically in the final poem of this short collection, poem 9 subtitled (Diario de a bordo). It was written while the poet left Europe as a political exile toward what would be his home for the next twenty-three years: Buenos Aires, Argentina. There, “Bajo la Cruz del Sur / cambiará nuestra suerte. / América. / Por caminos de plata hacia ti voy / a darte lo que hoy / un poeta español puede ofrecerte” (441). The possessive *nuestra* in these final lines gives at least three

possibilities (or combinations of them) for his change of luck in Argentina: 1) *nuestra* could refer simply to his wife's and his lives; 2) it could refer to his political poetics and his life; 3) it could remind him of the Republic and his life. These three possibilities might change later in Argentina; we will now explore his later collections to examine his simultaneous political and poetic evolution in the Americas.

### *ENTRE EL CLAVEL Y LA ESPADA*

Although Concha Zardoya claims in "Poesía y exilio de Alberti" that Alberti's *clavel* is "[...] la esperanza y la fe" (165), the dialectic between his carnation and his sword goes beyond simple hope or faith. In the following pages, I will explore whether or not the poet continued to balance his poetic commitment (symbolized by the carnation) and his political commitment (symbolized by the sword) in *Entre el clavel y la espada*. During his last months in the Republic and his exile to France (1939-1940), Alberti began work on this collection and he published it once he was established in Buenos Aires.<sup>25</sup>

There are two *prólogos* (1 and 2) in *Entre el clavel y la espada* in the 1941 edition. In the first, titled "De ayer para hoy," the reader sees how the falling Republic was fresh on the poet's mind. In fact, the first words in the collection are: "Después de este desorden impuesto, de esta prisa, / de esta urgente gramática necesaria en que vivo, vuelva a mí toda virgen la palabra precisa, / virgen el verbo exacto con el justo adjetivo" (445). This introduction to his new *poemario* explains what the components of his verses (verses that are not new, verses that return to him) are: his political exile from the

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<sup>25</sup> Alberti dedicated this book to Pablo Neruda.

Republic (“desorden impuesto”) and aesthetics (“urgente gramática [...] palabra precisa”). Furthermore, the second prologue reads:

Si yo no viniera de donde vengo; si aquel reaparecido, pálido, yerto horror  
no me hubiera empujado a estos nuevos kilómetros todavía sin lágrimas; si  
no colgara, incluso de los mapas más tranquilos, la continua advertencia  
de esa helada y doble hoja de muerte; si mi nombre no fuera un  
compromiso, una palabra dada, un expuesto cuello constante, tú, libro que  
ahora vas a abrirte, lo harías solamente bajo un signo de flor, lejos de él la  
fija espada que lo alerta. (445)

The poet accepted the fact that his work would constantly be influenced by his politics and his poetics; without the sword, his poetics would not have the political bent that created a synthesis in his poetry. The title of the work (*Entre el clavel y la espada*) exemplifies the poet’s dual position. Here the poet continued that dialogue through *Entre el clavel y la espada*; the work acts as an autobiographical trace of his poetic trajectory and a eulogy to his Republic.

That carnation-sword dialogue appears in the first section of the *poemario*, “Sonetos corporales.” This part contains twelve sonnets; with a sense of longing and loss, each sonnet denounces the poet’s forced exile from Spain and simultaneously (in the majority of the poems) searches for a rejuvenation of his poetics. The first sonnet acts as an introduction in that it sets the tone for the poems in “Sonetos corporales” and also for the entire collection. The first image is that of a person (or possibly a personified object), that cries while trapped within “las humanas paredes sin salida” (447). This object is the very thing that finds itself between carnations and swords as the later poems demonstrate. The poet cries out that, “Grito en la entraña que lo hincó, futuro, / desventuradamente y resistida / por la misma cerrada, abierta herida / que ha de exponerlo al primer golpe

duro” (447). His yell condemns the Franquist attack and takeover of the Republic, but also warns of future vengeance. He commands the *destinario* to be nurtured by his political poetics: “Mama la luz y agótala, criatura, / tabícala en tu ser iluminado / que mamas con la leche el pensamiento” (447). He could resurrect the fallen Republic through his poetry if he could uphold his position *entre el clavel y la espada*. This idea of resurrection sets the precedent for the rest of the book because his nostalgia for the Republic feeds that possibility.

By the 12th sonnet of “Sonetos corporales,” the speaker feels insecure about his ability to keep the light and fire of his position aflame. He asks, “¿cómo arder si el humo ya está frío, / si el césped ya es ceniza barredera / y fué tan sólo pólvora mi sueño?” (453). At this point in the collection, the poet then strives to recreate his own poetic trajectory in order to examine the validity and necessity of his political poetics. He does so by returning to his pre-Republic past in Part 2.

After the “Sonetos corporales,” Part 2 turns to Priapus (the Greek god of male procreative power) and Venus (the Roman goddess of love, beauty, and fertility) to reconstruct what his idea of poetry was before 1930. This second part titled “Diálogo entre Venus y Priapo,” establishes a discussion between the two gods, a discussion that questions whether Alberti’s poetry should be concerned mainly with love or lust of art (as was his pre-1930 poetry).

However, in Part 3, “Metamorfosis del clavel,” Alberti centered on how his poetics grew after his political affiliation. The first poem of Part 3 established a shift from his pre-Republic poetry (the dialogue between Venus and Priapus). He wrote that in the

past he “Quería ser caballo” (462); but then the time came for a transformation in his poetics. He no longer wanted the simple carnation; it needed something more as seen through the words of the third poem: “Un clavel va de viaje, un clavel ya ha naufragado” (463). “Art for art’s sake” had now been shipwrecked. His poetry had new meaning with the Republic. In fact, the fourth poem emphasized his exit from his pre-Republic poetics in few words: “Me fui. / Las conchas están cerradas” (463).

While Rafael and María Teresa were living with Pablo Neruda and Delia del Carril in Paris in 1939, he wrote the next poem, “Se equivocó la paloma,” verses that show how the poet questioned his previous poetic purpose during the late 1920s and early 1930s, which led to its metamorphosis. “Se equivocó la paloma. / Se equivocaba” (465). The transformation that occurred after the poet had realized the purpose of his poetry was erroneous grew from his experiences in the Republic. As he remembered that change, he saw that it was fed by his previous art.

Instead of rejecting what he had done before, the poet saw that his pre-1930s work had simply fused with his political stance. To describe this fusion, he uses the metaphor of a breastfed bull: “Mamaba el toro, mamaba / la leche de la serrana. // Al toro se le ponían / ojos de muchacha. // Ya que eres toro, mi hijo, / dame una cornada. // Verás que tengo otro toro / entre las entrañas. // (La madre se volvió yerba, / y el toro, toro de agua.)” (466, poem 10). The ties between the bull, the Republic, and Alberti’s poetics appear here as inseparably connected. For example, the combination of the past poetics and the political appear in poem 12 when the poet writes, “Se despertó una mañana. / Soy la yerba, / llena de agua” (467). Here the blend referred to in the 10<sup>th</sup> poem results in a

fusion, a fusion that symbolizes both the poet's political poetics and the lost Republic. He nostalgically turned back the clock to a couple of years earlier, and analyzed both his poetics and the Republic's history. He saw that his politics built up his poetics and strove to change the definition of poetry itself during the Spanish Republic. But the Republic then came to an end. Would the poet's political poetics have the same fate as the Republic?

That question is played out in Part 4 called "Toro en el mar (Elegía sobre un mapa perdido)." In this section, the recently exiled Alberti continues to use a metaphor that compares the lost Republic with a bull. As the title of this section implies, however, only the map was lost, while the principles were not. Therefore, the Republic had only fallen on the surface for the poet. This is where his poetics might differ. Now we will turn to the 4<sup>th</sup> part of *Entre el clavel y la espada* to see if his political poetics "fell."

The first poems of Part 4 refer to "aquel país" as a green bull. As a reference to his Republic, the green bull suffered, just as Alberti had suffered because of his choice to uphold a political poetics. The double play of this green bull as a representation of his poetics and also of the Republic comes alive in the 4<sup>th</sup> poem:

Le están dando a este toro  
pastos amargos,  
yerbas con sustancia de muertos,  
negras hieles  
y clara sangre ingenua de soldado.  
¡Ay, qué mala comida para ese toro verde,  
acostumbrado a las libres dehesas y a los ríos,  
para este todo a quien la mar y el cielo  
eran aún pequeños como establo! (472)

Both the Republic and Alberti's poetics had to be defended despite all odds against them. They both seemed contradictory and irreconcilable. They were both poorly nourished. Yet they would both survive. Be it survival under the surface like in the case of the Republic or not, the political poetics would survive in the poet, like political platforms survived underground in Spain during the thirty-six years of Franco's Rule.

Then, in the eighth poem, the speaker refers to the fact that everything is dark and terrible (473), and in the ninth poem the nostalgia sets in. The first line suggests that there was something that the poet was thinking about before through his usage of the ellipsis: "...Y le daré, si vuelvo, una toronja" (473). His return was that of uncertainty, yet his support for his political poetics project was far from uncertain. Because of his pledge to both politics and poetics, he had to give his testimony about what had occurred in Spain. By giving his testimony about the oppositions to the Republic, the poet could also give testimony of the oppositions to his poetics. For example, in the eleventh poem of part 4, the speaker talks of all that fought against that green bull: "¡Ay, a este verde toro / le están achicharrando, ay, la sangre! / Todos me lo han cogido de los cuernos" (474). Later, when in the twelfth poem death is the main protagonist, that green bull can still be resurrected, and it will live on underneath the surface despite death. The Republic had personified his twofold commitment; even death could not ruin his vow to both poetics and politics.

Death and alienation could, however, give way to melancholy and nostalgia, which it did. At the end of each stanza of the 19<sup>th</sup> poem, the poet writes two lines: "Mis ventanas / ya no dan a los álamos y los ríos de España" (477-478). These two repeated



lines show the nostalgia that the speaker disclosed, a nostalgia based on his separation from the Republic and Spanish soil. Furthermore, the 21<sup>st</sup> poem then sings to that *toro*, once again, as Alberti sees Spain from the boat on his way toward exile in the Americas. Despite the fact that it had been taken over by the Nationalist forces, the speaker sings to the Republic's memory while he travels away from it by sea: "Que se va, / canta al toro que se va" (479). Here his dedication to sing to the *toro* reproduces the uncertain future of his political poetics that had been nurtured by the Republic.

Although uncertain about that future, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> poem the speaker wants to wrap both his poetics and the Republic up in a shroud as if they were both gone ("Ven y que amortaje entre violetas" (479)). Yet, the promise of resurrection feeds his claim. He states that he enshrouds the addressee so that it "traspase de morado olor y húmeda / luz esas vivas, misteriosas ramas / oculto pasto verde de tus huesos" (480). The new shoots of these branches would then flower and grow once again, like Alberti's double commitment, and another version of the Republic would appear in the future.

The focus returns once again to the bull metaphor in poem 26, this time from *América* where he claims that the bull, "Bien por aquí podrías, solitario / huésped y amigo, esas sedientas ascuas, / que un estoque enterrado hasta los huesos / prende en tu sangre, helarlas mansamente" (481). Alberti's lost and solitary Republic supposedly could calm its fires in the Americas as he had done. The final stanza reads "Pero me he levantado, ya que andaba, / párpado insomne el fijo pensamiento, / pensando en ti [...]" (482). The fall of the Republic continued to cause insomnia in the poet; it was one of his major preoccupations in exile. The injustices that had occurred in the Republic dominate

his political stance in these poems more than the plight of the working man, revolution, or class consciousness. The poet still adhered to his official Communist stance; the politics represented in this poem hone in specifically on how to extinguish the fires in Spain, how to overcome the plight of the exiled Spaniard, how to continue a revolution from a distant land (if that was even possible), and his individual consciousness of exile. These elements then work toward the utopia of the future, a Communist ideal.

In Part 4 up to this point references to the “Toro en el mar” strengthen the Communist ideal and center on how to help the *mapa perdido* of Spain return as a starting point for that future utopia. Alberti’s fight for a return of the Republic enhanced his political poetry because the extended metaphor of the bull reproduced a personal loss that the poet strove to universalize beyond simple nostalgia on the one hand or dogma on the other. In other words, this poem focuses on how to obtain rest in a perfect egalitarian land and that rest could be obtained only through the Republic’s resurrection.

If the speaker could contribute to a resurgence of the Republic, he had to define how he would reach that goal. In the last poem of Part 4 the first lines read: “Cornearás aún más que nunca, / desdoblando los campos de tu frente, / y salpicando valles y laderas / te elevarás de nuevo toro verde” (483). The *tú* of the poem, the Republic, represented as a bull would gore (with its horns) more than ever in order to rise up as a new green bull. So, in order to gain the desired rest from poem 26, it would have to first fight and use force in order to become a the calm place that Alberti desired. In other words, although the Republic had been overcome by Franco’s counterrevolutionary forces, underground revolution would build and battle more than ever. Through the revolutionary effort, a

“nuevo toro verde” would rise up, one that would be “dueño de ti y de todo para siempre” (483). The fact that this new Republic would be the “owner of itself and of everything” suggests the collective base that an ideal free land would be key for its success. This idea resists blatant allusions to the dogma of communes, but at the same time praises collectivity; the idea resists bourgeois individuality but does not deny individual worth. The vigor of this poem is its avoidance of specific political references and that very avoidance gives more acuteness to Alberti’s poetics.

From part four to part five of *Entre el clavel y la espada*, the poet moves from regeneration of the Republic to nostalgic memories of Antonio Machado. Part 5, called “De los álamos y los sauces: en recuerdo de Antonio Machado” eulogizes another poet who Alberti claims found himself between poetics and politics. In this section, Alberti includes fourteen poems that recognize both aspects of that synthesis through a tribute to Machado’s work.

Throughout the poems of the fifth section, Alberti compared his own situation with that of the poet who had recently passed away. Machado’s death in 1939 inspired Alberti to keep his commitment firm. Alberti claims that because of Machado “cantar[á] más alto, / aunque esta tierra ni [le] escuche y hable. // Y echar[á] [sus] raíces / de manera que crezcan hacia el aire” (485). This inspiration shows how Alberti’s poetics also had looked to his contemporaries as inspiration, another key component to his trajectory.

More specifically, in the last poem of the section, Alberti refers to Machado in order to use their exile to forward their poetics:

Descansa, desterrado  
corazón, en la tierra dura que involuntaria

recibió el riego humilde de tu mejor semilla.  
Sobre difuntos bosques va el campo venidero.  
Descansa en paz, soldado.  
Siempre tendrá tu sueño la gloria necesaria:  
áلامos españoles hay fuera de Castilla,  
Guadalquivir de cánticos y lágrimas del Duero. (491)

These lines show the double sided commitment that Alberti assigned to Machado. Both an “exiled heart” and a “soldier,” Alberti referred to Machado as a poet who planted his poetic seeds and fought for future glory--a glory that preserved political and poetic principles simultaneously. Since the death of the great poet coincided with the death of the Republic, the Spanish poplars (representative of the exiled Spanish poets) would work to keep the poet’s dream alive, and Alberti interprets that dream as the possibility of a place where a political poet can flourish without confrontation. Machado appears as an epitomized representative of the Republic’s political poetic ideal.

Alberti also creates a similar ideal when he dedicates part six of *Entre el clavel y la espada* (“Del pensamiento en un jardín”) to José Bergamín (who chose exile in Mexico during the final months of the siege in Spain). Alberti attributes certain characteristics to his fellow *exiliado*. For example, the speaker exclaims, “Sé mi ejemplo, ligustro persistente; / planta vivaz, continua flor, rizoma / y siempre viva y siempre verde fuente. // Como mi patria: sol y aroma” (496). Another way that Alberti maintained his twofold commitment was to focus on other exiles and incarnate his political poetics in them. By projecting his ideal on other exiles, his nostalgia for his past Republic advanced a balance between his politics and his poetics, because, if others continued in the same path, he would not be alone.

In the seventh section of *Entre el clavel y la espada*, “Como leales vasallos,” Alberti introduces each poem with a quote from *El mío Cid* as if to compare himself with the political and poetic national hero. The title of the section shows that the poet would be faithful to bringing the Republic back to life. He could also remain faithful to his poetics as he alluded to his own poetic trajectory. He refers to his poetics and the Republic as “hermosa [...] sin comparación... / Y hermosa, / con un tajo en la garganta” (500). Despite the fact that metaphorically speaking both the Republic and Alberti’s poetics had had their throats slit, they continued to be Alberti’s ideal. That ideal would return if he, like the Cid, would remain loyal to his principles. The last poem of Part 7 speaks of the future, a future that the poet will help to build despite and through his nostalgia for Spain. The sea “abre sendas” and at the end the final line the speaker asks “¿para quién siembra [el mar] banderas?” (503). The poet would use his nostalgia for his homeland to open doors for his commitment. Just as the Cid was faithful to Spain despite the misconceptions that the King had toward him, the poet Alberti would be faithful to his commitment and his lost Republic and lyrically conquer the moors to regain his honor. By recurring to the Cid, Alberti could maintain his dual allegiance. Because of the courage that the Cid showed when he knew he was right and everyone else thought he was wrong, the poet could look to him as an example to maintain his position.

After the last line of the poem the poet includes two final quotes from *El mío Cid*: “Sonando van sus nuevas todas a todas partes...” and “Siempre vos serviremos como leales vasallos” (503). His loyalty to his politics and his poetics is what made him one of the few poets of the 1930s and 1940s who remained true to his commitment despite the

changing world around him. That is what made his political poetics balance a success up to this point. He did not fall from one or the other: he truly found himself *Entre el clavel y la espada*. Now we will look to his later works to determine whether or not his balance ended here or whether they are present in later collections: *Pleamar*, *Signos del día*, *Retorno de lo vivo lejano*, and *Coplas de Juan Panadero*.

### *PLEAMAR*

Alberti wrote his most extensive collection, *Pleamar*, between 1942 and 1944. Through this collection, as I will try to show, his political poetics grew to a high tide of commitment. Moreover, far from ending, nostalgia for Spain fed his ongoing work, as in *Entre el clavel y la espada*. Also, through a continuing self-examination of his own poetic development, I believe that the poet continued to try and convince himself to remain faithful to his principles.

The first section of this collection is called “Aitana.” The first poem, “Ofrecimiento dulce a las aguas amargas,” refers to the birth of his daughter as an offering to the sea, a sea that represents many evils. He writes: “¡Oh mares de desgracias, rica mar de catástrofes, / avara mar de hombres que beben agua dulce, / aquí la tenéis” (510). The speaker presents his daughter to the sea; he contrasts the joy of her birth with the anguish of his exile. The ocean exemplifies negativity in this poem; Alberti uses adjectives such as bitter, unfortunate, catastrophic, and greedy to define it. Even further, the “greedy sea of men” denies him of his own sea in Spain. The subtle indication of his political exile buries the joy of the birth of his daughter, an exile that keeps him (and her)

from his place of birth. Yet, his poetry would act as an offering to save him from that “sea of men.”

Tied with that sacrifice, the second poem, “Remontando los ríos,” shows what matters most is to remain faithful to one’s beliefs even if one’s principles are not accepted by others. For some, the poet’s beliefs went against the current. In the poem, he refers to his pre-1930 position as if it were “este ramo de agua. / De agua dulce, ramito, / que no de agua salada” (511). He found himself alone paddling against the tide, yet a boat appeared that would forward his fight against the current: his official Communist Party commitment. This is where he says goodbye to his solitary fight and says, “(Adiós, ramo, ramito. / Para ti toda el agua)” (511). He then asks how he could convince others of the importance of a political poetic fusion, and at the same time, fight against his opponents: “¿Quién los doma, ramito? / mi ramo, ¿quién los para?” (512). His answer is: “¡A la doma del río! / ¡A la doma del agua!” (512). Although his desire to combine politics and poetics was not shared by many others during his life, he worked to try and prove that he could convince them. He would instill these principles in his daughter.

From a focus on his daughter in the first section, the collection then moves to “Arión” (a legendary Greek professional performer) in the second. According to Greek mythology, Arion supposedly had won a music contest, and on his way back home on a boat, the sailors tried to kill him for the prize that he had won at the contest. He asked if he could sing before the sailors killed him, and his song attracted dolphins. Then he threw himself into the ocean and the dolphins carried him home. In Alberti’s version of Arion, there are one hundred eleven short poems, the majority of which are couplets or one verse

poems. He begins with a poem “¡El ritmo, mar, el ritmo, el verso, el verso!” (519). The poems renew and re-examine the speaker’s relationship with the disgraceful, catastrophic sea of men referred to in Part 1, yet at the same time, the poet proclaims that “Gil Vicente, Machado, Garcilaso, / Baudelaire, Juan Ramón, Rubén Darío, / Pedro Espinosa, Góngora...” sing through him (519-520). So Alberti preserved past poets through his poetics. He was the modern day Arion who would sing despite opposition to his political poetics.

The addressee of the majority of these poems is *el mar* (the sea of disgrace, the sea of catastrophes, and/or the greedy sea of men that Alberti refers to in Part 1 of this collection). The purpose of the entire collection could very well be the creation of an overarching allegory that shows his political commitment as well as his poetic development during the violent high tides (political confrontations, self-exile, and reconciliation between politics and poetics) of the 1930s and 1940s as we will now see. The poet confessed through his short one or two line phrases in Part 2 that the high tide of scrutiny, disgrace, catastrophes and the greedy sea of men acted as important contributors to his political and poetic development. Each short poem in Part 2 of *Pleamar* acts as a wave of that three-part sea where the poet can give a parable of his political and poetic experiences. That parable takes shape in poems 3 and 4:

3

Yo soy, mar, bien lo sabes, tu discípulo.  
¡Qué nunca diga, mar, que no eres mi maestro!

4

Cantan en mí, maestro mar, metiéndose  
Por los largos canales de mis huesos,  
olas tuyas que son olas maestras,



Vueltas a ti otra vez en un unido,  
Mezclado y sólo mar de mi garganta:  
Gil Vicente, Machado, Garcilaso,  
Baudelaire, Juan Ramón, Rubén Darío,  
Pedro Espinosa, Góngora...y las fuentes  
Que dan voz a las plazas de mi pueblo. (519-520)

Beyond *mar de desgracias*, the allegorical sea here also had positive effects on the poet.

The waves were not simply waves of sea water from the ocean, but poetic and political inspirations that united and mixed in the poet. The masterful waves of this ocean were poets from the past and at the same time the people, that is, the people that cried out in public plazas for political upheaval and equality. These waves went far beyond the waves that the poet wrote about in *Marinero en tierra*, waves that he had left behind and longed for. Undoubtedly he had left his Gaditan mar behind after his exile and that did create nostalgia in his poetry. However, here we see that his inspiration was not simply Mother Nature's beauty or the rocking of the waves; he allegorized the *mar* as his experience with politics and poetry.

In fact, poem 48 states, "Vivir en pleamar, seguir viviendo..." and then poem 49 responds, "Nunca morir en bajamar, no nunca..." (528). The poet prefers the effervescence of the 1930s and 1940s political hotbed. At the same time, his poetics challenged traditional ideas of poetry that claimed that poetry should be separate from politics. These two situations built up violent reactions against Alberti's poetry; however, he would rather be in the high water of criticism than cruising through on the low tides.

Now, his nostalgia for the Republic did not die after his exile because of his continued involvement in active, heated political and poetic issues. Poems 50 to 53 bring to life that feeling of loss and apprehension yet at the same time these poems refer to that

disgraceful, catastrophic, and greedy yet masterful, instructive and metaphorical sea that the poet had mentioned to at the beginning of Part 2:

50

Yo sé que tengo, mar, obligaciones  
contigo, mar que debo  
recordar ciertas cosas...

51

Hoy, por ejemplo, mar, nos convendría,  
tanto a ti como a mí,  
hablar de nuestros muertos.

52

¿Será posible, mar, que cualquier noche  
puedan mis enemigos secuestrarte?

53

No me contagies hoy de esa desgana  
tan tuya, mar, y menos de esas olas,  
mar, de hombres caídos. (528-529)

The ambiguity of these lines causes the reader to think about what the obligations might be that the poet refers to here; the majority of the world does not have obligations with the ocean. Therefore, a plausible answer could be that the speaker refers to certain obligations that he has with the symbolic ocean, not literally with the water or the spray, but with the ideals that waves had represented in his poetry from this collection up to this point: disgrace, catastrophe, and greed, as well as mastery and poetry. These ideals brought out memories of the dead from the Republic and from the war. Because of all of the death that had occurred because of political inequalities in Alberti's recent past, he questions in poem 52 whether or not even his ideals can be abducted midst the abductions that had occurred in Spain and Argentina. Although the answer to that rhetorical question is no, the poem recognizes the negativity that surrounded the political tensions of his

times. For example, all of the “waves of fallen men,” that is, waves of his lost and fallen comrades (the fallen anti-fascist defenders from the Republic) and the poets and workers from poem 4, could easily affect Alberti’s poetic production for the worse.

Despite others who had died or fallen in the high tide of war and revolutions, the poet believed that his commitment to his lost Republic and to his poetics was worth the risk. In fact, by not remembering those who had fallen or those who had been exiled, he would have committed a grave error. This symbolic sea, in other words, this political and poetic experience, gave oppressed peoples a way to momentarily, even imaginary escape from political oppression. Poem 85 reads: “No quiero trasladarte mi dolor, escribiendo: / Aquel pueblo no tuvo aquella tarde / pañuelo que la mar no se llevara” (535). Although that group of people was then distant (“aquel pueblo”), the *mar* had helped to spread the ideals of that people. Alberti reminisces later in poem 105 about how: “Era hermoso ser ola, / ser crecido oleaje de aquel pueblo (539). The beautiful experience that his union with the people of the Republic had given him fostered his political poetic union. In fact, in poem 108 his poetry (he calls it his voice) represented all of the defenders of the Republic: “Sí, yo era muchedumbre... Entre sus olas, / igual, múltiple mar, que entre las tuyas, / era una sola voz la que sonaba” (540). As he compared himself with the people from the Republic, the poet realized that his poetry also represented the voice of the sea of men with whom he dialogued. Because of his memories of what had occurred in Spain, his political poetics would now reflect not only *aquel pueblo* but also the entire *mar de hombres*. Hence the title of the collection: *Pleamar*.

He then asks that *mar* in poem 110 (the second to the last of the section “Arión”) for advice, what the sea would do if it were in his situation: “Si a ti, mar, te arrancaran de tu sitio, / descuajaran a hachazos de tu pueblo; / si ya como lenguaje te quedara / tu propia resonancia repetida; / si ya no fueras, mar, mar para nadie, / mar ni para ti mismo, / perdido mar hasta para la muerte...” (540). In midsentence, the poem asks how others would respond in his situation. The poet compared himself to Arion; many would try and kill him for his political and poetic prize, just as in the myth.

His answer to what would happen if “he were torn from his home and his people were dissolved and if his language remained in its own repeated resonance” is to return to the three poets that became representative of the Republic: Machado, García Lorca, and Hernández. I believe that the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of *Pleamar* (“Égloga Fúnebre: a tres voces y un toro para la muerte lenta de un poeta (1942), a la memoria de Miguel Hernández”) allows Alberti to turn his memories of poet friends into beauty beyond a simple denouncement of their deaths. Alberti had already eulogized Machado in *Entre el clavel y la espada*, Hernández’s death in 1942 spurred him on to embody their memories in his poetics.

The poet from Cádiz recreates a dialogue among four actors: *voz 1*, *voz 2*, *voz 3*, and *toro* in three “acts.” In the description of the speakers (or the cast), the first voice is Machado, the second voice is García Lorca, and the third voice is Hernández. Alberti combines his recent past with his present by proclaiming at the beginning of the scene that “Lo que ya sucedió y aquí sucede, / sucede todo junto a un lento río / donde flota la vida y la muerte” (541). So, the differentiation between the past and present, or what

happened already and what happens *here* is not important. What matters most is the river, which I believe is a political and poetic symbol, as we will now examine.

To begin with, the *Égloga* alludes to a beginning similar to the Bible. However, differing from the Bible, the beginning here refers specifically to a *poeta*. In the beginning, “Podía *el poeta* remontar jilguero / y descender canario a los bardales. / Podía abrir, cerrar de ruiseñores / la flor del limonero / y el naranjel morir de zorzales. / Podía el corazón lo que quería” (542, my italics). Through these lines poets can be compared with the creator of the world as poetry can be compared with the creation of the world. That beginning corresponds with the beginning of the Spanish Republic during the 1930s. Once again, as in *Entre el clavel y la espada* the poet ties the developments of his political poetics to the Republic. They both could develop freely in the beginning without limits, but beyond that, they provided happiness: “En el principio eran las alas, pero / también, en el principio, la alegría” (542). According to the poet, this happiness was not limited to his own; the other three poets of the poem also contributed to that dynamic.

After the introduction of the poem, each voice introduces himself and his poetry. After each *voz*’s introduction in the poem, the bull appears (“un toro derribado, / junto a la orilla, / herido” (542)) and intervenes for the first time in the poem. Ambiguously representative of both the Republic and poetics, the bull reminds the other three voices of their purpose, and all three voices together exclaim, “¡En el principio era la alegría!” (544). But the *toro* replies, “Pero un mal viento la hizo mil pedazos” (544). With that statement, the reader notes that happiness, brought on both by the Republic and poetry would be challenged and destroyed.

An attack on the bull occurs in the second part of the poem (“¡A ese toro!” (545)); yet despite the attacks, his memory would be preserved through the voices of the poets. Through the voices and the bull, Alberti shows his commitment to both preservation of the Republic’s principles and also the political and poetic synthesis that he personifies in his fallen fellow poets. By giving his “friends” a voice again, his political stance and his poetics are strengthened, just as his poetry from ten years before. His political poetry had not ended; it was Alberti’s driving force. In fact, he continues to move his readers, focuses on three important poets of the twentieth century, and reminisces about the Republic without sacrificing the aesthetic pleasure of his poetry or his political commitment.

That driving force would not end, just as the voices of Machado, García Lorca, and Hernández would not die. In order to prove his point, each of their interventions end with “En el principio eran las alas...” (550-551). The ellipsis suggests that their voices will continue on. That is, the bull (the Republic or the political poetics) would never die completely; *alegría* would return. Alberti carries the Republic nostalgically in his poetry, where his poems work for those lost principles. While the poem repeats three times the words, “¿Es que no tengo ya ni toro?” (552), the bull of his political poetics was far from dead. Yes, it was “Tan herido y tan duro, que hasta el río exánime / tembló helado papel la cara de la muerte” (552). But it would remain alive as the poet would.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> section, “Cármenes,” the poet analyzes how to negotiate the balance between politics and aesthetics. For example, the very first poem, a couplet, establishes how to continue *entre el clavel y la espada*: “Poeta, por ser claro no se es mejor poeta. /

Por oscuro, poeta –no lo olvides—, tampoco” (553). The following poems then continue on a route toward that balance. He refers back to the fact that during the Spanish Civil War, the opposing forces thought that with the fall of the Republic, Alberti’s political poetics would also fall, but he reminds them in poem 10, “Creyeron que con armas, / unos tristes disparos una aurora, / iban –¡oh Poesía, oh Gracia!—a asesinate” (554). Here we see that he admits that his poetics reproduced the same political stance as before. That position did not simply disappear because of fascist (Franquist) pressures.

In fact, the poet uses the next poems to describe his past search for purpose in his poetry. The poems embody that purpose in a Muse. He claims that the “Musa verde, perdida, de mis primeros años” was a muse that had come to him “encubierta, / con máscara fingida de albayade, / de estopa los cabellos, / la sonrisa sujeta a las mejillas / de cartón; la palabra / falaz, bailando en la embozada lengua. / Te acercaste diciéndome: ¡Yo soy! / ...Mas oí en ti la Musa de la muerte” (559). He writes that his true purpose, that is, the object of his poetry, was not to focus on his incorrect idea of aesthetics from before 1930, but on his later more political stance. Here we also see how he continues to auto-analyze his poetic trajectory, comparable to his works during the Republic.

However, once again he is not quite sure if his political poetics will take root, especially after his separation from his fatherland. As he reminisces, a recent exile and a doubtful return to Spain fill him with uncertainty: “Pensaba el árbol pleno, / viéndose las raíces / de fuera, doloridas, / pensaba en lo imposible / de enterrarlas de nuevo / en nueva tierra... / Y se quedó suspenso, / con su mudo dolor por todo canto” (poem 34 560). The speaker recognizes that it will be more difficult to maintain his *canto* than before because

of his separation of the Republic, a Republic that promoted a political stance among poets.

The difficulty of maintaining a political poetic balance does not mean that it cannot be done, as is seen in Part 5 of *Pleamar*. For example in the 1<sup>st</sup> poem of the series “Púrpura nevada,” he points out that “Hubo un tiempo que dijo, que decía: / Más blanca que la nieve, prima mía. / Rosa de Alberti, rosa chica, breve, / níveamente pintada. / Hoy diría: Más roja que la nieve, / ya que la sangre es púrpura nevada” (561). In a reference to his past, the poem looks at the aesthetic pleasure (the purity whiter than snow) that Alberti’s poetry had longed for, then with the shift to the poet’s present, the poetry no longer looked for innocent purity but for the redness of blood. The symbolism of the color red in the 1930s and 1940s referred often times to the Communist Party; but here that would be a stretch without the next three stanzas of the poem. For example, in the third stanza speaks of “las tristes Pascuas militares / de los nevados desaparecidos” (561). The poem compares missing people with snow, yet this snow is far from white: it is purple. The idea of purple snow looks to the blood spilt on behalf of those military men who destroyed the peace of the people. However, in the final stanza, working men as *héroes* would help so that “el mundo [pudiese] alzarse de costado” (561). Riding a political and poetic *pleamar*, the first stanza focuses on the aesthetic importance of poetry. Then in the second and third stanzas, anti-military and anti-*Pascua* tactics turn the aesthetic to the political by denouncing the fact that the Civil war in Spain and the Military dictatorship in Argentina had given way for many missing people. In the final stanza, the combination of poetry and politics then provides an example so that the world



could fight against political discrimination that led to the kidnapping of various left-wing leaders and their convenient disappearance.

Although an anti-conservative (anti-military, anti-capitalistic, anti-Christian) position caused many doors to be closed to political poets as the next poem, “Puertas cerradas,” implies, a political poetics is always knocking, striving to cut through the door. The poem asserts in the second stanza, and then repeats in the last stanza that “Éste es el escabel, el seco filo / inicial de la entrada, / la cuchilla / para los pies, que tienden los umbrales” (562-563). So, while the very structure that holds the doors that are closed to a political poet, the doorframe, is the provider of the tool that will continue to force the doors open. This poem exemplifies the continued combination of Alberti’s politics and his poetics. Moreover, it demonstrates his commitment to his ideas, despite all of the oppositions against him from both sides of the debates of art and commitment.

Yet not all men are able to maintain a political poetics. “Un sin olvido,” reiterates that important point. The poem follows a protagonist, who goes down into the street, yet not only does he go down into the street, but he “huye de los cristales de la alcoba [...] [de] los libros, ¡ah los libros! Mudamente / afligidos quizás de tanto orden, de otras quemadas, cenicientas horas / le ofrecen ya en pavesas las palabras” (563). So, this man flees from the crystal of the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie; he also flees from the books that he had wasted countless hours reading, in order to defend the working class. By defending the working classes and participating with them in their lives the man would have a chance to analyze the realities of a “balanced life in the street,” to experience it, and, more importantly, to remember it and maintain it. The final lines of the poem read:

Baja el hombre a la calle...Es el desvelo  
De no haberse olvidado que está vivo,  
que está más vivo lo que ya no alienta,  
quien, sombra abajo, lo fustiga, oscuro.  
Y quisiera, pasado, detenerse  
en cualquier piedra dulce a no olvidarse.

Pero sube a la casa, huyendo, el hombre. (564)

In other words, the majority of those who claimed to reject their aristocratic or bourgeois upbringings on behalf of the people in reality return after a short period. Alberti however, was not like these men. Beginning with his work in the 1930s, Alberti used the metaphor “en la calle” to exemplify support for the working class and reiterate his commitment to them. The title of his collection, *El poeta en la calle* demonstrates that point. Here, more than ten years later, the image is of a man who goes down into the street because he has not forgotten that he is still alive. That allusion compares life (those who have “gone down into the street”) with death (or those who are not willing to work on behalf of those who are less fortunate than they). In other words, the poem challenges all those who did not continue to work on behalf of the peasants, the industrial workers, and others simply because their comfortable position allowed them to return to their old ways of life whether or not the plight of the workers improved or degenerated. That is why the last line of the poem points out that when persecution grows, men usually falter and flee. True men uphold their principles and do not run away simply because they can; they also maintain their political stance amid persecutions. Slowly, Alberti’s poetics evolved toward a less explicit politics; instead of complaining openly and obviously that many of his fellow intellectuals in reality were contributing to the plight of the working class

because of their lack of action, he accused an unembodied man because he did not remain in the street.

Following the same lines, the title of Poem 8 (“Luz no usada, homenaje a Fray Luis de León”) implies that all of the possibilities of poetry were not being explored by the great majority of poets:

Muere la voz del hombre; las palabras, si salen de los labios, son peores  
que piedras rebotando en la frente de un niño. Un idioma de escombros  
nos destruye, nos tapia. Pero aquí, hoy ahora, aunque sea un solo instante,  
un tenue manadero, una suma de ángeles y agua, un confluir de aires y de  
hojas, un sobrenatural verbo de músicas y números. (569)

From this quote the poem laments how men in general have lost their voice (their personality or their ability to share their ideas) because of the influences of those in power; these influences have made it so that words or language reproduce either stones that slowly penetrate children’s minds or wreckage that collaborates with a fall of society. The only way to overcome that challenge is to find a new voice. In order to find that voice, the poem ends with the following: “Una nueva hermosura, ‘una no usada luz’ nos envuelve, nos ase levantándonos, trocándonos sonido, fuente dulce, paz dulce, paz sin fin, dentro de la morada de la noche” (569). His reference to “new beauty” aesthetics as an “unused light” was that which would provide peace. In his poetry, this was the first time that his poetry would provide peace; yet peace would only be found through the new unused techniques that would fight against “[...] esa rama de llanto que se estampa hecha sangre por el campo [...]” (568). So the poetic light must overcome “weeping because of death in the fields;” yet once again, the open references to the Civil War or to exile or to the Republic of old are more obscure. We see here that what has occurred in the poetry of

*Pleamar* so far has contributed to a more concealed politics; by less overt political examples, Alberti's poetics sustains its own balance where a general audience is not turned off because of the open mention of revolution like may have occurred in the 1930s. But his political poetics still remain strong.

That strength is found in the 7th section of *Pleamar*, called "Tirteo" after the Greek poet, there are forty-one poems of varying length that embody the political poetics fusion.<sup>26</sup> Here the poems once again address a muse. He asks this muse, *la niña bonita*, what she is feeling and the muse responds, "Nostalgias de la guerra, de la mar y del colegio" (576). So the nostalgia of the war and the Republic is what continued to fuel his political and poetic equilibrium in his poetry, as in *El poeta en la calle*, *De un momento a otro*, and *Entre el clavel y la espada*. In fact, the next poems depict the muse as a soldier who gave her life for an ideal. In poem three, the final lines state, "Una humareda / me la quitó dejándome este acento" (576). As the poet laments her death, he realizes that his nostalgic, fused lyric was a direct result of his experience during the Republic and after its fall.

Beyond simply referring to the war in Spain, the speaker dedicates his life to his muse and exclaims, "Yo te defenderé" (578). As he defends his stance, he also nostalgically nourishes the lost place where his muse had been free. In order to nourish both his poetics and the principles of the lost Republic, he knows that he must "ser fuego puro, / alta llama continua, / para ser merecida brasa tuya" (578, poem 13). At the same time, he also understands that until a similar place like the Republic appears again, his

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<sup>26</sup> Many of the poems have one or two verses, similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> section ("Arión")

longing undoubtedly will continue. Later, he recognized his poetic trajectory before, during, and more importantly, after the fall of the Republic. He writes: “Tú eras la Poesía [sic]. / Recién parida, fuerte, dando saltos, / plantando el sol sobre una tierra insigne / ¿Qué fué de ti, radiosa trasplantada? [...] En tus manos el mirto era tan verde / que nunca creció fuego / que hablara más lozano” (583, poems 34 and 35). This look at his own development refers to his poetry from before 1930 and then the growth during the years of the Republic. Then later in poem 38 to the shift in his politics from then until his present (1944): “Sí, Baudelaire, yo fui poeta de combate... / pero de esos del mar y el verso como puño” (584). As he speaks in the past, it is as if he admits that his political poetry were a thing of the past. Yet later he recognizes that his politics had only become less overt when he states that the sea and his faith “Diéranme a mí nuevos pulmones / con que arbolar las multitudes [...]” (585). Since he had renewed his voice to help the masses, his dedication to politics was far from over.

This poem sums up the overarching idea of *Pleamar*. We have seen that in this collection, political poetics continued to survive in Alberti’s poetry through more obscure references to the poet’s political exile from Spain and his commitment to the tenets of freedom of the common man. Also, nostalgia for the Republic and self-analysis remained intact from *Entre el clavel y la espada*. Yet here the poems reflect less obvious politics and contribute to a more acute poetics. He advances his argument further in this work that to be able to help the seas of men, despite the rough waters, one must seek a combination of politics and aesthetics. Lack of a political and poetic synthesis translates into poor poetry because it does not move the reader as much, as far as Alberti is concerned.

Up to this point, this chapter has analyzed some of Alberti's poems until 1944 that reveal how he established a meticulous balance between his politics and his poetics. Through the analysis of both *Entre el clavel y la espada* and *Pleamar*, Alberti's commitment to both his politics and his poetics continues as an underlying thread that links his works. In these two works, differing from *El poeta en la calle* and *De un momento a otro*, his nostalgic memories of the Spanish Republic strengthen that tie. In the following pages I will look at three much shorter works, *Signos del día*, *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*, and *Coplas de Juan Panadero*, to explore the further development of the equilibrium between poetry and politics.

### *SIGNOS DEL DÍA*

Now we will turn to *Signos del día*, written between 1945 and 1955, to see if Alberti continued to balance politics and aesthetics through his poetry. However, differing from *Entre el clavel y la espada* and *Pleamar*, this section works to show that *Signos del día* acted as a beacon to convince the allies that they also had to liberate Spain. When that plea fell on deaf ears, the nostalgia of the collection grew and, as I hope to demonstrate in the following pages, he strengthened the tie between his Communist Party affiliation and his poetry after World War II.

In the very first poem of *Signos del día*, the poet directs a sonnet to the *La Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional Española*, a left-wing group that claimed the right to replace Franco's government once the fascists and Nazis were defeated. In the first four verses, the symbol of the bull carried over into this collection as "un nuevo toro de la luz [que]

levanta” (11). The similarities between his addressee, *La Junta*, and his poetics, gave them both the chance to create life from that which was considered dead by the Franquists (“levantarás la vida de la muerte”). In the beginning of this collection, the poet embodied his poetics in the underground group that epitomized the lost Republic’s principles. This group would contribute to the formation of a place similar to the Republic where a fusion between politics and poetics would prevail. In the wake of the fall of the Nazi forces, Alberti believed, like many exiled and non-exiled Spaniards alike, that the allied forces would also oust Franco in Spain. Nevertheless, that day did not arrive, so the establishment of a place where a political poetics could thrive once again would have to wait.

In fact, the following poem condemns the allied forces; the title itself reprimands the forces for ignoring Spain: “¡Pueblos libres! ¿Y España?” The poem’s thesis is clear: “La vida hermosa para todos...menos / para los combatientes españoles” (720). Later it appears that few support Spain at all besides the *guerrilleros* and “[...] un toro suelto ardiendo por España” (720). This allegorical reference to the poet’s own poetics, acts as the burning force to keep his ideal Spain alive. His poetics, besides being that driving force, is what created the fusion between politics and aesthetics, a fusion that initiated the fight in the first place:

Y mientras allí mueren, aquí estamos,  
pero aquí como allí permanecemos,  
y el precio de la deuda que pagamos  
nos lo deben, que a nadie lo debemos. (721)

The fighters owed the poet their drive because his continued commitment to his political poetics caused him to be alienated. He accentuated the importance of his poetics and

acted as the sole creator of any kind of poetic fervor in favor of the lost Republic. The final lines read: “¡No hay paz, no hay paz, no hay paz en el planeta / si el corazón lo tiene ensordecido! / ¡Pueblos libres! España no está muda. / Sangra ardiendo en mi voz. ¡Prestadle ayuda!” (721). His voice was what kept the ‘real’ Spain alive and burning. Here the poet believed that his own aesthetic achievement was a direct result of his political poetics, and he claimed that through that link he had the authority to make claims about what Spain truly needed.

That authority was powered by his memories of the Republic, yet that was not his only commitment. In “Una paloma blanca,” the poet sent a white dove to a yet undefined *mariscal*, yet this dove was special: it “[...] siendo blanca permanezca roja / y siendo roja blanca permanezca” (724). From his fusion of the carnation and the sword, he also fused the reds (communists) with the whites (bourgeoisie). The combination of these two politicized colors strengthened even further his commitment to the principles of the white-red (or red-white) Republic. Later in the last stanza, the reader learns that the marshal is Stalin. Because of his reference to Stalin as the *mariscal*, this poem may imply that his poetics was compromised by an overly obvious Communist commitment.

According to the poet, that was a possibility that haunted him; it forced him to disguise other specific Communist references in the collection. In the first part of *Signos del día* there are only two explicit references to the Party: one here in “Una paloma blanca” and another in the following poem “Balada para un día señalado” that talks of Lenin. Other moments look to *el pueblo* for inspiration. The rest of the poems teeter between the more obscure language like that of *Pleamar* and historical references to Spain like that of *De*



*un momento a otro*, whereas these two overt allusions to Communism appear as if they were an obligation for one who had adhered to the Party.

Yet, beyond the Party, the poem “Carta abierta a los poetas, pintores, escritores...de la España peregrina” called out to his fellow exiles that unless they maintained their commitments to restoring Spain to its Republican glory (not their commitments to the Party) they would have failed as intellectuals. He exclaimed: “[...] ¡oh hermanos de la patria distante!, se deshila / la fe del fatigado corazón que vacila, / escuchad, y el poeta nunca jamás se engaña: / si en España hay hogueras, son del pueblo de España” (729). That is, it was the poets, painters, and writers’ job to advance and not falter; they must do it themselves and could not wait for someone else to do it for them, not even Stalin himself. The third stanza states: “A nosotros, hermanos de ese toro en castigo, / de ese pueblo que un día enfrentó a su enemigo / como una clamorosa fiesta de valentía, / nos toca levantarlo para su nuevo día” (27). He defined the Spanish bull as the Spanish people, so that when he wrote, he in truth worked to lift up the people. The people also represented his political poetic tie. The people were cultured yet fought in the streets as this *poeta en la calle*. The poem then described that future in the final stanza as filled with furor, liberty, clarity, and cheer; yet the poets (himself included) might not deserve that new place unless they worked without ceasing: “[...] trabajemos, hermanos!” (730). In this poem we see that poetics could revive the political and aesthetic fusion in other people; he had to present an aesthetically pleasing product that at the same time could convince its audience of the legitimacy of a political stance. This last poem of the first section of *Signos del día* exemplifies that possibility.

Although *Signos del día* was completed in 1955 and first appeared in 1961, as we have seen so far, the same principles from that lost Spain push the nostalgic Alberti to work toward a fusion between politics and his poetics. Here he calls out to his fellow exiles so that they also do the same, despite more than fifteen years of exile. Those that did not write or publish on behalf of the fallen Republic let her down: “¡oh poetas, oh hermanos de la palabra fuerte!, / no cantar claro dándole la mano es darle muerte” (730). Alberti’s commitment was still clear; he still strove to negotiate between his poetics and his politics in his poetry. By continuing to urge others to join with him, he is an example of an unwavering commitment to both.

Part 2 of *Signos del día* focuses on various key figures from the past such as Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, Bergamín, Neruda, and others. Here we will explore how Alberti strove to connect these figures with his ideal of a political poetics, and later incorporated them into his rhetoric in order to recruit his contemporaries so that they might also forge ahead toward a fusion of politics with their aesthetics. Alberti looks to the great intellectuals of the past for inspiration; yet at the same time he condemns certain political decisions of his time. Of the names that he mentions, he includes Apollinaire, Nietzsche, Gorki, and others. His political commentary that ends the poem (and Part 2 for that matter) suggests that these great figures of the past would have turned over in their graves because of the political situation of the 1950s: “Y el asno, siempre inteligente / y lleno de ideas geniales / se autopropona presidente / del reino de los animales” (735). Unless the intellectuals realized the danger that this donkey proposed, they would also fall into the trap that separated the political from the poetics.

So, in parts 3 and 4, in order to help his contemporaries, he dedicated poems to them so that they might not be consumed by the donkey's propositions. In fact, the first poem of Part 3, "A Pablo Neruda, después de tantas cosas," also shows that by including others, he appeals to them and also implies that they share his ideal fusion. In order to do so, Alberti returns to the carnation metaphor from *Entre el clavel y la espada*. First the carnation is "pausado," then it is "armado" (734). The symbol could also represent Neruda because his political poetry had also flowered during the Republic. Alberti embodied that tie through a metaphor: "Cuando el calmo clavel saltó en espada, / en sangre el mar ya sin frontal ni freno / y el corazón en polvo sacudido / tú, flor fuiste la flor más señalada, / tú, mar, el mar más amoroso y pleno, / tú, corazón, el más enardecido" (734). Although these praises are not limited to Neruda (Alberti also praises his other contemporaries such as Elviro Romero, Luis Carlos Prestes, General Walter, Steve Nelson, and Ilha Ehrenburg), the poems in Part 3 continue to build up a political and poetic link by striving to sustain others in their continued support of a political stance in their works.

In part 4 he includes poems for his fellow *exiliados*, José Bergamín and Dolores Ibárruri (la Pasionaria). Undoubtedly each poem either condemns opposition to his stance or praises support for those who share it. The final poem of the collection, "El toro del pueblo vuelve," demonstrates how the poet compares his work with the 'true' Spanish people. First of all, he states that Franco had thought that the bull had "rotas las astas, el testuz vencido" (747), but the poet knows that the bull remains alive and well because he is the very person who has helped to keep the commitment alive. Then, the speaker

highlights the fact that the bullring represents the entirety of Spain (748). This suggests once again, as during the Second Republic, an idealized unity that the people should have established, but could not obtain. It appears that beyond political unity, cohesion would arise to oust the unfair governing power. This time, according to the speaker of the poem, there would be no resistance.

Although the poet idealized the future Spain as a land of fairness and equality, it reminds the reader of the failed Republic (with promises of a bright future). The rhetoric here stems purely from the proclamation of the Republic after the dictatorship's downfall and the king's exile; nothing could control the bull: "No habrá oscuros que lo lidien, / no habrá picas, no habrá capas, / banderillas que lo doblen, / estocadas que lo hagan / morder el polvo, mulillas / que lo arrastren. ¡No habrá nada! / Sólo su hervor y una nueva / lumbre en los montes de España" (749). Just as nothing could control the Spanish people, nothing could change his political poetic fusion.

*Signos del día*, as we have seen, continued to combine politics and aesthetics through nostalgia as in the other works studied up to this point. What we have now seen is that the poet focuses on how to collaborate more effectively with others so that a political poetic tie did not die. By focusing on his contemporaries and their role to keep the fusion alive, he could project certain principles on them and pull them in to his ideal, and, at the same time, he could make sure that they knew that he would keep them on track.

## RETORNOS DE LO VIVO LEJANO

Now we will continue to explore the possible continuation of Alberti's political poetics in his most well-known book in exile, *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*. Alberti began writing *Retornos de lo vivo lejano* in 1948, and as the title suggests, the work focuses on various returns, returns that make up a far away life. Each of the poems has the word *retorno* in it, implying that despite the poet's nostalgia and separation from Spain, he could return even if it were through his thoughts. Also, as in Alberti's other collections that we have examined up to this point, we will look for ways that *Retornos* analyzes Alberti's own poetic trajectory. Once again, we will search for both nostalgia and self-analysis as contributors to maintain his political poetics. In other words, the following pages will explore both his nostalgia and his self-analysis to see if they continue to contribute to a fusion of politics and poetry in *Retornos*.

His preoccupation with his past life in Spain is apparent in the first poem, where he imagines that "También estará ahora lloviendo, neblinando / en aquellas bahías de mis muertes" (817). Although the poem's denunciations are more subtle and ambiguous than those of *Signos del día*, they still remind us of a symbolic death of the Republic, and at the same time the symbolic death of the poet's pre-1930s poetry. Throughout the rest of the first poem of the collection, Alberti reminisced about his childhood, yet he began by using the previously mentioned metaphor of his exit from Spain as if it were a first death, one from which he would resurrect. The distance that separates Spain and the poet allegorically is represented by bad weather. He writes that because of the political situation in Spain, rain and storms reign there now: "También por la neblina entre el

pinar, lloviendo, / lloviendo, y la tormenta también, los ya distantes / truenos con gritos celebrados, últimos / el fustazo final del rayo por las torres” (817). These storms were filled with “celebrated yells” until the final whipping of lightning; the metaphor justified his denunciatory position as in *Entre el clavel y la espada*. Yet, because of his constant *retornos* to *aquel* place, the poem demonstrated a way to denounce his exile. He made a political statement about his position while outside of his homeland, and simultaneously maintained the aesthetic goal in his poetry to move his reader. For example, although here the poem contained some specific memories of the poet’s childhood (Agustín, José Ignacio, Paquillo, el hijo del cochero), it was also pock-marked with what remained after his exile: “Se murió el mar, se murió el mar, murieron / con el las cosas que llegaron. Quedan, / ya sólo quedan, ¿oyes? / una conversación confusa, un errabundo / coloquio sin palabras que entender, un temido, un invasor espanto / a regresar sin ojos, a cerrarlos sin sueño” (818). The confused conversation that remained after death suggests that he might not be sure whether his poetics *entre el clavel y la espada* will maintain its clarity from before. The words here suggest that he would offer colloquia, but because of the fall of the Republic, those words might not be understood. Although his words might not be understood in his present, he will continue to produce them with the belief that a *retorno* would occur and make them comprehensible. Through poem’s hermetic language, a similar voice to that of *Pleamar* resurfaced and strove to avoid explicit political allusions unlike some of the poems of *Signos del día*. In these collections it is as if there was a battle between open specific examples of commitment and indistinct political allusions.

Either way, Alberti's political stance and his poetry try to struggle and find a Spain that is no more.

In fact, the poet's faith in the return of the Republic's principles continues to mix with his childhood memories. In the second poem, Alberti first writes that despite the recent storm (the fall of the Republic), "me escapo esta mañana inaugural de octubre / hacia los lejanísimos años de mi colegio" (819). It is not a coincidence that he mentions that it is the month of October that he happens to remember his childhood. The reference to October in this poem reminds us of other *octubres inaugurales* of 1917 and 1934. At the same time, his exile appears as a blockade for his memory, a memory that works to put the pieces back together and return to the beauty and innocence of his childhood. Here we see both of the inspirations of his political and poetic synthesis. At the same time the alexandrine lines of this poem (except for the seven-syllable climax and the seven-syllable final line) demonstrate his concern with poetic tradition. Yet the two half lines also represent his ability to break with that tradition, especially when memories of his earlier years bring to mind his political stance and lead him away from his previous poetics. The final lines remind us that, "Estas cosas me trajo la mañana de octubre, / entre rojos dondiegos de corolas vencidas / y jasmínes caídos" (819). If he were not politically involved in his personal life or had not been recently exiled, these lines might have had a different meaning. October might have had a distinct political connotation or the fallen jasmínes might not have possibly referred to the fall of the Republic. The ambiguity that so far has distinguished *Retornos* from the other works examined up to this point may suggest that the poet was moving away from his political poetics.

Ambiguity once again surfaces in “Retorno de una mañana de primavera.” Could his return to that spring morning refer to his participation/excitement on the fourteenth of April 1931, when the Republic was proclaimed? If he refers in reality to his sister (flesh and blood) in the poem, and if we focus on that possibility, why then does he make sure in his dialogue with her that she knows that he is her sister? “[...] Tú eres / mi hermana, sí, mi hermana” (820). He has to convince the addressee that in reality she is his sister. A sister of flesh and blood would not need that confirmation. So, later in the poem, when he writes: “¿Quién me veda poblarte, hoy a tanta distancia [...] / Mucho has llorado, hermana, para que yo no pueda / llenarte las orillas de pasos venturosos” (821), it would make more sense that he refers to another person or a personified object. His sister, then, could be his lost Republic. And he would “populate” her through his political poetics in *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*.

Then his poem “Retornos de un día de cumpleaños” dedicated to “J. R. J.” (Juan Ramón Jiménez), compares Alberti’s exile with that of one of the self-proclaimed *poetas puros*. In his memoirs, Alberti refers to a time in the mid-1920s when he visited Jiménez, and this poem is dedicated to that visit.<sup>27</sup> Here we have a poem that reminisces of the days of *Marinero en tierra* (“Le llevaba yo estrofas / de mar y marineros [...] (822)); at the same time, his memory of that time has been altered because of his separation from Spain. The poem builds on this memory until the last eight lines when a change in focus occurs: “¡Oh señalado tiempo! / Él entonces tenía / la misma edad que hoy, / dieciseis de diciembre, / tengo yo aquí, tan lejos / de aquella tarde pura / en que le subí el mar / a su

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<sup>27</sup> See *La arboleda perdida: Libro I*.



sola azotea” (823). When the poem signals the distancing from his Spain in comparison with Juan Ramón, it demonstrates the decisive effects of political exile.

The beginning of his exile is the focus of his “Retornos de una mañana de otoño.” Here, the poem refers to the fall of the Republic in the first stanza as “[...] esta interminable desgracia desoída” (824). Beyond simply denouncing the injustices that had occurred in Spain, he claims that, “No es difícil llegar hasta ti sin moverse, / ciudad, ni hasta vosotras, alamedas queridas. / Me basta el amarillo que me cubre y dispone, / difunto, acompañarme adherido a mis pasos” (824). The poet recognized that what he took with him from the Republic (*el amarillo*) would be with him, and his poetics gained political adhesion during the 1930s. The *tú* of the poem once again refers to that lost Republic (“Llego hasta ti, pequeño palacio recogido” (824)); he still believed that through his poetry he can keep the principles of the “palace” alive. In this poem, Alberti’s political side has not diminished; he still calls out against the loss of the legitimate Republic and examines his political development at the same time.

Return to the legitimate Republic appears in the very next poem, “Retornos de un día de retornos.” The poem recognizes the characteristics of the Republic that have remained with the poet and what he would promote upon returning to his *patria*. One of the key ingredients to that Republic was the fact that intellectuals participated in creating the laws and reforming the government. Alberti talks of the exiles and how they would be received in their own land, “Aquí estás, ya has venido, con más noche en la frente. / Llegas de caminante, de romero a tu patria. / Los lugares que hiciste, las horas que creaste, / pasados todavía de tu luz y tu sombra, / salen a recibirte” (825). The principles

that were still alive underneath the surface would resurface upon his return. Also: “sabes bien que el arroyo / que corre por tu voz nunca ha de repetirse, / que a tu imagen pasada no altera la presente” (825). Although his poetics had not changed what it defended politically, it did use other techniques to achieve that end. Specifically in the first part of *Retornos de lo vivo lejano* ambiguity strengthened his political poetics further in that the metaphors and the symbols were more hermetic.

The second section of the *poemario*, titled “Retornos de amor,” implies various returns of “love.” I believe that because of the ambiguity of the “love” that the poems contain, the addressee of the poems can be his *niña bonita* (his lost Republic) and simultaneously refer to his poetics. In other words, the poet manifests that his “love” is what continues to give him reconciliation between politics and his poetry; what we will explore here is the possibility that “love” here may be another hermetic symbol carried over from the first section of the collection.

He refers to his love, as an “amor recién aparecido” in the first poem of the second section. The love of the poem appears when the speaker “penaba yo en la entraña más profunda / de una cueva sin aire y sin salida” (831). The final lines claim that he “no penaba en una cueva oscura, / braceando sin aire y sin salida. // Porque habías al fin aparecido” (831). This love then was what changed the speaker, because of its appearance, but that love appeared when the speaker was in a cave, similar to Plato. When the poet finally saw the light and combined his poetics with his politics, he left the cave and united his politics with his aesthetics.

The image from the poem “Retornos del amor en los balcones” further forwards the possibility that the *tú* here could be his Republic and his poetry simultaneously: “Tus cabellos tendidos vuelan de los balcones / a enredarse en la trama delgada de las redes, / a poner bandarines en los palos más altos / y un concierto de amor en los marinos aires” (833). The vision is that of when the Republic was proclaimed, when various intellectuals and government officials stood in balconies in various government offices all over Spain to announce the victory of new political leadership. In that time when his love for the *niña bonita* was strong, “todo era fuego en aquel tiempo. Ardía / la playa en tu contorno [...] Yo me volqué en tu espuma en aquel tiempo” (833-834). He immersed himself in his political poetics and the fervor of the Republic at the same time.

In fact, he reminisces, “Soñarte, amor, soñarte como entonces [...] Tú eras lo mismo, amor. Todas las Gracias, / igual que tres veranos encendidos” (835), as if he were again in the war. The three summers of the war or other metaphors such as “en una noche de verano,” remind us that despite the fight to tear it apart, the love between speaker and addressee will not falter. In fact, when “[...] en la isla aparecieron barcos / y hombres armados en las playas [...] La edad de oro del amor venía, / pero en la isla aparecieron barcos...” (838-839). That golden age of his love had grown; his poetics had fused with his politics. As he remembered that time, he noted the beginning of his political poetics in his itinerary.

“Retornos del amor en la noche triste” and “Retornos del amor en medio del mar” remind the reader again to look to the past to analyze the present. In the first he asks, “¿Qué soy sin ti mi amor?” and in the second he responds, “Son tus costados como dos

lejanas / bahías en reposo / donde al són de tus brazos solo canta / el silencio de amor que las rodea [...] Voy por el mar, voy sobre ti, mi vida, / sobre tu amor, / hacia tu amor, cantando / tu belleza más bella que las olas” (840-841). Here we have a reference to exile and to his dedication to his aesthetic. The poet would be nothing without his political poetics. In this second part of *Retornos*, although the symbols are more obscure, the longing for his homeland (personified in his *amor*) and exploration of his poetics continue to strengthen his fusion.

In the third part of *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*, love becomes motherly love instead of conjugal love as in part 2. The speaker wonders about a possible return to Spain in the poem “Retornos de una sombra maldita.” He asks, “¿Será difícil, madre, volver a ti? Feroces / somos tus hijos. Sabes / que no te merecemos quizás, que hoy una sombra maldita nos desune, nos separa / de tu agobiado corazón [...]” (850). However, the question followed by a quick answer demonstrates his faithfulness and his ferocity, despite the difficulties. Later on in the poem, he also begs the Republic to gather all of the exiles together back to her: “Júntanos, madre” (851).

That phrase leads to the next poem, where a return to his motherland will also provide a return to “sweet liberty” in “Retornos a la dulce libertad.” The poet assures the Republic that his dedication is stronger than ever. In fact, the addressee of this poem is the poet himself; he refers to himself as “marinero en tierra,” and compares himself with liberty. It reads, “Hoy mi brazo es más fuerte que el de ayer, y mi canto, / encendido en el tuyo, / puede abrir para siempre, / sobre los horizontes del mar nuestra mañana” (852). Only through his song, a song that the Republic had ignited in him, could he get that

strength. Freedom, in fact, equals the *niña*, and his only consolation will be to continue his devotion to the Republic until she returns. He even goes on to say in the next poems that his political poetics became a “dura obsesión” and the fall of the Republic caused an “antigua tristeza” in him (852-853). That nostalgia combined with an analysis of his own development as a poet justified his political poetics, one that had continued at least until this point in his poetry.

His continued loyalty to a lost Republic after approximately twenty years of exile and his dedication to reconciling poetry and politics are the foci of the next four poems, “Retornos frente a los litorales españoles,” “Retornos de un poeta asesinado,” “Retornos de la invariable poesía,” and “Retornos del pueblo español.” As he travels by the coast of Spain on a trip, he refers to his “madre hermosa,” yet beyond that, he denounces the horrible scene from years before: “Por ese largo y duro / costado que submerges en la espuma, fué el calvario de Málaga a Almería, / el despiadado crimen, / todavía —¡oh vergüenza!—sin castigo” (857). Here, the challenge against the Franquists once again is obvious. In fact, that open challenge leads him to memories of his martyred friend, Federico García Lorca. More importantly, he is reminded of his purposes in poetry. He writes, “¡Oh hermana de verdad, oh compañera, / conmigo, desterrada, / conmigo, golpeado y alabado, / conmigo, perseguido; / en la vacilación, firme, segura, / en la firmeza, animadora, alegre, / buena en el odio necesario, buena / y hasta feliz en la melancolía” (859). Despite his melancholy, happiness grew; that happiness embodies his political poetic fusion.

In “Retornos del pueblo español,” that happiness in melancholy becomes more acute:

Y cuando rebosaste los muros, los agónicos  
pozos de las prisiones, los campos de trabajo  
en donde traspiraste por la boca hasta el alma  
aún me llegó de ti, sobre el mar, ese viento  
ese sostén de piedra que hoy a tantos kilómetros  
asegura las alas iguales de mi canto.

*Me hirieron, me golpearon*  
(Tomo ejemplo y miro en ti.)  
*y aunque me dieron la muerte*  
(Tomo ejemplo y miro en ti.)  
*Nunca jamás te doblaron.*  
(Tomo ejemplo y miro en ti.  
Tus hombros me acompañaron.) (862)

Here we see that the fall of the Spanish Republic in 1939 only spurred on his political poetics even further. He compared himself with the Republic, and saw that despite everything that he had suffered because he was willing to combine politics and poetics, his inspiration helped him to keep it alive. The last two lines of the series show how much the Republic had influenced the poet. Although they had both been beaten (the Republic by the Franquist forces, and Alberti by his exile from her), she constantly accompanied him, with the very strength that promoted his poetic and political synthesis.

That very theme underlines all of *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*. Hence it can be concluded that through his nostalgia and self-analysis of his own political project, he continued to forward a balance between politics and poetics. First he refers to the Republic as his sister, then as his love, then as his mother. In each of these cases, *la niña bonita* contributes to a more balanced political poetics: first as a companion in development, then as a partner in creation, and last as a nurturing guide. In other words,

so far, in Alberti's post-1930s texts, each has shown how nostalgia for the Republic and self-analysis of his poetics reconciled his politics with his poetics.

### *COPLAS DE JUAN PANADERO*

From 1949 to 1953, Alberti wrote his *Coplas de Juan Panadero*. Of all of Alberti's texts that I have explored up to this point, this collection is written in the least abstract form. Through these simple tercets (irregular *coplas*), the poet slyly presents his powerful support and commitment to his politics and his aesthetics approximately ten years after Franco's victory. He achieves that goal by using a simple method, one that some readers may find too simple and archaic to be real poetry. His method is to write tercets, where the first and the third verses rhyme. Now, sometimes he does include pairs of *coplas* that have four lines and occasionally some have five lines. By trying to show the simplicity of his make-believe poet, Juan Panadero, Alberti challenged the norm of tradition that claimed that poetry had to be complex in order to have aesthetic value and simultaneously captured the voice of the people. Yet, as we examine these three-verse poems I believe that they display similar nostalgic and self-analyzing elements that reflect Rafael Alberti's political poetics through a simple poet of the people, who says much without saying much at all.

The first section of the collection (called "Autorretrato de Juan Panadero") gives a self-portrait of this poet of the people. He claims in the first poem that "El pan que amaso es de harina / que nadie puede comprar" (869). Here the speaker claims that he will not sell his principles at any cost. Then he gives examples of those who have tried to buy him

out: “Tengo dientes, tengo manos, / y en la punta de los pies, / puntapiés para el inglés / y los norteamericanos” (870). But the denouncement does not end there: “¡Mueran los imperialistas!” (870). He even attacks his old nemesis: “Repito esas tres señales: ¡Franco, fuego! ¡Franco, muerte! / ¡Franco, muerte, fuego y sangre!” (871). Similar to Alberti’s collections from the 1930s, *Coplas* begins with direct and open political criticisms. If this were the only poem that the poet had ever written or were the only poem in the collection, a reader may note pure political rhetoric. However, the next section of the collection focuses specifically on his poetics.

After the obvious political references in the first section, the next short section titled, “Poética de Juan Panadero,” turns to the aesthetic. The speaker “no di[ce] como los tontos: ‘que hay que hablar en tonto al pueblo’” (872). Yet that does not mean that his poetry cannot be aesthetically pleasing. He states:

9  
Si no hubiera tantos males  
yo de mis coplas haría  
torres de pavos reales.

10  
Pero a aquél lo están matando,  
a éste lo están consumiendo  
y a otro lo están enterrando. (873)

Here the speaker recognizes the fact that the links between his poetics and his politics are inseparable because of his world around him.

The third section of *Coplas* is called “Juan Panadero en la guerra española” and the baker talks of how “Toda España se salía / como de madre. Era el mar, / el mar lo que España abría” (876). The allusion to the forced separation of the majority of Spaniards



that supported the Republic also gives birth to a new Spaniard who will follow in the footsteps of his mother. Later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> and final tercet of the series, it shows how the exiled Alberti hoped that the principles of the Republic would return: “Era un día de verano / Muy pronto vendrá el que traiga / la nueva lumbré en la mano” (876). Beyond simple Communist rhetoric, the *copla* moves from the memories of the past to the new light of the future, a demonstration of how experiences of the Republic would contribute to a new future, as it had contributed to unify politics and aesthetics in his poetry.

In fact, the next section in the series of *coplas*, “Juan Panadero en América,” continues to sing to Spain despite the *panadero*’s exile from it. He writes, “Y así se puso a cantar / Juan Panadero de España / del otro lado del mar” (877). The last poem of this series (number 21) implies the fact that he still continues to work for Spain despite his exile: “Y ahora yo, Juan Panadero, / muelo para España trigo, / pero con aire extranjero. / (Extranjero, pero amigo.)” (880). Juan Panadero and Rafael Alberti performed the same function to keep the Republic alive through their poetry: they looked at how their own poetics matured through the experiences from the 1930s.

The growth of the political poetics is the focus of a later section called “Otras coplas sobre la poética de Juan Panadero.” First we see that “El barro, si es puro barro / tan solo, no es poesía [...] Y si le sucede a la estrella, / si es pura estrella, ser fuego / que todavía no sueña” (883). Here the poet shows how a focus on either politics only or on aesthetics only produces incomplete poetry. Here, Alberti continues to justify his political poetics tie by pointing out that if it were one-sided only, it would not be poetry. Therefore, his thesis remains that a synthesis of “stars” and “dirt” is what makes his

poems. In fact, his thesis appears to only imply that those who find a synthesis between poetry and politics are true poets.

Later, in another section of *coplas* called “Juan Panadero insiste sobre su poética,” the poet focuses on what his poetics has become in order to look to the future. In these couplets, there is not one reference to the past; there is not one verb in past tense. At the same time, the speaker points out that his poetics is not simple, despite the simple set up of couplets. The lines of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> *coplas* show this perspective: “[3] Nadie de Juan Panadero / piense que es simple. Si soy / simple es porque así lo quiero. [4] Sencillo, porque disparo / contra lo oscuro, sabiendo / que el aire ha de ser muy claro. [5] Para oscuro, un calabozo, / y para claro, la luna / llena en el fondo de un pozo” (61). Although *sencillos* these poems are far from *simples*.

*Coplas de Juan Panadero* is overlooked by criticism because of its supposed simplicity and its political references. Although it may appear that Alberti simply created a ping-pong effect between Juan Panadero’s politics and his poetics, the collection also reflects once again, that Alberti analyzed the legitimacy of his political-poetic synthesis through nostalgia, hence the reason for “Poética de Juan Panadero,” “Otras coplas sobre la poética de Juan Panadero,” and “Juan Panadero insiste sobre su poética.” As he writes in “Juan Panadero insiste sobre su poética,” “Vendrá el día, vendrá el día / en que el que dice ‘ya sé’, / dirá al fin: ‘Yo no sabía’” (917).

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have hoped to demonstrate the permanence of the marriage between politics and poetry that occurred in Alberti's work from the Spanish Republic during the 1930s until the mid-1950s. As we have seen, his two anthologies from the Republic *El poeta en la calle* and *De un momento a otro* united his politics and his poetics. After 1939, nostalgia and self evaluation of his poetic trajectory contributed to build up that political and poetic fusion in *Vida bilingüe de un refugiado español en Francia*, *Entre el clavel y la espada*, *Pleamar*, *Signos del día*, *Retornos de lo vivo lejano*, and *Coplas de Juan Panadero*. Through my analysis of the six works in this study that Alberti wrote after his exile, we can conclude that Alberti wrote several later collections that did not alter this balance. That synthesis, which did not end after the fall of the Second Spanish Republic, was nurtured by the poet and it allowed him to continue to move readers both aesthetically and politically.

### CHAPTER 3: PABLO NERUDA: EPIC REVOLUTIONARY POET

*La fuerte sangre española  
le puso a Pablo en el pecho  
un borbotón de amapolas.  
Y le dio lo que le dio:  
una garganta tan honda,  
que ya fue un pozo su voz.*

(Rafael Alberti, *Coplas de Juan Panadero* 31)

La experiencia española cambia la vida y la obra de Neruda.  
Esto no es nada nuevo y el propio poeta insistió en ello.  
(Gutiérrez Revuelta y Gutiérrez, 41)

#### INTRODUCTION

In a 1937 interview, Pablo Neruda testified of his experience in Spain that: “Sólo he podido ver los acontecimientos con ojos de poeta y éstos tendrán una profunda influencia en mi poesía futura” (Seguel in Shidlowsky 276). What lacks is a sufficient study been done on the “profound influence” of the poet’s experiences in the Spanish Republic on his later poetry. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how Neruda’s poetics developed during the Republic and how that poetics gave him the ability to create his own model of an ideal *patria* that he would develop in his poetry after the fall of the Republic in 1939. Thus, this project will explore how Neruda’s experience in the Spanish Republic contributed to a balance between politics and aesthetics and the continuation of that balance in his later work. I hypothesize that the later works have imprints of politics and poetics that grew during the Republic. This chapter explores how each collection (during and after the Republic) tries to establish guidelines and characteristics of a future

ideal place where his politics and poetics can fuse together in his overall work until the end of the 1950s.

After a brief history of Neruda's life/poetic productions before 1934 and a brief framework of the various criticisms that exist about his works, first, the chapter focuses on Neruda's political poetics in the second half of *Residencia en la tierra* (1931-1935) and the first half of *Tercera Residencia* (1935-1937), that is, from his arrival in Spain in 1934 until his departure in 1937. Then, the chapter examines several of his post-Republic works, beginning with the final poems of *Tercera Residencia* (1947), *Canto general* (1950), *Odas elementales* (1954), *Nuevas odas elementales* (1956), and *Tercer libro de las odas* (1957). Although these last four works were not his only works from these years (he published a work yearly during the decade of the 1950s<sup>28</sup>), these works establish the poet's poetic trajectory. Furthermore, the odes are far enough away from the immediate effects of the Spanish Republic on the poet that they permit us to understand better the lasting equilibrium between politics and aesthetics in Neruda's overall poetics.

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY LEADING UP TO THE REPUBLIC

Pablo Neruda (Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes) was born in Parral, Chile in 1904 and published his first poems when he was only thirteen years old. Later, in his early twenties, he produced various collections, *Crepusculario* (1923), *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* (1924), *Tentativa del hombre infinito* (1926), and *El habitante*

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<sup>28</sup> *Canto general* (1950), *Los versos del capitán* (1952), *Poesía política* (1953), *Las uvas y el viento* (1954), *Odas elementales* (1954), *Viajes* (1955), *Nuevas odas elementales* (1956), *Tercer libro de las odas* (1957), *Estravagario* (1958), *Navegaciones y regresos* (1959) and *Cien sonetos de amor* (1959).

*y su esperanza* (1926), that began to build up the poet's popularity. Of these initial collections, Neruda later said, "El escritor joven no puede escribir sin ese sentimiento de soledad, aunque sea ficticio, así como el escritor maduro no hará nada sin el sentimiento de compañía humana, de sociedad" (Neruda in Loyola 11). In other words, the poet himself recognized that he was still searching for his poetic voice in the 1920s. During that search, in 1927, Neruda travelled to Rangoon where he worked at the Chilean consulate. After serving as consul in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Batavia (Java), Singapore, and Argentina he was reassigned to Spain in 1934. He first worked at the consulate in Barcelona and then was transferred to the Chilean embassy in Madrid, where he took up his residence. His home in Madrid became known as *La casa de las flores* because it was here where poetics and politics united on a daily basis; the house acted as a beacon for artists and politicians alike. Because of his social popularity he became the director of *Caballo verde para la poesía*, a literary magazine dedicated to "impure" poetry, a poetry that implied commitment to social issues, a poetics tied to reality. That poetry, tied to political reality is now united in *Tercera residencia*. During the Spanish Civil War, after the military coup in 1936, Neruda moved to Paris where politics and poetics continued to intertwine. For example, while in Paris, Neruda and César Vallejo organized the *Comité Ibero-Americano para la defensa de la República Española* (C.I.A.P) committed to the Spanish Republic.<sup>29</sup> Neruda also published support for the legitimate government in Spain with Nancy Cunard in *Los poetas del mundo defienden al pueblo español*. His commitment to the Republic also pushed him to invite all of the Latin American

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<sup>29</sup> César Vallejo, a Peruvian poet, worked toward equality for the underrepresented masses through his poetry and also published in favor of the Spanish Republic before his death in 1937.

participants to the Second Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture. His support for the Republic was only strengthened during the course of the 1930s and his experience there as a fellow traveler of the Communist Party then pushed him to affiliate himself with the party later in 1945.

## CRITICISM

Sifting through the many pages of criticism that have been written on Pablo Neruda, up until recently there had been two divisions that focus on his poetics: 1) a liberal tradition that focuses on his poetry and discounts his political adhesions as not related to his poetic genius and 2) a Marxist tradition that focuses on the dialectical materialism of his texts and downplays Neruda's bourgeois individuality as an intellectual. Although the liberal tradition looks at his poetry despite his politics and the Marxist tradition looks at his poetry because of his politics, both trends have one thing in common: they recognize the importance that Neruda placed on his experience in Spain, but neither gives an adequate look at his post-1939 collections to trace the political and aesthetic interaction that first occurred during the Spanish Republic. Beyond these two traditions, there has been a push recently to appreciate both aspects of Neruda's work, but a search for balance between the two after the Spanish Republic needs further consideration. The following pages look at the traditions of Nerudian criticism (some of the foundational texts) in order to demonstrate that what is needed now more than ever is a study of the balance between the politics and aesthetics that drove the poet's work.

## LIBERAL TRADITION

Amado Alonso's *Poesía y estilo de Pablo Neruda: interpretación de una poesía hermética* (the first edition was published in 1940) was one of the first in-depth studies written on Neruda's poetics. Because of its year of publication, the work was limited to Neruda's poetry up to *Residencia en la tierra*. In the second edition (published in 1951), Alonso also included a study of *Tercera Residencia*. This later addition to his study (chapter VIII called "La conversión poética de Pablo Neruda") argues that suddenly in *Tercera Residencia* Neruda suffered a poetic crisis. The previous chapters focus on topics such as "Angustia y desintegración," "intuición y sentimiento," and "la índole de la fantasía de Pablo Neruda," with the supposition that all of these aspects end with *Tercera Residencia*. Alonso's words are clear: *Tercera residencia* is "[...] una poesía social y de combate político [...] su poesía se empleará solamente en la lucha social" (Alonso 360-362). Although Alonso states, "La misma voz poética es reconocible en la nueva poesía, aunque cambiada de tono" (364), his underlying argument is the following:

La cuestión es si el poeta domina y señorea su material, o si su material (en este caso la experiencia vivida) lo domina a él. En medio de la desesperación de la aflicción o la rabia, y más que nada en medio de la lucha, no es probable hacer su poetización, o por lo menos no tan cumplida como cuando el poeta toma distancia y, puesto a contemplar sus propios sentimientos, los puede señorear y modelar con mano segura. (365)

Here, Alonso pits aesthetic quality in Neruda's work against politics. How do we know when and where in his work that the poet has actually distanced himself from what he writes? A study of love poetry, for example, may suggest complete lack of distance and utter emotion; many of the poems of Neruda's own *Veinte poemas de amor y una*



*canción desesperada* could have been written during the time of his love. Beyond his love poetry, I believe that his post-1939 collections are distanced from his “conversion” and the Spanish Republic to recognize the importance of his tie between politics and poetics. Despite that tie, Alonso’s study has influenced other works among Nerudian critics to the present day, and the fact that he mentions that Neruda suffered a *crisis poética* at the same moment as his political conversion has implied in criticism that politics and aesthetics are irreconcilable in Neruda’s work.

After Alonso’s study, Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Enrico Mario Santi’s anthology *Pablo Neruda* (1980) continues to discount the political aspect of Neruda’s poetry. In his article “El sistema del poeta,” Rodríguez Monegal writes, “La poesía que Neruda propone en su «Arte poética» es, pues, una poesía profética” (70) but later, “El poeta habrá de renunciar a su pasado de lobo, aceptará la solidaridad con todos los hombres y convertirá su poesía en arma de combate [...] Creo que el poeta olvida en este momento la visión profética que él mismo había subrayado en su poesía” (76). According to Rodríguez Monegal, that vision only returns later in Neruda’s 1958 collection *Estravagario*. What happened from 1939-1958? “Una poética nueva, la poética del realismo socialista, que es la doctrina oficial del mundo comunista de entonces” (84). So, Rodríguez Monegal in some way would like to discount Neruda’s poetry from these years as simple Communist rhetoric.

To steer away from Neruda’s political side, Manuel Durán and Margery Safir’s *Earth tones: the poetry of Pablo Neruda* (1981) looks at the development of Neruda’s poetics when it separates his work into four different epochs: “the erotic poet,” “the

nature poet,” “the public poet,” and “the personal poet.” Among the works that Durán and Safir focus on, *Tercera residencia* is not one of them (although part of *Tercera Residencia, España en el corazón* is briefly mentioned), even as it stands as one of the most important links to the four-part trajectory. At the same time, when speaking of *Canto general* Durán and Safir write: “Yet Neruda’s open political activity during these years and the epic nature of the masterpiece that emerged from it have tended to obscure the fact that much of *Canto general* is, in reality, love poetry” (19). These authors give more importance to his seducing tone than to his epic political stance. They assert also that “To suggest, however, that in leaving behind the overtly political thrust of *Canto general*, Neruda abandoned his political commitment would be a gross error. The *Odes* are not in any way directly ideological, it is true; yet they reflect attitudes that are ideological” (Durán and Safir 55). Their thesis on the odes is that Neruda moved from a cryptic lyric to poetic clarity. The clarity in Neruda’s poetics stemmed from one important event: “From the Spanish Civil War on, his poetry becomes simpler and simpler, reaching its utmost clarity in the *Odes*” (Durán and Safir 63).

## MARXIST TRADITION

In response to the liberal critiques of Neruda’s poetics, one of the most influential works of the Marxist tradition, Jaime Concha’s *Neruda (1904-1936)*, strove to concentrate more on Marxism’s influences on the poet than on the poet’s bourgeois individuality. Publishing his work in 1972, Concha distanced himself from Alonso, but shared a similar limitation: he looked at Neruda’s poetry only up until 1936. Therefore,

he does not show the continuity that existed between the poet's political poetics from the Republic and after. However, he does refer to the politics of Neruda's work, the "formidable sentido dialéctico" as influenced by the poet's experience in Spain: "[...] la situación individual del poeta y el momento histórico de España coinciden" (Concha 245). Concha calls this combination (based on his study of *Residencia en la tierra*) Neruda's "visión totalizadora." This vision contains elements such as "significación histórica de los objetos," "la figura del héroe," and "el area de las estaciones" (249), which implies Neruda's complete dedication to Marxism. In fact, in a later article called "El descubrimiento del pueblo en la poesía de Neruda" Concha concludes: "Las observaciones hechas nos autorizan para postular una total correspondencia entre la poesía de Neruda y su posición marxista [...] la lección permanente de esta poesía es la superación que lleva a efecto del sentimiento individualista, superación consumada de una vez para siempre" (Concha, *Tres ensayos*, 94-95). It would appear from Concha's work that Neruda threw himself headfirst into Communism and that individuality in his work could not exist after his adoption of political poetics.

Working in light of Concha's study, the French critic, Alain Sicard wrote *El pensamiento político de Pablo Neruda*.<sup>30</sup> Sicard's work takes that idea of *realismo socialista* and mentions that as early as "[...] las dos primeras *Residencias*, [Neruda es] un poeta consciente de su responsabilidad histórica y de sus «deberes»" (Sicard 103). Sicard argues that the poet's politics contribute to his overall poetic trajectory even before 1939. Building off of Alonso, he calls Neruda's poetic project "una ambición

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<sup>30</sup> The work was translated into Spanish by Pilar Ruiz Va in 1981.

totalizadora” (Sicard 137). Neruda’s ambition to be the epic poet of the twentieth century was enhanced by his experience in the Republic, which led to his *Canto general* and his later *Odas* as we will see in a few moments. However, the third part of Sicard’s work “El poeta y la historia” is the most relevant to our study:

Enfocar las relaciones entre historia y poesía en términos de exclusion o asimilación es, inevitablemente, meterlas en un callejón sin salida, y eso a partir de una determinada definición de la historia y de la poesía. Pero no todos son malentendidos propiamente dichos: revisten un contenido ideológico concreto. Algunos fingen confundir a Neruda con el historiador marxista que no es, para desacreditar al poeta materialista que es. Desde 1936, Neruda escribe según una concepción materialista de la Historia, y señalar la presencia, en la obra del poeta, de elementos que pertenecen al materialismo histórico es necesario frente a una crítica dispuesta con demasiada frecuencia a silenciarlos. (234-235)

Sicard, then, will not silence the important contributions that historical materialism has had on Neruda’s overall work. The key here, which I share with Sicard, is to not limit the relationship between poetry and history (or politics) where one either excludes or assimilates the other. In Neruda’s work, as we hope to find in the coming pages, that relationship could become more apparent during the Second Spanish Republic and could have repercussions in his post-1939 collections.

## SEARCH FOR RECONCILIATION

Despite Alonso’s influence on one side and Concha’s on the other, René de Costa’s *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda* (1979) searches for possibilities of a “nonpartisan reassessment of each [Nerudian] work considered to be major, the political and the nonpolitical” (Costa ix). In de Costa’s study, he notes that “[...] *Tercera residencia* must, therefore be considered [...] from the dual perspective of art and society, poetry and

politics” (93). Then, according to de Costa, the *Canto general* shifted to a focus on epic poetry, and left the political poetry behind. I believe that beyond de Costa’s argument the poems of *Tercera Residencia* “close one cycle and clear the way for another” (104), and that they contributed to and enhanced Neruda’s post-1939 poetry. The epic character of the *Canto general* did not eradicate Neruda’s politics, but as de Costa states, it contributed “to move the reader totally, to affect not only his literary sensibility but his social consciousness as well” (99). De Costa himself asserts later that “[...] the reader of *Canto general* [was] manipulated aesthetically and plied ideologically in Neruda’s five-hundred-page effort to win him over to the cause” (142). Whether or not *Tercera Residencia* closed the political cycle then remained unsolved.

After more than twenty years without an extensive study on Neruda’s work, David Shidlowky wanted to disentangle Neruda’s biography and give insights to the poet’s work in his *Las furias y las penas: Pablo Neruda y su tiempo*. Published in 2003, this extensive, two-volume study takes a biographical look at Neruda and separates his life into various sections, three of which are relevant to our study: “Pablo Neruda Cónsul,” “Pablo Neruda: político y poeta (1943-1949)” and “Exilio: política comunista y poesía (1949-52). Shidlowky first attributes Neruda’s poetic shift in the 1930s to the First International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in Paris (1935): “Mientras la poesía nerudiana hasta ese momento era claramente nihilista e individualista, a partir de este Congreso Neruda inicia un proceso personal de politización que seguirá desarrollando y profundizando” (238). Later Shidlowky changes his mind: “En febrero [de 1936] la situación política en España cambia. Es un cambio con enormes

repercusiones para el futuro español, y para el futuro de Neruda” (257). So the change was then attributed to the Popular Front elections in February, 1936. Then, beyond the first two possibilities, Shidlowsky once again modifies his thesis and comments that the change occurred in July, 1936, when the Spanish people rose up and stifled the military coup: “Neruda por primera vez deja atrás su nihilismo, su romanticismo intelectual. Aún no es el poeta de una línea política clara, pero es uno que grita contra la injusticia en España. Es su primer poema comprometido” (268). In other words, Shidlowsky says that there are three instances when the commitment began: the First Congress in Paris, the elections of the *Frente Popular* in February, 1936, or the beginning of the war. One thing is for certain: each of these instances occurred during the Spanish Republic. The political and intellectual fervor of the Republic was the contributing factor to his poetry not only until the end of the Spanish Civil War, but for many years after as well.

More recently, Nerudian criticism has continued to work toward a dialogue between liberal and Marxist views. For example, Greg Dawes published his *Verses against the darkness: Pablo Neruda's Poetry and Politics* in 2006. Dawes worked to combine “liberal and Marxist tendencies in the criticism” (26). His was the first study that looks at *Tercera Residencia* as a junction of politics and aesthetics in Neruda's trajectory. Dawes also recognizes the debates about Neruda's collections. He points out that either Marxist criticisms do not adequately recognize Neruda's individuality as an artist (“[...][they] argue that Neruda holds reformist capitalism in too high a regard”) or liberal critics do not want to recognize the influences of politics in his work (“[...] if critics are not willing to consider the history of Marxism, the major debates, stances, and

political conflicts, the different forms of Marxism will go unnoticed” (Dawes 52)). These recent considerations on the work of the Chilean poet point out the lack of dialogue that exists between the two fields, and a way to reconcile them. Dawes focused more specifically on *Tercera residencia*. What is needed more than ever is a look at Neruda’s post-1939 work as a continuation of the political and poetic parallels that he had defended during his time in the Spanish Republic.

## NERUDA’S POETRY DURING THE REPUBLIC

Two of Neruda’s collections were written and/or published during the Spanish Republic. The last third of *Residencia en la tierra* was written in the Republic and the entire work was published in 1935. Simultaneously, Neruda began writing *Tercera Residencia* in 1935. These two works show his initial response to the ideals of the Republic and also demonstrate the poet’s admiration of those ideals. The following pages now explore how the poetry responded to Neruda’s experience in the Republic where the ideal of a balance between politics and aesthetics surfaced through these two collections.

### *RESIDENCIA EN LA TIERRA*

Written from 1925-1935, *Residencia en la tierra* is in reality two works in one. Neruda wrote the first section, *Residencia en la tierra I*, between 1925 and 1931. As early as 1927, Neruda already had in mind some of the characteristics of a new poetics that he was looking for, yet it lacked concreteness and refinement. His poetic search developed in the poems of *Residencia*. The poetics that he was looking for became a far away land,

the goal of his search: “Hay un país en el cielo / con las supersticiosas alfombras del arco-iris / y con vegetaciones vesperales / hacia allí me dirijo, no sin cierta fatiga, / pisando una tierra removida de sepulcros un tanto frescos, / yo sueño entre esas plantas de legumbre confusa” (*Residencia en la tierra* 94). Here, he wrote that he was headed toward that place, toward his goal of finding his own poetic voice. He had to build on the recently “dead” ideas of the 1920s while he dealt with an uncertain future and confused paths. Although undefined, the poetics that he aspired to began to take shape in book II of *Residencia en la tierra*; the formation of that poetic style of the second *libro* coincided with Neruda’s move to Spain.

According to Hernán Loyola, the chronological order of the poems from *Residencia en la tierra II* written in the Spanish Republic are: “Alberto Rojas Giménez viene volando,” “El reloj caído en el mar” (both written in Barcelona), “Enfermedades en mi casa,” “Vuelve el otoño,” *Tres cantos materiales* (“Entrada a la madera,” “Apogeo del apio,” and “Estatuto del vino”), “El desenterrado,” “La calle destruida,” “Melancolía en las familias,” “No hay olvido (sonata),” “Josie Bliss,” and “Oda a Federico García Lorca” (15). Although Neruda places the poems in a different order in the work, I believe that Loyola’s chronological order determines the development of his poetic voice. Through “Vuelve el otoño,” the three *cantos materiales*, and “Oda a Federico García Lorca” the following pages explore how his poetry exemplifies his search for and characteristics of an ideal place where his poetic balance could exist.



In “Vuelve el otoño,” first of all he points out that as a “solitario poeta” he senses fear and doubt that surround him in “cielo” and “atmósfera” (232).<sup>31</sup> His fear and doubt are caused by the *bienio negro* government’s suppression of the rebellion in Asturias (that also had occurred in Autumn, 1934). Then, in the second stanza, he denounces the government “la gente deposita sus confianzas en sórdidas orejas / los asesinos bajan escaleras” (232). The government was deaf to the needs of the people. Hernán Loyola points out that these lines “[...] aluden en cambio a la esfera pública: la crítica situación política española del otoño de 1934” (Loyola en Neruda, *Residencia en la tierra* 298). So, if the verses allude to Neruda’s position about the critical political situation in Spain, we can see that he was committed to the preservation of ideals of the Republic, not to the leaders of the *bienio negro* that repressed the miner’s revolution in Asturias.<sup>32</sup> The poet found himself in a tense moment of political fervor. Yet, at the same time, he was still unsure if a commitment to that political fervor would demean his poetics or not. In other words, this poem also alludes to the critical situation of a possible tie between politics and poetics. The poet asked himself if he should seek a balance between politics and aesthetics in his work or not.

If balance was in question, then what inspired the poet can give us insights into how he maneuvered between politics and aesthetics. Neruda wrote three poems that he called his *Tres cantos materiales*. The *Tres cantos materiales* (“Entrada a la madera,” “Apogeo del apio,” and “Estatuto del vino”), besides giving the reader a glimpse of his

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<sup>31</sup> These quotes come from Pablo Neruda, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1957) unless otherwise marked.

<sup>32</sup> In *The Spanish Labyrinth*, Brennan discusses how many of the conservative leaders of the *bienio negro* in reality tried to undermine the Republic. See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

*Odas* more than twenty years later, show how poetics and politics jockeyed with each other. For example, in the climax of the first *canto material*, “Entrada a la madera,” the poet delivers himself up to a tree or a trunk of a tree. This tree trunk appears in a historical moment for the speaker; it is also a personal moment, one when the poet had moved to Spain in 1934. He declares: “caigo al imperio de los nomeolvides, / a una tenaz atmósfera de luto [...] Caigo en la sombra, en medio / de destruídas cosas” (217). The personal experience for the speaker (when he arrived in an atmosphere of mourning with destroyed things), has parallels to Neruda’s arrival in Spain during the *bienio negro*. Yet, the images are not open declaration of support of a political stance or of political adhesion per se. There is, however, an undefined ideal to which the speaker wants to deliver himself. Hence the title of the poem, “Entrada a la madera,” This image of entrance then takes over the rest of the poem. In fact, the apogee of union between the speaker and his entrance into the wood gives them the chance to become tightly linked: “y a vuestra vida, a vuestra muerte asidme, / a vuestros materiales sometidos, / a vuestras muertas palomas neutrales, / y hagamos fuego, y silencio, y sonido, / y ardamos, y callemos, y campanas” (218). The poem looks for inspiration through some entity or some institution that can sustain him. This poem appears at a time when his poetry could fill that void. Adhesion to a specific political platform could also provide the inspiration that he desired. Even the Republic itself could also take over his verse and prolong its existence. Here at this crossroads of the personal and the historical, of the poetic and the political, the Chilean poet looks for ways to preserve his poetry, and he recognizes that various elements would contribute to his persona. However, differing from Alberti’s

experience, Neruda does not jump right into the specific references to the Republic or the Communist Party, but wants to see where history and poetry will take him.

Poets and their role in history and society continue to concern the poet as a possible source of poetic material. In fact, the second poem of the *Tres cantos materiales*, “Apogeo del apio,” allegorizes the tense relationship that poetry and poets have with society, especially in the society of 1930s Spain.<sup>33</sup> Because of the moment in which it was written, the poem could also act as a symbol of the stressed situation of the Republic during the *bienio negro*. Once the celery arrives at the market, “se cierran las puertas a su paso.” For poets in general, they have usually occupied a small space among an elite group of intellectuals, so their relationship with the people or society as a whole has been strained, and many doors have also been closed for them. Also, the “closing of doors” metaphor alludes to the policies that the conservative bloc of the Republican government tried to implement during the *bienio negro* to destroy the reforms from the Republic’s first two years. Next, the comparison between the poet’s concern for his poetics and the Republic through the allegorized celery grows: “Sus pies cortados van, sus ojos verdes, / van derramados, para siempre hundidos / en ellos los secretos y las gotas” (219). Here we see the oppositions that cut at the poet and at the Republic to hinder their success just as the grocer cuts celery.

Later, the fourth stanza shows how the emblematic celery manages to survive despite cruelty and restrictions:

A medianoche, con manos mojadas,

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<sup>33</sup> Loyola states that the poem is “ligada a una imagen de la situación política española a finales de 1934” (Loyola in Neruda, *Residencida en tierra*, 263).

alguien golpea mi puerta en la niebla,  
y oigo la voz del apio, voz profunda,  
áspera voz de viento encarcelado,  
se queja herido de aguas y raíces,  
hunde en mi cama sus amargos rayos,  
y sus desordenadas tijeras me pegan en el pecho  
buscándome la boca del corazón ahogado. (219)

In these verses, we see that if the Spanish situation could be epitomized in celery, it could also act as a contributor to the poet's voice against the *bienio negro*'s political drawbacks. Obviously, the poet's ideal, balanced Republic is not embodied in the *bienio negro*, in that *niebla*. The poem symbolizes the "real" Republic and the "real" poet through their "venas del apio" (218), that is, the very fibers of society made the Republic and the poet what they were: "Fibras de oscuridad y luz llorando [...] entráis, en medio de la niebla hundida, / hasta crecer en mí, hasta comunicarme / la luz oscura y la rosa de la tierra" (219). Various voices from the fibers of the celery enter the poet's voice; they grow so that he can find a medium between light and roses, between politics and poetics. The key ingredient of that representational *rosa de la tierra* is Neruda's emphasis on the celery's metaphorical role in his work: the fibers are the scissors that move him, in other words, they push him to action.

That focus on action returns in the first five stanzas of the last *canto material*, "Estatuto del vino;" the "I" of the poem becomes who he is through the wine: "Yo estoy de pie en su espuma y sus raíces," (220). Furthermore, he sings with the rest of the "hombres de vino," and makes sure that his audience believes him, by saying, "Hablo de cosas que existen, Dios me libre / de inventar cosas cuando estoy cantando" (221). In some way the poet wants to clarify for his readers that he talks of an experience that he

considers important for his (and their) existence. In other words, the poet wants to make sure that his reader does not discount his poetry because they think that it might be too abstract or not relevant to what he represents. Beyond connecting with his reader, his tie between politics and poetics became *vino perseguido* in this poem (222). Despite persecution, his voice would fill the whole earth and contribute to a land similar to the Spanish Republic of the 1930s.

The Spanish Republic was appealing to Neruda not only because of the principles that it housed but also because of the intellectuals who had corroborated in one way or another to its existence. In the poem “Oda a Federico García Lorca,” besides García Lorca, Neruda mentions various intellectuals such as Alberti. Neruda considers García Lorca to be the king of the group, hence the words, “Ven a que te corone, joven de la salud” (279). Like Alberti, Neruda knew that he could project the good of these people on his ideal future version of an egalitarian place. Others of the Republican tradition that helped to form the Republic only a short time before would impact Neruda and influence him for the rest of his days. These same individuals incarnated principles of the Republic for the Chilean poet before the outbreak of the war.

In the second part of *Residencia en la tierra* we have begun to see that Neruda’s voice channeled a poetics that worked with politics to develop a process where both were edified. For the poet, the Spanish Republic represented a place where a balance between politics and aesthetics was not only possible, but could also flourish. From symbolic representations of the Republic and his poetic voice in the *cantos materiales* to individuals that embodied politics and poetics, the poems contain testimonies of the

realities of the development of Neruda's poetics during the Spanish Republic. The poems would show how he became a part of those principles (either in the veins of the celery or the bubbles of the wine). Finally, Neruda praised Lorca, Alberti, and others. He began to show the characteristics of those who should rule: Lorca, the intellectual, should be king of the Republic.

### *TERCERA RESIDENCIA [1934-1945]*

In Part I of *Tercera Residencia*, six poems reflect a similar play and style of the poems from the second half of *Residencia en la tierra* ("La ahogada del cielo," "Alianza (sonata)," "Vals," "Bruselas," "El abandonado," and "Naciendo en los bosques"). From the beginning line, "Tejida mariposa, vestidura" (237), aesthetic beauty and poetics give the reader an ideal symbol, the butterfly. But that butterfly ends up being *ahogada*; and the speaker claims that he stops and suffers ("yo me detengo y sufro") because of the attacks against poetics. In the effervescence of the *bienio negro* more important than anything was a denunciation of those attacks, attacks that tried to silence free speech and beauty.

Farther on, his experience in Spain allowed the poet to be reborn while his ideas also were reborn. In "Naciendo en los bosques" we see:

[...] porque para nacer he nacido, para encerrar el paso  
de cuanto se aproxima, de cuanto a mi pecho golpea como un nuevo corazón  
tembloroso.

Vidas recostadas junto a mi traje como palomas paralelas,  
o contenidas en mi propia existencia y en mi desordenado sonido  
para volver a ser, para incautar el aire desnudo de la hoja  
debo volver y ser, hasta cuándo el olor  
de las más enterradas flores, de las olas más trituradas

sobre las altas piedras, guardan en mí su patria  
para volver a ser furia y perfume? (242)

The last lines of this excerpt show how the scent of the Republic churns in the poet and through him becomes “fury and perfume.” Through this declaration, the poet shows that he will be the *portavoz* for the principles of conflict and sweetness simultaneously: conflictive in the sense of fighting for an ideal, and sweet in the sense of providing aesthetic beauty.

The first six poems of *Tercera residencia* continue to show how politics and aesthetics were operating together while the poet decided how to make them fit together in practice. More specifically, the last two poems of these six give glimpses of Neruda’s political-poetic awakening. For example, in “El abandonado,” the speaker admits that “Yo no sé, yo sólo sufro de no saber quién eres” (241), as if referring to an undefined entity that contributed to his poetry so that it reflected both “rosa[s] magnánima[s] de canto y transparencia” and “temblor[es] de las cuerdas humanas” (241). Here we see the suffering that the poet feels toward his own poetry where his inspiration should come from. In fact, the poet does not comprehend exactly where his poetics has come from (“no sé quién eres pero tanto te debo / que la tierra está llena de mi tesoro amargo”), but he does realize that it will accompany him despite his solitude (“[...] nos hallaremos inermes, apretados / entre los dones mudos de la tierra final” (241)) in order to be a decisive factor for the establishment of a new world. This idea of a new world combined with the idea of the “new man” show the tendencies that take Neruda to the Communist Party ten years later; the poet’s search for a voice compares with humanity’s search for equality.

In fact, the next poem in *Tercera residencia*, “Las furias y las penas” (the only poem in part II of *Tercera residencia*), continues to work for roses that went beyond pure aesthetic beauty. In a note that precedes the poem (from March 1939), Neruda claims that: “España, donde lo escribí, es una cintura de ruinas. Ay! si con sólo una gota de poesía o de amor pudiéramos aplacar la ira del mundo, pero eso sólo lo pueden la lucha y el corazón resuelto” (244). I believe that the addressee of this poem, the tú, is in fact his poetics, one that before the 1930s had lacked ideology and had died as the poet himself becomes “interminably exterminated” by his emerging political and poetic combination. He calls his old poetics “[...] mi enemiga de tanto sueño roto de la misma manera / que erizadas plantas de vidrio” (244). So if that old poetics (one that did not have much politics) was now an enemy, it might be destroyed because of the new political inclusion.

To answer that question, the poet himself describes this stance in “Reunión bajo las nuevas banderas:” “Es la hora / alta de la tierra y de perfume, mirad este rostro / recién salido de la sal terrible, / mirad esta boca amarga que sonrío, / mirad este nuevo corazón que os saluda / con su flor desbordante, determinada y áurea” (251). Because he had recently left the horrible salt, he created a new flower, one that was *determined*. That adjective shows how his poetics had adapted and worked together with his political awakening. Stemming from the previous poem (“Las furias y las penas”), the poet shows others that his *new* voice was a direct result of his inclusion of his ideology in his poetry. That is how the poet had risen up and left that horrible taste behind him. It is his aesthetic (his *flor*) that will contribute to political improvement and vice versa.



As history goes, in the middle of Neruda's *Tercera residencia* the war broke out in July 1936. The Chilean government closed the Consulate in Madrid, and did not reassign Neruda. He separated from his wife in 1936 (who had just given birth to a daughter). In 1937, he moved to Paris with Delia del Carril. That year for him was a busy one. From Paris he started to collaborate with the *Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas* in order to organize the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture that was later held in Spain.<sup>34</sup> With Nancy Cunard he directed the magazine *Los poetas del mundo defienden al pueblo español* (the first issue of the magazine left the presses in February, 1937). In April he and César Vallejo founded the *Grupo Hispanoamericano de Ayuda a España*.

It is during this time when Neruda began writing *España en el corazón: Himno a las glorias del pueblo en guerra (1936-1937)*. Later, *España en el corazón* became Part IV of *Tercera Residencia*. In the first poems of *España en el corazón*, he shows how Spain truly was in his heart. In fact, in the first two poems, "Invocación" and "Bombardeo," the speaker calls Spain his "madre natal" demonstrating his desire to defend a place that embodies a political and poetic tie.

Later on in fact, the word *patria* begins to be repeated; in the third poem "Maldición" we read: "Patria surcada, juro que en tus cenizas, nacerás como flor de agua perpetua" (253). The implication that the fatherland is scarred with furrows but will overcome and be born again implies Neruda's metaphorical future land: an ideal that he claims powers his politics and his poetics. Just as the poet himself had been scarred with

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<sup>34</sup> Neruda sent letters to many Latin American authors inviting them to Spain to participate in the Second Congress.

lack of commitment up until his arrival in Spain but was born again, the Republic would overcome the scars of war and be born again.

The causes of those wounds surface in the next poem, “España pobre por culpa de los ricos.” The poem damns the rich “[...] que no adelantaron a la solemne patria / el pan sino lágrimas [...]” (253). Because the aristocracy did not help the development of the Republic, they only contributed to sadness. Here we see that his ideal is a place where the rich recognize the poor man’s plight; everyone is seen as equal and willing to work together for a common goal. Moreover, until the rich realize that if they do not support a place where all can have access to bread, they are the cause of many of the wounds among the lower classes. Since Neruda believed that the Republic strove to find a balance between rich and poor, the rich would also have to work toward similar principles of equality in order to provide an ideal land in the future that stepped beyond the boundaries of the Spanish Republic.

Later, when the poem “Explico algunas cosas” denounces the destruction of his home, *la casa de las flores* (a place that became a microcosm of politics and poetics among the supporters of the Republic), we begin to see that although the building was destroyed the principles that it represented were not. Despite the destruction of his *casa de las flores*, and the destruction of many of the cities in Spain, the Republic would rise: “Generales / traidores: / mirad mi casa muerta, / mirad España rota: / pero de cada casa muerta sale metal ardiendo / en vez de flores, / pero de cada hueco de España / sale España [...]” (256). Here the speaker’s dedication to Spain shows that his dead house and its *tertulias* are compared with a broken Spain. He reiterates the fact that however broken

Spain may become, the Republic will rebuild. His ideal place also would be able to rebuild after attacks as he combined his political stance with his poetic. Not only would Neruda resurrect his *casa de las flores*, but he would also resurrect the Spanish Republic.

His dedication to revive the Spanish Republic through his verses comes out in the poem, “Cómo era España.” This poem contains a list of towns, cities, and provinces of the Spanish Republic before the war had begun; they were *puras*: “proletaria de pétalos y balas” (259). In other words, how could these cities overcome the civil war? Through flower petals and bullets, through both aesthetic beauty and political fight. Each city is equally important to maintaining the principles that Neruda considered key for his ideal place; each would participate to rebuild a balance between beauty and war after a Republican victory. It is in this poem where the idea of the Spanish Republic as an egalitarian society, where small villages unite together for a common goal is evident. The idea that people from even the smallest of towns share in the creation of a Republic becomes a central theme that unites the poet with the people, and implies another characteristic of his ideal place: equality of urban and rural areas.<sup>35</sup>

Besides the importance of urban/rural impartiality, the next poem, “Llegada a Madrid de las Brigadas Internacionales,” begins by praising foreigners for their dedication to the Republic in order to work toward international parity. From this poem, Spaniards and foreigners worked to revive “la fe perdida, el alma ausente, la confianza en la tierra” (262). Just as these soldiers from other lands had come to Spain and given a

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<sup>35</sup> Born in Parral and living in Temuco, the poet faced a challenge during his teenage years when moving to the capital, Santiago. In this poem, his commitment to the Republic allowed him to denounce irregularities between the city and the *campo* that had plagued him from his youth.

rebirth to a lost faith through their sacrifice for Spain, Neruda (also a foreigner) could likewise promote the same cause. In Spain, various international groups worked together, and Neruda saw this cohesion as imperative in order to establish open dialogue among peoples of different backgrounds. The combination of foreign ideas and an international savvy within a very localized and personal lyric would dominate his poetic during the Republic.

Later, “Canto sobre unas ruinas” compares the defense of the Spanish Republic and the rise of a new poetics to the creation of the world: “Como el botón o el pecho / se levantan al cielo, como la flor que sube / desde el hueso destruido, así las formas / del mundo aparecieron [...]” (267). Here this poem is one that creates both a political pattern but also a poetic sample for the rest of the world to follow. Yet the poem also reflects on the change in both examples:

Ved cómo se ha podrido  
la guitarra en la boca de la fragante novia:  
ved cómo las palabras que tanto construyeron,  
ahora son exterminio: mirad sobre la cal y entre el mármol desecho  
la huella—ya con musgos—del sollozo. (268)

The poet asks the reader to see with his own eyes how “the guitar in the mouth of the bride had rotted” with the advent of the military coup in 1936. He also begs the reader to see how “the words that they had constructed are now annihilation.” The coup had affected both song and political dialogue. In other words, the Republic’s opponents had worked to destroy both the aesthetic beauty that the Republic had created and the political possibilities of equality that the Republic had advanced. A lack of one or the other would

not make the Republic or Neruda's ideal of true poetics complete. Harmony between politics and aesthetics were the backbone of the poet's work of the 1930s.

Harmony, in fact, is exactly what the People's Army was supposed to provide in the Republic. Neruda's poem "Oda solar al ejército del pueblo," illustrates the importance of unity: "Ejército del Pueblo: / tu luz organizada llega a los pobres hombres / olvidados, tu definida estrella / clava sus rancos rayos en la muerte / y establece los nuevos ojos de la esperanza" (274). The organized light that the Army provided would help out the forgotten Spanish man. While Neruda was writing *Tercera residencia*, he returned to the Republic to participate in the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture to work alongside those forgotten men once again. During this apogee of commitment to the Spanish Republic in general, Neruda involved himself more than ever in the Republic, not only by sending invitations so that delegates from the Americas would attend the congress, but also by traveling with them throughout Spain and participating with his fellow Americans in the sessions of the congress. He spoke during the last session in Paris on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, the first anniversary of the military uprising. His speech ends with a description of what had influenced his politics and his poetics: "[...] aunque no la nombremos, incluso sin saberlo, será por España por quien lucharemos, será por España por quien lucharemos" (Neruda in Aznar Soler and Schneider 262).

Did Neruda's link between politics and poetry end in Spain? After the Congress, he headed to Chile with Delia del Carril, Raul González Tuñón (his communist friend from Argentina) and Amparo Mom, the wife of González Tuñón. In November, 1937

Neruda founded the *Alianza de Intelectuales de Chile para la Defensa de la Cultura*. And in the same month, *España en el corazón* was edited and published in Chile.<sup>36</sup> In 1938, his magazine *Aurora de Chile* was dedicated to supporting the Spanish Republic's cause. President Aguirre Cerda made Neruda a special consul to help organize the Spanish exiles. His collaboration helped over four thousand Spaniards find refuge in Chile after the fall of the Spanish Republic. They arrived in Valparaíso on the Winnipeg in September of 1939.

Then, in 1940, he went to Mexico as Chilean consul where he remained until 1942. During his time in Mexico, he recited his "Canto a Stalingrado" and then after being criticized for it, published "Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado." Both of these poems are included in Part V of *Tercera Residencia*. In that same section of the volume, the fresh reminders of the defeat of the Spanish Republic pushed the Chilean poet to continue to forward the principles that he had experienced during the Republic. In fact, "Canto a Stalingrado," was Neruda's first published poem after the Spanish Civil War. In it, the speaker compares Stalingrad to Madrid. The speaker reminds Stalingrad how Madrid could stand its ground and asks Stalingrad to resist, just like Madrid. He also compares Stalingrad to Spain because of the loneliness that each felt on the international scene. The poet showed that his poetics and his politics did not need support of anyone either; it could, and would survive on its own, just as the Republic (even though it had been destroyed, it remained loyal to its principles). In "Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado," Neruda adapted his verse to the form of a *romance* but he did not adapt his

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<sup>36</sup> In November, *España en el corazón* was published for the first time in Spain by Manuel Altolaguirre, supposedly on a printer in the Monastery of Montserrat.

dedication to both politics and aesthetics. For some critics, this poem and its predecessor demonstrate that Neruda was in fact a subjugated Stalin follower and he had sold out his poetics to politics.<sup>37</sup> True, he does refer to the “mirada de Stalin a la nieve,” yet the poem jockey between aesthetics and politics as a *canto de amor* for the besieged city.<sup>38</sup> The constant reminders that Stalingrad was not alone echo two poems about Madrid in *España en el corazón* from during the Spanish Republic; they remind readers that dedication to the defense of certain political views does not end with the fall of a beloved friend who had also dedicated his life to those principles. After the fall of the Republic, up until the “Stalingrad” poems, Neruda’s balance between politics and poetics continued and contributed to his poetic longevity.

In “Tina Modotti ha muerto,” the speaker points out that he can take the Italian actress and political activist to his ideal fatherland: “A mi patria te llevo para que no te toquen, / a mi patria de nieve para que a tu pureza / no llegue el asesino, ni el chacal, ni el vendido: allí estarás tranquila” (281). Here, the quick assumption is that the poet refers to Chile. However, it could also refer to a place yet to be established, an ideal that would protect Tina (or her memory at least) from would-be assassins. Chile of the 1940s was not that place; the political conflicts during these years did not represent a utopian place where everyone was protected. This poem demonstrates that his reference to a fatherland is a place of his own creation, one that in the future could reunite principles that the poet had adhered to during the Spanish Republic. The *patria* that he refers to is his future

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<sup>37</sup> Neruda did not officially join the Communist Party until 1945.

<sup>38</sup> The city Stalingrad was besieged by Hitler’s forces during the early 1940s and held on as a stronghold just as Madrid had held out against Franco’s forces the decade before. The big difference is that Neruda did not live the Russian experience and therefore pursued a possibly abstract sense of the city.

perfect place, one that he will try to define and describe and redefine during the next twenty years. All of this began with his search for a political and poetic balance that began during the 1930s in Spain. That is why the poet's experience in Spain during the Republic is so important for Neruda's trajectory. We will now explore how Neruda could use his experience in Spain to envision an ideal place where politics and aesthetics could unite later on. After the Stalingrad poems, Neruda's definition of an ideal *patria* begins to take shape.

#### NERUDA'S POETRY AFTER THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

In 1945, after a change in the Chilean government, Neruda and his fellow Communists began to be persecuted openly, and the poet went into hiding. During this underground experience he wrote many of the poems that make up his most extensive work, *Canto general* (1950), a work that the majority of critics consider to be his epic work *par excellence*.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, during the 1950s, Neruda's three works of *Odes* stand out in order to examine the long-lasting effects that Neruda's politics and poetics fostered and nourished beginning in the Spanish Republic. First, he published the *Odes* ten years after the end of the Spanish conflict, and second, he published them before the Cuban revolution, a revolution that would allow Neruda to see the possibilities of another possible republic in action, founded by the people. I believe that both *Canto general* and the three collections of *Odas* contain elements that the author considered as all-

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<sup>39</sup> For example, see Hernán Loyola's *Neruda*.



encompassing for his ideal construction of a new *patria*, that is, an ideal place that would house the principles of a political and poetic equilibrium, as the following pages explore.

### *CANTO GENERAL*

*Las reticencias manifestadas ante las insuficiencias del «marxista Neruda», en el dominio del análisis histórico, no mermarán un ápice de la admiración que se le tiene al «poeta épico»; serán simplemente una oportunidad de comprobar una vez más que la historia y la poesía se llevan muy mal, sobre todo, cuando se mezclan con la ideología o la política.*  
(Alain Sicard, *El pensamiento poético de Pablo Neruda* 284)

Leading up to the publication of *Canto general* in 1950, political and aesthetic oppositions challenged Neruda more and more. Although he was nominated by the Chilean Communist Party to be a Senator in the Chilean government in 1943, he was not a member of the Party. When in 1947 *Tercera Residencia (1935-1945)* was published for the first time as an anthology, the Chilean President Gabriel González Videla broke with the Communist Party, which in turn pushed Neruda to criticize him openly. Videla had used the Party to win the election, but then turned his back on them; he outlawed the party in 1948.

Neruda's criticism of Videla led to political persecution, and in 1948 he went into hiding. During this time, he wrote much of his *Canto General* (published in 1950). This work is organized into fifteen different sections. Each section bears a title: "I Lámpara en la tierra," "II Alturas de Macchu Picchu," "III Los conquistadores," "IV Los libertadores," "V La arena traicionada," "VI América no invoco tu nombre en vano,"

“VII Canto General de Chile,” “VIII La tierra se llama Juan,” “IX Que despierte el leñador,” “X El fugitivo,” “XI Las flores de Punitaqui,” “XII, Los ríos del canto,” “XIII, Coral de año Nuevo para la patria en tinieblas,” “XIV El gran océano,” and “XV Yo soy.” The following pages explore the various poems of this epic as a continuation of Neruda’s political and poetic equilibrium; at the same time these pages search for the characteristics of Neruda’s ideal *patria*.

One of the main purposes of the first part of *Canto general* is defined in the title of the first section: “La lámpara en la tierra.” For the speaker, the definition of that lamp of the earth is in fact uncovered in the first poem, titled “Amor América (1400).”

American love could produce a light for the rest of the world, a new type of system that would lead others; a place that was not based on the capitalistic system of the North, but a system that, in turn, would provide communion between the people and the land. And since the speaker is “There to tell the story” (297) he will bring to light how to obtain, create, and establish that new land, a land that “has no name, no America” (298). So, if his purpose is to establish a new place, he would turn back beyond the conquest of the Europeans and show the importance of the native pre-Columbian peoples in his ideal construction of the *patria*.

The poet’s emphasis in pre-Columbian history also drives the speaker in the second section, “Alturas de Macchu Picchu.” In this second section of the *Canto*, the ninth poem talks of a “pure fatherland” for the first time in the book (321). This pure land was the land that existed before the Spaniards had arrived in the American continent. The purity of the land however is based on the bare nature of the land, not on the use of that

land by man. So, the poem focuses on the fact that the earth does not necessarily need man; man then appears in the twelfth poem. This man is one who will work in and through the speaker: “Sube a nacer conmigo, hermano.” The speaker invites the past inhabitants of the land, practically ignored in history up to that point, to be born through him. He speaks of a birth, not a re-birth, a creation of a new order in the land, an order that is not based on the Spanish geographic conquest or the capitalistic conquest from North America. The political implications of this epic project work toward a world where injustice against the indigenous peoples might not occur, while the epic poetics implies a world where anything outside of it lacks quality. His pro-indigenous stance brings the forgotten cultures of the Americas to the forefront; the poem resurrects the native cultures of the past and denounces the practices of society to silence them.

In fact, in the final lines of the poem he asks the men and women from the past to give him silence, to give him fight (*lucha*), he asks them to stick their bodies to him like magnets, and that they enter into his veins and his mouth (324). He also commands them to speak through his words and his blood. In order to establish an ideal political and poetic place, he must obtain certain characteristics from the peoples that inhabited the great Incan lands. By appropriating the voices of the past, the speaker provoked change in the system that had deteriorated over the past five hundred years. Through the voice of the forgotten peoples, the speaker could proclaim a new *patria*, one of silence, hope, *belleza* and *lucha*.

In the third section of *Canto General*, “Los conquistadores,” Neruda focuses on some of the causes of the impurities in the current *patria* that was once so pure. In fact,

because of this section, some critics accused the Chilean poet of being *anti-español* which Neruda refuted and claimed that in reality he was anti-conquest.<sup>40</sup> In the poems of the third section, Neruda showed how the conquistadors robbed the virgin, pure land and corrupted it. He refers to Cortés, Alvarado, Balboa, Ximénez de Quesada, Pizarro, Valverde, Fray Luque, and Almagro, men who started the process of impurity in the American continent. Overcoming the problematic years of history built into the mentality and the culture of the entire continent looms as a difficult task for the poet, yet he works to rewrite that history anyway. By denouncing the barbarous acts of many of the first travelers to the New World, Neruda returned to the roots of his American ancestors to reclaim the title of producer of his own world. At the same time, Neruda could condemn the many injustices that were occurring in his contemporary world (such as the Nazis, the Fascists, the Franquists, etc.) and compare them with the conquistadors. By doing so, he could glorify a turn toward equality that would eliminate “misery and ignorance through democracy and mutual respect” (Gutiérrez Revuelta and Gutiérrez 52).

For example, poem XX of “Los conquistadores,” gives a possible way to overcome misery and ignorance. This poem is called “Se unen la tierra y el hombre,” and the speaker calls out to the “[...] Patria despiadada, amada oscura [...] Patria la paz de la dureza / y tus hombres eran rumor, / áspera aparición, viento bravío” (343). In the beginning, the fatherland existed, but men were almost non-existent. In other words, more important for the poet was the land itself, just like for the men of the 1400s. By privileging land over man, the speaker cried out against the landowners of the 1900s and

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<sup>40</sup> See Pablo Neruda, *Yo respondo con mi obra* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2004) 47.

too much speculation of certain products. The poet's ideal *patria* then would give importance back to the land and not to the people who owned it.

Later the speaker calls his land, "Patria, nave de nieve, follaje endurecido: / allí naciste, cuando el hombre tuyo / pidió a la tierra su estandarte / y cuando tierra y aire y piedra y lluvia, / hoja raíz, perfume, aullido, / cubrieron como un manto al hijo, / lo amaron y lo defendieron. / Así nació la patria unánime: / la unidad antes del combate" (344). Here there are two options that possibly show both the birth of Chile and the birth of the poet's ideal place. The ambiguity of the phrase tends to lead the reader to side with the fact that he must be speaking of Chile, however, the speaker wants to have his ancestors be a part of him; his own world was born through unity, love and defense. Part XX suggests one of the key characteristics of the past that Neruda would include in his description of his own *patria*, strengthened by his experience in the Republic and his Communist ideology: land reform.

Later, in the fourth section of *Canto general*, "Los libertadores," Neruda calls upon all of the grand personages who fought for that innocent, pure land from the time of Cuauhtémoc in the sixteenth century up until the climax, a time that he calls "Llegará el día" (the last poem of this, the fourth section). Here, the titles of the poems refer to people such as Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Túpac Amaru, Bernardo O'Higgins, José Miguel Carrera, Manuel Rodríguez, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Morazán, José Martí, Sandino, Emiliano Zapata, Recabarren, and Prestes. The references to these historical figures show that the poet considers himself more than just a Communist; his politics play an important role in his poetics undoubtedly, yet by siding with the liberators and

considering himself in their ranks, he moves his reader to act in the same way as these historical figures moved the masses. These leaders typify the ideal man who would work to establish a new *patria*. Neruda would continue the legacy of those men that he mentions, and advance further than they.

As early as poem II (titled “Fray Bartolomé de las Casas”), the *conquistadores* laugh at Bartolomé saying “[...] No tiene patria” (358). Although de las Casas might not have a geographical fatherland according to the conquerors, Neruda insists that *patria* is not contained within geographical limits. In fact, Neruda defines his ideal place as a state of being, an idea. Any attack on the idealized fatherland, a place of equality and justice, one of politics and aesthetics, was in fact an attack on the poet himself. He even compares himself (a poet who defended his virgin political and poetic combination from the political invaders and poetic critics) with the natives who defended their virgin land from the invaders and with Bartolomé.

Again, in poem III (“Avanzando en las tierras de Chile”) the speaker talks of the fact that “[...] hasta el fondo de la patria mía, / puño y puñal, el invasor llegaba” (359). Later in the same poem, Neruda refers to that purity of the native people from before the invasion: “El avellano de la Aruacanía / enarbolaba hogueras y racimos / hacia donde la lluvia resbalaba / sobre la agrupación de la pureza” (359). It is not a coincidence that the poet wrote about the attacks on the native peoples while he was in hiding, protecting himself from the attacks of the Chilean government.

Farther on, in poem X, Neruda begins to speak of Lautaro, who is the protagonist of the next five poems. Lautaro fought against Valdivia; the speaker refers to this hero as

“[...] acariciando / los caballos de piel que iban hundiéndose en su patria” (365). So despite everything that Lautaro did, he kept falling because of his dedication to creating an ideal. Yet he did take care of Valdivia eventually, just as Neruda would keep writing in favor of his political and poetic tie that would eventually encompass the whole world (or at least his own idealized version of that world). Yet, his *patria* would be a place where there were no regrets. In fact, Neruda asks Lautaro, “Dame la patria sin espinas” (368). The fatherland without thorns was not Chile of the 1940s, so he wanted to get rid of the thorns and would work toward that ideal.

In poem XIX “América insurrecta (1800)” of “Los libertadores,” Neruda then turns to the following statement to express comparisons between the past and his present: “Patria, naciste de los leñadores, / de hijos sin bautizar, de carpinteros / de los que dieron como un ave extraña / una gota de sangre voladora, / y hoy nacerás de nuevo duramente, / desde donde el traidor, y el carcelero / te creen para siempre sumergida. Hoy nacerás del pueblo como entonces” (376). So, even though Chile had already existed, the *patria* was about to be born again, through the people, in Neruda’s future. He would contribute; just as the liberators had contributed to gaining independence, Neruda would gain independence for his ideal land.

Independence then becomes the topic of the next poem (XX), “Bernardo O’ Higgins Riquelme” the founding father of Chile. Neruda writes that O’Higgins worked toward independence not only for his fellow Chileans, but for the people of the Americas, and all of the people of the world (“[...] la patria que nos hiciste [...]” (377)). For the speaker of the poem, establishing the fatherland was even more important than family.

The speaker points out that O' Higgins "Es el mismo sólido retrato / de quien no tiene padre sino patria [...] (378). Yet, fatherland once again is not a geographical space that confines principles. When O'Higgins went into exile in Argentina, Neruda writes, "Tu fin de fiesta fue la sacudida / de la derrota, el porvenir aciago / hacia Mendoza, con la patria en brazos" (379). Here we see the idea that acts as a thread in Neruda's definition of *patria*; it is not a geographical place, because even O'Higgins took it with him when he went into exile. Fatherland is an idea, one that would also have to gain its independence.

Later, in poem XXIV, "José Miguel Carrera," the fatherland preserves and defends those who have died trying to construct an ideal place for everyone: "Patria presérvalo en tu manto [...] Patria, galopa y defiéndelo" (387). Through the death of all those who had died trying to create a fatherland, the people would triumph: "La victoria del pueblo necesita / la voz de tu ternura triturada. / Extended mantos en su ausencia / para que pueda—frío y enterrado— / con su silencio sostener la patria" (389). Neruda then knew that he might become a martyr for his political and poetic ideals. He would be preserved by the *patria* if he gave his life and continued to work toward it.

The poem XXXVII, called "Recabarren (1921)," sheds light on a principle of his ideal land that the poet had avoided explicitly up to that point: communism. The poem is dedicated to Luis Emilio Recabarren "[...] Y fue por la patria entera / fundando pueblo, levantando / los corazones quebrantados" (417). From this great man came "lo más hondo de la patria [...] y se llamó Partido" (417). Recabarren was the founder first of the *Partido Obrero Socialista* in 1912 and of the Communist Party in Chile in 1922, but he was criticized by other members of the Communist party because of his social-



democratic tendencies. In fact, Neruda's next poem, "Envío (1949)," points out that "[...] y con la patria envuelta en odio [...] Tú eres la patria, pampa y pueblo [...] Recabarren, bajo tu mirada / juramos limpiar las heridas / mutilaciones de la patria" (143). Neruda shows that Chile had been sidetracked from the ideal that Recabarren had set up.

So, since according to Neruda Chile had veered from political unity, he must look elsewhere for inspiration. He would step back to his 1930s experience in the Spanish Republic as seen in poem XXXIX, "Dicho en Pacaembú (Brasil, 1945)." The poet's experience in the Spanish Republic filters through six years after Franco's takeover:

Yo recuerdo en París, hace años, una noche  
hablé a la multitud, vine a pedir ayuda  
para España Republicana, para el pueblo en su lucha.  
España estaba llena de ruinas y de gloria [...]  
y les dije: Los nuevos héroes, los que en España luchan, mueren,  
Modesto, Lister, Pasionaria, Lorca,  
son hijos de los héroes de América, son hermanos,  
de Bolívar, de O'Higgins, de San Martín, de Prestes. (424)

Neruda's *patria* included and linked those who fought or died during the Republic and *libertadores* from all over the American continent. Through the imagery in these lines, the aesthetics of Lorca combine with the politics of *la Pasionaria* while similarly Bolívar's aesthetics combine with Prestes' politics. The underlying influence for that combination was the Republic. Although it had fallen, it would remain alive through Neruda's poetics and would someday return.

That return comes about in the final poem of Part IV of the *Canto general*: "Llegará el día." The poet calls out to all of the people of *nuestra América*: "somos la misma tierra, el mismo / pueblo perseguido, / la misma lucha ciñe la cintura / de nuestra América" (427). Unity beyond invented geographical boundaries became another

important aspect of Neruda's ideal. In fact, he criticized the division of the Americas: "Alguien que recibió la paz del héroe / la guardó en su bodega, alguien robó los frutos / de la cosecha ensangrentada / y dividió la geografía / estableciendo márgenes hostiles, / zonas de desolada sombra ciega" (427-428). The speaker defined what the new limits of the *patria* should be, an undivided land based on a combination between Recabarren and O'Higgins. Any region united under these principles would lead to a future land where politics and aesthetics could find unity.

Unity against political injustice abounds in the fifth part in *Canto General*, "La arena traicionada." In an introduction to Part V, Neruda states that in order for the *patria* to be invincible, he has to denounce all of the dictatorships that have occurred in the Americas (429). The "betrayed sand" calls the dictators of the Americas "desangradores de patrias" and then he says that "sólo hay uno / peor que vosotros, sólo hay uno / y ése lo dio mi patria un día / para desdicha de mi pueblo" (440). The poem also talks of how the "funnel law" (442) only helped the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. While the rich (*la crema*) went about buying lands and committing atrocities among the poor, the people "received the fatherland in its arms" (445). He also attacks poets that he refers to as "heavenly poets" (446) that do not side with the people and remain hidden within the upper classes as to avoid the reality of the people around them that are not as fortunate. A classless structure becomes one of the driving elements of Neruda's ideal. At the same time, a lack of balance between politics and aesthetics does not produce poetry that is worth anything. Poets with their heads in the clouds cannot see the political reality of the world around them.

Therefore, the political and poetic balance goes beyond simply a group of intellectual elites that makes decisions for the rest without any empirical experience. Poets must combine their reality with aesthetics despite the political oppositions against them. In Part VII, “Canto General de Chile,” the poet focuses specifically on how that dynamic pans out both his ideal *patria* and his country, Chile. For example, in Poem I, “Himno y regreso (1939),” Neruda begs: “Guarda tu luz, oh patria! [...] En tu remota tierra ha caído toda esta luz difícil, / este destino de los hombres” (493). In a period of political persecution and political exile, Neruda strives to push his country, his ideal, his fellow countrymen, his fellow Communists, and his fellow citizens of the world to keep the light alive no matter what the cost, because, as they do so, they will be able to overcome any hardship. There are various examples throughout the “Canto General de Chile” that demonstrate that after passing through fire, politics, poetics, the ideal place, Chile, and mankind could survive. Each has great potential. Each is filled with many possibilities, yet, in order for it to develop, it has to pass through a period of uncertainty and challenge.

Despite tribulation, the poet dedicated his dual commitment to promote that ideal as seen in the entire “Canto general de Chile.” The poems evoke Chile’s various regions. Yet, the ambiguity of the references allow for play between his ideal place and his poetics as well. A good example of this is found in poem X: “Patria mía, terrestre y ciega como / nacidos aguijones de la arena, para ti toda / la fundación de mi alma, para ti los perpetuos / párpados de mi sangre, para ti de regreso / mi plato de amapolas” (504). Once again we see how this place, this *patria*, had been born out of tribulation; the poet dedicates his

entire being to its defense and its livelihood. More specifically, he devotes two things to the perpetual preservation of his politics and poetics, his ideal place, and his home country simultaneously: blood and poppies. Revolutionary blood and aesthetic poppies. These two aspects make up the entire foundation of his soul, and are far from gone just because the Spanish Republic had fallen. Although his *casa de las flores* in Madrid acted as a beacon for political and poetic unification, the future ideal place would do the same, and the aspects to create such a place are embedded in *Canto general* up to this point.

In the eighth part of *Canto general*, “La tierra se llama Juan,” we see glimpses of people who will contribute to a politically active and aesthetically pleasing place: Jesús Gutiérrez (agrarista), Margarita Naranjo (salitrera), José Cruz Achachalla (minero), and others. In the poem “Abraham Jesús Brito (Poeta popular),” the poet actually becomes the very backbone of the *patria*. He travels throughout his terrible fatherland, “the colder it got, he found more blue: the harder the ground became, the more moon came from him: the more hunger, the more he sang” (520). His grassroots beginning fueled his artistic creation, and the popular poet, became a beacon for others. The parallels to Neruda’s life at this time are apparent. Abraham Jesús Brito’s ego was beaten (“Brito, tu majestad fué golpeada”), but his sovereignty of nature and people (“era una monarquía a la intemperie” (521)) made him an ideal contributor to a political and poetic place. Poets should represent a union between workers and intellectual production in order to qualify him to lead.

Later in Part VIII, Neruda shows how important the people are to his model and the ideal Chilean models of *patria*. For example, in “Catástrofe en Sewell” he says, “El

pueblo es el cimiento de la patria. / Si los dejáis morir, la patria va cayendo” (530). So, the people are the most important element for the construction of the poet’s perfect utopia. Then in the same poem, he returns to add a twist when he refers to Stalin, “[...] Stalin alza, limpia, construye, fortifica, / preserva, mira, protege, alimenta, / pero también castiga” (530-531). The ability of a leader, then, is to know when to protect and when to punish. Furthermore, the people should “[...] construir una patria severa / que sepa florecer y castigar” (531). The combination of poetics (*floreCIMIENTO*) and politics (*castigo*) show how the balance that the poet had striven for during the Spanish Republic was still at work in Neruda’s poetry.

In the final poem of “La tierra se llama Juan,” despite the opponents who did everything to stop him such as “Lo ataron [...] Lo hirieron [...] Le cortaron las manos [...] Lo enterraron” (531), Juan could not be exterminated. He would not be destroyed because of the support of the people. Here, both politics and poetics have grown simultaneously on a parallel; the fact that it could not be defeated depended on aesthetic factors such as humanity and eternity while the poet remained close to reality. This moving and unifying gesture makes the universal personal and the personal universal for readers; in other words, to claim that Neruda was an aesthetically-pleasing poet despite or because of his politics does not do his poetry justice.

Later in *Canto general*, in Part XII “Los ríos del canto,” the poet claims that his poems are recited among all of the workers, and then he specifies a bit more when a young girl from the mines asks him to recite: “[...] un poema [s]uyo, un viejo poema [s]uyo que rueda entre los ojos arrugados / de todos los obreros de mi patria, de América”

(583). The rhetoric of the poem tried to unite the people of the Americas, just as Neruda had tried to do during the Second Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in 1937.<sup>41</sup> The poem strove to mobilize the workers against a common threat in the regime, just as in Spain. There was a despot in power and he tried to bury Neruda's *patria* (as had occurred in Spain): "[...] donde un déspota sucio / ha enterrado la flor de mi patria para que muera y él pueda comerciar con los huesos" (583). Despite the work of the government in Chile to silence Neruda's politics and his poetics, his ideals did not die.

Speaking of Spain, the next poem (II) of part XII is dedicated "A Rafael Alberti (Puerto de Santa María, España)." Here, the praises of Alberti abound, "a ti más que a ninguno debo España" (585), and then he credits Alberti because "a ti sí te deben, y es una patria: espera. / Volverás, volveremos [...]" (586). If Neruda and others owe Alberti for their ideas about Spain, those ideas must be imbedded somewhere in their poetry. Neruda writes that Alberti inspired him both through his "poesía desnuda" and "la rectitud de [su] destino" (585). The inspiration was Alberti's dedication to both poetry and politics. Furthermore, that double commitment would not die simply because the Franquists ousted the two poets from Spain. Neruda clarified what would happen as a result of both of their exiles: "Sí, de nuestros destierros nace la flor, la forma – de la patria que el pueblo reconquista con truenos / y no es un día solo el que elabora / la miel perdida, la verdad del sueño, / sino cada raíz que se hace canto / hasta poblar el mundo con sus hojas" (587-588). In other words, through their poetry they could establish their

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<sup>41</sup> Manuel Aznar Soler, *II Congreso de Escritores para la Defensa de la Cultura (Valencia-Madrid-Barcelona-París, 1937): Vol. II, literatura española y antifascismo (1927-1939)* (Valencia: Conselleria de Cultura, Educació i Ciència de la Generalitat Valenciana, 1987) Chapter 5, 129-213.

*patria*, one fed by their song, a political and poetic song at that. The importance of their poetry to establishing a model to follow stems from a balance of politics and aesthetics that had grown since the Spanish Republic.

Beyond poetry, Neruda's *patria* also has a material component, but it should not overshadow the intellectual and political well-being of the people who live there. In Part XIII of *Canto*, "Coral de año nuevo para la patria en tinieblas," the poet cries out that, "Yo quiero tierra, fuego, pan, azúcar, harina / mar, libros, patria para todos, por eso / ando errante [...]" (609). The basic necessities of life are important, yet books and fatherland end the list. Supposedly egalitarian, once again the poet returns to the point of who is able to enter: "Yo quiero mi país para los míos, quiero / la luz igual sobre la caballera / de mi patria encendida [...]" (609). Only those who can obtain equilibrium between politics and poetics with the poet are worthy to enter.

So in order to find out who are "los míos" Neruda shows who he is in the last Part (Part XV) of *Canto general*. Titled, "Yo soy," this section gives a history of the life of the poet, from his early childhood days, to his studies in Santiago, and then to his travels throughout the world. A big part of the poet Neruda is found in the tenth poem of the last section "Yo soy." These lines invoke Spain once again and show who he was: a political and poetic writer. There is an abrupt change in the way that the poetry is constructed in this section of the book. The tenth poem, "La Guerra (1936)," talks exclusively to the Spanish Republic as if it were his love. He says: "[...] te vi nacer, tal vez entre las breñas / y las tinieblas, / labradora, / levantarte entre las encinas y los montes / y recorrer el aire con las venas abiertas" (656). The Spanish Republic and the poet's tie between poetics

and politics originated among darkness, like the future new type of *patria* would emerge in the Americas. The birth of that Spanish Republic was comparable to the long-awaited birth of Neruda's ideal land.

The next poem in "Yo soy" also invokes a memory of the Republic. In the poem he personifies the Republic once again as his love. The speaker points out that the lovely Spain, "was at his side during the fight" (657). However, his relationship with the Republic goes much farther than that of a love; the Spanish Republic becomes his wife: "No sé, mi amor si tendré tiempo y sitio / de escribir otra vez tu sombra fina / extendida en mis páginas, esposa: / son duros estos días y radiantes [...] Hoy, copa de mi amor, te nombro / apenas, / título de mis días, adorada, / y en el espacio ocupas como el día / toda la luz que tiene el universo" (419). By referring to Spain as his love and even as his wife, the speaker evokes a spiritual link between the two of them. This link for him represents "all of the light that the universe has."

So far I have discussed Neruda's political and poetic balance from its surfacing during the Spanish Republic in *Residencia en la tierra*, *Tercera Residencia* to its epic development in *Canto general* where the poems work toward an ideal *patria*. In *Canto*, the poet looks to the past of the American continent for inspiration and examples of how to create his ideal. As *Canto* progresses, other political and poetic revelations contribute to the ideal. Ultimately, Neruda's poetics would provide the necessary base for the ideal place to grow and be sustained.



## THE THREE COLLECTIONS OF *ODES*

In 1954 Neruda published *Odas elementales*, in 1956 he published *Nuevas odas elementales*, and in 1957 he published *Tercer libro de odas*, three collections that poeticize supposed anti-poetic objects. Hernán Loyola points out that the *Odas elementales* “[...] celebra[n] (con modalidad seria) materias tradicionalmente consideradas apoéticas y, aún más, elevarlas al rango de lo sacro, al nivel de instancias invocadas con fervor de tipo religioso [...]” (Loyola, *La biografía literaria* 517). The majority of the poems are extended apostrophes, that is, rhetorical addresses of objects. Moreover, up to this point, the poet has apostrophized his own version of an ideal land, one that was fed by his balance between politics and poetics and that began during the Spanish Republic. Now he will turn to focus more on the elements of that land.

### *ODAS ELEMENTALES*

The *Odas elementales* are in alphabetical order, suggesting that any one element is not more important than any other. From A to Z the majority of the letters are represented in order to provide the reader with an all-encompassing vision of Neruda’s world. The poems evoke air, atoms, hope, rain, bread, love, poetry, and life, among others. In other words, the poet politicizes each of these materials while at the same time he aestheticizes them. His politics therefore may not represent the Communist Party line necessarily, but his politics now turns to ordinary elements or a material existence which reflects how his politics has become less obvious in his poetry.

In an introductory poem called “El hombre invisible,” Neruda claims that he is different from all of the other poets in the world in that he truly understands the plight of the workers and can establish a utopian *patria*. He is not like “los viejos poetas” because they “siempre dicen «yo»” (935). Conveniently enough, it is his *canto* that looks to helping others and working for the common man; this vision differentiates him from the *viejos poetas* who always refer to themselves: “dadme / las luchas / de cada día / porque ellas son mi canto / y así andaremos juntos, / codo a codo, / todos los hombres, / mi canto los reúne: / el canto del hombre invisible / que canta con todos los hombres” (940). If then, the *luchas* are literally his song, he can unite others, especially the underprivileged classes, and give them voice, beyond other poets that have their heads in the clouds and forget what is around them. In this introduction to this first book of odes, the poet offers a declaration about the poems that one is about to read. These odes will be works that build up a relationship between ordinary people and the poet, not declarations of a poet who “piensa que es diferente / a todo el mundo” (937). These statements tie the poet with more than the working-class and as the odes tie poetry with more than simple elements.

In other words, poetry should not be for the privileged elite only but should be designed for the ordinary man. Hence the use of ordinary things as the object of the odes. In the first poem of the collection, “Oda al aire,” the speaker commands the air, “no te vendas / que no te canalicen, / que no te entuben, / que no te encajen / ni te compriman, / que no te hagan tabletas, / que no te metan en una botella, cuidado!” (941-942). The comparisons between air and the poem’s opposition against an industrial-capitalistic air surfaces already in the book of poems; at the same time the poem strives to create an

accessible poetics for an audience that normally might not read poetry. The fact that air is free but it is governed by certain principles shows that the poetics should be the same. As air is an element that exists everywhere and will work with the poet, so should poetry exist everywhere and be accessible to everyone: “[...] libertaremos / la luz y el agua / la tierra, el hombre, / y todo para todos / será, como tú eres” (943). Therefore, as air, poetry should be available to all without a price tag, and the poem continues to make his poetry accessible to that man who may not normally have access to poetry. At the same time the poem makes a stance against industrial capitalism.

The place where the people of the Americas should take a stance against any kind of capitalist domination, specifically one that might sell out to the highest bidder emerges in “Oda a las Américas,” when the poet addresses the American continent(s). The first verse of the poem defines the Americas of the past, with one adjective: “purísimas.” (949). Yet, that purity becomes contaminated as the poem progresses. The speaker condemns exploitation by “nuevos conquistadores” and injustices by Machado, Bautista, and Trujillo (950), three men that were considered imperialist puppets. Although the Americas had been contaminated by men such as these, people and poets would provide new heroes and “nuevas banderas” (951) for an ideal place where men controlled by their pocketbooks would not exist. In fact, under new flags, the Americas would be free through two means: her voice and her actions. Through these two means, she would “restaur[ar] el decoro / que te dió nacimiento / y elev[ar] tus espigas sosteniendo / con otros pueblos / la irresistible aurora” (951). So, if her voice and her actions would lead to a restoration of the past, the poet’s voice and actions combined could also restore or

resurrect a pure place, one where voice and actions could contribute equally to establish it.

In other words, in order to obtain that ideal place the poet must work to bring to pass change not just talk, as the workers that he claims to represent. For example, in “Oda a la claridad,” he claims that he must “cumplir [su] obligación / de luz: / ir y venir por las calles, / las casas y los hombres / destruyendo / la oscuridad” (968). The poem then offers clarity to workers in their own homes, in the streets and not from some oligarchic or bourgeois property. Only through his work can his goals to destroy obscurity be reached: “Yo debo / repartirme / hasta que todo sea día, / hasta que todo sea claridad” (968). Beyond simply writing aesthetically pleasing poetry, in order for his ideal place to be established, the politics of his poetry must provide some means to an end, and his words strive to move or at least show the reader, as the poet himself was moved to action. So far in the *Odes*, we have seen that his politics and his poetics have become more acute simultaneously, and that he would work to bring to pass light on behalf of those who cannot do it for themselves, the blue-collar workers.

Although Neruda strove to create a model for workers through his poetry, he realized that he would be criticized for it. In his “Oda a la crítica” he denounced that criticism. He claims that many critics took away from his poetry because “se lanzaron / a disputar mi pobre poesía / a las gentes / que la amaban” (974). So, in his opinion the criticisms of his work strove to distract readers (working-class readers who loved him because he wrote for them) from what was truly important. Neruda tells us what was truly important: “junto a mi poesía / volvieron a vivir / mujeres y hombres / de nuevo /

hicieron fuego / construyeron casas, / comieron pan [...]” (975). So poetry and work should go hand in hand for these men and women who read his work. His balance of aesthetics and communal principles can overcome criticism. In fact, because of the poet’s dedication to his relationship with the proletariat, all of the critics “se retiraron uno a uno / enfurecidos hasta la locura” (975). As each critic withdrew, Neruda chose to go and “vivir / para siempre / con la gente sencilla” (975). By choosing to live with this simple people who live and work next to his poetry, the poem yearns to establish a connection with workers.

That path is outlined later in “Oda al hilo.” His thread of poetry runs through humankind and through civilization. Throughout the poem he works to establish what he calls in the first two lines “el hilo de la poesía” (1004). This poetic thread has two elements: “es duro porque todos / los metals lo hicieron” and “es frágil porque el humo / lo dibujó temblando” (1005). These two metaphors demonstrate the ability and the necessity for a balance in poetry in general: hard because of life’s experiences and fragile because of the aesthetic effects of life’s experiences. For example, his poetry made clothing for the poor, nets for fishermen, scarlet colored shirts for firemen and “una bandera para todos” (1006). His political and poetic string was an element of his poetics that created ideology for workers, and united them in one. Moreover, the thread of poetry was designed to “escribir la bandera” of this new place (1007). In other words, his poetry would act as the *magna carta* of that ideal.

Before arriving at perfection however, in “Oda al mar,” the poet tells the ocean that humankind has some issues to work out before it can settle in perfect harmony. It

reads: “Pero eso será cuando / los hombres / hayamos arreglado / nuestro problema, / el grande, / el gran problema” (1043). Neruda tells us that that problem can only be overcome “en la lucha” (1043). As the leader of his utopia, Neruda claims that slowly humanity will overcome its problem, and political poets will force nature to “hacer milagros” (1043). Continually the reader sees that the poetry’s role is necessary in order to produce the new place of refuge and miracles.

Speaking of nature, “Oda al murmullo,” looks to establish a relationship between the land and the poet: “Amé la tierra, puse / en mi corazón la transparencia / del agua que camina, / formé / de barro y viento la vasija / de mi constante canto, / y entonces / por los pueblos, / las casas, / los puertos / y las minas, / fui conquistando una familia humana, / resistí con los pobres / la pobreza, / viví con mis hermanos” (1048). The poet was able to win many over to his cause because of his *canto*’s dedication to both nature and the people; he claimed that “me hice campanero, / campanero / de la tierra / y los hombres” (1048). His voice then, would denounce injustices, but beyond that, his goal was to convince others: “y yo con mi campana, / con mi canto, / despierto y te despierto. / Ése es mi oficio / --aunque no quieras--, / despertarte / a ti y a los que duermen [...]” (1050). So, the poet’s goal was to awaken others so that they could see the value of a poetry dedicated to supporting the working classes.

Later, “Oda a los números” is one of the few poems in *Odas elementales* where the poet focused on how the classification of things in general had degraded the aesthetic pleasure of the world around it. He writes: “Fuimos empapelando el mundo / con números y nombres, / pero / las cosas existían, / se fugaban / del número” (1054). Here

we see how things cannot be classified simply by a name or number. Yet, on the other hand, things are not pleasing simply because they exist. They have to contribute to what the poet refers to in the last line of the poem: “innumerables / espigas / que llenarán la tierra transformada” (1055). In this place where there are innumerable harvests, the people will be able to count the stars with their lovers and their children (1054-1055). The poet focuses on why he wants to create a land based on principles he obtained through his political and poetic symmetry: for posterity’s sake.

In order for posterity to survive, one element is imperative: poetry. In “Oda a la poesía,” Neruda refers to the development of his own poetic trajectory. First, he thanks his poetry because it made him fall on his face; second, his poetry “[se ciñó] / a [él] con los dos brazos de amante;” third his poetic “[se convirtió] en copa” (1075). But none of these satisfied him. A change in the poem occurs in the second stanza with a one-word line: “Pero”. After this one-word line, a shift occurs, a shift that the author himself recognizes. His focus on beauty from before was not enough: “Tanto anduve contigo / que te perdí el respeto [...] te puse a trabajar [...]” (172). Throughout this poem, poetry slowly became a comrade and worked for the poet, one who gained the company of millions: “Juntos, Poesía, / fuimos / al combate, a la huelga, / al desfile, a los puertos, / a la mina [...]” (173). Yet, his poetry will shine forth even after he is gone: “mientras me fui gastando / tú continuaste / desarrollando tu frescura firme, / tu ímpetu cristalino, / como si el tiempo / que poco a poco me convierte en tierra / fuera a dejar corriendo eternamente / las aguas de mi canto” (1077-1078). The balance will continue even after the poet’s

death; he can preserve that equilibrium through his poetry that will be read over and over again and he can influence many after he passed away.

Despite the fact that Neruda lived for twenty years after he wrote this poem, his focus on how he could preserve his dedication to politics and poetics at the same time reoccurs in the rest of the collection. For example, the very next poem, “Oda a los poetas populares,” reminds the reader that balance is necessary for his utopia, balance between poetry and *pueblo*. He talks of another combination that defines his very being, “aquí en mi patria / está el tesoro, / el cristal de Castilla, / la soledad de Chile” (1081). We are reminded of the Spanish Republic, combined with his political exclusion and repression in his home country. Linked to the very essence of his political poetics is his unforgettable dedication to the Spain of 1931-1939.

In *Odas elementales*, as we have seen, poetry and politics continue to unite more than ten years after the fall of the Spanish Republic. The poetry continued to work toward a place where the balance could continue unabashed. Popular poets would be the model leaders of his place. Neruda continued to build up both aesthetics and politics in this collection while looking at elements that could contribute to the ideal place where that balance could survive. Now, this chapter will turn to the next set of Nerudian odes, *Nuevas odas elementales*.

### *NUEVAS ODAS ELEMENTALES*

In the introductory poem of *Nuevas odas elementales*, “La casa de la odas,” written in 1955, the poet describes his poetic project that follows. The title of this poem



encloses the poetry in a house, which I will explore acts as a synonym that he will use for his ideal *patria*. He points out that those who read the poems (“el comprador de mitos / y misterios”) might hate the tools that the poet uses, including “los retratos / de padre y madre y patria / en las paredes,” but, after all, “pero así es la casa de mis odas” (1129). So, here in his *casa de odas* many might be turned away because it may not fulfill their idea of traditional poetry as mythical or mysterious. In this poem he claims that beyond aesthetics for aesthetics’ sake, his poetry will work. The final lines read, “Regresé a trabajar sencillamente / con todos los demás / y para todos. // Para que todos vivan / en ella / hago mi casa / con odas / transparentes” (1130). This *casa* must contain elements that would strengthen that equilibrium.

In contrast with “Oda a la crítica” of *Odas elementales*, Neruda includes in *Nuevas odas elementales* a poem called “Oda a la crítica (II)” that now allows criticism to seep into his perfect world if it edifies and forces writers to learn. He thanks criticism because it helped him to “Volv[er] más verdadero, / enriquecido” (1159). Criticism has to be constructive and not be resentful or envious, but “Con una sola vida no aprenderé bastante. // Con la luz de otras vidas / vivirán otras vidas en mi canto” (1159-1160). The poet realizes in this poem that he cannot edify his *casa* by himself. He needs help from others, especially his readers, otherwise his work would be worthless. Help from others (including those who criticize him), is necessary in order to publicize and improve his poetics.

Assistance from others then appears again in “Oda a las estrellas.” The stars give the earth its light, but they will help the poet to turn the earth into a star, a beacon for the

other stars. The earth can only become a star through collaboration between Neruda and the stars. He states: “la tierra / es nuestra estrella. / Primero / fecundaremos / hasta que esté colmada / como un canasto verde / con los dones / que / le sacaremos / y entonces, / arriba!” (1182). This is an excellent example of how the ideal *casa*, the *patria*, and the *tierra* will produce results after they are filled with light. Then the words of the poem describe what creates that light: “dejadme/ levantar / a la más alta altura / mi mano de poeta [...] una oda / que anticipe / en el cielo / la terrestre / invasión / progenitora” (1183). The poet’s ode will result in two things that will convert the earth into a star: the beauty of the sky and terrestrial invasion. These two metaphors play on the synthesis of aesthetics and revolutionary rhetoric in *Nuevas odas*, and exemplify how Neruda’s ideal world can be filled with light.

From the light of the stars to the light of the moon, at the beginning of “Oda a la luna” it appears that the moon might be free from politics. First of all, while the moon sits in its aesthetic state, its “eternidad celeste,” down below “los martillos / golpean, / arden / los altos hornos” (1200). But that separation will not last for long according to the poet: “No será, no será / siempre / prometo / en nombre / de todos / los poetas / que te amaron / inútilmente: / abriremos / tu paz de piedra pálida” (1202). Through his verse the speaker promises that the moon will be useful, not simply aesthetically pleasing as other poets have described it (1203). So, Neruda continues to move his reader by not focusing only on the supposedly untouchable aesthetic beauty of an object (in this case the moon) but by showing that each object can be aesthetically pleasing and have a use value at the same time. Here, beauty transforms into utility.

Continuing on his course of examining supposedly untouchable aesthetic material, Neruda hails the beauty of the eye in “Oda al ojo.” Descriptions of the eye as “globo de maravilla,” “pequeño / pulpo de nuestro abismo,” or “perla / elaboradora” (1214-1215) contemplates the eye as a thing of beauty, and the parallels between the eye and his poetic before the 1930s are apparent. However, that is only half the story. In the second half of the poem, the eye acts as a witness of events that are occurring around the poet amid his “indecisa patria de los sueños” (1216), a land of dreams that did not become reality until he became conscious that his verse lacked personal testimony of experience. As a witness, the speaker proclaims, “Yo vi un muerto / en la pampa / salitrera” and after seeing that dead body, he realized that his first-hand experience had not contributed much to his poetry up to that point until he saw the dead (“Ojo, / tú faltabas / en mi canto”) (1217). What he had seen in Spain and later in Chile gave him the balance in his work that he needed, and gave him the power to see how foolish his aesthetic goals had been in the past. In fact he writes, “Tú [ojo] delicadamente / me mostraste / qué tonto soy [...]” (1217). He had been foolish because he had focused his early poetry on aesthetics only. His experiences had given him the possibility to move toward a more down-to-earth lyric that included denunciations of injustices toward the lower classes and to leave that foolishness behind.

A way to leave foolishness in the past is to focus on the present. “Oda al presente” offers a comparison to the “Oda al pasado” from *Odas elementales* in that both question the tense relationship between the past and the present. In each poem, the present is ours; we have control over it. Here we see that we need to use the present for

our advantage: “cógelo, / que no resbale, / que no se pierda en sueños, / ni palabras, / agárralo, / sujétalo / y ordénalo [...] (1228-1229). We must be the makers of our own destiny or our own ideal *patria*. Yet, in the present one should build for the future and at the same time not overlook what is around him. Neruda uses an image of stairs:

Sí  
escalera,  
sube  
en el presente  
peldaño  
tras peldaño,  
firmes  
los pies en la madera  
del presente,  
hacia arriba,  
hacia arriba,  
no muy alto,  
tan sólo  
hasta que puedas  
reparar  
las goteras  
del techo,  
no muy alto,  
no te vayas al cielo  
alcanza  
las manzanas,  
no las nubes,  
ésas  
déjalas  
ir por el cielo irse  
hacia el pasado. (1229)

In other words, we as human beings should not have our heads in the clouds and focus solely on the aesthetic beauty of things in general, otherwise we regress toward the past. Symbolic of Neruda's overall poetic trajectory, here the poem combines magnificently aesthetic pleasure with a personal political experience that includes manual labor. This

labor is dedicated to repair the *casa de odas* without moving to an exalted plain and catering to the elites or, on the other hand, solely providing political propaganda.

As I have hoped to have shown, in *Nuevas odas elementales*, Neruda continues to provoke his reader through his work to combine use value and aesthetic pleasure in common material things. In this collection he strove to establish a *casa* that contained such elements: criticism, the stars, the moon, eyes, and the present. In this ideal house, some of the poems converted objects that were traditionally purely aesthetic into defenders of a communal, egalitarian existence. Other poems take items that were traditionally anti-aesthetic or known for their use-value and gave them aesthetic power. Anyone who lived by the precepts established in this house would continue to climb the stairs to a more perfect political and poetic union. Although slightly different than Neruda's work from the Spanish Republic, the poems of this collection continue to move the reader to action, and, more specifically, they challenge the reader to reconsider either the aesthetic pleasure of elements that supposedly are not beautiful (the eye, criticism) or the political possibilities of things that supposedly are simply aesthetic (the moon, the stars).

### *TERCER LIBRO DE ODAS* (1957)

Written between 1956 and 1957, *Tercer libro de odas* continued the poet's quest to emphasize the fact that "De todo / un poco / tengo para todos" (1284). If the poet had something for everyone, then he could attract them to his poems. These odes contribute to the poet's quest to make his view of Communism aesthetic, and to give aesthetic items

anti-imperialistic and anti-capitalistic characteristics, while at the same time, we will explore how his ideal place pans out. If he can offer everyone something, as he states in the introductory poem of the collection (“Odas de todo el mundo”) then his goal steps beyond simply establishing a place where the his dialogue between the working class and poetry could flourish. Rather, he wanted to incorporate everyone and everything into that synthesis. In the introduction the speaker points out that there are odes from everyone, and there are odes of all kinds. In order to give an all-encompassing feel to the third book that he tried to establish in the first two (1283), now he works for an all-encompassing utopia beyond defense of the proletariat. The difference between this book and the previous *Nuevas odas elementales* is that the poet admits that in reality his goal is to make everything poetic: “hasta que todo / sea / y sea canto” (1285).

In order to make everything poetic, Neruda begins with his “Oda a la abeja.” As in “Oda al ojo” from *Nuevas odas elementales*, the first half of the poem looks at the beauty of the bees: “Perfecta / desde la cintura, / el abdomen rayado / por barrotes oscuros, / la cabecita / siempre preocupada / y las / alas / recién hechas de agua” (1286). Yet to focus solely on the aesthetic pleasure of these wonders of nature would not do them justice. They become an example of possible unity of the proletariat, of militias, and of workers (1288). From the beginning of this collection, the worker bees become aesthetic objects simply because they work to bring about the future, a future where poetry and workers unite until everything becomes poetry. So, up to this point, either the poem reminds us of where Neruda had left off in *Nuevas odas elementales* or his work to make everything song has returned to what he knows best: defense of workers’ rights.

Either be the case, the poem contains a combination of Communist rhetoric and rhythm that could inspire workers to memorize the poem and also feel part of a great community.

Speaking of workers, “Oda al albañil tranquilo” strives to demonstrate the possibility that a bricklayer can be aesthetically pleasing. The movements of the bricklayer act as a thing of beauty for the speaker, but the fact that this worker also contributes to the construction of something (“Y al fin de la semana, / las columnas, el / arco [...]” (1292)), shows that to simply aestheticize him would fall short of the mark in order to describe the dedication and hard work that he had employed. At the end of the poem, the poet claims that he had learned something from the bricklayer (1293): To continue to be dedicated to his work, to work steadily and to produce something that could be used for the future. That is the epitome of his political and poetic balance.

Dedication to a worthy cause is the focus of “Oda a un albatros viajero.” In fact, the speaker calls the albatross a hero because he made the trip from New Zealand to Chile (1296). Although the bird had died on the shores of the Chilean desert, he had reached his goal. Neruda laments the fact that “[...] nadie / levantará sobre la tierra / en una / plaza de pueblo / tu arrobadora / estatua” (1296), and then points out who the statues represent that are found in the plazas: “al hombre de bigotes / con levita o espada, / al que mató / en la guerra / a la aldeana, [...] al que usurpó / las tierras / de los indios [...]” (1296). By denouncing those who were considered heroes by mainstream society and comparing them with an albatross that had died shows the kind of commitment that the poet believes is necessary for a future world, compared with what others say. His political commitment works with his poetics; together they remind the reader of his/her social and aesthetic

responsibilities as well. And beyond that, the eulogy to a dead, insignificant bird shows how anything could transform into aesthetic pleasure.

Now, instead of tackling such an enormous task all in one bite, and to remind the Chilean reader of his responsibilities both to aesthetics and politics, *Tercer libro de odas* contains many poems that focus on the specific reality of Chile in the 1950s. In fact, of the sixty-seven odes in *Tercer libro* more than half refer specifically to Chilean themes or contain a reference to Chile, a shift from the first two books of odes. Because of the shift from a more global focus to a Chilean one, *Tercer libro* also allows the poet to focus on specific moments that are close him in his own country, moments that make his search for a continued balance between politics and aesthetics more intimate for his fellow countryman. It is as if he decided that trying to convince the rest of the world was too large of a task to obtain success, so he would focus on creating his ideal in Chile first, and then work on the rest.

For example, “Oda al barco pesquero” talks of how fifteen fishermen died in an explosion aboard a fishing boat off the coast of Chile in 1956. This occurrence caused the speaker to claim that the disaster, even though “Es poca muerte quince / pescadores / para el terrible / océano / de Chile [...],” was in reality “como ceniza / inagotable, / como aguas enlutadas / que caían / sobre / las uvas de mi patria” (39). The tone of the verses recognizes how the majority of the workers (in this case fishermen) were forgotten about by mainstream Chilean society (their deaths normally occur unnoticed by the majority of Chileans). He later said, “Sí / son / siempre / pobres / los elegidos / por la muerte” (1311) as if to point out that tragic death only happens to the poor. But these deaths did not



happen for nothing: “Pero / del mar / y de la tierra / volverán / algún día / nuestros muertos. / Volverán / cuando / nosotros estemos / verdaderamente / vivos, / cuando / el hombre / despierte / y los pueblos / caminen [...] sería la victoria sólo nuestra. / Ella es la flor final de los caídos” (1312-1313). In the future, once mankind wakes up from its slumber, and the workers and the poets work together for a victory, then these people will be remembered (their death would not be in vain). That is the goal of his political poetics as well: continue to work for a balance between aesthetics and politics so that in the future, all those who had fallen who were dedicated to it could claim that they contributed to its establishment, first in Chile and then in the rest of the world.

The focus on Chile and its heritage becomes more alive in “Oda a la calle San Diego.” This specific *calle* in Santiago reproduces a microcosm of the Chilean situation and also the world’s situation. The specificity of this ode in *Tercer libro* creates a sense that maybe while trying to establish his ideal, he had forgotten about Chile, but that is not the case. In fact, here there are references such as “[...] el número 134, / la librería Araya” (1327) that show that he sees in Chile potential for the future. Later, the climax of the poem shows the mixing of an ideal with his country: “Busca conmigo / una copa gigante, / con bandera, / honor y monumento / del vino y de la patria cristalina” (1328). In this moment in the poem it appears that the speaker moves to another dimension. These verses are separated into its own stanza. They are the pendulum that switches from a nostalgic, specific description of the *calle* to a “mítin relámpago” (1328) that brings together workers and students. At the same time, the search for a giant cup that had along with it “a flag, honor and monuments of wine and of the crystalline father land” is the

purpose of that later meeting: a search for that ideal land that united aesthetics and politics, only now on a more local level. Yet this focus on the specific street in Santiago shows that the street can be transformed into a poeticized and politicized sample for the rest of the world.

Even further, the poet aggrandizes his chances to poeticize and politicize everything by using the train station in Santiago as a metaphor in his “Oda a la vieja estación Mapocho en Santiago de Chile.” The train station itself has an aesthetic beauty, even the very rust on the walls gave it a uniqueness that, despite its disuse, reminds the speaker of the history and tradition that it contains. In the second stanza, the poet refers to the past when the “[...] nave de hierro / alimentó las crinolinas / y los sombreros altos” (1364). This reference to the upper class is then juxtaposed to the life of the poor: “mientras / sórdida era la vida de los pobres / que como un mar amargo / te rodeaba” (1365). Despite the inequalities that existed in the far past, slowly “Otra gente / llegó, / llenó los trenes, / mal vestidos viajeros, / con canastos, / banderas / sobre amenazadoras multitudes, / y la vieja Estación / reaccionaria / se marchitó” (1365). Despite their poor appearance, these new people contributed to the political changes in Chile, while the station grew older. Here both the political and poetic implications of the train station show the continued balance that Neruda’s poems contain in the *Tercer libro*. He continues to work toward a place where the “high hats” and the poor could find refuge and work together. A balance between the upper class and the lower here poeticizes the political class struggle, one that is not unique to the train station in Santiago, or Chile, or South America for that matter.

The poet can promote his equilibrium through a simple act (biting into an apple) in “Oda a la manzana.” The goal is to share this act with all of humanity: “quiero / una ciudad / una república / un río Mississippi / de manzanas / y en sus orillas / quiero ver / a toda / la población / del mundo / unida, reunida, / en el acto más simple de la tierra: / mordiendo una manzana” (1392). Everyone should be able to bite into an apple, and the speaker wants a place, *una república*, where the entire population of the world can participate in such a simple act. From an action that seems apoeitic and apolitical, this poem converts that action into political and poetic at once; it also looks to establish a place where that can happen. First, equality for all becomes a central theme to this poem, and at the same time the fight against hunger reopens the wounds between the abundance of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie versus the poverty of proletariat and the lower classes. Second, the poem fights for an utopianesque society where a communal existence will rid the earth of the class struggle.

The establishment of that new republic culminates in “Oda a la naranja.” In this poem, workers become “artistas / desgarradoras / del metal andino” (1402) while Chile becomes “un largo recinto de naranjos” (1403). Workers are not workers anymore, but metal artists, and Chile is the ground where Neruda’s ideal can take root. Neruda’s ideal land unites countries in the world; they become “en tu piel [...] como sectores de una sola fruta” (1403). Here we have two lands, the ideal place and “a [su] costado” Chile acts as the grove of orange trees. Chile acts as the ground where the tree can grow. In other words, collective experience must be planted in Chile in order to give fruit that will unite other countries.

The “Oda a la naranja” precedes the first poem of the three books of odes that is not an ode dedicated to something. That is, the ode “Oda *con* nostalgias de Chile” is not dedicated to a specific object, but it was written, proclaimed and spoken with nostalgia of Chile. This ode demonstrates how the poet thinks of that Chile of old and how he can work to construct a new republic. He begins by saying that in Argentina, he “viv[e] y muer[e] / penando por su patria” (1403), then later he thinks of what Chile means to him: “Pero mi cuerpo, Patria, / reclama tu substancia” (1405). Because he needs his land like an addiction, he promises exactly what he will do when he returns: “cuando vuelva / me amararé a tu proa / de embarcación terrestre, / y así navegaremos / confundidos / hasta que tú me cubras / y yo pueda [...] ser vino que regresa en cada otoño [...]” (1405). So the poet wants Chile to form the main part of his political and poetic dialogue. Both the poet and Chile will work to make his model a reality, which means that he will work to create his model in his home country.

The poems in *Tercer libro de odas* show that the poet did strive to poeticize every aspect of his life, while at the same time he politicized every aspect as well. In his goal to make everything poetic, he also made everything political from bricklayers to biting into an apple. While striving to poeticize and politicize *todo* he worked toward a republic; the ultimate goal of a republic then was the answer to how everything could be political and poetic at the same time. Neruda’s republic found its roots in the Spanish Republic, and more than twenty years later, that idea of a republic would be the ideal world, a world where all became political and poetic at the same time.

## SUMMARY

From the texts examined above, we have seen that Neruda's political and poetic balance during the Spanish Republic did continue in his later works with variations, and he did try to establish an ideal place in his later poetry. During the Republic, his two works, *Residencia en la tierra* and *Tercera residencia*, demonstrate how he began to develop his model for an ideal place where politics and aesthetics could reside together. Then, after the fall of the Spanish Republic, as I have tried to demonstrate, in *Canto general*, Neruda gives glimpses of that ideal, and balances anti-imperialism, workers' rights, "the new man" and his theory of poetry in this epic work as well. The poet looks to the American continent of the past for inspiration and searches for examples of how to create his ideal communal society. Each poem works to balance both aesthetics and politics, build both aspects up, and not sacrifice one for the other.

The next text in this analysis was *Odas elementales* and as I have tried to show, contains the positives of the elements of his ideal imaginary in an attempt to encompass various communal elements in his utopia. *Nuevas odas elementales* contains his commitment to his ideal proletariat model, except that in the final poems he sees that his ideal will never become a reality unless he focuses on concrete points in the present that go beyond the proletariat. He develops that idea in *Tercer libro de odas* and shows that the ideal land then had to have some more concrete details, Chilean details that had to be established in order for them to be lasting. Instead of the passing ideal that was the main purpose in the imaginary of the Nerudian poetry up until that point in the odes, he includes more specific references to Chile in order to embody his collective, classless

ideal. Here his focus is a society, or *una república*, that poeticizes and politicizes everything. As he continued to produce his poetry and his imaginary perfect model of a world, then his synthesis could last beyond his death and have an effect on Communist politics and society of the future. Neruda's all-encompassing goal was his own republic.

## CHAPTER 4: NICOLÁS GUILLÉN: RACIAL DEMOCRACY

*Alguna vez he dicho—creo que desde estas mismas páginas—que mi contacto con la guerra civil española sirvió de mucho a mi desarrollo político. De tal manera es ello cierto, que ya en las vísperas de abandonar el escenario de la lucha que me había tocado ver, no me sentía en nada dispuesto a que lo que había sido y era todavía una realidad viva, dolorosa, fuera tomando lentamente, inevitablemente, índole de recuerdo de episodio más o menos borroso de una experiencia extraordinaria.*  
(Guillén, *Páginas Veltas* 303)

### INTRODUCTION

Of the three authors in this study, Nicolás Guillén is unique in that although he never had been to the Spanish Republic until 1937, he had published poetry in its favor before his travel to Spanish soil. Guillén wrote and published *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* in the first months of 1937, only weeks before travelling to Spain; he accepted Neruda's invitation to participate in the Second Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture and, once in the Republic, he republished the collection.<sup>42</sup> The impact of his experience in Spain led him to officially join the Communist Party while there. The purpose of this chapter is to explore Guillén's poetry, beginning with *España*, in order to find a political, aesthetic and ethnic crossroads that the Spanish Republic fueled and fostered toward the formation of an ideal racial democracy in his post-Spain collections. In other words, the triple combination of ethnic, political, and aesthetic

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<sup>42</sup> There are two publication dates of *España*. Ángel Augier asserts that the poems were written and published in México (Editorial México Nuevo) during the month of May, 1937 (Augier 223). Manuel Altolaguirre republished *España* in Valencia, Spain (Nueva Colección «Héroe») later in July, 1937.

equality gave rise to an ideal *democracia racial* in his collections from 1937 until the 1959 Cuban Revolution.<sup>43</sup>

This chapter briefly introduces Guillén's biography up until and including his Spanish experience in 1937-1938. Then, I look at the criticism written about Guillén and how to build from the work of the critics in order to find common ground among race, politics and poetics while devoting space to Guillén's experience in the Spanish Republic as important to both his political poetics and ideal racial democracy trajectories after 1939. Then, after a review of the criticism, the pages that follow look at his ethnic-political-poetic collections written and published before his arrival to the Spanish Republic in early 1937: *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza*. Last, I will look at three post-Republic collections: *El son entero* (1947), *Elegías* (1951), and *La paloma de vuelo popular* (1958) to determine the three-way link and the effects of his experience in Spain to help him create an ideal *democracia racial*.

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY LEADING UP TO THE REPUBLIC

Nicolás Guillén was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1902 in Camagüey, Cuba. In 1919 he finished his schooling, and a year later he published his first poems. In 1922, he went to Havana to study law, but after a short time, he dropped out because he was disappointed in the instruction that he was receiving. His disappointment in formal education led him to dedicate a poem to his experience at the university, "Al margen de mis libros de

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<sup>43</sup> This term has been used in the Brazilian academic community for some time to refer to the Brazilian State; recently it has been reevaluated. That same idea can be applied to the Spanish Republic: it was a land of supposed equality and freedom, yet Guillén noticed from the beginning that a racial element was still missing, despite the reforms that the liberal governments had tried to put into place.



estudio,” that Julio Antonio Mella (the later founder of the Cuban Communist Party) published in his magazine *Alma Mater*. That poetic beginning led to his first collection less than eight years later, *Motivos de son* (1930). Shortly after, in 1931 he finished and published *Sóngoro cosongo*. Both *Motivos de son* and *Sóngoro cosongo* contain rhythmic verses and colloquialisms that reflect the Cuban socio-economic situation of the late 1920s and 1930s. However, in 1934 he published *West Indies Ltd*, a collection that introduced him into the political world as he took on North American imperialism. He continued his anti-imperialist stance as director of the magazine *Mediodía*. In January, 1937, Guillén went to Mexico with Juan Marinello in order to participate in a conference organized by the *Liga de Escritores Revolucionarios* (LEAR) of Mexico. While there, he wrote and published *Cantos para soldados y sones para turistas* and his specific dedication to the preservation of the Spanish Republic appeared later in his 1937 collection *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza*. In May, 1937, after the conference in Mexico, Marinello and Guillén received invitations to go to the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in Valencia, Spain. After a brief stint in France for the last session of the Congress (in July, 1937), Guillén returned to Spain and he remained there until May, 1938. Although Guillén did not spend as much time in the Spanish Republic as Neruda or Alberti (he was there for less than a year from June, 1937 until May 1938), he committed officially to the Communist Party during his time in the Republic (after his return from France). The Republic served as inspiration for Guillén even before his trip, so in this case, the principles of the Republic had already influenced him even before he set foot there.

## CRITICISM

The research on Nicolás Guillén's poetry can primarily be separated into three groups. First, there are those who focus primarily on his politics and the relationship that it has with his aesthetic. Second, others look at his ethnic-aesthetic combination for the main inspiration of their work. Last, other recent studies work to combine the poet's Afro-Cubanness with his aesthetics, his poetics and his political ideology. Among all of this research, up until recently the poet's experience in the Spanish Republic has been understudied. Building from the research that has been done up until this point, what lacks is a study of Guillén's trajectory (the combination of politics, aesthetics, and race in a three way synthesis) enhanced by his Spanish experience. In order to maneuver through the three elements of his work, the following pages look to the criticism written on Guillén up to this time and strive for a triple synthesis that attempts to describe and define a racial democracy inspired by the poet's political poetry during the 1930s (coinciding with Spanish Republic) and the continuation of that possibility.

## STUDIES THAT PRIMARILY FOCUS ON GUILLÉN'S POLITICS AND AESTHETICS

Keith Ellis' *Cuba's Nicolás Guillén: poetry and ideology* (1983) focuses on the ideology of the poet. He says of *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* "The fact that Guillén wrote his Spanish Civil War poems before arriving in Spain is indicative of the ideological, rational basis of his inspiration" (Ellis 105). Later Ellis writes that Guillén differed from Neruda and Vallejo because for them, "Fascist activity

[was] a jolting revelation” whereas Guillén “[...] needs to make no major adjustment from [...]” before (106). His trip to Spain coincided with his desire to join the Communist Party. It was the first time that Guillén had left Cuba; his worldview was about to become more acute. In Spain he would see Fascist, Nazi, and Franquist forces first hand. Here the possibilities of a place where intellectuals and workers could unite in order to establish laws (however disorganized that ended up being in practice) gave Guillén the chance experiment with his own idea of racial democracy. When Ellis concludes in part that Guillén has a “[...] democratic outlook that firmly combats economic exploitation and racial discrimination, [one] that is hostile to any tradition that does not foster the general advancement of mankind” (195), he recognizes that the Cuban national poet is a product of his politics and poetics within a specific historical reality. From 1937 onward, the Spanish Republic influenced his politics and poetics. Both the possibilities of the Republic that he had seen before his travel and his experience while there contributed to that synthesis.

In her *Self and Society in the poetry of Nicolás Guillén* (1982), Lorna V. Williams confirms the importance of the time period that corresponded with Ellis’ affirmation. She asserts that “Guillén’s early verses were published at a decisive moment: the height of the avant-garde movement of the pre-World War II era” (Williams 2) and also stresses that “Whether composed on the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, or in commemoration of local events such as Fidel Castro’s ‘Declaration-of-Havana’ speech, certain poems possess an immediacy that could well have only historical interest when the event to which they refer has been forgotten by the majority of people” (6). Although the

historical interest as she states may have lost its significance in the eyes of the majority, I agree that the 1930s and the Spanish Republic cannot be discounted when referring to Guillén's work, otherwise his poetic trajectory appears incomplete.

## STUDIES THAT PRIMARILY FOCUS ON GUILLÉN'S ETHNICITY AND AESTHETICS

An analysis of Guillén's poetry would also be incomplete without ethnicity. Many of the studies of Nicolás Guillén focus appropriately on the ethnicity or race issue in his work. An example of this is Ángel Augier's *Nicolás Guillén: estudio biográfico-crítico* (1984). By representing the oppressed collective the Cuban poet became known as "el mensajero de la unidad de los pueblos del continente nuevo" and "el embajador de los comunes anhelos de la tierra americana" (Augier 317). If Augier considers *West Indies, Ltd* to be "la expresión de la *primera* etapa de la evolución ideológica de Guillén hacia posiciones radicales ante el problema nacional" (192, my italics), then *Cantos para soldados* and more specifically *España* mark this position *ante* the international dilemma in a possible *segunda etapa*. In this second period, not only did Guillén see the future in the Republic, but he could also see what it needed; and despite any words to the contrary, the Republic was far from a *democracia racial*. So the inspiration for the poet to continue his political poetics during the Republic was its lack of equality for ethnicities, and he would work toward including that in his ideal model, during and after the Spanish Republic, as we will hopefully see in the coming pages.

Josaphat Kubayanda also focuses primarily on the Africanness of Guillén's work in the fourth chapter of his book, *The Poet's Africa: Africanness in the poetry of Nicolás Guillén and Aimé Césaire*. This chapter, titled "The «Double Proletarian»: Race and the Caribbean Social Space" (1990), argues for the combination of race and social justice as key contributors to Guillén's worldview. Although he focuses primarily on Africanness, Kubayanda also points out that for Guillén, "Commitment, to be precise, refers to a poetic mode of disclosing and dealing with the 'collective' situation: the problematics of the poor, weak and disorganized subcultures" (Kubayanda 51). In fact, Kubayanda focuses on Guillén's case as a prime example of socio-racial equality. When referring to *Cantos* and *España* Kubayanda writes that "[...] they relate to the early Negritude perspective of a socio-racially equal, conquest-free, and open world" (64). In other words, even in a study that focuses on the Africanness of the Guillén's poetry, the poet's politics appears indispensable.

## A SEARCH FOR SYNTHESIS IN GUILLÉN'S POETICS

In an attempt to house the three distinct aspects of Guillén's work, Nancy Morejón's anthology, *Recopilación de textos sobre Nicolás Guillén* (1974), contains various studies of Guillén's work written between 1930 and 1974. In this collection, various articles on Guillén concentrate on his Afro-Cuban aesthetics.<sup>44</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>44</sup> Some examples are: Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's "La poesía afrocubana de Nicolás Guillén," Regino E Boti's "La poesía cubana de Nicolás Guillén," H R. Hays' "Nicolás Guillén y la poesía afrocubana," and Ángel Augier's "La raíz cubana."

other articles focus specifically on the political influences of Guillén's work.<sup>45</sup> Yet intercalated in the anthology, two articles evoke the balance between politics, ethnicity, and aesthetics that Guillén had strived for during his lifetime. The first, written by Roberto Fernandez Retamar, sums up Guillén's political and poetic synthesis through its title "El son de vuelo popular."<sup>46</sup> This article first identifies the challenges that authors face in order to satisfy both an intellectual, critical elite and masses of workers:

Crear un arte de calidad que satisfaga a las amplias masas, es empresa grande. Crear uno que satisfaga a las bien o mal llamadas *élites* intelectuales, es logro menor, aunque logro al cabo. Pero lo que es del todo excepcional es dar con una obra que a la vez llegue *realmente* a los muchos y a los pocos, a los espectadores ingenuos y a los más exigentes. Son sólo unos cuantos los que alcanzan esto. En esta exigua familia [...] tiene una silla nuestro Nicolás Guillén. (Fernández Retamar in Morejón 177, author's emphasis)

Because Nicolás Guillén was able to please both the intellectual elite and workers, he could inspire and prove that a tie between politics and poetics was not only legitimate but necessary for the twentieth century. However he did not fall into the trap of simple propaganda or political rhetoric that degraded poetry. Fernández Retamar argues for that point by saying that "Desgraciadamente, es posible asumir una magnífica posición política y carecer de virtud poética, en cuyo caso la llegada de la Revolución profetizada en versos malos será una gran alegría humana, pero no salvará las estrofas patituertas" (Fernández Retamar in Morejón 178). Fernández Retamar recognizes that Guillén does not lack poetic virtue because of his political and ideological stances. In fact, what Guillén achieved, few could; he could build up aesthetic pleasure and political

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<sup>45</sup> "Un líder de la poesía revolucionaria" by Manuel Navarro Luna or "Canta a la revolución con toda la voz que tiene" by José Antonio Portuondo.

<sup>46</sup> This title appears to be a play on Guillén's 1958 work, *La paloma de vuelo popular*.

involvement simultaneously and he could do so because of his ethnic position. The critic argues that Guillén's poetry goes beyond *poesía negra* and in reality is *poesía de la descolonización* (180); a move toward racial democracy. Guillén's experience was distinct; as we will explore, his experience in the Spanish Republic fostered a political, poetic, and ethnic tie, a tie that did not end when he left Spain in May of 1938 or when the Republic fell a year later.

Furthermore, coinciding with Retamar, Alfred Melon's article, "El poeta de la síntesis," refers to Guillén's two commitments: his commitment to aesthetics and his commitment to politics in light of his ethnicity. Melon calls this two-sided commitment tied to Guillén's ethnicity "total poetry" and argues that *el poeta nacional cubano* is an ideal provider of that totality: "[...] Nicolás Guillén es uno de los artesanos de mayor envergadura de la poesía total, es decir de la realización, a escala mundial, de la poesía como síntesis" (Melon in Morejón 202). Later on he writes, that Guillén "[...] logra en lo que atañe a la expresión poética, la síntesis estética más cercana a lo que todos esperamos de la poesía. Hasta tal punto que incluso la crítica reaccionaria, reacia a sus mensajes políticos y ávida de la emoción estética nada más, se deleita en su lectura" (227). The focus on Guillén's political poetics is key for this study. What needs to happen is to focus on the international aspect of his ethnic and political poetics as it emerges during the Spanish Republic, his publication of *Cantos* and *España* and the enhanced balance of all these factors that occurred from his experience there. From the Republic onward, Guillén's poetry looks to a place, similar to the Republic, one that would not discriminate against anyone because of the color of their skin.

*Nicolás Guillén: Popular Poet of the Caribbean* (1990) by Ian Isidore Smart argues the thesis that “West-Indianness is an essential feature of Nicolás Guillén’s poetic art” that stems from “a legitimate neo-African cultural manifestation” (Smart 2). Smart veers away from the simplicity of reducing Guillén to his African roots or his Communist ideology (as he argues had been the focus of the majority of the criticism written on Guillén up until the 1990s). By doing so, he can dive into Guillén’s poetics without being completely overrun by Guillén’s pure Afro-Cubanness or his political ideology. Smart defines Guillén’s poetics as “Pan-Caribbean” and “Neo-African.” He states that “Ultimately, poetry, even that of a Poeta Nacional, is not a manifesto or a declaration of party policy, it is the outpouring of genuine emotion” (Smart 61). However, that party policy does run on a parallel line with his poetry; as both elements grow, they work together to build up one another. The Pan-Caribbeanness or Neo-Africanness of the poetry then enhances the synthesis between the two.

Later when referring to commitment in Guillén’s poetry, Smart believes that “The marriage of his art and his politics attained its highest point with the publication of *West Indies, Ltd* in 1934” (Smart 63). Although I agree that the word *marriage* gives an appropriate idea of political and poetic balance that Guillén instilled in his poetry, I will strive to show that beyond *West Indies, Ltd*, Guillén’s later works became more acute concerning that equilibrium, and his visit to the Spanish Republic in 1937 contributed to that acuteness. He gained an international perspective that continued with him until at least 1959, an international perspective which would in turn push his *marriage* to a higher plain. In fact, Smart only mentions *Cantos para soldados y sones para turistas*



twice in his study (106, 170) and *España: cuatro angustias y una esperanza* is not mentioned at all, as if the Spanish experience had had no effect or influence on Guillén. If for Smart *West Indies, Ltd* is the culmination of his political poetry and *El son entero* is Guillén's "most important book" (Smart 63), what happened to the two collections that he published between them?<sup>47</sup>

## RECENT STUDIES OF NICOLÁS GUILLÉN AND SPAIN

Jerome Branche consolidated research on Guillén in 2003 when he edited his *Lo que teníamos que tener: raza y revolución en Nicolás Guillén*. In this collection, Ángel Augier talks of the importance of the 1930s and the Spanish Republic in "Nicolás Guillén: esquema de la evolución estética-ideológica de su poesía." Augier argues that *España* consolidates Guillén's personal aesthetic style and advances his ideological stance (Augier in Branche 50). In Branche's article, however, the aesthetic-ideological tie is not linked to the poet's ethnicity; a separation still exists between that political poetry and the poet's undeniably charged racial verse. As we look into Guillén as a poet who searched for a *democracia racial* we hope to bridge that gap.

More recently (in 2004), Guillén's Spanish experience has created more interest in his work, when Nancy Morejón recognizes the importance of Guillén's Spanish experience in "España en Nicolás Guillén," the afro-Cubanness of the author is left aside. Her contribution to the studies of Guillén shows that the Cuban national poet's political poetics reflected the Republic's defense of aesthetics and politics: "En Guillén

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<sup>47</sup> In reality, Smart does not focus on *El son entero* either.

cohabitaban una España literaria y una España factual, caras de una misma moneda. Su voluntad de estilo forjó un perpetuo túnel de vasos comunicantes entre esas dos Españas” (Morejón in Barchino Pérez and Rubio Martín 76). Morejón shows marvelously that Guillén transformed himself through his experience in the Republic of politics and poetry, and now what needs to occur is to combine that experience with his experience as a *poeta negro* in order to see the political and poetic goals at work in his later collections.

Continuing on the same idea, Niall Binns refers to Guillén when he says “[...] la utopía de España seguiría siempre viva y construiría el fundamento para un duradero compromiso político” (Binns in Barchino Pérez and Rubio Martín 116). Beyond simply staying alive, the Spanish Republic would be a determiner for Guillén’s ideal poetically political place. What is missing in the aforementioned criticism is a focus on how, if the Republic fueled a political poetics, how the relationship between politics, race, and aesthetics developed to create an ideal racial democratic place in Guillén’s post-Republic poetry.

#### GUILLÉN’S POETRY DURING THE REPUBLIC: *ESPAÑA: POEMA EN CUATRO ANGUSTIAS Y UNA ESPERANZA* (1937)

Ángel Augier wrote of *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* that “La presencia de lo político se diluye victoriosamente en el hecho poético” (Augier 224). Politics became diluted in Guillén’s poetics; from the beginning *España* denounced the monarchical, aristocratic, and oligarchic animosity toward the Spanish Republic. The poems offered answers about how the Republic could overcome the ethnic inequalities

and political injustices of the 1930s. In this collection, there are four *angustias* followed by an *esperanza*, that is, there are five poems that bring out the effects and influences of the Republic on Guillén even before he had stepped foot on its soil. The following pages explore how politics, poetics, and race combine to build each other up and strive for an ideal racial democracy in *España*. Each of the five poems that these pages analyze is broken up into its political, poetic, and racial characteristics to determine its contribution to a racial democratic ideal.

#### “ANGUSTIA PRIMERA”

Politically speaking, the first *angustia* is subtitled “miradas de metales y rocas,” a phrase that plays on two possibilities: either this phrase personifies rocks and metals and focuses on their vision of political injustices in Spain or it refers to the hard, courageous looks of the defenders of an egalitarian Spain. The first two lines show where Guillén’s, as well as the rocks’, metals’, and people of Spain’s allegiance lies: “No Cortés, ni Pizarro” (*Obra poética 1920-1958* 209).<sup>48</sup> From this anti-imperialist attitude, Guillén compares the unjust conquest of the American continent with the unjust conquest that Franco’s proto-fascist cause brought against the Republic. His Cuban and Mexican audience would still be biased against Spain because of their relatively new “independence” from it, so he points out that the Spain that Cortés and Pizarro represented was also a characteristic of those generals who were attacking the Republic, not of the people. In this way, he can point out that the people of the Republic do not

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<sup>48</sup> These quotes come from *Nicolás Guillén: Obra poética 1920-1958, Tomo I* unless otherwise marked.

share the imperialistic ideology of the *conquistadores* nor of the Franquists. In other words, the anti-imperialist attitude that Guillén had developed during the course of the 1930s was then applied to a Spain that had once filled the shoes of the conquerors, but now shared the plight of the underrepresented classes.

According to the poem, the plight of the workers was caused by those who sought to limit their freedoms. Later on in the last stanza of this first *angustia*, we see who is to blame for breaking Spain apart:

Miradla, a España, rota!  
y pájaros volando sobre ruinas,  
y el fachismo [sic] y su bota,  
y faroles sin luz en las esquinas,  
y los puños en alto  
y los pechos despiertos [...]. (210)

The birds, metaphors for the planes of the Franquist forces (supplied by the Nazis and the Fascists) were the culprits of the split in Spain. Fascism, represented by the boots of the rebelling forces was the culprit of all of the evils that had occurred in the Iberian Peninsula. And the heroes of the story were those who were awakened to their duty through their hearts and lifted their fists in salute.<sup>49</sup> So here Guillén shows what is key for the success of the Republic and also for his own world: the fight against fascism and class discrimination. Both the Republic and his ideal place should protect the underrepresented classes.

As for poetics, if the Franquists can be compared to the conquistadors of the Spanish Golden Age, how does he define the people, that is, the defenders of the

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<sup>49</sup> The Republicans adopted a salute where they lifted their left fist high in the air. This action opposed the fascist right hand raised (used in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy).

Republic? He achieves this by pointing out that the Republic is filled with “*hombres rudos*” (209) who fight against the hegemony of the wealthy, just as the people of the Americas had fought against the traditions of imperialistic Spain. He defines the people, these *hombres rudos* of Spain, as “saltando el tiempo” (209): they jump over time. The poem describes them as progressive, *avant-garde* men on the forefront. Normally, workers and *avant-garde* do not mesh well together; yet, in the Republic, the poet sees the positive prospects of this combination, one that ties workers politics with aesthetics. Moreover, these *rudos* are also militiamen. However, despite their distance from the location where Guillén wrote (he was writing in Mexico, while the people fought in Spain) in reality, they were closer than he thought. The adjectives that describe these *milicianos* are “remotos” and “lejanos” two words that suggest a distancing from the poet, but despite that distance, they are “al pie *aquí* con nosotros [...] *aquí* al fin con nosotros [...] *cercanísimos* hermanos” (209, my italics). This reference to brotherhood between an Afro-Cuban poet in Mexico and the simple Spanish working-man goes beyond politics or race; poetry spans time and space. The poetic gesture of repetition suggests that distance in reality linked the words of the poet with the Spanish people’s fight.

With Cuba’s independence from Spain less than thirty years before, Guillén had to differentiate between the Spain of the conquest and the people of the Republic of his own time. If he could align definitions of the conquistadors with the opponents of the Spanish Republic (in some way, each forced “aztecas, incas, juntos [a][halar] el doble carro”), he could convince himself and his readers that the people who fought against

them were in a similar situation as the underrepresented peoples of the Americas. In other words, the poet attacked the hegemonic, racist ideas that Spain represented for many in the Americas, and compared them with those who fought against the Republic. Fascism worked against Aztecs, Incans, and Afro-Cubans; at the same time, it destroyed possibilities for the working-class, peasants, and farmers.

In “Angustia primera,” anguish for the fight against freedom in the Spanish Republic grew because of an attack on a politics, poetics, and race that Guillén held dear. As a model for his own racial democracy, the Spanish Republic represented those three elements that the poem defended. This first poem establishes a triple combination that sets the precedent for the poems to follow, one that reminds the reader that beyond politics and poetics, racial equality was equally important. The relationship that the poet has now created with the Spanish militiamen has tied various realms together in the first stanza of this collection because that *nosotros* implies various interpretations. First of all, he has tied workers with poets. Second, he fortifies the links between the Spanish people and the people of the Americas. Third, he connects the plight of the underrepresented Afro-Cubans, or indigenous Mexicans with the challenges of the *hombres rudos*. In the first lines of the poem, the synthesis of politics, aesthetics and, ethnicity begins to take shape. The lines, “todo el viejo metal imperialista, / corre fundido en aguas quemadoras, / donde soldado, obrero, artista, / las balas cogen para sus ametralladoras” (104) unite artists, workers, and soldiers against imperialistic measures. As his ideal *democracia racial* took shape, if the protagonists were artists, soldiers, and workers, they could use the imperialist’s own tools against him and get rid of him. An ideal racial democracy

would contain people with “[...] ojos coléricos, abiertos, bien abiertos” (210). In other words, it was time for poets, workers, and soldiers to open their eyes for a better world together.

#### “ANGUSTIA SEGUNDA”

The poem “Angustia segunda (tus venas, la raíz de nuestros árboles)” works from another angle: it strives to build common ground with the Spanish people. To build on that common ground with the Spanish workers, the poem refers to the roots that they shared. The poem declared “Yo la siento” (211). The poem’s extended metaphor tied the speaker with the workers. If he felt the roots in him, he opened up to his reader about how important it was to nurture the tree. Inside him, the root was “nailed” to him; by nurturing the tree, he suggested three results of that dedicated cultivation. First, it will flower. It will “[florecer] en lenguas ardorosas” (211). So by building on that common root, the resulting flower will be an arduous tongue—a powerful poetics—that will convince others of the viability of the roots.

The second result claims that the root will “[alimentar] ramas donde colgar los pájaros cansados” (211). The root then would provide a politics for a place where the weary could rest. In fact, although the root throughout the poem (“la raíz de mi árbol, de tu árbol”) refers to the distance between the speaker and reader, it gave birth to the ideological beginning to both. Politics then would contribute to “la raíz de nuestros árboles” (210-211).

However, without the third result, the tree would not be strong enough to survive. By building on characteristics that the Afro-Cubans and the Spanish people had in common, the tree would “[elevar] sus venas, nuestras venas, / tus venas, la raíz de nuestros árboles” (211). In other words, the final tree would lift up the veins—the race, ethnicity—of the Spanish people, of the American/Caribbean peoples, and the future peoples that would inherit this tree.

So, the focus of the second poem turns from the injustices in the Republic to the relationship that the people of the Americas have with the people of Spain. The “*Angustia segunda*” ties Guillén’s genealogy with that of the workers in the Spanish Republic. He builds the common relationships between the trees of the Americas with the trees of the Iberian Peninsula. Even though they are different trees, the roots are the same, “la raíz de mi árbol, de tu árbol” (210). He repeatedly refers to the same roots that the Americas share with Spain. But these roots are more than family roots. Both his family roots and his ideological roots have formed an important part of his poetry, and here in support of the Republic, he considers his ideological, poetic and racial inspirations one and the same with the defenders of the “Republic of intellectuals.” Despite differences between the poet and the Spanish people (differences in ethnicity; he asserts that “la raíz de [su] árbol [es] retorcida”) he could support them and build on common ground, a perfect ideological and governmental model for a racial democracy.



### “ANGUSTIA TERCERA”

The political aspect of the next *angustia* (“y mis huesos marchando en tus soldados”) starts with the very title of the poem. As the speaker’s bones march in the Republic’s soldiers, he demonstrates where his loyalty lies: anti-fascism. More specifically the enemies of the Republic are also the enemies of the poet, as in the next stanza the poet reiterates: “Contra cetro y corona y manto y sable, / pueblo, contra sotana, y yo contigo (106). In other words, the monarchy, the aristocracy, the military, and the church are all enemies that the Republic and the poet share. As with Alberti’s commitment to the Spanish Republic, Guillén’s ideal model does not include those who form part of these classes, unless they accept equality and avoid repression of the underrepresented groups of which he forms a part.

The personification of the Republic, the open sores of the Republic (the “tú” of the poem), gave the poet a chance to testify against the injustices of the rebelling generals and his poetics act as a witness. Along these lines, in the second stanza, he says, “y por tus llagas fúlgidas preguntan. / Secos verá a los hombres que te hirieron” (106). The implications that the poet would witness the drying up of those who had hurt the Republic are fortified here by sixteen verses separated into traditional Spanish hendecasyllable quartets that rhyme ABAB, a meter and rhyme scheme that the poet uses for the first time in the collection. Here it appears as though tradition supported and strengthened the poem’s witness of injustice. Similarly, Guillén’s poetics do not simply disappear because of his adhesion to the defense of the Republic.

Neither does the poem negate the racial aspect of Guillén's poetry. In the second stanza we read: "Las dos sangres de ti que en mí se juntan / vuelven a ti, pues que de ti vinieron" (106). From the two bloods that he has inherited from the Spanish Republic, he returns the favor and dedicates his cultural inheritance and his ethnic heritage to fight against the Franquists. His "two bloods" are those that strengthen and build up the Republic. His fight against these enemies of the Republic returns in the last two lines of the poem: "mi piel, en tiras, para hacerte vendas, y mis huesos marchando en tus soldados" (106). So, his skin was what could save the Republic, a skin that had received discrimination by those same forces that tried to destroy the Republic. By defining his skin as one of the defenders of the Republic, Guillén combines prejudices against certain ideologies such as his own, or that of the Republic, and also prejudices against his physiology.

Up to this point in the collection, the promise of the Republic for the workers and the people enhanced Guillén's participation to defend it. For the poet, the Republic's fight was against discrimination of many types (racial, ethnical, religious, class, and others), and by supporting the Republican cause, he could provide a voice for those who shared his physical characteristics, and work toward establishing similar principles in the future for all in a racial democracy.

#### "ANGUSTIA CUARTA"

In the longest *angustia*, "Angustia Cuarta (Federico)," Guillén denounces the death of the silenced Federico García Lorca who had been killed by Franquist supporters

in Granada in August, 1936, during the first months of the military coup. The poem is made up of three parts. Although these parts have simple titles (“Federico,” “(Una canción),” and “(Momento en García Lorca)”), politics, poetics, and race continue to work in Guillén’s poetry as the martyrdom of the poet Lorca epitomizes that three-way synthesis.

By mentioning the recently assassinated Lorca, Guillén toyed with the legacy that Lorca possibly would have left behind had he not been martyred. The reference to Lorca in 1937 became a common metaphor of the brutality of fascism and more specifically the unjust random murders committed by the Franquists. In other words, by solely mentioning the Granadian poet’s name, Guillén denounced the politics of Franco’s *nacionalistas* and supported the ideals of a supposed egalitarian Republic.

Now, that denunciation emphasized the poetic relationship that Guillén wanted to establish between himself and the poet from Granada. In the first three stanzas, the speaker asks “¿No anda por aquí Federico?” (212). Guillén can tie himself with Lorca as a poet as he searched for Lorca’s wisdom and poetic inspiration. During his search for Lorca, he knocks on the door of three different entities. First he knocks on the doors of a *romance*. The *romance* is a stanza much liked by Lorca (eight-syllable lines where the even lines have rhyme in assonance). For Guillén, Lorca’s primary inspiration is his aesthetics. Second, the speaker looks for Lorca by knocking on a crystal door. The explicitness of his poetry was also in line with Guillén’s poetic goal. Guillén strove to clearly write for those who were not of the elite, intellectual class, in order to provide aesthetic beauty. Third he knocks on a gypsy’s door. Here we see the cultural legacy that

Lorca had left behind, and the ideal that Guillén was also searching for through his representations of the underrepresented peoples of the Americas, Spain, and the World. Lorca had given voice to a people who had been silenced by the mainstream (the *gitanos*) while at the same time he showed the political injustices that the gypsies had suffered in Spain because of their cultural differences.<sup>50</sup> Guillén links Lorca's death with the loss of a voice on behalf of the *gitanos*.

In the last part of the *Angustia cuarta*, "Momento en García Lorca" concentrates how to consecrate Lorca after his death. In the first tercets, as Lorca dreams, his assassins make their way to find him and take him to the mountains where they will kill him. The final lines then show the kind of person that Lorca was (according to Guillén):

Alzóse Federico, en luz bañado  
Federico, Granada y Primavera  
Y con luna y clavel y nardo y cera  
los siguió por el monte perfumado. (214)

As Federico rises to accompany his would-be assassins, he also takes Granada and spring with him. In this poem, Guillén converted the Granadian poet into a Messianic figure, one that would pay the price not only for poets or the Republic, but also for *gitanos*. So, Lorca's death became a sacrifice for the preservation of aesthetics, politics, and underrepresented groups in the *monte perfumado*, a place where the racial democracy could flourish. Although Granada could have represented an ideal place where the three elements could survive, that democratically racial place would have to be established at another time. Here is where the last poem of *España*, "La voz esperanzada," appears.

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<sup>50</sup> See specifically *Romancero gitano*.

## “LA VOZ ESPERANZADA”

After the four *angustias*, the title of the next poem appears to bring a promise of happiness in the wake of the anguish: “La voz esperanzada: una canción alegre en la lejanía.” That being said, the poem begins with a line that seems to undermine that very happiness. It reads: “¡Ardiendo, España, estás! Ardiendo” (215). Although Spain burns, hope and happiness might emerge through a voice with various qualities. First, the voice is “tu voz de abajo.” This voice from below, a voice that expresses the opinions, beliefs, and realities of those from below (politically speaking) must speak in order for happiness to be achieved. Second, the voice must be “fuerte.” Despite any opposition, this voice has to carry on despite the things that work against it to discourage it. The Republic could be the entity that might provide that strength: “Viéndote estoy las venas / vaciarse, España, y siempre volver a quedar llenas” (215). Despite the Republic’s loss of blood, the veins would always fill up. Third, Spain was not the only entity that is willing to lose its blood on behalf of the principles of the Republic, the poet was also. He emphasizes, “corro hacia ti, muero por ti” (216). If he as an Afro-Cuban poet is willing to die for the Republic, the Republic should promise to honor rights for others despite ethnicity, race, or color as well to be politically acceptable.

Without both “pastor y poeta” the voice would not be able to give way to an *España alegre*. Without the combination of both worker and intellectual, Spain would continue to burn. In fact, Guillén’s voice would make Spain “más pura.” In the second stanza he qualifies his ability to talk in favor of the Republic and make it more pure: “Yo, / hijo de América, / hijo de ti y de África, / esclavo ayer de mayores blancos dueños de

látigos coléricos; hoy esclavo de rojos yanquis azucareros y voraces” (216). Each of the characteristics that he mentions about himself is directly related to the Republic; the Spaniards are a mixture of cultures just as he is, they were enslaved by landlords just as he was, and were trying to break free from the current threats of fascism just as he was trying to break free from the threats of imperialism. The parallels between the Republic and the poet in this poem show that he considered the Republic an example of a place that contained principles where his freedom as an Afro-Cuban could be attained in the future.

His three-fold synthesis would contribute to a new Spain, a place that would rise from the charred remnants of the military *coup*. Spain then became the epitome of a location where his synthesis could create a racially democratic utopia. What would rise in Spain then could also rise in the rest of the world, through his three-fold voice. Building from his plea to gain the same rights for all people despite the color of their skin, Guillén includes the following anecdote in “La voz esperanzada” in order to show his dedication to a Republican victory in the war:

yo os grito con voz de hombre libre que os acompañaré, camaradas;  
que iré marcando el paso con vosotros,  
simple y alegre  
puro, tranquilo y fuerte  
con mi cabeza crespa y mi pecho moreno. (217)

Through this claim, he demonstrated that he was willing to join the ranks of the Republic. Was the Republic willing to grant his request for racial equality? If the Republic could grant his appeal for racial equality as long as the Spanish people of the 1930s could grant him that wish, then they would be different from the conquerors of the Golden age. When

he writes, “Con vosotros, brazos conquistadores / ayer, y hoy ímpetu para desbaratar fronteras” (217), I believe that he includes this portion of the poem to show that not only can the Republic break down the geographical barriers with a victory, but it can also question ideological difficulties as well as racial boundaries. Those *fronteras* impeded the success of the Spanish Republic and also Guillén’s ideal model of *democracia racial*. His commitment to the Republic, a republic that offered opportunities to overcome those imagined boundaries, then would contribute to his later works and urge him to work toward an ideal without ideological or ethnic limits.

## GUILLÉN’S POETRY AFTER THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

### *EL SON ENTERO* (1947)

While in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1947, Guillén published *El son entero*, his first collection, since *España: poema en cuatro angustias y una esperanza*. This work contains twenty-six previously unpublished poems that the poet had written between 1940 and its publication.<sup>51</sup> The poet looked for a way to create a “complete” *son*, one where he could give a full vision of his poetics. The *son* became a voice for Afro-Cubanism during the first half of the twentieth century and tied Afro-Cubans with mainstream society.<sup>52</sup> By offering an all-encompassing *son* the poet claimed to be the most authentic voice for afro-Cubanness. Beyond that, he could also continue to be the authority for a political and poetic balance in Cuba through that complete song. In the

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<sup>51</sup> The 1952 Losada edition left out “Una canción en Magdalena.”

<sup>52</sup> Robin Moore, “AfroCubanismo and son,” *The Cuba Reader*, eds. Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Pamela Maria Smorkaloff (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003) 193-200. The word *son* refers to a type of Cuban music/dance that combines Spanish, African, and Caribbean rhythms.

following pages, we will explore how that political and poetic balance, one that was enhanced by the Spanish Republic, could grow by Guillén's search for a racial democracy. In this way we can see the repercussions and influences during the 1940s of his political and poetic acuteness during the 1930s. I believe that this collection continues to give glimpses of Guillén's idea of a place where racial discrimination would not exist.

#### "GUITARRA"

The first poem of the collection, "Guitarra," continues Guillén's political push from ten years earlier so that the underrepresented classes and ethnicities could rise up and lift "el pie por sobre el muro" (224). The barriers that his song would overcome were those that blocked him from political representation; these walls were set up to contain him, but his voice would give his associates the boost that they needed to overcome the barriers. So here we see the political implications of the complete *son*, one that assists others to break down barriers and allows them to succeed. Also, when the guitar plays, "el pueblo suspira" and finds itself "libre de su esclava / bata de cola" (223). This image of the people's sighs as the guitar strums its slavery-free melody demonstrates the political aspect tied to his poetics and his racial representation as well.

Poetically speaking, in "Guitarra" above, I have mentioned that Guillén compares himself with a guitar player; while the musicality of the verses proceeded to improve the totalizing *son*. To begin with, the title of the collection and of the poem lead the reader to think about the musical characteristics of Guillén's complete *son*, and the fact that the poet considers that he is the creator of that music. In the first poem, the quartets that



rhyme ABAB contribute to the musicality of his voice, as each fourth line differs from the three previous (the first three of each quartet has eight syllables while each last line has five) and incorporates a typical rhyme scheme and meter. This challenges the tradition of poetry, while it maintains its melodious rhythm. The *son entero* in other words lends to melodic as well as political innovation. In the second to last stanza the poet enumerates the characteristics of that lyrical and political totality: “El son del querer maduro, / tu son entero; / el del abierto futuro, / tu son entero; / el del pie por sobre el muro, / tu son entero...” (224). First he mentions “mature love.” Beyond simple infatuation or lust, love developed over time for his principles will guide his *son*. Second he defines his *son* as a main contributor to the “open future.” Despite the constrictions of society, he knows that his poetics has the possibility to create a more utopian society both socially and politically.

Furthermore, the *son* flows forth from a guitar that is “universal y cubana” (223) at the same time. For the first time in Guillén’s work, he steps beyond the plight of Cubans; his voice now can defend others from slavery and injustice as well. Hence the search for that *son entero*; beyond simply being a Cuban outlook on life, his vision (one strengthened by his visit to the Spanish Republic in 1937) works to encompass every place and everything. The *son* could only become complete with the image mentioned earlier: a guitar freed from “su esclava / bata de cola” (223). Therefore, the complete voice went beyond building up politics and poetics. Guillén’s complete voice needed to shake the chains of slavery.

By ridding his voice of the chains of slavery, racial democracy became more of a reality. The focus of *el son entero* grew from mature love for others, the open future that looked beyond political orientation or skin color, and stepped over the social, economic, political and poetic barriers that had been imposed upon it up until the 1940s. So far, in this first poem of the collection, the principles of political, aesthetic, and ethnic equality continued. As Guillén's vision extended even further beyond the Caribbean (a possibility that began during the 1930s when he travelled to Mexico and then later to the Spanish Republic), his complete *son* would continue to grow because his politics, poetics and his race worked together for a better place.

#### “MI PATRIA ES DULCE POR FUERA”

In the next poem of *El son entero*, his plea is clear and poignant: “La mano que no se afloja / hay que estrecharla en seguida; / la mano que no se afloja, / china, negra, blanca, o roja, / china, negra, blanca o roja, / con nuestra mano tendida” (54). Solidarity in Cuba was not limited to political solidarity. From these lines, the poet shows that by building up the various peoples that were represented in Cuba, a Cuba that he had left as a political exile, the future would be better. This poem shows that equality should exist in his ideal Cuba; his land was in fact turned into bitterness because of the repression of its political leadership. Without any unification of different colors, the same Cuban government that had forced him into exile would continue without opposition. He describes the government as an entity that contributed to palm trees made of blood (225). Despite the localized focus of this poem, the fact that he mentions “nuestra mano

tendida” gives way to an ambiguity that shows solidarity from both the intellectual in Guillén and the rest of the Americas from where he produces this poem, since they all share the same fight for political and racial equality. A racial politics then laces this poem.

Guillén tried to convince the reader that because he had written an all-encompassing *son*, his voice was the authority on the subject: “(Lo digo en mi son entero, / porque es la pura verdad.)” (226). His poetics in this case became truthful testimony of the Cuban reality. That is, “Mi patria es dulce por fuera,” turned from the universal back to Cuba. At the same time, the sweet-outside-but-bitter- inside dichotomy in the poem reflected his poetics in general: the poem as an entity appeared sweet and aesthetically pleasing on the outside, but the message on the inside was bitter.

Also, “Mi patria es dulce por fuera” shows the ethnic challenges that faced Cuba, and the poet’s dedication to changing the mentality of the people. He considers his Cuba as “muy amarga por dentro” (225) and the poet shows how the diverse populations of Cuba must be united in order to overcome the bitterness that represses them (“china, negra, blanca o roja”). As a representation of the poet’s racially political and aesthetic life, his work to change the world from bitter to sweet *por dentro* drives this second poem of *El son entero*. Also, by pointing out to others in *América Latina* that although everything looked great from the outside, what truly was happening in Cuba was far from paradise. In order to obtain a racially-democratic paradise many political changes needed to occur; his *son entero* would contribute to those changes.

## “SUDOR Y LÁTIGO”

The obvious allusion from the title of poem “Sudor y látigo” is to slavery’s past. Why publish a poem about slavery in the 1940s if supposedly it had ended? Guillén was no fool to the cultural shift, and the politics of the poem not only denounce slavery of the past but also seek to overcome the *mayorales* of the 1940s, that is the government that repressed its people. Although slavery had been supposedly overcome, it had been pushed under the rug and then perpetuated because slaves of the past had only become the poor workers of the present. The image of the title works for either the past or Guillén’s present:

Látigo  
sudor y látigo,  
tinto en la sangre del amo;  
látigo,  
sudor y látigo,  
tinto en la sangre del amo,  
tinto en la sangre del amo. (228)

From the whips and the sweat of the past, the images of the metaphorical whips and sweat of the 1940s still represented a master that suppressed the “slaves.” The anti-slavery aspect of the poem adds to the sincerity of the poet and his poetics; he built up the political dimension of underrepresented peoples and gave them voice, which affects the reader either to remorse or guilt for past injustices. In this way the poet can move toward a racially democratic model that would allow (or push) readers to overcome their prejudices and look to establish a future society that avoided those inequalities. Guillén’s experience in the Spanish Republic taught him that although the Republic had claimed

equality, ethnicity had still not entered the forefront as an issue of political importance.<sup>53</sup>

True equality would not exist unless peoples of all ethnicities could share the same freedoms (an ideal even today unfortunately). Thus, the slaves would have had to continue to fight to obtain a racial democracy, because in the 1940s, it was far from a reality.

### “ÉBANO REAL”

After denouncing the injustices of slavery in “Sudor y Látigo,” this is the moment where the poem “Ébano real” appears in the collection. Once again, the poet builds on the royal ebony of his current culture and also of his forefathers. The repetition of the *estribillo* “Arará, cuévano, / arará sabalú” (229-230) blesses and confirms the words of each stanza. The Arará sabalú and cuévano were African peoples that were brutally transferred to the Caribbean during the slave trade; now they approve of each stanza and reflect the royal ebony that the poem refers to and stems from. Of the ebony tree (the speaker remembers the “royal ebony” because of its heart: “Tu corazón recordé” (229)) he asks for four things, a boat, a trunk, a roof, and a square table (229-230). So, the metaphorical reference to his strong African past will provide a way of transport, a place to keep things safe, protection from the elements, and a place to write. The racial element of the poem then unites with both a poetics and a politics to reiterate three-fold necessities of the *son entero*.

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<sup>53</sup> Manuel Aznar Soler and Luis Mario Schneider, *II Congreso Internacional de Escritores Antifascistas (1937): Vol. I, II y III: Ponencias, documentos, testimonies* (Editorial Laia: Barcelona, 1979) included Guillén’s talks in their study.

The rhythm of the poem pushes the reader to imagine that the forces from the past are about to bring to pass change through the “complete voice” of Guillén’s poetics. He achieved this rhythm through repetition as in other poems, yet here the constant reminder of the two-lined reference to the covered up, African nations of Cuba breaks up the poem from a constant rhythm to a more fragmented one. The octosyllabic verses of the stanzas compared with the six syllables and odd emphases of the two repeated lines “Arará, cuévano, / Arará sabalú” plays with poetic tradition in Spanish verse and African tradition as well. The fusion of the two represents the fusion of poetics in Nicolás Guillén.

Later in the poem, the speaker wants the strong ebony wood for “el asta de mi bandera” and “[su] lecho pesado” (230). As a contributor to the wood for his flagpole and his past bed, not only do his African roots provide a chance for him to lift up and publicize his ideology, but they also provide a place of rest for him. In mainstream society many of these roots were covered up, but in Guillén’s ideal world, these roots would provide the base for his future politically-acceptable racial democracy. Although the repetition of “Ahora no puede ser, / espérate, amigo, espérate, / espérate a que me muera,” gives the impression that the racial democracy must wait a little longer, Guillén’s politics, poetics, and race would work toward that goal.

#### “SON NÚMERO 6”

As far as the issue of race is concerned, “Son número 6” plays once again with Guillén’s African heritage; here he accentuates that point to begin the poem: “Yoruba

soy, lloro en yoruba, / lucumí. / Como soy un yoruba de Cuba, / quiero que hasta Cuba suba mi llanto yoruba, / que suba el alegre llanto yoruba / que sale de mí” (231). Guillén asserts that he is Yoruba from Cuba; his search for a “happy Yoruba cry” gives strength to his *son entero*. Without that aspect in his poetry or his politics, it would be empty. Furthermore, in fact, beyond strength, his situation allows him to find appropriate politics and poetics that can defend underrepresented race both locally and universally.

His political commentary in this poem shares a similar thread with the previous poem “Ébano real” in that both look to find unification through race. Here we see that his future goal, one that his reader should share with him is “Adivinanza / de la esperanza: / lo mío es tuyo, / lo tuyo es mío; / toda la sangre / formando un río” (231). In other words, his hope is that in the end what is mine is yours and what is yours is mine. Only in this case, all blood forms the same river, which then proves that we all share blood and should therefore respect others’ ideas as legitimate.

Once again, in his ideal racial democracy, the combination of ethnicity will prevail in his mind, only if racial equality, true racial equality exists there. The Spanish Republic had influenced the poet as advancement toward that goal, but he saw that it still had fallen short of the mark. A true racial democracy would exhibit a mixture and acceptance of all cultures:

Estamos juntos desde muy lejos,  
jóvenes, viejos,  
negros y blancos, todo mezclado;  
uno mandando y otro mandado,  
todo mezclado. (232)

From the old to the young, from blacks to whites, from those in command to those who are commanded, the racial democracy was comparable to his *son entero*. The last line of the poem returns to the image of his *son entero*, a melody that belongs to everyone: “¡que el son de todos no va a parar!” (233). This all-inclusive vision does not simply denounce injustices, but it strives to work together with all others in order to overcome differences and ignorance.

#### “CUANDO YO VINE A ESTE MUNDO”

The beginning lines of the poem “Cuando yo vine a este mundo,” exemplify that beyond race, and because of it, “Cuando yo vine a este mundo, / nadie me estaba esperando” (234). Since nobody was waiting for him when he came to this world, he can contrast his humble beginnings with that of the bourgeoisie or the aristocracy. As a poet, he can join openly with workers and peasants because they share the same beginnings. That idea continues later on, “Hay gentes que no me quieren, / porque muy humilde soy; / ya verán cómo se mueren, / y que hasta a su entierro voy, / con eso y que no me quieren / porque muy humilde soy” (236). Despite his humble beginnings he would still pay his respects to those who did not respect him. The double-play on humility (economically sparse conditions or meek, lowly) qualifies the speaker so that he can speak on behalf of both definitions. The denomination “poet” hardly ever carries with it the adjective “humble;” Guillén looks to make a statement on behalf of those who did not have a share of power. And those who were humble in his eyes were those who could talk from experience: “hay que andar, / hay que vivir para ver, / hay que andar” (236). Experiences



then were what defined this humble people. “Humble” or real life experiences in the trenches allowed for the people to be able to participate in the decision-making process of a governing body, even though that governing body ignored those same people because of their humility.

“UNA CANCIÓN EN EL MAGDALENA,” “SON VENEZOLANO,” AND  
“BARLOVENTO”

It is during his stay in South America (1943-1948) that Guillén continued to work for his ideals and saw that the people were rejected because of their humility in all of the countries that he had visited; his ideals needed implementation beyond the borders of his Cuba or the Spanish Republic. Three poems of *El son entero* give specific references to his experiences in South America and the need for action toward racial equality beyond Spain or Cuba: “Una canción en el Magdalena,” “Son venezolano,” and “Barlovento.” In the first, Guillén mentions that the port towns that he visited during his trip on the *Medellín* were “¡Puertos / de oscuros brazos abiertos!” (237).<sup>54</sup> Despite open arms, children were starving. Guillén saw first-hand that starvation also affected the Colombian and Venezuelan people as well of the Cuban and the Spanish people.

In “Son venezolano,” the enemy became petroleum, and Guillén compares the Venezuelan oil with Cuban sugar. Repeatedly, he mentions “yo lo acompaño” (240-241) as if to assert that despite the different commodities, they both cause bitterness and unhappiness because of foreign intervention. Avoidance of exploitation by foreign

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<sup>54</sup> In the postscript of the poem in the 1947 edition, it states, “Vapor *Medellín*, junio 20-1946” (71).

powers was comparable to avoidance of a politics that excluded the people. Yet the evils of the Americas came from those foreign powers: “—La misma mano extranjera / que está sobre mi bandera, / la estoy mirando en La Habana: / ¡pobre bandera cubana, / cubana o venezolana!” (74). Imperialism from the United States or Britain had not disappeared since the 1930s, in fact, it had intensified; Guillén had seen the similar exclusion of the people’s voices in political and social decisions in Venezuela, in Cuba, and in Spain. Now, instead of only speaking out in favor of anti-imperialism on behalf of the underrepresented Afro-Cubans or anti-fascism on behalf of the Spanish people, he now spoke out in favor of Colombians and Venezuelans who shared the Cuban’s situation.

This idea combines with a racial slant in the next poem “Barvolento.” As Guillén sees the reality of Venezuela, the climax of the poem denounces the poverty and lack of recognition of the black cultures of Venezuela, while the final section of the poem focuses on the fact that they will not give up or give in. First of all in the climax, the poet writes, “Negro con hambre, / piernas de sogá, / brazos de alambre. // Negro en camisa, / tuberculosis / color ceniza. // Negro en su casa, / cama en el suelo, / fogón sin brasa” (243). Despite poverty, sickness, and malnutrition, the final part of the poem reminds the reader that still “mi negro canta” (*El son entero* 78).<sup>55</sup> As if all of these problems weren’t enough, many leaders sold out once they obtained sufficient funds to leap out of their humble beginnings. Guillén however fought against that urge: “ni yo me alquilo, ni yo

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<sup>55</sup> In *Obra poética* it says “un negro canta” (244).

me vendo [...] si me levanto, / ya no me rindo” (Guillén, *El son entero* 78).<sup>56</sup> The poet avoids selling out, and at the same time he does not give up despite all of the odds against him. The complete *son* then works on two levels. First, the Afro-Cuban poet could and did work on the same level as poets that do not share his heritage and he maintained a political dialogue without sacrificing his poetics. Second, his poetics could also touch a reader (or a listener) who shared his humble beginnings or readers who did not. In other words, that *son entero* encompassed the theories of his racial democracy.

#### “UN SON PARA NIÑOS ANTILLANOS”

In order to overcome distinctions between the Spanish-Speaking West Indies and the rest, Guillén included his “Un son para niños antillanos.” In order to avoid classifications or differences that might arise between one and the other, he begins in the title by referring to all of the children of the Antilles. Then, the first image in this poem is that of a paper boat: “Por el Mar de las Antillas / anda un barco de papel: / anda y anda y barco barco, / sin timonel” (250). It is important to point out that the poem does not say that the boat does not have a helm (*timón*), only someone who will take control of it (*timonel*). That had been the problem for the underrepresented cultures; they had no one who would be their champion. Would Guillén be their champion against imperialism and racism? Later on he continues that image: the boat is “sin capitán” (250). The boat is constantly moving; it is a “barco negro y blanco” and “Una negra va en la popa, / va en la proa un español” (250). In this fragile ship, the Spanish and African heritage that united

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<sup>56</sup> The lines “ni yo me alquilo, / ni yo me vendo” do not appear in *Obra poética*.

in the poet becomes visible once again; the leadership for the recognition and equality of those who shared his characteristics needed guidance. Despite its fragile make-up and lack of leadership, (similar to the Spanish Republic of 10 years earlier) the boat continued to move. Here it is not clear whether or not he is willing to take that leadership on his shoulders, but he does claim that with a little bit of guidance, his model could become a reality, not only for Cuba but also for the Antilles.

This poem reveals the importance of his *democracia racial* despite the fact that that democracy may seem unguided or quite possibly, unattainable. Furthermore, that ideal now included more than just the Spanish-speaking world; slowly his vision grew more global beyond those who spoke Spanish. The question of who would lead these workers, these Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Americans in general comes to the forefront. The reason why the racial democracy had not become a reality in the mind of the poet was because not one person was willing to take the wheel and steer. Until someone did, the ideal would remain an ideal.

#### “UNA CANCIÓN A STALIN”

The poet did think of a possible leader who might provide leadership for this fragile, unguided boat: Joseph Stalin. “Una canción a Stalin” (one of Guillén’s most dogmatic poems) is the last poem of *El son entero*. In fact, the first line reads: “Stalin, Capitán” (260). The obvious allusions to Communist Party leadership combine with elements from African Yoruba religions. Both Changó (Xangó) and Ochún (Oshun) need to protect Stalin from the invading, blind, German forces (261). Guillén even went one

step further and mentions Buddha; Stalin in some remote way also can become the captain of lands where Buddhism reigns. The strange links between “Stalin, Capitán” and “tambores africanos” (261) reminisce of the Spanish Republic’s rhetoric where communism and religion could exist freely together.

In the first stanza, Guillén works for racial equality; on Stalin’s side are “el chino,” “el negro,” and “el blanco” (260). The distinct ethnicities on Stalin’s side show the Communist side of Guillén tied with his racial focus. Whether or not that occurred in the Spanish Republic from the decade before is debatable, but in Guillén’s ideal model, nothing could be more plausible or acceptable. By the same token, whether or not *democracia racial* was possible at all (or even supported by the left) is also debatable, but Guillén, saw the promise of such a possibility after his experiences in Spain, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

#### “POEMA CON NIÑOS”

After “Una canción a Stalin,” *El son entero* ends with a short play called “Poema con niños.” In the play, four boys (el chino, el judío, el negro, y el hijo) start playing but end up fighting because of their differences (racial, religious, and cultural). The mother then stops them and recites a poem for them. The first lines of the poem illustrate the fact that blood flows in all of us as human beings: “La sangre es un mar inmenso / que baña todas las playas...” (267). Therefore, if we all have the same lifeblood within us, we should share the same freedoms. Later on the mother condemns those who try to separate mankind into different categories because of physical characteristics. She exclaims, “¡Ay

del que separa niños, / porque a los hombres separa!” (267). In order to teach about a utopian racial democracy, it had to begin with children. If classification began with children, it would continue on into adulthood. A life free from separation for the young would then contribute to a more tolerant future, a future that recognizes that all mankind has mixed heritage. We see this in the following lines:

la vida suelta y sin vallas,  
vida de la carne negra,  
vida de la carne blanca,  
y de la carne amarilla,  
con sus sangres desplegadas... (268)

From these lines, blood is crossed and mixed for all anyway. Not a soul in this world is free from mixing. Playing on that metaphor of blood, those who do not strive to establish a racial democracy are symbolic of those who had no blood in them, no life. Those who stifle equality among all should be condemned: “Ay de quien no tenga sangre [...] un cuerpo seco y vacío, / un cuerpo roto y sin alma” (268). In other words, those who do not collaborate with Guillén’s ideal compare with those who have no soul. His racial politics and his poetics have balance here, as in his works during the Spanish Republic.

The idea of totality, where everyone must be equal despite physical, political, economic, or cultural differences has been reflected in the collection from the title of this collection of poems, *El son entero*, in the poems that it houses. Guillén recognized the possibilities of an all-encompassing melody that could exemplify not only Afro-Cubans’ entrance into mainstream Cuban life, but also distinct races and colors into a mainstream global society in the 1940s (well before the Civil Rights movement in the United States). His balance between politics, aesthetics, and ethnic fairness continued to contribute

quality poetry to the defense and the beautification of the very people that he embodied. By showing how this people had been unjustly treated and how they would overcome injustice, he also shows how his ideal society would not exclude any person on the basis of their physical characteristics. That very balance is still needed today.

### THE *ELEGÍAS*

Between 1948 and 1958, Guillén wrote six elegies, which he published in various publications until he finally gathered them all in his *La paloma de vuelo popular* in 1958.<sup>57</sup> Ángel Augier, the man who wrote the introduction of Guillén's complete works, refers to the elegies as poems that "se desplazaron hacia horizontes que significaban creciente responsabilidad pública y mayor resonancia internacional" (Augier in *Obra poética*, XL). Guillén's more acute public responsibility and international impact did not come from nothing however. Augier once again asserts that Guillén could combine poetic, humanistic, and revolutionary principles in *El son entero* that would influence his later work.<sup>58</sup> Of the six elegies, three refer to a very personal situation that the Cuban poet universalizes and the other three act as universal eulogies. Through these six poems, I hope to find that Guillén hones his poetics through the crossroads of politics, aesthetics, and ethnic equality in order to enlarge his scope toward a more international audience, as was evidenced in his *España: cuatro angustias y una esperanza* and his *El son entero*.

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<sup>57</sup> For example, he published *Elegía a Jesús Menéndez* in the Editorial Páginas in 1951 and a smaller, bilingual edition of his elegies written up until 1955 was published in Paris under the title *Elégies Antillaises*. See the introduction of *Nicolás Guillén: Obra poética 1920-1958*, VII-VIII.

<sup>58</sup> In *Nicolás Guillén: Obra poética 1920-1958*, p. XL.

## ELEGÍA CUBANA

After spending most of the 1940s in South America, the poet returned to Cuba in 1952 where he published his *Elegía cubana*. In this same year, he was forced into exile once again because Batista was going to put him into prison. In his memoirs, he remembers a specific moment when he fought for his racial democracy. He wrote that when an agent of the *Servicio de Inteligencia Militar* (SIM) had picked him up on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1952, Guillén told the agent that he (Guillén) had done nothing illegal; he was only working so that “podamos algún día recibir la justicia que hoy se nos niega, a causa de una cosa estúpida: el color de la piel que nos envuelve el esqueleto” (180). The *Elegía cubana* works beyond Guillén’s fight for racial equality; he cries out against illegal imperialistic sanctions on the people and on his poetics because of his political orientation.

To personify his three-fold battle, he refers to “Juan Descalzo,” “Juan Montuno,” “Juan Negro,” “Juan Blanco,” and “Juan Pueblo.” Each *Juan* has a specific characteristic:

Ahí está Juan Descalzo. Todavía  
su noche espera el día.  
Ahí está Juan Montuno,  
en la bandurria el vegetal suspiro,  
múltiple el canto y uno.  
Está Juan Negro, hermano  
de Juan Blanco, los dos la misma mano.  
Está, quiero decir, Juan Pueblo, sangre  
nuestra diseminada y numerosa. (392)

Each of these characters personifies a specific aspect of Guillén’s politics and poetics.

The first four *Juans* form elements of the last; here the poet shows the importance of the combination of ethnicities, classes, and cultures that make up the people. First, *Juan*



*Descalzo* waits for the day when he might overcome poverty. Second, *Juan Montuno*, sings his multiple poetry with rhythmic consistency. Third, *Juan Negro* and *Juan Blanco* walk hand in hand as brothers of different races. These four make up the disseminated blood of the people, that is, *Juan Pueblo*. Also, the word “disseminated” shows how the idea the cultural mixing that has occurred in Cuba and in the world, mixing that should have given way to a more united people despite differences in color of skin, differences in economic status, or cultural distinctions.

In fact, the poem further highlights the problem within his society that limits and at the same time denies that heritage. For example, later the poem suggests what had happened to the children of Cuba because of repression and their response to that injustice: “A mitad del camino, / ¡ay! sólo ayer la marcha se detuvo; siniestro golpe a derribarnos vino, / golpe siniestro del ímpetu contuvo. / Mas el hijo, que apenas / supo del padre el nombre al mármol hecho, si heredó las cadenas, / también del padre el corazón metálico / trajo con él: le brilla / como una flor de bronce sobre el pecho” (393). Although the current generation had inherited the chains of its fathers, it would work for the same principles that Antonio Maceo Grajales and José Martí had fought for during the Cuban War of independence.<sup>59</sup> The combination of Maceo and Martí of the previous generation (reiterated in the last two lines of the poem) reminds the Cubans of the 1950s that they must lay aside their prejudices and obtain a balance between the ideals that Maceo and Martí represented. The poem exemplifies the ideal combination of Martí (the

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<sup>59</sup> The War of independence began in 1895; José Martí (the poet, patriot, and martyr in this war) and Antonio Maceo (nicknamed *El titán de bronce* because of his Afro-Cuban roots) were two key players in Cuba’s independence.

poet and political activist) and Maceo (the Afro-Cuban militarist and politician) for the 1950s contemporary reader. Therefore, Guillén's politics, ethnicity and aesthetics continued to reflect and build up a balance that referred to both the poet's and the reader's participation in history, a history that should undeniably contain those three principles and work toward a place where racial politics could find equality for all.

### *EL APELLIDO (ELEGÍA FAMILIAR)*

Guillén's second elegy is called "El apellido." From the beginning lines, he questions the reader's understanding of race and the relationship that we have with our ancestors. He wonders if others think that because of his last name his grandfathers all come from Spain: "¿Toda mi piel (debí decir), / toda mi piel viene de aquella estatua / de mármol español?" (395). The rhetorical question reminds the reader that his ancestry is not solely Spanish. In fact, later he reminds the reader that "¿No tengo acaso / un abuelo nocturno / con una gran marca negra / (más negra todavía que la piel) / una gran marca hecha de un latigazo?" (396). Although he was a descendant of both Spain and Africa, society had erased the memory of his "other last name," the name that came from his African roots.

Furthermore, Part II of the poem reveals an aspect of his ideal that both Neruda's and Alberti's do not, because these latter already had a certain privilege thanks to their skin color. Guillén says that the true racial democracy will be constructed by others who come from: "De algún país ardiente, perforado / por la gran flecha ecuatorial, / sé que vendrán lejanos primos [...] que vendrán pedazos de mis venas [...] que vendrán hombres

de vidas verdes” (398). Those that will come to his land will be those from Africa. These cousins of the poet would then work for a world where racial politics would reign.

### *ELEGÍA A EMMITT TILL*

The racial element from *El apellido* coincided with the death of Emmitt Till in Mississippi. In the troublesome years of the 1950s, Emmitt Till’s murder inspired the poet to write an elegy to him.<sup>60</sup> The poem cries out against the unfair racial practices in the United States, because of the acquittal of two white murderers who killed the fifteen year old African-American boy. Guillén in his elegy evokes the Mississippi river as a “brother of blacks” (400). In fact, Guillén’s focus on the river only strengthens how he denounces the unjust death of the boy. Nature then, especially the powerful Mississippi can unite all African descendants in the Americas, and harmony among them, reflected in the river can overcome the discrimination of the current system and contribute to another.

Beyond racial discrimination, the poem denounces unjust political practices in the United States. Because the two white men were acquitted, the political practices of the United States represented the exact opposite of Guillén’s racial democracy. The supposed democracy of the North American imperialists lacked the principles of a true democracy. The poem gets to the heart of the issue when it says, “Un niño negro asesinado y solo, / que una rosa de amor / arrojó al paso de una niña blanca” (402). As a precursor to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s in the United States, Guillén recognized the tensions

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<sup>60</sup> Before the poem, Guillén includes an excerpt from *The Crisis*, New York, October, 1955: “El cuerpo mutilado de Emmett Till, 14 años, de Chicago, Illinois, fue extraído del río Tallahatchie, cerca de Greenwood, el 31 de agosto, tres días después de haber sido raptado de la casa de su tío, por un grupo de blancos armados de fusiles...” (400).

that racial equality would face throughout the world, but he would work toward it through his poetry, a poetry that had strength and current like the Mississippi river.

*ELEGÍA A JACQUES ROUMAIN EN EL CIELO DE HAITÍ (1948)*

After the death of the Haitian poet, Jacques Roumain in 1944, Guillén published his elegy to the poet four years later in 1948. He praised the Haitian poet for his dedication to the foundation of a *democracia racial*; the poem offers its respects to Roumain's many contributions to racial politics and poetics. Guillén reminisces about the experiences that he had with the poet in Paris and the way that he dressed. More importantly, however, Guillén knows that Roumain should be remembered because of his dedication to the equality of races despite the controversy that it caused: "Recuerdo / sus poemas inéditos / sus papeles polémicos / y sus apuntes sobre los negros" (404).

Later on in the poem, Guillén uses an extended metaphor by calling Haiti "una esponja empapada en sangre" (407). And then he asks, "¿Quién va a exprimir la esponja, la insaciable esponja?" His answer reveals how he thinks the world should be ruled: "Él, Monsieur Jacques Roumain, / que hablaba en nombre / del negro Emperador, del negro Rey, / del negro Presidente / y de todos los negros que nunca fueron más que / Jean / Pierre / Victor / Candide / Jules / Charles / Stephen / Raymond / André [...]" (407). Guillén shows that the Haitian poet gave voice to the underrepresented people; Roumain even spoke on behalf of black leaders. Here there is a glimpse of what Guillén wants to establish in Cuba and in the world: a black poet as the voice of black leaders in order to represent the black peoples who had not been represented.

Up until this point in the poem, Guillén epitomizes the recently deceased Haitian; yet, the metaphor for his racial democracy becomes more acute. Although Guillén's focus is Roumain and Haiti in the poem, he considers himself as an equal, or as a *portavoz* of that same ideology of racial equality. He later writes, "El pasado pasado no ha pasado. / La nueva vida espera nueva vida. // Y bien, en eso estamos, Jacques, lejano amigo" (408). He recognized that, although there might be talk of equality and freedom, as was the rhetoric in the Spanish Republic, in reality not much had changed concerning the treatment of racial equality. But that fight did not end with Roumain's death:

No porque te hayas ido,  
No porque te llevaran, mejor dicho,  
No porque te cerraran el camino,  
Se ha detenido nadie, nadie se ha detenido. (408)

Although Roumain had died, Guillén was convinced that a racial democracy would arrive, and he knew that the death of one of its advocates in the Antilles would not stop it.

He reiterates that point later: "Cantemos, pues, querido, / pisando el látigo caído / del puño del amo vencido, / una canción que nadie haya cantado [...] una húmeda canción tendida [...] de tu garganta en sombras, más allá de la vida [...] a mi clarín terrestre de cobre ensangrentado" (409-410). Here Guillén considers himself the advocate for a new place where the song of the repressed afro-Caribbean peoples can come alive; Roumain's voice would survive in Guillén's *canción* in a racial democracy.

#### *ELEGÍA CAMAGÜEYANA*

In an effort to look at his home city as a place of refuge, Guillén dedicates his next elegy to Camagüey. The repetition of the words "No puedo hablar" (410) in the first

stanza reflects the poem's incapacity to do the city justice. Guillén's return to his native land reminded him of how it should be, not how it was during his visit. His visit provides memories of "su prehistoria;" it is as if Guillén's true history did not begin until he had left his home city.

The final lines in this poem show Guillén's memory of his homeland and the ideals of the future. He looks both to his present Camagüey and to his "prehistoric" Camagüey for inspiration in order to find the characteristics that his democratic model needs. He claims that beyond his childhood memories he can be one with the people of the 1940s and 1950s in the final stanza of the poem because of his "[sus] recuerdos [...] [sus] heridas y [sus] versos" (415). The poem therefore can establish ties with a people that he had abandoned not only through his memories, but also through his wounds and his verses. His poetry talks not of the people of his childhood but of the people of the time when he wrote the elegy, thirty years later: "Gente de urgencia diaria / voces, gargantas, uñas / de la calle, límpidas almas cotidianas, / heroes no, fondo de historia" (415-416). If the poem did not represent the people of his hometown, then it would have not recognized the importance of them and their socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic ties. Yet the place where he had returned did not represent what he tried to establish through his poetry. Hence, the poem regrets that his homeland had not progressed toward his model as he had hoped.

*ELEGÍA A JESÚS MENÉNDEZ* (1951)

In the introductory statement to the poem “Elegía a Jesús Menéndez” in the 1948 edition, Guillén wrote: “Nacido entre las cañas, muerto luchando por ellos, Jesús Menéndez fue el más alto líder de los trabajadores cubanos del azúcar. Cayó asesinado en la ciudad de Manzanillo, el 22 de enero de 1948” (Guillén, *Elegías*, 139). In this, Guillén’s most extensive elegy (made up of VII separate sections containing both prose poetry and verses), he praises the black leader, Menéndez, who was killed unjustly in 1948 because of his political commitment, that is, his fight against the United States’ control of the Cuban sugar market. Menéndez had worked on behalf of the sugar-cane workers in order to keep sugar prices high when the United States wanted them to drop at their convenience. Because of Menéndez’s dedication to the worker, and his physiological representation of his fellow Cubans, Guillén dedicated this poem to the fallen leader in order to show that he was the epitome of a man in his ideal Cuban model.

Part II of the poem focuses directly on what happens on Wall Street with all of the stocks and bonds; it compares values of certain commodities on the New York Stock Exchange (Cuban Company, West Indies Company, United Fruit Company, Cuban American Company, Foster Welles Company) and then last on the list is “Sangre Menéndez, hoy al cierre, / 150 puntos  $\frac{7}{8}$  con tendencia al alza” (420). As the poem compares Menéndez’s blood with the other stocks on the market, the anti-imperialistic tone denounces capitalism as a root of evil. In contrast, Guillén’s ideal land is similar to the province where Jesús’ people are from: “alguna vez anduve con Jesús transitando de sueño en sueño su gran provincia llena de hombres que le tendían la mocha encallecida:

su gran provincia llena de hombres que gritaban ¡Oh Jesús!, como si hubieran estado esperando largamente su venida” (147). These simple people juxtapose the Wall Street mania. They wait to see their champion instead of waiting anxiously for a rise in prices.

As for aesthetics in this poem, later on, Part IV, nature once again appears to strengthen Menéndez, as it had done with Rolland in the previous *Elegía*. This section ends with the following lines: “Jesús nació en el centro de su isla y allí se le descubre desde el mar, en los días claros, cubierto de nubes fijas; ¡subid, subidlo y contemplaréis desde su frente con qué fragor hierve a sus pies y se renueva en ondas interminables la vida!” (147). As the poet idealizes Menéndez, he also idealizes the natural beauty of the Caribbean: the two become one in the poem.

Part V begins: “Los grandes muertos son inmortales: no mueren nunca” (426). Menéndez, then, was one of the great men who had become immortal because of his racial and political dedication. In this section of the poem, the Cuban national poet focuses on how those who die in favor of a cause live on. Their words live on, and therefore, they plant their ideas in the hearts of others. Jesús Menéndez’s death inspired others both in his country and out of it. The protagonist “Anda por su isla, pero también se sale de ella, en un gran barco de fuego” (430). The poem then describes the possibilities of an ideal racial democracy as Menéndez traveled to Chile, Venezuela, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Mexico, Central America, and even the United States (430-431). During these trips, he worked toward ending injustices. In fact, even after Menéndez’s death, the poem argues that “Jesús no está en el cielo, sino en la tierra; no demanda oraciones, sino lucha; no quiere sacerdotes, sino compañeros; no erige Iglesias,



sino sindicatos: Nadie lo podrá matar” (433). Menéndez was not in heaven, he was on earth still, and he searched for friends, instead of priests; his legacy is that of the racial democracy, one that opposed the situation in the United States. By juxtaposing the injustices in United States (the poem mentions Jim Crow, Charles Lynch, Klu Klux Klan, United Fruit Company) with Menéndez, the poem continues to look for an ideal place and at the same time, the poem continues the triangular poetics that Guillén would not step away from.

In the final section of the poem (VII) the poet uses the phrase “la paloma de vuelo popular” (an allusion to his next collection) to refer to the martyred Menéndez. This metaphor embodied the leader; he became known as the *general de las cañas* (the sugar-cane general) because of his popular fight against the United States sugar policies in the 1940s. Beyond epitomizing the leader, the phrase also alludes to the ideals that Guillén holds dear: peaceful equality through political action on behalf of the oppressed, sustained through poetry that articulates his future *democracia racial*.

#### *LA PALOMA DEL VUELO POPULAR* (1958)

The last book of poems that this chapter on Guillén analyzes is *La paloma del vuelo popular*. This collection was published in 1958, only one year before the Cuban revolution. Guillén wrote these poems while he was in exile in other countries of Latin America and Europe.

## “ARTE POÉTICA”

The first poem of *La paloma de vuelo popular* (“Arte poética”) concerns the metapoetic purpose of the work that is laid before the reader. “Un pájaro principal me enseñó el múltiple trino” (9). From the beginning of *La paloma de vuelo popular*, Guillén recognized the importance of his multiple trill, his poetics that had a combination of means dedicated to more than one end. What was that “first bird” that had taught him about his own political, ethnic, and poetic art? The poem leaves that up to the reader to decide; it turns to three metaphors to describe that multiplicity in his own poetics. The first is the image of a wine glass, where “Sólo [le] queda el cristal” (9). So one of the elements of his multiple poetic art is a clarity that accompanies the beautiful crystal of the glass. The poet can obtain clarity through his direct style. Second, the poem mentions “plomo que zumba y mata” and “El cañaveral sombrío [que] tiene voraz dentadura” (9) as two political elements that form part of that multiplicity in his poetic voice: revolutionary lead bullets and the sugarcane fields that bite their imperialistic masters. Finally, his Afro-Caribbean heritage shines through as an obvious part of his compound voice: “Se alza el foete mayoral. / Espaldas hiere y desgarrá” (10). These components continue his poetic trajectory and demonstrate the three-fold synthesis that formed part of his poetics.

That triangular voice then looks toward the future. In the final stanza, Guillén emphasizes his poetic art’s role to create that ideal: “Dile también del fulgor / con que un nuevo sol parece / en el aire que la mece, / que aplauda y grite la flor” (10). So, beyond simply creating a poetry that exhibited the three elements, his poetic art would not be

complete unless it contributed to the foundations (or building up of) a better future for all in a racial democracy. Do the following poems then reflect the characteristics of that future through his poetics?

#### “UN LARGO LAGARTO VERDE”

The next poem, “Un largo lagarto verde,” compares Cuba’s geography with a long lizard. Yet, bitterness stems from the exploitation of sugarcane that has given Cuba an “Alta corona de azúcar / le tejen agudas cañas; / no por coronada libre, / sí de su corona esclava” (11). Sugar was the slaving force that controlled the people of Cuba. Just as his people were enslaved in the sugar trade for centuries, Cuba was enslaved, but the poet claims that she would wake up, just as his people would wake up. The poet strove to wake up his people to build Cuba as a land free of slavery, both an ethnic slavery as well as a slavery brought on by foreign interests and imperialism. Since the 1930s and Guillén’s witness of the possibilities of a Republic in Spain more than fifteen years before, he realized that the people would have to come to life in order to wake up Cuba. Without the work of the people, the racially-democratic model would never become a reality.

#### “DEPORTES”

Despite all of the bitterness for the bondage of Guillén’s people and Cuba, the poem “Deportes” gives two of the characteristics of his future and the equality that exist between Cubans and others. The first key to create equality between Cubans and citizens

of other countries is boxing. He writes, “Junto a los yanquis y el francés / los míos, mis campeones, / de amargos puños y sólidos pies, / son sus iguales, son / como espejos en el tiempo que no empaña” (16). Cubans then were on the same level physically as the Yankees or the French. He continued to look for ways to build up a land where “la libertad con sencillez” (in *España cuatro angustias y una esperanza* 111) would make all human beings equal, and one of those ways is through boxing and sports. Guillén specifically points out the peoples of the United States and France as powerhouses strong in physical strength, but his Cubans are just as strong. In order not to let his reader think that only brute strength is important for his ideal world, in this poem he also focuses on intellect which leads to the second key to creating equality.

The second characteristic that places Guillén’s Cuba on the same level as other countries of the world is chess. The merit of Guillén’s ideal Cuba is not limited to the physical, brute strength of the Cuban boxers. Guillén praises the Cuban chess champion, José Raúl Capablanca. So, on both a level of physical strength and a level of intellectuality, Cubans were just as capable of doing something great with brains or brawn as the French or the North Americans. This constant comparison between the abilities of the Cubans and the abilities of the “other” gives this poem a denunciatory feel; Guillén can claim that neither he nor his fellow Cubans can be considered less than the North Americans or the French. That is key for his racial democracy: not only are comparisons between ethnicities inappropriate, but also comparisons between countries as powerful are also irrelevant. In other words, racial democracy and political equality

would lead to equality among nations, where one would not consider himself greater than others because of their place of birth.

#### “CANCIÓN DE CUNA PARA DESPERTAR A UN NEGRITO” AND “LA MURALLA”

Birth, better said, rebirth or awakening is the focus of the next poem, “Canción de cuna para despertar a un negrito.” Here, Guillén calls out to his people in order to awaken them to their duty: if they do not act, then a *democracia racial* will not be possible. His brothers must wake up from their sleep, in fact he makes it very clear that “Ya nadie duerme” (20) and invites “Negrón [and] negrito” to wake up as well. This idea reminds us of Guillén’s speech at the Second Congress in Spain, where he took it upon himself to awaken the others to the racial inequalities of society despite their supposed political liberties. Here he strives to awaken his own people; he had already caused it so that others would recognize the Afro-Cubans’ contributions to the world, now they themselves had to do so.

Even more important for the poet was how to protect that ethnically and internationally equal society once it was constructed. The way to do it, according to the poem “La muralla,” was to have the different colors of hands do the work: “Para hacer esta muralla, / tráiganme todas las manos: / los negros, sus manos negras, / los blancos, sus blancas manos” (21). Within Guillén’s walled utopian model, roses and carnations are allowed to enter, the coronel’s sable is allowed to enter, doves and laurels are allowed to

enter, but scorpions and centipedes are not (21-22). These scorpions and centipedes become any entity that looks to take over and occupy his racial democracy.

#### “EL BANDERÓN” AND “CASA DE VECINDAD”

Guillén’s land is not tolerant of the Yankee imperialists, just as earlier in *España en cuatro angustias y una esperanza* he excluded the Franquists. In fact, the negativity of the poetry focuses on that enemy, one that tries to take over every aspect of his life. The next two poems, “El banderón” and “Casa de vecindad” point out the problematic relationship between the United States and his land, one that he calls *antillilandia* (25) in the first of the poems. His model can survive only if it overcomes the interventions of the United States. And the way to overcome it appears in the second of the two poems, through an “Onda negribermeja / de obreros de agria ceja / y niños con la cara vieja” (25). The wave would be an innocent, hard-working one, both black and red. Racial politics and workers politics could work against imperialism; only through the interventions of the underrepresented ethnicities would Guillén’s democracy materialize.

#### “LITTLE ROCK”

Breaking away from imperialism would not be easy. So, he writes of how he must do all he can to stop imperialism so that everything does not end up under control of those who defend it. In a later poem, “Little Rock,” he writes, “[...] el mundo todo yanqui, todo Faubus... / Pensad por un momento, / imaginadlo un solo instante” (34). He begs his fellow *antillanos* (“[...] peludos y pelados / ahora indios, mulatos, negros,

zambos (34)) to keep the diversity alive, one of the key components that the Spanish Republic had lacked for him years earlier. If everything came under the control of the North, everything would become one dimensional, and that excludes others because of the color of their skin. This is far from what he believes the ideal place should be.

Although Alberti and Neruda had also denounced North American imperialism in various poems from 1931 until 1959, Guillén's shift from denouncing Fascism to denouncing imperialism is more immediate, especially since the leaders in Cuba were controlled by the Platt Amendment. If through his poetry his fellow Cubans (of any ethnicity or color) could overcome the influences of the United States in Cuba, then his model for racial democracy could be a foundational stepping stone to provide it.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have seen that Nicolás Guillén's simultaneous political and poetic development included a third element that strengthened that equilibrium: his ethnic background. His poetry supported the Spanish Republic during the 1930s and reflected that three-fold vision. However, despite advances toward freedom or equality in the Republic, the poet noted that impartiality in practice continued to leave out any person that had African roots. Although the Republic was a step in a positive direction toward equal rights for all, it still fell short of a racial democracy. Despite the Republic's shortcomings, Guillén appreciated the great progress toward equality among the races that it could have obtained. While the poems of *España* built up the Republic, the verses also fought against Fascist and Nazi racist attitudes. Although he had written *España*

before his trip to Spain, the poem already anticipated certain oppositions toward the liberties of all, and those oppositions did not only represent a Fascist, Nazi, or Franquist slant. The poems recognized that the people, the workers, the ex-slaves would have to rise up in order to work toward the goal of an egalitarian society; hence the poet's adhesion to the Communist Party despite its faults.

In Guillén's poetry after 1939, *El son entero* advanced the poet's search for an all-encompassing verse that reflected political and ethnic equality and at the same time maintained a poetic musicality through candid language. The poems spoke out against the imperfections of the capitalist system and the racism that that system had caused while at the same time they endorsed and revived the forgotten peoples of the Americas. The poems emphasized the initiative of these peoples even though they had suffered oppression. The *Elegías* gave specific instances of how to unite issues of ethnicity, politics and poetry so that the reader could become conscious of the societal oversights that excluded the underprivileged classes and ethnicities. Finally, *La paloma del vuelo popular* continued Guillén's poetic search for diversity and acceptance instead of discrimination and hate. If the racial democratic ideal ever were to become a reality, future generations would have to consider Guillén as one of the founding fathers for his work in that direction.



## CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation started out as a search for commonalities among three authors: Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, and Nicolás Guillén. Each had joined the Communist Party, each had supported the Republic, and each produced a long trajectory of poetry affected by their experience in the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939). The main goal was to analyze if their poetics could survive their political commitment and if their politics overwhelmed their aesthetic commitment. From what these pages have explored, one can conclude that from the time of the Republic up until 1959, Alberti, Neruda, and Guillén produced poetry that was not completely overcome by political propaganda nor was it entirely devoid of political implications. The effects of the Republic on their poetry after the fall of the Spanish Republic in 1939 pushed them to include Communism, class struggle, revolution, anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalism in their verses. During the Republic, these themes were explicit. Although not apparent in the poetry that they wrote during or afterward, a search for how to synthesize their politics with their poetry continued on through the poems up until at least 1959. Each approached differently how to build up these two components in their writing; that search for cohesion was a common thread in their poetic trajectories.

The larger goal of this dissertation was to open doors for future studies of politics and poetry together, not to reduce poets to the condition of pawns of a political stance

who refer to history in their poetry. By avoiding poetry written by Communists, Fascists, or Capitalists, readers cannot fully understand how poetry searches for stability between the personal and the universal in certain contexts. By the same token, it is acceptable that authors include historical and political references that they do not compromise their aesthetic quality. These questions will remain open for debate for many years to come and hopefully this dissertation has posed a question that can help to reconcile politics and poetics for future generations.

Although the three poets had mentioned that their experience in the Second Spanish Republic had affected their politics, they did not mention the relationship between the Republic and their poetry. This dissertation has been a study in that direction, a focus on how the years of the Republic contributed to their poetics. The premise of this dissertation was that the Republic in some way benefitted the work of each so that instead of producing simple political propaganda on one hand or “poetry for poetry’s sake” on the other, both their politics and their poetics formed a bond, one that would allow both factors to avoid degradation. By this avoidance, these poets could maintain (and have maintained) their position among the Spanish-language poetic canon of the twentieth century and beyond.

For example, Rafael Alberti’s poetry during Second Spanish Republic appeared to be an open declaration of the Communist Party’s tenets. In the works that he published during the Republic, the plight of the worker, the fight against the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, and the errors of capitalism litter his poems and denounce opponents of the Republic as anti-humanist. However, the open and obvious references to his then recent

political affiliation did not diminish his poetry to pure propaganda. The poems' specific allusions do not necessarily demean his poetry; the poems burst with feeling and urge the reader to feel and then to act.

After the fall of the Republic in 1939, Alberti's poems move to a more obscure mention of Communist principles, that is, to a synthesis between these political values and his poetics. His escape from Franquist forces in 1939 and his subsequent 28 years in exile contributed to a poetics that searched (in many of his poems) for a reestablishment of the principles of the Republic, if not the Republic itself. By the same token, Alberti's exile also forced the poet to reconsider his own trajectory as a poet. Through his nostalgia for what he had lost, his poetry could somehow revive a Spain where his version of Communism and poetry could dwell in harmony.

The works of Pablo Neruda after his arrival in the Republic in 1934 questioned the relationship that poetics and politics had one with the other; his poems often times acted as a way to maneuver between the two elements or to avoid sacrificing one to the other. Could the poet join a cause and not lose his poetic independence? His poems from the end of *Residencia en la tierra* strive to answer that question. However, after the Civil War broke out in 1937, the poems in *España en el corazón* then refer explicitly to the poet's reaction to the Spanish situation.

After the Spanish Republic's fall, Neruda's *Canto general* has traces of the Republic's politics, a politics that embraced Communism while it also refused to succumb completely to a socialist realist production. This work acts as a manual to form an ideal place like the Republic. The *Canto* rewrites history in order to build a new era

and a new way of thought. The poet's most extensive, epic collection also encourages both common men and poets alike to follow in the footsteps of the "real" people of the past that the poet has recreated and those who fought for just causes (such as the liberators or the leaders of social movements).

As happened in Alberti's poetry, the obvious political references that had surfaced during the Second Spanish Republic also diminished as the poet moved into the 1950s; although the three works of *Odas* do contain elements that politicize and poeticize things that would seem anything but political or poetic. The poet did not leave his politics behind in his poetry, but then again, all of the poems were not political in their purpose either. However, his 1950s poetry does denote the relationship that poetry and politics should have with each other. His pursuit of synthesis is one of the underlying threads in his poetic trajectory that allows him to strive for a republic-like utopia throughout his poetry; the poems analyze key components that were missing and incorporate them into an all-inclusive world where everything has the potential to be political or poetic.

What differentiates Nicolás Guillén's poetry from that of Alberti or Neruda is not only his Afro-Cuban heritage. True, he shares a history with the underrepresented classes more than Alberti and Neruda. However, the Cuban National Poet also stands out from the other two because he published *España: cuatro angustias y una esperanza* before he had ever travelled to Spain. The Republic's influence, and more specifically, the influence of what the poet had heard about the Republic, contributed to a denunciatory declaration in favor of the Republic in Guillén's poetry.

Through the combination of his official Communist affiliation in 1937 and his rhythmic *sons*, the political musicality that the poems represent reproduce the search for balance in Guillén's poetry. His poetics worked toward a place similar to the Spanish Republic, only better; a place that recognized the racial inequalities that the institutions in Spain did not. The Republic gave promise of a better place for those of all races, but a *democracia racial* was far from its official and unofficial agendas.

In Guillén's poems after the Spanish Republic, the poet strove to establish a large-scale racially democratic place exemplified in his *El son entero*. This complete *son* became a comprehensive, unrestricted way for the poet to work toward racial equality through poetry. Despite the growth of freedoms in general after the Second World War, Guillén's poetry recognized that those freedoms were not necessarily for all and that in reality capitalism had only changed the title of his enslaved brethren: industrial workers. Instead of making possibilities available for all, Guillén saw that modern progress only continued to provide liberties for a select few. Guillén's poems work to overcome those inequalities.

Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, and Nicolás Guillén give distinction to a balance (or a struggle to find a balance) between politics and poetics in part due to their participation in the public, social, poetic, and political upheavals of the Second Spanish Republic. Thus we can see from this study that the Second Spanish Republic did have an influence on the three poets and their poetry far beyond its fall in 1939. As we have seen, the effects on each of the poets were different, yet the results in their poetry were very similar. The outright denunciations of political prejudices in their poetry during the

Republic would appear intermittently in their later poetry, but the more obscure political references (generally) contributed to a parallel development of politics and poetics to which very few authors of the twentieth century can stake a claim. That political poetic balance is why Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, and Nicolás Guillén make up an important part of the poetic canon during the twentieth century and beyond.

Alberti, Neruda, and Guillén are not the only poets to maneuver between politics and poetics, neither are they the only poets who have struck (or have worked toward) a balance between their political adherences and their poetic production. It cannot be said that the Spanish Republic was the only contributor to their works or that the experience in Spain only affected them. But what can be said of these three is that their poetics did co-exist with political commitment that arose during the 1930s, and that very politics stayed alive in their poetry until at least 1959.

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