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ARCHAIC MODERNISM AND SPANISH POETRY, 1898-1975

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ABSTRACT

Archaic Modernism examines the role that long-standing discourses of Spain's cultural belatedness play in the complex character of its modern poetry through the Franco Era. While commentators from the first-century histories of Pliny the Elder, to the early twentieth-century proclamations of futurist F.T. Marinetti, Spain has been marked as outmoded, oppressive, and culturally obsolete, this dissertation challenges that Spain's supposed archaism—a term I employ to gather the various stereotypes regarding Spain's backwardness—has had an entirely negative effect on its cultural production. Instead, I argue that many modern poets engage in complex rewritings of the past that form the basis of an active and engaged aesthetic, inspiring experimental forms and critical perspectives that challenge the institutions they appropriate. While the use of primitive, primordial, and traditional motifs is a common feature to many canonical writers and artists of the modernist period across Europe and the Anglophone world, Spain exhibits a complex relationship to the past given its perennial marginalization as a belated nation. This special relationship to the suspect ideologies of the past allows us to reconsider the role that Spain played in the development of a broader European modernism. Furthermore, examining the continual debates within Spain about the relationship of its past and its literary culture, also shows us how poets consciously worked to recuperate certain truths, expressions, and inquiries associated with its archaic institutions as a means to establish a national cultural identity resistant to the marginalizing views of a hegemonic Northern European culture. Following this, I examine several Spanish poets who focused on spiritual notions such as irrationality, mysticism, and care for the suffering—ideas opposed to what they saw as an abhorrent Northern European, “protestant” modernization that had alienated human life through its rationalized quest for economic progress and material comforts. My focus on the role of archaism in Spanish poetry through the Civil War through the end of the Franco Era also

highlights the work of several poets little-known poets such as José García Nieto, Juan Eduardo Cirlot, Fernando Millán, and Julio Campal.

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Introduction

“El *arcaísmo*”: An Intellectual Epidemic

In his 1909 *Proclama futurista a los españoles*, founder of the futurist movement F.T. Marinetti argues that Spain is plagued by decaying institutions: its oppressive monarchy, its submission to the Catholic Church, and its tradition-obsessed literature, “es decir el culto metódico y estúpido del pasado” [“that is, the methodic and stupid cult of the past.”] Published in Ramón Gómez de la Serna’s literary magazine *Prometeo*, Marinetti’s proclamation aims to incite the Spanish populace with aggressive and colloquial language to free themselves from their paralyzing past. In order to move forward and “transformar completamente la intelectualidad española,” Marinetti argues that Spain must defend itself against “la más grande de las epidemias intelectuales: el *arcaísmo*” [to completely transform Spanish intellectualism... the greatest intellectual epidemic: *archaism*.” original emphasis]. As a futurist Marinetti envisioned an artistic revolution that would match the speed and transformative power of the new technologies: cars, industrial machines, mechanized warfare, modern printing techniques, the radio, etc. By tapping into the liberating and creative powers of the industrializing world, artistic expression would accelerate toward an ideal future while shedding the ballast of the past. *Arcaísmo*, by contrast, represented a wholly antithetical movement involving a “stupid” attachment to the oppressive norms of the past—a cultic and blind resistance to the technological liberation of society.

I begin with this anecdote as Marinetti’s accusation of *arcaísmo* strikes a deep nerve involving long standing discourses of Spain’s geopolitical identity in relation to the rest of Europe. By the time Marinetti impugned Spain’s *arcaísmo* in 1909, Spain was a nation whose

political and religious institutions had long been marked as backward, oppressive and perpetually obsolete in European geopolitical commentaries for millennia, from the first-century histories of Pliny the Elder to the Enlightenment philosophies of Kant and Hegel. In *fin de siècle* Europe, when “modern” became a buzzword for a reformative politics and aesthetics seeking to make a break with an oppressive and outdated past, Spain would become once again an epitome of the anti-modern that would prove the rest of the Western world’s relative development. *Archaic Modernism and Spanish Poetry, 1898-1975* takes this deep-seated stereotype and its relation to Spanish literature, particularly modern poetry, as its central field of investigation. I explore writers who engage with the suspect ideologies of Spain’s past, but as a means to develop particular kinds of truths, experiences, and expressions bound up in these discourses. Whereas Marinetti argued that *arcaísmo* was an intellectual “epidemic” that palliated Spanish culture, these Spanish poets’ investment in the history of their nation’s literature and political institutions actually complicates and enriches its literature as the past is rewritten in service of effecting changes in the present. Moreover, these writers use key themes and tropes inherent in these discourses—often spiritual and mystical, but also compassionate to human suffering—as a conscious resistance to what they saw as the an abhorrent Northern European, “protestant” modernization that had alienated human life through its rationalized quest for economic progress and material comforts.

To demonstrate the impact the discourse of Spanish archaism has had in its modern poetry, my dissertation examines several writers who deeply invest in the problematic discourses of Spain’s history—those marked as antiquated, cultish, outmoded, primitive, etc.—such as Federico García Lorca’s valorization of Spanish Catholicism in his poetry of the 1920s, and the ambivalently fascist ideology that undergirded Juan Eduardo Cirlot’s use of medieval Kabbalism in the Franco era. In the case of these and other poets, the appeal to a primordial force reacts against and resists the Enlightenment values of clarity and rationality, which they saw as

contributing to a palliated aesthetic that alienated human life in favor of bourgeois materialism. While the rewriting of the archaic discourses of Spain's past often provides the basis for an engaged and active aesthetic—inspiring experimental forms and critical perspectives that challenge the institutions they appropriate—this poetry also tends to replicate and even reassert problematic aspects of the ideologies and institutions with which they engage, such as Lorca's deferral to narratives of Catholic grace and redemption, or Cirlot's celebration of heroic violence. Taking into account these ideological ambiguities, my reevaluation of the role of the archaic in modern poetry does not aim to demonstrate that Spanish poetry inherently resists fascist ideologies such as Marinetti's; rather, *Archaic Modernism* examines the complexity of ideological positions that often lag behind the aesthetic progressivism of the poetic work.

Spanish poets' deferral to the past for its aesthetic force is not at all unique among the international renovation of aesthetic and political practices known broadly as modernism. masterworks of Anglophone poetry and prose such as Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* mined world literary tradition in their literary experimentations; in France, Henri Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (*Time and Freewill*) expounded a new theory of time in which past temporal states are intertwined with the present in a complex revision of consciousness; the international *Blaue Reiter* movement based in Munich actively espoused styles based in primitivism, spiritualism, and the naïve as a means to renovate visual art and music. Highlighting the importance of the past within *fin de siècle* art and society, Roger Griffins offers a "primordialist definition of modernism," stipulating that one of the most pervasive features of the era's art was "a bid to achieve a sense of transcendent value, means, or purpose despite Western culture's progressive loss of a homogenous value system... caused by the secular and disembedding forces of modernization" (2007, 116). This becomes a "primordialist definition" as Griffin specifies that one of the most common variants for recuperating the loss of a "homogenous value system" comes though the "paradoxical

appropriation of elements found in the premodern, the mythic, ‘reactionary’ past to serve the revolutionary task of creating a new order in a new future” (117).

While I find Griffin’s definition of modernism particularly useful in its ability to explain much of the far-reaching aesthetic, societal, and political shifts that took place in Europe and the Americas at the beginning of the twentieth century, the case of Spain’s long-standing belatedness complicates and even challenges Griffin’s conceptualization. This is because for Spain, the return to its “pre-modern, mythic, ‘reactionary’ past”—that is, Spain’s archaism—as a means to effect changes in the present does not necessarily imply revolution or paradox. Rather, the appeal to the primordial and traditional aspects of Spanish culture is often an expression of what is immanently intertwined with what the rest of Europe had long considered integral to Spain’s backward character: irrationality, mysticism, paradox, belief-driven values, etc. Though Spanish poets’ use of these problematized discourses often serves as a means to consciously create ideologically complex and self-reflexive works, Spanish poets’ will frequently be marginalized for such practices, even within Spain by intellectuals and artists seeking to distance themselves from their nation’s supposed belatedness. As a case in point, both Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel—artists who had left Spain to join the surrealist movement in France—would reject the naïve style and provincial themes of Lorca’s poetic work *Romancero Gitano*, even as naïve, folkloric, and primitive motifs had been integral parts of the aesthetics of contemporary masterworks such as the groundbreaking visual and musical works of the *Blaue Reiter* group. Though aspects of Spain’s long-standing belatedness formed part of canonical modernist art elsewhere, within Spain these expressions will continually be marginalized as examples of Spain’s anathematized archaism.

In the last two decades, numerous studies have similarly worked to challenge Spain’s marginalized status, highlighting the fundamental contributions it has made to the history of modernist art. Anthony Geist and José B. Monleón’s 1999 study, *Modernism and its Margins*, for

example, challenges what they see as a prevailing but misleading center/periphery model of modernism by which new aesthetic models proceed from geographical centers such as London and Paris toward more marginal loci such as Spain, Italy, and Eastern Europe. Mary Lee Bretz (2001) takes a similar approach by challenging the “persistent ‘othering’” of Spain that has resisted integrating Spanish contributions into broader discussions of turn of the century art and literature (Bretz 4). Works by Christopher Soufas (2007, 2015), Michael Iarocci (2009), and Gayle Rogers (2012) also work to connect Spain to the broader currents of modernism by challenging the common place of Spain’s cultural difference and isolation. Soufas’ and Iarocci’s studies in particular align with my approach in their recognition that much of what has formed a part of Spain’s stigmatized belatedness—spiritualism, provincialism, traditionalism, etc.—not only becomes a common feature to other European and Anglophone modernist expressions, but also serves as a resistance to the dehumanizing aspects of modernity.¹

Building from and extending these fundamental reconsiderations of Spain’s role in the development of a broader European and Anglophone modernism, *Archaic Modernism* distinguishes itself from these works in two important ways, the first pertaining to its thematic focus, and the second to the time period on which it focuses. By examining the role that archaism plays in Spanish poetry, I highlight the complicated and ever-present ideological ambiguity discussed previously: as Spanish poets invoke their nation’s problematized past to reform and engage in the present, they nevertheless reassert, at least in part, the discourses they intend to subvert and challenge. I also focus on a later time period than the above-mentioned studies,

¹ There are several other excellent studies similarly reassessing Spain’s role in twentieth century art and literature that should be mentioned here. Nicolás Fernández-Medina and Maria Truglio’s edited volume *Modernism and the Avant-garde Body in Spain and Italy* (2016) offers numerous contributions on the integral that figurations of the human body in avant-garde and modernist art. The editors keenly note in their introduction that much of what has been used to marginalize both Spain and Italy—“religion, patriarchy, and fascism”—actually contribute to the rich aesthetic productions of these nations (x). Robert Havard’s 2001 study on poet Rafael Alberti, *The Crucified Mind*, also examines the important role that Catholicism played in the development of what he terms “Spanish surrealism,” though it is less concerned with recuperating Spain’s role in the development of twentieth-century European and Anglophone art and literature.

tracing the role of archaism through the Spanish Civil War up to the end of the Franco Era in 1975—well past the a common critical endpoint of modernism at the start of World War II. My emphasis on examining a time period that moves through the Civil War demonstrates that the discourse of Spain’s archaism continues to complicate and enrich Spanish poetry, even in the Franco Era, which has often been viewed as aesthetically poor, especially in comparison with the so-called “Silver Age” of the early twentieth-century.

Whereas aspects of Spain’s archaism played integral an role in the celebrated literature of the decades preceding the Civil War—from the nationalism of the *Generación del '98* to the *gongorismo* (from Golden Age poet Luis de Góngora) of the *Generación del '27*—Spain’s history became a highly polarized and politicized subject with the rise of Franco’s nationalist-fascist regime. In the postwar, poetic tradition became associated with the pro-regime poetic nationalism of early fascist magazines such as *El Escorial* and *Garcilaso: juventud creadora*. As a reaction, counter-regime movements associated with magazines such as *Proel*, *Corcel*, and *Espadaña* rejected tradition and instead sought a simpler, populist style emphasizing personal liberty that would give rise to the engaged, Leninist *poesía social* of the 1950s, as well its successors in the 1960s such as *poesía del conocimiento* and *poesía de la comunicación* [poetry of knowledge, poetry of communication]. Due to this polarization, much of the poetry that resumed the prewar legacy of experimenting by rewriting tradition was marginalized both during Francoism and in later critical commentaries. This lack of critical interest stemmed in part from postwar experimental poetry’s supposed evasion of current political situations as well as for its more difficult, intellectual style that fit poorly with both the nationalist poetry of the right and the socially engaged populism of the left.

In this dissertation I reassess the work of these postwar poets—such as Juan Eduardo Cirlot, Fernando Millán, and Julio Campal—by demonstrating that their engagement with the archaic discourses of Spain is not an evasive, detached anomaly in the postwar era, but yet

another iteration of a very conscious engagement with Spain's archaism to create complex ideological and aesthetic commentaries on the present moment. In the case of the visual poets, for example, I demonstrate how they imagined their deconstruction of writing through visual elements as a resistance to the increasing influx of commercial and pro-government media. As a contrast to this more experimental poetry, I dedicate Chapter 1 to the study of the nationalist, pro-Franco *garcilasista* movement, showing that even as poets like Luis Rosales and José García Nieto take up aspects of Spain's poetic nationalism rooted in the Renaissance, recourse to these complex discourses creates a deep ideological ambiguity that contradicts the rhetorical devices of authoritarian politics.

Beyond this unique historical outlook, my study is also characterized by a specific attention to poetry during this time period. The main reason behind this focus pertains to Spanish poetry's deep relation to discourses such as nationalism, religion, and aesthetic elitism. In the case of nationalism, for example, the Renaissance poetry of Garcilaso became closely associated with both the politics and personal values of Spanish nationalism, not just in the post-Civil War era, but also since just after Garcilaso's death in 1536. As for Catholicism, the poetry of San Juan de la Cruz (1542-1591) would be celebrated as the pinnacle of Counter-Reformation literature, firmly rooting the doctrines of paradox, irrationality, and intense devotion to "other-worldly" forces in Spanish poetry. In Chapters 2 and 3 on Lorca and Cirlot, we will see the profound resonance that San Juan's poetry has in even some of the most experimental poetry of the twentieth century. Lastly, and more generally, Spanish poetry tends to exhibit intricate intertextual allusions, complex syntax, esotericism, and intellectualism, implying the elitism of outmoded courtly culture in poetic discourse, and separating verse from the more popular sphere of prose and the novel.

“El problema de España”: The Search for a Cultural Identity

While concerns over Spain’s culture in relation to the rest of Europe was a commonplace in critical commentaries from outside of Spain, questions about the legacy of Spain’s past also played a central role in debates within Spain about the character, purpose, and direction of its national literature. According to literary historian E. Inman Fox, intellectual debate within Spain regarding the belatedness of its own poetry root back to at least the eighteenth century when notions of “secular civilization” began to replace religious forms of understanding historical continuity (Fox 1). Critic Mary Lee Bretz notes that this debate continued into the eighteenth century between the liberal, secularizing Krausists and the more religious-nationalist positions of figures like Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (Bretz 40). Fox notes that these debates came to a head in the wake of the “Desastre de ’98”—Spain’s crushing defeat in the Spanish American War in 1898 that prompted a great deal of intellectual and public debate about the legacy and future of the nation’s identity and culture. I mark the beginning of my dissertation’s historical focus with this event since I primarily study how Spain’s perpetual belatedness complicates and enriches its twentieth century literature. While the debate had been carried out over the preceding centuries, Spain’s backwardness now opposed the broader program of a renovating modernism along with a plethora of new perspectives on the viability of returning to the past.

Fox notes that the crisis of Spanish cultural identity—referred to then within Spain as the “problema de España” [“problem of Spain”]—caused a profound search for national identity by examining “la relación entre el pasado del país, la identidad del pueblo y la política” [the relation between the country’s past, the identity of its people, and its politics] (Inman Fox 1). Many writers sought to start anew by shedding the ballast of Spain’s past, such as playwright, novelist, and essayist Ramón Gómez de la Serna, who initially collaborated with Marinetti’s futurist movement, translating and publishing the 1909 *Proclama futurista a los españoles* I discussed

above. In the preface to the *Proclama*, Gómez de la Serna took a similarly aggressive stance against Spain's national literature, impugning the Generation of '98 with a hyper-traditionalism that obstructed creative freedom, arguing instead for break from tradition as a means to reinvigorate Spanish culture. Philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, though less aggressive, also launched a project to "Europeanize" Spain through translating and advocating German thinkers—including Kant, Hegel, and Freud—in order to create dialogue between Spain and the rest of Europe. Gayle Rogers has also recently studied how Ortega's project also involved collaboration with Anglophone and Continental European periodicals such as T.S. Eliot's magazine *The Criterion*.²

Bretz has also shown that in the peripheries of Spain there were a number of writers hoping to modernize Spain by integrating it into broader cosmopolitan and European trends (Bretz 44-6). Galician intellectual Camilo Bargiela, for example, published an article in 1903 entitled "Modernistas y anticuados" that rallied against the closed and traditional "anticuados" while suggesting that Spain would do better to follow the "modernista" spirit of openness to international artistic and scientific currents. While figures like Gómez de la Serna, Ortega, and Bargiela form part of the complex systems of reactions to Spain's self-consciousness of its supposedly backward culture, my focus in this dissertation is on those who envisioned how certain aspects of Spain's ideologically suspect institutions—such as its insular poetic tradition, religion, obsession with death, and resistance to material progress—could serve as the foundation for a Spanish identity over and against a spiritually poor and overly logicized Europe. In other words, I focus on those who embrace Spain's supposed archaism as an active function in their aesthetic practice and ideological outlook.

² For a detailed discussion of Ortega's international collaborations in the early decades of the twentieth century, see Gayle Rogers *Modernism and the New Spain* (2012), especially Chapter 2.

One of the biggest proponents of embracing Spain's past as a resistance to the problematics of "modernization" was philosopher, poet, essayist, and novelist Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936). While Unamuno has been viewed as a traditional and Catholic writer in comparison with Ortega's more cosmopolitan and secular stances, he also cultivated a deep knowledge of the Western philosophical tradition. His studies of Kierkegaard, Spinoza, Nietzsche and many others culminated in his philosophical magnum opus *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* [*The Tragic Sense of Life*] (1909), an influential work often cited as a precursor to existentialism. In his 1906 essay "Sobre la europeización (arbitrariedades)," Unamuno argues that the en vogue "regenerative commonplaces" of "Europeanization" and "modernization" in Spain were not only vague ideals, but furthermore, that Spain should embrace the values associated with its antiquated, marginal status. For Unamuno, the "modern" world was obsessed with technical development and materialist comfort, ideals that often led to a neglect of human life in the name of economic progress. Furthermore, this neglect was also a result of "modern" aesthetic ideals misled by an obsession with logic instead of the living, indeterminate nature of paradox and ambiguity. His native Spain, by contrast, still maintained great spiritual values that allowed it not only a living aesthetic, but also a deep need to care for the sanctity of human life.

These ideas would form the basis of Unamuno's *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, which establishes a philosophy of care and charity based in the paradoxical yet vital suffering of Christ. Unamuno opposed this "tragic sense of life"—one that listens to the call of the suffering instead of the hollow ideals of success, ideals created by a "protestant," Northern European outlook focused on "this-worldly" progress. While Unamuno advocated for changes within the present that resist important problematics associated with the ideal of "modernity," his "tragic sense of life" is nevertheless intertwined in some of the suspect, archaic aspects of Spanish culture, such as nationalism, self-mortification, Catholicism, and an passionate irrationalism.

This frequent slippage between aesthetic expression of a work and the ideology that undergirds its creation appears throughout *Archaic Modernism* and complicates the study of these works. To study how the discourse of Spain's supposed archaism complicates and informs its literary expression thus means that one must constantly be sorting out a complex web of political ambiguities. These ambiguities show that the use of Spain's archaism does not entail a univocal viewpoint or ideology, since poets lobby progressive moral and aesthetic ideas such as attention to oppressed populations and formal experimentation often through discourses associated with religion and nationalist tradition. Adding to the complexity of how archaism and Spanish poetry relate, not all rewritings of the past aim at "revolutionary" or liberal ends. In Chapter 1, for example, I explore the poetic recourse to Golden Age poet Garcilaso de la Vega (1501?-1536) in the development of a postwar nationalist-fascist poetics, namely the *garcilasista* movement including poets José García Nieto and Luis Rosales. For centuries Garcilaso had served as an ideological figurehead for poetic nationalism insofar as his work supposedly upheld authentically "Spanish" values such as virility, loyalty to the crown, and aesthetic sensibility. Yet modern commentators such as Richard Helgerson and Jose María García Rodríguez have noted Garcilaso's subtly subversive ways of modifying classical sources as a means to express his personal doubts toward the violence of imperial politics and other contemporary issues. Despite the conservative and nationalist rhetoric of the *garcilasistas*, I demonstrate that they were aware of the nuances of Garcilaso's subversive and critical poetics. Examining the way that their archaic "honoring" of Garcilaso through the imitation of his forms and themes complicates the ideal of a Golden Age nationalist poetics in an impoverished and turbulent post-Civil War Spain.

Subsequent chapters similarly identify instances of poets writing ideological complex and socially relevant poetics through their engagements with Spain's past, even with the presence of continual discrepancies between their experimental, progressive aesthetics and suspect underlying ideologies. In Chapter 2 I examine the role of Unamuno's Spanish Catholic philosophy in

Federico García Lorca's experimental and socially critical work *Poeta en Nueva York*. While Lorca has often been memorialized as a socialist martyr and liberal, I demonstrate that Unamuno's Catholic conception of paradox and charity are some of the most fundamental mechanisms in Lorca's experimental verse. We will also see that Lorca envisioned his irrational technique as a resistance to a "Protestant" morality of capitalist progress—an idea developed from the works of Unamuno. In Chapter 3 I examine Juan Eduardo Cirlot's poetic adaptation of a permutational divinatory technique of the thirteenth-century Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia as a synthesizing method for finding order and structure in his seemingly infinite range of interests in poetic systems, ancient religions, and hermetic wisdom. Although Abulafia was a religious fanatic, Cirlot adapts his technique as way to disrupt traditional forms of meaning making based on linear logic. Even though Cirlot carried out his experimentations as a means to disrupt aesthetic and political rules of the anti-traditional left and the nationalist Regime, we will see that he often expresses contradictory ideologies, including a fascist militarism and a defiant romantic liberalism. In Chapter 4, I explore how the little-studied wave of visual poetry in Spain in the 1960s and early 1970s similarly aimed to disrupt traditional, linear modes of writing. By returning to and modifying forms of ancient, baroque, symbolist, and avant-garde traditions of visual writing, they revolted against what they perceived as limitations on creative freedom imposed by the bureaucratic and political norms of a broadly oppressive modern Western Culture.

Archaism and the Practice of Rewriting

While I use the terms "archaism" and "archaic" throughout this dissertation as a means to gather and keep present the numerous aspects of Spain's stigmatization as a belated and backwards nation—including but not limited ideas like religion, monarchy, violence, feudal

economics, nationalism, fanatical irrationalism, insularism, intellectual elitism, traditionalism, and fascism—I also prefer “archaism” and “archaic” since their etymologies help highlight some theoretical ideas I will discuss in my analyses of poetic works. Archaism derives from the Greek word *archē*—beginning, origin, or first place—highlighting the mythopoeic and primordial force often appealed to in the return to texts from a previous age. As discussed above, Griffin argues that primordialism is perhaps the most important renovative trope in modernist aesthetics and politics—undergirding major literary and artistic works of the early twentieth century such as Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, as well major political developments such as fascism. While words such as antique and ancient often can also be used to make an appeal to primordial force, their etymology relates them to the Latin *ante*, a relatively constructed sense of anteriority as opposed to the more absolute sense of origin implied in *archē*. I use the term *archē* throughout my dissertation as a form of shorthand to express a poetic discourse appealed to for its force as a primordial origin. An important *archē* in my study of Cirlot’s poetry, for example, is the Kabbalist writings of thirteenth century mystic Abraham Abulafia. As with my use of the terms archaism and archaic, the term *archē* is also meant to keep present the problematic and complex ideology often intertwined with these origins—in this case of Abulafia, we could cite his fanatical religious intentions undergirding his mystical and prophetic techniques.

In addition to the Greek *archē* relating to primordialism, from “archaic” we can also derive the Latin word *archivum*, written record or archive, which I associate with traditions, especially those constituted by canonized written texts such as Garcilaso’s poetry and the texts of his numerous commentators over the centuries. This sense of material text and historical continuity invoked by archaism is largely why I am not only using the term “primordial:” whereas primordial relates more to originary power, with archaism I want to also invoke the textual records and the various norms they institute, be they legal, religious, aesthetic, or otherwise. Throughout, I will relate the political and aesthetic impositions of the archive to the

importance of textual traditions, especially poetic traditions. In Derrida's deconstruction of the concept of archive in *Archive Fever*, he recalls that closely bound to the idea of the archē in Ancient Greece were the *archons*, those who protected and enforced the written rules, giving written records authoritative force and stability.

In a contrary motion to the stabilizing and normative function of the textual records, Derrida's *Archive Fever* offers a compelling deconstruction of the concept of the archive, showing the preservation of writing also implies the possibility for the modification and even nullification of imposed norms. This will be an important nuance as I explore how discourses of archaic forms and themes often result in critical stances that oppose ideological and aesthetic limitations. In my analyses of poetic texts, this mainly involves the rewriting of concrete works, such as José García Nieto's recasting of a Golden Age sonnet in post-Civil War Spain, though to some extent this may imply vaguer fields like Catholic doctrine or nationalist discourse. For Derrida, an essential feature of an archive is its open and accessible nature, which is the source of its instability. Derrida succinctly explains the paradox by which the conservative gesture of archiving is thus also a destructive one:

[If] there is no archive without consignment to an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, and of reimpression,³ then we must also remember that repetition, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction. (12) [original italics]

Here Derrida uses the Freudian terminology, though this idea can be expressed without recourse to psychoanalysis: the bringing into view of any artifact or text makes it vulnerable to scrutiny, criticism, and potentially nullification. In this sense, Derrida demonstrates that the preservation of a text also allows for that text's modification and even nullification. Largely due to this duality,

³ I would add to Derrida's list "reinforcement", so as to not forget the jussive aspect of the archive.

we see the kinds of slippage between the ideology and aesthetic expression of poetry that engages with archaic traditions, since the voicing of archaic discourses simultaneously subverts as well as asserts the ideologically suspect ideas of which they are composed.

Beyond this more philosophical, approach to the instability and transformation archivic and canonical texts, a sense of rewriting and modification has been a prominent part of Spanish literary expression since at least the early sixteenth century, as Renaissance poets recovered classic models like Vergil who was keen to note that a poet's job was to transform others' work into something better, as bees do with honey. Mary Barnard has noted that Garcilaso de la Vega was particularly successful in his modifications of his classical predecessors, and that his poetry often aimed to surpass his models and to establish his own excellence over their traditional authority (Barnard 1987 316-7). Other scholars have noted that Garcilaso's subversive poetics extends to the political sphere, as well. Richard Helgerson and José María García Rodríguez, for example, have pointed to works such as the sonnet "A Boscán desde la Goleta" in which Garcilaso engages with classical sources—in this case Vergil and St. Augustine—as a means of expressing personal doubts toward the imperial politics of King Carlos V. The last line of the sonnet, for example, is a rewriting of Queen Dido's last words before she commits suicide by throwing herself into a fire; commentators have noted that Garcilaso's citing of these words can be read as an act of defiance against the collective politics of empire. While I discuss the intricacies of this rewriting and its reception in the twentieth century in Chapter 1, I want to highlight here how Garcilaso's poetic self-sacrifice is an undoing (Spanish: *deshacer*) that is also a form of making (*hacer*), a metaphor for the remaking of an imperial, epic text (the *Aeneid*) into a protest against the politics of empire. While of course Garcilaso did not have the postmodern philosophy or deconstructive framework to conceptualize his sonnet, he nevertheless displays an intelligence about the efficacy of rewriting the ideological stances of past aesthetics—in this case the epic—in the creation of lasting artwork. Similar to this example, we will see that Spanish

poets' frequent attachment to the past often demonstrates a similar awareness about how rewriting is an effective means to suggest its undoing.

In the early twentieth century, following the “Desastre del ‘98” as Spain attempts to reestablish its cultural identity, new ideas emerge about the function of the nation’s past in terms of tradition, rewriting, and the creation of new, authentically Spanish literature. The poets and writers known as the “*Generación del '27*,” for example, sought to incorporate the complex stylistics of the baroque poet Luis de Góngora (1561-1627). While official academic institutions like the *Real Academia Española* had long marginalized Góngora for his difficult style rich in baroque conceits, tortuous syntax, and abstruse vocabulary—the young *Generación del '27* poets seized upon his difficult style to create their own modern poetic expressions that would rival the aesthetic obscurity and complexity of contemporary poets such as French Surrealists like André Breton and Paul Éluard and Anglophone Modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Yet again Spanish poets would find their own “modern” expression through the recuperation of its archaic past—in this case the excessive, esoteric poetry of Góngora.

Reacting to the perceived excess of the *Generación del '27* Luis Rosales, in a 1936 essay, proposes a return to classical and restrained forms of writing as opposed to baroque and ornate styles. While Rosales is writing to nationalist ends—he will join the fascist *falangista* party during the war—as means to establish Garcilaso the origin of authentic Spanish poetry, his theory of poetic tradition is complex and involves a somewhat paradoxical view of the return to the Renaissance poetics. For Rosales, it is not necessarily the imitation of Garcilaso that makes effective poetry, but rather an awareness that tradition transforms and is refracted through history and the current conditions in which one is writing. In this way, Rosales sees departure from a norm as that which gives rise to a poetic tradition. In other words, what holds together and even enriches a national poetic tradition is paradoxically an inevitable decadence that occurs throughout history as writers drift further from an origin. Rosales’s poetic theory demonstrates a

kind of postmodern complexity by which change happens through the undoing of a perceived standard, yet at the same time Rosales ideology is steeped in the nationalism often associated with Spanish archaism.

One last theory of rewriting and deconstruction in the Spanish context that will serve as a theoretical background throughout the following chapters comes from Juan Eduardo Cirlot's masterwork of art criticism *Diccionario de los ismos*. In the entry on *experimentalismo* Cirlot sets forth that experimenting is always experimenting *on* or *with* something, and involves the fragmentation and reassembly of a previous a previous work. In Cirlot's own words: "¿Qué se entiende por experimentalismo? Respecto a las realizaciones: consciencia de la provisionalidad. Respecto a la técnica, *voluntad de fragmentación y de cultivos parciales de las estructuras desmontadas*" [What is understood by experimentalism? In respect to the realizations: consciousness of provisionality. In respect to the technique, *desire for fragmentation and partial cultivation of dismantled structures.*] [italics added] (230-1). This definition calls attention to the role of fragmentation in experimentation, a key aesthetic practice discussed by Frankfurt school thinkers such as Benjamin and Adorno, yet Cirlot highlights the need for recourse to "dismantled structures," i.e. the aesthetic forms and styles of the past.

Cirlot discusses in more detail own methods of experimentation in a letter to fellow poet and scholar of ancient law Félix Alonso y Royano. In a previous letter, the younger Alonso had expressed a desire to follow Cirlot's style of poetic creation; as a response Cirlot encourages his friend not to use his poetic discoveries, but develop his own through experimenting on older material:

Mírate si quieres en mi espejo en cuanto al experimentalismo, pero experimenta por tu cuenta. Hay cien cosas a descubrir, te lo juro... // Idiomas extranjeros entremezclados, resurrección del romance (octosílabo, nadie lo ha hecho bien desde Lorca, tu podrías), imitación deliberada, deformada de uno o más clásicos, sea Garcilaso o Quevedo, arcaísmo medievalizante siguiendo a Alfonso X el sabio, práctica sistemática de versos

inacabados, de neologismos constantes, etc. Ya ves que te insinuó el inmenso panorama. Quiero que me sigas como inventor, pero no de mis hallazgos, sino de los tuyos. (Alonso 88)

[Look if you want in my mirror in regards to experimentalism, but experiment on your own. There are a hundred things to discover, I swear... // Foreign languages intermixed, resurrection of the *romance* (octosyllable, no one has done it well since Lorca, you could), deliberate, deformed imitation of one or more classics, be it Garcilaso or Quevedo, medievalizing archaism following Alfonso X the Wise, systematic practice of unfinished verses, of constant neologisms, etc. Already you see I'm hinting at an immense panorama. I want that you follow me as an inventor, not of my discoveries, but rather your own.]

For Cirlot, experimentalism depends upon engagement with past literature, such as the *romance* (a popular medieval verse form), Golden Age poets like Garcilaso and Francisco de Quevedo, or the thirteenth-century King of Castile Alfonso the Wise. In Spain, the practice of experimentalism typically associated with the progressivism of the avant-garde and modern art, functions in concert with Spain's historic literature and its function in the creation of new poetry.

Rhizome/Multiplicity: The Heterogeneity of the Archive

A theoretical paradigm that I will use variously to explain the dynamic between rewriting as a neatly ordered, conservative practice and a dynamic, subversive system is Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the multiplicity, variously called the rhizome. The multiplicity/rhizome is central for these philosophers inasmuch as it names a system that that has some degree of structure and discernible components (i.e. not a complete chaos), but which is constantly "becoming" something else, leading to unpredictable and even unprecedented kinds of expressions. Deleuze and Guattari give six principles for their concept of the rhizome, but all of these are essentially contained in the first two, the principles of connections and heterogeneity: "any point of the rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be" (7). Because of this intricate connectivity and heterogeneity, rhizomatic systems have a relatively high degree of

freedom, allowing for a constant reorganization and shifting of terms. The use of this concept is best illustrated when we compare dynamic multiplicities to their normative counterparts, “arborescent systems,” wherein each “offshoot” is essentially pre-determined by a central principle that overcodes any heterogeneity actually present in the system. In less mystifying language, arborescent systems deal with normalization and work toward homogeneity. A clear example that Deleuze and Guattari give of arborescence is a grammar, which codes linguistic expressions as either correct or incorrect, ignoring the unique variations that arise naturally in human language. Needless to say this can have very real political consequences, since the normalization of language can easily result in discrimination of populations that “speak improperly.”

Deleuze and Guattari note that a multiplicity or a rhizome is not particular to one or another system, but is rather “made” by subtracting out an “regime of signs” that imposes unity on what is actually heterogeneous—a process that they describe as “n-1”, i.e. a set of elements minus a governing principle. This notion of subtracting out an ordering principle works in concert with the deconstructionist idea of investigating and exposing the tenuous binaries that determine meaning: once these are exposed and removed, new meanings and new connections can be drawn in conjunction with the original, concept that at first appeared closed in on itself. In general, I aim to show that the supposed unity and homogeneity of the Spanish tradition—the historical doxa against Spain’s modernity that I discussed from Northern European historians and philosophers—is an imposition that can be removed to show a great deal of dynamic, heterogeneous, and modern literary expression.

One example from Chapter 1 of the kinds of “unifying principles” that I subtract out is the sense that the *garcilasismo* movement in the postwar put forth a purely conservative and traditional aesthetic. While the movement certainly had conservative elements, I demonstrate that once we examine this movement’s connection to less politically charged prewar uses of

Garcilaso, to other postwar trends, and also to Garcilaso's own subversive politics, we find a complicated aesthetic that disrupts the supposed unity of a traditional poetic archē. In Chapter 2, I work on subtracting the idea that, at least for Lorca, Catholicism is incompatible with a modern view of experimentalism and attention to minority populations. In chapters 3 and 4, I work with figures deliberately “subtracting” out certain norms related to the archē of writing itself such as Cirlot's removal of a fixed order of words in a poem, resulting in the permutational form of *Palacio de Plata*, a poem which opens “rhizomatic” connections to a complicated set of discourses, including medieval Spanish Kabbalism, Counter Reformation mysticism, Fascism, and modernist music.

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1 focuses on the use of Golden Age poet Garcilaso de la Vega years immediately preceding and following the Spanish Civil war, beginning somewhat in *media res* after Lorca's poetry of the late 1920s and before exploring the experimental poetry of the 1950s and 60s. I start at this point for several reasons. One of the reasons is that studying the phenomenon of Garcilaso through the war provides a unique way of exploring how attitudes toward archaic practices changed as a result of the war. This happened as Garcilaso would become the heroic figurehead for the postwar *garcilasista* poets, in some sense an appropriate choice since Garcilaso had been hailed since the earliest commentators as the “light of our nation” and the “emperor's poet.” Furthermore, due to Garcilaso legacy as an archē—as an origin of Spanish poetic culture—he is a particularly figure way of studying the ambivalences of rewriting the past, as he demonstrates how this can used to substantiate nationalist poetic programs in the poetry of the postwar, yet also shows how the inevitable rewriting of tradition, in this case of Garcilaso's own poetry, tends to distort and subvert these norms.

I begin Chapter 1 by discussing the poetics of Garcilaso, detailing how he came to be such an important archē for Spanish poetry. After this I begin to discuss Garcilaso's uses in the twentieth century, beginning with some texts from 1936, including what would become one of the foundational essays for the postwar conservative *garcilasista*. In this essay by poet and critic Luis Rosales, we will see that the foundation of what would become a pro-regime poetry founded on the supposedly heroic poetics of Garcilaso actually presents a complicated theory of decadence that fits uncomfortably with a nationalist politics of positive renewal. In the rest of the chapter I examine a series of works that reflect upon and complicate Garcilaso's "legacy of decadence," including works from Miguel Hernández, and José García Nieto.

If Chapter 1 works toward refuting that Spain's interest in its own literary heritage impeded its intellectual progress, Chapter 3 challenges the other great "archaism" in Spain, its Catholic heritage. I do this by examining the presence and function of a number of Catholic-oriented themes and images in the middle poetry of perhaps Spain's most internationally known modernist, Federico García Lorca. While little work has been done on Catholicism in Lorca's work—likely due to his occasional hostility toward the Pope and the Church—I show that Lorca very deliberately situates himself within a genealogy of Spanish Catholicism, which includes Counter Reformation mysticism and the philosophy of Miguel de Unamuno. Not only does Lorca deliberately declare his allegiance to this tradition, but he also uses it form some of the modern and celebrated aspects of his work, such as his famous experimental images—his *hechos poéticos*, poetics facts or deed—as well as his compassionate attention to marginalized populations such as women, children, and racial minorities. This aspect can be seen especially when we view Lorca's poetry through the lens of the Miguel de Unamuno's *El sentimiento trágico de la vida* [*The Tragic Sense of Life*], which, as discussed above, defends the focus in Spanish literature on the ultimate and vital paradox of Christ as a god that suffers and dies. This not only provides Lorca with a rationale behind his paradoxical style—as the indeterminacy of paradox

gives life to writing—but also guides his attention to those suffering under the oppression of modern society.

In Chapter 3 I explore the complicated aesthetic universe of poet, art critic, novelist, and composer Juan Eduardo Cirlot. In many ways, my development of the concept of archaism and its ambiguous relation to conservative ideology, experimentation, and post-Civil war thought stems from my research into Cirlot's unique and often paradoxical oeuvre. Cirlot amassed, systematized, and published an incredible amount of archaic knowledge in his two dictionaries (one of symbols and another of "isms") and treatises on medieval, classical, and modern art. Yet while systematizing his vast erudition, he also developed a highly experimental, anti-conceptual, and destructive poetics that sought to undermine this very knowledge. Furthermore, Cirlot not only saw himself in opposition to the overly politicized tactics of the avant-garde, but he also tended toward the aesthetics of fascism, which he saw as superior to communism and socialism for its rich mythological and aesthetic structures.

In the first half of the chapter, I give a brief biography of Cirlot—as he is little known, especially in international contexts—as well as some international context for his work, in particular the relation of his early work to French Surrealism. In the second half of the chapter I examine a poem that Cirlot felt was one of his greatest contributions to literature, *Palacio de plata* (*Palace of Silver*). This work is founded upon two complex systems of thought: the medieval Kabbalism of Zaragoza native Abraham Abulafia and the dodecaphonic music of Austrian modernist composer Arnold Schoenberg. I analyze *Palacio de Plata* to demonstrate Cirlot's interest the less typical archēs of the Iberian peninsular, such medieval Kabbalism and Sufism, and also to show how Cirlot, similar to Lorca, views juxtaposition as the fundamental aspect of poetic and creative language.

In Chapter 4 I explore the wave of experimental visual poetry that ran through the last years of Francoism. While perhaps the longest lasting and most active avant-garde in Spanish

literary history, it has received little critical attention, especially in international contexts—somewhat surprising given the canonicity of other post-World War II experimental and visual poetry figures Eugen Gomringer, Ernst Jandl, and the Brazilian Noigandres group. I examine how these poets’ deconstruction of writing through the inclusion of visual elements and other non-traditional forms of textual composition, which I term heterography, subverts the simpler styles of both the nationalist and socialist aesthetics dominant in the poetry of the era.

Though many of the artists such as Fernando Millán, Julio Campal, and Gómez de Liaño employed a much more iconoclastic, avant-garde rhetoric that challenged the tradition of writing itself—especially its linearity, orthography, and homogeneity—I show that these writers’ works were still deliberately invested in maintaining a tradition of alternative forms of writing, through French symbolism, Italian futurism, as well as ancient forms of visual writing. In this sense, even though they wished to destroy the institution of writing as it stands, their works nevertheless depend on a traditional, archaic intertextuality that both legitimates and enriches their poetic creations. I focus particularly on the works of Julio Campal and Fernando Millán, two of the foundational figures of the numerous experimental poetry movements that arose during these years, such as *Problemática '63* and *Grupo N.O.*

Chapter 1

Unstable Roots: The Legacy of Garcilaso de la Vega in Spanish Poetry from 1936-1953

“Tras de la norma la inquietud, tras la inquietud la norma; ésta es la ley que da fertilidad y permanencia a la cultura”

*“Behind the norm, anxiety; behind anxiety, the norm: this is the law that gives fertility and permanence to culture”
—Luis Rosales, “Poesía y verdad,” 1939*

España Libre, Grande, y ¿Una?

On July 18th 1932, exactly four years to the day before the start of the Spanish Civil War, the conservative magazine *Libertad* published an article by Onésimo Redondo that prompted what would become one of the most important fascist slogans for the coming national Catholic-fascist dictatorship: “*España libre, grande, única...*” (Preston 1998, 81-3). Under Franco’s fascist rule, Spain would be *libre*, sovereign and free from foreign influence; *grande*, a word invoking Spain’s historical imperial grandeur and its planned conquests in North Africa; and *única*, with its own singular cultural identity as a unified nation. *Única* would later be changed to *una* (“*España Una, Grande, y Libre*”) and placed first in the list, highlighting not just the uniqueness of Spain among another other nations, but also the importance of national solidarity under fascist rule. While *Grande* and *Libre* reacted against certain anxieties of the regime that would become highly

problematic,⁴ the concepts of both *Una* and *Única* foregrounded a difficulty plaguing the long history of attempts to control and maintain Spain as a coherent nation. From the Greek historian Strabo (d. 23 A.D.) remarking upon the stubborn territorialism of the peninsula, to the Roman conquerors battling the Celtiberians for two centuries (Trent 6), to the centuries-long wars against the Moors—not to mention the current separatism of Barcelona, the Basque Country, and other provinces—rulers of Spain have constantly struggled to create a singular cultural expression with which to unite the diverse cultures and peoples within their territory.

In this chapter I explore how the project of Spanish unification that emerged before and after the Civil War did not just involve political hegemony and territorial unification, but also as a unification of *expression*. The fascist vision of a unified Spain included a literature that would equally be “Una, Grande, y Libre,” advocating a normalized aesthetic intended to reinforce the image of a newly unified nation under Franco’s rule. This was especially the case in the field of poetry where a group of conservative young poets—who would become fascist supporters through the early years of Francoism—set forth a fascist-nationalist poetics based in the archaic return to the neoclassicism of the poet Garcilaso de la Vega (1501?-1536), a figure who had been celebrated over the centuries as representing the authentic values of Golden Age Spain such as virility, loyalty to the crown, and aesthetic sensitivity. As Garcilaso was famously a soldier in addition to being a poet, he had been lauded since the time of his earliest commentators as an aesthetic figurehead for both the cultural and political hegemony of Spain in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries with its colonial expansion into the New World and the coronation of Carlos V as Holy Roman Emperor.⁵ In this way, Garcilaso represented for the young “*garcilasista*” poets—including Jose García Nieto, Luis Rosales, Luis Felipe Vivanco, and

⁴ The sovereignty implied in *libre* no doubt the economic and cultural isolationism that choked an already impoverished Spain throughout the early years of the dictatorship; the *grande* also is associated with the failed imperial territory grab in Morocco.

⁵ For a discussion of Garcilaso’s legacy as a “poet of empire,” which began immediately after his death, see Isabel Torres 2003.

Salvador Pérez among others—a primordially Spanish poet whose activation could heal the wounds of the aesthetic and spiritual decadence that had divided Spain and led to the Civil War. Whereas the experimentalism of the preceding *Generación del '27* was inaugurated under the sign of the baroque poetry of Luis de Góngora, Garcilaso's neoclassical, Renaissance, and “wholly” Spanish style inspired a contrast that might unify the fragmentation of the earlier generation's aesthetic excess. As the quatercentenary of Garcilaso's “heroic” military death coincided with the start of the Civil War and the rise of Spanish fascism in 1936, he became a timely as well as apt figure for the *garcilasistas* hoping to establish their identity as “uniquely” [*única*] Spanish poets embodying a singular [*una*] pro-regime aesthetic.

Though Garcilaso suited nationalist, fascist ends in effective ways, the return to his legacy demonstrates the nuances of archaism that I have set forth; that is, we find a critical rewriting and transformation of Garcilaso alongside a return to the “cultish” repetition of poetic forms associated with overly traditional and nationalist forms. While works like the heroic war sonnets written by Franco's first minister of propaganda, the poet Dionisio Ridruejo, were empty, politically driven imaginations of the programmatic “unity, greatness, and freedom” of Spain, the *garcilasistas* demonstrated a highly refined aesthetics that has often been overlooked in critical commentaries. Because these poets supported Franco's fascist regime, the left-leaning critics of post-Franco Spain (see Introduction) would have had little reason to discuss their poetry.⁶ Part of this chapter, then, is reexamining what has been marginalized as fascist archaism, demonstrating that despite the conservative politics of these writers, they embody a self-reflective and critical consciousness that gives their poetry a subtle but nuanced aesthetic depth and contemporary political relevance.

⁶ Though pro-regime fascists in the immediate postwar, most of these poets would become disillusioned with the Regime by the end of the decade. This change in politics of Dionisio Ridruejo, who went from being Franco's first minister of propaganda to anti-Franco communist in the Spain of a decade, has been addressed by numerous critics, see for example Gracia 2006 and Tatjana 2012. Luis Rosales' disillusionment with the regime is also discussed in Wahnón 1998.

In the epigram to this chapter, Luis Rosales—the most prominent theoretician of *garcilasismo*—demonstrates an awareness of the complexity of an return an archaic aesthetic ideal: “Tras de la norma la inquietud, tras la inquietud la norma; ésta es la ley que da fertilidad y permanencia a la cultura” [Behind the norm, anxiety; behind anxiety, the norm: this is the law that gives fertility and permanence to culture]. Rosales argues that what gives rise to the “fertility and permanence” of culture is not so much an ideal *norma*—in this case the thematic and formal constraints of Garcilaso’s poetry; rather, it is the interplay between a norm and the various *inquietudes* [Spanish: anxieties, concerns] that a given norm attempts to regulate—here, the multiplicitous, excessive, and heterogeneous forms of liberal and decadent poetry. This play between *normas* and *inquietudes* shows Rosales’ awareness that the return to the repetitive forms of a norm necessarily effects various transformations and changes that give rise to lasting, meaningful aesthetic production. One might think of this in terms of the interplay between an arborescent system and a rhizome: behind the imposed binary of a norm (i.e. either appropriately traditional or aberrantly decadent) lies the real “connection and heterogeneity” of its various shifting components, which allow for lines of flight that produce change, and rupture. Following Rosales’ very modern, deconstructive formulation, I demonstrate in this chapter that the numerous *inquietudes* underlying the return to a classic aesthetic produced a very “fertile” field of Spanish poetics in the years leading up to the Civil War and through the early years of Francoism.

Though stipulated as a “law” by Rosales, the interplay between the *normas* and *inquietudes* involving Garcilaso is particularly productive, since behind his status as the ideal “light of our nation”—a well-known epithet given by Ambrosio Morales (1513-1591) (Torres 35)—lies a complex rhizome of political and aesthetic discourses that will come into play in the formation and poetics of the *garcilasistas*. Since Garcilaso was an educated courtly poet of the Renaissance, his poetry is steeped in Neoplatonist philosophy, Greek and Roman classic poets, and the complex Renaissance verse of Petrarch. Furthermore, modern scholars have identified

that Garcilaso often rewrites these various traditions as a means to express his own personal doubts toward the idealism of imperial politics and its violence. One key example of this is the much-discussed sonnet *A Boscán desde La Goleta* in which, as I mentioned in the introduction, Garcilaso makes a sudden turn away from the collective violence of empire in favor of rebellious personal sentiment. Though pro-Franco fascists at the time, the garcilasista poets nevertheless effect similar kinds of rewritings and transformations of classical texts—those of Garcilaso himself—that express their own subtle anxieties toward the nationalist ideals of a Francoist Spain and its pretensions as nation “Una, Grande, y Libre.”

In order to understand the historical developments that gave rise and contributed to formation of *garcilasismo*, my analysis begins with Garcilaso’s quatercentenary in 1936, which inspired a great deal of interest in his poetry right before the Civil War. In this year both liberal poets like Rosa Chacel, Germán Bleiberg, and Miguel Hernández as well as conservative ones like Dionisio Ridruejo and Luis Rosales, paid homage to Garcilaso with various elegies and books dedicated to the themes and forms he popularized.⁷ Celebrating and paying tribute to historical poets was a common practice within Spain, especially with the recent impact of the celebration of Góngora in 1927. While most of the left-leaning, republic-supporting poets were either killed or forced in to exile following the war, the conservative poets continued to pay homage Garcilaso in the postwar. They first published in fascist Falangist magazines such as *El Escorial* (1940-1950) and *Cuadernos culturales* (1940-1944), both of which were dedicated to various conservative themes. *Cuadernos culturales* represented the “integrista” movement, publishing more populist literary works that supposedly utilized “integrally” (“wholly”) Spanish

⁷ Poets typically associated with liberal politics that released books of sonnets (or primarily) sonnets during this time include Rosa Chacel (? 1935-6), Gerardo Diego (*Alondra de la verdad* 1936), Miguel Hernández (*El rayo que no cesa*, 1935), and Jorge Guillén (1935 additions to *Cántico*, Guillén’s ever-expanding single book of poetry). Lorca also composed his *Sonetos de amor oscuro* in 1935-36, though they would not be published in Spain until 1983. Other more conservative poets, several of whom would become important *garcilasistas*—Luis Rosales, José García Nieto, Luis Felipe Vivanco and others—likewise published various homages and volumes dedicated to the neoclassicism of Garcilaso.

themes. *El Escorial* was a Falangist run magazine that published more intellectual and critical content—usually with a focus on Spanish culture and Catholicism—as well as occasional poetry. *El Escorial* also republished a Luis Rosales’ 1936, *Figuración y la voluntad de morir en la poesía española*, an essay we will examine later from as it is one of the theoretical foundations of the *garcilasista* movement.

A few years into the publication of *El Escorial*, a Madrid-based *tertulia* consisting of young conservative poets with a particular interest in Garcilaso, established *Garcilaso: Juventud Creadora*, the flagship magazine of the *garcilasismo* movement. Though not offering an overt statement of propagandistic support for the regime, the editorial write-ups of the first several issues, written by Juan Aparicio, make a clear point to establish Garcilaso as a both moral exemplar and as a precursor to the military values Francoist fascism. The write-up in the first issue clearly establishes the magazine’s aesthetics rooted in Garcilaso and the military authority of the new regime:

En el cuarto centenario de su muerte (1536) ha comenzado de nuevo la hegemonía literaria de Garcilaso. Murió militarmente como ha comenzado nuestra presencia creadora. [...] Bautizado con su nombre, aparece hoy esta revista, bajo la influencia estelar de su vida, su verbo, y su ejemplo. [...]

[...] Como el Greco contrastó a los hombres del 98, creemos y queremos que sea Garcilaso quien signe el pensamiento de los que podrían encuadrarnos bajo las cifras decisivas de 1936.⁸

On the fourth centenary of his death (1536) the new literary hegemony of Garcilaso has begun. He died militarily as our creative presence was born. [...] Baptized with his name, under the influence of his life, his word, and his example. [...]

[...] As El Greco confirmed the men of [the generation of] ’98, we believe and we want that Garcilaso is he who marks [signs] the thought that of those place us under the decisive year [literally “numeric figures”] of 1936.

⁸ As *Garcilaso: Juventud Creadora* did not have numbered pages, I will list the only the issue number in my citations of the magazine.

Though indirect, the rise of Franco's regime is evoked twice in these lines, reinforcing the military birth of their movement and the decisiveness of the year 1936 for Spanish culture.

Like the other conservative magazines of the time, *Garcilaso*'s primary editor, Jose García Nieto—who permanently took over editorship after the first three issues—imposed formal and thematic constraints based on the poetry of Garcilaso (de Luis, xi). As a counteraction, the generation of young left-leaning, counter-regime poets largely rejected the formal tenets of the fascist magazines, a subtle protest against the nationalism implied in the return to the traditional forms of Garcilaso de la Vega. Instead, the more left-wing poets advanced various forms of neo-romantic, realist types of poetry, often citing a vague “poetic freedom” as the rationale behind the rejection of formalism.⁹ As they saw the idealizing and harmonious pretensions of *garcilasismo* as an evasion of the harsh social reality of postwar Spain, they wrote largely on the day-to-day difficulties of the Spanish populace. This initial reaction against the traditionalism of pro-regime poetry was an important precursor to the *poesía social* [social poetry] of the late 1940s and 1950s, as well as to the *poesía de la comunicación* [poetry of communication] and the *poesía del conocimiento* [poetry of knowledge] of the 1960s, all of which had more leftist aims of making poetry more accessible to broader, popular audiences. For this tendency against intellectualism, the more experimental poetry of the postwar that I will examine in Chapters 3 and 4 chapters deviated from the more radical left that was founded upon this rejection of tradition under the rationale of rejecting Francoism and reaching a popular audience.

These two poetic trends in the postwar—one fascist and “neoclassical” and the other liberal and “social”—would give rise to Dámaso Alonso's influential distinction between *poesía arriagada* (“rooted poetry”) and *poesía desarraigada* (“uprooted poetry”), the former tending

⁹ Like the conservative poetry it reacted against, much of the left-leaning poetry of the postwar centered on various magazines published in parts of Spain removed from the capital, such as *Proel* (Santander 1944-1950), *Espadaña* (León 1944-1951), *Corcel* (Valencia, 1946-1949), *Cántico* (Córdoba 1947-1957).

toward traditional forms and conservative politics, the latter toward free verse and counter-regime sentiment.¹⁰ This distinction would have a lasting effect on the way poetry of this era has been viewed, and for many historians and critics, it is still generally employed as a means to discuss the tendencies of the postwar.¹¹ While I agree that Alonso's classification is partially justified since so much of the so-called *poesía desarraigada* originated as a reaction to what they perceived as the traditionalism of the poets associated with the *Garcilaso* magazine, one aim of this chapter is to challenge the simplicity of such a binary. I do this by showing that the "rooted poetry" does not form such a neatly "arborescent" system of roots, in the Deleuze & Guattari sense, by which the themes and forms of *Garcilaso* predetermine all of the modern "offshoots." Rather, as we subtract out the determination of *Garcilaso* as a simple, harmonious poet embodying imperial values, we will find that the uses of his legacy in the twentieth century, even by the conservative postwar poets, form a complex system—a rhizome, even—that subverts and rewrites Spanish tradition rather than univocally affirming it. In this way, we will see that the "rooted poetry," just as much as "uprooted poetry," results in an intricate aesthetic demonstrating the complex relation of Spain's archaic discourses to the poetry of the postwar.

Examining the rise of *garcilasismo* and its complicated rhizome of aesthetic forms and postwar politics, I take a perspective that moves *through* the Civil War, which has the advantage of tracing out how certain trends actually continue into the Franco era, including the experimental tendencies of the so-called *Generación del '27* that supposedly died out with the start of the Civil

¹⁰ See "Poesía arraigada y poesía desarraigada" in Alonso's *Poetas contemporáneos españoles* (1969) Dámaso Alonso not only became known as one of the original, canonical members of the *Generación del '27* for his poetic contributions, but also gained wide-acclaim, especially after the Civil War, for his scholarly contributions to the study of Golden Age poetry, especially that of San Juan de la Cruz and Luis de Góngora.

¹¹ The distinction is used without questioning for example in Valero's *Poesía y poetas bajo el franquismo* (2016), Carnero *El grupo Cántico de Córdoba* (2009), Gracia's *Estado y cultura* (2006) Gracia and Ródena's *Historia de la literatura española 7 (1939-2010)* (2011), Navas Ocaña's *Vanguardias y crítica literaria en los años cuarenta*, and Carnavaggio's *Historia de la literatura española* (1994).

War and the death of Lorca in 1936.¹² For this reason I have dated this chapter from 1936 until 1953, that is, from the start of the Spanish Civil War and the beginning of renewed interest in the poetics of Garcilaso de la Vega in 1936, through the isolationist politics of early Francoism, ending roughly in 1953, the year of the signing of the Pact of Madrid. This pact was primarily a military agreement with the United States leading to the use and construction of several air and naval bases in Spain, but also coincided with efforts to boost Spanish economy by opening its borders to European tourism, thus marking the beginning of the end of Spain's isolation that effectively began with the outbreak of the Civil War.

In what follows I trace Garcilaso's role in the development of Spanish poetry through the Civil War and in the early, most authoritarian stages of Francoism.¹³ As we examine *garcilasismo* and its precedents in the pre-war period, we see how the "norm" of Garcilaso gave rise a number of poetic *inquietudes* that reflect both the political and aesthetic anxieties of the time, such as the possibilities of a harmonious aesthetics in a Spain still divided by the aftermath Civil War. I begin with a discussion of Garcilaso's poetry and life as a means to demonstrate how and why this Golden Age poet became such an important nationalist figure in the years marked by Francoism. This discussion of Garcilaso's legacy will also us give a chance to develop two key subcomponents of archaism that we mentioned in the introduction, tradition and primordialism. These relate importantly to Garcilaso's legacy, since on one hand this will be taken as the most authentically Spanish poetic tradition by the *garcilasistas*, and on the other since much of

¹² I write "the so-called *Generación del '27*" since the very idea of a literary generation has become heavily criticized in the last few decades, largely on the grounds that it is an outdated literary model that built upon arbitrary conditions of proximity of writers' births, birthplaces, and style. Furthermore critics have noted that it tends to be androcentric and nationalistic. For further reading see R. Gullón (1969), I. Fox (1990), A Anderson (2005), and C. Soufas (2007).

¹³ To my knowledge, this will be the first direct discussion of this time period for Anglophone readers. While there have been numerous studies within Spain, it is still a relatively unexplored area, with only a few select works from the time period attaining widespread recognition such as Dámaso Alonso's *Los hijos de la ira* and Vicente Aleixandre's *Sombra del paraíso*.

Garcilaso's "cultural capital" arises from his biography's relation to the rise of the Spanish political at the turn of the sixteenth century.

In the second half of the chapter I examine how Garcilaso's legacy motivated a great deal of poetic creation and aesthetic reflection beginning with his quatercentenary in 1936 and through the early years of Francoism. This includes reading an essay by Luis Rosales and an elegy by Miguel Hernández, both dedicated to the legacy of Garcilaso. In both of these works begin see a set of aesthetic and political issues—including violence, nature, and idealism—as they are taken from Garcilaso's poetry and reconfigure within the climate of Spain just before the Civil War. As we then move to the postwar era, we will see how the *garcilasistas* continue to develop these aesthetic and political issues in the context of a nation radically transformed by a the war and the rise of fascist authoritarianism. I focus here particularly on a poem from José García Nieto, editor of the *Garcilaso* magazine, since it demonstrates a subtle subversive criticism of the aesthetics of unity, questioning the dream of a Spain "Una, Grande, y Libre."

The Traditional Legacy of Garcilaso de la Vega

Tradition operates as a feature of archaism that establishes authenticity and traces out poetic lineages to be followed. Yet the boundaries it sets can then be questioned, crossed, and transformed in turn—as Rosales stipulated, behind every *norma* there is an *inquietud*. The construction and use of Garcilaso de la Vega as the root of a unified national expression meant to establish the aesthetics of a renovated Spain, "Una, Grande, y Libre"—that is, a Spain attempting to reduce the anxious multiplicities of its poetic tradition with the singularizing norm of a heroic poet. As I have mentioned, the use of Garcilaso in the establishment of a national poetics in line with Francoism was fraught with difficulties from the beginning, since the poetics of Garcilaso is a particularly unstable archē, given the influence of the Petrarchan poetics of fragmentation and

Neoplatonist philosophy. Nevertheless, there exist important historical interpretations and uses of Garcilaso that led to his becoming a centerpiece for the national tradition and the postwar rise of the pro-regime *garcilasista* movement.

Recalling again for a moment the *Proclama futurista a los españoles*, Marinetti's charge against the Spaniards of *arcaísmo*, with its specific reference to the institutions of power such as the Catholic Church and the royal family, reacts against the negative (conservative) value of tradition in terms of both aesthetics and politics. In both cases, Marinetti's sense of *arcaísmo* implies subservience and lack of change. Aesthetically this meant repeating and reinforcing defunct patterns, violating of the modernist ethos of novelty expressed succinctly by poets like Charles Baudelaire—"Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe ? / Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau !" [Heaven or hell, what does it matter? / To the bottom of the unknown to find the new!]"—and, more succinctly, Ezra Pound: "Make it new!" Politically, this meant the continued dominance of elites who abused their powers to subjugate lower social classes, particularly visible in Spain where a de facto feudal system lasted well into the nineteenth century and where popular allegiance to the ruling class and to the Catholic Church consistently hindered the establishment of a lasting modern democratic government.

In the case of Garcilaso (the historical figure) and *garcilasismo* (the poetic movement), aesthetics and politics complexly interrelate, since one of the central "legends" of Garcilaso's legacy was his supposed success at harmonizing the contraries of "arms and letters," a dualism that had become a common place by the High Middle Ages.¹⁴ In Golden Age Spain this meant harmonizing classical Imperial Spanish values—masculinity and loyalty to the crown—with aesthetic vocation—mastery of the Western poetic tradition inherited Rome and Greece. Though Isabel Torres (2013) has recently shown that Garcilaso's poetry actually tends to complicate

¹⁴ See Anne J. Cruz (2002) for a discussion of the persistence of the "arms versus letters" trope from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance.

rather than resolve the battle between arms and letters, Garcilaso's "heroic" death from injuries sustained during a battle in Le Muy, France and his excellence as a poet have not surprisingly been used to justify this synthesis from the time of the poet's death. Even the earliest commentators such as Fernando de Herrera and Nebrija (both contemporaries of the poet) hoped that Garcilaso's poetic virtuosity could help establish the Spanish language as an imperial *lingua franca*, just as Virgil's poetry did so for Rome.¹⁵ Though accurate to a certain extent, Garcilaso's own reflection on his dual vocation "Tomando ora la espada, ora la pluma" ("Taking now the sword, now the pen")—a well known and often-cited line from his first eclogue—will distort for centuries a balance that critics now agree he never attained.

The historical importance of this synthesis between politics and aesthetics can be understood in Garcilaso's poetry and its cultural contexts by examining the two related Renaissance concepts of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, the transfer of knowledge or culture and the transfer of imperial command from one ruler to the next. *Translatio studii* implies the maintenance of aesthetic unity through tradition in which poets in new ages and geographical areas incorporate "the knowledge of the ancients" through the use of classical models; though new poetry is created, its themes, styles, and forms imitate previous models forming a sense of coherence with the past.¹⁶ In the case of Garcilaso, his use and advocacy of the hendecasyllabic line and the sonnet were particularly important inasmuch as they were Italianate forms, which had travelled in the providential direction of the sun from Greece, to Italy, and finally to Spain.¹⁷ Though curiously the poetic form most associated with empire, the epic, would not play a major role in the formation of the new empire's aesthetic formation—as it did for example Virgil's

¹⁵ See Helgerson 1982, Chapter 1

¹⁶ For a discussion of *translatio imperii et studii*, see for example Kimberly Bell's (2008) article discussing the use of the trope by Virgil, or Cary Nederman's *Lineages of European Thought* (2009), especially Chapter 11, "*Translatio Imperii: Medieval and Modern.*"

¹⁷ Though the Petrarch sonnet had existed since (Quilis 84), it had not attained acceptance in the courtly class until its by Garcilaso as well as by his close friend Juan de Boscán, who was encouraged by to use such forms by Garcilaso himself.

Aeneid within the Roman Empire—through the efforts of Garcilaso, the transfer of Italianate forms nevertheless carried significant the aesthetic weight of the one great classical empires of the East.

Translatio studii typically is discussed in conjunction with *translatio imperii*, the unifying and unbroken transition of political authority (Nederman 177). At the nexus of these two movements, Garcilaso stands at a particular historical position as the first major poet of the newly renovated Holy Roman Empire following Carlos V's coronation by Pope Clement VII in 1519. These factors—as well as the supposed moral value of Garcilaso's poetry, which we will explore shortly—contributed to Garcilaso becoming known as “the emperor's poet” and the “luz muy esclerecida de nuestra nación,” the “most brilliant light of our nation” that harmoniously embodied Spain's military and cultural imperial endeavors (Torres 2013, 35-6). Spain's expansion into the New World in 1492 as well as the official establishment of the Spanish vernacular with the publication of Nebrija's *Gramática castellana* the same year likewise marked two important *translationes* very present in Spanish culture at the time of Garcilaso's rise to poetic fame.

The concern for the establishment and valorization of the Spanish language also has echoes in the rise of modern Spanish fascism, notably in the propagandistic work of the fascist thinker Ernesto Giménez Caballero's *Arte y Estado* from 1935. In this work Giménez Caballero encourages art that fits the norms of the state while rejecting what he believed was the romantic, selfish individualism of modern art. While Ortega y Gasset in his famous 1925 essay “La deshumanización del arte” [“The Dehumanization of Art”] argued that a key characteristic of modern art was its polemic and anti-popular character, Giménez Caballero saw this divisive quality as a cultural plight that should be overcome in order to recover a popular, nationalist aesthetics. As a means to demonstrate the force of a unified culture, Giménez Caballero defends the grandeur of the Spanish language by recounting an anecdote of the newly crowned Holy

Roman Emperor Carlos V, claiming that he spoke Spanish to the pope in Rome, a sign that the transfer of knowledge (through language) never lags far behind the transfer of imperial power. *Arte y Estado*, along with others by Caballero such as *El genio español*—demonstrate the importance of a unified language and a unified cultural tradition in inspiring the extreme nationalism that would contribute to the start of the Civil War and persist throughout the Franco Era.

The Subversive Legacy of Garcilaso de la Vega

While Giménez Caballero celebrates the dubious episode of Carlos V speaking Spanish to the pope, his ideal for art reaches back past the era of Garcilaso to the anonymous medieval troubadours, composers of the *romances* (popular ballads) and the epic *El Cantar del mio Cid*. For Caballero Giménez, the Renaissance poetry of Boscán and Garcilaso was too intellectual to foment the kind of populist revolution envisioned within his fascist ideology. To a certain extent his preference for medieval poetry makes a great deal of sense since the intellectual, complex nature of Garcilaso's Renaissance verse, when examined carefully, does indeed complicate and even undermine the values attributed to it in the name of Spanish nationalism. Thus behind these historical uses of Garcilaso in the name of unity, we see a contrary motion; that is, the tensions and multiplicities always present beneath political and aesthetic efforts to normalize and unify.

The sense of a multiplicity latent within the process of conserving documents stands out as one of the most surprising consequences of Derrida's deconstruction of the term *archē*: although an archive is established as that which constructs order, and hence consolidates authority through a written record, this attention to the record itself always threatens to expose the

arbitrariness and artificiality of its construction.¹⁸ For example, we will examine shortly one of the primary texts involved in the formation of *Garcilasismo*, an essay by poet and critic Luis Rosales, that advocates a rather ambiguous position, simultaneously placing Garcilaso at the center of the Spanish poetic tradition while also proclaiming the impossibility of returning to Renaissance poetics due to the decadent force of history. T.S. Eliot assumes a similar position on the multiplicitous potential of tradition in the already-mentioned essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, in which he argues that the writing of any text *reorders*, even if ever slightly, the organization and hierarchy supposed by that text, thus making it essentially impossible to sustain the integrity of the canon through allusion or rewriting. The presence of a new, individual voice subverts the order of the original text in a polyphonic game.

An example of the awareness of this ambivalent nature of traditional unity within the Spanish context comes from Juan Eduardo Cirlot's *Diccionario de símbolos*, wherein he notes that the great traditional symbols of unity—the Chinese *pi*, the Hindu Wheel of Transformation, the Holy Grail—are all coupled by an inverse movement away from the center that represents the creation of the physical world (Cirlot xl). In other words, any movement that consolidates around a center (or an *archē*) will always be coupled by an outward, fragmenting tension that disrupts the very notion of centrality. Such an idea is also expressed in the epigram we have borrowed from Luis Rosales: “Tras de la norma la inquietud, tras la inquietud la norma” [“Behind the norm, anxiety; behind anxiety, the norm”]. While such an express, conscious understanding of this double movement may not have been formulated in the Spanish tradition until the mid-nineteenth century—and perhaps never as directly as in Eliot or Derrida's critical writings—this paradoxical sense of moving outward through moving inward has been characteristic of the Spanish poetic tradition since at least the Spanish Renaissance, particularly in the poetry of Garcilaso de la Vega

¹⁸ Maybe footnote here about how for Derrida this is very Freudian via the “death drive,” but this makes sense without psychoanalysis because it has to do with simply re-examining “evidence.”

and the particular ways in which he altered classical models, making the trope of *translatio studii* highly unstable, which, as we will see, results in a great skepticism toward the unifying movement of *translatio imperii*.

In what Mary Barnard terms a “poetics of subversion,” Garcilaso demonstrates his skill by outdoing earlier models in terms of emotional expressiveness, descriptive precision, rhetorical concision, etc. (see for example Barnard 1987, 316-7 where she discusses Garcilaso’s rewriting of Ovid’s version of the Orpheus myth in the third eclogue). Here we observe again the political and aesthetic movements that arise from returning to a potentially obsolete past: while risking the concretization of canonical texts that work toward elitist, learned versions of literary understanding—and which reinforce the tradition of Roman imperialism—an opportunity for a poetics of textual multiplicity opens up as the contemporary poet places his or her own work alongside those that came before. Rather than Giménez Caballero’s ideal of the troubadour who serves only as a conduit through which the “spirit of national poetry” passes, Garcilaso’s poetics of fragmentation and subversion highlights the subjectivity of the individual poet as he carefully demonstrates how and why he rewrites certain texts.

One key example of Garcilaso’s subversion of imperial poetics that occurs through the rewriting of classical texts is Sonnet XXXIII, also known as “A Boscán desde la Goleta” [“To Boscán to the Goleta”]. While historically not one of Garcilaso’s most celebrated poems (García Rodríguez 151-2), numerous modern critics such as Richard Helgerson (1982), José María García Rodríguez (1998) and Isabel Torres (2013) have pointed out that Garcilaso’s rich use of intertexts undermines the initial epic tone. This happens as the poem begins with language replicating the opening line of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, celebrating a bellicose force. Yet, in the poem’s last stanza, the poetic voice abruptly shifts away from this collective, imperial tone to a personal, and romantic one, identifying with Carthaginian queen Dido in a defiant self-sacrifice.

Boscán, las armas y el furor de Marte,
que con su propia fuerza el africano
suelo regando, hacen que el romano
imperio reverdezca en esta parte,

han reducido a la memoria del arte
y el antiguo valor italiano,
por cuya fuerza y valerosa mano
África se aterró de parte a parte.

Aquí donde el romano encendimiento,
donde el fuego y la llama licenciosa
sólo el nombre dejaron a Cartago,

vuelve y revuelve amor mi pensamiento,
hiere y enciende el alma temerosa,
y en llanto y en ceniza me deshago. (Garcilaso 238)

[Boscán, the arms and furor of Mars,
that watered with their own force the African
soil, are making the Roman Empire
flourish once again in these parts,

they have reduced to the memory
of art and of ancient Italian valor,
by whose force and valorous hand
terrorized Africa part by part.

Here where the Roman conflagration,
where the fire and licentious flame
left to Carthage only its name,

love turns and stirs my thought,
wounds and ignites my fearful soul,
and in lament and ash I destroy myself.]¹⁹

The dedicatory subtitle of the poem situates us in La Goleta, a Tunisian fortress that had just been retaken from the Ottoman Empire by the forces of Carlos V. Garcilaso participated in the battle, and biographers and critics note that it is quite likely that the poem was indeed written in Tunisia during his stay (Helgeron 9). The sonnet's first three stanzas establish an epic, imperial

¹⁹ All translations of poetry in this chapter are my own.

tone, by which Spain is written into the Roman tradition for its imperial conquest of Carthage in 146 B.C.E.; Garcilaso's deliberate marking of the geographical coincidence of Tunis and Carthage and of the historical coincidence of the site's conquest by the Roman and Holy Roman Empires suggests the *translatio imperii* from Ancient Rome to Spain. The opening lines imitating the *Aeneid* demonstrate the role that *translatio studii* takes in the recording this *translatio imperii*: the aesthetic transfer alludes to a neat, unifying transition from the ancient times of Virgil to the contemporary moment of Garcilaso and the conquest of Tunis. The language of the poem's opening, suggestive of epic conquest, remains consistent through the first quartets and the first tercet, yet in the final stanza, the fragmentation of rewriting and the negating potential of the lyric interrupts with a personal, self-afflicting violence that challenges and the imperial violence suggested in what comes before.

This reversal happens as love interrupts at the beginning of the last tercet ("love turns and stirs my thought"), a personal sentiment that will disrupt the collective and virile force implied in the preceding epic-toned language. This volta, the turn in tone at the end of a sonnet, cleverly involves two forms of turning itself (*volver*, to turn; and *revolver* to stir); furthermore the volta appears at the beginning of the fourth stanza, dramatically suspending its traditional placement at the beginning of the third stanza according to Petrarchan tradition. This hesitating intrusion of personal sentiment upon the language of empire and collective conquest stands out to even more sharply since it occurs midsentence, interrupting the celebration of Carthage burned to the ground. Although this "becoming-personal" of the poem at first may seem an arbitrary and abrupt interruption upon the epic thought of the destruction of Carthage, Garcilaso demonstrates his skill as a poet by setting up the "turnings" of the poem in two important ways. The first way the volta is prefigured comes in the very first word of the poem, "Boscán," the epistolary address to a friend—a subtle yet highly personal move that entails an important consequence for the rest of the poem. Garcilaso encloses the sonnet within a contemporary framework, contrasting the *illud*

tempore (“in those times”) of primordial time suited to epic discourse, a time which the muses reveal to the poet in a state of divine inspiration. As a result, the legendary heroism of imperial conquest is reduced from the outset to an intimate communication between two friends—even if this correspondence is obscured by the epic language that follows.

Beyond this personal framing that prefigures the reversal of the poem’s lyrical end, García Rodríguez discusses how the use of the Virgilian intertext also foreshadows the final sentimental turn. García Rodríguez notes that while the movement of the *Aeneid* is a *translatio imperii* from Carthage to Rome, the poetic voice of Garcilaso’s sonnet moves “from the West to Africa, where it stays, and sings its own destruction” (158). This movement away from the center alludes to the common symbolic scheme of disrupting unity that we have mentioned from Cirlot’s *Diccionario de símbolos*: a center (Rome) and a marginal/liminal space of transformation (Carthage). Furthermore this transformation moves from masculine to feminine: whereas the poem begins with Garcilaso’s own voice singing the virile imperial conquest of Holy Roman Empire, the poem ends with an intimate identification with Dido’s tragic suicide, thus complicating the celebration of Garcilaso as a quintessentially masculine poet.²⁰

In short, the turn toward personal sentiment disrupts the collective thinking implied by the epic. Yet despite this breach in epic form, it is critical to note that the *archē* of the epic—i.e. the epic as a primordial origin of both poetry and Western society—is not simply ignored, but rather called forth to show that it was never whole or unified to begin with. Isabel Torres notes that the most emotive and memorable scene from the great Roman epic is the self-sacrifice for love of the enemy queen, making Garcilaso’s identification with the perspective of a female character not an upheaval of the *Aeneid* or an iconoclastic gesture against it. Rather, Garcilaso’s turn toward Dido gives attention to and brings forth a latent subversive quality inherent in the text

²⁰ For a discussion of the importance of “masculine virtue” and imperial aesthetics see David Quint *Epic and Empire* (1993)

from its inception. Though modern scholarship can recognize how Garcilaso's intertexts undoes the epic impulse that at first seems to control the sonnet, such a reading nevertheless involves a great deal of learnedness, historical distance, and knowledge of academic allusions to specific lines from an ancient epic written in Latin.

This contradiction signals the key problematic of traditional forms with which we started. While Eliot notes that any text "simultaneously reorders" the canonical discourse, even if in a very small way, Garcilaso's sonnet points to a contradiction in classic epic form: though Virgil's epic meant to establish the collective imperial grandeur of Rome through *translatio imperii et studii*, the work's dramatic highlight comes as a woman destroys herself for an unrequited love in the distant space of Carthage. Garcilaso's poem can only expose this fissure in the discourse of the epic inasmuch as it deftly manages the orders (mandates) and orderings (sequences) of its historic forms. Opposed to the iconoclasm that proposes the destruction the archive, here is a personal move that highlights a fissure—a Derridean seam, so to speak—within the order of the originary epic. In the case of "A Boscán..." and its relations to the *Aeneid* the "death drive" of the archive is quite literal: a feminine death that undoes the ethically problematic call to life through epic splendor. Although such a reading of the sonnet made clear by a post-modern, deconstructionist approach that looks for ways that texts subvert their own meanings, yet it is important to note that Garcilaso's turn against epic sentiment in favor of love is a consciously created device in the poem that very deliberately turns upon the play of intertexts within the poem. In other words, Garcilaso is well aware of the subversive potential of reconfiguring classical texts in modern contexts.

As Garcilaso stands as both a foundational figure and as a poet who consciously subverts canonical texts, he demonstrates the contradictory nature of my concept of archaism in regards to tradition. While at once named as the basis for a set of forms, themes, and even morals, Garcilaso's nevertheless challenges the constitution of such norms, allowing for an array of

tensions—of love, of personal sentiment, of anti-imperial politics—to arise in opposition. Nevertheless, the success of Garcilaso as a poet and his celebration with the nationalist epithet as “light of our nation” show that double political movement within recourse to archaic discourses. By engaging with the discourse of epic and empire, Garcilaso, despite whatever intentions he may have had to express criticism toward the violence of imperial politics, nevertheless will be remembered for four centuries for his masculine valor and his loyalty to the crown in its military endeavors. As we now move on to discuss the other aspect of archaism I wish develop in this chapter, primordialism, we will find a similar double movement as primordialism both forms a part of modernist subversions of contemporary political and social constructs, yet also plays a key role in fascist aesthetics and rhetoric.

Primordialism, Modernism, and Palingenesis

For a number of thinkers—such as David Harvey, Roger Griffin, Frank Kermode, Peter Berger, and others—a key component of modernism is the desire to seek cultural renewal, especially in the face of Enlightenment values of progress that continued to be questioned in the wake of WWI. One of the most common ways to imagine this renewal in modernist art is through a pre-historical, or extra-historical, mythological space—an trope that I will refer to as “the primordial” or “primordialism.” Whereas the traditional component of archaism generally relies on a textually constructed tradition, my notion of the primordial here is a more general *mythos* existing as much within popular imagination than within a particular text, as is the case with something like the notion of a pure German *Volk* or a homogenous Catholic Spanish identity. While the Spanish avant-garde may be partially unique in its reluctance to throw out its poetic tradition *en masse* as the futurist and surrealist movements suggested in their rhetoric, this sense for renewal through a kind of primordialism—which we can describe following Peter Griffin

(2010) and Antliff (2015) as palingenesis, the reappearance of ancestral characteristics—stands as near universal part of modernism.²¹ For this reason the primordial aspect of archaism makes it both more complex and more comparative than our discussion of tradition.

In Griffin's 2009 study *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, he argues that a desire for a renewal of aesthetic value is one of the most universal modernist concerns, and that this renewal is constantly envisioned by recourse to a primordial time that is at once before history and transcends it completely. Griffin takes up Peter Berger's sense of man's need to create a "sacred canopy," a transcendental protection that gives meaning to life and protects against the fear of death (Griffin 74-77). The maintenance of this "canopy" became particularly important within modernism, as the dominant myth of Christianity continued to crumble following the atrocities of World War I as well as the increasing skepticism toward the Enlightenment morals of rationality and progress. Through art's elevation to a secular religion in romanticism, it became a new transcendent category that had the potential to create cohesion within the increasing fragmentation of modern life. Griffin cites several modern masterpieces that are all attempts at a complete renovation of art that are heavily based in a kind of primordial artistic consciousness: Joyce's *Ulysses*, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, Heidegger's *Being and Time*, etc.

Similar to the tradition component of archaism, this longing for transcendence through a primordial or temporally transcendent dimension entails as many problems as it does solutions. It is no coincidence, for example, that some of the most in-depth analyses of primordialism within modernism are also studies on fascism, such Griffin's and Antliff's works mentioned above. This is due to the idea that palingenetic renewal, according to these scholars, undergirds

²¹ Griffin even goes as far as to include the sense of palingenetic renewal as a key component of his definition of modernism: "MODERNISM: the generic term for a wide variety of countervailing palingenetic reactions to the anarchy and cultural decay allegedly resulting from the radical transformation of traditional institutions, social structures, and belief systems under the impact of Western modernization" (54).

the bulk of fascist rhetoric aimed at animating a nationalist, populist base. Using the notion of a primordial mythic time that has been distorted and effaced by the “terror of history”—Peter Berger’s term discussing the anxiety toward historical time from which gives recourse to originary mythological thinking—proto-fascist thinkers such as George Sorel and Georges Valois hypothesized that the masses could be moved to revolution once they understood that their lives were imbued with epic, transcendent meaning via a temporal coincidence with mythological time.²² Fascist dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler—and to a lesser extent Franco—would prove the efficacy of invoking such mythological constructions of what Antliff generally terms “qualitative time.”²³ This notion of qualitative time, largely appropriated from Bergson’s *Time and Freewill*, rejected the work-hour ideas of communism and capitalism, and instead imagined a system of temporal superimpositions by which a mythic, primordial time became reactivated, superimposed on top of the seemingly mundane time of modern life. This coordination of different temporal realities allowed access to the mythological, foundational time of primordality in everyday life, deepening both the meaning and aesthetics of existence.

Where the notion of primordialism becomes problematic and ambivalent is that the transcendent and primordial conceptions of time sought after to “repair” the shattered values of Western society are common to both modernist avant-gardes as well as fascist politics. This is one of the central observations in both Antliff’s and Griffin’s work: the aesthetic force of modernist literature cannot be neatly separated from the populist fascist myths of returning to an Edenic past. For example, surrealism is founded upon the idea that we must return to a primitive, primordial form of being evades the confining movements of rationalism; similarly, fascism is founded upon the idea of returning to the primordial, pure nature of an original *Volk* that has not

²² See Antliff 2015 Chapter 1, 2, and 3 for a discussion of these two thinkers role in the rise of proto-fascism.

²³ This subjective time, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3 (Cirlot) was meant to oppose the “objective” time of labor hours central to both communism and capitalism. Instead of reducing time to labor, fascism thought to over

been corrupted by the succession of history which has made modern man too rational, causing him to forget his transcendental mission within a mythopoeic time. In both surrealism and Nazism, for example, mankind must reestablish its correspondence with a primordial mode of thinking that imbues life with its purpose that has been destroyed by a post-Enlightenment, capitalist, rationalist society. Even Futurism, whose name naturally implies a forward movement and rejection of the past, cannot evade reference to myths of primordality. One of the key scenes in Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*, for example, is when the narrator, after being thrown from his car in an accident, arises out of a muddy ditch beside the road, symbolizing the emergence of man from primordial waters, a common creation myth: "O maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! [...]When I came up—torn, filthy, and stinking—from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!" (Marinetti 16).

Before moving on to discuss how Garcilaso became the "essence" of a traditional and primordial figure in modern Spanish poetry, it is worth saying a few words about the relationship between my notion of tradition and primordialism. For one, the two concepts cannot neatly be separated out from each other, since the sense of poetic tradition inherently involves a kind of originary force, while the aesthetic and political force of a primordial origin is often undergirded by a textual tradition. Due to this interconnectedness, the dynamic of between the two is better described by the term archaism. There would be no reason to have a tradition if what it transmitted was an trivial, accidental, succession within the "terror of history"—an event not from outside of the sacred canopy. Yet tradition here can stand apart from primordialism a heuristic sense, inasmuch as tradition implies textual allusion, rewriting, and recreating; in other words, by the sense given in Latin *archivum*, archive, written record. The affective mythos of the "primordial," in turn, is more difficult to reduce to a text: what, for example, is the textual basis for the existence of a "pure" German culture, or the "splendor" of Ancient Rome? Yet another way to describe the difference, would be to relate tradition more closely with the nature of

translatio studii, the transfer (across both time and space) of knowledge, whereas primordialism involves more affective and abstract notions of transcendence and mythopoeia. In this way, the existence and transmission of a strongly affective primordialism depends upon the more concrete, textually based mandates of tradition.

As we now turn to examine the uses of Garcilaso in the imagination of nationalist poetics both before and after the Civil War, we can begin to trace out the constantly shifting political and aesthetic ambiguities of archaism within Spanish poetic discourse. While the return to Garcilaso on his quatercentenary in 1936 began as a relatively neutral aesthetic practice, after the war, Garcilaso became a figurehead for the traditionalism and nationalism of Francoist aesthetics through the pro-regime *garcilasista* movement. Even as Garcilaso is deployed by poets like liberal poets Miguel Hernández before the war, and afterwards in the *garcilasista* verse of José García Nieto, he is in all cases recuperated archaically: on one hand in the sense that his mythopoeic, primordial, and originary force is imagined as a reinvigoration of the aesthetics of the present; and on the other hand in the double ideologically ambiguity of archaism where we find a slippage between the ideology cause and the aesthetic result of the work.

Garcilaso in the Twentieth Century

Unlike the *gongorismo* (from Luis de Góngora) of the so-called *Generación del '27*, which began in a relatively homogeneous fashion among like-minded poets mostly from the same geographical region (Andalusia, Góngora's birthplace), the heterogeneous interest in Garcilaso that arose on his quatercentenary in 1936 makes his reception in the twentieth century resistant to any simple analysis. The turn toward Garcilaso is further complicated given that even the conservative, nationalist version of *garcilasismo*—effectively the only version that would ever become theorized and made into a critical paradigm—was envisioned originally as decadent

movement, conscious of the impossibility of returning to the Golden Age primordial “splendor” of Garcilaso. While the flagship magazine of the conservative, post-war *garcilasista* movement, *Garcilaso: Juventud creadora* would not appear until 1943, we might date the origins of this nationalist *garcilasismo* to the 1936 publication of Luis Rosales’ essay “La figuración y la voluntad de morir en la poesía española” [“Figuration and the Will to Die in Spanish Poetry”] *Cruz y raya*—a “progressive Catholic” magazine which saw collaboration from some of the most important writers of the time, including Lorca, Luis Cernuda, and Miguel Hernández (Wahnón 1997, 22). Though critic Sultana Wahnón notes that Rosales was not a member of the fascist Falangist party at the time, it is not surprising, given the ideas in the essay regarding purity, unity, and the perceived decadence of modern Spanish culture, that Rosales would become a Falangist during the war and a regime-supporter in the immediate postwar. Rosales was not only one of the chief contributors of poetry for many of the pro-regime magazines in the post war (including the Falangist *El Escorial* and the Catholic nationalist *Cuadernos de cultura española*, in addition to *Garcilaso*), but he also wrote numerous critical essays, a factor that certainly contributed to Wahnón naming Rosales as the most the important theoretician of postwar *garcilasismo* (Wahnón 1997, 20). His essay *La figuración y voluntad de morir en la poesía española* stands out among these critical works as the most overt attempt to establish national poetic unity based on the figure of Garcilaso.

Wahnón argues that the essay’s praise of Garcilaso’s and its claim that the majority of subsequent Spanish poetry fell into decadence can only be read as a political move in favor of a “pure” Spanish poetics rooted in the imperial splendor of Golden Age Spain (Wahnón 1998, 73). While I agree that the essay is an attempt to consolidate a national poetics centered upon the figure of Garcilaso, the way that Rosales argues this is somewhat more nuanced, demonstrating an awareness that a return to Golden Age poetics is not only impossible but also not necessarily desirable. For Wahnón as well as María Isabel Navas Ocaña, Rosales’ argument is rather radical.

In their view, the essay dismisses all poetry that comes after Garcilaso as inauthentic, largely due to its lack of spontaneity and overly reflective intellectual nature. Instead, however, we will see that Rosales does not necessarily dismiss all of the poetry that comes later, but rather argues that Garcilaso represents a kind of perfect center, from which all subsequent Spanish poetry arises as decadent derivatives; even if these derivations are less pure, they are nevertheless authentic in their indexing of Garcilaso as the fundamental and foundational center. Despite this decadent and somewhat deconstructionist vision of the progression of a poetic tradition, I do agree with Wahnón that Rosales nevertheless does have a nationalist agenda: Garcilaso as a center point is the proof of a national tradition, which must be held in mind in order to maintain an authentic “Spanishness.” For Rosales, Garcilaso is the norm that gives rise to the multiple tensions that allow for the fertility of Spanish poetry, even if the subsequent derivations are necessarily decadent in nature. This is to say, somewhat paradoxically, that although Garcilaso is a root in Rosales’ thinking, what branches out from him is necessarily a deformation that betrays its origins.

In short, Rosales’ essay argues that the poetry of Garcilaso most purely embodies the essence of the Spanish spirit, while almost all subsequent poetry, including Golden Age canonical figures such as Francisco de Quevedo and Luis de Góngora, represents a self-reflective, decadent poetry. Though Rosales’ 34-page essay is complicated and evasive, perhaps the most direct formulation of the “downfall” of Spanish poetry since Garcilaso might be summarized by what Rosales poses as a general theory of literary decadence: “Todas las épocas decadentes son más reflexivas que espontáneas, y la obra de arte (esto no es nuevo) debe tener por igual espontaneidad y advertimiento” [“All decadent epochs are more reflexive than spontaneous, and the work of art (this is not new) should have equally spontaneity and caution/care...”] (72). In other words, Garcilaso was able to achieve a harmonious balance between a natural, spontaneous expression, and an intellectual, reflective awareness. Though not precisely about love and arms in

this case, Garcilaso again embodies the synthesis of contraries—inspiration and intellect—within a fundamental and special moment in time, that of Golden Age Spain. This synthesis and the time period in which it happens establishes an identity through a normalization; it is the moment of a *real* event that transcends time and that will give rise to the “accidental” history of Spanish poetry that will follow. Here we can see again the mutual dependence of the concepts of tradition and primordialism: the primordially of Garcilaso is what establishes the Spanish poetic tradition. We also see Rosales making an appeal to the past not as a return to origins, but as the most authentic means to create new poetry in tune with the present moment, even as this creation has the ideological aim of consolidating a nationalist modernity.

This argument for Garcilaso’s capacity to synthesize these two differences hinges upon Rosales’ rather vague concept of “el misterio,” “mystery,” which he suggests Garcilaso had mastered in his relative naiveté and which provided his poetry with its perfect harmony; later poets having read Garcilaso only saw this mystery as a “second order” phenomenon. Garcilaso was able to, in Rosales words, “Pesar y medir el milagro para encontrar su ley, para escuchar en la naturaleza la armonía del misterio [To weigh and measure the miracle in order to find its law, to hear in nature the mystery’s harmony]” (68). This contact with the “mystery” is contact with the other worldliness and the other “timeliness” of perfection, accessing a primordial mythological space by which a “true” Spanish poetics emerges from ideality into the succession of historical events. Whereas Garcilaso creates by directly measuring, or “metering” the mystery, subsequent poets futilely attempt to “reconstruct” this mystery by starting with a world what has already been seen and established: “el empeño inquietante de Lope, de Quevedo, de Góngora por organizar su poesía desde la realidad hacia el misterio y no desde el misterio hasta la realidad...” [“the anxious effort of Lope, of Quevedo, of Góngora to organize their poetry from reality toward the mystery and not from the mystery toward reality...”] (70). Gone is the naïve spontaneity of

authentic creation, replaced by an attempted recreates based not on true reality itself, but only its indexing in the poetry of Garcilaso.

This working “from reality,” leads to a hyper-aestheticization of poetry that Rosales generally calls “figuration,” bringing us back to the essay’s title: “*Figuración y la voluntad de morir en la poesía española.*” This figuration is related to the “will to die” inasmuch as the departure from the realer, quasi-mythological world of Garcilaso’s poetry guarantees the “becoming-death” of the Spanish tradition. In other words, attempts to reconstruct the grandeur of Garcilaso’s poetry through figuration is necessarily decadent, but this effort is also the sign that marks the specificity of the Spanish tradition. Rosales writes:

...la poesía sigue de un modo inexorable el *interno proceso de su desmembración*. La sustantivación de las formas se fundamenta siempre en *el peso de la tradición literaria* y obedece a una necesidad de enriquecimiento o de justificación. Un análisis minucioso de ella permitiría comprender cómo se extenuan, cómo van perdiendo lentamente su contenido todos los principios en que *se apoya nuestra poesía*. (98) [My emphasis]

[...in an inexorable fashion, poetry follows the *internal process of dismemberment*. The substantiation of forms is founded always in the *weight of literary tradition* and obeys a necessity of enrichment or of justification. A meticulous analysis of this [of literary tradition] would allow one to understand how it becomes extenuated, how all of the principles on which *our poetry* rests slowly lose their contents.] [My emphasis].

Although Rosales clearly demonstrates here his belief in a decline of Spanish poetry since Garcilaso, notice that he nevertheless argues that this forms the basis for a literary tradition, and in this case, specifically “*our poetry*,” the Spanish tradition. The sense the Spanish tradition is decaying, that it has fractured into multiplicity, is the reason why it forms a tradition: it “decays from” the center unity of Garcilaso. We will see in the next chapter on Lorca the importance of a Christian viewpoint within this plan: the dying of Christ is what makes the Christian tradition, a tradition aware that death is the fundamental part of life. This also demonstrates one of the main ideas I wish to express with my notion of archaism: returning to the tradition and the texts which

constitute does not necessarily involve a simple repetition, but rather brings forth the inevitable process of transformation; that is, what Derrida recognized as the inherent “death drive” implicit in the act of preserving and maintaining.

Once we realize that Rosales’ essay sets forth a complicated vision of how the decay of a tradition is actually that which constitutes a tradition, and not simply a dismissal of the Spanish poetic tradition since Garcilaso, *garcilasismo* becomes a nuanced aesthetic aware of its own limitations. On one hand, this complicates Dámaso Alonso’s classic distinction that the formally traditional poetry of the postwar is “rooted” poetry, that is, poetry with a clear link back to a stable origin. Even if Rosales does posit Garcilaso as an important “root” at the basis of Spanish poetry, the progression from this starting point is hardly “arborescent”—the kind of branching out that Deleuze & Guattari identify as negative and non-creative since new expressions are pre-determined by the linkage back to a stable center. Though Rosales does imagine Garcilaso as a center point, he argues that poetry “inexorably” deviates from these kinds of centers as a law of poetic inheritance. In other words, poetry may be “rooted” in tradition, but it does not necessarily pretend subservience to this tradition; there is an inherent openness in the system that allows for variation.

Rather than call for poetry that attempted to perfectly imitate classical norms, Rosales at the very end of the essay establishes an attitude toward tradition rather similar than the one proposed by Eliot in *Tradition in the Individual Talent*, which acknowledges that literary tradition cannot be mastered, but must be curated according to one’s intuition and abilities. I cite now the last few sentences of Rosales’ essay:

Los momentos de su [la tradición poética española] mayor o menos robustez se puede ir siguiendo en relación con los diversos elementos que sustantiva cada una de las diversas épocas, hasta llegar al completo agotamiento de todos sus elementos integradores. Esta radical vocación de pobreza del pensamiento humano y su ritmo angustioso, mimético,

desustanciado, no se altera jamás. Cada hombre en su puesto, atento al tránsito. Lección ésta de altísima enseñanza, que no podemos olvidar. (98)

[The moments of its {the Spanish poetic tradition} greater or lesser robustness can be followed in relation to the diverse elements that substantiate each of its diverse epochs, until arriving at the complete exhaustion of each one of its constitutive elements. This radical vocation of the poverty of human thought and its anxious, mimetic, enervated rhythm never changes. Each man at his post, attentive to the movement. This is a lesson of the highest teaching, which we cannot forget.]

While we will explore next chapter a similar vitality through death in Lorca's poetics—grounded in active Catholicism—there are at least two important points to be gleaned from these concluding remarks. Firstly, Rosales acknowledges that that one cannot maintain tradition, but it is still each poet's duty to be aware of the decay and passage of tradition. While on the eve of the Civil War in 1936, this essay would come to be seen as a rather radical position expressing that one must be subservient to tradition, Rosales' awareness that tradition cannot simply be repeated demonstrates a more ambiguous and ideologically open position. This complexity leads us to the second point, involving the sense of the supposed rootedness of this poetry: this is essentially highlighting the idea that the Garcilasista movement begins with a much more complex and nuanced position than has been recognized. In Rosales conception, rewriting becomes "figuration," which he reads as synonymous with the "will to die"—that is, with the sense of being unable to recreate (simply by studying the original texts) the intrusion of the "mythological" perfection of Garcilaso into the historical realm. Curiously, the recreations of this event are acknowledged as not being able to recuperate the past: it is an accidental, decayed succession, yet still bears the sign of an original. The mythological archē establishes the tradition, but does not precisely control its aesthetic and ideological ends in its modern manifestation

One concluding remark in regards to this essay is the awkwardness of putting forth such a decadent theory of poetry, poetics, and literary traditions as the basis of a nationalist literary tradition. On one hand, Garcilaso takes his place in the Petrarchan tradition of fragmentation,

reversal, and ambiguity; one recent critic, Elizabeth Amann (2013) even argues that Garcilaso surpasses Petrarch in terms of the confused polyphonic voicings within his poetry. Recovering a poetry of multiplicity for a nationalist political program of unity inevitably creates slippage between the complexity of the aesthetic and singularly of the ideological vision. On the other hand, even Rosales, a founder of the movement, seems to be aware of the problematic and decadent nature of this kind of poetics, and takes it as a model for all literature; a poetics of decline fits oddly with a nationalist agenda of renewal and reinvigoration. While Wahnón takes this as the origin the conservative politics of the *garcilasista* poets, it is rather quite an appropriate formulation for *garcilasismo* as whole, since it assumes that rewriting and deviating from an *archē*—in this case from Garcilaso—is an inevitable result of the passage of time. Each poet must be “attentive to the movement” of the decadences of history, and from that construct one’s own poetics in accordance with the times. In the remainder of the chapter I examine the poetry from this time period, demonstrating that even “liberal” uses of Garcilaso from poets like Miguel Hernández as well as the conservative *garcilasistas* all consciously manipulate decadence to various political ends in their poetry, even in ways that seem to compromise their ideological leanings.

Miguel Hernández’s Elegy to Garcilaso, “Égloga”

As critic Francisco Florit Durán notes, Miguel Hernández had a taste for eulogizing poets, both dead and alive: Lope de Vega, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, Vicente Aleixandre, Raúl González Tuñón, Pablo Neruda, etc. (198). In this sense, Miguel Hernández’s participation in the wave of *Garcilasismo* in 1936 did not represent a particularly surprising move, though it does show Hernández’s continued dedication to tradition, even though he would be later be memorialized as a forerunner of the social poetry movement that would be very hesitant to

engage directly in Spain's literary heritage in the postwar. Hernández also seemed to take a particular interest in Garcilaso, since in 1936, he published two neoclassical works in honor of the infamous poet-warrior. The first was a book of sonnets *El rayo que no cesa*, considered part of the turning point in Hernández's work, ending the phase of ideal love and moving toward the more political poetry that he would publish in the last part of his life.²⁴ The second work, the main focus of my discussion here, is the poem "Égloga," published separately just a month before the start of the Civil War in the June edition of José Ortega y Gasset's seminal magazine *Revista de Occidente*. Though titled "Égloga" ("Eclogue"), it is better defined in terms of genre as an elegy, dedicated to Garcilaso, the subject of the poem. To this end verses from Garcilaso's Sonnet XI are also cited as poem's epigram: "... o convertido en agua, aquí llorando, podréis allá despacio consolarme" ["or changed into water, here crying, you will there be able to slowly console me."]

As Florit Durán notes, the decision for calling the poem "Égloga" likely derives on the one hand as a means to pay homage to Garcilaso's celebrated eclogues, and on the other hand because of bucolic and pastoral images found within the poem, typical of the genre: water, trees, grass, bees, nymphs, wind, sun, shade, etc. (197).²⁵ While Juan Cano Ballesta remarks that the poem earned universal approval upon its publication (Ballesta 233), it is hardly one of the more celebrated poems of Hernández, appearing in few anthologies and infrequently discussed in the critical literature. Part of this is likely due to the fact that it was not included in one of Hernández's highly celebrated poetry books such as *El rayo que no cesa*, *Viento del pueblo*, and *El hombre acecha*; the outbreak of the Civil War just one month later would also obscure the work. Furthermore, due to the pro-regime appropriation of Garcilaso following the war, a poetic

²⁴ This particular analysis of the phases of Miguel Hernández's poetry is emphasized especially by critic Antonio García (1998), although the sense that *El Rayo que no cesa* marks a transition into more social, politically committed poetry seems to be a commonly held view for many years; see for example David Mayor Becerra & José Antón Fernández (2010), Francisco Florit Durán (1996), Margarita Hendrickson (1983) and Cano Ballesto (1962).

²⁵ See Appendix for the full poem and a translation into English.

eulogy would have contradicted the liberal, Republican legacy of Miguel Hernández that continues to this day.²⁶ Even as we will see that Hernández's poem is not overtly nationalist, the turn toward who Garcilaso who would become a figurehead for nationalist poetics nevertheless risks compromising the legacy of Hernández's leftist ideology.

The "Égloga" is noteworthy in terms of its relevance for my interest in archaism for several reasons. For one, it demonstrates the universality of Garcilaso before the war, being taken up by a poet who was already an active supporter of the Republic (Becerra Mayor and Antón Fernández, 13). Furthermore, the poem exemplifies very clearly a kind of experimentation "on" Garcilaso that we will see in the postwar *garcilasista* poets, demonstrating not only continuity on the subject through the Civil War, but also more continuity than one might expect between liberal and conservative poetics. This in turn highlights the ambivalent nature of poetics in Spain that make a return to the suspect figures of the past, which tend to simultaneously reinforce tradition while also experimenting on and subverting canonical texts. Lastly, the "Égloga," much more than the sonnets of *El rayo que no cesa*, specifically engages the character and importance of Garcilaso's legacy and what this means for Hernández as a modern poet. Indeed, the poem is in many ways a reflection upon the meaning of Garcilaso's Sonnet XI—the source of the poem's epigram—a poem that is itself about the nature of tradition and the possibility of accessing a world of primordial mythopoesis. As Garcilaso's Sonnet XI will not only serve as a key intertext for our discussion of Hernández's "Égloga," but also for the rest of the poems we will discuss in this chapter, let us examine this work before moving onto Hernández's "Égloga."

In Garcilaso's Sonnet XI we are presented with nymphs we are presented with the image of river nymphs in the river that are engaging in various forms of storytelling, whether through

²⁶ One recent book that discusses the controversial nature of determining Hernández's political is David Becerra Mayor and Antonio J. Antón Fernández's *Miguel Hernández: Voz de la herida* (2010).

weaving tapestries or orally. The scene of the poem is simple: the poet looks on plaintively and laments his condition for not being able to enter into the ideal world of the nymphs:

Hermosas ninfas, que, en el río metidas,
contentas habitáis en las moradas
de relucientes piedras fabricadas
y en columnas de vidrio sostenidas;

agora estéis labrando embebecidas
o tejiendo las telas delicadas,
agora unas con otras apartadas
contándoos los amores y las vidas:

dejad un rato la labor, alzando
vuestras rubias cabezas a mirarme,
y no os detendréis mucho según ando,

que o no podréis de lástima escucharme,
o convertido en agua aquí llorando,
podréis allá despacio consolarme. (Garcilaso, 213)

[Beautiful nymphs in the river,
you happily inhabit the dwellings
of shimmering fabricated stones,
held in columns of glass;

Now you are working lost in wonder,
or weaving the delicate tapestries,
now a few of you together apart from the rest
telling each other of loves and lives:

set down for a moment your labor, lifting
your blonde heads to gaze upon me,
you won't stop for long as I walk by,

either you won't be able to hear me, a pity,
or turned into water here crying
you will there be able to slowly console me.]

Garcilaso uses the image of the nymphs to evoke the world of classical mythology, the world of origins and foundations. They are appropriately water nymphs since water, according to Cirlot's *Diccionario de símbolos*, is one of the most common origin symbols. Low waters in

particularly, that is a river or a lake, as opposed to rain or a waterfall, symbolize primordial forces of creation from which unformed life and creation springs (Cirlot 1958/1992, 54/218).

The tapestries of Garcilaso's nymphs constitute real creation and serve as its record, that is the creation of exemplary and foundational events—events in which the human poet, observing from the bank of the river strives to enter but cannot. We can surmise something about the nature of the kinds of myths imagined by Garcilaso that would appear on these tapestries by examining the appearance of similar tapestry-weaving river nymphs in a famous scene from Garcilaso's third eclogue. In this poem, Garcilaso describes for us the content of several tapestries on which a similar band of river nymphs are working. All of the scenes depicted are tales of tragedy, violence, and death. The first three are borrowed from classical mythology: Orpheus and Eurydice, Apollo and Daphne, and Adonis and Venus. Yet for the fourth and last tapestry depicted, Garcilaso invents his own myth that crowns the presentation of the tapestries with a “crescendo of violence”—In the words of Barnard—where we find a nymph whose throat has been slit, an image intensified by the ghastly contrast of flowers in which she lay (1987, 318).²⁷

By placing such an emphasis on the tragedy of the nymphs' myths—even to the point of striving to outdo the tragedy of classic myths with an invented scene—Garcilaso suggests a certain timelessness in suffering itself. Sonnet XI further reinforces this sense of emulations as we see that Garcilaso expresses his desire to enter into the mythological world by proving his own ultimately tragic existence through his tears: if his crying is pained to such an extent that it constitutes that foundation of his existence (represented by his conversion into the water of his tears), he will be able to enter into the primordial realm of the nymphs. Though Rosales does not mention this poem directly in the essay we examined above, we can establish a relationship between his thesis and the poem: just as Rosales expresses the impossibility of returning to an

²⁷ Barnard also notes that the word *degollada* (one whose throat has been slit) created a great deal of controversy for its shocking violence, including one early editor of Garcilaso's work, El Brocense, substituted the word for *amortajada*, shrouded.

origin that establishes belonging to that tradition, Garcilaso also paradoxically sets forth that it is the lament of not being part of the ideal world—the world where the nymphs could see him—that provides the ground for the immortalization and sublimation of his own pain. With this better understanding of the relationship between suffering, primordial time, and poetic creation alluded to in the Hernández’s epigram, let us now turn back to how “Égloga” presents a modern reimagining of Garcilaso’s Golden Age verse in the context of a Spain on the verge of Civil War.

Hernández opens the poem by immediately engaging in both the themes of immortalization and water, speaking of Garcilaso’s eternal, primordial nature and also highlighting the synthesis of poet and warrior.

Un claro caballero de rocío,
un pastor, un guerrero de relente,
eterno es bajo el Tajo; bajo el río
de bronce decidido y transparente.

Como un trozo de puro escalofrío
resplandece su cuello, fluye y yace,
y un cernido sudor sobre su frente
le hace corona y tornasol le hace.

El tiempo ni lo ofende ni lo ultraja,
el agua lo preserva del gusano,
lo defiende del polvo, y lo amortaja
y lo alhaja de arena grano a grano. (Hernández 540)

[A clear knight of dew,
a pastor, a warrior of night’s fog,
eternal beneath the Tagus; beneath the river
of resolute and transparent bronze.

Like a piece a of pure shiver
his neck shines, flows and lies,
and a looming sweat over his brow
makes a crown for him and for him makes a sunflower.

Time neither offends nor insults him
the water preserves him from the worm
defends him from dust, shrouds him,
and adorns him with sand, grain by grain.]

While the sense of being preserved by water, that which is capable of eroding and rotting may seem paradoxical at first, we can understand, now that we have examined the poem's intertext, the logic behind such a conceit. Hernández poetically realizes Garcilaso's desire to enter into the creatively authentic and foundational world of the nymphs by writing the Renaissance poet into the eternal watery space of the river nymphs. Hernández's placing of Garcilaso on the riverbed of the Tagus—a river which flows through Toledo and is also the site of the tapestry-weaving nymphs in the third eclogue—is an artificial construction motivated by aesthetic purposes, as Garcilaso died in France after receiving a severe head wound in a battle at Le Muy.

This artificial poetic construction of Garcilaso's death carries out several poetic functions in terms of the primordial and traditional elements of the poem. For one, it is a way of affirming the poetic legacy of Garcilaso, by asserting poetically that his pain was sufficient enough to enter into the eternal space of the primordial river and its nymphs (i.e. answers the question at the end of Sonnet XI). While on one hand this affirms resolves the ambiguity left open at the end of Garcilaso's poem—whether he will remain invisible to the nymphs or enter into their realm through his becoming-water; yet, on the other hand, it simultaneously affirms a tradition of poetic pain that we have seen in Garcilaso, in the poetic suicide at La Goleta, in the tapestries of the third eclogue, and of course in the separation from the ideal world of the nymphs. Even though the poem memorializes Garcilaso and in a sense making him into an ideal poetic hero, it is nevertheless pain and suffering, as affect, that Hernández hopes to inherit from Golden Age poet. For example, in stanza 11:

Diáfano y querencioso caballero,
me siento atravesado del cuchillo
de tu dolor, y si lo considero
fue tu dolor tan grande y tan sencillo. (541)

[Diaphanous and longing²⁸ knight,
I feel pierced by the knife
of your pain, and if I reflect upon it
it was your pain so great and so simple.]

Here, Hernández reifies Garcilaso's melancholy as a knife that pierces him, maintaining the tradition of bloody violence that Garcilaso often used to accompany for his images of heartbreak and loss. Garcilaso's pain is not only "great" but also "simple," stressing the kind of foundational naiveté of Garcilaso described in Rosales essay when talking about the purity and simplicity of Garcilaso's foundational poetry.

We can also see how certain images of Garcilaso work in concert with Rosales theory of tradition by thinking in terms of the way that Hernández attempts to "outdo" the poetry of Garcilaso in terms of figuration, a sign of death. One example of this is the image of Garcilaso's wounded head, figured as an inventive but gory metaphor in the seventh stanza:

y su cabeza rota
una granada de oro apedreado
con un dulce cerebro en cada gota. (541)

and his broken head,
a golden pomegranate, smashed by a stone
with a sweet brain in each drop.

While offering a more accurate depiction of Garcilaso's death than the dwelling beneath the Tagus, the figuration of his head as a pomegranate broken open not only brings forth bright and plentiful blood (each seed equaling drop of blood), while also suggesting a somewhat uncomfortable parallelism between blood and fruit. In Garcilaso's famously violent image the

²⁸ I have used "longing" to translate the word *querencioso*, though the word is not easily translatable. It is the adjectival form of *querencia*, which can mean homesickness or even homeland, but its most common use is a zoological one, describing the homing instinct of birds and other migratory animals, or describing the preferred spot in a bullfight, to which it tends to return. The adjective, then, describes an animal that has a lot of *querencia*, instinct to return home, or perhaps one that is in the process of doing so. It seems that Hernández here wants to say that Garcilaso had a great desire to return home, perhaps, back to the originary and primordial world of the water that he now inhabits.

nymph from the third eclogue, he only suggests the presence of blood with the word “degollada,” bringing out its color only by an implicit contrast with the white flowers in which the nymph lays, Hernández creates an image that rivals the slit throat, and a vibrant color through the pomegranate metaphor. Though Hernández perhaps outdoes Garcilaso’s image in terms of gore, it is nevertheless contextualized within the tradition of Garcilaso, simultaneously deferring to the pain of Garcilaso yet working to surpass and modernize this particular tradition of violence. This forms part of a trend that we will observe in the rest of the poems of the chapter: the constant vacillation between confirming and negating tradition, a general condition of Spain’s archaism that tends to destabilize the meaning of the modern text

In another stanza, Hernández again fixates on Garcilaso’s blood and his wounding as a means to simultaneously celebrate and lament the creative potential of Garcilaso’s mortal vitality:

Hay en su sangre fértil y distante
un enjambre de heridas:
diez de soldado y las demás de amante. (541)

[In his fertile and distant blood there is
a swarm of wounds:
ten of a soldier, the rest of a lover.]

Here, in a clever pairing of adjectives (“fértil y distante”), Hernández praises the creative force of Garcilaso’s blood, its fertility, yet balances the image by also it as distant, unreachable. In terms of Rosales theory of literary tradition and Garcilaso’s centrality within the Spanish poetic tradition, we can see that the fertile center is imagined as a distant place, in terms of both time and space, neither of which can be recovered in actuality. Instead, the poet is left to imagine the recovery *figuratively*, that is, as a poetic conceit that inherently demonstrates its own deviation from the originality of Garcilaso. For example, the metaphor of Garcilaso’s wounded head as an opened pomegranate: it is an intensification of Garcilaso, yet nevertheless demonstrates a modernization in its intense visuality.

Another example of the simultaneous affirming and negating of Garcilaso's poetics is the "enjambre de heridas" from the stanza just cited, an image evoking the surrealist tradition in its unexpected yet effective animation of wounding as a swarm. Here, with this more direct appearance of a modern tradition, namely surrealism, we can see Rosales idea of "each man" being attentive to their position within the passage of time: Garcilaso becomes expressed anew within modern language, demonstrating progression not through complete disruption of the past, but with a new configuration of this tradition. This example is particularly salient because it shows surrealism's potential to intensify and multiply through unexpected juxtapositions, yet the image nevertheless aligns itself in the tradition of Garcilaso's wounding and fragmentation. In this way Hernández makes a felicitous marriage of Garcilaso's "neoclassical" violence that challenged the Golden Age celebration of imperial violence—as we have seen in the example from the *A Boscán* sonnet—and modern poetry's potential to magnify the irrational nature of both imagery and violence, i.e. the "enjambre de heridas." This simultaneously oscillates between the norm of Garcilaso and the unstable, rhizomatic "enjambre" of tensions that his tradition can suppose: at once a tradition of harmony between contraries, and also a history of the chaos of violence, fear of mortality, and the subversive politics self-annihilation.

As the poem comes to a close, we see very clearly how Hernández reinforces the oscillating binary between affirming the vitality of Garcilaso and lamenting fatalism of inheriting a tradition of violence and self-negation.

Nada de cuanto miro y considero
 mi desaliento anima,
 si tú no eres, claro caballero.
 Como un loco acendrado te persigo:
 me cansa el sol, el viento me lastima
 y quiero ahogarme por vivir contigo. (542)

[Nothing in all that I see and consider
 animates my dismay,

if you do not exist, bright knight.
 Like a pure madman I follow you:
 the sun tires me, the wind pains me
 and I want to drown myself so that I may live with you.]

In the first half of the stanza, we find what appears as one of the more optimistic statements of the poem, as Hernández states that nothing can alleviate his suffering without the presence of the foundational Garcilaso, here described in the rather positive phrase “claro caballero” [“bright/clear knight”]. Yet the second half of the stanza reverses this sentiment almost completely. This reversal is carried out as the poet states that the natural world—the sun and wind, that which he “sees and considers”—tires and pains him, and that his ultimate desire is to enter into the tragic yet permanent world of Garcilaso beneath the river. Hernández reinforces the fatalism of such a statement by evoking yet again the water theme that he has taken from Garcilaso. The artifice reminds the reader that the eternal space he has created for Garcilaso, in which the poet might still exist is doubly artificial: first in the sense that Hernández has fabricated a poetic death in a water space, but furthermore, that the watery space of the nymphs, following Garcilaso is also one of artifice and fabrication, in their construction of the tapestries, which not only contain established classical myths, but also a myth fabricated by Garcilaso himself—that of the nymph with a slit throat.

As we return to the fundamental artificial trope—Garcilaso’s death in the Tagus—we also return to some of the key workings of the archaism in the poem. One is that even though the poem turns on the poetic fertility of Garcilaso, which is guaranteed by his mythical status as a poet who manages the entire field of suffering, both physical as a soldier and emotional as a lover, his permanence and immortality cannot be imagined without recourse to poetic artifice. On one hand, this artifice is inherited from Garcilaso and copied in an affirming way, such as the use of water and nymphs to express a primordial, mythological and foundational space. On the other

hand, however, part of the artifice derives from that which is a decadent deviation from Garcilaso, namely the intense expression of violence that we have seen.

Though Hernández affirms Garcilaso's tradition, the poem nevertheless bears a mark of variation and change, connecting with heterogeneous discourses that the tradition has "accumulated" in its traversal of history. As heterogeneity is one of the principles we mentioned from Deleuze & Guattari's theory of the rhizome/multiplicity, this entails a certain dynamism within Hernández's poem in regards to its use of Garcilaso. In other words, even though the poem bears numerous formal and thematic motifs inspired by Garcilaso—the valuing of suffering, the nymphs, the meter—the poem is nevertheless the result of numerous complex voicings including, romanticism, surrealism, and the poetry of the *Generación de '27*. While we might imagine that this a fairly "liberal" way to treat Garcilaso, we will see that this kind of complex inclusion of discourses—tensions and *inquietudes*—also forms an integral part of the more conservative uses of Garcilaso in the postwar, to which we will now turn.

Garcilaso and Literary Climate of the Postwar

While the difference between of avant-garde's iconoclastic reference and its dependence on tradition in actual praxis has been long observed and criticized, in many ways the Garcilasistas' rhetoric coincides well with Rosales decadent/deconstructive reasoning. Following his ideas on the decadent constitution of Spanish poetic tradition, we can expect that one does not find perfectly "harmonious" poetry, especially since even the movement's supposed model, the verse of Garcilaso, is polyphonic and subversive in its own right. In the flagship magazine of the movement, *Garcilaso: Juventud Creadora*, one finds a series of variations rather loosely "rooted" in the Garcilasian tradition, largely through two main criteria set out by the magazine's primary editor Jose García Nieto: the use of some kind of classical meter, as well as the use of a

traditional theme, such as unrequited love, the beauty of a young woman, Christ, pastorals, etc. (de Luis xi). Beyond this, García Nieto seemed quite open to a large range of forms and styles that would not be found in other more conservative postwar magazines, such as the *falangista* magazine *El Escorial* (1940-1942, 1946-1953), primarily a magazine of critical essays that also occasionally published poetry and excerpts from plays, had a much more overtly Catholic agenda and primarily published religious-themed poetry.²⁹ Another conservative magazine, *Cuadernos culturales* (1941-1947), represented what critics have described as the *integrismo* (“wholeness-ism” or “integralism,” which sought to completely eschew foreign influence, matching in a sense the political isolationism of early Francoism (Wahnón 97). This poetry that appeared in this magazine tended more closely toward aesthetic populism, with a markedly less intellectual poetry, and stricter use of traditional meters.

Another important factor that set *Garcilaso* apart from the more conservative magazines was the inclusion of left-leaning and experimental poets, who were included on the basis of traditional meter or traditional subject matter, even if the result of the poem was nothing traditional. This is another example of the slippage in Spanish poetry between ideology and aesthetics: even as the poetic form matched traditional aesthetics, effectively “qualifying” the poetry as acceptable within the constraints of the magazines, the ideology of many poems included in *Garcilasismo* runs contrary to the magazine’s nationalist intentions. One poet included in the magazine that stands out as particularly incongruent is Dámaso Alonso, who placed himself firmly on the “uprooted” side of his famous distinction; he had also been previously associated with Republican ideology and his poetry often expressed a doubtful agnosticism incompatible with the tents of Francoist Catholic nationalism. (Navas Ocaña 168). In

²⁹ Like the magazine *Garcilaso*, the title *El Escorial* is significant for similarly traditional and primordial reasons: El Escorial (officially El Real Sitio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial) is a Renaissance era monastery, royal palace, library, pantheon, and library envisioned as a perfectly harmonious structure. As one of the most celebrated structures in Spain and often seen as the pinnacle of Spanish Golden Age architecture and design.

issue 8 of *Garcilaso*, we find an excerpt from Alonso's 1943 work *Hijos de la ira*, now a classic of post-war existentialism and often seen as a precursor of the social poetry movements that would occur later for its undertone of criticism against the horrors of modern social reality. This "social" side of *Hijos de la ira* is even clearly evident in the untitled excerpt that appears in the magazine, from which we can quote a section to demonstrate on one hand the kind of dark, angst-ridden, existentialist language that would become common in much of the post-war poetry, both in the "rooted" and "uprooted" traditions:

... Ávidas manos
 se aferran a jirones de la vida.
 El prostíbulo brota en carcajadas
 y arde en alcohol el árbol de la muerte.
 ¿Adónde va, poeta, ese camino?
 Dios alienta en el aura de la noche,
 y tú eres ya vilano de ese aliento.
 Los rumbos de los muertos, en la noche,
 ¿adónde van? ¿Adónde, tu camino?

[..Eager hands
 cling to shreds of life.
 The brothel bursts in laughter
 and the tree of death burns in alcohol.
 To where, poet, does this road go?
 God breathes in the aura of the night,
 and you are now a villain of that breath.
 The courses of the dead, in the night,
 where do they go? Where does your path go?]

Here Alonso evokes an idealized dead "poet" as a bearer of an ideal aesthetic—perhaps a deliberate reference to the figure of Garcilaso—as a symbol of an ideal aestheticism now failed in the wake of the war. Nevertheless, the poem is written in perfect hendecasyllabic lines, which we could read as "rooting" the poem in the Garcilasan tradition, even if its underlying ideology intended to subvert this tradition.

Another poet that stands out as an odd fit with the postwar *garcilasista* trend that appears numerous times in the magazine (issues 8, 11, 18, and 23) is Carlos Edmundo de Ory, a poet frequently associated with surrealism and symbolism, and who would become best known as a co-founder of the short-lived *postismo* movement in the early 1950s. We can cite a brief excerpt from “A una muchacha” [“To a girl”] from the eleventh issue of *Garcilaso*, demonstrating some of the more surreal poetry that appears in the magazine:

OH muchacha que nunca fuiste a un bosque
ni tuviste ese techo de cadmio de la luna;
oh sombra por tu alcoba, oh llama destrozada
que ves tras de la lluvia de mi rostro de poeta.

[O girl that never went to a forest
nor did you have that roof of cadmium of the moon;
o shadow among your bedroom, o destroyed flame
that you see through the rain of my poet-face.]

Despite the strangeness of some of these images (“roof of cadmium of the moon”), we can recognize that the poem is written in a mixture of classical forms, using both hendecasyllabic and alexandrine (14-syllable) lines. Furthermore, the subject matter of the young girl is one of the most common themes in the entire magazine—even most of the pen drawings by various artists that appear on the magazines cover are of young, traditional looking women.

Despite the allowance of these more liberal and experimental poets, the magazine’s first two issues (when still edited by Juan Aparicio) nevertheless establish a clearly conservative tone with the opening editorial write-ups that we examined earlier. As these statements overtly stipulate the moral and aesthetic exemplarity of Garcilaso (“la influencia estelar de su vida, su verbo y su ejemplo” [the stellar influence of his life, verb, and example]) as well as the important coincidence of Garcilaso’s quatercentenary and the rise of Franco, the magazine nevertheless proclaims its aesthetic excellence within a nationalist poetic tradition in support of the authority

and militarism of the new regime. For this rhetoric, perhaps more so than the actual poetry, we can see why *garcilasismo* would produce so many counter-reactions among the left-leaning poets we discussed earlier that reject traditional forms on political grounds. Nevertheless, the magazine *Garcilaso* serves as a telling emblem of the actual ambiguity that lies within the *garcilasista* movement and within archaic practices in general: despite the magazine's claim of an authentically Spanish poetry—traditional and exclusive in its reach—it ends up as a bearer of not so much Garcilaso's purity, but rather his tendency toward conflicting political viewpoints and subversive poetry. In the next section we will see, examining a poem from José García Nieto, how these conflicting viewpoints manifest in *garcilasista* poetry, disrupting the presumed unity of a nationalist and pro-Franco aesthetics.

García Nieto's "A tu orilla he venido..."

José García Nieto took over the editorship of *Garcilaso: Juventud Creadora* from Juan Aparicio after just three issues, and would continue to edit the magazine for the length of its three-year run. Although it was García Nieto who ultimately stipulated the classical formal and thematic constraints of the magazine (de Luis 2004, xi), García Nieto himself often transgresses the limits of Garcilaso's poetry with his own verse. While his verse did not approach the emotional intensity of Dámaso Alonso or the ecstatic surrealism of Ory, García Nieto's variations on classical motifs can nevertheless be read as subtle yet critical transformations—archaic transformations—that simultaneously appeal to Garcilaso as a means to reawaken an authentic Spanish poetry while also questioning the idealism and unity of nationalist politics. One poem that demonstrates how García Nieto alters both Garcilaso's thematic and formal constraints in ways that reflect upon contemporary political and aesthetic issues related to unity is "A tu orilla

he venido,” which appears in issue 4 of *Garcilaso*. Like Miguel Hernández’s “Égloga,” the poem is a reflection on an encounter with a river/water as an eternal and eternalizing force:

A tu orilla he venido. Tengo un otoño, un pájaro
y una voz desusada. Tú me esperas: un río,
una pasión y un fruto. Y tiene nuestro encuentro
el vuelo, la corriente, seguros, proclamados.

He venido a tu orilla con los brazos tendidos
y ahora ya soy la hierba que no termina nunca,
el barro donde el agua sujeta sus mensajes
y la cuna del cauce para mecer tu sueño.

Dime si estoy pendiente de mi diario trabajo,
si basta a tus oídos mi tristísimo verso
o si a mi sombra vive mejor mayo tu carne.

De tu orilla me iría si ahora me dijeras
que te amo solamente como los hombres aman
o que mi voz te suena como todas las voces.

[To your riverbank I have come. I have an autumn and a bird
and an antiquated voice. You wait for me: a river,
a passion and a fruit. And our encounter has
flight, current, both certain, and proclaimed.

I have come to your riverbank with hanging arms
and now I am already the never ending grass,
the mud where the water fixes its messages
and the cradle of the riverbed to rock your dream.

Tell me if I am dependent on my daily work,
if my saddest verse is enough for your ears
or if your flesh lives a better May under my shadow.

From your riverbank I would go if now you tell me
that I love you only as men love
or that my voice sounds to you like all other voices.]

This encounter between man and the primordial is yet again indeterminate and inconclusive: like *Garcilaso*’s Sonnet 11, “A tu orilla he venido...” ends with an expression of doubt as to whether the poetic voice’s lament will be compelling enough to establish a union within the primordial realm of the flowing, feminized river. But before delving into García Nieto’s portrayal of this

classic scene and its reflections on unity and modern aesthetics, let us take a moment to examine the poem's particular form and how this already indicates a departure the nationalizing tradition of Garcilaso.

The poem "A tu orilla he venido...", also numbered XIII, forms part of García Nieto's third book of poetry *Tú y yo sobre la tierra* [*You and I over the Earth*] (1944), in addition to being published in the magazine. All the poems found in this volume are written using the same form, though this form is not precisely as traditional as one might expect. In terms of stanza structure, the poems of *Tú y yo sobre la tierra* follow the classic fourteen-line Petrarchan sonnet pattern of two quartets followed by two tercets, yet the verses are not rhymed Petrarchan hendecasyllables, but rather unrhymed alexandrines. The fourteen-syllable alexandrine line has a rich history in Spanish verse, though its course circumnavigates the Italianate poetry of Garcilaso. The meter dates back to the late Middle Ages (Quilis 76), suggesting a return to an even more primordial form than that of Garcilaso (as someone like Giménez Caballero proposed). After the rise in popularity of the 11-syllable line following Garcilaso's use and advocacy, the alexandrine went largely unused until eighteenth-century romanticism (Quilis 76). Around the turn of the twentieth century the alexandrine then became one of the canonical forms in the decadent *modernismo* of Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, where the extra-lengthy line suited the extravagant nature of *modernista* exoticism. Indeed, Darío wrote numerous sonnets in alexandrines—perhaps to extend and embellish the traditional model—though he did follow the traditional rhyme scheme, such as in "Caracol" ["Snail"], of which I cite the first stanza:

En la playa he encontrado un caracol de oro
 macizo y recamado de las perlas más finas;
 Europa le ha tocado con sus manos divinas
 cuando cruzó las ondas sobre el celeste toro.

[On the beach I have found a golden snail,
 solid and embroidered with the finest pearls']

Europa has touched it with her divine hands
when she crossed the waves on the celestial bull.]

Beyond demonstrating the rhymed alexandrine form, each of these lines also contain the ornate images we find in *modernista* poetry (“golden snail,” “embroidered finest pearls,” “divine hands,” “celestial bull”) that largely fell out of use in Spain following the Civil War in both leftist and rightist poetry. They also contain embellished depictions of classical mythology (i.e. Europa crossing the ocean on Zeus in the form of a bull), showing an affinity between what Rosales saw as decadent modern poetry, and the classical mythology present in Golden Age verse. Nevertheless, the preciousness of images like the golden snail, as well as the sense of mystery invoked toward the end of the poem (“y oigo un rumor de olas y un incógnito acento / y un profundo oleaje y un misterioso viento...” [I hear a murmur of waves and an unknown accent / and a profound swell and a mysterious wind...]) overload any notion of the “balanced harmony” of Golden Age poetry.

This blending of forms in “A tu orilla...”—the strophic distribution of a sonnet, the Alexandrine line length, and the unrhymed, free meter—already demonstrates some of the principle ideas that we will see in the content of the poem, all of which will orient us toward the difficulties of harmonious “neoclassical” verse in the post-Franco era. In the first place, there is the kind of “rootedness” that Dámaso Alonso distinguished in his well-known classification between the *poesía arraigada* [rooted poetry] of postwar neoclassicism and the “*poesía desarraigada*” [uprooted poetry] that we have commented upon earlier. The fourteen lines make reference to the traditional Golden Age sonnet of Garcilaso, yet simultaneously the extended line length and the lack of rhyme overflow the bounds of the classical form, adding a subjective touch similar to the kinds of emulations we have seen from Garcilaso as he surpasses his classical models. This hybridized form reflects the poem’s complex content, which synthesizes a range of

styles and motifs, drawing on a complex set of archē in its reconstruction of and reflection on the trope of a poet coming face to face with primordial existence with which he hopes to unite, validating his melancholic vocation as a poet.

This poem's particular melancholy derives from the incongruity and lack of authentic relation between poetic voice (which we will assume to be male given the author) and his object of desire, which seems to be a woman figured as a river, or perhaps a river figured as a woman. The presence of water, especially in the form of a river also connects us back to Renaissance tradition, since water is a key element in one of the most commonly used settings of Garcilaso, the *locus amoenus*. Traditionally the *locus amoenus* is a pastoral setting, a space apart from the agitation of modern city life, and typically includes water, grass, shade—typically provided by a tree. The water and shade usually offer respite from the heat of the midday summer sun, indicating a time for resting, love, and poetry. In the poetry of Garcilaso, such as the third eclogue and Sonnet XI the water of the *locus amoenus* is also a sight for nymphs who are busy weaving tapestries on which myths are recounted. In this way, water carries out one of its most typical symbolic functions according to Cirlot's *Diccionario de símbolos*: low waters (that is a river or a lake, as opposed to rain or a waterfall) often symbolize the primordial forces of creation from which unformed life and creation springs (54). The tapestries of Garcilaso's nymphs constitute "real" creation, that is, the creation of exemplary and foundational events—events in which the human poet, observing from the bank of the river strives to enter but cannot.

Observing that this irremediable difference between the trivial, mortal presence of the poet and the eternal presence of the river/beloved gives rise to the poem's anguished tone, we can further connect it to Garcilaso's sonnet and begin to understand its variations. Although García Nieto does not use nymphs or mythical tapestries to symbolize the formational mythos of water, the blending of the poet's beloved and the river points toward the feminization of the water image, reinforcing its traditional symbolic role as a creative force. Furthermore, the poet remarks

that he is the mud upon which the water leaves its messages, impermanent and shifting as opposed to the eternal and stable nature of the nymphs' tapestries. These messages will soon be erased given their volatile medium, a sign of the poet's inability to inhabit a stable identity, an idea expressed similarly by the "never ending grass" [la hierba que no termina nunca] a classic Deleuze and Guattari rhizome that lacks hierarchy and stability. Despite ideal pretensions of a poetics rooted in the exemplary aesthetics and morality of Garcilaso's mythical poetics, García Nieto does not aggrandize his own aesthetic capacities, but rather witnesses his own expression as decadent and impermanent. As with the unresolved question of the poetic voice at the end of Sonnet XI, as Garcilaso's wonders whether or not he will be able to enter into the nymphs primordial dwelling, García Nieto's poem ends with a similar unresolved desire. The poet expresses a clear longing for this becoming-water/becoming-eternal at the end of the poem as he announces to the river that he will leave the riverbank if his love and his voice are only those of men, implying that the poet's aspirations are to attain such a high level of art as to qualify as immortal. Anything less and the poet would resign himself to the incidental and impermanent world of his "obsolete voice" [voz desusada], his messages written in mud, and his rhizomatic grass without center or discernable direction.

Comparing "A tu orilla he venido..." to Hernández's "Égloga" highlights both the continuity of melancholy and impermanence inherited from Garcilaso, yet also alludes to a heightened anxiety in the postwar *garcilasistas* toward an overly positive aesthetics in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. Hernández celebrates Garcilaso directly, alluding to his "heroic" poetry and life. He also does so in a classical form, "rooting" his poem to a greater extent than García Nieto, who makes a deliberate departure from the Renaissance established by Garcilaso. This deviation on the part of García Nieto demonstrates well the simultaneous affirming and negating frequently seen in these kinds of returns to archaic discourses: while alluding to the classical sonnet in terms of number lines and stanza organization, he demonstrates a clear

manipulations of Garcilaso's form, utilizing the pre-Golden Age and Romantic verse form, the alexandrine, while also adding an further modification by choosing not to rhyme the poem. Though these formal variations may seem trivial, *garcilasismo* was often criticized for its obsession with classical form; Antonio Gonzáles de Lama, one of the founder of the anti-formal magazine *Espadaña* referred to *garcilasismo* sarcastically as the "primavera del endecasílabo" [spring of the hendecasyllable] (*Cisneros* No. 6, s/n). Even if the *garcilasistas* would come to be known by their opponents as formally closed, they nevertheless wrote forms that disrupted and modified the heritage of Garcilaso's Golden Age Verse.

In terms of content, both Hernández and García Nieto stress the theme of their own suffering in relation to the possibility of entering into the harmonious world of the river/nymphs. Yet one difference is that Miguel Hernández's "allows" Garcilaso a certain success by validating his pain and poetically fulfilling his wish, inscribing him into the classical world that he longed for. This in a sense breaks with the tradition of fragmentation and indeterminacy that Garcilaso sets forth, giving a resolution to the indeterminate desires expressed by Garcilaso in the final stanza of his Sonnet XI. García Nieto's poem, on the other hand, ends with a much more ambiguous position toward the possibility of entering into an immortal, primordial space; an ending truer to Garcilaso in its recognition of the fundamental indeterminacy of the poets' attempts to immortalize themselves through pain and longing. This in turn recognizes a deep paradox in Garcilaso's aesthetics: the supposedly harmonious world of foundational myths is actually founded paradoxically upon pain, longing and the undoing of the self. Any return to Garcilaso thus risks recreating this doubt and doleful legacy that tends to resist the grandiose politics of nationalism.

As Rosales sets fourth in his *Figuración y la voluntad de morir*, true poetry demonstrates its inevitable decadent qualities and recognizes the impossibility of attaining a primordial, mythopoeic perfection. While both the counter-regime poetry of the time identified *garcilasismo*

as an optimistic, evasive movement set to affirm traditional Spanish values such as virility and loyalty, the resigned mood of García Nieto's poem points to a deep weariness in regards to affirming the success of his own vocation as a poet. In a sense, this matches Rosales' suggestion that poets must not necessarily attempt to maintain a tradition—impossible in the face of necessary decadence—but rather be attentive to the various decadences that occur throughout the course historical progression away from the original idea. What is perhaps most salient about García Nieto's reimagining of Garcilaso's Sonnet XI, then, is its return to the core problematic of the rift between mankind and nature, identifying a deep doubt within the archē of Garcilaso's poetics that points toward the questioning of ideality, harmony, and perfection traditionally associated with his work. At least in the case of García Nieto's "A tu orilla he venido..." the *garcilasista* movement demonstrates a self-reflective and deconstructive turn inward—an archaic turn—affirming the real fragility of lyric expression against the often-feigned strength of imperial grandeur.

Conclusion

As a reflection on the entirety of what we have discussed in this chapter, I want to continue for a moment with García Nieto's "A tu orilla...", examining an image we have not yet explored. While negative and anxious sentiment generally dominates the poem, the first stanza contains what seems to be an expression of optimism, offering a contrast to the resignation that follows. Here, the poetic voice affirms that at least *something* will arise from the meeting of the separate realities of the poet and of nature, even if the result will be inconclusive. I cite the first stanza again in its entirety for context:

A tu orilla he venido. Tengo un otoño, un pájaro
y una voz desusada. Tú me esperas: un río,

una pasión y un fruto. Y tiene nuestro encuentro
el vuelo, la corriente, seguros, proclamados.

[To your riverbank I have come. I have an autumn and a bird
and an antiquated voice. You wait for me: a river,
a passion and a fruit. And our encounter has
flight, current, both certain, and proclaimed.]

Though this return to repeat the inconsequential encounter between human reality and primordial nature is doomed to never resolve, García Nieto nevertheless claims that what will arise from this encounter is a “flight and a current,” which are not only certain but also “proclaimed” as if worthy of aesthetic consideration and reflection. Recalling again the rhizome, we can gloss that the connection between two heterogeneous elements, between the river and the poet, is what allows for a line of flight (and in this case a current) that offer change, movement, and transformation. The encounter is also not a meeting of dualities, but rather of multiplicities, since García Nieto enumerates the various components that make up the two interlocutors: the poet with a bird, an autumn, and a voice; the river with a passion and a fruit. Despite, then, the normalization implied in the recuperation of Garcilaso as a figurehead for a singular Spanish tradition, García Nieto’s hope for movement and change (through a flight, through a current) arises from an encounter between multiplicities, and not from the unification upon a singular norm. Even though on one hand he is a poet supporting the Francoist regime with its aspirations of national unity, he identifies, like Rosales, aesthetic production through a complex encounter of disparate elements.

The configuration of this “meeting of multiplicities” demonstrates García Nieto’s transformation of an aspect found in Garcilaso’s Sonnet XI: the poet, who himself is disjointed in his melancholic state, witnesses mythical, primordial reality not as a monolithic whole, but as a group of nymphs along with their crystal dwellings and their storied tapestries. Garcilaso scholar Mary Barnard has noted that the presence of the crystal dwelling and the tapestries formed part of

Garcilaso's frequent meditations on the proliferation of material culture in the early modern era, a sign of the altering economic and social systems of the times. Returning for a moment to Miguel Hernández's "Égloga," we see that similar material elements appear in ways that reflect certain tendencies of the early twentieth century Spain. For example in the opening stanza, the Tagus River, under which Garcilaso is figuratively entombed, is described as being made of "resolute and transparent bronze" ["el río / de bronce decidio y transparente"]. This kind of blending of substances (water is not "resolute" and not bronze-colored, nor is bronze transparent and fluid like water), reflects the highly imaginative, baroque, and surrealist-inspired images of the "Generation of '27" poets that were a major influence on Hernández's poetry at the time. Hernández also picks up directly on the presence of glass in Garcilaso's Sonnet 11 (the nymphs' crystal dwellings), though it is figured within another imaginative blending of substances:

Una efusiva y amorosa cota
de mujeres de vidrio avaricioso,
sobre el alrededor de su cintura

[An effusive and amorous coat
of women of avaricious glass
around the length of his waist.]

Here it is the nymphs themselves that are made of glass, adding a magical or fantastical element to the mythical scene. Furthermore, while Garcilaso's sonnet fetishizes the delicate heads and blonde hair of the nymphs (Barnard 2014, 128), in Hernández's poem the nymphs are more heavily eroticized with their description as "amorous" [amorosa], their presence around the waist of the mythical poet; later in the stanza Garcilaso's mouth is also described as hovering over the moist mouths of the nymphs' "él de sus bocas de humedad rodea su boca" ["he hovers his mouth over their mouths of dampness."]. As we have seen in my discussion of violence in Hernández's poem, this erotic intensification similarly incorporates elements of the baroque and

exuberant poetry in vogue at that time. We might consider the blend of these baroque intensifications with the Renaissance stylistics and “harmony” of Garcilaso as another archaic encounter: a transformation of Garcilaso’s poetry that demonstrates aesthetic transformation and movement.

In García Nieto’s “A tu orilla...” the discourses of material culture and violence found in Garcilaso’s and Hernández’s poems have been subjected to another transformation. Here, Hernández’s violent and intense energy has become a resigned anxiety. As Victor de la Concha has noticed that this anxious and depressive mood pervaded the leftist and rightist poetry of the postwar, a mood which he interprets as a result of the bleak social aftermath of the war (67). It is hardly surprising to find this sentiment in the poetry of García Nieto, who had lived through the three-year long Siege of Madrid that had left vast parts of the city in ruins. This desolate environment may also contribute to the absence of material culture references in his poem. Having little reason to celebrate the rubble of his city, García Nieto reduces the critical scene of the encounter to a kind of bare nature. Thus even as a *garcilasista* wishing to recuperate the nationalist grandeur traditionally associated with Garcilaso’s verse, García Nieto’s archaic appeal to the primordial force of Renaissance verse nevertheless filters out the material and mythological splendor of Golden Age verse. In this way García Nieto subtly expresses the inconclusive yet aesthetically productive “encounter” between the impoverished reality of a war-torn nation and the idealized vision of Garcilaso and the Spanish Golden Age.

Chapter 2

“El sentimiento trágico de Nueva York”: Federico García Lorca’s Catholic Vision of the United States

No hay verdadero amor sino en el dolor, y en este mundo hay que escoger o el amor, que es el dolor, o la dicha. Y el amor no nos lleva a otra dicha que a las del amor mismo, y su trágico consuelo de esperanza incierta.

There’s no true love except for in pain, and in this world one must choose, either love, that is pain, or happiness. And love does not bring us any other happiness than that of love itself, and its tragic consolation of uncertain hope.
—Miguel de Unamuno

Moving back in time some seven years before the turn to Garcilaso in 1936 to Federico García Lorca’s poetic works of the late 1920s, in this chapter we continue to focus on the archaic qualities of the poetry of Spain’s foremost modernist. Rather than continuing to focus on the Garcilaso archē—though we will see that Lorca reflects on Garcilaso’s ambivalent stance toward primordial regeneration in one poem—I focus on the presence of the figure of Christ and certain conceptions of Christianity and Catholicism in Lorca’s experimental poetic work, *Poeta en Nueva York*, written in 1929-1930 but published posthumously in 1940, four years after the poet’s assassination in 1936. In this work Lorca focuses on the mystical aspects of the Spanish Catholic tradition, particularly the paradoxical nature of Christ’s suffering as a god and a perfect being. Taking this suffering as the primordial foundation of authentic, eternal life, Lorca develops a

poetry that at once exemplifies an ethos of care for human suffering and also thrives on experimental, irrational images that recall and reproduce the paradoxical wounding of Christ. In Lorca's own words: "La poesía pone ramas de zarzamora y erizos de vidrio para que *se hieran por su amor* las manos que la buscan" [Poetry puts blackberry branches and glass prickles so that *it wounds with love* the hands of those who seek it] (Lorca 1984, 21 italics added). For Lorca, an encounter with the irrational nature of authentic poetry wounds the reader's sensibilities, making one compassionately attend to the suffering that constitutes life.

For Western Civilization, the figure of Christ serves as a master-archē insofar as he establishes the basis for Christian testimony, as well as for the Christian religious traditions and the societal norms they institute on his behalf. For Lorca, by contrast, Christ represents the fundamental ontology of paradox and suffering within existence, which in turn necessitates and legitimizes a poetics that both attunes to suffering and legitimizes poetic expression that seems to surpass rational understanding. In the preceding chapter we saw how the *garcilasista* poets recuperated social and aesthetic issues from within the often-nationalist legacy of Garcilaso in ways that disrupted fascist conceptions of unity. In this chapter Lorca similarly recuperates from the ideologically charged institutions of Catholicism a left-leaning aesthetic of care for oppressed classes, yet this re-imagination of Catholicism will not eliminate some of the ideological and ethical problematics that arise when deferring to the authority of a religious tradition. Rather, we will see how Lorca's poetry tends to repeat, rather than settle, the ethos of valorizing (self)-mortification. Similarly Lorca defers to narratives of Christian redemption in his understanding of the finality of poetry, which, in Lorca's own words, is to be received en "una especie de estado de gracia" ["as in kind of state of grace"] (Lorca 1984, 22). In this way Lorca's poetry simultaneously recuperates an ethical and experimental poetics through Catholicism's iconography while ambivalently replicating problematic belief-driven aesthetic and ideological positions.

In the last chapter I sought to refute Marinetti's charge against Spain's attachment to tradition in arguing that even within one of the most prominent fascist poetic movements of the postwar—*garcilasismo*—engagement with tradition is carried out as a conscious means to employ archaic discourses in service of a modern aesthetics that attends to the nuances and difficulties of nationalist aesthetics. This chapter complicates another of Marinetti's claims about Spanish archaism—its thorough Catholicism—by showing that Spain's most internationally celebrated modernist, Federico García Lorca, understands his own poetry as inseparable from aspects of a certain Spanish Catholic tradition. This becomes clear once we see that Lorca's notion of a paradoxical "divine suffering," of which Christ is the archetype, undergirds his experimental poetics as well as his social engagement. Lorca thus recuperates Catholicism not as an ecclesiastical authority or political institution, but rather as a mystical tradition that mediates bodily care through the foundational paradox of God's suffering.

We saw in Chapter 1 how *garcilasismo* poetry often imagined suffering as a vital component of poetic inheritance, as in the case of Miguel Hernández's celebration and lament of Garcilaso's pain. In Lorca's case, similar ideas about Christian suffering likewise form the basis for a tradition of Spanish mystical poetry, as well as for the existential philosophy of Miguel de Unamuno, from which Lorca likewise drew. We know Lorca had Unamuno in mind during these years as he names Unamuno as "great father" in his reflections on *Poeta en Nueva York*; furthermore, Lorca's presentation of a Catholicism focused on the vitality of suffering and tragedy clearly reflects the influence of Unamuno's philosophical masterwork *El sentimiento trágico de la vida* ["The Tragic Sense of Life"]. Lorca's self-positioning within this tragic yet vital version of Catholicism is fundamental to his identity as a modern, progressive-thinking poet, one who not only seeks new experimental forms of expression but also one sensitive to the social injustices of modern society. This Catholic element is imagined by both Lorca and Unamuno as resistant to what they saw as the dehumanizing rationality of Northern European "Protestant"

culture, which gave rise to the social tragedies experienced by Lorca in New York such as the marginalization of racial minorities and the chaos produced by the Stock Market Crash. Lorca, then, invests in certain Catholic ethical and aesthetic notions as a form to expose and resist the perils of European and Anglophone modernization, while also advocating for a more Spanish modernism that attunes to the spiritual (anti-rational) values of suffering and paradox.

Studying the presence of Christian and Catholic themes as foundational and productive aspects in Lorca's work may seem somewhat atypical for those familiar with Lorca scholarship, since his work most famously deals with those oppressed by the norms of Western culture: women, children, and racial minorities. Lorca, like Miguel Hernández, has also largely been remembered as a Republican martyr—and therefore almost by default anti-Catholic—following his death at the hands of Franco's Nationalists just weeks after the outbreak of the Civil War in August of 1936. My perspective on Lorca as a Catholic reveals a systematic ethics at work within Lorca's experimentalism that derives in large part from Lorca's spiritual orientation rather than an affiliation with a political ideology. Recent studies by scholars such as Jonathan Mayhew (2009) and Gayle Rogers (2013) argue that the political framework of Lorca's works and his assassination have both contributed to a general "liberalization" and romanticization of his legacy, a process that has distorted and simplified our understanding of the role that typically conservative discourses, in this case Catholicism, played in his work.

Engaging with these scholars' work, this chapter contributes to a reassessment of Lorca's poetry in light of his ambivalent character that seems to simultaneously embody a rejection of religious authority and a deferment to the necessity of spiritual tradition. Despite occasional critical stereotypes that paint Lorca as a leftist, Republican martyr, he was well aware of his own complexity and even celebrates his multi-faceted nature, quipping once, "I am an anarchist, communist, libertarian, Catholic, traditionalist, and monarchist." In what follows I show that we can take Lorca's self-descriptions as "Catholic" and "traditionalist" quite seriously by

demonstrating that these two supposedly archaic facets of his persona are essential to understanding his irrational, experimental style as well as his engagement with socially marginalized populations.

Memories of the Dead

When Lorca arrived in New York in late summer of 1929, he was already in the midst of a deep personal crisis involving his sexuality, his friendships, and his family. He was well aware that New York City would be shocking to him, but he remarks in a letter that he nevertheless felt compelled to go and experience the chaos of the hypermodern capital of the New World. His expectations about witnessing a great deal of chaos and social tragedy would not be disappointed, and in many ways *Poeta in New York* is a chronicle of Lorca's horror and dismay at the things he witnessed, sentiments that reach their pinnacle in "Oficina and denuncia" ["Office and Denunciation"] and in "Grito hacia Roma" ["Cry to Rome"]:

Yo denuncio a toda la gente
que ignora la otra mitad,
la mitad irredimible
que levanta sus montes de cemento
donde laten los corazones
de los animalitos que se olvidan
y donde caeremos todos
en la última fiesta de los taladros.
Os escupo en la cara.

...

No, no, no, no; yo denuncio.
Yo denuncio la conjura
de estas desiertas oficinas
que no radian las agonías...
("Oficina y denuncia")

[I denounce all those
who ignore the other half
the irredeemable half

that raise up their mountains of cement
 where the hearts beat
 from where the little animals are forgotten
 and where we will all fall
 in the last festival of drills.
 I spit in your face.

...

No, no, no, no; I denounce.
 I denounce the conspiracy
 of these desert offices
 that don't radiate agonies...]
 ("Office and Denunciation)

Pero el hombre vestido de blanco
 ignora el misterio de la espiga,
 ignora el gemido de la parturienta,
 ignora que Cristo puede dar agua todavía,
 ignora que la moneda quema el beso de prodigio
 y da la sangre del cordero al pico idiota del faisán.
 ("Grito hacia Roma")

[But the man dressed in white
 ignores the mystery of the spear of wheat,
 ignores the moan of the birthing woman,
 ignores that Christ can give water still,
 ignores that the coin burns the kiss of the prodigy
 and dives the blood of the lamb to the pheasant's idiot beak.]
 ("Cry to Rome")

In "Oficina y denuncia," Lorca's sentimental anguish manifests as open political critique of the capitalist desire for progress that dehumanizes the poor and numbs the rich to their own pain and to the pain of the less fortunate "other half:" "yo denuncio a toda la gente / que ignora la otra mitad / la mitad irredimible," "estas desiertas oficinas / que no radian agonía." In "Grito hacia Roma," Lorca's anguish is again directed at the dehumanization of the business class—Paul Binding notes that white suits were in vogue for Wall Street investors at the time (130)—claiming that they are ignorant of nature ("el misterio de la espiga"), spirituality ("ignora que Cristo puede dar agua todavía") and the destructive powers of money ("la moneda quema el beso de

prodigio”). As the work continually critiques and denounces the pitfalls of modern capitalist economics, *Poeta en Nueva York* stands as Lorca’s most openly political piece of writing.

Though Lorca seems to embody here a markedly socialist or communist political position with his denunciation of the dehumanization of capitalism—substantiating the many leftist readings of his work³⁰—at the basis of this political critique, in Lorca’s view, we find an appeal to both his Catholic and Spanish identity, a turn opposed not to capitalism, but “Protestantism.” In a short lecture written to accompany public readings of selections from *Poeta en Nueva York* after he returned from his ten-month trip, Lorca stresses the religious divide he believes to be at the heart of the horrors he witnessed:

Lo impresionante por frío y por cruel es Wall Street. Llega el oro en ríos de todas las partes de la tierra y la muerte llega con él. En ningún sitio se siente como allí la ausencia total del espíritu... Y lo terrible es que toda la multitud que lo lleva cree que el mundo será siempre igual, y que su deber consiste en mover aquella gran máquina día y noche y siempre. Resultado perfecto de una moral protestante, como español típico, a Dios gracias, me crispaba los nervios. (Lorca 1994, Vol. II 348)

[The terrible, cold, cruel part is Wall Street. Rivers of gold flow there from all over the earth, and death comes with it. There as nowhere else, you feel a total absence of spirit... And the terrible thing is that the crowd that fills this street believes that the world will always be the same, and that it is their duty to keep that huge machine running, day and night, forever. The exact result of a Protestant morality that I, as a (thank God) typical Spaniard, found unnerving. (Lorca 2013, 187)

Here Lorca not only impugns the “Protestant morality” that has caused the downfall of New York, but also distances himself from this “morality,” whose machinations are abhorrent to his identity as a Spanish Catholic. Lorca’s position toward industrial “progress” here is quite the opposite of Marinetti’s *Futurist Proclamation* we examined in the introduction: Spain’s foremost archaic institution, the Catholic Church, forms part of Lorca’s resistance to the false modern myths of wealth and progress, the lies that keep society enslaved to the cult of money. Yet how

³⁰ For discussions of Lorca’s often-misguided appropriation by the left see the studies cited above, Mayhew 2009, Rogers 2013.

exactly are we to understand Lorca's use of the blanket adjective "Protestant?" Why does he frame the crisis of New York and the New World as a fundamentally spiritual crisis, as opposed to an economic or political one? And furthermore, how might Lorca's attachment to such an archaic institution inform the creation of a work of experimental and socially critical poetry? In what follows I propose that the answers to these questions can be found by investigating Lorca's self-positioning as a Catholic who attends to both suffering and paradox as the basis for aesthetic expression, a move that inherently resists the negligent progressivism that he identified in modern capitalist society.

As we continue to read Lorca's reflections on his time spent in New York, he cues us into the importance of Miguel de Unamuno as a source of spiritual guidance: "Y yo que soy de un país donde, como dice el gran padre Unamuno 'sube por la noche la tierra al cielo,' sentía un ansia divina de bombardear todo aquel desfiladero de sombra por donde las ambulancias se llevaban a los suicidas con las manos llenas de anillos. "And I, who come from a country where, as the great father Unamuno says, 'at night the earth climbs to the sky,' I felt a divine longing to bombard that whole canyon of shadow, where ambulances carry away suicides with their hands full of rings" (Lorca 2013, 187). It is not surprising that Lorca looks toward Miguel de Unamuno as he contemplates the horrors of the modernization and lack of spirituality in the New World, since Unamuno was an apologist for both Spanish tradition and Spanish Catholicism. In this way Unamuno offers Lorca a very learned reflection—synthesizing numerous thinkers of the Western philosophical tradition from Seneca to Spinoza—on the aesthetic and especially ethical values of paradox, and how this reflection embodies a particularly Spanish perspective, over against the anti-vital logic of "Protestantism." The poem Lorca paraphrases, Unamuno's well-known "Un cementerio de lugar castellano" [A Castilian Cemetery], cues us into Unamuno's own irrationally ethic aesthetics as he laments the fate of the dead in a provincial, rustic cemetery, yet also "irrationally" celebrates the care that Christ, a dead man himself, provides for them. In the poem,

as the “earth climbs to the sky/heaven” at nightfall, the buried rise as well, where they are reincarnated as part of Christ’s flock, guided by the crosses over their tombs and spurred on by the prayers and memories of the living:

Después que lento el sol tomó ya tierra,
y sube al cielo el páramo
a la hora del recuerdo,
al toque de oraciones y descanso,
la tosca cruz de piedra
de tus tapias de barro
queda, como un guardián que nunca duerme,
de la campiña el sueño vigilando.

...

¡Y desde el cielo de la noche, Cristo,
el Pastor Soberano,
con infinitos ojos centelleantes,
recuenta las ovejas del rebaño!

[Citation]

After the sun slowly has taken the earth,
and the moor ascends to the sky
at the hour of remembering
to the rhythm of prayers and rest,
the crude stone cross
of their mud wall
remains like a guardian that never sleeps.

...

And from the night sky, Christ,
the Sovereign Pastor,
with his infinite twinkling eyes,
counts again the sheep of his flock!

As Lorca reflects on the New World where he saw as an egregious disregard for the weakness and mortality of human life, he recalls this scene of care for the memory of those passed as a reminder of the fragility of human life, a sentiment still active in Spanish culture. But more than just a reflection on human mortality, this poem also presents the great paradox of Christianity that undergirds both Unamuno’s philosophy and much of Lorca’s poetics: the impossible death of a perfect being, Christ, as that which establishes eternal life for mankind. As

Lorca once wrote that the primary task of poetry was to *animate*, in the etymological sense of “give life” (Lorca 1984, 13-4), Christ’s life-giving death will be seen as an archetypal poetic act, even in spite of all the dogmatic complications of the Catholic Church that both he and Unamuno would struggle against throughout their lives. For Lorca and Unamuno alike, attention to death and suffering is thus not only an aesthetic issue, but also a moral one, since expressions of care will become the fundamental way of resisting the neglect of human life in the name of “Protestant” progress.

Although Unamuno’s take on Catholic tradition was heterodox in his focus on irrationality and suffering, he would nevertheless be seen as a generally conservative figure—a teetotaling, hard-working family man as well as a Catholic apologist. Despite this reputation, his thinking synthesizes of a long line of heterodox Catholicism rooting back to Spanish Counter-Reformation mysticism that Lorca will incorporate into a system of ethical and experimental poetics. His philosophy not only seeks to return to the fundamental origins and basis of Catholicism, stripping away the oppressive and political baggage of the Church and its dogma, but in doing so he also creates a new, existentialist philosophy that praises paradox as a solution to the horrors caused by modern reason, and argues for attention human to suffering in the face of the ideals of progress. In the following pages we will spend some time developing the basis for Unamuno’s heterodox version of Spanish Catholicism, which informs greatly our understanding of why Lorca continuously returned to his “archaic religion” when developing the irrational yet critical poetry of *Poeta en Nueva York*.

The Tragic Philosophy of Miguel de Unamuno

In Miguel de Unamuno’s philosophical masterwork, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (1912) he sets forth a tragic, irrational vision of Catholicism explicitly opposed to what he saw as

the focus on “this worldly” progress of Protestantism and an ethics of logical justification that he found in the Enlightenment philosophy of Kant (57).³¹ Unamuno’s argument for a tragic conception of life, in its simplest terms, is that there is an incommensurable yet necessary divide between life and knowledge (33). Not only do we all possess an innate desire to continue living and to live forever (an idea he borrows from Spinoza), but we also act as though we are sure of this immortality; if we truly die, then our actions would be meaningless. As rational beings, however, we doubt this immortality and strive to prove it through reason and philosophy, which are nevertheless limited in their capacities. Let us look at the problem in Unamuno’s own words:

[No] quiero morirme del todo, y quiero saber si he de morirme o no definitivamente. Y si no muero, ¿qué será de mí?; y si muero, ya nada tiene sentido. Y hay tres soluciones: a) o sé que me muero del todo y entonces la desesperación irremediable, o b) sé que no muero del todo, y entonces la resignación, o c) no puedo saber ni una cosa ni otra cosa, y entonces la resignación en la desesperación o esta en aquella, una resignación desesperada, o una desesperación resignada, y la lucha. (32)

[I do not wish to die utterly, and I wish to know whether I am to die or not definitely. And if I do not die, what is my destiny? (a) I know that I shall die utterly, and then irremediable despair, or b) I know that I shall not die utterly, and then resignation, or c) I cannot know either one or the other, and then resignation in despair or despair in resignation, a desperate resignation or a resigned despair, and hence conflict] (33)³²

What is determinate of our capacity to live and to act in meaningful ways is precisely an irrational belief that we will live forever. This irrational belief in life, however, is constantly under attack from our rational mind, which doubts the belief and works to find a definitive solution to the question of our immortality. A definitive answer either way, however, will result in complete despair or complete resignation, hence a vital struggle (*lucha*) between belief and knowledge.

³¹ Though Unamuno does not cite Max Weber directly, it is almost certain *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* figured in his conception of Protestantism and its relation to logic progressivism, not only for the similarity in Weber and Unamuno’s thinking, but also since Unamuno cites the Weberian terms *Jenseitigkeit* and *Diesseitigkeit* in German.

³² For the English translations of *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* I cite Crawford Fitch’s 1954 English edition of the work.

The conclusion to this struggle, which forms the essence of the “sentimiento trágico de la vida,” is this: “[Vivir] es una cosa, y conocer otra, y como veremos hay entre ellas una tal oposición que podamos decir que todo lo vital es antirracional, no ya sólo irracional, y todo lo racional, antivital” (33) [“For living is one thing and knowing is another; and, as we shall see, perhaps there is such an opposition between the two that we may say that everything vital is anti-rational, not merely irrational, and that everything rational is anti-vital] (34). We should note here that the traditional English title, *The Tragic Sense of Life* would be better rendered as *The Tragic Sentiment* or *Feeling of Life*. The distinction is critical in this case, since for Unamuno life and existence are affective (sentiment, feeling) before they are rational (meaning, sense). This idea is key since we will see that Lorca’s theory of the irrational poetic image the *hecho poético*, poetic fact or deed, does not necessarily have a sense, a rational meaning, but carries with it a deep affective sentiment that moves the reader emotionally even if it cannot be understood rationally.

In many ways Unamuno’s conclusions about the irrational basis of life derives from a synthesis of key ideas from preceding philosophers. The idea that man innately desires to live forever, for example, comes directly from three principles of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. I quote Unamuno’s translations of Spinoza’s Latin: 1) “cada cosa, en cuanto es en sí, se esfuerza por perseverar en su ser;” 2) “el esfuerzo con que cada cosa trata de perseverar en su ser no es sino la esencia actual de la cosa misma;” and 3) “el esfuerzo con que cada cosa se esfuerza por perseverar en su ser, no implica tiempo finito, sino indefinido” (13). [1] “Everything... endeavors to persist in its own being.” 2) “the endeavor wherewith everything endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself.” 3) “The endeavor whereby each individual thing endeavors to persist involves no definite time, but indefinite time.” (6-7)] Unamuno concludes from this that not only do we not want to die, but also that the core of our very existence is the affect or desire not to die (13). Unamuno also likely draws on Henri Bergson in his formulation of another aspect of the “sentimiento trágico.” This is that our rational

knowledge cannot solve the question of our existence—one of the central theses from the influential 1889 essay *Time and Freewill*. Here Bergson argues that freewill, our very autonomy, is that which cannot be defined rationally, for if it were definable, freewill would be determinate and hence not free.³³

While Unamuno is greatly indebted to these thinkers and others, what is crucial for the Spanish philosopher's version, and what will be crucial for Lorca's poetics as well, is the blending of these ideas with Catholicism. In a chapter entitled "La esencia de catolicismo" [The Essence of Catholicism], Unamuno argues that the power of Catholicism lies precisely in its sustenance of both mysticism and rationalism. The two belligerents in the "tragic" battle of life—the religious mystery of eternal life and rational theological attempts to understand this mystery—are incorporated in Catholic dogma in what Unamuno calls a series of "harmonized contradictions:" "La Trinidad fue un cierto pacto entre el monoteísmo y el politeísmo y pactaron la humanidad y la divinidad en Cristo, la naturaleza y la gracia, esta y el libre albedrío, este con la presciencia divina, etc." (64) [The Trinity was a kind of pact between monotheism and polytheism, and humanity and divinity sealed a peace in Christ, nature covenanted with grace, grace with free will, free will with the Divine Prescience, and so on"] (77). The most central of these paradoxes, and the most tragic, is the example of Christ himself: a "perfect man" who should not have suffered yet did, thereby granting eternal life to mankind (53).

According to Unamuno this paradox of Christ as a god that suffered "scandalized" Jews and Greeks alike, and even continues to scandalize Christians themselves, for no longer is eternal life found in forms of perfection, but rather—quite tragically—in suffering: "Fue la revelación de lo divino del dolor, pues sólo es divino lo que sufre" (155) [It was the revelation of the divine in suffering, since only that which suffers is divine] (181). For Unamuno, the great paradox of Catholicism is that god suffers, which is to say, god lives. While Catholicism does have a strong

³³ For a detailed study of Unamuno's relationship with Bergson, see Fraser 2007.

theological tradition of attempting to logically resolve these paradoxes, the mysteries hold a special place and are considered irresolvable, necessitating faith and creating what Unamuno calls Catholicism's "profunda dialéctica vital" (profound vital dialectic): the oscillation between life and reason (64).

This "dialéctica vital"—whose primary element, its "thesis," is irrationality—is for Unamuno characteristic of Catholicism, which stands apart from other forms of Christianity, in particular Protestantism. Whereas Catholicism is founded upon the irrational belief in immortalization through Christ, Protestantism derives from a preoccupation with "*justificación*", epitomized by Kantian ethics. Unamuno discusses the difference between the two forms of Christianity: "Porque lo específico religioso católico es la inmortalización y no la justificación al modo protestante. [...] Y es en Kant, en quien el protestantismo... sacó sus penúltimas consecuencias: la religión depende de la moral, y no esta de aquella como en el catolicismo" (57) [For what is specific in the Catholic religion is immortality and not justification, in the Protestant sense [...] It was from Kant... that Protestantism derived its penultimate conclusions—namely that religion rests upon morality, and not morality upon religion] (67) This preoccupation with justification is only the "penultimate" consequence of Protestantism because what it leads to—its ultimate consequence—is an overvaluation of reason. The focus shifts from a tragic otherworldliness (*Jenseitigkeit*)³⁴ of irrational religious mystery to a "this-worldliness" (*Diessseitigkeit*) of science, logic, and progress (57/68 in translation). It is in particular the overvaluation of "this-worldliness" that Lorca will specifically lament, as with the "huge machine" that must be kept running forever by the soulless businessmen.

³⁴ For the apparently neologized *allendidad*, Unamuno cites the German word *Einseitigkeit* (one-sidedness), which I take as an error. The English translator J.E. Crawford Fritch replaces this word for *Jenseitigkeit* (other-sidedness), a word used by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic* that Unamuno almost certainly intended.

While Unamuno does refer to a dialectic, seemingly connoting “this-worldly” progress, María Zambrano notes that this dialectic should not be understood as Hegelian (and by extension, we might say, Protestant). In her posthumous *Unamuno y su obra*, she argues that the Hegelian dialectic meant for Unamuno a transcendental *logos* or reason that would gradually manifest itself, perfecting the order of the cosmos in its unfolding. In contrast to real perfection, Unamuno saw reason as limited to the realm of mankind, hence the need for “otherworldliness” (Zambrano 89). Furthermore, the perfect ordering of the cosmos would be synonymous with death, since it would lack the tragic and vital oscillation between reason and life. In short, Protestantism’s first term is reason, whereas Catholicism maintains tragedy and irrationalism, giving it in turn a dynamic character.

Having laid out these basic coordinates of Unamuno’s thinking—tragedy, irrationalism, and vitality—as well as their Protestant counterparts—progress and reason—we can now turn to examine how Lorca will incorporate these elements into his poetry. Before directly engaging in this tragic dialectic as it unfolds in *Poeta en Nueva York*, let us first examine a lecture from Lorca on his own poetic theory that he wrote just before his travels to New York. In this lecture we see how Lorca employs Unamuno’s notion of vital irrationalism to create a poetry that “wounds” the intellect with paradox as a call to attend to the paradoxical suffering that constitutes both the foundation of life and the need for its care.

Lorca’s Hecho Poético and the Poetics of Wounding

In 1928, before he would leave for New York, Lorca gave his conference “Imaginación, inspiración, y evasión,” alternatively titled in subsequent versions “Tres modos de poesía” and “La mecánica de la poesía.” In this conference Lorca lays out his concept of the *hecho poético*, his term for poetic images that not only defy rationality, but wound the sensibility of the reader as

a means to evoke the vitality and pity found in suffering. Investigating this theory of poetic irrationality, we will see why Christopher Flint observes that “[the] violence and pain that characterize [Lorca’s] poetry constitute in large measure the immediate source of his political and aesthetic convictions” (Flint 180). The poetic wounding caused by Lorca’s irrational images is not merely an aesthetic device, but, following Unamuno’s philosophy, is a direct call to care for human life in the face of blind progress.

Though we only have indirect knowledge of the conference from newspaper reviews—some of which give lengthy quotations—it is in one sense fitting, since in the discourse Lorca proposes that exact ideas and concrete knowledge are lifeless—an idea which looks quite familiar after our discussion of Unamuno. Indeed, in the most complete version of the text that we have, written almost entirely as a direct quote, Lorca begins by rejecting the notion that his ideas should be taken as definitive: “Sé perfectamente bien las dificultades que este tema tiene, y no pretendo, por tanto, definir, sino subrayar; no quiero dibujar, sino sugerir.” [I know perfectly well the difficulties involved in this topic, and I don’t pretend, because of this, to define, but rather underline; I don’t want to lay out, but rather suggest] (Lorca 1984, 13). As the lecture continues, Lorca asserts that the poet’s primary task is to give life, a task that has nothing to do with truth or falsity: “La misión del poeta es ésta: animar, en su exacto sentido: dar alma... Pero no me preguntéis por lo verdadero y lo falso, porque la “verdad poética” es una expresión que cambia al mudar su enunciado” [The poet’s mission is this: to animate, in its exact sense: to give *anima*... But don’t ask me for what is true or what is false, because “poetic truth” is an expression that changes each time it is expressed] (Lorca 1984, 13-4). Just as in Unamuno’s conception of Catholicism, Lorca places the life of a poem *before* notions of logical “justification,” and argues that poetry is not understood, but rather received like faith: “algo que no debe comprenderse, sino recibirse en una especie de estado de gracia” [something that shouldn’t be understood, but received as in a state of grace] (Lorca 1984, 22).

This reception of poetic grace for both the poet and the one who listens to or reads poetry necessitates a vital suffering, as we read in another quote:

“Como poeta auténtico que soy y seré hasta mi muerte, no cesaré de *darme golpes* con las disciplinas *en espera del chorro de sangre* verde o amarilla que necesariamente y por fe habrá mi cuerpo de manar algún día. [...] Desde luego, no he pretendido convencer a nadie. Sería indigno de la poesía si adoptara esta posición. La poesía pone *ramas de zarzamora y erizos de vidrio para que se hieran por su amor las manos que la buscan*” (Lorca 1984, 21 italics added).

[Like the true poet that I am and will be until my death, I won't stop striking myself with discipline, waiting for the spurt of green or yellow blood that necessarily and by faith will have to flow from my body some day. [...] Of course, I haven't tried to convince anyone. It would be insulting to poetry if I adopted this stance. Poetry puts *blackberry branches and glass prickles so that it wounds with love the hands of those who seek it.*]

Here, we see more emphasis on rejecting the idea that a poem conveys any kind of logical meaning, but beyond this, the poem's irrational expression should also have a wounding effect, which is described in images reminiscent of Christ's crown of thorns and the stigmata that mark the hands. This sense of bodily wounding will become a central figure in the New York poetry as it guides Lorca's attention to the shocking physical suffering he witnesses, from the deformed bodies of the homeless to the businessman crushed on the sidewalk after having leapt from a skyscraper's windows. This leads on one hand to a political conviction, since, as Flint argues, Lorca saw the constant mistreatment of bodies “in the cause of a ‘universal’ ideal” (Flint 183), an ideal that Unamuno named as blind “Protestant” progress and the overly rational Kantian morality of “justification.” On the other hand, this political and philosophical conviction is inseparable from the ultimate spiritual and transcendental wounding of Christ. As Lorca establishes his poetics on not just wounding, but on wounding as a foundational ontology of life, poetry carries out the double function of attending to the immediate, immanent suffering caused by ideologies of progress, while it also expresses ultimate transcendental wisdom of the “tragic sense of life.”

That Lorca actively grounds his poetics in suffering not only connects him with Unamuno, but also with a much older tradition of poetic wounding and suffering in Spanish, Counter Reformation tradition, namely the mystic poetry of San Juan de la Cruz. In several of San Juan's poems, the poetic voice experiences a "divine wounding" as an expression of the contact between the eternal, primordial nature of God, and the fleeting, incidental life of man. This is figured especially in the poem of "Llama de amor viva" in which contact with the divine is described as a burning flame that gives life in its wounding:

¡Oh, llama de amor viva,
que tiernamente hieres
de mi alma en el más profundo centro!
Pues ya no eres esquiva,
acaba ya, si quieres,
rompe la tela deste dulce encuentro.

¡Oh, cautiverio suave!
¡Oh, regalada llaga!
¡Oh, mano blanca ¡Oh, toque delicado,
que a vida eterna sabe,
y toda deuda paga!
Matando muerte en vida la has trocado.
[Citation]

[O living flame of love,
how tenderly you wound
my soul in her profoundest core!
You are no longer shy.
Do it now I ask you:
Break the membrane of our sweet union.

O soothing cautery!
O wound that is a joy!
O gentle hand! O delicate touch
tasting of eternity,
repaying every debt.
Killing you turn my death to life.]

Here, the presence of God is felt in the body as a burning pain, as sensation and not as reason, and hence as an expression of the paradox of Christ's life-giving suffering. For Lorca, poetry not only

represents this divine wounding, but true poetic language has the ability to surpass our reason and speak directly to our “tragic” affect; the wounding of poetry is then its animating, life giving quality. As for Unamuno “sólo es divino lo que sufre,” (“only that which suffers is divine”), then poetry is the divinization of man through the realization of our fundamental suffering.

For Lorca, the highest expression of poetry’s ability to wound divinely lies within his concept of the *hecho poético*. These irrational yet emotive “poetic events” or “facts” operate under a mysterious logic that is unknown “even to the poet himself” (Gibson 357). One report of the conference describes the phenomenon as this: “Hay que aceptarlo [el hecho poético] como se acepta la lluvia de estrellas. Pero alegrémonos... de que la poesía pueda fugarse, evadirse, de las garras frías del razonamiento” [One must accept the poetic event like one accepts rain from the stars. But let us rejoice... that poetry can flee, evade, the cold claws of reason]. Again, poetry’s greatest feat is that it can surpass the confines of reason, which is to say, it can express Unamuno’s vital irrationality directly to the soul. As with Unamuno, Lorca sees reason as limited to the human realm, necessitating the power of poetry to instruct mankind of its transcendence to the “other-sidedness” that contains true reality.

We should also note here that for Lorca, this *hecho poético* epitomizes poetry’s *evasive* aspect. This term—evasive—carries certain ludic connotations and perhaps signals the tail end of Lorca’s loose interest with the often-whimsical Surrealist movement. In some sense this may seem difficult to reconcile: on one hand evasive, playful irrationality, on the other, tragic Catholic irrationality. While Lorca’s poetry, particularly in his earlier work, does at times have certain whimsical and ironic elements, when we actually investigate what seem to be Lorca’s own “*hechos poéticos*,” we see that they are almost always violent and tragic. The example Lorca himself gives from “Romance Sonámbulo” delicately hints at this violence: “Mil panderos de cristal / herían la madrugada” [A thousand crystal tambourines / wounded the early morning]. The crystal of the tambourines and the hour of the early morning suggest light, making daybreak

a tragic event in its wounding. Just as Unamuno looked toward the divine wounding of Christ as a foundational and creative wounding that gives rise to life, Lorca poetically imagines here the light of morning, usually an optimistic image for the coming day and renewed life, as a wounding by light. The reports of Lorca's talks unfortunately (and somewhat oddly) do not give more examples of the *hechos poéticos* that Lorca used to illustrate his concept, but the tragic nature of these "poetic events" can be clearly seen in the experimental images in *Poeta en Nueva York*—both Lorca's most tragic and most irrational book of poetry, to which we can now turn.

Disfigured Forms and Perfect Architecture: Lorca's Arrival in New York City

Following the publication of the *Romancero Gitano* in 1928, Lorca seems to have entered into a period of intense meditation on Catholicism. He began work on *Oda al Santísimo Sacramento del Altar*, a long poem that contemplates the mystery of Christ made Flesh in the Eucharist; a poem he did not finish until at least a year later in New York (Southworth 141). Though this is Lorca's most open address to Catholicism, it is in *Poeta en Nueva York* where we see the struggle with his Catholic heritage, perhaps brought into relief by its contrast with the American Protestants and Jews. In Lorca's letters from the United States to his family, he frequently reports on the religious diversity in the United States, noting that even American Catholicism has been "minado por el protestantismo" and no longer has "cordialidad... [y] solemnidad, es decir, calor humano" [Catholicism has been undermined by Protestantism and no longer has cordiality and the solemnity, that is, human warmth] (Lorca 1997 626-627).

In many ways, this lack of solemnity in life, lack of warmth toward others, and the uncanny absence of the human spirit despite the overabundance of human bodies represent for Lorca the tragedy of New York City. The first sections of the work are colored by the shock at the marked otherness of the world that Lorca has entered, resulting in a desperate resignation in the

face of social tragedy while Lorca worked to come to terms with his new experiences. The first poem in the work, “Vuelta de paseo” [Back from a Walk] expresses with several *hechos poéticos* the hopelessness Lorca felt after having taken a walk through the city:

Asesinado por el cielo,
entre las formas que van hacia la sierpe
y las formas que buscan el cristal,
dejaré crecer mis cabellos.

Con el árbol de muñones que no canta
y el niño con el blanco rostro de huevo.

Con los animalitos de cabeza rota
y el agua harapienta de los pies secos.

Con todo lo que tiene cansancio sordomudo
y mariposa ahogada en el tintero.

Tropezando con mi rostro distinto de cada día.
¡Asesinado por el cielo! (p. 640)

[Murdered by the sky.
Between shapes moving toward the serpent
and crystal craving shapes,
I'll let my hair grow.

With the amputated tree that doesn't sing
and the child with the blank face of an egg.

With the little animals whose skulls are cracked
and the water, dressed in rags, but with dry feet.

With all the bone tired, deaf-and-dumb things
and a butterfly drowned in the inkwell.

Stumbling into my own face, different each day.
Murdered by the sky!]

Within this strange world Lorca encounters a number of images he can only describe with his irrational *hechos poéticos*: the “amputated tree that doesn't sign,” and the child with seemingly no facial features but only the “blank face of an egg,” images that call attention to the violent

oppression of children. We are also presented with the particularly difficult to interpret *hecho*, “el agua harapienta de los pies secos.” “The tattered water of dry feet” invokes water as tatters: a spraying out of water, as if from a puddle stepped in by a shoe, and hence the dry feet. Perhaps Lorca is hinting at a disconnect between life (feet) and nature (water), but this remains indeterminate at best. Nevertheless, the image of the tatters seems to invoke homelessness, and the dry feet do not seem to express any kind of comfort. As this appears in a series of ghastly images—the amputated tree, the faceless child, the smashed heads of small animals—its context further suggests the vital tragedy of New York City: oppressive reason and the wounded beings crying out for care.

These beings seem to have little possibility for redemption in their present state, since Lorca names them as only vague “formas” that move either down toward the “snake”, a symbol involving the underground subway system, or up toward “cristal” (glass), a synecdoche for the towering skyscrapers and the suspicious ideals of progress they represent. Though downward may be infernal, the upward direction seems equally undesirable especially once we see that rigid forms and fixed lines, such as the “cristal,” are coded negatively throughout *Poeta en Nueva York*. The precise geometry of the modern architecture is constantly juxtaposed with the fluidity and freedom of life, such as in these lines from “Panorama ciego de Nueva York” [Blind Panorama of New York], another poem early in the volume expressing the “blinding” tragedy Lorca witnessed: “Pero el verdadero dolor estaba en otras plazas / donde los peces cristalizados agonizaban dentro de los troncos” (Lorca 1994, 344) [But the true pain was in other plazas / where the crystalized fish agonized inside the [tree] trunks.]. Here, Lorca relates true pain to the crystallization of the fluid forms of fish, a traditional symbol of fertility; in this way, life is expressed as a desire for movement beyond the rigid forms of the New World. This reaction against the fixation of life in glass and other rigid figures connects with Unamuno’s idea that the rational mind—always opposed to the irrational heart—can only operate with definite, and hence,

dead forms: “La mente busca lo muerto, pues lo vivo se le escapa; quiere cuajar en témpanos la corriente fugitiva, quiere fijarla... Para comprender algo hay que matarlo, enrigidecerlo en la mente” (73) (The mind seeks what is dead, for what is living escapes it; it seeks to congeal the flowing stream in blocks of ice; it seeks to arrest it... In order to understand anything it is necessary to kill it, to lay it out rigid in the mind” [90]).

In another poem, Lorca relates the exactitude of the architectural geometry directly with the fixedness of Protestant thought and its ignorance of vitality in favor of the dead forms of economic progress. In *Nacimiento de Cristo* rigid architectural features, like that of glass, are associated with Protestantism through a direct invocation of Luther himself. Here, the birth of Christ takes place in an eerie setting whose apocalyptic images, like “Los vientres del demonio resuenan por los valles,” (“The demon’s intestines resonate through the valleys”) overshadow the traces of the ineffectual “Cristito de barro” (680) (“little clay Christ”). After several stanzas of surreal and terrifying images, the poem ends in a procession of fallen religious figures, led by Luther himself, through the rigid forms New York City:

La nieve de Manhattan empuja los anuncios
y lleva gracia pura por las falsas ojivas.
Sacerdotes idiotas y querubos de pluma
Van detrás de Lutero por las altas esquinas. (680)

[The snow of Manhattan blows against billboards
and carries pure grace through the fake Gothic arches.
Idiot clergymen and cherubim in feathers
follow Luther in a line around the high corners.]

The “gracia pura” [pure grace] carried by the snow is oppressed by the iron billboards and juxtaposed against the “falsas ojivas” [ogives, a kind of gothic arch], while Luther walks among the “altas esquinas” [high corners], the towering corners of the skyscrapers that oppress the city.

Against these rigid forms that have corrupted the fluidity and evasiveness of authentic

spirituality, Lorca comes to identify a system of ethics through irrational poetic representations of and reactions to the bodily suffering he witnessed in his journey to New York. Following Unamuno's demonstration that life is found in the inconclusiveness of vital suffering as opposed to the perfection of lifeless forms, in the next section we will see how Lorca looks toward the primordial wounding of Christ's body as the source of his authentic poetic voice—a voice that will give testament to the irrational suffering that constitutes human existence.

“Voz de mi costado abierto:” The Reconciliation of Lorca's Poetic Vocation

Midway through *Poeta en Nueva York* Lorca briefly leaves the city to visit an American family in picturesque rural Vermont, a space of calm and reflection where Lorca begins to come to terms with his poetic vocation of bearing witness to the suffering he experiences. Escaping from the “arquitectura extrahumana y ritmo furioso” [extrahuman architecture and furious rhythm] New York Lorca connects with the natural symbols of rebirth and regeneration that we explored in the last chapter (Lorca 1984, 349.) For example, the “low waters” of Eden Lake near where Lorca was staying give rise to the “Poema doble del lago Eden,” a key expression for Lorca's spiritual and poetic renewal. Though Lorca connects with these symbols, nature will ultimately offer him little solace, as was the case with poets we studied in the last chapter who continued to find themselves in uncertain relationships to the primordial regenerative powers of nature. Nevertheless, in his experiences in rural Vermont, Lorca comes to terms with his position as a poet who will take his inspirations from the conflicts and tragedies of life, although he will never find resolution in them, he can at least expect the “flight and current” that García Nieto experienced upon his encounter with the alterity of nature.

In the opening lines, Lorca gives us both an image of the possibility of the regenerative capacity of nature, yet he also introduces a now familiar motif of bodily suffering and pain that

will give rise to his poetic vocation, the “voz de mi abierto costado” [voice of my open side]:

Era mi voz antigua
ignorante de los densos jugos amargos.
La adivino lamiendo mis pies
bajo los frágiles helechos mojados.

[It was my ancient voice
ignorant of the dense, bitter juices.
I sense it licking my feet
underneath the fragile, wet ferns.]

Like in García Nieto’s “A tu orilla he venido...” the search for the “ancient voice” is the search for primordial and authentic voice of real creation and foundation; this will be contrasted later in another poem that describes the decadent, unnatural expressions that Lorca witnessed in the modern city, such as “las voces de los borrachos” [“the voice of the drunks”] and the “voz de hojalata and talco” [“voice of tinsplate and talc”]. In a typical romantic and modernist trope, Lorca senses the presence this ancient voice in the natural world, “under the fragile, wet ferns,” an ideal world evoked by the utopian place name of Lake Eden. But as we read the next stanza, we see that it is not nature where Lorca finds his ancient voice, but rather he finds it in his own wounded body, figured in parallel to the dead body of Christ:

¡Ay voz antigua de mi amor,
ay voz de mi verdad,
ay voz de mi abierto costado,
cuando todas las rosas manaban de mi lengua
y el césped no conocía la impasible dentadura del caballo!

[Ay, voice of ancient love,
ay, voice of my truth,
ay, voice of my open side,
when all the roses flowed from my tongue
and the lawn did not know the impassive teeth of the horse!]

The image of the “open side” recalls the last wound inflicted upon Christ’s body, as a soldier pierces Christ’s rib with a spear creating a wound from which blood and water flow.³⁵ Lorca here looks not toward the regenerative powers of nature with its promise of life, but rather to the body of Christ with its promise of death.

Connecting us back with Chapter 2, the poem even begins with an epigram from Garcilaso’s “Égloga II”—“Nuestro ganado pace, el viento espira” [“Our herd grazes, the wind exhales”]—demonstrating that even the experimental and “dehumanized” poetry of the *Generación del ‘27* tended to root itself within Spanish poetic tradition.³⁶ Although written in 1929, seven years before the widespread reflections on Garcilaso’s legacy that we explored last chapter, Lorca’s use of the Toledoan poet’s verse anticipates the decadent readings that color *garcilasismo*. While at first the epigram seems to reinforce the rustic and pristine Lake Eden, the locus of Lorca’s palingenetic renewal through nature, examining the context of the quote in Garcilaso’s “Égloga II” cues us into Lorca’s skepticism toward the utopian ideal of the *beatus ille*. In Garcilaso’s poem, the shepherd Salicio does seemingly use these words to evoke the simple bliss of country life, but his declaration comes in the midst of a strange and unsettling scene: Salicio and fellow shepherd Nemeroso have just resorted to tying up their companion Albanio who has gone insane and assaulted Nemeroso after being rejected by Camila, his former lover.³⁷ The violent and emotional trauma of Albanio, now tied up and asleep after having exhausted himself in his rage, offers a deeply ironic contrast to the supposed natural harmony that defines the *beatus ille* trope.

Turning back to Lorca’s poem, we can see that he uses the evocation of the *beatus ille* with similar ironic intent. Like Albanio, Lorca is under similar emotional duress following

³⁵ “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” (John 19:33-4, King James Edition).

³⁶ Footnote on Alberti and Garcilaso

³⁷ Footnote about critics commentaries on Albanio’s “schizophrenia.”

personal crises at home and his despair at the chaos of New York City. Like Albanio, he is similarly presented with nature as a possibility of a palingenetic renewal through a reconnection with nature. Yet Lorca, following Garcilaso's ironic presentation of the *beatus ille*, portrays a deep skepticism toward such idealized and facile solutions to psychological trauma. Lorca continues to be tormented by the "voices of the drunks" and the "voice of tinsplate and talc" that still cry out from the city; even if Lorca momentarily finds himself in an Edenic sanctuary, he knows he will soon return to the urban chaos from which he has recently departed. This skepticism toward the regenerative powers of nature is also affirmed by another irony found in Lorca's use of the image of the grazing horses, likewise adapted from Garcilaso. The irony becomes apparent as we connect the image of grass to similar images throughout *Poeta en Nueva York*, where grass, especially when being grazed upon, is a figure of death, a memory of the dead buried beneath whom, in their oblivion, become food for the unknowing animals.³⁸

As Lorca reflects upon the foundations of Spanish literary tradition, he finds, just as the *garcilasista* poets we examined last chapter, that nature, even with its pristine beauty offers no solace for his psychological troubles and no solution for the inhumanity of the city to which he must return. Yet in the "voice of the wounded side" with its representation of the fundamental wounding of existence that is the very basis for the rift between man and nature, Lorca comes to understand his position as a poet who must delve into the suffering of mankind in order to care for it. Reflecting on this difficult mission to investigate and decry suffering, where his body "flota... entre equilibrios contrarios" [floats... between contrary equilibriums"], Lorca comes to

³⁸ The examples of grass as a symbol for death are numerous: "Es allí donde sueñan los torsos bajo la gula de la hierba" [It is there where the torsos dream between the gluttony of the grass] ("Norma y paraíso de los negros"); "tu buscaste en la hierba mi agonía / mi agonía con flores de terror" ["you looked in the grass for my agony / my agony with flowers of terror"] ("El niño Stanton"); "Vienen las hierbas, hijo; ya suenan sus espadas de saliva, por el cielo vacío" ["The grasses are coming, child / you can already hear their swords of saliva / in the empty heavens"] ("Ruina"); "ni quien cultive grass in the mouth of death" ["nor anyone who grows grass in the mouth of death"] ("Grito hacia Roma"); "tendremos que pacer sin descanso las hierbas de los cementerios" ["we will have to graze tirelessly the grasses of the cemeteries"] ("Pequeño poema infinito").

an assertion of the precarious nature of his existence in some of the most memorable lines from the book: "...yo no soy un hombre, ni un poeta, ni una hoja, / pero sí un pulso herido que sonda las cosas del otro lado" [I am not a man, nor a poet, nor a leaf, only a wounded pulse that probes the things of the other side]. Through his understanding of the fundamental instability and tragedy that constitutes life, Lorca rejects his identity as a man, as an artist, and as a (possible) part of the natural world, asserting that he is only a wounded flow of blood meant to flow in to investigate the death always present just on the other side of life.

Dos odas: Lorca's Final Criticisms of the New World

As Lorca returns to the city, we find his most aggressive denunciations of it. While there are still expressions of horror at the perils of modern city life, Lorca speaks with renewed vigor, actively calling for attention to suffering instead of expressing resigned shock at the inhumanity he witnessed. The most intense moment of Lorca's active denunciation utilizing his new found strength comes in the section *Dos odas* [Two Odes], consisting of one ode that looks back toward Rome in a cry for help, and another that sets forth a criticism on the poetics of the New World through an apostrophe to Walt Whitman, a poet Lorca had recently read in translation.³⁹

The first of these two odes, "Grito hacia Roma, desde la torre del Chrysler Building" [Cry to Rome, from the Tower of the Chrysler Building] represents for critic Paul Binding the emotional climax of the work (18), and is particularly important for our theme for its direct relation to Catholicism. Figuratively exclaimed from atop the then tallest building in the world, these verses look back with both hope and distress toward the center of the Catholic world in a wish to re-substantiate the vitality of suffering in New York and the United States. As Southworth notes, the poem is generally critical of the institutions of Catholicism: Lorca aligns the oppressive

³⁹ Footnote about Giner's translation of "Song of Myself."

architecture of New York with that of St. Peter's Basilica, and the suits and rings of Wall Street businessmen with the fine fabrics and jewelry of corrupted priests (728). The poem also ends with a rewriting of the Lord's Prayer which reads as an accusation of the Church's hypocritical distribution of wealth: "porque queremos que se cumpla la voluntad de la Tierra / que da sus frutos para todos" [Because we demand that Earth's will be done, / that its fruits be offered to everyone] (Southworth 728). Furthermore, Federico Bonaddio notes, following Harris (1979), that this poem comes at an important historical juncture for the Catholic Church, as it was written shortly after Pope Pius XI's pact with Mussolini and the Fascist Italian state (Bonaddio 160). With this in mind, some of the poem's ambiguous references, such as the "viejo" (old man) whose lips turn to a moneyed-silver, become clear criticisms of the Papacy. Again, though Lorca returns to the archaic theme of Catholicism, these criticisms show that this does not represent a blind return or subservience to the institution, but rather a critical reworking of particular redeeming qualities.

Despite these criticisms, the poem is as much a call for a Christian spiritual revival as it is an accusation of corruption. Aside from the direct references to Christian redemption ("Porque ya no hay quien reparta el pan y el vino" [Because there is no one to bestow the bread or the wine"] and "...el hombre vestido de blanco... / ignora que Cristo puede dar agua todavía" [the man dressed in white... / [ignores] that Christ can still give water]) there is a strong presence of Unamuno-esque Spanish Catholic themes throughout the entire poem. For example, in the second section of the poem Lorca proclaims the need for a lament of pain and weakness rather than a focus on the fleeting states of wealth:

El hombre que desprecia la paloma debía hablar,
 debía gritar desnudo entre las columnas,
 y ponerse una inyección para adquirir la lepra
 y llorar un llanto tan terrible
 que disolviera sus anillos y sus teléfonos de diamante.

Pero el hombre vestido de blanco
 ignora el misterio de la espiga,
 ignora el gemido de la parturienta,
 ignora que Cristo puede dar agua todavía
 ignora que la moneda quema el beso de prodigio... (p. 726)

[The man who scorns the dove should have spoken,
 screamed naked between the columns
 and injected himself with leprosy
 and shed tears terrible enough
 to dissolve his rings and diamond telephones.
 But when the man dressed in white
 knows nothing of the mystery of the wheat ear,
 or the moans of a woman giving birth
 or the fact that Christ can still give water
 or the money that burns the prodigy's kill.]

The man who scorns the dove (a traditional symbol for the Holy Spirit) would have done better to shout so that his tears may dissolve the rings and the rigid, diamond telephones that imprison him.

The man dressed in white—a reference to the en vogue white suits of Wall Street businessman (Binding 130)—ignores the pain of the woman giving birth, the suffering that, very directly in this case, gives life.

The poem ends with a call for an intense collective lamentation of all those oppressed in New York:

Mientras tanto, mientras tanto, ¡ay!, mientras tanto,
 los negros que sacan las escupideras,
 los muchachos que tiemblan bajo el terror pálido de los directores,
 las mujeres ahogadas en aceites minerales,
 la muchedumbre de martillo, de violín o de nube,
 ha de gritar aunque le estrellen los sesos en el muro,
 ha de gritar frente a las cúpulas,
 ha de gritar loca de fuego,
 ha de gritar loca de nieve,
 ha de gritar con la cabeza llena de excremento,
 ha de gritar como todas las noches juntas,
 ha de gritar con voz tan desgarrada...

[Meanwhile, yes, meanwhile the blacks who empty the spittoons,
 the boys who tremble beneath the pallid terror of the executives,

the women who drown in mineral oil,
 the multitudes with their hammers, violins, or clouds—
 they'll scream even if they bash their brains against the wall
 scream in front of the domes,
 scream driven crazy by fire,
 scream driven crazy by snow,
 scream with their heads full of excrement,
 scream as if all the nights converged,
 scream with such a heartrending voice]

Curiously, Bonaddio argues that these lines form a parody of the call to violence against the Catholic Church in Marinetti's *Proclama futurista a los españoles*, a text Lorca would have had in mind considering the recent pact between the Church and the Fascists (Bonaddio 158). It would be incorrect to discount this interpretation of these lines, both because it is well argued, and because Lorca thrives on ambiguities double meanings, (cf. *hecho poético* as the life of the poem). Nevertheless, we might also view these lines not as parodical, but as part of what Lorca sees as a genuine remedy to the woes of New York City: not a call to action, per se, but a collective lament that would express the tragic, and hence vital, pain of those who fare worse in the city such as women, the blacks, and children.

Following Unamuno's discussion of mourning in *Del sentimiento trágico*, we can further corroborate the notion that Lorca's call to collective lament expresses an authentic expression of hope. In the first chapter, Unamuno relates an anecdote about the Greek statesman Solon: "Un pedante que vio a Solón llorar la muerte de un hijo, le dijo: '¿Para qué lloras así, si eso de nada sirve?' Claro está que el llorar sirve de algo, aunque no sea más que de desahogo; pero bien se ve el profundo sentido de la respuesta..." (21) ["A pedant who beheld Solon weeping for the death of a son said to him, 'Why do you weep thus, if weeping avails nothing?' And the sage answered him, 'Precisely for this reason—because it does not avail.' It is manifest that weeping avails something, even if only the alleviation of distress; but the deep sense of Solon's reply to the impertinent questioner is plainly seen" (17)]. For Unamuno, mourning may have a purpose to

relieve a certain bodily stress, but more than this it is the kind of “resigned despair” or “desperate resignation” discussed above, the tragic but true view of life resulting from the belief in immortality and the rational doubt which undermines it. Unamuno goes on to note that the most profound expression of mourning, as with Lorca’s remedy for New York, is an expression of collective lament: “Lo más santo de un templo es que es el lugar a que se va a llorar en común. Un *Miserere*, cantado en común por una muchedumbre, azotado del destino, vale tanto como una filosofía” (21) (The chiefest sanctity of a temple is that it is a place to which men go to weep in common. A *miserere* sung in common by a multitude tormented by destiny has as much value as a philosophy.” Though Unamuno was born in Bilbao and resided in Salamanca, he seems to have in mind here a very Andalusian ritual which would have been very familiar to Lorca: the famous *Semana Santa* processions, in which a wooden Mary, painted with visible tears, is carried through the streets as women sing laments from nearby terraces. Christopher Flint, in his analysis of bodies in *Poeta en Nueva York*, also points out that the bodies of the oppressed are frequently presented in states of pain, giving voice to the marginalized figures in their anguish (Flint 182). In this way, Lorca addresses the tragic irony that the weakness and mortality of a body only becomes noticeable once it expresses its own pain—perfectly tragic in Unamuno’s sense of the word.

After looking toward Rome in testament to suffering, in the second ode Lorca turns his gaze back to the New World, this time addressing its poetics and aesthetics through an apostrophe of one of its most notorious poets, Walt Whitman. “Oda a Walt Whitman,” the longest poem in *Poeta en Nueva York*, has largely been read as a celebration of the U.S. poet, and to a certain extent it is: we know Lorca admired his poetry greatly, and he seems to look toward Walt Whitman as a possible model for pure gay poet, devoid of the perverse connotations generally

conflated with homosexuality at that time.⁴⁰ In the opening stanza of the poem, Lorca imagines Whitman as an “ángel oculto” [hidden angel] who speaks with a “voz perfecta” [perfect voice] that might redeem the downfall of New York into filth:

Nueva York de cieno,
 Nueva York de alambres y de muerte.
 ¿Qué ángel llevas oculto en la mejilla?
 ¿Qué voz perfecta dirá las verdades del trigo? (730-1)

[New York of mud,
 New York of wire and death.
 What angel lies hidden in your cheek?
 What perfect voice will speak the truth of wheat?]

In the next stanza, Lorca reveals that it is Whitman who he hopes may be the answer to these questions, and that he has kept Whitman in his poetic vision throughout his stay in New York as a source of possible redemption:

Ni un solo momento, viejo hermoso Walt Whitman,
 he dejado de ver tu barba llena de mariposas,
 ni tus hombros de pana gastados por la luna,
 ni tus muslos de Apolo virginal... (730-1)

[Not for a single moment, Walt Whitman, lovely old man,
 have I ceased to see your beard filled with butterflies,
 nor your corduroy shoulders frayed by the moon,
 nor your thighs of virgin Apollo...]

Despite Lorca’s praise of Whitman as America’s bard in the opening lines of the poem, Paul Binding keenly notes that Lorca is actually quite critical of him for two important reasons related to the dangers of Protestant progressivism and the lack of tragic vitality in the United States: “Lorca is rebuking Whitman... on two accounts: that he didn’t anticipate... the direction in which his society with its pioneering acquisitions and industry was moving; that he didn’t

⁴⁰ For other discussions of this poem, all of which code Whitman positively in some way, see, Ilie 1968, Laguardia 1978, Flint 1988, Nandorfy 2000, Havard 2000, and Bonaddio 2010.

properly acknowledge the wickedness and suffering that are a part of life” (138). Lorca is critical, in a word, of Whitman’s lack of attunement to the “*sentimiento trágico de la vida*,” which both recognizes the limitations of reason and progress, and understands the need to be aware of human suffering.

In the opening lines of the ode, even before Lorca sings the praises of Whitman, the poet presents young men hard at work and busy school children learning the rigid forms that have already begun to imprison them, demonstrating pitfalls of industry and progress:

Por el East River y el Bronx
 los muchachos cantaban enseñando sus cinturas
 con la rueda, el aceite, el cuero y el martillo.
 Noventa mil mineros sacaban la plata de las rocas
 y los niños dibujaban escaleras y perspectivas. (730-731)

[By the East River and the Bronx
 boys were singing, exposing their waists,
 with the wheel, with oil, leather, and the hammer.
 Ninety thousand miners taking silver from the rocks
 and the children drawing stairs and perspectives.]

Lorca describes these figures strongly and directly, especially as they reference the presentation of the virile workers in Section 12 of “Song of Myself;” but given what we have observed with rigid forms and money, we can already see that the image also has a strong negative side, as well. The workers do not attain any kind of self-satisfaction or spiritual development: they must work continuously and remain separated from nature:

Pero ninguno se dormía,
 ninguno quería ser el río,

 Pero ninguno se detenía,
 ninguno quería ser nube. (730-1)

[But none of them could sleep,
 none of them wanted to be the river

.....
 But none of them paused,
 none of them wanted to be a cloud.]

Eventually, torture and death come to those who can no longer bear to work: “un límite de agujas cercará la memoria / y los ataúdes se llevarán a los que no trabajaban” (730-1) [a border of needles will besiege memory / and the hearses will bear away those who don’t work]. We are reminded again of Lorca’s analysis of Wall Street, with which we started: “[The] crowd that fills this street believes that the world will always be the same, and that it is their duty to keep that huge machine running, day and night, forever” (Lorca 2013, 187). The economic pragmatics of Protestantism only enslaves workers, and leaves no path for a spiritual connection with life.

After the presentation of the restless workers, Whitman is invoked as a possible redeemer of the city in the lines we cited above: he is associated with nature (“tu barba, llena de mariposas”), with chaste deities (“tus muslos de Apolo virginal”), and also with the mysterious and poetic moon (“hombros de pana gastados por la luna”). But the potential of Whitman’s America is not fulfilled, a failure epitomized, as Binding notes, by an apple tainted with gasoline, attributed as belonging to Whitman himself (“tu manzana / con un leve sabor de gasoline” [“your apple / with the light taste of gasoline”]) (Binding 130). Eventually, Lorca comes to openly criticize Whitman for his lack of vision of the negative side of industry, urban development, and life in general:

Pero tú no buscabas los ojos arañados,
 ni el pantano oscuro donde sumergen los niños
 ni la saliva helada,
 ni las curvas heridas como panza de sapo (732-3)

[But you didn’t look for scratched eyes,
 nor the darkest swamp where someone submerges children,
 nor the frozen saliva,
 nor the curves slit open like a toad’s belly.]

The corrupted potential of the United States has been caused, at least in part, by a lack of awareness of tragedy and suffering. The horrors that Lorca tries desperately to represent with fresh vitality are conceived as consequences of reason and progress not kept in check by the basic needs of life.

On one hand these basic needs are political: minorities, such as women, blacks, and children have been marginalized and denied their fair share of the fruits produced in economic development (recall the end of “Grito hacia Roma:” “que da [la Tierra] sus frutos para todos” [that (the earth’s) fruits be offered to everyone]). On the other hand, these needs are also spiritual since their lack has dehumanized all classes of people, both the minorities who work tirelessly like machines, as well as the businessmen who are able to rationalize subjecting other humans to such conditions. Unamuno would argue that this irrational spiritual concern is in fact that which gives rise to rational ethical considerations, since it is precisely the development of pity for suffering that allows one to act ethically (67). In order to give meaning to our efforts of helping others, we need to first develop and be aware of our own drive (affect) for life and our own dread and humility in the face of suffering and death: “Sólo compadecemos, es decir, amamos, lo que nos es semejante... y así crece nuestra compasión, y con ella nuestro a’mor a las cosas a medida que descubrimos las semejanzas que con nosotros tienen” (67) [We only pity—that is to say, we only love—that which is like ourselves... and thus our pity for things, and with it our love, grows in proportion as we discover in them the likenesses which they have with ourselves” (139)]. Before we can feel pity for others who are weak and in need, we must be aware of our own limitations. In this case, it is poetry that can provide this self-awareness, especially irrationalist poetry full of *hechos poéticos* that wound the body, making it cry out in pain against forms of repression, and marking the limits of rationalization. Whitman’s poetics of the strong, the healthy, and the beautiful creates a false standard that actually inhibits seeing oneself as weak, suffering, and abnormal. Understanding one’s own weaknesses, according to Unamuno, is to have a vital

attunement to the tragic aspect of life, which is also a necessary condition for loving others. For Lorca, the acknowledgment of suffering is also the condition for a socially responsible poetics.

Conclusion

I began by stating that *Poeta in Nueva York* is Lorca's most openly critical book of poetry. Indeed, Lorca's championing of marginalized populations and his denunciation of dehumanized, insatiable businessmen encourages political readings. But the book also represents a spiritual attunement to suffering, to both the poet's own weakness in his precarious position "floating between contrary equilibriums", and to the often tragic lives of others. For Unamuno, this attunement to suffering is particularly a Catholic characteristic, since it was Catholicism that understood that life's most fundamental conditions are tragedy and suffering, caused by a conflict between the affective drive to live forever, and the limitations of the rational mind. Catholicism's genius lies in the vital paradox of a god, Christ, that would prove life through the tragedy of torture and death.

Because life is primarily affective—i.e. the heart over the mind—an overvaluation of rationalization actually decreases the extent to which one is actually alive. For Lorca and Unamuno alike, this overvaluation is attributed to Protestantism. However incorrect or simplistic such an accusation may be, it demonstrates here that these Spanish writers, take an archaic turn back to their own religious and poetic tradition as fully conscious resistance to the anti-Spanish discourse pervasive in Europe since at least the times of Kant, Hegel, and other Enlightenment philosophers. Lorca in particular, who wandered out into the New World, comes to identify the false logic of endless progress driving the modern metropolis—manifested in the skyscrapers, billboards, and faux-gothic arches—with the downfall of affective care for those forgotten in the rapidly advancing city. This lack of affect also leads to a poetics that dangerously focuses on the

strong and the beautiful, leaving the weak and the poor ignored and on margins of society. Walt Whitman, as the embodiment of this aesthetic in the New World, demonstrates that the consequences of aesthetics that overvalues perfection are far from trivial, but can rather result in a contribution to an obsession with advancement at all costs.

Lorca offers an alternative vision of New York and the United States, one that is not afraid to address the darker sides of the self, and in turn, the darker sides of society. It is a poetics that is willing to resist easy intelligibility for the sake of expressing the irrational feelings that are proof of life, the “sentimiento trágico de la vida.” Yet in this resistance to intelligibility and rationalism as an ethical stance against the failures of capitalist modernism, Lorca still maintains the archaic idea that true poetry will be understood, “en una especie de estado de gracia” [“as in kind of state of grace”]. Even as Lorca has generated from Spanish Catholic an advanced experimental and ethical poetic expression, its ultimate truth, for Lorca, is still inseparable from a belief-laden mysticism that fits uncomfortably within the liberal, social political agenda to which he aspires. Again, the use of Spain’s archaism often functions in ways that lead to highly progressive aesthetics, even when the ideology undergirding poetic creation involve ambivalent and even contradictory relationships with the belief-laden and sometimes oppressive discourses of the past.

Chapter 3

The Epistemophilic Archaism of Juan Eduardo Cirlot

*El centro es lo lejano, y es allí
entre espirales grises y plateadas,
donde acaso la cruz es una cruz,
el cruce y el encuentro.*

*The center is the distant, and it's there
among grey and silver spirals,
where perhaps the cross is a cross,
the crossing and the encounter.*
—Juan Eduardo Cirlot, Bronwyn

The Circle, the Center, and the Cursed Spiral

Approaching the poetry of Juan Eduardo Cirlot is not an easy task. In the first place, one must deal with the odd variety found within Cirlot's extensive poetic oeuvre: throughout the approximately 110 chapbooks of poetry published in his lifetime—some 1,200 pages-worth—one finds a complicated and even contradictory array of styles and themes. Formally, Cirlot excelled at many traditional models such like the sonnet, while also experimenting continuously with forms like hypnotic, liturgical lists and “phono-visual” poems consisting of sparsely arranged strings of letters. The content of his poetry is perhaps even more eclectic and strange, with poems dedicated to an overdosed Swedish actress, the ancient siege of Cartagena, and an aging ex-Nazi—not to mention an entire cycle of mystic love poems for a character in a forgotten Frank Schaffner film. To add to the obscurity and complexity of his poetry, Cirlot also drew heavily

from his work as a critic and intellectual, which comprises of 41 monographs and over 600 articles dedicated to an equally broad range of topics, such as world esoteric traditions, modern art and music, Romantic literature, Romanesque architecture, and even amusement parks. As critic Isabel Román has recently put it, Cirlot is simply “un raro” [an odd one] (Román 37).

Like Lorca, Cirlot developed an experimental poetic practice deeply rooted in a vital irrationalism that opposes the finite closure of logical thinking. In his reflections on *The War Lord*, Frank Schaffner’s film mentioned above, Cirlot formulates why he rejects rationality as a poet, linking this reasoning with a the thought of an archaic mankind—a mankind who rejects both logic and rationality:

Si durante muchos siglos, los seres humanos han preferido el mito a la interpretación, el ensueño a la formulación racional de sus elementos, la creencia a un conocimiento que, seguramente, por esencia propia es imposible en tanto que tal, es por miedo a la decepción que tales conclusiones aportan. La virtud del relato, de la poesía, del mito es “mover el alma a creer”...(*Bronwyn*, 627)

[If for many centuries, human beings have preferred myth to interpretation, reverie (dream) to the rational formulation of its elements, belief to knowledge that, surely, in its own essence is impossible as such, it is for fear of the disappointment [deception] that such conclusions provide. The virtue of the tale, of poetry, of myth is to “move the soul to believe”...]

Also like Lorca, Cirlot often uses the Christ, wounding, and the cross as symbols that found this irrationality. But at a difference, the symbols of Christianity are just one of the ever-proliferating epistemologies that Cirlot would use as both the ground and form of his poetic experimentations. Though Cirlot was removed from Jesuit school at the age of just thirteen to help support his family, he received informal training in the avant-garde and abstract art from painter Alfonso Buñuel (younger brother of film director Luis), in medieval history and symbolism from scholar Gudiol, and world symbolic and hermetic traditions from the eclectic ethnomusicologist Marius Schneider. Beyond this, Cirlot worked throughout his entire adult life

as a copy editor and translator for two small presses, where he would read and translate a vast number of historical, philosophical, critical, and fictional works. While many of the disciplines Cirlot would study offered archaic and irrational forms of organizing knowledge, such as Gnosticism and Ancient Sumerian mythology, Cirlot's epistemophilic collection of world knowledges served in itself as his primary form of evading the kinds of aesthetic "disappointments" [decepciones] that he believed rational conclusions mandates.

Whereas Cirlot's work as a scholar aimed at collecting (in his readings), organizing (in his dictionaries), and explaining vast amounts of knowledge in his critical works and articles, Cirlot's experimental poetic method undertook a deliberate program to transform, alter, and destroy the discourses with which he engaged. Returning to Cirlot's definition of experimentalism, the two principles he stipulates describe the deconstructive nature of his poetic method: "Respecto a las realizaciones: consciencia de la provisionalidad. Respecto a la técnica, voluntad de fragmentación y de cultivos parciales de las estructuras desmontadas" [In respect to the realizations: consciousness of provisionality. In respect to the technique, desire for fragmentation and partial cultivation of dismantled structures] (Cirlot 1949/2006 230-1). On one hand, the provisionality of his aesthetic realizations guaranteed a continual evasion of rational finality through ever increasing number of discourses and knowledges that would inform the creation of his work. On the other hand, the principle of "fragmentation and partial cultivation of dismantled structures" ensured a constantly shifting rhizome of "encounters" among the numerous popular and esoteric discourses within his complex intellectual universe, causing an endless proliferation of lines of flight and transformation.

Despite the chaos of Cirlot's massive body of work and his complicated biography, critic Jaime Parra, author of one of the most extensive study of Cirlot's poetry, suggests that there is nevertheless one trope that binds together all of the loose ends of Cirlot's trajectories: the circle and the center (Parra 1997, 67). He argues that tropes of circularity and centrality are the most

insistent and reiterated in all of Cirlot's poetry, and that all of its various trajectories are like threads of a spider web that continuously weave back through the center in a mystic union (Parra 68). Cirlot's dictionary entry on the symbolism of the center—one of the longest in the book—shows that he indeed had a particular reverence for the sense of unification this symbol provides: “To leave the circumference for the center is equivalent to moving from the exterior to the interior, from form to contemplation, from multiplicity to unity, from space to spacelessness, from time to timelessness” (*Dictionary* 41). This quest for the center is furthermore what Cirlot found so fascinating in the esoteric traditions he tirelessly studied such as Sufism, Kabbalah, medieval alchemy, and the poetry of San Juan de la Cruz. We could also add that many of Cirlot's contemporary interests—the Dasein of Heidegger, Surrealist mysticism, and modern symbology—all stem from this interest in discovering the unity hidden behind the realm of appearances.

Though it is clear that Cirlot's poetry represents in many ways a centripetal quest for a mystic center, in this chapter I focus on how Cirlot's scholarly and poetic career alternatively represent an inverse, centrifugal motion—a spiral constantly proliferating outwards in a collection of new knowledges and new correspondences that continually threaten and destabilize the unity of a perfect center. The ever-expanding, transgressive figures of circles that Cirlot employs in his poetry in this way also represent a self-conscious mode of thinking about the collection of knowledge. In the introduction of the *Dictionary of Symbols*, Cirlot notes that the major symbolic images of circularity and centrality—the grail in the center of the round table, the Hindu Wheel of Transformation, or the Chinese *Pi*—all present nevertheless an “almost obsessive repetition of the image of a duality: the centre contrasted with the circumference, as a twofold image of the ineffable origin of the world of phenomena” (xl). He subsequently cites a Basque myth to

demonstrate the hidden dynamism that the center implies.⁴¹ In this myth, a hunter is attending mass; just at the moment the priest raises the Holy Eucharist, the hunter sees a stag run past the church. When he leaves in pursuit of the prey, he is cursed for having left mass, doomed to chase after the beast for eternity. Cirlot remarks: “One can see delineated here a spiral movement *which ‘repeats’ the creation of the physical world*” (xI). I emphasize the last phrase here to call attention to the idea that for Cirlot, all creation, all *poesis*, presupposes a movement that abandons a central unity in its realization, creating a constant and unresolvable tension between the unified center and the wild margins that continually threaten to transform and subvert unity.

This movement is similar to the dialectic that Rosales sets forth in his argument that behind every norm there exist a field of *inquietudes*, a dispersion. Yet whereas Rosales envisioned stable and nationalist traditions constituted by decadences “from” a singular figure such as Garcilaso, Cirlot’s poetic world encompasses a dizzyingly heterogeneous rhizome of fragmentations, combinations, and encounters among a maximal number of discourses. Following Cirlot’s reflections on the symbolic ambivalence of the center—its implication of both inward and outward movement—this chapter examines how the tropes of centrality throughout his poetry reveal constant flights that destabilize the very idea of the center. Instead of focusing on the unifying power of centripetal symbols like the Eucharist—one of the key “centers” in Christianity, perhaps the most central tradition in Western civilization—Cirlot compels us instead to imagine the abandonment of the center as a creative act, as *poesis* itself. Again, like Rosales, authentic poetry happens for Cirlot through the inevitable abandonments of norms—symbolized in Cirlot as centers—through the decadent proliferation of historical time. In the last two chapters we have seen how primordial figures such as Garcilaso and Christ figured as centers for their respective traditions of Spanish poetry and Christianity; similarly we have seen how the return to

⁴¹ Curiously it seems there is also a popular Catalan version of this myth, though Cirlot mentions the Basque myth in his text. The myth also certainly has ancient origins, in myths of quests such as the Percival and the Holy Grail.

these centers caused a caused a destabilizing poetic proliferation—as the *garcilasistas* took up Garcilaso’s poetics of doubt within a fascist aesthetics and as Lorca established an experimental, irrational poetics founded upon the paradox of Christ’s suffering. Any return to tradition threatens to expose the arbitrariness of the unifying commandment and ordering involved in political mobilizations of the archē. Instead of returning to the archē as a homogenizing gesture, Cirlot’s inclusion of archaic elements subversively works toward revealing the constantly shifting and proliferating flight away from imposed orders of all kinds—from the aesthetic norms of both Francoist nationalism and the a-traditional, populist tenets of the leftist *poesía social*. Cirlot’s appeal to archaic discourses intends a drastic, continual shifting of the entirety of his vast knowledge—very different than an archaic stagnation that remains obedient to the regimes of signs of the past.

One example of a subversive flight from tradition in Cirlot’s poetry is the epigram above, taken from a signal work in Cirlot’s literary career, the *Bronwyn Cycle*.

El centro es lo lejano, y es allí
entre espirales grises y plateadas,
donde acaso la cruz es una cruz,
el cruce y el encuentro. (*Bronwyn* 71)

[The center is the distant, and it’s there
among grey and silver spirals,
where perhaps the cross is a cross,
the crossing and the encounter.]

In these lines, the central and the distant are not only identified with each other but they are also confused with the indeterminate referent of “there” [allí]—we do not know whether the space of “the crossing and the encounter” is the center or the distant, or somehow both. The colors mentioned in these lines add to the confusion, since silver in alchemical symbolism represents purity and centrality, while grey suggests obscurity and distance. We do not know

whether these spirals take us inward, toward the mystic fusion at the heart of Christ, or outward in a cursed proliferation, figured often in *Bronwyn* as an eerie “swamp of crosses”—a topos representing both death and the primordial, life-giving waters. Again, the Christianity, figured here by the cross, is juxtaposed with the disperse, swampy waters of a pagan creation myth. Despite the impossibility of determining a location where these two contrarities would coexist, it is in this ambiguous juxtaposition where a critical change takes place: “donde acaso la cruz es una cruz, / el cruce y el encuentro” [“where perhaps a cross is a cross, and crossing and the encounter” (Bronwyn 71)]. That is, where the cross escapes its own overused banality and fulfills its function of opening a conduit between two disparate planes of reality: between mortality and immortality, between form and matter, between life and death. For Cirlot, then, the cross is not solely a Christian icon, but rather a figuration of the dialectical movements of his dualistic system of encounters between and among world knowledges. As these knowledges are first collected and then brought into contact with one another in the Cirlot’s complex poetic expression, these distant and diffuse discourses form a “crossing” with the present, effecting authentic change and transformation.

The duality of Cirlot’s scholarly work to preserve such variegated discourses and his poetic endeavor to transform, distort and even destroy the knowledge he collected reflects the complex aesthetic and political ambiguities that arise from the inclusion of archaic ideas. While Cirlot continually, even obsessively, appeals to the primordial forces of numerous discourses as means to complicate and alter the facile aesthetics he believed dominated modern poetry—both within Spain and abroad—the transformations that Cirlot hoped to effect in the present were often made in favor of rather contradictory political positions. Cirlot deliberately set forth a destructive poetics meant to challenge the finality of any single aesthetic paradigm. In his essay “La vivencia lírica” [The Lyric Experience], he conceives of lyric poetry as a negating process, one that gradually strips away rationalized and systematized knowledge as a means of liberating flows of

affect. Cirlot's engagement with any systematic form of thought in this way is ultimately aimed to deconstructs the coordinates of that system and the "conclusions" it provides.

Cirlot's politics in many ways corresponded with this rejection of singularized, systematic authority; he was fond of citing in capital letters the Luciferian "NON SERVIAM" when discussing political matters in correspondence to friends, proclaiming his independence from any particular ideological determination. Yet seeming to contradict this resistance to authority, Cirlot identified as a political conservative, and even expressed sympathy toward aspects of fascism and even Nazism—beliefs that contributed to his marginalization as a poet.⁴² While adamantly rejecting the "detestable" and Nazi war crimes against the Jews and other populations, and while opposing the tenets of Francoist Nationalism, Cirlot identified precisely with fascism's archaic tendencies, its frequent appeal to primordial and mythological forces as a means of transforming the present. By contrast, Cirlot abhorred communist and socialist aesthetics in their efforts to popularize art through what he saw as an iconoclastic erasure of tradition.⁴³ Even as Nazism hoped to evoke the world-destroying powers of the Nordic Ragnarök, the epic final battle that would destroy and renew the earth, this radical, apocalyptic transformation was by far preferable to the stagnation that communist, populist aesthetics would cause. Eliminating arcane and obscure knowledges and the primordial force they bear would in turn eliminate the possibility of an essential "crossing" between the central and the remote, the past and the present, which produce authentic change and expression.

The pronounced disparity between Cirlot's radical poetic experimentalism aimed at ultimately subverting and deconstructing all of the discourses with which he comes into contact and his tendency toward conservative and fascist politics demonstrates succinctly the kind of

⁴² For an interesting insight into Cirlot's politics and their reception among the Barcelona intelligentsia see José Luis Corazón Ardura's interview with Arnau Puig reproduced in Corazón Ardura 2007.

⁴³ These political beliefs are expressed, though rather indirectly, in an article that would cause a great deal of controversy for Cirlot "La destrucción de Hess," published in the Barcelona newspaper *La Vanguardia*

slippage in archaic poetic practices that I highlight throughout this dissertation. While Cirlot's experimental practice is one of the most unique and complex in modern European and Anglophone poetry, synthesizing an incredible wealth of discourses, progressivism and uniqueness of such a poetic practices, the ideology behind the practice does not develop symmetrically, but nevertheless still forms an important part of Cirlot's inspiration as a poet.

In this chapter I study the way that figures of the circle can be understood as part figurations of Cirlot's epistemophilic quest that is the basis for the continual transformative encounters that occur throughout his poetry. On one hand this involves the most and common traditions available to him as a twentieth-century Western poet: Ovid, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Poe, Mallarmé, Rilke, etc. Yet on the other hand, these canonical figures are continuously presented alongside more obscure archēs: Sufism, Kabbalism, Gnosticism, esoteric hermeticism, etc. Viewing the blend of these canonical and obscure traditions as a manifestation of the persistent tension in Cirlot's life and work between centrality and remoteness, we can begin to understand how Cirlot's poetry threatens the very the principality of canonical figures, that is the very principality of a literary archive. Ultimately, I propose that Cirlot's irrational juxtapositions of canonical and marginal traditions can be read as a flight away from what he saw as a legacy of overly determinative Enlightenment rationalism. Like Lorca and Unamuno before him, Cirlot envisioned that the legacy of Enlightenment in its quest for determinative answers as ultimately a restriction on the unpredictable and limitless expressions that can be generated through irrationalist techniques. In this way we can read Cirlot as not an aberrant esotericist or belated surrealist, but as a writer in long line of Spanish poets that deliberately resist what they saw as the finiteness of central authority in their focus on paradox.

The ambiguity between a unifying center and the dispersive margins figures characteristically in Cirlot's poetry, but it also informs so much of Cirlot's own life and his relationship to the critical trends of the time; more than just a trope or theme, Cirlot's life

thoroughly embodies the problematics of archaism. Demonstrating these biographical tensions, I will begin with a discussion of Cirlot's life, reception, and legacy, not just as a means of demonstrating the ways he embodies an alienated margin, but also since Cirlot remains an obscure figure, even in his native Spain. In the latter part of the chapter, I examine Cirlot's chapbook *Palacio de plata*, which, despite being a rather short work, leads us deep into the center/periphery problematics of Cirlot's poetic expression. The poem's thematization of the primordial force of centrality also allows us to think about Cirlot's notorious interest in the sublimity of fascist aesthetics—particularly curious in this case since the poem's form is based on the techniques of two Jewish thinkers.

Life and Context

Early in life, Cirlot developed a particular interest in poets whose traumatic losses caused them to reject the world in which they lived, compelling them to dedicate their lives to a literary flight from reality. In an article written when he was just 28, Cirlot dramatizes the turbulent romanticism of two of his favorite writers, Dante and Edgar Allen Poe: “¡Aquel no sentir la patria ni el hogar en parte alguna! Recorrer la tierra entera sin encontrarla a ella, y solamente acaso, cerrando los párpados, muriendo para el mundo sensible, verla transfigurada, y oír sus palabras...” [That feeling of not having a motherland or home anywhere! Traversing the entire earth without finding it, and only perhaps, closing the eyelids, dying to the sensible world, seeing her transfigured hearing her words...] (*Confidencias literarias* 36). Poe and Dante, along with many other troubled poets Cirlot admired—often Romantics such as Blake, Hölderlin, and Gérard Nerval—were examples of authors whose worlds consisted of an irreconcilable lack, and whose lives were dedicated to a restless, creative flight from traditional conceptions of realities—cursed hunters spiraling out from a dubious center to the limits of expression and morality.

While as far as we know Cirlot never experienced such traumatic loss experienced by so many of his favorite writers, his identification with and respect for these “limit cases” is not altogether surprising given that his life was marked by a restless estrangement with his environs. This separation likely started at home, as young Juan Eduardo’s father frowned upon his son’s interests in antiques, ancient coins, and art—pastimes incompatible with the family’s military legacy. To make matters more difficult, Cirlot was pulled from school at the age of just 13 to help make money for the family working in a bank—a development that his daughters noted was likely traumatic for their father who had up until then had enthusiastically attended Jesuit school.⁴⁴ In 1935, after years of studying on his own at home and in libraries in his free time, Cirlot entered the L'Ateneu Barcelonès, studying music with Cuban born avant-garde composer José Ardévol. These studies, like those earlier in his youth, ended prematurely—this time truncated by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936. Late in his life, he would reflect that during these years of his youth an ominous sense that he was somehow not human began to develop, a premonition perhaps caused by the estrangement from his family and his prematurely truncated education.⁴⁵ This sense of not being human would persist throughout his life, no doubt contributing to his deep admiration for Martin Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism*, which puts into question the Renaissance norm of placing man at the center of both artistic expression and reality at large. For Cirlot, the human was an anomaly that stood out precariously from the higher orders of reality, and could only be assimilated, or perhaps destroyed, by the subversive powers of poetry and art.

Another part of Cirlot’s alienation was likely symptomatic of his peculiar ancestry: Cirlot was not only Catalan, itself an other to classic Castilian or Andalusian Spanishness, but he also had important Irish Celtic heritage, roots that would have further displaced a sense of

⁴⁴ Much of the biographical information of this section comes from *Boceto biográfico*, a short written by his two daughters and from Antonio Rivero Taravillo’s biography *Cirlot: Ser y no ser de un poeta único*.

⁴⁵ Letter to Jean Aristiguieta, April 7, 1967.

nationality.⁴⁶ In the *Bronwyn Cycle*, for example, Cirlot will come to use Celtism as a trope of an immanent European otherness, a culture whose lack of societal organization and homeland he would juxtapose against the grounded, territorial harmony Greek and Roman classicism. Cirlot's "fulfillment" of his family's military legacy is also marked by a curious lack of ground: he was mobilized by the Republic in 1937 only to be called up again shortly after the war by the Francoist army 1940. Though Cirlot notes that his experience as a soldier was essential to his formation as a poet, he will only address this subject obliquely, figured in medieval combat, the mysticism of armor and wounded bodies, and a handful of surreally opaque poems dedicated to the destitute neighborhoods of Barcelona in the years after the Civil War, one of which we will examine shortly.

During the first few years after Cirlot's military involvement he lived in Zaragoza, where he befriended Alfonso Buñuel, younger brother of the film director Luis Buñuel. Through this friendship Cirlot gained access to Luis's extensive surrealist library, which initiated Cirlot into the world of avant-garde literature, and would have a lifelong influence on both his creative and critical writing. Upon returning to Barcelona in 1943, Cirlot found work as a copy editor in a small publishing house; although he would remain in this profession for the remainder of his life, changing companies once, it would remain deeply dissatisfying for Cirlot's ambitious intelligence. During his first few years back in Barcelona, he became active in a number of surrealist-oriented *tertulias* (social literary clubs), eventually leading to his involvement in the literature and art collective *Dau al set*, notable as one of the few avant-garde movements that surfaced in the 1940s without being immediately quelled by Francoist censorship. Though these early years after the war marked the most socially active time in Cirlot's life, they were nevertheless distinctly colored by the destitute social conditions of post-war Barcelona,

⁴⁶ Adding to his lack of roots at home, Cirlot was Catalanian inasmuch as he lived almost his entire life in Barcelona, but he had both Catalanian and Spanish heritage, and claims that he did not speak Catalan well.

particularly the poverty-stricken Barrio Chino where he often met with intellectual circles (Granell 7). This locale, filled with the tragedies of the post-war—orphans, alcoholic veterans, and war widows resorting to prostitution—was a source of dark inspiration for much of Cirlot's early work, particularly his recently rediscovered novel, *Nebiros*, which describes firsthand the social depression pervading Barcelona and particularly the Barrio Chino.⁴⁷

Following his marriage and the dissolution of *Dau al set* in the early 1950s, it seems that Cirlot largely retreated from collective activities and published little poetry, focusing most of his energy on his critical works. Though much less social than the 1940s, Cirlot nevertheless developed two important friendships during these years that would have major impacts on both the direction of Cirlot's late scholarship and poetry. The first, and arguably most important, was with Marius Schneider, an eccentric German ethnomusicologist who had moved to Barcelona to escape the war in Germany and to study primitive and Romanesque art in Catalonia. Schneider's sprawling *El origen musical de los animales-símbolos en la mitología y la escultura antiguas*, which presents the findings of his research along with an highly original intricate symbolic system based on "common rhythms," would exert a singular influence on the late poetry of Cirlot, particularly the *Bronwyn Cycle*.⁴⁸ This friendship also turned Cirlot on to the study of traditional symbolism, resulting in the widely-acclaimed *Diccionario de los símbolos*.⁴⁹ The second important friendship from this time was with scholar of medieval history and

⁴⁷ It had been known that Cirlot had written the novel *Nebiros*, and that it had been censored in 1953, but no remaining copies of it were known to exist. In late 2016, a copy was found in the Franco Era censorship archive in Alcalá de Henares, mysteriously resurfacing just in time for the celebration of Cirlot's centennial in 2017.

⁴⁸ Full title: *El origen musical de los animales-símbolos en la mitología y la escultura antiguas ensayo histórico-etnográfico sobre la subestructura totemística y megalítica de las altas culturas y su supervivencia en el folklore español* (1946).

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that this "common rhythm" is for Cirlot the fundamental way in which "the analogy between two planes of reality" is manifested, as described in the introduction to the *Dictionary of Symbols*. "Thus, between the live snake, with its sinuous movement, and the snake appearing in inanimate relief, there may be an analogy which is not only formal (in the design, disposition, or in the specific shape of the animal) but also rhythmic—that is, of tone, of modality, of accent, and of expression" (*Dictionary* xxxii). In this way, a common rhythm is crucial figure of juxtaposition within Cirlot's thought.

architecture Jose Gudiol, who piqued Cirlot's interest in the ideology of symbolic interconnectedness present in Europe throughout the late Middle Ages. This furthered Cirlot's interest in symbolic systems, and no doubt contributed to the continual presence of medievalist themes in much of Cirlot's late poetry.

From the early 1960s onward, Cirlot started once again to publish great quantities of poetry while continuing with his scholarly work. Maintaining a strict work schedule, it seems Cirlot had little social contacts through this last period of his life, though he did maintain extensive correspondence with a number of international poets, artists, and publishers. The most important event of the 1960s in terms of Cirlot's poetic career was his viewing of Franklin Schaffner's *The War Lord*, a medieval romance with a heavy dose of mysticism starring Charlton Heston and Rosemary Forsyth. This film, along with a Russian production of Hamlet seen several months later, would spark what many critics believe to be Cirlot's masterwork, *The Bronwyn Cycle*, a series of chapbooks dedicated to the character played by Forsyth in *The War Lord*. The final installment in the cycle, *Bronwyn, w*, was published in 1972, the year Cirlot fell ill with pancreatic cancer, which ultimately led to his death the following year.

Cirlot's Reception and Legacy

During his life, Cirlot was much better received as an art critic and for his *Diccionario de símbolos* than for his poetry (Corazón Ardúa 19). Discussing some of the reasons why this may have been the case begins to show us how Cirlot's aesthetics related to—and clashed with—the poetic trends within Spain at the time. One of the most apparent reasons for the lack of recognition of Cirlot's poetry is that it was simply not very visible. Most of his numerous chapbooks were published through small editorials in limited editions, often self-funded and self-distributed. While censorship may have made it difficult to publish some of Cirlot's poetry, he

also tended toward the elitism of Mallarmé or Schoenberg, believing that one must not attempt to write “para el menos inteligente de las masas” (“Dificultad en literatura”).⁵⁰ Contrary to this exclusive and esoteric attitude in regards to his poetry, Cirlot took a different, more open approach to his criticism. He viewed his work as a public intellectual—40 monographs and over 600 newspaper and magazine articles—as a service that helped a broader audience understand the intricacies of different art traditions, particularly necessary in modern times given the complex subtleties of modern art and music. This sense of service, however, is not without a hint of mysticism: in one letter he compares his own work as an art critic to an ancient priest who, through special kinds of learning, could interpret otherworldly phenomenon for the masses to help enrich their lives (Royano 56). The dynamics of central and distant traditions play out even in Cirlot’s relationship to the public, as he spent a great deal of time making remote traditions more familiar to everyday readers, yet created some of the most obscure poetry of the twentieth century.

While the contrast between the pragmatism of his criticism and the difficulty of his poetry may help explain why the latter was less broadly received, the literary environment of postwar Spain would have been particularly hostile toward experimental and mystic poetry for a number of reasons. While Cirlot did write a great quantity of sonnets—formally standard many with classic themes such love, pastoral landscapes, and religious motifs—Cirlot’s experimental style hardly matched the more straightforward style of the *garcilasistas*. A quick glance at a sonnet from his *44 sonetos del amor* shows Cirlot’s characteristically ecstatic and surrealist style that disrupts any sense of emotional balance or harmony; in this particular sonnet, the center/distant play is also particularly evident, especially in the *cadenza*.

⁵⁰ See Lloyd (1999), especially pp 202-203 for a discussion of Mallarmé’s anxiety about the masses spoiling poetry. Schoenberg makes the same argument from an interesting perspective: “...no chess master would make moves everyone could anticipate just to be agreeable..., no mathematician would invent something new in mathematics just to flatter the masses..., and in the same manner no artist, no philosopher and no musician whose thinking occurs in the highest sphere would degenerate into vulgarity to comply with such a slogan as ‘Art for All.’” (1955, 51)

En tus muslos de rosas y de arena
 la lontananza grave de mi sino,
 el desatado mar de mi destino
 sabe la claridad y así la ordena.

En tu torso que el sol desencadena
 adoro la ascensión a lo divino
 y en tus brazos de luz a mi camino
 desolada se vuelve mi condena.

Tu cuerpo inaccesible contra el cielo
 abre sus cataratas insondables,
 sume todo mi ser en la agonía.

Tu cuerpo incandescente como el hielo
 expande en lo desnudo innumerables
 halos que son lo cerca en lejanía. (*Del no mundo* 389)

[In your thighs of roses and of sand
 the grave remoteness of my fate
 the untied sea of my destiny
 knows clarity and thus orders it so.

In your torso that the sun unchains
 I adore your ascension to the divine
 and in your arms of light my desolate
 condemnation returns to my path.

Your inaccessible body against the sky
 opens its unfathomable waterfalls,
 amasses all of my being in agony.

You body, incandescent like ice,
 expands in the nakedness innumerable
 halos that are what's close in the distance.]

Aside from being a poor match in aesthetic tastes, Cirlot was adamantly anti-Francoist—
 despite the accusations of fascism, which we will discuss shortly—and would have never directly
 supported any programmatic aesthetic, especially not one exalting national glory of his own

country.⁵¹ Cirlot's poetry also fit poorly with the various movements of the postwar. On one hand the *garcilasista* movement in itself would have also had little interest in Cirlot's poetry, since even though he sometimes used formal schemes such as sonnets, his hypnotic, ornate, and surrealist style would have been a stretch even for the inclusive tendencies of the magazine's editor, José García Nieto. On the other hand Cirlot's penchant for both classical forms and experimentation contrasted sharply with both the anti-formal and populist tendencies of the poetry that arose in reaction to the conservative *garcilasismo* movement. Cirlot's eschewal of overt political statements in his poetry would also clash with the *poesía social* movement of the 1950s (in many senses continuation of the leftist poetry of the late 1940s) that rebelled against official regime culture by exposing the destitute social conditions of post-Civil War Spain.

Despite this tendency toward evasion, however, at least two critics argue that some of Cirlot's early poetry does indeed address the destitute social conditions of postwar Barcelona, even if figured in an opaque, surrealist style. Critic Enrique Granell, for example, notes that Cirlot and his literary friends of the mid-1940s often met in Barcelona's destitute Barrio Chino—home of alcoholic veterans and war widows working as prostitutes—which they drew upon for inspiration for many of their works (Granell 1998, 3). Granell, a friend of Cirlot and member of the *tertulias* of those days, recalls that the poem "Susan Lennox" was written in a bar in the Barrio Chino, and serves as a clear indication of Cirlot's sensitivity to the tragic social aftermath of the war. The character depicted in the poem, a lone man drinking in a bar, is weighed down by a traumatic past, which Granell takes to be at least in part a memory of the Civil War.

Aquí estoy, en un bar, bebiendo vino
como otras tantas tardes. La tristeza,
la tristeza de muchas cosas muertas,
perdidas o no sidas, me acompaña.

⁵¹ For a recent discussion of Cirlot's anti-Francoism see Luis María Anson's recent article in *El Cultural* "Juan Eduardo Cirlot" (May 13, 2016)

Niebla, niebla.
 La sombra baja lenta como un río;
 su invasión me atenaza.
 Ni música de jazz se oye a lo lejos
 y un silencio infinito me circunda. (Cirlot 2016, 70)

[Here I am, in a bar, drinking wine
 like so many other afternoons. The sadness,
 the sadness of so many dead things, lost or never existed
 accompanies me.

Fog, fog.
 The shadow lowers slowly like a river;
 its invasion torments me.
 Not even jazz music is heard in the distance
 and an infinite silence surrounds me.”

Isabel Román notes in a recent article (2011) that even as Cirlot reacted against the realist norms of magazines such as *Espadaña*, one of the magazines that arose in part reacting to the *garcilasista* movement, he nevertheless used liberal topoi as a means to have his work published. In one case this resulted in an elegy dedicated to socialist martyr Miguel Hernández, or in the case of “Susan Lennox,” the use of a subtle realist setting embedded in Cirlot’s surreal crossing of time speaks to the political failures in the wake of a destructive civil war (213). While these are two examples of Cirlot’s oblique political engagement from his early poetry, we will see shortly that even a poem like “Susan Lennox,” despite its political content, functions according to an ambiguous play between centrality and distance, between the order of an archē and its undoing.

The last and perhaps most complicated reason for a general lack of reception of Cirlot as a poet stems from his notorious relationship with fascism and Nazism. We can see that Cirlot’s politics is still an open question in regards to his legacy from a 2008 newspaper article entitled *Cirlot y el nazismo*, written by his daughter Victoria. This article responds to a piece published some days prior in the same newspaper, which made a few general claims about her father’s Nazism: namely that he was not politically a Nazi, but felt a strong attraction to the aesthetics of

Hitler's Germany.⁵² She responds by arguing that her father has been subject to a great deal of "cotilleo morboso" ["morbid gossip"] in Barcelona that centers primarily on two newspaper articles—one on the symbolism of the swastika, the other a call to release ex-Nazi Rudolf Hess—the only remaining prisoner in the Nazi prison Spandau.⁵³ While not denying her father's interest in Nazism, Victoria Cirlot does mention that his defense of Hess and the swastika are complicated matters. Indeed, Cirlot's "defense" of Hess, while containing politically suspect language, is a markedly ambiguous text, as it simultaneously attempts to defend the archaic aspects of fascism aesthetics—such as its tendency toward primordial myths—while simultaneously accusing communism not only of emptying out history, but also of equal crimes against humanity. There is even a mention of medieval Britain and the creation of Arthurian legend as a precursor to the kind of intense nationalism that undergirds fascism. Furthermore, Cirlot's penchant for provocation cannot be excluded as part of the rationale for publishing such a piece: as an ardent opponent of communism and anarchism, he would no doubt have anticipated, perhaps eagerly, the hostile reaction from Barcelona's radical left.

Rather than attempting to explain Cirlot's publications on Hess and the Swastika, Victoria Cirlot points out that accusations of her father's politics tend to leave out an important detail that substantially complicates the matter. "La otra mitad de la verdad," she writes, "es que mi padre también sentía una 'declarada admiración estética por el judaísmo... por músicos judíos como Mahler o Schoenberg, por la Cábala hebrea, Abraham Abulafia, the Zohar...'" [The other

⁵² It should be noted that Victoria Cirlot's reaction is not only against the discussion of her father, but also against what she believes was a manipulation of words she stated in an interview. The letter reproduces the misrepresented words with her own commentaries and corrections. See Victoria Cirlot 2008 and Jorge Masset 2008, the original article.

⁵³ Almost certainly complicating this gossip, we could also add, is the fact that signed a petition for the release of Hess circulated by the *Ciruculo Español de Amigos de Europa* (CEDADE), a neo-Nazi party that also published a few of Cirlot's poems in their monthly newsletter. Furthermore, Arnau Puig, Catalan artist and sociologist, also suggests in a 2009 interview that Cirlot's interest in Nietzsche and Heidegger would have further associated him with rightist politics: while intellectuals such as Bataille, Derrida, and Celan were reviving these philosophers, it seems they were still taboo amongst the anti-Franco left within Spain (interview published in *Corazón-Ardua*, pp 288-9).

half of the truth is that my father also felt a ‘declared aesthetic admiration for Judaism... for composers like Mahler and Schoenberg, for Hebraic Kabbalism, the Zohar...’] (Victoria Cirlot, 2008). An interest in Jewish culture hardly defends one’s politics, but instead this statement draws attention to the practical impossibility of determining any kind of definitive hierarchy within Cirlot’s thinking. As Victoria Cirlot states it in her letter: “La admiración que [él] sentía por Roma, la sentía igualmente por Cartago” [The admiration he felt for Rome, he felt equally for Carthage].

These two ancient cities—Rome and Carthage—cited by Victoria Cirlot are particularly telling, since they are the two cities that figure in the Garcilaso’s sonnet studied earlier. The juxtaposition of the *Aeneid*’s Roman imperial verse with sentimental presence of the more distant Carthage destabilizes hierarchy within the poem while highlighting poetic self-sacrifice, or poetic self-negation. The same might be said of the complications of Cirlot’s life and his legacy: suspended between so many contradictions—between a family man and a mad poet, between supporting the arts as public intellectual and publishing esoteric verse in private, between championing artistic freedom and occasionally defending ex-Nazis—the only conclusion we might draw from his life is the curious way in which he embodied so many paradoxes. As we turn to focus more on Cirlot’s poetry, we will see that his tendency toward the paradoxes of centrality and remoteness, of archiving and effacing, and toward juxtaposition in general were not merely aesthetic gestures, but vital ones, as we have seen with Lorca and Unamuno.

Cirlot’s Poetics of Juxtaposition

As with any contradiction, those of Cirlot’s life and work all share a necessary feature: they involve juxtaposition, the laying adjacent of two or more contrastive or contradictory ideas. Having examined several contradictory juxtapositions of Cirlot’s life and legacy, in this section

we will begin to examine how this plays out in his poetry and poetics; that is, how Cirlot employs juxtaposition to efface clear boundaries between unity and dispersion, between tradition and the heterodox. On one hand, we will see that Cirlot shares a tendency toward contradiction and paradox with early twentieth-century avant-gardes, particularly surrealism. On the other hand, the particular way Cirlot created juxtapositions, guided always by traditions and techniques, not only underscores an aesthetic difference between his poetry and traditions like Surrealism, but it also establishes a connection between Cirlot's poetics and certain aspects of fascist aesthetics, particularly the kinds of Bergsonian, qualitative time that allowed the superimposition of primordial realities—ancient or mythological—over top of seemingly mundane contemporary life. I will develop this sense of time, which the fascists ironically appropriated from the Jewish Henri Bergson, when we discuss Cirlot's *Palacio de plata* and Schoenberg's dodecaphonic music below.

In a letter to fellow poet Félix Alonso y Royano, Cirlot discusses a technique for creating juxtapositions as well as some rationale for doing so—a rare moment of discussing his poetics explicitly that demonstrates the importance of the technique for Cirlot:⁵⁴

No:

Su cabeza dorada quemaba el horizonte
y convertía en rosas los pantanos sin fin

pues siempre me parecerá peor (más pobre, por su *linealismo continuo*) que:

Su cabeza dorada quemaba el horizonte
pantanos infinitos transformando sus rosas⁵⁵

⁵⁴ While it is surprising that Cirlot discusses his poetics so concretely, what is not surprising is that Cirlot destroyed his correspondence with Félix Alonso y Royano, likely because of intimacy of the letters: Cirlot discusses briefly, for example, his interest in Nazism, as well as a curious conjecture that San Juan de la Cruz's poetry reveals a "complejo homosexual," which Cirlot also believes he may share. Royano, a virtually unknown poet, lawyer, and scholar of Ancient Egyptian law, fortunately saved the correspondence and published it under the title *Cirlot y yo* (199X)

[Royano 71, original emphasis]

[Not:

His/her golden head burned the horizon
and converted endless swamps into roses

since it always seemed worse (poorer, for its *continuous linealism*) than:

His/her golden head burned the horizon
infinite swamps transforming its/his/her roses]

In the first version the “continuous linealism” derives from an obvious linking between the verb “convertía” [converted] and its subject, “cabeza” [head], in the preceding verse—a grammatical construction continuous across two lines, i.e. linealism. In the second version, each line contains a separate subject, and the lack of grammatical, temporal, or causal markers leaves the relationship between the two lines ambiguous. Cirlot expands on why he believes this enriches poetry:

Se trata de ir rompiendo la conexión coherente o inmediata para introducir, mediante los cambios (yuxtaposición y no coordinación) una riqueza, una polivalencia de alusiones que produce, a la vez, la sensación de muchos planos de la realidad unidos y ‘abiertos’ por el poema, y la una [sic] oscuridad mayor, que como toda oscuridad, posee una fuerza mística” (71).

[“It is about breaking coherent or immediate connection in order to introduce, by means of changes (juxtaposition and non-coordination), a richness, a polyvalence of allusions that produces at the same time the sensation of many united and “open” planes of reality in the poem as well as a greater obscurity, that like all obscurity, possesses a mystic force.”]

Cirlot prefers juxtaposition since it allows that his poems open multiple “planes of reality,” creating a “rhizomatic” effect such that not one single plane dominates over another, making his

⁵⁵ I have yet to locate these lines anywhere in Cirlot’s poetry; it is possible that he wrote them for the purpose of example. Whatever the case may be, they are typical/emblematic of his late poetry, and the presence of the blonde hair and the swamp are common images in the *Bronwyn Cycle*.

more about potential crossings and connections between heterogeneous realities than about drawing conclusions or putting forth political ideas.

By erasing the “linealism” on the level of a logical, fixed order within the poem, Cirlot opens numerous lies of flight that escape centric determination. Indeed, we can see that the motif of juxtaposition is never far from a game of centrality and distance as we examine the couplet that Cirlot gives as an example, unpublished lines that closely resemble the language of *Bronwyn Cycle*. Each line contains one image of a center, and one image of a distant, dispersed space. In the first line, the golden head—which we might read as the blonde hair of Bronwyn—represents a light source (the sun), a focal point of beauty blended with feminine form. This golden center actively burns the horizon, evoking the golden, diffuse tones of a sunset. In this way there is symbolic link between the golden hair of the center and the golden “burn” of the distant horizon. The second line functions in a parallel but inverse fashion: where in first the line it is the central golden head that acts to transform the distance (through burning), in the second line it is the distant swamps that transform the rose, a classic symbol of centrality, such as in Dante’s *Paradiso*. Given the lack of coordination between the two centripetal and centrifugal movements the image remains less clear—less centered, so to speak—in the second version, allowing for greater interpretative possibilities.

As Cirlot continues his explanation in the letter, he specifies further what might be accomplished by this technique of juxtaposition: “El tema mítico... crecerá desmesuradamente por el apoyo de este procedimiento, que empezará tal vez algo artificialmente; pero que terminará siendo un modo de pensar (esto es lo que hay que conseguir: que el pensamiento ‘coja’ varias cosas a la vez)” [The mythic theme... will grow abundantly with the support of this technique [of juxtaposing], that may start perhaps somewhat artificially; but that will end up being a way of thinking (this is what one must achieve: that thought “grabs” various things at once.)” (Royano 71). Leaving aside for a moment the “mythic theme,” this quote demonstrates a key feature of

Cirlot's poetry, a sense of multiplicity and non-singularity. Through the continuous opening up multiple "planes of reality," any idea of centrality or arborescence weakens with the proliferation of "polyvalent allusions" that draw outward toward various possibilities. The ability to hold two, ambivalently hierarchized ideas in the mind at once—essential to poetry for Cirlot—challenges the possibility of a single image or idea as central; juxtaposition in this way serves as a suggestion, almost an index, for a logic *outside* of any of the various images, as a line of flight away from any one idea. In this way, juxtaposition as a technique continually presents the paradox that what is central cannot be extricated from notions of externality.

At the close of the letter, Cirlot defends this technique briefly with an example of the development of Western music—not a surprising justification given the importance of music in Cirlot's thought.

No me pidas justificación. Sólo puedo darte una por paralelismo en la música: la evolución del sistema monódico (un canto simple) medieval a las grandes polifonías, y de la tonalidad a la modulación constante (cambios) (Wagner) y el atonalismo (inherencia sistemática: Schoenberg) (Royano 98)

[Don't ask me for justification. I can only give you one by a parallelism in music: the evolution of the medieval monadic system (a simple song) to the great polyphonies, and constant modulation (changes) (Wagner) and atonalism (systematic inherence: Schoenberg)]

While Cirlot's justifies his technique in a characteristically laconic style, the parallelism with the development of music explains a great deal about his engagement with juxtaposition. Each of the musical examples given involves a progressively subtler and more difficult organization within the music, that is, each demands greater attention and imagination to connect the various juxtaposed musical ideas. Simple medieval songs used a single key signature, and there was only relatively small set of acceptable notes outside the diatonic scales used to create tension and resolution within the music. In a sense, this music is highly "arborescent" as all notes are a

function of the single root note. At the height of the baroque with Bach—whom Cirlot almost certainly had in mind with the mention of “great polyphonies”—complicated polyphonic forms such as fugue required the listener to keep in mind the initial subject (the foundational melodic line) while often discordant variations entered into the score, competing with and complicating the unity of the original motif.⁵⁶ Through the development of chromatics in Romantic music (in the traditional version of music history, this begins with Beethoven and is intensified by Wagner), which allowed for almost continuous key modulation, demanding the listener decipher tenuous relationships between distant keys throughout an entire work. In Schoenbergian serialism, as we will discuss later in the chapter, the demand on the listener is maximized, since the base structure is neither a melodic line nor even a difficult blended key signature, but rather a completely dissonant structure that varies according to abstract systematic rules. The progression ultimately moves toward ever subtler connections between ideas and images, requiring the invention—or discovery—of new kinds of coherence. This development of subtlety undergirds much of Cirlot’s poetry, especially *Palacio de plata* and its engagement with Kabbalism and Schoenberg’s dodecaphonic music, as we will see in the following section.

To illustrate some of the principles of juxtaposition and harmony at work in Cirlot’s poetry, let us return to the poem “Susan Lennox.” Aside from it standing out as an example of Cirlot’s subtle political tactics, it also demonstrates Cirlot’s penchant for juxtaposition, since within the poem numerous mythic dimensions appear whose relationships create unresolved tension between several motifs. In this poem Cirlot juxtaposes at least three “planes of reality” which are not only temporally distinct, but also bear different qualities of reality: the Barrio Chino of post-war Barcelona where the poem was written (contemporary, historical); the film *Susan Lennox* (recent-historical, fictional); and the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (proto-historic, mythical).

⁵⁶ We might also add that Bach’s development of the Well-temperament allowed for these developments, since before instruments were tuned only to play in a particular key.

In the poem, the presence of things not just from the past, but also unreal—whether fictional or mythological—is evoked from the very beginning of the poem:

Aquí estoy, en un bar, bebiendo vino
como otras tantas tardes. La tristeza,
la tristeza de muchas cosas muertas,
perdidas o no sidas, me acompaña. (Cirlot 2016 70)

[Here I am, in a bar, drinking wine
like so many other afternoons. The sadness,
the sadness of many things, dead,
lost, or that never existed, accompanies me.]

The poem continues in several stanzas reiterating the themes of memory, sadness, and the ambient of a bar (wine and jazz) before arriving at the mention of the title character Susana (Susan Lennox), who appears prefigured by the presence of Siduri, a goddess character from *Gilgamesh*. The poetic voice marks any distinction between the two female presences, Susana and Siduri, as inconsequential; the same indifference marks the distinction between the multiple geographical locales that enter abruptly:

Niebla, niebla.
No sé qué me sucede; es un recuerdo.
Recuerdo las palabras del poema:
Siduri; la del cabaret, vivía
Susana, no Siduri. Sí, Susana,
cerca del mar inaccesible y puro.

Da lo mismo Siduri que Susana.
Caldea que Cartago o Barcelona,
las islas del Pacífico o Long Island,
que China; hay una sala abandonada.

[Fog, fog.
I don't know what is happening to me; it's a memory.
I remember the words of the poem:
Siduri; the one from the cabaret, Susana
lived, not Siduri. Yes, Susana,

close to the inaccessible and pure sea.

Siduri, Susana, all the same.
Chaldea, same as Carthage, Barcelona,
the Pacific Islands or Long Island,
same as China; there's an abandoned room.]

Any attempt to hierarchize characters (Susana, Siduri), time periods (the second millennium B.C., the 1920s, the 1940s), or geographical spaces (Barcelona, Chaldea, Carthage, New York City etc.) ultimately fails in the confusion of the poetic voice, who remains unable to sort through the meaning of the pained memories and fantasies passing through his mind. Though the mythic and fictional planes are evoked, neither of these takes the form of an allegory meant to structure the drama of the poetic voice's situation; instead the poem leaves us with a series of images and symbols from disparate forms of reality, all confusedly present together on the surface of the poem. The time of the poem is also repeatedly confused and blended, further bringing the spaces into contact in a singular time that the poetic voice inhabits:

Recuerdo aquella sala rodeada
de pálidas cortinas. Ella siempre
vivía entre la niebla, entre la niebla,
da lo mismo.
Las horas que han pasado no me importan,
no me importan las horas, ni los días,
los años que han pasado, ni las horas,
ni las eternas horas solitarias.

[I remember that room encircled
by pallid curtains. She always
lived among the fog, among the fog,
it's all the same.
The hours that have passed don't matter to me,
the hours don't matter, nor the days,
nor the years that have passed, nor the hours,
nor the eternal solitary hours.]

Memory is not limited to a particular time, but instead the poet's recollection reaches back across the "eternal solitary hours" that bind the three distinct planes together. This sense of temporal unification or singularity, another great theme in Cirlot, is precisely what allows the kind of "holding two ideas at once" that Cirlot suggested in his letter to Royano.

The result of all this temporal, spatial, and ontological blending defies a single organizing principle, defying the kind of "arborescent" organization provided by something like a key signature. Since the center cannot be located in any single image, the poem allows each to take part in a polyphonic voicing, a fugue that escapes designating any one plane as central. Like any fugue, however, the poem nevertheless has an important through-line that gives some sense of coherence, and saves the poem from falling into complete chaos. In this case, it is a rhizome constructed around ideas such as fertility, femininity, loneliness, and marginality. In the first place, the title character Susan Lennox is a notorious character from the movie 1931 *Susan Lennox (Her Rise and Fall)*, a pre-regulation era classic that recounts the life of a woman who rises from poverty to brief success as a circus dancer, only to end up as a destitute cabaret performer in a remote South American bar. Yet at the same time Susan is confused with Siduri, an ancient Babylonian goddess associated with fertility and alcoholic fermentation. Susan Ackerman also notes that in the Old Babylonian version of the ancient epic, Siduri briefly attempts to persuade Gilgamesh to abandon his quest for immortality and relish in the simpler pleasures of life, such as the wine she makes (130). The wine that the poetic narrator drinks in a rundown bar thus brings together both Susan Lennox, in her aesthetically fertile yet tragic trajectory that ends in a seedy bar, as well as Siduri, who tempts the poet with her intoxicating brew, but cannot convince the hero to forget his sadness and forsake his quest.

Cirlot, Surrealism, and the Avant-Garde

On one hand this tendency toward juxtaposition shows Cirlot's clear debt to the early-twentieth century avant-garde movements, most of which used juxtaposition in some form or another as a means to express rupture and novelty. Here, surrealism was particularly important for Cirlot in their valorization of juxtaposition as not just a means to achieve aesthetic ends, but also as a mystical practice meant to completely defy modern day rationality. On the other hand, the juxtaposition and simultaneity of temporal states also can help us understand why Cirlot was drawn to conservative and fascist aesthetics, which often attempted to invent or "reactivate" primordial myths to instill a revolutionary spiritual meaning in proletariat life.

Cirlot would have discovered the importance of juxtaposition from his tireless studies of modernist and abstract art, in which juxtaposition became one of the primary means to express rupture and novelty, carrying out Ezra Pound's injunctive to "Make it new." In practically all of the arts, juxtaposition became an essential part of modernist expression in the early twentieth century: in literature, works like *The Waste Land* and Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* rapidly shifted from ancient and modern settings; in painting cubists and futurists experimented with multiple perspectives and temporalities on a single canvas; in music Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg explored new ways of structuring dissonant harmonies and key signatures. Though Cirlot wrote critical works on several of these figures such as Picasso and Stravinsky, the largest influence on Cirlot's thinking regarding the mystical potential of juxtaposition likely came from surrealism, a subject on which he wrote several books such as *Introduccion al surrealism* (1953) and *El mundo del objeto a luz del surrealismo* (1953).

For André Breton and his followers, chance juxtaposition was not only a matter of disrupting bourgeois logic that led to the stagnation of culture, but it also carried the potential to revitalize mankind by accessing mystical creative powers. In the truer realm of "surreality"

existing just above everyday reality, all connections were possible, so that the experience of a new connection between distant ideas gave one a brief glimpse at the *unio mystica* underlying all phenomenon. Juxtaposition and free association also carried important ethical weight as well, since the surrealists believed that the hidden world of surreality contained great “primitive” forces capable of undoing the damages that had been caused by a society founded upon rational thought. This ethics of hidden forces, so to speak, was largely undergirded by Freud, who Breton cites in the first manifesto of Surrealism as discovering “strange forces capable of augmenting or conquering those on the surface” (Breton 1969, 10). With these new insights in hand, the surrealists set out to invert the rational world.

Given Cirlot’s proximity to this line of thought, it is not surprising that critics have so long classified Cirlot as a surrealist. In the example of *Susan Lennox* above, the confusion between multiple planes of reality, as well as the use of a primitive text such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* are motifs frequently found in surrealist works, such as Michelle Leiris’ use of Ethiopian mythology in *Aurora*, or the constant interplay of Greek and other mythologies in Breton’s *Nadja*. Cirlot’s use of a popular film is also reminiscent of the engagement with popular culture and kitsch found in many avant-gardes such as surrealism and Dadaism.⁵⁷ Another common trope both Cirlot and French surrealist poets employed is the fantastic, grotesque, or uncanny description of a woman’s body. One might compare, for example, this kind of writing in Breton’s famous “L’Union libre” and Cirlot’s *Lilith*, a chapbook dedicated to Breton himself. Formally, Cirlot often employed chaotic list structures—again, similar to “L’Union libre”—throughout his career, such as in *Homenaje a Inger Stevens* from 1967. These chaotic lists provided a simple way to create juxtaposition, since the anaphora guarantees some sort of repetitive cohesion while the content of the list varies wildly:

⁵⁷ For a lengthy discussion of kitsch in modern art, see Calinescu (1987) Chapter 4 “Kitsch.”

Inger Stevens.
 Muerta en la pregunta de tus ojos.
 Muerta en la claridad de tu cuerpo.
 Muerta entre tu boca y tus cabellos.
 Muerta entre tus luces juveniles.
 Muerta con tus suavidades rubias.
 Muerta con tus tormentas ignotas.

[Inger Stevens.
 Dead in the question of your eyes.
 Dead in the brightness of your body.
 Dead in your mouth and your hair.
 Dead among your youthful lights.
 Dead with your blonde smoothnesses.
 Dead with your unknown storms.]

Though both Cirlot and the surrealists strived to create juxtapositions for similar aesthetic reasons, it is in the method for the creation of these juxtaposed images that we can begin to see why Cirlot began to take a critical distance from the movement sometime in the 1950s.⁵⁸ Originally, at least for the orthodox surrealists signed on to André Breton's manifestos, the method *par excellence* for creating was *écriture automatique*, which attempted to circumvent input from the conscious mind while writing.⁵⁹ Cirlot, however, looked toward automatic writing with skepticism: although mentioning in a letter to Royano that it is at times a useful technique, especially for self-psychoanalysis (*Royano* 114), he elsewhere states that the general result of it is “verborrea intolerable” (*Confidencias literarias* 139). In opposition to this lack of order in surrealist *écriture automatique*, what was essential for Cirlot was the presence of a structuring principle that gave a sense *coherence* to work. Even if traditional structures of harmony and

⁵⁸ Allegra (1988) argues that in the 1950s with works like *Palacio de Plata*, Cirlot turned away from Surrealism as his studies led him to his more trademark and original symbolist poetry. While I believe this is essentially correct, I find it slightly reductive, since Cirlot's early poetry has innumerable symbolist moments, while surrealism continues to be a useful interpretive frame for his late poetry, even if there is perhaps a shift in focus. Again, we can take the “mud of thought” metaphor: it is much more useful, even if more difficult, to talk about simultaneities and confluences than it is to talk about hierarchies and clear cut phases. Surrealism has also been the most common interpretive lense for Cirlot's poetry, and there are numerous studies dedicated to the topic, including Roman (2011), Murta (2010), and Medina Bañon 1997.

⁵⁹ The famous “first work” of Surrealism, *Les Champs magnétiques*, by André Breton and Philippe Soupault was written in this way.

symmetry were inadequate in modern art, the sense of coherence within a given work, even if difficult to uncover, is fundamental for Cirlot's thinking. In the next section we will see how Cirlot's sense of structure comes largely from Schoenberg, who argues that even though the composer may not be aware of the coherence within his or her own work, the challenge of creation, even in music, is to ultimately contribute to the understanding of what mankind can "apperceive, reason, and express" (Schoenberg 108). The point then, is not to work toward a complete lack of coherence, as the surrealists might have it, but rather toward an ever more subtle logic.

By the time Cirlot offers this criticism of surrealism in the 1960s, it is already a common place for Spanish poets to express some skepticism toward the surrealist practice of automatic writing: Lorca notes in his lecture on the *hecho poético* that we explored last chapter that poetic irrationality must be guided by "la conciencia más clara" [the clearest consciousness] (Lorca 591). Alberti likewise mentions that although Surrealism exerted a great influence in Spanish poetry, it often amounted to a lot of "bla-bla-bla" and that the Spanish poetry at the time was "más seria, más profunda" [more serious, more profound].⁶⁰ Ortega y Gasset offers perhaps what is a synthesis of the Spanish skepticism toward the chaos of surrealist art in his essay on dehumanization, arguing that the true challenge of modern art is to create something that conserves as little as possible of what is being represented (Ortega 366). For Ortega, to create something completely lacking in sense is easy, "[p]ero lograr construir algo que no sea copia de lo "natural," y que, sin embargo, posea alguna substantividad, implica el don más sublime" [but to achieve constructing something that is not a copy of the "natural," and that, nevertheless, possesses some substantiveness, implies a most sublime gift"] (368). Again, the issue at stake is

⁶⁰ In the case of Lorca, it is also interesting to note that in his discourse where he introduces the *hecho poético*, "Imaginación, inspiración, y evasión," he cites several examples from his then recently published *Romancero gitano*, a work which both Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, who had already joined the surrealists in Paris, disparaged for the work's apparent traditionalism.

maintaining something of the past while simultaneously transforming it, a particular kind of juxtaposition that leaves just enough of a similarity to compel the observer to look for a connection.

Nevertheless, accusations from figures like Marinetti—that Spain suffers from intellectual archaism—show that there is nevertheless a particular set of dangers present when engaging with the idea and forms of politically suspect institutions. Marinetti, of course, saw that the use of tradition risked the protection of both politically and aesthetically oppressive norms. In the next section we will examine how Cirlot’s interest in juxtaposition may have indeed led him in part to his interest in certain aspects of fascists aesthetics, even if his poetry in itself can in no way be easily reduced to supporting such a political position.

Mythic Time, Bergson, and Fascism

In Mark Antliff’s *Avant-Garde Fascism* (2007), a work largely dedicated to fascism and its predecessors before the start of World War II, he discusses that one of the most aesthetically enticing aspects of early, pre-Nazi Germany fascism was its anti-capitalist sense of temporality (21). Curiously, this idea was derived largely from Henri Bergson’s theory of subjective or qualitative time, which proto-fascist thinkers such as Georges Sorel and Georges Valois appropriated as an alternative to what they saw as an overly quantitative conception of time in both capitalism and communism. Believing that both communism and capitalism only valued “clock time” which converted workers’ lives into exchangeable labor hours, fascist qualitative time sought to restore the “spiritual and epic significance that transcended mundane materialism” (Antliff 52). Though Sorel’s and Valois’s fascist appropriations of Bergson both manipulated major parts of his philosophy, durational time gave to fascism the possibility for the simultaneity of multiple planes of reality, adding qualitative depth or intensity to the present. Given Cirlot’s

affinity for temporal multiplicities, we can already see that this aspect of fascism would have been attractive to him.

For Bergson, each moment consists of a multiplicity of mental states that are experienced simultaneously, which includes equally the various aspects of the present (a conversation blended with walk through a city, for example), as well as a deep time which contained both personal and cultural memory. Any attempt to analyze this irrational flow, to divide it up into discrete units, will fail to some degree, since the overlapping qualitative states all affect one another; separating them out discretely into a spatial plane necessarily violates the real unity of temporal experience.⁶¹ Though this confused and chaotic dynamism resists rational knowledge, Bergson saw within it the true powers of the intuitive mind as well as the keys for human freedom. As the rational mind could only operate with approximate spatial analyses of time, Bergson argued for a trust in the intuition since it more accurately perceived the real flow of life. Though Cirlot only mentions Bergson briefly in a few passages, reflecting on Cirlot's poetics of juxtapositions, the similarity between their thought is readily apparent. Just as Cirlot argued for the aesthetics of holding two ideas in the mind at once, as opposed putting them into a logical relationship, Bergson's durational time also prefers the simultaneity of experience against the successive spatiality of rational analysis.

For Sorel—just as for Cirlot—investigating this irrational multiplicity of present mental states within consciousness opened the door to powerful religious and mythological forces, latent remnants of archaic powers hidden within conscious experience (Sorel 30). In his infamous *Reflection on Violence* Sorel argues that the implementation of a rational, quantitative time emptied life of its true mythological and spiritual meaning (Antliff 52). By activating myths,

⁶¹ Not surprisingly Bergson's theory about the multiplicity of mental states would be a key influence in the thinking Deleuze (Lawlor, Moulard Leonard 2016). Just as one of the central tenets of Bergson's thinking is the irreducibility of a multiplicity to single one of its elements, so to will Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome reject the singularizing overcoding of arborescent structuration.

Sorel argues, politicians could foment a violent proletariat revolution that would restore spiritual meaning to modern life, and it is precisely the juxtaposition of multiple planes of reality that allows this revolution: instead of simply working in a factory or fighting in a battle, fascist qualitative time superimposed myths that aggrandized these tasks, adding epic significance to the role of the proletariat citizens. Nazi propaganda such as Leni Riefenstahl's famous film *Olympia* clearly demonstrate the efficacy of this mythological juxtaposition as an archaic pull toward the imagination of a primordial reality.

Antliff notes that another important trait of fascism that had high aesthetic appeal was the myth of a primitive regeneration through a return to a cultural golden age. In Nazism, for example, these primordial forces are rooted in the German soil and the German people, destined to thrive so long as they fight to remove corrupting forces (Judaism, homosexuality, Gypsies, etc.).⁶² In Italy, Mussolini attempted to instill an epic sense of time by superimposing a fascist calendar on the Gregorian calendar, starting over at "Year 1" and giving each day a "twofold mythic significance." "Thus March 23, Youth day, commemorated the founding of the Fasci; April 21, Labour Day, the founding of Rome, [etc.]" (Antliff 54). Here we find one very significant point where we can identify an obvious split between Cirlot's aesthetics and fascism: though Cirlot exploits primitive mythical dimensions in his poems, we have seen that it is impossible to determine any kind of nationalist hierarchy within the "planes of reality" opened in Cirlot's poetry. Indeed Cirlot's poetry tends toward a maximalization of polyphony and independence between the various images and themes. Furthermore, among the numerous planes that open in Cirlot's poetry, none ever exalt in any direct way a sense of Spanish or German grandeur. For this reason Cirlot would have been generally uninterested in Francoist nationalist

⁶² Though we have already mentioned that Cirlot denounced the tragedies of Nazism's crimes against other races, it seems likely that he felt sympathy toward Nazism's use and glorification of a mythic past. One example of this is Cirlot's article on Hess, in which he seems to defend, though very elusively, Nazism's medievalism while disparaging communist aesthetics.

politics, including the Garcilaso poetry that, at least rhetorically, sought to reinvigorate Spain's imperial splendor.

Turning now to focus on *Palacio de plata*, we will see a continued obsession with centrality, but rather than the binding and homogenizing force of the fasces, instead there is a negative flight away from materiality that is created through permutational juxtaposition. We will also develop how Cirlot's coupling of central and obscure traditions, this time of medieval Kabbalism and modernist music, subverts traditional poetic composition.

Palacio de plata: Abulafia, Schoenberg, and Permutational Form

Palacio de Plata was one of the few poetic works Cirlot produced between 1953 and 1962, yet he frequently remarked that it was perhaps his greatest contribution to literature. Several critics agree that *Palacio de plata* is an important contribution for Cirlot, and one goes as far to argue that the work represents a rare "absolute novelty" in Western literature (Gimferrer 62). The originality of the poem lies not in its content, but rather in its unique permutational form, which Cirlot informs us in the work's preface is based on the Kabbalism of thirteenth century mystic Abraham Abulafia and the twelve-tone serialism of modernist composer Arnold Schoenberg. *Palacio* begins with a single ten-line poem, occupying a single page, which is then rewritten in eleven subsequent permutations, each of which uses the exact same set of words as the original. Impressively, classic Spanish hendecasyllabic meter is kept throughout the entire poem, and readability is maintained in each permutation, though a few lines feel slightly contrived due to long genitive chains, such as "de las rosas de plata de la sangre / levanta su cabeza de las llamas" ["from the roses of the silver of blood / it lifts its head of flames"].

Even before getting to the poem's elaborate structure, we see that the symbolic content of the poem produces tension between the central and the distant. Beginning with the title, such a

locale as a “Silver Palace” calls to mind to mind the *modernismo* of Rubén Darío, whose aesthetics of decadence, exoticism, and musicality exerted a great influence in both Latin America and Spain. While the poem evokes the kind of ancient, distant, and esoteric places used so often in *modernista* poetry, the notion of a palace simultaneously draws us back in toward a center, be it religious, political, or cultural. Examining the entry for “Palace” in Cirlot’s *Dictionary*, we also find that it is also a symbol of a spiritual or mystical center, particularly in the Kabbalist tradition. I quote the first several lines from the entry: “En el simbolismo cabalístico, el palacio santo, o el ‘palacio interior’ se encuentra en medio de las seis direcciones del espacio, que forman con él el septenario. Es, por consiguiente, un símbolo del centro recóndito, del ‘motor inmóvil’” (352) [“In Cabbalistic symbolism, the sacred palace, or the ‘inner palace’, is located at the junction of the six Directions of Space which, together with this center, form a septenary. It is, consequently, a symbol of the occult Centre—of the ‘unmoved mover’”] (248). On one hand, the “occult Center” here refers to the kind of “mystic center” that the *Dictionary* tells us lays at the heart all unification, thus coloring the poem with an inward motion. Yet on the other hand, the palace gives an outward movement as well, since it is the “unmoved mover,” that which gives rise to movement, to the outer spiraling of the cursed hunter.

As we continue to read the entry on palaces, we see that silver palaces in particular are loci of the kinds of temporal compression that we see in Bergson’s theory of duration and in fascist aesthetics:

También se le llama el “palacio de plata,” y el “hilo de plata” es el ligamento oculto que une al hombre con su origen y su finalidad. La idea de centro refunde el corazón y la mente, por esto el palacio del anciano rey de las leyendas y cuentos folklóricos tiene cámaras secretas (inconsciente) que guardan tesoros (verdades espirituales). En especial, según Loeffler, los palacios de cristal o de espejos, como también los palacios que brotan por ensalmo son símbolos de la memoria ancestral de la humanidad, del saber primitivo de la edad de oro. (352)

It is also known as the ‘silver palace’, the ‘silver thread’ being the hidden bond which joins man to his Origin and to his End. This concept of the Center embraces the heart and

the mind; hence, in legends and folktales, the palace of the old king contains secret chambers (representing the unconscious) which hold treasure (or spiritual truths). Loeffler suggests that palaces made of glass or of mirrors, and also those which suddenly appear as if by magic, are specially symbolic of the ancestral memories of mankind—of the basic, primitive awareness of the Golden Age. (248)

Cirlot's interest in these kinds of myths—of secret chambers representing unconscious and spiritual truths—show his longing for the actualization of certain kinds of primordial truths through the exploration a hidden interiorities, i.e. “the basic, primitive awareness of the Golden Age.” These interiorities are not limited or limiting spaces, but demonstrate the ambiguous place of centrality and distance, since the palace is that which gives access to the distant recesses of consciousness that retain the traces of the man's ancient wisdom.

Examining the first section of the work, more literary allusions connected with the center and the distant become apparent:

El palacio de plata resplandece
en medio de las aguas del abismo
y las coronas arden con dulzura.

Y la dorada rueda de las rosas
levanta su cabeza de aire blanco.

El árbol infinito de la sangre
atraviesa la roca transparente.
La noche abre sus ojos de fulgor
sus letras de cristales que respiran.

De la calma del centro nacen llamas. (Cirlot 2005, 514)

[The palace of silver shines
in the middle of the waters of the abyss
and the crowns burn with sweetness.

And the gold wheel of the roses
raises its head of white air.

The infinite tree of blood
pierces the transparent rock.

The night opens its eyes of brilliance
its letters of crystal breathe.

From the calm of the center flames are born.]

The language is very typically Cirlotian in its sparse hermetic symbolism reminiscent of the *poesía depurada* [pure poetry] of Juan Ramón Jiménez, which sought to strip away extraneous anecdotes and historical references from poetry.⁶³ Cirlot's tendency toward Baudelairean symbolist aesthetics is evident in the line "sus letras de cristales respiran," similar to the living "forêts de symboles" that look at man with "regards familiers" in Baudelaire's famous "Correspondances" (Baudelaire 19). In this sense, the poem evokes both the eerie familiarity of the symbolic world, and also the "long échos qui de loin se confondent," the space of unification that is at once distant and exterior in our knowledge of it, yet close and interior in its identification with the subconscious.

While one may identify the simultaneous movements of centrality and proliferation with most of the images in the poem—the crowns, the head, the tree, eyes—the image of the flames born from the calm of the center in the last line evoke San Juan de la Cruz's "Llama de amor viva," that we explored in our discussion of Lorca and Unamuno's imagination of divine suffering. This reference to San Juanian Mysticism demonstrates the inclusion of canonical, central traditions in Cirlot's poetry, even when the work's structure stems from more obscure traditions such as Kabbalism and dodecaphonic music. In the next section we will see how the appearance of this traditional image, with its insistence on centrality, morphs in a proliferating flow founded upon principles from a religion long-marginalized in Spain.

⁶³ Discussion with citation. Also a mention of how continuing this trend put Cirlot at a difference from the social poets of the time.

Palacio de plata and Permutational Form

As mentioned earlier, the most striking feature of the poem is not the language employed, but rather its permutational structure. Because of this structure, the references and allusions that we have seen only exist “in tact” in the first three permutations, which are derived by changing the position of whole lines, i.e. line 9 becomes the new line 1, line 7 becomes line 3, etc. After the third section, individual phrases and words start to move around to form new lines and new images so that by the fourth stanza, the palace has changed color and character—“y la calma dorada del palacio” [the golden calm of the palace]—and the flames bear a different relation to the center: “el centro abre las llamas infinitas” [the center opens the infinite flames.] Each subsequent section affirms the one that precedes it by drawing upon the exact same set of words, yet it also negates its predecessor since it offers an alternative set of relationships among these words. Cirlot explains the formal and metaphysical rationale for such a text in the work’s preface:

“Este poema representa la consecuencia extrema de la analogía y paralelismo. Aparte de los primeros diez versos, que dan lugar al prototipo, al ‘acorde germinal’, o serie simbólica, todos los demás constituyen variaciones expresivas del anhelo de cada cosa en su tendencia a unirse a las otras.” (*En la llama*, 512)

[This poem represents the extreme consequence of analogy and parallelism. Aside from the first ten verses, which form the prototype, the “germinal chord,” or the symbolic series, all the rest constitute expressive variations of the longing of all things in their tendency to unite with others.]

The language of the preface clearly embodies the two recurrent poles present throughout Cirlot’s work: at one end, the poem represents an “*extreme* consequence,” that is to say a limit case of mechanical technique that subverts romantic notions of narrative or emotional coherence. Yet to produce this extremity, Cirlot must repeatedly return to the center, to the “germinal chord.” As

the preface continues, we learn also that that Cirlot employed such a methodology due to “desprecio cada vez más fuerte contra el sentido” [“a greater and greater distaste for sense/meaning”]. Cirlot’s anti-conceptualism moves him away from any kind of popular centrality, anything that can be easily understood by common readers. To use a metaphor from Ortega in his *Deshumanización* article, modern art embodies a distant orbit in its difficulty, which rejects any claims to the totality of the center. Yet accompanying this movement away from popular meaning is the desire to represent the hidden connection of all things, the absent term that joins two juxtaposed images. We have seen this quest for the center in the content of the poem which revolves around the center as an *unio mystico*, but the structure of *Palacio de Plata* itself allows for a heightened degree of possibility given what must have been a very careful selection of words and phrases, such that they are able to recombine with each other while still maintaining poetic sense and correct meter.

In the preface of *Palacio*, Cirlot informs us of the precise archēs he had in mind while constructing his work: the medieval Kabbalism of Abraham Abulafia and modernist music of Arnold Schoenberg. Both of these figures developed related forms of permutational serialism as a means of altering normal perception. For Abulafia, this was a matter of ritualistically permuting a series of letters, which allowed one to achieve an alternative conscious state in which prophecy could be received. In Schoenberg’s serialist music, this amounted to permuting a series of each of the twelve chromatic scale tones, which demanded a new way of perceiving musical structure as traditional tonality was abandoned. Though separated by nearly six centuries, both of these figures’ permutational techniques involve concepts critical to *Palacio de plata* and Cirlot’s work as a whole.

Firstly, these techniques suggest a refined perception receptive to the very subtle unity of all things, a perception attained as attention shifts away from focus on a single object (i.e. a single word, a single tonic note) and toward nearly imperceptible formal relationships, much like the

logic of juxtaposition discussed above. The specific method for attaining this refined perception, or rather encouraging it in the listener or reader, leads us to the second key idea: the creation of a proliferating series, which has a structural coherence not dependent on a rational center. While an image such as San Juan's "Llama de amor viva" suggests such a proliferation in the irrationality of Christ's vital suffering, *Palacio de plata* performs such a proliferation through its permutational form. Let us now turn to how these two ideas—a refined perception and an irrationally proliferating series—derive from the Kabbalist and modernist music traditions that inspired Cirlot to write this peculiar poem.

Abraham Abulafia and Permutational Kabbalism

Gershom Scholem, in his classic study *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, notes that mystics of any tradition almost inevitably transgress the boundaries of its own religion (9). Abraham Abulafia was certainly no exception to this rule as he not only transgressed the rules of his own religion, but also those of the typical Kabbalist as well. Scholem discusses that while common Kabbalist language, especially that of the famous *Zohar*, resonated with many Jews for its restrained style, Abulafia's texts often employ ecstatic, enraptured language that gained him little renown (124). Furthermore, while most Kabbalists carried out their duties of living simple, family-oriented lives as mandated by the Torah, Abulafia lived much more radically as a kind of wandering ascetic who travelled to Israel, Greece, and Italy proclaiming a coming apocalypse and teaching his new "ecstatic Kabbalism" (Hames 5).⁶⁴ Abulafia even deemed himself a messiah based on his capacities for reading the symbols and signs of the Torah, a fanaticism that would

⁶⁴ Harvey Hames (2007) notes that Abulafia lived at a time when both Christians and Jews were anxiously waiting an apocalypse which led to a flourish of a mysticism from both sides in an attempt to make a claim to Truth. Abulafia rose to the call of redeemer, though these messianic pretensions, as Hames notes, gained him little favor in posterity.

culminate in a madcap trip to Rome 1280 in an effort to convert Pope Nicholas III to Judaism—the kind of madness that would have no doubt piqued Cirlot’s curiosity for the extreme.⁶⁵

Perhaps the most important of Abulafia’s curiosities, however, is that, unlike most Kabbalist writers, he left rather explicit instructions on how to practice Kabbalah. We see in a passage translated by Scholem the ritualistic technique that would have inspired Cirlot, the permutation of letters:

Then take ink, pen and a table to thy hand... Now begin to combine a few or many letters, to permute and combine them until thy heart be warm. Then be mindful of their movements and of what thou canst bring forth by moving them. And... when thou seest that by combinations of letters thou canst grasp new things which by human tradition or by thyself thou wouldst not be able to know... then turn all thy true thought to imagine the Name and His exalted angels... (136)

Cirlot adapted this idea by starting with a set of words, and then recombining this single set to form new and unpredictable combinations (he would later do similar experiments with a set of letters in *Inger. Permutaciones* and parts of the *Bronwyn Cycle*). Cirlot had already carried out at least one similar experiment in his *Homenaje a Bécquer* published one year prior to *Palacio de plata*, which involved free combinations of words from late romantic poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer’s *Rima LIII*, “Volverán las oscuras golondrinas” [“The dark swallows will return”]. In *Homenaje a Bécquer* Cirlot does not utilize Abulafia’s strict permutational form as he does in *Palacio de plata* (Cirlot refers to them as *combinations* since many words are elided or repeated), but this poem, in its thematization of return and proliferation, demonstrates Cirlot’s developing interest in permutational form.

⁶⁵ Pope Nicholas III learned of Abulafia’s journey beforehand, and ordered that he be burned as a fanatic. Curiously, Abulafia, who continued on his mission undeterred, would never have the chance to convert the pope, for Nicholas III died of a sudden stroke the night Abulafia arrived in Rome. Abulafia would have also attracted Cirlot’s attention for the simple fact of his Iberian heritage. Not only was he born in Zaragoza, but he would later study and develop his own Kabbalism in Cirlot’s native Barcelona. Cirlot seemed to have a particular curiosity for these kinds of uncanny historic coincidences. Schoenberg would also compose a great deal of his longest dodecaphonic work *Moses and Aaron* in Barcelona.

Now, note that Abulafia's language above is vague—a feature typical of Kabbalist texts (Scholem 135)—as he suggests that one use either “few or many letters;” in another description, he also suggests that one may use words as well. Letters are likely preferable because the end goal of Kabbalist practice is to find and experience the yet-to-be-revealed “Name of God,” essential since, “all things exist only by virtue of their degree of participation in the great Name of God, which manifests itself throughout the whole Creation” (Scholem 133). Abulafia's recombination of letters enables the possibility of seeing and feeling new connections, whose meaning transcends individual letters, giving access to the realm of the “Name of God,” perhaps equivalent to the “silver thread” that connects all things to their origin that Cirlot mentions in his entry on palaces. From here we can also read more deeply into the line that we related to Baudelaire's *Correspondances*, “La noche abre sus ojos de fulgor / sus letras de cristales que respiran.” The night, as a dark space seemingly void of content becomes brilliantly alive and aware; furthermore, language is no longer a hindrance that only approximates expressing the divine, but rather it is a medium constitutive of both the divine and the human.⁶⁶ Signification itself becomes a living, dynamic being in which man can experience the “Name of God,” thus realizing his own godliness.

Even though this living aspect of language is the most ubiquitous presence in existence (it is the very fabric of the universe), it is nevertheless for Abulafia, “the least concrete and least perceptible thing in the world” (133). Hames informs us that Abulafia once described his refined perception using the metaphor of Jacob's ladder: as man ascended each rung, he gained perspective and came closer to the truth. Abulafia, of course, had reached the highest rung, and thus his messianic pretensions (Hames 1). He achieved this through his permutational technique, which led one away from the habitual mode of perception focused on the meaning of words and

⁶⁶ Scholem notes that this positive attitudes toward language is perhaps a unique feature of Kabbalism, since so many other mystic traditions, particularly Christian Mysticism, from Meister Eckhart to San Juan and Santa Teresa, is often marked by a lament that language cannot describe the divine (Scholem 13).

sentences, to a subtler consciousness capable of perceiving the divine in the space between letters. Scholem informs us that for Abulafia, even permutations that lack sense in human language represented some aspect of the divine (Scholem 133); it was only a matter of “climbing higher on the ladder” to see how the individual letters of the Torah made up the “score of the divine” (Hames 3).

This rejection of traditional meaning in favor of subtle refinements connects Abulafia and Cirlot’s experimentations with permutational form. While Cirlot would have taken Abulafia’s mystical rationale for permutation very much to heart, we can also identify important aesthetic and political motives for creating a poetic adaptation of this technique in the mid-twentieth century. As we know from the work’s preface Cirlot employed the permutational method in part for his growing contempt of *sentido* (sense, rational meaning) in art—no doubt driven by his anti-Renaissance aesthetics of dynamism, ambiguity, and negation. Abulafia’s form would have given Cirlot a means of creating a coherent structure that nevertheless obstructs any argumentative reading of the poem. For example, one might be tempted to take the striking last line of the last section, “Y las coronas nacen de la sangre” [“And the crowns are born from blood”], to mean that poem is a political commentary on something like the cruelty of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. Yet the mention of the crown in the first three sections contradicts this: “y las coronas arden con dulzura” [“and the crowns burn with sweetness”]. Here the poetic voice celebrates the crown, especially when considering that *dulzura* in Spanish has connotations of kindness—not to mention that the first stanza in general paints a mysticism incompatible with any direct political schema.

Given the deliberately non-conceptual, apolitical gesture of a poem like *Palacio de plata*, then, it is hardly surprising that Cirlot’s self-proclaimed “greatest contribution to literature” had little resonance with either the fascist Francoist regime or the leftist counterculture. Whereas the

idealized language of a quest for unity appears in some of the regime-sponsored poetry,⁶⁷ Cirlot's extreme formal game in *Palacio de plata*—not to mention its sources from Jewish cultural history—hardly serve a Catholic, Fascist dictatorship. Likewise, the poem's mystical pretensions, obscure symbolism, and “dehumanized” form stood in stark opposition to the leftist *poesía social* and their efforts to make poetry “useful” again after the historical vanguard's oblique experimentations.

While one might sum up the political aspirations of social poetry with Celaya's famous “La poesía es una arma cargada de futuro” [a weapon loaded with the future] for its investment in effecting political change, we might consider Cirlot's *Placio de plata* as an “arma cargada de presente” [“an arm loaded with the present”]. Just as Abulafia saw that the goal of his Kabbalism as revealing an already divine present as opposed to effecting changes in the world (Hames 63), *Palacio de plata* functions in a similar way since one finds not so much an argumentative logic or call to action so much an exercise attempting to refine symbolic perception, that is, to expand present consciousness. We might call to mind what we have said about Bergson's temporal logic here, wherein rational analysis projected into the future is always partially equivocal, inasmuch as it is based on a false projection of the “dead” material of the past into an indeterminate future. The truest way, then, of effecting future change, is paradoxically opening to the immanent richness of the present, a path to which opens though permutational experimentation, at least for Cirlot and Abulafia. While the politically engaged leftists of the day may have denounced such writing as irrational and evasive, we have already seen that Cirlot saw lyric poetry's main function as a negation, relegating affirmation to the politically dubious category of epic. Elsewhere, Cirlot defends the irrationality of mythology, suggesting that for primitive peoples it was perhaps not a matter of a lack of intelligence that kept their myths alive, but rather a

⁶⁷ This is much more the case in the *integrista* movement and the propaganda poetry of Dionisio Riduejo than in the *garciliasta* movement we explored in Chapter 1.

skepticism toward the closure and limits that an Enlightenment rationality imposes.⁶⁸ Curiously Cirlot preferred archaically reiterating the indeterminate mysteries of the past than over-assured speculation about a still non-existent future.

Arnold Schoenberg and Twelve-Tone Composition

While *Palacio de plata* lacks a clear communicative message, the essence of the poem, as we have said, lies in its distinct organizing principle, granting it a sense of coherence beyond more traditional kinds of literary meaning. This sense of structure without traditional meaning is largely what Cirlot learned from composer Arnold Schoenberg, whose challenge to the structuration of music through traditional tonality was one the most influential and lasting developments in twentieth-century musical history (Haimo 4). This is particularly apparent in Schoenberg's twelve-tone music, which Cirlot cites along with Abulafia as the basis of *Palacio de plata*. Composing in this style begins by constructing a "primary series" of each of the twelve chromatic scale notes used exactly once that serves as a structuring principle instead of a traditional diatonic tonality. This series—analogueous to the first stanza of *Palacio*—is then rewritten continuously through a number of carefully defined permutational techniques, such as reversing the order or inverting the intervals. Following such a set of rules ensured coherence between the original series and subsequent variations, giving the work a peculiar unity, even if difficult for most listeners to identify.⁶⁹ This method of composing stood in sharp contrast to

⁶⁸ See "Bronwyn (Simbolismo de un argumento cinematográfico)" in *Bronwyn*, pp. 609-28

⁶⁹ Twelve-tone music was just one of many of Schoenberg's means of maintaining structure while evading traditional tonality (Dahlhaus 87), though I focus on it here since it is the one specifically mentioned by Cirlot in the preface to *Palacio de Plata*. For a full description of the technique and its implications, see Schoenberg's essay "Composition with Twelve Tones" in *Style and Idea*.

traditional compositions, which relied on a diatonic scale (either major or minor), whose natural tendency is to continuously revert back a tonic note that defines a composition's key.

The abandonment of traditional tonality, led to strange, alien sounding music that shocked many critics of the day. Musicologist and Schoenberg scholar Carl Dahlhaus notes that while some critics celebrated Schoenberg's early experimentations, and while others criticized it harshly for his structural "anarchy," all of them were well aware that he had accomplished at least a very new kind of composition (88). Much like the effects that we have seen in *Palacio de plata*, composing with a chromatic "primary series" abolishes the traditional resolution of "musical arguments:" dissonances only lead to more dissonances since no single tone takes a central role. This also makes the music practically impossible to memorize, and presents a particular challenge to singers who must struggle against a constant barrage of unconventional intervals.⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, Deleuze & Guattari praise the "rhizomatic" composition of Schoenberg and its capacity for continuous becoming, a topic we will develop more in brief.

The application of constant dissonance developed through what Schoenberg called the "Emancipation of Dissonance," which occurred as listeners became more and more accustomed to dissonance, such that the ear came to hear that it was not necessarily less beautiful than consonance, but only more difficult to understand (Schoenberg 104).⁷¹ As Schoenberg states, twelve-tone music has no other aim than comprehensibility—a seemingly polemical statement given the difficulty and strangeness of a twelve-tone composition.⁷² But as we examine this a bit further, taking Schoenberg's notion of the "Idea" of a musical composition, as well as his sense of

⁷⁰ Another curious effect of dodecaphonic composition that Schoenberg also notes is that key modulation no longer makes any sense: since the work no longer begins with any established key, modulating into another key is impossible (Schoenberg 105).

⁷¹ Schoenberg discusses this at more length in his *Harmonielehre (Theory of Harmony)*, where he argues that dissonant intervals are more difficult because they are perceived *later* than consonant ones. See Chapter x [citation]

⁷² Schoenberg discusses in an essay on the technique that singers had a great deal of difficulty memorizing the notes at first. Upon familiarizing themselves intimately with the primary series, the musicians reported that the music not only became easier to perform, but also more enjoyable—proving in a sense that despite the music's alien tone, its structural quality can indeed be learned.

“developing variation,” we will see how his music not only aimed at comprehensibility, but, how it also aimed at a refined perception capable of grasping a continuously moving musical structure free from the need of a concrete center.

Developing Variation, Continuous Variation

Developing variation is a term coined by Schoenberg to describe the progressive transformations of a musical idea throughout the length of a work, the kinds of permutations, so to speak, of a musical phrase in terms rhythm, melody and harmony.⁷³ Very closely related to this term is Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of “continuous variation,” a notion largely inspired by Schoenberg, though applicable to a broader range of domains such as language and visual art. Though the two terms could be taken as synonyms, I will use developing variation in regards to Schoenberg and continuous variation in other contexts since Schoenberg conceived the former primarily in terms of describing a phenomenon within the history of music. The concept of continuous variation not only helps us understand Schoenberg’s compositional techniques and their aesthetic ends, but it will also lead us back into our discussion of Cirlot’s poetics and the notion of flight, since continuous variation for D&G is the method par excellence of escaping aesthetic constraints.

Schoenberg described developing variation as one of the most important composition techniques since the middle of the eighteenth-century; it is no surprise he held such esteem for the technique given that his contributions to music are largely new ways of producing variation

⁷³ Schoenberg gives his most precise definition of the developing variation in “Bach” from *Style and Idea*, pp. 397, of which the definition I give is a paraphrase. Also see “New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea” and “Composition with Twelve Tones” in the same volume. A small selection from the extensive critical literature on the idea includes Ethan Haimo’s *Schoenberg’s Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-Tone Method, 1914–1928* (1990), Keith Salley’s “On Duration and Developing Variation,” (2015) Carl Daulhaus’s *Schoenberg and the New Music*, Chapter 4: “What is Developing Variation?” (1987).

(Haimo 73). The particular ways within a given work that make a theme vary—creating a series of tensions and resolutions based on the “distance” from a tonal center—constitute the *Idea* of the work, which for Schoenberg embodies the essence of a composer’s contribution (Schoenberg 65). While his critics saw this highly cerebral and rational approach to composing as lacking in emotional depth, Schoenberg argues against this, noting that even such an emotional and romantic composer such as Beethoven stressed the importance of logic in his compositions (Schoenberg 48). Dahlhaus explains why Schoenberg valued the intellect’s role in musical composition: his seemingly mechanical techniques actually sought to escape the populist emotionalism of romanticism, which showed emotional intensity on the surface, but lacked originality at its depth (Dahlhaus 83). Though the beginning of this quest for novelty began with the brain, the end goal of such a practice for Schoenberg implied an exploration of what Schoenberg saw as more complicated, profound emotions; a flight from vulgar simplicity to the obscure corners of the mind.

In a letter written to Ferruccio Busoni in 1909, Schoenberg expresses his desire to move away from the banality of Romanticism, while also demonstrating how much his thinking on these questions resembles Bergson’s theory of the con-fused, complex and continuously varying nature of our emotions:⁷⁴

Away with Pathos!
 Away with protracted ten-ton scores!
 My music must be
brief.
 Concise! In two notes: not built, but "*expressed*"!!
 And the result I wish for:

⁷⁴ Though it is unclear whether or not Schoenberg read Bergson directly, Keith Salley (2015) argues that is highly likely, not just because Schoenberg was highly popular in turn-of-the-century intellectual circles in Vienna, but also because of the numerous clear intersections of their theory. Salley notes, for example, that Schoenberg at times reads almost exactly like Bergson, demonstrable by simply substituting “developing variation” with Bergson’s “duration” (Salley 10). Salley also notes several other scholars who have recently examined the influence of Bergson in Schoenberg, such as Cherlin (2007), Hulse (2008), and Cahn (1996), and several others (see endnote 2 in Salley 2015).

no stylized and sterile protracted emotions.

People are not like that:

it is *impossible* for a person to only *one* sensation at a time.

One has thousands simultaneously. And these thousands can no more readily be added together than an apple and a pear. They go their own way.

An this variegation, this multifariousness, this *illogicality* which our senses demonstrate, the illogicality presented by their interactions, set forth by some mounting rush of blood, by some reaction of the senses or the nerves, this I should like to have in my music.

(Cited in Auner 70-71) [Original italics]

In this excerpt from the letter, Schoenberg implies that the excesses of the Romantic Era (“protracted ten-ton scores”) amounted to nothing more than “stylized and sterile emotion,” and that this infringed on our ability to see the real irrational complexity of our emotions. Extending this one step with Bergson in mind, we can see how this complexity relates to developing and continuous variation: for Bergson, the complex nature of experience constantly changes, such that reducing the present state to previous states would be, in the words of Schoenberg, to “add up apples and pears.”

Theodor Adorno, in his reflections on Schoenberg and romanticism, notes as well that what is at stake is not so much a quest for novelty—a “new” sound or harmony—but rather for a presentation of notes that allows the listener to perceive music in a subtler, more objective way. Adorno stipulates that there is essentially no difference between more traditional music and Schoenberg’s serialism, but rather that Schoenberg’s serialism, stripped of all emotive and performative bravado, allows one to more easily hear the uniqueness of a particular work’s “Idea” (Adorno 12).⁷⁵ Again, for all the permutational experiments of Cirlot, Abulafia, and Schoenberg, one must train the mind to experience new kinds of subtlety. In an essay, Cirlot reflects on this idea with Schoenberg in mind, highlighting the spiritual aspect of such a search:

⁷⁵ Schoenberg once quipped “I owe very, very much to Mozart; and if one studies, for instance the way in which I write for string quartet, then one cannot deny that I have learned this directly from Mozart. And I am proud of it!” (Schoenberg 1949, 72), demonstrating that Schoenberg saw no shortage of ideas that he would use to create his modernist music, even in the “digestible” music Mozart.

La poesía sobre todo, se hace con “ideas;” pero con ideas que son de un lado, pensamiento, de otro “ideas técnicas”, esto es, de técnica poética. O mejor, sólo es gran arte —según Arnold Schoenberg, a cuya opinión me adhiero—el que sabe inventar procedimientos que expresen inéditamente las nuevas situaciones espirituales que ‘encuentra’ el hombre en su evolución... (“Mallarmé,” *Confidencias literarias* 139)

[Poetry, above all, is made with “ideas;” but with ideas that are on one hand thought, and on the other “technical ideas,” that is, ideas of poetic technique. Or better said, great art is only—according to Arnold Schoenberg, to whose opinion I adhere—that which knows how to invent techniques that unprecedentedly express the new spiritual situations that man finds in his evolution...”]

The idea of the work may begin as an intellectual analysis of how to discover new psychological states, but it ends as a means to encounter subtle spiritual truths hidden in the fabric of normal experience. These truths are not generated *ex nihilo*, but rather they lay hidden within everyday notes and harmonies, revealed only through processes obligatorily repeat the basic components of music in new contexts, or in the case of *Palacio de plata* and Abulafia’s Kabbalism, repeat the basic units of language in unforeseen ways.

Deleuze & Guattari’s continuous variation, similar to developing variation, describes a form that varies in such a way that it does not repeat, or, better said, so that it does not correspond to a single determining principle. In essence, continuous variation is something that is always present in the world of phenomenon, but it is effaced as predetermined categories and concepts homogenize experience; this is, of course, a homologous idea to principle of making a multiplicity through subtracting out a unifying principle (n-1). The goal then is not so much to invent a continuous variation, but to develop an awareness that there is never a single determining principle at work in a field of phenomena, just as like Schoenberg’s skepticism of experiencing a single emotion,. In developing his twelve-tone variation, Schoenberg subtracted the tonal center, which “pre-hierarchized” all of the notes in a given work, relativizing them to the centrality of the tonal base. As a consequence of subtracting tonality, the classical musical structure of alternating consonances and dissonances alters substantially since absolute resolution to tonic harmonies

disappears. Musicologist Stephen Hinton suggests that Schoenberg conceptualized something like a general “sonance” that functioned on a continuum of not beauty, but rather intelligibility: dissonances were really only consonances that are difficult to understand, with the level of difficulty relative to both composers and listeners (Hinton 573). As Schoenberg believed the unique goal of twelve-tone music was comprehensibility, his music did not boast so much the invention of new structures, but rather as making intelligible a broader range of musical possibilities (Schoenberg 103). In this way we can understand Schoenberg’s music as a flight away from relying on the structuring principles of traditional music, away from monophony, away from key signatures, away from traditional harmony altogether.

Again, the development of a sensitivity to relationships that were previously excluded by certain norms (“false constants”) undergirds Schoenberg’s musical permutations, just as it did for Abulafia six centuries earlier. For Abulafia this meant substituting the false constant of actual (human) words with a series of letters; for Schoenberg this meant replacing a tonal center with a dodecaphonic series. In *Palacio de plata*, Cirlot places the poem’s images into continuous variation in a similar way by ignoring the implicit constraints of traditional poetry that centered on a narratological or imagistic argument. Rather than relying on this traditional coherence, which to some extent excludes contradictory images, *Palacio de plata* is an inclusive work that hopes to expand and exhaust the range of possibilities for a given set of images. This exploration of new possibilities, even if they lack meaning or sound displeasing, can be understood through Abulafian mysticism, which imagines a subtleness of perception capable of seeing the divine in every detail. And like Schoenberg, Cirlot attempts to develop understanding of these details through the dehierarchization of relationships—the subtraction leading to continuous variation—as a means opening new emotional and spiritual possibilities.

Importantly, this opening of new possibilities cannot be attained through a random or chaotic process, but one that proceeds with a careful methodology. After all, the basis of

continuous variation is a repetition, which Deleuze notes in his classic work *Difference and Repetition*, takes on meaning as much through its reference to the repeated figure as it does through the difference shown in the new iteration.⁷⁶ Though many of Schoenberg's detractors claimed that he was a musical anarchist (Dahlhaus 85), we can observe that there are at least two important archēes which Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositions followed. One of these is the "internal" archive of the primary series, manipulated through a precise set of rules, such that each new variation still referred back to it. Though Schoenberg worked toward removing the discrete nature of traditional harmony through a continuum of "sonance," his methodology of starting with a fixed series—even as series of difficult to understand relationships—nevertheless ensured a coherence to the work, or, as we have said, it constituted the Idea of the work.

The second, "external" archive connects Schoenberg's work to the Jewish theological tradition, showing us that despite the revolutionary nature of Schoenberg's style, we might consider it a manifestation of a very old idea. Dahlhaus, in his influential but controversial 1987 essay "Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology" recalls that in Medieval Jewish theologians, the Torah as Revelation "is not in itself a comprehensible message, but becomes one only in the reflections which it experiences in human consciousness" (Dahlhaus 1987). This idea—certainly present in the permutational explorations of Abulafia—meant that meaning had to be continuously updated in accordance with the experience of man and his progress or evolution. In order to express truth, then, one had to guarantee that experience be constantly shifting, thus leading to the notions of continuous and developing variation. The ambiguity of a religious document, rather than a challenge to overcome, can continuously be actualized through various iterations; there is a need for proliferation, flight, which guarantees something like the living nature of religious experience.

⁷⁶ D&G further reinforce this idea in *A Thousand Plateaus* as they often discuss the "danger" of stripping away norms without methodology. They suggestively call this "destruction without methodology" the foundation for fascism; I imagine Cirlot would have disagreed with such a claim, since his interest in Fascism was precisely that it did have a structure (mythological, primitivist) that he saw lacking in communism.

Like Lorca, much of the finality of Cirlot's poetic practice involve formal configurations stemming from religious systems that aim toward an evasion of conclusive solutions. In the case *Palacio de plata*, Cirlot employs a strict methodology of variance that shifts the burden of creating continually new relationships from the "creative spirit" of the poem to a formal system that that works toward of a maximal number of variations in continuous flux. In this way Cirlot not only aims to actualize a single ancient truth in the context of new historical periods, but rather attempts to show that even within the timeframe of reading a single poem, meaning making is a continuously varying process. Like Abulafia, then, who aimed not so much at a change within textual meaning, but rather at reconfiguration of perception that looks beyond the text to the "fabric" of god constituting the medium of meaning itself, Cirlot employs poetry with the ultimate aim of moving beyond poetry itself.

Chapter 4

“nunca esfacil”: Heterographic Experimental Poetry in Late Franco Era Spain

In the summer of 1966 Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, poet and student in philosophy at the Complutense University of Madrid, organized a series of “public poems” in which he and a group of colleagues would spell out a single word in a public space by each holding a giant, nearly two-meter tall letter cut out of white cardboard.⁷⁷ While their first performance, spelling out the word “ARTE” [art] in front of the *Círculo de Bellas Artes*—a private cultural organization near the center of Madrid—generated little reaction from authorities, their second attempt some weeks later was a different story. This time Gomez de Liaño and his colleagues stood in front of *Palacio de Buenavista*—headquarters of the Spanish land army—spelling out “ARMA” [weapon]. Within minutes after, they were asked by the authorities at the center to promptly leave. Rather fortunately, Gómez de Liaño remembers, they were not arrested, as they almost certainly would have been had they carried out such an act twenty or even ten years before, when even the most ambiguous public act would have been viewed suspiciously by Francoist authorities.

This incident shows the kind of social and behavioral normalization enacted within authoritarianism. This simple gesture—making public art that stands out as unordinary—is met with suspicion by the authorities; even if the message of the word “arma” is ambiguous, the public medium in which the message is presented is enough to qualify the act as subversive. But beyond the gesture of transgressing norms in a public space—all that the Francoist authorities

⁷⁷ This anecdote comes from an interview I conducted with Gómez de Liaño on October 10th, 2016.

really needed to stop the act—there is also another level of subversive meaning in its experimental poetics, as a word fragmented from its normal location on a page and appropriated as part of a necessarily visual, public spectacle. The word *arma* indexically signals the army nearby behind the gates of the palace. While this is essentially redundant information—after all, it is general public knowledge that it is the location of the army headquarters—the synecdochal form of the message calls attention specifically to the weapons of the army, that is, toward the army’s capacity to enact violence to authoritative ends. In this way we could read Gómez de Liaño’s poem/act in terms of Lorca’s calling attention to violence against bodies, highlighting the military’s capacity to rationalize harm against others as an act of political control.

The *garcilasistas* also signaled the regime’s capacity for violence as Juan Aparicio in the first issue of *Garcilasismo* aligned the group’s “creative hegemony” with Franco’s victory in the Civil War. Yet they did so in a completely traditional manner, highlighting not the violence against helpless bodies, but rather celebrating war as a creative act that righteously establishes a nation “*Una, Grande, y Libre*,” an event arising out of the archaic primordality of Spain as a sovereign nation with its own unified aesthetics—even if this aesthetic will be compromised by the complicated legacy of Garcilaso, as we examined in Chapter 1. Not only did they align themselves with the tradition of Spain’s birth as a modern nation, but also the form in which they expressed such a celebration was highly traditional: the medium of Renaissance poetic forms and literary publishing. It is here—read against the traditional presentation of the *garcilasista*’s celebration of Spain’s “primordial” birth—that the subversive nature of the poem “ARMA” arises, precisely through its experimental form that fragments writing, removing the word from the page to make it a visual, public experience. Thus writing, stripped from its traditional context and presented in the heterogeneous medium of public space, becomes a real *arma*, a political weapon able to subtly call attention to the violent nature of authoritarian control.

In this chapter I explore similar works from the wave of politically charged experimental poetry in the 1960s and 1970s as it was organized in various movements such as *Problemática '63* and *poesía n.o.*, including figures such as Julio Campal, Fernando Millán, Felipe Boso, José Luis Castillejo, as well as Gómez de Liaño himself. These artists sought to increase the political intensity of writing through experimenting with its heterogeneous presentation, focusing on a becoming-visual and becoming-public of poetic experimentation that blends writing with other genres and media such as sound, performance, and protest. Though the examples I will explore do not all have the same kind of definitively public character as “ARMA,” they nevertheless stress the making-visual of poetry, often in the public space of an art gallery or exhibition.

I argue that this making-heterogeneous of poetry was an essential part of their political positioning, since they sought to reach a broad public through the revolutionary aim of collapsing traditional genre boundaries—limits which they saw as the political and institutional oppression of their expressive freedom. More than this, not only did these writers oppose the regularity and perceived simplicity of traditional writing, I explore how their invocations and use of both national and international artistic movements (*creacionismo*, *ultraísmo*, symbolism, futurism, etc.) construct alternative aesthetic traditions that disrupt the dominant literary practices of Francoist nationalism and romantic socialism.⁷⁸ These constructions of eclectic lineages work to establish both syntagmatic continuity, inheriting a rich legacy of national and international experimentation, as well as paradigmatic continuity, connecting outwards to the numerous experimental poetic movements that arose in the post-Spanish Civil War, post-World War II era.

Although these poets aimed at a complete blending of artistic genres, I explore how they first and foremost sought to deconstruct the institution of writing, as they imagined that the writing’s norms, especially its regular linearity, as that which prohibited the free play of

⁷⁸ See Mayhew (2009), especially Chapters 1 and 2 for a discussion of how socialist-leaning critics and anthologists promoted often-oversimplified versions Franco Era poetry.

heterogeneous elements within a work that would allow greater expressive freedom. Without the regularizing linearity of traditional writing, meaning would no longer be determined solely by the artist, but rather created in tandem with the observer who can recombine the elements of a given text or image, free from the overdetermining logic of a fixed sequence. Following this, one of the key works mentioned by these writers in the efforts to reconstruct the lineages of modern poetry is Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*, which is often imagined as the first major disruption of strict linearity in Western tradition. Much like in Cirlot's discussion of juxtaposition, the experimental poets preferred the possibilities and encounters of the rhizome that is created once an imposed "linealism" is subtracted (n-1) giving way to a freer visuality of poetry.

In order to name and discuss these poets' practice of deconstructing writing, I will employ the term heterography. Though not used by the artists of these days, I use heterography to help delimit a specific practice among the plethora of experimentations with genre blending carried out in Spain in these years. As opposed to orthography—etymologically "correct writing"—heterography, by contrast, can be understood as a means of writing *another way*, writing *differently*, particularly as this alternative writing increases heterogeneity within written expression. Gómez de Liaño's poem/act "ARMA" is an illustrative example of heterography, as it removes writing from its normal context on the page and blends it with the public medium of protest. This reaction against the regularity of writing, we will see, was not only a reaction against the norms and regularities of Francoist Spain, but also against all forms of traditional, orthographic writing, including the leftist *poesía social* of the day, which they perceived as overly facile and incapable of fomenting the kind of expressive revolution they envisioned.

In the last chapters, we explored how poets tended to subvert the discourses of ideologically problematic institutions in which they engaged—such as poetic nationalism or Catholicism. In this chapter, at a slight variation, these visual poets imagined the institutions of linear, logical writing in general as an archaic institution that imposes limitations on creative and

individual freedom. Their heterographic practices—their making-heterogeneous of writing—was an attempt to subvert not just a single written discourse, but writing itself. As visual poet and critic Felipe Boso notes in his review of visual poetry trends in 2009, these writers imagined their practice as the “opposite of the Sumerian formation of writing,” undoing the standardization of written language and returning to a freer, more primordial state of expression before it would be dominated by the linealism of modern writing (Boso 2009, 87). Boso further notes that this was not seen as a regression, but as an *evasion*; in the terms of my dissertation, we could say that this evasion is an appeal to an archaic imaginary that bears the primordial force of purer state of aesthetic expression, before the rigorous controls instituted by modern political, authoritative society. As with the examples of poetic archaism we have studied thus far, this is indeed not a regression, but rather a means to effect a change in the present, in service of a modernity that will have done away with the limiting constraints of generic delimitation. In one sense, this imagined blending of genres resembles the epistemophilic inclusionism of Cirlot, as Julio Campal, one of the primary figures who renewed interest in experimental poetry in this time period, argued that the modern poet must not deny any technique or resource in the creation of new poetry. Yet, at difference from the intellectualism of Cirlot, the breaking down of genres imagined by these visual poets was largely a populist gesture that would ultimately invalidate the need for elitist, intellectual, and traditional forms of meaning. This ideal of their heterographic writing practice—of combining other media with writing as a means of making it vary continuously—is a way of freeing expressive meaning from its archaic constraints of linealism and pre-determined meaning.

While the inclusionism and populism of these writers entails a progressive ideology by which art has a broader popular impact, their tendency toward archaic ideas nevertheless tends to compromise parts of their progressive ideology. While they attempted to do away with the traditional kinds of meaning making as a populist move that would negate the tenets of intellectual art, they frequently relied on the complexities of the alternative lineages that they

constructed in the imagining of their new art. This happens especially as the visual poetry of this era can be difficult to read given in its abstraction and habitual sparseness, such as we have seen in Liaño's "ARMA." As critic Juan Carlos Fernández Serrato has noted, one of the great ironies of the movement is that even though they intended a kind of populist revolution of art, the difficulty of their work made it such that they never reached a broad audience. The phrase that appears in this chapter's title, "nunca esfacil," from poet Fernando Millán, is a reference to this difficulty that both defines and compromises much of the visual poets' intent to revolutionize art. As a means to stabilize their texts, we will see that many of these poets create meaning in their work by borrowing techniques from and making allusions to the Western European, salvaging them from non-meaning—despite the fact that in their appeal to a broader public, they sought to do away with a dependence on knowledge of traditions. This is another example of the double-edged sword that archaism in poetry tends to bring forth; even as these poets react against lineal writing and allusive, traditional forms of meaning, they still replicate these kinds of sense making paradigms in their work, never fully escaping or subverting the institutions with which they engage.

Whereas in the last chapter we examined some of the ways that Cirlot employed a number of heterogeneous discourses as a means to disrupt what he saw as a limiting unity of intellectual discourses in the field of modern Spanish, European, and Anglophone literature, the poets I examine in this chapter manipulated the generic heterogeneity as means to not just intensify potential meaning within writing, but also as a way to collapse the boundaries between different genres. For these writers, this was a deliberate political and even revolutionary tactic since they imagined that the institution of writing itself, particularly its normalized linearity, was ultimately an authoritarian affront to the possibilities of expression involving a non-linear, heterogeneous genre in which forms could be combined more freely. Whereas they saw the linearization of writing as overly determinate of how one could make sense of a text, by

exploiting the visual aspects of writing, combining graphic and other media, sense making of the new poetry would become a participative process. This increased participation on the part of the perceiver likewise formed an important part of their ideology. As the presence of advertising and other informational media increased in the post-Civil War and World War II era, these poets sought to activate the public's critical capacities so as not to be persuaded or "brainwashed" by the governmental and corporate flood of information.

The visual poets' ideal of heterogeneity as an ideological stance is something that we have seen repeatedly throughout this dissertation. In Chapter 1, we saw that García Nieto envisioned aesthetic movement and change in the encounter [encuentro] between the disparate realities of human and nature; even as this seemed to disrupt the ideological unity supposed in a nationalizing poetics. In Chapter 2, we examined how Unamuno and Lorca reacted against the perfect logic of a "Protestant" morality in favor irrational system of juxtapositions that strategically evaded simple conclusions. We also saw Cirlot theorize a similar take on juxtaposition as something that opposed simple linealism; this in turn formed part of his greater theory that juxtaposed a maximal number of literary discourses, esoteric religions, and world knowledges against each other as a means to combat the homogenizing discourses of modern poetry. In this chapter, we will explore similarly how the "atomization of form"—a phrase coined by visual poet and theorist Fernando Millán—attempted to increase a given artwork's capacity to create connection. Through atomization, a process of giving independence to a works various components through visual juxtaposition or other means, these writers worked to disrupt the stability of linear expression and allow for a greater number of possible connections and lines of flight within a given work.

In what follows I begin elaborating more thoroughly on my notion of heterography. Discussing this term will allow us to situate the wave of visual poetry in Late Franco Era Spain amongst the larger vogue of visual and concrete poetry that arose in Europe and the Americas in

the post-World War II era. Furthermore, it will allow us to develop how these writers envisioned their experimentations as an archaic practice that aimed at a return to the primordial origins of writing. I then discuss these movements' origins with the arrival of Argentine-born Uruguayan Julio Campal in Madrid in 1963 and the continuation of his legacy through Fernando Millán.

Heterography and Poetic Lineage

In order to further illustrate my concept of heterography we can examine with Felipe Boso's 1973 poem, which we can refer to as "Lluvia." It is a work that consists of just single, large-font word on a blank page (Fig. 1):

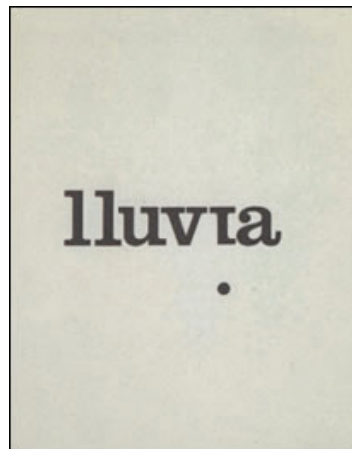


Figure 4-1: Felipe Boso (untitled) in Sarmiento 1990a.

Like with many of the concrete and visual poems of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s that were produced in Europe, the Americas, and beyond, the text of the poem only reveals its full meaning when perceived as a visual sign. The necessarily plastic representation of the inverted i and the dot that hangs below its stem produce the visual pun central to the poem's playful gesture: the dot, rather than just a component of the letter i, is now a raindrop, forming an iconic relationship with the

image of the content of the word rain. The poem “Lluvia” does not so much call attention to the classic Derridean opposition of speech and writing as it does between one kind of writing and another: that is, between orthography and heterography, between correct writing and writing *alternatively*, writing as process that makes it vary. The diacritical mark of the letter i in Boso’s poem constitutes a heterography through the inversion of a diacritical mark, distorting the line between semantics and visuality in a “becoming-plastic” of writing. In this way, I will use orthography and heterography refer not just to the writing of words, but to writing in general, including paragraph structure, verse structure, or, as in the case of Boso’s poem, even the writing of a single letter.

As I discussed above, I emphasize heterography instead of concrete or visual poetry on one hand in order to bracket out a particular kind of poetic practice from the plethora of internationally circulating forms and schools that existed during this time period. This practice, which I posit as fundamental for Spanish experimental poetry in the 1960s and 70s, involves imagining writing—its formalizing institutions, its limiting conventions—as a constraint that must be overcome or overthrown to attain a renewed expressive vitality. Whereas for the Brazilian Noigandres group, the blending of genres in their *poesia concreta* derived in part from the inheritance of “cannibalist modernism,” an ingestion and transformation of foreign materials,⁷⁹ much of Late Franco Era experimental poetry stems from an anxiety over the limitations of traditional forms of writing

The title-phrase “nunca esfacil” is similarly an example of heterography, alluding to both the challenge that heterography represents to the “facile” forms of writing that relied too heavily on the constraints of traditional forms of writing, as well as to the interpretative difficulties produced by “texts” that continuously seek to move beyond traditional forms of meaning

⁷⁹ See Shellhorse (2015) for a recent discussion of Brazilian Modernism and its relation to the Noigandres movement.

making, as I discussed above. Boso's "Lluvia" is a simple demonstration of a "becoming-visual" of a text, a word with a minimal degree of plastic interference that prevents a purely textual glossing of the poem. Yet "Lluvia" also demonstrates the intertextual complexity typical of Spanish experimental poetry, alluding not only to the mention of rain in Millán's poem (reproduced below), but also to vertical appearance of "Apollinaire," in turn a reference to the vertical lines of Guillaume Apollinaire's famous calligram "Il pleut."⁸⁰ These complex renderings of meaning simultaneously oppose the singular lineages drawn by regime-sponsored literary movements like *garcilasismo*. Likewise, the continuous proliferation and overloading of meaning also opposed the leftist social poetry and its successors such as *la poesía de la comunicación* and *la poesía del conocimiento*, all of which sought to revitalize the political and social power of poetry after its pre-war "dehumanization," described in Ortega y Gasset's classic *La deshumanización del arte* that I discussed briefly last chapter. Though perhaps largely ignored for its own irrational and "dehumanized" aesthetic, the difficulty of heterographic works from this era forms an essential part of the politicization of alternative poetic forms during Francoism.

Visual Poetry, Experimental Poetry, and Heterography

In the index of the "Catálogo de poesía internacional de vanguardia," published in 1970 for distribution at the exposition on experimental poetry in Zaragoza, an image appears listing over a dozen variegated terms employed by the artists who would be on display: *poesía concreta*, *poesía cinética*, *poesía espacial*, *poesía objetiva*, *poesía n.o.*, *poesía semiótica*, *poesía*

⁸⁰ The frequent appearance of rain makes its a veritable master trope for visual poetry, especially in the French, Catalan and Spanish traditions (Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, Josep Maria Junoy, Boso, Millán, etc.). Some reasons for its frequent, I speculate are: its vertical nature, adding a second dimension to the horizontality of traditional writing; the iconic relationship, exploited by Boso, of a letter and a raindrop; and perhaps, following this last idea, the utopian particle rain of Lucretius.

experimental, poesía gráfica, poesía visual, verbofonía, poesía semántica, poesía matemática, zaj, poesía visiva, poesía tecnológica, and poesía asónica. While this richness of terms signals the heterogeneous nature of writing practices in this era, such an excess of concepts makes it difficult to describe or even refer to the movement as a whole. Despite this difficulty, what these terms do show us is an impulse to create new forms that defy traditional generic boundaries, opening a multiplicity of interrelated forms and techniques.

This constant blending of words, images, and different media aimed to deconstruct any sense of boundary between genre, an idea discussed explicitly by poets like Joan Brossa, as well as theorists such Dick Higgins and Adriano Spatola (Brossa 2009, Spatola 2008 [1978]). Higgins suggests that the notion of category (genre) must be replaced by a sense of continuity; affirming Higgins' suggestion, Spatola adds that "Continuity is the only possible relationship between such diverse artistic activities that thus blur into one another. The arts of our century... are characterized by the tendency to move toward zone-limits in which each individual art form brushes against the borders of the others, often encroaching upon their territory" (Spatola 10).⁸¹ Examining some the writings of the Spanish experimental poets, we can see how specifically writing is posited as that which prevents this continuity of genres, as writing's inherent linearity and effacing of the visual dimension attempt to cordon off a strictly lexical (semantic) mode of artistic experience.

One of the most incisive statements against the institution of writing is Ignacio Gómez de Liaño's 1973 manifesto *Abandonar la escritura*, which decries the fixed "Orden" of traditional writing that would inhibit the powers of the imagination. Liaño writes: "Un ensayo humanista supone que el hombre 'es,' que sus productos 'son,' en otras palabras, supone que continúa aún siendo verdadera la idea platónica de lo sagrado y de lo inmutable..." (Gómez de Liaño 2009

⁸¹ Spatola cites the phonetic poetry of Hugo Ball, Raoul Hausmann, and Kurt Schwitters as examples, in which music and theatrical performance also form necessary parts of their work.

[1973], 67). [A humanist essay supposed that man “is,” that is products “are,” in other words, it supposes that the Platonic idea of the sacred and the immutable still continues to be true.] Here we can see how writing is imagined as a force that blocks change, and that an appeal to the archaic time period before writing—appealed to in the face of a present that holds mistaken ideas about permanence and fixity—can reverse this limitation and allow for greater movement. In terms of the rhizome, writing is one of the major forms of arborescent determinism in society, one that blocks heterogeneous connectivity (encounters) between the semantic and other forms of meaning.

Liaño further argues that this fixed and ordered nature of writing—in opposition to what Spatola would call the dynamic tendency for the “arts of our century” to move toward “zone-limits”—inevitably propagates bureaucratic structures, hence protecting those already in power. Following Liaño’s emphasis on “el Orden” we might call to mind Derrida’s discussion in of the dual nature of the word “order” itself, both sequence and command (Derrida 2). For Derrida, it is the archive, the deposit of the written law—that is, the aspect of *archē* that gives rise to the Latin *archivum*—which determines felicitous arrangements of signs.⁸² Thus an archive, “depósito de lo sagrado” in the words of Liaño, orders (commands) acceptable orders (sequences) of signs, a process which the experimental poets of this era viewed as disastrously limiting. While Liaño’s reaction against “lo sagrado” and the “Orden” points to the absolutism Franco’s Catholic-fascist dictatorship, it is also important to note the denunciation of “lo humanista” as well, likely referring to the leftist “rehumanization” of literature mentioned above. In this example from Liaño, we see quite directly how writing is imagined as an *archē* that must be undone in order to attain true expressive freedom.

⁸² I use the word ‘felicitous’ here deliberately in an Austinian sense of ‘felicity conditions’ that must be met for a given speech act to bear locutionary effect. In regards to visual poetry, we can consider how their heterographic nature goes hand in hand with their marginalization: the inclusion of heterogeneous material has disqualified them from achieving a broader literary recognition.

As a reaction against these homogenizing discourses, Spanish visual poets employed a number of heterographic techniques as means of increasing the possibilities of meaning within a given text. While few techniques were discussed by the writers of the era—perhaps due to an anxiety of “fixing” any particular practice—Fernando Millán has identified retrospectively what he sees as most important compositional technique during the 60s and 70s: atomization, the construction of meaning out of smaller and smaller units of language and writing, moving from verse to word, word to letter, or in the case of Boso’s “Lluvia,” even down to a single component of a letter. Millán notes these artists used the atomization of form as a way to intensify meaning within a text, since breaking writing down into its component parts allows for more connections and hence a broader range of interpretations (248). This technique is particularly illustrative of my conception of heterography as it describes one way these writers reacted against the absolute “Orden” and linearity of a traditional text by creating a multiplicity of possible connections between component parts. Thus we can read “atomized” visual poems, as rhizomatic structures, composed of possible lines of flight instead of arborescent determinations. In addition to the principles of heterogeneity and connection Deleuze & Guattari also discuss principle of the an “asignifying rupture,” a break with “oversignifying” traditional structures. To take up the example of “Lluvia” again, we might note how the inversion of the letter *i* disrupts the semantic normality of the word “lluvia,” while simultaneously establishing a new line of meaning involving both semantic and plastic orders of signification, not to mention the various lines that can be drawn back through the allusions to Millán and Apollinaire we mentioned earlier. Even as traditional signification may be ruptured by such a poem, we can see here how this poetry often depends upon the creation of alternative poetic lineages in order to enrich and stabilize meaning within the poem.

Julio Campal and the Heterographic Tradition

The dynamic of rupture and tradition within the visual poetry of Late Franco Era Spain arises in part from the vision of Julio Campal, an Argentine-born Uruguayan who came to Madrid in 1963. Shortly after arriving, Julio Campal became a leader and organizer of the young poets in the city, starting the avant-garde group *Problemática '63* which included members such as Fernando Millán, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, Felipe Boso, and Juan Luis Castillejo. Campal served as a kind of Socrates figure for the entire movement in Spain, since he was much better known for his efforts to organize exhibitions and inspire through lectures than he was for the scant poems and articles published before his untimely death in 1968. Though Campal was active in Spain for only five years, poets of the movement and critics alike credit him with almost single-handedly renewing interest in experimental practices in Spain.⁸³ Campal would eventually co-organize two of the first exhibitions dedicated to experimental poetry in Zaragoza (1966) and Bilbao (1967) and collaborate with numerous artists before his death. Before organizing these events however, critic and anthologist José Antonio Sarmiento notes that Campal first dedicated his energy to re-introducing the tradition of experimental poetry to the new generation of young artists (Sarmiento 1990b).

In true Socratic fashion, most of what we know about Campal's ideas about the practices and aims of visual poetry come from half-summarized, half-cited reports on lectures he gave, written and published by Fernando Millán. Though Campal would be remembered as a great inspirer of avant-garde activity, his appreciation for the past is somewhat atypical for the frequent avant-garde rejection of poetic tradition and traditional learning. Part of this inclusionism arose from his friendship with Gerardo Diego, founder of the 1920s avant-garde movement *creacionismo*, a prewar avant-garde that critic Willard Bohn notes was unique in its

⁸³ See Millán (2009), Fernández-Serrato (2003), Sarmiento (1990b).

“unprecedented eclecticism,” that is, its gesture to include whatever resources—traditional or not—into its productions (Bohn 10). In one lecture Campal asks “¿Por qué limitar nuestra sensibilidad, nuestro sentimiento?”—encouraging his collaborators to engage in a broad, heterogeneous spectrum of practices (Campal 2009 [1963], p. 87). In similar fashion, Campal insists that the avant-garde did not arise by causing a rupture with the past, but rather proceeds stepwise; following this, he argues that anyone wishing to make successful avant-garde art should be aware of the rich inheritance of both experimental and traditional poetics (88). We can describe what Campal endorsed as heterographic in its push toward including maximizing acceptable content, over and against the homogenizing power of the presumed arborescence of writing.

Along with such movements as the Brazilian Noigrandes group, Campal places a particular emphasis on French poets Mallarmé and Apollinaire, the former of which Campal signals as the first to deliberately use space as an integral expressive component of the poem.⁸⁴ Though Millán’s report does not give us further details on this point, examining Mallarmé’s own comments on the use of expressive space in the introductory note to his famous poem *Un Coup de dés* shows us his understanding of the aesthetic effects of altering writing and how this may have influenced the experimental poets of the Late Franco Era. To quote Mallarmé:

The “blanks” indeed take on importance, at first glance; the versification demands them, as a surrounding silence, to the extent that a fragment, lyrical or of a few beats, occupies, in its midst, a third of the space of paper: I do not transgress meter, only disperse it The paper intervenes each time as an image of itself... The literary value, if I am allowed to say so... is to periodically accelerate or slow the movement, the scansion, the sequence

⁸⁴ Campal also cites other less expected predecessors, arguing modern Anglophone poetry began with Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Rubén Darío is the foundational figure in Spanish letters, which culminates in Juan Ramón Jiménez. It should also be mentioned that the Noigrandes group began nearly a decade before the wave of Spanish experimental poetry. Spanish poets would have had at least some knowledge of this group no later than 1962, when influential poet Ángel Crespo and Pilar Bedate published a lengthy article on Brazilian concrete poetry in the *Revista de Cultura Brasileña*. Nevertheless, Campal seems to only mention Noigrandes in passing, and tends, for whatever reason, to place more emphasis on the French symbolists and the historical Spanish avant-garde’s

even, given one's simultaneous sight of the page: the latter taken as unity, as elsewhere the Verse is or perfect line. (Mallarmé 23)

In these lines, Mallarmé calls attention to the necessary visual component involved in interpreting *Un Coup de dés*; one must survey the amount of blank space between clusters of words and decide how this will affect the rhythm or flow of the poem. This breaking apart can also be read as a heterographic atomization of form, in the sense that traditional textual unity is broken apart into discrete units to create new, ambiguous relationships that make possible new meanings. Here the atomization, which consists of breaking apart stanzas into clusters of words and verses, is not as fine-grained as in a poem like Boso's "Lluvia" where a single component of a single letter becomes atomized as a heterographic expression. Nevertheless, we can read this as an initial phase which, as Mallarmé himself says, does not transgress meter completely, as the visual poets would try to do, but it would initiate its dispersion into increasingly experimental forms.

Aside from calling attention to the use of blank space as expressive content, this quote also contains another idea that will become essential to the theory and practice of Franco Era experimental poetry. This is the notion that the aesthetic unity of the poem derives from the simultaneous sight of the page, as opposed to the successive reading of a particular verse or line. Prefiguring Apollinaire's often-cited assertion that "[it] is necessary that our intelligence habituate itself to a synthetico-ideographic comprehension, in place of an analytico-discursive one" (Apollinaire xvii), this idea of a shift in intelligence or cognition will occupy a center place in the theoretical concern of the Spanish experimental poets. Rather than creating transcendental meaning—Campal mentions that the "poeta divino" is a thing of the past—they aimed to create art that would awaken the masses' critical sensibility, taking them out of the orthographic linealism of traditional discourse, and helping them reach an awareness of aesthetic possibilities that arise out of a more synthetic, simultaneous vision that allows for a freer combination of meaningful elements. Referring back again to Derrida's comments on the dual sense of order,

experimental poetry opens the possibility of disrupting regimes of signs that operate through their enforcement of acceptable sequences.

For this reason, Campal wanted the new poets to serve society as “aesthetic organizers” that could work toward a more open, self-critical society (Millán 2008, 74). This was not to be achieved through the kind of critical social realism that was popular at the time, but rather through a cognitive shift, “una nueva forma de percibir—vivir—la poesía y el arte” [a new form of perceiving—living—poetry and art”] (Millán & García Sánchez 1975, 12). These poets saw the development of this new perception particularly pressing in the post-Civil War/World War II era in which modes of communication were changing rapidly and visual media, particularly in the form of advertisements, were flooding public and private spaces through billboards and television.⁸⁵ Their appeal to the archaic imagination of prewriting and the total poetry of Spatola, is an appeal to an imagined primordial order that can heal the present. In the fear of becoming essentially brainwashed by the assault of new media, the appeal to an imagined primordial freedom of movement is an appeal to increase critical awareness in the present.

Heterography in the Poetry of Julio Campal

One of Campal’s heterographic experiments is a kind of permutational poetry very similar to that of Cirlot’s. These poems, which Campal names as *poemas móviles* [mobile poems], resemble Cirlot’s *Palacio de plata* in that they consist of a base poem and then a series of variations. For example, examine the first two permutations of the first poem:

[1]

⁸⁵ As Millán (1975, 1998, 2009) and several critics (Sarmineto 1990b, Fernández Serrato 2003) mention that experimental poetries use of visuality arose largely as a reaction to the increase of media culture, a full investigation into the changes involving media in Spain during the 60s and 70s and how the poets incorporated these into the work would likely prove very fruitful.

te quedas desnuda
del lado de la sombra

lejana como tú
la luz se tambalea

la sonrisa nocturna
se viste
se desviste

el cuarto tan oscuro
las horas solitarias

te miro

te quedas

todavía

[2]

Te miro todavía
las horas solitarias
el cuarto tan oscuro
la sonrisa nocturna
la luz se tambalea
lejana como tú
desnuda como tú
Se viste
se desviste
te miro todavía

te quedas
del lado de la sombra

While Millán notes that it is very likely that Campal was inspired by Cirlot's poem, the difference behind the rationale of each work signals the different kinds of changes these poets wanted to effect. For Cirlot, as we saw, it formed part of his mastery of knowledge involving the complicated forms Schoenberg's modernist music and the esoteric prophetic technique of Abulafia's divinatory Kabbalism. This esotericism on the part of Cirlot serves as a contrast to the more populist intent of Campal's, which was more of a demonstration of the combinatory

properties of any set of words rather than an actualization of esoteric knowledge. In a prefatory note accompanying the publication of the first *poema móvil* in the literary magazine *Cuaderno cultural* in 1967, Campal even notes that he has only presented a certain number of variations, and that the reader will be able to devise many more (24). In this way, Campal not only shares the compositional responsibility of the work with the public, but also demonstrates a heterographic sense that the work has no definitive order in the first place

In both cases, the subversion of orthographic standards comes from an atomization of form: there is no absolute unity at the level of poem or verse; rather, individual words and phrases change relationship with one another opening up novel expressive combinations. Again, this atomization leads to a disruption of a definitive order (sequence) that would order (mandate) the reader to parse the poem in a particular way. The lexicon of Campal's poems in particular signals this living, shifting nature of the poem: in the first poem this appears as the alternating pairs of light/darkness and dressing/undressing in the first poem; in the second poem as a similar play of light and shadow accompanied by the passage of time, "el tiempo / pasó del lado de la sombra / mordiendo;" and in the third as the instability of memory and the presence of life in language, "tu memoria indecisa / se torna como bruma // ardes desposeída / materia de palabras / derecho a lo que vive." I read this last phrase, "derecho a lo que vive" as a poignant expression of the ideal or aim of permutational poetry: to open up the living possibility of new phrases that would otherwise never become manifest obeying the orthographic convention of a singular order. In other words, heterographically manipulating the order of the poem gives life to unforeseen expressive combinations. We discussed this intention to unearth new possibilities evident in Cirlot's *Palacio de plata*, as Schoenberg's serial music uses permutations as a means to produce new harmonic possibilities that would be excluded by traditional compositional methods.⁸⁶ Both

⁸⁶ For an excellent discussion of some of the philosophical and even theological implications of Schoenberg's music see Dahlhaus (1987), 'Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology.'

of these works tend toward a continuous variation, but Cirlot's version is more strictly methodological, since also following Schoenberg, there is a general skepticism that the observer will be able to spontaneously generate new truths without a systematic engagement.

Looking at one of Campal's more visually oriented works in which writing becomes significantly distorted, we see Campal gesturing even further to the role of the reader in establishing the meaning of the text itself. Campal wrote a series of works which he referred to as calligrams, invoking Apollinaire's use of the term, though they do not resemble Apollinaire's visual poems since they do not involve words arranged as an icon to evoke the objects they describe. Rather, they are made of colorful marker strokes that at first appear to be eloquent Arabic or Hebrew calligraphy, but upon further inspection reveal that they are mere semblances of writing and do not correspond to any language or alphabet (Fig. 2).

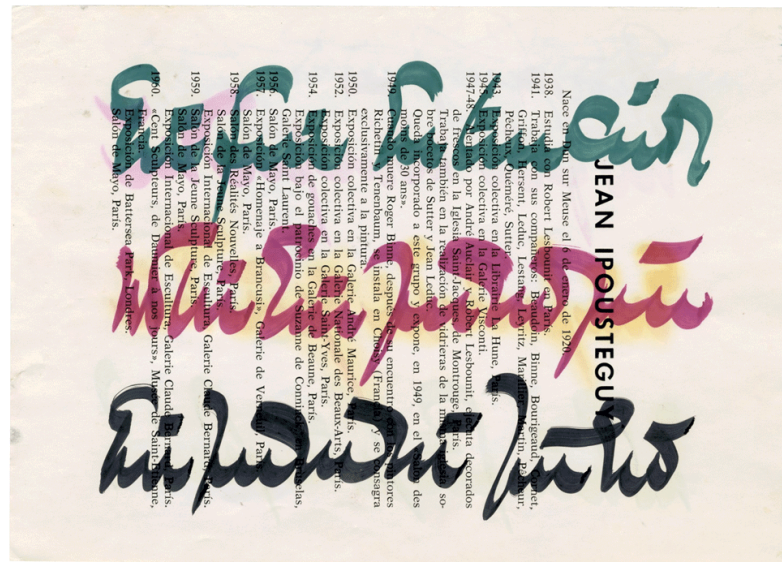


Figure 4-2: Julio Campal "Calligram," in Sarmiento 1990a.

Several of Campal's calligrams are written over other texts, which in the case shown appears to be a chronology of the life of French sculptor Jean-Robert Ipousteguy. Giving a complete reading

of these poems would involve considering Campal's aesthetic choice in this particular text as a background, but to focus on the heterographic element of the poem I would like to simply call attention to the way that the text beneath the poem becomes part of the visual *texture* of the work. Thus it is writing that at least in part loses its quality as expressive semantic meaning in a process that seems to lie opposite (but closely related) to atomization: the blocks of text become used for their macro-properties, that is, their image as a whole, as opposed to a minute dissection of a work like Boso's "Lluvia." "Reading" the background purely for its visual (and not semantic) components, as such also opens up aesthetic play between the rigidity of mechanographic typeface written over by the fluid quality of Campal's marker strokes.

Fernández Serrato suggests that Campal's calligrams seek to represent direct emotional meaning, attempting to circumvent the semantic nature of words, suggesting affect through colors and curves the tone of voice, intonation, inflection, etc. (Fernández Serrato 84-5). This in turn reveals a play between traditional texts' relatively poor ability to represent the nuance of spoken language, a concern already present at the origins of the avant-garde with Futurism, as Marinetti and others played frequently with typography as a means to represent different modes of speaking and tones of voice (Webster 21). Mallarmé, even a decade before futurism, could also be seen as a precursor. Even though he did not suggest that his spacing and different font sizes could be read as affect and tone of voice, his cues that the format of the poem would affect its reading could certainly have led to the use of "expressive" type.

What is particular about Campal's version of using writing to suggest tone of voice and affect is naturally the fact there is no real text to begin with, since the marker strokes do not correspond to any natural language. In this sense these works are heterographic, in that they are seemingly writing without language, yet they raise the question of whether we can call these works poetry or writing at all, since they only give the appearance of written language and the only readable text as such is over written by something which resembles text, but is not text itself.

Nevertheless, they show that the aesthetic shift from written to visual not only disrupts how we read but also signals the way our reading of poetry has habitually excluded visuality, opening it as a prime area to explore expressive possibilities.

Fernando Millán's and the Negation of Writing

Fernando Millán's heterographic poetry explores the way meaning both saturates and empties the poetic text, a gesture learned from the kind of dismantling of order in Mallarmé and Campal that resists meaning while simultaneously opening new interpretative possibilities. Yet Millán's work, stylized with the more aggressive rhetoric of rupture and change, has a far more utopian vision of writing's complete undoing in a maximally heterographic mode that resists interpretation. As Millán's rhetoric is more evident of revolution and avant-gardism, we can see the problematic of archaism that I signaled earlier: even as visual poetry often attempts to make a complete break from intellectualized and traditional modes of meaning making, it makes frequent recourse to these kinds of constructions that help ground the poem and avoid meaninglessness or solipsism. In this way the utopian future in which distinctions between genres and traditions disappear, which would in turn give way to a fully open perception no longer guided by the limiting orders of orthographic linealism, is continually compromised by visual poets' "traditional" methods of construction.

If Campal is the Socrates of Late Franco Era experimentation, Millán would be its Plato, not only for writing down and publishing Campal's lectures, but also for the extensive efforts he has made over the last four decades to continue the legacy of Campal's efforts to renew poetic experimentation in Spain.⁸⁷ These efforts began in 1968 shortly after Campal's death when

⁸⁷ Aside from co-editing the first major retrospective book on the movement, *La escriutra en libertad* (1975, with Jesús García Sánchez), Millán has also published several other books on the subject,

Millán founded the avant-garde group *poesía n.o.*, including Aberásturi, Jokim Díez, Jesus García Sánchez, and Enrique Uribe. With these collaborators, Millán drafted an open letter to Campal's numerous collaborators declaring to continue poetic experimentation despite the "muerte absurda y súbita" of Campal (Millán 2009 [1968], 78). There is a certain irony in the letter, since while it affirms the need for continuity with the tradition that Campal rekindled, Millán's *poesía n.o.* employs much more revolutionary language, even going as far, in one manifesto, to call for a "revolución total" of poetry. Millán would note many years later that he and his collaborators accepted Campal's desire for social change on the grounds that it aimed at awakening aesthetic sensibilities and moving toward a more open, critical society, and eschewed the romanticization of liberal solidarity, as was popular in "poesía social" (Millán 2009, 53). Yet while for Campal little tension exists between the past and the future, since past developments must be learned from and incorporated in order to move forward, the two manifestos Millán wrote for *poesía n.o.* iterates a much more aggressive attitude toward the past.

The manifesto *Hacia una visión objetiva de la poesía n.o.* employs a heterographic presentation as it is written in lines that slant up and down the page. While this in itself does not disrupt traditional order (there are no ambiguities as to the sequence of the text), it nevertheless demonstrates Millán's fundamental concern over the disruption of traditional modes of writing. Aside from its unorthodox presentation, the very beginning of the text displays a revolutionary and aggressive rhetoric that at once imitates "traditional" avant-garde language while calling for a total movement forward:

"1. la poesía en españa carece de proyección y significado, esta situación es tan definitiva que sólo una renovación total tiene sentido. mientras ello no ocurra la poesía n.o. niega que en el momento actual haya obligación de complacer al público más o menos mínimo" [(Millán 2009 [1968], 79).

numerous articles and collaborated on various exhibitions dedicated to experimental poetry. See Fernández Serrato 2003 for a complete bibliography.

[1. poetry in Spain lacks projection and significance, this situation is so definitive that only total revolution makes sense. as long as that does not occur *poesía n.o.* denies that in the current moment there is an obligation to appease a greater or lesser audience.]

Millán's lack of intent to please the public seems somewhat out of place at first, given the social commitment inherited from Campal, but as we continue reading, we see that this is more out of a reaction against the more Leninist social-realism poetry of the postwar involves an attack on facile nature of "socially attractive literature:" "2. sólo la libertad de forma expresiva razonable, sólo la creación artística, sólo la apertura a nuevos lenguajes progresistas, sólo el olvido de la totalidad de la literatura tradicional de la posguerra atrayente socialmente" [2. only the freedom from rational expressive form, only artistic creation, only the opening of new progressivist languages, only the total oblivion of traditional, socially attractive literature of the postwar] (Millán 2009 [1971], 81). While the social poetry of the late 40s, 50s, and 60s, within Spain arose in part as a reaction to the perceived traditionalism of the pro-regime *garçilasistas*, Millán now envisions even this left-leaning movement as a tradition in itself which must be overthrown as it does not represent a "lenguaje progresista."

Millán's second manifesto, *Una progresión negativa: Nueve razones entre otras*, employs less revolutionary and utopian rhetoric, and focuses instead on the processes and techniques that one might utilize to achieve such ends, which, as the title suggests, are negative in character; that is, they aim to negate pre-established principles for creation as a means to allow for a greater possibility of creative expression, a subtraction of the arborescent making principles. For example, the third "razón" exemplifies the typical avant-garde sense that the destruction of tradition always aims to create a new field of possibilities: "3. la negación es un proceso dialéctico: la negación del texto tradicional da paso a otro nuevo que nace de ese proceso, y que no permanece como una simple negación, sino que crea sus propias relaciones, su mundo significativo" [3. negation is a dialectic process: the negation of a traditional text gives way to

another new one [text] that is born from that process, and that does not simply result as a negation, but rather it creates its own relations, its signifying significant world] (Millán 2009 [1971], 81). In this case, the undoing of the “texto tradicional,” can be read as an asygnifying rupture of the possible rhizomatic connectivity, which is carried out not as a nihilistic gesture, but rather as a means to create a new set of relationships that can be drawn through the heterographic elements in a given visual poem. This rupture is imagined as a beginning anew from the archaic origins of expression, recovering the primordial force of expression before it has been ordered by enervating, lineal logic.

Like Campal, Millán also expresses concern over the increasing saturation of media and advertising as a threat to the creative and critical capacities of the individual, naming this phenomenon as the “atracción aplastante de la publicidad, de la verborrea” [crushing attraction of the advertising, of verborhea]. The metaphor of crushing that Millán employs suggests an overloading or oversaturation that encroaches upon and debilitates the free movement of thought and expression. For this impingement upon movement, Millán stipulates that poetry could only move forward by “tachando, negando, borrando” [crossing out, negating, erasing], clearing out all the excess of information as a means to make space for new expression. On one hand, this erasure is in the figurative sense that visual poetry, in its heterographic and generally non-conforming character, negates the ordering commandments of the homogenizing gestures of media. Yet on the other hand, Millán will take this process of crossing out and erasure quite literally in a series of “texts” he created by crossing out almost all traces of text on the page with thick black lines of ink, leaving only the stems and tails of letters peaking out from beneath the erasure. Millán used this erasure occasionally to create shapes on the page, making the text into a *texture* that decorates the background, such as in in Campal’s calligrams (Fig. 3).

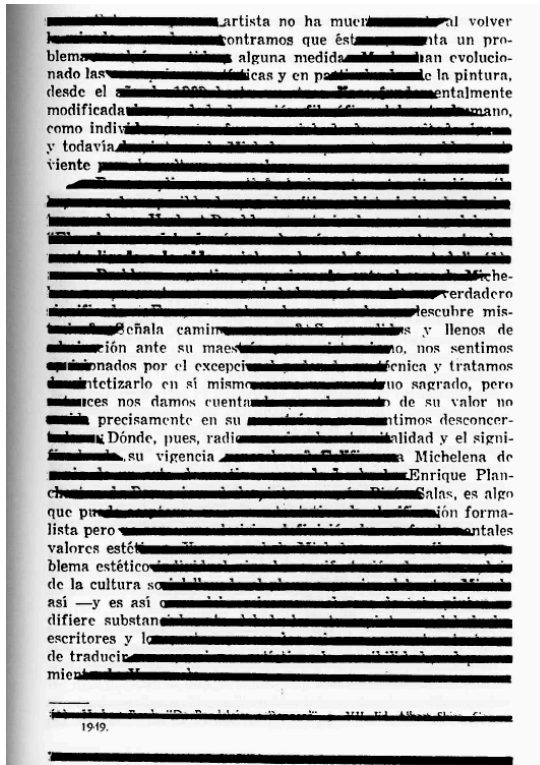


Figure 4-3: Fernando Millán, “Untitled” in *Ideogramas, emblemas, y mitogramas* (2000).

Millán also went as far as to write an entire book only to cross out every single line so completely as to make the book entirely illegible.

The most obvious way that these texts are heterographic is that they make writing completely illegible, negating the convention that a text is something created with intention of being read. These texts are also heterographic in a second, subtler way that relates to experimental poets’ concerns about the oppressive nature of media: by effacing the text before it can even be read, Millán demonstrates that a text can become an aesthetic object even when it cannot express its semantic content. After all, no one will ever read the book that Millán completely blotted out, yet it stands as an elaborated aesthetic object that still asks to be “read” as a text, given its resemblance to a traditional book. Reading the work through a Derridean lens we could argue that Millán makes concrete the sense that a text, as substitution, can only be

understood by its differing from/deferment to a proliferating set of absent relationships (Derrida 1968, 279-280). In Millán's erasure poems, meaning is deliberately concealed, but since the text is clearly irrecoverable we can read Millán's gesture as one that obviates the need for a text to express its own emptiness. Yet with his suggestion that experimental poetry, or at least *poesía n.o.*, seeks to dismantle the boundary between "lo visual y lo semántico" [the visual and the semantic], Millán's erasure are also completely full in their visual presence.⁸⁸

To discuss how Millán's theoretical ideas play out in more of his poetry, let us examine one more poem, "Relato 3," (Fig. 4) that brings us back to the phrase "nunca esfacil." This poem also demonstrates the common tendency in visual poetry toward a simultaneous excess and lack of meaning that arises as traditional modes of sense making are challenged. This is similar to what we have already encountered in the permutational poems of Campal and Cirlot, where meaning slips away as the words take on a new order in each new permutation, yet the infinite variations of such poems provides a surplus of meaning that is difficult to reduce into a coherent interpretation. Though it may "never be easy" to determine the a final sense of an experimental poem, we can see in "Relato 3" the dynamic between the revolutionary overthrow of traditional meaning and the grounding within alternative poetic lineages that work to stabilize the text.

⁸⁸ Although Millán mentions Derrida in his later writings (1998, 2009), it is unclear whether or not these artists were reading his publications in the 1960s and 70s.

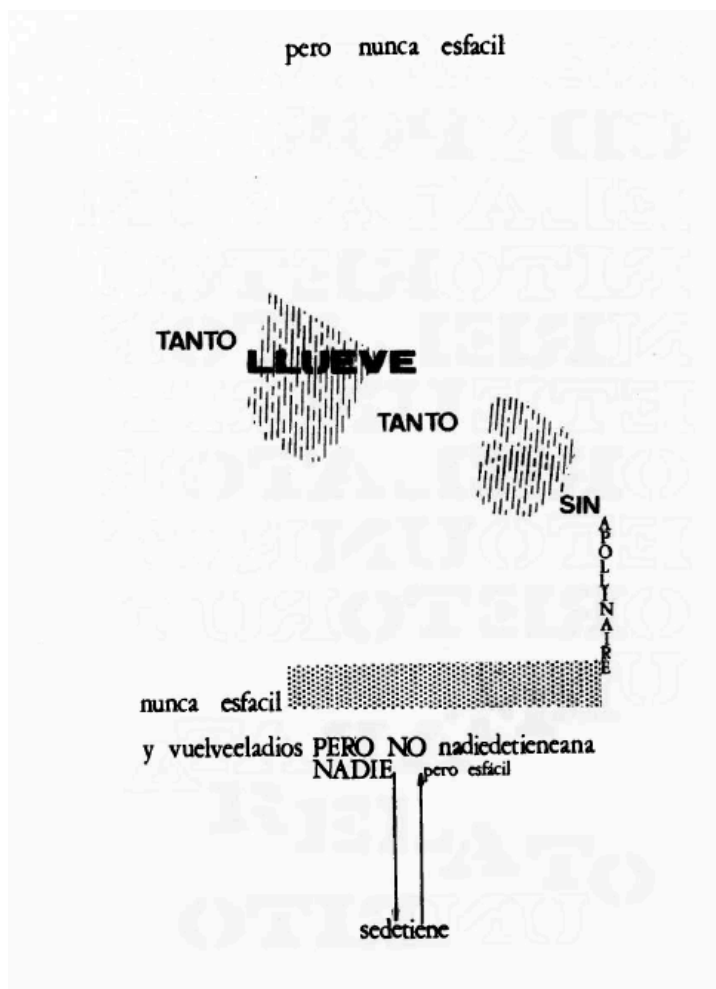


Figure 4-4: Fernando Millán, “Relato 3,” in *Ideogramas, emblemas, y mitogramas* (2000)

One of the first things to note about Millán’s poem is that despite its title (given in the index to the work), it is difficult to build any kind of coherent “relato” that binds the heterographic elements of the poem, such as the lack of typographic spacing between certain words, occasional lack of accents, two patches of vertical lines, the series of neatly organized dots, the vertical arrow lines, as well as the mention of Apollinaire written vertically, which, as we have mentioned, opens a conduit into the tradition of calligrams and other historical forms of visual poetry. Furthermore, the text of the poem clarifies little and only leaves more questions: What exactly is “never easy?” What does the absence of Apollinaire have to do the rain, whether

literally or as a metaphor? What does it matter than no one is stopping anyone? Like Millán's erasure poems, "Relato 3" seems to border on a complete lack of semantic meaning; it does not even seem to have a particular punning visual element like Boso's "Lluvia," which although is very simple is nevertheless clear in terms of its basic intended meaning. Yet, given the tendency for experimental poets to call for active participation, all of the questions that the text presents can be read equally as suggestions for a creative act on the part of the reader. Like Campal's *poema móvil*, the text could be rearranged, altered, made in to an image, used to form part of a larger assemblage, etc. Given the playful ambiguity of many experimental poems, it is not surprising that numerous critics of visual poetry cite Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* as a means to describe the necessary participatory nature of reading a poem that so overtly suggests its own incompleteness.⁸⁹

While such an exercise as reorganizing the words of a poem or using it in a visual collage could be done with any traditional text, experimental poems—in their rejection of orthographic rules that establish patterns for interpretation—reveal such a high degree of ambiguity that they seem to necessitate participation to establish meaning. As is typical in the experimental poetry of this era—evidenced in examples from Boso and Campal—the focus is not so much on the meaning that the work has, but rather in the suggestion that the reader play an active role in the construction of the work, always with the end in mind of developing one's critical and aesthetic awareness. In this way we see the continual insistence on a new kind of perception or consciousness that takes an increasingly active role in sense making. This notion of perceptual change not only serves in the observation of art, but also works to form a defense against the increasing presence of advertising media, in its various visual and textual forms in modern life.

⁸⁹ For discussions of Eco's *The Open Work* and visual poetry see Fernández Serrato Chapter 2, Lundington (2014) Chapter 1, Webster p. 2, Millán (1998), Chapter 4.

Though there is a populist sensibility in this attempt to awaken readers' critical capacity, "Relato 3" demonstrates the paradoxical or ironic way that much of the experimental poetry of this era, struggles to distance itself from interpretation through literary lenses can never quite separate itself from the desire to be interpreted through traditional literary lenses. This is given in the appearance of Apollinaire's name, written vertically so as to suggest Apollinaire's well-known calligram "Il pleut" which consists of five lines written vertically suggesting streaks of falling rain. In this way, Millán suggests the heterographic tradition that one may trace out in order to begin arranging the various elements of his poem. Even as Millán works toward "n.o." meaning in his texts, traces of the paradoxical archē of heterography—its simultaneous deferral to and destruction of tradition—appear to situate the text within literary tradition.

Conclusion

To conclude I would like to reflect upon how this entire experimental movement in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s presents us with a similar excess and lack of meaning that we have seen in their poems, particularly in regards to these figures present in the panorama of Franco Era literature. Fernández Serrato notes that despite the movements' reaction populist aims and reaction against elitism it always remained marginal (39); Campal's idea of making visual poetry a service that could enlighten the masses and protect against the brain-washing effects of mass media never seems to have come to fruition. Not only did these movements fail to achieve popular support, but as mentioned earlier, there seems to still be a major lack of critical attention to these scholars, particularly on the international level. In one sense, this lack "success" of the movement is an integral part of its avant-garde quality, since, as David Ayers and Benedikt Hjartarso have recently argued, the utopianism inherent in all avant-garde projects assures their failure from its very conception. Furthermore Jonathan Mayhew in his 2009 study *The Twilight of*

the Avant-Garde argues that the critical environment from Franco's death onward has been particularly dismissive of avant-garde art in general. As influential Marxist anthologists and critics began to promote the simpler, social realist works of the era, so Mayhew argues, the more complex aesthetics of the avant-garde came to be seen as evasive and lacking a message to promote social change.

Given this lack of efficacy, then, one might question the attempt to recuperate the efforts of these poets in the first place since not only are their works designed to resist interpretation, but they also seem to have missed their mark by attempting avant-garde art in era dominated by more realist styles. I would like suggest that one possible reason is that including these heterogeneous poets into the panorama of Franco Era poetry, much like the heterographic gesture they make in their poetry, deconstructs certain homogenizing "archives" that characterize the literature of the era, and hence make possible a great deal of new investigation. While during the Franco Era the literary scene was dominated on one hand by the *garcilasistas* and their "rooting" in the Golden Age poetics of Garcilaso and on the other hand by leftist social-reality poetry, the active presence of experimental poetry throughout the last decade of Francoism challenges the accuracy of such a distinction, especially inasmuch as experimental poets reacted to what they saw as a restrictively simplistic aesthetic in social and nationalist works.

These experimental poets likewise challenge the commonplace that Spanish experimentalism died out at the onset of the Civil War, since it is clear that the tradition of heterography developed by the historic avant-gardes was not only inherited by a large group of writers and artists in the 1960s and 1970s, but furthermore, these figures renewed this tradition and matched them in their artistic activity. Aside from opening up many question within the field of peninsular literature, there is also the perplexing question of how experimental poetry became part of the international canon of post-World War II literature, with such figures as Eugen Gomringer, Ernst Jandl, and the Noigandres group, despite the fact the Spanish iteration of this

trend is unknown even within its own literary tradition. The inclusion of these poets can, then, not only add an enriching element in the field of Spanish Franco-Era literature, but also open an era that has often been stereotyped for its insularism to what Gómez de Liaño has called the most internationally connected art movement before the internet era.

Conclusion

*Todo lo que no es consciencia del ser
es expresión del ser.*

*All that is not consciousness of being is
expression of being.*

—Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *Del no mundo*

In the fall of 1939, just months after the end of the Spanish Civil War, philosopher María Zambrano wrote a short book entitled *Filosofía y poesía* while exiled in Mexico. The book traces a winding dialectic between what she calls “the two halves of man: the philosopher and the poet” (13). Zambrano begins by reminding us that since Plato’s *Republic*, philosophy and poetry have been opposed to each other; for Plato the poets should be cast out of the city-state for their obsession with recounting the inconsistencies and immoral actions of the gods and the heroes, leaving the philosophers to instruct and edify the young minds that will one day rule the *polis*. Zambrano’s own commentaries and reflections on this division—the subject of the book—arise from a clever reworking of Plato’s classic opposition, not as it pertained directly to the political state, but rather through the most famous story within *The Republic*, the allegory of the cave.

In the cave, the philosophers and the poets are distinguished by their very different reactions to their predicament, chained to the wall and able only to see shadows of things passing by. The philosophers, as we know, one day are able to break their chains, exit the cave, and come to understand that the reality before them was secondary and untrue. Yet, in Zambrano’s version of the allegory, the philosophers may be seekers of truth, but they are also guilty of committing a

“terrible violence” in their restless uprooting of the chains—guilty of willful certainty and desire for unity that they will go to even violent extremes to attain. Translating this out of the utopian framework, Zambrano here complicates the position of those whose certainty in an ideal leads them to violent behavior—no doubt a reference to the violent war for utopian ideals—one nationalist, one socialist—in her native Spain that had played out over the last three years.

In contrast to these truth-seeking yet potentially violent philosophers, the poets in Zambrano’s cave remain content to marvel at the dancing shapes upon the wall in front of them, with no thought of needing to make a violent escape. “Fieles a las cosas,” Zambrano writes, “fieles a su primitiva admiración extática, no se decidieron jamás a desgarrarla; no pudieron, porque la cosa misma se había fijado ya en ellos, estaba impresa en su interior” (“Faithful to things, faithful to their primitive, ecstatic admiration, [they, the poets] decide never to break [their chains], they could not, because that very thing had already been fixed in them, impressed in their interior) (17). Whereas the philosophers must exhibit a “terrible violence” to search for truth and unity, the poets, who already carry a divine sign within them allowing them to appreciate the seemingly endless amount of sensuous material in the superficial world. They exclude nothing and love the “desdeñada, menospreciada multiplicidad” [disdained, despised multiplicity] in which the philosophers attempt to find coherence and unity (19). While the philosopher is driven by a quest for consistency and truth—at the risk of violently imposing her ideal upon the world—the poet embraces the potential of all the world’s forms, but at the risk of an undiscerning amorality and, as Zambrano later adds, an incapacity to make decisions.

Zambrano reflects upon this utopian division of man into two natures in her preface written for the 1987 reprinting of the work, nearly half a century after its initial publication—noting that writing such an ideal work was an act of utopian futility in the wake of the defeat of the Republican cause in Spain. Although utopian, it gives us a framework to reflect upon the function of archaic discourses within Spanish poetic expression: even as the use of and appeals to

primordialism, tradition, religion, irrationality, nationalism, etc. tends to exhibit what may be considered a moral violation of the principles and ideals of a modern world attempting to do away with the archaic baggage of the past, this backward movement—or supposedly backward movement, since it is made as an appeal to the present—actually entails perhaps the greatest possibilities for expansion and creativity, since they are not governed by limiting ideals. While expansive and creative, there is nevertheless the lack of discernment intimated by Zambrano as this kind of expression exhibits a difficult ideological complexity: the poet's work is to be valued at once for its creative expansion, but something to be looked at very critically for the modes and means for this expression. Like the Cursed Hunter discussed by Cirlot in regards to the symbolism of the circle, leaving in chase of the cursed prey is an act of creativity, yet it is also one that compromises the hunter's morality and curses him.

This is essentially the central idea that the study of archaism in literary expression brings out: despite the idea that an attachment to the problematic ideologies of the past would limit poetic expression, it actually tends to do just the opposite. Even a poet like José García Nieto, writing as a means to consolidate a nationalist poetics, shows the capacity for acting like a poet in Zambrano's sense by showing a curiosity for expression beyond the "moral" and ideal forms of Garcilaso. As I discussed at the end of Chapter 1, his use of the alexandrine verse in rewriting a sonnet from Garcilaso, in conjunction with his transformation of mythical reality into a stark experience with nature betrays—or at least complicates—the poetics of nationalism. Studying the archaic aspects of liberal poets also tends to deepen our understanding of them, even when it seems to contradict their ideology. This I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, where I showed that investigating Lorca's attachment to a Spanish Catholic identity allows us to see Lorca's unique conceptualization of both experimental poetics and compassion for marginalized populations through religion—an institution often demonized by avant-garde conceptualizations of experimentation and ethics. Likewise, in Chapter 4, we have seen that while visual poets like

Julio Campal and Fernando Millán aimed to popularize literature, they replicated the esoteric, intellectual, and allusive styles of numerous visual poetry traditions.

Yet despite this capacity for interest in archaic discourses to provide a means for creative expansion and the recuperation of problematized institutions, this expansion tends to be accompanied with a questionable moral discernment that complicates whether or not the poetic/aesthetic expansion serves a justifiable cause. The most obvious case of this is the poetry of Cirlot, which tends to engage in practically every possible aesthetic discourse, from Hollywood cinema to Nazi mythology. Yet I hope to have shown with this dissertation that these moral complications are not reasons that we should avoid Cirlot, but on the contrary, attempt to understand why powerful aesthetic ideas tends to seek morally reprehensible modes of expression.

Studying archaism within Spanish poetry highlights that discourses archaism operated to equally productive and complex aesthetics ends in Spain as it did with the rest of Europe. Furthermore, this also shows that we should always be equally critical of the ever-present suspect ideologies within all kinds of archaic expressions. Following this, I would suggest that many artists, writers, and musicians are aesthetically valid not *in spite of* their ideological complications. Rather that ideologies exhibiting the less-desirable, archaic moralities of the past allow us to understand better both the mistakes in thought that lead to subscribing to these ideologies, as well as the fact aesthetics expression and ethical thought do not always go hand in hand. As in Cirlot's aphorism, "Todo lo que no es consciencia del ser es expression del ser" ("All that is not consciousness of being is an expression of being") stipulate, expression is that which has not been reconciled with being as a knowledge (con-scienca, with knowledge) (403); rather, expression arises from an ignorance, from a lack of unity—from the "disdained heterogeneity" that the philosopher may be too quick to reject. Not following the difficult and often

reprehensible expression of the archaic in the production of modern literature may lead a deep limitation in regards to understanding creative expression itself.

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EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University
PhD in Comparative Literature **2017**
• Minor in Spanish Literature

Case Western Reserve University
Interdisciplinary M.A. in World Literature and Cognitive Linguistics **2011**
• Thesis: A Comparison of French and Spanish Surrealist Poetics: A Cognitive Semiotic Approach into Breton, Éluard, Aleixandre, and Lorca.
• Thesis Advisor: Per Aage Brandt

Case Western Reserve University
B.A. in Spanish and Cognitive Science **2009**
• Émile B. Desauze Award for Modern Language and Literatures highest honors
• Magna Cum Laude

AWARDS

- Denise Haunani Solomon Outstanding Teaching Award for Graduate Students **2016**
- Dolinger Fellowship in WWII Era Studies **2015**
- Superior Teaching and Research Award, Penn State College of Liberal Arts **2014**
- University Graduate Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University **2011**
- Cognition and Culture Award for excellence in research, CWRU Center for Cognition and Culture **2009**

SERVICE

- Graduate Travel Funding Committee, Comparative Literature Dept., PSU. **2012-2013**
- Served as secretary of Case Western Reserve University's Graduate Student Senate **2010-2011**

CLASSES TAUGHT

- Spanish 002 (Intermediate Spanish) **2014-15**
- Development of Literary Humor **2014**
- World Myths and Mythologies **2013**
- The Short Story **2013**

SELECTED SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

"Poesía visual y la vanguardia perdida de la época franquista" **2016**
• Paper presented at *Sociedad española de literatura general y comparada*, Santander, Spain

"The Tragic Sense of New York': Lorca's Catholic Vision of the United States" **2015**
• Paper presented at the Unorthodox Orthodoxy Conference, London

"Value and Waste in Lorca's Poeta en Neuva York" **2014**
• Paper presented at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900

"Nature and Alienation in Rosalía de Castro's Verse" **2014**
• Paper presented at the 2014 ACLA Meeting, New York

"Anchoring time space mappings and their conceptual blends and their emotions: The timeline in poetic metaphors" **2013**
• Co-author with Cristóbal Pagán Cánovas, Ph.D., University Of Murcia, Spain, Classics Dept.
• *Language and Literature*, Feb. 2013