Realism, Surrealism, Socialist Realism and Neruda's "Guided Spontaneity"*

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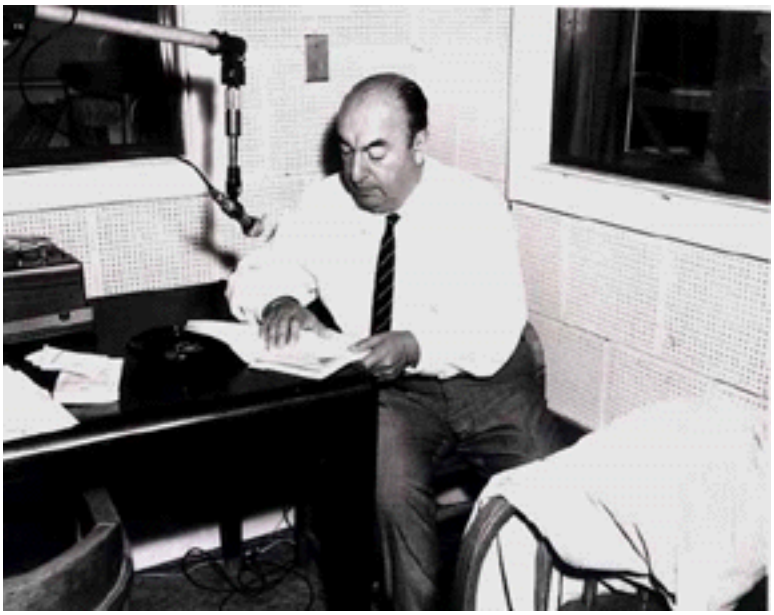

From the 1920s to the 1950s socialist realism and late surrealism were the two dominant political and aesthetic positions for leftist Latin American and Spanish writers. For several eminent poets the literary avant-garde's light went out once the civil war erupted in Spain in 1936. One need only think of some of the most renowned poets, among them, Rafael Alberti, Luis Cernuda, César Vallejo and Pablo Neruda, who dedicated themselves to writing avant-gardist works before the civil war and later, in the throes of war, committed themselves to the Republican cause by writing accessible verses to the general public. However, others, such as Vicente Huidobro or Octavio Paz, never abandoned avant-gardist theory or style. As is well known, Paz became an un-official member of the second generation of surrealists; and Huidobro invented his own avant-gardist theory, "creacionismo." And in spite of their political commitment to the Spanish Republic, their leftist commitments were short-lived.

At first glance Federico García Lorca also seems to belong to this last group of poets because of his volcanic verses in *Poeta en Nueva York* [Poet in New York]. Nonetheless, García Lorca does not fit for two main reasons. Firstly, *Poeta en Nueva York* is a contemporary of *Sobre los ángeles* [About Angels] by Alberti, *Un río, un amor* [A River, A Love] by Cernuda and *Espadas como labios* [Swords like Lips] by Aleixandre,

meaning that it is not affected by the tumultuous events of the civil war (it is, as we know, a posthumous book).1 Secondly, while it is avant-gardist poetry, it is also a politically committed poetry that vividly portrays racism, poverty, the ostentatious wealth of the capitalists, and the desperate alienation during the Great Depression in the United States.

As noted, the first group of poets--among them Neruda--established ties, sometimes tenuous, with the avant-garde and, in particular, with surrealism, ties later severed with the advent of the civil war. And it is during this period that socialist realism first emerged as a literary alternative. Many poets rejected socialist realism; some, like Paz, for example, criticized it openly as a byproduct of Stalinism. But others, like Alberti and Neruda, accepted some of its premises.

In Neruda's case, we can appreciate his navigation between these two literary currents and his choice to chart an independent course. In spite of his work's evolution toward realism during the civil war, Neruda never gave up his literary autonomy or his creative independence. Even in *Canto general* and *Las uvas y el viento* [Grapes and Wind], books that have often been "accused" of socialist realism,2 there is ample evidence of the founding principal of Neruda's poetry: "espontaneidad dirigida" [guided spontaneity].3 If we turn to Neruda's commentaries in his memoirs, we encounter astute observations about his ties to the Communist Party and the Soviet Union during the "diabolically confusing," Stalin years, and about his stance regarding literary realism.4 Although Neruda was affected by late surrealism and socialist realism and established his independence from both of them, his poetry showed signs of being more swayed by realism, or what I would call his "dialectical realism". He showed a growing distaste for surrealism because of its perceived irrationalism and its criticism of the USSR. Likewise, despite his support of the USSR, Neruda never declared himself a follower of socialist realism. However, from the Spanish Civil War onward, Neruda turned increasingly to realism in order to portray the complexity of the class struggle during these years. Compared to the *Residenciaen la tierra* poems, his poetic form became more accessible because of the shifting emphasis to social content. His deepening political commitment, first to the Spanish Republic, then to anti-fascism and later to socialism gave him the opportunity to become more politically conscious and this made its way into the poetry that he wrote during these years, precisely the years that *Tercera Residencia* spans (1925-1945).

The Impact of Socialist Realism

Socialist realism became one of the dominant aesthetic currents in the 1930s because it associated itself with the USSR's destiny. This official literary position borrowed from the past--the October revolution--and oft-made exaggerated claims about the national achievements after the death of Lenin. So, in 1934, in the First Soviet Writers Congress, some four years before the Great Purges, Zhdanov openly declared that the Congress was convening in a historical moment in which "under the leadership of the Communist Party, under the guiding genius of our great leader and master, Comrade Stalin, the socialist system has triumphed irrecoverably and finally in our country." According to Zhdanov,

Soviet culture was "growing and developing in exuberant splendour."[5] As Zhdanov saw it, the challenge for art during this period consisted of overcoming the barriers of underdevelopment in the industrial sector and in the countryside, and, above all, "the vestiges of bourgeois influence in the proletariat, laziness, vagrancy, waste, individualism and the immoral behavior of the petit bourgeoisie" (17). To become the "engineers of the soul" that Stalin imagined artists to be, they should combine "truth and historical specificity in their artistic portrayals" with the "education and shape of the working class in the spirit of socialism" (21).

If socialist realism would have based itself on Zhdanov's stance and the prestige of the USSR as its shining inspiration then it would have proved convincing to many writers, but probably not for the majority of them. Government officials in the USSR could talk of the "triumph" of socialism in one country, the collectivization of agriculture and the road to industrialization by relying on the main arguments of the 1930s, but they could only do so with some success. Nevertheless, the German, Karl Radek, was the writer who gave the most persuasive speech about socialist realism at the Congress. In Radek's view "proletarian art cannot only be content with the class struggle. It should also describe the processes through which those same social classes pass--their lifestyle, their psychology, their development and their aspirations" (136). So working class culture was conceived as the culture of the future, as an indication of psychological and social struggles that were gestating in the heart of socialism. In sum, Radek believed that proletarian or socialist realism more accurately represented socioeconomic and psychological conditions than its avant-gardist counterpart and that socialist realism was closely tied to the destiny of socialism, that is, with the leading example of the USSR, and, as such, was a mechanism to raise political consciousness among artists around the world. According to Radek, as a "worker[s] of consciousness" writers should overcome individualism by becoming "soldiers of the revolution" and abandon their desire for absolute freedom, which, after all, was the product of bourgeois ideology (142, 157).

It would not be surprising if many writers on the left, like Neruda, after hearing the speech by Radek, concluded that accepting a socialist realist method, while not required, would allow them to surpass petit bourgeois consciousness and to commit themselves to socialism, incarnated in the Soviet Union. After all, the 1917 revolution was the first socialist revolution in the world and the hopes for socialism on an international scale, until the purges of the 1930s at least, were to be found in the USSR.

Among the more or less official opinions on aesthetic matters during the 1930s in the Soviet Union, in my judgment, Radek's would have been most convincing to fellow travelers and Party members like Neruda or Louis Aragon. On the one hand committing oneself to socialist realism meant that the writer was dedicating himself to the socialist struggle, and, as such, supporting the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it provided the writer with certain artistic freedoms. It was expected that the writer who wanted to ally himself with socialism recognize the economic, social and cultural achievements in the USSR. Naturally, this expectation grew as fascism raised its head in Italy, Germany and Spain.[6] Anti-fascism came to be associated with the defense of the Soviet Union and garnered the support of a great number of progressive and leftist poets, among them

Neruda, Alberti, Miguel Hernández, César Vallejo, García Lorca, Aragon and Paul Eluard.7 It is not surprising then that as World War II approached, Neruda, the avant-gardist, should write more realist verses describing the war-time conditions, become an anti-fascist and openly support the Soviet Union. If there were any doubts they were dispelled in 1942 when Neruda wrote and read in public his "Canto a Stalingrado" [Song to Stalingrad], and, a year later, "Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado" [New Song of Love to Stalingrad].8

Surrealism and Trotskyism

For progressive or left-wing writers, the most palpable alternative to socialist realism was late surrealism. By the 1930s, the most eminent defender of the Trotskyist critique of the Soviet Union in the cultural realm was André Breton. According to biographer Mark Polizzotti, already by the 1920s Breton considered that "social revolution by the Communists reflected perfectly the aesthetic and moral revolution that surrealism had set out as its goal."9 As Breton's political position drifted towards Trotsky's, surrealism began to abandon its formerly anarchist views and find closer affinities with communism. In the long run this radicalization of surrealism led to the break up of its founders: Breton, Eluard and Aragon. The latter two would then become members of the French Communist Party, while Breton would associate himself more with the Left Opposition (Trotsky).

In 1938 Breton visited Trotsky in Mexico and they agreed to write a "Manifesto for Independent Revolutionary Art." In this manifesto they propose a socialist alternative to socialist realism: the freedom of art.10 Aware of the implications of this position they made it clear that they "defended freedom of creation" and at no time did they intend to "defend political indifference," nor did they want to support "pure art," which commonly serves the more than impure actions of reactionary forces" (31). Having criticized art for art's sake for being potentially reactionary, they then focus on the counterproposal they offer to socialist realism and Stalinism:

We believe that the major job of art today and this period is to participate assiduously in preparing the revolution. Nevertheless, artists cannot participate in the struggle for emancipation unless they have absorbed its social and individual content, unless they feel its meaning and drama in their nerves and unless they express and incarnate their life experiences freely (my translation; 33).

In that way Breton and Trotsky put the legitimacy of Stalin's regime in the USSR and socialist realism to the test. They reject "all solidarity with the caste that currently rules in the USSR . . . because . . . it does not represent communism but rather its most dangerous and treacherous enemy" (30). It is worth mentioning in passing that in spite of the crimes committed by Stalin's regime, which are not few nor possible to pardon, it is assumed that the main enemy of socialism is capitalism and not the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, so Breton and Trotsky's position here is misleading. It is easy to see how Communists who supported the USSR and considered that it was under constant attack by capitalist

countries would denounce Trotsky's position and contend that it, in fact, could be used for reactionary purposes.

After rejecting the USSR's claim to socialism, Trotsky and Breton concentrate on what the Soviet Union can provide to left-wing writers as far as resources are concerned and they urge artists to break with Stalinism:

> At the present moment, characterized by the slow death of--democratic as well as fascist--capitalism, artists, even though they may not protest socially, are threatened with loss of the right to earn a living and to continue his work because they are denied all means to promote creative works. It is natural for them to turn to Stalinist organizations that allow them to escape their isolation. But, in exchange for those resources, the artists are asked to renounce all that could be considered their own message and to show terribly degrading subservience. Therefore, artists have no alternative but to withdraw from these organizations, as long as demoralization has not taken over their characters (33).

If left-wing writers did not feel drawn to either socialist realism or surrealism, Georg Lukács' position would have persuaded the dissenters. This stance had the advantage of allowing Communist writers to support the socialist cause, incarnated in the Soviet Union, while still maintaining their independence. As I argue below, this is the theoretical position that comes closest to mirroring Neruda's own beliefs regarding realism, surrealism and socialist realism.

Lukács' Marxist Aesthetic Theory

Lukács' 1938 essay "Realism in the Balance," as the title indicates, argues for realism and against anti-realist and avant-gardist literary currents such as surrealism. Lukács maintains that avant-gardist literature that aspires to startle bourgeois consciousness and, ultimately, transform society falls victim to the representation of immediacy. Avant-gardists' artistic creations revolve around the importance of experimentalism and spontaneous expression and, as such, they are only able to capture a fragmented, and thus temporary, purchase on the sociopolitical reality. In Lukács' view:

> both emotionally and intellectually they all remain frozen in their own immediacy; they fail to pierce the surface to discover the underlying essence, i.e. the real factors that relate their experiences to the hidden social forces that produce them. On the contrary, they all develop their own artistic style--more or less consciously--as a spontaneous expression of their immediate experience (37).

In reproducing the immediate social relations and conflicts through their mediated art forms the avant-gardists end up portraying these phenomena in a näive way. Consequently, while they appear to achieve critical distance in their representations of the sociopolitical reality and the life of the individual, they really do not incisively and

comprehensively criticize that reality. Therefore, their writing becomes abstract and lacks concrete and complex depth. As such these avant-gardist representations become one-dimensional and thus succumb, as we now know, to commodification. The avant-gardist shock effect serves a momentary purpose which then vanishes into thin air as its oppositional intent is absorbed by the capitalist system.

As is well known, Lukács then makes a case for realism arguing that the dialectical method is crucial to any convincing portrayal of reality. Realism thus conceived shares in the unity of human inquiry and attempts to approximate social and physical reality in a mediated, literary form, and then suggests how this reality will be transformed. Lukács cites Lenin on this matter: "In order to know an object thoroughly, it is essential to discover and comprehend all of its aspects, its relationships and its 'mediations.' We shall never achieve this fully, but insistence on all-around knowledge will protect us from errors and inflexibility" (33). So it is paramount that writers aspire to understand the general dynamics of the social totality: the individual thoughts and feelings, the social relations, the class struggle, the drive for profit, and more. In this way the author's consciousness and creation is consistently contrasted with the complexity of social consciousness and reality (35). Lukács sums up this critique of the avant-garde and avowal for critical realism this way:

> For as capitalism develops, the continuous production and reproduction of these reactionary prejudices is intensified and accelerated, not to say consciously promoted by the imperialist bourgeoisie. So if we are ever going to be able to understand the way in which reactionary ideas infiltrate our minds, and if we are ever going to achieve a critical distance from such prejudices, this can only be accomplished by hard work, by abandoning and transcending the limits of immediacy, by scrutinizing all subjective experiences and measuring them against social reality. In short it can only be achieved by a deeper probing of the real world (37).

Here and elsewhere in this essay Lukács argues that the dialectical method is pivotal for Marxism and a more complete view of reality. Without it distortions, isolations and fragmentations of thought and analysis will occur. The dialectic is just as crucial to literature as it is to any field of knowledge. If it is not an integral part of literature then it cannot be literature that seeks to be Marxist. For all its good intentions then surrealism does not follow in the footsteps of Marxism, because it never overcomes the level of immediacy.

Lukács' stance on socialist realism during the 1930s is expressed in a more veiled way since he was living in the Soviet Union at the time. In referring to proletarian literature in his essay "Tendency or Partisanship," he scrutinizes the idea of tendentious literature. Lukács says that its proponents disregard literary form, regarding it as bourgeois and calling attention to the immediate sociopolitical situation. Thus tendentious literature becomes mere literature of agitation that lacks the depth and subtlety of even the great works of bourgeois realists. Tendency, as it is conceived by its advocates, is posited as an "ought" in opposition to reality (the "is) and, consequently, makes subjective demands on

writers and readers alike within an idealist framework. In spite of its proletarian provenance, tendency fails to grasp its connection to material production, human activity and the class struggle.11 In Lukács' words "it is not a tendency of social development itself, which is simply made conscious by the poet (in Marx's sense), but rather a (subjectively devised) commandment, which reality is requested to fulfill." This position is flawed because of the "rigid and formalized separation of the various spheres of human activity from one another" (37).

The central vantage point of the proletariat does not, in and of itself, grant it any particular privilege as regards society or literature. Painstaking work is required for the writer to see the class relations, the progression of class struggle, the fetishism of commodities under capitalism and the lure of the dominant ideology. The process of understanding these laws of capitalism and the accompanying evolution of feelings, thoughts and experiences in this context is a very difficult one that the tendency writers cannot reach because they hold to mechanistic and idealist thought:

> This knowledge is in no way a mechanical and immediate product of social being. It has rather to be produced. The process of its production, however, is both a product of the internal (material and ideological) disposition of the proletariat, as well as a factor promoting the development of the proletariat from a 'class in itself' to a 'class for itself" (41).

The demands of social reality are already a natural part of the writing process for those writers who strive to portray reality in this way. This partisanship entails "knowledge and portrayal of the overall process as a synthetically, grasped totality of its true driving forces, as the constant and heightened reproduction of the dialectical contradictions that underlie it" (42). Lukács then proceeds to criticize the proletarian literature of his day for its tendentiousness and, in so doing, carries out a critique that likens itself to his critical assessment of socialist realism:

> Our literature, even in its best products, is still full of 'tendency'. For it does not always succeed, by a long chalk, in portraying what the class-conscious section of the proletariat wants and does, from an understanding of the driving forces of the overall process, and as representative of the great world-historical interests of the working class, portraying this as a will and a deed that themselves arise dialectically from the same overall process and are indispensable moments of this objective process of reality (43).

Lukács' commentary on proletarian tendency acts as a prelude to the critical analysis he does of socialist realism. In "Tribune or Bureaucrat?", Lukács addresses the status of socialist realism and the left-wing writer's political and aesthetic commitment more openly than any other essay during these years. In this context he maintains that spontaneity, be it in its avant-gardist or Socialist realist variants, is consciousness in its embryonic form, so it is necessarily a partial view of the social totality limited by the

recording of immediacy (219). This is the position of the bureaucrat. By contrast, the member of the revolutionary tribune has passed from the realm of spontaneity to conscious political thought or artistic work. The artist who is able to overcome the spontaneity of thought and to perceive the dialectical complexity of life moves beyond the alienation and mystery involved in the capitalist system and writes singular, and more complete works of art. Lukács argues that:

> Only the love of life gives the artist his unreserved truthfulness towards everything that he perceives and reproduces, his breadth, scope and depth of vision. If a social condition arises in which the artist is forced to hate life, to have contempt for it, and he even begins to develop an attitude of indifference, then the truth of even his best observations is constricted. The surface and the essence of human life grow apart, the former becoming empty and vacuous, requiring invigoration by trimmings that are foreign to the material itself, while the latter becomes alien to life, trivial, or full of simply subjective and false profundities (218).

The idea behind the revolutionary tribune, in contrast to the bureaucrat, is to return to the roots of the Russian revolutionary experience in order to critique the development of socialism in the 1930s. For someone living in the Soviet Union at the time, this was a delicate matter. Lukács manages to isolate and critique what he considers to be vestiges of capitalism in the USSR at this point in history and to anchor his analysis in classical Marxism. Thus he makes bureaucracy the target of his analysis in the political and cultural spheres and implies that it is preventing the dialectical flourishing of socialism in the USSR. In doing so Lukács quotes Lenin's reflections on the eventual withering away of the state as a coercive apparatus in order to implicitly denounce, I assume, the purges taking place internally. He also cites Stalin's own remarks about classless society:

> a classless society cannot come of its own accord, as it were. It has to be achieved and built by the efforts of all the working people, by strengthening the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat, by intensifying the class struggle, by abolishing classes, by eliminating the remnants of the capitalist classes, and in battles with enemies, both internal and external (230-1).

For Lukács the blame is laid at the doorstep of the bureaucracy, which has taken things into its own hands and gone against the very founding principles of the Russian revolution.

From there Lukács moves to a critical analysis of socialist realism as the result of bureaucratic thinking in the cultural realm. It is worth remembering though, as his later writings make clear, that his aim is not to declare socialist realism bankrupt, but rather to criticize its development at this moment in history and under these particular social circumstances.[12] By criticizing socialist realism, Lukács is indirectly holding the Soviet bureaucracy responsible for the travesties and errors committed.[13] So, for instance, Lukács charges socialist realism with "formal, empty, bureaucratic 'optimism' expressed

in certain works that appear at first sight to be socialist, but are in actual fact dead, devoid of ideas, and useless and ineffectual both from the standpoint of aesthetics and from that of propaganda" (235). He also contrasts Gorky's great literary work with socialist realism. The latter is full of bureaucratic optimism and it makes:

> the process with its contradictions and difficulties simply vanish. For this school, the only events that exist are victories won without struggle or effort: the resistance of the external enemy, and internal resistance within men themselves, hindering the birth of socialist man and in individual cases frustrating this, does not exist for them (235-6).

Lukács concludes by declaring that struggle must be waged against this bureaucratization of art, which he judges to be a remnant of capitalist cultural development.

The three options that carried more weight for left-wing poets during this period are: Karl Radek's position on socialist realism, André Breton's Left Opposition alternative in surrealism, and, Lukács' critique of both tendencies and advocacy of a more sophisticated critical realism. Of interest in what follows are the reasons that led Aragon, the French communist writer, to break ties with Breton and to become one of the main defenders of socialist realism; Octavio Paz to solidify his ties with surrealism in particular and the avant-garde in general; Neruda to follow a course which comes closest to being represented either as somewhere between Aragon's and Paz's stances or as more closely associated with Lukács critical position.

Neruda's Contemporaries

Neruda's good friend, Aragon, wrote several justifications for his break with surrealism and his defense of the virtues of socialist realism. In his essays "In Moscow there are Sculptors" and "Parenthesis about the Stalin Prizes" he tries to refute Breton's arguments by claiming his role as an insider in the USSR and by suggesting that Breton's view is limited because he can only judge socialist realism from outside the Soviet Union. So, for example, Aragon alleges that critics in France misunderstand socialist realism because they rely on the aesthetic laws, criteria and taste found in France and they attempt to then apply them to the Soviet case.14 That is why socialist realism offends so many artists and critics in the West, as any new artistic movement provokes the ire of established artists (54). Aragon maintains that the theme of Soviet art is its point of departure and arrival; whereas in the case of surrealism anarchist tendencies can be discerned that distance it from reality and liken it to art for art's sake (59-60, 63-64). In sum, then, he alleges that the form of Surrealist art practically becomes the content, whereas with socialist realism form yields to and deepens content. In echoing Radek, Aragon concludes that there is a great deal of freedom of expression under socialist realism, but he ends the second essay with a definition of socialist realism which is very similar to Zhadanov's (64, 74). So it is that Aragon oscillates between Radek's and Zhadanov's stances.

Although Aragon and Neruda were members of the Communist Party during some very complex, trying and brutal years--the Stalin period--they embraced semiautonomous positions in the political and artistic realms. In interviews, and later, in his memoirs, Neruda denied that the Party interfered in the creation and context of *Canto general* and thus answered the same critics' charges that he wrote that great work under the auspices of the Party.15 Neruda insisted that he had always followed his own artistic road. Likewise, according to Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, the French Communist Party gave Aragon a quasi-independent role, allowing him to defend his orthodox aesthetic positions in unorthodox ways.16 However, as in the case of many of the most salient Communist writers during the Stalin years, Neruda and Aragon also benefited from their advantageous status: they were well treated and awarded prizes in the Soviet Union after they joined the Party; they had their books published there; they served on the Stalin Prize committee; and they relied on their close ties with USSR to be more persuasive in discussions on artistic matters (although this can be seen more clearly with Aragon). Nevertheless, Mary Ann Caws has demonstrated that even an ardent defender of the USSR and socialist realism like Aragon was able to distance himself from that artistic school and maintain his autonomy.17

Surrealism won over the young Aragon but once he strengthened his ties to the French Communist Party and to the Soviet Union its influence waned and he became more convinced of the importance of socialist realism. Octavio Paz, on the other hand, drifted in the opposite direction. During the Spanish Civil War, he wrote socially committed and erotic poetry, collected in *Bajo tu sombra clara y otros poemas sobre España* [Beneath your Clear Shadow and Other Poems about Spain] (1937). In writing for the journal *Hora de España* [Spain's Hour] Paz steered a course that showed his artistic independence without breaking with Spanish Communists.18 In principle, then, Paz's initial position differs little from Neruda's: he aligns himself with the Republican cause and yet, like most poets, searches for his own poetic voice. In fact Paz's poetic theory comes very close to Neruda's "guided spontaneity": "Nunca he creído que la poesía nazca de la mera espontaneidad o del sueño; tampoco es hijo de la conciencia lúcida sino de la lucha--que es también, a veces, abrazo--entre ambos" [I have never believed that poetry is born of mere spontaneity or of dreams; neither is it the offspring of conscious lucidity but rather a struggle--which is also, at times, an embrace--between both].19 Although Paz's political stance seemed to mirror Neruda's at this stage of their lives, Paz was accused of being a Trotskyist because he refused to believe that Trotsky was an agent of fascism, despite Paz's firm conviction that the main enemy at hand was fascism. Unlike the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista [Workers Party for Marxist Unificación]), Paz did not support a revolution above all else in Spain; he was primarily concerned about the defeat of fascism.20 While Paz's commitment to the Republican cause was unswerving, his association with the Spanish Communist Party was tenuous. In the last years of his life Paz described his oscillation between "adhesión ferviente y una reserva invencible" [fervent adherence and an invincible reserve]. Much of his opposition to the PCE at this stage had to do with its intervention in cultural matters and the Party's aesthetic stance.21 Elsewhere I argue that in the final analysis Paz's avant-gardist aesthetics clashes with his beliefs as fellow-traveler and that this leads him to embrace Trotskyism and, later in his life, social democracy.22

After the Spanish Civil War, Paz returned to Mexico and published in *El Popular* until shortly after the 1939 non-aggression pact between Germany and the USSR and the assassination of Trotsky, at which point, Paz broke with Neruda and also with the Mexican Communist Party.23 By 1941 Paz began to chart his own course politically and aesthetically. From this moment on, Paz was more persuaded by Trotskyist political positions even though he did level criticism at Trotsky. He criticized "Stalinism" along the same lines as Trotsky did and did not reject Marxism per se.24 By the 1950s Paz turned more and more to existentialist, anarchist, and libertarian ideas even though socialism still held its appeal, but not following the tradition of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc.25

Always a critic of the "barbaric partisans of socialist realism," from this point on Paz sided unequivocally with the avant-garde in the aesthetic realm.26 He contributed to *Taller*, a Surrealist-inspired literary journal, and, he refused to write political poetry. A turning point thematically in his work is the poem "Himno entre ruinas" [Hymn among Ruins]--far different from the Nerudian equivalent written during the Spanish Civil War. In contrast to the social reality, the hymn stands in for the existential and momentary reality because, as Enrico Mario Santí puts it, it is "la eternidad a que puede aspirar el ser humano" [eternity to which human beings can aspire].27 Paz's political disillusionment is an alienated space from which the poet attempts to make sense of life and he finds it in the spontaneous notion of carpe diem. As his later work indicates, Paz's aesthetic preference adheres more to simultaneism and surrealism. His years in Paris after World War II were decisive: they brought Paz closer than he had ever been to surrealism and they left the mark of Reverdy's, Breton's and Camus' influence on him. From surrealism, he inherited his rebellious individualism, the concept of the "other voice" that runs through his poetry, the "subversive" potential of desire and the "revolutionary" character of eroticism; from simultaneism he borrowed the idea of disparate verses linked by metaphors, the conviction that metaphors are intimately connected with analogy and rhythm, the focus on the basic intrapoetic elements: vision, sound and rhythm, and, also, the insistence on language as the poet's destiny.28

As Paz views it in *Hijos del limo* [Children of the Mire] the two dominant literary trends in Latin America by 1945 were socialist realism and the social poetry of former avantgardists. In this context the neo-avant-garde--the works of such poets as José Lezama Lima, Roberto Juarroz, Enrique Molina, Nicanor Parra, Jaime Sabines and Paz himself--held in common their emphasis on solitary rebellion, language as an expression of the self, parody and self-parody, late surrealism, and an oscillation between Trotskyism and anarchism.29 The neo-avant-garde became the dominant current in Latin American poetry and remains so today, whereas politically committed poetry and realism can claim only a minority of representatives, such as Ernesto Cardenal, Juan Gelman and Mario Benedetti. Paz's own poetic work and theory, up to the end of his life, then, finds its source, generally speaking, in the position carved out by Breton and Trotsky and fully opposes itself to socialist realism and to the Lukácsian theory of realism.

Neruda's "Guided Spontaneity" or Dialectical Realism

In reading Neruda's comments on realism, surrealism and socialist realism in his memoirs and in *Para nacer he nacido* [I have been Born to be Born] one might easily arrive at the conclusion that he searches for a middle road in the debate between these aesthetic schools. Indeed, his opinions about them are often contradictory and confirm that while all three movements influenced Neruda's writing, he rejected them as artificial literary models lacking in dynamism and in "guided spontaneity." This explains a commentary like the following:

> En cuanto al realismo debo decir, porque no me conviene hacerlo, que detesto el realismo cuando se trata de poesía. Es más, la poesía no tiene por qué ser sobrerealista o subrealista, pero puede ser antirrealista. Esto último con toda la razón, con toda la sinrazón, es decir, con toda la poesía.
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> Me place el libro, la densa materia del trabajo poético, el bosque de la literatura, me place todo, hasta los lomos de los libros, pero no las etiquetas de las escuelas. Quiero libros sin escuelas y sin clasificar, como la vida.30
>
> [As far as realism is concerned I should say, because it isn't in my best interest to do so, that I detest realism when it comes to poetry. Moreover, poetry doesn't have to be overrealist or subrealist, but it can be antirealist. The latter (being) absolutely right, absolutely irrational, absolute poetry. I enjoy a book, the dense matter of poetic work, the woods of literature, I enjoy everything, even the spines of books, but not the labeling of schools. I want books without schools and without classifications, like life itself.]

Here Neruda refuses to associate himself with surrealism and realism. However, he is reacting to a näive realist attempt to "reflect" reality, not, as I will show below, a deeper dialectical reality. Likewise he appears to be rejecting socialist realism by declaring that poetry can be anti-realist. And yet we know that once his avant-gardist stage reaches its saturation point with *Residenciaen la tierra*, with the advent of the Spanish Civil War, Neruda began writing poetry that could be called critical realist. From *España en el corazón* [Spain in the Heart] onwards he wrote in a realist yet experimental style, and thus did not abandon his formal innovation or his creative spontaneity. However, the content in his work did change. While Neruda's avant-gardist poetry tends to be self-reflexive and it represents a personal crisis in the poet's life, his poetry from 1937 to his death was influenced by political matters.31 As Neruda's political and moral consciousness grew so did his ability to represent the social forces at work in capitalism in a way that Neruda the avant-gardist did not. Far from impinging on or distorting his poetry and worldview, Neruda's increasing political awareness allowed him to see beyond his own alienation and that of his fellow human beings in the Orient.

The source that leads him to the banks of realism can be appreciated in his memoirs. In his poetry prior to 1937 Neruda says that he "[había] explorado con crueldad y agonía

el corazón del hombre; sin pensar en los hombres había visto ciudades, pero ciudades vacías" [had explored with cruelty and agony the heart of man; without thinking about human beings I had seen cities, but empty cities.]32 In "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" he says a similar thing: "poco a poco el hombre fue negándome" [little by little man was being denied to me]. And, a few verses later, he echoes the desperate Neruda of "Walking Around" in *Residenciaen la tierra*: "rodé muriéndome de mi propia muerte" [rolled dying from my own death].33 After 1937, Neruda's poetry began to reach a wider readership and it served as an exploratory instrument of nature and history. In point of fact Neruda's case is rather unique as far as the readership is concerned: *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* has sold more than a million copies and, according to his memoirs and his biographers, his poetry in the 1940s and 50s was read before thousands of people.34

Neruda became so popular due to the quality and intelligibility of his poetry, and because of his ties to the political left. So it would not be an exaggeration to say that Neruda appears to be a "dialectical realist" poet who employs accessible vocabulary and narrations in an oral form with surprising metaphors produced by his "guided spontaneity." I say "dialectical realist" because Neruda's work attempts to express the thoughts and feelings involved in the class struggle of society as a whole while granting an exceptional vantage point to the class-conscious proletariat. Therefore, his poetry does not only aim at representing social relations as they are (through the mediation of language), but also those social relations that are distorted and alienated under capitalism. Moreover, based on actual socio-historical experience his poetry, beginning particularly with *España en el corazón*, tries to capture collective and individual aspirations that portray more humane social relations that could lead to the creation of socialism. As the following chapters prove in this book, this socialist future does not include an unfounded, utopian view or the "bureaucratic optimism" with which Lukács charges socialist realism.

This explains why Neruda gives the following humorous account of realism:

> [el poeta] que no sea realista va muerto. Pero el poeta que sea sólo realista va muerto también. El poeta que sea sólo irracional será entendido sólo por su persona y por su amada, y esto es bastante triste. El poeta que sea sólo un racionalista, será entendido hasta por los asnos, y esto es también sumamente triste.35
>
> [Poets who are not realist are dead. But poets who are only realist are dead also. Poets who are only irrational will be understood by themselves and their lovers, and that is pretty sad. Poets who are only rationalist, will be understood even by donkies, and that too is very sad.]

And yet he praises his friend Paul Eluard because he did not lose himself "en el irracionalismo surrealista porque no fue un imitador sino un creador y como tal descargó sobre el cadáver del surrealismo disparos de claridad e inteligencia" [in Surrealist irrationalism because he wasn't an imitator but rather a creator and as such he fired on the cadaver of surrealism shots of clarity and intelligence].36 Neruda's attack against both

surrealism and realism in this context underscores my contention that he is not focusing on realism per se but on näive and socialist realism. From Neruda's perspective each provides a static view of emotional life and the social reality under capitalism and socialism; consequently, they are unacceptable as literary models. As Lukács has shown, näive realism can manifest itself under capitalism as a reflection of the primacy of an immediate, fragmented reality, whose alienation is sketched as natural; or it can emerge in the form of socialist realism which is required to serve as agitation and create a schematic sense of optimism about the future of humanity and socialism.37

There is no doubt that socialist realism had an impact on Neruda's work, but it was not his first option because he objected to any type of institutionalization of art. While Neruda objected to the bureaucratic task assigned to literature, he also acknowledged that the Soviet bureaucracy's manufactured role for literature was contested openly. In his memoirs, Neruda states that there was some dogmatism in the USSR vis-à-vis the arts, but he also argues that that dogmatism was denounced (even during the Stalin years):

> La existencia de un dogmatismo soviético en las artes durante largos periodos no puede ser negada, pero también debe decirse que este dogmatismo fue siempre tomado como un defecto y combatido cara a cara. El culto a la personalidad produjo, con los ensayos críticos de Zdhanov, brillante dogmatista, un endurecimiento grave en el desarrollo de la cultura soviética. Pero había mucha respuesta en todas partes y ya se sabe que la vida es más fuerte y más porfiada que los preceptos. La revolución es la vida y los preceptos buscan su propio ataúd.38
>
> [The existence of a Soviet dogmatism in the arts during long periods cannot be denied, but it should also be said that this dogmatism was always taken as a defect and battled face to face. The cult of personality produced, with the critical essays of Zhdanov, a brilliant propagandist, a serious hardening of the development of Soviet culture. But there were many responses all over and we all know that life is stronger and more insistent than its precepts. The revolution is life and the precepts search for their own coffin].

Here Neruda makes it clear that he disagrees with Zdhanov's defense of socialist realism because it impaired the development of Soviet literature. He also indicates that there were plenty of opponents to socialist realism within the USSR, including, I would assume, Lukács. Indeed, Neruda's position here is very similar to Lukács': he supports the USSR and yet opposes the official cultural program offered in the form of socialist realism. However, at other moments his thoughts take a Brechtian direction: he feels impelled to defend the USSR and yet is not comfortable with the literary schools, which try to represent socialist life. Neruda was clearly torn between his commitment to the Soviet Union and the literary means available to analyze the situation:

> Por una parte, las nuevas formas, la necesaria renovación de cuanto existe, debe traspasar y romper los moldes literarios. Por otra parte, cómo no

> acompañar los pasos de una profunda y espaciosa revolución? Cómo alejar de los temas centrales las victorias, conflictos, humanos problemas, fecundidad, movimiento, germinación de un inmenso pueblo que se enfrenta a un cambio total de régimen político, económico, social? Cómo no solidarizarse con ese pueblo atacado por feroces invasiones, cercado por implacables colonialistas, oscurantistas de todos los climas y pelajes? Podrían la literatura o las artes tomar una actitud de aérea independencia junto a acontecimientos tan esenciales?39
>
> [On the one hand, the new forms, the necessary renovation of all that exists, must break and overcome literary models. On the other hand, how could one not follow the steps of a deep and spacious revolution? How could one distance oneself from the main issues, the victories, conflicts, human problems, growth, movement, germination of an immense people who confronts a radical change in the social, economic and political regime? How could one not commit oneself with this people attacked by ferocious invasions, fenced in by implacable colonialists, obscurantists from all climates and backgrounds? Could literature or the arts take on an air of independence knowing of these essential matters?]

This position is almost an exact rephrasing of Brecht's own stance as regards realism and experimentation: "New problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change." But Brecht was quick to add, as Neruda would, that realism as aesthetic method was necessary.40 Furthermore, any reader of Brecht's poetry knows that it is dialectics at work in a realist setting. Here we come to the crux of the question of the two opposing sides: on the one hand, the belief in a poetic revolution; on the other, the imminent necessity of supporting the Soviet people and of reacting before the major historical events that afflicted them. In the end, in his works and life, Neruda incarnates both tendencies and thus upholds his notion of "guided spontaneity," "spontaneity" reflecting the sometimes sudden flashes of imagination and the fires of inspiration; "guided" indicating that there was an overarching framework, a coherent, systematization in Neruda's method. Realism and experimentation form an integral whole in Neruda's poetic work.

That is why he chose to pay homage to Mayakovsky in Peking in 1957, because, although there were thematic and formal differences between Neruda's work and Mayakovsky's, the Chilean felt a real affinity with the Russian. Neruda lauds him because he was the first poet to incorporate the Party and the proletariat and he compares his impact on contemporary poetry to that of Baudelaire and Whitman. In an obvious criticism of socialist realism, he contends that Mayakovsky's work is not dogmatic, it is poetic:

> Porque cualquiera innovación de contenido que no sea digerido y llegue a ser parte nutricia del pensamiento, no pasa a ser sino un estimulante exterior del pensamiento. Maiakovski hace circular dentro de la poesía los duros temas de la lucha, los monótonos temas de la reunión, y estos

> asuntos florecen en su palabra, se convierten en armas prodigiosas, en azucenas rojas.41
>
> [Because any innovation in content which is not digested and becomes part of food for thought, cannot be anything but an outside stimulant of thought. Mayakovsky has the hard issues of struggle circulate in his poetry, the monotonous topics of meetings, and these affairs flower in his poetic word, they become prodigious arms, red lilies.]

In other words, Mayakovsky challenges the reader with his complex and contradictory depiction of the social reality in the USSR, with its ebbs and flows, its glories and its tragedies. Neruda also praises Mayakovsky for his satires of the Soviet bureaucracy and attacks on petit bourgeois consciousness.42 So while Neruda's poetic method and work show the impact of the Lukácsian theory of realism, Neruda does not quite fit the paradigmatic role of realist. Although he lives and breathes as a realist, he nonetheless holds fast to his rebel spirit, at least until the early 1950s, and experiments with formal devices.

The Chilean Communist Party supported Neruda wholeheartedly even when he held on obstinately to his own rebelliousness. He could do this because, on various occasions in the twentieth century, the Party in Chile proved to be independent of, or even antagonistic to, the Comintern.43 So Neruda benefited from the ideological flexibility in the Party and carved out his own niche in its midst. And in that situation he developed what we might call his "dialectical realism": a dynamic method for understanding social and natural forces as well as human nature and the possibilities of human emancipation; a method grounded in human labor as its foundation and the Party as an imperfect yet effective vehicle for paving the way for socialism.

In his works and life, Neruda remains committed to socialism and the USSR, and this affects the direction his literary form and content take. From *Tercera Residencia* (1947) on, his poetry becomes more realist in both its dialectical portrayal of social relations and in the clarity of form. And yet Neruda is able to maintain critical distance and to cultivate his passionate commitment. From 1937 on, his poetic method becomes more sophisticated in its ability to represent, in abstraction, the sociopolitical, economic and moral dilemmas of his time. This transformation, I think, can best be appreciated in the poetry itself.

Neruda's Dialectical Realism at Work

In the two poems I analyze below, Neruda's artistic uniqueness stands out in spite and because of the winds of history which blow and envelope him, moving him to commit himself to the anti-fascist cause and socialism. In this context poetic form is not as esoteric as it was during *Residenciaen la tierra*, but it continues to be demanding for the reader. And even in the realm of content, if Neruda were following in the steps of socialist realism we would expect a realist and perhaps schematic account of sociopolitical and economic matters at the expense of petit bourgeois consciousness,

which, during these years, meant autobiographical details. However, this is not the case even at the height of his poetry during the 1940s and 50s after he joined the Party.

While Neruda's artistic independence is worth noting, the most significant question regarding "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" from *Canto general*, and "El hombre invisible" [The Invisible Man] from *Odas elementales,* is that they demonstrate that Neruda enhances and elaborates his poetic method after *Residenciaen la tierra*, and even after *Tercera residencia*. His poetry in the 1940s and 50s developed as regards three principal aspects. First, it is anchored in a more elaborate understanding of sociopolitical, economic and emotional matters. By this stage Neruda has read enough and gained sufficient experience to comprehend Marxism more completely. Previously, even in a book foregrounding political struggles like *Tercera residencia*, Neruda's pro-Republican and anti-fascist stances were more second nature: they were his gut reactions to the injustice perpetrated by the Nationalists in Spain or to Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union which the poet experienced in a primary or secondary way. This is not to say that his political ideas did not cohere, but they began do so as he was taking part politically in the defense of the Republic or participating in the anti-fascist movement.

By the 1940s and 50s, however, Neruda's grasp of Marxism is more systematic and intricate even though or, we might say, precisely because he did not come to Marxism through theory or through academic channels. This is evident in the breadth and depth of his thought present in the poetry of these years. In his avant-gardist poetry, he had a perceptive yet spontaneous understanding of the dialectic, whereas by *Canto general* he developed it into a persistent mode of thought, or a way of thinking about the reality in which he was immersed. Thus, in *Canto general* he makes use of several poetic and class vantage points to attempt to assess and accurately portray the historical events he is recounting; he employs several levels of generality which link concrete historical events with the totality of colonization, imperialism and class struggle; and he shows how there is an historical continuity and discontinuity in these specific and general social conflicts. Neruda's dialectical way of thinking can be appreciated in the internal structural relations in the poems. Thus, for instance, in a classic and yet subtle way Neruda makes use of negation as a generating principle that leads to its own negation; he cultivates the interpenetration of opposites as a vehicle for describing complex and antagonistic social situations (a model superior to the literary device "antithesis"); and he carefully avails himself of differences in verb tenses to dramatize qualitative and quantitative changes. These are some techniques among others associated with a coherent and complex way of viewing the world that inform his poetry at this juncture and demonstrate that the poetry of the 1940s and 50s gains in depth of understanding over his previous work.

Likewise in the case of form: while it is as complex as the *Residencias* stage, it is enriched by the realist foregrounding of everyday sociopolitical and economic issues. This poetry's formal difficulty can be seen, for example, in the long and majestic "Alturas de Macchu Picchu." As far as stylistic technique is concerned this poem is clearly one of the most elaborate Neruda wrote: readers are asked to decipher the chain of incomparable and provocative metaphors to understand the speaker's odyssey. In the first stanza we read the following famous verses:

Del aire al aire, como una red vacía,
iba yo entre las calles y la atmósfera, llegando y despidiendo,
en el advenimiento del otoño la moneda extendida
de las hojas, y entre la primavera y las espigas,
lo que el más grande amor, como dentro de un guante
que cae, nos entrega como una larga luna.44

[From air to air, like an
empty net
I went between the streets and atmosphere
    arriving and departing,
in the advent of autumn the outstretched coin
of the leaves, and between springtime and the ears
    of corn,
all that the greatest love, as within a falling
glove, hands us like a long moon.]45

As readers we are obliged to analyze the function and meaning of "red vacía," "moneda extendida," as well as the last two verses in order to make sense of the stanza. As far as style is concerned, these verses are at least as difficult to entangle as ones in *Residencia en la tierra* even for the avid and sensitive reader; the difference between the latter and the former manifests itself in the content and composition of the poem. Unlike the avant-gardist poems where solitude, alienation, the overwhelming force of nature and chaos drown the speaker, these verses portray this same autobiographical moment (the 1920s and 30s) with the critical eye of a mature poet. Readers of *Residencia en la tierra* observe the speaker entrapped in an endless whirlwind. In the second part of that same book the speaker finds his refuge in Jossie Bliss and in nature's creativity, but he does so as he drowns in the chaos that surrounds him. As several critics have noted, it is a desperate world that is very similar to T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, though lacking notably the impersonal tone Eliot cultivated. As "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" powerfully shows, Neruda, unlike Eliot, transcended this moment of existential anguish and moved to the left politically; Eliot never freed himself from the cage capitalism had placed him in and he became more right wing (a royalist).46 By contrast, Neruda became a Communist without surrendering the quality of his poetry.

Neruda's youthful years fit in the structure of "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" as a generating negation, that is, as a negating moment, which is also negated by his life's transformations. The mature Neruda learns from these changes in life and raises his sociopolitical consciousness. From the point of view of the narrator the lost soul that inhabits the *Residencia* poems is perceived as a person who suffers from a "soledad más espesa" [in the deepest loneliness] and alienation from his fellow human beings from whom he is only able to "asir sino un racimo de rostros o máscaras / precipitadas" [I could grasp nothing but a clump of faces or / precipitous] (30-31). So it is that the poet narrates his epic misery and decline, which, ironically, will produce one of his most famous works.

Unlike the mature Neruda, the poet of the *Residencia* stage was incapable of understanding his years in the Orient as a negative period leading to its sublation. That young Neruda was only able to describe vividly and painfully the immediate reality that encircled and suffocated him: his isolation and his estrangement from the diplomatic work, his abhorrence of English imperialism, his yearning for the Spanish language, and his lack of friendships. In the final verses of Part II Neruda, recognizes the severe limitations of his *Residencias* poetry and concludes that he had lost track of humanity. In the following section, VII, reminiscent of "Walking around" in *Residencia en la tierra*, he depicts the desperate life that accosted human beings who filled their lives with their "corta muerte diaria" [every day a little death] (31). As Part IV bears witness, Neruda suffered a similar fate: "La poderosa muerte me invitó muchas veces" [Mighty death invited me many times] (32). During the 1920s and 30s he was so dominated by alienation that suicide tempted him and he isolated himself even more ("poco a poco el hombre fue negándome" 32). The Neruda of the *Residencias* years poured his anguish and solitude into his verses, but his catharsis left him just as spiritually impoverished as before.

Neruda the elder and wiser, on the other hand, who writes this poem as a self-criticism, manages to evaluate his personal life in the context of other social factors (capitalism as such, imperialism, class consciousness, questions of the human species, etc.) and to reconsider his 20s and 30s as marred by alienation. Passion's dialectical opposite, self-destruction, runs rampant during these years of his life. The mature Neruda, emboldened by his mistakes and experiences, can judge these years more accurately as a negation, a negation that taught him moral and political lessons that have expanded his knowledge and ignited his passion for life.

The mature Neruda continues this poetic narration of his political awakening in Part VI. His travels take him to the splendidly imposing Macchu Picchu, surrounded by smoky mountain peaks, where the speaker finds "la cuna del relámpago y del hombre" [the cradle of lightening and man] (33). Having formerly sought out isolation and thus shunned his fellow human beings, now he encounters one of the sites of hope for humankind. In the Andes, a train's ride from the Incan capital, the speaker is re-humanized when he is confronted with the ruins in Macchu Picchu:

> Miro las vestiduras y las manos,
> el vestigio del agua en la oquedad sonora,
> la pared suavizada por el tacto de un rostro
> que miró con mis ojos las lámparas terrestres
> que aceitó con mis manos las desaparecidas
> maderas: porque todo, ropaje, piel, vasijas,
> palabras, vino, panes,
> se fue, cayó a la tierra (34).
>
> [I behold the vestments and hands,
> the vestige of water in the sonorous void,
> the wall tempered by the touch of a face

that beheld with my eyes the earthen lamps,
that oiled with my hands the vanished
wood: because everything--clothing, skin, vessels,
words, wine, bread--
is gone, fallen to earth.]

In these verses the speaker blurs himself with the Incas who, with their remarkable workmanship, created the astounding architecture that he finds in ruins. As he unites and confuses himself with the Inca laborers he recognizes and feels a part of these congealed ruins destroyed by the Spanish conquerors. So, violating the grammatical structure, he states that an Incan "miró con mis ojos" and "aceitó con mis manos." The Inca laborer here inhabits the speaker thus allowing the latter to participate in the construction of Macchu Picchu and to become a worker. Only by refusing the division of labor under capitalism and by becoming a laborer himself can Neruda earn the right to tell the story of these ruins built under the coercion of the Incan monarchy and later almost completely destroyed by the Conquest. So, there are three vantage points which are incorporated into the poem--that of the monarchy, the workers and the Conquerors--and yet Neruda chooses to privilege the laborers' point of view. All that is left from this class conflict between the Incan working people, the Incan monarchy and the Spanish conquistadors is the architecture which is the fruit of the Incan people's toil, proving that it is this class that creates all the value in feudalism and capitalism and that all other classes must depend on it and/or usurp its value. The Incans' manual labor leaves traces of their history on the product of their labor. Engraved with the Incan's own social authorship, this architectural structure is the social and sentient result of their work. Thus, in examining this landscape, Neruda pays homage to the Incan laborers (the slave, the serf, the miserable one in Section X) and not to the Inca monarchy.

The poet then takes the readers beyond the particular--the *Residencias* period--to the general, that is, to the socio-historical circumstances and political forces that can potentially minimize the very conditions from which the speaker suffered in the 1920s and 30s. What follows proves to be the opposite of the avant-gardist position he previously defended (part XI in "Alturas"): "porque el hombre es más ancho que el mar y que sus islas, / y hay que caer en él como en un pozo para salir del fondo / con un ramo de agua secreta y de verdades sumergidas" [because man is greater than the sea and its islands, / and we must fall into him as into a well to / emerge from the bottom / with a bouquet of secret water and sunken truths](41). In that way Neruda suggests that the dehumanizing and all-absorbing individualism promoted under capitalism can be overcome by working for political and economic change and committing oneself to socialism. By abolishing capitalism we can arrive at a historical moment that, as Marx and Engels put it in "The Communist Manifesto," provides for "the free development of each [as] the condition for the free development of all."47

In examining the material basis of the Inca empire erected by the laborers, Neruda starts to track down an alternative history of the Incas and to associate his own poetry with the architectual wonders of Macchu Picchu:

Pero una permanencia de piedra y de palabra:
la ciudad como un vaso se levantó en las manos
de todos, vivos, muertos, callados, sostenidos
de tanta muerte, un muro, de tanta vida un golpe
de pétalos de piedra: la rosa permanente, la morada:
este arrecife andino de colonias glaciales.

[But a permanence of stone and word:
the citadel was raised like a chalice in the hands
of all, the living, the dead, the silent, sustained
by so much death, a wall, from so much life a
stroke
of stone petals: the permanent rose, the dwelling:
this Andean reef of glacial colonies.]

Neruda allies himself with the working people who created Macchu Picchu with their suffering: "pétalos de piedra: rosa permanente" (35). Archetype of poetry, life and love, the rose is congealed in the ruins in its association with the stones (they are "pétalos de piedra"). From a descriptive, realist point of view the stones serve an instrumental function in the architectural formations in Macchu Picchu, but, from a dialectical critical realist point of view, the identity of stone, as negation of the rose, is interpenetrated in the relationship between the stone and the rose. The negation of the negation--"la rosa de piedra" which appears in section IX--redefines the stone as something congealed with history and aesthetic work. In this context, arduous and exploitative work under capitalism would be conceived as the stone itself and the human creativity (the rose) ignored or under-appreciated. However, Neruda seems to say that under a more just economic system, with less stratification of social classes and a more equitable distribution of resources (in spite of the Inca empire being a monarchy) collective labor can potentially become more humane and creative. Thus, the dialectical image of the rose and stone points to one of the objectives of Neruda's poetry: the historical materialization of work.[48] So poetry itself is a type of work that can be compared to the historical legacy of the architecture at Macchu Picchu. Part IX clearly attempts to imitate Incan structural designs visually in verses, using the repetition of "stone" to reinforce that point. Neruda thus returns to a fundamental argument made by Marxists that all intellectual labor depends on manual labor because the latter serves as the point of departure for the former.

In Part IX the focus is the personified, mural-like poetic construction in which "los dormidos" (the Incas whose legacy is embodied in the ruins) scarcely make an appearance, except as the magnificent authors of Macchu Picchu. Logically, then, the vantage point shifts from the congealed work, the ruins, to its creators in Part X ("Piedra en la piedra, el hombre, dónde estuvo?" [Stone upon stone, and man, where was he?] 39). Here Neruda concentrates on the fundamental antagonism between the laborer and his product (the architecture). Even though the economic system is not capitalist but rather simultaneously feudalist and communitarian, Neruda places the emphasis on this conflict

between the working population which constructed the lion's share of Macchu Picchu and the nobility which coerced, exploited and profited from the laboring people:[49]

> Macchu Picchu, pusiste
> piedra en la piedra, y en la base, harapo?
> Carbón sobre carbón, y en el fondo la lágrima?
> Fuego en el oro, y en él, temblando el rojo
> goterón de la sangre? (40)
>
> [Macchu Picchu, did you put
> stone upon stone and, at the base, tatters?
> Coal upon coal and, at the bottom, tears?
> Fire in gold and, within it, the trembling
> drop of red blood?]

The construction of the grandiose buildings on the mountain-tops is here contrasted with the exploitation and dehumanization of the people responsible for its creation. Even in this pre-capitalist economic setting, Neruda seems to argue, the buildings are reified and so is the workers' suffering. The ruins and workers' exploitation and misery appear to be things-in-themselves at first sight. In this instance, the reification is tied to the mystification of the real conditions that led to the construction of Macchu Picchu. For the site does not build itself; the workers' exploited labor constructs this lost city. Yet, just as the capitalist is credited for the workers' toil even as he exploits them, so the nobility puts its stamp on history by virtually eliminating the traces of the architects of this labor. As the rest of this part suggests, workers' labor was similarly reified during the Conquest and colonial period when the Incas were driven to hunger and subjected to degrading labor.

Part XI continues with the speaker's plea that the Inca slaves, serfs and miserable ones tell him this tragedy as he interrogates them with a passionate interest; however, this section represents a significant transformation in "Alturas de Macchu Picchu." The speaker implores them: "que en mí palpite, como un ave mil años prisionera, / el viejo corazón olvidado!" [let the aged heart of the forsaken beat in me / like a bird captive for a thousand years!] Neruda, then reverses his avant-gardist position of describing, in a neo-Romantic vein, a menacing nature and his own despair and he focuses passionately on humanity: "el hombre es más ancho que el mar y que sus islas, / y hay que caer en él como en un pozo para salir del fondo / con un ramo de agua secreta y de verdades sumergidas" [because man is greater than the sea and its islands, / and we must fall into him as into a well to / emerge from the bottom / with a bouquet of secret water and sunken truths.] The poet unveils reification and then turns to the laborers as the, so to speak, cornerstone and liberators of humanity. This is underscored by the speaker's focus: he decides to blind his eyes momentarily to the Incan monarchy and also to the conquistadors, "no veo a la bestia veloz, / no veo el ciego ciclo de sus garras" [I do not see the blind cycle of its claws]. And the poet chooses to close his eyes to ideology (understood as a distortion), to shut it out. Then he open his eyes to another vantage point: "veo el antiguo ser, sevidor, el dormido / en los campos, veo un cuerpo, mil cuerpos, un hombre, mil mujeres, / bajo la racha negra, negros de lluvia y noche" [I see

the man of old, the servant, asleep in the / fields, / I see a body, a thousand bodies, a man, a / thousand women, / black with rain and night]. The slumbering worker--"yee prisoners of starvation" as "The Internationale" memorably puts it--will arise with the speaker as he tells their story: "Juan Cortapiedras, hijo de Wiracocha, / Juan Comefrío, hijo de estrella verde, / Juan Piesdescalzos, nieto de la turquesa, / sube a nacer conmigo, hermano" [Juan Stonecutter, son of Wiracocha, / Juan Coldeater, son of a green star, / Juan Barefoot, grandson of turquoise, / rise up to be born with me, my brother] (41).

This purview gives way to the following famous section, XII, in which, the speaker, taken in by the fury of passion, demands that the Inca workers use him as a vehicle for telling their story. The sleeping (not dead) artisans and laborers narrate their story to the speaker, but they are only able to convey their tragedy through their labors:

> Sube a nacer conmigo, hermano.
> Dame la mano desde la profunda
> zona de tu dolor diseminado.
> No volverás del fondo de las rocas.
> No volverás del tiempo subterráneo.
> No volverá tu voz endurecida.
> No volverán tus ojos taladrados.
> Mírame desde el fondo de la tierra,
> labrador, tejedor, pastor callado:
> domador de guanacos tutelares:
> albañil del andamio desafiado:
> aguador de las lágrimas andinas:
> joyero de los dedos machacados:
> agricultor temblando en la semilla:
> alfarero en tu greda derramado:
> traed la copa de esta nueva vida
> vuestros viejos dolores enterrados (41-2).

> [Rise up to be born with me, my brother.
> Give me your hand from the deep
> zone of your disseminated sorrow.
> You'll not return from the bottom of the rocks.
> You'll not return from subterranean time.
> Your stiff voice will not return.
> Your drilled eyes will not return.
> Behold me from the depths of the earth,
> laborer, weaver, silent herdsman:
> tamer of the tutelary guanacos:
> mason of the defied scaffold:
> bearer of the Andean tears:
> jeweler with your fingers crushed:
> tiller trembling in the seed:
> potter split in your clay:

bring to the cup of this new life, brothers,
all your timeless buried sorrows.]

In a reference to the Last Communion, the Inca laborers' bring their "buried sorrows," like red wine, like blood and martyrdom, to fill the cup of life in Latin America in the late 1940s (a contemporary setting for the Neruda writing at that moment). They are unable to return ("No volverán") because they have sacrificed their lives to exploitative labor, to the creation of the Inca empire. There would be no Inca empire if it were not for their labor. It is a situation analogous to the relationship between the proletariat and Capital that Marx describes: "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks."[50] The Inca laborers' own product--the ruins-- remains and is valorized while its creators are apparently lost but are really congealed in the ruins. Although the laborers cannot return, they have shaped and erected the stones that form the structure of every village and city in the Inca empire, including Macchu Picchu. But this fact in and of itself, however accurate it may be, cannot elucidate the subjective factor that then dominates the rest of the poem: not paternalistic pity nor sympathy, but a profound empathy and commitment. In other words, there has to be an accompanying moral dimension to the ravaging exploitation and alienation of labor. Otherwise, how are we to explain Neruda's fervent and impassioned commitment to the working class? How to explicate Neruda's famous moral and political stance late in the poem: "Yo vengo a hablar por vuestra boca muerta" [I've come to speak through your dead mouths] (42)? Identifying a reality--the labor theory of value--in the Inca empire alone cannot account for Neruda's radical moral commitment to the working people and not, say, to Inca society as such. Neruda clearly sees the plight of the Inca laborers as inhuman and unjust based on a concept of human nature perceived in glimpses even in exploitative social systems (feudalist or capitalist) and concludes, based on moral and social progress, that the economic and social relations could be transformed into more just and egalitarian ones.[51]

Canonical, liberal interpretations of "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" in particular and *Canto general* in general, argue that the moral dimension in this book leads to an ideological distortion. In this classic book of poetry, Neruda purportedly is unable to hold himself back and he thus succumbs to the "simplifications" of his Marxist political position. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, for instance, maintains that since *Canto general* was "fomentado por un partido político [fomented by a political party], namely, the Communist Party, that it is "una pieza de propaganda" [a piece of propaganda] because it portrays history in a one-sided way. In essence, Rodríguez Monegal claims, *Canto general* is "esencialmente periodística y tiene el vigor, la parcialidad, la demagogia y hasta el terrorismo de los titulares de periódicos [essentially journalistic and it has the vigor, the partiality, the demogoguery and even the terrorism of newspaper headlines].[52] This Uruguayan critic thus criticizes the moral positions Neruda defends in his poetry as though they had no socio-historical and political support and justification. From that point of view, Neruda seems to make outlandish claims that just do not jibe with the liberal perception of reality that Rodríguez Monegal upholds. Neruda's moral positions and Marxism are then dismissed as insufficient and outdated. While Enrico Mario Santi's focus in *Pablo Neruda: The Poetics of Prophecy* is on rhetoric per se and on the virtual

impossibility of linguistic reference, his aim is to describe Neruda as "a prophet lost in a labyrinth who remained blind to the 'real' issues of human history."[53] Lost in the wilderness of human history, the poet as prophet relies on allegory in *Canto general* to represent (inaccurately) the conflicts and tragedies in Latin America from the pre-conquest to 1950. In short, the poet/prophet is left to making empty moral declarations in his poetry. Like Rodríguez Monegal, Santí argues that there is no objective foundation on which Neruda's moral positions rest. Indeed, he conceives Marxism as a "modern, secular prophetic movement" that should be considered a "prophetic mythology that stakes scientific and historical claims" (179-80). Having associated Marxism with a mythic apocalypse and having dismissed its economic foundation, Santí can then suggest that Neruda internalizes this type of Marxism and works it into his prophetic form (181). As in the case of Rodríguez Monegal's study, Neruda's moral/political stances are stripped of their substantiation in socio-historical, economic and political affairs. Consequently, given Rodríguez Monegal and Santi's moral relativism, their Neruda is an extremely gifted yet lamentable poet who wildly denounces social ills without any particular rhyme or reason.

In contrast, following a moral realist standpoint, I argue that is only by recognizing this savage socioeconomic injustice and by reliving the experiences the Incan artisans and workers have been through that Neruda can become their spokesperson, a vessel to retell Inca history from the point of view of the vanquished.[54]

> Yo vengo a hablar por vuestra boca muerta.
> A través de la tierra juntad todos
> los silenciosos labios derramados
> y desde el fondo habladme toda esta larga noche
> como si yo estuviera con vosotros anclado,
> contadme todo, cadena a cadena,
> eslabón a eslabón, y paso a paso,
> afilad los cuchillos que guardasteis,
> ponedlos en mi pecho y en mi mano,
> como un río de rayos amarrillos,
> como un río de tigres enterrados,
> y dejadme llorar, horas, días, años,
> edades ciegas, siglos estelares (42).
>
> [I've come to speak through your dead mouths,
> Throughout the earth join all
> the silent scattered lips
> and from the depths speak to me all night long,
> as if I were anchored with you,
> tell me everything, chain by chain,
> link by link, and step by step,
> sharpen the knives that you've kept,
> put them in my breast and in my hand,
> like a river of yellow lightening,

like a river of buried jaguars,
and let me weep hours, days, years,
blind ages, stellar centuries.]

Only by becoming an intellectual laborer, an intellectual whose destiny is united with the working class and whose very existence depends on that class, can the speaker be granted the opportunity of representing the Inca laborers. Only by investing himself with a collective purpose is Neruda able to become something other than the solitary, individual poet he was during the *Residencias*; only by making the workers' position his own is he capable of letting his individuality flourish.

Odes To Common Things: A Passionate Dialectic

Neruda's *Odas elementales* [Odes to Common Things] shows both continuity and rupture with *Canto general*. While *Canto general* focuses on the historical and geographical panorama in Latin America, *Odas elementales* deals with dialectical meditations on nature and human existence. As is well known, in short verses and long poems Neruda dedicates odes to things that, at first sight, seem common and even insignificant. On closer inspection, these objects of daily life like the onion or bread, become sources of contemplation and critical observation. As a dialectical thinker Neruda manages to unearth the object's social and natural properties and restore their vital importance. In *Canto general* Neruda's intent was to point out that labor is exploited and disregarded as the object itself is reified; the laborer vanishes for all intents and purposes. As a laborer of words the poet identified with workers and attempted to rewrite history from their point of view, thus, textually reversing the state of affairs under capitalism. In *Odas elementales* Neruda concentrates on valorizing the object congealed with the laborer's or nature's hours of work. The poems appear, deceptively, as odes dedicated merely to trivial and even humorous affairs, when, actually, odes like "Oda al tiempo" [Ode to Time] and "Oda a la vida" [Ode to Life] deal with profound social and natural issues. As Jaime Concha puts it, the odes concentrate on the "frágil singularidad de las cosas en medio de las leyes generales de la materia y la historia. Las grandes energías de la totalidad pulsan en estos minúsculos granos simbólicos" [fragile singularity of things amidst the general laws of matter and history. The great energies of the totality pulsate in this miniscule and symbolic grains.][55]

While the form in *Odas elementales* is noticeably more accessible than any of his previous poetry and thus appears simple (elementary), the manner in which the object is located in a matrix of social relations makes this poetry, ironically, more complex. Thus, it is true and misleading to affirm, as the poet Luis Rosales does, that "el verso corto de estos poemas no es nunca caprichoso. La intención de Neruda al utilizarlo ha sido establecer la relación más natural entre fondo y forma, ya que el mundo de los objetos elementales debe expresarse en la forma más sencilla y elemental" [the short verse of these poems is never capricious. Neruda's intention in using it has been to establish a more natural relationship between content and form, since the world of elementary objects should be expressed in the simplest and most elementary form.][56] In terms of dialectical method, it would be difficult to find more penetrating poems than, say, "Oda al

tiempo," "Oda a la intranquilidad," "Oda a la vida," or "Oda a la cebolla" [Ode to Time, Ode to Restlessness, Ode to Life, Ode to the Onion]. Far from merely privileging a phenomenology intent on capturing the object's fleeting and independent existence, these poems conceive the object as the intersection of natural and social relations, which give it its identity. In his seminal essay on the *Odas*, Robert Pring-Mill has underscored the importance of profound poems like "Oda al hombre sencillo" [Ode to Simple Men] for the complexity of Neruda's poetic method:57

> yo borro los colores
> y busco para encontrar
> el tejido profundo,
> así también encuentro
> la unidad de los hombres,
> y en el pan
> busco
> más allá de la forma.
>
> [I erase colors
> and look to find
> the deep fabric,
> so too I find
> the unity of all men,
> and in bread
> I look
> beyond the form.]

In this context, going beyond the form means transcending the notion of bread as commodity and examining the labor that made it possible. However, in a more general sense, it entails seeing beyond poetic form and its own fetishism particularly in avant-gardist poetry. It also denotes more than a näive realism, which demands that the object itself be reproduced artistically. Neruda's reference to form is evidently meant as a critique of the avant-garde and of näive realism (or mechanical materialism). The apparent transparency of his poetic form in *Odas elementales* leads to a more elaborate display of the content, to a richer consideration of the endless complexity of reality that Neruda attempts to represent in his poetic form.

In his thesis-poem, "El hombre invisible" [The Invisible Man] Neruda defends this poetic method and poetry.58 Neruda begins with a self-criticism, a critique of pure poets and of the Neruda of the *Residencias* years. In spite of that he adds that he adores "toda la poesía escrita" [all written poetry], but has to smile when he hears his "antiguo hermano" [his former brother], the hermetic poet who limits himself by describing events in his own life and does not transcend them (5). The self-absorbed poet loses himself and fails to notice fellow human beings suffer and love (6). According to Neruda these hermetic poets have lost sight of reality completely:

Yo me río,
me sonrío
de los viejos poetas,
yo adoro toda la poesía escrita,
todo el rocío,
luna, diamante, gota
de plata sumergida,
que fue mi antiguo hermano,
agregando a la rosa,
pero me sonrío
siempre dicen "yo",
a cada paso
les sucede algo,
es siempre "yo",
por las calles
sólo ellos andan
o la dulce que aman,
nadie más (5).

[I laugh,
I smile
at the old poets,
I adore all
written poetry,
all the dew,
moon, diamond, drop
of submerged silver,
who was my former brother,
adding to the rose,
but I smile
they always say "I",
every step of the way
something happens to them
it's always "I",
along the streets
only they stroll
or the sweet one they love,
no one else.]

By carrying out a self-criticism while still disapproving of the avant-garde and pure poetry's narrow representation of reality, Neruda avoids any suggestion that he is taking the position, as Pring-Mill puts it, of a member of a "Peoples' Tribunal."[59] Pring-Mill notes that Neruda is not denouncing these poets as "enemies of the people" because they write introspective poetry, but he is, rather, poking fun at them. Having gone through the avant-gardist stage himself, Neruda places the emphasis on the avant-gardist or pure poet's false consciousness. The problem is one of both form and content, of poetic

method and political consciousness. For Neruda they are closely intertwined: the less form obstructs, the less poetry becomes an endless exploration of the vicissitudes of language, the more it can foreground and develop the content. That is why, in this poem, and in countless others, he incorporates a critique of his avant-gardist poetry in the body of his poems. As I contend elsewhere, Neruda charges that his *Residencia* poetry was rich in its exploration of language, but that language served as an alienating refuge from his own social alienation.60 Moreover, his poetry of the late 1920s and early 30s suffered from a poverty of method and class-consciousness. In essence, that is what the speaker refers to in "El hombre invisible." The individual poet and his particular tragedies and pleasantries become the sole focus of this hermetic poetry, thus blindly closing off the rest of society ("sólo ellos andan / o la dulce que aman, / nadie más"). This poet finds himself entrapped in social alienation and unable to overcome the bourgeois notion of poetry as the realm of the inner dramas of the individual. He is unable to see those sentiments as either opposed to or as representative of social consciousness. So, as Lukács duly noted, the artist portrays immediate reality via his spontaneous method, and gives the reader a fractional view of the society as a whole or a one-dimensional distortion of the social relations.61

Commencing with "nadie más" this alienated point of view is negated: the speaker names what the hermetic poet does not perceive in his false consciousness and contrasts this with his myopic and individualist distortion:

> nadie más,
> no pasan pescadores,
> ni libreros,
> no pasan albañiles,
> nadie se cae
> de un andamio,
> nadie sufre,
> nadie ama,
> sólo mi pobre hermano,
> el poeta,
> a él le pasan
> todas las cosas
> y a su dulce querida,
> nadie vive
> sino él solo,
> nadie llora de hambre
> o de ira,
> nadie sufre en sus versos
> porque no puede pagar el alquiler,
> a nadie en poesía
> echan a la calle
> con camas y con sillas
> y en las fábricas
> tampoco pasa nada,

se hacen paraguas, copas,
armas, locumotoras,
se extraen minerales
rascando el infierno (5-6).

[no one else,
fishermen don't walk along
nor booksalesmen,
bricklayers don't go by,
no one falls
from scaffolding,
no one suffers,
no one loves,
only my poor brother,
the poet,
things happen to him
everything
and to his sweet loved one,
no one lives
but him alone,
no one cries from hunger
or ire,
no one suffers in his verses
because he can't
pay the rent,
no one in poetry
is kicked out of his house
with beds and chairs
and in the factories
nothing happens either,
nothing happens
umbrellas, wine glasses, arms
trains are made,
minerals are extracted
scraping hell.]

As in the case of "Alturas de Macchu Picchu," Neruda's vantage point is the working class, the creator of value in capitalism who is nonetheless exploited for profit. In "El hombre invisible" all that is negated by the alienated hermetic poet is foregrounded by the speaker. And yet, his criticism of the lost poet who believes that he is an extraordinary visionary is also connected with a self-criticism of Neruda's previous poetry, stretching as far back at least as *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* [Twenty Love Poems and a Desperate Song 1924]; thus, as Jaime Concha has pointed out, the reference to the poet who "ama los puertos / remotos, por sus nombres, / y escribe sobre océanos / que no conoce" [loves remote / ports, because of their names, / and writes about oceans / that he doesn't know].62 So too in the case of the

poet who goes through life incapable of grasping its most fundamental elements: "junto a la vida, repleta / como el maíz de granos, / él pasa sin saber / desgranarla" [together with life, replete / like corn on the cob, / he passes by without knowing / how to thresh it] (7). Neruda charges that, because of the division of labor, the hermetic poet has lost contact with the labor that sustains him, with those who allow him to write poetry. The alienated poet only sees faded images of nature and of human beings, whereas the speaker declares that he does not consider himself to be superior to his fellow poets, but he smiles because only he, the speaker, does not exist (8). At first glance, this seems to be a false collapsing of subject and object and the erasure of individuality. However, as I comment below, this provides the speaker with several vantage points and excludes his own momentarily. Unlike the isolated poet, Neruda is inundated by what he observes and by what people tell him. "La vida es una lucha" [Life is a struggle], he says:

> como un río avanza
> los hombres
> quieren decirme,
> decirte,
> por qué luchan,
> si mueren,
> por qué mueren,
> y yo paso y no tengo
> tiempo para tantas vidas,
> yo quiero
> que todos vivan
> en mi vida
> y canten en mi canto,
> yo no tengo importancia,
> no tengo tiempo
> para mis asuntos,
> de noche y de día
> debo anotar lo que pasa,
> y no olvidar a nadie (9-10)
>
> [like a river it advances
> and men
> want to tell me,
> tell you,
> why they are struggling,
> if they are dying,
> why they are dying,
> and pass by and I don't have
> enough time for so many lives,
> I want
> everybody to live
> in my life
> and sing in my song,

I am of no importance,
I don't have time
for my affairs,
at night and during the day
I need to jot down what is happening,
and not forget anyone.]

So it is that, in an echo of "Naciendo en los bosques" [Emerging in the Woods] in *Tercera residencia* we reread the autobiographical story of Neruda, the former hermetic poet, who got lost in a sea of solitude but who now thirsts for all that nature and society offer him.63

Now we come to the crux of "El hombre invisible" in which the very title can be appreciated in its dialectical tension. As in section XII of "Alturas de Macchu Picchu," the speaker needs to earn his right to represent the working class by struggling with it politically and by examining the world realistically and critically. Neruda chooses a specific vantage point from which to view social relations under capitalism and give credence to the proletarian point of view because they are the architects of capitalist society who are exploited and robbed of their humanity. So the speaker states that he is not "superior a mi hermano" [superior to my brother], denoting that he is equal to his fellow workers, and by becoming equal, he is invisible. He becomes invisible due to the clarity of his consciousness and his position. Being transparent means that for him, unlike the old Neruda, "no hay misteriosas sombras, / no hay tinieblas" [there are no mysterious shadows, / there is no darkness] brought on by the dominance of form and the alienation in content. At first sight, the speaker's declarations that he is "el único invisible" [the only invisible one] and unimportant suggest that he subordinates the individual to the goals of socialism; the individual, as such, seems to disappear, his individuality vanish. And yet, ironically, this poem is written in the first person, making this testimony and poetic form more palpable and realistic for a Communist poet than the alienating effects of art for art's sake or the promised illusions of socialist realism. Therefore, to be invisible in this context involves relinquishing the pedestal that bourgeois society has conferred to the poet which allows him to consider himself more valued and interesting than workers, and equating himself with the destiny of the class which can potentially put an end to class society. That is why the speaker is so busy trying to record all that he sees and why his own identity is dependent on other human beings ("No puedo sin la vida vivir, / sin el hombre ser hombre" [I can't without life live / without man be a man11]. In the last verses of "El hombre invisible"--again in an echo of "Alturas de Macchu Picchu"--he underscores this point beautifully:

dadme
las luchas
de cada día
porque ellas son mi canto,
y así andaremos juntos,
codo a codo,
todos los hombres,

mi canto los reúne:
el canto del hombre invisible
que canta con todos los hombres (12).

[give me
the every day
struggles
because they are my song,
and that way we will walk together,
shoulder to shoulder,
all of humanity,
my song unites them:
the song of the invisible man
who sings with humanity.]

First he asks for the workers' dramas so he can retell them in his poetry, so, as in "Alturas de Macchu Picchu," his poetry can become a vehicle for interpreting reality in radically different way than the ruling ideologies of class society. Only by struggling side by side with the workers can his poetry have any meaning and gain grounding and depth.

In both "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" and "El hombre invisible" Neruda's capacity to portray social relations in pre-capitalist or capitalist settings develops significantly as he throws his lot in with the working class and perceives it as the fundamental creator of value. Although the language that populates "Alturas" is akin to what is present in the avant-gardist *Residencia en la tierra* as regards its intricacy, the content is more complete, more accurate in its portrayal of the social and natural factors that affected the Incan laborers who left their legacy in Macchu Picchu. Neruda's method has evolved and become more elaborate as his understanding of sociopolitical, historical and moral questions has grown. Neruda does not content himself with describing the vantage point of the Incan laborers; he attempts to show how they built the edifices-become-ruins, invested their livelihood in that work, were exploited as they constructed something that would not be theirs, and communed with nature. He also portrays the interests of the monarchy and the conquerors indirectly as social forces opposed to but dependent on the laborers. Moreover, after criticizing his early poetry for its barren alienation, the speaker attempts to relive the laborers' experience so that he too might become a laborer and thus earn the right to represent them. So, the formal elements in this poem, which hold much in common with Neruda's avant-gardist stage, as demanding as they are, cannot hold back the torrent of ideas that flood the plain of content.

In "El hombre invisible" the method becomes more visible as the language is ostensibly simplified, or made more consonant with everyday language. As in "Alturas" his criticism of his former avant-gardist poetry and of his contemporaries who are still enamored of linguistic labyrinths, allows him to show the thematic limitations of this literary school. As form becomes a fetish it loses its concreteness and becomes abstract and, in so doing, it yields to the illusory spontaneity of individual motivations. As a prisoner of immediacy, avant-gardist form reveals the poet's inner life in a heavily

constrained and distorted content. Isolated, his poetry becomes strongly subjectivized and relativized as it relies more and more on immediate experience and perceives social reality as hostile. By contrast, in the *Odas*, Neruda reaffirms his connection with social reality and endeavors to probe deeper into it by committing himself politically to the cause of the working class and by becoming a laborer of words. By surrendering the exalted position of the poet and becoming "invisible," that is, equal to his fellow human beings and committed to egalitarianism, Neruda is more able to portray the countless varieties of work that the working people do which constitute the backbone of capitalist and socialist societies. He can focus on a product, say, wine ("Oda al vino" [Ode to Wine]) and describe its personified appearance as a loved one, the labor involved in making wine from the grape, the peasant's cultivation of the grape vine, its enhancement of love and friendship, and its relationship to the earth. Thus, as I indicated above, the form appears to dissolve and the content, to fully blossom. But as any reader of the odes can attest, Neruda's incredible use of metaphor, simile and synecdoche, among other poetic techniques frequently confronts the reader unprepared, jolted by the sudden flash of creative spontaneity.

In both "Alturas" and "El hombre" the presence of Neruda's independent "guided spontaneity" stands out clearly. There is no question that there is a well-thought, internalized method guiding Neruda, but there are also explosions of verbal creativity that are set off by his spontaneity.

Notes

Editor's note: This article is Chapter 3 of Greg Dawes' book, *Verses Against Darkness: Neruda's poetry and politics* (forthcoming, Pluto Press).

With regards to the affinity between the works of García Lorca, Alberti, Aleixandre and Cernuda, see Anthony L. Geist's "Las mariposas en la barba: una lectura de Poeta en Nueva York," *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos*, num. 433-46 (julio-octubre 1986): 547-65. Geist argues, correctly in my opinion, that the poets from the generation of 1927 go through personal crises around the time of economic crash of 1929 and turn to avant-gardist form to express themselves in their work. As far as the publication of García Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York*, see Eutimio Martín's introduction in *Poeta en Nueva York y Tierra luna* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1981): 18-19.

2 The accusation that Neruda was a socialist realist can be found, for example, in Emir Rodríguez Monegal's *El viajero inmóvil: Introducción a Pablo Neruda* (Buenos Aires: Losada,1966). After warning readers that they must not consider *Canto general* an assignment by the Communist Party, Monegal says that "A pesar de su explícita adhesión a las huestes del realismo socialista y de la poesía edificante, el *Canto general* no está todo en la línea simple y simplificadora" [Despite his explicit adherence to the followers

of socialist realism and edifying poetry, *Canto general* is not entirely simple and simplistic 235, 251-2]. Manuel Durán y Margery Safir in their *Earth Tones: The Poetry of Pablo Neruda* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1981) do not accuse Neruda of being a socialist realist openly but, rather, claim that he was a "strict Soviet-style Communist" when they refer to his political ideas in *Canto general*. Needless to say, at no moment do they explain what that description means. Enrico Mario Santi's introduction to *Canto general* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1997) does not baldly call Neruda a socialist realist but Santí does allege that Neruda falls for a "sectarianismo apasionado" (passionate sectarianism 76) and "una interpretación apocalíptica del marxismo" (an apocalyptic interpretation of Marxism 92). In another passage Santí associates, and not without reason, Neruda with the tragedies in the Soviet Union under Stalin's regime: "Años después de los infames Juicios de Moscú, y en días en que ya se tenía conocimiento de la existencia de campos de concentración en la Unión Soviética y de la destrucción por el régime de Stalin de la clase campesina, el libro [*Canto general*] hace caso omiso de todos estos acontecimientos, aún cuando dedica buena parte de una sección a elogiar la dirigencia del país" (Years after the vile Moscow Trials, and at a time in which the existence of the concentration camps in the Soviet Union and the destruction of the peasantry by the Stalin regime were known, the book [Canto general] avoids these events, even when it dedicates most of section to praising the leadership of the country 77).

3 Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido*, 11th edition (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1992): 362.

4 Neruda, *Confieso*, 426.

5 A. Zhadanov, *Problems of Soviet Literature: Reports and Speeches of the First Soviet Writer's Congress* (Moscow-Leningrad: Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1935): 15. Hereafter the citations appear in the text.

6 As regards this historical period see, for instance, "Against the Common Enemy" in Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World*, 1914-1991 (New York: Pantheon, 1994): 142-77.

7 See Cristian Delporte's "Fascisme-Antifascisme: Les années de Lutte" in Intellectuels et Politique (Firenze: Casterman-Giunti, 1995): 54-69. In Spain the question of commitment or of "impure poetry"--a phrase that Neruda himself coins--revolves around the journal Octubre, which took a revolutionary stance and advocated social poetry. See Juan Cano Ballesta, *La poesía española entre pureza y revolución* (Madrid: Gredos, 1972): 201-27.

8 Both poems are in *Tercera residencia*.

9 Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1995): 246.

10 André Breton/Louis Aragon, *Surrealismo frente a realismo socialista*, Ed. Oscar Tusquets (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1973): 32. Hereafter the pages appear in the text.

11 Georg Lukács, *Essays on Realism*, Rodney Livingstone Ed. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980): 36-7.

12 Georg Lukács, *Realism in Our Time* (New York and Evanston: Harper& Row, 1962). See especially "Critical Realism and Socialist Realism" (93-135).

13 For very recent information on the forces behind the purges, see J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

14 André Breton / Louis Aragon, *Surrealismo frente a realismo socialista*, Oscar Tusquets Ed. (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1973): 54. Hereafter the pages are cited in the text.

15 As far as I have been able to ascertain, no critic accuses him of this directly. However, there are several that allege that Neruda was influenced by the Party's "propaganda." Besides the aforementioned criticism (Enrico Mario Santí y Emir Rodríguez Monegal) see, for example, Cedomil Goic's "'Alturas de Macchu Picchu': La torre y el abismo" in Santí and Monegal eds., *Pablo Neruda* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1980): 219-44. In the same book see also Saúl Yurkievich's "Mito e historia: Dos generadores del '*Canto general*'" (198-218). It is worth quoting from Yurkievich's essay to underline the critic's subjectivist political position:

> "Neruda se autocensura, se autocercena. Abandona el ritual, el verbo oracular, el ámbito sacralizado para intentar una poesía utilitaria, herramienta o arma de la revolución, una poesía proletaria. Los problemas que ella plantea siguen vigentes: ¿puede una poesía juzgarse en términos de lucha de clases? ¿La función estética debe subordinarse a la ideología o viceversa? ¿Cuál es el valor cognoscitivo de una poesía que renuncia a su función estética en aras de la referencial? ¿Vale la pena ampliar la audiencia en detrimento de la especificidad poética? ¿Optar por un nivel popular de lectura significa llegar al pueblo? ¿Cuál es la eficacia práctica de la poesía política? ¿Qué es lo decible y lo indecible poéticos? ¿Cómo decir poéticamente lo político?" (216).

Yurkievich adheres to a dualist view of art and politics: he either assumes that the two can exist independently or believes, presumably in the case of left-wing politics, that politics impinges itself on poetry. The cases of Neruda, César Vallejo, Miguel Hernández, to name a few of renowned committed, left-wing poets, should leave no doubt that the elaboration and cultivation of form can take place in tandem with the deepening of content. Poetry cannot escape ideology nor can evade the class struggle since the latter indirectly or more directly inform the poet's political and artistic consciousness.

16 *Histoire politique des intellectuels en France (1944-1954)* [Bruxelles: Ediciones Complexe, 1991]: 16-17.

17 Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism: Aragon, Breton, Tzara, Eluard and Desnos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970): 38-39.

18 Enrico Mario Santí, *El acto de las palabras: Estudios y diálogos con OctavioPaz* (México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1997): (12, 37-8).

19 Quoted in Santí's *El acto de las palabras*, 99-100.

20 Octavio Paz, *Itinerario* (México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1993): 63-5. For more on the POUM see my Chapter 4.

21 Paz, *Itinerario*, 64.

22 See my forthcoming article, "Octavio Paz: el camino hacia la desilusión" in Héctor Jaimes Ed., *Octavio Paz: La dimensión estética del ensayo*. Mexico: Fundamentos.

23 Santí, *El acto de las palabras*, 51.

24 For a full account of Paz's politics see his *Itinerario* (cited above).

25 Paz, *Itinerario*, 88.

26 Santí, *El acto de las palabras*, 70.

27 Santí, *El acto de las palabras*, 100.

28 See Octavio Paz, *Los hijos del limo*, primera edición en Biblioteca de Bolsillo (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1987): 194-6, 206-10.

29 Paz, *Los hijos del limo*, 208-210.

30 Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido: memorias*, eleventh edition (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1992): 395.

31 As regards criticism about *Residencia en la tierra*, the works that seem most innovative and essential are the following: Jaime Concha, *Neruda (1904-1936)* [Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1972), Alain Sicard, *El pensamiento poético de Pablo Neruda* (Madrid: Gredos, 1981), Hernán Loyola, "Las dos Residencias," the introduction to *Residencia en la tierra* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1987).

32 Neruda, *Confieso*, 205.

33 Pablo Neruda, *Canto general*, second edition (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1982): 32.

34 See Neruda's *Confieso que he vivido*, in particular, the emotional poetry readings he did for the Carriers Union of la Vega in Chile (346-7) and the reading before 10,000

miners in the Plaza de Lota (349-50). As biographer Volodia Teitelboim notes in *Neruda*, quinta edición (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones BAT, 1991): 281-4, that, in running his campaign for the Senate, Neruda often read poems hundreds of miners in northern Chile rather than giving political speeches.

35 Neruda, *Confieso*, 361.

36 Neruda, *Confieso*, 377.

37 See in particular Lukács' "Art and Objective Truth" in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays* (New York: Universal Library, 1971): 32; and *Realism in Our Time: Literature and Class Struggle* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962): 93-135.

38 Neruda, *Confieso*, 269.

39 Neruda, *Confieso*, 271.

40 Bertolt Brecht, "Against Georg Lukács" in *Aesthetics and Politics*, second printing (London: Verso, 1986): 82.

41 Pablo Neruda, *Para nacer he nacido* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1989): 94.

42 Neruda, *Para nacer*, 95.

43 See "The PCCh in the Period 1912-1948" in Carmelo Furci's *The Chilean Communist Party and the Road to Socialism* (London: Zed Books, 1984). In particular Furci says "The PCCh's leadership basically refused to accept the directives of the Communist International, and this refusal meant political suicide, in view of the mood prevailing within the International under Stalin" (31).

44 Neruda, *Canto general*, 29.

45 I am quoting from Jack Schmitt's wonderful translation. See Pablo Neruda, *Canto general*, Jack Schmitt trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 30-31.

46 See Frank Lentricchia, *Modernist Quartet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 239-86. Eliot's bourgeois and, paradoxically, anti-capitalist sentiments made right-wing positions more palatable to him as Lentricchia notes:
stands against humanitarianism and the enthusiasm that all men are worthy of a promiscuous sympathy and benevolence; against the belief in the kingdom of man through the interventions of science (the religion of "progress"), against the rule of impulse ("one impulse from a vernal wood"); against the "inordinate exaltation of the individual," the democratic spirit, the "pedantry of individualism," and the "free play of one's individual faculties." He stands for discipline, constraint, and the ideals of community; for tradition and classical literary values that stress impersonality and the

universal life (as opposed, in Eliot's dark imagery from Dante and Bradley, to the prison of self); for the muses of memory over those of inspiration and genius (255).

47 Lewis S. Feuer, *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1959): 29.

48 The works of Alain Sicard, Jaime Concha and Hernán Loyola argue along similar lines.

49 Federico Kauffman Doig, in *Perú antiguo: El incario: Una nueva perspectiva* (Lima: Kompaktos Editores, 1990), states the following:

> Juicios valorativos aparte, sin la presencia de una aristocracia gobernante como la de los Incas, que ordenaba a las multitudes lo que debía hacerse, no se habrían podido construir las grandes obras públicas destinadas a acelerar la producción de los alimentos, como los canales de riego, ni cumplido con la meta de recolectar para distribuir equitativamente los productos; tampoco tendríamos Machu Picchu (160).
>
> [Value judgments aside, without the presence of a governing aristocracy, like the Incans,' that ordered the multitudes about, the great public works projects designed to accelerate the production of foods, like the irrigation system, or the goal of gathering products to distribute equally, we would not have a Machu Picchu.]

Alden Mason, in *The Ancient Civilizations of Peru* (New York: Pelican, 1975) puts it this way: "The Inca state was a queer blend of theocracy, monarchy, socialism, and communism, its categorization in one system or another depending mainly on definition. It has often been termed a socialistic empire, for it was an aristocratic and autocratic socialism, not a democratic one. Mason adds that there was a "large class of nobles and priests, supported by the masses" (180). In his *The History of the Incas* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), Alfred Métraux makes a similar commentary as regards the Inca empire:

> the Inca empire combined absolute despotism with respect for the social and political forms of the subject peoples. The Inca reigned as absolute monarch, but his will reached the common man only through the local chiefs, whose authority and privileges were maintained, if not reinforced. Centralization of power was combined, after a fashion, with the exercise of indirect rule, if such an anachronistic phrase may be allowed" (93).

50 Karl Marx, *Capital*, volume 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1977): 342. In the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" in *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), Marx puts it even more precisely:
The fact simply means that the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is

labour embodied and made material in an object, it is the objectification of labour. The realization of labour is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy this realization of labour appears as a loss of reality for the worker, objectification as loss of and bondage to the object, and appropriation as estrangement, as alienation [entäusserung] (324).

51 I am contending here that Neruda was a moral realist: that his moral positions are intimately tied to approximate human knowledge about social and physical reality. Alan Gilbert suggests the following definition of moral realism: it "recognizes progress in morality and advance in moral theory through successive approximations to the truth about human potentials for cooperation and freedom. Further, progress in moral theory rests heavily on progress in social theory" (155). See his "Marx's Moral Realism: Eudaemonism and Moral Progress" in James Farr and Terence Ball Eds., *After Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For more on moral realism see Gilbert's, *Democratic Individuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Geoffrey Sayre-McCord Ed., *Essays on Moral Realism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), especially Richard Boyd's "How to be a Moral Realist," 181-228.

52 Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *El viajero inmóvil: Introducción a Pablo Neruda*. (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1966): 236-8.

53 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982): 17.

54 I discuss the work of these critics in Chapter 1 of my forthcoming book on Neruda, *Verses Against the Darkness: Neruda's poetry and politics*.

55 Jaime Concha, "Neruda, desde 1952: 'No entendí nunca la lucha sino para que ésta termine' en Coliloquio Internacional sobre Pablo Neruda (*La obra posterior a* Canto general) [Poitiers: Publications du Centre de Recherche Latino-Américaines de l'Université de Poitiers, 1979]: 61.

56 Cited in Jaime Concha's excellent introduction Odas elementales (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999): 39.

57 See R.D.F. Pring-Mill, "El Neruda de las Odas elementales" in Coliloquio internacional sobre Pablo Neruda (*La obra posterior a* Canto general) [Poitiers: Centre du Recherche Latino-américaines, 1979): 261-300.

58 Pablo Neruda, *Odas elementales*, 6th edition (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1986). Hereafter all citations appear in the text.

59 My translation. See the previously cited essay by Pring-Mill, 273.

60 In Chapter 3 of my book, *Verses Against the Darkness: Neruda's Poetry and Politics*, I flesh out of this argument.

61 See Georg Lukács, "Art and Objective Truth" in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays* (New York: Universal Library, 1971). In *Realism in Our Time*, Lukács says that in Kafka's work, despite its virtues, the "reflection of a distortion becomes a disorted reflection" (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962): 53.

62 See Concha's previously cited introduction to *Odas elementales,* 30.

63 In "Naciendo en los bosques," from *Tercera residencia*, tercera edición (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1983), Neruda expresses it this way: "porque para nacer he nacido, para encerrar el paso / de cuanto se aproxima, de cuanto a mi pecho golpea como un / nuevo / corazón tembloroso" [because I was born to be born, to close off the pass / of all that approaches me, all that beats against my chest like a / new / trembling heart 18].