

THE SHEPHERD OF DEATH

The Pastoral Design in the Work of Miguel Hernández

George W. Rose

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
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# ABSTRACT

## THE SHEPHERD OF DEATH

The Pastoral Design in the Work of Miguel Hernández

George William Rose

This thesis is a study of the extent to which the work of the Twentieth-Century Spanish poet Miguel Hernández was influenced by the pastoral tradition in its manifestations from the Eclogues of Virgil to modern times. It was found that Hernández's entire work--poetry, prose and theater--is within the pastoral tradition, both as regards the conventions of that genre and also its basic design, with the conventions diminishing and the design growing in complexity as his work progressed. For this reason Hernández's work contains a basic unity within its pastoral framework, moving from an initially light tone--though interwoven with the more somber themes of erotic frustration and death--to an increasingly tragic tone culminating in the elegiac poetry of the Spanish Civil War and postwar periods. It is in this final period that Hernández achieves his purest expression of the pastoral tradition, in his Cancionero y romancero de ausencias, and touches on one of the most essential aspects of poetry itself: the representation of ausencias, that which is absent. Prior to that Hernández had experimented with a Gongorist pastoral in his

first book, Perito en lunas, and a neo-Catholic pastoral in his auto sacramental, Quien te ha visto y quien te ve y sombra de lo que eras. Other questions considered in the course of the dissertation include that of the class origin of the poet himself, and the political implications of the pastoral literature he created in the latter part of his career. Hernández was a shepherd as a child and young man, and yet the pastoral is traditionally a genre cultivated by urban intellectuals as a type of dream fulfillment. The poet presents the interesting case of a person seeing himself and his reality through the prism of a highly artificial literary medium, using his reality to create his literary persona. As for the political aspects of his later pastoral, we have what many have considered an aristocratic literary vehicle being used by Hernández to express a Marxist view of society. As a result of these special conditions, Hernández was able to create not only a modern pastoral literature, but also one which is unique in the history of the genre: a pastoral literature written by a shepherd turned writer, and one looking to the future rather than the past.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

To discuss Miguel Hernández from the point of view of the pastoral tradition in European literature seems quite natural and obvious. The poet, after all, was a shepherd in his youth, and pastoral allusions can be encountered from the beginning of his work until the end. Why, then, have thirty-seven years elapsed without his work being examined from this point of view?

There seems to me to be a number of reasons for this rather puzzling phenomenon. One is that some people like to see Hernández as a poet of the people--as though he could be anything else, given his origin and his sympathies--and have thus only wished to see spontaneity in his work. They feel that any connection with the literary tradition would somehow lessen his links with his people. This is clearly absurd in a nation like Spain, where there is such a close connection between the folk and literary traditions, and it is also a rather patronizing attitude to take toward Hernández, who was as complex and many-faceted an individual as any other writer, whatever his class origin.

However, I feel that a more important factor is the scorn in which pastoral literature is generally held.

Most people, including many who should know better--and I include myself in this category prior to initiating the present study--regard pastoral literature as a quaint convention that played itself out in the eighteenth century. They see it as a series of rigid and artificial tableaux with aristocrats affecting pastoral dress and ways. Fortunately, there are a number of modern critics who distinguish between what might be termed the pastoral convention and the pastoral design. These critics, inspired by the pioneering work of the English critic, William Empson, in his book Some Versions of Pastoral, believe that beneath the pastoral conventions, which did indeed play themselves out long ago, there is a pastoral design, a way of seeing life and society in pastoral terms, which is alive and well in modern literature, from the novels of Mark Twain and Herman Melville to the poetry of Robert Frost and Luis Cernuda. This distinction is discussed at some length in the following pages; so suffice to say here that I am of this point of view.

There is opposition to this position, of course, among those who take what I believe to be an excessively rigid point of view regarding literature. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, for example, in his very provocative and valuable work The Green Cabinet--Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric, establishes a strict differentiation between the Theocritean and the Hesiodic traditions,



and sees Virgil as the beginning of the corruption and decadence of the Theocritean tradition. I have no quarrel with his interpretation of the various literary traditions which make up the modern pastoral, but it seems to me that such inflexible categorization of literature is lifeless and nonevolutionary in nature. Granted that pastoral literature today is not what it was in the time of Theocritus, but then it could hardly be otherwise. Should it be the endless repetition of the original model, assuming that Theocritus was indeed the originator of this type of literature, or a living concept, capable of adapting itself to different times and different people? I opt for the latter position, because I believe that it is a fact that the pastoral design is an integral part of our viewpoint and can be used to analyze our history and our society as well as our literature. In this regard, see the fascinating work by Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden--Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America.

Having established my point of view, it remains to explain in a little more detail my concept of the pastoral design. Generally the pastoral is an episode in the midst of a larger work in which the protagonist or protagonists remain for a while in the bower and then return to the world beyond. Sometimes the entire work takes place in the bower, as in "The Tempest," but even then it is understood that the pastoral is but an interlude in the

lives of the protagonists. The purpose of the pastoral interlude is basically regenerative, through the protagonists' contact with nature, and it provides a contrast with the larger society beyond, and serves as a commentary on it. By its very nature, then, the pastoral is dialectical, as the movement to and from the bower is essential to it.

Philosophically the pastoral rests on a number of assumptions, one of the most basic of which is the view that the natural life and natural things are superior to the class stratification produced by a highly centralized political and economic system. It is not the same as the urge to return to the wilderness, because the pastoral bower is nature modified by human hands. It is rather the urge to return to the freer, more democratic and simpler way of life of the herdsman. To object that this is utopian and unrealistic does nothing to eliminate the urge, which grows stronger as our society becomes more dependent on technology. It is no coincidence that interest in the pastoral design has been renewed in this period, because the factors that originally produced the pastoral--at least from the time of Virgil--are more operative today than ever. Indeed, there are many today who would say that the only hope for the survival of our world depends on controlling the development of technology, with its attendant social and ecological disasters.

This conflict is traditionally represented in

pastoral literature as the opposition of the artificial and decadent city to the pure and healthy countryside. City and countryside are symbols, however--though there is a basis in reality for this opposition--and they should not be taken too literally, as we shall see in Hernández's work. It can also be stated as the difference between art and nature, between things in their natural state and excessive artistic elaboration, which leads to artificiality and lifelessness. This, of course, is the problem perennially posed by civilization itself, and can be found in Freud's study of neurosis, which he regarded as the necessary result of the harnessing of libido and its sublimation by the imposition of societal restraints, essential to the development of our civilization. The rub, of course, is in the definition of such ideologically loaded terms as "civilization," "progress," "natural," "healthy," and so on. What Freud, a nineteenth century European bourgeois intellectual, regarded as good and necessary may be regarded as just the opposite in today's world, with the evidence provided by two world wars, atomic power and the destruction of the environment. To say simply that reason must prevail is to beg the question, because what is reason? What may be reasonable for one person may be totally irrational for another. All of these terms are subject to redefinition, and that is perhaps the main function of pastoral literature, to embody and pose such questions

in a vital form.

The opposition, which the pastoral presents between the city and the countryside, the corrupt and the pure, oppression and freedom, generates a tension between the two. The decadent, corrupt system symbolized by the city cannot tolerate the existence of its opposite and, either through deliberate aggression or the blind encroachment of technology and the economic forces it spawns, it threatens the bower with destruction. This force or forces hostile to the pastoral design is what Leo Marx aptly terms the counterforce. The counterforce is present from Virgil on in all pastoral works which present something more than a bucolic scene of simplistic happiness and placidity. This constitutes the difference between what Leo Marx calls sentimental and complex pastoralism.

It is my basic contention that all of Miguel Hernández's work, and not just his early work, falls within the pastoral tradition. His early work is more explicitly pastoral, because it contains more of the conventions of the genre, but the pastoral scheme underlies all of his writing, as I believe I demonstrate in the following pages. The nature of the bower and the counterforce in his work vary, of course, as the poet himself and the times he lived in change. We move from a more limited pastoral with the bower threatened mainly by internal contradictions in the poet himself, such as his

vigorous eroticism, to a broader vision, particularly at the time of the Spanish Civil War, in which all of Spain becomes the bower threatened by the forces of international fascism. The totality of Hernández's work, in fact, can be seen as one vast pastoral symphony, moving from an initially light tone--though interwoven with the more somber themes of the various counterforces--to an increasingly more somber, tragic tone culminating in the elegiac poetry of the wartime and postwar periods.

In addition to this basic theme, the relationship of Miguel Hernández to the pastoral tradition poses a number of very interesting problems. In the first place, pastoral literature is a literature of the middle class, usually city based, for whom the bower is a dream world, a retreat from the depressing environment that surrounds them. However, Hernández was himself once a shepherd, and although he immersed himself in classical and modern literature and eventually moved to the city as the only place where his talent would be properly appreciated and where he would be able to develop artistically, his class loyalties were always with the peasants and workers. Thus we have the fascinating situation of a real shepherd who then projects himself as a shepherd in his writing, but through the medium of a highly developed, upper-class literary tradition. The result is a literary product that is unique in Spanish literature.

Another problem is that posed by Hernández's socialism and the pastoral tradition. The pastoral, as we have said, is written by the middle and upper classes, and the shepherds it presents are usually masks for their authors, and have little or nothing to do with their real-life counterparts. For this very reason Karl Marx was quite scornful of pastoral literature, which he regarded as aristocratic and utopian nonsense, and a modern critic such as Renato Poggioli, one of the most perceptive writers on the subject of the pastoral design in literature and modern society, felt that such a thing as the pastoral of the left is impossible, a contradiction in terms. Empson, on the other hand, disagrees, and I, for my part, feel that Hernández actually created a pastoral of the left. The reader will judge in the course of this study whether I am correct in this hypothesis.

In any case, I feel that the essential thing about the pastoral is not its use as an upper-class literary vehicle with the concomitant conservative bias, but its basic design or world-view, as described above, and this design can be used by anyone who has internalized its tenets. Thus it can be seen in poets as different as Robert Frost and Miguel Hernández. This in no way invalidates the pastoral as a vehicle for literary expression, in my opinion, but on the contrary adds richness and vitality to the genre.

In regard to Hernández's life and work, they have been studied by now in so much detail that I see no need to recapitulate them. Such information as I need to present my thesis is contained in the body of this work, and readers who desire additional information are referred to the studies written by such scholars as Concha Zardoya, Dario Puccini and Juan Cano Ballesta.

## PART I. THE SHEPHERD OF DREAMS

"Cuando la poesía es un grito  
estridente y puntiagudo--de  
madrugada en flor fría--, cumple  
el poeta su primer luna reposada:  
es el poema terruñero, provincial,  
querenciosa de pastorería de  
sueños."

Ramón Sijé, prologue to  
Perito en lunas.



CHAPTER I  
THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

One of the most striking and, at the same time, most misleading features of Miguel Hernández writing is the rapidity and seeming ease with which he encountered his poetic identity, the literary self which he projected throughout his life both in his work and in his relationships with other people. I say misleading because this characteristic of his work and his personality has caused many of those who knew him or who have studied his work to confuse his literary identity with the man himself--a confusion the poet deliberately fostered, as we shall see--and thus overlook his conscious relationship with his pastoral tradition. What we are dealing with is a case in which a writer consciously identified himself and his work with a literary mode and then projected this image so successfully that the world has taken the persona for the man himself and has overlooked the process by which the persona was created. And yet it is only through the study of this process that we can see the relationship between the poet, his literary tradition and the moment in history which he was destined to live and reflect in his writing.

For I do not wish to suggest that Miguel Hernández

encountered his pastoral literary identity instantly and fully formed, and that it remained immutable for the rest of his life. Nor am I suggesting that there was no basis in reality for his literary persona. There is in fact a continuing development, a dialectical relationship between the poet, his self-image, historical events and his contact with others, particularly other literary figures. However, the fact remains that he realized, apparently as soon as he began to write poetry, that his most natural mode of expression was through the pastoral tradition.

And what could be more natural in a writer who was in fact a shepherd and the son of a shepherd? Miguel took care of his father's goats in the countryside around Orihuela from the time he was a child until he was 20 years old. His literary image therefore contains a basic authenticity. Miguel Hernández was of peasant origin, with little formal education, and as such he is a fascinating and almost unique literary figure in this age in which peasant revolutions--China, Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba--are sweeping the world. For Hernández was destined to become a revolutionary and use his pastoral art as a political weapon.

#### 1. First Poems

This reality is reflected in his first poems, written when he was sixteen. Of these earliest poems Cano

Ballesta says: "El dato sensorial, sobre todo el visual y acústico, predomina en esta poesía balbuciente." However, other poems of the same period, this critic notes, "mezclan motivos de la sierra, la huerta y los montes de Orihuela, con temas bucólicos y mitológicos."<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning, in other words, his poetry reflected the pastoral literary tradition as well as the very real circumstances of his life. Nor can this be surprising in a boy who was described as follows by one of his early mentors, Luis Almarcha, then canon of the cathedral of Orihuela: "No he tenido discípulo a quien haya causado sensación más profunda Virgilio y San Juan de la Cruz."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Miguel's brother Vicente told French critic Claude Couffon that:

Leía . . . La Eneida, en una traducción de Fray Luis de León, de la cual lo divertía recitar de memoria ciertos pasajes.<sup>3</sup>

Since Fray Luis did not translate the Aeneid, we may assume that Vicente Hernández confused that work with the Eclogues, which Fray Luis did translate.

This early mixture of personal reality and literary tradition can best be seen in Hernández's first published poem: "Pastoril." It was written when he was 19 years

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<sup>1</sup>Juan Cano Ballesta, La poesía de Miguel Hernández (Madrid, Gredos, 1962), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Almarcha Hernández, Notas sobre Miguel Hernández, quoted by Cano Ballesta, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Couffon, Orihuela y Miguel Hernández (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1967), p. 20.

old and appeared in "El Pueblo de Orihuela" on January 13, 1930. The following is the complete text:

Junto al río transparente  
 que el astro rubio colora  
 y riza el aura naciente,  
 llora Leda la pastora.  
 De amarga hiel es su llanto.  
 ¿Qué llora la pastorcilla?  
 ¿Qué pena, qué gran quebranto  
 puso blanca su mejilla?  
 ¡Su pastor la ha abandonado!  
 A la ciudad se marchó  
 y solita la dejó  
 a la vera del ganado.  
 ¡Ya no comparte su choza  
 ni amamanta su cordera!  
 ¡Ya no le dice: <<Te quiero>>,  
 y llora y llora la moza!

-----

Decía que me quería  
 tu boca de fuego llena.  
 ¡Mentira! --dice con pena--,  
 ¡ay! ¿Por qué me lo decía?  
 Yo que ciega te creí,  
 yo que abandoné mi tierra  
 para seguirte a tu sierra,  
 ¡me veo dejada de ti! . . .  
 Junto al río transparente  
 que la noche va sombreando  
 y riza el aura de Oriente,  
 sigue la infeliz llorando.

-----

Ya la tierna y blanca flor  
 no camina hacia la choza  
 cuando el sol la sierra roza  
 al lado de su pastor.  
 Ahcra va sola al barranco  
 y al llano y regresa sola,  
 marcha y vuelve triste y bola  
 tras de su rebaño blanco.  
 ¿Por qué, pastor descastado,  
 abandonas tu pastora  
 que sin ti llora y más llora  
 a la vera del ganado?

-----

La noche viene corriendo  
 el azul cielo enlutando:  
 el río sigue pasando  
 y la pastora gimiendo.  
 Más cobra su antiguo brío,  
 y hermosamente serena  
 sepulta su negra pena  
 entre las aguas del río.

-----  
 Reina un silencio sagrado . . .  
 ¡Ya no llora la pastora!  
 ¡Después parece que llora  
 llamándola, su ganado!<sup>4</sup>

The poem contains literary influences from Garcilaso, San Juan ("Un pastorcico solo está penado") and the pastoral novel of Renaissance Spain to Rubén Darío, as well as reminiscences of popular coplas in verses such as "Decía que me quería / tu boca de fuego llena" and phrases such as "su negra pena." However, while the poem is written within the pastoral convention, its ending owes more to the Romantic tradition. In short, the piece is typical of a young poet groping for his own voice amid a variety of influences, and is basically imitative.

Nevertheless, the poem contains some very interesting features. The city-country opposition is already clearly present, with the city representing temptation and a threat to the peace and harmony of the bower, and the countryside representing love, purity and fidelity. Perhaps this is the basic reason Hernández chose to make the

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<sup>4</sup>Vicente Ramos, Miguel Hernández (Madrid, Gredos, 1973), pp. 108-109.

protagonist a woman, since he himself was already feeling the call of the great world beyond the bower, and was soon to depart from his native Orihuela for Madrid. So Miguel Hernández's first published work is a pastoral poem containing the traditional city-country dialectic as its basic mechanism. The poet has made his debut in print with what will continue to be his essential self-image: that of the shepherd poet.

## 2. Hernández as Seen by Others

Also interesting is that Hernández's emergence as a budding poet was heralded in the pages of the same publication on December 30, 1929, with a poem entitled "La sonata pastoril" by his friend Carlos Fenoll, who dedicated his work "A Miguel Hernández, el pastor que, en la paz y el silencio de la hermosa y fecunda huerta oriolana, canta las estrofas que le inspira su propio corazón." Fenoll refers to Hernández in the following terms:

¡Es él! . . . El es quien inspira  
de mi huerta los cantares,  
y es su cayado la lira  
que suena cuando suspira  
el viento en los olivares.

-----

Ya torna a su hogar querido  
por la vereda desierta,  
de su rebaño seguido  
este pastor ¡que ha nacido  
para cantar a su huerta!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-8.

Another of Hernández's friends in Orihuela, José María Ballesteros, gave his vision of the young poet in an article entitled "Pastores poetas" in Voluntad of Orihuela in its issue of June 15, 1930. In this article, which is the first to be published about Hernández, Ballesteros said:

El pastor poeta oriolano es un pastor de cabras; nació pastor, continúa siendo pastor y morirá tal vez pasturando su rebaño . . . El pastor poeta oriolano es pastor y es poeta por naturaleza. Sus versos fluyen de su imaginación viva como la leche al ordeñarla. Escribe sin esforzar la inteligencia; por eso su poesía es amena y cantarina . . . Para Miguel Hernández, que escribe como habla, que escribe porque siente en su alma la poesía, no es difícil escribir versos. Los versos del pastor poeta oriolano rebosan naturalidad, sencillez; no tienen esos rebuscamientos del lenguaje perniciosos, porque amaneran el estilo y demuestran pedantería. El pastor poeta oriolano escribe sin artificios, a la luz del sol, cara a cara con la diosa naturaleza.<sup>6</sup>

The myth of Miguel Hernández, the shepherd-poet whose verses sprang spontaneously from his heart, a simple, unsophisticated rustic who was also a great poet almost by divine grace, has been born. These visions of Hernández are in no way different from that of Ernesto Giménez Caballero who will describe him in La Gaceta Literaria of Madrid in its January 15, 1932, issue in the following terms: "Su cara muy ancha y cigomática, clara, serena y violenta, de ojos extraordinariamente azules, como enredilando un ganado ideal. La manos fuertes, camperas y tímidas."<sup>7</sup> Or that of Rafael Alberti, who will recall

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<sup>7</sup>Cano Ballesta, op. cit., p. 22.



his first impressions of Miguel Hernández years later in these words:

Pablo Neruda fué quién lo vió mejor. Solía repetir: --¡Con esa cara que tiene Miguel de patata recién sacada de la tierra!

De la tierra . . ., porque si conocí muchacho a quien se le podían ver las raíces, aún con ese dolor de arrancadura, de tironazo último, matinal, era él. Raigón, raigones, guías hondas, entramadas, pegadas todavía de ese terrón mojado, que es la carne, la funda de los huesos, le salían a Miguel del bulbo chato de la cara, formándole en manojó, en enredo, toda la terrenal figura. Pero siempre en lo alto, al inclinarse, tosco, con cierto torpe cabeceo de animal triste, para enlazarle a uno la mano, le resonaban hojas verdes, llenas de resplandores.

—Sí, Miguel venía de la tierra, natural, como una tremenda semilla desenterrada, puesta de pie en el suelo. Y nunca este sentir, esta presencia de espíritu y de cuerpo procedente del barro se los sacó de su poesía.<sup>8</sup>

Nor was Hernández himself unaware of the power and usefulness of this image of himself. In a letter to Juan Ramón Jiménez requesting an interview on the eve of that first trip to Madrid, Hernández described himself in the following terms:

No le extrañe lo que digo, admirado maestro: es que soy pastor. Soy pastor de cabras desde mi niñez. Y estoy contento con serlo, porque, habiendo nacido en casa pobre, pudo mi padre darme otro oficio y me dio éste que fue de dioses paganos y héroes bíblicos.

Como le he dicho, creo ser un poco poeta. En los prados por que yerro con el cabrío, ostenta natura su mayor grado de hermosura y pompa: muchas flores, muchos ruiseñores y verdones, mucho cielo y muy azul, algunas majestuosas montañas y unas colinas

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<sup>8</sup> Rafael Alberti, Imagen primera de . . ., (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1945), p. 91.



y lomas, tras las cuales rueda la gran era azul del Mediterráneo.<sup>9</sup>

And yet, in the very passage in which he depicts himself, as a simple goatherd, he explicitly relates himself to the Classical and Biblical literary traditions!

### 3. From Shepherd to Pastoralist

Why did everyone from Hernández's childhood friends in Orihuela to Pablo Neruda and Rafael Alberti seize this image of the poet so eagerly and feed it in a symbiotic relationship? It seems to me that the answer is to be found, at least in part, in the pastoral tradition itself. The shepherd-protagonist-author always has been and must be a highly educated person, the exact opposite of the simple rustic he pretends to be. As one writer puts it, "The pastoralist must of necessity be a man of sophistication writing for a sophisticated audience, for to yearn for the rustic life one must first know the great world from which it offers an escape."<sup>10</sup> So Hernández's pose was the traditional one of the pastoralist and if that were all there was to it, it could hardly have excited anyone. But there was one basic difference between Hernández and the literary figures he knew and those who have studied the man and his work subsequently: Hernández

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<sup>9</sup> Ramos, op. cit., pp. 117-8.

<sup>10</sup> John F. Lynen, The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost, (New Haven and London: Yale, 1967), p. 13.

was of peasant origin and he had been a shepherd for the first twenty years of his life. This lent an authenticity to his pose as rustic poet which no one of middle-class origin could achieve, and allowed him to project an image which was in fact the literary wish-fulfillment of his fellow poets. They also were perfectly aware of the traditional pastoral fiction, but now it seemed that the fiction had become reality; here they finally had a pastoralist who had been a real shepherd! The myth was established because, like all good myths, it responded to a felt need and had a foundation in reality.

And yet Hernández's pose was a fiction, for all that. He was far from being a simple rustic. He was well-educated despite the fact that he had little classroom training (he had less than two years of secondary education).<sup>11</sup> He was familiar with the pastoral tradition, as we have seen in his first published work. Despite his lack of travel in the great world beyond Orihuela, he was quite aware of its existence and problems. Hernández was the first president of the Socialist Youth of Orihuela, although he was also strongly influenced by his friend Ramón Sijé's neo-Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> Sijé himself was a federalist Republican, however, and as has become

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<sup>11</sup>Ramos, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

increasingly apparent in recent years, a Catholic religious orientation and a concern for social issues are not mutually exclusive. Thus Miguel Hernández was already able to construct his pastoral bower with all the tensions and contradictions of traditional pastoralism before he left Orihuela for his first visit to Madrid. From that point on his pastoralism would become more complex and sophisticated, but the pastoral design would remain as the basic framework of his poetic world.

#### 4. Other Experiments with the Pastoral

Hernández's other poems of this period also spring from the pastoral tradition or from a pastoral view of the world, even when they seem to be very different in genre. "El árabe vencido," for example, is a poem written by Hernández in the same period as "Pastoril." Juan Cano Ballesta says that the piece "manifiesta evidente parentesco con el canto épico-lírico de tradición y gusto romántico que solía cultivar por esas fechas."<sup>13</sup> This is true, but on closer examination it seems even closer to the pastoral tradition. The poem deals with a Moorish nobleman, Aben Zur, who has been defeated in battle and has lost everything to the Christians. Complaining of his misfortunes, the vanquished warrior wanders aimlessly until he finds

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<sup>13</sup>Juan Cano Ballesta, "Tres poemas desconocidos de Miguel Hernández: valoración," Hispania, (May 1972), vol. 55, No. 2, p. 342.

himself by a calm pool of water. There he encounters his love, Zoraida, who has also escaped the Christians. The poem ends with the verses "Y en la noche pura / ya no se oye Aben Zur sollozar."

This retreat of the disillusioned sophisticate from the world into a calm place far from the courtly life--the pastoral bower--where his troubled spirit will be soothed by the pure, restorative qualities of nature, symbolized by the love of Zoraida, is typical of the pattern of pastoral episodes so frequent in the Renaissance, as for instance the various pastoral interludes in Don Quijote. Poggioli says:

Its presence (that of the locus amoenus or bower) in an epic or a chivalric poem, in a romance or a tragicomedy, foretells the unexpected apparition of a bucolic episode, which breaks the main action or pattern, suspending for a while the heroic, romantic, or pathetic mood of the whole. Accordingly, the topos itself is but an idyllic prelude to a bucolic interlude, where the characters rest from their adventures or passions. Since the pause normally occurs in an obscure or faraway place, the intermezzo itself should be termed the 'pastoral oasis.'<sup>14</sup>

This poem by Hernández, then, rather than an attempt to write an epic poem is actually the pastoral interlude which would interrupt the larger work.

Another variety of pastoralism is contained in a poem Hernández published in "El Pueblo de Orihuela" on January 27, 1930, two weeks after the publication of

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<sup>14</sup>Renato Poggioli, "The Oaten Flute," Harvard Literary Bulletin, (Spring 1957), XI, No. 2, p. 155.

"Pastoril." This poem, entitled "En mi barraquica!" is written in the panocho dialect employed by the Murcian regionalist poet Vicente Medina. Its theme is the plea of a poverty-stricken Murcian peasant who is begging his landlord not to evict him from his home. He ends by saying"

¡Ay! no m'eche, no m'eche por Dios  
de la quería tierra,  
que yo quíß morirme  
ande yo naciera.  
¡En mi barraquica llena de gujeros,  
de miseria llena!

Regionalism, with its imitation of local speech patterns and its exaltation of the rural poor, frequently with overtones of social protest, is a direct offshoot of traditional pastoralism. Rosenmeyer says: "In one branch of the pastoral, not the main branch by any means, there is an attempt to capture the earthy feel of the countryside. This is done, in part, by means of 'vulgar' speech and national meters . . ."<sup>15</sup> And Lynen points out in his study of the pastoralism of Robert Frost:

. . . regionalism may be understood as a popular art which satisfies a vague but widely felt yearning to look back toward a simpler life . . . Thus regionalism is always potentially pastoral. It establishes a comparison between the rural world, seen in terms of its richly picturesque local traits, and the complex industrial society of today, just as the old pastoral established a comparison between peasant life and the court.

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 18.

In both cases, the contrast involves a juxtaposing of past and present.<sup>16</sup>

Thus in his regional poetry Hernández is exploring another variety of pastoralism. It is interesting that these experiments are limited to his earliest work and were never repeated. Even the use of regional expressions disappeared from his literary work. The poet quickly recognized the inherent limitations in regionalism and preferred to work within the mainstream of present-day pastoralism.

From this moment on Hernández's work will evolve rapidly, passing through a variety of stylistic phases and reflecting, implicitly or explicitly, the rapid unfolding of events during the tumultuous period through which he lived. However, the basic pastoral framework has already been clearly established in his earliest work and while it will change in appearance, becoming more complex and broader in context, it will remain the touchstone of his work until his death, far from his native bower, in a prison hospital in Alicante in 1942.

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<sup>16</sup>Lynen, op. cit., p. 57.



## CHAPTER II

### CREATION OF THE BOWER

#### 1. Gongorist Influence

The qualitative leap from Hernández's initial poetic efforts to his first published book of poetry, Perito en lunas (1933), is enormous. From highly imitative, rather facile versification we move to a group of highly sophisticated poems written in octavas reales with such typically Gongorist techniques as hyperbaton and highly complex metaphors. Furthermore, it is a book within which the poet constructs a self-contained poetic world which is of particular interest for us, since it is none other than the bower or pleasance, which is so central to pastoral literature.

This book has not been given the attention it deserves by the critics, who have generally seen it as a youthful effort stemming from the celebration of Góngora's centennial in 1927, artificial and only related to Hernández's subsequent work in as much as it reflects some aspects of the poet's real life and surroundings. Concha Zardoya says that this is a book "que la crítica, en general, ha menospreciado, acusándolo de deshumanizado conceptismo y huera retórica, vacío de toda emoción o sentimiento. A nosotros, en cambio, nos parece un

asombroso comienzo poético y un prodigio de autosuperación juvenil."<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1955, but the type of judgment Zardoya refers to is still being rendered, as we can see in Gustav Siebenmann's work, Los estilos poéticos en España desde 1900, published in Spain in 1973.

Siebenmann says that Perito en lunas is composed of " . . . ejercicios de versificación gongorina para temas no apropiados, enunciados cifrados artísticamente y desfigurados con conceptos." He adds later:

La dificultad de la lectura está garantizada, la entonación ampulosa. Empero el desciframiento produce un sencillo cuadro de género, una escena rústica que se desliza hasta lo grosero. La inadecuación a este tema de la forma pomposa responde igualmente a una intención cómica. Es significativo que el Hernández de más tarde se ha distanciado de esta obra primeriza gongorista. A semejantes juegos llegó a decaer el curioso episodio del gongorismo al comienzo de los años treinta.<sup>2</sup>

Siebenmann does note, with some surprise, the time that separates Perito en lunas from other works produced by the enthusiasm for Góngora (Rafael Alberti, for instance, published Cal y Canto in 1929) and says that Hernández is an example of " . . . un neoclasicismo que ya no tenía nada en común con el parentesco íntimo que los 'modernos' sentían con el arte gongorino."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Concha Zardoya, Miguel Hernández (1910-1942), (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1955), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Gustav Siebenmann, Los estilos poéticos en España desde 1900, (Madrid: Gredos, 1973), pp. 237-9.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.



Indeed, there is a great difference between Hernández and the other Spanish poets who wrote Gongorist-type poetry some years earlier. For Hernández, the alleged simple, untutored rustic attempted with some considerable success to reproduce Góngora's pastoralism with Góngora's poetic techniques, but using his own reality as poetic material for the creation of his bower. From the stanza that he utilized, the octava real, "estrofa predilecta de la poesía épica y pastoril del Renacimiento,"<sup>4</sup> to the elements which he carefully selected from his environment, every aspect of the book is within the pastoral tradition. Perito en lunas is another aspect of Hernández's pastoralism, and a considerable advance over his previous efforts. He will cease to use the Gongorist literary techniques in his later works because they will be inappropriate to his aims, but all of the basic themes and symbols of this book will continue to be used in his subsequent work.

## 2. The Function of Humor

What Siebenmann fails to see is that "un sencillo cuadro de género, una escena rústica que se desliza hasta lo grosero" is precisely a description of the Idylls of Theocritus, father of European pastoral poetry. The humor, in fact, which at times reaches "lo grosero," is an

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<sup>4</sup>Marcial José Bayo, Virgilio y la pastoral española del Renacimiento (1480-1550), (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), p. 133.

essential element in pastoralism, in that it counteracts the tendency toward excessive artificiality. To quote Rosenmeyer:

The pastoral frame is opened to admit the entry of vulgarity or abuse or some other equivalent shock to shatter, at least momentarily, the pastoral otium. . . . usually it is the dominant character, or the winner in the contest, who achieves the humorous breakthrough designed to subvert the threat of over-refinement.<sup>5</sup>

One of the best examples of this type of humor is contained in poem XLI, which Siebenmann himself analyzes in the aforementioned work.<sup>6</sup> It deals with laborers enjoying their day off drinking at the local tavern and urinating with more force than usual due to the amount of liquid they have consumed. To end a poem which begins "Barbihecho domingo" with "a mirar a los hoy orinadores, / como nunca de largos, labradores" performs precisely the function Rosenmeyer describes: it relieves the tension of highly artificial language and poetic devices with humor which is on the one hand rustic and on the other a graphic description of very real scenes the poet has observed. So we see that these touches in Perito en lunas are far from being examples of bad taste on the part of the young poet. They actually show how thoroughly he understood the basic mechanisms of pastoral art.

In one poem after another in this book Hernández

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<sup>5</sup>Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.

subjects each of his main themes to the same good-natured humor. Just as laborers were the butt of his conceptualist humor in XLI, it is religion, and more concretely the Virgin Mary, who are the recipients in XXX, entitled "Retrete" by the poet:<sup>7</sup>

Aquella de la cuenca luna monda,  
sólo habéis de eclipsarla por completo,  
donde vuestra existencia más se ahonda,  
desde el lugar preciso y recoleto.  
¡Pero bajad los ojos con respeto  
cuando la descubráis quieta y redonda!  
Pareja, para instar serpientes, luna,  
al fin, tal vez la Virgen tiene una.

So among other moons in which the author is expert is that round hole one finds, usually in pairs, in outdoor toilets! The metaphorical allusion to sockets of the eyes ("cuenca"), the metaphysical joke in line three, the pun in the word "recoleto," the sexual allusion in the word "serpientes" and, above all, the highly irreverent and possibly heretical suggestion that the Virgin uses an outdoor toilet in Heaven (if in fact "una" refers to "Pareja" and not "serpientes") are all things which I am sure incur Siebenmann's displeasure. And yet it would be difficult to imagine something more rustic, more characteristic of the countryside and more hilarious when described with baroque poetic devices than the humble outhouse. This is, by the way, not only typical of the Classical pastoral tradition but

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<sup>7</sup> See Cano Ballesta, La poesía de Miguel Hernández, pp. 57-8, for Hernández's list of titles to the poems contained in Perito en lunas.

also of another of the Spanish Golden Age poets who exerted an enormous influence on Hernández, Francisco de Quevedo, in whose work such humor is not at all uncommon.

Politics receive the same humorous treatment in XVII in which the poet describes a knife slicing a water-melon as "un rojo desenlace negro de hoces" and in XXIII, where he describes the halves of an open pomegranate "como revoluciones de los huertos." The colors red and black and sickles are of course references to the symbols of revolutionary socialism, both the Anarchist and the Communist tendencies.

Nor does the main theme of Perito en lunas, which is sex, as we shall see later, escape the poet's laughter. In XXXIV, entitled "Huevo," we find the rooster ("un rejoneador galán de pico") as the symbol of male sexuality mounting a hen, described absurdly but logically within the bullfight metaphor as "el potro en abanico." This is logical, because the rejoneador places his lances in the bull's back from horseback during the corrida. However, it is particularly interesting that here Hernández not only subjects sex, a painful subject for him in this period, to his irreverent humor, but does so employing the symbolism of the bullfight, a symbolism which acquires great dramatic intensity in the rest of his work. Literally nothing is sacred in Hernández's bower in Perito en lunas, and in this regard (particularly in the case of "Retrete,"

analyzed above) the following comment by Rosenmeyer is of special interest:

In his perceptive discussion of religion in the *Eclogues* [of Virgil], Hubaux finds that Virgil's gods have about them an air of *opéra-comique*. They are invoked at moments when the singers are not necessarily at their devotional best. The way they are fitted into the pastoral scene puts them close to the woodland creatures whose comportment, in Hellenistic literature and its Roman succession is rarely dignified. But it is also true, as Hubaux admits, that Virgil substitutes native Italic cults for the largely decorative institutions in the Hellenistic epigrams. The combination of gaiety and rustic respectability communicates a genuine sense of faith.<sup>8</sup>

Whether Hernández's image of the Virgin sitting in her celestial outhouse "communicates a genuine sense of faith" is something which I personally doubt, but in any case this is a subject which will be discussed at greater length later in this work, and cannot be judged in the isolated context of one poem.

### 3. Other Contradictory Elements

However, humor is only one of the contradictions which introduce tension and keep the otium of the bower, its basic condition, from becoming tedious. Rosenmeyer says otium

. . . is vacation, freedom, escape from pressing business, particularly a business with overtones of death. Within the pastoral, otium is two things; it is the condition under which the herdsmen operate, the social and psychological characteristics of their world; but it is also a function of the ethos of the poem, the idea which the poem is expected to

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<sup>8</sup> Rosenmeyer, op. cit., pp. 126-7.

communicate over and beyond the dramatic realities within it.<sup>9</sup>

The contradictions which are introduced into what could be termed complex pastoralism as opposed to the static and usually ornate exaltations of the bucolic life into which the pastoral convention degenerated in the eighteenth century are not simply to maintain the reader's interest. They serve to maintain contact with the real world which does in fact disturb and threaten the peace and freedom of the bower. This is the mechanism of Virgil's first eclogue, in which Tityrus sings the pleasures of his life as a shepherd while Meliboeus laments his forced exile from his land and home and the harsh life which awaits him. Pastoral art of any sophistication, then, is dialectical, and it is the study of its contradictions which reveal its basic mechanism and the poet's intention.

The main element providing tension in Perito en lunas is the baroque language itself, which stands in such marked contrast to the rustic and sometimes "vulgar" subject matter. This is none other than the notorious conflict between Nature and Art, "without which," as Rosenmeyer observes, "the Renaissance pastoral is unthinkable," and which "has no standing in the Theocritean pastoral lyric."<sup>10</sup> This was precisely Góngora's

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 196.



achievement in the Polifemo and the Soledades, which as Elias Rivers points out "are pastoral poems, urging us to return to a primal life close to nature, a physical world free from the moral corruption of modern city life." The language of these poems introduces a paradox, however. The paradox, according to Rivers, "is that Góngora gives us a new vision of the world of nature by creating enigmatic verbal artifacts which can only be deciphered by the humanistically educated, constantly alert intellectual." The function of this contradiction is to provide a dialectical synthesis of Nature and Art which, Rivers concludes, "are first restricted to their most materialistic senses and are then pushed to their antithetical extremes which meet and merge in Góngora's hyperaesthetic poetry itself."<sup>11</sup> The baroque language of Perito en lunas was not, then, "inadecuación a este tema," as Siebenmann believes, but rather proof of the degree to which Hernández had understood and internalized the dialectical function of Góngora's poetic language in the writer's pastoral poems. In this sense Perito en lunas is a spectacular poetic achievement for the young poet. As Ramón Sijé said in the prologue to Perito en lunas, Miguel Hernández "ha resuelto, técnicamente, su agónico problema:

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<sup>11</sup>Elias L. Rivers, "Nature, Art and Science in Spanish Poetry of the Renaissance," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, (1967), vol. 44, pp. 261-2.

conversión del 'sujeto' en 'objeto' poético."<sup>12</sup>

Hernández's bower follows the classical model in other ways as well. Freedom is the result and the precondition of otium. As Rosenmeyer remarks, "Freedom, like simplicity and leisure, is an endowment that the pastoral surrenders at its peril."<sup>13</sup> In Perito en lunas freedom is symbolized, as in Rafael Alberti's Marinero en tierra, by the sea:

Agrios huertos, azules limonares,  
de frutos, si dorados, corredores;  
¡tan distantes!, que os sé si los vapores  
libertan siempre presos palomares. (XXI)

and, as in Federico García Lorca's Romancero gitano, by gypsies, represented symbolically as moons:

¡Lunas! Como gobiernas, como bronces,  
siempre en mudanza siempre dando vueltas.  
Cuando me voy a la vereda, entonces  
las veo desfilar, libres, esbeltas. (XXIX)

#### 4. Freedom from Toil

However, basically freedom in the bower means freedom from hard, alienating labor, labor with which Hernández was well acquainted as the following prose passage, written during the same period as Perito en lunas and entitled "MIGUEL--y mártir," shows:

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<sup>12</sup>Miguel Hernández, Obras completas, (Buenos Aires: Losada), 2nd. edition, (1973), p. 59. Any further references to this volume will be indicated by the letters "OC" and the page number after each quote.

<sup>13</sup>Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 129.



¡Todos! los días, elevo hasta mi dignidad las  
boñigas de las cuabras del ganado, a las cuales  
paso la brocha de palma y caño de la limpieza.

¡Todos! los días, se elevan hasta mi digni-  
dad las ubres a que desciendo para producir  
espumas, pompas transeúntes de la leche; el  
agua baja y baja del pozo; la situación crítica  
de la función de mi vida más fea, por malpon-  
iente y oliente; los obstáculos de estiércol  
con que tropiezo y que erizan el camino que  
va de mi casa a mi huerto; las cosas que toco;  
los seres a quienes concedo mi palabra de  
imágenes; las tentaciones en que caigo,  
antonio . . .

¡Todos los días! me estoy santificando,  
martirizado y mudo. (OC, p. 957)

This reality is nowhere present in Perito en lunas, however. We have already seen laborers portrayed, not engaged in backbreaking work but drinking in the tavern, relaxed and happy, on their day off, in octava XLI. The other forms of work mentioned, aside from the poet's own occupation as goatherd, are the palmero or person who harvests coconuts (VII), a confectioner-nun (VIII), a barber (XIV), farming (XX), a baker (XXII) and a washwoman (XXXIX). None of these forms of work are referred to within the context of hard labor, even farming, which is described as follows in a poem reminiscent of Lope de Vega's "Al villano se lo dan," in which Lope describes the production of bread from tilling the land to the oven:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Lope de Vega, Poesías líricas, (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1941), vol. I, pp. 96-98.

Párrafos de la más hiriente punta,  
 si la menos esbelta, como voces  
 de emoción, ya se rizan, de la yunta:  
 verdes sierpes ya trémulas de roces  
 y rocíos. La mano que las junta,  
 afila las tajadas, sí, las hoces,  
 con el deseo ya, la luz en torno;  
 y enarca bríos, era, masas, horno.

The tone of the poem is that of Virgil's Georgics rather than of Hesiod's Works and Days. Farming is seen in terms of the aesthetic delight of breaking the soil and harvesting the wheat, which in turn acquires the status of a fertility rite, since its purpose is to produce bread, a sacred symbol of life. If food or drink is needed in the bower, it is provided generously by the bower itself, by idealized nature. When the poet and his friends are hungry, he simply climbs a fig tree and picks the fruit:

El maná, miel y leche, de los higos,  
 llueve sobre la luz, dios con calzones,  
 para un pueblo israelita de mendigos  
 niños, moiseses rubios en cantones . . . (IX)

And when the poet is thirsty, he drinks directly from the goat's udder:

Cojo la ubre fruncida, y a mi boca  
 su vida, que otra mata aun muerta, siento  
 venir . . . (XXVIII)

Hernández's bower is literally the "land of milk and honey" promised in the Bible to God's chosen people, and this is within the purest Classical tradition, for as Rosenmeyer observes: ". . . the food eaten in the pleasance does not, typically, include meat or fish; milk, cheese, nuts, and fruits, the non-violent products of a bountiful nature,

are preferred."<sup>15</sup> In effect, the only other foods referred to in Perito en lunas are watermelons, pomegranates, eggs and, as we have seen, coconuts, sweets and bread. As Leo Marx says: "In the pastoral economy nature supplies most of the herdsman's needs and, even better, nature does virtually all the work."<sup>16</sup> The reason is that otium, creative leisure, requires liberation from toil. Therefore Hernández deliberately excludes those aspects of reality of which he was only too aware from his bower. They were not excluded from his writing altogether. On the contrary, grueling labor occupies a great deal of Hernández's attention and is dealt with in varying ways depending on his ideological development. But this aspect had to be excluded from the idealized bower that he constructed in Perito en lunas, which is a classic pastoral work. It is yet another indication of how well he understands the demands of traditional pastoralism.

There are some economic contradictions in Perito en lunas. Their function, however, is to maintain dialectical tension through the hint of threats to the pastoral otium. A glimpse of rural poverty is provided in poem XXXVIII. It is treated in an ambiguous tone, somewhere between

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 23.

seriousness and humor:

Este paisaje sin mantel de casa  
gris, ¡ay, casi ninguno en accidentes!:  
los pastos pobres . . . la colina escasa  
de trigo . . . los cristales no corrientes . . .  
Sólo al final, frustrando el gris, en masa,  
colores agradables a los dientes  
encontran el paisaje de destellos,  
y se obra un cigüeñal de ávidos cuellos.

The food consumed by the hungry family in the second quatrain almost, but not quite, offsets the grim realism of the first half of the poem. It is a brief and sobering glimpse of reality offered by the poet almost at the end of the book.

#### 5. The Function of Death

Another classic challenge to pastoral otium is death. A recognition of the grim fact of the end of human existence and therefore of the pastoral idyll is present in the pastoral tradition from Theocritus on. It will occupy an increasingly large portion of Hernández's work from his youthful elegies until his final writing, in which death will be the main theme. It appears only twice in Perito en lunas, but it is significant that one of the two instances is the first poem in the volume, entitled "Suicida en cierne," and refers to the poet himself:

A la caña silbada de artificio,  
rastros, si no evasión, de su suceso,  
bajaré contra el peso de mi peso:  
simulación de náutico ejercicio.  
Bien cercén del azar, bien precipicio,  
me desamparará de azul ileso:  
no la pita, que tal vez a cercenes  
me impida reflejar sierra en mis sienes.

The second example is octava XXXVI, near the end of the book, entitled "Funerario y cementerio," in which the poet asks the undertaker to prepare his coffin so that his love, in true pastoral style, may continue to live under the earth after death:

Final, modisto de cristal y pino;  
a la medida de una rosa misma  
hazme de aquél un traje, que en un prisma,  
¿no?, se ahogue, no, en un diamante fino.  
Patio de vecindad menos vecino,  
del que al fin pesa más y más se abisma,  
abre otro túnel más bajo tus flores  
para hacer subterráneos mis amores.

However, the reader feels that there is little reality in this threat of suicide and later reminder of death. Erwin Panofsky, in his study of the "Et in Arcadia Ego" motif in pastoral art, establishes this as the principal difference between the treatment of death in the poetry of Theocritus and that of Virgil. As he says:

Virgil does not exclude frustrated love and death; but he deprives them, as it were, of their factuality. He projects tragedy either into the future or, preferably, into the past, and he thereby transforms mythical truth into elegiac sentiment.<sup>17</sup>

Hernández clearly has the same intention here, that of depriving death of its "factuality" and making it somehow unreal for us. One way he does this is by projecting it, as Panofsky says, into the future in both poems. Another way is to relate it to love and show this emotion

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<sup>17</sup> Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," from Meaning in the Visual Arts, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), p. 301.

triumphing over death as he does in the second quatrain of the second poem. This is not only typical of pastoral poetry but of poetry in general, as we can see in the Spanish tradition from Quevedo ("Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado") to Zorrilla's Don Juan Tenorio.

Nevertheless, the main way in which Hernández deprives death of its reality is through the artificiality of the language with which he expresses these concepts. He provides the clue for us with the last word in the first verse of the first poem of the volume: "artificio." The baroque language and poetic devices which Hernández employs in Perito en lunas not only allow him to achieve a synthetic resolution of the contradiction between Nature and Art, but also permit him, as Sijé observed, to change himself from subject to poetic object in his work. Thus he is able to observe his own suicide and death from the ironic distance provided by the playful and highly artificial poetic devices he employs in this book. The reader has been reminded of another aspect of reality without, however, disturbing the general tone of the work.

#### 6. The Main Contradiction

But the most important contradiction in the bower at this stage is undoubtedly contained in the sexual theme. At the time he wrote this book Hernández was an adolescent experiencing the sexual desires common to most adolescents on the one hand, and the conviction that chastity was the



only road to spiritual purity on the other. This opposition between sexuality and Christian asceticism is present in most of Hernández's work of this period and was only to be resolved in later life by sex sanctioned by marriage and childbirth, and by the presence of larger contradictions in his poetic material. In the meantime sexuality provided the greatest single threat to otium both in this and other works.

This strong and threatening presence of sex is typical of the Classical pastoral, but not of Renaissance or later pastoral literature. In the latter, sex has been replaced by a more ethereal emotion originating in the Petrarchan tradition of courtly love. In Freudian terms we would say that it represented a Christian sublimation of the more earthly pagan expression of love and sex. Indeed, in the pagan pastoral, according to Rosenmeyer:

Sex takes the place of love, the physical relieves the spiritual, life conquers death, kinesis swamps the precarious stasis, which needs to be re-fashioned again and again. The life swirl of sex is ever-present on the horizon, promising to spill over into the still heart of the setting.<sup>18</sup>

This is far different from the Renaissance pastoral, in which the inhabitants of the bower sigh, suffer and sometimes even commit suicide as a result of loves which are, with few exceptions, unhappy; in that unreal world any suggestion of a sexual interest in the loved one would

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<sup>18</sup> Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 133.

have been seen as a totally incongruous element in the idealized world of the bower. Tension was provided in this version of the pastoral by the unattainable nature of the loved one, not by the menacing presence of sex. This development was present in the pagan pastoral in embryonic form, because there also love was generally unsuccessful in its aspiration, but sex had not yet been exorcized from the bower. Speaking of Theocritus' Daphnis, Rosenmeyer says that he

. . . does not know the concept of chastity. His refusal to love is not a matter of spiritual sacrifice or commitment, but an assertion of his freedom against what he regards as an illicit compulsion. He does not consider love wrong; he wishes to choose his love of the kind and in the manner that he elects. It would, of course, be going too far to deny that Theocritus' hero does in some fashion anticipate the distinction, pervasive in pastoral drama, between the good--i.e., non-carnal--hero and the bad, aggressive, satyr villain.<sup>19</sup>

What we are actually dealing with is a single literary tradition, but with an all-important intervening ideological development: Christianity with its definition of "pure" love as "spiritual"--that is, asexual--love, and its consequent glorification of chastity as the most perfect of human states.

## 7. Pagan-Christian Opposition

The fascinating thing about Miguel Hernández's work --especially in the context of Spanish literature, in which

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 80.



erotic writing is virtually nonexistent--is to see this conflict between the pagan and Christian traditions in the pastoral take place in the most explicit fashion. This has led Juan Cano Ballesta to write:

. . . Miguel Hernández, por su hondo arraigo en la tierra y por la reiterada meditación del motivo sexual, coincide con intuiciones importantes de mitologías primitivas y de los poetas griegos, y vuelve a desenterrar metáforas de tradición varias veces milenaria, expresión vigorosa y honda de los más profundos misterios de la vida.<sup>20</sup>

This type of statement, though it points to a real quality in Hernández's writing, seems to me more an expression of what I have termed the myth of Miguel Hernández rather than a useful hypothesis to explain why Hernández's work contains such explicit sexuality. I see this rather as a combination of frustrated sexuality and his commitment to both the Classical and the Renaissance pastoral traditions.

In Perito en lunas, the emotional content of the sexual conflict is removed, as in the case of the other themes we have examined, by the techniques of self-objectification and the ironical distance produced by the baroque poetic devices in the language. As in the other cases, Hernández does not allow a conflict which in other works he expresses in much stronger terms to destroy the atmosphere of pastoral otium he has painstakingly constructed in Perito en lunas.

Examples of this process abound in this book. Two

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<sup>20</sup> Cano Ballesta, op. cit., p. 161.

of the octavas, numbers X and XI, were entitled "Sexo en instante," 1 and 2, and seem particularly interesting because of the explicit nature of their treatment of the theme. They read as follows:

## X

A un tic-tac, si bien sordo, recupero  
la perpendicular morena de antes  
bisectora de cero sobre cero,  
equivalentes ya, y equidistantes.  
Clama en imperativo por su fuero,  
con más cifra, si pocas, por instantes;  
pero su situación, extrema en suma,  
sin vértice de amor, holanda espuma.

## XI

Al polo norte del limón amargo  
desde tu arena azul, cociente higuera!  
Al polo norte del limón subiera,  
que no a tu sur, y subo sin embargo.  
Colateral a su almidón, más largo,  
aquél amaga de otra y una esfera.  
A dedo en río, falta anillo en puente:  
¡cómo he de vadearte netamente!

The first poem appears to be a description of masturbation from erection ("recupero/la perpendicular morena de antes") to ejaculation ("holanda espuma"). The penis ("la perpendicular morena") neatly bisects the testicles ("bisectora de cero sobre cero"), which are of equal size and equidistant from the penis ("equivalentes ya, y equidistantes"). The erect penis nears the climax ("Clama en imperativo por su fuero"), but lacking a sexual partner ("sin vértice de amor") can only end in manual ejaculation ("holanda espuma"). The poem begins with two quotes, one of which, from Góngora, contains the same allusion to the

male genital organs:

. . . fija en nivel la balanza  
con afecto fugitivo  
fulgor de mancebo altivo . . .

The metaphor is that of the scales held from above, with a long needle indicating the weight of that which was hanging in the round plates at either side.

The second poem begins with a symbol of the female genitals, and seems to correspond to the second quote that precedes X, "¡Hacia ti que, necesaria, / aun eres bella! . . . ," by Jorge Guillén. The symbol is that of the higuera or fig tree, a symbol which reappears in a poem written during this same period, entitled "ODA--a la higuera," and which begins:

Abiertos, dulces sexos femininos,  
o negros, o verdales;  
mínimas botas de morados vinos,  
cerrados: genitales  
lo mismo que horas fúnebres e iguales.

(OC, p. 85)

The bitter lemon is a reference to the poet's own breast (see his later sonnet, "Me tiraste un limón y tan amargo" in El rayo que no cesa, OC, p. 215) and is probably from the popular tradition, as in the following copla:

De tu ventana a la mía  
me tirastes un limón,  
me pegastes en el pecho  
pecho de mi corazón.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the poem is again a lament caused by sexual frustration

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<sup>21</sup> Folk Music and Poetry of Spain and Portugal, Ed. by Kurt Schindler, (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1941), p. 123.

since Hernández cannot satisfy his desire with the woman who caused it or, apparently, anyone else ("A dedo en río, falta anillo en puente").

#### 8. Sex and Death

As in the case of the death theme, sexual symbolism appears at the very beginning of Perito en lunas and continues throughout the book. The two themes are linked, in fact, in octava XXXVII, which Hernández entitled "Crimen Pasional":

Fría prolongación, colmillo incluso,  
de sus venas, si inestables ya, de acero  
y salidas de madre por ayuso,  
injerta en luna cata vivo cuero.  
Si la firma Albacete, hizo mal uso,  
a lo incommensurable, de mi entero.  
Lengua en eclipse, senos en agraz,  
estamos para siempre en guerra, en paz.

Here we have the connection sex-death established through the knife-fang-moon symbols, the moon representing a woman's breasts. These symbols will recur in the poet's later work, the first two in the first poem in El rayo que no cesa, which begins with the lines:

Un carnívoro cuchillo  
de ala dulce y homicida  
sostiene un vuelo y un brillo  
alrededor de mi vida.

and continues in the fourth strophe:

Tal es la mala virtud  
del rayo que me rodea,  
que voy a mi juventud  
como la luna a la aldea. (OC, p. 213)

Here again the knife represents the sexual urge and is

connected with death and, interesting enough, with the moon, although the tone of this poem is serious while in the octava quoted above the baroque language and metaphorical technique render the basic theme--the murder of a woman--unreal and devoid of emotion.

#### 9. Moon Symbolism

The connection between moon and breast will recur in one of Hernández's most famous and most moving poems written in prison shortly before his death, the "Nanas de la cebolla," in which he writes:

Una mujer morena  
resuelta en luna  
se derrama hilo a hilo  
sobre la cuna.  
Ríete, niño,  
que te traigo la luna  
cuando es preciso. (OC, p. 418)

Basic symbols, as well as the themes they represent and the interconnections between them, recur throughout Hernández's work with remarkable consistency. In this case, the moon-breast-sex-death connection throws light on the title of the book itself. Now we know more about the nature of the moons in which the poet considered himself expert.

The moon-breast correspondence is naturally related in pastoral poetry to moon-udder, as in XXXVIII, entitled "Ubres," in which the poet describes the goat's udders as he milks them as "Manantiales de lunas, las mejores." The relationship between nanny goats and women is made even

more explicit in a prose composition from this period, "CABRA--fórmula de feminidad" (OC, p. 952), which begins "Véase la mujer a cuatro patas . . ." and ends " . . . ¡Eva!, traducción desnuda, por mía, su autor, de este inicial modelo de feminidad, zamarreado."

Animal symbols in Perito en lunas for the male include the bull (III and IV), which will recur throughout the poet's work; the snake, a classic phallic symbol connecting evil, temptation and women in the Biblical tradition of Adam and Eve; and the rooster. The poem devoted to this final gallant, octava XIII, begins by comparing him to the Archangel Gabriel as he announces the dawn and ends by directly quoting the last verse of Góngora's "Soledad Primera": "'a batallas de amor, campos de pluma.'"

The importance of the sexual theme and its link with death is revealed by the last poem in this volume, number XLII, entitled "Guerra de estfo." It is linked to the first poem in Perito en lunas, "Suicida en cierce," which we have examined above, by the phallic symbol pita, a plant of the cactus family known in the southern United States as Spanish Bayonet. The poem reads:

¡Oh combate imposible de la pita  
con la que en torno mío luz avanza!  
Su bayoneta, aunque incurriendo en lanza,  
en vano con sus filos se concita;  
como la de elipsoides ya crinita,  
geométrica chumbera, nada alcanza:  
lista la luz me toma sobre el huerto,  
y a cañonazos de cigarras muerto.

The meaning of the poem is clearer if one compares it with



other poems of this same period, in which Hernández constantly laments the battle between the flesh and the spirit, which the latter habitually loses, at least in the heat of summer. As he says in "ESTIO--robusto" (OC, pp. 102-105), "Cuando no se es esclavo de la espuma, / se es mártir de la carne y la cigarra."

Yielding to the greatest temptation of the flesh--sex--is spiritual death or suicide to the young poet. This, the greatest threat to the otium of the pastoral bower constructed with such care and attention to the pastoral tradition in Perito en lunas, is finally triumphant as the poem--and the book--end with the word "muerto." The final resolution of this battle ("guerra de estío"), which provides the bower at this stage of his work with its greatest dialectical tension, is fated to be the poet's yielding to the demand of the flesh--the victory of pagan pastoralism over Christian asceticism.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE BOWER THREATENED

The contradictions that threatened the peace of the bower were deliberately muted by the poet in Perito en lunas because he realized that their full expression would destroy the otium essential to the classical pastoral. In that book he wished to create a closed, unified poetic world, and so he adhered very closely to his classical models. In the work of his next period, however, he expressed his conflicting feelings much more clearly and forcefully.

#### 1. Period of Transition

One reason for this is probably that he felt the contradictions in his own life much more strongly. This period, 1933-1934, falls between his first attempt to establish himself in Madrid in 1932 and his second, successful attempt two years later. Hernández left Orihuela to enter the world of letters and to establish himself as an independent person. Orihuela not only limited him intellectually, but it also meant that he had to remain under the control of his father who was, according to Miguel's brother Vicente, "un hombre muy duro, autoritario, hasta



violento si alguien se oponía a su voluntad."<sup>1</sup> His father, who wanted Miguel to be a goatherd, was responsible for ending the poet's brief formal schooling, and when he found him reading in his room at night, Vicente said, "se producían escenas terribles, que nos dejaban aterrorizados."<sup>2</sup>

Under these circumstances it is understandable that Hernández was desperate to escape Orihuela. His first trip to Madrid was organized with the help of his mother and sister Elvira and without his father's knowledge; a "verdadera fuga," according to one of his friends in Orihuela.<sup>3</sup> When he was forced to return home because he had been unable to find work in the capital, he must have felt not only humiliated but doubly desperate to escape again. However, it was to be two years before he would have accumulated the money necessary for his second trip. Furthermore, he had had a taste of freedom and of broader horizons; he could never again adapt himself to the life of a shepherd and the tyranny of his father. This was childhood's end for Hernández, and an end to the more or less simple pastoralism we have examined up to this point. From now on his pastoral world would become increasingly complex and its contradictions more apparent.

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Couffon, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

## 2. Identity Crisis

This change in the poet's psychology and literary world is expressed strikingly in a prose composition, "PASTOR--plural," that he published in La Verdad of Murcia in 1933 (OC, pp. 936-37). In it Hernández describes how he was walking one morning in the mountains near Orihuela where he used to take his father's herd. He still feels himself to be a shepherd, even though he no longer is (after returning to Orihuela he found work first as cashier in a store and then as secretary to a local notary<sup>4</sup>):

Este yo mío, era un pastor sin ganado,  
marchando por los mismos lugares por que antes  
conducía mansedumbre, sencillez, lana.

Suddenly he finds himself face to face with a real shepherd and his flock of goats. Hernández's dog barks, and the other, after questioning the poet's presence there, orders him to leave. Hernández obeys, realizing that he has symbolically confronted himself:

El pastor, el otro yo, que no era de mí, me echaba.  
Me acometió casi un desconsuelo de adán expulsado.  
Tuve el sentimiento de que era yo quien me echaba,  
sin quererirme:--¡ Vete, Miguel; vete de ti!

As the poet walks down the mountain he leaves the other alone "en su altura con su inocencia baladora y apenada en dispersión." And no longer will he be able to find in the countryside the peace of mind and spirit which he found there as a child and an adolescent.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

Ya no pude apurar sin retama las horas  
campesinas con la vocación de serenidad  
y alegría con que las había buscado.

It is truly childhood's end. On leaving his father's home and Orihuela he had changed irrevocably and would never be able to believe again in the first bower he had so carefully constructed. He still feels himself to be a shepherd but his future fields of endeavor and his future identity lie elsewhere. He has yet to define himself, but the break with the relatively uncomplicated world of his childhood is clear and irrevocable.

The poet compensates for the agony of this transitional period by writing steadily. He also experiments with other literary models more appropriate than Góngora to the existential drama he is experiencing. This is the period when he writes his Calderonian auto sacramental, for example, which we will examine later in this chapter. Other influences include Garcilaso and Quevedo, whose imprint will be evident in the book of sonnets he composed at the end of this period, El rayo que no cesa. This was also a more generalized phenomenon, since in these years Góngora was displaced by Garcilaso and Quevedo as models among the classic authors, and Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo among the modern authors.

### 3. Spirit-Flesh Dichotomy

The conflict of spiritual love or asceticism versus sexual desire is one of the principal contradictions in

this period. As we have seen, it appeared, thinly disguised, as one of the most basic themes of Perito en lunas. Now even that thin disguise falls away and we are able to observe clearly what was evidently an agonizing conflict in the poet's life. On the one hand we have the poet expressing the desire for sexual love with innocence, as in his two ecolgues of this period. Both are written in sílvas, irregular stanzas of mixed seven- and eleven-syllable verses, the same form employed by Garcilaso in his Egloga primera.

In the first of the two poems, "EGLOGA--nudista" (OC, pp. 99-102), we have nudity equated with purity: "Desnudos, sí, vestidos de inocencia." However, since Christian theology teaches that this combination has been impossible since Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, Hernández projects himself back to that idyllic state:

Desnudos: se comienza  
de nuevo la creación y la sonrisa,  
sin vicio ni vergüenza  
íntimamente unidos con la brisa.

Even as in the Biblical paradise, sexual temptation is present in Hernández's pristine bower:

Queriendo está venenos  
serpientes el manzano,  
que alrededor del tronco y de sí mismas,  
a lo látigo prismas,  
a lo largo barrenos,  
ofrezcan, como en juego malabares,  
sus pecados en almíbares mollaros.  
--Largas y demasiadas las serpientes  
para lo corto y poco del pecado.

The poet simply shrugs this off for the moment with his vision of the purity of biological functions:

Nuestra función de vida  
cumplimos sin ningún inconveniente.  
Nos vamos contra el viento  
y nos circula, sangre transparente,  
su sensibilidad y sentimiento.

He ends with the recognition that this is only a temporary state of grace:

Somos adán y eva  
que ha reanudado Dios a la edad nueva.  
¡Ay! Hasta que al estío  
el otoño releva,  
y el ángel, expulsándonos del frío,  
de nuestros dos estados verdaderos  
a un infierno de calles y sombreros,  
nos recuerda de ser, por nuestros males,  
no padres principales,  
sino hijos postreros.

In the second of the eclogues, "EGLOGA--menor" (OC, pp. 110-112), there is no hint of conflict, simply the desire of the poet for his loved one:

. . . veo,  
el fiel plenilunar de mi deseo  
remitir a tu vértice, hortelana.

The poem ends with the traditional idyll in the shepherd's hut:

Te besaré con seda,  
me mirarás con rosas, blancas digo,  
y nuestro amor alumbrarán candiles  
allá, luego, en la choza circunfleja  
con la hierba en el sitio de la teja,  
donde crecen colgados perejiles,  
y los gusanos, mis mayores bienes,  
su afán de lujos dejan en rehenes.

Side by side with these poems are others in which the poet aspires to and seems to achieve, although always

tenuously, a state of pure Christian asceticism, devoid of sexuality. For example, in "INVIERNO--puro" (OC, pp. 107-110), he establishes a pastoral setting in winter, that season usually being symbolic of asceticism in his work:

(DICIEMBRE)

Ya verdeció en el surco el pan temprano,  
que el labrador sembró sobre Castilla  
con un vuelo gracioso de su mano.

The winter cold is painful, but it is a purifying pain which the poet prefers to the pain of yielding to sexual temptation:

¡Oh, qué puro color para mi frente,  
harta ¡tanto! del fuego sanjuanero  
que me hacía pecar a lo frecuente!

Thus he achieves again a temporary state of grace:

Anda el alma en un hilo de desvelo  
por esta luz vacante en tanta hora,  
pasturando cometa, frío y cielo.

#### 4. Mystical Yearnings

These intervals of innocent love or painful asceticism are rarities in the bower, however. They are the extreme poles of the contradiction, but much more frequent are the poet's lamentations because his flesh is weak and he cannot withstand temptation. An interesting example of this is "CANTICO--corporal (yo, en busca de mi alma)" (OC, pp. 125-27), inspired in San Juan de la Cruz's mystic pastoral Cántico espiritual. In it, perhaps to symbolize the difference in emphasis between his feelings

and those of the mystics (he is unable to free himself from the temptations of the flesh, finding them too attractive), he employs the same strophic form as San Juan and Fray Luis, the lira, but varies it by using three verses of eleven syllables and two of seven, instead of two of eleven and three of seven. The result is a somewhat heavier, more earthbound stanza. The poet burns with desire for divinity ("Soy llama con ardor de ser ceniza") but his inability to achieve it results in a split in his personality similar to that we observed in the prose passage dealing with his pastoral identity. Here he says: "Yo ya no soy: yo soy mi anatomía." He ends the poem with three rather ambiguous stanzas which apparently refer to his soul, but which suggest that he is actually thinking of a woman of flesh and bone, the source of his inability to achieve the mystical state:

¿Y tu boca?, reparo de la mía,  
 ¡ay! bello mal que cura;  
 ¡ay! alta nata de mi pastoría,  
 ¡ay! majada segura  
 y oveja de mi boca, si pastura.

Esparcida por todos los lugares,  
 en ellos te deseo.  
 Sigo tus huellas, flores de azahares,  
 te silbo y te zureo,  
 con los vientos de carne me peleo.

Patria de mis suspiros y mi empeño,  
 celeste femenina;  
 vuelve la hermosa página del ceño  
 que cielos contamina.  
 Yo para ti, si tú para mi ruina.

In "Primera lamentación de la carne" (OC, pp. 129-30),



Hernández again expresses the tyranny of his flesh over his spirit:

El sol ya panifica soledades:  
su luz es ya membruda.  
Y yo me altero ya bajo mi carne,  
bajo su dictadura.

His struggle against temptation is, as always, destined to fail:

Malaganas me ganan, con meneos  
y aumentos de pecados;  
me corrijo intenciones y deseos  
en vano, en vano, en vano.

The resultant pain is so great that the poet desires death to free him from himself:

Oh Muerte, oh inmortal almendro cano:  
mondo, pero florido,  
sálvame de mi cuerpo y sus pecados,  
mi tormento y mi alivio.

The poem ends with the recurrent theme of masturbation:

La desgracia del mundo, mi desgracia  
entre los dedos tengo,  
oh carne de orinar, activa y mala,  
que haciéndome estás bueno.

Hernández's struggle against sexual desire is summed up in the following sonnet, entitled "DE MAL--en peor" (OC, p. 151), which he begins by quoting from one of the octavas of Perito en lunas. It was number XVI, entitled "Serpiente," in which the snake symbolized, as always in his poetry, the penis and the temptation of the flesh. He says in the later poem:

"Dame, aunque se horroricen los gitanos  
(dije una vez hablando a la serpiente,  
con un deseo de pecar ferviente),  
veneno activo el más, de los manzanos."



Inauditos esfuerzos, soberanos,  
ahora mi voluntad frecuentemente  
hace por no caer en la pendiente  
de mi gusto, mis ojos y mis manos.

Antes no me esforzaba y me caía;  
y ahora que, con un tacto, un susto, un cuidado,  
voy sobre los cristales de este mundo,

no me levanto ni me acuesto día  
que malvado cien veces no haya sido,  
ni que caiga más vil y más profundo.

## 5. Failure of Christian Pastoral

The contradiction between sexual desire and Christian asceticism could be resolved in two possible ways: sublimation into mysticism or self-hatred. This sonnet and, indeed, most of the poems he wrote up to this point contain the latter resolution, with its attendant urge toward self-destruction. The Christian ideal is antithetic to the pastoral ideal and, unless some other solution than mysticism or self-hatred is found, will destroy the bower. This incompatibility between Christianity and the pastoral ideal is expressed thus by Poggioli:

Both Christian theologians and pastoral poets see in that condition [poverty] both a sign of humility and a token of grace. The former, however, exalt the pauper's estate because it teaches self-resignation; the latter, because it teaches self-contentment. The first alternative connects poverty with self-mortification and self-abasement; the second, with a self-gratification that finds its check in self-control. In brief, Christian poverty is a quest after innocence, pastoral poverty, after happiness as well . . . The shepherd, unlike the snake or the monk, is obsessed by neither temptation nor guilt, and is free from the sense of sin.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 153.

This is why Poggioli concludes ". . . the critical mind can only treat as failures all attempts to Christianize the pastoral, or to translate Christianity into pastoral terms."<sup>6</sup>

#### 6. A Temporary Solution

Hernández's search for a viable modern pastoral would have to find some solution to this contradiction, some dialectical synthesis which would enable him to continue to deal with the problem on a higher plane of development. That synthesis, still well within the Christian tradition but also compatible with the pagan tradition, was to be found in his love for Josefina Manresa, later to be his wife and transmuted poetically into what until now he had lacked in his bower: the beloved shepardess. Immediately following the above-quoted sonnet in his Obras completas we find the following poem "A mi gran Josefina adorada" (pp. 151-52):

Tus cartas son un vino  
que me trastorna y son  
el único alimento  
para mi corazón.

Desde que estoy ausente  
no sé sino soñar,  
igual que el mar tu cuerpo,  
amargo igual que el mar.

Tus cartas apaciento  
metido en un rincón  
y por redil y hierba  
les doy mi corazón.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

Aunque bajo la tierra,  
 mi amante cuerpo esté,  
 escíbeme, paloma,  
 que yo te escribiré.

Cuando me falte sangre  
 con zumo de clavel,  
 y encima de mis huesos  
 de amor cuando papel.

It is a poem written within the tradition of a pastoral lament for the absent loved one, expressing a love which will be eternal and transcend death. The symbolism of the third stanza is purely pastoral.

Thus the poet has found a solution to his agonizing existential problem which is, for the moment, within the Christian tradition. After all, Saint Paul had advised men, if they were unable to practice the superior good which was sexual asceticism, to marry and let their surrender to the pleasures of the flesh at least serve the purpose of perpetuating the Christian family through procreation, the only legitimate reason for sexual relations, in his opinion. Thus Hernández is able to reconcile both his neo-Catholicism and his sexual urge in an ideologically acceptable solution. It is not a solution free of guilt or the sense of sin, which Poggioli felt were incompatible with the pastoral condition, but it will serve for the moment until the poet has come into contact with other ideologies and other world-views in Madrid.

## 7. The Social Element

The other basic contradiction that appears in

Hernández's work of this period is the threat posed to the bower by growing revolutionary sentiment in the Spanish peasantry--to the bower conceived in traditional conservative terms, to be more exact. This position is expressed by Rosenmeyer as follows:

When pastoral is used for the purposes of satire, or even when it pauses to indulge in a temporary contrasting of country and city, the natural life that is set against the vices of the city tends to be Hesiodic rather than strictly pastoral. Hesiod is the prototype of the writer who protests against an order which he thinks interferes with the rights and the norms of the village culture. The more strongly the writer condemns the sins of the enemy, the greater is his obligation to describe the society he favors in colors which suggest social responsibility, moral health, and economic vigor--all elements with which the pastoral has no truck.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the whole question here is what constitutes the pastoral--especially the pastoral today. Rosenmeyer regards Theocritus as the originator of the pastoral and the only pure representative of the genre, which he believes was flawed by the social preoccupations of Virgil and the Roman pastoralists. This, however, is meaningless in terms of defining the pastoral tradition today. A much more practical view for present-day critics, in my opinion, is that stated by Leo Marx:

Although Theocritus is regarded as the first pastoral poet, Virgil's Eclogues are the true fountainhead of the pastoral strain in our literature. . . it is in the Eclogues that the political overtones of the pastoral situation become evident . . . The first eclogue certainly represents more than a simple wish-image of bucolic pleasure. No sooner does Virgil

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<sup>7</sup> Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 212.

sketch in the ideal landscape than he discloses an alien world encroaching from without . . . What is out there, from the reader's point of view, is a world like the one he inhabits; it contains great cities like Rome, organized power, authority, restraint, suffering, and disorder. We are made to feel that the rural myth is threatened by an incursion of history. The state of mind of Meliboeus--we should call it alienation nowadays--brings a<sup>8</sup> countervailing force to bear upon the pastoral ideal.

It is precisely the presence of this "countervailing force" which distinguishes "complex" from "sentimental" pastoralism in Leo Marx's view.

It might seem odd that Hernández was troubled by the prospect of peasant revolt for he himself was a peasant and thoroughly aware of the reality of life for the rural poor. However, it was during this period that he was powerfully influenced by Ramón Sijé's neo-Catholic ideology, upon which he depended until he began to associate with Pablo Neruda, Rafael Alberti, and other leftist intellectuals after returning to Madrid in 1934. The contradiction we are now dealing with is in no way a minor or adolescent conflict in Hernández's work. It is the essence of the ideological conflict in Spain between progressives and traditionalists that led to the Civil War of 1936, and in literary terms it brought into question the viability of the pastoral itself. Indeed, in Poggioli's view:

While creating quasi-pastoral utopias, the modern world destroyed the conventional and traditional pastoral through four cultural trends that arose together and partly coincided. These were the

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<sup>8</sup> Leo Marx, op. cit., pp. 19-21.



humanitarian outlook, the idea of material progress, the scientific spirit, and artistic realism.<sup>9</sup>

That is why Poggioli felt that ". . . normally there is no political pastoral but of the conservative Right . . ."<sup>10</sup>

#### 8. Class Differences

There is another aspect to this contradiction. The pastoral convention is one in which a writer of the middle or upper classes uses poor country people for the entertainment of middle- or upper-class readers. As Empson puts it, the pastoral was "about" the people, but not "by" or "for" them.<sup>11</sup> In Hernández's case, however, his writing was not only about the people but also "by" and "for" them. He himself was of peasant origins and he was destined to remain poor. As for his audience, he not only intended his poetry to be read by the people, but as early as Perito en lunas he took it to the people himself. Concha Zardoya describes the process as follows:

Se procura un cartelón en el que aparecen figuras o «cuadros», pintados seguramente por él mismo. El asunto del cartel procede de los temas--tan plásticos--de Perito en lunas. El improvisado juglar lleva también un puntero, una campana y una jaula con un limón. . . se va por los pueblos, mercados y ferias con su teatro en embrión, del cual es autor, director y escenógrafo a la par.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>11</sup>William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, (New York: New Directions, 1974), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Zardoya, op. cit., p. 16.

There is, then, a basic difference between Hernández and the traditional writers of pastoral. He identified with working people and was anxious for his work to be understood by them, even if this meant explaining it to them himself. However, this could have been the product of the feeling of alienation we saw in the prose selection examined at the beginning of this chapter. As Hernández consciously incorporated his work into the pastoral tradition he felt a growing gap between himself and his people--between himself and his own class origins. This resulted in an even stronger urge to identify himself with the social class he believed he belonged to. He undoubtedly felt that, since the subject matter of his poetry was pastoral, his listeners would understand and enjoy them once he had explained his poetic devices. However, the very fact that an explanation was needed meant that there was already some distance between himself and his audience. This contradiction would not be resolved until the Civil War and postwar period, when the poet employed popular poetic forms almost exclusively--the Romance, copla, seguidilla, etc.--in an effort to better communicate with his audience.

#### 9. Unresolved Duality

In this period of Hernández's work the contradictions are unresolved. On the one hand we have examples of what Leo Marx would term "sentimental" pastoralism, little cameos presenting idyllic pastoral scenes. Two beautiful



examples of this are his sonnets "Después de un golpe de agua necesario" (OC, p. 152) and "RASO--y cubierto" (OC, p. 153).

Después de un golpe de agua necesario  
al pan que avaloró la barbechera,  
en una principiante primavera  
el mundo vuelve al día originario.

Un religioso aroma de incensario  
hace la rama, el surco y la ladera,  
y es la vida más dulce que una pera,  
y todo crece más que de ordinario.

Gotea el aire miel y mansedumbre,  
y el ojo del pastor y el campesino  
despeja a gozos su visión sombría.

¡Qué esbelta y renovada está la cumbre!  
El cielo, amor, el cielo nos previno  
para después de un llanto una alegría.

A la serena duerme mi ganado,  
tornaluna de música y sendero,  
y está su lana, tanto da el lucero  
con ella, de un color puro escarchado.

A la serena duerme mi ganado,  
y al abrigo de un lado de romero  
¡qué cosa más florida de cordero,  
que me lleva perdido enamorado!

Aire arriba, me voy por la mañana  
en busca de la hierba no mordida,  
delante de la nieve que vigilo.

Aire abajo, me alejo de la lana,  
por la tarde, a la cosa más florida,  
y la gozo pacífico y tranquilo.

This is the traditional bower, with the pastoral otium undisturbed by any of the tensions we have noted. I think it is significant that in the first sonnet he is actually creating an Edenic vision, just as he did in "EGLOGA--nudista." Nothing short of a return to the Garden of Eden

would sustain such an idyllic view.

#### 10. Didactic Writing

However, in contrast to the above, we also have a series of poems in which Hernández adopts either a didactic tone, as in "Alabanza del árbol" (OC, pp. 158-161), or an admonitory one, as in "La morada amarilla" (OC, pp. 142-145) and "Profecía sobre el campesino" (OC, pp. 161-163). The first of these poems, "Alabanza del árbol," is inspired in Book Two of Virgil's Georgics. In it the poet praises trees, an indispensable element in any traditional bower,

Imposible sin ti la primavera  
los verdes paraísos terrenales.

and mentions their beneficial effect on the people who sit beneath them:

Debajo de tu amparo creosotado,  
las batallas son paces,  
el trabajo sosiego sosegado.

Agrupas a los hombres y los haces  
hermanos en tu umbría.

However, the bower is being profaned by the very people who should appreciate it most:

La inquisición obrera  
está quemando, mártir de madera,  
lo hermoso de tu vida;  
¡qué imposibilidad ya de los abriles!

The poet then calls on his brothers to stop cutting down trees and instead engage in a reforestation campaign:

Hermano y campesino,  
hay que extender la encina,  
que propagar el pino,  
fresco en el campo, ardiente en la cocina.  
Vuelve a la educación del arbolado,  
a la repoblación de la campaña.

and ends on a very didactic, Virgilian note:

Espúlgale alternado  
el racimo y el piojo.  
Cauteriza y restaña  
con barro sus heridas del gorgojo.

In "La morada amarilla" Hernández expresses his anguish over the more general neglect of agriculture, which he attributes to the peasants' growing alienation from their traditional labors and religion, which he equates in this and other writings of the period. Again, he describes a bower, although now it is the Castilian plateau, which he sees as the very essence of spirituality:

¡Qué morada! es Castilla:  
¡Qué morada! de Dios y ¡qué amarilla!  
¡Qué solemne! morada  
de Dios la tierra arada, enamorada,  
la uva morada y verde la semilla.  
  
¡Qué cosechón! de páramo y llanura.  
¡Qué lejos!, ¡ay!, de trigo.  
¡Qué hidalga paz! ¡Qué mística verdura!  
y ¡qué viento! rodrigo.

But it is also the traditional bower with shepherds peacefully caring for their flocks:

¡Tan bien! que está, ya arriba, y aun abajo,  
la soledad lanar de los pastores,  
proveyendo distancias  
de soledad, de amor, de vigilancias,  
encima de la loma  
que lo deja en el cielo que lo toma  
La espiga rabitiesa  
nutrida de altitudes . . .

All is not well in the bower, however, and it is due to the peasants' rebellion against their traditional Catholicism:

. . . Esta Mancha manchega,  
¿por qué? se desarrima  
al cielo en este tiempo, y le da voces.

The result is that the labors of the countryside are being neglected:

La viña alborotada  
está la mies revuelta:  
ruedo es la era ya de polvo y nada:  
¡tanto que fué! la era, por la trilla,  
todo de Dios, en Dios siempre resuelta.

This poses a major threat to the traditional bower, for one of its conditions is that it be a self-contained economy, satisfying its simple needs with its own products. Any other situation would mean dependence on the outside world, which would make it vulnerable to the very forces from which it represents a refuge, and would destroy the illusion of freedom. The solution, as Hernández sees it at this point, is a return to traditional virtues, meaning basically traditional religion:

--De casta te vendrá lo de Castilla,  
¡oh campal ricaembra! castellana,  
asunto, como Dios, de la semilla.  
No esperes a mañana  
para volver al pan, a Dios y al vino:  
son ello tu destino.  
Y has de ser resumible ¡siempre!, Amiga,  
en un racimo, un cáliz y una espiga.

In "Profecía sobre el campesino," Hernández joins the themes of the two poems we have examined above. He begins, as before, addressing the peasants as their brother, using the sickle as the symbol of their militant anger in its triple function as tool, weapon and traditional symbol, with the hammer, of the Communist Party:

Tú no eres tú, mi hermano y campesino;  
tú eres nadie y tu ira, facultada  
de manejables arcos acerados.

The result is that the peasantry is harboring dangerous designs:

Cornalón por la hoz, áspero sobre  
la juventud del vino,  
apacientas designios desiguales;

which lead them to make unreasonable demands:

Pides la expropiación de la sonrisa  
y la emancipación de la corriente  
--¡lo imposible!--del río.

and either neglect or destroy their bower:

Dejas manca en los árboles la brisa,  
al ave sin reposo ni morada,  
con el hacha y el brío.

Escaso en todo y abundante en nada,  
el florido lugar de regadío  
se torna seco.

\* \* \*

Al prado no pastura ya la oveja:  
pasto puro es la oveja ahora del prado.

The result will be bloody civil strife and even worse  
oppression should the progressive forces triumph:

Tu voz, de valle en valle y peña en peña,  
de tu cólera espejo contrahecho,  
incita a tus iguales a verdugos,  
para sacar de todo--¿qué provecho?--  
más trabajos, más bueyes y más yugos.

The solution, again, is to return to their former love for  
their work, although the poet now adds an incongruously  
modern element to the bower, the machine:

¡Volver, volver al apisonamiento,  
al apisonamiento de los rulos!  
Sentir, a las espaldas el pellejo,  
el latir de las vides, el reflejo  
de la vida del vino,  
y la palpitación de los tractores.

Finally, Hernández prophesies a return to religion:

Día vendrá en un cercano venidero  
 en que revalorices la esperanza,  
 buscando la alianza  
 del cielo, y no la guerra.

¡Tierra de promisión y de bonanza  
 volverá a ser la tierra!

#### 11. His Early Theater

These themes are given symbolic unity in the poet's first major theatrical work, published in 1934, the auto sacramental Quien te ha visto y quien te ve y sombra de lo que eras (OC, pp. 437-582). This piece also represents another aspect of Hernández's experimentation with the traditional pastoral, because the Calderonian autos, which were his immediate inspiration, were the culmination of a long line of theatrical works of an allegorical religious nature containing pastoral symbolism and sometimes rustic language, beginning in the Middle Ages and appearing in the Renaissance with such authors as Gil Vicente and Juan del Encina (author of three Eglogas de Navidad).

Hernández's auto is traditional in its theme, in that it represents man's fall from grace through the temptations of the flesh and his suffering in this vale of tears, due to its gross materialism, until his reason is illuminated by the light of the Eucharist and he is saved by Christ's sacrifice, reduplicated at the end of the work by man's own redemption through martyrdom. The symbolism is basically pastoral, with the Hombre-Niño in the bower of

innocence at the beginning, described as follows by the  
Esposo, father of the Hombre-Niño:

Ve, hijo; ponte a correr  
por esos campales prados  
con los lanares ganados,  
la luz y las mariposas,  
antes que vengan las rosas  
a parecerte pecados.

The Hombre-Niño then falls from grace due to the  
action of Deseo, in the form of a goat (a common sex symbol  
in Hernández, as we saw in Chapter II), allied with the  
five senses, who are presented as rebellious laborers  
asking their employer for a raise in wages. Once again  
the sickle is used as a symbol of labor and of revolution,  
and now the hammer is added to make the symbolism totally  
explicit:

OLER.

Las hoces  
sirven para segar:  
pero yo he descubiertto  
que sirven además  
para humillar cabezas.

\* \* \*

OIR.

Yo, que el martillo doma  
huesos como el metal.

However, it is sex that causes man to fall from  
grace. Thus Hernández brings his two basic concerns of this  
period, sexual desire and the social question, together in  
this work in an attempt to give them a solution within the  
framework of neo-Catholicism. It was logical that he  
should link sexual satisfaction and revolutionary socialism,



given the fact that he equated religious purity and sexual abstinence. Since the time of the French Revolution sexual liberation has been linked with radical social change, favorably by some and with disfavor by others, namely, the defenders of traditional social values. These latter believe sexual liberation would result in the destruction of the family and, consequently, in social chaos. Interestingly enough, Freud himself, who has always been attacked by these same conservative elements, believed that sexual sublimation was essential to the preservation of traditional bourgeois society, a view that has been rejected by other social and psychological theorists such as Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse. Thus Hernández not only touches on some of the main social issues of our time in this work, but also reveals the extent to which they are rooted in our psyche.

## 12. The Pagan Bower

When the Hombre-Niño yields to temptation and eats of the apple of sexuality, he moves on to the bower of sensuality ("un vergel nocivo, reino de la sensualidad," in the poet's words), described as "un paraíso vicioso de higueras, manzanos y toda clase de árboles sensuales" in the stage directions. Hernández also suggests that this is the bower of pagan pastoralism when he says that it contains "las hierbabuenas de virgilio." That, of course, is precisely what he is trying to do in this period: replace pagan pastoralism with Christian pastoralism,

and what better vehicle than the auto sacramental, of combined pastoral and Christian tradition? That this solution was no solution, because Christian asceticism is incompatible with the hedonism essential to the pastoral bower and its atmosphere of otium, will rapidly become apparent in the poet's subsequent work.

After the fall the Hombre-Niño, now the Hombre, is counseled by the Shepherd, a dual symbol of Abel and Christ, to come to his bower of asceticism, the bower corresponding to Christian pastoralism, which he describes as follows:

Dicen que la sierra es fría;  
mas su frialdad, yo diría  
que invita a la desnudez.

¡Tan pura corre y tan ancha  
por el lomo extraordinario  
de las cimas, avalancha  
virginal! . . .

There the Shepherd will initiate the Hombre in Christian pastoralism ("Te enseñaré / a hacer tu vida pastora, / tranquila."):

Y con mucho amor, pastor  
has de ser; que el pastoreo  
solicita mucho amor,  
mucho ojo y avizor,  
y poco, ¡ningún deseo!

\* \* \*

Sabe mi ganado amigo,  
desde el mayor al cordero  
menor, que tiene conmigo  
mi amor, y que lo castigo  
por lo mucho que lo quiero.

The Hombre is attracted by the Christian bower:

A una vida de altitud  
que me enfríe de verdad  
fuegos de la juventud,  
donde compañía y virtud  
nieve son y soledad.

Donde la paz lana es,  
pena acordada la esquila,  
reina la blancura y res . . .

But he is subverted by Deseo and the five senses, who incite him to rebellion against the Shepherd and shout such slogans as: "El mundo es para todos," "¡Todos somos iguales!" "¡Abajo, explotadores!," "¡La huelga general, trabajadores!," "¡Dios es un mito!" and "¡Abajo los sencillos / de corazón!"

An idyllic pastoral scene between the Shepherd and his Shepherdess (apparently a symbol of the Virgin Mary) ensues, at the end of which the Hombre kills the Shepherd by plunging his sickle into his heart. This leads to repentance on the part of Deseo's former allies, the five senses, at which point Deseo begins to rave at them in a violent parody of the Left:

No tenéis nada de hombres:  
no sois machos, que sois hembras.  
Por detrás consentiréis  
que os den sin pedir licencia.  
Pero yo me vengaré  
de todos. ¡Venganza!, ¡ea!  
La revolución social  
he de armar en cuanto pueda.  
Voy a la Urreseté  
a dar de todo esto cuenta:  
alimentaré los odios,  
movilizaré las fuerzas,  
hoz y martillo serán  
vuestra muerte y nuestro lema;  
todas las malas pasiones:  
la lascivia, la vileza  
de la envidia, la ira roja,

la indignación roja y negra  
 y el rencor descolorido,  
 nuestra más firme defensa.  
 ¡Ay de vosotros, esclavos,  
 que pasáis hambres sedientas  
 y no le quitáis el pan  
 al que lo tira a la acequia  
 antes que veros comer! . . .

(Urreseté is an amalgam invented by Hernández to suggest the two revolutionary syndical organizations in Spain at that time, the UGT and the CNT.)

This is a curious speech in a number of ways. In the first place, we again see the link between political radicalism and sexuality in Hernández's mind. Sex runs through the speech from the first two lines to the reference to the "evil passion," lasciviousness. It is surprising to compare this speech with Hernández's subsequent writing, in which he composed almost identical speeches from a revolutionary point of view. No matter how strong an influence Neruda was to exert on the young poet, I find it hard to believe in such a sudden and total conversion. On the contrary, I sense a certain eloquence in this speech, especially in the last five verses, and suspect Hernández of protesting a bit too much. Or rather, this and similar writings are efforts to convince himself of the correctness of an ideological position--that of Sijé--which he had adopted more out of friendship than conviction.

### 13. The Christian Bower

The auto ends with the Shepherd reborn as the Buen Labrador who takes the Hombre to the fourth and final bower,

described as follows in the stage instructions:

. . . viña a punto de ser recolectada y rastros en espera de ser barbechos. A un lado, un monte de trigo, y a otro, un pino con la impaciencia del aire y unas cigarras soleadas sobre su verdor paciente. Habrá un ruido de trillos y de mieses recorridas y trabajadas, como de una era vecina . . . En una rama del pino habrá una cántara colgada, como una tórtola tierna en la horca.

The recurrent mention of the cicada is one of the most typical of the pastoral conventions. Rosenmeyer says on this score:

The most musical animal, because it is pure music and little else, and has none of the qualities associated with sex and strength, is the cicada. The literary tradition, from Homer to the Anacreonte, concerning cicadas and grasshoppers (they are not clearly distinguished) is full and virtually unanimous. They live on dew, or on nothing at all; their bodies are mere shells, but they have no wants. By way of compensation, they are marvellously gifted with speech or song.<sup>13</sup>

They are thus not only typical of the pastoral tradition, but are also apt symbols of the asceticism Hernández is advocating in this work.

The Hombre praises the new bower as the ideal pastoral retreat from a troubled world:

¡Qué olor a Dios echa el trigo!  
Yo alabo al buen labrador  
que a este retiro me trajo,  
y aquí, si me da trabajo,  
me da sosiego y amor.

It is to be destroyed by a hostile outside world, the world which always threatens the bower in the tradition of complex pastoralism. Deseo arrives with a revolutionary mob and

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<sup>13</sup>Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 134.



they burn the bower and the Hombre with it. The religious message of redemption through martyrdom is obvious, but the fact remains that the Christian bower is ultimately destroyed.

#### 14. The Threatening City

Two of Hernández's prose pieces from this period further clarify his ideas and show even more clearly his link with the pastoral tradition. In "MOMENTO--campesino" (OC, pp. 938-940) he speaks of the regenerative powers of the countryside:

El campo nos serena y pacifica, si nos hace mejores. Se quedan las horas sin relojes, con cálculos de pastor tan sólo; con relojes monteses de barrancos, sombras, agujas de piedra y sol.

He then warns the peasants of the dangers of the city, sophisticated and corrupt, in the most classic pastoral fashion:

Y vosotros, hombres de la soledad, campesinos de Dios, buscáis la compañía de la ciudad mala . . . Los hombres urbanos, cultos, pero sin cultura campesina, introdujeron en nuestras funciones las arañas que no pueden vivir si no es atadas a sus vicios brillantes, sus hilos, que impiden el desarrollo de las plantas. Os han destetado del campo. Os han expropiado la inocencia; os han desintegrado de vuestro cariño. Os han arrebatado la sabiduría del no querer saber, la alegría de ignorar, y no habéis protestado.

In the second piece, "VIA--de campesinos" (OC, pp. 958-959), he again exalts the knowledge one acquires in the country, "En el campo analfabeto es donde más se aprende," and condemns the city, exhorting its inhabitants to return to the regenerative rural life:

¡Oh, ciudad! malnutrida de labios removidos con todo lo peor: abandona tus muros. Hazte del campo donde naciste.

For it is in the countryside, obeying the natural order of things, which at that time included the social status quo for Hernández, that one can be truly free:

Libres, campesinos: ¡sed libres! Como las cometas, bajo la dictadura de los niños, encadenadas libremente a un hilo. Libres, campesinos: ¡id libres!, por el libre albedrío de la senda, la voluntad en sujeción, obedeciendo al polvo, a nada, a Dios.

The sentiments expressed in these prose selections are particularly significant because, in one form or another, they go to the very heart of Hernández's ideological assumptions, assumptions which will still remain long after he has rejected his neo-Catholic, traditionalist notions. This is because they lie at the very heart of the pastoral tradition itself, and Hernández will remain faithful to this tradition throughout his life.

One of these assumptions is that the rural life is purer than the life of the city, and that it contains certain regenerative powers. As Lynen says of the pastoral poetry of Robert Frost:

. . . he is playing upon a major theme of pastoral, present in the classical eclogues and reinforced in the Renaissance by the authority of Christian asceticism: the idea that retreat to the rural world purifies the mind and thus brings it closer to ultimate truth.<sup>14</sup>

This in turn is based on a belief so pervasive in our

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<sup>14</sup>Lynen, op. cit., p. 77.



culture that it has acquired the status of myth and we are barely aware that we are in fact dealing with an assumption and not established fact. Lynen says this myth is

. . . the belief that man, in his natural and healthy state, is organically related to his environment, and therefore that human nature is purest and most understandable where we find it in the most direct and simple relation to its physical setting . . . No doubt, a distrust of urban life is as old as civilization. It has always provided a motive for pastoral  
 . . .<sup>15</sup>

Whether this myth has in fact a basis in reality is a controversy which does not concern us in this study. What I want to point out is that we are not dealing with a quaint adolescent notion of our poet, but with one of the fundamental assumptions of the pastoral tradition itself.

#### 15. The Desire for Freedom

Another factor which will remain a constant throughout Hernández's life is the desire for freedom expressed above. Ironically, it will be this very desire which will be the determining factor in his abandoning the neo-Catholic ideology and joining the forces of social revolution. This is because dictatorship, however disguised, is incompatible with the pastoral ideal, the very raison d'être<sup>A</sup> of which is the desire of alienated, repressed urban intellectuals for a freer life, even if it has to be in an imaginary utopia. As Rosenmeyer says, speaking of the first pastoral poet:

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

The powerlessness of the Gods in Theocritus is one of the important factors for the vitality of the pastoral scene. Whatever their temporary ailments may be, the author gives his herdsmen a clean bill of health, and they know this. They are not always sure of their own capacities and desires; but at every turn they are sustained by the assurance that they are free. Their actions and their songs document this conviction. Freedom, like simplicity and leisure, is an endowment that the pastoral surrenders at its peril.<sup>16</sup>

This is another reason why the Christian pastoral, as Poggioli pointed out, had to be a failure, and Hernández is a prime example of this.

But perhaps one of the most basic points to be made in connection with this phase of Hernández's work is that it exemplifies another of the fundamental features of the pastoral: nostalgia for a lost Golden Age. The most famous example of this was Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, which was later to be given a Christian interpretation and seen as a prediction of the coming of Christ. The reason for its persistence in the pastoral tradition is that it provides a vision of social justice, even though it may only be in the past, and is caused by a certain class consciousness on the part of pastoral writers. As Poggioli says, "What threatens most the equilibrium of a pastoral community is the violence of those who are neither humble nor poor." Therefore, he adds,

The realization by the community that their peace, and even their very existence, may be destroyed by willful deeds, as well as by 'acts of God,' produces

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<sup>16</sup> Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 129.

a sense both of insecurity and of injustice. To restore at least ideally its own moral balance, the pastoral turns back to the myth of the Golden Age, and claims that in prehistoric time there existed a state of perfect equality and absolute justice . . .<sup>17</sup>

In Spanish literature the most famous statement of the Golden Age myth is Don Quijote's speech to the goat-herds in Chapter 11 of the first part of Cervantes's work. It comes as no surprise to learn that, according to Ramón Sijé, this speech made a profound impression on Hernández. Sijé wrote of his friend:

Al abrir una página del Ingenioso Hidalgo, evoca a sus antepasados cabreros en un ruego estupendo a Don Quijote.<sup>18</sup>

Poggioli says that this speech by Don Quijote represents

. . . the aristocratic view of pastoral justice, which, like all aristocratic views, is a retrospective utopia, a backward-looking dream.<sup>19</sup>

It is true that the purpose of many pastorals was to present a society in which people are reconciled to class differences, and the rich live peacefully with the poor, and it may even be, as Rosenmeyer maintains, that Golden Age nostalgia

. . . is, in essence, an aristocratic scheme contrived when new political and social developments threatened to destroy the influence of the noble lords, and caused them to look back with longing to a remembered glory.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>18</sup>Ramos, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>19</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>20</sup>Rosenmeyer, op. cit., p. 215.

However, I do not believe that this was Cervantes's intention when he wrote Don Quijote's Golden Age speech, nor Hernández's understanding of it when he read it. Cervantes's critical genius had a particularly sharp edge when he was dealing with the rich and powerful. And in his version of the Golden Age there were no class differences because, as Don Quijote says,

--Dichosa edad y siglos dichosos aquellos á quien los antiguos pusieron nombre de dorados, y no porque en ellos el oro, que en esta nuestra edad de hierro tanto se estima, se alcanzase en aquella venturosa sin fatiga alguna, sino porque entonces los que en ella vivían ignoraban estas dos palabras de tuyo y mío. Eran en aquella santa edad todas las cosas comunes . . .

In other words, Cervantes was describing as ideal a classless society in which private property did not exist, a form of primitive communism. This, I submit, is not the "aristocratic scheme" Rosenmeyer refers to, and it is difficult for the modern reader to avoid projecting Cervantes's "Backward-looking dream" into the future.

What I am suggesting is that Golden Age nostalgia takes several forms in Hernández's work. The form it has taken in the work we have dealt with in this chapter is indeed an "aristocratic scheme," or rather a scheme of the Spanish middle class to restore social peace and exorcize the evil spirits of socialist revolution with a new version of their traditional religion, neo-Catholicism. But while this had temporary appeal for Hernández, it could hardly be satisfactory to him in the long run,

because it did not respond to his class interests. After all, what interest did he really have, a penniless poet of peasant origin, in maintaining the status quo? As Poggioli points out, the modern age has brought with it the idea

. . . that man may help, but not hinder, the realization of the pastoral visions of old. But, when the ideal yields to doubt, when man fears that the forces of the past or reaction will prevent the automatic fulfillment of his heart's desire, then he becomes a radical and a rebel. Since involution seems to prevail over evolution, he recurs to revolution itself. . . . Yet when he does so he shatters the pastoral dream.<sup>21</sup>

The course of this process in the work of Miguel Hernández, and whether it "shatters the pastoral dream," or whether he succeeds in creating the pastoral of the Left that Empson believed possible, will be the subject of further study in Part II of this essay.

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<sup>21</sup>Poggioli, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

## PART II. THE CITY

"yo que llevo cubierta de  
montes la memoria"

--M.H.

## CHAPTER I

## MADRID

When Hernández returned to the Spanish capital in March of 1934, he was more fortunate than during his first visit. He was able to obtain work and establish himself there permanently. From this point on his life would be centered on the city, even though he would return to the country for brief idyllic periods with Josefina during the Civil War after they had been married.

1. Encounter with the City

The poet's reaction to the city was a complex one, and its relation to the pastoral design in his work is crucial, for as I have pointed out before, the city-country dialectic in its various forms is basic to the pastoral mode. On the one hand, Madrid represents freedom for Hernández: freedom from a tyrannical father, freedom from the narrow provincialism of the small-town intellectual circle he had been a member of, and possibly, freedom from poverty. In this sense the city represents the very opposite of what it symbolizes in traditional pastoralism, where it is the epitome of slavery, corruption and oppression in contrast to the freedom and purity of the rural bower. This provides a unique quality to Hernández's pastoralism, an added dimension not to be found in the



work of other writers, who are urban intellectuals escaping their environment through the fantasy of the rural retreat, and for whom, in Poggioli's words, "The bucolic dream has no other reality than that of imagination and art."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, for Dario Puccini this will lead to Hernández's " . . . rebelión contra su mismo limitado y prefigurado personaje de pastor poeta . . ."<sup>2</sup>

However, when dealing with this problem we must not forget that Hernández was not and could never be an urban intellectual turned shepherd. He was a real shepherd turned intellectual who then used his actual life and surroundings as the artistic raw material for literary works conceived within the pastoral tradition. There was no way he could fit within the traditional pastoral scheme. This does not mean, however, that his work lies outside of that tradition. It merely means that he represents a unique variation within that tradition.

## 2. Critique of the Country

That he should criticize certain aspects of the rural world after he came into contact with writers such as Neruda and Alberti and freed himself from the neo-Catholic ideology of Sijé is only natural. After all,

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<sup>1</sup>Poggioli, "The Oaten Flute," Harvard Literary Bulletin, (Spring 1957), XI, No. 2, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>Puccini, Miguel Hernández. Vida y poesía, (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1970), p. 41.

who knew better than Hernández himself the limitations and brutalizing nature of life in a small town? As we saw in the prose piece "MIGUEL--y mártir," Hernández was quite critical of his reality even before he left Orihuela. Even then his pastoral art was a way of escaping a sordid reality by projecting it into a bucolic dream world. As he said in that piece:

¡Todos! los días, elevo hasta mi dignidad las  
boñigas de las cuadras del ganado, a las cuales  
paso la brocha de palma y caña de la limpieza.

This was, after all, the reason he had fled to Madrid. Hernández understood quite well the real nature of the world he was leaving behind. It was one thing for Sijé, comfortably ensconced in the small-town bourgeoisie, to philosophize about the sanctity of rural misery, and quite another for Hernández, who had known that misery from the time he was born, to follow him for very long. At some point Hernández was bound to rebel, to come of age politically.

On the other hand, one must not confuse Hernández's rejection of the poverty and pettiness of small-town life with his basic feelings about the purity of nature and its regenerative qualities. These are feelings he will never lose and which will continue to provide the core for his pastoral view of life. Madrid actually played a dual role in his life and work. It was the bower-in-reverse, in that it was the place where the shepherd-poet could escape

from his reality, and it also provided the necessary perspective for a critical reevaluation of his pastoral ideology in which he would turn away from the values he embraced during his brief excursion into Christian pastoralism and move rapidly toward a new, revolutionary view of life and art.

### 3. Rustic Self-Image

Even after he had returned to Madrid for the second time, Hernández carefully cultivated his self-image as a simple rustic. Pablo Neruda tells in his memoirs<sup>3</sup> how Hernández would climb trees in the streets of the city in order to give a vivid demonstration, from the highest branches, of how the nightingales sang in his native Levante. Neruda also tells of how he had interested a Spanish aristocrat and high government official in Hernández's poetry. When Neruda told Hernández that he had only to name the post he wanted, the latter considered the matter at length. In Neruda's words:

Miguel se quedó pensativo. Su cara de grandes arrugas prematuras se cubrió con un velo de cavilaciones. Pasaron las horas y sólo por la tarde me contestó. Con ojos brillantes del que ha encontrado la solución de su vida, me dijo:

--¿No podría el vizconde encomendarme un rebaño de cabras por aquí cerca de Madrid?

However one wishes to interpret this incident, whether as a charming example of rustic simplicity (which I suspect

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<sup>3</sup>Neruda, Confieso que he vivido--memorias, (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1974), pp. 159-62.

is Neruda's view) or as a more sophisticated example of a man who is not interested in a government post but wants to find a way out which will neither upset his friend nor spoil the pastoral image he is projecting, there is no doubt as to the impression Hernández created in his friends' minds after returning to Madrid in 1934. Writing some forty years later of his impressions of that period, Neruda said of Hernández:

Me contaba cuentos terrestres de animales y pájaros. Era ese escritor salido de la naturaleza como una piedra intacta, con virginidad selvática y arrolladora fuerza vital. Me narraba cuán impresionante era poner los oídos sobre el vientre de las cabras dormidas. Así se escuchaba el ruido de la leche que llegaba a las ubres, el rumor secreto que nadie ha podido escuchar sino aquel poeta de cabras.

#### 4. Rejection of the City

Hernández's first reaction to the city was one of violent rejection. City life was a rude shock to a person accustomed to a far different way of life. He expressed his feelings very clearly in "El silbo de afirmación en la aldea" (OC, pp. 182-187), one of six silbos he wrote during the period between his first and second trips to the city. The term silbo is one he coined from a verse in the Cántico espiritual of San Juan de la Cruz:

Mi Amado, las montañas,  
los valles solitarios nemorosos,  
las ínsulas extrañas,  
los ríos sonorosos,  
el silbo de los aires amorosos.

San Juan's poem represents the most outstanding example

in the Spanish tradition of Christian pastoralism.

Hernández was also to use the word silbo in the second title (El silbo vulnerado) of the book he finally titled El rayo que no cesa. The strophic form he used for this particular silbo, however, was the silva of Garcilaso's Egloga primera and not San Juan's lira.

It begins with a two-line self-portrait within the pastoral image which Hernández always presented of himself:

Alto soy de mirar a las palmeras,  
rudo de convivir con las montañas . . .

The next two verses, in deliberate juxtaposition to those just quoted, reveal that the thing which Hernández found perhaps most disconcerting in the city was the difficulty it created in his maintenance of that self-image:

Yo me ví bajo y blando en las aceras  
de una ciudad espléndida de arañas.

It is evident that the young poet's self-image was fairly tenuous, to be so shaken by his encounter with the city. And in effect, we saw in analyzing the prose composition "PASTOR--plural" (Part I, Chapter 3), written in Orihuela during this same period, that Hernández was already questioning his literary identity before he left the countryside. So evidently Madrid exacerbated the crisis, although it was certainly not the origin of the poet's difficulty in arriving at a clear vision of himself, or rather of his poetic self.

The beginning of the next stanza then refers to his

current neo-Catholic ideology, and explains the jarring effect of the city on him through the lack of religious feeling in its inhabitants:

Yo vi lo más notable de lo mío  
llevado del demonio, y Dios ausente.

At times he even adopts a denunciatory tone reminiscent of the Biblical prophets denouncing the corruption of ancient cities:

. . . ¿Cuándo será, Señor, que echas  
tanta soberbia abajo de un suspiro?

One of the things which he finds particularly upsetting, because he obviously finds it so attractive, is the sexuality he finds in the city:

Topado por mil senos, embestido  
por más de mil peligros, tentaciones,  
mecánicas jaurías,  
me seguían lujurias y claxones,  
deseos y tranvías.

¡Cuánto labio de púrpuras teatrales,  
exageradamente pecadores!

And he now sees the countryside, which formerly produced such sexual anxiety in the young poetry, as the abode of purity:

¡Ay!, ¿dónde está mi cumbre,  
mi pureza, y el valle del sesteo  
de mi ganado aquel y su pastura?

But running through the first part of the poem--the denunciation of the city--is his anguish over his lost self, which he now sees as an anachronism:

No concuerdo con todas estas cosas  
de escaparate y de bisutería:  
entre sus variedades procelosas,  
es la persona mía,



como el árbol, un triste anacronismo.  
 Y el triste de mí mismo,  
 sale por su alegría,  
 que se quedó en el mayo de mi huerto,  
 de este urbano bullicio  
 donde no estoy de mí seguro cierto,  
 y es pormayor la vida como el vicio.

The second part of the poem is a traditional eulogy  
 of the small town and the countryside:

Aquí está la basura  
 en las calles, y no en los corazones.  
 Aquí todo se sabe y se murmura:  
 no puede haber oculta la criatura  
 mala, y menos las malas intenciones.

The countryside represents peace:

Con una paz de aceite derramado,  
 enciende el río un lado y otro lado  
 de su imposible, por eterna, huida.

and purity:

Las venas manantiales  
 de mi pozo serrano  
 me dan, en el pozal que les envío,  
 pureza y lustración para la mano,  
 para la tierra seca amor y frío.

Hernández declares himself resigned to a country life, far  
 from the threatening presence of the city, to which he will  
 never return:

Haciendo el hortelano,  
 hoy en este solaz de regadío  
 de mi huerto me quedo.  
 No quiero más ciudad, que me reduce  
 su visión, y su mundo me da miedo.

He makes a virtue of necessity, finding his poverty, which  
 was the basic reason he had just been forced to leave the  
 city and which was so painful to him, good because it  
 enforced humility:



Lo que haya de venir, aquí lo espero  
 cultivando el romero y la pobreza.  
 Aquí de nuevo empieza  
 el orden, se reanuda  
 el reposo, por yerros alterado,  
 y mi vida humilde, y por humilde, muda.

Here Hernández is voicing the most traditional Classical and Renaissance pastoralism, denouncing the vices and artificiality of city life and praising the virtues of the country in tones reminiscent of Antonio de Guevara's Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea. This dichotomy will not disappear from his work because, as we have noted previously, it is basic to the pastoral itself. Its terms will be redefined, however, as under the impact of the Civil War the poet sees Spain become the bower with Madrid as the symbol of its defense against the new counterforce, fascism, which threatens its existence. But it is only the terms of the dichotomy which will change, not the mechanism itself.

Thus "El silbo de afirmación en la aldea" reaffirms his commitment to the pastoral design at the moment when the poet is on the verge of drastic artistic and ideological changes. This commitment will remain, but its manifestations will be quite different in his subsequent work. This could hardly be otherwise in a writer as deeply involved in the living process of his nation and his times as was Hernández.

CHAPTER II  
THE UNCEASING PASSION

1. The Shepherdess

With the poet's love for Josefina Manresa, who would become his wife in March, 1937, a new element was introduced into his bower--the shepherdess, focal point for his erotic tensions and contradictions from this point on. The years of courtship from 1934 to 1937, with the lovers separated during most of that time, would bring to culmination the erotic tension observable in Hernández's work from his earliest writing. This is, in fact, a major turning point in his life which will determine the entire future course of his literary work, for as Dario Puccini writes:

. . . el encuentro con Josefina, comcomitante con otros encuentros y con otras experiencias, es para Miguel más importante que el mero cambio sentimental que el mismo determinó para él. El primer descubrimiento pánico y arrebatador del poeta pone en movimiento toda la oculta carta emotiva del poeta, interrumpiendo su vano soliloquio; y la ulterior experiencia amorosa--ya superado el primer período ingenuo y provinciano--lo libera decididamente de las incrustaciones espiritualistas y literarias . . . y lo conduce finalmente a la plena revelación de sí mismo. Todavía no es una verdadera toma de conciencia, pero es algo que vivamente ya la prepara.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Puccini, op. cit., p. 41.

I agree that this is a turning point in the poet's life and work, and that it will purify and deepen his writing, but I do not agree that it represents, in Puccini's words, " . . . su rebelión contra su mismo limitado y prefigurado personaje de pastor-poeta,"<sup>2</sup> unless by this Puccini means Hernández's excursion into Christian pastoralism. In this latter sense Hernández does indeed rebel against the limitations inherent in that literary and ideological subgenre, but he does not abandon the pastoral mode itself. His pastoralism will change, it will broaden and deepen as his perspective of life broadens and deepens, but it will remain his basic literary framework. It is in this period that he wrote the poem "Sonreídme" (OC, pp. 258-260), in which he joyously proclaimed his intellectual liberation:

Vengo muy satisfecho de librarme  
de la serpiente de las múltiples cúpulas,  
la serpiente escamada de casullas y cálices . . .

But he then says:

Sonreídme, que voy  
adonde estáis vosotros los de siempre,  
los que cubrís de espigas y racimos la boca del  
que nos escupe,  
los que conmigo en surcos, andamios, fraguas,  
hornos,  
os arrancáis la corona del sudor a diario.

In other words, he has freed himself from the bonds of Christian pastoralism, not to abandon pastoralism but rather to be more truly and closely with his people, the

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<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

shepherds and laborers who have always populated his bower. Thus, with a changed poetic style, in which the sonnet, free verse and popular meters will predominate, the poet will proceed to readjust his vision of the bower.

## 2. A More Violent Eroticism

As is natural in the pastoral scheme of things, the point of departure for the creation of this new bower will be love. It will not be a serene, fulfilled love but one in which the tensions we have observed previously will be exacerbated and clearly reveal the basic Hernandian--and pastoral--relationship of love-pain-death. As he says in the poem "Mi sangre es un camino" (OC, pp. 237-239), in a clearly pastoral context:

Mira una fuente alzada de amorosos collares  
y cencerros de voz atribulada  
temblando de impaciencia por ocupar tu cuello,  
un dictamen feroz, una sentencia,  
una exigencia, una dolencia, un río  
que por manifestarse se da contra las piedras,  
y penden para siempre de mis  
relicarios de sangre desgarrada.

Mírala con sus chivos y sus toros suicidas  
corneando cabestros y montañas,  
rompiéndose los cuernos a topazos,  
mordiéndose de rabia las orejas,  
buscándose la muerte de la frente a la cola.

That the poet is speaking of sexuality is made explicit later in the same poem:

Manejando mi sangre, enarbolando  
revoluciones de carbón y yodo,  
agrupando hasta hacerse corazón,  
herramientas de muerte, rayos, hachas,  
y barrancos de espuma sin apoyo,  
ando pidiendo un cuerpo que manchar.

¡Ay qué ganas de amarte contra un árbol,  
ay qué afán de trillarte en una era,  
ay qué dolor de verte por la espalda  
y no verte la espalda contra el mundo!

This is the same frustrated erotic desire we have seen in Hernández's work since Perito en lunas, with the same pastoral imagery of goats and bulls and threshing floors, but expressed with a new violence. The association between revolution and sexuality, expressed humorously in Perito en lunas and disdainfully in his auto sacramental, appears here again, but now in a tone of acceptance.

Is the new violence in his erotic poetry the product, as before, of the conflict between his sexual desire and his aspiration to ascetic purity? Probably not, because Hernández has abandoned his neo-Catholicism, and while it is not easy to shed guilt feelings produced by religious training and one's cultural environment, he has a love-object acceptable by all standards--an official fiancée whom he intends to marry. What, then, does explain the extreme violence and desperation with which Hernández expresses the erotic theme in this period? I believe these feelings are generated by his present understanding of the pastoral tradition itself. As Poggioli remarks:

The bucolic imagination equates happiness with the fulfillment of the passion of love, with the consummation of man's erotic wishes; and identifies unhappiness with the rejection or denial of one's heart's desire, in brief, with unrequited love.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 157.

### 3. Frustrated Sexuality

Josefina returned the poet's love, so in that sense it was not unrequited, but that was not enough for Hernández. It was physically unrequited love, and therefore frustrating to the poet. Poggioli adds:

Love, however, may remain unsatisfied even when it is returned: when it is public morality, or the ties of honor and duty, rather than the heart's inconstancy or indifference, that prevent the beloved one from heeding the entreaties of her lover . . . Often pastoral poetry is but a voice of protest against society's power to replace the fruitions with the frustrations of love.<sup>4</sup>

This, as we have seen, is exactly the situation Hernández found himself in during this period, for sexual fulfillment required societal approval through marriage. Poggioli then writes something that could have been written about Hernández himself:

When pastoral man becomes aware of the impossibility of realizing here and now his ideal of an absolute erotic anarchism, his protest has no outlet but the very dream on which his heart feeds. Thus he projects his yearning after free love, his longing for sexual freedom and even license, into a state of nature that exists nowhere, or only in the realm of myth.<sup>5</sup>

This is the key to Hernández's existential anguish in this period. As he himself says in the self-portrait contained in the "Oda entre sangre y vino a Pablo Neruda" (OC, pp. 252-255), he is pastoral man and his basic urge is erotic:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 157-58.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 158.



Yo he tenido siempre los orígenes,  
 un antes de la leche en mi cabeza  
 y un presente de ubres en mis manos;  
 yo que llevo cubierta de montes la memoria  
 y de tierra vinícola la cara,  
 esta cara de surco articulado;  
 yo que quisiera siempre, siempre, siempre,  
 habitar donde habitan los collares:  
 en un fondo de mar o en un cuello de hembra . . .

But his erotic urge, which he identifies with his very blood, is presented in "Sino sangriento" (OC, pp. 239-242) as uncontainable and overwhelming, and therefore impossible to satisfy:

De sangre en sangre vengo  
 como el mar de ola en ola,  
 de color de amapola el alma tengo,  
 de amapola sin suerte es mi destino,  
 y llego de amapola en amapola  
 a dar en la cornada de mi sino.

The poet then describes his struggle against the tyranny of his sexual desire:

Lucho contra la sangre, me debato  
 contra tanto zarpazo y tanta vena,  
 y cada cuerpo que tropiezo y trato  
 es otro borbolón de sangre, otra cadena.

But the struggle is futile and brings finally the desire of death, the only peace possible in the face of such insatiable eroticism:

Aunque leves, los dardos de la avena  
 aumentan las insignias de mi pecho:  
 en él se dió el amor a la labranza,  
 y mi alma de barbecho  
 hondamente ha surcado  
 de heridas sin remedio mi esperanza  
 por las ansias de muerte de su arado.

The poet finally accepts his destiny and will struggle no longer against his eroticism, even though he sees it



eventually destroying him:

Me dejaré arrastrar hecho pedazos,  
ya que así se lo ordenan a mi vida  
la sangre y su marea,  
los cuerpos y mi estrella ensangrentada.  
Seré una sola y dilatada herida  
hasta que dilatadamente sea  
un cadáver de espuma: viento y nada.

There has been, then, a fundamental change between this anguish and the suffering we saw in his earlier work. Here the anguish is not caused, at least primarily, by the guilt feelings produced by the conflict between sexual desire and religious prohibitions. Now it is the result of the poet's awareness of an eroticism so vast that it cannot be satisfied, even by sexual union with his loved one. Of course, the fact that even that union is being frustrated by societal demands does nothing to relieve the situation. The ultimate expression of this frustration is "Me sobra el corazón" (OC, pp. 257-258), in which the tone is frankly suicidal:

No puedo con mi estrella.  
Y me busco la muerte por las manos  
mirando con cariño las navajas,  
y recuerdo aquel hacha compañera,  
y pienso en los más altos campanarios  
para un salto mortal serenamente.

because

Un amor me ha dejado con los brazos caídos  
y no puedo tenderlos hacia más.

The tone is reminiscent of Damon's lament, in Virgil's eighth eclogue, which reads, in the translation by Fray Luis de León:

Y ni siquiera se anegue todo el mundo  
 (vivid selvas, por tiempo prolongado):  
 que yo del alto risco al mar profundo  
 venirme determinado despeñado;  
 si no lo fué primero, este segundo  
 servicio de tí, Nise, será amado.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Toward Pagan Pastoralism

In a tone of calmer desperation Hernández wrote a new "Egloga" (OC, pp. 245-247) dedicated explicitly to Garcilaso and written, like the other eclogues by Hernández that we have examined, in the silva form, with alternating verses of eleven and seven syllables, the same strophic form used by Garcilaso himself in his Egloga primera. The poem begins with Garcilaso identified as a shepherd as well as a warrior:

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

Hernández sees Garcilaso as suffering eternally from the wounds of love, and identifies his own suffering with that of the Renaissance poet:

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

He goes on to ask that Garcilaso's spirit of amorous complaint--the spirit, that is, of pastoral love poetry--inspire his own work:

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<sup>6</sup>Fray Luis de León, Poesías, (Madrid, Tipografía de Archivos, 1928), p. 332.

Antes de que la voz se me concluya,  
 pido a mi lengua el alma de la tuya  
 para descarriar entre las hojas  
 este dolor de comida grama  
 que llevo, estas congojas  
 de puñal a mi silla y a mi cama.

Hernández then proceeds to describe his own pain, again showing the relationship love-pain-death:

Me ofende el tiempo, no me da la vida  
 al paladar ni un breve refrigerio  
 de afectuosa miel bien concedida  
 y hasta el amor me sabe a cementerio.

He ends the eclogue with the same tone of quiet desperation which pervades Garcilaso's own eclogues:

Nace la lana en paz y con cautela  
 sobre el paciente cuello del ganado,  
 hace la rosa su quehacer y vuela  
 y el lirio nace serio y desganado.

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

The shift from the pastoralism of Calderón and San Juan to that of Garcilaso is indicative of Hernández's move toward the pagan origin of pastoral poetry, which was best represented in Renaissance Spain by the work of the Toledan poet. It is also indicative of the shift in Hernández's ideological perspectives, in which he abandoned neo-Catholicism and adopted a Marxist philosophy.

##### 5. Under the Sign of Quevedo

The book of poetry prepared by Hernández in this period of transition preceding the Civil War is El rayo que

no cesa (OC, pp. 211-231). Puccini devotes particular attention to this work in his study of the poet

. . . porque en El rayo que no cesa está el nudo de la experiencia poética de Hernández, y porque substancialmente este libro constituye exactamente el momento crucial de transición de la experiencia humana y de la maduración ideológica de nuestro poeta.<sup>7</sup>

The sonnet form and the influence of Quevedo predominate in this work, which is dedicated to Josefina Manresa and contains all of the themes we have been examining in this chapter. Quevedo's influence does not represent a turning away from pastoralism. In the first place, Quevedo's influence is nothing new in Hernández's poetry, including his most obviously pastoral early period. Compare, for example, this sonnet by Quevedo, "Contra los hipócritas y fingida virtud, en alegoría del cohete":<sup>8</sup>

No digas, cuando vieres alto el vuelo  
del cohete, en la pólvora animado,  
que va derecho al cielo encaminado,  
pues no siempre quien sube llega al cielo.

Festivo rayo, que nació del suelo:  
en popular aplauso confiado,  
disimula el azufre aprisionado,  
traza es la cuerda, y es rebozo el vuelo.

Sí le vieres en alto radiante,  
que con el firmamento y sus centellas  
equivoca su sitio y su semblante;

¡Oh, no le cuentes tú por una dellas!  
mira que hay fuego artificial farsante  
que es humo, y representa las estrellas.

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<sup>7</sup> Puccini, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Francisco de Quevedo, Antología poética, Espasa-Calpe, (Buenos Aires, 1952), pp. 53-54.

with octava VI of Perito en lunas (OC, p. 62), entitled "Cohetes" by the poet:

Subterfugios de luz, lagartos, lista,  
encima de la palma que la crea:  
invención de colores a la vista,  
si transitoria, del azul, pirea.  
A la gloria mayor del polvorista,  
rectas la caña, círculos planea:  
todo un curso fugaz de geometría,  
principio de su fin, vedado al día.

or with the poem "COHETE--y glorioso" (OC, pp. 122-123), which is closer to Quevedo's moralism:

Lo pez de lo que enseña,  
lo impide lo que oculta devorado.  
Sin lustre, deslucida, se despeña,  
regresa al mismo lado.  
¿Para qué? le sirvió su triunfo airado.

Se le acabó el esfuerzo, la porfía.  
Le sobró voluntad, pero le hacía  
falta más munición, para el camino.  
Y volvió al disimulo,  
al silencio, sin tino,  
ciega la caña y el silbido nulo.

Quevedo was as influenced as any other Renaissance poet by the pastoral tradition, especially in his love sonnets. The following<sup>9</sup> is a good example, since its title places it squarely in the pastoral tradition. Lacking the title, "Dice que como el labrador teme el agua cuando viene con truenos, habiéndola deseado, así es la vista de su pastora," we would have to seek its pastoral nature in its subject matter and imagery, just as we will with the poems in El rayo que no cesa. Quevedo's poem reads as follows:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

Ya viste que acusaban los sembrados  
secos las nubes, y las lluvias; luego  
viste en la tempestad temer el riego  
los surcos, con el rayo amenazados.

Más quieren verse secos que abrazados,  
viendo que a la agua la acompaña el fuego,  
y el relámpago, y trueno sordo y ciego,  
y mustio el campo teme los nublados.

No de otra suerte temen la hermosura  
que en los tuyos mis ojos codiciaron,  
anhelando la luz serena y pura.

Pues luego que se abrieron, fulminaron,  
y amedrentando el gozo a mi ventura,  
encendieron en mi cuanto miraron.

Compare this with poem 26 of El rayo, which also because of its amatory tone--in this case it is a lament--and by its imagery of laborers returning from the countryside and the poet symbolized by a bull (also traditional in Hernández's poetry from Perito en lunas on), is a pastoral poem:

Por una senda van los hortelanos,  
que es la sagrada hora del regreso,  
con la sangre injuriada por el peso  
de inviernos, primaveras y veranos.

Vienen de los esfuerzos sobrehumanos  
y van a la canción, y van al beso,  
y van dejando por el aire impreso  
un olor de herramientas y de manos.

Por otra senda yo, por otra senda  
que no conduce al beso aunque es la hora,  
sino que merodea sin destino.

Bajo su frente trágica y tremenda,  
un toro solo en la ribera llora  
olvidando que es toro y masculino.

One of the significant things about this book from the point of view of its pastoralism is the three phases its title passes through. The first title, Imagen de tu

huella, is taken from a verse ("a zaga de tu huella") from San Juan's Christian pastoral Cántico espiritual. The second title, El silbo vulnerado, is also typical of both San Juan's and Hernández's pastoral poetry, as we have seen earlier. The third and definitive title, El rayo que no cesa, accomplishes a double purpose. It de-Christianizes the book, thus removing it from the realm of Christian pastoralism and placing it in the tradition of pagan pastoralism. It also incorporates the most appropriate of the many symbols Hernández uses for the passionate, destructive feeling of love, and elevates the emotion to the level of a universal symbol. The fact that the symbol--lightening--is taken from nature is typical of the bucolic atmosphere of the work as a whole.

The very first poem in the book, "Un carnívoro cuchillo," establishes the basic love-pain-death relationship which underlies the entire book:

Descansar de esta labor  
de huracán, amor o infierno  
no es posible, y el dolor  
me hará a mí pesar eterno.

Pero al fin podré vencerte,  
ave y rayo secular,  
corazón, que de la muerte  
nadie ha de hacerme dudar.

The idea of eternally unsatisfied love which can only be ended by death is a common one in pastoral literature. We have already seen Damon's intention to commit suicide to alleviate the pain that love caused him in Virgil's



eightth eclogue. In his tenth eclogue Pan, the god of Arcadia, says of love:

"¿Y cuándo has de dar fin a tu tormento?  
que de estas cosas, dice, amor no cura,  
que nunca amargo lloro y sentimiento  
hartaron del amor la hambre dura,  
ni se vió amor de lágrimas contento,  
ni cabra de pacer rama y verdura,  
ni flor las abejas, ni los prados  
d'en agua de continuo andar bañados."<sup>10</sup>

#### 6. Universal Love

However, the love which torments the poet is vaster. As he says in poem number 28, it is love for everything, and for that very reason even more impossible of realization or satisfaction:

La muerte, toda llena de agujeros  
y cuernos de su mismo desenlace,  
bajo una piel de toro pisa y paze  
un luminoso prado de toreros.

Volcánicos bramidos, humos fieros  
de general amor por cuanto nace,  
a llamaradas echa mientras hace  
morir a los tranquilos ganaderos.

Ya puedes, amorosa fiera hambrienta,  
pastar mi corazón, trágica grama,  
si te gusta lo amargo de su asunto.

Un amor hacia todo me atormenta  
como a ti, y hacia todo se derrama  
mi corazón vestido de difunto.

The image of the bull as the symbol of love and death appears in Hernández's poetry from the very first poems he wrote, as in "Toro" (OC, p. 39), a poem of adolescence, or in octava III of Perito en lunas

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<sup>10</sup>Fray Luis, op. cit., p. 349.

(OC, pp. 61-62), also entitled "Toro," in which the poet himself is the bull:

¡A la gloria, a la gloria toréadores!  
La hora es de mi luna menos cuarto.  
Emulos imprudentes del lagarto,  
magnificáos el lomo de colores.  
Por el arco, contra los picadores,  
del cuerno, flecha, a dispararme parto.  
¡A la gloria, si yo antes no os ancore  
--golfo de arena--, en mis bigotes de oro!

Particularly interesting is his relationship between the bull, symbolizing death, and sexual desire, from which the horn will free him, in his elegy to Ignacio Sánchez Mejías ("Citación final"--OC, pp. 138-140):

Quisiera el desgobierno  
de la carne, vidriera delicada,  
la manifestación del hueso fuerte.

Estoy queriendo, y temo la cornada  
de tu momento, muerte.

The bull symbol is common in classical pastoralism.

Damoetas says in Virgil's third eclogue:

¡Ay en qu n buenos pastos, qu n mal sano  
y flaco est s mi toro, que al ganado  
y al ganadero mata amor insano!<sup>11</sup>

while in the fifth eclogue Mopsus says:

Ans  como del olmo es alegr a  
la vid, y de la vid son las colgadas  
uvas, y de la grey el toro es gu a.

Qual hermosea el toro las vacadea,  
como las mieses altas y abundosas  
adornan y enriquecen las aradas.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 288-89.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

In the eighth eclogue Daphnis's lover says in her incantation to attract his love:

Qual la novilla de buscar cansada  
su toro por los montes, junto al río  
se tiende dolorida y olvidada,  
no huye de la noche ni del frío,  
ansí me busques, Daphni, ansí buscada  
en pago del amor te dé desvío:  
ve presto, mi conjuro, y la mar pasa,<sup>13</sup>  
y vuelve de la villa a Daphni a casa.<sup>13</sup>

This is particularly reminiscent of sonnet 26, quoted above, in which the poet pictures himself, at evening time, as a bull weeping because of his unrequited love:

Bajo su frente trágica y tremenda,  
un toro solo en la ribera llora  
olvidando que es toro y masculino.

This pastoral symbol runs throughout El rayo. In the second poem of the book, speaking of the torments of love, Hernández says:

¿no cesará esta terca estalactita  
de cultivar sus duras cabelleras  
como espadas y rígidas hogueras  
hacia mi corazón que muge y grita?

and in poem 17 he relates his blood with the erotic passion and death:

El toro sabe al fin de la corrida,  
donde prueba su chorro repentino,  
que el sabor de la muerte es el de un vino  
que el equilibrio impide de la vida.

Finally, in poem number 14 he depicts himself as the bull enraged by the smell of his lover's urine, and also identifies the animal with death:

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 334-35.

Silencio de metal triste y sonoro,  
 espadas congregando con amores  
 en el final de huesos destructores  
 de la región volcánica del toro.

Una humedad de femenino oro  
 que olió puso en su sangre resplandores,  
 y refugió un bramido entre las flores  
 como un huracanado y vasto lloro.

De amorosas y cálidas cornadas  
 cubriendo está los trebolares tiernos  
 con el dolor de mil enamorados.

Bajo su piel las furias refugiadas  
 son en el nacimiento de sus cuernos  
 pensamientos de muerte edificados.

#### 7. Erotic Anarchism

The repeated use of the bull imagery, putting his feelings of passion and frustration on the very basic level of animal desire, places the other poems in El rayo in perspective. There is no doubt that he projects his passion onto a universal level, but the point of departure is always very apparent. This is very much within the pastoral tradition, as we have seen in the quotes from Virgil and Poggioli's remarks about the ideal of "absolute erotic anarchism" on the part of pastoral man, and pastoral literature as "a voice of protest against society's power to replace the fruitions with the frustrations of love."<sup>14</sup>

This protest is powerfully voiced in poem number 20, in which Hernández refuses to limit himself to token and totally unsatisfying rewards, which are but the shadow

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<sup>14</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 158.

of the desired reality:

No me conformo, no: me desespero  
como si fuera un huracán de lava  
en el presidio de una almendra esclava  
o en el penal colgante de un jilguero.

Besarte fué besar un avispero  
que me clava al tormento y me desclava  
y cava un hoyo fúnebre y lo cava  
dentro del corazón donde me muero.

No me conformo, no: ya es tanto y tanto  
idolatrar la imagen de tu beso  
y perseguir el curso de tu aroma.

Un enterrado vivo por el llanto,  
una revolución dentro de un hueso,  
un rayo soy sujeto a una redoma.

#### 8. The Traditional Shepherdess

His lover is the traditional shepherdess of the pastoral lament--elusive, chaste, cold, cruel and, above all, absent. Poem number 5 is a typical pastoral lament in which the poet depicts his loved one as cold and cruel as well as tantalizing:

Tu corazón, una naranja helada  
con un dentro sin luz de dulce miera  
y una porosa vista de oro: un fuera  
venturas prometiendo a la mirada.

Mi corazón, una febril granada  
de agrupado rubor y abierta cera,  
que sus tiernos collares te ofreciera  
con una obstinación enamorada.

¡Ay, qué acontecimiento de quebranto  
ir a tu corazón y hallar un hielo  
de irreductible y pavorosa nieve!

Por los alrededores de mi llanto  
un pañuelo sediento va de vuelo  
con la esperanza de que en él lo abreve.

The imagery in this poem is similar to that of number 4 although the intent is different, for here the poet is contrasting his loved one's purity with his own sexual desire:

Me tiraste un limón y tan amargo,  
con una mano cálida, y tan pura,  
que no menoscabó su arquitectura  
y probé su amargura sin embargo.

Con el golpe amarillo, de un letargo  
dulce pasó a una ansiosa calentura  
mi sangre, que sintió la mordedura  
de una punta de seno duro y largo.

Pero al mirarte y verte la sonrisa  
que te produjo el limonado hecho,  
a mi voraz malicia tan ajena,

se me durmió la sangre en la camisa,  
y se volvió el poroso y áureo pecho  
una picuda y deslumbrante pena.

This is the same sonnet I referred to in analyzing Hernández's relationship between lemon and breast and its bitterness on the one hand and the pain of love or unsatisfied sexual desire on the other hand, in Perito en lunas. I pointed out the origin of this imagery in popular coplas, and to the example I gave there we could add:

Un limón me tirastes  
desde la torre;  
en el alma me distes  
sangre me corre.<sup>15</sup>

and:

Arrojóme unas naranjicas,  
con los ramos del blanco azahar;

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<sup>15</sup> Cantos populares españoles, Ed. by Francisco Rodríguez Marín, Sevilla, Francisco Alvarez y Cía., (1882), vol. 2, p. 251.

arrojómelas y arrojéselas  
y volvíómelas a arrojar.<sup>16</sup>

In quoting the article in which I discussed the relationship between Hernández's work and popular poetry,<sup>17</sup> Puccini adds another possible source from Fernán Caballero's Cuentos y poesías populares andaluces (Leipzig, 1866):

De tu ventana a la mía  
me tirastes un limón  
el limón cayó en la calle,  
el zumo en mi corazón.<sup>18</sup>

These resonances from popular poetry, like the reference to the sexual excitation produced in the bull by the odor of the cow's urine, add a note of realism to Hernández's pastoral poetry and tend to offset the impression of artificiality caused by the elaborate and rigid sonnet form. As Rosenmeyer said in pointing out the function in pastoral literature of such other popular elements as proverbs and curses, they serve "to anchor the pastoral dream in a more solid substratum."<sup>19</sup>

His lover's vigilant chastity is the theme of poem number 11, in which the poet describes her reaction to the first stolen kiss:

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<sup>16</sup> Antología de la poesía española. Poesía de tipo tradicional, Ed. by Dámaso Alonso and José M. Blecua, (Madrid, Gredos, 1956), p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> "Lo popular en la poesía de Miguel Hernández," Revista Nacional de Cultura, (Caracas, Año XXII, mayo-agosto 1960), No. 140-41, pp. 179-92.

<sup>18</sup> Puccini, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Rosenmeyer, The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969), p. 26.



Te me mueres de casta y de sencilla:  
estoy convicto, amor, estoy confeso  
de que, raptor intrépido de un beso,  
yo te libé la flor de la mejilla.

Yo te libé la flor de la mejilla,  
y desde aquella gloria, aquel suceso,  
tu mejilla, de escrúpulo y de peso,  
se te cae deshojada y amarilla.

El fantasma del beso delincuente  
el pómulos te tiene perseguido,  
cada vez más patente, negro y grande.

Y sin dormir estás, celosamente,  
vigilando mi boca ¡con que cuido!  
para que no se vicie y se desmande.

The shepherdesses of the Spanish Renaissance tradition  
(Montemayor's Diana and Cervantes's Galatea, for example),  
are nothing if not castas.

To the quality of being cold Hernández joins that  
of being hard, as in sonnet 25:

Por piedra pura, indiferente, callas:  
callar de piedra, que otras y otras rosas  
me pones y me pones en las manos.

These qualities are the same as those Gacilaso attributes  
to Galatea in Salicio's lament at the beginning of the  
Egloga primera:

¡Oh más dura que mármol a mis quejas,  
y al encendido fuego en que me quemo,  
más helada que nieve, Galatea!

And the following verses in no way differ from the pain  
expressed by Hernández throughout El rayo, in my opinion:

Estoy muriendo, y aún la vida temo;  
témola con razón, pues tú me dejas;  
que no hay, sin tí, el vivir para qué sea.

9. From Absence to Death

Hernández, too, complains of his love's absence, although her absence is not caused by infidelity or death, as in the case in Garcilaso's shepherds. He expresses this suffering in El rayo in purely pastoral terms, depicting himself as the farmer or fisherman whose efforts are sterile (sonnet 22):

Vuerto la red, esparzo la semilla  
entre ovas, aguas, surcos y amapolas,  
sembrando a secas y pescando a solas  
de corazón ansioso y de mejilla.

\* \* \*

Pero transcurren lunas y más lunas,  
aumenta de mirada mi deseo  
y no crezco en espigas o en pescados.

Or as the farmer bent over the earth, perhaps digging his own grave with his sorrow (sonnet 7):

Después de haber cavado este barbecho  
me tomaré un descanso por la grama  
y beberé del agua que en la rama  
su esclava nieve aumenta en mi provecho.

Todo el cuerpo me huele a reciénhecho  
por el jugoso fuego que lo inflama  
y la creación que adoro se derrama  
a mi mucha fatiga como un lecho.

Se tomará un descanso el hortelano  
y entretendrá sus penas combatido  
por el salubre sol y el tiempo manso.

Y otra vez, inclinado cuerpo y mano,  
seguirá ante la tierra perseguido  
por la sombra del último descanso.

This poem is a small gem of pastoral poetry. It contains all of the motifs we have seen in Hernández's poetry thus far--the poet as farmer, the wellbeing produced by nature

and its regenerative qualities, the poet's love of nature and its power to lessen his sorrow, and the one definitive contradiction in the bower, the one intruder who signals the inevitable end of the pastoral dream--death.

Thus Hernández's pastoralism has undergone a basic change. It is now frankly pagan and erotic, resolving in this way the contradictions inherent in the Christian pastoralism of his adolescent years. In addition, a theme that was previously muted--the Et in Arcadia Ego motif--now assumes a major position in his work.

CHAPTER III  
ET IN ARCADIA EGO

One of the basic themes in Hernández's pastoral world, as we have seen from the creation of the bower in Perito en lunas, is death. This theme is present in pastoral literature of any complexity from the death of Daphnis in the poetry of Theocritus to the present day. It has been said that escape to the pastoral bower may be temporary or permanent, but the presence of death in the bower means that it really can never be more than temporary.

1. Evolution of a Theme

The role of death in the pastoral design has been further clarified by Erwin Panofsky in his discussion of the legend Et in Arcadia Ego, which occurs in a number of paintings of pastoral scenes and has been the object of differing interpretations. Its correct meaning is "Even in Arcadia there am I," spoken by death itself, but Panofsky points out that these differences have been caused by different feelings toward death and its meaning for life arising from people's varying sensibilities in different historical periods. It was Virgil's discovery of the elegiac treatment of death which constituted one

of his most important contributions to the genre.

As we shall see in this and later chapters, Hernández not only used death as a constant motif, but he was also a master of the pastoral elegy. In fact, due to the historical circumstances of war and prison, his entire work became a vast pastoral elegy, in which he sang the death of his dream of a life of peace, love and happiness for himself and his people.

Panofsky describes the further evolution of the theme in the Renaissance, when it acquires feelings of melancholy and nostalgia:

Reflecting the feeling of a period that, for the first time, had realized that Pan was dead, Sannazaro wallows in those funeral hymns and ceremonies, yearning love songs and melancholy memories which occur in Virgil only occasionally; and his very predilection for triple rhymes . . . endows his verses with a sweet, lingering plain-tiveness.<sup>1</sup>

The first appearance of the Et in Arcadia Ego legend occurs in a painting by Giovanni Francesco Guercino from the seventeenth century. In this work, as Panofsky points out, it has its literal meaning and

conveys a warning rather than sweet, sad memories. There is little or nothing elegiac about it . . .<sup>2</sup>

In a work by the French painter Nicholas Poussin executed

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<sup>1</sup>Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," From Meaning in the Visual Arts, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), p. 304.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

but a few years after Guercino's, however, we see a change in tone:

The Arcadians are not so much warned of an implacable future as they are immersed in mellow meditation on a beautiful past . . . Poussin's Louvre picture no longer shows a dramatic encounter with Death but a contemplative absorption in the idea of mortality. We are confronted with a change from thinly veiled moralism to undisguised elegiac sentiment.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, we have passed from Medieval moralism to Renaissance pastoralism, the counterpart in painting to Sannazaro in literature. This change, however, led to misinterpretation of the Et in Arcadia Ego legend on the tomb in the painting. The elegiac mood of Poussin's painting caused the viewers to assume that it was a dead shepherd or shepherdess within the tomb saying, "I, too, was born, or lived, in Arcady," rather than Death itself saying, "Even in Arcadia there am I." As Panofsky says:

We can easily see that the new conception of the Tomb in Arcady initiated by Poussin's Louvre picture, and sanctioned by the mistranslation of its inscription, could lead to reflections of almost opposite nature, depressing and melancholy on the one hand, comforting and assuaging on the other; and, more often than not, to a truly "Romantic" fusion of both.<sup>4</sup>

This culminates in a drawing by Honoré Fragonard showing love triumphing over death, and Panofsky concludes:

Here the development has run full cycle. To Guercino's "Even in Arcady, there is death"

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<sup>3</sup>Panofsky, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 318-19.

Fragonard's drawing replies: "Even in death, there may be Arcady."<sup>5</sup>

Poggioli, on the other hand, regards this as a complete perversion of the pastoral tradition, just as he regarded the Christian pastoral as an allegorical distortion of the pagan pastoral doomed to failure:

In reality the Christian pastoral of death conflicts with the pagan one even more when the former replaces the sense of awe before the death of the body with the hope of an afterlife for the soul . . . No pastoral poet ever believes in man's return or ascent from the realm of the dead: the apotheosis closing a funeral elegy is always merely conventional and literary.<sup>6</sup>

In the twentieth century, with its discovery that not only Pan but the Christian God is dead, the pastoral elegy again acquires the tone more consonant, in Poggioli's opinion, with the pagan tradition and with the true meaning of Et in Arcadia Ego: Even in Arcadia there am I, spoken by death itself as a memento mori to the shepherd of the bower. And in fact, when Calvin Cannon examines Federico García Lorca's "Elegía por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías," he finds that

. . . Lorca speaks the truth in terms of irreducible simplicity: that Ignacio is no longer known, and that he has died forever . . . The force of what Lorca is saying is strengthened manyfold when we measure it against the message of the traditional elegy: that the dead man's friends will forever remember him (thus bestowing a kind of immortality), and that all nature joins in mourning his disappearance . . . There is no spring, but only

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>6</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 165.



autumn and death in Lorca's elegy.<sup>7</sup>

With these things in mind, we can now consider Hernández as an elegiac poet and the function of death in his work with a sense of historical perspective.

## 2. Early Treatment of Death

It is fascinating to see how soon death and the elegy appear in Hernández's work. There is a little poem entitled "Hermanita muerta" (OC, p. 37) among its earliest efforts, followed by an elegy to the goalkeeper on the local soccer team, who was killed in the playing accident. The poem (OC, pp. 43-45), which is written in his baroque style of the period mixed with neologisms such as "Goles," "córner," and "penaltys," has a disconcertingly festive, ironical tone which is totally inappropriate to the theme. Even stranger is the proliferation of sexual imagery. For example, the tangle of players in front of the ill-fated goalkeeper is described as follows:

Ante tu puerta se formó un tumulto  
de breves pantalones  
donde bailan los priapos su bulto  
sin otros eslabones  
que los de sus esclavas relaciones.

and the death of the goalkeeper is depicted in these terms:

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<sup>7</sup>Cannon, "Lorca's 'Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías' and the Elegiac Tradition," Hispanic Review, (July 1963), vol. 31, pp. 236-37.

Fué un plongeón mortal. Con ¡cuánto! tino  
y efecto, tu cabeza  
dió al poste. Como un sexo femenino,  
abrió la ligereza  
del golpe una granada de tristeza.

The same can be said of "Elegía media del toro,"<sup>8</sup>  
which is basically an exercise in baroque imagery, and  
"EXEQUIAS--a mi canario" (OC, pp. 92-93), a lament for  
his dead canary, eaten by a cat, and which perpetuates  
the same playful tone:

Cayó a una tumba eléctrica tu trino:  
a la afición de un gato.  
Por cabecera tienes un maullido,  
por epitafio un rabo.

In his "EXEQUIAS AL RUY-SEÑOR--al poeta" (OC,  
pp. 94-95), on the other hand, the tone is subtly  
modulated playfulness and seriousness, and a number of  
the conventions used in the pastoral elegy from Theocritus  
to the present day can be seen here.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the nightin-  
gale itself is a traditional element in the genre. Other  
conventions that can be observed in the piece are the  
announcement of the victim's death:

Sí. Decretó tu muerte  
una reunión de malas intenciones,  
de iniquidad celada.

an account of how he died:

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<sup>8</sup> Couffon, Orihuela y Miguel Hernández, (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1967), pp. 172-73.

<sup>9</sup> For a list of these conventions, see Cannon, op. cit., pp. 229-30.

La piedra, dura suerte,  
aún propósito, aún gana tus canciones  
de cantar, se llevó sin transiciones  
con su todo a la nada.

\* \* \*

¡Vete!, te dijo el viento,  
y la piedra: ¡porfía!  
Fuiste con el consejo desatento,  
sordo con la amenaza:  
¡funesta valentía!

the eulogy of the victim:

¡qué pico!, abril, ¡qué pico! más agudo  
de belleza te falta.

the expression of grief:

Nada colma el vacío  
de tu delicadez y gloria alta . . .

a reflection on the cruelty of death:

Tu muerte, laborable  
hace el gusano activo:  
te afea hoy todo muerto,  
sí ayer lo embellecías, todo vivo.

and the mourning of nature:

El álamo ha quedado, por viudo,  
desilustrado y mudo . . .

Also present are the pastoral setting and the use of archaisms (the spelling of the word ruiseñor as ruy-señor). Missing is the tone of consolation or reconciliation with death, a significant departure from the traditional conventions. Instead the poet ends his elegy on a note of desperation, since he saw the song of the nightingale as a note of beauty in nature which counteracted his sinful impulses and helped him attain the state of

Christian asceticism he aspired to in that period:

Sin tu función tenora,  
mi atención distraída, ociosa ahora  
mi devoción, como tu eco, espera,  
mi audición sin empleo,  
y en la desesperanza mi deseo,  
al Ruy-señor de otra primavera,  
mientras en estos prados,  
¿quién? impide y aventura mis pecados.

What is apparent in this poem--and the same could be said of "Elegía al gallo" (OC, pp. 119-121)--is that Hernández was quite aware of the conventions of the pastoral elegy and was not simply using the word "elegy" for convenience. While these poems are merely finger exercises and lack the feelings of real sorrow, anger at the cruelty of death, melancholy, etc., which are characteristic of the genre, they demonstrate the poet's familiarity with the form.

### 3. The Technological Element

The poem "Vuelo vulnerado" (OC, pp. 136-138) is interesting not only because it is an example of a type of pastoral elegy, this time for an unknown aviator, but also because it contains a motif which is rare in Hernández's poetry prior to the war but very common in U.S. pastoral literature: the machine intruding in the bower. That is the main thesis of Leo Marx's book, The Machine in the Garden, subtitled "Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America," which analyzes the effect of the development of modern technology, symbolized by the machine in varied forms, on the pastoral design in American literature.

Marx shows that this is the central contradiction or "counterforce," as he calls it, in modern pastoral literature in the U.S. since the industrial revolution. We can expect that this would be less so in the case of the modern Spanish pastoral, since Spain is a technologically underdeveloped country, especially at the time Hernández was writing. Therefore it is particularly interesting to find this theme in his early writing, with the machine appearing in the form of an airplane and in a clearly pastoral setting, as is apparent from the first strophe, subtitled "El Aeroplano":

Redención del acero:  
cisne de geometría que en la gloria  
canta y muere; cigarra del enero  
y el agosto gigante y transitoria.  
En el pico una estrella giratoria,  
por el viento camina,  
barítono pastor de gasolina.

The machine is still not a threatening presence in the bower but rather an alien one which the poet adapts to the pastoral landscape by metamorphosizing it into a huge insect, a cicada, which is the traditional insect of the bower. However, Hernández is more concerned with the pilot, the man who directs the machine, and whom he eulogizes as a modern Icarus who pays for his temerity with his life:

En situación celeste, ultraterrena,  
arcángel nunciatorio de sí mismo,  
se ausenta en su presencia,  
apolíneo Jesús, en cruz del suelo:  
se siente, como Dios está, en el cielo,  
facultado de islas y heroísmo,  
doble acero y potencia.

The pilot, in fact, is a celestial shepherd:

¡Apártate!, Señor, que va de vuelo.  
Rebaños de clamores,

holgando de la baja tierra gufa,  
himalaya entre todos los pastores  
por altitud y hombría.

Nature mourns the death of the hero when his motor and  
parachute fail and he plummets to earth in what is seen  
as an almost mystical experience:

Abajo todo llora, arriba calla.  
Ardió el pájaro, falla.  
Su jinete se hizo al fin profundo,  
midiendo en un momento  
la beldad que sentía el elemento  
de entre el vuelo y el mundo.

However, this time the elegy closes on a note of consolation,  
because the hero, like Virgil's Daphnis, achieves a kind  
of pastoral immortality:

Se ocupan ahora de él como de un drama  
los prados de la prensa,  
o de algo nunca visto.

\* \* \*

Nadie sabe de todo nada cierto:  
le confunden el nombre, la existencia,  
lo dan por vivo un día, otro por muerto.

¿Tropezó? su proeza con la espuma . . .  
¿La interceptó? la roca . . .

Igual que el gallo, va de pluma en pluma.  
Igual que el niño, va de boca en boca.

#### 4. Death Desired

In this same period Hernández wrote his own elegy  
for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, "Citación final" (OC, pp. 138-  
140). In this poem he eulogizes Sánchez Mejías, whom he,

like Lorca, casts in the role of a classical hero because of the superhuman nature of his courage shown in the conquest of the fear of death:

Con el valor sublime de tu miedo,  
el valor más gigante,  
la esperabas de mármol elegante.  
Te dedicaste al hueso más avieso,  
que te ha dejado a ti en el puro hueso,  
y eres el colmo ya de la finura.

In fact, he says in terms reminiscent of Jorge Manrique, the hero's death was his final triumph, because he died with the same courage and elegance with which he had lived:

Morir es una suerte  
como vivir: ¡de qué, de qué manera!  
supiste ejecutarla y el berrendo.  
Tu muerte fué vivida a la torera,  
lo mismo que tu vida fué muriendo.

Death does not have importance in itself, because all living things must die:

Mas, ¿qué importa que acabes? . . .  
¿No acabamos todos, aquí, criatura,  
allí en el sitio donde Todo empieza?

The only important thing is the way one dies. Hernández even sees Sánchez Mejías as desiring death:

Quisiera yo, Mejías,  
a quien el hueso y cuerno  
han hecho estatua, callado, paz, eterno,  
esperar y mirar, cual tú solías,  
a la muerte: ¡de cara!,  
con un valor que era un temor interno  
de que no te matara.

The poet ends the poem by desiring for himself the immortality which the bullfighter earned by his exemplary life and death, exemplary because of the courage and style with which he lived and died:



Espero, a pie parado,  
 el ser, cuando Dios quiera, despenado,  
 con la vida de miedo medio muerta,  
 que en ese cuando, amigo,  
 alguien diga por mí lo que yo digo  
 por tí con voz serena que aparento:

San Pedro, ¡abre! la puerta:  
 abre los brazos, Dios, y ¡dale! asiento.

Hernández's elegy therefore ends on the note of consolation that Lorca's lacks, precisely because the latter poet did not have the faith in an afterlife that Hernández had in this period of his life. Moreover, Lorca wrote his masterpiece in his full artistic maturity, while we are examining an early effort on the part of Hernández. It is in his later work that we will find elegies worthy of being compared with Lorca's in artistic quality and emotional depth, and not merely in the more superficial aspects of the genre we have been considering up till now.

## 5. Death as Loss

There is a prose piece written by Hernández in this period which is relevant to our study. It is his "Elegía de Gabriel Miró" (OC, pp. 933-934), written in 1930 and published, with a brief addition, in 1933. This composition, which was dedicated to Juan Ramón Jiménez, begins by establishing a pastoral setting:

Al preliminar canto de la luna en los últimos de mayo--para eras de junio, cuando los comités de plenos verdes, de chumberas, invitan a la continuidad--, el moral al azúcar, la seda encapillada a la transformación, si al sueño, del reptil que deshila su existencia, y las palmeras, alineación de bronce y geometría, dejan de menear rosarios,

abalorios sabrosos a su altura, entonces,  
 ruy-señor mayor de edad, te encierran bajo llave . . .

The poet laments the loss of the writer's brilliance:

¡Ay, la joya, tu voz, joya metida ya en estuche  
 de madera!

Nature mourns the loss also:

Bate sus campanadas de pechuga el palomar lunado  
 del magnolio.  
 Amarillez los limoneros lloran.

Even the animals of the bower mourn the death of the  
 writer:

Las culebras, los lagartos quisieran, ¿no  
 quisieran?, igual que los toreros millonarios,  
 cortarse la coleta, aquí en tus sierras.

The poet also meditates on the cruelty and inevitability  
 of death:

La carcinoma, el gusano, deshilará tu muerte  
 laborable para aumentar su vida.

\* \* \*

Se le escapan al mar todos los barcos . . .

The first part of the elegy ends on a note of melancholy  
 resignation:

Tu quietud se ha quedado limitando eternamente  
 al norte con tu obra, al sur con tu tristeza, y al  
 este y al oeste con toda la belleza.

Entre página y página de ella, voy planchando  
 magnolias, árbol del Paraíso, camisas de serpientes,  
 fundas caladas, verdes de aquel bello veneno a lo  
 cohete.

However, in the lines he added three years later for  
 publication of the piece, I sense a harsher note, as  
 though he were rejecting the earlier feeling of consolation  
 due to a suggestion of immortality achieved through the

beauty of Miró's work:

Como el fruto luego de comido, sólo hay hueso de  
ti bajo la losa.

Se tenía a tu obra por ti antes, y a ti por ella  
ahora.

The pastoral elegy approaches its artistic maturity in Hernández's work with the elegies written to commemorate the death of his close friend, Ramón Sijé. On December 24, 1935, Sijé died of illness, and Hernández wrote four elegies, two in prose and two in verse, one of which he included in El rayo que no cesa. This poem, dated January 10, 1936, is number 29 and the next to the last in that book. It is written in the traditional form employed Sannazaro and Garcilaso (Egloga Segunda)-- 11-syllable triplets rhyming aba, bcb, cdc, etc., and ending in a quatrain.

The pastoral setting is established in the first stanza, as well as the tone of grief for his dead friend:

Yo quiero ser llorando el hortelano  
de la tierra que ocupas y estercolas,  
compañero del alma, tan temprano.

The fourth stanza is the announcement of Sijé's death and the account, poetically rendered, of how he died:

Un manotazo duro, un golpe helado,  
un hachazo invisible y homicida,  
un empujón brutal te ha derribado.

The first part of the elegy is an expression of profound grief:

No hay extensión más grande que mi herida,  
lloro mi desventura y sus conjuntos  
y siento más tu muerte que mi vida.

and resentment at the cruelty of death, which struck his friend down at such an early age (he was 22 when he died):

Temprano levantó la muerte el vuelo,  
temprano madrugó la madrugada,  
temprano estás rodando por el suelo.

No perdono a la muerte enamorada,  
no perdono a la vida desatenta,  
no perdono a la tierra ni a la nada.

culminating in his rebellion against the fact of death itself:

En mis manos levanto una tormenta  
de piedras, rayos y hachas estridentes  
sedienta de catástrofes y hambrienta.

He says that he will attack the earth like some savage animal and return his friend to life:

Quiero escarbar la tierra con los dientes,  
quiero apartar la tierra parte a parte  
a dentelladas secas y calientes.

Quiero minar la tierra hasta encontrarte  
y besarte la noble calavera  
y desamordazarte y regresarte.

The last part of the poem is a description of how his friend will return to the bower:

Volverás a mi huerto y a mi higuera:  
por los altos andamios de las flores  
pajareará tu alma colmenera

De angelicales ceras y labores.  
Volverás al arrullo de las rejas  
de los enamorados labradores.

and ends on a traditional note of consolation:

A las aladas almas de las rosas  
del almendro de nata te requiero,  
que tenemos que hablar de muchas cosas,  
compañero del alma, compañero.

As can be seen, this is a pastoral elegy written within the traditional framework, in content as well as form. It observes most of the 15 to 20 elegiac conventions, even including the use of flowers, and ends on a note of tranquility in contrast to the violent rebellion against the power of death which he expresses earlier in the poem. It is no Christian immortality which provides the balm for his pain, however, but a personal victory over death which he will achieve through the very force of his love for his friend. This is a very tenuous victory, though, and rather reveals his lack of faith in an afterlife than any real belief that he would recover his lost friend. It is a somewhat conventional solution to the very modern dilemma of facing death without the consolation of religious belief, and serves to mask the poet's desperation rather than to sooth it.

#### 6. Waning Faith

The other elegy is directed to Josefina Fenoll, the daughter of a baker in Orihuela and fiancée of Ramón Sijé, in whose bakery Hernández, Sijé and other friends had a literary tertulia long before Hernández left Orihuela for his first trip to Madrid. The poem is written in the same metrical form as the other elegy, and also contains a pastoral setting which is established in the first stanzas, when the poet invites his friend's fiancée to

retire with him to the bower in order to properly mourn their loss:

Tengo ya el alma ronca y tengo ronco  
el gemido de música traidora . . .  
Arrímate a llorar conmigo a un tronco:

retírate conmigo al campo y llora  
a la sangrienta sombra de un granado  
desgarrado de amor como tú ahora.

This is the only consolation he can offer her, however. He warns her not to hope that she will ever see her love again:

No esperes ver tu párpado caliente  
ni tu cara dulcísima y morena  
bajo los dos solsticios de su frente.

because he is dead, and beyond death there is only silence:

Y sólo queda ya de tanta vida  
un cadáver de cera desmayada  
y un silencio de abeja detenida.

He recalls the happy days he and his friends passed together in pastoral peace and contentment:

Corazón de relámpagos y afanes,  
paginaba los libros de tus rosas,  
apacentaba el hato de tus panes.

But now Sijé is dead and the only consolation Hernández can offer her is his solidarity in suffering and the reflection that death comes to all, in terms that recall the "Coplas" of Jorge Manrique:

La implacable muerte nos espera  
como un agua incesante y malparida  
a la vuelta de cada vidriera.  
  
¡Cuántos amargos tragos es la vida!  
Bebió él la muerte y tú la saboreas  
y yo no saboreo otra bebida.



As Cannon said in his analysis of the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías," "As the elegists before him, Lorca has come to recognize the inescapable universality of death."<sup>10</sup> Hernández has reached the same realization, and so he ends the poem on a note of resignation and profound grief, unallieviated by the hope of immortality in any form whatsoever:

Retírate conmigo hasta que veas  
con nuestro llanto dar las piedras grama,  
abandonando el pan que pastoreas.

Levántate: te esperan tus zapatos  
junto a los suyos muertos en tu cama,  
y la lluviosa pena en sus retratos  
desde cuyos presidios te reclama.

The difference between this elegy and the one included in El rayo is striking due to this shift in tone from desperate hope and resignation in the face of death's inevitability in that poem, and the lack of any consolation in this one. For that very reason I would judge this to be a later composition.

Of the two prose pieces which he wrote in homage to his friend, one, entitled simply "Ramón Sijé" (OC, p. 943), is not really an elegy. It is simply a piece written for the newspaper La Verdad of Murcia in which he expresses his profound grief for the death of his friend. The second composition, however, which is reproduced in Couffon,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cannon, op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>11</sup> Couffon, op. cit., pp. 47-49.



contains one of the elements in the traditional pastoral elegy which is curiously lacking in the verse elegies we have just examined: the eulogy of the dead man. In this speech, which Hernández read in Orihuela on March 12, 1936, when one of its plazas was renamed "Ramón Sijé," he said:

Hemos perdido con Ramón Sijé un genial escritor, si aún temprano de razón ya tardío de humanidad. Con una luz sobrenatural en el corazón y en el entendimiento, lo veía todo, lo sentía todo, lo sufría, lo angustiaba y lo hacía vivir muriendo todo: desde el sentimiento del amor hasta el pensamiento de la muerte. Fue un héroe, y resistió mientras pudo, a pie firme, las violentas tempestades que se organizaron y chocaron de continuo entre su corazón y su cerebro. Pocos hombres han vivido una vida interior tan intensa y sangrientamente volcánica como Ramón Sijé. Veintidós años contó sobre la tierra y se ha llevado la dolorosa experiencia de cien bajo ella. Cayó agotado por la tremenda pelea inacabable de sus pensamientos y sus sentimientos, sus trabajos y sus fatigas. Un día escribiré las memorias de su vida, que a cada paso y recuerdo adquiere en mí más caracteres de tragedia.

There are several references in this composition to an afterlife, but they do not seem to me to be references to a Christian life after death, but rather remarks that Hernández probably felt more fitting to a public occasion with an audience composed of people with a variety of beliefs than the pessimistic resignation of the elegy dedicated to Josefina Fenoll. In the beginning of the speech Hernández said:

Sé qué su alma anda hoy--con la precipitación con que solían andar su corazón y su cuerpo--anda y recorre esta plaza, y le complace su soledad cotidiana, que acrecientan las siestas, las lluvias y las casas cerradas.

and he ended by saying:

Ramón Sijé verá desde la tierra que ocupe lo que hagamos por él, y juzgará desde su sombra, y no hablará porque ya su oficio es callar como el de un muerto.

Hernández is clearly speaking here of an immortality far different from the conventional one (if indeed he is speaking of immortality at all), but the phrase "ya su oficio es callar" is very reminiscent of the above-quoted verses:

Y sólo queda ya de tanta vida  
un cadáver de cera desmayada  
y un silencio de abeja detenida.

In any case, the compositions Hernández wrote as a result of his friend's death show the degree to which he had mastered the pastoral elegy. Now the elegy had come of age in his work because it had acquired the essential ingredient which until now had been missing--genuine emotion for the loss of someone dear to him. This is a good example of the phenomenon described by Poggioli, when he wrote that " . . . the pastoral of friendship finds its highest expression in the funeral elegy, which is but a shepherd's lament for a friend 'dead ere his prime.'"<sup>12</sup>

#### 7. Union with Nature

Another statement on the presence of death within the bower written in the period immediately preceding the war is the poem "Vecino de la muerte" (OC, pp. 242-244).

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<sup>12</sup>Poggioli, op. cit., p. 164.

Its particular interest is that it contains a form of immortality through a physical union with nature in the form of the earth itself, recalling Rosenmeyer's statement that in the pastoral elegy:

. . . there is much attention to the integration of man into a larger universe of animal and vegetable life, of which the immediate scene, the bower, is for once a more transparent agent than in some of the varieties of pastoral.<sup>13</sup>

In the fifth stanza Hernández presents a catalogue of the dead typical of the medieval "Dance of Death" but with pastoral symbolism:

No hay nada sin un monte de riqueza explotado.  
 Los enterrados con bastón y mitra,  
 los altos personajes de la muerte,  
 las niñas que expiraron de sed por la entrepierna  
 donde jamás tuvieron un arado y dos bueyes,  
 los duros picadores pródigos de sus músculos,  
 muertos con las heridas rodeadas de cuernos:  
 todos los destetados del aire y del amor  
 de un polvo huésped ahora se amantan.

In the next stanza the poet asks himself what has become of those who have died, in terms reminiscent of the "Ubi sunt?" of the medieval meditations on death but again with pastoral imagery:

¿Y para quién están los tiernos epitafios,  
 las alabanzas más sañudas,  
 formuladas a fuerza de cincel y mentiras,  
 atacando el silencio natural de las piedras,  
 todas con menoscabos y agujeros  
 de ser ramoneadas con hambre y con constancia  
 por una amante oveja de dos labios?

He then asks if this is to be his fate also:

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<sup>13</sup>Rosenmeyer, op. cit., pp. 113-14.

¿Y este espolón constituído en gallo  
 irá a una sombra malgastada en mármol y ladrillo?  
 ¿No cumplirá mi sangre su misión: ser estiércol?

He rebels, but he is not rebelling against the fact of death, whose inevitability he has already accepted, but against the "Christian way of death," which is part of the ritualism he is rejecting in this period:

Yo no quiero agregar pechuga al polvo:  
 me niego a su destino: ser echado a un rincón.  
 Prefiero que me coman los lobos y los perros,  
 que mis huesos actúen como estacas  
 para atar cerdos o pícar espartos.

Union with nature is the solution he is advancing to the contradiction between Catholicism or Christianity and his rejection of that tradition. It is a solution in accord with pagan pastoralism, and it is expressed through the dust-earth symbolism:

El polvo es paz que llega con su bandera blanca  
 sobre los ataúdes y las casas caídas,  
 pero bajo los pliegues un colmillo  
 de rabioso marfil contaminado  
 nos sigue a todas partes, nos vigila,  
 y apenas nos paramos nos inciensa de siglos,  
 nos reduce a cornisas y a santos arrumbados.

Y es que el polvo no es tierra,  
 La tierra es un amor dispuesto a ser un hoyo,  
 dispuesto a ser un árbol, un volcán y una fuente.

Mi cuerpo pide el hoyo que promete la tierra,  
 el hoyo desde el cual daré mis privilegios de león y  
 nitrato a todas las raíces que me tiendan sus trenzas.

In the last stanzas he presents death not only in pastoral terms, but as union with the bower itself when he asks:

que se apoyen en mí sembrados y viñedos,  
 que me dediquen mosto las cepas por su origen.

Aquel barbecho lleno de inagotables besos,  
aquella cesta de uvas quiero tener encima  
cuando descanse al fin de esta faena  
de dar conversaciones, abrazos y pesares,  
de cultivar cabellos, arrugas y esperanzas,  
y de sentir un beso sobre cada deseo.

This is a form of immortality, and it is a form  
consonant with both pagan pastoralism and the materialism  
of the revolutionary ideology he had embraced.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PASTORAL OF THE LEFT

When Miguel Hernández arrived in Madrid for the second time in March, 1934, his country was in deep political ferment. The Second Republic, proclaimed as a result of the municipal elections of April, 1931, was being torn apart by the unresolved class conflicts which were to culminate in the Civil War of 1936-39. The Left was deeply divided as a result of the government's repressive tactics, as in the Casas Viejas incident in January, 1933. In November, 1933, a right-wing coalition, the Ceda, won in the elections to the Cortes due to the disunity on the Left and the electoral boycott conducted by some sectors. Thus began a period of such reactionary government policies that it came to be known as the Bienio Negro.

#### 1. Move to the Left

It was a situation in which neutrality was impossible for anyone with any degree of political consciousness or conscience, and Hernández possessed both. As we have noted, he had been politically involved since his early adolescence. Now, however, he could see things from the vantage point of the capital, and he gravitated both

literally and ideologically toward such leftist intellectuals as Pablo Neruda, Rafael Alberti, Raúl González Tuñón and others. For Hernández this was not so much as radical change as a return to his class roots and his earliest political convictions. As he himself put it in his declaration of political and religious freedom, "Sonreídme" (OC, 258-260):

Sonreídme, que voy  
adonde estáis vosotros los de siempre,  
los que cubrís de epigas y racimos la boca del que  
nos escupe,  
los que conmigo en surcos, andamios, fraguas, hornos,  
os arrancáis la corona del sudor a diario.

· · ·  
salté al monte de donde procedo,  
a las viñas donde halla tanta hermana mi sangre,  
a vuestra compañía de relativo barro.

The anger which he felt was not that of a middle-class intellectual, who identifies with more or less remote suffering of working people; it was the anger caused by the poverty he and other working people had to endure all their lives. As he said later in the same poem:

la cólera me nubla todas las cosas dentro del corazón  
sintiendo el martillazo del hambre en el ombligo,  
viendo a mi hermana helarse mientras lava la ropa,  
viendo a mi madre siempre en ayuno forzoso,  
viéndoos en este estado capaz de impacientar  
a los mismos corderos que jamás se impacientan.

In October, 1934, the nation was rocked by the revolt of the Asturian miners. They occupied Gijón and Oviedo, but the revolution was short-lived. General Francisco Franco from his post in the War Office ordered the Foreign Legion and African mercenaries to crush the



revolt, and no sooner had the fighting ended than the executions began. No one knows exactly how many people were executed in this dress rehearsal for the Civil War, but it is certain that thousands fell before the firing squads, aside from those who were tortured and herded into concentration camps modeled on the highly efficient German camps then in operation.<sup>1</sup> Political repression was nothing new in Spanish history, but the unprecedented use of the Foreign Legion and African troops on Spanish soil to carry on a war against Spanish workers was a profound shock to the national psyche.

## 2. A Social Drama

Soon after the tragedy of Asturias and before the Civil War itself broke out, he wrote his second major theatrical work, Los hijos de la piedra (pp. 593-662). This play and the one that follows it, El labrador de más aire, also almost certainly written prior to July, 1936, are fundamental to a study of his new political views. We must examine them to see if his pastoralism survived the change and, if so, in what form.

The plot of Los hijos de la piedra is simple. The people of the small mining village of Montecabra are industrious and contented; their limited needs are fulfilled by the wages paid by their employer, the owner of the mine

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<sup>1</sup> See Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1950), pp. 285-89.

and most of the real estate in the entire village, don Pedro. However, don Pedro dies and his successor, who is never identified by name but only as the "Señor" (employer, master, lord, in English), immediately lowers their wages and demands more work from them. When the miners go on a hunger strike, the owner calls in the Civil Guards and, after flushing the workers out of the mine with tear gas, locks them out and tries to starve them into submission. The only resistance is offered by the Shepherd, who kills the owner's foreman when he catches him stealing his sheep. The Shepherd escapes from jail and returns, only to find that his compañera, Retama, has been raped by the owner and as a consequence had a miscarriage. She dies in his arms and the Shepherd incites the starving population to revolt. The tyrant is killed by the furious workers and their families, and the four Civil Guards protecting him are put to flight. The Guards return later in force, and the Shepherd, after burying Retama, goes to certain death leading his people in the defense of their lives and property.

The similarity to Fuenteovejuna is obvious, and yet the differences demonstrate the distance between Lope's concept of democracy and that of a modern revolutionary. The collective nature of the revolt, the execution of the tyrant and the subsequent defense of the village against the representatives of the State are similar in both

works. The people of Fuenteovejuna are saved by their loyalty to the good lords, Isabel and Fernando, who represented a relatively progressive force in fifteenth century Spain in opposition to the feudal aristocracy. Now, however, there is no good lord ("señor"); don Pedro has died and the State represents the interests of the exploiting class. The people are saved in Fuenteovejuna, thanks to their own solidarity and to the political configuration of their time. The people of Montecabra die, despite their solidarity, because they are unable to resist alone the onslaught of the repressive forces. So would the people of Fuenteovejuna have perished, if they had not been able to take advantage of the Catholic Monarchs' need for popular allies in their struggle against the feudal lords.

Moreover, the concept of honor, so fundamental to Golden Age drama, is present superficially in Hernández's play, but more as a convention than anything else. The real source of conflict is economic exploitation, and the only solution to the dilemma is revolution and the seizure of the mines and lands by the people who work them. There is no hope of aid from the State, which is simply the representative of exploiters such as the evil master of Montecabra. The revolt fails because it is too limited; it is revolt rather than revolution, but it bears within itself the seeds of social revolution and therefore is

the hope of tomorrow. It is significant that the three acts of the play are entitled Verano, Otoño and Ivierno. Spring is yet to come.

Even more revealing is a comparison of this work with Hernández's own auto. Los hijos de la piedra is similar to an auto, in that the characters are identified as anonymous types--the Shepherd, the Señor, the miners, the Civil Guards--with little attempt to develop their individual characteristics. They are symbolic figures and the play is a didactic piece rather than an exploration of human emotions and motives, although these are present. Both, in fact, deal with the salvation of mankind, but the ideology has been almost exactly inverted. While in Hernández's auto the Shepherd represented Christ and was killed by man, in Los hijos de la piedra the Shepherd is the leader of the revolt against the interests defended by, among other institutions, the Church, and is killed by the repressive forces sent to defend those interests. The difference is not as great as it may seem. The revolutionary content of the New Testament has been recognized and used by many modern writers, such as Tolstoy and Galdós, and Hernández is using a variant of this theme. But the matter is more complicated, because far from having broken with the pastoral tradition in this, his first revolutionary theatrical work, he is still working very much within that framework.

### 3. From Golden Age to Revolt

Montecabra is established as the bower at the beginning of the play; it is located "en el último rincón de España" and there is no class conflict: "Jamás usamos las herramientas para otra cosa que no sea el trabajo." This is due to don Pedro, the good master ("el buen señor"): "Tenemos un señor que no permite que el pan ande escaso en ninguna boca." In the summertime the Edenic quality of the bower is even greater. The children run free and eat the fruit of the bower: "No tenemos que atender a nuestros hijos y se crían solos y desnudos con la fruta que cae del árbol." And of course the bower is pure, especially when contrasted with the city. As a woman says, speaking of marital infidelity: "En la ciudad abundan siempre las cornamentas; aquí se da poco esa cosecha y muy de tarde en tarde." Labor is beneficial in the bower and not a curse: "El trabajo espanta los malos pensamientos, mantiene la paz en Montecabra, evita los crímenes y los robos y no deja crecer en la huerta la ortiga, en la casa el polvo y en el barbecho el cardo." Labor in the bower, in other words, is not alienating, while in the outside world it is. As the Woodcutter says: "¡Qué triste debe ser trabajar como en los presidios: esperando el latigazo y el insulto!" The difference is that in the bower people work in an atmosphere of freedom. The Woodcutter adds: "En libertad

trabajo desde que despunta la luz en mi hacha hasta que no la veo en mi mano de tanta sombra que la envuelve. Me daría cólera que alguien me dijera: ¡más de prisa!" Therefore the most ideal jobs within the bower are those which are most isolated from any type of supervision, jobs such as that of the Woodcutter or, of course, the Shepherd. The latter adds: "Nosotros, leñador, hemos nacido para trabajar solos en el monte. Nadie puede acompañar a un leñador y a un pastor tampoco. Unicamente el hacha y el cayado, y la hembra si se tiene."

This is more a reflection of the aristocratic origins of the pastoral than of modern socialist ideas. For a Marxist there is no area of the economy which is exempt from capitalist exploitation because all workers, no matter how distant from the metropolis, are still part of the market economy and are therefore selling some portion of their labor power. A "good" master only attenuates the conditions of that exploitation and makes it more bearable, thus perpetuating it.

The traditional pastoral, however, implied "a beautiful relation between rich and poor."<sup>2</sup> Since this was obviously not the case at any time during which pastoral literature was being written, a Golden Age of social harmony was invented in the past or projected into

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<sup>2</sup>Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, (New York: New Directions, 1974), p. 11.



a future time on an unknown island, as in The Tempest.<sup>3</sup>

The Montecabra we find at the beginning of the play is living in the mythical Golden Age of social peace due to its buen señor, don Pedro. When he dies there is no longer any hope of a good master, as is seen in the deaf ears turned to the miners' pleas by the State, referred to in the play in good pastoral terms as "the city." This is likewise nothing new, because the threat to pastoral peace from the hostile outer world is as old as Virgil's First Eclogue, with Meliboeus being evicted from his lands and going into the hard life of an exile. As Poggioli observed, "What threatens most the equilibrium of a pastoral community is the violence of those who are neither humble nor poor."<sup>4</sup> What Hernández does in this play is to link the traditional threat to the bower--the greed of the rich and powerful, located in or originating from the city--with the institutionalized exploitation of the capitalist system.

#### 4. A Pastoral Hero

This is also his intent in another play written in the same period, El labrador de más aire (OC, pp. 663-804). In this work, more reminiscent of Peribáñez y el Comendador

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<sup>3</sup> See Frank Kermode's introduction to The Tempest, Arden Edition, 5th edition revised, (London, 1954).

<sup>4</sup> Poggioli, op. cit., p. 170.



de Ocaña than of Fuenteovejuna, the protagonist is a tenant farmer, Juan. However, he is none the less the traditional hero of the pastoral for being a farmer and not a shepherd. His outstanding characteristic is his independence, while his physical beauty makes him irresistible to women. He is, in effect, a latter-day Daphnis, and, like the classical pastoral hero Daphnis, is doomed to an equally tragic death. Even his labor is described in such a way as to emphasize its vigor and sensuality rather than the drudgery that Hernández well knew it involved. He is described working in the fields by his cousin Encarnación:

Sé que le vi en la labor  
 un día de primavera:  
 labraba de igual manera  
 con el arado el barbecho  
 y con el vigor del pecho  
 el lienzo de su pechera.  
 La tierra que removía  
 con la reja y con la yunta  
 se alzaba de punta a punta  
 ruidosamente sombría.  
 La tierra se descubría  
 y se abría su espesa rosa,  
 y al preparar una fosa  
 para la lluvia y la mies  
 le tiraba de los pies  
 como una novia celosa.

##### 5. City-Country Dialectic

Furthermore, the scene of the play, which is never identified by name--only as a small Castilian village--is no less the pastoral bower than Montecabra. It is described in these terms by one of the inhabitants:

Aquí la gente es muy lenta  
 y todo va despacioso.  
 Nada verá presuroso  
 mirando estos andurriales:  
 son en ellos naturales  
 la lentitud y la paz,  
 del haz de la tierra al haz  
 de los cielos celestiales.

The pastoralism of this work can be most clearly seen in the city-country dialectic, which is much more developed in this work than in Los hijos de la piedra. Here the city is once again represented by the evil master, don Augusto, who no sooner arrives in the village with his daughter Isabel than he demands that the peasants increase their already onerous payments to him. Juan defies him and finally pays for his defiance with his life, but in the meantime he falls in love with Isabel. This development, which is absurd within the psychology of the characters as Hernández presents them to us, is actually a device whereby the author can develop the country-city contradiction more fully than in the previous work. This can best be seen when Juan confronts Isabel and tries to win her love. She rejects country life, which she finds tremendously boring:

No quiero oír más canciones  
 ni andar la orilla del río.  
 Estoy harta de escuchar,  
 aun desde la misma cama,  
 la noria que echa a rodar  
 y la novilla que brama;  
 harta de ver las gallinas,  
 el campo, el trigo, las eras,  
 los vecinos, las vecinas,  
 las yuntas y las corderas.  
 No puedo con este olor  
 a establo y flor de tomillo.

Me irrita ya tanta flor  
 y tanto cuadro sencillo.  
 No sé para qué me trajo  
 mi padre de la ciudad  
 a esta vida de trabajo  
 y de laboriosidad.  
 Para sentirme aburrida  
 por tanto pesado arrullo  
 y tener que oír mi vida  
 que es un pecado mi orgullo.

Juan responds that the country contains one thing she should find of great value, and that is the love of a hard-working farmer--namely, himself. Speaking now clearly from the viewpoint of class privilege, Isabel rejects him, saying: "No eres más que un labrador," and when Juan replies, "Ni menos," she says, "No eres bastante." At this point Juan launches into a defense of his class and his work:

Pues es mi orgullo mayor  
 ser labrador.

\* \* \*

Arrogante y aldeano,  
 me honra extremadamente  
 decir que mi pan lo gano  
 con el sudor de mi frente.  
 Y que desde que la esteva  
 llevo, con su manantial  
 siempre el sudor me renueva  
 una corona de sal.

Finally he reiterates his basic point, which is that true love is to be found in the country and among the tillers of the soil:

ten en consideración,  
 que si soy de la labranza,  
 soy también del corazón.

Juan finally rejects Isabel, but while he pursues her--the beauty and values of the city--he even acquires an unhealthy look, and neglects his work. His cousin describes him in the following terms:

Noto tu color trocado:  
que a tu moreno encendido  
sustituye un apurado  
moreno desfallecido.

Thus the country--the bower--is the abode of simple pleasures and physical labor, of love and of pride in being an honest farmer, as opposed to the arrogance of class privilege, the artificiality and parasitism of the city. The country is good and healthy, while the city is evil, and when it enters the bower it brings suffering and death. This is the reason both plays end in the death of the protagonist, the rebel. It is not that Hernández felt the struggle against social injustice was destined to fail; it was rather the lesson, flowing from the pastoral framework and ideology of his works, that the city--which he equated with the capitalist class--meant the death of the pastoral dream. Thus, to preserve the bower, effective collective resistance was needed. Hernández has given the socialist revolution a pastoral justification and, in so doing, has created the Pastoral of the Left.

#### 6. Pastoralism and Socialism

There is no doubt that this pastoral contains

certain basic differences when compared with the traditional pastoral, but then, as we have seen, there are certain basic differences between Hernández and the traditional writer of pastoral literature, to wit:

--He was not from the city but the country.

--He was not an aristocrat or a middle-class intellectual using country people as the vehicle for his ideas, but a member of the peasantry himself.

--He was living in the 20th century, a time of social upheaval, and in a particularly crucial time and place within that period--Spain on the eve of the great conflagration which was to become the Second World War.

His pastoral would therefore of necessity be somewhat different from the traditional forms of the pastoral, but this does not mean it was any less of the genre. Hernández shows the traditional conflict between the pastoral dream and reality within the context of his times. While it is true in a sense, as Poggioli says, that when the pastoral rebel declares war on the exploiting class, "he shatters the pastoral dream,"<sup>5</sup> this is not the result of his action, but the result of hostile forces from the outside world. As we have seen in both these plays, the action of the protagonists was defensive, and was in response to the economic aggression of masters who were not of the bower.

What all of this boils down to is that Hernández's pastoralism was complex pastoralism, to use Leo Marx's

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

terms, and the counterforce at this stage of his work was the economic oppression of the capitalist class. Thus it is the counterforce that shatters the pastoral dream in Hernández's work, just as it does in Huckleberry Finn.<sup>6</sup>

There are two possible objections to this. One is that the introduction of the counterforce--of any counterforce--destroys the bucolic peace of the true pastoral, in which case we have not had any examples of pure pastoral literature since Theocritus. This is Rosenmeyer's position, and it is a sterile one, since it, in effect, denies the existence of the pastoral tradition.

The other objection, posed by Poggioli, is that pastoralism is inherently incompatible with all forms of progressive thought from Rousseau on, including most particularly Marxism. However, Hernández was not a Marxist theoretician but a poet and dramatist writing within the framework of a tradition--the pastoral--which was uniquely suited to his origins and his temperament. Furthermore, the projection of the Golden Age into the future was typical of the so-called utopian socialists from the eighteenth century on, and the quarrel of the Marxist socialists with the utopians was not over their vision of a better future society. Indeed, such a vision is the *sine qua non* of any socialist. The Marxists are critical

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<sup>6</sup> See Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), chapter V.



of the lack of a historical and economic basis for the utopians' projections, and of the inadequacy of the means with which they propose to achieve their goals. Engels himself projected such a society when he wrote in his work Socialism: Utopian and Scientific:

. . . The proletariat seizes the public power, and by means of this transforms the socialized means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property. By this act, the proletariat frees the means of production from the character of capital they have thus far borne, and gives their socialized character complete freedom to work itself out. Socialized production upon a predetermined plan becomes henceforth possible. The development of production makes the existence of different classes of society thenceforth an anachronism. In proportion as anarchy in social production vanishes, the political authority of the state dies out. Man, at last the master of his own form of social organization, becomes at the same time the lord over Nature, his own master--free.

Such a vision harmonizes quite well with the pastoral dream, as long as one does not propose the latter as the actual contours of the future society, disregarding modern technology and other factors. Such was not Hernández's intention. He was merely utilizing a convenient literary framework as the vehicle for his ideas and feelings, and in that sense his Pastoral of the Left was a valid and successful creation. The vehicle will change under the impact of war and defeat, as we shall see in the last part of this study, but it will remain the vehicle of his world-view until the end of his life.



## PART III. THE SHEPHERD OF DEATH

"que soy pastor de la vida,  
por ser pastor de la muerte."

-- H. H.

CHAPTER I  
THE MACHINE IN THE GARDEN

On July 18, 1936, the world changed radically for Miguel Hernández and untold millions of others. A frustrated military coup ignited the civil war in Spain and, soon after, the world was involved in a global conflict. It was one of the decisive moments in history, and Spain was the pivotal point in that turn. For Hernández war and revolution would cease to be abstract concepts, and for the last six years of his life he would live the vast tragedy of his people and express it in his work. This is the final phase, which will culminate in his masterpiece, the Cancionero y romancero de ausencias, and it is extraordinarily difficult to submit to literary analysis. It seems obscene to use this work in such a way, since it is one of the clearest expressions of the human condition in the twentieth century. How does one quantify or dissect suffering and death, especially on such a scale as this? It is tantamount to studying the use of the metaphor in Ann Frank's diary, and I for one have to overcome considerable resistance within myself on undertaking such a task.

# 1. Art as Resistance

There was no question, of course, as to how Hernández would stand in the crisis. As we have seen, his peasant origin, his life experience and his ideological development made it inevitable that he defend his people against the onslaught of national and international fascism. And this he did with all of the considerable fervor and enthusiasm he had shown throughout his life. His poetry and theatre became didactic and exhortatory--this was poetry to be heard rather than read, to be recited on the front lines, which was what Hernández did throughout the war as cultural commissar in the famous Fifth Regiment. His weapon was his art, and he used it as effectively as he could, in the tradition of Mayakovsky and Brecht. His personal life reflected the general tragedy: he married Josefina on March 9, 1937, but they were to have only days together in their married life. His first child was born on December 19, 1937, and died from an intestinal infection eight months later, on October 19, 1938. Hernández himself was continually ill during this period, suffering from headaches compounded by undernourishment and overwork.

The pastoral universe Hernández had so carefully constructed in his work over the years continued to be the prism through which he would view events in his writing, but it would undergo some fundamental changes.

The bower, the island of peace and tranquility to be defended from a hostile outer world symbolized by the city, would cease to be just Orihuela and would become Spain, symbolized by Madrid's last-ditch resistance to the armies of fascism, including African mercenaries, Italian troops and German military technicians, planes, tanks and other war materiel. The machine in the garden so aptly chosen by Leo Marx<sup>1</sup> to represent the counter-force to the pastoral dream in our technological age becomes in Hernández's work the machines of modern warfare, the airplane and the tank. In the poet's view, his nation had become the bower, the depository and defender of the virtues of working people, while the forces of fascism represented those perennial forces of power and corruption which have threatened the bower with destruction from the time of Virgil.

## 2. Defense of the Bower

This new schema can be seen quite clearly in Hernández's wartime play, El pastor de la muerte (OC, pp. 833-929). The play begins in the bower, a Spanish village called Aldea del Chopo, with a debate on the relative merits of peace and war. The older villagers extoll the virtues of peace, summing up their position in the verse, "Siempre es sagrada la paz." They are rebutted by Eterno, a very old, blind shepherd, who is

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<sup>1</sup>Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

the prophetic voice of truth in the play. He says:

La paz no es siempre sagrada.  
Y en estos tiempos que cruzan  
al trote por mis espaldas  
es tan sagrada la guerra  
como la paz de más gracia.

There follows a eulogy of the bower in the most idyllic terms:

VIEJO 3o.

El atardecer se tienda  
pacífico a nuestras plantas.

VIEJA 1a.

Suenan pacíficamente  
las esquilas y las vacas  
en el corazón del valle.

VIEJA 2a.

Mira cómo se reclaman  
la totovía y su esposo  
en medio de la vacada  
pacífica.

VIEJA 3a.

Mira tú  
cómo los aires se amansan  
hasta dejar sin aliento  
aquel olivar de plata.

VIEJO 1o.

Por allí vienen los hombres  
pausados de la labranza  
y de la pastorería  
en polvoredas pausadas:  
las yuntas de ojos pausados  
y los rebaños de pausa.

\* \* \*

VIEJO 3o.

Entre los hombres que vienen  
el atardecer se apaga.

The scene ends with the old shepherd insisting:

El alba se ha de encender  
entre los hombres que vayan.

It is significant that the work begins with a debate

between the proponents of war and peace, which at the moment meant resistance or nonresistance to fascism. In terms of Hernández's pastoral world-view it represents the turning point, already implicit in his work, from a simpler pastoralism of relatively undisturbed bucolic peace to a complex pastoralism which recognized the modern counterforce to the bucolic dream and proposed militant defense of the bower. The essential difference between the villagers and Eterno is that the former still believe that their village is the bower, while Eterno, like Hernández himself, believes a broader view is now necessary:

Esos hombres defensores  
de su pobreza y su pan,  
harán de la tierra, harán  
de España un huerto de flores.  
El huerto del mundo entero  
será en España plantado  
con roble, encina, granado,  
alegría y limonero.  
Huerto que he soñado ver,  
y que no veré jamás  
con estos ojos, detrás  
de una luz de amanecer.

\* \* \*

¡Nunca seré el hortelano  
del huerto que apetecí!  
Donde no haya río, habrá  
canales de agua y granito,  
que están pidiendo en un grito  
el Tajo y el Ebro ya.  
Acueductos con estruendo  
de carros y de animales  
a la grupa de los cuales  
vendrán los hombres riendo.

### 3. The New Dialectic

These verses are not only prophetic in terms of

Hernández's own life, but they contain the terms of his new pastoralism, in which Nature and Art are united in the new bower, which contains the seeds of the future socialist society. This is the same synthesis Elías Rivers<sup>2</sup> discovered in the following quote from Cervantes's Galatea:

. . . La tierra que lo abraza, vestida de mil verdes ornamentos, parece que hace fiesta y se alegra de poseer en sí un don tan raro y agradable, y el dorado río, como en cambio, el los abrazos della dulcemente entretejiéndose, forma como de industria mil entradas y salidas, que a cualquiera que las mira llenan el alma de placer maravilloso . . . Y la industria de sus moradores ha hecho tanto que la naturaleza, incorporada con el arte, es hecha artífice y connatural del arte, y de entrambas adós se ha hecho una tercia naturaleza, a la cual no sabré dar nombre . . . ¿Qué diré de la industria de las altas ruedas, con cuyo continuo movimiento sacan las aguas del profundo río y humedecen abundantemente las eras que por largo espacio están apartadas?

Rivers comments:

Cervantes' fusion of Nature and Art might perhaps be called either 'Natura artifex' or 'Ars naturans.' This synthetic resolution of the Nature-Art dichotomy reminds us that binary oppositions tend to generate a third, mediating term.

The dialectical nature of Cervantes's pastoralism is compared to the Marxist dialectic by Rivers in a quote from Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844):

. . . Industry is the real historical relationship of nature, and thus of the natural sciences, to man. Consequently, if industry is conceived of as an

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<sup>2</sup>Rivers, "Nature, Art and Science in Spanish Poetry of the Renaissance," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (1967), vol. 44.



external manifestation of essential human faculties, one is able to grasp also the human essence of nature or the natural essence of man . . .

This is the essence of Hernández's new pastoral vision which, like that of Cervantes, resolves the contradiction between Nature and Art in a dialectical leap to a higher stage of human development, one which will allow us ideally to see "the natural essence of man." Such, at least, was Hernández's dream, as it was that of Karl Marx.

#### 4. The Duality of Technology

But the pastoral dream cannot be realized without the defeat of the counterforce, and that is the task to which the young shepherd Pedro addresses himself, fully aware that it is not just a matter of defending the status quo, but of building a new and better society. When his sister says that he is crazy because he wants to volunteer to serve in the Republican forces, he replies:

Loco que me van a atar  
en una trinchera clara,  
con el fusil en la cara  
ansioso de disparar  
donde hará cada disparo  
sepultar y aparecer,  
un oscurecido ayer,  
un mañana libre y claro.

Pedro's favorite weapon, however, is dynamite, which he tells his commander he can use "Como cuando era pastor / la honda." With dynamite Pedro becomes an antitanquista, hurling bundles of the explosive under the fascist tanks advancing on Madrid. Thus the shepherd becomes the

living symbol of man against machine, the "machine in the garden" that threatens to make the pastoral ideal forever impossible. Thus Pedro earns the title of "Shepherd of Death." This title contains the dialectic underlying the poet's new pastoralism. As Pedro says:

Con este puño de arado,  
sujeta la bomba fuerte,  
dije: Voy a someterte,  
muerte rejuvenecida,  
que soy pastor de la vida,  
por ser pastor de la muerte.

That is, the only way in which the life-giving forces of the bower can survive the lethal onslaught of the forces opposed to its development is by taking up weapons and defending it. This opposition of man to machine, with the machine symbolizing the destructive forces opposed to the pastoral dream, does not imply a rejection of modern technology on the part of Hernández. He does not see a force inherent in the very nature of technology itself which is opposed to the healthy development of society. This latter view of technology is the meaning of the "Machine in the Garden" of Leo Marx, and it is a meaning taken from the literature of an advanced technological society, the United States. For Hernández it is a question of who controls the technology, and this he makes explicit at the end of the play, because he does not want his audience to feel that the machine is inherently evil. The machine, after all, will be necessary to attain and construct the type of society he has envisioned. The

Cubano, a character inspired by Pablo de la Torriente, a Cuban revolutionary who died while serving as political commissar of the Fifth Regiment, says in a meditation on the machinegun, one of the most lethal of modern weapons:

. . . se ha de querer  
la máquina que nos trajo,  
la guerra como el trabajo,  
a cumplir con un deber.  
En nuestras manos no son  
destructoras, no: que fluyen  
sus músculos y construyen  
con una noble ambición.

\* \* \*

La mano de ellos, convierte  
la máquina en el objeto  
de enriquecer a un sujeto  
y dar a miles la muerte.  
Los cuerpos trabajadores  
reposan, reposarán,  
en los reposos que dan  
las hélices, los motores.

##### 5. The Greater Bower

This new pastoral vision also pervades Hernández's wartime poetry, the books Viento del pueblo (OC, pp. 261-310) and El hombre acecha (OC, pp. 311-343) and other poems written from 1938-1939 (OC, pp. 345-357). As in the poem "Madre España" (OC, pp. 341-342), all of Spain is now the bower:

Abrazado a tu vientre, ¿quién me lo quitará,  
si su fondo titánico da principio a mi carne?  
Abrazado a tu vientre, que es mi perpetua casa,  
¡nadie!

It must be defended against the attacks of hostile outside forces:

Hermanos: defendamos su vientre acometido,  
hacia donde los grajos crecen de todas partes,  
pues, para que las malas alas vuelen, aún quedan  
aires.

And as in El pastor de la muerte, the city has become the bower. In the poem "Madrid" (OC, pp. 340-341) Hernández says:

Sólo te nutre tu vívida esencia.  
Duermes al borde del hoyo y la espada.  
Eres mi casa, Madrid: mi existencia,  
¡qué atravesada!

#### 6. The Basic Dichotomy

The basic pastoral dichotomy, with all that is pure, healthy, simple and virtuous threatened by all that is impure, rich, powerful and corrupt, is expressed in almost every poem the poet wrote in this period. To adapt the pastoral vision to the Spanish Civil War period was after all not difficult, because the contradiction Poggioli noted between the shepherd and the rebel was not present. The rebels were the reactionaries, who had revolted against the Republican status quo. Hernández, though a revolutionary, was in the position of defending the established order, although he had no intention of maintaining it. Therefore his attitude of defense and resistance to hostile outside forces was compatible with the traditional pastoral situation. This dichotomy is nowhere expressed more clearly in the poet's work than in the poem "Las manos" (OC, pp. 294-296), in which the purity of the hands of workers:

Ante la aurora veo surgir las manos puras  
de los trabajadores terrestres y marinos,  
como una primavera de alegres dentaduras,  
de dedos matutinos.

is juxtaposed to the impurity of the hands of the wealthy  
exploiters:

No han sonado: no cantan. Sus dedos vagan roncós,  
mudamente aletean, se ciernen, se propagan.  
Ni tejieron la pana, ni mecieron los troncos,  
y blandas de ocio vagan.

\* \* \*

¿Quién lavará estas manos fangosas que se extienden  
al agua y la deshonran, enrojecen y estragan?  
Nadie lavará manos que en el puñal se encienden  
y en el amor se apagan.

The dichotomy is also expressed in terms of freedom  
and slavery. Freedom, as we have seen before, is a  
requisite condition for the bower. In fact, the *raison*  
*d'être* of the bower is to be free. In a sadly prophetic  
poem ("Las cárceles," OC, pp. 332-333) Hernández says:

Son los encadenados por siempre desde siempre.  
Ser libre es una cosa que sólo un hombre sabe:  
Sólo el hombre que advierto dentro de esa mazmorra  
como si yo estuviera.

But since the struggle has not ended, there is still hope:

Un hombre aguarda dentro de un pozo sin remedio,  
tenso, conmocionado, con la oreja aplicada.  
Porque un pueblo ha gritado ¡libertad!, vuela el  
cielo.  
Y las cárceles vuelan.

However, due to the terrible destruction the war  
is wreaking on his land the bower cannot lie in the mythical  
present the poet constructed in his earlier works. Nor,  
according to his socialist viewpoint, can it lie in a

past in which working people were cruelly exploited and forced to live in a poverty that was the antithesis of freedom, for despite his temporary position of defender of the status quo, Hernández is a revolutionary and his defense of the Republic is only the defense of a situation which contained the possibility of building a better society. The bower now lies in the future, a future as ideal as the Golden Age or the mythical present. In "Recoged esta voz" (OC, pp. 282-285), Hernández says the workers:

. . . harán de cada ruina un prado,  
de cada pena un fruto de alegría,  
de España un firmamento de hermosura.

And in "Juramento de la alegría" (OC, pp. 297-299) he wrote:

Se hacen las carreteras de diamantes,  
el horizonte lo perturban mieses  
y otras visiones relampagueantes,  
y se sienten felices los cipreses.

## 7. The End of Hope

But the war continues, and since the fascists received an unending flow of weaponry from the Axis powers while the Republic was subjected to an international arms embargo, it was clearly a contest of man against machine, the Machine that is destroying the Garden. And, as in El pastor de la muerte, it is a contest in which Hernández still believes that man can triumph due to the force of his humanity:



Poco valen las armas que la sangre no nutre  
 ante un pueblo de pómulos noblemente dispuestos,  
 poco valen las armas: les falta voz y frente,  
 les sobra estruendo y humo. (OC, p. 334)

These are somber times, however, and as the war continues the poet's optimism turns to desperation. The necessity to defend the bower, or at least the possibility of the bower, is turning even the defenders into ferocious beasts, the antithesis of the peaceful animals who inhabit the bower. The title of El hombre acecha reflects this change, and in the "Canción primera" that opens the book, Hernández sees this loss of humanity as the most terrible result of the war, in verses that by their sobriety and depth of feeling prefigure the Cancionero y romancero de ausencias:

Se ha retirado el campo  
 al ver abalanzarse  
 crispadamente al hombre.

¡Qué abismo entre el olivo  
 y el hombre se descubre!

El animal que canta:  
 el animal que puede  
 llorar y echar raíces,  
 rememoró sus garras.

\* \* \*

He regresado al tigre.  
 Aparta o te destrozo.

Hoy el amor es muerte,  
 y el hombre acecha al hombre.

The great tragedy of the war is that the very necessity of defending humanity creates the necessity of reviving the killer in man, thus destroying that very humanity for



which he is fighting. Symbolically nature, the peaceful, fertile nature of the bower, becomes more remote from man as this process continues. Only one thing can save the defenders of the bower--love--and that is the desperate cry with which the poet closes the book in "Canción última" (OC, p. 343):

Pintada, no vacía:  
pintada está mi casa  
del color de las grandes  
pasiones y desgracias.

Regresará del llanto  
adonde fue llevada  
con su desierta mesa,  
con su ruinosa cama.

Florecerán los besos  
sobre las almohadas.  
Y en torno de los cuerpos  
elevará la sábana  
su intensa enredadera  
nocturna, perfumada.

El odio se amortigua  
detrás de la ventana.

Será la garra suave.

Dejadme la esperanza.

#### 8. Death Triumphant

But the basic theme in these poems, the constant presence, is that of death. That somber figure is no longer simply a resident of the bower, subject to chance encounter as in the Et in Arcadia Ego motif, but the master of its ruined fields and smouldering villages. There is an apparent contradiction in Hernández's treatment of death in the poems of the war period. On the one hand

there is the concept, which is close to that of the traditional pastoral elegy, of immortality through union with the people in their struggle for a better life (as in the elegy for Pablo de la Torriente or the poem "Nuestra juventud no muere") and on the other hand a fatalistic acceptance of death as the end of personal existence: "Antemuro de la nada / esta vida me parece" ("Sentado sobre los muertos," OC, pp. 268-270). It is interesting to compare the two poems in Viento del pueblo which Hernández himself entitled elegies.

The "Elegía primera" (OC, pp. 265-268), which is the first poem in the book, deals with the death of Federico García Lorca. The main conventions of the pastoral elegy are present in the work, and its tone is similar to that of Lorca's own elegy to Ignacio Sánchez Mejías. Hernández begins with a meditation on the brevity of life:

Verdura de las eras,  
¿qué tiempo prevalece la alegría?

and goes on to announce the person to be mourned:

Entre todos los muertos de elegía,  
sin olvidar el eco de ninguno,  
por haber resonado más en el alma mía,  
la mano de mi llanto escoge uno.

Federico García  
hasta ayer se llamó: polvo se llama.

There follows the eulogy of the dead man:

¡Tanto fué! ¡Tanto fuiste y ya no eres!  
Tu agitada alegría,  
que agitaba columnas y alfileres,

de tus dientes arrancas y sacudes,  
y ya te pones triste, y sólo quieres  
ya el paraíso de los ataúdes.

The poet then insinuates the shadow of a hope of immortality  
through union with nature:

Primo de las manzanas,  
no podrá con tu savia la carcoma,  
no podrá con tu muerte la lengua del gusano,  
y para dar salud fiera a su poma  
elegirá tus huesos el manzano.

Hernández expresses the traditional resentment at the  
cruelty of death:

¡Qué sencilla es la muerte: qué sencilla,  
pero qué injustamente arrebatada!  
No sabe andar despacio, y acuchilla  
cuando menos se espera su turbia cuchillada.

The mourning of innumerable people for the dead poet is  
joined by the mourning of nature, another traditional  
theme:

Por hacer a tu muerte compañía,  
vienen poblando todos los rincones  
del cielo y de la tierra bandadas de armonía,  
relámpagos de azules vibraciones.  
Crótalos granizados a montones,  
batallones de flautas, panderos y gitanos,  
ráfagas de abejorros y violines,  
tormentas de guitarras y pianos,  
irrupciones de trompas y clarines.

Any consolation, however, is ruled out by the next verse:

Pero el silencio puede más que tanto instrumento.

No matter how many mourners the dead man may have, his  
death is final and irrevocable:

Silencioso, destierro, polvoriento  
en la muerte desierta,  
parece que tu lengua, que tu aliento,  
los ha cerrado el golpe de una puerta.

There is no hope of an afterlife, no soothing intimation of immortality in the final stanza, only the grim reality of death:

Rodea mi garganta tu agonía  
 como un hierro de horca  
 y pruebo una bebida funeraria.  
 Tú sabes, Federico García Lorca,  
 que soy de los que gozan una muerte diaria.

Thus Hernández has done in his elegy to Lorca what the latter did in his elegy to his friend Ignacio Sánchez Mejías: he has expressed his pain at the separation of death without any of the traditional attenuating elements of religion or a pagan survival in nature, although it is done within the traditional framework of the pastoral elegy.

The "Elegía segunda" (OC, pp. 276-277) is devoted to the death of Pablo de la Torriente, who figured prominently in the play El pastor de la muerte. Here the tone of the elegy is completely different, as is appropriate in the case of a revolutionary who falls in the midst of the struggle and who would wish his death to serve as an inspiration to other combatants, and not as a disheartening event. There are mourners, but they repress their tears and instead harden their resolve to win:

Nadie llora a tu lado:  
 desde el soldado al duro comandante,  
 todos te ven, te cercan y te atienden  
 con ojos de granito amenazante,  
 con cejas incendiadas que todo el cielo  
 encienden.

The dead friend and comrade has died a hero's death and as such is rendered traditional honors:

Y hay muchos capitanes y muchos comisarios  
quitándote pedazos de metralla,  
poniéndote trofeos funerarios.

But the finality of death is still present:

Ya no hablarás de vivos y de muertos,  
ya disfrutas la muerte del héroe, ya la vida  
no te verá en las calles ni en los puertos  
pasar como una ráfaga garrida.

However, now the dead man will achieve the immortality of his memory in the hearts of others:

Pablo de la Torriente,  
has quedado en España  
y en mi alma caído:  
nunca se pondrá el sol sobre tu frente,  
heredará tu altura la montaña  
y tu valor el toro del bramido.

The same note is present in the final stanza, although it also contains the theme of the finality of death:

Ante Pablo los días se abstienen ya y no andan.  
No temáis que se extinga su sangre sin objeto,  
proque éste es de los muertos que crecen y se agrandan  
aunque el tiempo desvaste su gigante esqueleto.

The theme of attaining immortality in one's people by dying a hero's death is repeated again and again in the poet's wartime writing. It is not, however, in my opinion, merely a propagandistic device employed to raise morale for the purpose of carrying on the struggle, but an answer--the only one possible, given Hernández's beliefs--to the sorrow provoked by the vast carnage of war. Hernández is honest--death is final, and it is painful separation. But at the same time he clearly feels that

to die in a just cause is an honorable thing, and it is this consolation that he can offer his people--and himself. As he says in one of his most famous poems, "Vientos del pueblo me llevan" (OC, pp. 270-272):

Si me muero, que me muera  
con la cabeza muy alta.  
Muerto y veinte veces muerto,  
la boca contra la grama,  
tendré apretados los dientes  
y decidida la barba.

Cantando espero a la muerte,  
que hay ruiseñores que cantan  
encima de los fusiles  
y en medio de las batallas.

Death is certainly no incidental theme in Hernández's work. We have seen that it pervades his writing from the very beginning. As he said in his "Elegía primera," " . . . soy de los que gozan una muerte diaria." Now, surrounded by the reality of war, one feels a resignation before the fact of death which in no way indicates a lack of determination or strength. On the contrary, the admiration he feels for those who struggle and die is clearly genuine ("Una gota de pura valentía / vale más que un océano cobarde" from "Nuestra juventud no muere," OC, p. 278). Hernández himself, after all, was no armchair poet, singing the glories of his people at a safe distance from the fighting, but a militant who placed his life in jeopardy at the front lines on a daily basis. This is rather a stoicism very much in the Spanish tradition, as can be seen in the final stanzas of "Sentado sobre los muertos"

(OC, pp. 268-270), so reminiscent of Jorge Manrique but without the latter's Christian ideology:

Canto con la voz de luto  
pueblo de mí, por tus héroes:  
tus ansias como las mías,  
tus desventuras que tienen  
del mismo metal el llanto,  
las penas del mismo temple,  
y de la misma madera  
tu pensamiento y mi frente,  
tu corazón y mi sangre,  
tu dolor y mis laureles.  
Antemuro de la nada  
esta vida me parece.

Aquí estoy para vivir  
mientras el alma me suene,  
y aquí estoy para morir,  
cuando la hora me llegue,  
en los veneros del pueblo  
desde ahora y desde siempre.  
Varios tragos es la vida  
y un solo trago la muerte.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BOWER DESTROYED

The progressive forces defending the Republic resisted the advance of fascism for three years, but finally their bodies and their heroism were not enough. The lack of weapons, munitions, clothes, food and supplies in the face of a well-equipped enemy had its inevitable result, and on March 28, 1939, the war formally ended. However, it did not end for the hundreds of thousands of people who went into exile or were imprisoned in Spain. The firing squads continued to add their grim harvest to the innumerable dead of the Civil War. Spain was a prostrate nation, exhausted by the years of fighting, its youth dead, paralyzed in the grip of famine and terror. Many years would pass before there would be any sign of rebirth.

When the war ended Hernández was on the southern front. He made his way to the Portuguese border, but was there arrested by the Portuguese authorities and handed over to the Spanish Civil Guards, who tortured him for eight days.<sup>1</sup> He then began a long journey from prison

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<sup>1</sup>Zardoya, Miguel Hernández (1910-1942), (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1955), p. 38.

to prison until he finally arrived at the Prisión Celular de Torrijos, where he wrote most of the poems contained in the Cancionero y romancero de ausencias. In September of 1939 he was released, thanks to the efforts of Pablo Neruda and other friends, but instead of leaving the country immediately he committed the error of returning to Orihuela. When he arrived in nearby Cox, his sister and a number of friends begged him not to continue to Orihuela, but he refused to listen to them. He walked from Cox to Orihuela over the Sierra de Callosa, following the shepherds' trails<sup>2</sup> he knew so well. He was arrested in Orihuela on the day of his arrival and would never again be free. Again he made the long journey through the prisons of postwar Spain, and on March 28, 1942, he died in the Reformatório de Adultos of Alicante. The cause of death was officially tuberculosis, but in reality it was the lack of food and medical care. Miguel Hernández was another victim in the tragedy of his people.

#### 1. The Living Tomb

The final work of the poet is elegiac in tone and its basic theme is contained in the title of his last book, the Cancionero y romancero de ausencias (OC, pp. 359-405). These poems deal with the absence of all those things which make life meaningful--love, freedom, hope. In one of his

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

most impressive poems of this period, Hernández portrays himself as a mason, full of hope, building the house of the future ("Sepultura de la imaginación," OC, pp. 427-428):

Un albañil quería . . . No le faltaba aliento.  
Un albañil quería, piedra tras piedra, muro  
tras muro, levantar una imagen al viento  
desencadenador en el futuro.

only to find that he was constructing his own prison:

Un albañil quería . . . Pero la piedra cobra  
su torva densidad brutal en un momento.  
Aquel hombre labraba su cárcel. Y en su obra  
fueron precipitados él y el viento.

This is the predominant tone of his work in this period. It is only occasionally that a ray of hope breaks through the darkness, as in the last two verses of the poem "Eterna sombra" (OC, pp. 431-432):

Pero hay un rayo de sol en la lucha  
que siempre deja la sombra vencida.

In general the poet has little hope, for what hope for the future can there be in a nation when its youth has been slaughtered on the battlefield and before the firing squads? The death of youth means sterility (Cancionero, No. 93):

La vejez de los pueblos.  
El corazón sin dueño.  
El amor sin objeto.  
La hierba, el polvo, el cuervo.  
¿Y la juventud?

En el ataúd.

El árbol solo y seco.  
La mujer como un leño  
de viudez sobre el lecho.  
El odio sin remedio.

¿Y la juventud?

En el ataúd.

While the loss of freedom is also the loss of love

(Cancionero, No. 31):

No puedo olvidar  
que no tengo alas,  
que no tengo mar,  
vereda ni nada  
con que irte a besar.

The loss of freedom and love are inextricably linked, because, in the dialectical play of opposites so characteristic of Hernández's work and of pastoral literature, the only freedom is to be found in love and in union with the loved one (Cancionero, No. 47):

La libertad es algo  
que sólo en tus entrañas  
bate como el relámpago.

## 2. The Pastoral Mechanism

In a remarkable poem (Cancionero, No. 41) the poet describes the creation of the bower of love, which is in fact the process by which the pastoral mechanism functions. Each person creates his or her own reality:

El mundo es como aparece  
ante mis cinco sentidos,  
y ante los tuyos que son  
las orillas de los míos.  
El mundo de los demás  
no es el nuestro: no es el mismo.

Therefore one is essentially alone in the world:

Nadie me verá del todo  
ni es nadie como lo miro.

Only love can alleviate our loneliness to some degree, but

love like all else is a creation, a deliberate act of the will, and calls for constant effort:

Trabajo y amor me cuesta  
 conmigo así, ver contigo;  
 aparecer, como el agua  
 con la arena, siempre unidos.

The bower of love, this constant act of creation, is forever threatened by the hostile world without (Cancionero, No. 78):

¿Qué quiere el viento de enero  
 que baja por el barranco  
 y violenta las ventanas  
 mientras te visto de abrazos?

Derribarnos. Arrastrarnos.

Derribadas, arrastradas,  
 las dos sangres se alejaron.  
 ¿Qué sigue queriendo el viento  
 cada vez más enconado?

Separarnos.

Finally the tragic destiny of the lovers is fulfilled, the bower of love is destroyed and there is only ausencia and death (Cancionero, No. 26):

¿De qué adoleció  
 la mujer aquélla?  
 Del mal peor:  
 del mal de las ausencias.

Y el hombre aquél.

¿De qué murió  
 la mujer aquélla?  
 Del mal peor:  
 del mal de las ausencias.

Y el hombre aquél.

### 3. The Ruins of Love

The death of the poet's first child is another ausencia that echoes painfully throughout these writings. It is also part of the love lost, of the bower destroyed. In another poem (Cancionero, No. 57) Hernández traces the same course from momentary happiness due to the birth of his first son, a happiness threatened by disaster:

En la casa había enarcado  
la felicidad sus bóvedas.  
Dentro de la casa había  
siempre una luz victoriosa.  
La casa va siendo un hoyo.

to death and emptiness:

Pero la casa no es,  
no puede ser, otra cosa  
que un ataúd con ventanas,  
con puertas hacia la aurora;  
golondrinas fuera, y dentro  
arcos que se desmoronan.  
En la casa falta un cuerpo  
que aleteaban las alondras.

This process may be seen, to use Poggioli's terminology, as the passage from the pastoral of innocence or the domestic idyll, and the pastoral of happiness or the fulfillment of love, to the pastoral of melancholy, root of the pastoral elegy, and the pastoral of solitude, which also may be considered an elegy.<sup>3</sup> Faithful to his pastoral vision, Hernández sees himself as the shepherd needing the life-giving rain, but which when it comes brings

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<sup>3</sup> Poggioli, "The Oaten Flute," Harvard Literary Bulletin, (Spring 1957), XI, No. 2, p. 157 and 165-6.



only melancholy and reminders of death (OC, pp. 415-416):

Enmudecido el campo, presintiendo la lluvia  
reaparece en la tierra su primer abandono.  
La alegría del cielo se desconsuela a veces,  
sobre un pastor sediento.

\* \* \*

Llueve como una sangre transparente, hechizada.  
Me siento traspasado por la humedad del suelo  
que habrá de sujetarme para siempre a la sombra,  
para siempre a la lluvia.

The bower, once the source of happiness and a refuge from  
a hostile world, is now lonely and sad (Cancionero, No. 60):

Troncos de soledad,  
barrancos de tristeza  
donde rompo a llorar.

and its once fertile land has been reduced to burning  
sands, as in the "Casida del sediento," written in the  
prison of Ocaña in May, 1941 (OC, p. 417):

Arena del desierto  
soy: desierto de sed.  
Oasis es tu boca  
donde no he de beber.

Boca: oasis abierto  
a todas las arenas del desierto.

Húmedo punto en medio  
de un mundo abrasador,  
el de tu cuerpo, el tuyo,  
que nunca es de los dos.

Cuerpo: pozo cerrado  
a quien la sed y el sol han calcinado.

#### 4. A New Unity

And yet some things remain in the midst of the  
poet's sense of alienation. One is the final reconcili-  
ation of the dichotomy spiritual love versus sexual love.



That contradiction has been resolved by the pain of separation and death, guilt feelings have been purged and now love is seen as part of the unity of life and death. This unity of life, love and death is expressed again and again in the poetry of this period, where each element is seen as inseparable from the other:

Escribí en el arenal  
los tres nombres de la vida:  
vida, muerte, amor.

Una ráfaga de mar,  
tantas veces ida,  
vino y los borró. (Cancionero, No. 10)

Life, death and love are all parts of the human condition. They are the essentials, that which gives existence meaning. There is also pain, but pain is also an essential part of the human condition:

Llegó con tres heridas:  
la del amor,  
la de la muerte,  
la de la vida.

Con tres heridas viene:  
la de la vida,  
la del amor,  
la de la muerte.

Con tres heridas yo:  
la de la vida,  
la de la muerte,  
la del amor. (Cancionero, No. 9)

Flowing from this realization, there is still, in spite of all his suffering and all the tragedies of life which he has seen and felt, the perennial note of optimism which is contained in the last lines of the Cancionero. Truly, the shepherd of death is, by that very token, the

shepherd of life:

Porque dentro de la triste  
guirnalda del eslabón,  
del sabor a carcelero  
constante y a paredón,  
y a precipicio en acecho,  
alto, alegre, libre soy.  
Alto, alegre, libre, libre,  
sólo por amor.

No, no hay cárcel para el hombre.  
No podrán atarme, no.  
Este mundo de cadenas  
me es pequeño y exterior.  
¿Quién encierra una sonrisa?  
¿Quién amuralla una voz?  
A lo lejos tú, más sola  
que la muerte, la una y yo.  
A lo lejos tú, sintiendo  
en tus brazos mi prisión,  
en tus brazos donde late  
la libertad de los dos.  
Libre soy, siénteme libre.  
Sólo por amor.

## 5. The Essence of Art

Finally, love is reduced to the ultimate symbol  
of ausencia, a photograph (Cancionero, No. 34):

Una fotografía.

Un cartón expresivo,  
envuelto por los meses  
en los rincones íntimos.

Un agua de distancia  
quiero beber: gozar  
un fondo de fantasma.

Un cartón me conmueve.

Un cartón me acompaña.

Here in modern form is the traditional symbol of  
separation from the loved one, the prenda, the object  
which the lonely lover cherishes as his or her only link

with person who is absent. The photograph is a particularly suggestive symbol because it contains the image of the poet's lover. It is not real; it is the loved one once removed, reified by the lens of the camera--a real person reduced to a piece of paper. And now, through the intervention of poetry, the loved one is twice removed, by the device of a poem not about her, but about her image on the photographic print. The remoteness of the poet's loved one could hardly be depicted more effectively--the love object twice removed and thus twice as unreal, like a memory blurred by the passage of time. What is real, however, is the ausencia, the feeling of remoteness, distance, loss, which is what the poet is really trying to express. And this is what is left of the bower--words written on paper, a fantasy which can be recaptured through art, but never again experienced in reality. But was it ever anything more? The essence of the pastoral is its unreality, for it is a place we flee to from an unpleasant--or unbearable--reality, and then only for a time, because we must always return. Reality is our creation, as Hernández said, and in that sense it exists, as any creation must exist, but there is always another reality, not of our individual creation, that impinges on and frequently destroys the reality we have willed into existence, or discovered through the medium of art. Then there only remains the pastoral of solitude, the

elegy for that which has been lost, and which is forever absent. And this is the end of the pastoral journey, for when the poet recognizes that his pastoral dream has been shattered by the hostile outside world, by the counter-force, he has completed the circular trip he began in his earliest poems and takes his place finally and irrevocably in the outside world, the reality most people feel to be the only reality there is.

Thus it is that through his journey in search of the essence of pastoral literature, Hernández reaches the essence of all literature. For does not the act of literary creation consist in the substitution of a symbol--the word--for the reality perceived by the artist? But the symbol can never be identical to the reality it represents, and therefore the process must necessarily lead to the ausencia or alienation which the poet now feels so acutely:

Ausencia en todo veo:  
tus ojos la reflejan.

Ausencia en todo escucho:  
tu voz a tiempo suena.

Ausencia en todo aspiro:  
tu aliento huele a hierba.

Ausencia en todo toco:  
tu cuerpo se despuebla.

Ausencia en todo siento.  
Ausencia. Ausencia. Ausencia. (Cancionero,  
N. 12)

In this sense the act of writing is comparable to the act of taking a photograph, and the poem is real in the same



sense the photograph is--as a representation of a reality now lost in time and space, but not as the reality itself. Furthermore, both the poem and the photograph in their highest forms are an artistic creation in and of themselves, independent of the original reality which we, the readers, will never be able to perceive exactly as it was. Besides, as Hernández noted in a poem we have quoted previously:

El mundo de los demás  
no es el nuestro: no es el mismo.

Even if we had perceived the original reality which served as the basis for the poem, it could not have been the same for us as it was for the poet, for we are different people with different experiences--different realities.

But the question is still more complex. The act of literary creation in a sense destroys the original reality of the object perceived for the poet himself. It is this aspect of the pastoral which was noted by Paul de Man in an article dealing with, among other works, Empson's Some Versions of Pastoral:

Qu'est-ce alors que la convention pastorale, sinon l'éternelle séparation entre l'esprit qui distingue, nie, légifère, et la simplicité originaire du naturel?

adding:

Il n'y a pas de doute que le thème pastoral est en fait le seul thème poétique, qu'il est la poésie même.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>De Man, "Impasse de la Critique Formaliste," Critique (Paris: Jan. - June 1956), vol. 12, p. 494.

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