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### Pablo Neruda: Inventing "el mar de cada día"

In "La verdad," the penultimate poem of *Memorial de Isla Negra* (1964), Pablo Neruda declared "quiero inventar el mar de cada día" (*M 5, OC II: 667*).<sup>1</sup> The verse repeats the poetic code he had outlined in the first *Residencia en la tierra* written from 1925-1931. There in "Arte poética" Neruda envisioned himself as a furious widower--pale and withered, wearing mourning "por cada día de vida" (*OC I: 148*). Neruda emphasized the autobiographical essence of his poetry in "Magnetic Art," the first poem from the fifth book of the *Memorial de Isla Negra*: "de tanto amar y andar salen los libros" (*M 5, OC II: 634*). While admitting both impulses, Neruda in his extratextual comments about the *Memorial* leaned more towards its classification as a diary than as autobiography: in it he returned "a una poesía de la sensación de cada día. Aunque hay un hilo biográfico no busqué en esa larga obra, que consta de cinco volúmenes, sino la expresión venturosa o sombría de cada día" (cited in Teitelboim, p. 333).

Neruda's extensive body of work might be considered a vast diary in which he recorded his reactions to the things, the events, the emotions which each day assailed him. Sánchez compares Neruda to J. S. Chocano: "Ninguno de ellos ha hecho otra cosa que poetizar sus respectivos actos cotidianos" (39). Sánchez goes on to say that Neruda's poetry "no es otra cosa que su autobiografía en progreso" (39). Critics and reviewers have generally extended their dual perception of Neruda's work as consisting of both diary and autobiography to the poems of *Memorial de Isla Negra*. As Belitt (605) has observed, the poems partake of the poetic diary in their departure and return to the present. On the other hand, Couffon calls *Memorial de Isla Negra* "admirable autobiografía poética" (299), a judgment which Durán and Safir also endorse in *Earth Tones: The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*. Rodríguez Monegal describes the *Memorial* as "autobiografía parcial y diario poético del otoño de Neruda" (323).

González-Cruz relegates the first three sections of the *Memorial* to autobiography and the last two to diary (19). As a schematic overview this proves accurate. Book I, "Donde nace la lluvia," recreates Neruda's birth, parentage, childhood, the awakening of sexuality and of social conscience, and his transfer from Temuco to Santiago for university study. Book II, "La luna en el laberinto," relates his loves for a rural girl (Terusa) and for a student in Santiago (Rosaura), his experiences with friends and city life, and his first trips to Paris and Rangoon. Book III, "El fuego cruel," records his conversion to political activism during the Spanish Civil War as well as memories of his Eastern experience including his love affair with Josie Bliss. Book IV, "El cazador de raíces," and Book V, "Sonata crítica," develop themes of the poet's relationship to nature, to politics, and to his vocation. The division into autobiography and diary is not absolute for Neruda includes autobiographical poems in Book IV, *i.e.* his poems to Delia, and in Book V, *i.e.* "El episodio." Furthermore, as

González-Cruz points out (21), the diary aspect also impinges upon his poems in the first three books, where he frequently shifts between the present, the imperfect and the preterit tenses (109). In his freedom from strict chronological order and in his movement between reflexion and narration as well as between idealism and realism, Neruda participated in a current trend within Latin American literature where the boundaries between history and fiction, between autobiography and poetry were becoming blurred.<sup>2</sup> Before dealing with the specific denotation of Neruda's "memorial," I should like to delve into the contrast between "memoirs" and "diary" to elucidate the difference between the two genres in which Neruda's work is usually classified.

"Memoirs" or "memorias" are clearly subsumed by "autobiography" or "a record of events based on the writer's personal observation" according to the *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*. "Memoirs" differ from diaries in that the former impose a time lapse upon events: the writer recalls earlier events in his life. Thus, as in autobiography in general, the writer's present point-of-view contrasts and plays off that of his younger self of the time the events occurred. Neruda used the word "memorias" in the title of his prose autobiography, sections of which he published in the Brazilian newspaper *O Cruzeiro Internacional* in 1962, very close to the time he was working on the *Memorial*, but which he continued to develop until he died. The diary, on the other hand, is "a daily written record of one's experiences, observations and feelings" which lacks this double point-of-view. Thus, readers' expectations vary depending on whether they believe they are reading an autobiography or a diary.

Starobinski discusses the "ethical and relational" conditions of autobiography. The genre allows great relational scope but demands "the truthful narration of a life" (285). Autobiography establishes "the relation between the `author' and his own past; but also, in its orientation toward the future, of revealing the author to his future readers" (286). Starobinski goes on to discuss the necessity of a conversion experience in autobiography, an experience of before and after which necessitates showing how change occurred in the life. Without such a change history rather than autobiography would be the more appropriate vehicle for the narration of the life.

The conversion experience most frequently pointed to in Neruda's *Memorial* is that which occurs in the first poem of Book III where the poet describes the impact of the Spanish Civil War on his psyche. Neruda presents himself as a poet dedicated to commemorating for future readers the sacrifice of those dead in the Civil War:

yo estuve  
y padecí y mantengo  
el testimonio  
aunque no haya nadie  
que recuerde  
yo  
soy el que recuerde,  
aunque no queden ojos en la tierra  
yo seguiré mirando  
y allí quedará escrita  
aquella sangre,  
aquel amor aquí seguirá ardiendo,

no hay olvido, señores y señoras,  
 y por mi boca herida  
 aquellas bocas seguirán cantando

(*M*, 3, *OC II*: 557).

Especially noteworthy is Neruda's insistence on his witnessing of that war and on his "testimony" of its occurrence. He suggests that political conviction and the desire to communicate to the people made him grow both as a poet and as a man.<sup>3</sup>

Olney stresses the integrity of the single individual beneath the multiplicity of the selves he or she experiences during a lifetime and the reflection of the Logos in the individual. Autobiography becomes the search for the individual: the search for oneself. Olney expresses this more poetically: "the same man, according to Heraclitus, cannot step twice into the same stream, and this is doubly true: for the man and for the stream. But there is a oneness of the self, an integrity or internal harmony that holds together the multiplicity and continual transformations of being, and it is not an 'imitation' of the unity of the Logos, nor is it the individual's 'piece' of the Logos. In every individual to the degree that he is individual, the whole principle and essence of the Logos is wholly present, so that in his integrity the whole harmony of the universe is entirely and, as it were, uniquely present or existent. What the Logos demands of the individual is that he should realize his logos, which is also more than his own or private logos--it is the Logos" (6).

Olney's description of the autobiographer's need to discover the single, ongoing self among the person's many selves applies to Neruda's task in *Memorial de Isla Negra*. Few poets have manifested such multiplicity of selves and done so in such a public forum as Neruda. Each volume of his poetry presented a new persona. Nolan provides the best overview of this development: "Neruda's major personae include: the lost child (1923) [*Crepusculario*]; the adolescent lover (1924) [*Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*]; the anguished somnambulist (1933) [*Residencia en la tierra*, 1925-1931]; the witness of war (1947)[*Tercera residencia*]; the politicized American singer (1950)[*Canto general*]; the poet of simple objects (1954) [*Odas elementales*]; the whimsical private man (1958) [*Estravagaria*]; the autobiographical older poet (1964) [*Memorial de Isla Negra*]; and the naturalist and metaphysician of his late work" [*Las piedras del cielo*, etc.]. Of these works *Memorial de Isla Negra* might be considered the most representative for in it Neruda searches back through his past to sort out the constant and the changing concerns of his life to that point. The *Memorial* shows Neruda's development before and after the conversion experience that Starobinski considers essential to autobiography. Neruda formalized his celebrated conversion from alienated, post Modern poet to poet-engagé with his initiation into the Chilean Communist Party in 1945, a party to which he remained loyal for the rest of his life and for whom he stood as Chilean Presidential candidate in the primary campaigns of the 1969 election. Nevertheless, I believe that Neruda intended as much to dispute the claim that Communist party affiliation represented a metamorphosis of his self as to confirm it, for he shows in his autobiography the development of social conscience in distant youth, just as he shows the continuation of feelings of alienation after the conversion to Communism. He repudiated *Residencia en la tierra* in 1949 during the flush of his conversion when a young man in Santiago, with this book open to the page "Sucede que me canso de ser hombre . . .," committed suicide (Teitelboim, p. 275). He later relented in this decision and

allowed the work to be included in the *Obras completas*. Neruda feared that his early poetry taught people how to die rather than how to live.

Nevertheless feelings of alienation continued to resurface sometimes in reaction to events within Communist Party politics. This is true even though two of the most traumatic events of Neruda's life occurred after the completion of *Memorial*. The first resulted from factionalism within the Communist Party. The Cuban Communist Party released a letter repudiating Neruda for revisionism and abandonment of the Party for having addressed a meeting as guest of the PEN Club in the United States in 1966. According to Edwards' account the letter was signed by all the major Cuban writers, including Nicolás Guillén. Only Enrique Labrador refused to sign, despite the pressure that Fidel Castro brought to bear upon his country's writers (Edwards, 223). Neruda revealed to Edwards (149-150) that Fidel was retaliating against the poet's scarcely veiled warning in *Canción de gesta* against the establishment of a personality cult in Cuba. Neruda's poem "A Fidel Castro" contains the injunction:

Está llena de tantas esperanzas  
que al beberla sabrás que tu victoria  
es como el viejo vino de mi patria:  
no lo hace un hombre sino muchos hombres  
y no una uva sino muchas plantas:  
y no es una gota sino muchos ríos:  
no un capitán sino muchas batallas...

Neruda never forgave or spoke to anyone who had signed the Cuban letter. In his prose autobiography, *Confieso que he vivido: memorias*, Neruda declared: "Pero cada uno tiene su debilidad. Yo tengo muchas. Por ejemplo, no me gusta desprenderme del orgullo que siento por mi inflexible actitud de combatiente revolucionario. Tal vez será por eso, o por otra rendija de mi pequeñez, que me he negado hasta ahora, y me seguiré negando, a dar la mano a ninguno de los que consciente o inconscientemente firmaron aquella carta que me sigue pareciendo una infamia" (446).

Neruda's second disillusionment, which proved to be catastrophic, was the military's assassination of Allende and Pinochet's subsequent assumption of power. Neruda's grief that his own countrymen had turned their guns against their elected president is patent in his final words: "Aquel cerpo fue enterrado secretamente en un sitio cualquiera. Aquel cadáver que marchó a la sepultura acompañada por una sola mujer que llevaba en sí misma todo el dolor del mundo, aquella gloriosa figura muerta iba acribillada y despedazada por las balas de las ametralladoras de los soldados de Chile, que otra vez habían traicionado a Chile" (Neruda, *Confieso ...*, 476).

Neruda's ambivalence between his roles as poet engagé and poet desengagé evident throughout the *Memorial* indicate a kind of prescience of what lay in store for him in his public life between 1964 and 1973. González-Cruz demonstrates that Neruda developed the view of himself as an individual, a member of a minority saved from the masses and "nunca duplicado" (p. 28) throughout the *Memorial*, even though this idea was fundamentally at variance with the Communist philosophy he embraced with such fervor in the 1940's and 1950's, and indeed to the end of his life. Like such Romantic poets as Wordsworth Neruda believed his spirit was purest in childhood and sought in adulthood to regain that purity (González-Cruz, 48); he also developed love of woman as

an ongoing theme (González-Cruz, 60), and the desire for poetic immortality symbolized by the sea. González-Cruz maintains that Neruda presented the "poeta engagé" and the "poeta desengagé" as two facets of his personality. On the one hand he identified with the common man, on the other he showed the condemnation of the poet by the common man ("el hombre transitorio") to isolation and solitude (156).

The desire for poetic immortality, which González-Cruz identified in the *Memorial*, has received less critical attention than either its aspect as diary or autobiography. The desire for immortality is directed towards the future rather than the present or the past. The poet reaches out to future readers to whom he hopes that his poetry will still speak with a voice of lasting truth and relevance. While Neruda's stance as prophet has frequently been analyzed in his earlier and later poetry by such biographers as Edwards and Teitelboim and such critics as Santí, Nolan and Bellini, no one has dealt extensively with this theme in *Memorial*. The elucidation, undertaken in this paper, of Neruda's attitude towards the future in *Memorial*, will reveal that Neruda valued solitude for providing renewal of his inner life in nature as much as did the mystic San Juan de la Cruz. Like San Juan he was eager to overcome linguistic obstacles to communicate his mystical experience of solitude to future readers. Like San Juan, he was also eager to communicate a particular politico-religious philosophy. San Juan accomplished this purpose in the massive theological commentaries he wrote to accompany his poems, masterpieces of symbolic expression. Neruda expressed his Communist philosophy in both poetry and prose. In his attitude towards the future as well as in his attitudes to past and present, Neruda had a divided psyche. He embraced both a personal and a collective vision in the *Memorial*. To place Neruda's personal futurism in perspective necessitates looking first at his social role as an almost official prophet of the Communist philosophy. The lay person who confronts the work of either San Juan de la Cruz or of Pablo Neruda confronts an identical problem of "separating out" a particular ideology from ideas of greater universality.

In accordance with his Communist philosophy Neruda perceived humanity as moving towards a Utopia of equality and brotherhood. However, developments within national and international Communist politics, as well as such developments as the invention of the atom bomb and interplanetary space travel, sometimes left him struggling to hold onto his vision. In his autobiographical writings Neruda had to deal with his own blindness to certain developments within Soviet Communism, to which the Chilean Party looked for leadership and global solidarity. He made his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1949 where he participated as a guest of the country in the one-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Pushkin's birth (Teitelboim, 270) Despite his subsequent annual visits to Moscow as member of the Committee of Lenin's International Peace Prizes (Teitelboim, 273), he failed to perceive or to acknowledge Soviet repression. *Las uvas y el viento* (1954) marked the height of a Stalinist enchantment that he was later to disavow when Khrushchev repudiated that leader's imposition of the police state in the Soviet Union. Even at his most polemical, Neruda remained first a poet in the judgment of the Indian writer Ezekiel, who takes "the risk of saying that Neruda's politics was flawed but his political poetry is not. he was too good a poet to allow his politics to spoil it" (86).

Edwards (pp. 269-270) reports that Neruda maintained a curiously defensive attitude towards the Soviet Union even when he was speaking to decidedly leftist people among whom he could be expected to communicate his disagreement with certain Soviet policies. Nevertheless, Neruda welcomed Khrushchev's loosening of the former dictators' iron grip; he admitted to having been tricked

into praising Stalin. "El episodio" from *Memorial* welcomes Reason which has returned to floundering humanity. He laments that fear has ruled people's lives and that the man of terror has constructed statues and police which endanger everyone, a patent allusion to Stalin. Edwards points to Neruda's similar defense of his politics in the poem "La verdad" from *Memorial*: "desempeñaba una función de balance y de testamento muy frecuente en su poesía, función equivalente a la del testamento de *Canto general*, y a la del 'Testamento de otoño' de *Estravagario* (191). In this poem Neruda rejected philosophical arguments in favor of intuitive feeling that he had chosen correctly in embracing and remaining loyal to the Chilean Communist Party: "por muchos errores que cometiera, su partido era el de los trabajadores, de los pobres, de los perseguidos, del pueblo de Chile. Y él, Pablo Neruda, era su Poeta. No había que darle más vueltas a este asunto" (Edwards, 192).

The fall of Communism in the Soviet Union as well as in Chile would seem to indicate that history has proved Neruda wrong in his Utopian vision of the future where order and love would reign, a vision developed especially in his poem "Partenón" (*M 3, OC II*: 587). Prosperity for the common man appears to lie in the operation of Capitalism's free market economy more than in Communism's state ownership and managed economy. Given this development it becomes even more necessary to examine the relevance of Neruda's *Memorial* to readers in the twenty-first century. Is it merely a historical curiosity? Does Neruda have something to say--not just about the poet's recreation of the past and his celebration of the present--but also of the future? Is there something of universal value in the work despite the particular development of history in the late twentieth century? Must one have recourse to the caveat that history is long and man's life is short as Bellini (1988, 104) argues in the thesis that history may yet prove Neruda correct in his political philosophy? Beneath all these concerns lies the basic question, does the *Memorial* convince the reader of the poet's integrity through development of an underlying, continuing self, manifest in his attitudes towards past, present and future?

Critics who have analyzed Neruda's role as social prophet in the earlier and later works answer these questions in the affirmative. Clearly, Neruda believed in the Biblical view of the poet as prophet. As early as "Arte poética" from the First *Residencia* he had declared that the truth, the infinite nights and each immolated day "me piden lo profético que hay en mí." In a recent article DeHay maintains that the *Canto general* adopts the encyclopediac, exclusionary, and apocalyptic structure of the Bible; Neruda is a "poet-priest" who revises "the history of the people, providing an alternative history to that of the dominant culture, he also restructures the relationship between the Bible and the political history in a sort of pre-text of liberation theology. And in so doing, he attempts to shift the faith of the people from the Bible to an active participation in a Marxist revolution" (DeHay, 47). Santí made Neruda's role as prophet the subject of *Pablo Neruda: The Poetics of Prophecy*.<sup>4</sup> Relating Neruda to the ancient theory of allegorical poetry with Dante as particular focus, Santí used deconstruction to show that Neruda simultaneously criticized and endorsed the prophetic mission of the poet in works from *Residencia en la tierra* (1931, 1935, 1947) through *Canto general* to *La espada encendida* (1970). Santí traces "a prophetic strain in Neruda's poetry and its gradual shift from visionary to political to apocalyptic mode" (14). Santí carefully distinguishes prophecy from "augury or prediction" focusing instead on "vision or revelation" (14). Santí values Neruda's poetry for its self-reflexivity: *i.e.* Neruda writes a metaprophecy in which he criticizes the prophet's role at the same time that he fills that role.

Santí's "Afterword" to Alastair Reid's translation, *Isla Negra: A Notebook* cites Neruda's own description of the book as one containing both biography and "each day's joyous or somber feeling . . . a tale that strays off and then rejoins, haunted by both the events of the past and by nature, which keeps calling me with its numerous voices" (in Reid, 410). Santí points out that the memoir aspect of the book is based on retrospection while the notes or diary aspect is based on intropection, with a growing emphasis on the later aspect as the book progresses. Santí also points out that Neruda acknowledges the "precarious, unreliable" (in Reid, 411) aspect of memory and the distance separating the present attitudes and the present self from the past. The remaining part of the seven-page "Afterword" is dedicated to relating Neruda's poems to his actual biography to show the things Neruda included and those he excluded. Santí does not concern himself with the prophetic aspect of *Memorial de Isla Negra*.

The *Memorial* is also excluded from another important recent book which relates Neruda to the prophetic tradition. James Nolan in *Poet-Chief: The Native American Poetics of Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda* restricts himself to analysis of *Canto general* in the development of the thesis that both poets continue the tradition of the Indian shaman in the development of their poetic voices. Instead of concentrating as had Santí on the relation of Neruda to the European tradition which grew out of the Hebraic-Christian and Greco-Roman roots of Western culture, Nolan finds a precedent for Neruda in native American culture. Nolan recalls the misnaming that forms a part of American culture, beginning with the names of our two continents North and South America, which had better have been named for Columbus. He also points out the determination of both Whitman and Neruda to include native Indian names of places and things in their poetry. These poets wanted to develop the uniquely American experience in the New World as opposed to that of Old World Europeans. Nolan acutely observes that the shaman combines the popular images of the Indian as healer in the nineteenth century with that of warrior in twentieth-century "wild West show and cowboy movie." (Nolan 55). Nolan demonstrates Neruda's conjunction of apocalyptic Inca legend of the restoration of the Sun with "Latin American faith in a posthistorical Marxist utopia." Nolan also points out that the section "Alturas de Macchu Pichu," which anchors *Canto general* to Indian cosmology and poetics, was initiated only one month after Neruda became a member of the Communist party in 1945.

Neruda's readers would readily agree with Nolan's thesis (70) that this event simply confirmed a tendency present sporadically in the early works and accentuated by the poet's experiences before and during the Spanish Civil War when he proclaimed and demonstrated his universal solidarity with the Left as champion of the Common Man, the worker, the soldier and the downtrodden. In fact, additional evidence for Nolan's thesis can be found in the *Memorial* where Neruda groups his poems about the Spanish Civil War with those of his election as Communist senator from the mining districts of Antofagasta and Tarapacá in 1945 in Book III, "El fuego cruel." This middle section of *Memorial* marks the conversion experience which identifies the "before" and the "after" of Neruda's autobiography, just as St. Augustine's conversion in the garden before his open Bible and Santa Teresa's transfixation mark the turning points in their autobiographies. The religious imagery of conversion is brought down from the teleological to a Marxist, purely humanistic level in Neruda's works both here and, as Boero notes (158), in Neruda's prose autobiography written at the end of his life, where he used such religious imagery as "peregrinación", "alma", "bautismo." Surprisingly, Boero does not point out the word which to my mind most reveals

Neruda's use of religious terminology: the "confieso" of the title, *Confieso que he vivido*, reveals an ironic, almost flippant, attitude towards the Christian use of the word. Epple contrasts the suggestion of an authority that is invoked in the use of "confieso" with "la evocación cándida de las vivencias personales" suggested by "he vivido" (133). Labanyi (218), concentrating on Neruda's attitude towards women as mythic "other," points out that Neruda insisted in *Confieso* on the view of the monolithic, unified self that would not admit the conversion he had commemorated in *Canto general*, but instead searched for Marxist beginnings in his youth. Pointing to literary critics' failure to admit Neruda's development from rigid Communist orthodoxy to admission of Soviet errors, Valdés disputes such readings of the *Confieso* and affirms that for Neruda "la construcción biográfica ... es metafórica y como tal no se detiene en las transiciones de la experiencia sino en su simultaneidad. Sus zonas de concomitancia son sutiles y permiten el trasvasijamiento desde el verso a la prosa, sin ruptura ni sobresalto" (1128). My reading of Neruda's poetry confirms the election to develop a complex persona, for he both shows sociological awakenings in youth and demonstrates the importance of his Spanish Civil War experience, painting the ebb and flow of Marxist commitment. His implicit conversion imagery, nonetheless, relates Neruda to the Hebraic-Christian prophet tradition--his European roots.

Nolan does not deny these European roots but emphasizes an aspect heretofore ignored--Neruda's debt to the Indian tradition. Nolan points out: "more than simply a prophet, the shaman is a namer, singer, word-conjurer, storyteller, spirit-guardian, tribal-unifier, healer, and psychic voyager: the individual apart who represents the whole" (62). Nolan then goes on to document Neruda's debt to the shaman tradition by analyzing his poetic devices which replicate those of native Indian literature--frequent anaphoras, illocutionary language (speech acts), oratorical quality (oral presentation before even illiterate audiences which incorporates collective imperatives and liturgical call-and-response), visual-oral synesthesia, grouping of things by tribal or family resemblances, creation of mythic time through manipulation of verb tenses, and the invention of a mask or persona--a communal self--who speaks for all.

Analyzing the late poetry in *Fin de mundo* and the posthumous book, *2,000*, Bellini emphasizes Neruda's "obstinate optimism" that looked beyond an apocalypse of a world decimated by the bomb to foresee the survival of human beings who would establish a new Eden. "Neruda subrayaba la necesidad fundamental de sobrevivir a todo fracaso, a toda derrota, en función del hombre," affirms Bellini (1986: 5). This optimism could recognize and dismiss Stalin's oppression as a deviation on the road to the Marxist Utopia where Hungary, Rumania, and Chechoslavia were happy waystations. Bellini shows how Neruda, beginning in *Las uvas y el viento* and *Los versos del capitán*, also constructed a personal utopia of love with Matilde whom he identified with America and with life itself in *Estravagaria* (1958) and *Cien sonetos de amor* (1959). The two visions combine in Neruda's affirmation of the power of love to unite mankind in *Plenos poderes* and of a single human couple's survival to found a joyous new world in *La espada encendida*. In Bellini's view this constant emphasis on the poet's duty to encourage humanity offsets the bleak Quevedian tone of much of the posthumous poetry which returns to the darker, resigned vision of man's solitude in the early *Residencias*.

Neither Santí, nor Nolan, nor Bellini has given much attention to the prophetic aspect of *Memorial de Isla Negra*. Teitelboim touches on it in his description of the *Memorial* as Neruda's "Pentateuco extrabíblico" (332). This allusion to the first five books of the Old Testament where the



prophets figured extensively tantalizes the reader but is not developed further. Teitelboim points out the future dimension of Neruda's life in a personal and immediate sense: Neruda lived for twelve years beyond completion of *Memorial*: "mira adelante. Vivirá a fondo todo lo que le queda" (333). In his discussion of Neruda's recreation of the past, Teitelboim points out that the poet can never fully recapture the past because time moves in only one direction--"hacia el futuro" (338). Speaking of Neruda's visit to Colombia in 1968, Teitelboim observes that a journalist applied the same phrase to the Chilean poet that had been applied to Victor Hugo: "dilata en `nosotros la facultad de sentir los secretos del pasado y los enigmas del futuro'." Later Teitelboim speaks of a "Chile nerudiano" which belongs to the future: Neruda as a candidate for president in 1969 was before his time (357). The biographer perceives Neruda not as an "oráculo, sólo es bardo" in his poem "Incitación al Nixonicidio." He believes that poem was heard by the American people who stripped Nixon of his power (382). Teitelboim recalls that during the poet's ambassadorship in Paris for Allende's government, Neruda constantly worried that the experience of Republican Spain leading up to the Civil War would be repeated by Communist Chile. Teitelboim also shows how an apocalyptic poem Neruda had written in 1946 to show solidarity with the workers of Humberstone and Mapocho was adopted and used as a memorial by the relatives of victims discovered in Pinochet's secret cementeries (240). Nevertheless, Teitelboim does not delve into the future aspect of the *Memorial*.

Edwards (215-216) also speaks of Neruda's prescience following the Leftist victory of the tragedy awaiting Chile. The poet remained within "Communist orthodoxy," but as something of an "atheistic Cardinal" within the Church (227). His hope was that Chile would become a model of peaceful Communist revolution ("Se suponía en esos días que Cuba, bloqueada, atrasada, soviética, había caído en el estalinismo, y que Chile, en cambio, con su revolución electoral, pacífica, podría salvarse y convertirse en un modelo a nivel mundial," (233). He realized that victory in those elections was more dangerous than defeat and that Chile would become the center of ideological struggle for the world.

Given these indications of futurism in Neruda's other works and in his life, it would seem logical to assume it also influences his development of the *Memorial de Isla Negra*, a work Cousté (103) characterizes as the most representative of Neruda's collections of poetry. The title Neruda chose for *Memorial de Isla Negra* is neither diary nor autobiography but "memorial." It is important to point out for an English language audience that "memorial" does not literally mean "memoires," which is translated as "memorias" in Spanish. Nor does "memorial" imply a monument as in the English "the Lincoln Memorial." Nevertheless, by tying "memorial" to "Isla Negra" Neruda seems to evoke a feeling of remembrance or celebration of that place to which he always returned to establish contact in solitude with his own inner resources. "Memorial" is closely related, if not to "monumento," to "memorativo," which is defined as something said "en memoria de uno o de algo" in the nineteenth edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua española de la Real Academia Española*. Likewise "memorial" ultimately derives from Latin "memoria" so that something of the meaning of Spanish "memorias" is cast over "memorial." Memory or remembrance is clearly implied by the word.

"Memorial" translates as "memorandum book; memorial (written statement making a petition): (law) brief" in *Williams diccionario: español-inglés, inglés-español*. Under the English word "memorial" Williams includes the Spanish "escrito en que se pide un favor." In other words, it is a future-oriented as much as a past-oriented word. Alastair Reid's translation of the title, *Isla*

*Negra: A Notebook* captures the "memorandum" aspect of the Spanish "memorial" but neither its legalistic and somewhat defensive connotation of formally asking for a hearing nor its futuristic connotation of expecting an action from the person petitioned. Neruda was a man fully engaged in his time, not only as a poet but as a politician holding elected office as a senator and appointed office as ambassador and consul. Sometimes forced to live in exile, he kept his bags packed at the end of his life in case he should once again have to slip out of Chile. Neruda had made enough enemies to feel the need to defend himself. Valdés comments that Neruda "establece un diálogo con la historia, con las circunstancias concretas de un tiempo y con el lector que es juez, testigo interesado y tribunal inquisidor" (1131). *Brief from Isla Negra* would translate this aspect of the *Memorial*: it includes the petition to future readers to judge his life with sympathy as well as the affirmation of the essence of the poet which remained constant throughout his life, the solitary communication with the sea and with nature as the poet tries to discover his place in the cosmos.

The *Memorial* was intended to insure that the presence of Isla Negra throughout all the permutations of Neruda's psyche not be forgotten. The colloquial phrase "haber perdido uno los memoriales" means "haber perdido la memoria de una cosa y no saber dar razón de ella" in the definition of "memorial" in the *Diccionario de la Academia Real*. *Williams diccionario español-inglés* translates this phrase as "to have forgotten, to have lost the thread." By including the word "memorial" in his poetic autobiography, Neruda indicated that he wished to trace the dominant themes or threads that made up the fabric of his life. The primary thread is "Isla Negra" itself, which becomes what Olney would call the dominant "metaphor" for Neruda's life. Its significance as symbol of his emotional and philosophical center is cast back in retrospect to the period before he possessed this home on the rugged Chilean coast. "Isla negra" represents the psychic center from which Neruda assimilated experience and to which he constantly returned after its purchase in 1939. Camacho Guizado has observed the effect of Isla Negra on the poet: "se siente una especie de encerramiento en la persona del autor, en su casa de Isla Negra, en su cuarto de trabajo, frente al mar, frente al pequeño infinito / de la ventana desde donde busco, / interrogo, trabajo, acecho, aguardo" (241) Camacho Guizado also points to Nicanor Parra's condemnation of the effect of Isla Negra on Neruda. The former apparently believed that its solitude distanced Neruda too far from Marxist struggle: "'Isla Negra / no es la solución'" (quoted by Camacho Guizado 220). González-Cruz (109, etc.) has demonstrated Neruda's use of the sea as a symbol of poetic immortality. Hence, I would argue, the poet's choice of Isla Negra as symbol of his particular relationship to immortality becomes especially meaningful. In "El mar" he returns to the basic underpinning of the four elements--earth, air, fire, and water--to underscore how Isla Negra changed his existence, a conversion experience of equal or greater importance than his political conversion:

y cambió bruscamente mi existencia:  
di mi adhesión al puro movimiento

(*M*, 3, *OC II*: 584).

Thus, Neruda simultaneously develops two conversion experiences throughout the *Memorial*: one political and historical, the other mystical and universal. The two scrape against each other like the earth's plates beneath a faultline, frequently sending tremors to the surface. How fitting that a poet

from Chile, a country subject to frequent earthquakes, should develop this kind of movement between his dominant themes. He was to retain both themes to the end of his life as White (123) concludes in his reading of the social and personal themes of the posthumous poetry.

From his careful choice of the title of *Memorial de Isla Negra* it is evident that Neruda was fully aware of the complexities of autobiography. He fits into the category of what Olney labels autobiographers of the double rather than the single metaphor (39). That is, Neruda is conscious of himself writing his autobiography. Of him, it could be said as Olney says of Montaigne, Jung and Eliot, "the autobiographic process is not after the fact but a part and a manifestation of the living, and not only a part but, in its symbolic recall and completeness, the whole of the living. In the whole image of the man, in the complex metaphor or the symbol--union of conscious and unconscious, of the individual with humanity--these two succeed . . . in being both inside and outside, beyond because entirely within, living and simultaneously capturing in symbolic form" (40).

Thus *Memorial de Isla Negra* contains elements of diary and of autobiography while at the same time standing as a legal brief in which Neruda solicits the reader's approbation of his life. The latter aspect of *Memorial de Isla Negra* links the book to the future. González-Cruz (p. 89) points out that in "Las cartas perdidas" Neruda refers to the dilemma of showing his readers that his ideas or opinions have changed for they will judge him to have been wrong either before or after the change:

A veces tengo miedo  
de caminar junto al río remoto,  
de mirar los volcanes  
que siempre conocí y me conocieron:  
tal vez arriba, abajo,  
el agua, el fuego, ahora me examinan:  
piensan que ya no digo la verdad,  
que soy un extranjero.

(*M. 2, OC II: 554*)

His solution was to regard these opinions as "lost letters" written to other men, like himself but distant from himself. Another solution was to admit the diversity within himself and the changes of the self over time. In "No hay pura luz," the last poem of *Memorial*, Book II, Neruda observes:

Es tarde, tarde. Y sigo. Sigo con un ejemplo  
tras otro, sin saber cuál es la moraleja,  
porque de tantas vidas que tuve estoy ausente  
y soy, al la vez soy aquel hombre que fui.

Tal vez es este el fin, la verdad misteriosa.

(*M. 2, OC II: 556*)

It is Neruda's honesty in admitting the complexity of his being, the variation of his opinions, while at the same time holding fast to the solitary core of Isla Negra, that ultimately wins the reader's trust. As González-Cruz points out, "idealismo y realismo no son para él cosas opuestas, y así abraza un idealismo que contradice la filosofía materialista del partido al cual pertenece. Aunque sabe que esto no es 'lo que debería ser,' es, sin embargo, 'lo que él quiere'" (171). At last Neruda confesses in "La verdad":

No soy rector de nada, no dirijo,  
y por eso atesoro  
las equivocaciones de mi canto.

(*M*, 5, *OC II*: 668).

In "La memoria," seventh poem from the end of *Memorial* Neruda outlines the necessity "de acordarme de todos" and of remaking them in the present ("tengo que hacer de nuevo el aire,' el vapor, la tierra, las hojas..."); he addresses the readers with the plea: "tengan piedad para el poeta" (*M*, 5, *OC II*: 656-657). Neruda's appeal to a universal audience which resulted in his winning the Nobel Prize in 1971 is rooted in his ability to create a future space from the interaction between the present and the past. "Soy decididamente triangular" Neruda declares in "La verdad," the penultimate poem of *Memorial*. In this image the reader may perceive the poet's relationship to the three dimensions of time: present, past, and future.

*Memorial de Isla Negra* ends with the poem "El futuro es espacio." González-Cruz (162) interprets this poem to show the disillusionment of the poet; he perceives Neruda's images as dark and ambiguous for Neruda imagines man encountering another planet where despite his scientific advances he will continue talking on the telephone of his petty illnesses. Agosín (91) also perceives Neruda's desire for solitude as a defensive reaction against his perceived persecution by enemies. The poet wishes to escape "del río sofocante" to return to pure solitude. Returning to the view of Gamacho Guizado, whose book appeared between those of González-Cruz and Agosín, I read this poem in an opposite manner. Gamacho Guizado points out that the word "soledad" points backward to the theme that obsessed Neruda in the *Residencias* and anticipates the theme of *Arte de pájaros*, the book following the *Memorial*. Perriam (ix) has since shown that "the land as a source of images and memories, the sea as a metaphor for purity, and solitude as a newly sought-after state of mind and being" are the major themes of Neruda's late poetry. Purified by solitude, "soledad de la naturaleza, elevada sobre la miseria cotidiana, soledad mística del futuro, milenarismo que de alguna manera excluye a los 'otros peces', a otros hombres" (Gamacho Guizado 246), Neruda turns in upon himself in solitary isolation.

The rejection of "other men" is not absolute. In "El futuro es espacio" Neruda, on one hand, makes an ironic allusion to the space explorations of the 60's, but on another he develops an image of space and air that he has used consistently throughout the *Memorial* to refer to the future. Neruda frequently used the image of the net to refer to the poet's art. He pointed out that the net contained both the threads and air or the spaces between the threads, the former as important as the latter. What is not said, what is not yet known, the mysterious, what can only be intuited are as important as the perceived. Furthermore, solitude, the kind of solitude Neruda envisions which allows him to be reintegrated into

the cosmos, is a positive force. In "Aquella luz" from Book II Neruda says that the light of Ceylan allowed him to become transparent as a diamond. Developing the image of a net he declares:

(La luz que cae sobre el traje negro  
y perfora la ropa y el decoro,  
por eso desde entonces mi conflicto  
es conservarme cada día desnudo.)

(*M 2, OC II: 549*)

Creating a space through the use of parenthesis, Neruda makes a hole in the poem that reflects the holes that dappled light casts upon clothing. The space creates freedom from daily mundane concerns, from immediate temporal reality, and allows him to rise above himself into an atemporal zone where he can return to his basic humanity. In the East Neruda learned that he needed solitude, to exist between light and shadow, the luminescent and the desperate:

Las redes que temblaban en la luz  
siguen saliendo claras del océano.

(*M 2, OC II: 549*)

"Aquellas vidas," also from Book II recounts an epiphany Neruda experienced during the cremation of a woman: he was unsure whether smoke (the real--the transformation of her body through fire into ashes and air) or her soul (the ideal) rose into the air:

Este soy, yo diré, para dejar  
este pretexto escrito: ésta es mi vida.  
Y ya se sabe que no se podía:  
que en esta red no sólo el hilo cuenta,  
sino el aire que escapa de las redes,  
y todo lo demás era inasible:

(*M 2, OC II: 550*)

By naming what escapes one's grasp, what escapes consciousness, and by fixing it with the image of the burning woman, Neruda recognizes the limitation and the ambition of the poet, to bring into the light, into consciousness, something of the vast realm of the unconscious.

Book III begins with his poems of political engagement commemorating the Spanish Civil War, but then moves back into poems celebrating nature and solitude. Once again the net image appears in "Cordilleras de Chile": "Debo decir que el aire / establece una red.." (*M 3, OC II: 573*). All that remains are the four elements; all else dies into silence, including words. En "La primavera urbana" Neruda transfers the image of the net to an urban setting: the worn-out pavement disintegrates into "una red de sucios agujeros / en que la lluvia acumuló sus lágrimas." (*M 3, OC II:*

575) The elements, degraded in the urban setting, nonetheless make him remember that "se desnudaba entre los azahares / la primavera impúdica y plateada." Book IV contains the poem "El héroe" in which Neruda describes the difficulty of remembering accurately: the only truth is in forgetting. In an allegory in which he seeks his muse as Santa Teresa sought Christ in the labyrinth of the castle of the self, the poet laments:

o todo era pasado o sueño vano,  
o el tiempo  
no nos reconocía  
y en su red, presos como peces, éramos  
dos condenados al castillo inmóvil.

(*M 4, OC II: 611*)

Here he shows that time, a net containing threads and spaces, can yet entrap men in its folds. This negative image of the net continues in "Amores: Delia (II)" where Neruda refers to Delia as a thread of honey and steel that tied his hands. He then recants the image, declaring "existes tú no como enredadera / en el árbol sino con tu verdad" (*M 4, OC II: 618*). In "Para la envidia" Neruda uses the allegory of the fisherman who uses his net to bring treasures from the sea to figure forth the poet who captures "pez o palabra o planta plateada / o simplemente piedra submarina" (*M 4, OC II: 629*) from the sea which suggests an image for the unconscious. He pities the envious who fail to capture anything in their fishing excursions, but defends himself as one who innocently offered his findings. "Se amanece" from Book V contains the image of time as a tangled thread which again suggests a net. "El episodio," his anti-Stalinist poem, also develops the negative connotations of the net as an image for the system of nationalistic beliefs which destroys man's identification with the larger interests of humanity. People, hungry for enlightenment, are poisoned by silence and "un sordo rumor":

eran tantas ausencias que se unían  
unas a otras como un agujero:  
y otro agujero, y otro y otro y otro  
van haciendo una red, y esa es la patria:

(*M 5, OC II: 642*)

"Atención al mercado" recreates the image of the net from the inside where men are fishes caught in time's treacheries, their mortality gaping in their exposed scales and guts. Men like all other living things are subject to time and death. Nevertheless, Neruda enjoys the bustle of the Valparaíso marketplace where he can taste and smell the particularity of mortal things, laugh at the tomato, buy a lettuce, and anticipate tomorrow. The next poem "La memoria" laments the difficulty of capturing memories and threads from the past. He petitions the reader for his pity for he tried to capture unseizable things; implied here is the image of the poet as one who attempts to create his own net that would allow him to entrap truth and memory.

Throughout *Memorial de Isla Negra* Neruda develops the images of the net and of fish, both

from the inside as one caught within the net, and from the outside as one who casts the net. In the foundation of his house at Isla Negra he placed ceramic images of fish; on his windows hung netted curtains through which the sun shown on the woven images of birds.<sup>5</sup> In the final verse of the *Memorial* Neruda writes in italics for emphasis, "*Volemos a la pura soledad.*" Does this not recall the Esposo's closing words in the "Cántico espiritual" where San Juan de la Cruz describes the union of the soul with God in the perfect solitude of the mountain into whose secret caverns the soul enters and from whence she views all nature's beauty?

En soledad vivía  
y en soledad ha puesto ya su nido,  
y en soledad la guía  
a solas su querido,  
también en soledad de amor herido.

(Fitzmaurice-Kelly and Trend 158)

Neruda developed the same idea earlier in "Tal vez tenemos tiempo" where he affirmed that:

tenemos este último minuto  
y luego mil años de gloria  
para no ser y no volver.

(*M*, 5, *OC II*: 640)

Unlike San Juan de la Cruz, Neruda did not want to fly to Christ, "fisher of men," to spend eternity in heavenly contemplation. Neruda wanted to enact the Christian promise in a Marxist Utopia in this life. He himself took on the role of Christ, proselytizing the New Gospel and suffering for and with his people. The only immortality he could achieve was communication with future generations of humanity's limitation in the necessity of each person's return to Nature and of humanity's prowess in its self-awareness of its condition and in its ability to achieve a more just society. That men even on a distant planet would still endeavor to communicate, though it be by telephone, and that they would still be concerned with their minute health problems, the problems of mortality, establishes their essential humanity. Neruda's faith in communication led him to believe that by establishing the present moment, man can conquer death

No es necesario nada sino ser  
y ser es a la luz, ser es ser visto  
y ver, ser es tocar y descubrir.

("Las comunicaciones," *M* 5, *OC II*: 666)

Neruda believed that he possessed a universal mentality which allowed him to speak for man in general. In "La injusticia" he declared:

Quien descubre el quien soy descubrirá el quien eres  
y el cómo y el adónde."

(*M I, OC II: 514*)

It is precisely because everyman can recognize himself in the poet that the poet is a unique man with special ability to see into the essence of things present, past and future. As Agosín points out, Neruda laments in "Sonata crítica," the last book of the *Memorial* that because of his "visionary gifts...the poet ... is permanently separated from other men" (92). The title "Sonata" implies the song of a solo instrument, Agosín observes (93) and Neruda "looks forward to an idealized future in a search for a tie with the world" (94).

In his Nobel Prize address in 1971 Neruda affirmed both the view of the poet as one worker among others and the view of the poet as visionary. The title of the address "Hacia la Ciudad Espléndida" affirmed his Marxist vision,<sup>6</sup> but his emphasis on his effort to understand himself affirmed his individualism. As a poet, he sought both "solitude and solidarity," contradictory as those two claims might seem: "No hay soledad inexpugnable. Todos los caminos llevan al mismo punto: a la comunicación de lo que somos" (20). He argued against a too rigid definition of realism in art, but urged that his poems be seen as "working instruments." Once again he returned to the image of the net to define how those poems might serve man in the future: "cada uno de mis cantos aspiró a servir en el espacio como signo de reunión donde se cruzaron los caminos, o como fragmento de piedra o de madera en que alguien, otros, los que vendrán, pudieran depositar los nuevo signos" (28). However bound by Marxist premises some of his poetry may be, Pablo Neruda developed themes of love and solitude as relevant to us today as they were to his contemporaries.

1. References to *Memorial de Isla Negra, Obras Completas II* appear in this abbreviated form throughout the paper.
2. Epple places Neruda's *Confieso que he vivido*, Violeta Parra's *Décimas* and Fernando Alegría's *Una especie de memoria* in this new trend.
3. See González-Cruz, pp. 98-99.
4. Lozada provides a translation of the deconstructionist premises of Santí's book and an ultimately sympathetic reading of it.
5. These images appear in the photographs of Neruda's home at Isla Negra in Poirot's book.
6. Neruda here develops an image present in some of his earliest work. Marcos, comparing *España en el corazón* with *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*, observes: "ambos poemarios abren un espacio utópico en que las nuevas generaciones habrán de reconocerse, y formulan una parábola, no tanto elegíaca como profética, del género humano, simbolizado por el pueblo español" (224).



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