THE INTIMACY OF HUMANKIND: CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES OF LOVE IN LATIN AMERICAN POETRY 1950-1990

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the interchange between individual and social love, *eros* and *philadelphos*, in the writings of four Latin American poets of the Cold War era: Pablo Neruda, Ernesto Cardenal, Gioconda Belli, and Raúl Zurita. Chronologically, I frame this work beginning with Neruda’s return to writing love poetry in the early 1950s, up until the breakdown of collectivist movements in the late 1980s with the expansion of capitalism and the return to democracy in the Southern Cone and in parts of Central America. Geographically, I focus on two countries that have had democratic revolutions in the twentieth century in which literature has played a social role: Chile and Nicaragua. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theories on Romanticism and territorialization, I establish several major points of divergence between *eros* and *philadelphos* and then examine the ways each poet manages these differences in their attempt to create a committed poetry oriented towards expressing collective realities and promoting social change.
PREFACE

This dissertation is original, independent, unpublished work by Barbara Kelly Fraser.
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DEDICATION

A Blanca Isabel y Elías.

A vos mi gran amor, la otra mitad de mi universo.

Y a Ti, entre los doctores
Y pienso que la poesía es una acción pasajera o solemne en que entran por parejas medidas la soledad y la solidaridad, el sentimiento y la acción, la intimidad de uno mismo, la intimidad del hombre y la secreta revelación de la naturaleza. Y pienso con no menor fe que todo está sostenido—el hombre y su sombra, el hombre y su actitud, el hombre y su poesía en una comunidad cada vez más extensa. (Neruda, “Towards the Splendid City: Nobel Lecture”)

In Pablo Neruda and the US Culture Market, Teresa Longo uses the term “wonder-bread” to describe what emerges as Neruda’s sensual late period poetry is mediated through the enthusiasm of English-speaking American audiences in the 1990s. Neruda experienced a surge in popularity thanks to mass-media exposure that followed the 1995 academy award win for Michael Radford’s film, Il postino. Played by French actor Philippe Noiret, the poet is one of the film’s main protagonists, and his love poems are cited by various characters throughout and given a prominent role in the plot.

Subsequently, Neruda’s name and selected lines of his verse began appearing in a wide variety of television programs and movies including The Simpsons, Ellen, Patch Adams as well as the Broadway musical Rent! The film’s success also led to a flood of publications of anthologies, translations, and sound-recordings of romantic verse.

Bruce Dean Willis notes that for the millennial reader trapped in the malaise of urban sprawl, ubiquitous mass-media, and global warming, Neruda’s poems—anchored to nature and to expressions of eros and passion—evoke a kind of pastoral “Golden age” of (supposed) emotional authenticity (93). The lover-Neruda of Il postino and subsequent mass-market publications, appearing just as the USA became the world’s sole superpower, is in Longo’s terms a “romanticized, de-politicized, pre-packaged” version of the poet, rebranded for North American audiences and conveniently stripped of any of his discomfitting politics. This version of Neruda brings to the North American consumer
“love,” “nourishment,” and “healing” for the ideological and social divides that plagued the country at the turn of the millennium:

Through the poetry itself and to an even greater extent, through the packaging of the poetry, this Neruda promotes a vision of communion, community, hope and wonder. The message is clear: a romanticized Neruda can heal the divided nation; an essentialized Latin America exists to serve and nourish the United States. (xvii)

It is no coincidence that Longo attributes the poet’s “healing properties” to the region as a whole. Latin America at the turn of the millennium was, for the US consumer, the land of Like Water for Chocolate: a transnational signifier for sensual delight, wonder, and emotional authenticity. At the same time as the “Latin Craze” made Salsa-inflected synth-pop peppered with first-grade Spanish expressions a ubiquitous presence on radio and music television, Latin American writers and artists became “all the rage” among both middlebrow and academic cultural consumers as the mass media rendered literary works and historical biographies into easily digestible bits of escapism. Oprah Winfrey’s book club, which reached the apogee of its popularity in the year 2000, featured Gabriel García Márquez’s Cien años de soledad, introducing the Colombian writer’s work to middle America. Hollywood brought to the screen novels by Isabel Allende, Sandra Cisneros, and Julia Álvarez. In 2003, Julie Taymor turned Frida Kahlo’s memoirs outlining the artist’s tormented marriage and revolutionary politics into an Oscar-nominated film starring Salma Hayek. This, along with Madonna’s interest in her work, led to a surge in popularity for the Mexican painter’s images of self-immolation.

This fascination with all things Latin American is not a new phenomenon. Jon Beasley-Murray identifies a complex and long-standing exchange between “Western rationalism” and “Latin affect” in which the West—referring both to Europe and Anglo-
North America—accumulates raw commodities and discursive materials charged with “affective energy” that range from stimulant monocultures such as coffee, coca, chocolate, sugar, and tobacco to marketable experiences of titillation, both vicarious and direct, such as “travelers’ tales describing cannibals,” “magic realism,” “salsa,” “package tours,” and “commodified sexuality” (129). The relationship between North and South, he argues, has long involved an “exchange of consumer goods” closely intertwined with “a no-less material affective economy, also often structured by a distinction between the raw and the refined” (129). Latin America thus “marks the Western imagination with a particular intensity. And the figures who stand in for the region are distinguished by their affective charge” (130). Beasley-Murray thus places Longo’s turn-of-the-millennium fascination with Neruda within a broader context, connecting the neoliberal to the colonial, the modern “tourist gaze” to the “orientalism” of the pre-modern explorer.

What interests me in particular is some of the affective “matter” that has been so refined in the modern North American consciousness. In spite of having been created many decades earlier and in diverse artistic and socio-historical contexts, the artistic works that achieved commercial success at the turn of the millennium did so by exploiting and refining for North American audiences two intensely affective experiences: eroticism and revolutionary political engagement, combining the two as forms of “authentic passion,” one singular, the other collective. To take another example: Isabel Allende’s novels La casa de los espíritus and De amor y de sombra, both written in the 1980s and made into moderately successful Hollywood movies, center around passionate erotic relationships cast against a backdrop of human catastrophe in the form of a totalitarian regime using torture and disappearance as means of consolidating power.
Finding love and joining the revolutionary struggle become conflated. A couple makes love on a mountaintop after discovering a mine used as a mass tomb: the former initiates them into a union with one another; the latter into the struggle for justice for Pinochet’s victims. The eponymous biopic depicting Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera’s tormented marriage titillates the viewer with an idealized 1920s artistic ferment of leftist intellectuals dancing tangos, debating Stalinism and Trotskyism over bottles of tequila, making art, and experimenting with their sexuality. The Neruda of Il postino combines a notion of Whitmanian passionate authenticity with an axis of leftist activism, unencumbered eroticism with artistic and political expression, as an antidote to the self-indulgent aecidia of the film’s young protagonist.

Notably, in the case of Il postino, and despite the assertions from Willis, Longo and Irene Hodgson that the poet’s presence in the film is de-politicized,¹ Neruda’s leftist politics do emerge, minus, of course, their problematic Stalinist elements. They are integrated into the mythic trope of the Latin American artist as lover/revolutionary. Eros and a vaguely defined sense of social activism become the two hemispheres of the mythic Neruda, and love is the common thread that binds them together. Love is simultaneously the source of man’s “becoming” and the affective grounding of leftist politics, enabling the poet to become the true Whitmanian subject who relishes his embodied nature through sexual relationships, emotional authenticity, and natural beauty, all the while fighting for the liberation and fraternity of the collective. The poet’s political

¹ Hodgson, in particular, critically addresses the removal of the Chilean political context of the original Antonio Skármeta novel on which the plot of Il postino is based. Skármeta’s Ardiente paciencia is set in Chile in the early 1970s, configuring the story around the election of Salvador Allende in 1970 and the coup d’état of September 11, 1973, and using the love story of Mario and Beatriz as an allegory of Chile’s euphoria and loss. As Hodgson explains, by moving the story to Italy in the 1950s, Michael Radford “impoverishes” both Neruda and “Skármeta’s portrayal of him” (97-98).
engagement, under this rubric, becomes primarily an affective experience that appeals to, and even intoxicates—to take Beasley-Murray’s comparison with stimulants—the Western imagination. In a narrative reflecting more the preoccupations of the United States youth movements of the 1960s than those of the European and Latin American leftism in the previous decades when the poet was a politically active figure, Radford’s exiled Neruda is a refugee of love, cast from his homeland for loving women and the people too much.

The North American “sexing up” of Hispanic political engagement is not without foundation in the discourses of the revolutionaries themselves, many of whom use a language of love and eroticism when articulating their political passions. Both Neruda and Che Guevara consistently attribute political engagement to loving motivations. The former, in an interview with Rita Guibert in Seven Voices from Latin America, compares political poetry to its erotic counterpart as “deeply emotional” (75). Guevara’s famous passage from Man and Socialism in Cuba, a perennial feature of North American aphoristic leftism, elaborates on revolution as an action motivated by love:

Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality. This is perhaps one of the great dramas of a leader; he must combine an impassioned spirit with a cold mind and make painful decisions without flinching. Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize their love for the people, for the most hallowed causes and make it one and indivisible. They cannot descend with small doses of daily affection, to the terrain where ordinary men put their love into practice. (352)

Guevara hints at a more complex and problematic interchange between revolutionary engagement qua love and eros than Neruda. Although Guevara recognizes that both types of love are emotionally intense, leading to an “impassioned spirit,” revolutionary love is almost religious in its insistence that certain of its personal manifestations, particularly
desire and affection, be sublimated. The revolutionary must exile himself from intimate relations in order to transubstantiate his love into the epic passion required to advance the revolutionary cause. Erotic passion, as an embodied and highly subjective manifestation of love, seems a shameful concession to self-centeredness that would turn the guerrilla’s focus towards “the things of his wife.” At least this is what Che seems to imply. Nevertheless, Latin Americanist scholar Ileana Rodríguez notes through careful analysis of guerrilla narratives, including those of Che himself, that eros remains a pervasive presence in guerrilla discourse such that the asceticism of the guerrilla almost never extends to the sexual sphere. Indeed, guerrilla narratives establish “a relationship between erotic love (the heterosexual love of men for women), and patriotic love (the homosocial love of men for men and of men for their country),” resulting in “two dissimilar and separate logics”: woman (the female body, mother, sex, home,) and the nation (law, codes, politics, revolution) (30-31). Rodríguez perceives this interchange of loves as a means by which guerrilla narratives open themselves up to feminist critique, as well as by which such narratives can transcend the binary structure with which Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo contrasts the “authorized (male) subjects of Revolution” and the “feminized” masses. The “love” involved in political engagement often involves a collectivized voice, a shift in gender roles: the masculinization of woman through the “crucible” of guerrilla instruction, and the feminization of man through a highly emotionalized form of social commitment, which Rodríguez terms “tendresse.” This emotionalized commitment is a form of love, though it differs from dyadic subject-object exchanges of intimate passion. To keep the terminological parallel with eros I will refer to committed affect as philadelphia.
In socially committed poetry, *philadelphos*'s coexistence with *eros* is not merely what William Rowe describes as a “continuum of the erotic and the social, in that other Whitmanian sense of adhesive, as that which draws human beings together” (287). The two also diverge. Indeed, Rowe’s discussion of love in relation to both Raúl Zurita and Ernesto Cardenal’s poetics underemphasizes a quality of *eros* that both Cardenal and Zurita recognize implicitly: erotic love sets itself against gregariousness, even as it paradoxically creates communion between one person and another. The man or woman in love moves from the self’s solitary monad to a dyadic union, but he or she also sets the beloved above all other concerns. In Neruda’s poetry the beloved is a *reina* or queen whose queenship is unrecognized by everyone except the poet. In Cardenal’s epigram, the gregarious North American metropolis is empty if his beloved is not in New York. Indeed, the rich area of social critique that Rowe finds in the poetic language of the inner life—as opposed to the language of political symbolism and mass emotion—stems from *eros*’s creation of impermeable spaces of intimacy in opposition to patriotic *philadelphos*, which can be much more easily appropriated by totalitarianism. Indeed, rendered into poetic form, erotic space creates a useful paradox for social critique retaining the anti-gregarious personalism of love while simultaneously rendering it public matter. Erotic poetry can testify to the wounds left on the body by the brutality of totalitarian regimes, to call the disappeared into memory, or to penetrate areas where collectivism is excluded due to state censorship, self-censorship or ideological defensiveness.

Therefore, I contend that the “continuum view,” which sees *eros* and *philadelphos* as two points on a continuum of social interchange, ignores this anti-gregariousness and its critical potential which the region’s poets do not. Critics such as Bruce Dean Willis,
Nelson Osorio, and Eliana Rivero in their discussion of Neruda, and Rowe in his discussion of Zurita and Cardenal, downplay the divergence between the modalities of that these poets negotiate or exploit. This dissertation explores two main issues. On the one hand, there is the much-ignored question of divergence, the tension between *eros* and *philadelphos* in Latin American socially committed poetry of the Cold War era. My analysis spans this historical range as it begins with Neruda’s writings in the 1950s and continues to the democratic transitions of the 1990s when a different set of paradigms—neoliberalism and its attendant commercializing practices—begin to capture the attention of socially critical writers. On the other, there is the potential of *eros* itself to inspire social critique without sacrificing the partiality or intimate nature of the romantic bond. *Eros* is a paradox, both spatializing and gregarious, that can thus inspire both public and intimate language. In *eros*’s public function we see a convergence with *philadelphos*, what I call the *philadelphos-in-eros*. This study, therefore, challenges the continuum view by focusing on both divergences and convergences, places where *eros* approximates socially oriented passions, and places where it imposes difference.

Neruda and Gioconda Belli are excellent poets through whom to examine this divergence, as they both write from a position of an embodied *eros* that competes with political objectives. In both, *eros* and *philadelphos* place mutually exclusive demands on the lyrical speaker, and this contest of demands cries for resolution. Moreover, the gendered guerrilla discourse in Neruda’s *Los versos del capitán* (1951) finds its feminist counterpart in Belli’s *Línea de fuego* (1976). In Neruda’s text, Rodríguez notes, “woman continues to be portrayed as the object and realization of erotic desires, ‘revolutionary pussy,’ but she is already situated in a semidialogic position within the space and
possibilities of insurgency” (94). In Línea de fuego, especially when read in conjunction with Belli’s earlier Sobre la grama (1974), these “possibilities of insurgency” are finally actualized. Belli gives us the fully converted revolutionary woman whom Neruda’s text attempts to bring into being, Rosario speaking in her own voice. At the same time, Belli’s “revolutionary woman” reveals something that Neruda barely grasps and only at the very end of his work: the primarily feminine nature of collectivism, which for Belli is linked to woman’s natural “peopleability” through childbirth.

Collective love as feminization has a curious parallel in compatriot Ernesto Cardenal’s mystical works following his vocational call to religious life. Indeed, examining Cardenal’s Epigramas (1957) and Gethsemani KY (and its companion prose piece Vida en el amor) (1961), one is struck by the evolution of the speaking subject who moves from the masculine erotic subjectivity of his epigrams to the feminized position of the monastic, who exists in a dyadic union with God, not as the male center of language, but as its female recipient. Raúl Zurita, similarly, in Canto a su amor desaparecido (1985), employs a fluid, feminine lyrical “I” for much the same purpose: to express the common violation experienced by all of Pinochet’s victims, disappeared and survivors. This polyvocality is expanded in his subsequent work Amor de Chile (1987), which subverts the entire logic of Romantic subjectivity by dissolving the authorial voice into a collective consisting of both the multitude and the Chilean landscape. Yet despite this tendency towards collectivism, Cardenal and Zurita also recognize eros’s ability to generate a critical and refractory discourse against totalizing, collective discourses, such as those put in place by authoritarian regimes. For these poets, erotic love grounds an expansive collectivism—love being the one remaining transcendent “universal” in
modernity—even as it emerges from an irreducible particularity, the place where the subject is most an “I,” gazing on the face of the only other person in the universe. This paradoxical unity of universality and particularity becomes the site of a counter-discourse against totalitarian repression

*The Intimacy of Humankind*, thus, rather than seeking to dismantle the affective trope of the lover/revolutionary, takes it as the basis of an examination into the complexities of the relationship between erotic love and social commitment in mid-century Latin American poetry: its purpose is to investigate *eros* and *philadelphos* as two contiguous but not necessarily continuous affective experiences. The conjunction of these two loves results in a hybrid form of expression, interpreting history in the gap between affect and discourse, between subjectivity and collectivity, and between the personal and the political. This study therefore builds on some of the work done by Ileana Rodríguez, though her focus is more specifically on guerrilla testimony and fiction. It also expands on work by William Rowe, though his concern is primarily poetic language as the site of encounter between the inner life and history. Rowe’s attention to Zurita and Cardenal’s use of “*eros*” in “epic necessity” begs to be developed and discussed in greater detail, particularly as these poets, unlike Neruda and Belli, are not usually considered “love poets” in any standard sense. Finally, this study argues that the coexistence of *eros* and *philadelphos* in these texts mitigates the excesses of both revolutionary and Romantic subjectivity. *Eros* permits the embodied subject to reveal him or herself when totalitarianism would silence him, while *philadelphos* modulates his (or her) voice so it does not silence the other, becoming totalitarian itself.
Eros and Philadelphos: Two Loves, Two Subjectivities

This dissertation deals with two distinct modalities of love. For “love” is, after all, an imprecise term, in both English and Spanish, that conflates various forms of fellow-feeling. Whatever their points of contact and overlap (and this dissertation is also deeply concerned with these), eros and philadelphos are sufficiently different from each other to be considered two distinct affective experiences. Drawing on the concepts of subjectivity and territorialization in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus, I suggest that eros and philadelphos divide at three key points, each of which will be relevant to my subsequent discussion of the poetry: Romantic subjectivity, spatiality and their relationship to twentieth-century political discourse.

Eros is riddled with paradoxes. It is a social phenomenon, and yet also deeply subjective. Eros involves both sexuality and its socialized negation at the same time. As the signified of sexual intercourse is partially or entirely veiled by social codes and taboos, a corona of affects, stirrings, languages and symbols becomes visible, all of which, in the thoughts of Octavio Paz, distinguishes human from animal (18). In Un más allá erótico: Sade, Paz differentiates eros from sex as “reinos independientes aunque pertenecen al mismo universo vital.” The former is a “channeling” and “socialization” of the latter, such that the vital energy of sexual pursuit is “sometida a las necesidades del grupo” (19). The occultation of sex through its codification is primarily seen in this light, as a “technology” in Paz’s terms, a mechanism of social control of instinct, generally imposed by a Victorian or Judeo-Christian bourgeoisie looking to, in Michel Foucault’s terms, “confine” sexuality “into the home” and absorb it “into the serious function of reproduction” and making “silence” the rule (3). In The History of Sexuality, Foucault
argues against this “repressive hypothesis,” suggesting that both the Victorian veiling of sex and its dialectical “incitement to discourse” are component parts of an intricate “mechanism” of discursive power-relations (12). Indeed, one of the tropes of the “repressive hypothesis,” the belief that the Catholic Church was a primary motor of repression, is undermined in Foucault’s analysis. Foucault claims that the Counter-Reformation, by encouraging more frequent use of the confessional, actually encouraged more, not less, discussion of sexuality. The seventeenth century saw a paradox of two coexisting, contrary movements. On the one hand there was a “veiling of the nakedness” of the medieval language of the confessional, a refinement of the terminology used by confessors when examining their penitents (18). But on the other hand, this occurred in concert with an expansion of the scope of confession: “thoughts, desires, voluptuous imaginings, delectations, combined movements of the body and the soul […] had to enter, in detail, into the process of confession and guidance” as the Church encouraged “meticulous rules of self-examination” (18-19).

Thus eros can be defined as “veiled” sexuality. The veil is imposed by collective morals and codes in order to facilitate social interchange, yet this same veil also paradoxically amplifies the subjective consciousness of the erotic self. Foucault approaches this “see-saw” effect between veiling and self-revelation as grounded in a specific historical, ecclesial moment—the Counter Reformation of the seventeenth century, yet this paradox of the erotic experience is intrinsic to it. There is a close link between socialized eros and subjectivity, as is evidenced throughout Western thought in a

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2 Foucault further explains “All these negative elements—defenses, censorships, denials—which the repressive hypothesis groups together in one great central mechanism destined to say no—are doubtless only component parts that have a local and tactical role to play in a transformation into discourse, a technology of power, and a will to knowledge that are far from being reducible to the former” (12).
diverse range of sources from Medieval and Renaissance poetry—such as the writings of Petrarch and Garcilaso de la Vega—to Christian epistemology to Psychoanalysis. The late Pope John Paul II in the series of lectures that make up his Theology of the Body, for example, refers to the socialized occultation of sex as a response to the post-lapsarian “estrangement” of the human being to the physical body as an expression of the divine image, and to man and woman from each other. His argument is not that sexual desire is a manifestation of the sinful or impure nature of the human body, but rather that post-lapsarian desire involves a distortion and objectification of the other:

“The love that is in the world,” that is, lust, brings with it an almost constitutive difficulty of identification with one’s own body. This is not only in the sphere of one’s own subjectivity, but even more with regard to the subjectivity of the other human being, of woman for man, of man for woman. Hence the necessity of hiding before the other with one’s own body, with what determines one’s own femininity-masculinity. This necessity proves the fundamental lack of trust, which in itself indicates the collapse of the original relationship of communion. Regard for the subjectivity of the other, and at the same time for one’s own subjectivity, has aroused in this new situation, that is, in the context of lust, the necessity of hiding oneself. (19)

Similarly, another Christian thinker, writer and Oxford don C.S. Lewis, makes the same association between erotic veiling and subjectivity. Lewis actually makes a semantic distinction between eros as a “feeling for the other” and sexual desire or “Venus” as “an event occurring within one’s own body” (Four Loves 95). Lewis roots eros in a desire for an intersubjective encounter with a person: “without Eros sexual desire, like every other desire, is a fact about ourselves. Within Eros it is rather about the beloved” (95).

To the potential chagrin of all concerned, the pope and Lewis have much in common with second-wave feminist writers Laura Mulvey and Luce Irigaray, both of whom, drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, decry the sacrifice of female subjectivity in
the phallic drama of the erotic male subject.³ Discussing cinematic representation, Mulvey notes that visual sexual arousal is predicated on “taking other people as objects: subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze,” which, in the logic of phallocentrism, leads to a “sexual division of labor” in the cinema, where man acts as the subject “bearer of the look” and woman as object “looked at and displayed with [her] appearance coded for strong visual impact” (837). Irigaray, meanwhile, proposes an alternative grounding for male-female relationships to the “transitivity” of phallogocentric discourse which takes woman as object. Her intersubjective recognition of the other imposes a “negative” between lover and beloved such that the two are “transcendent” to each other:

“Recognizing you means or implies respecting you as other, accepting that I draw myself to a halt before you as something insurmountable, a mystery, a freedom that will never be mine, a subjectivity that will never be mine” (I Love To You 104). This, in John Paul II’s terms, is the role occultation plays, as one sign of that “insurmountable” negative, leaving room for a fuller expression of man or woman’s subjectivity in the face of the other. In this light, the difference between pornography, erotica, and romantic literature is not merely the degree of coverage or nakedness, but also, contiguously, the presence of lover, beloved, or both as subjects: almost nonexistent in the first, moderately present in the second, and completely dominating the third.

³ At least some of this similarity comes rom the influence of phenomenology and personalism on both French feminism and Karol Wojtyla’s theology. For more on the phenomenological base of John Paul’s theological writings see Hans Köcher, “The Phenomenology of Karol Wojtyla” (382). More generally, there are, of course, fundamental differences between the worldviews of the poets that this dissertation examines and those of the French Feminists and other theorists that it uses to examine them. The theorists are often characterized by deconstruction and its distrust of language. The poets, by contrast, even Zurita who trends closer to deconstructivist practices, are more optimistic, retaining and promoting ideals of solidarity and love as sources of objective good. Indeed, Zurita has been critical of deconstructionist and post-colonial concepts, as in a 2012 interview given to The Poetry Foundation’s Forrest Gander in which the Chilean poet criticizes the concept of “cultural appropriation.” Yet I draw on both the French Feminists and Deleuze and Guattari more for their concise theorizations of important dimensions of populism such as feminization (Irigaray, Cixous) and relationship to subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari).
Psychoanalysis in particular has made the connection between desire, occultation and subjectivity a core concern through its theorization of the Oedipus complex. Jacques Lacan departed from Sigmund Freud in that respect, allowing space in his theories for the influence of philosophical concepts such as subjectivity (Lorenzo 4). As Chiesa Lorenzo points out, Lacan’s particular concept of subjectivity was revised over the course of several decades. Initially, both subjectivity and the ego, which are strongly differentiated in Lacanian thought, were both associated with the Imaginary: “The ego is an imaginary construction, and it must be differentiated from the subject of the unconscious. [...] The fact that the subject should not be “confused” with the ego qua imaginary function does not indicate they are unrelated” (13). Lorenzo argues that Lacan’s early writings were more concerned with differentiating the ego, which Lacan views as an “object,” from the concept of the subject. His later writings would, however, elaborate a “new theory of subjectivity that [would] shift the axes of his research from the order of the Imaginary to the Symbolic” (13). Negotiation of the Oedipus complex, of the infant’s libidinal desire for and identification with the mother, is a vital element in Lacanian subjectivity.

Lorenzo continues:

The child is initially an “a-subject” (assujet) entirely subjected to the Other. The pre-Oedipal child is an individuated subject only for the Other: with the resolution of the Oedipus complex, however, the child individuates himself symbolically. The process of symbolization is, for the child, a gradual one: however it is fully actualized only by the resolution of the Oedipus complex. (61)

This resolution occurs through the child’s assimilation of the father’s Law, a primeval prohibition against the child’s identification with and desire for the mother, through which the child is initiated into the Symbolic order.
The link between subjectivity and eros is important, as it touches on the paradoxical nature of erotic love that is the source of both its divergences and convergences with philadelphos. Second-Wave Feminist writers such as Irigaray and Mulvey, as well as Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva, applying Lacanian psychoanalysis, demonstrate that a revolution in women’s social role necessitated a revolution also on both the sexual and subjective levels. Woman needed to “speak” herself as an embodied “I,” freed from the “phallogocentric” norms of post-Enlightenment epistemology, in order for her relations with men and society to become more egalitarian. Yet while the psychoanalytic approach has dominated the discussion of eroticism and its relationship to individual and social identity for the last fifty years, Affect Theory, a more recent theoretical “turn” in literary and cultural studies, has also looked at subjectivity in relation to collectivities and multiplicities, closer to the eros-philadelphos relationship I am discussing here. Indeed, considerations of populism and collectivism are a primary focus of Affect Theory, which looks at the movement and interrelationship of bodies and beings, as well as questions of individual and collective emotion. Thus, William Mazzarella distinguishes between two types of collective affects, those of the clan and the mob. The latter is both “effervescent” and “frighteningly unstable and vulnerable to the manipulations of demagogues and advertisers alike,” while in the former, excitation generated through communal dance and ritual “operates as a principle of solidarity and commitment” (296). Similarly, Beasley-Murray examines affect as a grounding of both collective “order” and “insurgency”: “Narrative history,” he argues, “is the by-product of a process that selects, confines and captures an affective flow that is in fact unpredictably mobile and in continuous variation” (131).
Patricia Ticineto Clough, drawing from Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, defines “affect” broadly as “bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body’s capacity to act, to engage, and to connect, such that autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling of being alive—that is aliveness or vitality” (2). At the same time, affect “constitutes a nonlinear complexity out of which the narration of conscious states such as emotion are subtracted” (2). This “non-linear complexity” is the terrain of not only the subject, but also the discourse of Romanticism, an aesthetic founded on pure emotion. Indeed, all of the poets under consideration here borrow and inherit Romantic motifs such as the elevation of nature over culture and the prioritization of what Isaiah Berlin calls the “inner goals” of “authenticity and sincerity” (57). “These goals,” Berlin explains, “represent the self-expression of the artist’s own unique, inner vision to set aside which in response to the demands of some “external” voice—church, state, public opinion, family friends, arbiters of taste—is an act of betrayal of what alone justifies their existence” (57-58). Yet, as Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre note in Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity, Romanticism is riddled with paradoxical and seemingly contradictory elements, “revolutionary and counterrevolutionary, individualistic and communitarian, cosmopolitan and nationalistic” (1). Deleuze and Guattari get around some of these contradictions by theorizing two types of Romanticism. In A Thousand Plateaus, they theorize Romanticism in a manner which not only helps us to clarify the connection between subjectivity and eros, but also

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4 Beasley-Murray defines Spinoza’s concept of affect and explores Deleuze’s contribution to it in more depth. He explains: “Spinoza’s philosophy is centrally concerned with the relationships between bodies, which can be human bodies but also body parts, things and collectivities. [...] [A] body is defined by its potential to affect or to be affected, by its powers of affection; some bodies have much greater powers to affect other bodies, and no two bodies affect others in in precisely the same ways. Moreover, this capacity for affection is in constant flux, depending on a whole history of interactions” (127).
provides the theoretical groundwork for our three main divergences between *eros* and philadelphia: spatiality, subjectivity, and the relationship to modern political discourse.

For Deleuze and Guattari, spatiality or what they call “territorialization” is an intrinsic element of all matter of expression. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they argue that all “territories” emerge as the result of art. Territories are formed by utterances or qualities that have ceased to become “functional” and instead have become “expressive,” acquiring a “temporal constancy and a spatial range” that make them “territorial, or rather territorializing, mark[s]” (315). The “territorializing factor” is found in “the becoming-expressive of rhythm or melody, in other words, in the emergence or proper qualities (color, odor, sound, silhouette...),” an emergence that is essentially “art.” The “artist,” they continue, “is the first person to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark.

Property, collective or individual, is derived from that even when it is in the service of war and oppression. Property is fundamentally artistic because art is fundamentally *poster, placard*” (326). Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion distinguishes two types of territorial construction: “Classical” and “Romantic.” In the former, territorializing art consists of a dyad of voices, instruments or rhythms calling and responding to one another, working to set a boundary of order against chaos:

The classical artist proceeds with a One-Two: the one-two of the differentiation of form divided (man woman, masculine and feminine rhythms, voices, families of instruments, all the binarities of the ars nova); and the one-two of the distinction between parts as they answer each other (the enchanted flute and the magic bell). The little tune, the bird refrain, is the binary unity of creation, the differentiating unity of the pure beginning. (339)

The metaphor of “the enchanted flute and the magic bell” comes from Mozart’s Neoclassical opera *Der Zauberflöte*, a cryptic drama suffused with masonic imagery in which pairs, couples, dualities, and “alignments” of good, evil, order and chaos, are
overarching themes. The couple at the center of the drama, representing order and reason, come together against the chaotic forces of the Queen of the Night—the personification of chaos and superstition—by calling and answering one other with chimes and flute. In Romanticism, the nature of the territory as a dyadic construction changes. The Romantic does not confront chaos with a rhythmic, binary order, but draws close to the Earth or what Deleuze and Guattari define as the focal point where all forces draw together. He no longer calls out to be answered, but sings within himself, the voice of the Earth providing both discord and rhythmic accompaniment:

The little tune, the bird refrain, has changed: it is no longer the beginning of a world but draws a territorial assemblage upon the earth. It is then no longer made of two consonant parts that seek and answer one another; it addresses itself to a deeper singing that founds it, but also strikes against it and sweeps it away, making it ring dissonant. The refrain is indissolubly constituted by the territorial song and the singing of the earth that rises to drown it out. (339)

Romanticism is determined by the all-encompassing voice of the subject, such that the other half of the neoclassical pair, the beloved, is experienced only as lack or as an avatar of the Earth itself. The Romantic voice, at least the one described here, is essentially the same as the Modernist monad in Fredric Jameson’s discussion of postmodernism and the prophetic voice in Enrico Mario Santí’s reading of Neruda: a lyrical subject whose very act of expression closes him off from social interchange, even with the beloved who is in the enclosure with him. The beloved becomes, particularly in the case of Neruda, integrated into the space into which he is locked. Erotic Romanticism is, in Roland Barthes’s terms, a modern discourse of “extreme solitude”: the erotic romantic subject is “exiled from all gregarity” to the “backwater of the unreal” (2).

This “exile” is because Romantic eros, and one could say erotic discourse in general, is a spatialized phenomenon. For Deleuze and Guattari, the expressions of the
lover, or the “lover’s refrain” “[territorialize] the sexuality of the loved one” (327),
circumscribing the beloved’s sexuality into an enclosure or monde à deux in which the
two remain in constant relation to each other.5 Indeed, Medievalist Georges Duby credits
erotic discourse with the genesis of “private space” as well as subjectivity itself. For
Duby, ritualized eros in the form of courtly love—itself a social “channeling” of the
wayward instincts of mercenaries—helped foster the emergence of “private
individuality” by loosening the Medieval taboo against solitude, encouraging courtly
lovers to withdraw from society and to engage in a game of furtive intimacy, enforced
silence, secrets and codes, to hide “behind a veil” (520). Janell Watson, in her
comparison of Deleuze and Guattari to Duby, elaborates: “The rules of courtly love
required that the lovers find solitude within the collective private spaces of the feudal
manor house. Furthermore, a space of intimacy was created through secrecy, elaborated
through a secret language of signs, such as objects or words recognized only by the
lovers” (89). Courtly love created both “interior” and “exterior” space, a discursive
enclosure as much as a physical love-nest. This creation of “erotic space” also fostered
the emergence of the individual as set apart from the gregariousness of the feudal
household in which people lived “crowded together cheek to jowl, living in promiscuity,
sometimes in the midst of a mob” (Duby 511; also see Watson 89).

That “furtive language of signs” isolates the erotic dyad or couple into a private,
intimate form of dialogue, a discursive enclosure. In Romanticism this discursive
enclosure intensifies the subjectivity of the artist within it, such that even the beloved is
merely an absence. “The territory,” explain Deleuze and Guattari, “does not open onto a

5 Watson notes that Deleuze and Guattari perceive in eros two possibilities: erotic discourse such as that of
courtly love can propel the lovers into an enclosed state of “subjectification,” in the service of the sedentary
state; or it can provide a desubjectifying “line of flight” (86). For more on this, see Chapter 3.
people, it half-opens onto the Friend, the Loved One; but the Loved One is already dead, and the Friend uncertain, disturbing. As in the lied, everything in the territory occurs in relation to the One-Alone of the soul” (340). The erotic Romantic subject is a singular voice whose singularity is, paradoxically, a product of the dyadic relationship. The couple-as-two, in Irigaray’s terms, makes the erotic Romantic subject more one, more him- or herself, more alone.

Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of Romanticism, however, distinguishes between two types, and it is this distinction that will launch us into a discussion of \textit{philadelphos}. The former type in which the Romantic subject is enclosed in an absolute solitude is attributed to what they call “German romanticism” (340). The other type, called “Latin Romanticism,” involves the subject not as One All but as the One-Crowd, a voice in concert with the people:

The romantic hero, the voice of the romantic hero, acts as a subject, a subjectified individual with “feelings”; but this subjective vocal element is reflected in an orchestral and instrumental whole that on the contrary mobilizes nonsubjective “affects” [...] the vocal element and the orchestral-instrumental whole are only in an extrinsic relation to one another: the orchestration imposes a given role on the voice, and the voice envelops a given mode of orchestration. (341)

This “Latin Romantic” is a kind of “orchestrator” whose solitude merely acts to focus and concentrate the affects of a multitude. She is not an erotic subject, but a philadelphic one, whose affect flows from an interpersonal, intersubjective exchange between herself and the people. Her “subjective” lyrical voice is determined by the multitude, which “imposes” its given role, while the lyrical voice draws the multitude’s affects together. The Neruda of “Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu” cries to the multitudinuous ghosts inhabiting the ruins: “acudid a mis venas y a mi boca / hablad por mis palabras y mi
sangre.” The “orchestrator” is thus not so much an erotic romantic subject, locked into an enclosure with the beloved, but a philadelphic Romantic subject.

Unlike *eros*, which has the whole classical and western history of poetic discourse behind it, *philadelphia* is a recent discursive phenomenon born out of the late nineteenth-century push against isolationist Romanticism by poets such as Walt Whitman in the USA and José Martí in Latin America.\(^6\) *Philadelphia* is also a nationalist phenomenon, emerging with the development of nations themselves. Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, points to a “deep, horizontal comradeship” at the heart of the conception of nation “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each” (224). He goes on to explain: “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (224). Aristotelian and Christian distinctions of love, such as that undertaken by Lewis, discuss *philia*, or interpersonal friendship, *agape*, or self-sacrificing love, and even patriotic love of one’s homeland, but *philadelphia* melds all three together. *Philadelphia*, that passion for which Neruda’s verse, quoted above, stands as a kind of tautology, is not “like *eros* but with more people.” *Eros* is dyadic. Its fundamental manifestation is an interchange of passion between one and another. The philadelphic subject does not direct her passion *towards* the other; she is *inhabited* by that other. Indeed, philadelphic subjectivity is nearly a paradox. The philadelphic subject is not really a subject at all, but a sounding place for the multitude. Any conceptual gap between self and other, implicit in the very concept of subjectivity, is

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\(^6\) In Christian discourse there is a related concept of *adelphoi en christo* or the “brother/sisterhood” of believers who are bound together by both their love of Christ and of each other (Colossians 1:2). See Chapter 2.
permeable. The “we” haunts the borders of the “I,” constricting it and opening it, charging it and deterritorializing it.

The choice of gendered pronouns here is intended to draw attention to the distinctly feminine quality of philadelphos, belied by the masculine term I have used—perhaps philadelphiai would be more precise. Feminine subjectivity as described by Hélène Cixous in “Sorties” from The Newly Born Woman contains the double characteristic of being both embodied and peopleable, a condition that Cixous refers to as “bisexuality.” She explains:

Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me—the other that I am and am not, that I don’t know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live—that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who?—a feminine one, a masculine one, some?—several, some unknown, which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars. This peopling gives neither rest nor security, always disturbs the relationship to “reality.” (42)

For Cixous, woman is naturally a “peopleable being,” capable of being inhabited by a multitude of voices without drawing them into any type of “I/Thou” binary. Maternity and eros are two ways, distinct but interconnected, in which woman experiences being peopled through the body. By “writing the body,” woman is able to create a peopleable discourse, a new type of language in which the body’s members, and multiple presences within the self, are given leave to speak without submitting to any rational hierarchy. This explains why in the poetry of not only Neruda, but also Cardenal and Zurita, philadelphos has a “softening effect” on eroticism, modulating the domineering passions of the lyrical subject. The male authorial voice becomes feminized and permeable, open to “possession” by the voice of the other, the people or the beloved.
Deleuze and Guattari’s subdivision of Romanticism into “German” and “Latin” types corresponds to the distinction between *eros* and *philadelphos*. The German Romantic is the erotic Romantic, the singular voice drawing its territorial assemblage to the silent Other subsumed into the Earth. It is the Neruda of *Residencia en la tierra*, who expresses his longing for woman as a longing to be drawn into the Earth itself, or the lyrical “I” of Cardenal’s *Epigramas* addressing Claudia as the woman he literally “calls into being” through poetry. The “Latin” Romantic, by contrast, is the philadelphic subject, drawing up from the Earth and being possessed by the multiple voices of the people. One could say that the assemblage drawn by the erotic romantic is a masculine two step—tú y yo—while the philadelphic Romantic’s assemblage is a peopled space, no longer a *space* in the sense of enclosure, than the philadelphic subject is really a subject, but more a *cosmos* or nation, inhabited by the people whose voices it orchestrates. Similarly, in Cixousian terms, the erotic romantic is a monosexual, phallogocentric lyrical speaker who imposes on the Other the condition of “absence/passivity.” The philadelphic romantic is the bisexual voice that includes the affirmation and non-exclusion of difference, of the voice of the Other. The masculine erotic romantic subject draws a territorial assemblage through his passionate utterances. The feminine philadelphic romantic subject both becomes a territory and de-territorializes, breaking down cultural isolations between subjects and proposing an alternative intersubjectivity and collectivity.

Having established two of the fundamental points of divergence between *eros* and *philadelphos* as questions of subjectivity, territory and even gender, I turn to the third difference that necessitates a section of its own as it touches on the tension between
subjectivity and collectivism in Latin American revolutionary discourse. The divergence in the way in which the respective discourses of *eros* and *philadelphos* interact with politics is due to the circumstances of their emergence. The late nineteenth century saw fundamental changes in the discourse around love and the role of literature in Latin America. On the one hand, with the advent of modernity, literature became disengaged from the heart of the nationalist/rationalization project; and on the other there was José Martí’s encounter with the philadelphic poetry of Walt Whitman. Doris Sommer notes that in the Early National Period, the mid nineteenth century, “romance”—novels dealing with love relationships and marriages—was tightly linked to “republic,” as writers of the former were frequently also statesmen of the latter (*Foundational Fictions* 7). The erotic romances that emerged during this period were idealized articulations of the nationalist projects that these same members of the intelligentsia were trying to implement on the political level. In Sommer’s words, “The books fuelled a desire for domestic happiness that runs over into dreams of national prosperity; and nation-building projects invested private passions with public purpose” (6). Sommer notes that erotic passion, rather than being a socially corrosive force to be disciplined as in Europe, in America meant the possibility of consolidating and unifying the fractured constituencies of Latin American nations through bonds of mutual interest and social and sexual productivity. It also was seen by the bourgeoisie as a way to achieve an ideal society in which productivity, passion, and sensibility would be linked in harmonious union (14). The economic prosperity of the end of the nineteenth century brought with it changes in the level of writers’ social engagement. Sommer notes that the literary elite, relieved of the burden of state affairs, were freed up to develop their aesthetics.
Similarly, Julio Ramos notes that the advent of modernity brought with it a change in the earlier conception of the writer as engaged in the project of bringing the “barbarian” subaltern into the rational order. Modernity would attempt to institutionalize diverse fields of knowledge and to professionalize teachers by creating a discursive pedagogical field under a positivist ideology that would reject literature as antiquated or too indebted to irrational faculties such as the imagination:

This pedagogical discourse, dominated by a positivist ideology [...] would deny the emergent literary subject any entrance into position into the scholarly apparatus, eclipsing the development of literature as an academic discipline until the first decade of the twentieth century. Doubtless this was due to the still-pervasive identification of literature (outside the literary field) with the traditional system of belles lettres and rhetoric, both of which had become radically discredited for their questionable authority and imprecise applicability. (49)

Ramos suggests that this led to the disengagement of literature from its privileged position at the heart of the rationalizing project, and the subsequent construction of an alternative field from which literature, beginning with Martí, would critique the very project of which it had once been a part. From this alternative space, literature would begin to embrace those faculties rejected by the rationalizing project. In terms of Martí’s work, Ramos describes his book Ismaelillo as the prototype for this condition, a book that presupposes an alternative knowledge: in Ramos’s words, “that of the child, that of the oneiric vision—as the locus of a specifically imaginary, tied to leisure which in this instance serves as a refuge from a ‘punishing’ rationalization. From this place, at once created and excluded by rationalization the new literary subject speaks” (45).

This shift in literature also affected the discourse of love which, after Martí, became less grounded in issues of productivity, i.e. marriage and family, and came to encompass the dialectical vision of a spiritual and emotional purity threatened by the
encroachment of rationalization and the interest-based market economy. Eros would come to be associated with the pure motivation of the romantic poet, who seeks the beloved out of passion and inspiration rather than economic or social interest. Poetic creation and love became inseparably linked in this purified ideal realm—“La poesía eres tú”—severing the latter from its relationship to society, and transforming it into a purely subjective and artistic experience. Poetic love would come to offer a platform of spiritual purity in opposition to a society of interests.

*Philadelphos*, meanwhile, came into Hispanic poetic discourse through the influence of Walt Whitman on the populist rhetorical tradition in Latin America. Whitman’s influence on Latin American poetry is longstanding, beginning with his contemporary José Martí who attended a reading of Whitman’s poetry while living in New York in 1887. Martí would go on to compose an effusive essay in tribute, “El Poeta Walt Whitman,” praising the North American Bard as “naked, virginal, loving, sincere and powerful,” a poet of authenticity rather than artifice, who was common rather than rarefied (Martí 183). According to Josef Raab, what impressed Martí was not only Whitman’s identification with common humanity, but also his “anti-Romanticism,” his rejection of an isolated Romantic subjectivity for a polysubjective, philadelphic lyric “I”:

> That Whitman grounded his verse in his American surroundings and that he presents the lyrical “I” as symbiotically connected to the people, landscapes, scenes, or history out of which it emerges greatly appealed to Martí. While for

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7 Whitman’s influence on Latin American poetry is a matter for much more nuanced discussion than I can give here. Sommer, for example, talks of “different and competing Whitmans” teased out from the “amorous tangle declared in the opening lines of “Song of Myself” by poets and essayists of all ideological bents (*Proceed with Caution* 28). Similarly, Enrico Mario Santí discusses the effects of translation and colonialism on Latin American writers’ “misreadings” and “imaginings” of Whitman: “the production of a Whitman question in Latin America constitutes a revealing instance of an alienated colonial discourse, in the sense of a body of information filtered through the language of an Other— in this case, idealized (and foreign) biographies as well as translations twice-removed from the original” (“Accidental Tourist” 162). I draw primarily on Fernando Alegría’s argument for Whitman’s provision of a rhetorical “base” for populist poetry, as well as Whitman’s use of philadelphic or multiplicitous subjectivity.
both poets the “I” is central, both try to prevent the Self from overpowering the Other. The Self and the Other, by contrast, form part of the same entity. (4)

The Whitmanian “I,” of which “Song of Myself” is the emblem, occupies two planes of existence at once. The poet both relishes his embodied subjective individuality and at the same time is “not contain’d between my hat and boots […] the mate and companion of all people” (9). Whitman’s “Self” is thus collective as well as a singular. His longings are de-centered or ex-centric, rather than focused on one beloved as the only other “person” in his universe. Whitmanian philadelphia radically alters the territory of eros. There is no possession or competition in philadelphic love, nor does philadelphia isolate lover and beloved into an enclosure. Philadelphia radiates outward, gathering beings in a wide net. The presence of others is not threatening but rather strengthens and expands it further: the more people involved in the struggle, the stronger philadelphia becomes. The Whitmanian subject allows himself to be “possessed” by multiple voices. He takes on the “loving eye” of God and observes their lives, acknowledging the temporal injustice and suffering under which they exist.

Eros and philadelphia relate quite differently to political engagement. While it would be an error to describe eros as completely apolitical, in modern Latin American poetry, due to its association with belles lettres and Ramos’s “alternative spaces of critique,” its relation to society manifests more through what Walter Benjamin calls a “refraction” or “discontinuity,” and what Theodor Adorno describes as a “form of reaction to the reification of the world” (40). Philadelphia, on the other hand, thanks at least partly to the influence of Whitman, is the affective grounding of social commitment,

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8 All Whitman passages are quoted from Walt Whitman: Representative Selection.
the right-brain half of socialism. Whitman’s association with socialism is made explicitly by Fernando Alegría:

A mi juicio Whitman une a las nuevas generaciones de poetas americanos sobre la base de un programa que, en síntesis, recomienda las virtudes de un estilo realista y popular, la exaltación del tema americano con proyecciones universales, la defensa de los trabajadores en las luchas revolucionarias y la misión social y política del poeta. Whitman, el místico, el lírico cantor de refinados sentimentalismos y de complejas sutilezas metafísicas, no encuentra discípulos en español sino por excepción. (Whitman en Hispanoamérica 250)

Latin American poets of these “new generations”—Alegría wrote this in 1954—appropriate Whitman’s philadelphic subjectivity into a “base” whose principal elements are those of leftist social commitment as mediated through the artist’s vocation, “the exaltation of America as a theme,” the “defense of the workers and revolutionary struggles,” and the “social and political mission of the poet.” The refractory nature of the relationship between eros and social milieu makes its integration into a revolutionary cause problematic. Indeed, this is the basis of Ileana Rodríguez’s work in Women, Guerrillas and Love. The male revolutionary subject finds himself struggling not only with the paradox created by woman’s sexual difference, but with the gendering of his relationship to the people.

María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo—who has studied the construction of revolutionary subjectivity in Latin America in texts such as those written by Che Guevara, Mario Peyeras and Rigoberta Menchú—recognizes the inherent isolation of the revolutionary “I.” Saldaña-Portillo goes so far to suggest that revolutionary narratives have much in common with the very narratives they oppose, the first-world discourses of development, in that both are “animated by a particular theory of subjectivity,” the notion that “the movement of societies is contingent on the development of the members of
these societies into free, mature, fully conscious and self-determining individual subjects” (6). Revolutionary discourse and its developmentalist rival both reiterate the race and gender binaries of their Enlightenment colonial legacy, a meliorist model of subjectivity that “worlds the world” into an actualized self and a raced and gendered other. Guerrilla narratives reiterate these development and Enlightenment themes by “repeatedly [figuring] the moment of achieving revolutionary consciousness as a transcendental moment of choice with its attendant discursive binary modes of being” (66). This transcendent choice appears in several of these poets as a quasi-spiritual awakening or conversion, frequently conflating religious and political language. While on the one hand, that conversion allows them to be freed from painful histories of complicity with both the bourgeoisie and also a compromised third-world masculinity, on the other, framing revolutionary critical consciousness as a “transcendent mode of choice” reinforces the same oppressive divisions that lead to this “shameful” position. The Revolutionary subject becomes, in Saldaña-Portillo’s words, the “risk-taking, resolute, frugal, non-ornamental, productive, fully masculine fellow,” while the people become “unruly, feminized, not quite human, not quite non-human, objects of perpetual instruction” (65).

Ileana Rodríguez, upon whose work Saldaña-Portillo bases her analysis of Guevara and Peyeras’s writings, explains the narrative of revolution as “the narrative of the construction of the self, first as guerrillero, then as vanguard, leader, party and government” (xvi). Rodríguez problematizes this subject-construction as creating a breach between the guerrilla—the “New man”—and the people in whose name he attempts to speak:

The first proposition of this New subject is that of constituting a revolutionary masculine alterity, debunking “bourgeois” masculinity. Yet at this very moment a
lacuna between the “warrior/guerrilla” and the masses-peoples-troops-base is revealed. In Che’s text, for example, he writes the warrior-guerrilla as “one who shares the longing of the people for liberation.”

[...]

In this sharing the warrior/guerrilla denotes a moving toward, a positioning, but also marks a difference between himself and the people. For Che the warrior/guerrilla is a “guiding angel, who has fallen into the zone, helping the poor”; he is a standard-bearer in the cause of the people” In “fallen” and in “the cause of the people” whose standard the warrior-guerrilla bears there is a differentiated, distinct and separate subjectivity. In the process of trying to define the warrior/guerrilla as “the people” the warrior/guerrilla paradoxically becomes “the other.” (32, 42)

Rodríguez does, however, note optimistically the potential parity between revolutionary subject and masses-bases-people when insurgency arises. The ideal of the New Man represented by Che Guevara himself has both “masculine” and “feminine” qualities, discipline and tendresse. As I have suggested, Che’s love is not eros, whose particularity the guerrilla rejects, but philadelphos: a love that is collective in scope. Philadelphos also “feminizes” Che, whom Rodríguez casts in the role of Kristeva’s “virginal maternal” “mother as idealization of relations, as paradigm of the complex relation between the masculine (Christ/troops) and the feminine (tendresse) as a point of convergence of humanization” (61). Philadelphos potentially redresses the erotic romantic/revolutionary subject’s excessive “I” and his silencing of the other, by reinforcing instead the multiplying interpersonal interlocutors that diminish the subject and blur the gendered binaries of active vs. passive, speaker vs. listener, male authorized subject vs. female object. Turning Che’s multifacetedness into a paradigm, revolutionary narratives unconsciously promote androgy as an integral element of any future social order. Che’s “revolutionary androgy,” in Saldaña-Portillo’s words, “supersedes the binary opposition put in play by development’s discursive regime of subjection” resulting in the
dialectical synthesis of the masculine revolutionary subject and the feminized
“underdeveloped” subject (78). Feminine (or feminizing) philadelphos offers the
potential for the revolutionary subject to cross what Rodríguez calls the lacuna or caesura
between his “differentiated, distinctive, subjectivity” and that of the “people” whom his
discourse condemns to alterity and to whom he is equally an Other (41).

Socially Committed Poetry: A Pragmatic Definition.

This dissertation is interested in that poetry which sought to apply art externally towards
social causes, one of the two basic trends that Hugo Achúgar argues characterized Latin
American literary production after the 1950s. Achúgar identifies these two trends as, first,
“the universalist claims of the avant-garde, which minimize the natural and the regional”
and, second, “a poetic system that centers its discourse in a local reality underwritten by
history, whether national, continental or racial” (655). For Achúgar, socially-committed
poetry comprises a novelization of lyric discourse, a socialization of experiences that
produce solidarity with global revolutionary movements and a tendency toward
colloquial language and immanent themes. In Poets of Latin America, History and the
Inner Life. William Rowe notes that the concept of socially-committed art that arose in
Latin America during the 1930s tended to prioritize realism and epic forms above all.
This tendency to equate “commitment” with “realism” is also echoed in the selection of
poems in anthologies of “political” or “revolutionary” verse such as Roberto Márquez’s
1974 collection Latin American Revolutionary Poetry, or Warwick Fry and Jeff Cassel’s
Poems of the Nicaraguan Revolution. In similar manner, Frederic Murray’s study of the
aesthetics of what he terms “social protest poetry” explains that poets in a time of
historical crisis are forced to come up with a counter- or anti-aesthetic: “The contemporary social protest poets who take up the challenge to use poetic devices as a rhetorical weapon of denunciation often find that traditional poetic techniques are inadequate to the task” (47). Murray draws on the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz’s notion of a poetry of survival, which in crisis becomes de-romanticized and radically simplified.

Achúgar and Murray’s definitions, while useful, are problematic: they ignore the “political side” of avant-garde poets and leave little room for a subjective dimension in socially-committed poems outside of philadelphic mass emotion. For César Vallejo, by contrast, “socialist” poetry contains both interior and exterior dimensions, an expression of internal states and a response to the crises of history: “En el poeta socialista, el poema no es, pues, un trance espectacular provocado a voluntad y al servicio preconcebido de un credo o propaganda política, sino que es una función natural y simplemente humana de la sensibilidad” (34). Vallejo later explains that the true mettle of a poet rests on his ability to develop an interior life, one based in “la sinceridad personal y afectiva,” rather than adherence to artistic and political models (29; see also Rowe 4). Enrique Foffani, in his reading of Vallejo and drawing on Theodor Adorno’s “On Poetry and Society,” argues that in poetry, even that in which social themes dominate both form and content, the subjective, personal element is lo in-eliminable: “es decir, una instancia que se resiste a su pulverización definitiva pese a tantas declaraciones de su muerte” (13). The subjective element complicates a genre that has often been accused of reducing the poetic form to propaganda and pamphleteering. Mike Gonzalez and David Treece, commenting on the political use of poetry in the 1960s and 1970s, explain that what distinguishes political writing from “mere rattle” is the “quality of lived experience.” Poetry thus provides a
space where the individual and the social can encounter one another, an encounter which in their words could “enact an alternative public language [and] overcome the separation of public and private, creative and determined in a reappropriation of the terrain of collective communication” (343).

Rowe notes that the problem of definition lies in the conflation of three conditions that determine whether, beyond expressing the writers’ stirrings of emotion, a poem had a social function: “the narrative of revolutionary struggle,” “the need to respond to injustice,” and “the capability of poetry as art” were conflated into the first (5). Historical realism, Achúgar’s “novelization of the lyric,” and the “use of plain language” were imperative, and all other criteria were met simply by writing about revolutionary struggle and injustices. Rowe gives as an example the difference between the poems of Ernesto Cardenal, which besides being poems of revolutionary struggle also utilize a combination of “popular and erudite poetic traditions extending back to the sixteenth century,” and the poems included in Márquez’s collection, which he describes as “one-dimensional” (4). While the Márquez anthology includes a mixture of anonymous protest poems, prison poems, guerrilla poems by lesser known authors as well as poems by established literary figures such as Cardenal, Castillo, Dalton, Pedro Shimose, Nicolás Guillén, and Enrique Liñn, its introduction expressly negates literary influences and conflates all poets according to discursive function:

Literary influences and antecedents notwithstanding, these poems are equally a response to the nature of specific conditions; written against the background of contemporary Latin American history and the global movement for change. They reflect the impact of events. Their context is imperialism—concrete and intolerably continuing. (28)
Márquez defines socially-committed poetry as a negation of both the literary and the subjective. At the same time he calls it a conscious *reaction* on the part of the poets themselves. Political poetry is therefore defined as such by not only its aesthetic, but also its function and intention.

Márquez’s secondary definition of poetry-as-reaction can be used to create a less restrictive definition, one which would look to the function of the poems as the locus for social commitment. Such a definition would more closely resemble Terry Eagleton’s “functional Marxist” approach. In “Two Approaches on the Sociology of Literature,” Eagleton argues that the realist view alone, or the degree to which a text or cultural product reflects actual conditions, is not sufficient to determine whether a work is politically motivated. He argues that this dependence on realism implies that the superstructure, or the field of contending political forces, is something fixed rather than variable. Eagleton makes the point that certain activities (art, education, mobilizing the army) can be superstructural in some instances (breaking a strike, teaching children to salute the flag) and not in others (rescuing flood victims, teaching children to tie their shoes). In this sense, a social phenomenon such as literature is not inherently superstructural, but rather is so only when it “plays some active, reasonably direct role in the power struggles of class society” (474). Pragmatism, or political agency, is also necessary. He explains: “Insofar as ‘superstructural’ is a functional term, we cannot simply read off, in the manner of a strong epistemological realism, what is superstructural and what is not. Something can be made superstructural, focused and defined as such by the contention of political forces” (475). Poets such as Zurita and Cardenal, whose poetry criticizes the construction of symbols at the discursive level, are as “committed” as poets
such as Neruda and Gioconda Belli, who employ epic and lyric styles to praise revolution and denounce abuses. Under this rubric, socially committed poetry extends beyond the (anti-)aesthetic of radical simplicity or realism to inhabit a much wider rhetorical field, one which more realistically defines the literary practices of Latin America’s mid-century poets and writers who, according to Alegría, viewed, “revolution” as a simultaneously aesthetic and political endeavour.9 This definition not only accords with the general direction of recent criticism but also allows more room for those poets (i.e. Zurita) whose work involves both social criticism and avant-garde techniques.

Methodology and Plan of the Thesis

The dynamic between social and personal, literary and historical in this particular type of poetry requires a literary analysis that excludes neither aesthetic techniques nor what Achúgar terms the “enunciating situation” of the work. Achúgar’s theory of the book of poems as a “social act” provides a theoretical basis for the analysis undertaken here. The texts that this dissertation analyzes all fit Achúgar’s definition of a “consciously articulated book of poems”: Neruda’s Tercera Residencia (1945) and Los versos del capitán (1950); Cardenal’s Epigramas (1957) and Gethsemani KY (1960); Belli’s Sobre la grama (1974) and Línea de fuego (1976); and Zurita’s Canto a su amor desaparecido (1985) and Amor de Chile (1987). The Uruguayan critic describes a “poemario” as a textual totality containing both literary elements—the poems themselves—and other

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9 In Literatura y revolución, Alegría explains: “todos [los escritores revolucionarios] han dado en su obra una imagen o una visión trascendente de la realidad que conocieron y que los marcó, no solo un fragmento de ella; y en esa imagen o en esa visión queda su concepción del mundo, tanto como el testimonio de su intento de marcar, a su vez, esta realidad. Esta condición [...] nos guía, en fin, hacia un arte donde se armonizan activamente el uso de la técnica necesaria, encarnado en la acción, y la actitud de quien crea comprometiéndose en lo que, para él, debe ser el supremo uso de la palabra” (29-30).
elements normally excluded from hermeneutics such as “epigraph, date and place of publication, visual design, typography, illustrations and printers mark,” all of which contribute not only to the signifying unity of the work but also to the text’s ideological enunciation. Achúgar draws from the example of Vallejo’s España, aparta de mi este cáliz, whose entire publication, from the Picasso-designed cover to the paper made from scraps contributed by Republican soldiers, contributes to the reading of the book. For Achúgar “reading the book independently of its editorial presentation implies silencing the aesthetic and ideological project that it performs. As we accumulate a whole critical tradition of such silences, we end by silencing the entire history of efforts to shape the impact of books and the corollary effort to influence future projects” (654).

The construction of the texts themselves is therefore a significant element of the reading in this dissertation. One cannot read the “patchwork” of Neruda’s Tercera Residencia without taking into account the poet’s engagement in the Spanish Civil War, its effects on the poet and the subsequent “conversion narrative” arrangement of the poems that is also mirrored in the structure of Los versos del capitán. Cardenal’s two works are likewise loosely structured, and were written under circumstances that affect their readings: the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza García in Epigramas, and the two years spent in the Trappist monastery at Gethsemani, Kentucky, for which the second book is named. Belli’s Sobre la grama contains many of those non-textual elements that Achúgar describes. The text was a collective undertaking with several of the author’s Sandinista artist friends creating the drawings, designing, binding and distributing the text. Similarly, Línea de fuego was created in a frenzy of writing during Belli’s exile in Mexico. Zurita’s texts were produced in Chile during the Pinochet years, inspired by the
poet’s own experiences at the hands of the military and also by the context of newly-discovered human rights abuses that the regime had committed.

Achúgar notes that a book of poems is meant to be read as a unity “whose motive is indivisibly articulated with social processes.” He continues: “It has a syntax that draws together poems, epigraphs, dedications and so on, overdetermining and sometimes resemanticizing them. Thus it proposes a particular reading of the whole, and the isolated poem should be read in such a way that its integration of the whole of the book changes its meaning” (653). Hence in the following chapters I attempt to preserve the “basic speaker’s voice shaped for the syntax” by undertaking a close reading of the poems “from left to right,” commenting on the structural elements of the text as a whole and, at the same time, examining the syntactic relationships between individual texts. For this reason I have chosen texts written, with the exception of Neruda’s, one after the other in the poets’ oeuvres, examining syntactic binding not merely within the texts themselves, but between books written during the same time period. In Neruda’s case, I have foregone the above approach only because the relationship between the structure of Tercera Residencia and that of Los versos del capitán is far more compelling than that between Canto General and the latter text. For the most part, I have chosen texts that discuss eros within the context of social commitment, but some of these texts deal with politics in a more lateral fashion than others. Cardenal’s Gethsemani KY, Belli’s Sobre la grama, and Zurita’s El amor de Chile leave much of their social content implied rather than explicitly discussed, yet a reading of these texts without reference to their social background would be an impoverishment. By utilizing a syntactic approach combined with Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas I examine precisely how the lyrical “I” constructs his own affective
subjectivity through poetic devices, and how this subjectivity changes in the light of the demands of social engagement.

Each of the four chapters that follow is an exploration of a negotiation, of an attempt to find a via media between the competing passions of erotic love and social commitment, to exploit their commonness and their differences and ultimately, in Rowe’s words, to “assert an alternative politics” (192).

In Chapter 1, “Pablo Neruda and the Conversion of Love,” Neruda’s war-time conversion from an erotic “poet of love” to philadelphic “poet of the people” becomes the model for his burgeoning relationship to Matilde Urrutia in Los versos del capitán. I argue that the poet structures Los versos after his 1945 “conversion text,” Tercera Residencia, in order to propose the philadelphic conversion of Matilde/Rosario as a resolution to the conflict created in his public role by the anti-gregarious nature of their relationship. The conversion ultimately fails, as genuine internal transformation cannot be “passed on” or forced on another individual. However, the failure of Neruda’s conversion experiment creates an opening for alternative forms of collectivism founded on the egalitarian union of irreducible subjectivities.

In Chapter 2, “Ernesto Cardenal and the Tao of Love,” I examine how Cardenal’s early text Epigramas both recognizes and critically employs eros’s anti-gregariousness and spatiality. In Epigramas, Cardenal turns erotic space into a platform for social critique by drawing on the modernist concept of the purity of the artist, and also by recognizing the universal nature of erotic love, which allows the poems to his beloved to act as metonymies of the state of couples in Nicaragua under the regime of Anastasio
Somoza García. This combination of spatialized contrast and erotic universalism is brought into the monastic poems of *Gethsemani KY*, where *eros* is integrated into the religious praxis of the mystic. God’s *eros* becomes revealed as the prime motor of all existence, the *Tao*, which moves all beings in accordance with itself while binding them in philadelphic union with one another. Cardenal comes to conceive of the *Tao* as a potential standard for social relations, but his monastic works are troubled by the difference imposed by the monastic enclosure that prevents the “pure” love of the monastery from acting in the world. Invariably, the only way for that perfect love to escape the enclosure is for it to be communicated via poetry and reconstructed in larger scale through the creation of an open commune (Solentiname) and for it to become engaged in the revolution.

The third chapter, “Gioconda Belli and the Liberation of Love,” stays with Nicaragua and explores critically the “solution” Cardenal proposes: demonstrating the effects of revolutionary engagement on erotic love. Belli’s two works of poetry are founded on three types of rebellion: against the spatializing tendencies of modernist *eros*; against the sedentary state of bourgeois womanhood; and against the phallocentrism of revolutionary discourse. Indeed, implicit in Belli’s critique of modernism in *Sobre la gramá* is the notion that for women, erotic spatiality leads straight to enclosure in the bourgeois home. By contrast, she sees woman’s natural “place” as a philadepheric, “peopled” state that *eros* generates through its universal quality, the *philadelphos-in-eros*. That state, however, is also problematized by revolutionary engagement itself, which spatializes the affects of the loving subject into those of a war-context, precluding the expansiveness of her philadelphic/erotic impulses. This is the problem that her second
work, *Línea de fuego*, attempts to resolve by reconfiguring *eros* and revolutionary engagement as potential “lines of flight,” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, an escape from the enclosure by means of becoming or “desubjectification.” Belli’s texts, particularly the latter, anticipate and try to prevent what will invariably be the failure of the revolutionary metanarrative as the result of the postmodern disintegration of collectivism.

With this failure in mind, I return to Chile in Chapter 4, “Raúl Zurita and the Apocalypse of Love.” Here I look at *eros*’s role as the one remaining source for collective discourse in the postmodern (and post-apocalyptic) vacuum created by Chile’s amputated revolutionary experiment. The fracturing of public discourse created by the 1973 coup and the repressive and privatizing activities of the Pinochet regime rendered all appeals to philadephic sentiment ineffective. *Eros* was one of the few sentiments that could still generate a collective discourse, something which Zurita’s *Canto a su desaparecido* and *Amor de Chile* pick up on. Like Cardenal before him, Zurita exploits *eros*’s intrinsic paradox: the antigregariousness of erotic space as well as *philadelphos-in-eros*. For Zurita, particularly in *Canto a su amor desaparecido*, the articulation of *eros* is inescapable from an act of mourning that becomes political through public, artistic expression. Erotic space becomes a tomb, and the lovers’ tomb is the tomb of all lovers, the mass, secret tombs created by the regime’s secret assassinations. In *Amor de Chile*, the universality and permanence of *eros* is applied as a remedy to the transitory and random irruptions of totalitarian violence. The erotic *Tao* is shown to transcend and absorb the violent interventions of the regime, promising the nation’s renewal.

Overall, I hope to show that *eros* and *philadelphos* coexist in these works not as a continuum, but as two forces that balance each other, or persist in a (sometimes tense)
coexistence, allowing space for what Rowe calls “history” and the “inner life.” The continuous modulation between one type of subjectivity and another ultimately undermines the *logos* of totalitarianism that seeks either to isolate poetry as a pure subjectivity, or to appropriate its collective registers. The poetry of these writers is collective when the regimes in question would like it to focus on “poppies and metaphysics,” and it is erotic and embodied where these regimes would use philadelphic language to construct a patriotic discourse of its own.
In these private poems, the tropes of “Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu” recur in a new context, and once again they reiterate the narrative of a sterile existence that is redeemed not by community but by his love affair. [...] Doesn’t “everything belonged to others and to no-one” betray a certain lack that the party had not filled? Why does “love” in these poems have the same redemptive function as the “party” in Canto General? (Franco, The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City 79)

Jean Franco poses critical questions regarding Pablo Neruda’s 1950s turn to poems of erotic sensuality. With Los versos del capitán in 1951-2 the Chilean poet returned to writing personalized love poetry, which he had abandoned since his personal and political conversion during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. Although Neruda’s return to eroticism was motivated by a biographical factor—his relationship with Matilde Urrutia, with whom he carried on a secret love affair during his European exile in the late 1940s and 50s—Franco’s questions highlight more widespread ambiguities in the relationship between Latin American leftist artists and international Communism. Communism provided, in Franco’s terms, “a secular narrative that gave meaning and purpose to individual lives” (60); its adoption by leftist artists and intellectuals was often founded more in their visceral opposition to US imperialist practices than in any deep commitment to Marxist materialism. Many were members of the same bourgeoisie they contended against, and their writings reiterated the same subjectivist preoccupations while attempting to graft critical consciousness on to them.

This ambiguity between subjective preoccupations and collectivist philosophy explains why, for many critics on the left, rather than the militant Stalinist Neruda of Canto General, it is the Neruda of the 1950s, writing sensual poems about fruit, vegetables, Matilde’s hair, and “the people,” who became the archetype of the committed poet. The poet’s admirers have often taken the romantic and domestic preoccupations of
Neruda’s post-1950s poetry and applied them to the whole man and his voluminous body of work. Manuel Durán and Margery Safir, for example, suggest that “it would be a mistake to think of Neruda’s epic poetry as a departure from his early erotic poetry. Neruda never stops associating the Earth and Woman” (20). Eliana Rivero, similarly, sees love as the common thread throughout the poet’s literary transitions. The main themes of Neruda’s oeuvre—including eroticism, defense of the oppressed, chilenidad, the telluric nature of poetry, and the attraction for material things—are manifestations of the poet’s “amorous humanism,” “un adorar la vida” expressed not only in his “poesía pasional” but also his “quiet odes to daily pleasures” and in his “sonorous verses in praise of revolution” (16). Forget that in Neruda’s early poetry sexual desire is not always associated with humanism or even “love”—there is little “love” towards the woman in “Las furias y las penas,” for example—Neruda is the omnivorous lover, the “heterosexual Whitman” whose collectivist passions are on a continuum with his embodied eroticism. Rivero’s reduction of all of Neruda’s poetic inspiration to “love” intuits the poet’s political engagement as oriented on a type of affect, but overlooks the tensions inherent in the conjunction of dyadic eros and revolutionary philadelphos, which do not coexist harmoniously in Neruda’s middle-period poetry, particularly Los versos del capitán on which this chapter focuses.

If social engagement provides a “secular narrative that gives meaning and purpose” to writers’ lives and work, it is a contradictory narrative that demands the sacrifice of subjective self-expression, including personalized love. This problematic is at the heart of Los versos’ poetic arrangement. On the one hand, eros creates a monde à deux, drawing the lyrical subject into a deeply subjective discursive enclosure shared
with one other person. In *Los versos*, the dyadic union between El Capitán and his beloved Rosario occupies the whole of time and space, language and meaning, sense and perception. Revolutionary commitment, on the other hand, which binds El Capitán such that his name is replaced by the demarcation of a public role (“captain”), demands the sacrifice of partiality in the name of a collectively oriented affect, a “*philadelphos*.”

Bruce Dean Willis describes *philadelphos* as a kind of “widening” of love, undertaken by Mario, the protagonist of *Il postino* who “begins his apprenticeship with the bard for the basic purpose of impressing Beatriz with dazzling metaphors.” Mario’s “connection to Neruda’s ideas about love widens from *eros* to *philadelphos*, and he sacrifices himself for the cause” (88). Willis originally employs the term *philadelphos* as a rhetorical throwaway, providing a counterpoint to *eros* without entering into any discussion of what collective love involves, or how it diverges from or problematizes *eros*. Willis, like William Rowe and Eliana Rivero, takes the “continuum” or “*eros* with more people” interpretation of collective love, which as mentioned in the introduction, is problematic. *Philadelphos* and *eros* are predicated on distinct subjectivities, and interact with political discourse in different ways. But though Willis’s use of the term “*philadelphos*” fails to recognize the divergences between collective love and *eros*, his statement regarding the “widening of love” tells us something of the poet’s strategy for harmonizing the seemingly irreconcilable difference between erotic and collective love. Neruda proposes an expansion of love’s spatiality predicated on the conversion of the lyrical subject.

Enrico Mario Santí identifies “conversion” as the overarching theme of Neruda’s middle period poetry—between the Spanish Civil War and the Twentieth Congress of the
Soviet Communist Party of 1956. According to Santí’s study of Neruda’s “poetics of prophecy,” the conversion narrative provides a potential resolution to the inner conflict created by the “subject/object dichotomy” of the poet’s “visionary role,” the poet who both exists in time and yet abstracts and alienates himself from it through poetic creation (Pablo Neruda 26). Santí’s examination of the visionary poetics of the “Residencia” cycle, in particular the conversion structure of Tercera Residencia, will provide the framework for my discussion of Los versos del capitán. Indeed, Los versos bears remarkable structural similarities to Tercera Residencia, in that both texts involve conscientious syntactic arrangements of the poems to create a conversion narrative, the former describing the poet’s own conversion, the latter prescribing a conversion of the beloved and of the affective terrain which binds the couple. Both texts also use the conversion structure to reintegrate the alienated lyrical subject into history and collective reality from the abstracted “otherness” created by his poetic vocation in the former, and from eros’s spatializing constrictions in the latter.

10 Guillermo Araya situates Los versos del capitán in the fourth of what he calls Neruda’s four “etapas”: “iniciación (1920-26),” “plenitud lírica (1925-1935),” “plenitud épica (1936-1948),” and “poeta profesional (1950-1973).” As Antonio González Montes notes, Los versos “no deja de tener antecedentes y contactos profundos con etapas anteriores de la vida y de la poesía de [Neruda]” (22). The similarity between Los versos and Tercera Residencia, as well as the impact of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, Nikita Khrushchev gave a “secret speech” officially denouncing the cult of Stalin, as well as the human rights abuses of the Stalinist regime. These revelations had a tremendous impact on the poet’s Communist views, causing him to seek less-violent examples of socialism, in the form of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and later Salvador Allende’s campaign for the Chilean presidency in 1970. There is also a corresponding shift in his later poetry away from the militancy of Canto General and Los versos, the exception being Incitación al nixonicidio y alabanza a la revolución chilena, written in 1972 as a response to the United States’ intervention in Chile during Allende’s presidency.
Conversion is primarily psychological, but it has its literary component. Conversions are intense affective disruptions that provoke a narrative that might bring some kind of rational order to the experience. Neruda’s experiences in the Spanish Civil War and the radical shift in his poetic discourse that accompanied it are generally accepted by critics such as Santí and Amado Alonso as analogous to the radical shift experienced by religious converts. Thus a brief examination of the psychic, political, and rhetorical aspects of the conversion phenomenon is useful. In 1902, American psychologist William James developed one of the first comprehensive theories of conversion, a theory that is still authoritative in current studies dealing with the psychology of religious experience and radical personality changes. The Varieties of Religious Experience describes conversion as a permanent transformation often preceded by a crisis, “a sudden emotional shock,” a “new perception,” or “an occasion which lays bare the organic alteration” causing the system of ideas which James calls “the mind” to collapse and reorganize (121). New or previously peripheral ideas—such as those religious in nature—move to the center of the psyche and dominate an individual’s mental space:

What brings such changes about is the way in which emotional excitement alters. Things hot and vital to us to-day are cold to-morrow. It is as if seen from the hot parts of the field that the other parts appear to us, and from these hot parts personal desire and volition make their sallies. They are in short the centres of our dynamic energy, whereas the cold parts leave us indifferent and passive in proportion to their coldness. (121)

11 M. Darrol Bryant and Christopher Lamb, in a recent collection of studies on the conversion phenomenon, have pointed out some of the limits of James’s study, in that it “limited the phenomenon of conversion to Christianity and it interpreted conversion wholly in psychological terms” (2). Lewis Rambo and Charles Farhadian, in an essay in the same volume, recognize the multiple internal and external factors of the conversion experience: “converting is a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations and experiences. [...] Converting cannot be extricated from the fabric of relationships, processes and ideologies which provide the matrix of religious change” (24). Neruda’s own conversion experience was nourished fundamentally by the war experience as well as by his friendships and relationships with leftist intellectuals during the Spanish Republic.
James’s language of “hot” and “cold” brings us immediately into the affective domain, the domain of *emotions*, or impulses that determine the convert’s activities. It would not be too much of a stretch to assert that religious conversion and political engagement alike are primarily affective phenomena: Paolo Freire describes the latter in terms of “Critical Consciousness” or “conscientization.” Indeed, drawing inspiration from Che Guevara, Freire also uses the language of conversion to describe the development of critical consciousness in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, situating the development of critical consciousness firmly within the affective domain of philadelphic love: “The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love” (89). In this sense, in their passionate or affective dimensions, religious conversion and political “conscientization” are comparable. Both involve a kind of “falling in love,” the former with a divine absolute, and the latter with a multitude. This “loving” tends to inspire the convert to new modes of action and engagement.

The analogy between conscientization and religious conversion, indeed the question of whether Neruda’s post-war transformation can be called “conversion,” is admittedly controversial. Beyond the differences between religion and Marxism—the latter is a paradigm of economic analysis and makes no moral or metaphysical claims—in Neruda’s case the analogy is predicated on the notion of a rupture dividing the poet’s work into two (sometimes three) discrete stages: an apolitical, avant-garde poetry written before 1936 and a socially committed poetry beginning with *España en el corazón*. Greg Dawes, drawing on Chilean critic Jaime Concha and French critic Alain Sicard, proposes instead a hermeneutic of continuity: “An uneven yet steady line” can be traced from “the young Neruda affected by anarchist politics in Southern Chile, to the poet who defended
the Spanish Republic during the civil war, to the Communist who ran for the senate and later the presidency” (16). Dawes also argues against conflating Marxism and religion. In his critique of Santí, he suggests that the analogy between the two undermines Neruda’s political commitment: “If there is no epistemological or ontological foundation to Neruda’s Marxism, then it can be depicted as a system of thought that is ideological, in Marx’s sense of the term, that is a moral philosophy and nothing more, with no more purchase on reality than, say phenomenology” (39). Yet in describing Neruda’s political commitment in religious terms, Santí shies away from dealing with Marxist theory itself—as Dawes himself recognizes—and from making any direct comparisons or categorizations. His focus is on the rhetorical exchanges between social discourses found in Neruda’s poetry, specifically prophecy as the embodiment of a “rhetoric in which religion and politics merge” (Santí14). Indeed, Dawes occasionally commits the very lapse he notes in Santí, the neglect of context. Marxism in Latin America was not founded on the pure historical materialism of the Soviets, but rather drew from multiple discursive streams, including Catholicism, pre-Columbian indigenous traditions, Romanticism, and Whitmanian populism. Latin American Marxist thinkers such as Che and Freire borrow and resemanticize religious symbols, metaphors and moods in their writings, as we have already seen. As for “continuity,” Neruda’s own post-war autobiographical poems, including those found in Tercera Residencia, Canto General, and Memorial de Isla Negra, all describe the war as the catalyst for a literary and personal transformation. As we will see, this is particularly the case with the issue of love and its prioritization in his poetry.
The similarity between conscientization and religious conversion is, as Santí notes, troubling even for critics who agree that there is a rupture in Neruda’s work, such as Amado Alonso. While quick to note that Neruda’s conversion is not “a Dios” but rather “al prójimo,” Alonso nevertheless insists that it is “a true conversion in the technical/psychological sense.” He even defines it in very Jamesian terms as an affective event that galvanizes “[t]odas [las] fuerzas espirituales [de Neruda], las ejercitadas y las dormidas, reunidas de pronto y organizadas con una imantación nueva, enardecidas por un entusiasmo nuevo, justificadas ahora y satisfechas por los nuevos fines” (359). Yet Santí describes Alonso’s need to qualify “conversion” with the descriptors “technical/psychological” as an impoverishment of conversion’s “critical potential” (97). Rather than downplaying the theological implications of conversion, Santí therefore exploits its rhetorical dimensions as a means to precisely articulate the “epic” bent of Neruda’s middle poetry.

This chapter takes Santí’s view, situating poetic language as the main point of convergence between the affective experiences of religious conversion and political conscientization, as well as recognizing language as an integral element of the conversion experience, the way through which the “new self” is consolidated internally and articulated externally. This consolidation through language helps to cover the diachronic rupture in the convert’s self-consciousness that occurs as a result of the transformation. In James’s explanation, the post-conversion self, with its new “hot centers,” looks upon the pre-conversion self with a sense of estrangement. Similarly, Freire recognizes this “rupture” as more than incidental: “Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly. This conversion is so radical as to not
allow ambiguous behavior. [...] Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth” (60-61). The resulting méconnaissance between pre-conversion and post-conversion identities necessitates a retrospective self-examination in the form of a conversion narrative. As Santí explains,

Conversion, or at least its narrative representation, rests on a retrospective structure issuing from a self who, having reached self-understanding and ontological coherence, proceeds to give an account of his spiritual progress. The convert narrates his experience from the end, after his spiritual crisis is over, and the plot of his story assumes a rhetorical difference between the self he has become and the self he used to be. (89)

Santí describes this “retrospective structure” as dialectical, a kind of “re-writing” or “self-correcting” function in the form of a “renunciation,” and it is this renunciation, this “differential crisis” and its attempted synthesis, that determines Neruda’s Tercera Residencia poems as poems of conversion.

I spend so much time on the issue of conversion in my examination of eros and philadelphos in Los versos del capitán because this text in particular includes this “renunciation/synthesis” pattern, and it is my argument that the poet draws from Tercera Residencia in order to construct it. The conversion pattern is integrated into what Hugo Achúgar calls the text’s “syntax” or reading order. Neruda’s tendency is always towards syntactical composition, which is one reason why Emir Rodríguez Monegal refers to him as a “poeta de libros.” According to Monegal, Neruda is a poet of “total lucidez creadora” who conceives the majority of his texts with an “interior unity”: “una concepción o impulso interior que asume ya (dentro de sí) la forma del libro” (181). Interestingly, Tercera Residencia and Los versos del capitán are similarly exceptional in terms of Neruda’s literary praxis. The former was not composed as a book proper, but rather cobbled together from what the poet had written between 1935 and 1945. Los versos,
meanwhile, began as series of secret “love letters” to Urrutia, with whom he had started a relationship while still married to Delia del Carril, his companion for twenty years. It is likely that Neruda had no intention of publishing the poems of the collection, but rather gave and sent handwritten and typed originals to Matilde as gifts. In both texts the poet applies his creative lucidity a posteriori, gathering together poems written in haste during an emotional event so intense it drew all else into it, then processing that transformative event by creating what Santí calls a “closure or synthesis” of the experience through the poems’ syntactic arrangement. Santí considers Tercera Residencia to be a “failed” conversion narrative, since the requisite “synthesis” or “gradual convergence […] of present and past” is never fully dramatized in the poems themselves (102). In Los versos del capitán, meanwhile, the proposed “synthesis” between eros and temporality, and between the erotic isolation which determines its opening sections and the philadelphic transformation which the relationship undergoes, is never completed.

This failure, however, doesn’t preclude our extension of Santí’s link between poetry and prophecy to the realm of erotic love, a fundamental theme in Neruda’s poetics that is also affected by the conversion experience. Prior to the war, love is experienced in its erotic Romantic dimension, circumscribed by anomie and intemporality, and anchored to embodied sexual passion. Following the war, the poet’s erotic subjectivity is submerged into the philadelphic current of the conversion experience, drawing his personalized eros into an expansive, humanistic philadelphos. One poem expresses this transition quite clearly: “El amor (1936),” part of a subset of love poems in the

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12 We see this for example in Matilde’s description of the writing of “La carta en el camino,” in which the poet gives her the poem immediately after writing it with no thought of keeping a copy for himself: “Se puso a escribir rápido, llenaba hojas y hojas. […] Terminó de escribir, metió todo en un sobre y me dijo, riendo de satisfacción -Es para que la lea mañana durante el viaje a París. Era ‘La carta en el camino’” (Urrutia 72).
autobiographical section (“Yo Soy”) of *Canto General*, in which Neruda re-tells his conversion story, placing *eros* as an emotional element of his pre-conversion self in dialectical relation to his post-conversion *philadelphos*:

> El firme amor, España, me diste con tus dones.  
> Vino a mí la ternura que esperaba  
> y me acompaña la que lleva el beso  
> más profundo a mi boca.  
> No pudieron  
> apartarla de mí las tempestades  
> ni las distancias agregaron tierra  
> al espacio de amor que conquistamos. (817-18)

“El amor,” one of the few poems dedicated to Delia del Carril, describes a lyrical subject that is not, as in Neruda’s earlier erotic poetry, contained within an isolating dyad with an unattainable other that exacerbates his romantic anomy, but rather integrated along with the beloved into a human multitude with its contingent network of philadelphic passions and actions. This is reflected in the poem’s diffusion of dyadic speech into a collective framework. “España”—a spatial and collective signifier and the site of Neruda’s own conversion—not Delia, is the poem’s “thou” in the opening stanza. Delia is addressed in the third person. When Delia is finally addressed in the second stanza, the poet’s dyadic language is further modified by its integration into a rhetorical question “¿Quién no te vio, amorosa, dulce mía / En la lucha, a mi lado como una / aparición, con todas las señales / de la estrella?” (817).

The Romantic subject and his beloved are bound to each other by their philadelphic integration into the multitude, not by their erotic passion for each other. Indeed, Neruda here almost excludes *eros* entirely:

> No sé mi amor, si tendré tiempo y sitio  
> de escribir otra vez tu sombra fina  
> extendida en mis paginas, esposa;
The ideals of *philadelphos* have galvanized all the poet’s mental and emotional energies. He simply “doesn’t have time or place” to spend on the partial love of his wife, which is in any case unnecessary since the energy of collective love is what binds the two together. Indeed, the philadelphic “love” that Spain gives, penetrates more “deeply” and “firmly” into the poet’s subjective being than *eros* ever did, resolving his erotic romantic alienation and giving him a beloved who “brings a deeper kiss” to his mouth. Neruda’s conversion thus coincides with an abandonment of *eros* as an element of the romantic isolation he experienced as part of his pre-conversion self, in the name of a *philadelphos* that touches him on both the intimate and public levels. *Tercera Residencia* states this abandonment explicitly, while *Los versos del capitán* problematizes it.

_Tercera Residencia: Eros as a Casualty of War_

Neruda began writing *Tercera Residencia* in 1935 as a third instalment to *Residencia en la tierra*. According to Adam Feinstein’s 2004 biography, Neruda had been given a post as Chilean consul in Barcelona and traveled to Spain in 1934 as the Second Spanish Republic came into power. Later, after switching consulships with Gabriela Mistral, he re-located to Madrid where he remained until 1939. During this time he developed many close friendships with leftist intellectuals both in Spain and France who would influence the political direction he would take as the war broke out in 1936. Feinstein credits, in particular, the assassination of his friend and fellow poet Federico García Lorca as a decisive factor in Neruda’s support of the Republican cause (Feinstein 118). The war and Lorca’s death provided that moment of “sudden emotional shock” that caused the whole
structure of Neruda’s identity to collapse and reorganize. In his poetry, this shock produced a complete shift in what Mario Rodríguez Fernández calls the “temple de ánimo” or the affective framework of his lyrical voice. The text’s arrangement is thus almost directly chronological. Tercera Residencia opens with the seven pre-war poems, introduces the poet’s conversion through an epigraph to a long erotic poem entitled “Las furias y las penas,” and follows with the poems of engagement, “España en el corazón” and a series of poems celebrating Stalin’s WWII victories as well as honouring several heroes of the Latin American left. The first seven poems echo the erotic Romanticism of the previous two Residencia texts. The lyrical speaker is an erotic Romantic subject drawing his “territorial assemblage,” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, upon the Earth which both founds and batters against it. Indeed, the speaker of Residencia en la tierra fits perfectly with Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the “German Romantic,” what we have called the erotic Romantic subject, who “experiences the natal territory, not as deserted, but as solitary regardless of population density” (340). As Rodríguez Fernández puts it, “El hablante lírico se intuye a sí mismo como rodeado por lo impenetrable, limitado por lo insalvable, estrechado por lo ominoso y hostil” (155). Santí associates the alienation of the poet’s erotic Romantic subjectivity with what he calls “the subject-object dichotomy” of the “visionary mode.” “In visionary poetry,” he explains, “the revelation of an object’s truth stems from the perception of an alienated subject” (24). The poet’s prophetic voice is charged with articulating the absolute truth of a revelation, but that absolute creates a temporal and psychic disruption: “the power of the language that infuses him, in the thrust to establish a dialogue with absolute values, disrupts his temporal structure as a perceiving and
expressing subject and replaces it with a whole new series of temporal relations” (16). “Visionary truth” thus corresponds with “the subject’s estrangement” and “his own internal discontinuity,” a discontinuity that also affects his perception of the object, “alienating” it such that it prompts the object’s “rearrangement in inordinate, perhaps superior ways” (26).

This same visionary discontinuity between subject and object is at the center of the erotic poems of the pre-conversion half of Tercera Residencia, including “Alianza Sonata” and “Las furias y las penas.” The “alienated” object is woman, an impenetrable, inaccessible other who nevertheless casts an affective longing upon the disjunct psyche of the erotic Romantic subject.

Ni el corazón cortado por un vidrio
en un erial de espinas,
ni las aguas atroces vistas en los rincones
de ciertas casas, aguas como párpados y ojos,
podrían sujetar tu cintura en mis manos
cuando mi corazón levanta sus encinas
hacia tu inquebrantable hilo de nieve.

Nocturno azúcar, espíritu
de las coronas,
redimida
sangre humana, tus besos
me destierran,
y un golpe de agua con restos del mar
golpea los silencios que te esperan
rodeando las gastadas sillas, gastando puertas. (349)

The very title, “Alianza Sonata,” is another of the many ironies found among the Residencia titles, including Residencia en la tierra itself, which according to Santí expresses “an ironic distance between subject and object,” since “a ‘residence on earth’ can be that only for someone not of this earth […] alien or alienated” (26). “Alianza” uses a substantive of nuptial, religious and even political expressions of union—the word
in Spanish means “covenant,” “alliance” and even “wedding ring”—in a poem where lover and beloved are inaccessible to each other. The visionary vocation permits the erotic Romantic subject to “rearrange” the loved object as “el corazón cortado por el vidrio,” “erial de espinas,” “agua de ciertas casas,” but not to possess or integrate with her as the answer to his longing: “sujetar tu cintura entre mis manos.” Sexual encounter with the beloved, which holds out the hope of his transcending that erotic Romantic isolation and finding redemption and communion, only exacerbates the problem. Her kisses “exile” him. Between their lips are “cities of great ashes and humid chimeras” (350). Eros can overcome the solitude of normal human beings, causing them to bond, copulate and reproduce, but the erotic Romantic poet, as prophetic witness, is permanently estranged from these couplings. Thus in “Caballero solo,” from the first Residencia en la tierra, the poet describes himself as under siege from the eroticism of the coupling multitude: “Los jóvenes homosexuales y las muchachas amorosas […] rodean mi residencia solitaria / como enemigos establecidos contra mi alma” (285). While in “Agua Sexual,” from the second text, the poet is an unwilling witness to the eros around him, abstracted from it by the visionary role “con la mitad del alma en el mar / y la mitad del alma en la tierra” (322). In the “Alianza” poem of Tercera Residencia, eros is unable to break the poet’s visionary isolation, because the beloved is, herself, a poetic object caught in the same web of disjuncture as everything else. She becomes abstracted from him as soon as he tries to use his artistic skills to approach her.

This failure of eros to break the poet’s Romantic isolation, indeed eros’s exacerbation of isolation, is echoed in “Las penas y las furias,” which is characterized by what Alain Sicard calls an amorous paradox: “no poder vivir su objeto sino como
carencia. Cuanto más se exacerba en él la voluntad de un cumplimiento, más se ahonda en el vacío: vacío que es el lado negativo de su plenitud” (502). “Las furias y las penas” tells of an erotic obsession with a woman whom the poet is unable to fully possess or forget. He remains connected to her “in the depth of the breast,” beating against her memory in an attempt to dislodge it. This amorous paradox is, in Sicard’s view, a manifestation of woman as an “incarnation of time,” an indicator of the poet’s own contingency in paradoxical relationship with the intemporality of the poetic art. Santí expands on this view in relation to visionary poetics: “Writing,” he argues, “instead of allowing the subject to integrate with the object […] partially temporalizes that object […] causing] the dissonance we encounter at every step between the speaker’s desire for presence, on the one hand and his experience of difference—historical or linguistic time—on the other” (58). Thus, as in “Alianza,” the beloved of “Las furias y las penas” is caught in the poet’s web of intemporal disjunctures. Any integration with her is impossible. She remains abstracted from him by the same prophetic role that isolates him from the wider world.

All this is to say that the erotic paradox of the Residencias fits into its larger temporal paradox, as elements of the same visionary subjective disjunction. The erotic Romantic subject of “Las furias y las penas” is eternally bound to the beloved in a kind of extra-temporal erotic enclosure that cuts them both off from the flow of time. Thus “at the depth of the breast” the poet declares that “we are together,” “in the canefield of a summer of tigers” “in some area of the summer,” “when everything tells me a day has ended, you and I have been together […] constructing a house which neither lasts nor dies” (357). While they are bound together, the visionary disjunction paradoxically
makes her inaccessible, imposing an insurmountable difference. Greg Dawes, in line with his contextual approach to Neruda, attributes this “separation” to biographical circumstances, reading the “beloved” of “Las furias y las penas” as Josie Bliss, a woman with whom Neruda had a relationship during his stay in Burma and whom he had to abandon due to her jealous rages. Dawes explains that “in ‘Las furias y las penas’ he hates her in part because […] he had to leave her. And at the time of the writing (1934, in Spain) he misses her has never before” (Verses 166). Dawes’s view is useful in that it confirms through biography the relationship that Santí and Sicard establish between eros, temporality and the poet’s visionary role. The poet is absent from the beloved, having abandoned her years prior to the poem’s composition, yet he is still paradoxically with her, locked, through memory and poetry, into the extra-temporal enclosure created by his passion and its “matter of expression.” As Deleuze and Guattari describe it, this enclosure “half opens onto the Loved One […] but the Loved One is already dead” (340). In the case of “Las furias y las penas,” the situation is much worse. The beloved is not dead: she is in time, forgetting the poet and carrying on new relationships.

Dawes’s reading brings up the beloved’s relationship with other men, without making the connection between her relationships and this question of temporality:: “Due to the distance that has put Josie Bliss on one shore of the river and he on the other, he hates her because […] he imagines she has been with other men” (166). The “haunting” of Neruda’s poetic vision by metonymic indicators of the beloved’s sexual experiences—semen, bedsheets, coins, hotel rooms, bite marks, legs—occurs because of this temporal paradox. The beloved is in the contingency of time, able to transit through her amorous experiences without memory or regret; the poet, on the other hand, is tormented by his
intemporal vision of her relationships. The beloved’s sexuality torments, not merely because of the poet’s jealousy, but because she is in time while he is outside of it. Josie is integrated into the same category of erotic being as those of “Caballero solo,” the “muchachas amorosas,” “jóvenes estudiantes,” “empleados,” “esposos,” and “adúlteros” who pursue their temporal sexual and amorous couplings without the shadow of the erotic romantic subject’s visionary alienation. For Josie, “no hay cáscara, no hay distancia ni hierro. / Tocan manos tus manos / y caes haciendo crepitar las flores negras” (358). The poet has the same ache toward erotic union as the beloved, yet his visionary disjunction prevents him from attaining it.

This recognition of his permanent visionary alienation explains the poem’s abrupt change of language, from the dyadic address (yo-tú) to a sudden retrospection:

Recuerdo sólo un día
que tal vez nunca me fue destinado,
era un día incesante,
sin orígenes. Jueves.
Yo era un hombre transportado al acaso
con una mujer hallada vagamente,
nos desnudamos
como para morir o nadar o envejecer
y nos metimos uno dentro del otro,
ella rodeándome como un agujero,
yo quebrantándola como quien
golpea una campana,
pués ella era el sonido que me hería
y la cúpula dura decidida a temblar. (361)

In this retrospective “break,” the poet’s visionary role prevents him from either anchoring his erotic experience into the flow of time or attaining any type of union with the “vaguely found woman.” The act of “finding love” and “remembering,” and their articulation in language through temporal markers “one day” and “Thursday,” are undermined by his visionary temporality which randomizes both time and circumstances:
“un día incesante / sin orígenes,” “un día que tal vez nunca me fue destinado.” Similarly, the poet’s sexual encounter with the beloved, while promising to overcome his separation by “placing one inside the other,” only exacerbates that alienation. The sound he produces from her only “wounds” him, driving him deeper into his romantic isolation, receiving the sound, vibrations and symbols of the sex act, but simultaneously abstracted from the beloved. Josie, on the other hand, has no such problem: “Miras: no ves la luna ni el jacinto / ni la oscuridad goteadas de humedades” (360). Her vision, unencumbered by intemporality or the subject/object disjunction, can focus on the fulfillment of her sensual and affective appetites: “ves cinturas delgadas como oxígeno, / pechos que aguardan acumulando peso / e idéntica al zafiro de lunar avaricia palpitas desde el dulce ombligo hasta las rosas” (360). The poet remains within the intemporal erotic enclosure with both his passion for her and the knowledge of her absence, the temporal paradox of lovers “interminablemente extinguidos.”

The poet’s a posteriori resolution to the erotic/temporal paradox involves something of a post-conversion scorched-earth policy towards his pre-conversion self. In Neruda’s epigraph to “Las furias y las penas,” history enters as a rupture.

En 1934 fue escrito este poema. ¿Cuántas cosas han sobrevenido desde entonces! España, donde lo escribí, es una cintura de ruinas. ¡Ay! si con sólo una gota de poesía o de amor pudiéramos aplacar la ira del mundo, pero eso sólo lo pueden la lucha y el corazón resuelto. El mundo ha cambiado y mi poesía ha cambiado. Una gota de sangre caída en estas líneas quedará viviendo sobre ellas, indeleble como el amor. (357)

This post-conversion epigraph, written five years after the poem’s composition, not only negates a posteriori the erotic romantic visionary voice of the Residencias, but effectively consigns it to the same temporal paradox through the conversion structure. As Santí explains, the epigraph dramatizes the diachronic rupture of the conversion
experience: “The self that is (‘marzo de 1939’) writes about a self that was (‘1934’) who died in a holocaust for which the poem itself […] appears to be partly responsible” (100). In its place, “a link between history and writing is proposed and even dramatized” (100).

The relationship between the poem and epigraph becomes a manifestation of the temporal paradox. The poem preserves the erotic romantic voice, while the epigraph displaces it in time such that it becomes an emanation of an anterior negative self that the conversion process alters. Its role becomes the antithesis in the conversion dialectic, the “before” image that confirms the new self of the convert through a negative.

As the erotic Romantic subjectivity is displaced, a philadelphic subjectivity takes its place and the temporality of Neruda’s subjectivity and poetry is fundamentally altered. The lyrical speaker commits himself to what Santí calls “poems of historical allegiance,” and places those poems in dialectical relation to the pre-conversion poems “grounded in temporality.” “History,” Santí explains, “becomes time embodied, and the conversion narrative constitutes the dramatic enactment of that embodiment” (99). The conversion externalizes the Nerudian concept of time, from the tormented intemporality of the visionary poet, to the bliss of the philadelphic lyrical subject buoyed by his communion with the multitude. Poetry’s intemporality is inserted into the utopian future or monumental eternity towards which history moves, a movement involving not merely the isolated visionary poet, but the multitude as a whole. As Alain Sicard notes, this “rupture into history” changes the nature of love as well. As a consequence of the war, he explains, “las relaciones entre el amor y el tiempo se volverán a definir de arriba a abajo, pero esa nueva definición solo habrá sido posible gracias a la intuición—particularmente clara en el último verso de ‘Las furias y las penas’ de una permanencia que constituye el
reverso dialéctico de la destrucción temporal” (504). The postwar Neruda uses the epigraph to call for a purging of anger and love through “la lucha y el corazón resuelto,” or an embodiment of the two forces into the flow of time and history. Anger moves from “furia” to “lucha,” while love becomes “el corazón resuelto”: a revolutionary philadelphos acting as a counter-type of love from visionary eros. By “embodying” his subjectivity and poetry and love into time, the intemporality of the poetic art ceases to alienate the lyrical subject from the multitude. Philadelphos performs the function of which eros was incapable, to integrate the visionary poet into the movement of the world and to integrate the multitude into his subjectivity such that the poet becomes, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, the “orchestrator” of the people’s affects rather than the One.

Following “Las furias y las penas,” the poet’s inner affects become historicized and collectively oriented passions of the philadelphic romantic subject, rather than the alienated passions of the erotic romantic. “Explico algunas cosas” demonstrates this process, as Neruda articulates the main elements of his conversion: “emotional shock”; the renunciation of a former self; and the embrace of a radically different poetic praxis.

Preguntaréis: ¿Y dónde están las lilas?
¿Y la metafísica cubierta de amapolas?
¿Y la lluvia que a menudo golpeaba
sus palabras llenándolas
de agujeros y pájaros?

Os voy a contar todo lo que me pasa.

Yo vivía en un barrio
de Madrid, con campanas,
con relojes, con árboles.

Desde allí se veía
el rostro seco de Castilla
como un océano de cuero.
Mi casa era llamada
la casa de las flores, porque por todas partes
“Explico algunas cosas” fits Czeslaw Miloz’s description of a poem “in passionate pursuit of the real” (25). Neruda illustrates a radical de-Romanticization as “poppies,” “metaphysics,” and “rain” give way to first the real (“yo vivía en un barrio de Madrid”) then to the horrible: “las hogueras salían de la tierra devorando seres.” The first stanza’s “lilacs,” “poppies,” and “rain” relate not only to traditional poetic themes of beauty and death, but also to the sexual longing and alienation of Neruda’s erotic Romanticism which “read” image objects as metaphoric symbols, externalized expressions of his subjective being. In the “Madrid” stanza, metaphor changes to metonymy as rarefied, symbolically loaded “poppies” and “lilies” become “geraniums,” a hardy and abundant flower ubiquitous in urban environments. Rather than evoking visionary or erotic themes through metaphor, flowers now become a metonymic indicator of the urban landscape and marketplace where Neruda experiences communion with the “brotherhood of man” through his friendships with artists like Lorca, Rafael Alberti and Raúl González Tuñón and his daily interactions with madrileños of all social classes.

The renunciation of erotic Romantic subjectivity in the name of its philadelphic counterpart is manifest in the poem’s internal shift from the interrogative opening lines to the expository third stanza, a shift that Dawes notes: “The poem,” he explains, “shifts its attention, formally and thematically, from the autobiographical specificity of Neruda’s individual case to the collective nature of the poet’s life” (198). Dawes stresses the emotional characteristics of this collectivity, founded on philadelphic love: “he associates
the unity between them with the profound heartbeat and the pulsating bread. Their hearts are metaphors for shared emotions and thoughts” (199). As the war breaks out, “burning metal” replaces “flowers.” The “resolute heart” takes the place of the loving heart. Love, in the collective sentiment of “España en el corazón,” becomes inseparable from the struggle for justice. Instead of personal friendships and relationships, the poet experiences union with other people through their common political goals, through the “brotherhood of man” and solidarity. Personal dyadic relationships, both friendships and romantic pairings—such as Neruda’s relationship with Delia del Carril—are encapsulated in the philadelphic framework that both absorbs and sustains the unions while sublimating the poet’s subjective passions. The poet thus no longer conceives of himself as a solitary artist writing from a visionary impulse or a solitary lover seeking an exit from his alienation through sexual union. Indeed, the erotic romantic subjectivity of his past self is now horrible to contemplate and is bearable only when safely contained within the dialectical structure of the conversion narrative. At least, until Matilde Urrutia enters the picture, turning the entire philadelphic enterprise on its head.

1946: The Return of Eros

With Matilde, Neruda’s own life becomes ironic. In 1945, the poet consolidated the break from his “residential” solitude and anomie into the gregariousness of his philadelphic commitments through both the publication of Tercera Residencia, and his official declaration of membership in the Chilean Communist Party. Feinstein records that in

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13 This consolidation explains Neruda’s decision to publish a “third residence” twelve years after the second, integrating “España en el corazón within it—a poem that had already been published and distributed as a text on its own in November of 1937, both in Chile by the publisher Ercilla as well as in
1945 Neruda won a Senate seat for the regions of Antofagasta and Tarapacá. In his first speech as senator he showered effusive praise on the Soviet Union for the defeat of the Nazis and the triumph of the Red Army in Berlin, an event which would also inspire two of the final poems of *Tercera Residencia*: “Canto de amor a Stalingrado” and “Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado” (Feinstein 182). This speech was the culmination of his conversion, a journey which he undoubtedly felt the need to establish as a public fact by creating what Santí calls a “closure or synthesis” of his poetry up to that moment. He then met Matilde Urrutia, fell passionately in love and spent nearly a decade labouring to create niches of solitude in that same philadelphic gregariousness where he and his paramour could be alone together. Biographically speaking, the couple was living a modern version of Georges Duby’s medieval courtly lovers, creating continuous “spaces of intimacy” through surreptitious communication, the poet’s own Manichean plotting, and the writings of the poems that would eventually make up *Los versos del capitán*. The writing of *Los versos del capitán* is itself a story of both the couple’s pursuit of erotic isolation and its paradoxical repudiation.

Neruda began writing *Los versos del capitán* on August 28, 1951, on a journey with Urrutia, his wife Delia del Carril, and Cuban poet Nicolas Guillén to the Romanian capital of Bucharest. Urrutia recounts the trip in her own 1982 memoir as fraught with emotional strain. Living in the same house as her paramour and his wife left her in a constant state of inner turmoil causing her to become ill: “Mi vida se había convertido en disimulo […]. Todo eso me hacía daño” (50). Neruda began writing poems to her as a Spain by the Republican army under the direction of Manuel Altolaguirre” (Feinstein 137).

14 According to Feinstein, Neruda had met Urrutia in Santiago in 1946 and begun a casual sexual relationship with her that ended quickly but resumed again in Mexico in 1949 when she was hired to nurse him through a bout of phlebitis: “In Mexico City, right under Delia’s nose, they resumed their affair” (248).
consolation during her illness and a vent for his longing for that had grown sharp from keeping up appearances. Urrutia refers to at least five poems from *Los versos* that he gave her during this time: “Siempre,” “Tus pies,” “El alfarero,” “La reina,” and “La pródiga.” He presented the last two of these to her in an envelope as the couple was about to separate: she left Bucharest for Paris while Neruda continued on to Prague, the Soviet Union and China. According to Robert Pring-Mill, who has carefully traced the chronology of *Los versos del capitán*, the journey from Romania to China lasted approximately a month. During this time Neruda, travelling with Delia, surreptitiously wrote twelve poems over the course of a day during the long stretch of travel across Russia and Mongolia.\(^{15}\) Two months later the couple reunited in Switzerland and decided to remain together during Neruda’s time in Europe, beginning with a week-long stay in the town of Nyon on the shore of Lake Leman. During the Nyon trip Neruda would write “La carta en el camino” and “Si tú me olvidas.”\(^{16}\) The couple then moved on to Rome and finally Capri, where Pablo and Matilde spent several months together in the house of Italian historian Edwin Cerio. On Capri, Neruda finished the remainder of the poems that make up *Los versos del capitán* and reorganized the book into its final form.\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) The writing of the poems occurred over a three-month period, from September to December, 1951. The Russia/Mongolia trip would have occurred on September 11, 1951, in which Pring-Mill dates the following poems: “El amor,” “El sueño,” “8 de septiembre,” “La bandera,” “La ausencia,” “El desvío,” “El daño,” and “Las vidas.” Other dates and poems from that same period include “Las muchachas” (September 14), “La tierra” (September 28), “El amor del soldado” (October 4), and “El insecto” (October 9).

\(^{16}\) Pring-Mill gives the dates of December 2 for “Si tu me olvidas” and December 3 for “La carta en el camino.” According to Matilde, Neruda wrote “La carta en el camino” the day before the Nyon trip was supposed to end, which suggests the possibility that the poems “La pobreza” (November 23) and “La pregunta” (November 26) were also written on the same trip.

\(^{17}\) According to Pring-Mill, nine poems were written on Capri, while another five were probably written in Rome (between December 20-29).
Presenting a diagram depicting the chronology and geography of the successive versions of the poems and the resulting book, Pring-Mill extrapolates two coinciding textual orders:

En esta figura esquemática el orden de composición de los poemas—a la izquierda—queda contrapuesto al orden del libro y todos los desplazamientos de los poemas, en su transición del ciclo composicional al libro definitivo, cobran forma visible en líneas de desplazamiento cuyos entrecruces constituyen el complejo tejido de la columna central. Ahora bien: cada una de estas tres columnas representa una red de relaciones intertextuales. La de la columna derecha es obvia y harto conocida: […] es la red sistemática con que se ha ido familiarizando todo lector del poemario que siguiera el orden de lectura que nos fue propuesto por el poeta. La de la izquierda es una red cronológica en que cada poema está relacionado por su contigüidad en el tiempo con el texto que le precedió, pasando a constituir—a su vez—el predecesor inmediato del próximo poema en escribirse. (184-5)

Pring-Mill’s “lines of displacement” show drastic transpositions: poems written during the “last phase” of the writing, when Neruda and Urrutia were living on Capri, are included in the opening section El Amor, while some poems in the first and second phase of the writing are placed in later sections. What was Neruda’s intention in re-ordering his poems? Neruda’s editorial decisions, like those that gave birth to Tercera Residencia, create an a posteriori conversion narrative structure of the poetic arrangement as a means to repudiate the same erotic isolation that the relationship produced, an isolation incompatible with the poet’s philadelphic identity. This “conversion structure” is then preceded by a letter that accompanies the anonymous first publication of the text, written by Urrutia under the pseudonym Rosario de la Cerda. Rosario/Matilde’s letter frontloads the conversion narrative structure of the text through her own testimony, over-determining its reading. She frames her encounter with the poet as simultaneously an intense romantic tryst and a life-changing experience leading to her own conscientization: “Me hizo sentir que todo cambiaba en mi vida, esa pequeña vida mía de artista, de
comodidad, de blandura, se transformó como todo que tocaba” (844). Indeed, here the intimate and political, the love and war, of her relationship are so completely fused that she addresses her beloved by his military title as though she herself were a soldier in his army. At the same time, his political objectives are framed entirely as acts of love motivated by personal sentiment: “Tenía la misma pasión que él ponía en sus combates, en sus luchas contra las injusticias. Le dolía el sufrimiento y la miseria, no sólo de su pueblo, sino de todos los pueblos” (844).

Matilde’s account encapsulates two halves of Neruda’s proposed resolution to the tension created by her re-awakening of his erotic desire. These twin objectives are articulated by Ileana Rodríguez in relation to the guerrilla: first, “constituting the revolutionary collective subject by departing from the man/woman copula”; and, second, “instructing woman in the debits and assets of revolutionary insurgency” (95). The text becomes an “entwining” of the poet’s civic and sexual fantasies,” an attempt “to pry affect from the personal and fuse it with politics,” performed through the conversion narrative structure. Although the text was written fifteen years after the Spanish Civil War, the text’s “fiction” uses that event as what Santí calls a “scene of writing” or “textual theatre.” Rosario is Matilde, but she is also Neruda himself, the “artist” with a small-scale life whose love is “widened” through a dramatic wartime experience. By combining references to the war with a conversion narrative structure, Neruda intended Los versos del capitán as a feminine mirror of Tercera Residencia, a conversion nurtured on Venusian rather than Martian terrain.

Rosario’s “conversion” occurs over the text’s main four sections, which are entitled “El amor,” “El deseo,” “Las furias,” and “Las vidas,” and is then reinforced
through the retrospective view presented by three long poems “Oda y germinaciones,” “La carta en el camino,” and “Epitalamio.” The sections create an intemporal erotic enclosure abstracted from the flow of time, while the longer poems reintroduce temporality through retrospection. The sections are Deleuzo-Guattarian “territorial assemblages,” each dedicated to a particular “affective field” in the couple’s relationship: ecstasy and longing, sexual desire, jealousy and anger, solicitousness and tenderness. Antonio González Montes defines the pattern created by these interlocking fields as a dialectic of love, moving from “un ámbito natural y cósmico maravilloso pero desconectado de la realidad” to one of “comprensión y compromiso con los demás” (25). Yet this dialectic is also a conversion one. The fields pass through a transition from territories of erotic romanticism, determined by a solitary voice speaking to a silent or absent beloved, to philadelphic romanticism in which the lyrical voice is modulated by the presence of others.

_The Isola of Love_

Of all the text’s sections, “El amor” is the longest, containing sixteen poems written mostly in the first and last phases of the writing when the couple was enjoying their tranquil, lengthy cohabitation on Capri. The “island” locale is more than contextual, however. The entire opening section is a meditation on erotic space, the niches in gregariousness created by the lovers’ discourse. The couple both lives on an island and creates one through their secretive communicative union, a space of intimacy in the gregariousness of “El Capitán’s” public life. This brings a new dimension to Neruda’s “woman/earth” osmosis, a perennial element of his erotic romanticism. Selena Millares,
exploring Ruben Darío and Neruda’s shared erotic symbolism, picks up on the
woman/nature osmosis—“la comunión panteísta con la Naturaleza, que se identifica de
modo ambivalente con la madre germinadora y la mujer amada”—as a transcendent-
sensualist vision of the universe that contains echoes of Whitman: “hay un proceso de
ósmosis entre amada y naturaleza que hace que sus atributos se confundan en una
comunión simbólica y mística. Este elemento panteísta guarda gran relación con la
poética whitmaniana, canto de amor universal que Darío evidentemente conoció y
admire” (223). This osmosis is experienced, however, as a paradox: as the simultaneous
expansion and communion of the lyrical speaker with the universe, as well as the
“territorialisation” of his eros into a dyadic enclosure. While El Capitán experiences a
communion with the cosmos via the mediation of Rosario, her body also occupies the
center of El Capitán’s perception, excluding or tending to exclude other preoccupations.
She is the isola he inhabits.

Pequeña
rosa,
rosa pequeña,
a veces,
diminuta y desnuda,
parece
que en una mano mía
cabes,
que así voy a cerrarte
y llevarte a mi boca,

pero
de pronto
mis pies tocan tus pies y mi boca tus labios,
has crecido. (845)

18 Gioconda Belli also explores “transcendental sensualism” and “woman-Earth” osmosis in Sobre la
grama, a book whose title is a homage to Whitman. I discuss this in Chapter 3, along with the concept of
erotic deterritorialization and philadelphia-eros.
The section begins with a clear poetic illustration of woman as erotic space or cosmos, describing the beloved as “expanding” through three stages: smallness, embodied similitude, and cosmic expansion. Antonio González Montes breaks down “En ti la tierra” into 21 lines to demonstrate Neruda’s “hyperbolic expansion of the beloved,” a rhetorical strategy echoed structurally as the verses “expand” in length as the poem progresses (26). González’s analysis, however, only focuses on one of what are actually three emotional sub-territories in “En ti la tierra,” each associated with one of Rosario’s “stages”: diminutive tenderness, human-embodied sexual desire, and expansive ex-stasis.

In the first section she is compared to a “small rose” who would fit into the poet’s hands. This littleness is both wondrous and endearing to the poet who uses a broken chiasmus to bring its attention to the reader, packing on the affective charge through an almost musical compaction of rhythms and pauses “pequeña / rosa / rosa pequeña.”

Physical contact—bringing the small beloved up to his mouth—changes not only her affective size but also the emotional field from which El Capitán speaks. The source of sense-contemplation shifts from the gaze, which reduces, to touch which triggers desire for sexual union with an embodied counterpart. Her size becomes human and on par with his own: “mis pies tocan tus pies y mi boca tus labios.” Neruda emphasizes not only the visual, but the tactile. Rosario and the poet meet as two bodies in sexual union with each other, a union which initiates a process by which Rosario becomes “unbound,” expanding beyond her human size to take up all the space in the loving subject’s universe. He no longer merely kisses Rosario, but through her the entirety of the earth. An enclosure is thus created by the continuous expansion of the beloved and of the poet’s affects in response. The beloved becomes simultaneously woman and Earth, she who in
“Las furias y las penas” “surrounds” the poet through her sexual receptivity: not like a “hole” but more like nature itself, an island, or enclosed garden, a hortus conclusus in the classical sense, which the poet enters to find succour and spiritual communion.

The woman-as-terrain is actually only one half of the spiritual communion in question. As well as a “terrain,” Rosario is also a “counterpart,” the only other person in the universe whom the poet “sees” and who “sees” him. Here we see C.S. Lewis’s observation about the other-centered nature of eros versus the self-centered nature of sexual desire. For the lyrical speaker of Los versos, Rosario is not merely “a woman”; she is the woman. Neruda, like Cardenal, would say that if Matilde is not in New York, then no one is. Thus lover and beloved inhabit a planet made for themselves alone, not only because of Matilde’s integration with natural forces, but also because they are bound to each other in an exclusive intersubjective union. In the second poem, “La Reina,” El Capitán explores this idea through a language of queenship: “Yo te nombro la Reina / Hay más altas que tú, más altas. Hay más puras que tú, más puras. / Hay más bellas que tú, hay más bellas. / Pero tú eres la reina” (846). This title invokes both a dyadic orientation through the traditional association of queen with consort, as well as an association with territory, with a circumscribed Earth. Rosario is distinguished not because of her physical beauty relative to other women, but because she is the “only other.” The erotic enclosure excludes all other human beings, isolating the Romantic subject and the beloved from expressing their subjectivity relative to anyone except each other. The final verse of this poem unites both “territory” and “consort” associations through the utterance of the Earth, an utterance which to which the visionary poet has
privileged access, and which binds the couple in that union of intersubjective exclusion, emphasized by the repetition of “Sólo tú y yo” in the poem’s final two verses.

These two elements of erotic space—the woman/earth osmosis and the lovers’ exclusive intersubjectivity—are repeated throughout the “El amor” section. Thus in “8 de septiembre,” the couple’s bodies “become expansive” and “grow to the ends of the world” (847). In “La infinita,” Rosario’s body becomes a territory that the poet’s hands can never fully encompass, while in “La tierra” she literally becomes fused with the elements of nature such that everything the poet sees reminds him of her:

Veo los monumentos
de antigua piedra rota,
pero si toco
la cicatriz de piedra
tu cuerpo me responde,
mis dedos reconocen
de pronto, estremecidos,
tu caliente dulzura. (860-861)

“La tierra” is really the first poem in which erotic space becomes problematized. The poet has a philadelphic role to which he must attend, yet the erotic space extends to wherever the lyrical speaker is, isolating him from whomever he happens to be with. The “heroes” and “the people” have been crowded out of the Earth by the face and body of the beloved, leaving him tormented with desire by every contact made with it. *Eros* is prodigious, overriding not only *philadelphos* but the Earth itself such that, in the final verse of the poem, it is nature that pursues the poet for the sole purpose of tormenting him with its analogies to the beloved, piercing him with “knife-shaped leaves” in order to create wounds in the shape of her mouth. This is a problem that the poet will further examine in subsequent sections of the text: “El deseo,” which examines desire more
closely, and “Las furias,” which further problematizes it. Both sections settle on conversion as the only step toward resolution.

The first section’s ending launches the poet into a closer examination of his desire in the second section, proposing three potential trajectories his eroticism can take in the form of three “animal” poems: “El tigre,” “El cóndor,” and “El insecto.” Neruda may have intended the three poems as a kind of play on the nature of desire, and for this reason chose to put these three poems together, beginning with the poem in which he plays a “powerful, savage role” (Duncan 439), and ending with the one in which he is nothing more than a tiny insect wandering the body of the beloved. Indeed, despite Cynthia Duncan’s assertion that the section manifests merely the brute need of the male speaker to “penetrate her body with force, to reassert his control over her, and to ward off the threat her sexuality poses for him” (439), the power dynamic in this section is more complex and subtle. Pring-Mill’s chronology notes that the three poems of “El deseo” were written one right after the other, but that “El insecto” was written first, followed by “El condor” and “El tigre” (Pring-Mill 178). The order of reading here differs little from the order of composition other than the significant transposition of “El tigre” and “El insecto.” By transposing these two poems, the section now emulates the small-immense pattern of “En ti la tierra,” this time within the erotic theme of consumption. As “the tiger” his desire is to consume the beloved in a violent manifestation of desire—Cynthia Duncan uses the loaded term “rape” to describe it (439). In turn, in “El insecto” the same longing manifests as a desire to be consumed or absorbed by her, returning to the idea of woman an erotic cosmos.

19 For more on feminist responses to Neruda’s poetry, see John Felstiner, “A Feminist Reading of Neruda.”
“El cóndor,” the middle poem, balances these two impulses by imagining the beloved as becoming the poet’s equal through a kind of conversion. Rather than consuming or being consumed, the poet’s erotic impulse “raptures” her and transforms her into a likeness of himself, prefiguring the text’s philadelphic transition by drawing the readers’ focus both to the exclusive intersubjective element of erotic space and also to the symbol of the condor itself which has immense significance in Neruda’s poetry, particularly in “Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu” where it signifies both monumental temporality and the Americas themselves. Neruda’s use of such a monumental symbol in an erotic poem creates an odd juxtaposition, which only begins to make sense in the light of the conversion narrative. In “Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu,” the condor prefigures the poet’s own conversion:

Cuando como una herradura de elitros rojos, el cóndor
Furibundo
Me golpea las sienes en el orden del vuelo….
   No veo la bestia veloz
No veo el ciego ciclo de sus garras,
Veo el antiguo ser, servidor, el dormido
En los campos. (446)

The image of the Americas that the condor reveals is not one of monumentality but one of suffering humanity in time and in history. In “El cóndor” the poet enacts a similar conversion on Rosario, using the erotic energy that draws him to her to “lift” her up to his nest, cover her with feathers, and transform her into a “hembra cóndor” who will fly with him over the world, and with whom he will pounce upon a “palpitating life”:

Yo soy el cóndor, vuelo
Sobre ti que caminas
Y de pronto en un ruedo
De viento, pluma, garras
Te asalto y te levanto
En un ciclón sibilante
De huracanado frío

Y a mi torre de nieve
Te llevo y sola vives,
Y te llenas de plumas
Y vuelas sobre el mundo
Inmóvil en la altura. (863)

In this first stanza, the description of the condor’s flight and the woman’s rapture immediately echoes the imagery of “Alturas.” The condor is associated with violence, speed and spiritual ascension. Paradoxically, in spite of the violent phrase “te asalto” and unlike the beloved of “el tigre,” Rosario is not the condor’s “prey.” His intention is not to attack her, but to make her like himself by isolating her in his “tower” and covering her with feathers so that she will be capable of both flying and “seeing” from a higher vantage point, developing a broader perspective that encompasses all of history. Once the transformation is complete, the two will then plunge to Earth together and “pounce upon this red prey / tear into this palpitating life,” by becoming re-immersed in the struggle. “El cóndor” thus anticipates the transformation that Rosario will undergo through her union with the poet, a transformation that begins by problematizing and breaking open the couple’s erotic isolation, a process the poet undertakes in the section “Las furias.”

Comprising twelve poems, seven of which were written during the couple’s month-long separation and near breakup between October and November 1951, “Las furias” is the text’s second-longest section. That separation explains some of these poems’ darker tones. “Las furias” is characterized by obsession and possessiveness on the part of El Capitán, a constant childish demand for Rosario’s attention and a keening insecurity regarding her past. Rosario herself refers to the conflicts that precipitated this section as “Celos y furias incontenibles. Éstas eran como tempestades furiosas que
azotaban su alma y la mía” (844). Rosario describes the poet’s anger coming in “storms and furies,” a pluralization that echoes the poet’s own shift in title. According to Pring-Mill, the section title in the original 1952 anonymous publication of Los versos was simply “Furia.” In the 1963 Losada edition in which Neruda acknowledges his authorship of the text, it became “Furias.” The plurality of “furias” is not merely a reference to the emotional variedness of the section, nor to the multiple arguments the couple may have had. It also calls to mind Neruda’s earlier poem “Las furias y las penas,” which acts as a template for the section, not only in terms of its affective and rhetorical similarities, but also in terms of its role in the conversion narrative.

“Las furias” enacts the same drama as its predecessor, and by doing so sets itself up as the antithesis of the section “El amor” in which woman acts as enclosure and counterpart. In “Las furias,” as in “Las furias y las penas,” the erotic enclosure now isolates him from the flow of time and history and also progressively imposes a difference between lover and beloved making the latter inassimilable. Finally, as in “Las furias y las penas,” the temporal difference between the poet, anchored to an intemporal present, and the beloved, moving in the flow of time, makes him keenly aware of her past and potentially future relationships. The evocation of “Las furias y las penas” is intentional. It purposefully troubles the jouissance of the erotic Romantic subject in “El amor,” by invoking the anguish of erotic isolation so as to incite the conversion process.

For this reason many of the poems in “Las furias” are arranged as affective inversions of the poems of “El amor,” a textual order recalling William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience, which organizes poems into pre- and post-lapsarian dualities. There are many examples of this dual structure linking “El amor” and “Las furias,” from
the title of the opening poem of “Las furias” (also called “El amor”) to the diminishment of Rosario’s body as a kind of counterpart to “En ti la tierra”:

¿Qué tienes? Yo te miro
y no hallo nada en ti sino dos ojos
como todos los ojos, una boca
perdida entre mil bocas que besé, más hermosas,
un cuerpo igual a los que resbalaron
bajo mi cuerpo sin dejar memoria. (863)

In “En ti la tierra,” Rosario’s body was a cosmic expanse; now it is diminished to “one more among many,” which nevertheless is inscribed with the erotic paradox of “Las furias.” Inasmuch as the poet attempts to “reduce” Rosario to one more notch on his bed post, he is unable to do so. Like Josie Bliss, she has a hold on him through the intemporality of memory, precluding any separation. This is intimated in the final poem of the section “El amor,” “La tierra,” but it is not until the poem “El amor” of the section “Las furias” that it becomes explicit:

Ay nuestro amor es una cuerda dura
que nos amarra, hiriéndonos
y si queremos
salir de nuestra herida,
separarnos
nos hace un nuevo nudo y nos condena
a desangrarnos y quemarnos juntos. (863)

Like Blake’s *Songs of Experience*, “Las furias” portrays how the love of “El amor” becomes corrupted. For Blake, the source of corruption is the passage of time and continuous interchange with the world, but for Neruda it is the opposite. *Eros* becomes corrupt due to the couple’s lack of engagement with either the flow of time or the wider world. The dyadic enclosure, which was a refuge for the lovers in “El amor,” now isolates the couple not only from the wider world, but also from each other. The longer his energies are locked in to a contemplation of the beloved, the more he becomes
conscious of her difference, drifting back into the visionary disjunct of his Residencia self. Rosario is inscribed with difference, becoming progressively more inassimilable. Her subjectivity rises up to say, in Luce Irigaray’s terms, “The power of a negative prevails between us […] you are irreducible to me, just as I am to you” (105).

Thus because the dyadic sphere is so tightly bound Rosario never goes away:

La encontraré
Y ella me encontrará…
La que estará fundida
Conmigo
En la vida o la muerte! (“Las muchachas” 867)

Yet, because Rosario is an irreducible other, she is always in danger of leaving:

Sí poco a poco dejas de quererme
Dejaré de quererte poco a poco (“Si tú me olvidas” 873)

Si me apartas tu vida
morirás
aunque vivas. (“El desvío” 867)

She is “empty”:

Qué vacía por el mundo ibas
Como una jarra color de trigo. (“El amor” 865)

But she is filled with qualities that disturb him: “Recodo[s] de sombra que no quiero,” “algas ciénagas, rocas,” “risa de metal.” These same qualities were once enchanting, in “El amor”: her connection with earthly and marine elements, her laughter to which an entire poem is dedicated. In “El amor,” Rosario’s difference was new and invigorating, supplying the poet with something he lacked in his own subjective being: lightness, sensuality, femininity, domesticity. But over time in the dyadic enclosure, these elements become sources of frustration. They belong to Rosario, inaccessible and inassimilable to the Romantic Subject, remaining “transcendent” in Irigaray’s sense of the word, “the
resistance of a concrete, ideational reality (105). El Capitán cannot possess Rosario completely, and he cannot be completely free of her. Each encounter with the paradox created by the poet’s erotic subjectivity on the one hand and Rosario’s “I am not you” on the other throws the poet back into the chaos of “Las furias y las penas.”

As in Tercera Residencia, the only possible resolution requires Rosario to undergo a conversion of her own subjectivity, proposed in the final poem of “Las furias,” “Tú venías”:

Yo no sufrí buscándote,
sabía que vendrías,
una nueva mujer con lo que adoro
de la que no adoraba,
con tus ojos, tus manos y tu boca
pero con otro corazón
que amaneció a mi lado
como si siempre hubiera estado allí
para seguir conmigo para siempre. (878)

“Tú venías” introduces the theme of conversion intimated in the poem “El cóndor.” El Capitán describes, almost in Freirean language, Rosario’s required “change of heart” and “glance” so that she would become his ideal lover “para seguir conmigo para siempre.”

The nature of this conversion is as yet ambiguous. From the poem itself there is the sense that Rosario has submitted herself entirely to El Capitán’s subjectivity, beaten into submission. Yet reading the poem in relation to the following section, “Las vidas,” suggests that the conversion is not necessarily a “consumption” of her subjectivity by the poet’s own, but a conversion of love from the dualism of eros to the multiplicity of philadelphos. The poet seems, in many ways, to be trying to make a Delia out of her, a fellow traveler who, through the agency of his “tough love,” or what Ileana Rodríguez calls the duality of “tendresse” and “discipline” (46), submits herself to the greater cause
in order to become his equal. Introducing the subject of conversion in the very final poem of the section strengthens the link to “Las furias y las penas,” acting on the prior sections of *Los versos* in a manner analogous to that poem’s epigraph. Both the epigraph and the poem “Tú venías” work retrospectively to create a temporal displacement, the former of the erotic romantic subject, the latter of erotic space. “Tú venías” displaces the erotic enclosure from the text’s central modality of love, to a dialectical expression resolved through the conversion process, a conversion that takes place in “Las vidas.”

“*Las vidas*” and the Long Poems: Philadelphic Love and the Eros of Communism

Bound together thematically and rhetorically through verbal cues and line breaks, the poems of “Las vidas” are themselves philadelphically linked. They are a collective entity and, simultaneously, part of a single lecture through which the poet leads his beloved into a state of philadelphic engagement analogous to the poet’s own. In Alain Sicard’s terms, the section demonstrates the movement of “love” from the intemporal enclosure of the erotic romantic poet to the landscape of history (504). Erotic isolation becomes philadelphic engagement. The couple’s relationship must cease to be bound by their exchange of passions and be bound instead by their common engagement in the struggle.

The fundamental difference between *Los versos* and *Tercera Residencia* lies in the question of who is converted. Neruda’s conversion occurred as a result of his own choices and evolution in the former text. In the latter, his entire enterprise is hamstrung by the sexual and intersubjective difference of the beloved. Conversion is an intransitive, not a transitive experience. Its grounding in subjectivity means one can move through the terrain of a conversion but cannot be its direct object. Matilde/Rosario’s transformation
remains the poet’s own even as he tries to transform her. The results of this attempted impossibility are nearly paradoxical. On the one hand, the poet experiences a philadelphic “opening” in his relationship to the beloved, becoming progressively more comfortable with her difference and making fewer frustrated attempts to assimilate her into himself as the answer to his longing. On the other hand, she never really fully “converts” to a philadelphic companion, but remains an erotic one:

En mi patria hay un monte.
En mi patria hay un río.

Ven conmigo.

La noche al monte sube.
El hambre baja al río.

Ven conmigo. (879)

As with the transition of flowers from metaphoric to metonymic elements in “Explico algunas cosas,” “mountain” and “river” lose their poetic function as analogues of woman. Neruda now assigns them as geographical features of his nation, a space inhabited by the multitude and given dimension by their sufferings within it: “night climbs the mountain / hunger goes down to the river.” The dyadic enclosure has become externalized. No longer is Rosario the only other person who occupies the poet’s consciousness; others have entered the scope of El Capitán’s amorous attention. Erotic love is now inscribed within a larger concern, within the context of the poet’s philadelphic role as “voice of the people.” By integrating erotic passion into a larger social struggle, as Nelson Osorio explains, “El amor […] trasciende la simple individualidad hombre-mujer para convertirse en sentimiento que se liga a todos los que marchan con la misma esperanza”
In the poem’s final stanza, Neruda returns to his singular affection for Matilde only briefly, in order to articulate its role within the couple’s larger calling:

O tú, la que yo amo,
pequeña, grano rojo
de trigo,
será dura la lucha,
la vida será dura,
pero vendrá contigo (880)

Beyond the mere term of endearment “mi amor / amor mio” used throughout the earlier sections, Rosario is now given a longer, more formalized title: “la que yo amo,” “she whom I love,” which emphasizes the uniqueness of her relationship to the poet. That partiality is immediately modulated by the metaphoric description of her as a “small grain of wheat,” emphasizing her membership in a collective. Finally the poem closes on a heavy foot by shifting the refrain “ven contigo” from an amorous supplication to a military command. She is not merely his beloved, she is a soldier in the army of which he is the Captain. She will accompany him.

Or will she? The following poem, “La pobreza,” begins with a reverse enjambment with its predecessor. In “On the Function of the Line,” Denise Levertov argues that line breaks determine emphasis and musical pitch, with the potential to “[explore] areas of human consciousness and [create] new aesthetic experiences” (81). A line break creates a pause of half a breath, drawing attention to the caesura and the words on either side of it. “Ay no quieres,” the opening line of “La Pobreza,” is really, other than the Rosario letter, the first place where Rosario’s voice is heard, even as it is perceived primarily through the filter of the poet’s response. Unlike in the letter, however, here Rosario takes on an active role, actually arguing with the lyrical subject. Thus the opening line of “La pobreza” both completes and undoes the final thought of
“El monte y el río.” Although that poem ended on a seemingly unarguable statement, Rosario does argue:

Te asusta
La pobreza

no quieres
ir con zapatos rotos al mercado
y volver con el viejo vestido. (880)

The caesuras created by the breaks in lines 2-3, cited above, put the emphasis on “asusta” and “pobreza.” Neither word is diminished by syntactic predication. These caesuras put focused attention on the fear and its cause, a cause elaborated on in lines 4-6 by examples of the things Rosario fears doing. Although the “examples” use longer lines than the expressions of fear, these too include caesuras through enjambment that slow down the reading. These caesuras seemingly rupture Neruda’s overdetermining lyrical subjectivity; one can almost hear Matilde’s voice through the pauses. The poem becomes one side of a dialogue, rather than a monologue. Each caesura is a moment in which the lyrical voice listens to the beloved, while in the lines that follow he repeats her thoughts back to her.

The caesuras force the poet to enter Rosario’s subjectivity, to empathize with her emotional reaction and try to calm her anxieties through gentle persuasion and encouragement. Philadelphos not only elicits a solicitude and patience from El Capitán of which eros was incapable, it calls him out of his alienation into the other as other, as an inassimilable subject. The couple’s erotic relationship emerges in a different perspective, not as a central concern but in a supportive role, to strengthen Rosario’s resolve and to layer her philadelphic commitment with the firmness of eros: “y piensa, amor, que yo te estoy mirando / y somos juntos la mayor riqueza / que jamás se reunió sobre la tierra.”

This “somos juntos” brings the couple and the multitude together as two types of union
joined by love, the one within the other, loving and caring for the beloved within the interpersonal dimension of *eros* while at the same time potentially avoiding the isolating tendencies of erotic subjectivity.

I say “potentially” because, as Ileana Rodríguez points out, engagement merely modulates, rather than doing away with, the inherent imbalance between the revolutionary/romantic subject and the beloved/people/masses. On the one hand, the “Las vidas” section sees Rosario’s subjectivity as less problematic than in “Las furias.” On the other hand, Rosario moves from woman as an inassimilable absence to the naïve protégée who must be continuously “educated.” María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo recognizes this ambiguity as one of the problems of revolutionary discourse in terms of the androgyny of the guerrilla camp: “Woman as sign and referent has been banished, but her banishment does not eliminate signs of subordination and domination” (80). The poems oscillate between Rosario as New Woman and Old Lover, between revolutionary protégée and “revolutionary pussy.” What *philadelphos* does, however, is create apertures in absolute subjectivity of the masculine lyrical “I” which *eros* did not permit, allowing for a progressive expansion of the beloved’s own subjectivity. Rodríguez and Saldaña-Portillo recognize this process elsewhere, noting for example that Che Guevara’s revolutionary androgyny, his appropriation of both the “model of the masculine desire for manliness” and the Virginal Maternal “mother as idealization of relations,” appears at first blush “to have synthesized, dialectically, the thesis of a fully masculine, developed subject moving forward universally through historical time and the antithesis of a feminized, underdeveloped subject who gets left behind” (Saldaña-Portillo 80). In Erotic
Romanticism, that binary remained unbridgeable, as any manifestation of the beloved’s subjectivity was immediately quashed by the raging sentiments of the lyrical speaker.

So it is interesting to note the similarities between *Los versos del capitán* and the Central American revolutionary writings of the 1970s studied by Rodríguez, particularly as far the position of women is concerned. They are close enough to suggest that Neruda was a likely influence, and perhaps also on Che Guevara. The text does, after all, prefigure Che Guevara’s own entry into guerrilla life by a good four years—in 1951 Che was still a medical student travelling the Americas on his motorcycle. This notion would certainly correspond with what Ricardo Piglia argues about Guevara as a “reader,” constructing both his identity and his guerrilla testimonies through intertextuality with literary fiction (261). Neruda’s text may have provided a model for revolutionary discourse around eroticism for people such as Che, Tomás Borge, Sergio Ramírez, and Mario Roberto Morales, all of whom are known for their literary as well as political pretensions. It introduces the trope in phallocentric guerrilla writing of woman as a problematic element within revolutionary praxis, whose difference signifies erotic desire and subjective intimacy—forces that compete for the guerrilla’s loyalties and affections. Woman is thus placed in an ambiguous position, in Rodríguez’s terms both “object of erotic desires” and “situated in a semidialogic position within the space and possibilities of insurgency” (94). The conversion of woman to a fellow soldier is one potential solution to the dilemma that Neruda proposes. The erotic in *Los versos* is thus a means to an end, a path to the philadelphic and to the realization of Rosario as a New Woman, a collective subject and revolutionary.
Because “transitive conversion” is impossible, and because Rosario’s sexual difference remains, *eros* cannot be “displaced” as easily as in *Tercera Residencia*. Matilde/Rosario cannot be completely absorbed into what Saldaña-Portillo terms “the sameness of revolutionary universalism” (79). Thus in the poems of “Las vidas,” “Las vidas” and “El amor del soldado,” the beloved is both integrated into the multitude and also, paradoxically, externalized from it in her erotic role. In the poem “Las vidas,” El Capitán takes on the role that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to the Latin or Philadelphic Romantic. The lyrical “I” is an orchestrating subject that “mobilizes” the affects of the people and is modulated by them; as Deleuze and Guattari put it, “the orchestration imposes a given role on the voice, and the voice envelops a given mode of orchestration. Orchestration-instrumentation brings sound forces together or separates them, gathers or disperses them; but it changes, and the role of the voice changes also” (341). Thus the lyrical “I” identifies himself as the “frente,” the forehead or front, of the multitude, incarnating what Saldaña-Portillo describes as the elusive yet much desired objective of the revolutionary leader: “to represent the masses” (80). In the poem “Las vidas,” Neruda becomes the concrete embodiment of the multitude, sublimating his subjectivity into the philadelphic romantic lyric voice “que no soy / que no existo / que sólo soy la frente de los que van conmigo” (881). The poet’s actions are re-worked to become collective through the agency of the multitudinous body created by the philadelphic subject who has “a thousand eyes” to look towards the revolutionary future, and “a thousand hands” to build it. Rosario herself is not absorbed into this multitudinous body:

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mi voz se oye en las orillas
de todas las tierras
porque es la voz de todos
los que no hablaron,
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Rosario is never assimilated into “revolutionary universalism,” but remains somewhat outside it, relating to the poet through eros as woman kissing the mouth of a man. As much as the poet’s “ven connigo” beckons her to join in the struggle, his eros also holds her apart, abstracting her from the multiplicitous body. This same tendency is seen in “El amor del soldado”:

Ya no puedes volver a bailar
con tu traje de seda en la sala.
Te vas a romper los zapatos,
pero vas a crecer en la marcha.

Bésame de nuevo, querida.

Limpia ese fusil, camarada. (883)

“El amor del soldado” describes Rosario’s metamorphosis from “compañera del baile” to “compañera.” El Capitán emphasizes that her old life of “poor silk,” “false nails,” and ballroom dances is coming to an end. These are sartorial elements that emphasize sexual difference, a difference that cannot be assimilated by the philadelphic subject and thus must be discarded. At the same time, these sartorial elements are signs of coquetry in which woman becomes a conscious referent for eros. Yet, for Neruda, something of eros always remains. Rosario may not go to the ballroom anymore, but she is still his lover.

Her role as “camarada” is conjugated with that of “querida.” She occupies a third space, between soldadera and guerrilla, in the army but not of it, separated from the troop by her “special” relationship to their leader.

To what can one ascribe the ambiguity of Rosario’s role? Biographically, Neruda’s relationship with Matilde Urrutia was very different from his marriage to Delia
who in many ways exemplified the role of the purely philadelphic companion. According to Feinstein, del Carril, herself a committed member of the Communist party, was twenty years older than the poet and had turned sixty-five in 1949 when the couple fled to Europe. Their relationship was held together more by an intellectual affinity than an erotic one. Matilde on the other hand was twelve years younger than Neruda and physically attractive, but was completely apolitical, coming from a conservative family (248-260). Urrutia’s conscientization, her commitment to the cause, would not only fulfill the poet’s “civic and sexual fantasy” in Rodríguez’s terms, but also, on a practical level, resolve the tension in Neruda’s own life between his commitment to the Communist party and his love for her, a tension exacerbated by Delia’s links within the same party. This tension would eventually explode as his affair with Matilde and subsequent divorce of Delia became public knowledge, resulting in a loss of many friendships and connections. Finally, a third issue emerges in the longer poems that make up the end of Los versos: erotic passion provides a refuge where the poet encounters a deeper, more authentic subjectivity beneath the constructed subjectivities of his public life and literary romanticism.

The three long poems that complete the work bring the focus back to eros as the poet’s primary affective mode of lyrical expression. The text’s trajectory is thus not from eros to philadelphos, as originally proposed by Alain Sicard and Antonio González Montes, but from subjective eros to intersubjective eros through or along philadelphos.

20 Additionally, as Feinstein explains, for personal reasons Matilde had a strong antipathy towards the Chilean Communist party: "one of her brothers, who had been a lifelong Party militant, had been expelled over some internal struggle and accused of dissipation and alcoholism. Distraught, he committed suicide. Matilde never forgave her brother’s accusers, and every now and then she would bitterly reproach the Party leaders for bringing about his death" (248).
This is particularly evident in the first long poem “Oda y germinaciones,” which brings together the two types of space previously explored, the erotic and the national:

Años tuyos que yo debió sentir
crecer cerca de mí como racimos
hasta que hubieras visto cómo el sol y la tierra,
a mis manos de piedra te hubieran destinado
hasta que uva con uva hubieras hecho
cantar en mis venas el vino.
El viento o el caballo
desviándose pudieron
hacer que yo pasara por tu infancia,
el mismo cielo has visto cada día,
el mismo barro del invierno oscuro,
la enramada sin fin de los ciruelos
y su dulzura de color morado.
Sólo algunos kilómetros de noche,
las distancias mojadas
de la aurora campestre,
un puñado de tierra nos separó. (889)

In a reiteration of the Woman/Earth trope of El amor, Matilde’s body “dissolves” through physical contact with Neruda into a series of natural impressions, scents of honeysuckle and shucked corn, the warmth of roads, bread and the dusty color of the moon. These natural images are not purely sexual metaphors, nor purely metonymies for the poet’s nation, but something in between, implying and signifying the body of the beloved and the poet’s homeland. Erotic space evokes the poet’s nation through the mediation of the body of Matilde who grew up in Chillán, Chile, 272 kilometers north of Neruda’s hometown of Temuco. In “Oda y germinaciones,” the poet reflects on this conversation surreptitiously, couching it in the flood of natural metonymic-metaphoric impressions. One gets the sense, particularly in the above-cited passage from the second canto, that it is Neftalí Reyes who is speaking, not “Pablo Neruda” the public persona, nor “El Capitán,” the lyrical speaker constructed by his erotic and philadelphic Romanticisms.
The geographical elements mentioned in the poem are Chilean, instead of the Central American provenance of “El Capitan” and the abstracted nature-sex metaphors of El amor. The woman-geography fusion inherent in Nerudian erotic space becomes woman as home. At the same time, eros’s subjective element brings him to a deeper encounter with his own personhood through his and Matilde’s shared histories.

By touching his own deeper, human subjectivity through the mediation of Matilde, he also touches hers. Their childhoods are unified by their common territory, yet separated by “unos kilómetros de noche.” The poet has to travel backward in time along their separateness, recognizing their differences, including their past histories, to “march backward, in the distance of our lives, kiss by kiss […] discovering in the other the secret road that lead our feet together.” In that sense, the “retrospection” of the text is not, in Santí’s terms, integrated into the conversion narrative, but part of the niches in philadelphic gregariousness created by eros that gives the poet the experience of being seen by and seeing another person, like him but not like him. In “La carta en el camino,” the text’s final poem, eros re-shapes the nature of the poet’s philadelphic subjectivity, feminizing and personalizing it all the more:

Saldrá el ladrón de su torre algún día. 
Y el invasor será expulsado. 
Todos los frutos de la vida 
crecerán en mis manos 
acostumbrados antes a la pólvora. 
Y sabré acariciar las nuevas flores 
porque tú me enseñaste la ternura. (904)

The poet’s philadelphic subjectivity is now modulated by eros with the dual effect of “strengthening” the poet, inspiring him to go on fighting even in the darkest of circumstances, and also “softening” him, providing him with Rodríguez’s “feminine”
characteristics of humility, nobility, and “tendresse.” His philadelphic work becomes encapsulated within his erotic sensibilities, motivated and inspired by the beloved, for the beloved. Rosario’s love fills, nourishes, and accompanies him during his work as a “soldier.” The poet’s Communist militancy becomes an act of love, not merely philadelphic love, but informed by and infused by eros. Indeed, the poet is no Guevaran ascetic, sacrificing his partial affection for Matilde on the altar of the cause. Rather, he takes his eros with him on the road, in Rodríguez’s terms “prying” his emotion from it and mingling it with his Communism, thus sweetening the latter by making it into a type of romance: the passionate actions of a man in love.

In conclusion, this “romancing the revolution” means that the text, as Santí argues with Tercera Residencia, is ultimately a failed conversion but for a different reason. Both Los versos del capitán and Tercera Residencia are structured as a posteriori conversion narratives: the poet, rather than conceiving the works as a unity prior to the writing as was the case with Canto General, or the other Residencias, gathers poems written during an intense experience and then arranges them along a narrative arc. Each begins with eros as a form of enclosure: as source of either visionary alienation or (later) communion and pleasure. This enclosure is then confronted and problematized, by the impact of the war in the first place, or the corruption and strangulation of the relationship by its isolation in the second, until finally philadelphos emerges in a salvational role. Philadelphos comes to rescue the poet from his anomie in Tercera Residencia, and the couple from their conflicts in Los versos del capitán. Yet both conversions fail. For Santí, Tercera Residencia fails because in it the poems never bring in the proper retrospection and synthesis of conversion narratives. For me, Los versos fails because the retrospection
emerges from the pre-conversion form of love, not the post-conversion one. There is no palinode or retraction of El Capitán’s eros, merely an oscillation between the two love types settling on a philadelfhos infused with erotic sensibility and an intersubjective eros. It is a transformation of a kind, but ultimately not a fully realized conversion. Indeed, biographically speaking, Matilde Urrutia does become something of a “companion” in the struggle: she was responsible for sneaking Neruda’s memoirs out of Chile following the 1973 coup, as well as for keeping the poet’s memory alive during the Pinochet years. But her union with the poet had as much of an effect on him as he did on her. After the revelations of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, which brought to light the human rights abuses of the Stalinist regime, and after the revelations of his marital infidelity to the Chilean Communist party in defiance of what Franco calls its “sexual orthodoxy” (72), the poet—while still remaining committed to Communist objectives, initially supporting the Cuban revolution and later becoming the Communist party candidate for the presidency—modulates and softens his militancy. Indeed, Franco, in the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, notes how after 1956, particularly in the text Cien sonetos de amor, it is Matilde, rather than Communist engagement, that becomes the agent of Neruda’s personal fulfillment, his “salvation” or “homecoming.” We saw this intimated in that profound subjectivity and intersubjectivity discovered in “Oda y germinaciones,” as Neruda and Urrutia settle down together, returning to Chile in 1953 and then eventually marrying in 1961, his life and his poetry become committed to celebrating earthly delights and, of course, love.

Perhaps the failure of the conversion and assimilation of eros and philadelfhos comes from Neruda’s lack of recognition of the political potential of eros qua eros.
Eroticism has its own means of contending with the field of political forces, which does not require a conversion to *philadelphos*. Ernesto Cardenal, writing in Nicaragua during the regime of Anastasio Somoza García, would come to recognize *eros*’s potential as the site of an alternative form of social expression, and as a way to act against the totalizing tendencies of authoritarian regimes without necessary recourse to philadelphic mass emotions or the language of epic. Indeed, as Cardenal discovers, *eros* has its own intrinsic collective dimension that allows it to be a source for common expression, even as it is also anti-gregarious in nature. It is to Cardenal’s poetry that I now turn.
CHAPTER 2: ERNESTO CARDENAL AND THE TAO OF LOVE

Ernesto Cardenal might seem a curious addition to a study dealing with love poetry, committed or otherwise. Cardenal wrote the majority of his oeuvre as a celibate Roman Catholic priest, and his poetic style leans more toward imagistic exposition than to sentimental or introspective lyricism. Chilean critic Fernando Alegría goes so far as to categorize him as an “antipoet,” along the same lines as Nicanor Parra, Roque Dalton and Juan Gelman, inheritors of a rhetorical praxis that eschews affective lyric for a more “conversational” style (Literatura y revolución 234). Cardenal is not Neruda, nor is he a Nerudian. Yet there is something of Neruda in Cardenal’s early writings, and by this I am referring not merely to the adolescent imitations of Nerudian lyricism that characterize the poems published in 1948’s Carmen y otros poemas. Both Neruda and Cardenal’s early writings reflect the modernist preoccupation with the poet as an “isolated being,” contending with what Fredric Jameson describes as the “modernist thematics of alienation, anomie, solitude and social fragmentation and isolation” (61). And like Neruda’s Residencia, Cardenal’s poetry employs a “prophetic voice,” in Enrico Mario Santí’s terms, that “embodies a language of authenticity not only summoning men to abide by the principles of their faith, but in doing so with the weight of tradition and with a charged discourse that strips the fictions of innovation” (Pablo Neruda 17).

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21 Alegría defines “antipoetry” as founded on conversational language, the intent to “devolverle al poeta el derecho de expresarse como persona, no como organillo ni como diccionario, ni como vigia del aire […] devolverle el derecho a la conversación” (203). Alegría describes Ramón López-Velarde (1888-1921) as one of Latin America’s first antipoets, who instead of simply opposing the tropes of modernism, opted to “tell” rather than “sing” (204).

22 Eduardo Urdanivia Bertarelli identifies a strong “Nerudian” strain in the poems that Cardenal wrote in 1943-1945, while he participated in the literary salons of the group “Taller San Lucas,” which were later published as the collection Carmen y otros poemas (21). Urdanivia Bertarelli explains: “Cardenal no ha mencionado nunca a Pablo Neruda como una influencia en su poesía, pero las imágenes de ésta son de una factura nerudiana, especialmente del Neruda de Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada” (21). The poem cited in Urdanivia’s essay, entitled “Amor que pasa y no vuelve,” includes lines such as “El arpa de tus pechos fluye sonora en la sombra / tu pelo melodioso es como un pinar al viento” (21).
“prophetic voice” invariably points toward some kind of integration or conversion that resolves the anomie of the modernist poet through a radical displacement of subjectivity.

Both Neruda and Cardenal experience conversion as a lived event, steering their poetic praxis away from modernist isolation.23 To read the early Cardenal, the young poet who spent two years at Columbia University discovering Ezra Pound’s *imagisme*, who (along with Adolfo Baez Bone and Pablo Leal) joined the failed April Conspiracy against Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza García in 1954, who translated Catullus and Martial and wrote a series of love epigrams to the beautiful tyrant “Claudia,” who then underwent a profound religious awakening leading to a vocation to the priesthood, is to read a work burnished and shaped by its passage through a series of personal transitions resulting in a poetry of multiple lyrical subjectivities: the romantic, the revolutionary and the monastic. In these three subjectivities, love is a continuous motif. The Romantic, the Revolutionary and the Monastic are each “motivated by love”: the romantic and revolutionary by *eros* and *philadelphos*, and the monastic by a mystical hybridization of the two that in William Rowe’s words is the result of the “displacement” of the tension between erotic and social love towards “resolution in religious belief structures” (88).

Prior to his entry into the Trappist Monastery in Gethsemani, Kentucky, where he spent two years between 1957 and 1959, *eros* and *philadelphos* were central affective centers of gravity around which he constructed his verse. Rowe points out that in spite of

23 A question arises as to whether Cardenal’s religious experience could be called a “conversion” given that Cardenal’s relationship with Catholicism was long-standing. Borgeson indicates that not only did Cardenal finish his education at a Jesuit school, his earliest poems evoke an “angustiada búsqueda de Diós” (22). Beverley and Zimmerman also count the early influence of Catholic poet Pablo Antonio Cuadra as fostering Cardenal’s interest in religion (66). Rambo and Farhadian, however, use a more flexible definition of conversion that includes so-called “reversions” or intensifications of prior religious affiliations: “Whether it entails converting from one religious tradition to another, changing from one group to another within a tradition, or the intensifying of religious beliefs and practices, instances of conversion can be found in many cultures, historical periods, economic conditions and social categories” (23).
being unable to “resolve” or “harmonize” these two affective experiences, Cardenal approached their tension creatively (88). His Epigramas (1957), written in the aftermath of the failed April Conspiracy and shortly before his entry into religious life, discusses *eros*, not merely *philadelphos*, as an element of revolutionary sensibility and not simply bourgeois conceit. Indeed, one of the text’s unifying themes is an exploration into how *eros* functions within revolutionary praxis, and how its rendering into poetic form can serve a collective purpose beyond the expression of subjective stirrings of emotion. Later, submitting to the rigors of the monastic life radically alters the poet’s concept of *eros* and its relationship to *philadelphos*, not merely by veiling the poet’s erotic impulses under the Cistercian vow of celibacy, but also by shifting the entire ground of subjectivity on which his erotic Romanticism was built. Yet even these monastic poems are not entirely isolated from their social milieu. The poet takes advantage of the ways in which monastic life awakens his consciousness to critique the social and political reality of his country, and also to propose alternative bases for collective interaction through the monastic model. Cardenal reaches two conclusions: that *eros*’s rendering into poetic matter can function as a counter-discourse undermining authoritarian regimes’ stranglehold on public language; and that erotic love possesses its own philadelphic dimension through its objective and universal nature. *Eros* acts as a guiding force in all human and material interaction, a Natural Law or *Tao* that undergirds the movement of the cosmos and that, if permitted to do so, could function as the *logos* of all social interaction, from the erotic couple to the revolutionary nation.

This chapter is interested in three of Cardenal’s early works in which love passes through the romantic, revolutionary, and monastic subjectivities, to investigate how it is
altered by the transitions and how it remains the same. *Epigramas* is fundamentally an erotic Romantic text, with a philadelphic transition not unlike that of Pablo Neruda’s *Los versos del capitán*. In *Gethsemani KY*, and its companion prose work *Vida en el amor* (1960), the poet experiences a further displacement of his eroticism and subjectivity through the linguistic and spatial constrictions of the monastery. In all three texts, the poet’s modernist posture, his “language of authenticity” defines the particular perspective that his early poetry takes towards the interchange of eroticism and social commitment. *Eros*’s spatiality as rendered through the modernist poetic lens exposes the imprint left upon it by a surrounding society that Theodor Adorno calls “hostile, cold and alien” (39). Cardenal’s erotic and monastic poems “evolve the image of a life free from the coercion of reigning practices, of utility, of the struggle for survival” (39). Yet, as mentioned before, neither the erotic nor the monastic texts remain within their respective enclosures. They are all texts oriented towards society, using the particular paradox inherent to *modernismo*: the poet as an isolated being performing a self-acknowledged public role as an artist, to enact a scathing critique of the Somoza regime. These texts, which revolve around Cardenal’s call to religious life, showcase the poet’s strategies for exploiting the tension between *eros* and *philadelphos* to raise collective conscience and create a revolutionary discourse centered on love.

*Epigramas: Erotic Subjectivity in a Dangerous Time*

Within Cardenal’s oeuvre as a whole, *Epigramas* stands out in that at least up until the mid-1980s, few had read the text in its entirety. Ariel Dorfman notes that as of 1984 the amount of epigrams included in anthologies of the poet’s work barely reached 50% (221).
The diffusion of the text as a whole was minimal compared to Cardenal’s epic works. The tendency has been to view *Epigramas* as a kind of “prelude” containing what Dorfman terms “promesas de un esplendor por cumplirse” in later works such as *Cántico cósmico* and *Homenaje a los indios americanos*, a reading that the Chilean critic sees as erroneously presupposing a rupture in the poet’s work (223). Written around the same time as his *chanson de geste* against the Somozas’ *Hora cero*, *Epigramas* is composed primarily of angst-ridden love poetry written in a voice and poetic form reminiscent of the Roman poets Catullus and Martial, translations of whose work are included in the second half of the text’s 1961 Mexican publication. *Epigramas* is also an early attempt by Cardenal to put into practice the poetic philosophies of Ezra Pound, which he had encountered during his studies at Columbia University in 1947—specifically, Pound’s exhortation to “direct treatment of the thing” and ensure there was “no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something” (Urdanivia Bertarelli 29-32).

Dorfman’s attempt to defend the continuity of the text within Cardenal’s oeuvre is part of a larger debate about whether *Epigramas* can truly be considered “political poetry” on the same level as his later works, since as he and Yvette Aparicio note, the text is “dominated by love poetry,” and the erotic romantic voice of the “I, Poet-lover-sometimes activist,” looms over it. Aparicio describes its erotic romantic subjectivity as an “elitist” phenomenon, harking back to Cardenal’s bourgeois literary education, which in her words “grates against the inclusiveness, objectivity and openness” of his political and poetic objectives. The critic goes so far as to argue that the level of the text’s political commitment demonstrated is weak, although it does demonstrate what she calls the

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24 Urdanivia Bertarelli explains the influence of Pound’s poetics on Cardenal further: “creemos que a Cardenal le impresionó el concepto de Pound sobre la poesía como una ciencia y del poeta como un científico de la palabra que da a conocer objetivamente la realidad histórica que vive” (33).
“poet’s struggle to divest him/herself of an elitist I, and adopt a more appropriate voice for a politicized speaker who advocates radical social transformation.” Aparicio’s contrasts with that of Claire Pailler, who suggests that the love poetry frames a kind of “chanson de geste” against Somoza, who provides its unifying force: “L’unité du livre, indéniable, vient d’ailleurs: de cette constante présence d’une voix, de l’affirmation passionnée d’un être-là, ici et maintenant, au Nicaragua, Somoza régnante” (111). Each critic favours one end of the text over the other: Pailler as a primarily political work; Aparicio, as less political than it ought to be, implying that erotic romantic subjectivity is an inherently reactionary phenomenon, inappropriate for articulating collective struggle.

This chapter sides more with Pailler, for Latin American poetry rarely conforms to the either/or model of historic realism / reactionary subjectivity that has been at the center of the confluence of art and politics from the Frankfurt School Brecht/Lukacs debate in the 1920s to the critical writings of Hugo Achúgar, Enrique Foffani, and Fernando Alegría in Latin America well into the 1990s. Indeed, as Rosa Sarabia explains, Latin American literature, even at its most experimental, always “pensó históricamente” (118). At the same time, the poetry of the twentieth century, including Cardenal whose exteriorismo seems more directly Lukacsian, is closer to Brecht’s position, invoking a multiplicity of “objective” and “imaginative” forms through which “one can arouse a sense of outrage at inhuman conditions” (Brecht 83). Even modernismo, dominated by erotic subjectivity and the notion of the artist as set apart from society, comprised poets involved in a type of social project. Argentine poet Leopoldo Lugones articulates the social nature of his “artistic” poems in the prologue to Lunario Sentimental:

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25 Sarabia in particular explores this multiplicity of elements in Cardenal’s work, describing it as an “encrucijada de varias conformaciones culturales, un híbrido donde dominan una suerte de regionalismo superado; el aporte de la modernidad en su tecnología y el pujar de nuevas estructuras sociales” (119).
Cardenal’s romantic subject in Epigramas is very aware of the social dimension of the poetic vocation as described by Lugones. The poet has a privileged role in social discourse as the one in charge of the refinement and maintenance of language, “that most solid element of nationalities” (99).

As Urdanivia Bertarelli indicates, Cardenal’s view of the poetic vocation coincides with that of Lugones. The poet is “una especie de ente elegido para ser el representante de la raza humana,” charged with the refinement and maintenance of language (32). Such a role neither excludes erotic Romanticism nor insists upon historic realism as the only viable means for the poet to engage with society. Rather, the modernist vision of the artist as a “consecrated” being, with pure and hallowed motives, creates an alternative space through which the corruption of the social milieu is exposed. Julio Ramos associates this particular idealized self-concept with the poets of the nineteenth century beginning with José Martí and Andrés Bello, who saw in poetry an idealized space from which rationalized and interested social relations could be examined and critiqued, a concept that would carry into the Latin Americanist ideologies of the twentieth century. Ramos explains:

26 Angel Rama, similarly, argues that modernismo was inherently a social phenomenon, born primarily out of the need for poets to defend their usefulness in a liberalized society ruled by “los principios de competencia, la ganancia y la productividad” (56).
27 Urdanivia Bertarelli argues that this similarity was not coincidental, that Cardenal was already familiar with Lugones’s philosophies on the role of the poet in society: “la concepción de Lugones sobre los mismas temas, que Cardenal sin duda conocía dada la importancia del poeta argentino en el mundo literario de lengua española. Esa necesidad de testificar sobre la circunstancia histórica era sentida por Cardenal de modo imperativo” (33).
The same impetus behind rationalization, the one that had negated the authority of letters, generated by exclusion the very space devalued by Hostos: the space out of which the literary subject would emerge. This subject would find a voice through the contradiction and critique of rationalization; this voice would be charged with a spiritual value precisely in a disenchanted and mercantilized world. (46)

The lyrical subject in the modernist poem speaks, and defines himself, in opposition to the alienating milieu from which he emerges. It is no coincidence that Adorno’s treatise on lyric poetry and society, which precisely defends the subjective voice in poetry reacting against “the reification of society and the dominion of merchandise,” was written at a time when the poetic art was most associated with the Romantic and modernist modes, the pursuit of beauty and purity. Adorno argues that “the demand that the lyric word be virginal […] implies a protest against a social situation that every individual perceives as hostile, alien, cold oppressive” (39). This modernist contrast is a constant theme in Cardenal’s poetics, from the purely motivated artist of Epigramas to the praying lyrical subject of “Oración a Marilyn Monroe” to the monastic subject of Gethsemani KY. Indeed, in spite of its sparing use of rhetorical devices or lyrical ornamentation, Epigramas could be classified a modernist text, comparable to Martí’s Versos Sencillos and Ismaelillo in its portrayal of the poet as an alienated prophet of art. Cardenal’s epigrammist transplants his modernist sensibilities to a different but no less alienating milieu, Nicaraguan society under the regime of the Somozas.

John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman note that Cardenal came of age as a poet when the Nicaraguan regime of Anastasio Somoza García, who had been in power since the assassination of Augusto Sandino in 1937, had consolidated its dominion. The regime which had at times put on the veneer of democracy, holding elections such as the one in 1951 that saw Somoza elected for a six year term he never finished, became
progressively more authoritarian and corrupt, effectively losing the support of the middle and Conservative sectors, including “artists and intellectuals—whose emergence was due to the relative prosperity that accompanied import substitution economics during the Second World War” (64). Somoza García’s response to the growing opposition from the middle sectors was to increase repression. According to Javier Gavlán, the Guardia Nacional and the Nicaraguan military formed the core of Somoza’s power. During Somoza García’s reign, its function expanded from military operations to controlling “all the national radio and telegraph networks, the postal service, the immigration office, all public health clinics and hospitals, the internal revenue service, and the national railroad system.” He further explains that “it was the Guardia Nacional that repressed all government opposition movements, quashed the revolutionaries such as Sandino, and even tortured political dissidents” (109). Somoza García’s regime thus created a repressive intellectual atmosphere, closing opposition papers or forcing their support, suppressing critical publications as well as arresting and torturing journalists and writers.

Cardenal himself, in an interview with Margaret Randall, describes the effect of Somoza’s censorship on the publication of Epigramas:

I’d been publishing in magazines, but I couldn’t publish the political epigrams, for example, even outside Nicaragua under my own name. Because, under Somoza García’s dictatorship, press censorship was much worse than under the other Somozas. The other Somozas were forced to let up to some extent. They allowed at least veiled attacks in La Prensa. But Somoza García wouldn’t even tolerate a joke. During his first year in power he even forced the opposition papers to publish articles in his favor. A paper could be closed down indefinitely for the slightest uncomplimentary allusion to his person. (97)

Somoza’s tactics forced the opposition to become, in Beverley and Zimmerman’s words, “more desperate, attempting a series of abortive coups like the so-called April Conspiracy of 1954” (65). The April Conspiracy was an attempt against Somoza by what Cardenal,
cited in Paul Borgeson’s biography, calls “un pequeño partido de jóvenes, muy revolucionario” (40), which Beverley and Zimmerman describe as “a clandestine group of young people from good Conservative families” (65). According to Cardenal, the conspiracy headed by Adolfo Baez Bone and Pablo Leal involved a “plan muy vasto de acabar con Somoza,” in which the conspirators would take control of the presidential palace: “Íbamos a subir a la Casa Presidencial la noche 3 de abril, pero el plan no se llevó a cabo esa noche; al día siguiente fuimos descubiertos y los líderes principales fueron torturados ferozmente” (Borgeson 40).28

*Epigramas*’s “hybridity” is thus a product of two factors. First, there are the poet’s own erotic and philadephic “passions” of the 1950s: “los enamoramientos,” of which, according to Borgeson, there were many, and “la pasión política” in which he was heavily engaged between his return to Nicaragua from the United States in 1950 and his entry into the monastery (44). Second, there is the social repression of the Somoza regime that weighs heavily on the text. Though dominated by erotic Romanticism, *Epigramas* cannot be divorced from the social milieu from which it emerged. Love poems are politicized by their mere emergence as public forms of language in a repressive context; the poet’s subjective alienation is as much due to political as amorous factors. Indeed, the text is not merely a passive form of resistance, an upraised middle finger to Somoza’s discursive control; it is an active one, a declaration of war on the terrain of language.

Urdanivia Bertarelli notes that in the eyes of Cardenal, the political milieu in which

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28 Jesús Mañú Iragui gives a more detailed explanation of Cardenal’s role in the April Conspiracy “El plan, en el que tomaron parte varios ex-oficiales del ejército, consistía en capturar durante la noche al dictador en su propio palacio, y allí mismo asumir el poder. El papel de Cardenal debía ser vigilar y confirmar el retorno de Somoza al palacio después de asistir a una fiesta en la Embajada norteamericana” (15). Somoza García would eventually be assassinated two years later, in 1956, by poet Rigoberto López Pérez, and succeeded by his own son Luis Somoza Debayle.
Catullus flourished—one in which state power had congregated in the hands of the imperators—had much in common with his own Nicaragua under the Somozas, who ruled the country like a family of Caesars with “una concentración de poder y la riqueza en las manos del propio Somoza y otras pocas familias allegadas a él” (Urdanivia Bertarelli 52). While drawing on Catullus’s eroticism and sharp social commentary, Cardenal also fully utilizes what Urdanivia Bertarelli describes as “la posibilidad infinita del epigrama para el ataque y la burla, para una causa no solo amorosa sino del carácter social que involucra el yo del poeta y las voces de una sociedad entera” (53).

Cardenal’s formal strategy uses the classical epigram to create a link between Nicaragua and Imperial Rome, thus attacking Somoza by inference. William Rowe’s analysis of Epigramas picks up on this. Rowe defends the poet’s erotic epigrams as not solely Adornian inversions, but also as forms of contextual criticism. For Rowe, Cardenal uses a model derived from first-century Latin poets such as Martial and Catullus that precludes any division between the subjective and the social, as these divisions were later social constructs. Thus “Love and politics occur in the same space without variation of the voice” (89). Displacing energy from love to politics, either across individual poems or in the same poem as in the epigram “Me contaban que estabas enamorada de otro,” does not preclude any pre-existing continuity between them. The poet’s internal and external concerns dovetail, making the text too erotic to be fully collectivist, too pressed in by history to exclude the political from the erotic territory. Rowe goes on to argue that Cardenal’s rationale in using these Latin models was to critique Nicaraguan society in which the Somoza dictatorship obstructed the full expression of a private subjectivity.
Urdanivia Bertarelli’s “involvement of the poetic I and the voices of an entire society” (53) brings up the issue of philadelphos and how it relates to a text statistically dominated by erotic poems, as Pailler indicates. While Cardenal’s text mirrors Neruda’s in that the erotic is modified and softened by the philadelphic, the Somoza regime’s suppression of a private discourse of subjectivity creates a situation in which erotic language articulates both the personal and the social simultaneously. Indeed, not only does the regime’s repressive atmosphere make philadelphic Romantic subjectivity a risky discursive tactic, it also produces its own, competing forms of philadelphic discourse through its own interpretation of nationalism disseminated through mass media of which the regime had complete control. Epigramas responds by making public and intimate communication converge, having them work within one another to undermine the discursive chaos created by the Somoza regime’s dominion over public discourse. In Epigramas, Cardenal employs the modernist concept of the poetic vocation epitomized in Lugones’s description of the poet as “El encargado” charged with “finding” beauty and “expressing it with clarity and concision.” Cardenal’s epigrammist puts together an alternative public discourse by collecting intimate speech acts as public language forms.

From The Parabola To the Nation

Although the lack of numbers or titles for the text’s fifty epigrams implies a random structure, and indeed according to Borgeson the epigrams were written over the entire seven-year period the poet spent in Nicaragua and not published in book form until the

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1961 Mexican edition, they are syntactically linked to each other, suggesting conscious editorial decisions on the poet’s part. Ariel Dorfman’s syntactic reading of the epigrams treats them as strands that call and respond to one another. Though only three of the text’s epigrams bear Claudia’s name, Dorfman argues that the relationship with Claudia provides a narrative arc or “parabola” determining the first nine poems, which he defines as “la evolución de un solo amor” (231). That relationship’s failure causes the arc’s poetic unity to shatter into lyric fragments that reappear in subsequent epigrams “con parecidas fluctuaciones, vaivenes y ajustes del poeta ante la plenitud, el malogramiento, la promesa de algo mejor” (231). Examination of the parabolic cycle also reveals a similar construction to Pablo Neruda’s Los versos del capitán, in which eros, rendered in poetry as a discursive enclosure, opens to philadelphia due to a crisis in an amorous relationship. The erotic Romantic “Yo” of Epigramas is a poet aware of the way in which his vocation adds a public dimension even to erotic Romantic subjectivity.

The text begins with three poems addressed to “Claudia,” in which an erotic enclosure is constructed and then later rendered public matter by the poet’s specialized vocation. The three Claudia epigrams reveal a progression in the lyrical subject’s consciousness of that vocation and its public implications. Initially in lines one and two, and as in Neruda’s verses to Rosario, the lyrical subject writes poems principally for the purpose of giving them to his intended:

Te doy Claudia, estos versos, porque tú eres su dueña. 
Los he escrito sencillos para que tú los entiendas. 
Son para ti solamente, pero si a ti no te interesan, 
un día se divulgarán, tal vez por toda Hispanoamérica. (46)

He does not yet declare himself a “poet” in any kind of public role, but rather the one who “made these for you,” presenting the verses to her with the sensibility of a timid
lover trying to impress his paramour by giving her something of himself. He seeks that the poems be understood by their intended recipient and that his erotic sentiment be reciprocated. Claudia mediates between the lyrical speaker’s emotions and the language forms into which he “intones” them in Adorno’s sense of the term. Claudia’s subjectivity is thus doubly subsumed, first into the Romantic’s “Earth”—in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, the conjunction of forces upon which he draws his territorial assemblage—and second into the modernist poet’s impetus for creation. Claudia’s primary role is as both muse and interlocutor. Like Rosario in Neruda’s Los versos, within the erotic space of the poem she exists as simultaneously the “Earth” or “Terrain” founding the poet’s creation, and the “only other,” “The Woman” who hears and receives it.

Yet, because the lyrical subject is a poet, this enclosure is simultaneously a public and private construction. According to Adorno, this is the “paradox specific to the lyric work, a subjectivity that turns in to objectivity” (43) that he describes as “tied to the priority of linguistic form in the lyric.” Adorno continues:

> It is that priority from which the primacy of language in literature in general (even in prose forms) is derived. For language is itself something double. Through its configurations it assimilates itself completely into subjective impulses; one would almost think it had produced them. But at the same time language remains the medium of concepts, remains that which establishes an inescapable relationship to the universal and to society. Hence the highest lyric works are those in which the subject, with no remaining trace of mere matter, sounds forth in language until language itself acquires a voice. (43)

Through its rendering into aesthetic language, the enclosure becomes externalized and part of the social discourse that surrounds and connects all members of a linguistic or territorial group. Octavio Paz similarly describes this process as the poetic “consecration of the instant”: “el poema no abstrae la experiencia: ese tiempo está vivo, es un instante henchido de toda su particularidad irreductible y es perpetuamente susceptible de
repetirse en otro instante, de reengendrarse e iluminar con su luz nuevos instantes, nuevas experiencias” (“El arco y la lira” 233). Through this “consecration,” the lovers’ enclosure is preserved yet also accessible to the public, the way a stage set might contain every detail of a private living room from the dried flowers in a vase to the chintz curtains, to the emotional rages firing back and forth between its occupants. If Claudia refuses to acknowledge the poet’s intimate communication, an option presented in line three, that communication, as a “consecrated” affective moment, is diverted outward to larger territories. Cardenal’s particular term “Hispanoamérica” emphasizes a geographic as well as a linguistic space, a discursive territory through which the poems travel and produce the same kind of “loving feelings” in others. While the poet may not be able to affect Claudia’s feelings for him, he can affect the feelings of others, impressing other potential paramours into loving him, and forming other couples by inspiring love in readers.

This same “consecration” and “making public” of the erotic enclosure is reiterated in the second and third Claudia epigrams. Epigram 2 comes with a warning, with the phrases “Cuídate Claudia” in the first line, and “Claudia ya te aviso” in the last, advising the beloved that her gestures in the intimacy of the lover’s company are poised to become fodder for study and public memory, just as his own “verses” were in the prior epigram:

Cuídate, Claudia cuando estés conmigo, 
porque el gesto más leve, cualquier palabra, un suspiro  
de Claudia, el menor descuido, 
tal vez un día lo examinen eruditos 
Y este baile de Claudia se recuerde por siglos 
Claudia, ya te lo aviso. (46)

Claudia’s “gestos,” “palabras,” “susiros,” and “baile,” like the poet’s “simple verses,” are generated spontaneously through genuine emotion and intended for the lover alone as her contribution to the erotic enclosure. The poet’s vocation, however, causes these
expressions to be “consecrated” and then historicized, inscribed with temporal significance and subject to scholarly scrutiny. The result is a near complete eradication of inter-subjectivity between lover and beloved. Claudia becomes a text. The poet becomes her “author,” possessing, through his art, a will-to-memory. It is he who decides what will be remembered or forgotten, what of Claudia will continue to exist and what will be consigned to oblivion. The erotic enclosure he constructs will transcend both himself and the beloved, becoming an objective reality of which she will ultimately have no control.

Cardenal’s construction of the erotic enclosure, however, is inscribed with a specific purpose, as an Adornian inversion of the corrupt agora or reified modern world. This objective is discussed in the third “Claudia” epigram, “De estos cines, Claudia, de estas fiestas.” Here Cardenal sets up a modernist dichotomy between the erotic enclosure and other social milieus such as the cinema, parties, and horse races. These activities indicate the milieu in which Claudia moves. Claudia’s love life occurs in a series of territories where eros is sublimated in entertaining performances and substitutions: films (where love is a literal performance), parties (a public terrain where performances of flirtation begin the love process), and horse races (which simulate sexual pursuit.) All erotic “substitutions” are consigned to oblivion through the poet’s public role and will-to-memory, leaving nothing behind but the poet’s verses. A dichotomy is thus presented between the false, interested love of the agora’s social milieus, and the genuine eroticism of the enclosure, steeped in disinterested passion. The former is associated with Claudia; the latter, with the poet. Claudia’s upper-class social activities are to be “written out” of the poem as they belong to the very sphere against which that the poet places himself in
dialectical opposition. The erotic space is founded on authentic expressions of *eros*, and only these shall be preserved.

Through the description of Claudia’s “love territories” and the poet’s rejection of them, the epigram differentiates two types of *eros* and subsequently two types of *philadelphos* that will be further explored throughout the text and throughout the monastic works: first, a false or inauthentic love, associated with the agora, in which erotic or philadelphic affects and language stem from ambition, greed or vice; and second, a genuine *eros* and *philadelphos*, associated with the enclosure, expressed through aesthetic forms and steeped in disinterested passion. The former is associated erotically with Claudia and philadelphically with Somoza; the latter, especially in the erotic dimension, is associated with the poet, as he is the architect of the erotic space. The erotic enclosure becomes, itself, a manifestation of modernist “alternative space,” a territory called into being by art and governed by the law of love, excluding all interested eroticisms. We see this particularly in Epigram 5:

> Al perderte yo a ti tú y yo hemos perdido:  
> yo porque tú eras lo que yo más amaba  
> y tú porque yo era el que te amaba más.  
> Pero de nosotros dos tú pierdes más que yo:  
> porque yo podré amar a otras como te amaba a ti  
> pero a ti no te amarán como te amaba yo. (49)

Epigram 5 reflects the purity/corruption dialectic between the erotic enclosure and the world, and simultaneously Claudia’s belonging to the latter. Echoing Gustavo Adolfo Becquer’s “Volverán las oscuras golondrinas,” the poem is tightly structured; the same nouns, verbs, prepositions and conjunctions bounce back and forth in a perfect discursive enclosure, a square-shaped cell even in its typography, forbidding the entry of any others: “tú, yo, perder, amar, más.”
In Ariel Dorfman’s analysis of the parabola, Epigram 5 represents the “crisis point” in the relationship, the moment of the couple’s breakup, which precipitates the subsequent changes in the poet’s focus and orientation. This emotional tension is reflected in the poem’s remarkable structural elements. Epigram 5 is a chiasmus, an x pattern in which lines are inverted in order. Lines one and four set up the reality of both lovers in a “nosotros” statement, which lines two to three and five to six expand upon with a single verse description of each member of the couple’s reality. Lines one to three establish how each member of the couple’s fate is similar, while lines four to six establish how it differs. The chiasmus pattern is visible in lines two to three and five to six:

Yo porque tú eras lo que yo más amaba
Tú porque yo era lo que te amaba más.

porque yo podrá amar a otras como te amaba a ti
pero a ti no te amarán como te amaba yo.

The chiasmus marked by the repetition of “yo” and “tú” reflects the conflicted nature of the dyadic relationship. The poet and his beloved only have one line in which they are brought together in any kind of union, a union of losses described at the outset. The second nosotros line divides the pair into unique destinies. The Romantic subject, the architect of the “purified” enclosure, is the source of eros; the beloved, brought into the erotic enclosure from the “corrupt outside,” is its destination. Thus although their positions in lines two and three and five and six are grammatically transposed, their fundamental roles remain the same. The “yo” is the subject of the various forms of “amar”; the beloved is the object. In Luce Irigaray’s words, the utterance constructs the relationship in terms of “transitivity,” of the “sacrifice of one subjectivity to another” through the taking of the other as “a direct object” (I Love to You 110). Similarly, in the
poem’s final lines, the lyrical speaker attempts to assert control over the future. It is not enough that Claudia will be remembered as a ninny, a floozy, or both: the poet goes so far as to prophesize her sentimental demise, condemning her with the harsh use of the simple future tense “no te amarán” (“You will not be loved”), in contrast with the more modulated prediction he makes for himself, “yo podrá amar a otras,” softened by the use of the modal “poder.” Indeed the poet can “love another” because he has the power to create a purified erotic space steeped in authentic feeling. Claudia, on the other hand, seeks the interested _eros_ of the agora, in which—as in epigram 9—erotic unions are contingent on a bourgeois exchange of material goods for sexual and reproductive favours: “Ella fue vendida a Kelly & Martínez Cía Ltda., / y muchos le enviarán regalos de plata” (50). The poet, source of authentic _eros_, will find another destination for his passion: not only the “otras” of this poem, but also the people in general.³⁰

Following the crisis and breakdown of the relationship, the poet’s focus begins to shift from the beloved to his environs:

> Me contaban que estabas enamorada de otro
> Y entonces fui a mi cuarto
> Y escribí ese artículo contra el gobierno
> Por el que estoy preso. (49)

While Epigram 8 continues from the three previous poems of the parabola in which the lyrical speaker laments Claudia’s abandonment and lack of appreciation for his poetical skills, the poem also prefigures the shift that takes places as the relationship dissolves.

Epigram 8 presents an alternative trajectory to the previous poems, in which communication generated from within the erotic enclosure was extended outward. Here,  

³⁰ Cardenal takes this dualistic pattern straight from the final stanza of Bécquer’s poem. Unlike Cardenal, Bécquer does not impute interested motives to the beloved. In Bécquer, the poet’s love is pure because it is contemplative and worshipful: “pero mudo y absorto y de rodillas / como se adora a Dios ante su altar / como yo te he querido..., desengañate: / ¡así no te querrán!”
by contrast, something pertaining to the couple enters from outside, via an alternative form of public communication, the dissemination of gossip. The erotic enclosure becomes a kind of shortcut between two points on the continuum of public discourse: gossip, the information given to the poet regarding Claudia’s new love affair; and journalism, the article that the poet writes against Somoza as a vent for his frustration. In Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual framework, gossip represents a “molecular” system of communication, in which information is in constant motion, passing along informal chains of conversations, while journalism constitutes a “molar” system, sedentary and organized, in which information is passed from depersonalized sources to a mass audience through established distribution organs (299-301). The existence of such a “shortcut” between one form of public speech and another lends itself to two basic interpretations: either the poet is a lousy revolutionary, or a brilliant one. The causal link between hearing the news, writing the article, and ending up in prison is so disjunctive as to be nearly humorous, making the lyrical speaker comically unsuccessful both as activist and lover. This is Yvette Aparicio’s interpretation, when she argues that it “relegates [the article] to the sphere of jilted love,” reducing the political engagement of the poet to erotic grandstanding or revenge.

This poem’s contrast between gossip and journalism, and its handcuffing erotics and politics together in an unexpected cause-and-effect relationship, might not be as apolitical as Aparicio proposes. The anti-government article lands the poet in prison, a metonymic piece of information that points, however indirectly, to the reality of public discourse under the Somoza regime. The lyrical speaker’s motives for writing the article and his engagement or lack thereof aside, such an extreme trajectory, from being jealous
of his ex-girlfriend to ending up behind bars, indicates the chaos of the regime that presses in on it, where the weight of the law falls heavily on anyone questioning the regime through established organs of communication. In such a discursive atmosphere, the relationship between *eros* and politics, gossip and journalism, changes. If gossip is primarily a vehicle for transmitting erotic news, and journalism for transmitting political news, when journalism is under strict state controls, gossip then becomes the only means by which political news can be successfully transmitted. By hiding in the constantly moving molecular system of gossip, political information can avoid the repressive state apparatus. Political news can hide in the erotic field not only because of its fluidity, which makes repression difficult and requires a complex network of neighbourhood spies, but also because, as Aparicio proves even in her criticism of Cardenal, erotic news is not taken seriously enough to repress. In epigram 8, the real story is not that the poet’s girlfriend is in love with someone else, but that the poet is writing from prison for challenging Somoza. Cardenal buries this “lede” in the second two lines of the epigram, underemphasizing them by using a dyadic conversation addressing his lost love.

The “gossip/journalism” transposition introduced in epigram 8 is part of a larger change within the text as the parabola comes to an end. The breakdown of the initial relationship leads the text into a philadelphic transition. In Cardenal’s text, as in Neruda’s, the poet attains a kind of peace in the erotic sphere by displacing some of his energy over to revolutionary concerns. The love epigrams after the parabola are thus less heated by possessiveness and erotic Romantic narcissism. The lyrical subject’s relationship to the beloved is more egalitarian and inter-subjective. Political issues also enter the text more directly. Eventually, epigrams of denunciation begin to appear
interspersed with the erotic ones, while the erotic epigrams are themselves impressed with political subject matter. The lyrical speaker expresses himself as a revolutionary as well as romantic subject. His lyrical vocation, and the erotic enclosures he creates, are applied dialectically against the regime of Somoza.

The eleventh and thirteenth epigrams present *eros* in a slightly different role, as a check rather than support for the poet’s newly introduced revolutionary subjectivity. Epigram 11 contrasts the poetic speaker’s love and political experience with three lines addressing the former, and two lines addressing the latter. In the first three lines, the poet confronts Somoza’s National Guard without fear, but passing his beloved’s house provokes physical symptoms of anxiety:

> Yo he repartido papeletas clandestinas
> Gritando ¡VIVA LA LIBERTAD! En plena calle
> Desafiando a los guardias armados
> Pero palidezco cuando paso por tu casa
> Y tu sola mirada me hace temblar. (50)

This contrast of emotional states, besides echoing the love/war theme of the classical epigram, is also reminiscent of Spanish Renaissance poetry, in particular the sonnets of Garcilaso de la Vega in which the warrior poet compares his strength in battle to his weakness before the gaze of the beloved. The contrast between the bravery he experiences in his revolutionary activities and the trepidation in his romantic ones reiterates love’s tense relationship with political reality, or what Paul Borgeson calls “La desunión dentro del texto” (44). On the one hand, the erotic sphere is the only place where the poet can truly encounter his own subjectivity and vulnerability. In contrast, the wider space of the “plena calle,” contaminated by Somoza’s presence, requires Neruda’s “resolute heart,” a philadelphic passion walling him off from tender or subtle emotions.
Eros is a thus a humanizing factor, but it leaves the revolutionary vulnerable and introduces an element of contingency and uncertainty into a monolithic public identity. Love is not the banner the revolutionary carries with him into battle, but rather the thing that could get him in trouble, which causes him fear and even dangerous distraction.

Ernesto Cardenal handles this tension by, in Rowe’s terms, causing eros to “[enter] the political sphere and in doing so [asserting] an alternative politics” (192). For Rowe, Cardenal’s rationale is that “the very idea of a public sphere in which social necessities can be made visible and debated is lacking and has to be invented” (192). This is true, but it is only part of the story. Somoza’s regime not only prevented the flow of public communication and democratic debate, it also appropriated public language including philadelphic expressions of nationalism and patriotism. Indeed, Javier Galván notes that Somoza liked to style himself as a kind of populist, making himself accessible to the general population and even receiving “average citizens in his personal office at the presidential office in Managua” (111). To construct a philadelphic counter-discourse to Somoza would be to fall into the trap of “contestatory art,” described by Nelly Richard as “remaining inscribed within the same linear duality of a Manichean construction of meaning” (4). Basically, Cardenal would not only be exposing himself to direct censure by the National Guard, he would be mimicking Somoza’s own discursive practices by inverting them. Cardenal, as has been demonstrated already, prefers the modernist approach, the creation of alternative spaces using a purified eros’s dialectical function as a foundation. This preference explains epigram 13’s particular opening line, which reads as a direct repudiation both of Neruda, and indeed of the philadelphic Romanticism of Neruda’s political verse. There is a sense that in order to remain “pure,” the poet must
speak from the erotic enclosure, launching his critique indirectly through an
acknowledgement of the public nature of the poetic vocation. To write simply in
philadelphic/populist tones would make Cardenal both an imitator of Somoza and open to
corruption from the temptations of “false loves.”

Epigram 13 neatly divides into two contestatory statements that reject the
temptations of false philadelphos, which is merely a mask for the ambition for glory, and
false eros, which masks the desire for wealth; the former is a temptation for the poet, the
latter for the beloved. Both are a temptation for Somoza:

Yo no canto la defensa de Stalingrado
ni la campaña de Egipto
ni el desembarco de Sicilia
ni la cruzada del Rhin del general Eisenhower. (52)

The same poet who, in epigram 1, could affect public space by publishing his love poems
to Claudia now refuses a public role with all its attendant glory, preferring instead to
write intimate verse “for a girl,” choosing the pure eros of the enclosure over the
corruptible philadelphos of the agora, or the public sphere. There is an implicit link
between the self-aggrandizing acts of “epic poets” too proud to write poems about girls,
and Somoza who erects statues to himself and puts his name on everything from the
stadium it sits in to the street where its located. The “Statue of Somoza in Somoza
Stadium” (Epigram 30 [59]) represents the dictator’s inescapable presence in the agora
and the corrupting effects of that presence, the breakdown of collective signs and
meanings: a statue that should be a philadelphic symbol of the loving interchange
between the “orchestrator” and “people,” becomes instead an exercise in futility and
Orwellian Doublethink, erected by the dictator out of hatred for the people who will
simply tear it down. Somoza’s temptation and the poet’s are the same.
Whoever attempts to be the philadelphic “epic” poet of great historical events runs the risk of corrupting language by grasping at prosperity. He must remain in the erotic enclosure, only speaking to the agora from and through it. At the same time, the beloved rejects those temptations that lead Claudia into the arms of her socially-approved bourgeois husband (cars, jewellery, perfumes, and other material pleasures), being “conquered” rather by the poet’s creative expressions of authentic eros. Somoza’s appearance at the end stands as a signifier of both “false loves.” He is wealthy, possessing “millions”—described in the following epigram as having “worked twenty years to collect twenty million pesos” (52)—and he is powerful, controlling the masses through brute force and false praises of himself disseminated in the public media as described in epigram 41 (69). By rejecting their contingent temptations, the couple also rejects Somoza and the model of false love he presents. The lyrical speaker is able to speak on behalf of the people through his individual sentiment rather than the ambitious philadelphos of “Poet-Prophets” such as Neruda. This creates a more authentic philadelphos through eros’s intrinsic gregarious dimension. Because the experience of falling in love and forming a couple is a common one, eros becomes the source of a different collective unity not predicated on nationalist or politicized sentiment: the philadelphos-in-eros. This new, more authentic philadelphos, in turn, deepens the erotic link between lover and beloved by transforming the enclosure from a Romantic to an intersubjective structure. Thus, in a reversal of epigram 5, the poet allows himself to become a loved object in the final line of the poem saying “Ella me prefiere, aunque soy pobre, a los millones de Somoza.”
Rather than appropriating a philadelphic romantic subjectivity à la Neruda, Cardenal combines authentic erotic subjectivity and the public role of poetry as a means to speak philadelphically, appealing to philadelphia, the universal experience of eroticism, as a means to articulate collective realities. The poet’s sensitivity to those collective realities, in turn, makes his lyrical voice more intersubjective towards both the people and the beloved. The erotic enclosure becomes metonymic. The couple speaks to the nation as a whole by speaking of and to one another. The denunciation of Somoza occurs, not through a philadelphic call to arms but by exposing the dictator’s incursion into their purified erotic enclosure, which Rowe describes as “politics [invading] with violence and shame all areas of life” (91).

Epigram 38 demonstrates the effects of Somoza’s invasion on the erotic enclosure. The poem is structured as a conversation between lover and beloved that could be read as either a monologue by the erotic subject or a dialogue between the two. Romantic and intersubjective readings are both possible, “amor mío” and “casita” indicating a feminine voice, counterbalancing the masculine: “se publique mi libro o vayamos los dos.” I prefer the second reading as it indicates the increasing intersubjectivity of the lyrical voice that compensates for the gendered reading of affective vs. vocational language. These “feminine voiced” cues, particularly the repetition of “amor mío” in the second and final lines, also create sonically an erotic enclosure in which the couple spins out their hopes for their future together:

Tal vez nos casemos este año
amor mío y tengamos una casita.
Tal vez se publique mi libro
o nos vayamos los dos al extranjero.
Tal vez caiga Somoza, amor mío. (62)
The dialogue is loaded with tender emotion, desire, hope, and expectation. Such a soft build-up increases the impact of the poem’s final line. Somoza violently invades that private conversation through the beloved’s mention of his name as another fantasy of happiness for the couple along with marriage and buying a house. Against the couple’s wishes, Somoza becomes an ineludible element of their reality. His presence in the public sphere precludes the consolidation of the erotic enclosure through marriage and the founding of a household, as well as the public expression of that enclosure through the publication of the poet’s works. Indeed, Somoza’s appearance in the final line works retrospectively against the rest of the epigram, undermining the couple’s earlier wishes. The lyrical speaker’s desire to publish his work is no longer the wistful desire of a working poet, but rather an expression of anxiety that he is unable to do so in the repressive atmosphere of the regime. Similarly, the possibility of “going abroad” is now not just because they want to travel together, but because they may need to go into political exile. Somoza is in the couple’s private life, preventing them from extending or expanding their relationship, as well as the public sphere, preventing the poet from publishing. Any real “closure” of the enclosure is impossible. The poet’s response becomes to fight invasion with invasion, to denounce Somoza from within by drawing on intimate communication forms.

Epigram 41 is structured similarly to Epigram 38, framed in terms of an intimate conversation. Here the couple is poring over the newspaper together:

¿No has leído, amor mío, en Novedades: 
CENTINELA DE LA PAZ, GENIO DEL TRABAJO, 
PALADIN DE LA DEMOCRACIA EN AMÉRICA, 
DEFENSOR DEL CATOLICISMO EN AMERICA, 
EL PROTECTOR DEL PUEBLO, 
EL BENEFACtor?
Le saquean al pueblo su lenguaje.
Y falsifican las palabras del pueblo.
(Exactamente como el dinero del pueblo)
Por eso los poetas pulimos tanto un poema
Por eso son importantes mis poemas de amor. (63)

Once again Somoza intrudes upon the conversation in the form of effusive and false epithets printed in Novedades, one of the country’s opposition papers that according to Cardenal was forced to print praises of Somoza or be shut down (Randall 91). Newspaper headlines often appear in Cardenal’s poems so as to provide linguistic snapshots that reflect the temporal flow of political reality. As Alfredo Veiravé notes, Cardenal uses newspapers as “information sources” “para suministrar al lector datos verosímiles propuestos como narraciones de hechos sucedidos” (86). Newspapers also provide points of entry or invasion into the intimate sphere by the regime. Here Somoza, through the news organs that members of the public consume in their own homes, attempts to shape both public language and private perception of himself. These self-aggrandizing headlines are expressions of the dictator’s “false philadelphos,” the attempt to construct himself as a “Paladin of democracy,” “benefactor,” and “protector of the people,” whose actions stem from genuine philadelphic love, and to mask his true desire to “orchestrate” their affects to secure his high position.

The poet responds to these headlines by turning to and addressing his beloved, telling a truth through erotic subjectivity that he is prevented from saying elsewhere. Here, as in epigram 8, gossip and journalism are brought together. The former is introduced and characterized in the first line by the phrase “No has leído, amor mío,” which not only indicates the information to follow as gossip proper, but also locates the conversation within the erotic enclosure. The latter is brought in via Somoza’s headlines,
which are revealed as the content of the couple’s conversation. Gossip—generally associated with rumour and falsehood—becomes the only means for truth to be exposed. Journalism, originally a reliable source of objective truth, has now become a medium for state-sanctioned falsehoods and doublethink. Journalism, under the regime’s discursive control and belonging to the corrupt agora, simply repeats the self-aggrandizement that the dictator demands. Gossip, private conversation from within the erotic enclosure, is the only vehicle through which to utter the truth.

Upon establishing Somoza’s headlines as philadelphic manipulation, and transposing gossip and journalism’s relations to objective truth given the regime’s corruption of language, Cardenal then proposes poetry as an alternative means of communication. The vocation of the poet is to make things public, including intimate exchanges within the erotic enclosure. By “writing love poetry,” truths shared in private conversations can be pushed back into the public sphere. To contradict Somoza’s falsehoods to his beloved in a private conversation is insufficient; the poet has to take these protests against the regime to its own terrain of public language, sending them “por todo Hispanoamérica.” Throughout the Epigramas, the lyrical speaker emphasizes that his role is to expose what is hidden. After the parabola and the failed relationship with Claudia, he comes to understand the proper application of that role, not as erotic leverage against a failing relationship, but as a purification of public discourse by creating a channel through which intimate truth can become public knowledge.

An exchange is thus established between intimate and public communication. Gossip and intimate dialogues circulate between public and private, drawing in fragments of Somoza’s corrupted discourse, his newspaper articles, his words, the audible and
visual markers of his presence such as sirens and gunshots, statues and street-signs. These fragments are then reframed, undermined and exposed by the poet’s creative act and his application of poetry to express an emotional authenticity. Through poetry, elements from the erotic enclosure, into which the poet also injects political matter, build an alternative communicative structure inside the nation from which the nation itself can be criticized, a process which is best described in epigram 35: “Nuestros poemas no se pueden publicar todavía, / Circulan de mano en mano, manuscritos / O copiados en mimeógrafo.” Poetry, like gossip, is passed along a molecular system—from hand to hand. Here, unlike in the majority of the epigrams, there is not just one but a collective of poets doing this surreptitious work. Each poet passes his individual creations along the chain to build up a collective dialogue amongst those who oppose the dictator, leading to a collective conversation in which the truth of Somoza’s actions and the true measure of the embodied effects of the regime are communicated and registered.

An alternative public discourse emerges that contradicts, undermines, and progressively dismantles the regime’s discourse that itself attempts to circumscribe the nation through its own signs. Somoza’s attempt to erect a statue of himself in epigram 31 becomes the ultimate exercise in futility due to the activities of these poets and these alternative modes of communication, which represent and make public the authentic truth of the intimate sphere. The people will merely tear it down. The sign, like the newspaper headlines in epigram 41, is undermined and revealed as a lie, unable to attain the meaning that Somoza would attribute to it due to the poets’ discursive resistance. The dictator’s appropriation of philadelphic language is undermined, not by appropriating an equal and
opposing philadelphic Romantic subjectivity, but by a collective of poets each writing
about their beloveds, the *philadelphos-in-eros*, the commonness of love.

*Epigramas* would be the last of Cardenal’s experimentations with erotic
Romanticism. In 1957, after much personal upheaval, the poet experienced a call to
religious life, which according to Paul Borgeson involved a fundamental shift in the
direction of the poet’s love, from “los dos intereses principales que tenía en esa época, las
muchachas y la política revolucionaria” to “un amante que no quería que amara a nadie
sino a Él” (44, 50). In that shift from the Romantic/Revolutionary subjectivity to the
Monastic, we see an expansion of the underlying conception of love found in *Epigramas*.
The purified erotic enclosure of *Epigramas* is exchanged for the monastic enclosure,
another territory founded on love. The concept of *philadelphos-in-eros*, erotic love as a
universal experience, expands to cosmic proportions, revealing through the poet’s own
“veiling” of his erotic desire under Cistercian celibacy that *eros* is the common law of the
universe, the base of what Thomas Aquinas calls the Natural Law and what C.S. Lewis
calls the *Tao*. As an extension of the *Tao*, the problem of authentic versus false loves
becomes grounded in the theological problem of evil and what Saint Augustine calls the
lack of order to one’s loves that defines the practice of virtue.

*The Monastic Texts: The Love that Moves the Sun and Other Stars*

*Gethsemani KY* and *Vida en el amor* are both drawn from notes that Cardenal took during
his period in the monastery. Cardenal spent two years among the Trappists under the
tutelage of Thomas Merton, who had interceded to allow the Nicaraguan poet access as
Gethsemani had become a popular pilgrimage site for writers (Randall 100). For
Cardenal, the Trappist lifestyle meant renouncing both erotic encounters and writing for publication. The former was intended as a form of penitence, limiting the poet’s writing activities to personal notes and observations. The vow of celibacy, meanwhile, put an end to the poet’s carousing, which had lasted years prior to his religious calling:

It wasn’t just the poetry; I had to reject marriage, freedom [...] maybe not poetry as such, but poetry meant women to me, my great desire to love a woman, and that seemed to be my greatest obstacle in choosing a religious life. I had several relationships with women, but I always felt that if I married I’d have to give up that which always seemed to me to be my true calling. God kept on searching me out, tracking me down. (Qtd. in Randall 100)

The recompense for veiling his sexual impulses was an expansion of the poet’s eros. Prior to his monastic period, eros was articulated, indeed experienced, as primarily a male-female coupling whose discursive interchange with the agora was mediated through poetic art. Passing through the gate at Gethsemani, the poet leaves this eros behind and enters a very different erotic enclosure, shaped by the mystical union between the soul and God. The eros of Gethsemani KY is both different from and similar to the eros of Epigramas. Both eroticisms are experienced as “enclosures” in dialectical relation to the corrupt “agora,” although from the view of Cardenal’s monastic theology the agora is no longer just Somoza’s Nicaragua, but now the whole modern world. Similarly, both enclosures are formed on the discursive level: the former through erotic verse and intimate communications; the latter through the religious praxis, prayers, and songs of the monks who take vows of silence, speaking only these structured utterances of praise. The difference between enclosures lies in the poet’s subjectivity. In the dyadic enclosure, the

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31 Jesús Mañú Iragui describes the Gethsemani period involving paradoxically both a renunciation of Cardenal’s writing as well as its development through Merton’s influence: “Por las normas de la Trapa, Cardenal tuvo que renunciar a escribir poesía; pero las conversaciones con Merton y sus propias reflexiones y apuntes le ayudaron a madurar y crearon el caldo de cultivo propicio de donde nacerían posteriormente nuevas obras. [...] Esto y sus apuntes poéticos hicieron decir a Merton que Cardenal era una de esas raras vocaciones donde se combinaban en forma clara y segura los dones del contemplativo y del artista” (16).
poet is the erotic Romantic subject, the source of language and architect of the erotic space. In the monastery, he is a “bride,” a feminine counterpart to the divine Bridegroom and a philadelphic Romantic subject peopled by divine utterances and presences. The eros that the poet experiences and observes in the monastery is also its own law.

In *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas explains Natural Law as an objective code of values, that while sharing the same ground as Scriptural law, does not depend on or originate from Scripture. Natural Law exists by virtue of divine logos and governs all humans as rational beings whether or not they have had access to Christian revelation: “Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end” (*Summa 2:1, 91:2*). In *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis provides a simplified definition of the concept, addressing it from the view of multiple cultures. Lewis refers to the continuity of certain moral laws across cultures and time-periods as signs of what he calls the *Tao*, “the reality beyond all predicates, the abyss that was before the creator himself. It is Nature, it is the Way, the Road. It is the Way in which things everlastingly emerge, stilly and tranquilly into space and time. It is also the way in which every man should tread in imitation of that cosmic and supercosmic progression, conforming all activities to that great exemplar” (18).

As the sole source of all value judgments, the Tao cannot be rejected without rejecting value itself. Emotional states and desires can be in harmony with or in opposition to the *Tao*, but there is no “outside.” neither breach nor border: “What purport to be new systems or […] ideologies […] all consist of fragments from the Tao itself,
arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the Tao and to it alone such validity as they possess” (Lewis 19). Moral codes of conduct exist to keep human beings in a proper state of orientation towards the *Tao*. Virtue, Lewis argues, drawing on Augustine, involves an *ordo amoris*, a proper ordering of one’s loves such that, in Lewis’s words, “every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it” (16). Augustine’s “order” is drawn from Christ’s synthesis of the Mosaic Law in the Gospel of Matthew: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40). A virtuous person, properly oriented on the *Tao*, gives the principal part of his affection and dedication to God, then to humanity, than to the things of the Earth. An improper orientation on the *Tao* involves changing the order, giving an inordinate amount of love to created things in place of the creator.

Cardenal’s spiritual father, Thomas Merton, also discusses the *Tao* and the zones of encounter—Merton is cautious about direct comparisons—between Taoism and monastic Christianity. Indeed, the problem with Lewis’s use of the term is that it underemphasizes Taoism’s philosophical and historical context. Lewis’s intention in *Abolition* is to establish continuity between the Christian concept of Natural Law, the Platonic concept of the *Chora*, and the Chinese *Tao*, evidencing a universal guiding absolute independent of religious tradition or context. Merton takes a more Taoist approach, expressing interest in the philosophical writings of Chuang Tzu because “he is what he is, [...] one who shares the climate and peace of my own kind of solitude” (11). Yet for all their differences, Lewis and Merton approximate each other in their understanding of the *Tao*’s intrinsic nature. Merton explains: “The way of *Tao* is to begin
with the simple good with which one is endowed by the very fact of existence. Instead of self conscious cultivation of this good (which vanishes when we look at it and becomes intangible when we try to grasp it), we grow quietly in the humility of a simple, ordinary life, and this way is analogous to the Christian ‘life of faith’” (23-4). For Merton, as for Augustine and Lewis, virtue involves the perfection of action, so that it occurs not “independently of heaven and earth and in conflict with the dynamism of the whole, but in perfect harmony with the whole […] in perfect accordance with our nature and with our place in the scheme of things” (27). As we saw in Lewis and Augustine, this “harmony” grows out of a proper distribution of one’s “loves,” grounding love as the source of Tao. Dante’s “Love that moves the sun and other Stars” is not merely a metaphoric description of God: it defines, from the view of Augustine and Aquinas’s theology, love as the base element of existence, the ground of being. Cardenal’s monastic writings bring this transcendental concept to the level of temporal immanence and material reality. Metaphysical love as the ground of all being becomes concretized as philadelphia-in-eros, or the near-universal tendency to erotic coupling among humans, animals and insects. The Tao is God’s own eros manifest in this universal coupling.

There are two types of coupling in Vida en el amor: one horizontal and one vertical; animals, humans and insects couple with one another in order to perpetuate life, and each of these couplings is also a coupling with God as life’s divine source. The universal erotic impulse manifests itself though a type of utterance:

El coyote aúlla solitario en la noche, aúlla por Ti. Y por Ti grita la lechuza cuando grita en la noche. Y por ti arrulla dulcemente la paloma y no lo sabe; y cuando el ternerito tierno llama a su madre es a Ti quien llama, y a Ti llama el león cuando ruge, y todo el croar de las ranas es a Ti. Toda la creación te llama con toda clase de lenguajes. Como te llama también con el lenguaje de los amantes, y de los poetas, y con la oración de los monjes. (Vida 27)
This is a vocalized form of what Deleuze and Guattari call a territorializing “matter of expression,” in which the manifestation of erotic impulse “acquires a temporal constancy and a spatial range that make it a territorial” (315). Every creature connects to the divine being and orients himself on the Tao via its own form of utterance, from the howling of wolves to the cooing of doves as well as the songs and psalms of the monks, the moans of lovers and the composition of poets. Birds sing to attract each other and to territorialize their mating and reproduction. For humans, eros draws the boundaries of our erotic enclosures through language forms. There is a three-step communion in the loving act. First, individual creatures engage in an intimate dialogue with their mates, employing the forms of expression native to them and forming erotic territories of their own. Second, through this coupling they orient themselves on the Tao, tapping into the divine source of all love and becoming conduits for its outward flow. Third, tapping into that source puts them in a philadelphic communion with one another. They become what Paul’s letter to the Colossians calls “adelphoi en Christo” brothers/sisters in Christ, bound to each other through their common dyadic union with the divine. Philadelphos-in-eros equalizes all beings, uniting them to each other. There are no hierarchical divisions between one type of creature and another, or one type of utterance and another. Poems and prayers are equal to forms of “howling,” “cawing,” “cooing.”

This “equalizing of utterances” demonstrates where Cardenal’s poetic theology of love departs from its Thomistic influences and approximates more a Franciscan ideal of interspecies spiritual communion. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, Cardenal poetically articulates the eros of creation, including human eros, through a “rhizomatic” rather than an “arborescent” model. For Deleuze and Guattari, drawing from Botany, a rhizome is a
type of logic founded on multiplicity, whereas a tree-like or arborescent logic involves a binary order. Thus: “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (7). Animal and human forms of expression are made equal to each other, or as they put it: “Art is not the privilege of human beings […] many birds are not only artists but virtuosos in their territorial songs” (317). Aquinas’s concept of relations between divinity and creation involves an arborescent model. Human beings are the only creatures to have a “rational soul” as well as a “vegetative” and “sensitive” soul; they thus share in the divine logos relating to the divine Bridegroom as a fellowship of persons, a fellowship from which animals and other “lower orders of beings” are excluded. In Aquinas’s words: “The modes of living are distinguished according to the degrees of living things. There are some living things in which there exists only vegetative power, as the plants. And there are some living things which with these have rational powers—namely, men” (Summa 1.78.1). Cardenal’s rhizomatic model, by contrast, equalizes all orders of beings through the unity of erotic utterance. The monastic subject sees himself as inseparable from the paschal cicadas, skating insects, hydrogen, and potassium. The monk-poet experiences Saint Francis’s “brotherhood” with the natural world, pronouncing his own Laudato sie, mi’ Signore alongside groaning animals, plants, and planets.

This rhizomatic theology of love brings us into philadelphic territory, and its rendering into poetry evokes Whitman. Whitman is the rhizomatic lover par excellence, who articulates love almost entirely in collective registers, and whose intertextual traces are scattered throughout Latin America. I am not interested in the arborescent question of whether Whitman influenced Cardenal directly. Whitman’s influence on Latin American
twentieth-century poetry, particularly Cardenal’s compatriot Darío, as well as Martí and
Neruda, was pervasive enough that the poet would have been influenced by Whitman
whether he liked it or not. What interests me here, rather, is the place where Whitmanian
philadelphic subjectivity intersects with the mystical discourse of the monastic subject:
the philadelphic subjective utterance as feminine.

There is a curious similarity between Whitmanian subjectivity and Hélène
Cixous’s concept of “female subjectivity.” Each rejects the “monosexual” romantic, the
isolated and alienated lyrical “I” whose interchange with the beloved, the Earth, and the
people is intercepted by an abyss and characterized by an imbalance of agency. The
Whitmanian “I” is a “peopled” voice, uncontained and uncontainable, encompassing the
multitude even in its contradictions: “I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the
wise; Regardless of others, ever regardful of others, Maternal as well as paternal, a child
as well as a man, Stuff’d with the stuff that is coarse, and stuff’d with the stuff that is
fine” (Whitman 9). Cixous discusses the written manifestation of female subjectivity, or
écriture feminine, as a permeable, peopleable discourse in which the lyrical voice is
“possessed” by the presence of the other or multiple others. “Being possessed,” she
explains, “is not desireable for a masculine Imaginary, which would interpret it as
passivity—a dangerous feminine position […]. A certain passivity is feminine” (583).

One of the major exceptions to the “masculine imaginary” is the mystic who,
male or female, “becomes woman” in the Deleuzian sense and by becoming woman
embraces a philadelphic subjectivity. Luce Irigaray describes mysticism as “the place
where ‘she’—and in some cases he, if he follows ‘her’ lead—speaks about the dazzling
glare which comes from the source of light that has been logically repressed, about
‘subject’ and ‘Other’ flowing out into an embrace of fire that mingles one term into another” (*Speculum* 191). In mystical poetry, such as that of John of the Cross, the lyrical speaker as “the soul” is always in a posture of feminine passivity to Christ the Bridegroom, seeking Him or waiting upon Him, sighing for Him or being penetrated by His presence. The monastic subject speaks erotically. Indeed, according to Dorothee Soelle, “One cannot think of mystical experience and certainly not speak of it without eroticism. [...] There are many texts where, based on the meaning of words, one cannot distinguish the mystical love of God from the human Eros” (113). Nevertheless, the monastic subject is not an erotic romantic subject. His posture is one of receptivity and peopleability. If he speaks with subjectivity, it is a feminine one, more philadelphic than erotic, more beloved than lover, not possessor but possessed.

While the mystic becomes the bride, the Bridegroom is an omnipotent subjectivity who communicates through a collective voice. He transmits his messages of love through the communicative movement of nature itself, through the orchestra. In *Vida en el amor*, God-the-Bridegroom uses the very utterances of the brides, of the elements of nature, to communicate with them:

> El trazo de los meteoros en el cielo y el rastro de los moluscos en la arena [...] todos son signos que trasmiten un mensaje a aquellos que lo saben leer. Y los que se extasían contemplando esos signos sin descifrarlos y sin saber que toda la naturaleza está escrita para ellos, son como la muchacha del campo que se divierte contemplando la bella escritura de un manuscrito que ha llegado a sus manos, pero sin saber leer, y sin saber que esos signos son una carta de amor que el emperador escribió para ella. (35-6)

Each bride acts as both speaker and echo-chamber, containing and transmitting His utterances. One speaking bride may be answered by the Bridegroom by means of another bride, providing an antidote to the discursive imbalance of erotic Romantic subjectivity.
God, the original poet, whom Gabriela Mistral refers to as the “First Musician,” speaks collectively rather than through an all-powerful lyrical “I.” In this passage, God’s messages of love to the monastic subject are encapsulated in the signs that the movement of nature produces and that the lyrical speaker ecstatically contemplates. Each sign composes a love note, a form of dyadic communication, from the Bridegroom directly to the monk-poet. The monastic subject’s role is not to be the arbiter of language, as in *Epigramas*, but to purify himself into a greater receptivity. He embraces idealized feminine traits: simplicity and transparency, comparing himself to a “country girl” marvelling over the beautiful handwriting of a letter that she is unable to read. This is indeed a remarkable shift from the poet of *Epigramas*, who could make or break a woman by his poetic powers. Here, the writer must become a reader and a listener, emptying himself out so he can be filled and impregnated by the Bridegroom’s messages.

*Gethsemani KY*, the second monastic text, is thus a kind of orchestration of the Bridegroom’s messages through the monastic poet’s “feminine subjectivity,” mediated in the acts of contemplation, observation, and utterance. The contemplative poet comes to perceive how humans and animals share a common utterance undergirded by divine *eros*. The poet’s perception of the *Tao* is the product of a paradox: his life in the monastic enclosure “feminizes” him, opening him to a deeper philadelphic communion with all of creation; and yet the monastic enclosure and its vows of chastity and silence ensure *difference*, an impermeable border between monk and world. This monastic difference is articulated in Peter’s biblical epistle as a kind of “exile.” Peter describes the disciples of Jesus in pagan lands as “foreigners and exiles,” comparing them to “living stones” rejected and “built into a spiritual house” (2 Peter 11). Thus the monk-poet’s status as a
spiritual exile has the twin effect of producing the Tao-consciousness of the monastic subject, while simultaneously performing the dialectical function of erotic space.

The text begins with a meditation on the springtime song of the cicadas and its relationship to the Paschal mystery. This is also an exceptional manifestation of eros and utterance in nature:

En Pascua resucitan las cigarras
…cantan y cantan todo el día
y en la noche todavía están cantando.
Sólo los machos cantan:
las hembras son mudas.
Pero no cantan para las hembras:
porque también son sordas.
…¿Para quién cantan los machos?
¿Y por qué cantan tanto? ¿Y que cantan?
Cantan como trapenses en el coro
delante de sus Salterios y sus Antifonarios
cantando el Invitatorio de la Resurrección. (85)

Throughout Gethsemani KY and Vida en el amor, the utterances of animals and birds are associated with the pursuit of mates and the consummation of unions. Songbirds such as rooks and cardinals, for example, are sonic signifiers of embodied eros, calling to and answering each other in the pursuit of love. The utterances of the cicadas, however, do not facilitate mating. The lines of communication between males and females are cut off, as the females are deaf and mute, unable to receive the erotic music or to produce a song in kind. The lack of a dyadic erotic impulse behind the cicada’s song estranges it from the regular patterns of the natural world and creates a kind of lacuna, a mystery that breaks the flow of the poet’s contemplative thoughts, forcing him to ask: “to whom are they singing?” “Why do they sing so much?” The weight of these questions leads the poet into deeper contemplative territory as, in line 10, he begins to reflect on the similarity between the cicadas and the Trappist choir singing its Easter psalms, antiphons and invitatory. In a
sense, the monks are both deaf and mute to ordinary dyadic communication between lovers, living under a vow of silence and in an enclosure where they are unable to receive messages from the outside world. Set apart from nature in their utterance practices, the monks are also exiled from the world of erotic encounters and couplings that Cardenal inhabited prior to his religious vocation. The Trappists, particularly Cardenal who once viewed poetry as a means to pursue women, undergo both a loss of embodied *eros* and a disconnection between sexual pursuit and utterance. Unhinged from mating practices, the song of the insects and the monks expands outward towards the Bridegroom in celebration of the risen Christ during the season of Easter.

The similarity envisioned by the poet between the cicadas and the monks is more than a poetic device, a descriptive metonymy to adorn the poem. Cardenal’s contemplative monk orients himself on the divine *Tao* through the act of singing that binds both monk and cicada. Paradoxically, monks and cicadas are exceptions to the *Tao* inscribed within the *Tao*. The veiling of sexual impulse, through the habits and vows of the monk or the evolutionary blindness and deafness of the female cicada, exiles them from the erotic interchange of nature without separating them from the *Tao* itself, as they remain in a dyadic union with God. This exile gives them a vantage point from which to “see” or perceive the *Tao* in which they are submerged. The cicadas and monks are in communion with each other through their common exceptionality and their dyadic love affair with the Bridegroom. The fact that the cicadas’ songs fade at the end of the Easter season signifies that the two share a common beloved. Nature and humanity alike participate in the Paschal mystery, rejoicing in the Resurrection of Christ by singing a love song to Him. Once the season of the Resurrection has passed, the song ends.
If the contemplative poet begins to be aware of the erotic *Tao* in which he and his brother insects are submerged, his perception is soon broadened further still:

Ha llegado al cementerio trapense la primavera  
Al cementerio verde de hierba recién rozada  
Con sus cruces de hierro en hileras como una siembra  
Donde el cardenal rojo llama a su amada y la amada  
Responde a la llamada de su rojo enamorado. (86)

The *Tao* encompasses the whole of the Earth and manifests itself in its material and perceptible elements: the burgeoning grass that grows in the fields, the red cardinals singing an erotic call and response, the sounds of the monks on the farm, the symphony of human and animal movements and noises. The *Tao* moves through the whole of nature, calling it into being and growth through the binding and loosening of elements: “hidrógeno,” “fósforo,” “nitrógeno,” and “potasa.” In its gregarious and prodigal expansiveness, the *Tao* covers and absorbs death, converting a cemetery into a field and tombs into a trough. Bodies that die simply revert back to these elements, leading to a material resurrection through the various life cycles of plants and animals. The line “Hidrógeno somos y en hidrógeno nos hemos de convertir” introduces materialism into liturgical language, concretizing the metaphorical and metaphysical expression of human contingency and divine eternity through the elemental origin and end-point of all life. All life will then be re-born from the same elements, containing within it “the whole of the Earth.” Orientation on the *Tao* is orientation on the force that not only binds pairs together, but produces and maintains life through the continuous burgeoning of nature.

If Gethsemani is experienced as a community oriented on the *Tao*, Nicaragua is portrayed as a community out of sync with the *Tao*. The love that pervades Gethsemani is the love of the Trappists, in communion and harmony with one another through their
proper orientation on the *Tao*. Working and living off the land, they neither possess nor are possessed by it. Theirs is a philadelphic communion with the natural world. This love is contrasted with the “amor del dictador” that pervades Nicaragua. As in *Epigramas*, Somoza becomes a sign of a corrupted or worldly form of love, based on material gain and a desire for power. Somoza’s *ordo amoris* elevates the love of possessions ahead of the love of people or God. Thus, unlike the Trappists who work the Earth and receive its gifts, Somoza “robó la tierra y lo poseyó.” Such a contrast between corrupt and purified love is only perceptible through the imposition of monastic difference. God, the author of the *Tao*, preserved the poet from corruption by carrying him from the disoriented enclosure of Somoza’s Nicaragua to the properly-oriented enclosure of the monastery. The poet experiences the monastic difference keenly, as both a spiritual a political exile. The grass and heat of Kentucky reminds him of Nicaragua, and yet it is not Nicaragua. Cardenal’s final verse reads as something of a reprimand to the divine being. The dictator is perfectly at home “en su tierra amada está ahora el dictador embalsamado / mientras que a ti el Amor te ha llevado el destierro.” Not only does the monastic difference make perceptible Nicaragua’s corruption; also the very injustice gives material and familiar comforts to the dictator while carrying the poet away from his roots.

As in “En Pascua cantan las cigarras,” “Los insectos acuáticos” begins by observing insects in nature, using them as a platform to launch into a deeper contemplation of the *Tao* and the monastic difference:

> Los insectos acuáticos de largas patas  
> Patinan sobre el agua como sobre un vidrio  
> Y patinan en parejas. Se separan  
> Y se persiguen y se emparejan otra vez.  
> Y pasan toda su vida bailando en el agua.  
> Tú has hecho toda la tierra un baile de bodas
Y todas las cosas son esposos y esposas. (89)

Here, the contemplative poet observes the dance of small aquatic insects as they come together on the surface of a lake. The lake is a circumscribed space in which the insects spend their lives in erotic dances separating, pursuing each other, and coming together again. The poet’s perspective then expands as he turns and addresses the eternal Thou: the lake becomes a metonymy of the Earth itself in which “all things are husbands and wives,” moving in endless cycles of union and reunion. The anaphoric repetition of “Y” intensifies the poem’s flow, drawing an association between the Tao and movement. God is also the “first mover” who sets in motion the erotic dance of union and burgeoning.32 Every being moves along the track set by the Tao: the insects seek partners while the birds call out to one another. God himself, the Tao’s author, is described in the conjugal role of “El Esposo.” Both the divine being and the contemplative poet, inasmuch as they participate in the divine dance, are also set apart from it, excepted from it by the repetition of “solo” in lines 8-9: “Y solo Tú eres el Esposo que se tarda / Y sólo yo soy la esposa sola sin esposo.” The divine being is excepted because He tarries, holding back and neglecting to join the dance even as He was the one who set it in motion. The poet, as exiled monk and bride, is alone, waiting for the divine Bridegroom to come.

Cardenal not only echoes the parable of the “prudent virgins,” also discussed in “En la noche iluminada de palabras,” he echoes a theme common in mystical literature: the mystic as bride to a persistent-yet-absent God, who in the “Song of Songs” calls upon

32 This relationship between God, being, and movement is fundamental for Aquinas, who defines God as a being of pure actuality in which there is no potentiality. “Motion,” he argues in the Summa, “is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality […]. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God” (I.2.3).
the beloved and then withdraws before she can reach him. Cardenal’s contemplative poet is surrounded by manifestations of God’s *eros*, yet isolated from it by the monastic difference. In “Los insectos acuáticos” he is exiled from the erotic pairings of nature, and he is also left without the Bridegroom, in a mystical desert of waiting and longing without consummation. It is no coincidence then, that these lines that single out the divine being and the poet are placed in the middle of the poem, breaking the meditation on the insects and on the *Tao of eros* and bringing in a note of sorrow. Cardenal is the proverbial widower at a wedding, bookended by the dancing insects in lines 1-5 and the chatter of mating rooks in lines 10-13. Alone in the midst of a multitude, the monk-poet is isolated from *eros* but also by it. Because his love is directed to the Bridegroom himself, and the bridegroom is absent, he is exiled from the others.

The short poem “En la noche iluminada de palabras” and the much longer piece “Es la hora del Oficio Nocturno” meditate on the Trappists’ late night prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours as a manifestation of the monastic enclosure and its dialectical relationship to the agora. Night life outside the monastery is associated with corrupted loves, from the carnal sins of the bars and bordellos to the social sins of capitalist greed, torture, political murder and oppression. The act of praying the Office in the small hours of the morning signifies the monks’ status as “foreigners and exiles.” In both poems, the night hour is a point of reference for two types of nocturnal utterances and, in a related

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33 See Song of Songs 5: 2-6: “I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My lover is knocking: ‘Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.’ I have taken off my robe—must I put it on again? I have washed my feet—must I soil them again? My lover thrust his hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for him. I arose to open for my lover, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened for my lover, but my lover had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him.”
manner, two types of light: in biblical terms that of the World, and that of the Spirit; or in the terms we have used here, the agora and the enclosure.

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, in his study on the cultural significance of lighting, makes a distinction between “close” or “traditional” forms of light (candles, flames) and “distant” or “modern/technological” forms (electricity, gas). Schivelbusch explains that electric and gas lights were at first generally associated with the outside: “Outside light, that is light that shone into the room from the street, made people feel uncomfortable because it represented an invasion of the private by the public sphere” (186). Gas and electricity were also forms of “outside light,” distant, harsh forms grating against the intimacy of the salon and with their origins in “big industry” (186). In Cardenal’s poems here, electric light retains this exteriority by contrast to the closeness, intimacy, and authenticity of the monastic enclosure. In the first poem, night is lit up by words and by electric energy signifying American night life. There are flashing commercial ads, illuminated hotels, and bars filled with chatter, cinemas, radios, and television sets:

En la noche iluminada de palabras
Pepsi Cola
Palmolive Chrysler Colgate Chesterfield
Que se apagan y se encienden y se apagan y se encienden
Las luces rojas, verdes y azules de los hoteles y de los bares
Y de los cines, los trapenses se levantan en el coro. (91)

In the second poem, the night-lights and utterances consist of war-councils, torture rooms, prisons, bordellos, Somoza’s palace, and the house of Caiaphas where Christ was brought and tried in the middle of the night following the last supper and his agony in the Garden. Electric light and language create nocturnal spaces, ruptures in the gregarious natural darkness that brings all beings to rest at the end of a daily cycle. These ruptures are due to sin and its origin as “false” or “contaminated love.” Thus in Cardenal’s later
poem “Oración a Marilyn Monroe,” the world is described as “contaminado de pecados y radioactividad,” while for Marilyn herself, all love becomes a “kiss with closed eyes […] under the spotlights” (126). Electric light creates spaces in which false versions of love flourish, be it the prostitution and solicitation that takes place in the bordellos, the “love of money” of the capitalists who hawk their products into the nightscape, the avarice and libido dominandi of the dictator Somoza, or even the corrupted religious love that led Caiaphas to see Christ as a threat and to push for his execution.

The other rupture in the gregarious night darkness comes from the monastic difference. The Trappists, who pray the Holy Office at 3:00 a.m., are exempt from natural rhythms by their exiled status. But they are, nonetheless, still properly oriented on the Tao, offering their night prayers and supplications to the Bridegroom, their lit chapel an antithesis to the light-filled spaces of false eros. In the first poem, the choir’s fluorescent lamps, as well as their psalms and hymnody, creates a spiritual light: “the lamps of the prudent virgins awaiting the bridegroom in the night of the USA.” If light creates spaces of false love in the World, in the monastery it creates a space where a purified love is uttered towards the divine being through the singing of the monks. In the second poem, their song beats against the encroaching darkness as the church is full of “shadows” and “demons,” intruding on meditation:

Es la hora del oficio nocturno, y la iglesia
En penumbra parece que está llena de demonios
Esta es la hora de las tinieblas y de las fiestas
La hora de mis parrandas y regresa mi pasado. (92)

The poet’s thoughts become a chaotic fusion of memories, anxieties, and the consciousness of personal, biblical, and historical sin. Cardenal makes no distinction, but threads all sins together as nocturnal activities and examples of false love. Erotic pursuits
of the poet’s previous life—drunken episodes and conversations, nightclubs, dances and movies—are brought together with bordellos, war councils, torture chambers, and biblical battles. The poet battles his temptations by twice citing a penitential verse from Psalm 51: “Y mi pecado siempre está delante de mí.” Psalm 51 is deeply associated with the corruption of love, attributed to David’s repentance for his seduction of Bathsheba, the murder of her husband Uriah, and his misuse of kingly power to cover up the crime. Cardenal uses the verse to anchor his thoughts, to keep himself in a state of repentance as a bulwark against the temptations of lust, fear, and despair. Like King David, Cardenal is restored to a right relationship with the erotic Tao by ordering his loves in the Augustinian sense, by focusing his love on the Creator and by rejecting, through an act of repentance, the false loves that tempt him.  

In these poems, the monastic difference enables the poet to perceive the differences between purity and corruption, but it also leads to inner tension. The poet’s exile is a source of both sorrow and relief. On the one hand, the contemplative poet is set in a purified space, where divine eros replaces lesser and corrupted erotic manifestations. On the other hand, these corrupted forms still intrude upon the poet’s thoughts, leading him to lose his grip on the present moment and drift into the past. The poet struggles as an erotic and a political exile, between the tranquil present of night prayer and the chaotic past where Somoza convulsed his nation with secret crimes. The poet cannot let go of his past or fully embrace the detachment of monastic life, in which the divine eros is his only concern. In the monastery poems, Cardenal experiences the revelation of eros as Natural Law, but the monastic difference, the poet-monk’s exiled nature, troubles his engagement on the Tao. The world continues to exist in all its sinful corruption; the monastery, with

34 For the story of David and Bathsheba, see 2 Samuel 11.
all of its pure love, remains separate and isolated from it. The monastic difference that makes the Tao perceptible only does so because it isolates the monastic subject from the world, and this isolation precludes any transferability between enclosure and agora.

The boundary separating the monastery from the rest of the United States is sharply defined, symbolized in one poem by an unchanging red traffic light between the highway and road to Gethsemani: “encendiendo y apagando su luz roja / y amarilla roja—roja—roja / STOP—STOP—STOP / ¡Sola la roja para el monasterio!” (90). This light signifies the absolute nature of the monastic difference, preventing traffic from entering and those in the monastery from taking to the highway. The world only enters the sacred space in a series of invasive disembodied impressions, from the terrifying memories and temptations of “Es la hora del oficio nocturno,” to the neon signs that the poet observes surrounding the monastery, to the sound of passing trains and cars that wake the poet from sleep. The poet finds this lack of transferability difficult, as it not only keeps the selfless and purified love behind walls instead of in the world where it is most needed, it keeps the monks’ love for one another in a detached state.

After examining the erotic Tao of nature and the dyadic eros of the mystic, the poet turns his attention to the collective life of his brethren in the monastery. This is a key moment in the progression of Gethsemani KY, as the poet, like the Neruda of “Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu,” turns from the enchantments of nature and broad spiritual pontification to take in the human collective. Cardenal would eventually come to see the communal life of the monastery as an ideal model for a new “communist” society, in which human beings would divest themselves of the desire for acquisition and live in a state of self-abnegating caritas, sharing and simplicity:
Es como una utopía realizada, en pequeño. Es una comunidad en que los hombres tratan todo el tiempo de amarse unos a otros, de no explotarse, de no dominarse unos a otros. Es también, en realidad, una vida comunista. Todo es de todos. En la trapa estaba prohibido decir la palabra “mío,” aplicándola a algún objeto. Uno tenía que decir “nuestros zapatos,” “nuestros vestidos” etc. Es también una vida pobre como la de nuestros campesinos, y los monjes viven de su trabajo, que es un trabajo duro en el campo, trabajo de campesinos. Y lo que les sobra de ese trabajo es para los pobres. Es pues una vida comunista y de amor. (Qtd. in Borgeson 51)

Cardenal’s double-use of the term “comunista,” as opposed to “comunitaria,” reflects not only his characterization of monastic life as indivisibly collective on both the practical and discursive levels, but his view of its political potential. The concrete manifestation of a utopia that exists “en pequeño” could potentially be reconstructed in a larger scale. In the poem “Fray Cipriano, Fray Anselmo, Fray Albérico,” Cardenal expresses his dawning appreciation for this collective life, but also his recognition of the limitations imposed by the monastic difference. The poet reflects on his brethren, wondering about their lives prior to their entry into the monastery:

Fray Cipriano, fray Anselmo, fray Albérico, 
fray Plácido: mis hermanos que no sé cómo se llaman 
—escondidos en sus capuchas blancas y callados— ni de dónde son ¿Se llamarán Bill, Tom, Bob, Jack, Jim? ¿Son de Detroit, de St. Louis, de New York? ¿En qué ciudades bebían con amigos en los bares, entraban al cine con muchachas, y a drug stores, corrían en convertibles por avenidas iluminadas? (94)

Their relationship as his adelphoi en Christo is juxtaposed with the fact that the poet does not know their real names. The monks’ consecrated names are derived from saints, while their real names remain unknown. The new names act as a verbal equivalent to the habits they wear, both identifying them and keeping their identities hidden. Cardenal’s contemplative poet moves to pondering their cities of origin, trying to place them in some context outside of the enclosure. In line 6, the poet sees in them a reflection of himself,
wondering if in their past lives they moved in parallel milieus, spending nights kissing women and going to bars. Here in this first half of the poem, then, the loss of identity and background is presented as a kind of necessary purification. Putting on white habits and taking saints’ names become—as for Cardenal’s contemplative poet—a means by which the monks are cleansed of their prior iniquities. The habits and the consecrated names ensure the lack of transferability between enclosure and agora: novices entering Gethsemani leave outside all external or bodily traces of their existence in the world, thus preventing any contamination of the sacred sphere by the false or perverted loves of the World. The vow of silence, similarly, prevents any worldly discursive traces from “leaking” into the consecrated space and corrupting the others. One can see the potential in this in Cardenal’s “wondering” about the brethren’s partying lifestyles. Speaking and sharing their memories could lead to nostalgia, which would generate desire among the monks for a return to worldly life.

In the second half of the poem, these mechanisms of intransferability—the silence and the habit—are problematized. Some brothers eventually leave the monastery and their habits “return to the vestibule.” Others move in to take both their places and names. Subjectivity itself is commonly held. The people who were “Fray Cipriano,” “Fray Anselmo,” “Fray Albérico,” and “Fray Plácido” are disappeared and replaced. Any borders between philadelphic subject and people are erased. The identities, which Cardenal used to address his friends, stay in the monastery, while their bodily selves leave. Cardenal laments this, precisely because he shared a life with these friars, working alongside them for long hours “cutting down trees” and “singing in the choir.” The life they built together was threaded through with a deep love, but one that cannot become
personal, as the brethren are cut off from their pasts and, when they leave, from monastery life itself. Thus intransferability problematizes love, prohibiting it from deepening on the subjective level even as it expands it on the philadelphic. At the same time, the monastic difference prevents it from moving out into the world. The enclosure remains an island in a sea of corruption, able to purify those who enter from the agora, but unable to purify the agora itself.

In conclusion, the common thread that unifies both the monastic and pre-monastic erotic poems is the notion of eros as enclosure as well as the imposition of difference between the hallowed space of the poet and the wider world that surrounds him. In *Epigramas*, this difference is an element of the erotic enclosure created by a modernist poet who stands “outside” the corrupt agora singing of the beauty of his beloved and the purity of his erotic feeling. In the monastery poems, it is the spiritual exile of the monk himself, protected and purified from the corrupting forces of the world by the cloister. At the same time, both texts also use the enclosure critically, holding it up to the agora as an accusation against the latter’s corruption while exposing the effects of the Somoza regime on individual lives. Somoza is accused throughout both texts. He is the shadow that haunts the poet’s alienated expressions of love in *Epigramas*, and he is the powerful figure of sin and corruption against which his prophet’s voice batters in *Gethsemani KY*: Ahab, or perhaps Jezebel, to the poet’s Elijah.

Another element that unites both texts is their desire to use the enclosure to purify the agora, while preserving the former from corruption. Both texts settle on the poet’s vocation as a means to make public the communications of the enclosure, disseminating them as literature and therefore as uncorrupted public language forms. In *Gethsemani KY*
and Vida en el amor this strategy overcomes the intransferible monastic difference. In the monastery poems, Cardenal experiences the revelation of eros as something beyond the dyadic, narcissistic passion of Claudia’s paramour, but the monastic difference troubles him. The world continues to exist in its sinful corruption; and the monastery, with its pure love, remains separate and isolated. The publication of the Gethsemani writings, like the publication of those of Thomas Merton, allow something of the monastery to circulate in the world, laying the groundwork for an alternative type of philadelphic social interaction based on the Tao. This version of philadelphos would approximate the monastic life in its simplicity, self-abnegation, and caritas, where interest-based endeavours are supplanted with the erotic love of God and the philadelphic love of humanity. Indeed, the creation of a Gethsemani-in-the-world would become one of the principal aims of Cardenal’s later poetic and political career. It was this impetus that inspired the creation of an accessible commune on the Nicaraguan island of Solentiname during the Nicaraguan Revolution, where he shared the gospel with the poor and taught workshops on poetic composition. Similarly, the perception of eros-in-philadelphos as intimation of the Tao would inform both Cardenal’s political and poetical praxis in the years to come. Liberation theology, the conjunction of Marxist political goals and Gospel philosophies, would become the means to bring the communitarian love of Gethsemani out of Gethsemani: to orient Nicaragua as a whole in proper relation to the Tao.

Each text, Epigramas and Gethsemani KY, makes up for what the other lacks. Epigramas reveals eros in its intimate and highly personal dimension, tightly connected to subjectivity and to emotional authenticity, an intimacy that is precluded in Gethsemani by the intransferability between the monastery and the realm of human interaction. In
Vida en el amor, Cardenal had praised a life liberated from the subjective “I,” particularly in its possessive dimension, but in both Epigramas and the “Fray Anselmo” poem of Gethsemani KY, the poet realizes the need for a highly personalized love, in which a subject can fully commune with another and transmit emotional authenticity as a corrective to corrupt versions of love. At the same time, Gethsemani KY mediates the excesses of Romanticism through eros-in-philadelphos directed both vertically to the Creator and horizontally to the whole of nature and humanity. This mediation takes place through the poet’s embrace of a mystical feminine subjectivity. Cardenal’s compatriot and fellow Sandinista, Gioconda Belli, will likewise come to make the association between feminine subjectivity and philadelphos-in-eros. Belli’s poetry presents a feminine view of eros that expands rather than encloses, drawing the loving subject into communion with the multitude through the commonness of love.
CHAPTER 3: GIOCONDA BELLI AND THE LIBERATION OF LOVE

With Gioconda Belli’s poetry, this study crosses an important temporal and discursive threshold from the pre-1970s to the post-1970s, and from modernism to the beginnings of postmodernism, a shift with a significant effect on the dynamic between *eros* and *philadelphos*. In modernism, poetic discourse around love is characterized by what Fredric Jameson calls the “aesthetics of expression,” which presupposes “some separation within the subject, and along with that a whole metaphysics of the inside and the outside, of the wordless pain within the monad and the moment in which […] that ‘emotion’ is then projected out and externalized” (61). In postmodernism, that alienation “is displaced by the fragmentation of the subject.” Those emotions felt within and expressed from the “monad-like container” of the subject are liberated to become “free floating and impersonal […] dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria” (62). Taking Jameson’s perspective, the dawning of the sexual revolution coincides with the waning of erotic Romantic subjectivity and the modernist poets’ almost exclusive focus on erotic anti-gregariousness. In the postmodern milieu, *eros*’s public dimension comes to the fore. All love in postmodernity is polyamory, grounded in the notion of the lyrical subject as a philadelphic or multiplicitous being.

This shift from modernism to early postmodernism, more than the question of gender, explains the differences between Gioconda Belli’s articulation of love and that of

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35 Whether or not Belli’s early writings in praise of the Sandinista Revolution completely fit the postmodern paradigm is admittedly debatable. Jean François Lyotard characterizes postmodernism as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” or totalizing ideologies and discourses including Marxism (xxiv), while Leonor Arfuch, similarly, speaks of a “loss” of the great collectivist narratives of “el partido, la clase, la revolución” characterizing the movement from enlightenment and modernist subjectivist construction to postmodern micronarratives (19). Yet, as is shown in this chapter, Belli’s particular concept of revolution—as a means toward personal liberation—is closer to the postmodern paradigm than that of her predecessors. Moreover, Belli’s poetic praxis is predicated on a critique and deconstruction of modernist isolation.
her predecessors, Cardenal and Neruda. This is not to put aside the question of gendered subjectivity entirely: philadelphos’s “feminine” nature shows in that Belli inhabits it quite easily, without the radical displacement of subjectivity seen in Cardenal’s monastic poems or Neruda’s post-conversion verse. The gendering of subjectivity, however, must be read within this larger shift that affects the very grounding of subjective expression.

The male poets in question are writing in the modernist mode. Erotic love is circumscribed by shadowy affective forces—in Jameson’s terms a “thematics of alienation”—differentiating “pure erotic feeling” from the corrupt market-based milieu. In contrast to Neruda and her compatriot, Belli’s experience of dyadic love does not isolate, it liberates. In her early texts Sobre la grama (1972) and Línea de fuego (1975), Belli’s eroticism draws her towards rather than away from the agora. For Belli, love is fundamentally interpersonal. Its telos or end-point is the lyrical subject’s “peopling,” the philadelphic possession of her subjectivity by the other. Belli’s eros is not an enclosure but a movement from inside to outside, a “line of flight” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, aiming towards “deterritorialization” and “desubjectification,” the dissolution of the socially and discursively constructed self into “packs” or “multiplicities.”

The question of political engagement emerges here. If previously, engagement in collective struggle displaces the modernist poet’s erotic Romanticism into philadelphos, how does that engagement affect the postmodern love poet whose eroticism is already inscribed within a philadelphic multiplicity? This chapter takes up this question by examining two of Belli’s early works in which there is a transition from poetry that articulates love as a subjective liberation, to poetry as a means to articulate political engagement. Sobre la grama was written in 1972 while Belli was an underground courier
for the Sandinistas during the reign of Somoza García’s son Anastasio Somoza Debayle, and is focused entirely on love, leaving the poet’s political activities unspoken. Línea de fuego was written as Belli fled into exile in Mexico following the Sandinista capture of a high-level government functionary’s house in December of 1974. It politicizes, or attempts to politicize, all relationships by drawing them into the cause. Sobre la grama describes eroticism in terms of the postmodern “peopling telos,” rendering it through erotic instead of philadelphic subjectivity. Eros opens the lyrical subject into becoming an embodied “territory” for her lover, her children and the people. In Línea de fuego, as Belli’s poetry becomes more politicized, something almost inverse to this “peopling” process occurs: political engagement involves a spatio-temporal enclosure of philadelphic subjectivity, focusing its energies on a national context and revolutionary cause.

This “enclosing” of the philadelphic expanse creates its own tension within the philadelphic Romantic subject, not only because engagement “constricts” the expansive bent of the philadelphic subject, but also because, in Belli’s case, it brings into relief the different and sometimes competing objectives of feminism and collectivist struggle. Feminism, particularly at the time in question, focuses on establishing a language and discourse of female subjectivity, as in the work of Cixous and Irigaray among others. For these French feminists, the female “I,” its desires and unconscious, are paramount while collective concerns are covered through the “peopleable” or philadelphic nature of female subjectivity. Revolutionary ideology, however, involves subsuming the self into the collective struggle. There is no room for a language of subjective desire. All individual desires are to be filled through the cause. Sobre la grama articulates the self-discovery of the female poet through eroticism, leading not to the construction of an isolated erotic
Romantic subjectivity, but a philadelphic one. *Línea de fuego* concretizes those expansive philadelphic impulses in the context of the struggle against Somoza. The demands of revolutionary engagement in the latter text problematize Belli’s poetic praxis in the former. *Sobre la grama*’s celebration of woman as a primordial erotic being is precluded by engagement in a collective struggle for which questions of selfhood are to be sacrificed. Belli responds to this tension in *Línea de fuego* by “inverting” Neruda’s Venusian conversion narrative in *Los versos del capitán*, rewriting the revolution as a collective version of the personal liberation she underwent in *Sobre la grama*. The Nicaraguan Revolution becomes a line of flight, a means toward the dissolution of the self and its differences, and the embrace of a kind of multiplicitous euphoria or, as Jon Beasley-Murray (paraphrasing Jameson) puts it, “the narcotic delights of postmodern jouissance” (126).

**Feminism, Collectivism and Postmodernity**

La poesía de una mujer, cuando se trata en realidad de una mujer poeta, generalmente resulta ser como su imagen en el espejo. Por distintas que sean las formas de que ellas se valen, rara vez dejan de reflejar, de una manera o de otra, la fisonomía física o mental o al mismo tiempo física y mental de la mujer poeta. La mujer más que el hombre, siempre está en su poesía. (José Coronel Utrecho)³⁶

Women poets writing during and prior to the Sandinista Revolution in the late 1970s found themselves pulled in two directions. On the one hand, feminist consciousness demanded they “re-create themselves” and affirm their frequently subsumed or understated subjectivity by “writing the body” and reclaiming their own experiential

³⁶ Quoted in Daisy Zamora, *La mujer nicaragüense en la poesía* (946). Zamora elaborates that while poetry itself has no sex, it has authors: “Y los poemas, única prueba de la existencia real de la poesía, son expresiones de individualidades irreductibles” (946).
voices. On the other hand, participation in revolutionary struggle required engagement with the process of history outside of subjective concerns. For Beverley and Zimmerman, along with other women poets of the period Belli sought both “a feminist poetry championing the demands of equality of women [and] a redefinition of female role models” as well as “a woman-centered poetry projected onto a larger scene of national revolutionary unity” (105). Greg Dawes’s criticism of Belli encapsulates this tension. Dawes argues that collective struggle precludes any competing objectives. Feminist “writing the body” can only be revolutionary if it is “accompanied by political action that works toward altering the ideology, institutions, and in the end, economic and political systems promoting patriarchy” (Aesthetics 128). Dawes criticizes Belli for undercutting “realist depiction of experience in a revolutionary situation,” displacing revolutionary actions onto a subjective, irrational foundation, and creating a refraction of reality in which sexual issues are foregrounded and revolutionary experiences remain in the background (128). Ileana Rodríguez notes that this perception occurs in guerrilla literature. Feminism is private matter, “expelled” she argues “from insurgent epistemes, only to be cursorily sketched in, and superseded by ‘real politics’ those of endurance, willpower, sacrifice. The masculine tenets of the insurgent body outlined by Che” (96). Concern for women’s issues are treated as “gringa” or “bourgeois” subjects, while issues of gender equality are “subsumed under patriotica” (97).

There are several possible responses to this critique. First, feminist interest in “female subjectivity” is inseparable from the question of collectivism. As both Rodríguez and María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo observe, revolutionary discourse repeats a “colonialist” logic of male-authorized subject and female masses-bases. The introduction
of female subjectivity problematizes that discourse and suggests a more authentic version of collectivism described by Irigaray as a “we” constituted by “subjects irreducible each one to the other, each one to the others and thus capable of communicating out of freedom and necessity” (*I Love To You* 104). Feminine subjectivity is also, as Cixous explains, primarily philadelphia: better oriented towards the orchestration of collective voices. The female voice is capable of “keeping alive that other that is confided to [her] that visits [her]” (41). Dawes’s critique, however, opens up a specific theoretical problem with regards to Belli. Is Belli’s writing an expression of what Saldaña-Portillo refers to as the “elaboration of subjectivity agency, conscience and change” inherited from Enlightenment discourse in the shadow of colonialism? (7)

On the one hand, the Nicaraguan poet’s frank discussion of sexuality makes her “revolutionary” in the eyes of critics such as Daisy Zamora and Elizabeth Casimir-Bruno. Both call attention to Belli’s embodied discourse as a challenge to the bourgeois control of woman’s sexuality, which insists on woman’s “covering herself” for the sake of “shame” and “morals” (Zamora 43).37 On the other hand, Belli’s construction of feminine subjectivity repeats many of the same old post-Enlightenment tropes, or what Elena Grau-Lleveria calls “las imágenes impuestas por la tradición patriarcal” (Grau-Lleveria 48). I refer, here, not only to Belli’s uncritical use of tropes of Erotic Romanticism such as Nerudian metaphorical osmoses between woman and nature. These have been well discussed by critics such as Grau-Lleveria, who describes woman in Belli’s poetry as “la...

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37 Zamora explains that the very act of writing the body, especially in sexual matters, is subversive for women: “Exaltar el cuerpo amado, celebrar la sensualidad y sexualidad del cuerpo para nosotras las mujeres tiene una intención subversiva y de allí surge su expresividad.” Casimir Bruno, meanwhile, dedicates her entire doctoral dissertation to this topic, drawing on Simone de Beauvoir’s concepts of the body as “situation,” while placing Belli within the embodied and differential concerns of Second Wave Feminism (9). Belli’s poetry “uses images of the body” as an “empowering discourse” in order to reclaim female subjectivity from patriarchal oppression (5).
Indeed, Sofía Kearns makes the connection with Neruda directly: “Ella era la naturaleza y paisaje nicaragüenses, y la tierra que esperaba ser poseída por el amante-guerrillero. A través de imágenes reminiscentes de algunas falocéntricas de Neruda, […] la mujer no existe por sí misma sino exclusivamente para el sujeto masculino.” Beyond this, I refer also to her construction of herself as a “revolutionary subject” along the same guerrilla narrative model as Che Guevara, articulating her engagement in the political struggle as a kind of subjectivist conversion and liberation.

Like Guevara, Belli came from an upper-class background and experienced revolutionary conscientization as a means to, in Saldaña-Portillo’s terms, “free” herself from a “history of bourgeois privilege and complicity” (66). Che finds in revolutionary struggle freedom from “a sense of compromised masculinity as a third-world subject,” while Belli finds freedom from the compromised and constricted position of bourgeois womanhood. For both, political struggle is a stage on which to perform revolutionary subjectivities and personal liberations.³⁸ Eros is implicit in this liberation, particularly for Belli. While Che, according to Rodríguez, re-interprets Christian tropes of self-discipline and sublimation of personal desire in his narrative construction of guerrilla identity, by contrast Belli establishes eros as another form of “liberation” or rebellion. The poet willingly becomes what Rodríguez cheekily calls “revolutionary pussy”: an object of

³⁸ Note that for both Belli and Che Guevara, reading and writing, activities which recall their bourgeois education, constitute major components of this “subjective construction.” Ricardo Piglia describes the role reading and writing play in Che’s construction of his self-identity. On the one hand, Che “lived his life on the basis of a certain model of experience [adventurers such as Don Quijote and Jack London] he has read and which he seeks to repeat and realize,” therefore “life is completed with a meaning derived from what has been read in fiction” (261-2). On the other hand, Che was himself an aspiring writer, who “constructed” experiences “so as to then write [them]” (264). In her personal memoir, Belli similarly narrates how her activities as a writer eventually lead to her encounter and engagement with the Sandinistas, which in turn nourished her writing (35).
both erotic desire and revolutionary instruction. Belli’s 2001 memoir *Country Under My Skin* conjoins her political conscientization with an erotic awakening, linked as it was to an affair with a poet and friend of Camilo and Daniel Ortega in the early 1970s. She describes sexual transgression as opening her up to social consciousness, first by bringing her into contact with “artists” and “hippies” who would meet at a café to discuss politics, then later by enabling her to meet Camilo Ortega himself, who asked her to join the Sandinistas. The love affair was the catalyst: “my own personal genesis. It made me question all of my obligations, and I began to seriously think about my rights, about what my life was and what it could be” (*Country Under My Skin* 35).

Dawes’s criticism, then, has merit at least on one level. By conflating her revolutionary and erotic activities, Belli seemingly “rebels against patriarchy” without really “challenging the structures of capitalist society” (128). Although she has, in Rodríguez’s words, “passed through the crucible of feminist instruction” (91), her “woman revolutionary” is still Neruda’s Venusian convert, politicized in or through the bedroom. Belli’s political engagement reads as an extension of her extramarital affair, a form of personal rebellion. Her memoirs make that connection explicitly: “I always thought that you couldn’t truly commit to the cause of freedom unless you freed yourself first. […] One couldn’t make others happy if one didn’t know how to be happy in the first place” (45). In that sense, her poetry is indeed an elaboration of subjectivity, agency, conscience and change. It does, however, shift the ground of revolutionary discourse from collective struggle to a “pursuit of happiness,” a kind of postmodern revision that treats the objectives of revolutionary action as ultimately the affective liberation of the individual rather than merely structural or economic changes to the state.
Elena Grau-Lleveria’s response to Dawes picks up on this point. She argues:

Belli crea un erotismo, un ideal de revolución, que no es ni agresivo ni auto-destructivo. Tanto uno como otro es la búsqueda de una sociedad libre. Así la lectura alegórica de algunos de los poemas como la reformulación de los ideales ideológicos de la revolución también forma parte de ese proyecto de alteración de la tradición. Si la tradición nos ha acostumbrado a hablar de amor por medio de otros lenguajes (el religioso, el guerrero, el político) la poética de Belli usa el lenguaje amoroso para crear el mundo deseado de la revolución. (52)

Grau-Lleveria remarks on how the combination of eroticism and revolutionary struggle through a female subjective voice reconfigures the poetic link between both types of discourse such that “el lenguaje amoroso sirve para representar la lucha por la libertad, tanto colectiva como individual” (48).39 “The Pursuit of Happiness” is thus intended as much as a philadelphic pursuit as an erotic one: as much as the female subject proclaiming her right to orgasms, it upholds the right of the people to seek pleasure away from the hindrances of what Deleuze and Guattari call “the sedentary state-formation” and its “passion lines” that determine societies’ moral and molar organization. “Pleasure-seeking” becomes common goal and common ground, the means for all people to become equal through philadelphos-in-eros and through a “desubjectification” and direct communion with each other. In this, Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of “lines of flight,” “desubjectification,” and “detrimentalization” are useful.

According to Janell Watson, Deleuze and Guattari draw from Foucault and Althusser to describe “private individuality” as part of the regime of “subjectification” or the construction of subjectivity based on the internalization of imposed social codes and

39 Kearns makes a similar point, adding that Belli’s work includes “la conceptualización del amor de pareja como una metáfora multivalente que representaba la unidad socio-política y de género en oposición a la tiranía [...]. El amor era esencialmente una fuerza por la cual se minimizaban las divisiones entre las clases sociales y los géneros y se enfatizaba la unión.” In that sense, Belli’s postmodern concept of the social or philadelphic dimension of erotic love also draws from pre-modern sources, calling to mind Doris Sommer’s “foundational” Romances of the Early National Period that attempted to unify the “fractured constituencies” of the nascent Latin American nations through “domestic happiness and productivity” (14).
signs along the lines of Althusser’s notion of ideological “interpellation.” As Watson explains, “The regime of subjectification allows for the emergence of consciousness which belongs to the confining ‘strata’ of molar organization rather than to the liberating lines of flight associated with molecular flows” (87). *Eros* can either manifest as a “cogito for two”—deepening the subjectification process into the black-hole of molar “consciousness”—or it can lead to liberation and desubjectification. Watson continues:

> Love implies an extraction of the individual from the group, but then necessitates a transformation of the individual into a multiplicity, a pack within. Love can thus operate on a molecular level, dissolving personhood (always molar) into becoming (always molecular), which always implies the multiple, and has no use for subjects. Love is a matter of becoming-woman, for men as well as for women. (90)

In Belli’s case, freedom involves a movement from the bourgeois home, an erotic space that has been “subjectified” into a social construct, and towards a deterritorialization that Watson calls the “dissolution of the self.” In other words, *eros* can enclose, or it can be the line of flight from an enclosed erotic subjectivity to an expansive *philadelphos*. In *Sobre la grama*, *eros* desubjectifies the socially-imposed construct of Belli’s bourgeois identity, transforming her “I” into a philadelphic, or multiplicitous, one. Even the book’s title evokes this movement towards multiplicity. In her memoirs, Belli acknowledges its homage to Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, in particular Whitman’s “celebration of the body, the landscape and the multitudes of his homeland” (71). According to Floyd Stovall, “grass” in Whitman is a symbol of divine creation, and also of the equality of all people and their connection to each other via primeval nature” (Whitman xviii). Belli preserves the rhizomatic symbolism of grass while simultaneously evoking a boundless erotic space in which sexual impulses connect lovers with the same Earth that stirs them. Belli’s lyrical “I,” with *eros* as a line of flight, becomes a philadelphic subject.
Having sketched out a theoretical framework for Belli’s postmodern elaboration of revolution as liberation of the subject via a flight towards philadelphic communion, I turn to the text itself. *Sobre la grama* can be read as a postmodern text that engages in an intertextual dialectical relationship with modernist love poets such as Neruda and Cardenal. Belli’s purpose is to dismantle the isolation and Cixousian monosexuality of erotic Romanticism, recasting subjectivity, sexuality, and art as oriented towards philadelphic collectivity and Deleuzo-Guattarian desubjectivism. Even the text itself is a collective construction, helped along in its production by Belli’s Sandinista friends: Jaime Morales Carazo, one of Belli’s advertising clients at Publisa, funded the text’s publication, while poet José Coronel Utrecho wrote a laudatory six-page introduction; artist Róger Pérez de la Rocha designed the cover and a series of pencil sketches of the poet that are included in the original first edition (*Country 71*).

Beyond its “collective” genesis, which undermines the modernist notion of poetry as a solitary endeavour, *Sobre la grama* also lacks page numbers, chapters or an index.\(^\text{40}\) It is organized, rather, into four interrelated thematic sections, each of which is introduced by one of Pérez de la Rocha’s sketches of Belli. This composition guides the reading of the poems as a kind of molecular flow, loosely structured by the visual refrain of Belli’s image that introduces a change in poetic theme and a deepening of the text’s philadelphic *telos*. The four sections create this *telos* as a syntactical narrative arc in which the poet moves: from establishing a philadelphic subjective voice that I will call “Fertile Subjectivity”; to its multiplication via the erotic inclusion of the beloved in the

\(^{40}\) For this reason, citations of the text will refer to poem titles only
section I refer to as “Eros”; to its further multiplication through motherhood in a section dedicated to “Maternity”; and finally a full immersion into the multitude via art in the final section on “Writing.” The poems of the “Fertile Subjectivity” section deal with the poet herself, her emotional states, her fertile body, and her desire to commune with the natural world. They are introduced by a line-drawn sketch of Belli’s face, gazing directly at the viewer with an enigmatic half-smile evocative of her namesake. The “Eros” section comprises love poems, describing her passionate romantic encounters with her beloved and preceded by a nude drawing of the poet reclining in a languid pose gazing left, as though she is waiting for someone towards whom she stretches her hand. The “Maternity” section is dedicated to Belli’s experiences of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood and is preceded by another nude lying on her back, gazing upward with her hips turned toward the viewer. The deep shadows around her belly round it out, giving a sense of gravity. Finally, the “Writing” section explores Belli’s identity as a poet during the regime of Somoza Debayle, preceded by a drawing showing the poet in an active pose, in quarter-profile with her head obscured by her long curly hair, and her arms raised and folded in front of her face, reflecting the poet’s need to remain partially hidden. Each section works to deterritorialize the modernist molar tendencies inherent in its particular lyrical subject matter: subjectivity, eroticism, motherhood, and art.

The book begins with a manifesto, articulating through the appropriation of a Biblical phrase the embodied subjectivity of woman as both a self, created by God for her own sake, and also as a philadelphic Romantic subject:

41 Casimir Bruno discusses this “appropriation” in more detail as a “subversion” of a patriarchal biblical narrative. She explains: “The opening verses appropriate the words from the Bible, ‘And God made man,’ and then deliberately subverts them by substituting the word woman for man [...] . Belli writes that God created woman as if her creation was a purposeful decision to allow females to perpetuate life, thus
Y Dios me hizo mujer,
de pelo largo,
ojos,
nariz y boca de mujer.
Con curvas
y pliegues
y suaves hondonadas
y me cavó por dentro,
me hizo un taller de seres humanos. ("Y Dios me hizo mujer")

Unlike modernist concepts of selfhood, the poet’s subjectivity and its expression through art is intrinsically linked to the multitude rather than isolated from it. In a Cixousian sense, this is a move away from the phallogocentric identification of woman with lack, focusing instead on the “yes” of female subjectivity, the affirmative inclusiveness of the female libido (39). Belli frames her body through God’s creative act, starting with the head and face and working her way through the body in what Casimir Bruno describes as a composition “consistent with the poetic tradition of rhetorical portraiture” (42). The facial elements identify her as both woman and Woman, as a unique person who stands for the collective, reflected in the chiastic pattern “mujer de” and “de mujer” that frames the poem’s description of her facial features. At the same time, the eyes, nose, and mouth are also means through which the body communicates, receiving sensory information from the external world and enabling the woman to communicate her internal state through her glance, expression, and utterance. The poem then extends downward along her body, linking the communicative/identifying conjunction of features to the more erotic mid-body conjunction of “curves,” “folds,” “soft depths” through the enjambment between “de mujer” and “con” in lines 4-5. The erotic and communicative fields of the

changing the Biblical version that Eve was created out of Adam’s rib to be his companion and meet his needs" (41-42). But Casimir Bruno’s reading of the Biblical text is superficial. The creation passage, Genesis 1:27, emphasizes the creation of both male and female simultaneously “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
body work in synch. Sexuality is a type of communication, and communicative utterance is nourished by embodied love. In a sense, Belli makes the same connection as Cardenal, associating erotic impulses with the production of language, an association that builds through the text. For Belli, however, the erotic production of language and poetic creation are not meant to isolate the lyrical speaker but to expand her.

The erotic field of woman’s body is composed of not only those physical elements that indicate sexual attractiveness and pleasure, but also those that make woman peopleable as evidenced in the “workshop” image, one of the poem’s few uses of metaphor. The image of the workshop fuses several modalities of creativity together. On the one hand, it associates birth, writing, and manual labour in a feminine revision of a Nerudian construct. On the other, it brings God and humanity closer to each other in a manner that recalls Gabriela Mistral’s “El arpa de Dios,” in which God is described as the “First Musician,” producing music by playing on the entrañas of human beings (206). For Belli, as for Mistral, the entrañas, viscera or mid-body, become the point of contact between divine creator and lyrical subject, the place from which the music or poetry stimulated by the former emerges from the latter. Belli, however, draws attention to those entrañas specific to woman, whereas Mistral refers to the viscera of both.42 Woman has a direct and unique link to divine nature by being both a created being and a participant in creation through the twin acts of birthing and writing. The poem structurally becomes a womb within a womb, providing the discursive terrain in which the divine being moves and acts in order to create the body of the poetic subject, who herself is a terrain for the creation of both bodies and discourses, utterances and forms of expression.

42 Motherhood is mentioned near the end of Mistral’s prose piece as an example of one who labours in the world unaware that God is producing music from her: “la madre que entrega a su hijo ignora también que en ese momento su cuerda se ensangrrienta” (207).
Two subsequent poems (“Soy llena de gozo” and “Metamorfosis”) take the peopleable potential of the poet’s feminine subjectivity as also the potential for desubjectification, for dissolution of the self by overcoming the black-hole consciousness imposed by society. They do this through a kind of Whitmanian nature/culture dichotomy, in which the female lyrical speaker seeks a line of flight from the bourgeois enclosure towards a state of primordial philadelphic communion. In “Soy llena de gozo,” the dichotomy comes via a reference to the poet’s desire to “become naked” in lines evocative of the second stanza of Whitman’s Song of Myself, “I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked / I am mad for it to be in contact with me” (3):

Imantada mi sangre con la naturaleza
Sintiendo el llamado del monte
Para correr como venado desenfrenadamente
sobando el aire,
o andar desnuda por las cañadas
untada de grama y flores machacadas. (“Soy llena de gozo”)

Belli draws from Whitman the symbolic association between physical nakedness and primeval return. Clothing is a sign of alienation, imposing a false division between humans and nature, and men and women. “Nature,” in terms of both uncultivated wild spaces and unencumbered human instincts, puts the lyrical speaker in contact with all of humanity through its common material origins and also its erotic longings, the philadelphos-in-eros. The primitive elements “El barro,” “la costilla,” “el amor de la parra,” and “el cuero” connect man and woman. The poet attains “oneness” with her male counterpart by re-joining his body and becoming one of his ribs, and the two of them return to the elemental matter from which they were created. This communion between the sexes and between the lovers cannot be accomplished through the erotic enclosure but through philadelphic liberation, which dissolves their subjectivities into the Earth.
In “Metamorfosis,” the same nature/culture dichotomy, and the poet’s desired flight into culture, is articulated through a type of Nerudian osmosis of the woman’s body into geological and vegetable elements. Unlike Neruda’s poems in Los versos, however, this “osmosis” destroys, instead of creating, an enclosure. “Culture” here is represented by the domestic sphere, an enclosure that her transformations disrupt and dismantle:

Mis ramas estorban en el cuerpo,
sigo enredándome en todo:
ya mi nariz
también se ha puesto verde
y mis olores han cambiado,
tropiezo con los muebles
y mis piernas están rompiendo
los ladrillos,
buscando la tierra,
enredándome. (“Metamorfosis”)

The woman begins “messing up” her home, dropping leaves everywhere, disturbing it with her branches and knocking against the furniture. Her legs or roots, seeking communion with the Earth, break up the “stones” of the house. The poet’s desire, as expressed in the poem’s final line, is to “become nature.” This becoming necessitates a complete breakdown of the subjectified enclosure—her body transforms irrevocably into something more expansive and ancient than itself—and undermines the domestic sphere to which she is consigned as a bourgeois woman, whom society condemns and constricts. Communion with the Earth, as well as philadelphic communion with humanity, requires a breakdown of constructed and isolating subjectivities, including erotic enclosures.

The text’s second section, “Eros,” argues that dyadic love can only attain a truly intersubjective equality by becoming desubjectified, dissolving the selfhood of the lyrical speaker and beloved. Belli’s erotic discourse opposes enclosure, preferring liberation or a flight into a philadelphic communion in which, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, lover
and beloved encounter and immerse themselves in each other’s multiplicities, and “love” becomes “an exercise in depersonalization on a body without organs yet to be formed” (35). Belli’s liberation of love from the subjectivized enclosure is both linguistic and physical, as seen in the poems “Escribirte,” “Te veo como un temblor,” and “Quiero.”

Definir el misterio, el momento preciso del descubrimiento, el amor, esta sensación de aire comprimido dentro del cuerpo curvo, la explosiva felicidad que me saca las lágrimas y me colorea los ojos, la piel, los dientes, mientras voy volviéndome flor, enredadera, castillo, poema, entre tus manos. (“Escribirte”)

For Belli, love produces an expansive effect not only on her libido and her physical body but on her language. Her body loses its molar solidity, coalescing into a molecular multiplicity of imaginary forms (“flor, enredadera, castillo, poema”), while the beloved’s presence is not merely evoked, but experienced in a multitude of ways from the memories of physical contact to the elements in her daily life that call him to mind. “Escribirte” articulates eroticism through the molecular language of a philadelphic subject. The poem travels along the outer rim of language and meaning, tracing the multiplicity of the beloved. The frenzied lines move from sensation to sensation, chasing rabbit trails of passions without closure or completion and without subsuming the multitude of impressions into a molar compositional or grammatical structure. The sentences run on, losing their grammatical structure in the abundance of commas and “ands” as sensations crowd in. Indeed, the task Belli sets for herself in the opening verse—“Escribir, escribirte, dibujarte, llenarte en el pelo de todas palabras colgadas en el aire”—becomes futile. She cannot “write” the beloved precisely because he is a multiplicity; recognizing that multiplicity means being unable to frame him into a modernist erotic enclosure. So this poem is an antithesis to Cardenal’s “Claudia” epigrams, particularly “Cuídate Claudia cuando estés conmigo,” in which the lyrical
speaker “writes” Claudia into a poetic construction, leaving her subjectivity behind.

Belli’s lyrical “I,” like Cardenal’s, has a privileged relationship to language. But unlike Cardenal, Belli’s position is molecular receptivity rather than molar dominion. Like Whitman’s philadelphic subject who states “I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop. They seize every object and lead it through me” (31), and like Cardenal’s “monk-bride” in Gethsemani KY, who interprets and observes the erotic communications of the universe, Belli’s lyrical speaker remains passive, collecting like a net or Shelley’s “Aeolian harp” the signs of her lover’s multiplicity that pass through her in their communion with the Earth.

“Te veo como un temblor” directly expresses Belli’s reconstruction of dyadic love as a “union of multiplicities” rather than an erotic enclosure. The poet states her desire to “multiply” herself in order to people her lover:

Cuando estoy con vos  
Quisiera tener varias yo  
Invadir el aire que respirás  
Transformarme en un amor caliente  
Para que me sudés  
Y poder entrar y salir de vos. (“Te veo como un temblor en el agua”)

Belli’s union with her lover involves a molecular state of becoming. As a “subjectified” woman, the lyrical speaker cannot contain the energy of her ecstatic desire and has to create “varias yo” to experience it fully. Bodies, of both lover and beloved, become permeable fields rather than physical enclosures or boundaries determined by a phallus and its lack, the alienation of sexual difference. Belli’s poem subverts modernist eros whose “thematics of alienation” circle around this difference, this gap between genders that sexual intercourse can only temporarily erase. By contrast, Neruda’s “Las furias y las penas” expresses this difference in language so precise it is worth exploring more:
Yo era un hombre transportado al acaso
con una mujer hallada vagamente,
nos desnudamos
como para morir o nadar o envejecer
y nos metimos uno dentro del otro,
ella rodeándome como un agujero,
yo quebrantándola como quien
golpea una campana. (365)

Neruda’s expression of the difference can be summarized as “phallic” penetration and “feminine” encapsulation: “She surrounding me like a hole”; “I breaking her like one who rings a bell.” “Placing” one inside the other represents sexual union’s potential to overcome their inherent separation and mutual alienation, a potential that never comes to fruition. All Neruda can do is “produce” a cry from the beloved that “wounds” him through a type of circularity described by Jameson in regards to Munsch’s “The Scream”: “the absent scream returns more closely towards to that even more absent experience of atrocious solitude and anxiety which the scream was itself to ‘express’” (62). Through her molecular dissolution of the self into a multiplicity, Belli opens up this circularity and dissolves the difference between phallic penetration and feminine encapsulation.43 Her multiplicity “encapsulates” her lover—becoming “tierra para sembrarte”—and penetrates him, entering and inhabiting his body, “caressing” him “cerebrally” and “entering his heart to explode along with his heartbeats.” Thus the poem undoes both modernist isolation and the difference between “encapsulation” and “penetration.” Here, male and female bodies alike become “permeable” and “peopleable,” undergoing in Watson’s words a shift to “becoming-woman, a molecular, minoritarian becoming for molar men as well as for molar women” (84). As a result of this union of multiplicities, lover and

43 This “penetration/encapsulation” difference is also read by Cixous as an association of woman with Lacanian phallic “lack.” Belli follows Cixous’s exhortation to refuse to “pay allegiance to the negative” or to “go round and around the supreme hole.” “What is feminine (the poets suspected it) affirms: […] and yes I said yes I will yes” (42).
beloved’s subjectivities are euphorically melded together ("no sepamos quién es quién"), precluding any monadic alienation.

In “Quiero,” Belli’s dissolution of the self into a multiplicity becomes concretized in the poet’s longing to conceive her lover’s child. Maternity becomes a focal point for the poet’s philadelphic longings. It reinforces her communion with primordial nature, echoed in the image of her life growing like a tree watered by her lover:

*Quiero ese hijo tuyo, amor.*

Dáreme desde dentro de mi vientre
En una nueva prolongación de la inmortalidad
Mostrarte hasta donde puede crecer mi vida
Como un árbol
Si tú la riegas. ("Quiero")

Motherhood enables her to multiply both herself and her beloved. Birthing a child will extend the poet’s life, by making her “immortal” and by expanding her multiplicity in time and space. The phrase “dáreme,” repeated at the beginning of line 2 and at the end of line 7, can be read as both “give you myself” in an erotic sense, and “birth myself for you” in the maternal sense, making the erotic peopling of lovemaking and the physical peopling of maternity indistinguishable. Indeed, the movement between the poem’s first line and its subsequent elaboration reiterate this idea. Belli’s ache toward maternity is not merely due to a sense of motherhood as a defining factor of femaleness, nor to any social pressure on women to have children. She does not conceive of herself as a chaste mother in the Mistralian sense, who wants a baby to hold and to nurture. Motherhood is an outflow of Belli’s sexual passion for her lover. She wants not any child, but *his* child, to be inhabited by him and by the physical manifestation of their passion, to expand that
passion beyond the dyadic relationship so that that love may expand rhizomatically to a multiplicity of beings and to the multiplicity within each of them.

Belli does something revolutionary by doing something markedly conservative: by inscribing maternity as an element of sexual passion, she integrates peopling into the sexual experience. Indeed, she could almost be poeticizing the Theology of the Body. This is conservative in that it links motherhood with sex, but revolutionary because it links sex with motherhood, bringing the Mistralian “chaste mother” into the bedroom and reminding her where babies come from. Yet for all of their differences in sexual expressiveness, both Belli and Mistral treat motherhood as a philadelphic phenomenon: a point of solidarity between women and a point of contact with the generative forces of nature. Mistral expresses this philadelphic solidarity in an introductory note to the section “Poemas de las madres” in Desolación:

En esta obra egoísta, empequeñecida a mis propios ojos por ese egoísmo, tales prosas humanas tal vez sean lo único en que se canta la Vida total. ¿Había de eliminarlas? ¡No! Aquí quedan, dedicadas a las mujeres capaces de ver que la Santidad de la vida comienza en la maternidad, la cual es, por lo tanto, sagrada. Sientan ellas la honda ternura con que una mujer que apacienta por la Tierra los hijos ajenos, mira a las madres de todos los niños del mundo. (141)

This passage, and Belli’s poems, add a third philadelphic association to motherhood, linking it to artistic creation. Mistral experiences solidarity with mothers not only through their common womanhood and love of children, but also through the act of writing, which brings her close to them in a Whitmanian communion. In the “Maternity” section of Sobre la grama, Belli makes the same connection between writing and motherhood, but in her case so as to resolve the problematic “isolationist” nature of motherhood itself.

The “Maternity” section brings together two types of maternity: “artistic maternity,” the sublimation of the maternal impulse into art; and “biological maternity,”
begetting children through the female body. While the former is, more often than not, an interpretive and literary trope associated with women artists unable to bear children (as well as Mistral, Frida Kahlo comes to mind), in Belli’s case it is connected to her philadelphic impulses, her desire for self-expansion and communion. But the latter type of maternity problematizes that expansive impulse by creating its own spatiality, making the poet’s affects immanent in a new type of dyadic enclosure that cuts the maternal subject off from interaction with the multitude. Belli’s memoir describes this “enclosure” as initially delightful: “For the first months of my daughter’s life I retreated into a private little world that the two of us shared, deliciously and exclusively alone with one another.” But later, it becomes suffocating: “I soon began to have nightmares about it. Half of my body had become a household appliance” (24). Like eros, maternity generates its own enclosures and has to be reconfigured through philadelphic subjectivity. The “Maternity” section does this by prioritizing the “artistic maternity” of Belli’s subjectivity at the beginning of the section, and “biological maternity” at the end. The poem that best describes the first concept occurs early in the section entitled “Quiero escribir un niño”:

Quiero escribir un niño
Con grandes ojos como semillas
Pelo color maíz
Dulce sonrisa de níspero

Quiero escribir un niño
Hacerlo con palabras
En el idioma de su placenta hecha de mar
De sacuanjoches olorosos. (“Quiero escribir un niño”)

Here the poet “engenders” a child through art, rather than the body. The child is a creature of pure poetry, its features composed according to the wild phenotypes of the poet’s creative impulse and the material elements that Belli collects from her philadelphic
communion with nature: “níspero,” “sacuanjoches,” and “maíz.” The “poem child’s” physical maternity is displaced to that same “Earth,” thus it is not her body that acts as the child’s womb, but the “sea.” Belli’s lyrical subject takes on a role analogous to God in “Y Dios me hizo mujer,” laying the teleology of the child’s being. Yet even as she appropriates a divine role, she avoids an omnipotent molar subjectivity by establishing the child’s genesis through philadelphic linkage with the Earth and its elements. The “poem child” is both poet (“un verde niño poeta,” “moreno cantor”) and poem: “[hecho] con palabras,” “En el idioma de su placenta hecha de mar.” Just as the child is engendered through the philadelphic union of the poet with the Earth, the poem child is also a “philadelphic” being, not merely an incarnation of the burgeoning forces of the Earth, but existing to perpetuate itself interminably “to fill the world with smiles.” The child “sung” into existence via the poet’s creative act, sings other imaginary beings into being, inundating the world with an ever-expanding multiplicity of others like itself. Maternity in this poem, therefore, is associated almost entirely with art, with the work of the imagination and philadelphic interconnectedness. Biological lineage, that arborescent form of interpersonal relationship, is replaced with a rhizomatic lineage in which the poet and her “child” bond with the multitude through an ever-expanding multiplicity.

Arborescent “Biological Maternity” is brought into the second half of the section with several poems referring to the birth of Belli’s two daughters. Biological motherhood has a reductive effect on the expansive themes of the rest of the text. Thus Belli’s lyrical subjectivity collapses in on itself in a manner best described in the poem “parto”:

Yo era un solo dolor miedoso,  
esperando ver salir de entre mis piernas  
un sueño de nueve meses  
con cara y sexo.
As a result of the birthing process, the lyrical “I” has withdrawn into a singular embodied reality, a point of “fearful pain.” Similarly, in “Feto” the poet describes a dyadic relationship between mother and child that encloses them both: “Eres mi pequeño habitante / con el que vivo frente a frente / y yo soy tu saco amniótico.” Biological maternity creates its own embodied monde à deux, in which mother and child are isolated from the multitude. Motherhood’s isolation is as much temporal as spatial, introducing an immanence that counteracts the transcendent expansion of the earlier poems of the texts. Thus the six poems dedicated to biological maternity are most directly autobiographical, drawn from Belli’s own physical and temporal experiences. Three of these final six poems are named after her daughters and deal with experiences related to their early lives, from her reflections on her first daughter Maryam, to the troubled birth of her second daughter Melissa, who nearly died from complications due to an incompatibility between Belli and her husband’s blood types. Likewise, the poetic language employed is less rhetorical and more anchored in time, with fewer metaphoric flourishes and relying on preterit verb forms to establish temporality: “ya se quedó dormida la muchachita” and “Me acuerdo cuando nació mi hija.” As the text progresses, however, this immanence of motherhood is swallowed up in the philadelphic expansiveness of the final section dedicated to “Writing,” in which artistic creation is the most philadelphic act of all.

The final section of Sobre la grama deals almost exclusively with Belli’s vocation as a poet. No wonder this section is given primacy: it is the final destination of the text’s teleological structure, at the very end of the work and following the section dedicated to poems of maternity. This not only solidifies the relationship between maternity and

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44 Belli describes this episode in detail in her memoir, alongside observations on how women were treated in public hospitals (60).
writing; it also gives writing a higher position, resolving the tension created by biological motherhood’s competing demands by subsuming the whole of Belli’s female subjectivity into philadelphic expression through art. It is, moreover, the longest and most varied section of the text, containing twenty-two poems and two prose pieces. As in previous sections, Belli’s concept of art is an attempt to deterritorialize modernist themes. In terms of literary creation, the poet subverts the notion of art as a solitary endeavour, a kind of alienated “expression” in Jameson’s sense of the term. All art should expand outward to the multitude and make the artist peopleable by that same multitude. Writing is a philadelphic practice, and the poet is the philadelphic subject par excellence.

“Dándose” opens the section by describing three basic purposes of poetry:

Escribir para darle forma al mundo
Para delinear el perfil de la lágrima
La tristeza del árbol cortado

Escribir para despojarnos de la mañana recién nacida
Para irnos desnudando del dolor y de la alegría
Para revestirnos otra vez del sol, del mar
De la pareja que inspira ternura sin saberlo. (“Dándose”)

In the first stanza, poetry becomes a means to, in Shklovsky’s words, “defamiliarize” the world, to “frame speech” and “impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known” (Shklovsky 16). The poet or (in Belli’s case) poets “give shape” to the world by tracing a line around “the profile of a tear” and the “sadness of a cut tree,” making them perceivable elements. In the second stanza, the act of writing becomes a means to denude one’s subjectivity, a “shedding of joys and sorrows,” and a re-dressing in “sun, and sea,” opening up philadelphic communion with nature and the multitude. In Stanza 3 the poet then expresses the necessity of consciously becoming a public being. The poet is called to undress herself not merely of “joys and sorrows,” but of her entire
body, to substitute it for “other bodies that live and feel in us.” Each body that occupies the poet’s own is not subsumed into her ego, but rather “lives and feels” itself in her.

The poem is thus a manifesto of the philadelphic nature of the poet. At first, Belli’s concept of poetic vocation is similar to that proposed by Cardenal in *Epigramas*: to reveal and make public what is hidden. Unlike Cardenal, however, Belli does not see this role as consecrating the poet or setting him or her apart from the multitude. Quite the contrary: the “denuding” of the second stanza and the “peopling” of the third make that clear. The poet’s self-expression is meant to facilitate philadelphic communion. By expressing inner emotions, she builds links with the other, and with multiple others who are drawn and bound to her by that same human vulnerability. Similarly, by “stripping” herself, the poet opens herself to possession by that multiplicity of voices. Her role is as Deleuze and Guattari’s “orchestrator of affects,” the philadelphic romantic subject through whom other voices are heard. Her own feelings and the fruit of her own creativity are shared collectively with the multitude in a cyclical process by which the philadelphic romantic subject nourishes the multitude with her creations, while the multitude nourishes those same creations through the orchestrator’s mediation. Modernist subjective isolation must be sacrificed, “gotten rid of,” for the philadelphic subject to become habitable by the multitude, to fertilize the same Earth that nourishes her and to allow the cyclical process to continue.

Modernist artistic isolation is anathema to the poetic vocation, yet Belli also recognizes this isolation as an Adornian “reaction to the reification of society.” Modernism is an inversion of the same molar subjectification that shapes and oppresses her society, not only in terms of its restriction of woman’s roles, but also the constrictions
of public life under a dictatorial regime. The poem “Rebelión” expresses the relationship between social conditions and poetic isolation:

Están en mí, dentro de mí, con toda la fuerza de la tierra
Del amor, con toda angustia del hijo que debo parir y esconder
Porque no me está dado enorgullecerme de él
Sino agachar la cabeza y guardar estos papeles
En alguna gaveta donde el tiempo los amarille.

mientras yo me voy convirtiendo en repollo, lechuga
o cualquier otro vegetal. (“Rebelión”)

As in “Quiero escribir un hijo,” the destiny of “poem children” is to spread rhizomatically, to expand through the world. The poet is a public being, meant to share and communicate. Otherwise, the poem child “withers” with time, in a drawer, while the poet becomes a kind of “vegetable.” The vegetable imagery here contrasts with Belli’s transformation into a tree in “Metamorfosis,” which was a product of her molecularization in philadelphic communion with “the forces of the Earth.” Belli’s poems in “Rebelión” are locked in a subjectified enclosure, the private domestic sphere, while Belli herself transforms into a subjectified type of plant life, not the wild expansive growth of trees and grass, but vegetables, cultivated plants grown under controlled conditions and assigned a specific role in society as foodstuff.

This isolation can be read in three ways. First, the consignment of the poems to the “drawer” and the poet to the vegetable crisper is a critique of the isolation of woman in the domestic sphere and of the subjectified identity of the bourgeois wife. Second, it also calls into question the modernist separation between artist and public. Poetry’s destiny is to thrive in the world, not to “wither” as the insular expression of private passions. Finally, the poet is unable to “take pride” in her poem child and set him loose because of a situation beyond her control, articulated merely as “no me está dado”: “I am
not allowed.” The prohibiting factor is left purposefully ambiguous. One likely interpretation is that it is an oblique reference to the repressive atmosphere of the Somoza Debayle regime, in which poems of a certain nature are unable to move freely and live out their communicative destinies. This would certainly correspond to what we have already seen with Cardenal’s “gossip” epigrams, as well as with the repression that Belli herself describes in her memoirs.45

“Rebelión,” then, can read as a metaphoric depiction of the transition from state censorship under a totalitarian regime, to the internalization of that censorship in the form of self-censorship. Raúl Zurita expresses this transition in terms of language:

En un primer momento se descubre la censura (administrada) impuesta, luego se la internaliza (autocensura) y finalmente pasa a desbordar cualquier estrategia que sobre ella se puede tener. No se tratará ya de privarse de hablar por temor a un posible castigo (en general los análisis de la censura paran aquí), sino que hablar, ejercer la lengua ya es un castigo. Es allí donde el régimen dobla y subvierte su culpabilidad, ella pasa a ser dominio público de modo tal que todos son culpables aunque no se sepa por qué. (15)

The poet is unable to establish a locus for the prohibiting factor, to point an accusatory finger in its direction. She is “guilty”—forced to “agacharse la cabeza”—but cannot explain “why.” The poems are prevented from circulating outward in the philadelphic trajectory described in “Quiero escribir un niño,” a horizontal incarnation and expansion into multiple selves and bodies. Rather than expanding and multiplying into new bodies, “el mensaje emitido” (in Zurita’s words) collapses into and becomes the interlocutor. Expansion is replaced by implosion, thriving by a mere vegetative existence. The implication is that poetry is meant to expand beyond the self into the public sphere, but is

45 Belli describes several incidents including being denounced to her employer by the chief of Somoza’s State Security Office and being tailed by members of the National Guard (Country 71-84).
prevented from doing so by socio-historical circumstances that reverberate back on to the body of the poet herself.

This examination of Sobre la grama has focused on the text’s internal structure and its philadelphic themes. The text reads as an intertextual critique of the Erotic Romanticism of Belli’s modernist predecessors. Artistic creation, rooted in feminine philadelphic love, is not an expression of enclosure and alienation, but a means of desubjectification and deterritorialization. Belli’s “poet’s role” desubjectifies her lyrical subjectivity in the “Fertile Subjectivity” section, her love affair in “Eros,” her relationship with her children in “Maternity,” and her artistic sensibilities in “Writing.” The political situation of Belli’s country, however, enters as an inhibiting force, locking her into a molar, sedentary identity and preventing her expansion. Reading the text as a whole, it becomes evident that while Belli and the Cardenal of Epigramas contend against the same or similar forces, using poetry as a means to counter totalitarianism, the two employ very distinct strategies. Epigramas is modernist: the poet creates an alternative space of purity to contrast with the corrupt agora, but that space remains molar and enclosed, exposing itself to public view through the artist’s vocation. Sobre la grama’s strategy is by contrast a postmodern deconstruction of spatiality, a molecular subsuming of all things into the Earth that makes them equal, something that Cardenal only intuits through a radical displacement of subjectivity in his monastery poems. But despite this fundamental difference between modernist and postmodernist approaches, Belli’s text does not entirely eschew modernist strategies. Belli’s vision of freedom and expansion is itself a form of Adornian inversion, criticizing the restrictions and repressions of both the Somoza regime and bourgeois womanhood. The text expresses her utopian objectives,
the vision she has for herself in a “free Nicaragua.” Read alongside Sobre la grama, Belli’s subsequent text Línea de fuego confirms this. This utopian vision of subjective liberation and philadelphic communion guides Belli’s explicitly politicized expression.

Línea de fuego, Philadelphos in Love and War

In December, 1974, a commando unit of Sandinista guerrillas seized the home of the president of the Banco Central de Nicaragua during a Christmas party, taking hostage a number of government supporters, including relatives of Somoza Debayle himself. In response, government repression against the Sandinistas increased to such a degree that Belli, who had been involved in intelligence gathering for the operation, fled to Mexico City and later Costa Rica with her family. Exile, as she describes it, freed up her writing, allowing her to express in her poetry “what until then had been walled within” (Country 28). The result was Línea de fuego, written in Mexico in 1976, which would go on to win the “Casa de las Américas” poetry prize when it was published two years later.

Clandestinity and exposure, implication and direct exposition: Sobre la grama and Línea del fuego are texts whose very construction is marked by a difference between disarticulation and articulation. In Sobre la grama, the poet’s political consciousness is buried beneath the edifice of a utopian vision of philadelphic communion. In Línea de fuego, that political consciousness is made explicit. The former critiques its social environs via the modernist methods of contrast and difference; the latter speaks directly. Sobre la grama exposes a utopian vision at the surface, subsuming the revolution below it. Línea de fuego brings both to the surface. Exposing the revolution in Línea de fuego, however, also makes manifest the tensions between utopian ideation and revolutionary
reality, which *Sobre la grama* had left unexplored. Revolutionary conscientization has a spatializing effect on the poet’s affects, precluding the types of molecular philadelphic communion expressed in *Sobre la grama*. Philadelphos becomes divided into two types that contend with one another throughout the text: the “transcendent” *philadelphos* of *Sobre la grama*, and “conscientized” *philadelphos*, a spatialized, immanentized version in which all parts of the multiplicity conform to revolutionary objectives. The former has space for subjective being and dyadic love relationships; in the latter, all subjectivity is subsumed into collectivity and all personal affections must be transubstantiated into Che Guevara’s “revolutionary love.” *Línea de fuego* encounters this tension in the first two sections of the text and tries to resolve it in the third by drawing revolution into the transcendental philadelphic framework as another form of personal liberation of the isolated molar subject.

In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, *Línea de fuego* is a “little machine” plugged into both the war-machine of revolutionary engagement and the love-machine of Belli’s philadelphic liberation. The “war machine” is a nomadic force exterior to and distinct in nature and origin from the sedentary state formation, a formation that is composed of the duality of “the despot” and “the legislator.” The state is interiority, a polis; the war machine is exteriority, a *nomos* that sets itself against the state. The sedentary state formation possesses no war-machine of its own, but “can only appropriate one in the form of a military institution: one that will continually cause it problems” (355). The warrior himself differs from the soldier in that he or she is a molecular being, “a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, the pack, the irruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis” (352). This being is not beholden to the state but rather “bears witness to
another kind of justice […] above all to other relations with women and animals, because he sees all things in relations of becoming rather than implementing binary distributions between ‘states’” (354). Deleuze and Guattari’s theorization of the “war machine” and the “man of war” absolves the guerrilla of the charges laid by Ileana Rodríguez regarding his appropriation of masculine and feminine identities as a means of “excluding woman.” The guerrilla is closer to becoming-woman, to a molecular unity with what is excluded. Belli recognizes this. Her adoption of a revolutionary subjectivity is motivated by a desire to become a “woman of war,” to liberate herself from state sedentariness.

Belli’s revolutionary and erotic activities have the same function. Love is, in Deleuze and Guattari’s words, its own type of “War Machine endowed with strange and somewhat terrifying powers” (278). The warrior’s nomadism is an integral element of both his Venusian and Martian activities. His “sins” against the sedentary state are as much in the sexual realm as on the battlefield, transgressing the laws governing “the distribution of men and women” as much as “the laws of war instituted by the state” (354). Línea de fuego recognizes this sameness between war and love machines in their opposition to the sedentary state, and this recognition resolves the problematic created by the revolution’s demand on personal expressions of love. This resolution is evident in the text’s structure. Línea de fuego is divided into three sections: “Patria o Muerte,” whose poems are dedicated to the Sandinista cause; “Acero,” telling of a love affair with a fellow Sandinista named Eduardo Contreras or “Marcos”; and “A Sergio,” a series of poems that returns to the themes of Sobre la grama, eroticism and philadelphic communion. The first two sections explore how “conscientization” alters or changes the poet’s philadelphic subjectivity, while the third undoes the change, proposing revolution
as ultimately a temporary phenomenon designed to lead the poet and the people to the philadelphic utopia proposed in *Sobre la grama*. This reading of the text, rather than going section by section, will read the first two sections in conjunction as expressions of the effects of conscientization on both and the tensions it causes, while the third section examines Belli’s philadelphic resolution.

The text’s opening poem, “La Huelga,” recognizes the difference between the *philadelphos* of revolutionary engagement and the more “transcendental” type, while anticipating Belli’s prioritization of the latter as a means to “correct” the former:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Quiero una huelga donde vayamos todos} \\
\text{Una huelga de brazos, de piernas, de cabellos} \\
\text{Una huelga naciendo en cada cuerpo.} \\
\text{Quiero una huelga} \\
\text{De obreros de palomas} \\
\text{De chóferes de flores} \\
\text{De técnicos de niños} \\
\text{De médicos de mujeres. ("Huelga" 10)}
\end{align*}
\]

A strike is a sudden and conscientious refusal to participate in a social contract, whether that contract is large and general or small and particular, a workplace or a national culture. To strike requires a process of Freirean conscientization, the recognition of the oppressive social contract that governs one’s temporal and spatial environs and one’s own role in it. In Neruda’s poems, conscientization changed the nature of *eros* in Santí’s words by “grounding love in history,” moving Neruda’s dyadic passions to a spatio-temporal framework of revolutionary consciousness. In “La Huelga,” conscientization produces a similar effect on Belli’s philadelphic subjectivity. Here, the poet brings both her molecular being and the multiplicity of the people into this spatio-temporal consciousness. Their bodies, arms, legs, and hair become discursively reduced through conscientization as either agents of the social contract—contributing to it through their
labours (arms, legs) or through their consumption and cooperation with social norms (hair)—or agents of the revolution through the strike action. The strike is a kind of spatio-temporal territorialization of the multitude, a means to unify their diversities into a single battlefront advancing toward justice through the paradoxical act of stoppage.

There is a tension between molecular and molar forces in the poem. Conscientization and revolutionary action (or inaction in this case) reduce the scope of the activities of the molecular multitude. All are involved in a single collective action. There are no outliers, no “warriors” or “lines of flight” from revolution, as there are from the state. In that sense, revolution is a molar phenomenon. Yet the strike is an action undertaken by molecular forces, not bodies as organs, but parts of bodies. Belli structures the poem such that this tension is sustained rather than subsumed. Indeed, Belli’s foregrounding of the body in the strike action reflects her idea of political revolution, expressed to Margaret Randall as a movement to collectivism through subjectivity: “The revolution from the inside out, the search for one’s authentic identity, for new human relations […] to confront the inheritance of concepts and prejudices we carry inside” (150). Belli draws from Freire the rejection of either an entirely objectivist or subjectivist approach to social change, prescribing a dialectical movement between the one and the other (Freire 50). The strike action is meant to produce the same kind of alternative collectivism espoused by Irigaray: a unity of irreducible subjectivities.

This unity is reflected in the structure of the poem, which typographically splits, putting the strike’s participants into two basic columns that represent the traditional divide between public and private sphere. The first column identifies members of four professions, two commonly associated with the lower class (“obreros” and “chóferes”),
and two with the professional and middle class (“técnicos,” “médicos”). The second column counterbalances the first by referring to “doves,” “flowers,” “women,” and “children,” representing not only the private sphere, but elements and persons that tend to be distanced from political processes. The use of “flowers” and “doves” has two levels of reading: on the one hand, they are images frequently used in lyric poetry; on the other, they are associated with an idealized view of woman. Both uses are an attempt to create a “purified” sphere excluded from politics. Belli wants them to become part of the same struggle, which she expresses by reunifying the poem in the second stanza with the lines “Quiero una huelga grande / que hasta el amor alcance.” The spacing retains the diversity of the molecular multitude, while the act of loving, the philadelphia-in-eros, holds them together. The conscientized molecular body parts of the third stanza are those associated with erotic contact: “una huelga de ojos, de manos, de besos.” The act of loving in a dyadic union is reconfigured as a political act that preserves the internal diversity of the molecular multitude without sacrificing its unity. Belli’s transcendental philadelphia, here manifest as philadelphia-in-eros, becomes the grounding of revolutionary action.

The spatializing effect of revolutionary philadelphia really begins to be explored here, in the poem “Hasta que seamos libres.” This poem conscientizes the poet’s philadelphic subjectivity, displacing her transcendental communion with the Earth and the multitude and transforming both via a war context:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ríos me atraviesan} \\
\text{Montañas horadan mi cuerpo} \\
\text{Y la geografía de este país} \\
\text{Va tomando forma en mi} \\
\text{Haciéndome lagos, brechas y quebradas} \\
\text{Tierra donde sembrar el amor} \\
\text{Que me está abriendo como un surco} \\
\text{Para verlo libre, hermoso}
\end{align*}
\]
Pleno de sonrisas. (“Hasta que seamos libres” 11)

This poem borrows some of the imagery of “Metamorfosis,” in which the philadelphic subject is subsumed into the Earth through Romantic osmosis. As it did with Neruda, conscientization transforms Nature, the expansive primeval terrain of Sobre la grama, into “geography,” a delineated national territory circumscribed by time, history, and language. No longer does the philadelphic romantic subject spread throughout the Earth. She is now contextualized to Nicaragua and Nicaragua’s political struggle in particular. The “lines of flight” of her philadelphic passions as expressed in Sobre la grama, her desire to “explode like a malinche pod” and “seed the wind,” is re-inscribed as a desire to “explode” like a bomb filled with “shrapnel” that would “finish off the oppressors.” The self’s liberation into a multiplicity, which occurred through love in the first text, now occurs through the conjugation of love and war, the fusion of two Deleuzo-Guattarian machines that are both set in opposition to the sedentary state, proclaiming liberation.

The role of the love/war machine is not, however, pure liberation into molecular being: it is liberation from the state into the conscientized spatiotemporality of revolutionary action. In “Hasta que seamos libres,” nature, and the poet’s philadelphic communion with it, becomes via conscientization’s spatio-temporal enclosure a “war stage.” Through conscientization, the multitude becomes a war machine. The territorialized war stage directs the war machine by determining the nature and objective of both the poet and the multitude’s affects. In “Hasta que seamos libres,” that same poetic art that in Sobre la grama enabled both the philadelphic expansion of the lyrical speaker and her communion with the multitude, is altered by its enclosure upon the war stage. Its role is still philadelphic, but it is a conscientized or spatio-temporal philadelphos. Poetry and song
now orchestrate the multitude’s affects so as to consolidate and direct the war-machine.

“Singing” is a means to bind the war machine via love-based utterances shaped into battle hymns: “con voces que revienten mis poros, / y que mi canto se contagie; / que todos nos enfermemos de amor, / de deseos de justicia.” Love, which in the earlier poem preserved diversities without sacrificing partiality, has been conscripted into the war machine and transformed. It both binds and liberates, liberating the multitude from the oppression of the sedentary state and binding them into a battlefront. Spatality and liberation are inseparably linked. The multitude’s liberation occurs through a territorialized war machine, yet it is this same consolidated, territorialized war machine that problematizes personalized manifestations of love such as eros and maternity.

Earlier in this section, I mentioned that there is no “outlier” or “line of flight” from the spatality of revolution. But this is not entirely true. Eros and Maternity, those dyadic, potentially isolating forms of love, trouble the war stage precisely because they prove resistant to integration and direction into the war machine, like stones in a river. Maternity’s isolating nature, introduced in Sobre la grama, is contended with on the conscientized terrain of Línea de fuego in a triad of poems: “La madre,” “Ya van meses hijita” and “Engendraremos niños.”

In “La madre,” the war stage is manifest as dress. The poem describes a conscientized version of Sobre la grama’s embrace of nudity as a path to philadelphic communion. Here, however, the poem’s “mother” divests herself of clothing that indicates not only sexual difference, but privatized femininity and motherhood as a specialized, isolated mode of being:

La madre
Se ha cambiado de ropa
La falda se ha convertido en pantalón
Los zapatos en botas.
La cartera en mochila
No canta ya canciones de cuna
Canta canciones de protesta
Va despeinada y llorando
Un amor que la envuelve y sobrecoge.
No quiere ya sólo a sus hijos
Ni se da sólo a sus hijos
Lleva prendidas en sus pechos
Miles de bocas hambrientas. (“La madre” 34)

The war stage attempts to reconfigure the mother-child coupling and its affective
exchanges by altering “maternal love” from its dyadic nature to a conscientized
philadelphic one. Her passion for the struggle should subsume her partial love for her
child, such that the “love that wraps her” is no longer “for her child alone,” but for the
“thousands of hungry mouths that cling” to her breasts. Dyadic maternal love, however,
resists the direction of the war-stage. Belli’s “Mother” is burdened by the memory of her
own child whose piercing cry affects her conscience and calls her back to the dyadic role:

    pensando en el fruto de su carne
    —lejano y sólo—
    Llamándola en la noche sin respuesta
    Mientras ella responde a otros gritos,
    A muchos gritos
    Pero siempre pensando en el grito sólo de su carne.

The gerunds reflect the mother’s underlying indecision, her sense of being pulled by two
opposing forces, one of which holds a claim on her as “her own flesh,” the other as the
manifestation of her revolutionary love. Her baby demands partiality, but the “collective
children” of her revolutionary role demands impartiality, even demanding that her baby’s
cries be subsumed into the collective: “un grito más en ese griterío de pueblo.” The poet’s
hope is that because her child is a member of the same multitude, collective love will
somehow compensate for its partial counterpart. However, the poem’s final verse ends
with a rather violent image of the “people” ripping her own children from her arms, an image that suggests that the tension between the two can only be resolved through a painful sacrifice of the partial.

The mother described in “La madre” is essentially a rhetorical construct, an archetype of conscientized motherhood as practiced on the war-stage. “Ya van meses hijita,” meanwhile, focuses directly on Belli’s own experiences, revisiting the theme of maternal immanentization explored in *Sobre la grama*:

Meses en que mi calor
No ha arrullado tu sueño
Meses en que sólo
Hemos hablado por teléfono
—larga distancia, hay que hablar aprisa—
Como explicarte mi amor
La revolución a los dos años y medio? (“Ya van meses, hijita” 35)

The poem refers to Belli’s prolonged absence from her daughters during the initial months of her exile, encapsulating the agony of her separation and her inability to communicate its reasons to a child too young to grasp its immensity. In her memoirs she describes this period vividly:

I suffered tremendously thinking of my daughters. To listen to their small voices eagerly asking me when I was coming back and to be unable to console their dismay made me feel nauseated. Every breath burned as if my lungs were on fire. I’d try to explain to my kids what I was doing, telling them about poverty, needy children, and the obligation to be responsible to other people. I think I sounded like some missionary nun as I tried to explain the scope of a commitment that went beyond our individual happiness. For the love of many, for a future where things could be fair for everyone, I had to temporarily sacrifice being with them. […] But this was the kind of solace that could soothe me. For them there was no other palpable reality than their mother’s absence. (*Country* 127)

The gap between mother and child is communicative as well as geographical. The lyrical speaker feels compelled to explain her absence to her two-year old daughter, in a conversation abbreviated by the long-distance call, which forces her to “speak quickly”
and concentrate the intensity of her emotions and her explanations into as few words as possible. But the child’s tender age means she is unable to comprehend concepts such as “revolution,” “injustice,” and “poverty.” This communicative distance and the agony of the mother and lyrical speaker is reflected in the structure of the poem, which is set up as a series of emotionally charged rhetorical questions beginning with the anaphoric repetition of “Cómo explicarte.” Indeed, the notion of collective reality, collective suffering, and collective love are beyond the understanding of a two-year-old whose only frame of reference is her dyadic relationship with her mother.

If the war stage is a linguistic construction, the failure or loss of language creates fissures or gaps, zones of incommunicability that cannot be drawn into the war machine. Belli’s two-year-old daughter exists in one of these fissures, exterior to the war stage, in a realm of pure subjectivity, aware only of herself, her mother, and the pain of her mother’s absence. The lyrical speaker attempts to “open” that subjectivity and bring her daughter onto the war stage through language, employing different strategies with each of the five main rhetorical questions that make up the poem. She begins by analogy, referring to poor children in the mountains whose mothers have been murdered or imprisoned. Second, she turns to pedagogy, reconfiguring her experience as a “life lesson” on the necessity of sacrifice. In the third and fourth questions, she replaces any expression of the maternal affective bond with what Rowe calls “mass emotions,” propagandistic statements of her ideals and actions as “a war against sorrow, death, and injustice.” Each explanation is progressively shorter in length, demonstrating the child’s failure to understand the message. The poem ends with her abandoning any attempt to make sense of it to her daughter: as the lyrical speaker puts it, these are “tantas cosas mi muchachita.”
The gap between mother and child produced by the child’s subjective differentiation from the war stage is unbridgeable. The mother has sacrificed the dyadic relationship with her daughter in the name of collective love, but finds herself trying to cover the rupture by attempting to expand the child’s own experiences of the mother onto a larger scene.

In “Engendraremos niños,” the poet reconfigures all motherhood onto the war stage. The “children” in question are rhetorical symbols who are extensions of the political passions of their parents. They are born amidst protest songs, participate in “conspiracies,” carrying “secrets” in their eyes and messages in the mountains:

Cientos de niños saliendo a la alborada
Entre piernas morenas y canciones

Engendraremos niños
Con el puño cerrado
Y la conspiración, el secreto en los ojos. (“Engendraremos niños” 36)

Belli’s answer to the tension between the mother-child dyad and the collective struggle is a radical abandonment of the former’s claim on the revolutionary subject. There is nothing for motherhood except to be subsumed into the struggle, abandoning any sense of partiality. The dyadic relationship itself is obliterated by the politicization process:

Niños sigilosos cruzándose en la noche los mensajes
Niños sin padre o madre
hijos de hombre o mujer agazapados,
iños clandestinos.

Belli’s use of anaphora emphasizes the philadelphic nature of the children’s identity, as the pluralized word “niños” dominates the poem’s sonic field. The word “hijos” breaks the anaphora briefly, establishing a thematic link with the “padre o madre” of the previous line and creating a chain of “relational” words emphasizing partiality. But those relationships are surrounded by negations and exclusions. “Mother and father” are
negated by “sin,” while “hijos” is negated by the phrase “hombre o mujer,” which disengages the link between the child and his parents. Relational substantives “hijos,” “padre,” and “madre” become generalized collective ones—”niños clandestinos” and “hombre o mujer agazapados”—and they all become political symbols representing the oppressed masses and clandestine revolutionaries. As partial relationships with their caregivers and progenitors are excluded, so too is any sense of the children as anything other than ideological actants. Each child’s identity is a discursive construct, like Cardenal’s monk-novices in “Fray Cipriano, Fray Anselmo, Fray Albérico,” who take on the consecrated names and habits of those who have left the order. Revolution involves a divestment of subjective identity not so different from that of the monastery, the embrace of a “new selfhood” built entirely on a collective foundation. Like Cardenal’s monks, the children reincarnate their vanished predecessors by taking on their clothing and names, their individual selves excluded by the revolutionary communicative order.

Belli’s willingness to see motherhood subsumed entirely into the “war-machine” seems to stand against the general thrust of the rest of her text, which would preserve personal manifestations of love by drawing revolution into transcendent philadelphos. Yet this is not entirely the case. Rather, Belli is drawing attention to the similarities between maternity and revolution so as to “de-masculinize” revolutionary engagement, forging a space for women within collective causes as themselves, not as de-gendered guerrillas. While sacrificing maternal dyadic relationships, Belli preserves maternity as a sign of sexual difference. The poem’s final verse places on one line the verb “pariremos,” making the collective “we” entirely feminine. Like poetry, birth will become an act of war that can only be performed by women. So Belli resolves two problems
simultaneously: she subverts the isolationist nature of sedentary motherhood by bringing mothers into the war machine, and she combats the subsuming tendencies of conscientized *philadelphia* by leaving a space for sexual difference.46

This strategy of “liberation/preservation” is also applied to *eros*. The section “Acero” explores Belli’s relationship with Marcos in the aftermath of his death at the hands of the National Guard. Belli sets up this section by framing the love relationship as an interlude in the war, an erotic enclosure on the “war stage.” *Eros* recovers something of its spatiality, constructing as in Neruda’s *Los versos del capitán* a Venusian “island in the war” where the couple can bodily encounter each other. In Neruda’s text, however, the island is completely separate from the war stage. El Capitán is cut off from the war machine by the erotic enclosure. For Belli, by contrast, the “love stage” is actually part of the war stage. The war machine makes the love machine as a kind of “gift” for the warrior, a “moment inserted into the battle” where the couple can nourish each other and recover. There is an exchange of energies between the war stage and the erotic enclosure, whereas in Neruda there is merely a dichotomy to be resolved.

This exchange of energies manifests itself in various ways throughout the section. Belli wrote it as an elegy in the aftermath of Marcos’s death. But Belli’s elegy does not discuss his war activities beyond the occasional reference to his martyrdom; rather it frames her homage as a series of ardent lyric poems to her lost lover. War is actually the negative space of the poem’s composition, bringing into relief the emotional intensity of

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46 Belli also seems to be appropriating what Mary Louise Pratt calls the trope of “Republican Motherhood,” the exclusion of women from nation-building other than the function of reproducing citizens: “As mothers of the nation, they are precariously other to the nation. They are imagined as dependent rather than sovereign. They are practically forbidden to be limited and finite, being obsessively defined by their reproductive capacity. Their bodies are sites for many forms of intervention, penetration, and appropriation at the hands of the horizontal brotherhood” (51).
their relationship and Belli’s own sense of loss. In the poem “Orquídea de acero,” a title which itself evokes an exchange of Martian and Venusian energies, the war stage affects the love stage through temporal reduction and affective intensification. Belli’s relationship with her lover occurs in her “off moments,” whenever the two are able to meet and for undetermined periods of time. Thus the opening verse situates the couple’s erotic union, their enclosure on the war stage:

Amarte en esta guerra nos va desgastando
Y enriqueciendo
Amarte sin pensar en el minuto que se escurre
Y que acerca el adiós al tiempo de los besos
Amarte con el miedo colgado a la garganta
Amarte sin saber el día del adiós o del encuentro. (“La orquídea de acero” 49)

Their erotic encounter becomes a refuge in a war, while the war itself “drains” and “enriches” the couple, divesting them of superfluous subjective desires and allowing them to love each other in a purer fashion. Lines 5 and 6 fuse acts of war with lovemaking. Belli foregrounds the body’s members by placing them on line 6 while at the same time connecting them to the “loving” and “fighting” of line 5 via enjambment. The body becomes the point of fusion between both acts. Through the use of the prepositional phrase and its ambiguous link to the gerund verbs “loving” and “fighting,” “arms” and “legs” become the implements of both types of action.

The war eliminates any superfluity from the relationship, distilling it to an intense exchange of flesh and emotion. There is no future for the lovers, other than the collective utopian future that orients their revolutionary activities. They are called to “love without thinking about the moment that passes” and “without knowing which day brings an encounter or a goodbye.” Thus their lovemaking, while providing respite from the war, is also integrated into the war machine. Indeed, the couple’s union recalls the sacrificial
posture of the mothers in “Engendraremos niños.” The lovers must hold each other lightly, savouring their time together as a gift while demanding nothing.

In later poems such as “Como tinaja” and “Yo la que te quiere,” the love stage becomes a means of preservation of the warriors themselves. In “Yo, la que te quiere,” the poet describes herself as “la prolongación de tu sonrisa y tu cuerpo,” while in “Como tinaja” she describes herself as containing his memory:

Mi cuerpo como tinaja
Recogí toda el agua tierna
Que derramaste sobre mí
Y ahora
En estos días secos
En que tu ausencia duele
Y agrieta la piel
El agua sale de mis ojos. (51)

“Como tinaja” expresses one of the fundamental uses of erotic enclosure on the war stage, which we will see become vitally important in the next chapter on Zurita. Eros’s enclosure allows the lost “warrior” to be remembered and recovered. In an image reminiscent of Borges’ poem “La lluvia,” Belli uses water and its circularity as not only a metaphor for memory, but a natural element through which the past can be reconstructed. The erotic union between Belli and Marcos enables this preservation, since the poet’s body contains the “water” he left behind, circulating both it and his memory through her, “fertilizing” the emptiness of her loss with his presence in a paradox “tan vacía y tan llena de vos.” Eros becomes analogous to motherhood in “Engendraremos niños,” as the body of woman as beloved is the means for the war machine to continue, by producing “new warriors” to replace as well as to preserve the old.

The idea of love’s generative capacity is carried into “Te busco en la fuerza del futuro,” in which Belli describes herself seeking to “reanimate” her lover and the
moments they shared with one another, finally concluding that he will be reincarnated as
the strength that animates the revolutionary future. Similarly, in “Sólo el amor resistirá”
she imagines seeing her lover again as a symbol of the indestructibility of love itself:

Sólo el amor resistirá
Mientras caen como torres dinamitadas
Los días, los meses, los años

Solo el amor resistirá
Alimentando silencioso la lámpara encendida
El canto anudado a la garganta
La poesía en la caricia del cuerpo abandonado.

This poem, left untitled, begins with an epigraph from Sergio Ramírez, a Sandinista
leader. Ramírez invokes love as the collective-oriented philadelphos that Che Guevara
describes as undergirding revolutionary action. Belli’s poem performs two functions. The
first and second stanzas gloss Ramírez’s thoughts by examining the indestructibility of
love in relation to revolutionary action and poetic writing. Belli accompanies Ramírez’s
line with images of “days,” “months,” and “years” falling like bombed towers, evoking
both the material images of warfare and the protracted experience of temporality. The
epigraph is then brought into the realm of embodied subjectivity. Love nourishes the
souls of individual fighters in the war, strengthening their songs and poetry in moments
of solitude and loss. In the third stanza, Belli conjugates Ramírez’s indestructible
revolutionary love with her own erotic experience of her lost beloved, imagining that the
same indestructibility will enable him to be brought back to life: “Lo veré alto y distante /
oiré su voz llamándome y sabré que el amor ha resistido.” Thus, if Ramírez’s collective
love can resist the rigors of warfare, so too can Belli’s dyadic love. Resistance means not
only that the revolution outlasts the forces of counterrevolutionary destruction and
entropy, but also that the poet’s beloved can live again through her love.
In the first two sections of *Línea de fuego*, Freirean conscientization on the poet’s erotic feelings provoke a radical shift in the poet’s views on peopleable feminine subjectivity, on the links between dyadic and collective love, and on the poet’s subjective experience of time. Conscientization leads to an immanentization of the transcendental selfhood experienced in *Sobre la grama*, wherein the poet ceases to imagine herself an ontological symbol of fertile, erotic womanhood and begins to experience love as circumscribed by time, as grounded in a historical reality in which she plays a role.

*Línea de fuego*’s third section, celebrating Belli’s relationship with her second husband whom she met in exile, brings the text full circle to *Sobre la grama*. Revolution gives way to utopian vision, reconfiguring the relationship between the two. If the prior section “Acero” placed the erotic enclosure on the war stage, “A Sergio” places the war stage on a broader, philadelphic ground, transforming it into the means for *Sobre la grama*’s philadelphic self-liberation. The war is integrated into the erotic poems as a series of metaphors and images:

> Es larga la tarde  
> Y el amor redondo como el gatillo de una pistola  
> Me rodea de frente, de lado, de perfil.” (“Es larga la tarde” 81)

> Nos casaremos con el techo cerrado,  
> Cuando suenen los techos  
> Como ametralladoras. (“Nos casaremos en invierno” 87)

This poem, the text’s second to last, also features the return of the same elements of *Sobre la grama* that were excluded in the first two sections.47 In particular, time returns to its normal flow. The poet and her beloved look towards a future with one another, not subsumed into a collective utopian ideal, but as a couple seeking to affirm the

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47 One can also read the intervention of the war/revolution in this pair of texts as a kind of rupture of violence into the erotic enclosure similar to what we saw in Cardenal, and what we will see in Zurita. Unlike Cardenal and Zurita, however, Belli finds the rupture liberating rather than destructive.
permanence of love and the enduring pull of all natural creatures towards life by marrying in the rainy season, characterized in the poem by a burgeoning fertility that affects nature and human beings alike. Similarly, maternity and *eros* are once again affirmed as simultaneously personal and collective. In “Mi amor es así,” Belli compares her erotic passion to a rain-shower that not only fertilizes her language:

Así como esta lluvia
Me desbordo en palabras
Para contarte todos mis quehaceres
Para meterte en todos los rincones de mi día. (86)

But also her body, urging her towards motherhood and self-expansion:

Y me duele la carne de querer prolongarte
De querer florecer la semilla en mi vientre
Y darte un hijo hermoso y vital. (86)

Read in conjunction with the earlier sections, the Sandinista revolution in *Línea de fuego* is not mere framework, for which love is a diversion, but rather an immanent interlude in Belli’s transcendental *philadelphos*. It is an attempt to infuse national and collective concerns with the same fertile erotic energy, orienting them towards what Elena Grau-Lleveria calls “La felicidad que produce el amar” (49).

In conclusion, the question that began this chapter, regarding the effects of political engagement on a postmodern love poet whose concept of eroticism is *a priori* multiplicitous, reveals itself as only the surface of the matter. Indeed, in the two works discussed here there is a mutual influence of political engagement and a kind of postmodern philadelphic romantic subjectivity. Revolutionary engagement in *Línea de fuego* does have a spatializing effect on Belli’s philadelphic Romantic subjectivity, creating a war stage on which to channel the molecular energies of the nomadic war machine. That philadelphic Romantic subjectivity also, however, alters the very nature of
political engagement itself, exchanging conscientized collectivism for molecular diversity and reconfiguring revolutionary action as stage on which one can perform one’s own narrative of self-liberation. Grau-Lleveria’s analysis recognizes this as part of Belli’s feminist revisioning of insurgency to make space for what masculinized revolutionary tropes exclude. But Belli’s predecessor in this was Guevara himself, who according to Ricardo Piglia “burns his life in the flame of experience and makes politics and war the center of such a construction” (277).

Belli, and indeed Che himself, anticipate the ultimate failure of revolutionary discourse as a collectivist endeavour, and postmodernism’s “fracturing” of meta-narratives into micro-narratives, of collectivism into a sort of molecular flow of individual stories. Leonor Arfuch’s discussion of postmodernism, which she posits as beginning in the 1980s, picks up on this quality. For Arfuch, postmodernism involves two types of fragmentation: on the one hand, the waning of the Enlightenment binary between private and public, subjectivity and society; on the other, the fragmentation or loss of what she calls “los grandes sujetos colectivos, el pueblo, la clase, el partido, la revolución” (19). This would be replaced by “el decisivo descentramiento del sujeto y, coextensivamente, la valorización de los ‘microrrelatos,’ el desplazamiento del punto de mira omnisciente y ordenador en beneficio de la pluralidad de voces, la hibridación, la mezcla irreverente de cánones, retóricas, paradigmas y estilos” (18). Belli’s poetry, even in its revolutionary fervour, anticipates the failure of the revolutionary paradigm. Her poetry thus attempts to correct the paradigm’s trajectory by shifting its ground to a positive, affective series of objectives, and conjugating it with love.
That failure will be experienced by Raúl Zurita and his generation not merely as the failure of a paradigm, but as a human catastrophe. Chile’s 1973 coup destroyed the revolutionary project that country had begun with the election of Salvador Allende in 1970, and it also salted the ground against any future utopian projects. In the Chile of the 1970s and 1980s, micro-narratives were all that remained, yet these would provide fuel for Zurita, like Cardenal before him, to attempt to reconstruct public language and collective identity through eros.
CHAPTER 4: RAÚL ZURITA AND THE APOCALYPSE OF LOVE

El ataúd caminaba delante de mí, llevado por amigos que no recuerdo, porque solo miraba este ataúd que habían tapado y ya no vería más su cara. (Urrutia, Mi vida junto a Pablo Neruda)

Thousands of persons, defying the menace of machine guns and helicopters, poured through the streets of Santiago angrily, proudly shouting the names of Neruda, of Allende, of Víctor Jara. Thus, they peacefully disarmed the rage of the dictatorship. The poet then left us one more lesson, profound and unforgettable: just as in life he endured the avatars of injustice and never yielded to the tricks of power nor to any reward that compromised his freedom, in the same way, at the end, he resisted the most powerful and implacable State of all, turning his last act of resistance into an art we must never betray: the art of life and the movement of free men. (Alegría, “The State and the Poet”)

On September 23, 1973, twelve days after the Chilean coup d’état that installed the military regime of Augusto Pinochet, Pablo Neruda succumbed to cancer in a Santiago hospital. Several days later, the procession leading his casket from his ransacked home at the foot of San Cristóbal hill swelled into a public demonstration as the poet’s comrades began shouting slogans against the coup and the military. Neruda’s death, so soon after the coup itself, is read primarily—as Alegría’s passage above demonstrates—in terms of political and historical symbolism.\(^{48}\) It was both an event and the articulation of events: the death of one public figure acting as a sign of the multitude of “secret” deaths taking place in stadiums, ships and other makeshift prisons. Chileans gathered under that single death, tying their individual losses to the body of the poet who once called the dead to sharpen their hidden sorrows and plunge them into his hands and breast.

The burial of Chile’s poet and its transformation into political symbolism prefigures the dynamic between grief and language that would develop in Chile under

\(^{48}\) Volodia Teitelboim gives a detailed account of the poet’s funeral in *Neruda: An Intimate Biography*, drawing out the threads of political symbolism and collective meaning: “That funeral was the first demonstration to take place in Chile against those who struck down the government on 11 September 1973. One more virtue of the poet—he went on fighting even after he had died” (477-8).
Pinochet. As William Rowe points out, Pinochet’s regime came close to the image of totalitarianism created by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in which the state employs traditional “hands-on” methods of repression and also a pervasive media presence that “re-writes” history and its own activities through the appropriation of public discourse. The result was an immolation of the schema of referents, signs, and narratives that compose national identity on both the individual and collective levels. To speak of what had occurred was to do so from a kind of collective aphasia in which language could no longer communicate along common lines of understanding.

Boundaries between public and private, art and life, ceased to exist. Neruda’s funeral became a lived moment and a work of art, a communal outpouring and a means to express individual experiences of loss following the coup. Expressions of private grief, funerals, cemetery visits, the carrying of photographs, would all acquire political significance as the regime consolidated and retained a protracted stranglehold on the public sphere. The families of disappeared persons would use these expressions of grief to give testimony, not only to affirm the existence of people whom the dictatorship had declared as “unpersons,” but also to expose the regime’s own actions against them.

Raúl Zurita’s poetry, much of which he wrote during the dictatorship years, focuses on drawing out that dynamic between love, grief, and language. Zurita’s difficult

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49 The comparison with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not merely rhetorical. Beyond the self-censorship that this chapter discusses, the regime also manipulated news stories and the distribution of information. Paula Thorrington describes in detail the regime’s censorship practices in terms of print, television and film. She draws attention to the case of *El Mercurio* newspaper, which colluded with the dictatorship not only by portraying “the military regime in a favourable light while advancing its anti-Marxist policies with stories that vilified leftist ‘rebels,’” but also was recently exposed in the 2008 documentary *El diario de Agustín*, as “changing facts and tweaking the news that Chileans consumed everyday” (41).

50 Jean Franco discusses disappearance and the political intervention of mourning in *Cruel Modernity*: disappearance, she argues, was a “triple deprivation—of a body, a mourning and a burial,” countered by the use of photographs as “Tableaux Vivants” that haunted the regime and the public sphere with their “fantasmalidad” (196-201). Josephine Fisher differentiates Chilean from Argentine mothers of the disappeared by their mourning attire. Women in Chile wore black headscarves as a sign of mourning, “to represent their dead children because in Chile there were less disappearances, more murders” (152).
poetics attempts to bypass the regime’s mechanisms of appropriation as well as to recover a common language using erotic love, landscapes, wounds, and losses as touchstones of human experience. It performs what Idelber Avelar describes as the “task of mourning,” in a context in which literature has been “forced to abandon” its privileged modernist role as “the imagination” of a non-reified “otherness,” the redemption of the poetic from within a prosaically alienated daily existence (315). In one sense, Zurita’s poetry compares with that of Cardenal, for whom love both communicates the effects of state repression on the intimate sphere and is something transcendent and objective, affecting the movement of beings from the outside. In another sense, however, Zurita, is a postmodern poet, in a context in which (as Avelar describes it) postmodernity, the “complete colonization of the globe by transnational capital,” is introduced via “dictatorship”: Avelar quotes Eduardo Galeano, “se torturó al pueblo para que los precios pudieran ser libres” (515). Here, neither religious nor erotic language can spatialize or abstract the poet from temporal reality to bestow him with a “prophetic” vision.

In this context, philadelphic engagement, which had allowed Gioconda Belli to deterritorialize her erotic subjectivity into a kind of euphoric postmodern polyamory, is no longer relevant. The Chilean experience of totalitarianism and the transition to democracy involved what Nelly Richard calls an exhaustion of, and rebellion against, “the ideological determinism of rationalities unified by final and totalizing truths” (2).

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51 As Javier Gavlán notes, in 1975 the regime attempted both to prevent an economic collapse and to “enhance the perception of the military regime among the international financial markets” by giving Milton Friedman and his disciples, the “Chicago Boys,” the green light to implement a series of radical changes to the economy including “privatizing public companies, opening investment to foreign banks and corporations, reducing public spending on social programs, […] reducing university subsidies, and slashing government spending” (149). These reforms had both positive and negative effects on the economy: reducing inflation and debt, increasing imports, but driving out smaller businesses and further marginalizing the poor. Gavlán explains that the reforms also “created an important social transformation by creating a blend of civilian and military government” (149).
Philadelphic Romanticism, predicated on leftist political engagement, led to contestatory literature that Richard argues remained “inscribed within the same linear duality of a Manichean construction of meaning” against the official discourse of the regime (4). As philadelphic Romanticism could only parrot the regime’s own discourse in reverse, a truly “refractory art,” which might seek both to “escape military authoritarianism and the censorship administered by official culture” and to “escape certain ideological and technical forms of reductionism” (5), had to rely on eros, but an eros appropriated and fractured by totalitarian violence and conjugated with grief and violation.

This is where Zurita’s poetry intervenes. Rowe points out that for Zurita, Chilean history is inseparable from the “intolerable violation of human beings,” a sorrow “that needs to be purged if any regeneration is to occur” (282). This chapter expands on Rowe’s analysis, looking more deeply at Zurita’s use of eros to bypass what Richard calls “ideologized discourses.” Despite their difficulty, Zurita’s anti-dictatorship poems have been warmly received both inside and outside the country in a way that the poems and plays of writers in exile have not always been, as they avoid what Richard calls “the dualities and oppositions that had been part of the rhetoric created by the human rights agenda: victim/victimizer, harm/reparation, offense/pardon, and so on” (19). This chapter focuses on two texts that engage the dictatorship directly, written in response to political events: Canto a su amor desaparecido (1985) and Amor de Chile (1987), the former a tribute to the families of the disappeared, the latter written in response to the killing of three Communist activists. My analysis departs from Rowe’s in that Rowe uses only the ambiguous term “love,” which assumes that eros, ideologized philadelphos, and philadelphos-in-eros are interchangeable. Yet Zurita explores love as both “individual”
and “collective,” teasing out the paradox of its anti-gregariousness and universality. Love is eros, and eros is only collective through its own universality. Zurita’s eros, through the construction of erotic space, is not only “a continuum of the erotic and the social” (Rowe 283), it is also the imposition of a difference. Zurita uses eros’s spatializing tendencies to create a “refractory art” that “plots,” in Richard’s terms, “a conceptual and semantic rupture” with the totalizing narratives of the regime and the opposition alike.

*Chile under Pinochet: The Deformation of Eros*

The 1973 coup, in which democratically-elected Socialist president Salvador Allende was ousted by a military junta led by Pinochet, is often described as a communicative as well as a social tragedy. Here I will briefly examine this “discursive” element in relation to artistic production and the language of eros, drawing on some of the texts of the period. For René Jara, the three-year period between the election of Salvador Allende in 1970 and coup itself was a “tragic sequence” from a “triunfo dionisiaco” to an “apocalyptic defeat,” “con todo lo que el apocalipsis tiene de revelación y terror cósmico, de mutación brutal en el orden de los fenómenos naturales y culturales, de paso repentino del orden al caos” (1). This “apocalypse” interrupted what Jara calls the “semantic circuits” of “comprehension,” “communication” and “socialization” (1). Similarly, sociologist José Joaquin Brunner describes Chilean society during the seventeen-year military regime in terms of a certain anomie, as it lost a centralized image of itself thanks to “una implosión de imágenes, ninguna de las cuales tiene fuerza suficiente para ordenar un sentido generalizable” (76; See also Rowe 297). This implosion of images had two main causes:
the profound discursive and ideological divide left in the coup’s wake, and the discursive practices of the dictatorship itself.

Brunner describes the dictatorship period as caught in the grip of two communicative regimes struggling to control the production of meanings: that of the broad left who had supported the Unidad Popular, and that of the authoritarian regime that usurped it. The latter, centered on the military government, operated through a combination of repression, the free market, and mass-media dissemination. The former, much weaker, operated through multiple “centers of articulation” and was centered on the opposition. \(^{52}\) Almost the only language and art to survive what Richard calls the “catastrophe of meanings” belonged to these orders: the “fraudulent language” of official power and the “ideological mold of militant art serving the culture of political parties” (5). The coup’s rupture in the discursive field was also manifest in two distinct streams of writerly activity, one a literature of exile produced by those on the left who fled the country, the other, an “interior” literature produced by those who remained in Chile. While the coup acts as a referential horizon for both types of writing, according to Carmen Galarce each developed in different and at times opposing directions. Those outside the country created a historicist literature full of denunciations of the regime’s activities. Those inside, on the other hand, created a literature that is subjectivist, ambiguous and carefully encoded, distancing itself from referentiality (35). “A la ambigüedad del interior” she argues, “se opone la transparencia del exterior”:

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\text{si las del interior se refieren a la decadencia de los grupos dominantes, en los universos de la novela exiliada predominan los protagonistas de la clase media y el hombre común; si en el interior del país se destaca la constante alusión a un}
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\(^{52}\) Brunner’s characterization of the opposition as weak and “local” fails to take into account the sheer volume of oppositional narratives from exiled writers, artists and film makers whose narrative still dominates how the country’s history is viewed from the outside.
pasado lejano que remite a un presente determinado de antemano, en la novela que se escribe afuera hay esperanza a través de la autorreflexión o los proyectos utópicos que se plantean en algunos relatos; si hay desgaste, decadencia y degradación en un caso, en el otro predomina lo opuesto. (35)

As with Belli, this difference in literary praxis is primarily a product of external factors. Life in exile freed the latter group, whereas those who remained in Chile were curtailed by the repressive state apparatus. Interior writings reflect what Galarce calls a certain “incommunication,” a product of both the prohibition of dialogue by state censorship and its contingent reduction of what Manuel Alcides Jofré describes as Chileans’ “social aura, the psychological space within which one travels wherever one goes” (73).

The incommunication that characterized the “interior” group was more than merely a question of writers such as Zurita evading the regime’s machinery of censorship that by the 1980s was fully entrenched in television, cinema, and print publications. It reflects also both the critical praxis of writers inside Chile, and their response to the dictatorship’s discursive crisis. Nelly Richard argues that the more “challenging” interior writings “proposed something that a totalitarian logic would find impossible to take advantage of or appropriate” (4). What Richard calls “contestatory art,” the exterior literature of the opposition, merely “takes revenge on the dictatorial offence by plotting—in symmetrical inverse—an epic of resistance that would be the photographic negative of the official ‘take’” (5). These writings refused “the contingency of the ‘NO,’ without simultaneously critiquing the entire discursive regime responsible for transforming the dogmatic rigidity of ‘YES’ vs. ‘NO’ into an imprisoning paradigm” (5). Thus while the

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53 Paula Thorrington explains: “the dictatorship transmitted a one-sided version of reality in the printed press and on television and diminished cinematic production almost to the point of inexistence” (40). Galván likewise discusses the regime’s radical agenda regarding music: “The junta was able to exclude all folk singers because the junta controlled all the communications media. Cultural censorship isolated the ‘leftist’ creative talent from recording their music and even from getting permits for live performances. When some of the popular musicians attempted to find refuge in universities, the military junta ordered a complete restructuring of all music departments” (148).
“exterior” group occupied itself with collectivist denunciations of the regime in the form of testimonial novels, theatre and poetry, the “interior” group sought alternative methods of dismantling the regime’s discursive control.

The practice of interior writers such as Zurita was not, as Galarce implies, an “evasion” of social critique, but an intervention into “less obvious dimensions of language than the battle of communicative stances unleashed in 1973” (Rowe 297). Rowe and Zurita himself recognize that the dictatorship’s Orwellian discursive practices “attempted to monologize language, turning its interlocutors, quite literally, into its message” (297). Rowe continues: “Even unspoken thoughts, or the internal sounds that initiate them, are interfered with. If words had only one meaning, then the sayable could be reduced to a schematics of state legitimacy” (297). Pinochet’s regime could not alter the entire morphology of language, settling instead for the “disappearance” of the interlocutors themselves, plus the imposition of a state censorship that through the threat of violence became self-censorship such that “ejercer la lengua ya es un castigo” (Zurita 14). As Brunner suggests, daily life lost the dense, multilayered structure of shared references that makes it possible to live politics as “occasions for negotiation and progress” (74).

The art that would problematize such a totalitarian discursive structure would be faced with the challenge described by Richard as naming “fragments of experience that were no longer sayable in the language which had survived the catastrophe of meaning” (5). Drawing from Walter Benjamin, Richard continues:

It was necessary to reinvent “an indomitable, irreducible nongregarious reader” […] faced with “communicable but not easily processed signs” […] conserving in their interior a linguistic memory of the clashes born from repeated disarms of meaning. These clashes inscribed resistance and rebellion in the interior of the
word, generating a memory of trauma in solidarity with the accidents of its graphing as a wounded word. (6)

The fragmentary signs that would emerge in this art include embodied and erotic ones, which contain within them both the “memories of trauma” and the “clashes born from disarming of meaning.” Jara articulates the effects of state repression on the language of eroticism. He creates a “(small r) romantic fable” out of the regime’s tropes and then examines how what he calls “coup novels,” including Fernando Alegría’s 1979 Coral de Guerra and Isabel Allende’s 1982 La casa de los espíritus, try to reclaim erotic language from the contortions of totalitarian logic:

Se trata de la épica de un hidalgo generoso—guerrero y cirujano experto—que ha debido acudir con sus hombres a los gritos de desesperación de una doncella. La joven, contagiada por una monstruosa enfermedad, ha sido arrastrada al borde del abismo junto a casi la totalidad de su país. […] El Héroe, en consecuencia, debe hacer uso tanto de sus capacidades bélicas […] como de su habilidad quirúrgica para someter a cirugía de emergencia el tumor maligno que invade el cuerpo de la historia patria. De un solo golpe de bisturí extirpa el cáncer con disciplinada laboriosidad y cierra la herida que tendrá que ser abierta una y otra vez para prevenir nuevos rebrotes. Se pone entonces a reorganizar el Estado, desarrollando un proyecto nacional que, en el futuro, hará de la doncella en peligro la Reina saludable que siempre debió ser, la a encarnación de los Objetivos Nacionales, el vientre fecundo de la nación. (41)

Jara’s fable invokes a romantic dyad: the Hero and the Maiden, playing out what Mary Louise Pratt calls the uneasy coexistence of nationhood and womanhood by using “female icons as national symbols.” Pratt explains: “In patriotic speeches, in sculpture, in poetry, novels, and plays, female icons are used to symbolize the nation—symbolizing, often enough, that which is at stake between warring groups of men” (54). Thus, in Jara’s allegorical rendering of the official narrative, woman’s body is the site of both contagion and the Hero’s “beneficial” intervention, which extirpates the sickness and fertilizes her womb, converting the regime’s “entry into the body,” an allegory for the regime’s use of
torture and its invasion into the private sphere, into quasi-sexual acts. As Jara explains, the female body becomes “la escena de la escritura,” the point at which dictatorship re-writes its intervention by appropriating the language of *eros* as a semantic cover.

This gendering of the totalitarian imagination is picked up and inverted by the counterdiscourse of the opposition. The woman as victim is a trope in contestatory literature from Alegría’s *Coral de guerra*, Allende’s *La casa de los espíritus*, and Ariel Dorfman’s *La muerte y la doncella* to recent works such as Carmen Rodríguez’s 2011 novel *Retribución*. As Marjorie Agosín notes, in contestatory novels “we don’t find texts where a woman is a torturer, just the constant allusion to women as victims” (68). Dorfman’s play may be something of an exception in that the protagonist, Paulina, turns torturer, but even there her appropriation of the language, gestures, and games of the torture come close to mere performance and substitution. These contestatory texts, inverting but not breaking from totalitarian logic, indicate the crisis of meanings deep within the language of *eros*. They feature not merely a gendered torturer-victim dyad, but a triangulation in which the duality that opposes male torturer to female victim is offset by the specter of the victim’s lover or husband. This third presence is neither witness nor victim, but frequently extemporaneous, missing, and evoked as a memory.

Alegría’s *Coral de guerra* is a prime example of what Agosín describes as “the metaphor of the dictatorship through an assaulted body” (68). The novel is a trilogue of voices: torturer/victim/husband. As Jara notes, “El trigram y la actividad del receptor coralizan la confusión semántica provocada por el golpe. De pronto sin aviso, la escritura sugiere que los militares parecen de haber descubierto que amor rima con terror, consentimiento con resentimiento, y que tortura alitera con ternura” (43). Torture in
Alegría’s novel involves the soldier’s own play of supplementarity, his jeu amidst the “centers” of torturer/violence, lover/sex, appropriating the signs of the one and the other. Yet the presence of the lover’s absence also points to the deformation of eros as a sign, the “traces of distortion,” in Jara’s terms, “la tortura del vocablo, del discurso” (44). The lover is, as Richard puts it, a sign conserving the “linguistic memory of the clashes born of the disarming of meaning” (6). The presence of the beloved as torture victim and the present absence of the lover as “disappeared” imply between them the entire totalitarian edifice, the regime’s violence against lover, beloved, nation, and language.

*Canto a su amor desaparecido: Cueca Sola and the Jeu of Loss*

*Canto a su amor desaparecido* draws out the triangulation between torturer, victim, and lover by employing the testimonial voice of a female lyrical speaker. Zurita’s use of a female voice has several effects. Beyond its reconstruction of the testimonial triangulation through the voice of the violated woman-victim, it also draws on the Romantic poetic association between woman and erotic love, the trope that Kearns decries in Gioconda Belli “la mujer [que] existe para ser amada.” Finally, the female speaker makes the “love song” more permeable and philadelphic:

Canté, canté de amor, con la cara toda bañada canté de amor y los muchachos me sonrieron. Más fuerte canté, la pasión puse, el sueño, la lágrima. Canté la canción de los viejos galpones de concreto. Unos sobre otros. Decenas de nichos los llenaban. En cada uno hay un país, son como niños, están muertos. Todos yacen allí, países negros, áfrica y sudacas. Yo les canté así de amor de la pena a los países. Miles de cruces llenaban hasta el fin el campo. Entera su enamorada canté así. Canté el amor. (11)

Paula Thorrington’s reading of the opening interprets it as a scene in a prison camp, which implies a triangular dynamic: the singer as beloved, the lover as an inference
drawn from the possessive phrase “su enamorada,” and the torturers as “los muchachos que sonrieron” (136). The young men’s ludic reaction in the face of her agonized, passionate performance manifests the discursive problem of “incommunication.” It turns back upon the singer, to wrest enunciative control over the song and render it a purely erotic performance. She no longer gives testimony, but rather becomes a romantic trope of the suffering beloved: Norma, lamenting the love-betrayal of Pollione with Adalgisa; or Donna Elvira swearing to tear out Don Giovanni’s heart if he does not return to her.

The lover’s presence/absence, however, problematizes the torturers’ enunciative control over the song. Zurita evokes him as what Richard terms a “strange body” kept afloat as a “hybrid recollection” composed of “shredded newspapers, fragments of extermination, syllables of death, commercial phrases, pauses of untruth, names of the deceased” that together speak to “the infection of memory that contaminated [Chileans] through a deep crisis of language” (6). The lover as the discursive center of the song is invoked by a _jeu_ of fragmented signs implying violence, torture, and the wounding of the nation. These include “viejos galpones de concreto,” “países,” “nichos,” “cruces,” all gathered up and sustained by the identifying phrase of the beloved, “su enamorada,” a “su” which in Rowe’s terms reads polysemically in Spanish: “theirs, his and yours, in multiple reference both to the mothers and others close to the disappeared, and to those who died in prison and in torture” (287).

The female loving witness’s song, an “aria” or expressive melody, rhizomatically re-orders the multiplicity of testifying fragments in an affective framework, creating an

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54 Franco discusses this absence/presence of the disappeared and its troubling effect on the regime’s designs against memory and history: “In these societies of masquerades, the counterfactual demand by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Families of the Disappeared in Chile that the disappeared be returned with life exposed the prevarications of the military by taking the lie as literal truth, creating a new form of opposition, one that relied on this ghostly presence” (200).
arrangement distinct from the arborescent structure of oppositional narratives. Drawing together the fragments in an affective framework, like Ernesto Cardenal’s “gossip epigrams” the text not only bypasses state-controlled means of transmitting vital information: it also bypasses ideological language entirely, avoiding both the alienation of Chilean readers caught in what Brunner calls the “pugna por definir socialmente la realidad” (75), as well as the degradation of the song by ideological communicative orders. A love song becomes political “action” without resorting to ideological language, precisely because, under the regime, love implies loss, and loss implies cause. There is no room under Pinochet for an ahistorical aria. The regime’s violence deforms the signs of *eros* such that singing a love song becomes testimony. In the love song, the disarticulated reality of the loss and its political cause all enter the game of signification. Like Cardenal before him, Zurita merely exposes that loss and cause through the emoting voice of the singer, whose being-expression draws it out and renders it something to be encountered and emotionally engaged with by the reader.

*Canto a su amor desaparecido*’s “testifying love song” framework recalls the Cueca Sola—the signifying action performed by the mothers of the disappeared. Started by the Conjunto Folclórico de la Agrupación de las Familias de los Detenidos-Desaparecidos, and performed for the first time at the Teatro Caupolicán in March of 1978, the Cueca Sola appropriates a dance and music of both erotic and patriotic meanings. It involves a game of pursuit and evasion between a male dancer and his female partner who never touch. As Araucaria Rojas Sotoconil describes it, the Cueca, frequently used by the Pinochet regime as a touchstone of its concept of *chilenidad*, was reworked by the AFDD art-group such that “la brutal ausencia del compañero de baile y
vida trasunta en la escenificación de la cueca sola una literalidad que pone al descubierto
lacerías y dolores, prescindiendo en ese acto de metáforas u ornamentos estéticos
accesorios” (60). Rojas quotes the lyrics from a Cueca used in the 1978 performance:

En un tiempo fui dichosa
apacible eran mis días
mas llegó la desventura
perdí lo que más quería
Me pregunto constante
¿dónde te tienen?
y nadie me responde
y tu no vienes. (59)

Once again, a female voice sings a song to a lost love, a love who is also disappeared.
Without displacing the “love song framework,” the lyrics create a signifying game in
which the amorous lament evokes the existence of the lover while signalling the cause of
his disappearance. The Cueca, an erotic form of being-expression, already collectivized
in the art of performance, is now doubly so, entering historical discourse and contending
with forces already warring within it. The song thus becomes interpretable through
political registers, not through the mediation of philadelphic expression or subjectivity,
but through the public expression of *eros as loss*.

The lover’s lament or Cueca Sola also comes to function as allegory in Idelber
Avelar’s sense of the term. According to Avelar, allegorical narratives flourished during
Chile and Argentina’s dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily “as witness and
expression of political defeat.” This resurgence of allegory occurred not merely because
“in order to escape censorship writers have to craft “allegorical” ways of saying things,”
but also because “allegory is the aesthetic face of political defeat […]. The petrified
images of ruins, in their immanence, bear the only possibility of narrating the defeat”
(69). Avelar draws from Walter Benjamin’s concept of “eternal transience” as “that
interval when history is suspended and contemplated in the starkness of its ruins. Nature becomes an emblem of death and decadence, a way of depicting a history that can no longer be grasped as a positive totality (69). In Canto a su amor desaparecido, these ruins are, among other things, tombs that contain fragments of erotic speech, thus becoming “erotic spaces.” The tombs not only manifest the temporal paradox of “eternal transience,” they link that paradox to eros itself, expressing eros as the primary implication of the extra-temporal and objective nature of love that in Chapter 2 I described as the Tao. Zurita’s introduction of the Tao changes the nature of the allegory: rather than the “narration of a defeat,” Canto a su amor desaparecido becomes an affirmation of permanence that undermines totalitarian destruction.

We see this affirmation in several elements of the textual order. The “aria” is an affective, loving framework, infusing eros and pathos into even the most violent images. Similarly, the poems’ use of space conjugates the “tombs” created by torture and mass-murder with erotic spaces. Integrating love and violence into “eternal transience” undermines the temporality of the latter through the former’s intemporality. Following the “aria” that introduces the text, the poems are structured in terms of an alternating pattern of textual constructions. First, a series of “niches”—square-shaped textual enclosures—evoke the niche-tombs of Latin American cemeteries. Second, the text includes a series of long-lined passages preceded by hyphens that I call “soundscapes.” These hyphens allow for an oral reading of the lines, although the connection with auditory sound is sometimes tenuous. The poem’s lyrical speaker/witness gives testimony through multiple senses. These niches and soundscapes are introduced in the “aria” as the raw material of the singer’s song: “Canté la canción de los viejos galpones de concreto.”
Unos sobre otros. Decenas de nichos los llenaban. En cada uno hay un país, son como niños, están muertos” (11). The “niches”—a term also used by both Rowe and Zurita—express a spatiality that Rowe’s analysis picks up on: “space is not the setting for occurrence but is itself occurrence: a sense of the land as expression of social hope […] and of landscape as expression of emotion” (283). We saw this association in Neruda’s rendition of erotic spatiality as an osmosis between beloved and island. In Zurita’s poetry, however, erotic space is not an island, but a tomb.

The textual niches are a combination of tomb and erotic enclosure, containing the discursive remains of the lovers in conversation and communion with each other, but also the traces of the violence of the state. They are memory impressions of “golpes” and “tormento,” the death of the lovers themselves:

Fue el tormento, los golpes y en pedazos nos rompimos. Yo alcancé a oírte pero la luz se iba. Te busqué entre los destrozados, hablé contigo. Tus restos me miraron y yo te abracé. Todo acabó. No queda nada. Pero muerta te amo y nos amamos, aunque esto nadie pueda entenderlo. (11)

In the first niche, the tomb is the product of state violence, “opened” in the first line by “el tormento, los golpes.” At the same time, it is also an erotic space that, as in Neruda and Cardenal, emerges through loving utterance. Lover and beloved seek to contact and communicate with each other through their remains: “Te busqué entre los destrozados, / hablé contigo. / Tus restos me miraron / y yo te abracé.” Zurita’s transformation of erotic space into tomb performs an allegorical function similar to the Cueca Sola, conflating erotic love and grief to provide evidence of the cause of the lovers’ deaths through the
speech fragments preserved in the enclosure. At the same time, by transforming the tomb created by violence into erotic space, the poet undermines the state’s discursive power to confuse *amor* and *terror*. This “undermining” is evidenced in two ways. First, we see it in the poet’s use of predicates: verbs referring to loving or loving gestures make up the majority of the poem, softening and eventually neutralizing the violence of the first line, in a reversal of the structure of Cardenal’s epigram “quizás nos casemos este año amor mío,” where a final verse invoking Somoza completely changes the erotic enclosure. Second, it is also evident in the poem’s temporal make-up: the eternal transience of love’s ruins becomes a way for it to undermine temporal violence.

The tomb as erotic space creates two paradoxical temporalities: the present/eternal temporality of *eros*, “te amo y nos amamos”; and the “preterit time” of death (“fue la tormenta,” “nos rompimos,” “todo acabó”) and the lovers’ final gestures (“te hablé, te abracé”). Zurita’s poem seems to take literally Avelar’s mandate for writers to undertake the “task of mourning,” creating an allegorical “exposed tomb” through concrete poetry and then filling it with words, phrases, and fragments of love. By making the tomb an erotic space, not only are the preterit events leading to the lovers’ death “retained” as parts of erotic memory, *eros* itself is made eternal. The poem’s final lines—“muerta / te amo y nos amamos”—place love on the plain of eternal/present time. This eternity both undermines the preterit “extinction” of the lovers’ “todo acabó,” as well as intimating their *erotic* union as part of the *Tao*, a “reality beyond all predicates” that absorbs all things into it, and that the violence of the regime cannot touch. *Eros* renders the regime unable to retain control of the history and language that it grasps.
A dynamic is set up between *eros* and *philadelphos-in-eros*: *eros*’s dyadic nature dismantles the regime’s strategy of disappearance of individual persons, while *philadelphos-in-eros* precludes its larger ambitions against re-writing history. That dynamic is explored further in the first soundscape following the first niche:

–Si, si miles de cruces llenaban hasta el fin el campo.
–Llegué desde los sitios más lejanos, con toneladas de cerveza adentro y ganas de desaguar
–Así llegué a los viejos galpones de concreto.
–De cerca eran cuarteles rectangulares, con sus vidrios rotos y olor a pichi,
–semen, sangre y moco hendían. (11)

As with the tombs and the aria, the soundscapes retrieve what Richard calls “the discard,” “marks to be recycled via the precarious economy of the fragmentary and the trace” (2), ordering it into an affective framework. Composed of bodily sensations, speech fragments, visual impressions, codenames, dreams and prayers, the impressionistic soundscape becomes “a field of citations, crisscrossed as much by continuity (the various forms of supposing or imposing an idea of succession) and discontinuity (by cuts that interrupt the dependence of that succession on a predetermined chronology)” (2). The speaker comes into a rhizomatic field of embodied, sonic and visual traces: “a belly full of beer, a full bladder,” the sight of “los viejos galpones de concreto,” “thousands of crosses on the cold-storage unit” and “rectangular bunkers” covered with “piss, semen, blood, mucus,” all implying various forms of human degradation and torture.

When the soldiers blindfold the witness, dream and memory images blend with external sense impressions, populating the soundscape with fragments of the witness’s own subjective, inner life. This is also the point at which *eros* enters the soundscape:

–El teniente dijo “vamos,” pero yo busco y lloré por mi muchacho
–Ay amor
–Maldición, dijo el teniente, vamos a colorear un poco.
–Murió mi chica, murió mi chico, desaparecieron todos
Desiertos de amor. (11)

The association between her loss of sight, the introduction of *eros*, and the subsequent effects on the soundscape recall the role of veiling in Cardenal’s monastic poems. In the monastery, veiling led to the perception of the *Tao, philadelphos-in-eros*. Zurita suggests something similar. The witness’s blindfolding collapses temporality into an “eternal present” in which her whole life becomes contained into the present-tense act of perception: images of Jesus, The Virgin, Satan, Mr K., her mother, and the prison guards all become confused. At the same time, the beloved’s gender shifts, rendering the lyrical “I” polysemic. The witness becomes multiple and singular. S/he laments the death of her “chica” or “chico,” and that “they all have disappeared.”

The poet not only appropriates the soldiers’ acts of blindfolding the witness(es) prior to her (their) imprisonment, torture and execution, but also demonstrates his view of *eros* as simultaneously collective and individual. Her body is the only means for her to recall what occurred, and from its discarded fragments she reconstructs an impression of the military’s brutality. As she remembers her lover, her subjectivity multiplies via *philadelphos-in-eros* and the fact of the regime’s crimes affecting multiple lives. The polysemic “I” of the witness, however, is not a philadelphic subject, an “I” who renders every voice, but an erotic subject speaking to the disappeared beloved, with both “I” and beloved shifting from subject to subject. Loving and remembering become multiplicitous while simultaneously remaining dyadic, which sustains a tension between embodied and collective reality so that her subjectivity and its wounding is not dissolved into an ideological *philadelphos* and absorbed into political symbols. Her violation, and that of all Chileans who were victims of the dictatorship, become what Richard calls a sign not
easily processed, which the reader is forced to confront and experience nakedly without
the (cold) comfort of ideologized mass emotions.

The collective singularity of *eros* and its temporal manifestation through the *Tao*
expands in the second pair of niche and soundscape. The first niche’s dual temporality
extends into the second, establishing a temporal continuity and a sense of repetition
between niches. This continuity expands on the individual story of the witness, while
repetition collectivizes her as one of many who shared the same experience:

> Ay amor, quebrados caímos y en la caí-
da lloré mirándote. Fue golpe tras gol-
pe, pero los últimos ya no eran nece-
sarios.
> Apenas un poco nos arrastramos entre
Los cuerpos derrumbados para quedar
Juntos, para quedar uno al lado del otro.
No es duro ni la soledad. (12)

This second poem reiterates the ruptures of the first, graphically denoting these ruptures
through hyphenated breaks in the words “caída,” “golpe,” “necesarios.” These ruptures
are both similar and different to the prior verse. Indeed, the relationship between
repetition and difference in the first and second niches is a way to collectivize the
witness(es) while retaining the singularity of erotic subjectivity. The word-changes
between niches demonstrate this paradox, corresponding to the semantic variations
between multiple witnesses observing the same event, as well as establishing a continuity
of experience for the aria’s singular voice. Thus “Fueron los golpes” becomes “golpe tras
golpe,” stretching the temporality of the beating to include the idea of a protracted and
meaningless violence in which the lovers are beaten beyond the point of death. Similarly,
the loving gestures shift from those of the beloved alone (“te busqué, te hablé”) to the
couple moving in unison: “nos arrastramos entre los cuerpos para quedar juntos.” Then in
the final lines the Tao, which in the first niche was introduced as a vague sense of eternity buffeted by a negation (“nadie puede entenderlo”), becomes more spatially and temporally concrete, extending via enjambment into a refrain appearing in the second soundscape as of antiphon: “Todo mi amor está aquí y se ha quedado /—pegado a las rocas, al mar y a las montañas.”

Rowe spends much time discussing this particular antiphon. For him, it denotes love’s “inscription” on and in the landscape: “there is both an adherence to the surface of the earth—’ha quedado adherido en las rocas’—and some degree of penetration or incrustation of the surface resulting in the marking in it by love” (284). Yet more than love “embedding” or “marking” the Earth, the antiphon is an articulation of love as Tao, a Tao that was expressed temporally in the first niche, “muerta te amo y nos amamos,” and that has now become both spatial and temporal. In the second niche, the eternity of eros is rendered through a present-perfect phrase (“se ha quedado”) that moves beyond the “present tense” of the first niche so as to encompass all of time, compressing past into present. At the same time, eros’s eternity blends into a spatial omnipresence, a fixed “here” from which there is no distance, “cleavage or escape.” The “rocas,” “mar,” and “montañas” become not merely expressions of emotion, or places where love becomes “permanent,” in Rowe’s terms, but signs of the monumentality of the erotic Tao.

Zurita seems to be drawing directly from the same theological sources as Cardenal, and indeed, as Rowe points out, Zurita relies on a “cosmological view of love” that “relates to his deliberate use of Dante as a model” and often “includes a mapping of constants in the form of Christian symbols” (284). Nevertheless, Zurita and Cardenal’s view of the Tao is fundamentally different. Cardenal approaches the Tao through a
monastic Christian paradigm, examining it through a materialistic lens but otherwise retaining its theistic presuppositions. God still exists in Cardenal, even as He is perceived in nature. Zurita, on the other hand, deconstructs Christian symbols, resemanticizing them and removing their theistic anchors. There is no God, only Godliness, inferred through the permanence of love and landscape. At the same time, Zurita’s Tao-consciousness is also brought directly to bear on political reality, whereas in Cardenal it remains latent potential. Zurita applies his recognition of eros’s permanence back to the crisis of language in which he and his country are immersed.

 –Cómo te llamas y qué haces me preguntaron.
 –Mira tiene un buen cul. Cómo te llamas buen culo bastarda chica, me preguntaron.
 –Pero mi amor ha quedado pegado en las rocas, el mar y las montañas.
 –Pero mi amor te digo, ha quedado adherido en las rocas, el mar y las montañas.
 –Ellas no conocen los malditos galpones de concreto.
 –Ellas son. Yo vengo con mis amigos sollozando. (13)

The antiphon “mi amor se ha quedado pegado a las rocas, el mar y las montañas” is repeated three times: before the soundscape, in the middle portion quoted above, and then again right at the end. In between the antiphon’s repetitions, the second soundscape’s images and language of violence go much deeper than before. Rowe describes the antiphon and the images of violence as “unsignalled transitions between words which are acts of violations and others which express openness to tenderness,” claiming that the effect of this schizophrenic movement is that “one finds oneself thrown from extremes of defensive closure to extremes of tender vulnerability. The poem takes the risk of actually confronting the erotics of violence, instead of using it as a means to capture readers into passivity” (288). Rowe’s reading is insightful, but beyond mimicking the torturers’
strategies, the antiphon also creates its own erotic spaces of inassimilable difference where the violent distortions of the regime are driven out by the language of the Tao.

In the second soundscape, the antiphon enters just as the violence towards the witness has turned sexual. It follows the line “¿Cómo te llamas buen culo bastarda chica?” Thus the witness uses the erotic violence of the soldier’s words as a pathway back to the Tao through the antiphon, contradicting him in the following line with the conjunction “but” and continuing on for the next four lines. The eros of the Tao cannot be affected or distorted by violence under totalitarianism. It penetrates the soundscape, forcing the signs of violence to retreat, and flooding it with tenderness. Later, something similar occurs during one of the soldier’s attempts at appropriating the language of eros:

–Oh sí, lindo chico,
–Claro –dijo el guardia, hay que arrancarlo de raíz.
–Oh sí, oh, sí.
–El hombro cortado me sangraba y era olor raro la sangre.
–Dando vueltas se ven los dos enormes galpones.
–Marcas de T.N.T., guardias y gruesas alambradas cubren sus vidrios rotos.
–Pero a nosotros nunca nos hallarán porque nuestro amor está pegado a las rocas, al mar y a las montañas. (13)

Here, the soldier intervenes in the witness’s words to her disappeared lover, with the word “Claro” at the beginning of his utterance in the passage’s second line. This interjection forces an enjambment with her own utterance in the line before it, displacing the lover as interlocutor and redirecting the message to himself. The soldier then uses the context of an appropriated erotic phrase to repeat one of the regime’s tropes about creating a new world by pulling out the “Marxist Cancer” by the root.

The relationship between the soldier’s words, the witness’s sensory impressions, and the antiphon recreates the triangulation of torturer, victim, and lover. But it does so to
expose the “tortura del vocablo,” the “traces of distortion” in erotic language that come from the regime’s praxis. Zurita sustains the verbal lie, the fragments of speech produced by the torturer—“hay que arrancarlo del raíz,” next to the sensual truth that “El hombro cortado me sangraba y era olor raro la sangre,” “enormes galpones,” and “guardias y gruesas alambradas” (13)—in a manner that recalls Orwell’s description of the “Ministry of Love”: a “really frightening” building without windows, inaccessible due to “a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors, and hidden machine-gun nests. Even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons” (6). The body of the torture victim registers all that is disarticulated from the soldier’s phrases of affirmation and purpose. It exposes through its sense impressions the actions of the military and the hellish space they create, impregnated by imposing bunkers, armed guards, barbed wire, darkness, and the sound and smell of human degradation. Amidst the tension between spoken signs and referents, the antiphon intervenes a third time, reintroducing the Tao, effectively undermining the soldier’s power to create a nightmarish new world. The couple will never be appropriated or absorbed by the regime’s distortions. The Tao’s monumental nature makes it, and the couple’s love, untouchable. Zurita is much more optimistic than Orwell, for whom totalitarianism eliminated eros through a violent invasion of mental space. Zurita avoids the solipsism that situates love completely within the subject, so ensuring its destruction—as in the dénouement of Winston and Julia’s relationship in Orwell’s novel. Instead, he conceives of love as something objective that exists both beyond the mind and beyond preterit reality. By transcending the temporal, transitory nature of totalitarian violence, love can act, endure, and resist.
The *Tao* imposes its refractory difference through the two erotic paradoxes discussed earlier: *eros* is both subjective and collective, and both temporal and intemporal. Zurita draws out these paradoxes by multiplying niches following the second soundscape. There are now four niches in the third set, which can be read, as in the progression between first and second niches, as both linear and multiplicitous repetitions: the voice of the loving witness as one and multiple. The first line of the top-left niche describes the military’s attempt to bury the lovers’ bodies by piling “lime and stones” on them. Through this burial, the couple revisits and expands on its own death and temporal erasure from the first niche: “Sentí las piedras aplastándote y creí que gritarías, pero no. El / amor son las cosas que pasan. Nuestro amor muerto no pasa” (14). This phrase—“El amor son las cosas que pasan. Nuestro amor muerto no pasa”—reflects an awareness of love’s paradoxical existence as both the dyadic, temporal love of the couple (which dies) and the *Tao*, which is eternal. The “eternity” of the *Tao* precludes the regime’s temporal erasure of the couple. The disappeared lovers remain suspended in the gap between extinction and eternity. As Zurita explains elsewhere, they remain “tipos que no han sido enterrados […] ellos penan permanentemente en el eje de la lengua” (qtd. in Rowe 282).

At the same time, in the third set of niches, the *Tao* is also experienced as the sum of all things that “happen” or move in time, of everything that (in Thomistic terms) passes from potentiality to actuality. The *Tao* acts on the universe as a *prima mobilae* or unmoved mover. The bottom-right niche expands on this notion:

El dulce y no. Fue el último crujido y ya no hubo necesidad de moverse. Todo ahora se mueve. Tus pupilas están fijas, pero cuatro ojos infinitamente abiertos ven más que dos.
Por eso nos vimos.
Por eso nos hablamos. (14)

In their death and burial, the lovers’ temporal movement is absorbed into the *Tao*, a vital, omnipresent fixity that moves everything else. The tomb, which had been the couple’s erotic space in the first two niches, is now the cosmos of the *Tao* in which the couple can “see each other” and “speak to each other,” to continue being even after their bodies’ extinction. The *Tao* is thus a Borgesian infinite: something that cannot be encompassed, only inhabited, a “concept which corrupts and upsets all others” (Borges 109). It is thus utterly useless for, indeed counter to, the territorializing purposes of totalitarianism. The *Tao*, like the “infinite straight-line” that is also a “circle” “a triangle” and a “sphere,” (109) can only be articulated through its paradoxes: fixed mover, preterit eternity, singular collective. The top-left niche expresses these Taoist paradoxes through an axiom: “Ahora todos son caídos menos / nosotros los caídos. / Ahora todo el universo eres tú y yo / menos tú y yo.” These lines situate the paradoxical quality of love in two couplets that turn on the word “menos”: enjambed at the end of the first line of the first couplet, and beginning the second line of the second. The first line allows for a dual reading that incorporates the saving or uplifting quality of the *Tao*—“Ahora todos son caídos menos”—and the paradox of life from death: “menos / nosotros los caídos.” The word “menos” virtually turns on its own negativity, subtracting death from the equation and moving the pair from life to life. The second couplet lets the end-line emphasis fall on “eres tú y yo,” foregrounding the dyadic couple as the universe, while the “menos tú y yo” of the second line abstracts them from the collective by their erotic space. The fallen are both in a collective “todos son caídos” and abstracted from the collective by their erotic space “menos nosotros, los caídos.”
The third soundscape establishes a poetic dynamic between the “forces of love” and those of “totalitarianism,” each of which acquires its own communicative space:

–Ay, grandes glaciares se acercan. grandes glaciares sobre los techos de nuestro amor.
–Eh ronca, gritó mi lindo, los dinosaurios se levantan. Los helicópteros bajan y bajan.
–Donde yacen los viejos galpones, las paredes muy altas con torres de T.V
–Tú podrías aparecer en las pantallas, oh sí amor
–En mis sueños enciendo el dial y allí apareces en blanco y negro. (14)

In a curious reversal of modernist poetics, Zurita has *eros* appropriate technological space, and the totalitarian regime appropriate natural space in the form of glaciers. Like the Cueca, glaciers are an integral element of Chile’s symbolic geography, its national self-conception. The symbol of the glacier, however, is affected by the regime, becoming symbolic of the spread of totalitarianism. Rowe’s reading of “Canada,” in the niche-sets named for countries, gives a starting point for exploring the image of glaciers in relation to the rest of the soundscape. For Rowe, the niche named “Canada” creates a discursive space in which “whiteness and ice penetrate perception, becoming an equivalence (not a representation) of dominance, torture and genocide” (293). Glacier imagery appears several times in the soundscape, set in opposition to the couple’s love. The language of *eros* also enters at intervals, imprinting itself on the sonic field, integrating itself into the lines and appropriating military images. The lyrical speaker appropriates the image of TV towers atop bunkers, which calls to mind the regime’s use of television to disseminate its totalitarian discourse, to associate it with the beloved’s face.

Similarly, further on in the soundscape the lyrical speaker responds to the torturer’s attempts to diminish one of his victims:

–¿Fumas marihuana? ¿Aspiras neopren? ¿Qué mierda fumas rojo asqueroso?
–Pero son lindos. Aun así yo me reglo de verlos, mojo la cama y fumo. 
–Yo me enamoro de ellos, me regio y me pinto entera. Enviélta en
–lágrimas los saludo. (15)

The lyric voice counters the words of the torturers with a combination of physical and
verbal expressions of love, such that her entire body labours in bringing it forth. These
interjections of love take up increasing space in the soundscape, creating alternative
spaces of their own, such as dreams and imaginary television screens in which the
beloved can be remembered and evoked. Thus, while the glacier imagery gives the sense
that totalitarianism might be an implacable force threatening the Tao through its
attempted erasure of the fragments, the “infinite” nature of the Tao is revealed in the
multidimensional space that emerges from its paradoxes. The glaciers can expand only in
a linear fashion, “covering” the lovers’ ruins and remains. The Tao can be manifested
through various realms of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, through the lovers’ bodies,
through their dreams, fantasies, and imagination. The lyrical subject’s singular affective
voice counters the violence of her immolation by means of a loving affirmation of her
beloved “lindo chico” as well as her entire generation. That singular voice with its aching
tenderness shapes the entirety of the soundscape, encompassing it in the voice of the Tao.
Thus it is the affective Tao, rendered through the singular voice of the loving witness,
and not the glaciers, that determine the soundscape’s vectors. Everything, including the
torturers and their words and actions, is contained within it.

At the soundscape’s end, the poem dissolves the distinction between individuals
and nations, imagining all of the region’s countries to be entombed like the couple. By
humanizing the nations, Zurita uses eros to create the same temporality of
“problematizing refraction” not only against totalitarianism, but against all artificial
forms of transcendence, including philadelphic romanticism. As Rowe indicates, patriotic narratives that sacrifice human beings so as to create an essentialist national identity are overturned in the act of making countries into “violated human beings” (289). Giving nations a body in this way involves them in the signifying game of the poem’s “love-song” structure as substitute beloveds, reflecting the Tao as the ground of both human and nation. It also maintains the intimacy of the erotic utterance, ensuring it is not subsumed into the mass emotion of philadelphic patriotism. At the text’s opening, the scene of the aria, the singer includes entire nations at the center of her song: “Canté del amor así a los países.” From the fourth set of niches and on to what could be called the book’s climax—the revelation of the poem’s “galpones” as two mausolea representing Africa and South America—the song is re-oriented towards nations, which enter and exit its dyadic center. As with landscapes, nations become inscribed with human traits, possessing bodies, living, dying, and being loved. These nations aren’t merely soma—transcendent bodies—but sarx, corruptible flesh that can be cut, bruised and wounded, that aches, bleeds and agonizes.

This incarnation of nation is introduced through the collectivization of mourning. In the fourth set of niches, whole nations lay buried in the mausolea to be mourned by the witness: “Los países están muertos / Un Gal / -pon se llama Sudamérica y el otro África” (16). The witness expresses herself in both intimate and collective terms: “Tormento me dio la vista, me dije abriendome. En responso cantamos.” Her song of mourning sustains the erotic paradox that philadelphos-in-eros is political, spiritual, and personal all at the same time. Her song is simultaneously an aria and a psalm, the verb “cantamos” evoking a congregational call-and-response. The psalm emphasizes an overlap between intimacy
and collectivity, as a form of prayer that is both extremely personal—a dyadic
conversation between the suffering or rejoicing psalmist and God—and also integrated
into communal liturgy. In the bottom-left niche, the song moves from psalm to anthem,
from the spiritual to the political:

La Internacional de 1os países muertos
creció subiendo y mi amor puse.
Todo el amor paísa, todo el lloro
mío sumé y sonó entonces la General
de 1os países muertos.
Así desangré yo la herida y al
partir rojo sonó el canto a mi
amor desaparecido. (16)

The lyrical speaker interjects her grieving love song into a collective political chant, an
“Internationale” and a “General” for the countries that have died. But Zurita prevents it
from fully entering the realm of mass emotion: the song’s content and expression retain
personal elements. The singing originates not from a collective, but from a singular voice,
embodied and shedding blood. Rather than raising the lyrical speaker’s grief up into the
“Internationale” and sublimating it into philadelphic subjectivity, collectivized grief is
brought down to the intimate level. The “Internationale” and “General” are integrated
into the bloodletting love-song of the witness. The niche-sets collectivize mourning, but
only to incarnate the nation and bring it into an intimate mode, preserving the embodied
and personal sense of loss experienced by the family members of the disappeared.

The final niche-soundscape pair and the 30 niche poems that make up the text’s
continental “Galpones” emphasize the dyadic, the embodied, and the personal even as
they give voice to collective losses and political realities. Indeed, the poetic movement is
consciously inward, from multitude to beloved: “Todos los países natales se llaman del
amor mío, Es mi lindo y caído.” The galpones themselves, after expressing the sorrow of
every oppressed nation, synthesize the tragedy of the multitude into the affective, erotic
voice of the female witness speaking to her disappeared beloved:

¿Llamai tumba del amor de los
países? ¿Por duelo me llamaste?
¿Por puro duelo fue? ¿Por duelo fue
el amor que lloraron tanto? Que
tanto me iban diciendo que se
acaba, que se acaba todo y fue el
sueño el que se acababa. Perdiendo
dice paisa te vi por pastos que se
iban, paisitos dice el nicho. Perdiendo
negro todo se va desaparecido
por islas, países y nombres
sí; ¿me llamas? ¿Me llamas tú? (23)

The opening word, “llamai” and the anaphoric repetition of the question “You called?”
orient the poem as an oral expression of affective language emerging from the loving
voice of the witness. The first of these affective questions employs a distinctly Chilean
form of address: the second person “Llamai,” used only in oral, familiar speech. This
intimacy is then offset by the noun phrase “tumba de amor de las naciones” that, as in the
introduction, displaces the disappeared beloved as the interlocutor of the loving witness.
He is buried in the “tomb of love” and “nations,” therefore the loving witness directs her
song to him through them. Zurita’s use of repeated questions makes the poem a field of
sonic disturbance, of lilts in the lyric voice framed by silences and lacunae. The beloved,
or beloveds, never answer back. The question of his calling remains hanging at the end of
the poem. Again, Zurita allows us to read this as one voice and as many; indeed the two
readings dovetail into each other. Each “llamai?” “llamaste?” “llamas” is asked by one
witness and many. The nation’s collective grief and the lacuna left by the disappeared are
integrated into the beloved’s partial erotic love and loss. At the same time, the
witness(es)’ imagined perception of the beloved’s voice in these anaphoric questions
represents what Nelly Richard calls the “fantasmalidad” of the disappeared. For Richard, the disappeared themselves are a question, a suspension between life and death: “how to interpret the dual ghostliness of the bodies and the destinies of the bodies and the destinies of these victims of ‘presumed deaths’ that materially lack the traces of a proof of truth to confirm the objective outcome of the dilemma of life-death?” (qtd. in Franco, Cruel Modernity 201). Zurita doesn’t provide an answer, but rather blesses that phantasmagorical ambiguity in which the disappeared and the nation as a whole are suspended. He inscribes it with the love of the Tao.

Amor de Chile: Zurita and the Tao

Amor de Chile follows Canto a su amor desaparecido chronologically and also thematically. Published in 1987, this is a brief text of 28 short poems, each speaking of love from different vantage points on the Chilean landscape. The 2002 edition features an authorial prologue addressing some of the criticisms the book received and outlining his rationale for creating a book of poems based purely on “love” and “landscapes.” The poet addresses his critics who, in his words, judged the work “bland,” and preferred more Purgatorio and Anteparaíso’s “avant-garde fury and self-destruction” (7). Without going into too much detail, Zurita explains that the book was written against the backdrop of “one of the most brutal years in Chile—the year 1986—after seeing manifest once again the abyss that human cruelty can reach” (7). The book pays homage to Chileans’ permanence, “un poema barrido de belleza y de amor que se pudiese oponer, insisto: por lo menos frente a mí, a la transitoriedad terrible del crimen y del daño” (7). Interviewing Zurita in 2009, Thorrington gives more details of the event that precipitated its writing:
Zurita explains that the writing of *Amor de Chile* was a reaction to the awful event in March of 1985, where three Communist professionals were found dead, their throats slit and their bodies showing all the evidence of the abuses they suffered. Having been a very close friend to one of the victims, Zurita grieved this tragedy in a personal way and wrote the book in a matter of months. His desire was to express something beautiful to combat the horror of those deaths. As he explains it to me: “es tan increíblemente bello, opone precisamente para que se note el horror.” (140)

Zurita’s comment suggests we should read *Amor de Chile* as something of a modernist inversion, an expression of beauty on which, in Adorno’s terms, the “hostile, alien, cold, oppressive” world is “imprinted in reverse.” The poems’ focus on landscape is meant to console compatriot readers living under the shadow of the regime’s brutality, by drawing their attention to the sublimity of the country’s awesome geography.

The text thus takes a cue from Gabriela Mistral, who describes natural beauty as a “bandage” left by God as recompense for the sorrows of the world: “Toda la belleza de la tierra puede ser venda para tu herida. Dios la ha extendido delante de ti” (204). Indeed, like Mistral’s *Desolación*, *Amor de Chile* proposes nature and art as means of purging the soul, soothing earthly suffering and loss, and interacting with the *Tao* and its divine source. The text is not, however, a complete inversion in the Adornian sense, a poetry whose social context can be measured only by the shadows cast upon lyrical speaker or poetic subject matter. The poems are active, socially oriented critique. The “sorrows” for which the nation’s sublime scenes compensate are those caused by the regime. The poems critique the dictatorship’s fetishizing of *chilenidad* by breaking down geopolitical, discursive, and spatial boundaries, and by binding reader, author, poem, natural landscapes, and human subjects as parts of a living human continuum through *philadelphia*-in-eros, the *Tao*. This inversion, through which Zurita creates a book full of beautiful imagery celebrating love and nature against a background of human cruelty and
totalitarianism, is a strategy of appropriation. The Tao is an extra-subjective monumental spatiality and eternity, a permanence that can oppose the “terrible transitoriness of crime and harm.” In a passage reminiscent of Cardenal in Vida en el amor, the poet explains that: “La hoja de un árbol está al lado de otra hoja porque se aman y los pastos se mecen al unísono bajo el viento porque se aman. Esa constatación simple, elemental es el mentís mayor a cualquier forma de exterminio” (7). For Zurita, a meditation on and revelation of the Tao is pertinent to Chile’s immanent sociopolitical reality.

The Tao precludes totalitarian extermination and disappearance, preserving eternally lives lived and moved into being through love. The text’s opening poem introduces two important elements of eros and the Tao that set the tone for the rest of the book. First, the Tao is an omnipresent spatial and temporal reality, paradoxically fluid and fixed, monumental and preterit. Second, as in Cardenal’s Vida en el amor, it is linked to the production of language. In terms of the second element, the acts of loving and speaking are contiguous. All elements in Zurita’s erotic cosmos love by “opening themselves” and producing utterances:

Del amor de Chile, del amor de todas las cosas que de norte a sur, de este a oeste se abren y hablan. Todas las cosas hablan de amor: Las piedras con las piedras y los pastos con los pastos porque así se aman las cosas. (13)

Line 5 here provides the example of “rushing streams” and “snowy peaks,” which draw together in love. Zurita takes a physical relationship between two geographical points and reinscribes it as simultaneously erotic and communicative by combining the verb “hablan” and the verbal “amándose.” The poet then justifies this conjunction of love and
speech in the line “todas las cosas hablan de amor,” making love the source and subject of all speech. This line also recalls Cardenal’s statement in *Vida*: “Toda la creación te llama con toda clase de lenguajes. Como te llama también con el lenguaje de los amantes, y de los poetas, y con la oración de los monjes” (27). Cardenal expresses a rhizomatic fellowship or communion among beings through *philadelphos-in-eros*. For Zurita, too, this rhizomatic communion occurs through speech as well as the commonness of erotic impulses. Utterance is the principal manifestation of the *Tao* in the world, and all beings speak. Speech is intrinsically erotic, and all *eros* is language. Subsequently, if communication between lover and beloved leads to the creation of erotic space, the totality of *eros* and language is the *Tao*, a universe that encloses everything in existence.

The *Tao*’s communicative element ties into the spatial. Zurita uses prepositions ambiguously to locate love at a multiplicity of centers, moving in multiple directions. “Del amor de Chile” directs love towards the reader from the nation, restricting love to that particular type circumscribed within it, while at the same time making the nation itself a “loving source.” Paradoxically, Zurita has the nation shed its geopolitical signs and acquire poetic ones anchored to the *Tao*. Chile is the nation located between 30 and 46 degrees south latitude, and at the same time it is the *Tao*’s universe, the sum of all “things which open themselves and love.” Zurita blurs the dichotomy between nature and geography set up by Neruda and Belli, for whom nature is a transcendent field of erotic poetic inferences, and geography an immanent war stage for philadelphic engagement. For Zurita, “Chile” becomes the infinite space of the *Tao* while paradoxically remaining immanent, the nation that the text addresses. The book’s title, and the poem’s first line, restricts some, though not all, of the semiotic drift of geographical signs—indeed Zurita’s
poetic strategy often exploits the drift of signs—so as to allow the compatriot reader to “read” them from the view of what Stanley Fish would call his interpretive community, filling them in with his own memories and emotional associations.

Zurita has two purposes in his construction of the Tao as language, and the nation as Tao. First, he reappropriates the nation and its signs from the violence done them by the regime’s concept of chilenidad, purging them of the regime’s meanings and reinscribing them with those of the Tao. Second, he reappropriates language and love from the “tortura del vocablo.” As René Jara explains: “el trabajo de la escritura es apropiarse de la palabra de la sociedad militarizada para resemantizarla: la tortura es amor en la medida en que el reconocimiento […] implica una reactivación de la conciencia, y por ende, un tropismo de extrañeza que reconduce a su semantización habitual: amor es amor, y su negación está en el terror y en la tortura” (44). As in Cardenal, the “negation” of the Tao is the genesis of social sins, leading to the improper ordering of loves and the distortion of what Jara calls the “sema del amor.” The Tao for Zurita, however, is not merely a transcendental conceit, a game of theology and metaphysics; it provides a counterdiscourse to the violence and death that the country had experienced. Chile itself becomes a field totally inscribed with love, and that love re-writes the suffering of the dictatorship’s victims without subsuming it, allowing it to be encountered, experienced, and purged. The desert landscape expresses this poignantly.

“Homenaje de amor de los desiertos” is the first of three “Homenajes de amor” or “love homages,” each of which invokes one of the landscapes characteristic of Chile’s geography: deserts, mountains, and beaches. The first of these returns to one of the central images of his prior text Purgatorio, a passage from which is cited as an epigram:
“Quien podría la enorme dignidad del desierto de Atacama como un pájaro que se eleva sobre los cielos apenas empujado por el viento” (17). The desert is also one of the most common examples of what Rowe calls “the intensive and multiple use of land, landscape and in a more general sense, space […] as a main vector for interventions in the language and the culture” (294). For Rowe, Zurita’s landscapes are emptied of human movement and yet also act as a kind of quasi metaphoric site and shape of a “pure flow of emotion, irrespective of its meaning” (294-5). In Amor de Chile, landscape implies and manifests the Tao through the production of speech and through love:

Por el amor llegamos, por el amor subimos,  
Por el amor se nos volaron los pastos  
Que nos cubrieran, repite entonces  
el desierto de Atacama, inmenso, tendido  
frente a los Andes, mirándolo. (17)

In “Homenaje de amor a los desiertos,” the “speaking landscape” is the desert, a space whose “scarred,” “burned,” and solitary nature indicates human wounds and what Rowe calls “the emptiness of total loss,” and at the same time offers (again, in Rowe’s words) “a prophetic-utopian discourse […] transformation of desert into fertile land […] the bareness of the space becoming a positive” (289). This transformation takes place in the fusion of love with suffering, and the articulation of the suffering that binds the nation together in solidarity. Erotic love is here the prima mobilae that moved the Earth to create the desert’s features, but love and motion are inseparable from pain: “Es que el amor nos quemó como el sueño y somos los arenales, somos ustedes, somos las líneas de Zurita” (Amor 17). The fusion of pain and love leads to an integration of utterances, creating communion through the empathetic drawing together of suffering lives.
This “solidarity of grief” recalls an image from the “Desiertos de Atacama” section of *Purgatorio*:

> Para que mi facha comience a tocar tu facha y tu facha
> A esa otra facha y así hasta que todo Chile no sea sino
> Una sola facha con los brazos abiertos: una larga facha
> Coronada de espinas. (*Purgatorio* 51)

In this image, the agony of the regime’s victims draws them together to create a single “face” in the desert, that of an agonized Christ in his passion. The use of the Passion of Christ as a signifier of collective suffering and victimization is a poetic theme repeated in Zurita’s poetry from *Purgatorio* to 2004’s *INRI*, which employs Christian symbols in relation to the mass murder of political prisoners who were thrown from helicopters into the sea. The desert and Christ become synonyms: both are *Immanu-el*, the consoling immanence of the *Tao* amongst the suffering of human beings. We see this, too, in *Canto a su amor desaparecido* as the loving witness “sees” “El Verdadero Dios gritando dentro de los helados galpones de concreto.” The “sublime” Atacama Desert experiences “compassion,” “miseri-cordia” with humanity, identifying with us through its painful “burning,” forging a sense of commonality and rhizomatic equality among beings.

If in the desert, the *Tao* manifests itself through a compassionate “union of sorrows,” in the “cordilleras” that union is anthropocentrically erotic:

> Todas las cosas viven y se aman. Las grandes
> Montañas y las nieves que se levantan
> Azules y se miran
> Como ustedes se esperan te esperan. (21)

Here, the cordilleras engage in various forms of loving communication: meeting, looking, and speaking. Their language is that of human *eros*, and indeed Zurita uses rhetorical forms that personify. Similes such as “Como ustedes” and personifications as when the
mountains “esperan,” “miran,” “arriba besándose” highlight “ustedes,” the people of Chile, as the model to be copied. Zurita’s personification of sublime elements suggests—as in Cardenal—that all of nature participates in eros; but it goes further, in implying that nature participates in a specifically human eros. The gestures of the mountains “kissing,” “greeting,” “gazing,” and “waiting” are loving gestures inscribed with temporality, performed by monumental or atemporal elements. That same immanence of the Tao that was experienced in the desert and through suffering is now experienced in the mountains in the context of erotic love. Indeed, the mountains exist in order to make humans aware of the Tao in which they are immersed, which forges a communion among them. This communion eliminates any hierarchal division between human and divine, but also between author and reader, lover and beloved. We see this equality in line 13: “igual que tú / a quién ahora saludan estas cumbres / y a quien yo saludo.” The romantic gap between lover and beloved, and the modernist gap between poet and society, has ceased to exist in the Tao. The Romantic poet who once constructed erotic space as a bulwark against the “corruption” of the agora, now contributes through his loving utterances to the matrix space of the Tao, an “enclosure” (if a universe could be called that) created by the sum total of all loving communication.

One element that emerges in both “Homenaje a las cordilleras” and “Homenaje a las playas” is the notion of the Tao as a force that can purify language and society alike. Unlike in Cardenal’s monastery poems, there is no modernist divide between the ideal and real, between purified enclosure and reified agora. Cardenal’s monastic difference, which made the Tao perceptible but only from the monastery, is no longer required. Indeed, we see a contrast here between Zurita’s view of faith and Cardenal’s. For Zurita,
there is no need to be purified before an encounter with the Tao, nor is there any distance between the transcendent and the immanent that could only be breached by an intense spiritual praxis of renunciation and asceticism. The Tao purifies the whole because it is monumental and immaculate; its rhizomatic nature touches all beings while its infinite and eternal nature means it cannot be sullied, abused, appropriated, or reified. Thus in “Homenaje a las cordilleras” the “snow and ice” associated with totalitarianism in Canto a su amor desaparecido is purified by the Tao and integrated into its communion. The glaciers that attempted to “erase” love, by absorbing the remains of the lovers, is now drawn into the intercommunication of the Tao: “Toda la nieve te he esperado, responden al unison los desbordados horizontes” (21). Zurita recycles the image of snow to re-appropriate it within a loving geography. The snow is “greeted” by the expansive horizons who speak to it in unison.

In that same vein, the third “love homage”—addressed to the beaches—articulates the Tao as a source of purification and reclamation. This particular poem has an explicit reference to the country’s political situation:

- Que todo vuelva y vuelva entonces
- Como las rompientes
- Las cordilleras y las cumbres del océano
- Y que cuando Chile, que había estado
- Ciego y muerto vuelva a ver
- Que vea de nuevo el fulgor de estas costas. (25)

Here the Tao manifests itself metaphorically as the sea that calls all being to itself. Zurita mingle geographical, evolutionary, and religious associations of the sea as the space from which all things emerge and to which all things return in endless cycles whose association with monumental temporality is evident. In the opening section of “playas,”
elements from earlier “homages” (including rivers, snow, and human news) return to the ocean so as to speak of love. This return becomes a call for the rebirth of the entire nation. The lyrical speaker shifts from the indicative (“Aquí llegamos”) to the subjunctive, in particular the declarative subjunctive: “Que todo vuelva” or “May everything return,” an affective language form in which the poet’s voice takes on a “divine tenor,” making prophetic declarations to the collective. Zurita’s lyrical voice becomes the affective voice of the Tao, calling for a return to the loving source of reality in tones of longing and supplication.

Through that affective voice of the Tao, loving utterances lead to collective restoration. Lines 9-11 (“Que vea de nuevo…”) evoke the healing of the blind man in the Gospel of John, the raising of Lazarus, and Ezekiel’s prophesying to the bones in the dried valley, all of which feature the pronouncement of a divine word, God or the prophets’, as catalyst for restoration or healing: “Que renazcas tú, cada uno de ustedes / con algo de estos poemas.” But Zurita’s prophetic role is not the same as Neruda’s, who found himself abstracted and isolated from the multitude by what Santi calls the “internal discontinuity” created by “the power of the language that infuses him, in the thrust to establish a dialogue with absolute values” (16). Like Neruda, Zurita engages with an absolute, but the poetic language he utilizes is integrated into that same absolute, the communion of the Tao. This integration could be a product of what Jameson terms the postmodern “fragmentation of the subject,” from the monad with its “metaphysics of the inside and outside” (61). For Zurita, poetic creation is not an expression but a habitation of the free-floating, euphoric affects of the Tao, the rhizomatic multiplicity of

55 See Ezekiel 37: 1-14, John 11: 1-46, and John 9: 1-12. Note that the third parable also has the connection between water and healing, as Jesus sends the blind man to the pool of Siloam to wash.
erotic communication. The poet or lyrical speaker is submerged in that communicative multiplicity; he speaks neither for the multitude as a philadelphic romantic subject, nor isolated from it as an erotic one. His role, rather, is in between: a dialogue with the multitude as a communion of speaking persons within the Tao.

In “Canto del amor del pacífico,” it is not the poet who speaks for the multitude, but the multitude that speaks to the poet, breaking down the imbalances in the modernist concept of subjectivity and the poetic vocation. The poet’s task is to draw on inner and natural resources so as to bring the multitude closer to the Tao through the articulation of beauty. The plea from the multitude is highly emotional, with repeated commands for the poet to speak:

Cuenta ahora del territorio libérrimo
De las olas y del mar salvaje
Que te habita
Cuenta que allí ves el cielo y que
Sobre esas aguas esculpes los poemas
De tus difuntos. (29)

The speaking multitude asks for four things: for Zurita to “speak of the wild sea that lives within him,” for him to describe that ocean as the place where he “sees the sky and on which he sculpts poems of the dead,” to say “there is no ocean bigger nor more blue than ours,” and finally for him to declare “that this is our sea.” In these four solicitations, the sea, another metaphor for the Tao, is accessed through both inner and outer space: it is both the psychic field from which Zurita draws his poems, and also the place that Chileans use to locate themselves in relation to each other as members of the nation. This conjunction of inner and outer space is evoked in relation to a specific sociopolitical reality: the ocean as the site of burial for the disappeared. The ocean is the space where Zurita “sculpts his poems” of “his dead”: it is the inner space of grief that the poet draws
on as a source of his compositions, as well as physically and geographically the place where the dead are located. The *Tao*'s paradoxical location in both inner and outer space means that the utterances that the multitude elicits from the poet are not a philadelphic “speaking for”: he is not their spokesperson, nor the “frente” of their multitudinous body. The poet speaks to them through his own erotic subjectivity and its contingent grief. Collective and individual sorrows are fused in the poem’s discursive “ocean” field.

“Pacífico”’s reference to the disappeared is folded into a description of the sea’s beauty, a strategy by which once again the lyrical voices re-appropriate the image away from the dictatorship’s use of it as a mass tomb. They ask the poet to speak of the ocean in terms of the nation. There is no sea more beautiful, large or immense than that which belongs to the collective loved object, which they possess and which they love. The declaration “el mar nuestro” is the collective as it takes ownership of both the sea and their sorrow, insisting that it be re-written by the poet using a language of the *Tao* that, although stained with grief, absorbs the traces of the regime’s violent interventions. This same appropriation of the traces of violence through the *Tao* is also explored in the poems dedicated to stone. “Saludan las piedras de Chile” is the first of three “Saludan” poems that bring the poet’s *Tao*-consciousness to bear on political reality. “Piedras” reiterates some of the “sense” of stone found in *Canto a su amor desaparecido*, for which it is a sign of both memory and oblivion. Zurita makes the same links here through a combination of metaphors: referring to stone in its molecular sense, as “the hardest air that touches”; in its geological sense as the Earth’s oldest substance and thus the “first dream” of humanity; and finally in its use as an agent of monumental inscription “las palabras que jamás se dijeron.” This last metaphor also reiterates the erotic temporal
paradox of *Canto*: “eternal transience.” Stone monumentalizes fragments of what has been disappeared or disarticulated, in this case, language itself:

Somos el aire más duro que toca, el primer
Sueño, las palabras que jamás se dijeron
Murmuran encaramándose las piedras de Chile
Porque si tú sientes el latido de los riscos
Entenderás que mi amor es igual que tu amor
Y que mi pena es también la tuya. (41)

Stone becomes the site of a communicative paradox, making evident both that which has been disarticulated and the fact of its disarticulation. Thus, Zurita has them “rise up and murmur,” a revision of the biblical trope of “stones crying out” against the shedding of innocent blood. “Murmur” has the additional sense of a soft-spoken, intimate message in a chain of dyadic conversations, similar to and at times synonymous with “gossip.” The contrast with the biblical phrase is also an appropriation, albeit founded on Christian logic. Contestatory utterances, the “protesting utterances” of stones, invert but do not undo the violence they react against.

Zurita replaces the “protesting utterance” with a form of intimate, loving speech that can only be shared by entering into close contact with the speaker. This closeness is expressed in lines 4-5, which call the interlocutor to “feel” the “pulse” of the stone and “understand” that his or her love and grief are united with those of the speaker. So the communion of the desert is revisited. Violation is not “contested,” but is transubstantiated by the *Tao* into “grief” or “pena,” whose articulation creates solidarity. The poet reaches out to the interlocutor through a combination of stone and word and offers her the consolation of shared mourning: “Al menos sentirás mi mano buscando la tuya / aquí en la durísima noche de las piedras.”
A second “Saludan” poem, “Saludan los pastos,” follows. The two poems are linked through their communicative title and their similar themes. Zurita titles many of his poems here with verbs and substantives describing forms of utterance and lyrical composition such as “cantan,” “saludan,” “hablan,” “canto,” “monólogo,” underlining the role of erotic utterance in the *Tao*. The “Saludan” poems also deal with the effects of the dictatorship on individuals and the role of the *Tao* in consoling its victims and in purifying the nation from its influences. In “Piedras,” Chile’s stones become the agents of memory and the terrain of union between the dyad formed of speaker and interlocutor, poet, and reader. “Saludan los pastos” constructs a metaphoric link between grass, collectivity, love, and forgiveness:

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Que se vuelan, que se levantan volando
Desde el primer amor que subió sobre
Las llanuras
Los pastos de nuestros cuerpos tendidos
Perdonándose
Como habrán de perdonarse todas las cosas
Tendidas bajo el cielo. (41)
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The poem moves from the “Greeting” of the “grasses,” which begin speaking of forgiveness, to a dialogue between two landscapes, the “pastos” or “grasslands” and the “bloody” deserts and “sand dunes” that interrogate them:

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Pero de dónde han llegado, nos preguntan
Los sangrientos arenales, resecos de
Pena, arrastrándose
Es que no cuajó de pasto la terrible
Noche
Y somos la multitud que marchará renacida. (41)
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The “grass” acts in two ways: as a metaphor for the “bodies” scattered on the Chilean landscape by the regime’s violence, and as a landscape formed by the *prima mobilae* of the Tao, the movement of love. Grass’s association with the dead becomes, as in
Cardenal’s monastery poems, an image of the *Tao*, bringing life from death. Here, however, the grass also evokes the rhizomatic quality of the *Tao*, which covers and embraces everything, including those responsible for the country’s violence.

One of the principal affective expressions of the grass is “forgiveness.” The grass or bodies are linked across an enjambment by the gerund “perdonándose,” which modifies “todas las cosas bajo el cielo” as its own enjambment. Forgiveness becomes two things in this section: the eternal action of the grasses expressed in “perdonándose,” and the eternal mandate of all beings that “habrán de perdonarse.” The word “tendido” is to signify death as another element that links all beings together. Combining it with “forgiveness,” however, the poem proposes a radical message: it includes the perpetrators along with the victims of violence in the *Tao*. Forgiveness can only be extended from victim to perpetrator. The fact that the dead bodies “forgive each other” suggests the inclusion of the torturers in the *Tao*. Forgiveness also becomes the mandate of “everything under the sun,” referring to the nation as a whole. Zurita circumvents the logic of violence that perpetuates itself through cycles of opposition, action, and reaction. There is no contestatory discourse here, no Manichean condemnation of the regime as a force of pure evil; nor is there a repetition of its tropes of “righteous defense.” Rather, Zurita longs for a total purging of violence from the nation through the *Tao*.

Zurita turns to and addresses the opposition in the form of an interrogation between poet and desert. The desert’s “bloody sand dunes,” described as “dried up with grief, and dragging themselves,” interrogate the poet as to the origin of such forgiveness. The poet responds by claiming: “nos cuajó de pasto la terrible / noche / y somos la multitud que marchará renacido.” In this phrase, dispersed over three lines, the poet lays
out how the dictatorship can be best dismantled at its root, its *logos*, through a
communion among its victims who come together in “the terrible night” and share both
grief and forgiveness. This calls to mind the Christian notion of grace’s ability to
transubstantiate suffering and sorrow into joy. But for Zurita this is achieved through the
immanence of the *Tao* and not its transcendence. Entering into communion with the
multitude and binding all of their sufferings together, suffering itself can be transformed.
The multitude is “reborn from the waters,” combining the grass/desert dichotomy into a
geographical and poetic sign of renewal. Grass grows in the desert when it rains. A new
multitude is formed from old sorrows by the “rainfall” of grief and love:

Querido tú, queridos valles

Y queridas de las praderas humanas, valles
Del centro y torrentes
Que grandes y hermosas son las cosas que te
Hablo
Los hombres y las mujeres que recorren
Las líneas de estos poemas
Y firman un acuerdo con las nuevas aguas. (45)

In “Saludan los valles, las praderas y el amor humano,” Zurita reflects on his own
erotic union with his beloved as part of the *Tao*. This third “Saludan” poem follows on
from the other two in presenting a vision for a renewed Chile freed from totalitarian
violence in harmony with the *Tao*, but it also foregrounds the erotic couple in that
“utopian vision,” problematizing the philadelphic concepts of his predecessors. This
poem begins a series in which Zurita addresses his partner Amparo, whom he mentions in
the dedication, recognizing the link between her name and erotic space: “Escribo estos
poemas al Amparo de tu amor.”56 Zurita’s dream for a “new world” is purposefully

56 Thorrington tells us that Zurita dedicated the book to Amparo Mardones, his partner following his split with Diamela Eltit in 1987 (140).
differentiated from socialist thought, which defers dyadic love and individual emotion by sublimating them into a collective ideal. Here there is no “revolutionary love” demanding the sacrifice of those “daily doses of affection where ordinary men put their love into practice” (Guevara 352). Zurita’s relationship with Amparo becomes the basis for all collective love. The poem itself, described as the framework for this new world and the place where “men and women run through” and “sign an agreement with new waters,” is authored by “tu aliento sobre [las líneas].” Indeed, this line transforms the entire text into a loving conversation between Zurita and Amparo, and the poem’s final lines bring the entire loving communion between humans and each other, humans and nature, down to one simple line: “yo a ti te amo.” As in Canto a su amor desaparecido, the Tao and the poet’s collective endeavour alike rest upon a single couple in communication with one another. Likewise the nation will be saved not by idealized collective love, but by individual human beings who come together, “open themselves,” and speak.

While “el amor humano” foregrounds the dyadic relationship of lover and beloved, Zurita also seeks to avoid the isolating traps of erotic romanticism. The poems in which he discusses his feelings for Amparo are buffeted by the Tao, the philadelphos-in-eros. One sees this in a pair of poems dedicated to Amparo called “Y mis ojos buscarán tus ojos” and “Raúl y Amparo largan su amor frente a las aguas.” The first of these employs an erotic romantic language in which the lyrical “I” addresses the beloved:

Y mis ojos buscarán elevándose tus ojos
Y la grandeza en mí de amar
Te enseñará la gracia de sentirse amada
Por eso ábrete y tócame como se tocan los mares
Como los rompientes.
The lyrical “I” appropriates a tone of erotic romantic subjectivity, describing himself as the source of love and the beloved as the receptor: the “greatness of loving in me” shows the beloved “the greatness of feeling loved.” This unidirectional love, however, is buffeted by the Tao in which they are immersed. The poet modulates his voice through the use of “sentirse” instead of “sentirte,” a key grammatical shift that equalizes the couple. Rather than positioning himself as the unique source of eros in the dyad, he shows her “the grace of feeling oneself loved,” bringing her into awareness of the Tao, and into communion with him and others as a result. In the following line the poet’s imperative commands, “ábreame y tócame,” are metaphorically linked to “seas” and “waves,” a comparison that further modulates the lyrical voice by submerging it and the beloved into the mutual approach of the waters.

There is, additionally, a second level of comparison, drawing the dyad into the nation, as the beloved is told to open herself “like countries which rise up from their last snows.” The poet’s role in his own love poem is deferred outward to these same forces that “write for us.” Despite being submerged into the equilibrium, the dyad is not itself diluted or deferred. The final line summarizes the composition of the poem and the movement of the erotic equilibrium as founded on the couple’s mutuality, as the poem ends on a note of unity with the “skies of your life and my life” shining “like a new poem writing itself on the horizon.” Dyadic love thrives in the Tao. The dyad occupies the very center of the communion itself, being the genesis of the erotic utterances produced by the poet that reverberate through nature.

Likewise, “Raúl y Amparo largan su amor” plays with this natural irreducibility of the dyad in the midst of the communion:
Señor, ante el torrente de las almas que aquí
Van pasando
Nosotros dos, boteros de estos ríos, te pedimos
Que sostengas nuestro amor
Tal como sostienes estas aguas corriendo. (81)

This poem is structured as a prayer directed initially to a divine being addressed as
“Señor” or “Lord,” asking that love become permanence in the midst of contingency.
Indeed, the poem plays with Heraclitus’s thesis of a universe centralized on constant
change, conflating souls and rushing streams. The dyad, compared to two “boteros,” is
simultaneously above the flow and within it. The divine interlocutor is both the “source”
of the water and of the water’s movement, a fixity within change and paradoxically the
very essence of change itself. But the “tú” of the poem changes from the divine
interlocutor to the beloved:

Y que cuando mi alma y la tuya
Se desvanezcan entre los sueños y los mundos
Que nuestro abrazo siga creciendo. (81)

The shift in addressee conflates divine being and the beloved, locating the dyad in the
universe’s “flux.” The beloved, and love itself, becomes the fixed point amidst change,
even as the dyad is immersed in the contingent movement. Their embrace expands to
become “vaster” and “slower” than the tides while their souls “fade amidst the dreams
and worlds.” The utterance of their love is heard at the end of time when “everything
goes behind the currents, streams and rivers,” yet it “accompanies the pulse of the oars on
the water.” The lovers are equal in their union with one another. The poet, the poem’s
source, elevates the beloved to the source of love, while love itself is the source of his
“call.” Thus love and language move in a circular motion between them as they
themselves move in the temporal flow of souls.
Zurita ends with a reiteration of the inclusiveness of the communion in the form of a short poem called “Queridos poderosos, Queridos humildes.” The terms “querido” and “amado” appear throughout the text in the form of first lines for each of the poems, acting as both addresses and subtitles. Now, however, the term is elevated to the title itself, bringing into focus the words themselves and the equality they imply. All the poem’s forces, human and natural, are made equal in that they are “beloveds.” Like Cardenal’s Vida, Zurita’s text denies the primacy of a single source of love in the name of a communion of “speaking brides.” The final poem’s title brings this idea to political discourse, recognizing the existence of class divisions while erasing those divisions by foregrounding the bride’s role. The powerful and the weak, the rich and the poor, are equal in being loved objects. None is given primacy even in the act of loving itself:

Cuando todo se acabe quedarán tal vez
Estas algas.
Sobrevivirán a las marejadas, a los siglos y a los sueños
Como perdurarán a los poderosos, a los
Tercos de corazón
Y a los hombres que nos humillan
Estos poemas de amor a todas las cosas.

Love transcends the contingency of temporal life, surviving beyond time itself. In this fragment, love permeates the whole of existence. It survives not only monumental elements such as the tides, centuries and dreams; it also outlives the “powerful,” the “hardened hearts” or “those who humiliate us.” Note how the absoluteness of love relative to totalitarian forces is expressed in the line structure. Lines 4-8 comprise a single, long sentence that takes up five whole lines beginning with the verb phrase “sobrevivirán a las marejadas,” but the subject of that verb phrase doesn’t appear until line 8, where it comprises the line in its entirety: “Estos poemas de amor a todas las
cosas.” In line 6, Zurita evokes the forces of the regime in quasi-Biblical language—the phrases “hardened hearts” and “those who humiliate us,” recall the Egyptian slavers of the book of Exodus. But these forces are subordinate elements of the sentence, in a comparative clause that reinforces via contrast the absolute nature of love. The influence of the “hard-hearted” is rendered impotent by its position in the phrasing. One more element that the Tao will outlast. Indeed, even as these forces set themselves against the Tao, the Tao will use them to make itself known and felt. Opposition to love is no escape from it.

In conclusion, Zurita’s two books of love poetry written between 1985 and 1987 propose an alternative means to confront the Chilean dictatorship’s logic of violence and its appropriation of social discourse. Instead of contestatory rhetoric or a Manichean dualism in which political ideologies are presented as opposing forces of light and darkness, Zurita explores love, dyadic and external from ideological narratives, as the foundation of a renewed society. The aria at the beginning of Canto a su amor desaparecido is universally accessible, touching the common human experience of love, grief, and loss, neither denying the regime’s influence on the suffering of individuals, nor elevating it to a titanic battle between opposing forces. For Zurita, love and grief are external to ideologies and narratives, both revolutionary and reactionary. They are, however, the only common ground left in a Chile where all dialogue has broken down.
CONCLUSION: THE MULTIPLICITY OF LOVE

This study breaks with other discussions of love and politics in Latin America in that it shows the various different experiences and subjectivities that coexist, sometimes uneasily, under the banner of the one term, “love.” This may seem counterintuitive, given that literary and cultural criticism tends to see love as synonymous with *eros*. And yet love encompasses sexual desire, erotic longings, homosocial friendship, solidarity, *caritas*, and religious mysticism, among many other possibilities. The complexities and missed encounters in love’s interaction with the social milieu through poetry in Latin America has much, I hope to have shown, to offer for critical examination. Work by William Rowe and Ileana Rodríguez (and others) has begun to tease out some of the more complex interactions of love and social commitment among mid-century writers in the region. This study aims to build on and contribute to that trend.

I hope to have made two major contributions to our understanding of the relationship(s) between love and politics. First, I have offered a theoretical framework for *philadelphos*—that particular type of collectivized/revolutionary love for which Neruda’s poetry stands as an archetype—anchoring it both to Walt Whitman’s influence in the region and to the discursive shifts in and between modernity and postmodernity. The connection between *philadelphos* and feminist concepts of intersubjectivity and *écriture feminine* is in some ways intuitive, given Whitman’s own pansexual concept of eroticism. I show how the Latin American poets I discuss, particularly those writing before the 1970s, require a radical displacement of revolutionary subjectivity—Pablo Neruda’s wartime conversion or Ernesto Cardenal’s entry into the monastery—so as to become philadelphic subjects and to overcome the gap between the revolutionary subject and the
“people” they claim to represent. Second, I have distinguished *eros* from *philadelphos* in poetic discourse based on the subjectivity specific to each: *eros*, I claim, functions through what Jameson calls a monadic “aesthetics of expression”; *philadelphos*, through a “peopling” of the lyrical subject by the voice of the other. In the course of this enquiry, then, a third modality of love manifested itself in connection with Cardenal, Gioconda Belli, and Raúl Zurita: *philadelphos-in-eros* and its contingent *Tao*. By *philadelphos-in-eros*, I mean the universal instinct towards coupling; by *Tao*, the totality and governing force of all erotic activity, interaction, movement and speech.

These various modalities of love interact in different ways with political discourse. Here my study has unearthed a multifaceted interchange well beyond the trope of the Latin American socially-committed poet as Whitmanian lover-revolutionary whose commitment is an extension and expansion of his erotic passions. Indeed, in the writings of these four poets, erotic language most frequently interacts in the social sphere through refraction rather than through an infusion of “loving energy” into the lyrical subject who then “expands” that love outward to the multitude. *Eros*’s political function more frequently is to assert inassimilable differences, to construct an “enclosure,” a non-gregarious erotic space that would resist the totalizing objectives of dominant ideologies. Cardenal and Zurita both recognize this refractory function and attempt to apply it against their respective regimes. In Cardenal’s *Epigramas*, erotic poems create spaces of modernist purity, in which interaction between lover and beloved is predicated on self-giving passion, by contrast to the self-interested concern with sex, power, and money prevalent in the agora of Somoza’s Nicaragua. Similarly, in Zurita’s *Canto a su amor desaparecido*, erotic language is a testimony against the communicative distortions of
Pinochet’s dictatorship. For Neruda and Belli, however, these “refractory” strategies are troublesome, as they imply a distance not only from authoritarian “totalizing narratives” but from revolutionary ones as well. Their poetry attempts to “make eros fit” into the revolution: through conversion in Neruda’s case, and deterritorialization in Belli’s. But neither poet integrates eros into philadelphic commitment in any satisfactory manner, flipping over into centralization of eros with revolutionary engagement acting as a kind of pressure valve to counter-erotic isolation, anomie, and subjectification. Thus in Neruda’s Los versos del capitán, the beloved’s conversion never takes place, however much this is the text’s aim. We see, rather, changes in the poet’s own revolutionary subjectivity towards an intersubjectivity as he negotiates between the different varieties of love. In Belli’s poetry, the difference between revolutionary engagement and eros is flattened out as both are presented as channels of self-liberation: Línea de fuego and Sobre la grama fall back into an erotic fantasy for which revolutionary engagement is a kind of interlude in one woman’s passionate “line of flight.”

If eros’s interaction with political reality is refracted, philadelphos is at first sight more directly and obviously political, serving as affective foundation for nationalist and revolutionary commitment. But philadelphos can only flourish in a free society, or in what I describe as a nomadic “war stage” where the expression of oppositional sentiment can escape punishment. Neruda and Belli can give free reign to their philadelphic passion only when they are at war or in exile, and so distanced from the political cause. Indeed, exile is both poetic theme and experiential reality for many of these poets: Neruda, Cardenal and Belli were all forced to live abroad because of their political activities, while Zurita experienced an internal estrangement thanks to the Pinochet regime’s
censorship. Exile allowed these poets a greater range of philadelphic expression. For instance, it influenced Neruda’s paean to philadelphic love, *Canto General*; and Zurita’s Romanticization of Chile’s landscape in *Amor de Chile* emerges from a similar impulse. And it is during her exile that Belli embraces revolutionary philadelphic subjectivity at its most intense and most absolute, experiencing it more as obligation or destiny than a flowery Whitmanian dream. Under dictatorships, where language is appropriated and public discourse restricted, philadelphic language is as useless as it is dangerous, prone to a censorship that is often internalized by poet and masses alike. Zurita and Cardenal avoid or elide philadelphic expression both for reasons of self-preservation and to avoid having their words taken and turned against them. Neither of them wished to be a José Martí, whose verses are quoted by castristas and anti-castristas alike. Nor did they wish to simply invert the dictatorial tropes that—in the case of both Somoza and Pinochet—are themselves expressed through philadelphic registers such as nationalism and patriotic populism. Cardenal and Zurita therefore turn to *eros* and its paradox of gregariousness and anti-gregariousness to speak collectively and intimately at the same time.

*Philadelphos-in-eros*, the gregarious side of erotic love, becomes an alternative collective language for almost all these poets (bar Neruda). Cardenal in *Epigramas* deploys erotic enclosures as metonymies, exposing Somoza’s incursion into every aspect of public and private life through the instances of intimate conversations in which the dictator’s presence is felt, while in the monastery poems of *Gethsemani KY* he comes to recognize the universal reality of love but also its (inevitable?) corruption. For Zurita, in *Canto a su amor desaparecido*, *philadelphos-in-eros* is one of the few ways to testify to Pinochet’s disappearances, while both here and in *Amor de Chile*, the *Tao* disarms the
regime’s appropriation of history and language. Since *eros* is universal, it is the one source of collective meanings still accessible in a society in which communication and trust have broken down. Drawing from Whitmanian language and its Romantic dichotomy counterposing nature to culture, Belli invokes *philadelphos-in-eros* as the basis for a desubjectification of woman and the deterritorialization of *eros*. *Philadelphos-in-eros* becomes the utopian vision of a revolutionary politics whose goal is not so much the redistribution of goods, but self-actualization through unrestricted sexual instinct and communion with the multitude. Neruda does not explore *eros* beyond Romantic subjectivity: the closest he comes is a sense of communion with the Earth through the mediation of woman, but this is an Earth that remains abstracted and impenetrable, a “poetic object” to which he can relate only through a visionary disjunction. For Neruda *Tao* remains a poetic abstraction whose relationship to experiential *eros* is separated by a distance that can only be bridged by the mediation of woman. Yet he comes closer to experiencing the *Tao* in later poems, his “elementary odes” and his more mature love poems to Matilde, in which the couple’s domestic enclosure implies an idealized interaction between humans and the labours of the Earth, free from capitalist alienation.

The *Tao*, a concept only tangentially related to *eros*, comes in these poets to offer a kind of totality of *eros*, for which *philadelphos-in-eros* is primary expression. As law, the *Tao* also comes to ground of an alternative view of politics, in which the idealized nation is one in which the *Tao* or the law of love governs all interaction. All four poets, but especially Cardenal and Zurita, perhaps due to mutual Christian and poetic influences such as Dante, recognize the *Tao* as an extension of the universality of the erotic impulse. They see the whole of nature inscribed with erotic love, and all human interaction
determined by an impulse to communion. They highlight the political implications of the Tao. For Cardenal, the Somoza regime represents a turning away from the law of the Tao predicated on Somoza’s preference for power and riches above people. In the Augustinian sense, Somoza’s loves are “disordered.” In Cardenal’s poetry, the true goal of revolution then is to re-orient the nation on the Tao. For Zurita, the Tao’s existence denies totalitarianism its absolutist and eliminatory goals: it registers the traces of Chile’s violations and provides a language and common ground for those violations to be articulated and purged, and for healing to occur. Zurita’s poetry is filled with prophetic images of renewal, a renewal based on the collective purgation of suffering, and the union and mutual solidarity of Chileans through the Tao.

There are fundamental differences between Zurita and Cardenal’s expression of the Tao. Cardenal discovers the Tao through the strictures of monastic life and through Christian symbols. His concept of the Tao is therefore anchored to the transcendent even as it is perceived through the immanent, through the mating of insects and birds and the growth of grasses and flowers. The Tao is the eros of a divine being, a Bridegroom who moves nature and yet holds himself apart from it. For Zurita, the Tao is almost entirely immanent, expressed and manifest in nature alone. In Amor de Chile, one inhabits the Tao, but the Tao has no source; it is simply being. Christian symbols, such as the cross, are merely signs indicating continuity and collective wounding. Zurita gestures towards the transcendent in the form of temporal paradoxes and a notion of eros as a non-solipsistic, objective reality, but he finds language inadequate to the task. As in a Cubist painting, in Zurita’s poems transcendence can only be imagined indirectly, through the fracturing and multiplication of immanence.
The differences in these poets’ approach to the Tao raises the question of modernism and postmodernism, and their impact on each poet’s practice. Although this study is not a chronology proper, the chronological arrangement of each individual chapter tells us something about changing poetic approaches to love and politics over the decades. A distinct shift takes place between the 1950s and 1960s on the one hand, and the 1970s and 1980s one the other; a shift that corresponds to the transition in poetic discourse from modernism to postmodernism. The modernist approach, in Neruda and Cardenal, is determined by the idea of eros as transcendent, as something that abstracts or separates the lyrical subject from the social milieu, a separation that is to be exploited in Cardenal, overcome in Neruda. In postmodernity, as in Belli and Zurita, eros is immanent, and it contends within the social milieu on its own. At the same time, the very notion of subjectivity, both erotic and philadelphic, is different in the two milieus. The erotic Romantic subject in modernism is Jameson’s “monad,” an alienated being calling out to an absent beloved, a non-subject. In postmodernism, it is a fragmented and multiplicitous self, a flux of euphoric affects articulated through micronarratives. The philadelphic subject in modernism is more politicized: the revolutionary who speaks on behalf of the “masses.” In postmodernism, by contrast, the philadelphic subject is a self without a self, a sounding board for the molecular articulations of the multitude. Her voice emerges from euphoric affective penetrations and envelopments on the part of the other. Indeed, for the postmodern philadelphic subject, political engagement itself can be a source of tension, as it imposes a territorialized boundary on that dynamic flux, drawing it toward the conformity, asceticism, and renunciation of militarized action.
This study is potentially the start of a larger examination that would recognize the need for a fuller chronology of the topic and that would include a more expansive sample of poets, perhaps along the lines of John Beverley and Mark Zimmerman’s *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions*. Country by country, Beverley and Zimmerman analyze Central American literary production in relation to twentieth-century political struggles. Their national approach is supported by a chronology that makes their study comprehensive. The radical transitions in erotic poetic discourse through the twentieth century, and the multiple ways in which that discourse has entered the public sphere and contended against political reality, the diverse poetic expressions of *eros* and *philadelphos*, are only implicit in this study that takes samples from four poets for detailed examination. And while (I hope to have shown) there is merit in the “narrow and deep” approach, the complexities and particularities of the topic would benefit from a more expansive study. Indeed, for example, I have dealt only indirectly with feminism and feminist poets, who have their own particular perspective on the conjunction of eroticism and politics. Some rethinking in this respect may be required. Yet my hope is that my analysis has made it possible to speak of *eros* as an affective phenomenon and thus shed some new light on that oldest of topics, as well as to explore the affective side of political discourse. Jean Franco’s insight, with which this dissertation began, is that Marxism provides a “secular narrative that gives meaning and purpose to individual lives” (60). This suggests that political discourse acts as much upon inner as upon outer reality, and it is this “inner movement” that my analysis hopes to have drawn out.
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