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César Vallejo *solidario*: metonymy, secular transubstantiation, and socialist utopia

César Vallejo *solidario*: metonimia, transubstanciación secular y utopía socialista

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ABSTRACT

This article explores two grammatical characteristics, metonymy and metaphor, in relation to two central themes: the melancholy of death and solidarity between men, as they appear and work together in César Vallejo's poetry. I propose that in Vallejo's poetics there is a cooperation between metaphor and metonymy, in the sense that the metonymic connection between linguistic elements works in the poetry as a system that metaphorises the world as a totality of connections in flux. This article suggests that these systems of interconnection and interdependence

—both linguistic and physical— are very similar to the scientifico-philosophical (that is, Epicurean) system of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*. This comparison, I conclude, is important for a renewed comprehension of the political and secular worldview of solidarity as it appears in Vallejo’s work.

Key words: ethics; socialism; poetic socialism; metonymy; metaphor.

Indexing terms: literary criticism; literary analysis (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora dos características gramaticales, metonimia y metáfora, en relación con dos temas centrales: la melancolía de la muerte y la solidaridad entre los hombres, y cómo estos aparecen y funcionan juntos en la poesía de César Vallejo. Propongo que en la poética de Vallejo existe una cooperación entre metáfora y metonimia, en el sentido de que la conexión metonimical entre los elementos lingüísticos funciona en esta poesía como un sistema que metaforiza el mundo en todas sus conexiones en movimiento. Este artículo sugiere que estos sistemas de interconexión e interdependencia —lingüístico y físico— son muy similares al sistema científico-filosófico (es decir, epicureano) del *De Rerum Natura*, de Lucrecio. Esta comparación —concluyo— es importante para una comprensión renovada de la cosmovisión política y secular de la solidaridad, como aparece en la obra de Vallejo.

Palabras clave: ética; socialismo; socialismo poético; metonimia; metáfora.

Términos de indización: crítica literaria; análisis literario (Fuente: Tesauro Unesco).

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«For they are born from one another, and change their colour
and their whole nature amongst themselves from everlasting».
Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* (Book 1, vv. 767-768).

«Cada cosa contiene en potencia a todas las energías y
direcciones del universo. No solo el hombre es un microcosmos,
cada fenómeno de la naturaleza es también un microcosmos
en marcha».
César Vallejo, «Últimos descubrimientos científicos» (1927).

1. CONTEXTUAL BASE

In choosing the two epigraphs above, I have sought to initiate a comparison between Epicurean (and, indeed, Spinozan) atomic theory and ethics, and Vallejo's own ethics as they are present in his poetry and other writings. At this formative stage, I cannot present anything like a definitive link between Vallejo and these earlier writers, let alone proof of his having been acquainted with their work or similar works. However, at the direction of

Carlos Fernández López and Dominic Moran, I am planning a period of research, into Spanish translations of Lucretius and Spinoza, and of the Trujillo archives where Vallejo's school and university curricula records are stored¹.

Perhaps a sign of his very personalised ethics, Vallejo's later poetry at once reflects and seems to have motivated his distancing from ideologised Marxism, and his move towards a militant utopian socialism. An ardent supporter first of Trotsky then of Stalin, Vallejo published two travelogues of subsequent trips to Russia, one positively propagandistic, the other containing seeds of disenchantment with Sovietism, which eventually yielded what Stephen Hart calls the later poetry's «Christian communism» (2007, p. 18; 2013, pp. 149-262). Retaining the connection to the transformative power of language in Christian semiotics whilst rejecting the ideological import of the term «Christian», I prefer my own term «poetic socialism». Indeed, Vallejo's poetry and poetics in the later poetry takes the «socialist realist» tag attached to works of his Soviet period —such as the novel *El tungsteno*— to new lengths (Hart, 2013, p. 189). For *Poemas humanos* and *España, aparta de mí este caliz* differ from *Trilce* only in their more *explicit* presentation of Marxian critique, often retaining the disruptive experimental language of the earlier collection, in presenting reality *poetically*. Poetic socialism, herein, epitomised by *Poemas humanos* and *España, aparta de mí...*, has consequences for both poetry *and* socialism, the former exemplifying herein a *committed* creative practice, and the latter signalling an apprehension of a potential sociopolitical —rather than ideological— «being-in-common» (Nancy, 2006, p. 33).

1 Much of this archival research, and its documentation, has already been completed by Carlos Fernández López (2021) and Valentino Gianuzzi (2014), in their doctoral work theses on Vallejo. See also Fernández and Gianuzzi (2020).

2. THEORETICAL BASE

Being-in-common, which involves a necessary levelling of societal and axiological hierarchies, works in *Trilce* and the posthumous poetry through a combination of metaphor and metonymy. As we know, metaphor substitutes one sign for another, entailing a transference of meaning that bestows greater or lesser axiological value upon the signs involved with the substitution. For Paul Ricoeur, following Aristotle, such substitution involves an equivalence of semiotic similarity or dissimilarity (2003, pp. 4-5). Substitution on the basis of a perceived dissimilarity can result in a seemingly anomalous bestowal of greater value to an object normatively considered of lesser value, like a stone, and in the corresponding devaluation of a sign normatively considered of higher value, such as «oro». As Samuel R. Levin states, employing the example «the stone died», metaphor as an «A is B» relation can transfer meaning in either direction (Martin, 2012, p. 867). The personification of the stone in Vallejo's poetry, indeed, is part of a poetic disruption of words and things typically deemed static and fixed, which fragments them and redistributes their significance in all directions, both within and outside the text.

Redistribution, marked by displacement, is performed by the poetic function of metonymy, which Michelle Clayton identifies as the predominant trope in Vallejo's poetry from *Trilce* onwards (2011, pp. 1-22). Metonymy entails not so much a transference of meaning as a «change of name» (this being the translation of the Greek «metonymy»); a displacement from one semanteme to another «on the basis of some material, causal, or conceptual relation» (Martin, 2012, p. 876). Metonymy, indeed, typically substitutes one trope for another on the basis of a pre-existing semantic or taxonomic rather than an innovative abstract connection between sign and referent, and thus «lends words new meaning without leaving the literal plane» (p. 876). In this relation,

metonymy has been seen to remain on the horizontal plane of signification, maintaining an earth-boundedness abandoned by metaphor.

Here, on the sphere of earthbound connection and interdependence, of signs as of their referents as atomic parts—each, as Vallejo understood, microcosmoses in themselves—I observe a resonant echo of Epicurean atomic theory as outlined by Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura*. I quote at length from Book 2, in what follows, for its correspondence to the scientific and philosophical underpinnings of Vallejo’s metaphorically metonymical poetics:

Lastly, we are all sprung from celestial seed: all have that same father, from whom our fostering mother earth receives liquid drops of water, and then teeming brings forth bright corn and luxuriant trees and the race of mankind, brings forth all the generations of wild beasts, providing food with which all nourish their bodies and lead a sweet life and beget their offspring; therefore she has with reason obtained the name mother. That also which once came from earth, to earth returns back again, and what fell from the borders of ether, that is again brought back, and the regions of heaven again receive it. Nor does death so destroy things as to annihilate the bodies of matter, but it disperses their combination abroad; then it conjoins others with others and brings it about that thus all things alter their shapes and change their colours and receive sensation and in a moment of time yield it up again; so that you may recognize how important it is with what and in what arrangement the same first-beginnings are held together, and what motions they give and receive mutually, and that you may not believe it possible that the first bodies for ever hold possession of that which we see floating upon the surface of things and sometimes being born and perishing on a sudden. Moreover, it is important in my own verses with what and in what order the various elements

are placed. For the same letters denote sky, sea, earth, rivers, sun, the same denote crops, trees, animals. If they are not all alike, yet by far the most part are so; but position marks the difference in what results. So also when we turn to real things: when combinations of matter, when its motions, order, position, shapes are changed, the things must also be changed (Lucretius, 1924, Book 2, vv. 991-1022).

In positioning Lucretius' work in active conjunction with Vallejo's, I am following a recent historical practice of embedding the latter poet's work within the context of the philosophical and scientific discourses and theories that were influential or even just a la mode, both during his formative years as a poet, especially those of his education and earlier intellectual development, and his later relationship with Marxism. This practice stretches back through Moran's analysis of Vallejo's work's Bergsonian underpinnings in certain poems from *Trilce* (2022), to Jean Franco's examination of the influence of *fin de siècle* theories of natural history and human evolution upon Vallejo's poetry in her book *The Dialectics of Poetry and Silence* (1976, pp. 9-11, pp. 57-59).

Metonymic displacement in Vallejo's poetry enacts the constant fragmentation of compound bodies into their constituent parts. The poetry's grammatical—or indeed *agrammatical*—displacement of graphemes, lexemes, and semantemes (as values) *metaphorises* the natural processes of organic composition, decomposition, and the redistribution of matter. Herein, Vallejo's poetry performs textually the potentially fluid processes of de- and re-composition that work on all objects, presenting thereby the figurative and literal interrelationship between all things by exhibiting the instability of matter through a use of signs and significations that are themselves unstable and shown to collapse. Any object, as whole, as Lucretius saw so long

ago, eventually decomposes and disperses into world or language via death or metaphorical metonymy, implying its potential, in a deconstructed state, to become part of the production of other objects. In Vallejo's poetry, the decomposition of signs disrupts their material and conceptual stability, whereby the textual transference of meaning as a semantic displacement in all directions imitates the physical displacement of decomposed objects.

Indeed, through formally imitating physical decomposition and the concomitant potential for recomposition, Vallejo's metaphorically metonymical poetry, with its radically democratic arrangement of meaning, tacitly performs the formation of a utopian community wherein the subject displaces themselves empathically into the other as addressee, or as inanimate object. Combining metaphor and metonymy entails, here, not a Cartesian separation from, but a projection out into the world of objects and subjects which are at once a part *of* the subject and apart *from* it. Vallejo's poetics, then, in displacing the subject into all other subjects and objects through metonymy, brings together *all* subjects and objects in a state of metaphorical, reciprocative solidarity that, integrally, does not subsume their individual identities as atomic parts of the whole that is the world.

3. STUDY 1: «PARÍS, OCTUBRE 1936»

De todo esto yo soy el único que parte.
De este banco me voy, de mis calzones,
de mi gran situación, de mis acciones,
de mi número hendido parte a parte,
de todo esto yo soy el único que parte.

De los Campos Elíseos o al dar vuelta
la extraña callejuela de la Luna,
mi defunción se va, parte mi cuna,
y, rodeada de gente, sola, suelta,
mi semejanza humana dase vuelta
y despacha sus sombras una a una.

Y me alejo de todo, porque todo
se queda para hacer la coartada:
mi zapato, su ojal, también su lodo
y hasta el doblez del codo
de mi propia camisa abotonada.

In «París, octubre 1936» (2009, p. 412), we find a relationship between the poem's subject and a set of objects that involves the textual redistribution of that subject onto those objects, metaphorically presenting the dissolution of death through metonymical displacement. The poem begins with a premonition of the subject's dissolution: «De todo esto yo soy el único que parte». «[T]odo esto», here, refers to the subject's experience of the world: «mi gran situación», composed of «mis acciones» and «mi número hendido parte a parte», evincing the plural meaning, as in English, of the Spanish «parte»: a departure *and* a constituent piece. The subject's identity, then, is presented as constructed through a metonymical part-whole relationship. Though the subject takes even its «sombras» along with it, the «partes» of text, memory and material belongings remain —the «zapato» and the immaterial space of its «ojal»— even the «lodo» attached to its sole. These objects «hacer la coartada» of the subject's death, testifying to the continuing, pluralised existence of the subject *after death* in its contingent, «nonhuman» bodies.

The paradox here is not counterproductive but productive. The persistence of the subject's prosthetic objects after its death

leaves the melancholy memory of the subject behind in its «partes». These objects' continuing existence in the world hereby immortalises the subjects' previously condensed presence —the «*semejanza humana*» of the poem's second stanza— in the form of fragments charged with meaning. All-powerful death, in *not completely* disappearing the body, is overcome by the persistence of memory attached to objects, like headstones bearing the names of those passed, or simply propagating moss. This textual transference and redistribution of the subject's identity and body *metaphorises* the processes of senescence and decomposition and the concomitant redistribution of matter, suggesting that anything can be transferred, eventually, through however many degrees of separation, into anything else. Such textual compression of the temporal instability of objects implies the plurality held within and emanating from all seemingly singular «things», just as it emanates from the signs and texts that gather these things, or those that are inscribed, written, carved, or etched upon them. «París...», then, tacitly imitates the temporal construction of a seemingly fixed identity and stable body —textual or organic— even as it performs that body's decomposition. Indeed, the *yo lírico* is the *only* «thing» to «parte» «de todo esto»; the subject's self-conscious identity may disappear; however, it lives on in the things that that subject leaves behind. This, then, is a *secularised* immortality, whereby «the immortal is not what transcends, but [...] the temporal as such» (Rowe, 2013, p. 19). This potential for secular transubstantiation, indeed, is performed throughout Vallejo's poetry.

4. STUDY 2: «PIEDRA NEGRA SOBRE UNA PIEDRA BLANCA»

Me moriré en París con aguacero,
un día del cual tengo ya el recuerdo.
Me moriré en París —y no me corro—
tal vez un jueves, como es hoy, de otoño.

Jueves será, porque hoy, jueves, que proso
estos versos, los húmeros me he puesto
a la mala y, jamás como hoy, me he vuelto,
con todo mi camino, a verme solo.

César Vallejo ha muerto, le pegaban
todos sin que él les haga nada;
le daban duro con un palo y duro

también con una sogá; son testigos
los días jueves y los huesos húmeros,
la soledad, la lluvia, los caminos...

Secular transubstantiation, indeed, appears again in «Piedra...» —reminiscent of «París...» in its Quevedian formal qualities, though Vallejo's poems bring the metaphysical melancholy of Quevedo's sonnets back down to earth (Clayton, 2011, p. 100)—. The «piedras» of the title allude to a ruined Mayan city, Piedras Negras, a centre of Pre-Columbian sculptural output (World Monuments Fund, 2019), and to a photograph of Vallejo (fig. 1) donning a dark coat and leaning, pensive, against a pale stone in the Fontainebleau woods outside Paris (Hart, 2013, pp. 127-128), a «lóbrego mamífero», in his own words (2009, p. 404).



Figure 1. César Vallejo in the forest of Fontainebleau.

In this sense, these «piedras» tacitly imply a certain mirroring of «piedra» and «humano», object and subject. Far from implying the poet and the poem's insignificance (Clayton, 2011, pp. 204-206), «Piedra...», like «París...», performs the decomposition of the body upon death, and implies the potential for re-construction concomitant upon this process of redistribution. The decomposition and displacement of matter

allows for a redistribution of meaning into everyday signs and objects, such as mud and stones. Such redistribution —recalling the Spanish phrase ‘criar malvas’ (the English equivalent of which is «pushing up daisies») — bestows herein a significance upon things that might otherwise be deemed insignificant or relatively *meaningless*.

Following the *yo lírico*’s prediction that they will die on a Thursday in autumn (ironically, though this prediction proved incorrect, Vallejo died on Good Friday 1938, not exactly a day without symbolic import), they admit that this prediction is contingent upon experience: the poem is written on a Thursday. On this day, the subject presents their premonition of death as a temporally condensing semantic metaphor for their impending dissolution. This dissolution is then performed by a metonymical fragmentation and displacement of the subject into multiple objects, into the world as across the text. The processes of the day, recalling the «ponte el alma [...] ponte el cuerpo» of «Los desgraciados» (2009, p. 558), become a prosaically poeticised quotidian itinerary that metaphorises the metonymic displacement and redistribution of things consequent upon figurative and literal death. Where «París...» redistributed the subject among its external belongings, in «Piedra...», not shirtsleeves but humerus bones are put on, deconstructing the human body into its internal (osseous) parts.

The interdependence of material, existential, and textual constructions of the subject is epitomised by the first verse of «Piedra...»’s third stanza: «César Vallejo ha muerto». This separation of the *yo lírico* from the poet’s nominal identity features also in Vallejo’s prose poem «Voy a hablar de la esperanza», which begins: «Yo no sufro este dolor como César Vallejo» (2009, p. 342). Such verses initiate a separation of the normatively unified human body and its Christian and patrilineal

names, suggesting the *contingent* nature of constructed identity and presenting name and body as *parts* of the fluid assembly that is «the individual». This separation disrupts the notion of identity, exposing its metonymical constructedness. Like bones and memories, then, our names are but constituent (and constituted) parts of our being, to be lost in time, a «polvo humano» that organically decomposes and disperses into the world as so many potential parts of some future constructions.

Such dissolution, indeed, is not *entirely* negative. In the final stanza, the entropy of the subject's body and identity is again *witnessed* by the very *objects* that had supposedly disappeared along with the subject, including the inanimate «la lluvia» and «los caminos», which now become «testigos»; just as in «París...», these attendant objects themselves acquiring a certain subjectivity. The subject, then, as unified body and identity, is mortal, but Vallejo's poetic texts perform the subject's *pluriversal immortality* as dispersed and redistributed into the world of objects. Immortality, here, entails —rather than any metaphysical transcendence— the deconstructed subject's transference into the surrounding world despite the disappearance of its unified subjectivity. This metonymical displacement into proximate objects and things, then, metaphorises the immortalising of the writing subject in their texts, just as Vallejo immortalises himself with «Piedra...», and the other published poems. «Piedra blanca», then, metaphorising the void of the white page, beckons not nothingness but all that a seemingly empty space potentializes: the «piedra negra» of textual work or physical recondensation. Organic decomposition, it is implied, potentialises the transformative recomposition of life.

5. CENTRAL STUDY 3: «XXXVI»

Pugnamos ensartarnos por un ojo de aguja.
enfrentados, a las ganadas.
Amoniácase casi el cuarto ángulo del círculo.
¡Hembra se continúa el macho, a raíz
de probables senos, y precisamente
a raíz de cuanto no florece!

¿Por ahí estás, Venus de Milo?
Tú manqueas apenas pululando
entrañada en los brazos plenarios
de la existencia,
de esta existencia que todaviiza
perenne imperfección.
Venus de Milo, cuyo cercenado, increado
brazo revuélvese y trata de encodarse
a través de verdeantes guijarros gagos,
ortivos nautilus, aúnes que gatean
recién, vísperas inmortales.
Laceadora de inminencias, laceadora
del paréntesis.

Rehusad, y vosotros, a posar las plantas
en la seguridad dupla de la Armonía.
Rehusad la simetría a buen seguro.
Intervenid en el conflicto
de puntas que se diputan
en la más torionda de las justas
el salto por el ojo de la aguja!

Tal siento ahora el meñique
demás en la siniestra. Lo veo y creo
no debe serme, o por lo menos que está
en sitio donde no debe.
Y me inspira rabia y me azarea
y no hay cómo salir de él, sino haciendo
la cuenta de que hoy es jueves.

¡Ceded al nuevo impar
potente de orfandad!

Soon, we must take this notion of metonymic/atomic construction and interchangeability even further, to the point where textual deconstruction and distribution initiate a performance of productive re-condensation *as cooperation and collectivisation*, wherein the mournful and melancholic voice of the epitaphic poems moves towards that of a poetic socialism that imagines a utopian pluriversal community. As Vallejo wrote, «El pesimismo y la desesperación deben ser siempre etapas y no metas. Para que ellos agiten y fecunden el espíritu, deben desenvolverse hasta transformarse en afirmaciones constructivas» (Close, 1987, p. 182).

To understand how Vallejo's «afirmaciones constructivas» function in terms of his work's poetic socialism, however, we must first explore how this optimistic, productive deconstruction works on the level of poetic language itself, in turning to another poem featuring a porous petrous body. Christine von Buelow claims that the «metaphoricity» of Vallejo's *ars poetica* or «Venus de Milo poem», *Trilce's* «XXXVI», in its portrayal of the temporal fluidity of bodies undergoing ruin, echoes Walter Benjamin's view of allegory as a figuration of temporal ruin, as well as his notion of «critical decomposition, which assumes that “any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else”»

(1989, p. 42). Lucretius, of course, begins *De Rerum Natura* with an invocation to Venus, figuring her in secular fashion as the productive force that drives not only the world's cycles of decline, dissolution and rejuvenation, but also as «the giver of life to his poetry» (1924, Book 1, v. 42).

Indeed, the Venus of Vallejo's poem not only «brings stone to life while bringing art closer to manual labour» (Clayton, 2011, p. 172), but, for von Buelow, also stands for the instability of signifiers as of matter (1989, p. 48). The instability of inanimate bodies subjected to the wearing of time, represented by the petrous *and* porous marble Venus, both of whose arms are missing, *metaphorises* the organism's senescence *and* the instability of language as a fluid, open and temporally constructed system. The effects of decomposition through both literal and figurative *erosion* —of geomorphological factors and language and meaning— expose the porous, metonymical *constructedness* of objects and subjects. Erosion and redistribution of the object-body and sign is performed by «XXXVI», which, signalling the reality of physical fluidity, performs the *productiveness* of physical and metaphorical erosion upon the Venus' body, this sculpture with missing limbs being valued, paradoxically, for refusing «la simetría a buen seguro» and «la seguridad dupla de la Armonía». «Armonía» is ironised in the earlier «Amoniácase casi el cuarto ángulo del círculo», whereby «the fourth angle of the circle, instead of reaching completion in an idealized geometric quadrant, “almost ammonia-izes”» in the «form of a colorless gas, the chemical compound ammonia mocking the ideal, invisible essence» (Buelow, 1989, p. 45). Not only does «ammonia» mock the «higher» *value* of formal «armonía»; Jorge Guzmán suggests that «ammonia» tacitly refers to «orina» (2000, p. 145). This metonymical semiotic connection can be inferred as tacitly presenting a waste product (urine) *as productive*,

relating to the meaning produced by the broken sculpture as by insignificant objects and subjects throughout Vallejo's poetry —*Trilce's* fascination with «guano» being one example (Clayton, 2011, pp. 123-133)—.

Analysing Vallejo's nominalising («aunes que gatean») and verbalising («todaviiza») of adverbs, von Buelow states that

we can determine the status of Venus's existence as meaning that emerges or becomes rather than is [...] Even here, though, a reverse dialectic lies imminent in this chain of purely temporalized significations [...] [wherein] Venus can emanate, namely, the capacity alternatively to recall and to cancel the most lofty «unions» [...] (1989, p. 48).

Herein, the distributive effects of metonymy disrupt the purchase of fixed metaphorical substitutions. Von Buelow connects this process to Derridean *différance*, but goes beyond the deconstructionist disruption of unitary meaning, noting that the deconstruction of signification in «XXXVI» performs the reconstruction of meaning *as anti-ideal*. For this Venus, this stone, whilst disintegrating still «emerges» (1989, pp. 47-48), constantly *resignifying* in its deteriorating state. The deconstruction of matter here —epitomised by «XXXVI»'s phrase «verdeantes gujarros gagos», which connects the multiplying of the petrous body in its deconstruction (stone to pebbles) with the multiplying of meaning in the poem's «stammering» text and intentional dittographic repetition of letters («todaviiza») — entails the transformation of meaning as part of a signifying process that, as in «Piedra...» and «París...» continues through and after the body's decomposition, wherein the latter formal process metaphorises the physical reality of the former. This textually performed regrowth suggests that all

things that do not attain an (impossible) ideal unity, still signify *in their making as in their unmaking*.

6. PRODUCTIVE DECONSTRUCTION AS A SOCIALIST POETICS

The triadic subject-object-text relationship that we see opening up in these poems, signifies the connectedness-in-separation of all objects, whatever their apparent distance. The «soledad» into which the *yo lírico* disperses upon death in «Piedra...» and «París...», is hereby a productive decomposition, as in «XXXVI», whereby this «soledad» is that of a world shared by all upon it, by all subjects and objects. The deconstruction of the *yo lírico* performs the rise out of «soledad» as suffering, through an apprehension and textualisation of sharing, implying the potential for reconstruction through combination and cooperation, and apprehending the echoes of «sólido» in «soledad», «solitary» in «solidarity». This apprehension of our essential being-together and thus of the (im)mortal potential for cooperation, then—depicted most beautifully, most tragically in the condensed form of Vallejo's poem «Masa»— is in Vallejo's poetry contingent upon the disruption of illusorily fixed substances and identities, and recalls Lucretius' descriptions of liberty according to Epicurean atomic theory, which signals the paramountcy of «free will» to the movement of matter, specifically motion entailing a «combined effort» (1924, Book 2: vv. 265-270).

The apprehension of subjects and objects in solidarity, indeed, leads us to another form of reconstruction central to Vallejo's work, *communal action*. The formation of community, in Vallejo's poetic socialism, is again often undertaken in relation to stones (as in the play *La piedra cansada* and the poem beginning «Parado en una piedra...»), and results not only in a disruption of the status of objects, but in a reconfiguration of the human as concept, subject, and objective body. A potential being-together

is dependent upon prior empathic acts, which initiate a de- and re-construction of subject and object in their interdependence. Vallejo, speaking at a congress of socialist writers in Madrid in 1937, proclaimed that writers can «mover el mundo» with «nuestra pluma» (Hart, 2013, p. 241), and the posthumously published poems follow this declaration. *España...*, written contemporaneously with *Poemas humanos* and containing particular references to the civil war battlegrounds visited by Vallejo, was published by Republican soldiers in Montserrat, but only after Vallejo's death, and on the eve of Franco's victory (Clayton, 2011, p. 7). The collection's title references Christ's words to his Father upon the Mount of Olives, secularising Christ's suffering in tacitly presenting Vallejo and/as Spain or even the entire world and universe, in anguish before the two possible outcomes of the civil war, the outcome itself secularising the «will» of God. Despite Franco's victory and Vallejo's suffering and death, the poems in *España* and *Poemas* still perform, and always shall, the potential for re-construction held within the resistance to oppression by a collective that hypothetically overcomes not only Francoism and Fascism as the power of death (Rowe, 2013, pp. 6-7), but all axiological hierarchies upheld by supremacism and anthropocentrism.

7. STUDY 4: «HIMNO A LOS VOLUNTARIOS DE LA REPÚBLICA»

España's first poem, «Himno a los voluntarios de la República» (2009, pp. 568-577), aligns a universalised Republican soldier with their own «criatura» or «animal». Following this, the militiaman as «criatura» is said to be «agitada por una piedra inmóvil». The subsequent verses suggest just how revolutionary the stone's affect can be:

se sacrifica, apártase,
decae para arriba y por su llama incombustible sube,
sube hasta los débiles,
distribuyendo españas a los toros,
toros a las palomas... (2009, p. 570).

As in «Piedra...» and «París...», these lines signify a parting that redistributes significance among different subjects and objects. «[L]os débiles» now comprise a group towards which one must *ascend*, and Spain itself, as a unitary body torn asunder by civil war, is redistributed to that animal that has so long suffered as a sacrificial living symbol in Spanish cultural practice, the «toro». Indeed, in the next line the «toros» themselves, now a metaphor for power, are redistributed among «las palomas». Recalling Ricoeur's reading of Aristotle, these five lines redistribute power among a chain of signs connected semantically through their drastic *dissimilarity*. In the fragmentation of the unitary bodies of Spain and «los toros», power is redistributed among those objects that exist in a relation of lesser power to the objects being deconstructed and redistributed. Herein, in echo of Nietzsche's genealogy of Christianity, «los débiles» rise to a position of paradoxical supremacy.

Indeed, Vallejo's poetry's resistance to hierarchy reoccurs in «Himno...»:

[...] todo
en el mundo será de oro súbito
y el oro
fabulosos mendigos de vuestra propia secreción de sangre,
y el oro mismo será entonces de oro! (2009, p. 572).

The word «oro», here, as a sign of value, abandons the premonetary gold standard, *and* the significance of gold in Christian

iconography and Incan culture —Incans having revered it as «the sweat of the sun» (American Museum of Nature History, n. d., par. 1)—. Gold here is not reserved by and for the powerful, as for Incan emperors and national central banks, but is instead redistributed throughout «el mundo». In Vallejo’s poetic socialist imaginary, the victory of the «mendigos» over the Fascist death squads will initiate the redistribution and reconfiguration of value itself, generated not by «oro» as a material of reverential fiscal value, but by the very bodies of «los débiles» whose alienated labour capitalism and fascism exploit and upon which they depend. Vallejo’s new «gold standard» makes gold valuable as object, whilst the symbolic value that was previously gathered to and reserved for it is now redistributed equitably amongst all other subjects and objects in the world. Here, poetic socialism redistributes value in such a way that that which had been insignificant and powerless is brought up and forwards, onto the page as into view, whilst that which has been celebrated and coveted by capitalists and emperors is pulled back down from loftiness, to the earth, and stone, from whence it came.

This poetic redistribution of power is contingent upon Vallejo’s poetic understanding of the metaphorically metonymical and physically potential interchangeability of all things. «Oro» then, as a catalyst for the poetic levelling of societal and metaphysical hierarchies, becomes as valuable as the stone from which it is cut, whilst the now «fabuloso mendigo», shining *as* «oro», becomes as valuable as all other human beings, as valuable as anything and everything on earth in its particularity. Each individual thing, herein, exists as part of an ever-changing whole, a revelation hidden in the «mi cuerpo solidario» of Vallejo’s «Epístola a los transeúntes», from within which words resonate the phonetic echoes of so many «cuerpos solitarios». Echoing Lucretius’ account of Epicurean philosophy, then, in Vallejo’s poetry the

excess value and substance of particular objects is redistributed into the world, bringing all objects and subjects together in a state of pluriversal equity.

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